

# **Shanghainese in the Mandarin Environment**

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—— Language attitudes and social and cultural  
functions of the language

**MA Thesis**

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## **Abstract**

In 1956, the Chinese government began to encourage people all over the country to speak Mandarin in accordance with government policy. This policy was regarded as an effective way to remove linguistic barriers among the different provinces, but later it was found that it was also one of the most important reasons behind the vanishing of dialects. Shanghainese 上海话 (*Shanghainese*), is the indigenous language in Shanghai. It developed rapidly in the first half of the last century and is regarded as a cultural symbol by the local people of Shanghai. It enjoyed a dominant position in the area until the implementation of the national language policy. After 2000, more and more local people in Shanghai have begun to speak Mandarin in daily life. This thesis aims to study political, social and cultural factors which have led to this kind of linguistic change. I will explore the social function of Shanghainese and give an analysis on why and how people speak specific languages in various social domains. After demonstrating that the social function of Shanghainese is at present rather limited, I will investigate the prevalence of the awareness that favors saving the language and promoting local culture in Shanghainese for the goal of retaining local uniqueness.

The thesis will consist of five chapters. The first chapter will include the introduction of Shanghainese, the interdependent relationship amongst languages, society and people and the central question and research methods. The second chapter will be the literature review. Then, I will discuss about how the social context has impacted

peoples' attitudes to Shanghainese and Mandarin and explore incentives behind the switching of languages. Different public and private space, including schools, governmental institutions, media, work places, home and so on, will be analyzed respectively in the third chapter. In 'Chapter Four', I will sketch how people consider Shanghainese to be a key part of their cultural identity. The last chapter will be the conclusion of thesis.

*Keywords:* Language attitudes, Sociolinguistics, Cultural identity, Language protection, Shanghainese, Mandarin

## Introduction

In the beginning, I will introduce some basic information about Shanghainese including the sources of the language, the history of its development and the remarkable decline in linguistic and cultural aspects of Shanghainese after the Mandarin policy. This information can help us to understand the linguistic features of Shanghainese and why people think Shanghainese embodies the cultural identity of Shanghai, which is useful for us to look at analyses in the third and fourth chapters respectively. At the same time, this chapter will indicate the central question, sub-questions and research methods in the end.

In essence, Shanghainese is a combination of different kinds of imported languages. The generally accepted definition of Shanghainese is there are two branches of Shanghainese. One is called ‘old Shanghainese’<sup>1</sup>, which mainly consists of *Songjianghua*<sup>2</sup> (Qian Nairong 2007, 7). Six hundred years ago, Shanghai County<sup>3</sup> was established and managed by the Prefecture of Songjiang<sup>4</sup>. Corresponding to the administrative system, *Songjianghua* was popularized in Shanghai County. Until now, people in suburban districts of Shanghai still speak *Songjianghua* (Qian Nairong 2007, 2-4). The other is called ‘new Shanghainese’<sup>5</sup> which refers to the language spoken in downtown Shanghai after Shanghai became one of five trade ports open to foreigners in 1843 and continues to be used in the city up to the present day (Qian Nairong 2007,

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<sup>1</sup> 老上海话, *lao Shanghaihua*

<sup>2</sup> 松江话, *Songjiang language*

<sup>3</sup> 上海县, *Shanghai xian*

<sup>4</sup> 松江府, *Songjiang fu*

<sup>5</sup> 新上海话, *xin Shanghaihua*

9). In this thesis, the branch of Shanghainese we are talking about refers to new Shanghainese. New Shanghainese was influenced by multiple languages during the process of development, including languages in neighboring areas and the original languages of immigrants, principally English and Mandarin. As a result, its pronunciation and grammar rules are already quite different from *Songjianghua*, although *Songjiahua* is its basis.

The development of Shanghainese can be divided into three phases. In the first phase (from the end of the Southern Song Dynasty to 1843), as I said in the last paragraph, the common language in Shanghai County was *Songjianghua* and it was impacted by languages of economic and cultural centers in the Wu language area<sup>6</sup> at the same time. Hangzhou was the cultural center of Wu language area in the Song and Yuan dynasties, and *Hangzhouhua*<sup>7</sup> impacted Shanghainese in the aspect of *Wenduyin*<sup>8</sup>. In the beginning, *Wenduyin* was only learnt by intellectuals, but gradually it was also absorbed into spoken Shanghainese. Some words have two pronunciations when used in different terms, which is a typical phenomenon caused by *Wenduyin* and *Baihuayin*<sup>9</sup> in Shanghainese. For instance, ‘大’ is pronounced as *Baihuayin* ‘*dhu*’ in the term ‘大小’ *dhu*<sub>22</sub>*ei*<sub>23</sub> (big or small), but pronounced as *Wenduyin* ‘*dha*’ in ‘大家’ *dha*<sub>22</sub>*ka*<sub>44</sub> (everybody) (Qian Nairong 2007, 20). In “Language Atlas of China”<sup>10</sup>, languages of Suzhou 苏州, Shanghai and Jiaxing 嘉兴 are sorted out as a linguistic branch of Wu language called ‘*suhujia xiaopian*’ 苏沪嘉小片 (‘沪’ *hu*, an alternative

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<sup>6</sup> 吴语区, *wuyuqu*

<sup>7</sup> 杭州话, Hangzhou language

<sup>8</sup> 文读音, pronunciations for reading in indigenous languages

<sup>9</sup> 白话音, pronunciations used in spoken dialects

<sup>10</sup> Chinese Academy of Social Science & Australian Academy of the Humanities, *Language Atlas of China* (Longman: Hongkong, 1987 and 1990).

name of Shanghai), which shows that languages in three places have an interactive relation. Until now, we can still find many expressions or terms which were from *Suzhouhua*<sup>11</sup> or *Jiaxinghua*<sup>12</sup> in Shanghainese. Nevertheless, the development of Shanghainese in this phase was far slower than languages of well-developed areas in Wu language area. It is because Shanghai was merely a county and *Songjianghua* could meet the need of communication.

In the second phase (1843 to 1949), Shanghainese developed rapidly in a relatively short period, which was led by the prosperity of city. In order to take advantage of commercial opportunities, huge numbers of immigrants, both domestic and foreign moved to Shanghai. Naturally, multiple cultures and languages were brought to Shanghai along with them. It is astonishing to find that up to 70% of the whole population in Shanghai was immigrants or the offspring of immigrants before 1949.<sup>13</sup>

Under this circumstance, it was necessary to have a common language for different groups of immigrants to communicate with each other, but there was not an imported language that successfully occupied a more powerful status than the others. Therefore, immigrants all had to speak Shanghainese (Qian Nairong 2007, 12). In the meanwhile, several imported languages were integrated with old Shanghainese in the progress that new Shanghainese was established as the dominant language. The most representative two languages were *Suzhouhua* and *Ningbohua*<sup>14</sup>. Since Suzhou became the cultural center in the southern region of the Yangtze River after the reign of the Qianlong

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<sup>11</sup> 苏州话, Suzhou language

<sup>12</sup> 嘉兴话, Jiaxing language

<sup>13</sup> “Shanghairen xue putonghua”, [Shanghai People Learn Mandarin] in v. ifeng.com (Oct. 21st, 2014): <http://v.ifeng.com/documentary/society/201410/0301bbdf-8cec-4134-bfd0-096b19629c6c.shtml>

<sup>14</sup> 宁波话, Ningbo language

Emperor in the Qing period, people in Wu language areas were familiar with *Suzhouhua* as a cultural symbol of *ya*<sup>15</sup>. Performances in *Suzhouhua* were popular in Shanghai after 1843, consequently Shanghainese absorbed syntactical structures, expressions and pronunciations from *Suzhouhua* (Qian Nairong 2007, 21). *Ningbohua* was also an influential language, since there was a large amount of Ningbo people doing business in Shanghai (You Rujie 2006, 75). Shanghainese absorbed many terms from *Ningbohua*. Other languages like *Subeihua*<sup>16</sup> and English had positive impacts on shaping new Shanghainese as well, but their impacts were not as big as *Suzhouhua* and *Ningbohua*. To sum up, new Shanghainese is a mixture of old Shanghainese and imported languages and its form was developed maturely in the second phase.

Local culture of Shanghai was flourishing from 1900s to 1940s under the specific circumstance of hybrid culture and people call it *Haipai wenhua*<sup>17</sup>. It has features of creativeness, inclusiveness, commercial awareness and catering for a civic taste (Sun xun 2010, 12). Except the third feature, we can find that Shanghainese can reflect other features of local culture, since it is a blended language and its development was closely related with the developing pace of the city. Consequently, Shanghainese, which has similar feature as *Haipai wenhua* is regarded as a symbol of local culture.

