Exemplary Capstone Projects 2023

(Independent research projects by final year English Majors)

ENGLISH @CUHK

Department of English
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Preface

I am delighted to present the showcase of exceptional capstone projects from the Department of English at The Chinese University of Hong Kong for 2023-2024. Each year, senior students complete an independent project under faculty supervision. This project is one part of the University's approach to students' transition to the next phase of their lives – a job, training, or further study. The works showcased here were nominated by supervisors as outstanding representations of the innovative scholarship, clear communication, and creativity we work towards for all students.

The projects cover ChatGPT, Filipina diasporic identity, language acquisition in South Asian school students, the legitimation of Hong Kong English through studying abroad, and language in Hong Kong music. All exemplify the department's commitment to developing well-rounded skills and expertise in students - through a range of topics, rigorous theoretical frameworks, and research methods.

Congratulations to the featured students, whose achievements demonstrate the systematic training and guidance provided by the Department of English, but whose work is still very much uniquely theirs.

David Huddart
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Contents

The impact of ChatGPT on the acquisition of English indirect questions: A mixed-methods study

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Abstract

ChatGPT, a large language model (LLM)-powered chatbot developed by OpenAI, has infiltrated into different sectors across societies, with language education not being an exception. Previous scholarly efforts have discussed the incorporation of the chatbot in the language classroom and surveyed the attitudes of students and teachers towards the technology. However, there has been a lack of positivist studies that probe the effectiveness of ChatGPT in specific components (e.g., syntax and pragmatics) of second or foreign language acquisition. The present study seeks to bridge the gap by administering a classroom experiment to measure the effects of ChatGPT-generated feedback on the acquisition of English indirect questions by Hong Kong senior secondary students (n = 12). To account for the quantitative findings, a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted to gain learner perceptions of ChatGPT. Inferential statistics indicated that there were no significant differences in post-test scores between the experimental group (ChatGPT-generated feedback) and the control group (human teacher feedback). Meanwhile, the participants who took part in the interviews (n = 4) displayed mixed-to-negative perceptions of the LLM-powered chatbot. Several hypotheses are formulated based on the descriptive statistics of the quantitative experiment to provide future directions for research in the field of technology-mediated language learning.

Keywords: ChatGPT; indirect questions; feedback; technology-mediated language learning; intelligent computer-assisted language learning

1. Introduction

Ever since the initial release on 30 November 2022, Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer (ChatGPT)[1] has been grabbing the headlines, sending members of the general public into a state of panic about the imminent replacement of jobs by the generative artificial intelligence (AI) system. Powered by GPT-3.5, ChatGPT was developed and trained by OpenAI through machine learning techniques such as Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF) (OpenAI, 2022), with task-based fine-tuning being one of the important breakthroughs (Ray, 2023; Liu, 2023). Upon the revolutionary launch more than a year ago, it has infiltrated into a wide range of sectors across societies, including public health (Biswas, 2023; Cheng et al., 2023), business (George & George, 2023), hospitality (Gursoy et al., 2023) and education (Extance, 2023).

Among the widespread uses of ChatGPT, language education has attracted careful scholarly attention in the past year. With a foundation in the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), scholars have begun to evaluate the chatbot as a potential accompaniment in second language or foreign language classrooms. On the one hand, an abundant number of discursive articles (e.g., Kohnke et al., 2023; Hong, 2023; Javaid et al., 2023) have been dedicated to exploring the opportunities and risks involved in the use of ChatGPT for language learning purposes. On the other hand, there have been qualitative studies (e.g., Xiao & Zhi, 2023; Yan, 2023) that surveyed the attitudes of learners and teachers towards learning the English language through the chatbot. Nevertheless, there seem to be insufficient positivist works devoted to its effectiveness in fostering a specific component of second language (L2) acquisition, particularly syntax and pragmatics.

In this light, the present study, situated in Hong Kong, seeks to bridge the gap by investigating the effect of ChatGPT on the acquisition of indirect questions in English through

[1] In the present study, ChatGPT refers to the version based on the GPT-3.5 language model.

a single factor design. Described as a complex syntactic feature in the literature (e.g., Johnston, 1985), indirect questions would serve as a decent indicator of advanced linguistic competence and, in addition, sophisticated sociolinguistic competence according to the communicative competence model proposed by Canale and Swain (1980). The target construction, thus, tests the capacity of ChatGPT as not only a natural language processing (NLP) tool but also a potential language learning tool.

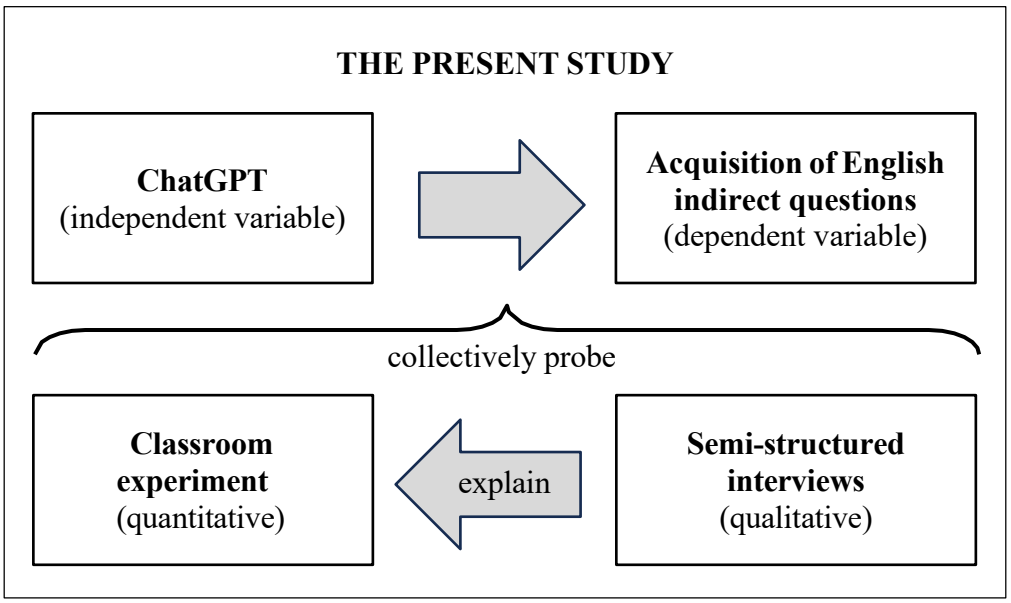

Figure 1: Methodological triangulation in the present study

The present study utilises a mixed-methods explanatory approach to explore the link between ChatGPT and the acquisition of English indirect questions (see Figure 1). A quantitative classroom experiment was first conducted to probe whether ChatGPT-generated feedback can facilitate the acquisition of English indirect questions by Hong Kong senior secondary students. Then, a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews, which revolve around the way Hong Kong senior secondary students perceive ChatGPT in their processes of acquiring English indirect questions, were carried out to account for the quantitative findings.

As described above, the present study aims to fill the research gap that there have been few quantitative studies on the effectiveness of ChatGPT in second or foreign language

acquisition. To the best of my knowledge, this study contributes one of the first pieces of empirical research in Hong Kong which inquires into the impact of ChatGPT on English language education. Meanwhile, the quantitative component of the present study, focusing on both syntax (linguistic competence) and pragmatics (sociolinguistic competence), serves as a valuable addition to the scarce research on the acquisition of English indirect questions by English as a second language (ESL) learners. Most important of all, the significance of this study extends beyond bridging research gaps. With findings from the classroom experiment and semi-structured interviews, the present study offers illuminating insights into the ongoing discourse on whether AI can replace humans through the lens of teaching complex syntactic features.

This paper is divided into six sections. Section 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the application of ChatGPT to language education and on the acquisition of English indirect questions by ESL and English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, followed by theoretical models and the reiteration of research questions. In Section 3, the research methods of the present study, namely the quantitative classroom experiment and the semi-structured qualitative interviews, are thoroughly explained along with information about data coding and analysis. Moving on, in Section 4, the experiment results are presented and analysed in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics while the themes from the interviews are introduced with their corresponding codes. In Section 5, the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative components are interpreted and connected to form a clear, macroscopic picture that addresses the research problem (i.e., the impact of ChatGPT on the acquisition of L2 syntax and pragmatics). Pedagogical implications, limitations of the present study and future directions for research are also described and explained in the section. Finally, Section 6 revisits the research questions and restates the key findings that answer the questions, succeeded by wider implications and concluding remarks.

2. Literature Review

2.1 ChatGPT in Language Education

As mentioned in the previous section, much recent research has been devoted to examining the incorporation of ChatGPT in language education. This is evidenced by studies that discuss the potentials and risks concerning the use of ChatGPT in language classrooms, that evaluate the effectiveness of ChatGPT-generated feedback in language learning and that collect perceptions of the LLM-powered chatbot by students and teachers.

2.1.1 Potentials and Risks

There have been a number of non-empirical articles that analyse the opportunities and drawbacks ChatGPT might bring to language education. A technology review, Kohnke et al. (2023) explores the affordances and drawbacks of using ChatGPT for language learning and teaching. While it is mentioned that ChatGPT can contribute to language classrooms through built-in dictionary look-up functions, translation between the first language (L1) and the target language and adjustment to linguistic complexity in order to cater for individual differences, it can pose various issues regarding plagiarism, accuracy and cultural awareness. In particular, since ChatGPT-generated responses "sound definitive, with little or no hedging, users may assume that the chatbot is correct even when it is wrong" (Kohnke et al., 2023: 9). Such could not only cause great hindrance to language learning but also create broader adverse societal impacts including the propagation of fake news (Huang & Sun, 2023).

The notion is echoed by Barrot (2023), another technology review which probes the use of ChatGPT for L2 writing. Upon the request for generating references on a particular topic, non-existent titles were identified from the response. Concerns pertaining to academic integrity and critical thinking skills are also stated. Nonetheless, it is noted by the author that the use of the chatbot transcends the traditional temporal and spatial barriers to learning, as well as minimising stress and fear of being judged in the course of L2 learning.

As a result of lowered stress and fear associated with L2 learning, Hong (2023) expects that "learners can easily initiate authentic conversations with the chatbot" (p. 40), thus compensating for the scarcity of authentic input beyond classrooms under EFL environments. Moreover, the author emphasises that ChatGPT enables synchronous feedback (see also Opara et al., 2023) and personalised language learning experiences, which are conducive to acquiring second languages. However, he stresses that the underlying mechanisms render the LLM-powered chatbot purely statistical rather than semantic and logical, hence generating plausible sounding yet inaccurate responses at times.

To have a brief summary, previous technology reviews and papers have delved into a range of opportunities and risks regarding the use of ChatGPT for language teaching and learning. Despite the fact that ChatGPT can provide a more personalised and less stressful environment for learners to acquire their second or foreign languages, the reliability of the responses it generates and the issue of academic honesty have remained under concern. As such, scholars have arrived at a consensus that AI literacy of both students and teachers should be fostered (Kohnke et al., 2023) and the two parties should co-reflect on their experiences of using ChatGPT for language teaching and learning purposes (Kostka & Toncelli, 2023).

2.1.2 Effectiveness of ChatGPT-generated Feedback

Researchers from around the world have conducted empirical studies to examine the quality of ChatGPT-generated feedback in and of itself. For example, Dai et al. (2023) compiled a dataset of ChatGPT-generated feedback on a project proposal assignment required by a postgraduate data science course[2] at an Australian university. The study showed that feedback generated by ChatGPT was more readable than human instructor feedback. Furthermore, ChatGPT was found to be able to generate both task-level (100%)[3] and process-level (55%)

[2] Although this context, strictly speaking, bears little relationship with language education, the study still provides important insights into the quality of ChatGPT-generated feedback.
[3] The percentage in brackets refers to frequency. For example, 100% of task-level feedback means every episode of ChatGPT-generated pertained to task achievement.

feedback but not self-regulation-level and self-level feedback according to the model of feedback (see Figure 2) proposed by Hattie and Timperley (2007). In short, while ChatGPT-generated feedback were task-specific and, occasionally, process-focus, it had yet to respond to the personal level of learners.

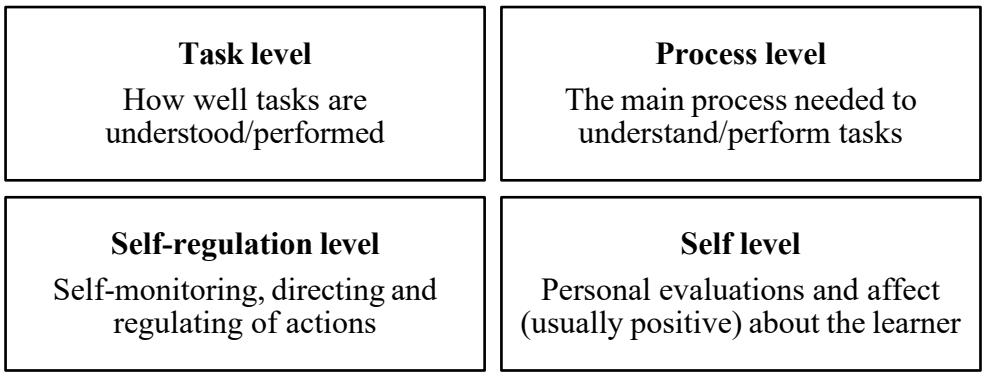

Figure 2: Four levels of feedback
(Source: Adapted from Hattie & Timperley, 2007: 87)

Kim et al. (2023) constructed a virtual learner persona and analysed the capability of ChatGPT as a L2 task-based language teaching (TBLT) tool. The authors agreed with the claim by Hong (2023) about the synchronous feedback of ChatGPT and proceeded to argue that the high feedback speed was instrumental in L2 learning efficiency. Having said that, they found that ChatGPT was limited to assessing linguistic knowledge and coherence, without any constructive feedback on the communication skills of learners.

In contrast, Yoon et al. (2023) present negative evidence for the effectiveness of ChatGPT-generated feedback in enhancing the coherence and cohesion of compositions by English language learners. Providing 50 Grade 12 essays from the English Language Learner Insight, Proficiency, and Skills Evaluation (ELLIPSE) corpus[4] as input for feedback elicitation, the authors concluded that ChatGPT was inadequate in respect of correcting higher-order

[4] Even though the ELLIPSE corpus consists of essays by English language learners in the United States, who are considered L1 learners of English, this study is still able to provide useful empirical findings to predict the effectiveness of ChatGPT-generated feedback in terms of facilitating coherence and cohesion.

writing errors, such as identifying subpar main ideas and idea repetitions. They also noted that the assessment of cohesive devices was unsatisfactory in that ChatGPT "heavily relied on the presence or absence of connectives rather than their efficacy or appropriateness" (Yoon et al., 2023: 21).

Some other studies investigate the practical effects of ChatGPT-generated feedback instead of the feedback per se. Cao and Zhong (2023) researched 45 master's students in mainland China with high English proficiency. The participants were split into three groups and asked to complete a Chinese-to-English translation task based on ChatGPT-generated feedback, human teacher feedback or self-feedback. While the group which received ChatGPT-generated feedback outperformed other groups in terms of vocabulary usage, it came last in overall translation quality and syntax. The authors particularly noted the inability of ChatGPT to parse complex sentence structures, including verb phrases.

A quasi-experimental study based in Chile, Vera (2023) probes whether ChatGPT-based instruction is effective in boosting the four macro skills of English language learning (reading, writing, listening and speaking) using a pretest-posttest control group design. Receiving supplementary instruction from ChatGPT on every school day for six weeks, the experimental group performed better in all the four skills of the post-test than the control group which received merely traditional instruction. Despite the unavailability of descriptive and inferential statistics, the study seems to indicate the superiority of ChatGPT-based instruction to traditional human teacher instruction. More information about this study is discussed in Section 5.1.2.

To sum up, while the usefulness of ChatGPT-generated feedback manifests itself in aspects such as readability, immediacy and lexicon, other aspects including syntax and coherence serve as some constraints of the feedback type in accordance with previous empirical findings. Nevertheless, it would be important to note that some existing studies (e.g., Kim et al., 2023 and Yoon et al., 2023) have yielded inconsistent results with one another.

2.1.3 Perceptions of ChatGPT by Students and Teachers

The perceptions of ChatGPT by students and teachers have also been explored by scholars through a mix of quantitative and qualitative means. Ali et al. (2023) utilised an online quantitative questionnaire to survey the attitudes of teachers ($n = 42$) and students ($n = 38$) who were geographically scattered towards the chatbot. The questionnaire responses revealed that teachers and students believed ChatGPT improved both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of EFL learners, with high ratings recorded in the *Independence* and *Fun and Enjoyment* criteria. In a nutshell, the perceptions by students and teachers were overwhelmingly positive, which was confirmed by a similar study by Muñoz et al. (2023).

There have been many qualitative studies that dissect in particular the perceptions by learners. Vera (2023), a Chilean study mentioned in the sub-section above, also concluded that the attitudes displayed by learners towards ChatGPT-based instruction were favourable, with undergraduates describing such a method of instruction as "personalised", "interactive" and "engaging" (p. 20). Other studies in tertiary settings, on the other hand, reflect more reservations. Xiao and Zhi (2023) interviewed five undergraduates in China from various academic disciplines and observed more negative sentiments related to plagiarism and unreliable responses. That said, the participants perceived ChatGPT positively in general, citing personalised learning and synchronicity of feedback as reasons. However, Yan (2023), another Chinese study, reported that "participants generally showed more concern rather than satisfaction". In the context of ESL writing, students voiced worry about issues such as academic integrity and unfairness in spite of appreciation for the reasonable quality and well-structuredness of responses generated by ChatGPT.

Compared with studies that are in connection with perceptions by students, works interested in the perspectives of educators have introduced more doubts about the LLM-powered chatbot. The thematic analysis by Iqbal et al. (2022) generated themes with reference

to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)[5] by Davis et al. (1989). Similar to students, the university teachers in Pakistan interviewed were also concerned about academic honesty issues, although some valued the user-friendliness of the chatbot, which contributes to the *Perceived Ease of Use* construct (see Figure 3). Whereas Jeon and Lee (2023), who surveyed 10 elementary English teachers in South Korea, also reported concerns about ethics and digital literacy, teachers were confident in ChatGPT as an interlocutor and as a teaching assistant.

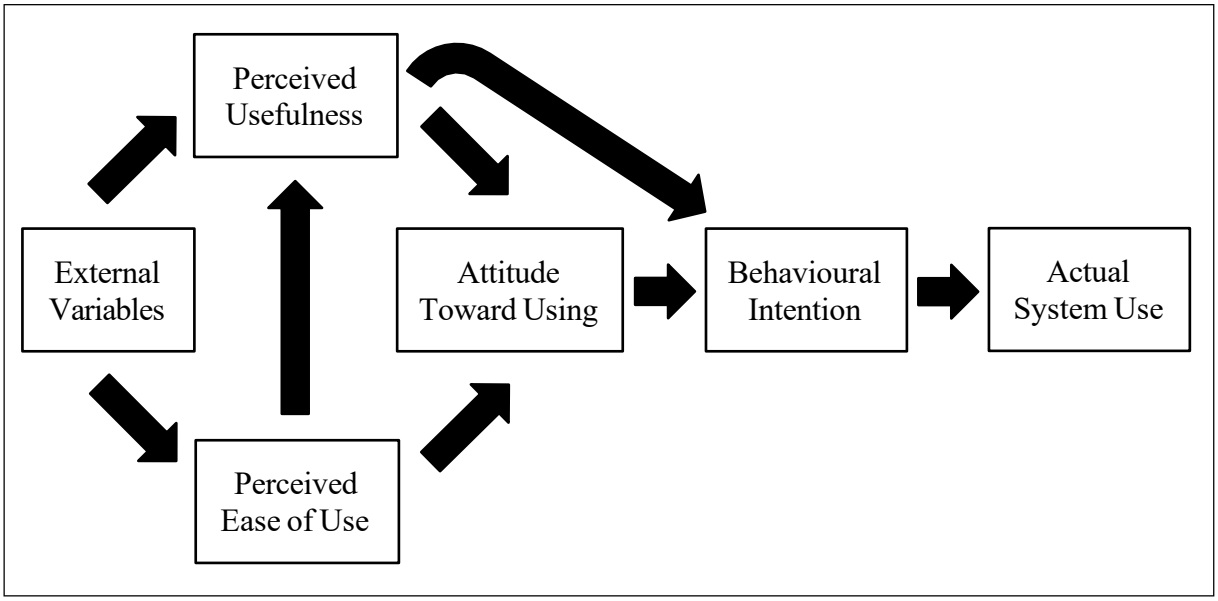

Figure 3: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)
(Source: Adapted from Davis et al., 1989: 985)

To briefly conclude, there exist both positive and negative sentiments on the use of ChatGPT in language teaching and learning, ranging from personalised instruction and instant feedback to inequity and academic dishonesty. In other words, there has yet been a scholarly consensus about whether positive or negative perceptions of ChatGPT dominate from the standpoints of both students and teachers.

[5] Other researchers have also analysed the use of ChatGPT in language learning through the lens of TAM. For instance, Liu and Ma (2023) examined the use of ChatGPT for informal digital learning of English (IDLE) by Chinese EFL learners.

2.2 Acquisition of English Indirect Questions by ESL and EFL learners

Before delving into previous studies on the acquisition of English indirect questions by ESL and EFL learners, it would be worthwhile to first have a proper discussion about indirect questions in English per se.

2.2.1 Indirect Questions in English

Also called embedded questions (e.g., Pozzan, 2011; Pozzan & Quirk, 2014), indirect questions are defined as "subordinate clauses […] occurring as objects" (Baker, 1968: 7) of certain verbs, such as "ask", "know" and "wonder". Below show two examples of indirect questions (in **bold**) that conform to such a definition:

(1) I would like to know **what fair trade is**.

(2) May I ask **whether you are interested**?

As can be seen in (1), the verb "know" takes the clausal object "what fair trade is", which exemplifies the indirect question construction. Likewise, the verb "ask" in (2) selects the subordinate clause "whether you are interested" as the grammatical object.

While indirect questions are described by grammarians as "questions put inside ordinary declarative sentences" (Baker, 1968: 1), the present study would embrace a broader definition under which an indirect question is operationalised as a finite noun clause that is selected by a verb as the grammatical object and that issues a directive[6]. Such noun clauses can be embedded inside a statement as in (1) or another question as in (2). The operationalisation will inform the coding of experimental data in Section 3.3.3.

According to popular taxonomies (e.g., Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016), indirect questions in English can be divided into two sub-categories – indirect *wh*-questions or indirect yes-no questions. An indirect *wh*-question, on the one hand, involves the embedment of a *wh*-question inside a statement or another question. To illustrate, the *wh*-question "What

[6] The present study follows the taxonomy of illocutionary acts developed by Searle (1975).

is fair trade?" is embedded inside a statement "I would like to know…" to form (1). An indirect yes-no question, on the other hand, is embedded inside a statement or another question, such as the yes-no question "Are you interested?" embedded inside another question "May I ask…?" in (2). The major distinction between the two sub-types is the complementiser; while indirect *wh*-questions retain the *wh*-word as the complementiser, indirect yes-no questions have either *whether* or *if* introduced to fulfil the role.

There are two points about English indirect questions that are of particular interest in the present study, the first of which concerns syntax. Contrary to canonical direct questions, indirect questions do not allow subject-operator inversion (or Tense-to-Complementiser movement), as governed by the Penthouse Principle by Ross (1973):

(3) *More goes on upstairs than downstairs.* (Ross, 1973: 397)

This rule in (3) accounts for inversion on upstairs (i.e., independent clauses) but not on downstairs (i.e., subordinate clauses). As such, the following structures (4-5; based on 1-2) are ungrammatical, despite the prevalence in a wide range of Englishes such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) (ref. Butters, 1974, 1976; Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016):

(4) *I would like to know what *is* fair trade.

(5) *May I ask whether *are* you interested?

The second issue pertains to pragmatics. Indirect questions can be deployed as a politeness strategy in accordance with the politeness principle (PP). Leech (1983) proposes six conversational maxims, including the tact maxim, which refers to the minimisation of cost to other. By using indirect questions, the speaker can achieve the purpose of "softening an utterance which may otherwise sound too direct" (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016: 751). Consider (6) and (7) below:

(6) Are you interested?

(7) *May I ask* whether you are interested? (reused from 2)

Through embedding the question "Are you interested?" inside another question "May I ask…?", the speaker can reduce the directness of the request for information (i.e., the conceptual definition of fair trade) and, therefore, minimise the cost inflicted on the interlocutor. In fact, Leech (2014) considers indirect questions the politest compared to other types of questions such as "Will you…?" and "Could you…?".

2.2.2 Acquisition by ESL and EFL Learners

Empirical research on the acquisition of English indirect questions has been relatively meagre throughout the years. Building on the developmental stages in English questions by Pienemann et al. (1988) and Spada and Lightbown (1999), Dyson (2008) modifies the fifth stage of question formation to encompass the overgeneralisation of subject-operator inversion from direct questions to indirect questions and introduces the sixth stage of the process, which refers to the cancellation of such inversion in indirect questions (see Appendix A). Such a proposal is consistent with the description by Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016) that students "tend to overgeneralise inversion [present in direct questions] to indirect questions" after acquiring the direct counterparts (p. 742). In essence, the process of indirect question acquisition resembles a non-linear course of development (see Figure 4).

Pozzan (2011), one of the most comprehensive studies on the issue by far, examined the acquisition of English indirect questions (embedded questions in her terms) by L1 Chinese and L1 Spanish learners[7]. Through elicited written and oral production tasks, the author found that both groups of learners, regardless of L1, produced inversion errors in indirect questions, thus confirming the descriptions by both Dyson (2008) and Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016) above. Hence, the author concluded in a subsequent study on a similar topic that the overperformance of subject-operator inversion is "not a product of L1 transfer but possibly the

[7] Pozzan (2011) selected L1 Chinese and L1 Spanish learners in the study because Chinese does not have subject-operator inversion in both direct and indirect questions while Spanish does in both types.

result of structurally constrained overgeneralisation of inversion from main to embedded clauses" (Pozzan & Quirk, 2014: 1073).

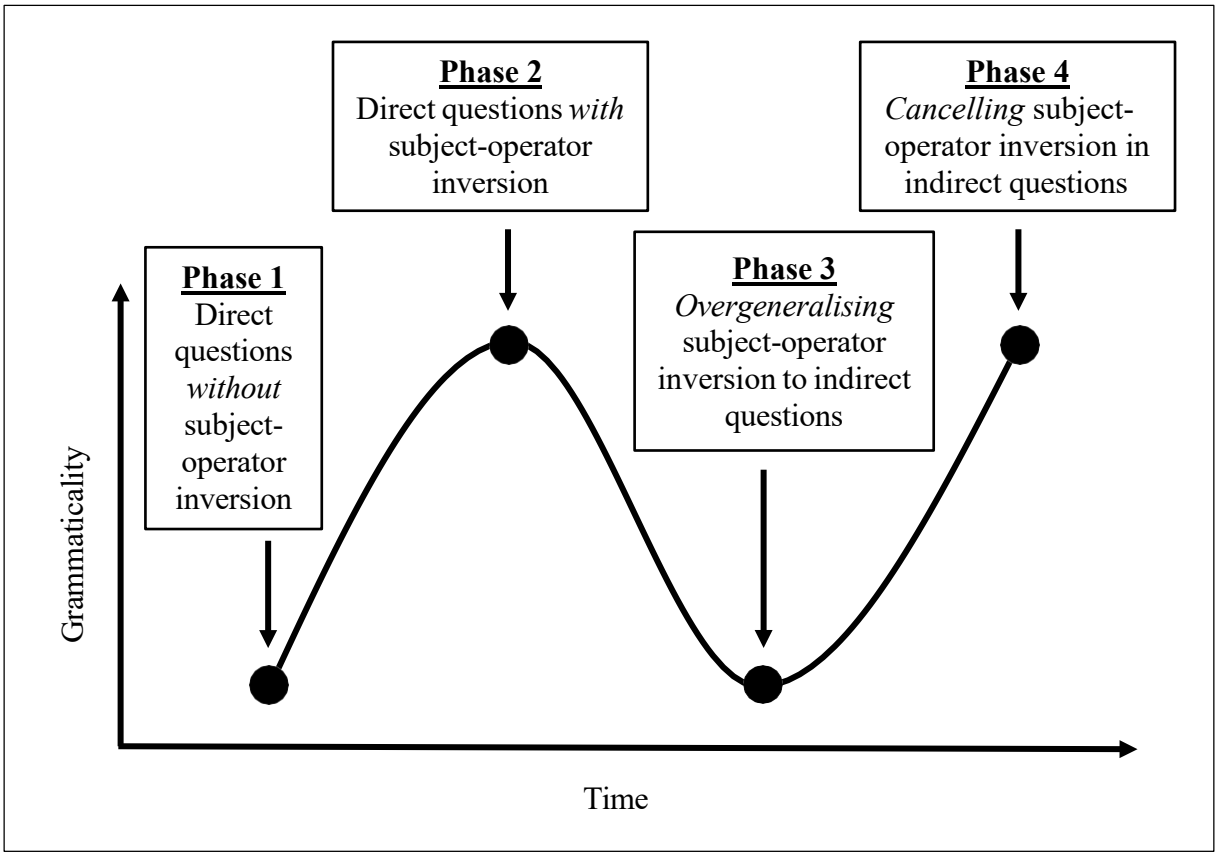

Figure 4: Simplified non-linear course of development of indirect questions in English (Sources: Reconstructed from Dyson, 2008; Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016)

Several other studies were conducted under the context of Hong Kong and the wider China. For example, Chan (2010) collected free-writing tasks from university (n = 65) and secondary school students (n = 322) in Hong Kong. The author identified 47 tokens of erroneous subject-operator inversion from indirect question constructions, with 70.2% of the errors committed by upper immediate learners. Culnan (2016), a corpus-based analysis using the Hong Kong section of the International Corpus of English (ICE-HK), recognised subject-operator inversion in indirect questions (15 occurrences) from Hong Kong English (HKE) samples. Ma (2018) investigates the effect of study abroad on the acquisition of indirect *wh*-questions by L1 Cantonese learners (n = 21) and found no significant differences in

grammaticality judgement and oral production scores between the study-abroad group (n = 10) and the at-home group (n = 11). In mainland China, He and Oltra-Massuet (2021) conducted written production tests with foreign language specialised secondary students (n = 47) and rural public secondary students (n = 34) [8] . The results showed that both groups attained the respectively lowest accuracy scores for producing indirect questions among the four question types examined, with subject-operator inversion errors accounting for 62.8% of the ungrammatical indirect questions produced by the foreign language specialised secondary students.

In summary, what poses challenges to L2 learners in terms of acquiring English indirect questions is the absence of subject-operator inversion, which many ESL and EFL learners from various L1 backgrounds overgeneralise from the formation of direct questions. In other words, subject-operator inversion in indirect questions constitutes a universal feature of the English interlanguage. As such, it is unsurprising that learners in Hong Kong also produce ungrammatical indirect questions with such inversion. What is also noteworthy would be the poverty of studies that investigate the acquisition of English indirect questions as a pragmalinguistic resource to realise sociopragmatic functions, namely asking questions and extending invitations.

2.3 Theoretical Models

This sub-section briefly introduces two influential theoretical models which inform the design of the present study – communicative competence and the affective filter hypothesis.

2.3.1 Communicative Competence

What is known as the communicative competence model in current second language acquisition (SLA) research is proposed by Canale and Swain (1980). Based on the notion of

[8] In China, students at foreign language specialised secondary schools tended to display higher English proficiency while those at rural public secondary schools were generally less competent.

competence by Chomsky (1965), the two scholars sought to develop a comprehensive theory to describe the L2 communicative abilities of learners. The notion of communicative competence, by their account, is comprised of four components – linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence[9] and strategic competence (see Figure 5).

Linguistic competence Knowledge of L2 morphosyntax, lexis and phonology	**Sociolinguistic competence** Ability to use the language appropriately in various social contexts
Discourse competence Knowledge of how to produce coherent and cohesive written and oral language	**Strategic competence** Ability to deal with communication difficulties

Figure 5: Four components of communicative competence
(Source: Adapted from Loewen, 2020: 20, shaded cells as foci of the present study)

Of the four competences, the first two serve as the main foci of interest in the present study. Linguistic competence, also known as grammatical competence, refers to the "knowledge of lexical items and of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics and phonology" (Canale & Swain, 1980: 29). As mentioned in the previous section, the subject-operator word order remains an obstacle to the acquisition of English indirect questions by ESL and EFL learners. Hence, linguistic competence is measured through the word order of indirect questions in this study. In addition, sociolinguistic competence, the sociocultural contextual appropriateness of language production (Canale & Swain, 1980), is assessed with consideration of the ability of learners to employ English indirect questions as a politeness strategy under appropriate contexts such as the power asymmetry between the speaker and the hearer.

[9] Discourse competence is categorised under sociolinguistic competence in Canale and Swain (1980). As the present study is not concerned with the coherence and cohesion of texts produced by learners, discourse competence would be detached from the sociolinguistic competence component by following the taxonomy in Loewen (2020) to avoid misunderstandings.

2.3.2 Affective Filter Hypothesis

Formulated by Krashen (1982), the affective filter hypothesis is one of the five hypotheses that compose the Monitor Model. The hypothesis postulates that a group of psychological variables, including self-confidence and anxiety, would facilitate or impede the access of comprehensible input ($i + 1$) to the language acquisition device (LAD) proposed by Chomsky, thus the metaphor "affective filter" (see Figure 6). For instance, a high level of self-confidence weakens the affective filter and allows input to reach the LAD for processing whereas learner anxiety activates the filter and blocks input from device, resulting in fossilisation. The present study probes whether ChatGPT can create a pleasant learning environment (see Section 3.4.2) so that the affective filter can be lowered to facilitate the acquisition of indirect questions.

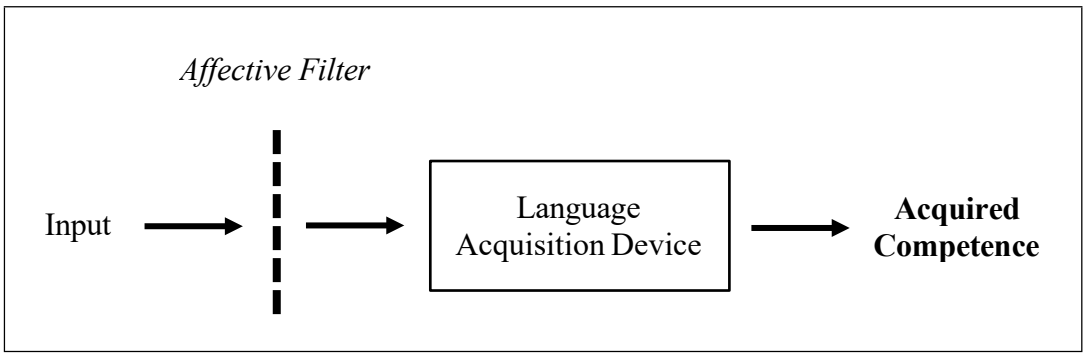

Figure 6: The affective filter hypothesis
(Source: Adapted from Krashen, 1982: 32)

2.4 Research Questions

In this section, previous studies regarding the incorporation of ChatGPT into language education and the acquisition of English indirect questions by ESL and EFL learners have been discussed. Several research gaps in the literature are identified: (1) the effect of ChatGPT-generated feedback (or ChatGPT at large) on English language learning at secondary level is largely unexplored; (2) very few empirical studies on ChatGPT and the acquisition of English indirect questions have been conducted under the context of Hong Kong and (3) to the best of

my knowledge, there have been no previous research on the acquisition of English indirect questions as a politeness strategy. Therefore, seeking to bridge the above-mentioned gaps, the research questions that guide the present study are as follows:

1. Can ChatGPT-generated feedback facilitate the acquisition of English indirect questions by Hong Kong senior secondary students[10]?
2. How do Hong Kong senior secondary students perceive ChatGPT in their processes of acquiring English indirect questions?

[10] The senior secondary level in Hong Kong refers to Form 4 to Form 6, which are respectively equivalent to Grade 10 to Grade 12 in American high schools. Senior secondary school students were selected in the present study due to two reasons: (1) the disproportionately large amount of previous ChatGPT empirical research that examines undergraduate and postgraduate students and (2) the developmental readiness of senior secondary school students to acquire indirect questions as a syntactically complex feature.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In the present study, a mixed-methods explanatory approach is adopted (see Figure 7). In order to address the first research question about the effectiveness of ChatGPT-generated feedback, a classroom experiment with the pretest-posttest control group design was performed to gather quantitative data. Subsequently, a series of semi-structured interviews were carried out to obtain qualitative data for answering the second research question about the perceptions of ChatGPT by students and for expounding on the quantitative experimental data.

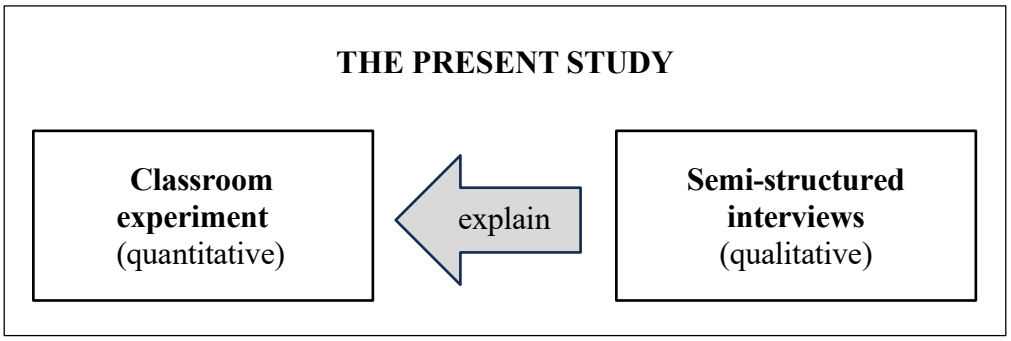

Figure 7: The mixed-methods explanatory approach of the present study
(Excerpted from Figure 1)

3.2 Participants

A total of 12 senior secondary students in Hong Kong were recruited via snowball sampling, a sampling technique where existing participants are asked to invite their best friends, for example, to participate in the study (Goodman, 1961). In this study, the first batch of participants were recruited from either the personal network of the author (n = 4) or Dcard (n = 5), a social media platform originating in Taiwan that has been widely used by young people in Hong Kong. The second batch (n = 3) was invited by two of the participants in the first batch.

Table 1 displays the baseline information of the research participants. The sample of the population is comprised of 7 males (M) and 5 females (F); 2 Form 4, 7 Form 5 and 3 Form 6 students; 10 students from English as the medium of instruction (EMI) schools and 2 from

Chinese as the medium of instruction (CMI) schools. All the participants shared Cantonese (Canto) as the L1. At the end of the research process, each participant received 100 Hong Kong dollars in compensation for time.

Experimental Group (*n* = 6)						
Participant Number	**01**	**04**	**07**	**09**	**11**	**12**
Sex	F	M	F	M	M	F
Form	6	5	6	5	5	6
School	EMI	EMI	EMI	EMI	EMI	CMI
L1	Canto	Canto	Canto	Canto	Canto	Canto
Proficiency (numerical)[11]	I (2)	A (3)	A (3)	I (2)	A (3)	I (2)
Personality	2	3	4	2	3	1
Familiarity	3	4	3	3	4	3
Control Group (*n* = 6)						
Participant Number	**02**	**03**	**05**	**06**	**08**	**10**
Sex	M	F	M	M	M	F
Form	5	4	5	5	5	4
School	EMI	EMI	EMI	EMI	EMI	CMI
L1	Canto	Canto	Canto	Canto	Canto	Canto
Proficiency (numerical)	A (3)	A (3)	A (3)	I (2)	A (3)	B (1)
Personality	1	1	2	5	3	4
Familiarity	1	1	3	2	5	1

Table 1: Baseline information of research participants

3.3 Classroom Experiment

3.3.1 Procedure

Following the recruitment process stated in the previous section, the participants were first asked to take an online English language proficiency test called EF SET Quick English

[11] The categorical proficiency descriptors were converted into numerical data (i.e., *Beginner* or B = 1; *Intermediate* or I = 2; *Advanced* or A = 3) such that quantitative between-group comparisons could be drawn.

Check (https://www.efset.org/quick-check/), which was developed by EF Education First for non-native English speakers. With a time limit of 15 minutes, the proficiency test involved a series of reading (n = 10) and listening (n = 10) questions to assess the receptive knowledge of learners. Each completed test would generate test results including the overall accuracy rate in percentage, a qualitative descriptor of proficiency level (i.e., *Beginner*, *Intermediate* or *Advanced*) and an estimated Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level. The tripartite qualitative descriptor serves as the indicator of the proficiency level of participants for subsequent grouping.

After the proficiency test, each participant completed a background questionnaire (see Appendix B) that was constructed on the MyCUForm platform operated by the Information Technology Services Centre at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The questionnaire, on the one hand, collected demographic information such as sex, form, school and L1 as presented in Table 1. On the other hand, confounding variables including self-rated personality (on an introverted-extroverted continuum) and familiarity with ChatGPT (on an unfamiliar-familiar continuum) were gathered on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 along with the English language proficiency levels determined by the EF SET test.

The research participants were then evenly split into two groups – the experimental group (n = 6), which received ChatGPT-generated feedback, and the control group (n = 6), which was exposed to human teacher feedback. During the grouping process, stratified block randomisation, a method widely used in clinical trials, was applied such that homogeneity was achieved between the experimental group (M = 2.5; SD = 0.5) and the control group (M = 2.5; SD = 0.8) in terms of proficiency. To control for other confounders, namely personality and familiarity with ChatGPT, a number of measures were implemented. For instance, a Mann-Whitney U test[12] showed that the personality ratings between the experimental group (M =

[12] The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test is used owing to the ordinal nature of self-rated personality data.

2.67; *SD* = 1.0) and the control group (*M* = 2.50; *SD* = 1.5) were identical (*W* = 18.5, *p* = 1)[13]. Finally, to minimise the unwanted impact of familiarity with ChatGPT, all the participants were asked to watch a 30-minute ChatGPT tutorial on YouTube[14] before the main experiment.

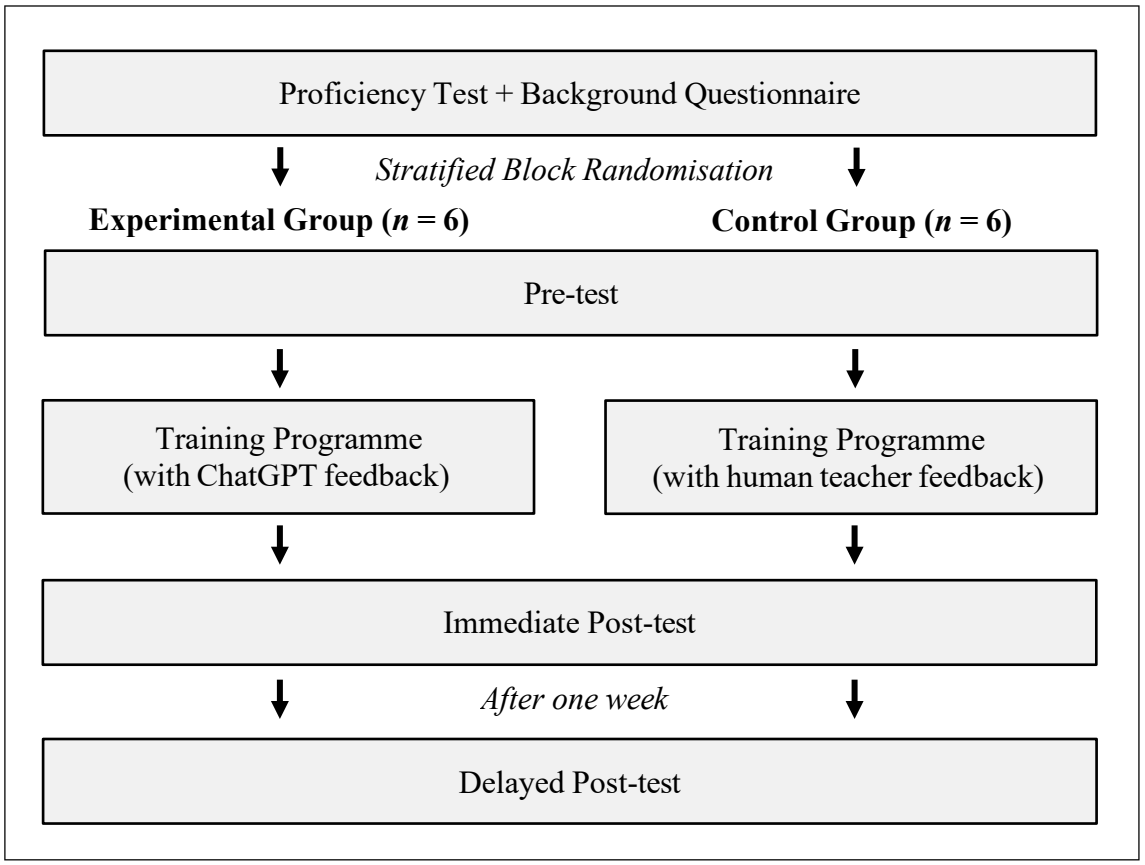

Figure 8: The pretest-posttest control group design of the classroom experiment

Allocated to groups, the participants took the untimed pre-test (PreT; test items to be discussed in Section 3.3.2 below) before attending the training programmes, which were held in ZOOM virtual classrooms and lasted for around 30 minutes each. The programme for the experimental group was divided into three parts: (Part 1) a pre-recorded 15-minute presentation on English indirect questions by the author; (Part 2) a real-time practice session in which participants completed a worksheet in pairs inside a breakout room and (Part 3) participants

[13] The level of significance is set at $p < 0.05$ (i.e., the 95% confidence interval) in the present study.
[14] The video can be accessed through the following link: https://youtu.be/JTxsNm9IdYU?si=Sx7MHY6tL3LdsekY

receiving feedback generated by ChatGPT [15] on their answers. While the control group experienced the same arrangements in their training programme for Parts 1-2, the participants were exposed to human teacher feedback offered by the author in Part 3. The design of the training programmes were inspired by the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) paradigm where the first two parts corresponded to the *Presentation* and *Practice* components respectively. Immediately after the respective training programmes, the groups attempted the immediate post-test (IPostT) and, one week after, the delayed post-test (DPostT), both of which were untimed.

