Multilingualism in Greater China and the Chinese Language Diaspora
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Author Bios

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INTRODUCTION

Greater China consists of four distinct polities: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the two Special Administrative Regions: Hong Kong and Macao. Large-scale migration from these regions has also resulted in a huge Chinese language diaspora across the globe. Altogether, the communities subsumed under these two entities – Greater China and the Chinese diaspora – represent an incredible array of cultural and linguistic heritages, language situations and multilingual resources. This chapter gives a sociolinguistic overview of those communities: their historical background, sources of linguistic diversity, and issues pertaining to bi/multilingualism including language policies, bilingual education, language shift, language maintenance and institutional support.

CHINA

China, with over 1.3 billion inhabitants, is the most populous country on earth, and the

Chinese language, in its multifarious dialectal forms, has the largest number of speakers in the world. By default, the term 'Chinese' refers to the largest ethnic group, the Han, who compose about 92 percent of the total population in Mainland China (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011). The remaining eight percent (about 90 million) is comprised of dozens of mainly distinct ethnic groups – *shaoshu minzu* or 'minority nationalities'. The distribution of population is very uneven. The overwhelming majority of the population live in the plains roughly in the eastern half of the country, while the minority nationalities mainly inhabit the border regions. The linguistic diversity and sociolinguistic complexity in China is discussed in various literature (e.g. P.Chen 1993, 1996, 1999; Erbaugh 1995; D.C.S.Li 2006; Norman 1988; Ramsey 1987).

The (Han) Chinese language

There are broadly speaking seven *fangyan*, or dialect groups – Mandarin, Wu, Xiang, Gan, Hakka (Kejia), Yue and Min. It is widely believed that these historically evolved from the same stem. The biggest dialect group is Mandarin, which is spoken by over 70 percent of the Han population. The vernaculars of the other *fangyan* are generally referred to as Southern dialects, of which Cantonese – the Yue vernacular spoken in Guangzhou and the two special administrative regions Hong Kong and Macao – is the most prestigious.

There is considerable variation within each of these major *fangyan*, not only in terms of phonological (e.g. tonal) features, but also vocabulary and syntax. From the point of view of intelligibility, the dialect groups are more appropriately seen as members of a language family akin to the Romance languages. Intelligibility may sometimes be more problematic than in communication between, say, a native Spanish and a native Italian speaker.

Notwithstanding such inter-dialectal communication barriers, the Han Chinese have since antiquity recognised that they share the same ethnolinguistic heritage. There is a widely perceived linguistic and cultural unity among the Han Chinese, which transcends their cross-dialectal variation in speech. Such a perception is generally attributed to a common, logographic writing system. The Beijing dialect provides the standard for the national language which is officially called Putonghua (Guoyu in Taiwan, and Huayu in Singapore). The term Putonghua emphasises spoken Chinese; when reference is made to standard Chinese both as a spoken and written language, the term 'Modern Standard Chinese' is preferred.

For nearly half a century, Putonghua has been promoted as the national lingua franca by the PRC government, especially in the domains of education and the media. Putonghua is now the medium of instruction in most schools in urban areas. Teachers and civil servants are required to pass Putonghua examinations as part of their professional qualifications. Thanks

to these measures, the number of speakers conversant in the national lingua franca has increased significantly in the past decades. The promotion of Putonghua, however, is generally more difficult in Southern dialect areas, where speakers of non-Mandarin dialects make up about one third of the entire Han population. This is so largely because Modern Standard Chinese is **modelled** on Northern Mandarin. Unlike speakers of Mandarin varieties, therefore, the degree to which speakers of Southern dialects are able to write the way they speak is much lower.

Minority nationalities and their languages

The minority nationalities are found mostly in the border regions to the north, northeast, northwest and southwest, but also in scattered, smaller enclaves among the Han Chinese. Only 55 minority nationalities are officially recognised (but the number of distinct language varieties spoken in China ranges from 80 to 100). The size of the minority populations also varies considerably. According to the latest census figures, the ten largest minority groups are Zhuang (16.1 million), Manchu (10.6 million), Hui (9.8 million), Miao (8.9 million), Uygur (8.3 million), Tujia (8 million), Yi (7.8 million), Mongol (5.8 million), Tibetan (5.4 million) and Buyei (2.9 million). The smallest groups, the Hezhen and Lhoba, each have a population of only several thousand (National Bureau of Statistics of China 2011).

All of the minority nationalities speak their own languages except for the Hui and the Manchu, who have adopted Mandarin as their mother tongue, and also the Chinese writing system. Quite a few minorities speak more than one language. Some of them have long-established written languages: Tibetan, Mongol, Uygur, Zhuang and Korean; nine written languages were created since 1949, while 31 of the minorities are still without a written language (Lam 2007; cf. Postiglione 1999).

Bilingualism, dialect bilingualism and diglossia

The 'Putonghua Promotion Campaign' implemented since the 1950s has substantially increased the number of Putonghua speakers across the country. One indirect consequence is that some vocabulary items in local dialects and minority languages gradually give way to their corresponding terms in Modern Standard Chinese.

Officially however, the purpose of promoting Putonghua to the status of the national lingua franca is not to eliminate dialects and minority languages. Quite the contrary, with the exception of periods of political instability, both dialects and minority languages have enjoyed considerable support from the central government. Thus, for example, while there is no doubt that Putonghua has taken on the function of the H variety (in a diglossic relationship with the other dialects) in television and radio broadcasting, as well as in films and theatre, one finds

at the same time the active use of dialects in semi-official public settings, such as local opera in different regions. Radio programs in dialects catering for the needs of people who do not understand enough Putonghua have been valued (e.g. Cantonese-speaking radio stations in Guangzhou and Shenzhen), although this has reportedly been a matter of concern, resulting in top-down directives reminding the regional authorities that Putonghua should be used in public settings and in the mass media (P.Chen, 1999:57-59).

Bilingual education

The rights of the minority nationalities to use, and be educated in, their native languages are protected by the national constitution (Feng 2007; M.L.Zhou 2000, 2001, 2004). For promoting literacy, the Nationalities Publishing House (*Minzu Chubanshe*) oversees the publication of newspapers, books and magazines in minority languages, especially those with established written languages. At the same time, minority populations are expected to master Chinese. To this end, bilingual education is seen as the principal means. Unlike Han students, for whom the goal of 'additive bilingual teaching' is to add a foreign language to their repertoire, minority nationality students are expected to develop bilingual competence to include mainstream Putonghua, mainly through transitional bilingual education (J.Lin 1997; Ru Blachford 1997).

The ideological orientations of the policy model of bilingual education in China are discussed in Lam (2005, 2007). In the 'Implicit Trilingual Model' in China, speakers who have a Mandarin variety as their usual language need to develop biliteracy in Chinese and English, and bilinguality in Putonghua and English, while Han dialect speakers are expected to develop biliteracy in Chinese and English and be trilingual in Putonghua, their local/regional vernacular, and English. Similarly, speakers from the 24 minority nationalities with a writing system are expected to be bilingual in Putonghua and their minority language(s), while those who aspire to climb up the social ladder would need to develop literacy skills in three languages – including English.