By the time of the era of People's Republic of China, Shanghainese entered into the third developing phase and the linguistic environment of Shanghai tuned into bilingualism owing to the national linguistic policy. Shanghainese was still the main

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<sup>15</sup> 雅, refinement

<sup>16</sup> 苏北话, a language from the northern Jiangsu province

<sup>17</sup> 海派文化, all-inclusive culture



language for people to speak in daily life before the beginning of 1980s.<sup>18</sup> With the promulgation of the policy of promoting Mandarin, more and more local people were asked or encouraged to speak this national common language. Especially from the 1980s onwards, the pace at which Shanghai people learned Mandarin well was accelerated by a series of measures. In 1985, the Shanghai government organized the first session of ‘*Woai zuguo yuyan mei*’ 我爱祖国语言美 (I love my mother country and the language is beautiful) which was a citywide competition of citizens’ Mandarin skills. This yearly contest attracted quite a few citizens and winners obtained opportunities to work in TV or radio stations as anchors.<sup>19</sup> The legal position of Mandarin was reinforced by the government time and again. From the official website of ‘*Shanghai yuyan wenzi*’ 上海语言文字 (Shanghai spoken and written language) [www.shyywz.com](http://www.shyywz.com), which is responsible for promoting Mandarin and certifying the level of Mandarin (it is directly managed by the Shanghai Educational Committee<sup>20</sup>), we can find many documents showing how the Chinese government is trying to reach a target for the popularizing of Mandarin for many years. Among these documents, I think that “*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi fa*” 中华人民共和国国家通用语言文字法 (The Law of National Spoken and Written Language of People’s Republic of China) plays a crucial role in elevating Mandarin to the official language in current Shanghai. It regulates where and when people should use Mandarin and these occasions involve governmental departments, schools, mass

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<sup>18</sup> See reference. 2

<sup>19</sup> See reference. 2

<sup>20</sup> 上海市教育委员会, *Shanghaishi jiaoyu weiyuan hui*

media, service or signs in public space and so on.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, governmental websites which are especially designed for Mandarin can mirror that the government pays attention to the progress of promoting Mandarin. In the national conference of ethnic Chinese in 2014, Zhang Haoming, who is the director of the department of language, characters and information management of the Ministry of Education, introduced that the popularity of Mandarin in current China was 73% and all of thirty-six first-tier cities reached the standard in the evaluation.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the work of popularizing Mandarin in Shanghai can be seen to be carried out smoothly in the light of the national agenda.

The unified language and characters are always thought of an important part of the national identity by the Chinese government. The Chinese term of Mandarin which was confirmed in 1955 has the meaning of ‘common’, which implies the target of constructing a standard language for all people from different areas (Chen Ping 1999, 24). In “*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi fa*”, the first article explicitly points out that this law is made for facilitating the standardization of the national language further and making the standard language undertake functions in society better.<sup>23</sup> From above, we can notice that the aim of popularizing Mandarin is not changed over past sixty years. A standard language is helpful to create a cohesive force to consolidate speakers of different dialects in a same community

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<sup>21</sup> “*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi fa*”, [The law of national spoken and written language of People’s Republic of China] in [www.shyywz.com](http://www.shyywz.com) (Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000 ): <http://www.shyywz.com/jsp/index/show.jsp?id=2519&newsType=119>

<sup>22</sup> “*Jiaoyubu guanyuan: zhongguo Putonghua pujilv da 73%*”, [A Official of the Ministry of Education: the Popularity of Mandarin in China Has Reached 73%] (Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014): <http://www.chinanews.com/cul/2014/10-30/6733026.shtml>

<sup>23</sup> See eference. 21

(Smakman 2012, 26). Shanghai is a significant economic center of China, so it is necessary to promote Mandarin in order to reinforce communication of politics, culture, economy and social ideology between it and other places. In the third chapter, we will take a look at the reality about speaking Mandarin and Shanghainese in different occasions after thirty-year efforts by the government.

The popularization of Mandarin has directly led to the fading of linguistic features of Shanghainese. With respect to the phonologic system, vowels have been reduced from 63 in 1853 to 32 nowadays and tones have been simplified from 8 to 5 (Qian Nairong 2007, 11). With respect to lexical variety, many expressions have been lost by generations because of speaking Mandarin. In an investigation, the interviewer noticed that many young people have never heard about vivid expressions which were often used by older generations, such as “*tɕ'i<sub>44</sub> dʏ<sub>22</sub>bi<sub>44</sub>*” 牵头皮 (scalp is grabbed by others, means being reproved or raked up faults by others), “*sɿ<sub>44</sub> kuə<sub>23</sub>dʏ<sub>44</sub>*” 收骨头 (tighten up bones, describes that teachers or parents educate children not to be lazy or talk nonsense) and so on.<sup>24</sup> Since younger generations have gotten used to speaking Mandarin and thinking within the confines of Mandarin, specific expressions with linguistic features of Shanghainese have easily faded from young peoples' memories. In other words, the fact that Shanghainese is converging with Mandarin is becoming increasingly apparent under a specific social context which encourages people to use Mandarin.

As the most important tool of communication, language conveys ideas, thoughts, and

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<sup>24</sup> “Shijiao nanxun fayinren: Shanghaihua shuailuo, yishi ‘Tieban dingding,’” [It Is Hard to Find People with Standard Pronunciations of Shanghainese] (May. 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011): [http://www.sh.xinhuanet.com/2011-05/06/content\\_22695417\\_1.htm](http://www.sh.xinhuanet.com/2011-05/06/content_22695417_1.htm)

emotions. Since it has a strong and natural connection with speakers, it varies on the basis of different regions and is greatly influenced by social and cultural changes. In China, languages spoken by northern people and southern people are extremely different from pronunciations to grammar. Even though they are languages of neighboring areas, there are still many differences that were caused by indigenous culture or produced during social development. Take the area where people speak Wu languages for instance; it is made up of Shanghai, southern Jiangsu province, Zhejiang province, southern Anhui province, north-east Jiangxi province and northern Fujian province. Due to geographic differences, these areas had formed different living habits, food traditions, modes of production and so on and so forth. These factors were all influential in producing linguistic differences within the Wu language area, so it is noticeable that people living in different places of this area cannot understand each other.<sup>25</sup> In the book “Sociolinguistics: A Brief Introduction”, Fishman used the term “variety” to summarize the localization of languages. He thought varieties could be generated due to regions, ethnicities, religions, societies and so on (Fishman 1971, 22), which reflects that languages are closely associated with human activities. In rural regions, closed societies and homogeneous cultures keep the situation of languages stable. In contrast, languages in big cities tend to be constantly changed by political and social contexts, hybrid cultures and encounters with other languages. At the same time, attitudes of speakers play important roles in the using of languages in modern society. They, on one hand, are influenced by

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<sup>25</sup> “Wuyuqu”, [The Area of Wu Dialect] (6<sup>th</sup> April, 2015):  
[http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=zj3bYDkxqks37DeJCmTWanNG7RyZjv82WdPIfs7IicxLS9NNVqy-XtgFhIXb1F1MA5UfimCny10eFgSzmppM\\_#7](http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=zj3bYDkxqks37DeJCmTWanNG7RyZjv82WdPIfs7IicxLS9NNVqy-XtgFhIXb1F1MA5UfimCny10eFgSzmppM_#7)

conventional rules of language usage in society, so that people speak specific languages on different occasions. On the other hand, the accumulation of individual attitudes can stimulate new varieties in old languages. As a result, language attitudes provide an angle through which we can learn about the reasons behind and phenomena about linguistic variety in big cities.

The central question in this thesis is what language attitudes do people who were born in Shanghai have towards Shanghainese. I will first discuss it with regards to social functions of Shanghainese. Is it still a tool of communication used in social domains? When, where and why do people speak Shanghainese or why do they choose Mandarin instead? How do other social factors (such as social class, educational background, age and so on) influence picking up different languages? These questions will all be discussed in the third chapter and then we can see that language attitudes can reflect the social development. Moreover, a prominent attitude to Shanghainese after 2000 is that local people need to protect the language in a linguistic environment which is favorable to Mandarin, since it meets the need of highlighting local uniqueness under the unified national identity. In the fourth chapter, we will take a look at efforts to protect Shanghainese and how people are creating new artistic forms in Shanghainese. By means of studying these phenomena from the goal of promoting cultural identity, a possibility is made clear to us that the position of Shanghainese will probably improve in the future.

For knowing about practical language attitudes in society, I interviewed six local people who were born from 1970s to 1990s in Shanghai. Each generation has two

interviewees, one male and one female. I know six interviewees are insufficient to have a representative conclusion about language attitudes to Shanghainese of generations from 1970s-1990s. But since it is not easily feasible for me to meet more Shanghai people here in limited time, I will use the result of the interviews as a reference and combine it with arguments in academic papers and different opinions from the Internet to provide analysis.

## **Literature Review**

Theories closely connected to this thesis are language attitudes and language vitality theories. Language attitudes are indicative of an important respect of the value of a specific language, since it is helpful to explore the usage of a specific language in daily life as well as the connection between people who speak the language and the language itself. Social class and the significance of cultural identity to Chinese will also be illustrated as indications of language attitudes. In order to see the status of Shanghainese, I will quote relative theories of language vitality and endangered languages to examine whether Shanghainese is in an endangered situation or not. By means of knowing about various factors which impact the vitality of languages, we get to realize to which aspects of Shanghainese protection should be given.

