

Language Use Among The Hakkas in The Netherlands¹

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Abstract

Background. Chinese migration to Europe brought speakers of various Sinitic languages from various multilingual to predominantly monolingual countries with well-established standard languages. Cultural and linguistic variation inside the Chinese community forms different intersecting Chinese identities among first-generation migrants and presents a showcase of a new urban linguistic diversity, as well as global connectedness. The Hakkas constitute an important Sinitic migrant group in this context.

Material & method. With the help of the Benelux Tsung Tsin Hakka Association, 115 questionnaires and 21 qualitative interviews with Hakkas in the Netherlands have been collected. This study focuses on language competence, language use and everyday communicative practices, both quantitatively and qualitatively, followed by a study on language attitudes.

Analysis. The Hakkas of the Netherlands are all well-versed in Dutch and well-integrated into society. They immigrated from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds but connect with each other at the level of a shared Hakka identity. One group of Hakkas has ties to Hong-Kong and Guangdong, they have a strong tendency to use the Cantonese language as their first language; old speakers reflect earlier linguistic variation and often speak smaller sub-varieties of Cantonese and Hakka. Contrary to second-generation Hakkas, even young migrants and students from Suriname speak Hakka as their family language. The Hakka migrants are often also able to use Mandarin Chinese. Community members value Hakka but are generally aware that it is unlikely to be maintained in the future.

¹ This article is dedicated to the Benelux Tsung Tsin Hakka Association under president Theo Chang and secretary Martina Ho, and all the members and friends who made this study possible through their extensive support; furthermore, to Mr. Chin-A-Woeng who diligently collected data for a Hakka dictionary (陈志明, 2021) in order to preserve the memory for future generations

Conclusions. Language shift appears to be the likely outcome for small minority languages in superdiverse societies with a strong preference for school-mediated standard languages (Dutch, English), even the superordinate language(s) of the migrant community become the new ingroup language – in this case Cantonese, but also Putonghua.

Keywords: Hakka, language and migration, multilingualism, language shift, superdiversity.

1.0 Background

1.1 Chinese migration

During the times of ship travels, Chinese overseas migration originated mostly from Southern China, settlers travelling to South-East Asia and other regions of the world (e.g., Mauritius, Suriname); these migrants spoke South Sinitic languages (SS, i.e., Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, etc.). Since the 18th century, small numbers of Chinese sailors (from Guangdong; Parker 1998: 68) settled in the UK (cf. Parker 1998); somewhat higher numbers of Chinese arrived in Europe since the beginning of the 20th century (ca. 1900-1920; cf., e.g., Pieke & Benton, 1998, p. 126-127), however, their numbers diminished substantially during the 1930s and 1940s, due to the world economic crisis and World War II, either by remigration or assimilation (Pieke, 1998, p. 6; Pieke & Benton, 1998, p. 129; Gütinger, 1998, p. 200), with some of Central European Chinese moving to war-free Spain (Beltran, 1998, p. 215). For that reason, Chinese immigration to Europe relevant to today's situation really starts only after World War II.

Originally, Chinese migration was a male activity, so that migrants often married local women in their new environment (cf. Parker, 1998, p. 73; Beltran, 1998, p. 215) which led to their assimilation into the autochthonous population. It was only later that men managed to bring a wife from China (cf., e.g., Live 1998: 101). In more recent times, men and women alike migrate to new places. Thus, after World War II, new groups of Chinese, mostly from other countries than China, arrived in Europe and established new European Chinese communities; many ethnic Chinese decided to migrate from their respective (previous) motherlands as a result of decolonization which often worsened their situation as a middleman minority (Ha, 1998) and often led to political persecution or economic disadvantaging. In the case of the Netherlands (NL), people from Indonesia, the Antilles, and Suriname could choose to move to the heartland of the former colonial power. From the 1970s onwards, work migration into Europe intensified, among these were ethnic Chinese from Hong Kong and adjacent regions in China from where people managed to enter Hong Kong illegally and then emigrate from there. Finally, since the 21st century, due to the economic and social opening of China, a greater number of migrants from mainland China keeps coming to Europe, often for pursuing university studies; wealthy people come to Europe as investors.

1.2 Diversity of countries, languages, ethnicities, migrations

After a short period of homogenisation of European societies into uniform “national” societies, overseas migration since the 1950s has increasingly allowed people from many origins to come together in increasingly complex societies which consist of a multitude of different ethnicities and languages, but also is organized in subdivisions of the various groups (e.g., the various linguistic groups of Chinese); this situation of modern globalized mobility has been termed “superdiversity” (Vertovec, 2006; Vertovec, 2007). Additionally, migrants may come from autochthonous or allochthonous (i.e., relatively young) minorities of their country of origin (e.g., Chinese from Indonesia); furthermore, migration speed has increased, i.e., people may have migrated more than once in their lives. Since migrants use chain migration for moving to new places, one will find particular, enclosed groups in one place, but also many social and international ties with family members and friends internationally. For that reason, so-called “astronaut families” (Ong, 1999) emerged, i.e., families that are spread out across the globe. This situation often leads to a “trans-national” identity (cf. Vertovec, 2001), not feeling bound to one particular location in the world. There are no more “typical” migration routes, instead, airplanes connect cities across the globe. Superdiversity leads to the segregated coexistence of many groups, as in Indian cities (cf. Oxfeld, 1996), or sometimes to their (partial) assimilation to a superordinate, newly-developing culture.

Europe consists of many relatively small countries with different “national languages” which makes it linguistically more difficult for migrants to move between states and attain good levels of competence in another language, as opposed to North America where only English is to master. It is also for this reason that many migrants hope to reach the UK. With respect to general education, multilingualism poses a challenge for schools (cf. Extra & Yağmur 2004; Extra 2011) whose task it is to spread competence in one elaborated, codified national language and a working competence in one or two international languages. If the underlying mother tongues are “diverse” and thereby diversify the rudiments for linguistic elaboration (cf. Vollmann & Schwabl 2014, 2015). This concern seems to not exist with Chinese families whose second generation is usually very successful in education. Language barriers certainly hold back first-generation migrants if they lack the opportunity to attend language courses.

1.3 Language situation in Benelux

The three countries of Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxemburg agreed on a “politico-economic union” after World War II which is called “Benelux”. The Netherlands have

three autochthonous languages (cf. Willemyns, 2006): (a) The densely populated southern part and the areas reclaimed from the sea are areas of the Dutch language which is historically a continuum of Lower Francique Germanic dialects which extend into Germany (cf. de Vaan, 2018). (b) In the North, most people (originally) speak Lower Saxon dialects which are on a continuum of Lower German(ic) dialects, (c) except for the northwest where Frisian is preserved, a related, but distinct (Anglo-Frisian) Germanic language. Due to high degrees of urbanization, the various varieties are by and large replaced by standard Dutch, especially in the densely populated southern part of the country.

In Belgium, Dutch, French and German are national languages for the 59% Flamish, 40% Walloon linguistic groups, and a 1% German minority (cf. Willemyns, 2004, p. 1763). Flamish is a collection of Francique dialects considered to be “Dutch”, but diverge to some degree from Standard Dutch; similarly, Walloon is a variety of Gallo-Romance (“French”). In Luxemburg, the national language of the country is Letzebuergesch which is a German(ic) dialect of the Mosel Francique group; However, Standard German and French are also used as administrative languages. The Benelux countries have larger numbers of speakers of allochthonous languages, e.g., Maghrebin Arabic and Turkish, among others.

1.4 The linguistic situation of Chinese speakers

The 13 Sinitic languages of China are not mutually intelligible, but closely related. The writing system of Chinese was developed for a codified written language, but allows to write Sinitic varieties in relative independence from the phonetics of words. The development of a codified written and spoken national language (普通话 pǔtōnghuà; together with the simplification of written characters and the pinyin standard for transliterating Chinese; cf., e.g., Chen, 2004, p. 13ff.) was concluded in 1955 and taught at schools since then; other countries with Chinese populations adopted these new standards with a short delay (e.g., 1981 in Malaysian Chinese schools). Modern Standard Chinese is based on the Beijing Mandarin “dialect” (方言 fāngyán).

