

# **Correlation between Language and Cultural Identity: Chinese Diaspora of the Netherlands**

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# 1 Introduction

Over the last few decades, Chinese people have been migrating to Western countries in growing numbers. Chinese migration to Europe, of merchants, students, or travellers, started in the late Qing dynasty period (1840-1912). Generally, these Chinese migrants are referred to as 海外华人 (*hǎiwài huárén*), which means ‘Chinese overseas’, and the result of the Chinese migration pattern is often referred to as the ‘Chinese Diaspora’.<sup>1</sup> Another term that has often been used to refer to people of Chinese origin residing outside of China is 华侨 (*huáqiáo*). The origin of this term refers to the Chinese overseas (*huá*), that acted like a bridge (*qiáo*) to bring overseas knowledge back to China.<sup>2</sup> However, the term that has been used most for people of Chinese descent residing outside of China, regardless of their citizenship, is 华裔 (*huáyì*), which is commonly used for the second, third or later generations.<sup>3</sup>

After the First Opium War (1839-1842), China was forced to sign the Treaty of Nanjing and five treaty ports were established in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Ningbo, Fuzhou and Xiamen. This was the first time in recent history that China opened up the country to the rest of the world, and the first time that Chinese people had the opportunity to migrate to foreign countries. These Chinese overseas introduced Europeans to their culture, languages and goods, and after some years, there was already a significant amount of Chinese overseas in Western countries. Some of them travelled back to China, but there was also a significant amount of ethnic Chinese people that wanted to establish a new life here.<sup>4</sup> Even during this early period, cultural identity was something that the Chinese overseas had been concerned about. According to Sinn, various developments, such as the Western national expansion and withdrawal, Chinese nationalism, anti-colonial and anti-Chinese nationalism and other national experiments by the various countries had a major impact on the lives of the Chinese overseas. Sinn argues that these developments caused even more uncertainty about their own cultural identity, because at the same time, they created intense feelings for Chinese nationalism.<sup>5</sup> An example, during the Sino-Japanese War, when many Chinese people made sacrifices during the war. Since these sacrifices ended up to be worthwhile. On the one hand, since China became one of the Big Five members of the United Nations Security Council. On the other hand, because of the nationalism

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<sup>1</sup> Liu & van Dongen, ‘The Chinese Diaspora’.

<sup>2</sup> Wang, ‘Upgrading the Migrant’, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Harvard, ‘Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas’.

<sup>4</sup> Teng, ‘Eurasians’, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Sinn, ‘The Last Half Century of Chinese Overseas’, p. 2.

that Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) aroused.<sup>6</sup> Sun Yat-sen was the first president of the Republic of China and the first leader of the Kuomintang (China's Nationalist Party). Since during the long years of war, inequality and humiliation ended with a desired ending.<sup>7</sup>

As a second generation Chinese overseas that has been born and raised in the Netherlands, I myself have struggled how to identify myself culturally. Through my own observations, I have noticed that even the speaking ability of the second generation of the Chinese diaspora in the Netherlands is already very unstable and diverse. Some of my peers do not speak the Chinese language at all. This personal interest raised many questions for me. What are the key factors that made some people speak Chinese fluently? Is the fluency linked with how people identify themselves?

Currently, there are about 71,500 'Chinese overseas' living in the Netherlands, which makes this community the fifth biggest minority group of the Netherlands. Most of them come from Mainland China and from Hong Kong, which is a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Although there are many migrants from Indonesia and Surinam with Chinese heritage or ethnicity, these particular communities are never included in the statistical population used by the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Statistics Netherlands). Although they will be mentioned occasionally, these communities (which have known completely different patterns of migration and inculturation) do not feature heavily in my research.<sup>8</sup>

In this thesis, I will dedicate my research to answer the question: Is there a correlation between the Chinese language and the cultural identity of the Chinese diaspora of the Netherlands? After this introduction, I will start with a methodology, where I will explain what methods I will be using in this research. After the methodology, I will describe the historical context of the Chinese diaspora of the Netherlands, because this will provide some background information for the core questions of my thesis. In the next chapter, I will address current theory on the correlation between language and cultural identity. This will lead to a theoretical and conceptual framework that is necessary to answer the main question. In the next part of my research, I am hoping to find data among people with a Chinese background, that are born and raised in the Netherlands. Since, there is almost no information about the Chinese diaspora of the Netherlands in the existing literature. Finally, I will conclude my research, and with the

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<sup>6</sup> Sinn, 'The Last Half Century of Chinese Overseas', p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'Sun Yat-sen'.

<sup>8</sup> CBS, 'Chinezen in Nederland in het Eerste Decennium van de 21ste Eeuw' p. 29.

collected data, I can hopefully, answer my main research question. I will also analyse if my research can be significant for any future researches.

## 2 Methodology

As I stated before, I will research the correlation between language and cultural identity of the Chinese diaspora of the Netherlands. Firstly, I am going to develop a historical and theoretical framework. This will act as a base for my research answer, as some of the terminologies are very controversial and difficult to define. It was noticeable that the secondary literature that I have found were indeed about the language that is linked with someone's cultural identity. However, considering the people in my own circle that are mainly Chinese dialect speakers, it is surprising that most of the Chinese schools in the Netherlands are currently teaching Mandarin Chinese. This does raise questions about how learning Mandarin in Chinese schools are going to help with finding or restructuring a dialect speakers cultural identity. Since, there is a scarcity to literature about the Chinese diaspora of the Netherlands, to answer these questions; I will do an exploratory research while using various methods. In this part of the research I will firstly do research in secondary literature and website analysis. Secondly, I will conduct interviews with one of the principal of a Chinese schools in the Netherlands, including three Chinese school teachers which are from various schools. I mainly asked questions about the purpose of the Chinese schools, and what their view is on the cultural identity of their students. Thirdly, I will conduct a short survey among young Chinese Dutch individuals, where I will ask multiple-choice questions about for example: how they would identify themselves or whether they think learning Mandarin has impact on their cultural identity. Lastly, I will also interview four of my former classmates, which all studied Chinastudies, as I will go deeper into the questions of my survey. Thus, this research is indeed exploratory and cannot be generalized, since I am not doing a complete social scientific quantitative and qualitative analysis.

### 3 Historical Context of the Chinese diaspora in the Netherlands

The first substantially recorded presence of Chinese people from mainland China in the Netherlands was in 1911. These were mainly sailors who came to the cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. For China, this was after the dynasty period and the establishment of the Republic of China.

According to Van Heek, after the First World War, the Chinese immigrants mainly came from Hong Kong, Canton, Hainan and the fishing village Foe-kien (Fujian), and most of them were sailors or stowaways. Alongside these Southern Chinese migrants, there were also Chinese people from the north of China. This was because China's most important harbour was in Shanghai in the province Zhejiang. This group of migrants were importing trinkets and textile in huge quantities and located themselves in the centre of Amsterdam. The mother companies of the trinkets and textile migrants sent them as traders to do business in the Netherlands, and these people usually stayed up to five years. These migrants did not live as sailors, but earned a decent income and had good living conditions in Amsterdam.<sup>9</sup> Since many Chinese people that came to Europe came for trading purposes, they were for obvious reasons attracted to the cities of Marseille, Liverpool and Rotterdam, since these were the biggest harbours of Europe during this period.<sup>10</sup>

In that early period, there were many internal conflicts in the Dutch shipping and sailor unions, and instead of coming to an agreement, many shipping unions decided to replace the Dutch sailors with Chinese sailors who were rejected in England. Although some of these sailors decided to establish a new life in the Netherlands, the Chinese community as a whole was still small. It was not until after the First World War that Chinese people decided to immigrate to the Netherlands in larger numbers. During the First World War, many people from Hong Kong decided to work for British shipping companies, since the demand for sailors grew rapidly due to need of the war. In a short period, the number of Chinese sailors grew from 8,000-14,000 to 30,000-40,000.<sup>11</sup> However, after the war, the demand for sailors dropped in England, since the British government was faced with a recession. Therefore, they were forced to let go of a majority of the Chinese sailors. Since the harbour of Rotterdam was one of the most obvious

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<sup>9</sup> Rug, 'De Vooroorlogse Chinese Migranten in Nederland', p. 51.

<sup>10</sup> Heek, 'Chineesche Immigranten in Nederland', p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Rug, 'De Vooroorlogse Chinese Migranten in Nederland', p. 42.



places to send the Chinese sailors, it makes sense that many of them continued their employment in the Netherlands, where the demand grew rapidly after the First World War.<sup>12</sup>

Over several years, the number of Chinese sailors working at the harbour of Rotterdam grew rapidly, and the Chinese community became one of the biggest groups of foreign labourers in the Netherlands (alongside Javanese, Norwegians, and Greeks). Eventually, Katendrecht became the Chinatown of Rotterdam. Since the harbour of Rotterdam offered more job opportunities, many Chinese people that were originally located in Amsterdam moved to Rotterdam.<sup>13</sup> With the rise of modern technology, the job market began to shrink slowly.<sup>14</sup> The economic crisis of 1929 produced a huge drop in the need for new sailors.<sup>15</sup> Many sailors who had lost their jobs needed to find a new way to make a living, and this is how the peanut trade began. Some Chinese people started business to make and sell peanut cookies. Although this was not a huge market, it was enough for some to have a nice living. Since this was not a complete downgrade, because in their earlier employment, sailors had experienced bad living conditions and had earned small salaries as well.<sup>16</sup>

Another group of Chinese migrants that settled in the Netherlands originated from France. These Chinese migrants were from Qingtian, Zhejiang, and had come to Europe during the First World War to work for the supply and transport of ammunition. It is estimated that 100,000 people from this area in China moved to Europe at that time. After the war, some of them went (or rather: were sent) home, but some of them stayed in France and slowly migrated to other European countries from there. Another group from France were people from Wenzhou, Zhejiang. In their case, it was the rise of industrialisation in China before the Second World War that caused them to migrate to Europe. Industrialisation led to increasing pressure on the labourers that worked on the land. Both these groups, in the course of time, moved from France to the Netherlands.<sup>17</sup>

There thus were several occurrences that produced the beginnings of Chinese migration to the Netherlands. This migration involved several groups and communities from different regions in China. It makes sense that after the establishment of these various Chinese communities,

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<sup>12</sup> Rug, 'De Vooroorlogse Chinese Migranten in Nederland', p. 43.

<sup>13</sup> Rug, 'De Vooroorlogse Chinese Migranten in Nederland', p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> Rug, 'De Vooroorlogse Chinese Migranten in Nederland', p. 48.

<sup>15</sup> Rug, 'De Vooroorlogse Chinese Migranten in Nederland', p. 49.

<sup>16</sup> Rug, 'De Vooroorlogse Chinese Migranten in Nederland', p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> Rug, 'De Vooroorlogse Chinese Migranten in Nederland', p. 51.

they wanted to import their families to the same country, and this in turn caused the Chinese diaspora to continue to grow.

### 3.1 Chinese Indonesians

If we view the Chinese diaspora more historically, the first people of Chinese ethnicity were most likely from Indonesia, the former Dutch East Indies, which was a Dutch colony. According to Sinn, at the end of 1980s, there were about 60,000 ethnic Chinese living in the Netherlands, 7000 of whom were from Indonesia. These people from Indonesia originally migrated from mainland China to Southeast Asia between 1850 and 1940. They mainly came from coastal cities such as Xiamen, Shantou, Hainan and Hong Kong. Over ten million of these Chinese people migrated to Malaysia, but about three million established their lives in the Dutch East Indies. The term Peranakan Chinese, is called after the Malay term of ‘person born here and descended from elsewhere’.<sup>18</sup> Over the course of time, many of them intermarried with Javanese people and developed a unique mix of Chinese and Javanese culture. Peranakan Chinese in Indonesia was the official term for people of Chinese descent who were born in Indonesia. The term was often used to distinguish them from non-Chinese Indonesians and from the Chinese from Mainland China and Hong Kong.<sup>19</sup>

Since 1863, the Peranakan Chinese were allowed to attend the Dutch mission schools in Java of the Dutch East Indies. It is likely that these Peranakan Chinese people were mainly allowed to attend these schools because of their wealthy background as businessmen and entrepreneurs. The Dutch presence in the Dutch East Indies facilitated the immigration of these people to the Netherlands, since they gained knowledge of the Dutch language and culture in these Dutch mission schools, and were able to establish successful businesses in the Netherlands.<sup>20</sup> The number of Peranakan Chinese businessmen, however, always was rather limited, since it was hard to compete with Dutch entrepreneurs. With the establishment of the “Hollandsch-Chineesche school” in 1908, the number of Chinese people that spoke Dutch grew rapidly. As a result, many Chinese people were accepted into universities in the Netherlands, and they represented a sizeable part of the migration of Chinese people.<sup>21</sup> According to Sinn, in 1911, the Peranakan Chinese students in the Netherlands were only about 20. However, the number increased to 50 in 1920, and to 150 in 1930, and the number of students who studied in the

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<sup>18</sup> Wilkins, ‘Who are the Peranakan Chinese?’.

<sup>19</sup> Kitamura, ‘Long way home’, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Sinn, ‘The Last Half Century of the Chinese Diaspora’, p. 168.

<sup>21</sup> Sinn, ‘The Last Half Century of the Chinese Diaspora’, p. 169.

Netherlands was a total of 900 between 1911 and 1940. During the Second World War, when Indonesia was occupied by the Japanese and Holland by the Germans, the immigration of Peranakan Chinese students to the Netherlands declined rapidly.

However, migration started again after 1949, when Indonesian independence was formally recognized. The Peranakan Chinese were able to choose Dutch, Chinese or Indonesian nationality. Many Peranakan Chinese living in the Netherlands wanted to have their family in the same country and some of the Dutch trained Chinese Indonesians also chose to have Dutch nationality, since that would mean that they would be able to live in the Netherlands. The reasons for this choice are most likely to have had a socio-economic background rather than a political one. By 1957, the number of Chinese Indonesians had already increased to 1000 people, some of them students but many of them already employed.<sup>22</sup>

The most significant wave of migration of the Chinese Indonesians followed upon the 'Bloody Incident' on 30 September 1965. This started with a change in attitude of the Indonesian government towards China, since they forced over 10,000 ethnic Chinese people back to their homeland. This attitude of the Indonesian government made the lives of Chinese Indonesians that were living in Indonesia insecure. Thus, according to Sinn, about 5000 Chinese Indonesians decided to migrate to Western countries, and since some of them had already gained knowledge about the Netherlands, many of them decided to migrate to this country.<sup>23</sup>

Before World War II, most Peranakan Chinese students in the Netherlands joined the Chung Hwa Hui (CHH), which was a Chinese students Union, founded in 1911. Even though these students were living in the Netherlands, this fraternity shows that many of the Peranakans still separated themselves from other minority groups or Dutch students.<sup>24</sup>

Even though many Peranakan Chinese shared an interest in Chinese culture and history and defined (organized) themselves as belonging to the Chinese diaspora, many of them did not speak Chinese and did not want to define themselves as if they were from mainland China or Hong Kong.<sup>25</sup>

As I mentioned before in the introduction, the Chinese people from Indonesia are not included in the overviews of the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), since the Dutch government categorises people based on nationality and/or country of origin and not on (perceived) ethnicity.