As a research topic in sociolinguistics, 'language attitudes' is inherently associated with people and society in addition to language. It studies how people react to different languages, speakers, listeners as well as language behaviors in various occasions and explores reasons hidden behind changes of attitudes (Cargile, Giles, Ryan and Bradac 1994, 211). Generally speaking, language attitudes can reflect two relationships of speakers and listeners, people and society. The first one is concerned with how people gain their perceptions of others and the circumstances in which the perceptions are gained by means of languages (Edwards 2006, 324 & 329). In turn, they are able to convey corresponding feelings and thoughts and behave accordantly in light of received information. Moreover, people give judgments on the methods and

content of others' speeches or linguistic phenomena in society as well (Williams 1973, 113). Specific modes of expression deliver more information about the speaker than the language habit, such as the social status, educational background and so on. The judgments about linguistic phenomena can reveal language attitudes which have been accepted by the public and are being shaped in the process. Some sociolinguistic scholars put emphasis on dynamics between society and language varieties, whereas I am interested in interactions between society and people in this thesis. Language attitudes can be seen as productions processed by reconciliation or collision of these two factors, but we should bear in mind that language attitudes are about opinions that people hold towards their own languages as well.

As a way to differentiate different groups of people within the structure of society, social class has been applied in a variety of academic research. Marxism holds the argument that the distribution of social resources and production results in social class. In modern society, the construction of social class is mainly based on educational background, economic power and social status (Harris & White 2013). With respect to sociolinguistics, social class is a tool to investigate reasons and forms of linguistic diversity in the social structure (Romaine, 8308). By means of using a specific language, people can convey two layers of information to others. Explicitly, their words express meanings which they want to say. Implicitly, how and what they say reveals a great deal of information about themselves, and listeners can thereby shape a general idea about their social status and personalities. Consequently, speakers always need to consider the occasion or the target of communication when utilizing a specific



language in bilingual or multilingual society.

As we all know, languages can externalize individual choices of cultural identities. From the beginning of the establishment of the PRC (People's Republic of China), the Chinese government put efforts into building up and underpinning the ideology of a unified China. However no matter how much this ideology is emphasized, local identities are still deeply rooted in Chinese people. When they meet with foreigners, they think they are Chinese without any hesitation. In a domestic situation, Chinese people distinguish each other in accordance with geographical regions (Romanucci-Ross and De Vos 1995, 95). It is not difficult to find that there is a pronounced homesickness in literatures or poetry, from which we can recognize that Chinese people inherently relate the senses of belonging with their hometown instead of the nation. For one thing, China has always been a large country. Another consideration is that people are nourished by diverse and widely different local cultures. Under these kinds of circumstances, Chinese people are inclined to rely on a network of their countrymen when they travel or work in other places inside or even outside of China. Generally, people are used to adopting two methods to reach the target of constructing identities, either highlighting themselves positively or stressing others in a negative way (Carrico 2012, 26). As in typical provincial phenomena in China, languages in many regions (such as Cantonese or *Sichuanhua*<sup>26</sup>) are protected and promoted by local people spontaneously in order not to lose the oral heritage passed down by ancestors under the popularization of unified Mandarin (Jin Liu 2013,

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<sup>26</sup> 四川话, Sichuan language

117). As we understand that languages can pave the way for keeping the uniqueness and cohesiveness of the language community, we then need to take a look at theories about language vitality. In general, the higher the language vitality is, the more apparent the boundary of speech community is in the social context of plural culture (Bourhis and Barrette 2006, 246).

Grenoble studies three difficulties about keeping the vitality of many languages all over the world (Grenoble 2006, 138). Firstly the, number and generations of speakers is “not the sole but very important indicator of language vitality”. Although there are thousands of languages in the world, most people merely use a tiny part of it which takes up 4% of the whole amount. The second one is that geographic distribution and relative isolation of languages can be observed to be unequal. Some continents such as Europe and Australia have access to fewer kinds of languages than other continents such as Asia and Africa. We should bear in mind that quite a few languages in language-diverse continents are limited by regions or ethnicities. Last but not least, Grenoble thinks that there are evident language shifts in progress, which can make languages which have fewer speakers and undertake fewer political or social functions being replaced by superior languages. In general, this kind of shift takes place through several generations, but it is not impossible for it to happen within one generation as well. From the above three points, we can conclude that language vitality is greatly interconnected with speakers and the linguistic environment in society. With the strengthening of global modernization, regional languages or languages of minorities are the most likely to be pushed into an endangered situation,

because they have limited speakers and their linguistic environments are so fragile that external forces can easily break them. The language vitality of Shanghainese, therefore, is faced with challenges brought by the encroaching of Mandarin and social changes. Next, I will present the criteria that indicate an ‘endangered language’ written by Grenoble by which we can judge whether Shanghainese is an endangered language now in following chapters.

The status of a language’s safety consists of six levels from safest to most endangered. The safe level means that this language is being used throughout society including formal and informal occasions. Normally, a safe language is also the official language and thus enjoys a priority comparing with other languages. ‘At risk’ is a less safe level. A language at risk does have enough speakers, but its domains are smaller than a safe language’s. The next level is disappearing, in which the numbers of speakers are rapidly decreasing. At the same time, social domains where a disappearing language was used are being replaced by other language(s). The fourth level, namely ‘Moribund’, refers to a situation in which children who would formerly have learned the language in question no longer learn it. ‘Nearly extinct’ and ‘Extinct’ are the last two levels in the evaluation system. The most evident indication of them is that very few speakers (who are concentrated in old generations) or no speakers whatsoever (Grenoble 2006, 139-140). During my research, I found there is prevalent opinion in society that Shanghainese is an endangered language, because opportunities to use it are becoming increasingly scarce (I will give a detailed analysis about this kind of opinion in next chapter). However, some voices (including my interviewees) argue

that Shanghainese is not in an endangered situation at all, since it still has a large speaker base. In the fourth chapter, I will give an analysis about which level Shanghainese is currently at and list actions which people are taking to improve the situation of the language.

## **The Social Function of Shanghainese**

As we all know, language is a communicative vehicle in social activities. Mandarin, as I mentioned before, was established as the official language by the government and has been popularized all over Shanghai since the 1980s. Mandarin has become the common language in official channels and increasing numbers of people speak it rather than Shanghainese, particularly in public spaces (Zhang Jingjing 2007, 24). This chapter is aimed at analyzing what people think of the communicative value of Shanghainese and whether Shanghainese is still active in social domains. In order to explore the current situation of this language, I will take a look at these sub-questions on the basis of different occasions: Why do speakers select Shanghainese/Mandarin on this occasion? How do they use the language? What other targets besides communication do they also want to reach? What incentives bring about the current situation of Shanghainese and how are they related to people's language attitudes? In the recent 'Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language', the government divides the linguistic domains of speaking Mandarin into five categories: schools, governmental institutions, media, working places and the whole society.<sup>27</sup> In my opinion, the last category involves public space (except for the previous four categories) and private spaces (like home). Since this division is used to measure whether Mandarin is popularized successfully in society by the government, it can indicate the position of Shanghainese from the

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<sup>27</sup> "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language" in [www.GOV.cn](http://www.GOV.cn), (Aug. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005): [http://big5.gov.cn/gate/big5/www.gov.cn/ziliao/flfg/2005-08/31/content\\_27920.htm](http://big5.gov.cn/gate/big5/www.gov.cn/ziliao/flfg/2005-08/31/content_27920.htm)

other side.

In sociolinguistic theories, ‘standardization’ is given precedence to explain why people from the middle and upper classes lay more emphasis on expressive accuracy and appropriate language than the lower classes. We can notice that the standardization of language is actually a kind of reflection of the social order which defines what is correct and what is incorrect (Fishman 1971, 24). Standardization can also be embodied from the aspect of normalization. According to *Macmillan English Dictionary*, authors define a language which is accepted by most people as standard (Rundell and Fox 2002). Meanwhile, a standard language is gradually formed for meeting the needs of different social occasions (Gee 2012, 97). Note that some informal occasions also need to use a standard variety to create a sense of accordance for participants.

In general, people have an impression that dialects are contrary and inferior to the standard language, since dialects are generated naturally in regional environments and the standard language is artificially created by the government in modern society for propagating a shared ideology (Smakman 2012, 26-27). As a result, speaking Mandarin is considered a correct and appropriate behavior for formal occasion. On one hand, this is in answer to the national policy of popularizing Mandarin in society. The American scholar Charles A. Ferguson interpreted the enthusiasm for implementing the national linguistic policy as a result of Chinese philosophy “*Dajia doulai chubali*” 大家都来出把力 (Everybody all puts forth his strength) (Zhang Jingjing 2007, 23). Under this kind of collective ideology, speaking Shanghainese is

viewed as incorrect owing to its confliction with the linguistic standard in society. As a matter of fact, Shanghainese itself is not a nonstandard language on the basis of the definition of standardization mentioned above. Only because the social environment has changed, have language attitudes to Shanghainese changed along with it.

### *Schools*

From the first policy (in 1956) concerned with the popularization of Mandarin, the Chinese government paid close attention to the progress of learning Mandarin in schools and took a series of actions to ensure that students learned Mandarin well. For example, *Pinyin* 拼音 was first introduced to schools, since the government believed that this system would be helpful for students to grasp the phonologic rules of Mandarin. Consequently, the linguistic environment of schools gradually but ultimately, completely switched from Shanghainese to Mandarin.

