

Sounding Chinese: Tracing the Voice of Early 20th to 21st Century Transnational Chinese

by

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Abstract

Accent, that is differences heard in pronunciations, specifically the speech sound that identifies Chineseness is the departure point for this research into the construction of the identity of transnational Chinese. This question also frames *pronounce, Meddling English, Oh Canada!* and the six volumes of a project *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds*. The genesis of *The Phrase Books of Migrant Sounds* lies in phrase books written in the late-19th and early-20th centuries for migrants to North America. Of great interest is not only the fact that English phrases were translated into languages spoken in the southern parts of China (for example Toisanese and Cantonese) but that English words and phrases were transcribed using their corresponding pronunciations. These phrase books helped them articulate words of a language they had not heard before, the unfamiliar sounds made familiar, the alien brought closer to home.

The research employs knowledge from an array of disciplines—cultural studies, sociolinguistics and anthropology to name a few—as well as archived sound recordings of late-19th century and contemporary transnational Chinese to map a sound history of transnational Chinese. It considers the experiences of those who call multiple places ‘home’ to challenge the singularity of transnational Chinese identity and to suggest that, rather than being monolithic, transnational Chinese identity is pluricentric and multiphonic. The thesis affords a link between one’s sense of identities, however changing though they are, with political, cultural and social experiences.

My practice-based research *Sounding Chinese: Tracing the Voice of Early 20th to 21st Century Transnational Chinese* looks at how transnationals—those who call more than one place home and who modify the way they speak accordingly—conceptualize themselves.

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Notes on Terminology

Romanized Cantonese words and names are written in the alphabetic language called *jyutping* and romanized Mandarin in the alphabetic language *pinyin*. Both *jyutping* and *pinyin* are written in italics with number tone markings which follow the romanized text.

Whenever possible characters follow both *jyutping* and *pinyin* text, except where there is a preferred spelling. In the case of words and names with specific spelling, *jyutping* and *pinyin* follows in brackets. Following conventional Chinese usage, I have written surname first, followed by given names, except in citations where authors have indicated otherwise. When appropriate or required, Mandarin is written using simplified Chinese characters and Cantonese using traditional Chinese characters. For example:

‘ball’ – *qiu*² (球) in Mandarin, *bo*¹ (波) a Cantonese loan word pronounced [bɔː]

Names of people, places and organization are written in the language they are spoken in and where appropriate translated to relevant languages. Where Cantonese was used, especially in the chapter on Chinese in Vancouver, Canada, I followed local usage for people, places and organisations and wherever possible have included pinyin.

Malay and Peranakan texts are written using romanized Bahasa Melayu. Singlish texts, usually a mesh of various languages, are written in their respective languages. Malay, Peranakan and Singlish texts are written in italics.

When required, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is used to contrast phonetics and phonological speech.

Non-English words that are included in English-language dictionaries are not italicized, or in the case of Chinese language words are tone markings included.

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In memory of Fizah

Chapter 1

Introduction

On 13 March 2011, UCLA student Alexandra Wallace posted a three-minute video that went beyond her intent to complain about being disturbed while studying in the library¹ (amrevolutions, 2011, 01:47). In it she mimics Asian students talking loudly on mobile telephones. Wallace's video illustrates an important point. Her controversial 'Ohhh! Ching chong ling long ting tong? Ohhh!' is an audio portrait, an over-arching gesture to describe collectively Asians that make up 37% of the 26,000 UCLA undergraduates (Associated Press, 2011).

Whilst Wallace refers to Asians² in general, 'ching chong' has long been used in English to describe a Chinese sound. Many rhymes and limericks refer to 'Ching Chong Chinaman', for example, as in John Steinbeck's 1945 *Cannery Row*, 'Ching-Chong Chinaman sitting on the rail – 'Long came a white man an' chopped off his tail' (Steinbeck, 1945, p. 376). How does the term 'ching chong' come to refer to the Chinese and, as in Steinbeck's example, is this how migrant Chinese in North America see themselves?

In her three-minute video on 13 March 2011, Wallace was applying a stereotype. Her description of the Asians in the library, untaught and thus ignorant of 'polite' manners, is a normative stereotype (Appiah, 2000, p. 47) based on social conventions associated with group membership, both as a stereotype of Asians as well as the expected code of conduct in a public library.

Furthermore, Wallace's mimicry of their speech—Ohhh! Ching chong ling long ting tong? Ohhh!—is consistent with Associate Professor of Philosophy,

¹ Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70qcgliWKk0&list=PLjLp7_SYP1nQgCGNaffgjwHnKVdCD37yK&index=8>

² In North America the term 'Asians' generally refers to East Asians such as Chinese, Japanese and Koreans, whereas in the United Kingdom it generally refers to Asians from the Indian sub-continent.

University of Utah, Erin Beeghly's discussion of stereotypes and stereotyping. She writes,

... they don't merely access or use stereotypes. They judge that person based primarily on stereotypes. Moreover, their interactions with that person are structured by their expectations. As a result, their judgments and interactions are not individualized to this person and his particular features; they are driven by views of what typical group members are like (Beeghly, 2015, p. 684).

How did 'ching chong' come to be associated with Chinese as well as 'hordes of Asian people' (amrevolutions, 2011, 00:19)? How did Wallace's mimicry, articulated in a chant-like 'sing-song' style and ending on a high pitch, come to be associated with a group of people? How did the words and these particular sounds come to be expected and become a stereotype?

Many theories have been written about Chinese identity and diaspora, focussing on changes in the use of language. However, I will examine Chineseness that is not related to the Chinese language. There has been theoretical openness to the concept of different Chineseness, for example, in eminent historian Wang Gungwu's *Among Non-Chinese* (1991), as well as to non-Chinese-speaking Chinese, for example, in post-colonial theorist Ien Ang's *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (2001). However, to date no one has considered specifically the sound of Chineseness that speaks to a multi-accented voice.

I seek to understand how people who experience multiple migrations and call more than one place home, that is, the transnationals, conceptualize themselves, and how they understand their identity in the face of expected, perceived or imposed-upon identity. How do we come to terms with transnational identity if identity necessitates some degree of sameness and location whilst being transnational means one is beyond borders? Does migration change the way people speak and consequently change their sense of self? Specifically, I am interested in focussing on Chinese identity and why a particular sound, such as 'ching chong' in the above, seems to frame Chineseness. I am interested in understanding how difference can be discerned in sound, specifically the sound that identifies Chineseness since there are many different practices of being Chinese and even that is always in flux.

I propose to bring to focus the sound and voice of the everyday Chinese, a sound that is still changing and dynamic as migration is very much alive with returnees and transnationals. It is an expanded route with constant multi-directional movements. I will do this by looking at the literature of post-colonial theories with particular attention to Ang's concept of togetherness-in-difference (Ang, 2001 and 2003), cultural theorist Homi Bhabha's third space (Bhabha, 1994) and curator and writer Sarat Maharaj's untranslatability (Hall and Maharaj, 2001).

This practice-based research proposes to examine how sound frames the identities of early 20th-century as well as contemporary Chinese migrants and the concepts of Chineseness. I will gather documentation of interviews with early 20th-century migrants from the Oral History Centre in Singapore and the Chang Collection at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. I will also conduct first-person qualitative interviews with return migrants as well as transnational Chinese for a contemporary perspective. How do transnational Chinese living in more than one country understand themselves? How do astronaut families (Tsong and Liu, 2008, p. 366) negotiate cultural difference in both host and source countries? This research will centre on the changes that occur when moving from one location to another, the unhinging, the dislocating and relocating, the everyday changes that are inherent in such movements and migrations.

Although I shall use language as a way of examining sound, this is not a linguistic exercise. I am not looking at linguistic translation but at voice, as the 'sound we make with our mouths' (Karpf, 2011, p. 22). Whilst it is intrinsically linked to language, I am interested in voice in the way that its particular quality, inflection and phrasing tell of identity, the way it reflects the palimpsestic shifts and the negotiations of difference arising out of the coming together of different historical trajectories because of migration. Therefore, I will be using linguistic sounds as a signifier of identity, as a voice of belonging.

In *Playing with Words: The Spoken Word in Artistic Practice*, sound artist and composer Cathy Lane writes that the qualities of the sound of spoken words often lend insights to the speakers themselves (Lane, 2008, p. 8). For example, who I am and how I speak is a continuous adjustment to where I am as well as where I am

from. It is never constant, always changing and, as linguist Suresh Canagarajah puts it, 'is a process constantly reconstructed in sensitivity to environmental factors' (Canagarajah, 2007, p. 94). My research will trace the sounds of migrant voices and consider an audio portrait of Chineseness as seen by the transnational Chinese. I will also consider sound in relation to identity, how both sound and identity are open and constantly re-negotiated and determined. Thus, focussing on Chineseness, the research investigates 1) changes in sounds, 2) hearing new sounds and 3) negotiating new sounds. It will consider the sounds of Chinese not as the sounds of an Other but one in dialogue with other sounds within other modernities, that perhaps these movements of sounds suggest the instability of Chineseness.

How is it that a single sound can represent 1.3 billion people in China who are Han Chinese, Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Miao, Uighur, Tujia, Yi, Mongol, Tibetan, Buyi, Dong, Yao, Korean, just to name a few, as well as the 55 million in at least 83 countries in Asia, the Americas, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Oceania? This does not even factor in the many transnationals who live in more than one country – astronaut families as well as contract workers. It is precisely the fact that Chineseness is experienced in myriad ways that we ought to demand attention to how we frame and underscore Chineseness. How did 'ching chong' come to be coupled to 'Chinaman' and identified with Chineseness? How did the history and movement of the sounds of Chinese in a particular geographical and historical space alter, subvert or reinforce ideas of Chineseness?

Historical Study on Chineseness Represented in Euro-America

Amongst the many studies on the representation of Chineseness and how it has been historically constructed in the mindset of the West, Ang, in her 2001 seminal book *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between East and West*, discusses her own experiences with expectations of Chineseness as well as a telling description of an Australian-Chinese's first awareness of his Chinese identity through his school friend's chanting of the limerick, 'Ching Chong Chinaman, Born in a jar, Christened in a teapot, Ha ha ha' (Ang, 2001, p. 37).

Such phrases go back very far and were even used in popular music in the early 1900s, an example of which is *Ching Chong* composed in 1917 by Lee S. Roberts, with words by J. Will Callahan (Figure 1:1). ‘Ching chong’ is still used today to describe Asians, as exemplified by Wallace’s video log in March 2011. This is not an isolated incident. During Chinese President Hu Jintao’s visit to the United States in January 2011, U.S. radio presenter Rush Limbaugh, in referring to the Chinese President’s speech, said, ‘Hu Jintao was just going ching chong, ching chong chong cha ...’.³ Nor was it the last. Piers Morgan in 22 January 2020 used the same perjoratives⁴ in describing Shanghai’s Bright Food Group advertisement featuring Peter Philips, Queen Elizabeth’s eldest grandson.

How did words such as the onomatopoeic ‘ching chong’ used to describe Chinese persist within the Euro-American imagination? The many dictionaries that have ‘ching chong’ and ‘Chinaman’ entries do not offer definitive origins. Some provide plausible connections between the term and the Qing dynasty which ruled China between 1644 and 1911, at a time of large labour movements. Jonathan Green’s *Cassell’s Dictionary of Slang* places the popular usage of ‘ching chong’ between late-19th century and 1900s in the United States (Green, 2005, p. 277), which coincides approximately with the European settlement in late Qing dynasty China.

Whatever its history the term is ultimately associated with Orientalism, Edward Said’s reading of the binary distinction of the East and the West, the way the East has been represented and the construction of an essentialized notion of the Other, as a ‘western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over’ non-Western (Said, 1979, p. 3). In Europe, Orientalism expressed itself in the romance and nostalgia of Cathay and the Orient, in Chinoiserie, ‘a European fantasy vision of China and the east’ (Beevers, 2008, p. 13). David Beevers traces manifestations of Chinoiserie in buildings such as The Royal Pavilion in Brighton, UK; ceramics such as willow patterns and blue and white porcelain; domestic furniture and furnishings such as Chippendale’s Chinese straight-back chairs, Chinese hand-painted wallpaper

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiLu_flqut4

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRWQf7bBTJo>

2

CHING CHONG

Words by
J. WILL CALLAHAN

Music by
LEE S. ROBERTS

Marcia

Way out in old San Fran There is a Chi-na-man Who's known for
When you're in Fris-co town Don't fail to stop a-round And see this

miles a-round Ching Chong man, Won-der-ful place he keeps Down where he eats
Won-der-ful things you'll learn Down where the tor-

and sleeps way un-der-neath the ground; Each night the fes-tive chinks
ches burn He'll show you all he can; Then when the time is ripe

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Figure 1.1 Callahan, W. and Roberts, L. (1917) *Ching Chong*.
Historic Sheet Music Collection. 192.

and imitation lacquer ware. Furthermore, according to Anne Witchard, European fascination with things Chinese was encouraged by exhibitions of exotic merchandise such as Madame Tussauds' and Nathan Dunn's *Ten Thousand Chinese Things* (Figure 1.2) (Witchard, 2009, p. 42).

How does one reconcile such obsessive celebration of the opulence of Chinoiserie with pejoratives such as 'ching chong'? To answer this, perhaps we should consider British demand for tea which resulted in the two Opium Wars of 1839-1842 and



Figure 1.2

Dunn, N. and Langdon, W. (1842) *“Ten Thousand Chinese Things.”: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Chinese Collection, in Philadelphia. With Miscellaneous Remarks Upon the Manners, Customs, Trade, and Government of the Celestial Empire.*

1856-1860. The First Opium War ended in the ceding of Hong Kong to the United Kingdom and European settlements being established in the Chinese treaty ports of Shanghai, Canton, Ningpo, Fuchow and Amoy (Bard, 2000, p. 11). Robert Halls explains that the flourishing trade in these ports were facilitated by a mercantile Pidgin English. He further explains that the Chinese language does not have certain consonants. To accommodate the difference, Chinese speakers substitute the missing consonants with approximations and in some cases add syllables (Halls, 1944). I propose that the difference in pronunciation resulted in certain characteristics as, for example, ‘Bietnam’ for ‘Vietnam’.⁵ Pidgin English found its way into another manifestation of European Chinoiserie, in musicals such as *The Geisha* which opened 25 April 1896 at the Daly’s Theatre on Leicester Square—featuring the song

⁵ See p. 89.

Chin Chin Chinaman—and in *A Chinese Honeymoon*⁶ at the Royal Strand 5 October 1901 (Figure 1.3). Musicals and plays such as these were very well attended across



Figure 1.3

1901, *A Chinese Honeymoon*. Strand Theatre. London, UK.

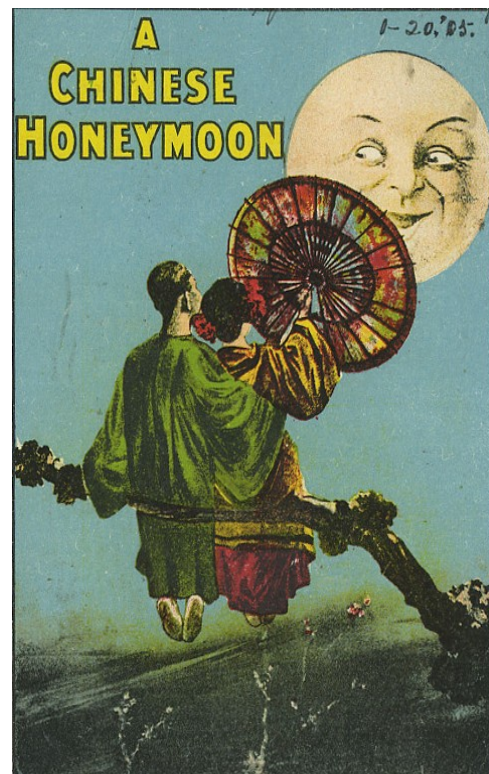


Figure 1.4

1902, *A Chinese Honeymoon*. Casino Theatre, New York, N.Y.

the British social spectrum, finding support from the working class and the aristocracy as well as from those in North America (Figure 1.4). In her book *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s* historian Krystyn Moon writes that musicals and plays, performed in the United States, not only ‘helped to codify stereotypes’, they ‘delineated national identity during the latter part of the nineteenth century’ (Moon, 2005, p. 31-32). Mary Paik Lee writes about her own first-hand experiences, of the limericks and playground taunts in *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (Lee, 1990, pp. 16-17).

⁶ Lyrics and music for *A Chinese Honeymoon* is available at:
<<https://gsarchive.net/british/honeymoon/index.html>>

However, this historical review alone does not explain the entire spectrum of the sound nor does it account for the contemporary consideration of a singular and monolithic Chineseness that is linked to China and/or the Chinese language.

Studies on the Question of Mandarin as Official ‘Chineseness’

It is an obvious fact that there is a discrepancy between the perceived sound of Chineseness among non-Chinese-speaking audiences and the Chinese-speaking world. Among many non-Chinese the perceived sound of Chineseness, as expressed in ‘ching chong’, arises out of a stereotype. On the other hand, within the Chinese-speaking world many expect Chineseness to be sounded through Mandarin, an expectation implemented through language policies.

Studies on Mandarin as the official language of Chineseness and its criticism have been conducted by Ying Zhu and Chris Berry as well as Rey Chow. Zhu, Professor Emeritus, CUNY and Director of the Center for Film and Moving Image Research in the Academy of Film, Hong Kong Baptist University observed the use of cultural nostalgia—presented in China’s dynastic-era dramas—as well as a cutting-edge modernity—presented in urban dramas—to present and codify a unified concept of Chineseness (Zhu, in Zhu and Berry, 2009, p. 224). Zhu and Berry, Professor of Film Studies at King’s College, London, problematized the singularity of China’s State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) language policy which rejects any consideration of plurality and hybridity (Zhu and Berry, 2009, p. 116). SARFT is the broadcasting regulatory body in China, directly controlling public television, radio and film industries. Hence, as directed, all programmes must be broadcast in ‘standard Mandarin’ (Zhu, in Zhu and Berry, 2009, p. 223), not other Chinese languages or in any hybrid languages, for example, Chinglish (Han, 2018) and the new internet language Huoxing wen (Liu and Tao, 2009: p. 10). Furthermore, the programme must also be Mandarin as spoken in the northern capital, not in southern-accented or Taiwanese-accented or non-standard Mandarin. The marketing of these programmes on the internet to the wider Chinese diaspora emphasizes the authority of Mandarin. Little wonder then that globally the sounding of Chinese text is invariably Mandarin, which not only denies the many other Chinese languages but also rejects any consideration of plurality and hybridity.

In *Ethics After Idealism* post-colonial theorist Chow writes of the direct and indirect pressure felt by non-white academics to behave appropriately, to act accordingly – that is, as defined by their ethnicity and culture (Bowman, 2010, p. xviii). I argue that they would also be expected to sound accordingly. Sounding accordingly, that is speaking Mandarin, is not confined to academics but also applies to the public at large. Such pressure to conform comes from many forces: political, societal and cultural. For example, the Singapore government's education policies require children to learn their mother tongue as a second language. For children whose fathers are ethnically Chinese, their mother tongue is defined to be Mandarin Chinese⁷ regardless of their dialect or mother's ethnicity.

Chow also states that one of the pre-requisites of Chineseness is the ability to speak Mandarin. She writes,

Those who are ethnically Chinese but for historical reasons have become linguistically distant or dispossessed are, without exception, deemed inauthentic and lacking (Chow, 1998, p. 12).

This sentiment proposes Mandarin as the normative language of Chineseness, a pre-requisite that frames the sound of Chineseness as Mandarin. This is a frame against which those who speak any of the other Chinese languages are measured, not as the Other of Chinese but as 'lacking'.

The success of the language policy can be seen in the pervasive expectation of Mandarin as the language of Chineseness, such that the inability to speak it could elicit scorn from the public. Sinologist Victor Mair, who teaches Chinese language and literature at the University of Pennsylvania in the United States, related an incident with a taxi driver in Singapore. In his *Language Log*, October 2011, he filed a report of the conversation he had with the taxi driver in Mandarin Chinese about 'fake foreigners',

⁷ I use 'Mandarin Chinese' when referring to the Chinese language used in Singapore to differentiate the language from Putonghua, which is used in China. Sociolinguists Kevin Wong and Ying-Ying Tan use 'Mandarin-Chinese' to refer to both Putonghua and the standard Mandarin Chinese taught in Singapore (Wong and Tan, 2017, p. 4)

A 'fake foreigner,' he [the taxi driver] said, 'is a Chinese who comes into my cab and speaks English to me. A 'fake foreigner' is also a Chinese who speaks English to his/her children. Such people are beneath contempt' (Mair, 2011).

Discussions on Hybridity: Chinese and Peranakans

The above pre-requisite proposes Mandarin Chinese as the sound of Chineseness, a proposition that disregards, to quote Ang, 'the complicated entanglement' of being migrant Chinese in Southeast Asia (Ang, 2001). Ang, after being identified as one, was taken to task for not speaking in a Chinese language (Ang, 2001, p. 30). Ang says, 'Hybridity, ... best describes this world, in which the complicated entanglement of togetherness in difference has become a 'normal' state of affairs' (Ang, 2001, p. 17).

Ang's take on hybridity follows closely post-colonial theorist Bhabha's discussion on the issue. Bhabha writes that cultures are composers of symbols and signifiers. As such, people of different cultures relate to each other by way of translations. It is out of the colliding of discrete cultural positions that a different culture is formed, a hybrid that is always changing, never completing. Bhabha suggests that this continuous process of hybridity creates a space of new meanings and representations, a space which allows for other positions to be expressed. Thus, Bhabha suggests hybridity as a third space that affords 'new structures of authority, new political initiatives' (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211).

Ang, whilst agreeing with Bhabha on the importance of hybridity in challenging containment, disagrees with his claims of an empowering third space. Ang cautions vigilance in negotiating differences. Far from being a space of equal opportunities, hybridity is a contested, challenged place, heavily policed and patrolled (Ang, 2001, p. 165). Furthermore, she observes that in border situations and cultural collision, it becomes particularly important to pay attention to the fact that any local and immediate condition is informed by a much larger and historical context. Ang writes that hybridity requires a complicated entanglement, a togetherness-in-difference that not only acknowledges differences but understands that that difference could be 'asymmetrical' and incommensurable (Ang, 2001, p. 180).

Maharaj takes the discussion farther by asserting that hybridity is both the success and failure of translation, the collision of discrete conditions. Unlike Bhabha, Maharaj, like Ang, cautions against a celebratory note that may cause the flattening of difference and asserts that hybridity is the acknowledging of two conditions, or as Maharaj calls it – the ‘double-turn’ – that which has successfully wrestled fusion from disparate elements and the untranslated, the incommensurable leftover that refuses any agreement (Maharaj, 2001, p. 27).

I am with Ang and Maharaj in this regard. The space of hybridity, the third space, togetherness-in-difference and the untranslated is not an uncontested space. Contrary to Bhabha’s declaration that hybridity will afford ‘new meanings and representation’, some hybrids are not given voice and representation. For example, Eurasians were and, in some situations today, are considered ‘half-breeds’ (Braga-Blake, 2017: pp. 14-15) and Chinese who do not speak Chinese are considered ‘lacking’ (Chow, 1998, p. 12). Also contrary to Bhabha’s claims, hybridity does not necessarily do away with dominance. That government policies have been known to override personal histories and control voice speaks to the fact that the third space that hybridity affords certainly does not guarantee free and equal participation. Moreover, where Bhabha claims that hybridity is a collision of discrete positions it is important to bear in mind that these two positions may not be singular and monolithic. Each position must necessarily have earlier history of other collisions. Hence there is a layered history pointing to a much larger global history that is also at play. A multi-tiered crossroad.

Ang finds crossroads fraught and problematic, far from being utopias of open and equal representations. A person who has social and economic weight may find it easier to negotiate crossroads (Ang, 2001, p. 165). However, I would expand on Ang’s ‘highly controlled crossroads’ – it is sometimes not a matter of agreed rules and regulations that control the crossing but is a very specific matter of who one is, where one is from. This does not make the crossroads different from borders. We are inevitable products of our culture and, despite continuously changing, we speak from specific geographical locations, within specific social, political and cultural situations and these positions are, more often than not, stratified.

Maharaj's notion of hybrids in discrete positions does not include the hearing of layers of histories in a person's voice which has the ability to bear witness to history, of the sounds and words of experience and places that have grafted themselves along the way. Furthermore, Maharaj speaks of the infidelity of the hybrid, the acknowledgement of what is lost. However, it remains to be discerned what has been lost. Offsprings of some mixed marriages, for example, are hybrids who have not lost either parent's discrete ethnicity which they never had in the first place. The Peranakans of Southeast Asia are a good example of such hybrids.

As very few Chinese women emigrated before the latter half of the 19th century, Chinese migrant labourers and traders married Malay locals as second wives and even business assistants (Kuhn, 2008, p. 70), forming a hybrid community of Peranakans. Marriage and funeral practices tell of both Chinese and Malay influences. Unlike traditional Chinese but like Malays, married Peranakan men live with the bride's family. Moreover, ancestral rites reflect Malay influences by honouring both parents' ancestors. However, Peranakans maintain some Chinese rituals and the devotion to Chinese deities. Within the family and the community, they speak a creolized language of Malay with Chinese loan words, the Peranakan language. Take for example, the Malay word *peranakan*. The Malay dictionary defines *peranakan* as 'cross bred' ('Peranakan', 2011). However, Peranakans use the word slightly differently to mean 'locally born'. In their website, The Peranakan Museum in Singapore uses the word to refer to descendants of foreign traders who settled and married local women (Peranakan Museum).

However, in common usage the general word *peranakan* has become coupled to Chinese Peranakans and their very specific material and language culture. Peranakan songs are more likely to mean the traditional genre *Dondang Sayang*, at one end of the spectrum, and well-known Chinese Peranakan composer/entertainer Dick Lee's popular song *Bunga Sayang*, at the other. *Peranakans* have come to mean Straits-born Chinese which do not include the Eurasians or the Tamil Chittys, the Indian Peranakans whose culture is a hybrid of Indian, Malay, Dutch, Portuguese and Chinese cultures.

Tan Chee-Beng studies the Chinese in Southeast Asia and did his doctoral research on ethnographic issues concerning the Peranakans in Melaka. In his 2003 essay *People of Chinese Descent: Language, Nationality and Identity*, he writes that in Southeast Asia, as everywhere else, one of the first things a migrant does on landing is to learn the local language. It was the same for migrants in the early-20th century. In many instances, the local language is taken on as part of the necessities of sojourning, with no major impact on one's cultural identity. However, the Chinese Peranakan adopted the local Malay language and added to its lexicon loan words from other cultures. That, together with socio-cultural adjustments, resulted in a rich distinct cultural hybrid that is the Peranakan language and culture (Tan, 2003, pp. 39-42).

The Peranakans are different from the Chinese in that although they retain their Chinese identities, features and traditional customs, they are culturally Malay in certain ways (Tan, 2003, pp. 40-41). The Peranakans' distinct cultural identity articulates a hybrid context that manifests the circumstances of the moment - their embodiment of regional Chinese identity, customs and mores and those of the local cultures and situations.

Studies on Untranslatability

A Chinese Malaysian, on his first visit to Hong Kong, asked the bus conductor the fare in Cantonese, *gei² do¹ lui?* It is only when the conductor commented that he must be from Singapore (which he is not) that the Chinese Malaysian realized that the Cantonese he spoke was Malaysian-accented. His question contained the Malay loan word *lui* from *duit*, the Malay word meaning money (Tan, 2003, pp. 42-43).

This is a familiar moment of translation when one is at once, not linguistically but culturally, Chinese as well as non-Chinese. As Maharaj so eloquently puts it,

Beyond the sense of the word and image are sounds which cannot be entirely drawn into the net of signification and cannot entirely be decoded and deciphered as meaning this, that or the other (Hall and Maharaj, 2001, p. 39-40).

Language and the way we speak it informs our social, political and cultural identity and our sense of self. However far from being immutable, they are dynamic, moulded by time, place and context. They often change, with outcomes outside the sum total of our experience. The language we speak and the sound of that spoken language are woven into the very fabric of our being, sense of self and identity within society. Our sense of self is challenged in migration, often without resolution. It is in a state of flux and remains volatile. Even where the languages from places of origin are retained, the manifestation and use of these languages are inevitably modified in the new migrant homes. They are inescapably changed and re-articulated in this new context. In short, there is never a tabula rasa. James Clifford observes, 'One enters the translation process from a specific location, from which one only partly escapes' (Clifford, 1997, p. 182). Moreover, cultural theorist Mieke Bal adds that the past specific location is no longer accessible. For her, translation is tantalizingly equivocal because the accent holds trace evidence of where anyone has been (Bal, 2007, pp. 110-111).

Change is inevitable. It comes out of moving from one place to another and having to negotiate, in these new locations, entrenched social, cultural and political mores and customs, in short, values that are carried over and not left behind. However not everything that is carried over translates into its new circumstance. Maharaj calls the parts that resist translation 'the leftover-dross', the untranslated (Hall and Maharaj, 2001, p. 45). Concerned that hybridity does not become reduced to a celebratory and privileged catchphrase of multiplicity, Maharaj proposes that the untranslated could maintain the tension by challenging hybridity itself.

Sound as It Relates to Identity

Sound knows no borders. And as such it migrates and re-migrates and in doing so transforms the way we communicate, the way we speak and sound as well as the way we are expected to speak and sound. In the same way that our identity is constructed – contingent and changeable – we are not born with a particular sound but learn those sounds which in turn tell us of where we have been as well as where we are at. Sound is all around us – we hear, we listen. And when we listen, we absorb, we re-negotiate and we re-determine.

Whilst there have been many discussions on the impact of language on identity, sound as it relates to the voicing of identity is a relatively new field. Anne Karpf and Mladen Dolar have written about the voice. In her book *The Human Voice: The Story of a Remarkable Talent*, Karpf looks into the psychological, social, emotional and cultural role of the human voice in society. She writes that our voice informs our identity and our alliances, how we perceive ourselves and are perceived by others (Karpf, 2011, pp. 205-206). Furthermore, she quotes Pierre Bourdieu who states that our culture is inscribed in our voice (Karpf, 2011, p. 210). In an insightful study Karpf highlights the concerns of voice trainers in Mumbai's call centres,

A lot of times our trainees say, "Why do I need to sound British? ... I'm an Indian and this is my accent and I want to sound like this ... I don't want to lose my identity." (Karpf, 2011, p. 219).

The notion that the sound of our voice carries our identity is well supported by Dolar (2006). Among many issues around voice, his book *A Voice and Nothing More* addresses the difference between sound and text. He points to the performative strength of voice to amplify and draw out important nuances in text used in rituals. The same could also be said of the inflections and modulations in our own speech. Our voice embodies our experiences and history. If that is so it might be pertinent to consider how Mumbaiians working in call centres—trained to speak in Received Pronunciation that many of their clients, let alone their British counterparts, do not speak—perceive themselves and are perceived, both at home and abroad?

Not much has been written about the sound of the transnational, let alone the transnational Chinese. Like many other sounds, Chinese sounds come out of negotiations and clashes with other cultures, for example, Malay, Indian, Arab, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch and French. Linguistic anthropologist Dr Chiang Wai Fong observes that, 'Our world is full of culturally constructed symbols, and ideologies imbue languages with aesthetic value, pragmatic significance, and beliefs about speakers and their social relations' (Chiang, 2009, p. 37). Hence accents often pronounce social boundaries and locate their speakers.

Okwui Enwezor pointedly asked, ‘How do the new accents we acquire during the course of migration or contact with other cultures change our positions of affiliation?’ (Enwezor, 1998, p. 36). We are forever becoming and our identities will always be unfinished. The diapason of life is on-going. If communication depends on some platform of sameness, some recognizable patterns of speech, how do we relate with each other, communicate without collapsing into a shapeless pitch? How do we construct a complex entanglement that would resonate distinctly, with clear registers of differences on which to compose contrapuntal narratives?

This is a point that finds resonance in Vic Seidler, who speaks of the importance of the relationship between the ability to speak out and the recognition of one’s individuality in that act of voicing. It is in the Other’s understanding of what we are saying that we experience ourselves, or as Vic Seidler puts it, ‘the correlation of ‘being listened to’ to ‘being seen’ as a person in your own right’ (Seidler, 2005, p. 401).

Identity as an Entangled Trajectory

Identity is determined by how we negotiate our new circumstances and balance them with values we cannot leave behind, values that have been woven into the very fabric of our being and sense of self. In other words, how we negotiate difference. Identity is also an indefinite cluster of connections, associations which are often contingent on the circumstance, on-going and plastic rather than set in concrete. They are inescapably in progress and re-articulated in new contexts and associations. As such the transnational, who crosses borders and manoeuvres what Ang calls ‘complicated entanglement’, is therefore a fluid and constantly translating multiple. As sociologist Stuart Hall states, ‘Every identity has its pre-identities’ (Hall and Maharaj, 2001, p. 36). With the passage of time and migration from one region to another, our ways of being become entangled, modified and reconverted, becoming a palimpsest of cultural histories that is embodied in the self. And if identity is more like a trajectory rather than departure or arrival, how do we negotiate multiple translations that refer, but are not specific, to their histories?

Hall notes that identity is ‘multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices, and positions’. Identities are necessarily constructed within a relationship with another person, with a community, ‘within, not outside representation’ (Hall and du Gay, 1996, p. 4).

Studies on Chinese Identity

Chinese identity in the late Qing period was very much based on regional loyalties (Kuhn, 2008, p. 28), a point Wang reiterates in an interview (Goh, 2020). They identified themselves as members of their native communities and in their native community’s language. Many first generation Singaporeans continue to identify themselves as *teng-swa-lang* (唐山人) (Chan, 2005, p. 96), an identification spoken in Hokkien, the language of people from Fujian region. In a recent online group chat Mrs Helen Khoo (2022) writes, ‘I am a fellow Cantonese, born in 广州, originally from 顺德大良’, that is Khoo was born in the Liang village, Shunde district, province of Guangdong.

In his book *China and Chinese Overseas*, Wang states that the Chinese have several approaches to their sense of being Chinese. Chinese historical identity calls on tradition and emphasizes the importance of family values and relationships, clan origins and sub-ethnic loyalties, as well as symbols of a Chinese past. ‘The “Great Tradition” of Chinese civilization’ sustains Chinese historical identity (Wang, 1991a, p. 199). It is interesting to note that these markers are all situated within a local and intimate family, clan and sub-ethnic geography.

Quite different from historical identity is cultural identity which places its accent on the value of communal relationships forged through exchanges with other cultures. According to Wang, the Overseas Chinese, that is Chinese who have migrated or are descendants of migrants, who are nationals of other countries, have for centuries maintained their Chinese historical identity. Its singular persistence and the preservation of past cultural values have clashed with native leadership and colonial power (Wang, 1991). However, the modern concept of a Chinese cultural identity affords an inclusive approach and takes into its ambit knowledge, beliefs, morals,

customs, religions and the laws of the larger society. In essence then, how cultural identity develops depends on local variables.

Philip Kuhn writes that even in China, the ‘homeland’ of the Chinese, there is Chinese culture as practised in its particular local situation rather than a ‘pure’ Chinese culture (Kuhn, 2008, p. 192). For early 20th-century migrants, it is their identity that promotes mutual support, affording, amongst other things, security and communal loyalties (Kuhn, 2008, pp. 161-170).

In Southeast Asia Overseas Chinese identity, Wang suggests that we approach it by way of multiple identities – that is, not as a dual citizenship but as a cluster of varying responses to norms or ideal standards. This approach underlines the conditions that prescribe a transnational identity – firstly, that notions of identity come about through contact and negotiations; secondly, the context for these articulations often occurs outside familiar space and thirdly, identities are subjected to partial and periodic reformulations.

Wang cites an example of the gradual translation of migrants who in time shed their Chinese national identities. In taking up local national identities, he asserts that they also become more aware of their own Chinese cultural identities (Wang, 1991). However, I would add that this consciousness of their cultural identity comes together with the acknowledgement of the influence of non-Chinese culture. It is a process of loss and gain, true of early 20th-century Chinese migrants.

Studies on Contemporary Representation of Monolithic China and Transnational Chineseness

As China is at the cusp, poised for global leadership, the ascendancy of Sinocentrism and Han Chineseness within and without China, as well as the latest wave of Chinese migrants (Goh, 2020; Wong and Tan, 2017, p. 3) attended by China’s expanding social and cultural influence lends to an urgent clarification of what we understand as ‘Chinese’, particularly how language describes and pronounces the Chinese transnational identities.

Not too long ago the question of Chineseness and Chinese identity was an issue that concerns the Overseas Chinese, that mainland Chinese are not interested in Chineseness. The distinction was made between Chinese as a nationality and Chinese as an ethnicity at the 1955 Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia (Kuhn, 2008, p. 330). What muddies the water now, under the aegis of Chineseness, is the expectation of the practice of Chineseness as exemplified by China's broadcasting directives and Singapore's language policy which has gained widespread acceptance amongst the local populations. As such it is now reasonable to re-consider China's interest and the recent proliferation of Confucian Centres of Learning as well as CNTV, the English medium of China's broadcasting station CCTV.

There are at least 55 million people of Chinese ancestry living outside of China (Ryan, 2006) with no affiliation to China's 1.4 billion Chinese. Yet these 55 million or so Chinese are called variously Chinese Overseas, *hai³wai⁴ hua²ren²* (Chinese living overseas) according to Michelle Lee, or Overseas Chinese, *hua²yi⁴*, the term Wang uses when referring to Chinese not resident in China to differentiate from *hua²qiao²* – migrants of the early 20th century.

Ang notes that the double-bind problem of being, in the case of Westernized overseas Chinese, either too Chinese or not Chinese enough, is not particular to the Chinese situation as migrants of other ethnicities face the same problem. However, in addition to expectations of performing Chineseness, Chinese abroad must contend with the prominent status China holds in the imagination of the West.

Ruth Ho writes in Ang's 2001 *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West*,

... yet overseas Chinese are always expected to know Chinese or else they are despised not only by their fellow Chinese but also by non-Chinese! ... But European emigrants to the USA and Australia ... are not criticised when they become English speaking (quoted in Ang, 2001, p. 33).

Perhaps this expectation to speak Chinese by both Chinese and non-Chinese is not surprising considering Tu's support for Cultural China which describes a transnational Chineseness shaped by a shared mother tongue, common ancestral home and ethnicity (Tu, 1991, pp. 14). In his essay *Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center*, Tu proposes the periphery as the place from which the transnational Chinese develops. In Tu's proposal Cultural China could be realized in the places where Chinese migrants have settled. Thus, these places become the cultural and intellectual loci of Chineseness to the traditional, spiritual and geographical centre that is mainland China, as it were, branches to the singular rooted trunk of the Middle Kingdom.

Nevertheless, as Ang points out, this proposal does not account for and overrides any specific local identity that has occurred over time (Ang, 2001). Ang observes that Chinese cannot be the same everywhere (Ang, 2001) and Allen Chun takes the observation further by offering a different approach, upholding context as crucial to the formation of identity. Chun argues for a multiple Chineseness that is particular to the location and geopolitical influences. As he states,

Rather than viewing the substance of one's ethnicity or culture as a natural point of departure, more importantly it is necessary to see how context invokes the relevance of culture, as a function of strategic choice, to the processes of identifying (Chun, 2001, p. 106).

The condition of one's Chineseness cannot be articulated in expected social practices let alone academic definitions of Chineseness. It is utterly futile to demand that one's experience of Chineseness follows the theoretical discussion as outlined in Tu's Cultural China. Futile because whilst we maintain some fundamental links to cultures of our birth, we grow out of this and sever the apron string. More importantly, this large singular monumental gesture of Cultural China wipes out the individual voice and everyday experience of each local negotiation. The important consideration should be, not the centre and periphery, but how to be both within and without Chineseness, how to understand and configure space where space and time are so challenged and collapsed by communication technology. We need to insist that it is not enough to acknowledge the specificity of the situations and conditions

in which we find ourselves but to persist in interrogating the overriding acceptance of difference. The question should be how in this hyper-connected transnational world we negotiate being transnational. How is one's voice, being at once specific to where one is and yet somewhat related to the larger imagination of the community of Chineseness, recognized, understood and heard and related to, beyond the borders of Cultural China?

Shih Shu-mei in *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations Across the Pacific* (2007) also supports the argument that ethnicity is a limiting consideration in conceptualizing Chineseness as well as in defining the identity of Chinese scattered across the globe. Shih asserts that the label 'Chinese' in reality has a limited function. It is 'a national marker' and as an ethnic marker is reductive – not unlike considering all Americans to be 'white Anglo Saxons' (Shih, 2007, p. 24).

Unlike Ang and Chun however, Shih avoids the specificity of a location and context, anchoring her argument instead on the formation of identity in the visual and verbal. She presents her argument through the example of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. The four actors playing the main characters are from different countries – China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Malaysia. They articulated their lines in Putonghua, the Mandarin spoken in the People's Republic of China, but with accents that revealed their different origins, accents which spoke to the existence of a non-standardized sound. They speak to different locales, amplifying the heterogeneity of a multiple and different Chineseness – or as Shih cogently puts it, 'articulat[ing] its autonomy into being', dissonance against uniformity (Shih, 2007, p. 31).

The Notion and Debate on Transnational Art

Art has always been neatly compartmentalized into distinct time or geographical zones. It is not unusual to find titles such as *History of Art – From Paleolithic Age to Contemporary Art*. Lee Sorenson, editor of the online *Dictionary of Art Historians*, writes that Anthony Janson's survey of art history, *History of Art*, published in 1963 and now into its seventh edition is the standard text for art history in the United States. His content page appears updated and the writers continue to chart the story

of art in a chronological format, starting from *Prehistoric Art* to the last chapter titled *Post-Modern Era – Art since 1980s*. A steady art tour through time.

Admittedly there has been an upsurge in discussion regarding the way art history is practised and considered. The linear approach described above or what Mark Jarzombek describes as ‘Euro+’, an approach that writes an unbroken European narrative with individual chapters on China, India and Africa, is being challenged (Jarzombek, 2010, p. 192). Critical thinkers and scholars who contribute to the discussion through essays called *Assessments* in James Elkins’ 2007 *Is Art History Global?* suggest an openness to including non-Western European and North American text, other voices. However, there are to date no conclusive decisions and contemporary works of art produced by artists who are more often than not transnational, working in a globalized reality, are still interpreted using traditional approaches of looking at/reading art, approaches that are entrenched in Western art history. Elkins’ observation that non-Western readings of works are not taken seriously is thus disconcerting (Elkins, 2007, pp. 5-7). How will discussions on and about artists and art practices effectively disengage the East/West, North/South, us/them dichotomies and canonical references to consider the shifts that have occurred in artists’ identities and practices?

There have been huge shifts and moves across geographical, political, social and cultural borders. And these shifts must surely yield new cartographies of transnational artists and the art they make. Today’s itinerant artists roam extensive geographical, political, cultural and social distances and in a time of increasing globalization of information technologies, not always in a neat A-B direction. This must make imperative a reformulation of the way we understand cultural production. Not so much in bounded and discrete categories of geopolitical location, nation, race, ethnicity and class by which we have traditionally studied and articulated our world but a portmanteau of multiplicity that carries traces of multiple cultures not easily untangled or attributable to a dominant presence.

It is important to note that transnational art speaks to a crossing of borders – borders that are not necessarily political or geographical. By that I mean to foreground a multiplicity not limited to a physical movement. An example of which would be the

transnationalism of Chinese Singaporean, which derives not from migration but from language policies. In her discussion on the de-territorializing of art history, art historian Claire Harris writes of the difficulty in discussing work when discussions are traditionally based on discrete definitions of culture – based on nationality and ethnicity (Harris, 2006, pp. 718-719). This condition is not to be confused with the situation where the art is made in one place and presented in another via art markets, mechanical or digital reproductions which would already re-contextualize the reading of the work.

Regardless of the source condition, art that considers such issues is well-placed to challenge expectations of singular and monolithic concepts of identity. We can take a lesson from Enwezor's reference to the anachronistic concept of 'black' African in his 1998 text *Between Localism and Worldliness*,

These artists engage in critical conversation with the thorny issues of place, identity, and memory, which acquire new meaning insofar as they detotalize and deconstruct a performative African psychic space from a homogenized, political economy of race and authenticity to one of multiple identities (Enwezor, 1998, p. 34).

Enwezor writes of the unstable sound of identity, a sound that commends a multipleness, a colliding of local histories and foreign influences, a sound of 'Africa, at home and abroad' (Enwezor, 1998: p. 31). Sounds of transnationalism.

More than just the breeching of discrete political and ethnic boundaries is the spilling over of disciplines, not only in visual art categories of painting, sculpture and media. It has become increasingly difficult to consider artwork without taking into consideration pertinent conditions that lend weight to the issues, considerations that are necessarily multiple and complex – such as the missing image of the Buddha in Gonker Gyatso's 1989 *Red Buddha*, a painting through which he claims the Buddha iconography to speak to the political conditions, or the lack of autonomy, of Tibet. Furthermore, Gyatso is attentive to how he positions himself – neither in the style of the traditional Tibetan thangka or the romantic wind-swept landscapes popular with Chinese painters, a representation that further advances China's claims on Tibet (Harris, 2006, p. 702).

Harris points out, ‘the transmission of visual information can begin and end in diverse sites and move in many directions’. I agree as, more times than not, art follows artists and the lines of contemporary migration run on more than Europe-America or east-west or core-periphery as Cultural China suggests. Moreover, technology now affords simultaneous presentations of works, which, in my opinion, is in keeping with how we can understand some identities – not as ‘and/or’ or multiple identities, never singular but rather indiscrete and simultaneous. I mean to say, beyond the convenience it affords when facing down immigration officers at departure and arrival gates, that one is never either Singaporean or Canadian or British. These categories are what they are – convenient tags for crossing geographical borders.

Furthermore, we have to consider the audience and markets of transnational art and artists. Studies on the demographics of attendance in Canada (Ewoudou, 2005), in US (Farrell and Medvedeva, 2010) and UK (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2007) art galleries and museums report the majority of audience to be middle class and white. Are they sympathetic or knowledgeable? In some cases artists have had to respond to demands of authenticity, not just in the fine arts but in the literary arts as Ang, Ho and Chow have variously experienced (Ang, 2001; Ho in Ang, 2001, p. 33; Chow, 1993, p. 2). At the other end of this spectrum is the expectation of work that deals with displacement.

Moreover, many transnational artists may be nomadic and itinerant, and their work can be easily coupled with notions of refugee and diasporic exiles. In such instances, it could very well stereotype both the maker and the work, limiting in the way that transnational artists and their art are perceived – as being primarily concerned with rupture and nostalgic recovery. Art and the discussion of art have to abandon the fixed notions of binaries and periphery/centre and consider open and multiple spatial and chronological realities.

The 1998 exhibition *Inside Out: New Chinese Art* was shown extensively throughout the United States including the Asia Society, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Asian Art Museum. Curated by Gao Minglu, *Inside Out* showcased a large array of works by artists from mainland

China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and ‘by selected artists who emigrated to the West in the late 1980s’. In his catalogue essay Gao refers to the above-mentioned selected artists as ‘the overseas Chinese artist community’. He addressed them as follows,

Chinese artists overseas may play the most important role in confronting and communicating with an international cultural mainstream. Rather than being part of a "diaspora," the identity and visual world of recent Èmigrés may be shaped by, and may be shaping, a "third space" that truly is between East and West (Gao, 1998, p. 19).

In *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* website, post-doctoral researcher at the Center for African, Asian and Amerindian Studies of Leiden University, Dr Francesca Dal Lago writes of Gao’s intentions to challenge the singular entity of historical Chineseness and to present the ‘anti-institutional’ post-Mao style of work in the show as transitional, showcasing the developments of Chinese art (Dal Lago, 2011). However, included in the lists are works of Singapore artists which makes Gao’s proposal of the diaspora as a ‘third space’ disconcertingly familiar in the way it echoes Tu’s Cultural China.

The adjective ‘Chinese’ is charged with meanings and as Chow writes,

the ethnic supplement occurs first and foremost as a struggle for access to representation while at the same time contesting the conventional simplification and stereotyping of ethnic subjects as such (Chow, 2013, p. 44).

This first chapter of my practice-based research investigated why Ching Chong came to be associated with Chineseness by tracing how Pidgin English—which facilitated trade between British and Chinese tea merchants—came to be used in English language musicals and literature. I have also considered the policies that advanced the use of Mandarin language and the insistence of speaking Mandarin as the prerequisite of Chineseness when being Chinese is, as Ang (2001) writes, ‘a complicated entanglement’—fluid and subjected to time and the place. The following chapters will consider the notion of Chinese, how the term ‘Chinese’ came about as well as the politics that determine it.

Chapter 2

The notion of Chinese and Chineseness as a ‘monolithic given bound ultimately to China’ (Chow, 1998, p. 8), has long been contested by thinkers and researchers since the 1990s, for example, by anthropologist David Wu in 1991, Ang in 1993, Wang in 1995, Allen Chun in 1996, and Chow in 1998, to name a few.¹ It is as Ang—having been taken to task for not speaking Chinese—writes, a ‘decade-long engagement with the predicaments of ‘Chineseness’ ...’ (Ang, 2001: p. vii). The ‘adamant insistence on Chineseness as the distinguishing trait’² has continued unabated and is urgent enough for Chow’s 1998 text to be included, fifteen years later, in Shih’s, together with fellow editors Chien-hsin Tsai and Brian Bernards, 2013 *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*. Fuelling both the earlier theories and Shih’s compilation is the rapid economic rise of China—Deng Xiaoping’s modernisation policies in the nineteen-nineties and current financial and political decisions attending the spectacular rise of China as a global force. Accompanying China’s ascendancy is the rise of Mandarin as the normative language of Chineseness.

Against this background, the popularity and use of Mandarin as another global language apart from the English language seems expected (Odiye, 2015). However, Chow’s, Ang’s and Mair’s accounts of their experiences discussed in Chapter One (pp. 11-12) appear to suggest that there is more to the issue than simply popularity - why is there an expectation to speak Chinese? What is the sound that we understand to be Chinese? Where do our perceptions of such a sound come from? Why is there an anticipation of a way of being or of sounding Chinese?

¹ Wu, D. (1991) ‘The Construction of Chinese and Non-Chinese Identities’, *Daedalus*, 120 (2) Spring 1991, pp. 159-179; Ang, I. (1993) ‘To Be or Not to Be Chinese: Diaspora, Culture and Postmodern Ethnicity’, *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, 21(1) pp. 1-17; Wang, G. (1993) ‘Greater China and the Chinese Overseas’, *The China Quarterly*, 136 Special Issue: Greater China. pp. 926-948; Chun, A. (1996) ‘Fuck Chineseness: On the Ambiguities of Ethnicity as Culture as Identity’, *boundary 2*, 23 (2) Summer 1996, pp. 111-138; Chow, R. (1998) ‘Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem’, *boundary 2*, 25 (3), *Modern Chinese Literary and Cultural Studies in the Age of Theory: Reimagining a Field*, Autumn, 1998, pp. 1-24.

² Chow, R. (2013) ‘On Chineseness As a Theoretical Problem’, in Shih, S., Tsai, C., Bernards, B., (eds.) *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*. N.Y.: Columbia University Press. pp. 43-56.

Applying a primarily trans-disciplinary approach and theories from a wide array of disciplines such as cultural studies, sociolinguistics and anthropology amongst others, I consider notions of representation, in particular the role language plays in representation as well as in the formation of identity, and the consequences migration has on these identities.

In her book *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West*, Ang relates an experience,

So it was one day that a self-assured, Dutch, white, middle-class, Marxist leftist, asked me, ‘Do you speak Chinese?’ I said no. ‘What a fake Chinese you are!’, was his only mildly kidding response, thereby unwittingly but aggressively adopting the disdainful position of judge to sift ‘real’ from ‘fake’ Chinese. In other words, ... I was found wanting’ (Ang, 2001, p. 30).

In the above encounter, Ang narrates the condition of one not recognising the other, of the construction of the other according to one’s own perspective and of a construction applied through power and dominance. Her narration reflects William Edward Burghardt Du Bois description of double-consciousness in his book *The Soul of Black Folks* originally published in 1903. Du Bois writes, ‘[i]t is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, the sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity’ (Du Bois, 2007, p. 3). Henry Louis Gates Jr., W. E. B. Du Bois Professor of the Humanities at Harvard University and editor of the 2007 edition of Du Bois’ 1903 book writes that double consciousness is an imposed and persistent bifurcation, an internalised sense of ‘twoness’ (Du Bois, 2007, pp. xiv-xv).

Du Bois’s double consciousness theory sets the basis for the later ‘second wave’ (Go, 2018, p. 440) in which Said’s 1979 book *Orientalism* challenged Western assumptions and representations of the non-West, which in turn, foregrounded a silent but salient element in this process of knowledge building - who can represent whom? Indian historian Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that the foundation of knowledge is ‘always at least culturally “European”’, the universal ‘silent referent’ which must be quoted while non-Western historians are relegated to their specific cultures (Chakrabarty, 1992, p. 2). Turkish-American historian Arif Dirlik in his

discussion on Eurocentricism agrees that non-European issues were considered as ‘a theory of our contemporary ancestors’ rather than as a response to and an advancing of a contemporary and developing discourse (Dirlik, 1996, p. 100). Chow extends this discussion in her 1998 text *On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem*.

In the eponymous opening paragraph of her essay discussing issues of Chineseness, Chow takes to task the persistent and unqualified use of the label ‘Chinese’. In Chow’s opinion, the insistence on the word ‘Chinese’ points to the hegemonic relationship that ‘continues to stigmatize and ghettoize non-Western cultures ...’ as the prefix ‘Chinese’ takes the discussion at hand away from the larger theoretical and intellectual arena, thus effectively putting it in its place by restricting discussions of non-Western issues to a specialized concern (Chow, 2013, pp. 43-44). In such situations, discussions of East Asia history are seen in isolation.

Continuing her interrogation on the use of ‘Chinese’, Chow then addresses twentieth century Chinese intellectual use of the same modifier. The difference, in this instance, is in its reversal – by ‘Chinese intellectuals in the twentieth century’ as a defensive reaction to historical military and territorial incursions and contemporary domination of academe and politics (Chow, 2013, p. 45).

The modifier Chinese is problematic in complex ways. Its ubiquitous presence belies an ambiguous Chinese, often pronounced at once as one’s nationality, ethnicity, culture and/or language. Furthermore, as Shih writes, there are ‘altogether fifty-six official ethnicities in China and far more diverse languages and topolects spoken across the nation’ (Shih quoted in Shih, Tsai and Bernards, 2013, p. 26).

Accordingly, the modifier Chinese is an umbrella designation that purports to refer to the 1,360,070,000 nationals of the People’s Republic of China, of its Han majority and the fifty-six official ethnicities,³ as well as the 50,000,000 Chinese spread across Africa, Asia, Europe, Americas and the Oceania. In the face of such staggering numbers, one can reasonably assume that there has to be more than one

³ Anthropologist David Wu writes that under new ethnic classification many previously anomalous groups, whether by tribal name or by cultural characteristics, have now been subsumed under single ethnic labels. Wu also note the official efforts to promote a ‘new unified, centralized, and pan-national sets of cultural symbols and activities’ (Wu, 1991, pp. 167-168).

characteristic and more than one experience of being Chinese, thus belying the singularity implied by the term 'Chinese'. As well, the re-enforcement of a singular China affords 'a sense of belonging to a great civilization' (Wu, 1991, quoted in Chow, 1993, p. 24). As such, the colonizer need not be a clear identifiable foreign colonizer. The colonizer can be within, be of the same race, sharing the same land and speaking the same language (Chow, 1993, p. 9).

Furthermore, 'Chinese' also contain a complex multiplicity of being Chinese without China. Ang captures a familiar query '...What that Chineseness meant was never quite clear to me ...' (Ang quoted in Gabriel, 2011, p. 123). Chow, on the other hand, in interrogating the same problematics of identification, relates instances where, all too often, criticism was levelled at a perceived 'lack', that is where one was too Westernised. Chow in *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, interrogates the entrenched Orientalism in the academic world of East Asian studies and the critics who feel that Chinese writers who were too 'westernised' have betrayed their culture, that these writers were not 'Chinese' enough (Chow, 1993, p. 2).

Of Identification, Representation and Discourse

Cultural theorist and sociologist Hall offers a different approach to the challenge of representation and identification (1997). Where Said takes the perspective that our systems of knowledge are based on the consequences of vested interest, Hall emphasises the importance of the language we use to relate and the consequences of the communication exchanges that are the building blocks of culture. For Hall the struggles over language are also contestations of representations and frames of references as language creates meanings and interpretations of those meanings. Seen in the light of such reflection, one could say that the control of language is essentially a control of constructions of values, of representation as well as our understandings of cultures and identities.

The link between our thought processes, which are framed by previously internalised concepts, and our perception of the object through sound, text, image or gesture, that is our conceptual map, produces our understanding of the meaning of the object.

Meaning is produced and communicated through shared conceptual maps and shared language. Hall explains that conceptual maps are particular signs we allocate to particular concepts. A shared language depends on our agreement that certain signs, whether they are sounds, text, images or gestures, stand for certain persons, objects or ideas being referred to. These signs carry our agreed meanings. These signs, that is, sounds, text, images or gestures are therefore our language of representation. We communicate through this agreed language of representation.

The relationship between language and what it represents is our conceptual map. As such, people with same language and conceptual map are able to communicate, make sense or interpret the meanings of their communication, that is, they share the same culture. In short, meaning is vested, not in what is referred to but by what is pre-determined – by what is agreed between and amongst those that refer to it (Hall, 1997, pp. 16-22). In the Wallace and Limbaugh examples cited on pages 1 and 5 respectively, one could say that in rejecting a sound that has not been agreed upon, Wallace and Limbaugh point to a difference to indicate that the unfamiliar sound is not part of the conceptual map and therefore not part of a community. It could also be seen as a signal that the speaker of the unfamiliar sound is somehow ‘lacking’.

It is the systems of representation, the shared conceptual maps and shared language of speech, writing, visualization and gestures that enable us to understand, interpret and translate ideas, that make us part of a community, a part of a culture. Hall points out that the focus is not in the linguistic aspects but the location of the relationship through which such exchanges or communication occurs. And I will add that it is also the situation or context, in which the sign is located that points to the signified, that gives the sign its meaning.

However where does meaning and our body of knowledge come from? In his chapter *The Work of Representation*, Hall quotes Michel Foucault’s investigation of meaning and knowledge, how shared meanings are produced (Hall, 1997, p. 2-4).

Accordingly, Hall takes up Foucault’s argument. Meaning is produced through discourse rather than through language. It is vested in thoughts not signs, and those who provide those thoughts direct the interpretation of signs. That is to say that

meaning is produced not through shared language of speech, writing visualization and gestures but through the specificity of its cultural and historical context.

Continuing to quote Foucault, Hall iterates that meanings of things are constructed through our assigning words and sounds to them. Thus, if we assign a thing with a word and sound of a language, the thing assigned will be imbued with the meanings and values assigned by the community that agreed on the meanings and values of the word and sound assigned. Furthermore, Foucault includes the significance of the historical and cultural specificity in which such meanings are constructed as well as marking ruptures, breaks to be important potential turns. Thus, by extension, the choice of language could also control who gets to speak, what is discussed, why the topic is being discussed, when, why and where do these discussions occur, suggesting that the power to control the choice of language is synonymous to the control of discourse.

The advocacy of Mandarin as the language of Chinese, whether within or without China denies the multiplicity of Chinese languages, many of which are ‘mutually unintelligible forms of speech’ (DeFrancis quoted in Chow, 2013, p. 48). Thus, the multiplicity of identities is threatened if not eradicated through the standardization of Mandarin as the language of Chinese, regardless if one is a national of the People’s Republic of China or if one had been born of descendants of immigrants. Once reiterated as information it becomes entrenched in place as knowledge.

Foucault also contends that power is not always vertical, top down. We all speak, and by extension, are thus implicated because we exist within communities. And within this community we create knowledge and meaning by what is being said and agreed on (Hall, 1997, pp. 49-50). The financial and economic viability of speaking Mandarin is clearly illustrated in the interview with Sydney’s Chinatown locals who find themselves, not only linguistically displaced but having to learn Mandarin in order to maintain their businesses (Ang, 2013, p. 11). Therefore, discourse comes out of what is said, not who said it. In Foucault’s argument, the subject does not matter. One could be a king or slave for power and knowledge to be asserted. But it could also be argued that that condition is dependent on the context, as is the case of the impending changes in Sydney’s Chinatown language of commerce.

Hybridity

Bhabha's concepts of hybridity also comes out of a meeting of two or more different cultures. Bhabha states that this condition is 'never finished or complete in itself' (Bhabha, 1990, p. 210) and that out of two other positions emerges a space of new meanings and representations. He calls this 'the third space'.

Hybridity is a third space which allows for other positions, establishes new structures, political initiatives replacing the histories from which it is derived. Hybrid is not identity but 'identifying with and through another object' (Bhabha, 1990, p. 210). Furthermore, Bhabha states that the hybrid is always ambivalent and 'bears the traces of those feelings and practices which informs it, ...'

Cultural theorist Nikos Papastergiadis elaborates that a hybrid being the result of neither an adaptation, assimilation, addition or absorption does not have the same characteristics as its constituent elements. Any conflict, similarities and/or difference in its antecedent is not necessarily manifested in the resulting hybrid (Papastergiadis, 1996, p. 14). However, the third space or the process of hybridity is not an uncontested space that diffuses hegemony. The spread of English as the language of business can testify to the fact that hybridity does not escape imperial colonial influence.

Anthropologist Nestor Garcia Canclini defines hybrids as discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices. And while Canclini posits hybridity as a useful tool in challenging fundamental attitudes, he also cautions of elitism and coercion (Canclini, 1995, pp. xi-xxv).

More often than not it is troubled and policed as art historian Yuko Kikuchi and postcolonial theorist and literary critic Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan have argued. Kikuchi in her investigation of Orientalism interrogated Japanese national identity which was crafted via the hybrid Mingei theory and depended largely on a hegemonic relationship with other Asians (Kikuchi, 2006). Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan argues that hybridity is far from being the utopian space, free from

the struggles of identity politics. Radhakrishnan's portrayal of the struggles of the post-colonial hybrid can quite accurately be applied to anyone who must necessarily intone a multiple of geographies and histories in the 'excruciating act of self-production' to present an 'inventory of one's self' in defence of a perceived lack (Radhakrishnan, 1993, p. 753).

Hybridity is the inevitable consequence of the meetings and co-habitation of difference. Ang applies Canclini's position to assert that it is difficult to define the boundary between Chinese and non-Chinese. Ang also cautions that hybridity is not a celebratory merger, that it is not without challenges. Ang states that far from being solutions, 'hybridity alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution' (Ang, 2001, p. 17).

Maharaj also questions hybridity. He asks if hybridity could be considered 'a double-voicing concept' one that is both positive as well as negative. Maharaj considers that a hybrid could be the negotiation and subsequent merger of discreet elements. On the other hand, a hybrid could also be the consequence of their inability to superpose on each other. However, he cautions against a celebratory reductive, in particular the possibility of hybridity potential to aggregate, producing 'a flattening sameness' (Maharaj, 2001a, p. 27).

We, Chinese

While anthropologist Wu allows that being Chinese is a continuously changing process, dependent on historical context, he identifies two salient elements that speak to being a Chinese. The first is *zhong¹guo²ren²* (中国人) – an allegiance and connection to China and a cultural heritage that is different from non-Chinese and secondly *zhong¹hua²min²zu²* (中华民族) – members of the historical Chinese race. Overseas Chinese or *hua²qiao²* (华侨) are deemed to retain their Chineseness 'as long as they are able to claim a Chinese male ancestor, a homeplace in China from where this ancestor supposedly emigrated, and observe some manner of cultural practices' (Wu, 1991, pp. 160-163).

In his 1998 *Upgrading the Migrant: Neither Huaqiao⁴ or Huaren⁵* Wang questioned the continuing use of *hua²qiao²/hua²ren²*, citing the immigrants settling and new loyalties to the host country, thus in effect, ending their allegiance to China, severing the bridge in *hua²qiao²*. And in such circumstance, Wang continues, it does not make any sense for a person who has taken up other nationality or permanent residency, for example, as a Canadian or Singaporean to maintain the title of *hua²ren²*.

The problem Wang outlined above has its beginnings in the early days of Chinese migrating. According to Wang, from as early as the 1900s, pre-industrialized China did not support the concept of migration as we know it. In fact, their closest equivalent for the word ‘migrate’ is the Chinese word *yi²min²* (移民).⁶ *Yi²min²* has its root in the government’s relocation policy, an example of which is the contemporary movement of people away from their homes to make way for the construction of the Three Gorges Dam. *Yi²min²* also refers to the people that were relocated, a concept that is quite different from the general movement of migrant labour, who re-located voluntarily for personal and financial reasons. Therefore historically, all Chinese who moved, whether because of government policies or voluntarily for personal reasons, as individuals or in groups, were categorized as ‘migrants’.

