Democracy and Mother Tongue

The Role of the Cantonese and Mandarin Language in the Socio-Political

Relationship of Hong Kong and Mainland China

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Introduction

      In recent years, the complex relationship between Hong Kong society and the growing Mainland Chinese political influence has led to active outbursts of civil dissatisfaction. A large component of this unease is the anti-Mainland sentiment, aimed at both the government and Chinese immigrants and tourists. Additionally, the prevalence of the Mandarin language and the Simplified Chinese script has increased, in local schools, on television, in the workplace and in the streets. Since both the language issues of Hong Kong and the socio-political issues associated with the Mainland Chinese influence have gotten increasing attention, it makes one wonder whether there is a form of correlation and plausible causation between these two factors. Thus, using news articles, social media, a survey and youth responses this paper will attempt to answer the question;

      Do attitudes regarding the Mandarin and Cantonese language in Hong Kong reflect a political stance vis-à-vis Mainland China and Hong Kong?

      Since most of the recent developments in the Mainland-Hong Kong relation have been prompted by youth movements, this paper's research and data collection will aim themselves on social media active Chinese youths. These youth movements include both large scale conflicts such as the Umbrella Movement, but also more localised, singular protests and demonstrations, many of which will be discussed in this paper. As reported by The Guardian, many local news outlets fear harming their relationship with the Mainland and thus have failed to report critically on such protests and the negative image of the Mainland as associated with political protest. Subsequently, traditional media failed Hong Kong youths and lead them to search for impenitent news elsewhere; social media outlets such as Facebook became critical to the Umbrella movement, "the best-documented social movement in history" (Kaiman, "Hong Kong Protests"). Consequently, social media and online activity will be the primary tool with which the research question of this paper will be answered. Furthermore, this paper will be accompanied by an extensive theoretical framework on identity issues and the political relationship between the Mainland and Hong Kong, a deeper look at the language situation in Hong Kong and social media usage and student perception in Hong Kong. Analysing

news articles, a moist controversial Facebook video and ending with a deeply analysed survey, this paper will set out to find a satisfying answer.

1. Historical Outline and Development

Before attempting to analyse the intricacies of the complicated relationship between the Mainland Chinese government and the people of Hong Kong, there must first be briefly recounted exactly how their relationship came to be and how it has developed over the course of the 20th and 21st century. The historical development of Hong Kong, the former British colony at the Southern border of Mainland China, is wholly responsible for its current political situation. As the term 'political conflict' is quite integral to this paper's research question, there must also be clearly defined what this conflict exactly entails, as its current battles are fought with minimal bloodshed, for the most part.

In many everyday interactions and media, Hong Kong is often called 'China but not China'. Formally ceded to the British government in 1842 and the following decades, after the events of the Opium Wars, the Hong Kong territory became a 'lease' of ninety-nine years in 1898; after almost a century of British possession, the territory would have to be formally returned to the Chinese government. This colonial period knew its own, unique set of difficulties and a problematic, ambiguous relationship, which is responsible for a large part of culture and society in current day Hong Kong (Poon 6). In short, it can be said that for the period between 1842 and 1997 Hong Kong functioned as a British colony, not entirely isolated yet for the most part 'protected' from the political developments that occurred in the Chinese mainland, at least until the 1970s.

However, it should be noted that a majority of Hong Kong's demographic growth was contributed by Mainland Chinese immigration, such as refugees caused by the Chinese Civil War and those seeking to flee the subsequent Communist rule (Poon 4-5) It is in this scheme that 'Hongkonger vs. Mainlander' could be seen as a redundant, ideological division rather than an essential, natural distinction. This applies even more so to the language division, the 'local, native' Cantonese language vs. the 'foreign, invasive' Mandarin language; not only are both these language import languages of the Mainland and brought along by immigrants, Cantonese has in fact more so replaced the native

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tongue of the 'original' Hong Kong people, i.e. Hakka and Yue dialects, than the later introduced Mandarin has done. Nevertheless, these historic developments, though undermining the inherent distinction between the Mainland and Hong Kong, do not change that in the modern day this distinction has fully developed into something tangible and capable of affecting the lives of many. This relationship between identity and language will be further reflected upon in the following theoretical framework.

Returning to the topic of the political relationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland, starting from the 1970s and onwards, the first conflicts begin originating. As the political situation between the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China developed internationally, so did the 'Hong Kong issue'. As the deadline of the Handover, set to happen in 1997, slowly but surely approached, pressure and tensions amongst the Hong Kong people rose. Despite treaties and agreements between the British government and the Mainland Chinese government, e.g. the Sino-British Joint Declaration, settling on basic rules regarding the protection of Hong Kong's autonomy and civil rights, at least for the fifty years following the Handover, many did fear the transfer to Mainland Chinese rule, resulting in mass emigration to the United States and other Western territories (Poon 4-5).

As one of the two 'special administrative region' or SAR of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong supposedly is one with the Mainland, an inherent part of China, yet continues to be able to have its own economic and administrative system; one country, two systems. This political situation is the current system in place and will remain so till at least 2047, which is when the Sino-British arrangement expires. This future deadline, much like the 1997 Handover, is one of the major catalysts of Hong Kong's protests and the Mainland's policy introduction and application. 2047 is a year which already strikes much fear into the hearts of Hong Kong people, both old and young. However, there remains much uncertainty over the future; as will be discussed in the subsequent theoretical framework, scholarly debate ranges drastically concerning the speculation of Hong Kong post-2047. While some of these speculations will be found amongst the sources in the theoretical

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framework, it would be impossible to do any sort of definite prediction regarding the Hong Kong-Mainland political situation in the following decades.

On the other hand, a more defined exposition should be written on the current 'political conflict' in Hong Kong. In the past decade, given the rise of social media as described in the introduction and the stricter implication of Mainland ideology and rule, Hong Kong youths especially have become more and more rallied against the Reunification of Hong Kong and the Mainland. Extensively reported by international media were the 2014 Hong Kong protests. On this topic, it should be noted that in this paper the term 'Umbrella Movement' takes a preference over the term 'Umbrella Revolution'; the movement has been widely reported and documented, while the revolutionary characteristic of said movement can be debated. Perhaps testifying to this statement is that although the Chinese terms for the protests, 雨傘革命 and 雨傘運動, yield a near similar amount of results on Google's search engine, the English term Umbrella Movement takes a clear preference over Umbrella Revolution, with more than triple the amount of results. It is possible that the more ambiguous term 'movement' caused this preference in naming. After all, although this movement was prompted by Mainland Chinese government proposed reforms of Hong Kong's electoral system, it has done very little to change the plans of the Mainland government. However, the Umbrella Movement did have one major effect on Hong Kong society; it lastingly politicised its youths and solidified the acknowledgement of an actual political conflict between the people of Hong Kong and the Mainland Chinese government (Che-Po Chan 885). Its aftermath is still very actively developing as this paper is being written, which was a major driving force in its conception. Retrospectively, this political conflict might extend itself over the following decades, or it could fade out in the following years. However, at this moment, there are still daily developments that characterise the 2010s as a decade of political conflict in Hong Kong. These incidents, which will be given a closer look in further passages, are underreported, by international media but even more so by local news outlets; unless another protest, on the scale of the Umbrella Movement, announces itself, the conflict, in its organised form, will likely disappear from public eye. However, given the impending Reunification

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and stricter reforms, often concerned with language policy, it seems quite unlikely that the ongoing student protest will cease rather than grow.

2. Theoretical Framework

Although most of the research towards answering the research question of this paper will be based on distinct findings from primary sources such as social media postings and questionnaires as well as non-academic sources such as news articles, there have been some relevant academic contributions that could benefit the upcoming research. As such, in this section, a brief theoretical framework will be build up from these sources. Three major discourse points will be addressed; the recent Hong Kong-Mainland political issues, the adoption of Mandarin and its relation to Cantonese in Hong Kong and lastly, studies on Hong Kong students and their social media use. Of course, these topics do not exist in a vacuum and will appear throughout the works, to some degree.

2.1 The Hong Kong-Mainland Political Relationship

Firstly, we will return to the Hong Kong-Mainland political relationship and its conflicts. While the historic developments of this controversial kinship have briefly been introduced in the previous section, scholarly analysis of this phenomenon is equally, if not more, relevant, indicating an entirely different framework to be used. Important to note is that the Umbrella Movement not only caused a great surge in international media attention to the conflict between Hong Kong and Mainland China, it also reconvened academic interest to the topic. This becomes sufficiently clear as one attempts to find academic articles and publications on these political relations.

Consequently, a paper like Yew and Kwong's "Hong Kong Identity on the Rise" (2014), published at the end of the original Umbrella Revolution occupy movements, is quite representative for this academic wave. Tracking Hong Kong's relationship with the Mainland and specifically the ultimately failed effort at 'top-down indoctrination' (1089), Yew and Kwong focus their attention on the increase of the Hong Kong identity amongst the people of Hong Kong, juxtaposed with their pan-Chinese sentiment. As the article examines other papers on this topic since the 1997 Handover, it provides a complete overview of the perpetually changing attitudes regarding Mainland influence, or

popularly phrased as 'mainlandisation'. It is argued that the strong and rapid influx of Mainland Chinese politics, education and immigrants oversaturated the minds of Hong Kong's youth, triggering a heavy backlash (1095, 97-98, 1110). Anti-mainlandisation since the adoption of the 'one country, two system' ideology has been driven primarily by the fears of losing civil rights in favour of 'brainwashing propaganda' (1101). In retrospect, it is intriguing to see the authors' commentary on the then ongoing Umbrella Movement as a visible spike of this before mentioned backlash, which could prophesize significant future developments (1109-1111).