There were many difficulties in this process, but teachers were successful in keeping a Mandarin-speaking environment which was required by the government and the Shanghai Educational Committee. In a documentary, a teacher who gained distinction by creating an efficient method of teaching *pinyin* spoke about how she made use of children's songs to make students remember *pinyin* quicker and better.<sup>28</sup> In order to accelerate the pace of learning Mandarin, students were not allowed to speak Shanghainese as soon as they were at schools. It is revealing to see slogans posted

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<sup>28</sup> See reference. 2

around schools to remind students to speaking Mandarin, such as “*Qingjiang Putonghua, qingxie guifanzi*” 请讲普通话, 请写规范字 (Please speak Mandarin, please write standard characters.) (Yang Jinping 2011). Children began to learn Mandarin from the time of kindergarten. As for teachers, the government set a rule that younger teachers (under forty years old) must master Mandarin within a certain period. In particular, Chinese teachers must have scores of 92 or above out of 100 in the *Putonghu shuiping ceshi* 普通话水平测试 (the test of Mandarin level).<sup>29</sup> After the middle of 1980s, when the government restarted the popularization of Mandarin after the suspension during the Cultural Revolution, teachers above forty were also required to use Mandarin in classes. Since then, not only teachers but also parents have helped children with speaking Mandarin, since speaking Mandarin has already become the trend of the social mainstream (Zhang Jingjing 2007, 25). As a result, opportunities for generations born after 1980s to speak Shanghainese have dropped sharply compared with people born in the 1970s or older generations who mainly spoke Shanghainese in daily life. The direct result of this change can be shown by the surveys about language usage. People born in 1970s grew up in a Shanghainese environment, consequently they think that Shanghainese is the mother tongue without doubt. Generations of the 1980s and 1990s gave different answers. Although they can speak Shanghainese and communicate with older members of families in this language, they still see Mandarin as the mother tongue. One interviewee of the 1980s generation supported Mandarin as the mother tongue on the grounds that it was

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<sup>29</sup> “Putonghua shuiping ceshi,” [The test of Mandarin level] (Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014):[http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=GdTZTKhnOF92xtfs0NsXDvy7KrbNIlpD\\_5qYMja4YM4VNyXh\\_vqM-Vs1VDvpt6cAXjHNOwIBcTLdEeShD9wZB\\_#2\\_1](http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=GdTZTKhnOF92xtfs0NsXDvy7KrbNIlpD_5qYMja4YM4VNyXh_vqM-Vs1VDvpt6cAXjHNOwIBcTLdEeShD9wZB_#2_1)



established as the official language by the government. From this evidence, we can conclude that Shanghainese is extinct at schools owing to the strong intervention of government, which greatly influenced language attitudes from students regarding the position and usage of Shanghainese. To people of the 1970s, Shanghainese is the first choice when communicating with others. However, people of 1980s and 1990s probably do not speak Shanghainese on their own initiatives, both at schools or in daily life, to teachers or with friends. The frequency of speaking Shanghainese has shrunk dramatically over generations, which is concomitant with the recent development of this language: young people prefer to speak more simplified Shanghainese (whose grammatical and linguistic features diverge from old Shanghainese) which is also more convergent with Mandarin (Qian Nairong 2007, 180).

Government policy results in the turnaround of the linguistic environment of school life, and we need to take notice that attitudes of teachers play a crucial role in constructing students' attitudes towards Shanghainese as well (Edwards 2006, 327). At schools, the responsibilities of teachers are passing on knowledge and grading. Mandarin is taught as the standard language to students, whereas Shanghainese is forbidden as the nonstandard language. Some researches show that positive attitudes from teachers can stimulate enthusiasm of students to learn a specific language (Liu Meihua, 852). In contrast, there is an opinion that attitudes have no impact on language learning, since sometimes practical needs or social pressure make students learn a specific language due to a sense of obligation (Edwards 2006, 328). In any

case, the evaluation of speaking Shanghainese at schools (incorrect or unacceptable) from teachers does affect students and shapes distinct attitudes to Shanghainese and Mandarin. In other words, students are influenced to adopt the concept that Shanghainese is not an appropriate language to be used for professional communication and formal occasions.

In recent years, there is a tendency that Shanghainese may be taught in schools for the purpose of protecting local culture. More and more scholars, like Shanghainese linguist Qian Nairong and professor of Fudan University Ping Yueling, are worrying that fewer and fewer young people will be able to speak Shanghainese in the future.<sup>30</sup>

As a result, the view that encouraging children to learn Shanghainese at schools is desirable is attracting increasing attention in society. After prolonged discussion lasting for more than two years, the Shanghai Educational Committee commenced experiments on teaching Shanghainese in kindergartens, which aim to create a linguistic environment for children to speak Shanghainese.<sup>31</sup> Children's songs are taught in Shanghainese, but this coverage does not mention that children are learning the language as systematically as learning Mandarin. Not coincidentally, two interviewees also mentioned that now teachers at schools are encouraged to speak Shanghainese to students except during class time. Quite different from popularizing Mandarin however, there are not any regulations to guide teachers how to make students be familiar with Shanghainese. As a result, many teachers speak

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<sup>30</sup> "Huju zhao waishengshi xuesheng, shanghai fangyan liushi dui huju chongji da," [Hu Opera Enrolls Students from Other Regions, the Loss of Shanghainese Has a Great Influence on Hu Opera] in *Chinadaily.com*, (Mar. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015): [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/dfpd/sh/2015-03/18/content\\_19844697.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/dfpd/sh/2015-03/18/content_19844697.htm)

<sup>31</sup> See reference. 7

Shanghainese in a really casual and personal way, which creates a reverse effect on the promotion of Shanghainese among students. One of two interviewees is a mother of a 16-year-old girl. Although she can understand Shanghainese, her daughter cannot speak a word of it. Since the teacher of her daughter always criticizes her mistakes in her Shanghainese she thinks the language is so ungraceful that she is not willing to speak it. Obviously, this kind of negative language attitude to Shanghainese is undermines efforts to persuade students to learn the language with enthusiasm. Since the linguistic environment, positive guidance from teachers and logical teaching methods all play important roles in shaping language attitudes of students to a specific language, the government and schools need to design a set of practical steps to stimulate students' interest in speaking Shanghainese. Otherwise, the experiment to encourage speaking Shanghainese at schools cannot mitigate the crisis that young people are not able to or willing to speak the language.

### *Governmental Institutions*

As stipulated in national language policies, Mandarin must be spoken in governmental departments. In the report of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in 1958, Premier Zhou Enlai 周恩来 compared learning Mandarin to “*Yixiang zhongyaode zhengzhi renwu*” 一项重要的政治任务 (a significant political task) (Zhang Jingjing 2007, 23), which indicated that Mandarin played a significant role in consolidating the whole country. Naturally, cadres are always the first line of people

who are required to learn and speak Mandarin from 1956 to now. Every year, levels of governments organize various activities for improving the ability of cadres to speak standard Mandarin. We can say that Mandarin has already been a deep-seated part in the daily operation of governmental institutions.

Under these circumstances, cadres who speak Shanghainese in the space of governmental institutions are criticized for neglecting their duties. For instance, some people may answer in Shanghainese if they are interviewed by journalists on the street. However, officials will definitely speak Mandarin in the same situation, otherwise audiences will feel that the cadre's conduct is unprofessional and unreliable (Zhang Jingjing 2007, 24). Consequently, we can conclude that Shanghainese is completely prohibited in governmental institutions, since it conflicts with national policies and the official image of government.

### *Media*

Media is always seen as the bridge for the exchange of massive amounts of information in society. In modern society, there are different kinds of media, including printed media, mass media (like TV, broadcast), new media (like *Weibo*, apps). The law states that the government sets the rule that Mandarin is the standard language that should be used by media.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, several scholars have noted that quite a few people give the definition of the standard language with the language used

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<sup>32</sup> See reference. 8

in media (Smakman 2012, 38). On the basis of this, it seems clear that is not possible for Shanghainese to be utilized in this domain. Nevertheless, the practical situation is much more complicated.