The situation regarding Chinese immigrants is currently not any clearer when, as the source country, China insists on using the ambivalent *Hua²qiao²-Hua²ren²* in

⁴ Huaqiao: Originally, this term meant those Chinese who spend some time abroad, but it does not include settlers. Nowadays, it simply refers to Chinese who have the permanent right to reside in their adopted country but retain their Chinese citizenship. Li, M. (1999) *IIAS Newsletter* Online. Available at: <<http://www.ias.nl/iasn/18/index.html>> (Accessed 27 Sept 2013).

⁵ Huaren: This refers to the Chinese who have settled down somewhere outside China and have also obtained foreign citizenship. Li, M. (1999) *IIAS Newsletter* Online. Available at: <<http://www.ias.nl/iasn/18/index.html>> (Accessed 27 Sept 2013).

⁶ In Chinese, the term *yimin* covers all the meanings expressed by the words ‘migration’, ‘migrant’, ‘immigration’, ‘immigrate’, ‘immigrant’, ‘emigration’, ‘emigrate’, and ‘emigrant’ in English. Nevertheless, the Chinese term *yimin* has an added connotation not expressed in any of the English words. It also suggests a compulsory migration; in other words, people moving away from their homes because of official policy. Li, M. (1999) *IIAS Newsletter* Online. Available at: <<http://www.ias.nl/iasn/18/index.html>> (Accessed: 27 Sep 2013).

addressing their emigrants, thus causing host countries to feel uncertain of the loyalties of their Overseas Chinese immigrants.

Drawing from her research on Netherlands immigrants, Li Ming Huan makes this observation of Chinese emigrants or migrants in the Netherlands – that ‘many Chinese in the Netherlands, whether they have become naturalized as Dutch citizens or retain their Chinese nationality, prefer to call themselves Huaqiao’ (Li, 1999, p. 2). Furthermore, she notes that their associations often proclaim their ‘long distance patriotism’ and by titling themselves *hua²qiao²* hopes to bask in the reflected glory of China’s global success and presence. Wu has also noted a similar attitude in Southeast Asia’s *peranakans*⁷ who still consider themselves Chinese, ‘the peranakans themselves are quite confident about the authenticity of their Chineseness. They are often heard referring to themselves as “we Chinese”’ (Wu, 1991, p. 72).

On the other hand, Ang, in speaking to the conditions of the changing context of Chineseness in Australia’s Sydney Chinatown, described the area’s present condition as being ‘no longer a space for community, but for co-presence among strangers, it may be described as ‘a space of possibility, but shared with others, and belonging to none’ (Ash Amin quoted in Ang, 2013, p. 9). Sydney’s Chinatown was a place where its Chinese migrants first found refuge from being the ‘other’ in a predominantly Occidental society and culture. It later became an icon of multiculturalism and is presently a hybrid and transnational space, hosting a wide spectrum of Chinese and an array of multiple Chineseness. Quite different from an older essentialized Chineseness, it is a space for all, familiar and strange but more importantly a space of possibility, shared by all, belonging to all and no one.

The Oxford English Dictionary informs that the word ‘identity’ is derived from late Latin *identitas*, from Latin *idem* ‘same’. This is troublesome from the start as our identities separate us from another while also noting a sameness. In other words, our

⁷ ‘Peranakan – used as a proper noun, much like the noun Creole – is derived from the Malay anak (“child”), and means “a descendant of a native and a foreigner” (*Kamus Dewan*, 1970. Kuala Lumpur: *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*), with the connotation of being “local-born”.’ Available at: <<http://www.thestar.com.my/story.aspx?file=%2f2013%2f1%2f22%2flifeliving%2f12573799&sec=lifeliving>> (Accessed: 30 September 2013).

identity reflects simultaneously our similarities and differences. We also have many identities because we belong to many social, cultural and political groups.

Furthermore, we are the same and different to a wide variety of ways and situations (Buckingham, 2008, pp. 1-2). With the aforementioned definition of identity in mind, I would like to suggest that we could assume that Chinese identity must hold within it a range of sameness and difference. Therefore, while there may be a general sameness about a person's Chineseness, that person also embodies a way of being Chinese that is unique and particular.

It would seem reasonable then to suggest that Chinese identities, like Sydney's Chinatown, are never stable, nor do they develop in clearly defined patterns or conditions. In fact, it is observed that they can sometimes develop as a simultaneous hybrid. For example, Chinese Singaporean in Canada, through a sense of absence, may become keenly aware of the uniqueness of being Chinese in a multi-racial Singapore, while at the same time be influenced by Chinese Canadian culture which has strong Hong Kong Chinese characteristics. Thus, in many ways hybridity is a contemporaneous activity, and in the globalised situation, can sometimes have more than two elements. It also can happen at the same time in many different places. Hence, I would like to suggest that it is important to consider hybridity as a verb, not a noun and that Chineseness is not an end-product but a continuously complex multiple, always becoming.

Chinese Canadian identities are precipitated by labour and race policies and forged within the social dynamics of nineteenth century in the then British Dominion Canada. Chinese first migrated to Canada in 1859 to work the gold mines of the province of British Columbia. In 1882 more than 110,000 Chinese workers arrived to meet labour demands of the Canadian Pacific Railway. At the last count in 2006 there were 1.22 million Chinese Canadians. Some were immigrants while many had Canadian-born status (Ma quoted in Ley, 2010, p. 12). According to Guo Shibao and Don DeVoretz, (2006) the Chinese make up the largest group of visible minorities in Canada. What is also interesting is their findings from an earlier research which revealed that while the country of birth of more than 70 percent migrated from China, Hong Kong or Taiwan, all 'were citizens of 132 countries from Afghanistan

to Zimbabwe' before moving to Canada. That is to say that Chinese immigrants in Canada are not homogenous but from all over the world (Guo and DeVoretz, 2005, pp. 7-8).

Singapore's Chinese were, in the main, constructed from race management policy of an earlier British colonial rule—between 1819 and 1963 except for 3 years of Japanese occupation during World War II—and then the new national government. It is pertinent to note that the make-up of Chinese in Singapore, even as early as the time of British colonial rule has long been complicated because the Chinese in Singapore intermarried. In contrast to British colonial race policies, the Singapore government re-classified Chinese into a singular entity, despite the fact that migrants and their descendants were from different geographical locations and societies, each with their own discreet cultures and languages. Moreover, Mandarin Chinese was designated the official mother tongue of any Singaporean of Chinese descent. Chiang reveals that Mandarin Chinese was chosen as the language to represent Singapore's Chinese because of the language's 'official status in mainland China, which the Chinese community in Singapore viewed as the main provider of Chinese culture, ...'. She also observed that most Chinese Singaporeans identify Mandarin Chinese as their mother tongue despite having been brought up speaking non-Mandarin Chinese (Chiang, 2009, p. 29). However, I would suggest that that identification may be applied only to Chinese Singaporeans who speak the Chinese languages as there are some, and I would include myself, who do not identify with Mandarin Chinese or with any of the Chinese languages. This last point is a contentious fact. Chow and many theorists have attested to the primacy of Mandarin as the primary marker of one's Chineseness by both politics and academe, the Occidentals and the Chinese, thus effectively disregarding a plural Chineseness, one that is multiple, unique and particular, to contain a managed Chineseness.

It is also interesting, if somewhat disconcerting, that Chineseness is still so much aligned to China and that it almost feels as though Zhou Enlai's 1954 enunciation (Skinner, 1959, p. 145) which was made official in the 1958 National People's Congress—that overseas Chinese had the right to self-definition and identification—

never happened.⁸ More pointedly, the declaration clearly states that '[c]hildren of overseas Chinese should study local languages' (Skinner, 1959, p. 146).

Interestingly, studies from Singapore, Canada, Netherlands and Australia have shown that the knowledge of a Chinese language is still very much held to be central to one's claim of Chinese identity and those who do not speak Chinese are considered lacking or fake (Verkuyten & deWolf, 2002, quoted in Mah, 2005, p. 10). This almost ubiquitous phenomenon is interesting in the expectation some Chinese have of themselves. Is this because of the ease in which language can be transmitted especially within the family and the strength it then gives in return, holding first the family and then the migrant community together in a nucleus of history and familiar sounds, the stories and songs shared and passed from one generation to another? Even if they do not retain their forms, the common language sounds bind, support and strengthen a community even as it evolves in their new location.

Sinophone

Shih coined the notion of the Sinophone (Shih quoted in Shih, Tsai and Bernards, 2013, p. 30). According to her, Sinophone studies are concerned with Sinitic-language cultures and communities 'on the margin of China and Chineseness' (Shih quoted in Shih, Tsai and Bernards, 2013, p.19). Its remit is to theorize the cultural production and contemporary experiences concerned with Chinese languages, ethnicities and cultures that span the globe. Sinophone studies range in three fields—from the legacies of empires (acknowledged or otherwise)—the study of colonial languages, engagement with language cultures and ethnic studies or minority studies.

Of importance is the Sinophone relationship with China and Chineseness. The Sinophone's strategic position of being 'on the margin' denotes connection and at the same time, a disconnection that a de-coupling would afford. It is a critical

⁸ 'We hold that overseas Chinese should be free to choose the nationality of the country in which they reside and should be loyal to that country and its people. As for those who wish to remain Chinese subjects, we ask them to continue to observe the policies, laws and regulations of their countries of residence and to respect the customs and habits of the local people. ... Children of overseas Chinese should study local languages, ...' (Skinner, 1959, p. 146).

distance, if not equidistance, between Western hegemony and China's response to it. Hence the Sinophone is not Sinocentric.

It is also important to note that central to the Sinophone is the disaggregation of the singularity of Chineseness and China. The Sinophone is multiple in that its particularity, which may even be located in a non-Chinese context, is integral to its being a part of the larger Sinitic communities. On this point Shih is emphatic – 'Sinophone culture is therefore transnational in constitution but local in practice and articulation' (Shih quoted in Shih, Tsai and Bernards, 2013, p. 7).

However, it is perhaps pertinent to consider the notion of minority studies and the Sinophone concerns, not with polyphony or the multiplicity of languages but, with colonial language cultures in situations such as Singapore's where Cantonese, Hakka, Hockchiu, Hokkien, Teochew are considered heritage languages in comparison to Mandarin Chinese, the 'mother-tongue' of Chinese Singaporeans. I would add that the promotion of Mandarin Chinese, at the expense of other Chinese languages may have been a source of discomfort, of loss as one is described linguistically in ways totally unfamiliar to oneself. Furthermore, the concept of Sinophone minority studies in multicultural and multi-linguistic Singapore, where the Chinese make up the majority is complicated.

Diaspora

In her arguments for an end date, Shih argues that the Chinese diaspora is 'a universalizing category founded on a unified ethnicity, culture, language and place of origin or homeland.' The critical point of her argument is the singularity of Chineseness. As Shih emphatically states, 'There is no such group called "ethnic Chinese"'. She maps the production of a uniformed Chineseness to nineteenth century Orientalism which essentialized a diverse and multiple Chineseness to one ethnicity, a singularity that was seconded by the Qing rulers to 'emphasize its cultural and political autonomy' in response to Western hegemony (Shih quoted in Shih, Tsai and Bernards, 2013, pp. 26-27).

In Shih's opinion, the organising principle of an essentialized Chineseness and the insistence on China as homeland belies a plurality. Instead, it insists on a homogenous Chineseness, and, to quote Ang, denies the complicated entanglement of local cultures and being Chinese without China (Ang, 2001). The de-coupling of home and China is critical to the inquiry and articulation of a transnational Sinophone.

In her essay on *Together-in-Difference: Beyond Diaspora, Into Hybridity* (Ang, 2001), Ang agrees and contends that the Chinese diaspora arguments are primarily based on consanguinity and its present currency is largely due to the rise of China as a global presence – the power house of the Asian Century. Furthermore, membership to the Chinese diaspora depends on the notion of one being Chinese or not, one which Ang describes in the same text as 'pure identity politics on a global scale'.

Cultural theorist Lily Cho writes that diaspora 'is a subjective condition marked by the contingencies of long histories of displacements and genealogies of dispossession' (Cho, 2007, p. 14). The problem with the concept of diaspora is not that there is no diaspora—there is and we can quite easily recall Tibetans loyal to the Dalai Lama creating a diasporic existence in Darussalam—but that we confuse it with immigration. For example, emigrants may still hold emotional ties to their source country. However, it is reasonable to expect that their children and grandchildren would place their primary loyalty to the country of their birth and residence so that even if they, in their turn migrate and/or re-migrate, their emotional belonging and sense of home is not to the historical source of their ancestors but their own particular understanding of home.

A more accurate or perhaps useful way of understanding ourselves is perhaps as transnationals which would invert the perspective such that it resists the source and host binary and expands it to include a back and forth trajectory and/or a forever on-going direction. Moreover, one's transnationality could perhaps be considered beyond the idea of crossings of national borders, that one could be transnational because one is multiple and hybrid, constantly engaging at the liminal.

Transnationalism

Curator Norman Kleeblatt noted, ‘Some may argue that identity is a dated concept of little value in current exhibition practice. Yet the term continues to rear its complicated and confusing head. Identity seems all the more important in a global context where, as I mentioned earlier, an elastic tension persists between the two’ (Kleeblatt, 2005, p. 62).

Ang advocates that, ‘If ethnicity and identity continue to be an issue discussed in art, it behoves us to continue to consider its ‘entangled complications’ (Ang, 2001). However, to attend to Ang’s suggestion and to establish a clear overview of the problematics of transnational art, we must consider art concerned with issues of transnationalism, in the case of this research, art of Asian countries which is the source countries of transnational Chinese.

In their introduction to *Contemporary Art in Asia: A Critical Reader* editors Melissa Chiu and Benjamin Genocchio bemoan a continuing ‘Western cultural chauvinism’ exemplified in H. H. Arnason’s 1985 *A History of Modern Art*, a mandatory reading in any undergraduate Art History curriculum. Singapore historian T.K. Sabapathy in his 1997 contribution adds his support – that it is also incomprehensible that the Euro-American paradigm continues to be the bench mark by which art in Asia is considered, and if found to be lacking in ‘authentic’, local culture is ‘found wanting and dismissed as inauthentic and derivative’ (Sabapathy quoted in Chiu & Genocchio, 2011, p. 6). It bodes well that this 2011 critical reader on art in Asia and its eminent contributors argue for the proposition that Asian art needed to be judged and defined on its own terms. Some of its authors privileged locality as frame of reference. Others looked back on earlier theories of the differences and specificity that make up the vast diversity that is Asia, an Asia that John Clark traces geographically from ‘Indus valley to the Sakhalin peninsula which is bounded by the Siberian steppes to the north and the Indian Ocean and the Straits of Timor to the south’ (Clark quoted in Chiu & Genocchio, 2011, p. 27).

In a geography of such vastness and a political diversity of more than thirty discreet nations, Chiu and Genocchio ask, ‘How can Asian art be defined? And how are the

field and its relevant interests to be drawn?” They understood that ‘... the art scene is highly variable; when Japan's scene was booming in the late 1980s, the contemporary Chinese art world was in its infancy’ (Chiu & Genocchio, 2011, p. 8). Perhaps one could also take another perspective by saying that art, such as the batik paintings of Indonesian, Malaysian and Singaporean artists—each unique in their own rights—or posters painted and designed during the various eras of Communist rule in China, while they may not be familiar to western contemporary art of the same time or take its formal cue from expressionism, impression, of pop or conceptual art, it is all the same in these countries in Southeast Asia, and in China, a contemporary visual expression.

As well, it seems puzzling that cubism in Asia was considered to be a 'mistranslation' of the European original (Chiu & Genocchio, 2011, p. 9). Picasso and Braque are credited for creating the style in Paris in between 1904 and 1914. The Metropolitan Museum of Art noted that ‘Other influences on early Cubism have been linked to Primitivism and non-Western sources’ (Rewald, 2004). At another later incarnation of cubism, North American Max Weber, Charles Demuth, Davis, British Ben Nicholson were all considered to have been cubists. Why then is Asian cubism a ‘mistranslation’ rather than a response and furthering of the discourse?

The importance of language is also exemplified in Singapore’s foremost art historian, curator and critic Sabapathy’s response to New York’s Guggenheim-UBS Map Global Initiative *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*. Sabapathy disagrees with the overarching notion of its title, one that overwrites nations with their own particular issues and practices. It is, as well, a cogent reminder that Orientalism continues to plague the contemporary and globalised world as ‘it signals a regression into a colonial picture in which Southeast Asia is an appendage of the other’ (Sabapathy in Chen’s blog, 2015).

More specifically around the question of language, art journalist Patricia Chen questions if language had been a hindrance to a ‘unfiltered and multiple perspectives’, that the availability of other languages might provide ‘direct access to the discourse of artists, artistic communities, cultural practices and scholarship’ (Chen, 2015, para 3-4). Furthermore, she challenges the quality of a scholarship

conducted only in English when the countries of Asia's 'most salient cultural practices and intellectual discourses' are first written and discussed in the vernacular (Chen, 2015).

Bearing in mind Chakrabarty's observation that, despite a persistent propensity of Western modernity to propose a need for 'catching up', 'No country ... is a model to another country, ...' (Chakrabarty, 2008, pp. xii), what are the ways in which one could address this complex, if not messy, situation? Geeta Kapur offers a practical perspective. Kapur takes up Canclini's arguments that one could sustain plurality through a strategy of 'simultaneously closed and open identitarian politics' (Canclini, 1995). She also advocates a turn beyond the histories of otherness, to selfhood and authorship, thus claiming the representation of the other by ourselves, that is, the other. Kapur proposes that we do so through several strategies. Her list of strategies a practice could take up includes deconstruction, re-codification, re-examination of representation, foregrounding the extreme indulgence of the desired orientalist other and any combination of the aforementioned. She also proposes a 'practice based on the epiphanies of language ... which springs from purposeful intransigence and lost Utopias' (Kapur, 1997, pp. 28-32).

I would like to suggest that a theoretical foundation for such a turn could be found in Chakrabarty's 2005 text *Legacies of Bandung: Decolonisation and the Politics of Culture* in which he focuses our attention on several salient points that may be useful in expanding perspectives. Chakrabarty explains that, while having mutual influence, there is a clear distinction between anti-colonial and postcolonial. Where anticolonialism is located in colonies in Southeast Asia, South America, Africa, postcolonialism is mainly initiated in the West in Europe and North America. Where the former is eponymous, postcolonial criticism discussions are based on immigration, indigenous and minority issues. These issues found their initial audience in the Anglo-American West. Anti-colonialism was a campaign for a rupture, a break with history. It was never anti-European or anti-North American but rather its rule. I would suggest that this salient difference could well be an important point of departure for a transnational discussion on Chineseness and even perhaps engender the very pivotal decoupling of ethnicity and recover the otherness.

On the other hand, curator Enwezor, explaining a different view of Western hegemony, offers the strategy of the off-centre. While he acknowledges Chakrabarty's disclaiming of a European franchise for modernity, personal liberty, democracy and capitalism, and that modernity in practice is very diverse and particular to the specificity of its location, Enwezor argues that these modern concepts are in fact grand modernity. Grand modernity is defined as European values which was later exported as petit modernity to their respective colonies. Thus it is this interaction with their colonies that imbues modern concepts such as personal liberty, democracy and capitalism with a sense of European qualities and claims of universality (Enwezor, 2010, pp. 590 - 596). However, equality, democracy and human dignity are not homogenous and are different in different contexts. In fact they may not even be the same as Chakrabarty illustrates in the difference between an Australian and an Indian concept of personal space (Chakrabarty, 2008, pp. xiii).

Enwezor defines an off-centre approach as one, unlike that of decentralising, is 'structured by the simultaneous existence of multiple centers'. I am with Enwezor, that contrary to a singular understanding, our many worlds are intrinsically plural and multiple in both complex and messy ways, each with their own orbits. However, while I cannot agree with Enwezor's statement that Asia's cultural environment was 'unimaginable a generation ago'—the pronouncement, in my opinion, appears to be cognizant only of cultural spheres that are recognizable—Enwezor makes a case for an off-centred leadership citing Yinka Shonibare's projects, using batik textiles which challenged a European imperial construction of African traditions (Enwezor, 2010, p. 598).

Yet another approach is that suggested by artist, curator and writer Rashid Araeen. New York, at the end of World War II, may have claimed to be the centre of modern art but he argued against the notion that modernity only travelled in a singular direction - going West to East. In his *A New Beginning* text, Araeen writes that, 'In art this struggle took the form of challenging the prevailing concept of modernism' and redefining it without 'eurocentric structures' (Araeen, 2000, p. 6).

Singapore art critic and curator Lee Weng Choy proposes the consideration that shared practices is not equivalent to a singular perspective. On the contrary,

differences and disparities, when shared and negotiated has the potential to extend one's horizons. There is no tabula rasa. Our particular history, its time and location, where we come from will affect how we understand ourselves or is in turn understood... (Chakrabarty, 2008, pp. xii). However, we can 'begin to understand somebody else, but ... still stay in the same space' (Disavowing globalisation: Singaporean art critic and curator Weng Choy Lee in conversation, 2011). Hence the salient and pertinent activity, and the point of it all remains primarily the exchanges rather than coming to 'an unquestioning universal agreement' (Lee, 2011).

Finally, Ang proposes a strategy of cultural intelligence. Ang states that we are not only having to consider the prospect of a turn in global relationship in an Asian century, the reality of an increasingly and overwhelmingly complex tangle of social, economic and ecological global experience demands a response which at best can 'only be a partial, provisional and indefinite affair, with uncertain and indeterminate outcomes' (Ang, 2011, p. 780).

In our present world situation, where local and global are not separate entities but are in fact intimately interconnected, nations lose some sovereignty particularly in the aspects of money, information and technologies. It is also difficult to ascertain factual information because of other possible issues within the situation, some of which may be critical. In short, we live in a world of high-speed globalised communication technology where information is transmitted instantly - information on complex and sometimes messy situations in which are embedded pervasive, multiple and invested perspectives that are changing continuously.

Perhaps it would be more beneficial to take the perspective that, in a complex and messy situation any negotiation is at best applicable only to the particular perspective at hand. The negotiation is contingent to its immediate perspective and not the larger complex and messy condition. This strategy affords placing open and multiple possibilities in place, possibilities that can shift, as required, contrapuntally at times, counterpoint to itself when appropriate. And whether the move is similar, parallel, oblique, or contrary, it is always in concert with the entire situation.

Furthermore, each specific situation will react with its particular history and specificity with regards to universal concepts. Chakrabarty makes another pertinent point, ‘... do places leave their imprint on thought in such a way as to call into question the idea of purely abstract categories?’ (Chakrabarty, 2008, p. xiii). Or in the context of my research, do places imprint their particularities such that the notion of an overarching Chineseness serves very little, if at all, any purpose? For example, Overseas Chinese identity encounters of modernity at the Bandung Conference 1955 is very different from the challenges to identity faced by Chinese Singaporeans and Chinese Canadians.

Artists and historians working with issues of identity in the 50s were urgently concerned with the dilemma of being caught in the volatile maelstroms of a newly victorious but still unfamiliar Communist rule on the one hand and the colonies’ nascent fight for independence from their European rulers on the other.

Chinese Singaporean artists and historians, on the other hand, encountered policies designed to serve nation-building and an urgent promotion of a Singaporean identity from a populace of diverse races, each with their multiple ethnicities, cultures and languages as well as a wide spectrum of different levels of hybridity. Sabapathy in *Road to Nowhere: The Quick Rise and Long Fall of Art History in Singapore* detailing the struggles of a fledging art history in Singapore has an intriguing conclusion which can be applied to the concerns of a multiple Chineseness. Sabapathy confesses to a failure to expand the remit of its art history, to transgress hallowed traditions and, to paraphrase Sabapathy, to prospect with fresh interest. As a result, ‘The story of the practice of history of art as a disciplinary field in Singapore is frozen, entombed as chapter two in the 1960s and early 1970s’ (Sabapathy, 2010, p. 37).

In Canada, although they face, and continue to face issues of the us/them conundrum and a prominent presence of a largely Western art canon, the investigations of their cultural politics, begun in 70s and 80s, today sees an expansion into transnational research and practices. According to art historian Alice Jim, the crucial issue at hand is to negotiate and continuously challenge the definition of this culturally diverse nation. The task of Canadian art is to avoid containment, to maintain ‘provisional

conditions of its various manifestations' (Miki quoted in Jim, 2010, p. 3). The strategy that Jim proposes is a critical awareness of how the Other is curated from both within and without its cultural ambit, a cross border interrogation to afford a collective inquiry that is 'forever dynamic and self-critical but visible' (Jim, 2010, p. 3).

When is one's Chineseness questioned? There is no explicit understanding of Chineseness in a way that one could clearly define what or who is Chinese. Is Chineseness based on one's nationality, ethnicity, race or culture? Am I engaging in Chinese issues because I am identified as being 'Chinese' or because of my practice and the issues I investigate? Can a non-Chinese then make Chinese art? Following Chakrabarty, I suggest that Chineseness, like ideas of universals, are only considered when someone challenges a particular aspect of their expectations of Chineseness, such as when Ang cannot speak Chinese or in the case of Chow, in speaking Cantonese instead of Mandarin (Chakrabarty, 2008, p. xiii). Moreover, is it possible to admit the notion that one's Chineseness is always 'prejudiced', that whether cognizant or not, it is the sum of its (transnational) histories (Gadamer quoted in Chakrabarty, 2008, p. xiv), modified by the trajectory of a highly globalized information and infotainment technology that impacts and thus modifies our particularities (Chakrabarty, 2008, pp. xiii-xiv).

I am with Chakrabarty. Boundaries enable description, and description affords knowledge. While my sense of being Chinese is discrete in that it is quite different from my sense of being an artist, they are not disparate. Although there are times when one's identity is manifested more strongly than the other, I cannot draw a boundary around where my being Chinese ends and my identity as a sculptor begins.

Thus, it becomes quite disconcerting to have Chineseness—and, like many others, I have been expected to speak a Chinese language, or eat Chinese food, or to be skilled in martial arts or eastern spirituality—insisted upon me (Chakrabarty, 2008, p. xiv).

Chapter 3

My practice project *The Phrase Books of Migrant Sounds* developed with an on-going consideration of theoretical issues informed by art history, cultural theory and social-linguistics discussed in the introduction. Developed in six volumes, *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds* employ different genres of sound such as music and spoken words and are interwoven with life stories drawn from interviews of transnational Chinese. Collectively they tease apart the threads that bind the notion of Chineseness.

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 1 through to *Vol. 6* and interviews seem all the more pertinent as, despite an increased visibility and an expanded research field, the notion of Chineseness continues to be fraught with ambiguity. Author Lynn Pan's observation about Chinese in United States—that they are 'lost to Chineseness' (Pan quoted in Shih, Tsai and Bernards, 2013, pp. 29-30) because of their lack of cultural grounding—appears to be a near-sighted insistence of using 'Chineseness' as the organising principle, with a myriad of qualifications of Chineseness, the most contentious of which has been that of language.

The remit of my exploration is concerned with this specific qualification of Chineseness – that of language and in particular, Mandarin. At issue are questions concerning language policies, specifically, the continuing role and dominance accorded to spoken language as the mainstay of identity politics, despite the long understanding of language as polyvalent and polysemous (Bal and Morra, 2007; Pennycook, 2010) and the critical interrogation of identity as an entangled trajectory (Ang, 2001; Niranjana, 1992; Hall and Maharaj, 2001; Chow, 1993, 2013).

Through *The Phrase Book of Migrants Sounds* I will explore how different forms of Chineseness are voiced as well as what it means to be Chinese in a transnational context by honing-in on the voice, words and sounds of Chinese transnationals and examining the impact of migration. They will also consider how migration affects transnationals living in Hong Kong, Singapore and Canada. Although it is but one

network in the great flow of arriving and departing, as well as being part of my own personal transnational experience, these three countries are important gateways of migration both in the early twentieth century as well as the present.

In SAR Hong Kong Cantonese-speaking Hongkongers keenly oppose the imposition of Putonghua, China's national language. The Chinese Singaporean community also protested when the government implemented Mandarin Chinese as their mother tongue and restricted the broadcasting of other Chinese language, such as Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese, programmes. In fact, it was only when I found her clan village in Heshan, Guangdong, that I heard for the first time how my great grandfather might have sounded, a sound my maternal grandmother might have heard.

Canada has been the recipient of Chinese migrants since the early twentieth century. It is important to consider the issues of cultural collision in the converging of disparate Chinese identities. In fact, the Canadian *Magazine of Immigration*, 3 November 2016, reported a five-fold increase in the number of Chinese nationals in the Canadian student population alone. Besides Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China (henceforth China), the Chinese community in Canada is now made up of migrants of Chinese descent from all corners of the world. It is my encounters in Canada that initiated my inquiry into Chineseness. Of course, my Chineseness or lack of, had raised issues prior to my migrating to Canada but it was the several expectations of Chineseness I experienced in Halifax, Nova Scotia, that catalysed both the sounding of and search for understanding of the perceived 'spectrum of Chineseness'.

My Approach to the Interviews

I chose to use the compact Zoom H4 hand-held recorder to record the interviews. Its size—15cm length, 7cm wide and 3.7cm thick and weighing a mere 190 grams—and more importantly, the ease of operation gave the interviewees a degree of control as they could decide how they wished to share their experience. At the start of each session, I would show the participants the various control switches before handing them the recorder. Some participants chose to lay the recorder on the table

or flat surface once recording commenced. One participant chose to walk a distance away to a bench. I hoped this approach in some ways would initiate trust in me as the eventual transcriber and thus a translator of their experiences.

The interviews were conducted in order to elicit the participants' recollection of a time of transition. All other participants were encouraged to recall their memories of their journey from their home countries to the host communities. These interviews solicited information about the migrants' experiences. Some participants were quite forthcoming and spoke fluently of their journeys. Some had a little trouble and the Birman Acculturation Scale and questionnaire, both of which I adapted from Dr Nan Sussman who applies cross-cultural psychology to her research on migration (adapted from Sussman, 2011, pp. 265-268), was a useful tool to focus their sharing as the open-ended questions allow for narrative responses. I kept any interruption to a minimum and maintained eye contact, only silently nodding at appropriate instances to acknowledge the participants' sharing.

To set up the interviews, I enlisted the help of my friends and colleagues and their contacts in Singapore, Hong Kong and Canada. I set up an Information Sheet which my friends and colleagues emailed their contacts. In the Information Sheet I explained that I was conducting my dissertation fieldwork and that I hope to record words spoken by people who identify as Chinese. This is to consider the effects of migration on voice and identity and investigating if moving to another country changed the way they spoke and consequently their sense of self. The search did not come back with many potential participants but snowball sampling (Parker et al, 2019), with each interviewee helping to recruit others, yielded more interviews. Of those that agreed, one is a British National, six are Canadians, two Chinese Nationals, two Singaporeans and two Hongkongers. The second Chinese National withdrew from the project in 2015.

The British national left China as a refugee at the outbreak of the Chinese Communist Revolution. Of the six Canadians, two were born in Hong Kong and migrated when young to Canada, two were born in Singapore and have lived in Canada for nine years, one migrated from China and the sixth Canadian was born in

Canada. One Chinese Singaporean migrated from Hong Kong to Singapore when he was slightly more than a year old.

In accordance with the ethics code all participants were provided with literature detailing the project and possible public exhibitions and broadcastings, their rights to anonymity as well as their right to withdraw from the project and the university's contact information. Each participant provided a signed consent before any recordings were made. As a few of my interviewees requested to remain anonymous I have decided in this thesis to identify each by alphabet after the word 'Respondent'. Over the years about thirteen hours of recordings were made in Hong Kong, Canada and Singapore.

Whenever possible, the process involved at least two meetings, each meeting lasting about one to two hours. The initial meeting takes place at a suitably neutral public venue such as a café or library or if needed, I would speak with them over the telephone or in some situations, communicate via email. I discussed the project and the recording process in detail with each participant before emailing them my information sheet and consent form prior to the recording session.

At the second meeting, I began with a summary of my project, collected the signed consent form and explained the recording procedure. Before recording I gave each participant a Modified Birman Acculturation Scale as well as a questionnaire. These documents proved to be quite useful as they focused the participants' attention and directed them to discuss various situations that they may have experienced in migrating. Some of these conversations stretched over the years of my research programme. All meetings, exchanges and recordings were conducted primarily in English. Each participant was asked if they would record a statement in a Chinese language.

These interviews were used in qualitative and cross-sectional studies which considered how participants' speech sounds and patterns responded or adapted to life in destination countries. I also initiated two longitudinal studies to track changes in speech sounds and patterns. The first is of three siblings and their respective families, each family living in Singapore, Kent (UK), and Melbourne (Australia).

The second study is a family from Wuhan (China) who migrated in order that their young son could be brought up in Singapore. However, it was quite impossible to maintain a series of recordings as repeated requests for them veered close to intrusion. The longitudinal studies, while still in progress, are not included at this point of the project.

My Approach to the Transcripts

The transcripts threw up some ethical concerns regarding representation. Celia Roberts, Emeritus Professor of Applied Linguistics, King's College, London describes transcription as 'quite an elastic concept, stretching out in one direction to very technical details [...], while stretching out, in quite another, to the politics of representation' (Roberts, not dated). It is therefore important to be cognizant of the ethical responsibility of the transcript as the sole representation of the participant's voice. It presents to the reader an absent participant whose only recourse is the review of the final transcript. The transcript is also, at best, a potentially heavily edited translation of the spoken interview that does not reflect a complex reality – the physical environment of the place of interview, the unsaid emotional responses that may be present as well as a myriad of inter-personal reactions to each other and to the moment. It must then be recognised that transcripts are at best a construction. The transcriber edits and decides details to include or exclude to produce one version of the experience. The transcript is therefore a political judgement which may even contribute to the generalization of the participant's identity. As such 'the transcription is one version of 'reality'', the idea of a complete and final transcription is a chimera' (Roberts, not dated).

Most text-based transcripts of the recording of the interviews are tasked to report an exchange rather than reflect resonance and as such do no justice to the sounds and speech of the interviews. In terms of accents, I am directed by guidelines established by linguists such as Jane Setter, David Deterding and Charles Boberg and the University of Victoria Multimedia IPA chart. However, to transcribe the entire spoken interview into phonetic symbols would render the transcript too unwieldy and quite impossible to comprehend as a whole. The decision was then to only use phonetic and extended speech descriptions on selected segments.

Transcripts are highly subjective text representations of spoken words. Intrinsically woven into the very fabric of transcripts are the cultural and social biases of the speaker and the transcriber who chooses to listen to particular threads of the conversation. The transcript is a reduction of the actual event in which there are a multitude of details – gestures, hesitations, intonations, rhythm as well as many simultaneous activities of the environment as well as their accompanying ambient sounds.

Therefore, in analysing the interviews I am critically aware and reminded of my own subjective position – that of second-generation born in Singapore, adolescent at the nascent moment of its nationhood and who as an adult migrated to Canada. I am a third age student, primarily thinking and speaking in English with very little knowledge of Chinese languages or cultures.

I also acknowledge that the insights gleaned from the interviews are another construct, and as such is mutable and ‘always becoming’ (Hall and du Gay, 1996, p. 4). The interviews are also translations that focus on selected features of larger and more complex exchanges which are accounts of larger and more complex experiences.

My analysis follows Celia Roberts’ guidelines on assumptions of qualitative research in her paper on Qualitative Research Methods and aims towards ‘understanding, interpreting and meaning’ bearing in mind that speaking is socially constructed.

My analysis also leans towards a focus on the social and cultural elements in the interview that lends to a transnational experience and the eventual sedimentation of another possible layering of identity. It also examines the way the participants understand their experiences by considering the spoken text against the larger social context of the narrative. For example, in my conversation with Kaiping local, Dr Selia Tan, conservator at Wuyi University, she quotes her aunt in San Francisco *zou⁶ ng⁶ si¹man⁴* in Cantonese, (*zuo⁴ wu² si¹wen* 做唔 斯文) – to be ‘not refined’ implying a ‘lack’ in her niece. It also indirectly infers that Tan, despite their kinship, as someone who does not socially and culturally belong to the same milieu as her

aunt, a pejorative that found its target in Tan's accented English (Tan, 2010, S39 Appendix p. 382).

Various Projects that Led to the Development of *The Phrase Books of Migrant Sounds*

Various expectations, and perceptions encountered in both my birthplace Singapore and in Canada where I had lived are folded into my practice from its very inception while I was still an undergraduate at the Nova Scotia College of Art (henceforth NSCAD). Over the years my practice developed from exploring associations and identities embedded in objects to include sounds made by objects, and then to recordings of spoken sounds and now to include listening. This journey began in 2002 with the project *By the Spoonful* in which I measure a 40-kilogram bag of plaster by casting multiples of a spoon and its contents (Figure 3.1). It is interesting to note the translation of a 40-kilogram bag of plaster into a spoonful of itself is also a visual version of a linguistic phenomenon which Professor Judith Kroll¹ describes – that the languages a person speaks are constantly present.



Figure 3.1 Gerard Choy, *By the Spoonful*, 2006. Image Credit: Fizah Hassan.

¹ Judith F. Kroll is a Distinguished Professor of Language Science at University of California, Irvine. I discuss this phenomenon on p. 100.

As well, the shape of this spoon is often recognised as being a Chinese spoon. In an interview with a curator, I wondered aloud about the ‘great homogenizing’ that is the stereotype of Chineseness and why stereotypes are created, for example such as those observed in Alexandra Wallace’s library video mentioned on page 1.

These questions led to *One Ton of Won Ton Bowls* which investigates the notion of an object that refers to but does not reproduce or represent its source. It considers the trajectories of the objects and how meanings and values are carried over or lost in translations - from porcelain to concrete, from the title *One Ton* to the Cantonese transliteration ‘Won Ton’ meaning ‘to swallow clouds’.



Figure 3.2 Gerard Choy, *One Ton of Won Ton Bowls*, 2008. Beaverbrook Gallery. Image Credit: Laura Ritchie.

One Ton of Won Ton Bowls consists of 279 elements. It is a multiple cast of a bowl whose design and use have become simplified and generalised over time. Although the surface treatment is reminiscent of Chinese cobalt glazes, Yves Klein IKB and Anish Kapoor, it is the Chroma Key - the pigment of blue screens that creates the empty spaces onto which something can be projected (Figures 3.2-3.3).



Figure 3.3 Gerard Choy, *One Ton of Won Ton Bowls*, 2008. Beaverbrook Gallery.
Image Credit: Laura Ritchie.

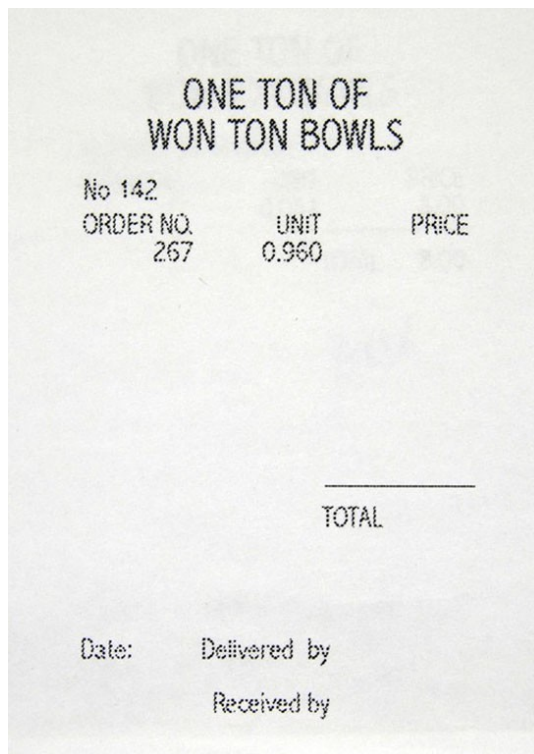


Figure 3.4 Gerard Choy, *One Ton of Won Ton Bowls*, 2002.
Image Credit: Fizah Hassan.

My projects are often collaborations, and in *One Ton of Won Ton Bowls*, I took orders prior to casting and delivered each in a brown bag together with a receipt to document the sale. Each cast carried the accumulated weight, starting with the first at 8 lbs or 0.004 of an imperial or long ton and ending with one ton (Figure 3.4).

The project began in 2002 when I happened on a blue and white double fish bowl in a Chinese grocery store in Halifax, Canada (Figure 3.5). I had seen a version of this bowl in Singapore, although my family and I have never used it. Where did this bowl come from? What is its history?



Figure 3.5 Bowl bought in Halifax. Image Credit: Fizah Hassan.



Figures 3.6 & 3.7

Plate with Carp. Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) Accession No.: 1987.10
Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The bowl is probably a descendant of the mid-14th century Yuan dynasty porcelain seen here on the right and is used when fish is served. And, unlike its descendent the Halifax bowl, the Yuan porcelain is elaborately decorated with all kinds of grasses and the fish is animated (Figures 3.6-3.7).

I also discovered that my Canadian blue and white bowl is a modern and simplified version of household ceramics collectively called *Kitchen Ch'ing*,² first mass produced in the 19th century - at a time when many people, along the coastal areas of East Guangdong and South Fujian left China, to fill the colonial labour markets in Southeast Asia and beyond. I also recognised that the form references Chinese food, at least in North America. It is interesting to note however, that although linked with 'Chineseness' in this context, that if either the bowl or the work was to be transferred to China, its meaning would be lost.

Finally, *One Ton of Won Ton Bowls* also investigates the way identity is imposed. The Chroma Key Blue serves as a void onto which any image can be projected on the casts and are as such containers of identity.



Figure 3.8 Gerard Choy, *Take Out*, 2006. Image Credit: Fizah Hassan.

² Willets, William and Lim Suan Poh (1982) *Nonya Ware and Kitchen Ching: Ceremonial and Domestic Pottery of the 19th-20th Centuries Commonly Found in Malaysia* (South East Asia Ceramic Society). Australia and New Zealand, Oxford University Press.



Figures 3.9 & 3.10 Rice measure. Image Credit: Fizah Hassan

Take Out One Ton began as an exploration of a single serving takeout box, a form that I feel is closely related to rice measuring boxes which I had only seen in Shanghai (Figures 3.9 and 3.10) and yet they are often featured in popular North American television programmes.³ Did the takeout box, like the double fish bowl, migrate with 19th century migrant workers?

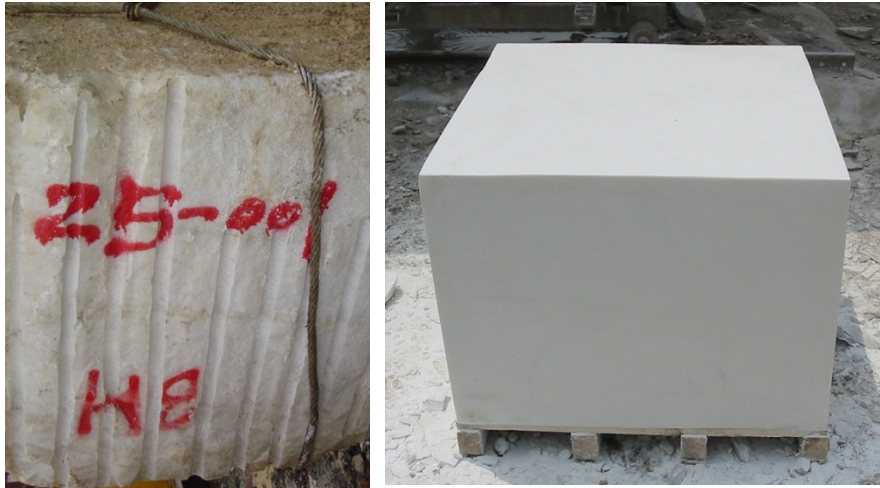
At the same time, I also read of a 1712 edict from the Imperial Palace in the Forbidden City – that Qing dynasty officials ‘shall request foreign governments to have those Chinese who have been abroad repatriated so that they may be executed’,⁴ and although revoked in 1727, anyone who wished to return depended on bribery and purchased official titles for safe passage. To quote Ng Chin Keong, National University of Singapore’s Professor of Chinese History, many were ‘simply pawns in the hands of the officials and depended on the mercy of the state’.⁵

Returning to Beijing, I purchased one ton of Han Baiyu marble from the quarry that supplied the same marble for the construction of the Forbidden City in the 11th C – and had it cut in Shanghai in the form of 114 simplified takeout boxes (Figure 3.11 - 12). These were shipped to Halifax, Nova Scotia where the work was exhibited at the Mount St Vincent Art Gallery (Figure 3.13).

³ Ernest Ingersoll (1881) *The Oyster Industry: History and present condition of the fishing industries*. United States. Bureau of Fisheries, United States. Census Office. 10th census, 1880. U.S. Government Printing Office. p. 246.

⁴ Skinner, W. (1957) *Chinese Society in Thailand: An Analytical History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp. 15-16.

⁵ Ng, CK. (2017) *Boundaries and Beyond: China's Maritime Southeast in Late Imperial Times*. Singapore: NUS Press. p. 443.



Figures 3.11 & 3.12 One Ton of Han Baiyu. Image Credit: Shanghai Anye Natural Building Material Co.

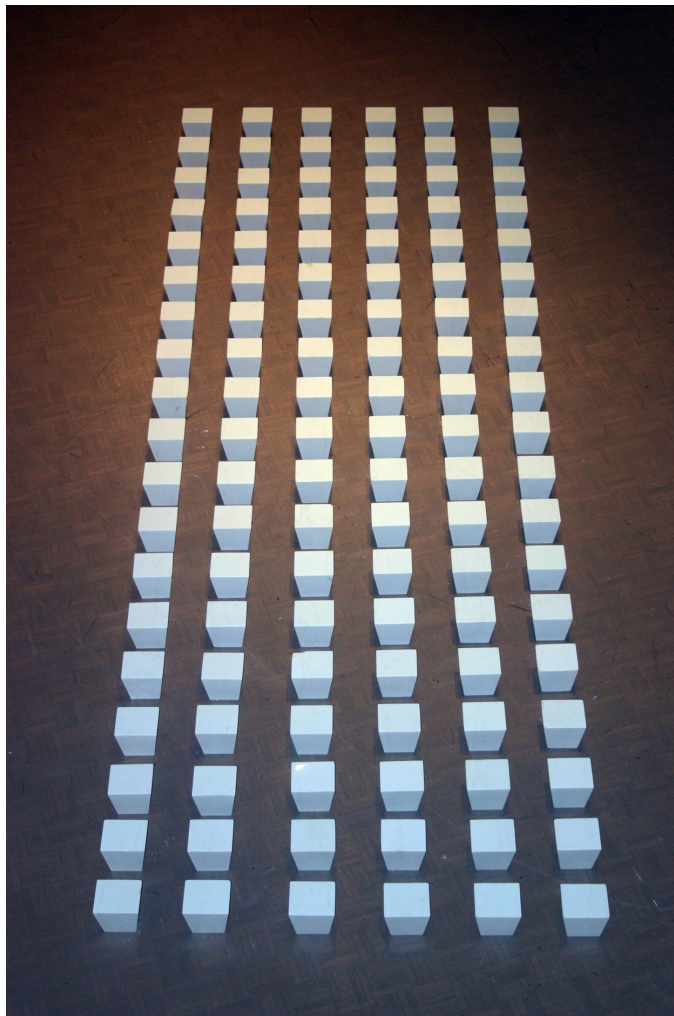


Figure 3.13 Gerard Choy, *Take Out One Ton*, 2007. Mount St Vincent University Art Gallery. Image Credit: Stephen Fisher.

So, unlike *One Ton of Won Ton Bowls*, *Take Out One Ton* maintains the natural pigment and veining of the marble. However, laid out in a grid format, without attentive study, the uniqueness of each form is lost. And as with *One Ton of Won Ton Bowls*, *Take Out One Ton* manifest a misunderstanding of these stereotyped objects.



Figure 3.14 Gerard Choy, *Violin in Alum 6*, 2009. Image Credit: Fizah Hassan.

The intent of *Violin in Alum 6* is to initiate a series of processes, a passage of several translations, not as re-presenting an original voice, but as an unending work of carrying.

In 2009, while travelling in search of my maternal grandmother's village in China, I discovered the country to be a source of white violins – that is violins in their rawest of forms, unfinished and unvoiced (Figure 3.15).



Figure 3.15 White violin, 2008. Image Credit: Fizah Hassan.

China produces 80,000 of these instruments annually, and they are only voiced and completed in their final destination, journeys that are not only similar to the 19th century and contemporary international labour migration but can also point towards the formation and translation of meaning (or voice) through travel.

I then travelled to Hong Kong to search for my paternal grandfather's origins, failing which, I looked for a music shop willing to search for and purchase a white violin from Guangdong, South China.

The white violin was mailed to Singapore where my father, a violin repairer who apprenticed with his father, dismantled it before sending it on to me in Canada where I prepared it for casting in London.



Figure 3.16 Alum 6 cast of the white violin, 2008. Image Credit: Fizah Hassan.

Two translations occurred as a consequence of casting the white violin in alum 6. I mean that by casting the violin form I translate its potential as a music instrument into a sculptural object relevant to a visual art discourse. The second is a material translation of a wooden violin form into an alum 6 object.

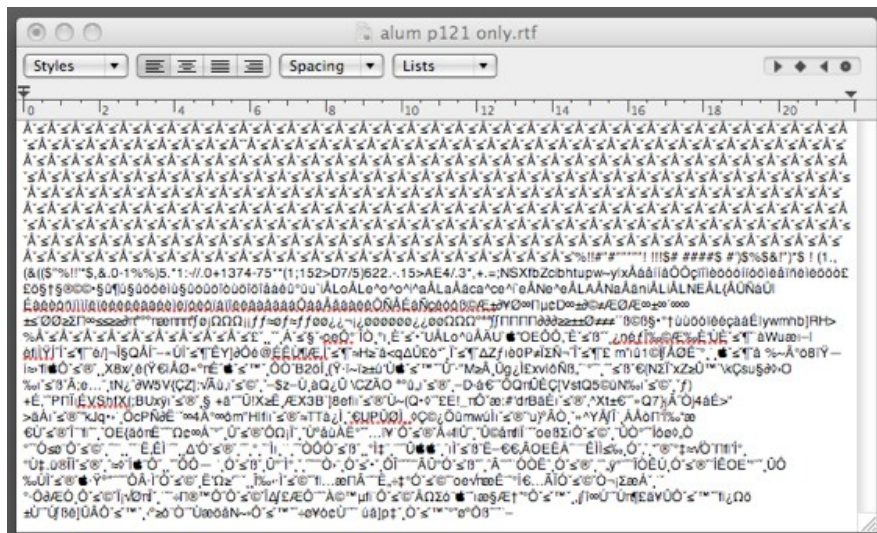


Figure 3.17 Translation #4, 2008. Image Credit: Fizah Hassan.

Next, I made a series of translations of the picture of the cast (Figure 3.13) using digital software into text (Figure 3.16), then into audio recording, to sound waves and finally to music notations.

11/24

Sarah Halpin
11/7/09

Hurt

72


Figure 3.18

Violin in Alum 6 - Sarah Halpin p. 72, 2009. Image credit: Fizah Hassan.

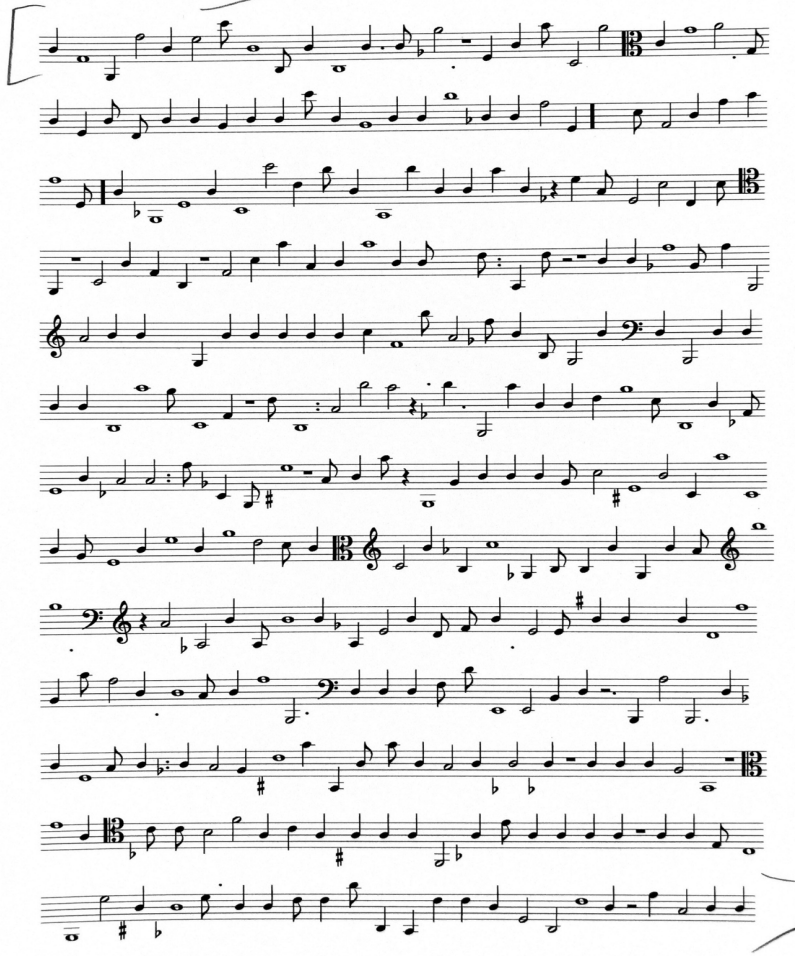


Figure 3.19

Sarah Halpin performing *Violin in Alum 6* at Camberwell College, 2009.
Image Credit: Fizah Hassan.



10/2/2010



124

Figure 3.20

Violin in Alum 6 - Colin Heuhns p. 124, 2010.
Image credit: Fizah Hassan.



Figure 3.21 Colin Heuhns performing *Violin in Alum 6* at Chelsea College, 2010. Image credit: Fizah Hassan.

Totalling 753 pages, these notations are collectively titled *Violin in Alum 6* and their articulation is only determined by the performer's decisions. These could be played in its entirety or in sections; for any duration; by anyone and on any instrument.

As such *Violin in Alum 6* is a channel and open to multiple translations. Its future articulation is 'not already wrapped up in its past, ... it is not part of an unfolding narrative, whose end is known and given in its beginning'.⁶ It is still, in any of the translations, a rendering of the passage of the unvoiced violin as well as a rendition that is present to the deliberation of its performer.

The participatory approach to the making of the work that has become an integral element of many projects led me to consider a change in the position of the artist,

⁶ Hall, S. (2007) Epilogue: Through the Prism of an Intellectual Life. In: Meeks, B. ed. Culture, Politics, Race and Diaspora: The Thought of Stuart Hall [internet] Lawrence and Wishart Reading Room. Available from <http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/ReadingRoom/public/epilogue.html> [Accessed 11 Feb 2009]

where the participants are also the maker, such as the violinists in the performance of *Violin in Alum 6*. My role then is also

... to create situations and experiences allowing listeners, these fellow artists, not only to explore their world aurally in novel ways but also to aim at suspending ingrained listening habits to expand and sharpen individual listening practice (Klien, 2015, in Carlyle and Lane, 2015, p. 136).

pronounce and *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds* launched my research into aspects of Chineseness and the disquieting incongruence of the demands of being Chinese. The various volumes of the *Phrase Books of Migrant Sounds* require participants to listen, gather meaning from form (Cutler, 2012, p. 74) and measure the distance between the strange utterance of familiar words. These projects focus on ‘sound as its ‘object’ of investigation; and it is philosophical in that it speculates and inquires into new ways to consider art, the world and our positions within the production of art and the world through sonic sensibility’ (Voegelin, 2010: p. xiv).

pronounce 1 and pronounce 2, 2010-2016

The intent of the project was to take a measure of sounds articulated by people who identified themselves as Chinese in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Canada. However, it soon became clear to my companion, a local translator, and me that being asked by total strangers to say I or *wo*³ (我) could appear a dubious request despite our explanations. Given the precautionary response to strangers on one hand and the possibility of ‘residential surveillance’ (Brown, 2009, p. 2) on the other, it is understandably so and a different approach was hastily thought of and put to work. Respondents were instead asked if they would tell something about themselves, beginning with their name (if they wish), and to say whatever they felt comfortable saying.

The audio-recordings of their voices were made in both private spaces – homes and offices, as well as public spaces such as food centres and restaurants, shopping malls, university campuses and even at bus stops and airports. In all situations I explained my intention to collect samples of Chinese voices and language sounds in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Canada. I recorded the voices of 171 volunteers,

two-thirds of which were women, the youngest about twelve years old and the oldest probably in the late seventies, in eight major language groups - the Gan, Kejia or Hakka, Min, Northern Mandarin, Uyghur, Wu, Xiang and Yue languages.

The recordings, after editing, became *pronounce 1* and *pronounce 2*, a roll call of audio portraits which fine tunes and speaks to the crude reduction of the complexities of what is generally considered Chinese sounds and languages. They begin and end the thesis - voices of Chinese Nationals precede and those of Chinese descents conclude it. It might be useful, at this juncture, to address questions around the use of the words 'Chinese' and 'Mandarin' to describe the language – what do these words mean and are they interchangeable? Sinologist Victor Mair in considering the complex issues surrounding Chinese language(s) and the accompanying dissensions, advises,

[...] we must be extremely cautious when using such an expression as “the Chinese language. What do we actually mean when we do so? [...] it is inaccurate to speak of there being but a single Chinese language’ (Mair, 1991, p. 12).

Besides challenging the notion that Mandarin is a language and all other Chinese are dialects, Victor Mair also clarified that the word 'Mandarin' derives from Sanskrit, via Malay as well as through Portuguese colonisation and that Mandarin described the language of officialdom, not the language of the Chinese people. He cautions that calling Mandarin Chinese, Putonghua and other varieties of this Chinese language simply 'Chinese' is analogous to calling Hindi, the national language of India, 'Indian' (Mair, 1991, p. 11-12).

pronounce 1 and *pronounce 2* question if the central policy that hitched a specific and single language to an identity is tenable in a world where, despite Benedict Anderson's utopian 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006), multi-lingual communities and polyglotism is more the norm rather than the exception. It is also where a robust and cacophonous 'Babel' is often the descriptor of the voices heard in Southeast Asia and in many of the southern coastal ports of China and Hong Kong (Setter, Wong and Chan, 2010, p. 5).

Historian Rachel Leow listed ‘the gamut of European ones [...] as well as a plethora of regional ones’, of at least twenty-two languages heard and spoken in 1836 Singapore alone and a proliferation of dictionaries and phrase books (Figures 3.22 - 23) translating the spectrum of Arabic, Chinese, European, Indian and Indo-Malay languages (Leow, 2016, p. 28 and p. 67).

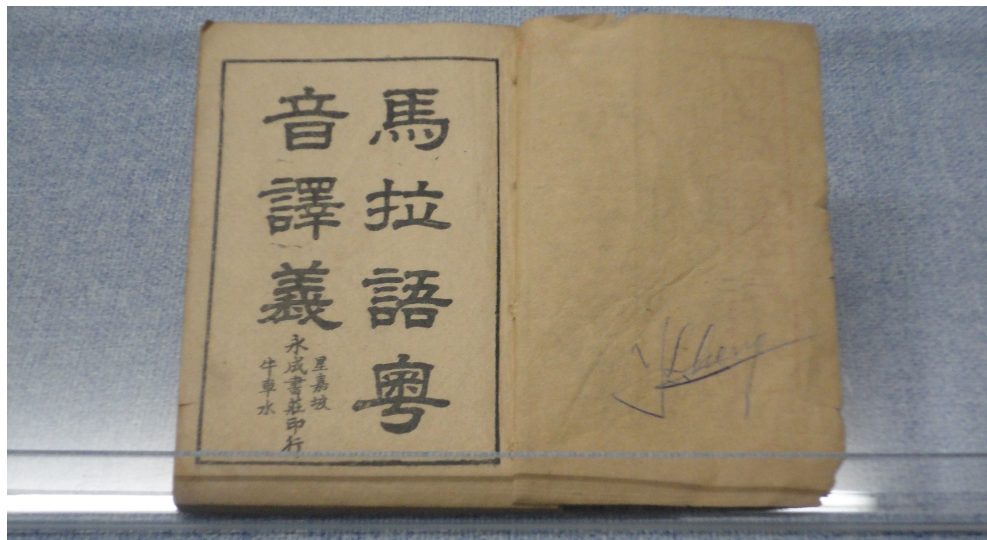


Figure 3.22 Malay-Cantonese dictionary. Wuyi Overseas Chinese Museum.
Image credit: Fizah Hassan.

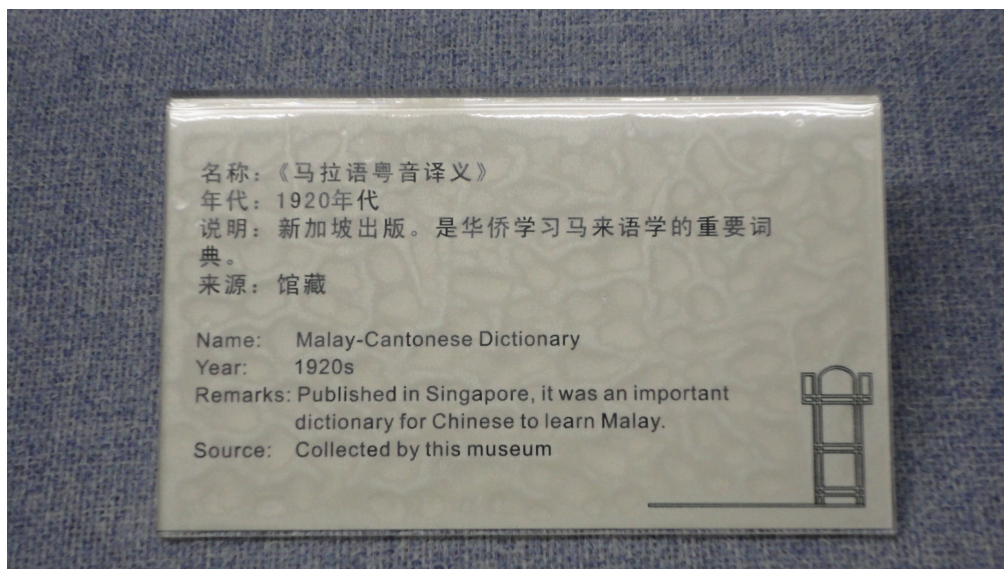


Figure 3.23 Malay-Cantonese dictionary. Wuyi Overseas Chinese Museum.
Image credit: Fizah Hassan.

Since as early as the twelfth century, merchants and tradesmen from China have sojourned and plied the mercantile routes of Southeast Asia and these early transnationals also spoke Malay, the lingua franca of trade (Leow, 2016, p. 4). Malay continued to dominate in Southeast Asia during European colonization of the area (Freedman, 1962). The Oral History Centre in Singapore archives recordings of settlers code-switching between their Chinese languages and Malay. From as early as the mid seventeenth century, pidgin English and English were also the languages of trade in China and Hong Kong, (Setter, Wong and Chan, 2010, pp. 103-104). Multilingualism and polyglotism were the norm then and continue to be today. All participants in *How to Speak Chinese* are fluent in at least two languages. How is it possible that Ien Ang and Rey Chow's choice of language was given short shrift and Mandarin is insisted upon as the language of Chinese? (Ang, 2001, p. 17; Chow, 1998, p. 12).

whisper, 2009

whisper (2009), examined not the moment of a participant's recording of *wo³ shi yi¹ ge Zhong¹ guo² ren²*, (我是一个中国人) but of her recording that was copied repeatedly at various times and places, using a wide variety of technology (Figure 3.24).

When listening to and analysing the playback of the compilation I observed that the sounding of *wo³* (我), despite their longer duration, maintained their position in the recordings. On the other hand, the analysis of the recordings of *zhong¹* (中) suggest an audio displacement of the centre of the Middle Kingdom (Figures 3.25 and 3.26). The sounds moved and shifted from their initial moment and space to trace the map of migration and because of different technologies and locations amplified questions of mediated realities. These subsequent recordings raise questions of authenticity versus derivatives. They are translations and relocalization rather than copies and/or derivatives of the first recording. They do not repeat the same things and are themselves creative acts of difference (Bearn quoted in Pennycook, 2010, p. 36). And if they do stand in their own right as valid encounters of their particular time and space, or as Walter Benjamin puts it, 'of their here and now', the subsequent recordings must necessarily stand as original, (Benjamin, 1936, p. 5).