On the other side of the conversation, Iam-Chong Ip article "Politics of Belonging: a study of the campaign against Mainland visitors in Hong Kong" (2015) frames the rise of anti-Mainland sentiment and local identity politics through a deeper, more analytical scope with extra emphasis on the hateful ideologies that came along with these developments. Ip is critical of the right wing political groups that have latched onto the growing fear of Hong Kong existing in the shadow of the more and more influential Mainland (411-12). Furthermore, the negative stereotypes of the Mainland Chinese consumer-tourist as perpetuated throughout social media are named and critiqued, including but not limited to the 'locusts', the new rich without moral standards, the uncivilised threat to Hong Kong civil rights infiltrating 'our' society (413-14, 418-19). In one of the quotes Ip has included to highlight this stereotypical view, young Putonghua speaking students are depicted as enforcing a 'cultural cleansing', influencing and contaminating the local youth with their bad behaviour (414). Despite these dramatic testimonies, or perhaps because of them, Ip mentions that Mainland tourism and immigration has declined as political restrictions grow (418). As Hong Kong people fear the socioeconomic 'death' of Hong Kong, dire xenophobia has been normalised in Hong Kong identity politics (419). This article is therefore quite significant as it offers quite the more nuanced, impartial look at the phenomena that will be discussed in this paper.

Following this thematic line, the scholarly article "Discourse, democracy and diplomacy: a pragmatic analysis of the Occupy Central movement in Hong Kong" (2015) by Jacob L. Mey and Hans J. Ladegaard examines the socio-linguistic nature of political conflicts, focusing on the 'language wars' that have led to the term 'democracy' being at the heart of the Mainland-Hong Kong

strained relationship. The authors claim that sociocultural differences between Hong Kong society and Mainland China have a large stake in the conflict; the outcry for 'real democracy' instead of 'democracy with Chinese characteristics' as often heard in local protests illustrates the miscommunication between state and society (320-21). From a variety of different perspectives, including but not limited to the Basic Law, PRC democracy and school curriculum, Ladegaard and Mey bring the issues into perspective (324-30). Consequently, the authors find that only by opening up debate without clinging onto preconceived notions of what exactly 'democracy' entails, a satisfying change can be within reach (331-32).

Naturally, the Umbrella Movement did not exist in a vacuum, nor has it been the only series of protests of its nature. Connecting the Umbrella Movement to other anti-Mainland protests and ideological debate such as the Mong Kok Riot of 2016, or in the international press known better as the Fishball Riot, Ying-ho Kwong's "State-Society Conflict Radicalization in Hong Kong: the Rise of 'Anti-China' Sentiment and Radical Localism" (2016) helps tying together all developments that are relevant to the tensions studied for this paper. Starting with a timeline of recent events even preceding the Umbrella Movement (428-29), Kwong relates the rise in anti-Mainlandisation civil protests to the impatience regarding the soft, placating local government policies regarding the interaction issues between the Hong Kong people and Mainland influence; these half-hearted policies ignored the roots of the problem and allowed for anti-Mainland sentiment to sprout (428-31, 36). So-called 'localism', the radicalist wave of Hong Kong identity politics as also discussed by Iam-Chong Ip, is based on the primary principal that 'Hong Kong should come first', as well as all things associated with Hong Kong identity and culture (437-38). Although not expressly mentioned by Kwong, this too relates to the Cantonese language attachments and Mandarin language rejection as witnessed in recent protest.

Bridging the first topic of this theoretical framework, i.e. the Hong Kong-Mainland political tensions, and the second topic of the Mandarin language adoption and rejection, scholarly works dealing with language, text and visual sources within recent activism are most useful. One of the first academics that wrote on this topic is Sebastian Veg; his article "Creating a Textual Public Space: Slogans and Texts from Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement" (2016) provides ample sources in

Cantonese and Mandarin through translation, as well as English language slogans (675-76). Calling back to Mey and Ladegaard's research, the controversial term 'democracy' is once again extensively mentioned, as well as related concepts (678-79). Concluding from his extensive research, Veg finds that this visual type of protest stirs a self-reflective discourse within Hong Kong politics and society (699-700). Quite peculiar is the author's choice to present the majority of the Traditional Chinese slogans in Mandarin transliteration; only Cantonese specific phrasing and vocabulary uses Cantonese Yale romanisation (675, 677-698).

As a final short addition to this topic, Hope Reidun St. John's visual essay is a compilation of ten pictures illustrating the Umbrella Movement. "Space, Image, and Culture in Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement" (2017) perfectly captures the atmosphere of the protests and is particularly capable of showing the importance of visual support to bring across ideological messages. As protest slogans, flyers and other visuals are quite central to parts of this paper's research, these past two articles offer a great start.

2.2. Language and Identity in Hong Kong

Like the first theme of this theoretical framework, the 'language situation' in Hong Kong is beyond complicated and engrossing. Especially after the 1997 Handover, international academic interest for the linguistic complexities in Hong Kong society grew; after all, the British colony was quite rapidly transformed into a region of China. Two waves of language changes have particularly captivated scholarly discourse; English to Cantonese and Cantonese to Mandarin. First, the abandonment of English as a mode of instruction in favour of the Cantonese language in the majority of local schools was one of the more controversial decisions that came along with the first wave of language policy change. Secondly, the current growing importance and adoption of Mandarin in Hong Kong schools and workplaces, as is the topic of this paper. Interesting is how these two waves differed; whereas the first wave bemoaned the abandonment of the English language, associated with better academic chances than the informal Cantonese language, the current wave fears letting go of this once disdained language in favour of an economic giant of a language, promising ample opportunity (Poon 19-20)

One of the important articles in academic discourse regarding the Hong Kong language situation is Anita Y.K. Poon's historical overview, "Language use, and language policy and planning in Hong Kong" (2010). Poon's article divided in four parts, which respectively summarise Hong Kong's language profile, analyse the spread of languages in Hong Kong's history and present, bring together the details of language policy and planning and finally take a closer look at language attitudes in local youth. In the first place, a major distinction that Poon makes is the difference between the official languages of Hong Kong and the only recently introduced, recently made important national language, i.e. the Mandarin language (10-12). Furthermore, the author reiterates the absence of the Mandarin language in the Hong Kong school curriculum until the Handover, after which interest and prevalence of access to Mandarin language courses grew exponentially (20). Other influences on the language profile of Hong Kong include economic growth, which has been boosting Mandarin proficiency since the 1980s when 'China trade' became internationally sought after (20-21). Finally, socio-political change had an undeniable hand in bringing change in language attitudes regarding the Mandarin language and language promotion (21-22); nevertheless, the Mandarin language never gained much appeal beyond its instrumental value (25). Finally, despite parental pressure increasing Mandarin proficiency amongst local youth (52), the number of native Mandarin speakers in Hong Kong has gradually decreases (53). In her conclusion, Poon makes a prophecy that in the near future, Hong Kong youth would feel more and more positive about the Mandarin language; given the article's age, this has been shown to not be current day reality (55-59).

Looking at the decades before the Handover retrospectively, the research paper "Experimenter language choice and ethnic affirmation by Chinese trilinguals in Hong Kong", published by Michael H. Bond and Man-King Cheung in 1984, was one of the first academic works on language attitudes regarding Mandarin in Hong Kong. Through an experiment, the authors set out to prove that in Chinese trilinguals in Hong Kong, their choice to use a certain language reflects their attitudes (347-49). Using a spectrum ranging from 'strongly Chinese' to 'strongly Westernised' to classify responses, Bond and Cheung ranked the participants based on their attitudes regarding the experimenter speaking Mandarin, Cantonese and English (351-52). Fascinatingly, the results directly

conflicted with their initially proposed hypothesis; while Bond and Cheung expected the participants to reflect a strongly Chinese response to the Mandarin speaker, it in fact stimulated them to respond in a strongly Westernised manner (352-54). Thus, the authors speculated that the participants felt less connection with the Mandarin speaker, culturally, and chose to adopt an attitude directly opposite of this speaker to indicate their belonging to another sociopolitical, ethnic group (353-54). Given the age of this experiment, it is highly useful to indicate the long-time existing rejection of the Mandarin language amongst Hong Kong youth, as well as the association between the Mandarin language and political, cultural stances rooted in identity.

Continuing on this theme in more recent academic discourse, Julie May Groves' article "Language or dialect, topolect or regiolect? A comparative study of language attitudes towards the status of Cantonese in Hong Kong" (2010) addresses the self-reflection of Cantonese speakers and poses the question whether there is a distinction in socio-political attitudes between Cantonese and Mandarin speakers (532). Amongst many results, Groves finds that the majority of Hong Kong people and Mainland Chinese expect Cantonese to never be replaced as the main language of Hong Kong, as well as judging that Cantonese proficiency is essential to Hong Kong identity (539-541). However, it is especially the second research question is quite relevant; as Groves points out, there is a correlation between one's opinion on the status of Cantonese and one's identity, as the language shows exceptionally strong socio-political attitudes being associated with it (546-49).

One author in particular has contributed extensively to this discourse on Hong Kong cultural identity and English-Cantonese-Mandarin language attitudes in Hong Kong is Mee Ling Lai; her articles and contribution should naturally be included in this paper. Articles like "Hong Kong Students' Attitudes Towards Cantonese, Putonghua and English After the Change of Sovereignty." (2001) and the more recent "Cultural Identity and Language Attitudes – into the Second Decade of Postcolonial Hong Kong." (2011) and "Tracking Language Attitudes in Postcolonial Hong Kong: An Interplay of Localization, Mainlandization, and Internationalization." (2012) serve perfectly as a series of academic sources of information on these themes. As her works are self-reflective, it is quite stimulating and informative to see the realisation and the rejection of Lai's proposals, as new data

influences her research. For example, Lai's 2001 study showed the difference in language attitudes and identity between social classes (120-21), which included a greater affinity for the Mandarin language amongst lower class students compared to middle class Hong Kong youth, who preferred the English language (123-28). Despite this, both socioeconomic groups outright preferred the Cantonese language to represent Hong Kong and themselves, while showing a rejection of Mandarin as anything other than a gateway (128-29). Like Anita Y.K. Poon, Lai finds that for local students the Mandarin language carries no feelings of national identity with it; without strict enforcement through governmental policy, it is purely an instrumental language (129).

Subsequently, Lai's 2011 study is set up with a similar purpose, attempting to sound out any changes that have developed in the ten years since her previous study. Amongst these findings are the development of more negative connotations with the word 'Mainland' and the derogatory nature of the term 'Mainlanders', due to increased exposure to immigrant and tourists from Mainland China (254-55, 258-59). Additionally, the respondents have more detailed, expository attitudes regarding the status of the Cantonese language and the Mandarin language; the essential character of Cantonese as a part of identity is stressed again. As one person puts it, "If we change to English or PTH, one of our essential characteristics will disappear, and we shall become westerners' Hong Kong or China's Hong Kong instead of being ourselves" (257-58).