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<sup>22</sup> Sinn, 'The Last Half Century of the Chinese Diaspora', p. 169.

<sup>23</sup> Sinn, 'The Last Half Century of the Chinese Diaspora', p. 170.

<sup>24</sup> Tjiok-Liem, 'The Chinese from Indonesia in the Netherlands', p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Kitamura, 'Long way home', p. 29.

Obviously, for the Peranakan Chinese the issues of nationality are rather complex. According to Tjiok-Liem, the Chinese people that came to the Netherlands after 1945, had a complex legal status, as the Peranakan Chinese became Dutch subjects (*Nederlands onderdaan*) in the Dutch East Indies. Within this grouping of Dutch subjects, people belonged either to the group of Foreign Orientals, which was not equated with the Europeans, or to that of Chinese Foreign Orientals, which obtained equal legal status with the Europeans (*gelijgesteld*). Even obtaining the equal legal status did not mean they automatically acquired Dutch nationality. Rather, they continued to be Dutch subjects with non-Dutch nationality (*Nederlands onderdaan, niet-Nederlander*). It was not until the Indonesian national revolution in 1949 and the Assignment Agreement from 1949 until 1951 that people were allowed to choose either Dutch or Indonesian nationality. Even after the change of legal status of the Peranakan Chinese, the people that chose Indonesian nationality ended up with a dual nationality, and thus had both Indonesian and Chinese nationality, since this was in accordance with the Chinese nationality law that was in force during 1960 and 1961. This strictness got to a degree where the Peranakan Chinese were forced to acknowledge their Chinese nationality, and those who did not want to acknowledge, would by law lose their Indonesian nationality.<sup>26</sup>

According to Tjiok-Liem, the Peranakan Chinese that came to the Netherlands with Indonesian nationality were registered as ‘aliens’, as they were considered to be Chinese or People with Chinese national character. In 1980, this changed: because the government wanted to avoid anything that was associated with discrimination, people were no longer categorized based on their ethnicity.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.2 New immigrants

When these particular waves of migration pattern stopped, in the early 1960s, a new generation of migration took off. The majority of this new migration pattern are Chinese overseas students.<sup>28</sup> Although many Chinese people prefer English-speaking countries over the Netherlands, the quality of the Dutch education system along with the lower tuition fees, has attracted a significant amount of Chinese students. In 2000 and 2001, it even increased by 50%,

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<sup>26</sup> Tjiok-Liem, ‘The Chinese from Indonesia in the Netherlands’, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Tjiok-Liem, ‘The Chinese from Indonesia in the Netherlands’, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> CBS, ‘Chinezen in Nederland in het Eerste Decennium van de 21ste Eeuw’, p. 37.

and between 2007 and 2008 with 30%.<sup>29</sup> By 2012, 5700 Chinese students had established themselves as students in the Netherlands.<sup>30</sup>

In the earlier migration waves, the Chinese people were mostly looking for permanent residence. This is not entirely the case with the more recent migration, as some of them return home or move to other countries. In spite of this, it is estimated that roughly 30% of the Chinese students in the Netherlands stay here to work after finishing their studies.<sup>31</sup>

In a counter move, many of the Chinese migrants of the older generation have returned to China. According to the CBS, the number of Chinese migrants that returned home increased from 1800 in 2008 to 3300 in 2012. According to Engelhard, the main reasons for returning home were the high costs of travelling regularly between both countries, the costs of health insurance, and the fact that some people have their own place or investments in the country of origin.<sup>32</sup>

The Chinese languages spoken by the majority of the Chinese migrants in the Netherlands are Mandarin and Cantonese. Mandarin is the official language in mainland China and Taiwan, but before 2000, the majority of the Chinese migrants in the Netherlands came from Hong Kong and spoke Cantonese. The other minority of Chinese migrants had to learn Cantonese for communication, since most of them would be working in a Cantonese-speaking environment. After 2000, with a wave of migration from mainland China, this changed. This change was also affected by the business opportunities that were created between the Netherlands and China.<sup>33</sup>

The Chinese community in the Netherlands is considered to be 'invisible'.<sup>34</sup> One of the signs of this is the fact that the level of Dutch proficiency is relatively low compared to the people from other ethnic groups in the Netherlands. According to a Dutch national survey of Gijsberts, 33 percent of the Chinese respondents often have problems with speaking Dutch, 37% having problems with reading and 45% have problems with writing. If we compare this to the Turkish community, the same levels are only approximately 23%, 24% and 33%.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Nuffic, 'Incoming Student Mobility in Dutch Higher Education'.

<sup>30</sup> Liu, 'Suffering in Silence' p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Liu, 'Suffering in Silence' p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Liu, 'Suffering in Silence' p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Liu, 'Suffering in Silence' p. 22.

<sup>34</sup> Liu, 'Suffering in Silence' p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Liu, 'Suffering in Silence' p. 22.

## 4 Theoretical Framework: Correlation between Language and Cultural Identity

In this chapter, I will present terminologies that I will use in my research. Since this will describe and support some of the theories that I will explain further in this research.

### 4.1 Identity

The study of identity has been a complex field in itself, and in order to analyse the correlation between language and cultural identity, we need to define the term ‘identity’ first. Many scholars have attempted to do this, and it makes sense that there are many diverse perceptions of how we define ‘identity’. According to Hall, from pre-modern times individuality was intertwined with old religious conceptions and social tradition, and thus people were viewed as part of a specific place in a society rather than seen as a distinctive individual. It was only in the eighteenth-century, with the Enlightenment, that people were more encouraged to express their unique self.<sup>36</sup> However, Castells argues that in postmodern discourse, identity was non-constructed such as: age, culture, ethnicity, gender, nationality, kinship roles, language, religion and sexual orientation.<sup>37</sup> However, identities develop and change, and with the age of life, the consistency and continuity of one’s identity is thus constructed. Lemke also argues that identities are multi-faceted and plural, and linked with the changing patterns in our community, and are thus not something we own from birth but rather something that is socially constructed. For example, people act differently according to their surroundings, we act differently around children or with peers, and we act differently in formal or informal situations, in professional and intimate settings.<sup>38</sup> Thus, in this age of life we live in, we can define identity as an ambiguous phenomenon that keeps changing and developing.

We defined identity as socially constructed, and defined it as a process rather than an entity. This now raises the question: how is this process constructed? According to Bucholtz and Hall, the literal meaning of identity is sameness,<sup>39</sup> as they argue that how we define identity has more to do with distinguishing ‘self’ and the ‘other’, or ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’. As such, they argue that we cannot identify our own identity without even comparing with others or anything outside ourselves. The interest in a specific group is also caused by agency and power, and not

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<sup>36</sup> Hall, ‘The Question of Cultural Identity’, p. 602.

<sup>37</sup> Bucholtz & Hall, ‘Language and Identity’, p. 372-376.

<sup>38</sup> Lemke, ‘Identity, development and desire’, p. 19.

<sup>39</sup> Bucholtz & Hall, ‘Language and Identity’, p. 370.

just by pre-existing and recognizable similarities. Bucholtz and Hall give the example of students in a French-language high school in English-speaking Canada, whose identities are not based on any linguistic, racial or ethnic identities. Social grouping is a process whereby identity is established by discovering similarities, by deemphasizing differences instead of just acknowledging similarities.<sup>40</sup> In order to define identity, we need to make a distinction between personal identity and collective identity. According to Edwards, we define personal identity on the basis of the fact that a person is oneself and not someone else. Thus, personal identity is linked with the notion of a personality from oneself, and everyone outside the individual is the other.<sup>41</sup>

## 4.2 The Chinese identity

According to Wang, the definition of the historical Chinese identity was simple and definite. The Chinese identity meant that a sense of belonging to this great Chinese civilization, and acting in accordance with the Chinese intellectual elite's norm of conducts.<sup>42</sup> Obviously, the meaning of Chinese identity is subject to change, and according to Wu, the terms of Chinese and non-Chinese in processes of Chinese self-definition can be complicated and may cause confusion. In the modern Chinese language, there are many definitions and terms that can refer to the western word 'Chinese'. For example: 中国人(*zhongguoren*), 中华民族 (*zhonghua minzu*), 华人(*huárén*), 华侨(*huáqiáo*), 唐人(*tangren*), 汉人(*hanren*). These terms reflect racial, cultural, ethnic and national characteristics.<sup>43</sup> As many of these terms also refer to Chinese people, *zhongguoren*, that live outside the 'centre', they still carry the notions of patriotism and nationalism that they referenced in the past. According to Wu, the feelings for China also include the sense of fulfilment of their cultural heritage, as they believed that they must honour their ancestors.<sup>44</sup> Another confusing term is the Chinese race, *zhonghuamingzu*, which originated during the Western invasions and thus created nationalistic feelings. The Chinese conceived of China as the centre of the world, and of themselves as being the civilized people that were in the centre and were surrounded by barbarians. Both terms *zhongguoren* and *zhonghua minzu*, represent the Chinese identity as a concept of cultural and historical fulfilment. However, the modern cultural concept of 'Chinese identity' must be defined in the current political context, and thus is associated with nationality and citizenship. The meaning of

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<sup>40</sup> Bucholtz & Hall, 'Language and Identity', p. 371.

<sup>41</sup> Edwards, 'Language and Identity', p. 19.

<sup>42</sup> Wu, 'The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities', p. 181.

<sup>43</sup> Wu, 'The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities', p. 168.

<sup>44</sup> Wu, 'The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities', p. 169.

Chinese identity as something superior, has created various difficulties. For years, the Chinese have been changing, restructuring and reinventing their culture, which had a big impact on the Chinese people in the peripheral areas.<sup>45</sup> When are people considered to be Chinese and when not? From the 1960s, The People's Republic of China established a new concept of 'Chinese identity', under the impact of Marxist ideology. This new concept of being Chinese divided people between being Han and non-Han, which to the Chinese was seen as the real ethnically and racially Chinese.<sup>46</sup> As China is a country with many minorities, the Chinese make a distinction between Han and the Chinese minorities. This led to a system of classifications, giving each minority its own language, culture and history. This left the Han in the role of the superior and the 'real' ethnic Chinese. The majority of the people that are ethnically Chinese, who used to call themselves as *zhongguoren*, now refer themselves as *hanren*, and thus the term *zhongguoren* is now used to refer to someone that has Chinese nationality. However, many Han people live outside China, and may have differences in speech, customs and religious beliefs. Thus, Han people do not separate themselves by cultural differences, but do separate themselves from other Chinese minorities.<sup>47</sup>

### 4.3 Language and identity

By all definitions, language is a system of communication. Language gives us the ability to understand others, and to make ourselves understood by other individuals.<sup>48</sup> Most interpretations of the meaning of language in the construction of identity, however, move greatly beyond this purely instrumental definition.

As Bunge said: '*Language is not just another thing we do as humans- it is **the thing** we do. It is a total environment: we live in language as a fish lives in water.*'<sup>49</sup>

According to Joseph, identity and language are two constructs that are ultimately inseparable.<sup>50</sup> Just as identity is constructed, how we define languages is constructed as well. There are obviously issues concerning the difference between language and dialects, since many dialects, in a more linguistic view, can be considered languages. However, in the world we live in, the distinctions that are made between languages and dialects are more likely to be political rather

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<sup>45</sup> Wu, 'The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities', p. 169.

<sup>46</sup> Wu, 'The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities', p. 173.

<sup>47</sup> Wu, 'The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities', p. 174.

<sup>48</sup> Edwards, 'Language and Identity', p. 55.

<sup>49</sup> Bunge, 'Language: The Psyche of a People', p. 376.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph, 'Language and Identity', p. 13.



than linguistic. The distinctions are affected by the status of the language or dialect itself, since this can vary from the number of speakers, high social or economic prestige, official state recognition and standardised oral and written forms. A good example for this, and very relevant to this thesis, is the Chinese Cantonese ‘dialect’, since many scholars say that this dialect can be defined as a language. However, the official language of mainland China is Mandarin Chinese, and since the politicians use this language to communicate with each other and with the wider population, this language gained a higher status. Groves also argues that the Cantonese dialect is correlated with a cultural identity. This is especially true in Hong Kong, where Cantonese has developed into an area of political tension with mainland China, and has given a unique identity to people from Hong Kong.<sup>51</sup> Historically, the Cantonese dialect was almost recognized as the official language of China, shortly after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912.<sup>52</sup> The fact that this did not happen has had a big impact both on linguistic policy, and on the subject of this thesis: cultural/linguistic self-understanding.

Another way to view language is the representational meaning that it carries as a marker of culture and identity. According to Edwards, language acts as an indicator for groupness. The original language that was spoken in New Zealand, the Maori language, is a good example of how a language acts as a representative symbol for culture or identity. The symbolic role is how the language acts as a characteristic of groupness. Since the Maori language, opposed to the English language in New Zealand, may be a representative of cultural traits. Thus, the Maori language emphasises the linguistic sameness within a collective identity. They position themselves in opposition with the ‘other’ (the non-Maori speakers of New Zealand).<sup>53</sup>

#### 4.4 Chinese Language and dialects

According to Groves, the Chinese term 方言 (*fāngyán*) is used for what in English would be called a dialect. But the term ‘*fangyan*’ is different from what the concept is to someone who speaks English, where the concept of dialects is more similar to accents. This means that it mainly references pronunciation differences such as British English, American English, Irish English and Australian English. Although there might be some differences in pronunciation, usually people that speak different English dialects, have no serious trouble communicating

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<sup>51</sup> Groves, ‘Language or Dialect, Topolect or Regiolect’, p. 549.

<sup>52</sup> SCMP, ‘Cantonese almost became the Official Language’.

<sup>53</sup> Edwards, ‘Language and Identity’, p. 55.

with one another.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the definition of dialect is much looser than the definition of *'fangyan'*. In western conceptions, Cantonese can be defined either as a dialect or as a language, and thus occupies a middle-zone.<sup>55</sup> For Chinese people, *'fangyan'* refers to any 'dialect' that is not Standard Chinese Mandarin. It is a compound built from the word *'fang'*, which means regional and *'yan'*, meaning speech.<sup>56</sup>

There are many dialects in the Chinese language, and in general, we can classify Chinese dialects into seven groups: Putonghua (Mandarin), Gan, Kejia (Hakka), Min, Wu, Xiang and Yue (Cantonese). Mandarin is the official language of China, which is supposedly spoken everywhere in China. The standard language is based on the Beijing dialect, and is mostly referred to as the Northern dialect. The second one is the Gan dialect, which is spoken in the western parts of China, near the province of Jiangxi. The third dialect is the Kejia, more known as the Hakka dialect; this dialect is spread over Taiwan, Guangdong, Jiangxi, Guizhou and beyond. The fourth one is the Min dialect, which is more spoken in the southern coastal province, Fujian. This is also the dialect that has the most sub-dialects within the dialect. The fifth dialect is the Wu dialect, which is spoken around the Yangtze Delta and Shanghai. The sixth dialect is Xiang, which is mainly spoken in Hunan province. The last dialect is Yue, which is referred to as the Cantonese dialect, as this is spoken in Guangdong, Guangxi, Hong Kong and Macau.<sup>57</sup>

All these dialects are spoken by Han-people, and they do not include the languages that are spoken by the big minority groups in China, such as Tibetan, Mongolian and Miao. Even though these dialects have many differences in pronunciation, they all use the same writing system. For example, the word for 'I' or "me", which is in written Chinese '我'. In Mandarin this is pronounced as 'wo', in Wu it is pronounced as 'ngu', in Min 'gua', and in Cantonese it is 'ngo'.<sup>58</sup> Linguists have divided Chinese into these seven main dialects, but, for example, the Wu dialect includes the Shanghai, Suzhou and Hangzhou dialects. These are considered sub-dialects: people are not able to speak the other dialects, but they are mutually intelligible, as people in these cities are able to understand each other.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Bolotnikov, 'The Many Dialects of China'.