Figure 8 recapitulates the pretest-posttest control group design of the classroom experiment.

3.3.2 Test Items

The untimed PreT, IPostT and DPostT (see Appendix C for PreT) were composed of two tasks – a Grammaticality Judgement Task (GJT) and a Discourse Completion Task (DCT).

The GJTs aimed to measure the linguistic competence and receptive knowledge of participants, which is, in this study, whether learners were capable of identifying subject-operator inversion errors from indirect question constructions. There were 12 items in the GJT of each test and the targets (n = 6) were alternated between fillers (n = 6). Of the six target items, three contained indirect *wh*-questions and the other three indirect yes-no questions. To ensure the validity of the results, three of the target items were well-formed while the remaining ill-formed. For the purpose of controlling for other confounding variables such as argument-adjunct asymmetry and personal preferences between the complementisers *if* and *whether*, all the indirect *wh*-question stimuli were formed with the *wh*-word *what*, the most frequently occurring in indirect questions found in the Great Britain section of the International Corpus

[15] Participants were asked to access ChatGPT-3.5 Turbo on Poe.

of English (ICE-GB) (Siemund, 2017), while all the indirect yes-no questions with the complementiser *whether*.

The DCTs sought to assess both the linguistic and sociolinguistic competences, as well as productive knowledge, of the learners. In the tasks, learners were examined in regard to their ability to form indirect questions without subject-operator inversion and to use the feature based appropriate social contexts provided in the items, namely when conversing with elders, strangers, acquaintances and people who have a higher social status than the speaker, including but not limited to teachers and superordinates. Similar to the GJTs, each DCT consists of 12 items, with equal numbers (n = 6) of targets and fillers. Out of the six targets, four items aimed to elicit indirect questions (i.e., power asymmetry and/or unfamiliarity) and two items direct questions (i.e., power symmetry and/or familiarity). The four target items were designed to prompt the production of both indirect *wh*-questions with the complementiser *what* (n = 2) and indirect yes-no questions (n = 2).

3.3.3 Data Coding

The data coding process for the GJTs (see Appendix D for a sample of coded PreT data) was relatively simple owing to the close-ended binary answers of either *Correct* or *Incorrect*. All the accurate answers were coded "C" and were awarded 1 point while the inaccurate answers were marked as "I" and received 0 points, without any point deduction.

In contrast, data coding was more complicated for the open-ended DCTs. Prior to examining the responses by participants, an initial codebook was developed as a means to standardise the coding process. Each datum was assigned a code and the corresponding number of points (i.e., 1 point for each accurate response and 0 points for each inaccurate answer). Nonetheless, after all the DCT responses were scrutinised, the initial codebook had undergone several episodes of expansion and modification and came to form the final version of the codebook, as indicated in Table 2.

Code	Description	Exemplar
IQ	*Grammatical* indirect question, with the **absence** of subject-operator inversion and **appropriate** insertion/retention of complementiser, if any	*Excuse me, may I ask what the Korean word for "chicken" is?* (Item 22 of IPostT, Participant 07)
IQ_F	*Grammatical* indirect question without a finite noun clause, with the **absence** of subject-operator inversion and **appropriate** insertion/retention of complementiser, if any	*May I know the name of the district near Thonglor?* (Item 18 of PreT, Participant 05)
IQ_I	*Ungrammatical* indirect question, with the presence of subject-operator inversion	*May I ask you what is the assignment today?* (Item 22 of DPostT, Participant 06)
IQ_C	*Ungrammatical* indirect question, with **inappropriate** insertion/omission of complementiser	*Hello, do you know there have any assignments today?* (Item 22 of DPostT, Participant 12)
IQ_M	*Ungrammatical* indirect question, with a miscellaneous error	*Do you know what the symptoms of covid?* (Item 24 of PreT, Participant 12)
DQ	Direct question, irrespective of grammaticality	*Which country is the largest country in the world?* (Item 16 of PreT, Participant 01)
IM	Imperative, irrespective of grammaticality	*Oh it seems to be funny. Forward it to me, dude.* (Item 22 of PreT, Participant 02)
M	Miscellaneous error (such as a statement and an interjection)	*Hello* (Item 14 of PreT, Participant 10)

Table 2: Codebook for the assessment of Discourse Completion Task (DCT) responses

There are two points about the DCT codebook that are worth discussion. The first is concerned with the code *IQ_F*. As stated in Section 2, one of the main foci of the present study is to test the ability of participants to produce grammatical indirect questions that are without

subject-operator inversion. Constructions which were categorised with the code *IQ_F* are without a finite noun clause, thus rendering impossible the assessment of the linguistic competence to cancel subject-operator inversion. As such, 0.5 points were awarded for *IQ_F* responses when the indirect questions were applied under appropriate social contexts. Another noteworthy aspect of the codebook pertains to the codes *DQ* and *IM*. When used in appropriate contexts (which reflects sociolinguistic competence), each instance of ungrammatical direct questions and imperatives would still receive 1 point due to the syntactic well-formedness of the two features lying beyond the scope of this study.

3.4 Semi-structured Interviews

This sub-section explains the process of the semi-structured qualitative interviews in the present study, which took place after the IPostT of the quantitative classroom experiment. The interview protocols and data coding are also accounted for.

3.4.1 Procedure

Due to time and resource constraints, four participants were further selected from the sample to attend the interviews based on self-rated personality collected from the background questionnaire. Participants who were more introverted (n = 2) and more extroverted (n = 2) were invited to participate in the interviews (see Table 3 for details) in order to discover possible personality effects on their perceptions of ChatGPT-assisted instruction and traditional human teacher instruction. The participants who were called for interviews did not receive any further remuneration.

Experimental Group (n = 2)		**Control Group (n = 2)**	
Participant	Personality	Participant	Personality
07	4	02	1
12	1	06	5

Table 3: Participants who were selected for semi-structured interviews and their self-rated personality (as collected from the background questionnaire)

To guarantee that participants could recall their experiences in the training programmes, the interviews were conducted as soon as the IPostTs were completed. Similar to the training programmes, the interviews were held on ZOOM. To facilitate communication and the expression of thoughts, the interviews were carried out in their L1 Cantonese and on an individual basis. The duration of each interview ranged from 15 to 25 minutes. For research and documentation purposes, each interview was audiotaped with prior verbal permission from the participant and the audio recordings generated from the interviews were transcribed verbatim before being rendered into English. The author did not strictly observe the order of questions as arranged in the interview protocols (to be introduced in Section 3.4.2 below) so as to respect the semi-structured nature by allowing participants to freely voice their feelings wherever appropriate.

3.4.2 Interview Protocols

Separate interview protocols (see Appendixes E and F) were formulated for interviewees from each group. The protocol for the experimental group aimed to probe attitudes towards ChatGPT while that for the control group sought to examine perceptions of human teachers, which serve to provide a baseline for comparison. Each protocol consists of nine main questions, underneath which are possible probing questions.

After the permission to audiotape the interview was obtained, the interviewees were first encouraged to articulate their feelings about the training programmes (Q.1). While the responses to the question were not necessarily of high research value, such a section played a crucial role in building rapport for subsequent episodes of interaction between the author and the interviewees within the interviews. Then, the author proceeded to discuss the learning atmosphere (Q.2), interest value (Q.3), feedback speed (Q.4) and feedback quality (Q.5) of the respective methods of instruction, with the ordering subject to the flow of discussion. Subsequently, the author asked the interviewees to summarise their thoughts using adjectives

(Q.6-7) and to describe their overall enjoyment, as well as future actions (Q.8) before ending the interviews with other opinions about the respective methods of instruction (Q.9).

The core questions of the interviews (i.e., Q.2-5) were designed based on existing theoretical models. Q.2 is informed by the affective filter hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1982) in that it serves to examine whether ChatGPT and human teachers can create a learning atmosphere that reduces the affective filters of learners to allow for more successful acquisition. Q.3, which explores the interest of learners, is based on the interest-intrinsic motivation link by Reeve (1989). Attitudes towards feedback, as investigated through Q.4-5, contribute to motivation and, in turn, language acquisition in accordance with the socio-educational model (Gardner, 2001).

3.4.3 Data Coding

The data generated from the semi-structured interviews in the present study were manually coded by the author as part of the reflexive thematic analysis (to be discussed in Section 3.5.2).

3.5 Data Analysis

Before moving on to the findings, the approaches adopted to analyse the quantitative experimental data and the qualitative interview data are outlined in this sub-section.

3.5.1 Statistical Analysis

To analyse the data from the classroom experiment, statistical analysis was performed on RStudio (R Core Team, 2023). On the one hand, descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were produced to summarise test scores. Inferential statistics, on the other hand, were calculated to test hypotheses and make generalisations about the population. Owing to a small size of 12, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests and the Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were computed for between- and within-group differences respectively. Rank-biserial correlation coefficients were also obtained to estimate effect sizes.

3.5.2 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

To dissect the qualitative interview data, a reflexive thematic analysis was conducted based on Terry and Hayfield (2021), which in turn stems from Braun and Clarke (2006). The motivation behind such a methodological decision would be attributed to the more qualitative and interpretative nature of reflexive thematic analysis (Terry & Hayfield, 2021), which could complement the more quantitative and descriptive classroom experiment.

Figure 9 demonstrates the six-phase process of a reflexive thematic analysis. After reading the interview transcripts (see Appendix G for a sample) for two times (Phase 1), the author manually coded the raw data using pen and paper (Phase 2; see Appendix H for a sample) prior to utilising techniques such as clustering codes and promoting codes to form prototypical themes (Phase 3). The final themes (as developed in Phases 4 and 5), along with their corresponding codes, are presented in Section 4.2.

Furthermore, to ensure data validity, member checking was carried out with the interviewees upon the completion of Section 4.2.

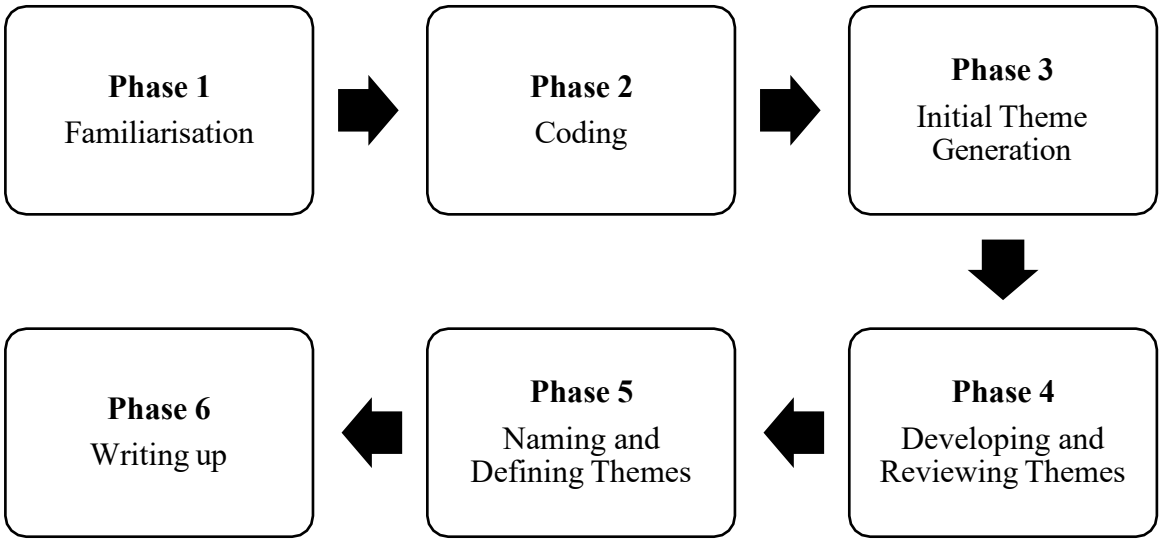

Figure 9: The six-phase process of a reflexive thematic analysis
(Source: Constructed from Terry and Hayfield, 2021, based on Braun and Clarke, 2006)

4. Results

4.1 Classroom Experiment

In this sub-section, the test scores from the classroom experiment, including aggregate scores and task scores are displayed in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics. Boxplots showing the between-group distributions of test scores are available in Appendix I.

4.1.1 Aggregate Scores

Group	Test	Mean	Mean Gain	SD
Experimental	PreT	6.33		2.04
	IPostT	7.83	1.50	3.01
	DPostT	7.92	0.09	1.69
Control	PreT	6.58		1.02
	IPostT	8.25	1.67	2.09
	DPostT	6.75	-1.50	1.17

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of aggregate test scores (out of 12) in the classroom experiment

Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of aggregate test scores (i.e., the sum of GJT and DCT scores) in the classroom experiment. Apart from mean and standard deviation, the mean gain is also provided for the comparison between tests. For example, the mean gain in IPostT refers to the difference in mean between PreT and IPostT. Negative numbers in mean gain, such as -1.50 in the DPostT by the control group, indicate that the mean decreased in comparison with the preceding test.

In the PreT, the experimental group scored 6.33 (out of 12) on average while the control group 6.58. A Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was no between-group difference in aggregate test scores prior to the main experiment ($W = 18.5$, $p = 1$), which is consistent with the homogeneity of proficiency as discovered in Section 3.3.1 and provides common ground for subsequent comparisons.

The IPostT, which was administered after the training programmes, had seen an increase in test scores in both groups, with the experimental group, which received ChatGPT-generated feedback, gaining 1.50 more points on average and the control group, which was exposed to human teacher feedback, 1.67 points. Due to the mere difference of 0.17 points, it is unsurprising that a Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant difference in IPostT aggregate scores between the groups ($W = 19$, $p = 0.935$). The effect size, as measured by the rank-biserial coefficient r, was $r = 0.05$, indicating a small effect.

Relatively more contrasts were noticed in the DPostT, which occurred one week after the IPostT. While there was a slight increase of 0.09 points from the IPostT in the experimental group, the mean score of the control group declined by 1.50 points to 6.75. Despite such a discrepancy, the difference in DPostT scores failed to reach statistical significance as shown by another Mann-Whitney U test ($W = 11$, $p = 0.288$) but the effect size of $r = 0.32$ reflected a medium effect.

A series of Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were computed to investigate within-group differences across the tests. No significant differences were observed in the experimental group between the PreT and the IPostT ($V = 4$, $p = 0.203$) and between the IPostT and the DPostT ($V = 11.5$, $p = 0.916$). Despite more noticeable growth, the difference between the PreT and DPostT had yet to reach statistical significance ($V = 0$, $p = 0.089$). The case was the same for the control group: insignificant differences were calculated between the PreT and the IPostT ($V = 0$, $p = 0.100$); between the IPostT and the DPostT ($V = 10$, $p = 0.098$) and between the PreT and the DPostT ($V = 6$, $p = 0.787$).

4.1.2 Grammaticality Judgement Scores

Table 5, in similar fashion to Table 4, lists the descriptive statistics of grammaticality judgement scores.

Compared to aggregate scores, a wider gap was seen between the experimental group (M = 3.83; SD = 1.83) and the control group (M = 4.67; SD = 1.03) in terms of the PreT grammaticality judgement scores. Nevertheless, the result of a Mann-Whitney U test suggested an insignificant difference (W = 22.5, p = 0.502), which rendered comparisons after the intervention meaningful.

Group	Test	Mean	Mean Gain	SD
Experimental	PreT	3.83		1.83
	IPostT	5.00	1.17	1.10
	DPostT	5.33	0.33	0.52
Control	PreT	4.67		1.03
	IPostT	5.00	0.33	1.26
	DPostT	4.83	-0.17	1.17

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of grammaticality judgement scores (out of 6) in the classroom experiment

Coincidentally, the mean GJT scores in the IPostT were identical (M = 5.00) between the groups in spite of differential mean gains. Another Mann-Whitney U test did not reflect a significant difference in the between-group grammaticality judgement scores (W = 19, p = 0.932, r = 0.05).

The grammaticality judgement scores in the DPostT bore resemblance to the aggregate scores in the same test. The experimental group continued to improve, albeit slightly, in the DPostT whereas the performance of the control group diminished. A Mann-Whitney U test showed there was no significant difference in the DPostT GJT scores (W = 14, p = 0.542, r = 0.18).

To investigate within-group differences, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was also used. Regarding grammaticality judgement scores, the experimental group did not show significant

differences between the PreT and the IPostT ($V = 0$, $p = 0.089$), between the IPostT and the DPostT ($V = 0$, $p = 1$) and between the PreT and the DPostT ($V = 0$, $p = 0.098$). Likewise, the control group did not display statistically significant differences among the three test scores – PreT vs. IPostT ($V = 4$, $p = 0.850$), IPostT vs. DPostT ($V = 2$, $p = 1$) and PreT vs. DPostT ($V = 2$, $p = 0.773$).

4.1.3 Discourse Completion Scores

Table 6 displays the descriptive statistics (mean, mean gain and standard deviation) of DCT scores in the classroom experiment.

The between-group homogeneity at the starting line was confirmed by the statistically insignificant difference in PreT DCT scores between the groups ($W = 11$, $p = 0.278$).

Shifting the focus to the IPostT, the control group gained 1 more point on average in the DCT than the experimental group. Having said that, a Mann-Whitney U test did not succeed in showing any statistically significant difference in the scores between the two groups ($W = 21.5$, $p = 0.627$, $r = 0.16$).

Group	**Test**	**Mean**	**Mean Gain**	**SD**
Experimental	PreT	2.50		1.00
	IPostT	2.83	0.33	2.02
	DPostT	2.58	-0.25	1.36
Control	PreT	1.92		0.66
	IPostT	3.25	1.33	1.17
	DPostT	1.92	-1.33	1.11

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of discourse completion scores (out of 6) in the classroom experiment

As for the DPostT, both the DCT scores of the experimental group and the control group shrank, with the latter returning to the PreT level. Another Mann-Whitney U test reflected that the scores were not significantly different from each other ($W = 14$, $p = 0.566$, $r = 0.18$).

Another round of Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were conducted to probe within-group differences in DCT scores. As expected from previous results, no significant differences were observed among the three tests by the experimental group and the control group. The test statistics and the *p*-values were as follows – for the experimental group, PreT vs. IPostT ($V = 8.5$, $p = 0.753$), IPostT vs. DPostT ($V = 12$, $p = 0.833$) and PreT vs. DPostT ($V = 2.5$, $p = 1$); for the control group, PreT vs. IPostT ($V = 0$, $p = 0.054$)[16], IPostT vs. DPostT ($V = 10$, $p = 0.098$) and PreT vs. DPostT ($V = 6.5$, $p = 0.892$).

4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The results from the semi-structured interviews are presented in this sub-section. There were a total of four themes developed from the interview transcripts. The themes are listed with their corresponding codes and direct quotations from interviewees in succession as follows.

4.2.1 Pleasant Learning Environment

The first theme summarised from the semi-structured interview data was *Pleasant Learning Environment*. In other words, the interviewees, particularly those who rated themselves as more introverted, held the view in general that ChatGPT was able to create a favourable environment for learning to take place. Table 7 shows the codes that were categorised under the theme *Pleasant Learning Environment*.

When asked about whether ChatGPT would influence the overall learning atmosphere (Q.2), Participant 12 from the experimental group expressed that she preferred “asking questions through typing”, which included interacting with ChatGPT, owing to her introversion.

[16] Although some researchers would consider the *p*-value of 0.054 as reflecting marginal significance, any value that exceeds 0.05 would be regarded as an indicator of insignificance in the present study.

She also revealed that the fear of being judged was minimised when she wanted to ask the chatbot questions:

> *"Especially when I ask questions that are very minor or something that will make me feel looked down upon, no one [including ChatGPT] will really care or criticise me."* (Participant 12)

She then concluded at the end of the interview:

> *"Speaking of comfortability, I think ChatGPT is equal to teachers whom I am very familiar with and, together, they are greater than unfamiliar teachers."* (Participant 12)

In stark contrast, Participant 02, who was from the control group and also rated himself as more introverted in the background questionnaire, stated that interacting with a human teacher in the setting of a large class size, such as a student-teacher ratio of 30:1, would be anxiety-inducing:

> *"It's extremely anxious [sic]! If [the teacher] really asks questions this way, it will be fine as long as the question at stake is not too difficult. But if I am asked to give a presentation [in front of so many people], I will basically die!"* (Participant 02)

Theme 1: Pleasant Learning Environment	
Positive codes	Negative code
• emotionally comfortable • relaxed • enjoyable • reduced pressure from studies and communication • reduced fear from being judged	• overwhelming information load

Table 7: Codes under the theme *Pleasant Learning Environment*

To interviewees who rated themselves as more extroverted, whether ChatGPT-assisted instruction or traditional human teacher instruction were adopted would not constitute much difference in learning atmosphere.

"I don't think [receiving feedback from human teachers would affect the learning atmosphere]. This is because receiving human teacher feedback is a way to learn. It's very normal." (Participant 06)

"In terms of [the degree of] relaxation, I don't think [using ChatGPT] for learning is relaxing, at least to me." (Participant 07)

4.2.2 Debatable Learning Tool

Another theme from the interview transcripts was *Debatable Learning Tool*. While some interviewees commented that ChatGPT was capable of producing quality, well-organised and accessible feedback for learners, others were more sceptical about its reliability, accuracy and usefulness. Table 8 shows the codes for the theme.

Theme 2: Debatable Learning Tool	
Positive codes	Negative codes
• detailed • well-organised • high quality • relevant • accessible	• questionable reliability and accuracy • "feels like Wikipedia" • stifling thinking and intellectual exploration • better alternatives for grammar learning

Table 8: Codes under the theme *Debatable Learning Tool*

In response to the question about the quality of ChatGPT-generated feedback (Q.5), Participant 12 remarked that the feedback was useful in many domains of learning:

"[…] because it helps me with issues that I encounter in my studies, no matter which subject. Also, it talks way more than expected." (Participant 12)

Then, she proceeded to compare between ChatGPT and human teachers, concluding that she appreciated the accessibility of the feedback and how the chatbot would elaborate on the responses it provided:

"Maybe this is because the feedback from teachers might not be as detailed as that from ChatGPT when I asked about something I didn't understand in class. Or it could be that I had yet to figure out what my teachers meant." (Participant 12)

However, other interviewees voiced their reservations towards the suitability of ChatGPT as a learning tool. When asked to draw comparisons between ChatGPT and human teachers based on previous experiences, Participant 02 vocalised the following:

"In fact, sometimes the information provided by ChatGPT might not necessarily be true, because it has never been applied in real life. Human [teachers] would have the upper hand in this regard since there'd be fewer mistakes. Also, ChatGPT may go off topic from time to time. It doesn't really give you feedback. When you have something that you don't understand, it might not be able to answer you clearly without popping unrelated nonsense on your screen. Human teachers don't have this sort of problems." (Participant 02)

Participant 07 shared a similar sentiment as she compared and contrasted ChatGPT with other online resources:

"[ChatGPT] feels like Wikipedia[17] *in terms of quality."* (Participant 07)

"If I am to check grammar, I'll use Grammarly to achieve such a purpose. […] I think Grammarly would be more useful for indirect speech as a topic." (Participant 07)

4.2.3 Controversial Motivator

The third theme which emerged from the interviews was *Controversial Motivator*. Similar to the theme *Debatable Learning Tool*, the idea that ChatGPT provides students with motivation to learn was met with a polarising reception. The codes are shown in Table 9.

[17] The purpose of the simile was interpreted by the author as questioning the reliability of ChatGPT. As many Wikipedia entries can be freely edited by Internet users, the practice often poses concern about credibility. Participant 07 agreed with such an interpretation during the member checking process.

The interviewees from the experimental group agreed that ChatGPT could generate feedback at high speed, as evidenced by adjectives such as “very fast” and “efficient”. Nonetheless, Participant 02 from the control group contended that the response speed between ChatGPT and human teachers was in fact comparable, especially when real-time verbal feedback was available from the latter:

> *“Speed? It depends on the capability of the teacher. If he or she can give [the feedback], it can be quite fast. […] If he or she can reply immediately, then there really won’t be much difference.”* (Participant 02)

Theme 3: Controversial Motivator	
Positive codes	Negative codes
• high response speed • timely feedback when still on task • increased motivation • fresh at first	• encouraging procrastination • exploitation of practicality • lack of incentives • destroying motivation to learn • lack of uniqueness • unsustainable interest

Table 9: Codes under the theme *Controversial Motivator*

The interviewees, moreover, generally agreed with the fact that the immediacy of feedback could serve as a contributing factor in motivation:

> *“If there is instant feedback, you can know whether [your answers] are right or wrong. If you are wrong, you can correct it, which improves motivation.”* (Participant 02)
>
> *“Yes. This is because I was focusing on the task and I could understand what I’d gotten wrong if I had the answers at that very moment. But if there were no answers when I finished [the worksheet] and they were available not until, let’s say, two days*

later, I think the efficiency wouldn't be as good since my attention wouldn't be on the task [when the answers were available]." (Participant 06)[18]

However, the interviewees from the experimental group specially noted that some aspects of ChatGPT would exert an adverse impact on motivation to learn:

"If we make good use of ChatGPT, it would constitute a useful tool to us, but if we abuse the technology because of idleness, it would shatter our motivation to learn." (Participant 07)

"I think ChatGPT worsens my habit of procrastination. It makes me hang around more often.[19]*"* (Participant 12)

4.2.4 Non-humanlike Interlocutor and Teacher

The final theme was entitled *Non-humanlike Interlocutor and Teacher*. The interviewees seemed to have reached a consensus on the notion that ChatGPT lacked certain qualities that characterise a humanlike conversation partner and instructor. Table 10 houses the codes under the theme.

Theme 4: Non-humanlike Interlocutor and Teacher	
Negative codes	
• unidirectional communication • lack of flexibility • redundant responses • not straight to the point • long-winded	• lack of real-life examples and applications • lack of exam-orientation • not understanding students' difficulties

Table 10: Codes under the theme *Controversial Motivator*

[18] This direct quotation was a response to the question "Do you think immediate feedback would affect your motivation to learn?"

[19] Replying to a subsequent probing question, Participant 12 agreed that ChatGPT would decrease her motivation to participate in learning.

The interviewees from the experimental group reflected on their experiences and opined that ChatGPT lacked flexibility and the ability to engage in two-way communication with the user:

> *"Talking to ChatGPT is more question-and-answer, which does not allow for opportunities to further investigate other topics. It's like you ask it a question, then it answers the question and you ask, then it answers. I think this is more unidirectional communication."* (Participant 07)
>
> *"And sometimes when you ask ChatGPT something, it would apologise for something it cannot answer. Humans do not talk this way, so I think that's weird."* (Participant 07)
>
> *"In the first activity, I asked it whether an answer is correct or not. Then, it would tell me what I got wrong. But it [the feedback] was often in the form of a long paragraph, so it felt a bit redundant."* (Participant 12)

On the contrary, Participant 02 from the control group considered attending lessons by human teachers effective in learning indirect questions in English in that there were "real conversations between humans". When asked to recapitulate using adjectives his perceptions of human teacher instruction, he went on to praise human teachers:

> *"[Human teachers] are straight to the point. They're also understanding as they can resonate with my difficulties. They do have more comprehensive insights into the questions I raise and offer clearer and more accurate feedback."* (Participant 02)

5. Discussion

5.1 Classroom Experiment

5.1.1 Research Question 1 and Key Findings

The first research question of the present study probes whether ChatGPT-generated feedback can facilitate the acquisition of English indirect questions by Hong Kong senior secondary students. As a summary of the key findings from the classroom experiment, the non-parametric tests, namely the Mann-Whitney U test and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, computed in Section 4 consistently showed that there were no statistically significant differences (i.e., $p > 0.05$) in test scores between and within the experimental group and the control group. The rank-biserial correlation coefficient r, which was calculated to obtain the effect sizes from the Mann-Whitney U tests, displayed small effects (i.e., $r < 0.3$) in general. Nevertheless, other descriptive statistics, including mean, revealed more subtle distinctions. The experimental group, which was exposed to ChatGPT-generated feedback, showed a more marked increase in grammaticality judgement scores (+1.17 vs. +0.33) as a result of the treatment whereas the control group, which received human teacher feedback, improved relatively more noticeably in discourse completion scores (+1.33 vs. +0.33). Besides, the experimental group could maintain their aggregate and grammaticality judgement test scores in the DPostT, as reflected by the respective slightly positive mean gains (+0.09 and +0.33), while the control group could not (-1.50 and -0.17).

5.1.2 Logical Explanations for Statistical Insignificance

The statistically insignificant results from the present study diverged from the findings in Vera (2023), which is introduced in Section 2.1.2. In the Chilean study, undergraduate students (n = 35) were surveyed and it was reported in the conference paper that the experimental group (n = 18) performed significantly better in the four macro skills of the English language than the control group (n = 17), as shown by the results from independent-

samples t-tests. By logic, there could be four possible factors behind such an inter-experimental discrepancy – geographical location, target population, target feature and sample size. First, since Hong Kong, a city in East Asia, is geographically distant from Chile, a country in South America, there could be a wide range of cultural and institutional factors that could play a role in influencing the effectiveness of ChatGPT-generated feedback in English language learning. Technological savviness, moreover, might also determine the experimental outcomes. Second, the groups of learners that were under investigation are different, with the present study exploring senior secondary students and Vera (2023) examining undergraduate students. It might be the case that ChatGPT is more conducive to English language learning at the tertiary level due to, as a mere speculation, cognitive maturity. Third, while the present study specifically evaluated the acquisition of indirect questions as a syntactic feature, Vera (2023) conducted an inquiry into more generic skills, namely reading, writing, listening and speaking. As such, upon the availability of further evidence through experimental replications, it could be concluded that ChatGPT-generated feedback is more functional for macro skills at large rather than micro skills such as grammar [20] . Last but not least, there were merely six observations per group in the present study, as opposed to 17-18 in Vera (2023). Hence, there could exist an alternative possibility that ChatGPT-generated feedback is indeed beneficial to the acquisition of indirect questions but the differences in this study were not salient enough to surpass the 95% confidence interval owing to a small sample size, thus constituting a Type II error.

5.1.3 Respective Effectiveness of Feedback Types

Despite the insignificant differences as reflected by inferential statistics, the subtle distinctions revealed by descriptive statistics could be useful for formulating hypotheses to be

[20] Having said that, generalisations must be made in a cautious manner in that there are also sub-categories within the domain of grammar (e.g., morphology and syntax) and further sub-levels within syntax (e.g., phrasal, clausal and sentential levels).

tested in future research. First of all, the experimental findings might suggest that ChatGPT-generated feedback was more effective in facilitating linguistic competence and receptive knowledge. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the experimental group showed a greater increase in the IPostT grammaticality judgement score than the control group. Since the GJT, as explained in Section 3, aimed to measure the ability of participants to identify subject-operator inversion errors from stimuli (i.e., linguistic competence and receptive knowledge), the results might reflect the effectiveness of ChatGPT-generated feedback in advancing linguistic competence and receptive knowledge of students. This hypothesis is in line with the finding by Kim et al. (2023) that ChatGPT could assess the linguistic knowledge of learners but contrasts with the conclusion in Cao and Zhong (2023) that ChatGPT-generated feedback concerned only surface structures rather than deeper structures, which include the syntactically complex indirect question constructions. Meanwhile, the observation that the control group displayed a more noticeable improvement in the IPostT discourse completion score might cast light on another related hypothesis that ChatGPT-generated feedback, as compared with human teacher feedback, is less valuable for learners to hone sociolinguistic competence and productive knowledge. In fact, the effect of human teacher instruction upon the DCT score had almost reached statistical significance (i.e., $p = 0.054$), which possibly reflects the relative potency of such a conventional method of instruction in this respect. Furthermore, the finding might also produce an important insight, albeit more distant from the research question, that the acquisition of English indirect questions as a politeness strategy is harder than cancelling subject-operator inversion and would require more time and effort from learners.

5.1.4 Better Knowledge Retention and Technology-mediated Interface

In addition, the descriptive statistics of the classroom experiment might imply that ChatGPT-generated feedback promotes knowledge retention and the development of implicit

knowledge. Also recapitulated earlier in this section, the experimental group was shown to be able to sustain their IPostT performance in the DPostT, as evidenced by the positive mean gains in the aggregate and grammaticality judgement scores. The effect size of $r = 0.32$ for the Mann-Whitney U test that examined the difference in the aggregate DPostT score between the groups indicated a medium effect. These statistics might lend support to the hypothesis that ChatGPT-generated feedback improves knowledge retention of learners. Even further, the positive mean gains in these DPostT scores might also signify the origination of implicit knowledge. The premise that implicit knowledge typically requires a longer time for development (Li, 2010, as cited in Loewen, 2020) seems to harmonise with the present result that increases in test scores, instead of mere maintenance, were found in the DPostT that took place one week after the IPostT. As such, the classroom experiment might present positive evidence for the causal relationship between explicit instruction (i.e., the PPP paradigm-inspired training programme), which results in explicit knowledge (Bowles, 2011), and implicit knowledge. It is postulated, from the present experimental findings, that technology mediation serves as a condition of the explicit-implicit interface, which the author would term the *technology-mediated interface*.

5.1.5 Interim Summary

Notwithstanding the above series of hypotheses based on descriptive statistics, it would be crucial to reiterate that the inferential statistics gathered from the quantitative classroom experiment do not indicate any statistically significant difference in the acquisition of English indirect questions between the experimental group and the control group. Therefore, it follows that the present study fails to reject the null hypothesis in favour of the alternative hypothesis.

5.2 Perceptions

5.2.1 Research Question 2 and Key Findings

The second research question pertains to how ChatGPT is perceived by Hong Kong senior secondary students in their processes of acquiring English indirect questions. As

analysed in Section 4, there were a total of four final themes developed from the semi-structured qualitative interview transcripts. The interviewees (n = 4), who were selected from both the experimental group (n = 2) and the control group (n = 2) based on self-rated personality, first perceived ChatGPT to be able to create a pleasant learning environment (Theme 1) for learners, as opposed to the relatively anxiety-inducing human teacher instruction. Also, they articulated ambivalent feelings towards the chatbot as a learning tool (Theme 2) and a motivator (Theme 3). Moreover, there was a general consensus that ChatGPT was a non-humanlike interlocutor and teacher (Theme 4).

5.2.2 Weakened Affective Filter

As a contribution to the theme *Pleasant Learning Environment*, the fact that some interviewees found ChatGPT to be enjoyable (ref. Table 7) is in correspondence with the finding in Ali et al. (2023) that a high mean rating (4 out of 5) was recorded in the *Fun and Enjoyment* item from the online Likert-scale questionnaire designed to probe the perceptions of ChatGPT by teachers and students. The code *reduced fear from being judged*, as formulated from the response by Participant 12, provides empirical evidence for a similar claim made by Barrot (2023) in the technology review. Furthermore, it was reported in Section 4 that more introverted interviewees tended to regard ChatGPT as a positive influence on learning atmosphere while those who leaned towards the extroverted personality recognised little difference. Such a distinction seems to confirm the personality effect, a hypothesis that informed the selection of interviewees. In other words, this supplies positive evidence to the possible tendency that learners who consider themselves more introverted consider ChatGPT a pleasant environment for learning to take place. With reference to the affective filter hypothesis (ref. Section 2.3.2), affective variables including anxiety, as a result, could be minimised, thus allowing for comprehensible input to enter the LAD and achieving acquired competence.

5.2.3 Curses in Disguise

The second theme *Debatable Learning Tool* registered more divided attitudes. On the one hand, a number of interviewees positively perceived ChatGPT-generated feedback to be quality and well-organised, which is largely consistent with the favourable interview findings in Yan (2023). Other interviewees in the present study, on the other hand, questioned the accuracy and credibility of responses generated by the LLM-powered chatbot. The sentiment would have been endorsed by the participants in Xiao and Zhi (2023), who also voiced concerns about the unreliability of generated responses. To briefly summarise, there seem to be contradictory findings with respect to the quality of ChatGPT-generated feedback, with interviewees approving of and entertaining doubts about the feedback. Upon further analysis of the baseline information of the interviewees, it was discovered that more positive opinions were primarily held by Participant 12, who was an immediate English learner as suggested by the proficiency test at the beginning of the classroom experiment. On the contrary, Participants 02 and 07, both advanced learners from the test results, expressed reservations about the reliability and accuracy of ChatGPT-generated feedback. Since it would be reasonable to assume that intermediate learners are generally less competent than more proficient learners at identifying misinformation from generated output, the discovery above might serve as an astonishing confirmation of the emphasis by Kohnke et al. (2023) and Hong (2023) that ChatGPT generates plausible sounding yet inaccurate responses, of which learners who are less proficient might not be aware. As such, this highlights the necessity of AI literacy education, which are to be briefly discussed in Section 5.3.3.

5.2.4 Complex Relationship with Learner Motivation

As the name suggests, the third theme *Controversial Motivator* also embodies a matter of controversy among the interviewees. Interviewees from the experimental group agreed that ChatGPT was able to generate immediate feedback on their language production, which

matches the arguments and results in Hong (2023), Xiao and Zhi (2023) and Kim et al. (2023). Coupled with the idea that timely feedback is conducive to motivation[21] when the learner is still on task, it could be logically concluded that ChatGPT can indeed facilitate learner motivation. However, a few interviewees displayed less enthusiasm for the chatbot. While they opined that ChatGPT once felt fresh and modern to them at first, most of them could not sustain their interest in the chatbot, which might conflict with the finding in Vera (2023) that learners perceived ChatGPT-based instruction as "engaging". More surprisingly, Participant 12 from the experimental group was under the impression that ChatGPT did not strengthen her motivation to learn but aggravate procrastination owing to its functionalities to help her complete a wide range of school tasks. This new insight is echoed by Mogavi et al. (2024), a study which examines the perceptions of ChatGPT in education via a content analysis of social media platforms such as X, Reddit and LinkedIn. It might also insinuate the possible oversimplification in Ali et al. (2023) and Muñoz et al. (2023), whose results indicate uniformly welcoming attitudes of students and teachers towards ChatGPT. Future research might investigate the nuances between ChatGPT and the motivation of learners (to be further discussed in Section 5.5.1).

5.2.5 Merely Statistical Machine

The fourth and final theme from the interviews *Non-humanlike Interlocutor and Teacher* further represents negative sentiments towards ChatGPT. First of all, the criticisms of unidirectional communication and redundancy seem to be in conflict with the interview results in Jeon and Lee (2023) that positive attitudes towards ChatGPT as an interlocutor and a teacher assistant prevailed among the surveyed elementary English teachers in South Korea (n = 10). Moreover, in connection with the findings from the classroom experiment, the fact that ChatGPT was perceived by interviewees as lacking in human qualities as a conversation partner

[21] This notion is supported by multiple studies in the past, including Malone and Lepper (1987).

and an instructor might account for the less pronounced increase in the IPostT discourse completion score of the experimental group. As discussed in Section 5.1.3, such a condition could reflect the relative ineffectiveness of the chatbot in developing the sociolinguistic competence of learners. This finding is far from surprising in that manoeuvring language under appropriate social contexts is beyond the realistic expectations for a statistical machine like ChatGPT. The sophisticated considerations involved in the use of language within extralinguistic contexts are, instead, a unique human trait. Noam Chomsky and his colleagues remarked the following in a newspaper article on the New York Times published this year:

> The human mind is not, like ChatGPT and its ilk, a lumbering statistical engine for pattern matching, gorging on hundreds of terabytes of data and extrapolating the most likely conversational response or most probable answer to a scientific question. On the contrary, the human mind is a surprisingly efficient and even elegant system that operates with small amounts of information; it seeks not to infer brute correlations among data points but to create explanations. (Chomsky et al., 2023)

Such a viewpoint is empirically reinforced by, apart from the present study, a result in Yoon et al. (2023) that ChatGPT-generated feedback failed to address the contextual appropriateness of the use of cohesive devices in student essays.

5.2.6 Interim Summary

In short, the perceptions of ChatGPT by the interviewees were more mixed-to-negative than positive, which gravitates towards the conclusion reached by Yan (2023) rather than the more optimistic Xiao and Zhi (2023).

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

5.3.1 Use of ChatGPT in Classroom

As mentioned in the previous discussion, the present study recorded a lack of statistically significant differences in test scores between the experimental group (ChatGPT-

generated feedback) and the control group (human teacher feedback). In other words, from the present experimental findings, ChatGPT-generated feedback and human teacher feedback were comparable[22] in terms of the influence on the acquisition of indirect questions. As such, English language teachers may permit the use of ChatGPT in the classroom so that the chatbot can serve to lighten the already enormous workloads of educators (Limna et al., 2023). Furthermore, according to the interview findings, ChatGPT can create a pleasant environment for learning to occur (ref. Section 4.2.1) while the continuous availability and immediacy of the feedback it generates might be able to foster the motivation of learners (ref. Section 4.2.3). In a nutshell, the use of ChatGPT in English language classrooms might be able to bring benefits to both teachers and students.

5.3.2 Human-AI Complementary Language Teaching

If future empirical evidence can substantiate the hypotheses (ref. Section 5.1) that ChatGPT-generated feedback is more effective in developing linguistic competence and receptive knowledge whereas human teacher feedback sociolinguistic competence and productive knowledge, then human-AI complementary language teaching would be able to enjoy the best of both worlds. The approach could be realised in the form of the flipped classroom – learners first access ChatGPT at home and receive ChatGPT-generated feedback before returning to school for more in-depth discussions guided by the human instructor. In the case of learning indirect questions in English, students may first learn about the structural differences between direct and indirect questions through, for example, ChatGPT-generated consciousness-raising tasks. Then, the lesson at school begins with a quiz on the receptive knowledge of learners (i.e., identifying subject-operator errors from indirect question constructions), followed by a human teacher-led investigation into the use of indirect questions

[22] The effectiveness of feedback varies among teachers. The recommendation in Section 5.3.1 is provided in conformity with the present findings, which must be further verified or falsified in future studies.

as a politeness marker in different social contexts. Hence, according to the three-dimensional framework of grammar teaching (see Figure 10) in Larsen-Freeman (2001), ChatGPT would be responsible for the *Form* component while human teachers would be in charge of the other two, *Meaning* and *Use*.

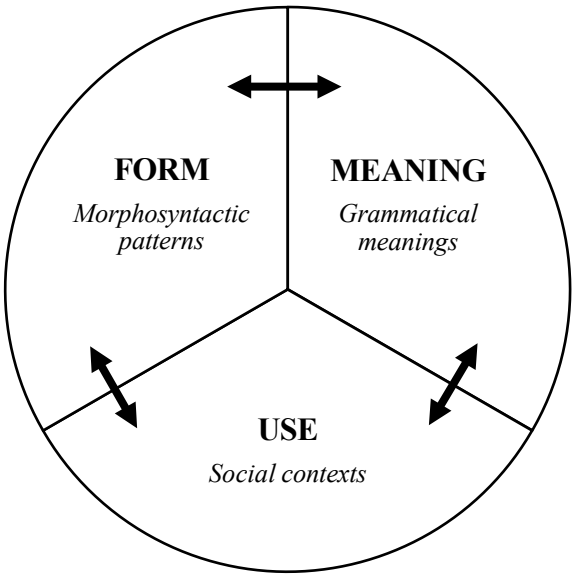

Figure 10: Three-dimensional framework of grammar teaching
(Source: Adapted from Larsen-Freeman, 2001)

5.3.3 AI Literacy

As remarked in Section 5.2.3 that ChatGPT had the tendency to produce apparently accurate misinformation, the implementation of AI literacy programmes has been more pressing than ever. As of the time of writing, the Education Bureau of Hong Kong has yet to introduce formal AI literacy programmes to schools in the territory. Although AI literacy is concerned with education in general rather than specific subject areas including languages, it would be necessary for teachers, inclusive of language teachers, to bear the responsibility to educate students about AI before official curricula are developed. At the bare minimum, students should acquire competences (as listed in Long & Magerko, 2020) such as

understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the LLM-powered chatbot (Competence 5) and critically interpret available data (Competence 13). Moreover, for ChatGPT and other AI-powered chatbots to succeed in language education [23] and the wider educational context, guidelines must be issued and strictly adhered to in order for learners to use the state-of-the-art technology ethically and responsibly (Jeon & Lee, 2023).

5.4 Limitations

5.4.1 Sample Size

The small sample size of the present study (i.e., n = 12) has resulted in limited generalisability. With merely six observations in each group that participated in the quantitative classroom experiment, the author could only resort to non-parametric tests, namely the Mann-Whitney U test and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, for statistical inference since some assumptions[24] of parametric tests could not be guaranteed in the dataset. A larger sample size (i.e., $n > 30$) in future studies would allow for the use of parametric tests (including t-tests), which possess high statistical power in general to draw valid inferences. Likewise, the number of interviewees ($n = 4$) would not be able to achieve data saturation. It is not until more students take part in the qualitative interview that a more accurate picture of perceptions of ChatGPT can be gained.