Thus, Mee Ling Lai's 2012 paper was written to finally compare the two studies above and possibly narrow down any clear developments (83). Lai expected to find a greater pride in Cantonese, a greater acceptance of Mandarin and a more negative view of English (87), which were all proven right but the attitude to the English language, which actually became more positive too (97). Summarising her findings, Lai finds that despite a small improvement of the quality of the Mandarin language, it remains ranking last in social status and fondness (97-98). Therefore, Lai expects trilingualism as a likely future possibility rather than the Mandarin language taking over totally (106-108).

A last paper on Hong Kong's socio-political language situation that could contribute to this study, Mingyue Gu's "Language Choice and Identity Construction in Peer Interactions: Insights from

a Multilingual University in Hong Kong" (2010), transcends to the third theme of this theoretical framework by its focus on language use and views of identity in university students. Foreshadowing the Facebook article analysis that will be conducted in this paper, Gu's study focused itself on analysing the differences between the growing group of Mainland students and Hong Kong students at local universities, particularly the manners in which they strengthen their identity. Many of the Mainland students cite a feeling of resentment and alienation coming from the local students, whereas the Hong Kong students are of the opinion that their personal low Mandarin proficiency and lack of common interests is to blame, the latter being echoed by Mainland students as well (21-23). Additionally, Gu finds that many of the Hong Kong students are hesitant to identify with the 'Chinese' identity, as they consider the 'Hong Kong' identity to be superior to the image they have constructed of the Mainland Chinese (23-24). Considering language, the Hong Kong students report having no emotional connection to the Mandarin language and feel ambivalent about using the language, which causes Mainland students from the Guangdong region, i.e. being proficient in both Cantonese and Mandarin, to have a much easier experience fitting in with local students (24-27). In many cases, these Guangdong students purposefully attempt to hide their Mainland status, clearly showing the important relationship between language and identity (27).

It should thus be noted that none of these academic studies on language attitudes regarding Hong Kong's situation have been conducted during or after the events of the Umbrella Movement. Given that this paper will attempt some research in this direction, it should prove to be highly interesting to see any potential deviations from these previous research papers. Moving on, however, the academic research papers selected for this theoretical framework's third theme, studies on Hong Kong students and their social media experiences.

2.3. Students and Social Media

In the first place, Gregory P. Fairbrother's academic novel "Toward Critical Patriotism : Student Resistance to Political Education in Hong Kong and China" (2008) is a pre-Umbrella Movement work on the dimensions involved in the student response to political influence on their education in both Hong Kong and the Mainland. In his chapter on Hong Kong's civic education,

Fairbrother notes the lack of a nationalist, political curriculum until the Handover was formally agreed to; following from the 1980s, a strong emphasis on democratic government systems and civic rights could be found in local courses to ensure Hong Kong's 'legacy' even under Chinese sovereignty (37-42). Furthermore, the comparative chapters of the book which focus nationalist attitudes, perceptions and critical thinking provide a clear view of the great difference that the legacy of Westernisation has had on Hong Kong students. For example, Hong Kong students are less patriotic and attach little feelings of emotion, duty, and fondness to the idea of China as a nation (79-92). Quite significant is Chapter 6's table 6.2, which shows that while Mainland Chinese students find their political attitudes are most strongly influenced by their secondary school education, the majority of Hong Kong students' thought is formed by media agents (94-96). In fact, two national events widely documented in media had a strong effect on shaping the nationalist attitudes and the negative image of Mainland China held by Hong Kong students; the 1997 Handover and the 1989 Tiananmen Square student protest (104-105). Especially the apparent importance of the latter event is highly interesting when put into context with the Umbrella Movement; the great impression of this event on the thought of Hong Kong students might have had a hand in the mental foundation of the recent student protests.

Moving forward beyond the events of the Umbrella Movement, much more critical academic articles can be found focusing particularly on the Hong Kong students and their radical movements. As Che-Po Chan points out in his paper "Post-Umbrella Movement: Localism and Radicalness of the Hong Kong Student Movement" (2016), in the period before the Umbrella Movement, local political student movements relied mostly on peaceful and nonviolent protest which kept them mostly out of the eye of the media, both locally and internationally(885-87). As such, the author argues that the events of 2014 were a key turnaround moment for more radical, direct action with real political effects (886-88). Again, the 1989 Tiananmen student protests and the June Fourth Massacre are cited as an ideological foundation for current day movements of Hong Kong students (887). Most importantly, Chan finds that post-Umbrella Movement, radicalism and localism have become an essential part of Hong Kong's youth identity (891-92, 899-903). This is only further strengthened by social media attention to controversial events and omnipresent tension (892-93), as well as the still growing fear of

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mainlandisation, presented in the form of Mainland tourists and immigrants, political policies and education proposals (894-96). Amongst the most respected of ideological thinkers of the radical localism movement is Horace Chin Wan-kan, who is of the opinion that mainlandisation is in many ways a form of neo-imperialism, out to destroy Hong Kong's identity by promoting the study of the Mandarin language instead of the Cantonese language and replacing the Traditional Chinese characters with the Mainland's Simplified Script (897-98). Consequently, this stresses the awareness of local (student) movements of language policies playing a major role in the 'assimilation process' of Hong Kong and places the Mandarin/Simplified issue at the heart of their political motivations.

A key author in the discourse concerning the Hong Kong student political attitudes and its relation to social media expression and consumption is Michael Chan, who published various scholarly articles on his own and in cooperation with other scholars. "Social Network Sites and Political Engagement: Exploring the Impact of Facebook Connections and Uses on Political Protest and Participation" (2016), which written by Chan alone, applies the proven positive correlation between social media participation and political engagement to post-Umbrella Movement Hong Kong (431-32). As Facebook was particularly useful during the student protests and in many ways responsible for the extent and the longevity of the events (432-34), Chan's research shows that this link between social media usage and political participation especially affects the educated youth of Hong Kong (446-47).

Pooling together his research with Hsuan-Ting Chen and Francis L. F. Lee, Chan published a comparative study between Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Mainland on this same theme. "Social media use and democratic engagement: a comparative study of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China" (2016) builds upon the above findings of Chan's earlier study, but place them in the international environment of political student protest for democratic values across East Asia. While most of the findings suggest that Hong Kong's experience is quite similar to the data on Taiwan and even the controlled social media usage of Mainland China, Hong Kong's youth has access to a significantly larger and more diverse and heterogeneous social network than their peers in the other regions, which in turn correlated a stronger offline social engagement with political issues (362-63).

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Finally, through Chan's cooperation with Xueqing Li for the academic article "Comparing social media use, discussion, political trust and political engagement among university students in China and Hong Kong: an application of the O–S–R–O–R model" (2017), it is proposed that Hong Kong's current political situation is both helped by and actively helping the political debate and social media participation of local students, more so than the current events of Mainland China (76-77). However, whereas in the Mainland there is a negative correlation between political trust and online information exposure, no similar direct influence was found in the Hong Kong data. Instead, while online presence did correspond to political engagement, both negative and positive opinions of local politics were fed by this income of information through social networking (75-76).

In conclusion, through discussion of the above three themes in the form of a theoretical framework, a solid, extensive foundation has been created with which the original research in the following sections will be supported. Supported by information on the Hong Kong-Mainland political relationship and its conflicts, ample sources on the language situation in Hong Kong and finally, some insight in the political attitudes of Hong Kong students and their social media participation, this theoretical framework will allow for a greater interaction with existing academic discourse that will ultimately prove to be beneficial to bringing this paper to a satisfying answer.

3. News Article Analysis

Despite social networks having been shown to influence the youth of Hong Kong more so than traditional media sources such as newspapers and television broadcasts, it would be very interesting to see exactly what kind of image these media broadcasters create of the Mandarin language in relation to political localism and student movements. Now, for this section, a useful mix of English language and Chinese language sources will be analysed, all of these articles centred on the language issues in Hong Kong.

Firstly, an illuminating news article was published by the Epoch Times during the events of the Umbrella Movement. It should be noted that the Epoch Times is a New York based newspaper, ran primarily by Chinese-Americans and relying on Chinese sources, documenting news

developments centred on China and its issues with the infringement and protection of human rights. Access to its websites are blocked in the Mainland, due to the news outlet's open anti-communist stance; this political stance naturally influences the article which will be examined now. Published in Chinese with the headline "「遮打」為何令中共驚懼？粵語是關鍵", the article is already highly interesting just from the initial look. As was explained before, the term 雨傘革命/雨傘運動 is used most commonly in media to refer to the Umbrella Movement. However, the headline of this paper uses the original, uniquely Cantonese naming, i.e. 遮打, to refer to the event. The character 遮, which would usually be translated as 'obstruction' or 'cover', has an additional, older meaning of 'umbrella' in Cantonese and Hakka. Combined with the character 打, a widely applicable character used commonly with hitting motions and attacking actions, the word 遮打 uses a resolute play on words directly linked to the Cantonese language to represent a political movement. As the article headline says, 'the Cantonese language is key' in the Umbrella Movement 'frightening the CCP'. This becomes further clear as one reads the article's content; the author 'Sally' argues that the Cantonese language is used often throughout the protest to give off a strong, additional message:

"因此，雨傘運動口號中頻繁和故意地使用「遮」等粵語詞組，象徵著香港人不只是抵制共產黨的政治價值觀，也要保衛香港鮮明的文化特徵，要保衛他們的歷史。"

"Therefore, the frequent and intentional use of Cantonese phrases such as "遮" in the slogans of the Umbrella Movement symbolises that Hong Kong people not only resist the political values of the CCP, but also defend Hong Kong's distinctive cultural features and defend their history."

Quoting various academics in Hong Kong and the West, such as Victor Mair, George Chen and Ho Liming, the author compiles a strong case for the importance of language issues and attitudes regarding the status of the Cantonese language in Hong Kong. Both these researchers stress the importance of social media in defending Hong Kong as a Cantonese stronghold; suddenly, the

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language has been used exponentially. Finally, George Chen is quoted again, pointing out a final play on words, only understandable to Cantonese speakers. The slogan '冇民主 冇公義', translatable as 'no democracy, no justice', uses the character 冇, meaning 'to not have' or the opposite of 有. Not only does this character not exist in Standard Mandarin, it is a very visual representation of the emptiness or lack of democracy and justice the movements are protesting.