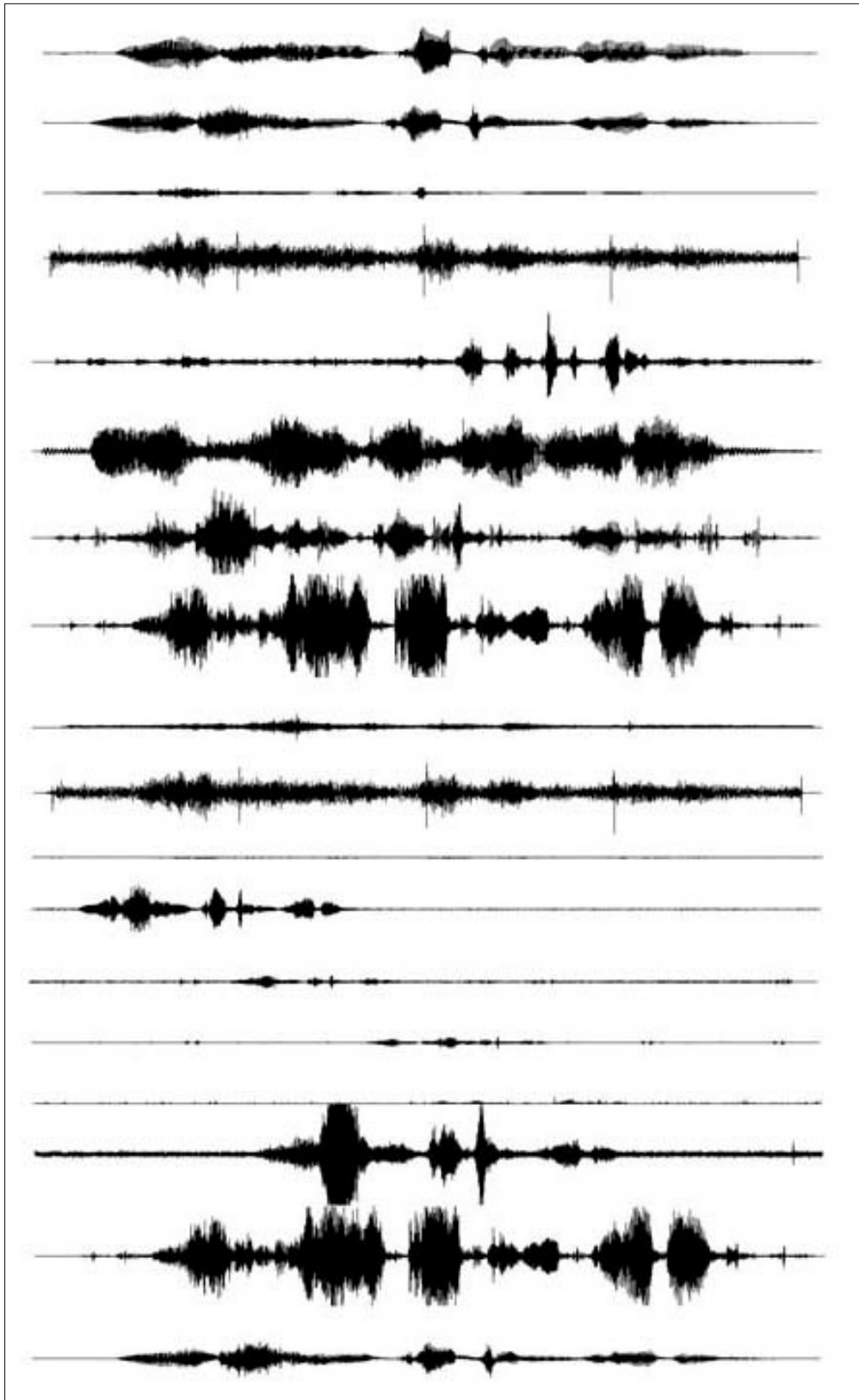


Figure 3.24 Gerard Choy, *whisper*, excerpt, 2009.

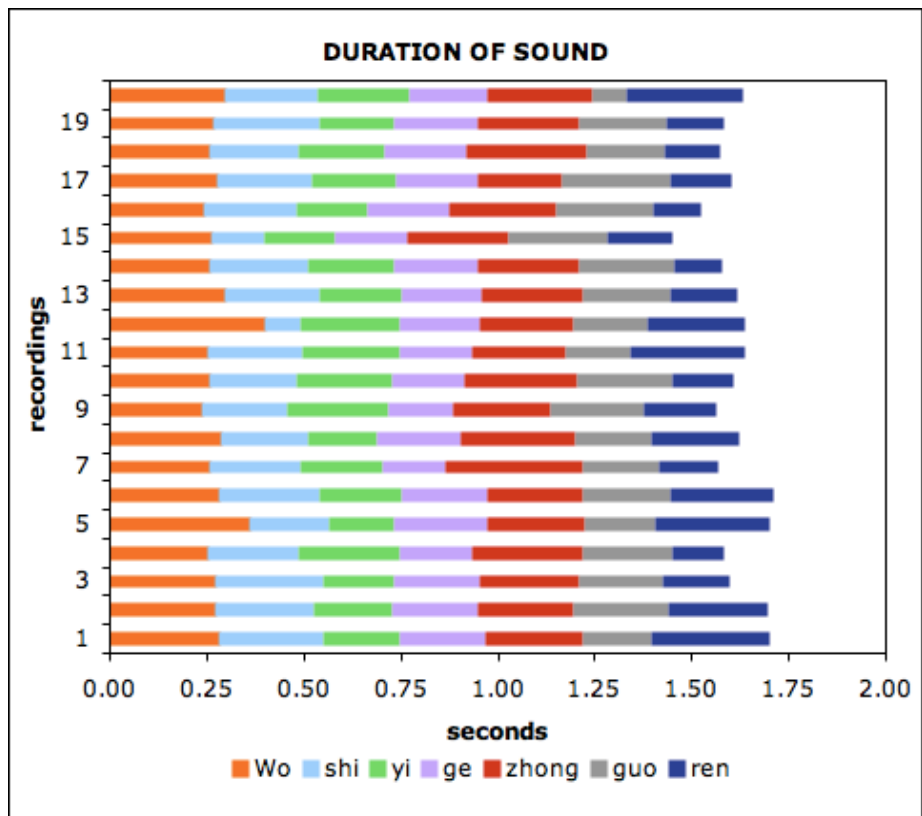


Figure 3.25 Duration of Sound.

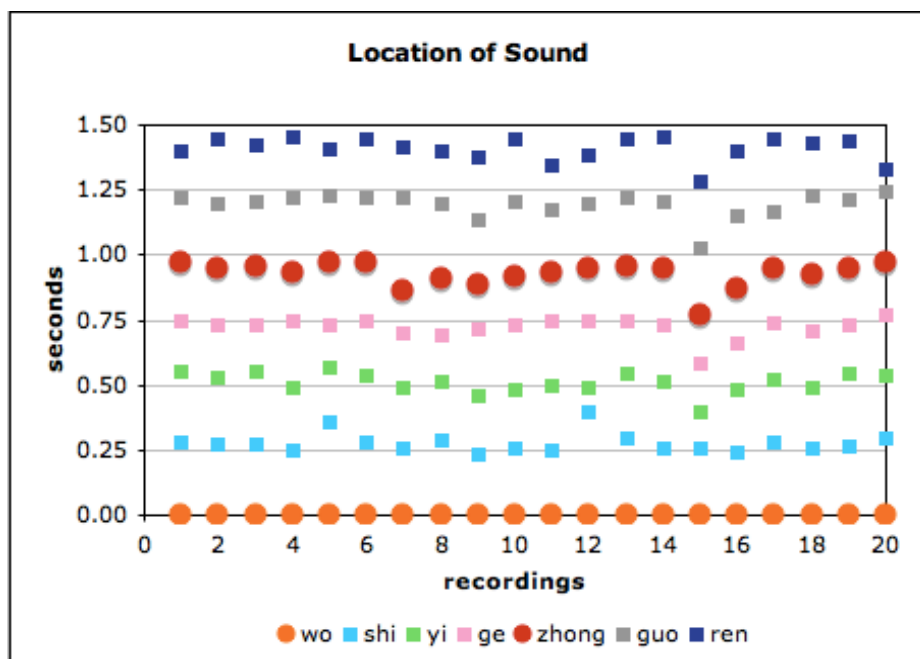


Figure 3.26 Location of Sound.

Meddling English, 2015

Meddling English (after Bergvall, C., 2010) (2015) takes its cue from Caroline Bergvall's 2010 *Middling English* exhibition at the John Hansard Gallery⁷ which featured, along the gallery, 'lengths of wire weighted by bright orange dumbbells, ... [which are] both navigating and obstacle, orientating and disorientating' (Pester, 2012 para 3). *Middling English* is a multi-sensory project employing 'spoken pieces, audiophonic compositions, printed broadsides' which could be taken by visitors to the exhibition. Of particular interest is the inclusion of the audio recordings of texts from Caroline Bergvall's *Shorter Chaucer Tales* in which 'the act of pronunciation always anchors us in the present, underscoring the present as the only attainable aspect of time' (Swensen, 2011, para 2) and her use of invented language (Bergvall, 2010, frame 05:26) to explore language as an unstable shaper of identity and primacy accorded to the English language. Listening to her interview with Stephen Foster, director of the John Hansard Gallery, I wondered if, as in *Violin in Alum 6* (2009) and *whisper* (2010), there would be any change in the transcription if the interview was reproduced by digital technology.

I researched Google's website to find out how to access a transcript of the interview. The resulting YouTube transcription, compared to my own understanding of what I heard during the interview itself, evinced a slippage that my earlier works had investigated. Moreover, the trajectory from *Middling English*, that is from Chaucer to Caroline Bergvall's invented language, to the audio recording of her interview with Stephen Foster and finally to YouTube's transcription of that interview served to highlight several intercessions. It maps the trajectory of a historic language interpreted in contemporary language sounds to a series of digital numbers.

Meddling English charts Chaucerian texts (Middle English), Caroline Bergvall's *Middling English* which is a 'reinvention of a language' (Swensen, 2011 para 2) to my own understanding of English and to the YouTube transcription of sounds that are stored in a series of binary numbers. It points to a probability that the sounding of a language is not singular, that there is a co-relation between sounds of language and

⁷ Caroline Bergvall's *Middling English*, 2010 is available at: <<https://vimeo.com/78241736>> and her interview with Stephen Foster is available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNhTBcjKHs>> (Accessed: 21 April 2015).

the time and space or as Caroline Bergvall's video succinctly states 'LANGUAGE ■ SPACE ■ SOUND' (Bergvall, 2010, 00:17).

James Clifford (1997) notes that the travel of cultural influence, ideas and thus of languages and sounds, has had a primary role in everyday life. Although he made specific reference to the development of European ideas, Clifford's suggestion that the passing of influence has always been a reciprocal relationship which is valid and applicable to all situations where collision occurs and negotiations and relocalization ensue. With regards to language and sound encounters, multi-lingualism and polyglotism appear to be the natural consequences. And thus, it would, circling back to the question of a Chinese voice, suggest that a single Chinese language — that is speaking only Mandarin, the essential hallmark of being Chinese — can only be tenable through vigilant gatekeeping.

pronounce 1 and 2 (2009-2010), *whisper* (2009) and *Meddling English* (2015) clearly foreground the problem I had begun to wrestle with – that although there are as many voices speaking many Chinese languages as there are Chinese people and people of Chinese descent, unabashed monolingualism lingers. It must be reasonable to consider that there are many types of Chinese sounds because the articulation of our thoughts is influenced by more than the rules of the language we are directed to abide by. But far more importantly, local sounds play a role in our articulations and in doing so present audibly the many different communities of fifty-five million Chinese and people of Chinese descent living in eighty-three countries beyond China's political, social and cultural boundaries. Even within China, despite appearing counterintuitive to the persistent narrative of national language policies, new words, sounds and cultures have emerged and are emerging all the time within contact zones (Pratt, 1991). An example of such a contact zone is the UNESCO Heritage site in Kaiping, Guangdong China and the migration corridor that nineteenth century transnationals' circulatory flows built.

Gleaning the Grain/Audio Postcards, 2014

Gleaning the Grain had its seeds in 2009, growing out of Roland Barthes' observations of significance, of what is articulated, 'the body as it sings' (Barthes,

1977, p. 188). It was conceived as a sound presentation using multiple speakers placed at strategic points to simulate the routes taken by the early migrants as well as the everyday sounds of present-day Guangdong and Kaiping's residents.

While recording voices and conversations in Shanghai as part of my initial research in *Sounding Chinese: Tracing the Voice of Early 20th to 21st Century Transnational Chinese*, I heard of a Canadian village⁸ in Kaiping, Guangdong, China built by late nineteenth century transnationals. This began the tracing of the movements of people that carried the sounds of their everyday lives across the South China Sea and Pacific Ocean. I listened to archival recordings of nineteenth century migrant Tang She Choon who settled in Singapore, Charles Quan in Canada, the caretaker of the Canadian village Guan Chee Way, Helen Liang of the Kaiping Diaolou Research Department, Carmen Qui at Pan Tower Hotel and Jerry Jerowski in Chicago whose ancestors built Liyuan Gardens in Kaiping. I also listened to Tan, the conservator at Wuyi University, who shared that her great-great-grandfather, who lived in Montreal Canada while working on the Canadian Pacific Railway, taught his family new words for common household items which added to Kaiping's Overseas Chinese family's vernacular glossary.

Heeding Mieke Bal's caution, that the use of the term 'voice' portends the 'de-individualized', requiring us to '[...] give it body' (Bal, 2004, p. 39), I had begun a search for information about the lives of early twentieth century migrants and where they lived before they migrated—where my own ancestors might have come from. While I could not discover much about my paternal family's history, initial visits to Guangdong, China, revealed the historical importance of the county of Kaiping, as one of the major sources of early twentieth century migrant labour to Hong Kong, Singapore and Canada (Tan, 2010 S8, Appendix p. 378). It must be said that not all migrants endured hardship and that merchants and traders have long plied ancient trade routes and transnational networks (Frost, 2005, p. 30). But in the case of many twentieth century labour migrants, archival recordings and my own interviews with their descendants tell of arduous journeys on foot from Kaiping to the harbour in Jiangmen and from there a ferry to Hong Kong. Many would have to transit in Hong

⁸ <http://www.canadavillage.org/engHome.html>

Kong before embarking on their ocean voyage to Southeast Asia, Canada and to various other parts of the world (Tang, 1986; Tan, 2010, S1, Appendix p. 144). Of great interest, however, is the realization that, while many migrants settled in their host countries, about a quarter were sojourners who led transnational existence (Tang, 1986; Reid, 2001; Ang, 2001). In the case of Kaiping they also built entire villages that stood as remarkable, if somewhat eclectic, testimonies of their lives and material evidence of their success.

I discussed the production of *Gleaning the Grain* with several sound technicians, audio equipment suppliers and galleries in Halifax, Nova Scotia. However, the project was shelved when it became clear that *Gleaning the Grain*, as I had conceptualized it, was not feasible financially in Singapore where I had resettled.

Another impetus for shelving *Gleaning the Grain* was my realisation of a possibility to go beyond what was recorded. Kaiping had been acknowledged as a UNESCO World Heritage site, architecturally significant for its watch towers, its diaolous (碉楼), the subject of many photographs and films in which they remain silent artefacts of the past. Less focus was afforded to the Kaiping residents themselves, to Guan Chee Way, Helen Liang, Carmen Qui and Jerry Jerrowski, to name a few. The proposal of *Audio Postcards* is an attempt to mitigate this lack of attention.

Audio Postcards is a compilation of National Archives of Singapore recordings of early twentieth century migrants from the south coast of China and of those I had made in Guangdong and Kaiping which I intended to upload to a SoundCloud account. Each recording will have its own site and the site information printed on two-page postcards displayed on a rack. Included in the site information is also the contact details of the participants of the recordings given in their consent forms. *Audio Postcards* proposes that members of the public select a postcard to access a link and listen to the voice track after which they are invited to dialogue with the person whose voice they had just listened to or write their thoughts or comments and to pin them to a cork board or to do both.

New Language from Material Wealth

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Kaiping transnationals designed and built defence towers to protect the families when able-bodied locals were away and extravagant mansions that showed off their success and wealth. Their exteriors and interiors speak of access to an extensive material inventory – from the steel, cement from England and timber from Southeast Asia and Canada to the latest finishing and furnishings. These lavish buildings held a vast array of objects not limited to ceramic floor tiles, rooms full of contemporary furniture, safes, exercise equipment, toys, photographs, and clocks. Kerosene lamps light up these rooms and objects, and modern amenities such as flush toilet systems that made life all the more comfortable and convenient were part of their everyday lives as were traditional beds with ceramic pillows and elaborate altars to household gods.

Patricia Batto, author of *The Diaolou of Kaiping (1842-1937): Buildings for Dangerous Times* estimated that five to twenty percent of early twentieth century migrants returned wealthy (Batto, 2006, p. 7) and that amongst the families of the



Figure 3.27

Chairs. Zilicun Diaolou, Kaiping. Image credit: Fizah Hassan.

returnees it was considered proper to display a degree of Westernisation (Figure 3.27). Western-style clothes, not locally woven ones, and leather rather than cloth shoes were worn, meals were served with knives and forks, not chopsticks, hanging

lamps light the evening darkness and clocks tell time (Figures 3.28 - 3.30). On the streets, advertisements, posters and calendars promoted western goods. As early as 1910, Eveready Batteries (Figure 3.31), Palmolive soap and Hatamen cigarettes were household names as were various electrical appliances (Figure 3.32) (Laing, 2004, p. 34, p. 110 and p. 171).

Professor Zhang Guoxiong of Wuyi University notes, ‘the changes on diaolou and folk dwellings symbolize the inevitable modernization of Chinese society’ and that contrary to the thinking of the day, quite ordinary people, that is the segment of the people not usually included in history, were the forerunners of that modernity. He continues, ‘They could accept, sort out and improved the useful things and become very creative. [...] This shows that the local people have been the backbones for social changes in the course of modernization’ (Zhang, 2002, pp. 42-43).



Figures 3.28 & 3.29 Hanging lamp and clock in study. Zilicun Diaolou. Kaiping. Image credit: Fizah Hassan.

Besides extended inventories of materials and the vast variety of consumer objects, transnational migrants also brought with them words and changes in the language.

Patricia Batto observed that '[c]ertain Anglicisms entered the local dialect: gei (ji in Mandarin) was cake, suoli was 'sorry', feixi (feishi in Mandarin) was face, etc.' (Batto, 2006, p. 7).



Figures 3.30 Personal items. Chikan. Image credit: Fizah Hassan.



Figures 3.31 & 3.32 Posters advertising Eveready Battery and Electrical appliances. Image credit: Visual Source Book of Chinese Civilization.

In our conversations about her great-great grandfather, Tan who also identifies as a member of an Overseas Chinese family (Woon, 1989, p. 325), shared how he, her great-great grandfather, adapted English words like 'stamp' into Cantonese which he pronounced as [sə:'tampei]. She also noted the difference between the Northern and

Southern Chinese vernacular for ‘ball’ – *qiu*² (球) in Mandarin, *bo*¹ (波) a Cantonese loan word pronounced [bɔː] sounding very close to the English [bɔːl] except for the familiar absence of final. In my proposal for *Audio Postcards*, Tang (who migrated to Singapore when he was sixteen years) and Guan (the caretaker of Kaiping’s Canadian village) has the same way of dating birth dates - year, month, day. It is interesting to note that Tang uses the phrase *parnai*, [paː ‘nɿ] a transliteration of the Malay *pandai*, [pɒnˈ dɿ] for ‘clever’, rather than *cung¹ ming⁴* (*cong¹ ming* 聰明).

As noted in an earlier chapter, historian Frank DiKötter observed that material objects introduced by returnees also brought new words into the language. Interestingly, DiKötter goes on to say that ‘many ordinary people were far more concerned with the actual uses of particular goods than with their presumed origins.’ (DiKötter, 2007, p. 6). About the use of these objects and the people who used them, DiKötter’s observation is similar to that which writer Kenneth Lo made in his autobiography. Lo grew up in China and the United Kingdom. About his early childhood living in China, Lo writes that ‘... the old blended naturally with the new and we were not aware of any cultural conflicts’ (Lo, 1993, pp. 54). Guan would have agreed. He was especially happy to point out a bottle of Snow Hill atop a Western-style dresser (Figure 3.33). Perhaps this is how British consumer products such as Borroughs and Welcome’s Hazeline Snow became Wing Yim’s Snow Hill. However what sounds did these transnational migrants carry with them? How did they articulate their conditions or requirements in a world that did not speak their language and vice versa? What were the negotiations required of these interlocutors?

There is evidence of English words that were used in the service of trade and migrant labour as these were recorded in phrase books and dictionaries. But what of the sounds that came with these words? How were they pronounced or sounded? And when they were pronounced or sounded, what did they tell of the speaker and listener? What did unfold at this juncture of the journey when ‘sound maps the world not as borders and nations but as dynamic trajectories of individuals, moving, being moved and remaining in place’? (Voegelin, 2010, p. 144). For example, if there are objects that translate from the British export Hazeline Snow to local Canton version Snow Hill, who used them and more pertinent to my research, how did they speak of



Figure 3.33 Snow Hill. Zilicun Diaolou. Kaiping. Image credit: Fizah Hassan..

Snow Hill or Hazeline Snow? Correspondingly, if there are transnational people, it stands to reason that there are also transnational voices that – by the particular quality of the sound, inflection and phrasing – suggest an elsewhere. Do these voices evince traces of an absent sound? Do they represent unspoken presence of other languages and that in the articulation of the word, the sound of these other unspoken but sounded languages and places, are articulated and brought into being. These questions accompanied my research trips to Kaiping and Jiangmen and only aggregated sufficiently to formulate the beginnings of a question when I chanced upon an 1893 phrase book and dictionary.

The Chinese-English Phrase Book and Dictionary, 1893

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds is based on two serendipitous discoveries. The first was finding quite by chance a phrase book while doing further research at Wuyi Overseas Chinese Museum at Jiangmen, Guangdong, China (Figure 3.34) which collected a wealth of objects that Kaiping migrants brought with them on their many return journeys. Amongst the many was the 1893 *Chinese-English Phrase Book and Dictionary* (Figure 3.35).

According to the didactic text, this 1893 edition of the *Chinese-English Phrase Book and Dictionary* was compiled by Zheng Zhiruo a Chinese American from Enping,

South China and published in San Francisco. It was the first of the phrase books that I encountered in my research on Chinese voices, and just one of many such dictionaries and phrasebooks used by early twentieth century migrants. Jennie Horn, contributing to the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF) website, recorded her grandfather's 1922 voyage from Guangzhou, Hong Kong and then San Francisco, California, USA. She noted that he had packed a 1915 edition of *English and Chinese Phrases and Mercantile Dictionary*, by Cheuk Ki-Shan, Canton, China, published by the Wo Shing Publishing Office in Hong Kong.

The next year while tracing the migrant journey from their famine-stricken villages to Jiangmen Harbour from which they would embark on a perilous ferry ride to Hong Kong before boarding a steamship, a page from the Museum's phrasebook was read to me. Not being able to read Chinese characters I had not realised that early Chinese migrants learned to articulate English sounds by associating them with the closest Cantonese words or phrases they speak. However, my elementary knowledge of Cantonese allowed me to recognise enough sounds to be able to discern the conceptual incongruence that resulted from this awkward matchmaking of sounds. The Cantonese sounds here are, at best, phonic approximations of spoken English and more often than not have quite a different meaning.

What would these interlocutors have felt when they tried to communicate in English by articulating the homophonic Cantonese sounds and phrases, which at best might be amusing and almost always make no literal sense? How does anyone understand themselves without the sounds that identified one's being and in the absence of all the sounds that once echoed one's self and the extended social and cultural



Figure 3.34 Jiangmen Wuyi Museum of Overseas Chinese. Pengjiang, Jiangmen
Image credit: Fizah Hassan.

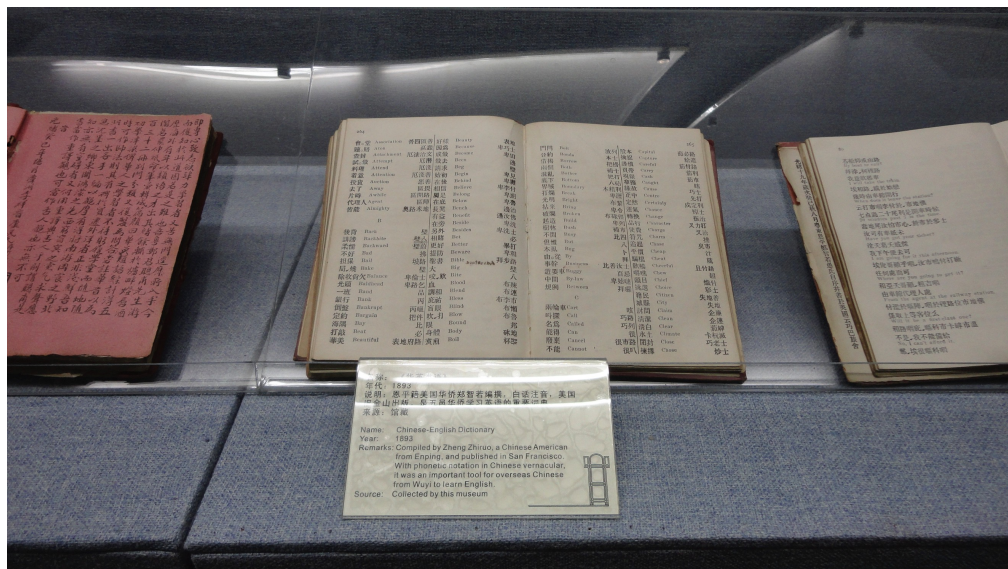


Figure 3.35 Dictionaries. Jiangmen Wuyi Museum of Overseas Chinese. Pengjiang, Jiangmen. Image credit: Fizah Hassan.

community since sound is ‘a phenomenon of experience – that is, of our immersion in, and commingling with, the world in which we find ourselves’ (Carlyle quoted in Lane, 2011: p. 121-122).

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol.1 takes its cue from these historical phrasebooks to consider the experiences of early twentieth century migrants and to reflect on the consequences that often accompany the interlocutor’s language and sound negotiations in their attempts to communicate. This volume and the others

following it examine the validity of language as a frame of identity. How does voice tell of identity? Does voice inform identity through language? The five volumes of the *Phrase Books of Migrant Sounds* are concerned with voice – sounds that we make, accents which suggest identity, accents which are sometimes anticipated and expected and perception of these sounds.

Strategies of the Phrase Books

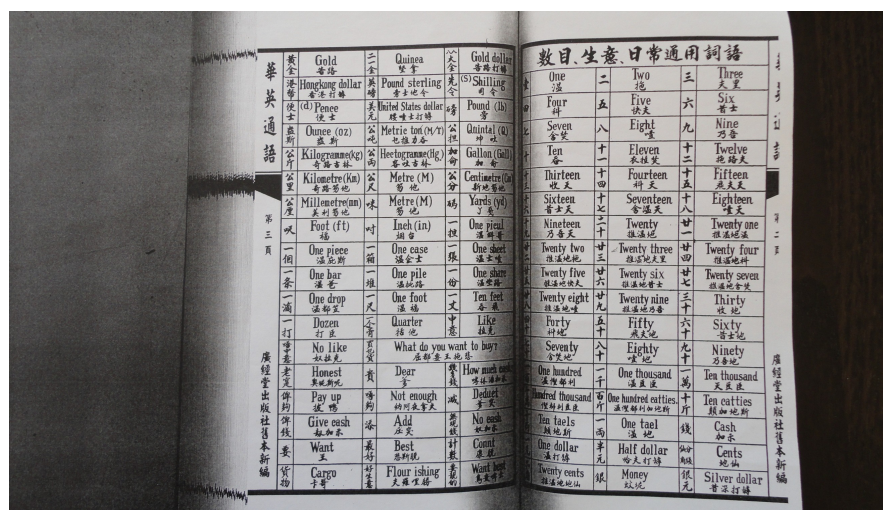
For early twentieth century migrants from Guangdong province, grappling with a foreign tongue would have been one of the most fundamental reminders of their dislocation. Historically, these Chinese-English phrasebooks were used in helping them learn English. What is unique about these texts is not only that the English is translated into Chinese characters but that the English is transcribed phonetically into Cantonese to assist migrants pronounce English words using more familiar Cantonese sounds. For example, the English word ‘son’ is paired with its corresponding Chinese character *zi* (子) as well as its Cantonese phonetic *saan1* (*shan1* 山) meaning ‘mountain’. Thus, depending on the linguistic ability of the speaker, a range of Cantonese and English sounds would be articulated.

These strategies of acquiring sounds are not particular or limited to early twentieth century. In a conversation prior to my interview with him, Hong Kong resident Respondent A shares the experience of his grandmother learning to speak English when the family moved to Vancouver, Canada, in 1993 ahead of the Handover. Respondent A’s grandmother possessed printed Cantonese to English phrase books as well as a homemade version in which she had painstakingly written out words she needed to learn as she went about her new way of being – words such as ‘supermarket’ (Figures 3.36-3.38).

Kaiping participant Helen Liang presented me with contemporary phrase books she had bought the day before which use the same strategies as the early nineteenth and twentieth century publications (Figure 3.39).



Figures 3.36 Respondent A's grandmother's dictionary, page 1.
Image credit: Respondent A.



Figures 3.37 Respondent A's grandmother's dictionary, page 3.
Image credit: Respondent A.

Victor Mair himself had written in his blog that

My father-in-law, a Shandongese from near Qingdao, learned how to say “Good morning” by writing it neatly in his notebook as Gǒutóu māo níng 狗頭貓寧, which he explained to me as meaning “dog’s head cat’s meow” (though the níng 寧 doesn’t really mean “meow”) (Mair, 2010).

The strategy that these early twentieth century phrase books and their contemporary versions use depends on a good working knowledge of source language in these

please	多謝	清 祈
please	唔 諗	P 利
market	市 場	文 展
in the supermarket	超級市場	永平 媽 厨
shopping	行 公司	雲 平
see you next week	下星期見你	一 週
see you next month	下個月見你	一 個月
see you next month	下個月見你	一 個月
see you next year	下年見你	一 年

Figure 3.38 Respondent A's grandmother's dictionary with the translation of the word 'supermarket'. Image credit: Respondent A.



Figure 3.39 Practical Spoken English Sucheng Shi Kouyu, 速 成實口語, 2010. Published by China People Press (Zhongguo ren kou chubanshe 中國人口出版社).

examples, Cantonese. Cantonese is also the language spoken in Guangdong and Hong Kong as well as in many other parts of the world where early twentieth century migrants settled and where their descendants live (Setter, Wong and Chan, 2010, p. 4). Until quite recently, Cantonese was the language spoken and taught in many of the world's Chinatowns.

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 1, 2010

Inspired by this new insight, I made my own phrase book. My interviewees who spoke about their living in more than one place had shared that, to prepare for their migration, they watched contemporary films made in and about their destination country. *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 1* (henceforth *Vol. 1*) consists of videos of well-known film clips. Their iconic phrases were transliterated into Cantonese. *Vol. 1* attempts to approximate early twentieth century migrants' experiences and their negotiations with the sounds of the language of their destination countries, English, through a selection of iconic lines from Hollywood films and their transcriptions into Cantonese sounds.

I used classic lines from popular films such as *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987). Below and next to a muted video loop of these key scenes is projected the Cantonese phonetic transcription of the classic line in both Chinese characters and the corresponding romanization (Figure 3.40). A largely English-speaking audience will have to work out these classic lines from the visual clues of the video clip, and if possible, from the homophonic sounds of the romanization of the Cantonese characters and in this way, experience how new migrants would have wrestled with speaking English.



Figure 3.40 Gerard Choy, Greetings, *Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 1*, 2010.

Fertile Mimesis

Vol. 1 begins with brief instructions on using the phrase book to learn to speak English before proceeding to a series of clips that teach useful phrases used in greeting and in situations, for example, restaurants or when taking leave of someone. In the first clip from *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987), Adrian Cronauer, played by Robin Williams, silently mouths his famous sign-on⁹ as romanization of the closest homophonic Cantonese cues up – the English extended ‘good’ and accentuated ‘Vietnam’ is matched with the Cantonese *gwat¹ mo⁴ ling⁴ bei⁶ bit¹ naam⁵ (gu³ mo² ling² bi² re⁴ nan³ 骨 摩 零 鼻 熱 腩)*, literally meaning ‘bones rub zero nose fever brisket’. The <v> consonant does not occur in Cantonese and many whose primary language is Cantonese, often substitute <v> with a and thus ‘Vietnam’ becomes ‘Bietnam’.

It clearly requires more than a great leap of imagination to make sense of the Cantonese transliteration of Adrian Cronauer’s famous sign-on and an equal, if not greater, effort is demanded of the listener to simply match the Cantonese articulation to the English phrase, let alone the exaggerated and dramatic ‘good’ which lasts for about two seconds.¹⁰ This may well be analogous to the experience of early twentieth century and contemporary migrants who grapple with a range of new and strange sounds. Furthermore, it is important to note that the same word—even without transliteration as in a case where migrants are fluent speakers of the destination country language—is most likely to be pronounced quite differently because of local accents. It was certainly the experience of non-Singaporean Chinese where their strong Beijing and Taiwan Mandarin accent marked them. This is also true in the case of other languages, for example, in the Malay language. Linguist anthropologist Andrew Carruthers, presenting the findings of his research on migrant Indonesian Sulawesi Bugis living in Sabah, East Malaysia, relates an exchange

⁹ Cronauer, A. (2008) Adrian Cronauer Good Morning Vietnam, on 94.5 KOOL FM. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXAFgF-9KQ8>>

¹⁰ It may be of interest to note that Cronauer demonstrated his sign-in on 94.5 KOOL FM and the ‘good’ lasted from 5.04 – 5.39 and ‘morning Vietnam’ took all of the last two seconds.

between himself and local Sabahans. Speaking in Sabahan-accented Malay, he asked,

Carruthers: So how can you tell the difference between illegals [meaning Sulawesi Bugis] and locals, seeing as they look alike, dress alike and all speak the same language, Malay?

Sabahan: ... you can tell by their accents and behaviour whether they are locals or not” (Carruthers, 2016).

How We Acquire Our Accents

Linguists Donna Jo Napoli and Vera Lee-Schoenfeld assert that our first language is ‘acquired’ rather than ‘learned’. While acknowledging that the way in which we first learn to speak differs from person to person, they argue that we are not ‘taught’ to speak our first language but rather we learn to speak it from hearing and listening to the sounds of our environments. Their convictions are amply supported by historical language acquisition studies and the 2001 foundational discovery of FOXP2—the gene directly affecting language ability. Accordingly, in a speaking environment, we have the ability to acquire language as soon as our auditory systems are developed – even before we are born. (Napoli and Lee-Schoenfeld, 2010, pp. 3-9 and pp. 32-49).

Linguist and writer Rosina Lippi-Green is equally emphatic that nobody speaks without an accent. She suggests that the articulation of our thoughts is influenced by local sounds rather than the rules of a language. These local sounds are thus audible signs of the community we live in (Lippi-Green, 2011, p. 45). Furthermore, our accent is also the sound by which we understand ourselves and our world, our social structure and its order. As well our accents are the bases on which we learn other language sounds.

The natural human ability to acquire language—our mother tongue and its sounds—can in the right circumstance be in service to essentialism and identity politics. Cultural theorist Jing Tsu notes, ‘Native speaker’ is to language what color [sic] has been to race’ (Tsu, 2011, p. 197). As Andrew Carruthers points out through his research, the singularity of a sound—of any particular vocal sound—has been used, in some instances with alarming success to identify and separate communities.

Living in London, German-born, French and Norwegian national artist Caroline Bergvall's and her collaborator's *Say Parsley* (2010) highlights the tyrannical power of sound and language. The present-day Dominican Republic then consisted of French (Haiti) and Spanish (Dominican Republic) colonies existing cheek by jowl on the island of Hispaniola. Overpopulation and the lack of arable lands forced Haitian workers onto the Dominican Republic until 1937 when a word was used as a shibboleth in what is now called the 1937 Parsley Massacre, a movement to control Haitians migration.

More than 50,000 Haitians who could not 'correctly' pronounce the sprig of parsley presented before them the Spanish way—'perejil'—were executed (Jadotte, 2009, p. 1). In the tolling and the echoing of words, *Say Parsley* unfolds the grim potential of language in service of ideology. Caroline Bergvall's *Say Parsley* and Andrew Carruthers' fieldwork amongst Sulawesi Bugis clearly show that given specific and favourable social, cultural and political conditions, sound and language can be a trigger for disempowerment and disenfranchisement. It could also be a catalyst for the creation of new ways of being as it is for one of my interviewees, Respondent M.¹¹

Respondent M was born in Shanghai where she lived with her grandparents while her parents were away on scholarship studies in Edinburgh University. It was an idyllic childhood living with an extended family. Respondent M grew up tying knots with her grandfather who made sure she knew the symbolism of the knots. In April 1949 Respondent M and her grandparents fled the city on the last plane out of Shanghai before the city fell to Communist forces a month later on 12 May. She was four years and three months old then and has never returned to China since.

Respondent M and her grandparents stayed in a refugee camp before going into Hong Kong where they lived in a little flat, and Respondent M started school, until the summer of 1951 when they all left to join her parents in Britain where they stayed until 1956. She would spend the next four years shuttling between Singapore

¹¹ Transcripts for Respondent M is available in the Appendix pp. 369-376.

and Malaysia before finally settling down in the United Kingdom where, except for holiday trips, she has lived since.

Respondent M, a retired Advanced Maths teacher, speaks Sichuanese and Xiang language spoken in Hunan, her familial languages, Mandarin as well as Shanghaiese, Hong Kong Cantonese and English. Of her accent when speaking Chinese and English, Respondent M writes,

... I found it hard to communicate in either language in Singapore last year when I was shopping for something trivial - a pair of scissors, or a bottle of shampoo, I think - because (I was told) my 'accent was too pure'! (ResM R27, p. 376).

When asked to elaborate on 'pure accent' she explains,

'Pure' accent. I'm not sure how to explain this, but if I speak English over the phone, it usually comes as a shock to a strange individual at the other end of the line to find that I am Chinese (ResM R27a, p. 376).

In a reversal of the situations in Caroline Bergvall's *Say Parsley* and Andrew Carruthers' research on Sulawesi Bugis, Respondent M's accent proved to be an advantage. As she stated, 'I think my voice carries conviction! ... usually I only have to open my mouth (ResM R14a, p. 374). Respondent M is quite clear, she is a British National and does not feel 'any need to identify myself with any cultural label. I am myself' (ResM R20, p. 375).

'Why did I hear race so palpably in the voice?' (Olwage, 2004)

Cultural theorist Mieke Bal points to the development of movies, of talking pictures that put culture and identity in voice.

The late Twenties and the Thirties would, I speculate, be the moment that the word "voice" became replenished with sense and relevance in a culture that saw itself as modern. [...]. Specifically, it was [...]the transition from silent to sound film (Bal, 2004, p. 36).

However, music historian Grant Olwage writes that mid-nineteenth century ethnomusicologist Richard Wallaschek, in his 1893 book *Primitive Music: An Inquiry Into the Origin and Development of Music, Songs, Instruments, Dances and Pantomimes of Savage Races*, locates ‘the primitive’ in music, not in the rudiments of music—in its rhythm, melody and harmony—but in the voice itself (Olwage, 2004: p. 206). I suggest that it began earlier via mid-Victorian and Edwardian middle-class conceits and fanned by the popularity of theatre music. According to historian Dorothy Marshall, accent was not a significant issue in the 1750s (quoted in Mugglestone, 2007, p. 4) yet by the end of the nineteenth century books, journals and ‘sixpenny’ manuals on accent and elocution, stressing the importance of ‘phonetic propriety’, were sold in their thousands. English language historian Lynda Mugglestone writes in a chapter entitled *A National Obsession* that ‘A proper accent gives importance to what you say, engages the respectful attention of your hearer, and is your passport to new circles of acquaintance’ (Mugglestone, 2007, p. 1). Upwardly mobile Victorian and Edwardian readers with a voracious appetite for personal advancement—for information that would allow them to re-invent themselves and to ‘eradicate the traces of their origin that linger in their grammar and pronunciation’—were exhorted to acquire ‘proper’ elocution through fashion, languages and music. Musicologist Grant Olwage writes that Victorian and Edwardian singing lessons changed the voice to conform to a particular way of speaking and to a range of sounds that became synonymous with ‘civilization’ – the middle-class notion of ‘the civilised voice’,

[...] the 1830s and 1840s is the moment to which historians of vocal pedagogy date the appearance of the “modern” singing voice, [...] John Potter has linked the rise of “art” or “classical” singing to that of the middle classes (1998, chs 4,5), [...] the embourgeoisement of the singing voice brought the idea of othered voices into play¹² (Olwage, 2004, pp. 206-207).

The ephemeral quality of popular music lends itself easily to the creation of tastes and opinions. Anne Witchard who researches the representation of China and

¹² Olwage annotates that ‘While Potter (1998) points out that middle-class appropriation of the classical singing voice and its institutionalization as hegemonic sound, or “vocal authority”, has set it apart from other types of singing, he does not explore how it became a normative ground against which specific other voices were invented’ (Olwage, 2004: p219).

Chinese in fiction writes that the translation of what was considered Chinese speech forms into English was fodder for pantomime writers. ‘Pidgin English [... coupled] with the Chinese inability to pronounce certain consonants, [...] would become a conventional source of humour to the English ears’ (Witchard, 2009, p. 54). Such compositions could perhaps be described as a music version of chinoiserie as the music compositions in response to these experiences was inextricably tied to Orientalism.

Historian Krystyn Moon observed that despite eighteenth and nineteenth century Western excoriation of Chinese and their music conventions, composers and librettists seized on the vogue du jour to create spectacles based on their fantasy, ‘loosely borrow[ing] from what limited information there was on Chinese clothing, objects, and architecture’ (Moon, 2005, p. 11). I am inclined towards Lynda Mugglestone and Grant Olwage – mid-Victorian and Edwardian middle class and the aestheticization of music birthed identity in voice and its consequential otherness. It drew the line that separates what are acceptable social and cultural norms, that is the normative, and invested what is not onto the Other. Grant Olwage adds, ‘Indeed, so tied to the body is the voice that even when disembodied we easily identify it as belonging to a particular subject, whether individual or social’ (Olwage, 2004, p. 206).

English as It is Broken

The burden of the racialization of sound should not fall only on the shoulders of mid-Victorian and Edwardian middle class. In Singapore, unlike the favoured British or American accents as BBC’s Alina Dizik has reported (Dizik, 2015), the Mandarin Chinese accent is not considered an asset. Singaporeans of Chinese descent are said to have ‘only a ‘superficial association with ethnic culture’ brought about by an ‘abiding legacy of Anglophone education’ (Wee, 2009, pp. 17-18). The Mandarin Chinese accent varies depending on the level of education. One of my interview participants Respondent G speaks with a very strong Hong Kong accent interspersed with the local patois, ending most of his statements in the Singlish discourse particle ‘lah’.

Many older first and second-generation Singaporeans' and Hongkongers' speech is close to what is described in a section of Vol. 1 entitled 'Service' where the grammar of one is transposed onto the language of another. Vernacular Cantonese and most



Figure 3.41 Gerard Choy, *Services*, Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 1, 2010.

vernacular Mandarin always begins with a consonant and completes with a final sound.

The section *Service* begins with a phrase for ordering food, “I’ll have what she’s having”, and its Cantonese transliteration “Au hafu wat shusi hafeing”, the English ‘have’ is matched with the Cantonese *hafu*, *fu* is added as a final sound (Figure 3.41).

In this chapter I have explored how migration affects the voice, in the way we speak, and established how the re-localization of a glossary of sounds sedimented into an identity. Nineteenth century Kaiping transnationals not only brought material wealth to their province but also changed the linguistic landscape of the community of their Overseas Chinese families. I have also examined how we acquire our accented sound—in vitro and through the community we live in—which in turn becomes the base on which we learn other sounds and languages. However, it does not explain how those sounds came to be a part of the community, or how they came to be recognised as the sounds of that community. The following chapter and my project *The Phrasebook of Migrant Sound Vol. 2* will explore these issues and consider language policies and their attending consequences.

Chapter 4

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 1 explored the experience of migrants hearing new sounds and traced the gradual relocation of these sounds into the vocabularies and their eventual sedimentation into identities of their speakers. It also indicated the presence of an established glossary and speech sounds that were already associated with the identity. *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 2* (henceforth *Vol. 2*) aims to unravel the threads that bind a language and a community. It also aims to address questions that surfaced as *Vol. 2* developed, for example, why is language, in this instance, Hong Kong Cantonese and Hong Kong English, linked to race. Project *Vol. 2* and the review of the history of Hong Kong Cantonese add to the above considerations. Moreover, the chapter considers probable accent changes of transnational interviewees and how this might impact their sense of identity.

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 2, 2010

As in *Vol. 1*, *Vol. 2* is organised as a phrase book using selected film frames set against appropriate texts. I began the search for appropriate images by looking at early twentieth century Chinese films and film actors such as Shanghai's Ruan Lingyu and United States's Anna May Wong. Ruan Lingyu's life was seen through Stanley Kwan's 1992 docudrama *Center Stage*. It is interesting that, in Kwan's film, the actors spoke Cantonese, Shanghainese and Mandarin as it showcased the porous and fluid conditions that existed between Mainland China and Hong Kong in the 1930s.

There was no biopic in the case of Wong but the Asian American had a long and successful career spanning a range of performing genres and an enduring presence in her own right (Figure 4.1). It was interesting to note that while Wong was exoticized by her Caucasian colleagues, she was disdained by Chinese Mainland students in the United States (US) because she was Cantonese (Corliss, 2005). I also considered a more contemporary film *Love in a Puff* which contrasted Kwan's documentary



Figure 4.1 Google celebrating Anna May Wong, 22 January 2020.
The doodle was created by Sophie Diao.¹

drama and the selection of Wong's filmography. While the former two offered insights into life and experiences of early twentieth century transnational Chinese, I felt that the films' dialogues would not encourage or solicit audience participation in the way Pang Ho-cheung's, more contemporary 2010 film *Love in a Puff*, would.



Figure 4.2 Screen shot from trailer of Pang Ho-cheung's *Love in a Puff*, 2010.

Set in Pang's home country, Hong Kong, *Love in a Puff* opens with a group of advertising agency employees and friends gathered around a trash can. They have been meeting regularly during their office breaks to smoke since the 2007 prohibition on all indoor smoking, earning them the name 'Hot Pot Pack'.

In one of these sessions Jimmy, who has just broken up with his girlfriend, meets Cherie, a cosmetic sales girl whose organisation has recently banned their employees from smoking or be seen smoking. A mutual infatuation ensued.

¹ Screen shot from Google 22 January 2020. Available at:
<<https://www.google.com/doodles/celebrating-anna-may-wong>> (Accessed 22 January 2020).

Both felt that they had an instant connection which eventually leads to Cherie's own break up with her live-in boyfriend. Shortly afterwards, in order to save costs, Cherie asks to be added to Jimmy's telco account. The implication of this request provoked them to re-access the nature and their commitment to the relationship.

In *Vol. 2*, I decided to use images and text from *Love in a Puff* (Figures 4.2² and 4.3) because the film's dialogue, replete with current Cantonese words and phrases, many of which were profanities, accurately portrayed the way Hongkongers speak (Lee, 2010; Ma, 2010). In fact, renowned cultural critic Perry Lam wrote in a review that *Love in a Puff* was unique in its portrayal of contemporary Hong Kong and in his opinion "[n]o other Hong Kong movies in recent memory give a more vivid sense of how Hong Kong people talk in real life" (Lam quoted in Gilman, 2014). From first frames declaring, in legalese, Hong Kong's new smoking law, the film as a microscopic slice of contemporary Hong Kong Cantonese speech, argues that language is practice-based. Symbiotic rather than predetermined and formulaic, the language, in this case Hong Kong Cantonese, reacts and is formed in response to the needs of its community, its time and context.

I enlisted the help of friends to contact transnational Hongkongers. Of all that were contacted, only two responded and eventually one dropped out of the project. Eva Chow agreed to participate in the project. I mailed a copy of the video *Love in the Puff* to her in Toronto with instructions to watch the film and note words and phrases, new terms of references which she might not be familiar with. I also asked Eva to note the time index of the film where these unfamiliar phrases are located. This was useful as the notation allowed me to accurately locate the words or phrases Eva highlighted and to see them in the context of the storyline. The texts that Eva provided were to be translated and used to create a phrase book which explained the terms.

² Screen shot from trailer. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3X2SoOdwxS>> (Accessed: 15 February 2017).

Many of the phrases Eva noted were very new to my friends in Hong Kong so they sought the advice of local Hongkongers who might know. They emailed me the romanised Cantonese translation which I transliterated into English sounds. Finally, visuals from the film that featured the dialogue Eva highlighted were ‘re-sketched’ in Photoshop and rendered black and white to resemble book illustrations. I also wrote a small paragraph giving the parts of speech as well as the meanings of the term or phrase.

The phrase book was emailed to Eva and presented to her to use as her personal guide to new Cantonese terms and phrases. *Vol. 2* was screened at Halifax’s Canadian Museum of Immigration in October 2010 and in downtown Vancouver where it was beamed from a television screen in a rented apartment.

Vol. 2 exemplifies a linguistic phenomenon - the languages a person speaks are constantly present within the speaker (Kroll et al, 2014). For example, if one only speaks English, the text ‘guy pay’ in the first lesson could well be asking the gentleman to pay. However, to someone who also speaks Hong Kong Cantonese the phrase could also mean ‘chicken skin’.

In the course of developing *Vol. 2*, I learned about the language conflict between Hongkongers and the Beijing government over Hong Kong Cantonese, a language most Hongkongers identify with. Consequently, the surfacing of these issues exposes the entangled threads of complication that over the years had been woven into the larger tapestry of Chinese identity in Hong Kong. While an average Hongkonger might speak Putonghua, it is vernacular Cantonese and Cantonese-English codeswitching that symbolises the culture and identity of a Hongkonger - ‘neither British nor Chinese’ (Setter, Wong and Chan, 2010: pp. 5, 8).



Figure 4.3 Gerard Choy, *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 2*, 2010.

Cantonese in Hong Kong

The English language had become the lingua franca of the nineteenth and twentieth century and British Received Pronunciation (RP) and US Standard American English (SAE) were highly desired by all who wished to be well-thought of. English accompanied the rise of British expansionism and the domination of post-war United States. Mandarin came to the fore around the twenty-first century by way of India and China's rapid economic development. The Asian Century ushered in a subtle shift and nod to different accents of English—the Oxford Dictionary lists them as Dialects of English—and the rise of Mandarin. Mandarin speakers are growing exponentially, its popularity matched by a global proliferation of Chinese language institutions and accompanying paraphernalia of language acquisition. If language is the foundation on which we build our futures, it therefore obliges us to consider our choice of language as '[l]inguistic relations are always relations of power ...' (Wacquant quoted in Chan, 2002, p. 272). Why then do the usually pragmatic Hongkongers or students like Respondent A³ below cling fast to Cantonese?

³ Transcripts for Respondents A, B, C, D and E are available in the Appendix pp. 239-286.

‘I am a Hongkonger’

I met Respondent A at Exchange Square in Hong Kong. At the time of the interview, he had just completed his Masters degree at the University of Hong Kong.

Respondent A asked for some privacy and moved a little away to do his recording.

In 1992 eight-year-old Respondent A with his family left for Canada. On arrival they lived in Richmond, Vancouver, where about eighty to ninety percent of its residents are of Chinese descent, before eventually settling down in White Rock which was primarily Caucasian. At home in White Rock he spoke Cantonese with his parents and grandmother. Respondent A explains,

I spoke very little Chinese outside family because of a lack opportunity, because there were, none of my classmates were Hongkongers.

Secondly two of my classmates, born in Canada, Generation 1.5. They understand a little Cantonese but are not conversant (ResA R20-21, p. 241).

Respondent A had to attend Second language remedial classes as he knew very little English having only attended two years of schooling in Hong Kong. His command of the language improved so much that from his fourth year onwards, he only spoke English and by the time he left Canada to begin his tertiary education, he had significantly mastered the language to read for a Master of Philosophy in English. However, his Cantonese did not fare as well. Respondent A elaborates,

Actually I had difficulty communicating with others when I first returned after finishing my studies (ResA R8, p. 239).

... besides speaking with my family in Hong Kong, I did not speak Cantonese while in White Rock. I spoke mostly in English with my friends. Actually, I did not speak Cantonese after my parents returned to Hong Kong. Even with my elder brother, I had very few conversations. ... (ResA R22, p. 241).

Therefore, it was a complete surprise when I listened to the recording that Respondent A had decided to do his interview completely in Hong Kong Cantonese, a language which he feels challenged by. At the time of the interview I did not speak

any Chinese languages and it was only later did I learn that Respondent A had spoken Hong Kong Cantonese fluently in the recording.

While evincing his bilingualism, Respondent A's choice of language also pronounced his identity which he declared immediately after introducing himself - 'I am a Hongkonger' (ResA R3, p. 239).

Could Respondent A's declaration suggest a clear line drawn between Mainland Chinese and Hongkonger? Did he speak in Cantonese to avoid using the English word 'Chinese' which may not satisfactorily identify his ethnicity or nationality? Why is Cantonese synonymous to Hong Kong and being a Hongkonger? Why is Cantonese so predominant in Hong Kong and why do Hongkongers place such importance on Cantonese?

Cantonese and Hongkongers

Cantonese, the people and the language had a large and an important role in early days and the subsequent development of nineteenth and twentieth century Hong Kong. Hong Kong SAR—comprising of Hong Kong Island, the New Territories, Kowloon and over 200 islands, sits at the south-eastern tip of the Pearl River Delta, Guangdong. Hong Kong's northern borders adjoins the great land mass that is the People's Republic of China and to the south lies a natural deep water harbour - one of the reasons for British interest in Hong Kong which, together with the prominent presence of Cantonese settlers, determined the island's identity (Law, 2009, p. 9 and 54; Carroll, 2005, pp. 18 and 23) and spawned a language particular to Hong Kong – Hong Kong English or HKE.

Although the country's colonial past is one of the threads forever woven into her identity, Hong Kong's history did not begin when she was ceded to Britain at the end of the First Opium War in 1842. The island had one hundred and fifty villages two centuries before the arrival of the British (Sinn quoted in French, 1997). Writer Jan Morris noted that it was the Cantonese people from the southern province of Guangdong who brought to Hong Kong the Cantonese language and traditions that are rooted on Confucianism and family ties (Morris quoted in Sussman, 2011, p. 13).

Fan Shuh Ching from the Department of Statistics, University of Hong Kong, writes that in the first population count *The Government Gazette* 15 May 1841 reported that the total population of Hong Kong in 1841 was 7,450 (Fan, 1974, p. 1) and a study listed four distinct Chinese communities that spoke Cantonese and Fukienese (Balfour, 1970, p. 135). The Cantonese fishermen and boat builders thrived in Hong Kong's deep-water harbour that shaped her livelihood from fishing to marine industry. The second major wave of Cantonese migration that fuelled the roaring coolie trade and construction industry came after the Taiping Rebellion (1850 - 1864) in the southern provinces of Qing China, followed by the third wave of Chinese immigrants at the end of the Qing Empire in 1912.

In the mid-1850s Hong Kong was the major embarkation and disembarkation port, not only for the long established regional coastal Chinese networks, but for the Southeast Asian trade and a globalizing network around which a 'class of elite transnationals arose around Hong Kong' (Law, 2009, p. 11). Although Hong Kong in the fifties was not quite as cosmopolitan as Shanghai, it was nonetheless a vibrant city where many languages were spoken. Historian Elizabeth Sinn described a dynamic mid-1850s Hong Kong which had, besides Chinese immigrants, a strong contingent of Indian Ghurkha and Sikh soldiers, Parsi merchants, European settlers as well as a growing Eurasian community (Plüss, 2005, Sinn, 2004, p. 98, Siu, 1993, p. 29). Hong Kong was then, and continues to be today, a multicultural society.

Hongkongers today speak Hong Kong Cantonese, English, Putonghua and twenty-four other languages, ranging from Sze Yap (a dialect from Guangdong) to Urdu. Whichever language they might choose to use, Hong Kong University researchers studying language practices note that Hong Kong is also a community with 'strong feelings of language loyalty' (Li, 2015). And this language loyalty has had a long history dating back to as early as 'the late seventeenth century when British traders came to Canton to buy Chinese tea and porcelain and has continued to the present' (Wong quoted in Setter, Wong and Chan, 2010, p. 6). The British relied on Hong Kong comprador-merchants' grasp of Cantonese, their intimate knowledge of local culture, business practices and networks to negotiate with local trading communities and local merchants (Law, 2009, p. 12). It is through such collaborations that an

already malleable sense of the language evolved from '[t]he Guangzhou version (shengcheng hua 省城话), ... to a deeply Anglicized version' - Hong Kong Cantonese (Bauer, 2010; Siu, 1993, p. 30).

My interview with Respondent B revealed another variation of the Cantonese speech and sounds. While Respondent A speaks an occasional English with Cantonese inflection, Respondent B had a particular cadence, which together with her choice of words was a marked difference from British-influenced English. Her Cantonese and Hong Kong Cantonese accented English occasionally interspersed with North American accent evinced a tantalising modulation that spoke to another influence.

Respondent B was a transnational who grew up living between Toronto and Hong Kong but has since returned and settled in Hong Kong. I met her after her tennis game at her club on Old Peak Road, Hong Kong. Fifty-five-year-old Respondent B's family hails from Canton, present day Guangzhou, making her and her siblings first generation Hongkongers. In Cantonese accented English, Respondent B tells me about her family, referring to herself and her siblings in terms that are consistent with the Chinese system of kinship. She first identified herself as the youngest of five sisters and two brothers. Respondent B speaks of 'my oldest sister', 'my second sister', 'third sister' and of the younger of two brothers as 'the brother after him' where one might simply say 'my sister' or 'my brother'. However, in Chinese family relationships, one could not just speak of 'sister' (Blum, 1997). So Respondent B, the youngest speaks of 'elder sister' *ga¹ je¹ (jia¹ jie² 家姐)* or 'second sister' *ji⁶ ga¹ je¹ (er⁴ jia¹ jie² 二 家姐)*.

Respondent B left Hong Kong to join her brother in Edmonton before going to Pembroke, Ottawa where she was accepted at an adult learning school. In the 1970s Edmonton had a population of about 450,000 and is one of Canada's four main cities besides Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary. 9% of Edmontonians are a visible minority (Megyeri, 1996, pp. 114-117). While Respondent B felt that Edmonton was small compared to Hong Kong, she found Pembroke even more provincial and quickly returned to her brother in Edmonton. There she settled down when school began,

started making friends with Edmontonians and began speaking like a Canadian, something her companions in Hong Kong would note. Respondent B spoke mainly English while in Canada, even at home with her brother who hardly spoke Cantonese. In describing her feelings on leaving Hong Kong, she shared, 'I felt very happy, I felt I have wings... Really! I felt really, really good. I was... I'm out about!' the last word pronounced with a marked Canadian Raising [ə blaʊt].

Respondent B attended night classes to complete the academic requirements before moving to Toronto where her third sister lived to enrol in a university. After university she joined her husband and worked in Tanzania, Africa for two years. Respondent B returned to Hong Kong in 1988 where she has lived since and occasionally visits her husband and two children in Canada. About her accent, she observed that one could quite easily adjust. She said, "I think on the process of living overseas will change the way how you converse, thinking and converse back to verbal language and writing [sic]" (ResB R37, p. 249). I agree but would qualify that 'change' would entail not a replacement but an addition, that new sounds are added to, rather than changed and that each location adds to the palimpsest.

'I feel I really don't belong to either'

Respondent C was born in Hong Kong in 1956 where he lived until he left for Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada when he was seventeen. Respondent C recounts clearly those early days in Saskatoon - being welcomed into the Christian Canadians community, scholastic achievements, acquiring a taste for Canadian food such as beef and desserts, discovering pho, borscht, perogies and meeting his wife and starting a family (ResC R5-6, pp. 252-253). They lived in Saskatoon until 1987 when Respondent C and his young family left for Toronto where job prospects were better. By the mid-1990s Toronto's economy experienced a slowdown and he eventually returned to Hong Kong where jobs were plentiful.

Respondent C explained that, at the time of his departure from Hong Kong in 1974, he understood himself to be 'unmistakenly' Chinese in that 'we look different, we speak different' (ResC R20, p. 256). Respondent C immediately explained that by 'Chinese' he meant a Hong Kong Chinese and 'not a part of China' (ResC R12, p.

255). One way his family attests to this is their nucleus of four, ‘we were there by ourselves, we are here by ourselves’, which contrast with the traditional Chinese extended family (Wu, 1927, p. 316) as described by Respondent M. However, having spent some time in Saskatoon, he modified his certainty vis à vis his sense of his Hong Kong Chinese identity and after an adjusting period, he observed that despite speaking with an ‘accent at the beginning’ he and his family felt ‘100% Canadian as well as 100% Chinese’ (ResC R20, p. 256), that is, his nationality is Canadian and his ethnicity is Chinese ‘No dispute about that’ (ResC R21, p. 256). Respondent C still speaks with a Hong Kong Cantonese accent but modified with Canadian pronunciations, for example he says [sæskə’tun] with a Hong Kong Cantonese emphasis on the first syllable. In fact, some of Respondent C’s Hong Kong friends think he’s a *gwai lou*. *Gwai² lou²* and *gwai² po⁴* or in Mandarin *giu³lao³* (鬼佬) and *gui³po²* (鬼婆) are terms referring to a Caucasian man and woman respectively.

Respondent C spoke about his plans to return to Canada.

I seldom discuss this with people but this is how I feel. I feel when I go back to a white society, my height and language advantage [that I enjoy here] is taken away..... the more I stay in Hong Kong, the more hesitant or the less willing I am going to a pure white society (ResC R30, p. 260).

Notwithstanding the fact that Respondent C is comfortable amongst Asian Canadians, the above appears to suggest that Respondent C, while he wanted to be and later somewhat becomes part of ‘mainstream society’ (ResC R32, pp. 260-261), is not quite assimilated. Thus, by extension one might also suggest that transnational Chinese, while they might assimilate into host Chinese communities, do not easily slip into non-Chinese host communities. Respondent C’s experience and the support he receives from Saskatoon Chinese Alliance Church is similar to the support extended to late 1900s migrants by clan associations and Chinese Canadian Club in Canada discussed in Chapter 6.

Respondent C’s discomfort has another historical precedent. Anthropologist Professor Gordon Mathews wrote about a meeting he had,

One professor of Western literature in his forties described to me his first meeting with a white person: “Every one of us, in childhood, was afraid of foreigners: because of their size, because they belonged to the ruling class, and because they spoke a language we didn't understand” (Mathews, 1997, p. 6).

Respondent C's primary language is Hong Kong Cantonese. As he emphatically declares with a laugh, ‘My Chinese is perfect. Cantonese is my mother-tongue’ and, despite having lived in Saskatoon, Canada since he was seventeen years old, only began to speak English on a daily basis when he was twenty-two. However, he noted that he ‘... can speak English without injecting Cantonese but I cannot do the reverse. I cannot speak Cantonese without injecting English’ (ResC R10, p. 254).

It is while listening to Respondent C and Respondent B that I experienced a sense of equivocalness in hearing double, ‘... two worlds at once, through Chinese and non-Chinese eyes, and to work in a state of constant and subtle reference between the two’ (Pan, 2009, p. 222, Kroll et al, 2014). Their accents and language choices parallel the objective of *Vol. 2* to foreground the ambiguity of listening to one language and hearing two voices. For example, Respondent B's idiomatic description of her daughter—*hok⁶ laap⁶ gai¹ kwan⁴ (he⁴ li⁴ ji¹ qun² qun² 鹤立鸡群)* a crane amongst chicken—can only be completely understood if one listens with both languages and hears the implicit comparison she makes of race and therefore of social hierarchy. The crane, towering above the common herd, is white as well as more highly valued. Respondent A differentiates between English and Hong Kong English when he introduces himself in English.

Respondent C speaks English with a Hong Kong Cantonese accent as most Hongkongers do. While he does not, Respondent A and Respondent B code-switch between sentences—in Respondent A's case inserting English texts while speaking Hong Kong Cantonese and vice versa for Respondent B—consistent with those of Hong Kong returnees who had emigrated to English-speaking countries (Setter, Wong and Chan, 2010: p. 97). In this regard, has acquiring another accent changed their sense of identity? Taking everything into consideration, there appears to be no agreement. With Respondent A, it appears his time in Canada and subsequent return

to Hong Kong had strengthened his sense of being a Hongkonger. Respondent B hesitates at the question and Respondent C feels he is both.

According to 2011 census, 89.5% Hongkongers speak Cantonese, 3.5% English and 1.4% Putonghua and with a wide array of accents which reflect their diverse history from early Southern Chinese to the great influx of migrants to expatriate intermarriages. There is also a wide spectrum of Hong Kong English accents and variation even amongst those who speak HKE. However, Respondent B's HKE had a particular tone and in many ways, it reminded me that part of the range of Respondent B's Cantonese accents could be attributed to her Guangzhou parents.

Hong Kong English

The marriage of English and Cantonese birthed Hong Kong English (henceforth HKE) and the local language, culture and identity developed 'in opposition to what was taking place in mainland China' (Lai, 2007 quoted in Setter, Wong and Chan, 2010, p. 101). Twinned to Cantonese, HKE conforms to standard English arrangements of English words and phrases, with romanized Cantonese words and homophonic texts and phrases in the mix. 'Ketchup' and 'typhoon' are examples of HKE texts (Cummings and Wolf, 2011, pp. 218 and 220). The Cantonese sound for 'inch' is used as a unit of measure as well as to describe someone as boorish because 吋 *cyun*³ (in Mandarin *cun*⁴) the unit measure is a homonym of, 串 *cyun*³ (*chuan*⁴) in the phrase, 串通 *cyun*³ *tung*¹ (Mandarin *chuan*⁴ *tong*¹) meaning to 'gang up'. The sounds for 'measurement' and 'boorish' are only homonyms when spoken in Cantonese.