For over two decades, attempts have been made to enhance the bilinguality of minority nationality students through an immersion-like model. Thus through an *Neidiban* (the Inland Boarding Schools) scheme, Tibetan secondary school students were sent to inland cities with a view to nurturing them to integrate Tibetan culture and language into the mainstream culture. The results did not seem to be so effective in terms of producing balanced Tibetan-Chinese bilinguals however. Other bilingual teaching models include the 'Tibetan plus Chinese' and 'Chinese plus Tibetan' models (Wan & Zhang 2007). Effective bilingual teaching methods have been used experimentally. One successful method consists of introducing *pinyin* romanisation to Korean primary school pupils before introducing Chinese characters. The

general consensus among Mainland scholars is that mother tongue teaching is the most productive model of minority bilingual education (Dai & Cheng 2007).

Bilingual education appears to be developing rapidly in China. In a recent news bite entitled 'Bilingual teachers required' (South China Morning Post 2011, June 29), it was noted that over 5,500 kindergarten bilingual teachers of Putonghua and Uygur dialects were to be recruited to work in rural areas of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The region already has 966 bilingual kindergartens, and plans to build 1,146 new facilities.

As for recent developments of the spread of English in China, English is increasingly taught in rural and minority areas. The vicissitudes of the ideologically loaded English curricula in China since 1949 is discussed at length by Adamson (2004, 2007). For a study of the complexities involved in the learning of English by minority nationality students (e.g. trilingual code-switching), see **Jiang, Liu, Quan & Ma** (2007).

HONG KONG

An international metropolis situated at the estuary of the Pearl River Delta in South China, Hong Kong is barely 1,054 square kilometers in size but home to over 7 million people, making it one of the most densely populated places in the world (Census and Statistics Department 2009). It was a British colony for over 150 years until July 1997, when it was renationalised as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China.

Over 95 percent of the population in Hong Kong are ethnic Chinese, mainly descendants of migrants from different parts of the Mainland, especially the adjacent province, Guangdong. They came to settle in the British colony for political and/or economic reasons. After the handover, English remains a co-official language alongside Chinese (spoken Cantonese, standard written Chinese). Putonghua is becoming increasingly important, although no major language functions have been assigned to it. Printed Chinese in Hong Kong continues to be written in traditional Chinese characters. Dialectal elements, which are generally disallowed in Mainland print media, are very common in informal sections of the Hong Kong Chinese press.

Throughout the history of Hong Kong, the number of native English-speaking residents has never exceeded five percent. Since colonial times, except for work-related purposes there has been relatively little social interaction between westerners in Hong Kong and the local Chinese communities. This is so partly because both sides have access to various institutions in their preferred language, Cantonese or English (e.g. school, church, radio, television and

print media). In short, it is as if the two communities lived in separate 'enclosures' (Luke & Richards 1982).

Diglossia with (increasing) bilingualism

English has been the dominant language in the domains of government, business, education and law. In the early 1980s, the kind of Chinese-English bilingualism in Hong Kong approximated Fishman's (1972) model of 'diglossia without bilingualism'. Considerable change has taken place in the past three decades, however. Both census figures and language surveys yielded similar findings, namely, a significant percentage of Hong Kong Chinese described themselves as competent speakers of English, and had to use at least some English in their workplace, especially in white-collar settings (e.g. Bacon-Shone & Bolton 1998). This is in part a direct consequence of the nine-year compulsory education system since 1978, which means that all children are taught at least some English up to the end of Form 3 (Grade 9). Sociolinguistically, therefore, post-handover Hong Kong is more appropriately characterised as 'diglossia with (increasing) bilingualism'.

Bilingual education

Two of the main language-in-education issues that have been a matter of widespread concern are (a) the choice of a suitable model of bilingual education, as manifested in the medium of instruction policy, and (b) the proficiency level of the languages: English (spoken and written) and Chinese (written). The Hong Kong government's goals in its language-in-education policy is to promote biliteracy in Chinese and English, and trilingual skills in spoken Cantonese, English, and Putonghua. These goals have constituted the main driving force of a decade-long education reform, triggering heated debates and lively discussions in public discourse (D.C.S.Li 2009; cf. Lu 2005; Poon 2009, 2010).

To bolster the standards of English, the government implemented a Native English-speaking Teacher (NET) scheme in 1998. Every secondary school has been given financial support to hire one NET teacher, who is expected to collaborate with local teachers to motivate students to learn English and to improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of English. Since preliminary results are encouraging, the NET scheme has been extended to primary schools (A.Lin & Man 2009).

Putonghua is now a compulsory subject in primary school and an optional subject in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Exam (Grade 11). It is also the teaching medium in some subsidised primary and secondary schools. Since Modern Standard Chinese is largely **modelled** on Putonghua, some scholars argue that one effective means to elevate Hong Kong students' Chinese standards is to use Putonghua as a medium of instruction for teaching

Chinese subjects. While the rationale behind this proposal is sound, there are many practical difficulties that may not be easily overcome in the short run, in particular, the availability of teaching materials and well-trained and competent Putonghua teachers (Lu 2005; Poon 2009, 2010).

Cantonese-English code-switching

Research has shown that Cantonese-English code-switching is very common, indeed ubiquitous among educated Chinese Hongkongers. Clause-level switching is rare; more frequent is the insertion of English elements of various lengths below the clause level into the matrix language, Cantonese or written Chinese. Most school children start learning ABC from Kindergarten. At the age of 16, a secondary school graduate will have learned English for about 12 years. Given the significance of English in the Hong Kong education system, it is only natural that English elements would be called upon and surface in the middle of Chinese discourses, be it (informal) written Chinese or spoken Cantonese (e.g. B.H-S.Chan 2008; D.C.S.Li 1996, 2000; D.S.C.Li & Tse 2002; Gibbons 1987; Y.Pan 2000; D.Wu & Chan 2007). There is some evidence showing that often an English expression is cognitively and psycholinguistically more salient, and therefore comes to mind faster due to a medium-of-learning effect (D.C.S.Li 2011). Similar findings have been attested in an experimental study in Taiwan (D.C.S.Li 2011).

MACAO

Situated on the western shore of the Pearl River in South China, Macao (also spelt as Macau; Moody 2008) was formerly a Portuguese colony and became a Special Administrative Region of China in December 1999. The territory of about 23.8 square kilometers is home to over 550,000 inhabitants (Statistics and Census Service 2011). To international **travellers**, Macao is probably best known for its casinos, which have earned it the title of 'The Monte Carlo of the Orient'.

Over 95 percent of the population in Macao are ethnic Chinese. Cantonese is the mother tongue of close to 87 percent of all Macao residents. About 30 percent are speakers of different Chinese varieties who came to Macao from Mainland China some 10 to 15 years before the handover. Putonghua is getting more popular as a result of the government's efforts to promote it in the education domain. However, as yet Putonghua has not been assigned any significant functions. While societal bilingualism prevails, the Chinese communities seem to be moving toward diglossia/triglossia with increasing (dialect) bilingualism.