Even moving forward two years after the events of the Umbrella Movement, the sensitivities regarding the Cantonese language's position being endangered by the more and more used Mandarin language have not disappeared from the public eye. The news outlet Hong Kong Free Press, a free press English language alternative to Mainland owned English newspapers in Hong Kong and once again banned in Mainland China, was one of the few sources to report on the controversial 'Mandarin first' speech held at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. As is explained in the article headlined "CUHK students slam university chief's 'Mandarin first' congregation speech", the university's vice-chancellor's decision to hold his congregation speech in Mandarin before Cantonese and English led to a plethora of critique from the CUHK students. As I was personally attending the university while this occurred, I can recall the tense atmosphere around campus and on social media in the following days. Additionally, the author of the news article, Kris Cheng, points out the political protest which was already silently held on this graduation day, regarding a governmental decision concerning interpretation of the Basic Law. Thus, it is significant that these same protesting student unions responded as such; this choice of language order was seen as a political expression in favour of Mainland China. Clearly, a link was made between language and politics; at least for these students of CUHK, the Mandarin language reflects a political stance.

Although the South China Morning Post is the prime example of the before mentioned Mainland Chinese owned news outlets which are criticised for their subjectivity, the same 'singular perspective' criticism could be used for the news articles that have thus far been covered. Conversely, the use of sources employing different perspectives on the political situation between Hong Kong and Mainland China helps to create a more neutral overview. In the first months of 2018, student protest at the Hong Kong Baptist University regarding the rejection of the compulsory Mandarin course exam

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requirement was reported multiple times by the South China Morning Post, as the story developed. A first article that explains the intricacies of the protest is "How a compulsory Mandarin course caused chaos at Hong Kong Baptist University" by Peace Chiu, the same author who would write the other two articles on this topic. Frustration over the necessity of Mandarin proficiency in order to be able to graduate lead a group of students demanding a dialogue with university staff, through an eight hour protest. Even in the article, the chaos surrounding this Mandarin proficiency test is linked to separatist movements active on campus and general anti-Mainland sentiment throughout Hong Kong society. Subsequently, the two leaders of the protest were suspended, which is talked about in the second article, "Hong Kong Baptist University relents, agrees to review suspensions over Mandarin protest", as school officials debated about lifting the suspension, which they would ultimately do after a week. Chiu alludes to 'the public' having an influence on this decision; online response to the situation was intensely negative and actually exacerbated the issue by placing the Mandarin language course and following suspension in the Mainland China discourse. Thus, it is feasible to see that a month after these above events, student unions in all of Hong Kong's universities added the incident to their politically driven agenda. "Hong Kong Baptist University student union hopeful has 'no bottom line', vows to continue Mandarin fight", the final article on these events, highlights one of the student union leaders clearly following through on her decision to rid the university's degrees of this mandatory Mandarin test as part of her fight for democracy and independence. These concepts are very representative of the issues with the Hong Kong-Mainland political relationship and are hereby linked to Chinese language issues.

Finally, two recent articles concerning Hong Kong's language issues will now be analysed, both written as response pieces to the Hong Kong government's Education Bureau publishing an article stating Cantonese as a dialect, rather than a 'mother tongue' in May 2018. Essentially, the concept of a mother tongue is a very strong, integral part of one's identity. Thus, this official endorsement warrants much criticism from those who do consider Cantonese to be their mother tongue, with which they identify themselves as a 香港人.

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First, the article "【粵語非母語？】曾鈺成：若普通話才是港人標準母語　母語教學要用普通話教所有科", posted by the politically outspoken news outlet the Stand News in Cantonese. Given their concern and involvement with a variety of liberal social issues, the direct and imperative tone of the article is quite noticeable, even in translation. Issue is taken with the Board of Education's stance, as well as the significant backing it has received from government official, including the former chairman of Hong Kong's legislative council. Additionally, the author reflects negatively on the 'mother tongue paper' citing the expertise of many Mainland scholars and government officials, who advocate for a greater and more essential role of the Mandarin language in Hong Kong's education. A key argument of the news article is the significant effect that this paper will have on Hong Kong society; this is a realistic concern, given the official status it has already achieved thus far.

Likewise, the second article "Cantonese a dialect, not a mother tongue, says Hong Kong Education Bureau supporting material on Mandarin", shares similar critiques with the first article. Written for the Hong Kong Free Press by Kris Cheng, like the earlier article on the CUHK congregation speech, the intent of the writing is clear from the start. The headline does not leave much open for interpretation; the Cantonese language is deliberately 'devalued' by the Hong Kong Education Bureau, whose agenda is aimed at furthering the Mandarin language's position, as Cheng would argue. As the author points out, this is not an isolated incident, as the Education Bureau has once before referred to Cantonese as a 'Chinese dialect not considered an official language', before promoting the Mandarin language as a gateway to economic growth and closer ties between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Again, there is support for the significance of this collusion between politics, e.g. the Hong Kong Education Bureau and the relationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland, and the attitudes concerning the status and role of the Cantonese language as opposed to the Mandarin language.

Furthermore, the comment section of this last Hong Kong Free Press news article is perhaps a good bridge between this section and the next. Social networking consumption and response to this type of article creates a strong, yet divided image; with those protesting the article making a direct statement of about Mainland Chinese socio-political influence tainting Hong Kong's unique identity

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and culture, whereas the more neutral, thus 'agreeing', comments claim this is 'politicising a purely linguistic issue'. Language is at the heart of identity politics, as becomes clear through the largely varying responses conveying into intense discourse. As the choice between identifying as Hong Kong people or Chinese first remains controversial and political, the language that one chooses to form part of their being correspondingly remains up for much discussion, in social circles, online media and academic works.

4. Facebook Video Analysis

As we now move on to the next section, the sources that will be analysed are quite the opposite from the traditional media of the previous section. As discussed briefly in the past sections of this paper, many of Hong Kong's youth have turned to social media and alternative news outlets for local events that are purposefully underreported by state-owned media. One of these alternative news organisations is Social Record Association, or better known as SocREC, whose duty it is to 'report Hong Kong's social issues in a free format', distributed through their official website or their Facebook page. The latter was created in 2010 and is currently subscribed to by over 200.000 accounts, made up of mostly local Hong Kong Chinese. These include nearly all of my personal acquaintances in Hong Kong; this is interesting given that many of them I would describe as not at all politically active. When I inquired one of these acquaintances, a young female student, about her interest in this news outlet, she replied that to many of her friends and to herself, it was not necessarily a political reason that drove them to subscribe to such Facebook groups; rather, she felt that this was a most casual way to stay informed on daily issues that often don't reach national news.

All their posts, on both Facebook and their website, are in Cantonese, as well as the majority of the comments left by Facebook users. Thus, the following section involves for the most part texts in translation. Even aided by native Cantonese speakers, some of the comments provided a challenge; since casual Cantonese as used on social media and found in comment sections is a mostly spoken language rather than a standardised, written language, errors such as the use of wrong Chinese characters or using unrelated characters to convey an informal expression added a certain difficulty. However, this could also be considered a distinct quality of Cantonese on its own; the unique

expressions and word choices that distinguish Hong Kong Cantonese from the so-called 'Standard Chinese'.

Out of all of SocREC's Facebook posts, one of the more shared and interacted with posts is the video of an altercation between local Hong Kong students and a Mainland Chinese student at the campus of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In the three minute long video, a girl is filmed pulling down posters advocating for an independent Hong Kong. Once noticing the camera, the girl starts speaking in Mandarin to the surrounding students, who at first attempt to speak to her in Cantonese; as it becomes clear none of them can communicate with each other through the different languages, the Hong Kong student switches to speaking in English, which the Mainland Chinese girl follows.

Recalling the prevalence of the word democracy as an ambiguous, misunderstood concept which leads to never ending debate of semantics between the people of Hong Kong and the Mainland Chinese government, this recorded altercation could be considered a localised, miniature representation of larger issues. As soon as the words 'democracy wall' are brought up by the Hong Kong student, the Mainland girl approach significantly changes, from timid to assertive;

> *"Yeah yeah yeah, you can put it up, I can like, put it down, okay?"*
>
> (0:00:23-0:00:27)

Clearly disagreeing with this statement, the Hong Kong student suggests that, instead of censoring the voice of the pro-independence posters put up by the CUHK student union, the Mainland Chinese girl ought to create a poster with her opinion and put it up herself. Simplifying the issue at hand in the video, one could say that for the Hong Kong students democracy means the right to voice one's opinion, allowing for a plurality of diverse opinions that could oppose each other. However, for the Mainland Chinese girl, the concept of democracy is "you can put it up, I can put it down". Judging by this behaviour, the girl's idea of democracy is based on the presence of censorship of opposing opinions, as she has no problem removing something "which she does not approve of".

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While the analysis of this short video on its own is already largely fascinating as it allows for an ample application of academic theory, its social media presence truly connects this debate on democracy as a right of Hong Kong people to language issues. The Facebook video was featured in most of the articles detailing the altercation, viewed nearly half a million times and shared over two thousand times on Facebook alone, with nearly four thousand 'like' or emotion based responses to the original post. Like the sheer majority of 'angry' emoji being chosen, the comment section features strong debates and statements, speaking for or against the actions of the students. Noteworthy is the overwhelming amount of mentions regarding their language choice and use, of which four representative comments which be featured now, ordered by amount of responses.

