

**Language Maintenance in Malaysia:**  
**A Case Study of the Chinese Community in Penang**

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## **Thesis Abstract**

Language use is deeply connected to the socio-cultural identity of an ethnic group. In Malaysia, the Chinese are the second largest ethnic group, speaking a wide range of Chinese language varieties. Although the Malaysian Federal Government has explicitly allowed the use of Mandarin Chinese through the national education system, this encouragement is undermined by other socio-political influences that discourage the public use of Chinese community languages such as Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, and Hakka. Widespread language shift from Chinese community languages to Mandarin Chinese is evident, especially among the younger generation. A combination of social, cultural, and political influences has motivated this shift and disrupted the patterns of community languages in many Malaysian-Chinese families. This situation raises questions about the role and status—and ultimate survival—of Chinese community languages in Malaysian society.

The field of language maintenance and language shift has attracted much attention from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Many early studies of language maintenance and language shift in various countries have focused on examining demographic factors. Other areas of analysis include (1) using the concept of domain to describe social spaces of language use, (2) subjective factors such as motivation, attitudes, and beliefs, (3) language planning and policy, and (4) linguistic landscape. In order to provide a holistic picture of the language situation of the Chinese community in Penang, where the study took place, I developed an ecological framework that drew together three key components: language use, language perceptions, and language planning and policy. Conceptualising this study within the ecological framework, which assumes that ecological links exist between language, speakers, and the environment (Haugen, 1972), I applied a case study approach within a qualitative paradigm. The study drew on semistructured interviews, which were conducted with 46 participants, aged 30 and above,

from three different groups: (1) official actors, (2) community-based actors, and (3) grassroots actors, as primary source and photographs of the linguistic landscape as secondary source. Haugen's (1972) ten ecological questions were used to organise and frame the analysis of the interview transcripts.

The first finding demonstrates that participants in this study are keen to maintain Chinese community languages and use them actively in their everyday life. They also use Mandarin Chinese widely but due to the influence of globalisation, they regard it as a language for goal achievement and career preparation.

The second finding suggests that the participants' continuous use of community languages is motivated by the fact that they acknowledge the value of these languages and hope that they will be maintained in the future. They predict that Penang Hokkien will continue to be the lingua franca of the Chinese in Penang even as Mandarin Chinese is becoming increasingly dominant. When assessing the vitality of languages in Penang, it can be seen that in addition to the national and official language of Bahasa Melayu, dominant languages—English, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil—are given considerable support by the Penang Government in the public space. However, there is little evidence of Chinese community languages displayed in the landscape, mainly because these languages have survived through speech rather than writing.

The third finding shows that various organisations at macro level (Malaysian Federal Government and Penang Government), meso level (communities), and micro level (parents) have made efforts to support the maintenance of Chinese community languages in Penang. However, these efforts vary due to socio-political pressures.

By investigating language use, language perceptions, and planning efforts from macro to micro levels, this study presents a holistic account of the current role, status, and vitality of

Chinese community languages in Penang. Its findings show there is a discrepancy between the perceptions of community-based and grassroots actors about the role and status of community languages and the reality of today's language situation. This leads to the conclusion that in advocating for the survival of these community languages in Penang, there is a need to move beyond simple promotional campaigns towards a comprehensive approach that includes participation from the macro, meso, and micro levels of society.

The perfect journey is never finished;  
The goal is always just across the next river,  
Round the shoulder of the next mountain.  
There is always one more track to follow,  
One more mirage to explore.

By Rosita Forbes  
(1890 – 1967)

*To my late grandparents, Ong Eng Keat and Tan Kim Chio,*

You showed me the true meaning of hardship,

You demonstrated what love was all about,

You told me to believe in my dreams,

You have always supported me in my achievements,

Thank you for being my inspiration.

## **Statement of Originality**

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

*Jeresa Ong Wai See*

# Table of Contents

Thesis Abstract.....	ii
Statement of Originality.....	vii
Table of Contents.....	viii
List of Tables .....	xv
List of Figures .....	xvi
Translation of Bahasa Melayu Terms and Acronyms.....	xviii
Thesis-Related Publications and Presentations.....	xx
Acknowledgements.....	xxii
 <b>Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....</b>	 <b>1</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Motivation for the Study .....	2
1.2 The Sociolinguistic Background of Malaysia .....	4
1.2.1 Pre-independence history and colonial policy. ....	5
1.2.2 Nation-building and post-independence language policy.....	8
1.3 The History of Chinese Settlement in Malaysia.....	17
1.3.1 The development of Chinese-medium education. ....	20
1.3.2 The impact of language policy on the Chinese community and Chinese-medium education.....	22
1.3.3 The linguistic repertoire of the Chinese community in Malaysia.....	23
1.4 The History of Chinese Settlement in Penang .....	26
1.4.1 Chinese languages in Penang.....	27
1.5 Statement of the Problem .....	29
1.6 Outline of the Thesis .....	31
 <b>Chapter 2: Literature Review.....</b>	 <b>33</b>
2.0 Introduction .....	33
2.1 Language Maintenance and Language Shift in Malaysia .....	34



2.1.1	Past Chinese language maintenance and language shift studies in Malaysia. ...	36
2.1.1.1	Patterns of language use. ....	36
2.1.1.2	Parents' choice for Chinese-medium education. ....	40
2.1.1.3	Attitudes of Malaysian-Chinese towards Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese. ....	42
2.1.1.4	Other factors. ....	44
2.1.2	Limitations in the literature on Chinese language maintenance and language shift in Malaysia. ....	45
2.2	Key Themes in Language Maintenance and Language Shift Literature Relevant to This Study .....	47
2.2.1	Demographic factors. ....	48
2.2.2	The concept of domain to describe social spaces of language use. ....	49
2.2.3	Motivation, attitudes, and beliefs. ....	51
2.2.4	Language planning and policy. ....	54
2.2.5	Linguistic landscape. ....	57
2.2.6	Section summary. ....	59
2.3	A Way Forward: Conceiving the Study in Terms of Language Ecology .....	59
2.3.1	Language ecology. ....	60
2.4	Chapter Summary. ....	68
<b>Chapter 3: Study Design, Conceptual Framework, and Methodology .....</b>		<b>70</b>
3.0	Introduction .....	70
3.1	Purpose of the Study .....	71
3.2	Rationale for Choosing Qualitative Research Methods .....	74
3.2.1	Underlying philosophies. ....	75
3.3	Reasons for Employing a Case Study Approach .....	76
3.3.1	A single instrumental case study. ....	77
3.3.2	Research site. ....	78
3.3.3	Sampling decisions. ....	80
3.3.4	Data sources. ....	82
3.3.4.1	Primary data source: Semistructured interviews. ....	83
3.3.4.2	Secondary data source: Linguistic landscape photos. ....	84
3.4	Developing a Conceptual Framework .....	85
3.4.1	The conceptual framework. ....	86

3.4.2	Language use in the ecological framework. ....	89
3.4.3	Language perceptions in the ecological framework. ....	89
3.4.4	Language planning and policy in the ecological framework. ....	91
3.4.5	Illustration of the conceptual framework. ....	92
3.5	Summary of Study Design .....	92
3.6	Conducting Fieldwork.....	96
3.6.1	Stage 1: Collecting linguistic landscape photos.....	96
3.6.2	Stage 2 (part 1): Recruiting participants. ....	97
3.6.3	Stage 2 (part 2): Interviewing participants.....	103
3.5.4	Stage 3: Managing data.....	104
3.7	Data Analysis .....	105
3.7.1	Analytical procedures. ....	108
3.8	Validity and Reliability of Research Methodology.....	112
3.8.1	Reflections on insider/outsider status. ....	113
3.8.2	Limitations of study design.....	116
3.9	Chapter Summary.....	116
<b>Chapter 4: Everyday Language Use .....</b>		<b>118</b>
4.0	Introduction .....	118
4.1	Everyday Use of Chinese Community Languages.....	121
4.1.1	Everyday interactions.....	121
4.1.2	Language teaching and learning. ....	124
4.1.3	Literacy skills.....	126
4.1.4	Entertainment. ....	127
4.1.5	Religion.....	129
4.1.6	Chinese cuisine. ....	131
4.1.7	Cultural participation and transmission. ....	132
4.1.8	Section summary.....	136
4.2	Everyday Use of Mandarin Chinese.....	137
4.2.1	Everyday interactions.....	137
4.2.2	Language learning.....	140
4.2.3	Literacy skills.....	141
4.2.4	Entertainment. ....	142

4.2.5	Religion.....	144
4.2.6	Cultural transmission .....	145
4.2.7	Section summary.....	147
4.3	Employment of Concurrent Languages.....	148
4.3.1	Mandarin Chinese. ....	148
4.3.2	English. ....	150
4.3.3	Section summary.....	151
4.4	Chapter Summary.....	151
<b>Chapter 5: Perceptions of Chinese Community Language Maintenance.....</b>		<b>154</b>
5.0	Introduction .....	154
5.1	Revisit: Language Perceptions .....	157
5.2	Importance of Chinese Community Language Maintenance .....	158
5.2.1	Projecting multiple identities. ....	158
5.2.2	Representing historical and family roots. ....	161
5.2.3	Being part of a living culture. ....	164
5.2.4	Having emotional connection. ....	165
5.2.5	A strategic communication tool.....	168
5.2.6	Section summary.....	170
5.3	Predictions for the Future of Chinese Community Languages .....	171
5.3.1	General predictions. ....	171
5.3.1.1	Official actors.....	171
5.3.1.2	Community-based actors.....	173
5.3.1.3	Grassroots actors.....	176
5.3.2	Predictions for individual languages.....	178
5.3.2.1	Lingua franca of Penang. ....	178
5.3.2.2	New lingua franca of Penang. ....	179
5.3.2.3	Surviving languages. ....	180
5.3.2.4	Endangered languages.....	181
5.3.2.5	Dying languages.....	181
5.3.3	Section summary.....	183
5.4	Interpretation of the Linguistic Landscape of Penang .....	184
5.4.1	Official signage in public spaces. ....	185

5.4.2	Multilingual nameboards in public spaces.....	192
5.4.3	Ecology of Chinese-medium primary schools.....	202
5.4.4	Chinese cultural artifacts.....	209
5.4.5	Section summary.....	214
5.5	Chapter Summary.....	217
<b>Chapter 6: Institutional and Community Efforts .....</b>		<b>220</b>
6.0	Introduction .....	220
6.1	Malaysian Federal Government Efforts .....	224
6.1.1	Malaysian Federal Government policy context.....	224
6.1.2	Promotion.....	227
6.1.3	Identity construction.....	229
6.1.4	The education system.....	232
6.1.5	Section summary.....	235
6.2	Penang Government Efforts .....	236
6.2.1	Penang Government policy context.....	236
6.2.2	Public awareness.....	239
6.2.3	Education funding.....	243
6.2.4	Funding/assistance.....	248
6.2.5	Local event publications.....	251
6.2.6	Section summary.....	255
6.3	Community Efforts.....	256
6.3.1	Language learning.....	257
6.3.2	Literacy.....	260
6.3.3	Entertainment.....	263
6.3.4	Religion.....	267
6.3.5	Chinese cuisine.....	269
6.3.6	Culture and heritage.....	272
6.3.7	Public awareness.....	274
6.3.8	Section summary.....	277
6.4	Parents' Efforts.....	278
6.4.1	Children's education.....	279
6.4.2	Parents' attitudes.....	281

6.4.3	Everyday conversation.....	283
6.4.4	Section summary.....	285
6.5	Chapter Summary.....	286
<b>Chapter 7: Insights and Contributions .....</b>		<b>290</b>
7.0	Recap of the Thesis .....	290
7.1	Understanding Chinese Community Language Maintenance in Penang .....	292
7.1.1	Everyday language use. ....	293
7.1.2	Perceptions about Chinese community language maintenance. ....	294
7.1.3	Institutional and community efforts.....	296
7.1.4	Main conclusion of the study.....	298
7.2	Contributions of the Study .....	300
7.3	Closing Comments .....	303
References.....		305
Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet for Interview .....		329
Appendix B: Participant Consent Form.....		331
Appendix C: Participant Profile Questionnaire .....		332
Appendix D: Interview Guide for Official and Community-Based Actors.....		334
Appendix E: Interview Guide for Grassroots Actors.....		336
Appendix F: Information Sheet for Linguistic Landscape Photos Collection.....		338
Appendix G: Letter for Schools.....		339
Appendix H: Article 152 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia.....		341
Appendix I: The National Language Acts of 1963/1967 .....		343
Appendix J: The Local Government Act of 1976.....		346
Appendix K: The Education Act of 1996 .....		349
Appendix L: Codes of Interview Extracts for Chapter 4 .....		352
Appendix M: Codes of Interview Extracts for Chapter 5 .....		353

Appendix N: Codes of Interview Extracts for Chapter 6.....	354
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## **List of Tables**

Table 1. Participant profile for official actors. ....	100
Table 2. Participant profile for community-based actors. ....	101
Table 3. Participant profile for grassroots actors. ....	102
Table 4. Summary of analytical procedures. ....	110
Table 5. Summary of analytical codes. ....	111
Table 6. Guide to Chapter 4. ....	120
Table 7. Guide to Chapter 5. ....	156
Table 8. Guide to Chapter 6. ....	223

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Malaysia. ....	5
Figure 2. Classification of the Chinese community languages in Malaysia under the broad term of ‘Chinese’ (own compilation based on P. Chen (1999) and Norman (1988)). ....	19
Figure 3. The linguistic repertoire of the Chinese in Malaysia.....	24
Figure 4. Analogy of ecology in biology and linguistics (adapted from Garner, 2004, p. 30). ....	61
Figure 5. Penang. ....	80
Figure 6. Analogy of ecology in biology and language ecology of Penang. ....	88
Figure 7. Conceptual framework. ....	92
Figure 8. Study design. ....	95
Figure 9. Three stages in fieldwork. ....	96
Figure 10. Steps taken for validation. ....	113
Figure 11. A photo showing examples of generational names. ....	135
Figure 12. Summary of everyday use of Chinese community languages in Penang. ....	152
Figure 13. Summary of everyday use of Mandarin Chinese in Penang.....	152
Figure 14. A street sign written in Bahasa Melayu and Chinese .....	188
Figure 15. Places of interest displayed in Bahasa Melayu and English.....	188
Figure 16. Chinese community languages (Penang Hokkien and Cantonese) were introduced together with dominant languages on official signage. ....	189
Figure 17. A street name displayed in Chinese, Bahasa Melayu, and English.....	190
Figure 18. A market sign written in Bahasa Melayu, Chinese, and Tamil. ....	191
Figure 19. A nameboard written in Bahasa Melayu and Chinese.....	196
Figure 20. A modern nameboard written in English only. ....	198



Figure 21. A Chinese sundry shop nameboard written in Chinese and English. ....	198
Figure 22. A nameboard written in Chinese and English in a temple. ....	199
Figure 23. Names of delicacies written according to Penang Hokkien and Cantonese pronunciations. ....	200
Figure 24. Bahasa Melayu, English, and Chinese displayed on an electric sign. ....	205
Figure 25. Bahasa Melayu and Chinese posters on notice boards. ....	206
Figure 26. Display of Chinese lanterns at the front of a house. ....	210
Figure 27. Handmade red lanterns. ....	211
Figure 28. A name plank that shows a family's hometown in China. ....	212
Figure 29. Ancestors' portraits hung in a shop. ....	213
Figure 30. Importance of speaking Chinese community languages. ....	217
Figure 31. Participants' predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang. ....	218
Figure 32. A conceptual illustration of the three levels of organisation involved in Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. ....	222
Figure 33. Sample brochure illustrating the project mentioned by Ai Mei in her extract. ....	253
Figure 34. A sample page of Penang Hokkien-English Dictionary by Tan Siew Imm (published in 2016). ....	263
Figure 35. Penang Hokkien movie poster. ....	265
Figure 36. Summary of key findings of the efforts made by different organisations to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang. ....	288

## Translation of Bahasa Melayu Terms and Acronyms

<b>Bahasa Melayu Terms</b>	<b>English Translation</b>	<b>Acronyms</b>
Bahasa Melayu	Malay language	-
Bahasa Malaysia	Language of Malaysia	-
Pulau Pinang	Penang	-
Bumiputera	Sons of the soil	-
Bahasa Jiwa Bangsa	Language is the soul of a nation	-
Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka	The Institute of Language and Literature	DBP
Ketuanan Melayu	Malay supremacy	-
Rukunegara	Articles of Faith of the State	-
Negaraku	My Country	-
Muhibbah	Goodwill between each ethnic community	-
Bangsa Malaysia	Malaysia nation	-
Bahasa Rojak	Salad language	-
Majlis Bahasa Melayu	The Council of the Malay Language	-
Dasar Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris	Policy of ‘Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English’	PPSMI
Dasar Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia dan Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris	Policy of ‘Upholding Bahasa Melayu and Strengthening English’	MBMMBI
Pakatan Harapan	Alliance of Hope	PH
Pakatan Rakyat	People’s Party	PR
Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu	United Malays National Organisation	UMNO

Barisan Nasional	National Front	BN
Gagasan Sejahtera	Ideas of Prosperity	GS
Parti Islam Se-Malaysia	Islamic Party of Malaysia	PAS
Parti Tindakan Demokratik	Democratic Action Party	DAP
Parti Keadilan Rakyat	People's Justice Party	PKR
Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia	Malaysian United Indigenous Party	PPBM
Parti Amanah Negara	National Trust Party	AMANAH
Ahli Majlis Mesyuarat Negeri	Penang State Executive Council	EXCO
Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia	Ministry of Education	MOE
Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi Malaysia	Ministry of Higher Education	MOHE
Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia	Malaysian Certificate of Education	SPM
Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia	Malaysian Higher Education Certificate	STPM
Ringgit Malaysia	Malaysian Ringgit	RM

## Thesis-Related Publications and Presentations

### Publications

#### Peer-Reviewed

##### 2019

Ong, T. W. S. (submitted). A Report on My Reflections of Insider and Outsider Position during Fieldwork in Penang, Malaysia. *Jadavpur Journal of Languages and Linguistics*.

Ong, T. W. S. (submitted). A Language Maintenance Project in Malaysia: Efforts to Use Chinese Community Languages in Everyday Life. *TEANGA, the Journal of the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics Volume 26*.

Ong, T. W. S. (submitted). Maintaining Languages in Malaysia: Perceptions on Speaking Chinese Dialects. *World Report of Languages 2019*.

Ong, T. W. S. (submitted). The Role of Human Agents for Language Maintenance of a Chinese Community in Malaysia. *Concentric: Studies in Linguistics*.

#### Other Publications

Ong, T. W. S. (in press). Languages of the World: Penang Hokkien. *Babel: The Language Magazine*.

### Presentations

#### Peer-Reviewed Conferences

##### 2018

*“The Contestation of Languages in the Linguistic Landscape of Penang, Malaysia: Past and Present”*

Paper presented at the ‘2018 University of Queensland and Griffith University Postgraduate Research Community Conference’, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia, September 15-16.

*“Language Policy Issues in the Linguistic Landscape of Penang, Malaysia: Top-Down Signs vs Bottom-Up Signs”*

Paper presented with Ben Said, S. at the ‘Sociolinguistics Symposium 22’, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand, June 27 – 30.

*“Language Maintenance Efforts of the Chinese Community Languages in Penang, Malaysia”*

Paper presented at the ‘Sociolinguistics Symposium 22’, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand, June 27 – 30.

*“An Investigation of Daily Language Use within the Chinese Community in Malaysia”*

Paper presented with Ben Said, S. at the ‘28<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society’, Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, Kaohsiung, Taiwan, May 17 – 19.

## **2017**

*“Do Chinese-Medium Schools Support the Maintenance of Chinese Heritage Languages? A Case Study in Malaysia”*

Paper presented at the ‘2017 Education and Professional Studies Higher Degree Research Student Conference’, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, November 2.

*“Language Maintenance of Chinese Community Languages in Penang, Malaysia: Preliminary Analysis from Interview Transcripts”*

Paper presented at the ‘Griffith’s 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Cultural Research Postgraduate Symposium’, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, October 20.

*“Language Maintenance of Chinese Minority Languages in Penang, Malaysia: Preliminary Analysis from Fieldnotes”*

Paper presented at the ‘16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Minority Languages and 34<sup>th</sup> Summer School of Applied Language Studies’, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä and Närpes, Finland, August 28 – 30.

## **Other Talks**

## **2018**

*“Saving Community Languages in Malaysia!”*

Paper presented at the ‘Three Minute Thesis Heats Competition’, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, July 31.

## **2017**

*“Language Maintenance in Malaysia: A Case Study of the Chinese Community in Penang”*

Paper presented at the ‘Emerging Scholars Day #2 2017 – Mid-Candidature Seminar’, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, April 11.

## **2016**

*“Minority Language Maintenance in Malaysia: An Examination of the Penang Chinese Community”*

Paper presented at the ‘Emerging Scholars Day #2 2016 – PhD Confirmation Seminar’, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, June 6.

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Teresa Ong Wai See  
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# Chapter 1

## Introduction to the Study

### 1.0 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the relationship between national language policy and language maintenance pertaining to Chinese community languages<sup>1</sup> in Malaysia. It explores the extent to which the Chinese ethnolinguistic group, the second largest in Malaysia, maintains its language use in public and private spaces in Penang. This study is inspired by the personal experience of intergenerational communication difficulties in my own family, resulting from broader language policies designed to encourage a shift from community languages to dominant languages.

Like the rest of Malaysia, Penang is culturally and linguistically highly diverse. The long-standing presence of the Chinese in Penang has contributed to a language ecology that gives Penang its unique character. While several varieties of Chinese are spoken in Penang, Mandarin Chinese is increasingly becoming the dominant variety, largely because of its heavy official promotion in Chinese-medium schools. This situation is of sociolinguistic interest because it raises the question of whether the dominance of Mandarin Chinese in the country's Chinese-medium education and public life overshadows the use of Chinese community languages in everyday life. It further poses questions about the policies in place to maintain the use of Chinese community languages in Penang, and the extent to which these policies are actively supported by the Chinese community. This study examines the official planning efforts

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'community languages', which will be used throughout this thesis, is defined as "immigrant languages used...to emphasise the legitimacy of their continuing existence" (Clyne, 1991a, p. 215). It is adopted in preference to other terms, such as 'mother tongues' or 'ethnic/minority/immigrant languages'.

in place related to Chinese community language maintenance in Penang and evaluates local community support of such efforts. To capture a holistic picture of the relationship between national language policy and maintenance of Chinese community languages in Penang, I use an ecological framework that draws together a triad of key components: language use, language perceptions, and language planning and policy.

In this chapter, I begin by briefly describing the language situation in my own family, which served to motivate the study (Section 1.1). To help provide a broader understanding of the national context of this study, I then outline the sociolinguistic background of Malaysia (Section 1.2), its pre-independence history and colonial policy (Section 1.2.1), post-independence policy (Section 1.2.2), the history of Chinese settlement in Malaysia (Section 1.3), the development of Chinese-medium education (Section 1.3.1), and the impact of language policy on the Chinese community and Chinese-medium education (Section 1.3.2). To ensure the reader has a comprehensive picture of the present-day language situation, I summarise the linguistic repertoire of the Malaysian-Chinese community (Section 1.3.3). The chapter continues by providing the reader with an understanding of the history of Chinese settlement in Penang (Section 1.4) and a description of the sociolinguistic profile of Penang and its state legislative assembly (Section 1.4.1). Finally, I describe the research problem (Section 1.5) and conclude the chapter by outlining the content of the thesis (Section 1.6).

## **1.1 Motivation for the Study**

When I was young, my home environment was filled with the sounds of different varieties of Chinese. I was cared for by my maternal grandmother who always spoke to me in Penang Hokkien. When my maternal grandfather came home after work, he spoke to me in



Hokkien<sup>2</sup> with a strong Fujian accent, because he came from Nan'an (a city in the southern Fujian province of China). Whenever my paternal grandmother visited, she spoke to me in Cantonese. I spoke with my mother in Penang Hokkien, while my father and I used Cantonese. When my aunts and uncles visited, the house would immediately turn into a 'market environment' because everyone would speak a mix of different languages: Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, English, Bahasa Melayu (Malay language), and Mandarin Chinese. In school, I communicated with my friends and teachers using English and Bahasa Melayu.

I grew up in a multilingual social environment where I always spoke Chinese community languages at home but switched to English and Bahasa Melayu at school. My parents had a similar experience. When they were children, they spoke either Penang Hokkien or Cantonese at home with their parents (my grandparents) and switched to speaking English with their teachers at school. This everyday multilingual communication between the three generations of our family was never considered unusual, and I assumed the multilingual mix would continue for the younger generation in my family.

However, my observation of the present linguistic situation in my family is entirely different. As is the case for many Chinese families in Malaysia, members of the younger generation do not communicate much with their grandparents due to language barriers that are the result of language shift. Born in the 21st century, my nieces and nephews face communication problems when interacting with my grandparents. This situation has developed because my cousins, like most Chinese parents in Malaysia who acknowledge the economic value of Mandarin Chinese, send their children to Chinese-medium schools to receive a Chinese-medium education. To ensure their children keep up with the standard of Mandarin Chinese at school, my cousins speak Mandarin Chinese with their children at home. As a result,

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<sup>2</sup> My grandfather's Hokkien is similar to the Hokkien vocabulary and pronunciation used in Nan'an, China.

my nieces and nephews lack the opportunity to learn Penang Hokkien and Cantonese, which are the languages spoken by my grandparents (they do not know Mandarin Chinese or English). Pondering this linguistic dynamic in my family led to my interest in investigating the current situation of Chinese community languages in my hometown of Penang. Through this study, I hope to promote awareness about the importance of maintaining these languages in the Malaysian-Chinese community.

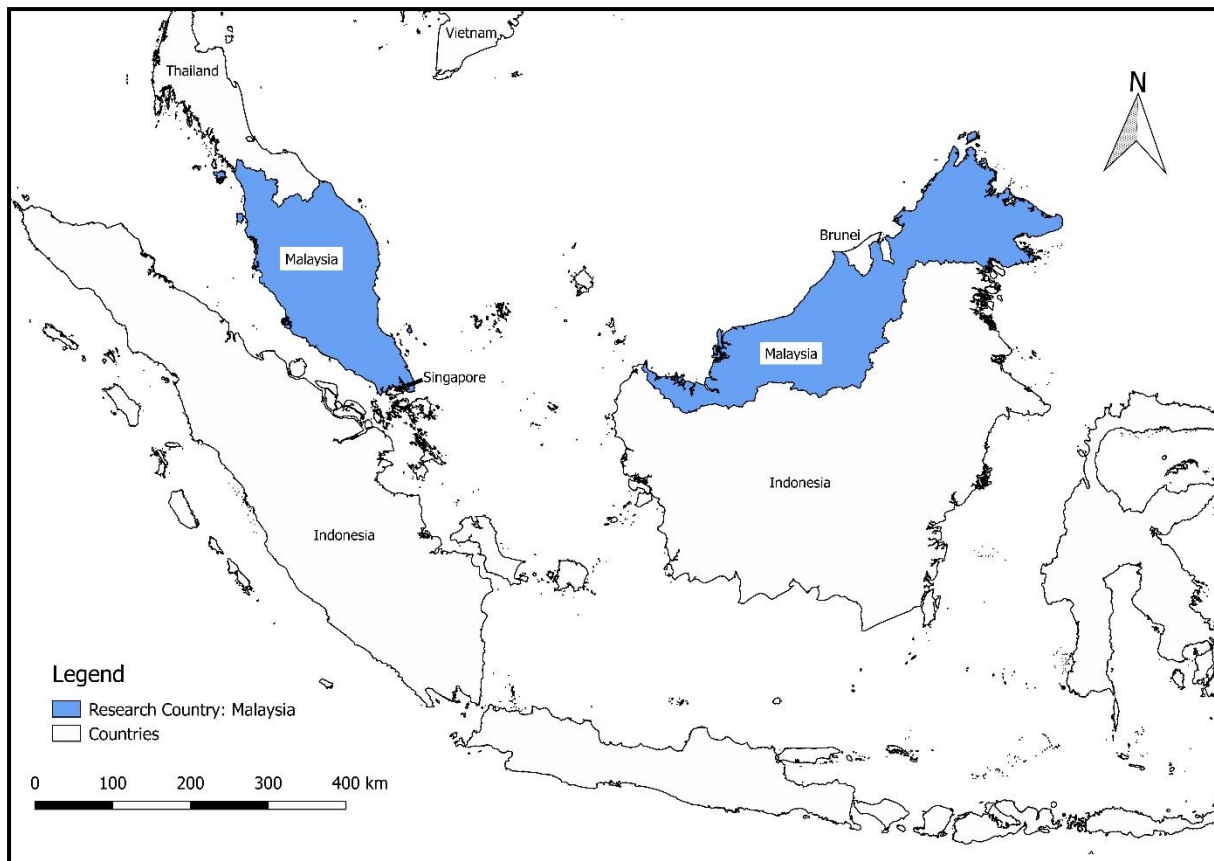
## **1.2 The Sociolinguistic Background of Malaysia**

To situate my research within its historical context, I will briefly describe the sociolinguistic situation of Malaysia. A multilingual, multiethnic, and multiracial country with a population of 32.6 million people (Department of Statistics, 2018a), Malaysia is located in Southeast Asia. It consists of Peninsular Malaysia (formerly known as Malaya before independence in 1957) and the states of Sabah and Sarawak (see Figure 1).

According to the Department of Statistics (2018a), the population of Malaysia is comprised of three main ethnic groups: Malays, Indigenous people, and natives of Sabah and Sarawak (known locally as the *Bumiputera*)<sup>3</sup> (69.1%); Chinese (23%); and Indians (6.9%), with other ethnic groups forming the remaining 1%. The official religion of Malaysia is Islam (Department of Statistics, 2018b), but other religious denominations include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and traditional Chinese religions. Regarding the languages spoken in Malaysia, there are a total 136 languages, 134 of which remain in use and two are extinct (Simons & Fennig, 2018). Of the 134 living languages, 112 are indigenous and 22 are non-indigenous (Simons & Fennig, 2018).

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<sup>3</sup> The term ‘Bumiputera’ (translated as ‘sons of the soil’) refers to the “original inhabitants of Malaysia” (Coluzzi, 2017, p. 18).



*Figure 1. Malaysia.*<sup>4</sup>

### **1.2.1 Pre-independence history and colonial policy.**

Present-day Malaysia is considered “ethnolinguistically dynamic” (Albury & Aye, 2016, p. 71), as many ethnic communities live together, practising their traditions and cultures while speaking diverse languages. The integration of ethnicities, languages, and religions in Peninsular Malaysia and the states of Sabah and Sarawak is a result of Malaysia’s history of labour migration, in which Chinese and Indian migrants assimilated with local Malays.

Malaya<sup>5</sup> was colonised by the British in 1771 when they sought to develop trade relations in Penang. Consequently, the Malay rulers were pushed “to the periphery” (Ooi, 2003,

<sup>4</sup> Source: Generated by Kretzer, M. M. (2018), using Global Administrative Areas (GADM).

<sup>5</sup> Before independence, Malaysia was known as Federation of Malaya. In 1963, Sarawak, Sabah, and Singapore (left after two years later) joined the federation. Subsequently, Federation of Malaya was changed to Malaysia.

p. 16) and the real power lay in the hands of the British. A central characteristic of British rule was “fragmentation of Malaysian society along ethnic and socioeconomic lines” (Albury, 2018a, p. 2). The British regarded the Malays as “lazy, unwilling to work for wages” (Andaya & Andaya, 2016, p. 182) and not useful in building the colonial economy. Therefore, they looked to Chinese and Indian migrants to work as labourers. Having already colonised India,<sup>6</sup> the British considered Indian migrants more adaptable to British rule and the Chinese more skilled and entrepreneurial. They encouraged a system where each ethnic group had its own ‘space’ and worked in separate economic sectors, which largely prevented the different ethnic groups socialising with each other (Asmah, 2007).

The Chinese migrants were initially labourers in tin mines; however, they worked hard and became urbanised in Chinese-dominated mining areas that developed into new towns. Andaya and Andaya (2016, p. 146) reason that “the Chinese who came to the Malay world were intent on one thing: to escape the life of grinding poverty they had known at home”. The Chinese learnt to trade and eventually became the economic engine of Malaya. Consequently, they enjoyed greater socioeconomic mobility than the Malays and Indians. Meanwhile, the Malays remained as fishermen and farmers in rural areas with little access to education, which left them socioeconomically marginalised. The British, who previously worked in Ceylon,<sup>7</sup> recruited Indian migrants from the Tamil areas in southern India because they were “considered more accustomed to British rule, more amenable to discipline than the Chinese, and more willing to work for wages than were Malays” (Andaya & Andaya, 2016, p. 186). These Indian migrants were placed in rubber plantations and had less opportunity to venture beyond their boundaries.

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<sup>6</sup> The British involvement in India commenced in the early 18th century.

<sup>7</sup> Ceylon was a former British colony. It adopted the current name, Sri Lanka, in 1972.

Thus, the British successfully implemented a divide-and-rule system (Asmah, 2007), resulting in a new economic society structured according to ethnic groups and professions. This system of ethnic segregation affected the country's language and education policies (Gabriel, 2015). Under British rule, English became the official language of Malaya. As such, English was used in government administration and education among the local elites, who were the wealthy Malays, Chinese tin miners and businessmen, and Indian merchants. Bahasa Melayu (translated as the 'Malay language')<sup>8</sup> remained the lingua franca in Malaya because it was the language of trade for Malaya, Indonesia, Singapore, and Brunei (Ostler, 2005). The Chinese and Indian migrants continued to use their community languages in everyday life. The former spoke Chinese languages, including Hokkien,<sup>9</sup> Cantonese, Hakka, Hainan, Teochew, Fuzhou, Puxian Min, and Taishan, while the latter spoke Indian languages, Tamil and Malayalam. As a result of this entrenched segregation, four different types of schools emerged based on their language of instruction: English-medium schools, Bahasa Melayu-medium schools, Mandarin Chinese-medium schools, and Tamil-medium schools.

By the end of the colonial period, Malaya had developed into a racially segregated society that was deeply divided along ethnic, religious, and cultural lines—a situation that “provided no natural basis for national integration” (Chai, 1977, p. 5). Language has been, and remains, a key marker of ethnic identity and as, I show in the following section, it has been an ongoing quest of successive governments to construct a basis for national unity and integration.

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<sup>8</sup> In 1969, the Malaysian Federal Government renamed 'Bahasa Melayu' (translated as 'Malay language') as 'Bahasa Malaysia' (translated as the 'language of Malaysia') with the intention of building national identity across all ethnic groups (Asmah, 1992; Hashim, 2009). On 25 June 2015, the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* chairman stated that a proposal was submitted to the Malaysian Federal Government to revert 'Bahasa Malaysia' to 'Bahasa Melayu' (KiniTV, 2015). At present, Bahasa Melayu is used in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia and the official website of DBP. In this thesis, Bahasa Melayu will be used throughout.

<sup>9</sup> The Hokkien spoken by the Chinese immigrants when they first arrived in Penang was similar to the Hokkien spoken in the southern Fujian province in China.

### **1.2.2 Nation-building and post-independence language policy.**

After the colonial period, the various communities' preferred choice of language and medium of instruction in schools remained largely the same. Even though contemporary Malaysia has developed into a multiethnic and multilingual country, prior to independence, colonial language and education policies did nothing to help the nation integrate and establish a national identity. Gill (2014, p. 1) describes the situation as a direct result of the “exigencies of history”. Hence, after independence in 1957, Malaysia focused strongly on the area of education; a strategy driven by the “political agendas of nation-building, national identity, and unity” (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004, p. viii). One principal nation-building instrument is language policy (Gill, 2004), and the twists and turns in Malaysia's language policy can be seen to reflect the tension between forces of globalisation and power struggles between ethnic groups, compounded by the desire to construct a common, unifying national identity.

In the former colonial system, most urban schools were English-medium in instruction. These schools provided opportunities for further education, employment in the civil service, and access to scholarships at local and overseas universities. As these schools were in urban areas where non-Malays formed the majority of the population, those who attended were mainly Chinese children along with the children of some wealthy Malay families. Consequently, English became the language of economic opportunity and academic achievement for the ethnolinguistic groups living in urban areas, and most Malays, who were located in rural areas, were overlooked in this period of economic growth. Asmah (1987a, p. 63) describes the resulting situation as “an identification of a racial group with a particular type of vocation or industry, and hence its identification with wealth or poverty”. This division led to a high degree of frustration among the Malays, who felt that political and economic power was concentrated in the hands of those who spoke the more favoured language of English

(Kelman, 1971); that is, the predominantly Chinese, Indian, and wealthy Malay residents in urban areas.

To solve this imbalance, at independence in 1957, the leaders of major ethnic groups decided to accept Bahasa Melayu as the national language of Malaysia, a decision that was enacted in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia (see Appendix H). The intended purpose was to reduce the role and status of English and suppress its value, which advantaged the non-Malays (Albury & Aye, 2016; Noor & Leong, 2013). It was thought that this policy would also lead to greater social and professional mobility (Gill, 2005).

There were several reasons why Bahasa Melayu was chosen as the national language. First, Bahasa Melayu was the language spoken by the Malays and indigenous people who form the majority of Malaysia's population. Second, it has always been the language of communication between different language groups in the Straits of Malacca, including the coasts of Peninsular Malaysia, the eastern coast of Sumatra (Indonesia), and the western coast of Sarawak and Kalimantan (Borneo). Third, Bahasa Melayu has been used for centuries as a trading language among the kingdoms in the Malay Archipelago (Asmah, 1987b). In strengthening its role as the national language, the Malaysian Federal Government articulated slogans with strong messages, such as *Bahasa Jiwa Bangsa* (translated as 'language is the soul of a nation'). To ensure the development of Bahasa Melayu, the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* (translated as the 'Institute of Language and Literature') was established as a statutory body to carry out activities related to language enrichment, literary promotion, and publications of books in Bahasa Melayu (Hassan, 1988). When the government established Bahasa Melayu as Malaysia's national language and a symbol of national unity, there was little resistance from the Chinese and Indians because they had been offered citizenship as a compensatory "bargaining tool" (Gill, 2005, p. 246). Non-Malays could apply for citizenship if they were residents, had a record of good conduct, and spoke Bahasa Melayu (Asmah, 1979; Azirah,

2009). As Asmah (1979, p. 11) explains, “the institution of Bahasa Melayu as the national and official language ... was a barter for the acquisition and equality of citizenship for the non-Malays”.

The national language question was a crucial aspect of nation-building. However, Article 152 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia did not explicitly name Bahasa Melayu as the official language of Malaysia and thus, English continued its role as the official language. This situation caused uneasiness among Malay advocates. Hence, on 3 March 1967, the Malaysian Federal Government passed the National Language Acts of 1963/1967 (see Appendix I) to institute Bahasa Melayu as Malaysia’s national and official language, as well as establishing it as the language of education and administration to provide better educational and economic opportunities for the Malays. Besides Bahasa Melayu becoming the country’s national and official language, the government policy was structured in a way that the Malay (and therefore Muslim) people were given more privileges (Albury, 2018b) than the Chinese and Indians in education and employment opportunities in government departments (David & Govindasamy, 2005). These privileges extended to customary land rights (Ting & Mahadhir, 2009), which were instituted in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia and promoted as the concept of *Ketuanan Melayu* (translated as ‘Malay supremacy’). Because such an imbalanced government policy favoured the Malays, it was viewed as “having a racial bias” (Ting & Mahadhir, 2009, p. 113).

In 1969, the Malaysian Federal Government held its third general election, which was “fought on the highly emotional issues of education and language ... as each ethnic group sought to preserve its interests against the encroachment of others” (Andaya & Andaya, 2016, p. 302). The election did not provide a solution to the prominent racial issues. Instead, tensions between the Malays and Chinese continued and erupted in racial riots on 13 May 1969. The government declared a state of emergency under Article 150 of the Federal Constitution of



Malaysia, accompanied by curfews throughout the country. This date became a black mark in Malaysia's otherwise tolerant history, which Andaya and Andaya (2016, p. 303) describe as "bloody fighting, arson and looting" over four days. As a consequence, the Chinese suffered heavy losses, including the loss of life.

Following the riots, the Malaysia Federal Government took steps to address racial tensions (Andaya & Andaya, 1982; 2016). First, the use of Bahasa Melayu as Malaysia's national and official language was widely implemented in the government sector, including Parliament and the law courts. The Malays took this approach as a matter of ethnic pride, as one of their cultural aspects was accepted by other ethnic communities. Second, to compromise with the non-Malays, the National Language Acts of 1963/1967 guaranteed the teaching and learning of any languages besides Bahasa Melayu, which accommodated the ongoing use of all other community languages. The Chinese regarded this action as a means of safeguarding Chinese culture within their community. Further, on 31 August 1970, the new ideology, *Rukunegara* (translated as 'Articles of Faith of the State'), was introduced to foster unity among all ethnic communities. The *Rukunegara* has five principles—(1) belief in God, (2) loyalty to King and country, (3) the supremacy of the constitution, (4) the rule of law, and (5) courtesy and morality—and is recited at all official functions and in schools after the national anthem, *Negaraku* (translated as 'My Country'). Finally, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was implemented in 1971, which lasted for twenty years. Its aim was to solve the ethnic economic imbalances and increase Malays' participation in the economic system by creating more job opportunities in the cities for them. For the Malaysian Federal Government to achieve success with the steps taken, they passed the Constitution (Amendment) Act of 1971, which prohibited "the questioning of any provision in Article 152 and makes it seditious, punishable under

Sedition Act 1948” (Nik, 1981, p. 296).<sup>10</sup> This Act provided safeguards for Bahasa Melayu as Malaysia’s national and official language, Islam as the national religion, the rulers’ sovereignty, and Malays’ privileges and special status. Thereafter, there was an understanding between the Malays and non-Malays that public discussion of sensitive racial issues and the Malays’ privileges must be avoided (R. L. M. Lee, 1986). In addition, the term *muhibbah* (translated as ‘goodwill between each ethnic community’) became a well-known phrase used by the post-1969 Malaysian Federal Government (Andaya & Andaya, 1982).

After the 1969 riots, the national language policy was implemented in a strict manner, resulting in public universities being forced to use Bahasa Melayu as the medium of instruction. English remained the official language for ten years after independence and continues to date to be the country’s second unofficial language. In national schools, the medium of instruction gradually switched to Bahasa Melayu, and English became a compulsory subject for students to study, but not necessarily to pass (Asmah, 1997). However, the Malays became increasingly frustrated at the slow progress of the adoption of their national and official language, particularly in the field of higher education. It took 18 years for the medium of instruction in all subjects at public universities to transition from English to Bahasa Melayu (Gill, 2004), with the transition from a bilingual to monolingual system achieved in 1983. As for the Chinese and Indian communities, their community language-medium education<sup>11</sup>—that is, instruction in Mandarin Chinese and Tamil—remained in the national education system. In consolidating the implementation of the national language policy, the fourth and now seventh Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, introduced the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* (translated as ‘Malaysia nation’), which was defined as “an inclusive national identity for all

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<sup>10</sup> The Sedition Act 1948 states that “a seditious tendency is a tendency to question any matter, right, status, position, privilege, sovereignty or prerogative established or protected by the provisions of Part III of the Federal Constitution or Article 152, 153 or 181 of the Federal Constitution”. As these articles relate to the rights of Malays and other indigenous peoples, it can be understood as a form of legislation against racial vilification.

<sup>11</sup> Chinese-medium education will be discussed in-depth in Section 1.3.1.

inhabitants of Malaysia ... of all colours and creeds ... being able to identify themselves with the country by speaking Bahasa Melayu and accepting the Constitution” (Mohamad, 1991, pp. 2-3). Together with his economic and social initiatives, the concept was an endorsement by Mahathir to unite Malaysians and build a national identity, which subsequently drew support from the non-Malays, in particular the Chinese (Gomez, 2009).

Despite the efforts to establish Bahasa Melayu in the Malaysian national education system, 2003 saw another dramatic change in language policy. After 40 years of modernising and promoting Bahasa Melayu, and legally enforcing it as the language of education and administration, Mahathir announced that Science and Mathematics would again be taught in English, starting with (primary) standard one, (lower secondary) form one, and (upper secondary) form six (lower) (Gill, 2014).<sup>12</sup> This change was implemented through the policy of ‘Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English’ (PPSMI) (Yang & Md. Sidin, 2012). Thus, English once again took a dominant role as the language of instruction in the fields of science and technology. This major change of direction was justified as a response to the influence of globalisation, the need to build human resource capability, and the need to develop a knowledge-based economy. Although the *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* was actively involved with translations into Bahasa Melayu, progress was slow because the institute could not keep up with English, especially in the field of scientific publications. Faced with international economic competition and the challenges of globalisation, Malaysia reintroduced English as the language of instruction. This decision conveyed the clear message that English

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<sup>12</sup> The Malaysian national education system (as stated in the 1996 Education Act, Part IV) (see Appendix K) comprises five levels: pre-school, primary, secondary, post-secondary and higher education. The primary level consists of six years of primary education (standard one to standard six), while the secondary level consists of six years of secondary education, divided into lower secondary (form one to form three) and upper secondary (form four to form six (lower and upper)). Post-secondary level includes upper secondary education and college.

was essential for building a knowledge-driven nation. Yet, at the same time, there was pressure to ensure a place for Bahasa Melayu in the linguistic ecology of Malaysia.

After six decades of independence, Malaysia still faced challenges in achieving national unity. Hence, in 2009, the sixth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, introduced the policy of *1Malaysia*, with the tagline of “1Malaysia, People First, Performance Now” (Chin, 2010, p. 166). The policy’s philosophy was to promote and celebrate harmony, unity, and integration among different ethnic groups under one existing “roof” (Khalid, 2011, p. 432), rather than the preferential policy that favoured the Malays’ needs (Chin, 2010). To the non-Malays, the policy reflected “political equality, inclusiveness, and an end to institutional racism” (Chin, 2010, p. 166). Aiming to dilute *Ketuanan Melayu*, Najib announced that government scholarships at the tertiary level would be awarded on the basis of merit rather than racial quotas. Najib further reached out to the Chinese community by attending a dinner organised by a Chinese-medium school. Development projects in the areas of energy, real estate, tourism, and agribusiness were established under the 1Malaysia Development Berhad, a government-owned firm. In 2010, medical clinics were introduced to provide basic medical services at RM1<sup>13</sup> for Malaysians and RM15 for non-Malaysians. Later in 2011, 1Malaysia grocery shops were set up to help lower-income groups with cheaper groceries and lighten their living expenses. However, the 1Malaysia policy was not effective, because the rights and privileges of the Malays remained in place (“Najib Assures Bumis”, 2009). The cost of living increased due to the introduction of a 6% goods and services tax (GST) and the reduction of fuel subsidies (Chin, 2014). 1Malaysia grocery shops were also found to be selling groceries at higher prices than other grocery stores. Consequently, the situation became a burden for lower-income groups.

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<sup>13</sup> RM is Ringgit Malaysia, the currency of Malaysia dollar.

While the 1Malaysia policy's aim was to promote equality and end racism, the issue of the national and official language continued to create unrest. Mahathir's policy of the reintroduction of English as a medium of instruction for Science and Mathematics was designed to build a knowledge-based nation that would "succeed, to be able to stand tall, and to be respected by the rest of the world" (Gill, 2014, personal communication with Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, 16 June 2005). However, pressure was applied from Bahasa Melayu advocates who were concerned about the loss of Bahasa Melayu and its role as a marker of cultural identity. Moreover, the national examination results for Science and Mathematics were poor, especially in rural areas with a predominantly Malay population. Chinese educationalists, namely the United Chinese School Committees' Association (UCSCA / *Dong Zong*) and the United Chinese School Teachers' Association (UCSTA / *Jiao Zong*),<sup>14</sup> also strongly opposed Mahathir's PPSMI policy. They argued it would not improve the overall performance of English in Malaysia; rather, it would erode the performance of Mandarin Chinese in Chinese-medium schools. To address the Bahasa Melayu advocates' concern and protect the sovereignty of Bahasa Melayu—the country's sole national and official language, as instituted in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia—the Malaysian Federal Government decided to revert to Bahasa Melayu for Science and Mathematics classes, while placing more emphasis on learning English. In 2009, they announced the abolition of the PPSMI policy and implemented a new policy of 'Upholding Bahasa Melayu and Strengthening English' (MBMMBI) (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2014). With this new policy, extra hours were allocated to learn Bahasa Melayu and English in schools. English became a subject that must be passed for the *Sijil*

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<sup>14</sup> Both associations were established in the early 1950s (Raman & Tan, 2015). Their role lies in coordinating the curriculum used in Chinese-medium schools and organising the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) exam.

*Pelajaran Malaysia* (translated as the ‘Malaysian Certificate of Education’)<sup>15</sup> national examination, in an effort to ensure students mastered both languages.

On 9 May 2018, Malaysia held its 14th general election. This date became significant in Malaysia’s history because it was the first time the opposition party won. As Malaysia is presently under the control of the new federal government, the policy of 1Malaysia and the schemes introduced by the previous federal government have been abolished. Further, because Mahathir is keen to ensure the nation attains a good command of English and protect the status of Bahasa Melayu as instituted in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, the teaching of Science and Mathematics is currently bilingual, and students can choose their preferred language in national examinations. To further promote Bahasa Melayu as Malaysia’s national and official language in the ASEAN region and beyond (Sukaimi, 2018), the Ministry of Education announced the establishment of the *Majlis Bahasa Melayu* (translated as the ‘Council of the Malay Language’), to adopt this role.

Thus, in Malaysia, language is closely bound with ethnic identity. The Malays —the dominant ethnic group in Malaysia—are anxious about how English will impact on their cultural and linguistic identity, even though Bahasa Melayu is established as the country’s sole national and official language, and their rights and privileges are enshrined in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. Conversely, in addition to learning Mandarin Chinese and Tamil in schools, the minority ethnic groups—the Chinese and the Indians—hope for more opportunities to learn and use English, a language that will facilitate their entry into the world of globalisation and internationalisation and provide an advantage in global scientific, technological, economic, and cultural development (Graddol, 1997).

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<sup>15</sup> The SPM national examination is taken by secondary five students before they enter secondary six or pre-university programmes.

### 1.3 The History of Chinese Settlement in Malaysia

This section provides a brief overview of Chinese settlement in Malaysia, the development of Chinese-medium education, and the impact of the language policy on the Chinese community and Chinese-medium education. It concludes with a summary of the hierarchy of languages used by the Chinese community in Malaysia.

The earliest Chinese settlement in Malaysia can be traced back to the 15th century in Malacca, which was a strategic trading port for the exchange of products from China, India, and other islands in Southeast Asia. Malacca attracted many Chinese traders who eventually settled in Malaysia to continue their business. Many of these Chinese traders were Hokkiens from Zhang Zhou (a city in Fujian Province, China) (Yen, 1993). They married local Malay women and formed the basis of the Peranakan culture (L. E. Tan, 2000).<sup>16</sup> Peranakans spoke a variety of Hokkien,<sup>17</sup> heavily influenced by Bahasa Melayu.

There were three patterns of Chinese settlement from the end of the 18th century to the early 20th century (Yen, 2000): (1) Urban port settlement, (2) Mining settlement, and (3) Rural agricultural settlement. Urban port settlement started in Malacca and grew rapidly after Sir Francis Light founded Penang in 1786. The British free-trading policy attracted many traders from Southeast Asia and China to Malaya. The urban port settlement provided opportunities for traders to interact with Europeans and non-Chinese residents and expand their commercial activities (Turnbull, 1972). Mining settlement began in the gold-mining centre in Sarawak during the 19th century. Gradually, Chinese immigrants opened up tin mines in Negeri Sembilan, Perak, and Selangor. Tin-mining settlements were often difficult to access due to

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<sup>16</sup> The Peranakans are descendants of Chinese immigrants (men are known as Baba) who married local Malay women (women are called Nyonya) and speak a variety of Hokkien that has a heavy influence of Bahasa Melayu (L. E. Tan, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> The Hokkien spoken in Malacca differed from that spoken in Penang. Therefore, I use the term 'Hokkien' instead of 'Penang Hokkien'.

their remote locations, and they became close knit communities. Rural agricultural settlement developed in response to the cash crop industry during the mid-19th century, with pepper and gambier plantations developed in Johor. These rural agricultural settlements were also close knit and their leaders enjoyed power over the community due to their responsibility for job recruitment in China (Lau, 1979).

These three patterns of settlement brought immigrants from different Chinese provinces, mainly Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, Guangxi, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang, and each came with their own variety of the Chinese language<sup>18</sup> (henceforth referred to in this thesis as ‘Chinese community languages’)<sup>19</sup>, namely Hokkien,<sup>20</sup> Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew, Hainan, Fuzhou, Taishan, and Puxian Min (C. B. Tan, 2000). In this thesis, the Chinese language varieties are referred to as ‘languages’ and not as ‘dialects’ because they are “not a single language but a family of languages made up of a variety of mutually unintelligible languages” (Bloomfield, 1933, p. 44).<sup>21</sup> Figure 2 shows how the examined Chinese community languages are derived from different language families grouped under the broad term of ‘Chinese’.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> When the Chinese first arrived in Malaya, they brought along their community languages. Mandarin Chinese was not brought as a traditional community language but was introduced later when it became the medium of instruction in Chinese-medium schools.

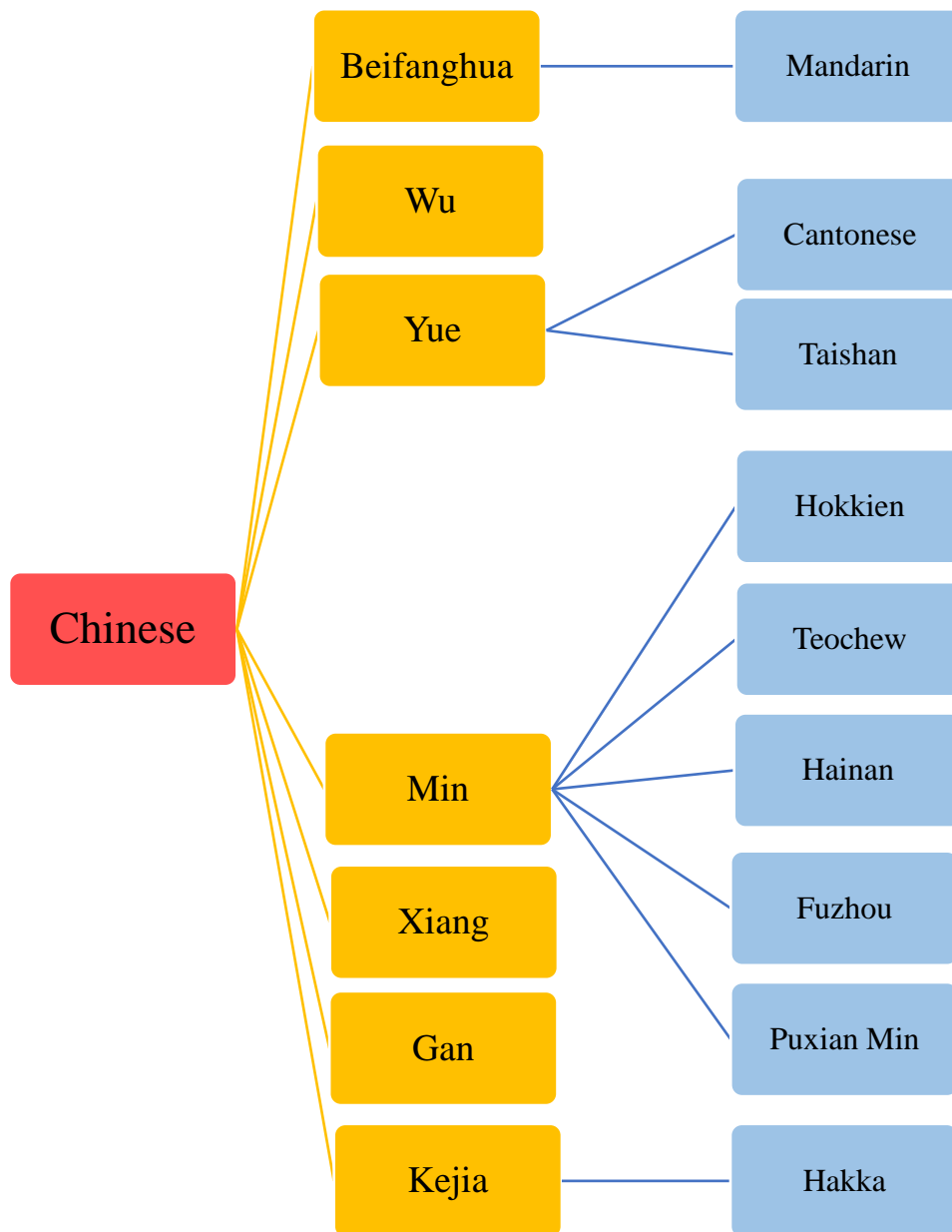
<sup>19</sup> Refer footnote no. 1 for the definition of community languages.

<sup>20</sup> The Hokkien spoken in the southern Fujian province in China differed from the Hokkien spoken in Penang because the one spoken in Penang was formed after the Chinese immigrants settled in Penang. Due to its distinctive accent and incorporation of Bahasa Melayu vocabulary, it is known as Penang Hokkien.

<sup>21</sup> As DeFrancis (1984) explains, the term ‘dialects’ is applied to mutually intelligible forms of speech while ‘languages’ is used for mutually unintelligible forms.

<sup>22</sup> The Chinese community languages in Malaysia are classified into seven major language families, which are mainly differentiated on phonological features, and to a lesser extent in terms of grammar and lexis.





*Figure 2.* Classification of the Chinese community languages in Malaysia under the broad term of ‘Chinese’ (own compilation based on P. Chen (1999) and Norman (1988)).

The Chinese writing system has two canonical forms: traditional and simplified. Both forms can be read according to the pronunciation of various Chinese community languages. In Malaysia, due to different phonological features, Chinese immigrants faced inter-group communication difficulties, and this was one reason why they could not understand each

other's language. They formed clan associations,<sup>23</sup> as I will discuss in some more detail shortly. These clan associations reinforced the distinctions between the community languages.

### **1.3.1 The development of Chinese-medium education.**

During the period of British colonisation, Chinese-medium education was established in Malaya, largely because the British did not take responsibility for educational facilities for immigrants. The Chinese and Indian communities were left to rely on their own initiative to educate their children, especially in their own language and culture (L. E. Tan, 2000). As a result, Chinese immigrants raised their own funds and started *sishu*,<sup>24</sup> which were small schools set up by a clan or a village committee to teach about 20 or 30 students traditional subjects such as Confucian classics (L. E. Tan, 1997, 2000). These schools used Hokkien,<sup>25</sup> Cantonese, Hakka, or Teochew as the main medium of instruction (J. Y. Y. Tan, 2015).

The early 20th century (the 1920s) saw the rise of Chinese-medium education in Malaya with the spread of modern Chinese-medium schools across major cities (Mak, 1985). These schools were still dependent on private funding but adopted a similar curriculum to their counterparts in China (Yen, 1992). Gradually, the Chinese-medium schools spread to smaller urban centres, villages, and rural areas due to the increased number of Chinese children born after the Chinese population started to permanently settle in Malaya (L. E. Tan, 2000). The Chinese immigrants had a strong commitment to educating their children in their own language and culture, and encouraged the growth of Chinese-medium schools and attachment to Chinese-medium education (Yung, 1967).

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<sup>23</sup> Clan association in this context refers to a Chinese ethnolinguistic group, such as Hokkien or Cantonese, forming their own association to stay united (Yen, 1981). Usually, they originated from the same village or province in China and spoke the same language.

<sup>24</sup> In 1819, the first *sishu* was set up in Penang (X. M. Wang, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> Refer footnote no. 9 for the Hokkien spoken during the early days.

The Japanese invasion of Malaya in World War II brought a temporary halt to the growth of Chinese-medium schools, but after the war the schools were reopened. The post-war era was a turning point for Chinese-medium schools in Malaya. The British tried to force their closure or convert them to English-medium schools, which resulted in a social movement intent on saving Chinese-medium education. In 1951, Chinese educationalists produced new textbooks based on a Malaya-centred curriculum to replace textbooks imported from China. By 1957, Chinese-medium primary schools were accepted into the national education system,<sup>26</sup> where they were classified as national-type schools (partially government funded),<sup>27</sup> as they are known in Malaysia, and Mandarin Chinese instituted as the main medium of instruction. However, the status of Chinese-medium secondary schools remained unclear. In the early 1960s, ethnic segregation was a problem in the country's education system. To resolve the problem, the Education Act of 1961 required all secondary schools to use English as the main medium of instruction (later, as noted above, it was switched to Bahasa Melayu) to receive full government aid (Raman & Tan, 2010). In need of the government funding, most Chinese-medium secondary schools decided to align with the policy and switched their medium of instruction first to English, and then Bahasa Melayu, retaining Mandarin Chinese as a subject. Schools that did not comply with the policy had to become private or independent schools where government funding is not provided: although they were permitted to continue using Mandarin Chinese as the main medium of instruction and could adopt the syllabi from Taiwan or China.

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<sup>26</sup> As stated in footnote no. 12, the Malaysian national education system comprises five levels (see Appendix K): pre-school, primary, secondary, post-secondary and higher education. At the primary level, there are two types of schools: national, and national-type. National schools use Bahasa Melayu as the main medium of instruction and teach English as a compulsory subject, while national-type schools use Mandarin Chinese or Tamil as the main medium of instruction and teach Bahasa Melayu and English as compulsory subjects. At the secondary level, there is only one type of school—the national secondary schools. These schools use Bahasa Melayu as the main medium of instruction, teach English as a compulsory subject, and facilitate the teaching of Mandarin Chinese or Tamil language if parents of a minimum fifteen students request.