Regarding the printed media in Shanghai, since Mandarin is the official language, people are more easily convinced by coverage of news in Mandarin. Meanwhile, the printed media in Mandarin are accessible to much broader readers than it in Shanghainese. Apart from readers who came from other places, those who can speak Shanghainese probably do not know the written system of this language either, since they were not taught how to write in Shanghainese at schools and few things are written in Shanghainese in daily life. Nevertheless, written Shanghainese actually appeared and has been gradually consolidated down from several hundred years ago.<sup>33</sup>

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a great deal of literature was written in Shanghainese as the support given to in the May Fourth Movement. After the promulgation of the policy of national language, people had gotten accustomed to using Mandarin. Nowadays, linguists have collected written forms of expressions which are the most commonly used in current Shanghainese to compile books of written Shanghainese in order to protect Shanghainese. The representative one is “*Shanghaihua dacidian*” 上海话大词典 (Shanghainese big dictionary) by Qian Nairong in 2007.<sup>34</sup> With these academic publications, readers can get to know the correct written forms of Shanghainese and printed media in Shanghainese thus have a

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<sup>33</sup> “Shanghaihua zhengzi,” [Written Shanghainese] (Jan. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015):  
[http://xmwb.xinmin.cn/html/2015-01/18/content\\_27\\_1.htm](http://xmwb.xinmin.cn/html/2015-01/18/content_27_1.htm)

<sup>34</sup> “Shanghaihua wenzi xiefa,” [The Written System of Shanghainese] (Jul. 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011):  
<http://news.163.com/11/0719/16/79BC0IIQ00014AED.html>

standard to refer to.<sup>35</sup> For example, '*Xinmin wanbao*' 新民晚报 (*Xinmin Evening Newspaper*) which was published from 1929 onwards is the most popular newspaper in Shanghai. It is worth noting that it is directly managed under '*Zhongguo gongchandang Shanghai shi weiyuanhui*' 中国共产党上海市委员会 (The Shanghai Committee of the Communist Party of China). In 2010, the only column written in Shanghainese all over the country was called '*Shanghai xianhua*' 上海闲话 (Shanghainese) was created in order to protect local culture and language. By means of articles in Shanghainese, standard written Shanghainese can be popularized, which is regarded as an important step to prevent further decline in Shanghainese. By the hundredth issue of this column, the editorial office had received nearly 20,000 letters from readers, which reflects the enthusiasm of readers for the content.<sup>36</sup> From this evidence, it is possible to conclude that people are delighted to read print media in Shanghainese. Articles written in Shanghainese are closely related to local traditions and civic life in general, so there is more dialectical fun in these articles. Non-native speakers, however, cannot surmount the linguistic barrier and are thus not concerned with these articles.

In spite of the factor that Mandarin is stipulated as the standard language in laws, indigenous languages are more frequently used in mass media. According to "*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi fa*", Mandarin is the basic language to be performed in TV and radio stations. If programs need to use

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<sup>35</sup> See reference. 29

<sup>36</sup> "Xinmin wanbao 'Shanghai xianhua' chuangan 100qi, zhuanjia xuezhe gonghua shanghai xianhua," ['Shanghai xianhua' of *Xinmin Evening Newspaper* Was Published 100 Issues and Scholars Discusses About Shanghainese] in *Xinmin.cn* (April. 13<sup>th</sup>, 2014): <http://shanghai.xinmin.cn/msrx/2012/04/13/14402410.html>

indigenous languages, they need to apply for approvals from national or provincial TV departments (Chi Changhai 2005, 126). Consequently, we can say that the Chinese government is limiting the using of dialects, instead of a complete prohibition of it. This kind of language policy was more tolerate before 2000, which resulted in the appearance of more and more programs in dialects all over China. Taking Shanghai as an example, there are several reasons: Firstly, the audience or listeners have already shifted from “the cultural elite to urban citizens in the late 1980s and 1990s” (Liu 2013, 108). Even until today, a group of people (mainly the elderly or low-educated) in Shanghai cannot understand Mandarin well. To meet their needs, broadcast or TV programs in Shanghainese which were stopped because of the popularization of Mandarin at the end of last century have been released again. For instance, a popular TV program called “*Bo Wanwing heie rexian*” 柏万青和谐热线 (Bo Wanqing’s Harmonious Hotline) addresses family conflicts and clashes in the neighborhood. Since both the participants and the audience are basically the middle-age and the elderly, speaking Shanghainese is a better choice than Mandarin. Secondly, using dialects can build up an intimate bond between the stage and the audience. According to a survey, speaking dialects can give listeners feelings of ‘solidarity, sociability, familiarity, closeness, sincerity and so on’ (Chen Ping 1999, 56). As a result, it is appealing for TV and broadcast programs to adopt dialects to attract more audience. Thirdly, programs in dialects can express out local characteristics. Similar to columns in printed media, the content of Shanghainese programs concentrates on social news and the lives of citizens. At the same time, this

is considered as a good way to protect indigenous languages and promote local identities (Wang Gang 2006, 85). Recently, the government notices the reality that increasing numbers of programs in dialects are on TV or in radio, so the National Broadcast, Film and TV Bureau has released an announcement about requiring hosts not to speak dialects except for the specific need of programs.<sup>37</sup> This new announcement actually is in accord with the usual language policy towards dialects. Dialects can be used, as long as it does not interrupt the promotion of Mandarin (Chen Ping 1999, 58). Obviously, the government thinks that speaking dialects in general programs will have an adverse effect on the standardization of Mandarin.<sup>38</sup>

Notably, audience has a positive attitude to utilize Shanghainese in programs. The first news program in Shanghainese ‘*Xinwenfang*’ 新闻坊 (News Lane) has been broadcast every Saturday since 2012. It consists of five parts: reporting local news, social focus discussion, helping citizens with life difficulties, tips about living in Shanghai and knowledge of Shanghainese.<sup>39</sup> The atmosphere of the program resembles a warm and mundane life in Shanghai. One male and two female hosts wear casual clothes, sit in a semi-circle and talk about local news as if they were chatting between neighbors.<sup>40</sup> After a period of piloting, *Xinwenfang* has been extended to the whole weekend (Saturdays and Sundays), which demonstrates that the content and form of the program is accepted by the audience. I think these positive

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<sup>37</sup> “Guangdian zongju guifan Putonghua,” [The National Broadcast, Film and TV Bureau Standardizes Mandarin] (Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014): [http://news.xinhuanet.com/gangao/2014-01/05/c\\_125957339.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/gangao/2014-01/05/c_125957339.htm)

<sup>38</sup> See Reference. 37

<sup>39</sup> “Shouge huyu xinwen dianshi jiemu zhouliu liangxiang,” [The First TV Program in Shanghainese Will Come Out This Saturday.] (June. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012): [http://epaper.dfdaily.com/dfzb/html/2012-06/20/content\\_637828.htm](http://epaper.dfdaily.com/dfzb/html/2012-06/20/content_637828.htm)

<sup>40</sup> “Cong huyuban ‘Xinwenfang’ kan shanghaihua chuancheng,” [The Inheriting of Shanghainese from the Shanghainese Program *Xinwenfang*] (Jul. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012): [http://www.xuhuibao.com/html/2012-07/02/content\\_16\\_6.htm](http://www.xuhuibao.com/html/2012-07/02/content_16_6.htm)



language attitudes can also be illustrated with reference to the respect of local identity and the requirement of cultural diversity under a unified macro-identity.

Last but not least, we turn our eyes to new media which caters to the most active audience who always respond with individual opinions to the content of new media. Compared with previous kinds of media, the boundary between the use of Mandarin and Shanghainese tends to get blurred. When Shanghai people post on the Internet, Shanghainese is inclined to be mixed up with sentences in Mandarin. For example, the official account of ‘*Xinlang Shanghai xinwen pindao*’ (‘Sina.com.cn’ is the biggest portal in China and it developed ‘Sina Weibo’ which is currently one of most popular new media) 新浪上海新闻频道 (Shanghai News of Sina.cm.cn) on *Weibo* 微博 (Chinese twitter) reported the rainstorm in Shanghai on June. 17<sup>th</sup>. In this Mandarin post, there is a sentence ‘*tɛin<sub>55</sub>tsɿ<sub>21</sub> noŋ<sub>23</sub> k’Y<sub>34</sub>h<sub>E34</sub> laʔ VA ?*’ 今朝依看海了哦? (Did you see the sea today?), which is evidently a Shanghainese sentence.<sup>41</sup> The sense of teasing in this sentence is particular to Shanghainese, so Shanghai people can feel cultural proximity and entertainment when seeing the sentence. In my opinion, the more casual and personalized atmosphere on the Internet is the primary reason of generating the linguistic diversity. Furthermore, there are some online communities which are specially set up for Shanghai people to communicate and naturally we can find many posts written in Shanghainese. Nevertheless, Mandarin is still the main language used in these online communities (such as *Kuandaishan* 宽带山: [http://www.kdslife.com/forum\\_1\\_15.html](http://www.kdslife.com/forum_1_15.html)).

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<sup>41</sup> “Shanghai xinwen bobao,” [Shanghai News Report] (Jun. 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015): [http://www.weibo.com/1814975931/CmZJe4NnW?c=spr\\_qdhez\\_bd\\_baidusmt\\_weibo\\_s#\\_rnd1434619045475](http://www.weibo.com/1814975931/CmZJe4NnW?c=spr_qdhez_bd_baidusmt_weibo_s#_rnd1434619045475)

By means of taking a look at different media, we can figure out that Shanghainese is not forbidden as it is in the domains of governmental institutions and schools. In fact, Substantial numbers of people are willing to use the language, since it is undertaking some linguistic functions which Mandarin cannot do. Due to the requirement of spreading information, Shanghainese is adopted in order to give consideration to local people who do not understand Mandarin. At the same time, the familiarity as well as affectional ties created by Shanghainese is being valued by a growing number of people, both program producers and audience. From this perspective, dialects can always keep a position in the Mandarin-dominated environment of media.

### *Work Places*

In this domain, language is an effective way of showing people's social status, consequently the choice of language can directly reflect some common sense about the relation between linguistic behaviors and social class.