In a follow-up survey conducted post Umbrella Movement, Jette Hansen Edwards observed an increase acceptance of HKE and that this development is hinged to Hong Kong's identity. She writes,

ethnic identity (i.e. identification as a Hong Konger) lies at the heart of acceptance and use of HKE. It also suggests that if speakers of English in Hong Kong continue to embrace a local Hong Kong identity, acceptance of HKE, as a marker of this identity, will also probably increase. ... Varsity, a student-run newspaper at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, ... states that 'Kongish, a

new term for Hong Kong English, is helping to redefine Hong Kongers' identity ... The rise of Kongish also coincides with Hong Kongers' heightened sense of local identity' (Edwards, 2016, p. 163).

Over the course of collective history, HKE has become part of a way of life in Hong Kong. HKE has been internalised as part of their way of being and this is clearly exemplified in the response of students and their supporters and in the text, graphics and art used in the Umbrella Movement's 2014 Occupy Central and the protest against Fake Suffrage in 2015. While the two main threads of HKE, Cantonese and English, are distinct languages in their own right, it is the simultaneous overlapping and sometimes conjoined application of the two that afford HKE the multiple voicing that many Hongkongers identify with.

Living Language

Hong Kong Cantonese is the language that is not only historically close to the hearts of Hongkongers, it is the language that defines and, in the light of recent events, reinforces their identity and distinct culture. The research, development and making of *Vol. 2* brought home the notion of a living language that is dynamic and immediate and responding to the time and circumstances it finds itself. This is exemplified in *Love in a Puff* especially in scenes and dialogues responding to the latest Hong Kong law regarding smoking and Hong Kong Cantonese words and phrases that neither Eva in Toronto nor my friends are familiar with. For Hongkongers, Hong Kong Cantonese play a central role in their lives (Bauer quoted in Guildford, 2014) and 'is not "ancient" at all. It is living, evolving. It is an energetic, expressive, sometimes dignified vernacular' (Ho, 2016: p. 2). Thus, it is to Hong Kong Cantonese that Hongkongers turn to voice their struggle for autonomy in the highly charged 2014 Umbrella Movement. Mair records that,

Linguistically, the most salient fact about the Umbrella Revolution is that Cantonese has its own word *ze1* 遮 ('umbrella'), and so doesn't need to use the standard Mandarin item. *Ze1* 遮 also functions as a verb that means "to obstruct, shut out; to shelter; to hide; cover up" (Sidney Lau, 1977, quoted in Mair, 2014) the sheer fact that the Cantonese have their own completely separate word for "umbrella" sends a powerful message of independent assertiveness at a

crucial moment in the evolving relationship between Cantonese and Mandarin (Mair, 2014).

Oscar Ho Hing-kay, Director of MA Programme in Cultural Management at the Chinese University of Hong Kong is enthusiastic and endorses students and artists' responses and participation in the Umbrella Movement.

“What’s happening now with this Umbrella Movement is that you start to see among the younger people a collective obsession with Hong Kong, a Hong Kong identity, which is very unusual for Hong Kong,” says Oscar Ho Hing-kay... (Pollack, 2015, p. 44).



Figure 4.4 Image and caption from Gwynn Guildford. Images published in Quartz, 22 October 2015. (Clockwise from top left: Savio Ho, Umbrella Creation, source unclear; bottom three: Flickr user Yukikei (images have been cropped).

These sentiments are passionately articulated in the images and art works. There is a palpable sense of commitment and investments. In an interview with Barbara Pollack, ArtNews, Ho points to the Lennon Wall—named after Prague’s famous Lennon Wall—teeming with drawing, slogans and pleas sketched and written on Post-it notes, “What’s happening here is totally amazing” (Figures 4.5 and 4.6). Of the public spirit and spontaneity, he comments, “The entire city is a work of art, and everyone is an artist. What impresses me is the totality of it It reflects a collective spirit, and it is organic, so it keeps growing,” adding that “In comparison, I find the contributions of trained artists are more conservative” (Pollack, 2015).

In the same interview which went into press while the students were protesting, Ms Claire Hsu, Founder and Director of Asia Art Archive, a non-profit research institute in Hong Kong noted that Hongkongers and Hong Kong artists' participation in the Occupy Central protest was a continuation of public responses to political events which can be traced from the 2003 protest against a sedition law proposal, demolition of Star Ferry Terminal to Beijing's language policy (Hsu quoted in Pollack, 2015). It is the Hong Kong Cantonese written in traditional Chinese characters that the Umbrella Movement protesters are adamant to maintain and in doing so protect a Hong Kong identity (Leung and Lee, 2016, p. 256).



Figure 4.5 Detail of the Lennon Wall, from the Umbrella Revolution, Hong Kong. PASU AY @ INCENDO/CC BY 2.0.

‘gwai po’

Hong Kong Cantonese was the language Respondent D had to ‘relearn’ when she returned to her birthplace Hong Kong after living in Canada for ten years. (ResD R36, p. 269). It is interesting to observe the role language played throughout Respondent D’s journey when she and her family migrated to Canada in 1977. It had taken some effort for Respondent D and her siblings to integrate into Ontario’s predominantly Anglo-Canadian landscape. Although she could not at thirteen years old quite articulate it then, Respondent D clearly felt ‘Canadian’ by the time she left Canada in 1986. At a second meeting she shared that she would like to return to

Canada at some point, although for the moment she feels that for now, opportunities are in Hong Kong (ResD R34, pp. 268-269) where all her family has since returned.

Respondent D speaks in her home language Hong Kong Cantonese, Mandarin and Canada's official languages of English and French. She also makes it a point not to code-switch (ResD R18, p. 266) when speaking Hong Kong Cantonese or English with her own children, at work with her colleagues or within her social circles. Her spoken English is tinted with a Hong Kong Cantonese accent during our two interviews. At home with her mother and siblings, or when she is with other Hongkongers, Respondent D speaks Hong Kong Cantonese although the familial language did not serve her parents well the nine years when they lived in a predominantly British Ontario. Respondent D confessed that she is not as well-versed in Hong Kong Cantonese and that her pronunciation has sometimes caused her Cantonese-speaking friends to call her 'gwai² po⁴' (in Mandarin *gui³po²* 鬼婆) a version of Respondent C's *gwai² lou²* (in Mandarin *gui³lao³* 鬼佬). What is of interest is how both had considered this characterization as somewhat a badge of honour. The command of English has cultural and symbolic capital amongst Hongkongers as it sets them apart from Chinese from China (Chan, 2002, p. 272).

Similar to the earlier nineteenth century migrants and Respondent C and his family, Respondent D learns new ways of being, new sights, tastes and sounds – for example, going to Canadian Tire to buy garden equipment, learning about new foods like rhubarb and new ways of speaking about familiar objects such as 'flashlights' instead of 'torch lights' and to be found at the 'trunk' rather than the 'boot' of the car. She articulates the list with a Canadian accent for example the extended /c:/ in torch [tɔ:tʃ].

Despite their Hong Kong-accented English and with a little extra coaching from their school teachers, Respondent D and her siblings had no trouble settling into Don Mills, North York, Ontario, Canada. The very few Asians who lived and schooled in the area were Canadian-born and spoke only English. Unlike Respondent C who lived amongst Chinese-speaking community in Saskatoon, Respondent D lived in a predominantly middle-class Caucasian neighbourhood and, apart from the cousin,

were the only Chinese family on the cul-de-sac where everyone spoke Canadian English (ResD R6, p. 263).

At the end of Respondent D's senior year in school there was an influx of students from Hong Kong who tend to speak Hong Kong Cantonese when they socialised after school and although she spoke the language at home, she confessed,

... I probably sound, you know I sounded like Canadian girls trying to speak Cantonese ... Which they curl their tongue [sic] I remember that, which was then only corrected when I came back to Hong Kong" (ResD R17, pp. 265-266).

In spite of her 'curling of tongue' she is adamant that she is a 'Hong Kong girl' (ResD R44, p. 271), 'more of a Chinese descent because I was brought up that way, my family spoke, you know, Chinese at home. ...we ate Chinese food' (ResD R41, pp. 270-271).

Unlike the other respondents, Respondent D has a good command of the English language which she speaks with Hong Kong Cantonese accent, punctuated with Canadian Raising and flapping /d/ heard in all the Hong Kong respondents except for Respondent A and C. Unlike them too, she seems to be a hybrid both of the Hong Kong and Canadian communities - brought up in and living the traditional way, abiding traditional values. Unlike Respondent B, she does not use traditional kinship terms. Respondent D observes,

I think it's pretty mixed up culturally. I would think at the moment probably more of a Hongkonger, rather than anything else. ... Everything is actually quite unique to where I'm living now and I haven't lived in Canada for quite a few years. If anything, it doesn't, it doesn't really exist (ResD R64, p. 276).

Cantonese versus Mandarin

In the first episode of Singapore's Channel News Asia's *The Maritime Silk Road*, narrator and presenter Anthony Morse speaks with Andrew Choi, executive producer of the award-winning short film *Ten Years* that imagines a China-controlled Hong Kong in 2025. Presented in five vignettes by five directors, each vignette investigates themes ranging from political issues such as Beijing's central

government control over Hong Kong to sociolinguistic challenges that the imposition of Chinese present to Hong Kong's Cantonese identity. The second issue is of particular interest to this investigation. Mandarin has been the medium of instruction in most of the subjects taught in Hong Kong's primary schools since 1984 (Chan, 2002, p. 275). The language policies in Hong Kong's schools are so strict that school children are not allowed to speak Cantonese outside of their classrooms or even during recess. Choi states with an urgent passion that Cantonese is key to the cultural identity of Hongkongers (*The Maritime Silk Road*, 2016). And he is not alone in this protest.

Hongkongers are adamant, 'Language is the tongue that gives a nation its voice' (Tam and Cummins, 2016). In an interview with a panel of eminent professors and journalists broadcast April 2016, Singapore's Channel News Asia's (CNA) Loke Wei Sue introduced the issue by stating that, 'No issue is more central to the identity of Hong Kong people than the use of the Chinese language, specifically spoken Cantonese with traditional written characters' (*Between the Lines*, 2016).

Cantonese, the Chinese language of Southern Chinese, has long had a place in the hearts and soul of being a Hongkonger. Where the earlier Southern Chinese fishing and boatbuilding industry allowed for the dissemination of the Cantonese sounds and culture, the movies and popular culture created in Hong Kong's flourishing entertainment industry was foundational in cementing Hong Kong Cantonese in the identity of Hong Kong and Hongkongers. Retired Professor of Political Science, Joseph Cheng in CNA's April panel discussion commented, 'Certainly dialect, languages, are very important part of Hong Kong people's identity...' and particularly the generation growing up in the 70s which witnessed the industrial and cultural development, immortalised by Cantonese movies and songs that forged Hong Kong's identity (*Between the Lines*, 2016).

With regards to Joseph Cheng's comments regarding Hong Kong's identity, media certainly played a major part in promoting language. Beginning in the late fifties to late seventies, Cantonese played a primary role as Hong Kong's Cantonese identity was forged not only locally in Hong Kong but globally wherever Hong Kong movies were shown and through the very popular Rediffusion broadcast all over Southeast

Asia from 1948 to 1982. Hong Kong's Cantonese broadcasts were especially popular in Singapore and Malaysia where economies were struggling to recover post World War II. The ubiquitous Rediffusion—with a daily combined total of thirty-four hours of broadcasting over two channels—was a cheaper alternative to radio sets (Singapore Infopedia, 2020). Its popularity continued to grow and by 1970 had over 90,000 subscriptions recorded in Singapore alone (McDaniel, 1994, p. 183). It was around such occasions that my own relationship with my grandmother was forged as she patiently explained the stories we had just heard in a language I do not speak. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that many personal as well as intergenerational family and community relationships were similarly shaped by memories gathered around a neighbour's Rediffusion set (Figures 4.7 and 4.8), listening to news, stories and songs of favourite programmes.



Figure 4.6 Rediffusion weekly programme.
Figure 4.7 Rediffusion speaker.

Historian Elizabeth Sinn illustrates Rediffusion's role in promoting Hong Kong Cantonese. She recalls her encounter with a cobbler in Penang, Malaysia whose normative Chinese language is Hokkien, speaking flawless Hong Kong Cantonese and was astounded when told that he had learned the language from listening to Hong Kong's Rediffusion broadcastings in the fifties and sixties (Sinn, 2014). Her encounter with the Malaysian cobbler also illustrates how non-Hongkongers associated a particular sound of Cantonese with Hong Kong and Joseph Cheng's point about the centrality of Cantonese to Hongkonger's identity. Hongkongers hold fast to their Cantonese identity even when the former British colony's struggle with language came to head with policy changes to the Medium of Instructions in

education. As Anderson observes,

What the eye is to the lover ... - language ... is to the patriot. Through that language, encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed (Anderson, 2006: p. 154).

Becoming Chinese

Any consideration or investigation of identity is certain to challenge older concepts of itself and Hall noting that without re-visiting the past 'certain key questions cannot be thought at all' (Hall, 1996, p. 2).

Europeans and North Americans were not alone in racializing Chineseness. A racialized Chineseness afforded China a unifying and rallying force, not only against imperialism—whether of Western or other Asian countries—but also as a way of articulating a modern identity for itself, shedding the old cumbersome but extensive rule the victorious leaders inherited from the Manchu dynasty (Shih quoted in Shih, Tsai and Bernards, 2013, p. 27). And the importance of Mandarin is coupled to Chinese identity through an ambitious and on-going national programme to modernise China beginning in 1949 when the China Communist Party successfully wrestled power from the Nationalist Party.

In the early 1950s the urgency was in the portrayal of a unified China and singular Chinese as a contrast to Western hegemony. However, it was not a simple opposition of East and West, White and Yellow. The emphasis on Chineseness had begun almost fifty years earlier in a domestic struggle against the Qing dynasty of Manchu rulers. Until the twentieth century the descriptor 'Chinese' was only used by non-Chinese (Wang, 2009, p. 202). Today Mainland Chinese might choose to speak of themselves in a variety of ways. It is pertinent to note that *Hua²ren²* (华人) and *Zhong¹guo²ren²* (中国人) hold particular meanings, which commit the speakers to specific identities and loyalties the English word 'Chinese' does not.

Around 1900 Chinese reformer Zhang Binglin wrote the first edition of *Qiushu* (楹書) in which he outlined the concept of *Hanzu* (Han lineage-race) and argued that

Han Chinese were descendants of the Yellow Emperor, a notion which quickly gained popularity amongst the revolutionaries (Chow, 1997, p. 40 and pp. 46-48). It is from this time that the notion of Chineseness became hinged to patriarchal bloodlines and ancestry. Hence the struggle is to establish an identity that is not just not Yellow but emphatically not Manchu to articulate the difference between the Han Chinese and the colonial Qing Manchu rulers.

Bonding within the family is an ancient heritage that Confucian and other thinkers in the past had made into both ritualistic and spiritual paradigms. ... the preparation of genealogies spread among ordinary Chinese families and the kinship claims that are still being made have a longer and more continuous history than among other peoples (Wang, 2009, p. 210).

The ancestry approach to Chineseness is not particular to the struggles of the 1900 Nationalists and Reformers. The concept of bloodline continues even to our present time.

However, China never had a situation when there was only one language spoken in the country. Newspaper man, author and owner of the first Western advertising agency in Shanghai, Carl Crow in *The Traveler's Handbook for China* (1913) advises that a foreigner traveller touring China in the early 1900s will only be required to be familiar with 'pidgin' or business English a language that even local Chinese travellers will use since 'the Chinese language ... is different in every province and in almost every community' (Crow, 1913, p. 2). Historically China had a universally understood text and multiple vernaculars, and when required, relied on intermediaries who were familiar with the languages, on pidgin or creolized form of communication. Chinese languages basically use the same script and structure but a person who speaks only Mandarin would not be able to understand spoken Cantonese and vice versa.

[...] the fact that the Chinese government has implemented a simplified version of Chinese characters, which renders them significantly different from the traditional script still used in Hong Kong and Taiwan, makes communication even more difficult between Hong Kong and China (Wong, 2016, para 5).

Chinese was not always the sound of Chineseness. In 1975 geographer and geologist David Lai researched the fourteen counties and clan associations on the Pearl River delta, Guangdong, China. These were the main sources of Chinese migrants to Vancouver, with a majority from Taishan and Kaiping. His research also revealed that migrants lived and worked in Canada as they did in China. Families, clansmen and associates lived together and took up trades and work skills they had long held in their home villages. And as it was in China, employment in Canada very much depended on the migrant's speech group and as far as the migrants were concerned 'Chinese' was whatever language the community spoke so that '[e]ven those who speak Mandarin or other dialects fluently are sometimes ridiculed by the Toishanese (T'ai-shan people) as being unable to speak Chinese (Lai, 1975, pp. 5 and 18). Thus, it would appear that in some quarters and at particular times Mandarin was not what makes Chineseness, at least not in mid-twentieth century. As Wang states,

There are those who do not look to Chinese history paradigms at all but emphasize personal connections with the paradigms of their family and ancestral past, each Chinese in its own way. What is important is the use of Chinese languages or dialects to keep in contact with those who are meaningful to their lives (Wang, 2009, p. 211).



Figure 4.8 Textbooks at turn of 20th Century. Available from The Children's Educator, Princeton Library.

One could argue that a confluence of at least two other historical events contributed to the language experience and thus the framing of Chinese identity – the modernization of China's examination and education system which led to the

standardization and publication of text books in the vernacular Mandarin and the birth of the nation-state of China. (Figure 4.9).

There was a fierce sense of nationalism when a new China was to be articulated at the end of Qing dynastic rule in 1911. Despite deep contentions amongst the victorious leaders as to how to bring about a modern China, all were unanimous in their determination and dedication to a Chinese nationalism. They also agreed that '[o]ne of the first orders of the day was to give China a national language (Ramsey, 1987, p. 3). In her approach to establish herself as a nation-state, China is not unique in quickly adopting a national language. This nation-building approach, maintained through nationalisation, is a relatively new concept and a throwback from colonialism (Hobsbawn, 1996: p. 1068; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994, p. 60).

Standardised language advances administration and government. Within a nation, regardless of home languages, citizens are schooled to speak the national language. Thus, a language, one in which every citizen regardless of their familial and home languages could understand and would be understood, came to be used. Newly established nation-states consolidated their infant identity through national languages and through national spectacles. The rousing singing of national anthems at public assemblies should and, in some instances, would elicit a sense of community, imagined or otherwise. It might even be reasonable to assume that at some point in the development of these communities there would be a consensus, out of which would emerge a homogeneity to which all belonged (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994, p. 56).

Anderson's proposal of an 'imagined community' argues in favour of nationalism. This becomes problematic in the way that the implementation of a singular Chinese language imagines a singular Chinese community. Historian Eric Hobsbawn argues that national unity is forged, regardless of culture, language and ethnicity, through political agreement. He compares Anderson's 1983 to a clarion call for ethnic, if not racial, homogeneity, a 'dangerous piece of brainwashing' that disregards the multiple histories that preceded and shaped national homogeneity (Hobsbawn, 1996, p. 1067). I propose two extrapolations to further trouble Anderson's assertion. The first concerns the assumed *longue durée* of a singular fixed language, one that is

immutable and unchanging, thus sounding Chineseness as an unchanging, predetermined monolith. The second is the assumption of parallel and equivalent

translation in multilingual communities, or in the case of many Chinese languages, that each is mutually intelligible and porous.

The 1st of July 2017 marked the twentieth anniversary of the Handover of Hong Kong to China. Yet Hongkongers themselves are quite clear that they are Hongkongers. According to Edwards who conducted a poll in June 2014 to find out how people thought of themselves,

Of the six choices, “Hongkonger,” which sounds a lot less clunky in Chinese, came first.

Then people told the pollsters that they identify themselves next as “Asian,” “Members of the Chinese race,” “Global citizen,” and “Chinese,” in that order. Trailing far behind, in last place, was “Citizen of the Peoples' Republic of China.” (Edwards, 2016).

The English version of the event, ‘Hong Kong’s Handover’ or even the ‘Transition’, is competent in extending the sense of the British return of Hong Kong to China but it is the Cantonese and Mandarin text, *wui⁴ gwai¹* (*hui² gui¹* 回歸), meaning ‘return’ in Cantonese, that carried the fraught emotions accompanying the impending reunification. *Wui⁴ gwai¹* is analogous to ‘a long-separated child headed back into its mother’s arms’ (Cheung, 1997). If that is so, why is there such great animosity between China and Hong Kong?

Anthropologist Sydney Cheung reflects on the open border between Hong Kong and China and the complicated entanglement that had held together some identities. This is especially so for those who circumvented China’s one-child policy. Thus, who is Chinese from China and who is Hongkonger escalates into what could be described as a controversial and contested cauldron rather than a melting pot (Cheung, 1997). For Hongkongers though the crux of the issue could well be that they are at once Hongkongers, Chinese and Chinese Nationals. They are situated at a confluence of a seventeenth century pre-British Cantonese culture, a two-thousand-year Chinese

civilization history and a modern Mandarin-speaking nation ambitious to be a global force. However, this modern China, as both Lucien Pye and Martin Jacques have argued, is not a nation-state as defined by European understanding but a Chinese civilization trying to fit into the framework of a modern nation-state as defined by European histories and European sensibilities (Jacques, 2009, p. 196).

‘I am Canadian’

I met Respondent E through his father Respondent C. In crisply ironed shirt and trousers the twenty-three-year-old has a youthful but sparing way about him as he finished organizing the church sound system. To get away from the departing congregation, we sat in the now emptied children’s room for the interview.

Respondent E was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada although he has no memory of Saskatoon, having moved as a baby to a town in Ontario where he grew up. At nine years old he moved with his family to Hong Kong where, but for four years at the University of Toronto, Canada, he has lived since. I would suggest that those four years spent in Canada galvanised the transnational sense of Respondent E’s identity. He describes himself, ‘I’m a Canadian Chinese who has split his life between Canada and Hong Kong. Currently in Hong Kong’. His Chineseness is forged in his being confidently Canadian—“I am Canadian”—and his Canadian-ness is tempered on the difference of Hong Kong’s expatriate and English-speaking milieu. That is, Respondent E’s Hong Kong Chinese identity is not predicated on his adolescent years in Hong Kong while his Canadian-ness is amplified by those ten years growing up in Hong Kong. He describes his moving between Canada and Hong Kong,

... I feel like it’s integral to my self-identity. I think, ... that combination is very important. ... but fundamentally, I feel my identity is, is Canadian. ... Hong Kong is very much a place where I lived for a long time. Where I ... formed a lot of memories, met a lot of my friends but culturally, ah, there’s no ... I think there’s little cultural inheritance for me from having lived in Hong Kong, even during that developmental stage of my life. And even having lived away from Canada for so long as a child and as a teenager, ... my cultural identification and comfort zone is essentially Canadian, for better or for worse (ResE R15, pp. 279-280).

And more succinctly he continues,

A few of the ways that Hong Kong has influenced my identity, ... is almost just a contrast with Canada. It's almost the, ... just the not-Canada that Hong Kong represents that helps give me perspective, that helps give me perspective on, ... what being in Canada and living in Canada is about (ResE R21, pp. 281-282).

Respondent E's moderately low voice betrays none of the fourteen years he spent growing up in Hong Kong which suggests that one looks to his earlier years in Canada. Linguist Noam Chomsky's theory informs that there is an optimal learning age and that between the ages three to ten a child is the most likely to learn a language in its entirety and grasp fluency. Yet language is first heard before it is sounded.

Despite having spent his teenage years in Hong Kong, Respondent E's accent and pronunciation, for example passport [pæspɔrt],⁴ is primarily North American. And although he does not remember much of his early nine years in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, his accent does when he remarks on not having a Hong Kong identity card [ceɪd] (Dollinger, 2008, p. 38). Pronunciations of city names are another marker. Where Respondent D and Respondent B enunciate the second 't' when referring to Toronto, Respondent E says [Torono⁵] that is, without sounding the second 't', an enunciation which clearly marks him as Canadian. His early years in Ontario's sound environment are also evident in his central Canadian Raising when he doubts [dAWbt]⁶ and apologises 'sorry' [sɔ:rry]. Interestingly while his pronunciation speaks to the influence of the sound environment of central Canada, his cadence [hɒŋ\$#kɒŋ] suggests the 'Hong Kong' of his everyday environs.

It is interesting to consider if Respondent E's reluctance to speak Cantonese is strategic to maintaining his foreign-ness, his Canadianness. Although he confesses that his Cantonese is somewhat lacking, he readily identifies himself as Hong Kong Chinese. He understands his Chineseness through his relationship with his parents - in some ways, the family appear self-contained as a modern Hong Kong nuclear

⁴ <http://ipa.typeit.org/>

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pa-88Nt1aTs>

⁶ <http://ic-migration.webhost.uits.arizona.edu/icfiles/ic/lsp/site/Canadian/canphon3.html>

family in contrast to the extended structure of a traditional Hong Kong Chinese family (Setter, Wong and Chan, 2010, p. 7). He agrees that he enjoys a degree of familiarity and comfort with Hong Kong Chinese culture in Hong Kong.

Boberg notes that our speech often reflects that of our peer group, in particular that of our early school years, adding that it is the face-to-face exchanges between our peers that influence the way we speak (Jimiticus, 2016). In short there has to be an active exchange rather than a passive receiving of the language through watching a television programme. Respondent E appears reluctant to speak Cantonese although he hears it all the time in Hong Kong. But his decision not to speak Cantonese does not detract from his practice of being Hong Kong Chinese. Thus, it is perhaps pertinent to reconsider the role and present racialization of language.

The development of Hong Kong Cantonese in the late seventeenth century and its use in popular media and the Umbrella Movement attest to Hong Kong Cantonese and HKE as living languages, responding to circumstances. Both languages are made by the people and is of the people. Applying Canagarajah's argument regarding the English language as the language of the English and of England, Mandarin as the language of Chinese people is both circular and self-perpetuating (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 22). Furthermore, the problem of the all-encompassing English word 'Chinese' for complex identities continues to escape solution.

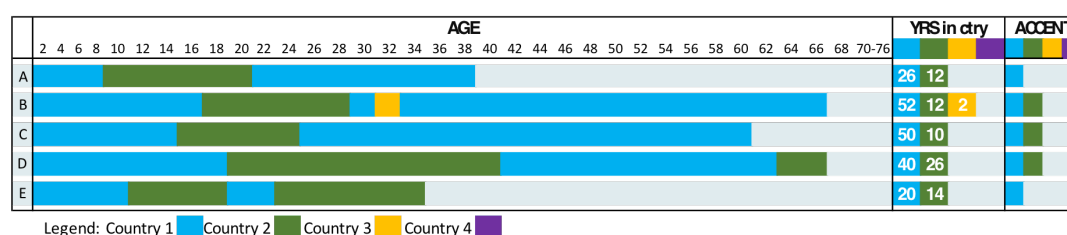


Figure 4.9 Years spent in a country and accent of Respondents A, B, C, D and E.

After living twelve years in Canada, Hong Kong Cantonese is a way for Respondent A to circumvent the ambiguous English word 'Chinese' and amplify his Hong Kong identity. For Canadian-born Respondent E, speaking with a strong Canadian accent, Hong Kong Cantonese was a means of communication while living in Hong Kong before he returns to Canada with his family when his father retires.

While all five are clearly transnationals and have, with the exception of Respondent A, spoken in varying degrees of Canadian accent, Respondent A identifies strongly as a Hongkonger, Respondent B and C are undecided despite the fact that Respondent C has made plans to return to Canada with his family. Respondent D seems to waver, which I observed seemed to depend on context and topic of discussion. However, it is Respondent D who identifies as Canadian while Respondent B hesitates and Respondent C is ambivalent. Respondent E is very clear he is Canadian. When asked to say something in a Chinese language, all but Respondent E, spoke in Hong Kong Cantonese. Respondent E declined.

Our voice carries information about our political, social and cultural histories (Bergvall quoted in Heisler, 2016). It locates us within a place, a time and the circumstances of those places and time. Hong Kong Cantonese and Hong Kong English serve as manifestos of Hong Kong identity, living languages responding to the needs of the Hongkongers. In many ways all the languages we speak never really leave us. Thus, it is important to note the complex and multi-layered indexes that are embedded in our voice (Foulkes, 2010: p. 6). In varying degree, the double-voicing heard when Respondent B, C and D speak parallels their multiple identities and affiliation while the accents and language of Respondent A and E resolutely confirm their identities as Hongkonger and Canadian respectively.

Chapter 5

Developing from *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 2* which considered Cantonese Hongkongers' opposition to China's imposition of Putonghua, *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 3* (henceforth *Vol. 3*) and *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 5* (henceforth *Vol. 5*) turn the focus on to Singapore to consider the circumstances of its mid-nineteenth century Chinese migrants. The volumes will also consider the history of Singapore's post-independence language policy - the prescriptive approach to mother tongue languages and its impact on the construction of Chinese Singaporean identity. *Vol. 3* appropriates a popular singer's performances to equivocate the authority of two global languages English and Mandarin. *Vol. 5* employs an inter-ethnic language, Singapore Colloquial English or Singlish to extend the language's ability to bridge linguistic spaces. Singlish is the ubiquitous local-born everyday language that Singaporeans—much to the chagrin of their leaders—identify with and by which they are identified.

The two projects aim to complement this chapter's attempt to tease out the historical threads that weave Singapore's race and language policies in order to understand the complexities of being Chinese in a multiracial Singapore. This chapter will consider Respondent G's¹ experience grappling with three different languages and his bifurcated identity, and Respondent F's difficulties in reconciling her sense of Chineseness. The chapter will also reflect on Chinese National Respondent H's experiences, her journey as a transnational Chinese, how her journey has seen a different accent and language in her son's speech.

The chapter will begin with a discussion on *Vol. 3*, the project's aim of challenging the authority of English and Mandarin Chinese before proceeding to discuss the political developments in Singapore that contributed to the make-up of Chinese Singaporean. These events, occurring in 1950s and early 1960s that gave rise to issues around language and identity, are considered alongside two important works - painter Chua Mia Tee's 1959 *National Language Class* and Ming Wong's 2005

¹ Transcripts for Respondents F, G and H are available in the Appendix pp. 287-324.

Four Malay Stories. My approach to both of these works is exploratory and my interpretation is presented as both a plausible, not definitive, reading of both works. The section will conclude with excerpts and points raised in interviews with Respondents F and G. The second half of the chapter follows this structure. It lays out the development of *Vol. 5* and its processes before discussing the development of Singlish. The discussion then turns to consider the experience of Chinese National Respondent H and her family perspectives.

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 3, 2016

Vol. 3 applies the homophonic sounds of English and Mandarin Chinese text to Teresa Teng's recording of *The Moon Represents My Heart* (*Yue⁴liang Dai⁴biao³ Wo³ de Xin¹* 月亮代表我的心). Both the singer and her song continue to be popular especially in East Asia. The project challenges the authority of the English and Mandarin Chinese languages by taking advantage of the perceived similarities in the homonyms to obscure differences in syllabic stresses or variables in pitch and tones particular to each language. This causes the sounds of the words to withhold, what Bal describes as 'their promise of translatability' (Bal, 2007, p. 115).

Vol. 3 takes a leaf from an exercise I was given in my Mandarin Chinese lessons here in Singapore and is similar to Mandarin language lessons which I have found over the Internet. The exercise, like those offered by many institutions and online organisations, uses the popularity of both the singer Teng (1953-1995) and the song *The Moon Represents my Heart* as language teaching aids (Gordon, 2012, p. 27) to promote Mandarin (Figure 5.1).

The lyrics of the song are transliterated into English to assist an English-speaking audience to sing along. At the 1:46 mark 'knee cheat can't ye can't' is a transliteration of *ni³ qu³ kan⁴ yi¹ kan⁴* (你去看一看) meaning 'have a look'. The transliteration results in significantly different meanings, thus making linguistic false friends. In some frames the English version appears cohesive, but taken as a whole,

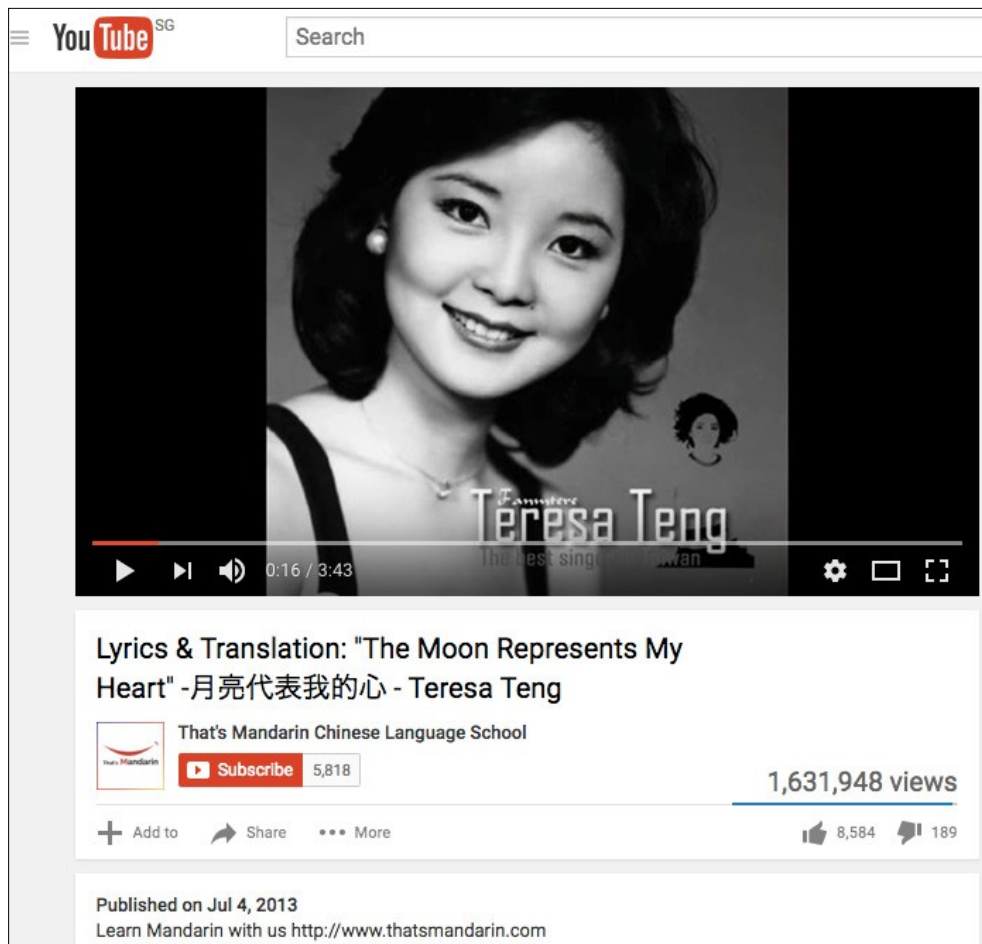


Figure 5.1 Screen shot of *That's Mandarin: Study Chinese in China*, 4 July 2013.
(Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-B5gAczFJps>>)

the English text lacks a continuous narrative. A student trying to connect to another language through the homonyms by speaking the English words in the hope of voicing the tonal Mandarin Chinese sounds will find little comfort and stability in the incoherent English text and unfamiliar Mandarin Chinese lyrics of the song.

It is interesting to note that while Teng's *The Moon Represents My Heart* afforded China's populace an alternative to the state-controlled policies (Baranovitch, 2003; Liew, 2013, pp. 3-4), Singapore leaders initiated a Speak Mandarin Campaign to encourage the use of Mandarin Chinese. History SG, Singapore National Library resource explained that the campaign aimed to 'improve communication and understanding' among the local Chinese communities by 'simplify[ing]' the many Chinese languages spoken and to 'create a Mandarin-speaking environment conducive to the successful implementation of the bilingual education programme' (History SG, not dated). It is also interesting to consider that the 'Speak Mandarin'

campaign and its corresponding *Speak Good English Movement* unwittingly pitted themselves against Singlish, the language which is featured in *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 5*.

Mandarin, Mandarin-Chinese, Putonghua and Global Languages

‘Mandarin’ has been used to refer to Putonghua the national language of China as well as *hua²yu³* (华语) the official language of Mandarin Chinese in Singapore. Sociolinguists Kevin Z. Wong and Ying-Ying Tan use ‘Mandarin-Chinese’ to refer to both Putonghua and the standard Mandarin Chinese taught in Singapore (Wong and Tan, 2017, p. 4). Linguist Daniel Kane use Putonghua when referring to China’s national language (Kane, 2006, pp. 12-15; Ramsey 1987, pp. 4–11) while Singapore’s Speak Mandarin Campaign (*jiang³hua²yu³yun⁴dong⁴* 讲华语运动) use Huayu to describe the language (Speak Mandarin Campaign 2017). Because of the difference in glossary, and to avoid confusion when referring to each language, henceforth, I shall take up Putonghua, following Kane’s example, when referring to China’s national language and use Mandarin Chinese when referring to the Chinese language used in Singapore.

According to linguist David Crystal, a global language is firstly the native tongue of a number of countries; secondly it is the official language and used in government, judiciary, media and education and thirdly the language is given priority in foreign-language teaching policy, in both school-going age as well as in adult education (Crystal, 2012, pp. 3-4). Elsewhere Crystal remarks that ‘... the use of global language does not exist in a vacuum but is closely aligned with the power of the nation-state’ (Crystal quoted in Jacques, 2009, p. 401).

Vol. 3 challenges the authority of global language English and potentially global language Mandarin (Gil, 2011, pp. 54-56) to consider an open and pluralistic approach to identity. To this end, *Vol. 3* employs linguist Lachman Khubchandani’s concept of the fluid borders of language - that the local community is based ‘not on unitary languages, but a shared space where many languages live together’ (Khubchandani quoted in Canagarajah, 2007a, p. 234). Hence, rather than the dictates of syntactic construction, language and its articulations are the consequence

of negotiations as well as of personal and communal experiences. The preceding in turn implicates the terms in which knowledge and subsequently identity are constructed. In short, language comes ground-up as a way to articulate rather than dictate identity.

Ambiguity of ‘Chinese’

By applying the limitations of the English transliteration of Mandarin Chinese to complicate the text, *Vol. 3* imitates Teng’s use of the ambiguity of Chineseness. In 1989 while performing in Japan, Teng introduced a song she was performing next (Figure 5.2). She began by thanking her audience in Mandarin, ‘*Xie⁴ xie* (谢谢)’ before switching her language to Japanese and completing her sentence in English, ‘*watashi wa Chinese*’ (わたしは Chinese). She does not complete the sentence in Japanese.



Figure 5.2 Teresa Teng speaking at her concert in Japan, 1989.
Image credit: Screen shot from You Tube video.

At the same time the subtitles read 我是中國人(*wo³ shi⁴ Zhong¹guo²ren²*) indicating ‘Chinese’ as a national identity.

Teng's use of languages in her 1989 address clearly calls on the complexity that has long been embedded in the English descriptor 'Chinese'. The descriptor in any Chinese language would detail a narrow and specific sense of cultural, ethnic and political belongings. This iconic moment speaks to the continuing discussion of the complicatedly entangled (Ang, 2001) notion of Chineseness – a Chineseness which I contend, rather than being monolithic and codified within rituals and Mandarin, is constantly being created, invented in some instances and very definitely transformed over time and in different places, spaces and circumstances.

Furthermore, I argue that the inadequacy of a single prescribed language is in the promise that such a language would create a community (Hobsbawn, 1996, p. 1073; Bachner, 2014, pp. 5-6). In practice, it is the community that over time and with its application, creates language to facilitate dialogue and communication amongst themselves and with other communities. However, in Singapore, Mandarin Chinese is hinged to Chinese identity.

The metonymic associations thrust onto Mandarin Chinese and Chinese identity and vice versa do both the language and identity a great disservice. These claims disregard their on-going and open-ended evolutions, one that is more akin to a process of continuous calibration and emergence. Caroline Hau, Professor at the Centre for Southeast Asia Studies, Kyoto University states that 'no single institution or agent, ... has so far been able to definitively claim authority as the final cultural arbiter of what constitutes "Chinese" and "Chineseness" ...' (Hau, 2012). So how did Mandarin Chinese become so definitively the sound of Chinese Singaporeans?

How did Mandarin Become the Sound of Singaporeans of Chinese Descent?

Singapore citizens who are sixty years or older, which is about slightly more than a quarter of the 3.5 million (Department of Statistics, 2016) would have had at least three identities by the time they reach their teens. They were born British subjects in the British colony of Singapore. In 1964 the colonial subjects became Malaysian citizens before finally becoming Singaporeans in 1965 when Singapore gained full independence. When the final dust for Singapore's independence settled, her founding fathers created the idea of a Singaporean identity around the concept of a

multiracial society of four main groups of people – the Chinese who make up the majority at 74.3 percent, the Malays totalling 13.4 percent, followed by the Indians at 9.1 percent. The fourth race is a group of Eurasians (Statistics Singapore, 2016). However, discussions of issues of race, and of language, that attend the daily lives of this island and its people began much earlier when the British established itself on the island in 1819 (Gupta, not dated; PuruShotam, 2000, p. 30).

Seven hundred years before it was ceded to the British East India Company, Singapore was a thriving major entrepôt of a dynamic global trade via the Silk Route of the Sea (Miksic, 2013, pp. 147). The bustling port saw a multitudinous throng of peoples and languages, for example, Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Khmer, Javanese, various Malay and Indian languages, Arab, Portuguese, and English. Polyglotism and multilingualism is more the reality than monolingualism (Gupta, not dated). Today the port continues to bustle with a multitudinous throng. However, within two hundred years the Chinese came to be a majority. How did this change in the demography of Singapore come about and what are the consequences and ramifications of such a change? How did Mandarin Chinese come to be the language of Chinese in Singapore, many of whom spoke the language—Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hakka and Hainanese—of their ancestors that migrated from the linguistically diverse regions of the southern coast of China? As sociologist Avtar Brah has noted, ‘all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even if they are implicated in the constructions of a ‘common’ we’ (Brah, 1996, p. 184).

Singapore, situated at the southern tip of peninsula Malaya, was predominantly Malay until British took over the island in 1819. The colonial government encouraged the immigration of Chinese labour because they felt that amongst indigenous and migrant Malays, peoples of Southeast Asia and the sub-continent of India, the Chinese had the disposition that would well serve the empire (PuruShotam, 2000). Sociolinguist Nirmala PuruShotam observed that Singapore’s racial classification was driven by ‘Euro-centric research and study of the Other by colonial powers. The population in the island of British Singapore was not exempt from orientalist deliberations upon themselves’ (PuruShotam, 2000, p. 30). It is noteworthy to consider that this is only tenable when one’s sense of self is racialised

on the one hand and on the other, that facticity of race continues to be debated despite UNESCO having stated otherwise in 1950 (UNESCO, 1950; Sussman, 2014).

Under British administration, Chinese labour poured into the island from Guangdong and Fujian provinces bringing with them their many different provincial languages and cultures of which all but two were mutually incomprehensible. By 1913 Chinese made up 75% of the island's population. This predominantly Chinese proportion would play a major role in Singapore's race and language policies that continue to resonate throughout contemporary Singapore. Among those that made the precarious journey in 1913 was Tang. His oral history is recorded and archived with the National Archives of Singapore in 1986 (Tang, 1986).

Tang was sixteen years old when he left Kaiping to join his uncle in Singapore. He worked in various jobs and did not return to his homeland (what is now called The Peoples Republic of China), instead took up Singapore citizenship. He recounts his journey in Cantonese with an accent similar to Guan and others in Kaiping. Unlike them, Tang would code-switch with Malay words such as *kepala* and *kapitan* referring to local Singapore leaders. 'One had to have connections,' he said, 'to be 'invited'. Tang and his fellow companions walked to the harbour to catch the boat to Hong Kong. He waited in Hong Kong for four days before boarding a 'multi-storeyed, three or four storeys high' cargo ship that took him to Singapore. He said that 'everyone slept in one big room', 'according to our surnames. ... At meal times we gathered in groups of ten and were given rice, soup and three accompanying dishes to eat'. Tang recalled alternately being concerned about not having enough to eat and being unable to eat because he was too seasick. The journey along the Hengmen Waterway is as treacherous today when I traced Tang's journey as it was when he made the journey.

While I could, in time, understand their Cantonese accounts, I noted a greater difference in accents between Tang and Guan, whom I recorded in 2010, than between Tang and Respondent G whom I recorded in 2015. Guan speaks Cantonese with a strong Kaiping accent and clear rhythmic stress while Tang's accent is less marked, sounding closer to Respondent G's than Guan's. The communities in which

they lived in may have influenced the difference between Tang and Guan who were contemporaries. As well education would have played a role in the difference between Tang's and Respondent G's speech (p. 24).

Since the time of British colonisation, 'few children went to school at all, and even fewer were educated in English' (Gupta, not dated). Those who had access to English-language schooling might go on to attain a British university education. As a result, English was the language of the privileged and ruling class. In a not-too-distant future, this legacy of British education system would shape race and language conditions of the Singapore nation because, while English is not ideologically neutral, it is the perception of its neutrality that afforded its leaders the means to thwart a critical racial conflict that might have otherwise ensued.

Another important development that would shape race and language policies in Singapore is that of a pan-Chinese identity politics which 1800s and 1900s revolutionist and reformist leaders in China brought to bear on the Qing rulers. These leaders took the domestic struggle against the Qing rulers to extra-territorial Chinese in Singapore and Canada. There they set up schools and organisations to teach and advance vernacular Mandarin (Figures 5.3 and 5.4) and organised drama and theatrical performances to propagate a sense of Chineseness (Yen, 1982, pp. 397-398). PuruShotam notes that

While before 1909 all Chinese schools in Singapore were dialect based and elusive to persons sharing a similar language, ... After 1917, when the national language movement was started in earnest in China, kuo yu ('national language', that is Mandarin) was adopted as the medium of instruction in most Chinese schools in Singapore (PuruShotam, 2000, p. 43).

The overseas efforts of China's revolutionist and reformist leaders and the eventual overthrowing of the Qing dynasty unified and democratized overseas Chinese communities. It is the containment of these politicised and vocal Chinese intellectuals—at the inception of nationhood in the 1960s and when Singapore was expelled from the larger Malaysian nation which it had been historically a part of—that exacerbated the urgent need to articulate policies which serve as the ground bass that is a continuum of Singapore's race and language issues.



Figure 5.3 Dictionary at turn of 20th Century.
Image credit: Stanford University East Asian Library.



Figure 5.4 Textbook at turn of 20th Century. Image credit: Stanford University East Asian Library.

The National Language Lesson, 1959

The tumultuous years that characterised Singapore's struggle for self-governance and concerns around identity and language is encapsulated in Chua's 1959 *The National Language Lesson* (Figure 5.5). Heralded today as the seminal commemoration of Singapore's independence, the painting was done when Chua was a member of the Equator Arts Society and a year after Malay was designated as the national language. In fact, various members of the society posed as the teacher and students. That the provenance of Chua's painting was clarified in another exhibition (Yap, 2016, p. 82) and the lack of scholarship of the art produced in this period—the 1950s and 1960s, the years leading up to Singapore's independence, were fraught with ideological and political struggles—evinced the complexities that overshadowed the work.



Figure 5.5 Chua Mia Tee, *National Language Class*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 112 x 153 cm. Image credit: National Heritage Board.

Chua was born in China and immigrated to Singapore with his family in 1937 at the age of six. He studied at several Mandarin-language schools and was also conversant in Malay. It is his fluency with these languages that would constitute the linguistic interplay to tease out the poignant questions ‘*siapa nama kamu?*’ (what is your name?) and ‘*di-mana awak tinggal?*’ (where do you live?). More noteworthy though,

in the context of this research, are two elements Chua invested in the painting – the repeated questions written in spoken syllables as well as the mourning pin worn on the left sleeve of the student standing directly opposite the teacher.

As discussed in Chapter 2 Malay was the lingua franca of trade. It was also the language of the working class. Even the colonial authorities were schooled in Malay (Turnbull, 2009, p. 100) and *Pasar Melayu* (market Malay) was used by the general populace. Therefore, it could be argued that the repeated questions in Chua's National Language Class, written as it would be spoken, '*Si-apa na-ma ka-mu?*' and '*Di ma-na ka-mu ting-gal?*' addressed a future generation and their sense of belonging. Furthermore, the issue at hand is not just a matter of linguistics but that of identity.

The Mourning Pin

Mourning pins, or *xiao*⁴, 孝 which also means 'filial piet', are small pieces of coloured cloth (Figure 5.6). These small pieces of cloth, about 3.5cm by 2cm, are pinned on shirt sleeves and worn during the mourning period.



Figure 5.6 Mourning pins. These are worn by Chinese mourners observing traditional funeral rites and rituals.

In 1959 Singapore leaders established the Ministry of Culture in Singapore and initiated the “Use National Language Campaign” to promote the Malay language. Art critic and columnist Marco Hsu’s observation that Chua’s National Language Class ‘can be said to contain the message of social education as it depicted some enthusiastic Chinese youth in Malaya² learning the National Language’ (Hsu, 1999, p. 104) highlights the significance and the adoption of the Malay language. Many Chinese groups favoured Mandarin, especially those who held allegiance to China.

Thus, taking up Malay as their national language was ‘to sever their cultural and political loyalties to China (often referred to as the Motherland) ...’ (Seng, 2007, p. 50). In the case of the student articulating the words in Malay in Chua’s painting, the pin for practical reasons had to be worn on his left, which when considering that Chineseness is patrilineal and in the light of the 1955 Bandung Agreement, is pointed yet entirely in keeping with the politics of the day.

Four Malay Stories, 2005

Chua’s 1959 *The National Language Lesson* encapsulating concerns around identity and language finds an echoing voice in actor P. Ramlee’s films of the same period, the oeuvre on which Singaporean Berlin-based artist Wong weaves his own explorations on the same issues.

Wong’s *Four Malay Stories* video installation was commissioned in 2005 for *Labilabu*, a two-man exhibition held in conjunction with *Pesta Raya Malay Cultural Festival* at the Esplanade, Singapore. In this project, Wong uses Ramlee’s films as source materials to explore identity and language. In his remake, or ‘sweding (Sutherland and Counts, 2010, p. 110) of the original’ the artist inverts notions of race, gender and age (Baecker, 2011, p. 1) by casting, or rather miscasting himself to foreground the racial and linguistic complications that shadowed Ramlee’s films, bringing mimicry to play in order to ‘challenge assumptions of ‘nation’, ‘family’, ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Tang, 2009, p. 51).

² Singapore was part of Malaya until 1963 when she was expelled.

Wong re-creates key scenes from four of Ramlee's best known films and played the sixteen principal characters from the classic 1956 Malay period drama *Semerah Padi* (Figure 5.7), the 1962 melodrama *Ibu Mertua* (My Mother-in-law) (Figure 5.8), the comedy *Labu dan Labi* (Labu and Labi) (Figure 5.9) filmed the same year and Ramlee's 1970 social drama *Dr Rushdi* (Figure 5.10).



Figure 5.7 Ming Wong, *Four Malay Stories – Semerah Padi*, 2005.
Image credit: Ming Wong.



Figure 5.8 Ming Wong, *Four Malay Stories – Ibu Mertua*, 2005.
Image credit: Ming Wong.



Figure 5.9 Ming Wong, *Four Malay Stories – Labu dan Labi*, 2005.
Image credit: Ming Wong.



Figure 5.10 Ming Wong, *Four Malay Stories – Dr Rushdi*, 2005.
Image credit: Ming Wong.

Ramlee, like his contemporary Chua, used art to reflect multi-ethnicity, to promote modernity, and, prior to Singapore's expulsion in 1965, to advance the inclusion of Singapore to create Malaysia (Bernard, 2006, p. 168). As with Ang Lee's 2000 *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, Ramlee's films were products of transnational efforts and their scripts evoked the multilingual settings of pre-independence Singapore and Malaya societies. 1950s and early 1960s film industry in Singapore

and Malaya was helmed and financed by Shaw Brothers from Shanghai and Hong Kong who had employed film directors from India such as B.S. Rajhans and featured Malay actors, of which Ramlee was the most popular (Bernard, 2006, p. 165). All of the films produced in this period were located in Singapore and Malaya and the multicultural aspects of the communities were highlighted through the transnational casts as well as the use of Malay, English and Chinese languages.

At a time when Singapore was struggling to formulate and articulate its identity, Ramlee and his work bridged the plurilingual communities. These films were made in a turbulent period of political and cultural upheavals when Singapore struggled with decolonisation, nationalism and the long hoped for independence. Southeast Asian culture historian Timothy Bernard writes that many of the films became ‘vital to the literature of the region ...played a role in helping Southeast Asian understand themselves’ (Bernard, 2006, p. 164).

In fact, Ramlee’s films as well as many of the lines Wong used are now classic quotations that have entered the popular lexicon of Malay society. Both Bernard and film studies academic William Van der Heide observed teenagers holding discussions and quoting lines from these films. In William Van der Heide’s example the teenagers were reciting lines from a 1961 film *Ali Baba Bujang Lapok*, an analogy of which might be that of teenagers today reciting lines off Barry Levinson’s 1987 *Good Morning Vietnam*. Bernard noted that the new forms of expression in films of the 1950s films ‘one that was tied to oral story-telling traditions of the past while also creating a new identity’ (Bernard 2006, p. 164).

However, it is Wong’s limited fluency in Malay that affords ‘a critical recognition of difference and ambivalence’ (Tang, 2009, p. 51) as he says over and over again the iconic lines in repeated takes of the same scene. Thus, Wong’s accented speech allows for the dross of a perfidious fidelity that Maharaj notes as ‘the condition of being and becoming’ (Maharaj quoted in Campbell and Tawadros, 2001, p. 39). Each scene is subtitled in English as in a language instructional video. Wong’s 2005 inversion of conventional notions of identity—race, gender and age—and his performance of the Malay script is analogous to Chua’s 1959 mourning pin and

written text on the blackboard addressing an emerging complication of being Chinese in Singapore.

Being Chinese in Singapore

Art historian Kobena Mercer contents that ‘‘community’ [is] a verb and one that is beyond ancestral and territorial claims’ (Kobena quoted in Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 200). However, every Singaporean is racialised at birth each according to a historical source country, that is the country of their patriarchal ancestors. These classifications also disregard the fact that many Singaporeans today are most probably second, if not third and fourth, generation, born in Singapore and have only known Singapore as their home.

Singaporeans are racially categorised under four main groups - Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others. Singaporeans are not identified as Singaporean – a policy that sociologist Chua Beng Huat maintains has its foundation in the leaders’ perception of the Chinese, Indian and Islamic civilization as the foundation of each racialised Singaporean. ‘By the logic of this racialisation, there is, ironically, no culturally defined ‘Singaporean’ way of life in Singapore’ only Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others (Chua, 2003, p. 60) speaking Mandarin Chinese, Malay and Tamil, their state-prescribed mother tongues.

Mother Tongue

In line with policies inaugurated in 1956 (All-Party Committee of the Singapore Legislative Assembly, 1956: 41), all students must also learn a mother tongue that was assigned according to their race, that is, ‘to a language that is socially identified with a particular ‘racial’ group’ (PuruShotam, 2000, p. 50). It is interesting to note that Tan observes that the decision to assign mother tongues is not based on ‘actual linguistics repertoire of any given individuals’ (Tan, 2017, p. 97).

The policy effectively gave its citizens of Chinese descent a new mother tongue as Mandarin Chinese is not spoken among families, either at home or within the community (Chiang, 2013, Appendix pp. 384-385).

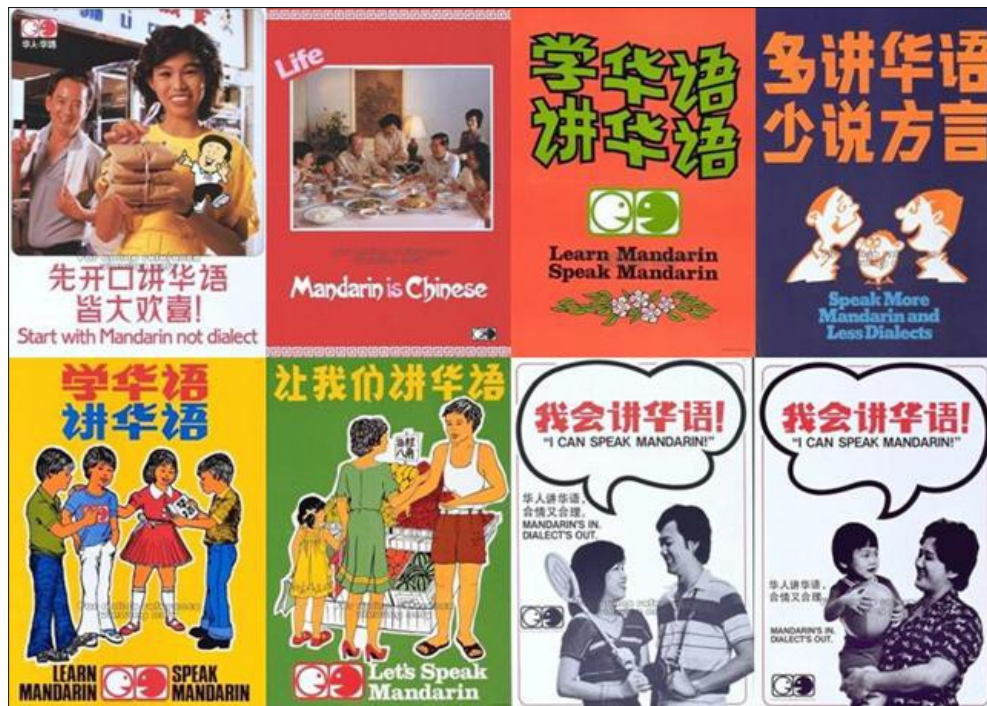


Figure 5.11 Speak Mandarin Campaign posters. Image credit: National Archives of Singapore.

When it was clear that Mandarin Chinese was not making much inroads into the hearts and minds of Chinese Singaporeans and that language competency was not achieved, the government launched the Speak Mandarin campaign in 1979 (Figure 5.11). The campaign was tasked to ‘transform a deeply entrenched social-linguistic habit of Chinese Singaporeans who were long used to the speaking of dialects’ (Promote Mandarin Council). However, this meant that those who did not speak a Chinese language at home, must also learn Mandarin Chinese otherwise they are susceptible to being labeled *xiang¹ jiao¹ ren²* (香蕉人) ‘bananas’, a demeaning term that suggests one is yellow on the outside but white on the inside’ (Chiang, 2013, Appendix p. 385) Singapore’s founding leader and then the Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew addressed the audience gathered at the opening of the campaign. The aim of the campaign was to build a Mandarin-speaking environment and to such ends,

[a]ll government officers, ... hospitals and clinics, and especially those in manning counters, will be instructed to speak Mandarin except to the old, those over sixty. All Chinese taxi-drivers, bus conductors, and hawkers, can and will be required to pass an oral Mandarin test, or to attend Mandarin classes to make

them adequate and competent to understand and speak Mandarin to their customers (Ministry of Culture, 1979, p. 2).

Lee reminded Chinese Singaporeans that learning Mandarin Chinese was ‘culturally worthwhile’ and, with Deng Xiaoping’s open door policy, useful in accessing China (The Straits Times quoted in PuruShotam, 2000, p. 69).

Speak Mandarin if You are Chinese

Over the years the annual Speak Mandarin campaign had steadfastly encouraged the speaking of Mandarin Chinese as a sign of being Chinese. Their posters encouraged the Chinese in Singapore to ‘*Make Mandarin the Common Tongue of our Chinese Community*’ (1979); ‘*Mandarin is (for) Chinese*’ (1985); ‘*If You are Chinese, Make a Statement in Mandarin*’ (1990) (Figure 5.12); ‘*Huayu Cool*’ (1990) (Figures 5.13 and 5.14) ‘*Immerse yourself today. Mandarin. It gets better with use*’ (2017).



Figure 5.12

If You are Chinese, Make a Statement in Mandarin, 1990.
Image credit: National Archives of Singapore.



Figure 5.13

Huaren Huayu 华人 华语, 1990 (A Chinese person speaks Mandarin)
Image Credit: National Archives of Singapore.



Figure 5.14

Speak Mandarin Campaign, 2006. Image credit: National Archives of Singapore.

Thus, over time in Singapore, Mandarin Chinese came to be synonymous to Chinese Singaporean. However, I would like to propose that speaking of Mandarin Chinese does not make you a Chinese. The racialization of Mandarin Chinese inevitably hinged the language to the race despite the reality that many non-Chinese Singaporeans speak Mandarin Chinese as well as Hokkien, Teochew and other Chinese languages. They also speak Malay. The polylingualism that had long characterised the sounds of this multi-ethnic nation affords them the nimble shuttling between communities. As Canagarajah observes, in a ‘pluralistic orientation to community, communication and competence’ there are no permanent insiders or outsiders (Canagarajah, 2007a, p. 238). Singlish, a variety of English spoken in Singapore, is a good example of a language that evolved through such pluralistic contacts and communal negotiations.

‘Super *rojak*’³

I met Respondent F at LaSalle College of the Arts where she was completing the final year of her Master of Arts programme. Prior to her studying Arts Management

³ *rojak* refers to a vegetable and fruit salad. *Rojak* is a Malay word probably from Javanese language. In Singlish it refers to ‘an untidy mixture of things; a mess’ or a sense of being ‘jumbled up, mixed, up, messy, untidy’ (see also Lee, 2004).

at the school, she had been living in and working for a Buddhist monasterial organisation in Taiwan, China and Australia. During our conversation, she interspersed her Singapore Standard English with Singlish and explained terminologies in Mandarin Chinese and Taiwanese Mandarin.

Respondent F speaks with a Standard Singapore English accent—a marked stress of /r/ sounds as in [Singa pORe], (ResF R1, pp. 287-288)—and the rhythmic stress and rising and falling tones of a Singlish accent, for example, in [Sing! ga" pore] with the last syllable ‘pore’ slightly stretched and in [SING ga Porean] (ResF R5, p. 290).

During the conversation Respondent F often use Chinese language phrases and phrase constructions. For example, the use of the word ‘call’ to mean ‘greet’, which in Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese *giu3* (*jiao*⁴ 叫) means ‘to shout’ and ‘to greet’, and in the insertion of ‘what’ in ‘more aware of what context you are in right now’ (ResF R6, p. 290).

Respondent F feels that it is her proficiency in Mandarin Chinese that lends to her understanding and awareness of the circumstances of her Chinese ancestry.

Because I actually very much appreciate my Chinese roots now having first gone back to my ancestral home, one thing and the second thing being in Taiwan and China. ... if I wasn’t able to speak the language, I wouldn’t appreciate what I was, I was experiencing there... completely. because they can’t speak English (ResF R25, p. 293).

It is her mastery and command of the language that helps her bridge differences in values and meanings assigned to words. The differences in Taiwan Mandarin and Mandarin Chinese spoken in Singapore was a hurdle Respondent F had to overcome. She explains,

... it was actually quite difficult understanding certain terminologies that they were using, certain words that they were using, it was very different from what, how we spoke in Singapore, the kind of Mandarin that we spoke in Singapore (ResF R1, pp. 287-288).

For example, while the term *xian¹sheng* 先生 (in this instance meaning Sir or Mister) in Singapore might be considered a very courteous way to address a man, in Taiwan and China it would not be a respectful or proper way of addressing one's elders and betters as it lacked the appropriate gravitas. Even Chinese Nationals noted that Respondent F spoke like a Taiwanese (ResF R4, p. 289-290).

Respondent F also feels that Mandarin Chinese is the marker of Chinese identity, which attest to the success of Singapore's language policy in positioning Mandarin Chinese as the mother tongue of Chinese Singaporeans. Her familial language is Cantonese. She observes that 'That is not... that is a dialect. I wouldn't say that it's Mandarin'. She elaborates,

I am Cantonese. That would be my... that would be like... that's part of being Chinese but that is not the mainstream Chinese language. I wouldn't say that... that most people would be able to communicate in China. Or even Taiwan (ResF R32, p. 294).

While Respondent F appreciates that it is her command of Mandarin Chinese that affords her insights into being Taiwanese and Chinese Nationals, she also notes that her own identity as Chinese is fraught. She says, 'I actually had an issue about being Chinese because I'm not Taiwanese Chinese, neither am I China Chinese' (ResF R20, pp. 292-293) until she visited her ancestral home in China. She relates the experience.

And then that was actually one of the instances that I actually felt 'oh so this is where I came from, where my ancestors are from.' That really... 'actually I'm from China'. That thought actually came into my head. ... [m]y roots were actually from China. Before that, I would never ever think of it that way (ResF R22, p. 293).

I noted, however, that while she also refers to Singapore as home, Respondent F also 'feel kind a bit like Taiwanese' and strongly identifies with the Taiwanese Buddhist monastery (ResF R83, pp. 302-303), and feeling somewhat a mix, or like a tabula

rasa, always beginning again. She asked, “what was I culturally then? Kind of like ‘rojak’, seriously. Super ‘rojak’ already by then” (ResF R84, p. 303) and adds,

none of the above and all of the above. So many environments have shaped the person that I am today and I cannot... I cannot say that I am specifically something. I cannot say that. I mean, of course, my passport is Singapore passport (ResF R86, p. 304).