<sup>27</sup> In most Chinese-medium primary schools, the Old Boys' Association, the Parent-Teacher Association, and other Chinese organisations always organise fundraising campaigns to support the maintenance of these schools.

In the 1996 Education Act (Part I) (see Appendix K), the Malaysian Federal Government explicitly stated that the Chinese language taught in the national education system would be referred to as Mandarin Chinese. Presently, Chinese-medium education in Malaysia<sup>28</sup> accounts for more than 1280 primary schools, 60 independent secondary schools, and three tertiary-level colleges in Malaysia (Gill, 2014). Although Chinese-medium education beyond primary level is privately funded, the growing number of Chinese-medium schools demonstrates the resilience of the Malaysian-Chinese community. Their determination to maintain Chinese language and culture is the reason the ‘Minority Rights Group international report: The Chinese of Southeast Asia’ stated that “Malaysia has Southeast Asia’s most comprehensive Chinese-language system of education” (Heidhues, 1992, p. 13). The survival of Chinese-medium education in Malaysia is a remarkable achievement, especially in a region where Chinese-medium schools have been forced to close down and Chinese language materials were prohibited (such as in Indonesia). Even in Singapore, where the majority of the population is Chinese and Mandarin Chinese is one of the country’s official languages, Mandarin Chinese is only taught as a subject in schools.

### **1.3.2 The impact of language policy on the Chinese community and Chinese-medium education.**

As described in Section 1.2.2, Malaysia’s drastic changes in educational language policy affected many students in Chinese-medium primary schools. Chinese educationalists were worried about the students’ performance even though they tended to do very well in national examinations (Gill, 2014). They were concerned the implementation of English as the medium of instruction for Science and Mathematics would leave Mandarin Chinese as the only

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<sup>28</sup> According to the Department of Statistics (2016), there are a total of 589 schools in Penang but no official statistics on the number of Chinese-medium schools in Penang.

subject taught in Mandarin Chinese at Chinese-medium primary schools. When the reversal to Bahasa Melayu took place in 2011, Chinese educationalists were happy to welcome back the use of Mandarin Chinese as the main medium of instruction. They claimed the best way to comprehend Science and Mathematics was by using students' first language (they usually referred to Mandarin Chinese as the first language of many Malaysian-Chinese) (Gill, 2014).

Despite sudden changes in the medium of instruction, there has been a significant growth in the number of students from non-Chinese backgrounds attending Chinese-medium primary schools ("Government to Present Chinese Schools", 2013; X. M. Wang, 2014). Approximately 11% of current enrolments are students from non-Chinese backgrounds (J. Y. Y. Tan, 2015). Chinese educationalists link this growth to the importance of Mandarin Chinese in today's globalised world, due to China becoming a leader in the global economy (Gill, 2014). Parents are also motivated to have their children educated in Chinese-medium schools by the expectation that they will learn English and Bahasa Melayu as well as Mandarin Chinese. Notably, as a result of its popularity in Malaysia, Mandarin Chinese was introduced as an elective subject in national primary schools<sup>29</sup> in 2006. Prior to that date, Mandarin Chinese had been taught after school hours under the Pupil's Own Language scheme (Raman & Tan, 2015).

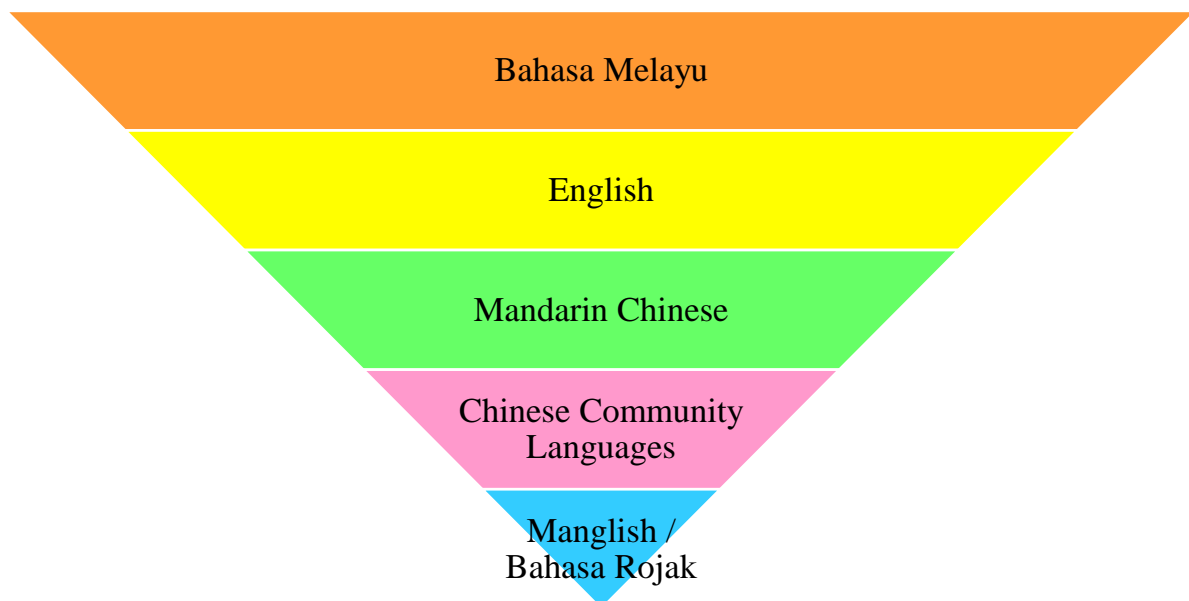
### **1.3.3 The linguistic repertoire of the Chinese community in Malaysia.**

Thus far, I have discussed issues relating to pre-independence history and colonial policy, post-independence policy and nation-building, the establishment of the national and official language Bahasa Melayu, the ongoing use of languages other than the official and national language, the history of Chinese settlement in Malaysia, the development of Chinese-medium education, and the impact of language policy on the Chinese community in Malaysia.

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<sup>29</sup> Refer footnote no. 26 for the definition of national schools.

As the discussion shows, the language situation of Malaysia's Chinese community is complex. Figure 3 provides a simplified illustration of the linguistic repertoire of the Malaysian-Chinese community, which has been developed in response to the conception of language ecology designed by Einar Haugen (1972), discussed in detail in Chapters 2 and 3 (see Sections 2.3 and 3.4).



*Figure 3.* The linguistic repertoire of the Chinese in Malaysia.

After independence, both Malays and non-Malays accepted Bahasa Melayu as Malaysia's national and official language (Gill, 2014), as instituted in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia and National Language Acts of 1963/1967. As a language of national identity, Bahasa Melayu is used as the language of government administration, education, and the law courts; thus, it is placed at the top level of the inverted pyramid. English, a global language, acts as Malaysia's second unofficial language. Despite being labelled as an unofficial language, English enjoys high status within the Chinese community in Malaysia. It is taught as a compulsory subject in both national and national-type schools and plays a prominent role in tertiary education (Gill, 2006). It is the preferred language for communications with different

ethnic groups and is notably visible in the linguistic landscape (Coluzzi, 2017). It is used in many domains, such as business, entertainment, books, and media press (Asmah, 2004). Therefore, English is placed at the second level.

In addition to these two important languages used by all Malaysians, including the Chinese, the National Language Acts 1963/1967 guarantee non-Malays' language rights to learn and speak their community languages. For the Chinese community, Chinese language varieties have different levels of standing. Due to the Malaysian Federal Government's explicit encouragement of Mandarin Chinese through Chinese-medium education (as stated in the 1996 Education Act, Part I), it has become the primary language of communication within the Chinese community, especially among the younger generation. In Malaysia today, the Chinese community treat Mandarin Chinese rather than Bahasa Melayu as their lingua franca, which supports the development of a cultural and linguistic identity for the Chinese community (Albury, 2018a). As a result, Mandarin Chinese is placed at the third level. When the Chinese immigrants landed in Malaya, they brought their community languages with them, namely Hokkien,<sup>30</sup> Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew, and Hainan, Fuzhou, Puxian Min, and Taishan. Labelled collectively as Chinese community languages in this thesis, they are usually spoken within the respective Chinese ethnolinguistic groups and in family settings, and therefore are placed on the fourth level.

In multilingual Malaysia, language mixing in certain contexts and domains is widespread (Asmah, 1992; Coluzzi, 2017). Two common language mixing phenomena are *Manglish* and *Bahasa Rojak* (Albury, 2017, 2018a). *Manglish* is a popular colloquial variety of Malaysian English, commonly used as a medium of communication by different ethnic groups in Malaysia, including the Chinese, in casual dialogues. Pillai (2008, p. 42) describes

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<sup>30</sup> Refer footnote no. 9 for the Hokkien spoken during the early days.

Malaysians' use of Manglish as a way of them seeking their "own brand of English to construct a sense of belonging and identity". Conversely, *Bahasa Rojak* (translated as 'salad language') is defined as "any mixture of two or more languages used in communication, with any of the languages being the base language" (Bakar, 2009, p. 99). *Rojak* (a traditional dish of mixed fruit and vegetables served with savoury peanut sauce) is a term in Bahasa Melayu to denote a mixture and therefore, serves as a metaphor to indicate a mixing of different languages. As Manglish and Bahasa Rojak are commonly used in informal situations, they form part of the complex linguistic ecology of Malaysia and are therefore included on the bottom level of the pyramid. However, as the focus of this thesis is Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese, the informal use of Manglish and Bahasa Rojak is not incorporated in any further analysis in this thesis.

Now that Figure 3 and the description above has provided an understanding of the linguistic repertoire of the Chinese community in Malaysia, I provide content for the area that serves as a case study in this thesis by discussing the history of Chinese settlement in Penang.

#### **1.4 The History of Chinese Settlement in Penang**

One area in Malaysia that has a particularly strong and distinct Chinese community is Penang. The strong Chinese presence in Penang is largely a result of the way it was settled and its historical development. This section provides an overview of Chinese settlement in Penang and the sociolinguistic background of the region, followed by a brief description of the Penang State Legislative Assembly.

Chinese settlers first arrived in Penang in the 17th century, escaping the Manchu invasion of the Fujian province in China. In 1786, the British established a free trading port in Penang's capital city, George Town, which attracted many Chinese merchants. The port



allowed them to interact with Europeans and provided opportunities to expand their commercial activities. Flourishing trade encouraged many Chinese merchants to eventually settle and set up shops in George Town. The 18th century establishment of tin mining in Taiping attracted greater numbers of Chinese immigrants to work as labourers. They moved to bigger cities, such as Penang, seeking better economic opportunities, establishing families, and building homes there. Many of these families have lived in Penang for generations.

As with the Chinese community in the other states of Malaysia (see Section 1.3), the Chinese who arrived in Penang brought along their community languages. They were mainly from Fujian province in China and spoke Hokkien,<sup>31</sup> as Fujian is home to the Min language. Because they could not speak English or Bahasa Melayu, the Chinese formed Chinese clan associations to provide services such as assistance with food, accommodation, letter writing and postage back to China, and making funeral arrangements. As time went on, more Chinese from other Chinese ethnolinguistic groups arrived in Penang, resulting in further Chinese community languages being spoken, including Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew, Hainan, Fuzhou, Taishan, and Puxian Min. Hokkien gradually developed and incorporated local Bahasa Melayu words, and today, due to its distinctive pronunciation and vocabulary, it is known as Penang Hokkien.

#### **1.4.1 Chinese languages in Penang.**

As a result of large-scale Chinese settlement in Penang, the Chinese are today one of the main and most important ethnic groups in Penang. According to the Department of Statistics (2018c), the population of Penang is 1.76 million and is made up of Malays (42.3%), Chinese (39.4%), Indians (9.4%), and other ethnicities (8.9%). Among the various Chinese

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<sup>31</sup> Refer footnote no. 9 for the Hokkien spoken during the early days.

ethnolinguistic groups in Penang, Hokkiens represent the largest group (approximately 64%) (Department of Statistics, 2010). This is why the majority of Chinese in Penang communicate in Penang Hokkien (X. M. Wang, 2017), and other Chinese community languages are commonly spoken. Concurrently, with Mandarin Chinese receiving strong institutional support in education, it has gradually become an important language of communication in Penang (X. M. Wang, 2016b). Further, as a result of this policy to support Mandarin Chinese, there is also a tendency for parents to speak Mandarin Chinese to children at home (X. M. Wang, 2017) to support their education. The sociolinguistic situation of modern-day Penang will be described in greater detail in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.3.2).

A brief description of the Penang State Legislative Assembly is also warranted because it differs from legislative assemblies of other Malaysian states. First, since independence in 1957, the Chief Minister of Penang (the head of government) has always been from the Chinese ethnic group. Second, since the 12th Malaysian General Election in 2008, Penang has been under the control of the Alliance of Hope (PH) ruling coalition.<sup>32</sup> At present, the Penang State Legislative Assembly consists of 40 elected policymakers: 37 seats are held by the Alliance of Hope (PH) ruling coalition, two seats by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) of the National Front (BN), and one seat by the Ideas of Prosperity (GS) of the Islamic Party of Malaysia (PAS). The Alliance of Hope ruling coalition is comprised of the Democratic Action Party (DAP) (19 seats), the People's Justice Party (PKR) (14 seats), the Malaysian United Indigenous Party (PPBM) (two seats), and the National Trust Party (two seats).

In summary, the Chinese people in Penang established a thriving and diverse Chinese-speaking community that uniquely contributes to the multilingual mosaic of Malaysia. The

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<sup>32</sup> The Alliance of Hope (PH) was previously known as the People's Party (PR). Due to internal issues, PR was abolished and succeeded by PH. Before the 14th Malaysian General Election, PH was an opposition party in the Malaysian politics. An historic day in the Malaysian politics took place on 9 May 2018 when the ruling coalition of PH won 125 out of 222 parliamentary seats and thus, formed the present-day Malaysian Federal Government.

Penang State Legislative Assembly—and subsequently their language policies—reflects this diversity. It is within this vibrant, concentrated Chinese community that the impact of changes to national language policy are particularly evident.

## **1.5 Statement of the Problem**

The current language situation for members of the Chinese community in Malaysia is that the Malaysian Federal Government explicitly allows the use of Mandarin Chinese as the main medium of instruction in Chinese-medium primary schools and as a subject taught in secondary schools. This provision sits in accordance with the Federal Constitution of Malaysia and National Language Acts 1963/1967, which state that all Malaysians can speak and learn any language alongside the national and official language, Bahasa Melayu (see Section 1.2.2). According to Gill (2014), more than 90% of Chinese parents in Malaysia send their children to Chinese-medium primary schools, which have also seen an increase of non-Chinese students' enrolment (15%) in recent years ("Government to present Chinese schools", 2013). These figures indicate that Chinese-medium education is gaining popularity in Malaysia. According to Gill (2014, p. 100), if the Government eliminated Chinese-medium primary schools in the country's education system, it would lead to "political chaos and instability for the nation". By acknowledging the importance of Mandarin Chinese as a language of high economic value in Malaysia, the Government hopes to win more Chinese votes in the country's national election (J. Tan, 2018). Mandarin Chinese has also been given strong recognition and support by the Malaysian mass media (X. M. Wang, 2016a). The promotion of Mandarin Chinese in Malaysia and other socioeconomic pressures have encouraged many of the younger generation to use this language more frequently at home (Ting, 2006; X. M. Wang, 2016a, 2017). In fact, according to Albury (2017) and X. M. Wang (2017), they regard it as the mother tongue for

the Chinese community. This situation implies that many Chinese families in Malaysia are undergoing sociolinguistic realignment in the home domain (Ding, 2016; X. M. Wang, 2017).

Likewise, in Penang, as Mandarin Chinese becomes increasingly important, many Penangite<sup>33</sup> Chinese parents are sending their children to Chinese-medium schools, their actions influenced by other Malaysian-Chinese parents (X. M. Wang, 2017). In the home domain, many parents are also shifting to Mandarin Chinese with their children (Low, Nicholas, & Wales, 2010). As the home domain is traditionally where Chinese community languages have been fostered and maintained, the shift to Mandarin Chinese within Malaysian-Chinese families in Penang today is closely tied to the declining use of Chinese community languages in Penang's Chinese community (X. M. Wang, 2017). Further, while the government's position on the use of Mandarin Chinese is clear, its position on Chinese community languages—specifically, official planning efforts to maintain them—is less clear, as is the extent of support at a local level. This situation raises questions about the survival of these languages and calls for an investigation into whether and how the Chinese community in Penang maintains Chinese community languages in everyday life.

Throughout Malaysia's history, language has been socially and politically entwined with ethnic identity and culture, which is demonstrated by the official recognition of Malaysians' right to learn and speak any language outside the national and official language, Bahasa Melayu, as detailed in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia and National Language Acts 1963/1967. In the culturally rich Chinese community in Penang, various Chinese community languages have existed alongside each other for generations. This has been my own experience, as I grew up in a multilingual environment where I spoke several Chinese community languages at home (depending on who I was speaking to), as well as Bahasa

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<sup>33</sup> Penangite is a local term referring to the residents of Penang.

Melayu and English at school. Today, children of the Chinese community in Penang learn and speak Mandarin Chinese at Chinese-medium schools, as the Malaysia Federal Government explicitly names Mandarin Chinese as the Chinese language of the national education system (see Section 1.3.1). Consequently, many families have adopted Mandarin Chinese as the language of communication in the home domain to support their children's education, and everyday use of Chinese community languages is in decline. As the official position on Chinese community languages—which include Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Hainan, Teochew, Fuzhou, Puxian Min, and Taishan—is less defined, various organisations from Penang's Chinese community are stepping in to support the learning and speaking of these languages after school hours to maintain ethnic cultures.

The situation in Penang highlights the tension between the dominance of Mandarin Chinese in Malaysia's Chinese-medium education and public life and the use of Chinese community languages in everyday life. To better understand what is happening to the Chinese community languages in Penang, it is therefore salient to explore the relationship between national language policy and the situation of Penang's Chinese community languages.

## **1.6 Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is organised as follows: Chapter 2 reviews the literature pertaining to language maintenance and language shift in the Chinese community in Malaysia, followed by a review of the different areas of analysis studied by scholars when investigating language maintenance and language shift in general, and key literature on language ecology. Chapter 3 explains the research design and methodology applied. It also provides a description of the conceptual framework developed for this study. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the findings according to my conceptual framework. Chapter 4 describes participants' everyday use of

Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in the ecology of Penang and the languages used by participants alongside Chinese community languages. Chapter 5 presents the findings on participants' perceptions regarding Chinese community language maintenance, their predictions for the future of these languages, and their interpretation of the linguistic landscape of Penang. Chapter 6 discusses the efforts made by different organisations from macro to micro levels in relation to Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. The final chapter, Chapter 7, summarises the findings of this study and discusses this research's contributions to the field of language maintenance and language shift.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter details the conceptual background for this study by reviewing the literature on language maintenance and language shift: firstly, in relation to the Chinese community in Malaysia, and secondly, in relation to the common areas of analysis in the broader field of language maintenance and language shift. By discussing the relevant past studies on Malaysia and significant areas of analysis beyond the Malaysia-related literature, the chapter identifies the limitations in the existing literature and searches for an appropriate way to conceive the study. Hence, the chapter has three main aims: first, to identify gaps of knowledge in the current literature on language maintenance and language shift in Malaysia; second, to identify areas of analysis outside the studies on Malaysia that are applicable to interrogating the language situation of Penang; and third, to survey the literature on language ecology as a way to bring forward the thesis and its potential for understanding this situation.

This chapter is structured as follows: first, I provide a brief definition of language maintenance and language shift (Section 2.1) and review past studies of Chinese language maintenance and language shift in Malaysia (Section 2.1.1). Based on this review, I identify the limitations in the literature (Section 2.1.2) and consider five key areas in the field of language maintenance and language shift in general (Section 2.2): (1) demographic factors; (2) the concept of domain to describe social spaces of language use; (3) motivation, attitudes, beliefs, and ideologies; (4) language planning and policy; and (5) linguistic landscape. This

chapter concludes by discussing language ecology as the way to bring these key areas together (Section 2.3).

## **2.1 Language Maintenance and Language Shift in Malaysia**

Before reviewing past studies on language maintenance and language shift of the Chinese community in Malaysia, I will clarify two key terms in the field of language maintenance and language shift. The study of language maintenance and language shift is a complex and important field of enquiry in sociolinguistics. It was first advanced by Joshua A. Fishman in the 1960s and then expanded to include various sub-disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, applied linguistics, and political science.

Broadly defined, language shift is the process of replacing one language with another as the means of communication and socialisation at both an individual and community level. Both situations result in favouring the use of a majority/dominant language, which leads to the loss of first languages among individuals or within a community. Language shift is both a process and an outcome (Pauwels, 2016). It is a process because the shift from first languages to a majority/dominant language in a society occurs gradually over several generations of speakers (Clyne, 2003). It is also an outcome because the shift may result in first languages no longer being used by the community after a period of time. The rate and speed of the shift varies among different communities. The most dramatic outcome of this shift is language loss or language death, which means the first languages are no longer used or spoken by the whole community and are completely abandoned.

Language maintenance is the process by which languages continue to be spoken by a particular speech community “in the face of competition from a regionally and socially powerful or numerically stronger language” (Mesthrie, 1999, p. 42). In some cases, a few



speakers in the speech community enter a new linguistic environment but continue to use their first language in all domains. Usually, the speech community becomes bilingual, adapting to the use of both the first language and the ‘more powerful/stronger’ language in the new environment for wider communication to take place. Language maintenance continues to occur in such a speech community despite a reduction in the number of domains in which the first language remains in use. In recent literature, some scholars have used the term ‘language revitalisation’ rather than language maintenance (see, for example, Hale, 1992; Sallabank, 2013). The terms have similarities, but language revitalisation involves a more intense process depending on the first language’s state of endangerment (Pauwels, 2016). However, this study employs the term ‘language maintenance’ because it focuses on the efforts that are currently taking place within the Chinese community in Penang.

In the fifty years or more since Joshua A. Fishman introduced the field of language maintenance and language shift, many related studies around the world have been conducted. In the case of Malaysia, there is evidence that many smaller ethnolinguistic groups have experienced language shift over a number of decades. Correspondingly, a range of studies have been conducted, including David (1996) on the Sindhis; David, Naji, and Kaur (2003) on the Punjabis; David and Noor (1999) on the Portuguese settlement; Mohamad-Yasin (1996) on the Javanese; Mukherjee (2003) on the Bengalis; and Ting and Campbell (2007) on the Bidayuh. These studies found that many factors underpin the process of language shift, including globalisation, urbanisation, industrialisation, migration, and government policies, as well as personal goals and motivations. Some groups have shifted to Bahasa Melayu, the country’s sole official and national language, while others have shifted to English—a language of international importance, prestige, and economic mobility. In short, these studies show that the use of dominant languages is gradually overtaking the use of community languages within different ethnolinguistic groups in Malaysia.

The section below aims to provide an understanding of the literature on the language shift currently taking place, particularly the Malaysian-Chinese community. My review of works conducted by the pioneer researchers in this field is organised into four themes: patterns of language use; parents' choice for Chinese-medium education; attitudes of Malaysian-Chinese towards Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese; and other factors. In this way, this section will provide the backdrop for this study based on the existing literature on the Malaysian-Chinese community.

### **2.1.1 Past Chinese language maintenance and language shift studies in Malaysia.**

#### ***2.1.1.1 Patterns of language use.***

In recent years, due to the rise of Mandarin Chinese as one of the main languages spoken worldwide and the language shift that is taking place globally, much emphasis has been placed on the language situation of the Chinese community in Malaysia. Since the development of modern Chinese-medium schools in the 20th century, Mandarin Chinese has become an important language among the Chinese community in Malaysia. It is the medium of instruction in Chinese-medium primary national-type schools and secondary private schools. Such development has caused a shift in the patterns of language use among various Chinese ethnolinguistic groups (X. M. Wang, 2016a). Therefore, I will review the literature in relation to the patterns of language use of the Chinese community in Peninsular and East Malaysia.

In the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia, Low, Nicholas, and Wales (2010) surveyed the language choices of mothers from various Chinese ethnolinguistic groups in downtown Penang Island. They found that these mothers spoke Mandarin Chinese and English to their young children, while Chinese community languages were mainly used for personal communication at home, with friends and neighbours. The authors show that language choice

among mothers in Penang Island is “strategically orientated” (Low et al., 2010, p. 582), suggesting a shift in the patterns of language use in downtown Penang Island. Low et al.’s (2010) results align with X. M. Wang (2016b), whose study shows that the patterns of language use among the Catholic Chinese community in Balik Pulau (west side of Penang Island) are in the process of changing. Based on an interview with senior Catholic church members and families, X. M. Wang found that due to generational differences, senior members of the congregation used Hakka in services whereas junior members switched to Mandarin Chinese or English for educational, communication, and networking purposes as well as for the sake of convenience. In addition to changes in the religion domain, X. M. Wang (2017) found that Hakka families in Balik Pulau have shifted from Hakka to Hokkien, and more recently to Mandarin Chinese. Together, X. M. Wang’s (2016b, 2017) studies suggest that patterns of language use are not only changing in downtown Penang Island, but also in other areas of Penang.

In the central region of Peninsular Malaysia, X. M. Wang (2010) conducted a survey of secondary school students in Kuala Lumpur regarding their language use in three domains. In the home domain, X. M. Wang found that Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese dominated as home languages and Mandarin Chinese was most commonly used. In contrast, the use of Hokkien and Hakka was declining in the home, Hainan and Teochew were declining even more, and Fuzhou was not used at all. Wang’s analysis shows that Hainan, Teochew, and Fuzhou are experiencing a dramatic decline in use in Kuala Lumpur and the use of Hokkien and Hakka is expected to decline in the near future. These findings support X. M. Wang and Chong’s (2011) study, which concludes that smaller sized community language groups (Hainan, Teochew, and Fuzhou) are shifting faster than larger sized community language groups (Hokkien, Cantonese, and Hakka) to the extent that some are experiencing language loss. Examining language use in the public domain, X. M. Wang divided venues into two

categories: less formal venues such as coffee shops, and more formal venues such as restaurants and shopping centres. Cantonese topped the survey list in the less formal venues, while Mandarin Chinese was preferred in more formal venues. In the education domain, students preferred to speak Mandarin Chinese because it is the medium of instruction in schools. It was uncommon for Malaysian-Chinese students to speak Bahasa Melayu to their Malaysian-Chinese friends. Based on these results, X. M. Wang concludes that the younger generation have abandoned their community languages and are currently shifting to the use of Mandarin Chinese in those domains she surveyed. X. M. Wang's (2010) study implies that the patterns of language use in the central region are moving towards Mandarin Chinese.

In the southern region of Peninsular Malaysia, E. Lee, Wong, and Laxman (2014) examined how the Hainan community in Malacca maintain their language and culture. They found that the older generation spoke Hainan with family and friends, but the use of Hainan had decreased drastically as the younger generation were unable to speak Hainan and did not see the importance of using it as a home language. E. Lee et al. conclude that Hainan is in decline in Malacca and is not maintained within the community except for its use in cultural events. Moving further to the south, X. M. Wang (2005, 2007, 2009, 2012) investigated patterns of language use among the Chinese community in Johor. In 2005, X. M. Wang examined the mass media in relation to the use of Mandarin Chinese in Muar and Batu Pahat. Her findings showed that Mandarin Chinese was extensively used in public areas. In 2007, she continued to investigate the interactions between ethnic identification and language choices of three participants. She found all three participants, aged between 21 and 25, regarded speaking Mandarin Chinese as an important marker of identity. She concludes that the spread of Mandarin Chinese strengthens and unifies different language groups under a general Chinese identity. Then in 2009, X. M. Wang returned to study language choices in public spaces and again found that Mandarin Chinese was used most often in all public settings, especially in the

major cities. In 2012, when X. M. Wang conducted a survey in four major cities, 84.8% of her respondents claimed that Mandarin Chinese was their most frequently used language in the home domain, while in the patterns of language use, Hokkien and other Chinese community languages had drastically declined. In summary, E. Lee et al.'s (2014) and X. M. Wang's (2005, 2007, 2009, 2012) studies strengthen the evidence that the patterns of language use in the southern region are rapidly changing, with Mandarin Chinese spreading widely in both formal and informal settings.

Many studies have been conducted on East Malaysia, such as those by Puah and Ting (2013, 2015), Ting (2006, 2010), Ting and Chang (2008), Ting and Hung (2008), Ting and Puah (2017), and Ting and Sussex (2002), to name a few. Focusing on the Fuzhou community, Puah and Ting (2013, 2015), Ting (2006, 2010), Ting and Hung (2008), and Ting and Sussex (2002) investigated the language choice patterns among the Fuzhou community in Sarawak. They found that there were strong interests and emotions involved when questions regarding the maintenance of Fuzhou were raised. The findings also showed that those aged 60 and above spoke Fuzhou with their children; however, among the children there was a shift towards speaking Mandarin Chinese. These studies indicate that the patterns of language use among the Fuzhou community are also changing, in ways similar to other Chinese ethnolinguistic groups in Peninsular Malaysia. In relation to the Hakka community, Ding (2016), Liao (2018), and Ting and Chang (2008) examined the language use of Hakka families and found that Hakka had limited functions. It was mainly spoken with family and friends in the family domain and used by the older generation in religious activities, while younger members of the family are shifting away from using Hakka. Their findings indicate a decline in the number of Hakka users in Sabah and Sarawak. Within the Hokkien community, Nelson (2009), Puah and Ting (2013), and Ting and Puah (2010a, 2010b, 2017) surveyed Hokkien speakers, including university students, to find out their language choices. In general, the results demonstrated that Hokkien

is losing ground to Mandarin Chinese and English in most domains. To sum up the language situation in East Malaysia, all three Chinese ethnolinguistic groups are facing a similar dilemma to those in Peninsular Malaysia—a shift in the patterns of language use that sees Mandarin Chinese taking over the family language and becoming a language of wider communication.

Based on the review of past studies in Peninsular and East Malaysia, it is evident that there is a change in the patterns of language use within the Malaysian-Chinese community. This evidence indicates that language shift has taken place. In general, many of the older generation still prefer to use Chinese community languages in the family domain; however, for the younger generation, Mandarin Chinese has gradually become their language of communication, whether in the family or public domains. Ding (2016) and X. M. Wang (2016a) conclude that the language environment in both Peninsular and East Malaysia has undergone change in recent years because many Malaysian-Chinese have begun using Mandarin Chinese due to the economic value Mandarin Chinese offers.

As it is clearly demonstrated in the review that language shift is taking place, the following three sections consider the factors motivating this shift: (1) parents' choice for Chinese-medium education; (2) attitudes of Malaysian-Chinese towards Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese; and (3) political issues and intermarriage.

#### ***2.1.1.2 Parents' choice for Chinese-medium education.***

As identified above, the patterns of language use within the Malaysian-Chinese community have changed in recent years. There is a decline in the use of Chinese community languages, especially among the younger generation as they are moving towards the dominant languages of Mandarin Chinese and English, which are taught in schools. This language shift

has prompted scholars such as D. P. Y. Lee and Ting (2016), and D. P. Y. Lee, Ting, and Lo (2017) to investigate parents' attitudes towards choosing Chinese-medium education for their children, which is regarded as a key factor influencing the shift. This section reviews related past studies.

For many Chinese language groups in Southeast Asia, Chinese-medium education is treated as a means for transmitting Chinese culture, traditional values, and nationalism (Ku, 2003; M. J. Tan, 1997). In Malaysia, Mandarin Chinese is regarded as an important language in the education domain (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.1), with national-type primary schools using Mandarin Chinese as the main medium of instruction and national secondary schools teaching Mandarin Chinese as a subject. Mandarin Chinese is also used as the main medium of instruction in secondary private schools and Chinese-medium colleges. Thus, a child can receive a complete Chinese-medium education from primary to tertiary level.

Whether a child receives Chinese-medium or Malay-medium education is a decision for the parents. As Chinese-medium education has been perceived positively as an integral part of the preservation of Chinese culture, language, and heritage (H. G. Lee, 2012; X. M. Wang, 2016a), a large proportion of Chinese parents send their children to Chinese-medium schools (D. P. Y. Lee & Ting, 2016; X. M. Wang, 2014). These parents believe Chinese-medium education incorporates an appreciation of Chinese culture in the curriculum, which will subsequently lead to the development of a stronger Chinese identity (D. P. Y. Lee & Ting, 2016). They further believe such an education is essential for their Chinese culture, language, and heritage to survive in a Malay-dominant country (H. G. Lee, 2012). Parents' choice of Chinese-medium education is also seen as a reaction against the "increasing Islamisation of the national schools" (H. G. Lee, 2012, p. 175). As Chinese-medium schools strictly prohibit students from speaking any languages other than Mandarin Chinese and the dominant

languages (Sim, 2012), emphasis is placed on teaching the three dominant languages of namely Bahasa Melayu, English, and Mandarin Chinese.

D. P. Y. Lee et al. (2017, p. 60) conclude that parents' preference for Chinese-medium education for their children is "more than a choice of language instruction"—it is about the appreciation of Chinese culture and development of Chinese identity. Therefore, parents' favourable attitudes towards Chinese-medium education over Malay-medium education clearly contribute to language shift.

#### *2.1.1.3 Attitudes of Malaysian-Chinese towards Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese.*

While many parents are enthusiastic about choosing Chinese-medium education for their children, family members' attitudes towards Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese is influencing the language spoken with children at home (Ting, 2006). Although many Malaysian-Chinese acknowledge the heritage value of Chinese community languages, according to Ding (2016), there are still some who do not try hard to safeguard the survival of these languages. Such attitudes contribute to language shift. This section reviews studies related to the attitudes of Malaysian-Chinese towards Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese.

Studies (see, for example, Ding, 2016; Liao, 2018; Puah & Ting, 2013; Ting & Puah, 2010a, 2010b; X. M. Wang, 2016b) have shown that many Malaysian-Chinese<sup>34</sup> have strong pride in their community languages. According to Puah and Ting (2013) and Ting and Puah (2010b), Hokkien speakers are proud of their Hokkien identity and do not feel embarrassed to

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<sup>34</sup> Data was not available for Chinese ethnolinguistic groups other than those mentioned; therefore, the review of past studies serves as a generalisation for other Chinese ethnolinguistic groups.



speak Hokkien in their everyday life. They demonstrated positive attitudes towards Hokkien in terms of status and solidarity (Ting & Puah, 2010a). Their pride in speaking Hokkien with confidence reflects their strong Hokkien identity (Ting & Puah, 2010b). Similarly, Hakka speakers claim deep feelings for Hakka, which they value greatly (Ding, 2016). They considered Hakka to be an important language for transmitting the Hakka tradition and ancestral culture (X. M. Wang, 2016b, 2017). According to X. M. Wang (2016b), many Hakka speakers treat Hakka as an asset for the Hakka community. Fuzhou speakers stated that Fuzhou was primarily used with other Fuzhou speakers, which served to strengthen the bond between them (Puah & Ting, 2013), acting as a special marker for the Fuzhou community (Ting & Sussex, 2002). They also stressed the need for Fuzhou children to know Fuzhou (Ting & Hung, 2008).

Despite the three Chinese language groups acknowledging the heritage value of their community languages, these languages have limited functional domains (Ding, 2016). They are mostly used in the family domain or less-formal public domains such as hawker stalls (Ding, 2016; Ting & Puah, 2010b). In comparison, Mandarin Chinese is perceived as a language that has solidarity value (Ting & Puah, 2010a, 2017). Many younger generation Chinese strongly express the view that higher social status is attributed to Mandarin Chinese, which has wider functional domains (Ting & Puah, 2017). Albury (2017) found that many undergraduate students at public and private universities across Peninsular Malaysia considered Mandarin Chinese a symbolic language and treated it as the only Chinese language to represent their Chinese ethnic identity and unity. Even though Chinese community languages are important for heritage and cultural preservation, Mandarin Chinese is now taking over the role of communication in many Chinese families (Ting & Hung, 2008; X. M. Wang, 2005, 2006).

Based on the reviewed studies, while many Malaysian-Chinese clearly express their pride and strong feelings for Chinese community languages, they are predominantly shifting to communicating in Mandarin Chinese in various domains. Thus, attitudes towards both Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese are certainly contributing to language shift.

#### ***2.1.1.4 Other factors.***

In addition to parents' choice for Chinese-medium education and the attitudes of Malaysian-Chinese towards Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese, there are other factors motivating language shift within the Chinese community in Malaysia.

Among these factors, political issues stand out because politics plays a sensitive and crucial role in the complex linguistic scene of Malaysia (Sim, 2012). According to Sim (2012), due to their unequal treatment in education and economic policies, the Chinese community have arguably had a 'hot and cold' attitude towards the Malaysian Federal Government. The two dominant ethnic groups in Malaysia, the Malays and the Chinese, have always been encouraged by their community leaders to stay united. This situation has led to the championing of Mandarin Chinese due to the Chinese community's belief that speaking different Chinese community languages would divide them—despite the important role community languages play in everyday life (Sim, 2012). As a result, many Chinese employ Mandarin Chinese as a tool of communication (Sim, 2012).

Intermarriage also plays a role in motivating language shift (Kow, 2003; Sim, 2012; Ting & Campbell, 2007). Kow (2003) found that language shift usually took place in linguistic intermarriage and over several generations in Malaysia. When intermarriage was present, the mothers' choice of home language found to be a key factor in ensuring the survival of community languages. In some families, children would speak the language of their mother

because mothers usually spent more time with them; it also ensured her community language was retained. In families where mothers felt the father's identity and language was more important, the children would speak father's community language. Yet, with the rising popularity of Mandarin Chinese and English, many mothers chose to speak these languages to their children (Ting, 2006; X. M. Wang, 2017).

To sum up the reviews in the above sections, there are four contributing factors motivating language shift within the Chinese community in Malaysia. They are parents' preference for Chinese-medium education, the attitudes of Malaysian-Chinese towards Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese, along with political issues, and linguistic intermarriage.

### **2.1.2 Limitations in the literature on Chinese language maintenance and language shift in Malaysia.**

Having reviewed the existing literature, this section will identify the limitations of the studies in helping explain the Chinese community language situation in Penang. Past studies of Malaysian-Chinese community language maintenance and language shift have demonstrated that in the present multiethnic, multilingual, and globalised Malaysia, the patterns of language use among the Chinese community have undergone many changes, which has led to language shift (Ding, 2016; X. M. Wang, 2016a). Smaller sized community language groups, namely Hainan, Teochew, and Fuzhou, are suffering more than larger sized community language groups, namely Hokkien, Cantonese, and Hakka. Moreover, the smaller sized community language groups are shifting faster than the larger ones to such an extent that some languages are currently endangered (X. M. Wang & Chong, 2011).

As noted above, the older generation tend to use Chinese community languages for communication purposes while the younger generation are exhibiting reduced use of Chinese community languages (Ting, 2010; X. M. Wang, 2010, 2016b). The younger generation are shifting towards speaking Mandarin Chinese with family and friends in various domains (Ting & Puah, 2017; X. M. Wang, 2012). They regard Mandarin Chinese as a symbolic language to represent their Chinese identity and unity (Albury, 2017; X. M. Wang, 2017), a language that has solidarity value (Ting & Puah, 2010a), and a language of wider use in all domains (Ting & Puah, 2017). In addition, many Chinese parents are sending their children to Chinese-medium schools to receive Chinese-medium education, which is perceived as an integral part of Chinese culture, language, and heritage (H. G. Lee, 2012; D. P. Y. Lee & Ting, 2016; X. M. Wang, 2016a). Parents' choice of Chinese-medium education over Malay-medium education has also contributed to language shift (X. M. Wang, 2014). Ting and Hung (2008, p. 3) conclude that such language shift is "inevitable", considering that other ethnic groups in Malaysia are also shifting towards dominant languages, as described in Section 2.1.

In summary, this review has shown that patterns of language use among the Chinese community in Malaysia have shifted and, consequently, language shift is currently taking place. Past studies have primarily focused on the end results of language shift; that is, that Mandarin Chinese is becoming a widely spoken language among many younger Malaysian-Chinese. These studies have also examined the factors motivating the shift. However, little reference has been made to the maintenance of Chinese community languages in Malaysia (Ting & Puah, 2010a). Ting and Puah (2010a) identify the need to study such language maintenance efforts; however, to date, no studies have looked at language planning efforts relating to Chinese community language maintenance in Penang from a holistic perspective involving both official planners and grassroots actors. Also, the community's opinions have not yet been examined to ascertain the extent to which it wishes to maintain community languages for the future.

The literature on the language shift of the Malaysian-Chinese community mainly focuses on its occurrence in specific states in Malaysia, with little work on the crucial areas of language use and language maintenance, and their relationship to language shift, particularly in a city with a long history of Chinese settlement like Penang. These are the areas this study will examine.

## **2.2 Key Themes in Language Maintenance and Language Shift Literature Relevant to This Study**

While the above literature on Chinese language maintenance and language shift issues in Malaysia is clear and insightful, none of the existing studies are relevant enough to use as a conceptual foundation for this study. The key questions in this thesis are broad-based and therefore require me to refract the conceptual lens to incorporate a much more comprehensive picture that considers multiple social actors and language environments, ranging from policy makers to community language users. Although confined to the Chinese community in Penang, the object of inquiry needs a holistic framework to provide a wider picture that captures the depth and complexity of the language situation in Penang. This wider picture can be achieved by exploring some key areas of analysis in the broader field of language maintenance and language shift, the relevance of which is examined and justified below.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the Malaysian-Chinese language situation in Penang, I need to ascertain how various sectors of society view the situation in relation to language maintenance and language shift. To build a picture of the various areas of analysis that might be used to provide such a comprehensive approach, I survey the wider field of language maintenance and language shift studies. I identify five key areas of analysis in the field which are discussed in the sections below: (1) demographic factors; (2) the concept of

domain to describe social spaces of language use; (3) motivation, attitudes, and beliefs; (4) language planning and policy; and (5) linguistic landscape.

### **2.2.1 Demographic factors.**

Demographic factors are the most commonly analysed in language maintenance and language shift research. Many early studies of language shift in various countries (see, for example, Clyne, 1981, 1982; Gal, 1979) focused on studying demographic factors. These factors are related to the absolute number of language speakers in a community and their demographic characteristics, such as birth and mortality rates, gender, age groups, education, and patterns of immigration and emigration (Bourhis & Barrette, 2006). Obtaining demographic data is usually done by analysing national census data, which include questions about language choice, language proficiency, and language use (Clyne, 2001; Clyne & Kipp, 1997). These quantitative data are useful to understand language shift in a community, but they have been criticised for inaccuracy and misrepresentation (Hatoss, 2013; Paulston, 1994). For example, prior to 2006, the first language was not included in the survey questions on the Australian census because immigrants' ethnolinguistic background was identified based on their country of birth (Clyne, 2003). An immigrant's country of birth, however, does not necessarily reflect their first language or ethnicity. Similarly, Extra (2005) is critical about using census data for immigrants in the European context. He states that immigrants' country of birth is becoming less applicable because many immigrants are adopting the nationality of their country of immigration. These issues highlight how studying demographic data obtained from the national census is not the most reliable approach to addressing language shift in the present day.

In addition to the use of demographic data, Fishman (1985, 1991) argues that other factors, such as religion, degree of integration into the mainstream population, and institutional support for teaching and learning first language, motivate language shift. Clyne (1991b) and David (2005) add that intermarriages are another contributing factor. Saunders (1982, 1988) asserts that children can become bilingual if parents speak their first language with them at home. However, Pauwels (1991, 2004, 2005, 2006) finds that in Australia, linguistic intermarriages have negative effects on the Dutch community in terms of maintaining Dutch as a first language. Such studies show that looking only at demographic factors and depending purely on statistics are insufficient for understanding the process of language shift, especially in today's globalised world where people are constantly moving into 'new' communities. As suggested by Milroy (1987), an understanding of social networks and the relationship between members of the network is needed to describe how languages are used in a community. This relationship can be examined by using the concept of domain to describe social spaces of language use.

### **2.2.2 The concept of domain to describe social spaces of language use.**

An important area of analysis in the field of language maintenance and language shift is the concept of domain to describe social spaces of language use. Fishman (1965) introduces the concept of domain to contextualise language use patterns, language attitudes, language choices, and language proficiency in bilingual and multilingual communities. He (Fishman, 1972a, 1991, 2001) argues that family, neighbourhood, and the community play important roles in ensuring first languages have a higher chance of survival. In this context, domain is defined as:

A socio-cultural construct abstracted from topics of communication, relationships between communicators, and locales of communication in accord with the institutions of a society and the spheres of activity of a culture, in such a way that individual behaviour and social patterns can be distinguished from each other and yet related to each other (Fishman, 1972b, p. 82).

Taking the original concept from Schmidt-Rohr (1933), Fishman (1965) proposes nine domains of language use: family, playground and street, school, church, literature, press, military, courts, and the governmental bureaucracy.

Fishman's (1965, p. 67) question of "Who speaks what language to whom?" is often used by scholars as a systematic way to describe the characteristics of a sociolinguistic situation where languages choices are made. These language choices are determined by social factors such as age, gender, social status, and socioeconomic background. In this sense, the concept of domain is a tool to categorise typical social settings in the community (Fishman, 1972a, 1991). In another sense, domain is concerned with participants and their social roles and relationships. Fishman states that although participants usually have multiple roles in a sociolinguistic setting, these roles must be drawn out when studying language use. As the nine domains of language use were proposed by Fishman in 1965, they can be revised to better suit the present era. Thus, Fishman, Cooper, and Ma (1971) consolidated the nine domains to five most important domains—family, friendship, religion, education, and employment—which are more appropriate for present day investigation. In short, the concept of domain plays an important role in language maintenance and language shift studies (Boxer, 2002) because it allows researchers to identify language use patterns.

In relation to researching language use patterns, Pauwels (2005) states that researchers have assessed language vitality in different domains to identify successful strategies for



language maintenance. These strategies are then used by scholars (see, for example, Pauwels, 2005; Sims, 2006; Tuominen, 1999) to assist parents, families, and communities in maintaining their community languages. One effective strategy is parents' persistence in speaking community languages in the family domain, especially among themselves and to their children. Their consistency in using community languages in the family domain successfully encourages their children to learn and speak the languages from a young age. Pauwels (2016) argues that an early start to learning community languages not only facilitates the process of gaining better linguistic competence but also establishes bilingualism among children. Consistent exposure to learning, speaking, and using community languages, particularly in the family domain, is crucial in maintaining community languages, especially in multilingual environments where dominant languages are usually perceived as more important (Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004).

As will be explained in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.4.2), the concept of domain is central to describing the patterns of language use within the Chinese community in Penang, particularly the family domain, because it plays such a vital role in ensuring children to continue using community languages.

### **2.2.3 Motivation, attitudes, and beliefs.**

Subjective factors, namely motivation, attitudes, and beliefs, are commonly analysed in language maintenance and language shift studies. These factors are fundamental, both when languages are in decline and when attempting to maintain them, because they are associated with language vitality, language use, and language policy in a community (Sallabank, 2013). Sallabank (2013, pp. 60-61) argues that the relationship between subjective factors and speakers' actions is complicated because they are "intrinsically linked to social processes and community dynamics". Baker (1992) points out that these subjective factors are so closely

related that in certain contexts, they are treated synonymously. Therefore, in this section, I will review each subjective factor in relation to language maintenance and language shift.

The first subjective factor is motivation, which has received little attention in language maintenance studies (Hatoss, 2013). Motivation is defined as “the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and satisfaction experienced in this activity” (Gardner, 1985, p. 10). It is an important concept in second language learning research where scholars use it to examine language learners’ attitudes. Given its importance in second language acquisition, Zhang (2008, 2010) uses the concept of motivation to drive his study on Chinese immigrant families’ language maintenance in America. He found that first-generation Chinese parents from two language groups, Fujian and Mandarin Chinese, had strong motivation for maintaining their home language for communication purposes. In addition to parents’ motivation, Zhang’s study indicates the importance of children’s motivation to speak the home language. Their motivation is based on their attitudes towards learning the respective language and the goals they wish to pursue through language learning. Beyond parents’ and children’s motivation, Karan (2001) observes the economic and social drive that motivates some individuals to maintain certain languages in certain contexts. Thus, the concept of motivation offers a useful starting point when studying language maintenance and language shift.

The second subjective factor is attitude. In sociolinguistic research, the study of language attitudes has a long history (see, for example, Baker, 1992; Dörnyei, Csizer, & Nemeth, 2006; Edwards, 2006; Gardner & Lambert, 1972). An attitude is defined as “a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event” (Ajzen, 1988, p. 4). Labov’s (1966) study on New York dialects, in which he investigates the relationship between language variation and social attitudes, is a classic study in language attitude research. Past scholars (see, for example, Dorian, 1981; Giles & Johnson, 1987;

Williamson, 1991) studied the attitudes of remaining speakers and were most interested in speakers' attachment to certain languages, as well as whether those languages were passed on to speakers' family members and children. These studies tend to focus on languages that are declining in use. Dorian (1993) criticises this focus and contends that such studies may have overlooked revitalisation efforts by new generations. Therefore, it is a welcoming development that recent studies address such issues (see, for example, Hatoss, 2013; Kroskrity & Field, 2009; Meek, 2011; Urla, 2012) by looking at the changing attitudes and confidence of language speakers in smaller speech communities.

The third subjective factor is beliefs. In general, language attitudes cannot be measured alone; one needs to explore speakers' beliefs because the emotions associated with speakers' attitudes and beliefs are interrelated, complex, and difficult to separate in practice (Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004; Yu, 2010). Bourhis, Giles, and Rosenthal (1981) argue that examining speakers' beliefs around the survival of their languages and community is crucial when studying language maintenance and language shift. Moreover, Schiffman (1996, p. 5) posits that these beliefs act as "part of the social conditions that could affect the maintenance and transmission of languages". Much of the work done in this area is related to parental and societal beliefs (Yu, 2010), and are approached in one of three ways: normative, metacognitive, and contextual (De Costa, 2011). Parental beliefs are mostly directed towards how community languages are used by parents in social and in family contexts, while societal beliefs are associated with how a community can influence its members to use its community languages more/less frequently. Both parental and society beliefs often result in either more effort being made to maintain community languages, or children and community members having to integrate into the mainstream society and speak the dominant language (Yu, 2010). In short, beliefs act as a support, not only to maintain community languages, but for speakers in a community to become bilingual (Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004).

Reviewing the three subjective factors exposes overlaps between definitions and conceptual understandings of motivation, attitudes, and beliefs associated with language. Nevertheless, all three subjective factors can be applied to shed light on the perceptions of Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. These factors will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.4.3).

Baker (1992, p. 14) notes that the notions of motivation, attitudes, and beliefs are interrelated and the difference between them is “partly about different traditions in research, theory, and expression”. However, they come from a similar foundation, as they either influence or are influenced by language planning and policy at personal and societal levels. Therefore, I now turn to the topic of language planning and policy.

#### **2.2.4 Language planning and policy.**

Language planning and policy is another crucial area analysed in language maintenance and language shift research. Einar Haugen first introduced the term ‘language planning’ in his 1959 study of language standardisation, in which he suggests language planning as a linguistic activity for “the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogenous speech community” (p. 8). Since then, the scope and definition of language planning and policy have expanded. Addressing the ground-breaking question of whether a theory of language planning is achievable, Cooper (1989, p. 98) contends that language planning should focus on studying “what actors attempt to influence what behaviours, of which people, for what ends, under what conditions, by what means, through what decision-making process, with what effect”. Following Cooper’s statement, many definitions of language planning presuppose “an attempt by someone to modify the linguistic behaviour of some community for some reason” (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. 3).

Shohamy (2006, p. 49) differentiates between language planning and policy, arguing that language planning refers to “intervention and control of language behaviour” while language policy is “a set of principles regarding language behaviour”. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, p. xi) define language policy as “a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules, and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in the society, group, or system”. Language policies, which come in different forms of documents such as constitutions and legislation (Baldauf, 2006), exist in different domains (Ricento, 2006). Spolsky (2007) agrees with Ricento’s (2006) observation that different domains are influenced by both internal and external forces, and individual members of a speech community make their decisions based on their understanding of the language choices appropriate to the respective domain. Spolsky (2007) proposes a three-part framework to define language policy: (1) language practices, (2) language ideologies or beliefs, and (3) language management. Language practices refer to the ecology of language, where language choices are selected from the varieties in a speech community; language ideologies or beliefs refer to the beliefs about language and language use; and language management refers to the specific efforts made to influence language practice.

There are different definitions of language planning and policy in the literature. Fettes (1997a) explains that language planning depends heavily on language policy development and implementation. McCarty (2011, pp. 7-8) adds that both language planning and policy are “not ... separable acts but [are] mutually constitutive, interdependent, and co-occurring sociocultural process[es]”. Thus, the boundaries between language planning and policy are vague. Consequently, various forms of language planning and policy, including status planning, corpus planning, prestige planning, and acquisition planning, are studied by scholars (see, for example, Cooper, 1989; Fishman, 1974; Haugen, 1983; Hornberger, 1994; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Nahir, 1984) from policy creation to interpretation and implementation.

When conducting language planning and policy research, Baldauf (1982) asserts the importance of considering the role of human agency. In the past, scholars primarily focused on studying language planning and policy activities as state affairs (Mirvahedi, 2018), so they were evaluated according to their achievement of stated goals. Thus, the fairness and equity of language planning and policy activities and their influences were not assessed (Tollefson, 1991). Although such an approach was fruitful when examining one form of agency, it failed to provide an account of the other levels of agency and enactment that may undermine or alter language planning and policy activities, and was criticised for neglecting all the “jumbled, messy, contested creative, and mundane social interactions” of language planning and policy activities (Ball et al., 2012, p. 2). Hence, Tollefson (2015, p. 145) calls for the integration of “multiple levels of analysis” when addressing the issue of agency in language planning and policy research, a view which aligns with Shohamy’s (2006, p. 48) argument that language planning and policy “can exist at all levels of decision making about languages”.

Contemporary scholarship recognises that many agents are involved in language planning and policy activities at different levels and scales (Hult, 2010, 2015, 2017). As Kaplan and Baldauf (2003, p. 201) reiterate, in addition to studying language planning agents at the macro level, micro level agents should also be considered, because “the impact of language planning and policy depends heavily on meso and micro level involvement and support”. The agent involved in the former is usually the nation-state, while the latter involves a diverse range of institutions such as local government, workplaces, religious organisations, schools, and families (Spolsky, 2004). Liddicoat and Baldauf (2008) purport that a language exists in its own ecology, within which language problems among individuals or community members may occur. To address these problems, micro level agents usually carry out their own language planning activities, such as compiling language resources and promoting language use with their own initiatives. These activities usually depart from those at the macro level but play key

roles in developing language at the micro level. At times, however, they may align with those at the macro level and thus, their interactions can be complex. Hornberger and Johnson (2007) conclude that language planning and policy activities are like an onion, where each layer, representing different agents from government to individuals, is interconnected and dynamically interacts and engages with the other layers.

Language planning and policy play an important role in the conceptual framework of the current study, which will be explained further in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.4.4). Due to their complex interactions—with some present and other remaining visible—it is vital to consider every agent in language planning and policy activities, from macro to micro levels.

### **2.2.5 Linguistic landscape.**

A more recent and promising area in the field of language maintenance and language shift is the use of the linguistic landscape as an analytical lens. The field of linguistic landscape emerged in the late 1990s when it was defined as languages on “public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings” (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25). For Landry and Bourhis, the presence of visible written languages, both produced by professionals and amateurs, marks the public space in a particular territory. Embracing Landry and Bourhis’ definition, together with a quantitative approach, classic studies such as Backhaus (2007), Gorter (2009), Griffin (2004), Hult (2003), and McArthur (2000) have examined dominant languages in public spaces and found that language hierarchies are frequently observed in multilingual landscapes.

Besides looking at dominant languages, Marten, Van Mensel, and Gorter (2012) suggest using linguistic landscape as a lens through which to observe the presence of community languages, because their visibility is as important as their audibility. When

examining the visibility of community languages, factors such as language demographics, language use, language attitudes, language policy, and the struggles of community speakers, possibly even the ultimate survival of their languages can be assessed. Several scholars such as Bruyèl-Olmedo and Juan-Garau (2015), Cenoz and Gorter (2006), Gorter, Aiestaran, and Cenoz (2012), and Salo (2012) have used linguistic landscape to investigate the presence of regional community languages such as Basque, Frisian, Catalan, and Sámi in tourist resorts, streets, and rural villages. These studies have demonstrated how regional community languages compete for space with local dominant/international languages in the territory where they are displayed and how language policy in that territory influences their visibility and patterns of display. Marten et al. (2012, p. 8) summarise the linguistic landscape as indicative of the “spread, vitality, maintenance, identity or status of a language”, which is related to aspects of revitalisation and the preservation of community languages. In short, it offers a useful tool to explore the situation of community languages in multilingual settings.

In recent years, as the field has expanded, so has the definition of linguistic landscape. A broader definition that incorporates “all possible discourses that emerge in changing public spaces” (Shohamy & Waksman, 2009, p. 328) has been adopted. Invoking Shohamy and Waksman’s definition, Troyer and Szabó (2017) draw together recent studies to explain how discourses include graffiti (Pennycook, 2009, 2010), internetscapes (Malinoswki, 2010), skinscapes (Peck & Stroud, 2015), smellscapes (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015), demonstrations and art installations (Blackwood, Lanza, & Woldermariam, 2016), and mass-scale events (Seals, 2017). However, these studies do not consider private spaces such as homes as research sites, despite increasing recognition that private spaces provide another level of analysis to further expand the definition of linguistic landscape to index an individual’s cultural patterns within the home (Lane, 2009; Shohamy, 2012). Nevertheless, the linguistic landscape is still considered “an excellent tool for explorative fieldwork” (Blommaert & Maly, 2014, pp. 1-2).



In the current study, the linguistic landscape serves as a valuable research tool for secondary data source collection in Penang's linguistic landscape (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.4.2) and for the actors' interpretation of the vitality of Chinese community languages and its cultural representation in Penang (see Chapter 3, Section 3.6.3).

#### **2.2.6 Section summary.**

The above section has reviewed five key areas of analysis used by scholars to examine language maintenance and language shift. In the field to date, assessing the demographic factors motivating language shift through census surveys and questionnaires is the most common area of analysis. Another area is the concept of domain, used to describe the social spaces of language use. The third area involves subjective factors, namely motivation, attitudes, and beliefs held by speakers in a community. The fourth is language planning and policy and its impact on language maintenance and language shift. Using the linguistic landscape as a lens through which the presence of community languages in public spaces is observed, is the most recent area of analysis. I will return to these areas of analysis in the next chapter to explain how these elements may all be brought together into a coherent framework for this study.

### **2.3 A Way Forward: Conceiving the Study in Terms of Language Ecology**

Thus far, this chapter has reviewed the past studies of Chinese community languages in Malaysia (see Section 2.1.1) and identified limitations in the literature (see Section 2.1.2). This review shows that language shift is currently taking place among the Chinese community in Malaysia, but little is mentioned about language maintenance. To gain a holistic picture of the various areas of analysis that might best be used to form my conceptual framework, I subsequently examined five key areas of analysis in the broader field of language maintenance

and language shift (see Section 2.2). The five areas are: demographic factors, the concept of domain to describe social spaces of language use, motivation, attitudes, and beliefs, language planning and policy, and linguistic landscape.

With the five key areas of analysis reviewed, a framework to bring all component parts together to compile a holistic picture of the complexity of the Chinese community language situation in Penang, is needed. The next section proceeds to a discussion of language ecology as a way of conceiving this framework.

### **2.3.1 Language ecology.**

In 1972, Norwegian-American linguist Einar Haugen proposed a new approach to studying languages in multilingual societies. He called this approach ‘language ecology’ and defined it as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment” (Haugen, 1972, p. 325). The term ‘ecology’ was first used in the field of natural sciences, defined as “the science of the economy of the organisms, of the way of life, of the external life relations of the organisms to one another” (Haeckel, 1866, vol. 1, p. 8). This definition gained little recognition when first formed, but in 1885, Reiter contended that ecology was the starting point to forming connections between variability and the natural conditions of existence. The term then began to receive wider acceptance in the field of biology and later expanded to include sociology and psychology.

Generative linguistics, which was dominant in the early twentieth century, conceptualised language as a managed system, detached from its communicative context, organised around, and explained by an established set of rules. However, Einar Haugen (1972) was dissatisfied with such linguistic descriptions. He argued that “linguists have generally been too eager to get on with the phonology, grammar, and lexicon” rather than discussing “the

social status and function of the language in question” (Haugen, 1972, p. 325). The basis for his argument was that language is inseparably intertwined with its communicative context; a view Haugen (1987) acknowledged as being inspired by Pike’s (1967) work, through tagmemic analysis, on creating a theory for both language and human behaviour. According to Haugen, human languages are intertwined with and embedded in their historical, social, and political contexts, and consequently, linguists needed to adopt a holistic approach to understanding them (Eliasson, 2015).

The term ‘language ecology’ relies on an analogy between two sets of elements: the first in the field of biology, and the second in the field of language. The two sets of elements are: interactions between living organisms and their natural environment, and interactions between language and the community of speakers who use it. In biology, an ecology represents the interactions between an organism and its natural environment. In linguistics, a language acts as an instrument for communication and has life, purpose, and form, and each can be studied and viewed as an aspect of human behaviour. The relationship between both sets of elements are equivalent, as shown in Figure 4 below (Garner, 2004, p. 30). (Note that the double arrow represents the interactions between both elements, while the equals sign represents the analogy between the two sets of elements.)