Betty ▮▮▮▮
第一，勿嘢叫you don't approve it..！就算你系度讀書，你都無權斯爛學生會嘅通告或其他文宣，呢個系禮貌，規舉，不過蠻夷系唔會明嘅！呢個行為可能被視為刑事毀壞或破壞公物，抄底呢個不知所謂嘅學生資料，出封警告信，話保留追究權利！唔好同我講民主，話"學生會可以貼，我就可以拆"呢的無意議嘅廢話！甘叻返中國講民主呀！唔好同我講英文，黎度香港，廣東話都學唔到都唔好黎讀書，講完！

"First of all, don't yell "you don't approve it..!" Even if you are studying (= are a student), you do not have the right to tear down the student's notices or other announcements, it is being polite and it's the rules, however these barbarians don't understand! (This) act may be regarded as criminal damage or destroying public property, copy the so-called student's information, send a warning letter, retain the right to pursue (her)! Don't talk to me about democracy, saying "the student union can put it up, I can pull it down" is insignificant nonsense! "Oh so sweet, clever girl", return to China for democracy! Don't speak English to me, this is Hong Kong, if you can't learn Cantonese don't come study here, I am done talking!"

Out of all Facebook commentary, this particular comment was outright the most 'popular'; it should be noted that this could be because of the direct nature and intensity that 'Betty' used to formulate her opinion. Additionally, Betty makes use of very colloquial, at times untranslatable Cantonese phrases and wording. In a way, this Betty accurately represents the 'average' Hong Kong

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person's angry voice in the crowd, which on Facebook usually means more radical and politically dissatisfied. Her vocabulary use indicates a fair presence of anti-Mainland sentiment. Additionally, the suggestion for the girl to return to the Mainland is in a simple form the suggestion to 'go back where you came from and see how that lack of democracy work for you'. This is especially strengthened by the use of the phrase "甘叻", a highly specific Hong Kong show reference used to mock people. Furthermore, Betty is one of the many commenters to bring up the girl's inability to understand the Cantonese spoken by the Hong Kong students. As Betty puts it, "don't speak English to me, this is Hong Kong, if you can't learn Cantonese don't come study here"; this strongly indicates the inherent quality of being able to speak the Cantonese language to being a part of Hong Kong society, at least in the eyes of social networkers.

Leo▇▇▇
其實唔駛刻意陪佢講英文，支那人係香港唔敢講匪語就以為英文大晒。係香港永遠齋講番廣東話就ok, 佢識聽就聽唔識聽話之佢! 千祈唔好亦毋須俾佢地帶左去另一領域，佢講匪語就話唔識聽!

同埋大家記得呢度所有留言，集益廣思下次用黎對付支那   😆😍 331

"Actually, don't intentionally speak English with them, the Chinese think that knowing English in Hong Kong is a big deal. You should always speak Cantonese in Hong Kong, if someone doesn't understand, let them be! Don't let those Mandarin people drag you to another region or culture, if they speak in Mandarin just reply with 'no, I don't understand'! (...)"

Another commentator, 'Leo', focuses entirely on the languages used throughout the video. Firstly, this comment at least hints at what the previous comment did not, i.e. the Hong Kong students being the first to switch to English. Following, Leo echoes the same claim as Betty; "you should always speak Cantonese in Hong Kong". Interestingly, according to Leo, Mainland Chinese use the English language to 'evade' having to speak Cantonese and actually think it reflects well on them. However, it is significant that the commentator sees Mainlanders speaking the Mandarin language as a form of 'dragging' Hong Kong people away from their region and culture. Again, this confirms the

political Hong Kong-Mainland and Cantonese-Mandarin conceived binaries as being related to some degree.

> **Andrew** ▊▊▊▊▊
> 首先 香港學生 英文真係好差， 英文唔得就應該用廣東話 ， 因為呢個係香港 ，要同個大陸落嚟嘅學生講 佢而家係刑事毀壞別人嘅財物 ，佢有權 發表 佢嘅言論，但係方權 撕毀 別人嘅財物
>
> 👍😠 147

"First of all, the English of the Hong Kong students is very poor. If you cannot speak English, then you should speak Cantonese, because this is Hong Kong, I actually would like to tell the other Mainland students to go home and destroy other people's property (there), they have the right to publish remarks, but not the right to tear up other's property."

'Andrew' reconfirms, again, the above statements. Unique though are his notes on the English ability of the local students, which was not brought up by any other commentators. This leads him to advise for Hong Kong people to remain speaking Cantonese. Furthermore, second part of this post suggests a larger, more general prejudice regarding Mainland Chinese students and possibly all Mainland Chinese. As Andrew sees this Mainland Chinese student's behaviour as being representative of all other students like her and at the same time seeing Cantonese as essential to Hong Kong identity, his analysis of the video is quite socio-political.

> **Xiaobei** ▊▊▊▊▊
> 一群港毒连视频都没看明白,就在这里评论,都不害臊吗?白衣女开始讲国语,而学生会那个女的讲粤语,两者不能交流,然后学生会那个女的先讲英文,而后白衣女子才讲英文辩论。另外声明一下: 香港是中国的一部分,永远都是! 港毒们,你们的那些觉得自己高人一等的港毒请滚出中国香港! 还有, 民主 跟 分裂国家是两个不相干的事情,别打着民主旗号搞分裂中国,我也欣赏香港民主 ,希望大陆将来也更民主,但香港永远属于中国国土,这点港毒要牢记!
>
> 👍❤️😆 114

"These Hong Kong 'pro-Independence supporters' start to comment before even understanding the context of the video. Aren't they ashamed of their comments? The girl in white talks in Mandarin first while the girl from the student association speaks in Cantonese and they cannot communicate. The student changes to English first and then the lady in white also speaks English. Disclaimer: Hong Kong is part of China and will always be! Hong Kong

'pro-Independence supporters' who feel they are superior, leave Hong Kong, China! Also, democracy and dividing the country are two unrelated things, don't fight China under the guise of democracy, I also appreciate Hong Kong's democracy and I hope that the Mainland will be more democratic in the future, but Hong Kong will always belong to China's national territory, remember that Hong Kong 'pro-Independence supporters'!"

For the final comment, one of the few Mandarin language responses was chosen, to represent another perspective. 'Xiaobei', her name being immediately indicative of her 'identity', responds not only to the events in the video, but primarily responds to the other commentators on the Facebook post. In the first place, one of the terms she uses multiple times is highly distinctive; '港毒', which was translated as Hong Kong 'pro-Independence supporters'. At suggestion of a native Mandarin speaker, this translation was chosen as it is what the term represents; however, the literal translation would be Hong Kong poison, or a reference to a harmful drug like the word 毒品. Thus, Xiaobei indicates her dissatisfaction with the harmful influence that the anti-Mainland sentiment found in the other Facebook posts brings along. Similar to the stereotypical, negative slurs employed in Cantonese to refer to the Mainland Chinese or the Mainland political influence, this 'Hong Kong poison' is like a growing epidemic, with the term being used quite harshly on the internet ("港毒." 伪基百科). Likewise, Xiaobei reiterates multiple times China's sovereignty over the Hong Kong territory, which even further indicates an anti-separatist political attitude. Nevertheless, Xiaobei does claim to be pro-democracy, in Hong Kong and the Mainland; this does not have to go in hand with anti-Mainland political movements.

Consequently, this Facebook video and the subsequent array of commentary provide enough material to conclude this as a case study of social media attitudes regarding the Hong Kong-Mainland political relationship and the language usage in socio-political conflicts. In all four of these comments, there seems to be a definite correlation between the commentators' reaction to the video's content, the essential role that the Cantonese language has in Hong Kong society and thus identity, as well as the association between the Mandarin language and the Mainland Chinese student(s). Hopefully, these findings should give a good support to the following survey analysis.

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5. Survey Analysis

As extensively discussed in the previous sections of this paper, the opinion of the Hong Kong youth and others involved in this social unrest is vital to reaching a satisfying answer to the research question. Exactly how do those at the frontlines of the conflict perceive the political situation of Hong Kong and the Mainland, the role and status of the Mandarin language, the simplified Chinese script and all other factors involved in this paper? Answering these questions is thus a necessary step towards the real life application of the previous arguments and analyses. Due to limited circumstances, a more practical online survey was opted for. Limiting the survey to a maximum length of five minutes and allowing for anonymous answering, this lowers the entrance bar for many online would-be respondees. Alas, asking for longer responses and more in depth questions would yield far too little responses and would shy away those who choose to answer surveys out of curiosity instead of an academic itch. Consequently, the following survey format was adopted, using a combination of multiple choice questions and a single open question;

Mainland presence and the Mandarin language in Hong Kong - Opinion Survey

This survey requires less than 5 minutes to complete. Answers will be analysed anonymously.

* Required

Age *
O 12-17
O 18-22
O 23-30
O 30+

Gender *
O Male
O Female
O Other

Ethnicity *

O Hong Kong Chinese

O Mainland Chinese

O Chinese (other)

O Mixed race (partial Chinese)

O Other

Language Proficiency *

	Native	Fluent	Good	Poor	No proficiency
Mandarin					
Cantonese					
English					

Word Association - What connotation do these concepts have to you? *

	Positive	Negative	No opinion
Mainland China			
Hong Kong			
Independence			
Reunification			
One Country, Two Systems			
Umbrella Movement			
Mandarin language			
Cantonese language			
Simplified Chinese			
Traditional Chinese			
Social media			

Statement: Cantonese and Mandarin should both be equally important languages in Hong Kong society *

O Agree, both should be equally important

O Disagree, Cantonese should be more important

O Disagree, Mandarin should be more important

O It does not matter

O Other: _____

Have you noticed any anti-Mainland sentiment in your social sphere? *

O Yes, both in real life interaction and on social media such as Facebook

O Yes, in real life interaction

O Yes, on social media such as Facebook

O No, I have not noticed any anti-Mainland sentiment whatsoever

O Other: _____

Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 - Articles shared on Facebook

CUHK students slam university chief's 'Mandarin first' congregation speech | Hong Kong Free Press HKFP
Student unions of seven colleges and a student senator of the Chinese University of Hong Kong have issued a joint statement criticising its vice-chancellor, who chose to give a...
HONGKONGFP.COM

Student who tore down independence posters praised and vilified
Youngster so scared since video surfaced that she hid for a day, she says
SCMP.COM

Did the above articles at some point appear on your social media feed? *

O Yes

O No

Please briefly share your opinion of the above two pictures/articles (~2 sentence)

_____

For two of the multiple choice questions, respondees who felt the given answers did not reflect their own opinions, could opt to answer with their own unique addition, i.e. 'other, _____'. This option was chosen a few times and these additional answers will be reflected upon in the answer analysis of this paper.