<sup>55</sup> Groves, 'Language or Dialect, Topolect or Regiolect', p. 533.

<sup>56</sup> Van Dam, "Language or Dialect".

<sup>57</sup> Shan, 'What are the Different Chinese Dialects?'

<sup>58</sup> Shan, 'What are the Different Chinese Dialects?'

<sup>59</sup> Bolotnikov, 'The Many Dialects of China'.

## 4.5 Cultural Identity

As for this thesis, to clarify my terminology, I will use the term ‘cultural identity’. In much of the literature I used, the more common term that I have found is ‘ethnic’ or ‘ethno cultural’. Especially in an East Asian context, using the terms ‘ethnic’ or ‘ethno cultural’ seems to be linked with implications of race. I am uncomfortable to use this as a label, since race is a widely controversial topic among many scholars, and is almost impossible to define. Fenton & May argue that race is nonexistent, and according to them in terms of biology, race is a ‘widely acknowledged scientific falsity (there are no such things as ‘races’). First, this is especially complicated to define people with mixed ancestry with a specific race.<sup>60</sup> Second, in the Chinese context, where the implications of race are even more clearly emphasized. In Chinese, there is no word for ‘race’. The closest word to race may be 种族 (*zhǒngzú*), (*zhong*: breed, seed, species, and type; *zu*: ethnicity, lineage, and nationality). Lan argues that the scarcity of studies on race by Chinese scholars may be because of political sensitivity, translation problems and difficulties in comparing of distinct historical trajectories and cultural contexts between China and the West.<sup>61</sup> Since cultural identity is linked with beliefs in shared ancestry and a common culture, and in order not carry the implications of race, it is in my opinion more useful to use the idea of cultural identity, where people are classified in terms of a ‘shared cultural heritage’.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Fenton & May, ‘Ethnonational Identities’, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Lan, ‘Mapping the New African Diaspora’, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph, ‘Language and identity’, p. 163.

## 5 Chinese Heritage Language

In my theoretical framework, I have certainly seen a correlation between language and cultural identity. For the following two chapters, I will research the correlation between the Chinese language and Chinese identity of the Chinese diaspora of the Netherlands. I will combine a literature review with my own research through interviews and surveys. I interviewed a few Chinese schoolteachers and a principal of a Chinese school in the Netherlands. I have also interviewed people with Chinese ethnicity, who were born and raised in the Netherlands. On top of this, I have also conducted surveys, which were all multiple-choice questions; to people that went to Chinese school in the Netherlands. The respondents of my interview and survey are mainly from the Chinese provinces or regions: Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Zhejiang. Thus, it does not come as a surprise, that the heritage language of my respondents were mostly Chinese dialects such as Cantonese and Wenzhounese, and thus not Mandarin Chinese. Since the Chinese schools in the Netherlands are mostly teaching Mandarin Chinese, this raises questions about maintaining the cultural identity through Chinese schools. How are students able to connect with their roots, by learning a language that they have no connections with? As there could be a difference in how people with different dialect background learn Chinese, I will divide the Chinese heritage learners by dialect speaking and Mandarin speaking in this chapter.

### 5.1 Chinese schools in the Netherlands

Many children with a Chinese background attend Chinese language schools on Saturday in the Netherlands. The first officially registered Chinese school in the Netherlands was established in the late 1970s, and the Stichting Chinees Onderwijs Nederland (Foundation Chinese Education The Netherlands), currently lists more than forty schools. According to this list, Chinese schools exist in almost all major cities of the Netherlands.<sup>63</sup> In other countries such as the United States and Canada, the Chinese schools focus on teaching mainly dialects, and initially this was not any different in the Netherlands.<sup>64</sup> For example, the Chinese school Fa Yin that is located in Amsterdam was established in 1979. This school has 550 students, and started with teaching Cantonese classes. As the years went by, the majority of the classes were changed to Mandarin, although they do still have Cantonese classes at the moment.<sup>65</sup> One of my

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<sup>63</sup> Stichting Chinees Onderwijs in Nederland.

<sup>64</sup> Li and Juffermans, 'Learning and Teaching Chinese in the Netherlands', p. 102.

<sup>65</sup> Chinese School Fa Yin.

interviewees, the principal of the Stichting Haagse School (育贤中文学校), indicated that his Chinese school has around 200 students. He says that his Chinese school is funded by tuition money and several donations, as the school is a non-profit organisation.<sup>66</sup>

According to the CBS, the majority of the Chinese immigrants came from Hong Kong and Guangdong, where the official dialect is Cantonese.<sup>67</sup> It is therefore not surprising that most of the Chinese Schools in the Netherlands taught the same dialect. But this has changed fairly recently. This change from the Cantonese dialect to the Mandarin language, according to Li and Juffermans, is due to the geopolitical repositioning of the globalized world system. There is another reason, however: the changing migration pattern, since more recently there was a huge wave from Wenzhou.<sup>68</sup>

The main purpose of most of the Chinese schools is to teach the Chinese language and culture and to build a community.<sup>69</sup> As the principal states:

‘这所学校的前身是在教会开始的，当年一些母亲到教会想学习荷兰语，因为孩子们在旁边吵闹；我们就让孩子到楼上去教他们中文。后来，因为来学习中文的孩子数量越来越多，教会已容纳不下了；我们就向一所荷兰小学租用他们 10 教室于星期六教孩子们中文。’

*‘This school started in the church, in those years, moms wanted to learn Dutch, and because of the noisy children, we decided to teach Chinese to the children in the upper floor of the church. Later, because the children that came to learn Chinese increased, the church could no longer accommodate. We then decided to rent one of the Dutch primary schools, with about 10 classrooms, to teach the children Chinese on Saturday.’<sup>70</sup>*

One of the Chinese school teachers said:

‘我认为在荷创办中文学校最早而又最朴实的初衷是：让在国外出生的华人后代能学习汉语，这可能源自于来自中国的父母辈的期望。希望后代能与之交流、理解和了解一些自己血统的文化。’

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<sup>66</sup> Appendix 9.2.

<sup>67</sup> CBS, ‘Chinezen in Nederland in het Eerste Decennium van de 21ste Eeuw’.

<sup>68</sup> Li and Juffermans, ‘Learning and Teaching Chinese in the Netherlands’, p. 103.

<sup>69</sup> Stichting Haagse Chinese School.

<sup>70</sup> Appendix 9.2.

*'I think that in the earliest times, the most simple intention of starting a Chinese school in the Netherlands, is to teach Chinese to people that were born in the Netherlands with a Chinese ethnicity. This might be due to expectations of the parents that were from China, that were hoping the next generation would be able to communicate and understand their ethnic culture.'*<sup>71</sup>

Yet another Chinese schoolteacher said:

‘我希望在这边出生和长大的孩子对中国文化认同，同时开拓学生们将来求职工作的广度.’

*'I hope that the children that were born here acknowledge the Chinese culture, at the same time be open about seeking jobs in this range.'*<sup>72</sup>

‘而是中国传统文化太灿烂，太多宝藏了，丢弃它实在太可惜.’

*'Because Chinese traditional culture is too magnificent, there is too much treasure, it would really be a pity to throw it away.'*<sup>73</sup>

Thus, the main reasons for the existence of Chinese schools in the Netherlands, as indicated by those who organize it, mainly are the maintenance and teaching of the Chinese language and culture for future generations of the Chinese diaspora.

## 5.2 Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language

With the growth of China's political and economic power in the world, the demand for learning Chinese as a foreign language has certainly increased.<sup>74</sup> According to Nuffic, which is an organisation that focuses on the internationalization of education in the Netherlands, there are about 58 Dutch high schools that provide teaching of Chinese as a foreign language.<sup>75</sup> Previously, students that took these Chinese classes, could only do the normal school exams. However, since 2018, this is also part of the Centraal Examen, which is the final exams of Dutch high schools.<sup>76</sup> There are also several universities in the Netherlands that provide Chinese language and culture majors. Such as China studies at Leiden university, Oriental languages

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<sup>71</sup> Appendix 9.3.

<sup>72</sup> Appendix 9.4.

<sup>73</sup> Appendix 9.3.

<sup>74</sup> Lan and Hancock, 'Learning Chinese in Diasporic Communities', p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Nuffic, 'Chinees in het Voorgetzet Onderwijs'.

<sup>76</sup> Visbeen, 'Chinees Leren?'.

and communication at Zuyd University of Applied Sciences and Trade management Asia at Rotterdam and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences.<sup>77</sup>

### 5.3 The Chinese Heritage Language

According to Duff, learning a heritage language, which is their first language, usually starts at home. The use of this language is in daily interactions with family and other people in their life. It includes not only language used in their daily communication with people, but also through a variety of oral activities, such as songs, rhymes and stories.<sup>78</sup> According to Li, heritage language learners develop their language proficiency by various semiotic resources, through engagement with other people but also by mass media and online engagement. Thus, learning the heritage language, but also the culture, can take place outside but also at home.<sup>79</sup>

According to Lan and Hancock, motivations for learning your heritage language in the Chinese diaspora are influenced by various factors. As the Chinese diaspora has been facing discrimination and social pressure of being able to speak the dominant language, they inevitably suffered heritage language loss. However, in some contexts, the loss of the heritage language by older generations may have resulted in the younger generations aspiring to revitalize the heritage language. They also state that some Chinese diaspora families indeed are successful in maintaining the heritage language. However, families or perhaps individuals that were unsuccessful in maintaining the language experienced shame and regretful feelings. The reason for not maintaining the heritage language is usually the need to integrate in their current environment by learning the dominant language and culture.<sup>80</sup> As such, attempting to maintain the heritage language can even differ within one household, where this can be different in birth order, where the older sibling will more likely retain the heritage language compared to the younger siblings.<sup>81</sup>

According to Duff and Doherty, the individuals that we classify in the group of Chinese heritage learners show remarkable differences, since they are all from different regions of China and speak different dialects.<sup>82</sup> Thus, the Chinese in Chinese heritage language is something we

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<sup>77</sup> Geledraak, 'Chinees studeren aan universiteiten en HBO in Nederland en België'.

<sup>78</sup> Duff, 'Language socialization', p. 28.

<sup>79</sup> Li, 'The Invisible and the Visible', p. 246.

<sup>80</sup> Lan and Hancock, 'Learning Chinese in Diasporic Communities', p. 16.

<sup>81</sup> Lan and Hancock, 'Learning Chinese in Diasporic Communities', p. 19.

<sup>82</sup> Duff and Doherty, 'Learning "Chinese" as a Heritage Language', p. 149.

cannot specify with one language or dialect. Nowadays, this often refers to learning Mandarin by learners of Chinese ancestry, whose home language may or may not be Mandarin.<sup>83</sup>

According to Duff and Li, the majority of the dialect speakers have switched to Mandarin Chinese, since it has a wider community and has received governmental, and societal support over the years.<sup>84</sup> According to Polinsky, it is hard to compare heritage language learners with native speakers. These learners are more likely to be better in comprehension than production, and thus are better in listening than speaking, and it is unlikely that they will reach native level in their heritage language. However, they do have the advantage of a native pronunciation in their heritage dialect.<sup>85</sup> According to Hornberger and Wang, heritage language learners have familial or ancestral ties with the language, which shapes their self-perceptions, positioning and interactions.<sup>86</sup> Even though many linguists have noticed the similarities of the Mandarin and Cantonese languages, according to Wu, students that are able to speak their Chinese heritage language have undoubtedly struggled with learning Mandarin Chinese.<sup>87</sup>

Wu further notes that many students that speak a different dialect at home are motivated to learn Mandarin Chinese partly for economic reasons.<sup>88</sup> These socioeconomic motivations include the desire to do business with Chinese speakers or obtain employment in the Chinese speaking world.<sup>89</sup> Besides, Wu states that the reason for learning Mandarin is a way to improve their own dialect, and thus be more connected with their families and people in the Chinese community.<sup>90</sup>

Learning Mandarin as a Cantonese dialect speaker of the sole motivation to connect with your roots seem to be strange at first glance. When we put this in a different context for comparison, for example: a Portuguese speaker that is going to school to learn the French language. However, according to Duff, it is much more logical if we put it in sociocultural context. For example, if the Cantonese speaker is located in a non-Chinese speaking area, where the education of their own heritage language, Cantonese, is not available, it makes much more sense to indeed learn Mandarin to get in touch with their roots. Since people, in this situation, are more looking for 'what is available', and not for 'what is desired'.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Duff and Doherty, 'Learning "Chinese" as a Heritage Language', p. 152.

<sup>84</sup> Duff and Li, 'Negotiating language, literacy and identity'.

<sup>85</sup> Polinsky, 'Heritage Languages and their Speakers', p. 7.

<sup>86</sup> Hornberger and Wang, 'Who are our Heritage Language Learners?', p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> Wu, 'Re-envisioning Heritage Language Education', p. 207.

<sup>88</sup> Wu, 'Re-envisioning Heritage Language Education', p. 208.

<sup>89</sup> Duff and Doherty, 'Learning "Chinese" as a Heritage Language', p. 155.

<sup>90</sup> Wu, 'Re-envisioning Heritage Language Education', p. 208.

<sup>91</sup> Duff and Doherty, 'Learning "Chinese" as a Heritage Language', p. 157.



#### 5.4 Meaning of ‘Chineseness’

As for many terms in this paper, there are also many problems that researchers have encountered in defining ‘Chinese’.<sup>92</sup> In the article of ‘On Not Speaking Chinese’ by Ang, a professor of cultural studies in Australia, she refers to herself as trilingual, being ethnically Chinese and a speaker of Indonesian, Dutch and English. She did not have a connection with her mythic homeland, because she was born in Indonesia and later lived in the Netherlands and Australia, but she was constantly being confronted by non-Chinese people about her ‘Chineseness’. This was mostly about her lack of Chinese proficiency, but also about how people defined her. Ang was not seen as Chinese in China, but neither was she seen as Australian in Australia or Dutch in the Netherlands.<sup>93</sup> This situation of Ang, is often seen in my research, and thus is by no means a unique case.