*Figure 4.* Analogy of ecology in biology and linguistics (adapted from Garner, 2004, p. 30).

In Haugen’s view, a language is like a living organism—a language is born, it has a life span where it grows and changes, then it falls ill and dies (Haugen, 1972). A language

environment is therefore not a physical setting, but rather a social and cultural setting where a language is in use, as described by Haugen (1972, p. 325):

The true environment of a language is the society that uses it as one of its codes. Language exists only in the minds of its users, and it only functions in relating these users to one another and to nature, i.e., their social and natural environment. Part of its ecology is therefore psychological: its interaction with other languages in the minds of bi- and multilingual speakers. Another part of its ecology is sociological: its interaction with the society in which it functions as a medium of communication. The ecology of a language is determined primarily by the people who learn it, use it, and transmit it to others.

In other words, a language should not be viewed only as a set of rules that exist independently from its speakers. Rather, it should be understood in conjunction with its speakers in a community. The integration of social, cultural, and historical aspects of a community is important in forming a dynamic and interactive language environment rather than a static and descriptive language environment. Haugen (1972, pp. 328-329) emphasised that language ecology should cover “a broad range of interests within which linguists can cooperate significantly with all kinds of social scientists towards an understanding of the interaction of languages and their users”. Thus, as a first step towards this multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach, he provided a series of questions that cover a set of linguistic subdisciplines:

- What is its classification in relation to other languages?
- Who are its users?
- What are its domains of use?
- What concurrent languages are employed by its users?

- What internal varieties does the language show?
- What is the nature of its written traditions?
- To what degree has its written form been standardised; that is, unified and codified?
- What kind of institutional support has it won, either in government, education, or private organisations, either to regulate its form or propagate it?
- What are the attitudes of its users towards the language, in terms of intimacy and status, leading to personal identification?
- Where does the language stand and where it is going in comparison with other languages of the world? (Haugen, 1972, pp. 336-337).

These questions are useful points of entry into better understanding how languages function in and interact with, language users in a community. Further, they provide the groundwork for considering how such language use and interactions impact that community. As Haugen (1972) emphasises, a language ecology is shaped by the community who uses, learns, and transmits the language to others; yet, the ecology simultaneously shapes the community socially, culturally, linguistically, and psychologically (Hatoss, 2013).

Around the time Haugen presented his ecological questions, many indigenous communities in North America and Europe were engaging with language planning and policy to tackle the process of language shift. Linguists such as Mackey (1976, 1980) and Haarmann (1980, 1986) were working on an inventory of factors motivating language maintenance and language shift. Mackey (1976, 1980) integrated Haugen's notion of language ecology into his research on the use, death, decline, and vulnerability of a given language. Haarmann (1980, 1986, p. vii) also explored language ecology through the application of Haugen's ten ecological questions, which he developed into a set of seven categories of language ecological variables for employment as "a tool for further research on the covariance of language use and the dynamics of environmental factors". However, as Edwards (2010) observes, Haarmann's set

of language ecological variables are incomplete and a number of them need further categorisation. Thus, Haarmann's framework will not be employed in this study.

Other scholars helped establish language ecology as a framework for understanding how languages interact in given environments. Scholars such as Mühlhäusler (1996, 2000, 2001, 2003) and Mufwene (2001, 2005, 2008) applied language ecology in their studies on language evolution, while Hornberger (1998, 2004) used it in educational research. In his work on the languages of the Pacific region, Mühlhäusler (1996, 2000, 2001, 2003) argued that languages were not isolated systems but had important interactions with other systems outside the realm of linguistics, including culture, politics, and the environment (Liddicoat & Bryant, 2003). He developed an ecological approach that considered the wide range of environmental factors that play a role in the survival and decline of languages. His work, which demonstrated the interconnection between the symbolic and natural ecology of language, served as a foundation for the critical turn of ecolinguistic work in the 1990s. Mufwene (2001, 2005, 2008) borrowed concepts from biology and treated language as a cultural tool that was used, adapted, and discarded according to the changing environments of the speakers. His studies focused on the macroecological relations of both external and internal ecologies—the relationships between languages and the relationships within languages. In Hornberger's (1998, 2004) research, language ecology was used as a metaphor that provided an ideological framework for educational language planning and policy, particularly those focused on multilingual communities.

As it is evident in the above works, there is a difference between the metaphor of language ecology and the reference to biological ecology (Fill, 2001). In some studies (see, for example, Hornberger, 1998, 2004), the interactions between language and its environment are discussed metaphorically, while in other studies (see, for example, Mufwene, 2001, 2005,

2008), the focus is on how a language describes the natural environment. Fill (2001) identified four ways to differentiate the terms and their various usages:

1. *Ecolinguistics*: This term is described as “the study of interdependence of language and the interpretation of the natural world we live in” (S. Chen, 2016, p. 108). In other words, ecolinguists deal with the interactions between language and its natural environment.
2. *Ecology of language/languages*: This term refers to the “investigation of the interaction of languages” (Fill, 1996, p. x). It is used in research on the preservation of language diversity where languages co-exist with each other in a metaphorical ecology.
3. *Ecological linguistics*: This term is defined as “linguistics that carries over concepts and principles (e.g., ‘ecosystem’) borrowed from ecology” (Fill, 1996, p. x). In other words, this term is concerned about language and its social and geographical environment.
4. *Language ecology*: This term is understood as “the study of interactions between any given language and its environment” (Haugen, 1972, p. 325). It was inspired by Haugen as a first step towards an ecological approach to language.

These four ways of differentiating between the metaphor of language ecology and the reference to biological ecology demonstrate that an ecological approach to language is versatile because it encompasses “the complex web of relationships that exist between the environment, languages, and their speakers” (Wendel, 2005, p. 51).

Moving into the second decade of the century, many socio and applied linguists began to acknowledge language ecology as a new direction in advancing the study of language given its broad potential for application. Scholars increasingly began to see it as a way of offering a rich and holistic perspective for understanding and appreciating human languages and their

environment (Ansaldi, 2015; Eliasson, 2015). In postmodern scholarship on language, language ecology is used in a more general sense; that is, languages exist in a particular ecology along with other languages, dialects, and the ways languages are spoken (Kaplan and Baldauf, 2008). For example, in language acquisition research, an ecological approach enables scholars to view “[an] individual’s cognitive processes as inextricably interwoven with their experiences in the physical and social world” (Leather & van Dam, 2003, p. 13). In the field of language planning and policy, an ecological paradigm allows scholars to associate languages and their contexts in complex ways and diminish the distance between a broad approach to the sociologies of language and a more acutely focused one (Pennycook, 2004). For language maintenance and language shift studies, an ecological framework provides a basis for scholars to restore relationships among speakers in a community through a process of raising consciousness and re-establishing networks where languages are used (Edwards, 2001; Fettes, 1997b). In research on language ideologies, an ecological perspective serves as a foundation for scholars to explain the relationship between languages and social groupings, and how languages are used to structure and justify inequality (Fleming, 2017).

The ecological approach to language today goes beyond what sociolinguists had traditionally studied (Ansaldi, 2015). For scholars such as Eliasson (2013), it is irrelevant to argue whether language ecology should be envisaged as a metaphor, a research technique, or a field of study. Rather, the focus should lie on studying the link between language and its social and cultural context, as expressed in Haugen’s original definition. By doing so, we can see that language ecology is in fact the ecology of language users, while the environment—its social and cultural setting—influences the language and its users, who in turn shape their language use. This view allows the research focus to shift to examining what language users do with and to their languages under certain social and cultural conditions. Therefore, while Haugen’s proposal on language ecology is rather ambitious (Ansaldi, 2015; Eliasson, 2013), its



application can nevertheless still yield valuable insights in studies that engage with multifarious and social-grounded language communities—especially those experiencing language shift and significant language change—as languages are always “embedded in social, cultural, economic, and physical ecologies, and in relationship to each other” (Pennycook, 2004, p. 214).

As the above review shows, the notion of language ecology was initially proposed by Haugen in 1972 to study the interactions between language and its environment. By the early 1980s, scholars were using it in language planning and policy studies to engage with indigenous communities facing language shift. Since then, language ecology has largely moved on, with different but related terms developed and primarily employed as a metaphor in the field of applied linguistics. However, in this thesis, I return to the roots of ecological studies to examine Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. The current study concurs with Eliasson’s (2013, 2015) recent reenvisioning of the origins of language ecology and identification of the possibilities it offers in helping make sense of increasingly complex and interrelated modern-day language environments. To do this, it travels back to the roots of Haugen’s (1972) original definition of language ecology, which is found to provide a valuable overarching conceptual framework. As Eliasson (2015, p. 90) observes, Haugen’s “taxonomy focuses chiefly on how social factors affect the form and use of language, and his brand of language ecology deals therefore to a large extent with linguistic variation”. Further, his “ecological-thinking way of looking at data fulfils an important heuristic function” (Eliasson, 2015, p. 90) in evaluating how languages interact with their users in complex language environments. Thus, in a study of the everyday use of community languages and that community’s efforts to maintain them—that is, changes in language use in specific social and cultural contexts, and the community’s practical efforts to address these changes—Haugen’s (1972) notion of language ecology stands out among the four terms identified by Fill (2001) as the most suitable framework for this present study. Specifically, it offers a flexible tool that

can help to: (1) capture the complexity of the relationship between Chinese community languages and Penang's Chinese community, and (2) understand the interactions of these community languages with their users in different domains.

The ecological framework that has been developed for this study is explained in full detail in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.4). But for the purposes of this chapter, it is useful to briefly note that my adoption of Haugen's notion of language ecology basically entails using his ten ecological questions as outlined on pages 62 and 63 above, as points of entry into better understanding how languages function in, and interact with, language users in a community. This is particularly important for the purposes of this study since it supports the idea that language ecology is shaped by the community socially, culturally, linguistically, and psychologically and vice-versa (Hatoss, 2013). In other words, the ecology analogy is particularly useful for this study because it captures the dynamic, multidirectional influence languages and community have on each other in Penang's Chinese community.

## **2.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided a review of the literature in three discrete areas. The first area provided a brief explanation of two important concepts—language shift and language maintenance. Language shift refers to a gradual replacement of one language by another in a society, while language maintenance is the maintenance of a language in its original speech community. The focus then moved to an overview of the language situation of the Chinese community in Malaysia. The review indicated that the existing literature shows that in the Malaysian-Chinese community, there has been a decisive shift to the use of Mandarin Chinese and a tendency to abandon Chinese community languages, mainly due to the educational and economic advantages gained from using Mandarin Chinese. There is little focus in the literature

on the maintenance of Chinese community languages, particularly the role of the Malaysian Federal Government, the state Government, and the local community. This limitation provides a rationale for this study.

The second area explored the broader (non-Malaysia) field of language maintenance and language shift studies. Five areas were identified as relevant to analysis of language maintenance and language shift, three of which are adapted as part of my conceptual framework and one (linguistic landscape) were adapted as a research tool for data collection (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.4.2). The three areas of analysis are: (1) the concept of domains to describe social spaces of language use; (2) motivation, attitudes, and beliefs; and (3) language planning and policy.

The third area reviewed the concept of ecology as a way of conceiving this study and provided a rationale for adapting Haugen's (1972) notion of language ecology for my conceptual framework. The next chapter describes the study design, conceptual framework, and how the research was carried out.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Study Design, Conceptual Framework, and Methodology**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

Chapter 2 reviewed the past studies of Chinese community languages in Malaysia, key areas of analysis in the wider field of language maintenance and language shift, and the notion of language ecology. The review contains conceptual insights that help inform key components for investigating the Chinese community language situation in Penang. Based on these insights, this chapter presents a description of the study design, conceptual framework, and methods used in addressing the issue of language maintenance pertaining to Chinese community languages in Malaysia, as seen in the Chinese community in Penang.

This chapter is structured as follows: I begin by stating the purpose of this study, which includes the central argument, aims, overarching and subsidiary research questions, (Section 3.1), and the rationale for choosing a qualitative research methodology as a method of enquiry (Section 3.2). I then explain the underlying philosophies of the study (Section 3.2.1), justify the reasons for employing a case study approach (Section 3.3), identify the types of case studies (Section 3.3.1), and describe the research site (Section 3.3.2). Details of sampling decisions and data sources are then detailed (Sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4), together with a description of my conceptual framework (Section 3.4). A diagram illustrating the study design is also presented (Section 3.5). Next, I provide a detailed discussion of the fieldwork (Section 3.6), which is divided into three stages, and a description of data analysis procedures (Section 3.7). Some ethical considerations of the research methodology (Section 3.8) and reflections on my insider

and outsider status in the field are provided (Section 3.8.1) and the limitations of the study design are presented (Section 3.8.2).

### **3.1 Purpose of the Study**

The literature review in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.1.2) shows there is evidence of a widespread language shift from Chinese community languages to Mandarin Chinese in Malaysia (see, for example, Ting & Puah, 2017; X. M. Wang, 2012, 2016b). A combination of social, cultural, and political influences has motivated this shift (see, for example, E. Lee et al., 2014; Sim, 2012; Ting & Puah, 2010a, 2010b) and discouraged the use of Chinese community languages in public and private spaces. This situation raises questions about the role, status, and survival of these Chinese community languages in Malaysian society. The complex and dynamic language ecology in the predominantly Chinese city of Penang serves to highlight tensions between dominant and community languages. This situation highlights the need for further research into language maintenance efforts within the Chinese community in Penang.

The purpose of the current study is to explore the relationship between national language policy and the situation of Chinese community languages in Penang. My central argument is that it is only possible to address the issue of language maintenance of the Chinese community in Penang by understanding:

- (a) the expectations of key social actors (policymakers in government and community members) who actively support maintenance of the language; and
- (b) the political, social, and market-driven limitations on those expectations.

To conduct this exploration, three clear aims have been identified:

1. To explore the participants' use of Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in everyday life in Penang;
2. To understand the participants' perceptions of the importance of Chinese community language maintenance in Penang, their predictions for the future of these languages, and their interpretation of the linguistic landscape of Penang; and
3. To examine the official planning efforts in place in Penang relating to Chinese community language maintenance and the extent to which these efforts are actively supported in local Chinese communities.

A literature review on the key areas of analysis in the field of language maintenance and language shift (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2) and my personal experience as a member of the Chinese community in Penang led me to consider these three distinct aspects. These aims are subsequently addressed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 respectively.

Based on these aims, this study seeks to answer the following two overarching research questions:

*RQ1:* To what extent are official planning efforts to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang reflected in the everyday use of these languages?

*RQ2:* What factors account for any discrepancies between official planning efforts and on-the-ground practice?

While these questions inform the whole study, both overarching research questions are directly addressed in the final chapter of this thesis.

In addressing the three aims, six subsidiary research questions were designed to guide the study. They are as follows:

1. How do participants maintain Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese as part of their everyday life in Penang?
2. What other languages are used alongside Chinese community languages in Penang?
3. What perceptions do participants hold regarding Chinese community language maintenance in Penang?
4. What are participants' predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang?
5. How do participants perceive the linguistic landscape of Penang in relation to Chinese community language maintenance?
6. What organised efforts are made by each group of participants to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang?

The first and second subsidiary research questions respond to the first aim. To explore participants' use of Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in everyday life in Penang, I consider how participants use them when communicating with friends, family members, and colleagues, in religious practices, for entertainment purposes, or accessing culturally specific recipes. I also investigate whether they use these languages alongside other languages (see Chapter 4). The third, fourth, and fifth subsidiary research questions respond to the second aim, which is to understand participants' perceptions of the importance of Chinese community language maintenance in Penang, their predictions for the future of these languages, and their interpretation of the linguistic landscape of Penang. I discuss with participants whether they value the community languages and how they see them being used in the future. I also gather their opinions on how they respond to these languages when seen in the landscape (see Chapter 5). The sixth subsidiary research question responds to the third aim. To examine the official planning efforts in place in Penang relating to Chinese community language maintenance and the extent to which these efforts are actively supported in local

Chinese communities, I uncover the strategic efforts made by various institutions in relation to Chinese community language maintenance in Penang (see Chapter 6).

To uncover and articulate the complexities of the phenomenon of Chinese community language maintenance in Penang, this study uses qualitative research methods. The following section discusses the rationale for this choice of enquiry.

### **3.2 Rationale for Choosing Qualitative Research Methods**

There are several reasons why qualitative research methods are best suited for this study. First, qualitative research methods allow a researcher to study and analyse a social problem, and later to build a complex and holistic picture of the studied problem (Cresswell, 2014). Second, they enable a researcher to view and observe the social problem through the eyes of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) in their local contexts (Flick, 2014). Third, qualitative research typically involves using different instruments such as interviews, fieldnotes, photographs, and documents to gather data, rather than relying on a single data source. Data collection usually takes place in a natural setting that allows for the understanding of “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). Finally, qualitative data analysis engages with complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic (Cresswell, 2013). Qualitative researchers build themes or patterns by organising the data and going back and forth to check the themes or patterns against the data.

On a practical level, a qualitative approach meets the needs and aims of the present study. The social problem being examined and analysed is Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. The efforts of the participants in maintaining Chinese community languages are crucial to understanding the survival and role of these languages in Penang. Since



little is known about Chinese community language maintenance in Penang, this study follows Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) suggestion of conducting the investigation in a natural setting, in this case within the Chinese community. Qualitative research methods also enable data gathering from various sources so it can be categorised for comprehensive data interpretation (Merriam, 1998), and so in-depth descriptions of responses and opinions from the different groups of participants in relation to the Chinese community language maintenance in Penang can be achieved.

### **3.2.1 Underlying philosophies.**

Over the years, qualitative researchers have adopted different philosophical paradigms to guide their ontology, epistemology and research studies. In this study, a social constructivist paradigm was adopted. Creswell (2013) explains that in a social constructivist paradigm, people seek understanding in the place they live and work and develop subjective meanings of their experiences that are directed towards specific objects or things. These subjective meanings vary according to different contexts and are usually developed through interactions with others, and through cultural and historical norms operating in their own lives. While postpositivist researchers start with a theory, social constructivist researchers work to generate a theory or pattern of meaning. This process of generating a theory or pattern of meaning is an “ongoing accomplishment” (Fish, 1990, p. 191) because knowledge and truth are constructed during the research process (Crotty, 1998).

In practical terms, the social constructivist paradigm fits the aims of this study and nature of the research questions, as they all focus on the relationship between national language policy and language maintenance in the case of Chinese community languages, and are in a natural setting that is multilingual but predominantly Chinese. This paradigm allows me as a

researcher, first, to interact with the participants by carefully listening to what they say during the interviewing process; and second, to pay close attention to the specific natural setting where the participants live and work. By doing so, I can then understand how the historical and cultural norms of this natural setting influence the participants' responses. The social constructivist paradigm also provides an awareness of how my own experience and social and cultural background may shape the research.

Thus, the characteristics of a social constructivist paradigm have guided my ontological and epistemological beliefs throughout this study.

### **3.3 Reasons for Employing a Case Study Approach**

Five approaches are commonly used to conduct qualitative research—narrative studies, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study (Cresswell, 2013). In this study, a case study approach is employed because it is particularly valuable for “responding to *how* and *why* questions about a contemporary set of events” (Meyer, 2001, p. 330) that is the phenomenon of Chinese language maintenance in Penang. A case study approach is defined as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Stake (2005, p. 443) states that a case study approach is “not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied”. In other words, it is defined by interest in the cases studied and not by the methods of inquiry (Stake, 2005). A case study approach is unique to qualitative research due to its flexibility and ability to frame an in-depth and detailed examination of a phenomenon such as a program, a group, an institution, a community, or a specific policy within a bounded system. It relies on multiple sources of evidence such as documents, interviews, archival records, and observations (Yin, 2003) to draw an intensive

description and analysis of the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998) usually overlooked by other approaches (Theodorson & Theodorson, 1969). In short, a case study approach is a tool to represent “the meanings that individual social actors bring to those settings and manufacture in them” (Stark & Torrance, 2005, p. 33).

In relation to this study, the features of a case study approach serve to address both the descriptive and explanatory research questions of this investigation, and they align with the chosen qualitative research methodology and social constructivist paradigm previously explained. Employing a case study approach enables the use of semistructured interviews and linguistic landscape photos to achieve a comprehensive and holistic description of the relationship between national language policy and Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. This approach also suits the presentation of detailed and contextual accounts of participants’ responses to and perceptions around Chinese community language maintenance, which may influence future policy and measures to ensure the survival of community languages in Malaysia.

### **3.3.1 A single instrumental case study.**

There are many ways to define a case. According to Stake (1995, p. 2), a case is “a specific, a complex, functioning thing...an integrated system which has a boundary and working parts”. For Merriam (1998, p. 27) it is “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries”. Whether a person, a program, a group or a specific policy, types of case studies are distinguished in terms of the purpose of the investigating case. There are three variations—single instrumental case study, multiple case study, and intrinsic case study (Cresswell, 2013).

For the present study, both Stake's and Merriam's definitions are taken into account when identifying the case. The phenomenon in this case study is the relationship between national language policy and Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. To investigate this relationship, this study explores the official planning efforts taking place in Penang to maintain Chinese community languages and the extent to which local Chinese communities support these efforts in their everyday life. Therefore, the identified case studied is the Penang's Chinese community and the type of case study is a single instrumental case study, as it focuses on only one issue—the efforts taken to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang. Hence, the investigated case is used to illustrate this specific issue.

### **3.3.2 Research site.**

In this single instrumental case study, Penang serves as an ideal research site for studying Chinese community language maintenance in Malaysia. Because of its long established history as a Chinese settlement (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4), the enduring presence of Chinese people in Penang has given the area a special cultural character that the Penang Government values and considers worth protecting, for both economic and cultural reasons. This makes Penang a rich site for researching language maintenance in a settler community. Below is a description of the sociolinguistic character of Penang.

Penang<sup>35</sup> (*Pulau Pinang* in Bahasa Melayu) (see Figure 5) is a multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural state situated in northern Malaysia. It consists of two parts: Penang Island and Seberang Perai, with George Town as its capital. As detailed in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.4.1), the Chinese community constitutes 39.4% of Penang's total population of

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<sup>35</sup> As Penang Island is known as Penang locally, the term 'Penang' will be used in the thesis because this study took place only on Penang Island.

1.76 million (Department of Statistics, 2018c). As in other states in Malaysia, the official language of administration, education, and the legal system in Penang is Bahasa Melayu. English is widely spoken in schools and work places and serves as an important but unofficial language in Penang. Since the establishment of the large Chinese settlement in Penang during the 17th century (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4), the Chinese community is one of the main and most important ethnic groups in the area. Among the various Chinese ethnolinguistic groups, the Hokkiens are dominant; thus, the majority of Chinese in Penang speak Penang Hokkien as their main language of communication (X. M. Wang, 2017). The Penang Hokkien Language Association encourages Chinese Penangites<sup>36</sup> to learn and actively maintain Penang Hokkien. Other Chinese community languages spoken among the Chinese community in Penang include Cantonese, Teochew, Hainan, and Hakka. Although Penang Hokkien and Chinese community languages play a significant role in the linguistic scenery of Penang, they are not taught in national or national-type schools. The only Chinese language taught in Chinese-medium primary national-type schools and secondary private schools is Mandarin Chinese (as instituted in the 1996 Education Act, Part I). Due to such explicit encouragement to learn Mandarin Chinese in the national education system by the Malaysian Federal Government, Mandarin Chinese is now becoming the language of communication in many Chinese families in Penang (X. M. Wang, 2017).

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<sup>36</sup> Refer footnote no. 33 for the definition of Penangite.

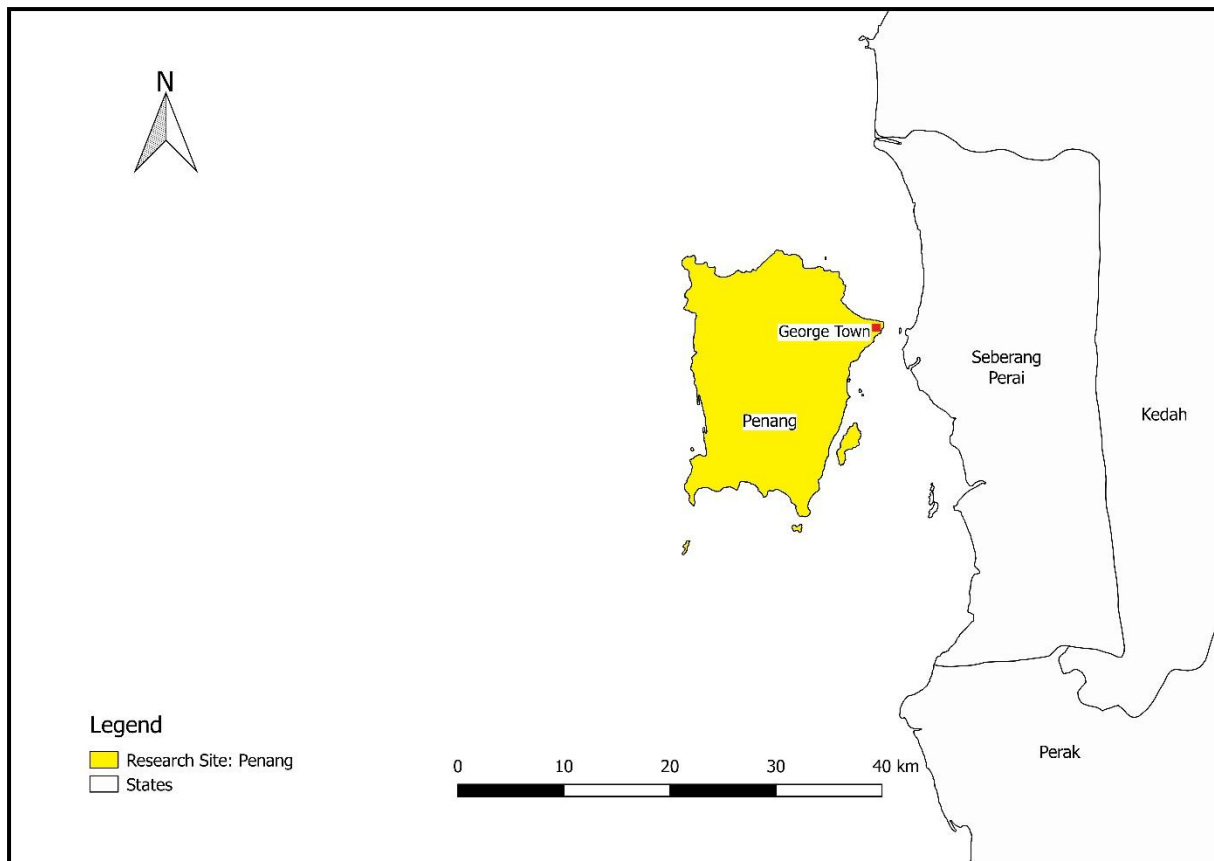


Figure 5. Penang.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.3.3 Sampling decisions.

In case study research, decisions related to sampling need to be based on what the researcher wants to explore. For this study, a purposeful sampling strategy was adopted when selecting the participants. This strategy enabled me to deliberately select information-rich cases (Patton, 2002) and relevant participants (Flick, 2014). Based on the aims of this study, two criteria were set when selecting the participants:

1. Each participant must speak one of the Chinese community languages—Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew, Hainan, Fuzhou, Taishan, or Puxian Min in

<sup>37</sup> Source: Generated by Kretzer, M. M. (2018), using Global Administrative Areas (GADM).

their everyday life. The ability of a participant to speak Mandarin Chinese will provide an insight into their experience of speaking diverse Chinese languages.

2. He/she must meet one of the age group criteria from the three generations listed:
  - i. Generation 1 – age 70 and above
  - ii. Generation 2 – age 50-69
  - iii. Generation 3 – age 30-49

This categorisation is based on different generations in my own family. Generation 1 is similar to that of my grandparents, Generation 2 is similar to my parents, and Generation 3 is my own generation. Past studies have shown that many of the younger generation currently studying at school and university in Malaysia, have shifted to predominantly speaking Mandarin Chinese (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.1.1). Based on this trend, as this study focuses on investigating the current situation of Chinese community languages in Penang, a fourth and younger generation is not considered in the research because they rarely speak or engage with Chinese community languages.

Since the main focus of this study concerns language maintenance efforts, I decided the selected participants should be people who play some role in language maintenance. Liddicoat and Baldauf (2008) state that official actors are usually involved in allocating funding and providing structural assistance for language planning, but language maintenance work itself is conducted by the local communities because individuals and communities are engaged with the language in everyday life. Taking Liddicoat and Baldauf's (2008) statement into account together with the two criteria set out above, three groups of participants, ranging from the macro level to the meso and micro levels, were selected:

1. *Official actors*—as Penang state policymakers and researchers from the government research institutes, they represent the Penang Government and play important roles in

managing legislation. Thus, they would be able to speak from an insider's point of view and provide knowledgeable insights into language maintenance in Penang.

2. *Community-based actors*—as representatives of Chinese clan associations and language promoters, they act as a channel to support and spread beliefs to individuals in the community. Even though they lack the power to manage laws, they would be able to draw on their valuable experiences of encouraging the community to maintain the Chinese community languages.
3. *Grassroots actors*—as individual participants of the Chinese community in Penang, they play vital roles in interpreting the laws enforced by the government and putting them into action. These individual participants, both men and women, have been selected to represent all five domains adopted from Fishman, Cooper, and Ma's (1971) study: (i) family, (ii) friendship, (iii) religion, (iv) education, and (v) employment. Representing each of the different domains, these actors are able to provide specific insights on their language behaviours, which is crucial to understanding the wider dynamics of language maintenance in the multilingual landscape of Penang.

In short, the selected three groups of participants were well suited to answering the research questions in my study.

#### **3.3.4 Data sources.**

Using multiple sources of evidence enables the researcher to gain a rich picture of the case from several different perspectives and work towards developing the reliability of the study. However, selecting appropriate sources relies on the aims and purpose of the study. In this study, the evidence was collected from two sources: (1) semistructured interviews and (2) linguistic landscape photos. Semistructured interviews act as a primary data source, while



linguistic landscape photos act as a secondary data source to support the primary data and allow cross-checking for consistency. The benefits of using these two data sources are as follows.

#### ***3.3.4.1 Primary data source: Semistructured interviews.***

Interviews play an important role in case studies. Interviews are defined as “a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study” (DeMarrais, 2004, p. 55). There are four advantages of using interviews as a data source (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Patton, 2002):

1. interviews allow the researcher to find out what is going on in the participants’ mind, and discover things that cannot be observed directly;
2. they assist the researcher to explore and understand meanings of a study in depth;
3. participants can express their feelings, thoughts, and actions explicitly through interviews; and
4. interviews support those participants who are not fluent readers/writers to verbally participate in a study.

Given these advantages, interviews were chosen as the primary data source to collect qualitative data for this study.

According to Merriam (1998), there are three common types of interviews—highly structured, semistructured, and unstructured. This study uses semistructured interviews, which means they are “based around a set of topics and a loosely defined set of questions” (Borg, 2006, p. 203). Due to their loose structure (Fontana & Frey, 1994), semistructured interviews enable the researcher to develop a rapport with participants while assisting the researcher with an interview guide that serves as a checklist during the interviewing process (Cohen & Manion, 1994) to ensure consistency (Patton, 2015). The interview guide for the three selected groups

of participants is attached in Appendices D and E. The guide was written in English to align with the language used for the presentation of this thesis. However, in cases where participants requested the interview be conducted in any of the Chinese community languages, the interview guide was translated by me, a multilingual speaker, into the requested language (for example, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, or Mandarin Chinese) during the interviewing process. This was done to ensure authentic data could be collected, despite the use of other languages besides English. In the interview guide, the questions developed related to the organised language maintenance efforts made by different groups of participants; their use of the Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in everyday life; their opinions on the importance of maintaining the Chinese community languages; their predictions for the future of these community languages; and their views about Penang's linguistic landscape.

#### ***3.3.4.2 Secondary data source: Linguistic landscape photos.***

As mentioned in the review of the literature (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.5), the linguistic landscape has become an important research tool in the study of language maintenance and language shift over the last decade because it can be used to diagnose the visibility of languages in a community. The indexical orders of languages (Silverstein, 2003) and the language attitudes displayed in the landscape (Ben Said, 2010) can also be studied. In addition to interviews as a primary data source, this study uses linguistic landscape photos as a secondary data source to elicit conceptual information that is “less direct than verbal data (i.e., interviews)” (Lou, 2009, p. 84) from participants regarding their attitudes towards Chinese community language maintenance in Penang.

According to Backhaus (2007), two fundamental points need to be taken into consideration when conducting linguistic landscape research; namely, the determination of the

survey items and the geographic limits of the survey area. In the current study, the survey items are confined to the definition provided by Shohamy and Waksman (2009), which includes public road signs, street names, advertising billboards and banners, commercial shop signs, and semiotic artifacts such as Chinese lanterns. And the geographical survey area is limited to various locations within the five domains (Fishman et al., 1971) of family, friendship, religion, education, and employment that are located around Penang, to guarantee wider representative coverage of the survey area and observe trends in different domains. The various locations are identified as follows:

1. Family domain – my aunts’ and grandparents’ houses
2. Friendship domain – Jetty, Chinese clan associations, coffee shops, bus-stops
3. Religion domain – Buddhist and Taoist temples, Chinese-language churches
4. Education domain – Chinese-language national primary and private secondary schools
5. Employment domain – streetscape, markets, Teochew Puppet Museum

### **3.4 Developing a Conceptual Framework**

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between national language policy and the situation of Chinese community languages in Penang. Thus, I developed a study design to conduct the exploration, which was explained in Sections 3.2 and 3.3. In this section, I continue to describe the conceptual framework I developed as part of the study design. This framework is adapted from Einar Haugen’s (1972) notion of language ecology. It draws together three key components—language use, language perceptions, and language planning and policy—to guide the data collection and analysis. Each component under this framework addresses one or more of the overarching and subsidiary research questions.

The conceptual framework begins with a short description of how I have adapted Haugen's (1972) notion of language ecology. I describe the first aspect of the framework, language use, which will inform the area of my study that relates specifically to how the Chinese community in Penang use Chinese community languages in everyday life. The findings of this aspect are discussed in Chapter 4. From there, I describe the second aspect of the framework, language perceptions, which will establish an understanding of the community's perceptions of Chinese community language maintenance and the linguistic landscape in Penang. A discussion of this aspect is presented in Chapter 5. Finally, I explain the third aspect of the framework, language planning and policy, which brings together the various efforts made by different organisations in Penang to support Chinese community language maintenance. These efforts are reported in Chapter 6.

### **3.4.1 The conceptual framework.**

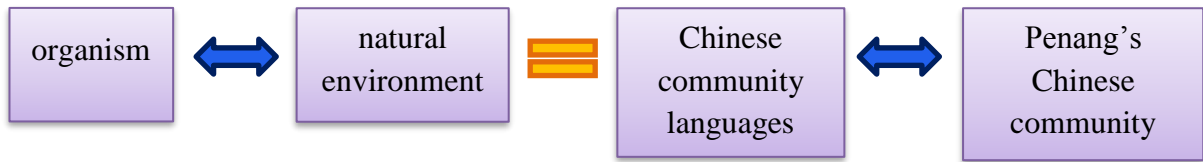
As discussed in Chapter 1 (see Sections 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4), the present-day language ecology of Penang is the result of a complex interaction between:

1. the pre-independence history of Chinese and Indian migrations to Malaya and British colonial policy that reinforced division between ethnic groups;
2. the effect of post-independence language policy and nation-building processes that place Bahasa Melayu as the country's national and official language while English acts as the unofficial language;
3. the National Language Acts 1963/1967, which guarantees the use of other languages besides the national and official language (for example, Mandarin Chinese and Chinese community languages) in everyday life; and

4. the language shifting that is taking place within the Chinese community—as the literature review in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.1) reveals, the younger generation of Penang’s Chinese community are currently exhibiting reduced use of Chinese community languages and moving towards speaking Mandarin Chinese with friends and family (X. M. Wang, 2016b, 2017).

Indeed, it can be argued that the pre- and post-independence periods have produced a dynamic language ecology in Penang due to the way dominant languages, community languages, and non-standard language varieties have coexisted and intertwined in the community. These languages have impacted on one another, and both shape and have been shaped by, language users in the ecology.

Therefore, to capture and understand this complex relationship between national language policy and the situation of Chinese community languages in Penang, I argue that Haugen’s (1972) notion of language ecology is most appropriate to employ as an overarching conceptual framework. This choice is supported by Wendel’s (2005) argument that an ecological approach to language encompasses the complex relationship between languages, their environment, and their users. The employment of Haugen’s notion of language ecology enables me to draw an analogy between: (1) environmental concerns about living organisms, and (2) cultural concerns about languages, as illustrated in Chapter 2 (see Figure 4 in Section 2.3.1). In the case of Penang’s language ecology (see Figure 6), the language element refers to Chinese community languages while the speech community refers to Penang’s Chinese community. By using this language ecology perspective, I will be able to critically explore the many interactions that take place between Penang’s Chinese community and their community languages in everyday life.



*Figure 6.* Analogy of ecology in biology and language ecology of Penang.

Haugen (1972) emphasises the need for a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach towards language and he argues that language ecology should cover a wide range of interests so linguists can work with scholars from other disciplines to better understand the interaction between languages and their users. To achieve this goal, he provides a set of relevant ecological questions (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1) that covers a set of linguistic subdisciplines. Far from being outdated, contemporary scholars such as Eliasson (2015) praise this holistic way of looking at data and highlight the important role of Haugen’s ecological questions in evaluating how languages are conceived and their relationships studied in deeply complex contexts. Thus, in addition to employing Haugen’s (1972) notion of language ecology as an overarching conceptual framework, the current study employs Haugen’s ten ecological questions to draw together the study’s data gathering tools and assist in analysing the interview transcripts. They are particularly useful in understanding how the Chinese community languages function in and interact with Penang’s Chinese community in specific social and cultural domains, and the community’s efforts to maintain these languages due to the extent Penang’s Chinese language ecology is shaped by its community—socially, culturally, linguistically, and psychologically, and vice-versa (Hatoss, 2013). Thus, this ecological conceptual framework allows me to bring together the three important elements of language use, language perceptions, and language planning and policy, to describe the different areas of analysis in this study. The sections below explain each of the three elements.

### **3.4.2 Language use in the ecological framework.**

The first component in this conceptual framework uses the concept of domain to describe social spaces of language use. Based on the discussion in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2.2), I argue that the concept of domain is a particularly suitable tool for classifying typical social settings and outlining patterns of how speakers in a community use their language, what their language choices are, and their attitudes towards the language. Moreover, persistence and consistency are also important in ensuring regular use of community languages. In brief, language use is “a reinforcement for language maintenance” (Pauwels, 2008, p. 732) and thus, language maintenance efforts can be studied through the examination of language use in different domains; not only in the family domain but also that of the neighbourhood such as in shops, markets, and streets.

To address the first and second subsidiary research questions “How do participants maintain Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese as part of their everyday life in Penang?” and “What other languages are used alongside Chinese community languages in Penang?”, the concept of domain is adopted to examine everyday language use in the Chinese community in Penang. Five domains in Penang are selected to explore how the participants in this study use Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in their everyday life. The five domains were adopted from Fishman, Cooper, and Ma’s (1971) study and was discussed in detail in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.3.3), with findings based on the concept of domain reported in Chapter 4.

### **3.4.3 Language perceptions in the ecological framework.**

The second component of my conceptual framework draws together a collection of subjective factors, which are motivation, beliefs, and attitudes, to address how participants in

this study perceive Chinese community language maintenance in Penang and interpret the linguistic landscape in relation to the vitality of Chinese community languages. These subjective factors are referred to as language perceptions in this study. Based on the review in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2.3), like other scholars in the field, I argue that motivation is needed as a push factor to encourage members of a society to learn their community languages. Without a strong desire and purpose, members of a given community will not have the motivation to learn and retain community languages especially in multilingual societies where dominant languages are considered so much more important to learn. The motivation to learn community languages is associated with individuals' attitudes, consistency of learning, confidence in speaking, and the time and effort put into learning the languages. In addition to motivation and attitudes, Schiffman (1996) points out that beliefs are also part of the social conditions that determine whether a community language will survive or die. Schiffman's argument is valid in establishing a link between members' efforts and their beliefs about the learning progress. In short, these three subjective factors are interconnected, as Baker (1992) notes, although the differences between them are difficult to tease out in practice.

As the three subjective factors of motivation, attitudes, and beliefs are interrelated, I use the overarching term 'language perceptions' to refer to them. Language perceptions play an important role in addressing my third, fourth, and fifth subsidiary research questions, "What perceptions do participants hold regarding Chinese community language maintenance in Penang?", "What are participants' predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang?", and "How do participants perceive the linguistic landscape of Penang in relation to Chinese community language maintenance?". Language perceptions is defined in this study as a set of interpretations about language expressed by users as justification for their view on language use. This definition is employed in Chapter 5 to understand participants' perceptions



about Chinese community language maintenance and the linguistic landscape of Penang, as well as their predictions for the future of these community languages.

#### **3.4.4 Language planning and policy in the ecological framework.**

The third component of my conceptual framework is based on language planning and policy. As reviewed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2.4), language planning is usually associated with activities undertaken by a legal authority, such as governmental bodies, while language policy is related to a set of language planning documents, ideas, and regulations intended to achieve language change. In line with other scholars in this field, I argue that when studying language planning and policy activities, it is necessary to consider the multiple levels of agents, because they often work simultaneously and frequently overlap. In most cases, fundamental language planning activities take place at the macro level while implementation is realised at the micro level. Yet, the distinction between these levels of language planning is not always clear, because they are intrinsically interconnected.

Thus, in addressing the sixth subsidiary research question “What organised efforts are made by each group of participants to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang?”, I will explore the language planning and policy efforts made by different levels of agencies in the ecology of Penang. In order not to only focus on macro level agencies and include what is happening at the grassroots level, the employment of the macro, meso, and micro levels of language planning in the Penang’s Chinese community language environment helps uncover “the indistinct voices, covert motivations, embedded ideologies, invisible instances, or unintended consequences of language planning and policy” (Hornberger & Johnson, 2011, p. 278). The findings are reported in Chapter 6.

### 3.4.5 Illustration of the conceptual framework.

To summarise, this study uses the notion of language ecology as an organising framework (see Section 3.4.1) and comprises the three key elements of language use, language perceptions, and language planning and policy (see Sections 3.4.2, 3.4.3, and 3.4.4). Figure 7 below illustrates their connections.

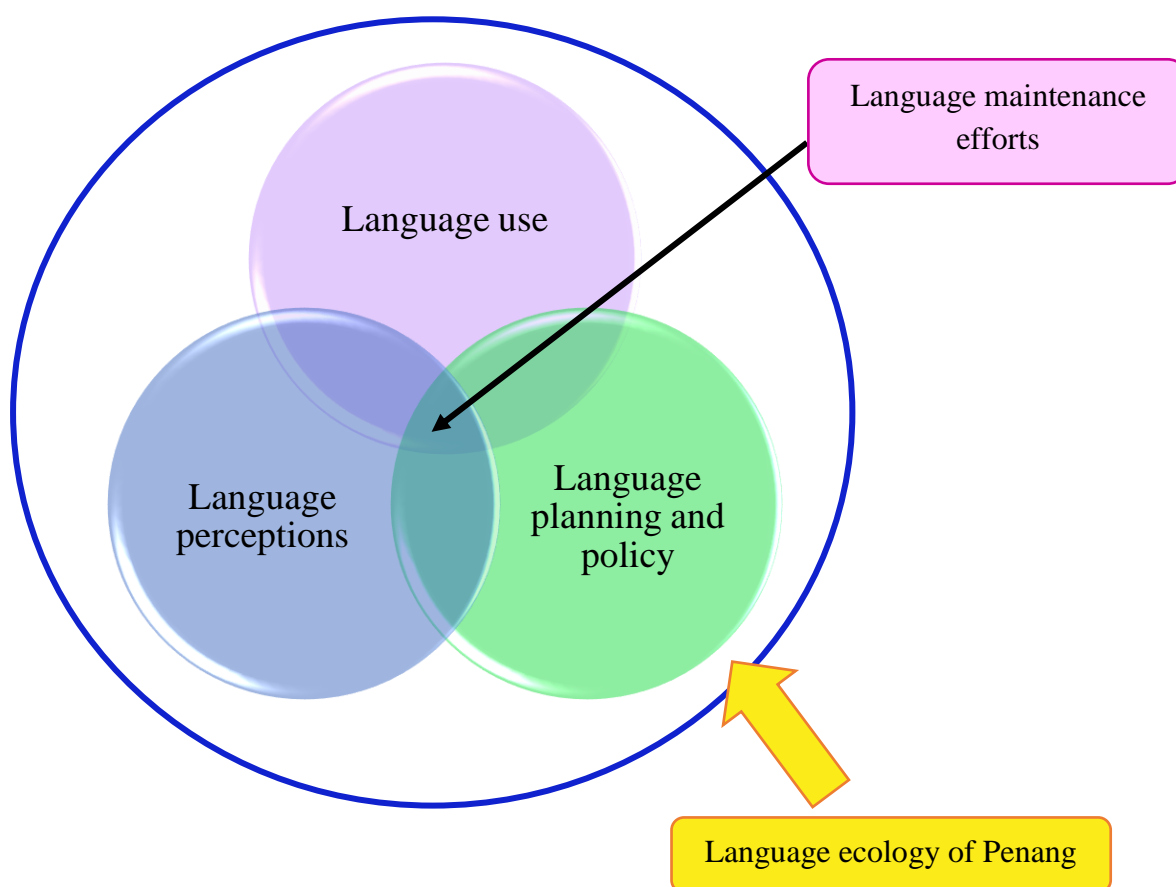


Figure 7. Conceptual framework.

## 3.5 Summary of Study Design

To sum up the study design, sections 3.2 and 3.2.1 state the rationale for choosing a qualitative research methodology and adopting a social constructivist paradigm based on the

aims and purpose of this study. Section 3.3 provides the reasons for employing a case study approach and section 3.3.1 identifies this study as a single instrumental case study, where the phenomenon explored is the relationship between national language policy and Chinese community language maintenance in Penang and the case studied is the Chinese community in Penang. Section 3.3.2 explains that Penang was chosen as the research site due its long establishment as a Chinese settlement and its cultural characteristics. Section 3.3.3 discusses considerations for selecting participants and the three groups selected: (1) official actors, (2) community-based actors, and (3) grassroots actors. Section 3.3.4 considers the data sources for this study, which are semistructured interviews and linguistic landscape photos. Lastly, section 3.4 describes the conceptual framework, which adapts Haugen's (1972) notion of language ecology and draws together three key components of language use, language perceptions, and language planning and policy. Figure 8 illustrates a summary diagram of the study design.

## Language Maintenance in Malaysia: A Case Study of the Chinese Community in Penang

### Purpose of the study:

To explore the relationship between national language policy and the situation of Chinese community languages in Penang, Malaysia

### Aims of the study:

- (1) To explore the participants' use of Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in everyday life in Penang;
- (2) To understand the participants' perceptions of the importance of Chinese community language maintenance in Penang, their predictions for the future of these languages, and their interpretation of the linguistic landscape of Penang; and
- (3) To examine the official planning efforts in place in Penang relating to Chinese community language maintenance and the extent to which these efforts are actively supported in local Chinese communities.

### Argument:

It is only possible to address the issue of language maintenance of the Chinese community in Penang by understanding:

- (a) The expectations of key social actors (policymakers in government and community members) who actively support maintenance of the language; and
- (b) The political, social, and market-driven limitations on those expectations.

### Overarching research questions:

*RQ1:* To what extent are official planning efforts to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang reflected in the everyday use of these languages?

*RQ2:* What factors account for any discrepancies between official planning efforts and on-the-ground practice?

### Subsidiary research questions:

1. How do participants maintain Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese as part of their everyday life in Penang?
2. What other languages are used alongside Chinese community languages in Penang?
3. What perceptions do participants hold regarding Chinese community language maintenance in Penang?
4. What are participants' predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang?
5. How do participants perceive the linguistic landscape of Penang in relation to Chinese community language maintenance?
6. What organised efforts are made by each group of participants to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang?

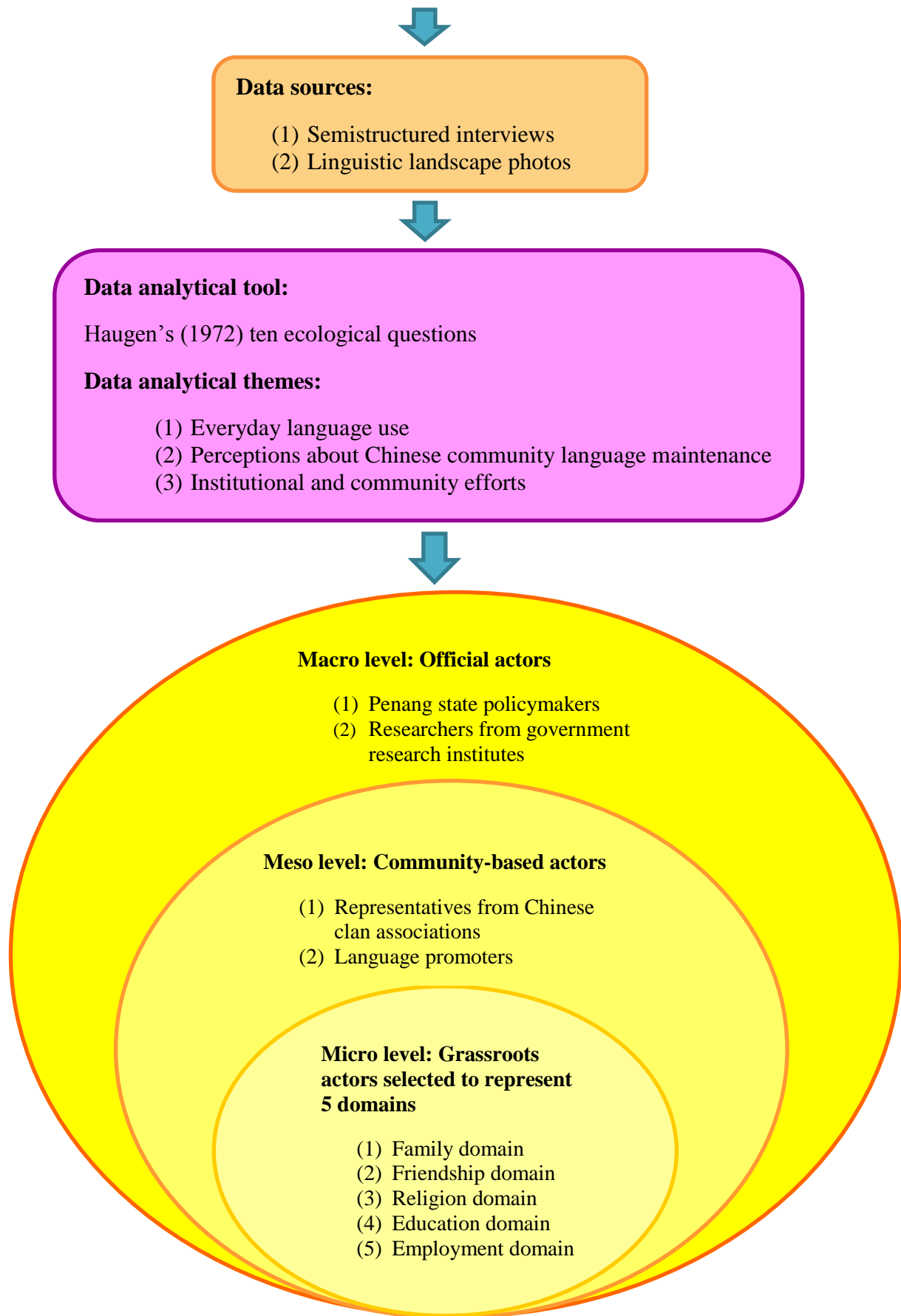
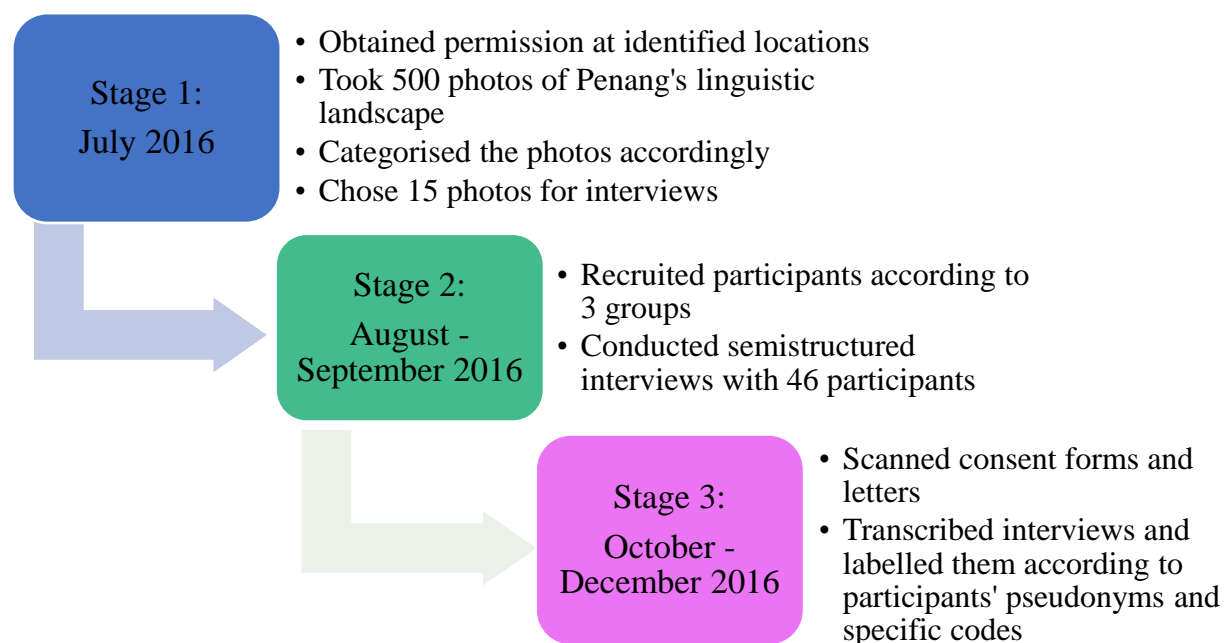


Figure 8. Study design.

### 3.6 Conducting Fieldwork

Based on the study design illustrated in Figure 8 (see Section 3.5) and the research proposal, an ethical clearance (GU Ref No: 2016/409) was sought from Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee in May 2016. Once clearance was received, the fieldwork was carried out in three stages in two places, Penang (Malaysia) and Brisbane (Australia)—as illustrated below in Figure 9 and detailed in the following sections.



*Figure 9.* Three stages in fieldwork.

#### 3.6.1 Stage 1: Collecting linguistic landscape photos.

Stage 1 of my fieldwork reports the steps taken when collecting linguistic landscape photos in Penang. The linguistic landscape photos are crucial in this study because they are used to confirm and validate participants' use of and perceptions towards the maintenance of Chinese community languages in Penang.

The first step was to visit the locations identified in Section 3.3.4.2 and obtain permission to use those locations as the survey site. For the family domain, I contacted two of my aunts who kindly granted me permission to use both their and my late grandparents' houses as survey areas. I took photos of Chinese cultural objects I observed in both houses. For the friendship, religion, and employment domains, I visited the identified locations and sought the verbal permission of the person in charge before taking photographs in those locations. I also provided them with an information sheet (see Appendix F) for further details of my study. For the education domain, I submitted a letter (see Appendix G) regarding my study to four Chinese-language national primary and private secondary schools to seek the principals' permission use the schools as a survey site for linguistic landscape photography.

After obtaining permission at all locations, I took 500 photos of public road signs, street names, advertising billboards and banners, commercial shop signs, and artifacts such as Chinese lanterns and calendars, using a digital camera. I then categorised the photos according to their respective domains and uploaded them onto Griffith University's Google drive. I carefully chose 15 photos from the 500, two to three photos from each domain. These 15 photos were chosen because they have different languages written on the signs, different artifacts shown, and the image quality of each photo is sharp and clear. These photos were used to elicit the participants' perceptions regarding the visibility of Chinese community languages in Penang during interviews.

### **3.6.2 Stage 2 (part 1): Recruiting participants.**

Stage 2 (part 1) of my fieldwork reports the recruitment process of participants in Penang, according to the three groups identified in Section 3.3.3. A chain/network sampling strategy was used when recruiting participants. This strategy starts by recruiting a few

participants who are interested in the study and follows by asking them to recommend other information-rich participants (Merriam, 1998). By doing so, the researcher is able to create a chain of participants who “would be good sources given the focus of inquiry” (Patton, 2015, p. 270).

For the first group of participants, the official actors, I first contacted the Penang state policymakers<sup>38</sup> by visiting their offices to explain my study, provide them with an information sheet (see Appendix A), and to request an interview with them. There were several policymakers whose offices were located a distance from my home, and hence I contacted them via email. In total, 10 policymakers were interested in the study and accepted my request. Although the Chief Minister of the Penang State Government was not available for an interview due to his busy schedule, he recommended several researchers from the government research institutes to me who contacted via email to request interviews. As three of these researchers accepted my request, in total I recruited 13 participants to represent the official actors.

The second group of participants were the community-based actors. First, I emailed an information sheet (see Appendix A) to a language promoter whose address I had found through a Google search. After explaining my study and desire for an interview, he accepted. Next, I sent out the information sheet (see Appendix A) to a Chinese clan association to request interviews. Two representatives from that particular Chinese clan association accepted my request. One recommended me to his colleagues from other Chinese clan associations and I contacted them via phone calls. In total, I interviewed five representatives from various Chinese clan associations. Then one of the Penang state policymakers from the first group of participants, recommended me to his brother who was a language promoter. His brother kindly

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<sup>38</sup> The fieldwork took place in July 2016. During that period, the Alliance of Hope ruling coalition was an opposition party in the Malaysian politics. Thus, during the interviews, the Penang state policymakers spoke from an opposition point of view, which were evident in the findings.



accepted my request for an interview and further referred me to colleagues who were actively promoting and raising awareness of Chinese community language maintenance. In total, I had 13 participants to represent the community-based actors.

The third group of participants were grassroots actors, selected to represent five domains (family, friendship, religion, education, and employment). For the first domain of family, I contacted my family members to explain my study and seek an interview. On meeting them, I handed them an information sheet (see Appendix A). For the friendship, religion and employment domains, I sent out the information sheet (see Appendix A) to several participants who were my parents' friends. These participants introduced me to their friends who were interested in participating in my study. For the education domain, I handed out the information sheet (see Appendix A) to four principals from Chinese language primary schools after receiving a recommendation from a friend. Two principals rejected my request for an interview, stating their schedules were too busy, and two agreed to participate. One principal kindly recommended me colleague from another Chinese language primary school, who accepted my request for an interview. One of the Penang state policymakers I interviewed also recommended the principal from a Chinese language private secondary school to me, and that principal happily agreed to be interviewed. In total, I recruited 20 participants to represent the five domains at the grassroots level.

Overall, a total of 46 participants from three different groups were recruited. Table 1 shows the participant profile for official actors, Table 2 for community-based actors, and Table 3 for grassroots actors. Pseudonyms were used to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. The participants with Chinese origins were given Chinese pseudonyms, and those whose origin is not Chinese were given English pseudonyms. All participants were further labelled with specific codes for identification purposes.

Table 1

*Participant Profile for Official Actors*

Label	Name	Gender	Age Group	Occupation	Languages Spoken	Origin
OA1	Kok Loong	M	3	State assemblyman	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Cantonese
OA2	Marco	M	3	Member of parliament	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien	Malay
OA3	Ying Song	M	3	Member of parliament	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Teochew	Teochew
OA4	Loon Teik	M	3	Member of parliament	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Hokkien
OA5	Geok Choon	M	2	EXCO <sup>39</sup> member	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew	Teochew
OA6	Ling Ling	F	3	State assemblywoman	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka	Hakka
OA7	Kim Bak	M	2	State assemblyman	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Teochew	Hokkien
OA8	Nicholas	M	2	Deputy chief minister	Malay, English, Tamil	Indian
OA9	Kok Wan	M	2	EXCO member	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka	Hakka
OA10	Wee Nam	M	3	Member of parliament	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew	Teochew
OA11	Cheung Kit	M	1	Research fellow	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Cantonese
OA12	Von Chee	M	3	Research fellow	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Hakka	Hakka
OA13	Ai Mei	F	3	Research fellow	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Thai, Swedish	Hokkien

<sup>39</sup> EXCO refers to Penang State Executive Council, of a similar structure and role to the Cabinet of Malaysia although it differs in size.