Naturally, before being able to gather the responses to a survey, one must distribute said survey in one way or another. The method of distribution, the context of the invitation and the domains where respondees will find the survey will influence the answers that the survey will receive. This is a natural flaw in all surveys, whether online or physical, that cannot be prevented. However, one can take into account this bias and, given one's awareness, use it as an additional strength to power the validity of the survey. In this particular situation, the survey was distributed in a variety of manners and appeared on multiple platforms. Although in an ideal situation, this survey would have been distributed through the social media groups of the universities of Hong Kong, such as the official Facebook student groups Hong Kong University or the Chinese University of Hong Kong. However, there are many ways in which this was not possible or would create additional response bias. Firstly, these universities are not welcoming of such discussion of Hong Kong's political situation, outright banning discussion on Hong Kong independence or anti-Mainland attitudes in most cases, as has been discussed in previous sections. Other options, such as distribution to private Facebook groups of politically active Hong Kong youths would reflect a limited and more singular opinion given the nature of the group. In both cases, the platform of distribution would shape the results. Possibly, my identity as a Western student analysing a Hong Kong conflict might also influence the willingness of some would-be respondees to contribute to the survey. Consequently, given all these obstacles, more

neutral grounds would benefit the survey. In the first place, I contacted Hong Kong friends I had

accumulated in the past and reached out to them to contribute personally to the survey, as well as

distributing the survey in their own friend circles, reaching people that would have been beyond my

access in any other situation. Although this hopefully yielded more diverse responses, the primary

domain of distribution was the platform Reddit, a social discussion website. The plethora of

subreddits, i.e. discussion categories, which are represented make it a well visited site that is viable

for the numerous surveys that are posted on the fora. The subreddit 'Hong Kong', which is currently

subscribed to by over 50.000 redditors, posts discussions ranging from travel and food

recommendations, to Hong Kong political and social issues discussion, to popular and commercial

media consumption. With a barebones description, the survey was posted on this subreddit, which

contributed largely to the responses. Lastly, an invitation to the survey was circulated on the informal

social media website Tumblr, which mostly targets youths. Thus, the survey was plenty distributed,

on diverse platforms not particularly affiliated with Hong Kong political groupings or education. In

the end, the survey was met with eighty responses, a number great enough to derive precise

information from.

The first four questions of the survey, i.e. age, gender, ethnicity and language proficiency, are

introductory questions; they do not require much critical thinking for the respondees, yet provide the

fundamental tools to analyse the response. Age, of course, is relevant as it reflects one's position in

society and in this case especially, one's relation to Hong Kong's political conflicts of the past few

years. The categories are deliberately chosen to reflect secondary education (12-17), early young adult

potentially starting academic education (18-22), young adult in the workforce or postgraduate (23-30),

and lastly those beyond the category 'youth' (30+) though active on social media platforms. The

response to the gender question consists of three options; the male-female binary as well as an 'other'

option, for those not conforming to the gender binary or those not willing to share their gender

identity. Furthermore, the ethnicity categories might be the most politically loaded. As has been

researched in previous studies, like Jiang, Li and Steinhardt's "The Identity Shift in Hong Kong since

1997: Measurement and Explanation" (2017), the term with which one identifies oneself is quite

ambiguous in Hong Kong society. While most Hong Kong people will refer to oneself in Cantonese as 香港人 *heunggongyahn*, or literally translated 'Hong Kong people', the exact word chosen in English remains a conundrum, carrying a significant political meaning ("你會稱自己為 香港人" *HKU POP Site* 2018). Thus, a person of (partial) Chinese background living in Hong Kong could arguably choose any of the categories provided in the survey. However, it is exactly the choice to identify with one of these options that is relevant to the survey results. Finally, respondees are asked to give information on their language proficiency, ranging their proficiency in Mandarin, Cantonese and English from 'no proficiency' to 'native'. One's proficiency in Mandarin or Cantonese is naturally vital to one's perception of the language, as well as being indicative of one's exposure to the languages.
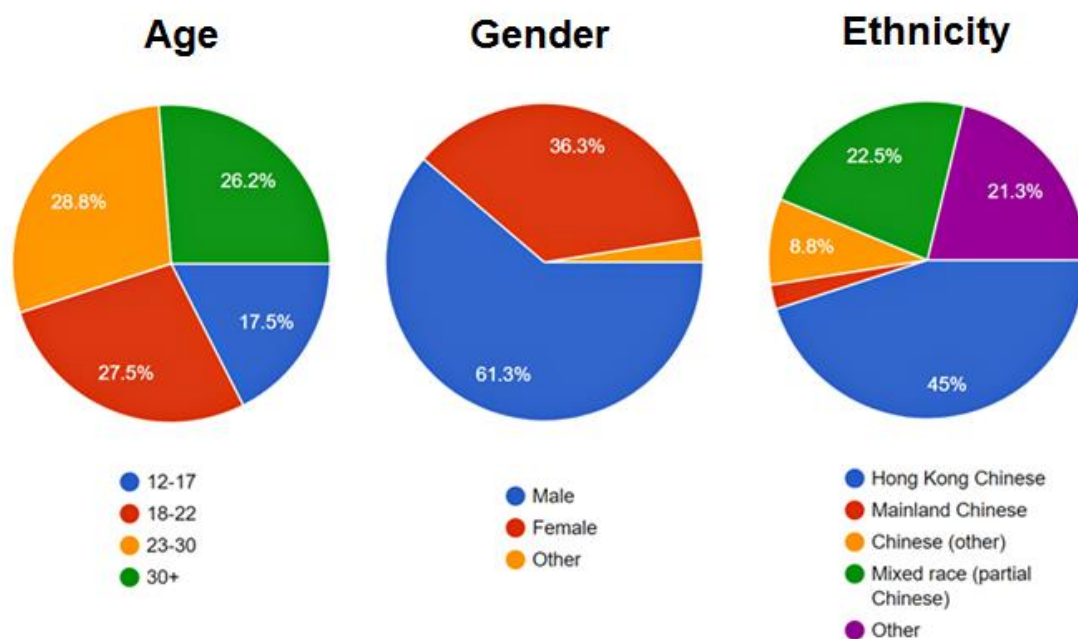

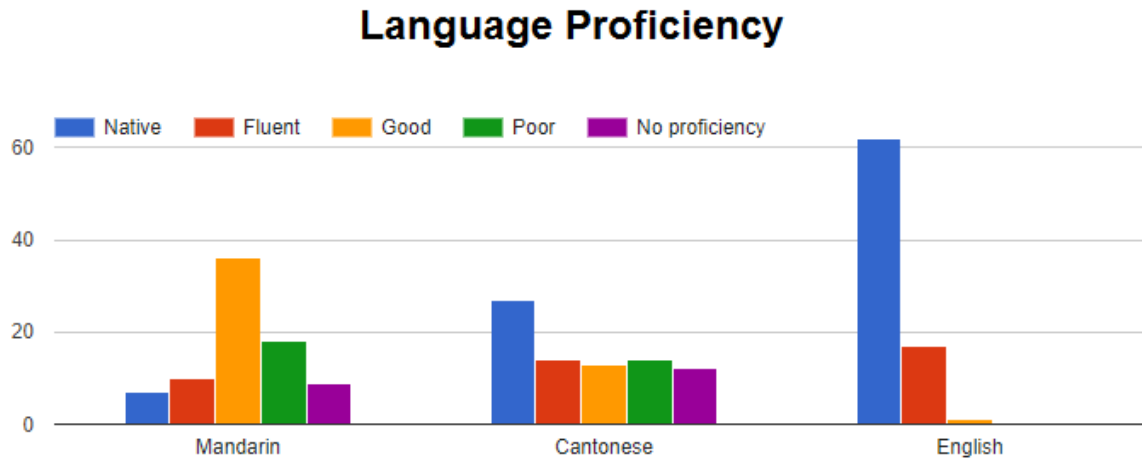Fig. 3 – Distribution of Age, Gender and Ethnic Group

Language Proficiency

Fig. 4 – Language Proficiency

As can be seen in first graph, almost ¾ of the respondents are aged under thirty. In general, there is a good balance between the age categories. In terms of gender, however, there is some imbalance in distribution as male respondents make up for 61.3% of the total. This is likely due to the platforms of distribution having a small gender imbalance in the first place. Still, the ratio is not disconcerting enough to significantly skew the results of this survey. Finally, the ethnic distribution of the respondees shows some diversity; almost eighty percent of the respondees identify as at least partially Chinese, with Hong Kong Chinese accounting for most and only two respondees identifying as Mainland Chinese. This ethnic profile is quite appropriate for the survey, as it puts the emphasis on the experiences of Hong Kong Chinese people, yet also allows for a more diverse perspective.

Furthermore, the language proficiency bar graph indicates that most of the respondees, i.e. 62 respondees, evaluate their English proficiency at native level; as Cantonese native proficiency is also indicated by 27 respondents, there is some overlap. Interesting as well is that there are more native Mandarin speakers than there are respondees identifying as Mainland Chinese, possibly indicating respondents from countries such as Taiwan or Singapore, or perhaps Western/Hong Kong diaspora. Overall, most Hong Kong people should have some Mandarin proficiency due to mandatory school subjects and workplace requirements (Bauer 107); this possibly accounts for most of the 'good' and 'poor' level Mandarin speakers.