The ethnic Portuguese community is tiny. There is, however, a small but important

community (about 10,000 – barely two percent of the total population) called the Macanese. They are residents of Portuguese and Asian ancestry as a result of mixed marriages. Being highly educated, many Macanese are either professionals or occupy senior positions in the Macao government. They are mostly bilingual in Portuguese and Cantonese, some trilingual in Portuguese, Cantonese and English, but generally weak in Chinese literacy.

Portuguese was the only official language until early 1992, when Chinese became the second official language. After the handover, the Basic Law stipulates that apart from Chinese, Portuguese may also be used. As in Hong Kong, the term 'Chinese' denotes (Mandarin-based) Modern Standard Chinese, which is printed using traditional Chinese characters, whereas spoken Chinese is generally understood to be Cantonese. During the colonial period, knowledge of Portuguese was essential for promotion in the civil service. This situation was reversed after December, 1999. The Basic Law makes it clear that knowledge of Chinese is one important criterion for promotion within government ranks.

During the colonial period, the Portuguese government adopted a laissez-faire attitude and made little effort to promote Portuguese among the local people. Until the 1970s, few Chinese learned or spoke any Portuguese, and few Portuguese showed any interest in learning Cantonese. The language divide between the Portuguese and the local Chinese helps explain a lack of communication between them. In this regard, the Macanese have rendered a great service by playing an active role as a bridge between the two communities.

In the run-up to the handover, however, there was manifestly a change in attitude. Many Macao Chinese had the incentive to learn Portuguese, while some Macanese started learning Chinese (Cantonese and Putonghua). The vitality of Portuguese is further assured by the post-handover language-in-education policy governing the medium of instruction in primary and secondary schools. There are three categories of schools according to the teaching medium adopted: Chinese, Portuguese and English. In 'official schools', the principal teaching medium may be Chinese or Portuguese, with one or the other being a compulsory second language. Private schools, on the other hand, may choose to have any of the three languages as the teaching medium, with the proviso that a second language – to be chosen from among the other two on the list – must be included in the curriculum.

Language death
The forefathers of the Macanese spoke a Portuguese creole called Macanese, which was characterised by significant influence from Malay and other Pacific languages. Following the introduction of standard Portuguese in the 1950s, Macanese slowly lost its vitality. According to UNESCO's *Atlas of the world's languages in danger*, there were only 50 remaining

speakers in 2000 (Moseley, 2010). Although the Macanese community has lost much of their once vibrant vernacular, they are very proud of their culture and identity.

Other language contact phenomena

As Cantonese and Portuguese (including Macanese) have been in contact for more than four hundred years in Macao, it is not surprising that contact-induced changes have occurred in the vernaculars of their speakers. Macao Cantonese has also been influenced by English to some extent, largely as a result of exposure to Hong Kong electronic media and the perceived significance of English in the domains of education, business and tourism. A survey of the relevant literature shows that much of this mutual influence manifests itself in the form of lexical borrowing, intra-sentential code-switching and, to a lesser extent, induced syntactic change (see further, Leung & Li 2011).

TAIWAN

Geo-politically, Taiwan consists in one major island and several smaller offshore islands of about 35,981 square kilometers, separated from the Chinese mainland by the Taiwan Straits. It has a population of just under 23.2 million (National Statistics R.O.C. 2011), which is composed of four main ethnolinguistic groups: Southern Min (73.3%), Hakka (12%), Mainlanders (13%), and Austro-Polynesian aborigines (1.7%) (S.Huang 1993). The majority of the Taiwanese are descendants of Han Chinese who came to Taiwan in successive waves of migration since the seventeenth century. Descendants of the Austro-Polynesian population make up a tiny ethnic minority.

Triglossia with multilingualism

The official and national language of Taiwan is Mandarin (Guoyu). It was due to the National Language Movement, an iron-clad language policy implemented by the Kuomintang regime in 1946 and relentlessly enforced for over three decades that Mandarin was successfully promoted, but at the expense of other language varieties. S.Huang (2000) estimates that nearly 90 percent of today's Taiwanese population can speak Mandarin, which is used as the lingua franca between ethnolinguistic groups. Standard Mandarin in Taiwan is phonologically, lexically and syntactically similar to Putonghua, the national language of Mainland China, but a local variety of 'Taiwanese-Mandarin' – characterised by influences of other local varieties at all linguistic levels – has evolved (Tse 2000).

The sheer number of Southern Min speakers explains why it is the second most widely used language variety on the island after Mandarin. According to Liao (2000:167), 'the further south one goes, the more one observes a dominance of Southern Min in the mixed

code used'. Code-switching between Mandarin and Southern Min is very common, and the matrix language may be either language depending on the speaker (S.Huang 2000; Liao 2000). As Southern Min is so commonly used, members of the Hakka and aboriginal communities often find it necessary to learn Southern Min as well, approximating thereby a state of triglossia in these communities (Tse 2000).

Language shift and language death

In the mid-1980s, the political climate became more liberal, and the use of 'dialects' in public began to be tolerated. By that time, however, the strict enforcement of the Mandarin-only policy had already taken its toll (C.M.Huang 1998). Studies from the 1990s provide evidence of language shift toward Mandarin among speakers of the other language varieties. In a questionnaire survey involving speakers of the community languages, Tsao (1997) found that the higher the speakers' education level, the more frequently Mandarin is used. For the aboriginal groups, a higher education level correlated positively with competence in Mandarin, and negatively with competence in their native tongue. Statistics show that the aboriginal languages are declining at the fastest rate, Hakka close behind and Southern Min less markedly.

In 2000, the aboriginal population of Taiwan was made up of 188,784 people of plain tribes ancestry, and 213,668 people of mountain tribes ancestry (Government Information Office 2001). However, the number of speakers of aboriginal languages is very small (Tsao 1997). The mountain tribes suffered loss of language and culture to a lesser extent, mainly because contact with the Chinese was less frequent. According to S.Huang (2000), of the ten Austronesian languages that still exist, four have a better chance of surviving: Paiwan, Amis, Atayal, Bunun, four are moderately endangered: Saisiyat, Yami, Rukai, Tsou and two are seriously endangered: Puyuma and Thao. Urbanisation has drastically transformed the lives of many aborigines. Tsao (1999) warns that up to half of the existing aboriginal languages will disappear within four or five decades.

Like their aboriginal counterparts, the Hakka communities have been undergoing language shift toward Mandarin at an alarming rate (cf. Lau 2001). This worrying trend is especially evident among the younger generations, who clearly prefer Mandarin to Hakka in their social interactions with others. Language shift toward Mandarin is also evident among the Southern Min group, albeit at a much slower rate (Tsao 1999). Since the Southern Min are the majority group in Taiwan, the effect of the government's past language policy on this group was much less marked.