Since Chinese is used in various countries, it is – to some degree – “pluricentric” (Kloss 1952, p. 66-67; cf. Clyne, 1992); since it is more a matter of competing usage standards, the term “polycentric” has been proposed, with reference to the competing (usage) “standards”, confusingly both for the “dialectal” orientation (Li & Juffermans, 2013) and for the multilingual situation (Juffermans et al., 2014). These discussions have to do with the fact that Chinese migrants speak different Sinitic languages (fāngyán, lit.

“dialects”) which also coexist as sociolects (or ethnolects, as group markers dissociated from a specific geo-geographical region), and usually have managed to have some competence in Standard Chinese, with the added complication that Putonghua has some relative competition from some “dialects”, especially from “Cantonese”.

It has been described in the literature that Chinese migrants in the Netherlands are using either Cantonese or Mandarin (Christiansen, 2003, p. 16). Christiansen (*ibid.*) also acknowledges the presence of Hakka and Teochew. Speakers of Hokkien (Minnan) are mentioned only for migrants from South-East Asia (Pieke & Benton, 1998). The now more numerous migrants from Zhejiang (and other, northern regions of China) are reported to not accept Cantonese, the lingua franca of the southerners (Pieke & Benton, 1998, p. 140), however, judging from personal encounters with Zhejiang migrants, they had picked up Cantonese, too; reversely, the southerners speak Cantonese or other languages among each other, but usually also have some competence in Putonghua.

Migrants from Indonesia and Malaysia are proficient in Indonesian/Malaysian, those from Suriname speak Sranan, and those from the Antilles speak Papiamentu. In short, the linguistic situation of the “Chinese” migrants in the Netherlands is subdivided into partly overlapping linguistic subgroups: For instance, there are Dutch Hakkas speaking Hakka (from the family), Cantonese (from their origin in Hong Kong / Shenzhen and out of necessity), Sranan (from Suriname), possibly Papiamentu (e.g., from having worked in Curaçao), and Dutch (from both Suriname and the Netherlands). Such a multilingual speaker will interact in a different social network than a Hakka from Indonesia speaking Hakka, Indonesian and Dutch. Beside language, religious, food-related and other cultural habits are, of course, also different to some degree, which also shows in the type of restaurants led by ethnic Chinese migrants. At the same time, all may identify as Hakkas, Dutch, Chinese, and may have contact with each other at certain interfaces. In short, the background of ethnic Chinese migrants can be quite varied at an individual level.

1.5 The various groups of Chinese in Europe

At all times, Chinese migrants to Europe mainly came from two areas of China: Hong Kong / Guangdong and Zhejiang, with the possible addition of Fujian. Guangdong refers to the hinterland of Hong Kong where one can expect speakers of Cantonese, Hakka, and smaller (sub)dialects of the area. Hong Kong itself has a far more varied recent linguistic history (So & Lau, 2013), Hakka having been an important language which is now mostly spoken by very old people in the New Territories (*cf.* Lau, 2005). As for the migrants from

Zhejiang, they are either from Wenzhou or Qingtian (Pieke, 1998, p. 6) and speak the respective local subvarieties of the Wu dialect.

Many old people migrated at times where they may not yet have learned the spoken Standard Chinese language. Probably due to the language policies of Hong Kong as an antipode to the communist mainland (and a traditional feeling of greater independence from the north), the Cantonese language has a high prestige and usage value as a non-codified lingua franca among southerners (including its use in mass media), and this dichotomy appears also among the Chinese migrants. The mechanics of chain migration required the close connection with trustworthy, known companions and agents. Therefore, Chinese migrants organized along the lines of their geographical origins which also gives some importance to nonstandard vernaculars.

The second-largest group of Chinese in Guangdong are the Hakkas. Majoritarily settled in the mountains bordering Jiangxi and Fujian, this group spread out inside of Southern China and settled in other parts of Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan, Hunan, and Sichuan. A small part of Guangdong, Chaozhou, is inhabited by speakers of a distinct language (Teochew) which is closer to Hokkien (or Minnan) and has contact with (Hopo) Hakka dialects. Hakkas are an important part of Chinese overseas migration. While earlier times saw the accumulation of speakers of Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew, it happened in recent decades that Chinese migrants from other areas of China began arriving in Europe, too, and their numbers have quickly increased. This signals an oncoming change in the structure of European Chinese culture. The above-mentioned differences between the various Chinese groups are not unbridgeable; all Chinese share a broader ethnic “Chinese” identity and diverge through their sub-identities.

1.6 Numbers of Hakka speakers

In 2011, there were almost 80,000 Chinese in the Netherlands (Linder et al., 2011, p. 28). However, ethnic Chinese feel more unified by their ethnicity (as opposed to their nationality), but also divergent when it comes to geographical or ancestral origins in China. The difference is expressed through linguistic differences, small differences in customs, and a number of stereotypes about the “character” of other groups. By “Chinese”, this paper means all “ethnic Chinese” irrespective of their country of origin. This makes the characterization of the people more difficult, as different origins and inherited commonalities create a rather diverse image of “the Chinese”.

Linguistic sub-identities (such as Hakkas) may also go unrecognized in quantitative studies, as not all languages have the same prestige and the same awareness among their speakers. Hakkas may testify to speak “Chinese”, or “Guangdong” language, or Hakka, or a subdialect of Hakka, or a variety which is a kind of mix of Hakka and Cantonese – the common situation of nonstandard languages which does not have clearly defined boundaries, no objective definition, and may not be noteworthy for the consultants. Since immigrants come from different countries and most administrations do not (or no longer) assess the “(sub)ethnicity” of people, it is difficult to assess the numbers of Hakkas, especially since the migrants may come from various countries. Individual estimates by consultants are usually quite high and are probably not realistic (01, 02).

(01) H01 (Amsterdam; from Dapeng); transl. from Dapeng.

Talking about Hakkas here, I estimate around 20,000 to 30,000 Hakkas here.

(02) H02 (Amsterdam, from Hong Kong / Suriname); transl. from CT.

There are quite many Hakkas here, [...] No, [the number] can't be estimated. [...] I think it should be around 10,000. [...] Those who came from Suriname in the 70's, they have already 2 or 3 generations here, plus those from Hong Kong - there are more than 10,000 Hakkas.

The Hakka Association of Thailand (泰国客家总会, 2019, 页 131-135) gives a list on the “origin and distribution of Hakkas”, and 刘卓义 (刘卓义, 2017, 页 219-236) also compiled numbers of Hakkas for various countries as follows; in short, all numbers are uncertain (03).

(03) Estimates about population numbers.

Country	Thai estimate	Melaka estimate
France	11,000	10,000
NL	1,200	2,100
Belgium	100	430

1.7 Chinese associations and identities

Migrants often founded associations in their new homeland which referred to their region of origin, a shared language or a shared surname (cf. Vollmann & Soon, 2018). In the early days, such associations were an invaluable help for newcomers from a specific

region who were taken care of by their respective 會館/会馆 huìguǎn,² e.g., in South-East Asia. Associations also help to keep business contacts. With China being geographically huge and linguistically diverse, Chinese migrants will emphasize their regional identity and flock with people from the same region of origin in China. In Malaysia, where there are many more Chinese, large associations can stand for only one (Hakka-speaking) department in China, e.g. Kar Yin Fee Kuan (Kar Yin Association) from “Jiaying”, an administrative entity established during the Qing dynasty (1904 Meizhou, 1911 Meixian). As is known from other migrations, the European-born Chinese (second and third generations) usually have little understanding of the small-scale identities of those who migrated from their specific cultural embedding, but assimilate to the local national cultures as, e.g., “Chinese Dutch”, without reference to being Hakka, let alone to originating from (or “belonging to”) a Hakka sub identity such as “Jiaying” or other. Due to smaller numbers of members, the associations in Europe are also less specific than in South-East Asia: Thus, we find a “Benelux Tsung Tsin Hakka Association” which refers to their regional extent (“Benelux”), allude to the “Tsung Tsin” associations founded by Hakkas in Hong Kong, and specify this by mentioning “Hakka”.

1.8. Business

Many Chinese migrants are determined to get their own business, which faces several natural restrictions, such as not speaking (and writing) the national languages well enough. For that reason, almost all Chinese migrants of the first generation were (and are) working in the catering and restaurant business, working in a close network of people, and whoever was able to do so would found a “Chinese restaurant” which in turn created fierce competition which was to be overcome through hard work. The next generations with full linguistic competence and high educational success could of course choose to move to any other professional field.