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Moving on from these introductory questions, the survey becomes more concerned with the respondees' actual opinion and assessment of Hong Kong's political situation in relation to the Mainland and the Mandarin language. The first of this line of question is the deliberately simple 'word association' table, asking the respondee to answer with their opinion on eleven concepts.
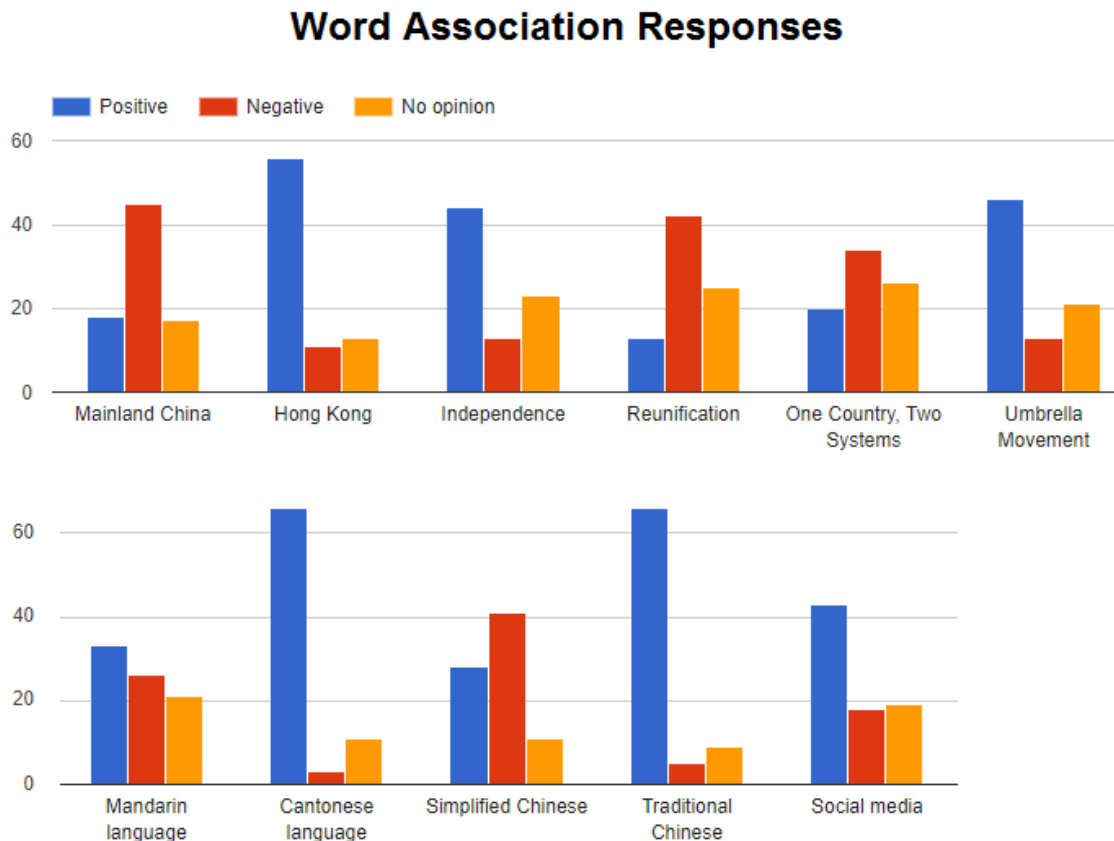

Fig. 5 – Word Association Response Graphs

While on their own, these results are already plentiful significant; for example, it shows that an overwhelming amount of respondents feel very positively about Hong Kong, the Cantonese language and the Traditional Chinese script. Furthermore, the concepts 'independence', 'Umbrella Movement' and 'social media' also received a large amount of positive responses. On the other hand, the concepts 'Mainland China', 'Reunification', 'One Country, Two Systems' and 'Simplified Chinese' find themselves ranked mostly negatively. This response is in line with the expected perception as showcased in previous sections of this paper. One thing that stands out quite strongly is the largely contested opinion on the Mandarin language that is found in the results. This can further be

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illustrated by the following table, which demonstrates the standard deviation of the answers, thus the disagreement amongst the respondents;

Standard deviation	
Mainland China	0.745
Hong Kong	0.613
Independence	0.674
Reunification	0.669
One country, two systems	0.701
Umbrella Movement	0.676
Mandarin language	0.753
Cantonese language	0.351
Simplified Chinese	0.858
Traditional Chinese	0.392
Social Media	0.739

Fig. 6 – Standard Deviation Table

These results further strengthen the display of answers above; while there is a general agreement on the positive response to the Cantonese language and the Traditional Chinese script, by far the most contested categories are the Mandarin language and the Simplified Chinese script. In fact, the latter has the largest deviation of the eleven concepts. This will be attempted to explain by further analysis.

While the results above show only the total perception of all respondents per category, it is even more significant to analyse how each concept correlates to each other. As it possible to see how each respondent answered to the concepts individually, there can be created a more all-encompassing image of the respondents. For example, while this is not visible in the graphs above, there might be a correlation between respondees feeling negatively about Mainland China and positively about Hong Kong. As the hypothesis of this paper relies heavily on correlation between language perception and political perception, demonstrating such a correlation is vital to reaching a satisfying answer. For this reason, the following table of correlations was created;

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	Mainland China	Hong Kong	Independence	Reunification	One country, two systems	Umbrella Movement	Mandarin language	Cantonese language	Simplified Chinese	Traditional Chinese	Social media
Mainland China	x	-0.059	-0.316	0.597	0.081	-0.301	0.595	-0.147	0.477	-0.039	0.083
Hong Kong	-0.059	x	0.105	-0.248	0.084	0.378	-0.141	0.583	-0.183	0.178	0.275
Independence	-0.316	0.105	x	-0.285	-0.199	0.403	-0.111	0.325	-0.036	0.011	0.047
Reunification	0.597	-0.248	-0.285	x	0.145	-0.379	0.383	-0.244	0.409	-0.057	-0.081
One country, two systems	0.081	0.084	-0.199	0.145	x	-0.149	-0.051	0.191	0.029	0.160	0.007
Umbrella Movement	-0.301	0.378	0.403	-0.379	-0.149	x	-0.250	0.270	-0.266	0.205	0.116
Mandarin language	0.595	-0.141	-0.111	0.383	-0.051	-0.250	x	0.014	0.658	-0.009	0.050
Cantonese language	-0.147	0.583	0.325	-0.244	0.191	0.270	0.014	x	-0.021	0.320	0.103
Simplified Chinese	0.477	-0.183	-0.036	0.409	0.029	-0.266	0.658	-0.021	x	-0.274	-0.083
Traditional Chinese	-0.039	0.178	0.011	-0.057	0.160	0.205	-0.009	0.320	-0.274	x	0.192
Social Media	0.083	0.275	0.047	-0.081	0.007	0.116	0.050	0.103	-0.083	0.192	x

Fig. 7 – Table of Correlation

For those unfamiliar with R, i.e. Pearson Correlation, it indicates correlation between data, with a spectrum between -1, i.e. negative correlation, and 1, i.e. positive correlation. A perfect one, positive or negative, or perfect zero are realistically impossible to find in different data. For this survey, given that these are not absolute numbers but rather psychological perceptions, an R of (-)0.7 is a most significant correlation. However, any R between (-)0.3 and (-)0.7 can be considered indicative of a correlation.

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Following from this, it can be deduced from the table that neither the concepts of 'social media' nor 'One Country, Two Systems' show any significant correlation with the other concepts. That is to say, whether the respondee felt positive or negative about social media has no noteworthy influence on their feelings about the Mandarin language or the Umbrella Movement. Moreover, the concepts that correlate most strongly in the table are 'Mandarin language' and 'Simplified Chinese', at an R of 0.658. This should come as no surprise, as these are quite commonly associated with each other, which is the primary reason of including the Simplified Chinese script as a part of this paper's research question.

For the purpose of this paper, the respective correlations between Hong Kong and the Cantonese language (0.583) and between Mainland China and the Mandarin language (0.595) are a strong indicator that for many respondents these languages are representative of the two countries. Like was seen in the analysis of the Facebook comments, the Cantonese language is associated strongly with Hong Kong identity. On the other hand, from these results we can gather that the respondents relate the Mandarin language to Mainland China quite strongly; whether they feel positively or negatively about these concepts. Despite the response to these two languages relating quite strongly to their 'respective' countries, it should be noted that the Traditional Chinese script does not correlate significantly to Hong Kong or even the Cantonese language. However, the Simplified Chinese script is often perceived in a similar manner as the Mandarin language and the Mainland. What we can gather from this is that while the Traditional Chinese script is perceived as a separate concept, there seems to be an immediate association between the Simplified Chinese script and Mainland China and the Mandarin language. As one takes a further look at the other categories correlating with the Simplified script and the Mandarin language, this association indicates the respondent's reaction to the idea of 'reunification' and to a lesser degree, the Umbrella Movement. Thus, opposition or acceptance of Mainland influence and one's opinion on protest has been found to correlate with the respondents' opinion on the Mandarin language and the Simplified Chinese script.

When looking at the negative correlations found in the survey answers, it can found that those who feel positive about Hong Kong's independence and the Umbrella Movement will likely feel

negative about the Mainland and potential reunification. This is only to be expected, as independence and reunification are opposing concepts in terms of Hong Kong and Mainland China's situation. Similarly, the Umbrella Movement inherently opposes influence from the Mainland, thus explaining the negative correlation. It is noteworthy that the positive correlations in general are much stronger than the negative correlations of the survey's answers.