In present-day Shanghai, Shanghainese cannot satisfy the need of communicative function in the domain of working places any longer. People from different areas of China come to the city to look for better job opportunities. Therefore, a unified language plays a crucial role in collaboration between locals and outsiders. As similar as Shanghainese that was in common use during last century, since it is impractical to use any kind of dialects, Mandarin is accepted by the public as a course of nature. As time goes on, using Mandarin in working places became normalized, whereas

speaking Shanghainese is seen as abnormal. However, there are exceptions: if people in the office can all understand Shanghainese or Shanghai people meet each other in private time during working (like lunch time or breaks), Shanghainese is still spoken for chatting about the weather, news and other casual matters. From my interviewees, I asked them to list situations in which they speak Shanghainese during work. Only one interviewee answered he only speaks Mandarin, the other five acknowledged that they do speak Shanghainese. It appears that the opportunities for speaking Shanghainese would be much greater, if people in the work places understood Shanghainese.

In Goffman's work "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life", he discussed how individuals presented themselves in front of others. In general, this kind of presentation could be completed by double channels: knowing information about others and showing others what the self has already had (Goffman 1971, 13). To some extent, social activities of humans are activities of exchanging information. No wonder language is believed to be a window to perceive a speaker's inner information, such as personality and quality (Cargile, Giles, Ryan and Bradac 1994, 212). In this sense, career people prefer to use the language which is helpful to create a professional and well-educated image of them, since their careers will definitely benefit from this kind of image. In multi-cultural cities like Shanghai, dialects are regarded as low varieties of Chinese, since it can merely be used in limited spheres and speakers center on the lower class of cities. By contrast, Mandarin is regarded as a high variety of Chinese, since it can only be mastered after systematic education and

can be used in all social domains (Chu Xiao-quan 1999, 18). As for the relation between Shanghainese and a good educational background, interviewees all supported the idea that speaking Shanghainese does not mean that the speaker is not well-educated. However in the meanwhile, more than one interviewee disclosed the fact that Shanghainese is perceived as being connected with trivial moments of city life. One interviewee revealed that her classmate at university was removed from the candidate list for the president of Student Union by students and teachers, just because he could not speak good Mandarin. Clearly, Mandarin is a professional skill but Shanghainese is not. This explains why people choose to speak Mandarin when working.

In short, Shanghainese is in a low vitality in the domain of working places. Not only social standards but also the needs to develop individual careers both bring about this result. At the same time, many people in many work places of Shanghai cannot speak Shanghainese, which reduces the chance of speaking Shanghainese. Other than communication, people also want to convey positive information to the outside by language. Obviously, Shanghainese is not qualified as a suitable tool for creating ideal images of the middle and higher classes. From another point of view, the drastic loss of well-educated speakers is quite a big challenge to the inheriting, protection and promotion of Shanghainese, which makes the situation of this language even worse.

#### *Other Public Space and Private Space*

It is important to take a look at the situation of Shanghainese in daily life, since it is very clear that its vitality has indeed decreased.

In the golden age of Shanghainese, new immigrants and foreigners had to learn how to speak Shanghainese. If they did not know this language, it would be quite hard to live and work well in the city. The second generation of these immigrants was taught Shanghainese from childhood, since their parents thought that standard Shanghainese would greatly benefit their children to gain more opportunities for individual development. As mentioned in the chapter of 'Introduction', the official language in Shanghai has shifted to Mandarin, in particular after 2000. The status of Shanghainese has declined so obviously that even local people no longer regard it as a necessary ability for living in the city. There is a question in my interview: Do you think that non-natives working or living here need to learn Shanghainese? All interviewees think that knowing Shanghainese can make non-natives get accustomed to the life in Shanghai quicker and help avoid troubles (such as cheating). Nevertheless, learning Shanghainese is not a prerequisite, since the native and non-native can both communicate in Mandarin.

In public space except for the previous four categories, like streets or shopping malls, the first choice of language is Mandarin, because people are not sure if others can understand Shanghainese or not. With the increasing number of immigrants in Shanghai, people who can speak Mandarin all get accustomed to not using Shanghainese to strangers. Consequently, the frequency of speaking Shanghainese in public space has declined greatly. Those who cannot speak Mandarin, without doubt,

still speak Shanghainese or speak a kind of combinative language: *Shanghai Putonghua* 上海普通话 (Shanghai Mandarin) (Qian Nairong 2007, 197). This kind of Mandarin is characterized by mixed pronunciations, expressions and even grammar that shares elements of both Shanghainese and Mandarin. Shanghai Mandarin can be used as evidence to illustrate that people who are not able to master Mandarin well are still inclined to speaking it rather than Shanghainese. This negative attitude to Shanghainese is not sufficient to explain the dislike of the language itself. Instead, that Shanghainese is not qualified enough to take on more social functions is the fundamental cause.

Ultimately, we can look at two circumstances where people mainly speak Shanghainese. The first one is when local people communicate with each other. For interviewees born in the 1970s, they speak Shanghainese unconsciously when talking with other locals, since it is the mother tongue. Interviewees born in 1980s and 1990s spoke Mandarin much more often while they grew up. Consequently they are inclined to speak in Mandarin as usual, even when communicating with locals. It is pretty interesting to find that there is an inconsistency between what interviewees feel and what they really do. For instance, an interviewee of 1990s thinks that she usually speaks Shanghainese when she is at home. As a friend of her, I remember she actually spoke Mandarin to her parents when I visited her. An interviewee who was born in 1970s told me that she has to speak Mandarin more and more often than before at home now, because her daughter (born in late 1990s) is not able to speak Shanghainese. From above, we can see that the habit of using a specific language is

more influential than other factors to determine in which language local people respond unconsciously under the bilingual environment in Shanghai. Except to specific people who can only speak Shanghainese (like grandparents), most young people are probably speaking Mandarin or mingle Shanghainese with Mandarin despite the fact that they are in the linguistic domain of local people. This corroborates with the fact that the frequency of speaking Shanghainese is indeed dwindling among local people.

Secondly, Shanghainese is used when speakers want to express specific feelings or meanings. Many expressions in Shanghainese are hard to directly translate into Mandarin owing to the loss of semantic and cultural features during translation. Interviewees mentioned that they tend to speak Shanghainese slang when cracking a joke with friends or relatives, because all of them can understand implications in the vernacular. Comparing with Mandarin which needs to be used on formal occasions, speaking Shanghainese in private space is beneficial to make the whole atmosphere more casual and entertaining.

Language attitudes seem to be closely related to personal views, but they are literally productions of social activities and interpersonal interaction. Linguistic changes of languages have a small impact on the changing of language attitudes. At the same time, the superiority and inferiority of languages are changeable along with the social progress.

As for Shanghainese, we have analyzed that its vitality in five domains is not strong

and active. The first unfavorable factor is that the development/maintenance of Shanghainese is not supported and encouraged by national policies. Furthermore, the reality that it can accomplish much fewer social functions than Mandarin is exacerbating the situation. The biggest detriment of this language at the moment is that most people do not agree that speaking Shanghainese can show individual competitive power or decent status, whereas speaking Mandarin can. Again, this inferiority is mainly generated from dramatic changes of social environment, instead of the language itself. Fortunately, the situation of Shanghainese has come to the notice of the public and there is a tendency in favor of protecting Shanghainese after entering this century. In next chapter, we will see how Shanghainese is associated with cultural identity.



## **Protecting Shanghainese as a Local Identity**

Using Mandarin is indeed beneficial to communication of Chinese people and the governmental management on social or cultural affairs, but it weakens regional diversities in the meanwhile. Dialects were generated by specific local culture, history and traditions, and all of them have experienced a long-term development. Consequently, it is not possible to fully replace dialects with Mandarin. On the other hand, the strong and affinitive bond with hometowns plays a crucial role in traditional culture of China all along (Chen Ping 1999, 57). As an apparent method of distinguishing the different groups of people and local differences, indigenous languages which are facing a crisis of a sharp decrease in number of speakers and types due to the deepening of the popularization of Mandarin are being drawn to the attention of more and more people.

After 2000, many people realized the importance of protecting Shanghainese. From the interviews I conducted, I found that Shanghainese is either the language which interviewees (born in the 1970s) have gotten used to hearing and speaking from their childhood, or the one which reminds interviewees (born in 1980s-1990s) of memories about growing up in the city. Under the linguistic environment of Mandarin, the communicative function of Shanhainese has largely shrunk, but the function of it to embody a local identity has been highlighted. In the following, we will see how people are striving for promoting the local identity in the form of saving Shanghainese under the macro-environment of building the national identity.

Quoting the answer of one interviewee about why the protection of Shanghainese needs to be paid attention to by the government and the public, she thought that if Shanghai people did not speak Shanghainese, then what else would constitute a difference between Shanghai people and other Chinese? Indeed, speaking the vernacular is a significant way to convey an individual identity to the outside and promote a sense of local pride. Young generations, as we have known from previous chapters, speak Mandarin much more often than speaking Shanghainese, so many people are worried about whether Shanghainese can be inherited authentically.