2.0 Material & Method

In a number of visits between 2020 and 2022 to the Benelux Tsung Tsin Hakka Association (henceforth TT), numerous Hakkas have been interviewed; specifically, 21 long interviews have been conducted in Amsterdam, Den Haag, Rotterdam, Delft,

² 會館/会馆 huìguǎn are “guildhalls” for people from the same region, with the same dialect, surname or other characteristics; the huìguǎn were an important support for newly arrived migrants and provided shelter, food, and connections.

Arnhem, Nijmegen. The interviews focused on life stories, use of languages, and linguistic attitudes, and included questions about the language use of family members and friends; they also tested the linguistic competence of the speakers by using Hakka, Cantonese, Chinese and English during the conversations. On the basis of these insights, a linguistic questionnaire was designed. On the occasion of the Chinese New Year festivities of 2022 in Delft, this linguistic questionnaire (either in English or in Chinese) was promoted to the members of TT and to friends of members. This proved to be extraordinarily difficult and time-consuming for various reasons; many people had to be approached individually (in various cities); in many cases, the researchers or helpful friends assisted older people to fill out the questionnaire which sometimes took the form of new interviews. It was finally possible to collect 115 questionnaires. TT reportedly has around 200 members, of which it was possible to query ca. 25%. Due to the complexity of the linguistic and migratory situation and the diversity of the people, this number is too small for statistical analyses, but the retrieved results are in accordance with previously reported facts about this group, and the questionnaire provides also more details on language competence and language use. For this reason, mostly absolute numbers will be given to show the general trend, and qualitative data from interviews are added for more detailed information.

(04) Questionnaire sex and TT membership distribution

Sex	TT	%	Non-Mem	%	ALL	%
Men	17	36.17	32	47.83	49	43.36
Women	30	63.83	34	52.17	64	56.64
TOTAL	47	100.00	64	100.00	113	100.00

Most interview excerpts are translated into English from the languages individually indicated; sometimes, it is marked for each line, which language has been used. the original HK is transcribed in few examples, but without tone marking; CT words are given with tone markers (according to the dictionary), in order to differentiate the two languages; “mix” means that there was code-mixing, as many speakers did not clearly distinguish the various varieties when speaking or had a CT “accent” when speaking HK.

3.0 Analysis

The analysis of these data may not be representative for all Hakkas in the Netherlands, but describes the ethnographic situation of the TT group and their friends and relatives,

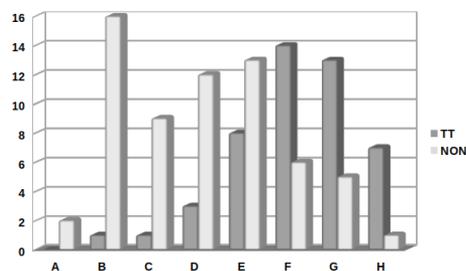
as far as we were able to penetrate the social network – with the help of the TT leadership. This group of people consists mostly of Hakkas who have come to the Netherlands after World War II, more often from the 1970s onwards.

3.1 Age groups distribution

The age group distribution for TT points out that most members are elderly; the surveyed people who were not members of TT were younger on average, as younger people were usually not involved in the TT activities of the parental (or grandparents') generation. Some younger people also declined to participate (e.g., on the grounds of not knowing or not being “Hakka”), so that they are not in the sample. The questionnaire therefore only assesses people who have some interest in the Hakka issue.

(05) Age distribution in the questionnaire: TT members are mostly from the older age range (50-90), non-members are rather younger people (20-50). Since there are only few participants, it is helpful to use broader age ranges (05b).

(05a)	TOTAL	TT	NON
A(...<20)	2	0	2
B(20-29)	17	1	16
C(30-39)	10	1	9
D(40-49)	15	3	12
E(50-59)	21	8	13
F(60-69)	20	14	6
G(70-79)	18	13	5
H(80-89)	8	7	1
TOTAL	111	47	64



(05b)	TOTAL	TT	NON
A+B	19	1	18
C+D	25	4	21
E+F	41	22	19
G+H	26	20	6
TOTAL	111	47	64

younger people
midlife adults
elder people
old people

Apart from some young people who were interested in our investigation, it proved to be difficult to approach many others, which points to the fact that a Hakka identity is often unimportant for many second- or third-generation Hakkas. It is also clear from many interviews (here and elsewhere) that Chinese parents in general do not seem to explain much about their own background to their offspring. One young man who was very interested in our investigations expressed the wish to bring young Hakkas together.

(06) Young Hakkas (30s) learning about their Haifeng family background (Hoklo-style Hakkas); transl. from CT.

H03: I only know (we are) Hakka, not even know that we are Hoi Fung.

(07) Young Surinamese Hakka (21) about his Hakka origins; transl. from HK.

H04: I don't know where it is.

In another instance a young man (H05) refused to fill out the questionnaire saying he is not a Hakka. He did not know that his father (H06) is a Hakka; his mother being a CT speaker from Hong Kong, he grew up speaking CT and never investigated further about his ancestry.

3.2 Education

As educational levels, the following parameters were distinguished: 0 N/A; 1 Elementary school; 2 Junior high school; 3 High school; 4 Bachelor degree; 5 Master's degree; 6 Doctorate. The educational levels are spread out, with TT members being lower than the non-TT group. This has to do with age and therefore differences in educational opportunities: While first-generation migrants had to work from an early age, the next generations had more opportunities to pursue educational goals.

(08) Education levels among TT- and non-members; the parameter is age-related: Older people tend to have lower education levels than younger people.

(08a)	EDU	L0	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	TOT
	TT	2	16	10	12	4	3	0	47
	NON	3	3	12	13	25	9	3	68
	TOTAL	5	19	22	25	29	12	3	110
(08b)	EDU	L0	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	TOT
	B+C	0	1	1	9	10	4	1	26
	D+E	3	1	3	5	12	7	2	33
	F+G+H	1	17	11	11	1	1	0	42
	TOTAL	4	19	15	25	23	12	3	101

From G2 onwards, the Hakkas in the sample have at least high school education, and from G3 onwards, they usually have tertiary education. This corresponds to previous findings about the high value of education for Chinese migrants (cf., e.g., Gijsberts, 2011). It was much more difficult for the migrant generation (G1) to get education.

(09) Various case studies.

- a. H07 (G1), born in 1939, studied in Dongguan; he was from Qingxi town, a Hakka village where all had the surname “Li”. He had to walk 1.5 hours to reach his school without public transport. All teachers taught in Hakka, and he only finished primary education.
- b. H08 (G1), born in 1949 in Hong Kong; at that time, public schooling was not yet available. her family was poor and she could only attend a kind of afternoon school for 2 hours per day where she paid less school fees (wealthier students would go to both morning and afternoon sessions). When she grew older and the family moved to NT, she managed to find a public school with a low-enough fee to continue her studies.
- c. H09 (G1), born in Hong Kong in 1940. only studied in primary school for 5 years.
- d. H10 + H11 (G2) (The Hague, from Hong Kong); transl. from CT.

H10: We came in the 70s, as there were only Chinese schools in big cities. There was no possibility to learn Chinese in a small town. Our parents had to work and had no time to teach us. We keep up our Chinese standard by talking to our parents, I can understand, I can speak, but I cannot read and write, so my Dutch is very much better than Chinese.

3.3 Educational languages

The reported educational languages show, once again, that older first-generation migrants were mostly educated in Chinese – with the small group (5) of Indonesian or Malaysian Hakkas. It must be noted that “Chinese” may mostly mean “Written Chinese”, perhaps still in CT or “Southern” pronunciation. The younger generations (<60) report having been mostly educated in Dutch (either in Suriname or in the Netherlands).

- (10) Educational language: 60+ Chinese, <60 Dutch; only five M/I migrants; some were educated in English

EDU-LG	CH	M/I	DU	EN
A(<20)	0	0	2	0
B(20-29)	0	0	16	2
C(30-39)	2	0	5	2
D(40-49)	2	0	12	2

E(50-59)	5	2	13	2
F(60-69)	15	3	1	5
G(70-79)	14	0	3	2
H(80-89)	7	0	0	0

Some of the answers may also come from the fact that migrants had to take compulsory Dutch courses, specifically for an exam required for the permit to sell alcoholic drinks in their restaurants (*diploma voor het cafébedrijf*). One interviewee (H12) gave a vivid description how he had struggled to pass the exam for this diploma; since the teaching material was in Dutch, he referred to a Dutch-English dictionary and then used an English-Chinese dictionary to try to understand the content of the coursebook. If someone would not pass this exam, he would need a business partner with that permit.