Language revitalisation and bilingual education

While Mandarin remains the lingua franca for inter-group social interactions, speakers of the community languages have begun to redefine their indigenous Taiwanese identities (Hsiau 2000). Despite their relatively small group size, the Hakka are no less assertive than the Southern Min of their indigenous Taiwanese identity, as shown in the Hakka Movement in the late 1980s and their aborted attempt to form a political party in the early 1990s. Government support for mother-tongue education and various local bilingual education programs is increasingly widespread, as are government efforts to help indigenous groups revive their cultures and languages, especially the aboriginal languages (Tsao 1997, 1999). Following the amendment of the school curriculum in 2001, it is now compulsory for all primary pupils to take at least one community language course. Increasingly, language teaching materials including textbooks and videos for Southern Min, Hakka and some aboriginal languages are being published.

However, the promotion and teaching of community languages is also plagued with many problems, notably **the attitude toward bilingual education among parents who** fear that their children's learning of Modern Standard Chinese and other valued foreign languages like English might be adversely affected. For speakers of aboriginal descent, therefore, bilingual education is widely seen as 'a luxury that they feel they cannot afford' (Government Information Office 2001).

Other problems include inadequate class time (typically one hour per week), a lack of funds, trained teachers and expertise in curriculum design and development, and **the choice of writing system which** is most conducive to the teaching and learning of Southern Min and Hakka. Among the alternative models are Chinese characters (also known as 'Sino-script'), romanisation (including the widely recognised Mainland-based *pinyin* system), and some mixture of characters and romanisation ('Han-lo', see Hsiau 2000; S.Huang 1993). It can be seen that the choice is partly politically motivated.

English is clearly the most important foreign language. Since 2001, English classes are compulsory from elementary Grade 5 onwards. Some elementary schools have chosen to start teaching it at Grade 4 or even as low as Grade 2. At the tertiary level, most college students are required to take at least one year of English at Freshman level.

According to Ho (1998), English generally has no place in people's daily lives (except for some in the professional fields) but there is a widely shared perception of English being an important linguistic capital for social advancement. Great demand for English is reflected in the proliferation of self-learning English materials, as well as sundry adverts promoting all kinds of English classes from bilingual kindergartens and private language schools to English

cram courses. This is not surprising given that a high score in TOEFL or IELTS is a ticket to higher education in North America and other English-speaking countries. Use of English in both print and broadcast media is also increasingly prevalent. According to S.C.Chen (1996), English, especially in the form of code-switching, is making inroads into the discourses of various social groups (cf. D.C.S.Li 2011).

THE CHINESE LANGUAGE DIASPORA

The Chinese are the largest diaspora in the world, and one of the most complex. Accurate statistics of the size of Chinese diasporic communities are difficult to obtain not least due to discrepancies between datasets on the definitions of China / Greater China, Chinese migrant and diaspora. The term 'Chinese language diaspora' is used in this paper to refer to the (Han) Chinese communities residing outside Greater China (PRC, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan), but including overseas-born Chinese.[i] It encompasses a hugely diverse and multifaceted group who differ in their places of origin, social background, migration history, geographic distribution, settlement patterns and population sizes, and who bring to their host societies complex sociolinguistic profiles as a result. It is impossible to capture the breadth and diversity of what constitutes the Chinese language diaspora in this chapter; hence, following some demographic and historical background which is necessary for understanding their current linguistic diversity, the ensuing sections will attempt to highlight only selected issues that impact the linguistic milieu and multilingual practices of this migrant population.

Demography, history and linguistic origins

Recent estimates of the number of ethnic Chinese living overseas at the turn of the millennium vary greatly from 33 million (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) 2007) to approximately 50 million (China News Service 2009; International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2005:175). These figures presumably do not account for the many irregular or undocumented migrants who enter their destination countries by various clandestine routes and means (Skeldon 2000; Thunø 2007). According to CASS, the overseas Chinese are spread across more than 150 countries in every continent of the world, but the majority (roughly 80 percent), are found in Southeast Asia, with long-established communities in countries like Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Outside of Asia, sizeable Chinese communities are found in Europe, Canada, United States, Australia and New Zealand. Smaller communities can also be found in Latin America, India and, more noticeably in recent years, Africa (L.Pan 1999; Liu 2006; Ma & Cartier 2003; Sinn 1998).

Diversity within the Chinese language diaspora partly reflects differences in migration history, geographical origin and settlement. Firstly, a distinction is drawn between the 'old'

and 'new' eras of Chinese migration (Skeldon 2003, 2011) or the 'old' and 'new' Chinese diasporas (Ma 2003). The old migratory movements before the mid-twentieth century were mainly labour-based and originated from a very few regions within Mainland China. The newer migratory patterns since then have been increasingly diversified and dynamic, and consist of out-migration from multiple origins in Greater China and Southeast Asia. Secondly, three distinct clusters of Chinese diasporic communities can be identified according to broad differences in their geographical distribution, and corresponding to some extent with migratory periods (Mackie 2003; G.Wang 1999). The first and largest cluster is made up of the thirty-plus million Chinese living in Southeast Asia; the second comprise the five-plus million Chinese in USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand; and the third, a smaller population spread across Europe and the rest of the world. While the rates of population increase among the Southeast Asian group appear to be declining, the numbers of Chinese in Europe, North America and Australasia are seeing marked and rapid increases. The massive growth of the American-Australasia cluster is the result of new immigration in recent decades, and it is this cluster that have mainly been responsible for the growing interest in Chinese diasporic studies.

The old diaspora

The vast majority of the old Chinese diaspora, including virtually all the Southeast Asian Chinese, trace their origins to two southeastern coastal provinces of China: Guangdong and Fujian. Large numbers of mainly unskilled male migrants from a small number of regions within those provinces went to Southeast Asian countries to work as labourers and traders in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The old era also includes the earlier waves of migration by Chinese labourers going to North America and, to a lesser scale, Australasia, to join the gold rushes beginning in the mid-1800s. Numbers subsequently dropped significantly however, when anti-immigration laws were implemented in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand from the late 1880s until after World War II. Some early Chinese settlements also appeared in western Europe by the late 1800s. The first migrants to this region included Chinese seamen from Guangdong who sailed to major port cities such as London and Amsterdam, where small Chinatowns formed. Taking an overland route, migrants from Zhejiang, an eastern coastal province of China to the north of Fujian, also found their way to western Europe, mainly France (Pieke 2002; Live 1998). Thus, fairly stable overseas Chinese communities were already established before the Second World War, mainly in Southeast Asia, while smaller settlements extended as far as North America, Australasia, Europe, Latin America and South Africa (Skeldon 1996).

Despite the relative proximity of their origins, the old diaspora migrants spoke mainly mutually unintelligible varieties of Chinese. Five main varieties of spoken Chinese from three

fangyan are still prominent among the older overseas Chinese communities today: Cantonese and other Yue varieties originating from the counties near Guangzhou (a.k.a. Canton) in Guangdong; Hakka from the inland areas of northeastern Guangdong and southwestern Fujian; and three varieties of Southern Min, namely Chiuchow from the coastal areas of eastern Guangdong, Hokkien (Hoklo) from southern Fujian, and Hainanese from Hainan Island – now a province of China, but historically part of Guangdong Province. Of the three Southern Min varieties, only Chiuchow and Hokkien are partially mutually intelligible. Different varieties of the Wu dialect were also spoken by migrants from Zhejiang, but as Zhejiang was not a major source of emigrants, Wu is less prevalent among the Chinese diaspora.