5.4.2 Experimental Control

As mentioned in Section 3.3.1, the data collection of this study was conducted remotely via ZOOM, a teleconferencing platform which has gained worldwide popularity since the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the more lenient experimental control might have reduced the overall validity of the results. To improve upon the present study, the classroom experiment could have been taken place in classrooms where participants were physically present during

[23] This also includes the potential benefits mentioned in Section 5.3.1.
[24] The author conducted a series of the Shapiro-Wilk tests and Levene's tests to check for normality and degrees of homoscedasticity. Results show non-normal distributions and significant differences (i.e., $p < 0.05$) between variances.

the whole data collection process. In this case, confounding variables such as environment could be better brought under control.

5.4.3 Time Constraints

Despite being conceived more than half a year prior to the official start of work, this research project was completed in slightly more than three months. As a consequence, a simpler between-group experimental design was chosen to warrant on-schedule completion. To investigate the impact of ChatGPT-generated feedback on the acquisition of syntax in a more comprehensive manner, a repeated-measures design could be selected where a group of participants were exposed to multiple experimental conditions (e.g., ChatGPT-generated feedback and human teacher feedback) in their processes of acquiring multiple target features (e.g., indirect questions, pied-piping and gapping)[25]. However, the more longitudinal nature of the design would require more time for data collection, which would be largely unfeasible for the context of the present study. Moreover, to more precisely measure the proficiency of participants as part of the baseline information, the 50-minute EF SET test (https://www.efset.org/ef-set-50/) should be administered instead of the current 15-minute EF SET Quick English Check, which could at most provide approximate estimates.

5.5 Future Directions for Research

5.5.1 ChatGPT and Other AI-powered Chatbots

Future studies in the field of intelligent computer-assisted language learning (iCALL), first of all, may test the series of hypotheses proposed in Section 5.1. Table 11 recapitulates the six hypotheses formulated in the sub-section. Besides, researchers may, as suggested in Section 5.2.4, further probe the relationship between the use of ChatGPT (other AI-powered chatbots may also apply) and learner motivation with a view to discovering which types of learners (e.g.,

[25] For instance, in the first session with indirect questions as the target feature, Group A receives ChatGPT-generated feedback while Group B is exposed to human teacher feedback. Then, in the second session with pied-piping, the group switches experimental conditions (i.e., Group A experiences human teacher feedback whilst Group B ChatGPT-generated feedback).

personality and language learning strategies) benefit to a greater extent from such a mode of learning.

Future research may also adjust the dependent variable and explore the influence of ChatGPT-generated feedback on the acquisition of other grammatical features, such as the morphological past tense marker *-ed*, and of other language areas including vocabulary[26]. It is also recommended that other populations, such as primary school learners and students with special educational needs (SEN), be examined so as to understand more holistically the usefulness of ChatGPT in language education.

Another potential direction for future research would be whether learners can transfer different competences developed through interactions with ChatGPT or other AI-powered chatbots, if possible, to real-life settings with human interlocutors. It is believed such will also provide interesting and important insights into the necessity of human teacher instruction.

Hypothesis	Description
H_1	ChatGPT-generated feedback, as compared with human teacher feedback, is *more* effective in facilitating linguistic competence.
H_2	ChatGPT-generated feedback, as compared with human teacher feedback, is *more* effective in facilitating receptive knowledge.
H_3	ChatGPT-generated feedback, as compared with human teacher feedback, is *less* effective in facilitating sociolinguistic competence.
H_4	ChatGPT-generated feedback, as compared with human teacher feedback, is *less* effective in facilitating productive knowledge.
H_5	ChatGPT-generated feedback improves knowledge retention.
H_6	Technology mediation serves as a condition of the explicit knowledge-implicit knowledge interface. (*Technology-mediated interface*)

Table 11: The six hypotheses from the classroom experiment
(according to the order of discussion in Section 5.1)

[26] A possible research question could pertain to the impact of ChatGPT on incidental vocabulary learning.

5.5.2 Acquisition of English Indirect Questions

Apart from AI-powered chatbots such as ChatGPT, more research may also be dedicated to the acquisition of English indirect questions, a syntactic feature that indicates the ultimate attainment of English question formation (Dyson, 2008). For instance, similar to how Yule (1998) analyses different positions of relative clauses, a thorough taxonomy of indirect questions in English could be developed. Next, a corpus of indirect question errors could be compiled in order to determine the more problematic types of indirect questions. As a result, practitioners could devote more attention through explicit instruction to the sub-types which learners tend to find most difficult and leave the less challenging ones for more implicit acquisition from comprehensible input.

Moreover, the acquisition of English indirect questions as a politeness strategy should be further investigated for the purpose of understanding the practical difficulties involved in the process, as evidenced by the relatively low discourse completion scores across the tests from the quantitative classroom experiment.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary

This sub-section revisits the two research questions posed in Section 2 and the more general research problem around which the present study is revolved. Key findings are succinctly generalised and presented to address the research questions and the research problem.

6.1.1 Research Questions Revisited

Research Question 1: Can ChatGPT-generated feedback facilitate the acquisition of English indirect questions by Hong Kong senior secondary students?

The first research question of the present study pertains to the effectiveness of ChatGPT-generated feedback. The inferential statistics from the quantitative classroom experiment in Section 4.1 consistently show that there were no significant differences in test scores between the experimental group, who received ChatGPT-generated feedback and the control group, which was exposed to human teacher feedback. Nevertheless, the descriptive statistics might have hinted at the relative effectiveness of the feedback type in developing the linguistic competence and receptive knowledge of learners, as well as improving knowledge retention and strengthening the interface between explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge. Owing to the comparison with human teacher feedback that ChatGPT-generated feedback might be less valuable for the facilitation of sociolinguistic competence and productive knowledge, the present study would be prone to the conclusion that ChatGPT-generated feedback can *partially* facilitate the acquisition of English indirect questions by Hong Kong senior secondary students. However, it is vital to reiterate that the hypotheses indicated by the descriptive statistics are subject to verification or falsification in future research.

Research Question 2: How do Hong Kong senior secondary students perceive ChatGPT in their processes of acquiring English indirect questions?

The second research question probes the learner perceptions of ChatGPT. As listed in Section 4.2, the four themes developed from the semi-structured interview transcripts are *Pleasant Learning Environment* (Theme 1), *Debatable Learning Tool* (Theme 2), *Controversial Motivator* (Theme 3) and *Non-humanlike Interlocutor and Teacher* (Theme 4). With all the corresponding codes (ref. Section 4.2) taken into account, the author has found that the surveyed Hong Kong senior secondary students displayed *mixed-to-negative* perceptions of the LLM-powered chatbot in their processes of acquiring English indirect questions.

6.1.2 The Research Problem

Research Problem: The impact of ChatGPT on the L2 acquisition of syntax and pragmatics

The two research questions in the present study aim to provide insights into the research problem, which refers to the impact of ChatGPT on the acquisition of L2 syntax and pragmatics, through the lens of the formation and use of English indirect questions. Combining findings from the quantitative and qualitative components of the present study, the author argues that the mixed-to-negative perceptions of ChatGPT in English language learning would account for the partial effectiveness of ChatGPT-generated feedback in fostering the acquisition of English indirect questions under the specific context of senior secondary education. Taken together, the classroom experiment and the semi-structured interviews of the present study seem to suggest the limited impact of the chatbot on the acquisition of L2 syntax and pragmatics despite a slightly more positive effect observed in the former language area.

6.2 Implications and Concluding Remarks

This final sub-section seeks to close this paper through restating the implications of the present study and passing concluding remarks.

6.2.1 Implications

The present study seems to have provided indirect evidence for ChatGPT as an NLP tool that can parse more complex structures, namely indirect question constructions, and improve the linguistic competence of learners. Nonetheless, ChatGPT as an LLM-powered chatbot still has considerable room for improvement until it can serve as an adequate tool for language learning. Under the context of English language education for the senior secondary audience in Hong Kong, ChatGPT has yet to fully replace human teachers in the case of teaching complex syntactic structures, particularly those as pragmalinguistic resources to realise sociopragmatic functions. As such, human-AI complementary language teaching would be the optimal solution for the time being. Meanwhile, the importance of critical thinking cannot be overstated as learners need to hone the ability to identify and evaluate faulty responses generated by ChatGPT and other AI-powered chatbots. Therefore, it is about time the government of Hong Kong launched AI literacy programmes to equip students with what will become survival skills in years to come.

6.2.2 Concluding Remarks

It is pivotal to foreground at the end of this paper that the small-scale present study, which constitutes an undergraduate capstone project, does not aim to present well-founded scientific facts as a means to solve any problems in an effective manner owing to time constraints and a small sample size. Instead, this preliminary study strives to present hypotheses which might open some avenues for future research in the field of technology-mediated language learning.

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APPENDIX A

Stages in the Development of English Questions

Stage	Question Type	Examples	Description
6	Cancel inversion	*I wonder where he is.*	Learners acquire the declarative word order in indirect questions.
5	Aux2nd Do2nd	*Where can he go?* *Why did he eat?*	Learners place the auxiliary (*do* or another type) in second position in direct questions, also overgeneralising this to indirect questions.
4	Yes-no inversion Copula inversion	*Have he seen it?* *Where is my purse?* *Is she at home?*	Learners form *wh*-questions and yes-no questions via inversion, or remapping, of *wh*-words and copulas, as well as subjects and copulas/auxiliaries.
3	*Wh*-fronting *Do*-fronting	*What you want?* *Do you understand me?*	Learners question by fronting a constituent before the subject, verb and complement. In this way, they ask yes-no questions with an initial do and wh-questions with an initial wh-word.
2	Rising-intonation SVO (Subject Verb Object / Complement)	*You like Chinese food?*	Rising intonation remains the major questioning resource but at this point it is built onto SVO clauses.
1	Word/s	*Yes?*	Second-language learners ask questions by adding rising intonation to single words or formulas.

(Source: Adapted from Dyson, 2008: 17)

APPENDIX B

Background Questionnaire

Hello! I am an undergraduate from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Currently, I am conducting research on the possible impact of ChatGPT on the acquisition of English grammar by Hong Kong senior secondary students. It would be appreciated if you could spend around five minutes to complete the following questionnaire. The information provided in the questionnaire will be kept confidential and destroyed upon the completion of the research.

If you have any questions regarding this questionnaire, please feel free to contact Mr. Aiden Cheung at 1155160099@link.cuhk.edu.hk.

您好！本人是香港中文大學的本科生。本人目前在進行一項有關 ChatGPT 對香港高中學生英文文法習得的可能影響之學術研究。希望閣下能夠花大約五分鐘時間完成以下問卷調查。閣下在此問卷調查所提供的資料將受到保密，並於研究程序完結後銷毀。

如閣下對這項問卷調查有任何疑問，歡迎隨時透過 1155160099@link.cuhk.edu.hk 聯絡 Aiden Cheung 先生。

(1) What is your sex? 你的性別是甚麼？

○ Male 男

○ Female 女

(2) Which form are you currently in? 你現正就讀甚麼年級？

○ Form 4 中四

○ Form 5 中五

○ Form 6 中六

(3) Which type of school are you currently studying at? 你現正就讀甚麼類型的學校？

○ EMI school 英文中學 (英中)

○ CMI school 中文中學 (中中)

(4) What is your first language (the first language to which you were exposed)? 你的第一語言 (你所接觸到的第一個語言) 是甚麼？

○ Cantonese 廣東話

○ Putonghua 普通話

○ English 英文

○ Other 其他 (please specify 請註明)：_____

(5) Which of the following indicates your current English proficiency level? (Please refer to the result of the test that you took earlier in this research process) 以下哪一個是你現時的英文水平？(請參考你早前在本研究過程的測試結果)

- ○ Beginner
- ○ Intermediate
- ○ Advanced

(6) Rate your personality on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = introverted; 5 = extroverted). 請按照 1-5 的等級為你的性格評級 (1 = 內向；5 = 外向)。

- ○ 1 (introverted 內向)
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 (extroverted 外向)

(7) Rate your familiarity with ChatGPT on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = unfamiliar; 5 = familiar). 請按照 1-5 的等級為你對 ChatGPT 的熟悉程度評級 (1 = 不熟悉；5 = 熟悉)。

- ○ 1 (unfamiliar 不熟悉)
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 (familiar 熟悉)

– End of Background Questionnaire –

APPENDIX C

Pre-test

Instructions:

This quiz consists of 24 questions, divided into two parts. Please attempt ALL the questions. After you have completed the test, please remember to click on the "Submit" button to ensure successful submission.

If you have any questions regarding this quiz, please contact Mr. Aiden Cheung at 1155160099@link.cuhk.edu.hk.

作答指引：

這個測試由兩個部份、24 個題目組成。請嘗試作答所有題目。在完成測試後，請緊記按下「Submit」按鈕，以確保成功提交。

如有關於這個測試的任何問題， 請透過 1155160099@link.cuhk.edu.hk 聯絡 Aiden Cheung 先生。

Part 1 第一部份
Is each of the following sentences grammatically correct or incorrect? 以下每一個句子從文法上來說是正確還是錯誤？

For each sentence, select either "Correct" or "Incorrect". 請為每一個句子選擇「正確」或「錯誤」。

		Correct 正確	Incorrect 錯誤
(1)	Sharon wants to know whether Tom is in love with her.	○	○
(2)	It is suggested the government to cancel the new policy.	○	○
(3)	I wonder what should I ask Katie during the interview.	○	○
(4)	There are many students who still haven't signed up.	○	○
(5)	Have you asked John whether the new book is sold?	○	○
(6)	Miss Lai has been teaching chemistry for over 30 years.	○	○
(7)	My class teacher didn't remember what Mr. Chan told her.	○	○
(8)	If I arrived on time, Jimmy and Harry would have survived.	○	○
(9)	Would you please tell us what is this document about?	○	○

	Correct 正確	Incorrect 錯誤
(10) Writing four reading reports are not an easy task for me.	○	○
(11) Will the host predict whether will Allen win the game?	○	○
(12) Principal Chan considered inviting Susie to give a talk.	○	○

Part 2 第二部份

Study the situations below and fill in each blank with an appropriate utterance based on the given context. 研究以下情況，並根據所給予的背景在橫線上填上恰當的說話。

(13) Your mother voiced her opinions on the JPEX saga but you disagree with her. You say:

_____

(14) You want your employer to write a recommendation letter for you. You say:

_____

(15) Your friend invited you to his birthday party but you want to turn him down. You say:

_____

(16) You want to ask your geography teacher about the largest country in the world. You say:

_____

(17) You bumped into a colleague in a foreign country and you would like to greet her. You say:

_____

(18) You are a tourist and you want to ask a pedestrian about the name of the district near Thonglor. You say:

_____

(19) You spilled some water on your professor's coat and you want to apologise. You say:

_____

(20) You want your English teacher to upload the answers to a reading exercise. You say:

_____

(21) You stepped on your sister's foot and you want to apologise. You say:

_____

(22) You want your best friend to share an Instagram post with you. You say:

_____

(23) Your student invited you to dinner but you do not want to go. You say:

_____

(24) You want to ask your twin brother about the symptoms of COVID-19. You say:

_____

– End of Pre-test –

APPENDIX C

Sample Coded Experiment Data

Pre-test

Q.	Ans.	Experimental Group						Control Group					
		01	04	07	09	11	12	02	03	05	06	08	10
(1)	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
(3)	I	C	I	I	C	I	C	C	I	I	I	C	C
(5)	C	I	C	I	I	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	I
(7)	C	I	C	C	C	C	C	I	C	C	C	C	C
(9)	I	C	I	I	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	I	I
(11)	I	C	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Part 1 Sub-total	**6**	**1**	**6**	**5**	**3**	**5**	**3**	**3**	**5**	**5**	**6**	**5**	**4**
(14)	IQ	IQ	DQ	IQ	DQ	IQ	DQ	IQ	IM	IM	DQ	DQ	M
(16)	IQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	IQ	DQ	IQ^I	IM	DQ	IQ^I	DQ	DQ
(18)	IQ	IQ^M	DQ	DQ	IQ	DQ	DQ	IQ^I	M	IQ^F	IQ^I	IQ^I	DQ
(20)	IQ	IQ^F	DQ	IQ^F	DQ	IQ^I	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ	DQ
(22)	DQ/IM	DQ	IM	DQ	IM	DQ	IM	IM	IM	DQ	IM	DQ	M
(24)	DQ/IM	DQ	DQ	DQ	IQ	IQ	IQ^M	DQ	IM	IQ^I	DQ	DQ	DQ
Part 2 Sub-total	**6**	**3.5**	**2**	**3.5**	**2**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**2**	**1.5**	**2**	**2**	**1**
TOTAL	**12**	**4.5**	**8**	**8.5**	**5**	**8**	**4**	**6**	**7**	**6.5**	**8**	**7**	**5**

APPENDIX E

Semi-structured Interview Protocol (Experimental Group)

你好！多謝你參與呢個訪談。呢個訪談主要圍繞着頭先嘅課堂同埋你嘅 ChatGPT 使用體驗，為時 15 至 20 分鐘。歡迎你隨時喺訪談進行期間表達自己嘅感想，令我哋可以一齊創造新嘅知識。今次嘅訪談將會透過 ZOOM 嘅內置功能進行錄音，而錄音檔案將會喺文字記錄完成後徹底銷毀，以保障你嘅私隱同安全。請問你係咪同意我喺呢個訪談進行錄音？

(Hello! Thank you for attending this interview. This interview will revolve around the lesson you had just now and your experience with ChatGPT. The whole interview will take 15-20 minutes. You are welcomed to express your opinions anytime during the interview so that we can co-construct new knowledge. This interview will be audiotaped using the built-in function of ZOOM and the recording will be completely destroyed after transcription is completed in order to protect your privacy and safety. Do you agree to be audiotaped in this interview?)

我哋先討論一下頭先嘅課堂… (Let's start by discussing the lesson …)

1. **你可唔可以講下你對課堂嘅整體感受？(Can you describe how you feel about the lesson in general?)**

   Probing questions:

   - 你鍾唔鍾意個課堂？點解呢？(Do you like the lesson? Why or why not?)
   - 你覺得課堂嘅邊一個方面最有趣？邊一個方面令你最唔愉快？(Which aspect of the lesson do you find most enjoyable? How about the aspect that you find least enjoyable?)

我哋依家嚟傾下 ChatGPT… (Let's talk about ChatGPT now …)

2. **你覺得喺課堂上接收 ChatGPT 嘅回饋會唔會影響學習氣氛？如果會嘅話，你覺得會點樣影響？(Do you think receiving feedback from ChatGPT during the lesson affects the learning atmosphere? If yes, how?)**

   Probing questions:

   - 你覺得透過 ChatGPT 學間接問句會唔會令你覺得輕鬆啲？點解呢？(Do you think learning indirect questions through ChatGPT is more relaxing? Why or why not?)
   - 如果講學習氣氛嘅話，你會點樣比較同 ChatGPT 進行互動同埋同真人老師進行互動？(In terms of learning atmosphere, how would you compare between interacting with ChatGPT and with a human teacher?)

3. **你覺得同 ChatGPT 進行互動算唔算係一種有趣嘅方法嚟學間接問句？(Do you think interacting with ChatGPT is an interesting way to learn indirect questions?)**

   Probing questions:

   - 點解你會覺得（唔）有趣？(Why do you think it is (not) interesting?)
   - ChatGPT 嘅邊啲方面令你覺得（唔）有趣？(Which aspects of ChatGPT do you find (un)interesting?)
   - 係咪 ChatGPT 作為一項先進科技令你覺得有趣？(Is it the status of ChatGPT as a state-of-the-art technology that interests you?)

4. **你會點樣形容 ChatGPT 提供回饋嘅速度？(How would you describe the feedback speed of ChatGPT?)**

   Probing questions:

   - 你會點樣比較 ChatGPT 同真人老師提供回饋嘅速度？(How would you compare feedback speed between ChatGPT and human teachers?)
   - 你覺得回饋嘅速度會唔會影響你學間接問句嘅動力？(Do you think the feedback speed affects your motivation to learn indirect questions?)

5. **你會點樣形容 ChatGPT 提供回饋嘅質素？(How would you describe the feedback quality of ChatGPT?)**

   Probing questions:

   - 你覺得啲回饋有冇用？會唔會出現廢話？(Do you think the feedback was useful? Is there any nonsense?)
   - 你記唔記得任何同ChatGPT嘅互動？介唔介意同我分享少少？(Do you recall any interaction with ChatGPT? Would you mind sharing some with me?)

我哋試下用一啲形容詞嚟歸納頭先討論過嘅嘢… (Let's recap what we have discussed just now with some adjectives …)

6. **你會點樣形容透過 ChatGPT 嚟學習間接問句？(How would you describe learning indirect questions through ChatGPT?)**

7. **你仲有冇其他嘅形容詞想用嚟描述 ChatGPT？(Are there any other adjectives you want to use for description?)**

8. **整體嚟講，你覺得自己算唔算享受透過 ChatGPT 嚟學間接問句？你未來會唔會想繼續透過 ChatGPT 嚟學習？(Do you think you enjoyed learning indirect questions through ChatGPT in general? Are you willing to continue learning through ChatGPT in the future?)**

喺呢個訪談完之前⋯ (Before this interview ends …)

9. 你仲有冇一啲關於 ChatGPT 嘅睇法想同我分享？(Do you have any opinions about ChatGPT that you would like to share with me?)

– End of Interview –

APPENDIX F

Semi-structured Interview Protocol (Control Group)

你好！多謝你參與呢個訪談。呢個訪談主要圍繞着頭先嘅課堂同埋真人老師教學，為時 15 至 20 分鐘。歡迎你隨時喺訪談進行期間表達自己嘅感想，令我哋可以一齊創造新嘅知識。今次嘅訪談將會透過 ZOOM 嘅內置功能進行錄音，而錄音檔案將會喺文字記錄完成後徹底銷毀，以保障你嘅私隱同安全。請問你係咪同意我喺呢個訪談進行錄音？

(Hello! Thank you for attending this interview. This interview will revolve around the lesson you had just now and teaching by human teachers. The whole interview will take 15-20 minutes. You are welcomed to express your opinions anytime during the interview so that we can co-construct new knowledge. This interview will be audiotaped using the built-in function of ZOOM and the recording will be completely destroyed after transcription is completed in order to protect your privacy and safety. Do you agree to be audiotaped in this interview?)

我哋先討論一下頭先嘅課堂… (Let's start by discussing the lesson …)

1. **你可唔可以講下你對課堂嘅整體感受？(Can you describe how you feel about the lesson in general?)**

   Probing questions:

   - 你鍾唔鍾意個課堂？點解呢？(Do you like the lesson? Why or why not?)
   - 你覺得課堂嘅邊一個方面最有趣？邊一個方面令你最唔愉快？(Which aspect of the lesson do you find most enjoyable? How about the aspect that you find least enjoyable?)

我哋依家嚟傾下真人老師教學… (Let's talk about teaching by human teachers now …)

2. **你覺得喺課堂上接收真人老師嘅回饋會唔會影響學習氣氛？如果會嘅話，你覺得會點樣影響？(Do you think receiving feedback from human teachers during the lesson affects the learning atmosphere? If yes, how?)**

   Probing questions:

   - 你覺得透過同真人老師互動嚟學間接問句會唔會令你覺得緊張？點解呢？(Do you think learning indirect questions through interacting with human teachers makes you nervous? Why or why not?)
   - 如果講學習氣氛嘅話，你會點樣比較同真人老師進行互動同埋自己喺網上 (例如 Google 或者 ChatGPT) 搵資料？(In terms of learning atmosphere, how would you compare between interacting with human teachers and searching for information online, such as on Google and ChatGPT?)

3. **你覺得透過上真人老師嘅堂嚟學習間接問句算唔算係一種有趣嘅途徑？(Do you think attending lessons by human teachers is an interesting way to learn indirect questions?)**

   Probing questions:

   - 點解你會覺得（唔）有趣？(Why do you think it is (not) interesting?)
   - 真人老師教學嘅邊啲方面令你覺得（唔）有趣？(Which aspects of teaching by human teachers do you find (un)interesting?)

4. **你會點樣形容真人老師提供回饋嘅速度？(How would you describe the feedback speed of human teachers?)**

   Probing questions:

   - 喺堂上解答學生疑問同埋改功課嘅時候，真人老師提供回饋嘅速度會唔會有分別？(Would there be any difference in the feedback speed of human teachers between addressing students' questions in class and marking assignments?)
   - 你覺得回饋嘅速度會唔會影響你學間接問句嘅動力？(Do you think the feedback speed affects your motivation to learn indirect questions?)

5. **你會點樣形容真人老師提供回饋嘅質素？(How would you describe the feedback quality of human teachers?)**

   Probing questions:

   - 你覺得啲回饋有冇用？會唔會出現廢話？(Do you think the feedback was useful? Is there any nonsense?)
   - 你記唔記得任何同真人老師嘅互動？介唔介意同我分享少少？(Do you recall any interaction with human teachers? Would you mind sharing some with me?)

我哋試下用一啲形容詞嚟歸納頭先討論過嘅嘢… (Let's recap what we have discussed just now with some adjectives …)

6. **你會點樣形容透過上真人老師嘅堂嚟學間接問句？(How would you describe learning indirect questions through attending lessons by human teachers?)**

7. **你仲有冇其他嘅形容詞想用嚟描述真人老師嘅堂？(Are there any other adjectives you want to use for description?)**

8. **整體嚟講，你覺得自己算唔算享受透過上真人老師嘅堂嚟學間接問句？你未來會唔會想繼續透過上真人老師嘅堂嚟學習？(Do you think you enjoyed learning indirect questions through attending lessons by human teachers? Are you willing to continue learning through attending lessons by human teachers in the future?)**

喺呢個訪談完之前⋯ (Before this interview ends …)

9. **你仲有冇一啲關於真人老師教學嘅睇法想同我分享？(Do you have any opinions about teaching by human teachers that you would like to share with me?)**

– End of Interview –

APPENDIX G

Sample Interview Transcript

*Note: This sample transcript is excerpted from the interview with **Participant 12**, who was assigned to the **experimental group** in the present study.*

Interviewer: 我哋而家就先討論一下頭先啱啱嗰個嘅實驗課堂先啦。首先你可唔可以講一講你對課堂嘅一啲整體嘅感受？
(Let's talk about the lesson we just had. Can you first describe how you feel about the lesson in general?)

Participant: 即係同我平時上堂唔同啦，因為我哋學校都係唔俾用 ChatGPT，都覺得有啲新奇。同埋用 ChatGPT 都幫到我嘅，唔係好似啲老師咁。
(It's different from my usual classes, because our school still doesn't allow us to use ChatGPT. That's why I think [the lesson] was a bit novel. Also, using ChatGPT did help me, not like some teachers.)

Interviewer: 咁呢個課堂融入咗 ChatGPT 你會唔會覺得有趣？
(Do you think this lesson was interesting because it incorporated ChatGPT?)

Participant: 都幾有趣嘅。
(Yes, it's quite interesting.)

Interviewer: 你覺得 ChatGPT 邊啲嘅方面會令你覺得有趣呢？
(Which aspects of ChatGPT do you find interesting?)

Participant: 我以為佢會答啲好死板嘅問題，或者可能未必會符合到我嘅預期啦。但係其實都好暢順囉嗰個過程。
(I thought it would give formulaic answers or might not meet my expectations, but the process turned out to be really smooth.)

Interviewer: 好暢順，即係基本上你覺得佢可能提供 feedback 嗰啲質素都唔錯嘅？
(Really smooth. That basically means you think the quality of the feedback that it provides was satisfactory?)

Participant: 係。
(Yes.)

Interviewer: 咁但係有時會唔會可能你問佢啲嘢啦，會唔會突然間出現咗啲廢話咁樣嘅？
(Would there be situations where you asked it something and then it responded with some nonsense?)

Participant: 都會有啲嘅，不過整體嚟講都暢順。
(Yes, sometimes, but it was smooth in general.)

Interviewer: 整體嚟講都暢順。明白。咁你記唔記得同 ChatGPT 做過嘅互動呀？介唔介意同我分享少少咁樣？
(Smooth in general. I see. Do you recall any interaction with ChatGPT? Do you mind sharing a little with me?)

Participant: 喺第一個 activity，我問佢嗰個答案啱唔啱，跟住佢會同我講返我邊度錯咗或者有啲咩唔啱嗰啲。但係佢一大篇咁樣囉，所以就令我覺得有少少好累贅囉。
(In the first activity, I asked it whether an answer is correct or not. Then, it would tell me what I got wrong. But it [the feedback] was often in the form of a long paragraph, so it felt a bit redundant.)

Interviewer: 即係可能有啲水份咁樣，未必一講就講重點咁樣。
(That means there was some unnecessary information, and it didn't start with the gist.)

Participant: 係。
(Yes.)

Interviewer: 明白。頭先講到 ChatGPT 有唔有趣嗰個問題啦，咁你會覺得基本上都有趣。你會唔會覺得佢係作為一個先進嘅科技會令你覺得有趣咁樣？
(I see. We talked about whether ChatGPT is interesting just now and you thought it's basically interesting. Do you think this is because it is a state-of-the-art technology?)

Participant: 都有趣，因為佢都幫到我好多學習上面嘅問題囉，咩科目都好咁樣。同埋佢比我想像中多好多嘢講囉。
(It's interesting, because it helps me with issues that I encounter in my studies, no matter which subject. Also, it talks way more than expected.)

Interviewer: 即係好詳盡咁樣？
(Very detailed?)

Participant: 係。
(Yes.)

Interviewer: 明白。咁你覺得頭先喺課堂上面接收 ChatGPT 嘅 feedback 呢，會唔會影響到整體嘅學習氣氛呢？
(I see. Do you think receiving feedback from ChatGPT during the lesson affected the learning atmosphere in general?)

Participant: 我覺得唔會囉。
(I don't think so.)

Interviewer: 冇乜分別咁樣？
(Not much of a difference?)

Participant: 冇乜分別。
(Not much.)

Interviewer: 但係你會唔會覺得就係透過ChatGPT 嚟學 indirect questions 可能相對輕鬆啲咁樣？
(But do you think learning indirect questions through ChatGPT was relatively relaxing?)

Participant: 會輕鬆好多。
(Much more relaxing.)

Interviewer: 輕鬆好多？點解會覺得輕鬆好多嘅？
(Much more relaxing? Why was it much more relaxing?)

Participant: 即係可能我平時上堂唔識，跟住我問老師啦。因為可能老師佢答嘅嘢可能仲要冇 ChatGPT 咁詳盡， 或者可能我未 get 到。
(Maybe this is because the feedback from teachers might not be as detailed as that from ChatGPT when I asked about something I didn't understand in class. Or it could be that I had yet to figure out what my teachers meant.)

Interviewer: 即係可能你會比較容易 get 到 ChatGPT 講嘅嘢多過可能平時老師咁樣？
(That means it's easier for you to understand what ChatGPT says than [the feedback from] teachers?)

Participant: 因為可能佢太長篇大論啦，所以佢講嘢好好笑咁樣囉。
(Probably because it [the feedback from ChatGPT] was long-winded. That's why the way it speaks is very funny.)

Interviewer: 好唪氣，即係好似 ChatGPT 咁樣？
(Long-winded, like ChatGPT?)

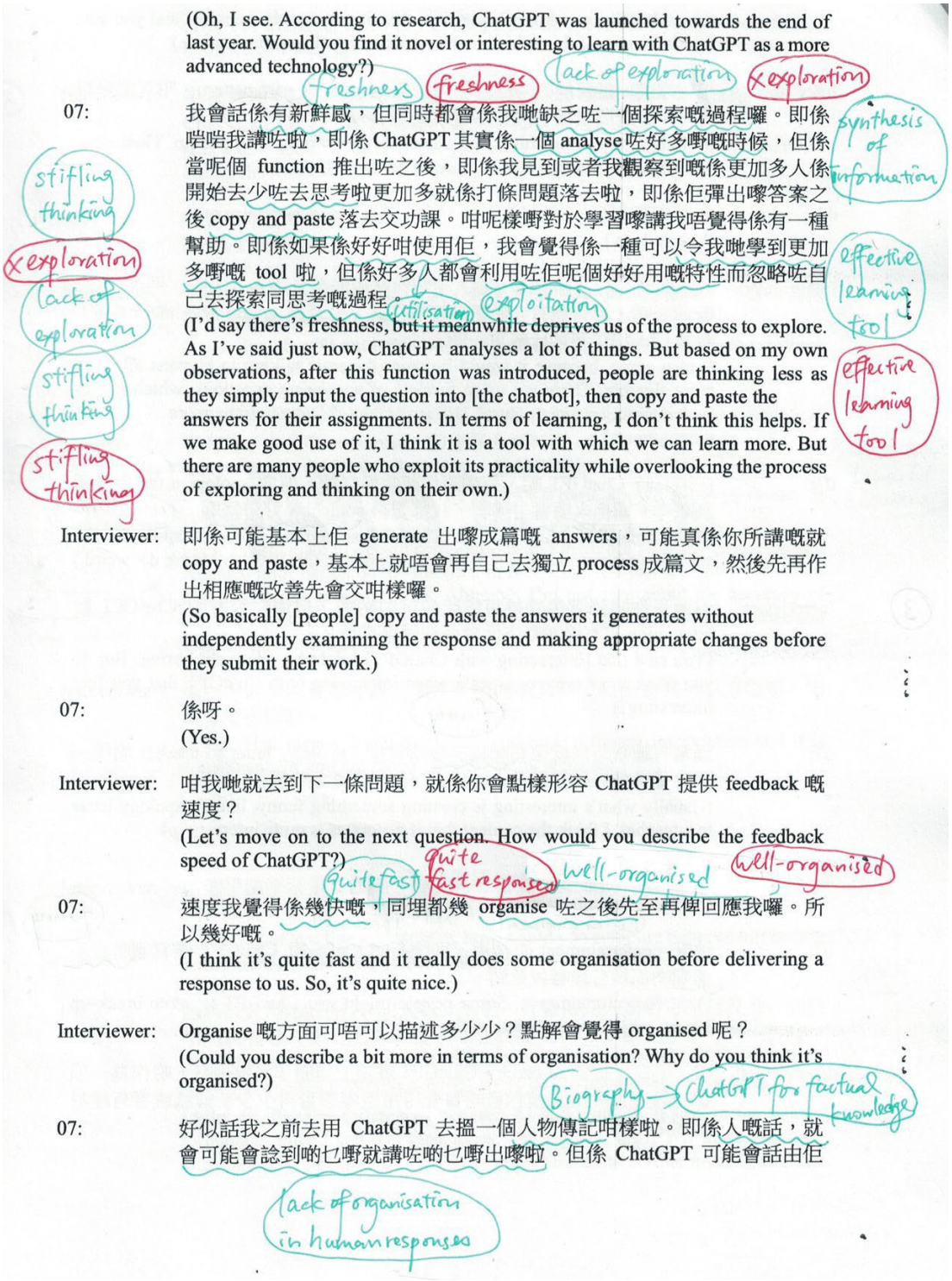
Participant: 都係，同時個人比較內向，會傾向打字問問題咁樣。
(Yes. Also, I'm more introverted, so I prefer asking questions through typing.)

[…]

– End of Sample Interview Transcript –

APPENDIX H

Sample Coded Interview Data



(Oh, I see. According to research, ChatGPT was launched towards the end of last year. Would you find it novel or interesting to learn with ChatGPT as a more advanced technology?)

07: 我會話係有新鮮感，但同時都會係我哋缺乏咗一個探索嘅過程囉。即係啱啱我講咗啦，即係 ChatGPT 其實係一個 analyse 咗好多嘢嘅時候，但係當呢個 function 推出咗之後，即係我見到或者我觀察到嘅係更加多人係開始去少咗去思考啦更加多就係打條問題落去啦，即係佢彈出嚟答案之後 copy and paste 落去交功課。咁呢樣嘢對於學習嚟講我唔覺得係有一種幫助。即係如果係好好咁使用佢，我會覺得係一種可以令我哋學到更加多嘢嘅 tool 啦，但係好多人都會利用咗佢呢個好好用嘅特性而忽略咗自己去探索同思考嘅過程。

(I'd say there's freshness, but it meanwhile deprives us of the process to explore. As I've said just now, ChatGPT analyses a lot of things. But based on my own observations, after this function was introduced, people are thinking less as they simply input the question into [the chatbot], then copy and paste the answers for their assignments. In terms of learning, I don't think this helps. If we make good use of it, I think it is a tool with which we can learn more. But there are many people who exploit its practicality while overlooking the process of exploring and thinking on their own.)

Interviewer: 即係可能基本上佢 generate 出嚟成篇嘅 answers，可能真係你所講嘅就 copy and paste，基本上就唔會再自己去獨立 process 成篇文，然後先再作出相應嘅改善先會交咁樣囉。

(So basically [people] copy and paste the answers it generates without independently examining the response and making appropriate changes before they submit their work.)

07: 係呀。

(Yes.)

Interviewer: 咁我哋就去到下一條問題，就係你會點樣形容 ChatGPT 提供 feedback 嘅速度？

(Let's move on to the next question. How would you describe the feedback speed of ChatGPT?)

07: 速度我覺得係幾快嘅，同埋都幾 organise 咗之後先至再俾回應我囉。所以幾好嘅。

(I think it's quite fast and it really does some organisation before delivering a response to us. So, it's quite nice.)

Interviewer: Organise 嘅方面可唔可以描述多少少？點解會覺得 organised 呢？

(Could you describe a bit more in terms of organisation? Why do you think it's organised?)

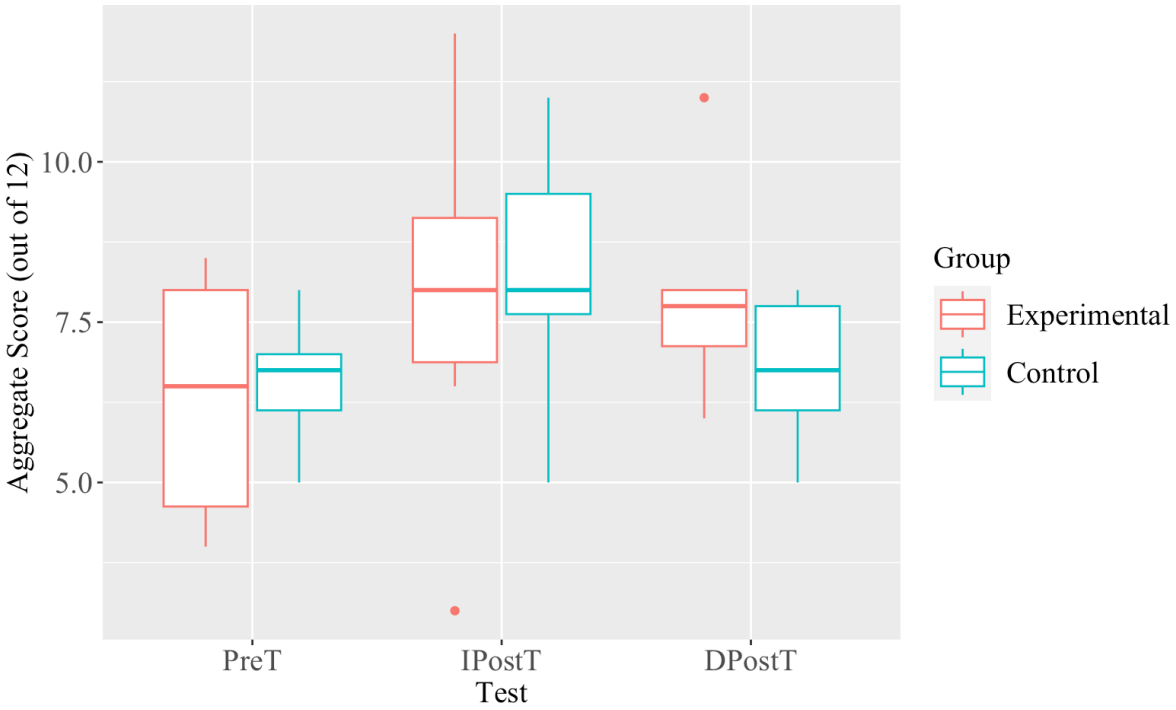
07: 好似話我之前去用 ChatGPT 去搵一個人物傳記咁樣啦。即係人嘅話，就會可能會諗到啲乜嘢就講咗啲乜嘢出嚟啦。但係 ChatGPT 可能會話由佢

Note: Two rounds of coding were conducted, with the first in green and the second in red.

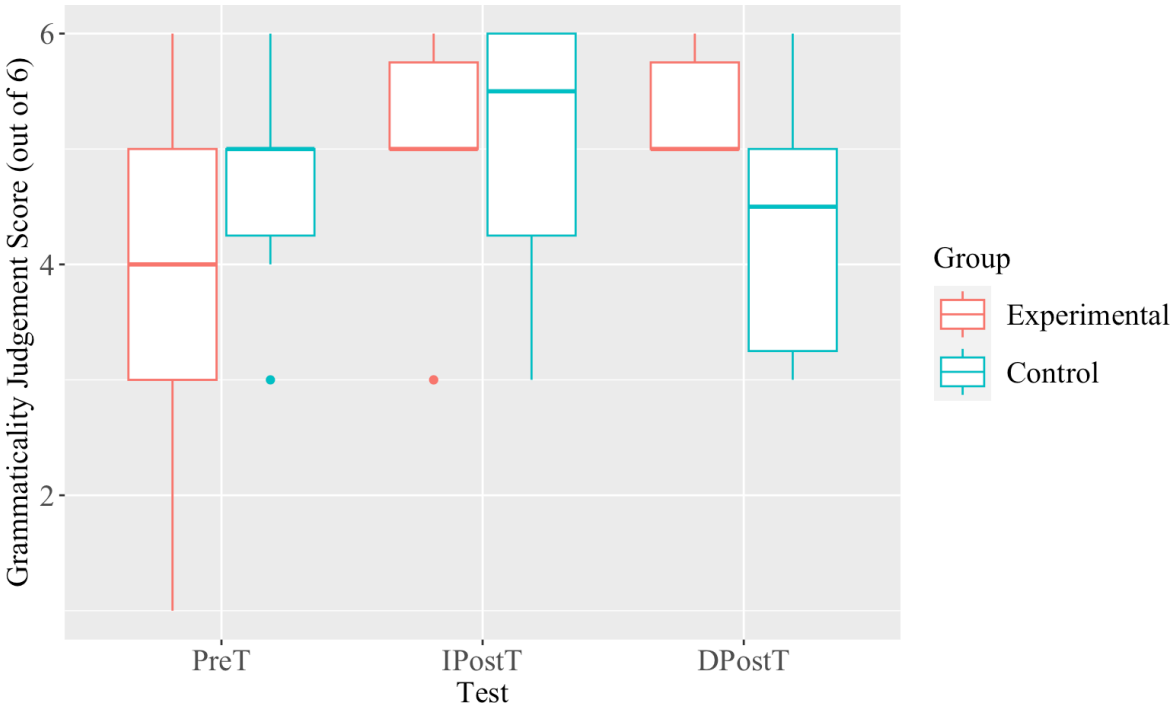
APPENDIX I

Distributions of Class Experiment Between-Group Test Scores

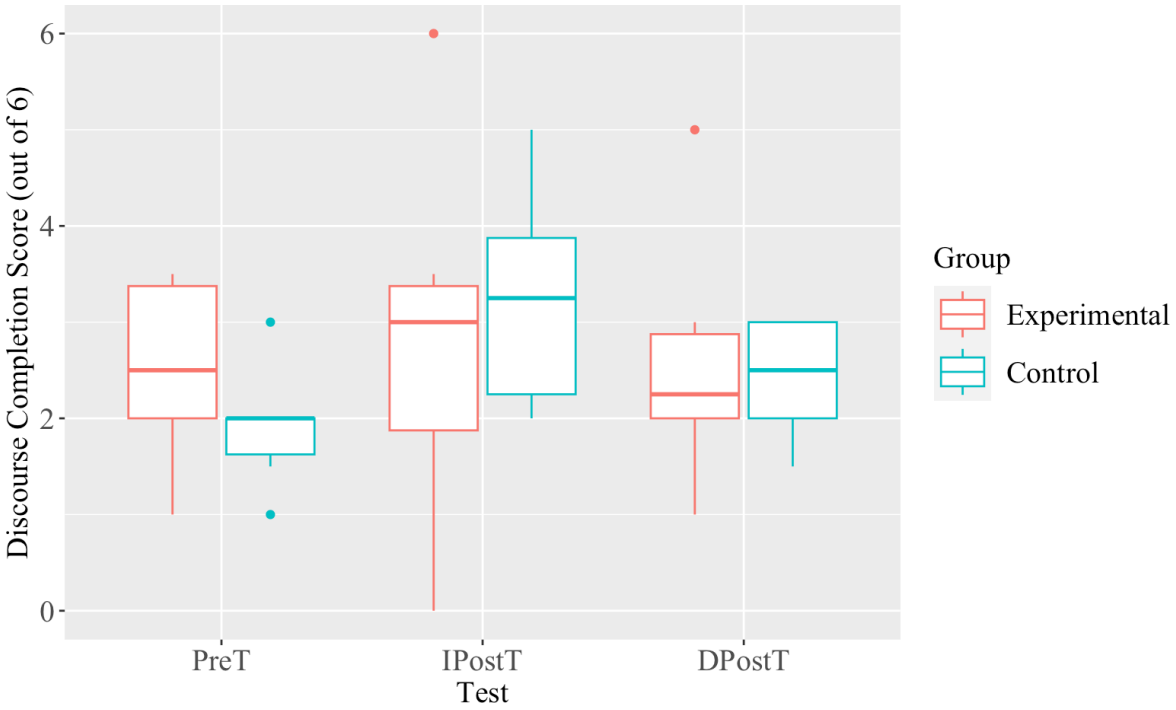
Aggregate Scores



Grammaticality Judgement Scores



Discourse Completion Scores



Investigating Language Attitudes and Identities through Hong Kong Pop Music in the 2020s: A Trilingual Genre

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ENGE 4700: Individual Research Project

Supervised by Prof. Tongle SUN

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement

This individual research project is a perfectly imperfect conclusion to my four years of fruitful university life at The English Department, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Four years ago, I would not have never imagined I could transform my passion in Hong Kong Pop Music into my capstone research through capitalizing on my knowledge and academic sensitivity cultivated with the help of top-notch teachers and mentors. Admittedly overwhelming in the initial stage, this project has lived up to its name, "capstone", as it anchors the end of a life chapter for me and served as a testament to my perseverance, a quality much needed in my upcoming journey in adulthood.