It is sometimes unclear whether consultants mean Cantonese or Putonghua when referring to “Chinese”, cf. this dialogue (11) from an interview.

(11) H13 (Arnhem; from Hong Kong NT); in HK.

H13: I speak **zung vun**, they can understand. And they speak Dutch.

IVW: You mean you speak Cantonese, right?

H13: Yes, **Cantonese**.

In olden times, teachers would have spoken their local *fangyan* or rather some approximation of the standard language while teaching Chinese:

(12) H01 (Amsterdam, from Dapeng); studying Chinese in China; CT/HK mix.

The Hakka teacher lied to us, he said that was “guo yu” [= Chinese], in fact it was Hakka. [...] He was not completely Hakka, like me, not standard Hakka, not standard TaiPang, not standard Hong Kong. His pronunciation was not authentic.

As Standard Chinese was not yet universally established in those times, the old speakers could not possibly learn it, which in turn gives strength to their *fangyan* competence:

(13) H14 (Rotterdam, from Hong Kong via Suriname); HK.

I could only speak Hakka, because when I left at twelve, I think it was 1965 – Yeah, maybe 1965 – I left when I was studying junior two (second year in secondary school), so I cannot – At that time, Putonghua was not yet spoken.

The same phenomenon appeared in the NL as well; it is not explicitly mentioned by the speakers that *hog jung man* “study Chinese” can mean “to learn (in) Cantonese”; it is a “Chinese school” speaking Cantonese.

(14) H15 (Arnhem, from Hong Kong); Chinese school; transl. from CT.

Because we have a Chinese school, the afternoon school, every Saturday, they’ll bring their children to the school. It’s very nice. But, and for me, I had to bring both my children to the Chinese school, and they learn very well.

Some migrants, especially from Indonesia and Suriname, had no opportunity to study Chinese at all and are therefore more firmly anchored to their respective *fangyan*; however, they usually also picked up Chinese (and Cantonese) through necessity, either back in their youth or in the NL (through media, communication).

3.4 Geographical origin

Most Hakkas from this group arrived from Hong Kong and from China (often via Hong Kong);³ the second-largest group are Surinamese Hakkas, and some are from Indonesia and Malaysia. This result may also indicate that TT consists mostly of migrants from HK and CH (i.e., Shenzhen, Dongguan, Huizhou, Bao-an), and does not have as many members among the South-East Asian Hakkas (although, obviously, there are many contacts).

(15) Geographical origin of the migrants (CH = China, HK = Hong Kong, SU = Suriname, I/M = Indonesia/Malaysia/Singapore, OT = other, NL = Benelux)

(15a)	Born in:	CH	HK	SU	I/M	OT	NL	TOTAL
	A(...<20)	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
	B(20-29)	0	2	1	0	1	12	16
	C(30-39)	3	1	0	0	0	6	10
	D(40-49)	0	1	4	2	0	5	15
	E(50-59)	5	6	8	2	0	0	22
	F(60-69)	3	13	1	4	0	0	21
	G(70-79)	7	7	2	1	1	0	18
	H(80-89)	5	2	0	1	0	0	8
	TOTAL	23	32	17	10	2	27	112

³ Due to the political and economic circumstances, ca. 2,5 million Chinese actually sneaked into Hong Kong from the 1950s until the 1970s, often to be able to migrate further.

(15b)	TT	13	25	1	2	0	3	44
	NON	6	9	14	6	1	27	63
	TOTAL	19	34	15	8	1	30	107

Only three TT members in the sample were born in the NL, while 27 of the non-members were born in Benelux which is, again, due to the age differences between the two groups: The non-members in the sample are younger people on average, and therefore second or third generation.

CH (China) often times means Bao-an/Shenzhen or other vicinities of Hong Kong; Shenzhen used to have CT- and HK-speaking populations (Liu, 2005), but has grown so fast with migrants from all over China that the main language is now Putonghua (cf. Liu 2005). The Hong Kong New Territories (NT) used to be Hakka- or Weitou-speaking (张双庆、庄初昇, 2003); Dapeng is described as a CT variety with HK influence or a “mix” of CT and HK (cf. Chen, 2016; Lau & Zhou, 2017). Migrants are aware that their language is no longer “original” (16, 17).

(16) H01 (Amsterdam), on the various *fangyan* in Hong Kong NT; CT/HK/DA mix.

H01: Here TaiPang, PingSan, LungGong, ShemZen, here DamShui, that means HuiYang (VeiYong). So we also belong to Hakka, but we speak in a mixed manner.

(17) H01 (Amsterdam; from Dapeng); CT/HK/DA mix

No. I tell you what, overseas Chinese like us, we can't speak the authentic TaiPang dialect, not able. [...] So it is like we have formed another type of dialect.

In the following example, a couple explains their linguistic background and behavior; both are Hakkas, but Hakka was already weak in their respective environments back in Shenzhen (H16) and Hong Kong (H12); therefore, the couple, although being native in HK, speaks CT as their family language:

(18) Couple H12 + H16 (The Hague, from Hong Kong + Shenzhen); transl. from HK/CT.

a. Husband:

H12: Speak Cantonese (with my wife), our children could not speak Hakka. I tell you, the moment I visited her (match making) in her home village, I had not spoken one word of Hakka with her.

b. Wife:

H16: I also didn't speak much Hakka back in those days, mostly Putonghua. You see, I lived in Guanlan, I worked in Shenzhen, spoke Cantonese and Putonghua more. I spoke Hakka with parents until I was 16 years old, I left home and worked. Since then I spoke less Hakka. We worked in Shenzhen, nobody spoke Hakka, no.

c. Wife about husband:

H16: He is very strange, whenever he meets my parents and siblings, he speaks Hakka with them, and when he turns to me, he switches back to CT.

In the following comment, a Hong Kong born, but Dutch-educated person (H11) who has learned HK from the grandparents (back in Hong Kong⁴) explains that her parents (G1) already had shifted to speaking CT with their children. When doing so, she herself switched to CT, and then to EN.

(19) H11 (G2, born in Hong Kong) (The Hague, child of H10); in HK, CT, EN.

- | | |
|---|----|
| IVW: gi gong ngia deu hiong di ji moi ciang he gong ho lan vun vo?
<i>She [H10] said only Dutch is spoken among all your siblings?</i> | HK |
| H11: he a. [= Right.] | HK |
| IVW: zo mag gai ngi m oi gong hag ga fa?
<i>Why don't you speak Hakka?</i> | HK |
| H11: coi ho lan nga deu mau gong hag ga ge.
<i>At Holland, we are not speaking Hakka.</i> | HK |
| IVW: <i>I don't care where you are, she is your elder sister, you grew up together, your parents are Hakkas.</i> | HK |
| H11: nga ba nga ma m he gong hag ga ge vo.
<i>My parents didn't speak Hakka [with us].</i> | HK |
| H11: gong ² gwong ² dung ¹ wa ⁶ gur vo, tung ⁴ ngo dei.
<i>[They] speak CT with us.</i> | CT |
| H11: They can speak, they speak Hoi Fung Hakka, they speak Cantonese with us. | EN |

⁴ The "Chinese" model where grandparents take care of children while the parents are working often leads to language preservation in spite of the parents' linguistic attitudes.

3.5 Migration routes

The members of TT predominantly are a group of Hong Kongers and Chinese who almost entirely migrated via Hong Kong. Some of the migrants from mainland China came from neighbouring regions and therefore also speak and understand specific dialects such as Dapeng and Weitou. The one outlier coming from “OT” (“other origin” in 05) is a man with a particularly complex migration history: Born in Tahiti, his family returned to China to assist his old grandmother, before he went to Hong Kong, from where he returned to Tahiti, until he moved to France and ended up in the Netherlands. Most Chinese migrants report sometimes adventurous ways of entering Hong Kong from where they could finally reach Europe.