One of the Chinese School teachers states this about her students:

‘我觉得他们会更认为自己是一个跨在荷兰文化和中国文化之间的中国人，但是绝对不会认为他们是荷兰人，因为他们知道整个的荷兰社会并不会认同他们。’

*‘I think that they think they are a Chinese person that is stuck between the Dutch and Chinese culture, because they know that they will never be recognized as Dutch by the Dutch society.’<sup>94</sup>*

The motivation of heritage learners is thus often stimulated by how they are defined by others, and thus are aware of the fact that they are lacking in a language which should be part of their heritage of being Chinese, which is usually based on assumptions and stereotypes of what people think it means to be Chinese.<sup>95</sup> According to Duff and Doherty, learning the heritage language comes with complexities, since the ‘Chineseness’ and Chinese heritage are terms that are not fixed, but rather problematic, ambiguous and elastic.<sup>96</sup> Since the terms ‘Chineseness’ and Chinese heritage are often used by the Chinese heritage language learners not in a way to describe themselves, but rather as a definition that they are being labelled by people outside the group.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Wong, ‘Diversity and Difference’, p. 317.

<sup>93</sup> Ang, ‘On Not Speaking Chinese’, p. 30.

<sup>94</sup> Appendix 9.2.

<sup>95</sup> Duff and Doherty, ‘Learning “Chinese” as a Heritage Language’, p. 154.

<sup>96</sup> Duff and Doherty, ‘Learning “Chinese” as a Heritage Language’, p. 153.

<sup>97</sup> Duff and Doherty, ‘Learning “Chinese” as a Heritage Language’, p. 154.

## 5.5 Imagined Communities

In the well-known interpretation of Benedict Anderson, imaged communities are individuals that are part of a nation, whether big or small. They would never meet, know or hear most of the people, and thus they imagine that they are part of a community.<sup>98</sup> According to Ang, the proficiency of an individual is seen as an important signifier to how people in the diasporic communities identify themselves.<sup>99</sup> However, according to Oriyama's research, the level of proficiency of people's heritage language is not related to the cultural identity or the group.<sup>100</sup> According to Francis, Mau and Archer, imagined communities can have a big impact on how people want to learn the heritage language and how they imagined to be identified.<sup>101</sup>

As I mentioned before in chapter 4.1, being part of a community has to do with distinguishing yourself from others. This is certainly true for Chinese heritage learners: it has to do with social belonging, wanting to be part of a community, and thus defining themselves to create a distance between the Chinese community and non-Chinese communities. However, the imagined Chinese communities are internally separated between Mandarin-speaking students that learn Mandarin and those from Chinese dialect-speaking students that also learn Mandarin. As for the Mandarin-speaking students, this is mainly because they wanted to be more integrated into their own existing community. For example, Wong states that students wanted to make their family proud and not be an embarrassment. Another reason would be not being able to reproduce and maintain the Chinese language in further generations.<sup>102</sup>

Norton calls learning the heritage language an investment, where the learners reorganize their identities and relationships through learning a second language. She argues that these investments expand symbolic or material resources, which thus increases the value of a cultural capital of an individual in the social world. According to Norton, this investment is related to the imagined community that Anderson wrote about: the learner of the heritage language envisions him or herself in a specific society. On the one hand, the imaged community is where the learner has similar life experiences with other members of the linguistic community. On the other hand, the learner reminds him or herself of their ideal selves and how they want

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<sup>98</sup> Anderson, 'Imagined communities', p. 6.

<sup>99</sup> Ang, 'On Not Speaking Chinese', p. 30.

<sup>100</sup> Oriyama, 'Heritage Language Maintenance and Japanese Identity Formation'.

<sup>101</sup> Francis, Mau and Archer, 'Speaking of Identity', p. 206.

<sup>102</sup> Wong, 'Diversity and Difference', p. 322.

themselves to be.<sup>103</sup> According to Wong, development of one's heritage language from a dialect does indeed benefit their ethnic sense and cultural identity.<sup>104</sup> The changing socioeconomic world and the expansion of the global marketplace have created a need for people that are able to speak other languages other than English. Heller even states that understanding other languages has been linked with the idea that knowing languages is a way to control and have access to economic resources.<sup>105</sup>

According to Wong, who designed an ethnic identity development model, the attitude of heritage language learners develops from ethnic ambivalence/evasion to ethnic emergence to identity incorporation. Thus, the cultural identity of heritage language learners is influenced by both economic and cultural aspects.<sup>106</sup> Thus, the dialect-speaking students aspire to be more international and different by learning Mandarin, to distinguish themselves in the global markets. As such, they are attempting to become members of the 'dominant' group, by putting themselves on top and being ahead of others.<sup>107</sup>

This construct, of how the Chinese heritage language learners are structuring and restructuring their own cultural identity, is according to Wong defined by versions of modern, transnational and intercultural experiences. Wong argues that the diaspora represents the identities serving as a bridge between cultures: it is not the place that is relevant but rather the link between them.<sup>108</sup> Where the term 华侨 (*huáqiáo*), as mentioned in the introduction, fits perfectly in this context. The origin of this term refers to the Chinese overseas (*huá*), that acted like a bridge (*qiáo*) to bring overseas knowledge back to China.<sup>109</sup> Kanno and Norton even state that the term of the cultural identities of heritage language learners must not only be understood in the real world, but also in terms of possible worlds that will be created.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Norton, 'Identity and Language', p. 10.

<sup>104</sup> Wong, 'Diversity and Difference', p. 327.

<sup>105</sup> Heller, 'Bilingualism and Identity in Post-Modern World', p. 12.

<sup>106</sup> Wong, 'Diversity and Difference', p. 328.

<sup>107</sup> Dagenais, 'Accessing Imagined Communities through Multilingualism and Immersion Education', p. 272.

<sup>108</sup> Wong, 'Diversity and Difference', p. 329.

<sup>109</sup> Wang, 'Upgrading the Migrant', p. 4.

<sup>110</sup> Kanno and Norton, 'Imagined Communities and Educational Possibilities', p. 249.

## 5.6 'Chinese' Language

Many diasporic communities use different Chinese dialects than Mandarin Chinese in their daily communications. This all depends on which part of China they come from, and it is even true to a certain extent of different Chinese writing systems. After 1949, China reinforced a new law and changed the traditional writing system, which was derived from the classical Chinese, to simplified Chinese. However, in the autonomous regions Hong Kong and Taiwan, the official writing is still until this day traditional.<sup>111</sup>

Lü and Koda have argued that the amount of Chinese that is spoken at home by family also has a big impact on the level of Chinese heritage learners. The support in Chinese language was especially useful for the children's Chinese's oral vocabulary knowledge. The outcome of their research is that the support of Chinese language and literacy has a positive impact on the children's acquisition of literacy skills, not only in Chinese, but also in the dominant language of the country. Lü and Koda indicate that most of their research subjects gave this Chinese language support, mostly by having a fair amount of books in both languages. Another good way to give language support was by just speaking to the children in Chinese, but especially giving support and time for their homework for the Chinese heritage schools.<sup>112</sup>

Chinese heritage learners struggle with many aspects in learning the language. According to Luo, many Chinese heritage learners have been struggling with anxiety while learning the language. In her research, she divides the Chinese heritage learners into three groups: learners with Mandarin background, learners with other Chinese dialect backgrounds and learners without any Chinese background. Their anxiety levels differ with the different backgrounds of the students, and even the aspect of what they struggle with also differs.<sup>113</sup> According to her research, generally, writing was the most anxiety provoking with learning the Chinese heritage language, compared to listening and speaking. One of the factors for this anxiety was the fact that non-Chinese heritage speakers identified them with Chinese, and being able to speak the language.<sup>114</sup>

Especially students that never spoke Chinese at home had high levels of anxiety while learning Chinese. On the basis of their physical appearance, both teachers and classmates had high

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<sup>111</sup> Lan and Hancock, 'Learning Chinese in Diasporic Communities', p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Lü and Koda, 'Impact of Home Language and Literacy Support on English-Chinese Bilingual Acquisition among Chinese Heritage Language learners', p. 211.

<sup>113</sup> Luo, 'Chinese Language Learning Anxiety', p. 22.

<sup>114</sup> Luo, 'Chinese Language Learning Anxiety', p. 26.

expectations of them.<sup>115</sup> Since they could obviously not meet those expectations, having to speak Chinese in class caused them much anxiety. Learners with Mandarin background had more anxiety when it came to writing Chinese. This was mainly to the fact that while they spoke the language, they saw themselves as lacking Chinese writing skills. When it came to writing, students from a non-Chinese background had lower levels of anxiety, precisely because the proficiency gap between non-mandarin speakers and mandarin speakers was smaller in that area. Thus, most of this anxiety was created because of perceptions of different values of how their proficiency was supposed to be in terms of their identities related to social demands.<sup>116</sup>

The reason why learners with a Mandarin background have less anxiety in speaking is because they are already exposed to the language by speaking and listening Chinese at home. According to Luo, dialect speakers at home have no advantage compared to learners with no Chinese background at all, since they both are not exposed by the Mandarin language at home.<sup>117</sup>

Wen has shown that there are different factors of motivation to learn Chinese as a heritage language. The first one is purely an internal motivation, because they think it's 'fun' to learn Chinese. The second one is the global significance of the Chinese language, such as job prospects and traveling to a Chinese-speaking country. The third, interest in Chinese culture, most likely because of media.<sup>118</sup> The fourth one was related to language achievements and the expected efforts that they were supposed to have. Fifth factor, appreciation of their own culture, being able to socialize in their community. Last one, motivations to fulfill their academic requirements, understand the importance of learning Chinese.<sup>119</sup>

According to He, learning the Chinese heritage language also depends on the origins of the group, the evolution of their historical situation, their present life and how they project and perceive their future. For example, according to Chang, most Chinese-Americans were located in Chinatown, which creates some sort of belonging and social pressure. However, nowadays, many ethnic Chinese people live in diverse locations, but they do define themselves and are defined by others, because of their physical appearance with their ancestral homelands.<sup>120</sup> Thus according to He, motivations for learning the Chinese heritage language are influenced by time,

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<sup>115</sup> Luo, 'Chinese Language Learning Anxiety', p. 27.

<sup>116</sup> Luo, 'Chinese Language Learning Anxiety', p. 35.

<sup>117</sup> Luo, 'Chinese Language Learning Anxiety', p. 36.

<sup>118</sup> Wen, 'Chinese Language Learning Motivation', p. 341.

<sup>119</sup> Wen, 'Chinese Language Learning Motivation', p. 342.

<sup>120</sup> He, 'Toward an Identity Theory of the Developments of Chinese as a Heritage Language', p. 18.

space and identity.<sup>121</sup> As such, Child learners can be very different from someone that is an adult.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> He, 'Toward an Identity Theory of the Developments of Chinese as a Heritage Language', p. 18.

<sup>122</sup> He, 'Toward an Identity Theory of the Developments of Chinese as a Heritage Language', p. 21.

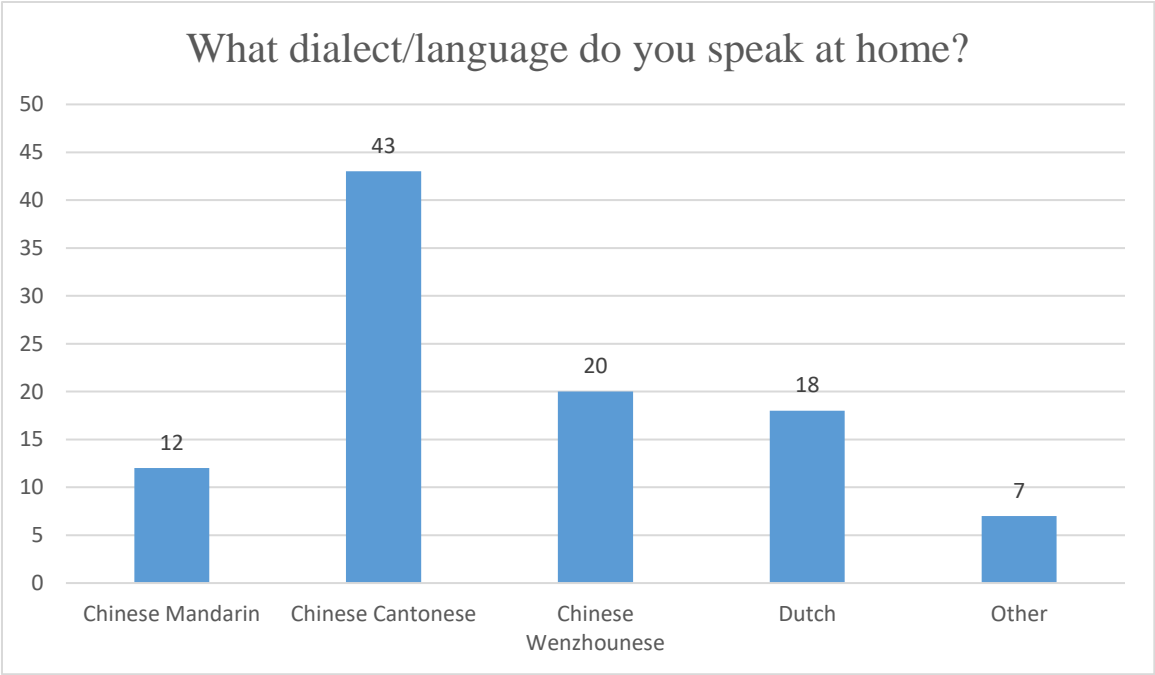
# 6 Results

In this chapter, I am presenting my results of the three types of researches I have done to find if there is any correlation between the Chinese language (Mandarin) and cultural identity of the Chinese diaspora of the Netherlands. I have divided this research into surveys to reach a bigger group, and conducted two types of interviews. The first one is an interview to four Chinastudies students, where go further into the questions of my survey. The second interview is to three Chinese school teachers and one Chinese school principal.

## 6.1 Results Survey

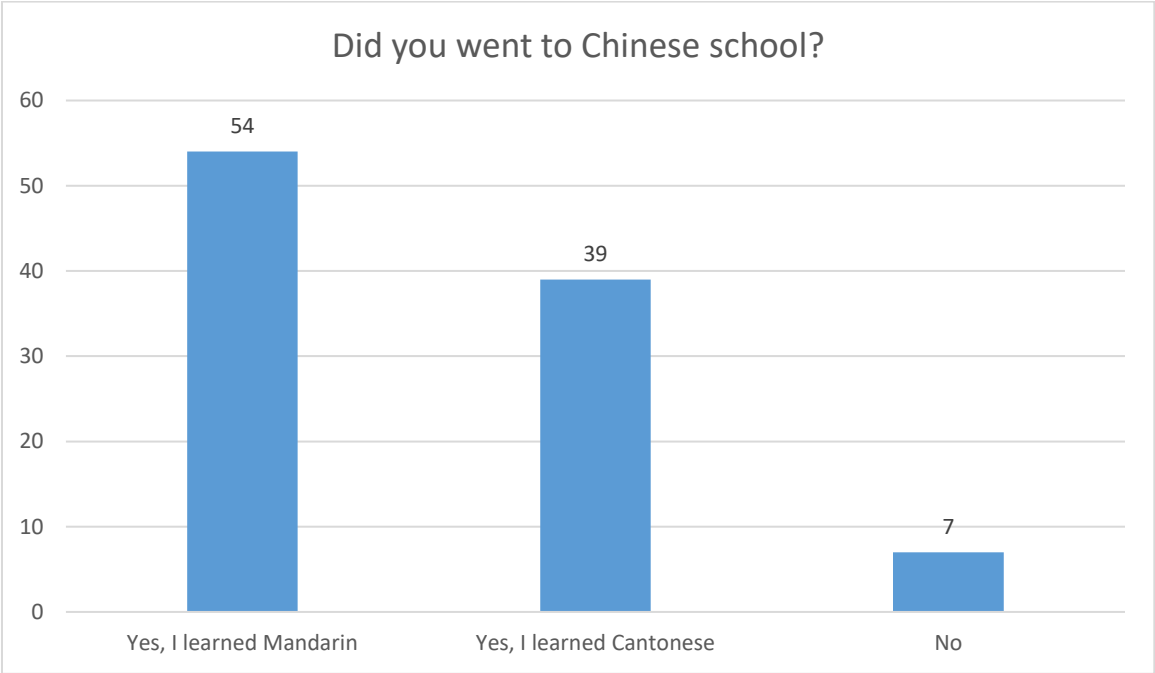
I conducted a Survey of 100 young people that have a Chinese background, but are born and raised in the Netherlands. I have asked them 10 multiple-choice questions, and presented each individual question into charts.