Most Shanghainese scholars argue that Shanghainese is in an endangered situation.<sup>42</sup> Associating the definition of an ‘endangered language’ and the analysis of domains, I think Shanghainese is closer to a dialect at risk. Many people, including a lot of young people still speak it, but it is also true that it is almost never used in the domains of public space (see content of the third chapter). Then why do scholars think it as endangered? It is probably because current Shanghainese is quite different from the form it took fifty or a hundred years ago. We have mentioned above that the habit of speaking Shanghainese greatly varies between generations and thus many previous linguistic features have lost or been changed. Another piece of evidence which proves the loss of authenticity is that it is harder to find qualified hosts for Shanghainese programs than before. Like a program director told the journalist of *people.cn*, young people have gotten completely accustomed to thinking and using words in Mandarin. Even if they are trained to speak Shanghainese specially, it is still difficult to grasp all

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<sup>42</sup> “82wei xuezhe lianming changyi kexue baohu Shanghaihua,” [82 scholars Propose to Protect Shanghainese Scientifically] (Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012): <http://www.dfdaily.com/html/150/2012/1/5/725785.shtml>

the authentic expressions of Shanghainese in a short period.<sup>43</sup> Above factors lead to many Shanghainese protectors express the view that the future of Shanghainese will be not positive if we do not take any actions to protect dialectical features and create an environment beneficial to the passing down of Shanghainese.<sup>44</sup>

However, some scholars hold the perspective that the loss of some linguistic features in Shanghainese should not be considered as negative, instead this is a normal phenomenon while a language develops along with the changing of society. Qian Nairong thinks that it is not reasonable to view Shanghainese spoken by older generations as a more authentic variety than the one spoken by younger generations, since we cannot reach a consensus on what is exactly the most authentic variety of Shanghainese in the light of the process of development. Qian presents the view that the phenomenon that new expressions replace old ones is natural in any languages. From this angle, the Shanghainese used by younger generations represents the direction of future development of Shanghainese (Qian Nairong 2007, 183-184). Another scholar Ge Jianxiong points out that it is impractical to keep so-called authentic Shanghainese in such a multilingual environment. In addition, the so-called authentic Shanghainese cannot represent the changing Shanghainese in reality.<sup>45</sup> In sum, scholars who have a positive attitude to changes in Shanghainese are putting efforts in maintaining the sustainable and extensive use of this language, rather than adhering to promoting the variety spoken by older generations.

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<sup>43</sup> "Shanghai: meiren huishuo shanghaihua," [Shanghai: No One Can Speak Shanghainese?] (July. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2003): <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/paper40/9618/887570.html>

<sup>44</sup> See reference. 37

<sup>45</sup> "Shanghaihua zenmele? Dui huyu weiji, zhuanjia: ke jianbian, bu duandai," [How About Shanghainese? Specialists Talk about the Crisis of Shanghainese, ] (Aug. 16<sup>th</sup>, 2012): [http://news.xinhuanet.com/edu/2012-08/16/c\\_123590967\\_2.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/edu/2012-08/16/c_123590967_2.htm)

The practical situation of Shanghainese prompts protectors to try various methods to prevent further deterioration. On one hand, supporters are striving for making the protection of Shanghainese a matter of government policy. More than one Shanghai councilor has submitted a proposal which suggests promoting Shanghainese onto the national agenda as a matter of cultural protection to ‘*Quanguo renmin daibiao dahui*’ 全国人民代表大会 (National People’s Congress) and ‘*Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi*’ 中国人民政治协商会议 (Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference). These councilors think that Shanghainese is a part of Chinese culture, thus protecting it can be seen as equal as protecting the cultural diversity of China. Furthermore, speaking authentic Shanghainese plays a key role in constructing an intimate connection between the people and the city, which is a significant incentive to maintain the sustainable development and competitive power of Shanghai. The forming of a Mandarin environment benefits from the national policy to a great extent, consequently councilors are looking forward to an official policy which will grant a legal position to Shanghainese and cultivate favorable conditions for the popularization of it.<sup>46</sup> Besides efforts in official channels, linguists have published many academic works which introduce the history of the development of Shanghainese or compile Shanghainese expressions and slang systematically. Representative publications are Qian Nairong’s “*Shanghai fangyan*” 上海方言 (Shanghai Dialect) and 上海话大词典, Wang Zhongxian’s “*Shanghai suyu tushuo*” 上海俗语图说 (The Illustration of Shanghai Slang) and so on. Different kinds of

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<sup>46</sup> “Shanghai weiyuan tichu baohu fangyan yingcheng guojia wenhua zhanlue,” [Shanghai Councilors Propose That Protecting Shanghainese Should Be a National Cultural Agenda] (March. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014): <http://sh.sina.com.cn/news/b/2014-03-12/081685404.html>

teaching materials about Shanghainese can be found in bookstores and on the Internet as well. Shanghainese classes are opened for students including outsiders and local people who cannot speak Shanghainese well.<sup>47</sup> We can find that above actions are aimed at setting up a standard system for Shanghainese, which is similar with the preparation of popularizing Mandarin. Needless to say, the standardization of Shanghainese will be favorable for more people to learn it. In view of the foregoing, we know about opinions and actions about saving Shanghainese from the view of scholars. Next, we turn our sight to some attempts tried by people.

In order to emphasize a cultural identity of Shanghai, someone innovate existed artistic forms in Shanghainese, which can satisfy the appreciative taste of current audience and show linguistic charms. Traditional performances in Shanghai such as *Huajixi*<sup>48</sup> and *Huju*<sup>49</sup> are no longer interesting for most of audience. In my interview, all interviewees answered that they do not watch any traditional performances in Shanghainese on their own initiatives, since they view the content and form are outdated. From 2008, a new form called *Haipai qingkou*<sup>50</sup> became prevalent among Shanghai and nearby areas. *Haipai* 海派 is a term for describing the hybrid feature of Shanghai culture. *Qingkou* 清口 means this performance is given merely by one actor. This performance keeps the essence of local culture and finds a suitable form to discuss about subjects (like Shanghai traditions, social affairs and so on) which audience is pretty interested in. Zhou Libo 周立波 is the founder and he was ever a

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<sup>47</sup> See reference. 19

<sup>48</sup> 滑稽戏, a specific comedy in Shanghainese and the form is close to northern *Xiangsheng* 相声 and *Xiaopin* 小品

<sup>49</sup> 沪剧, Hu operas

<sup>50</sup> 海派清口, Shanghai *qing* mouth

formal actor of the Shanghai Huajixi Institution 上海滑稽剧团. Combined with Zhou's professional experience, a good grounding in *Huajixi* skills is the basis of success for *Haipai qingkou*. In the meantime, Zhou borrows *Dankou xiangsheng* 单口相声 (*Xiangsheng* performed by one person) of Beijing and *Dongduxiao* 栋笃笑 (Stand-up comedy) of Hongkong. According to data, the audience for each performance includes people of different ages and they can laugh around 600 times in each performance, which is convincing evidence to reveal that this artistic form can give the performer a broad space to show linguistic advantages of Shanghainese.<sup>51</sup> In conclusion, *Haipai qingkou* makes local people want to see linguistic performances again and show cultural characteristics of Shanghai identity to people in other regions. Simultaneously, someone especially young people are trying to integrate Shanghainese with pop music (mainly rap, hip-hop and rock) to show opinions about the protection of local identity. All rap, hip-hop and rock imply a spirit of rebellion, which speaks out for an independent and distinctive sub-identity under a unified and authoritative macro-identity (Jin Liu 2014, 281). With the help of music, makers are able to set up a cultural space where they remind people of the importance of saving local culture and Shanghainese mainly through the channel of Internet (Jin Liu 2014, 266). The first hip-hop group which published some works in Shanghainese was *Heibang* 黑棒.<sup>52</sup> In 2003, the representative song “*Xiafeilu 87hao*”霞飞路87号 (No. 87 on Avenue Joffre) the creators described their unforgettable and fantastic

<sup>51</sup> “Haipai qingkou,” [Shanghai Qing Month] (Jun. 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015): [http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=dEBMJ72-Edf7uJgdyfhvqNt-K0CvuNZ9aTGA9\\_sXFsDbRJtQk7suD3pHn21i1JYE4UZmzRUly6C-2F5gDq21HK](http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=dEBMJ72-Edf7uJgdyfhvqNt-K0CvuNZ9aTGA9_sXFsDbRJtQk7suD3pHn21i1JYE4UZmzRUly6C-2F5gDq21HK).

<sup>52</sup> “Heibang,” (Jun. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015): [http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=HeApTWo3Z8D6I0HBI2FsHIL4vhATGsDkmHh9OTZjEd3rOOmGxHMuAESJA\\_kTOhcI](http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=HeApTWo3Z8D6I0HBI2FsHIL4vhATGsDkmHh9OTZjEd3rOOmGxHMuAESJA_kTOhcI)

childhood in typical *Nongtang* 弄堂 (narrow alleyways of old Shanghai). *Xiafeilu* is a famous avenue where many western fashion stores opened in 1920s-1930s and historical architecture can be found, so it is always seen as a code word for the prosperity of local culture by Shanghai people. In the mild and rigorous music, *Heibang* spices with English, folk songs of Shanghai, a representative theme song of film shot in Shanghai last century and Mandarin. The above elements were arranged harmoniously in the song, by which young artists convey abundant emotions about the hometown.