In Suriname, Hakka plays an important role; with independence, some Hakkas migrated to the Netherlands out of fear that the new government might not be conducive to their life interests. This fear was unfounded, as interviewees commented, but there is still an influx of Surinamese Hakkas into the Netherlands, mostly for studying. The Indonesian Hakkas are certainly more numerous in the Netherlands, but obviously do not connect to TT to the same extent and have their own networks; unfortunately, one group of Indonesian Hakkas who could be interviewed did not return the questionnaire. They were Christians who decided to leave the newly formed Indonesia which (at that time) was (particularly) hostile to Chinese. The illegal migrants ultimately managed to legalize their status through various measures; a Malaysia-born man reported he had been deported six times from Belgium and NL, and still found ways to return and finally settle down.

The individual migration histories sometimes include stays in the UK or other countries. Work migration led some of the Dutch Hakkas to Germany or Belgium for a while. In order to circumvent the tourist visa on arrival which would prohibit work of any kind, some migrants reported to have landed in Paris from where they were picked up by their relatives or friends and brought to the Netherlands by car, thereby avoiding a working prohibition for Benelux which would have otherwise been issued on arrival.

3.6. Multilingual competence

This is a difficult question for many people, since not all “languages” are seen as noteworthy; most people would only mention codified (“official”) languages, or the language name may not even be known, or differ from what is asked (e.g., “Sranan” which

was sometimes called “Suriname” in interviews). Although languages that were elicited in interviews earlier were proposed in the questionnaire, it is unclear how well the question has been answered, though, for the lesser known languages.

- (20) Language competence (HK = Hakka, CH = Chinese, CT = Cantonese, HO = Hokkien, EN = English, DU = Dutch, GE = German, M/I = Malay/Indonesian, SR = Sranan, DA = Dapeng, WE = Weitou, FR = French, OT = other)

HK	71	M/I	9	EN	64
CH	74	SR	14	DU	78
CT	84	DA	9	FR	15
HO	5	WE	11	GE	6
				OT	9

The Hakkas in this sample are able to speak Hakka, Chinese, and Cantonese, furthermore many speak English and Dutch, some know German or French. Depending on their origin, they may also know Indonesian/Malay, Sranan (from Suriname), and a few more South Sinitic varieties such as Dapeng and Weitou, indicating places of origin near Hong Kong. It should be mentioned here that “knowing Dutch”, for instance, does not tell us whether (elaborated) literacy has been achieved. 5 people reported speaking Hokkien which was included only for the sake of completeness. We did not ask for Teochew, as this variety had never been mentioned before in the interviews. Nine other languages were mentioned by only one consultant each.

When age groups are compared, the intergenerational development of linguistic competence becomes evident. The Hakka language is used less by younger Hakkas; competence in Chinese and Cantonese is reported by all age groups and shows a small increase among the younger people. English is generally understood except by old people, Dutch is understood by all respondents. There are no young people of Malaysian or Indonesian origin in the data, but it is known from individual interviews that Indonesian/Malay is not transmitted in families, and people prefer Mandarin Chinese (or Cantonese) over Hakka. Indonesian (and Malaysian)⁵ Hakkas could not learn Chinese in their country of origin, but watched Taiwanese movies; later, Cantonese media became available. This level of input may contribute to shift the family language. There are too few Surinamese people in the sample, however, it may be noted that first-generation

⁵ The situation in Indonesia and Malaysia is very different; Indonesians learn Chinese only through media (e.g., movies); Malaysians can learn Chinese in private schools and since some time even in public schools, and they have constant exposure to Chinese mass media; some old people, on the other hand, may not have learned to read and write Chinese, but were “English-educated” instead. The situation is more varied, but learning Chinese is usually an option for ethnic Chinese.

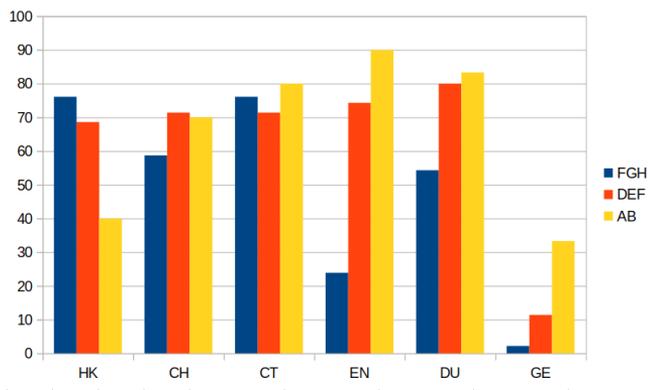
migrants from Suriname of any age will agree that they can communicate in Sranan. The smaller, specific (but emphatically represented) varieties from China such as Dapeng and Weitou are used only by old migrants among friends and family. Finally, half of the young people say that they have competence in German which is close to Dutch and obviously useful.

(21) Intergenerational development of language competence (NR = number of people answering this question).

(21a)	HK	CH	CT	HO	EN	DU	GE	M/I	SR	DA	WE	FR	OT	NR
AB	8	13	17	0	18	18	9	0	2	0	0	3	1	19
C	4	9	7	1	9	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
D	7	10	8	1	13	12	3	0	1	0	0	2	0	14
E	17	15	17	1	13	16	1	3	2	1	2	0	1	21
F	18	13	16	2	8	13	0	4	0	5	6	0	1	20
GH	17	14	19	0	3	12	1	2	9	3	3	1	5	26

Summarizing this small dataset into three age groups for simplicity, we find a trend of decreasing HK use and a slight increase in the use of CT and CH (21b; 22).

(21b)	HK	CH	CT	EN	DU	GE	
FGH	76,1	58,7	76,1	23,9	54,3	2,2	(older)
DEF	68,6	71,4	71,4	74,3	80,0	11,4	
AB	40,0	70,0	80,0	90,0	83,3	33,3	(younger)



(22) Intergenerational decline in the use of HK, increase in CH and CT (in %).

Smaller varieties such as DA are not that numerous in the questionnaire data, although speakers report that there are quite a few speakers:

(23) Speaker H01 (Amsterdam, from Dapeng); HK/CT/DA mix.

IVM: 有几个大鹏人在 –

How many people from TaiPang –

H01: 这里很多大鹏人。出外面的, 大鹏人呢, 就应该是第三多。第一就香港, 第二就美国, 第三是这里啊。

There are many people from TaiPang here. Those who left TaiPang, mostly went to Hong Kong, second USA, and here in the Netherlands, third choice.

In the following passage (24), a wife (H10, G2) comments on her NL-born, DaPeng-speaking husband (G2, born in Hong Kong); he speaks DaPeng with his family, otherwise DU, and has a heavy accent in CT. For G2, the family language is more restricted and cannot be extended as easily to “similar” varieties.

(24) H10 about her DaPeng-speaking husband (transl. from CT).

H10: No, really, he could not speak the proper Cantonese. His origin is Dapeng, he speaks authentic Dapeng, but not Cantonese. Because his mother could not speak Cantonese, just speaks Dapeng.

IVM: I see. How about his father?

H10: Very strong Dapeng accent.

IVM: Both his parents are Dapeng.

H10: Right, that's why he speaks Cantonese with very strong Dapeng accent. And he usually speaks Dutch, because he was born here, he is good at Dutch.

People from Suriname and the Antilles know a few more languages – the local creole languages:

(25) H17 (Amsterdam, from Suriname & Antilles), in EN.

IV2: Did your parents speak Hakka with you?

H17: In the beginning, full of Hakka. But when we go to Curaçao, I have to go to school, then they speak only Papiamentu, the language of Curaçao. And when we turn back, they speak mostly Suriname [= Sranan]. Because my parents have to learn the

language. Otherwise, they can't serve the clients when they come to buy Chinese food.

Another couple from Suriname (H14, Rotterdam) reported that they only used Hakka and Sranan when living in Suriname; when they moved to NL, they had to pick up some CT; the husband can understand, but does not speak CT, the wife uses CT for shopping at the Asia markets.

An Indonesian-born person (H18, Rotterdam, from Jakarta) reports (a) having gotten used to Standard Chinese through media, but (b) otherwise did not formally learn CH until she attended CH-speaking church services in the NL.

(26) Speaker H18 (Rotterdam, from Indonesia); transl. from HK/CH mix

H18: Guoyu, when I was small I used to watch guoyu movies from Taiwan. There were Indonesian subtitles, I could understand, but I dare not speak.