It is interesting that despite her proficient command of Mandarin Chinese and Singapore’s leaders’ long-standing policy to position Mandarin Chinese as a way of authenticating Chineseness in Singapore, Respondent F uses a Malay word rojak meaning ‘mixed’ in a Singlish context to describe her identity.

A Singaporean in Hong Kong and a Hongkonger in Singapore.

Respondent G was an occasional assistant trainer of my Taiko classes. Although we had been introduced before, I did not know much about him. That is until my curiosity was piqued when during a lesson, I overheard him talking about his ‘other life’ in Hong Kong. Respondent G and I arranged to meet for lunch and an interview. I asked him to tell me of his experience migrating from Hong Kong to Singapore.

Respondent G and his family left Hong Kong for Singapore in 1993, prior to the 1997 Hong Kong Handover. He was then a little over a year old and does not recall much of the journey. In the interview Respondent G found it easier to respond to my questionnaire.

Respondent G speaks English with a strong Hong Kong Cantonese accent. It is generously peppered with Singlish terms and many of his sentences end with the declaring participle lah. Besides English, Respondent G is at home speaking Hong Kong Cantonese which is particularly useful during the family’s annual return to Hong Kong. Among his peers he also speaks Mandarin Chinese which he learnt in school, and Singlish. Listening to Respondent G, one could easily sense the approach that Canagarajah speaks of - the easy back and forth sliding between Standard Singapore English and Singlish spoken with Hongkong Cantonese rhythm and stress, each bringing to the fore and sounding the sedimentation of his various

experiences (Canagarajah 2002, p. 249). Unlike the earlier nineteenth century migrants and their clan associations, Respondent G's sense of identity is not based on a unitary language but a 'shared space where many languages live together' (Canagarajah, 2007a, p. 234).

Respondent G recalls his younger days, going to school where he had to learn to speak Mandarin Chinese and write the Simplified script that is taught in Singapore. When he returns from school, his parents would teach him Hong Kong Cantonese and to write the language in traditional Chinese script. He remembers having to learn several languages, 'So, when I young I was taught in two different types of Chinese words. So for me it's really quite hard as a normal kid 'cause I, two different types of Chinese...' (ResG R21, p. 317).

Another interesting thread that ran through Respondent G's interview was the fact that despite having lived in Singapore all but one and a half years of his young life, he also identifies Hong Kong as 'home'. He sees himself and prefers to be known as a Hongkonger⁴ – fast-paced and task-oriented, individualistic and non-conformist (ResG, R3-5, pp. 312-313). He is quite adamant that his being Chinese is not related to China.

I just recognize myself as a Chinese, lah 'Oh so you are from China.' I say 'No!' I will very (inaudible). I will say 'No!' ... I don't recognize myself as a China citizen. I recognize myself as a Hong Kong citizen (ResG R16, pp. 315-316).

Respondent G is also attracted to the relative security that Singapore affords him, given Hong Kong's eventual integration into China. He also feels that Hong Kong is more dynamic and more efficient than Singapore. He compares himself to the Hong Kong system in his own approach to work. Singaporeans, he feels, need to be instructed and thus are not efficient unlike how things are done in Hong Kong - 'we just want to make sure the thing is done and is not illegally or the wrong manner. So, ya' (ResG R10, p. 314).

⁴ Singapore Government does not allow double citizenship.

Furthermore, Singaporeans tend to follow routines and procedure.

Er, for me, when I work I usually sometimes I won't follow procedures but I make sure it still works, totally functionable, but I just doesn't follow procedures 'cause I think that if everything we need to wait for the standard procedure, it will waste much longer time, lah but for working style-wise, still around the same, lah, 'cause however, still Chinese, lah (ResG R15, p. 315).

The duality he feels was brought home when Respondent G was at Food Republic,⁵ Hong Kong. He was about to put in his usual order, to say 'tarpau' when he realised that he was ordering his takeaway in Singlish in Hong Kong. Perhaps it was the ambiguity and equivocal quality of language that caused this momentary slipping away of awareness. Perhaps Respondent G is more at home in Singapore than he realised. For now, he is a Singaporean in Hong Kong and a Hongkonger in Singapore. In contrast to Respondent G's bifurcated sense of his citizenship, his sense of Chineseness is clear. It is not bounded by ideology or territory.

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 5, 2017

Vol. 5 focuses on Singlish. It draws from selected dialogues in Lee's successful *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (henceforth *Crouching Tiger*) to weave a Singlish presence whose simplicity and economy elide the 'hidden' historical, trans-social and transcultural elements at play. *Vol. 5* was designed for one of my interviewees, Respondent H, who except for three years has lived in Singapore since 2001. The local patois flourished despite years of Government policies to contain its spread and use (Au Yong, 2007, Leimgruber, 2014, pp. 52-53; Tan, 2002; Wee, 2005, pp. 56-59). However, I put the project on hold in 2015 when Singlish phrases were featured in the nation's fiftieth National Day Parade (Figure 5.15). This feature is unusual as it is outside the bounds of CMIO⁶ culture-based programmes of preceding years. Singlish was also used in the incumbent leaders' political rallies leading up to the 2015 Singapore General Election. I took up the project in 2016 when I realised how deeply Singlish is embedded in the Singaporean sense of identity and the potential of

⁵ Food Republic is a food chain in Singapore with branches in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Taipei.

⁶ CMIO is an acronym for Singapore's racial composition of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others.

the language to afford inclusion and make inclusive what would otherwise be circumscribed spaces.

The pronounced variation of accents heard in Lee's 2000 *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* undergirds the video *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 5*.⁷

Technically *Vol. 5* follows the same processes used in *Vol. 2*. The initial frames follow *Vols. 1, 2* and *3* and invites the audience to articulate the text. Appropriate excerpts of the dialogue from *Crouching Tiger* are matched to Singlish terms and phrases⁸. A long list was gathered from listening to various conversations and exchanges heard among friends or overhead in public situations. However, as *Vol.5* is a beginner's introduction to Singlish, only the more common and basic phrases are used in the video.



Figure 5.15 Singapore's 50th National Day Parade preview show, 2015.
Image credit: Xabryna Kek.

A still of a scene from the film was rendered into Black and White and re-sketched in Photoshop. I removed all background to accentuate the interlocutors and English text (Figure 5.16). After an appropriate length of time, the English text fades into Singlish counterpart. It is interesting to note that the Singlish text takes the place of

⁷ See Introduction of Chapter 1.

⁸ I used Wang Hui Ling, James Schamus, Tsai Kuo Jung script available at: <http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Crouching-Tiger,-Hidden-Dragon.html> (Accessed: 6 November 2009)

the English which is a translation from its original wuxia text.⁹ The segment ends with an explanatory text rolling right to left. The text is laid out in keeping with those of print and digital dictionary – the Singlish head term or phrase, is followed by its pronunciation, etymology and parts of speech and, when necessary, a short statement.

Vol. 5 was specially designed as a start to extend the language space of the many different cultures of peoples living in Singapore. Singlish's advantage as a concretion of languages spoken and heard in Singapore encourages participation as interlocutors easily understand most of the terms and are being understood (Tan, 2017, p. 90). Language and communication happen in spaces where differences are not eliminated, when, as in Lee's *Crouching Tiger*, '[t]he "here" matters as much as the "there," and the ability to understand the "Other" is as valued as the sense of attachment to an aboriginal "self" (Klein, 2004, p. 31).

When the lingua franca becomes a forbidden language, a new common language would be established within the shortest time frame. ... Localised varieties of Mandarin and English started to develop, ... This matured into a unique language environment (Chiang, 2013, Appendix pp. 384-385).

Singlish

Singlish evolved from Bazaar Malay the lingua franca of pre-colonial Southeast Asia. As sociolinguist Andrea Fraser Gupta noted,

Singapore has always had many ethnic groups, [not just four] and a dazzling range of languages. It is extremely rare for a person to be monolingual -- most people are bilingual from infancy and it is common for people to know and use four or five languages in their daily life. All these languages have influenced each other (Gupta, not dated).

⁹ *Crouching Tiger* is one of a five-part fantasy (wuxia) written by Wang Dulu (1909-1977). After reading the novel, Ang Lee wrote the précis and gave it to his scriptwriter, James Schamus, who worked with two writers from Taiwan to turn the novel into a script (Jay, 2006, p. 134; Pan, 2009, p. 222).



Figure 5.16

Gerard Choy, *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 5*, 2017.

Singlish borrows its grammar, syntax and lexicon from several languages, for example, Chinese languages as such as Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Indian languages such as Telegu, Bengali, Hindi, Tamil, Malay, European and North American slang terms. The colloquial language is generally used amongst family and friends and heard in casual and informal situations. Many in Singapore move easily between languages and Singlish. Deterding observes that in Singapore ‘many young people can easily switch between the two varieties depending on who they are talking to, where they are, and what they are talking about’ (Deterding, 2007, p. 6).

Written Singlish first appeared in 1982 when writer Sylvia Toh’s *Eh Goondu!* formalised spelling and punctuation of Singlish terms and phrases. This was closely followed by Michael Chiang’s multilingual theatre plays *Army Daze* in 1987 and 1988 and *Beauty World* in 1988 (Chiang quoted in Singapore Infopedia, 2017). The plays were scripted in Singlish, English, Malay, Hokkien and Mandarin. It is noteworthy that Sylvia Toh’s and Michael Chiang’s Singlish terms and phrases differ from those of contemporary Singlish aficionados, for example, Colin Goh, Mr Brown and Jack Lee.¹⁰ This is entirely appropriate as Singlish is a living language. ‘[A] finished language has no future in a multicultural society, because a multicultural society resides between languages’ (TEDx Singapore, 2015). Thus,

¹⁰ Goh, Brown and Lee are available from these websites, respectively. www.talkingcock.com/; www.mrbrown.com; <http://www.mysmu.edu/faculty/jacklee/>

instead of autonomous categories of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Others that government policies had envisaged, a pan-Singaporean identity developed and, along with it, Singlish, ‘... used by [the] people to express their local linguistic identity’ (The Straits Times, 2017).

Yet the language is stigmatized by government officials and educational institutions and considered by the same to be detrimental to pursuits of excellence, particularly in finance and economic progress (Wee, 2005, pp. 57-61). Thus, Singlish is not associated with good English.

The language situation in Singapore is a highly politicized one. This is reflected in the government’s open admission that English–mother tongue bilingualism is the desired outcome of their language policies. ‘... In this plan there is no place for a variety of English that does not fulfil some sort of socioeconomic potential’ (Cavallaro and Ng, 2009, p. 155).

The Speak Good English Movement was launched in 2000 to stem Singlish and to promote the use of ‘good English’. However, despite efforts by the government, a groundswell developed and rallied in support of Singlish. Sociolinguist Jakob Leimgruber reports that while it is hard to be certain of the success of the campaigns to limit the use of Singlish, the Speak Good English Movement has seen encouraging signs in the rise of the use of English (Leimgruber, 2014, p. 48). It is interesting to note that Singlish and literature using Singlish is offered in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in several universities around the world, for example, York, Boston, Duisburg and Essen and Fribourg (Sin, 2017). Singlish is used in creative writing, journalism, promotional material, and on the web in chat rooms and blogs (Gupta 2003). Many organisations have also incorporated Singlish terms and phrases in their public relations campaigns. Jetstar Asia, a branch of Qantas budget airline even celebrated Singapore’s 2015 National Day by using Singlish for all its onboard announcements.¹¹

¹¹ Jetstar’s announcement is available from <http://www.jetstar.com/sg/en/singlish-flights>

In his TEDx presentation writer Gwee Li Sui describes Singlish and Singlish users as language and speakers that ‘move from the inward-looking part to the borders, to the accessible outward looking part [...] to create communication’ (TEDx Singapore, 2015). *Vol. 5* maps Singlish to Lee’s transnational *Crouching Tiger* to emulate Lee’s intention for an inclusionist world and multiplex cultures (Kirkland quoted in Jay, 2006, p. 138). *Crouching Tiger* ‘illuminate [s] ... “the condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space” that characterizes our current moment’ (Klein, 2004, p. 21). Pan notes that *Crouching Tiger*,

... required cultural ambidexterity of the first order on the part of Lee, who alone bridged the two worlds the words expressed. To be such a bridge, he had to see double, two worlds at once, through Chinese and non-Chinese eyes, and to work in a state of constant and subtle reference between the two (Pan, 2009, p. 222).

Vol. 5 employs sound’s ability to agitate and to cause a rippling. Gwee in his TEDx talk remarks that Singlish has the ability to cut across ‘distinct grammars and syntaxes [to] create a way where previously there was no way to communicate’ (TEDx Singapore, 2015).

Both Singlish and *Crouching Tiger* draw from their centres – from what is known, to their borders – to that which may come. It is their agitations of the borders (LaBelle, 2014, p. iix) that rupture the discreet containments—of Chineseness and genre, in the case of *Crouching Tiger* and of race and languages in the case of Singlish—to create ambiguousness, the ability to hold more than one. The transnational China in Lee’s *Crouching Tiger* punctured his long-cherished imagination of “... a China that is fading away in our heads” (Lee quoted in Jay, 2006, p. 134). Singlish is an everchanging tapestry, a multilingual weave sounding the ‘interethnic cohesion’ of a multiracial community (Leimgruber, 2014, p. 52).

While it is laudable that Singlish, like Teng’s *The Moon Represents My Heart*, afforded voice to a community in need of a way to express itself, its contiguous borders excluded those not familiar with the language. And in this way, many Chinese Nationals who have migrated to Singapore became even more differentiated from Singapore’s Chinese.

Chinese Singaporeans and Chinese Nationals

In Singapore there are about 200,000 Chinese Nationals migrant workers (Lin, 2010, p. 194) and over four million Chinese Singaporeans. Chinese Nationals are attracted to Singapore because there would not be too much of a problem integrating as Chinese make up a majority of the population. Furthermore, Singapore's education system stresses bilingualism – English and Mandarin Chinese which will greatly benefit their children's future. However, these similarities are facile as sociologist Chua's reflection regarding Singapore's journalists' reportage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics reveals,

While they confessed to being proud of the 'Chinese' achievements, they were also very self-aware that it was the achievement of China and has little to do with themselves as Singaporeans (Chua, 2009, p. 248).

I agree that the 'Chinese' pride the Singapore journalist felt is misplaced. The extravagant spectacle that is the Beijing Olympics opening ceremony, particularly the centrepiece entitled 'Chinese Characters' is not about being 'Chinese' but about 'defining China's national character' (Bachner, 2014, p. 13) evidenced in particular by their claim to Chinese script and print technology. Unlike the *longue durée* of China's Chinese culture, exemplified by traditional text and print press to LED panel and digital technology, Singapore's 'Chinese' culture is allochthonous (Leimgruber, 2014, p. 59). Chinese Singapore identity formed, developed and practiced at another place is not a translation of China's Chinese culture. Simply put, Chinese Nationals and Singapore's Chinese are entirely different and while there are some similarities, for example, in physical appearance, the '[s]ocial distant is evident' (Chan and Seet, 2003, p. 173) and none more so than in speech. The primary language of the Chinese from China is Putonghua whereas English is the preferred language of Singapore's Chinese (Wong and Tan, 2017, p. 18).

Economist researcher with Xiamen University's Research School for Southeast Asian Studies Dr Lin Mei agrees and writes that the difficulties in communication lie with language. She points to English as the culprit in the breakdown in communications between China's Chinese and Singapore Chinese (Lin, 2010, p. 206). However, English may not be the only culprit as Singaporeans tend to speak

Singlish in casual meetings and informal settings, for example, at food courts as Respondents G¹² and H have noted. Not too long ago there was an altercation between an Indian Singaporean who ordered a *tarpau* (打包) of noodles, that is, ‘noodles to go’ spoken in Singlish. His order was taken by a Chinese National who chastised him for not speaking ‘Chinese’.

Respondent H has a reverse version of the problem. She speaks both English and Putonghua but has trouble ordering her lunch at the food court or in casual exchanges with local Singaporeans. Unlike the Singaporean Indian, she does not speak Singlish. Sociolinguists Jie Kathy Dong and Jan Blommaert note that the ‘Chinese’ in Singlish is not the same as ‘Chinese’, that is Putonghua, used in Beijing, and that the English and Mandarin Chinese languages in Singlish are spoken with Singaporean accents, ‘[i]n other words not just ‘Chinese’ and ‘English’ are blended in Singlish, but particular varieties of both languages’ (Dong and Blommaert, 2009: p. 2). The very language that wove disparate communities together is keeping another apart. As Lane puts it, ‘Social relations in populated spaces have long been defined by who can hear what, ...’ (Lane, 2015, p. 153).

‘I never feel I am Singaporean’

Respondent H is a friend’s colleague in Singapore. She left China to work in Singapore in 2001 when she was twenty-two years old. Like Respondent G, Respondent H felt more comfortable responding to the questionnaire when we met over drinks at a mall near her housing estate in Toa Payoh, a residential town in Central Singapore.

And as with Respondent G, Respondent H does not feel very much a Singaporean. She says certain words with the nasalized tone, for example in her pronunciation of ‘hometown’ (ResH R1, p. 319) and the change of /l/ to /n/ in ‘differently’ (ResH R2, p. 319). She also speaks with a Singapore Standard English accent in lengthening her vowels as well as placing unnecessary stress on words that do not need them, for example in ‘but’ and ‘culture’ (ResH R8, p. 320). She considers herself a Chinese, ‘I

¹² See p. 314.

strongly feel I'm a Chinese and ya, I'm proud to be a Chinese' (ResH R5, p. 319) and a Singapore PR,¹³ insisting that 'I never feel I am a Singaporean' (ResH R2, p. 319). Language, the ones we accept as well as the ones we reject, gives us a sense of who we are – our personal, collective and national identity.

Respondent H relates her encounters with language issues in Singapore. Both Respondent H and her husband are determined to give their son the advantage of a world-class education and felt that Singapore's bilingual education would afford him a head start, even as they recognise that he would not be fluent in Wuhanese, their mother tongue. At seven years old, her son speaks fluent Singlish which he learns from his peers in school and from their neighbour's children in the heartland neighbourhood of Toa Payoh. Respondent H and her husband speak Putonghua, some English and their home language Wuhanese, which their son does not understand, and his Mandarin is not Putonghua but Huayu, the Mandarin Chinese taught in Singapore's school and spoken by Singaporeans. Respondent H confides that when she goes for an outing with her son without her husband, the people she meets on their outing are hard pressed to believe that she is his mother as her son resembles his father and unlike Respondent H, speaks with a Singapore accent.

I asked Respondent H what she felt about her son's inability to understand his parent's language, which is also the language of their extended family in Wuhan. She shrugged her shoulders. "It's the price we have to pay", she said. Respondent H herself acknowledges that she has problems understanding the Mandarin Chinese that many Singaporean speak. In fact, she feels that they do not speak good Putonghua and many of the pronunciations are incorrect or there are problems with word usage.

They speak differently because in my mind, the pure Chinese, they speak Chinese and very pure Mandarin but Singaporeans, sometimes actually for young ones new generation a lot of them couldn't speak good Mandarin. I think that's their only regret but I think in future because they have emphasize on this part, and in future, I believe that they can speak better Mandarin (ResH R2, p. 319).

¹³ Singapore Permanent Resident.

This is a common phenomenon. Where many local Singaporeans would say ‘*suo³ shi²*’ (锁匙) and ‘*chi² geng¹*’ (匙汤) to refer to a key and a spoon respectively, Chinese Nationals use ‘*yao⁴*’ (钥) and ‘*shao²*’ (勺). The language used reflects the habits of many Singaporeans, regardless of race, who would most likely use a fork and a spoon when eating. Hence the identification with a language and all its accompanying sounds birthed by the experiences of the communities that use the language creates the identity of the community and the sense of belonging for the individual. Today Singaporeans address a Chinese young lady as ‘*nu³ shi⁴*’ (女士) and a waitress ‘*nu³ shi⁴*’ (女侍) or ‘*fu² wu⁴ yuan²*’ (服务员). It was not too long ago that ‘*xiao³ jie³*’ (小姐) was a polite form of addressing both – that is until it was noted that, in China and in Putonghua, the term refers to a prostitute. I do not know the negotiations that may or may not have occurred for this change in terminology but given the presence of Chinese Nationals in Singapore it would be quite in order to accommodate the switch in terminology. Language must accommodate the community and facilitate the building of the identity of each individual. Thus, true listening results in a ‘kind of de-centring that calls us to question or to shed our old views and certainties about our world’ (Lipari quoted in Lane, 2015, p. 153).

In *Vol. 5* the use of Singlish is employed to transgress borders and to spread over multiple spaces because the language subverts the misguided sense of pure origin and instead offers an equivocal ambiguity. Respondent H maintains her strong Putonghua-based accent. I suggest that like Respondent G who speaks English with a Hong Kong Cantonese accent and modulates his statements with Singlish, Respondent H would come to use Singlish to nuance her English and Putonghua expressions. And in doing so, she may discover that language, including speech and sounds, are less about a certainty and more about a ‘performative attempt at identity’ to find her own unique voice, and perhaps also finding her place wherever she may be (LaBelle, 2014, p.141 and p. 164). Her articulations may continue to carry her own linguistic experiences – for example the emphasized ‘*er*’ (儿) sound typical of

the speech of the peoples of Northern China. Artist and writer Salome Voegelin puts it succinctly,

... listening rephrases definition as a contingent activity of defining: continually drawing the thing as the fragile gesture of what it could be rather than representing what it appears to be (Voegelin, 2012).

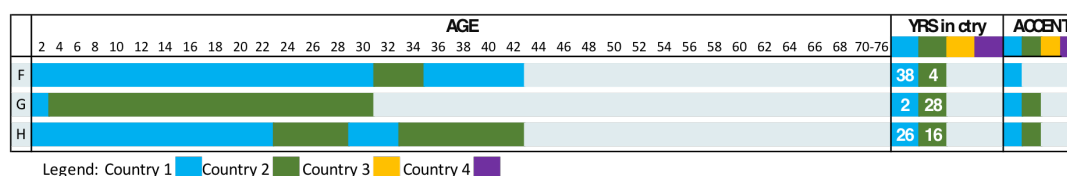


Figure 5.17 Years spent in a country and accents of Respondents F, G and H.

Figure 5.17 illustrates the years each respondent had lived in a second country. The similarity in physical appearance set against the differences in the language practices between Respondent F and her Taiwanese and Chinese Nationals counterparts caused her to recalibrate her understanding of her own Chinese identity, which she only managed to reconcile when she could identify a village in China where her ancestors had lived. Yet, despite her proficiency at speaking Mandarin Chinese and a variety of Mandarin Chinese languages as well as Singapore Cantonese, she used a Malay word in a Singlish context to describe her sense of ambivalence in terms of her identity. Respondent G also speaks several Chinese languages besides Mandarin Chinese as well as English with a pronounced Hong Kong Cantonese accent. He is very clear that he is both a Singaporean and a Hongkonger. While where she might call home eventually is still to be decided, Respondent H is also very clear that she is a Chinese and despite having added Singlish to her language repertoire, is ethnically Chinese.

Issues of identity and language have shadowed Singapore and Singaporeans since before its inception. Language policies instituted by its leaders have not been successful in redefining Chinese Singaporean identity. They have instead spawned a home-grown, ground-up language drawn from the speech and sounds of its local resources - Singlish, a universally recognised sound that articulates and represents the collective Singapore identity.

The languages and accents heard in the interviews with Respondents F, G and H sound the complications that seem to be woven into their sense of Chineseness. Furthermore, the languages they speak and the accents in which these languages are articulated appear to prompt an ambivalence and an ambiguity which could be valuable in indexing the always emerging as opposed to something that is prescribed. Altogether, *Vol. 3*, *Vol. 5*, their voices in the interviews and the considerations of this chapter refute the notion of Mandarin Chinese as the key signifier of Chinese Singaporean identity and argue against a prescriptive narrative of Chineseness.

Chapter 6

Shanghai-born author and business analyst Kenny Zhang writes in Dr Cao and Senator Poy's 2011 book *The China Challenge: Sino-Canadian Relations in the 21st Century*, 'There is no longer a homogenous Chinese community in Canada: the community has become very heterogeneous' (Zhang, 2011, p. 159). I would add that it is also a community of circuitous arrivals and departures, of transnational belongings. These are the experiences of Respondents C, D and E¹, true today as it was in the nineteenth century. How then do we understand ourselves or lend meaning and significance to our relationships, when we constantly 'engage with each other for specific objectives and then disband and form new communities for other needs' (Canagarajah, 2007a, p. 238)? What does being Chinese in Canada mean? How do disparate communities with their discrete cultures and languages negotiate difference when the constituents of difference are in constant change and fluid? This chapter and the accompanying projects, namely *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Volume 4* (henceforth *Vol. 4*) and *Oh Canada!* propose that despite the fluidity of constituents, of discrete languages and accents, engaging with difference is tenable by re-calibrating the way we listen to and understand sound.

Chapter 6 begins with an overview of Chinese and Chinese Canadian voices by recounting and tracing the development of the various names of Vancouver, a major Pacific port of entry of most migrants today as it was in the nineteenth century as well as interviews I have recently conducted. It then discusses the attempts and varying success of the projects - *Vol. 4* (comprising *The Halifax Conversations* and *The Singapore Conversations*) as well as an audio project *Oh Canada!*

The Confederation of Canada and Chinese Migrant Labour

'The time has come for laying aside sectional distinction, and for combining in one grand effort to create a nationality that shall know no distinction from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean' - Lord Dufferin, Governor-General quoted on the cover of *The Dominion of Canada and the Canadian Pacific Railway* (Wilson, 1874). William

¹ Transcripts for Respondents J, K and L are available in the Appendix pp. 325-368.

Wilson's pamphlet dated 1874 and Canada Pacific Rail website inform that the creation of the Confederation of Canada was incentivized by the railway construction plans. These ambitious plans in turn triggered the urgent demand for Chinese labour migrants.



Figure 6.1 A Chinese work gang for the Great Northern Railway, circa 1909.
Image credit: Library and Archives Canada.

All through the nineteenth and twentieth century, Chinese merchants and migrants, mainly from Guangdong China, arrived in Canada to work in the Cariboo gold rush, jade mining in Fraser Canyon, lumber, coal and railroad work (Lai, 1987, pp. 15-16; Li, 2008, p. 127; Jin and Roy, 1985, p. 3; Willmott, 1970, pp. 38-39 and pp. 43-44) (Figure 6.1). They mainly spoke Toisanese, the language of the Four Counties (Sze Yup 四邑).

By the mid-1970s, Hong Kong Cantonese and Hong Kong English were spoken, joined by Southeast Asian languages in the 1990s (Satzewich and Wong, 2006, p. 50; Wickberg, 2007, p. 186; Willmott, 1970). I propose to include to this list colloquial languages such as Singlish, seen and heard in *Vol. 5* from the previous chapter. Today migrants from 'every region' of China have added Putonghua and their own accented English to the milieu.

Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Migrants

Throughout the centuries, from early 1900s to the present, Chinese in Canada have contributed to the linguistic fabric of their host country. In the twentieth century the languages of Southern coast of China arrived via Chinese merchants from the United States and later through large-scale migration responding to the demand for labour in

the nascent mining and construction industries (Jin and Roy, 1985, p. 7). The migrants were mostly from south-eastern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian (Willmott, 1970, p. 38).

In 2009 the total population of peoples of Chinese descent was 39.5 million and is projected to be 60 million by 2040 (Li and Li, 2013, p. 20). In Canada, the overall population in 2009 was 33.6 million and home to 1.3 million Chinese, making it the sixth largest population of Chinese immigrants after Singapore (Wong, 2017, p. 3). This makes Canada an important region for Chinese transnationals as it has been since 1850s. I shall be discussing their migration and transnational practices as well as the particular speech sounds that reflected the different Chinese that arrived in Canada. The places and names these migrants came to be known also chart the sound maps of Chinese transnationals - for example, in the 1800s Gum San and Gum San Hak that is Gold Mountain and Gold Mountain Guest; in the early 1900s Ham Sui Fau and Lo Wah Kiu that is Saltwater City and Overseas Chinese; and more recently Wankowa and Wengehua, that is Vancouver.

Push and Pull Factors of Chinese Labour Migrations in the Nineteenth Century

A confluence of situations and conditions in the nineteenth and early twentieth century gave rise to Chinese labour migration. Natural and man-made calamities in China drove labour migration while the 1833 Emancipation Act, European expansionist policies and industrialization were the pull factors that persuaded the Chinese migrant workers to work in the mines in United States and British Columbia.

China during the late Qing rule was fraught with both external and internal crisis. An explosive population growth was made worse by poorly managed land policies while opium addiction and political rebellions resulted in huge fiscal deficit. Between 1851 and 1908 Taishan experienced fourteen major floods, seven typhoons, four earthquakes, two droughts, four plagues and five famines (Li, 1998, p. 20). For more than 11,000 Chinese, these became the push factors to seize the opportunities for work afforded by recruiters for Canadian Pacific Railway (henceforth CPR) (Li, 2008, p. 127).

Gum San Hak – from 1857 Onwards

“Go to Gold Mountain,” they told one another, promising to send wages home, to return rich or die.” (Choy, 1995: p.9).

Gum San (金山) was the name by which San Francisco, British Columbia and Australia were known and Gum San Hak (金山客), literally meaning ‘Gold Mountain Guest’, were migrants who arrived in Canada via San Francisco in 1850s at the beginning of the mining industry (Yu, 2012, p. 112). Gum San Hak worked in the Fraser Valley and Cariboo area, British Columbia, where gold and jade were discovered, in the lumber and coal industry, and later in the railway construction project (Jin and Roy, 1985, pp. 3-6; Lai, 1987, p. 16; Ng, 1999, pp. 10-11; Willmott, 1970, pp. 38-39 and pp. 43-46).

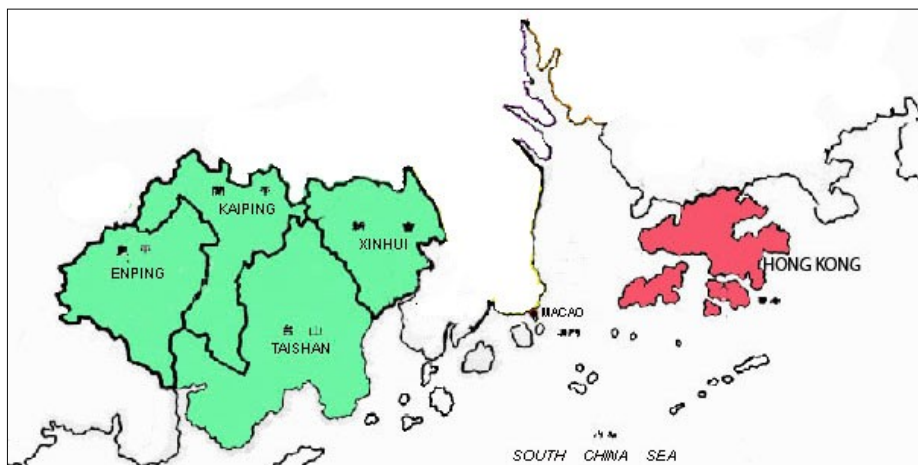


Figure 6.2 Sze Yup region of province of Guangdong, China, 1900s.
It consisted of Xinhui, Taishan, Enping and Kaiping.

The migrants hailed mainly from Sze Yup (四邑), that is Four Counties, in Guangdong, China (area marked in green in Figure 6.2). Although there were migrants from other provinces, Sze Yup migrants formed the majority of labour movement, with Taishan sending off the largest population of people (Lai, 1975, quoted in Li, 1998, p23; Willmott, 1970, pp. 38-39). All Gum San Hak were sojourners with every intent to return to their native places as soon as they have earned enough to support their families (Siu, 1953, quoted in Li, 1998, p. 25).

Guangdong province has about six different languages (Willmott, 1970, pp. 38-39) and is collectively called the Sze Yup dialects which is part of but distinct from the Cantonese language system. Although schooled in Cantonese, the province lingua franca (Tang, 1986), the young migrants spoke mainly their Sze Yup dialects which were mutually understood (Lai 1987, p. 106). Lai described these earlier migrant labourers,

Before the Exclusion Act of 1923, Chinese immigrants to Canada were mostly poor, unemployed rural people. [...] Unable to speak the language, and unprepared for the Western way of life, [...] They did not try to understand the Canadian culture nor did they intend to integrate into Canadian society; they planned to return to China as soon as they could save enough money to support their families and themselves for the rest of their lives (Lai, 1987, p. 106).

Anthropologist William Willmott noted that there were three Cantonese opera houses in Victoria. These would have catered to their cultural and ritual needs (Jin and Roy, 1985, p. 6; Willmott, 1970: p. 46).

The migrants' ability to speak the Taishan and Kaiping dialects as well as Cantonese facilitated the flow of transnational connections and transactions between host and native places. Thus, if the young migrants were fortunate as well as enterprising, they had the prospect of owning their own business, join the entrepreneurial class and advance in social hierarchy and status ((Jin and Roy, 1985, pp. 4-5; Yu, 2012, pp. 112-113).

With the chain migration and its infrastructure in their service, it appears that the migrants, linguistically, culturally and socially, lived in a closed community. In addition to the Chinese inclination to look inward towards kin for support and community, the Canadians had their own notions of the Chinese workers. Given the inconsistent demand and supply of labour, especially in towns that developed from emerging mining ventures, lumber and construction industries, the prevailing sentiment was that the Chinese immigrant was the lesser of two evils as they were available and affordable. Charles Woodworth notes an 1861 article in Victoria's newspaper,

We have plenty of room for many thousands of Chinamen. And notwithstanding they may not bring their wives [...], or acquire our language, but continue to

live and work among themselves, [...] their industry enables them to add very largely to our own revenues [...] (Woodsworth, 1941, quoted in Li, 1998, p. 27).

Canadian Pacific Railway 1881 – 1885 and Gum San Hak

On the eve of its formation 1 July 1867, Canada consisted of different regions. In the 1850s Canada consisted of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia on the east coast and the ‘United Province of Canada’. On the Pacific coast was the colony of Vancouver Island. In 1874 entrepreneur William Wilson published the document *The Dominion of Canada and the Canadian Pacific Railway* in which he argued that a trans-continental rail system, completed within ten years from the creation of a Dominion of Canada, would bring economic benefits. While CPR had a hand in the making of the new country Canada, it was the Chinese migrants, the Gum San Hak, that made the completion of the railway project possible.



Figure 6.3 ‘Oriental men aboard a Canadian Pacific Railway Company ship’.
Date, location and photographer unknown. Image credit: VPL# 12866.

In the 1880s the industrial boom caused an upsurge in labour demand in North America as well as Europe and their colonies (Yu, 2001, p. 6). Labour shortage also plighted the new-formed Confederation of Canada. Local European labourers was not available as many had left for the United States when the Canadian gold mines were depleted. It became clear that it was quicker and cheaper to transport Chinese labour from San Francisco and from across the Pacific than from across the Atlantic

to Quebec and the Maritimes and overland to British Columbia. Their wages were less than that of the European workers in British Columbia (Li, 1998, pp. 28-29).

The indentured workers were contracted by Chinese compradors on behalf on contractors,—for example New York construction contractor Andrew Onderdonk—transported by ship to Victoria, Canada (Figure 6.3) and then to railroad camps where an agent of the comprador resided (Li, 1998, p. 22). The Chinese workers, the Gum San Hak, that is Gold Mountain Guests, were then discharged when the railway construction project was completed in November 1885, leaving many stranded and destitute in Canada, Gum San.

Ham Sui Fau Saltwater City – 1885

Geographer Kay Anderson writes that,

“Chinatown” has been an arbitrary classification of space, a regionalization that has belonged to European society. Like race, Chinatown has been a historically specific idea, a social space that has been rooted in the language and ethos of its representers ... (Anderson, 1987, p. 583) (Figure 6.4).

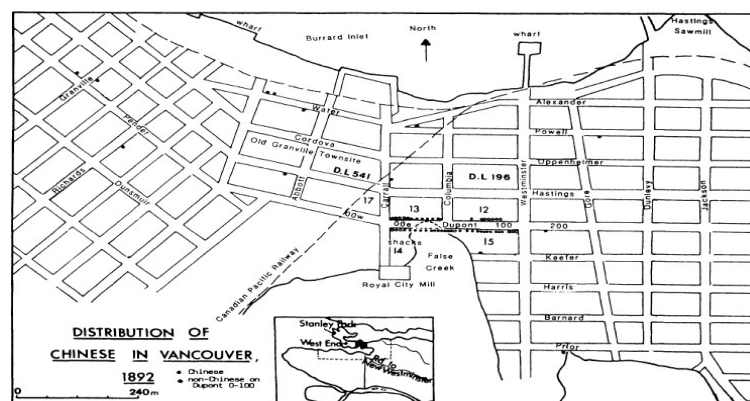


Figure 6.4 “Chinese” Residence in Vancouver. From Anderson, 1987, p. 582 with caption “Chinese” Residence in Vancouver. 1892. Based on William’s Directory (1892).

As early as 1884, when the CPR was completed, the Chinese migrants gave Chinatown a specific name to differentiate it from another city, New Westminster. They called it Ham Sui Fau (Yee, 2006, p. 1) our present-day city of Vancouver (Koh, 2004, p. 158). Its Cantonese translation and Toisanese both mean Saltwater Port rather than ‘City’. The 1893 Chinese and English phrase book and dictionary I

happened on at Wuyi Overseas Chinese Museum and the 1910 edition archived at the Chung Library in Vancouver have a pronunciation guide for ‘port’.

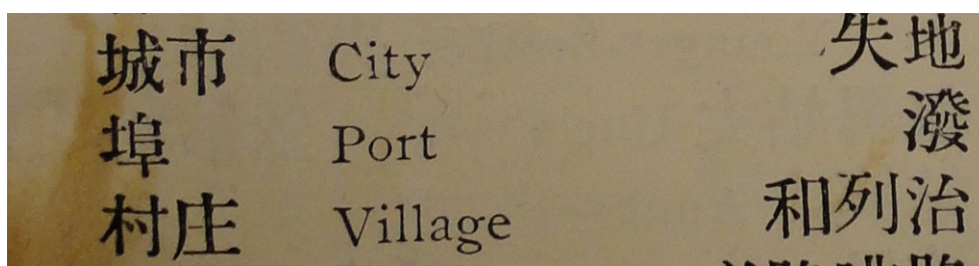


Figure 6.5 Chinese and English Phrase Book and Dictionary, Page 1, 1910.

In Figure 6.5 the Chinese character 埠 (*bu⁴*) on the left refers to ‘port’. The author pairs it with a homophone on the right [pɔt] 潑 (*po¹* 泼) which means ‘to splash’. The Toisanese [pɔt33]² is closer to the pronunciation of the English word ‘port’ (Figure 6.6).

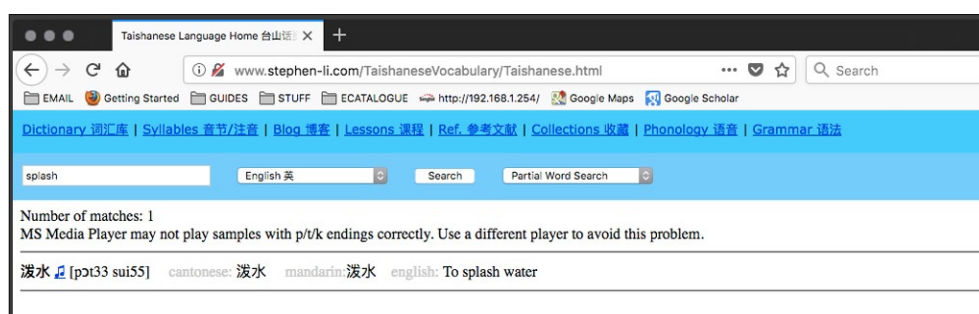


Figure 6.6 Screen shot from Stephen Li's Taishan Online Dictionary.

I propose that the consideration of the pronunciation informs three possibilities; firstly, that while Cantonese was the lingua franca, Toisanese was the language of the ground at the time when Vancouver was Ham Sui Fau; secondly that literate migrants preparing for and learning the language of their host country using phrase books and dictionaries spoke several languages and thirdly that, as it is in Vancouver today, Ham Sui Fau, was multilingual and resounded with a variety of Chinese languages.

² Taishan character for ‘splash’ is available from: <<https://www.stephenli.com/TaishaneseVocabulary/Taishanese.html>> and IPA for /ɔ/ and /u/ is available at: <<http://www.internationalphoneticalphabet.org/ipa-sounds/ipa-chart-with-sounds/>>

Despite the Head tax and series of immigration restrictions, there was a continuous coming and going. In time a nexus of transnational infrastructure and communication spread and flourished along the Pacific coast from San Francisco to Victoria and British Columbia and across the Pacific to Sze Yup with Hong Kong as the nodal centre, a network which Professor Henry Yu has identified as the Cantonese Pacific (Yu, 2012). I would suggest that this network was facilitated by the Guangdong regional language Cantonese, which according to authors of phrase books published at the time, entrepreneurs and labour contractors were learning (Lanctot, 1867).

Transnational Chinese in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century

Chinese in Canada remained very much in touch with their families and communities in their native places through their correspondences and periodical return visits (Li, 1998, p. 68). Although living in Gum San and later Ham Sui Fau, the Chinese migrant workers were well informed of conditions and events of their home villages. They maintained the private and public infrastructures (Jin and Roy, 1985: p.4) as well as saw to the safety of their families and communities. In Guangdong, for example, Chinese migrant workers bought land in their hometown and constructed several houses as well as five defence towers, the diaolou which were in fact armed fortresses to defend and avert interminable banditry.

A maple leaf design boldly (Figure 6.7) embossed in the architrave of the mansion at the front of the Village proudly proclaims the wealth and success of the migrants that toiled and thrived in Canada, a connection that is maintained today through courses such as University of British Columbia's The Heritage of Chinese Migration which Tan co-lectures with Professor Henry Yu. Today the Canadian Village is being conserved as part of the Canadian-Kaiping heritage.



Figure 6.7 Canada Village, Kaiping. The Chinese characters for *qiao² yuan⁴* (侨苑) indicates the entrance to a garden belonging to a Chinese who is living overseas. Image credit: Fizah Hassan.

Lo Wah Kiu – from 1881 Onwards

Transnational Chinese played a vital role in the 1990s domestic conflicts between the home country nationalists and reformist forces challenging the Qing rule. The transnational Chinese were considered the financial arm of their revolutions and reformations by all factions (Yan, 2008, p. 367-368). Qing administration realised not only the enormous financial leverage that was an important bridge to their goal of embracing modernity but also the wealth of information, transnational expertise and networks the Chinese overseas had garnered for themselves. Qing administration, contradicting centuries of considering those who left China as traitors, now recognised these Chinese abroad as citizens, and offered them protection and official status as Wah Kiu (Hua qiao 華僑) (Yen, 1981, p. 284).

Wah Kiu (老華僑), *va kia²* in Toisanese, is generally translated as ‘Overseas Chinese’. The English translation does not adequately carry across the concept of temporary mobility that is inscribed in the character 僑 *kiu*. Wang argues that Wah Kiu (Huaqiao 華僑) specifically refers to Chinese who live for periods abroad while remaining citizens of China (Wang, 1998, p. 16) – an important distinction and definition that had been, and still is today, variously applied advantageously or otherwise.

Wah kiu, mostly merchants who could afford to pay the immigration taxes, brought their wives with them. (Figures 6.8-6.10). Their Canadian born children attended British Columbia's public schools (Li, 1998, p. 160; Stanley, 2011, p. 148). Thus, before the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923, while there was a very mixed community of Chinese living largely in British Columbia—from wealthy merchants, their wives and English-speaking Canadian-born children to the working class and their Chinese-speaking young adult relatives—all fell under a single, aggregated and undifferentiated designation – Chinese.

Chinese and Chinese

The designation 'Chinese' as a determining identity might engender a community that tends to gloss over the myriad complexities of their members, thus misidentifying them. In early 1900s, when the label 'Chinese' was very much antithetical to the notion of being 'Canadian', the scions of Victoria's wealthy



Figure 6.8

The Lee Mong Kow family, ca. 1900. The following two pictures of the Lee family suggest that the locally born became increasingly acculturated to the dominant society. Image credit: Image A-20348, courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives.



Figure 6.9 The Lee Mong Kow family, 1911. Image credit: Image F-08202, courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives.



Figure 6.10 The Lee Mong Kow family, 1919 This picture includes Chu Chui Gene or Gine, third from left, back row, who was born in Victoria in 1898. Source: Image D-05832, courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives.

merchant families initiated the Chinese Canadian Club (Stanley, 2011, p. 20). Historian Timothy Stanley writes that the members of the Chinese Canadian Club were thus keenly aware of the prevailing social discussions on race that led to their bifurcated identity and the political expediency that resulted in their marginalized standing in Canadian society.

I would propose that they were also conscious of their membership in the ‘imagined community’ of transnational Chinese. Calling on their collective financial, social and cultural capital, they engineered a general student strike in 1923 to protest and frustrate Victoria’s School board’s proposal to segregate Chinese from other students in provincial schools. What is interesting is the different reactions from the wah kiu who complained that the proposed segregation and the reasons for the proposal were insults ‘to our country’ and Canadian-born who protested that segregation impinged on their ‘rights as British subjects’ (Stanley, 2007/8, p. 125).

Chinese and Chinese Canadian

Stanley, citing fellow historian Lisa Rose Mars, points to the nuanced difference in the identification of the club’s name. Chinese Canadian Club when referred to in Chinese languages is Tongyuan Hui (同源会), ‘Shared Origin Clu’ (Stanley, 2007/8, p. 121). I suggest that Tongyuan Hui points to a collective identity that drew from the Wah Kiu sense of belonging and identification to their native home places while the English name locates their younger members. However, even when these Chinese Canadians spoke the language, they were not included in mainstream Canadian society. Stanley observed that the student strike is ‘at heart a struggle over what it meant to be human, to have shared humanity recognized and real rather than imagined differences engaged’ (Stanley, 2011, p. 230).

Wankowa 溫哥華

With an increase in migrants from Hong Kong, the often-used name when referring to Canada, Ham Sui Fau, (Saltwater City) became Wankowa, the Cantonese pronunciation of Vancouver. These changes in the names point to transformation in the character and make up of Vancouver. It follows that there might have been some understanding and consideration given to engaging with the fact that what is Chinese in Canada is no longer circumscribed by an older China-based tradition, history and experience but also by those of Hong Kong Chinese and subsequently Chinese from other parts of the world. In this development, it became important to consider ‘[...] the content of ethnic Chinese culture in a Canadian context’ (Ng, 1999, p. 3).

Different from those who came before them in the nineteenth century, post 1967³ Chinese immigrants were mostly from Hong Kong and Southeast Asia and brought with them their cultures and languages – among which are Hong Kong Cantonese, their idiosyncratic Hong Kong English and Southeast Asian Cantonese. The amended immigration system opened doors to a burgeoning number of migrants coming to Canada which continued well into the 1980s. As well, the anticipated return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 fuelled Hong Kongers' migration. The final pull factors were changes in Canada's immigration policy which encouraged business immigrants. All these heralded the arrival of a new business class of migrants. Many of them set up homes outside of Chinatown in middle-class suburbs which then encouraged a flourishing of institutions and businesses that catered to their needs and those of their communities (Jin and Roy, 1985, p. 18). Besides Hongkongers, it is now made up of those from Szeypu, Mainland Chinese, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, South America, and Africa.

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 4, 2015

Vol. 4 - The Halifax Conversations and *The Singapore Conversations* propose to prompt plurilingual qualities that are inherent in speech communities through 'reflexive listening'. Interdisciplinary creator, performer and composer Keren Rosenbaum posits that reflexive listening necessitate an awareness of our reaction to listening and to what is said implicitly and explicitly and what is heard. The symbiotic relationship between the interlocutors is analogous to the harmony and counterpoint of 'traditional classical opera in the moments when several characters sing an entirely different text all at the same time and we understand every last word' (Rosenbaum, not dated) illustrated in *Vol. 4 - The Halifax Conversations* interlocutor Liu Weiyi Ivy's point about 'multi-culturalism' in discussing Canada's multiparty system of government.

³ 'In the wake of the White Paper on Canadian Immigration Policy of October 1966, the Canadian government announced a new series of immigration regulations in September 1967. [...] [T]he regulations introduced for the first time the principle of nondiscrimination on the basis of race or national origin, virtually ending the White Canada policy that had prevailed since the beginning of the 20th century'. Available at: <<http://immigrationtous.net/158-immigration-regulations-canada-1967.html>>

Vol. 4 works towards expanding the range and repertoire of voices in conditions Lane and her colleague sound artist Angus Carlyle describe as going beyond ‘... the boundaries of academic institutions to take its place in a number of everyday settings’ (Carlyle and Lane, 2013, p. 9). This undertaking employs reflexive listening, a commitment and interest on the part of the interlocutors to engender relationships and connection to each other and perhaps a reflection on the parallel reality that might be present in their conversations. The project is tasked to investigate the interlocutors’ ability to shift between multiple accents and perspectives through reflexive listening to difference (Rosenbaum, not dated), to measure and meet the distance between those differences.

Unlike text which is generally silent, accents are easily discerned in speech. For example, Hong Kong English and Hong Kong Canadian English sound different as do Singapore English and Putonghua English. The English and Chinese languages that are used by our interlocutors evinced different accents. Oxford Dictionaries’ head of Pronunciation Catherine Sangster (2017) noted that accents can change over one’s lifetime and also when one moves from and into different communities. Not only do the way words are pronounced changed but words themselves acquire new application when they migrate. Examples of such shifts are evident in our interlocutors’ discussions about being in a single child family and their sense of responsibility to their parents, certain social practices in China, the lack of freedom of speech compared to that enjoyed by Canadians, and the struggles of Haligonians with local politics.

This volume of the *Phrase Book* project proposes that communities are formed at interstices, beyond circumscribed edges of meanings, values and significance that we place on words and sounds. And certainly, beyond inclusion and exclusion. Thus, to consider it from another perspective, a community

emerges—not as a place but as a spacing of finite figures crossing, shattering the mirror that grounds community as an experience that is shared. [...] community obliges us to consider the stranger at the borders of our delimited spaces of belonging (Koh, 2004, p. 150).

Vol. 4 - The Halifax Conversations (henceforth *The Halifax Conversations*) is made up of reflections that the interlocutors gleaned from conversations they had with total strangers and was presented at the 2016 Conference of the Universities Art Association of Canada in Montreal, Canada. The work began as *pronounce*, the working title of a project to record the voices of Chinese in Canada and subsequently to reflect on an extended array of the sounds of spoken Chinese before it became a volume in the *Phrase Books of Migrant Sounds*. It was also intended to be an extension of *pronounce 1* and *2* which recorded the voices of Chinese in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and a companion piece of *Vol. 4 - The Singapore Conversations* (henceforth *The Singapore Conversations*).

The Halifax Conversations, 2015

The project evolved into its present iteration because earlier attempts to engage with newly arrived Chinese students found both myself and the students feeling self-conscious, resulting in forced and unnatural recording. Thus, I seized an opportunity during a conversation with a NSCAD faculty member, Becka Barker, to have conversations with her students who had just arrived from China. However as personal and family circumstances arose that required me to be in Singapore, Barker and I agreed to work long distance, using the approach I had worked out for the interviews - an initial meeting at a neutral venue to discuss the project and recording process, after which the information sheet and consent form was emailed to the interlocutor prior to the scheduled conversation.

In our subsequent correspondences and discussions, we worked out the mechanics of gathering our interlocutors. To avoid any strained moments and awkwardness on the part of the respondents, we felt that the conversations need not be recorded but that each interlocutor would give me a reflection of the experience as well as any new understanding of words and sounds that they might have encountered during the conversation.

Unlike the earlier volumes of *The Phrase Books of Migrant Sounds Vols. 1, 2, 3* and *5*, both the *Halifax* and *Singapore Conversation* are not pronunciation guides. Nor

do they explain words or phrases. *The Conversations* reflects sound artist and musician Volkmar Klien's observation that sound art

... strive to create situations and experiences allowing listeners, these fellow artists, not only to explore their world aurally in novel ways but also aim at suspending engrained listening habits to expand and sharpen individual listening practise (Klien, 2015, p. 136).

The Halifax Conversations aim to expand the expected sounds of Chinese by offering an extended diapason of Chinese voices in Canada. It does so by facilitating conversations between local Canadians and Mainland Chinese. The audio experiences are '... produced at the scene of reception; sound that will have resonated in embodiment. Hence the question, "What did you hear?" becomes itself a protocol — the primary protocol — that choreographs an inquiry' (Ultra-Red, 2012, p. 4), an inquiry that in turn will not only advance the bridging of interstitial spaces of disparate communities, but also allow for a unique space to open up.

Admittedly the participants of *The Halifax Conversations* voluntarily agreed to have a conversation with a stranger and that any disquiet felt would have been mollified by their confidence in the facilitator Barker. But the appeasement does not detract from the effort and generosity each participant had to bring to the table in order to create the experience for themselves and their respective partners. And perhaps in doing so, these interlocutors 'accommodate our 'not-belonging' (Markiewicz, no date, quoted in Durrant and Lord, 2007, p. 13).

The Development of *The Halifax Conversations*

The Halifax Conversations assume that the migrant is within the host community and the project takes place in the everyday setting of that community, for example at a grocer's, a bank or a school. It is interesting that most of the interlocutors chose to meet at the newly opened Halifax Regional Library downtown – a place where its history and relationship with the interlocutors, whether one has lived in Halifax since childhood or just arrived, all begin on equal footing as witnesses to the beginning of the history of a new public building.

In pairing a local with a non-local, the collaboration allows the pair to find each other to independently and collectively find themes and threads that might be woven into a conversation. It is expected that the ensuing conversation itself will also make other demands on its interlocutors because they come from places which are prompted by different political, cultural and social memories and auditory borders. The project shed light on the efforts participants made as they listened to each other, manifesting the moment when new sounds—as well as new versions of familiar words—are heard, learned and contextualized, or re-contextualized, into their experience, exemplifying the notion that ‘[l]istening is never natural. It requires and generates literacy. it puts subjects into relation with each other and with the world, ... ’ (Ultra-Red, 2012, p. 4).

Reflections

Out of a total of eighteen possible interlocutors who responded to my request for volunteers, twelve consented to taking part although four pairs eventually did meet. These four pairs of interlocutors—the forty-something Canadians had been living in Halifax for most of their adult lives and their younger fellow interlocutors from various parts of China and studying at NSCAD—recorded a total of about four and a half hours of conversation. Three pairs shared their conversations and six interlocutors posted reflections of their conversations. I transcribed only two of the recorded conversations because the third recording was inaudible.

Canadian writer and editor Elizabeth Pierce responded to her conversation with Chinese National Liu with a series of five postcards featuring amongst other things the iconic 1929 schooner Blue Nose and Peggy’s Cove, contained in an envelope she made and titled *Notes to Ivy* (Figure 6.9). Another Haligonian participant who wished to be known as Princess, an English as Second Language teacher, made an audio recording while policy analyst Mary Jo Monk, Liu together with her classmates Minmin Chen and ChaoPan wrote emails.

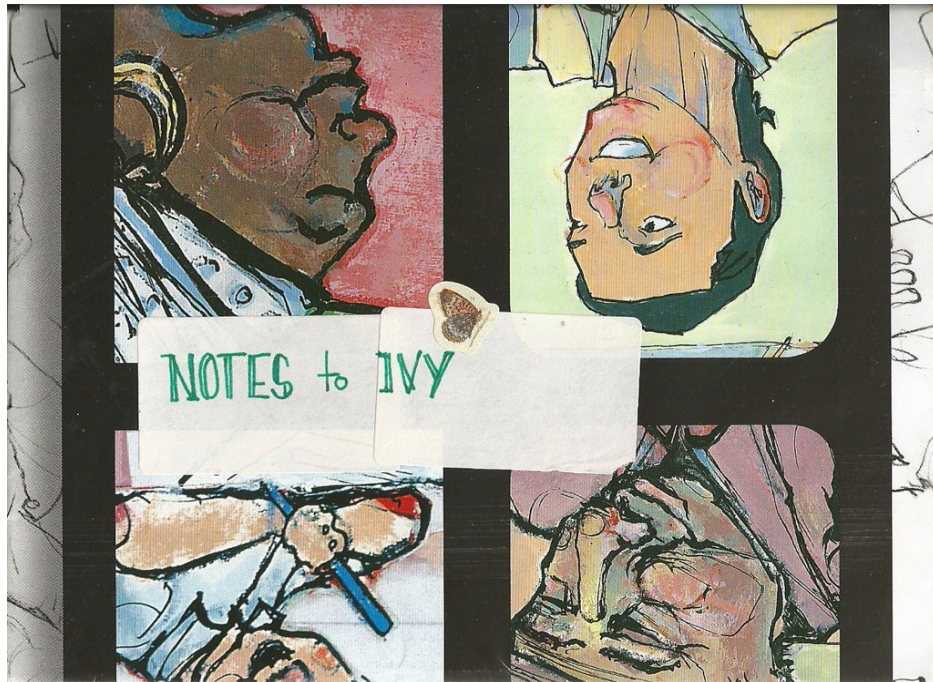


Figure 6.11 Elizabeth Pierce, *Notes to Ivy 01*, 2016.

In having to listen to what was being said as well as what might be implied, the reflections revealed that the interlocutors, rather like opera singers discussed earlier, attended to what they were saying, to what was being said, to what might have been said and how what was said might be received. In short, the identity of the speaker as well as the listener was always present, signifying the intimate connection our speaking and listening has with our sense of who we are, the larger history of experiences that constitute our being (Bourdieu, 1977, quoted in Norton, 1997, p. 411).

Princess confessed that she started her conversation with Rui Zhao in a teacher mode, speaking slowly and articulating carefully while Pierce, Liu, Chen and ChaoPan had some difficulties with accents and vocabulary. Pierce's reflection reveals that she had some difficulties in understanding Liu's accented English although Pierce has other Chinese friends and a good number of students in the English Literature class she teaches at Dalhousie University are Chinese students. She writes,

I strained to hear your words, to fill in gaps of pronunciation, meaning. I feel my eyebrows straining up, eyes wide attention fully on you, as kids pelted past/in

full screech on their way to the minecraft station. You are politely filling me in on Chinese geography (Pierce, 2016, *Notes to Ivy 4a*).

In her reflection, Liu shared that she found Canadian's multiculturalism challenging, that it 'really shocked me and led us to talk and think about the cultural differences and the difficulty of cultural cross [sic]'. It was on reading Pierce's *Notes to Ivy* that I surmised that, as Liu has only experienced a one-party rule, it was probably Canada's multi-party system of government that bewildered and perplexed her. On the other hand, Pierce noted with dismay at the implication of a leader for life, if 'MacNeil [sic] and company were the NS government for life'.⁴ It is quite clear that each has a different approach to citizenship and civic responsibility. Liu observes that Pierce's intent to bring about changes in local government policies is 'rarely seen around me' despite being aware of issues she (Liu) may have with China's government policies. But Liu quickly acknowledges that there had not been any attempts to engage with social and political concerns. ChaoPan echoed similar sentiments in his conversation with Brian Bylhonwer. He hopes to affect changes in social attitudes, to 'change the country [...] step by step, generation by generation'. In one of her postcard *Notes to Ivy*, Pierce recalls Liu's reaction to a classmate's exclamation, "Well, no wonder it doesn't work. 'Made in China.'" Pierce writes, 'I think of all the times I've spoken thoughtlessly about an entire culture'.

In another pairing, Haligonian Monk writes about her own limitations in explaining her life and her work. She reflects in her emailed response,

I enjoyed thinking about how to explain my work to someone I didn't know and who was not from here I find that communication like this challenges us to really think about what it is we are saying, what messages we mean to convey, and to boil down a stream of superfluous words into essential ideas and descriptions (Monk, 2015).

⁴ Stephen McNeil was then present Premier of Nova Scotia.

Chinese National Chen's reflections reveals her initial anxieties,

Then, I tried, yes I really tried, to influence the topic of the conversation because I am not a native person here. If she talked about something that I don't know or don't have interesting, I might not be able to continue the conversation. Thus, I tried to influence the topic more close to our daily life (Chen, 2016).

Speaking and listening requires and demands literacy on the part of the speaker and listener and, in the best of conversations, generates new knowledge as each hears unfamiliar sounds or phrases. Or perhaps encounter familiar words only to realise that they may carry altogether different meanings and applications. Such conversations engender reflections of new ways of being. This is clearly borne out in the conversation between Monk and Chen as well as Bylthonwer and ChaoPan. On learning that Monk has a degree in Sociology and Psychology Chen shared her concerns about the psychological impact China's One Child Policy⁵ had on her parents and those of her parents' generation. In her book *Paradise Redefined: Transnational Chinese Students and the Quest for Flexible Citizenship in the Developed World* published in 2011, anthropologist Vanessa Fong surveyed over 2000 Mainland Chinese between 1998 and 2016 noting that Mainland Chinese parents depend heavily on their child to be the 'the main providers of funds for their ... retirement, nursing care, and medical expenses' (Fong, 2011, p. 2).

Suzhou-born ChaoPan, in conversation with Haligonian Bylthonwer also discussed the financial implication of China's One Child Policy. However, it was the thought that a city could contain a population of thirty-five million⁶ that astonished Bylthonwer whose reaction, a loud intake of breath followed by silence as he took in the staggering difference, was palpable.⁷

⁵ "Singletons [only children] of both genders ... were therefore raised with the kind of heavy parental investment, high expectations, consumption demands, and educational aspirations common among children of highly educated professionals in developed countries, even though opportunities for higher education and white-collar work were more limited in China than in developed countries. (Fong, 2011, p. 2).

⁶ The population of Suzhou, with an area of 8,488 km², 10.7 million in 2016. Available at: <<http://china-trade-research.hktdc.com/business-news/article/Facts-and-Figures/Suzhou-Jiangsu-City-Information/ff/en/1/1X000000/1X0A11R6.htm>>

⁷ The population of Halifax, with an area of 5490 km², was about 950,000 in 2016. Available at: <https://www.novascotia.ca/finance/statistics/archive_news.asp?id=13441&dg=&df=∓dto=0&dti=3>

What is salient in the responses shared by three Chinese Nationals is the transnational aspirations that framed the thoughts of these interlocutors. Similar to earlier Gum San Hak and Wah Kiu, these Chinese students aspire to a world citizenship, whether social, cultural or as a national, that would augment rather than replace their Chinese citizenship (Fong, 2011, p. 6).

The Halifax Conversations met its brief to investigate one's ability to attend to multiple accents and differences in perspectives, to provide a passage through interstices and achieved its aim of connecting strangers. The reflections shared by the interlocutors clearly indicated that having the intent and will to listen reflexively with the intent to extend oneself across the communication distance is critically important.

Princess reflected on the conversation she had with Zhao that 'started out a little bit tense and [...] understandably awkward but added that, once they found a shared interest, the experience 'was really special. It was really special to feel a connection with another person through the common thread of art' although Liu observes that unless one is introduced into an existing community by a mutual friend, it is 'really challenging' to be a part of that community with very little ground to bridge differences. On the other hand, Chen concluded that the project 'demonstrated that culture and experience ain't problems if we want to getting close, [sic] and talking is always a way to decrease the distance between people to people'. What is incumbent on both speaker and listener is the willingness to transcend borders, and to construct a scaffolding on which one could re-calibrate understanding.

The Singapore Conversations, 2018

Both *The Halifax Conversations* and *The Singapore Conversations* afforded a perspective to the correlation between sound, or more accurately the sound of our speech, and our sense of self. It highlighted a resonance between the interlocutors hearing, or not hearing, a remembered sound, and the 'connection between 'being listened to' and recognition (Seidler in Bull and Beck, 2005, p. 401) of time, space and self.

The Singapore Conversations was developed along the same lines as *The Halifax Conversations*. Shanghainese Shirley Le is a physiotherapist and Malaysian Isaac Woo is in hospitality. I explained my *Conversations* projects to them and although they had never met, both agreed to have a conversation.

Le and Woo met in July and while they did not wish to have their forty-minute conversation recorded, both shared their reflections of it. Although both spoke English, Cantonese and Mandarin, their Chinese languages are specific to their home countries. Isaac Woo also speaks Malay.

Le shared that she had to ‘make an effort’ (Le, 2018) to respond in just one language. She also found that English was a more effective language when discussing work related topics whereas Cantonese lends itself to sharing about “certain people and incidents” which seems to suggest a degree of shared familiarity the language afforded. She also realised that she had no problem understanding him despite his Malaysian accent. Woo also felt that he was more comfortable speaking in his familial language Cantonese although he had to explain the meanings of certain Malaysian Cantonese phrases. Woo, like Chen, (Chen, 2016) was anxious at the beginning of his conversation with Le. According to Woo, he and Le have become friends after their conversations.

Both pairs—Le and Woo as well as Monk and Chen—discussed their different accents and their ability to bridge any differences in sounds, which are my main reasons for initiating these conversations. My instructions were very clear on this and was included in the Consent to Participate form. It stated that ‘The topics of discussion are entirely up to the participants’. I also directed that the interlocutors were to be left alone as soon as the briefings and introductions were over.