Therefore, I would like to take this chance to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to this project. First, I would like to thank the teaching and administrative staff of the English Department who has provided me with a top-notch learning experience in my past four years of study. Specifically, my project supervisor, Prof. Tongle SUN, has been a massive support with her patience, diligence, and guidance. I can never thank her enough for the motivation, confidence, and inspiration she has filled me with since day one. Meanwhile, I would also like to acknowledge the Department of Anthropology, which equipped me to be a better researcher and observant of the society.

Next, I express my deepest respect and gratefulness to the practitioners in the Hong Kong Pop Music industry, be they singers, composers, lyricists or sound engineers. They persevere at the frontline of the industry to create art that inspires, heals, motivates, and voices out for millions of people in the city, including myself. Also, I thank all my loved ones for their mental support since the commencement of my university study: my partner, my friends, my family, and my fellow seniors at the English Department. Without the each and every one of them, this would not have been possible.

Lastly, I thank myself and the universe.

Abstract

As an intricate music genre that is gradually more trilingual in the 2020s, Cantopop no longer represents Hong Kong for the language choice of its lyrics, but rather, for how it connects with the people and "vocalize" the local cultural identity. In this paper, I propose "Hong Kong Pop", a multilingual music genre that deploys all three dominant languages of the city, namely, Cantonese, English, and Mandarin. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study considers Hong Kong Pop lyrics as both a cultural product and a textual material for critical reflection on Hong Kong people's language attitudes and identities. The study shows that multilingual resources serve stylistic functions in rap music, maximize commercial benefits in dance-pop music, and manifest the cultural and musical upbringing of the artists. In-depth analysis of the interview data offered new insights on Hong Konger's attitudes toward the three languages: Cantonese has remained as the local people's robust cultural identity marker; English has risen beyond a detached sense of professionalism and social prestige, and has become an alternative cultural language of Hong Kongers; Mandarin has obtained higher level of acceptance among local youths. Ultimately, participants embraced the "Hong Kong Pop" genre, and defined it in two converging directions— "for Hong Kong people" and "from Hong Kong people".

List of Tables

1. Introduction

Hailed as the "godfather" of Cantopop, lyricist and scholar James Wong (2003) famously argued that "[e]very generation has its own voice" (p, 182). Echoing with the concept of *shi dai qu* *時代曲* ("song of the time"), Cantopop is long regarded as a powerful symbol of the Hong Kong cultural identity and delivers an "unmistakably Hong Kong style" in different eras (Choi, 1990, p, 539; McIntyre, 2002). With its development into the modern days, Cantopop as an expressive art form continues to intricately connects with the local identity as seen in its prominence during social movements (Lau & Man, 2020). All in all, as summarized by Chu (2019), who borrows Frith (1996)'s idea of music and city, "Cantopop has functioned as a major source of the city's cultural identity by connecting the individual and the social" (para. 1).

According to Lee (1992), the term "Cantopop" was coined in 1974 by Hans Ebert, a writer for the Billboard magazine who first noticed the emergence of the "distinctive, locally produced music in Hong Kong" (as cited in McIntyre, 2002, p, 226). Prior to the coinage, the music genre, was simply addressed domestically as *yuht yuh lauh hahng kuk* *粵語流行曲* ("Cantonese popular music") or *gwangdung go* *廣東歌* ("Cantonese songs") (McIntyre, 2002)[1], which is defined by an intricate combination of standard written Chinese pronounced in Cantonese, and Western melodies (c.f., pentatonic traditional Chinese melodies, a convention in Cantonese Opera). However, the categorization of the Cantopop genre based on language choice has long been blurry and loose. Scholarly attention directed toward the use of English code-switching in Cantopop lyrics, which has been a popular technique since the legendary Leslie Cheung, has not been scarce (e.g., Chan, 2009; Chik, 2010; Luke, 1998). With the rise of "Gen-Z" artists in the 2020s, the use of multilingual resources (including both English and Mandarin) has been elevated to an unprecedent level. These artists, despite not falling into the

[1] For a detailed history on the origin and early development of Cantopop, refer to Wang (2020).

traditional categorization of "Cantopop singers" who perform solely in the city's heritage language, have proved their significance in the popular culture scene with their enormous fanbase and successes in major music chart awards. In view of their prominence, it is valuable to investigate how the multilingual lyrics of their songs reflect Hong Kong people's language attitudes and ultimately deliver a local cultural identity in the 2020s.

Therefore, in this research, I deploy a mixed approach of qualitative methods and textual analysis of song lyrics to first highlight the patterns and unveil the underlying motivations of the use of multilingual resources in Hong Kong Pop. Then, synthesizing interview data and past studies, the study analyzes Hong Kong people's language attitudes toward the use of Cantonese, English, and Mandarin in lyrics. Ultimately, the study invites contemplation on the definition of "Hong Kong Pop".

2. Literature Review

The field of language identities and attitudes research in the Hong Kong context is constantly vitalized by the "fresh and complex" linguistic scene of the city (Lai, 2005, p, 363). The colonial history of Hong Kong creates a diglossic situation with the rulers' language, English, as the H-variety for official communication and formal education, and the local tongue, Cantonese, as the L-variety for everyday vernacular communication (Fisherman, 1967). Borrowing Fasold (1984)'s concept of "double overlapping diglossia", Liu (2018) further capitalizes on his sensitivity on the status dynamics between the "higher" Standard Written Chinese and the "lower" Vernacular Cantonese. The linguistic situation of Hong Kong is further complicated when Putonghua ("Mandarin"), the now prominent lingua franca in Mainland China, "formally introduced into the sociolinguistic setting of Hong Kong" (Lai, 2005, p, 364). and resulted in the city's "subtle transition towards Trilingualism" in the post-handover era (Liu, 2018, p, 195). As the crux of mainstream language education, the "Biliteracy and

Trilingualism" requires students to be proficient in Cantonese, English, and Mandarin in verbal context, as well as to be competent in Written English and Standard Chinese.

The rich fabrics between languages and the multifaceted social reality of Hong Kong have attracted abundant scholarly attention. Earliest studies on Hong Kong language attitudes and identities date back to Pierson et al. (1980) and Pennington and Yue (1994), who adopted both direct and indirect method to investigate students' attitudes toward Chinese and English. Soon after the handover, Axler et al. (1998) replicated similar results, further arguing that English is no longer the "colonizer's language", but the international language that carries substantial instrumental value. Mandarin was first introduced in local language attitude research in Pierson (1994)'s indirect study, which adopt content analysis on students' opinion regarding having Putonghua as a compulsory school subject. Noticing the gradually increasing prominence of Putonghua peri-handover, Hyland's 1997 study was a significant step in Hong Kong language attitude research as it set the earliest model for the majority of present day's research—accounting for all three languages through Likert scale questionnaires. However, his attempt to understand undergraduate students' attitude toward the three languages through five aspects, namely "cultural identity, social, affective and instrumental attitudes and general predictions for language use" (p, 191), was not a flawless one. As summarized by Lai (2005) and Liu (2018), the aforementioned early works on Hong Kong language attitudes mainly revolve around English as the focus, resulting in a lack of sophistication in explicating the language attitudes toward the two Chinese varieties.

A canonical study on Hong Kong language attitude that has attracted replication till the present did not appear until Lai (2005), who adopted Gardner and Lambert (1972)'s education psychology model of integrative and instrumental orientation in his design of the questionnaire. "Integrativeness" is defined as the language learners and users' wish to "tak[e] on characteristics of another cultural/linguistic group" (Gardner, 2001, p, 7), as well as their

"favorable attitudes towards the language community" (Lamb, 2004, as cited in Liu, 2018). Meanwhile, the instrumental orientation refers to practical purposes that the language can achieve, e.g., better opportunities in employment (Lai, 2005; Park and Uhm, 2020). The study found that participants are largely positive in integrative orientation of Cantonese and English while instrumentally, participants are generally positive about all three languages. The results proved that "the status of Cantonese as a regional lingua franca" (instrumental) that "indicat[es] Hong Konger's in-group identity" (integrative) is maintained after the handover (Park and Uhm, 2020, p, 400). Meanwhile, English was found to be more than just a "linguistic capital" and an "international language for wider communication" (Lai, 2005, p, 367) (instrumental), rather, as found in the focus group interviews, it symbolizes the local elite class and the general Hong Kong identity (integrative) as it is widely used and taught in the city. Finally, Lai (2005) argued that Hong Kongers are both emotionally and pragmatically detached from Putonghua, which would have to prove its market value in order to gain popularity.

Replication of similar results as Lai (2005) has been generally successful (e.g., Gao, 2012; Lai, 2011; Li, 2006, etc.) until the recent decade's alterations in political dynamics of the city. While English remains as a robust linguistic capital and Cantonese still connects strongly to the local people's cultural identity in Hong Kong, the pragmatic value of Putonghua is on the rise with China emerging as an international economic power and the influx of mainland Chinese living, working, and studying in Hong Kong (Liu, 2018) However, due to sociopolitical movements over the years, contrasting results have be elicited by Park and Uhm (2020), in which Putonghua scored significantly lower in both orientations caused by the Hong Kong tension. Hansen Edwards (2021) further supplies that English has slowly ascending to become an "authentic language of Hong Kong" as it helps local people to "achiev[e] optimal distinctiveness from and within the PRC" (p, 325). Nonetheless, current literature is inadequate in accurately representing the trilingual Hong Kong people's present language attitudes and

identities for its limited temporal coverage—the above studies only cover up to the end of 2019, and hence could not provide an updated capture of the changes in language attitudes with accordance to the changing sociopolitical circumstances.

Simultaneously a genre of expressive art that is closely connected with the local society and a form of creative planned discourse, Hong Kong Pop lyrics can be deciphered as the construction of the local language and cultural identity (Chan, 2009). While most of the previous language study conducted on Hong Kong Pop lyrics (Chan, 2004, 2009; Chu, 2017; Ng, 2020) focused on the poetic, pragmatic, and commercial functions of deploying English as a form of "creative linguistic technique" (Chik, 2010, p, 510), direct discussion on the issues of language attitudes and identities is surprisingly scarce, granted the genre close connection to the people's cultural identity. Chan (2009) and Lin (2011) converged in interpreting the use of English in Hong Kong Pop as a way to convey an internationalized, English-speaking cosmopolitan identity, which aligns with the local audience's attitude toward English. However, the reductive interpretation is not entirely conclusive as proved in the present study. On the other hand, most of the previous work ignored the growing influence of Mandarin.

3. Methodology

As observed from the previous studies, the most common, if not conventional, method of studying language attitudes builds on Gardner (1985, as cited in Lai, 2005, p, 366) who proposed the measurement of individuals' reactions to "evaluatively worded belief statements" as a way to elicit the internal and hidden perspectives and feelings that people hold (Liu, 2018; Mohajan, 2018;). Yet, as a form of social reality, language attitudes and identities are highly subjective, complicated, context-dependent, and closely intertwine with human behavior, emotion, and experiences (Tong et al., 2012). Thus, quantitative methodologies, despite their larger sample coverage and objectivity, often fail to "account for how the social reality is shaped and maintained" (Mohajan, 2018; Blaikie, 2007, as cited in Rahman, 2017, p, 106).

Intrinsically positivistic, statistical methods might in turn hinder the valuable naturalistic observations and interpretations on the "human minds and actions" that underlie language attitudes and identities (Mohajan, 2018, p, 43; Collins and Stockton, 2018). It lacks the explanatory power of a qualitative approach in unravelling stories and explicating the nuances behind social reality of individuals (Mohajan, 2018).

Therefore, the present study adopts a qualitative approach to understand the nuances that underlie the informants' language attitudes and identities toward Hong Kong Pop lyrics. Through understanding their language use, life circumstances, personal views on the current Hong Kong society, experience with Hong Kong pop music, etc., the study strives to describe the connection between the "lived experience of human beings" and their language attitudes and identities as forms of social reality (Atkinson, 2001, as cited in Mohajan, 2018 p, 24). Five informants were interviewed from late March to early April 2024.

This study present discussions that revolve the central guiding question "How does Hong Kong Pop, a trilingual genre, manifests and constructs language identities?" It aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How are Cantonese, English, and Mandarin used in lyrics of Hong Kong Pop music in the 2020s? What are the motivations behind the language use?
2. What are the attitudes of Hong Kong audience toward the use of Cantonese, English, and Mandarin in lyrics of Hong Kong Pop music? How does it represent local people's cultural identities?
3. How should the genre "Hong Kong Pop" be defined linguistically?

3.1. Participant Selection

Participants are selected based on several prerequisites derived from the current research directions: (1). As the present study's investigation revolves around the genre of Hong Kong Pop, the informants should have considerable familiarity and substantial experience with Hong Kong Pop in recent years to engage in fruitful and updated discussions about the genre in the 2020s scene; (2). To rightfully represent Hong Kong, i.e., the backdrop of this study, and the three dominant languages of the city, the participants are required to have spent majority of their lives in Hong Kong and hold self-evaluated satisfactory level of spoken proficiency of Cantonese, English, and Mandarin; and (3). The participants have received or are receiving tertiary education from a local higher education institute.

The importance of criterium (3) is threefold. First, the currently batch of university students grew up in a post-handover Hong Kong where Mandarin has "companied" them since the commencement of their primary education[2] (Liu, 2018, p, 196), which validates not only their ability to reflect on complex issues regarding languages and identity, but also their proficiency and familiarity with all three languages (Hyland, 1997). Second, university students are often the active participants of social movements, which could have altered their attitudes toward Mandarin (Shek, 2020; Wang, 2023; Zhu, 2019). Lastly, in a youth-dominant domain like university, popular culture "generates basic social norms" and "social solidarity" for students (Kidd, 2014, p, 11-12). Therefore, university students are often deemed as the entertainment industry's marketing target and major customer and can well represent the majority of Hong Kong Pop audience (Eyes4Research, 2023).

The above selection criteria are obeyed during the participant selection process and potential participants are ask to self-report for any discrepancies with the prerequisites.

[2] Note that since 1998, Putonghua ("Mandarin") has been included in the Hong Kong Secondary School Core Syllabus (Education Bureau, 2012). In addition, since 2008, primary and secondary schools have gradually started to adopt "Putonghua as the medium of instruction for teaching the Chinese Language subject (PMIC)" to improve the Mandarin spoken proficiency of students (Government of HKSAR, 2022).

Selected items of the survey result are summarized as follows[3]:

Table 1

Personal Information, Language Habit, and Experience with Hong Kong Pop of the Interview Participants[4]

Informant (Initials)	Age and Gender	Education Level	Language Use (Percentage of language use; Main domains of language use)	Hong Kong Pop Music Listening Habit (Frequency per week; Time Spent per week)	Top 3 Musical Genre Most Listen to (in descending order)
Chan, R.	21; M	Bachelor's Degree	Cantonese: 41-60%; DComm., Ent. English: 41-60%; Edu. & Work Mandarin: 0-20%; n/a	Every day; Above 9 hours	Pop, Rock / Pop-Rock, Soft Ballad
Fung, J.	21; M	Bachelor's Degree	Cantonese: 41-60%; DComm., Ent. English: 41-60%; Ent., Edu. & Work Mandarin: 0-20%; n/a	3 to 4 days; 3 to 5 hours	Pop, Rock / Pop-Rock, Hip-hop / Rap
Lee, P.	21; F	Bachelor's Degree	Cantonese: 41-60%; DComm., Ent. English: 41-60%; Edu. & Work Mandarin: 0-20%; n/a	Every day; 5 to 7 hours	Pop, Rock / Pop-Rock, Hip-hop / Rap
Lai, T.	21; F	Master's Degree	Cantonese: 41-60%; DComm., Ent. English: 41-60%; DComm., Ent., Edu. & Work Mandarin: 0-20%; n/a	Every day; 5 to 7 hours	Pop, Rock / Pop-Rock, Soft Ballad
Li, E.	23; F	Bachelor's Degree; In employment	Cantonese: 61-80%; DComm. English: 0-20%; Edu. & Work Mandarin: 0-20%; Edu. & Work	Every day; 3 to 5 hours	Pop, Soft Ballad, Rock / Pop-rock

3.2. Research Instrument

An online survey is administered via Google Form (Appendix A). The survey comprises three parts: Part 1 collects the basic personal information of the interviewees; Part 2 concerns the participants' language experience with the three dominant languages in Hong Kong. In this section of six questions, the informants reflect on their use of Cantonese, English, and Mandarin in terms of the contexts and frequencies they spend using the respective languages; In Part 3, participants review their experience with Hong Kong Pop music and provide information regarding their listening habit.

[3] Except the group of Chan and Fung, all other participants were interviewed individually.
[4] Abbreviations: Daily Communication (DComm.); Entertainment (Ent.); Education and Work (Edu. & Work)

The rationale behind the survey design is multifold. Firstly, the collected personal information in Part 1 could possibly be materials for comparisons to elicit some patterns regarding the experience with 2020s Hong Kong Pop of local audience of different age, gender, and education level. Secondly, the frequencies, time spent, and age of receiving voluntary exposure to Hong Kong Pop could be marshalled to serve as referential indicators of the interviewees' expertise and familiarity with the genre, hence providing creditability to the interview outcome. Lastly, the survey invites the participants to review on their recent listening habit and provide artists and musical genres that frequent their daily consumption of Hong Kong Pop, which can engage them in actively recalling their knowledge and recent experience with Hong Kong Pop.

Referencing qualitative research methodologies from other academic disciplines like social sciences and anthropology, the interview is semi-structured and it loosely follows the interview protocol (Appendix B), i.e., rather than direct interrogatives, the questions are careful designed to provide directions for the interviewees' self-reflection and inter-interviewees discussion.

Part 1 and 2 of the interviews, alongside examining the participants' understanding of the concepts, attempt to encourage them to engage in self-reflection on their cultural identification and experiences with the three languages, which are closely intertwined and could be indicatively connected to their views on Hong Kong Pop in Part 3 (Hansen Edwards, 2021). In Part 3, a guide discussion on various interconnected aspects of Hong Kong Pop, namely, language use, artistic concerns, artists' personal profile, etc., is carried out. It elicits and facilitates in elaborating how the participants' language identities and attitudes as local consumers of the music genre connects with their experience and viewpoints on the new trend of linguistic choice in Hong Kong Pop music in the 2020s

3.3. Data Collection Procedures

Upon completion of the survey, participants are automatically regarded as agreeing to participate in the interview session. Further verbal consent was elicited from them prior to the interview. The interviews were conducted via the online video chatting application, Zoom, for the sake of convenience and flexibility. The interviews start with a background introduction executed by the interviewer. To guarantee participants are in alignment with the current research questions and context, the research motivation, i.e., the observations made on recent Hong Kong Pop trends, are revealed. Meanwhile, the concepts of language identities and attitudes are illustrated with the interviewer's personal example to accommodate informants who are not familiar with them. Both before and after the discussion, participants are asked the recurring question, "How do you personally define the genre 'Hong Kong Pop'?", as an attempt to elevate the discussion onto a meta-genre discussion that investigate the sophisticated nature of the genre per se and the way it erects as an iconic part of the Hong Kong cultural identity. The interviews were substantial in length, ranging from 18 minutes to 68 minutes.

3.4. Data Analysis

Audio recordings of the interviews are then processed into transcription for critical textual analysis. Content analysis (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009) is deployed for this purpose. With close reference to the research questions and directions designed for the interview protocol, segments of the transcripts involving converging themes are grouped into thematic categories for further cross-case analysis, which aims to identify patterns, disputes, and connections that arise in the data pool. Aiming to investigate the interview data exhaustively and systematically, a bottom-up coding scheme is constructed (Appendix C).

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, interview data are analyzed and presented with close adherence to the research questions—it will first highlight the patterns and investigate the underlying motivations observed from the deployment of multilingual resources. Then, through reflecting on the interviewee's perceptions of the use of Cantonese, English, and Mandarin in Hong Kong Pop lyrics respectively, it explicates the embedded language attitude and identity of Hong Kongers with comparison to previous studies. The discussion is supported by abundant excerpts of interview transcriptions and lyrics of songs performed by artists that are either mentioned in the interviews or indicated by the participants in the pre-interview survey as their most-frequently listened artists.

4.1. Multilingual Resources: Patterns and Motivations

Concluding from the interview data with close references to recent work of Hong Kong Pop, multilingual resources are often utilized: first, in rap music for their stylistic function; second, in dance-pop music for its commercial value; and third, by local "Gen-Z" singer-songwriters who have a westernized background.

4.1.1. Stylistic Orientation in Rap Music

"…English and Mandarin appear a lot in rap songs, like Tyson Yoshi's. There's also rap verse in MC's. Like parts of it." (Lai, interview data)

When asked to make observations on the patterns of the use of the English language in recent year's local pop scene, all of the interviewees instantly pointed out its prevalence in rap verses in pop songs. Although there is currently no well-documented account of the strategic practice of inserting rap verses in pop songs, it is a reasonable deduction to anchor its origin in the U.S. As the two most dominant genres in the American market, the Pop and Hip-hop industry are million-dollar businesses and famous cradles to many musicians' stardom. By integrating the two, i.e., introducing a "rap interlude" into the song's pop matrix, commercial

success can be achieved as the song can benefit from the popularity of artists of different musical realms. According to music journalists Hugh McIntyre (2015), the tactic was particularly proved to be fruitful in 2014, as it occupied 4 spots in the top 10 on the *Billboard Year-End Hot 100 Chart.* This marketing strategy was soon transferred to the equally commercialized K-Pop industry. Under the industrial model of "factory line production", K-Pop follows a certain formular to commercial success, in which a rap verse performed by a member who is assigned the team role of an "idol rapper", are crucial ingredients (Song, 2019; Fiigaard, 2023). With its transnational cultural influence and the historical "Cantopop-Kpop media ecologies", such tactic has manifested in recent years' Hong Kong Pop music, as seen in the following example mentioned by Interviewee Fung (Liew and Sun, 2020, p, 40).

(1) *世一 (The One For U)* (2023)
Singer: Michael Cheung
Composers: Derrick Sepnio / Fergus Chow / Nick Wong
Lyricists: Wyman Wong, Young Hysan (Rap Lyrics)
(Excerpt: Rap Interlude)

1	Never needed the cameras. Never needed the praise
2	Only thing that I wanted, was when you calling my name
3	Never needed this money
4	Okay maybe a little, just so you can look fly. But you make it look so simple
5	Long as I got you wit' me, I don't need to stress
6	Don't need no accolade to tell the world that I'm blessed
7	'Cause baby you're the best, come take me as your trophy
8	Show me off to your friends and look at me when you're lonely
9	And if this cold world too cold for you to take a breath
10	And if this pain inside of your heart weighing on your chest
11	I'll take this coat off me and wrap it 'round your dress
12	'Cause who am I? Baby you know

For both K-Pop and Hong Kong Pop, English is often chosen as the language for the rap interludes adjacent to the Pop matrix written in the respective ethnic dialects, despite the unneglectable market size of Korean Rap and Cantonese Rap in the domestic markets. Borrowing Luke (1998)'s concept of "orientational motivation" of code-switching, the tactic is

deployed as an artistic method to connect with the cultural origin of the music genre, i.e., the African American community. Such motivation is revealed by the prevalence of features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in Excerpt 1. Grammatically, copula deletion can be found in Line 2, 9, and 10 (e.g., "*when you [are] calling my name"*) while double negation presents in Line 6 (*"Don't need no…"*) (Kim, 2021; Sidnell, n.d.). Diction-wise, the colloquial American expression, "looking fly", is found in Line 4. Lastly, the most iconic feature in both General American English (GAmE) and AAVE, i.e., ellipsis, manifests syntactically in Line 1, 2, 3 (leaving out the subjects), 5 (*"[As] Long As…"*), and phonologically in Line 5, 7, 11, 12 (e.g., /wɪð/ to /wɪt/). With careful manipulation of both lyric-writing and performance, the artist and the production team demonstrate their sensitivity and respect of the black-dominant hip-hop history and culture, hence achieving a sense of "conditional authenticity" as per Song (2019). The artist therefore "channels" the African American culture into his own advantages, gaining the authority to both partake in the rap genre and present a foreign musical element to the domestic audience.

By the same token, English is also used stylistically to portray an alternate artistic persona of the artists. In large aligned with Luke (1998), all informants agree that singing in English establishes the artists' westernized and international image. Informant Lai also describes singing in English as being "popstar and cool", while Chan raised the example of the local boyband Mirror, highlighting the strategic reasons revealed by the discrepancies between their language choice and their absence of an "English-speaking background" (e.g., studying abroad). On the other hand, while Mandarin was comparatively less considered in the discussion regarding the stylistic functions of multilingual resources, Informant Lai describes singing in Mandarin as sounding "Casanova and free-spirited", which can be attributed to its connection with Taiwanese Mandopop as addressed in later sections.

4.1.2. Commercial Orientation: The Case of Mirror's Dance-Pop Music

Secondly, it is impossible to undermine the communicative value of multilingual resources, which attracts artists for the commercial potential it entails. Similar to any other product of popular culture, Hong Kong Pop as a form of pop music is defined by its ability to "survive commercially" without any form of subsidy, which is otherwise crucial to "art music" like Cantonese opera (Manuel, 1988, as cited in McIntyre et al., 2002, p, 239). It is thus impossible to deny the fact that Hong Kong Pop is a form of expressive art that is intrinsically and "unabashedly commercial" (Chow, 2007, p, 2). At the same time, while acknowledging the local entertainment industry's heyday in the 1980s and 90s when Hong Kong was the trans-Asia cultural center (Liew and Sun, 2020), Informant Fung and Lee also admit the reduced influence of Hong Kong Cantonese cultural export in the modern days. Sharing the same awareness of the limitations of Cantonese as a market-oriented language as well as the commercial nature of Hong Kong Pop, all participants found no difficulty in converging to agree that:

"Language choice is related to marketing. Because [if the artists add in English and Mandarin,] they can promote the music to Malaysia, Taiwan, the Mainland, and Hong Kong locally as well."
(Lai, interview data)

By embracing multilingual resources, i.e., adopting English, the international trading language, and Mandarin, the lingua franca for Chinese communities globally, artists can enlarge their scope of audience to a transregional level (Chik, 2010). As mentioned by Informant Lai, the clear intention to promote their music to the proximal Chinese speaking countries underlies the artists' language choice of using Mandarin in their work. On a wider level, the commercial tactic is further proved successful when boyband Mirror's international popularity gained them the unprecedent opportunity to be featured on Fox5 New York and CNN in late April—a feat that has never been achieved by any Hong Kong artists prior to

them—despite the domestic internet debate over their legitimacy to represent Hong Kong Pop music[5]. All in all, the strategy to choose Mandarin and English over the less spoken ethnic tongue of Cantonese on a global context reveals the artists' ambitions to strive for "artistic recognition and financial gain" from not merely the domestic market (Chow, 2007, p, 5).

"...They (members of Mirror) always repeat English phrases in the chorus to highlight the theme...like Anson Lo's 'Money'. It is annoying but it does get in your head" (Fung, interview data)

As implied by Informant Fung, another pattern of the deployment of multilingual resources in Hong Kong Pop lyrics that can be interpreted commercially is the artists' tendencies to use English in the "hook line" of the song. According to Covach (2005), in songs that feature a verse-chorus format, which is conventional to works of Hong Kong Pop, the chorus is automatically the focus. To further signify the transition, a "hook", defined as a short riff, passage, or phrase that incorporates the song's main motif, usually kickstarts the chorus to "catch the ear of the listener" (Covach, 2005, p, 71; Davidson, 1996). While the artistic technique of writing a hook line has long been internalized in Hong Kong Pop, the trend to execute it in English was not popularized before the emergence of Mirror, as per my informants.

(2) *MONEY* (2023)
Singer: Anson Lo (Mirror)
Composers: Hanif Hitmanic Sabzevari/ Dennis Deko Kordnejad / Jeremy G / Daniel Kim
Lyricists: Jackson Lam Bo, Anson Lo (Rap Lyrics)
(Excerpt: First Chorus)

1 Money, money, money, money, money, money
2 It's the name of the game
3 Money, money, money, money, money, money
4 有 勇 氣 也 算 貴 氣
jau5 jung5 hei3 jaa5 syun3 gwai3 hei3
"Having courage also counts as noble demeanor"

[5] Note that all the interview sessions were executed by early-April.

In the example mentioned by Fung., the apparent hook line— "*Money, money, money, money, money, money*", recurs four times in each chorus, to an extent that some find it "annoying". Admittedly, the technique can be understood as an artistic method to highlight the theme of the song, which interrogates the complicated relationship between humanity and the pursue of wealth in a capitalist world, by emphasizing the expressive meaning and elated emotion of the persona (Cruse, 2011; Lee, 2004). However, as a song of dance-pop, *Money* models its highly commercialized Korean counterparts in adopting recuring English hook lines supported by a sudden transition to upbeat music and signature dance motion (Kim, 2020). As such, the code-switched English phrases play the role of a "textualization cue", alongside the musical and visual cue, to further indicate transitions and add emphasis on the catchy chorus (Mays, 2013). Similar with Ng (2020)'s analysis on code-switching in Hong Kong television drama theme song, the commercial purpose "to hook and retain viewers" underlies the pragmatic decision to deploy English in the hook line.

4.1.3. Zuk Sing: Driven by Influence

Lastly, aside from musical genre and lyrical segments, interesting patterns of deploying multilingual resources are also observed with accordance to the artists' personal profile as per the informants. Synthesizing interview data and research result on the artists' background, their language choice is concluded to be driven by two main sources of influence, namely, their previous life history and musical inspiration.

Addressed by some of the informants as *zuk sing* ("竹升")[6], the generation of younger artists have a common background of studying aboard or growing up in English-dominant linguistic environment. This is further confirmed through background research on the names that frequented among the interviewees when they were asked to give examples of artists with

[6] In Cantonese, *zuk sing* ("bamboo pole") is a colloquial and metaphorical way to describe overseas Chinese person who is more strongly identified with the Western culture. As bamboo poles are hollow in the stem, it is compared with Chinese people who do not have Traditional Chinese values on the inside. This term may or may not be derogatory.

an “English-speaking background”. Consulting mainly Wikipedia, which references sources like the media’s interviews with artists and their social media platforms, the education background of the mentioned artists is summarized as below:

Table 2

Education Background of Selected Hong Kong Pop Artists

Artist	Highest Education Level Attained
Gareth T.	Bachelor of Music, Berklee College of Music (U.S.A)
Jay Fung	Bachelor of Commerce in Marketing, University of Alberta (Canada)
Michael Cheung	High School Graduation (Canada)
Moon Tang	Bachelor of Arts in Design, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Hong Kong)
Serrini	Doctor of Philosophy in Hong Kong Studies, The University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong)
Tyson Yoshi	Bachelor of Arts in Interior Architecture, University of Brighton (U. K.)

As most of the artists mentioned all lived a substantial period of time in western countries and have attained higher education, it is intuitive to connect the increase in usage and exposure to English with the language becoming an accessible communicative tool for them, even in the creative process of songwriting.

“Gareth T. grew up listening to African American R & B music. I guess that’s why he sounds so natural singing in English and R & B.” (Li, interview data)

“...western pop influences local composer and lyricists a lot.” (Chan, interview data)

Moreover, aside from expanding the artists’ linguistic repertoire, living experience in an English-speaking environment, despite the absence of direct connection with active culture contact, entails a higher chance of exposure to western culture. According to my interviewees and research findings, the hypothesis is particularly applicable to the artists mentioned. For example, echoing Informant Li, in a 2022 interview with local magazine HBX, the now 24 years old rising star Gareth T. revealed how he was first enchanted by African American R&B and Hip-hop music when a Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) at his secondary school introduced to him Michael Jackson and Eminem. The two soon became his musical inspiration, enlightened him to pursue a career in pop music, and most importantly, shaped his present

music style (Hypebeast, 2022). Hence, English might be more proximal to them when they are recreating these music genres in Hong Kong.

The indirect influence of musical inspiration on artists' language choice can also be observed in the use of Mandarin in Hong Kong Pop lyrics. Informant Li and Lai pointed out the influence of Mandarin Soft-Rap on Tyson Yoshi, who made his debut in Taiwan and extensively utilizes Mandarin in his work. This echoes with Lai's impression on singing in Mandarin—sounding "Casanova and free-spirited", noting that romantic themes are often featured in the Taiwan originated genre.

"Music is an expressive art, so the most important thing is that artists express themselves genuinely...And that's also why some of them chose not to sign with record labels" (Chan, interview data)

In his reflection on the nature of music, Informant Chan perhaps does not only elicit Hong Kong Pop audience's expectations from their favorite artists, but also, the motivation behind the artists' choice to deploy multilingual resources, i.e., to express their sentiments and thoughts in the most genuine and comfortable languages for themselves. To further elaborate himself, he further pointed out another similarity among these Gen-Z artists, namely, except Jay Fung, they were all independent artists before signing to major record labels after rising to their fame. Such phenomenon is counter-intuitive to the industry's convention, in which amateur musicians with potential rise to their stardom with the labels' support after being scouted through different format of auditions. Without the pressure to compromise with the labels' commercial goals and intervention in the creative process, these singer-songwriters (except Michael Cheung) enjoy the freedom in expressing themselves through their music and lyrics, in which more experimental use of multilingual resources is recorded.

4.2. Language Attitude and Identity Reflected through Hong Kong Pop

After outlining the contour and the underlying motivations of the use of multilingual resources in Hong Kong Pop lyrics in the 2020s, the current section strives to dive deeper to explore the language attitudes, identities, and ideologies embedded, reflected, and represented by the three languages in lyrics. Building on the concept of sociocultural identity, which is the point of convergence between the two research themes herein—pop music and language attitude, the present study continues to bridge interview data and Hong Kong Pop song lyrics as textual materials for critical analysis. While making sensitive comparisons with language attitude research in recent years, it ultimately attempts to unveil Hong Kong people's language attitudes and identities toward Cantonese, English, and Mandarin respectively in the post-Covid era.

4.2.1. Cantonese: The Robust Cultural Identity Marker

At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked to describe their self-perceived cultural identity, then rank the three languages in terms of importance to themselves and to Hong Kong Pop. The results are summarized as follow:

Table 3

Summary of Interview Data for Part 1 Interview Questions

Informant (Initials)	Self-perceived Cultural Identities	Importance of Cantonese, English, and Mandarin to	
		The Interviewees	Hong Kong Pop
Chan, R.	Hong Konger	Cantonese > English > Mandarin	Cantonese > English > Mandarin
Fung, J.	Hong Konger	Cantonese > English > Mandarin	Cantonese > English > Mandarin
Lee, P.	Hong Konger	Cantonese > English = Mandarin	Cantonese > English = Mandarin
Lai, T.	Chinese	Cantonese = English > Mandarin	Cantonese > English = Mandarin
Li, E.	Hong Konger	Cantonese > Mandarin > English	Cantonese > Mandarin > English

Noting that all of the informants are born and bred in Hong Kong, the results of the Part 1 interview are almost readily predictable—Majority of participants identify as Hong Konger and unanimously ranked Cantonese as the most important language both to (1) themselves and to (2) Hong Kong Pop. The reasons behind the results of (1) and its close resemblance in (2),

as explained by the informants, are intuitive and succinct. Cantonese is the native ethnic language in Hong Kong, and it is the mostly used language for the majority of the local Chinese population owing to its rooted status as the lingua franca for intragroup communications, as confirmed in Table 1 (Lai, 2005). Additionally, Informant Lee pointed out that the sociocultural importance and distinctiveness of Cantonese to the city lies in the combination of Cantonese in the verbal mode and Traditional Chinese in the written mode, which is exclusive to Hong Kong. Therefore, with its proximity to Hong Kongers' daily life and its status as the "distinctive marker" of the place, the cultural identity, and hence the music genre (Fung), it is effortless to recognize Cantonese as the first priority for Hong Kong Pop.

Additionally, despite the bilingualism and the equally frequent use of English in Hong Kong, all informants did not hesitate to address their emotional attachment exclusive to Cantonese. Aligning with Harris et al. (2006), the participants in this study agreed that Cantonese, as their first language, exclusively represents their personal and private self, and therefore is associated with "greater emotional arousal" as compared to English (p, 257). The personal importance of Cantonese in the sentimental aspect can be readily generalized to its importance to Hong Kong Pop, which is a form of expressive art that serves as a vivid embodiment and reflection of the consumers' emotions and identity as per Informant Chan and Li.

"There are some words or phrases that only Hong Kongers can understand. Or some patterns of words." (Fung, interview data)

When asked to illustrate how they echo with Cantonese songs, Informant Fung explains that the linguistic familiarity of Cantonese lyrics is the most prominent factor that establishes and sustains his empathetic connection with the songs. In the same part of discussion, both Informant Fung and Lai mentioned the 2023 Winner of the Golden Ultimate Female Singer, Panther Chan, whom the latter describe as "the most local among the current generation of

artists" for the absence of English and Mandarin in most of her work. Thus, her 2021 single *我想和你好好的 (I Wanna Be With You)* is chosen to illustrate this point.

(3) *我想和你好好的 (I Wanna Be With You)* (2021)
Singer: Panther Chan
Composers: Panther Chan, Perry Lau
Lyricists: Panther Chan
(Excerpt: Second Pre-chorus)

1 沉 鬱 的 愛 人 誰 想 吻
cam4 wat1 dik1 oi3 jan4 seoi4 soeng2 man5
"Who wants to kiss a melancholic lover?"

2 辛 苦 與 我 繼 續 行 是 愛 還 是 責 任
san1 fu2 jyu5 ngo5 gai3 zuk6 hang4 si6 ngoi3 waan4 si6 zaak3 jam6
"Continuing to persevere with me, is it love or responsibility?"

3 誰 可 一 世 遭 軟 禁 都 不 轉 身
seoi4 ho2 jat1 sai3 zou1 jyun5 gam3 dou1 bat1 zyun2 san1
"Who can endure lifelong house arrest without turning away?"

While Fung failed to provide examples ad hoc during the interview to precisely explain his definition of the *"words or phrases"* and *"patterns of words"* that can only be understood by the local audience, his notion of "linguistic familiarity" could be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, the sense of proximity is contributed by the use of Cantonese phrases that achieve intertextuality with other local cultural product. In this case, the rhetoric "*是愛還是責任*" ("*is it love or responsibility*") is an intriguing cultural reference to the local internet meme "*係愛定係責任呀？*"[7] that went viral among Hong Kong netizens in 2018. The allusion to a vulgar and comedic out-of-context reference in a melancholy, aside from intentionally sparking disharmony to attract attention, establishes connection with the listener by building on the

[7] On 7th June, 2018, Hong Kong was hit by Tropical Storm Ewiniar. In a video filmed at a local construction site, the cameraperson asks the middle-aged construction worker, "年輕人，究竟有咩動力驅使你喺呢個暴雨下工作呀？係愛吖？定係責任呀？" ("Young man, what motivates you to work in this heavy rain? Is it love? Or is it responsibility?"). The worker then replies with a grin after a short silence, "係窮呀！屌你個閪！" ("It's poverty! Fuck your cunt!"). The video, reflecting the living reality of grassroot Hong Kong people in a vulgar and comedic, soon took over the internet and attracted numerous derivative works. Link to the original video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MeYHPoSmLms

assumption on shared cultural knowledge (Chan, 2009). Borrowing Newton et al. (2022)'s concept of "bonding icon", the listeners can cultivate a sense of belonging and realize their Cantonese in-group identity through successful decoding of the line.

Secondly, "*patterns of words*" can be understood as word choice and word combinations that are exclusive to the Cantonese dialect. This is best illustrated by the verb phrase "*繼續行*" ("*continue to walk* (*persevere*)") in Line 2, where the persona regretfully interrogates the reasons behind his/her ex-partner's decision to continue the unhealthy relationship. In Cantonese, with contextual support, the verb "行" ("walk") can carry the metaphorical meaning of enduring and persevering through difficult situation, as in walking through a rugged road. The implicit meaning is further strengthened when a sense of continuity to the action of walking is supplied, as in "繼續行" ("continue to walk*")*. In contrast, in Mandarin, the same meaning can only be achieved through the alternative "走" (walk; leave; go), preferably coupled with the auxiliary direction, as in "走下去". Despite still carrying the meaning of "walk", the instinctive interpretation of the word "行" in the Mandarin context would be the affirmative exclamation / adjective, i.e., "okay; fine", as in "xíng". Similar instances where nuanced discrepancies between the two varieties of the Chinese language is effective in erecting the distance away from the mainland and toward a distinctive Hong Kong linguistic identity.

"Even it is a minority language, Cantonese still has its attractiveness. We can use Cantonese to reach the international market like K-pop...Or like what Leslie Cheung did in the past." (Interview Data, Lee)

In conclusion, on account of its status as the native language of Hong Kong, its unique linguistic features, and hence, the emotional values it carries for the local people, Cantonese in Hong Kong Pop lyrics is a rightful representation of Hong Kong people's cultural identity. As evident in Informant Lee's loyal and ambitious remark on Cantonese as a transregional carrier

of cultural export, Cantonese is welcomed by the local people as an internal medium connecting the local people and an external representation of the domestic music genre as well as the city's own popular culture. While local Cantonese pop music remains as a steadfast icon of Hong Kong culture (Chu, 2024), Hong Konger's language attitude toward Cantonese as revealed through their reaction to its use in Hong Kong Pop lyrics in large aligns with previous studies—After the closure of the 2019 Political Movement, when the awareness of a Hong Kong identity surged to an unprecedent level, Cantonese's status as "the authentic language symbolic of an assumed Hong Kong identity" is unshaken (Hansen Edwards, 2021, p, 325). Furthermore, as illustrated above, it sustained its function as the heritage language that retains "sociocultural solidarity and [] in-group identity" since the colonial era (Lai, 2011; Wang and Ladegaard, 2008)

4.2.2. English: Beyond Professionalism

As aforementioned, English has long rooted its prominent presence not only in the society, but also in Cantopop since the "golden era" in the 80s. Hence, aligning with the study's prediction, all five informants recognize English as a legitimate language to be deployed in Hong Kong Pop lyrics. However, the level of acceptance toward English varies among participants due to different standards on 1. The proportion between English and Cantonese lyrics, which will be covered in later sections; and 2. The artists' performance and the general musical aesthetics. In this part of the interview, Informant Chan particularly emphasizes on the complex essence of pop music, that is, the delicate interplay of artistic textual design of lyrics and the artists' ability to "perform" the lyrics, which is equally crucial in our discussion on language. His viewpoint is echoed during the interview which similar keywords like "smoothness", "delivery", "language proficiency" and "pronunciation" were recorded in the interviews when participants were asked to describe a good design of English lyrics in Hong Kong Pop with examples. Intriguingly, drawing from the interview data, alongside replying to

the question positively by providing exemplary "performers" of English lyrics like Jay Fung (Chan and Lee) and Gareth T. (Li), three informants (Chan, Fung, and Lee) also responded negatively and convergingly used (particular members of) Mirror as examples:

(4) *Elevator* (2022)
Singer: Edan Lui (Mirror)
Composers: Daniel Kim / Jhen F / Mr Danny /Ethan Su
Lyricists: T-Rexx
(Excerpt: First Chorus)

1 Bala bala ba bala ba ba
2 Elevator Elevator
3 心 越 急 越 煩 問 題 越 難 拆
sam1 jyut6 gap1 jyut6 faan4 man6 tai4 jyut6 naan4 caak3
"The more anxious the heart is, the more difficult the problem is to solve"

(5) *Rumours* (2023)
Singer: Mirror
Composers: Ludwig Lindell / Chris Meyer
Lyricists: Ludwig Lindell / Chris Meyer
(Excerpt: First Chorus)

1 Cuz I think that you've heard
2 Rumo-rumo-rumo-Rumours

In his account of *Elevator* (4), Informant Chan highlighted that the artist's pronunciation of the hook phrase "elevator" is "unpleasant". With a close review of the artist's performance on streaming platforms, it is confirmed that the informant was referring to how Edan Lui might have morphed /t/ in the final syllable into /l/, i.e., /ˈɛlɪveɪtə/ as /ˈɛlɪveɪlə/. Drawing from theories of phonological processes, regressive complete assimilation, a common phenomenon in rapid speech of non-native English speakers, is likely the cause for the abnormal output. In another instance, Chan also pointed out two common features of Hong Kong English (HKE) that are manifested in the performance of *Rumours* (5)—In Line 1, "*think*" (/θɪŋk/) is produced as "fink" ("fɪŋk") while "*rumours*" (/ˈruːməz/) is pronounced as "wumas" (/ˈwuːməs/) in Line 2. Both phenomena are deduced to be the results of the absence of equivalent consonants /θ/ and /r/ in the Cantonese phonological inventory. From his

perspectives, these discrepancies in articulation with native speech occur as "disturbances" to his appreciation of the songs. Informant FUNG echoed by adding that the "forceful" use of English hook phrases in chorus (refer to Section 4.1.2) "annoys" the audience as the artists are not delivering messages and sentiments in their most comfortable medium. This as well exposes the unsatisfactorily executed motive to reach larger markets by singing in English. This is further supported when Informant Fung clarified:

"*It is the delivery that matters. As I remember, Serrini didn't study aboard. But since she has the language proficiency, she has the capability and option to express herself naturally in all three languages.*" (Fung, interview data)

From the above, we can further confirm that the performers' language proficiency, verbal fluency and accuracy are the main judging criteria when audience appreciate the presence of English in Hong Kong Pop. Interestingly, such pursuit can be connected to the personal language experience of the interviewees. Echoing Lai (2005)' results, the pre-interview questionnaire of the present study (Table 1) confirms that English has continued to retain its function as the language for education and work, which are the domains that requires professionalism and proficiency. The phenomenon of Hong Kong Pop consumers transferring their expectation for accurate language use from their daily lives in the local diglossic society to their appraisal of music reflects that the English language still maintain its status as the language for the professionals and elite class (Evans, 2011). Similarly, the audience's rejection of HKE (as in the case of Mirror) and appreciation of "authentic native English" (as in the case of the *zuk sing* artists) proves that Hong Kong is still at the "nativisation" stage of language development where the people have a strong exonormative orientation to concede the authority to classify language norm to the western native speakers (Sewell, Luk, 2010). All in all, reflected through the audience's attitude toward the use of English in Hong Kong Pop, the

language is in large still associated with intelligence, higher level of education and social status (Finzel, 2013).