H18: I don't know **zung vun** [= Chinese]. Chinese education was banned [in Indonesia]. It was allowed during my father's time. So I forgot English easily. Just speak Hakka and Hoklo⁶. At that time I couldn't speak Mandarin. I picked up Mandarin here.

IVW: Where?

H18: At church. – Yeah. Learn Putonghua. Learn Cantonese by watching video.

3.7 Acquisition of languages

It is evident that HK is strictly a family language, while CH, CT, EN, DU and possibly other (codified/national) languages are often learned at school. CT and DU are also reported to have been picked up with friends, i.e., in everyday communication. This is true for early immigrants who could not attend DU classes, and for some HK who needed to shift to CT since they were in NL. As mentioned before, Indonesian Hakkas picked up CH and CT through media, the more so in NL.

(27) Where languages were learned.

	HK	CH	CT	EN	DU	OT
Family	70	30	68	2	6	1
School	5	44	16	69	53	15
Friends	2	2	12	4	14	5

⁶ Hoklo is an expression for Hokkien/Minnan language which is widespread in South-East Asia and Taiwan.

HK and CT, and to a lesser degree CH, were spoken as the family language especially among the old migrants; CH, EN, DU, on the other hand, were learned at school. Among friends, CT and DU were picked up by the few who did not speak it. All Malaysian Chinese who were interviewed assessed that it was probably easier for them to learn DU, as they all knew EN already (28).

(28) Speaker H19 (Arnhem, from Malaysia) (transl. from HK).

H19: The boss gave me a takeout menu and asked me to memorize the prices. That's how I started. So I memorized the prices and the pronunciations upstairs, when the restaurant was closed. It was easy for us Malaysians, actually. Because we already know English. We could read these words.

Other cases: (a) In everyday situations, H09 could cope by himself. For contacts with government offices or the hospital, he would sometimes ask people to translate for him. For instance, his boss was married to a Dutch woman who would accompany his wife to see doctors, and then report back to her husband (the boss) who would then explain the matter to H09 in CH; although H09 is not very good in CH, he could communicate in this way. Nowadays, he would call his daughter at times to speak on behalf of him or translate for him. He understands the main topic, e.g., of an official letter, in DU, but sometimes needs a translation into EN. (b) Another consultant, H12 (Arnhem, from China), basically reported the same approaches to the language problem. (c) Consultant H18 reported that she would learn to speak some DU due to her neighbours back then in Belgium who would engage her in simple conversations. She learned to read DU when she needed to help her daughter in the first grade, in Belgium (29).

(29) Speaker H18 (Rotterdam, from Indonesia); transl. from HK/CH mix.

H18: Belgium, they gave you a book, you had to teach your child. After finished teaching, the parent had to sign, if the father was teaching, the father signed, if the mother was teaching, then the mother had to sign. Therefore, I was forced to learn Dutch.

Some migrants immediately started working in the kitchen which hindered them to engage in language learning, as in the following report.

(30) H01 (Amsterdam, from Dapeng); transl. from CT/HK/DA.

H01: I came with a working permit as labour. I was considered old. Working in the kitchen of Chinese restaurant which served westerners, everyday from “lu tiu” to “zim tiu” [= stove to pillow, i.e., working by the stove, sleeping on the pillow].

[...]

IVW: Can you speak Dutch now?

H01: More or less, to buy stuff, one couldn't manage without speaking Dutch.

The situation is much easier for Surinamese Hakkas, as they already speak DU upon arrival.

(31) H17 (Amsterdam, from Suriname); transl. from HK.

Yeah. The education [in Suriname] was also in Dutch. That's why, when we came here, it's very easy to continue the study, because it's all in Dutch.

3.8 Self-assessed competence and frequency of language use

Language competence can vary a lot; the consultants were therefore asked to self-assess their linguistic competence as well as their usage habits. Using a scale from 1 = "very good" to 5 = "not at all", the following average self-assessments were measured:

(32) How well do you speak ...? (1 = "very good" to 5 = "not at all")

Well	HK	CH	CT	EN	DU
AB	4,1	3,2	2,6	1,3	1,2
CD	3,2	2,6	2,5	1,9	1,5
E	2,4	2,7	2,4	2,7	2,1
F	2,0	2,9	1,9	3,6	3,2
GH	1,7	2,9	2,1	4,2	3,6

The oldest speakers (H) consider themselves to be best speakers of HK (H: 1,0), but only "good" or "so so" speakers of CT and CH, respectively. It is already the old people <80 (G) who think that their HK is only "good" – equal to CT, but better than CH. Then, the competence in HK decreases to "so so" (3) or "not much" (4) in younger people. CH remains at level 3 ("so so"), and CT is a bit better (2-3). The younger speakers (A-D) report being (very) good at DU and EN.

The consultants report the following usage habits: All age groups use CT most frequently (2-3), HK is used less, CH is used a bit more than HK. Except for the old people (F-H), DU is very often used, closely followed by EN.

(33) How often do you speak ...? (1 = “very often” to 5 = “not at all”)

Often	HK	CH	CT	EN	DU
AB	4,0	3,2	2,5	1,4	1,1
CD	3,6	2,5	2,8	2,5	1,4
E	2,9	2,8	2,4	2,9	1,8
F	3,2	3,1	1,7	3,8	2,5
GH	2,3	2,9	2,1	4,3	3,1

Thus, a language shift from HK to DU (and EN) can be assumed, with some resistance from CT and CH as secondary languages. For old people, the situation is such that they would have been in a CT- and CH-speaking environment during their lives – working in restaurants, buying at Chinese supermarkets, meeting with fellow migrants. DU played a role mainly when interacting with the authorities or with customers in the restaurant. This has been repeatedly reported by people filling out the questionnaire and in interviews. The speakers basically adapt to various settings and choose from the available resources, aware that they do not speak any “pure” variety, cf. the following comment.

(34) H01 (Amsterdam, from Hong Kong); transl. from HK.

IVW: Do you speak Hakka with others in daily life?

H01: If people want to speak Hakka then we speak Hakka, if they speak Putonghua, then Putonghua, they want to speak Cantonese, then Cantonese.

H01: But what we speak, none is standard. Really, I don’t bluff you.

Younger people may have given up speaking HK due to migration; for instance, H10 does not speak HK anymore, while her younger sister can still speak HK fluently.

(35) H10 (The Hague, from Hong Kong)

IVW: When you were still small in Hong Kong –

H10: Spoke until age of 8 when (I) was in Hong Kong.

IVW: From then onwards spoke less and less?

H10: Right. And then, for many years I have not spoken Hakka.

First-generation migrants inevitably picked up some DU, but are often not good at speaking DU.

(36) Speaker H13 (Arnhem, from Hong Kong); HK/CT mix.

I told them, I don't understand, don't speak Dutch with me. You speak Cantonese with me.

This leads to a “partition of labour” for language teaching in the family; the grandmother is asked to teach the children CT (“jung¹ man²”) in order to avoid that her “bad Dutch” does not “influence” the children (37).

(37) Speaker H13 (Arnhem, from Hong Kong); HK/CT mix.

H13: My son told me to speak Hakka with them, to teach them Hakka.

IVW: Oh!

H13: You speak jung¹ man² or Hakka with them, you don't speak Dutch with them, you are not good at Dutch.

Speaker H13 uses *zung vun* for CT, similarly, Dapeng speaker H01 does not sharply distinguish the vernaculars by name:

(38) H01 (Amsterdam, from Dapeng); transl. from CT/HK/DA mix.

	Language Used
IVW: What language do you speak with them [= the children]?	HK
H01: pà:k wǎ:	CT
IVW: pà:k wǎ:	CT
H01: We call TaiPang pà:k wǎ:.	CT/DA

H14 comments on his own (time-limited) language transmission efforts to his grandchildren as follows:

(39) H14 (Rotterdam, from Hong Kong via Suriname); transl. from HK.

IVW: He sees you and calls you Ah gung, ah po, then speak Hakka with you, or do you speak Hakka and they answer you in Punti or Putonghua?

H14: Answer in Hakka provided that he understands and knows, otherwise he won't be able to answer.

IVW: If he doesn't understand, you speak with him, he doesn't understand, in what language would he answer you?

H14: Er, maybe his father translates or I speak a bit Dutch and translate for him.