Some works express out the subject of promoting the local identity even more directly. The rap singer Shou Junchao responded to the social issue that some people do not like local people to speak Shanghainese in the song “*Shanghaihua yaojiang*” 上海话要讲 (Shanghainese needs to be spoken). He thought that Shanghainese is an important part of local culture and presented the individual view that people from other regions should put efforts to get accustomed to local culture after coming to Shanghai. The song conveys a persistence and pride in the language, the city and local people. Since the music and lyrics are catchy, this song is popular on the Internet and many Shanghai users think Shou Junchao sings out the inner voice of local people when facing with such a social affair.<sup>53</sup>

The promotion of local identity comes from the love of the local to the hometown, which seems to have nothing to do with foreign populations, whereas sometimes migrants can still be drawn into social conflicts caused by it. In 2009, a listener sent a

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<sup>53</sup> “Shanghaihua yaojiang,” [Shanghainese Needs to be Spoken] (Aug. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010): <http://tieba.baidu.com/p/855680517>

message to a popular music broadcast program in Shanghai to complain that two hosts spoke Shanghainese. The message was a bit extreme, since the listener wrote: “Please do not speak Shanghainese in the program anymore, I hate Shanghai people.” Then one host called Xiaojun replied to this message: “You can bend down, round yourself and leave Shanghai in a rolling way. Leave the city you do not like, leave annoying Shanghai people.”<sup>54</sup> Since everybody can understand the implication in Xiaojun’s words, this incident immediately touched off the discussion of whether hosts should speak the dialect in a program which was not designed to be performed in Shanghainese. It is clear to see that both the listener and Xiaojun connected speaking Shanghainese with the local identity of Shanghai people. According to online posts, coverage and answers from my interviewees, I conclude three types of opinion about this incident in society. Those who supported Xiaojun’s behavior felt that it is unquestionable to speak Shanghainese in broadcast programs of Shanghai, since this is the indigenous language. As long as the listener had come to Shanghai, he should learn Shanghainese on his own initiative and try to integrate into local culture. Some people also thought that if the listener did not like the form of this broadcast program, he could turn over rather than blaming hosts for speaking the indigenous language. The second type of attitude pointed at the inappropriate response of Xiaojun. An online user thought that hosts should be open to different kinds of opinions from listeners.<sup>55</sup> The sociologist of Shanghai University Deng Zhiwei indicated that hosts

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<sup>54</sup> “Tuancheng yituan, yuanrun likai” [You Can Leave Shanghai If You Do Not Like It] (Jul. 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014): [http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=9F0vuLW\\_PBfGYuclB6F3Un9HU-LjZs5TZWtApSm7F00sxV8heQcMQWsGAPWf13nCst69lnRSGKl3S8Z9xjGwvq](http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=9F0vuLW_PBfGYuclB6F3Un9HU-LjZs5TZWtApSm7F00sxV8heQcMQWsGAPWf13nCst69lnRSGKl3S8Z9xjGwvq)

<sup>55</sup> “Tuancheng yituan, yuanrun likai,” [You Can Leave Shanghai If You Do Not Like It] in *Xinmin.cn*, (Dec. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009): <http://news.xinmin.cn/rollnews/2009/12/27/3172412.html>



needed to pay attention to their words in media, since they can guide public opinion easily. Last but not least, some people argued that hosts should not speak too much in Shanghainese even in local programs. Especially in big cities like Shanghai, hosts should keep in mind that not only local people but people who do not speak Shanghainese were also listening to programs. Except a few specific Shanghainese programs, specialists suggested that hosts were supposed to speak Mandarin.<sup>56</sup>

In my opinion, the listener was actually not dissatisfied with Shanghainese, instead he was more likely to dislike the feeling of isolation when hearing a language that he could not understand. However from the perspective of Xiaojun and a group of Shanghai people, speaking Shanghainese in local media is a natural behavior. Therefore, the awareness of promoting the cultural identity by using Shanghainese is the main reason to provoke conflicts in this incident. Like scholars Xu Damin and Qian Nairong said, urbanization can bring clashes about the language usage more easily and the government needs to take the responsibility to construct a system where different languages are treated equally and given opportunities to develop naturally (Qu Shaobing 2011, 56).

From this chapter, it is not difficult to figure out that the language attitude of protecting Shanghainese and local identity leads to a series of social discussions, conflicts and innovations. This attitude externalizes the need of maintaining the uniqueness of Shanghai under a unified Chinese identity. With reference to that which

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<sup>56</sup> "Tingzhong: qiu nimen bieshuo shanghaihua le, diantai zhuchi: qingni 'Gun'chu shanghai," [The Listener: Please Do Not Speak Shanghainese, the Host: You Can Get Out of Shanghai] in *Sina.com.cn*, (Dec. 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012): <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2009-12-26/092816836734s.shtml>

we discussed in the chapter, I think the negative situation of Shanghainese can probably be altered in the future, since not only scholars and the government but also people are aware of the necessity to speak Shanghainese more.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> "Jiefang: hu nianqingren cheng yuanwei tuiguang Shanghaihua er duoshuo," [Young People Are Willing to Speak Shanghainese More for the Popularization] (Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014): [http://news.ifeng.com/gundong/detail\\_2014\\_02/08/33615545\\_0.shtml](http://news.ifeng.com/gundong/detail_2014_02/08/33615545_0.shtml)

## Conclusion

By applying theories and analyzing practical social phenomena, we have examined language attitudes to Shanghainese and its current position in the Mandarin environment. By looking at five domains, it needs to be acknowledged that Mandarin rather than Shanghainese is the major tool of communication in current Shanghai. The national language policy provides Mandarin with the position of official language in public space, while Shanghainese mainly relies on speakers to pass down by generations. When young people do not speak it, it gets into the trouble of endangerment at once. Since Shanghainese cannot be used in formal occasions, its usage has to be limited within a tiny range, namely in private space and among relatives or friends. In general, people with higher educational backgrounds or in higher classes can speak good Mandarin. Since communication can be completed by Mandarin, the shrink of using range of Shanghainese seems not to be so disturbing. However from the aspect of local identity, the vanishing of Shanghainese can weaken the sense of belonging as well as local uniqueness. Shanghainese can externalize cultural characteristics of the city, hence scholars and people have utilized various methods to save it. During the progress of protection, the content of local identity is enriched, from showing the aesthetic taste to expressing cultural independence. Mandarin and Shanghainese have linguistic advantages respectively and both of them are beneficial to social development from different aspects. If they could construct a

complementary relation like *guoyu*<sup>58</sup> and dialects (Chen Ping 1999, 57), the national identity would benefit from the flourishing of local identities.

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<sup>58</sup> 国语, the older name of Mandarin before 1949

## Appendix

Questions of interviews:

### 个人信息 (Personal Information)

1. Age: 43, Sex: male, Occupation: teacher of elementary school
2. Age: 44, Sex: female, Occupation: accountant
3. Age: 32, Sex: male, Occupation: bank clerk
4. Age: 32, Sex: female, Occupation: IT
5. Age: 24, Sex: male, Occupation: student
6. Age: 24, Sex: female, Occupation: student

### 关于上海话本身 (About Shanghainese)

1. 你认为那一种是你的母语：上海话、普通话、其他 (Which one do you think as your mother tongue: Shanghainese/mandarin/others)
2. 有人认为说普通话是一种受到良好教育的体现，而说上海话则不是。你是否认同，为什么？ (Someone holds an opinion that speaking mandarin reflects a good educational background, but speaking Shanghainese does not. Do you agree? Why?)
3. 上海话最吸引你的特点是什么？ (Which feature of Shanghainese is the most interesting or important to you?)
4. 应该保护上海话吗？为什么？ (Is it necessary to protect Shanghainese? Why?)

### 上海话的使用 (The Using of Shanghainese)

1. 你在学校里使用上海话吗？如果是，什么时候？(Do you speak Shanghainese at school? If so, when?)
2. 你在工作中使用上海话吗？如果是，什么时候？(Do you speak Shanghainese when working? If so, when?)
3. 日常生活中，你说上海话还是普通话多？(Do you speak Shanghainese or mandarin more in daily life?)
4. 是否认为有些场合是不适合说上海话的？请举例说明。(Are there any occasions where it is not appropriate to speak Shanghainese? Please give some examples.)
5. 你觉得在上海的外地人需要学说上海话吗？(Do you think that non-natives working or living here need to learn Shanghainese?)
6. 当有人不喜欢你说上海话的时候，你的反应是？(If someone did not like you to speak Shanghainese, your reaction would be?)
7. 你觉得广播、电视上应不应该多用上海话？(Should Shanghainese be used more in radio or TV programs?)
8. 你会在网络中使用上海话吗？(Do you use Shanghainese on Internet?)

### 上海话及本地文化 (Shanghainese and Local Culture)

1. 你觉得上海话是一门濒危方言吗？(Do you agree that Shanghainese is an endangered dialect?)
2. 随着社会的发展，现在或将来上海话和上海地方文化的关系大吗？(With the

development of China, do Shanghainese still have a close relation with local culture nowadays or in the future?)

3. 小孩子有必要学上海话吗? (Should children learn Shanghainese?)
4. 平时会看和上海话有关的表演节目 (如滑稽戏、沪剧) 吗? (Do you choose to watch performances in Shanghainese in spare time?)

有关案例的个人观点 (Individual Opinions about Cases)

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