However, while serving as the pragmatic "linguistic capital" it still is, a shifting trend to recognize English as a growing representation of a Hong Kong cultural identity has been observed in the present study. Except for Informant Lai, who grew up in a highly internationalized social circle, the other four informants expressed that English is "less personal" and "external" to them as they only use it for its communicative functions. Yet, despite the emotional detachment from English, all of them agree that English-as-matrix songs can be classified as works of Hong Kong Pop. Though not as prominent as Cantonese, their heritage language, they still see English as a valid representation of the popular culture and cultural identity of Hong Kong. This coincides with Hansen Edwards (2021)' verdict of English as the new, alternative "authentic language of Hong Kong" (p, 325). Additionally, in the same paper, the linguist concluded that English has developed its new role for Hong Kongers to distance themselves linguistically and culturally from the mainland Chinese. According to Table 4, Hansen Edwards' findings can potentially be generalized for the case of Chan and Fung, who prioritize English to Mandarin. This will be covered in the following section.

4.2.3. Mandarin: From Resentment to Acceptance

While the task to organize and elucidate Hong Konger Pop consumers' language attitude toward Cantonese and English, which are engraved in the historical and societal fabrics of Hong Kong, is inevitably perplexing and requires great associative sensitivity, the findings regarding Mandarin are condensable through the classic instrumental-integrative framework proposed by Lambert and Gardner as aforementioned (1972).

When asked to explain their preference of English over Mandarin on persona level, Chan, Fung, and Lee convergingly reported that Mandarin has low relevance to their daily living experience in Hong Kong as the only instance they would use Mandarin is when it is the

sole lingua franca with their interlocutors. For examples, in conversation with Mainland Chinese classmates in university, they prefer communicating in English instead of Mandarin. In the career context, Informants Lee and Li pointed out that English is the more efficient communication tool as employees, whether from local or transnational enterprises, still conventionally expect satisfactory written and verbal English proficiency from job applicants, despite the increased attention given to Mandarin due to the expanding Chinese market in the recent decade. Similarly, Informant Fung also highlighted the prevalence of Cantonese-English code-switching in intragroup communication among Hong Kongers, claiming that it is indeed a difficult task for one to remain monolingual in their utterances. Summarizing the above, it can be concluded that Mandarin has the lowest instrumental value both in daily conversation and professional context for the participants in this study. While disappointing Pennington (1998)'s prediction of Mandarin becoming the emerging language that would trigger "restructuring of linguistic alignments in the community" (p, 13), the present study also contradicts with Liu (2018), who concluded that "Putonghua has developed well its pragmatic function in Hong Kong" shown by the local university students' "near positive attitude" toward the ruler's language (p, 205).

From the affective aspect, Informant Fung pressed on by mentioning that he ranked Mandarin as the least important language to him due to personal sentiments—that he "do[es]n't like the culture of the people", which hints at the longstanding political tension and cultural differences between Hong Kongers and Mainland Chinese. Though being a vivid personification of the negative attitude toward Mandarin and its connotated culture as observed by Hansen Edwards (2021), Park and Uhm (2020), and Yeung (2021), Fung's attitude is ill-echoed by the other four informants. When asked whether songs with Mandarin lyrics produced by local artists fall into the category of Hong Kong Pop, Informants Chan, Lai, and Lee displayed neutral attitude, agreeing that Mandarin's commercial value can help expanding the

artists' audience to other regions (as mentioned in 4.1.3.), which is after all beneficial for the local industry's development. At the same time, Informant Lai also suggested that by experimenting with Mandarin, local artists can present an alternative side of their music and vitalize their music repertoire with freshness and novelty. Moreover, Informant Li, the only interviewee that ranked Mandarin before English, claims that Mandarin connects with her emotionally more than English because "it is still (a dialect of) Chinese".

While drawing the distinction between Mandopop and Mandarin Hong Kong Pop is a tedious task that is out of the current research scope, the above response undeniably provides important insights regarding the participants' attitude toward Mandarin as reflected by their reaction toward its use in Hong Kong Pop. Instead of a rejected symbol of "cultural invasion" as describe in Yeung (2021)'s study on local people's attitude towards mainlandisation of Cantonese, the present study found that Hong Kongers are generally starting to accept Mandarin as a newly acquired asset for the local music scene. Although unmatched with the representativeness of Cantonese and English, Mandarin is still generally accepted by the audience for its commercial value and inherited advantage of linguistic proximity to their native language, i.e., Cantonese. Compared with findings drawn in recent years' language attitude research, the present study discovered an alleviated negative impression and neutralized attitude toward Mandarin. While Hong Kongers' previous sentiments against the language in large correlates with the radical social atmosphere during the movement period, it is reasonable to connect the current findings with the political apathy and the reconnection with mainland lifestyles in the post-Covid era, as foregrounded in the literature review.

5. Conclusion: Toward a Definition of Hong Kong Pop

The present research sets out to explore the connection between Hong Kong people and "Hong Kong Pop", a vividly trilingual indigenous music genre. Through a qualitative research approach, the study considers Hong Kong Pop lyrics as both a cultural product and a textual material for critical reflection on Hong Kong people's language attitudes and identities. The study has shown that multilingual resources serve stylistic functions in rap music, maximize commercial benefits in dance-pop music, and manifest the cultural and musical upbringing of the artists. In-depth analysis of the interview data offered new insights on Hong Konger's attitudes toward the three languages: Cantonese has remained as the local people's robust cultural identity marker; English has risen beyond a detached sense of professionalism and social prestige and has become an alternative cultural language of Hong Kongers; Mandarin has obtained higher level of acceptance among local youths. The rich insights excavated through the current study have proved Hong Kong Pop to be a research subject with great potential for language, literary, and social studies.

Deviating from conventional research structure, a working definition is not established at the beginning of the study, rather, it is reserved for readers' contemplation and open debate throughout the study. This resembles the interview procedures with the informants—the question "What is Hong Kong Pop" was asked at both the beginning and the end of the interview sessions. Feedback from interviewees can be categorize into two converging directions, namely, "From Hong Kong peoples" and "For Hong Kong peoples".

Interviewees argued that the ethnicities of the artists are a deciding factor of whether their work can be regarded as Hong Kong Pop. Supporting the Gen-Z artists in their multilingual attempt, Informant Chan reckon that as long as the artists are Hong Kongers who produce music in the city and contribute back to the local industry, they shall be regarded as artists of Hong Kong Pop. He further proposed the example of the Malaysian Singer Namewee,

whom he would only see as a "foreign singer experimenting with Hong Kong Pop" (interview data) from the perspective of an audience, despite the sophisticated understanding of Hong Kong culture demonstrated in his lyrics[8]. Meanwhile, from a foreign consumer's perspective, Informant Lee claims that audience would expect a Hong Kong singer's performance to represent Hong Kong Pop music regardless of the language choice. Maintaining robust connection between the music genre, the people, and the city of Hong Kong, the artists' ethnic and cultural origin is emphasized.

On the other hand, Informant Fung raised the example of Hubert Hu and Mike Tsang, who debuted in Hong Kong, where they were born and raised, but have both turned to the mainland market for better opportunities. Fung and Lee converged in agreeing that singing in Cantonese does not qualify one as Hong Kong Pop singer, as in the case of the two artists, they are described as "selling Cantopop as cultural novelty" (interview data) instead of performing the values and identities carried by the genre. Therefore, in the words of Informant Lai, interviewees also hold the belief that "it is important that they (Hong Kong Pop artists) sing for the Hong Kong people". In other words, while it is unreasonable to require the content and themes of the song lyrics to be indiscriminately echoed by the entire local audience, as per Chan, the songs have to, in whatever way, carry a sense of "Hong Kongness" and connects with the local cultural identity. Albeit embracing multilingual resources as they add diversity and fluidity to the genre, both Lai and Fung agree that the choice of language could reflect the artists' target audience, which, in the case of English and Mandarin, might not be exclusively for Hong Kong pop consumers.

[8] Namewee is a Malaysian Singer-songwriter renowned for his experimental and culturally-diverse music. In particular, he has produced two songs in Cantonese, namely《學廣東話》("Learn Cantonese") and《唱廣東歌》("Sing Cantonese Song"). Both songs address the sociopolitical issues, living experience, and linguistic uniqueness of Hong Kong.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current study is faced with limitations. Firstly, despite the satisfactory research outcome produced by the current qualitative method, the current research admittedly lacks generalizability and replicability due to the absence of statistical results that can be otherwise achieved through standardized quantitative methods. As part of the aborted plans in the preliminary ideation of the present project due to the limited research scale, a mixed-approach, realized by the additional quantitative questionnaire derived from of the interview data content-wise and from Lai (2005) format-wise, can be considered in future studies. By first administering in-depth interviews, a sophisticated understanding of the motivations behind participants' language attitudes and identities can be achieved. The researcher can then develop statements for the questionnaire distributed to a wide audience to achieve a larger sample pool. Through the mixed-method, studies can strive to generalize the qualitative data to the wider population and hence improving its reliability. The quantitative data can in turn be used to triangulate with the interview data.

Design-wise, female artists are under-represented and mentioned throughout the whole study. However, the limitation herein is not the result of the researcher's biased data presentation, rather, it is a genuine reflection of both the interview data and the reality of the industry—one that is highly male-dominant. Future studies are suggested to explore the gender dynamics in Hong Kong Pop with close account to the gender inequality phenomenon in the local entertainment industry. Attempts can also be made to establish a potential connection between the informants' genders and their comment and attitude toward male and female Hong Kong Pop artists. Secondly, unsolved paradoxes exist in section 4.1's account on young independent artists—except Tyson Yoshi, all the other previously-independent singer-songwriters listed in Table 4 are now signed to major record labels. A follow-up case study is thus recommended to trace the potential changes in the artists' use of multilingual resources

and the shifting attitudes of the audience. Lastly, as the current mixed-discipline study has proved the potential of Hong Kong Pop lyrics as a critical area for linguistic research, despite the modest scholarly attention it is currently receiving. In view of the growing economic and sociocultural influence of the industry in the 2020s, an internet corpus specifically established for Hong Kong Pop lyrics can attract attention from the academia and facilitate future research. References can made to the WASABI Song Corpus (Universite Cote d'Azur), LyricFind Corpus (National University of Singapore), Corpus of American Song Lyrics (Seton Hall University), etc.

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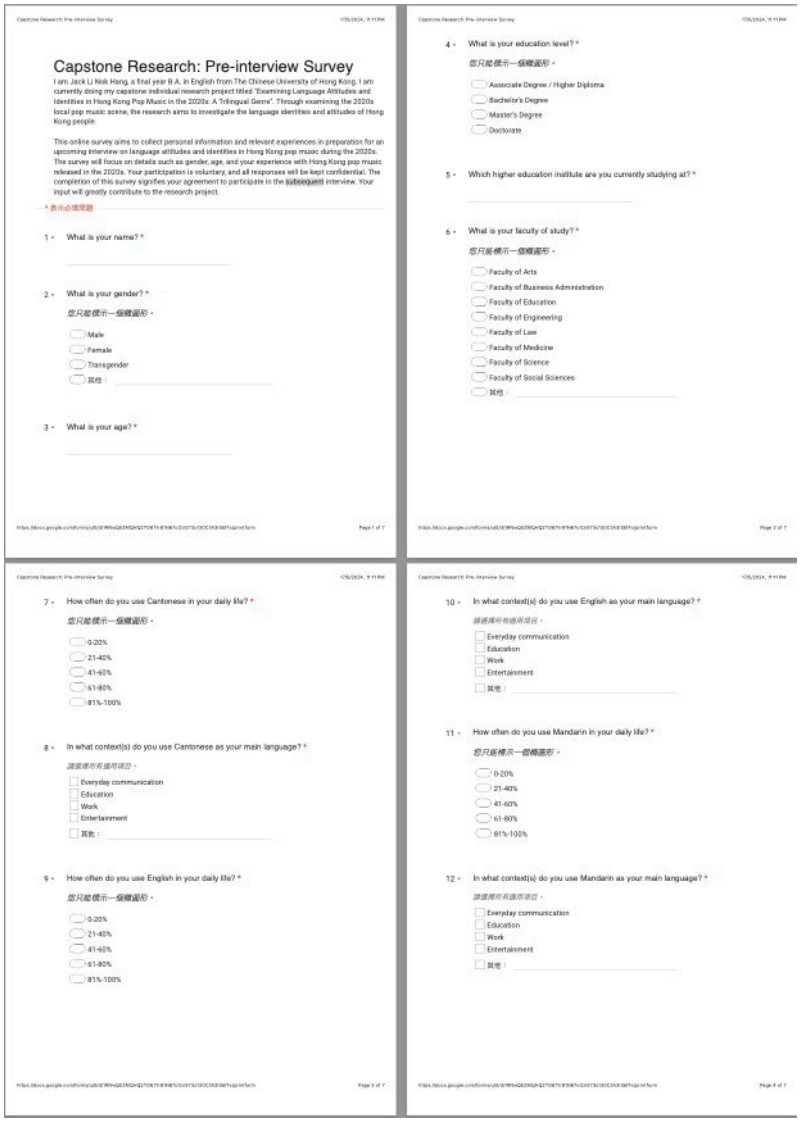
Appendix A

Pre-Interview Survey (Electronic Version)



Capstone Research: Pre-interview Survey

I am Jack Li Nok Hang, a final year B.A. in English from The Chinese University of Hong Kong. I am currently doing my capstone individual research project titled "Examining Language Attitudes and Identities in Hong Kong Pop Music in the 2020s: A Trilingual Genre". Through examining the 2020s local pop music scene, the research aims to investigate the language identities and attitudes of Hong Kong people.

This online survey aims to collect personal information and relevant experiences in preparation for an upcoming interview on language attitudes and identities in Hong Kong pop music during the 2020s. The survey will focus on details such as gender, age, and your experience with Hong Kong pop music released in the 2020s. Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential. The completion of this survey signifies your agreement to participate in the subsequent interview. Your input will greatly contribute to the research project.

* 表示必填問題

1 • What is your name? *

2 • What is your gender? *

您只能標示一個選項 •

- Male
- Female
- Transgender
- 其他：

3 • What is your age? *

4 • What is your education level? *

您只能標示一個選項 •

- Associate Degree / Higher Diploma
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate

5 • Which higher education institute are you currently studying at? *

6 • What is your faculty of study? *

您只能標示一個選項 •

- Faculty of Arts
- Faculty of Business Administration
- Faculty of Education
- Faculty of Engineering
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Medicine
- Faculty of Science
- Faculty of Social Sciences
- 其他：

7 • How often do you use Cantonese in your daily life? *

您只能標示一個選項 •

- 0-20%
- 21-40%
- 41-60%
- 61-80%
- 81%-100%

8 • In what context(s) do you use Cantonese as your main language? *

請選擇所有適用項目 •

- Everyday communication
- Education
- Work
- Entertainment
- 其他：

9 • How often do you use English in your daily life? *

您只能標示一個選項 •

- 0-20%
- 21-40%
- 41-60%
- 61-80%
- 81%-100%

10 • In what context(s) do you use English as your main language? *

請選擇所有適用項目 •

- Everyday communication
- Education
- Work
- Entertainment
- 其他：

11 • How often do you use Mandarin in your daily life? *

您只能標示一個選項 •

- 0-20%
- 21-40%
- 41-60%
- 61-80%
- 81%-100%

12 • In what context(s) do you use Mandarin as your main language? *

請選擇所有適用項目 •

- Everyday communication
- Education
- Work
- Entertainment
- 其他：

13 • How frequent do you listen to Hong Kong pop music? *

您只能標示一個選項 •

- 1 to 2 days per week
- 3 to 4 days per week
- 5 to 6 days per week
- Everyday

14 • How long do you approximately listen to Hong Kong pop music per week? *

您只能標示一個選項 •

- Less than 30 minutes
- 30 minutes to 1 hour
- 1 hour to 3 hours
- 3 hours to 5 hours
- 5 hours to 7 hours
- 7 hours to 9 hours
- Above 9 hours

15 • To the best of your memory, at what age and in which year did you start voluntarily and regularly listen to Hong Kong pop music? (e.g.,11 years old, 2012)

16 • Which three Hong Kong pop singers do you listen to the most? *

17 • Please arrange the following subgenres in Hong Kong pop music based on the frequenc with which you listen to them.

您只能在每列標示一個選項 •

	Pop	Soft ballad	Rock / Pop-rock	Hip-hop / Rap	Alternative / Indie	Electroni
1 (The most frequent)						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6 (The least frequent)						

Google 表格

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

ENGE 4700 Individual Capstone Research Project

Interview Protocol

Part 1. Cultural Identities

L How do you identify ymnself cu.Itm-ally? How important is yom cultmal identity to you?

2_ What are some aspects of cultme do you think best represent Hong Kong cultine? Why? (Elicit «Hong Kong pop music" if necessary)

Part 2. **Language Attitudes and Identities**

L How would you rank 1he importance of Cantonese, English, and Mandarin to you? Why?

- Emotional connection

2_ How would you rank 1he importance of Cantonese, English, and Mandarin to Hong Kong? Why?

- Cultmal significance, expression of identity, socio-economic values, political status_

Part 3. Experience with Cantopop

L How do you personally define 1he genre «Hong Kong pop"? Do you think Hong Kong Pop should be strictly Cantonese? Why or why not?

- Extra prompts to be provided when necessary: What are Hong Kong pop's key featmes? Who counts as HK pop artists? What are yom criteria of evaluation?

2_ Do you notice any changes in terms of1he language choice in Hong Kong pop songs in 1he 2020s? Any examples of artists / songs you can think of!

- If necessary: How do you perceive 1he growing trend of local artists using more Mandarin and English in 1heir music (or code switching?}?
- Interviewer to provide examples if necessary_ E_g_, playing snippet of selected songs1hat suit1he present discussion_
- Based on1he examples raised (by interviewees): Do you think1he artist(s) and1heir wmk: mentioned represent Hong Kong pop music? Do you personally identify with1hese work? Why?

3_ How do you perceive 1he growing trend oflocal artists using more English and Cantonese-English code-switching in 1heir work?

- Positive:
  - L Can you share examples in which code-switching / English and Mandarin are deployed in an interesting way?
  - n_ To you, who are some «good users" of1hese techniques and who are not? Why?
  - L Elicit discussion on1he relationship between 1he singers' background/ onscreen persona and 1heir music_
  - 2_ Some potential artists: Tyson Yoshi, Gare1h T, Michael Cheung, Serrini, Mirror
- Negative: Why? Retm:n to QL

Appendix C

Coding Scheme for Content Analysis

Themes	Category		Samples
Motivations of Language use	Stylistic Function	Fitting into music genre **[Mo-SF-G]**	"…English and Mandarin appear in rap songs, like Tyson Yoshi's. There's also rap verse in MC's. Like parts of it…" (T. L.)
		Portraying a different persona **[Mo-SF-P]**	"I'd say that English gives out a more 'pretentious' vibe. Like more 'pop' and 'cool'" (T. L.)
	Influence-driven (e.g. upbring of artists) **[Mo-ID]**		"…western pop influences local composer and lyricists a lot…and the influence is bigger than Mandopop from the Mainland or Taiwan…so I'd say that's a big factor that influence the language choice." (R. C.) "…but like Panther Chan, to the best of my memory, [her music] is less multilingual. Personally, she is less westernized…like more local to me." (T. L.)
	Commercial Function **[Mo-CF]**		"…Language choice is related to marketing. Because [if the artists add in English and Mandarin], they can promote the music to Malaysia, Taiwan, the Mainland, and Hong Kong as well. But if the audience for Cantonese songs is narrower. Perhaps only overseas Cantonese speaking-groups or foreigners who are interested in the language" (T. L.)
Criteria to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Multilingual Resources	Musicality (e.g., overall design and smoothness) **[Cr-M]**		"The good ones that use other language at least won't sound odd to me. Even two languages are used, it (the song) still exists as a piece. For the good ones, it might even be difficult for me to recall that English was used… I'd identify it as Cantopop (Hong Kong Pop) as long as it's smooth. One of the examples is *About Time* by MC. It has a big chunk of English rap" (J. F.)
	Compatibility with Artists' Personal Profile **[Cr-C]**		"…acceptability [for multilingual resources] depends on whether [their work] is compatible with the artists' profile. Like Jay Fung, it matches his persona." (T. L)
	Artists' Performance (e.g., Language Proficiency) **[Cr-P]**		"Their (Mirror) expressions are not natural. Code-switching is complete okay, but the music piece has to be a completed and smooth entirety. Like the part would sound like being forced into song instead of belonging to the song…It's not about the background of the artists. Sometimes I don't even know about the background of them but some would sound embarrassing to me (when they sing in English). So it's about pronunciation and expression." (R. C.)
Defining "Hong Kong Pop"	Linguistic Proximity **[D-LP]**		"…Mandarin might be a little less appealing to me. Because in daily conversation, it is common for us to switch to English but not Mandarin…Taiwan Mandarin would be more acceptable to me compared to Mainland as I prefer Taiwan culture more." (J. F.)
	Artist's Ethnicity		"…like the full-Mandarin ones from Tyson Yoshi. Do I still recognize them as Hong Kong Pop? I'd say…I do. Afterall the producers are Hong Kongers." (R. C.)
	Use of Multilingual Resources	For Hong Kongers **[D-Mul-Fo]**	"…it also depends on the proportion. Like Tyson's, some of his works are in full Mandarin…or the mix (of English and Mandarin) is heavy. I think his marketing focus is not only Hong Kong" (T. L.) "…even if the artist is fluent in English, I don't see the uniqueness and aesthetics if the whole song is English. Why don't I just go listen to a western singer?" (J. F.)
		From Hong Kongers **[D-Mul-Fr]**	"It's an extended element of their work. Like during the growth of their music journey, these are the inspirations did they draw as nutrients. They still contribute back to the local industry after all." (R. C.)
	Intended Audience	For Hong Kongers **[D-IA-Fo]**	"If the artists want to aim for a farther market, I think it's not just Cantopop…Just cause the artist is a Hong Konger doesn't mean their work is Hong Kong Pop. What matters is to whom they are singing for." (T. L.)
		From Hong Konger **[D-IA-Fr]**	"Audience from other places would expect a singer from Hong Kong to sing Cantopop or something produced in Hong Kong. So, I think even if a Hong Kong singer aims at, let's say the mainland market, they are still presenting Hong Kong music in the audience's perspective." (P. L.)
Cultural Identity	Self-perceived cultural identity **[CI-SP]**		"…because I'm born and bred here…so…Hong Konger. It (cultural identity) is important to me because this my 'root'…It is not just about how I present myself to the others, it's also how my past living experience here shaped my present self." (R. C.)
	Representation of Hong Kong Culture **[CI-Rep]**		"In the past, like 20 to 30 years ago, the film and music industry…and football, they are the best things in Hong Kong…but now I can't be so confident." (J. F.) "The hectic lifestyle and demanding work mentality…it's something that never changes" (R. C.) "The combination of Cantonese and Traditional Chinese…this combination is exclusive to Hong Kong only." (P. L.)

Does studying abroad legitimize Hong Kong English?
The role of Study Abroad programs on attitudes and perceptions of HKE accent

Wong Shin Ying
Supervisor: Prof. Wilkinson Daniel Wong Gonzales

Abstract

This project explored the role of study abroad programs on attitudes and perceptions of Hong Kong English accent among university students in Hong Kong. This study was carried out in two main sections: A mixed-method study was first adopted to uncover the reasons behind the typical attitudes of Hong Kong English accents among university students. Face-to-face interviews with qualitative measures were then employed to investigate how study abroad programs shape or reconstruct their perceptions of Hong Kong English accent. A total of 24 university students, including 20 local students and 4 study abroad students, participated in this study to share their valuable views and experiences regarding Hong Kong English.

The study revealed that most local students hold unfavorable and biased stereotypes towards Hong Kong English accents due to the learned process in their upbringings. Surprisingly, study abroad programs contributed to a shift in attitudes by exposing students to closely communicate with people from diverse linguistic backgrounds around the globe. As a result, students have increased attention to different language varieties and a growing appreciation for the uniqueness of Hong Kong English, and eventually acknowledging Hong Kong English as a legitimate and recognized variety of English.

This study on the legitimization of Hong Kong English holds educational implications for Hong Kong society, as it calls for reflection on people's perceived language attitudes and the significance of embracing the beauty of language diversity, including the unique Hong Kong English. Studying and understanding the legitimization of Hong Kong English can promote recognition and appreciation of Hong Kong English, and contribute to a more linguistically and culturally inclusive society in the long run.

Keywords: Hong Kong English accents, Study abroad programs, Language diversity, Language attitudes, Legitimization

1. Introduction

In our increasingly interconnected and highly globalized world, the English language has become the universal language of communication, bridging national and cultural boundaries. Due to its 156 years of British colonial rule, Hong Kong has a unique linguistic landscape shaped by its history, resulting in a distinct blend of Eastern and Western elements (Phillipson et al., 1970). Back in the day, English emerged and cemented as a functional lingua franca in Hong Kong that was often regarded as the paramount gateway of international commerce, trade, and traffic (Evan, 2013). This linguistic competence facilitated idea exchange, international network building, organizational goals, etc (Andersen & Rasmussen, 2004).

During the 1980s and 1990s, and following its handover in 1997, there were significant advancements and changes in English language education policies, practices, and implementation. These post-colonial shifts were primarily driven by political, social, and cultural factors, which gave rise to tensions concerning language, identity, and power (Phillipson, 1992). These tensions have grown over time because language has gone beyond being the sole tool for communication. The linguistic preferences of Hong Kong people have become symbolic representations of individual identities based on a multitude of complex considerations, such as their cultural preferences, sense of belonging, associated work mobility, and other socio-economic factors.

Hong Kong, as a former colonial society and a returned territory to the People's Republic of China, encountered the same language struggles as many other post-colonial regions. It is hard to find a middle ground and decide on a preference: Promoting the local language (i.e., Cantonese and Mandarin) and fostering national identity and unity. Or preserving the colonial-era linguistic and cultural legacy (i.e., English) at the expense of the indigenous tongue (Wright, 2016). Within this intricate linguistic landscape, this dilemma has influenced the language policies implemented by the HKSAR government. It also shaped the language identities and attitudes of Hong Kong people. Hansen Edwards (2015) suggested that individuals' sense of cultural identity (Hong Konger, Hong Kong Chinese, Chinese) could affect their attitudes towards the English language because the usage of English appeared to be a strong bond to the in-group identity as a Hong Konger, creating a sense of differentiation from the People's Republic of China. These considerations also resulted in varying preferences for British English, Cantonese-accented English, or Mandarin-accented English. These factors provide a valuable context for understanding the attitudes of Hong Kong students towards Hong Kong English accents, which will be further discussed in Research Question 1.

Surprisingly, even after 20 years of handover, English education has remained long-lastingly important in parents' and students' perceptions. As typical Asian parents, Hong Kong parents also adopt the child-rearing rationale of 'Winning at the starting line', where many parents provide the best for their children to maximize their life course and future achievements (Ng, 2016). This rationale pushed parents to be extremely serious and even widely considered to be overly pressurized about their kid's development and education. Many young kids in Hong Kong, starting from the age of 3, are experiencing packed extracurricular activities to equip them as high achievers. Among all the after-school courses, English enrichment classes have been one of the most popular and crucial picks for parents nowadays. This tendency may be driven by the wide belief that better-developed English language and literacy skills in ESL learners will potentially lead to greater school achievement and thus future careers (August & Hakuta, 1997). These English courses aim to equip phonological awareness, vocabulary learning, and writing and oral practices for young kids as early as possible in kindergarten and preschool (Yeung et al., 2012). It is widely observed that many of these English tutoring courses hire educators in foreign countries as a marketing strategy. This is because most parents aspire for their children to master a native English accent. Thus, they often prefer teachers with backgrounds of studying abroad and possess native accents, especially those of British, American, or Australian English. Having a 'native' accent has symbolic capital in Hong Kong. British English, as the colonial variety of English in Hong Kong, has enjoyed long-standing prestige for many people (Hansen Edwards, 2015), often considered a marker of international mobility, education level, status symbol, etc. Owing to globalization and the rise of American mass media, American English also became an internationally dominant variety of English and was widely favored. For these reasons, many Hong Kong people continue to have a low preference for Hong Kong English (Li, 2009; Zhang, 2013).

The preference for native English accents over Hong Kong English accents also extends to the tendency of studying abroad. Nowadays, more Hong Kong parents and students consider the option of studying abroad with the hope of immersing their children in English-speaking countries, interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds, and gaining admission to prestigious and widely recognized overseas colleges. Not only parents but many students also envision that studying overseas will train and equip them with highly desirable native English accents. According to Hansen Edwards' (2015) research, the majority of speakers, whether or not they speak Hong Kong English, still hold the idea that Hong Kong English is not a legitimate variety of English, but rather "a learner variety full of errors". Hong Kong English remains in Stage 2 and Stage 3 of Schneider's Dynamic Model due to their continued

preference for an exonormative variety of English (i.e. British English). In today's Hong Kong society, other native accents, such as American and Australian English, have also grown in preference and popularity. However, it remains uncertain whether there is a direct correlation between these overseas learning experiences and the extent to which they shape students' perceptions of their accents. Therefore, it is important to explore whether study abroad programs benefit Hong Kong students in terms of their language attitudes and their confidence in using the English language. This study seeks to shed light on these worth-investigating questions and examine whether studying abroad plays a significant role in legitimizing Hong Kong English and empowering Hong Kong students to become confident English speakers and intercultural communicators.

2. Literature Review

2.1.1 Defining "Hong Kong English"

To set a foundation for investigating university students' attitudes towards Hong Kong English, it is crucial to first recognize and acknowledge Hong Kong English as a distinct form of English with the following definitions. Hong Kong English is defined as the English spoken in the Hong Kong community that combines both English and Cantonese linguistic features (Hansen Edwards, 2015). Hong Kong English is characterized by Cantonese-influenced accents. However, the existence of Hong Kong English has been disputed due to the ambiguity regarding its reach and formality. The criteria for classifying Hong Kong English as Cantonese-influenced English are also debatable since residents in Macau and the Guang Dong region also speak Cantonese as their mother tongue and may develop Cantonese-influenced English (Lam and Ieong, 2022).

In the following study, Hong Kong English is defined as a distinct form of English due to Hong Kong's unique sociolinguistic and cultural characteristics of the city (Hansen Edwards, 2015). Cantonese-influenced accents are an outcome of a combination of local language practices in Hong Kong, British colonial history, and the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region under China's "One Country, Two System." Due to "a common underlying phonological system," many Hong Kong English Speakers include many shared localized features of the Hong Kong English accent in local linguistic practices (Hung, 2000). Shared features include the substitution of /n/ for /l/, /w/ for /v/, and syllable-timed rhythm (Luke and Richards, 1982).

Furthermore, much of Hong Kong's English vocabulary is developed. These localized vocabularies are 'mixed' from written English and Chinese. According to Chan and Kwok (1985), these vocabularies occasionally arise through "lexical

borrowing from Chinese into English." In other cases, they are freshly created with Cantonese vocabulary words and conversational particles, which are then ‘romanized’ into a written Hong Kong English language matrix (Bolton, 2002). Some Cantonese vocabulary words that had been used exclusively in Hong Kong communities in the past are now well-recognized worldwide. For example, "dim sum" refers to Cantonese small-steamed dumplings and other snack dishes. Another example is ‘char siu’ which means Cantonese barbecue pork. Therefore, Hong Kong English could be identified and recognized by its linguistic characteristics and localized vocabulary. Understanding the Hong Kong English landscape, including the legitimacy and distinctiveness of this variety of English, serves as the foundation of this study, which helps delve into the attitudes and perceptions of university students towards Hong Kong English.

2.1.2 Defining “Language Attitudes”

Language attitudes are defined as people's evaluative and emotional reactions, both positive and negative, to different language varieties, which further influence their perceptions and behaviors (Garret, 2010). Language attitudes are shaped through a learned process, including various factors such as stereotypes, reactions, selectively recalled experiences, etc (Oppenheim, 1982). According to Dragojević (2017), language attitudes are subject to change in individuals' minds over time and between different locations. One's social circle, including teachers, peers, family, and the media, can impact how linguistic attitudes are socialized. Even alterations in larger social contexts, such as changes in interpersonal relationships and governmental language policies, can influence one's language attitudes. However, when individuals consider language as a means of social comparison, they often develop language attitudes that lead to unfavorable behavioral outcomes, such as prejudice, inferiority, discrimination and problematic social relationships (Laurence, 2014). The above definitions confirm the dynamic nature of language attitudes which are prone to change over time, across contexts, and through socialization and learning processes. These are closely related to the focus of this research because students participating in overseas exchange programs fall into all these criteria, which aligns with the primary goal of investigating how language attitudes were shaped alongside all these factors.

2.2 Previous Research

Previous research and statistics have built an overview of the sociopolitical dynamics and evolving attitudes towards Hong Kong English within the Hong Kong context. In the paper ‘The Sociolinguistics of Hong Kong and the Space for Hong Kong English,’ Bolton (2002) explored the paradigm shift for English and

corresponding language planning in Hong Kong. Between the 1980s and 1990s, the government took educational measures and financial incentives to encourage secondary schools to switch to adopting Chinese as the main medium of school instruction. These measures served as a prelude to the subsequent language policies of biliteracy (English and Chinese) and trilingualism (English, Cantonese, and Mandarin) in 1995 (Bolton, 2002). These implementations, however, aroused wide resistance and dissatisfaction from general educators, parents, and students, in fear of losing global competitiveness and hindering social class dimension (Bolton, 2002).

Since the 1980s, elitist bilingualism existed within Hong Kong. Many rich and reputable families, including those high-ranking civil servants and educationalists who formulated language policies, often sent their kids to pursue higher education abroad in Australia, North America, and Britain (Postiglione, 1998). Studying abroad has often been correlated to the pursuit of status and prestige, because it serves as a visual cue of social stratification among individuals and proves that these students have a wealthy or famous family background. Also, studying abroad has been associated with success in the hierarchy of higher education, because it provides access to more valuable academic resources, and offers an easier and more promising pathway to top-ranked and internationally recognized universities (Whatley, 2019).

Many parents of lower-class backgrounds were alarmed by this trend and frustrated by the government's Chinese-as-main-stream education policy, which restricted their children's access to English. They also feared that children of middle-class and upper-middle-class backgrounds would take all the EMI schools places, neglecting their kids' education. They doubted that English education has been relegated from being a widely taught 'second' language to a less valued 'foreign' language in classrooms (Bolton, 2002). The government finally put into effect a "fine-tuning" language policy after years of deliberation, enabling more schools to teach the EMI curriculum (Cheng, 2020). 'Elitist bilingualism' shifted to 'mass bilingualism' to provide a large proportion of Hong Kong students the academic opportunity to study English and ideally master it, regardless of their family background and learning aptitude (Bolton, 2002). The HKSAR government's 12-year free education policy has made English a compulsory subject in all kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary schools. In addition to the fact that EMI schools in Hong Kong are frequently ranked higher than CMI schools, English is also frequently employed as the primary language of instruction in many university courses. All of them reaffirm people's desire to become proficient in English as well as their strong preference for English education in academic pursuits.

After more than 20 years since the handover, more than 80% of Hong Kong residents still prefer "native" English accents, such as British English, American

English, and Australian English. A mere 10% favor a Hong Kong English accent (Li, 2009). This preference extends across various contexts, including teaching models, business meetings, everyday conversations, etc (Chan, 2013). This preference towards native English and the unease of using Hong Kong English can be explained by the general assumption and stereotype that Hong Kong English varied from standard English and has not gained widespread acceptance and appreciation in the Hong Kong community, let alone in the global community (Lau, 2020).

Many parents nowadays also believe that sending their children to international schools located in Hong Kong, and even studying abroad, would guarantee that their kids grow up to be fluent English speakers and proficient English users. The same goes for foreign exchange programs, in which many students enroll with the idealistic expectation of achieving native-like communication skills in English accents and usage, as well as broadening their horizons and meeting global friends.

However, in recent years, political and social factors, such as the pro-democracy movement and the implementation of the National Security Law, have greatly encouraged Hong Kong residents to place greater emphasis and value on their identity as the "Hong Kong people." Apart from Canto-English code-switching as one frequent index of local identity, Hansen Edwards (2015) suggested an observed shift in perception: there has been a growing population of English speakers who “accept and like speaking Hong Kong English” and “feel it displays a local identity”. They also start to rebuild respect and embrace their dependence and favor on it. This tension between the preference for native English accents and the growing admiration for Hong Kong English draws attention to the legitimacy and acceptance of Hong Kong English as well as its role in shaping collective identities in a multicultural and globalized society (Hansen Edwards, 2015). This study aims to go beyond the local context and provide further insights into exploring how experiences in a global context, i.e. university students participating in overseas exchange programs, may potentially influence the legitimacy and acceptance of Hong Kong English.

2.3 Research Gap and Implications

The literature review section indicates growing attention to and discussion concerning the emergence and legitimacy of Hong Kong English, as well as the public perceptions regarding the language. Nonetheless, the majority of studies are primarily examined via the following lenses:

Most research papers explored the impact of British colonial history and Chinese sovereignty on Hong Kong's public opinion towards English, both before and after the handover in 1997 (Chan, 1997; Tung et al., 1997; Pennington & Yue, 1994). Some studies have examined the evolving perceptions of English among Hong Kong

students, teachers, and parents over different periods (Tung et al., 1997). Most researchers marked 1997 as a critical turning point of transition. The year 1997 marked the shift in governance from being a British colony to becoming a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, and it highlighted the corresponding and identifiable shift in public opinion regarding language use, attitudes, and preference. Studies also placed their focus on how these cultural influences might alter English as a medium of instruction in post-1997 Hong Kong regarding its language policies, sociolinguistic dynamics, and public usage (Evans & Green, 2003; Evans, 2017). These main focuses usually involved external variables, such as historical legacies and uncontrollable environmental influences.

In addition, scholars also investigated the connection between students' language attitudes and English education as a second language in Hong Kong. Education plays a key role in shaping students' language attitudes because English lessons are compulsory daily in primary and secondary schools, and classroom instruction is the most frequent and official way students learn and use English. Educators also often teach students how to improve their overall English skills and correct 'errors'. Therefore, students' perceptions of Hong Kong English are being shaped by everything from the whole education approaches in Hong Kong to the specific school language instruction to the English proficiency and accent of school English teachers. Many thorough analyses were centered on the implementation of second-language policies and practices in Hong Kong, as well as teachers' approaches to running vocabulary-building techniques and other teaching strategies in actual classroom practices. Decisions on the continuation and modifications of the aforementioned policies and instrumental strategies over time were also examined, taking Hong Kong's language policy of biliteracy and trilingualism into account (Lau, 2020). Apart from teaching strategies, the opposing students' opinions on whether they preferred native or non-native English teachers were also worth investigating while putting the primary focus on the teachers themselves. According to Ling & Braine (2007), the English-learning backgrounds of Hong Kong English teachers, such as acquiring a native or non-native accent, may affect students' respect and admiration for the teacher, and their willingness to participate in class. On the contrary, some scholars proved that non-native-speaker teachers have firsthand experience as second- or foreign-language learners, thus working better in conducting more effective learning strategies and tailoring to students' specific needs when learning English as second- or foreign-language learners. Therefore, the pros and cons of both native and non-native English school educators, along with the effectiveness of different English teaching strategies are compared and examined in many scopes.

In addition to teaching strategies, researchers also touched upon the language attitudes of Hong Kong students towards Hong Kong English, in terms of their attitudes, identity, and use (Hansen Edwards, 2015). Comparative studies have been conducted to examine students' attitudes between Hong Kong English and Mandarin-accented English (Zhang, 2013), as well as under different educational contexts in Hong Kong secondary schools, such as English as Medium Instruction (EMI) schools and Chinese as Medium Instruction (CMI) schools. Results have shown that different languages of instruction in Hong Kong English classrooms could significantly relate to and shape students' perceptions and participatory behavior in Hong Kong English classrooms. Therefore, it is well-discussed in research question 1 as there is a need to establish the perceived attitudes of students towards Hong Kong English. In addition, this sets a good start for research question 2 to further investigate the possible change in students' perceptions and confidence in using Hong Kong English within multicultural and multilingual educational contexts when studying abroad.

As stated above, most existing studies have been examined via the aforementioned lenses on language attitudes, perceptions of accents, and implementations of educational policies. However, there were noticeable research gaps in this field. While most studies were conducted within Hong Kong's context and environment, only a limited portion of research reached the overseas setting to further examine the potential impact of study abroad programs on Hong Kong students. Also, many have focused on the effects of studying abroad on the overall improvement in English proficiency or the increased tendency towards native English accents, such as through language immersion, language acquisition, and academic challenges (Jackson & Schwieter, 2019; Isabelli-García et al., 2018). However, academic researchers have ignored its other effects, such as the long-lasting effects of exposure to diverse linguistic varieties during foreign study experiences on their local English usage and accent in their home countries, i.e., Hong Kong students' perceptions and legitimacy of Hong Kong English in this study.

Therefore, the main objective of this study is to explore how socio-cultural factors, in particular, joining study abroad programs, may potentially reflect, influence, and shape language attitudes and confidence towards Hong Kong English among Hong Kong university students. A precise comparison of students' language attitudes, among those who have studied abroad versus those who have not, was done by performing the following mixed-method study and face-to-face interview.

2.4 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are:

(1) What are the attitudes of Hong Kong students towards Hong Kong English accent?

(2) What are the potential changes in students' attitudes towards using Hong Kong English and their perceived level of confidence during or after the study abroad program? In what ways do these changes manifest?

3. Mixed-method Study with Local Students

In order to address Research Question 1 about the typical attitudes of local students towards Hong Kong English, a mixed-method study was conducted with Hong Kong local students without any study abroad experience.

3.1 Methodology

To better understand how Hong Kong university students perceive and evaluate Hong Kong English accents in comparison to other native English accents, a mixed-method study was conducted. The main goal of this experiment is to elicit and gauge participants' subjective evaluations regarding Hong Kong English and native American accents spoken by the same speaker. This enabled a more nuanced examination of perceived language variances in pronunciation and associated attitudes.

Face-to-face surveys were carried out using a concurrent mixed-method approach for a more comprehensive result (see Table 1). Participants were invited to watch a selection of YouTube clips and subsequently complete a survey section. After video watching, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously. Quantitative data was acquired regarding students' judgments and evaluations of speakers' perceived attributes (e.g., pronunciation accuracy, accent strength, education level, friendliness, intelligence, and confidence). Qualitative data was further collected by capturing participants' opinions, attitudes, and individual experiences related to Hong Kong English accents.

This mixed-method approach facilitated the integration of participant perspectives and experiences, and enabled a greater scope, depth, and breadth of information to foster informed discussion and debate. It is concerned that using the quantitative method individually would suppress participants' response variability and individual stories (Hyrkstedt and Kalaja, 1998; Dörnyei, 2007) and that using the qualitative method individually fails to represent a pooled result that reflects the commonalities in perceptions of Hong Kong English among general university students (Soukup et al., 2013). Therefore, it was carefully determined that this mixed-

method study would investigate "meaning in particular" and "meaning in general" (Soukup et al., 2013) in equal importance. The utilization of mixed methods research was especially effective in examining educational phenomena and judgments, with potential benefits to evaluate and progress social norms and classroom practices (Almalki, 2016).