Table 2

*Participant Profile for Community-Based Actors*

Label	Name	Gender	Age Group	Occupation	Languages Spoken	Origin
CA1	Gee Boo	M	2	Web author	Malay, English, Penang Hokkien	Hokkien
CA2	Hua Lun	M	3	Translator	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew	Teochew
CA3	Elizabeth	F	3	University lecturer	English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien	New Zealander
CA4	Hock Chai	M	3	Banking associate	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Hokkien
CA5	Ah Meng	M	1	Retiree	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew	Hokkien
CA6	Cho Yaw	M	1	Retiree	English, Penang Hokkien	Hokkien
CA7	Zhi En	F	2	Author	Malay, English, Penang Hokkien	Hokkien
CA8	Kim Chen	M	1	Director	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka	Hakka
CA9	Wai Keong	M	2	Director	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hainan, Taishan	Cantonese
CA10	Tian Hin	M	3	Manager	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hainan, Korean, French	Hainan
CA11	Kian Lam	M	1	Secretary	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew	Teochew
CA12	Jit Ting	M	2	Chef	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Hainan	Hainan
CA13	Siew Siew	F	3	Director	Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew	Hokkien

Table 3

*Participant Profile for Grassroots Actors*

Label	Name	Gender	Age Group	Occupation	Languages Spoken	Origin
<b>Family domain</b>						
GA1	Shu Min	F	3	Finance manager	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Hokkien
GA2	Joo Hoe	M	2	Businessman	Malay, English, Penang Hokkien, Hainan	Hainan
GA3	Ka Fai	M	3	Manager	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Taishan	Cantonese
GA4	Shuk Yee	F	1	Retiree	Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Cantonese
<b>Friendship domain</b>						
GA5	Ka Chun	M	1	Retiree	Malay, English, Penang Hokkien	Hokkien
GA6	Min Tat	M	3	Manager	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Hokkien
GA7	San Choon	M	1	Hawker	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Teochew	Teochew
GA8	Huang Fu	M	1	Director	English, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese	Cantonese
<b>Religion domain</b>						
GA9	Ah Mooi	F	1	Retiree	Malay, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Cantonese
GA10	Meng Chong	M	2	Chief monk	Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hainan	Hainan
GA11	Fei Ming	M	3	Pastor	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Hokkien
GA12	Chui Mooi	F	2	Secondary school teacher	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew	Hokkien
<b>Education domain</b>						
GA13	Pei Ni	F	2	Principal	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew	Teochew
GA14	Jian Hooi	M	2	Principal	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Hainan
GA15	Tiang Lay	M	3	Principal	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew	Hokkien
GA16	Sin Nam	M	3	Principal	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka	Hakka
<b>Employment domain</b>						
GA17	Cher Leng	F	3	Chinese physician	Malay, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka	Hakka
GA18	Sum Sum	F	3	Kindergarten principal	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese	Taishan
GA19	Chiang Tee	M	3	Manager	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew	Teochew
GA20	Soon Gek	F	2	Teacher	Malay, English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Hainan	Hainan

### **3.6.3 Stage 2 (part 2): Interviewing participants.**

Stage 2 (part 2) of my fieldwork reports the interviewing process that was carried out after recruiting the participants. The process of interviewing can be “very personal and idiosyncratic in nature” (Walford, 2007, p. 145) but at the same time, the information gained is very precise, insightful, and relevant to the study (Yin, 2009) because the researcher is able to find out what is going on in the participant’s mind (Patton, 2002).

After recruiting the participants (see Section 3.6.2), I made appointments with each of them and organised an interview schedule. When meeting the participants, I first introduced my research project by providing them with an information sheet (see Appendix A), and then briefed them on the process of interviewing and the recording method. Once participants understood the process, they were asked to sign the consent form (see Appendix B), agreeing to participate in the study and allowing use of data from the interviews in my thesis and related publications. Next, participants were asked to fill in a demographic questionnaire (refer Appendix C) to record their profile. The interviewing process was divided into two parts. In part 1, participants were provided with an interview guide (see Appendices D and E) so they would have an idea of the questions being asking during the interview. The questions related to participants’ own experiences of using and maintaining Chinese community languages in everyday life. During the interviewing process, more questions were added to elicit additional information from participants. In part 2, participants were shown the 15 chosen linguistic landscape photos (see Section 3.3.4.2). Part 2 was conducted to draw out participants’ perceptions regarding the linguistic landscape of Penang and the representation of Chinese artifacts in everyday life. At the conclusion of each interview, I thanked the participants and gave them a keyring as a token of appreciation. Each interview was recorded on a digital recorder and took between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on participants’ responses. Most interviews were conducted in English, although there were several participants who preferred

to use Mandarin Chinese and Chinese community languages such as Cantonese and Penang Hokkien. I respected their decision and catered to their needs to yield fruitful interviews, as I believed allowing them to use their preferred language meant they could express themselves well and this would benefit my study.

### **3.5.4 Stage 3: Managing data.**

Stage 3 of my fieldwork reports the steps taken to manage data after the completion of interviews. Before proceeding to the analysis stage, I first scanned all consent forms and letters for digital storage and spent approximately three months transcribing 46 recorded interviews (a total of 386 pages of transcripts). Interviews were transcribed verbatim and, apart from a few changes for the sake of intelligibility, I did not correct the morphosyntax.<sup>40</sup> In accordance with ethical procedure, I removed all participants' names to protect their confidentiality, and for identification purposes, I labelled them with pseudonyms and specific codes. Nine of the interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, and Penang Hokkien. These interviews were translated into English to align with the rest of the data. As can be seen in the results chapters, all transcripts were labelled according to specific codes and transcription conventions employed, as follows:

[ ]      Researcher's insertion

.          End of an utterance

,          Short pause

—        Long pause

---

<sup>40</sup> A number of transcripts are not grammatically correct according to Standard English because many of the participants spoke Manglish (a colloquial variety of Malaysian English). Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed according to participants' mode of speech during the interviews to retain their authenticity.

- ?      A question
- !      An exclamation
- “ ”    A speech/quotation
- ...     Omission of certain sections of transcript

Once all raw data had been processed, the transcripts, scanned consent forms, and letters were stored securely on Griffith University's Google drive.

After completing stage 3, the data was analysed. Procedures for data analysis are described in the next section.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is a complex process of making sense out of the data (Merriam, 1998). There are various approaches to analysing data; one widely used approach is content analysis. Content analysis is a type of data analysis and is defined as “a systematic coding and categorising approach [a researcher] can use to explore large amounts of existing textual information in order to ascertain the trends and patterns of words used, their frequency, their relationship and the structures, contexts and discourses of community” (Grbich, 2013, p. 190). There are three strengths to content analysis (Prasad, 2008):

1. Objectivity: The content analysis is pursued according to explicit rules.
2. Systematic: The decision to include or exclude content is based on some consistently applied rules.
3. Generalisability: The findings can be applied in other similar situations.

These strengths support content analysis as a suitable approach to interpreting and making meanings from the transcripts of the present study. Content analysis is performed through thematic analysis, which Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) define as “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within data”. Thematic analysis is a valuable tool for analysing data using different methods, and allows for the interpretation of many aspects in a research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). This results in the discovery of a deeper meaning of the data (Dörnyei, 2007); in this case the efforts for Chinese community language maintenance. The notion of language ecology is used to support the process of data analysis.

As discussed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3.1), Haugen (1972, p. 325) defines language ecology as “the study of interactions between any given language in its environment”. The real environment of a language consists of lexicon and grammar that the society uses as its codes. Language functions when it is related to the society and its natural environment because “languages are embedded in social, cultural, economic, and physical ecologies, and in relationship to each other” (Pennycook, 2004, p. 214). This notion of language ecology has revived discussion among linguists interested in understanding how languages have shifted, how this shift has changed the world, and how certain languages have been lost during the shift (Pennycook, 2004). Some aspects of this notion relating to helping communities maintain their languages and the necessity to recognise and appreciate the value of the languages within their complex environment, are in favour of finding a solution to “protect endangered languages in order to preserve them” (Pennycook, 2004, p. 230). In addressing the social, cultural, and economic factors motivating language shift, an integrated package of employment, education, religion, and health, among others, is needed. At the same time, the continuing use of their languages can reinforce their meanings for communities.

As identified in the literature review (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.2), language shift in Malaysia is driven by social, political, and cultural factors. Nevertheless, due to the history of



Chinese settlement in the language ecology of Penang, Chinese community languages are tied closely to the Chinese community. Links between these community languages and their Chinese environment make the notion of language ecology an appropriate support in the analysis of the interview transcripts. In this notion, Haugen (1972, pp. 336-337) compiles ten ecological questions to help examine a given language. I indicate below the sections of my findings which address Haugen's questions:

- What is its classification in relation to other languages? (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.3)
- Who are its users? (see Chapter 4, Sections 4.1 and 4.2)
- What are its domains of use? (see Chapter 4, Sections 4.1 and 4.2)
- What concurrent languages are employed by its users? (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3)
- What internal varieties does the language show? (see Chapter 4, Sections 4.1 and 4.2)
- What is the nature of its written traditions? (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4)
- To what degree has its written form been standardised; that is, unified and codified? (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4)
- What kind of institutional support has it won, either in government, education, or private organisations, either to regulate its form or propagate it? (see Chapter 6, Sections 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4)
- What are the attitudes of its users towards the language, in terms of intimacy and status, leading to personal identification? (see Chapter 5, Section 5.2)
- Where does the language stand and where it is going in comparison with other languages of the world? (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3)

I analysed the transcripts in accordance with these ten ecological questions and then grouped the results into three significant themes: (1) everyday language use, (2) perceptions of Chinese community language maintenance, and (3) institutional and community efforts. In relation to Haugen's first question on classifying the examined language in relation to other languages,

this is addressed in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.3.3) and does not receive further consideration in the findings. The following section outlines the procedures of my data analysis.

### **3.7.1 Analytical procedures.**

The first step in my analysis was to read through each transcript in order to immerse myself in the data. The purpose was to acquire the opinions, perspectives, and feelings of all the participants regarding language maintenance issue.

Responding to Haugen's (1972) ten ecological questions, the second step was to highlight key phrases and terminologies from the transcripts in the first group of participants, the official actors. This step was repeated using the transcripts from the other two groups of participants—community-based actors and grassroots actors. The purpose of this step was to produce descriptive initial codes, which were provisional because the coding process was still at an early stage (Seidman, 2006).

For each group of participants, the third step was to reread the initial codes in search of common codes, which were grouped together to form analytical codes. Once the analytical codes were formed, I added key examples to each of them. The purpose of this step was to create a set of analytical codes with examples for each group of participants.

In the fourth step, I conducted another round of data reduction, and reviewed and refined all the codes for each group of participants. The purpose of this stage was to finalise the analytical codes so I could be certain the coding process was conducted systematically and significantly.

In the fifth step, I compared the finalised analytical codes across three groups of participants, paying attention to the commonalities. Once the common analytical codes were

found, they were grouped together to develop general categories. The purpose of this across-case analysis was to produce general categories on which to build themes.

Once the general categories were produced, the sixth step was to look for thematic connections across them. To ensure the analysed results fit into the conceptual framework illustrated in Section 3.4, I arranged the general categories into three significant themes:

*1. Everyday language use*

- Everyday use of Chinese community languages
- Everyday use of Mandarin Chinese
- Employment of concurrent languages

*2. Perceptions of Chinese community language maintenance*

- Importance of Chinese community language maintenance
- Predictions for the future of Chinese community languages
- Interpretation of the linguistic landscape of Penang

*3. Institutional and community efforts*

- Malaysian Federal Government efforts
- Penang Government efforts
- Community efforts
- Parents' efforts

The purpose of this step was to develop three significant themes so I could use them to write up the findings of this study. The steps in this analysis are summarised in Table 4 and the finalised codes are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 4

*Summary of Analytical Procedures*

Step	Strategy	Product
1	Immersing myself in all transcripts	Understanding of the participants' opinions, perspectives, and feelings
2	Finding key phrases and terminologies in all transcripts	Identification of descriptive initial codes
3	Grouping together common initial codes	A set of analytical codes for each group of participants
4	Refining and reviewing codes	Finalise analytical codes with key examples
5	Comparing analytical codes across three groups of participants	Develop general categories
6	Finding thematic connections across general categories	Produce three significant themes

Table 5

*Summary of Analytical Codes*

Themes	General Categories	Analytical Codes
Everyday language use	Everyday use of Chinese community languages	Everyday interactions
		Language teaching and learning
		Literacy skills
		Entertainment
		Religion
		Chinese cuisine
		Cultural participation and transmission
	Everyday use of Mandarin Chinese	Everyday interactions
		Language learning
		Literacy skills
		Entertainment
		Religion
	Employment of concurrent languages	Cultural transmission
		Mandarin Chinese
Perceptions of Chinese community language maintenance	Importance of Chinese community language maintenance	English
		Projecting multiple identities
		Representing historical and family roots
		Being part of a living culture
		Having emotional connection
	Predictions for the future of Chinese community languages	A strategic communication tool
		General predictions
		Lingua franca of Penang
		New lingua franca of Penang
		Surviving languages
		Endangered languages
	Interpretation of the linguistic landscape of Penang	Dying languages
		Official signage in public spaces
		Multilingual nameboards in public spaces
Institutional and community efforts	Malaysian Federal Government efforts	Ecology of Chinese-medium primary schools
		Chinese cultural artifacts
		Malaysian Federal Government policy context
		Promotion
		Identity construction
	Penang Government efforts	The education system
		Penang Government policy context
		Public awareness
		Education funding
		Funding/assistance
	Community efforts	Local event publications
		Language learning
		Literacy
		Entertainment
		Religion
	Parents' efforts	Chinese cuisine
		Culture and heritage
		Public awareness
		Children's education
		Parents' attitudes
		Everyday conversation

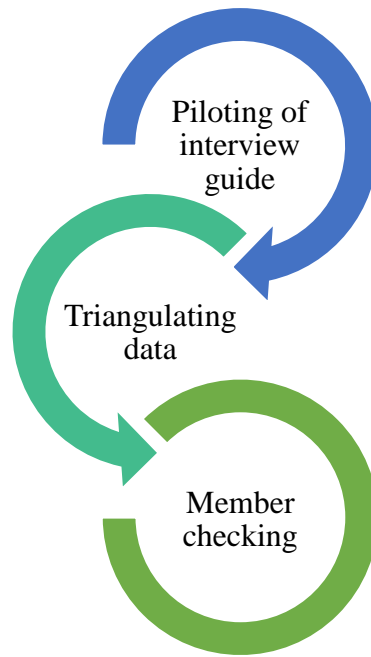
### **3.8 Validity and Reliability of Research Methodology**

Ensuring quality in every research study is essential regardless of the types of methodology and approaches employed. In this present study, several steps were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. These steps were piloting, data triangulation, and member checking.

Step one: When developing the interview guide, piloting of the interview guide was conducted with fellow researchers familiar with the topic, to enhance the quality of the interview questions. Unclear terminologies and inappropriate questions were identified and improved to ensure meanings were clear and straightforward for easier understanding by the participants during interviews.

Step two: Data triangulation was used to confirm the emerging findings of this study. Data triangulation refers to an attempt to obtain truth in a situation by combining different sources of information to increase the accuracy of the findings and view it from different perspectives (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). Information was gathered from two sources, semistructured interviews and linguistic landscape photos, to produce an insightful and valuable description of the situation of Chinese community languages in Penang. Linguistic landscape photos added reliability and enrichment to the interview process because they were used to elicit further opinions regarding the visibility of Chinese community languages.

Step three: Member checking was used to enhance the trustworthiness of the descriptions of findings and the codes. After finishing the process of coding the transcripts, I confirmed the set of codes with participants to check for accuracy. This was also an opportunity for participants to comment on the findings before they were finalised, a process resulting in minor adjustments before the results chapters were written up.



*Figure 10.* Steps taken for validation.

These three steps (see Figure 10) ensure the quality and reliability of the research. In addition to the checking process, the position of a researcher as an insider and outsider in his/her research journey is a fundamental issue in qualitative research, as the credibility of research depends on the researcher's assurance of reflection on and transparency about the methodological issues faced (Savvides, Al-Youssef, Colin, & Garrido, 2014).

### **3.8.1 Reflections on insider/outsider status.**

An insider is a researcher who shares gender, ethnicity, race, and language belonging to a participating group, whereas an outsider is a researcher who differs from the participants in terms of socioeconomic, historical, and/or ethnic characteristics (Gair, 2012; Rubin, 2012). Whether the researcher is an insider or outsider in the field, the epistemology employed will be impacted because the knowledge created is affected by the researcher's position in relation to the participants (Griffith, 1998). In addition, the implications of being an insider or outsider

should also be considered because the researcher has an active role in the field. In simpler terms, the researcher acts as a ‘traveller’ to meet participants and experience different scenarios during the research journey (Court & Abbas, 2013, p. 486). This travelling experience, itself coloured by either the insider or outsider status of the researcher, has a strong impact on the entire research process including the ethics and credibility of the research.

Nowadays, many researchers who are trained abroad, choose their home countries for fieldwork (Giwa, 2015). I consider myself part of this group of researchers, having pursued my graduate studies in Australia and then returned to my hometown of Penang to conduct my fieldwork. Penang was a ‘field’—it was the research site where I conducted my study to understand the situation of Chinese community languages. Penang was also a ‘home’—it was my hometown where I was born and raised. Thus, I was an insider as a Penang resident and simultaneously an outsider as a researcher. Katz (1994) argues there is no fixed boundary between ‘field’ and ‘home’ and the researcher is always considered to be in the field. I found myself in a similar situation where I was constantly questioning myself regarding the situation of Chinese community languages, given the dual nature of Penang as both a ‘field’ and ‘home’ in my study.

As a local resident of the Chinese community in Penang, I made full use of my local knowledge to gain access into the field. Getting in touch with people in the community was easy as I knew where and how to find them. Due to the high level of familiarity and trust, I quickly established a rapport because they trusted me as a Penang resident, keen to understand the Chinese community language situation in Penang. Many participants were very open in interviews, and some even disclosed information on sensitive issues regarding the government. This openness aligns with Kusek and Smiley’s (2014) claim that being an insider can grant the researcher access to information other researchers may not be able to obtain.



My language and cultural background as a Chinese individual growing up in Penang offered me the advantage of understanding the social norms, local cultures, and varieties of languages commonly spoken within the community. Being able to speak two Chinese community languages, Penang Hokkien and Cantonese, together with Mandarin Chinese, English, and Bahasa Melayu, enabled me to work alone in the field without help from interpreters. Consequently, there were no challenges in coping with frequent codeswitching and codemixing by participants during the interviews. Such codeswitching and codemixing commonly takes place in a multilingual state like Penang, and my ability to accommodate this has added authenticity to capturing the language situation in Penang.

However, sometimes being an insider has drawbacks. When coding and interpreting the interview transcripts and linguistic landscape photos, I tended to have certain *a priori* assumptions and beliefs. Knowing that internal validity is an important feature in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998), I did not take everything for granted. Instead, I allowed my knowledge of the Chinese community language situation to be discovered through the complexity of participants' responses. I present a holistic interpretation of the investigated phenomenon in later chapters of this thesis.

In conclusion, my fieldwork experience in Penang has demonstrated the dynamics and complexities of a researcher's insider and outsider status in the field. On some occasions my insider or outsider status might have overshadowed the other. Nevertheless, the spaces of betweenness, where my position was both separated from and belonging to the study (Rose, 1997), have facilitated my research journey by allowing me to distance myself from the participants while providing me with a degree of flexibility in how I represented myself ethically in the field.

### **3.8.2 Limitations of study design.**

In every study design, there are limitations and my study is no exception. It is a small-scale study with a limited number of interviewed participants. In addition, more men than women were recruited for the first and second groups of participants—official actors and community-based actors—mainly because most of the roles in managing legislation and representing the Chinese clan associations were held by men. It would be naïve to say that my study represented all possible responses from the Chinese community in Penang, as some might have been unintentionally missed. Therefore, a future large-scale investigation on Chinese community language maintenance efforts in Penang could be conducted.

Nevertheless, this study shows how Chinese community languages are maintained in Penang by the recruited participants and this information acts as a barometer of the role and status of Chinese community languages when compared to Mandarin Chinese in Penang. It can therefore be used as a predictor for the future of Chinese community languages in Malaysia as a whole.

## **3.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has justified the rationale for choosing a qualitative research methodology based on the aims and purpose of the study. The social constructivist paradigm guided my ontology and epistemology when conducting the investigation and the case study approach was chosen among the five common types of qualitative enquiry. Given the characteristics of the phenomenon investigated, this study was operationalised as a single instrumental case study. The research site, sampling decisions, and data sources consisting of semistructured interviews and linguistic landscape photos were described. A conceptual framework was developed as part of the study design. Data collection and analysis procedures were explained in detail.

Finally, this chapter discussed the validity and reliability of the research methodology, my reflections as an insider and outsider in the field, and the limitations of the study design. In the following three chapters, I report the findings of this study. Chapter 4 focuses on participants' use of Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in their everyday life.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Everyday Language Use**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

To provide context for this chapter, I will briefly recap some key issues regarding the hierarchy of languages in Malaysia. Bahasa Melayu acts as the country's sole national and official language of administration, education, and the legal system and while English is considered a non-official language, it is spoken widely in schools and work places. Moreover, the Malaysian Federal Government explicitly allows the use of Mandarin Chinese as the main medium of instruction in Chinese-medium schools due to the economic value it offers. This situation raises questions regarding the role, status, and survival of Chinese community languages, especially in a predominantly Chinese settlement such as Penang. In seeking to answer these questions, this study is situated within an ecological framework to provide a holistic picture of the relationship between national language policy and the situation of the Chinese community in the ecology of Penang.

Even though Chinese community languages are not widely spoken by all ethnic groups in Malaysia, they play an important role in the local speech repertoire of Penang's Chinese community. In this study, I wish to pursue the issue of whether language use in everyday life supports or undermines the maintenance of Chinese community languages in Penang. Such language use requires investigation into participants' everyday lives to reveal how these languages are used in different activities. By employing the concept of domain as spaces of language use in the ecology of Penang, this chapter presents the findings for the first and second subsidiary research questions:

- How do participants maintain Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese as part of their everyday life in Penang?
- What other languages are used alongside Chinese community languages in Penang?

As defined in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.3.1), language ecology refers to the demographic, social, political, and cultural environment, which is affected by speakers who develop, maintain, and ensure a linguistic repertoire within the ecology. The ecology of a language is the community that uses the language as one of its codes (Mühlhäusler, 2006). When examining language in an ecology, Haugen (1972) asks who uses the examined languages, in what domains they are used, and whether other languages are used. These questions are employed to contextualise the results of my data analysis, which are presented in this chapter as follows: first, I describe how participants use Chinese community languages in their everyday life in Penang (Section 4.1), I then consider how Mandarin Chinese is also used in the life of participants (Section 4.2), and subsequently, how the other languages are used alongside Chinese community languages (Section 4.3). The discussion is supported by interview extracts, which are labelled with specific codes for ease of reference (see Appendix L). Lastly, I conclude the chapter with a summary of the key findings (Section 4.4).

This approach is conceptualised in Table 6, which explains the relationship between the aims of this chapter, subsidiary research questions, findings, Haugen's (1972) ecological questions, and the responses to those questions in this thesis.

Table 6

Guide to Chapter 4

Aims	Subsidiary Research Questions	Findings	Haugen's (1972) Ecological Questions	Responses to Haugen's Ecological Questions
To explore participants' use of Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in everyday life in Penang	1. How do participants maintain Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese as part of their everyday life in Penang?	<p>Section 4.1: Everyday use of Chinese community languages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyday interactions</li> <li>• Language teaching and learning</li> <li>• Literacy skills</li> <li>• Entertainment</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Chinese cuisine</li> <li>• Cultural participation and transmission</li> </ul> <p>Section 4.2: Everyday use of Mandarin Chinese</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyday interactions</li> <li>• Language learning</li> <li>• Literacy skills</li> <li>• Entertainment</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Cultural transmission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are its users?</li> <li>• What are its domains of use?</li> <li>• What internal varieties does the language show?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese community in Penang</li> <li>• Various domains of use</li> <li>• Only one written form of Chinese, which can be read according to different Chinese community language pronunciations</li> </ul>
	2. What other languages are used alongside Chinese community languages?	<p>Section 4.3: Employment of concurrent languages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandarin Chinese</li> <li>• English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What concurrent languages are employed by its users?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandarin Chinese and English</li> </ul>

## **4.1 Everyday Use of Chinese Community Languages**

The first aim of this study is to explore how participants maintain Chinese community languages as part of their everyday life. In this section, I identify the various activities participants are engaged in when using Chinese community languages. These activities relate to everyday interaction, language teaching and learning, literacy skills, entertainment and religious contexts, Chinese cuisine, and cultural participation and transmission.

### **4.1.1 Everyday interactions.**

I was informed by all three groups of participants that the most basic way Chinese community languages are used, whether Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Hainan, or Teochew, is through everyday interactions with family, friends, colleagues, staff, customers, hawkers, and members in clan associations, churches, and temples. Ai Mei, from the official actors group, described such experiences:

I speak about eight languages myself. I speak with my family in Penang Hokkien and I dream in Penang Hokkien wherever I go, even in my subconscious. Yeah, I dream in Penang Hokkien! It's just natural for me, it's nothing that I need to purposely do because I feel I am quite comfortable and maybe lucky that people around me, we are able to speak Penang Hokkien. And then of course, with my colleagues, some of them speak Penang Hokkien. For me, Penang Hokkien it's just part of life so nothing special about it. (OA13/G3/Extract 1)

According to Ai Mei, she speaks Penang Hokkien regularly with her family and friends, and also dreams in Penang Hokkien. Being a Penang Hokkien native speaker, Penang Hokkien is part of her life and thus, conversing in Penang Hokkien becomes habitual for her. Consequently, she does not feel anything special when using Penang Hokkien in her everyday

conversation. On the other hand, Jit Ting from the community-based actors group highlighted that his mother's and his friend's wife's experiences of speaking Hainan have deeper meaning:

My mum is a Hokkien but she is married to my dad, a Hainanese. Hence, she has to learn to speak Hainan. At first when my dad spoke to her, she couldn't understand but eventually she listened and learnt how to speak Hainan. I also have a friend whose wife is a Cantonese but her Hainan is perfect, it's better than us Hainanese speaking Hainan! This is because at home, after marriage, her father-in-law spoke to her only in Hainan. She had to learn the language for communication purposes. (CA12/G2/Extract 1)

Jit Ting's extract demonstrates that his mother and his friend's wife had to learn Hainan in order to speak to their husband and in-laws. They had no choice other than to learn the language for communication purposes. Jit Ting also mentioned that in the Chinese culture, especially for his generation (Generations 1 and 2), it would be considered rude to speak a language that is not the in-laws' family language. He added that it is considered disrespectful for a woman not to follow her in-laws' command. Therefore, for his mother and his friend's wife, learning and speaking fluent Hainan was an essential task after their marriage. As a result, using Hainan in their everyday life symbolises their commitment to their family.

Kok Loong from the official actors group described how Cantonese was used in his work related to politics:

There is a group of Cantonese staying in Penang. Whenever they invite me for dinner, societies' dinners and associations' dinners, well, I speak in Cantonese. I deliver my speech in Cantonese. Even the campaigning speeches, election campaigns, I speak in Cantonese. It's a cultural identity. (OA1/G3/Extract 2)



Based on Kok Loong's description, as a Cantonese native speaker, he uses Cantonese regularly at work, especially when he is invited to Cantonese clan association dinners. He delivers his speech in Cantonese as a symbol of respect to the Cantonese people and to symbolise his Cantonese identity. Similarly, Kim Chen, a Hakka native speaker from the community-based actors group, stated that he always delivers his speeches in Hakka at the Hakka clan association. During a recent business trip to Meizhou (a city in China), Kim Chen spoke in Hakka during his appearance on television and when meeting with the city's mayor. He informed me that the people in Meizhou praised him for his accurate Hakka pronunciation and vocabulary because he did not use any Malay words when he spoke Hakka. From the employment domain, Cher Leng told me she always speaks Penang Hokkien to her colleagues in the clinic. As a Chinese physician, she sometimes needs to use Cantonese with older patients who can only speak Cantonese. However, she rarely uses Hakka because she has few Hakka patients, but she will use Hakka when needed. She concluded that "we should adapt to the local language of communication in order to feel closer to the community". What Cher Leng indicates is that speaking the language of the people one meets can strengthen the relationship between them. Similarly, Tiang Lay from the education domain explained why he picked up Hakka and how he uses it at work:

I'm a Hokkien but when I came to Balik Pulau [rural area in Penang] I tried to learn Hakka to become closer to the people. When people feel that we are from the same clique [same language group], it is easier for us to communicate and if you want to do something, it becomes easy. People can understand what you want and they can trust you. In order for us to communicate, we must make sure of the language we use so that people can trust us. When parents walk in, I want to understand what they actually want, I must use Mandarin Chinese first. After a while, if they prefer to use Hakka, I will try to use it so that they can express what

they want to me. As a principal, we must try to understand the parents when they walk in, what is their focus, what they want. If they can't express what they want, after they walk out, you still can't do anything. (GA15/G3/Extract 1)

Tiang Lay had to move out of his comfort zone of speaking Penang Hokkien, English, and Mandarin Chinese to learn Hakka because it is vital to communicate with the parents at his school to understand and to help them.

The interview extracts above demonstrate that Chinese community languages are used by participants in their everyday interaction with their friends, families, and colleagues. Some speak them regularly while others have had to learn languages that are completely new to them. In these ways, all can be understood to have put a great deal of effort into using these languages habitually.

#### **4.1.2 Language teaching and learning.**

The above section shows that participants use Chinese community languages regularly in their everyday interactions. As these languages have become part of their life, many of the older participants hope their community languages can be passed down to their grandchildren. This hope was expressed by Shuk Yee, a Cantonese native speaker from the family domain: "Yes, I hope my great-grandson will speak Cantonese. We are Cantonese, so we have to speak Cantonese." I deduce from Shuk Yee's hope that she wishes her great-grandson to be able to speak Cantonese when he grows up to symbolise her family's Cantonese identity.

To pass on these Chinese community languages, many participants have spent time teaching their grandchildren. San Choon from the friendship domain told me that his grandson, who is currently seven years old, goes to a Chinese-medium school. At school he speaks Mandarin Chinese and English, but at home San Choon speaks Penang Hokkien to him. San

Choon recognises that the only way to pass on Penang Hokkien in his family is by speaking it to his grandson every day. He also praised his grandson because he can now understand and reply in Penang Hokkien. Soon Gek from the employment domain is a Hainan native speaker with a similar practice. To ensure Hainan lives on, her family members have spoken it regularly to her niece since she was young. She highlighted subsequently that her niece is a fluent Hainan speaker despite being a teenager.

Besides teaching grandchildren Chinese community languages, one participant reported that she also taught her foreign friends. Elizabeth from the community-based actor group recalled what she did: “I did teach somebody some basic Penang Hokkien once before. And I have an email from an American friend who wants to learn like I did.” As a self-taught Penang Hokkien speaker, Elizabeth explained that she always tells her overseas friends of her “interesting hobby” to attract them to join her in learning Penang Hokkien, and she is willing to teach them the language. Similarly, Wee Nam from the official actors group described how he learnt Teochew:

Even myself is Teochew but I don't know Teochew because I was born in a single parent family where my parents divorced when I was very small. So I had no way to learn Teochew, no one taught me. Well, I know some Teochew, how did I learn? Well, from the songs, from the local composers. I think in the 1990s, a lot of our youngsters formed groups and produced their own songs and music, some of them produced Teochew songs and I bought the cassettes. There were no CDs, DVDs, I bought the cassettes, played them using the radio and then from there I learnt.

(OA10/G3/Extract 3)

In Wee Nam's description, having no opportunity to learn Teochew from his parents when young did not hinder his passion to learn the language. Being motivated, Wee Nam bought

cassettes to self-teach Teochew even though he did not have many opportunities to practise the language. In any case, he was able to conduct simple conversations with Teochew speakers. Min Tat from the friendship domain added that having a dictionary is a useful resource to learn these community languages. He bought the Penang Hokkien dictionary<sup>41</sup> to look for words he was unsure of because Penang Hokkien uses different vocabulary than other Hokkien languages.

Based on the opinions of the participants, speaking Chinese community languages to their grandchildren, and teaching friends and themselves these languages is a method of language maintenance. They further considered using these languages consistently would improve their competence, as demonstrated by San Choon's grandson and Soon Gek's niece.

#### **4.1.3 Literacy skills.**

During the interviews some participants stated that basic literacy skills, such as reading and writing, are crucial for language maintenance. According to Tian Hin from the community-based actors group, "literature is where a language can grow". What Tian Hin means is that a language can develop through literature because by writing books, the language can be passed on to future generations. During his free time, Tian Hin writes poems and articles using Penang Hokkien and standard orthography from Taiwan. He also finds new words and shares them with his friends, as well as using them at work. Similarly, Soon Gek from the employment domain jots down Hainan poems and rhymes using the English alphabet because she is not literate in Chinese writing. She recalled a Chinese man who collected Hokkien<sup>42</sup> poems and rhymes and published them in a book, but there were no such efforts in Hainan. As a result,

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<sup>41</sup> The Penang Hokkien dictionary will be explained in detail in Chapter 6 (see Section 6.3.2).

<sup>42</sup> Soon Gek did not indicate whether the Hokkien book was published in Penang Hokkien or other varieties of Hokkien.

Soon Gek urged the community to start compiling the poems and rhymes of their own community languages so they would not be lost.

As for reading, Cher Leng from the employment domain mentioned the importance of reading to understand Chinese literature and culture, because it is part of language maintenance. She provided an example: “The Hakka people have different literature. I read them to understand their differences. Even for Teochew literature too.” To enhance Cher Leng’s knowledge of this literature, she tried to read it using Hakka and Teochew. Discussing reading in Chinese community languages, Zhi En from the community-based actors group recalled: “My paternal grandfather used to read Chinese newspapers in Penang Hokkien.” Besides reading literature and newspapers, Fei Min from the religion domain said that some worshippers in his church, including himself, read the Bible according to Penang Hokkien pronunciation. Fei Ming stated: “We have a Hokkien Bible from Taiwan. All Hokkien Bibles are from Taiwan, they use Romanised Hokkien.” Fei Ming explained that the Bible used by the worshippers is from Taiwan and written in Romanised Hokkien; thus, it is convenient for those who could not read Chinese.

From the interview extracts above, it is understood that participants write poems and compile rhymes in their own community languages as a way of saving their languages for the future. They also read literature, newspapers, and the Bible using Chinese community languages. These actions symbolise the Chinese community’s everyday approaches in maintaining Chinese community languages in Penang.

#### **4.1.4 Entertainment.**

During a time of increased prosperity from the 1970s to the early 1990s, the Hong Kong entertainment industry had a huge influence on overseas Chinese communities in Asia (Law,

2016). Many young Chinese boys and girls in Malaysia grew up with the influence of Cantonese culture and language. However, many of the participants in this study claimed that after the 1997 change of sovereignty in Hong Kong, which saw a decline in the Hong Kong entertainment industry, their favourite pastime after work in the evening was to watch Cantonese dramas on television. Kok Loong, an official actor, stated his way of learning Cantonese when young:

My father never teaches me Cantonese, he speaks to me in Cantonese. I mean, er, I was brought up in that environment. There is no proper instruction or proper curriculum, language is a social skill we pick up. I pick up when watching Cantonese movies. (OA1/G3/Extract 4)

Kok Loong picked up Cantonese by watching Cantonese movies and speaking to his father in Cantonese. In the same way, Shu Min from the family domain said there was no formal Cantonese education and she picked up the language by watching Cantonese dramas and films from Hong Kong. On the other hand, Pei Ni from the education domain preferred watching Hokkien movies from Taiwan, while her mother-in-law was fond of Teochew dramas. She asserted that “Malaysians are talented” because they can pick up different Chinese community languages through watching dramas and movies. With the development of satellite technology, All-Asian Satellite Television and Radio Operator (ASTRO), a broadcasting television network in Malaysia, is now able to air Cantonese, Hokkien,<sup>43</sup> and Teochew dramas and movies from overseas to households everyday, thereby enhancing the opportunities to learn these languages.

Furthermore, some participants listen to Chinese community language radio broadcasts to improve their language skill. Shu Min from the family domain remembered that when she

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<sup>43</sup> The Hokkien dramas and movies broadcasted by ASTRO are usually from Singapore and Taiwan.

was young, her grandparents loved to turn on the Cantonese radio station to listen to the everyday short stories, and it was through listening to these that she picked up her Cantonese. To improve her community language proficiency, Chui Mooi from the religion domain switched to the Cantonese or Penang Hokkien radio channels when driving instead of the English radio channel. Furthermore, because there is no Hakka radio channel in Malaysia, when travelling to Meizhou (China), Kim Chen from the community-based actors group took the opportunity to listen to the Hakka radio channel. Being Cantonese with a deep appreciation for the language, Cheung Kit, an official actor, explained that in the 1980s and 1990s many young people, whether they are Hokkien, Hakka, or Teochew, enjoyed Cantonese pop songs. In his opinion, “Cantopop” has created a sensation within the Chinese community and resulted in Cantonese becoming a popular language to learn in Penang. He remembered that when the popular Cantopop singers held concerts in Malaysia, young people would save their pocket money to buy the concert tickets and were very excited to meet the singers.

This interview data demonstrates how the Hong Kong entertainment industry plays an important role among the Chinese community in Penang in terms of influencing them to learn Cantonese, even though Penang is a Hokkien speaking region. They also learnt other Chinese community languages via television and radio broadcasts.

#### **4.1.5 Religion.**

Having diverse religions is crucial in forming a multiracial and multicultural environment in Penang. Some participants explained to me that their everyday religious practices were conducted using Chinese community languages.

At a Taoist temple, Hua Lun, a community-based actor, observed a spiritual event where the spirit entered the leader’s body and the leader started speaking in archaic Hokkien.

In his opinion, Hua Lun did not believe it was archaic Hokkien but rather that the leader was trying to create a sense of the archaic, so followers would worship him. To him, it was an interesting observation in a Taoist temple. Alternatively, Elizabeth, another community-based actor, said she listens to Buddhist sutra and lectures in Penang Hokkien on her everyday walks to work to improve her Penang Hokkien vocabulary. She emphasised how determined one should be because learning a language is not instant and it takes some time to be able to speak it.

At a Christian church, Fei Ming from the religion domain described how Penang Hokkien was used:

We have Hokkien<sup>44</sup> composers who compose Hokkien songs. We use the English alphabet to write the songs. We sing in Penang Hokkien. For instance, *me, you and Him*, we will use Hokkien to sing *wa, loo, ye*. (GA11/G3/Extract 2)

Fei Ming demonstrated what he meant in his interview by singing some Christian hymns in Penang Hokkien. He explained that in his church, worshippers have the choice to participate in an English, Mandarin Chinese, or Penang Hokkien congregation. Chui Mooi, also from the religion domain, started a Penang Hokkien prayer group 13 years ago because she was frustrated when friends asked her to pray for their grandparents who could only understand Penang Hokkien. She said:

How to say “I want to call upon our Father-in-Heaven”? What is *our Father-in-Heaven* in Penang Hokkien? You know, if I say *our papa*, it’s not right. It’s *tipeh*.

I was really frustrated and I told my care group my frustration. So I say, “Why not

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<sup>44</sup> The Hokkien composers from Fei Ming’s extract were mainly from Taiwan and thus, their songs followed the Taiwanese Hokkien vocabulary and pronunciation. However, when the songs were sung in the Christian church in Penang, the worshippers sang them according to Penang Hokkien pronunciation.



we all learn in Penang Hokkien? The easiest way to learn is through singing.”

(GA12/G2/Extract 3)

Chui Mooi’s extract shows that terminology used when praying in Penang Hokkien differed from everyday conversation. To learn the terminology, she borrowed a Penang Hokkien hymn book from her friend’s church and learnt to sing the hymns. She told me that when her care group first started singing, they sounded like they were singing a vulgar language due to the different intonations in comparison to speaking. It took them some time to be able to sing the Penang Hokkien hymns accurately.

It is observed from this data that these participants used Penang Hokkien mainly in their religious practices. Activities include conducting spiritual events, listening to Buddhist sutra, and singing Christian hymns. Having Penang Hokkien as an alternate to mainstream languages benefits the older generation who do not speak much Mandarin Chinese or English.

#### **4.1.6 Chinese cuisine.**

Chinese cuisine is an important element in representing the history of Chinese culture. Chinese ethnic dishes are often perceived as an “authentic cultural marker” (Wu & Cheung, 2002, p. 7). At participants’ homes, many explained that they like to prepare the dishes of their own culture to suit their tastebuds and keep alive the family recipes that have been passed down through generations.

Being of Cantonese origin, Ah Moo from the religion domain always makes Cantonese style sticky rice dumplings (*zongzi*) during the dumpling festival. She said this style of dumplings is hard to buy because shop sellers usually offer only Hokkien style sticky rice dumplings. Therefore, she makes them whenever her family and friends would like to eat the

Cantonese style sticky rice dumplings. She uses glutinous rice with yellow beans for fillings instead of meat or nuts and wraps them with bamboo leaves. She added that steaming is an important skill in Cantonese cuisine and many Cantonese people love to have soups in their everyday meal. In the same way, Joo Hoe of Hainan origin from the family domain often practises Hainan cooking at home, especially during the Chinese New Year festival when his children, brothers, and sisters gather together to enjoy a Hainan style dinner. In his opinion, current food culture is changing rapidly, and more fusion cuisine is being served by different Chinese groups. It has become difficult to find authentic Hakka or Hainan or Penang Hokkien<sup>45</sup> cuisine in restaurants. Therefore, he is motivated to continue cooking authentic Hainan food at home, so his family recipes can be passed on. Both Ah Mooi's and Joo Hoe's opinions on cooking authentic Chinese cuisine demonstrate their passion and determination in maintaining not only Chinese community languages but also their culture.

#### **4.1.7 Cultural participation and transmission.**

Elovitz and Kahn (1997, p. 71) state that cultural transmission to children within a family structure is not only enfolded by "the personalities of the actual parents but also the family, racial, and national traditions handed through them, as well as the immediate social milieu which they represent". Exploration of culture is important when maintaining community languages because "heritage language maintenance is not inseparable from participation in the heritage culture" (Zhang, 2008, p. 129). This is evident in the Chinese community in Penang where many participants in this study were seen to hold strong cultural values in endorsing their everyday activities, as the discussion below demonstrates.

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<sup>45</sup> Penang Hokkien cuisine differs from other Hokkien cuisine because it is influenced by the local Malay and Indian cultures.

As stated in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.4), the Chinese first arrived in Penang during the 17th and 18th centuries. They came from China in groups according to their ethnolinguistic groups, such as Hokkien and Hakka. They could speak neither English nor Bahasa Melayu and therefore, usually clung together to help one another. They joined clan associations, which provided services such as looking for accommodation, writing letters and posting them back to China, and arranging funerals. These clan associations still operate today but their member numbers have reduced due to the younger generation being less enthusiastic about joining. The younger generation no longer need such services as they already have easy access via the Internet, which further illustrates the reduction in face-to-face interactions in their communities. Joo Hoe from the family domain remembered that his father had joined the Hainan clan association and he followed. However, his children were not interested in joining as they commented that the association was “old-fashioned and boring”. For Huang Fu from the friendship domain, since his great-grandfather’s time his family has been a member of the *Chong San Woi Koon*, a Cantonese district clan association. He emphasised the importance of these clan associations in helping maintain the history of family lineage. Huang Fu summed up that at present, most of the clan associations are “very quiet” and only a few continue to provide scholarships to children.

Despite the situation within Chinese clan associations, the Chinese community in Penang still use the family surname corresponding to their respective community language, such as Hakka or Teochew, and do not change the spelling to be read according to Mandarin Chinese. Some also name their children in line with their community language as a reflection of their identity. Wee Nam, an official actor, said:

I don’t put pinyin [for my daughter’s name]. I don’t use pinyin as part of her name, it doesn’t show anything. I don’t like it. We also preserve the surname. The

surname is spelled as a reflection, Ng can be Teochew, Taishan or Cantonese.

(OA10/G3/Extract 5)

Wee Nam's main point here is that he dislikes given names being pronounced according to Mandarin Chinese pinyin because they do not reflect the person's ethnolinguistic identity. Von Chee, also an official actor, noted that young parents today are not naming their children according to their community language. His own daughter was given a Hakka name, but many of her friends were curious about the pronunciation differing from theirs as their names were written and pronounced according to Mandarin Chinese pinyin. When asked, he told his daughter her given name was written according to Hakka pronunciation to reflect her identity as a Hakka. Von Chee concluded his view by predicting that soon, many Chinese in Malaysia will name their children according to Mandarin Chinese pinyin and only maintain their ethnolinguistic group's surname. Community-based actor Jit Ting clarified the traditional way of forming middle names in Chinese culture:

Like our generation, we will use an identical middle name as an identity marker.

Then for the next generation, they will change their middle name to match others.

When I visited Hainan Island, I got this book about names from my uncle. My middle name is *Sze* but my children's middle name is *Nan*. The identical middle name represents our identity as a Hainanese and each generation differs.

(CA12/G2/Extract 2)

Jit Ting explains how the middle name was passed down in his family as a representation of their family lineage. Certain Chinese families prefer a similar middle name for each generation and these middle names are chosen in accordance with a historical book based on their surname, hometown in China, and ancestral history. Jit Ting added that not many families are following

this tradition anymore because young parents prefer “modern” names for their children. Figure 11 illustrates Jit Ting’s explanation.



Figure 11. A photo showing examples of generational names.<sup>46</sup>

In summary, the interview data shows that the current younger generation are no longer keen to join Chinese clan associations because they feel these associations do not offer relevant services and as such are “boring”. Subsequently, many clan associations are inactive or losing members. Nevertheless, cultural transmission continues in many Chinese families in Penang who have kept their surname in line with their ethnolinguistic groups’ language. The older generation also named their children according to their community language as a reflection of identity, whether their origins were Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew, or Cantonese. However, the younger generation have started to name their children according to Mandarin Chinese pinyin.

<sup>46</sup> These generational names were exhibited at Khoo Kongsi (Khoo clan association) and were used for the clan group of Khoo surname. They differed from Jit Ting’s family because Jit Ting’s origin is Hainan whereas the Khoo group’s origin is Hokkien. However, the method used for traditional naming is similar.

If this trend persists, the naming culture will slowly disappear, causing the Chinese community in Penang further loss of their unique identity.

#### **4.1.8 Section summary.**

This section described how participants in this study maintained Chinese community languages in their everyday life. The most common way of using these languages is through everyday interactions with family, friends, colleagues, and customers. Some participants also taught their grandchildren and friends to speak these languages, while others use them to write poems and read the Bible and newspapers. Another popular pastime among the participants was to watch Cantonese, Hokkien,<sup>47</sup> and Teochew dramas and movies, as well as listen to community language radio broadcasts. At Christian churches, worshippers sing Christian hymns in Penang Hokkien while spiritual events at Taoist temples are conducted in archaic Hokkien. Besides using Chinese community languages in everyday life, some participants also maintain their culture by practising traditional Cantonese and Hainan cuisine at home, joining Chinese clan associations, and naming their children according to their community languages.

In short, the findings in this section demonstrate that the participants in this study are keen to maintain Chinese community languages as they make efforts individually to use these languages in different domains. The various ways of using them also demonstrates the versatility of the languages. Having identified the everyday use of Chinese community languages, this chapter now turns to surveying how Mandarin Chinese is used by participants in their everyday lives.

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<sup>47</sup> The Hokkien dramas and movies were from Taiwan.

## **4.2 Everyday Use of Mandarin Chinese**

Mandarin Chinese has become a global language spoken by many people, not only in China but worldwide. It is also one of the official languages of the United Nations (United Nations, n.d.). In Malaysia, Mandarin Chinese is becoming a popular language for communication especially among the younger generation, which has caused language shift among the Chinese community (Ting & Puah, 2010a; X. M. Wang, 2010). For example, official actor Cheung Kit stated that Mandarin Chinese is becoming the language that is best understood by the Chinese community in Penang. In his opinion, this linguistic shift began 50 years ago but it is becoming clearer today. As Mandarin Chinese is commonly spoken in Penang, this section explores how it is used by participants in their everyday life. Their use includes everyday interactions, language teaching and learning, literacy skills, entertainment and religious contexts, and cultural transmission.

### **4.2.1 Everyday interactions.**

Many participants in this study, especially those from Generation 3 (aged between 30 to 49) stated that besides speaking Chinese community languages, they also speak Mandarin Chinese to their family and friends. Hua Lun grew up speaking Mandarin Chinese to his siblings and schoolmates, so he continues using it to feel closer to them. He emphasises that speaking only Mandarin Chinese or Chinese community languages should not be forced because their use is more about the association of closeness and intimacy with a person's childhood language. In Hua Lun's opinion, maintenance of a specific language will be successful when there is a strong emotional connection with the language, because that is when there is passion to continue using it in social contexts and a desire to pass it on to the next generation.

Official actor Wee Nam claims Mandarin Chinese is becoming a common language in many families, especially those where husband and wife are not from the same ethnolinguistic group. They use Mandarin Chinese as their family language, which applies in his own case:

Even myself is Teochew, my wife is Teochew but I cannot understand their slang because their slang is from Nibong Tebal [a suburb in Province Wellesley]. Their slang is totally different. So, I cannot converse in Teochew with my wife. We can only converse in Mandarin Chinese, so when we use Mandarin Chinese, our children will communicate in Mandarin Chinese too. (OA10/G3/Extract 6)

Wee Nam explained that even though he and his wife are Teochew, their Teochew differs because they are from different suburbs in Penang. This situation made it hard to communicate, so they decided Mandarin Chinese would be their family language. As a result, their children speak to them in Mandarin Chinese. Sum Sum from the employment domain noted that many parents from different ethnolinguistic groups now speak Mandarin Chinese at home with their children. This is partly to focus on improving their children's mainstream languages, especially Mandarin Chinese which is used in the exam-orientated education system in Malaysia. Chiang Tee, also from the employment domain, highlighted that the main influence was the language parents spoke at home. He suggested the older generation prefer to use Chinese community languages whereas the younger generation tend to shift to Mandarin Chinese. Elizabeth from the community-based actors group said this situation would have an "interesting effect" on the Penang society in the future because many non-Hokkien families, like Cantonese and Hakka, are switching to Mandarin Chinese.

Besides using Mandarin Chinese as a home language, many participants also use it at work. At official Chinese functions, Kok Wan from the official actors group delivers his speeches in Mandarin Chinese. As Kok Wan is not fluent in Hokkien, delivering a speech in



Hokkien would demonstrate a weakness, so Mandarin Chinese is a “more preferred language” for him. Min Tat from the friendship domain works in a Chinese operated company, and always speaks Mandarin Chinese to his superior and colleagues because it is their main medium of communication. He stated that using Mandarin Chinese and not Penang Hokkien or Cantonese is convenient for all employees because the majority in his company could understand Mandarin Chinese but not Penang Hokkien or Cantonese. In addition, Wai Keong from the community-based actors group identified Mandarin Chinese as a “useful language during meetings, festivals, and cultural events”. Like Min Tat, Wai Keong suggests:

Mandarin Chinese is spoken for communication purposes. For a Chinese who can understand Mandarin Chinese, it will be easy for him to communicate with others.

This is the benefit of Mandarin Chinese. For Chinese community languages, it’s only used for communication if both parties understand that language.

(CA9/G2/Extract 3)

Wai Keong’s suggestion stresses the usefulness of Mandarin Chinese for communication because most Chinese in the present day can understand Mandarin Chinese but not Chinese community languages. Kim Bak from the official actors group added that there would be no barrier to communication when two Chinese people who do not speak the same community language are able to use Mandarin Chinese as a common language. As Fei Ming from the religion domain suggests, Mandarin Chinese is now becoming the “working language for adults, students, and professionals.”

The above extracts illustrate how Mandarin Chinese is used for communication between family members, friends, employers, and employees. Because not all Chinese can understand one another when speaking their own Chinese community languages, Mandarin

Chinese has become a useful tool to “unite the society [Chinese community]”, as claimed by Tiang Lay from the education domain.

#### **4.2.2 Language learning.**

As stated in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.3.1), Chinese-medium schools in Malaysia use Mandarin Chinese as the main medium of instruction. Jian Hooi from the education domain stressed the importance of knowing Mandarin Chinese in today’s globalised world due to the economic value it offers. Tiang Lay, also from the education domain, highlighted that when parents send their children to learn Mandarin Chinese in Chinese-medium schools, it represents their Chinese identity and provides a way of maintaining that identity in a Malay-dominant country. San Choon from the friendship domain suggested that since the education system in Malaysia offers Chinese-medium education, Chinese children should attend Chinese-medium schools to receive six years of primary Chinese-medium education to master some Chinese in preparation for the future.

According to Ah Mooi from the religion domain, today, some of her English-educated friends and neighbours are insisting their children attend Chinese-medium schools to learn Mandarin Chinese in addition to Bahasa Melayu and English. Some of these children do not like Mandarin Chinese but are forced to learn the language. Consequently, to ensure they achieve an adequate fluency in Mandarin Chinese, parents are sending them to extra tuition to improve their language skill. Shu Min from the family domain explained why she sent her children to tuition:

Chinese language is the main base for almost all subjects in school. So I send them to tuition to enhance their language. It’s more important that they read because through reading, that’s how you can actually improve in your writing. Speaking

and writing are different. For writing, it's more refine whereas speaking is just to get the message across. So to me, it's just that the writing part where my children need to write, so that's the important part they need to improve. So by reading more, it will also help them. (GA1/G3/Extract 4)

Shu Min's explanation shows how writing and speaking Mandarin Chinese are different, so she sends her children for extra tuition to enrich their writing skill. She also stressed the importance of her children reading a lot because it is the only way to achieve fluency in the language.

Based on the opinions of the participants, many Chinese parents are currently sending their children to Chinese-medium schools to receive Chinese-medium education. Some children are sent to extra tuition to improve their Mandarin Chinese to achieve better grades in school. It is also through this Chinese-medium education that their children learn Mandarin Chinese, which is becoming a useful gateway for better job opportunities.

#### **4.2.3 Literacy skills.**

The findings in Section 4.1.3 note that participants read newspapers, books, and Bibles using Chinese community languages. In the participants' opinions, reading is a way to understand these languages and to maintain them. Similarly, many participants explained they read in Mandarin Chinese to improve their language skill and ensure its continuous usage in a multilingual country.

Meng Chong from the religion domain explained that he always reads Chinese books in Mandarin Chinese. He reasoned that:

My Hainan vocabulary is not deep enough to read about Buddhism. It needs special religious vocabulary which I'm not sure of. To read in Hainan, it is very difficult. (GA10/G2/Extract 5)

Due to his lack of religious vocabulary in Hainan, Meng Chong finds it very hard to understand the context of Buddhism in that language. Therefore, to comprehensively understand the books he is reading, he reads in Mandarin Chinese. Min Tat from the friendship domain reads everyday newspapers in Mandarin Chinese because he was educated in Mandarin Chinese when young. To him, it is easier to think in Mandarin Chinese as he was brought up in such an environment.

The extracts above show some participants chose to read in Mandarin Chinese<sup>48</sup> instead of Chinese community languages because first, they have adequate vocabulary to understand in Mandarin Chinese and second, they were brought up in a Mandarin Chinese environment.

#### **4.2.4 Entertainment.**

Looking back at the discussion in Section 4.1.4, many participants' favourite evening pastime after work was watching Cantonese dramas and movies, with others preferring Hokkien<sup>49</sup> and Teochew dramas. The participants also frequently listened to Chinese community language radio broadcasts. When asked how Mandarin Chinese is used for entertainment, the participants described their everyday activities.

Kok Loong, an official actor, felt the Chinese community in Penang should adopt the worldwide trend of watching Mandarin Chinese-speaking channels because of the influence of language movement in China and Singapore. In his opinion, Chinese television channels, such

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<sup>48</sup> Written Chinese can be read in either Mandarin Chinese or Chinese community languages.

<sup>49</sup> The Hokkien dramas and movies were mainly from Taiwan.

as China Central Television (CCTV), use Mandarin Chinese as their main medium; therefore, the community should watch some Mandarin Chinese programmes to catch up with the worldwide trend. Huang Fu from the friendship domain claimed most of today's younger generation enjoy the Mandarin Chinese-speaking channels, whereas the older generation stick to the Chinese community language-speaking channels. The younger generation do not speak Chinese community languages often, so they find it hard to understand context when watching Chinese community language television programmes.

Aligning with Kok Loong's suggestion, Cher Leng from the employment domain said she usually watches "actual and serious" news broadcasts in Mandarin Chinese to gain a comprehensive understanding of the news. Sometimes she also watches news in Chinese community languages because certain regional news is only broadcast in Chinese community languages. For language improvement, Chui Mooi from the religion domain chooses to watch educational programmes such as those on cooking, rather than movies in Mandarin Chinese. To lighten things up, Ying Song from the official actors group sings in karaoke using Mandarin Chinese. He believes that due to the "dominant culture and political influence from China", Mandarin Chinese songs dominate the Asian cultural scene.

The observation made here is that participants watch Mandarin Chinese news broadcast and educational programmes on television, as well as sing Mandarin Chinese songs. Thus, it can be concluded that media such as television and radio act as a platform for learning not only Chinese community languages but also Mandarin Chinese, as official actor Wee Nam mentioned.

#### 4.2.5 Religion.

Based on observation made in Section 4.1.5, devotees at Buddhist and Taoist temples pray and chant sutra using Penang Hokkien, whereas worshippers at Christian churches sing hymns in Penang Hokkien and the pastor preaches in Penang Hokkien. As Mandarin Chinese is becoming a worldwide language, many participants also use it for religious purposes. It is not uncommon for Mandarin Chinese to be used in religious ceremonies; a trend similarly observed in Ding's (2016) study in Sabah and Sarawak, Malaysia.

For many years, Ka Fai from the family domain has been attending a Mandarin-Chinese chanting ceremony at the Buddhist temple. He stated that as he has been chanting in Mandarin Chinese, a sudden switch to Penang Hokkien would be difficult due to varying vocabulary. Meng Chong from the religion domain explained that since Mandarin Chinese is becoming the “public language” in many Buddhist temples now, chanting books are written in Hanyu pinyin, which can be read using Mandarin Chinese. Mandarin Chinese is used for the convenience of the younger generation because they are used to reading Chinese characters in Mandarin Chinese, as taught in Chinese-medium schools. Meng Chong also made it clear that by using Mandarin Chinese, chants have similar intonation and pronunciation rather than a mix of Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, and Mandarin Chinese, which may confuse the devotees. Ah Mooi from the religion domain told me that the local Buddhist temple she attends uses Mandarin Chinese as the main medium of communication because it follows the headquarters in Taiwan. The devotees have to chant in Mandarin Chinese, and so the older devotees who are illiterate in Mandarin Chinese chant *Amitabha* only. There are also several devotees who have been attending the temple long enough to have memorised the chants, and therefore do not have any problems when chanting in Mandarin Chinese. Aligning with the use of Mandarin Chinese for religious purposes, Fei Ming, also from the religion domain, chose to attend a

theology seminary in Mandarin Chinese because he is more fluent in Mandarin Chinese than English and it is therefore easier for him to communicate with his peers.

This discussion shows that participants use Mandarin Chinese for chanting and communication. They chose Mandarin Chinese over Chinese community languages because it was more convenient for them to read in a familiar language.

#### **4.2.6 Cultural transmission**

As noted in Section 4.1.7, participants explained that they continued to use their surname in accordance with their respective community language to maintain their ethnolinguistic group identity in a multilingual and multicultural country. Some also named their children according to the pronunciation of Chinese community languages to reflect their identity.

However, Wai Keong from the community-based actors group preferred to write names according to Mandarin Chinese pinyin. He described the advantage of doing so:

Actually when we use Hanyu pinyin, it's pinyin for Mandarin Chinese pronunciation. Pinyin is actually more accurate, such as *Li* instead of *Lee*. The Mandarin Chinese pinyin is very accurate when typed in the computer. Last time [during the olden days], we used Hokkien<sup>50</sup> or Teochew pronunciation and they were very confusing. If someone had a very strong Teochew accent, his name would be written according to his Teochew pronunciation. That day, I met someone whose surname is *Ten*. I was wondering which language group he was from and it turned out to be Hakka. Similar when we see *Ong*, *Ng*, *Ooi*, *Wong*, we

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<sup>50</sup> In the past, the Hokkien immigrants pronounced Hokkien according to the provinces they came from in China.

are unsure which Chinese character to write. We can't even differentiate whether it is a Hakka pronunciation or Teochew. Like *Ooi*, we don't know which language group [the person originated from]. The Teochews pronounce their surname as *Ng*. This is very complicated. Now, things like that will not happen because everyone will use *Huang*. Nowadays most parents use Hanyu pinyin when naming their children. Just like my nephew, we renamed *Lee* and write his name according to pinyin pronunciation. When writing in Chinese, you will know the exact characters immediately. It is for the convenience of everybody. When you see the name, you can read it because it follows Hanyu pinyin pronunciation. Therefore, I feel that the best is to go according to Hanyu pinyin pronunciation so that we won't be confused whether the name is written in Hakka, Teochew or Hokkien<sup>51</sup> pronunciation. Things that were not right last time should be changed for better improvement. Last time, when naming the children, the Malay officer at the registration office will write according to what they hear. Now parents are allowed to fill in the forms at home before submitting. Most important is we have to preserve our Chinese names and cultures. We are supposed to encourage parents to let their children know about their origin through their ancestors' history.

(CA9/G2/Extract 4)

In other words, according to Wai Keong, when names are written using Hanyu pinyin and read in Mandarin Chinese, they are accurately pronounced and easily typed into electronic devices. In the past, Chinese people named their children according to their Chinese community languages and sometimes it was difficult to find out their ethnolinguistic group. Wai Keong provided as an example where surnames such as *Ong*, *Ooi*, *Ng*, and *Wong* could be written as

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<sup>51</sup> Refer footnote no. 50 for Hokkien pronunciation.