The teaching of grandchildren by the older generation does not succeed due to the limited time the children are exposed, as expressed by H01:

(40) Speaker H01 (Amsterdam, from Dapeng); transl. from CT/HK/DA.

H01: The mother of grandson told me to teach him Cantonese.

IVW: Ask you to go there and teach?

H01: No, she brings her kid over and ask me to teach, how to teach if he is just staying for a few days?

3.9 Intra-familial language use

HK being a family language and probably being used mostly in interactions with the older family members, this question once again asked to self-assess usage habits.

(41) Speak HK with ... (1=very much; 5=not at all).

HK	grpar	father	mother	spouse	children	grchildr	other
AB	3,7	3,9	3,9	4,9	5,0	5,0	4,0
CD	3,5	3,3	3,5	5,0	4,7	5,0	3,2
E	2,2	2,3	2,3	3,8	3,8	4,9	2,2
F	1,7	2,1	2,0	3,7	4,3	4,7	2,2
GH	1,7	1,4	1,6	2,2	2,7	3,3	2,4

HK is used when speaking with grandparents and parents, but not much with spouses and children at ages A-F, not at all among A-D. This is a clear indication for language shift. According to the qualitative interviews, most consultants reported that they speak CT with their spouses and offspring. Parents also often expressed pride if their children could understand HK from passively listening to the parents speaking. In other cases, younger adults had picked up HK by returning to China or Hong Kong. The HK language is thus still perceived as a marker of Hakka identity. People who were helped to fill out the questionnaire often reported that their children don't speak HK, but do use CT. Even if both parents are Hakkas, they often reported speaking CT at home (just as they would speak mostly CT at their workplaces). Among the young people, only the Surinamese are truly fluent in HK, while others self-assess not knowing much or not speaking HK at all. In the case of "astronaut families" (Ong, 1999), HK serves a communicative purpose for

the first-generation migrants, but not for the following generation who are growing up in different languages:

(42) H18 (Rotterdam, from Indonesia); transl. from HK/CH mix.

IVW: So now you communicate with your siblings all in Hakka.

H18: Hakka.

[...]

H18: If it is my children with their children, it is not a problem, they all speak English.

Young migrants such as H10 below give up their familial language in favor of DU.

(43) H10 (The Hague, from Hong Kong); transl. from CT

IVW: Ah huh. So what is the common language among you and your siblings?

H10: Most of the time Dutch. (laughs)

IVW: You were 8 years old when you came to NL?

H10: Right.

IVW: And your elder brothers?

H10: 9 or 10, the other one was 11.

IVW: And your younger sister?

H10: 6 years old.

IVW: So after you had arrived in NL, your parents were working –

H10: Yes, we went to school. In the beginning we spoke only Cantonese, as we could not speak Dutch, until we picked up Dutch, then we only spoke Dutch.

IVW: Do you remember how long did it take for you and your siblings to switch to Dutch as a common language?

H10: I think it was quite fast, in two–three years' time.

Another reason for language shift are mixed marriages; e.g., migrant H20 from Boluo married a woman from Weitou which means that she is not a HK speaker; therefore, the family speaks CT.

(44) H20 (Arnhem, from Boluo, Guangdong); transl. from HK.

It is difficult (no opportunity) to speak Hakka – all day long speak only Cantonese at home, [...]

3.10 Multilingual domain analysis

Languages may compete for communicative situations or domains. It has therefore been asked which language is used in which situation. It is shown that HK is a family language used also with friends. CT, however, is even more used in the family, but also for shopping and at the (former) workplaces of the old people; since many of the consultants were already retired, the numbers are possibly lower than they would have been earlier.

(45) Domain analysis

LG	Family	Friends	Workplace	Religion	Shopping	Public	Other
HK	40	26	1	5	0	2	4
CH	28	24	13	8	3	4	3
CT	73	52	20	13	22	9	0
DU	44	53	56	9	65	43	3
EN	9	27	31	0	12	18	9
OT	2	3	5	0	2	3	1

3.11 Domain analysis by age

The analysis by age groups gives a more differentiated picture, however, risks having too low numbers for interpretation. CT and HK are family languages for all age groups, but HK decreases with younger generations, and they tend to use CH; age group F, interestingly, indicated not using HK much either. DU is a family language for ages A-E. As for the workplace language, CT is mentioned by the older generations, but not as numerous as would be expected; it is also not mentioned very often for the variable “shopping”; in both situations, DU is chosen by a majority. The other domains don’t contain enough data; there are churches where CT and CH is used.

(46) Domains by age group

(46a)	Family	HK	CH	CT	EN	DU	Friends	HK	CH	CT	EN	DU
	AB	5	8	18	4	13	AB	0	2	4	10	17
	CD	8	11	13	2	14	CD	3	5	10	9	19
	E	11	3	10	2	10	E	7	4	8	6	9
	F	3	3	15	0	4	F	8	9	17	2	6
	GH	13	3	17	1	3	CD	8	4	13	0	2

(46b)	Workpl.	HK	CH	CT	EN	DU	Shopp.	HK	CH	CT	EN	DU
	AB	0	2	1	7	12	AB	0	1	2	3	14
	CD	0	3	2	11	18	CD	0	1	1	5	14
	E	0	3	6	6	12	E	0	1	6	2	12
	F	1	4	8	3	8	F	0	0	9	1	14
	CD	0	1	3	4	6	CD	0	0	4	1	11

3.12 Language attitudes and promotion of Hakka

The participants have been asked whether they wish Hakka to be preserved, and 69 answered in the affirmative, 10 were somewhat affirmative, and one person said no. 27 did not answer to that question. When asked whether they would engage in its preservation, 44 answered yes, 11 chose “maybe”, and 14 answered “no”. Asked whether they would like Hakka to be passed on to the next generations, 74 yes, four replied “maybe”, and three people were opposed. Many people did not answer these questions at all. This fits with the impression from qualitative interviews that most people show only little interest in the matter, but will answer in the affirmative, if asked. As with other minority languages, only a small group of people wishes to truly act on that endeavour. People sometimes report having “forced” their children to answer in HK. Beside reporting a wish to preserve HK, most, if not all Chinese parents want their children to learn the national language, as it is useful for education and work. Furthermore, the questionnaire offered possible measures for the preservation of the language, which was agreed upon as follows (47).

(47) Why should HK be preserved?

- 20 Young people should speak Hakka.
- 23 There should be classes for Hakka.
- 12 Keeping up the language may not be possible or realistic.
- 15 Hakka has no practical use in daily life (in NL).
- 18 Dutch, English, Chinese are more important for studies and career.
- 32 Documentation of the language is a good idea to preserve the memory.

These answers highlight the wish to preserve the language at least through language documentation, and the wish for young people to keep using the language. HK is seen as an ancestral language, as is the result of the next two questions (48, 49).

(48) Measures to promote HK

- 38 Encourage Hakkas to speak the mother tongue with their children.
- 40 Promote the importance of knowing one's root and the ancestral language.
- 18 Produce short videos in Hakka.
- 27 Hold regular meetings where Hakka is spoken.

(49) Whether one speaks Hakka or not, one should cherish and pass on the traditions and culture. Why?

- 73 It is important to know our roots and our culture.
- 9 The young Hakkas are culturally different from the Dutch.
- 9 Not every young person is interested.
- 11 The younger generation does not think like the older people.
- 6 The younger people are just Dutch.

The activities of the TT association are promoting Hakka culture; this is in agreement with the consultants of the questionnaire (50).

(50) What should the association do to promote/preserve Hakka culture?

- 57 Celebrating Hakka/Chinese festivals to pass on the traditions.
- 27 Organise exhibitions or activities (e.g., reciting and singing in Hakka).
- 29 Traditional Hakka cooking course or competition.
- 22 Promote Hakka culture by using blogs and videos.
- 25 Organise gatherings/picnics/trips.
- 16 Establish a Tsung Tsin youth-league / organise youth fellowship gatherings.

3.13 Individual language attitudes

Some old Hakka speakers regret the loss of the language more deeply; consultant H20, for example, said that “he would not answer, if Hakkas address him in CT”, giving emphasis to his love for the mother tongue. Nonetheless, he is aware that the young generation does not learn Hakka, and “preservation” means just to use it as long as it is still understood (51).