### Question 1

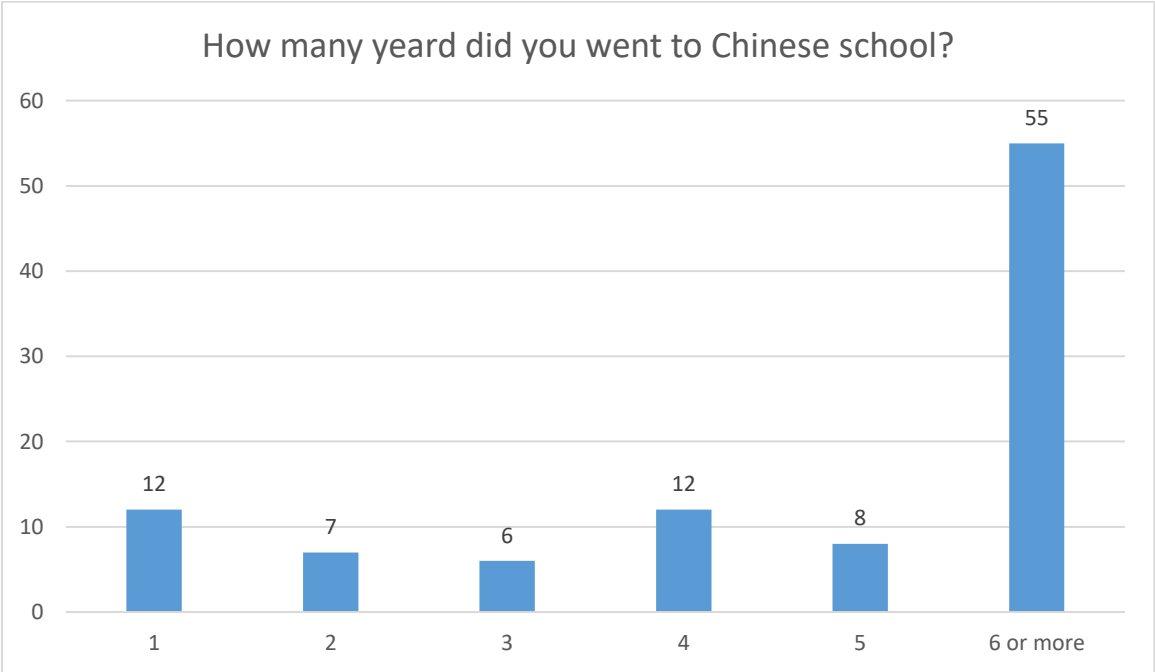


Other answers were Dutch and Cantonese, Mandarin and Cantonese, Hakka dialect, Enping dialect and Yunnan dialect.

**Question 2**

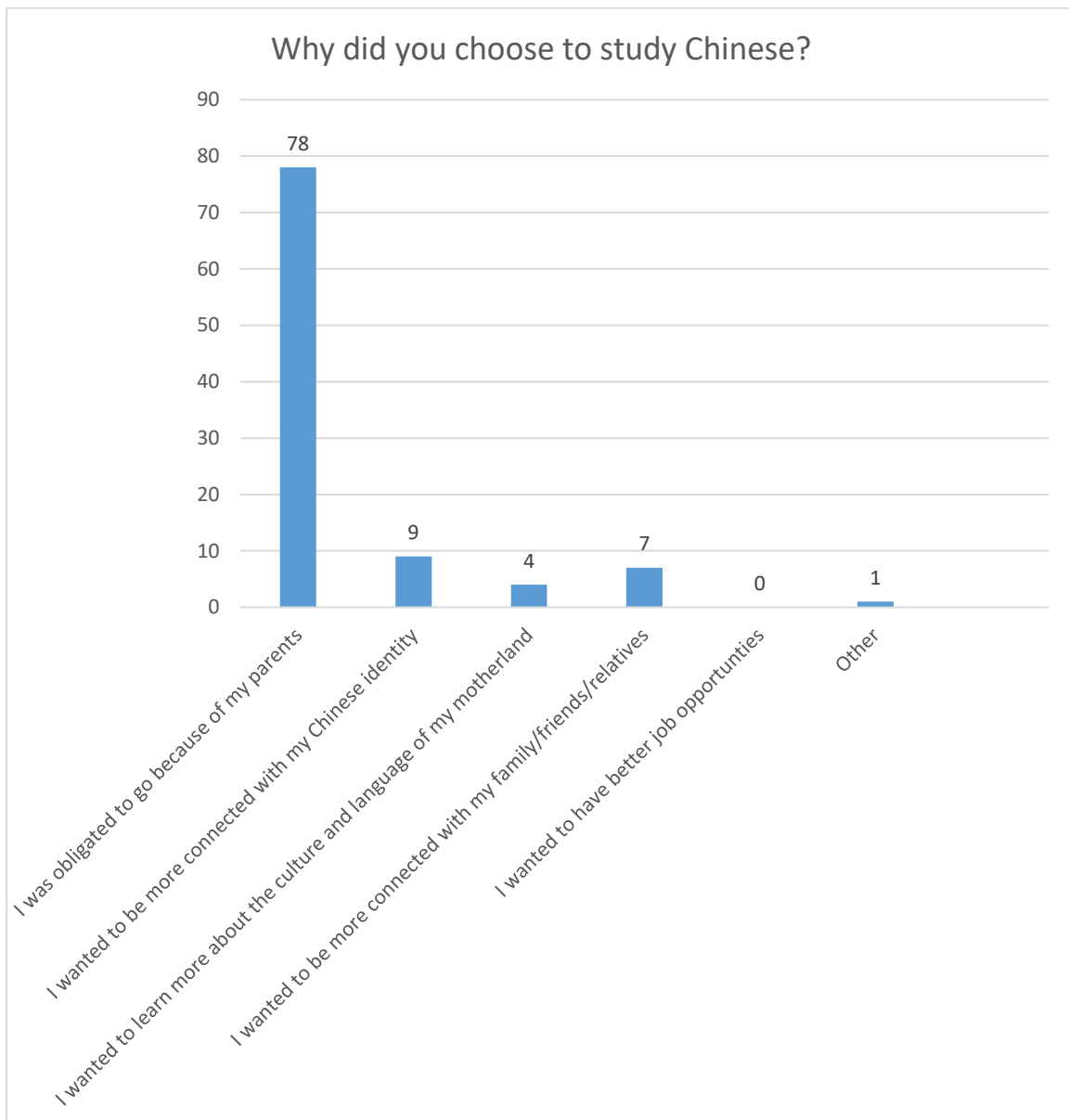


**Question 3**



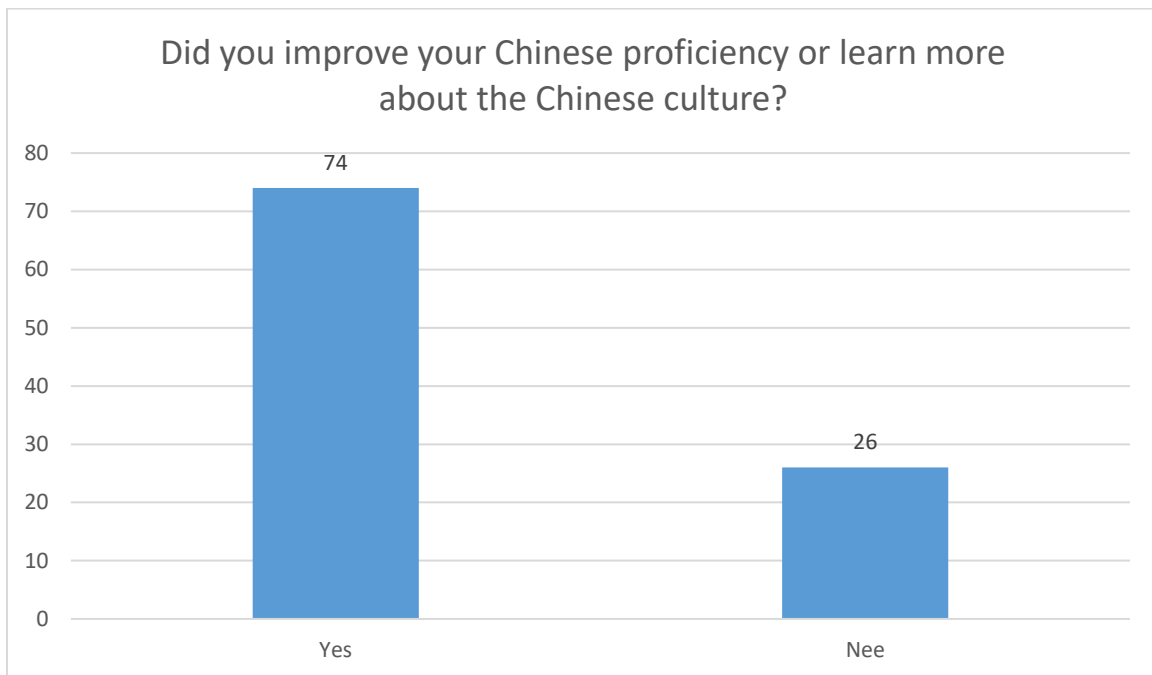


#### Question 4

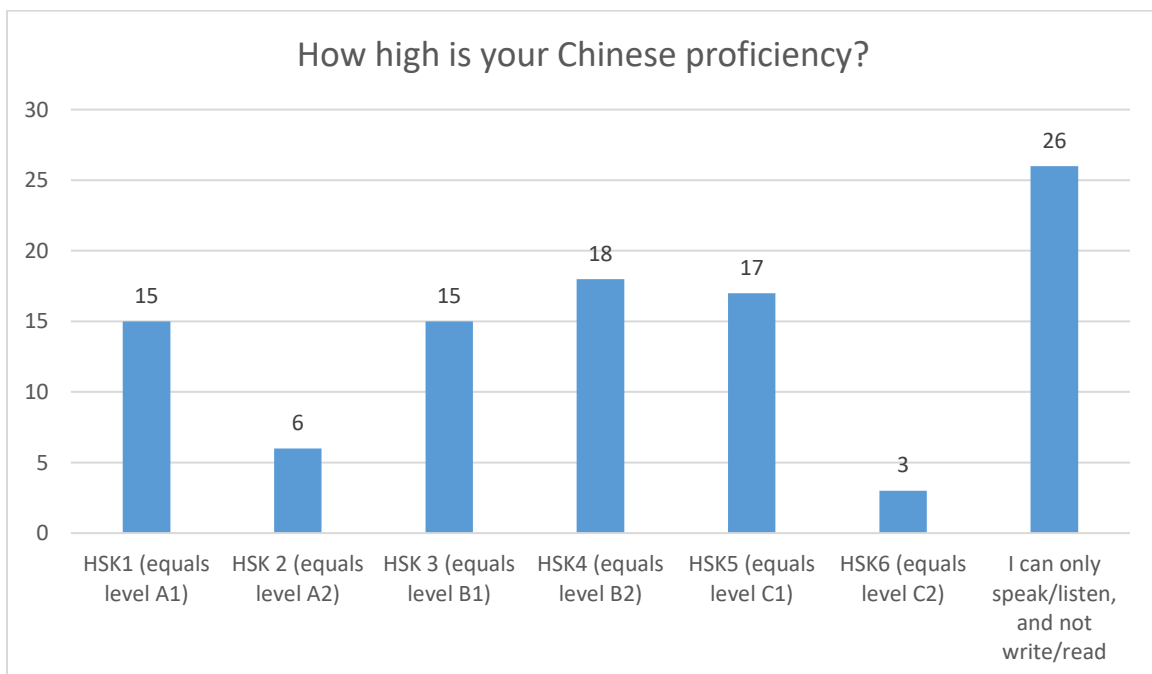


One respondent answered with other: I thought it was interesting, and I was obligated to go because of my parents.