*Huang* (黄) using Hanyu pinyin. In Wai Keong's opinion, this issue is very complicated and needs improvement. Therefore, he suggested names should be written in Hanyu pinyin for the convenience of reading and spelling. Nevertheless, Wai Keong stressed the importance of preserving Chinese names and cultures so that they are not lost in the future.

Wai Keong's extract highlights that using Hanyu pinyin for children's names is considered a more precise method for Mandarin Chinese pronunciation and Chinese writing. Despite not naming children according to Chinese community languages pronunciation, maintaining their Chinese names is still an important part of maintaining Chinese culture and identity.

#### **4.2.7 Section summary.**

This section discussed how the participants in this study used Mandarin Chinese in their everyday activities. Many participants, especially those from Generation 3, speak Mandarin Chinese at home with their family, while others speak it at work with their friends and colleagues. Mandarin Chinese is used in Chinese-medium schools as the main medium of instruction, and due to the exam-orientated education system in Malaysia, many parents send their children for extra tuition to improve their Mandarin Chinese. In addition, some participants choose to read books and newspapers in Mandarin Chinese because they are Chinese-educated, and it is easier for them to think in Mandarin Chinese. Television and radio are also used as media to learn and improve Mandarin Chinese. At many Buddhist temples, Mandarin Chinese is regarded as the main medium of communication, and consequently devotees chant Buddhist sutra using Mandarin Chinese. In terms of cultural transmission, naming children using Hanyu pinyin, which can be read in Mandarin Chinese allows for accuracy and precision when names are written.

Because Mandarin Chinese is spoken widely in the world today, it is clear from the discussion above that many participants in this study are following a similar trend; that is, to use Mandarin Chinese in their everyday life in the same ways they now use Chinese community languages. Nevertheless, they regard Mandarin Chinese more as a language for goal achievement and career preparation.

### **4.3 Employment of Concurrent Languages**

One of Haugen's (1972) ecological questions relates to the concurrent languages used alongside the examined language. The examined languages in this thesis are Chinese community languages in Penang, so in response to Haugen's question, this section explores the other languages participants use alongside Chinese community languages, which include Mandarin Chinese and English.

#### **4.3.1 Mandarin Chinese.**

Most of the participants in this study stated that Mandarin Chinese is now commonly spoken among the Chinese community, not only in Penang but across Malaysia. In many Chinese families, especially those with young children and teenagers, Mandarin Chinese has become the means of communication. This situation aligns with Zhang's (2010) study in the US that found both Fujianese parents and Mandarin Chinese-speaking parents made an effort to speak Mandarin Chinese with their children at home. To the former, Mandarin Chinese was the only language for communication with their children, while the latter regarded it as a language that brings warmth and familiarity. The interview extracts below state the reasons why the participants employ Mandarin Chinese as a concurrent language.

Kok Loong from the official actors group described the use of Mandarin Chinese as a worldwide trend influenced by the language movement in China. He provided an example: There is currently huge internal migration and movement of people in China where those from Fujian may be working in Nanjing and vice-versa. People from different provinces are crossing borders for job opportunities. Because they do not speak the same community languages, Mandarin Chinese is used as a lingua franca for communication. Kok Loong termed this trend “social changes”. Similarly, Sum Sum from the employment domain emphasised that Mandarin Chinese is now considered an international language, so many parents prioritise encouraging their children to learn the language, together with other mainstream languages such as English. She stressed the importance of knowing Mandarin Chinese for survival, especially in Asian countries, where written Chinese is used on signboards, restaurant menus, tourist brochures, and so on. Hence, they consider it is useful and practical to learn some basic Mandarin Chinese for simple communication and understanding.

Ling Ling from the official actors group suggested that due to the dominance of different Chinese ethnolinguistic groups in different states in Malaysia, Mandarin Chinese acts as the language tying all Malaysian-Chinese together. She gave an example of her own experience:

I went for massage yesterday and the masseur is a Chinese lady from Johor [a state in the Southern Peninsular]. So, she was speaking to me in Mandarin Chinese throughout because she can't speak Hokkien, at least sort of Penang Hokkien. Actually she speaks Hokkien but the Johor Hokkien. I know people from Johor who have spoken Hokkien to me before, you can sort of grasp it but actually there is a difference between the two. So, the thing is Malaysia is a small country, the Chinese are so divided into their subethnic languages, and that's why people fall back to Mandarin Chinese. (OA6/G3/Extract 7)

Ling Ling's main point is that a Chinese person from another state in Malaysia who speaks Hokkien might not understand Penang Hokkien due to different accents and vocabulary, and therefore, they use Mandarin Chinese to communicate with other Chinese people. They might opt to speak in English or Bahasa Melayu, but they usually prefer to use Mandarin Chinese. Kim Chen from the community-based actors group concurred. Because there are so many Chinese community languages spoken among the Chinese people in Malaysia, Mandarin Chinese is recognised by Ling Ling and Kim Chen as being more suitable for communication purposes.

The above extracts explain why participants state that Mandarin Chinese is spoken alongside Chinese community languages. They highlight Mandarin Chinese as an international language for survival and a common language to unite all Chinese in Malaysia. This finding supports Albury's (2017) study on the representation of Mandarin Chinese as the mother tongue for all Malaysian-Chinese, and Zhou and X. M. Wang's (2017) study on the rising status of Mandarin Chinese in the globalised world.

#### **4.3.2 English.**

Besides Mandarin Chinese, many participants in this study placed strong emphasis on the younger generation's ability to communicate fluently in English because they regarded English as a global language. Based on such a view, English is considered a language used together with Chinese community languages by participants in the language ecology of Penang. However, as this study focuses on understanding the Chinese community language situation in Penang, interview extracts from participants related to the use of English have not been included in the discussion, as they have been determined as being outside the parameters of the current study.

### **4.3.3 Section summary.**

This section surveyed the concurrent languages employed by participants in this study alongside Chinese community languages. Two important languages in the current globalised world—Mandarin Chinese and English<sup>52</sup>—are learnt, spoken, and used simultaneously with Chinese community languages in Penang. Both Mandarin Chinese and English are deemed as global languages for communication purposes. In fact, many participants who are parents, strongly emphasised the need for their children to master Mandarin Chinese and English, despite being keen for the use of Chinese community languages in their everyday social interactions (as per Section 4.1.1).

## **4.4 Chapter Summary**

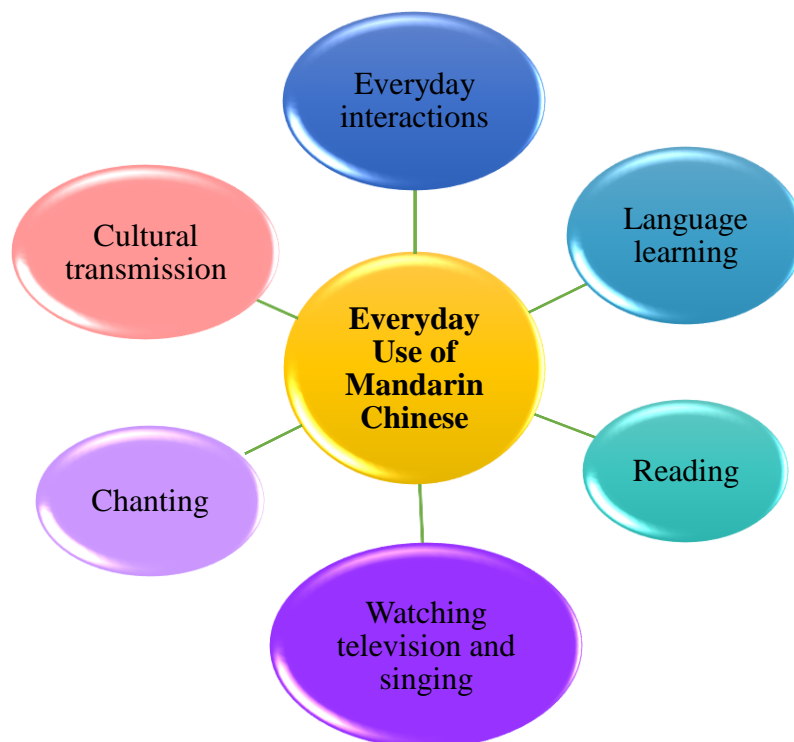
In addressing the first and second subsidiary research questions, “How do participants maintain Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese as part of their everyday life in Penang?” and “What other languages are used alongside Chinese community languages?”, this chapter has discussed how these languages are used by participants in this study. The results are captured in the illustrated figures below (Figures 12 and 13).

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<sup>52</sup> There was no detailed discussion about English as the scope of this study focuses on the varieties of Chinese language.



*Figure 12.* Summary of everyday use of Chinese community languages in Penang.



*Figure 13.* Summary of everyday use of Mandarin Chinese in Penang.

The key findings demonstrate that the participants in this study still actively use Chinese community languages in various domains. Penang has a long history of Chinese migration and settlement, and the interview extracts provide evidence of participants' use of community languages as part of their everyday life, with the hope that these languages can be passed on to future generations. In line with the current global language trend that prioritises mainstream languages, Mandarin Chinese and English are spoken alongside Chinese community languages in the language ecology of Penang. It is also clear that many participants, especially those from Generation 3, use Mandarin Chinese in their everyday life, but more as a tool to achieve their goals and to prepare for the future.

The next chapter deals with the motivation behind these efforts, predictions for the future of these languages, and the visibility of Chinese community languages in the landscape of Penang.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Perceptions of Chinese Community Language Maintenance**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter addressed the study's first and second subsidiary research questions and found that participants in this study still actively use Chinese community languages in various domains in Penang. They also use Mandarin Chinese but mainly as a language for goal achievement and career preparation. Continuing to locate this study within the notion of language ecology (Haugen, 1972), this chapter unpacks the results from the data analysis to address the third, fourth, and fifth subsidiary research questions:

- What perceptions do participants hold regarding Chinese community language maintenance in Penang?
- What are participants' predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang?
- How do participants perceive the linguistic landscape of Penang in relation to Chinese community language maintenance?

A language ecology is determined by the community who uses, learns, and transmits the language to others (Haugen, 1972), yet at the same time, the ecology shapes the community socially, psychologically, culturally, and linguistically (Hatoss, 2013). Psychologically, the community's attitudes towards the language plays an important role in influencing the intimacy and status of the language (Haugen, 1972). The first section of this chapter, therefore seeks to address participants' perceptions of current day maintenance of Chinese community languages in the ecology of Penang. The second section then explores participants' predictions for the



future of Chinese community languages in Penang. Their opinions are crucial to understanding the social, cultural, and demographic factors that underlie their enthusiasm for using Chinese community languages in their everyday life, despite acknowledging that Mandarin Chinese offers better economic value. The linguistic aspect of a language ecology is also related to the nature of the language's written traditions and standardised form (Haugen, 1972). Therefore, the third section of the chapter examines the vibrancy of Chinese community languages in the landscape of Penang by using linguistic landscape photos. The assessment is elicited through participants' interpretation of the landscape.

This chapter is structured as follows: I begin by revisiting the definition of language perceptions used in this thesis and explain its connection to the theme of this chapter (Section 5.1). The analysis is presented with illustrative interview extracts in two sections: (1) the importance of maintaining Chinese community languages in multilingual Penang (Section 5.2), and (2) participants' predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang (Section 5.3). Development of the linguistic landscape is briefly discussed alongside participants' interpretation of the visibility of Chinese community languages and related semiotic artifacts in the landscape of Penang (Section 5.4). Interview extracts are coded for ease of reference (see Appendix M). The chapter concludes with a summary of key findings (Section 5.5).

To guide the reader to understand each section in this chapter, Table 7 below shows the connections of this chapter's aims, subsidiary research questions, findings, Haugen's (1972) ecological questions, and the responses to Haugen's questions.

Table 7

Guide to Chapter 5

Aims	Subsidiary Research Questions	Findings	Haugen's (1972) Ecological Questions	Responses to Haugen's Ecological Questions
To understand participants' perceptions of the importance of Chinese community language maintenance in Penang, their predictions for the future of these languages, and their interpretation of the linguistic landscape of Penang	3. What perceptions do participants hold regarding Chinese community language maintenance in Penang?	<p>Section 5.2: Importance of Chinese Community Language Maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projecting multiple identities</li> <li>• Representing historical and family roots</li> <li>• Being part of a living culture</li> <li>• Having emotional connection</li> <li>• A strategic communication tool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the attitudes of its users towards the language, in terms of intimacy and status, leading to personal identification?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions about the importance of maintaining Chinese community languages</li> </ul>
	4. What are participants' predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang?	<p>Section 5.3: Predictions for the Future of Chinese Community Languages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General predictions</li> <li>• Predictions for individual languages</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where does the language stand and where it is going in comparison with other languages of the world?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predictions for the future of each Chinese community language</li> </ul>
	5. How do participants perceive the linguistic landscape of Penang in relation to Chinese community language maintenance?	<p>Section 5.4: Interpretation of the Linguistic Landscape of Penang</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Official signage in public spaces</li> <li>• Multilingual nameboards in public spaces</li> <li>• Ecology of Chinese-medium primary schools</li> <li>• Chinese cultural artifacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the nature of its written traditions?</li> <li>• To what degree has its written form been standardised; that is, unified and codified?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese community languages were written using the English alphabet</li> <li>• Non-standardised forms were used in signage</li> </ul>

## 5.1 Revisit: Language Perceptions

As noted in the literature review (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3), Sallabank (2013) states that subjective factors such as motivation, beliefs, and attitudes, play important roles when studying the language behaviour of a community because these subjective factors are related to language vitality, and language planning and policy in a community. Therefore, to provide a holistic understanding of the Chinese community language situation in Penang, this chapter focuses on examining the subjective factors involved with language maintenance. The three subjective factors are motivation, beliefs, and attitudes. Clustered together, they are discussed as language perceptions in this study.

It was noted in Chapter 2 (see Sections 2.2.3 and 2.4.3) that motivation is a push factor encouraging speakers of a society to learn and use their community languages. Their motivation is driven by the goals they wish to pursue through language learning. In addition, the speakers' attitudes, consistency of learning, confidence in speaking, and the amount of time and effort spent learning the languages are associated with their motivation to learn community languages. Therefore, motivation and language attitudes are closely related. Furthermore, speakers' beliefs are also an important factor affecting their motivation and attitudes to continue learning and using their community languages. In many communities at present, speakers are starting to abandon their community languages to focus on using dominant languages because dominant languages are becoming a necessity for economy and work-related communication, especially in major urban areas. When such a situation is taking place, beliefs act to support the maintenance of community languages.

The three subjective factors associated with language maintenance and language shift research—motivation, attitudes, and beliefs—are interrelated and it is difficult to tease them out in practice. To overcome this difficulty, this chapter uses the term 'language perceptions'

as an umbrella term to discuss participants' motivation, attitudes, and beliefs about Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. Language perceptions is defined in this study as a set of interpretations about language expressed by users as justification for their view on language use. This definition, together with illustrative interview extracts, provides a holistic picture of the community's standpoint on the maintenance of Chinese community languages in the ecology of Penang.

## **5.2 Importance of Chinese Community Language Maintenance**

The second aim of this study is to understand participants' perceptions of the importance of speaking Chinese community languages in their everyday life in Penang. This section reports their perceptions in relation to identities, historical roots, living culture, emotional connection, and communication tools.

### **5.2.1 Projecting multiple identities.**

When speaking Chinese community languages in their everyday life, most of the participants recognised that these languages projected multiple identities. Some thought that being identified as Chinese alone in multilingual Malaysia was insufficient for self-identification. They would like to further be identified as a Hokkien/Cantonese/Hakka/Hainan/Teochew, which was essential for claiming and maintaining ethnolinguistic group membership. Besides being identified as Chinese and a member of a Chinese language group, some participants explained that speaking Penang Hokkien was a reflection of their identity as Chinese Penangites, which also gave their hometown an identity.

Representing the official actors, Loon Teik expressed what it meant to him to speak Chinese community languages:

There is a self-identity. I'm a Hokkien, I think speaking of Chinese community languages enriches ourselves. In a sense, it is not only about your traditional historical roots but also who you are at this present point. So I'm not just a Malaysian, I'm not just a Chinese, I'm not just a Christian or a politician or a father but I'm also a Hokkien. It enriches the person itself and that sense of community you have among Hokkiens, it gives you more. (OA4/G3/Extract 8)

For Loon Teik, identity is a “multiconcentrated” concept—meaning that a person can have several identities, such as being a Malaysian, a Chinese, a Christian, a politician, a father, and a Hokkien. This “multiconcentrated” concept can determine behaviour and expression, further develop personality and appreciation for the society, and promote the value of respecting different identities among all ethnic groups. He added that this concept should be encouraged among the Chinese community in Penang. Taking this “multiconcentrated” concept further, Marco stated the following:

With these community languages, they really reflect your locality. Penang Hokkien is being Penang Hokkien. It sounds very different from other Hokkiens because it's very colloquial and fusion. And I think that's why I like it because it really gives you an identity as a Penangite. You know only Penang people speak like that. So I think that's great. (OA2/G3/Extract 9)

Besides being identified as a Chinese and a Hokkien like Loon Teik, Marco said that speaking community languages reveals one's hometown or place where one grew up. Being able to speak Penang Hokkien indicated a local identity due to the unique accent of Penang Hokkien, which differs from other Hokkiens spoken mainly in southern Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan. He

also observed that he felt closer with the Penang's Chinese community when he spoke Penang Hokkien with them and thus, he became part of the community.

The grassroots actors felt similarly. Shu Min from the family domain said:

We should continue to maintain Chinese community languages because that's the origin of Penang. It gives that unique feature of Penang. We can continue to preserve these languages so that the identity of Penang will be preserved. These languages will also give the country and the state itself an identity.

(GA1/G3/Extract 6)

According to Shu Min, speaking Penang Hokkien not only reflects a Penangite identity, it gives Penang city an identity that differs from other cities in Malaysia because Penang Hokkien has a unique vocabulary and pronunciation. Ka Chun from the friendship domain agreed:

We represent Penang, we are Penang Hokkien speakers, we show that we come from Penang, not Negeri Sembilan, they have different slang from us and we don't understand them. (GA5/G1/Extract 7)

For Ka Chun, being able to speak Penang Hokkien showed he had grown up in Penang. As Penang Hokkien is a distinctive type of Hokkien, not all Hokkien speakers can speak and understand authentic Penang Hokkien. As a result, he also thought that speaking Penang Hokkien quickly identifies the speaker as a Penangite. As a local who was born and grew up in Penang but had worked in other cities in Malaysia, having that identity as a Penangite made Ka Chun feel proud of his hometown.

Previous studies (Giles & Coupland, 1991; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1990) have shown that language and identity are closely connected, and that a language can serve as "a symbol of ethnic identity and cultural solidarity" (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977, p. 307). This

perspective is clearly demonstrated by Loon Teik, Marco, Shu Min, and Ka Chun. As Ling Ling summed up:

I think language plays so much a role in helping people to define themselves an identity. So the loss of a language will ultimately, will most definitely be the loss of cultural practices as well. (OA6/G3/Extract 10)

Ling Ling's summary implies that when a language is lost, the culture of the particular ethnic group and its identity will be lost too. Therefore, it is important to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang so Chinese traditions and cultures will not disappear.

### **5.2.2 Representing historical and family roots.**

A continuous use of Chinese community languages in everyday life is a way to represent one's historical and family roots. Many participants stated it was necessary for the next generation to know their family roots, such as their ancestors in China and their ethnolinguistic to ensure they are not only identified as Chinese, but able to speak their own community languages rather than follow the worldwide trend of speaking Mandarin Chinese. Official actor Kim Bak explained:

When you speak your own community language, then that is your root. You must be able to speak your own community language so that your root is not being cut off. If you are Teochew, you speak Teochew. If you are Hokkien, you speak Penang Hokkien. These are not new founded languages but from years of great-great-grandfathers coming down. (OA7/G2/Extract 11)

Kim Bak's extract shows that he sees a connection between community languages and family roots. When using their own community language, one is showing appreciation for their ancestors. Taking that connection further, Wee Nam added:

Language is important to be preserved and promoted because this is part of your identity, you know yourself as a Malaysian, as a Chinese. You also need to know where you are originated from because clan root is an important element in our society. Which clan you belonged to, which province you originated from, these elements are important in the Chinese society. You must know your surname, you must know well where your ancestors came from. The Chinese society are quite concern about family trees, all these things. (OA10/G3/Extract 12)

Wee Nam described precisely that surname, clan group, and origin of ancestors are important pieces of family information in Chinese society. A surname can reflect a person's community language, ethnolinguistic group identity, and province of their ancestors. By knowing a person's surname, one can tell whether they are a Hokkien or Cantonese or Hakka as well as their ancestors' province. For example, the Hokkiens, who were the first to come to Malaya, were usually from Fujian province while the Cantonese were mostly from Guangdong province. Knowing one's historical roots means family information can be passed down the generations and the family umbilical cord will not be broken in the future.

Interestingly, participants from the community-based actors group and all five domains from the grassroots level agreed that speaking Chinese community languages reflected their historical roots. Ah Meng emphasised:

Speaking all these Chinese community languages is really important because it's the soul, it represents who we are, our ancestors, the history and everything. At the Hokkien association, I was launching my book and talking about this. Today



people don't know their lineage. Parents don't tell you your district, you are Hainan or Hokkien. Of course we Khoo and Cheah associations are not scared because we have educational grants to go to the descendants. Every time they come and submit the application form, they have to fill in which Hokkien group and what is their lineage because they are 13 lineages. (CA5/G1/Extract 5)

Ah Meng further explained that many of today's younger generation in Penang do not know their lineage because their parents have not told them. In the past, Chinese parents used to have many children. However, today they only have one or two children. This situation has resulted in the Chinese community becoming smaller in comparison to other ethnic groups in Malaysia. Moreover, according to Ah Meng the retention of Chinese culture and Chinese language is also diminishing due to modernisation and globalisation. Therefore, to prevent these cultures and languages from becoming extinct in the future, Ah Meng believed it is important to discover family lineage and historical roots so this information can be passed down to the next generation. Cher Leng from the employment domain agreed:

When you speak Chinese community languages you can know your ethnic group. If you are a Cantonese and you speak Cantonese, then you know your origin is Cantonese. When your friends ask you regarding your origin, it is easy to introduce yourself as a Cantonese. Furthermore when they ask you about your village, you can immediately tell them where your village is in China. Some children do not know where their ancestral villages are in China. This is something very important, children should know where their ancestors came from in China and it is easily traced back through their spoken community languages. (GA17/G3/Extract 8)

Cher Leng emphasised the importance of knowing one's origin, ethnolinguistic group, and ancestors' hometown in China, and passing this family history on to future generations.

### **5.2.3 Being part of a living culture.**

For some of the participants, speaking Chinese community languages meant being part of a living culture. These languages have cultural and symbolic values, and they play important roles in establishing the Chinese community's position and role in multicultural Malaysia, thereby contributing to their social status and class. Ai Mei from the official actors group put it this way:

A living heritage is about the people. We practise multiculturalism and that is about everyone. So we don't promote any single one, we promote everyone. For me, heritage is about universal interest by humanities. We don't just focus on a single ethnic group. (OA13/G3/Extract 13)

Ai Mei's account verifies the Penang government's enthusiastic support of multiculturalism and multilingualism in Penang, which emphasises the promotion of all languages to represent each and every ethnic group.

In accordance with the official actors' perceptions of Chinese community languages as a culturally important asset that should be maintained, the community-based actors supported the need to keep Chinese culture alive. They recognised the distinctiveness of Penang Hokkien in comparison to other Hokkiens spoken in the world as specific to Penang's cultural identity. This is clearly seen in Gee Boo's extract:

I regard Penang Hokkien as the intangible heritage and cultural asset of Penang that is distinct from Hokkien spoken elsewhere. Singapore Hokkien may be

regarded as a community language but it bears greater resemblance to Taiwanese Hokkien than Penang Hokkien. It is important to preserve and continue developing Penang Hokkien as a language unique to the northern part of Malaysia for our own cultural identity. (CA1/G2/Extract 6)

In order to maintain this unique cultural identity for Penang, Gee Boo urged the community to continue using Penang Hokkien.

#### **5.2.4 Having emotional connection.**

Several participants expressed a strong emotional attachment to Chinese community languages when using them in their everyday life. They felt closer and more comfortable when speaking these languages with their friends, family members, and local communities. This feeling of closeness allowed them to form a social sense of belonging. Kok Loong, a participant from the official actors group, exemplified this view:

When I speak with the people in my area in Penang Hokkien, I feel much closer to them. Much closer to them because grassroots people don't speak English or Bahasa Melayu. They speak a bit of Mandarin Chinese but they speak Penang Hokkien all the time. So I believe I feel connected to them, I feel I'm part of them. I am part of them, I am not someone, not an alien from elsewhere. (OA1/G3/Extract 14)

Loon Teik expressed similar feelings:

All the time I use community languages especially in Bukit Mertajam. I use Penang Hokkien, sometimes Teochew, but I am very weak in Teochew. Sometimes I understand and can speak one or two words, then I switch to Penang

Hokkien. I just came from the market this morning, I used Penang Hokkien. These languages are still functional, not dead languages. When I speak Penang Hokkien to older people, I feel closer compared to if I speak Mandarin Chinese to them. (OA4/G3/Extract 15)

Geok Choon added:

If the people that I am speaking to or the constituent I am speaking to is Cantonese, then in order to show my sincerity or closeness, I prefer to speak in his/her language. (OA5/G2/Extract 16)

These three extracts reveal feelings of closeness, sincerity, and having a sense of belonging to the community influenced official actors' choice of languages when speaking with the grassroots actors. They also indicate that these feelings were crucial when forming a close connection between official and grassroots actors so the gap between them could be minimised and better communication established.

The community-based and grassroots actors experienced similar feelings when using Chinese community languages. Hua Lun recalled:

Personally I have emotional connection to it [Chinese community languages]. So I think it's important to maintain it. It depends on what language you grew up with. You grow an emotional connection to that. Hence the language maintenance can only be done when the rhetoric to maintain a language is because you are emotionally connected. If a generation grows up speaking only Mandarin Chinese, this kind of emotional connection will be lost. (CA2/G3/Extract 7)

Hua Lun's extract is evidence that he continues speaking Chinese community language because he has an emotional connection to it. He further explained that speaking Penang Hokkien or

other community languages cannot be forced because some people have grown up with Mandarin Chinese and have no emotional connection to the community languages. Consequently, they would prefer to speak Mandarin Chinese. Hua Lun indirectly indicated that the continuation of speaking Chinese community languages should be natural and dependant on a willingness to speak them. In relation to Hua Lun's extract, Meng Chong from the religion domain expressed his opinion:

Sometimes there are expressions where Mandarin can't be used to express out the meaning and it differs when you use community languages to express it ... I speak Cantonese quite well because there was a period of time when I worked closely with the people in Guangdong [China]. So I used a lot of Cantonese during that time and the special feeling started from there. My mum also speaks to me in Cantonese. Although my dad is Hainan, we speak Cantonese at home. So I am familiar with Cantonese. Cantonese has some expressions which other languages cannot be spoken out or represented ... If you use Mandarin Chinese, the sentimental feelings cannot be represented whereas if you use community languages, the feelings are different. (GA10/G2/Extract 9)

Meng Chong compares using Mandarin Chinese and community languages such as Cantonese to express himself. For him, sentimental feelings could only be represented through Cantonese because he was more familiar with the language and had been using it for a long time. He also spoke Cantonese with his parents and thereby developed a close connection with Cantonese. Pei Ni from the education domain reiterates these sentimental feelings:

I want my kids to learn to speak Teochew because of relationship. You use that language [Chinese community languages] to communicate with the elderly. Your sentimental feeling is different because you know the relationship so the

communication is different. I appreciate that. If you go to Europe or USA, then [someone says] “Hey, you speak Penang Hokkien!” You know it’s different. Deep inside my heart, I still appreciate this kind of languages. (GA13/G2/Extract 10)

Pei Ni’s remarks capture sentimental feelings experienced when using or hearing Chinese community languages abroad. When travelling or living overseas, suddenly hearing Penang Hokkien spoken with a Penang accent evokes an instant feeling of pride in coming from Penang. Any awkwardness disappears instantly, leading to a closer connection between the two people. In cases of emergency, it is also more convenient for the two people to get in touch and help one another because they will have a strong sense of togetherness having originated from the same hometown.

#### **5.2.5 A strategic communication tool.**

So far, I have looked at participants’ perceptions of maintaining Chinese community languages from the viewpoints of: (1) projecting multiple identities; (2) representing historical and family roots; (3) being part of a living culture; and (4) having emotional connection. The final aspect of perception below relates to the role of Chinese community languages as a strategic communication tool.

The participants from both official and grassroots levels agreed that Chinese community languages act as a useful communication tool when travelling and networking. This is evident in Kok Loong’s extract:

Language is a skill set which is a very important skill set. I started realising my asset skill language skill [sic] when I travelled to Jakarta. I was attending the Asia Museum Forum as a Chairman of the Penang State Museum. It was attended by

all the curators and the chairmen of all the museums in Asia. During the forum the China representative brought a translator from Beijing Institute of Foreign Language Studies. The chairman spoke in Mandarin Chinese and the translator translated into English. The host is Indonesia also with a translator from Bandung Institute of Technology. The host spoke in Bahasa Indonesia and the translator translated into English. So can you imagine the Indonesian speaks Bahasa Indonesia and translate to English, [then] English translate to Mandarin Chinese. \_\_\_ I saw it and I said why? Let me offer myself to do the translation for all of you, meaning that this guy speaks in Mandarin Chinese to me, I translate to Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Melayu is similar to Bahasa Indonesia, and then I translate to Mandarin Chinese. So language is very important, it is a skill set for Malaysian-Chinese as we master so many languages. We can replace the work of two translators from China and Indonesia. We are the only country in Southeast Asia who speak multiple languages. Of course we have additional skills, Cantonese or Penang Hokkien. It means that whenever I go to overseas like Hawaii Chinatown, I open my mouth and see a Chinese speaking Cantonese, we are able to converse in Cantonese. Whenever I go to San Francisco, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, to major cities everywhere, Chinese in Chinatown speak Cantonese. Communication becomes easier. (OA1/G3/Extract 17)

Kok Loong explained how important and useful languages are for networking, travelling, and business. A multilingual speaker can act as a translator in addition to handling their main work. Knowing Chinese community languages, especially Cantonese, is worthwhile because many Chinese in Chinatowns around the world speak mainly in Cantonese. Hence, being able to speak Cantonese allows one to feel more at home and have a sense of belonging to overseas Chinese communities.

San Choon from the friendship domain reiterated the view of language as a strategic communication tool:

I use languages as a communication tool in business. When customers speak to me in Penang Hokkien, I will speak to them back in Penang Hokkien. It's mainly for business communication. We cannot only speak English to customers. We have to accommodate to them. If they speak Cantonese, we'll speak some Cantonese to them. (GA7/G1/Extract 11)

San Choon emphasises having to reply to customers in whatever language they speak to him accommodate them. If there was a lack of communication between him and his customers, his business would deteriorate because he could not cater to their needs. It is therefore significant that San Choon is able to speak different Chinese community languages so he can keep his customers happy.

#### **5.2.6 Section summary.**

Overall, five different opinions from participants regarding the importance of using Chinese community languages were observed. Participants stated that using these languages in their everyday life reflected their broad Chinese and language group identity, which was crucial for claiming membership as part of the Chinese community and understanding their family roots. Among these languages, being able to speak Penang Hokkien projected a unique identity for them as Chinese Penangites, of which they were proud. Moreover, the participants had an emotional connection with the languages they spoke. When meeting family and friends overseas and being able to speak similar languages, they naturally felt closer. These Chinese community languages equipped the participants with a communication asset useful for business, networking, and travelling. Such opinions support Padilla's (1999, p. 166) statement



that “a language gives meaning to an ethnic group because it connects the present with the past”.

Having illuminated participants’ opinions on the significance of speaking Chinese community languages, the discussion below now turns to exploring participants’ predictions regarding the future survival of these commonly used languages.

### **5.3 Predictions for the Future of Chinese Community Languages**

Studies to date have shown that the number of people speaking Chinese community languages in Malaysia is diminishing (Ting, 2010; X. M. Wang 2010, 2016b), which raises questions regarding the future of these languages. This section explores participants’ predictions on the survival of these community languages in the near future in Penang.

#### **5.3.1 General predictions.**

Analysis of the interview data reveals different opinions across the three groups of participants regarding the future of Chinese community languages in Penang. Due to considerable variations, this analysis will be reported according to the respective participant groups.

##### ***5.3.1.1 Official actors.***

The official actors argue that due to the “packing of world languages” today, by which they mean a strong emphasis on learning English and Mandarin Chinese due to the economic value these languages hold, many Chinese community languages may die out in the near future. Ying Song states:

It's important [to maintain Chinese community languages] because many languages are dying and we can see that in one generation, dominant languages have actually killed off many less-dominant languages. There are less and less [fewer and fewer] people especially my children's generation who don't know how to speak Cantonese. I mean Cantonese, Penang Hokkien. It's all dominated by Mandarin Chinese or English because a lot of parents look at the packing of the world languages. The most important is English right? Then the second most important is Mandarin Chinese. You want to go to overseas, you want to have a better life, the lingua franca is English. Then regionally China is a very important country that provides a lot of opportunities, you are ethnically Chinese, you'll automatically want your kids to speak Mandarin Chinese. (OA3/G3/Extract 18)

Ying Song's extract shows the reasons why some parents tend not to focus on teaching their children Chinese community languages, but instead emphasise English and Mandarin Chinese. This is mainly due to preparing children to have better career opportunities and live overseas. Having said so, Kok Loong and Marco agreed the present situation of Mandarin Chinese becoming as important as English was a new and dynamic trend over the past twenty years. They suggested this was part of the natural growth and transformation of cultures, which every layer of the society has to accept.

Due to the trend of preferring to speak Mandarin Chinese, the official actors debated whether Chinese community languages should be maintained or not. Nicholas stated:

I don't believe in this one language policy. No matter the national language or English [becomes] a global language for communication, at the same time I think these community languages are very important because people are very keen on their mother tongue education ... Why should you stop these languages? I still

believe I mean I strongly believe they should flourish in this country.

(OA8/G2/Extract 19)

Nicholas believes Chinese community languages should continue to flourish in Malaysia while Wee Nam stresses that these Chinese community languages may disappear if they are not protected:

If you do not practise it, even you preserve it, it will not be helpful. You will not gain anything from that. Even [if] you preserve it in your archives, in your audio gallery, it doesn't help. (OA10/G3/Extract 20)

Realising these languages may disappear one day, Von Chee urged for more research to create public awareness so that more people could realise the present language situation and take action to save them:

I hope there will be more, more will be set up to conduct research on languages, something that has not really been done in the public universities.  
(OA12/G3/Extract 21)

Together these extracts show that official actors are enthusiastic about the maintenance of Chinese community languages in view of the language shift currently taking place. They also urged the community to keep speaking these languages and pass them on to the next generation.

#### ***5.3.1.2 Community-based actors.***

The community-based actor's opinions were different to the official actors'. Some of them, like Zhi En, predicted that Chinese community languages in Penang might become extinct in the near future if the community does not strive to maintain them in the present day:

Oral languages [Chinese community languages] are in danger of extinction. ... They are important and should be maintained among the ethnic groups. If each ethnic community strives to maintain their language, then it is possible that the language will continue to be used for generations to come. If the community chooses to ignore this and makes the young generation learn only commercially viable languages such as Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin Chinese and English, the threat of extinction is real and near. (CA7/G2/Extract 8)

On the other hand, Wai Keong, who was looking at the Chinese community languages from a business perspective, did not agree with Zhi En's more academic perspective. He stated his opinion strongly: "No! They [Chinese community languages] won't [disappear] as long as there are people speaking them." He supported this view with an example of the language situation in Penang:

Once you meet someone in Penang, usually you will speak Penang Hokkien and that is quite automatic for you to do that. This is a natural reaction as it's the main language for communication. Sometimes, you can also see two Cantonese people speaking Penang Hokkien instead. This is the same situation at home where everyone speaks Penang Hokkien. It's like a trend. Why is this happening? It is because in Penang, the majority of people are Hokkiens and it's the majority language. (CA9/G2/Extract 9)

This suggests it is understood that in Penang, regardless of the ethnolinguistic group of origin, Chinese Penangites usually employ Penang Hokkien as the main language of communication. Hence, Wai Keong did not think that Chinese community languages in Penang, especially Penang Hokkien, would disappear. Discussing the Hokkien culture, Von Chee from the official

actors group whose hometown was Kuala Lumpur (capital of Malaysia), experienced culture shock when he first moved to Penang:

Penang is very interesting because to me, it is an alien world, I am an alien in here. I grew up in a very Hakka environment, parents and friends speak Hakka, if not Hakka then it's Cantonese. When I came to Penang, it's all Penang Hokkien. I had cultural shock, I tried to adjust, Penang Hokkien is a new language to me. In Penang, Penang Hokkien is so commonly spoken. Everyone is Hokkienised. In fact I have a friend whose origin is Cantonese but he has been Hokkienised until he can't speak Cantonese and even his name is written according to Penang Hokkien pronunciation. I think Penang Hokkien in Penang is very strong, it is unique. (OA12/G3/Extract 22)

These statements shine a light on why Wai Keong's prediction differed from Zhi En's. In Penang, Penang Hokkien is a dominant language for every type of communication where every ethnolinguistic group's culture has been Hokkienised despite the presence of other strong cultures. Penang Hokkien is such an important language to learn and speak in Penang that other ethnic groups, such as Malays and Indians, also speak Penang Hokkien fluently. This is evident in Ah Meng's thoughts:

The problem in Penang is everybody born here, no matter if you are Hakka or Teochew, you can speak Penang Hokkien. Even the strangers opposite Maybank, the people who came from Kuala Lumpur, the Malays, the Indians, the trishaw man, the taxi man, you can see they speak Penang Hokkien. Don't ever scold the Malays in Penang Hokkien, they flare back at you. This is a true story, a Malay lady never speak Penang Hokkien but two ladies were gossiping about her, she

shouted and scolded back in Penang Hokkien! I was so surprised!  
(CA5/G1/Extract 10)

In short, the community-based actors had different opinions regarding the survival of the Chinese community languages in Penang. As Tian Hin stated:

I think and believe if we do something sustainable now, we can change the future of these community languages, then they won't disappear. I do not believe that they will eventually disappear. No matter what, as long as we develop and make them more active in the society, things will change. (CA10/G3/Extract 11)

This suggests that as long as the community continues to put effort into speaking Chinese community languages, they will not be endangered in the future.

#### **5.3.1.3 Grassroots actors.**

The grassroots actors from four domains had similar predictions while one domain differed. The actors from the family domain predicted the Chinese community languages would survive in Penang because these languages are still being used in everyday life. Shu Min observed:

I think they [Chinese community languages] will continue to survive especially in Penang. It will continue because people are still very strong in speaking Penang Hokkien, even at hawker stalls. We can see it is very apparent very clear. Even in schools, you can also see children speaking Penang Hokkien. (GA1/G3/Extract 12)

Shu Min's positive prediction was backed up by Ka Fai:

I think it [Penang Hokkien] will continue to grow in Penang. I don't think it will die off in the future because in Penang, the majority population of Chinese is still growing. I think in the future, Penang Hokkien will be maintained.

(GA3/G3/Extract 13)

Both Shu Min and Ka Fai did not think Chinese community languages in Penang would die off in the future because they always use these languages at work with colleagues and with friends. Moreover, their young children at home tried to speak these languages. The children picked up Penang Hokkien from their friends at school even though their parents strongly focused on them learning the mainstream languages taught in schools such as Bahasa Melayu, English, and Mandarin Chinese.

In contrast to the other four domains, predictions for the survival of Chinese community languages in Penang were met with different degrees of negativity by the grassroots actors. Chui Mooi from the religion domain claimed the languages would survive but “the numbers will dwindle in the future” because they are spoken less. Even her grandchildren did not have time to learn Chinese community languages due to the focus on achieving good grades in school. Soon Gek from the employment domain added that while these languages will not disappear, they “may be diluted because people are learning less words due to rare usage.” She noted that as a result of a lack of vocabulary, people replace terms with English or Mandarin Chinese. Jian Hooi from the education domain maintained hopes for the languages' survival:

These languages [Chinese community languages] won't die off unless parents don't want their children to learn. But if parents don't encourage, the society don't encourage, they are going to disappear. (GA14/G2/Extract 14)

Jian Hooi's view emphasises the important roles both parents and society play in encouraging the younger generation to continue speaking these languages. However, Huang Fu from the

friendship domain felt Chinese community languages would die off in the future, although “[i]t takes time, at least another three or four generations.”

### **5.3.2 Predictions for individual languages.**

As the predictions of Chinese community languages reported in Section 5.3.1 varied according to different groups of participants, I conducted a further micro-analysis on each language group in order to clarify the prediction of the future for each of them.<sup>53</sup> Below, I discuss this analysis.

#### **5.3.2.1 *Lingua franca of Penang.***

The official actors, community-based actors, and grassroots actors argued that Penang Hokkien is the most important Chinese community language in Penang because it is used as the main language of communication in most activities including business, networking, socialisation, and family gatherings. According to Kok Wan:

I think Penang Hokkien will not face a problem despite the talk that it will disappear after 40 years. I think it is still a very important language in Penang. I can see that it is slightly lower than Mandarin Chinese in terms of handling of numbers and it may not be as official as Mandarin Chinese and English but the sure fact is that it is a common language used in Penang and the northern region. I think that Penang Hokkien will still be a common language in this region for some time to come. (OA9/G2/Extract 23)

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<sup>53</sup> No data was available in this study for Fuzhou and Puxian Min, as they are rarely spoken by members of Penang’s Chinese community.



Kok Wan's extract shows that he thinks Penang Hokkien is a vital language not only in Penang but also in northern Malaysia. Moreover, extracts in Section 5.3.1.2 demonstrated that the majority of the population in Penang, including the Malays and Indians, spoke Penang Hokkien in their everyday life. This is evident in Kim Chen's statement:

Penang people speak Penang Hokkien. Penang Hokkien is the one [language], the environment is such that you pick up Penang Hokkien! ... Penang Hokkien is already a pre-dominant language in Penang, all people speak it, even Malays and Indians speak it. (CA8/G1/Extract 12)

Because Penang Hokkien is a common language of communication spoken by locals in Penang, as described by Kim Chen from the family domain, Elizabeth summed up that "Penang Hokkien is the *lingua franca*" of Penang.

#### ***5.3.2.2 New lingua franca of Penang.***

Although Penang Hokkien has been considered as the *lingua franca* of Penang, many participants argue that Mandarin Chinese is slowly replacing Chinese community languages in Penang as the new *lingua franca* because the younger generation use Mandarin Chinese more frequently than community languages. As Marco states:

During the olden days when people went to national schools, they learnt English at schools and spoke Penang Hokkien at home. As a result, many of the older generation didn't know Mandarin Chinese. But now youngsters learn Mandarin Chinese and they don't speak Penang Hokkien. So replacing Penang Hokkien with Mandarin Chinese, I think it's a new dynamic in this generation over the last twenty years or so. (OA2/G3/Extract 24)

Wai Keong, from the community-based actors group, also noted:

Due to the education system in schools, the younger generation speak only Mandarin Chinese and nothing else. Our generation [Generation 2] is still using the community languages but not the younger generation anymore. ... Foreigners visiting Penang also speak in Mandarin Chinese. (CA9/G2/Extract 13)

These extracts demonstrate that the perception of participants is that the younger generation in Penang now mostly speak in Mandarin Chinese and have started abandoning Chinese community languages.

#### **5.3.2.3 *Surviving languages.***

As for the other Chinese community languages, the participants considered Cantonese, Teochew, and Hainan as surviving languages that are confined to their respective ethnolinguistic groups. As Chiang Tee from the employment domain highlighted, “Cantonese is quite popular among our Asian region.” However, when examining Cantonese in greater detail, official actor Ying Song explained:

I think we are looking at a very dangerous level now because the landscape is going to be different. Cantonese can survive for one or two more generations.  
(OA3/G3/Extract 25)

Given this prediction, Ah Meng revealed that Cantonese clan associations are currently pushing for more activities and community participation.

On the other hand, as Cho Yaw observed: “Sadly, Teochew and Hainan are confined to the Hainanese or the Teochews.” Even though these languages are restricted to their ethnolinguistic groups, Ah Meng stressed that Teochew and Hainan clan associations now

conduct Teochew and Hainan language classes to teach young children to speak the respective languages.

#### *5.3.2.4 Endangered languages.*

Despite the survival of many Chinese community languages, the official actors and community-based actors claimed that Hakka is considered an endangered language in Penang. Ying Song predicted that “Hakka is seriously endangered.” Gee Boo further emphasised that “[s]ome of these languages, like Hakka, have become obscure in Penang and may be too late to save.” Some reasons why Hakka is endangered were provided by Elizabeth:

There’s actually many different types of Hakka, that’s why they’re quite fragmented. Hakka is like the name for a subethnic group but not a particular speech form. Some Hakkas would be different from each other. Much more different than Hokkien and Teochew. That’s one of the reason why it’s endangered. Hakka is probably the worst of all because the Teochews tend to speak the same Teochew and Hainanese tend to speak something very similar. Hakkas don’t. They’ll have more problems with their language. (CA3/G3/Extract 14)

Due to the different types of Hakka spoken by different Hakka groups, there is no standard version to learn, and this is why Elizabeth claimed that Hakka is fragmented and endangered.

#### *5.3.2.5 Dying languages.*

Among the Chinese community languages spoken in Penang, there is one language that is arguably heading towards extinction soon, and that language is Taishan. The majority of the

participants described Taishan as a dying language because hardly anyone speaks it, not even the Taishanese themselves. Kok Wan stated the reason: “If you speak Taishan, it is restricted to the Taishan clan members only and not outside of the clan.” Even as a Taishanese, Sum Sum said she does not know Taishan because her parents do not know the language. As a consequence, Sum Sum did not have any opportunity to learn Taishan. Instead, her family use Cantonese as a common language at home. This is also the case in shops, which Huang Fu describes:

Years ago, you can still find people speaking Taishan very frequently, you come across them very often but now it’s only 10% of the time, people speak Taishan.

I waited and waited in my shop. The last time I heard Taishan was about two months ago. (GA8/G1/Extract 15)

Commenting on the difficulties learning Taishan, Wee Nam, who previously worked as a news reporter before moving his career to politics, explained:

There is something different in Taishan. I think even the Cantonese can’t understand it. Definitely it is very hard to understand Taishan. When I was a reporter, I used to cover their [Taishan clan association] dinner events. I couldn’t understand Taishan at all. I didn’t know how to pick it up. I had to approach the chairman and asked him to translate again. Taishan people are minorities among the Cantonese group. (OA10/G3/Extract 26)

Due to the difficulties learning Taishan and it is being deemed a restricted language, Ka Fai predicted that Taishan would die off in 30 or 40 years.

### **5.3.3 Section summary.**

To sum up this section on predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang, the participants had two contrasting opinions. Approximately half of the participants claimed that Chinese community languages, especially Penang Hokkien, are still strong in Penang despite the younger generation not speaking them. They argued that these languages will not disappear in the future even though the number of speakers may dwindle. The vocabulary used will not be as authentic as before and speakers may substitute with English or Mandarin Chinese words. Languages such as Cantonese, Teochew, and Hainan will still be heard in Penang but confined to the respective clan groups.

In contrast, the other half of the participants disputed the survival of Chinese community languages in Penang in the near future. They felt that these languages would disappear after several generations because the younger generation are already moving towards speaking Mandarin Chinese and English. Many members of the younger generation do not know how to speak Chinese community languages at all. Even with classes being conducted at clan associations, they do not have much opportunity to practise at home because most of them focus on their academic languages, which are Bahasa Melayu, English, and Mandarin Chinese. Languages such as Hakka and Taishan are currently at an endangered level in Penang because there are too many sub varieties and they are considered too difficult to learn.

In short, although participants' opinions about the chances for the survival of Chinese community languages in Penang varied, all participants were keen for the community to continue speaking these languages because they are a representation of local identity and belonging. As concluded by Ai Mei:

The foundation of cultural heritage is something that you have inherited from your ancestors and are practising it. You want to pass it down to the next generation.

Language is one of it, community languages are one of it. ... if the community who practise Penang Hokkien feels that it's important to maintain, they will do so. It cannot be forced. It has to come voluntarily. (OA13/G3/Extract 27)

So far, this chapter has focused on discussion of participants' opinions regarding the importance of maintaining Chinese community languages and their predictions for the future of these languages, in response to the third and fourth subsidiary research questions. Moving on to address the fifth subsidiary research question, the next section discusses how I used the linguistic landscape of Penang to assess the vitality of Chinese community languages in various domains. The assessment was conducted by eliciting participants' opinions about their interpretation of the visibility of Chinese community languages and related semiotic artifacts in the landscape of Penang.

#### **5.4 Interpretation of the Linguistic Landscape of Penang**

To recap, as discussed in Section 2.2.5 of Chapter 2, the term 'linguistic landscape' is defined as the languages of "public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs and public signs on government buildings" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 25). Employing Landry and Bourhis' definition, many scholars (see, for example, Griffin, 2004; Hult, 2003; McArthur, 2000) have utilised the linguistic landscape as a tool to examine dominant languages in the landscape. In addition to studying dominant languages, Marten et al. (2012) suggest using the linguistic landscape to address the presence and vitality of community languages in public spaces and their interactions with dominant languages. This is because the linguistic landscape is able to present a holistic view of written languages to investigate how language hierarchies are manipulated in the landscape through the display of language patterns. As the field has developed, Landry and Bourhis' definition has also

expanded and incorporated semiotic artifacts, which Shohamy and Waksman (2009, p. 328) define as “all possible discourses that emerge in changing public spaces”. Studies demonstrating such discourses include the examination of postcards (Jaworski, 2010), skinscapes (Peck & Stroud, 2015), and building materials (Johnson, 2017).

In line with the broader definition of linguistic landscape, this section presents an examination of the visibility of Chinese community languages and their cultural representation within five respective domains, adapted from Fishman et al.’s (1971) study, in the linguistic landscape of Penang. Haugen’s (1972) ecological questions that are related to language’s written traditions and standardised form set the flow for examination of the vibrancy of Chinese community languages in this ecology. Based on Haugen’s ecological questions, the account of how Chinese community languages are used by the Chinese community within the five domains in the linguistic landscape of Penang will serve as an interpretation of Penang’s language ecology. The findings are reported according to: (1) official signage in public spaces; (2) multilingual nameboards in public spaces, (3) language use in Chinese-medium primary schools; and (4) representation of Chinese identity on semiotic artifacts. The next section begins with a discussion of the official signage as a way of identifying the Penang Government’s approach to language promotion.

#### **5.4.1 Official signage in public spaces.**

As discussed in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.2.1), Article 152 of the Malaysian Federal Constitution (see Appendix H) states explicitly that Bahasa Melayu is the country’s sole national and official language. By enforcing Bahasa Melayu as compulsory for official purposes, the National Language Acts of 1963/1967 (see Appendix I) enhances the overall visibility of Bahasa Melayu. This provision is an approach taken by the Malaysian Federal

Government in using and promoting Bahasa Melayu in the public spaces of Malaysia. Bearing these regulations in mind, this section analyses the written languages on official signage in three domains (friendship, religion, and employment) in Penang. As will be demonstrated in the findings below, the Penang Government is taking a different approach as compared to the Malaysian Federal Government in promoting Bahasa Melayu and other languages. This includes putting up historical street names on official signage in Chinese community languages.

The first data extract reflects on the approach taken by the Penang Government for language promotion. Kok Loong from the official actors explains:

We are taking a different approach from the [Malaysian] Federal Government. We support community languages which means that we support those neglected by the Federal Government ... It's not a written policy that we must promote [all languages], it's not a movement or whatever, it's an individual effort by the policymakers ... It's not a state guided policy. (OA1/G3/Extract 28)

Wee Nam elaborated:

It's for equal rights. I think in 1960s or 70s, we wanted to have four official languages and one national language, Bahasa Melayu, English, Mandarin Chinese and Tamil. That was our proposal. We [Pakatan Harapan] are a multiracial party. (OA10/G3/Extract 29)

Based on Kok Loong's and Wee Nam's comments, it is understandable that the approach taken by the Penang Government is to promote four languages, namely Bahasa Melayu, English, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil. Although not a written policy, it reflects a local effort contribution by policymakers from various constituencies. The term "equal rights" used by



Wee Nam affirms the Penang Government's philosophy to deliver social equality and wellbeing in Penang.

The second data extract reports how official actors have carried out this approach. As Kok Loong details:

Previously all street signs in Penang were written only in Bahasa Melayu but since 2008, we put up Chinese as observed in George Town. There are Chinese and Tamil and to be fair, we also put up Jawi. It's one of our efforts to promote languages. Penang is the only state in the whole of Peninsular that puts up multilingual street signs. We have Chinese, Tamil, English, Bahasa Melayu, and Jawi. (OA1/G3/Extract 30)

Geok Choon further illustrates the language choice of street signs:

In Penang, apart from promoting the official language, we try to promote and preserve the other side of heritage. In the tourist belt area such as George Town, you can see on street signs where names of streets were written in Bahasa Melayu and placed at the top position followed by Chinese or English at the bottom. It shows that we are taking great importance of all languages. (OA5/G2/Extract 31)

The ruling political party in Penang changed in 2008 after the 12th Malaysian General Election. Kok Loong and Geok Choon note that after the change of political party, the 'new and current' Penang Government showed support for all languages by putting up multilingual street signs in George Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008. Figures 14 and 15 below illustrate two examples of official signage in the streets in George Town where the country's national and official language of Bahasa Melayu is positioned at the top in a larger font, with non-official languages (Chinese and English) positioned below in smaller font. These

illustrations align with Scollon and Scollon's (2003, p. 120) argument that "[the] preferred code is on top, on the left or in the centre and the marginalised code is at the bottom, on the right, or in the margins". Wee Nam also mentioned that the Penang Government currently has no intention of expanding the multilingual signage outside the World Heritage site due to political resistance and controversy. Therefore, it is found in George Town tourist areas only.



*Figure 14.* A street sign written in Bahasa Melayu and Chinese



*Figure 15.* Places of interest displayed in Bahasa Melayu and English.

In addition to the Penang Government promoting four languages as illustrated in Kok Loong's (OA1/G3/Extract 30) and Geok Choon's (OA5/G2/Extract 31) extracts, written Chinese community languages were also found on official signage in George Town. Figure 16 below shows a street name written in Bahasa Melayu, English, Chinese, and Tamil. Its

historical name is also introduced in Bahasa Melayu (*Jalan Nona Baru*), Penang Hokkien (*Sin Kay*), and Cantonese (*Sin Kai*). The Penang Hokkien and Cantonese names are spelt according to their respective pronunciations and written using the English alphabet.



Figure 16. Chinese community languages (Penang Hokkien and Cantonese) were introduced together with dominant languages on official signage.

When asked the reason for Chinese community languages written on official signage, Kim Bak from the official actors expressed strongly:

This is maintaining the heritage yet catering to the society. It's part and parcel of Penang's heritage. Heritage is not only about people, it's about the culture, it's about the language and it's about the people living here. (OA7/G2/Extract 32)

Loon Teik, also from the official actors group, pointed out that Chinese community languages written in English alphabet would help those who could not read Chinese to be aware of local street names. Geok Choon, another official actor, claimed they were also for promotional purposes, assisting foreign tourists in getting to know more about the history of Penang.

The third data extract expresses the community-based and grassroots actors' feedback on the Penang Government's introduction of multilingual signage in George Town. Jit Ting from the community-based actors group was supportive:

It's a positive sign from the [Penang] Government. Nowadays there are three languages on most street signs, Bahasa Melayu, English and Chinese [see Figure 17]. It's for the convenience of tourists. (CA12/G2/Extract 15)



*Figure 17.* A street name displayed in Chinese, Bahasa Melayu, and English.

For Kim Chen, also from the community-based actors, George Town’s multilingual street signs are “a reflection of the multiracial and multicultural façade of Penang state.” Joo Hoe from the family domain added that the array of multilingual street signs in George Town symbolised that there are “no better ethnic groups than another and all ethnic groups are same and equal in status.” From a more practical perspective, the friendship domain’s Min Tat observed: “Four languages signs, it’s not only for the Malays or Indians, it’s for international tourists. It’s good for tourism purposes.” Ka Chun, also from the friendship domain, suggested having more written Chinese on street signs next to Bahasa Melayu and English to cater to the many Chinese tourists. Beyond those in George Town, Ah Mooi from the religion domain explained there were multilingual signs in the market near her house, as shown in Figure 18. When asked how she felt about those signs, she replied: “When finding the names of the different sections [in the market], it is easier and more convenient when they are written in Chinese.”



*Figure 18.* A market sign written in Bahasa Melayu, Chinese, and Tamil.

Soon Geok summed up the feedback provided by the Chinese community in Penang:

As far as I know, most Malaysians are multilingual. Most of them know more than one language, hence it won’t be a problem for them to read the signs. But for those older generation who never attended school or originated from China, they will

need Chinese writing and for those who came from India, they will need Tamil. Those younger generation can mostly understand Bahasa Melayu and English. So there won't be much problem but to cater to the tourists, the [Penang] Government should make our signboards friendlier with more languages. I think this is something that can be done to ensure that our street signs have many languages so that we can cater to tourists' needs and to locals as well. (GA20/G2/Extract 16)

Soon Geok encouraged the Penang Government to continue putting up multilingual signage for the benefit of tourists and locals. Most tourists cannot read Bahasa Melayu, so having street signs in English would be convenient for them, while older generation locals would benefit from having written Chinese, Tamil, or Chinese community languages on signage. She therefore considered multilingual signage practical for everyone.

#### **5.4.2 Multilingual nameboards in public spaces.**

As reported in Section 5.4.1, the Penang Government has taken a different approach than the Malaysian Federal Government by supporting languages spoken by various ethnic groups in Penang. This is evident in the multilingual official signage in George Town and some smaller areas such as markets. Within similar domains (friendship, religion, and employment) as reported in Section 5.4.1, this section examines the written languages on nameboards in Penang. The findings will show that there is flexibility in the implementation of the advertisement language policy at the grassroots level and this is demonstrated on the multilingual nameboards found in different areas in Penang. In relation to the focus of this study that is the maintenance of Chinese community languages, Chinese is usually displayed on these nameboards but there are also traces of Chinese community languages written using English alphabet.



According to the Local Government Act of 1976 (see Appendix J), shop owners are allowed to advertise in Bahasa Melayu together with other languages as long as they prioritise and emphasise the national language on nameboards. However, the data collected in this study show that many nameboards do not comply with the regulations. English, Chinese, Tamil, and foreign languages such as German and Japanese were seen without the national language. Such inconsistency leads me to explore further.

The first data extract reports clarification provided by official actors regarding the inconsistencies. Marco stated:

It's called lack of enforcement. I think these things shouldn't be too rigid or too strict. Government<sup>54</sup> only knows how to think in black and white but most of these things are grey. The rules are not flexible but if you want to enforce it in a black and white way, restaurants will be closing down and people will not be working. Why is that so? Because 80% of them are unlicensed, they operate in residential areas. Sometimes we have to be flexible, I think there is nothing wrong.  
(OA2/G3/Extract 33)

Nicholas emphasised:

It's for business. I don't think the Penang Government is very strict about this. If you conduct a survey, you'll find that many have violated the law. It's up to the shop owners to put up the languages they want. (OA8/G2/Extract 34)

These explanations demonstrate that the Penang Government does not enforce the laws strictly. In a way, it can be considered as what Marco interpreted as a "one eye closed policy", in which he indicated that the Penang Government provided some leeway for shop owners to use

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<sup>54</sup> Marco did not state precisely which government he was pointing to, whether the Malaysian Federal Government or the Penang Government. It is assumed he was addressing government agencies in general.

whichever languages they like on nameboards, as long as they did not oppose the policy too openly. He added that there has always been a mutual understanding and tolerance between the Penang Government and shop owners. The lack of enforcement could be a consequence of the more open-minded approach practised by the Penang Government in supporting all languages, as reported in Section 5.4.1. This finding of a “one eye closed policy” aligns with Anuarudin, Chan, and Abdullah’s (2013, pp. 783-796) study, which found that “language accommodations” were often made by Malaysian authorities to cater for “deviant language practices”.

The second data extract addresses the issue of flexibility and response by community-based actors. As Kok Wan from the official actors said:

Some of the shops do not have the license to operate whereas for some, they have the license but it is something very old and has been accepted. I think the council accepted status flaws. Should there be a new application, probably the new guidelines have to be heard. Of course, the council do enforce, we [the Penang Government] leave this issue to the council to deal. (OA9/G2/Extract 35)

The council is in charge of enforcing the advertisement law and passing licenses for shops in Penang. Kok Wan’s reference to the council is also known as the local government. Loon Teik and Wee Nam explain the three tiers of government in Malaysia: federal government, state government, and local government (council). The federal government controls the country’s policies while the state government provides state policies. The local government follows and implements the state policies. Issues regarding the enforcement of advertisement law and licensing for shops lie within the jurisdiction of the local government, although the state government is allowed to intervene from time to time when needed.