Some degree of geographical patterning was evident among old migratory flows, connecting specific regions of China, and therefore speech varieties, with specific destinations. In Southeast Asia, the majority of Chinese in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos originated from Chiuchow-speaking areas of Guangdong, while most of the Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore, and half or more of those in Indonesia and the Philippines came from Hokkien-speaking areas of Fujian; in Vietnam, the majority have Cantonese roots. However, most Southeast Asian countries are host to Chinese from all five major dialect groups in varying proportions (Bolt 2000). Outside Southeast Asia, most of the early Chinese settlers in North America and Australasia were mainly Cantonese-speaking villagers from the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong; Siyi varieties of Cantonese, especially Taishan (Toishan), were particularly prevalent in Chinatowns across North America (Ma 2003; L.Pan 1999; Skeldon 2003).

Newer waves of migration
For three decades following the establishment of the PRC in 1949, migration from China was strictly controlled. The most significant ethnic Chinese movements in that period were those from Mainland China to Hong Kong and Taiwan, and those from Hong Kong and Taiwan, plus various parts of Southeast Asia, to the Western World. One of the most important waves of Chinese immigration to the West in the post-World War II decades involved large flows of Cantonese or Hakka-speaking villagers from the New Territories of Hong Kong, then a British colony, going to the UK to seek better livelihoods following the decline of agriculture in their home regions. Most entered the catering trade and sponsored family members to join them in a system of chain migration (Watson 1977). These migratory flows were similar to the pre-war migrations in that they involved mainly unskilled migrants.

Starting from the 1960s, newer types of migratory movements began to emerge. These were marked by changing patterns of geographical destinations and migrant backgrounds. First, the easing of immigration restrictions in USA and Canada from the mid-1960s, and

Australia and New Zealand from the 1970s attracted a growing influx of professionals and their families from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Second, following economic reforms in China in 1979, increasing numbers of Mainland immigrants joined those from Hong Kong and Taiwan, leaving in more significant numbers from the mid-1990s. These 'new migrants' from China (Thunø 2007:3) originate from a more expansive region of the Mainland beyond the southern provinces, including large urban areas like Shanghai and Beijing. Lesser flows of migrants have also gone to countries in Europe – mainly less skilled Mainland Chinese from Zhejiang province who engage in manufacturing jobs in their destination countries (Skeldon 2011). According to China News Service (2009), by the middle of the previous decade, there were more than six million such new migrants spread across the continents, with concentrations in North America, Australasia, France, UK, Italy, Spain, Germany and Russia. Overall, the new migratory flows since the late twentieth century have been exceedingly complex and have involved different types of migrants from settlers, students and 'refugee elites' (G.Wang 1999), to contract labourers and irregular migrants, giving rise to an increasingly diversified Chinese diaspora.

Macro-sociolinguistic profiles of the current Chinese language diaspora

Southeast Asia

The Southeast Asian Chinese are long-established residents and nationals of their host countries, and as many as 90 percent of them are estimated to have been born locally (Mackie 2003). However, they are clearly a heterogeneous group. According to Leo (2007), growing numbers are highly assimilated into their host societies. Assimilationist policies from the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in cultural and educational realms – such as the closure of Chinese schools (Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines), adoption of names from the host language (Indonesia, Thailand), and banning of Chinese literature and media (Indonesia), have resulted in Chinese language loss, and many ethnic Chinese have no active command of their heritage language. The assimilation rate is particularly great in the Philippines and Thailand, but Indonesia and Malaysia have seen less assimilation partly due to religious barriers to intermarriage with the local Muslim majority. It is noted however, that with the rise of China in recent years, there has been a revival of interest in Chinese language and culture throughout the Southeast Asian region. In Indonesia for example, Chinese culture generally has become increasingly visible in the country following the revocation of discriminatory laws against the Chinese in the early 2000s. Chinese schools are being reopened, Mandarin is making a comeback in the school curriculum, and Mandarin language classes are now much in demand (Minority Rights Group International 2008; Kinadi 2011; Riady 2010).

The Chinese in Malaysia are considered culturally more Chinese-oriented compared to

those in the other countries because they form a greater percentage of the population there and have been given relative freedom to promote their language and identity. The Chinese language has received institutional (community) support in the form of independent Chinese schools using Mandarin – the lingua franca of the Chinese community – as a medium of instruction, and the availability of Chinese newspapers, and films and videos from Taiwan and Hong Kong. The situation in Singapore is yet different in that that is the only Southeast Asian state where ethnic Chinese constitute the majority of the population, and Chinese (Mandarin) is an official language (Leo 2006, 2007; Bolt 2000).

Multilingualism among the Malaysian and Singapore Chinese has long been recognised and taken as textbook examples of polyglossia (e.g. Platt 1977; Fasold 1987). In Malaysia, the current sociolinguistic situation among the Chinese in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur is described as triglossic (X.M.Wang 2010). The Supreme language, Malay, is used for intergroup communication and reserved for official usage; of the two High languages, neither of which have official status, English is used for intergroup communication in official or public domains, and Mandarin for intra-group communication in the home, public and school domains; finally, the Low languages include Cantonese – a major dialect still actively used among the community albeit one that is mainly restricted to informal domains, Hakka, and the various Southern Min varieties. The latter two *fangyan* are rapidly declining in all domains. The decline of minor Chinese dialects is also seen in Singapore, where they have been replaced by Mandarin due to pro-Mandarin language policies. The government promotion of English and Mandarin has led to a language shift in the Chiuchow community for example, where the two major languages are now used extensively even in the family domain (W.Li, Saravanan & Hoon 1997). A diglossic situation currently exists among the Chinese in Singapore, with English, which is used as the lingua franca across ethnic groups, functioning as the High language, while Mandarin functions as the Low language (X.M.Wang 2010).

Europe
According to Ceccagno (2001), transnational links built upon family networks and shared backgrounds have given Chinese immigrants in Europe increased mobility and accessibility to opportunities across national boundaries. It is noted however, that living among several host languages in Europe poses problems for Chinese inter-group communication across country borders. Unlike the Chinese in North America, they cannot easily lapse into English as a lingua franca, and thus, the need for a Chinese variety as a lingua franca is heightened (Christiansen 2003).

Different varieties are adopted as lingua francas among the Chinese in the various European countries, but particularly Cantonese and Mandarin. In the Netherlands for example,

the dominant spoken Chinese variety is Cantonese, which is used for intergroup communication between Chinese from Indonesia, Vietnam and others of Cantonese origins; but among the second largest Chinese group in the country, the Zhejiang group, speakers of different Wu varieties adopt Mandarin as their lingua franca. More widespread multilingualism can be seen in France, where the majority of the Chinese come from Southeast Asia. Those from shared homelands communicate amongst themselves using various tongues belonging to the five major Chinese dialect groups spoken in Southeast Asia, in addition to other languages found in that region such as Vietnamese or French. The Zhejiang minority in France speak their own Zhejiang dialect. In other countries, the situation appears less complex. For example, in Britain, Cantonese has traditionally been dominant (W.Li 2007), and in Italy, sub-varieties of Wu have mostly been spoken (Ceccagno 2001). In these and other European countries however, Mandarin is increasingly found, reflecting the general spread of Mandarin across the Chinese diaspora. Christiansen (2003) notes that in Europe, speakers of Cantonese were previously reluctant to use Mandarin, but this situation rapidly changed in the late 1980s and 1990s due to the growing importance of China. This has led to a situation of 'changing hierarchies' with regard to the Chinese varieties (W.Li 2011; W.Li & Zhu 2010, 2011). Nowadays, given its status as the national language of China, Mandarin is regarded by many overseas Chinese as having the highest socio-economic prestige, even in those countries where Cantonese still dominates. Cantonese, in turn, is considered better or more prestigious than other lesser varieties, such as Hakka and Hokkien, which are being displaced.