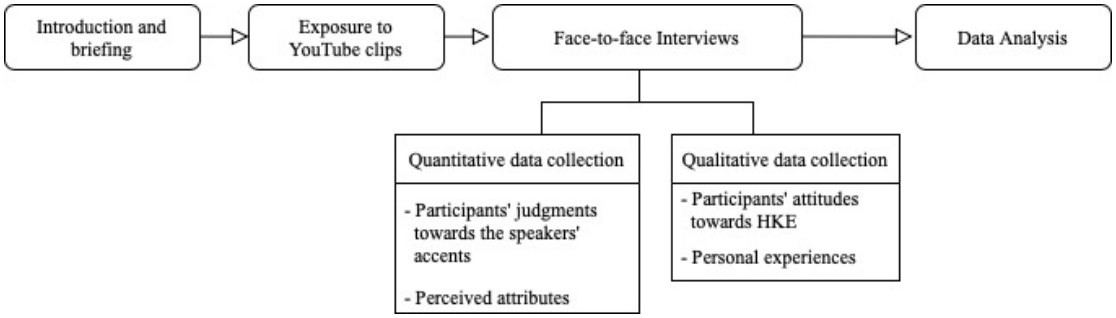


Table 1. Procedural Diagram for mixed-method study

3.2 Experimental Set-up

Clips from the YouTube video titled "How to speak Hong Kong English?" from the YouTube channel "Tiffany teaches English" (Tiffany, 2021) were selected as the stimulus material for this experiment to explore students' attitudes and biases towards Hong Kong English accents. The channel's host, Tiffany, is a young English Language teacher in Hong Kong who has made close observations of Hong Kong English accents throughout her long teaching career. Tiffany's firsthand knowledge and expertise allow her to impart daily English usages and pronunciations in a lively and pertinent manner that resonates with Hong Kong students' perceived English education. Therefore, it is believed that her examples used in the video are precise and reliable as a stimulus material for this study.

In this whole YouTube video, Tiffany offered insights and observations into typical Hong Kong English pronunciation patterns. These features include avoiding the schwa /ə/ sound, replacing "th" with "f", stressing particular syllables, and more (Tiffany, 2021). More importantly, Tiffany demonstrated the different ways of speaking the same sentence in both Hong Kong English and American English, highlighting specific linguistic variances and accent traits unique to Hong Kong English. This YouTube video served as the stimulus material for the mixed-method study by showcasing the accent variations and vocal examples. This enabled participants to directly hear, compare, and assess the Hong Kong and American accents based solely on these sound clips. This ensures that any disparities in evaluations and perceptions are primarily attributed to the variations in accent features

rather than other extraneous factors, to fulfill the primary goal of providing insights into attitudes and biases towards Hong Kong English accent.

To create a controlled and consistent experimental set-up, interviewees were only shown the variations in how to say identical sentences in Hong Kong English and American English. The experiment excluded all other extraneous factors, such as grammar, vocabulary, and semantics. Furthermore, respondents were purposely not provided the original sections of the video where Tiffany addressed and explained specific linguistic variations of Hong Kong English to avoid any potentially manipulated variables or preconceived judgments during the experiment. Besides, Tiffany herself acted as a constant throughout the entire YouTube video in the same appearance, identity, and shooting setting. Potential confounding elements about the message or topic being communicated are also eliminated by keeping the speech content consistent. All these eliminations guarantee that participants' evaluations are determined solely by the displayed accents, without the effect of additional linguistic information.

The below-selected clips were precisely chosen to present only Tiffany speaking the same line in both Hong Kong English and American accents. These specific clips were provided to the respondents for evaluation and direct comparison (Tiffany, 2021):

1. "What happened to you?" (1:19-1:26)
2. "Do you want to go shopping?" (1:27-1:35)
3. "For example," (1:52-1:59)
4. "There is a chicken in the barn." (2:01-2:07)
5. "One, two, three" (2:19-2:23)

*Significantly varied pronunciations were underlined

After listening to each clip for once, interviewees were invited to provide two descriptive adjectives to characterize how Hong Kong English sounds. Additionally, participants were asked to answer questions, such as "What can you tell us about the speaker?", "Which social group do you believe the speaker belongs to?", "How would you describe the speaker?". During the follow-up part, interviewees were further encouraged to share their perspectives and personal experiences with Hong Kong English (See Appendix A).

3.3 Participants

Twenty interviewees were invited to participate in this interview as it was considered a sufficient quantity to capture a manageable yet diverse range of viewpoints and attitudes among university students in Hong Kong. All the participants were current university students from different local universities in Hong Kong. They

were pursuing various majors and studying in years three and four of their normative studies. They all completed their secondary education in Hong Kong at local schools, with results on the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination ranging from Level 3 to 5*. In terms of their educational background, none of them had ever studied abroad; they were all born and raised in Hong Kong.

To protect the privacy and anonymity of participants, only their majors and years of study were documented. No photographs or video recordings were taken during the survey, and their identity was kept anonymous. In the following sections, these participants will be denoted as Interviewee A, Interviewee B, Interviewee C and so forth.

3.4 Data Collection

The data collection procedures for this mixed-method study lasted for one month. A thorough selection and comparison of various video and audio samples from platforms including YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram was carried out in mid-October, focusing on Hong Kong English accents, other Asian accents, and foreign accents. After finalizing the choice of "How to speak Hong Kong English?" from the YouTube channel "Tiffany teaches English", selected clips were edited into shorter clips to ensure a smooth presentation to participants. To facilitate a more in-depth discussion and examination, a list of interview questions and potential follow-up questions were also developed.

In late October, in-person surveys were performed at three locations: in front of the University Library and New Asia College Library of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and next to the main entrance of Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Throughout the surveys, Notes were hand-written to capture participants' verbal responses.

3.5 Findings

The overall frequency and percentage table of adjectives used to describe Hong Kong English based on the study, along with a by-person analysis, can be found in Appendix B.

3.5.1 Accent Stigmatization and Language Anxiety

Previous studies have questioned the validity of Hong Kong English, stating that the accents of English speakers in Hong Kong, Macau, and Guang Dong are too similar that it is difficult to differentiate between them (Lam and Ieong, 2022). However, it seemed that this confusion only happened to outsiders who were unfamiliar with Hong Kong English. During this survey, participants were invited to

rate the authenticity of Tiffany's Hong Kong English accent in the YouTube video (Tiffany, 2021). Up to 90% of participants, or 18 out of 20, rated her accent with a score higher than 7 out of 10. They claimed that they found it very easy to identify Hong Kong English accents, and that Tiffany's presentation of the Hong Kong accent and phrases sounded very authentic and familiar to them. Five participants were observed to laugh inadvertently at some points during the video because they found the accent features relatable and hilarious. The survey statistics from the quantitative part of the study showed that Hong Kong university students—who consider themselves insiders, actual users, and educated speakers of Hong Kong English—believe that the "systematic and idiosyncratic features" of the city's English phonology are readily identifiable and noticeable (Hung, 2000).

When asked about participants' perception towards Hong Kong English, however, more than 80% of respondents reported experiencing self-consciousness and shame in speaking Hong Kong English accents. Fourteen interviewees described it using negative phrases, such as "it sounds a little off," "disturbing," and "stupid". Eight participants were observed to show disdain and contempt upon hearing Tiffany's Hong Kong English accent immediately following the American English samples. They also showed their desire to possess native-like accents instead of Hong Kong English accents:

> [Interviewee A] I wouldn't say that I hate Hong Kong English accents. But I have been trying hard to pronounce words more native-like, but it is super hard to get rid of the Cantonese habits. My horrible Hong Kong accent just kicks in every once I speak in English. That is embarrassing!

> [Interviewee B] The nine Cantonese vowels are ingrained in our pronunciation. For example, we usually neglect the terminal /-t/ sounds and pronounce words like "assignmen'", "aligmen'", "approxima", etc. Obviously, messages could still be effectively communicated... but it sounds less official and dignified.

These viewpoints suggested that Hong Kong university students went through accent stigmatization. They generally held resistance and self-doubt towards Hong Kong English as a non-native accent and paid extra effort to eliminate their Hong Kong English features. These stigmatizations are not solely stereotyped, but also gradually "learned" during their individual experiences and mental struggles when the accent is stigmatized:

[Interviewee C] My Hong Kong English accent has become the target of teasing from my classmates. Even my university professor openly used the word 'broken' to judge my English in front of more than 100 students. That hurts a lot…(sighs) That is why I decided not to answer any questions in English classes anymore.

[Interviewee D] I once worked up the nerve to chat with my school's native-speaking English teacher. This British teacher looked confused when I spoke with my Hong Kong English accent. After explaining a few times, he finally understood it. Then he corrected me on how to say such expressions in standard British English. I became anxious and unconfident about talking in English afterward.

These related experiences have proven previous studies that language attitudes are shaped through a learned and socialized process. They were taught in schools that Hong Kong English is an unfavorable and non-native trait of their speech in classroom settings. The received reactions from one's social circle like teachers and peers, and selectively recalled experiences could intensify students' anxiety, shame, and unease towards Hong Kong English and its accent traits (Oppenheim, 1982; Dragojević, 2017). As proposed by Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994), second-language speakers prefer intentionally presenting proficient accents and pronunciation to retain their sense of self-worth or to seek approval from peers. These negative feelings further dissuaded Hong Kong students from speaking Hong Kong English. They stressed themselves to sound more 'native' by getting rid of their 'non-native' traits, as well as the associated negative connotations and signified reduced power relations (Jenkins, 2000). In worse cases, this associated fear and anxiety could potentially lead to negative psychological impacts on students' oral communication skills (Coppinger & Sheridan, 2022), and the feelings of being unqualified to communicate with native foreigners.

3.5.2 Belittlement Towards Education Level and Teaching Impact

The majority of Hong Kong students primarily receive English language instruction from primary and secondary school teachers and university professors. Unexpectedly, many interviewees attribute their 'unsuccessful' Hong Kong English accent to their 'undereducated' school teachers. Over 60% of interviewees used adjectives like "unpolished" and "undereducated" to judge HKE accents, as well as the quality of Hong Kong English teachers and professors:

> [Interviewee E] Some English teachers in Hong Kong have no idea how poor their Hong Kong English is. It's ironic when schools expect us to become proficient English users in such a teaching environment.

> [Interviewee F] That [Teaching in Hong Kong English] adversely affects the English education and development of thousands of young children. I believe that accents should be nurtured and trained from a young age. Schools seriously should consider hiring more native-speaking English teachers to assist us with our oral training.

The results from this survey contradicted earlier research that claimed Hong Kong students enjoy being taught English by local teachers who are also second-language learners due to the commonality and shared experiences with academic difficulties, and the more localized and tailored teaching techniques for Hong Kong learners (Ling & Braine, 2007). However, from the sample, students expressed distrust and ire at local teachers and professors for teaching in Hong Kong English accents. They considered this study environment would not benefit students learning 'standard' English. They even questioned the professionalism of local educators for their inability to teach in native accents. They saw this as a hindrance to learning proper pronunciation, language usage, and general English proficiency in the long run (Chan, 2016). On the other hand, most students prefer native-speaking English teachers over local English teachers. Native-speaking English teachers, often known as "NETs" in Hong Kong classrooms, are hired by the Education Bureau under the Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme to enhance English teaching in secondary and primary public schools. The main prerequisite to being a NET is that the teacher "acquire the language in infancy and develop the language through adolescence and adulthood within a community where English is spoken as the first language (Education Bureau, 2023)". More than 70% of respondents reported to prefer being educated by native-speaking English teachers:

> [Interviewee G] In my secondary school, native-speaking English teachers only teach regularly in enrichment classes tailored for academically gifted students. My studies were poor, and I studied in mainstream classrooms. I don't have the opportunity to enjoy this prestige English education.

The above findings once again concluded that Hong Kong local students generally had biased and unfavorable perceptions and emotions towards Hong Kong English accents and the instruction conducted by local English teachers. The survey

results supported previous studies that native accents are still preferred and perceived as "standard" and ideal English instruction in Hong Kong classrooms (Kwan, 2022).

These findings offered an explanation for recent education policies: There was a widespread belief that talented learners received a different allocation of native-speaking English teachers, and that local English teachers' proficiency have been declining. Even local teachers themselves hold an exonormative preference towards foreign forms (Pang, 2003). Therefore, the HKSAR government spent a large sum of money hiring native-speaking English teachers to support English instruction in Hong Kong (Ling & Braine, 2007). Students' perceptions of Hong Kong English were further adversely influenced by these education policies, as well as the noticeable difference in teaching methods and accents between native-speaking English teachers and local English teachers (Chan, 2016).

4. Interviews with Study Abroad Students

In order to explore whether these perceptions would change after study abroad programs, the following section focused on the interview part with a separate group of students who have joined study abroad programs. The primary goal of this interview was to address research question 2, which explores how Hong Kong students joining study abroad programs might potentially change their attitudes towards Hong Kong English and their perceived level of confidence in speaking it.

4.1 Methodology

The primary method used in this interview part was the qualitative method. It allowed for an in-depth examination to uncover patterns and insights that could not be adequately captured by solely numerical data. The potential benefits and downsides of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches were carefully considered before adopting the qualitative method.

Traditional scale-based attitude measurement includes "comparing mean scores or rank differences on the semantic differential scales." These have been proven to be more persuasive in presenting an average description of a larger population, and effective in investigating mainstream social meanings associated with language variations (Soukup et al., 2013). However, standardized scale-based attitude measurement has been widely criticized for suppressing participants' response variability (Hyrkstedt and Kalaja, 1998) and judging that "in this [quantitative] way we lose the individual stories (Dörnyei, 2007)."

In response to these critiques, quantitative researchers have been implementing the technique whereby they take a sufficiently big sample size to iron out the idiosyncratic variances linked to specific individuals. This quantitative approach

ensures that the pooled results mostly reflect the commonalities found in the data (Soukup et al., 2013). Unfortunately, under careful examination, it is unfeasible to perform the above quantitative solution for this interview for the following few reasons. It was impractical to conduct a large enough sample due to the study's time constraints and the limited size of the interviewee sample. Furthermore, it is challenging to quantify concepts including language legitimization, language attitudes, and subjective emotions with standardized scales and numbers.

Under serious consideration, the qualitative method was chosen with the goal of better capturing individual perceptions, emotional responses, and the meaning of actions (Queirós, 2017). Each individual has different ways in how they interpret, perceive, and remember things, and it is important to respect and appreciate considerable variation across individuals in their narratives (Dörnyei, 2007). Therefore, it was carefully determined that the following section would follow a qualitative research approach to dive deeper into the "meaning in particular," as opposed to the "meaning in general" strategy used in most quantitative approaches (Soukup et al., 2013).

4.2 Participants

Four interviewees were invited to participate in this interview based on their valuable experiences studying abroad in foreign nations where English is commonly spoken and widely used in the academic year 2022-23.

Regarding their English education background, all interviewees have studied English in Hong Kong's primary and secondary schools. They have received Levels 4 to 5 in English in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (DSE). Notably, they scored from Level 4 to 5** in the DSE Speaking Exam of the English language, indicating that their English-speaking skills are comparatively advanced within Hong Kong's standards.

In terms of their university background and study exchange experiences, these four interviewees are fourth-year students at local universities in Hong Kong. Marcus and Anna, two of them, are majoring in Actuarial Science and History, respectively at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. They are study abroad partners on an exchange program at the University of Waterloo in Canada for one semester. Valerie, the other, is a Sociology student at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, spending a whole year studying abroad in Denmark. The final one is Kary, a journalism and communication student at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She studied in Finland for a semester and is currently pursuing her postgraduate studies in Canada for another year.

4.3 Data Collection

The data collection for this interview section took place in November. Participants have been messaged with invitations and consent forms since early November. Once after received their consent letter, participants received a brief overview of the topic and an accompanying question bank (see Appendix C), making sure interviewees had sufficient time to prepare their answers to the questions. During mid-November, the meeting dates with each interviewee were finalized. During the period from mid-November to late November, in-person interviews were conducted on campus, lasting approximately 45 minutes each. Additionally, audio recordings were made with permission for additional analysis.

4.4 Data Analysis

The analytical procedure included four primary phases. The first phase was the transcription of audio recordings from the face-to-face interviews (See Appendix D). While the majority of the interview sections were conducted in English, several parts were aided in Cantonese or a combination of Cantonese and English. The reason for this decision was that all interviewees struggled to find the right English term and felt that Cantonese would be a simpler language to convey their meanings more precisely. Thus, the first step is to closely listen to audio recordings and read handwritten notes while translating the corresponding Cantonese responses into English.

The second phase was data integration. Following a thorough examination of the notes and recordings, pertinent and comparable responses from different interviewees were compiled and gathered for more systematic analysis.

The third phase involved a long cyclical coding process that moved between open, axial, and selective coding. By comparing interview transcriptions and field notes and applying data reduction, interviewees' responses were consolidated into categories in axial coding and further into themes in selective coding, which formed thematic connections and thematic patterns (Williams & Moser, 2019).

The last phase was to reread the collected data and revisit all recordings and notes to ensure all significant insights were covered in the discussion.

4.5 Findings

The interview questions and findings will be discussed in three sections: the period before, during, and after the study program.

4.5.1 Before Studying Abroad: Hesitation and Perceived Disapproval

All interviewees recalled their pre-study abroad memories and emotions. They reported feeling worried, hesitant, and disapproved of speaking with foreigners in their Hong Kong English accent:

> [Kary] In Hong Kong's ESL schools, most Hong Kong students have a good foundation in spoken English, but Hong Kong English accent does not sound appealing.

> [Valerie] Hong Kong's English education is very exam-oriented and fast-paced. There's very limited time or opportunities to practice communicative speaking.

While both Valerie and Kary thought that HKE education works well in building a good spoken English foundation, the main issues were the very limited time nor opportunities to practice speaking in daily communications and the unappealing Hong Kong English accent. Hong Kong students' lack of practice and biased attitudes towards Hong Kong English explained why they, as non-native students living abroad, face fear due to foreign language anxiety (Nastiti, 2023). Even though these four interviewees scored Level 4 to 5** in the DSE English Speaking Exam, they all worried that their English-speaking skills were just comparatively advanced within Hong Kong's standards, but not sophisticated enough for conversing with foreigners:

> [Anna] 香港人習慣用廣東話嘅思維方式去構思英文句子，令到句子好奇怪同累贅。我唔覺得外國人會聽得明。[Translation: Hong Kong people are used to structuring English sentences using the Cantonese conceptual framework, making the sentences weird and clumsy. I don't think foreigners could understand them.]

> [Marcus] My vocabulary bank is crammed with DSE-related and exam-related terms… but I don't have a diverse range of vocabulary for daily conversations. I lack the confidence to carry on a lengthy and fluent conversation like native speakers do.

The aforementioned responses from all four interviewees indicated their worries and self-doubt that their Hong Kong English and their accent would hinder their fluency and choice of words, which prevented them from communicating fluently with foreigners. Their greatest fear was not so much effective communication but

rather the anticipation that when they met new friends from various language backgrounds at host colleges, they might be mocked for their language skills. Kary and Valerie both claimed that they didn't want other people to think they had a poor English accent. Without confidence in their proficiency in the spoken host language, researchers suggested a foreseeable phenomenon in Hong Kong students studying abroad: Hong Kong students would be very passive in communication, and encounter difficulties in their host universities' classrooms and beyond. Inside the classrooms, they were less likely to participate in classroom discussions and barely follow the academic progress. Outside of classrooms, they also lost interest and motivation to interact with English-speaking international students by using their Hong Kong English accent (Evan & Morrison, 2011; Yu et al., 2019).

4.5.2 During Studying Abroad: Gradual Approval upon observation

As previously noted, before they arrived at the host universities, all four of them had preconceived notions that foreigners would look down on their English pronunciations. During the study abroad period, these four interviewees experienced a shift in perception towards their Hong Kong English accent. This occurred mainly because of their exposure to meeting people from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which encouraged them to closely observe the English-speaking experiences of people around the globe. They shared their unexpected and unique experiences of learning that Hong Kong English has been regarded as "recognized English" by foreigners, which boosted their confidence in speaking it:

> [Anna] My foreign friends like my Hong Kong English accent a lot. They think it is comparatively comprehensible and clear.

> [Kary] When I was traveling alone in the United States, a random stranger told me, "Wow! Your English is so fluent just like you grew up in New York!" That made me very surprised. I began to believe that the Hong Kong accent was internationally regarded as a good fluent English accent!

From the two excerpts above, it showed that Hong Kong English accents were complimented by overseas foreigners during their visit. Anna and Kary's foreign friends used positive phrases like 'comprehensible', 'clear', and 'fluent' to characterize Hong Kong English, proving its representativeness as a useful and recognized tool of communication. These foreigners' comments suggested that sounding native-like is not the primary goal, but to communicate your ideas to others in English proficiently and comprehensibly (Levis, 2005).

In addition to its comprehensibility, Kary also pointed out that foreigners regard the Hong Kong English accent as an intelligent L2 accent both in Asia and worldwide (Kirkpatrick et al., 2008):

> [Kary] Foreigners' perceptions of Hong Kong's English accent are generally positive! What's interesting is that the students at my exchange school often see the English-speaking Skills of Hong Kongers and Singaporeans as very similar. Both Hong Kong and Singapore are relatively international cities, so they sometimes assume that people from these places have a certain level of English proficiency.

According to close connection with foreigners, Kary acknowledged that Hong Kong English is well-known and widely recognized for its English accent, which was often compared by foreigners with other well-developed international countries such as Singapore. In addition to promoting global communication and multinational understanding as Kary did, it was also shown that studying at an exchange school could foster cross-cultural adaptation, language proficiency, and long-term positive attitudes towards self, cultural diversity, and language appreciation. This was especially accurate when the exchange learning environment was mutually supportive with sufficient social and peer support and little perceived discrimination (Yu et al., 2019). These exchange programs served as excellent incentives for Hong Kong students to exercise their English speaking to foreigners in the real world and to build their confidence:

> [Kary] I have gained a lot of confidence in speaking English. Many international students I met during the exchange program are not native English speakers either. There will be no pressure when communicating. These trained my confidence to speak boldly!

> [Marcus] 我發現香港學生嘅英文相對嚟講幾好，尤其是 Speaking 能力。 我留意到來自其他亞洲地區嘅學生，例如：韓國、日本或中國大陸嘅學生，做 presentation 會時不時斷斷續續。比較之下，我自然對自己嘅 Speaking 流利度同發音更有信心。[Translation: I found that Hong Kong students are relatively good at English, especially in speaking skills. I noticed that students from other Asian places such as South Korea, Japan, or mainland China sometimes get kicky when doing their presentations. Under such a comparison, I naturally feel more confident with my own speaking fluency and pronunciation.]

After studying the same courses with foreign classmates, all four interviewees agreed with the statement that 'I feel more confident with my Hong Kong English accent now'. The above excerpts from Kary and Marcus suggested that they regained their confidence in speaking in Hong Kong English, by constantly observing and comparing their language abilities with people from other backgrounds. These individuals included schoolmates from European and Asian countries who were also using English as a second language or foreign language. It was through understanding diverse linguistic variations and constant comparison that they now recognize their Hong Kong English accent as favorable.

All four interviewees expressed an increase in acceptance of Hong Kong English and willingness to use it as a communication tool:

> [Valerie] 喺我歐洲旅行期間，我負責同外國人溝通，例如問路。有時我會同陌生外國路人傾一陣計。佢地聽得明我嘅口音。[Translation: During my Europe trip, I was responsible for communicating with foreigners, like asking pedestrians the way to go. Sometimes, I chatted for a while with random foreign pedestrians. They understood my accents.]

> [Anna] There was a group of Holland girls in my hostel and some Japanese and Korean girls whom I met in Orientation Camps. English is the only universal language between us. We all have different accents, but it didn't matter at all. We had a lot of fun.

These above excerpts showed that exchange experiences pushed Hong Kong students to engage in real-life communication and speaking practices with foreigners. This encouraged Hong Kong students to observe others' accents, reflect on their own language behaviors, and make adjustments to their attitudes and language practices. These self-reflections and increased speaking practices could ease the initial foreign language anxiety and often foster confidence in using Hong Kong English (Nastiti, 2023).

Moreover, as they became more used to communicating with people of different accents, they developed a new mindset about accents: They learned not to discriminate against others for not having a 'perfect' and 'standardized' native accent. Instead, they were taught in exchange schools to respect all varieties and appreciate other students' participation in class (Goertler & Schenker, 2021).

Back in Hong Kong classrooms, students were generally passive and afraid of answering teachers' questions, because they feared 'losing face' if they answered

wrongly, or being called ‘showoffs’ by classmates. That explained why overseas professors often felt frustrated by “the reticence of local students” in classes (Jackson, 2013). These four interviewees expressed their shock when they realized that overseas students, regardless of their language proficiency or accent, were very active in class discussions. They started to follow the new norm of active discussions in overseas institutions.

It has been proven that Hong Kong students reflect on their language behaviors and overcome preconceptions that hinder their willingness to communicate with foreigners. After joining the exchange programs, they valued more for their chance to be immersed in an active learning environment, and two of them reported that they slowly stepped out of their comfort zone and became more confident in voicing their opinion in class using Hong Kong English accent. Immersion in study abroad programs was proven to contribute to the construction of self and changes in perception, including gradual approval and confidence toward the Hong Kong English accent (Aveni, 2005).

4.5.3 After Studying Abroad: Sense of Belonging

All four respondents have developed positive perceptions by connecting Hong Kong English accents with their sense of belonging. Instead of joking about accents like many Hong Kong students did, they all observed that foreigners don’t judge accents harshly, but instead, they also mix in their mother tongue in their English accents and considered local accents a way to make them unite:

> [Valerie] Europeans always mix their mother tongue with English speaking. So even if Hong Kong people occasionally mix in some Hong Kong-style English, it is still perfect in its own way. Speaking Hong Kong English accent should never be considered something to be ashamed of.

> [Anna] Foreigners don't take accents seriously and harshly, but instead, they feel like local accents make them unite. One time when my Spanish friend heard others speaking with a Spanish-English accent, they immediately recognized each other as amigos and bonded as friends.

The excerpts showed that Valerie and Anna seriously reflected on the usage and biased perceptions of Hong Kong English by referring to multinational people from various cultural backgrounds, who were comfortable with their accents and blended in their home accents in English speaking. This proved that Hong Kong students’

language attitudes could be influenced by socio-cultural factors during an exchange program, such as the language ideologies of other people around them.

Interviewees also reported that they developed a stronger sense of belonging and cultural identity when using or hearing Hong Kong English accents overseas, almost erasing any prior shame or humiliation:

> [Kary] Sometimes I hear Hong Kong people, either exchange students or immigrants or Hong Kong tourists, speaking English with a Hong Kong accent on Canadian streets. I feel a sense of familiarity and nostalgia, that even becomes an opportunity for locals to find friends of their own culture when staying in an environment with different language backgrounds. Now I consider my accent as a significant part of my cultural identity.

Kary's comments implied that Hong Kong English has now served as a representation of cultural identity and an identification of in-group identity for her (Hansen Edwards, 2015; Sung, 2016). She felt very warm and comfortable about this accent, especially when she sometimes felt lonely walking on the Canadian streets.

In response to the question: what makes it crucial to recognize and respect different English accents or variations, such as the Hong Kong English words and accent, surprisingly, Valerie, Kary, and Markus all pointed out their appreciation towards newly invented and localized words. Valerie suggested a similar rationale of 'English localization' by creating different words and different accents.

> [Valerie] People fit their own culture into languages. Americans like to create new vocabulary. Chinese like to convert some Chinese pinyin into English, and even make these words official enough to be put into dictionaries.

Marcus further mentioned the unbreakable correlation between Hong Kong English accents and the unique identity of 'Hong Kong people':

> [Marcus] These accents represent the culture and characteristics of a place. That's what makes Hong Kong English accent special!

Valerie and Marcus's insights could be elaborated with Kachru (1997)'s suggestion. Kachru argued that Asian countries and cities, including Hong Kong, usually use English as a functional lingua franca to meet "bilingualism/ multilingualism competency" for education and work purposes only. She also suggested that 'English on Asian terms' could lead to autonomy by "adding in literary

creativity" to cope with Asian societies. Similar to Kachru's beliefs, the four respondents also suggested adding innovation and a linguistic mix to English words, to make them a unique and irreplaceable representation of Hong Kong (Kachru, 1997).

As a whole, all respondents reported that they have never deeply reflected on Hong Kong English or developed any love other than familiarity. They reaffirmed their appreciation for joining the study abroad programs which broaden their horizons and social circles. They all claimed that the exchange program has impacted their overall perceptions of using different accents or variations of English, including the Hong Kong English accent. Not only did they find it easier to accept having a Hong Kong English accent that is not considered native, but they also agreed that they learned a lot through the process. One major shared takeaway was that it was crucial to respect people having different English accents and cultural diversities, and to embrace the Hong Kong English accent as it is a unique representation of cultural and in-group identity (Hansen Edwards, 2015) that is worthy and significant to be preserved and collectively shared within Hong Kong communities and even to global world in the upcoming future.

5. Discussion

In the discussion section, it is crucial to redirect the focus towards the central topic of this study: Does Study Abroad legitimize Hong Kong English? This was demonstrated using a before-and-after comparison of students' attitudes towards Hong Kong English, along with Schneider's Dynamic Model (2007) which depicts the evolutionary cycle of postcolonial Englishes.

5.1 Attitudes and Legitimization: Without and Before studying abroad

By combining the findings of the above two studies, it was discovered that the majority of Hong Kong students who had no prior studying abroad experience and who had not yet started their study abroad program reported negative perceptions towards Hong Kong English, as explained in the above sections. These perceptions included language anxiety, belittlement towards education level and teaching impact, and hesitation in speaking Hong Kong English.

These attitudes confirmed previous studies that Hong Kong local students are primarily in Stage 2 and Stage 3 of Schneider's Dynamic Model (2007). Even though they did acknowledge HKE as a distinct variety with unique linguistic features, and mainly used it within intra-ethnic and in-group communications, they generally treat exonormative norm (i.e. British English in Hong Kong context) as the standard, and still had lots of negative perspectives towards HKE. (Groves, 2011; Zhang, 2013).

These findings indicated a lower extent of legitimization of HKE, as it was not yet widely recognized yet.

5.2 Attitudes and Legitimization: During and After studying abroad

Interestingly, these perceptions have changed following study abroad experiences for Hong Kong students. During and after studying abroad, they developed gradual approval towards Hong Kong English upon observation and comparison with people with different language varieties. They also believe that Hong Kong English is linked closely to their sense of belonging.

These show that after studying abroad, there is a tendency that students would abandon past perceptions of Hong Kong English that relied on standardized foreign forms, and move to stage 4: endonormative stabilization. In this stage, Hong Kong students start to develop positive attitudes towards the newly emerging variety — a localized version of Hong Kong English — and accept it as a local norm and a carrier of identity (Kirkpatrick, 2007; Hansen Edwards, 2015). These indicate a tendency for Hong Kong English to become more legitimate.

5.3 Limitations of this study

Due to the limited sample size and time frame for this study, the findings and results may not accurately reflect the views of general study abroad students, for example, potential long-term changes of perception were excluded as additional learning experiences will inevitably occur in the future. Also, there are potential outliers in this analysis because study abroad programs are not the only way to legitimate Hong Kong English. Besides the study participants, other general students may have developed negative feelings or experienced no change in their attitudes and perceptions towards Hong Kong English.

This study calls for further investigation and exploration of the long-term effect of the legitimization of Hong Kong English after participating in study abroad programs. This topic is prone to be further discussed and investigated with a larger sample size and longer time span to provide more representative results and present the overall change in perceptions in the long run.

6. Conclusion

Throughout this study, I suggest the following cause-and-effect relationship. While local students typically hold unfavorable and biased stereotypes towards Hong Kong English accent, study abroad programs provide valuable opportunities for students to engage in close communication with people around the globe, leading to increased attention to diverse language varieties. This heightened awareness would

potentially inspire students to reflect on their perceptions and grow appreciation for the uniqueness of Hong Kong English, leading to a positive shift in attitudes towards Hong Kong English. This is in the hopes that eventually study abroad students would acknowledge Hong Kong English as a legitimate and recognized variety of English.

As born-and-bred Hong Kong individuals, it is hoped that this study would inspire people to think about the reasons behind their language perceptions and accent preferences, which may be influenced, learned, and shaped through every tiny moment of their lives without even noticing it. It is worth pondering over Valerie's remarks, "I guess… Hong Kong people are just too harsh and judgmental of their English." Meanwhile, a lighthearted statement from one of Kary's foreign friends offered insight: "English is probably the most forgiving language. Even native speakers make mistakes in their conversations… As long as I kinda got what you mean, then we're all good. Let's just carry on." After all, English is a universal medium to join people around the world to communicate and share love (Bolton, 2002). It would be ironic if English became the reason to tear people apart by discriminating against each other's accents. It is strongly recommended that Hong Kong students be encouraged to join more study abroad programs and cultural exchange programs, so they can be more exposed to the beauty of diverse English accents. This paper also served as an alarm to educators, parents, and students to embrace a supportive and inclusive classroom environment so that everyone is encouraged to participate without worrying about the accent perfection myth.

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Protocol with Local Students

Thank you for taking part in this short survey about the attitudes of Hong Kong students towards Hong Kong English accent. It should only take approximately 10 minutes of your time. To collect data for educational background, I will ask for your major and year of study. I would also jot down some inspiring insights from your responses. Please rest assured that no photographs or video recordings will be taken along the way, and your identity will be kept anonymous.

In the following part, I will play a few YouTube clips for you to listen to.

[Listening to YouTube clips]

Firstly, please suggest two descriptive adjectives that best characterize how Hong Kong English sounds.

Next, please share your insights on the following questions:

1) What can you tell us about the speaker in the audio clip?
2) Which social group do you believe the speaker belongs to?
3) How would you describe the speaker?
4) Would you please further share your perspectives and personal experiences with Hong Kong English?

Thank you for your participation and insightful input!

Appendix B: Dataset for Mixed-method Study with Local Students

By-Person Analysis Table

Partic-ipant ID	University Major, Year of study	Authe-nticity of Tiffany's HKE accent (Out of 10)	Adjectives Used to describe Tiffany's HKE accent	Related personal experiences/ opinions with HKE
A	CUHK, Commu-nications, Year 3	8	Embarrassing, Undereducated	I wouldn't say that I hate Hong Kong English accents. But I have been trying hard to pronounce words more native-like, but it is super hard to get rid of the Cantonese habits. My horrible Hong Kong accent just kicks in every once I speak in English. That is embarrassing!
B	CUHK, IBBA, Year 3	8	Fair, Normal	The nine Cantonese vowels are ingrained in our pronunciation. For example, we usually neglect the terminal /-t/ sounds and pronounce words like "assignmen'", "aligmen'", "approxima", etc. Obviously, messages could still be effectively communicated... but it sounds less official and dignified.
C	CUHK, English, Year 4	9	Unintelligible, Relatable	My Hong Kong English accent has become the target of teasing from my classmates. Even my university professor openly used the word 'broken' to

				judge my English in front of more than 100 students. That hurts a lot…(sighs) That is why I decided not to answer any questions in English classes anymore.
D	CUHK, English, Year 4	9	Inaccurate, Normal	I once worked up the nerve to chat with my school's native-speaking English teacher. This British teacher looked confused when I spoke with my Hong Kong English accent. After explaining a few times, he finally understood it. Then he corrected me on how to say such expressions in standard British English. I became anxious and unconfident about talking in English afterward.
E	CUHK, English, Year 4	8	Unprofessional, Broken	Some English teachers in Hong Kong have no idea how poor their Hong Kong English is. It's ironic when schools expect us to become proficient English users in such a teaching environment.
F	CUHK, Engineering, Year 3	9	Irritating, Hong-Kong-style	That [Teaching in Hong Kong English] adversely affects the English education and development of thousands of young children. I believe that accents should be nurtured and trained from a young age. Schools seriously should consider hiring more native-speaking

				English teachers to assist us with our oral training.
G	CUHK, Risk Mana-gament Year 3	10	Wrong, Non-standard	In my secondary school, native-speaking English teachers only teach regularly in enrichment classes tailored for academically gifted students. My studies were poor, and I studied in mainstream classrooms. I don't have the opportunity to enjoy this prestige English education.
H	HKU, Eng Edu, Year 4	9	Weird, Non-standard	My teachers said it is non-standard to speak in Hong Kong English accent. That's why I have been practicing hard for a native accent.
I	HKU, Law, Year 3	5	Familiar, Hong-Kong-style	I don't think it is embarrassing to communicate with Hong Kong English accent, because all my classmates speak the same way.
J	HKUST, Physics, Year 3	9	Non-standard, Low	I hate doing English group discussions, it makes me scared of being judged.
K	HKUST, Mathemati cs, Year 4	10	Familiar, Hong-Kong-style	It is ironic and sad for Hong Kong people to spread shame and hatred towards our own English accent.
L	PolyU, Nursing, Year 4	8	Non-standard, Nerdy	It sounds nerdy, just like DSE machines.
M	PolyU, Nursing, Year 3	9	Weird, Irritating	I think Hong Kong English accent sounds similar to Chinese English accent.

N	HKU, Music, Year 3	8	Familiar, Hong-Kong-style	No matter what accent we have got, it is just for communication anyway. No big deal.
O	PolyU, Fashion, Year 4	8	Undereducated, Hong-Kong-style	Hong Kong people talk very fast, just like rapping. It is not easy to be understood.
P	HKU, Translation, Year 4	9	Poor, Stupid	Our English accent is understandable within our own circle, but foreigners may look down on us.
Q	HKU, Nursing, Year 4	9	Non-standard, Unprofessional	When comparing to Band 1 students who have native accents, I feel shameful about my own Hong Kong English accent.
R	PolyU, Optometry, Year 4	6	Familiar, Unprofessional	I wanna get rid of my Hong Kong English accent.
S	PolyU, Mental Health Nursing, Year 4	8	Familiar, Wrong	I always think of my Hong Kong English accent as flaws.
T	PolyU, Mental Health Nursing, Year 4	8	Relatable, Wrong	Hong Kong people don't understand native slangs. We only say, 'I'm fine, thank you. And you?'

Overall Frequency and Percentage Table of Adjectives used

Adjective Used	Frequency	Percentage	Category	Overall Percentage of positive, negative and neutral terms
Embarrassing	2	5%	Negative	Positive: 0% Negative: 67.5% Neutral: 32.5%
Undereducated	2	5%	Negative	
Fair	1	2.5%	Neutral	
Normal	3	7.5%	Neutral	
Unintelligible	1	2.5%	Negative	
Relatable	2	5%	Neutral	
Inaccurate	1	2.5%	Negative	
Unprofessional	2	5%	Negative	
Broken	2	5%	Negative	
Irritating	2	5%	Negative	
Hong-Kong-style	4	10%	Neutral	
Wrong	3	7.5%	Negative	
Non-standard	6	15%	Negative	
Weird	2	5%	Negative	
Familiar	3	7.5%	Neutral	
Poor	2	5%	Negative	
Stupid	1	2.5%	Negative	
Nerdy	1	2.5%	Negative	
Low	1	2.5%	Negative	
Total	40	100%		

Appendix C: Interview Protocol with Study Abroad Students

The purpose of this interview is to learn about the participants' attitudes and perceived confidence using the Hong Kong English accent before and after their exchange program. Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in this interview and to offer your insightful thoughts and personal experiences. Please note that this interview will be audio recorded with your permission and consent for a detailed investigation. If you confirm that you are at ease and willing to do so, we will begin now.

Part 1. Before your exchange program

- How confident did you feel in speaking with a Hong Kong English accent? What are the reasons for your confidence level? Is it an outcome of the English-learning educational environment in Hong Kong?
- Did you have any assumptions or stereotypes about speaking with a Hong Kong English accent? If so, what were they?
- How do you believe the Hong Kong English accent is perceived by global citizens? Do you think it is generally viewed as 'good' or 'poor' English?
- Did you have any expectations on the potential difficulties of speaking English with foreigners during the exchange program?

Part 2. During your exchange program

- Did you notice any changes in your level of confidence when speaking with a Hong Kong English accent? If so, can you describe and explain those changes?
- Were there any specific experiences or interactions during the exchange program that shaped your perception and confidence while using the Hong Kong English accent?
- Could you observe how Hong Kong's English accent was perceived by the students at your exchange school? Is the response generally positive or negative?
- Based on your observation, did people's perceptions of the English accent from Hong Kong differ according to their nationality? For instance, nations in Asia and America?
- Would you tend to speak with a Hong Kong English accent during interactions? Or would you attempt to blend in by mimicking their English accents?
- (Question For Kary) Would you say that while you studied in Finland and Canada, respectively, your experiences communicating with local students in Hong Kong English accents differed? In what manners, if so?

Part 3. After the exchange program

- Did your overall perception of the Hong Kong English accent change during the exchange program? How and why?
- Since participating in the exchange program, have you become more comfortable and confident in speaking Hong Kong's English accent? If so, what social or cultural influences do you believe are at play when it comes to perceptions of speaking Hong Kong English accent?
- Have there been any discernible shifts in your mindset and attitude regarding the possible reactions or responses from other people when you speak with an English accent from Hong Kong, both before and following the exchange program?
- How has the exchange program impacted your overall perceptions of using different accents or variations of English, including the Hong Kong English accent?
- What advice or insights would you offer to a person with a Hong Kong English accent planning to take part in an overseas exchange program?
- In your opinion, why is it crucial to recognize and respect different English accents or variations, such as the Hong Kong English accent?

Thank you so much for your participation and valuable sharing!

Appendix D: An example of a transcribed interview transcript

Below is an excerpt from the interview with Kary, partly transcribed from Cantonese to English, covering questions 1-3 from Part 2:

Interviewer: So, as you were saying, before your trip to Finland, you had some not-so-great and unconfident perceptions towards Hong Kong English. I'm curious, did your perceptions change during the time studying in Finland? Let's move on to the second part of our interview. Did you notice any changes in your level of confidence when speaking with a Hong Kong English accent?

Kary: Yes, for sure! I have gained a ton of confidence in speaking English. And guess what? I believe I have picked the perfect location for my study abroad experience. Speaking English there was super stress-free.

Interviewer: It seems that you had a fantastic time during the study abroad program. I am so happy for you! I just noticed that you use the word 'stress-free' to describe the English-speaking environment in Finland. Would you further explain why you felt that way and whether it influenced your increased confidence in speaking Hong Kong English?

Kary: I mean… the English-speaking atmosphere there was very supportive and non-judgmental. Many international students I met during the exchange program weren't native English speakers either. So, there was no pressure when communicating. No worries at all! People never judge or discriminate based on accents. This trained my confidence to speak boldly!

Interviewer: I see. Were there any specific experiences or interactions during the exchange program that shaped your perception and confidence while using the Hong Kong English accent?

Kary: (laughs) In my experience, when talking to foreigners, they often found the Hong Kong English accent was somewhat similar to the accent in the United States. They actually praised my English accent several times.

Interviewer: That's interesting! What did they say? Do you mind sharing with me?

Kary: Hmm… (pauses for a few seconds) Let me share with you one exact quote from a random stranger in Finland. She said, 'Wow! Your English is so fluent, just like you grew up in New York!' That makes me very surprised and happy. So, I think the Hong Kong accent is internationally recognized as a good fluent English accent!

Interviewer: Since you mentioned international recognition, could you observe how Hong Kong's English accent was perceived by the students at your exchange school? Was the response generally positive or negative?

Kary: Generally positive! What's interesting is that the students at my exchange school often see the English-speaking skills of Hong Kongers and Singaporeans as very similar. Both Hong Kong and Singapore are relatively international cities, so they sometimes assume that people from these places have a certain level of English proficiency.

Interviewer: So, are you suggesting that foreigners can acknowledge Hong Kong people simply by observing our accents?

Kary: (hesitates) I'm not sure whether they can clearly distinguish the accent of Hong Kong. However, if they see an Asian person speaking English fluently, they would not be surprised if they were from Hong Kong or Singapore. So, I believe that people around the world generally appreciate Hong Kong English accent. Or at least, they do not hold negative attitudes towards our English accent, even though many Hong Kong people might dislike it.

[End of transcript for Part 2, Questions 1-3]

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Language, Signs, and Little Manila:
The role of visual semiotics in constructing diasporic identity among Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong

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1. Introduction

As at the end of 2022, the population of Filipina domestic workers (FDWs) in Hong Kong had reached 190,000 (Immigration Department, 2023). The spread of the Filipina diaspora in Hong Kong has begun in the early 1970s when Hong Kong was experiencing economic boom and the Philippines economy was beginning to hit rock bottom (Cruz, 2010). In the past half century, FDWs have been one of the vital cogs in the machinery of the Hong Kong society. They provide support to Hong Kong families by managing household chores and caring for children and the elderly, alleviating their employers' stress from juggling career and home responsibilities. Possibly also because of this, the identity of FDWs in Hong Kong is often tied to their occupation as domestic workers (Law, 2001). In Hongkongers' daily conversations, FDWs are commonly addressed as "工人"[1] ("maid") or "菲傭" ("Filipino maid") rather than their names. This is an example of the social constructionist view on identity, that bidirectional (avowed and ascribed) identity is being constructed in and through social practices that include but not restricted to language (Meyerhoff, 2018; Martin and Nakayama, 2009). This definition of identity will be used throughout the study. To counter this reductionist identity imposed on FDWs, I aim to explore the construction of FDWs' diasporic identity through place by firstly investigating the relationship between the linguistic landscape (LL) in World-Wide Plaza (WWP) and the FDW diasporic identity from the perspective of both FDWs and local Hongkongers followed with an examination of the role of WWP in constructing diasporic FDWs' identity.