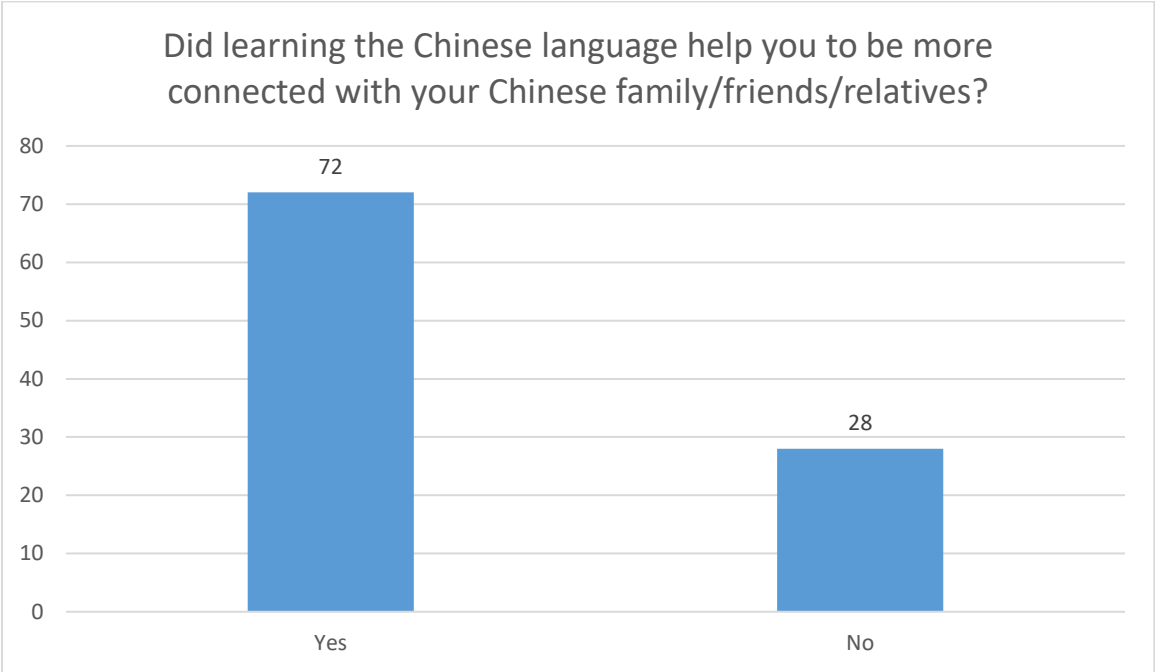
### Question 5



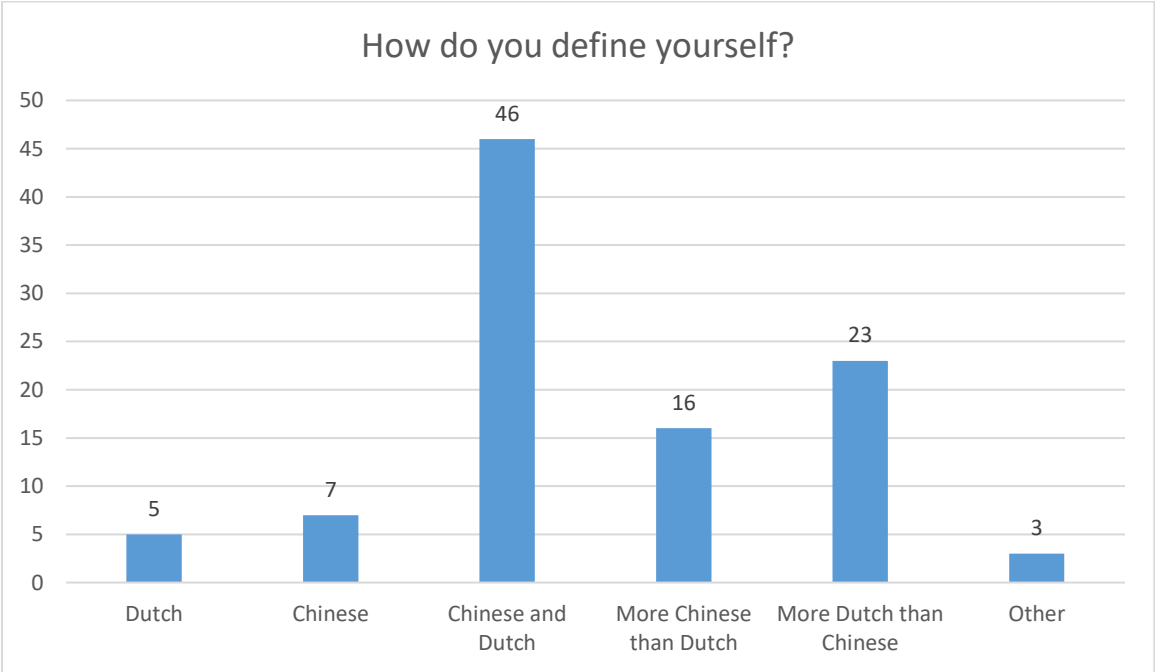
### Question 6



**Question 7**

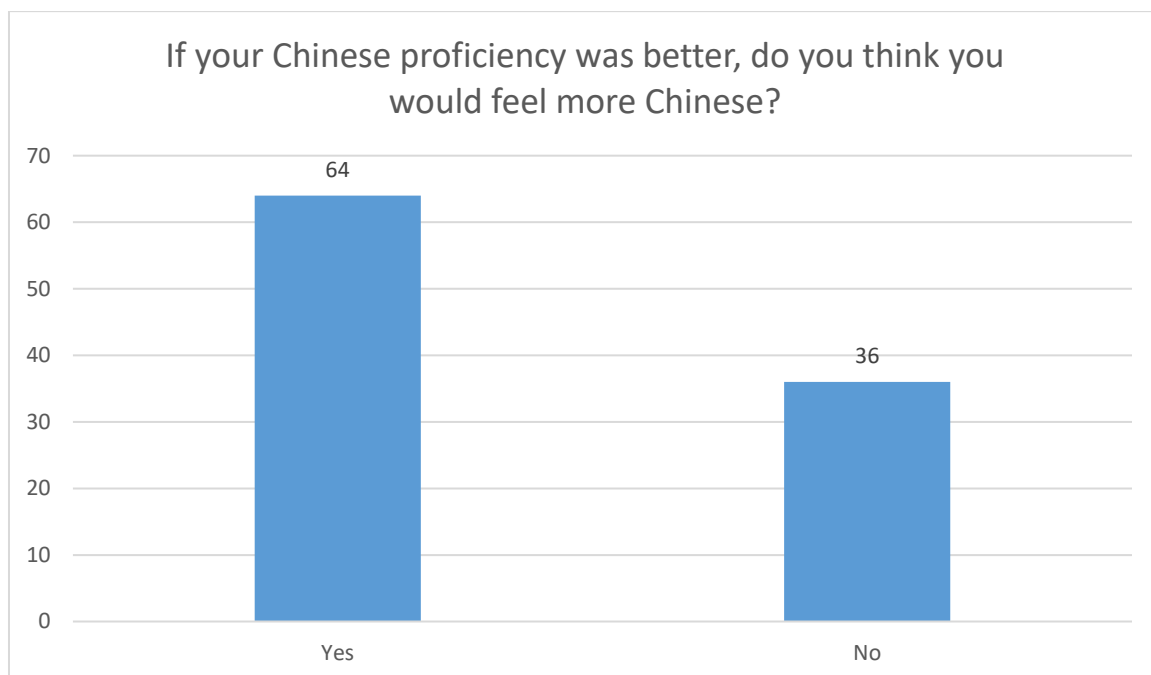


**Question 8**

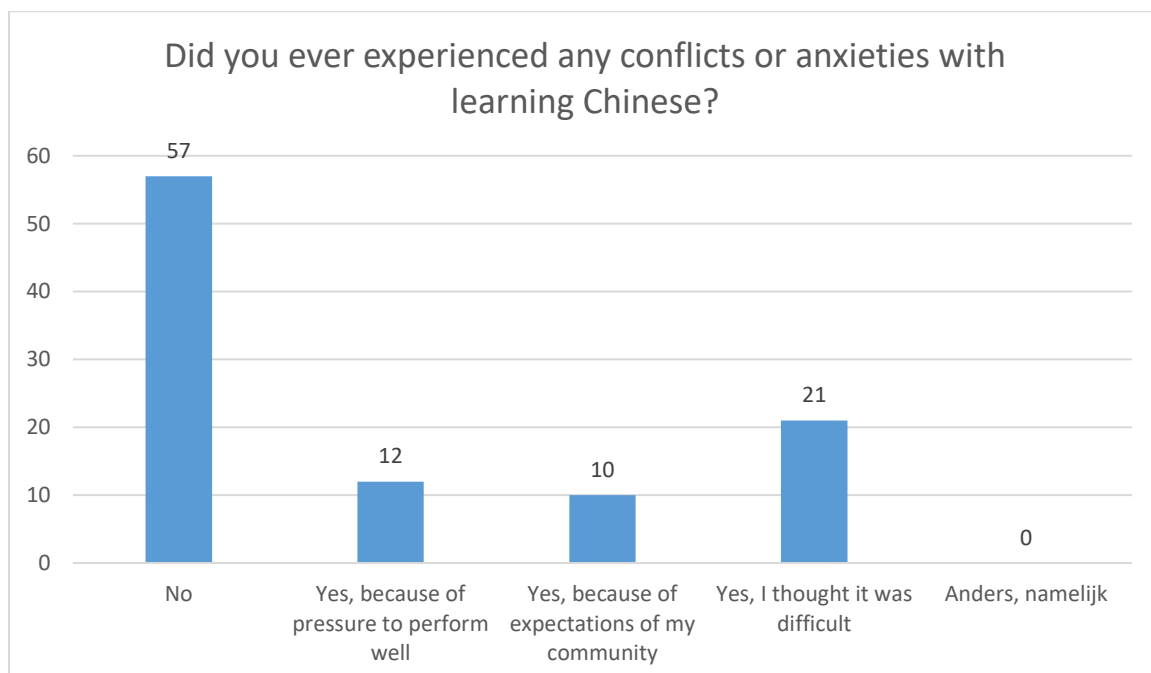


One respondent answered with Thai and Chinese, and two answered with having an identity crisis.

### Question 9



### Question 10



Although, 56.38 percent went to Chinese school for 6 years or more, the majority of my respondents were only able to speak or listen and not write or read Chinese. I assume the majority of the people never write or read any Chinese after they finish Chinese school. As in my own experience it is difficult to memorize even by learning it on a regular basis, it would be even harder to remember without using it. Although, most of the respondents are only able to speak and listen, the majority of the respondents did feel that learning Chinese made them more connected to their family, friends and relatives. As such, about 64 percent of the respondents thought that having a higher Chinese proficiency would make them feel more Chinese. As the majority of the respondents, 46 percent felt they were half-Chinese and half-Dutch.

## 6.2 Interview results Chinese students

I have also interviewed four Dutch born Chinese students that studied Chinastudies, since this was their own decision and not the same as going to Chinese schools when they were younger. I asked them six questions, and divided them as R1, R2, R3 and R4 (R=Respondent).

The questions were:

1. Which language/dialect do you speak at home?
2. Why did you choose to study Chinese?
3. In what way did learning Mandarin (which is a different Chinese dialect that you grew up with) made you more connected with your roots?
4. Do you think learning Mandarin made you feel more Chinese or more connected with China or your Chinese family/friends?
5. Would you identify yourself as more Chinese or more Dutch?
6. Did you ever experience any conflicts or anxieties with learning Chinese?

The complete answers to my interviews can be found in the appendix, since I will only give a summarize for my results in this chapter.

R1, spoke the Cantonese dialect at home, and her main purpose of studying Chinese was more for economic reasons. She says that learning Mandarin did not make her feel more connected with her roots nor did it with her family, since she speaks a different dialect at home. However, she does think it makes it is easier for her to speak Mandarin, for example, ordering food while

traveling in China. She also identifies herself as Dutch and did not feel any anxieties or many conflicts while learning Mandarin Chinese.

R2, also speaks the Cantonese dialect at home, and learned Mandarin because of social belonging. She said she felt 'out of place', while traveling in China. She does feel connected with her roots by learning Mandarin, however she did not feel like she connected more with her family, since she also speaks a different dialect at home. She felt like she had certain Chinese habits and beliefs, though she did feel like she did not belong while traveling in China. She also feels like there were more expectations with learning Mandarin due to the fact that she already speaks Cantonese. At the same time she thought it was frustrating to learn a language that sounds a bit different than her dialect, but at the same it overlaps.

R3, speaks Dutch at home, and wanted to learn more about her background, because she felt like she did not have much knowledge about her Chinese side. Another reason was because she felt like Mandarin would be very useful. This respondent did feel more connected with her roots and her Chinese family by learning the language. However, she would still identify herself as more Dutch than Chinese. She did feel stressed sometimes during the study, but it was not specific because of the language.

R4, speaks the Wenzhounese dialect at home. She started with learning Chinese for economic purposes, and although she is still glad that she chose to learn Chinese and finished her bachelor, she did switch to a different major. This respondent felt like she has more of an understanding to the mindset of her family, and she certainly feels like she is more connected to Chinese people. She especially feels like she has more of a social belonging while being able to communicate with Chinese people in Chinatown or while traveling in China. Although she thinks that her Chinese is not near to perfect, she does identify herself with 62 percent Chinese and 39 percent Dutch. Since she gained a much deeper knowledge of the Chinese culture, and all though she was influenced by the Dutch culture, it never felt like it was part of her. She did experience anxiety while learning Chinese, however this was also not because of the language but more due to the fact of the high expectations of her parents growing up.

### 6.3 Chinese identity?

Many of my respondents of my survey identified themselves with being one part Chinese and one part Dutch. Also, in my interview with the 4 four students, two identified themselves being more Dutch, one respondent identified herself part Chinese and one part Dutch and the last

respondent identified herself being more Chinese. However, it is also interesting to see the views of the Chinese schoolteachers and a principal of the Chinese schools. Especially, because these are mainly first generation Chinese people that migrated to the Netherlands, and were born and raised in China. I will you show you some of the interesting answers of my respondents, while the complete interview is shown in the appendix.

One teacher said:

‘他们更像荷兰人。他们的使用的语言、思维方式、习惯（饮食习惯多受家庭影响），他们的要求、学习方式也是荷兰式的。’

*‘They are more like Dutch people. Their use of language, way of thinking, habits (eating habits are mainly influenced by family), their requirements and learning style are also Dutch.’<sup>123</sup>*

Another answered ‘香蕉人’ to my questions if her students are more Dutch or Chinese. This translates to “banana-person”, which refers to someone with a yellow skin but is white on the inside. She means that her students have the appearance of a Chinese person but act as someone that is Dutch.<sup>124</sup>

However, the principal of the Chinese school said:

‘我觉得这些学生在开始学习中文时像荷兰人；在学习多年中文后更像中国人。’

*‘I think that these students are like Dutch people when they start learning Chinese, but after a few years of learning Chinese they are more like Chinese people.’<sup>125</sup>*

Another teacher answered:

‘在社会行为上，我觉得这些学生更像荷兰人，但是生活习俗各个方面还是更加倾向于中国人。’

*‘In terms of social behaviour, I think that these students are more Dutch, but their daily customs are more inclined to Chinese people.’<sup>126</sup>*

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<sup>123</sup> Appendix 9.3

<sup>124</sup> Appendix 9.5.

<sup>125</sup> Appendix 9.2.

<sup>126</sup> Appendix 9.4.

However, they do think that students with higher proficiency of the Chinese language are more likely to feel Chinese.

‘在我看来，中文语言水平较高的学生是对其中国人的身份有更高的认同感。’

*‘In my opinion, students with a higher Chinese proficiency have more of feeling of having a Chinese identity.’<sup>127</sup>*

Although, the majority of the Chinese Dutch of the younger generation do identify themselves as part Chinese and part Dutch. The results of my interviews with the older generation do view these younger people more as a Dutch person. However, they do think that having a higher Chinese proficiency makes a person more Chinese. Perhaps, this is correlated with the different views of how they define the Chinese identity.

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<sup>127</sup> Appendix 9.2.



## 7 Conclusion

In my secondary literature research, I have certainly found that there are aspects of correlation between language and identity. In this context, the language acts as representative symbol, this is especially the case with dialects. The Cantonese dialect acts as an indicator for groupness in Hong Kong, where there are political tensions with mainland China. Thus, this Chinese dialect has given the people in Hong Kong a sense of cultural identity. Since they position themselves as being different from the 'other'. However, as I mentioned earlier, the correlation between the Chinese language and the cultural identity of the Chinese diaspora in the Netherlands is much more complicated. Since the Chinese schools on Saturdays, high schools, universities and other educational organizations in the Netherlands are teaching Mandarin Chinese, while the majority of my respondents are Chinese dialect speakers.

My research shows the majority of my respondent went to six or more years to Chinese school, it was surprising that 26 respondents, which was the biggest group among the other answers, could only speak and listen, and not write and read Chinese. The reason may be that they do communicate in Chinese at home, but do not try to maintain their writing and readings skills after leaving Chinese school, since 78 respondents only went to Chinese school because they were obligated to go by their parents. Thus, this may influence these young Chinese Dutch people on how they view language that is being associated with their own culture. They may think that being not able to speak Chinese, means simply that they thus are not Chinese. As such, 64 respondents replied that they did think they would feel more Chinese, if their Chinese proficiency was higher. In some way, I do think there is a correlation between language and cultural identity. However, in this case, this only goes to extent where people only are able to speak and listen, and are not on a very high level in writing and reading the language. However, I found that most of my Cantonese speakers went to Cantonese school, where the complex issue of a dialect speaker learning the Mandarin language does not exist in this case.