Patterns of multilingualism are further complicated by contact between the Chinese varieties and the dominant languages in various combinations. Christiansen (2003) gives the example of Belgium, where two major communities exist: Cantonese-Flemish in Antwerp and Mandarin-Walloon in Brussels. However, the extent to which the Chinese immigrants have learned the language of their host country varies. Among the Zhejiang immigrants in one part of Italy for example, Italian proficiency is generally described as low. In comparison, among the Chinese in the Netherlands, Dutch is gradually becoming a lingua franca, especially among the local-born generation (Ceccagno 2003).

North America and Australasia
Soaring rates of new Chinese immigration in the past decades have replenished the old Chinese communities of North America and Australasia, with the new arrivals outnumbering the pre-existing Chinese population many times over. Divisions between the newcomers and old immigrants or the local-born Chinese are known to exist; differences in linguistic and social backgrounds have also led to variations in settlement patterns, especially in North America. Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrants from Mainland China and Taiwan have

tended to stay away from the old Chinatowns that are still dominated by Cantonese, and settled in more affluent urban neighbourhoods or suburbs, resulting in the establishment and spread of new Chinese enclaves and satellite Chinatowns (Fan 2003; Lai 2003; M.Zhou & Lin 2005).

The growing visibility of Chinese speakers in North America and Australasia is borne out by census data. Figures from the US Census indicate that Chinese is the third largest mother tongue after English and Spanish, with 2.5 million speakers in 2007, most speaking Cantonese and Mandarin (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Chinese is also the third most commonly spoken home language in Canada, behind English and French. Canadian census data shows that there were over a million speakers of Chinese in 2006 (Statistics Canada 2007). Chinese is also high in the rankings in Australasia. In Australia, Cantonese and Mandarin are the third and fifth most spoken LOTEs (languages other than English) respectively, each with over 220 thousand speakers in 2006 (Clyne 2011), while in New Zealand, Cantonese and Mandarin are the fourth and fifth most commonly spoken languages besides the official languages (English and Maori), each with over 40 thousand speakers in 2006 (New Zealand Human Rights Commission 2008). Among these Chinese communities, broad differences in language use or multilingual ability across the population are observed. In particular, differences between the local-born generation and the first generation immigrants are noted. The local-born Chinese are considerably less likely to be able to speak their heritage language than the first generation immigrants. To quote some figures, in USA, over a third of the Chinese residing in the country in 2008 were local-born citizens, among whom less than 40 percent reported speaking a Chinese variety at home, which compared with over 80 percent of the immigrant generation (Terrazas & Batalova 2010). In New Zealand, data from 2006 showed that a similar percentage of the immigrant generation could speak their heritage language, but this fell to 30 percent among the local-born Chinese (Ministry of Social Development 2010). On the other hand, the immigrant generation are likely to encounter problems with limited English proficiency. These themes are relevant to the discussion below.

Chinese heritage language maintenance

Like other immigrant children, Chinese children growing up in immigrant settings where the mainstream culture is significantly different from their original home culture are faced with the difficult task of maintaining their heritage language while acquiring the dominant language of the larger speech community. Research on the bilingual development of young Chinese children in immigrant populations has shown that the switch in primary language from the heritage language to the dominant language sometime after the children enter mainstream schooling leads to varying degrees of heritage language loss or stagnated

development (e.g. Wong Fillmore 1991; W.Li & Lee 2002; Jia 2008; Jia & Aaronson 2003). Besides language loss at the individual level, language shift away from the heritage language across generations has also been documented (e.g. Clyne 2011; Clyne & Kipp 1999; W.Li 1994; S.Sun 1999). (For a general discussion of heritage learners, see Montrul, this volume.)

In the past, efforts in Chinese language maintenance were mainly undertaken by individual families or within the heritage community, but along with the expanding Chinese immigrant populations in the West, there has been growing scholarly interest in Chinese heritage language maintenance and education, leading to a new wave of literature on Chinese heritage language research (e.g. He & Xiao 2008; Tao 2006; X.Y.Wang 1996a). This is especially true in USA, where language educators and policy makers have increasingly recognised the value of heritage languages as both personal and national resources (Brecht & Ingold 1998; McGinnis 2005, 2008; The UCLA Steering Committee 2000). Recent years have also seen an increasing number of Chinese heritage language students taking Chinese classes within the mainstream educational system at all levels in USA (He 2008; Kondo-Brown 2006a; McGinnis 2008), in UK (W.Li & Zhu 2010) and in Australia, where community languages have been incorporated into school LOTE programmes (Clyne 2011). However, the great majority of school-age heritage language learners still study Chinese at community-based schools.

Chinese heritage language schooling

Chinese immigrant communities around the world have been running community schools to provide heritage language education to their immigrant children for generations. The history of Chinese community schools in Britain dates back to the early twentieth century (Benton & Gomez 2008:185-192), while in USA, Chinese schools have existed in some form in the larger Chinatowns since as early as the nineteenth century (He 2008). Today, there are at least 700 such community schools in the USA (Lawton and Logio 2009) and over 200 in the UK (W.Li & Wu 2009), which has more Chinese heritage language pupils than any other European country. These heritage language schools share similar characteristics. They are typically run by voluntary, parent-led or religious-affiliated organisations in rented premises, and usually offer evening or weekend classes once a week that aim to promote Chinese language and literacy skills, as well as Chinese culture, among local-born immigrant children. They most often rely on teaching materials provided by voluntary organisations from the home regions.

Common problems that these community schools encounter range from a lack of funding, facilities and teaching resources, to apathy on the part of the pupils. Teaching staff are usually not trained teachers but volunteer parents or Chinese international university

students. Pupils are often frustrated by the use of traditional teaching methods that require memorisation, recitation and copying of Chinese characters, and they may also resent the time commitments required of them to attend classes (M.Li 2005; W.Li & Wu 2008, 2009; X.Y.Wang 1996b; S.Wang 1996; Y.Wong 1992; C.Wu 2006; Zhang 2004).

From a pedagogical perspective, teaching heritage language students can present educators with enormous challenges due to the varying proficiency levels, language backgrounds and language use patterns of learners. These differences are particularly salient when dealing with Chinese heritage language learners due to their diverse sociolinguistic origins (Kondo-Brown 2006b, 2008, 2010). Such diversities contribute to both pedagogical and classroom management problems such as the absence of a standard syllabus, and wide age differences among learners within the same class.