Consequently, this word association segment of the survey provides much information on the perception of topics related to this paper's research. Specifically, the correlation chart allows for greater insight in the individual perception per respondent, thus delivering a more complete image in general. Likewise, the next sections of the survey will hopefully offer valuable answers. Firstly, the respondees were asked to agree or disagree with a statement, potentially submitting a unique answer.
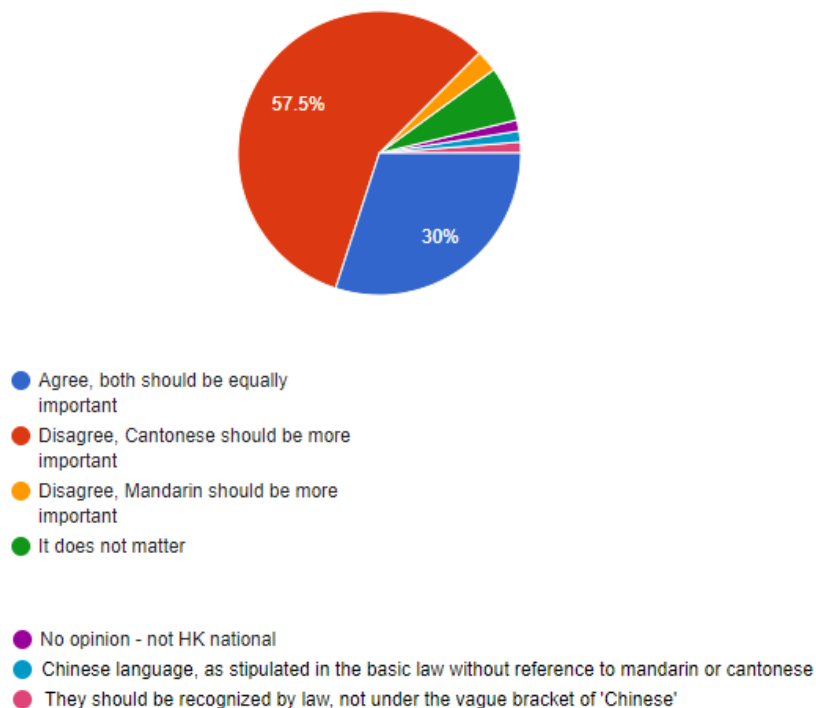

Fig. 8 – 'Cantonese or Mandarin' Statement Results

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As can be seen above, the majority of the respondents (57.5%) disagreed with the statement that the Cantonese language and the Mandarin language should be considered equally important in Hong Kong society. The second most popular answer was only chosen half as many times; thirty percent of the respondees found themselves agreeing with the statement. These options account for almost eighty percent of the total answers; only a total of two respondents was of the opinion that the Mandarin language should be more important than Cantonese. This option was thus even less popular than the 'it does not matter' option. What can be derived from this result overview is that in the perception of nearly all respondents, Cantonese should at the very least be equal to Mandarin. For the majority, however, the Cantonese language should ideally take on a dominant position over the Mandarin language in Hong Kong society. Recalling the earlier graph on language proficiency which indicated that only 27 of the respondents considered Cantonese to be their native language, it would mean most of the native English speaker also consider Cantonese more important. In conclusion, there is a clear preference for the Cantonese language, which correlates with and contributes to the way the Mandarin language is perceived. Potentially, this attitude amongst the respondents reflects their vision of the relationship between Mainland governmental influence and Hong Kong politics; both governments having a semi-equal status yet Hong Kong having the final, dominant position concerning Hong Kong society.

Additionally, it should be noted that for those respondees who opted for 'other,…', two of the answers mentioned '(the) law'. Notably, the 'Basic Law', i.e. the constitutional document of Hong Kong, only mentions that 'Chinese' shall be the official language of the region, besides the English language (Chapter I, Art. 9). It is interesting that these two respondents have two contradictory visions regarding Article 9; one argues the vague use of 'Chinese' benefits their equal status, while the other demands clear definitions to strengthen their positions.

Finally, the last questions of the survey are concerned mostly with interactions between the Mainland and Hong Kong, between the Mandarin language and the Cantonese language, as 'broadcast'

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through social media. Before anything, the respondents were asked about their experience with tensions in local interactions, specifically anti-Mainland sentiment, within their social spheres.

"Have you noticed any anti-Mainland sentiment in your social sphere?"

- Yes, both in real life interaction and on social media such as Facebook
- Yes, in real life interaction
- Yes, on social media such as Facebook
- No, I have not noticed any anti-Mainland sentiment whatsoever
- Don't use social media for anti-Facebook/Twitter reasons
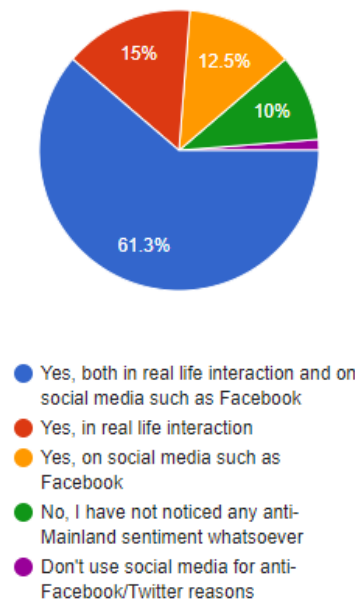
15%   12.5%   10%   61.3%

Fig. 9 – Anti-Mainland Sentiment Results

As can be seen in the graph results, almost ninety percent of the respondents answer positively to having noticed the presence of anti-Mainland sentiment in their social sphere. The vast majority of these occurrences happened both in real life and on social media networks such as Facebook. This confirms the importance of analysing not only real life interactions, but also bringing a focus to the social media attitudes.

In relation to the previously discussed politically loaded events at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the survey asks whether or not the respondees have seen two specifically chosen articles appear on their social media feed, most likely Facebook. As seen in the overview of the survey, the first article is the Hong Kong Free Press article about the 'Mandarin First' congregation speech, which was analysed in a previous section. Similarly, the second article concerns the Facebook video

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of the Mainland Chinese girl on the CUHK campus. However, instead of the regular video link, an article with the clearly visible source SCMP, i.e. South China Morning Post, and a more 'sympathetic' description was chosen.

"Did the above articles at some point appear on you social media feed?"
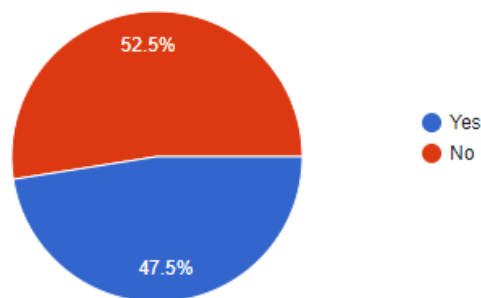

Fig. 10 – Social Media Awareness Results

With half of the respondents coming across these articles and the other half having not seen them appear on their social media feed, these articles fond a sufficient amount of saturation amongst Hong Kong people on Facebook and the likes. It also indicates that at least half of the respondees should have some prior information and opinion on the events discussed in the articles.

Subsequently, in the final part of the survey, the respondents were asked to share their opinion on these articles in an open question, n.b. the only open question of the survey, which is also the one question that the respondee does not have to answer to complete the survey. Since this answer is entirely open, it reflects the individual tone of each respondee in a different, more personal manner than the multiple choice questions. A few of these answers will now be showcased, as their content is quite poignant.

"For the first article, it makes me angry that Hong Kong is pushing away it's own cultural identity for the economy. It disappoints me that Hong Kong is like this now. For the second

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article, I may not agree with the actions of the protester, but I do support her right to action, as It shows Hong Kong's ability to maintain the right to free speech and expression."

"Hong Kong and China have different cultures and history. Therefore, I think it's important for Hong Kong to preserve it's culture such as using Cantonese for daily communication. It seems like Hong Kong independence is unlikely, but China must not continue to infrindge upon Hong Kong rights and autonomy."

"I think cantonese is the language of Hong Kong, not just a chinese dialect. That said, in formal situations like congregation speech, cantonese and english, as the official languages of Hong Kong, should be used instead of mandarin."

"An embodiment of a long term misunderstanding from both parties. Mainlander never put themselves into our shoes and local HongKong are a bit lack of compassion"

"Mandarin first is an attempt to erase Hong Kong History. Independence is a futile aim, that will only increase the CCP's desire to crush HK Society."

"I support their actions beacuze Cantonese is a native language for most Hong Kong people and hence should be protected."

"His speech should not have been in Mandarin at all - It should be in English and Cantonese, the official HK languages. And the student who tore down the posters had a right to do it, but I don't agree with her point of view or the type of person that she is."

"Mandarin fucking sucks. It's utterly fucking retarded to put Mandarin first
Also, mainlanders can fuck right off. If they hate civil liberties so much, they should just stay the fuck out of HK. Go back to China."

SCMP is Chinese owned and mainland propaganda so I don't give much credence to it as a source. My opinion on the first picture is that a commencement speech in Hong Kong is not the place to promote a Mandarin First ideology and a disservice to graduating students to be peddled political rhetorical at a University commencement ceremony.

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From these responses, one can clearly see the socio-political and cultural value that is bestowed to Cantonese as Hong Kong's representative language. Despite the Basic Law stating the general 'Chinese' as one of Hong Kong's official languages, multiple answers indicate that for many, this reads as 'Cantonese' specifically. On the other hand, there is a clear correlation between the respondent's attitude towards the Mainland and the Mainland Chinese and their perception of the Mandarin language, specifically the idea of 'Mandarin First' and its political nature. Qualities such as civil liberties, democracy and cultural identity are directly linked with Hong Kong, whereas the Mandarin language and associated actions are seen as a threat to these, attempting to 'erase Hong Kong history'. It is noteworthy that when independence is mentioned, it is described as a 'futile' attempt and 'unlikely'; however, that does not reflect as being against democratic values.

Thus, the results of this survey indicate a correlation between one's political attitudes and the perception of the Mandarin and Cantonese language. From the word association section, it can be gathered that for the respondents, there is a strong association between 'Hong Kong', the Cantonese language and anti-Mainland political opinions. Similarly, positive perceptions of the Mandarin language and the Simplified script often went hand in hand with positive perceptions of reunification and response to the Mainland. Nevertheless, the Cantonese language, Simplified script and thus Hong Kong identity is given a preference, as the agree/disagree statements and the open questions reconfirm. Amongst the respondents, wildly varying opinions were found, yet most of them did show a good amount of correspondence and consistency in answers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, positive correlation has been found between one's attitudes regarding the Hong Kong-Mainland political relationship and response to the Cantonese and the Mandarin language. With the academic foundation provided by the theoretical framework, highlighting concepts such as democracy, localism and identity, accurate analysis could be done of articles from various news outlets. Indicating the strong bond between language and political identity in Hong Kong society, it explained a causation for the anti-Mainland sentiment, i.e. the fear of losing one's language to Mainlandisation and with that, one's culture, history and socio-political identity. Through examining

the social media consumption and participation with regards to a controversial video displaying issues between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese students, the findings of the theoretical framework were reconfirmed. Furthermore, it was specifically the survey results of eighty different respondents that were able to confirm the suspicions and to show a definite relationship between certain political concepts and the Mandarin and Cantonese language. An unpredicted finding was the large variety of opinions on these socio-political issues; despite this, none of the findings contradict one another and only served to strengthen the idea that language and politics are highly related. Lastly, I would speculate that it would be incredibly enlightening to see one replicate this survey in Cantonese, as my personal abilities would have been lacking in successfully creating and assessing such a survey. Yet, this could potentially offer somewhat different opinions, particularly in the open question's response.

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