In the results of my interviews with four Chinastudies students are very broad, as it was hard to draw a line to answer my question. Since they were all students that already graduated Chinastudies or are in their final period of graduation, I do assume that the level of their Chinese proficiency in speaking and listening as well as writing and reading are on a high level.

My first respondent did not feel any more connected to China or any of her Chinese family, relatives and friends by learning the Mandarin, since she only speaks in Cantonese with them. However, learning mandarin is related to economic prospects for this respondent. This also

came back in my secondary literature research, where dialect speakers that learn the Mandarin language are indeed more interested in the economic prospects of this language.

My second respondent did not feel that learning Mandarin made her more connected with her family, because she also speaks Cantonese at home. However it did made her feel more connected with China and other Chinese people. This was mainly because, she felt like she did not feel like she fitted in the picture of the society. I have also found this in my secondary literature review, where heritage learners, imagined themselves to be in a specific place in society. Where the motivation of learning Mandarin as a dialect speaker, is mainly because of social belonging and what they imagined themselves to be.

Although my third respondent does speak Dutch at home, learning Chinese did made her feel more connected with her roots and her family. She wanted to find more about her background, perhaps this interest is aroused from the lack of Chinese language that she speaks. However, she did still felt more Dutch than Chinese. In this case, because she speaks Dutch to her family, this respondent is less relevant for my research.

My fourth respondent, did say she felt more Chinese, after learning Mandarin. Though, this was only to an extend to her own circle, since she did not feel any connection with the ‘Chinese-Chinese’ people that are living in China. Though, it was also noticeable that the Chinese school teachers and principal viewed their students more Dutch than Chinese. Thus, it may be good to mention, that the individual views on what a ‘Chinese identity’ is, may differ from person to person. In my opinion, these results are very broad, however, I certainly see a correlation between learning Mandarin, as a dialect speaker, and their cultural identity in respondent two, three, and four. In general, my four respondent did feel more Chinese after learning Mandarin. However, most of them did not feel more connected with their Chinese family, which is not surprising, since they speak a different dialect or language at home. Thus, choosing to study Chinastudies, as a dialect speaker, seems like something that is mainly because of structuring and restructuring their cultural identity, as I also mentioned this in my secondary literature research. In this case, it is about social belonging, and what they think is expected by others and fitting in a specific society.

With my research, I will be adding to the existing discussions about the correlation of language and cultural identity of Chinese diasporic communities, especially of those that are mentioning the issues of a dialect speaker. Since, many of my respondents of my survey and interview were Cantonese dialect speakers and also went to Cantonese school. This may also be interesting for

future research. Since they might have a strong feeling for their Cantonese identity, opposed to the Chinese identity. It would be interesting to go deeper into this, and compare the Cantonese identity perhaps with other Chinese dialects communities. While most of the existing literature, focusses on mainly countries, where the Chinese diasporic communities are most likely bigger, such as the US and Canada. I did not found any academic researches that are related to the Chinese diaspora of the Netherlands. Thus, it should be noted, that my research cannot be generalized. Especially, since this research is only an exploratory research, in which I only was able to do research among a small group of people. Thus, it is hard to draw a representative conclusion to this research question. However, my research could serve as a start to future researchers that are related to the correlation between the Chinese language and cultural identities of Chinese dialect speakers.

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## 9 Appendix

### 9.1 Interview questions teacher/principals of Chinese schools in the Netherlands (English/Chinese)

Hi,

I am a Chinese studies master student at Leiden University, and for my master thesis, I am researching the correlation between Chinese language and the Cultural identity of Chinese people born in the Netherlands. (huaren/huayi) I am looking for Chinese schoolteachers, principals or other people that are related to these organizations, who are interested in sharing and teaching the Chinese heritage language and culture. I would be very thankful, if you could answer these few questions for my research.

您好，

我是一名就读于莱顿大学中国研究专业的学生，在我的硕士毕业论文中，我将研究定位于在荷兰出生的中国人群体，并且探寻在他们身上中文和文化身份认同的关系。我的调查对象主要为致力于传播中国语言文化遗产的人群，如：中文学校教师、校长、以及其他与上述个人与组织有关的人。感谢您的参与，请您回答以下几个问题。

#### **Chinese school teachers**

##### **中文学校教师**

What is the purpose of having Chinese schools in the Netherlands? (Think about economic reasons/social belonging/social support/political reasons/language and culture learning/community feeling)

请问在荷兰创办中文学校的初衷是什么？（请从经济、社会、政治、文化以及归属感方面进行分析）

What do you think the reason is for students (or their parents) to learn Chinese?

请问您认为孩子（父母）学习中文的原因有哪些？

Why are you interested in teaching Chinese language and culture?

为什么您对中国语言文化的教学感兴趣？

Do you think the students feel more Chinese or Dutch?

您觉得这些学生更像中国人还是荷兰人？

Do you think learning the Chinese language has impact on their cultural identity and how they define themselves?

在您看来，学生对荷兰语的学习是否对他们的文化身份以及身份认同产生影响？

Do you think that students with a higher level of the Chinese language have a stronger feeling for their Chinese identity?

在您看来，中文语言水平较高的学生是否对其中国人的身份有更高的认同感？

### **Chinese school principals + above questions**

#### **中文学校校长**

How did this school start? How did it develop overtime?

请问这所学校是如何创办的？并且怎样一路发展到现在？

How are Chinese schools funded? (non-profit? Chinese Embassy?)

请问中文学校的资金来源主要是什么？（非营利组织或是中国使馆资助）

How many students are there in this school?

请问现在学校中一共有多少学生？

What is the average grade that students stop with going to Chinese school?

请问大多数学生一般在几年级以后就停止在中文学校的学习？

Do you also learn students about Chinese culture? If yes, how?

你是否也教给孩子中国文化？如果是，是以怎样的方法实现？

## **9.2 Answers Chinese school Principal**

1. 请问在荷兰创办中文学校的初衷是什么？（请从经济、社会、政治、文化以及归属感方面进行分析）

答：在荷兰创办中文学校的初衷是想让孩子可以有系统的学习中国语言和文化。

2. 请问您认为孩子（父母）学习中文的原因有哪些？

答：我认为年龄小的孩子学习中文的原因是父母亲要求他们的，年龄较大的孩子学习中文的原因是他们对中文感兴趣，想了解更多中国语言和文化。

3. 为什么您对中国语言文化的教学感兴趣？

答：我对中国语言文化的教学感兴趣是因为我不想在荷兰土生土长的华裔子弟不懂中文而被同化。

4. 您觉得这些学生更像中国人还是荷兰人？

答：我觉得这些学生在开始学习中文时像荷兰人；在学习多年中文后更像中国人。

5. 在您看来，学生对荷兰语的学习是否对他们的文化身份以及身份认同产生影响？

答：在我看来，学生对荷兰语的学习是对他们的文化身份以及身份认同产生影响的；因为如果学生在出生时已是荷兰国籍，而在适龄时上学是学习荷兰语的话，学生一般认为他/她本人是荷兰人。随着年龄的增长，他/她才会慢慢产生寻根的想法。

6. 在您看来，中文语言水平较高的学生是否对其中国人的身份有更高的认同感？

答：在我看来，中文语言水平较高的学生是对其中国人的身份有更高的认同感。

7. 你是否也教给孩子中国文化？如果是，是以怎样的方法实现？

答：我也教给孩子中国文化，一般是通过书本和多媒体的方法实现。

8. 请问这所学校是如何创办的？并且怎样一路发展到现在？

答：这所学校的前身是在教会开始的，当年一些母亲到教会想学习荷兰语，因为孩子们在旁边吵闹；我们就龄孩子到楼上去教他们中文。后来，因为来学习中文的孩子数量越来越多，教会已容纳不下了；我们就向一所荷兰小学租用他们 10 教室于星期六教孩子们中文。

9. 请问现在学校中一共有多少学生？

答：现在学校中一共有约二百学生。

10. 请问中文学校的资金来源主要是什么？（非营利组织或是中国使馆资助）

答：中文学校的资金来源主要是学费和一些捐款。本校是一个基金会，也是一个非营利组织。

11. 请问大多数学生一般在几年级以后就停止在中文学校的学习？

答：大多数学生一般在小学六年级以后就停止在中文学校的学习。

### 9.3 Answers Chinese school teacher 1

1. 请问在荷兰创办中文学校的初衷是什么？（请从经济、社会、政治、文化以及归属感方面进行分析）

答：我认为在荷创办中文学校最早而又最朴实的初衷是：让在国外出生的华人后代能

学习汉语，这可能源自于来自中国的父母辈的期望。希望后代能与之交流、理解和了解一些自己血统的文化。在骨子里有种对根的不舍之情。这种情结普遍存在，继而学校越来越多，中文学校的办学也越来越大。最初只有粤语的教学，是因为华人群体主要是香港地区的移民。随着中国的开放和对外交流的发展，各地的移民和因各种工作关系来荷华人的大量增加，粤语的教学已不能适应形式的要求，教学逐渐由粤语为主发展成粤、普的双语教学和单纯的普通话教学。随着中国对外交流的更进步发展和国际经济实力的壮大，全世界的经济重心向中国转移，大量需求懂得汉语的人才。此时，对中文的情结开始转向了中文的利用价值。大部份的家长送子女到中文学校学习汉语的目的，已不仅是为了让子女了解祖国文化，同时也希望它成为将来的一种求职谋生的技能。在整个过程中不乏一些喜爱中华文化的外籍人士，不愿完全不认识半个祖国文化的混血家庭孩子，更有很多善心的华人儿童收养家庭送孩子认识他来源国的文化。

自此，中文学校已不再是教教汉字，学说中文的地方，转型为较为重要的传播中华文化的活动。并受到了中国国务院文化部的重视、支持和合作。每年有各种的交流活

动，如夏令营、寻根问祖活动、历史文物的学习参观活动。为中文学校培训教师，设立了 HSK 的考试，为希望到中国学习和工作的人士提供语言的培训和水平鉴定。中文学校的壮大为荷兰培养的不少语言人才，为传播中华文化作出了不可磨灭的贡献。为不少的荷兰华人提供了工作的机会，尽管是义工为主。也为许多有才华和兴趣的人士提供了发挥的场所。来荷留学生也有不少加入了此行列，成为了文化的传播者。

最初的中文学校应该是不带政治色彩的。随着与中国政府的接触与交流合作，不可避免地必须适应中国的政治形式，如宣传“一带一路”的方针政策，参与其活动。而“孔子学院”是中国政府开班的汉学院，与民办的中文学校性质不同。

中文学校受到荷兰政府的资助。大部分为非盈利机构，也有少部分借此巧立名目谋取利益。

对于大部分的家长而言，子女学习中文自然欣慰，有归属、传承之感，在文化背景的理解沟通方便都有裨益。

2. 请问您认为孩子（父母）学习中文的原因有哪些？

答：1，既然是中国最好能会祖国的语言，与上辈的沟通无障碍。

2, 能会多一种语言绝对是好事。尤其是汉语, 中国的影响力日趋强大, 中国的对外交流日益增多, 对会中文的人才需求极大。

3, 中国文化博大精深, 奥迷无穷, 不学太可惜。学会几个汉字绝不能代表懂华夏文化。我还在学习中。

3. 为什么您对中国语言文化的教学感兴趣?

答: 说来惭愧, 当初我并没产生兴趣, 只是将我的孩子带到中文学校去学习。而是中文学校当时教师短缺, 知道我是读过点书的人, 请我去任教师。好在我有个特质, 要么不做, 要做好。很快我就成为了该校的双语幼儿教师, 兼家长班的普通话教师。并被家长们称为教得最好的老师。并成为了学校结业典礼的最佳司仪, 以至于我辞职后仍被邀请为该校的大庆做主持

虽不是自发产生的兴趣, 但在教学的过程中才发现, 我们从未留意过的、习以为常的许多华人习惯与传统, 对这里土生土长的孩子来说却是完全陌生或不明白的。文字的意义与使用及与荷语的区别, 表达方式差异的不同等等。为了让孩子们学好、学多、学明, 我开始通过各种渠道寻找资料、思考教学方法, 力求以最简单有趣的方式来传播古老的中华文化。兴趣由然而生, 越深入越有趣, 教学相长, 全心投入。除了教学外, 也参与宣传与招生工作, 先后为学校制作了, 幼儿粤语与普通话的教学计划与安排的宣传资料。

4. 您觉得这些学生更像中国人还是荷兰人?

答: 他们更像荷兰人。他们的使用的语言、思维方式、习惯(饮食习惯多受家庭影响), 他们的要求、学习方式也是荷兰式的。

5. 在您看来, 学生对荷兰语的学习是否对他们的文化身份以及身份认同产生影响?