When the community-based actors were questioned regarding the enforcement of the advertisement law, some were unaware of the law but many still highlighted the flexibility seen in its implementation in the landscape of Penang. For example, Gee Boo noted: “A standard advertisement policy is not rigidly enforced, allowing leeway for different businesses to adopt a degree of creativity and liberty.” Show owner Wai Keong expressed his thoughts:

The policy is just sitting there. They [the local government] don’t care much. They are just silly to implement such policy that doesn’t work. Actually in Malaysia, many policies do not work and the Government<sup>55</sup> do not bother us much. If you have your shop before 1978, there is a law, which states that they are not supposed to disturb us. My shop uses the old sign since my father’s time. If they want to complaint, they will have to pay us to make a new one. I don’t think they will do that because it uses too much money for every shop to remake the signs. But if your shop is new, they will emphasise to use Bahasa Melayu on your sign. In Penang, there was a period when they cared much but now, they don’t bother us anymore. (CA9/G2/Extract 16)

Wai Keong’s thoughts align with Kok Wan’s clarification (OA9/G3/Extract 35) that strict enforcement is carried out by the local government for new shops to use Bahasa Melayu on their nameboards, while there is less interference with old shops. Demonstrating an understanding of the language choice regulations, Jit Ting stated:

All the while I have been using an old shop sign. Maybe they [the local government] will complain the new shops but not for our old shops. For those new shops, they will ask the owners to place Bahasa Melayu on top and as main

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<sup>55</sup> In Wai Keong’s statement, I assumed he referred to the government in general.

language. It also has to be bigger in font size compared to Chinese.  
(CA12/G2/Extract 17)

Based on personal experience, Wai Keong commented:

My shop's name is Hung Kee Sdn. Bhd. [see Figure 19]. How do I change it to Bahasa Melayu? I can't! Sdn. Bhd. [public limited company] is already written in Bahasa Melayu. But if I'm a tailor, I can put *tukang jahit* [tailor in Bahasa Melayu], then it's a different case. Most important, I maintain a Chinese name because of my identity. As for the font size, they [the local government] expect some fonts to be bigger and some to be smaller. But in reality, they are all similar in size which is six inches. Chinese looks much bigger because they are square in shape whereas the English alphabet is round. When you measure them, you'll think that five inches are bigger than six inches because Chinese looks bigger than the English alphabet. I am aware of all these because I made my own shop's sign.  
(CA9/G2/Extract 18)



Figure 19. A nameboard written in Bahasa Melayu and Chinese.

Both extracts from Jit Ting and Wai Keong show that community-based actors are aware of the regulations regarding language choice for nameboards.

The third data extract relates to grassroots actors' reactions to seeing multilingual nameboards in the landscape of Penang, with a particular focus on George Town due to its UNESCO World Heritage status. Most were rather positive about the multilingual nameboards. Pei Ni from the education domain highlighted the benefits of having multilingual nameboards:

If I'm in the business, the more languages I put, the more advantage I get. If I target the Korean market, I put Korean. If you target the Japanese, you put Japanese. The more languages, the merrier. Business is business, it's different. When it comes to business, you have your strategy to attract the customers.

(GA13/G2/Extract 17)

Pei Ni is suggesting multilingual nameboards are a business strategy to bring in more customers. Although Sum Sum from the employment domain said that English and foreign languages nameboards (see Figure 20) give the impression cafes and restaurants were westernised and considered as high class, at the end of the day, she said: "Signs don't play a role. I don't think I will look at the shop sign before making my choice!"



Figure 20. A modern nameboard written in English only.

Ka Fai from the family domain looked at those nameboards from an historical point of view: “Of course, if the signs are written in Chinese [see Figure 21], it would be much more attractive because this place [George Town] has a long Chinese history behind it.” Ka Fai is suggesting that nameboards written in Chinese reflect the vitality of the Chinese community living in George Town for centuries.



Figure 21. A Chinese sundry shop nameboard written in Chinese and English.

Shuk Yee from the family domain added that it would be more convenient for elderly people like her to have nameboards written in Chinese, as seen in Figure 22 below. This is because many elderly Chinese originated from China or were educated purely in Chinese. As a result, they cannot read English or Bahasa Melayu, so having Chinese written on nameboards would help them understand what the shop is selling, what service the shop provides, or the regulations to follow in religious places.



Figure 22. A nameboard written in Chinese and English in a temple.

In addition to those nameboards that are written in Chinese, there were some written in Chinese community languages. Figure 23 is an example of a nameboard where names of Chinese delicacies are written using English alphabet and according to Cantonese (*Shat Kek Ma*, *Hup Toh Soh*) and Penang Hokkien (*Heong Pheah*) pronunciations.



*Figure 23. Names of delicacies written according to Penang Hokkien and Cantonese pronunciations.*

When asked about the purpose for using Chinese community languages on nameboards, Gee Boo from the community-based group expressed his views:

There is a complete absence of Chinese community languages on signs except in the transcription of proper names in Penang Hokkien or Cantonese, mainly because the local population is not literate in these languages. These proper names are often transcribed according to the writer's own interpretation of phonetics. It is somehow an indirect and soft approach in maintaining the presence of Chinese community languages but it is preferred that a writing system or orthography for them to be adopted in ensuring standardisation and clarity. (CA1/G2/Extract 19)

Gee Boo views writing down Chinese community languages as a method maintaining them, which Ai Mei from the official actors group also suggests: “[W]hat I think is you need to do proper documentation [of the Chinese community languages]. That’s the only way to keep it.” Ai Mei’s reference to “proper documentation” is the use of standard orthography to write and read Chinese community languages. According to Hua Lun, another community-based actor,



“in 1835, a spelling system was developed to learn Penang Hokkien.”<sup>56</sup> He urged the community to bring this spelling system back in Penang. For him, using a non-standardised spelling system to write and read Chinese community languages would not help much in propagating them, so it would be much better to educate the community with a standard orthography.

Nevertheless, the grassroots actors were perceived to have accepted these written Chinese community languages forms in the public spaces. Min Tat praised the use of the Romanised alphabets for labelling the Chinese delicacies (see Figure 23 above) according to their respective Penang Hokkien and Cantonese pronunciations as a way to learn and remember the languages. Agreeing with Min Tat, Soon Geok, who was educated in English and Bahasa Melayu, said it was useful for people like her to be able to read those names using the English alphabet. Chui Mooi agreed that writing the names of Chinese delicacies in such a way exposed tourists to more of Penang’s culture. Food has always been considered part of Penang’s culture, with the city listed as the top culinary spot for 2014 in the renowned international travel guide, Lonely Planet (“Lonely Planet Picks Penang”, 2014). The food culture in Penang is a reflection of the intermingling cultures that have arrived since 1786 from India, Aceh, China, Burma, and Thailand. Supporting Chui Mooi, Chiang Tee added that maintaining these delicacies’ names according to their authentic pronunciations was a representation of Cantonese and Hokkien identities. Summarising the grassroots actors’ perceptions, Meng Chong stated:

I will encourage people to do so [write Penang Hokkien using the English alphabet]. Penang has some specialities which should be represented by local Penang Hokkien words. Community languages can give us a sense of closeness and possess special feelings, and this is the way how Penang Hokkien should be

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<sup>56</sup> In 1827, Samuel Dyer travelled from England and settled down in Penang where he learnt Hokkien and published the first Penang-Hokkien dictionary at Anglo-Chinese College, Malacca (DeFrancis, 1972).

used. If we change the names of these delicacies into Mandarin Chinese or English, they will sound very strange, causing people not to know them. Besides, they will remove the authentic feelings. (GA10/G2/Extract 18)

The main point here is that the community should continue to use local Penang Hokkien words as names for their local delicacies rather than change them to Mandarin Chinese or English because the local Penang Hokkien words symbolise the delicacies' authenticity. This suggests written local Penang Hokkien words are intended to function symbolically rather than informatively.

To sum up, having nameboards written in Bahasa Melayu, English, and Chinese in addition to Chinese community languages could be considered an advantage for shop owners because they function strategically to attract more foreign customers and show off Penang's history. Indirectly, they also reflect Penang's colourful culture, as recapped by Tian Hin, a participant from the community-based actors group.

#### **5.4.3 Ecology of Chinese-medium primary schools.**

The findings in Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 demonstrate that various locations in the friendship, religion, and employment domains in Penang are considered by the participants to be multilingual, with a variety of languages seen on official signage and public nameboards. Progressing to the education domain, this section discusses the participants' views on the ecology of Chinese-medium primary schools in Penang to find out the support these schools provide in maintaining Chinese community languages. As will become apparent in this section, the main findings in relation to the ecology of Chinese-medium primary schools is that Chinese community languages are not prominent as part of the environment. More importantly, the schools are operating a de-facto policy of disallowing the learning of Chinese community



languages and instead encouraging Bahasa Melayu, English, and Mandarin Chinese. There is no space for community languages in this domain, since there is no space in the curriculum or linguistic landscape of schools.

As explained in Chapter 1 (Section 1.3.1), the Chinese-medium schools in Malaysia have fought a long battle to protect their identity and language (L. E. Tan, 2000). At the primary level, national-type Chinese-medium schools use Mandarin Chinese as the main medium of instruction (Puteh, 2010). However, at the secondary level, Chinese-medium schools changed the medium of instruction from Mandarin Chinese to English in the 1960s and then to Bahasa Melayu in 1977, after implementation of the 1961 Education Act (L. E. Tan, 2000). However, Mandarin Chinese is still taught as a subject. Conversely, private Chinese-medium secondary schools maintain the medium of instruction in Mandarin Chinese throughout. At the primary level, even though Mandarin Chinese is used as the main medium of instruction students still have to learn Bahasa Melayu, the national and official language of Malaysia, and English, the unofficial language, as language subjects. Students needing to master three languages raises questions regarding community language use in national-type Chinese primary schools.

The first data extract accounts for the type of environment the Chinese-medium primary schools create for students. Ying Song's views generally represent the official actors'

The reality is that the [Malaysian Federal] government wants to impose all Bahasa Melayu but Chinese schools are fighting back. Even the Ministry of Education wants to be more open-minded which I don't think so, most of the civil servants are Malays ... So it's good that these schools are using their own funding to have a more open and multicultural environment because it's about the messages sent out to the kids ... the key issue is about knowledge, it's not about language.

(OA3/G3/Extract 36)

Ying Song's responses makes clear the type of environment Chinese-medium primary schools create is a more open and multicultural environment rather than a monocultural one. He emphasised that these schools use their own funding to develop this environment. The education domain's Jian Hooi clarified the meaning of 'own funding':

The funding [obtained by the Chinese-medium primary schools] ... some from donations, some from activities like charity walks and dinners. We can get a lot of money from the society [Chinese clan associations and public donations].  
(GA14/G2/Extract 19)

He points out that this funding was used to maintain the school facilities. He explained that in Malaysia's national education system, all national-type Chinese primary schools received only partial funding from the federal government, which was used to pay the teachers and utility bills. School principals and administration boards therefore have to find ways to obtain their own funding. Nevertheless, as the Penang Government's approach towards supporting all languages was made clear in public spaces (as indicated in Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2), Kok Loong from the official actors affirmed they also support these Chinese-medium, Tamil-medium, and missionary schools by giving out annual allocations, of close to 10 million Malaysian Ringgit<sup>57</sup> per year to upgrade school facilities.

Investigating further, the second data extract uncovers the meaning of a more open and multicultural environment in these Chinese-medium primary schools. Tiang Lay from the education domain explained the environment in his school:

For me, Chinese will be my first priority because it is the identity of a Chinese school but I try to use three languages. I put up notices in three languages so that

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<sup>57</sup> Refer to footnote no. 13 for definition of Malaysian Ringgit (RM).

children can learn them. Besides Chinese students, my school has Malay students too. The Malay students can easily understand the meaning of Bahasa Melayu words. It's a way for the children to learn from one another. (GA15/G3/Extract 20)

Verifying Tiang Lay's claim of displaying three languages for school notices, Shu Min from the family domain observed:

I think many, many languages. Not just Bahasa Melayu, I can see English, I can see Chinese. There is a Chinese corner, an English corner and a Bahasa Melayu corner. That means they have corners for these main languages. Whenever there are important announcements, they use few languages. I could definitely see more than one language when there are announcements. (GA1/G3/Extract 21)

Shu Min noted that in her children's school, there were three main language corners and announcements were displayed in multiple languages. Despite the fact that the medium of instruction in Chinese primary schools was solely in Mandarin Chinese, both extracts shed light on the meaning of a more open and multicultural environment, as exemplified in Figures 24 and 25 (three languages displayed on signs and notice boards).



Figure 24. Bahasa Melayu, English, and Chinese displayed on an electric sign.



Figure 25. Bahasa Melayu and Chinese posters on notice boards.

The third data extract reveals participants' opinions regarding students learning three languages simultaneously in Chinese-medium primary schools. Jian Hooi stated:

To me, there should be a balance. If you attend Chinese school, it's a burden because you have to learn three languages. It's a burden to the children but it's good for the future. (GA14/G2/Extract 22)

He further explained that even though the burden was coming from the parents, they still put a lot of effort into encouraging their children to learn three languages in preparation for the job market. Many parents also send their children to private tutors to improve their language capabilities. Fei Ming, from the religion domain, expressed his view as a parent:

My children learn Mandarin Chinese, English and Bahasa Melayu. To me, every language is important. If the school can teach three languages, this demonstrates our country's uniqueness because we are a multilingual country. As Malaysians, we have the advantage when going overseas for business purposes. We can survive in anywhere because we are multilingual. So if the school can take care of every language, it's good for the students. (GA11/G3/Extract 23)

Fei Ming outlines the benefits children receive when attending Chinese-medium primary schools, as children who grow up as multilingual speakers adapt better when overseas. His view is supported by the findings in Section 5.2.5 that languages are a useful communication tool for travelling and networking.

So far, the above participants' views demonstrate that Chinese-medium primary schools support the teaching of three main languages—Bahasa Melayu, English, and Mandarin Chinese—as specified in the national curriculum. The fourth data extract below discusses how these schools encourage the learning of Chinese community languages. When asked, Jian Hooi said:

Whenever they [Chinese clan associations] come and ask us to help them to propagate booklets and all these, I always encourage them. They send the booklets to us in school. We announce to the students and encourage them to participate. My students mostly participated in art competition. (GA14/G2/Extract 24)

Tiang Lay supports activities organised by Chinese clan associations:

I support their activities. My school has cooperated with the Hakka association for two years to conduct activities related to Hakka culture. The Hakkas have their own style for Chinese New Year celebration. They performed a special ceremony

and served Hakka traditional cuisine. These activities were conducted after school hours such as Saturday and Sunday. I told them [Hakka association] that we must keep our Chinese tradition alive and one of it is language. During the activities, the people from the Hakka association spoke mostly in Mandarin Chinese but they also added in some Hakka words so that the children can learn something about Hakka. There is no harm to learn extra. (GA15/G3/Extract 25)

The private Chinese secondary schools also conducted activities related to using Chinese community languages, as illustrated by Sin Nam:

This is the first year we started this programme. The first step was we ran a survey to find out how many students were Hokkien or Teochew or Hakka origin. Then we checked how many of them were interested to learn their own community languages. After that, we held meetings with the respective clan associations to schedule the language classes. We also planned to have a singing competition using Chinese community languages. We tried to encourage the students to participate. (GA16/G3/Extract 26)

These three extracts show how national-type Chinese-medium primary and private Chinese-medium secondary schools support the learning of Chinese community languages and Chinese culture outside school hours. This effort to “keep the Chinese tradition alive” is highlighted by Tiang Lay and the continuation of speaking Chinese community languages as “part of a family relationship” mentioned by Sin Nam.

#### **5.4.4 Chinese cultural artifacts.**

In Chapter 2 (see Section 2.2.5), Shohamy and Waksman (2009) drew our attention to the ‘new’ trend in the field of linguistic landscape where scholars have begun to study any discourses that emerge in public spaces, which include “sounds, images, and graffiti” (Shohamy & Waksman, 2009, p. 328). While much of the focus in Sections 5.5.1 to 5.5.3 sits within the original concept of linguistic landscape proposed by Landry and Bourhis (1997), this section surveys the home domain in relation to how cultural artifacts represent Chinese identity in a Malay-dominant country. I find that although there is abundant evidence that Chinese culture in general is preserved and displayed in the home, these artifacts do not represent the various Chinese ethnolinguistic identities but rather a broad generic Chinese identity.

The first data extract involves looking at the official actors’ perceptions regarding cultural representation such as lanterns in a Chinese community in general. Ying Song said:

The display of Chinese lanterns shows that the Chinese culture is still living and the Chinese people feel comfortable about themselves. It’s the nature of a small community. They want to preserve their culture because this is a Malay-dominant country. They feel very insecure, they want to preserve their own identity. They fight with anyone to preserve their language too. These are the characteristics of a small community. (OA3/G3/Extract 37).

For Ying Song, the display of Chinese cultural artifacts such as lanterns symbolises the Chinese community’s perseverance in maintaining their culture, language, and broad Chinese identity in Malaysia. Ling Ling suggests such action demonstrates a continuous recognition and appreciation of cultural heritage despite many families having lived in Malaysia for generations. For Ai Mei, the display of lanterns reflects the history of a place and serves a

purpose. In Penang, many Chinese families continue to hang lanterns at the front of their houses (see Figure 26). In the past, there was no electricity at night and the lanterns served as lights, but now they are used as decorations. In the temples, large lanterns were used to send information to the Gods, telling them which family lived there. Ai Mei's explanation indicates that these lanterns served a purpose in the past as well as the present.



*Figure 26.* Display of Chinese lanterns at the front of a house.

The second data extract explains the community-based and grassroots actors' perceptions of Chinese cultural representation in Penang. Wai Keong discussed the meaning behind displaying red lanterns at home and shop fronts:

I made these red lanterns [see Figure 27] and hang them in my house and shop. I maintain the cultural image. It's a norm for us. Like in the temples, they will also hang lanterns because they represent our Chinese culture. (CA9/G2/Extract 20)





*Figure 27. Handmade red lanterns.*

For Wai Keong, the display of lanterns was a normal part of Chinese culture. Jian Hooi pointed out that when visiting a town or village, lantern displays give an authentic feeling to that town or village, such as a Chinese town, a Chinese village, or a fishing village. He compared it to town in America displaying cowboy hats and flags, which exhibited the authenticity and history of the town. Jit Ting and Siew Siew affirmed that lanterns were hung together with a red cloth at the front of their homes to welcome the Chinese New Year festive season. They carried out this practice each year to maintain Chinese tradition and customs, as well as present a Chinese cultural image. San Choon's family members play with fireworks on the eve of Chinese New Year because "fireworks represent joy and cheerfulness during Chinese New Year celebration." Ah Mooi recognised the importance of creating a celebratory atmosphere at home for Chinese New Year, with Chui Mooi adding that she serves traditional Chinese hotpot with seafood such as sea cucumber, scallops, and Chinese oysters so her grandchildren can

experience authentic Chinese culture.<sup>58</sup> She emphasised: “For a culture, no matter what, it cannot go away. You are a Chinese, therefore that is your culture.”

As well as using lanterns and red cloth to represent a Chinese identity, a number of participants spoke about name planks (see Figure 28). Tiang Lay recalled:

In the Chinese tradition, when you look at a name plank, you can tell which place the person came from and whether is he a Hakka, Cantonese or Hokkien. In the past, when you visit someone’s house, you can see a name plank hung at the front of his house. Nowadays, I don’t see this being practised anymore. Some people said this is an old-fashioned culture but it is actually very good. I always encourage people to continue this practice. However, today, it is very expensive to get someone to carve a name plank. (GA15/G3/Extract 27)



*Figure 28.* A name plank that shows a family’s hometown in China.

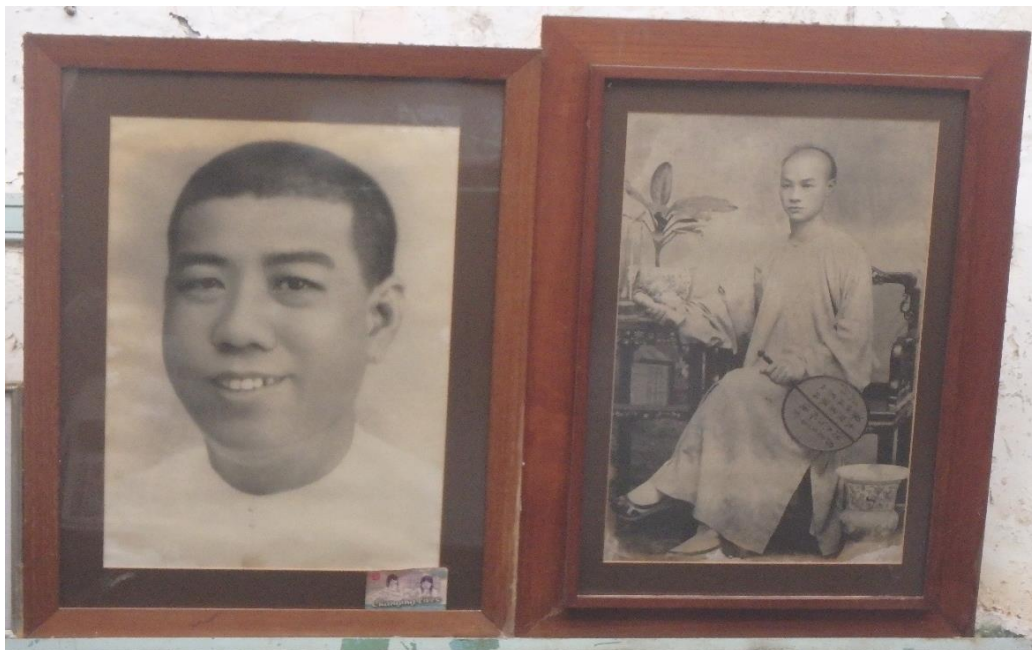
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<sup>58</sup> The authentic Chinese culture in Malaysia may be different from the one in China because the Chinese immigrants have lived in Malaysia for many generations and have assimilated into Malaysia’s multiracial culture. Thus, the authentic Chinese culture stated by Chui Mooi is the one practised by the Malaysian-Chinese community.

Siew Siew confirmed that people no longer hang name planks on their houses and called this a dying culture. Huang Fu added that he hung his family drawing at his home, and put his ancestors' portraits up in his shop "as a representation of his family" and "to keep up the efforts to continue the traditional system of his shop." These portraits have been hung for several generations (see Figure 29). His shop's interior is also kept in an old-fashioned manner to preserve the ancient lifestyle. Huang Fu's final comment demonstrated his strong desire to keep the traditional Chinese lifestyle alive, four generations on:

We hold pride in ourselves for maintaining this way of life, it has been going on for four generations. We tried to carry on all the traditions we learnt from our ancestors. (GA8/G1/Extract 28)

Huang Fu's comments show his determination in continuing the practice of traditions inherited from his great-grandparents and passed on to his great-grandchildren.



*Figure 29. Ancestors' portraits hung in a shop.*

Based on the comments made by the community-based and grassroots actors, participants had their own way of representing the Chinese culture using various semiotic artifacts such as lanterns, red cloth, Chinese cuisine, name planks, and family portraits. Importantly, these semiotic artifacts are passed down to each future generation to maintain their Chinese identity in a multiethnic and multilingual country. Although the participants did not discuss how they maintain their individual Chinese ethnolinguistic identities, the extracts show they did not lose their Chinese identity completely but rather maintain a broad generic Chinese identity and image. This is consistent with Matondang's (2016, p. 64) observation that the Chinese in Malaysia have created a "hybrid culture...within [the] Malaysian environment and globalisation", resulting in a "cosmopolitan Chinese cultural identity".

#### **5.4.5 Section summary.**

This section examined the three groups of participants' interpretations of the linguistic landscape of Penang, in relation to the visibility of Chinese community languages based on the photos collected in this study within five domains. The findings in all domains showed no major differences between the official, community-based, and grassroots actors. In fact, most of the opinions from the three levels complemented one another, mainly due to the accommodating approach adopted by the Penang Government in supporting not only dominant languages but also community languages. As a result, the community-based and grassroots actors, who speak a variety of Chinese community languages, feel more secure with their Chinese ethnic identity and status, which was evident in the opinions expressed and reported in the findings.

Section 5.4.1 notes that the Penang Government has taken a different approach to the Malaysian Federal Government in promoting the use of Bahasa Melayu and other languages in

three domains, friendship, religion, and employment. The Penang Government supports all languages with the intention of delivering equality to all ethnic groups in Penang. This intention is observed through the changing landscape since 2009 when official signage in George Town was labelled using at least two languages. In addition, Chinese community languages were also visible; they were written using the English alphabet and according to their respective pronunciations such as Penang Hokkien and Cantonese. The grassroots actors have taken this change positively; they have supported the Penang Government by suggesting the use of more multilingual signage throughout Penang.

In Section 5.4.2, the interview data shows that a consequence of the Penang Government's open-minded approach towards promoting all languages is that many nameboards in three domains (friendship, religion, and employment) in Penang are seen without the national language, Bahasa Melayu. This situation reflects flexibility in the Penang Government's policy. Many grassroots actors knew about the discrepancy and assumed it was a mutual understanding between shopkeepers and the Penang Government. They also took this opportunity to advertise in multiple languages in order to attract more customers to their shops and show off Penang's colourful culture and history. While not all Chinese community languages are found on nameboards, those which are, are perceived by some participants as a stepping stone to reading and writing Chinese community languages using a standard orthography to protect their future.

Section 5.4.3 found that in the education domain, despite the financial challenges faced, many Chinese-medium primary schools have constructed a multicultural environment to cater to their students from various ethnic groups. While the Malaysian Federal Government emphasises learning Bahasa Melayu only, the Penang Government has shown their support by contributing some funds to these schools to upgrade their facilities. Although all Chinese-medium primary schools practise a system of teaching three languages (Bahasa Melayu,

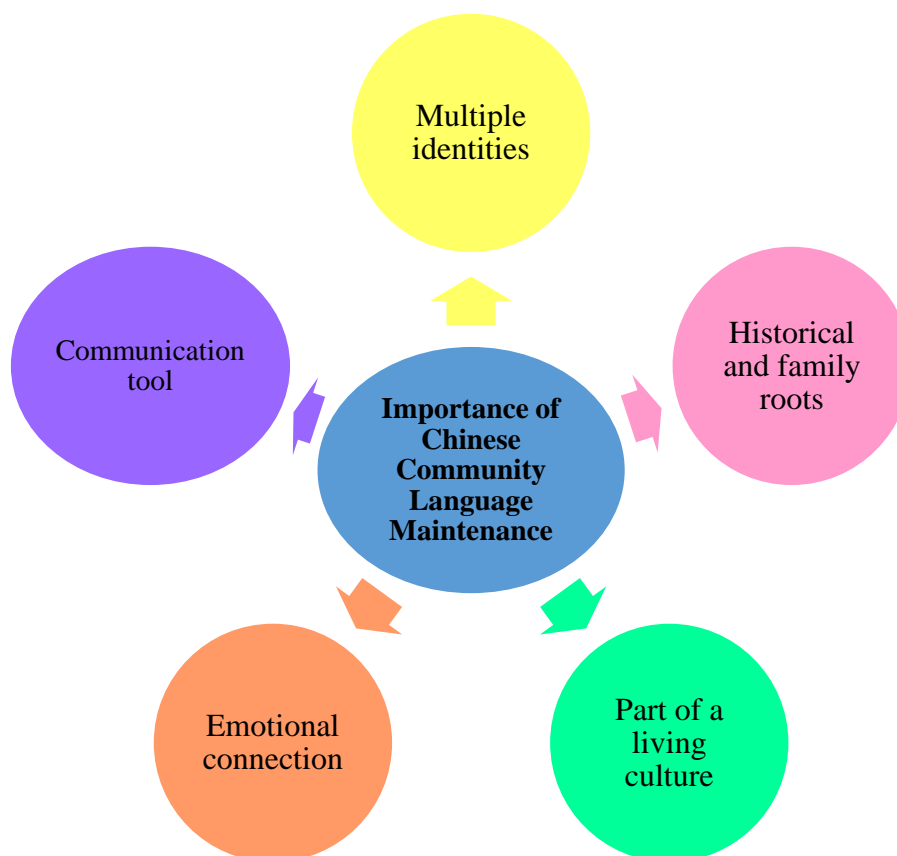
English, and Mandarin Chinese) simultaneously, there are some that further support learning Chinese community languages by encouraging students to participate in events, competitions, and language classes held by Chinese clan associations after school hours.

Finally, Section 5.4.4 revealed official and grassroots actors' use of semiotic artifacts to represent their broad generic Chinese identity and image in a multilingual and multiethnic country instead of demonstrating a specific Chinese ethnolinguistic identity. Many continue the practice of displaying red lanterns and red cloth at the front of their houses to welcome the Chinese New Year festive season, use fireworks on Chinese New Year eve, and celebrate the season with traditional cuisine. However, the practice of having Chinese name planks at home appears to be neglected.

Overall, most interview extracts relate to the Penang Government's approach to those languages neglected by the Malaysian Federal Government and grassroots' support of the Penang Government's approach. The dominant languages—English, Mandarin Chinese, and Tamil—are strongly supported, although there is little evidence of participants' perceptions of maintaining Chinese community languages in public spaces. Observations in Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 show some of the more popular Chinese community languages in public spaces in Penang but this is mainly due to them surviving generations by being spoken rather than written. Despite that, the Chinese community in Penang have constructed a Chinese ecology by carrying out Chinese traditions and customs in their everyday lives as found in Section 5.4.4. This contextualised view shows a close relationship between language, culture, and identity, demonstrating that none should be neglected in upholding the survival of Chinese community languages in Penang.

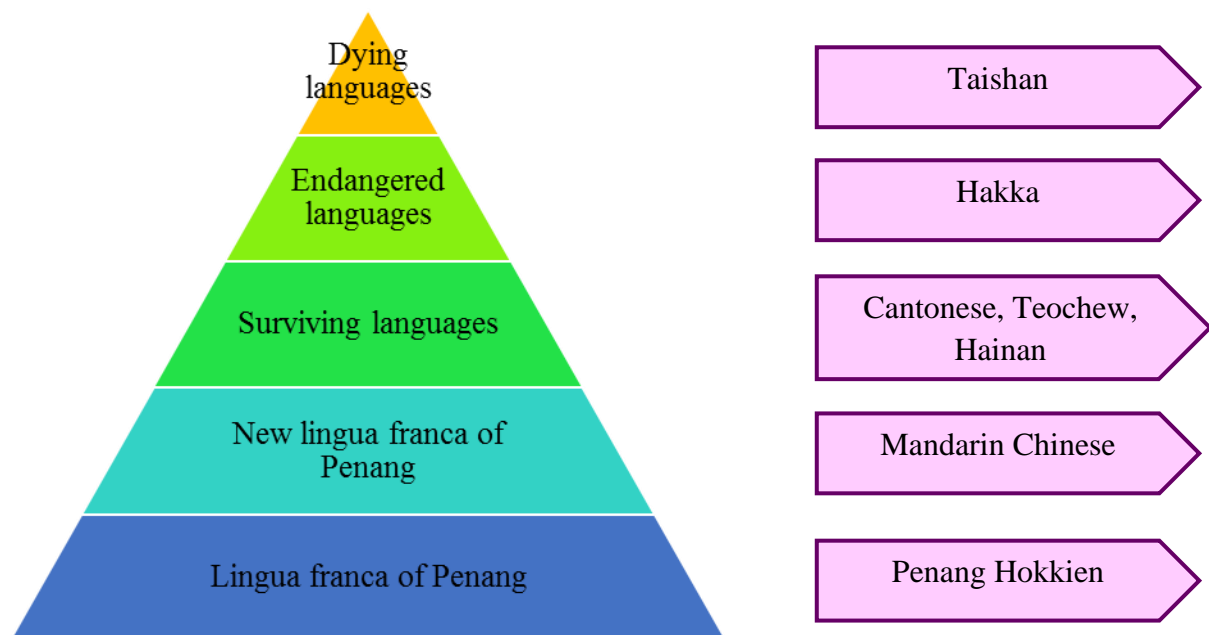
## 5.5 Chapter Summary

In addressing the study's third, fourth, and fifth research questions, "What perceptions do participants hold regarding Chinese community language maintenance in Penang?", "What are participants' predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang?", and "How do participants perceive the linguistic landscape of Penang in relation to Chinese community language maintenance?", this chapter has discussed participants' motivations, attitudes, and beliefs about maintaining Chinese community languages in their everyday lives in Penang. Key findings demonstrate that the participants in this study value Chinese community languages because they are related to their identity construction, history and family roots, culture and emotions, and are a useful communication tool (see Figure 30).



*Figure 30.* Importance of speaking Chinese community languages.

Interestingly, they had conflicting predictions about the survival of Chinese community languages: some predicted the languages would disappear after several generations, but others predicted that some of the more popular community languages would continue to survive. Figure 31 below summarises their predictions for the future of individual Chinese community languages in Penang.



*Figure 31.* Participants' predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang.

Although there was a lack of evidence demonstrating the visibility of Chinese community languages in the landscape, the Chinese community in Penang continues to practise Chinese traditions and customs in their everyday lives as a way of maintaining their broad generic Chinese identity and status in a multicultural country.

In conclusion, this chapter has exposed participants' motivations, attitudes, and beliefs about the maintenance of Chinese community languages in the language ecology of Penang, which I call language perceptions. These language perceptions have demonstrated that the



majority of participants show a strong determination to continue using community languages for as long as possible, despite knowing they will be diluted and the number of speakers will decrease. Following these language perceptions, the next chapter turns to discuss the analysis of institutional and community efforts for language maintenance.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Institutional and Community Efforts**

#### **6.0 Introduction**

As stated in Chapter 1, the results of this study are discussed in three chapters. This chapter is the third and final findings chapter. Before probing into the participants' interviews in this chapter, let me recap the findings of the previous two chapters. Chapter 4 demonstrated that the participants in this study actively used Chinese community languages in their everyday life as a way of maintaining these languages in a multilingual country. They also use Mandarin Chinese but treat it as a language for career preparation. Chapter 5 showed that the participants acknowledged the importance of maintaining Chinese community languages. They predicted that while Penang Hokkien remains as the present-day lingua franca of Penang but Mandarin Chinese is becoming the new lingua franca. Even though not all the community languages were evident in all five domains of family, friendship, religion, education, and employment, the participants hoped the use of community languages in general would continue to grow in the future. The structure of both Chapters 4 and 5 reflects the conceptual framework of this study. To reiterate, the conceptual framework of language ecology consists of three key components: (1) language use, (2) language perceptions, and (3) language planning and policy. Continuing with this framework, this chapter reports the findings in response to the sixth subsidiary research question: What organised efforts are made by each group of participants to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang?

Among Haugen's (1972) ten ecological questions is one that relates to the type of institutional support the examined language has gained from different organisations, and

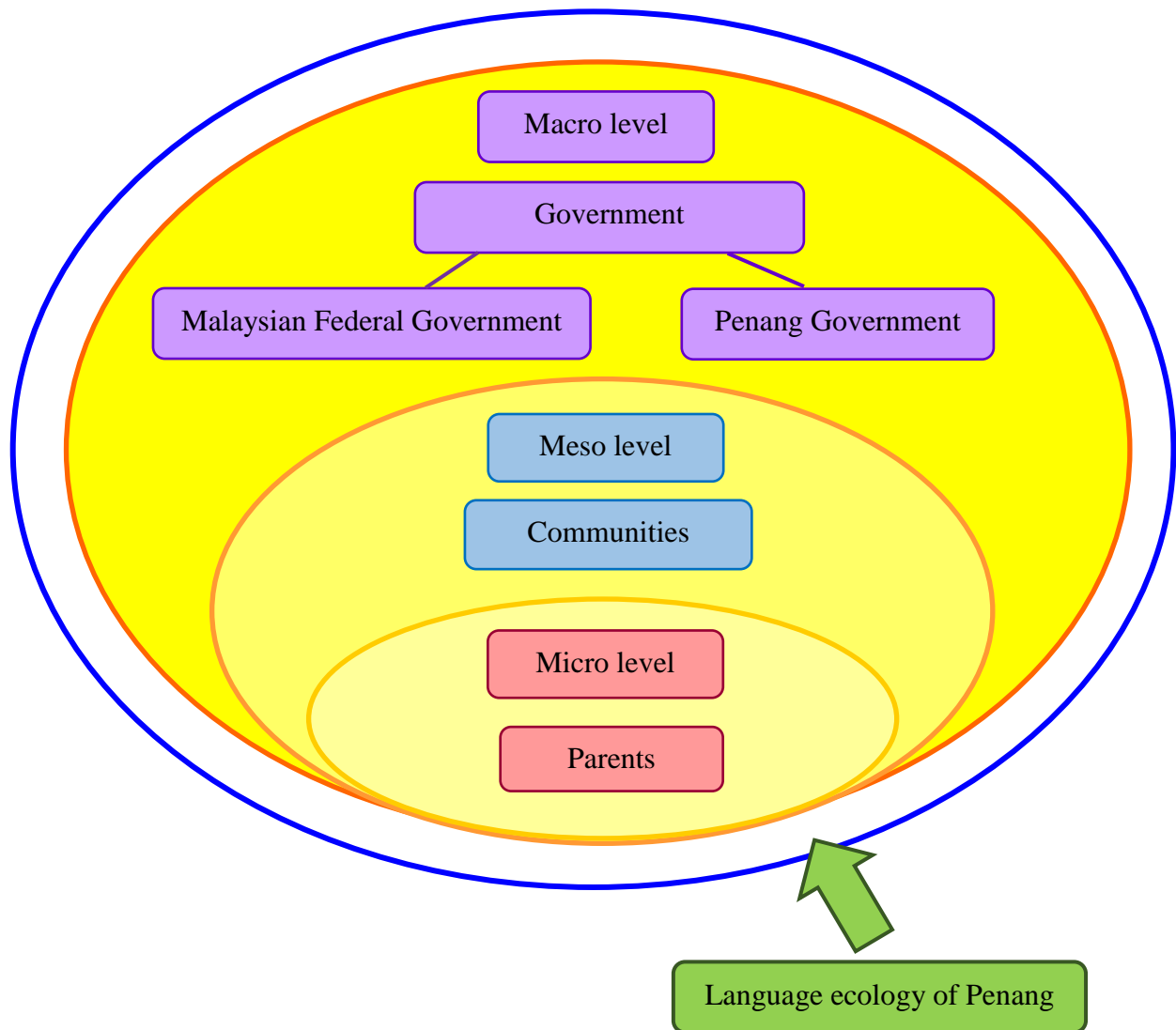
whether that support will regulate the examined language's form or propagate it. Such organisations vary from government to community and non-profit organisations. According to Spolsky (2004), not only macro organisations (i.e. nation-state groupings) are involved in language planning, but micro-level agents (i.e. families, religious organisations, local government) also play an important role in supporting community languages in a language ecology. Micro-level agents are usually less formal, but they can influence the promotion of languages. In addressing the sixth subsidiary research question relating to how institutional support plays a role in the language ecology of Penang, this chapter reports the language maintenance efforts made by participants. The results are hierarchically categorised according to three levels of organisation as illustrated in Figure 32 below: (1) the macro level, which consists of two tiers of government<sup>59</sup> (Malaysian Federal Government and Penang Government); (2) the meso level, which is the communities; and (3) the micro level, which is the parents.

This chapter is structured as follows: First, the efforts made to maintain Chinese community languages by the Malaysian Federal Government will be discussed (Section 6.1), subsequently those made by the Penang Government (Section 6.2), then by various communities (Section 6.3), and finally by parents (Section 6.4). The discussion is organised in accordance with the participant groupings stated in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.3.3). All interview extracts are labelled with specific codes for ease of reference (see Appendix N). Last, this chapter summarises the key findings (Section 6.5). Table 8 below acts as a guide to the reader

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<sup>59</sup> Although official actors Loon Teik and Wee Nam state that there are three tiers of government in Malaysia (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4.2), the findings in Sections 6.1 and 6.2 will only report the maintenance efforts by the first and second tiers of government. The third tier of government—the local government (council)—oversees the implementation of state policies and deals with issues regarding the enforcement of advertising laws and shop licensing.

to demonstrate the connections between aims of the chapter, subsidiary research questions, findings, Haugen's (1972) ecological questions, and responses to Haugen's questions.



*Figure 32.* A conceptual illustration of the three levels of organisation involved in Chinese community language maintenance in Penang.

Table 8

Guide to Chapter 6

Aims	Subsidiary Research Questions	Findings	Haugen's (1972) Ecological Questions	Responses to Haugen's Ecological Questions
To examine the official planning efforts in place in Penang relating to Chinese community language maintenance and the extent to which these efforts are being actively supported in local Chinese communities	6. What organised efforts are made by each group of participants to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang?	<p>Section 6.1: Macro level: Malaysian Federal Government Efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malaysian Federal Government policy context</li> <li>• Promotion</li> <li>• Identity construction</li> <li>• The education system</li> </ul> <p>Section 6.2: Macro level: Penang Government Efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penang Government policy context</li> <li>• Public awareness</li> <li>• Education funding</li> <li>• Funding/assistance</li> <li>• Local event publications</li> </ul> <p>Section 6.3: Meso level: Community Efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language learning</li> <li>• Literacy</li> <li>• Entertainment</li> <li>• Religion</li> <li>• Chinese cuisine</li> <li>• Culture and heritage</li> <li>• Public awareness</li> </ul> <p>Section 6.4: Micro level: Parents' Efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's education</li> <li>• Parents' attitudes</li> <li>• Everyday conversation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of institutional support has it won, either in government, education, or private organisations, either to regulate its form or propagate it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various efforts were made at three levels of organisation (macro, meso, and micro levels)</li> </ul>

## **6.1 Malaysian Federal Government Efforts**

This first section reports on the intentional efforts made by the Malaysian Federal Government at a national level (first tier of government) in relation to Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. Interview extracts from the three groups of participants demonstrate their reflections on issues related to Malaysian Federal Government policy, language promotion, identity construction, and the education system.

### **6.1.1 Malaysian Federal Government policy context.**

As explained in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.2.1), after independence, Bahasa Melayu was implemented as the sole national and official language of Malaysia. Even so, the majority of participants know they have the freedom to use and speak other languages besides Bahasa Melayu. In regard to the maintenance of other languages, with a particular focus on Chinese community languages, the three groups of participants indicated there was not much support given by the Malaysian Federal Government.

The first group of participants, the official actors, precisely stated that the Malaysian Federal Government had clear intentions to promote only Bahasa Melayu as part of the country's nation building process. Marco explained:

I think there is very clear ethnonationalism in Malaysia as the [Malaysian Federal] Government promotes the Malay nationalism. Since independence, the Government has allocated and promoted Malay nationalism agenda, one that is very agentic and also suppresses other cultures. This is an attempt to modernise not just Malaysians but to modernise the Malays so much, that even the Malays have lost their colloquial languages. For example, Javanese consider themselves as Malays [in Malaysia]. In Indonesia, Javanese is Javanese but here, everyone is

Malay. It's because it's part of the whole nation building process. So the Government tries to homogenise the Malays. The reason why they do this is because there are Chinese. So then we will differentiate the races. This is part of politics. So what we have here is basically a case of nation building, identity, politics and having many races, significant number of migrant races which then is a turning point. Basically, all of these form a large group so they can strengthen the numbers. This is a conscious policy by the [Malaysian Federal] Government. (OA2/G3/Extract 38)

Here Marco contends that because of the nation-building process and different races living together in Malaysia since its independence, the Malaysian Federal Government has attempted to strengthen the Malay identity by combining the Malays, the Indigenous people, and the Javanese from Indonesia into one ethnic group and naming them as Malays (*Bumiputera*). This attempt has led to the promotion of Malay nationalism, which now includes Bahasa Melayu. Marco further reasons why Bahasa Melayu was chosen as the national language:

Bahasa Melayu was chosen because it was the language of commerce, it's a very coastal language where all trades were done essentially through waterways, either in the straits or rivers and so on. The coastal language traditionally was Bahasa Melayu, even though given the Indonesians, Javanese, all were able to speak Bahasa Melayu. It was the language of trade. So that is why the language was chosen for economic purpose. So I guess that forms the whole basis historically of why they [the Malaysian Federal Government] called themselves as Malays and why they chose Bahasa Melayu as the national identity here. (OA2/G3/Extract 39)

Ying Song reiterates that in this dominant Malay country, the Malaysian Federal Government policy is commonly known as the “Bahasa Melayu supremacy language policy”. This policy means that the Malaysian Federal Government used all means to make Bahasa Melayu the country’s dominant language. By turning Bahasa Melayu into the dominant language of Malaysia, other community languages, including Chinese community languages, were not given the respect and space to prosper and grow. Wee Nam notes there were almost no discussions in the Malaysian parliament regarding the maintenance of any community languages, including Chinese community languages. Loon Teik added that by practising this language policy, the Malaysian Federal Government is indirectly trying to kill off vernacular education that uses Mandarin Chinese and Tamil as media of instruction in schools. This issue related to education will be discussed further in Section 6.1.4.

In line with the official actors’ opinions, the community-based and the grassroots actors clearly understood the language-related content in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. Ah Meng from the community-based actors group expressed his understanding: “Every Malaysian has their rights to speak their language and nobody can propagate or promote any language except Bahasa Melayu.” Tiang Lay from the education domain stated that the Chinese’s right to learn Mandarin Chinese at school is upheld in the Federal Constitution. Nevertheless, Chinese-medium schools are not given full funding by the Ministry of Education,<sup>60</sup> and there is a strong emphasis on learning Bahasa Melayu and English. He added that this situation demonstrates that the Malaysian Federal Government does not support learning Mandarin Chinese or Chinese community languages, especially when the use of Chinese community languages does not add economic value.

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<sup>60</sup> In Malaysia, pre-school to post-secondary education is within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education (MOE), while the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) is responsible for higher education. Both MOE and MOHE are ministries of the Malaysia Federal Government.



The above statements clearly show no government assistance in maintaining Chinese community languages despite the rights of all Malaysians to speak languages other than Bahasa Melayu stated in the Federal Constitution. Summing up, Soon Gek affirms:

I don't think our [Malaysian Federal] Government is into protecting the community languages. I think they most probably want all ethnic groups to be united under one language and that is our main language, that is Bahasa Melayu.

That is their ideology. I should say that is what they want. (GA20/G2/Extract 29)

Soon Gek's statement illustrates the Malaysian Federal Government's firm ideology which is to promote Bahasa Melayu and unite all ethnic groups under that one national language.

### **6.1.2 Promotion.**

The extracts in Section 6.1.1 demonstrate that the language policy held by the Malaysian Federal Government has favoured Bahasa Melayu, even though Mandarin Chinese and Tamil are taught in schools. This section now examines participants' views on the extent of language promotion conducted by the Malaysian Federal Government in relation to Chinese community language maintenance.

Overall, most participants expressed negative opinions on the one-sided language policy of the Malaysian Federal Government. A participant from the official actors group, Von Chee, expressed his views:

I don't think the [Malaysian Federal] Government play any role at all in maintaining [the Chinese community languages]. You look at Chinese[-medium] primary schools, they are facing a lot of problems. Even like Mandarin Chinese, they are not giving a lot of help, so how about community languages? There is

almost like zero [effort]. So then leave it to the community, leave it to the Chinese communities ... I think what the Government do is to leave it, you yourself go do, we as the Government only promotes one language and that is Bahasa Melayu. (OA12/G3/Extract 40)

Further to Von Chee's view of "zero effort" provided by the Malaysian Federal Government, Kok Loong stressed that:

The [Malaysian Federal] Government, the Government emphasises on Bahasa Melayu only, English a bit for business but the Government never, never emphasise on Mandarin Chinese. They don't have an active role in promoting Mandarin Chinese. (OA1/G3/Extract 41)

These two extracts show that the Government is not inclined to promote Mandarin Chinese and other Chinese community languages. They retain clear ethnonationalism in promoting and raising only the standard of Bahasa Melayu, as explained by Marco in Section 6.1.1. Due to their strong pro-Bahasa Melayu ideology, the promotion of community languages is left to the communities themselves.

The community-based and grassroots actors had similar perspectives regarding language promotion. Elizabeth from the community-based actors group described her thoughts:

I don't think they're [Malaysian Federal Government] interested. I don't think that the Malaysian [Federal] Government is interested particularly in what the Chinese people do ... You can't rely on the Government to preserve your own culture. The Government is interested in making money and so on. They're interested in promoting national identity but not really interested in promoting anything much below that. (CA3/G3/Extract 21)

Huang Fu added:

The [Malaysian Federal] Government is promoting the use of Bahasa Melayu and English. They promote to speak more Bahasa Melayu but the result is not as good as expected ... They are not so keen about promoting community languages.  
(GA8/G1/Extract 30)

Wai Keong affirmed:

The [Malaysian Federal] Government completely do not bother about us at all. I don't think the Government is promoting Chinese community languages.  
(CA9/G2/Extract 22)

Thus, the Malaysian Federal Government is perceived as not interested in upholding any Chinese community languages, mainly due to the “Bahasa Melayu supremacy language policy” mentioned by Ying Song in Section 6.1.1. The perception that the Malaysian Federal Government endorses Bahasa Melayu and ignores other languages, including Chinese community languages, is reiterated by Ting (2012). She describes Bahasa Melayu, which includes regional varieties of Bahasa Melayu, as having “more institutional support than the other languages because the ruling government of Malaysia has greater Malay representation than other ethnic groups” (Ting, 2012, p. 385).

### **6.1.3 Identity construction.**

To consider issues related to identity construction, this section discusses the reasons why the Malaysian Federal Government emphasises propagating Bahasa Melayu and how the grassroots actors react to this situation.

Kim Bak from the official actors group explains:

When you talk about nation building, then yes, Bahasa Melayu is the official language. Then for the growth of Bahasa Melayu, it is something important because this is our national identity. A national identity is the identity of a nation and also the citizens. (OA7/G2/Extract 42)

For Kim Bak, the Malaysian Federal Government uses promotion of Bahasa Melayu to unite Malaysians in the nation-building process. They also regard the use of Bahasa Melayu as contributing to national identity. Kim Bak's explanation aligns with the historical description of Malaysia in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.2.1). An interview with the sixth Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak,<sup>61</sup> also reports that students in Chinese-medium primary schools are urged to strengthen their proficiency in Bahasa Melayu ("Najib Promises More Chinese Schools", 2017). As language is deemed the key to unity, Najib wants all Malaysians to be able to converse, read, and understand the national language well. Cheung Kit, also from the official actors group, added:

In the case of Malaysia, at the federal level where education is under them, obviously it is only fair that their emphasis has to be Bahasa Melayu because that's the language that can unify the population. This is not a Chinese country, this is a country where there is Malays, Chinese and Indians ... The [Malaysian] Federal Government officially would like you and me to speak Bahasa Melayu which is the national language and that is done in Indonesia and Thailand. Everyone in Thailand whether Thai origin or Chinese origin speaks fluent Thai and likewise, you even see Chinese women in black trousers and white dresses speaking excellent Bahasa Indonesia, you don't see that in Malaysia. (OA11/G1/Extract 43)

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<sup>61</sup> After the 14th Malaysian General Election, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad was appointed as the seventh Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Cheung Kit acknowledges the Malaysian Federal Government's expectation that all Malaysians would speak Bahasa Melayu widely, similar to neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Indonesia. In Thailand, despite ethnic group origins, all Thais speak Thai as their first language. This circumstance is identical in Indonesia where all ethnic groups use Bahasa Indonesia in their everyday life. The Malaysian Federal Government hopes to similarly construct a national identity where all Malaysians speak Bahasa Melayu in their everyday life.

However, the reality in Malaysia differs from such governmental hopes. While every Malaysian can speak Bahasa Melayu, each ethnic group including the Chinese prefers to use their community languages rather than Bahasa Melayu in everyday life. When asked the reasons why, many participants argued their desire to keep their own community languages alive in order to retain the historical roots and Chinese cultural identity that have been passed down for generations. Kian Lam from the community-based actors group points out that "the [Malaysian] Federal Government would not support them as old folks to speak Mandarin Chinese or any community languages". Instead, they informed them through the mass media to learn and speak Bahasa Melayu. Kian Lam was unhappy about such messages because he was proud of speaking Teochew, his first language, from a young age. Moreover, Kian Lam's family has been using Teochew as their main medium of communication for several generations. Soon Gek from the employment domain also insisted that community languages should be spoken:

If all of us are Malaysianised, nothing else, then it will be very boring because everyone is the same. We always say unity in diversity is a principle in Malaysia. Unity in diversity means everyone has their own unique identity and entity so that when people come, people come and look at all these things, special traits that we can get in Malaysia which you cannot get in anywhere else. (GA20/G2/Extract

31)

Soon Gek's extract highlights the opinion that while everyone shares a national identity as Malaysians, it is just as necessary for every ethnic group to maintain their ethnolinguistic identity, such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, and so on. The perception here is that encouraging the co-existence of these multiple identities creates and sustains Malaysia's unique and authentic multicultural environment.

In short, the Malaysian Federal Government and grassroots actors have conflicting opinions. The Government promotes Bahasa Melayu in the hope of constructing a single national identity, which is one of the main reasons they have not actively participated in promoting community languages. At the same time, the community-based and grassroots actors, who represent the Chinese community in Penang, prefer to continue using their own community languages due to a fear of losing their status, rights, power share, and Chinese cultural identity in a multicultural country. This cultural feature has subsequently become an integral part of the Malaysian national identity and continues to create tension in the country's politics.

#### **6.1.4 The education system.**

As observed in Section 6.1.3, the Malaysian Federal Government maintains ideological reasons to champion Bahasa Melayu, while the grassroots actors prefer speaking their own Chinese community languages in everyday life as a way of retaining their Chinese cultural identity and enhancing their Chinese social solidarity (G. W. Wang, 1991/1997). In Chapter 5 (see Section 5.4.3), the survival of Chinese-medium primary schools was discussed. This section now adopts an educational perspective to discuss observations made on the level of government of Chinese community languages in these schools.

Cheung Kit from the official actors group explained his understanding of the Malaysian Federal Government's policy in relation to Chinese-medium education:

Any governmental policy is to be unfavourable to the development of Chinese language, any policy that is to erode the use of Mandarin Chinese as medium of instruction at the primary level and any policy that is aims at threatening the existence of Chinese[-medium] schools are to be resisted. (OA11/G1/Extract 44)

Cheung Kit's main point here is that despite the Chinese ethnic group's constitutional right to receive Chinese-medium education, the government's policy will not actively promote the growth of Mandarin Chinese or any Chinese community languages in formal education settings.

Ying Song, also from the official actors group, elaborated on the political force behind the government's stance. He stated that when teaching Science and Mathematics in English was implemented in 2002, it was considered an insult to Bahasa Melayu. Many Bahasa Melayu supremacists debated and objected to this issue for 10 years in the Parliament even though the fourth and now seventh Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, acknowledged the benefits of learning English and Malaysia's history as a former British colony. Bahasa Melayu supremacists argued that the teaching should be conducted in Bahasa Melayu, the national and official language of Malaysia. Therefore, in 2009 the Malaysian Federal Government announced that teaching would be again conducted in Bahasa Melayu, starting from 2012, which put an end to the debates on this language issue. Ying Song said that if Chinese policymakers were to champion teaching of Science and Mathematics using Mandarin Chinese, there would be renewed unrest in every Parliament session because Mandarin Chinese is mainly spoken by the Chinese ethnic group, which is only 23% of the country's population.

Learning from the official actors that while the Malaysian Federal Government allows Mandarin Chinese to be taught in schools, it is not fully supported, the grassroots actors clearly understood that the continuation of Chinese-medium schools is the result of political pressure. In addition, the United Chinese School Committees' Association (*Dong Zong*) also provides safeguards and representation for all Chinese-medium schools in their negotiations with the Malaysian Federal Government on the development of Chinese-medium education in Malaysia. Jian Hooi from the education domain expressed his thoughts: "From the [Malaysian] Federal Government's side, they are not that keen, maybe indirectly they support a bit but they are not that keen [in supporting of Chinese-medium schools]." Joo Hoe from the family domain added:

Well, basically there are Mandarin Chinese schools, Tamil schools and national schools. In all these schools, they [the Malaysian Federal Government] doesn't encourage you or rather they don't teach you Chinese community languages. It doesn't go with the government policy to teach community languages.  
(GA2/G2/Extract 32)

Jian Hooi's and Joo Hoe's statements reveal the Malaysian Federal Government's lack of support, whereby at the most, they only allow students to learn Mandarin Chinese at schools due to political pressure. Cher Leng from the employment domain added that she had known the government did not support the learning and speaking of Chinese community languages from a young age. Ka Fai from the family domain expressed his sadness at this position and reaffirmed the government's promotion of the language most commonly spoken by the majority population, Bahasa Melayu.



Thus, the extracts in this section demonstrate that in the Malaysian education system, the Malaysian Federal Government has allowed Chinese-medium education to continue because historically, the Chinese have fought for their language rights.

#### **6.1.5 Section summary.**

This section has discussed the opinions of the three groups of participants regarding efforts made by the Malaysian Federal Government in maintaining Chinese community languages. Broadly speaking, there were almost no efforts made by the government at the national level to support the learning and speaking of Mandarin Chinese or any Chinese community languages. Chinese-medium education has survived to date because the Chinese ethnic group's rights are recorded in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, and their long-fought protection of these rights. Although children can receive Chinese-medium education at primary level in national-type schools, they cannot continue receiving it at secondary and tertiary levels except in private institutions. While not directly hindering those who wish to have Chinese-medium education, the government does not provide any funding or support to develop or maintain Chinese-medium primary schools. This treatment of Chinese-medium primary schools reflects the Malaysian Federal Government's ideology to unite all ethnic groups under the sole national and official language, Bahasa Melayu, in the hope of constructing a national identity through its use. However, as is clear from Chapters 4 and 5, many smaller ethnic groups, including the Chinese community, continue using their community languages as their main medium of communication in everyday life. These actions are deemed as a way of representing their cultural identity and status. As G. W. Wang (1991/1997) notes, this situation differs from elsewhere in Southeast Asia, and the Chinese ethnic identity that was constructed by the Chinese community in Malaysia is considered influential due to its political force.

Although no encouragement is provided, the Malaysian Federal Government does not prohibit the Chinese community from speaking Chinese community languages. Continuing at the macro level of organisation, the next section examines the maintenance efforts by the Penang Government.

## **6.2 Penang Government Efforts**

The Penang Government is the state level of government (second tier of government). This section will continue its analysis by examining their efforts relating to the maintenance of Chinese community languages in Penang. The discussion will focus on opinions from the three groups of participants about Penang Government policy, public awareness, educational funding, funding for communities, and local event publications.

### **6.2.1 Penang Government policy context.**

As reported in Section 6.1.1, the Malaysian Federal Government policy does not favour the maintenance of either Mandarin Chinese or Chinese community languages and only promotes Bahasa Melayu because it is spoken by the majority of the population and is the sole national and official language of Malaysia. Because data collection took place in Penang and the focus of this thesis is the Chinese community in Penang, I next examine the participants' opinions on Penang Government's policy in relation to their support for the maintenance of Chinese community languages.

Marco, from the official actors group, talked about the Penang Government's policy in the context of celebrating diversity:

Our policy comes from the perspective of celebrating diversity rather than homogenisation of cultures. I believe my party does that as well. So we like diversity, which is why we promote vernacular education, Tamil education, Chinese education, even religious education, Islamic education and so on. They're all given support by the state [Penang Government] because we believe in freedom of choice. We believe parents do have a choice and there should be as much choices as possible. We believe that's healthy. For me there's nothing wrong, you can have unity and diversity, it is not a problem. You can have four or five national languages, different regions speaking different languages and you can learn them all, it's not hard. In here [Penang], you have that assimilation approach. I think Penang is the only state in Peninsular Malaysia that is doing a lot for the other cultures. (OA2/G3/Extract 45)

Essentially, Marco explained that the Penang Government's policy supports the diversity of cultures from every ethnic group in Penang. In supporting diversity, they encourage the growth of vernacular education and believe in providing the freedom to choose whichever type of education is best for the child. Their policy differs from the Malaysian Federal Government's strong emphasis on Bahasa Melayu. Marco does not foresee any challenges with having more than one national language in a country and believes in a policy approach that celebrates diversity so different ethnic groups can integrate and be united. Kim Bak elaborated what supporting diversity means to the Penang Government:

The community languages should not fade away. Their words should be fertilised and given a status in the society. You can speak all types of languages. (OA7/G2/Extract 46)

For Kim Bak, celebrating diversity means all languages, including community languages, are given a space in the community to grow and not to disappear. Ying Song was sure the Penang Government takes a more relaxed approach to creating a multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual society. He claimed this growth is due to the nature of Malaysian society itself. Ling Ling recognised that the role of the Penang Government should therefore be to create a demand and encourage the society to use community languages more often in everyday life.

Extracts from the official actors indicate that the Penang Government's policy supports the growth of all languages including community languages, which was demonstrated in Kok Loong's (OA1/G3/Extract 28) and Wee Nam's (OA10/G3/Extract 29) comments relating to the promotion of languages on official signage in George Town (see Chapter 5, Section 5.4.1). However, when the community-based and grassroots actors were asked about their understanding of the Penang Government policy, most gave fairly negative responses. Tian Hin from the community-based actors group put forward his opinion:

The Penang Government did not do anything substantial or enough to protect any of the community languages. They have the responsibility to ensure the liveliness of Penang Hokkien but so far, nothing has been done by them. (CA10/G3/Extract 23)

Tian Hin could not see the Penang Government taking any action to protect the community languages. Tiang Lay from the education domain concurred:

I don't think there are policies by the [Penang] Government in promoting Chinese community languages. Like I said, nobody will try to promote Penang Hokkien, Cantonese and so on. I won't say whether the government supports Chinese languages or not, they have their own political views. (GA15/G3/Extract 33)

Both extracts reveal how the community-based and grassroots actors feel regarding the Penang Government's policy of Chinese community language maintenance. They observed no written policy protecting Chinese community languages due to the perceived lack of economic value in comparison to mainstream languages such as Mandarin Chinese and English. The community-based and grassroots actors also felt that little had been done to create space for Chinese community languages to grow, even with the knowledge of Penang Hokkien's cultural value in Penang. Therefore, they had broadly negative opinions about the government's policy.