Despite being the major ethnic group in Hong Kong, the attention they received might be deemed disproportionate. Lai (2013) noted that the linguistic presence of minority groups was hard to notice unless special attention is paid to hotspots where such groups may congregate or reside. While several research on the LL and identity construction has been done in Hong Kong (Lam, 2023; Wong & Chan, 2018; Zhang & Ou, 2021), little attention was paid to the LL of FDWs' ethnic enclaves, otherwise FDWs' lives and identities outside their employers' house. This is not just a research gap but also a tacit endorsement of the reductionism of FDWs' identity. That said, gaining knowledge about FDWs' ethnic enclaves is of paramount importance as it acknowledges FDWs' contributions to both Hong Kong's economy and social fabric, and affirms that FDWs are an integral part of the Hong Kong society. With these in mind, three research questions were formulated and addressed in this study:

1. What are the language patterns and prominent language(s) of bottom-up signs displayed in WWP?
2. How do FDWs and local Hongkongers perceive and describe the Linguistic Landscape (LL) in WWP in terms of the diasporic FDW identity?
3. What is the cultural significance of WWP in the diasporic FDW identity?

2. Literature review

Filipina Domestic Workers in Central

Every Sunday in and around Central, "Little Manila" (Law, 2001) comes alive. On this day, Filipina break away from their employers' way of life and embrace their home culture by enjoying Filipino food, shopping at Filipino speciality shops and most importantly, gathering with friends (Law, 2001). Ortuzar (2020) and Peralta-Catipon (2009) discussed the public gatherings of FDWs in Central, both highlighting the importance of these gatherings as a form of social and cultural representation. Engaging in amateur performances such as beauty pageants is a way how FDWs resist the racialized conceptions of the diasporic FDW identity

[1] "工人姐姐" is also a typical way to address FDWs. Adding "姐姐" (*jie-jie/che-che*, directly translated as sister) is considered to be more respectful. Thus, this expression is preferred when FDWs' are being addressed externally, especially when introducing FDWs to children to avoid being rude.

as well as the invisibility of their labour in the Hong Kong society (Ortuzar, 2020). These performances showcase FDWs' talents and creates a public presence almost polarized to the stereotype that they are predisposed to domestic work. As noted by Peralta-Catipon (2009), physical spaces are being transformed into a place of community. FDWs' Sunday gatherings at Statue Square in Central was the subject of Peralta-Catipon's (2009) study, it demonstrates how a physical place could be manipulated as venues of shared experiences, meanings and identity. It was claimed that Statue Square serves as a provisional society and a home away from home for FDWs. In regards to FDWs' adaptation to the new environment in the host country, this process could be seen as attempts in mitigating the difficulties resulting from displacement, disempowerment and prejudice. However, there is still limited discussion on how these physical spaces are negotiated with other groups in the city (Hongkongers) which their perceptions of these spaces might affect the ascribed diasporic identity of FDWs. Therefore, this study will address this research gap by featuring not just the views from FDWs, but also Hongkongers in exploring the intricacies between the use and perceptions of physical spaces and the construction of an identity.

Visual Semiotics: Building Blocks of the Diasporic Identity

First appearing in the seminal work Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: An Empirical Study by Landry and Bourhis (1997), the term "linguistic landscape" was defined as "the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combines to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region, or urban agglomeration". In other words, LL concerns the visibility and salience of languages on signs in public spaces. That is because public signs reflect the language of power in a region and can convey linguistic identities and the status of competing language groups (Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

Over the past decade, LL studies have been expanding, accounting for not just texts but also "in place" discourses in signs during the meaning making process (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). This shift has been driven by the recognition that signs in public spaces are not just textual but also highly visual, "all of the signs and symbols take a major part of their meaning from how and where they are placed" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Visual semiotics might be preferred in the analysis and interpretations of visual representations as they focus on all of the ways in which pictures (signs, images, graphics, texts, and all of the other combinations of these and others) are produced as meaningful wholes (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). LL studies using visual semiotics have been conducted within the Hong Kong context. Lou (2017), for example, studies the dynamics within three Hong Kong markets which are important social spaces for the research participants. This research reveals the distinct arrangement of geosemiotic aggregate represented by each market which influence the experiences of the location since customers' selectively engaged with particular modes of communication and sensory characteristics of the spaces (Lou, 2017). Another study conducted by Persohn (2019) explored the LL when navigating new cities, which is particularly relevant to FDWs' experiences when they first arrived Hong Kong. The author suggested that public sings act as visual cues that influences visual literacy and help individuals navigate unfamiliar environments (Persohn, 2019). Based on this finding, it could be inferred that the public display of images and/or languages (i.e., Tagalog) that are intelligible and familiar to FDWs in Hong Kong might help them gain a sense of neighbourhood through navigating this place and ultimately build their diasporic identity.

Diasporic identity is defined as "the complex, multidimensional sense of self and belonging experienced by individuals who have migrated from their original homeland and are engaged in maintaining connections with it" (Naujoks, 2010). Previous studies established the relationship between visual semiotic resources and the expression of identity of the diasporic

communities. By looking into the contestation of urban signs and symbols in Petaling Street (Chinatown) in Kuala Lumpur, Ng and Chan (2023) note that meanings could be drawn from semiotics in shaping the street identities. Signages were one of the key elements of cultural products forming the central visual communication that has evolved from the shaping the sense of Chinese-ness (Ng & Chan, 2023).

It could be concluded that prior investigations on the role of visual semiotics in relation to diasporic identity have recognized visual semiotics as a powerful tool for expressing, negotiating, and understanding diasporic identity, substantiating the significance of this study.

3. Methodology

In the present study, Grounded Theory was adopted as the primary method in developing a theory in relation to the connection between visual semiotics and FDWs' diasporic identity. First proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), this methodology uses a systematic and inductive set of process to develop theory about a phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 2014) and is widely used in the field of social science. Yet, considering the people-orienting nature of the present linguistic study, the conscious choice of adopting the Grounded Theory is made because it sets aside speculations and assumptions about the actual process and concentrate on the participants' reality (Glaser, 1999). Hence, this facilitates the development of theory, the conceptual coding and data interpretations in a way that is anchored in context of the construction of FDWs' diasporic identity.

This study followed a sequential qual→Quan→QUAL design with more emphasis given to the last qualitative part. Figure 1 gives a visual representation of the research activities conducted in this study.

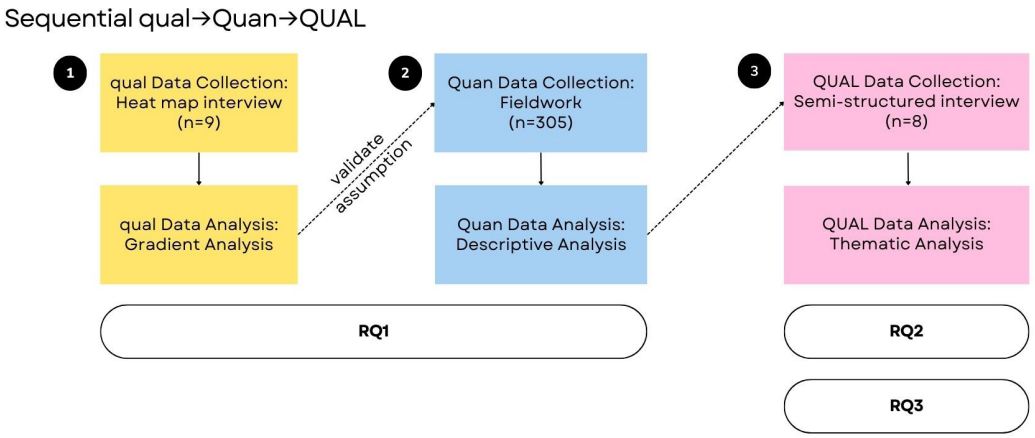

Figure 1 Flow chart of research activities

3.1 Phase 1: Heat Map Interview

The use of heat map interview in defining spatial boundaries was adapted from Amos's (2016) study. The goal of these interviews is to lay the foundation of the fieldwork in phase 2 by pinpointing the research site through examining FDWs' practices. In other words, this qualitative data help develop the first research question by visualizing and substantiating the status of WWP as one of the hot spots where FDWs congregate on their holidays.

3.1.1 Participants of phase 1

All 9 participants were recruited through purposive sampling method. The criteria for the selection of participants are that they must be a self-declared FDW in Hong Kong. The scope of participants is limited to only FDWs rather than all Filipinos because

FDWs have significant demographic presence as they make up the majority of the entire Filipinos ethnic group in Hong Kong.

3.1.2 Data collection of phase 1

Participants were shown a map of Central in the Sketchbook app on an iPad and were asked to circle the area(s) they usually go on their holidays. Then, follow up questions, for example "what do you do there?" and "why do you go there?", were also asked to yield data on FDWs' reasons for visiting those area(s). The products of this interview include the participants' responses on locations in the form of heat maps, as well as their purpose of visiting in the form of audio recordings. Note that the participants' responses were only modified (closing the drawn circles) to facilitate color filling and enhance visibility of the circled area, originality and accuracy of the responses were maintained to the largest extent. Nonetheless, one of the limitations of this mapping technique in defining space is that the participants' perception of space could vary, leading to potential mismatches between the mapping and the actual intended responses. Afterall, it remains clear that WWP is the center of FDWs' congregation. Participants were made aware that their participation is completely voluntary and all of them have given consents to participate in the study. All relevant information, for example, the objective of the study, the aim of the interview and the process of data handling etc. were explained verbally to the participants and were made sure that they understand clearly. Names were not asked in the interview to maintain their anonymity.

3.1.3 Data analysis of phase 1

The data were made into a composite heat map. Participants' responses were superimposed and the opacity of each layer was lowered to 25% when compiling the result. It then underwent gradient analysis which considers the concentration and the intensity of colour of the circled areas (the darker the red shade of the area, the more people have circled it). The analysis visualizes patterns like clusters and outliers of the spatial data which enhances the ease of comprehension and interpretation.

The analysis of the interviews involved transcription and thematization. All the recordings were firstly transcribed by otter.ai and were manually checked and reviewed for accuracy. The identified recurring themes from the transcripts represent FDWs' intent of visiting WWP.

3.2 Phase 2: Fieldwork

To proceed with data collection, it is necessary to first define the research site. The term "Little Manila" is widely defined as public spaces of Central where FDWs gather (Kwok, 2019; Tam, 2016). However, the result of our first phase of investigation suggested a more precise location (i.e., WWP) as the survey area, which aligned with actual FDWs' practices. Therefore, the scope of this particular investigation is limited to WWP, the key centre of FDWs' congregation, only.

In phase 2 of the investigation, quantitative fieldwork in the form of photographing signs displayed in WWP were carried out with the aim of building an inventory of the linguistic landscape within the mall. The photographic data were coded according to their visual semiotic features to address RQ1. Moreover, a selection of these photographic data were used in phase 3 as prompts to elicit FDWs' and local Hongkongers' perceptions towards signs in different (combination of) languages in WWP.

3.2.1 Data collection of phase 2

The photographic data of signs were collected through site visits to WWP in October 2023. Different from Cenoz and Gorter's (2006) "whole establishment" approach of photographing all visible linguistic objects, only bottom-up signs are included in this study mainly due to their representativeness. According to Gorter (2006), bottom-up signs, also referred to as nonofficial signs, are placed by commercial enterprises or by private organizations or persons. This type of signs incorporates different linguistic choices made by multinational shop owners in WWP, which could be part of their respective authenticities and identities (Zhang et al., 2023). The number of signs per shop in this study was capped at four and all signs were purposively sampled to best represent the shop. This is an attempt to strike the balance between a manageable data base without compromising the diversity of signs. Maintaining the level of richness of the data fosters a more holistic comprehension of the linguistic landscape in WWP.

In total, 305 photos of signs were collected. Rather than solely photographing the shopfront sign for each business as Zhang et al. (2023) did, this study utilized a varied data set including both stationary and transient signs such as promotional leaflets, handwritten signs, posters, shop notices, stickers and banners etc. This decision is grounded on the principal that although linguistic choices could be made either consciously or unconsciously, they are often meaningful, to an extent, in revealing various factors – for example, cultural background, identity and the context of communication. This maximizes the heterogeneity of the data, allowing a broad representation of different language users in WWP.

3.2.2 Data coding and analysis of phase 2

The data were coded with Excel spreadsheet according to Scollon and Scollon's (2003) visual semiotic framework, the coding included "language combinations patterns" and "code preferences". Subsequently, each sign was categorized according to the use of English, Tagalog, Chinese, as well as the combinations of English + Tagalog, English + Chinese and Tagalog + Chinese. It should be noted that although the use of Tagalog words, phrases, clauses, and sentences in English discourse, or vice-versa (Bautista, 2004) could be coded as Taglish, signs displaying a combination of English + Tagalog in this study were coded as Tagalog and English separately to facilitate comparisons on the language prominence in later stage.

In assessing the relative importance of languages on multilingual signs, this study followed the same system used in prior study of Hong Kong's linguistic landscape carried out by Lai (2012). She employed the code preference semiotic system suggested by Scollon and Scollon (2003). The rationale is that "the preferred code is on top, on the left, or in the centre and the marginalized code is on the bottom, on the right, or on the margins" (Scollon & Scollon's, 2003). Nevertheless, difficulties in judging the preferred code in signs with comparable placement of codes were expected, in which case both languages are regarded as equally prominent (Lai, 2012).

3.3 Phase 3: Semi-structured Interview

A total of 8 participants were recruited for the semi-structured interview. All interviews were recorded and were 15 minutes on average. This interview explores the topic in a free-flowing and open-ended manner, dialogues were encouraged to go beyond the discussion guide.

3.3.1 Participants of phase 3

The demographic was made up of four self-declared FDWs and Hongkongers each. FDWs were recruited through snowball sampling because of the lack of access to the FDWs population. In response to that, my mother, who used to be a FDW, agreed to put me in contact with FDWs in her social network. I then directly seek consents for the interview from the four participants. It should, however, be pointed out that this sampling method might not be accurate in making inferences about the general population since the selection totally relies on referrals which are likely to have social proximity. This might lead to potential sampling bias.

On the other hand, Hongkonger participants were recruited through purposive sampling. They are all declared to (1) be locally born Hongkongers who are residing in Hong Kong for most of their lives and (2) have varying experience with FDWs (i.e., two of them have been taken care of by FDWs whereas the rest have not). This a decision is made to counteract potential confirmation biases where people tend to seek out and interpret information in the way that confirms their pre-existing beliefs or relates to their past experiences. Again, participants were made aware that their participation is completely voluntary and all of them have given consents to participate in the study. All relevant information, for example, the objective of the study, the aim of the interview and the process of data handling etc. were explained verbally to the participants and were made sure that they understand clearly. Names were not asked in the interview to maintain their anonymity. Each participant was assigned a number when their responses were quoted.

Table 1 List of participants of the semi-structured interview

Speaker	Representing group	Remarks
1	Hongkongers	No experience
2	Hongkongers	Had been taken care of by 2 FDWs (for 10 years; 3 years)
3	Hongkongers	Has been taken care of by the same FDW for 7 years
4	Hongkongers	No experience
5	FDWs	Has been working as a domestic worker for 3 years
6	FDWs	Has been working as a domestic worker for 19 years
7	FDWs	Has been working as a domestic worker for 6 years
8	FDWs	Has been working for the same employer for 14 years

3.3.2 Data collection of phase 3

The procedure of this semi-structured interview is inspired by Leimgruber and Fernández-Mallat's (2021) study on the language attitudes and identity building in the linguistic landscape of Montreal. Participants were presented a set of photographic prompts of signs collected in WWP in phase 2. The prompt consists of five slides, each slide includes four signs that are with different language combination patterns as coded in phase 2 (i.e., English-only, Tagalog-only, Chinese-only, English + Tagalog and English + Chinese). Participants were asked for reaction and attitudes towards the photographic prompts, assumptions about the locations and the creators of the signs. Towards the end of the interview, participants were informed that all the signs were collected in WWP and they were asked about assumptions (Hongkongers) and perceptions (FDWs) specifically about the place (WWP).

3.3.3 Data coding and analysis of phase 3

The data were transcribed and thematized manually. A five-by-two matrix displaying FDWs and Hongkongers' perceptions towards signs in English-only, Tagalog-only, Chinese-only, English + Tagalog and English + Chinese was included in the findings of phase 3. Notes were taken during the coding process and themes were obtained based on recurring adjectives used by the participants to describe the signs.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Phase 1

While the results of the interview suggested that WWP is one of the hot spots, other practical reasons also have effects on the location of convergence. For participants who do visit WWP, it is found that their three main purposes are buying necessities, enjoying homely food and shopping.

4.1.1 Composite heat map

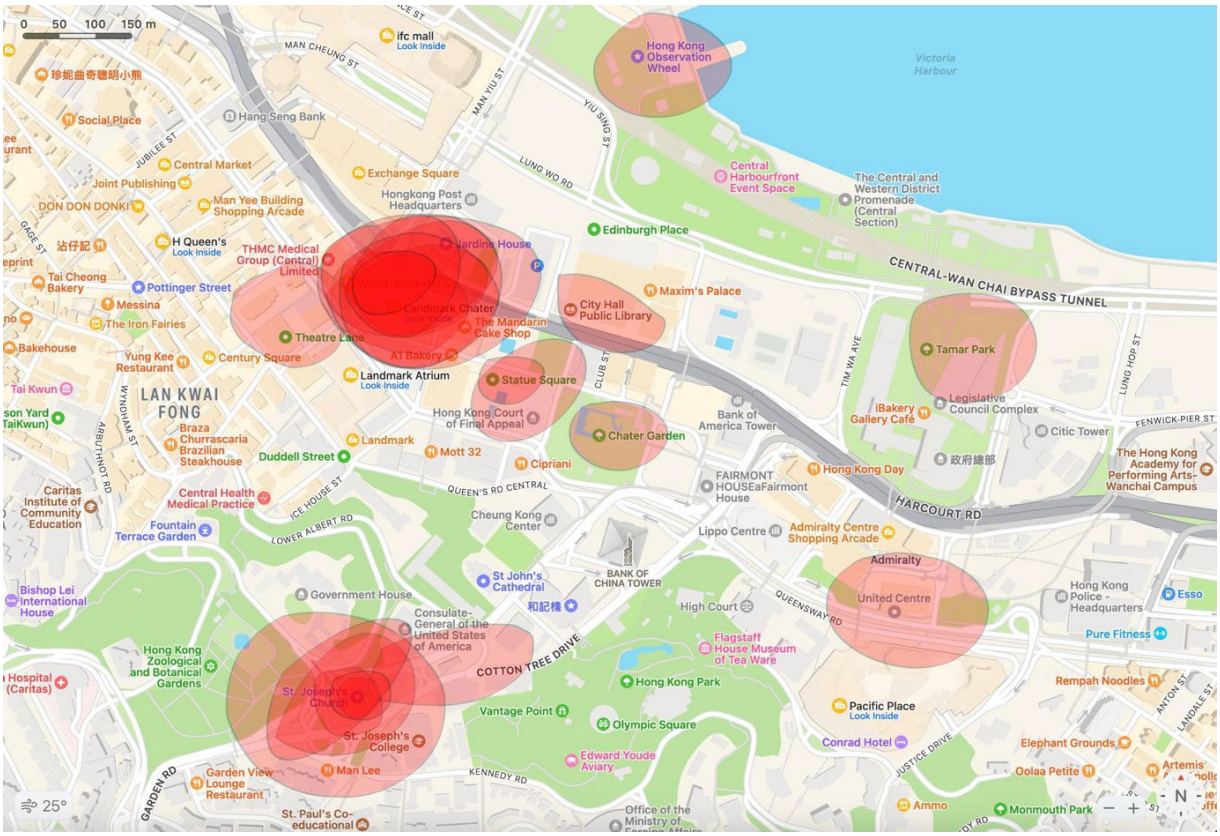

Figure 2 Composite heat map: hot spots of FDWs' congregation

Figure 2 displays the result of the heat map interview.

WWP was selected by the majority of the participants. Two darker shaded red circles are apparent in areas around WWP and St. Joseph Church in the heat map, making these two locations a popular choice. Among the nine participants, eight (88.9%[2]) included WWP as one of the areas they would visit, with six (66.7%) included St. Joseph Church

[2] All percentages are rounded to the nearest 0.1%.

as one of their destinations. Statue Square, otherwise known as the "black man", was indicated by merely two (22.2%) of the participants, and other selected locations mostly scattered along Harcourt Road. For example, Chater Garden, City Hall, and Tamar Park. In addition to WWP being the most selected place of convergence, it is chosen to be the research site also because of its abundance in signs.

It is worth mentioning that surrounding areas of Central outside the presented map, for example, Causeway Bay and Wan Chai, were also included by some participants. In particular, one participant pointed out that Central is not a place she would visit on her holidays because she lives with her employer in a remote area in Tai Po, which is far away from Central and thus the transport fee could be expensive. This example demonstrates practical reasons as to why FDWs might not congregate in WWP, or more generally in Central. At the same time, it might suggest a causal relationship between the residential districts of FDWs' employers and FDWs' preferred area(s) of gathering.

4.1.2 Reasons of visiting WWP

The motives among the participants who usually visit WWP on their holidays could be categorized into three main groups – necessities (62.5%), Filipino food (62.5%) and shopping (37.5%). Responses grouped under necessities include buying clothes, remitting money back home, and telecommunication services such as purchasing mobile phones and renewing mobile data plans. Remittance service is considered to be FDWs' necessities because it is the main source of financial support of their families back in the Philippines. Many FDWs even remit the majority of their income back home (Kwok, 2019) to maintain a standard of living for their families. In spite of the purpose of maintaining frequent communication between FDWs and their families (Madianou & Miller, 2011), mobile phones and peripheral services have become a necessity for FDWs since these services are vital means of social support for them in their adaptation to an unfamiliar environment (Ling et al., 2012), which explains why it is not categorized as "shopping".

Also indicated by more than half of the respondents, Filipino food sold in WWP embodies FDWs as national subjects (Law, 2001). Although most participants did not elaborate on the significance of consuming Philippine food, one of them mentioned how these food is "for treating themselves". Apart from triggering familiar sensory experience that resembles FDWs' home country, food allows FDWs to disrupt the social and economic geographies that labelled them as "maid" (Law, 2001). Due to the power hierarchy within homes of FDWs and their employers, they are either not permitted to cook or do not feel comfortable preparing Filipino cuisines because of their employers' stereotypical claims about the "bad smell" of their food (Law, 2001). This once again demonstrates how FDWs' origins and culture were disregarded by their Chinese employers, thus reinforcing the marginalized FDW identity.

Although shopping was mentioned by a smaller group of participants, it held its significance as one of the major reasons of visiting WWP. Used clothes priced at "ten dollars, five dollars" were explicitly identified as something FDWs would buy if they have extra money. This depiction of shopping was vastly different from how it is outside WWP because WWP is surrounded by luxury brands. The reason why bargain-priced products drew FDWs to WWP is most likely because of FDWs' affordability. According to the Labour Department (2023), the Minimum Allowable Wage for foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong ranges from HK$4,730 to HK$4,870 per month. Having a part of it remitted back home, there is not much spare for personal use (Kwok, 2019). This shows that shops in WWP catered for FDWs' needs and situations.

4.2 Phase 2

Signs with English dominated the LL of WWP. English was given prominence in the majority of the signs and Tagalog was more prominent in WWP. No multilingual sign is visible during the data collection.

The data reflects a contradiction with Hong Kong's language policy of being biliterate in English and Chinese and trilingual in English, Cantonese, and Putonghua. Tagalog, being more visible and prominent within WWP, violated the dichotomous norms of language use in Hong Kong, making it a place of its own.

4.2.1 Language combination patterns

Table 2 Language combination patterns on signs

Types of signs	*Combination patterns*	*N=305*	
Monolingual	English-only	170	55.7%
	Tagalog-only	20	6.6%
	Chinese-only	17	5.6%
Bilingual	English + Tagalog	60	19.7%
	English + Chinese	38	12.5%
	Tagalog + Chinese	-	-
Total		305	100%

Table 2 illustrates the combination patterns of languages in the LL of WWP.

Over half (55.7%) of the signs solely displayed English, which could be explained by the demographic of Central. Central, being the CBD of Hong Kong and a tourist attraction, drew businesses and tourists from around the world. That said, based on observations, despite Cantonese being the dominant language used in the city, English is more prominent in Central as a tool to facilitate communication when compared with other areas in Hong Kong. This could also be one of the reasons as to why Chinese-only signs merely take up 5.6% of the LL. More specifically in the case of WWP, the use of English on signs could be influenced by the fact that English is one of the official languages of both the Philippines and Hong Kong, making it a lingua franca between FDWs and Hongkongers who do not share the same native language. Among monolingual signs, it is worth mentioning that Tagalog signs (6.6%) are more visible than Chinese signs (5.6%) which is unusual in Hong Kong. As a minority language, Tagalog does not appear to be salient in the LL of Hong Kong (Lai, 2012). Apart from the obvious reason of having a small number of Tagalog speakers, Lai (2012) suggested that the visibility of foreign languages in the LL is highly due to "the prestigious meanings [and] status they carry as symbols of style, fame, quality and luxury". These adjectives are hardly associated with Tagalog, especially when the language is broadly used by FDWs who Hongkongers addressed as "maid". This ties in with phase 3 of this study in investigating the perceived meaning of the visibility of signs in different languages.

4.2.2 Code preference in bilingual signs

Table 3 Code preference in bilingual signs

Preferred code	*N=305*	
English	208	68.2%
Tagalog	60	19.7%

Chinese	37	12.1%
Total	305	100%

Table 3 illustrates the preferred code in bilingual signs in WWP.
Showing similar results as the language combinations, English was preferred in almost 70% of the signs in WWP. Yet, the gap between the visibility of Tagalog (19.7%) and Chinese (12.1%) signs are widened, which further substantiates the dominance of Tagalog over Chinese in WWP. The significance of this result lies in how the actual use of language index the community within which is being used, and this remains relevant to the perception of space (Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

4.3 Phase 3

Table 4 shows the matrix of Hongkongers' and FDWs' perceptions towards signs in WWP. The recurring theme spotted among Hongkong participants is the sense of unfamiliarity when seeing signs with the presence of Tagalog whereas FDWs' had opposite feelings, they thought that signs with the presence of Tagalog were familiar and carried a sense of homely feeling.

Table 4 Matrix of the perceptions towards signs in WWP

	English-only	Tagalog-only	Chinese-only	English + Tagalog	English + Chinese
Hongkongers	+Strange +Non-native like +Straightforward +Simplistic	+Confusing **+Foreign (Southeast Asian)** +Unfamiliar + Colourful	+Chinese +Frequently-seen +Familiar	+Uninterested +Confusing +Unintelligible **+Foreign (ethnic minorities/domestic workers)**	+(Mainland) Chinese
FDWs	+Clever +People drawing +International	+Helpful +Relatable +Familiar **+Filipinoness**	+Indifferent +Traditional (Chinese)	+Comfortable +Homely +Eye-catching +Likeable +Relatable **+Filipinoness**	+Practical +Functional +Informational

4.3.1 Hongkongers: "their" signs

"*every word is made up of letters that I feel familiar with, but when they are combined, I don't know their meanings.*" (Speaker 4)

Signs with the presence of Tagalog appeared to be "unintelligible" to Hongkongers because they have no access to the meaning conveyed through text in signs with Tagalog. Being confused is another reaction triggered upon encounter with Tagalog signs. This confusion, as mentioned by speaker 4 in the quote, arose because of the English resemblance borne by Tagalog. English and Tagalog share orthographic similarities in the use of Latin script and letter system. Additionally, Tagalog have assimilated a large number of English borrowings (Baklanova, 2017), and the language frequently features code-mixing or code-switching.

Figure 3 Advertisement of a telecommunication shop in WWP

Figure 3 is an example of loanwords and code-switching in signs. English words like "quiz" and "today" as supposed to Tagalog equivalents (*pagsusulit* [quiz] and *ngayon* [today]) are used. The conversation between the mother and her son exemplified code-switching. The Tagalog question *kamusta ang quiz mo today, anak?* (how was your quiz today, son?) was answered in English. With this being the case, the context, despite not knowing Tagalog, became more but still not fully accessible through making guesses based on the available linguistic and visual resources.

Figure 4 Menu of a Filipino canteen

"*Yeah, that's obviously you know, a bit of both languages. And I guess it's from the Philippines as well. Two ulam and rice. Big bowl small bowl. Yeah. I mean, I can understand some of the words on signs but I have to guess. So I guess ulam, U-L-A-M is some sort of, you know, dish?*" (Speaker 2)

"*I don't understand again. This is not the language I know. I mean, there's English like it's combined with English some of them but like I don't think it's mainly for Hong Kong people to see.*" (Speaker 3)

"*I feel extremely confusing… the characters and the words seem very unfamiliar with... Some, some of them are familiar and but most of them, I feel really confused about them… I don't feel like reading these posters.*" (Speaker 4)

The three excerpts are reactions of Speaker 2, 3and 4 (Hongkongers) to Figure 4 which was coded under the category of English + Tagalog. Speaker 2 was able to deduce the meaning of the Tagalog word *ulam* through utilizing pieces of meaning made available to him through English words and make accurate guesses about the context of the sign. Yet, it seems like Speaker 3 and 4 overlooked the possibility of making sense of the sign through inferences, they rejected the sign because of the unfamiliar Tagalog words. Unlike the case of Speaker 2, the mix of English and Tagalog created more confusion than contextualization for Speaker 3 and 4, drifting them further apart from the meaning and context since they might not have the interest in understanding the sign that they thought was extremely confusing or not meant for them (i.e., signs with Tagalog).

It is also worth mentioning how Hong Kong participants are hesitant in pinpointing the ethnicity of the perceived intended audience of signs with the presence of Tagalog.
"*It's obviously not English… I think these are all obviously… Southeast Asian languages… Philippine Tagalog, maybe Indonesian.*" (Speaker 2)

"*Filipinos, Indonesians... I guess they are the most people in Hong Kong that speak other language. Aside from like, English speaker. Yeah. Because of a lot of domestic helpers in Hong Kong, you know, they, they have day off, they go around. And maybe these shops are for them.*" (Speaker 3)

These signs are generally labelled as "foreign", with remarks that signs in English and Tagalog could be intended for Filipina or Indonesian domestic workers. Speakers from the excerpt shared a common impression that the language they saw on the signs presented is either Tagalog or Indonesian. This dichotomy could possibly be explained by the fact that Filipinas and Indonesians made up of 97.6% of the entire domestic worker population in Hong Kong as of the end of 2022 (Immigration Department, 2022), that could be why Hongkongers specifically named the two countries and/or nationalities when being asked to make assumptions on the language, as well as the intended audience of the signs. In addition, it could also be based on their general knowledge of domestic workers' linguistic practices at and outside of work – the use of English during work with their employers and the use of their mother tongue during their holidays with their friends. This understanding might be true but it does not justify their dichotomous view on foreign domestic workers. The assimilation of FDWs and Indonesian domestic workers (IDW) implies Hongkongers' failure in recognizing each group's unique experiences and cultural backgrounds. WWP is a hot spot for FDWs but not necessarily for IDWs; Tagalog is familiar to FDWs but not necessarily to IDWs, so on and so forth. Each ethnic group has their own cultural practices and needs, homogenizing FDWs and domestic workers with other backgrounds not only lead to possible elimination of the diversity of FDW identity, but also the negligence of ethnic domestic workers groups.

4.3.2 FDWs: "our" signs

The use of Tagalog, on the contrary, is found to be a cultural representation through languages and a source of comfort for FDWs. It creates a sense of familiarity and belonging in a foreign land, making them feel "at home".

"*It's Filipino because we are already here in Hong Kong.*" (Speaker 6)

"*…easy to understand, and they say if you want a cheaper lunch for today, you can go to their shop because you can see the price. You can saves money.*" (Speaker 8)

The excerpts show the reaction of Speaker 6 and 8 when presented with Figure 4. Speaker 4 was being asked to comment on the code-switching and code-mixing in Figure 4. In contrast to how it facilitates comprehension of the situation, she made connections between the presence of English and Tagalog and the linguistic adaptations or adjustments made by FDWs as they came to Hong Kong, a foreign country. The incorporation of English, in this case, indicated the seeking of common ground (common linguistic practices of using English) while reserving differences (the prevalence of Chinese in FDWs' host country and Tagalog in their home country), making themselves, their languages and their culture in WWP more accessible to non-Tagalog speakers in Hong Kong. This demonstrated FDWs' resilience and resourcefulness in the adaptation of a new environment and simultaneously maintain connection with their home country. Besides, Speaker 8's comment echoed with FDWs' financial affordability in phase 1 of this study, that FDWs are wise with money. Having signs that are "easy to understand", or with Tagalog in shops in WWP is of great importance to FDWs because it guides their decisions on making purchases. Shops that only display monolingual English or Chinese signs might deem to be opaque and therefore more prone to misunderstandings and even scams due to the use of less familiar or unfamiliar languages. Being able to understand the information on signs with ease allows FDWs to have full access to information and to compare options before making purchases, suggesting their frugality. On the other hand, Speaker 8 were also actively looking for "cheaper" options and to "save money" as indicated in the excerpt. This explicitly mirrors their frugal financial mindset of prioritizing cost-effectiveness over luxuries in the ultimate goal of making the most out of their hard-earned income.

Moreover, it was suggested by the FDW participants that WWP is a place that provides social opportunities.

"*It's just sometimes when my friends asked me to meet someone, and then we go to World-wide.*" (Speaker 6)

"*If my friend asking me to meet them, they just give me the World-wide place, we can meet there in the World-wide like this... easy to find.*" (Speaker 8)

"*...you can see many people many helpers who stay there.*" (Speaker 8)

Apart from practicality investigated in the first phase of this study, WWP, which sits two levels above the MTR station (Kwok, 2019), was regarded as the meeting place for FDWs and their friends because of its convenient and recognizable locations. It facilitates the connection and the building of social network among FDWs in Hong Kong. As mentioned by Speaker 8, "many helpers (FDWs)" were said to be present in WWP. Having a group FDWs who share similar background and experience in WWP encourages connections and interactions within the FDW groups as they are more likely

to resonate with each other, which is the first step to developing a sense of community and solidarity.

"*Because when I come in here in Hong Kong way back in 2009, my auntie always ask me if you we meet in the World-wide because that is the place for Filipino. You can find many Filipinos stay there...*" (Speaker 8)

Speaker 8's recollection of her own experience as a new FDW in 2009 compiled with her assertion that WWP is "the place for Filipino" reinforces the symbolic significance of WWP. Describing WWP as "the place for Filipino" means that it is a place for their identity as a Filipina, which is often overlooked by Hongkongers in FDWs daily lives, to finally shine; that they could embrace their Filipina identity and build or maintain connections with their fellows. The building of connection was made possible or at least easier because the congregation of FDWs in WWP opens up the possibility of socialization among different FDW individuals. This is especially important for new FDWs who are still trying to get used to the new environment because they could seek help from other FDWs who have been in Hong Kong for longer when necessary, which might help them adapt to Hong Kong smoother and quicker. WWP, in this case, could also be treated as an identity incubator for community member with varying level of experiences to culturally reproduce identity and belonging that draws on shared community practices (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009) as well as the passing on of existing culture in WWP.

"*...we so excited if you can find some Filipino too. You can talk easily, you can approach them, like that. And we can communicate easily using the Filipino word... own language.*" (Speaker 8)

Speaker 8's sense of belonging to the Hong Kong FDW community could be seen in her response. It is likely to be derived from identifying and interacting with fellow FDWs who share similarities. Her desire for social networks is built on the ability to converse in Tagalog, their "own language", illustrating the use their mother tongue eases the difficulties of expressing thoughts, emotions and other cultural-specific concepts that might be lost in translation. Using Tagalog enables Speaker 8 to communicate comfortably, concurrently strengthening their bonds with their fellow FDWs. That said, it is not likely that Hongkongers, who does not speak Tagalog, will be able to develop this sense of belonging as they have already been excluded from this community and place due to the language barriers.

In addition, as investigated in phase 1 of this study. It was found that practical functions also draw FDWs to WWP.

"*...to send box to the Philippines and send money also*." (Speaker 6)

"*...buying something to send in Philippines or send money also there.*" (Speaker 8)

The shared practices of sending door-to-door parcels or "balikbayan box" (Kwok, 2019) and remitting money have framed FDWs diasporic identity. These practices are acted on because they hold paramount emotional significance. Given that FDWs are physically away from home, these are two of the few ways for FDWs to maintain connection with their families back in the Philippines. FDWs identity as the bread-

winner of their families were reaffirmed through the material and financial support they provide to their families. Additionally, the fact that these practices are shared by most, if not all, FDWs in Hong Kong, fosters the connections between FDWs in Hong Kong as they could find common ground and support from each other, further consolidating their collective identity as FDWs.

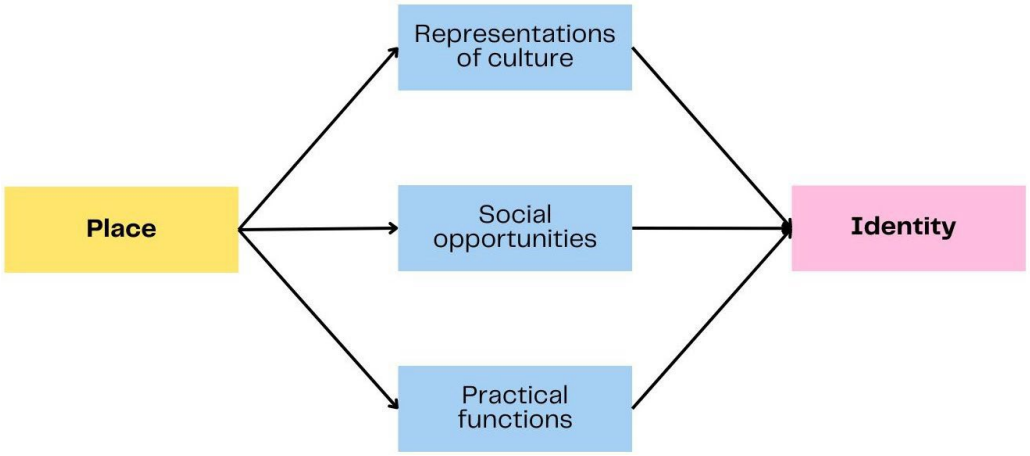

Figure 5 A model of the construction of FDW diasporic identity through place (WWP)

As shown in Figure 5, the cultural significance of WWP is evident in the FDWs' perceptions of signs in WWP. WWP represents the unique FDW culture, provides social opportunities for FDWs and carries practical functions that binds FDWs to this place. It provides a set of boundaries to the possibilities of what can be symbolically drawn upon in the process of identity construction (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009). Therefore, I suggest WWP to be considered as the locale of the FDWs community in Central.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has explored the construction of the diasporic FDW identity through physical place, bridging the study of linguistic landscape, geosemiotics and language variability. This is achieved through a three-stage process. Firstly, I determined the location of FDWs congregation to be at WWP by conducting heat map interviews. Then, fieldwork of collecting bottom-up signs was done to illustrate the prominence of English and Tagalog over Chinese in WWP. Finally in the third phase, Hongkongers' and FDWs' perception towards signs with presence of different languages were elicited through semi-structured interviews and it is found that the two groups have opposite feelings. By the end of this study, I suggested that the cultural representations, social opportunities and practical functions of a place play a part in the construction of identity. This addresses the notion of countering the reductive view of FDWs' identity as merely "maids" but rather a complex and multifaceted concept. Though, it has to be acknowledged that this study was geographically bounded within Central, which does not represent the opinions of the entire FDWs population, especially those outside Central.

After all, the attempt to investigate the identity construction of ethnic minorities in this study encourages further study on these "silenced groups" in Hong Kong to understand the misunderstood in our society.

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The Role of Age in Second Language Acquisition: The Case of South Asian Secondary School Students in Hong Kong

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Abstract

This research investigates the role of age on second language acquisition among South Asian Secondary School students in Hong Kong. Due to the complexity of the role of age in language acquisition, Lenneberg (1967) proposed the Critical Period Hypothesis which suggests that there is a threshold at which it is possible to learn another language successfully. The age of the Critical Period Hypothesis in existing literature varies from research to research while Lenneberg who proposed the theory claims that learning a language after puberty (age 12) becomes significantly challenging. The purpose of this research is to investigate whether age influences second language acquisition and explores the gap in existing literature by focusing on South Asian secondary school students in a multilingual setting in Hong Kong. The methodology consists of collecting data via a background survey and a grammaticality judgement test. Two exceptional cases were identified and interviewed to get insight into the different factors that play a role in second language acquisition. Contrary to what the existing literature claims, age only played a marginal role in this research. The findings show that learner's environment, individual differences such as motivation, language learning strategies, willingness to communicate and self-esteem play a much crucial role for successful language acquisition.

Introduction

The role of age in second language acquisition has long been a matter of controversy due to the Critical Period Hypothesis by Lenneberg (1967) which claims that there is a threshold at which it is possible to learn a language like a native speaker. However, after this threshold (i.e., after the crucial time), mastery of L2 becomes nearly impossible. In the pursuit of shedding a light on the matter, the impact of age on the second language acquisition of South Asian secondary school students was examined. According to the Census and Statistics Department, there were 96,500 South Asians in Hong Kong in 2023, making up a great percentage in schools, especially English Medium Schools. Given the increasing population of South Asian students, it is important to investigate their English proficiency.

It is a well-known fact the Hong Kong government has provided effective measures for non-Chinese speaking students (i.e. South Asian students) to improve their Cantonese proficiency since Cantonese is spoken by majority of the population. The government announced the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework" (Oxfam 2). However, there is a limited emphasis on the South Asian students' English because there is often an assumption made by most English teachers that South Asian students should have a higher level of English proficiency due to their perceived levels of exposure to English. The assumption stems from the idea that South Asian students are surrounded by English environment so it should naturally lead to a better English proficiency. However, this assumption overlooks the idea that some South Asians come to Hong Kong at a later stage in their lives, after the supposed critical period and there is a possibility that there are other factors that influence them such as their individual differences, educational system and their surroundings.

Research Questions

This research paper will contribute to a deeper understanding to help us gain a better grasp of the challenges of second language learning among South Asian students in Hong Kong and uncover the additional factors that may influence their second language acquisition. The project aims to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a correlation between one's age and second language acquisition?
2. Is it possible to attain proficiency in a second language beyond the supposed critical period?
3. If age is not a key consideration, what other factors influence one's second language acquisition?

Literature Review

The role of age is a highly debated topic since Lenneberg proposed the Critical Period Hypothesis in 1967. The theory claims that human beings are predisposed to acquire language in the early years of life and that this tendency is gone at the start of puberty at the age of twelve (Lenneberg, 1967 as cited in Dong and Ren, 2013).

The cut-off age in second language acquisition

Lenneberg claimed that acquiring another language past puberty, which occurs at the age of 12 makes it significantly difficult to achieve a native like proficiency. However, different researchers have found a different cut-off age for successfully acquiring another language. Johnson and Newport (1989) claimed that acquiring another language after the age of 7 makes it difficult to attain a native like proficiency. However, Birdsong and Molis (2001) found from their results that the critical period is set between the ages of 16 to 17.

With the varying literature, it shows that there is no consensus among researchers regarding the cut-off age for successfully acquiring a second language.

Age Effects: Evidence and Challenges

It is true that second language learners who begin acquiring another language early in life outperform late learners in the long run. Dong and Ren (2013) mention the evidence of age effects from a study conducted by Harley (1986) on two age group students in the acquisition of the French verb system in Canada. After receiving 1,000 hours of instructions, the results showed that L2 acquisition capacity declines with age in morphological domain. Similarly, Oyama (1976) as cited in Dong and Ren (2013), investigated 60 male immigrants who had entered the United States between the ages of 5 and 18, suggested that learner's capacity for acquiring phonology of the L2 declines with age. Furthermore, Johnson and Newport (1989) conducted their most influential study on 46 native Chinese or Korean participants in the United States. The participants were also divided into 2 groups, with early arrivals (before the age of 15) and late arrivals (after the age of 17). While testing the relationship between the age of arrival and grammatical rule types, it was found that there were significant individual differences. Some grammatical features were also difficult for late learners to comprehend such as determiners.

Contrary to the above literature where the research shows that age plays a major role in the successful acquisition of a second language, Singleton (2001) highlighted the possibility of attaining a native like proficiency after the supposed critical period. He mentioned the work of Bongaerts and his colleagues from 1999 where Dutch people who were learning French as a second language after the age of 12 were able to acquire a native like proficiency and perceived as natives by the French native speakers. Furthermore, he

included a case of a 22-year-old man, German as a second language learner who was largely self-taught but was mistaken by the raters as a German native speaker. This challenges the Critical Period Hypothesis which claims that acquiring another language after the age of 12 becomes significantly challenging. Surprisingly, Singleton is one of the few researchers who touched upon the learner's strong motivation as the result of successful language acquisition past the critical period. He had concluded that the man's successful language acquisition was due to his fascination with the German language and his strong desire to sound like a native German speaker.

Research Gap

By doing thorough literature review, significant gaps in the body of current research have been identified. Firstly, there is limited research on the age effects in a Hong Kong setting. As we can observe from the previous studies, majority of the research has been carried out in an English-speaking environment where English is the primary language or a foreign language such as French or German. Secondly, there is a paucity of research on the age effects in a multilingual setting for South Asians. Most of the previous literature is focused mainly on participants from East Asia such as Koreans or Chinese, or European people such as Spanish or Dutch.

Methodology

The data collection for this research was divided into three parts. The first segment attempted to gather background information from South Asian students in order to better understand their language habits and environment. The second part consisted of a grammaticality judgement test to test their implicit knowledge. Considering there were only 25 participants, Spearman's Rho was used to analyse the grammaticality test results, whereas the interview findings were analysed qualitatively.