Sound highlights the difference between citizenship and identity (Seidler in Bull and Beck, 2005, p. 407). It could be suggested that the sounds, as ‘matter and as memory’ (see Tonkiss in Bull and Beck, 2005, p. 303) gives us our identity.

‘Sorry, I don’t speak Mandarin’

Vancouver artist and associate professor at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Henry Tsang left Hong Kong when he was four years old. He and his family migrated to Canada in 1968, when Vancouver was Wan Ko Wah. Mainland Chinese artist Gu Xiong relates meeting Tsang in 1986 at Banff Centre for the Arts. Their different responses to the encounter are noteworthy.

Gu, homesick and unable to converse in English was excited at seeing another Chinese. He quickly approached Tsang and shook his hands. Gu writes,

I began to speak Chinese with him and I felt that all of my isolation had completely melted away. But an unexpected surprise shocked me when I heard him say, “Sorry, I don’t speak Mandarin.” What! This Chinese doesn’t speak Chinese? I couldn’t believe it and I became very upset (Gu, 2004, quoted in *An Open Book*, 2007, p. 3).

Tsang’s *Chinese Pictures* (1989) was a painting of his family name built up in layers of paint and brush strokes instead of a single ink brush that is typical of Chinese calligraphy (Figures 6.10 and 6.10.1). Tsang, on his website⁸ writes that he

appropriated Gu’s rendition of ‘my name in a variety of Chinese and western traditional artistic mediums that show my attempts to mimic, analyze, iconicize and normalize an image and name that had been alienated from my early immigrant experience’ (Tsang, no date).

Gu compares this painting to a ‘cultural door in a personal psychological space, with each side representing a different culture. Opening the door and letting fresh air flow inside, was like the cycle of his identity, moving from a “Canadian” to a “Chinese Canadian”’ (Gu, 2004, quoted in *An Open Book*).

Perhaps it might be pertinent to consider Tsang’s identity, having left Hong Kong at four-years old and having so far lived twenty years in Canada where the official

⁸ Henry Tsang’s statement on Chinese Pictures is available from his website:
<<http://henrytsang.ca/chinese-pictures/>>

languages are English and French. Mandarin or rather Putonghua is the official language of Mainland China.

One might ‘identify as’, the transitive verb demanding an object with which one might feel a sense of association or one might ‘identify with’ in which case one has affinities to. It would seem prescriptive to link one’s ability to speak Mandarin, or the performance of some practices or some way of being to Chinese identity. ‘... Chineseness is not about possession of norms or values but about relations of persons to forces and processes of globalisation: ...’ (Kong, 2005, p. 213) and Canadian video maker Richard Fung in *Multiculturalism Reconsidered*, puts in another way, ‘ballet is art, Chinese classical dance is multiculturalism’ (Fung, 1990).

‘All of the above and none of the above’

Singaporean Respondent J subscribes to the notion that Mandarin Chinese defines Chineseness. He worked as an Administrator at a Singapore university after completing his Philosophy, Politics and Economics degree at Oxford and is presently a Canadian citizen. Respondent J speaks English, Mandarin Chinese and his familial language Cantonese. However, his speech does not evince the fact he has been living in Canada for nine years. His English spoken in measured tones is clearly Singaporean and occasionally evince characteristics of a Chinese language speaker particularly through the lack of contrast between long and short vowels. For example, Respondent J, pronounces ‘deep’ /di:p/ as ‘dip’. /dɪp/. This perhaps corresponds with his opinion of a Singaporean identity. About the Singapore identity he said, ‘[it is] a little bit more tilted towards the western culture so it's not too, not really very Chinese or Malay, but ah, educated in the West in western ways’ (ResJ R5, p. 325).



Figure 6.12 Henry Tsang, *Chinese Pictures*, 1989. Oil and rabbit skin glue on linen, 48" x 96". Image credit: Henry Tsang.



Figure 6.13 Henry Tsang, *Chinese Pictures*, detail, 1989. Image credit: Henry Tsang.

Respondent J's definition of his Chineseness is also interesting in that, like that of Gu above and Respondent F's in Chapter 5, he subscribes to the notion that Chinese identity is defined by language. Furthermore, it is Mandarin Chinese rather than Cantonese that defines his Chineseness (ResJ R14 and R15, pp. 327-328). He states,

... partly it's the language and history. ... the Chinese, I mean, whether you are from Mainland China, Taiwan or Hong Kong, I think there's that sense of history, ah, like a thousand years of history, then all the culture that comes along with it which I think while being in Singapore, we did learn quite a lot of it. ... besides learning the language, learning about the history of China in movies and so on (ResJ R14, p. 327).

He also feels that Chineseness is defined by the tradition of the historical China he gleaned from school, books and popular media and values such as filial piety, loyalty

to family (ResJ R14, p. 327). He has visited his parents and brother in Singapore several times since migrating to Canada.

His perspective is diametrically opposite of Respondent K, his husband with whom he migrated. Respondent K does not locate his sense of Chineseness through Mandarin Chinese which he confesses 'I don't speak very much Chinese in the first place' (ResK R7, p. 338).

Respondent K defines his identity by geography and finds affinity with Peranakan material culture and its culinary arts. He declares that he is 'true blue Peranakan because we were born in Malacca' (ResK R36, p. 347) and that the Peranakan culture 'symbolises colour, diversity you know that kind of thing and all so I think the way I am is because of my heritage'. (ResK R37, p. 347) He seems reticent about saying he is Chinese except in describing the years at University where he decided to be American, 'blond and blue-eyes' and he compared the community as having '[v]ery few Asians, Chinese like me' (ResK R10, p. 339).

Although Respondent K has shared of occasional racial and homophobic remarks being thrown at them, for the couple, Canada rather than Singapore, is where they call home. In Canada, they feel free to be themselves as they cannot be legally married in Singapore.⁹ As Respondent K states,

I am who I am so maybe that's why I don't have to compartmentalise - you know it's like this is Asian, this is Canadian ... in fact I think I'm even more myself all these things together. Singaporean, Canadian, all everything is just background but I am who I am already so, ya (ResK R34, p. 346).

It might have been his itinerant lifestyle or the freedom and safety Canada affords him that his sense of identity is not circumscribed, but in 'many directions at once ... with multiple perspectives ... gained at great cost ... marked by sojourning, absence, nostalgia, and at times exile and loss' (Ong and Nonini, 1997, p. 12).

⁹ Section 377a of Penal Code. Available at: <<https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/PC1871?ProvIds=pr377A->> (Accessed: 2 June 2021).

On the other hand, although he feels more Canadian than Chinese, Respondent J is very clear that he is a Singaporean Chinese and he rated highly his sense of his Singaporean Chineseness at being one.

‘Life is truly unscripted’

Respondent L went to Canada after she completed her PhD with City University of New York. She speaks predominantly with a North American accent. Some words are said with Canadian Raising tones and characteristic of Canadian identity flapping /d/ such that twenty is pronounced [twini]. During the interview I noted that some phrases followed Chinese phrase constructions. The sentences suggest a mix of languages perhaps with just a little less said in one language. The texts convey entirely the meaning and intent while indicating another language operating simultaneously (Kroll et al, 2014), for example ‘cut him slack’ meaning to say ‘cut him some slack’ not to be too severe, to ease the pressure. A comparable phrase in Chinese language might be *fong³sung¹* in Cantonese and *fang⁴song¹* (仿宋) in Mandarin. Another example is in describing her husband as ‘not an international person’ (*bu⁴ guo²ji⁴ ren²shi⁴* 不国际人事). It is interesting that when asked to say something in a Chinese language, Respondent L had to pause. She said,

I think of it and I say it in, in, in English because ... I haven’t used the Chinese for quite a while. One sentence is ... Yup.

I am Chinese *Wo shi zhongguo ren* (我是中国人)

I am a Chinese woman *Wo shi zhongguo nuren* (我是中国女人) (ResL R50, p. 368).

Regarding her identity, she explains, ‘in filling out the forms, I always describe as Chinese because there is no other to describe myself ... If they ask for citizenship, that’s different story (ResL R11, p. 362).

Respondent L continues to explain that her decision to migrate—to live and experience different ways of being, to leave China for the United States and finally to settle in Canada—as well as the experience of growing up Chinese informs her present appreciation of her Chinese heritage as well as her Chinese identity. This is something she had not been aware of in June of 1989 when she decided to leave

China, ‘around the time Tiananmen Square Massacre’ (ResL R1, p. 361). At that time, she was adamant about leaving, given the situation at hand. However, after having left China for over twenty years, Respondent L feels that nostalgia might have prompted a different perspective. About being Chinese, she states,

... it was not something that, you know, that’s the way it is. But the older I get, I feel like there’s more substance in being a Chinese. We know more, you know, I have lived more ... I realise how much more we have experienced. I kind of er, feel, er, have er, a pride in that, being a Chinese, and have chosen to live in Canada rather than just accidentally being born here (ResL R12, p. 362).

Furthermore, she adds, ‘Yes, yes. And you know, it’s not, I don’t think that’s made up. It’s just always there. It was just the things we focused’ (ResL R15, p. 363).

Respondent L points to an important concept in the construction of identity - that while identity is always becoming (Hall, 1989), we are active agents, selectively unfolding sedimented experiences, remembered sounds and concepts. I wondered if this is an instance of not differentiating political crisis with cultural concepts.

Respondent L agrees - it is not a matter of her getting older but a matter of respite. The intervening years, away from China had afforded her space and time to come to terms with her own as well as her family’s experiences during the Cultural Revolution, in particular to Mao Tse Tung’s politics of the day. One’s identity is ‘not necessarily an all-or-nothing, permanent thing. One may claim one identity in one situation and a different identity in another situation, ...’ (Chan and Tong, 1993, p. 143).

I think it is Respondent L’s final statement that speaks succinctly to her identity and that identity like life is unscripted, ‘Wo (我)... I have...lived in many places and I have... never imagined...how my life had turned out. It’s, I guess ... life is truly unscripted. That’s how I feel’ (ResL R52, p. 368).

Oh Canada! 2017

‘The arts are how we tell stories about ourselves, and inform our sense of who we are as a nation’ (Ang and Mar, 2016, para 2).

Oh Canada! (2017), is an audio project to consider the multiple voices, cultures and dynamics that informs the Canadian tapestry. Where in *Vol. 4* the interlocutors are tasked to listen to familiar words presented in a manner of speech one is less accustomed to, *Oh Canada!* extends a national anthem, making the familiar unfamiliar with the anthem, usually sung in one of the two official languages, is instead sung with many languages. It attempts to weave a variegated audio landscape and to address a transnational and pluri-linguistic community that is ‘a zone of contact and change, a collision of cultures’ (Gagnon, 2000, p. 128).

Oh Canada! (2017) examines the Canadian’s sense of identity which, as Justin Trudeau admits, is a ‘work in progress’ (Connect, 2017). The project also underlines the contested nature of Canada 150. Its celebratory tones marking 150 years of the Confederation of Canada chafes against Chinese Canadian and First Nation’s declaration of 1 July, of any year, as a Day of Shame (Hayday, 2017).

Oh Canada! begins with the fanfare excerpted from TSO Canada Mosaic: A Canada 150 Signature Project,¹⁰ performed by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and conducted by Peter Oundjian. Performed individually and presented in separate recordings, *A Canada 150 Signature Project* features 12 of the most widely used languages in Canada – English, French, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, German, Italian, Arabic, Tagalog, Cree, ASL and Tamil. Unlike the managed multiculturalism (Maharaj in Hall and Maharaj, 2001, p. 46) of the *Signature Project*, *Oh Canada!* seeks to reflect a multilingual collective.

I sourced online for professional as well as amateur recordings of the national anthem sung in various languages, performed at openings of hockey games and conferences or sung by school children or ad hoc groups such as that of the recording

¹⁰ *TSO Canada Mosaic: A Canada 150 Signature Project* is available at:
<<http://canadamosaic.tso.ca/>>

of the anthem in Yiddish performed by a group of multi-generational and multicultural singers.¹¹

I developed *Oh Canada!* (2017) from recordings made in twenty-two languages. This compilation of recordings consisted of performances recorded in the same or approximate keys which ensured that no single language could be heard above the others, circumventing issues of a hegemonic order (Hobsbawn, 1996; Camnitzer, 2009). Equally important, the recording prompted a sense of a presence and acknowledged the collective presence as well as individual experiences of a multilinguistic and multicultural community that is ‘not created based on shared language but in shared space’ (Khubchandani, 1997, quoted in Makoni and Pennycook, 2006: p. 234).

‘... indistinguishable yellow-skin ...’

Fung’s identification with complicated and complicating identities is thoroughly considered in his films *The Way to my Father’s Village* (1988), *My Mother’s Place* (1990a) which searches for his identity and later in *Dal Puri Diaspora* (2012), where he traces the journey of an Indian flatbread, and his latest *Re:Orientation* (2016) a re-work of the 1884 documentary that addressed Toronto liminal community and their struggles of LGBT-identified Asian-Canadian to make themselves visible.¹²

Canadian, Trinidadian video artist Fung, born 1954 in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, the last child in a family of eight children of a creolized Catholic Chinese family, left the Caribbean to complete his high school education in Dublin in the seventies. He would go on to Ontario and never return to Trinidad to live. Fung’s maternal great grandfather was an indentured labourer who went to Trinidad in the mid nineteenth century (Fung, 1990). His father Eugene Fong who emigrated to Trinidad in the twentieth century was reticent regarding his stories, China and his language. Growing up Fung never spoke Hakka, the language of his father’s southern Guangdong village. In the filming of *The Way to My Father’s Village* (1988) Fung

¹¹ A video showing the making of this recording is available at:
<<http://www.visiontv.ca/videos/making-yiddish-o-canada/>>

¹² *Re:Orientation* available at: <<http://www.caribbean-beat.com/issue-141/richard-fung-no-easyreadings>>

finds that, not only [...] must [he] reluctantly accept the role of the tourist, but that he was linguistically an outsider.

Author and Associate Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong Gina Marchetti notes that it is in *Dirty Laundry* (1996), in the history of nineteenth Chinese immigration to Canada, that Fung investigates his roots (Marchetti, 2002). Of his search, Fung writes,

I am aware that my sense of priorities, and even my experience of racism, is rooted in being both an indistinguishable yellow-skin and specifically Chinese. So that while I may feel solidarity, neither internment, nor refugee camps—nor the head tax for that matter—is my own specific history. (Fung, 1994).

Sounding Chinese

Fung's accent speaks volumes and reverberates his trajectories, individuated experiences and personal histories - all of which contributes to the heterogeneity of his contradictory experiences as gay, Chinese, Trinidadian, Canadian, Torontonion, a video maker, middle-class and OCAD professor (Fung, 1995). He is clear that these identities are contextual in that, what makes our identity has as much to do with who we identify ourselves as, as much as who we identify ourselves with. Having said that, I am also cognizant of several counterpoints – that any discussions about identity are not end points but always the starting points of becoming; that to hear and state what one is not is also to recognise the elements of its constituents, for example, to state that Mandarin is not the sound of Chineseness is to also state the corollary. I mean firstly, that in some situations, Mandarin is the sound of Chineseness, secondly, that there are also other Chinese languages that hold other Chinese communities together and thirdly, the Chinese-speaking community may be non-Chinese in many other ways.

The review of the many names of Vancouver points to a continued making of the identity of Chinese, not just in the past but well into the present with new transnationals Respondents C, D and E in chapter 4, potential transnationals like Liu, Chen and ChaoPan and their colleagues, the Chinese interlocutors in *The Halifax Conversations*, and new migrants like Respondents J, K and L. Did the accents of

Respondents J, K and L change and did new accents change their sense of identity, making them more Canadian and Chinese Canadian?

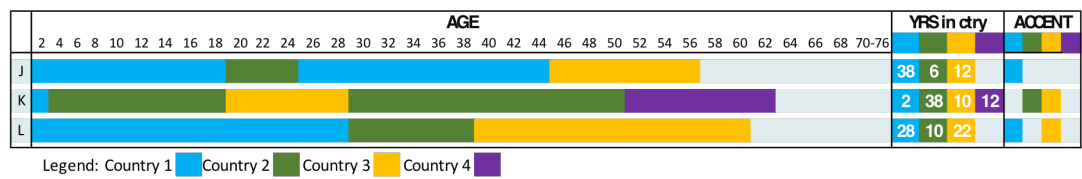


Figure 6.14 Years spent in a country and accent of Respondents J, K and L.

As the graph above indicates, all three spoke with an accent that, while displaying Canadian speech patterns, evinced a sense of having come from elsewhere. While Respondent J maintains that he is Chinese Singaporean as well, all three proudly identified themselves as Canadians. Respondent L, despite having to resolve her earlier experiences of being Chinese, finds her Chineseness irrefutable and Respondent K who is the only one of the trio that does not speak the language, identifies as a Peranakan. None of them considered themselves Chinese Canadians. Their trajectories are different from those of Haam Sui-fao, Lo Wah Kius, Wankowah and Wengehua, and different from Henry Tsang and Richard Fung.

The discussion of one’s identity must always attend to the complexities germane to one’s identity, that is what we identify as, as well as the communities that we identify with. It is complex in the sense that identity is oftentimes not an incremental process. Each layer of the mimesis is not a comprehensive static layer but rather a relocalization (Pennycook, 2010, p. 35).

Chapter 7

Through listening to 12 respondents and phrase book participants, I sought to understand if our sense of self changes when our accents and the way we speak changes and how a particular sound come to frame Chinese identity. Their experiences evinced a coming to terms with the distance between sameness and differences—in sounds of a word once familiar, how that sound spoke to a different meaning—and in doing so created a moment that is unique to each of them, a time and space where new sounds and their meanings come into being. It is the presence of all of the languages and sounds we have in our heads that gives us our present languages and sounds weaving together ‘the warp and woof of daily activities, concerns, fears and achievements’ (Glick-Schiller, 1992 quoted in Kong, 2005, p. 225). These revelations contribute to the on-going conversation about the way we understand ourselves; they lend meaning and significance to our relations to community.

As seen in *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 2*, language is a living thing. For it to function, language must respond to the needs of the community it serves, which in turn creates more sounds to serve the circumstances. This is how the Hong Kong English and Singlish came to be. Secondly, identity and language co-construct. Language does not frame an identity. Rather it functions in a collaborative relationship to create community, as evident in the vocabulary of the families of Overseas Chinese in Kaiping. Language, as with identity, is constructed in tandem with the situation at hand. From late seventeenth century comprador-merchants through to recent people’s movements such as Umbrella Movement and Fake Suffrage, Hong Kong Cantonese and Hong Kong English have served its community and in doing so co-create the identity of the Hongkonger. ‘As one Hong Kong artist says, “Language is one of the prime things to separate yourself from others... . In my drawings, I write in Cantonese. I don’t care if the [mainland] Chinese don’t understand”’ (Mathews, 1997, p. 11). As with the case of Respondent H, the quotation illustrates that language and the sound of language also create borders. As a marker of belonging or not, they could thwart the simplest act, to put in an order

for one’s lunch or facilitate an unspoken but protracted challenge to belong. Consider the experiences of the Respondents.

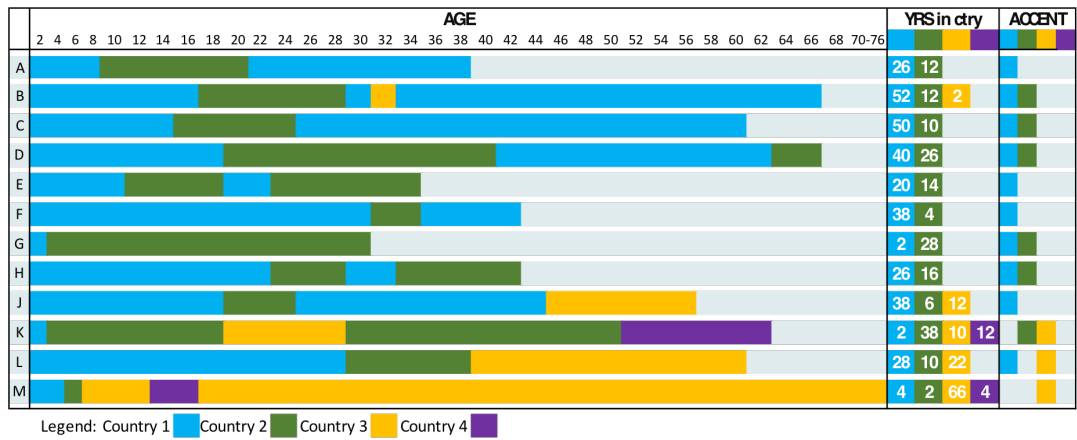


Figure 7.1 Years spent in a country and accents of Respondents.

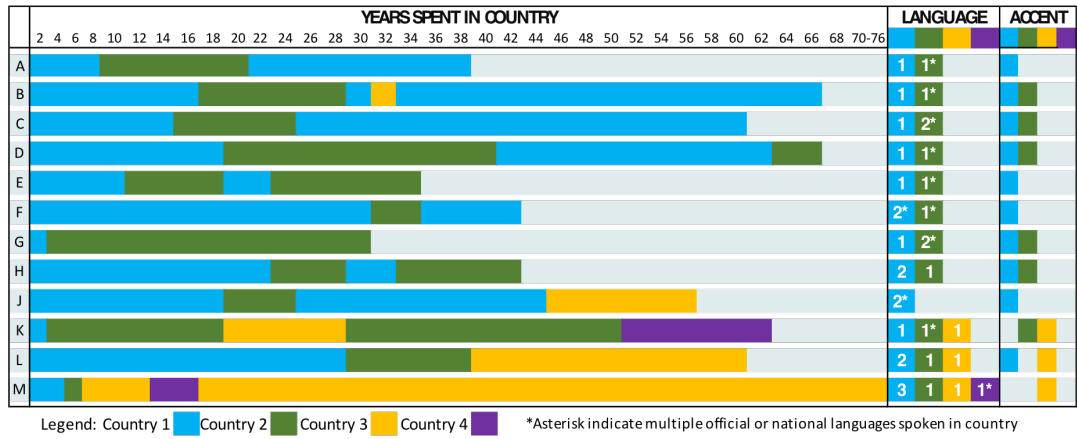


Figure 7.2 Languages spoken by Respondents and their accents.

Figures 7.1 illustrates that all of the respondents have lived in at least two countries, the shortest stay being of two years and the longest sixty-six years and Figure 7.2 shows that they each speak at least two languages. While many of my respondents identify as Chinese—the basis on which the call to participate in my projects was made—the responses from each respondent indicate that there needs to be some clarification about how the term ‘Chinese’ is applied.

While Respondent H has been living in Singapore almost half her life, she identifies as being a Chinese National. ‘Chinese’ in this instance functions as a national identity. On the other hand, Respondent A lives in Hong Kong, in a country which is both a part of China and apart from China and where claiming one's identity as

Hongkonger is a political statement (Mathews, 1997, pp. 3 and 11). Respondent A identifies with Hong Kong as a Hongkonger and amplifies that identification by his choice of Hong Kong Cantonese when making the recording.

Respondent B, despite her Guangdong ancestry, also identifies with being a Hongkonger. For her it is about the choices she makes, of availing herself of the freedom to choose. She is the active agent in shaping her identity, choosing to speak her English with marked Hong Kong Cantonese and Canadian accents, attesting to the notion that the language of one's birth is not always the language one identifies with. Respondent F's sense of being Chinese is in her 'roots in China' (ResF R15) which anchored her identity when confronted with the multiplicities of Chinese languages and identities (Kong, 2005, p. 219). However, her anchor proved to be a buoy - a super rojak one. As Canagarajah says, 'It appears that matters like linguistic identity, speech community, language competence and even language teaching are based on constructs of homogeneity and uniformity that we have invented over time. Once these closed systems are taken away, we are confused as to how we can practice language communication' (Canagarajah, 2007a, p. 233).

Respondent G, a Singaporean, also identifies with Hong Kong although he left Hong Kong when he was one-year old. He is adamant that Hong Kong is not synonymous with 'China' and his Chineseness is bound to his familial language, Hong Kong Cantonese. Respondent M felt she was too young, at the age of four and a half, to have garnered any sense of being Chinese living in pre-Communist Shanghai although she clearly recalls her uncle's advice to not forget her roots. She identifies with her grandfather whose legacy she honours through her second career as a knot tyer in a community of crafts people and where her expertise as a knot tyer and lace maker is well established. Thus, with Respondent M as well as C and D, their transnational experiences have gained them a measure of cultural and social capital.

In the same way that being Chinese must vary 'from place to place' (Ang, 2001, p. 38), it also must vary from time to time as it is for Respondent L. The concept of a Chinese identity based on Chinese civilization is contradictory to the sense of an identity that is always becoming (Hall and du Gay 1996). As Sinfree Makoni and Alastair Pennycook say, it is a '...creation of a past into which the present is

inserted. Thus, these constructed histories are also about the constructed present' (Makoni and Pennycook, 2006, p. 8).

The effectiveness of 'Chinese' as an overarching designator anticipates an urgent need to use this term with 'greater caution and specificity' (Shih quoted in Shih, Tsai and Bernards, 2013, p. 6). It demands a more nuanced word, a descriptor that would sound—that is to give voice as well as to ascertain the extent and depth of—the complexities of a pluralistic reality, 'to qualify and identify who exactly we are describing' (Wang, 1999, p. 16). Not before time, our attention must now be directed to one of today's most urgent predicament - how to engender a nuanced response to a complex reality of our everyday.

The inadequacy of the term 'Chinese' in fact gives weight to the notion that it is the community that makes the language rather than the reverse; that languages and the pronunciation of the language are brought about by their multidirectional, to borrow from Clifford (1997), routes rather than by their roots. Languages are created by and through encounters of differences. It is in these moments of collisions, in the suspension of expectations and in responding to the local influences, that jarring accents are made familiar. In unique moments like these 'fresh perspectives and elements of invention' give rise to that which is new (Tiampo, 2011, p. 53); when strangeness finds home. In the mid 1990s, when I first arrived at the city of Halifax, in Nova Scotia, Canada, not only were the names of grocery stores different, the pronunciations of basic foods were unfamiliar. After I had understood that 'Atlantic Superstore' is the name of a large chain of grocery markets, I had to change my mostly Singaporean British accent to that of Atlantic Canadian. For example, the 1960s British pronunciation of flour, ['flaʊə] and ['flaʊ(ə)r] and the phrase 'out and about', that is [aʊt] and [ə'baʊt], is closer to [əʊt] and [ə'bəʊt]. Over time my accent changed and I felt that I had no problems being understood by the local communities. However, a colleague observed that my accent was similar to that of local Singapore entrepreneur KF Seetoh, featured in Anthony Bourdain's television programme *Parts Unknown*.¹ When I am in Singapore, I am told I speak with an

¹ Anthony Bourdain's *Parts Unknown*. Available at:
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RM0nKhs4gs>> (Accessed: 11 May 2018).

accent. Identified in Singapore as a Chinese Singaporean, I do not speak any Chinese languages and, if I am Chinese by descent I am ‘only sometimes Chinese by consent’ (Ang, 2001, p. 36).

Did my identity change? It did not change as much as it expanded to include a sense of Canadian-ness. I felt that I was Chinese Singaporean, Singaporean and Canadian, in different intensity at different times and situations, modifying my accents and language accordingly. Therefore, more to the point, a translation of sounds is not a subtract. Phrasebooks and dictionaries do the job of carrying over the dross (Maharaj, 2001, p. 45).

Phrases in phrasebooks and dictionaries poured over during arduous sea journeys lend nineteenth century interlocutors their idiosyncratic pronunciations. The wide array of accents portrayed in Lee’s 2000 film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and in Jon Chu’s 2018 film *Crazy Rich Asians* attest to the diverse and multiple identities that have been subsumed under the ‘Chinese’ rubric. The accents heard in these films challenge a reified notion of a common ‘Chineseness’ which overlooks and overtakes local circumstances and influences that have sedimented over time and developed into a palimpsest of cultures, concepts and values. They also dispute any claims to a single source as ‘the authentic, authoritative, and uncontested standard for all things Chinese’ (Ang, 2001, p. 38). There is no single ground or bass line on which one could build the notion of ‘Chinese’ or even the idea of a Chinese voice.

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 6, 2018

The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 6 (henceforth *Vol. 6*) is a development of my earlier projects *whisper* and *Vol. 4* that considered translations and relocated texts as creative acts of difference rather than derivatives. If they do stand in their own right as valid encounters of their particular time and space, or as Walter Benjamin puts it, ‘of their here and now’, the subsequent recordings must necessarily stand as original (Benjamin, 1936, p. 5). In collaboration with Barker *Vol. 6* was performed twice, on Prince Edward Island and in Halifax, Nova Scotia with different participating audiences. The first is at *Art in the Open 2018* (henceforth AITO 2018), the annual art festival in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island (PEI), Canada. Barker

and I positioned ourselves in public locations - I in Singapore and Barker in Charlottetown to create itinerant, dialogic performances at different intervals. I performed at Singapore's Civic District, an area based on 1822 master plan initiated by Sir Stamford Raffles (Figures 7.3 and 7.4). Starting on Coleman Street, I continued on to the Dalhousie Obelisk, Victoria Concert Hall and concluded the performance at the Merlion Park on the Esplanade. In Charlottetown Barker began her performance at Rochford Square, continued on to Connaught Square, Confederation Centre Plaza, and finished at Victoria Park (Figures 7.5-7.8).

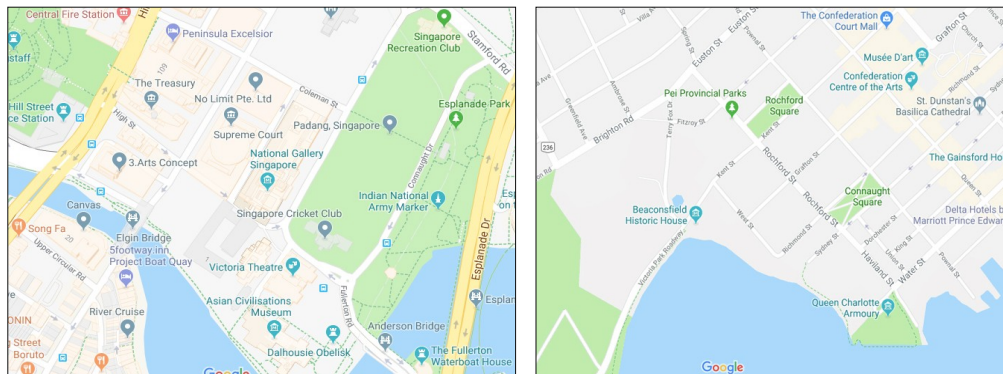


Figure 7.3 (left)

Map of Civic District, Singapore.

Figure 7.4

Map of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada.



Figure 7.5

Coleman Street in Singapore and Rochford Street in Charlottetown.



Figure 7.6 Dalhousie Obelisk in Singapore and Connaught Square in Charlottetown.

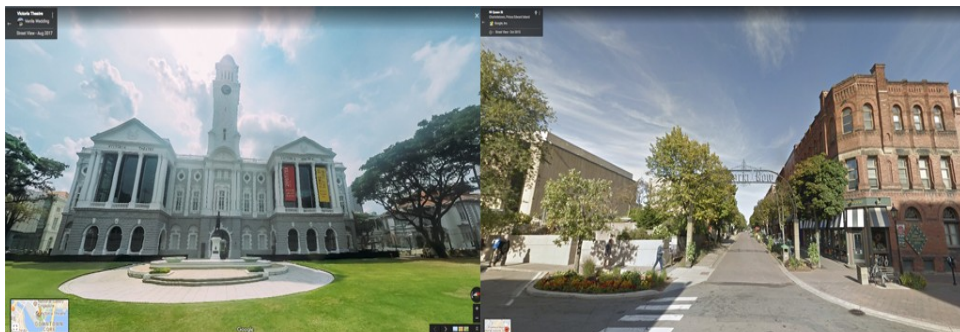


Figure 7.7 Victoria Concert Hall in Singapore and Victoria Row in Charlottetown.

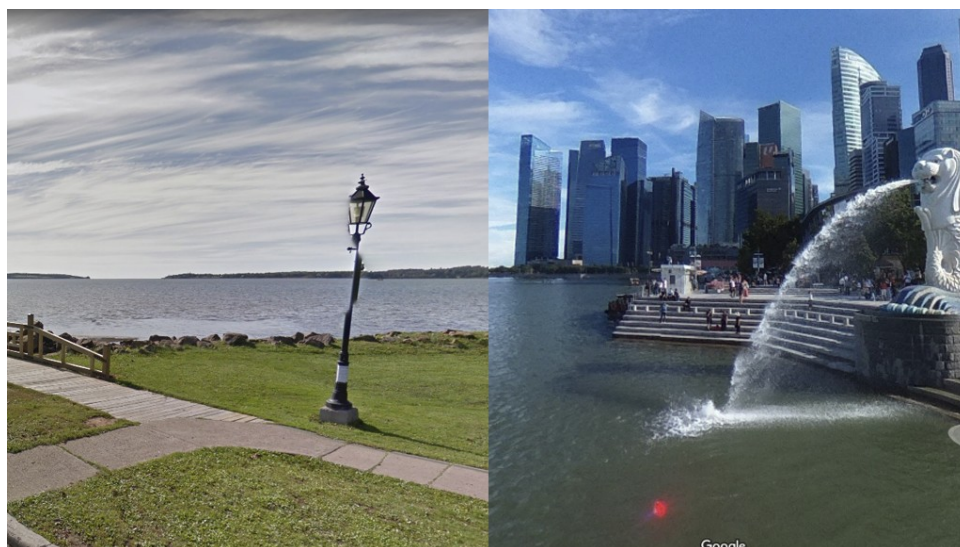


Figure 7.8 Merlion Park on the Esplanade in Singapore (right) and Victoria Park in Charlottetown.

Brochures detailing both the routes as well as the images of its surroundings were distributed prior to the performance and a monitor was installed at the Confederation of the Arts in Charlottetown which tracked us as we walked the routes in our respective countries and time zones. We spoke via a synchronous audio chat app and wore speakers to amplify each other from our remote locations. Chance encounters with audience in the public constitute ideal viewership.

Vol. 6 itself is a sounding game: one collaborator mimics, as closely as possible, the sound of a word their partner uttered moments before. In this performance however, each interval begins with a colonial place name either in Charlottetown or Singapore. As we volley back and forth, and mimic sounds spoken and listened to, the original word uttered slowly becomes indistinguishable and morphs into something else, incrementally detaching itself from its initial meaning. The performance thus questions the centre-periphery mindset in the localizations of spoken language. As discussed in Chapter 2, Canagarajah and Pennycook have both pointed out that the spread and subsequent localization of English over the course of the development of the British Empire has, indeed, created a wide array of local Englishes with specific cultural authority and meaning in local contexts. What holds true for English, holds true as well for Chinese languages which is exemplified by Respondent F's experiences. In migrating between Singapore and Taiwan, she had to negotiate differences in the two Mandarin languages used in the country. Thus if, as Singapore's language policies dictate, Mandarin Chinese identifies her as Chinese, what is she in Taiwan where being Chinese and speaking the language are completely different?

Finally, the use of synchronous audio and video media in our performance highlights the possibilities and frustrations of the now-common modes of online communication. Whatsapp and Skype cuts audio when background noise is present. As investigated in *whispers* (2009) and *Meddling English* (After Bergvall, C. 2010) (2015) networks and digital software are reliable only to some degree. Its unreliability however can be harnessed as a creative force (Maharaj, 2001, p. 37). In digital communication, signals are not dropped as frequently as before and glitches have become normalized as part of the communicative experience in these modes.

By incorporating possible glitches in *Vol. 6*, we further complicate our utterances in the performance.

Glitches, this time of traffic noises, fellow walkers along the Great Wall of China, of conversations and laughter heard in the background and interruptions are also heard in *pronounce 1*, the portrait of Mainland Chinese voices that begins this thesis and in *pronounce 2*, those of people of Chinese descent that concludes it. Both are presented in a loop and it is up to the listener to decide where and when to begin and when sounds have sedimented enough to conclude the utterance. Or perhaps they may never. As Benjamin proposes, ‘translation does not serve the original ...’ (Benjamin, (1992[1955]) quoted in Bal and Morra, 2007, p. 5). Instead *pronounce 1*, *pronounce 2* and my other projects employ an interdisciplinary approach to draw attention to different sameness.

The 11 projects and *Gleaning the Grain/Audio Post* cards lend themselves to the notion that language (and translations) and identities are performative. They amplify the collision of complex multiples and, in tandem with the research, afford the link between one’s sense of identities, however changing though they are, with political, cultural and social experiences. The six volumes of *Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds* and *Oh Canada!* exploit the qualities sound affords - polysemous yet at the same time works against absolute codification (Benjamin, (1992 [1955]) quoted in Bal and Morra, 2007, pp. 5-6). Furthermore, the projects in dialogue with the research and my own travels over several geographies, range over the diapason of sounds to examine and to contribute to questions of identity and home.

Historian Arthur Waldron began his epic study of the *Great Wall of China* (1983) with a quote from fellow historian and sinologist Yang Lian-sheng printed in the verso of the dedication page, ‘In studying the Chinese world order it is important to distinguish myth from reality whenever possible. Both can be influential.’ Yang’s quote is pertinent in this thesis’ consideration of being Chinese and the indicative sound of Chineseness, which very much like the wall, is in part embedded in the practices of communities and twinned to political agendas (Waldron, 1983).

What I have examined are claims to frame Chinese identities with a sound and language. I have considered them through the experiences of twentieth century to present day transnational Chinese. I have also considered how languages gave communities new identities as in the case of Hong Kong Cantonese, were tasked to ascribe Chinese identities in Singapore and prescribe identities of Chinese Canadians. Still, while we have long acknowledged that these multiples of Chinese languages and identities to be socially constructed and contingent on locations, we have yet to acknowledge that time is a constituent as well. As such, we insist on the authenticity of our routes without reducing its complexity, its complicated entanglement (Ang, 2003, p. 2).

Ang began the last chapter of her book *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* with ‘One of the most urgent predicaments of our time can be described in deceptively simple terms: how are we to live together in this new century? ‘We’ and ‘together’ are the key sites of contestation here.’ (Ang, 2001, p. 193).

This practice-based research has ‘no real conclusions but only strategies for engagement and efforts of interpretation’ (Voegelin, 2010, p. xiii). It contributes to thinking about being super *rojak* by creating situations where ‘... listening as an act of engaging’ (Voegelin. 2010, p. 3) lends further consideration to how we ascribe meanings and significance to ways of being with each other. In tracing the journey of the voice, the research lent itself to the development of my practice where sculpture had been my language. It is presently trans-disciplinary and borrowing from Papastergiadis,² with messy and multiple perspectives. Through my engagement with various communities and with other fields of knowledge production, I have gained and continue to gain new glossaries and to hear new sounds, for example those gleaned in developing *Drumming Out Loud*.

² ‘Art becomes more of a messy participatory medium, ... , it suffuses spaces between and through us, responsive, interactive, connective and intimate, but also elusive and invested, entangled with a multitude of invisible forces’ Papastergiadis, N., Wyatt, D. (2019) Is This How Participation Goes? *FIELD: A Journal of Socially-Engaged Art Criticism*. Issue 12/13 Spring 2019. Available at: <<http://field-journal.com/issue-12/far-east-and-australia/is-this-how-participation-goes>>

Drumming Out Loud began with a request in January of 2022 from Pyinya Sanyae in Myanmar to increase the institute's proportion of assistance with trauma cases possibly arising from on-going local conditions and the Covid-19 pandemic. Pyinya Sanyae's organisers knew me from my work in Singapore at a centre for latchkey children in the late 1980s. In subsequent meetings with them I shared my *Green Taiko* (2016) project which laid the groundwork to develop a response to Pyinya Sanyae's request.

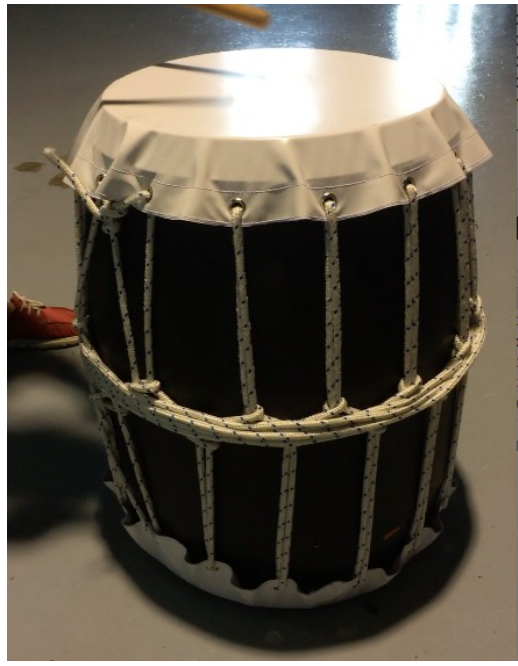
Green Taiko, Singapore 2016 – 2017

In December 2016 my taiko drumming instructor Wang Junyong (henceforth Junyong) asked me to help design a green taiko that could be made quickly and cheaply³ unlike the taiko we use in class which cost £4,000.00 each. As Junyong intends to use these green taiko to teach latchkey children at a community centre, the green taiko drums had also to be easily transported and not resonate as loudly as the taiko we use.⁴ After researching and experimenting with different materials and configurations, I developed a prototype. (Figures 7.9-7.10).

In early January 2017, I put together a team of volunteers who would help make these drums. The next challenge was to solicit funds to produce over 100 of these drums. Through a brochure initiative I obtained enough funds to make the drums which we could use to teach in community centres, schools and to also engage with seniors in nursing homes for the elderly (Figures 7.11-7.13).

³ Taiko refers to drums we used in class. Green taiko describes drums made from recycled materials.

⁴ When hit hard with drum stick or bachi, the taiko can produce sounds topping 130 decibels, a sound level that is on par with the noise produced by jet airplanes. Available at: <<http://webjapan.org/kidsweb/cool/12-12-25/>>



Figures 7.9 & 7.10 Gerard Choy, *Green Taiko* - prototypes, 2016. Photo credit: Wang Junyong.



Figures 7.11 Green Taiko - team at work, 2016. Photo credit: Wang Junyong.



Figures 7.12 Green Taiko - one hundred drums. Photo credit: Wang Junyong.

In researching eldercare in Singapore for the Green Taiko project I sought advice from Don Tan, Head of Programme with Tsao Foundation who has been working with seniors, and Mala Manap, a gerontologist at the Singapore Duke-NUS Medical School. I also met with Dr Rosie Perkins at the Royal School of Music in London. Dr Perkins investigates the role music and the arts can play in advancing societal wellbeing. Both Mala and Dr Perkins also assisted me in creating forms and



Figures 7.13 Green Taiko at work, 2016. Photo credit: Wang Junyong.

questions which were useful in evaluating the *Green Taiko* project. These questionnaires indicated that many participants felt unable to take control of their self-image and to transcend the often-one-dimensional clichéd image of seniors and the elderly.

Drumming Out Loud, Myanmar 2022 and on-going

Unlike Junyong, whose aim was to teach drumming, I wanted to have conversations, to encourage situations where both the participants and I would listen, acknowledge and respond to each other. The *Green Taiko* project afforded me the opportunity to create a situation where facilitators as well as participants listen to each other - a participatory experience that created the space for us to interact, help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities. This interaction is critical in *Drumming Out Loud* where the intent is to create conditions that would afford collaborations

and conversations to encounter sounds that might translate, that is to carry across, experiences and emotions for which there is yet no language and to listen when an other gives voice to them.

After several months of discussion, it became clear that despite the advent of 5G network technology, digital audio and video communication programmes have not developed enough to enable me, in Singapore, to conduct these sessions on line. The solution was to collaborate with volunteers. Music teachers already in Myanmar generously agreed to take up the baton. Our first meeting was scheduled for the Fall of 2022 with sessions beginning in Spring of 2023.

Collaboration is an integral part of my practice. This is exemplified in *By the Spoonful*, *One Ton of Wonton Bowls* and *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds* especially *Vol. 3* which was made in collaboration with Eva, a Canadian-Hongkonger. However, these projects are still framed by my practice and research around sound as a signifier of identity, as well as a voice of belonging. While *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 1* and *2* were projected in public spaces that were not specifically art venues such as a gallery, these are still events organised by and through art institutions and organisations. *Violin in Alum 6* and *Audio Postcard* did not allow autonomy for the participants as they were still performing within my framework.

I designed *Drumming Out Loud*, a course of ten sessions, not to produce drummers but with the intent to create conditions to solicit participation and gradually to encourage interaction—through the rhythms and sounds of the drums and/or through their relationships with each other—as well as gain self-autonomy. As such, the course itself is only a fluid framework through which the role of facilitators and participants might be interchangeable. The sessions are presented in gradual increments to create a language where members of the group could begin to give voice to their own life experiences and in time, perhaps to recognise that the capacity to discern that their identity is always becoming, might unfold.

Drumming Out Loud takes up the lessons of *The Phrase Book of Migrant Sounds Vol. 4* - to expand beyond academic boundaries and to listen reflexively⁵. As well, the decision to document the ten sessions is entirely up to the drumming group.

To extend Stanley's quote,⁶ while the details and circumstances of the struggle may be different, at heart it is still 'a struggle over what it mean[s] to be human, to have shared humanity recognized and real rather than imagined differences engaged' (Stanley, 2011, p. 230). What is incumbent on both speaker and listener is the willingness to transcend borders. As Kit Young, co-founder of Gitameit Music Institute says, 'It is to listen beyond who we are, to who they are, to what they know, and how they know it'. It can also be said that it is when we translate our experiences and histories into sounds and carry them across through voice that we change the way we listen, change our sense of self. In doing so, we create communities where nuanced sounds in their multiple accents give voice to a plurality of knowing.

Multi-directional and more kaleidoscopic than telescopic, my practice presently includes, and is not limited to listening, to participations and conversations carved into space and time, and to issues of communal well-being such as health. This is the direction of my journey.

⁵ Performer/composer Keren Rosenbaum and sound artists/composers Angus Carlyle and Cathy Lane are quoted in Chapter 6, pp. 175-176.

⁶ Quoted in Chapter 6, p. 174.

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Appendix

Text in black - English

Text in purple - Hong Kong English

Text in brown - spoken in Chinese, for example Cantonese, Mandarin, Teochew

ResA

Date of Interview: 17 December 2010

Venue: MacDonald's at Exchange Square,
Hong Kong

Project Title: The Phrasebook of Migrant Sounds

Recording No: ResA STE-005 and 006

Total Recordings: 2

Format: Digital .wav

Language: English, Cantonese and Mandarin

Running Time 00:12.08 (4:38 + 7:30)

STE -005.wav

R1 Ah... hello. My name is [...].

00:00 05

R2 My name is ... ah ... [...]

00:00:10

R3 I am a Hongkonger.

R4 I migrated, with my family, (00:00:20.461- *uk¹kei²* 屋企 *wūqǐ* not *jiārén* 家人) to Canada in 1992. I lived there for 12 years, a few years of which I lived alone as my parents decided to return to Hong Kong after 1997. After a few years my older brother decided to return as well.

R5 I completed secondary education and then returned to Hong Kong.

00:01:14

R6 Returning to HKG was not too difficult to readjust as I, once in a while, 3 or 4 years had returned to Hong Kong, therefore it was not too much of a **culture shock**. Also I would (ResA used 'communicate' *kau¹tung¹* 沟通 *gōutōng*) speak Cantonese with my family at home in Canada. Sometimes I have difficulties ... replying ... getting the right words because I am not fluent.

R7 Since returning to Hong Kong 6 years ago, there has been a great improvement. So it's not a problem now, not a big problem, speaking now to speak Cantonese although some local Hongkonger (*tou² sang¹ tou² zoeng²* 土生土长 *tǔshēng-tǔzhǎng*) might find some of my **sentence structure** strange [different from the way a local Hongkonger would have expressed it]

00:02:48

R8 Actually I had difficulty communicating with others when I first returned after finishing my studies, (*hok⁶jip⁶* 学业 *xuéyè*)

00:03:13

R9 I think my classmates and I did not have common topics with which we could share. Perhaps (*waak6 ze2* 或者 *huòzhě*) They found me strange but ... I don't know ... I don't know how to explain but ...

00:03:28

R10 Actually to speak the truth ..., ... I sometimes feel apart (*tyut3 zit3* 脱节 *tuō jié*) from local Hong Kong student. Whatever they were discussing, I did not quite understand all the words clearly but I now I do not have that problem.

00:04:00

R11 Actually to speak the truth, I sometimes feel apart and will ask them to clarify.

00:04:13

R12 Actually ... (*kei4sat6* 其实 *qíshí*) when I went to Canada, when I was 8 yrs old ... at that time ...

STE -006.wav

R13 My English was not good. I could not communicate (*kau¹tung¹ m⁴ dou³* 沟通 嚟/不到 *gōutōng bu dào*). I had only studied up to Primary 2 in Hong Kong and was not able to communicate with Caucasians (*sai1 jan4* 西人 *xī rén*) because my lack of English.

00:00:40

R14 So I did 2 years ESL (English as a Second Language) programme - programme for those whose mother tongue is not English. I did that programme for two and a half years. After that my teacher thought I could attend (*seong5 fo3* 上课 *shàngkè*) regular English language classes

00:01:28

R14 Actually the ESL years were very difficult because, when in class, I did not understand anything. I had the least problems with Maths only because it dealt mostly with numbers unless they are word problems but even those I could work around it.

00:02:11

R15 So my results (*sing4 zik1* 成绩 *chéngjì*) ... naturally there was a slight improvement and my English has only progress by fifty percent.

00:02:20

R16 In the fourth/fifth of having lived in Canada year home, except with family, I spoke English. Most of my friends in White Rock are Caucasian. White Rock is a small town with few Chinese.

00:03:11

R17 When I first emigrated to Canada, I lived in Richmond where there were more Asian compared to White Rock. About 80-90% residents of Richmond were of Chinese descent (*waa4 jan4* 华人 *huárén*) so it was not critical to be able to speak English

00:03:28

R18 But when we moved to White Rock, things were different. The composition of my classmates were mostly Caucasians. There were no Hongkongers and if there were any of Chinese descents they were mostly Taiwanese so we communicated mainly in English.

00:03:57

R19 With my Taiwanese friends, I reply in English although I understand Taiwanese.

00:04:24

R20 At that time I feel that I had the tendency (*king1 hoeng3* 倾向 *qīngxiàng*) ... I spoke very little Chinese outside family because of a lack opportunity, because there were none of my classmates were Hongkongers.

R21 Secondly 2 of my classmates, born in Canada, Generation 1.5. They understand a little Cantonese but are not conversant.

00:06:02

R22 So, besides speaking with my family in Hong Kong, I did not speak Cantonese while in White Rock. I spoke mostly in English with my friends. Actually, I did not speak Cantonese after my parents returned to Hong Kong. Even with my elder brother, I had very few conversations. I did not spend much time with elder brother because of our work schedules, no chance to speak Cantonese except when I was chatting with parents, with my aunt (*gu1 maal* 姑妈 *gūmā*)

R23 So I had little accent but no problem speaking with his family in general.

Cantonese- English

mou5 jyu5 母语 - mother tongue

ging1 jim6 经验 - experience

sou3 hau2 数口 - maths

gaau1 tung1 交通 - communication

Lit6 zi6 man4 列治文- Richmond

min6 mung4 mung4 面蒙蒙- blur

pui3 hup6 配合 - well together, match

hau2 jam1 口音 - accent

fuk6 mou6 jyun4 服务员 service person

ResB

Date of Interview: 18 November 2010
Venue The Ladies' Recreation Club
10 Old Peak Road, Hong Kong
Project Title: The Phrasebook of Migrant Sounds
Recording No: 2010 11 18 ResB STE-000
Total Recordings: 1
Format: Digital .wav
Language: English
Running Time 00:25:57 (hh:mm:ss)

00:04

R1 Hi, er, this is [...] from... er, I was born in Hong Kong. Oh my god, my birthday? ((chuckles)) October 17th, 1955.

I¹ Thank you. Erm, can you tell us a little bit about, er, your family and I believe you moved to Canada?

R1 Ya, er, well my family moved... well my father fled from Canton to Hong Kong when he was very young. Er, we were all born in Hong Kong. I've got, er, five sisters and two brothers. I'm the youngest. Er, ever since my, er... I was young... like I think I was... I was nine years old when my first... my, er, my older sister, er, moved to Can... er, moved to Australia and then every other year because we were only two years apart... So, my second sister is the only one who *stays* in Hong Kong because my father needs her here for, er, business because she has to translate all the documents and things. She's the only one who went to Hong Kong University so and my third sister left after, ya, two years after... we are two years in between so when the time... my sisters... er, the third sister, she went to *Toronto*. And then, er, next brother went to Alberta. And then my... and then the brother after him went to Nebraska, in the States. They all went to study university. That's the entrance years, er, when they finish high school in Hong Kong. And then my, er, the sister... above me which is two years apart, she went to Texas, Galveston to study Medicine, pre-med school. And then, me. Er, I left early. ((Chuckles)) Because I couldn't finish, er, secondary school here. So my mum sent me... my parents sent me to my brother in Alberta because he's the one who could take care of me and practically that was where I was accepted because Canada school is much easier to accept at this time. I went for, er, Grade 10 or ya, Grade 10 I think. Ya. So, er, I started primary school there. And... then when I finished high school, I didn't want to stay in Alberta so I took a train and went to Toronto to live with my sister. And then I, er, I find that I will- I need education because my, er, father almost disown me for not finishing school. So I have to, er, I went to night school and everywhere to... you know, get, get qualifications to fin- get this, the, the entrance requirements that I need so I was accepted in university. So I was there for four years. And... so, that was like in a span of 12 years.

03:35

I¹ You said that you left Hong Kong to go to Edmonton. Did you fly?

R2 Mm-hmm.

I¹ And so do you remember what happened and what did you feel when you...

R3 I felt very happy, er, I felt I have wings. I have wings when I- hmm, free as a bird. Really! I felt really, really good. I was... I, I, I'm out **about**. But I remember when, er, my older sister left. At that time, in the olden days, it's quite expensive to fly so my, my sister took the big ocean liners. I can remember odd streamers coming **down**, you know, like in the movie. So, ya, she, she took the boat. It took her almost a month. Really, because quite far away from here. Flying is nine hours. Right? Ya, something like that, anyways, ya. So I was flying. I took the plane.

I¹ So where did you land? The first port of entry was Edmonton?

R4 Edmonton. It was such small town I was really freaking out. It's, like, one row and that was it. Oh god, it was really, really scary because *that's it!* Hong Kong is huge. There, it's just one road so I couldn't... I, I couldn't really quite... erm, it was scary in the beginning but then as soon as I start school, it was OK. Ya, I met friends and it was, ya, starting to be more, more enjoyable to live there. But, erm, ya, I, I... finished high school there.

05:31

I¹ What was it like to go to school in Canada? What's the difference between going to school in Hong Kong and going to school in Canada?

R5 It's oh, big difference because, er, well I went to Catholic school here so it's very, very straight. You know, we, we wear uniforms, we have classes. Er, we stay in the same classroom with the same class... classmates. But in Canada, it's different. We went all over the place. You, you took one course and then you, you go to another class for another so **it's more freedom**, I found. That's how it changes, you know, school life for me... is more fun.

I¹ And because it's so different, did you find that you were learning to say different things, I mean, like, you know the Canadian way of speaking?

R6 Ya, got to... got... you made a lot of friends, Canadian friends and then you easily adapt... the accents, I suppose, ya. I would say, "*Aye*" ((chuckles)) and then when I came back, they'd say, "You're from Canada." Ya, I'd say, OK. Ya, so I find that I adopt to the American accents, er, readily when I'm there because you, you just associate with friends there. So, mostly people... are Canadian that I met, so...

I¹ Did you speak Cantonese when you were in Canada and to whom did you speak?

- R7 Mm... not much because, er, even my, my brother speaks English at home so we hardly speak Cantonese at home.
- I¹ So you spoke English in your home and you spoke English in school with your friends.
- R8 Ya, ya, ya. Hardly... hardly speak any Cantonese. I don't think I have any... maybe one Cantonese friend, that's it but, ya, at school we never speak Cantonese. Always speaking in English.
- I¹ How did they find you at first, I mean like your first day at a Canadian school?
- R9 It was very small class. Erm, to tell you the truth, I, I **actually accepted** to a school in Ottawa and it was away from my pa- my, my brothers and sisters so I didn't really like it there. It was even more provincial than where my brother lives. So... I, er, I took off and went back to my brother. And that, that school is not... real... like a normal high school. It's, it's an adult school. It's... I, I have to change in the middle of the thing, so, er, it's, it's where people who finish normal high schools and then they have in-between college thing so that's where I, I pick up all the rest of my, the subjects there. So, mostly I asso- associate with people who are older than me. Ya, but then it's OK.
- I¹ And this is in Ottawa?
- R10 I went back to Toron- er, Edmonton, Alberta. I finished high school there. Ya. I didn't like the normal school cause it was a, a Catholic school and it was in the middle of nowhere – Pembroke. Ya, so I didn't like it. So, I ran away again. I think **I'm running** away from things. That's how I migrate, I think and erm, I move from here to Edmonton and then I ran away for some **reasons** so I ran to Toronto and, and for some reason, I came back home to Hong Kong. And then from- in Hong Kong, I met my husband and he has to... he, he suddenly got a job in Africa so I, I, I went after him to Africa. For two years, we were in Africa and then we came back because, erm... the contract's finished and he didn't want to stay and I didn't want to stay because, er, **my father's birthday so everybody has to be home**. And, I **was conceived** with my child- with my daughter there so, er, I was pregnant so it was a good excuse for me to come back and check-ups and be with families and that's why I came back here and that's when we decided to stay and that's when my husband found a job in the, in, in the international school. He is also a, a, a... he's a... how do you say it... he's a... traveller, he's a world traveller. He was... he left home when he was very young and he was er, running all over, er, he, he's a sailor too so he bought the boat from, from people. He was travelling all around and in Asia he was in, er, Singapore when he helped people to **brought** a boat back and that's why he ended in Hong Kong. And that's how, that's where we met.
- I¹ In Hong Kong?

- R11 In Hong Kong.
- I¹ And when was that?
- R12 '84 I came back, ya.
- I¹ And you've been back in Hong Kong since '84?
- R13 '84 and then two years I was in Hong Kong. I was working for two years and I met my husband here and then after two years, he got a job in Africa. That's when we moved away from Hong Kong and lived in Africa for two years and contract's finished we came back here. That's when I start living here – '88, since '88 that's when my daughter was born and I have been here 21, 22 years. Ya.
- 12:06
- I¹ And all of this time, the language you speak at home and language of your people in your social circle is all English?
- R14 In Hong Kong, no. I came back, of course, most of my friends speak Cantonese to each other. Er, but in this club, everybody speak English, English, ya. Even I talk to my girlfriend in Chine- like Cantonese or sometimes but if we have a table of people with different who only speak English, we have to speak in English. That's being polite, that's all. Erm, but I do teach my kids Cantonese and you know what? Out of all my friends who has mixed marriages, they didn't teach their kids Cantonese. And that, I found they, they miss out on something. Because they, they have the potential, and they have the, the... how do you call... erm, you born, have this, erm, with the mother tongue, well sort of mother tongue so they, they can easily speak and learn language and my kids can speak total perfect Cantonese and English and they don't look like Cantonese so when they go out with their... she's got all friends from school which are Caucasians but when she go out and shops with her friends and she can bargain for her and then people turn around "Ah, you can speak Chinese." She, my daughter, is totally western. *She totally not look like me.* Like when she, she was a baby I was her maid because I was so dark, she was so fair. Was like people speak to me in Tagalog [tə'galɔg - US pronunciation] so, "OK, Hi" ((chuckles)). And then people say, "Do you take care of them?" I say, "Ya, more than 24 hours. A maid has time off. I don't. 24 hours on call." But it was, it was OK. I didn't take it like, er, offensively, so, ya. But, mind you, everywhere I go, I can, I blend right in. Like I go to Thailand, people speak to me in Thai. I go to Philippines, they speak to me in Tagalog. I go Japan, they thought I was Japanese. Hawaiian, I was a Hawaiian. I don't understand. Of course, in, in Canada, I'm totally Asian. But I tell you another thing. My daughter, when she lives in Hong Kong, she looks more... she, she stands out because, you know, *she totally don't look like Cantonese person*, Chinese person but when she goes to Canada, she looks more Asian. Strange.
- I¹ How do you mean, can you say a bit more? How does she look Asian in Canada?

- R15 Er, in Canada, people don't find her... people find her... she's a mixed breed, you know, like not total Canadian. I don't understand why. It's just... when she's there, she's not total Canadian. People know that she's... has a mixed blood in her... er, in her, ya. Very strange.
- I¹ The thing is the way she looks or they way she speaks or what?
- R16 Hmm... I'm not sure. But that's what she felt like. Because here... the rest... it's, it's like, er, how do you say... erm... a crane standing in, in a crowd of, er, chickens? That's a saying in Chinese— *Hok laap kwai kwan*— you know, you stand out when everybody looks the same, you stand out so they find you, you, you, er, er, not totally... you're, you're not Chinese. She's not Chinese but when she, she, you know, visit her father, her friends in Canada, she lives... you know she visits the father every year because my son lives with him. So, she... people can distinguish her. I don't understand. Maybe the way she talks?
- I¹ Maybe. There's certainly something that they are picking up, right?
- R17 But she doesn't speak Cantonese to nobody except to me.
- I¹ And how do you find her Cantonese? Is it, er...
- R18 Has she got an accent? No, I don't think so. My, my son does because he, he doesn't speak as much. He's not comfortable. I think, you know, it's just peer pressure or friends that he's always around with *who never speaks Cantonese*. (Chinese phrase construction) But I force them to sometimes when they are at home. I say, "No, don't talk to me. I don't understand." You know when they were kids, I say "I don't understand. Talk to me in Cantonese." And that's how I force them to, er, but then, he, he... my son moved there when he was 14. Again, very young so they can *adopt* and then lose the, the, the mother tongue, whatever he's had and *totally don't talk that* and then he never has the chance to talk in Cantonese so he lost that accent or the, the, the way you, you... Normal conversations, every day language is different *when you don't talk it* and I tell you one thing— when I, I, er, was living in, er, where was I... I was living in Africa and I came back, on my way back, I came early because I was pregnant so I was to meet my daughter, I mean my sisters in the States and so we came home together because of my father's 80th birthday and I, she, she... I told you, she study Medicine so she took me to the hospital to check up because I haven't had a good check-up in Africa. When I landed in New York because I came out from the other side... I, I, I went from Kenya. I was in Tanzania and then I went to Kenya, stop-over in Kenya, I went to France, from the other side. And then from, er, France I went, I stopped in New York to *met* up with my sisters-in-laws. They were in Chinatown so I met up with them. And once I landed and I start talking, I found myself very rusty. I couldn't... it's not like you, you, you... have you ever had that feeling? You felt like you cannot say anything in Chinese. I felt, really, at that moment, I felt my jaws was like rusty, you can't move quickly and I

found that because I haven't been talking in Cantonese for two years with anybody. Isn't that strange?

I¹ Very strange, very, very strange but you know-

R19 I was like, I couldn't even talk in perfect- I find it's just- I stuttered, you know, like... my jaws **got**, you know, **stiffened** or something. That's very strange. I think this is a good find for you.

I¹ Yes, very good find. So, how long did this experience of, you know, not being able to speak Cantonese, how long did it last?

R20 What do you mean?

I¹ This, you know, you find that-

R21 Oh, the... oh, right away but I still... it's like, suddenly you lost words, you lost in words, and you have to find it and it took a while. I find my jaws was kind of stuck somewhere and then couldn't move and I have to find words. You know, you lost in words and you have to find it. That's so strange. Er, maybe about... because they met me at the airport. That was... I couldn't find b- because I was just only talking to the one person but when we sat down and **start** eating and that's when I start have to kind of er, er, er swift conversation then I find a bit difficult in the beginning and then at the end I'm OK. I was OK, ya.

I¹ At the end of dinner, you mean?

R22 Ya, ya, ya, you get back into the, the tune and all that but, ya, that was very strange. You know, like when you, you were by yourself... I have another... I have another, er, friend's father who was by himself all the time in Canada and he has nobody to talk to and then he suddenly said, "I don't even know how to talk anymore." He just, you know, like the way you move your- the, the, the movement of your jaws and everywhere in your vocal chords, it just got rusty. Like you learn a new language and you haven't **say**, er, for long time and you- that's what I said, rusty. You just **lost in words**.

I¹ It's like learning anything, like tennis, you just-

R23 Ya, ya. It takes time to pick it up again and then once you're there and you always have it but it's just that you get rusty and then you just need to cut it- tune it back in, you get in tune again. So, yeah... [inaudible] fun ((chuckles)). See, from talking to you, I, I pick up quite a few things already. You know, because along the way, you don't realise things unless you sit down and talk about- aah, ya. I find that, see because you, you- when I asked you today when talking about tones or the way people- you sound or because you move from one place and you, you probably talk differently when you, when you went back to, er, er, where you were before so you do adopt a certain tone.