Overall, the official actors claimed their policy for Penang celebrates the diversity of various cultures and supports vernacular education. They did not wish for the community languages to disappear, but rather that these languages would be given status in the community. However, not understanding the policy well, the community-based and grassroots actors believe that like the Malaysian Federal Government, the Penang Government's policy did not favour the development of Chinese community languages and they felt no substantial actions were being taken in helping the maintenance of these languages.

### **6.2.2 Public awareness.**

The interview extracts in Section 6.2.1 indicate that the three levels of participants do not show mutual understanding of the Penang Government policy in relation to the maintenance of Chinese community languages. This situation may be caused by a lack of public awareness or by a lack of transparency in government bureaucracy. This section investigates issues related to the cause of this discrepancy of opinions based on interview data from the official actors.

Marco, whose voice represents the overall impression of the official actors group, described his opinions when asked why the Penang Government did not promote their policy to the society:

We don't have the expertise to actually go out and do the preservation of community languages in Penang but we can promote. I don't know many experts who have come to the [Penang] Government but it will be interesting if there are groups out there, they should contact the Government. I will be interested to work with them. I mean this is part of preserving your local heritage. Definitely Hokkien is a local heritage [language], Penang Hokkien is a local heritage [language], just as much as Penang Malay is. I don't believe in the government especially for cultural things, I prefer if things like these are community driven and come from the civil society and the government can support, so if you talk about the growth of art scene in Penang, simply if the government was to call for maintenance, they go out and do artwork, such from the government point of view, there is no policy today to have all these phenomena. So it will be very boring, lousy and it's going to be like some government thing because the government is not meant to do things like that. What the government does is allow these things to happen, so when people start drawing on the walls, the state didn't disapprove and go ahead and then suddenly we have the flourishing art scene, so much arts and cultural and the government funds it [referring to the street art project in George Town]. The government doesn't tell you what to do, they give you money, you do whatever you want. My point is the government shouldn't play a role in this kind of thing because we have no expertise and will just do it in a bureaucratic manner and things like language and culture cannot grow or fertilise it, you must let it grow organically, you can support it, you can facilitate it, you can allow space for it and

you can even fund it but you cannot do it. So I don't believe in government doing everything, that is my point of view, the less the government get involved, the better. (OA2/G3/Extract 47)

Marco indicated a preference for the maintenance and preservation efforts of Chinese community languages to come from the community and not the Penang Government. He suggests that involvement by the Penang Government would be rigid and unappealing to the community. Therefore, it would be more appropriate for language and cultural experts to approach the Penang Government with proposal, and if it was accepted, the Penang Government could assist the experts in conducting relevant events and taking the necessary actions. Marco believed the cultural scene would grow organically through community efforts.

Wee Nam, also from the official actors group, added:

I don't think you should expect the [Penang] Government to do all these things [maintaining and promoting] but if the government can provide funding for certain public initiative, it should be good enough. The thing is the government also depends on who are the one sitting in power, who is in charge of culture and arts. Even after five years later, another election comes, another one comes on board to be in charge of the same portfolio and his understanding about it is not so well, the cultural portfolio maybe different. You won't have a continuation on all these initiatives. So the most important I think is that you may need to have some private initiatives or common funding provided, that should be the way to grow. (OA10/G3/Extract 48)

In the above extract, Wee Nam explains the reasons why initiatives to maintain Chinese community languages should come from the community and not the Penang Government. He notes that when elections result in a change of political party with new policymakers in charge,

existing cultural efforts would stagnate or come to an end. Thus, he supports maintenance efforts derived by the community for continuity and posits it as one of the reasons why the Penang Government do not conduct large scale language promotion.

The grassroots actors were asked whether they were aware of any promotion of Chinese community languages by the Penang Government. Participants from the friendship and the employment domains stated that they are aware of the promotion and campaigns run by the Penang Government. This is evident in Ka Chun's extract:

Our Penang Government is trying to revive Penang Hokkien, organise shows [cultural programmes] or whatever shows in Penang Hokkien to let this present generation know the importance of Chinese community languages. I am aware of all these but it's only up to our generation to exhibit and to continue speaking these languages. Otherwise, if not I mean it won't be fruitful. (GA5/G1/Extract 34)

Here Ka Chun emphasised an awareness of the Penang Government taking some actions to run public shows and campaigns to revitalise Penang Hokkien, due to it being an important asset to Penang's culture. Nevertheless, there was no mention of revitalisation efforts and awareness for other Chinese community languages, partly because they were spoken less by the Chinese community in Penang. This is not surprising, because as was noted in Section 5.3.2 of Chapter 5, among the Chinese community languages, Penang Hokkien remained the lingua franca of Penang despite competition from Mandarin Chinese as the new lingua franca, while other varieties were considered as surviving or endangered community languages. Mentioning Mandarin Chinese as the new lingua franca of Penang, Sum Sum from the employment domain said she was quite informed about the Penang Government's campaigns and events to promote



it. However, she was not interested in participating in those events because they were not attractive or interesting to her.

Interview data from official and grassroots actors provided concrete reasons as to why there was a lack of public awareness regarding the Penang Government's support of Chinese community languages in their policy. It was mainly because they preferred community-led initiatives to allow cultures, including languages, to grow naturally. While several grassroots actors were informed of cultural and language promotional events organised by the Penang Government, the majority did not, mainly due to an absence of large scale promotion by the Penang Government.

### **6.2.3 Education funding.**

As noted in Section 6.2.1, the Penang Government attests to the goal of promoting community languages in a number of ways. However, the viewpoint of grassroots actors is that they had little knowledge of the promotion of cultural and language events by the Penang Government (see Section 6.2.2), demonstrating a lack of public awareness of government efforts. Because the official actors mentioned that their policy supports vernacular education, which has been abandoned by the Malaysian Federal Government, this section reports on issues related to funding given out by the Penang Government to aid Chinese-medium schools.

In Chapter 5, Section 5.4.3 reports that the Penang Government allocates annual funding to schools that are also partly funded by the Malaysian Federal Government such as Chinese-medium schools, Tamil-medium schools, and religious schools. This is confirmed by Kok Loong, whose opinions are a representation of the official actors group:

We support community languages, it means that we support those neglected by the [Malaysian] Federal Government which are Chinese-medium schools, Tamil-medium schools and missionary schools. You know, they don't receive ... they only receive money for utility bills. If they want to build new classrooms, they don't receive any funding, so we give an annual allocation. We give money to them so that at least they can use it to upgrade the schools' facilities but that is of course, we have no ... nothing to do with Penang Hokkien, Cantonese and so on.

(OA1/G3/Extract 49)

According to Kok Loong, the Penang Government provides annual funding for upgrading schools partly funded by the Malaysian Federal Government in an effort to support vernacular education. He clarified that this effort was not intentionally made for the maintenance of Chinese community languages because there were no Hokkien-medium schools. Rather, it was intended to provide support for learning Mandarin Chinese as it is a mainstream language and the medium of instruction used in Chinese-medium schools. Official actor Marco states the reason why schools in Malaysia cannot teach and promote community languages such as Penang Hokkien was because there were already too many languages that needed to be taught and learnt. He added that since Chinese community languages were not offered as language subjects, the Penang Government instead promoted vernacular education that uses Mandarin Chinese and Tamil as the medium of instruction. This promotion is an effort to showcase their policy to value diversity and supports the use of different languages. Loon Teik, another official actor, highlights the fact that no community languages receive enough attention in terms of maintenance and preservation, and it is only through supporting Mandarin Chinese via the financial aid to Chinese-medium schools that the Penang Government can show their endorsement of languages.

Another official actor, Kok Wan, detailed how the funding was used:

If you study the struggle of Chinese educationalists, the problem is with the [Malaysian] Federal Government. All community leaders are expected to raise funds for Chinese-medium schools to maintain them. It is so important especially organising fund and raising events to sustain the schools because of what we say, is an identity for the ethnic group. It helps a lot because with the funds, although not much but accumulated over a period of time, it is quite a sum, so they can repair, purchase equipment and over the years, conditions have improved a lot and community leaders now no longer have to beg for funds. So this is a way to assist in sustaining the Chinese-medium schools. Because of the minor things, as I said, the Penang Government has funded over these few years and have sort of assisted them in overcoming basic maintenance issue, so what is left is with big projects like building new block or relocation ... Using Chinese[-medium] education as a factor, Chinese[-medium] education is a very hot political issue. Of course, education is a national policy, so we cannot determine the education policy but we can help in other ways such as providing assistance to schools, giving scholarships, things that are outside the policy. (OA9/G2/Extract 50)

Kok Wan's account confirms how the Malaysian Federal Government's control of education means that the Penang Government can do little other than provide some assistance to the Chinese-medium schools to sustain them. Reducing the financial burden on Chinese community leaders means the Chinese-medium schools continue growing and the Chinese carry on with their Chinese-medium education. While Kok Wan's account does not mention the Penang Government helping out with maintenance efforts of Chinese community languages in schools, Marco commented that the efforts to maintain them were very much dependent on the community itself, and that the Penang Government is willing to support and fund private community events.

On the other hand, the grassroots actors complained that the funding was distributed unfairly to the Chinese-medium schools. Tiang Lay from the education domain explains:

You can see a lot of “lack of students” schools in Penang. They face a shortage of funds issue and they are looking for big funds to maintain the schools but they can’t do so. Why? The [Penang] Government considers per capital growth means they will give the funds to you according to the number of students in schools. One student is for how much, then the bigger schools get more funds and the smaller schools definitely have a shortage of funds. That’s why I say that sometimes, it is really hard to survive. (GA15/G3/Extract 35)

Tiang Lay’s extract explains the grassroots actors’ complaint of what they meant by unfairly distributed funds. Bigger schools do not face any problems because they have enough students to receive sufficient funding for the school’s maintenance. However, for smaller schools, it was harder for them to survive because they lack a strong board of directors and receive less funding due to the limited number of students. Hence, as was suggested by several grassroots actors that the Penang Government may need to change their strategy in helping these schools in order for them to continue growing and providing Chinese-medium education to children.

The community-based actors were aware that since the new political party took over Penang in 2008,<sup>62</sup> every Chinese-medium school has received funding assistance from the Penang Government, but there was still no mention of how to maintain Chinese community languages such as Penang Hokkien and Cantonese. Ah Meng from the community-based actors group described his thoughts regarding this matter:

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<sup>62</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.4.1), before 2008, Penang was under the control of BN. The 12th Malaysian General Election in 2008 marked a historic day for Penang where the ruling coalition of PR won and took control. In the 13th Malaysian General Election in 2013, PR won and continued controlling Penang. In 2015, there were internal issues within the coalition of PR resulting in the formation of PH. Since the 14th Malaysian General Election in 2018, Penang has been under the control of PH.

The Penang Government never say anything. They support the Chinese-medium schools and they say you must speak Mandarin Chinese. But when they are out for functions or dinners, they also use Penang Hokkien. They speak Mandarin Chinese first then a short passage in Penang Hokkien. In fact, the political party never talk about Chinese community languages. They say they support Chinese-medium education only and even at the time they launch the campaign to preserve, they say preserve your own cultures. They never say preserve community languages, they say culture because in the Federal Constitution, it's live a life by yourself. Nobody stops you [from speaking your own community language]. They put things mildly, they tell people not to support the 'Speak Mandarin' campaign.<sup>63</sup> Everybody, Malaysians have their rights to speak their language and nobody can propagate or promote any language except Bahasa Melayu. After we complained about the 'Speak More Mandarin and Less Community Languages' campaign,<sup>64</sup> it came out in the Chinese and English newspapers. In the Chinese press, there's a column where every week they teach you Penang Hokkien but now no more already. I think somebody has stopped it but we are still pushing.

(CA5/G1/Extract 24)

Ah Meng suggests the Penang Government use the term “preserving cultures” instead of “preserving community languages” to avoid public and political debate, as Chinese-medium education has always been a contentious issue in the Malaysian parliament (see Kok Wan, OA9/G2/Extract 50). The term “preserving cultures” used by the Penang Government can be understood as urging the Chinese community to preserve their community languages.

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<sup>63</sup> The 'Speak Mandarin' campaign was initiated by the Government of Singapore in 1979 to encourage Singaporean Chinese to speak primarily Mandarin Chinese. In Malaysia, although some parents, who support the 'Speak Mandarin' campaign, are encouraging their children to focus on learning Mandarin Chinese, the Penang Government urges these parents to instead allow their children to also learn Chinese community languages.

<sup>64</sup> Ah Meng was referring to the 'Speak Mandarin' campaign in his extract—refer footnote no. 63.

Moreover, policymakers' use both Mandarin Chinese and Chinese community languages such as Penang Hokkien in their speeches during dinners and cultural functions, for example, can also be interpreted showing Government support for maintaining Chinese community languages and respect for the Chinese community.

Thus, the Penang Government demonstrates support for the continuation of vernacular education, including Chinese-medium education, through financial assistance to the schools, which is part of their effort to enforce a policy of celebrating the diversity of cultures. Despite this, grassroots actors complain funding is unfairly distributed because smaller schools received less, which hinders their survival. They suggested the government adopt different strategies to show they are sincere about helping these schools. There was also no direct effort seen from the Penang Government in supporting the maintenance of Chinese community languages, such as Penang Hokkien, Cantonese, and Hakka. The community-based actors see this situation as the government encouraging society to preserve their cultures rather than community languages. The following section therefore addresses how the government helps society preserve their cultures.

#### **6.2.4 Funding/assistance.**

In the above section, the official actors indicated that cultural maintenance efforts should come from the community themselves. This section investigates what support the official actors could provide to the community in order to organise cultural events and how the community-based actors react to such support.

Representing the official actors group, Marco commented on the issue of government assistance:

What we can help is fund, we can help to give support. Let's say there are groups out there who want to go out and have some community events making use of Penang Hokkien, funding can be given, that's why we'll be given the expertise, in other words, educationalists or event culturalists or language experts so we can provide fund to groups like that to promote Penang Hokkien and so on. Let's say if you would like to have a play or something like that or a stage to attract people, things like this the [Penang] Government can support and give a subsidy, so on and so forth. Perhaps it will be interesting if there are groups out there and there should contact the government. Yeah, I mean this is part of preserving your local heritage. Definitely Hokkien is a local heritage, Penang Hokkien is a local heritage. (OA2/G3/Extract 51)

Marco identifies that the Penang Government is willing to support cultural events organised by language and cultural experts by subsidising events and helping with their promotion. He urges people not to be shy in approaching the government with proposals because maintaining community languages such as Penang Hokkien is considered to maintain Chinese heritage.

Wee Nam, also an official actor, highlighted this support:

Definitely I will support if you have such an initiative [referring to any proposal of ideas]. We can provide some funding or financial aid. So my attitude is I will support such an initiative. But if you want to have a huge sum of money, I don't have huge sum of money for you. I can help you in phases. (OA10/G3/Extract 52)

Wee Nam suggests he would definitely help provide some funding if there are initiatives by experts for such cultural events. While he would not be able to provide a large sum of money, he could assist at various stages.

Although the official actors said they were willing to assist cultural events, the community-based actors did not think their willingness was sincere. When the ‘Speak Hokkien Movement’ organisation approached the Penang Government proposing to revert the present language situation from Mandarin Chinese to Penang Hokkien (Penang Hokkien is considered Penang’s lingua franca and a cultural asset, see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.1), the Penang Government was not willing to provide any funding. The organisation’s proposal was based on the view that in order to reverse the present language situation, people in society should be encouraged to speak the language of a territory and not place an emphasis on the language of ancestry. Their argument was that the most important issue is to ensure Penang Hokkien does not disappear after several generations because Penang Hokkien gives Penang a territorial identity that differs from other states in Malaysia. In their proposal, the organisation wanted to urge a shift in focus from people in society learning their own community languages such as Hakka, Teochew, Hainan, and others, to Penang Hokkien so it could receive a significant boost in Penang. They also stated that various Chinese clan associations could collaborate rather than each clan association trying to promote their own community language on a smaller scale. The logic here is that when the public starts to speak more Penang Hokkien, the Mandarin Chinese speaking environment will diminish. As a result, Penang Hokkien would be able to flourish and gain status in the society. They believe that a standard Penang Hokkien writing system could also be introduced so it can be treated as a higher status language such as Cantonese in Hong Kong and not only as a community language. They also provided an example: In Hong Kong, despite it being a special administrative region of the People’s Republic of China since 1997, Cantonese is still treated as the *de facto* official language of Hong Kong. The ‘Speak Hokkien Movement’ organisation hoped their proposal could ultimately turn Penang Hokkien into Penang’s *de facto* language and create a situation similar to Hong Kong where Cantonese is spoken as the *de facto* language. However, as their proposal was turned down, they claimed



the Penang Government did not have a similar awareness and it was hard to persuade the Penang Government to see the whole picture because the idea was too complex. Hua Lun, a member of the organisation and also a participant from the community-based actors group, concluded:

I told them [the Penang Government] there's no use. It's not scalable, it's not big enough. It's not, it can't with the power and force they introduce. It's like they are killing you with a knife but you're trying to fight back with a straw. So what we need to do is something scalable, big, from a macro perspective. Get everyone to coordinate in such a way, instead of teaching Penang Hokkien to children and they don't use it outside their classes. They come here, learn Penang Hokkien, go home and speak Mandarin [Chinese]. It's not that, that's no use! (CA2/G3/Extract 25)

Hua Lun's conclusion indicates that if the Penang Government sincerely wanted to put in some effort to help maintain Chinese community languages with a particular focus on Penang Hokkien, they should collaborate with all Chinese clan associations and nonprofit organisations to create a big project to sustain the use of the language.

#### **6.2.5 Local event publications.**

While the community-based actors have urged the Penang Government to work on projects related to maintaining Chinese community languages from a macro perspective, the official actors have not yet provided funding to the relevant organisations. Still, the Penang Government argue that they do support Chinese community languages through local event publications and this section addresses this issue.

Ai Mei from the official actors group highlights the type of local event publications that promote Penang as a world class tourist destination:

Living heritage is about the people and the other Outstanding Universal Values [OUV] listed by UNESCO, that we have is multiculturalism and that is about everyone. So we don't promote any single one, we promote everyone. At least that effort is ongoing and I can show you something. This is a project we did [see Figure 33 below]. We don't only promote Chinese, Indian, Muslim, for me that is too general. We look into Bengali, we look into Hindu, Telugu, Hokkien and individual subgroups that community collectively identify themselves and they feel comfortable in that zone. At the same time, we encourage intergroups interaction. So I think to gather a balance because Malaysia has to move forward, it's only when we share a unified identity and at the same time, we are comfortable to hang out with whoever that we relate to. So there are modern, contemporary and traditional activities. Traditional, you know is more like by group, by blood, by name, by skin, that was one of the elements but that doesn't represent all. For me, heritage is about universe interest by humanities [sic]. So we don't just focus on any single group. (OA13/G3/Extract 53)

Ai Mei's extract demonstrates the strong enthusiasm and interest from the official actors group to endorse not only a single ethnic group but every ethnic group living in Penang. The brochure Ai Mei presented to illustrate her explanation was a local event publication produced by the George Town World Heritage Incorporated (an independent body that oversees the George Town World Heritage Site) and distributed as part of the George Town Heritage Celebrations. It was printed using multi languages, including Bahasa Melayu, English, Chinese, Tamil, Jawi, Telugu, Punjabi, Malayalam, Gujarati, and Thai. The only Chinese language in the brochure was Chinese characters, which could be read

using Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese pronunciations. Although there were no Chinese community languages such as written Penang Hokkien, there was still evidence of other community languages used by various subethnic groups. Thus, this local event publication signifies one of the efforts made by the Penang Government to support multiculturalism through the promotion of all languages and encouraging different ethnic groups to interact and have a balanced and comfortable unified identity.

● Language Kit to Make Friends in Penang									
English	Malay	Jawi	Chinese	Tamil	Telugu	Malayalam	Punjabi	Gujarati	Thai
Hello	Selamat Sajak-tera	سليم selamat sejah-tera	你好 nín hǎo		నమస్కారం namaskaram	നമസ്കാരം namaskaram	ਸਤਿ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅਕਾਲ sat sri akal	કેમ છી kem cho	สวัสดี sawasdee-krap
Good Bye	Selamat Jalan	سلامت selamat jalan		போயிட வாங்க poai vaanga	పిన్న kaanaam	പിന്ന kaanaam		સાગર sago	ลาก่อน la kon
How Are You	Apa Khabar		你好嗎 nín hǎo ma		మీకు ఎలా ఉన్నాడు meeku ala unnadu	എന്തിനെ ഉണ്ട് ? engine unde	ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਹਾਲ ਤ tuhaadi ki haal hai	કેમ છી kem cho	คุณสบาย อย่างไร kun sangyai bang
I Love You	Aku Cinta Pada Kamu	أنا أحبك aku cinta pada kamu		உனக்கு காதலிக்கிறேன் unnai kadhalikkiren	నేను నిన్ను ప్రేమిస్తున్నాను nenu ninnu premistunnanu	ഞാനും നിന്നെ പ്രേമിക്കുന്നു nyan ninne premikunnu	ਮੈਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਵਿਚ ਹਾਂ mi tuhada pyaar karada hun	હું તને પ્રેમ કરું છું hu tanna prem karejoon ju	
Sorry	Minta Maaf	میتا ماعت minta maaf	對不起 duì bù qǐ		క్షమించండి kshaminchandi	ക്ഷമിക്കണം kshamikkanam	ਮਾਫ਼ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ maaf karo ji		ขออภัย khor tot
Terima Kasih	كاسيه kasih	كاسيه kasih	謝謝 xiè xie	நன்றி nandri	ధన్యవాదములు dhanavadamulu	വളരെ ഉപകാരം valare upakaaram	ਧੰਨਵਾਦ dhanyard	धन्यवाद dhanyaad	ขอบพระคุณ khop khun krap
Welcome	Selamat Datang	سلامت datang	歡迎 huān yíng		స్వాగతము svagatamu		ਜੀ ਅਯਾਨ ਨੂੰ ji aaiyaan nu	પાછા pachhaaro	ยินดีต้อนรับ yin dii thon rab

Figure 33. Sample brochure<sup>65</sup> illustrating the project mentioned by Ai Mei in her extract.

In addition to Ai Mei’s extract on multilingual local event publication, some grassroots actors recalled a monthly bulletin distributed by the Penang Government. The following extract by Sum Sum from the employment domain discusses this:

<sup>65</sup> Source: Reproduced with permission from George Town World Heritage Incorporated, Penang, Malaysia. © 2017, George Town World Heritage Incorporated.

I like the monthly free bulletin given out by the [Penang] Government. It benefits us. I think they publish in four languages because they have their own purposes. Whatever they want to tell the people or convey any messages, they should cover all the languages, not just one, otherwise they won't serve the purpose. So I think the purpose they publish in four languages not because they promote the languages, I think maybe they are more into letting people know about the stuff, I mean the happenings, not only in one way, in all ways. It's not to promote languages. I think that's the objective of publishing four languages.

(GA18/G3/Extract 36)

Sum Sum agreed that the Penang Government published the free monthly bulletin about the happenings in Penang in four languages (Bahasa Melayu, English, Chinese, and Tamil)—not because they wanted to promote the languages, but mainly to convey the messages to different ethnic groups. As many of the older generation have Chinese and Indian origins, they do not speak Bahasa Melayu and use only their community languages. Therefore, the monthly bulletin printed in Chinese and Tamil would benefit them because they could at least read it in their own community languages. Chiang Tee, also from the employment domain, stressed the challenges faced by older community members:

I think having the bulletin in four languages brings forward the younger generation. Like us, maybe my aunt, we should be able to understand Bahasa Melayu, understand the gist in the news, Bahasa Melayu or English should be able to make us understand. Maybe like my great-grandma, they can't understand, they don't understand English or Bahasa Melayu. Maybe they, grandmothers or grandfathers can still read Chinese. So I think the bulletin \_\_ yes, it has some effectiveness for certain range of age maybe from 60 onwards, some of them are

not able to read English or Bahasa Melayu, the bulletin covers that part.

(GA19/G3/Extract 37)

Chiang Tee explained that people of his age (Generation 3—age 30-49 years old) or slightly older could understand Bahasa Melayu and English, so they do not face any problems when the bulletin is printed in Bahasa Melayu only. Nevertheless, those aged 60 years and above, like his great-grandmother, could understand neither Bahasa Melayu nor English. The only language of communication in the bulletin for them is Chinese, so they can at least read it according to Mandarin Chinese or Cantonese pronunciation. They would not feel neglected in the sense that they would still be able to know about the happenings in Penang. As a result, Chiang Tee felt that it was useful for the Penang Government to continue distributing their bulletin in four languages even though it is only for communication purposes and not part of maintenance efforts.

From both the official and grassroots levels, there was a lack of mutual understanding about the importance of local event publications distributed by the Penang Government. The official actors highlighted that the brochures given out to the society were published in four languages and it signified their efforts in supporting and appreciating cultural diversity in Penang. The grassroots participants acknowledged they receive local monthly bulletins published in four languages; however, rather than promoting languages, they argued this was mainly to convey the messages equally to all ethnic groups.

#### **6.2.6 Section summary.**

This section has discussed Chinese community language maintenance efforts by the Penang Government at state level. The Penang Government stated precisely that their policy differs from the Malaysian Federal Government and it comes from the perspective of

celebrating diversity and not the homogenisation of cultures. This means they encourage members of society to use their community languages because they see that maintaining such languages is equivalent to maintaining culture, heritage, and ethnic identity. Although there were no specific efforts identified, the official actors urge language and cultural experts to approach them to assist with funding and promotion of cultural events. However, at the community-based and grassroots levels, this message from the Penang Government offering assistance was perceived differently. There were several grassroots actors who were aware of the government's aims but stated that it could do more than only assist with funding. Conversely, the community-based actors claimed the government's offer was insincere because they rejected provisional funding for proposed projects. In short, there are different opinions across the three groups of participants, which may be due to a lack of effective public education provided to the community in Penang.

Having discussed maintenance efforts at the macro level (both the Malaysian Federal and the Penang Governments), I now turn to ascertain the efforts made at the meso level, which is the communities such as Chinese clan associations and various language organisations.

### **6.3 Community Efforts**

Many scholars have conducted studies on language maintenance, providing insights into attempts at language maintenance, whether successful or not. Studies that have shown unsuccessful attempts motivate us to identify further strategies and efforts in maintaining those endangered or threatened languages. These maintenance strategies and efforts may involve a range of social and political contexts. Pauwels (2008, p. 729) states that "the scope of language maintenance efforts may go beyond the personal and private if the sociopolitical context is characterised by tolerance or support". This means that language maintenance efforts involve

various active agents at different levels of the sociopolitical context. Liddicoat and Baldauf (2008) state that interactions between macro and micro levels can be complex and challenging, thus the meso level acts as a bridge to connect the two. This section discusses language maintenance efforts observed at the meso level (the communities) in the language ecology of Penang. The interview extracts show participants' reflections regarding language learning, literacy, entertainment, culture and heritage, cuisine, religion, and public awareness.

### **6.3.1 Language learning.**

The interview data in Section 6.2 reveals that despite the strong Malay ethnonationalism practised by the Malaysian Federal Government, the Penang Government has taken a multilingual approach towards the encouragement of learning community languages including Mandarin Chinese. However, there was no direct evidence to support their claim of maintaining Chinese community languages. Rather, their efforts are focused on the preservation of cultures and traditions. From the Penang Government's perspective, it is advantageous for society to promote an education policy that caters to a broad spectrum of skills, of which language skills are only one aspect. This sentiment is supported in the comments made by official actor Kok Loong, explaining why the education policy should be structured this way:

The reason is that not everybody can master all the languages, not everybody can master three languages fluently, as nobody can do that. If you can do that it means you don't learn about technology, engineering, maths. So, there is a capacity, err, constraint of a student. You cannot fit in too many languages, you cannot fit too many languages and overload them. Then they don't have interest in Maths and Sciences. So from a practical view, the [Federal] Government divides people based on the needs of the country. Language is important but you cannot have a

broad, too broad the spectrum and train in five languages, it's impossible! So you have to make up your mind, then decide on the main things you want to train and the rest, you have to pick up the pieces from outside the formal education.

(OA1/G3/Extract 54)

Kok Loong notes that since not every student is talented in learning languages, the education policy should not focus on languages only, and instead encourage students to learn different fields in education such as maths, science, and technology. Students are subsequently urged to pick up other languages from outside school or through informal education. Kok Loong's statement indicates that he believes the efforts to learn Chinese community languages should come from individuals outside the formal schooling sector or from the community. Therefore, this section surveys the efforts from various Chinese clan associations in supporting the learning of Chinese community languages.

Ah Meng is a representative from the Hokkien clan association and considers the range of Penang Hokkien language classes organised by his association:

There are Penang Hokkien classes catering for doctors and nurses who were transferred from other states and the Government department and council. They have it at 4pm, after office hours for the Malay staffs at the service counter in Komtar [name of the Penang Government building], then at the police station, they will teach Penang Hokkien to all the policemen and even make a Penang Hokkien play. The private classes are mostly for doctors and professionals from other states who come to work in Penang. (CA5/G1/Extract 26)

Other associations focus on activities such as publications. Kim Chen, a representative from the Hakka clan association, announced that his association is working on publishing a Hakka language book:



We are working on it. A professor from Jiaying University in Guangdong province, China has written a [Hakka] book and did some recordings. So we are going to launch and publish the book next year. It's written using Chinese characters but there's a disc in Hakka. She speaks and records it so that we can publish and introduce it, hopefully throughout Malaysia to other associations too.

(CA8/G1/Extract 27)

Kian Lam, a representative from the Teochew clan association, explained their Teochew language classes for young people:

Last year, our president collaborated with several organisations to conduct Teochew language classes, encourage younger generation to learn Teochew and invite a Teochew celebrity for a radio broadcast interview to encourage children to speak Teochew. This was what we started doing since last July and the responses were quite good. So we decide to organise Teochew karaoke and singing competition through this broadcast with the hope that there will be more people coming in to learn the Teochew language and culture. We also have Teochew language classes weekly so that children can learn them.

(CA11/G1/Extract 28)

Representing the Hainan clan association, Jit Ting revealed that his association organises singing competitions and produces Hainan language CDs:

We have singing competitions but participants ended up singing in Mandarin Chinese because there aren't many Hainan songs. Those karaoke CDs do not have Hainan songs. Real Hainan songs don't sound good! Our association also produces CDs to learn Hainan. A disc costs RM5. (CA 12/G2/Extract 29)

These four extracts affirm that various Chinese clan associations, such as Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew, and Hainan, have taken significant steps to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang. Clan representatives mentioned conducting language classes and producing language CDs/books as the main steps in encouraging the younger generation to participate and make use of the available resources. Such efforts concur with Pauwels (2008, p. 732) who states that community language teaching is “an important tool for language maintenance”. With such efforts, the representatives hoped that the younger generation would become serious at learning the languages and start speaking them in their everyday life.

### **6.3.2 Literacy.**

In addition to language learning, the communities put forward more ideas to encourage the society to continue using Chinese community languages. As observed the previous chapter (see Section 5.4.2), official actor Ai Mei suggested having the Chinese community languages documented in publications in order to keep them alive: when these languages are written down in books, future generations can more easily pick them up through reading. This suggestion aligns with Batibo (2009, p. 196), who claims that “language documentation is expected to be lasting as it is not only meant for immediate use, but also for the use of future generations”. The types of documents produced for Chinese community language maintenance are reported in this section.

Elizabeth, a member of the ‘Speak Hokkien Movement’ organisation, describes her role in the communities’ efforts:

Originally, it was a wordlist for myself. I used to give copies of it away to people who were interested as well. By chance, it sort of grows out of a wordlist. When I didn’t understand the vocabulary I would often ask people and give them the time

to pronounce and go through or ask the tones for Bahasa Melayu because Bahasa Melayu has tones as well and they're adopted into Penang Hokkien. First of all, it was for myself then about five or six years ago, I realised that people would be interested in it so I decided to do it more ... uhm a dictionary that other people would use. Like and eventually I thought I could publish it and by the time I started, I had like about two to three hundred pages of it and Luke's version was English to Penang Hokkien. The first edition had two hundred and fifty pages. And I thought if I can get there then I'll go and publish it as a pocket dictionary. And then I've got his new one and it's a lot more there. If I can get to four hundred pages then I can publish it. Yeah! It's closer to completion now but I still have about eighteen pages of words to put in. Actually I call mine, definitely a dictionary because it has examples of sentences. Anything that is slightly ambiguous and doesn't have direct translation into English, I'll use illustrative sentences .... Well, I said mine is not a wordlist. Mine is a dictionary. (CA3/G3/Extract 30)

Elizabeth has compiled a wordlist, which she will soon publish as a dictionary. She calls her version of publication a dictionary because it has illustrative sentences for ambiguous words. Penang Hokkien has many common word endings such as *liao* and *la*,<sup>66</sup> which originate from Malaysian English (Manglish). For example, *liao* has eight different functions that cannot be expressed in English. To ensure clarity for those using the dictionary, she has illustrated *liao* with several examples of sentences so they can understand the eight different functions. She also informed me that she made copious notes when learning Penang Hokkien seven years ago

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<sup>66</sup> According to Goddard (1994), particle *la* is a typical insertion in Malaysian conversation, which has different meanings depending on the context. The meanings may range from creating emphasis for a sentence to showing light-heartedness. Particle *la* was also found in Albury's (2017) study as an affixation to a sentence in Manglish.

and her next project would be turning these into a Penang Hokkien grammar and conversation book.

Similarly, a representative from the Khoo Kongsi, Ah Meng is also working on publications, including publishing a Penang Hokkien proverb book:

I'm going to come out with a Penang Hokkien proverb book. My previous books, I have some at the back but I want to put more out. People publish dictionaries, they are all in English, not in written Chinese. So mine has the Chinese writings. I will try to use Penang vocabulary but I don't know when I can complete. I'm so busy. (CA5/G1/Extract 31)

Having previously published several language books, Ah Meng is now working on a Penang Hokkien dictionary written in Chinese and a Penang Hokkien proverb book. Many of today's younger generation no longer know Penang Hokkien proverbs because they are so used to learning proverbs in English, Bahasa Melayu, or Mandarin Chinese at school. For that reason, a Penang Hokkien proverb book would help document the language so future generations could make use of the book to learn about Penang Hokkien proverbs. Additionally, language promoter Gee Boo highlights how children's poems, ditties, and rhymes have also been published using Penang Hokkien and are available in bookstores.

Thus, there is some evidence of authentic language documentation of Penang Hokkien by language experts. A Penang Hokkien dictionary was published in 2016 (see Figure 34) and more dictionaries in English and Chinese will be available to cater to a spectrum of audiences.

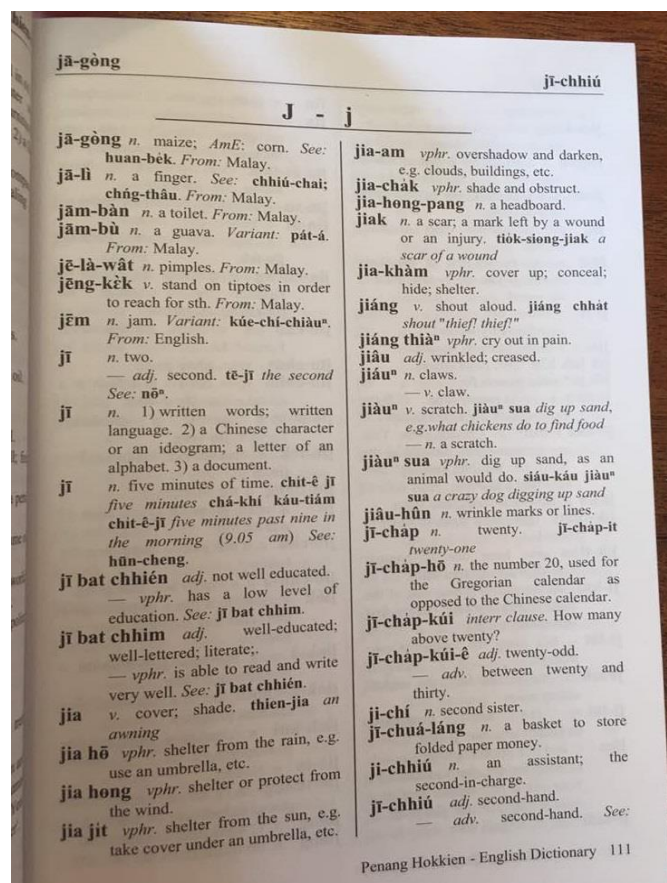


Figure 34. A sample page of Penang Hokkien-English Dictionary by Tan Siew Imm (published in 2016).

The publication of a Penang Hokkien proverb book is also on its way, adding to previously published children's poems, ditties, and rhymes as resources that act as a first step to encouraging the community to start practising the safeguarding of their community languages.

### 6.3.3 Entertainment.

Leuner's (2007) doctoral study on Polish migration to Melbourne in the 1980s claims that ethnic media and music play important roles in providing a sense of belonging to the community. She found newspapers, radio programmes, and television broadcasts acted as channels in encouraging the community to retain their community languages and cultures in

host countries where they start their 'new' life. As my study focuses on the Chinese community in Penang which has established itself in multicultural and multilingual Malaysia, this section investigates efforts by the communities in using entertainment as a method to maintain these Chinese community languages.

A representative of the 'Speak Hokkien Movement' organisation, Hua Lun explains that his organisation has collaborated with an entertainment company to produce a Penang Hokkien movie (see Figure 35): "There's a Hokkien film coming soon. It's called *Hai Kinn Sin Loo*." This is the first Malaysian film produced entirely in Penang Hokkien and was released in cinemas throughout Malaysia in May 2017. The title of the film refers to the Hokkien nickname for Victoria Street, which is in George Town, Penang. When translated to English, the title means "You Mean the World to Me". As the first Penang Hokkien movie, this production denotes one further step in encouraging movie producers and entertainment companies to combine efforts in making more movies using Chinese community languages in the future. Ling Ling, an official actor, supported such movie production and emphasised that it is important to create a need for Chinese community languages so they would be valued by society and used often. She explains: "In Singapore and Taiwan, the Cantonese and Hokkien<sup>67</sup> entertainment industries have never really went down because they are able to create a value for their language."

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<sup>67</sup> The Hokkien used in Singapore and Taiwan differs from Penang Hokkien.



Figure 35. Penang Hokkien movie poster.<sup>68</sup>

Siew Siew from the Teochew Opera Museum highlighted that her museum also took part in helping the society appreciate Teochew operas:

There are Penang Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese operas but we perform Teochew opera only. We use Teochew in our performances. The performances in Chinese temples usually have no subtitles because subtitles need more equipment to put up. Due to their financial status, they usually can't afford subtitles. But

<sup>68</sup> Source: Reproduced with permission from AstroShaw Sdn. Bhd., [www.astraoshaw.com.my](http://www.astraoshaw.com.my) © 2017, AstroShaw.

when we perform in theatre or bigger places, we will have subtitles. I think that the understanding is not a problem because we don't understand Italian but we still enjoy Italian opera shows. I think besides understanding the art, we can still appreciate it from different perspectives and the feelings in it. We also have workshops to teach this opera and the number of people who attended were quite a lot. (CA13/G3/Extract 32)

This account sheds light on the fact that watching an opera in an unfamiliar language does not hinder appreciation of its culture and emotional expression. Here Siew Siew stresses the importance of learning to appreciate this form of art from a different perspective and not focusing purely on language. To her, maintaining a language is equivalent to maintaining its culture. She noted that the Teochew Opera Museum opening was aimed at cultivating interest in historical and traditional cultures among the younger generation. She hoped these traditional operas could be passed down to future generations so they would not disappear. Shuk Yee from the family domain shared a similar view:

Last time [when I was young], I used to watch Cantonese opera performances. They [the performers] performed in Cantonese. I love to watch them. Now I don't watch them anymore because of my bad eyesight. (GA4/G1/Extract 38)

In addition to Teochew, Chinese operas are also performed in Cantonese. Shuk Yee recalled being very fond of watching them when she was younger, noting that she had accompanied her aunt to the theatre because she could not afford the entrance fees. Based on Shuk Yee's and Siew Siew's extracts, it can be understood that the older generation have a passion for Chinese operas but the younger generation do not know much about them. Therefore, Siew Siew's view of establishing the Teochew Opera Museum in Penang signifies a step towards the maintenance of these traditional Chinese cultures as well as Chinese community languages in which they



are sung and spoken. Moving to the religion domain, the next section will discuss religious events using Chinese community languages as a medium of communication.

#### **6.3.4 Religion.**

The official religion in Penang is Islam, which is consistent with other states on the Malaysian Peninsular. Nevertheless, Article 11 in the Federal Constitution of Malaysia states that every person in Malaysia has the right to practise their own religion and every religious group is allowed to establish and maintain its institutions for religious purposes. The Chinese community in Penang, like other ethnic groups in Malaysia, practise their own religions in particular Buddhism, Taoism, and Christianity. This section reports how the Chinese community use Chinese community languages in their religious practices.

Meng Chong from the religion domain describes the efforts forward in his temple:

In this temple, the older generation usually use Penang Hokkien for chanting. The chanting script is written using English alphabet. Then for the younger generation, they read Hanyu pinyin according to Mandarin Chinese pronunciation to learn about Buddhist philosophy and chants. When I speak to the devotees, I will use my own community languages. Like to the Teochew devotees, I will use Teochew to explain about Buddhism. For both Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese, I will mix and use them together. In Thailand, the Buddhist temples there use Pali language for chanting. When we chant, we use Mandarin Chinese as main language so that it won't confuse the devotees. Mandarin Chinese is seen as a common language now for most people. But when we conduct a lecture, community languages are used and it depends on the crowd and locality. At Penang Buddhist Association, the monks speak in Penang Hokkien and in Ipoh

[another city in Perak, Malaysia], they speak in Cantonese to the devotees.

(GA10/G2/Extract 39)

Meng Chong explains that in his temple, Mandarin Chinese is usually used as main language for chanting. Nevertheless, he uses Chinese community languages when conducting dharma talks, with the choice of language dependant on the crowd and locality. It is also understood that devotees at the Penang Buddhist Association can experience Penang Hokkien chanting and Penang Hokkien dharma talks. Ah Meng from the community-based actors group disclosed that he would chant in Penang Hokkien whenever attending the chanting ceremony there.

In relation to Christian churches, Fei Ming who is also from the religion domain highlighted that he preaches in Chinese community languages:

I will see the church's needs. If I go to Kuala Lumpur or Hong Kong, I preach in Cantonese. And when I go to Medan [a city in Indonesia], there are a lot of Chinese people and they speak in Hokkien.<sup>69</sup> I speak in Penang Hokkien to them because they understand Penang Hokkien. Some churches are Chinese-medium churches, so I speak in Mandarin Chinese. When it's the youth, I will preach in English, simple English. I see the needs of the church. If it's a Penang Hokkien church, I will definitely preach in Penang Hokkien. For Chinese church, I preach in Chinese and English church, I preach in English. (GA11/G3/Extract 40)

Fei Ming preaches in the language most commonly spoken in the church, depending on the crowd. He emphasised that as a multilingual speaker, he could preach in several languages including English, Mandarin Chinese, and Penang Hokkien. He also informed me that when

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<sup>69</sup> The Hokkien spoken in Medan differs from Penang Hokkien. Although there are differences between the Hokkien spoken in Medan and Penang, the people in Medan generally can understand Penang Hokkien.

he was invited to an Indonesian church, he preached in Bahasa Melayu because Bahasa Melayu is similar to Bahasa Indonesia, even though he was not very fluent in Bahasa Melayu.

Both extracts confirm that alongside the common languages like Mandarin Chinese and English, Chinese community languages such as Cantonese, Penang Hokkien, and Teochew are used in dharma talks and Christian services in Penang. This demonstrates that the Chinese community in Penang value Chinese community languages, which is one reason why they continue to use them despite the language shift taking place. Although these community languages are not being used as the main medium of communication among monks, pastors, and devotees, there is evidence to suggest that they are used when warranted by specific circumstances.

### **6.3.5 Chinese cuisine.**

Findings in Chapter 4 (see Sections 4.1.6 and 4.1.7) demonstrate that community language maintenance not only encompasses the maintenance of spoken community languages, but also includes the preservation of heritage culture. For the Chinese community in Penang, the maintenance of Chinese community languages involves the maintenance of culture, including cooking and serving authentic Chinese cuisine.

Chinese cuisine is generally known for its diversity, flexibility, and adaptability (Chang, 1977). It encourages adventurous culinary skills in pursuit of edible dishes and utilises a wide range of animals and plants in this pursuit. Chinese cuisine is therefore well-known for its high degree of variation and sophistication (Newman, 2004). An authentic meal in Chinese culture usually consists of rice as core ingredient, and vegetables and meat dishes as peripheral ingredients. Different Chinese ethnolinguistic groups serve different types of Chinese cuisine, although core ingredients are similar. Different types of Chinese cuisine are discussed in

Section 4.1.6, where participants identified a preference for preparing their cultural dishes at home and determination to pass down family recipes. Official actor Geok Choon described similar practices at the Chinese clan associations:

During Chinese New Year, some Hainanese associations, during their open houses, they will promote “Please come to our Hainan association, we are serving genuine Hainan cuisine.” And the Hakkas and Teochews, “Hey, please come to our place, we are serving Teochew or Hakka cuisine.” So of course, that is how they are trying to preserve, they are trying to encourage and also to remind the new generation not to forget their origins. (OA5/G2/Extract 55)

Geok Choon explains that the Hainan clan association serves Hainan cuisine during their open house occasions, and that this is similar to the Teochew and Hakka clan associations. He added that presidents of these clan associations would always deliver their speeches in community languages during the events to maintain cultural authenticity. As details of the different cuisines are not provided, this section investigates the types of cuisine from various clan associations.

Kim Chen from the Hakka clan association explained that popular traditional Hakka cuisine is *yong tao foo* (bean curd filled with minced meat mixture), *mui choy kau yuk* (preserved mustard greens with pork belly), and *yim kuk kai* (salted baked chicken). He said that *yong tao foo* can easily be found in *kopitiam* (Malaysian-Chinese coffee shops where Malaysian-Chinese cuisine is served) around Penang while *mui choy kau yuk* and *yim kuk kai* are usually eaten with rice. Kim Chen added that serving such traditional Hakka cuisine during open houses symbolises the Hakka culture, although the tradition has been modified to a simpler version to cater to today’s modern generation.

Jit Ting from the Hainan clan association identifies some common Hainanese dishes as being spring rolls, *roti babi* (bread stuffed with minced pork), Hainanese chicken rice, and Hainanese chicken chop. He described the dishes further:

Chicken chop was actually started by the Hainanese when they worked as chefs in high class hotels during the old days. They recreated the dish and it became our Hainanese chicken chop. Our Hainanese chicken chop is created in fusion style and that's why it's different from the genuine western style ... I've been to Hainan Island [China] before and ate the chicken rice there. It differs from the chicken rice in here. Their chicken meat is quite tough but ours is softer. When you cook the chicken, you should put it in ice to cool down before you chop them and that's why the chicken meat in Hainan Island is different. I went there to see how those chefs cook their dishes and their style is different from ours, completely different!

(CA12/G2/Extract 33)

Jit Ting highlights the difference between Hainanese and western chicken chop stems from its recreation of the western style from previous days. Hainanese chicken rice is unlike the chicken rice served in Hainan Island, China due to different cooking style. Thus, these dissimilarities in the Hainan cuisine demonstrate that the Hainan community in Penang has adapted to the Malaysian style of cooking while still trying to maintain their Hainan identity. Thus, they may have constructed a new Malaysian-Hainan identity in their journey towards assimilation into Malaysia's multiracial culture.

Kian Lam from the Teochew clan association recounts the dishes served during the Teochew prayers ceremony:

We have our own "praying to ancestors and Gods" ceremony. These Gods can only have vegetarian cuisine, this means we cannot offer meat to them. So we

offer *chai kueh* (Teochew steamed vegetable dumplings) which we use garlic, chives and beans as fillings. We also offer vegetarian *pao* (steamed buns) and *huat kueh* (steamed rice flour cakes). All these dishes are prepared according to the Teochew style. (CA11/G1/Extract 34)

As Kian Lam suggests, the Teochew clan associations serve vegetarian Teochew delicacies during prayer ceremonies to pay respect to their ancestors and Gods. He further noted the popularity of Teochew porridge served with side dishes such as peanuts and preserved salted eggs. Kian Lam explained that many Teochews like dining at the same popular Teochew restaurant in Penang because the chefs are Teochews and they offer flavours that suit their tastebuds. He summed up by stating that Teochews like him usually prefer to have Teochew tastes in their meals—a statement that denotes strength and passion Teochews have for preserving their cuisine.

The three descriptions of Hakka, Hainan, and Teochew cuisines imply that although the various Chinese ethnolinguistic groups have been in Penang for a long time, they still enthusiastically uphold their own cuisine, hoping to pass it down to the younger generation.

#### **6.3.6 Culture and heritage.**

Clyne (1991b) contends that language and culture are inseparable elements in language maintenance, citing example of part-time ethnic schools in Australia that incorporate elements of language, culture, and in some cases, religious study. Although these schools face challenges in keeping languages alive, such as parents speaking to their children in English at home, they remain an important force in spreading multilingualism in Australia (Clyne, 1991b). Acknowledging the method used in ethnic schools in Australia, this section investigates how the Chinese communities in Penang bring together elements of language, culture, and heritage.

According to official actor Geok Choon, the Chinese clan associations in Penang have always organised cultural events such as open houses, where people in society can participate without charge. The aim is to allow people in society to understand more about these Chinese cultures so they will not be lost in the future. During these events, the Chinese clan associations usually speak in their respective community languages. Alongside cultural events, Joo Hoe from the family domain suggested the Chinese clan associations should also organise trips to China, and in his case, Hainan Island in China (his origin is Hainan). To Joo Hoe, these trips could motivate the younger generation to be interested in participating in the Chinese clan associations because travelling has recently become a popular pastime among them. Besides having fun together during the trips, the younger generation could also learn about their ethnolinguistic group history indirectly through live experiences.

Kian Lam from the Teochew clan association described some cultural events organised by his association:

I have to tell you the history of our Teochew association because this is how our president thinks regarding the cultural stuff. In 1977, we formed our youth group with the hope that they can embark on cultural projects. Every year they organise Teochew karaoke singing competition in collaboration with the Malaysia Teochew Association. Then in 1999, we formed the women group. They organise cultural events and think of ideas to revive the culture. During the dumpling festival, they organise the “dumpling-making” activity. Teochew people have their own Teochew way of making dumplings. In 2004, we formed the Teochew drama group which is responsible for the old heritage and traditional cultural stuff. We like to promote the use of Teochew in order to encourage the younger generation to learn Teochew. (CA11/G1/Extract 35)

Kian Lam's description provides details of how the Teochew clan association began forming special groups, which focused on reviving the Teochew culture. There was the youth group, the women's group, and the drama group, and each group organised different cultural events aimed at encouraging people in society to participate and learn about Teochew culture and language.

In short, there were cultural events organised by the Chinese clan associations in Penang in connection with the preservation efforts of cultural and heritage aspects of Chinese community languages. Instead of attending language classes, those who are busy but are still willing to take time off to participate in these cultural events would also have the opportunity to learn about Chinese community languages and cultures.

#### **6.3.7 Public awareness.**

Although Sections 6.3.1 to 6.3.6 report that Chinese clan associations, Buddhist temples, and Christian churches in Penang put effort into actively maintaining Chinese community languages, the discussion did not include how these are promoted in Penang's society. This section looks into the issue of promotion.

The communities claim that awareness is spread through social media. Hock Chai, a representative from the 'Speak Hokkien Movement' organisation, recalled:

We promote mostly in Facebook. Through Facebook, the younger generation knows our website. As we know, Facebook is mostly used by the younger generation, so they tend to learn Penang Hokkien through our online resources. I encountered some foreigners like Japanese and Thais in Facebook and they already started to learn Penang Hokkien! (CA4/G3/Extract 36)



For Hock Chai, Facebook is a great platform for reaching out to the younger generation because they are the biggest group of Facebook users. Through Facebook, they tag their friends and spread the language easily. In current times, communication depends a great deal on virtual platforms such as Facebook, it is likely that the younger generation would be interested in learning Chinese community languages online through the use of their laptops, tablets, and smartphones. This connection to friends and peers enables languages to be learnt together. Hock Chai maintains that Facebook is an excellent source of spreading awareness to the public.

In addition to Hock Chai's way of spreading awareness, community-based actor Elizabeth claimed her strategy to spread awareness is to ensure the society values Chinese community languages. She elaborated:

Well ... my strategy is to talk to people to make them value it [Chinese community languages]. That's my strategy. And make people value it and it's like kind of slap people on their face if they think that foreigners are too good to learn it, that they are somehow high-class and too good to learn these vulgar street languages. I want to slap them on their faces. Actually it's worth learning. (CA3/G3/Extract 37)

As a foreigner now able to speak Penang Hokkien fluently, Elizabeth felt the community should not feel ashamed of speaking Chinese community languages or assume they are vulgar street languages because they are not taught in schools. According to Elizabeth, if the community starts to value Chinese community languages, they will definitely learn and speak them every day. And if the community does not value them, they will be taken granted and with fewer speakers, the languages will die off.

Despite awareness of efforts being spread online and mouth, many grassroots actors still did not know about it. Shu Min from the family domain pointed out:

Hhmm \_\_ I'm not aware. Yeah, this is the thing that I'm not aware of ... If you are in the community itself, you are supposed to learn the language. Let's say in Penang, the most important will definitely be Penang Hokkien. So if you are in the community and you want to connect to them, you have to learn the language of the community. So I'm not aware. (GA1/G3/Extract 41)

Shu Min suggests that if one lives in the community and wants to be connected, one will learn the relevant Chinese community languages in order to speak to the community. In her situation, she learnt Cantonese so she is able to speak to her grandparents and strengthen their relationship. Shu Min was unaware of any promotions conducted by the Chinese clan associations regarding their language classes and activities because she learnt the language through everyday conversation with her grandparents. Likewise, Pei Ni from the education domain also claimed she did not know about efforts by the Chinese clan associations to spread awareness through social media. This is partly because she learnt Teochew, her first language, from her mother. For her, Chinese community languages are usually passed down through the generations in every family.

Nevertheless, there were some grassroots actors who were aware of the efforts taken by the Chinese clan associations. Chui Mooi from the religion domain expressed her view:

The Hokkien clans in Penang, Khoo Kongsi is a Hokkien clan. We are not really Chinese educated, so normally we don't go and mix with the clans. But then my husband is Lee. We join the Lee Kongsi and his uncles and family members were past chairmen and members in there. I know because my husband's cousins participated and helped to promote for the clans. Maybe to promote or maybe just to keep the languages alive. (GA12/G2/Extract 42)

Chui Mooi was aware of the activities and promotions from the clan association because of her husband's cousins who participated actively in the association. In spite of her awareness, her family did not participate, partly because they were more westernised and their education originated from an English background. Her children did not learn Mandarin Chinese and spoke mostly in English. She felt uncomfortable for her family to participate in the association because the medium of communication was mostly Penang Hokkien or Mandarin Chinese. Thus, she was simply aware of the activities held by the clan association.

Thus, while there was some promotion and subsequently a degree of public awareness of the activities run by Chinese communities, many grassroots actors were not aware of them. This is partly because they felt that learning these Chinese community languages should come from the family and be practised every day. There were also some who were aware but did not participate due to different cultures being practised at home.

#### **6.3.8 Section summary.**

In this section, the communities' efforts to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang were discussed. The communities were represented by various Chinese clan associations and language promoters such as the 'Speak Hokkien Movement' organisation and others. Although these communities do not have the power to implement laws, they still act as channels between the official actors and the grassroots actors in supporting the maintenance of Chinese community languages in the language ecology of Penang. Among the efforts enacted were: language classes; publications of language books, dictionaries, and a proverb book; production of a Penang Hokkien movie; Teochew opera performances; Buddhist chanting and Christian preaching in Penang Hokkien; open houses and the serving of traditional cuisine from various Chinese ethnolinguistic groups; and dumpling making events. Despite many efforts

made by the Chinese communities to encourage people in society to participate in their events, the grassroots actors were unaware of them. Only some of the grassroots actors knew about the events and this was mainly through family members and friends.

The following section narrows down the final level of participants on a micro level, to relate efforts by parents in supporting the maintenance of Chinese community languages in Penang.

#### **6.4 Parents' Efforts**

Although Haugen's (1972) ecological question is related to institutional support (see Table 8 in Section 6.0) and does not specifically mention family, this study includes parents' efforts as part of institutional support. Pauwels (2005) argues that the presence of non-dominant language speakers in families—in most cases parents, grandparents and older relatives (aunts and uncles)—plays a crucial role in first language maintenance. In line with Pauwels' argument, some Australian studies (see, for example, Cavallaro, 1997; Murray, 1995) found that having grandparents with limited English is beneficial to children in terms of community language maintenance, because grandparents are often involved with after-school childcare, which means the children are exposed to communicating in community languages. Pauwels adds that both family and community language education should be supported by governmental policies to provide the foundation for successful language maintenance. Therefore, language maintenance should be studied from a multidimensional view to include micro planning and practices starting from parents. This section investigates the relationship between parents' efforts and language maintenance in the language ecology of Penang. Issues related to children's education, parents' attitudes, and usage of community languages in everyday conversation will be discussed.

#### **6.4.1 Children's education.**

Education plays an important part in children's development and growth (Phillips & Lowenstein, 2011). Based on my own observations, Chinese parents in Malaysia are very keen to ensure their children attend reputable schools that perform well in the country's exam-orientated education system. They often send their children to extra tuition after school hours to learn more, so they achieve better grades and are then able to secure a position at government-funded universities or receive scholarships from overseas universities. Regardless of their intended educational outcomes for their children, many Chinese parents are upset with the Malaysian Federal Government because their children, who achieved perfect grades in Malaysian Higher School Certificate (STPM),<sup>70</sup> were rejected by the government-funded universities. This is because entrance into these universities is considered "an unfair playing field and racially segregated" (Pak, 2013). The Ministry of Education denies this and instead claims that there is always a huge competition for "limited number of places on courses traditionally favoured by ethnic Chinese and Indians" (Pak, 2013). Subsequently, the Chinese and Indians believe they have to work harder to compete with Malays to secure their position. Ling Ling from the official actors group stressed that this situation has caused many parents to feel insecure about the quality of the country's education system. Because the focus lies on mainstream languages such as Bahasa Melayu, English, and Mandarin Chinese, parents are not able to appreciate Chinese community languages. Therefore, Ying Song, also from the official actors group, provides a suggestion:

We have to face the reality that this is a multilingual society with many first languages like English, Mandarin Chinese, Penang Hokkien, Tamil and Bahasa Melayu. So meaning the family, the parents know best [for their children]. So you

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<sup>70</sup> STPM (Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia, translated as the 'Malaysian Higher School Certificate') is a pre-university examination taken by sixth formers in national post-secondary schools and is equivalent to British A-levels.

need to let them make their choices. If their children are good at English, then let them have their education in English. If they are good at Bahasa Melayu, then let them. (OA3/G3/Extract 56)

Ying Song's main point here is that parents should be given the choice to make the best decision for their children in terms of whether to send them to the national schools using Bahasa Melayu as the medium of instruction, or national-type schools that teach in Mandarin Chinese or Tamil, or private schools that use the British or American syllabi. This is based on the belief that parents know what suits their children best and how to nurture their talents from a young age.

Recently in Penang, the enrolment rate for Chinese-medium schools has increased. According to Kok Loong, an official actor who is in charge of the Chinese-medium schools in Penang:

For Penang Chinese, there is a trend, there is a trend the enrolment rate for Chinese-medium schools picks up as compared to my father's generation. Last time they [parents] used to sign the kids to English-medium schools but there is no more missionary, no more English-medium schools now. They [national schools] still use English as language of conversation but it is not the mainstream language. Then China is picking up, there is a trend of parents sending their kids to Chinese-medium schools to pick up Chinese language, pick up writing because they know in China Mandarin Chinese will become the important language, same like English. (OA1/G3/Extract 57)

Kok Loong explains that the present trend is for parents to choose to send their children to Chinese-medium schools to learn Mandarin Chinese because in his opinion, Mandarin Chinese is predicted to become as important as English in the future due to job opportunities in China. In addition, Nicholas, also an official actor, stated another reason why parents are increasingly

choosing Chinese-medium schools for their children: “Chinese[-medium] education has been proven to be a very effective education.” Nicholas’s reason is a consequence of the excellent results in national examinations produced by Chinese-medium schools.

In this section above, the interview data shows that due to inequities in acceptance into government-funded universities, Chinese parents have been so concerned about their children’s education that they send them to Chinese-medium schools to receive a better quality education, as these schools achieve excellent results in national examinations. Below, I now turn to discuss issues related to parents’ attitudes.

#### **6.4.2 Parents’ attitudes.**

As discussed in Sections 6.1 and 6.2, the Malaysian Federal Government is not supportive of Chinese-medium education even though it allows the schools to continue operating with limited funds. It was in accordance with the Federal Constitution of Malaysia that the Chinese community was allowed to maintain Chinese-medium education after an extended political battle. In contrast, the Penang Government supports vernacular education and contributes funds to the Chinese-medium schools for their maintenance and upkeep. Based on these observations, it is apparent that the two tiers of government have employed different policies for the promotion of Chinese language varieties.