Participants

A cross-sectional study was carried out on 25 South Asian secondary school students in Hong Kong over the span of 2 weeks and consisted of Pakistani and Indian, Nepalese, Bangladeshi, and Filipino students. Participants represented an array of educational levels within the secondary school system, ranging from Secondary 1-6. Their ages varied from 12 to 18, the normal age range for secondary school students in Hong Kong. The students were either born and raised in Hong Kong or moved to Hong Kong for educational purposes. These South Asian students were chosen because they mostly spoke Hindi or Urdu, with English as a second language and Cantonese as a third language. Hindi and Urdu have the same Indo-Aryan basis, grammatical forms, and phonology. They are mutually understandable.

Background Survey (Google Form)

The background survey was divided into three parts: the first part covered basic background information such as age, form, place of birth, age of arrival if they were born overseas, and ethnicity. The second section was on their language habits, which included questions about what other languages they were fluent in and how many languages they spoke. Furthermore, it inquired as to when they began studying English and their third language, as well as when they achieved mastery of English. In addition, questions concerning their surroundings and linguistic habits were asked, as well as their self-reported English competence. The third and last section inquired about their motivation to study English in order to see whether there were any external variables that impact the student's English and overall English performance. The details of the Google Form can be found in **Appendix A**.

The background survey was made with reference to Silverberg and Samuel's (2004) bilingualism questionnaire. Their study is relevant to this research paper since they also study the effects of second language proficiency and the age of second language acquisition on bilingual participants. The questionnaire was slightly modified to help answer my research questions such as their overall English test results, their motivation to learn English and the first part (background information) of the survey.

Grammaticality Judgement Test

Because the students were unfamiliar with this type of test, a practice test with ten sample sentences was administered prior to the official grammaticality judgment test. **Appendix B** contains the link to the grammaticality judgement test with the test run.

The test was a paper-based test, and the students were required to input **G** for grammatical and **UG** for ungrammatical sentences. As mentioned by Sándor (2016), early research studies did not pose a time limit on the test-taker, but the recent studies do, which varies from 3.5 seconds to even 10 seconds. Before determining the duration of the sentences in this research, the test-run sentences were presented to random individuals with varying levels of English proficiency. This determined whether the sentences were long enough to prevent students from overlooking them while being succinct enough to promote the use of implicit knowledge. Hence, given the short to medium length of the sentences in this research, they were displayed on the screen for 3.8 seconds each.

The grammaticality judgement test was created in reference to Johnson and Newport's 12 rule types in GJT. There were a total of 18 grammatical features and consisted of 102 sentences with 76 target structure sentences and 26 fillers. The main grammatical

features included from Johnson and Newport's 12 rule types in GJT consisted of the following:

TABLE 2
12 Rule Types Tested in Grammaticality Judgment Task

1. Past tense	7. Particle movement
2. Plural	8. Subcategorization
3. Third person singular	9. Auxiliaries
4. Present progressive	10. Yes/no questions
5. Determiners	11. Wh-questions
6. Pronominalization	12. Word order

Table 1 Johnson and Newport's 12 Rule Types in GJT

To make the grammaticality judgement test challenging and relevant to the student's English curriculum, six other grammatical rules were added. They consisted of relative clause, comparative and superlatives, passive voice, conditionals, modal verbs, and infinitives. The goal of incorporating the diverse grammatical features was to create a comprehensive assessment that is relevant to the student's English curriculum.

In addition, the grammaticality test also included a part B **(Appendix C)** to assess the student's explicit knowledge. It consisted of 15 grammatical multiple-choice questions and given 10 minutes to complete.

Qualitative Results

Background information (Appendix A)

According to the survey data, the majority of South Asian students who participated in the study, comprising 48% of the sample, were form 6 students. Form 1 only included 4% of the participants. This favored the research since older participants would have passed the critical period and learned all the grammatical structures that were present in the grammaticality judgement test. Moreover, 8% of the students were born in Pakistan and

India, 4% in Nepal, and 80% of the students were born in Hong Kong. Pakistanis made up 48% of the student, followed by Indians (28%), Nepalis (12%), Filipinos (8%), and Bangladeshis (4%).

Language Habits

Based on the previous information and a question regarding the students' fluency in other languages, the majority of students' first languages were Hindi (44%) and Urdu (48%). Furthermore, 92% of the students spoke English as a second language, with Cantonese as their third language. Among the participants, 56% began studying English between the ages of 1 and 3, whereas just 12% began between the ages of 11 and 13. Most students learned their second and third languages in school, while 68% learned them via watching television or movies. Because the students were bilingual, they frequently spoke their second language (English) alongside their native language in the same context. The students also demonstrated the capacity to speak a certain language in a specific context, with 80% of them code-switching between their native language and English.

Motivation

To determine the student's motivation for studying English, their primary reasons were asked. Success at school and future career accounted for 68%, while being required to learn it in school was 60%. From this, it can be determined that most students learn English solely because it is a requirement in school. Other motives included being respected for correct grammar, making friends, having fun, travelling purposes and meeting the needs of one’s parents.

Correlation Results of Self-Reported English Proficiency and School Results

	Age：
Speaking	r= .814** p= .002
Listening	r=.723** p= .002
Reading	r= .418 p= .084
Writing	r= .271 p= .262
School result:	r= .230 p= .270

Table 2 Self-reported Results

The data from students' self-reported English proficiency and predicted school examination scores acquired from the background survey demonstrate a strong positive correlation between speaking and listening. Although the Critical Period Hypothesis implies that the earlier the onset age, the better the second language acquisition, the result of this research revealed that the older the onset age, the more confident students were in their speaking and listening abilities. The strong correlation is highlighted in the above table.

Correlation Results of Grammaticality Judgement Test

	Age
GJT-A	r= .037 p= .862
GJT-B	r= -.136 p= .517

Table 3 Grammaticality Judgement Test

Another major finding showed that age did not share a significantly negative correlation with the grammaticality judgement test scores, which was anticipated at the onset

of this study. The age at which individuals began learning English did not indicate their level of English competence which contradicted the Critical Period Hypothesis.

Interview Results

		Pakistani Student	Indian Student
Self-reported English proficiency: Scale of 1-5	Speaking	5	2
	Writing	4	2
	Listening	5	3
	Reading	4	2
Grammaticality Judgement Test Results (Part A)		68/76	35/76
Part B		15/15	11/15

Table 4 1=poor, 5=excellent

After analyzing the data from the background survey and grammaticality test, two exceptional cases were identified. One of the students was an Indian student, born and raised in Hong Kong and studied in a Chinese medium school. The student scored the lowest on the grammaticality judgement test. On the other hand, the Pakistani student was born and raised in Pakistan and came to Hong Kong at the age of 11, started learning English in an English medium school at the age of 12 and scored the highest on the grammaticality judgement test.

The purpose of the interview questions was to ascertain why the results of this research were contradictory to the Critical Period Hypothesis. As previous literature points out, learning a language beyond the critical period results in lower language competency. However, the student who started learning after the supposed critical period had a native like English proficiency while the student who started learning in kindergarten had a poor English

proficiency. The purpose of the interview questions was to understand the following:

(Appendix D and E for detailed interview questions)

1. English proficiency and confidence
2. School environment and peer relationships
3. Motivation for English learning
4. Parental influence on English learning
5. Opportunities for English learning outside of the classroom

1. English Proficiency and Confidence

The Indian student with lower English competence stated that she lacked confidence when speaking English. She was the only South Asian in her friend group who spoke bad English and was afraid of being criticised. As a result, she rarely spoke English with her friends, instead preferring to speak with them in Cantonese or Hindi, her mother tongue.

On the other hand, the Pakistani student gained confidence by asking her peers to communicate with her in English, allowing her to practise her listening and speaking skills. These efforts resulted in an improvement in her English skills and confidence.

2. School environment and peer relationships

The Indian student had been studying in a Chinese medium school since kindergarten and had plenty of local Chinese friends. All the subjects other than English were taught in Cantonese and the teachers used Cantonese to explain words and sentences since most of the students were local Chinese.

The Pakistani student said that her parents realized studying in a local Chinese school would be difficult because she had no prior experience or understanding of Cantonese, so she registered in an English Medium school.

3. Motivation for English learning

The Indian student claimed that she was not motivated to study English since it was not beneficial in Hong Kong. She mentioned that she would like to have a stable career in Hong Kong where Cantonese is the main language spoken and highly valued at most workplaces.

The Pakistani student had opposing views because she was highly motivated to learn English. She was struggling with Cantonese but knew that Hong Kong is a bilingual society which motivated her to focus on English so she could get around places, complete her homework and connect with peers.

4. Parental influence on English learning

The Indian student said that her parents had enrolled her in a Chinese-medium school to ensure her future success in Hong Kong. Instead of viewing cartoons of her own choosing, her parents forced her to watch Chinese cartoons.

However, the Pakistani student's parents enrolled her in an English school after hearing from friends that Cantonese is difficult to learn, particularly for immigrants.

5. Opportunities for English learning outside of the classroom

Despite recognizing that the Indian student's English proficiency was low, she did not take the initiative to improve it outside of class. However, the student did propose to herself that she could attempt to watch more English movies.

Because the Pakistani student was highly motivated to learn and improve her English skills after failing her exams during the first two academic terms, the student started incorporating more English YouTube videos and movies to facilitate in her English learning.

The student would imitate the native English speakers and advised her friends to speak to her only in English. Furthermore, the student had started taking private English tutorials.

Discussion

Based on the results, there have been intriguing findings that challenge the conventional notion of the Critical Period Hypothesis in language acquisition. The outcomes of the study revealed that age is not the only determinant in second language acquisition.

Cognitive Interactionism: Environmental factors

Althobaiti (2014) views cognitive interactionism as language learning as an individual cognitive effort. This implies that language development is dependent on the individual's cognitive ability to interact and create output. The dominant language in the learner's environment has a substantial impact on students' cognitive capacities since it influences opportunities and motives for second language learners as well as exposure to the target language. The Indian student who was exposed to Cantonese more than English had native-level Cantonese proficiency, but the Pakistani student who was regularly exposed to English via her peers and teachers had a significant positive influence on her English competence.

Individual differences

Individual differences are also factors that should be taken into consideration. As mentioned by Dornyei (2005), motivation, language learning strategies, willingness to communicate and self-esteem are influential in second language acquisition.

Motivation

Firstly, motivation is the stimulus that drives learners to sustain and initiate the language learning process (Dornyei, 2005). Hence, having the motivation to learn a particular language is important. In the case of the Indian student, she did not have the motivation to learn English because she claimed it is not important in Hong Kong while the Pakistani student had high motivation to learn in order to pass her exams and attain a native like proficiency.

Language Learning Strategies

Language learning strategies is defined by Oxford (2011) as cited in Dornyei (2005) as the learners' goal-directed actions for improving language proficiency or achievement, completing a task, or making learning more efficient, effective, and easier. This implies that taking the initiative to incorporate outside-the-classroom learning activities is crucial. According to the Pakistani student, watching English movies online was helpful in improving her listening and speaking skills since she was able to imitate the native English speakers. By listening to the native speakers constantly in her spare time, it increased her input to English, which improved her listening and speaking skills faster than her reading and writing. Moreover, she was able to hire a private tutor to help her catch up with the school exam curriculum which helped improve her English exam grades.

Willingness to Communicate and Self-esteem.

Willingness to communicate is defined as language learners' readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons using L2 (Mehrgan, 2013) One's willingness to communicate with people using the target language helps one to improve their speaking ability as well as get corrective feedback from peers. As the Pakistani student had claimed, she encouraged her peers to communicate with her in English so she

could learn from their speech style while her peers helped correct her grammar on the spot. Her confidence led to a positive learning experience. On the other hand, the Indian student was not willing to communicate due to anxiety over her poor English skills, reducing her chances to get corrective feedback from her peers, thus, leading to a negative learning experience and a reduced self-confidence. It was predicted by Singleton (2001) that older L2 arrivals may prioritize native speaker contact for social integration and cultural identity maintenance, potentially limiting L2 exposure. However, it can be observed that it depends on the learner's ultimate goal. The Pakistani student was able to converse with peers of different backgrounds to help enhance her English proficiency.

Implicit Knowledge

The grammaticality judgement test score for the high achievers was able to reflect implicit knowledge of English. For example, Part B of the GJT test asked the students to choose the correct grammatical answer, hence, the students were able to infer the rules of English based on the input they were exposed to during their English classes. Despite this, it is unrelated to the Critical Period Hypothesis that this research attempts to understand.

Metacognitive skills

Metacognition is defined as one's own awareness of the thought process, especially when it concerns the ability to regulate the cognitive processes of the learners in their learning (Mekala, 2016). The Pakistani student was aware that she did not understand English when she first started learning. The student took the effort to implement the previously mentioned tactics. The student had a defined aim that she actively sought to achieve; to achieve a native-like proficiency to help her in daily life and academics.

Conclusion

This research paper aimed to explore the role of age in second language acquisition of South Asian students. As previous literature has claimed, age plays a major role in language acquisition due to the critical period since there is a vital period where it is possible to acquire another language successfully. Although the critical period varies from research to research, age had only played a marginal role in this research. The South Asian student who started learning English at the age of 12, which is past the Critical Period as indicated by Lenneberg (1967), scored the highest on the grammaticality judgement test and had fluent spoken English during the interview. However, the student who had been exposed to English lessons since kindergarten scored the lowest in the grammaticality judgement test.

The results show that age is not the only determining factor in second language acquisition since learner's motivation, environment and individual differences are all essential in language acquisition. The student who refused to improve her English since she believed it was unnecessary in Hong Kong further underscored the importance of motivation while the student who had high motivation to learn English had integrated numerous languages learning strategies, resulting in higher English proficiency. This demonstrates that the answer of whether age plays a role in language acquisition is not straightforward.

Implications

Since this study aims to bridge the gap between the role of age and South Asian students, this research paper has important implications for future educational improvements.

School and Teachers

This research enables schools and teachers to recognize that the conventional idea that South Asian students should have better English competence is incorrect. According to this

research, there are South Asian students who have poor English proficiency for a variety of reasons; therefore, their English competence should not be generalized. Due to this misconception, the schools limit the amount of English tutorial classes that are needed after school, focusing on other subjects such as Chinese. In order to test the students' English proficiency accurately, teachers should rely on the formative assessments and continuous evaluations to appropriately measure students' skill levels rather than a common misconception.

Secondly, the school should implement more communicative and interactive tasks to benefit both the low and high-proficiency learners. These tasks will encourage students to actively participate in discussions and collaborative activities, giving them sufficient opportunities to practice their language abilities in real-life situations. Teachers would be able to create more group discussions, debates and scenario-based learning to encourage meaningful interactions among students. It is reported by Steeves (2012) and Oh and Jonessen (2007) as cited in Seker (2016) that the use of situated scenarios has been reported to facilitate problem-solving strategies to encourage learners to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life problems and to acquire strategies for managing learning difficulties. This is especially crucial for low-proficiency learners since they will be able to learn from their classmates while also using English rather than their native language to discuss various real-life problems, build confidence and reduce anxiety.

Learners

According to the interviews, immersing yourself in the target language is important for successful language acquisition. Thus, students should take various steps, such as watching English films and reading more books, to ensure that they learn implicitly.

Watching English films will assist students in understanding and imitating native speakers, resulting in better English competence. Reading more books will allow kids to master sentence patterns and complicated terminology, hence enhancing their written English.

Furthermore, South Asians are multilingual, which they should embrace and use to their advantage. They can identify similarities between their original language and English to improve their written or spoken English. For example, suppose a South Asian student speaks Pashto, one of Pakistan's dialects. In that case, they may find it simpler to study English grammar by putting the adjective before the noun, e.g., black car, but other dialects, such as Dari, frequently place the noun before the adjective, e.g., car black.

Limitations

The sample size of the research project was limited since it only consisted of 25 participants from the same secondary school. The small sample size makes it difficult to determine if the findings of this research are true and unbiased. It raises concerns about the reliability and generalizations of the findings since there are over 96,000 South Asian students in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2023). Moreover, the sample collected was based in the same secondary school and it is possible that the data from this school is not sufficient to represent a broader population. Each school has unique characteristics and curriculum, such as teaching methods, grade descriptors, resources and demographics. Hence, it becomes difficult to apply the results of this research to a more diverse population.

Given the small sample size, it also affected the number of latecomer South Asian students. The number of latecomer learners was disproportionately low, undermining the representation of the group of latecomer South Asian students in Hong Kong. In addition, the

background survey could record four latecomer learners with only two exceptional cases. This further reduces the ability to investigate and comprehend behaviours, experiences, and possible difficulties encountered by latecomer South Asian students. The small number of cases restricts the depth of study and the research capacity to find trends or draw significant conclusions about this subgroup.

Finally, student's English competency was assessed using self-reported data in the background survey. The question asked in the google form was to rate their English speaking, listening, reading comprehension and writing on a scale of 1 to 5 and a final question inquiring about their estimated overall English grade from their latest results. Relying solely on their self-reported English proficiency may lead to biases since individuals could have a different perception of their abilities, overstate or understate their English proficiency. Besides, the self-assessment does not have an evaluation criterion unlike school exams and report cards, reducing the robustness of the assessment. The students were not asked to upload their report cards due to privacy and ethical considerations. It includes their private information; hence, parents or legal guardian and the schools' consent would have been required, prolonging the research process.

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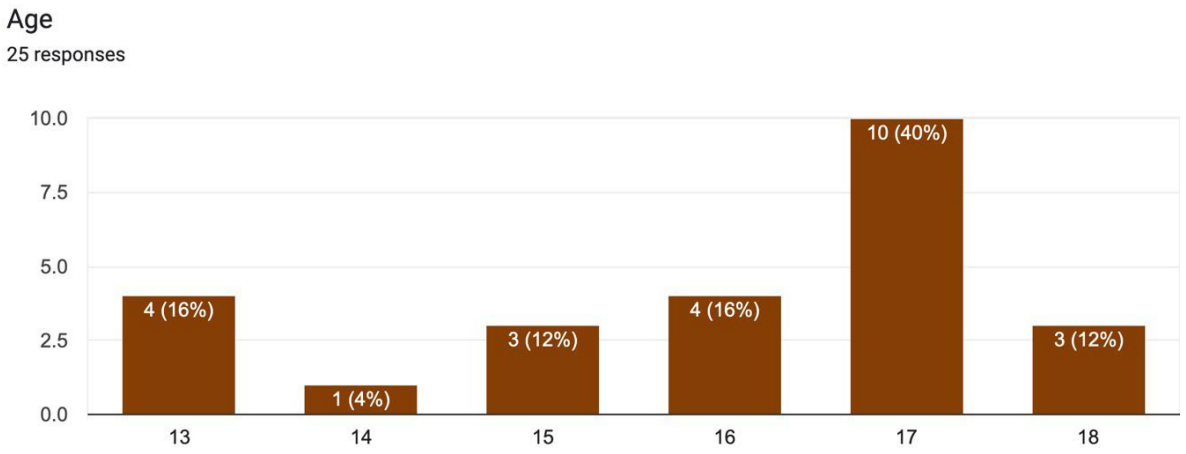
Appendices

Appendix A: Google Form Results (Background Survey)

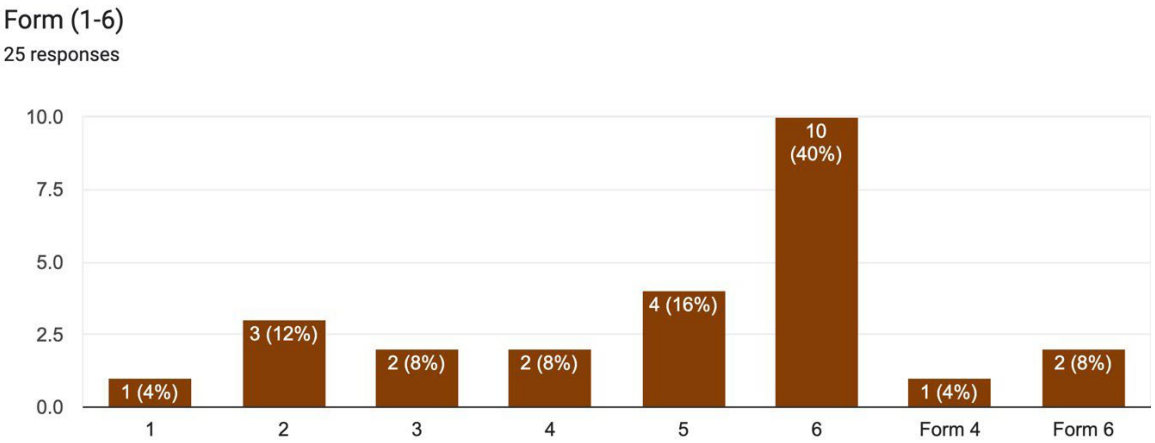
Link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf2jRfjKCPeDM8DmW7FwUBj1ZDnjZrhHejubq4dN2AJlvhPOA/viewform?usp=pp_url

1.

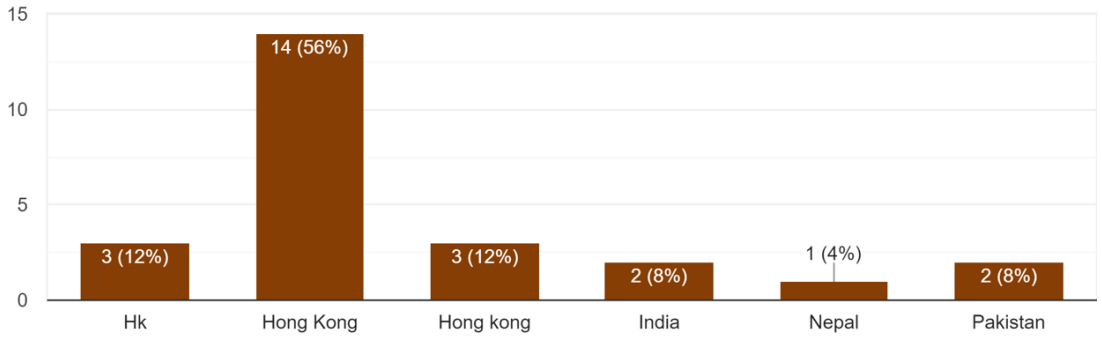


2.



Place of Birth

25 responses



3.

Arrival age in HK if born elsewhere

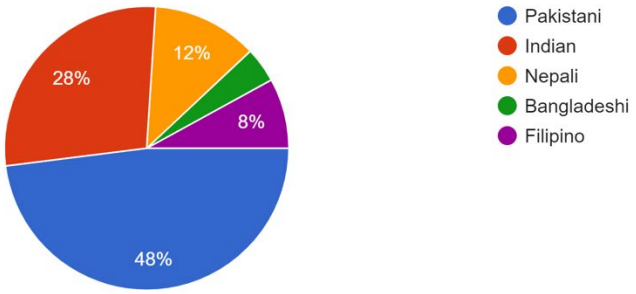
6 responses

NA
11
10
9
7
12

4.

Ethnicity

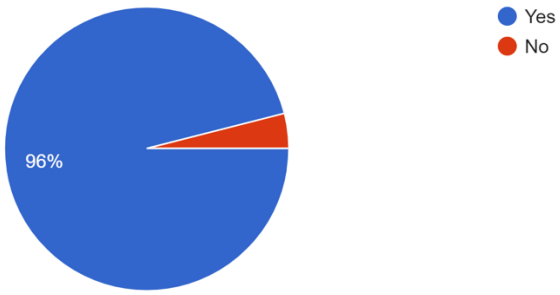
25 responses



5.

Are you fluent in a language other than English? (Fluent means for everyday conversations, you can converse with native speakers without having to consciously translate)

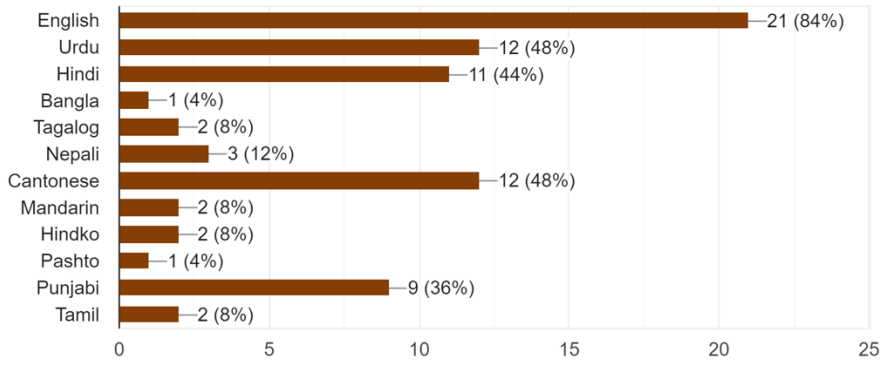
25 responses



6.

Which language(s) do you speak fluently (including English) *Tick all that apply *If you speak Urdu/Hindi, please just select either one.

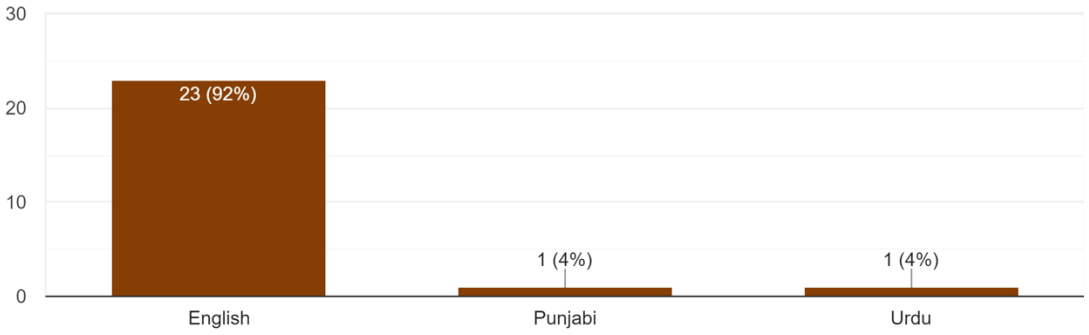
25 responses



7.

What is your second language?

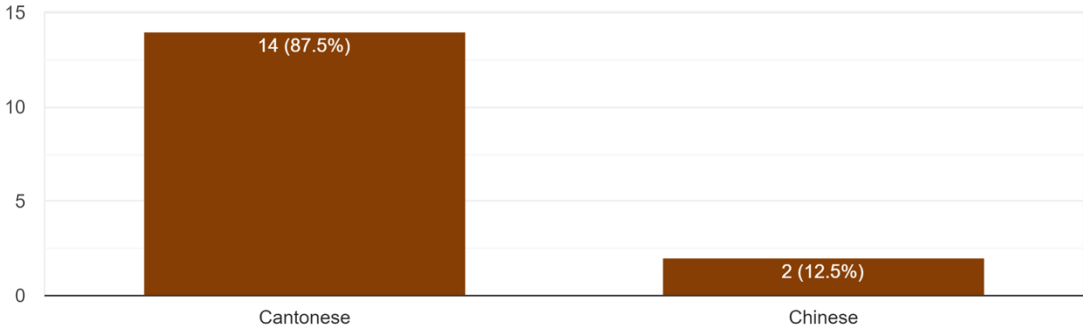
25 responses



8.

What is your third language? *Only if you speak a third language

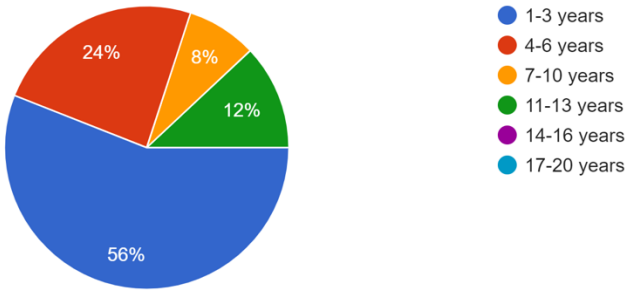
16 responses



9.

At what age did you start learning English?

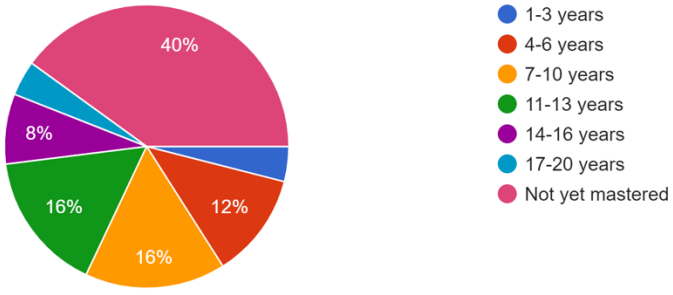
25 responses



10.

At what age did you master the English language?

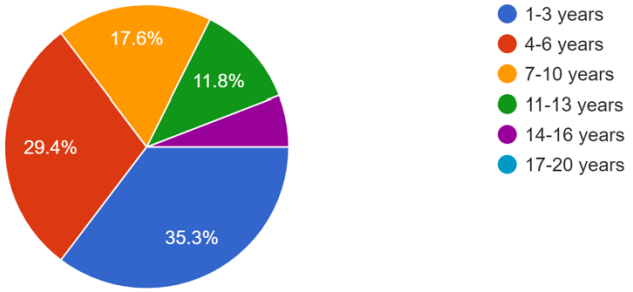
25 responses



11.

If you speak a third language, at what age did you begin learning it?

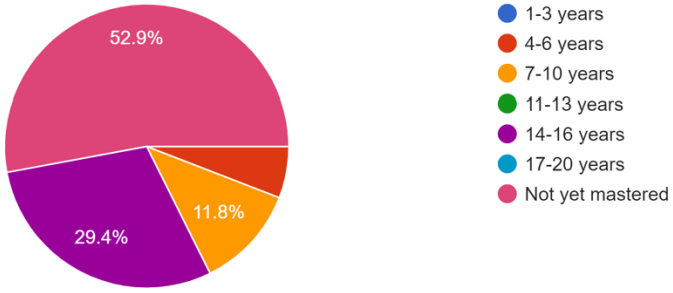
17 responses



12.

At what age did you master your third language?

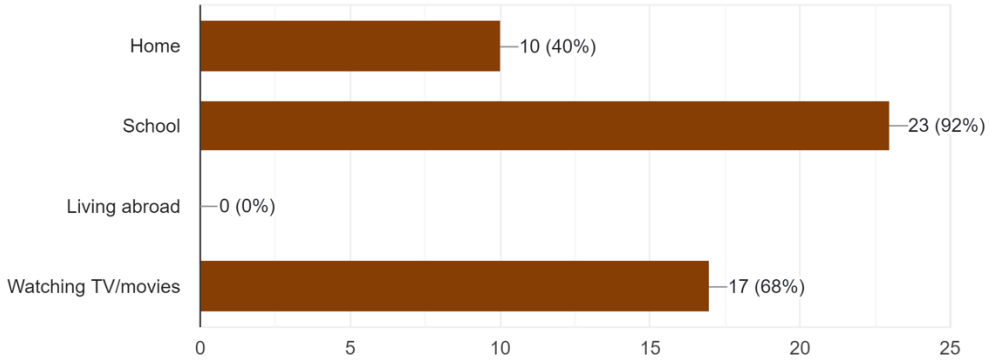
17 responses



13.

Where did you acquire your second/third language language? *Tick all that apply

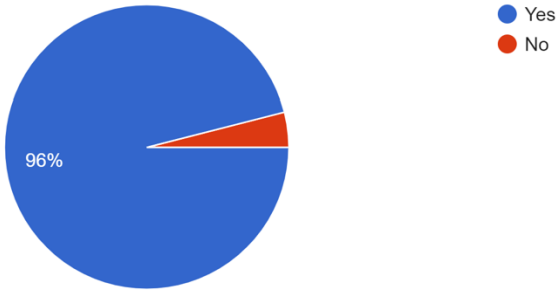
25 responses



14.

Have you ever experienced a time where you a) used your second language regularly?

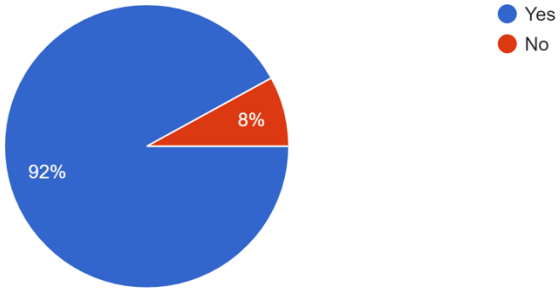
25 responses



15.

Have you ever experienced a time where you b) used both first and second language in the same setting (using both at home or with friends)

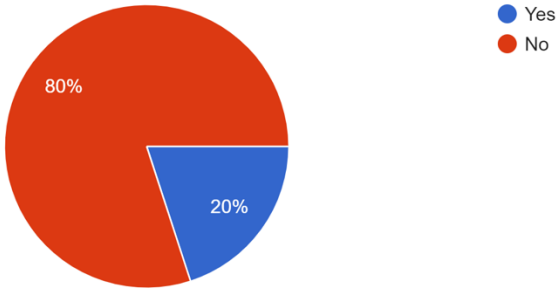
25 responses



16.

Do you now a) use primarily one language?

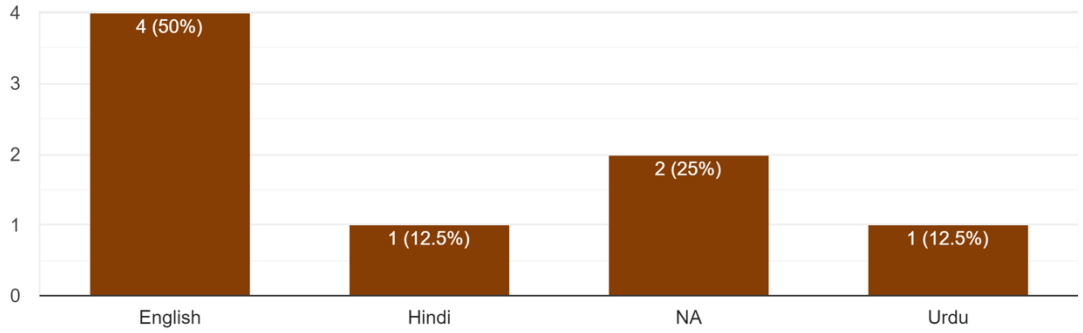
25 responses



17.

If yes, which language do you primarily speak?

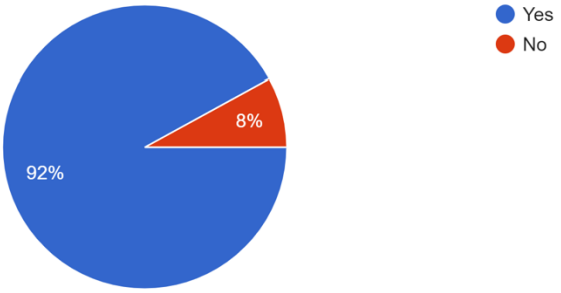
8 responses



18.

b) Use first and second language regularly BUT in different settings Eg. speaking one language at home, speaking another language at school etc

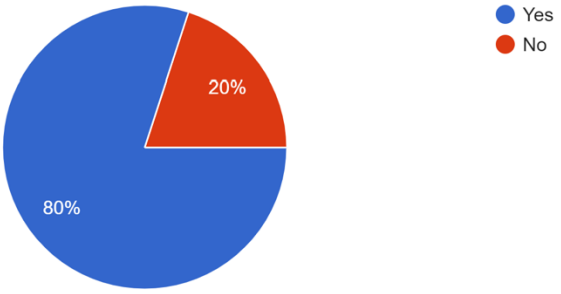
25 responses



19.

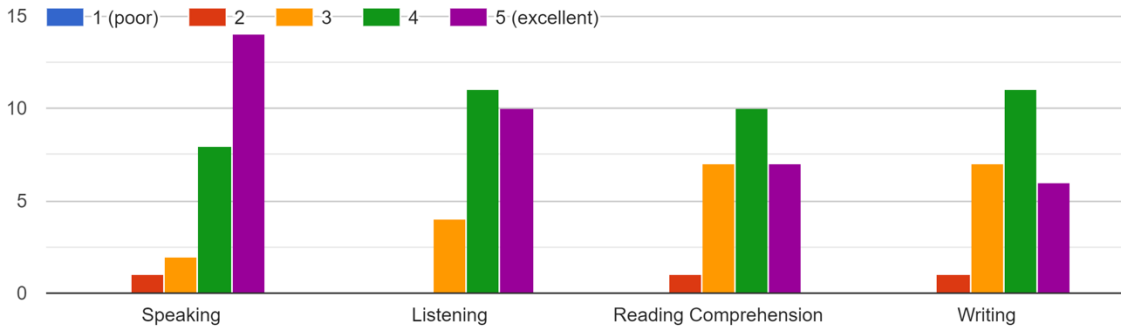
c) Use both languages everyday WITHIN the same setting Eg. Using BOTH first and second languages at home or school

25 responses



20.

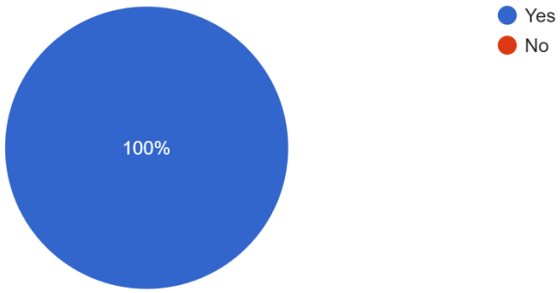
Rate your English level on a scale of 1-5



21.

Do you have friends or family who are also bilingual in the two languages you speak?

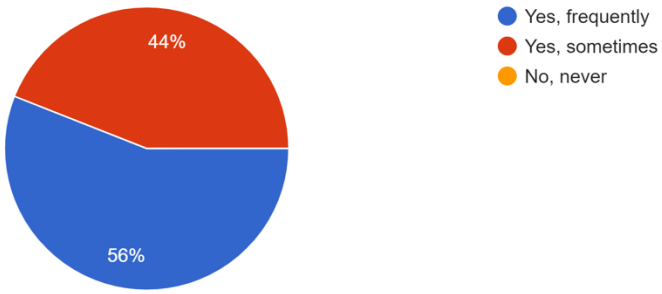
25 responses



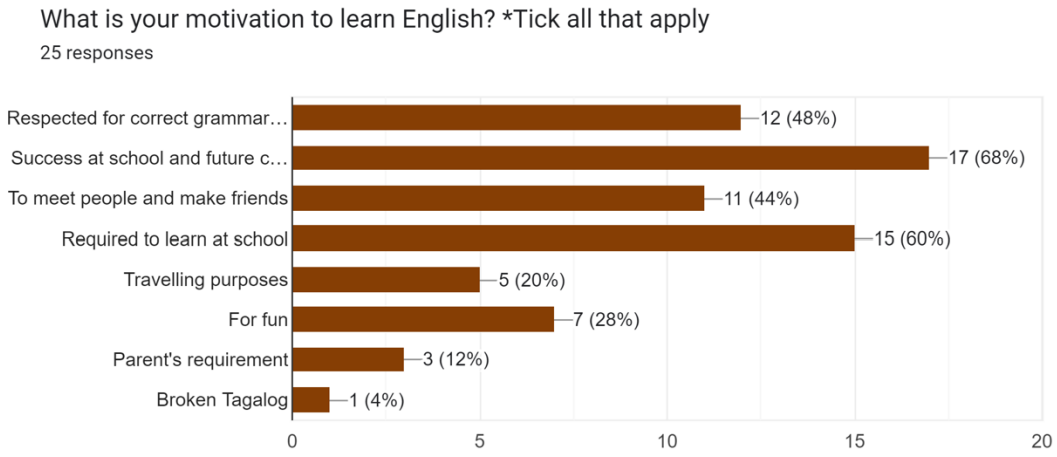
22.

When speaking with these bilingual family/friends, do you ever find yourself using your first and second languages in the same conversation?

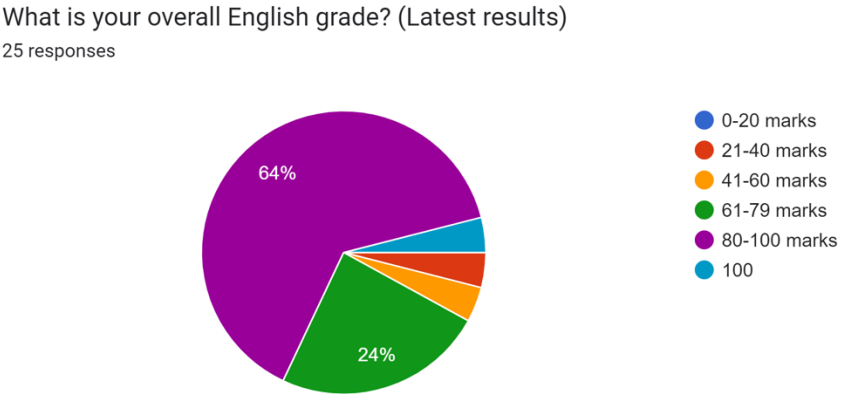
25 responses



23.



24.



25.

Appendix B: Grammaticality Judgement Test (Part A) Link

Link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dPCG81F_uZFYeGq2NheuiT_eZRivT6lu/view?usp=sharing

Appendix C: Grammaticality Judgement Test (Part B)

PART B: CIRCLE THE CORRECT LETTER ON THE PAPER. YOU HAVE 5 MINUTES.

The company's profits have been steadily **(1)** over the past year.

a. Increasing
b. Increased
c. Increase

The Hong Kong cricket team has **(2)** the Chinese national cricket team.

a. Surpassing
b. Surpassed
c. Surpasses

The farmers are **(3)** a beautiful park full of roses.

a. Cultivating
b. Cultivates
c. cultivate

Her mother would never **(4)** him for betraying her.

a. Forsakes
b. Forsake
c. Forsaken

James **(5)** his friend's name wrong even after she just told him.

a. Pronouncing
b. Pronounced
c. Pronounce

NASA **(6)** over 200 rockets that visit other planets every year.

a. Had launched
b. Had been launching
c. Launches

Michael Scott **(7)** a small paper company in Pennsylvania since 1989.

a. Is running
b. Had run
c. Runs

The typhoon signal No.8 heavily **(8)** the roads in Hong Kong.

a. Is impacting
b. Had been impacting
c. Impacted

The police arrested the suspect after **(9)** enough evidence.

a. Had garnered
b. Garnering
c. Garnered

The professors **(10)** our assignments on time.

a. Grades
b. Grading
c. Grade

The musician **(11)** a beautiful tune for the performance right now.

a. Composed
b. Is composing
c. Had composed

The chef must **(12)** the ingredients carefully.
a. Measuring
b. Have been measuring
c. Measure

The party planning committee and students **(13)** an Easter Party later this year.
a. Are organizing
b. Is organizing
c. Organized

The mechanic **(14)** the faulty engine of the truck.
a. Has repaired
b. Repairing
c. Repair

The talented architect, Adrian Smith **(15)** the tallest skyscraper in the world.
a. Designing
b. Designed
c. Is designing

Appendix D: Interview Questions for Indian Student

1. How old are you?
2. Where were you born?
3. What is your first language?
4. How would you describe your English level in terms of speaking, reading, writing, listening?
5. Which component do you think is the most difficult to grasp?
6. Did you study at an EMI or CMI primary and secondary school?
7. Can you share your experience with learning English in your Chinese Medium school in Hong Kong? How is English taught and how do you feel about the teaching methods.
8. Do you have or did you have any interest in learning English? Or did you do it because you were required to do so?
9. Outside of the classroom, do you watch any TV series or shows that are in English or in any other languages?
10. Are you mostly friends with local Chinese students or of any other ethnicity?

11. Do you have opportunities to practice English outside of the classroom? If not, how you think increased exposure to English would benefit your language learning?
12. Are there any personal factors such as motivation or self confidence that may have influenced your struggles with English? If so, how does it affect?
13. What about your parental style? In Hong Kong as south Asians where it is difficult to get jobs without knowing Cantonese, did your parents adopt a similar approach and force you to focus on Cantonese instead of English?
14. If there anything else that may have influenced the differences in English language proficiency between you and other students?
15. Do you remember the Grammaticality judgement test you took a month ago? How do you feel about it? Did you find it challenging or easy? Why do you think you performed the way you did?
16. Have you ever experienced a time when a teacher commented on your English proficiency by saying anything similar to "You are South Asian, your English should be better than Chinese students"? If you have heard about it, do you think it is fair to generalize that the English proficiency of all South Asians is good?

Appendix E: Interview Questions for Pakistani Student

1. How old are you?
2. Where were you born?
3. At what age did you come to Hong Kong?
4. What is your first language?
5. How would you describe your English proficiency in English? IN which aspect of English do you feel most confident in using English?
6. Could you describe your surroundings while studying in HK? Did you study at an EMI or CMI secondary school?
7. Do you have or did you have any motivation in learning English? Or did you do it because you were required to do so?
8. Can you share your experiences with learning English after coming to HK? How do you find the process of learning English at a later age? Did you face any specific challenges?

9. What about your parental style? In Hong Kong as south Asians where it is difficult to get jobs without knowing Cantonese, did your parents adopt a similar approach and force you to focus on Cantonese instead of English?
10. Can you discuss any strategies that you used to learn English effectively despite learning it at the age of 12?
11. Do you mostly hang out with local friends or foreign?
12. Do you have opportunities to practice English outside of the classroom? If yes, how do you think it has helped?
13. How do you feel about the Grammaticality judgement test you took? Did you find it easy or challenging?
14. Have you ever experienced a time when a teacher commented on your English proficiency by saying anything similar to "You are South Asian, your English should be better than Chinese students"? If you have heard about it, do you think it is fair to generalize that the English proficiency of all South Asians is good?