22:24

I¹ So how long were you in New York and in Houston? That's where your sister was or you all met in New York?

R24 No, no. I flew from New York to Houston to **met** up with my sisters. That's where I have my check-up because she was... she's, she still is, er, er, Gynaecologist- Paediatrician. No, she's children doctor.

I¹ And how long were you in the States? A couple of weeks?

R25 Oh, no, a few days before we flew back together. Ya, ya.

I¹ And after that you always met in Hong Kong for 20 over years?

R26 Oh, er, oh ever since my daughter was born, ya. I lived here. Ya, I was, I never moved away again.

I¹ How do you feel, you know, especially after being away from Hong Kong?

R27 To Africa or to Canada?

I¹ Well, both.

R28 What was the question again?

I¹ What does it feel like to return to Hong Kong after being away to both countries?

R29 I must say, when I first move to Canada, I love it there. I never felt I wanted to come back. For six years, I've never been back. Never came back to visit my parents cause I was young, I had so much to do. Well, you, you go to camp here and you go to ski there and so there was so much to do in Canada and I never miss, I never felt I missed Hong Kong. For six years, long six years I never felt that I wanted to come back here to visit, even for a visit. And then, er, because I have to run away from Edmonton to Toronto, and I went to university there and I met friends who has families back home in Hong Kong. That's when you wanted to— oh, they are going back to Hong Kong so we will go back together in the sum- over the summer holidays and we will meet up— and that's when I start coming back. Before, I never, you know, wanted to come back. And now, after **came back** here, I never want to move, go back to Canada. I have never visited my son since he moved to Canada, to Vancouver because his family, my ex-husband's family's there so I don't want to deal with that side of the family because if I do have to go visit, I have to. **I can't avoid not to visit them.** because you move from one place and you, you probably talk differently when you, when you went back to, er, er, where you were before so you do adopt a certain tone. So I rather have my son have that side of the life with that families over there and he comes here. He comes here to visit me over Christmas holiday. That's the only time we see each other.

I¹ So, coming back to Hong Kong, did you have the same-

R30 Sort of, oh, I don't think so because, er... That's, that's, that's from Africa to- that's the only short interval that I found because I haven't talk to anybody in Cantonese for two long years. That's why I find jaw's kind of stuck but after that, no problem. I speak Cantonese all my life. Will never lose it.

STE-001

ResB speaks in Hongkong Cantonese

R31 When (dong1 dāng 当) I returned to Hong Kong, when I flew back to Hong Kong, I was pregnant, so I ... at that time I had very few friends, having left Hong Kong for so many years so the only person I knew well was the lady who lived upstairs (to my apartment).

00:00:27

R32 However, I did not have many opportunity to speak Chinese, except when I visit my parents in their home. even with my children, I will not have a 'full ge conversation' so (so2ji5 suǒyǐ 所以) at that time, unless I am at home, when I will only speak English. If not with my friends, mostly like now, I tend to switch to English, will mix them, especially I find something out today, or yesterday, if I am irritable (mang2 zang2 Cantonese phrase) will speak in English.

00:01:13

R33 I am more fluent. Many have said ... like yesterday, I asked my friend, 'how do you say guilty? If I am very irritable, I would turn myself totally speak English.

00:01:29

R34 So those people will demand, are you a Caucasian (qwai2 guǐ 鬼) I am not consciously like that. I, I think that because I have lived elsewhere for such a long time, and as well with my husband I only speak English, you would be intune more, like, your thinking as well. Like your (seexiong?)

00:01:52

R35 Like as I told you, when I was young and studying, we have to write in English. You would think in Chinese. As soon as you say (immediately (zik1 kei4 jíqī 即期) 'I have to go to school today' you would translate it into English instead of thinking 'I have to go to school tomorrow' and then you would translate 'I have to go to school tomorrow'. The other way.

00:02:16

R36 But my thinking leh is automatic. I, I, think in terms of English-speaking terms instead of Chinese. But when I was younger, going to school, I have very difficulty in tra..., writing an essay in English. I would write everything in Chinese and then, and then I would translate back in English. That's the other way. That's when I start learning English.

00:02:47

R37 I think on the process of living overseas leh will change the way of, ya how you converse, thinking and converse back to verbal language and writing. I think that's a good find too, isn't it? ((langs))

((I asked ResB if she, at the earlier instance, when she was speaking in Cantonese, if she had to think in English before speaking in Cantonese. Now she does not have to think twice in different languages))

00:03:52

R38 I will mix together. I will not totally speak only in Chinese, just like a moment ago, totally I will add an English word or two or sometimes speak back into English ge.

((I asked if that's also the way she thinks))

00:04:06

R39 Thinking, I feel that I think mostly in English. I am more fluent in English now, I find. If I have to speak in Cantonese, I would have to think carefully and consider the fact that I now have to speak in Chinese. Especially now that there are not many with whom I can converse in Chinese. Most of my friends speak English. My children are all grown up. Most of my friends are here at the ge tennis club where we mostly speak English. So I totally think whatever I speak in English mostly, unless I am at the market. But even then, there is no need to as many speak English even Olivers. If I did not know you, I would also not speak to you in Cantonese. I will speak in English. I am not sure whether you can speak Cantonese or not. You see, I have all of a sudden switch back to speaking English! Really! Isn't that strange!

ResC

Date of Interview: 16 November 2010 and 21 May 2012

Venue: Charter House, Hong Kong and Yau Ma Tei Station,
Hong Kong

Project Title: The Phrasebook of Migrant Sounds

Recording No: 2010 11 16 ResC STE-004, 005 and 006
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05 - 00:31:01 + 00:4:26)

STE-004

00:02

R1 Yes ...uh... my name is [...]. Uh... my Chinese name is [...] but I have used the name, [...], ever since I was a teenager. I was born in Hong Kong. Uh... and I was raised here in Hong Kong. And after high school ...uh... the top prospect of entering university in Hong Kong was quite slim back then. There was only... there were only two university back in my ...uh... my high school age. Uh... so it was quite **common** for student graduating from high school to study abroad. Uh... so that's why I joined the... the wave of **student** going overseas to ...uh... further their study. Uh... at that time, my dad had a friend whose son ...uh... was living in **Saskatoon**, Canada. Uhm, so his friend kind of encouraged him, my dad, that it should be alright. Don't worry about, you know, your kid leaving Hong Kong or finance or stuff like that. They will survive because that's his experience. So I sent my high school marks to ...uh... my dad's friend's son. Then he submitted that to a high school in Saskatoon ...uh... which was accepted. Uh... at the... you know, they... they thought that the mark was okay so I just ...uh... got acceptance letter from this high school in Saskatoon then went to the Canadian Consulate, actually here in **Wanchai**. Uh, and then I got my student **visa**. So ...uhm... and then my parents, ya ...uh... bought a ticket for me and ...uh... away I went.

02:14

R2 Uhm... ya, it was a long flight. First, I remember... actually, I was the first one to **leave** home, to go overseas, in my family. So, everybody was quite **anxious** about that. Uh... so the flight went to Anchorage, **Alaska** and then ended in I think it was ...uh... **Oakland, California**. Interesting enough, at that time, I **have** to make a connection between **Oakland** and San Francisco. I remember I **hop** onto a helicopter with twin blades ...uh... with a bunch of other students from the plane that was also going to Canada. So I got onto the helicopter and then we flew over to San Francisco. But since, when we ...uh... took off back in Hong Kong, it was raining really hard so the plane was delayed. So by the time we got to San Francisco, we missed our plane. Uh... so we had to stay inside the airport ...uhm... overnight. So, the few of us just huddle together. We had nothing to eat. I remember I... there was a vending machine and I got a pack of ...uh... peanuts and that was our... my supper. And then... another experience which was quite interesting is - I was

wandering in the airport terminal and I approached this guy. You know, I... I... obviously I... I... I wasn't going anywhere but I was just curious walking around. The guy, apparently he's ...uh... secret agent or security. You know, he just pick up a gun and ask me where I wanted to go. I said, I... I... you know, I just wandering. He said, "You're not allowed to leave this point." So, I had to go back. So that was quite interesting. That was the first time, ya, I see... ya, ya... police, you know, police with guns just dangling from their waist.

04:32

R3 Uhm, so the next morning ...uh... we got onto the plane to Vancouver, Canada. And ...uh... then, there, I also missed my connection. Uh, my plane left the day before and that time I was already very tired. Uh... you know, because it was a long trip. And there was, at the airport ...uhm... some people there to help foreign students, you know, getting around so this nice young man asked if I would like to find a place to stay and to rest before I catch the plane the next day. So I did. I still remember, it was... the place is called The Blue Boy Hotel or Motel on Marine Drive in Vancouver. So he pointed me to the... to the taxi so I got a taxi and went to Blue Boy Motel and over there I stayed ...uh... overnight. Uh, the following day, I don't... I don't remember how I went to the airport but I did and got into a plane. And eventually, get on to ...uh... to Saskatoon and it was a day late.

05:53

R4 Uh... ya, back then, there's a group of ...uhm... Chinese from the Saskatoon Chinese Alliance Church who approached me ...uhm... and offer help. But actually ...uh... this... a friend of my father's, already lined me up a room, set me up, ya, a room with this ...uh... Chinese family in Saskatoon. Uhm... but they went to the airport the day before. Obviously, they did not meet me. So I, again, hop onto a... oh, actually this time, I met a lady on the plane. The lady is from ...uh... Campus Crusade for Christ. And, you know, I started asking question, talking to her and she was very funny. Uhm... so what she did was she offer me... that I... you know, that I go to her place with her and then she will drive me to... to my place. Ya. I still remember it's 202 Clarence Drive in Saskatoon. That's where... where I stayed. So ...uh... this Chinese family is involved with the Alliance Church in Saskatoon so naturally, I follow them to church. Uh... ...uhm... and then I settled in with my going to high school and then I also... and then... and then went to ...uh... university there as well. Uh... University of Saskatchewan.

07:32

R5 And at church, I met my wife, my, you know ...uh... my wife now. We married for 30 plus years now (laughs) ...uh... I don't remember, maybe 31, 32... Uh... her family's there already in Saskatoon. Uh... so ...uh... we started dating when I was in first year or second year and then when I graduated, after four years of Engineering study and that's when I got married... we got married. And then, I stayed behind at the campus to do research for a few more years and then I took my Master degree in ...uh... in Geotechnical Engineering.

08:22

R6 And then we had our first child, a son. He was born in 1987 in Saskatoon. And my wife had a pretty steady job in Saskatoon ...uh... at the library of University of Saskatchewan. Uh... but for Engineering, it was... it's quite

difficult to get a job in Saskatoon which is, you know, a very small ...uhm... university town with 170,000 people back then. But now... now I heard that the town is booming like any other Canadian city. That the... that the house that we used to stay there, now is worth three times as much. Uh... so I heard. Uh... but like... it was difficult for me to get a job there ...uh... so I decided to ...uh... to go ...uh... we moved to **Toronto** because the economy back then, there, was red hot. So ...uh... I got... started working and... and we stay there... I started working, you know, for this company for eight, nine years but then the time was bad again. Uh... in the beginning of... in the beginning of the 1990's, the... it was... it was... the ...[inaudible] was quite slow and eventually in 1995, I think I was... I was laid off. So, at that time, I... we have... we have two children and a big mortgage. So I have a family to feed. Uh... at that time ...uhm... I was facing whether ...uh... I... I actually, you know, I looked around for long... for a month or two and talking to ...uh... companies in my line of business. They say that they would not be hiring anybody at least for six months' time. So, I cannot face that kind of prospect, so I talk to my wife. I said, well we, you know, get on to the welfare line or I go back to Hong Kong to give it a try.

10:43

R7 Back in 1995, the infrastructure was going full tilt. The... all kinds of infrastructure just like... very much like now in Hong Kong. All kinds of... They built the... They were building the... the new airport so they need engineers of... and all sorts of engineers and all sorts of experience and background so I... And actually, alot of my classmates back then... already came back to Hong Kong and start... has already established back here. So ...uh... so I came back here and ...uh... Basically, I had never worked in Hong Kong at that point. But I found three jobs in one week. It's just a matter of which one to pick. So I... naturally I picked the one that paid the most. (laughs) And then I worked for the company for two and a half years and then I joined the government. Uh... ya, as a Geotechnical Engineer. And I've been with them for ...uhm... 12 years now. Yup.

11:57

R8 Uhm... ya... so... it was... it was... it wasn't difficult to adjust back here because I... I grew up here. I lived my first 18 years in Hong Kong so... so it wasn't difficult for me and also, when, you know, when you ...uh... when there's a family to feed, you have to make... I mean, there's no... no option, so ...uhm... so... uh... ya, I stayed here for about three months by myself and then I went home, back to Canada to sell the house there and then bring my family back here. Uh... so... ya, there's some ...uhm... so my... my... my kids, my children went through the ESF – the English School Foundation. So ...uh... the teaching media was... is English so they had no problem adjusting back here. Uhm... and my son, after high school, he went back to University of Toronto to get his ...uh... Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. At the moment, my ...uh... my second child, a daughter, is studying in Sydney, Australia in Performing Arts. She'll be back here ...uh... next week. So... ya... so that brings us up to current. (laughs)

STE-005

00:02

R9 Ya, I ...uhm... we decide to stay ...uh... ...uh... in Canada for ssss.... because we think... I still think that Canada is better for ...uh... to raise a family than Hong Kong. Open space ...uh... the education system is not as pressurized as in Hong Kong. Uhm... ya, they were born there so naturally they should grow up there. As... as... the case for most of their cousins. My family ...uh... my family is there, my wife's family is also in Canada. Their... you know, all their... all their kids grew up in Canada. I think we are the only **one** that left the country. And, you know, they all doing well. They ...uh... ...uh... ya, but I was faced with this decision in 1995 that the prospect of getting another job in the short-term is not very good. Uhm... so, we came back here. And I don't like concrete although I'm an Engineer. This is really, you know, ironic. That's why I go hiking every Saturday. I go up to the hill. I have to see some green. I have to see... I have to go away from the city, from the concrete jungle. Uhm... but my kids seem to be ...uh... okay. Well, we... we live in Sha Tin which is, you know, a little bit more open ...uh... more space, closer to the hills. Uhm... they... they... they seem to be alright. Uhm... basically associated with the English-speaking ...uh... **people** in... in... in Hong Kong. We go to the church where we attend is international church with English you know, **as the media**. So they went through the ESF which English, you know, is the media. So... so... ya, they find Hong Kong very fascinating. Uh... they treat Hong Kong as their home. The first eight, ten years that we were here, they basically go back to Canada every two years for the summer. They will go back there for visit with their ...uh... ...uh... the cousins and so they find both places home. Uh, they do not find Canada to be strange or Hong Kong to be strange. I think they are fine with both... although again ...uh... ...uh... the environment is quite harsh in Hong Kong. Uhm... it's very cramped, crowded, noisy. The air quality is declining by the year. Every year it's getting worse. Uh... but, you know I find ...uh... hiking on Saturdays ...uh... a solace that I can, you know, find refuge. So, you know, and I... as I said I live in Sha Tin where we have ...uh... a lot of ...uh... space for jogging, biking ...uh... so, it's not so bad, you know. When there's a will, there's a way. You need to survive. (laughs) Okay.

STE-006

00:02

R10 Uhm... I speak Cantonese to my wife. And I also speak Cantonese to my **kids**. Most of the time. (laughs) But when important issues come up, I have to speak to them in English. So their... maybe that's the reason why their Cantonese is very limited. Uhm... ...uh... I... I... I can speak English without injecting Cantonese but I cannot do the reverse. I cannot speak Cantonese without injecting English. So... when... you know, when the issue become serious, so I might as well just stick with English. So... so that's... that's the case. Ya.

Date of interview: 12 05 21
Venue: Yau Ma Tei Station, Hong Kong

STE-001

R11 What year did you leave your country?
How old were you when you left your country?
How long did you live in US/Canada/Hong Kong/Singapore?

00:04

R12 I left Hong Kong in 1974 and I was 18 years old then. I lived in Canada for 21 years and I came back in Hong Kong in 1995.
Before you left, how did you think of yourself culturally?

00:37

R13 Before I left, I didn't think much of anything else. Culturally, no, no, unmistakably, I Chinese. Back then, I always consider Hong Kong not a part of China as most Hong Kong people did back then.

R14 Think about your feelings when you were living in US/Canada/Hong Kong/Singapore. Describe a feeling or experience in which you were happy or glad to be living there.

Describe an experience that was confusing.

Describe an experience that was unpleasant or made you wish you had never left your country.

01:10

R15 I felt the need to integrate myself into the mainstream Canadian society. My wife and I went to a local church there, you know, Canadian church there so we worked at the university so ... ah ... we, I think we felt very much at home, ... er ... at work and also at church, picking up the ... er ... the custom there, the food there [laughs]. Ya, in fact I started eating a lot of dessert and beef. I still do.

01:55

R16 I cannot think of any experience that was confusing. Confusing ah I cannot think of any experience that was confusing The whole time that we lived there, I find the Canadian usually quite accommodating ... er ... well at least diplomatic or polite.

02:22

R17 No, I don't think there was any particularly unpleasant experience except only for once that when my wife and I first got married, we were looking for apartment, we were down at the ground level speaking to the intercom and was told that the unit was still available but when we went up there, once they saw us then they changed their mind and say that the, oh the unit was just rented out. I think that was the only one time that I can remember that was in a way quite unpleasant, Ya.

Describe where you lived - the neighbourhood, your friends and co-workers.

03:08

R18 Well, we lived in ... er ... different places in the last, you know the two decades that I was there. First we were in Saskatchewan which is in the middle of Canada, continental climate, hot in the summer and very cold in the winter, dry, very dry. Uhm ... the neighbourhood Saskatchewan back

then was very much in a way remote from the other part of the world so probably people have not seen much of other people non-white other than from TV so when they see me, they always ask if I know kung-fu. Ya, that's the usual question. Ya, and then we moved to Ontario. Well, my first son was born in Saskatoon and when he was six months old we moved out to Ontario. Then I find the, there are lot of British names in Ontario like Hamilton, Burlington. Back in Saskatchewan, its, there are lot more Ukranian names ... er ... something ...ski, something ...ski so ya, back in Saskatchewan I missed *pierogie*? which is ... er ... *pierogie*? bosch soup ... er ... things like that. ya, my first impression when we arrived in Ontario is the names are very kind of British or English, more, you know, a much larger metropolitan and also lot more different people other than white so ... ah ... ya, the company I work for there, I remember there were six, six *directors*, four of them were from, foreign-born, you know so ... ah ... ya, so I had no problem integrating into the Ontario society. Besides, oh, there's where I first ate Vietnamese food is in the Chinatown of Ontario, Thunder[?] Street when I had first the *pho* which is very good. The Vietnamese food in Hong Kong is just not up to par. Okay.

05:46

R19 Neighbourhood ... er ... nothing much, pretty, you know, middle class neighbourhood so ... ah ... not up class or getto or things like that so pretty middle class society, community.

Describe some particular situation that shows the extent to which you thought like a North American (US/Canadian)/Hong Konger/Singaporean.

06:17

R20 Well, while you're there you really don't need to think that you are North American but I think between the US and the Canadian there is quite a bit of tension sometimes, usually, you know trade war between Canada and US, their selling of lumbers and also the natural resources like fresh water. Canadians always saying that they always come up from the short end when they have a dispute with the United States ... ah ... the States of Alaska is a good example. They think United States has taken from them. Ya, so there's really no need to think, you know, that you feel you are North American. ... ah ... when I was living in Canada, I only came back here to Hong Kong two or three times, ya, two or three times so ... ah ... so ... er ... also I have not travelled out of Canada much except to the States once or twice.

Describe a specific situation in which you could have acted in either a North American/Hong Konger/Singaporean way or a Chinese way.

07:45

R21 I never had to ... er ... you know, I was never conscious about ... er ... you know, being in Canada. Of course, you know, we look different, we speak different ... er ... accent at the beginning at least but I find that once you speak the language, you're in so it's not difficult to integrate or to merge yourself so, so, ... ah ... my experience is all in all quite pleasant. We felt 100% Canadian as well as 100% Chinese there.

How would you describe yourself on forms or documents when you were asked about nationality and ethnicity?

08:32

R22 Back in Canada, nationality obviously is Canadian because I hold a Canadian passport. I still do and that's the only passport I have. The Canadian passport, I don't have any other passport at all. Ethnicity is Chinese. That's easy. No dispute about that.

Please describe your thoughts about returning to your country.

Would you decide to return? Why?

Describe your emotions - how would you feel about leaving US/Canada
US/Canada/Hong Kong/Singapore?

09:20

R23 Ya, coming back here was difficult, really difficult. It was because of the job situation that we decided to come back. My wife's family are all there in Canada. For their family, returning to Hong Kong almost **feel** like a defeat. You just don't do that in their family. You know, they laugh at people that have to go back to Hong Kong. To them, Hong Kong is a dump ... ah ... so it's almost like a betrayal to my mother-in-law that I take her baby daughter away from her. It wasn't easy decision. That's exactly why we never thought of coming back until things turned really bad in mid 1990s. At that time I had to make a decision to, whether stick with it or come back and I did and ... er ... I have **no regret**. Even my kids growing up in Hong Kong, they felt that ... er ... they think they are fortunate to grow up in Hong Kong so they can see the other part of the world. A lot of their cousins that stay, ... er ... grew up in Canada don't think much of anything else so ... ah ... so they think that they see more of the world not just North America or Canada. You know when my son go back to Toronto for university, he doesn't feel that he was missing out anything. He felt at home while away back in Toronto. There's no time, no need for him to adjust to anything at all so ... ah ... he speaks the language... the only thing was that when he had to ... er ... first time when he had to pay GST, he was wondering why have to pay more than the sticker price and ya, the shopkeeper says 'There's tax here' so then he knows ya, 'I'm in Canada now.' But, ya, the one thing about my son, Reuben is, he can stand cold **quite, quite good**. Even on minus 10, he just had a life jacket like here in Hong Kong. Ya ... er ... because well he just have to run from his dorm to the lecture hall which is probably ... er ... a two-minute dash so he doesn't need a parka or down wool jacket and people find that he's, you know, quite interesting growing up in Hong Kong that he can stand the cold there. But even here in Hong Kong he will just go out in short t-shirts. Mum and I always say, 'You need more. I mean it's only ten degree outside' but he goes out as if it is 30 degree so ... ah ... ya, coming back here, it's been 16 years now. I have **no regret**. I would have to go back there in three years when I retire ya, because my parents are in, living in Vancouver. They are in their eighties, they have health issues so I have no more excuse not to go back so I'll be retiring in three, a little bit over three years so we're already making plans to go back. So, ya, so that's life, you know. First 18 years in Hong Kong, the following 21 years in Canada and then another 20 years here in Hong Kong then I'll go back so it's almost like four quarters of my life back and forth. That's life. Ya, in a way, it's interesting, in a way it's quite costly to move around like this.

Think about your first day back.
Describe how the city looked, smelled, felt.
Where did you go?
Who did you see?

13:35

R24 My first day back I always try to speak English. I will say 'Excuse Me' when people don't say that here and they just bump their way through so ... ah ... ya, the thick and moist air, I still cannot get used to. The air quality here is bad so ... ah ... I'm a Civil Engineer but I don't like concrete so I go hiking every Saturday just to hide in the bush. Ah, that's where I find myself. So, I would say, you know, anywhere I live, in Canada, in Hong Kong, I can find things that I would feel comfortable doing so I can, ya, I survive. In Canada, there's big space, air quality, good. Here, you still find good air quality. You just have to know where to find it.

Describe your emotional reactions to returning home. Happy? Confused?
Relieved? Stressed?

14:45

R25 Well, the **emotion** coming home is quite confused. Happy, confused, relieved, stressed, everything. Everything. Stress. The first three months we were really stressed because my wife didn't want to come back. We scream at each other through the phone, over the phone. Finally I said 'I'm not going back.' then she agreed to come back here so after three months, I went back to pick them up, my wife and the two kids to come back here. It was difficult for my kids, you know to move from a house to a apartment and also because people don't speak English here but once they started going to the ESF then they feel better, ya, and then, ya, so the first few months was quite stressful. Things were different but we soon adapt, not a problem.
Did your emotional reaction change (that is, do you feel the same way about returning as you did the first time you returned?)
Describe the way in which you think or act like a North American/Hong Konger/Singaporean regarding family practices. e.g. think about the goals you have for your children versus what goals they have.

16:08

R26 Well, again I don't feel particularly different between living there and here. Like in Canada, among my peers, my kids are young, you know, my kids were young among my friends of the same age but when I come back here they always surprised that my kids are so big, so old, you know, because people have kids later in life here, obviously because of, you know, job, study and try to find a apartment before they get married and have kids so usually people have one kid and quite late in their life so, ya, so among my peers my kids are older. ... er ... Family ... er ... either in Canada or in Hong Kong there's always us, just the four of us. We don't live with family, we don't have family close by so in a way we're missing something so ... ah ... so ... ya ... we were there by ourselves, we are here by ourselves, we only meet our family members very occasionally throughout the year ... so... ahm ... we're still very much a close-knit family. Ya, they go out, hang out with friends, they have birthday parties, they, you know ... ah ... I think partly because we go to a English-speaking church, my kids go to a English school so we still live very much like in a English community in Hong Kong

although I've no problem switching between the two, actually I don't, I don't find myself in two different community at all. When I go to church, I speak English. When I go to work, I speak Cantonese. I think, likewise, my kids are used to that now although I think their job opportunity probably is quite somewhat limited when the routine Chinese is non-existent so, well, they will find something or going back to Canada is one option as well so we'll see.

Describe your neighbourhood where you live now. Think about your neighbours.

Describe one way in which you feel similar to them or have a lot in common.
Describe one way in which you feel different.

18:50

R27 Well, the neighborhood I live now, I enjoy it. Again most people in Hong Kong like to live along the empty out line[?] or MRT in Singapore. They find it convenient. When they go down, they are on the net, the MTR web but I don't like that. I moved right to the hillside. I look into the hill. I look into the greenery and I have to take a connecting bus to go to the main MTR line and I like that but most people in Hong Kong don't care for that so that's maybe I'm just different. Where I live I, we have ... ah ... again, it's a middle-class community. We have a large ... er ... gym, you know, fully-equipped gym ... er ... but I don't like running on treadmill. I run along the canal, outdoor. I find running on the treadmill very environmentally unfriendly but we have indoor swimming pool, outdoor swimming pool. I started swimming this year already. I jog along the river once or twice a week so, you know, still ... ah ... I just do what I like to do. The neighbourhood usually is quite friendly. Still, people mind their own business so that's it.

Where do your children attend school? Why, this choice?

20:36

R28 My kids, ya, they attended ESF, the English School Foundation which is probably the least expensive international school in Hong Kong. The ESF was set up for the British kids, for the British officers when they come over here to Hong Kong so their kids can attend that school. So in a way it's government subsidized so it's the least expensive compared to Hong Kong International or other international school. So, I think they get a very good education from ESF and my son went back to Canada University Toronto to study Political Science. He graduated about three years ago, ya, three years ago now. He came back and is working in Digital Marketing, whatever that is. They said their largest client is GM of United States . In fact, they just went up to Shanghai to meet up their counterpart. My daughter, after ESF, she took a gap year, wonder what she wants to do with her life and then she went to Sydney, Australia to study Performing Arts, Dance and Music. Ya, that's their choice. I never coach or give them any idea. They just do what they want to do or like to do.

Describe your relationship with your spouse and how it has changed.

22:24

R29 Well ... er ... this relationship with my spouse can be stormy at times. Well, we had a big fight moving back here but I think ... er ... she must agree with me that ... er ... it was a good decision that we came. We did. It has not

changed because of the change of country of abode ... er ... so in a way it's irrelevant.

Describe food preferences - seafood? Chinese food? Western food?

23:06

R30 I like food, period. When I was in Canada I like... when we go out **for occasion** like anniversary, birthday, we go out for, we will go Western food like the cakes, I like their prime ribs. I can have a 12oz prime rib but if we go out just for food, then we'll choose Chinese food. Seafood? Yes. You know, I picked up drinking coffee, having dessert, ya, and meat especially beef in Canada. And here in Hong Kong, we have all kinds of food, Vietnamese, Cantonese. I like noodle, all kinds of noodle, you know, spaghetti or Chinese noodle. Oh and coming back here in Hong Kong, I picked up eating sushi. I like Japanese food alot which I think is quite healthy, not as fattening, ya, we do go out for sushi once or twice a week so that my wife doesn't have to cook.

Describe work style Western? Chinese?

The answer to the next question may be a little difficult to put into words but I would like you to describe to me who you think you are culturally.

Chinese? American Chinese? Canadian Chinese? Hong Konger?

Singaporean? Combination? Different than both North American/Hong

Konger/Singaporean and Chinese? Depends on the situation? Walk me through a specific situation that you experience which is an example of how you feel about yourself culturally.

24:20

R31 Okay, now this is ... er ... the longer I live in a non-white society, the more I hesitant to move back to a white society. I seldom discuss this with people but this is how I feel. I feel when I go back to a white society, my height and language advantage is taken away. That's why I like Singapore. That's why, this may be one of the reasons why I like Singapore because Singapore is very ... er ... **advanced**, their ways are very **advanced** ... er ... what's the word for that ... er ... **advanced** but very cultured **society yet it is Asian**. You know, when I go there, when I go to Singapore I do not feel inferior at all. I somehow have this ingrained inferior complex when I am among tall, big, white people then automatically I feel inferior so ya, the more I stay in Hong Kong, the more hesitant or the less willing I am going to a pure white society. I was told that, you know, Vancouver is not white any more so white become a minority in Vancouver so maybe that helps but I'm sure I will adapt. I'm sure I will adapt and cope like I did first time I went there and coming back here in Hong Kong. So ... er ... ya, ya.

How do you think other people here view you?

26:19

R32 Oh ya people sometimes say that I am a **kwailoh** because maybe my English is, you know, is somewhat better than theirs. Sometimes I correct their English but most time they correct my Chinese or help me write the character so ... er ... but still I don't think that is my overwhelming impression to people. Well, they say that I behave like a **kwailoh** because I'm always quite open and I just say what I think but, but this is me. I was like this growing up

so nothing to do with *kwailoh* or whatever.
What advice would you give Chinese immigrant?

27:05

R33 Well, Chinese like to stick around overseas. I can see why because they find their comfort zone but you have to break through that, you know, otherwise you missing out a lot, you know, if you live overseas but stick the Chinese community, I think the person is missing out a lot. For me to... you know, the first four years in university I did not need to speak much so my English never improved that much but once I started **working**, that's when I actually seriously **become speaking** the language so people, my colleagues started to teach me how to say certain, you know, pronunciation or teach me **slangs** or things like that. So living, you know, working is really when I started speaking the language so, ya, do merge with the mainstream society whether it is Italian, Russian, Ukranian, whatever, don't just stick with the Chinese community. Ya.

What are your future plans? Do you intend to stay?

28:23

R34 Ya, like I said, I would definitely go back to Vancouver in three years' time ... er ... because my parents are there and you know, they need my help. I just don't know in what form do I go back. Do I sell everything here and move back there and start acquiring a property or do i leave my flat here and rent there, I don't know. It really depends on where my kids are in three years' time. So, ya, I still cannot think of how I should describe Singapore. Advanced society? Ya.

Background information

How many years of formal education did you have?

What was your occupation prior to your leaving the country? What is your occupation now?

How do you rate your ability to speak English? Very good? Good?

Somewhat good? Not very good? Hard to communicate in English?

How do you rate your ability to speak Chinese? Very good? Good?

Somewhat good? Not very good? Hard to communicate in Chinese?

29:19

R35 I had [sic] a Master degree in Engineering. I has [sic] always been an Engineer. When I left I only finished high school here so I did not ... er ... I studied Civil Engineering in Saskatchewan and then practiced as a Civil Engineer there and has always been so there's no change in occupation. How do you rate your ability to speak English? I think it's quite good but that's not what my kids think. They always laugh at my English especially my son, his English is quite good. You know, he actually thought of majoring in English and he says, 'Dad, your English is so bad'. Oh well, if [...] were here, he'd think my English is good. Anyway, well there's always room to improve but I only started speaking the language in, at the age of 21, 22 so I'm quite happy with my English. My Chinese is perfect [laughs] oh, Cantonese is my mother-tongue but the written character I've not used for so many years that I've ... er ... I forget most of them but I still read the paper. Communication ... er ... you know, depends [laughs] I speak Chinese to Chinese, speak English to white, so that's it...

ResD

Date of Interview: 17 November 2010
Venue: 2201 Queen's Place
Central
Hong Kong
Date of Interview: 20 May 2012
Venue: Charterhouse
Hong Kong
Project Title: The Phrasebook of Migrant Sounds
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STE-008

00:01

- R1 Hi, my name is [...] and I was born in 1962.
- R2 We went to Canada to Toronto back in the 1970s. And, I think my dad made most of the decision. I don't think we were involved. We knew that we were packing up. We were leaving Hong Kong. He did discuss about how nervous he was about communist China taking over and he thought it would be a good idea for the family to move and live in Canada in, er..., so that, you know, we could, we could do our secondary school education there. Erm, we didn't really discuss it in details, the typical sort of Chinese family that the father, the male just make the decision and we just sort of pack up and go. And, er, I remember that I do remember snippets of images when, you know, when the packers came or just before the packers came and I remember dad was sitting in the living room looking *outside* and he was just a bit stunned and I think it was..., must be something running in his head to think about, you know, leaving the place that he grew up in and taking the family, you know, thousands and thousands of miles away. So that was interesting. That's something I remembered. It almost looked like as if..., I remember I thought he will miss Hong Kong, you know, but he didn't really say anything so it was just unspoken. Anyway, so I remember the packers coming in and we all packed up. We had... I had no..., I mean personally I had no idea where we were going to live. Er, I think dad bought a house. We, you know, we didn't have to stay in a service apartment or apartment temporary, he bought something ((chuckles)) and it was across the street from a cousin who obviously went to Toronto to study and sort of settled so that was the bit of connection that my father had and he thought that that would be a good idea. At least there's a friend, you know, there's a cousin there and off we went. That was about it really.

STE-009

00:01

R3 Alright, now about our **arrival**. Erm, we flew... Ya I can't really remember details of our journey. I had to call my mum to actually help me remember. Er, it sounded like as if we, we landed in Vancouver first because my aunt was living in **Richmond** then and we had to stay with them for a week and as soon as my mum raised her aunt, I think I remember them now. Erm, we stayed with my aunt for about a week while our house in Toronto is being done up and you know, final touches of getting the bed and the mattress and things in because what I do remember is when we get, when we arrive... When we finally arrived in **Toronto**, we basically just walked straight into our new home. And, and we, I remember in **Toronto**, I mean we have a corner, what they call a corner, corner lot so the house itself is a bungalow. It's pretty modest, it's nothing huge or anything. It's got a basement and three bedrooms. Erm, got an extra bedroom downstairs in the basement but I remember the front lawn. The front yard and the backyard was just, you know, for a 13-year old, is huge. You know, you don't get that kind of thing in Hong Kong. And I remember we had, you know, there was a pear tree, there was, erm, a **rhubarb**, **rhubarb** plant and it was a bit of an eye opener for me for as a Hong Kong Chinese, we don't eat rhubarb. Erm, I never, never learnt even how to do a rhubarb pie but I know what it looks like because it was sitting in the back yard. Erm, that was fun and I remember the pear tree was great. Erm, and it, you know, was there until, until my mum sold the house, I think. Erm, so you know, we had some lovely time in the house.

R4 We, you know, we used to picnic outside. I remember going to the Canadian Tire and bought ourselves the..., one of these wooden picnic table and we will just enjoy the back yard, erm, you know, quite a lot. So that was good fun. Erm, what else is there? How we settled in.

02:27

R5 I think we settled in quite well. Bearing in mind that when we were in Hong Kong, my parents sent us to Anglo-Chinese schools. So, my sister and I went to a convent school in Hong Kong where classes were taught in English anyway, so conversing in English was, you know, it was mandatory at school and we spoke Cantonese at home so..., erm what it meant was, you just have to try a little harder when you're in **Toronto** because, you know, everybody else spoke English instead of Chinese or Cantonese.

R6 Erm, the cul-de-sac that my..., our house is on, that my dad picked, we were the only Chinese family there so I think, you know, I have to thank him. I think he chose well. He didn't choose where most Chinese will congregate so we basically had to melt in to the neighbourhood and it was typical sort of middle-class, fairly Caucasian, erm neighbourhood which is called North..., it is North York. It's in Don Mills so if you know that area, I mean we are within walking distance from Lawrence Park. So I think he chose well. We just had to make a little bit of extra effort to fit in.

- R7 Erm, we probably at that point in time probably spoke English with a bit of Hong Kong accent but you know, didn't... Canadians are so nice 'cause they are just so welcoming.
- R8 They all... I remember going into, erm, high school. That was tail-end of year nine and all these kids came up to me and said "So do you live on a boat? You live on a junk?" and I thought it was just quite funny. Erm, and so I quite enjoyed the attention I got in school. Erm, and what else is there?
- R9 I loved it because you know, we walked to school, erm, we rode our bikes to school 'cause we lived about a mile, a mile, short of two miles from school so it's pretty, you know, walkable or you could cycle. Erm, and we just usually gather around because everybody who lives in the neighbourhood actually either go to the primary school which is right behind the house, or junior high or you know, senior high which is Don Mills College, so everybody goes there anyway. So, we usually just get up in the morning and we will find there will always be people to walk with or cycle with to get to school so that was, that was a hoot. That was actually very nice.
- 05:10
R10 Uhm... so what else is there? Now, if I look at..., if I compare my life in Hong Kong now when, if you have friends, you get invited to people's family, you actually get invited to dinners and stuff. And I have to say that was probably lacking comparatively. I was not aware of that back then. But I don't think my dad and mum actually was invited, er, much together with the family, to let's say a Canadian, a white Canadian family home for dinner. I don't remember that. I don't really... So, you know, I suppose on that front, on the socializing front, for my parents, that was relatively limited. Er but for us, you know, that as teenagers that was alright, you know, we had play dates, you know, we run in and out of our neighbour's house. And, er, I didn't really..., I didn't, I mean I really didn't have many sleep-overs, er, at friends but I think my sister and younger brother did. They probably had a little bit longer to cultivate relationships with neighbourhood but that's alright. Erm, and what else is there?
- 06:23
R11 I do remember that I had to..., they had to put me in a support for English class for, you know, English as additional language and that was nice. I thought that was really nice 'cause then I had, you know, teachers that would sit down with about two or three Asian students, erm, and they just gave us a bit of extra help and **attention**. Erm, when it comes to... erm, trying to write, you know, for your English lessons or whatever... So that was good. I thought that was good. Erm, what else is there?
- 07:11
R12 School was great. Erm, so we soon made friends. Erm, I suppose a big lesson then was it's ok to sort of uproot your family and... you know, you go to a different country and you just sort of make an effort to melt right in. I think as far as... you know, where children are concerned, I don't think we had any trouble fitting in.

R13 I'm not so sure with my mum and dad though. I'm not sure. Erm, because I remember at some tail end of it, my mum was getting very upset and you know, how dad never really... After he left Hong Kong he probably didn't... His business never really took off. You know, he's fairly, I suppose he was fairly important back in Hong Kong before he left. Erm, so he always wondered, ok well, you know, if we got our citizenship, you know, I'd like to go back to Hong Kong and make another go but that was hard work I think, for him anyway. But then, for us it's not an issue because as teenagers, you're completely oblivion about what, you know, hardship that your parents are facing as long as you're having a good time. So, in terms of where, you know, we were, we were, you know, we were fine.

STE-010

00:01

R14 Right, about languages spoken at home and at school. Now I remember, I didn't, I didn't resent speaking Cantonese. Erm, at least I was not aware of it. It just so happens that everything is conducted in English so I just don't see any **point**. Erm, now at that stage, my mum could not, couldn't have convinced my sister 'cause I was 13 going on 14 and my sister was only nine going on to ten. Neither of us would go to these Chinese schools on a Saturday. However, my brother who was only four then was not given any **choices** so he went. I remember he was taken on a Saturday and he will have to go, you know, have some Chinese lessons so that he can keep up his Chinese. Erm, and we just thought, you know, we don't need to. You know, we don't need to because we know enough and you know, mum... We spoke Cantonese at home. Erm, dad's quite happy to speak to us in sort of half/half, mixture of Chinese and English anyway.

R15 Erm, so we watched English TV and back in the mid 1970's I don't think there was any Chinese TV available yet. It's a bit later on that they have a choice of paid cable TV and they've got Chinese, even Mandarin TV stations so we just had to.... Erm, so you know, then English, Canadian English was going to become the main language to use.

R16 Erm, and I think, I do remember, erm, back then, that we only have a few Asians in the school so **we didn't have to face with** ((possibly Chinese phrase construction)), you know, the oddness of speaking Cantonese in the hallway where the lockers are because then you know, it's just so odd so we never had that issue in the, you know, in the 70s because there was hardly any. I remember there was a Japanese Canadian and she was born in Canada so she spoke nothing but English.

R17 So we didn't really have that issue in school until much later on when I got into later end of senior high school, when there were more Hong Kong students that came in, so when we spoke socially, because they tend to speak more Cantonese because they, they arrived in Canada much earlier than we did right, so they come in at what, 15, 16. By then..., I mean, Cantonese is their mother-tongue. So, erm, and I didn't have any problem if I'm invited to go out to dance or whatever, I have to speak Cantonese, I will make an effort but I think I probably sound, you know, I sounded like the

Canadian girls trying to speak Cantonese **which they curl their tongue**. I remember that. Erm, which was then only corrected when I came back to Hong Kong.

R18 So I remember when I came back to Hong Kong, when I graduate, I stuck myself in front of... erm, stuck myself in front of the Canto-pop TV for hours so that I won't be laughed at, that I'm a **gwai² mui⁶** ((laughs)). Erm, but it was interesting to... Ya, it was actually interesting to see myself **changing** the, the choice of language. I think it's very subconscious, erm, flipping from one language to another. I don't really, as of now, I don't really translate. If I want to speak in English, I just think of words, it just comes out. If I need to speak in Cantonese, again I just sort of, you know, go with the flow but I do make a conscious effort when I do speak Cantonese, I try not to mix English words in there. Erm, not, you know, not that easy sometimes but if I fail to find the equivalent Chinese word you know, for an English word, you know, I'd like to say then I'll have to go back and rely on my English.

04:14

R19 Erm, now, in the earlier days when we **settle**, again we didn't really have that many Chinese friends other than relatives. Erm, so what we spoke on a daily basis was English.

R20 And I've got to talk about this. I think this is a great experience for all Hong Kong Chinese who live in this city in a small flat to go to Canada as I learnt how to mow the lawn and I've developed things like, er, what do you call it like, er, allergies so anytime I mow the lawn, it kicks up all the grass and I would just be **sneezing** non-stop right. I remember those days. It's just like all your glands are swollen. It's horrible. And in the wintertime, we had to, er, we had to shovel. ((laughs)) the driveway. So, er, because otherwise you can't get out. You can't get out of the house because the driveway was (inaudible). You know what Canadian homes are like, they've got, you know, usually a double driveway that can park two cars, you know, erm, and there's just so much to do. ((laughs)) I suppose that's, that's, that's, that's the bit I don't miss. ((laughs)) Shoveling snow in winter and mowing the lawn which I quickly delegated to my sister when she became older and then we both quickly delegated to my brother when he becomes a bit older. ((laughs))

R21 Erm, I remember there's one winter, it was quite funny, I was walking to school and I think it was probably about March and April where the snow was melting, it's really icy and I had such a bad fall. I sort of fal-, I fell backwards and hit my head and I remember there was a big bump. Erm, and that was pretty nasty, that was one experience I remember about the cold winter days, in Toronto and walking to school.

STE-011

00:01

R22 Ya, the issue of **gwai² mui⁶**. It's probably more... In recollection, when I was in Canada, I spoke Cantonese as a Canadian. And you can tell now. If you talk to any teenagers and they try and make an effort to speak

Cantonese, they **curl their tongue**. So I sounded like a Canadian speaking Cantonese.

- R23 Erm, I think I, I think I got rid of that now. Erm, my Cantonese is pretty fluent. Erm, and yet my Hong Kong friends thinks I'm a **gwai², gwai² po⁴** now, because I'm a lot older, and I don't understand why. They, they think that my mannerism is very **Western**. Erm, and yet, I suppose **in front of, in front of Western**, erm, folks, you know, they think of me as **Asian**. Erm, obviously my colour.
- R24 Erm, I suppose I'm a good sort of mix in between. Erm, I do understand both cultures well and I suppose that's the reason why I feel really comfortable in Hong Kong because, er..., you know, it works in the city where you get, you know, good mix of, er, expats and Hong Kong Chinese and mainland Chinese now.
- R25 And... ya. Now the other thing I did too when I was in high school was that I was..., I learnt French because French was second language in Canada and I kept it up until, sort of, university stage. Erm, so that was nice. And why I brought it up is because I think, I think my, erm, self-confidence was bashed up a little bit in the beginning of the school year when we first went because we, we moved from an Anglo-Chinese school to a all-English, erm, schooling system.
- R26 And I remember distinctly in History, we had to do Canadian Confederation and my god, back then, it didn't mean anything to me. So that was, that was quite tough, I thought.
- R27 Erm, so I felt in the initial stage, where I was probably not as good as the others, 'cause I was clearly struggling and they had to put me into English, you know, for the additional help. Erm, but you know going through the French class and I can plainly see as a Chinese girl, you know, I am doing equally good, if not better than some of the, you know, Canadian kids and it just sort of opens up a whole lot of avenues. I mean, you know, then I came to the, er, state where I realize I'm actually..., you know, if I put the effort into, I can actually do this. Erm, so that was a **big** turning point for me on the school front where I sort of moved and shifted from, you know, new immigrant trying to settle in, trying to make friends. Erm, you know, you're not quite sure how you're doing in school to ok, what if I put in the effort, I think I can do this. Erm, which then was an attitude that I quickly developed and cashed in on until my university days. So, studying was easier in Canada than it was in **Hong Kong** because..., and I think my parents was right because we were not forced to. We did it because we want to do it. We have the choice of choosing what subjects we want to do and, erm, and you can see where you were good, you know, you were good at. Erm, there are just certain things that just came easier and others were more difficult. Erm, so quickly you have a good idea as to what you, you you're good at.
- R28 Oh, there's one other thing. I mean, talking about melting into the culture. Erm, I became a cheerleader for, you know, our high school. And now

that's a great way of mixing in. So I quickly learnt how to do cartwheels and splits and you know, wearing short skirts and carrying pom-poms and going to, you know, high school basketball games and American football matches and it was just great fun. It was just great fun.

STE-012

00:01

R29 Right, I'm just going to zoom past senior high school, erm, university, university which was great. I did, I did my four-year degree in five years, erm, and mainly because by then, my dad tried, you know, a couple of times setting up businesses in Canada and it wasn't really working. And with all the cash that he made in Hong Kong which was slowly, you know, burning out. So, as a family we were more conscious about, you know, what we **spend** and that sort of thing and I think that posed quite a lot of stress on my, my parents especially my mum because I, I really wouldn't be surprised if someone tells me that she had a little bit of depression by then. But again, as teenagers, we don't really pick it up unless she sits us down and tell us about it. So it really was not confronted or anything but...

R30 So what I did was I went and did a part-time job. So which basically paid for, you know, most of my daily expenditures. Erm, which is great. Erm, so I think towards the tail end of high school, erm, I was a shopkeeper, the next..., you know, nearby Don Mills Shopping Mall and, erm, erm, and then I took out a student loan, a government student loan, erm, to go to university. And that's how I did my..., you know, erm, and of course because you are working part-time so I just had to, you know, scale the study until five years and, you know, just did that (inaudible). Erm, university was basically a party for me ((laughs)).

R31 I began to speak more Cantonese as there were a lot more Hong Kong Chinese students by then compared to the 70s right? So, erm, I made effort to speak more Cantonese, erm, to fit in, you know. Erm, I'm sure at that at that point I sounded like a *gwai² mui⁶*.

STE-013

00:01

R32 Right, so, erm ya, university was like a party. Erm, so I made more of an effort to speak Cantonese because a lot more Hong Kong Chinese. Erm, by then, I don't remember much from Hong Kong. You know, I don't really know the soap operas, I'm not really into it. You know, I know, I know what the game shows and stuff. The Canadian, the North American game shows so...

R33 Erm, and by the time I **finish** university, it's funny 'cause I..., the only jobs available back then was, erm in the early 80s, was banking jobs and it was so boring to work in the finance industry and guess where I'm working in now, right?

R34 So, anyway, it was my decision to come back to Hong Kong. Erm, because by then, we've all got our citizenship and dad has moved out to Hong Kong. He still want his last go. He wants to start something. So, I thought, you

know, it'll be a good idea to, erm, to come back out and stay with him for the summer and see what happens. And erm, well, I came up, I came back out in the summer and, oh my gosh, you just wouldn't believe. Back in the 80s, if you could speak Cantonese and English, you..., your doors are open. I mean, whatever jobs you want to have, you know. Erm, a fresh graduate from university from North America, erm, so I just, I just took whatever, you know, was on board. Erm, it was great and I really never looked back. I was really, ya, in the first three or four years, I was very homesick, I actually... I made an effort to go home every Christmas. I just need to, you know, indulge myself with Mum's cooking and all that sort of stuff. But, you know, three, four, five years down the road, I just didn't need that any more. Erm, all my family sort of move back now. They are all returned migrants now. My sister's back. She's married. Erm, brother is back and, erm, he's now married to a Chinese, mainland Chinese lady from Wuhan. So, erm, you know, father passed away. Erm, mum's back now and, ya, we're all sort of ((chuckle)) all came back. And, you know, it's a nice journey. And... It's a very interesting journey. You think you go, you know, so many thousand miles away and yet, you know, you come back and it's... you know, everybody's a very different person now.

STE-014

00:01

R35 ResD speaks in Cantonese.

00:54

Ok. Here in Hong Kong I have 2 groups of friends. One group consists of Hongkongers, some of which have returned from Britain, Canada and United States of America. Whenever we meet, we would often speak in Cantonese. Erm the other group of friends, I know from work. Most of them are Caucasian men from large international—England, Australia, the US, [inaudible]—finance organization with whom I only converse in English. Quite cute So as much as possible whenever I am speaking in Cantonese, I would wish not to mix it with English terms because my friends will laugh at me, call me a Caucasian woman.

20 May 2012

Charterhouse

Hong Kong

STE-002

What year did you leave your country?

How old were you when you left your country?

How long did you live in US/Canada/Hong Kong/Singapore?

00:25

R36 I left Hong Kong for Canada in 1977. I was 13 then. I lived in Canada, Toronto to be specific for about ten years before I came back to Hong Kong, so I returned back to Hong Kong in 1986 and lived here ever since.

Before you left, how did you think of yourself culturally?

01:00

R37 This is tricky because I basically left two places, right? Erm, when I left..., let's see, when I left Hong Kong, I don't really think very much culturally because when you're 13, you don't really think that, you know, on that note. Erm, when I came back..., when I left Canada in the 1980s, I actually felt fairly Canadian. Erm, so I felt more Canadian when I was back in Hong Kong in the 1980s.

Think about your feelings when you were living in US/Canada/Hong Kong/Singapore.

Describe a feeling or experience in which you were happy or glad to be living there.

Describe an experience that was confusing.

Describe an experience that was unpleasant or made you wish you had never left your country.

01:47

R38 (Inaudible) I'm not quite sure. Can we skip that?

Describe where you lived – the neighbourhood, your friends and co-workers.

01:55

R39 Ok, when we lived in Canada, we were actually in a, in a very Caucasian neighbourhood. Erm, so, erm, we walked to school. It was within two kilometres. You know, you sort of live within the 2-kilometre radius from where, you know, you went to school. So it was pretty much, you know, just melt into the, erm, into the neighbourhood. Erm, in Hong Kong now, erm, I've always chosen to live in more of the local, erm, but with a slash (inaudible) community but sort of more slanted to the local side rather than the very expat side, so most of my neighbours speak Cantonese. Erm, we have a few, erm, expats in the neighbourhood but those are mainly localized expats so they are not a, they are not on an expat package or anything. And they chose to live in a local neighbourhood.

Describe some particular situation that shows the extent to which you thought like a North American (US/Canadian)/Hong Konger/Singaporean.

Describe a specific situation in which you could have acted in either a North American/Hong Konger/ Singaporean way or a Chinese way.

03:21

R40 I don't know. I'm going to skip that. Skip five and go to six.

How would you describe yourself on forms or documents when you were asked about nationality and ethnicity?

03:25

R41 This is an interesting question. Nationality? I feel... For nationality, it's definitely Canadian. In terms of ethnicity, how do you say the word? Ethnicity, I feel Chinese. That's probably where my, erm, distinct division is. Erm, I suppose as I acquire the nationality, erm, when I was living in Canada, so I mean, that itself, when you ask me, I'll still say I'm Canadian. Erm, but in terms of ethnicity, I, you know, I am Chinese so that's probably where I would classify myself. And I think that is probably a lot of these questions and answers will stem from. Because that's probably the subtlety

when it comes to the divide in terms of when do you think yourself as Canadian, when do you think, you know, you are, erm, you know, you are Chinese. So, in a sense where **culturally**, I feel like I'm more of a Chinese descent because I was brought up that way, my family spoke, you know, Chinese at home. Erm, we ate Chinese food. Even though we were living in Canada, even though we were in, you know, living in a, in a suburb that's full of, sort of, white Caucasian, but you know, we still feel very..., ethnically, we still feel very Chinese.

05:00

I¹ Can I ask a question?

R42 Sure.

I¹ So, it would seem that your Chineseness is kind of shaped by a Canadian environment.

R43 Yes, yes. I would think so.

I¹ Rather than being Chinese in Singapore, or being Chinese in Shanghai or being Chinese in Hong Kong. Would you say that?

R44 I think there is some..., you know, I think you could say that. But then of course, it's slightly different now 'cause I've been back since 1986 so, so again, if you talk about, of my own experiences, then it's shaped differently again which actually will lead to one of the answers to one of your questions like what do I feel. Like I would probably feel like a Hong Kong **girl** more than anything else, right. Because that, that frame of mind change when, depending on what environment you're in, so, erm, but if you ask me a question back then, then I would think when I was in Canada, that we didn't really drop our, erm, you know, Chinese culture but it was actually quite well, you know, it was shaped around that. So, when we were living in Canada, we did go to these Chinese grocery shops too. I had to drive my mum to these Chinese grocery shops. We could distinctly buy these tin goods and whatever goods that we cannot get in the Canadian ..., Toronto..., Toronto local..., Toronto supermarkets. So we had to make those trips to Chinatown or wherever, you know, it was so actually, it did happen. Erm, it was something that we didn't throw away I suppose, erm. Ok and that would probably where, you know, for me, that would be my divide.

Please describe your thoughts about returning to your country.

Would you decide to return? Why?

Describe your emotions – how would you feel about leaving US/Canada/Hong Kong/Singapore?

06:52

R45 Ok, so let's say... OK, when I left Canada to come out to Hong Kong, even though I sort of missed it, I really did miss it for the first few years 'cause, erm, for the first few years though I was working in Hong Kong, I remember every single Christmas, I'd long to get home. So, you know, I felt that's where I need to be 'cause I didn't want to be out here on my own. No matter, you know, how many parties you're invited to, you know, to go to Christmas, is just actually nicer to be at home. So, for the first, say, five to six years I probably felt that. And I wanted to go home and I did go home. Erm, I brought my boyfriends home just so that they can actually get a feel

of what living in Toronto was like 'cause these are obviously guys I've met in Hong Kong that I started seeing. And yet, and yet when I was in Hong Kong, there was so much happening that I, you know, erm, I didn't really look back very much. I didn't feel that I have to go back to live. But, you know, it's almost like once in a while if I have a dosage of Canada and I have a dosage of home, that will be enough. Now because, you know..., my siblings were still living in Canada for the first few years I was living in Hong Kong when I started working because I was the oldest in the family. So it was actually important for me to actually get home. Erm, especially during the festive holidays which I'm sure, you know, any one who's living away from their parents would probably feel the same.

08:25

R46 Erm, my emotions on that front has subsided quite a lot more now 'cause my family is back here now. So, I suppose the need for going back to Canada has reduced significantly but I would like to go back at some stage. I'm not sure when though. Erm, I'm not sure when. Erm, I've started talking to my kids about my university days now because they are in their teenage years. My older son is now 15 and he's preparing for exams and he's thinking about his career and university and stuff and I thought that it's actually appropriate to talk about my university days, erm, and the friends I have back then. So, it has come across my mind that it might be a distinct possibility that we might, you know, just go for a visit and see how it goes but no, no strong plans, you know, at the moment. Erm, I will certainly offer Canada as an option for my children, you know, as a place, a destination to go university but, erm, but we'll see.

09:42

R47 Whether or not I will return to Canada to live; now that's an interesting question. Erm, at this moment, probably not a strong urge. Erm, you know, because work is in Hong Kong, my children are in Hong Kong. It doesn't seem like there is a tie to go back. Erm, but I mean I wouldn't rule it out. I don't really have any strong emotions about that so we'll just see. You know, I mean I could just be moving to another country. I mean I don't really know but I'm actually open to that idea. I reckon I can live anywhere.

Think about your first day back.
Describe how the city looked, smelled, felt.
Where did you go?
Who did you see?

10:20

R48 Think about your first day back. Can't remember that now. It's just too long gone.

Describe your emotional reactions to returning home. Happy? Confused?
Relieved? Stressed?
Did your emotional reaction change (that is, do you feel the same way about returning as you did the first time you returned?)

10:28

R49 If anything, I was just excited. If I move to a new place, I will just get excited about, you know, finding about the place and...

Describe the way in which you think or act like a North American/Hong Konger/Singaporean regarding family practices. E.g. think about the goals you have for your children versus what goals they have.

11:01

R50

Ok, this is an interesting one. Erm, do I think or act like a North American? I suppose at times I do but I **can't** really pinpoint. I'm not even conscious about that, erm, I'm not even conscious about that. But I think in terms of values, it's still, you know, I still think very North American in a way, very Canadian in a way because we were brought up in very impressionable years while, you know, I was a teenager and adolescent years where I do believe in the honesty and the integrity and the fairness that one practices when you went through high school. Erm, I, you know, in that sense, that mode of practice still exists today. I would imagine I have trouble working in a very local sort of Hong Kong company with a very local Chinese boss because some of their values just are not the same. Erm, I've recognized that very early on and I think that's the reason why some of my friends would say that I'm actually more Western than I am Chinese. Erm, and I think that's something that is already set in like I just can't take that away so I do communicate with my kids, you know, a lot of the Canadian values. I don't know whether it's Canadian or Western values compared to Chinese values we'll come across. Not necessarily culturally but how you see things and you know, how you regard things to be fair or not. That, that, you know, that actually is, ya, that, if anything, that's probably North American, if you can term it that way. Ya, and I think that has a **big** impact in terms of how I work and how I think and how I socialize with friends. Erm, I have very low threshold with people who cheat. Cheats, you know, that sort of thing. I have zero tolerance on that. ((laughs)) Whereas, I suppose, if you, if you were born and brought up locally in Hong Kong, you might not feel as strict, you know, with some of the, erm, with some of that notion. Describe your neighbourhood where you live now. Think about your neighbours.

Describe one way in which you feel similar to them or have a lot in common.

Describe one way in which you feel different.

14:04

R51

I think I actually live in a neighbourhood where families, even though they've got kids in varying ages, are actually fairly similar. Erm, we have a lot of couples who are in mixed marriages so we have quite a few Eurasian kids living around the neighbourhood even though in varying degree of ages. Erm, we also have local Hong Kong Chinese who have actually lived abroad, studied abroad. Erm, they sort of came back to Hong Kong and live, you know, in the block or around the block. So, I suppose it is a neighbourhood that's, erm, fairly similar. Erm, that the expats have actually localized, you know they are not on expat terms so they have sort of adopted a more local way of living. I remember there is this French couple that lives upstairs from me and they've got a two-year old, three-year old daughter and we were chatting about where we should be going for lunch and what's the, you know, places now to eat or what's the nearest recreation club that will offer the best value. I couldn't believe they told me that oh, there's such a club just up the street that you could pay close to nothing for,

for a lifetime member and you can have access to the pool and, and, you know, tennis courts and stuff and I sat there and I remember talking to Paul and say I can't believe a Frenchman is telling me where to go and I said I've never even been there, you know. It's actually a local, local residential club of people who live out of Jardines Lookout or something.

R52 And I remember I was commenting to this girlfriend of mine who is an Australian, erm, intellectual property lawyer. She drove me from Hong Kong side to Lo Wu where she actually parked the car so that we could, you know, take the yellow bus to go across the **harbour**, I mean, to cross the **border** to China. You know, I can't believe I'm actually getting a **gwai² po⁴** to drive me there. I just don't know, I never did it.

R53 So, I suppose it's very (inaudible) I live in a..., I feel very comfortable in my neighbourhood. You know, I feel like..., erm, you know, I can relate to my neighbours.

R54 But being in Hong Kong, you don't socialize with your neighbours. They don't really..., they don't come in to you... I suppose it's like living in New York. You don't really invite your neighbours to come in and have a meal with you. I think we tried it once. I went up to the French couple and had a glass of wine one night. And they invited me back to the, erm, to their three-year old daughter's party. Erm, but you tend not to do that. I don't know why but you don't. You tend to socialize a bit more with people you work with. You know when you are in the city. Anyway, that's how I feel.

Where do your children attend school? Why this choice?

17:11

R55 My children **goes** to ESF School, which is English School Foundation. It's a series of schools that's set up in Hong Kong for the benefit of the, erm, erm, English population when they were brought out back in the colonial days. So it actually maps back to the English national curriculum, which meant that if they..., should they like to go back to England to study, they could (inaudible) right in and the reason for that is because I was married to an Englishman and that seemed to be..., I mean the school itself was more established.

R56 So in terms of choosing a Canadian school versus an English school, I think the English school was a better choice. The Canadian school I think they're still struggling as to what sort of curriculum they, you know, they should provide. Because in the earlier days, when they provide more of a Canadian curriculum, it's such a, it's such a Canadian..., erm, it's such a narrow, you know, Canadian curriculum that it just didn't, it didn't fit if your children, should your children decide not to go back to Canada for university. And now, I think they've evolved into, erm, bringing in more Mandarin into the school as well as they're taking up the IB (International Baccalaureate) curriculum for and..., and I just didn't want my kids to be their guinea pigs while their curriculum evolves so, for selfish reasons we chose, erm, the English School Foundation. Erm, my belief was that if they choose to go back to Canada, they probably stand a good chance anyway. And I think it's actually a good... I like my decision, actually it was good. It was a good

decision. I prefer them to be in a, erm, international school rather than in a local school because I think in terms of their horizon, it broadens them up.

- R57 And I'm quite happy to (inaudible) the Chinese curriculum. But I just think that they, they are taught to think, erm, very differently than if you had gone to a local school. And I like to see the personality that comes through in an international school. In this particular instance, they have a good mix of English nationals, local Chinese, erm, Indians, Koreans. I mean, quite a mixture of, erm, different ethnicities. So, it suits me better than sending my children to an American school or Canadian school or what's the other choice, French international school. The other one is German-Swiss, so that's... Ya.

Describe your relationship with your spouse and how it has changed.

20:34

- R58 Oh my gosh ((laughs)). You know, I'm actually divorced now. Erm, the earlier days, my ex-husband and I met through work. And, it was, I think, our commonalities. We were in the same company so there was a lot of, there were a lot of common grounds because we were in the same industry, we work in the same company and it seemed that worked. As the children came along, I think there are differences in values, definitely, that I probably naively brushed aside at that point when you are madly in love. So, a lot of the inconsistency comes through in terms of the value of bringing the children up. And, I think, at that point I realized that there are other issues that are in play, you know, from your childhood or whatever that just pulled us apart. So, erm, unfortunately, we fit into one of the statistics that, you know, 50% or whatever, 49% of marriages that broke up and we did. And, so that's where we are today. Erm, there are still some fundamental issues about how we, you know, how we bring up children and how our values are different.

- R59 Typically, I think Asian parents seem to be more strict and more demanding on the children and whereas the Western parents especially (inaudible) the male, they are more laissez-faire, they are more, they are more into just having a good time and being happy, which I think is probably the major conflict that any mixed marriages have. ((chuckles)) And erm, and (inaudible) that for sure and it's..., and I don't know how that will be compromised so I just can't see that being compromised at the time (chuckles). Erm, so when I talk to, you know, my friends who are actually in mixed marriages, the women are becoming a little bit more, erm, they (inaudible) especially when their children are growing up... they actually got two different lots of values and now I sit there and just listen. 'Cause I just can't, I don't see how you can compromise that.

Describe food preferences – seafood? Chinese food? Western food?

23:30

- R60 OK food preferences – I like them both. Predominantly I probably prefer Chinese food but I'm equally happy to eat Western food. I like, I enjoy having a mix of both.

Describe work style. Western? Chinese?