Despite this, Chinese parents are still keen to send their children to Chinese-medium schools due to the quality education provided. Chinese-medium schools focus on teaching Mandarin Chinese as the main language together with English and Bahasa Melayu, enabling the children to become multilingual speakers and with better future job prospects. As Malaysia’s education system is exam-orientated, many Chinese parents currently emphasise

the mainstream languages, including Mandarin Chinese, and have abandoned speaking Chinese community languages at home. Community-based actor Elizabeth holds parents accountable:

At home that's the parents' fault. It's all to do with parents, if parents do not insist on speaking Penang Hokkien at home or Cantonese, then children are never going to learn them. That's all due to parents. If parents say "Mandarin Chinese is for school but at home you speak the home language", at least the children gain competence in it. So I'd say parents would blame the education system all the time but actually the real blame last with them because the education system for Chinese-medium schools is Mandarin Chinese for many years. But parents still insist that their children speak Penang Hokkien with their family and it's their fault for not doing that anymore. (CA3/G3/Extract 38)

Elizabeth clearly believes parents are responsible for abandoning Chinese community languages at home, and their children should not be blamed for a lack of interest in learning them.

Unhappy about the situation, community-based actor Hua Lun expressed his concern:

I think that propaganda is motivating parents to stop, to stop using community languages like this language is official. They frown upon the Singapore Government, in 1979 they discourage, yeah they discourage people from speaking Hokkien<sup>71</sup> in work places, discourage parents from speaking to the children, discourage people from speaking it anywhere. It was banned on TV in 1979 in Singapore. And yeah it's all propaganda! (CA2/G3/Extract 39)

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<sup>71</sup> The Hokkien spoken in Singapore differs from Penang Hokkien.



Hua Lun claims propaganda has led parents to refrain from speaking Chinese community languages to their children at home, having been influenced by Singapore's 'Speak Mandarin' campaign that encouraged the use of Mandarin Chinese at all times. In Singapore, the numbers of Chinese community language speakers at home have declined from 50% to 12% after one generation. It is an alarming situation that has led some Singaporeans in the present day to learn their community languages to understand their historical roots ("After Decades of Restrictions", 2017).

The above extracts show that the participants believe that many of today's Malaysian-Chinese parents focus on preparing for their children's future by sending them to Chinese-medium schools and speaking mainstream languages to their children at home.

#### **6.4.3 Everyday conversation.**

Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 discussed the observation made by Chinese parents in Penang that due to the exam-orientated education system and influence of Singapore's 'Speak Mandarin' campaign, these parents have refrained from speaking Chinese community languages to their children at home, preferring to use Mandarin Chinese or English with their children. This section investigates opinions from participants in relation to parents having everyday conversations with their children in Chinese community languages.

Making a comparison between parents in urban and in rural areas, Marco from the official actors group observed:

There's no real incentive to speak Penang Hokkien and there's much more incentive to speak Mandarin Chinese. Yeah, I think you can see Penang Hokkien is reducing a lot in usage. Parents in Balik Pulau [rural area] send their kids to

Chinese[-medium] schools as well. So the same thing is happening but there's still lots of families that are of course still maintaining both Penang Hokkien and Mandarin Chinese usage. I suppose even for the kids who go to Chinese schools, everyone in the village will still be speaking Penang Hokkien, so I think then you still have that going on. So that influences, you are able to speak Penang Hokkien more because of the older people in the village whereas the urban people are able to speak English, Bahasa Melayu and Mandarin Chinese because a lot of them are more educated and multilingual, whereas in the village they are just monolingual, so I think that's natural. (OA2/G3/Extract 58)

Importantly, Marco notes that children are sent to Chinese-medium schools in both rural and urban areas, but the difference is that those in rural areas continue to speak Penang Hokkien at home, whereas those in urban areas speak Mandarin Chinese. As the older generation in the rural areas do not know much Mandarin Chinese, the children are forced to communicate in Penang Hokkien; whereas in urban areas, everybody understands Mandarin Chinese so there is no need to use Penang Hokkien.

Kim Chen from the community-based actors group posits a solution for parents in urban areas, that is to actively use community languages at home:

You must have the environment, you must have the people to talk to you all the time. To me, is start from the family, start from the family. The family must use it, if you are not convinced or the family members can't use the languages in the family, it's very difficult. (CA8/G1/Extract 40)

Kim Chen's solution is that parents create an environment in the family where they initiate the conversation with their children in Chinese community languages. He argues that if parents are

not convinced they must speak the languages at home, then it will be hard for the children to pick up the languages.

As a confident parent, Shu Min from the family domain said she occasionally speaks Cantonese with her children at home. Her children are still young so they do not understand much but they reply her in ‘broken’ Cantonese; meaning they mix English and Cantonese. She hoped that as she gradually continues to speak in Cantonese to them, their fluency will improve over time. Ka Fai is another optimistic parent, also from the family domain, who affirmed that his young son learns Penang Hokkien from his friends at school and speaks to him slowly at home. He commented that his son is not fluent yet but because of his age, he believed his son could pick up Penang Hokkien quickly.

These opinions demonstrate that children living in rural areas have more opportunities to speak Chinese community languages than those living in urban areas because the older generation in rural areas tend to be monolingual speakers and do not know Mandarin Chinese or English. Evidence in the interview data shows that some parents have started to create an environment at home where children could reply in Chinese community languages, although they are not fluent. These parents believe their children’s fluency in Chinese community languages will improve over time. Such beliefs can also be understood as a “positive symbol of cultural pride and a tool that strengthens family cohesion” (Schwartz, 2010, p. 175).

#### **6.4.4 Section summary.**

In summary, this section on parents’ efforts has discussed issues related to children’s education, parents’ attitudes towards community language maintenance, and everyday conversation using Chinese community languages. Since the Malaysian education system is exam-orientated, parents have focused on their children’s academic result and send them to

reputable schools in order to achieve good academic results. At present, there is a trend in Penang that many Chinese parents, as well as those from other ethnic groups, send their children to Chinese-medium schools because these schools have proven to provide a better quality education. These Chinese-medium schools allow children to learn three mainstream languages simultaneously and thus, become multilingual speakers. As the education system is strongly exam focused, parents have not been able to take a step back to allow children to appreciate Chinese community languages. They are also influenced by policy initiatives such as the ‘Speak Mandarin’ campaign, which encourages parents to speak only mainstream languages including Mandarin Chinese to children, causing many to abandon Chinese community languages at home. Nevertheless, there are still parents who stress putting in efforts to ensure their children are also speaking Chinese community languages at home. In this way, their children are learning both mainstream languages as well as Chinese community languages. Such efforts by parents align with Lao’s (2004), Li’s (1999), and Park and Sarkar’s (2007) studies that affirm the importance of parents’ commitment for their children’s community language maintenance and development.

## **6.5 Chapter Summary**

In responding to the sixth subsidiary research question, “What organised efforts are made by each group of participants to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang?”, this chapter has discussed the strategic efforts made by various relevant institutions in relation to Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. The first finding demonstrates that at the macro level (the government), the Malaysian Federal Government and the Penang Government have adopted different attitudes to helping the Chinese community in Penang maintain their community languages. The Malaysian Federal Government strongly promotes

Malay nationalism to construct a national identity, which is in accordance with the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. Despite their efforts, various ethnic groups including the Chinese have preferred to promote the use of their own community languages in everyday life to maintain their ethnic identity. In contrast to the Malaysian Federal Government, the Penang Government supports cultural diversity and encourages vernacular education. It provides annual funding to vernacular schools, including Chinese-medium schools, so the vernacular education can continue to blossom in the future.

Understanding that communities and parents play a crucial role in helping maintain community languages (Pauwels, 2005; Sims, 2006; Tuominen, 1999), this study also delved into the efforts made by both agents in the language ecology of Penang. The second finding shows that at the meso level (the communities), Chinese clan associations and language promoters have been active in relation to education, entertainment, religion, culture, and heritage. The third finding reveals that at the micro level, parents place a strong emphasis on their children's education due to the country's exam-orientated education system and the influence of policy initiatives. This situation has seen parents refrain from using Chinese community languages at home with their children. However, some parents are aware of the community language situation and converse with their children in Chinese community languages at home. Figure 36 below illustrates a summary of the key findings of the efforts provided by each group of participants.

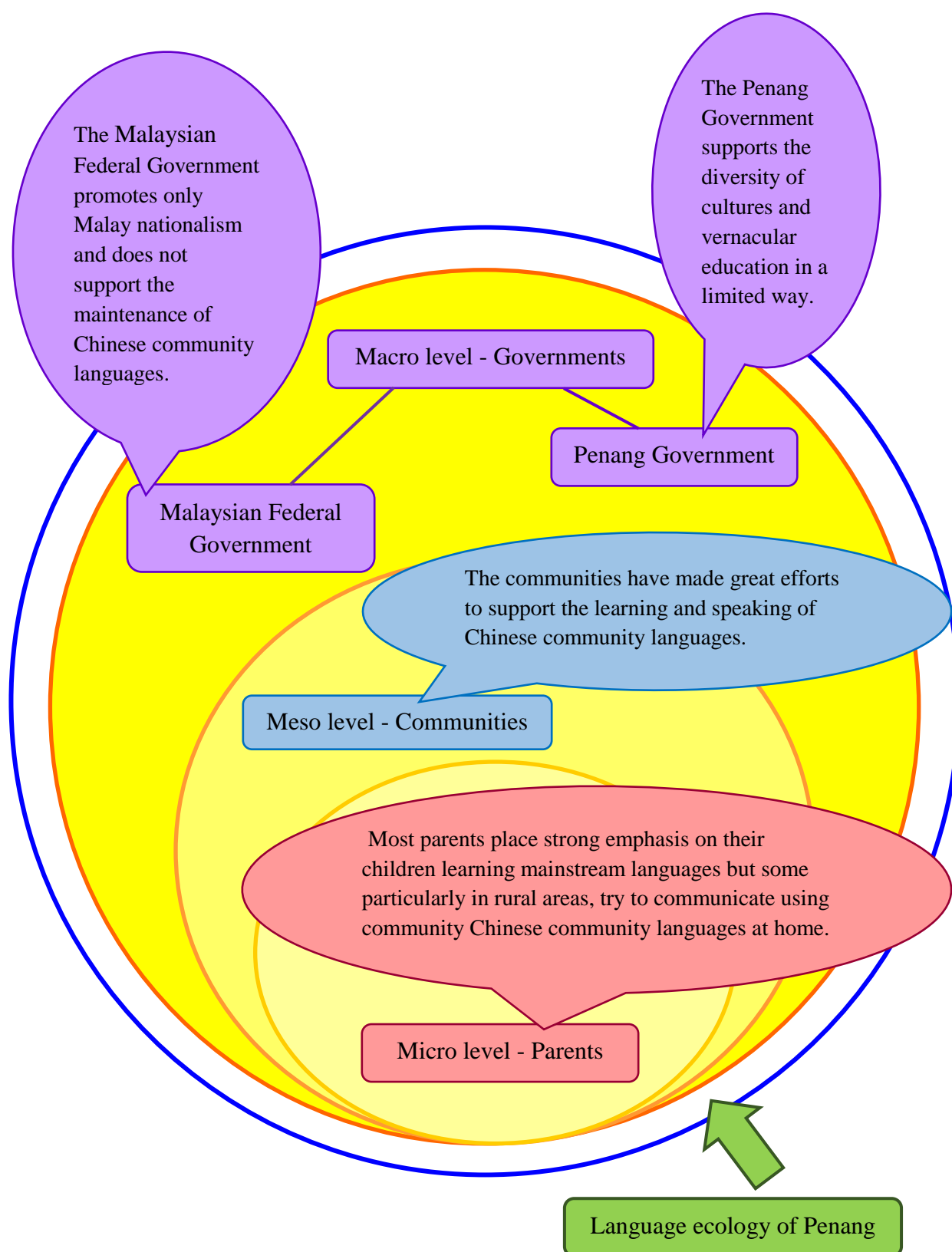


Figure 36. Summary of key findings of the efforts made by different organisations to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang.

In conclusion, the interview extracts analysed in this chapter indicate that there is no major promotion of the maintenance of Chinese community languages at the macro level, and that this is mainly due to Chinese community languages not being mainstream languages. Nevertheless, many efforts related to education, religion, and culture are made at the meso level, alerting the Chinese community in Penang to the importance of language maintenance and the problem of language shift. At the micro level, small steps have been taken to ensure these languages continue to survive in the future, with some parents starting to create a home environment where they communicate with their children in Chinese community languages.

Now that the three significant themes from my data analysis have been discussed, the final chapter will summarise this study by addressing the two overarching research questions and discuss the contributions of this study to the field of language maintenance and language shift.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Insights and Contributions**

#### **7.0 Recap of the Thesis**

This study was inspired by the language dilemma I observed in my own family, who are part of the Chinese community in Penang. Due to a shift in emphasis on the languages taught and used in Malaysia today, my grandparents were having difficulties communicating with their great-grandchildren. The study was therefore designed to examine this language shift by looking at the relationship between national language policy and the state of Chinese community languages in Penang.

Existing literature on the changing patterns of language use among the Chinese community in Malaysia examined in Chapter 2 (see, for example, Ting, 2006, 2010; X. M. Wang, 2010, 2012), reveals that many of today's younger generation have reduced their use of Chinese community languages and have shifted to Mandarin Chinese. These studies also show how many parents have abandoned using Chinese community languages at home to focus more strongly on mainstream languages. Older family members have begun to speak to the younger generation in Mandarin Chinese, hoping for more effective communication. A combination of social, cultural, and political factors has motivated the change (see, for example, D. P. Y. Lee et al., 2017; Sim, 2012; Ting & Puah, 2010a, 2010b), resulting in the use of Chinese community languages in private and public spaces being discouraged. However, existing studies do not address local efforts to maintain these community languages in Malaysia (Ting & Puah, 2010a).



Therefore, this study focused on the efforts made by the Chinese community in Penang, an area with a long history of Chinese settlement, to maintain their community languages. In this study, I sought to understand:

- (a) the expectations of key social actors (policymakers in government and community members) who actively support maintenance of the language; and
- (b) the political, social, and market-driven limitations on those expectations.

To address and contextualise language maintenance in the Chinese community of Penang, I developed a three-part ecological framework, encompassing language use, language perceptions, and language planning and policy. I then interpreted and reported my findings in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 respectively, to address two overarching research questions:

*RQ1:* To what extent are official planning efforts to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang reflected in the everyday use of these languages?

*RQ2:* What factors account for any discrepancies between official planning efforts and on-the-ground practice?

I begin by drawing together key findings from my analysis, summarised into three subsections. The findings first highlight how the participants in this study use Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in their everyday life (Section 7.1.1). Second, I look at what their opinions are regarding the importance of maintaining these languages, what their predictions are for the future of these languages, and how they perceive the vitality of Chinese community languages in the linguistic landscape is revealed (Section 7.1.2). Third, I explain how the findings show the efforts carried out by official planners and various institutions in Penang to maintain these languages (Section 7.1.3). While these efforts represent hope for those who aspire to maintain community languages, they are overshadowed by the realities of current language use, which indicate a wide discrepancy between official planning

efforts and on-the-ground practice (Section 7.1.4). Based on the findings, I will outline the contributions this study has made to the field of language maintenance and language shift (Section 7.2) and offer some closing comments (Section 7.3).

## **7.1 Understanding Chinese Community Language Maintenance in Penang**

This study used an ecological framework that drew together the three key components of language use, language perceptions, and language planning and policy. The impetus for this exploration began with the two overarching research questions restated above. To address both research questions, six subsidiary questions were employed:

1. How do participants maintain Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese as part of their everyday life in Penang?
2. What other languages are used alongside Chinese community languages in Penang?
3. What perceptions do participants hold regarding Chinese community language maintenance in Penang?
4. What are participant's predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang?
5. How do participants perceive the linguistic landscape of Penang in relation to Chinese community language maintenance?
6. What organised efforts are made by each group of participants to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang?

Three groups of participants were recruited for the interviews: (1) official actors, (2) community-based actors, and (3) grassroots actors, to represent the five domains of family, friendship, religion, education, and employment. To meet the age group criteria, they had to be from either one of the three generations listed:

- i. Generation 1 – age 70 and above
- ii. Generation 2 – age 50-69
- iii. Generation 3 – age 30-49

Generation 4, aged below 30, were not recruited in this study because past studies in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.1.1) have demonstrated that many of those in Generation 4, who are currently studying in school and university in Malaysia, have shifted to mainly using Mandarin Chinese and hardly speaking Chinese community languages. Therefore, they were not considered during the recruitment because this study focuses on investigating the current situation of Chinese community languages in Penang.

Haugen's (1972) ten ecological questions were used to support the analysis of the interview transcripts. Three significant themes emerged from the analysis. These three themes—everyday language use, perceptions about Chinese community language maintenance, and institutional and community efforts—provide a holistic understanding of the Chinese community language situation in Penang. The following section offers key insights based on the three themes.

### **7.1.1 Everyday language use.**

Chapter 4 addressed the first and second subsidiary research questions:

- How do participants maintain Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese as part of their everyday life in Penang?
- What other languages are used alongside Chinese community languages in Penang?

Drawing on the concept of domain to describe social spaces of language use, I illustrated how the participants in this study maintained Chinese community languages in their everyday life.

Based on interviews with the participants, I found that Chinese community languages are highly vital and used by participants in numerous domains, including: everyday interactions, language teaching and learning, reading and writing, watching television and listening to the radio, chanting and worshipping, cooking Chinese cuisine, and cultural participation and transmission. The data exhibited two important features: (1) the participants in this study are enthusiastic about maintaining their Chinese community languages in the language ecology of Penang; and (2) the use of Chinese community languages is versatile.

Corresponding to the current global language trend where mainstream languages are prioritised, I surveyed the languages used alongside Chinese community languages by the participants. This revealed Mandarin Chinese and English as the languages most frequently used by participants alongside Chinese community languages. Since the evidence of language shift currently occurring in the Malaysian-Chinese community showed that Mandarin Chinese is becoming a popular language for communication, especially among the younger generation, I further explored how the participants used Mandarin Chinese in their everyday activities. Based on the interviews, I found that Mandarin Chinese was mainly employed by those from Generation 3 in domains similar to those in which Chinese community languages are used; namely, everyday interactions, language learning, reading, watching television and singing, chanting, and cultural transmission. These findings indicate that even though Mandarin Chinese has become an important language in the ecology of Penang, the participants treated it more as a tool for goal achievement and career preparation.

### **7.1.2 Perceptions about Chinese community language maintenance.**

Chapter 5 presented the findings related to the third, fourth, and fifth subsidiary research questions:

- What perceptions do participants hold regarding Chinese community language maintenance in Penang?
- What are participants' predictions for the future of Chinese community languages in Penang?
- How do participants perceive the linguistic landscape of Penang in relation to Chinese community language maintenance?

By employing the concept of 'language perceptions' to denote a set of interpretations about language expressed by users as justification for their view on language use, I engaged with the participants to understand their opinions about Chinese community language maintenance and their interpretation of the linguistic landscape of Penang. While Mandarin Chinese is considered an important language for the Chinese community, the participants' consistent use of Chinese community languages in their everyday life suggests that maintaining Chinese community languages is regarded as very important by the participants in this study. This finding was supported by participants' expressed opinions. Their statements showed that Chinese community languages are associated with multiple identities, historical and family roots, membership of a living culture, emotional connection, and language as a communication tool.

The findings in Chapter 5 also demonstrated that the participants recognise the importance of maintaining the Chinese community languages through continued use in their everyday lives. Yet, despite this acknowledgement, the future survival of these languages remains uncertain because Mandarin Chinese has become a language of wider communication in Penang. However, micro level analysis of the data provides further insights. Half the participants claimed that Chinese community languages, particularly Penang Hokkien, would survive despite the younger generation not using them. They argued that while the number of

speakers would decrease in the future, the languages would not disappear. The other half of the participants predicted that Chinese community languages, especially Hakka and Taishan, would not survive for long in Penang due to the younger generation's move towards speaking Mandarin Chinese and English, which are predominantly regarded as global languages.

I used the technique of surveying the linguistic landscape to organise and frame discussions with participants on Chinese community language use in public and private spaces in Penang. The findings revealed that most of the opinions at the grassroots level participants complemented those of the official level (Penang Government), mainly due to the Penang Government's accommodating approach towards both dominant and community languages in the linguistic landscape of Penang. Participants also indicated that they continued to practise Chinese traditions and customs in the home domain in an effort to maintain their status and Chinese identity in a Malay-dominant country. These findings reflect the flexibility of the Penang Government's policy in the implementation of the advertisement laws that provide an opportunity for grassroots actors to use their community languages in the linguistic landscape of Penang.

### **7.1.3 Institutional and community efforts.**

Chapter 6 addressed the final subsidiary research question: What organised efforts are made by each group of participants to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang? Here I examined the language policy and planning efforts made by different organisations in Penang, from macro to meso and micro levels.

The macro level was divided into two tiers of government: the Malaysian Federal Government, and the Penang Government. At the Malaysian Federal Government level, the findings showed there was hardly any effort to promote Chinese community languages.

Chinese-medium education has survived until the present day, due to the constitutional right to learn and speak other languages beside the national and official language, Bahasa Melayu. The Malaysian Federal Government has not hindered those who wish to pursue Chinese-medium education, but neither have they supported the development of Chinese-medium education. Instead, they have pushed for the establishment of Bahasa Melayu in all educational institutions. Since independence, the Government's policy has been to promote Bahasa Melayu as the country's sole official and national language. However, at the state level, the situation is different. Interviews with Penang Government official planners demonstrated that their policy differed from the Malaysian Federal Government's because they support and celebrate diversity. The Penang Government encourages the community to put forward their ideas on different strategies for maintaining cultures and languages by offering funding to realise such schemes. However, some organisations claimed that negotiations with the Government for funding had failed, signifying a lack of communication between the Penang Government and the Chinese community.

The examination continued at the meso level through interviews with various Chinese clan associations and other groups that promote the use of community languages. A range of efforts to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang were identified. Among these efforts were language classes, publications of dictionaries and language books, production of a Penang Hokkien movie, Teochew opera performances, open houses and serving traditional cuisine at Chinese clan associations, religious events, and spreading awareness through Facebook. Although many cultural and language events occur on an ongoing basis, most community members were unaware of them due to limited promotion. This evidence suggests that the media could play a bigger role in promoting cultural and language events to raise their profile.

To ensure that I took into consideration both the planned and unplanned aspects of language planning in the language ecology of Penang, I also examined the micro level, represented by parents. The interviews indicated that some parents placed an emphasis on speaking dominant languages to their children at home to ensure children performed well at school. These parents were also influenced by policy initiatives such as the ‘Speak Mandarin’ campaign, which encouraged speaking Mandarin Chinese only. Nevertheless, there were other parents who felt they should also teach their children the Chinese community languages that represent their cultural identity, and have maintained efforts to speak Chinese community languages to their children at home. Children growing up in rural areas also have more opportunities to speak Chinese community languages compared to children in urban areas because the older generation in rural areas do not know much Mandarin Chinese, thus forcing children to learn Chinese community languages for communication purposes. These findings suggest that some parents are aware of the importance of Chinese community languages, and maintenance of these languages can be assisted by individual efforts in the home domain.

#### **7.1.4 Main conclusion of the study.**

In addressing the two overarching research questions, the key findings from Chapters 4, 5, and 6 show that in broad terms, the participants of this study were aware of the importance of Chinese community languages. Many participants acknowledged that their emotional, historical, and ethnic identity was associated with Chinese community languages. Their acknowledgement was supported by the active and consistent use of Chinese community languages in everyday life, but this active and consistent use was not reflected in the younger generation’s attitudes and language use. Three levels of organisations (macro, meso, and micro) demonstrated different degrees of effort put into supporting the maintenance of Chinese community languages in Penang. Given these findings, my main conclusion is that there exists



a gap between various participants' aspirations to maintain Chinese community languages and the current reality. This gap indicates there lacks a comprehensive strategy linking policy and activity at the macro level, and the meso and micro levels. This situation indicates that a strategy for Chinese community language maintenance needs to be developed to encourage the use of community languages within the Chinese community in Penang. It is through such strategies that the survival of these community languages can be prolonged, and the unique Chinese history and culture in Penang can be celebrated.

Most of the participants from the meso and micro levels—that is, those from the Penang Chinese community who grew up speaking Chinese community languages—are no doubt sincere in their assertions that they continue to speak community languages to friends and family members. Yet, as many of the interview extracts in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 have indicated, these participants have cultural and emotional connections to community languages that are not necessarily reflected in the language use behaviours of younger, especially school- and university-aged generations today. The literature review in Chapter 2 shows that these younger generations are increasingly using Mandarin Chinese as their 'go to' language in educational, community, and socio-economic contexts.

Thus, this study reveals a discrepancy between what community-based and grassroots actors believe should be the status and role of Chinese community languages, and the reality of the language situation today in Penang. This leads me to conclude that the current language promotion mechanisms in place to forestall a wholesale takeover of Mandarin Chinese as the community and commercial lingua franca in the future, are woefully lacking. Mechanisms that could be utilised at the Penang Government level, in schools, and in homes are currently not comprehensive or strong enough to hold Mandarin Chinese at bay. Presently, there is a lack of clarity around how the Penang's Chinese community's will—a will to maintain these diverse languages—can be translated into concrete measures that stimulate the use of Chinese

community languages among Penang's younger generation. So, while there is no doubt a 'will' to change the situation, the conditions for that will to be translated into a concrete mechanism for change are not yet present in the community or the government. In short, there is not yet a sufficiently strong enough collective motivation among the various organisations in the Chinese community to come together to implement change.

The ecological approach used in this study alludes to the importance of treating language maintenance and language shift as a complex and multifarious issue. The reasons for the decline in Chinese community language use are multiple and complex, and therefore cannot be addressed through simple, one-dimensional measures, such as a singular promotional campaign or some other governmental program. What is required is a comprehensive and varied approach that reaches into all areas and organisations of the Chinese community, from a macro level (Penang Government) to micro level (families) and, ideally, through the conduit of local community organisations (meso level), which would need to include Chinese-medium schools.

## **7.2 Contributions of the Study**

This research is the first doctoral study addressing Chinese community language maintenance in Penang, Malaysia, in a way that captures the ecology of language use and language shift. It has clarified the relationship between national language policy and Chinese community languages by employing an ecological framework to the case of Penang's Chinese community. Further, it has provided a holistic illustration of the current state of Chinese community languages in Penang based on three groups of participants and revealed their efforts to date to maintain these languages. Despite the lack of promotion and support at the macro

level, the Chinese community at the meso and micro levels has shown great commitment to supporting the maintenance of Chinese community languages in language ecology of Penang.

This study has therefore demonstrated a need to bridge the gap between macro, meso, and micro level language planning. In doing so, researchers interested in language planning can develop a comprehensive understanding of language maintenance and language shift, together with top-down and bottom-up language practices. Qualitative research methods have provided detailed and nuanced data that facilitate the analysis of language use, language perceptions, and language planning of the participants in this study, moving from a descriptive to an explanatory interpretation of the complex language situation in Penang. Moreover, the inclusion of linguistic landscape methods and data added value in diagnosing the visibility of Chinese community languages and the representation of Chinese identity in multicultural and multilingual Penang.

Thus, this study has shown that using diverse data sources adds layers of interpretation to the analysis of the language ecology of Penang, moving beyond a quantitative description to explain language use, language perceptions, and language maintenance efforts as voiced by the three groups of participants, representing official actors, community-based actors, and grassroots actors.

With the recent growth in studies dealing with language maintenance and language shift, it is important to note the ways in which they have been conceptualised from an ecological viewpoint. To date, very little work on language ecology has dealt with the issue of language maintenance and language shift, particularly regarding Chinese community languages in Malaysia where, in many cases, they have been treated as ‘unimportant’ compared to the sole national and official language, Bahasa Melayu, and dominant languages, such as English and Mandarin Chinese.

Drawing attention to the complexity of the language environment in Penang, the use of an ecological framework has highlighted the dynamic nature of interactions between Penang's Chinese community and Chinese community languages. The conceptual framework, which consisted of three components, was adapted from Haugen's (1972) notion of language ecology. Haugen's notion of language ecology assumes that ecological links exist between language, speakers, and the environment. The term 'language ecology' draws on an analogy between environmental concerns about living organisms and cultural concerns about languages. In the case of Penang, the cultural concerns in the analogy were related to interactions between Chinese community languages and Penang's Chinese community. The findings have indicated that Chinese community language maintenance in Penang is shaped by participants' everyday language use, their perceptions about the cultural and emotional values of the languages, their interpretation of Penang's linguistic landscape, and the numerous efforts made to maintain the languages.

Nevertheless, in this global era, many members of Penang's Chinese community face difficulties conducting everyday communications in Chinese community languages with younger people, especially those in schools and universities, as these languages compete with dominant languages. In this light, Penang may stand as an example for not only Malaysia, but many communities in other multilingual and multiethnic countries where the cultural values of community languages are jeopardised by the presence of dominant languages. Mandarin Chinese is rapidly becoming the lingua franca of the Malaysian-Chinese community, and has become a necessary language to learn, together with Bahasa Melayu and English, in most Malaysian-Chinese families. Therefore, the value of Chinese community languages may need to be reassessed, and their role as a primarily home language in many families to be re-established.

In light of the discussion above, the main contribution of this study to the literature is in relation to (1) the notion of ecology used to describe the environment of language use in Penang, and (2) the findings outlined in Sections 7.1.1, 7.1.2, and 7.1.3.

### **7.3 Closing Comments**

As identified in the above contributions, this study has successfully demonstrated that there is a connection between language use, language perceptions, and institutional and community efforts in attempts to maintain Chinese community languages in Penang's language ecology. All three groups of participants in this study (official, community-based, and grassroots actors) continue to use their community languages actively in everyday life, despite the competition these languages face from Mandarin Chinese and English. Because of this competition, some community languages, such as Hakka, have become endangered, while Taishan is heading towards extinction. However, the threat posed by Mandarin Chinese and English has not obscured participants' acknowledgment of the cultural and emotional value of their community languages. This study's analysis of the three levels of organisations shows that while at the macro level, the Malaysian Federal Government does not promote the use of Chinese community languages, the Penang Government celebrates diversity with a more accommodating policy. At the meso level, Chinese clan associations and language promoters have put substantial effort into organising language classes and cultural events, as well as publishing language books and dictionaries. And finally, at the micro level, parents subscribe to balancing the use of both dominant and community languages in the home environment. Overall, my analysis recognises the considerable on-the-ground practices driving Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. Nevertheless, as I have indicated in the main conclusion of my study in Section 7.1.4, there is a wide discrepancy between the beliefs of

community-based and grassroots actors on the status and role of Chinese community languages, and the reality of the present-day language situation in Penang.

Throughout this study, I have observed participants' strong emotional and cultural attachments to Chinese community languages, alongside the contrasting language behaviours of today's younger generation, whose the 'go to' language is Mandarin Chinese. Further, the study's findings (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6) indicate a major discrepancy between community-based and grassroots actors' aspirations for the role and status of Chinese community languages, and the reality of the language situation in present-day Penang. Ultimately, unless there is an across-the-board effort made by all three levels of organisations in Penang, any future efforts to maintain Chinese community languages will fail. What is required is a strategy to produce such a mechanism—one co-authored by the Penang Government and community leaders and supported in Chinese-medium schools as well as by families.

Haugen's (1972) notion of language ecology is a useful place to begin. The first step of designing a tiered and co-ordinated strategy would be to involve both state and non-state sectors and to ensure they recognise the value of having a combined macro, meso, and micro level commitment. This approach to language sustainability incorporates families, school communities, and government. Although the design itself sits outside the scope of the current study, the findings in this thesis provide valuable insights that could inform relevant future strategic planning.

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## Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet for Interview

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN PENANG
Information Sheet for Official / Community-based / Grassroots Actors
<b>Research Team</b>  <b>CHIEF INVESTIGATORS</b> Dr. Kerry Taylor-Leech School of Education and Professional Studies Griffith University, Queensland, Australia Email: <a href="mailto:k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au">k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au</a>  Prof. Sue Trevaskes School of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences Griffith University, Queensland, Australia Email: <a href="mailto:s.trevaskes@griffith.edu.au">s.trevaskes@griffith.edu.au</a>  <b>STUDENT INVESTIGATOR</b> Ms. Teresa Ong Wai See School of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences Griffith University, Queensland, Australia Email: <a href="mailto:teresa.ong@griffithuni.edu.au">teresa.ong@griffithuni.edu.au</a>
<b>Information</b>  <b>Why is the research being conducted?</b> This research project (GU Ref No: 2016/409) is concerned with the relationship between national language policy and language maintenance in the case of Chinese community languages. Among the Chinese community in Malaysia, there is evidence of a widespread language shift from community languages to dominant languages. To understand how the Chinese community languages in Penang are maintained, this project aims to explore (i) participants' language use of Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in their everyday life, (ii) the perceptions held by participants in relation to Chinese community language maintenance in Penang, and (iii) the official planning efforts in place in Penang relating to Chinese community language maintenance and the extent to which these efforts are being actively supported in local Chinese communities. This project is part of the doctoral degree of Ms. Teresa Ong under the supervision of Dr. Kerry Taylor-Leech and Prof. Sue Trevaskes.  <b>What you will be asked to do</b> You are invited to participate in an interview to discuss your opinion regarding Chinese community language maintenance in Penang. Before starting the interview, you will be asked to fill in a demographic questionnaire. The discussion will focus on your prior knowledge and experiences regarding the strategies that are taking place to maintain the

community languages. The interview will be conducted face-to-face in a quiet room in your office for approximately an hour and will be audio-recorded for analysis purpose.

**Voluntary participation**

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw your participation at any time during the interview.

**Expected benefits to you**

The main benefit that will derive from this research is your contribution to our understanding of the Chinese community language maintenance in Penang.

**Risks to you**

There is little risk to you in relation to participating in this interview. The chance of you experiencing any discomfort or emotional harm is low.

**Your confidentiality**

The conduct of this research involves accessing or usage of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to their parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for academic publications. However, your anonymity will be safeguarded at all times. For further information, consult the University's Privacy Plan at <https://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/governance/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan>.

**The ethical conduct of this research**

This research is conducted according to Griffith University policy and as such is in accordance with the National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Should you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact Mr. Rick Williams, Manager Research Ethics and Integrity at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia on +61 7 3735 4375 or [research-ethics@griffith.edu.au](mailto:research-ethics@griffith.edu.au).

**Feedback to you**

Once the results have been analysed, they will be aggregated and presented as part of Ms. Teresa Ong Wai See's doctoral thesis. An executive summary report will be presented to you at your request.

**Data storage and deletion**

As required by Griffith University, all video and audio recordings will be erased after transcription, and identifying information will be removed from data and not included in data analysis. However, other research data such as interview transcripts and analysis will be stored in a password protected electronic file at Griffith University for a period of five years before being destroyed.

**Questions/further information**

If you require any further information concerning this research project, please contact the research team detailed above.



## Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN PENANG
Consent Form for Official / Community-based / Grassroots Actors
<b>Research Team</b>  <b>CHIEF INVESTIGATORS</b> Dr. Kerry Taylor-Leech Email: <a href="mailto:k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au">k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au</a>  Prof. Sue Trevaskes Email: <a href="mailto:s.trevaskes@griffith.edu.au">s.trevaskes@griffith.edu.au</a>  <b>STUDENT INVESTIGATOR</b> Ms. Teresa Ong Wai See Email: <a href="mailto:teresa.ong@griffithuni.edu.au">teresa.ong@griffithuni.edu.au</a>

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information package and in particular have noted that:

- I understand that my involvement in this research will include an hour interview concerning my opinions in relation to Chinese community language maintenance in Penang;
- I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- I understand the risks involved;
- I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
- I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
- I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without explanation or penalty;
- I understand that I can contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on +61 7 3735 4375 (or [research-ethics@griffith.edu.au](mailto:research-ethics@griffith.edu.au)) if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project;
- I agree to participate in the project (GU Ref No: 2016/409).

Name	
Signature	
Date	

## Appendix C: Participant Profile Questionnaire

### LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN PENANG

#### Participant Profile for Official / Community-based / Grassroots Actors

Tick the appropriate boxes.

1. What is your gender?

Male

☐

Female

☐

2. Which age group do you belong to?

Generation 1 – age 70 and above

☐

Generation 2 – age 50-69

☐

Generation 3 – age 30-49

☐

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Primary school

☐

Secondary school

☐

College

☐

University

☐

4. What is the title of your occupation?

5. How long have you been involved in this position?

6. Which Chinese subethnic groups identity do you originate from?

Hokkien	
Cantonese	
Hakka	
Teochew	
Hainan	
Fuzhou (Hokchiu)	
Taishan	
Puxian Min (Henghua)	
Other _____	

7. What languages do you read, write and speak?

<b>Languages</b>	<b>Read</b>	<b>Write</b>	<b>Speak</b>
Bahasa Melayu			
English			
Mandarin Chinese			
Penang Hokkien			
Cantonese			
Hakka			
Teochew			
Hainan			
Fuzhou (Hokchiu)			
Taishan			
Puxian Min (Henghua)			
Other _____			

## Appendix D: Interview Guide for Official and Community-Based Actors

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN PENANG
Interview Protocol for Official / Community-Based Actors

1. How important is it to maintain Chinese community languages? Why do you say so?
2. In your opinion, do you feel that the younger generation should learn how to speak Chinese community languages beside Mandarin Chinese? Why do you say so?
3. In your opinion, which Chinese community language is the most important to maintain beside Mandarin Chinese and why?
4. As an officer involved in designing and promoting Chinese community languages, are you satisfied with the efforts in general and why?
5. In the long term, do you think these efforts will succeed in maintaining the Chinese community languages or do you think these languages will disappear in the near future? Why do think so?
6. Which strategy do you feel is the most effective in encouraging the community to maintain Chinese community languages and why?
7. As an officer involved in the process of designing and promoting Chinese community languages in Penang, do you practise any of the following actions in the list below at home?
  - Speaking to friends and family in Penang Hokkien/Cantonese instead of Mandarin Chinese
  - Listening to Penang Hokkien/Cantonese songs

- Watching Penang Hokkien/Cantonese drama/movies
  - Watching Penang Hokkien/Cantonese news broadcast
  - Singing Penang Hokkien/Cantonese songs
  - Joining Penang Hokkien/Cantonese church/temple services
8. Are there any other things you do in your personal time to maintain the Chinese community languages? What are they?
9. Looking at the photos featuring Chinese community languages in Penang and related cultural objects, which of these attract you the most and why?
10. Do you feel that the Penang landscape should continue to include more or less of the Chinese community languages? Why do you feel so?
11. Do you have any final comments related to this issue?

## Appendix E: Interview Guide for Grassroots Actors

### LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN PENANG

#### Interview Protocol for Grassroots Actors

1. How important is it to maintain Chinese community languages? Why do you say so?
2. In your opinion, do you feel that the younger generation should learn how to speak Chinese community languages beside Mandarin Chinese? Why do you say so?
3. In your opinion, which Chinese community language is the most important to maintain beside Mandarin Chinese and why?
4. As a local, are you aware of the strategies promoted by Penang government in relation to Chinese community language maintenance?
5. If yes, to what extent do you think these efforts have succeeded in maintaining the Chinese community languages? In the long term, do you think they will continue to succeed or do you think these languages will disappear in the near future? Why do think so?  
  
If no, why are you not aware of the strategies? Is it because there was not enough promotion to alert the local communities? In your opinion, do you think these languages will disappear in the near future?
6. Here is a list of strategies promoted by Penang government:
  - Promotion through schools and education institutions
  - Promotion through Youtube, radio and tv broadcast
  - Campaigning through social media such as Facebook and Twitter
  - Promotion through Penang tourism websites, banners and leaflets
  - Providing free language classes through Chinese associations

- Publishing language books which use Romanised characters
- Promotion through cultural and religious festivals
- Encouraging the use of community languages in religious places
- Encouraging people to speak community languages in the home domain
- Encouraging people to watch news in community languages

Which strategies do you feel are more effective in encouraging the local community to use Chinese community languages and why?

7. As a local, if you are keen on speaking these Chinese community languages, will you practise these strategies at home with your friends and family and why?

If you are not keen on speaking these Chinese community languages, why is that so?

8. Are there any other strategies which you think will be more effective in promoting the maintenance of Chinese community languages? What are they?
9. Looking at the photos featuring Chinese community languages in Penang and related cultural objects, which of these attract you the most and why?
10. Do you feel that the Penang landscape should continue to include more or less of the Chinese community languages? Why do you feel so?
11. Do you have any final comments related to this issue?

## Appendix F: Information Sheet for Linguistic Landscape Photos Collection

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN PENANG	
Information Sheet for Visual Data Collection	
<b>Research Team</b>  <b>CHIEF INVESTIGATORS</b> Dr. Kerry Taylor-Leech Email: <a href="mailto:k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au">k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au</a>  Prof. Sue Trevaskes Email: <a href="mailto:s.trevaskes@griffith.edu.au">s.trevaskes@griffith.edu.au</a>  <b>STUDENT INVESTIGATOR</b> Ms. Teresa Ong Wai See Email: <a href="mailto:teresa.ong@griffithuni.edu.au">teresa.ong@griffithuni.edu.au</a>	
<b>Information</b>  <p>This research project (GU Ref No: 2016/409) is concerned with the relationship between national language policy and language maintenance in the case of Chinese community languages. Among the Chinese community in Malaysia, there is evidence of a widespread language shift from community languages to dominant languages. To understand how Chinese community languages in Penang are maintained, this project aims to explore (i) the participants' language use of Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in their everyday life, (ii) the perceptions held by participants in relation to Chinese community language maintenance in Penang, and (iii) the official planning efforts in place in Penang relating to Chinese community language maintenance and the extent to which these efforts are being actively supported in local Chinese communities. This project is part of the doctoral degree of Ms. Teresa Ong under the supervision of Dr. Kerry Taylor-Leech and Prof. Sue Trevaskes.</p> <p><b>The ethical conduct of this research</b>            This research is conducted according to Griffith University policy and as such is in accordance with the National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Should you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact Mr. Rick Williams, Manager Research Ethics and Integrity at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia on +61 7 3735 4375 or <a href="mailto:research-ethics@griffith.edu.au">research-ethics@griffith.edu.au</a> .</p> <p><b>Question/further information</b>            If you require any further information concerning this research project, please contact the research team detailed above.</p>	



## Appendix G: Letter for Schools

Dear Sir/Madam,

8 June 2016

I am Teresa Ong Wai See, a PhD candidate from the School of Humanities, Languages and Social Sciences, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia. I am writing here to seek permission to use the space of your school for our research project during the period of July to August 2016.

Our research project (Griffith University Ethics Reference Number: 2016/409) is concerned with the relationship between national language policy and language maintenance in the case of Chinese community languages. Among the Chinese community in Malaysia, there is evidence of a widespread language shift from community languages to dominant languages. To understand how Chinese community languages in Penang are maintained, this project aims to explore (i) the participants' language use of Chinese community languages and Mandarin Chinese in their everyday life, (ii) the perceptions held by participants in relation to Chinese community language maintenance in Penang, and (iii) the official planning efforts in place in Penang relating to Chinese community language maintenance and the extent to which these efforts are being actively supported in local Chinese communities. To achieve these aims, our project intends to photograph the spaces at your school involving banners, notices and signs promoting language maintenance in Penang. This project is part of the doctoral degree of Ms. Teresa Ong Wai See under the supervision of Dr. Kerry Taylor-Leech and Prof. Sue Trevaskes.

The research team anticipate little to no risks to your school as a consequence of this research. After the data are collected, all identifying features will be removed and not be included in the analysis. The results of this research will provide us with a better understanding towards Chinese community language maintenance in Penang.

This research project is conducted according to Griffith University policy and as such is in such is in accordance with the National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research. Should you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this research project, please contact Mr. Rick Williams, Manager, Research Ethics and Integrity at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia on +61 7 3735 4375 or [research-ethics@griffith.edu.au](mailto:research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) or Teresa Ong on [teresa.ong@griffithuni.edu.au](mailto:teresa.ong@griffithuni.edu.au).

If you have any further questions or would like to further information, please contact Teresa Ong (012-4831737) or her supervisors on [k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au](mailto:k.taylor-leech@griffith.edu.au) and [s.trevaskes@griffith.edu.au](mailto:s.trevaskes@griffith.edu.au).

Thank you for your support. I look forward to having your permission as embodied in your signature in the form below.

Kind regards,

Teresa Ong Wai See,  
PhD candidate,  
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Nathan Campus, Griffith University,  
170 Kessels Road, Nathan,  
Queensland 4111, Australia.  
Email: [teresa.ong@griffithuni.edu.au](mailto:teresa.ong@griffithuni.edu.au)

**This is to confirm that Ms. Teresa Ong Wai See is permitted to conduct her research at a school in Penang during the period of July to August 2016.**

Approver:

Position:

Affiliation:

Signature:

Date:

## **Appendix H: Article 152 of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia**

(1) The national language shall be Bahasa Melayu and shall be in such script as Parliament may by law\* provide:

Provided that-

(a) no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes), or from teaching or learning, any other language; and

(b) nothing in this Clause shall prejudice the right of the Federal Government or of any State Government to preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of any other community in the Federation.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of Clause (1), for a period of ten years after Merdeka Day, and thereafter until Parliament otherwise provides, the English language may be used in both Houses of Parliament, in the Legislative Assembly of every State, and for all other official purposes.

(3) Notwithstanding the provisions of Clause (1), for a period of ten years after Merdeka Day, and thereafter until Parliament otherwise provides, the authoritative texts-

(a) of all Bills to be introduced or amendments thereto to be moved in either House of Parliament, and

(b) of all Acts of Parliament and all subsidiary legislation issued by the Federal Government,

shall be in the English language.

(4) Notwithstanding the provisions of Clause (1), for a period of ten years after Merdeka Day, and thereafter until Parliament otherwise provides, all proceedings in the Supreme Court or a High Court shall be in the English language:

Provided that, if the Court and counsel on both sides agree, evidence taken in language spoken by the witness need not be translated into or recorded in English.

(5) Notwithstanding the provisions of Clause (1), until Parliament otherwise provides, all proceedings in subordinate courts, other than the taking of evidence, shall be in the English language.

(6) In this Article, "official purpose" means any purpose of the Government, whether Federal or State, and includes any purpose of a public authority.

## **Appendix I: The National Language Acts of 1963/1967**

An Act to consolidate the law relating to the use of the national language.

### **Short title, application and commencement**

1. (1) This Act may be cited as the National Language Acts 1963/1967 and shall, subject to subsection (2), apply throughout Malaysia.

(2) This Act shall come into force in the States of Sabah and Sarawak on such dates as the respective State Authorities may by enactments of the Legislatures of the respective States appoint and different dates may be appointed for the coming into force of different provisions of this Act in those States.

### **National language to be used for official purposes**

2. Save as provided in this Act and subject to the safeguards contained in Article 152(1) of the Constitution relating to any other language and the language of any other community in Malaysia the national language shall be used for official purposes.

### **Use of translation**

3. Nothing in this Act shall affect the right of the Federal Government or the Government of any State to use any translation of official documents or communications in any other language for such purposes as may be deemed necessary in the public interest.

### **Continued use of English may be permitted**

4. The Yang di-Pertuan Agong may permit the continued use of the English language for such official purposes as may be deemed fit.

### **Use of English language may be permitted in Parliament and Legislative Assembly**

5. The President of Dewan Negara, the Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of any State, or other person performing for the time being the functions of any such office, may permit any member of either House of Parliament or of the Legislative Assembly to use the English language in addressing, or otherwise participating in the work of the House or the Legislative Assembly, as the case may be.

### **Authoritative text of laws**

6. The texts—

(a) of all Bills to be introduced or amendments thereto to be moved in Parliament or the Legislative Assembly of any State;

(b) of all Acts of Parliament and all subsidiary legislation issued by the Federal Government;

(c) of all Enactments and subsidiary legislation issued by any State Government; and

(d) of all Ordinances promulgated by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong,

shall be in the national language and in the English language, the former being authoritative unless the Yang di-Pertuan Agong otherwise prescribes generally or in respect of any particular law or class of laws.

### **Written laws enacted prior to 1 September 1967**

7. (1) Where any written law enacted before the first day of September 1967, has been translated into the national language, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong may prescribe the translation of that law to be authoritative.

(2) Nothing in section 6 shall apply to the amendment of any written law enacted before the first day of September 1967, until that written law has been translated into the national language and the translation has been prescribed to be authoritative.

## **Language of Courts**

8. All proceedings (other than the giving of evidence by a witness) in the Federal Court, Court of Appeal, the High Court or any Subordinate Court shall be in the national language:

Provided that the Court may either of its own motion or on the application of any party to any proceedings and after considering the interests of justice in those proceedings, order that the proceedings (other than the giving of evidence by a witness) shall be partly in the national language and partly in the English language.

## **Script of national language**

9. The script of the national language shall be the Rumi script: provided that this shall not prohibit the use of Bahasa Melayu script, more commonly known as the Jawi script, of the national language.

## **Form of numerals**

10. The form of numerals in the national language shall be the Arabic form of numerals.

## **Forms**

11. Save as otherwise expressly provided, wherever a form in the English language is prescribed by any written law a translation thereof in the national language by such person or authority as the Prime Minister may from time to time by order prescribe may be used for all the purposes for which the form may, if in the English language, be used.

## **Appendix J: The Local Government Act of 1976**

1. These By-Laws may be cited as the **Municipal Council of Penang Island (Advertisement) By-Laws 2000** and shall come into force on the date of its publication in the *Gazette*.

2. In these By-Laws, unless the context otherwise requires—

“advertisement” means any notification, intimation or publication exhibited for the purpose of bringing to the notice of the public any article, product, production, trade, business, profession, firm, corporation, organisation, institution, place, premise, event, activity or any other matter or information, on any hoarding, unipole tower, board, roof, wall, paling, fence, tree, frame, plate, cloth, bar, pillar, post, wire, casing, or any other structure or contrivance, or any part thereof, on, in, or over any building, street or place of public resort, or on or over any land, and includes sky-sign, poster, directional sign and nameboard but does not include an election advertisement;

“nameboard” means any board, or surface on the outer wall of a building or any sign attached to a building relating wholly to business being carried out or to goods sold or to services provided, together with the name and qualifications of the person carrying on the business, or selling the goods, or supplying the services;

“poster” means an advertisement which is not of a permanent commercial nature and measuring not more than 60cm by 90cm.



3. (1) Bahasa Melayu shall be used for all advertisements whether by itself or together with any other language.

(2) When Bahasa Melayu is used together with any other language in an advertisement, the words in Bahasa Melayu shall be bigger in size and be given more prominence in visual emphasis and position than the words in such other language.

(3) No person shall exhibit or cause or permit to be exhibited any advertisement that does not comply with paragraphs (1) and (2).

(4) Notwithstanding paragraph (3), if the name of a firm, company or society, as registered under the Registration of Business Act 1956, the Companies Act 1965, or the Society Act 1966, consists of or includes words that are not in Bahasa Melayu, such words need not comply with paragraphs (1) and (2).

(5) When a product is registered pursuant to the Trade Marks Act 1976 under a name in the English language or other language, the name of the product need not be translated into Bahasa Melayu if the Council considers it impracticable or undesirable to do so.

(6) Paragraphs (1) and (2) shall not apply to any business consisting solely of the exercise of any profession which under the provisions of any written law can be exercised by those who possess certain qualifications prescribed by such written law and whose names are registered or otherwise recorded in a manner prescribed by any written law.

4. When it appears to the Council that there has been an incorrect use of Bahasa Melayu in any advertisement, the Council may by notice in writing order the person who has exhibited the advertisement, or who has caused or permitted the advertisement to be exhibited, to alter

the advertisement so as to correct the error in such manner and within such time as the Council may specify in the notice.

## **Appendix K: The Education Act of 1996**

An Act to provide for education and for matters connected therewith [31 December 1997, P.U.  
(B) 541/1997]

### **Part I**

#### **Interpretation**

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires—

“Chinese language” means the form of the Chinese language commonly known as Mandarin;

“higher education” means education provided by a higher educational institution;

“lower secondary education” means a three-year course appropriate for a pupil who has completed primary education;

“national language” means the Malay language as stipulated in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution;

“national school” means a government or government-aided primary school—

- (a) providing primary education appropriate for pupils from the age of six years;
- (b) using the national language as the main medium of instruction;
- (c) in which the English language is a compulsory subject of instruction; and
- (d) in which facilities for the teaching of—
  - (i) the Chinese or Tamil language shall be made available if the parents of at least fifteen pupils in the school so request; and
  - (ii) indigenous language shall be made available if it is reasonable and practicable so to do and if the parents of at least fifteen pupils in the school so request;

“national secondary school” means a government or government-aided secondary school—

- (a) providing a five-year course of secondary education appropriate for pupils who have just completed primary education;
- (b) using the national language as the main medium of instruction;
- (c) in which the English language is a compulsory subject of instruction; and
- (d) in which facilities for the teaching of—
  - (i) the Chinese or Tamil language shall be made available if the parents of at least fifteen pupils in the school so request; and
  - (ii) indigenous language shall be made available if it is reasonable and practicable so to do and if the parents of at least fifteen pupils in the school so request;
  - (iii) Arabic, Japanese, German or French or any other foreign language may be made available if it is reasonable and practicable so to do; and
- (e) Preparing pupils for such examinations as may be prescribed,

and includes any such school providing a transition class;

“national-type school” means a government or government-aided primary school—

- (a) providing primary education appropriate for pupils from the age of six years;
- (b) using the Chinese or Tamil language as the main medium of instruction; and
- (c) in which the national and English language are compulsory subjects of instructions;

“post-secondary education” means education provided to a person who has completed upper secondary education, but does not include higher education;

“primary education” means a course of study at primary level which is designed for a duration of six years but which may be completed within five to seven years;

“secondary education” means education comprising lower secondary and upper secondary education;

“upper secondary education” means education suitable to the abilities and aptitudes of a pupil who has completed lower secondary education.

## Appendix L: Codes of Interview Extracts for Chapter 4

Official Actors		Community-based Actors		Grassroots Actors	
Labels	Name of participant	Labels	Name of participant	Labels	Name of participant
OA13/G3/Extract 1	Ai Mei	CA12/G2/Extract 1	Jit Ting	GA15/G3/Extract 1	Tiang Lay
OA1/G3/Extract 2	Kok Loong	CA12/G2/Extract 2	Jit Ting	GA11/G3/Extract 2	Fei Ming
OA10/G3/Extract 3	Wee Nam	CA9/G2/Extract 3	Wai Keong	GA12/G2/Extract 3	Chui Mooi
OA1/G3/Extract 4	Kok Loong	CA9/G2/Extract 4	Wai Keong	GA1/G3/Extract 4	Shu Min
OA10/G3/Extract 5	Wee Nam			GA10/G2/Extract 5	Meng Chong
OA10/G3/Extract 6	Wee Nam				
OA6/G3/Extract 7	Ling Ling				

## Appendix M: Codes of Interview Extracts for Chapter 5

Official Actors		Community-Based Actors		Grassroots Actors	
Labels	Name of participant	Label	Name of participant	Label	Name of participant
OA4/G3/Extract 8	Loon Teik	CA5/G1/Extract 5	Ah Meng	GA1/G3/Extract 6	Shu Min
OA2/G3/Extract 9	Marco	CA1/G2/Extract 6	Gee Boo	GA5/G1/Extract 7	Ka Chun
OA6/G3/Extract 10	Ling Ling	CA2/G3/Extract 7	Hua Lun	GA17/G3/Extract 8	Cher Leng
OA7/G2/Extract 11	Kim Bak	CA7/G2/Extract 8	Zhi En	GA10/G2/Extract 9	Meng Chong
OA10/G3/Extract 12	Wee Nam	CA9/G2/Extract 9	Wai Keong	GA13/G2/Extract 10	Pei Ni
OA13/G3/Extract 13	Ai Mei	CA5/G1/Extract 10	Ah Meng	GA7/G1/Extract 11	San Choon
OA1/G3/Extract 14	Kok Loong	CA10/G3/Extract 11	Tian Hin	GA1/G3/Extract 12	Shu Min
OA4/G3/Extract 15	Loon Teik	CA8/G1/Extract 12	Kim Chen	GA3/G3/Extract 13	Ka Fai
OA5/G2/Extract 16	Geok Choon	CA9/G2/Extract 13	Wai Keong	GA14/G2/Extract 14	Jian Hooi
OA1/G3/Extract 17	Kok Loong	CA3/G3/Extract 14	Elizabeth	GA8/G1/Extract 15	Huang Fu
OA3/G3/Extract 18	Ying Song	CA12/G2/Extract 15	Jit Ting	GA20/G2/Extract 16	Soon Geok
OA8/G2/Extract 19	Nicholas	CA9/G2/Extract 16	Wai Keong	GA13/G2/Extract 17	Pei Ni
OA10/G3/Extract 20	Wee Nam	CA12/G2/Extract 17	Jit Ting	GA10/G2/Extract 18	Meng Chong
OA12/G3/Extract 21	Von Chee	CA9/G2/Extract 18	Wai Keong	GA14/G2/Extract 19	Jian Hooi
OA12/G3/Extract 22	Von Chee	CA1/G2/Extract 19	Gee Boo	GA15/G3/Extract 20	Tiang Lay
OA9/G2/Extract 23	Kok Wan	CA9/G2/Extract 20	Wai Keong	GA1/G3/Extract 21	Shu Min
OA2/G3/Extract 24	Marco			GA14/G2/Extract 22	Jian Hooi
OA3/G3/Extract 25	Ying Song			GA11/G3/Extract 23	Fei Ming
OA10/G3/Extract 26	Wee Nam			GA14/G2/Extract 24	Jian Hooi
OA13/G3/Extract 27	Ai Mei			GA15/G3/Extract 25	Tiang Lay
OA1/G3/Extract 28	Kok Loong			GA16/G3/Extract 26	Sin Nam
OA10/G3/Extract 29	Wee Nam			GA15/G3/Extract 27	Tiang Lay
OA1/G3/Extract 30	Kok Loong			GA8/G1/Extract 28	Huang Fu
OA5/G2/Extract 31	Geok Choon				
OA7/G2/Extract 32	Kim Bak				
OA2/G3/Extract 33	Marco				
OA2/G3/Extract 34	Nicholas				
OA9/G2/Extract 35	Kok Wan				
OA3/G3/Extract 36	Ying Song				
OA3/G3/Extract 37	Ying Song				

## Appendix N: Codes of Interview Extracts for Chapter 6

Official Actors		Community-based Actors		Grassroots Actors	
Labels	Name of participant	Labels	Name of participant	Labels	Name of participant
OA2/G3/Extract 38	Marco	CA3/G3/Extract 21	Elizabeth	GA20/G2/Extract 29	Soon Gek
OA2/G3/Extract 39	Marco	CA9/G2/Extract 22	Wai Keong	GA8/G1/Extract 30	Huang Fu
OA12/G3/Extract 40	Von Chee	CA10/G3/Extract 23	Tian Hin	GA20/G2/Extract 31	Soon Gek
OA1/G3/Extract 41	Kok Loong	CA5/G1/Extract 24	Ah Meng	GA2/G2/Extract 32	Joo Hoe
OA7/G2/Extract 42	Kim Bak	CA2/G3/Extract 25	Hua Lun	GA15/G3/Extract 33	Tiang Lay
OA11/G1/Extract 43	Cheung Kit	CA5/G1/Extract 26	Ah Meng	GA5/G1/Extract 34	Ka Chun
OA11/G1/Extract 44	Cheung Kit	CA8/G1/Extract 27	Kim Chen	GA15/G3/Extract 35	Tiang Lay
OA2/G3/Extract 45	Marco	CA11/G1/Extract 28	Kian Lam	GA18/G3/Extract 36	Sum Sum
OA7/G2/Extract 46	Kim Bak	CA12/G2/Extract 29	Jit Ting	GA19/G3/Extract 37	Chiang Tee
OA2/G3/Extract 47	Marco	CA3/G3/Extract 30	Elizabeth	GA4/G1/Extract 38	Shuk Yee
OA10/G3/Extract 48	Wee Nam	CA5/G1/Extract 31	Ah Meng	GA10/G2/Extract 39	Meng Chong
OA1/G3/Extract 49	Kok Loong	CA13/G3/Extract 32	Siew Siew	GA11/G3/Extract 40	Fei Ming
OA9/G2/Extract 50	Kok Wan	CA12/G2/Extract 33	Jit Ting	GA3/G3/Extract 41	Shu Min
OA2/G3/Extract 51	Marco	CA11/G1/Extract 34	Kian Lam	GA12/G2/Extract 42	Chui Mooi
OA10/G3/Extract 52	Wee Nam	CA11/G1/Extract 35	Kian Lam		
OA13/G3/Extract 53	Ai Mei	CA4/G3/Extract 36	Hock Chai		
OA1/G3/Extract 54	Kok Loong	CA3/G3/Extract 37	Elizabeth		
OA5/G2/Extract 55	Geok Choon	CA3/G3/Extract 38	Elizabeth		
OA3/G3/Extract 56	Ying Song	CA2/G3/Extract 39	Hua Lun		
OA1/G3/Extract 57	Kok Loong	CA8/G1/Extract 40	Kim Chen		
OA2/G3/Extract 58	Marco				