答: 在荷兰出生长大的孩子绝大多数没有去想过他们的文化身份和身份认同。大部份的孩子自然而然地感觉自己就是当地人, 学习应用荷兰语是天经地义和必须的, 并不影响他们的文化身份与身份认证。当他们逐渐长大, 进入青年期时, 尤其在文化冲突时会对自己的身份与文化产生纠结感。这时会有夹板人的感觉。既不是纯粹的中国人也不是真正的荷兰人。都会在文化与身份的层面有所思考, 部分人会有所选择和取舍。

6. 在您看来，中文语言水平较高的学生是否对其中国人的身份有更高的认同感？

答：中文的语言水平的标准可能要细分一下：

1，口语水平良好，文字水平差，可能是生活在父母荷语均较差的家庭，不得不使用中文与上辈交流。不代表其对其中国身份的认同，甚至部分人反感。另一类是从小接触部分的中国文化，如电影、电视、歌曲等，常在华人圈内，参与华人的各类活动如：华人教会、华歌唱团、春节联欢会等，致常接触使用中文，较喜欢中华文化，对其华人身份较认同。

2，口语与文字水平均好，这一类华人通常接受过较好或较长时间的华语教育，或来自一些家长要求学习华语较高的家庭。其中也分为喜爱的主动学习和并不喜爱的被动学习。前者对其华人身份的认同较高，同时除了语言能力较高外，对传统文化的认识相对也深入些。

7. 你是否也教给孩子中国文化？如果是，是以怎样的方法实现？

答：作为来自中国本土的第一代华人家长，我非常希望我的孩子们懂得、学习和传承中国文化，这绝对不是中文的地位提高了，赶着全世界人学习汉语的热潮。而是中国传统文化太灿烂，太多宝藏了，丢弃它实在太可惜。更何况我从事的就是中华文化的工作——中医，它是国之瑰宝，博大精深，奥迷无穷，穷一生之力也只能窥其一线。所以，从孩子们出生开始我只跟他们讲中文，早早送他们去中文学校学习，在国内购买了大量的儿童书籍、CD、VCD，包括语言、歌曲、游戏、舞蹈、中国书法、绘画、传统手工制作，传统寓言故事，中国玩具及各种棋类，传统服装等。有空时都会传授一些传统知识、风俗习惯、待人待物礼仪、中国传统思维给他们。可惜由于最初是采用粤语教育，中文学校也是用粤语教学，之后欲改成普通话较难。在当地的荷语主流教育中，需要学习的知识也很多，作为夹缝中的中国孩子在其他语种的学习中处于相对不利的位置，家长对其其他的所有科目的帮助无能为力。孩子们并不能给出太多的时间专注中文的学习，兴趣也不是很大。随着年龄与阅历的增长，他们也认识到汉语的重要性与普及性。读大学的女儿主动加修了汉学。儿子也跃跃欲试地要自学中文，可惜他学业繁重，暂时尚未能实施其计划，相信他们作为华人后代，对自己身份的认同感从懂得其语言文字与文化开始。

## 9.4 Answers Chinese school teacher 2

2. 请问您认为孩子（父母）学习中文的原因有哪些？

我认为学习中文最大的愿望首先是能够传承民族的语言和文化，不能忘了自己的祖国，然后是增长个人的语言技能，能够在将来的生活，工作中多掌握一门语言知识。

3. 为什么您对中国语言文化的教学感兴趣？

我出生于教育之家，我的家里祖父，祖母，以及父母亲都是教师。我从小就喜爱这个职业，当然在荷兰我也很愿意担任中文教师这个职位，对传承祖国的文字和文化做一点力所能及的工作。

4. 您觉得这些学生更像中国人还是荷兰人？

在社会行为上，我觉得这些学生更像荷兰人，但是生活习俗各个方面还是更加倾向于中国人。

5. 在您看来，学生对荷兰语的学习是否对他们的文化身份以及身份认同产生影响？

是的，学生对荷兰语的学习对他们的文化身份起了一定的影响作用。但是我觉得他们会更认为自己是一个跨在荷兰文化和中国文化之间的中国人，但是绝对不会认为他们是荷兰人，因为他们知道整个的荷兰社会并不会认同他们。因而他们更加认同自己是一个“国际人”的身份。

6. 在您看来，中文语言水平较高的学生是否对其中国人的身份有更高的认同感？

不是，中文语言水平高低并不是对身份认同的一个决定因素。

7. 你是否也教给孩子中国文化？如果是，是以怎样的方法实现？

我也教授孩子们中国文化，语言和文化是一对孪生，它们相互关联，相互影响，不能把它们分开来教授，比如，在我们的中文课本里就有识字，词语，语法教学，但是课文的内容学习也是一篇关于文化，文学，地理，古诗词的学习。在学习语言的同时也学习了文化。

## 9.5 Answers Chinese school teacher 3

1. 请问在荷兰创办中文学校的初衷是什么？

我希望在这边出生和长大的孩子对中国文化认同，同时开拓学生们将来求职工作的广

度

2. 请问您认为孩子（父母）学习中文的原因有哪些？

孩子们开始学习中文大部分原因是父母让她们学中文。

3. 为什么您对中国语言文化的教学感兴趣？

教师是教书育人的崇高职业，教语言文化更是一种有成就感的事情。

4. 您觉得这些学生更像中国人还是荷兰人？

香蕉人

5. 在您看来，学生对荷兰语的学习是否对他们的文化身份以及身份认同产生影响？

学生学习荷兰语对他们身份认同不会产生影响。主要取决于小时候父母的影响。

6. 在您看来，中文语言水平较高的学生是否对其中国人的身份有更高的认同感？

这是当然。

7. 你是否也教给孩子中国文化？如果是，是以怎样的方法实现？

我喜欢教学生们认识中国文化，更愿意让她们充分认识中国文化和荷兰文化的各种差异。

## 9.6 Survey Chinese school studenten (Nederlands)

1. Welke taal/dialect spreek je thuis?

- Nederlands
- Chinees Mandarijn
- Chinees Kantonees
- Chinees Wenzhounees
- Anders, namelijk..

2. Ga/ging je naar Chinese school?

- Ja, ik leerde daar Mandarijn
- Ja, ik leerde daar Kantonees
- Nee

3. Hoeveel jaren heb je Chinees geleerd?

- 1



- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 of meer

4. Waarom koos je ervoor om Chinees te leren?

- Ik moest van mijn ouders
- Ik wilde meer verbonden zijn met mijn Chinese identiteit
- Ik wilde meer leren over de cultuur en taal van het land van mijn herkomst
- Ik vond het interessant
- Ik wilde meer verbonden zijn met mijn familie/kennissen/vrienden
- Betere baanmogelijkheden
- Anders, namelijk

5. Heb je op Chinese school je Chinees verbeterd en meer geleerd over de Chinese cultuur?

- Ja
- Nee

6. Wat is je niveau ongeveer?

- HSK 1 (gelijk aan A1)
- HSK 2 (gelijk aan A2)
- HSK 3 (gelijk aan B1)
- HSK 4 (gelijk aan B2)
- HSK 5 (gelijk aan C1)
- HSK 6 (gelijk aan C2)
- Ik kan alleen spreken/luisteren, en niet schrijven/lezen

7. Heeft het leren van de Chinese taal jou geholpen om meer verbonden te zijn met je Chinese familie/vrienden/kennissen?

- Ja
- Nee

8. Hoe definieer jij jezelf?

- Nederlands
- Chinees
- Chinees en Nederlands
- Meer Chinees dan Nederlands
- Meer Nederlands dan Chinees
- Anders, namelijk

9. Als je beter was in Chinees, zou jij je dan meer Chinees voelen?

- Ja
- Nee

10. Heb je enige vorm van conflicten en/of angstige gevoelens gehad bij het leren van Chinees?

- Nee
- Ja, door prestatiedruk
- Ja, door verwachtingen van mijn omgeving
- Ja, ik vond het moeilijk
- Anders, namelijk..

### 9.7 Survey Chinese school students (English)

Questions:

1. What dialect/language do you speak at home?

- Mandarin
- Cantonese
- Wenzhounese
- Dutch
- Other

2. Did you went to Chinese school?

- Yes, I learned Mandarin
- Yes, I learned Catonese
- No

3. How many yeard did you went to Chinese school?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6 or more

4. Why did you choose to study Chinese

- I was obligated to go because of my parents
- I wanted to be more connected with my Chinese identity
- I wanted to learn more about the culture and language of my motherland
- I thought it was interesting
- I wanted to be more connected with my family/friends/relatives
- Better job opportunities
- Other, ...

5. Did you improve your Chinese proficiency or learn more about the Chinese culture?

- Yes
- No

6. How high is your Chinese proficiency?

- HSK 1 (equals level A1)
- HSK 2 (equals level A2)
- HSK 3 (equals level B1)
- HSK 4 (equals level B2)
- HSK 5 (equals level C1)
- HSK 6 (equals level C2)
- I can only speak/listen, and not write/read

7. Did learning the Chinese language help you to be more connected with your Chinese family/friends/relatives?

- Yes
- No

8. How do you define yourself?

- Dutch
- Chinese
- Chinese and Dutch
- More Chinese than Dutch
- More Dutch than Chinese
- Other, ..

9. If your Chinese proficiency was better, do you think you would feel more Chinese

- Yes
- No

10. Did you ever experienced any conflicts or anxieties with learning Chinese

- No
- Yes, because of pressure to perform well
- Yes, because of expectations of my community
- Yes, I thought it was difficult
- Other, ..

## 9.8 Interview Questions Chinastudies students

**\*Note that these people are anonymized, as some of the personal information in the answers are modified. This does not have any impact on my results.**

### 1. Which language/dialect do you speak at home?

R1: *“Cantonese”*

R2: *“I speak Cantonese at home with my parents and mostly Dutch with my siblings.”*

R3: *“Dutch”*

R4: *“Wenzhounese”*

### 2. Why did you choose to study Chinese?

R1: *“To broaden my career opportunities. We can’t argue that China is a big player in the world (political and economic) and as a foreigner who can also speak Chinese is an advantage when you are interested in finding a job in China.”*

R2: *“I wanted to get better in the language, so I didn’t feel out of place especially when I was travelling back to China. A lot of people are speaking more mandarin now compared to Cantonese.”*

R3: *“I wanted to find out more about my background, as I knew relatively little about the Chinese culture and language compared to my knowledge of the Dutch culture and language. Also, Mandarin Chinese is a very handy language to know.”*

R4: *“When I started it, I thought the whole Bachelor would be a piece of cake for me because of my background, but it was very difficult. I was motivated by the economic prospects of China and the job opportunities that went with it. I quit halfway because it didn't really suit my needs, but two years later I picked it up again, because I did miss the challenge of the subjects. To be*

*fair, it still didn't quite match me. Although I am very glad that I took the mandarin courses, because as a Chinese person (even if I grew up outside China) I feel more connected to my roots and fellow Chinese people if I speak the language. I'm not very fluent in it still, but the better I get, the more doors of communications open around me in social interactions - for example in China Town in The Hague or on travelling in China etc. It's a great feeling really. No regrets, as I switched halfway through the Bachelors to Archeology anyway and did them both, so not missing out on either side!"*

**3. In what way did learning Mandarin (which is a different Chinese dialect that you grew up with) make you more connected with your roots?**

R1: *"It did not really make me feel more connected with my roots to be honest."*

R2: *"I could connect better with Chinese people due to better communication and especially in China it's better to know Mandarin in order to fit the society better."*

R3: *"Due to learning Mandarin, I can now communicate better with Chinese-speaking people. Additionally, I learned a lot about the Chinese culture during my studies."*

R4: *"Definitely that I am able to communicate more with other Chinese who are less westernized than I am, so they are "less washed out" from the original culture and being able to interact casually with people of that mindset makes it feel like new doors open to a deeper and more intimate understanding of "authentic" Chinese sociology and culture. Also the whole identity part that when other Chinese see you they automatically assume you will speak Mandarin and then you don't, you can see them thinking something like "oh, fake Chinese brainwashed by the west", something like that, haha! Or it's my imagination. Either way, I used to be called "half-blood" when I was younger by my family in China, because they saw me as the little west-Chinese. So being able to understand Mandarin a bit more does make me feel like I'm more "part of the club" so to speak, or rather: "less of an outsider"? Actually, I still feel like that person who simply has Chinese roots, but was heavily influenced by the west since I was born here and all. Makes sense. I have many friends who are also in this position, across the world there are other children of immigrants outside China that have the same mixed upbringing, so rather than feeling like an outsider, it's more like we have our own new group of social position among Chinese: the overseas second generation bunch."*

**4. Do you think learning Mandarin made you feel more Chinese or more connected with China or your Chinese family/friends/relatives?**

R1: *"I don't really feel more connected with my Chinese family, because I can communicate with them in Cantonese. I also would not say learning Mandarin made me feel more connected to China. It didn't change the situation for me personally, but I would say it does make things more convenient for me when I'm in China, like buying stuff or just simple things like ordering food."*

R2: *"I think learning Mandarin definitely helped me feel more Chinese and more connected with China. It did not necessarily made me feel more connected to my family there, since Mandarin is not used when communicating."*

R3: *"Yes"*

R4:

- a. *"I still speak Wenzhounese with my family, one difference is that nowadays with all the WeChat and social messaging apps, it has become possible for me to actually TEXT my parents in Chinese characters, haha! The devices make it much easier as well by suggesting automatic character forms and combinations when I simply type in the pinyin. So even if I do not remember all the characters I have digital help! It's very convenient to type some messages to my parents, for example when I'm in public in a quite area, I don't have to go shouting into my phone to convey my message to them, haha."*
- b. *"I do think that I feel more Chinese because I have a better grasp of Mandarin now, but not quite that I identify more with the Chinese in China themselves. My mindset is truly very, very different than what I've read about in China. I'm quite certain it must be the influence of the western upbringing, even though my parents' have a very traditional Chinese mindset. I very much value individual independence and authenticity, as opposed to the collectivistic Chinese view where the group harmony comes before the individual and "face" is a very important thing. Something I find "face" a little fake when because simply do it because they want the validation of other people, but I understand it very much, because I'm also entrapped with it, having grown up beside my Chinese parents. So yes, I do feel more Chinese because I have better understanding of my roots and the language, but I do not identify more with the other Chinese, I do understand them more than I used to. It's like at first I just felt like I couldn't quite form an opinion over the China-Chinese because I was so outside of the whole social circle, not speaking the language, not quite understanding the culture. The more I learned*

*about it now, the more Chinese I feel personally, but I feel like I can make a very clear decision now on that after learning more about them, I actually adhere to very different values than most of them. I feel very Chinese with a very western or simply "different" mindset than the China-Chinese."*

- c. *"My Chinese was never quite on that level to be real Chinese-Chinese friends with a China-Chinese person, I always had to use English to get my point across, so any kind of friendship started with the understand that I was that overseas-Chinese with the poor grasp or Chinese, haha! Compared to when my Mandarin was even worse, yes it has become easier to meet the China-Chinese halfway in language barrier to communicate! So in that sense you could say I feel more connected to them simply because it has become easier to make each other understandable towards each other!"*

##### **5. Would you identify yourself as more Chinese or more Dutch?**

R1: *"Dutch"*

R2: *"I would say it's both. A lot of times I definitely feel more Chinese due to certain habits and beliefs. When I go back to China, I feel there a bit out of place and can definitely see that I have some Dutch in me as well. Different living standards for example."*

R3: *"More Dutch I think"*

R4: *"That's a VERY difficult question! Is this were a black and white question, I'd say I identify more as Chinese than Dutch, especially now I speak Mandarin a bit more. If I'd use percentages, I'd say I'm 62% Chinese and 38% Dutch. I've had a lot of struggles in terms of "who am I"? But I haven't quite found the answers in "Dutchness". Often gaining deeper understanding on the Chinese social and cultural background led to better understanding of my parents' behaviour and parenting style which led to much more understanding in myself than any Dutch historical thing could ever do. I'll never look like any Dutch person, the upbringing I went through was wholly Chinese, the Dutch upbringing and influences felt in some way like window shopping: you could see how others interact, but it was never quite part of your own home. Now that I'm a grown-up I read A LOT of scientific, psychological books and articles and... I do feel more at ease in many western ideals when it comes to different societal issues like mental health, freedom of speech, gender equality etc (whether it's really equal is of course debatable), but I must say I'm somewhat hypocritical in this as well as I do enjoy being courted by a*



*gentleman who likes to treat a lady. So I don't know whether this makes me more "Dutch" or simply a Chinese with a different mindset, or a bit of both."*

**6. Did you ever experience any conflicts or anxieties with learning Chinese?**

R1: *"No, not really. For sure it was hard sometimes to remember all the characters and such, but not on a level it would give me anxieties."*

R2: *"It is frustrating to learn the language that sounds a bit different than your dialect but at the same time overlaps. I definitely feel like I have more pressure to be good at Mandarin since I am already Cantonese speaker."*

R3: *"I did experience some stress during exam periods, but I do not think this stress only included learning Chinese."*

R4: *"Not with learning Chinese specifically, but my parents were tiger parents during my developmental years and to be honest I've had some traumatic experiences because of the overly harsh punishments and expectations surrounding school and education. It was truly awful and set the course for a lot of halted efforts in studying in the future, including the Bachelor Chinese."*