Dialect backgrounds

In the literature on heritage language education, heritage learners are generally defined as those who have acquired some but not full competence in a non-dominant language as their first language, primarily through exposure to it in the home (Kondo-Brown, 2006a, 2010). In the case of Chinese heritage language learners whose spoken home dialects are different from that being taught in the classroom, there might not have been any exposure to the target language prior to community schooling. Even if their home dialect is from the same *fangyan* as the classroom language, there might still be regional differences in pronunciation or vocabulary. These learners might find their heritage language needs unmet.

W.Li and Wu (2009) point out that in the past decade, different types of Chinese community schools have emerged in the UK which specifically target different subgroups of immigrant children: Cantonese children from Hong Kong, Mandarin-speaking children from the Mainland, and Mandarin-speaking children from Taiwan. In USA, community schools also instruct in either Mandarin or Cantonese (Wiley 2008). In Europe however, where there is more diversity in language backgrounds, Mandarin is usually adopted as the classroom language (Benton & Gomez 2008:185-192). There appears to be no heritage language instruction for the lesser regional dialects. One interesting counter-strategy against this, as described by K.Wong & Xiao (2010:165), is that some minority dialect speakers utilise the studying of Mandarin as an alternative route to maintaining their own dialects. As one heritage language learner at **university explained**, 'I thought since they don't teach you how to read and write Cantonese here, so I would take Mandarin… I can take what I learn in that class, and kind of learn Cantonese'.

Script policies

Transmission of literacy skills is an important part of language maintenance, but in Chinese literacy instruction, a key pedagogical consideration is the choice of writing system. Although the Chinese language in its standard written form is considered one element that unifies all its dialects, there is still the problem of whether to use traditional or simplified script, or even *pinyin* romanisation to represent the Chinese characters (D.C.S.Li & Lee 2004). In Asia, the simplified script is used in Mainland China, Singapore and Malaysia; the rest of Greater China and most other regions use the traditional script. As Wiley et al (2008) note, decisions regarding script policy constitute an obstacle for establishing a unified approach to Chinese literacy instruction in community-based programmes. But more than simply a pedagogical consideration, choice of script is also linked with broader political and social affiliations and identities. Research shows that the script preferences of Chinese heritage learners themselves are, unsurprisingly, closely associated with their places of origin (D.Li & Duff 2008). Usually, community schools would teach the traditional script if most of their student body are from Hong Kong or Taiwanese immigrant families, and simplified script if they mainly serve immigrants from Mainland China; they utilise teaching materials from the three home regions accordingly. Although some schools in USA do provide instruction in both scripts in response to needs of the local Chinese community (M.Li 2005), most do not do so due to limited community resources.

Thus, one of the possible scenarios for a Chinese heritage language learner is that s/he speaks a home variety that is different from or not intelligible with the classroom variety, and uses a home script that is different from the classroom script (or has no home literacy). This, as He (2008:3) points out, goes against 'the intuition that to learn one's heritage language is to (re)establish similarities with members of one's heritage culture'.

Multilingual practices and language attitudes

While some second generation immigrant children express little motivation to learn Chinese through heritage language classes, many embrace their Chinese identity. As W.Li & Zhu (2010) explain, there is a new generation of overseas Chinese who desire to nurture their distinctive identity as multilingual and multicultural individuals. One way they do so is through the creative use of code-switching and other multilingual practices (W.Li 2011). W.Li and Wu (2009:209) assert that Chinese community schools provide a 'safe space' for children to express their multilingual creativity (in spite of the strong monolingual ideology that persists, at least within community schools in Britain where there is an implicit Chinese-only policy in the classroom). The frequent switching between Chinese and English in the classroom by those children to flout the rules or to challenge the norm is seen as reflecting their confidence in their own multilingual abilities and identities.

Other studies have shown that Chinese immigrants and immigrant parents generally hold positive attitudes towards their heritage language, especially when that language is Mandarin (Wiley et al 2008; Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe 2009). Multilingual and multidialectal speakers also tend to have favourable attitudes towards linguistic diversity, but attitudes among immigrant parents regarding their children's maintenance of varieties other than Mandarin vary. In G.Li's (2006a, 2006b) studies of immigrant families in Canada where the parents spoke Mandarin and Cantonese, there was a clear expectation on the part of the parents for their children to become trilingual (Mandarin, Cantonese, English) and biliterate (English and Chinese). In Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe's (2009) study however, Fujianese immigrant parents in USA did not express a desire for their children to maintain their home dialect but hoped that they would maintain Mandarin instead, as the latter was considered an important linguistic resource for their future. These differences reinforce the idea mentioned above of there being an internal hierarchy among the Chinese varieties, with Mandarin dominating over other dialects. A further indication of the growing hegemony of Mandarin is the increasing number of Mandarin classes for Chinese immigrant children across the world. In the UK for example, all the Cantonese community schools now also teach Mandarin, but none of the Mandarin schools teach Cantonese (W.Li & Zhu 2010).

Chinese language media

Besides an education system that supports Chinese heritage language programmes, another important 'pillar' for the maintenance of Chinese language and culture among diasporic groups is Chinese language media (Leo, 2006). W.Sun (2006) talks of an explosive development in the global Chinese mediasphere, as a result of which, members of Chinese diasporic communities living in most cities with a sizeable Chinese population across Southeast Asia, Australasia, America or Europe have ready access to a wide range of Chinese-language media products. These range from paid and free print media, including dailies, weeklies, and community papers and magazines, to television, radio and the internet. The following illustrates the scope and availability of Chinese language media available in selected diasporic regions.

Publications

Of all forms of Chinese language media, publications dominate. Daily newspapers available to many overseas Chinese communities include major dailies from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, whose overseas editions target the different subgroups of immigrants. To give a sense of figures, the largest Chinese language daily in North America is the Taiwan-based *Chinese Daily News*, which has a daily circulation of about 300,000 in United States and 25,000 in Canada, followed by the Hong Kong-based *Sing Tao Daily*, with a circulation of 181,000 and 40,000 in the two countries (M.Zhou & Cai 2002; M.Zhou, Chen & Cai 2006). Free weekly

or biweekly Chinese language papers have also appeared in larger cities, especially since the late 1990s. These are mostly established by immigrant entrepreneurs, and are distributed to members of the local immigrant community through Chinese-owned shops and eateries. For example, in New Zealand, where a print media floodtide is said to be occurring, growing numbers of free Chinese newspapers have been published nationwide; by 2004, more than 20 were in circulation (Ip 2006). In the UK and Ireland, free Chinese newspapers found in Chinatowns and Chinese areas of larger cities appear to be favoured over paid Chinese newspapers, at least among the newer migrant community of Chinese nationals or irregular migrants (IOM 2006, 2010).