(51) H20 (Arnhem, from Boluo, Guangdong); HK

he me a? an yong nga deu hag ga yan m ho yi diu oi gi e ma,
yes QU PTC? such 1 PL hakka lg. not can throw CoS 3 REL PTC*

iu ded yid toi jiu ded yid toi, liu ded yid ngien jiu yid ngien.
keep able one gen. then able one gen., keep able one year then one year.

And we can't abandon our Hakka language, (if we could) preserve it for one more generation, then we preserve it for another generation, (if we could) preserve it for one more year then we preserve it for another year.

The dictionary author Chin-A-Woeng in Rotterdam decided to document the language in an attempt to document the knowledge before it may get lost (陈志明, 2021); the dictionary is also accessible online.⁷ – For many other Hakkas who see the language decay, it is not the “language”, but the “culture” (i.e., “identity”) which is important (52).

(52) H14 (Rotterdam, from Hong Kong via Suriname); HK

H14: **ci zung gi du he yid zag vun fa, vun fa m neng giu sid hoi,**
after.all it ALL BE one CLF culture culture not can lose CoS*

yi hiu mau ngin hiau gong, ai vun fa, su hong han gi zoi den.
future no people can speak DEM culture book ON still documented-ASP*

After all it is a culture, culture cannot be lost, even though nobody speaks [the language] in the future, the culture is documented in books.

Many interviewees, not only in this study, express the “practical” viewpoint of favoring Standard Chinese or Cantonese over Hakka (53, 54).

(53) Speaker H18 (Rotterdam, from Indonesia); transl. from HK/CH.

IVW: Why don't you teach your children to speak Hakka?

H18: Because I think Hakka is less used. If it is Guoyu, wherever they go, even though they can't speak, they could still ask, could still understand. Hakka is rarely used. But it is easy for small children, they listened, they asked you many questions, but they dare not speak, not able.

* For a full list of abbreviations used in this text, refer the list of Abbreviations on page 111-112.

⁷ <https://hakkadictionary.com/hakkadict>

(54) H13 (Arnhem; from Hong Kong NT), transl. from HK/CT mix.

IVW: Does your husband ever think that his own sons, being Hakka, cannot speak Hakka?

H13: Not thinking like this.

IVW: You mean it's alright not to be able to speak Hakka?

H13: Why didn't I talk to them in Hakka, because many people don't speak Hakka, [but] if you don't speak Cantonese, it is difficult to communicate with other people.

H04, a young (aged 24) Surinamese student, commented that it is good to speak HK with the children, as they would learn DU at school anyway (55). This is an opinion which may originate from the very different situation in Suriname where HK is going strong and DU is taught at schools.

(55) H04 (Delft, from Suriname); transl. from HK.

H04: It is best if you speak Hakka with your children. xxxx When the children go to school, they would learn Dutch. So it is best to speak Hakka with them.

IVW: So you are not afraid that, when they go to school later, they couldn't speak Dutch. Some parents speak Dutch to the children at home.

H04: I think that the children would learn automatically, once they start schooling.

Even if many Hakkas prefer Standard Chinese over HK, learning Chinese in a non-Chinese environment is also an additional educational task which is experienced as a nuisance by children and teenagers who want to meet their peers, not use their free time to go to Chinese classes instead. In the following comment, speaking Chinese is experienced as a marker of not fitting into society (56).

(56) Family conversation; G1: H11; G2: H21 (The Hague, from Hong Kong); transl. from CT.

H11: What matters most was that they had no interest at all. They saw their Dutch friends going for ballet, football or fun or whatsoever activities on Saturdays, but you had to explain to them, this you cannot learn, that you cannot do, because at this point of time you have to be at the Chinese school.

H21: Also, when I was small, when I went out with grandparents, I would feel embarrassed.

IVW: Why?

H21: If other children met us, they would think we were different –

H11: You would feel like you were being discriminated like that.

H21: Sometimes they would say to us “ni hao”, like that. I remembered when I was small, I spoke very softly in public, now I grew up and I dare to speak up, and now I am proud to be Chinese. But when you were small, being in a foreign country, [different] race –

H11: You would be afraid of being laughed upon because of language –

The young adults (30+, G2) report having pretended not to speak Chinese at all, as they were bullied by other children. As is often the case with migrant offspring, it was only later that they would appreciate to speak another language (or regret not having learned it). When asked about possible discrimination, it is understood that it is just the children’s conformism, together with the Chinese spirit of not complaining easily about discomfort; nonetheless, it gave some discomfort to the second-generation (57). The conclusion for the younger people was often to simply identify as Dutch, not Chinese.

(57) Family conversation; G1: H11; G2: H21 (The Hague, from Hong Kong); transl. from CT.

H11: It is not really discrimination, but you felt that you shouldn’t be regarded as disturbing.

H03: But, and what differs was that, Chinese they don’t –

H21: they don’t make any problems.

H03: They don’t want to make problems, if Moroccans feel that they are discriminated,

H21: they would sabotage –

H03: they would speak out or whatever –

H11: Chinese would not –

H03: Chinese would just tolerate –

H21: That means Chinese won’t fight back, that is to say, you can make fun of Chinese people –

H03: In fact, even until today, the Dutch⁸ still have this mindset.

⁸ The speakers used, of course, CT *guai lou* “foreigners”, lit. “ghosts”, the usual term for Europeans.

H21: Yeah, when we were small, they would call us poep chinees, literal translation is “poop Chinese”. The Dutch, they said so.

H03: Or there is a children birthday song called A hunky bunky Shanghai, and all the kids they did this [chinky eyes].

H21: When small.

H03: But the Dutch said, “Oh, it’s just for fun, it’s not harmful”, but when you were small-

H11: If you were Chinese, you would feel bad.

H21: It’s very discriminating. But you can’t – the whole class was teasing you like that.

4.0 Conclusions

In superdiverse societies, many smaller linguistic minorities (of dialects and languages alike) experience language shift to the superordinate national and educational language, or, more exactly, to the commonly shared colloquial variety of that language. In the case of Chinese migrants, speakers of the non-standard dialects (or Sinitic languages) partly have the additional difficulty of attempting to learn Standard Chinese, and in the situation of the Netherlands, it seems that the language of Hong Kong, “Cantonese” intervened as the *lingua franca* of the Hakkas. Smaller vernaculars, Hakka or not (e.g., Dapeng, Weitou), are roofed over by superordinate languages and not transmitted into the next generations. Community members often express regret about language loss when asked, however, in practice, many Hakkas would like their children to learn Chinese in educational settings. The children, in turn, lack the feeling of necessity and often give up the learning of Chinese. Peer group pressure translates into a wish for linguistic assimilation. In this way, Hakka is the language of old, first-generation migrants, while the middle-aged migrants use Cantonese most of the time, partly because of their origin from Hong Kong. Individual linguistic trajectories are strongly shaped by migration history and origin of the families, and cannot easily be generalized. Where family histories invariably lead to, is, however, language shift, leading to a new multilingualism of more prestigious, and finally school-mediated languages.

5.0 Abbreviations

3	3rd person singular
A	age range (...<20)
ALL	Chin. function word dou
ASP	Aspect marker

B	age range (20-29)
BE	Copula “to be”
Benelux	“Politico-economic union” of Belgium+NL+Luxemburg
C	age range (30-39)
CH	China; Standard Chinese = Putonghua)
CLF	Classifier
CoS	change-of-state marker
CT	Cantonese
DA	Dapeng (dialect/language)
D	age range (40-49)
DEM	demonstrative pronoun
DU	Dutch
E	age range (50-59)
EDU-LG	educational language(s)
EN	English
F	age range (60-69)
FR	French
G	age range (70-79)
GE	German
gen.	generation
H	age range (80-89)
HK	(a) Hakka ; (b) Hong Kong
HO	Hokkien
IV2	second interviewer
IVW	first interviewer
M/I	Malay/Indonesian; Indonesia/Malaysia/Singapore
NL	Benelux
NON	Hakkas who are not TT members
NR	number
NT	Hong Kong New Territories
ON	Chin. postposition shang
OT	other countries/languages
PTC	pragmatic particle
QU	question particle
REL	Chin. relation marker de
SR	Sranan
SS	South Sinitic languages
SU	Suriname
TT	Benelux Tsung Tsin Hakka Association
UK	United Kingdom
WE	Weitou (dialect/language)
xxxx	ununderstandable passage

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