Television

Chinese television programmes available to diasporic audiences are mainly transnational – produced and imported from the homelands (Voci 2008). New digital technology and satellite television have allowed increasing numbers of overseas Chinese communities to maintain close connections with their homeland cultures through consuming a variety of Chinese language programmes, including news, films, television dramas and music videos originating from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In USA, three major national Chinese television networks broadcast in both Cantonese and Mandarin 24 hours a day every day via satellite, or for fewer hours through cable, in major cities. In addition, there are more than a dozen local Chinese language TV stations across the country. News and entertainment programmes in Cantonese and Mandarin supplied by channels from the home regions such as Hong Kong-based Phoenix Television Channel and the overseas wing of China-based China Central Television (CCTV), are also available to overseas Chinese subscribers across the globe (M.Zhou, Chen & Cai 2006; Ip 2006).

Internet

Homeland-based websites and online publications have become important resources serving the Chinese language diaspora. In smaller cities where Chinese TV and radio might be less accessible, the internet is often a major source of ethnic cultural and informational content. Shi (2005) found that consumption of Chinese online media is a habitual practice for professional and student immigrants residing in USA. They would typically go online for several hours daily to browse Chinese news-sites, and read online Chinese novels and popular magazines. To cater to such audiences, most of the major Chinese language dailies have launched online editions, and many Chinese television and radio channels now have an online presence. One advantage of online websites over printed publications is that the viewer can switch between simplified and traditional characters when reading Chinese text.

Another form of internet media consumption among the Chinese diaspora is the use of

diasporic websites and related discussion forums (e.g. B.Chan 2006; Parker & Song 2007). A steadily growing number of websites and discussion forums formed by Chinese diasporic groups or individuals worldwide have emerged in recent years, creating new virtual Chinese communities. Some sites target local communities and focus on sharing local news and information among members from specific geographical regions; for example, the site at http://www.aucklandchinese.org.nz specifically serves the Auckland Chinese community. Others bring together members from various locations with shared interests or backgrounds; for example, the site at http://britishchineseonline.com/ provides a forum for mainly second generation British-Chinese to share their experiences. A quick examination of such platforms suggests a broad distinction between websites and forums that are ethnic or host language dominant, although bilingual posts using varying extents of Chinese and English are found in some of the forums.

Roles of Chinese language media

The demand for Chinese language media has largely been driven by the surge of new era immigrants, who, in spite of their higher educational backgrounds compared with the earlier era immigrants, nonetheless encounter language barriers, and look towards Chinese media products as a form of institutional support. In North America, Chinese media is described to have achieved the status of an influential ethnic institution since the 1990s (M.Zhou, Chen & Cai 2006). A study from the mid-1990s found that even long-time Chinese immigrants in Canada spent a substantial 40 percent of their media time consuming Chinese as opposed to English media products (Lee & Tse 1994). The preference for Chinese media among immigrant audiences is due not only to linguistic barriers, but also cultural obstacles that prevent them from fully understanding culturally loaded entertainment. As one Chinese immigrant explained, 'you can never fully grasp the cultural nuances of an American movie, like many times you don't know what the American audiences are laughing about though you understand most of the language' (Shi 2005:64).

Chinese language media consumption serves several other purposes. Besides providing entertainment and direct information about immigrants' home countries or regions in their own language (though not necessarily their regional variety), ethnic media content gives them common reference points for socialising with people back home or with other members of the diaspora. Internet-based media play an increasingly important role in sustaining old communal ties while creating a sense of ethnic cohesion among diasporic members. Various internet-related platforms (email, social networking sites, discussion forums and others) are seen as providing new spaces for communication exchange, allowing members of geographically separated diasporic communities to connect and build on their 'Chineseness' (W.Sun, 1998).

Consumption of Chinese media has even been noted to help bring together subgroups of the Chinese language diaspora. Ip (2006) found that Chinese television and radio in New Zealand has helped Chinese youths from Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking backgrounds in the country 'integrate' with each other by blurring dialectal boundaries. Pop culture from Hong Kong available in New Zealand such as Canto-pop and action movies have had the effect of making Cantonese the preferred, trendy dialect among this group. W.Li (2007) likewise identified Cantonese influences from Hong Kong media in the language used among the Chinese in Britain.

Moreover, Chinese language media is used strategically by some as a means of maintaining cultural and linguistic capital. Shi (2005) noted that some immigrants turned to ethnic media to gain bilingual and bicultural competence as a way of increasing competitiveness in their host society, or conversely, to keep abreast of events in Chinese society and culture in preparation for possible return migration in the future.

While there has been an obvious increase in the number and diversity of Chinese language media products available to the overseas Chinese, in terms of the varieties of spoken Chinese available, it appears, however, that again, only the major dialects – Mandarin and Cantonese, are represented. Nonetheless, this increasing Chinese media presence has contributed to promoting community visibility among diasporic Chinese. As Voci (2008) notes, the emergence of Chinese language media in New Zealand has contributed at least partially to enhancing the perception of the country as a multicultural nation.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has illustrated the rich linguistic diversity that exists among the various communities within Greater China and the Chinese language diaspora. A significant trend that emerges from the discussion of the two diverse entities is the rising status of Mandarin. Within Greater China, Mandarin, as the national lingua franca in Mainland China and Taiwan, and as a variety with recognised status in the two Special Administrative Regions, is unsurpassed in terms of the number of speakers. But beyond Greater China, we are clearly witnessing the global spread of Mandarin as a result of two phenomena: the huge outflows of Chinese migrants from (Greater) China in recent decades, and the increasingly prominent role of (Greater) China in the global economy. One effect of this is the gradual change in the sociolinguistic patterns among the Chinese diasporic communities, where Mandarin is now competing with Cantonese as the dominant language of the larger diaspora. In parts of the Southeast Asian Chinese diaspora, dormant Chinese identities are resurfacing, and Mandarin

classes are in full demand. In the West, where Chinese immigrant children are mostly encouraged to develop their bilingual skills in the host language and heritage language, Mandarin is increasingly considered the more useful and prestigious Chinese variety to learn or maintain. While Mandarin, and to some extent Cantonese, has strong institutional support, other regional varieties are not supported and are at risk of being displaced. Globalisation is succeeding in promoting the spread of Mandarin at the expense of other lesser varieties.

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[i] There has been much discussion concerning the appropriateness of terminology used to describe all of the people of Chinese descent living abroad, in particular discussion generated by Wang Gungwu, considered the leading authority on China and the Chinese diaspora (e.g. G.Wang 1991, 1993, 2001). Various terms are considered politically or technically inappropriate, including the term 'Chinese diaspora' for its association with the type of forced migration found in Jewish history, and the more commonly used term 'Overseas Chinese' (regarded as the English translation of the Chinese term *huaqiao*) for its connotations of a Chinese national temporarily sojourning abroad. Wang proposes the term 'Chinese overseas' as a compromise in several of his works. More recent labels mainly used by the Chinese in Southeast Asia are the Chinese terms *huaren and huayi*, which translate into 'ethnic Chinese' and 'people of Chinese descent'. While these terms appear more neutral, they are insufficiently precise. Those terms also have different senses when used in the Mainland literature, among which usage of the ambiguous hybrid term **huaqiao-huaren** can also be found. For further discussion and analysis, see Benton & Gomez (2008:21-22); J.Huang (2010); Leo (2007:1-3); Mackie (2003); and Skeldon (2003).