23:45

R61 OK, my work style. I believe my work style is definitely more Western than Chinese. I've never worked for a Chinese company so I don't really know. Oh no, no, no, I did. A lie. I actually did work for a Chinese manufacturing company. They used to, erm, they used to, what did I do... The first year back from Canada, they used to do – garment, garment manufacturing. And... I was there, I was in and out in three months. That was it. ((Laughs)) That tells you how much I can cope. Ya, I, erm, ya, let me think about how happened then. My boss swears a lot in Chinese and he seems to love and enjoyed it especially when he gets the..., when he got the attention from the females, so he would walk around our desk and swear in Chinese in front of us which I absolutely thought was vulgar. So I remember trying to keep..., I kept a straight face. I just couldn't deal with it. Then he would always invite me along to dinners and whatever after work because when we have merchandisers coming to Hong Kong, they need to be entertained and he doesn't speak very much English so my role is there to, erm, entertain and account manage I suppose, which really eats into my personal time. Erm, and if you can term that as the Western values, I don't like my personal time to be eaten up by cultural entertain-, you know, corporate entertainment. And, so that was that. And that ended very quickly.

R62 I much prefer to work for multi-national companies. I don't really mind American, Australian or English-based. I work, I think I work particularly well with Western male, erm, bosses. And, er, what else? I tend to thrive in that sort of environment.

R63 I don't like working for female bosses. I tried that. ((laughs)) I don't know why. It doesn't work especially Hong..., especially Chinese female bosses. They tend to pick on very minor things and cannot seem to let go, can't see the big picture. I don't like people micro-managing and I think that's why I prefer male bosses and, preferably, you know who've lived overseas. That would suit me. Erm.

The answer to the next question may be a little difficult to put into words but I would like you to describe to me who you think you are culturally. Chinese? American Chinese? Canadian Chinese? Hong Konger? Singaporean? Combination? Different than both North American/Hong Konger/Singaporean and Chinese? Depends on the situation? Walk with me through a specific situation that you experience which is an example of how you feel about yourself culturally.

26:58

R64 The next question about who do I think, how do I describe myself culturally. Erm, that's an interesting one. I don't know. I think it's pretty mixed up culturally. I would think at the moment probably more of a Hong Konger, rather than anything else. It's the work culture, it's the social culture. Everything is actually quite unique to where I'm living now and I haven't lived in Canada for quite a few years. If anything, it doesn't, it doesn't really exist. Erm.

- How do you think other people here view you?
- 28:03
R65 Erm, I'm not really sure how people view me. I mean I can only judge by what they say so, erm, my Chinese friends tend to see me as a, the terminology is *gwai⁶ mui²*. They see me obviously as someone coming from overseas. Erm, my Western friends will then see me probably as someone who's very compatible with themselves but actually, you know is Chinese. So, erm, erm, that's probably where I am. Erm.
What advice would you give Chinese immigrant?
What are your future plans? Do you intend to stay?
- 29:04
R66 In terms of my future plans, I really don't know, I think, I'm going to be in Hong Kong for the rest of my work life. After that really depends on where my children will be and then we'll see what happens. Erm.
- Background information
How many years of formal education did you have?
What was your occupation prior to your leaving the country? What is your occupation now?
- 30:10
R67 Up till university.
I was a student in Canada, so there's no occupation back then. Erm
I'm a marketing professional.
How do you rate your ability to speak English? Very good? Good?
Somewhat good? Not very good? Hard to communicate in English?
- 30:19
R68 Close to native, erm, ability.
- How do you rate your ability to speak Chinese? Very good? Good?
Somewhat good? Not very good? Hard to communicate in Chinese?
- 30:29
R69 My, my, erm, my written Chinese is worse because it's a... I just haven't had the time to sit and write. So spoken Chinese is actually better. That would get me by easily on a day-to-day basis. Erm. I think that's about it.
- 30:56
I¹ So when you say Chinese, do you understand that to be both Cantonese and Mandarin or ...?
- 31:01
R70 Ah right. I speak Cantonese fluently. I have learnt to speak Mandarin so if I can control the, if I can control the conversation, I am quite happy. It gives me the giggles when I say things wrong but, erm, I will give it a try. If I am approached by Mandarin speakers, I actually..., I am, I am quite willing to try. Just give me a bit of practice, that's all. So I am not fluent in Mandarin. My fluency is in spoken Cantonese.

ResE

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Venue: Quarry Bay, Hong Kong

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STE-000

00:03

R1 My name is [...]. I was born on the 30th of March 1987. I was born in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in Canada.

00:14

Thanks, [...]. Can you tell us why did you leave Canada?

R2 Well, I left Canada when I was eight years old, er, close to nine and so I left because my, my parents made the decision to move us to Hong Kong. ((pause)) So they had chosen to move to Hong Kong because of my father's job situation.

00:42

How did you feel about it?

R3 I suppose at the time, given my age, I just felt that it was... Er, I kind of just went along with it, you know. I, I don't think I held strong opinions on, on that. I think maybe I viewed it as kind of a great adventure, great adventure sort of. Erm, and, and I don't think I was old enough to really consider, you know, will I ever come back, and things like that so... My parents kind of presented it and we just accepted it, me and my sister.

01:20

Do you remember how you left Canada?

R4 We left by plane if that's what you mean.

01:27

Did you pack you own things?

R5 Er, I doubt that I packed my own... Er, ya.

01:40

And how did you arrive in Hong Kong? Did you have to do immigration?

R6 Er, I think so, ya. I wouldn't have had a Hong Kong ID (identity) card at that time so I would have come using my passport.

01:52

Is there anything in particular you remember about arriving here?

R7 Erm, well, I remember it was nighttime when we landed. Ah, I remember we, er, I believe we took a taxi to where we were living at that point from the

airport. Erm, and I remember, erm, looking out the window and seeing, er, the kind of, er, ((pause)) the hillside near where we live. Erm, by that time it had been concreted over as Hong Kong tends to do and, erm, I remember, er, walking into our, our new apartment and seeing, erm, quite a, a bare bunk bed frame that my sister and I ended up sleeping on for, er, for a couple of years. Erm, I think, I think that night I wrote a, er, handwritten letter to a friend back in Canada. Erm, that's about all I remember from that, from that night. Ya. Ya.

03:02

So did you get any sense, I mean coming from Saskatchewan?

R8 W-, well, we, we had a... At that point, we had been living in Ontario and I have, I have no memory of living in Sas-Saskatchewan as a baby.

03:24

Do you speak Cantonese here?

R9 Erm, I, I understand, er, a significant amount of Cantonese. I, erm, ((pause)) er, i-, in a conversation, I think, er, more advanced now in some topics would be difficult for me to grasp, erm. I have to try to get from the context. Er, or I might just not get it at all and my spoken is quite poor. Erm, very rudimentary is how I would describe it. Ya.

04:04

Could you say your name in Cantonese?

R10 Erm, ((pause)) maybe not at this point. ((Laughs)) Ya, I think I'll pass on that one. Ya.

04:26

How long have you been in Hong Kong?

R11 Er, since 1996.

04:30

1996. was, well 14 years

R12 Er, I, I... There was a four-year period when I was in Canada for university.

04:37

So you returned to Canada?

R13 Er, f-for university, ya.

04:40

To which university did you go?

R14 The University of Toronto.

04:46

And so, ok. This back and forth between Hong Kong and Canada. What's your sense of it? What do you feel about it?

R15 Erm, I feel like it's integral to my self-identity. I think, erm, that combination is very important. Erm ((pause)) b-but fundamentally, I feel m-my identity is, is Canadian. Erm, Hong Kong is, Hong Kong is very much a place where I lived for a long time. Where I, er, formed a lot of memories, met a lot of my friends b-but culturally, ah, there's no... I don't... I think there's little cultural inheritance for me from having lived in Hong Kong, even during that

developmental stage of my life. And even having lived away from Canada for so long as a child and as a teenager, erm, m-my cultural identification and comfort zone is essentially Canadian, for better or for worse.

05:48

Can you give me examples of it?

R16 Oh, (inaudible) the language issue obviously. Erm, I-I feel that, I feel that in Hong Kong, er, to really, er, move comfortably, er, within the local culture and to be accepted in the local culture, you have to speak Cantonese. I think if you only speak English and you don't speak Cantonese then, then you will be er, er, essentially a foreigner. Erm, even having lived in Hong Kong your entire life. You may move in, in, in foreign circles, you know, erm, but y-you'll never, you'll never truly be a Hong Kong person, I think. ((pause)) Erm, ((pause)) I-I don't know if Canada will be more accepting necessarily of, of foreigners, erm, but, but I definitely fit in more there.

06:50

In what sense?

R17 Er, well, there's the language issue. Erm. I guess, I guess the way I think. Erm, ((pause)) what I find normal or acceptable is much, much more in line with the Canadian, er, norms and mores a-and less so than in Hong Kong. Ah, Canada is also just a more pleasant place to live, I think, erm, I mean, you know, one, one can argue about that, you know, for hours and for years but, I mean, I think, really, at the end of the day, I mean, you know, if, if one is, if one is... if one is real about the topic I think, you know, H-Hong Kong is many things but it's, er, it's not, it's not a cushier place to live than Canada. So that probably, er, helps the mindset. The mindset that I belong in Canada probably helps that a little bit too.

07:52

I'm just curious about what you just said. You feel more comfortable, culturally more comfortable in Canada?

R18 Ya.

08:00

Besides language, it's the way you think. What do you mean?

R19 Erm, ((pause)) I think language is huge. I mean, language is key (inaudible). Erm, It's, er, ((pause)) I mean for me to socialize with local Hong Kong people, they need to be able to speak a certain level of English and I have to try to supplement with my Cantonese wherever possible. Erm, but in English... (inaudible) In Canada, you know, you know, hu-, the intricacies of humour are very difficult to transmit across languages. You know, puns, inside jokes, cultural references that tell a vision. You know, those are very difficult to accomplish, erm, across languages. Er, culturally... Er, I studied Political Science in university and I'm very, er, I feel I'm very politically minded. Erm, a-and Hong Kong's political landscape is-is somewhat stunted. I-It's... Well, it's stunted in the sense that it's, it's very much, er, along the poles of... Ya. I mean, I mean China is the, the 800-pound gorilla in, in the

room, it's, er... So it's all about, you know, opposition to or nearness to, er, Beijing and what Beijing wants and, I'm a little bit more in tune with, er, a wider (inaudible), a wider, er, political, er, panorama that is present in, well, in any other country, really. Erm, that, that may seem a very strange point, er, but maybe, er, ((pause)) maybe people in Hong Kong are not as politically minded. I mean, Hong Kong is every bit a democracy. Er, ((pause)) I think just socially, er, people in Hong Kong are... er, I'm not as comfortable with them in a way. I-I-It feels like, er, wh-when I view Hong Kong's culture, it's, it's with almost a, a confused, er, er, disapproving, erm, er, air to it that, that doesn't, doesn't feel, er, native somehow. That was more complicated than I meant it to be but...

10:40

Oh, do you have an example?

- R20 An example, erm, ((pause)) I think, I think, I think a lot of it is tied into, to language. But I-I guess culturally I think, erm, what is valued and what is, er, kind of held up in Hong Kong society is, you know, erm, money. Erm, you know, if I can be a little bit crude about that, money. Er, holding down, er, you know, one of the few jobs. Well, I suppose if you make enough money (inaudible) no one really cares what you do. Erm, er, I mean Hong Kong, Hong Kong as a city just in its function is very, er, very geared towards finance. Erm, that's kind of all it really does. It's just finance and, ((pause)) and, you know, that's, that's about all that the city really does. Erm, Canada's maybe a more comprehensive society? I don't know. It gives me more room to... I don't know, I just... I mean, I'm a Canadian. I, er, Hong Kong is, er, I don't have a lot in common with local Hong Kong people. I often, er, I often express to my friends in the form of the question, "What are people in Hong Kong living for?" You know, what are people in Hong Kong living for? I mean, it's not to say that materialism and consumerism isn't, er, isn't present in Canada or in the West but in Hong Kong, it's a little bit, a little bit more exclusive in that for some people, that's really all they do, you know. ((Clears throat)) Make money. Erm, you know, go on trips. Invest, you know. Erm, ya. I wish I expressed that more succinctly but that's... Ya.

STE-001

00:03

- R21 A few of the ways that Hong Kong has influenced my identity, er, is almost just a contrast with Canada. It's almost the... Er, just the not-Canada that Hong Kong represents that helps give me perspective, that helps give me perspective on, er, what being in Canada and living in Canada is about. Erm, I find that... You know, I've cousins in Canada. And er, that have, you know, lived, lived, er, in really the same house for the last, you know, 20 years and, er, it has, it has this effect of very much, closing the mind. It's, er, you know, you know, moving from Canada to Hong Kong as a child, it, it very much kind of... Er, forces the mind open and forces you to kind of think in different

ways. Er, if, if only to notice the contrast even if you don't analyze it or think of its significance. Er, that's what I would say and you know, having grown up in Hong Kong, I'm used to the place and, er, I'm comfortable living here in a sense. Although I'm a cultural outsider, er, I think, physically, you know, I'm VERY comfortable in the space. I'm very comfortable with food. Erm, er, ya, that's what I would say.

01:41 Do you see yourself as Chinese?

R22 I do. Chinese is... Er, I am Chinese. Er, racially, obviously. I think, er, I think my self-perception, er, would have to be quite warped for me not to see that. As for Chinese as an identity, obviously linguistically, I lack that. Culturally, I think, er, I picked up a little bit of that from having Chinese parents. I didn't have the full Chinese parents treatment because they'd be quite liberal compared to the traditional Chinese parents. But I've a great deal more comfort with Chinese culture than say, you know, a white person who grew in Western culture would have. Because I would assume they would be quite foreign to them.

02:39

You said that your parents were not traditional in that sense. How do you mean?

R23 I feel like they were more liberal in their treatment of my sister and I and what they allowed than traditional Chinese parents would be. They are still very much traditional in certain ways. Er, er, they deal, they deal poorly with, er, highly sensitive or emotional issues which I think is a hallmark of Asian parenting particularly with my father. Erm, Asian fathers are just not, they are not well equipped to deal with emotional issues but their children are, I feel. Erm, ya, that is what I would say. Er, I wish they would be harder on us academically. They allowed me to slack too much, I think. Ya. Although they would argue that, that it was just in me and that they couldn't breed it out of me, that's what they would say.

03:51 (Texts from 03:51 to 04:37 spoken in Cantonese)

R24 Sorry? *Siu² siu². Sik¹ ting³. (Yi¹ dian³ dian³. shi⁴ ting¹ 一点点. 识听)*

04:11

R25 *gong² yea hai⁶ kei⁴ caa¹ (Bu⁴ liu² li⁴ 不流利)*

04:26

R26 *lei⁵ ... lei⁵ hou² di¹ (ni³ shi⁴ hao³ 你是好)*

04:29

R27 *er ... gwong² dung¹ waa² (guang¹ dong¹ hua⁴ 广东话) rather than zung¹ gwok³, Zhong¹ guo² (中国), that is China.)*

04:37

R28 If someone said it to me, I would recognize it - the word - but, er, I can't remember the word right now.

STE-002

00:02

So, what's going to school like in Canada?

- R29 Well, my memories of going to school in Canada, er, as a child... Er, I guess they are stronger than what one would expect but the details are not really there. It's just the impressions and kind of, you know, what the building look like and what hallways look like, er, I don't remember too much, ya. School, school in Hong Kong was, er... I don't know, I guess it's difficult to say without a comparison to make. Erm, I went to what was normally a British school in Hong Kong. Er, we did GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) which are I guess the successor to O levels (Ordinary Level). Erm, but I did the IB (International Baccalaureate) program in my final two years and not A levels (Advanced level). Erm, the student body at my school was, er, largely Chinese and largely Chinese kids that had had some experience overseas so many Canadian Chinese, er, some American Chinese, some British Chinese. Er, I would say a lot of those kids spend most of their life in Hong Kong. Erm, then you could probably say that I did as well. Erm, I mean the western style education was in English, so, er, ya. Er, most of the kids at school I think spoke some Cantonese. Er, a fair number of them spoke it fluently I think. Erm, ya.

01:46

So what language did you speak with them?

- R30 Er, with my friends in school, that would be English.

01:51

English. You never spoke any Cantonese?

- R31 Very little. It would mostly just be phrases here and there. Er, cute little phrases. Erm, well, erm, I mean if they were speaking Cantonese, I would get the gist of the conversation. Erm, and that would be about it, I would think.

02:15

And what language would you speak at home?

- R32 I speak English, ya. My parents, erm, sometimes they'll speak to me in Cantonese and I'll reply in English.

02:35

How do you think, you know, where's this aspect of Hong Kong? I mean, you have described yourself as being both of Canada and of Hong Kong. How does Hong Kong feature in... how do you understand yourself as part Hong Kong?

- R33 Erm, well, as I said before, it's mostly, er, the contrast to Canada, I think. Erm, I guess in an interesting way, although my parents were born in Hong Kong, erm, I don't feel that lineage very much. Er, although, although physically I look like people around me, at least, in having the same colouration, I don't feel that lineage. I think there are subtle fashion differences, quite subtle fashion differences between what I would wear and what, er, I hesitate to speak, er, of fashion and myself in the same sentence

but there are definitely subtle differences in the way that I might style my hair or the clothes I would wear and when compared to a local, er, a local man. Erm, so in my understanding of Cantonese, as much of it as I may understand, it somehow always still sounds foreign to me. Sounds like a foreign language that I, somehow, it's like a foreign language that I hear and somehow I, er, understand it. Ya, I understand the content even though it sounds sort of foreign to me. It doesn't always sound foreign I guess but sometimes it seems almost like, er, the content that I understand is contained in a foreign container almost, it seems like. Erm, actually, as my parents would tell it, I spoke Cantonese at home up until I went to school as a kid and they say that it was within a couple of weeks of going to school I had switched fully to English. Erm, I was thinking to myself just a couple of weeks ago, it would be interesting to ask my parents if my Cantonese is better now or if it was better when I was, you know, when I was four years old and presumably only spoke Cantonese. Erm, I've got to imagine it's probably better now just because I don't know how much Cantonese I could have probably known when I was four. I'm not, I'm not, I mean, Are four-year olds quite fluent? OK. I'm not an expert with kids, so... (Laughs) I don't know but, er, ya. I would imagine that I understand more now. Maybe I spoke more when I was four or... ya, I don't know. It'd be interesting to watch a video of myself from four but I don't recall myself speaking very much in any of the home videos, er, so I will have to ask my parents.

05:48

Would you? And email me? It would be interesting to know.

R34

Sure, if I get around to it, I'll let you know how it goes. I don't know if those videos exist at all. I mean in a lot of my home videos, I'm speaking English, so... I don't know if there are any from the Cantonese that I do speak in home videos are mostly, you know, 'daddy', 'mummy' or you know, er, 'Mum, look over there. What's that?' or something like that, so not, not a great deal of content I think. Ya. Erm, so that's how confident I sound in my, er, I don't know, I, er, I, er, I, er... Ya, I think when I look at my cousins who grew up in Canada and never left, er, it, it, that, that having not lived in more than one place, it, it reveals itself quite a bit I think in the way they think and... I mean the two cousins that I'm thinking of in particular are not... They are not intellectual giants by any means. That's probably a good part of it but I think even, you know, even intelligent people who have only lived in one place, it, it sort of necessitates a certain... I mean, your mind can only go so far, I think, if you've only lived in one place. Maybe, maybe I'm over-stating that but, erm, I think living in two places, I think, it does help to open up your mind and open new ways of thinking.

07:51

I'm going to say in what way but in a sense, if you agree that it does open up your mind, then how has it?

R35 I guess you could say that culturally, it hasn't opened up my mind. My cultural Canadian-ness has survived. Remarkably intact, I think. Erm, alot of people commented on how I even retained my Canadian, er, intonation even having lived in Hong Kong for years. Erm, even, you know, even up to 17, 18 when I went back. You know, Americans would comment on that intonation that I've kept. Erm, I don't know. I mean, you yourself have lived in different places, right, and, I mean that's given you a sort of different view than, you know, someone who would have just stayed in Singapore. Er, people who would have just stayed in Singapore would think that that funny accent is, is normal ((laughs)). Erm, ya, I'm not sure, I think, er, I guess, I guess it just... It just allows you to know implicitly that things are different in other places and you know, people don't do things exactly the same everywhere and... Ya.

09:31

Previously, when you said, you did your undergraduate Canada, U of T, did you spend all your four years in Canada?

R36 Yes, yes I did. I mean I came back for the summers er, I think, two times. Erm, but I didn't, ya... I was... I studied there the four years.

09:55

How does it feel going back?

R37 It's, it's a little bit odd. It's, erm, the, the mind kind of, er, when I'm in Canada, I'm sort of in Canada and my mind is very much in Canada and I have no great desire to go... Well, I, I can feel nostalgia for the other place but I don't, er, I didn't, I didn't... There was a certain sense that when I was in Canada, I didn't want to go back and when I was in Hong Kong for the summer, I was very happy to be in Hong Kong for the summer and, erm, going back and forth can be a little jarring, you know. It's, er, well, when I first went to Canada for university, I, I thought that, er, I thought that the similarities between Toronto and Hong Kong were, were quite remarkable because they're both modern cities and they have many of the same features that modern cities have but, I think, I think culturally, the differences are what stand out more and what are more, er, salient are the differences between Toronto and Hong Kong, I think.

11:09

And what are these?

R38 Erm, just, er, you know, the way, the way that strangers interact and public. Er, people in Hong Kong are much colder to, er, strangers. Erm, there is, er, there is no culture in following sports in Hong Kong because you know, in Toronto, you have a, you know, you have a hockey team and you have a... er, and a baseball team. Erm, ehm, er, and in Hong Kong you know, you don't have that and... In Toronto I think there's, erm, I mean there's a certain, er, there's a certain post-modern culture in Toronto. Erm, in, in Hong Kong, the culture's sort of, sort of Chinese. It's almost like a Chinese business culture

in Hong Kong and, er, Toronto culture seems to be much more laid back and more casual. Er, ya.

12:28

So no problems just moving back into...

R39 No, no.

12:33

whatever your accent is, seems different?

R40 No, my accent never seems to change. Ya.

12:42

What about the context?

R41 The context of?

12:46

Whatever you discussed.

R42 Sorry, the ... ?

12:51 You know, like when you first returned to Canada the first year, the things you had in common with other people, did, the things you were interested in, was there any difference?

R43 No, I, er, I fit in, I fit in with Canadians, er, socially quite, almost immediately the, the... I mean, the differences would be mostly in, er, you know, certain, certain experiences that they'd had when they were kids. And I didn't really grow up in Hong Kong and... Er, certain kind of factual... Erm, you know, like their awareness of, er, you know, the political tensions between Canada and Quebec, erm, would have been much more and still would be much more... Er, it'll be a bit keener than what I would have, having lived in, in Hong Kong for, you know, '96 to 2005. Erm, but culturally, I mean, you know, it was fine and it was... it was not, like, er, you know, like a foreign student from China who lived in China his whole life and come to Canada with a completely different cultural er, transition.

14:13

Thank you very much. Do you want to say anything?

R44 Er, no, do you have any more questions?

14:24

Not at the moment.

R45 Alright.

STE-003

00:01

R46 I was saying that, er, my Canadian-ness is, is sort of a displaced Canadian-ness in that, er, my attitudes and approaches, er, and mind-set sort of reflect that of Canadians but the content if you will, the experiences of being, er, er, er, an older child and a teenager in Canada during that period '96 to 2005 is not there. Erm, so in a sense, it, it, it is sort of, er, it's like, er, well, you know, like a Canadian who lived outside Canada for a long time. So, a Canadian, er, displaced and living, living somewhere else.

ResF

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2016 04 01 ResF STE-001

00:27

R1 Ok, I left Singapore about six years ago and I was about 29 years old and I left for Taiwan and because I was... I went there initially for a short term study and eventually stayed on there to work with a Buddhist organization. Uhm... When... when I was living in Taiwan, uhm... the first thing I felt was although we looked different as Chinese in Taiwan but it was actually quite difficult understanding certain terminologies that they were using, certain words that they were using, it was very different from what, how we spoke in Singapore, the kind of Mandarin that we spoke in Singapore. But fortunately, because I was brought up in the same temple in Singapore, they had a branch temple in Singapore, like since I was 17 years old and I've been there since then. So, in a way that kind of bridged my understanding of Chinese, to be a little bit similar to them and also er... from the aspect that when we were reading scriptures, it would be the same as what they used in Taiwan. So that kind of helped me in uhm... in my communication in a sense. And of course, uhm... being in Taiwanese... in Taiwanese setting, the culture in Taiwan and in a... a... a... Buddhist organization er... it was a big cultural shock to me in the first place even though I had been in, you know, the same organization since, since my teens. Uhm... but the monastic... er... although I am not a monastic but we live like monastics when we are in the temple. I mean, we wake up, we do the same prayers, we eat the same food, we do the same work. It's equivalent to me being a monastic with hair and not wearing robes. You know... er... So it was... but I was actually happy in a sense to go and have that experience because I find that the kind of discipline that it actually instilled in me was something that was er... is something that I find very valuable as a person because I would not be able to have that kind of experience if I was in Singapore or anywhere else. And uhm... I actually really do appreciate that part of my life. And uhm... in a way staying there uhm... 24/7 ... seriously, 24/7. And uhm... the kind of regime you go through every single day... you know... if you don't go crazy, actually you kind of become a little enlightened after that experience. So that was, that was what I thought about when I... when I went there. It was a bit difficult, ya, initially because there were so many classes. You had to go for classes. We had lots of classes and after two months, we had our internship so we started working... I started working at the, er... for the art gallery. But the thing is because I had a, I had a visa issue, I had to come back to

Singapore actually for my long term... er... for my two-month... er... internship. Er... But I was working on behalf of the art gallery here in Singapore, at our Singapore temple and at that time we had an exhibition and that was the first exhibition that I actually did. And... But it was still... because in our own temple it wasn't too complicated er... an exhibition. So that was my first working experience for the Taiwanese organization.

05.21

R2 After which I went back er... to Taiwan and er... they offered me to work with them er... for like a three-year contract which I stayed on and I did. And er... from a student and then you start working so that is another cultural shock in a sense, right? You are changing a different kind of er... it's really a different field. And er... the course of the... the nature of my work er... back then was... because I had a few projects going on at the same time after that. Ah... one of them... I was actually allocated to this place called the Buddha Memorial Centre. Buddha Memorial Centre was not yet built so it's a huge complex. It's supposed to house the Buddha tooth relic and uhm... the nature of that job was to actually speak with... speak with a lot of designers er... er... on the interior design of the place because they need to er... design exhibition spaces, shrines, er... auditoriums. So I actually got to meet people not only from the monastery. So I had to go outside or they would come to the monastery. They would do their presentations. And that was a different vocabulary altogether. That was a different vocabulary because it was talking more about design and you know, concept and you know, and after that when you went into the building stage, the construction stage, then you had to go and talk to the engineers or you know, the er... the foreman, you know, the construction workers. Oh, that was a completely different language altogether as well. So actually my stay in Taiwan was actually very exciting because from monastery setting and then you go into design and you know, you go to the and then you go to the common people, the workers and everything. So there were kind of a few phases on... but... I think one... one of the things that I felt that I learnt was actually er... that was very important in the language itself of speaking is actually the hierarchy, the hierarchy of how people... the way they spoke. In the monastery setting, how do you address the people? How do you address the monastic? A monastic that is in the elder position or the founder or your supervisor or your manager. There, there... there are still ranks within the monastery setting and as well as uhm... if I am talking about uhm... people on the outside – designers, even the taxi, a taxi driver, how would I address him er... by the right term? As in, I don't call him "uncle" you know, like we would do it in here... "Aye uncle... **I want to go to ...**" I mean you would say that in Singapore but uhm... you probably don't say that when you are in... you're in Taiwan or even in China. You address him as *shifu* which is a very respected, you know it's respect even though he's a taxi driver you respect him as a taxi driver. He has a certain... the way you call him... or even, even when you call a... address a... somebody that is of a senior position or you know, somebody that you respect, you call him *laotze* like a teacher instead of *teacher* (*siensen*) in Singapore. That *siensen* is also very courteous already but the extent is not there when you use the same term in China or in Taiwan. So, if you want to address somebody, it is a very important thing. When you learn to address somebody, that is so important in that, in that culture but in Singapore it is

less so because we are actually more... we are more equal in that sense. You know, er... of course we are not to that extent where we address our parents in their first names like Western countries do, like you know, Westerners might do, like you know, you don't call "papa" you don't call "dad", you call maybe, Steve. You know, you don't do that to your parents. So, in the same way, it has a lot to do with the culture. The language that we use has got a lot to do with the culture. How we are using the terms is very, very important.

2016 04 01 ResF STE-002

00:05

R3 So how did I first notice that there was a change in the way I had to call people or you know, when I address somebody was ...uhm... was actually when I was studying. ...Er... I would see the teachers which were monastics. They would say, "Oh, er, you address your seniors." Or your seniors so and so, so they would say "**your supervisor**" Or ...er... say for instance, in the office, ...er... there would be maybe something like a manager or like a supervisor and then we would have to address her not by her name or her monastic name but instead we would address her by her position which is er "**general manager**" or if somebody... the curator, "**official**". So you wouldn't address, like in Singapore you would just say "Mrs Lee" or you know, "Mr So and So" but over there you would say ...uhm... "**Mrs Lee the Curator**" or "**Mr Seow the Official**". You would have a surname and then whatever his title is. You would have to address him that way. And I think after you listen to how people address each other, then you understand that, oh, so that is the proper way that I should be addressing people here in this way. And sometimes even when they call my name, they will call me not by my first, that means my Chinese name, they'll call me surname and name like you know, with your surname. They call me my full name. So that is a very interesting thing even amongst friends. Even amongst friends, classmates they will call me by my full name which is like so then I will also call them by their full name which I found I – do we need to be that formal? But it's like since everybody is calling it that way, so you just kind of like adapt to it. So that was kind of... it was quite natural after a while. But if you talk about this in Chinese context, in a China context, then they would say that, oh you are very respectful of your seniors or your elders or people in position which actually the Chinese do like it very much because in a way ...uhm... China is... has eroded some of this. They would call people by their names as well and not call them by... sometimes a bit less so than in Taiwan.

02:52

R4 So after I was in... had some more of training in Taiwan, I went to China for touring exhibitions and that was when I brought the Taiwanese culture that I had learnt for the past two years to China. And they found that, oh, they... they... they say that oh, the way you speak is like you know, very Taiwanese. So the Taiwanese, they are very respectful. They find that, ya, you understand, you know, what is respect. You know, they would actually think that you know, you actually have a lot of respect. But actually, I didn't,

I didn't realize that... that it had, you know, it had this... this... this thing has gone into me until actually I went to China that it has, you know, actually came out already. So that was very... that was a very interesting... interesting er... realization on my part.

03:58

R5 And the thing is when I came back to Singapore that is even a bigger jump because Singapore didn't even have that altogether. So in a way it's like, how come people find it a bit weird, how come you are speaking like that so now in a Singaporean context, it's a different thing. You are too overly courteous. You know, too respectful. So you have to tone down a bit when you come back to Singapore. Ya.

04:25 Can I ask... Do you find a difference in the Mandarin you spoke and the Mandarin that was spoken in Taiwan in the monastery as well as when you were interacting with designers and then later on when you were interacting with foreman. And if you did notice a difference in the vocabulary, in the intonation or whatever the difference is, how did you work with that difference?

05:05

R6 Actually, you begin to realize it's not about the words that you are using. It's what you want to communicate. What you want to communicate and how is it best, how is your message best ...ah... expressed so that they understand you and that you can understand them because if you are only bogged down by words, then you will be... you keep thinking "what word should I use? What word should I use?" but the thing is that you are just trying to express yourself and you just have to be more aware of what context you are in right now. Who are you speaking to? And speak just what the person can understand. I think if you really try too hard... I mean... it's actually... you'll be very frustrated in speaking, you know, every day, who am I speaking to? Who am I speaking to? Or what am I trying to say? I think it's just... you try to relax you know, just relax and try to use... try to think about how are people... try to listen to what people are saying. How would my peers be speaking to a person of seniority? How would they be speaking? What kind of words would they be using? You know, that would be a easy... that would be... that would be easier for, you know, people like me to kind of understand.

06:45 So are you saying that there are different words for different people?

06:50

R7 Ya, I would say that there are different words for different people. Like say, I am a junior person. I am younger. If I am speaking to a person that is my senior, I have to, you know, the terminology of the way I speak, you know, the tone – it would be a little bit different.

07:13 Would it be different in Taiwan and in Singapore or the same?

07:18

R8 Uhm... I think there would be difference. Yes, I think there would be difference.

07:24 Can you give me an example of a difference?

- 07:25
R9 Just the, the way... uhm ... okay ... let me see ... er ... the kind of difference. [short pause]
- 07:35
R10 It would be ... It's like ... maybe in Singapore it's like – Ay, can you help me do this? – You know – Can you help me do this?
- 07:42
R11 But ... er ... maybe in Taiwan how the tone I would say is that er – ker for, ching nee *bang* wo zhuo sen? It's very ... could you *please* help me do this? ... you know
- 07:58
R12 You, you, you ... kindof lower yourself a lit ..., even lower so that, you know, when you are asking for a favour,
- 08:06
R13 you are not taking for granted that, – could you help me do this, kindof thing. You wouldn't say in that tone. At least for me, especially in a monastery setting because most of them, monastics, you don't say that and... even if it is not a monastic and is somebody senior, you would, you would also not say that. Definitely not, ya. For somebody who is like maybe my dad's age you know – fifty, sixty – definitely no. Ya.
- 08:33
R14 Even though ... er ... you are close to the person. Evm though if I am very close to the person, I would still, because there is a generation gap there, I would still, I would be more cautious because ... er ... to maintain ... er... er ... that kind of a relationship... kind of relationship. Ya.
- 08:57 What about between yourself and ... er ... the designers and between yourself and the contractors?
- 09:05
R15 For the designers ... er ... I would treat them very much like friends like, you know, ya and it depends on what kind of designer as well. You know, there are really very good designers and ya, you know, they have a status issue so in a way that they need to be respected, there is a... you need to respect them kind of thing. And ...er... so you would... you would also... the way you say things that would be “could you please help me....” instead of... so you would exercise more... kind of... the tone that you would be saying would be kind of different. Ya.
- 09:49
R16 But for me ...uhm... say for instance, I spoke to a contractor, I will still actually use very polite language in a sense that... doesn't mean that he is a contractor, I will treat him any differently. I have as much respect for him doing this job just because he is doing this job. So, in a way, when I spoke to people like that, I must understand where I am coming from. I am... who am I representing? I am representing the Buddhist organization. So I cannot be somebody who is saying that I am high up above. I am paying you money, you go and do it. That is not... I don't think that is ... er... what I stand for nor the organization that I am standing for and I think that is a difference when you speak to somebody. It can be reflected in the way you speak to somebody when you are asking somebody to help you in something or doing

something that, yes he's got to do it, he should do it so just tell him to do it but I don't think that is... that is how I want it. Ya.

11:03 So I can see that there is... the approach is different.

11:09

R17 Ya

11:10 What about language? You said there is no difference in the Chinese spoken? Is there or is there?

11:18

R18 Er... you just use more polite... more polite words ... and the tone of speaking I think is very important ...

Yes the tone that you are speaking through, you are not asking somebody to do something. You know, you are saying, "could you please help me do it."

That, I think that is a difference. That is a difference, ya.

11:57

R19 Er... describe yourself on forms or documents where you are asked about national and ethnicity. Okay, this is an interesting one. Hmm... so when... when they asked me, you know, when you are... you are Singaporean, so what do you think, you know, about Singaporean? You know, what makes you so special about Singaporean? So, you know, in Taiwan there are a few Singaporeans. When we gather together, so we speak Singlish lah or we speak, you know, Chinglish or what do you call that – Singlish lah. We normally speak in Singlish and then the Taiwanese friends or you know, the Taiwanese monastics?, "What the hell are you all talking about?" Doesn't sound like anything you know, it's like **"are you speaking in Chinese or English language? We don't understand what you are saying"**. Don't understand what you are talking about. I say, "ay, this Singaporean... this is how we Singaporeans speak lah, like, lah, you know, you don't understand it." And for us, it's just a natural... natural thing like when Singaporeans gather together you just naturally speak Singlish. Uhm... in a sense that is... I felt that was me being Singaporean. That the spoken language, that is Singaporean. And actually, it's very natural that ...er... I would say the pledge. You know, in Chinese so that they will understand. Like the Chinese **"What are you saying, what do you mean to say?"** they will think, what are you saying? You know, this is our pledge. You know, every morning in school you are supposed to say the pledge. They say, "why do you all have to say this thing?" Right? I don't know. It's like you just have to say it every morning. To, you know, to remind ourselves that what we stand for is Singaporean. And they think that, "wah, you are so... you love your country so much, you know, you are so Singaporean." But in that way, ya... that's how we are. That's how we've been brought up. So it's a very... it's a very... but for me, I don't think that just by saying the pledge, I'm Singaporean. Doesn't make me more Singaporean just by saying the pledge. It's just that it is ingrained in my head. I don't think I will ever forget it till the day I die. I cannot get this, Chinese or English. You know, after saying it so many years, you know, it's something that is... it will always be in you.

14:27

R20 And about being Chinese ... ah... I actually had an issue about being Chinese because I'm not Taiwanese Chinese, neither am I China Chinese but ...ah...

there was once that I felt I was actually part of China Chinese. That was once... there was one instance that I actually felt that was ...er... a trip in 2007 or 2008. I went back to the place where my grandfather... the village that my grandfather was born. And ...uhm... my uncle, who stays in Beijing... he's a China Chinese. He brought us back to the village. And he brought us to where our old house used to be, where my ancestral home used to be.

15:30

R21 And he talked about how he grew up. He talked about what my grandfather did to him – whack him because he didn't go to school, he didn't study and all sorts of things that he went through and then he went... And then he talked about the cultural revolution, how he went through the cultural revolution. Uhm... how he was grateful for the Singapore family for sending money back to him, you know, helping him out. But because of that, he actually, you know, there are certain issues, lah, that came out for him.

16:03

R22 And then ...uhm... that was actually one of the instances that I actually felt 'oh so this is where I came from, where my ancestors are from.' That really... 'actually, ya, actually I'm from China'. That thought actually came into my head. Oh, my roots were actually from China. Before that, I would never ever think of it that way. I would never have thought about it that way.

16:33

R23 Because ...uhm... my parents are English educated. They can't finish one sentence in Chinese. They cannot. They just cannot because they are English educated. They can "... a little bit here, a little bit there..." piece out here but they cannot, you know, speak a whole sentence in Mandarin... in proper Mandarin. And therefore, when I was growing up, my friends were either Westerners, or you know, or Malay kids or you know, so I never felt that I needed ... when I was young never felt that I needed to use Mandarin. Not necessary what, my friends, they are all 'ang moh' or they are, you know, 'baba' or you know... so we speak in English. There's no need.

17:27

R24 So, there was once my mum was saying that "Ya, I need to enrol you in Chinese school." I said, "I don't need Chinese school, what. I English girl." Then my mother was like – she seriously has to go to Chinese school, this one. If not, she will forget she's totally, you know, Chinese girl. Like, so for her, although she couldn't speak good Mandarin but she wanted her children to be able to speak Mandarin. Maybe it's because of something that she doesn't have. She's unable to do but she doesn't want that to be lacking in her children. And fortunately, she did that I think.

18:10

R25 Because I... I actually very much appreciate my Chinese roots now having first gone back to my ancestral home, one thing and the second thing being in Taiwan and China. I experience ...uhm... I don't think if I had the ability to speak Mandarin or I, ya, if I wasn't able to speak the language, I wouldn't appreciate what I was... I was experiencing there... completely. Ya... because they can't speak English.

- 18:50 Ya but I guess my question is – just out of curiosity, where are your grandparents from?
- 18:58
- R26 My grandfather is from Fujian, Xiayang, ya, ... And my grandmother is from Guangzhou, ... Shunde... So, ya, they are all from the southern.
- 19:22 Do you speak any of their ...
- R27 ... dialects? ...
... No, I call them languages.
- 19:29
- R28 Ya, I speak Cantonese. I don't speak Hakka. My grandfather is Hakka. ... (grandmother is) Cantonese.
and from Shunde and Xiayang ...ya, from Fujian, Yongding, Xiayang.
- 19:50 Do you speak Cantonese at home?
- R29 Ya, I speak Cantonese at home with my grandmother.
- With your grandmother. Do you speak Cantonese with your parents?
- R30 Yes, I can speak Cantonese with my parents.
- 20:03 So, do you not regard that as being able to speak Chinese?
- R31 That is not... that is a dialect. I wouldn't say that it's Mandarin.
- So you consider Mandarin to be the marker of being Chinese because if you Cantonese, you are not Chinese.
- R32 I am Cantonese. That would be my... that would be like... that's part of being Chinese but that is not the mainstream Chinese language. I wouldn't say that... that most people would be able to communicate in China. Or even Taiwan.
- 20:46 So can I assume then that there was no language – linguistic ah – difficulties as speaking in Taiwan? You have no...
- R33 I did have. Initially when I was there because when we speak Mandarin in Singapore, it would mix... you know, we will mix English and Chinese Singlish but in Taiwan or China, you would not be able to put an English word in and you would finish up your sentence. You would have to speak totally in Mandarin.
- 21:36 When you speak totally in Mandarin, is there a difficulty?
- R34 Right now, no.
- But at first?
- R35 At first, yes.
- What was that difficulty?
- R36 Because I couldn't find the right words. I had to ...uhm... I had to find words to... Chinese words to form my sentence because I was not able to articulate what I was trying to say properly back then.

22:01 So it was your lack of vocabulary rather than a different type of Chinese being used? Different type of Mandarin?

R37 In a way, both. Ya, that was both. Yes.

22:11 What was the difference in the Mandarin?

22:16

R38 Just terminologies that they use, like ...er... like say if it's more colloquial Chinese, like colloquial Taiwanese ...er... they would say, 'going to take a taxi' right... they would say "taxicab" (*xiao huang*). Er... they would say "...I want to go there. You know, if you say it in Chinese in Singapore, if you say... because in Singapore, you won't say "I want to take taxi". You would say "I am taking a cab to ..." Like you will say ... You will not say "...dishi..." Okay, the proper would be "I am taking a cab ..." but in Taiwan, they will say "...I go out to take a taxicab ..." So it's a...

Influenced by the Min?

R38a Er... it's not even Min, it's already because the language has changed. It's like... ya ... why don't you google something ... it's just... you know ... because taxis are all yellow there, so it becomes 'little yellow'... Like, "Let's go and take a little yellow."

23:18 So it's localized?

23:19

R39 It's localizes. In a way.

23:21

R40 But... er... er... say for instance... er... I think how they use it in Singapore... it's like if I take a bus, like it's *Ba shi*.

23:33

R41 But if you... say... erm... in Taiwan... *fong ciao*, public transport.

23:40

R42 So the terms are actually quite different when they use it. Like, you know... Ya. A lot of... actually a lot.

23:52

R43 So it took me some time just to understand ...

23:58 the terminology?

R44 Terminology. What they were actually talking about. Like MRT, it's [called] *cia yun* over there. Like we call it, maybe, in Chinese here is *ti tia*. They will call it *cia yun*.

24:10

R45 So it's all, it's all different. It's like... [gasp] [gasp] completely different. Ya

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00:08

R46 Okay, I'm at question 7. Please describe your thoughts about returning to your country. Uhm... okay, so I was ...uh... I was in Taiwan for two years then and I finished the contract which is a two-year contract and I decided to come back to Singapore because ...uhm... firstly, the contract finished although they did ask me if I would like to return. I said I needed a break

because it was such hard work. It was... there was a opening of the centre, The Buddha Memorial Centre. And ...uh... it's like tens of thousands of people attended for one whole week. Like every day, tens of thousands, tens of thousands of people will attend. And that it was a really huge project, it's like, you know, we would sleep like really very little so I had no doubt that I needed rest so that was ...uh... no doubt I wanted to return home. One of the reasons, because if I continued there, I wouldn't be able to rest. So ...uhm... coming home I was actually quite happy. Uhm... but in a sense I was also ...uh... reluctant to come back in a sense that because of the work that I was doing, I felt that the work was very meaningful. Uhm... it's not something that I experienced in Singapore because working in a non-profit, in our monastery basically ...uh... the work you find that is not for really yourself. It's not for earning money. It's seriously not about earning money because if you talk about earning money then it defeats the purpose of, you know, doing that kind of work. So, it's the kind of lifestyle that I was used to. Uhm... in a monastery setting, in the work that I did, that was what I actually... that I would actually miss and... and that was not what I would feel when I was working in Singapore, when I had worked in Singapore because it was just all about money when I was in Singapore or about, you know ...uhm... meeting targets and I mean, of course we have targets when we are in Taiwan but the targets are actually very different. How they set the targets are actually very different. It's like the motivation for doing things are not the same. Very different in that aspect. So ...uhm... in a sense, I was ...uh... it was kind of afraid if I came back, would I still be able to find other things that I felt meaningful to do in Singapore that were... that were motivated differently. Ya.

03:09

R47 And ...uhm... I can't remember what I did on my first day back. So I am at question 8. Think about your first day back. I think I must have been sleeping throughout the whole week. (Laughs) Eating and sleeping. And ...uhm... the city felt smaller. It felt claustrophobic. (Laughs) You know, in Taiwan, its... I live on the mountains, the air is fresh. Uh... not alot of people ...uh... okay, only for the opening there were alot of people but on normal days, it's very quiet. It was ...uh... you hear... you hear the birds chirping. You see squirrels, the sunshine or if it's in winter, cold air. Not that you'll be feeling in Singapore, for sure. Laughs. And ...uh... ya, in a monastery setting, it's in a way, more relaxed. You know, on the outside, its more relaxed but actually on the inside you actually feel damn stressed inside. (Laughs) Damn stressed. It's... I think the level of stress is worse than normal job in Singapore, I would say. Seriously. Ya, and ...uh... maybe because of the tight deadline of the opening so that was additional stress in that sense. Uhm... but actually, because in the monastery where I was working, we were like alcoholics there, actually. Mmm... because we didn't have family, so our colleagues are our family. Our friends are our family. We work there, we sleep there, we eat there. It's all the same people. And so there is no family that we have to go back to, to take care of. We are family in that sense. And ...uhm... so you basically really go back to your room to sleep, wash our clothes or you know, that's it. And then next day, you wake up, you go to work again and so you don't have to, like, take care of your parents, you don't have to take care of your, you know, even your siblings or your... if you're married, your

children or your husband or, you know, your spouse. You don't have that kind of worry. It was really – you just do your job and then just finish your job, you go back home. I mean, of course, we do, like, walk around together, you know, in the basketball court. You know, we do go down to the supermarket maybe to get some things to eat but it's in the middle of nowhere, you know. There's a small ...er... mini-mart at the foothill but that's about it, you know. (Laughs) And that's really about it and then you have to take a motorbike out to go to the nearest place where they have a night market or, you know, or shops. You know, there's nothing there. It's really in the middle of nowhere so there's nothing for you to do at night. There's nothing, so you basically work until night and then you just go back and sleep. And ...uh... ya, so it's different because it was so... it was so big. We looked out into the... there was a big river, you know, you see the small hills, the hilltops so that is definitely different from coming back to Singapore. You know, buildings and cars and... ya... that was... that was one big difference.

7:18 Was there a... did you find a difference in the way you had to speak, what you had to say when you...

R48 Come back?

Uh... not really. I think I spoke more Mandarin, that was all. Ya. I spoke more Mandarin when I came back because I was so used to speaking Mandarin so I naturally spoke more Mandarin. But it's not difficult for me to switch back to English. Uh... so that's one thing, like, you know, when I'm into the different countries, the way I speak is different like... like even when I go to Australia, then again, I have to change again to Australian, like, you know, how the Australians are speaking. So, it's like, it has come, I can't say naturally for me but I don't struggle that much to find the language. You know, to speak wherever I am, if I need to speak this, I just speak this. If I need to speak that, I just speak that. So I don't... I don't see much of a... it's not a very difficult thing. I don't think.

08:25 So you can orientate your pronunciation and the way you sound according to, say for instance, an Australian English.

R49 I probably will not speak Australian English but the terms that they use I would learn and speak it using their terms that they would understand because no point speaking something and then they don't understand. So I might as well adjust myself to use terms that they would understand.

So, you will not use the accent but the vocabulary.

R50 Ya, ya.

And what about if you are speaking Mandarin, is it same thing?

R51 Ya, probably the same. I'm... probably in... probably Mandarin, no. Probably Mandarin, I... in Taiwan I would still use Taiwanese Chinese ...er... Mandarin, you know, to speak. Because it's very natural to speak like them when you're there, somehow. Ya, I find that rather natural.

9:29 When you say, 'speak Taiwanese Mandarin', is that the sound? Is there a sound difference?

- R52 Sound difference? Ya, the way they... you know, like we say 'lah', 'ok lah' you know, this kind of thing, it... it... it... it's ...uh... the Taiwanese have their way also.
- Which is?
- R53 uh... it's very funny but ...uh... what should I say? I can't think of a... I can't think right now but I will think about it later and I will let you know. (Pause) I can't say it right now. I have to think about it.
- R54 I think it will come naturally when I speak to a Taiwanese but now if you ask me to speak, I... I somehow cannot articulate that right now. (Laughs)
- 10:25 What about in China, did you have that same issue?
- R55 In China, it would be a little bit different from... it will be different from Taiwanese Chinese like how they spoke Mandarin. But maybe because I was in Taiwan for longer period of time. I was like constantly in Taiwan. So, when I was in China, it would... it would be like for a couple of weeks and then I'll go back to Taiwan. Go there for a couple of weeks, then I'll go back to Taiwan. So, the time for me to adjust to the China Chinese, I don't have that much time but in Taiwan, i... we really live there and I was soaked in that environment for quite a long time. So that... that was quite strong, I guess. But, I mean when I went back to China more often, then that would be... so now, I don't really know what I'm speaking. I guess whatever comes out, comes out. As long as they understand and I understand what they are saying, they understand what I'm saying, that's my... I don't... I don't make that much of a conscious effort. I think it's not about really the tone that I'm speaking. I just... as long as I'm not culturally wrong, I don't offend anybody in the way I speak, I think that's most important. And my message gets through, that's most important. (Laughs) Even if I keep thinking about it, ya... I think I'll have... on top of the meaning that I'm trying to speak, I have to say the, you know, the right kind of words. You don't have to. As long as I feel comfortable and the person feels comfortable, feels comfortable talking to me, whatever goes.
- 12:13 So you have not had a situation where you meant to say something, the same text was interpreted differently.
- R56 Sometimes I might tend to forget using which word ...uh... the right word in China or Taiwan because you know they use different terms sometimes. Sometimes I would get mixed up. Ya, because like, you know, it's just too much of a toggle. If I realize that they don't understand then, okay, I'll just switch to something else. Okay, you understand this. Okay. Fine. Because, imagine ...uh... the kind of printing that they do. The printing, just the printing itself, the terminology is different so if I'm doing an exhibition in China, it's like they use the word, the terms 'pern huay', you know, it's a different... it's like spray painting. Okay, 'pern huay'. It's a different kind of terminology as they use in China or in Taiwan.
- 13:21 What would they say in Taiwan?
- R57 Uh... I'm not sure... 'in shua'. You know, like they would... they would 'in shua pin' you know. And then, it would be a bit different using the... like say

for instance if you want to use a... to paint on... uh... you want to print a poster or you want to print on canvas. You know, they would have the... all the different technical... different terms so it's like, okay ...uh... did I say that wrongly like, okay... so, if I mean this, which one is it? I like kind of have to clarify again with them because sometimes, even... even the different province would not be the same even in China, so it's like sometimes I have to, just to double confirm that I got the right thing. Like, okay, this one, is it this one? And this one, what do you call it? What would you call it? I would confirm with them one more time. Not to assume that I got it right because I could get it all wrong and...

14:31 So how do you know when you have it right?

R58 I'll just ask them what is the material. What is the material that they are printing on.

So, a sample?

R59 Ya, a sample like just to make sure or... because... and also different... different places they would have different materials also, so it might not be the same thing that I'm talking about because ...uhm... bigger cities, they will have access to more different materials or media, the trade mediums and smaller cities will not have that, you know, so it's natural that, you know, you kind of want to make sure that we are talking about... you're talking about the same things or at least similar kind of technology. You know, you don't want to get the things wrong.

15:10 Do they ever have the same name, same words for different things?

R60 Same names, different things...

Same words for different things...

R61 Same words for different things... not that I encounter...

like PVC, okay...

R62 Ya, ya.

The example I have is – in Singapore, you say 'canvas' ...

R63 Ya

... but it's actually PVC.

R64 Okay. ...uh... that's why I always get the sample. I don't care what they are talking about. (Laughs)

So you have the object.

R65 I have the object. This is what I want. You give me, can? Okay, this is what I want. Then I know we are talking about the same thing. I don't... I try not to assume because I've gotten things wrong. Also, I try not to assume that I'm getting it right...

So you've had experience before?

R66 Ya, as in, I thought he was saying this... you know, I thought it was this so... because I didn't understand what he was saying, you see, like you know...

- But when you thought he was referring to something...
- R67 Ya
- Was it because of the words that you thought he was referring to this?
- R68 Because it was something that I didn't understand...
- that you totally didn't understand. You didn't follow through... you didn't follow up?
- R69 Ya, ya. And then, so it's like, okay can you just give me a sample? So that would clarify whether whatever is, whether it was right or it was wrong.
- 16:46
- R70 Okay... so, number nine – describe your emotional reaction to returning home. Happy or at peace... I think, ya, ya... I was happy, I was de-stressing. So, emotional reaction... mmm... I don't quite remember my emotional reaction. Just relieved that I was back.
- 17:10
- R71 And number ten – describe the way in which you think or act like a Taiwanese regarding family practices. (Pause) Family practices... because I lived in the monastery... you know, I was... before I lived in a monastery, you know, I didn't really do very much housework. Maybe just wash the bowls and I didn't have to cook, I didn't have to, you know... everything was taken care of. But after being... living alone... I wouldn't say alone because I am living in a community, right? So we have... you... we take turns to... we have a duty roster. Everybody takes turns to do different things – could be you're sweeping the floor, you're mopping the floor, cleaning the, you know, mopping, washing the toilet or you know, washing the bathroom, stuff like that. So, I think, that kind of changed in a way I looked at ...uh... doing chores. Doing chores... I think one of the very important things that I learnt ...uh... this, this architect. He... he... he... he was brought up in a very privileged family but his mother is Japanese, is half Japanese, is half Taiwanese and ...ah... so his mother brought him up, you know, to wash his clothes, his own clothes, and you know, clean the house and stuff like that. So he always had this habit. And so he was one of the people I was working with, you know, when I was in Taiwan. And he was like a... he was like a mentor to me. Because he knew that I am Singaporean. I don't know many, a lot of technical terms, you would really... he would mark my paper, he would... because I had to type Chinese minutes. Imagine, Singaporean who doesn't know Chinese, have to type minutes... meeting minutes, technical terms, ...uh... ya, construction terms and everything so I... I... I had to learn and ...uh... ...uh... he actually corrected alot of my mistakes. He would teach me this is what term, this is what term and so I would learn and one of the things that he taught me about living life was that unless you don't have to wear clothes, you don't have to wash your clothes. If you don't have to use the toilet, you don't have to wash the toilet. So, why do you resist things that actually are natural to us? Why... how come we have been brought up...

now... people nowadays, how come we have been brought up to resist doing such things when it is natural for us to do such things because unless you don't go to the toilet and you don't dirty the toilet, then you don't have to wash the toilet which is quite true and that really kind of changed the way, you know, I thought about doing chores which, now that I am back, ya, I do wash the toilet. And I actually do enjoy washing the toilet now or mopping the floor because it... you know, people live together – whether I'm living in a community or living with my family, it's... you want a clean environment so, ya, why not? So, that kind of, like... that kind of like changed me. Ya, I thought... I thought it was a good thing.

20:55

R72 Describe your neighbourhood where you live now. Think about your neighbours. Describe one way in which you feel similar to them or have a lot in common. Describe one way in which you feel different.
So, I live in East Coast. It's a old... it's a old walk-up apartment... but there's... walk-up apartment kind but it has a lift so it's not exactly a walk-up apartment. Uh... it's a good environment. It's ...uh... I think I...

21:32

R73 My neighbours – we sometimes talk. I think the older... when I was ...uh... younger, like maybe when I was ...uh... very much younger, like in secondary school. Like I knew my neighbours then very well, those people that were staying. But over the years, they moved and the people that moved in, I don't know them as well as I did when I was younger because maybe some of the... but even though they were not the same age group as me, maybe they were like my parents' age or even my grandparents' age, I would know them. You know, I would know them. I would call them but nowadays, no. I don't... I don't really call the people... I will just, ya... some of... some of the older ones that has... have been staying for a longer time at that area, I would. I would talk to them. I actually would talk to them and sometimes we would really strike up a conversation and you know, talk about some... you know, about my neighbours and her daughter... they have issues and stuff like that. We would actually even talk about those kind of things. So, it's like, ya, actually some neighbours that I've known for longer, longer period of time, ya, we would strike up a conversation but not so... not so... not so much for those that I've known for a shorter period of time or that they just moved in like these couple of years.

23:09

R74 I do have one neighbour that recently because I'm into... I'm... I was learning to ride a bike, ride a motorbike. So I have one neighbour who has a motorbike and that is where we have something in common. That was a new neighbour and we... he was telling me about, you know, his bike and he was telling me about him learning, you know, Class 2... 2A, that kind of thing. I was talking... I was telling him about my, you know, encounter... encounter in learning my 2B... getting my 2B licence, so he was like sharing with me some... So, that, kind of like something in common. Ya.

23:56

R75 Describe one way in which you feel different. Mmmm...

- Or do you feel different? Or you don't, you know.
- R76 I guess in a way, some of them, I do not relate to them. I cannot in a way relate to... you know, I don't feel like I've an infinity with them. Some, I do. Like, you know, certain topics... maybe we don't... never had a chance to, you know, really interact or something, that's the... that's the thing, right? So, there's no common basis to even start a... strike up a conversation. It's just like, 'Hi', 'Bye' that... that kind of... that kind of relationship. So, ya. It takes some sort of, you know, environment or a situation that, you know, you will strike up a conversation with, ya... But other than that, that will be quite... so I won't say different but indifferent is what I would describe.
- 25:04
- R77 I have no children, so, thank goodness.
- 25:08
- R78 Describe your relationship with your spouse. I do not have spouse, so, thank goodness.
- 25:12
- R79 And ...uh... describe your food preferences. Oh, I am vegetarian, ha ha. (Laughs) Guess... not difficult to guess. I mean, before I even went to the monastery, I was already vegetarian for a very long time, so... Actually, I turned vegetarian when I was in... when I was studying in Holland. I was studying in Holland when I was in Uni for about half a year for an exchange program and that was when I started being vegetarian. It's about maybe 15 years ago already so, ya, so...
- 25:51
- What degree do you have?
- R80 What degree did I have? For Business Administration, ya, back then.
- In Singapore?
- R81 Ya, in Singapore. And then...
- 26:06
- R82 Number 16. The answer to the next question may be a little bit difficult to describe but I would like you to describe who do you think you are culturally. Who am I culturally? Wow. Combination. Different. Depends on the situation. Oh, okay, wow, this is a good one. So, when I'm in Singapore, I don't think myself as anything. I don't even think of myself as Singaporean. As I've given you an example of... because there's no need to feel Singaporean when you are in Singapore. That's a... that's a... that's a weird thing unless maybe you are... NDP lah... maybe you feel a bit like, wah, Singapore thing, like but if not, right, I don't think it's in my head constantly that I'm Singaporean, I'm Singaporean, I don't think there's ...uh... there's just no need for it. But, of course, when I'm in... when I'm in Taiwan ...mmm... if I'm with Singaporeans and we speak Singlish, yes, that's the context right? I'm trying to say that in that context, I do feel that I am Singaporean. Is it okay?
- 27:28
- R83 Okay, so ...mmm... when I'm in China, I actually feel kind a bit like Taiwanese. Because of who I am representing. The organization that I am representing, you know, ya, basically the Buddhist organization that I am representing, so I actually have that Buddhist organization in me when I'm going over there because basically it's the work that I am doing. Okay, so... but the thing is, is there Singaporeanness in me, Chineseness in me, yes there

is. Because sometimes I'm thinking, okay the reason why they were having this ...uh... tour in China was actually to promote ...uh... calligraphy of the founder of the Buddhist organization that I was working for. In the... in that organization ...mmm... they were trying to promote cross straits relations, better cross straits relations through art. And so, I'm like thinking, what has a Singaporean got to do with all these thing? Do I benefit? Or does Singapore benefit? You know, why... then why... why am I doing this? Like, why... why me?... Like, shouldn't the Taiwanese be doing it or maybe they should be assigning a China Chinese to do it instead? Like, what role am I in this whole picture? Like, why am I doing it? And then, I thought alot about this question because, you know, I need to find... (Distracted by singing in the background) But I mean, so I kind of like thought about it and ...uhm... I think if it's to promote world peace, okay, peace between the straits, that's good enough a reason for anything that you are doing and that was actually the meaning that I found in my work. Uh... I mean, if that can help in that way, religious or not, that is a secondary issue . I think, ya, but, if that helps to promote dialogue between these two, you know ...uhm... between the Taiwanese and the China Chinese, the mainland Chinese, then that's good enough a reason for me to be working on this. I'm passionately or, you know, giving my best for it and so I think the motivation I... I found the motivation in this question for me. That was a very important question. Ya.

30:23

R84 And ...uh... then again, when I went to Australia... (Pause) Was ...uhm... it was after I was in China, after I was in Taiwan so it was ...uh... it was kind of like oh, it was a big jump for me because from a very conservative, very hierarchical, very... very, okay... everything you have to respect, respect that kind of thing to a very open society. It's a... it's a... it's a huge jump for me. Actually, that jump was a huge jump. Like from Singapore I went to Taiwan, that was a huge jump. Taiwan to China was a jump but not that huge a jump. Then from China, I was back in Singapore for a short time and then I went to Australia. So that jump was another huge jump for me. Working in that context, was... was different because it's... it's just another... another leap in itself so ...uhm... whether I... what was I culturally then? Kind of like 'rojak', seriously. Super 'rojak' already by then. (Laughs)

31:37

R85 Like, my language... so I think when I was in China and Taiwan, my English wasn't as good already. Like, you know, because I didn't use it at all. So when I go to Australia, now you have to be super proficient in English which is like, okay, I have to start all over again. Wipe everything, all the Chinese out again. And then do it in... in English. So I had to build my vocabulary again like, in Australian context. And, you know (Laughs) it's very interesting. I have to keep wiping myself, clearing up my identity or you know, my language skills. Wipe it off. Get something else back. But then again, when I was in Australia, I was also in a monastery, in the same monastery. So there were Taiwanese people or people that were accustomed to speaking ...uh... Mandarin as well, Chinese. So I could still use the Chinese on them but I had to... I had to, you know, get back my English skills, my English speaking skills.

32:49

R86 So, by that time seriously, culturally what was I? I was really in a mix. I was... I am in... I am a mix so ...uh... I don't think I am anything right now. Whatever you want me to be, I just be. And I just feel comfortable. As long as I feel comfortable and be what I want to be, I don't even want to be anything, seriously. As long as I am comfortable in my shoe wherever that is, then so be it. I don't think that I need to specifically identify myself as certain thing or certain somebody to be who I am because I am seriously none of the above already after going through so many changes in, you know, in... in... in my environment and the people that I work with. Because if you say I am Singaporean, I don't think I am a very typical Singaporean already in the way I think. And the experience that I have experienced, I don't think it... it... its... so many environments have shaped the person that I am today and I cannot... I cannot say that I am specifically something. I cannot say that. I mean, of course, my passport is Singapore passport.

34:14 How do you mean by you're not specifically... what was that you said earlier on?

R87 Not specifically Singaporean or specifically any identity.

What does being specifically Singaporean...

R88 What is specifically Singaporean? Actually I ...uhm... (pause) you know, I don't know what is specifically... I cannot say what is specifically Singaporean. Uhm... in a sense there are alot of... okay, say for instance... I can't say it's typically Singaporean okay but say for instance, my friends, I... sometimes they would say, okay ...uh... ..uh... they will complain about the China Chinese. They will complain about, you know, the PRCs. They'll call them PRCs or, you know, like those Filipinos or, you know, or Indians or Banglas, you know. They would speak in a rather derogative manner. I mean, I'm not saying all Singaporeans do that. I'm not trying to say that. But some of my peers do. And... because... being in other countries, in China itself. So what about being PRC? I don't see any thrill(?) in being PRC. I mean they are here. So what? I... Yes, they may not act the way like Singaporeans do... like... say, I mean, there are some bad press about them. I mean, the things, the behaviour or how they speak or you know, they spit or, you know, somebody even just pooped in the MRT, whatever, okay. I mean, there are so many PRCs. That is just one PRC who did that or a couple, a handful of PRCs that did that. I mean there are some that have acted in bad taste. I do not... I don't disagree that there are... I've met as well, you know, but there so many others that are not like that. So, no... there's no need to discriminate against such, I mean, people.

36:55

R89 It's like, as well as, if I go overseas, I get discriminated against. They say, you're English... you're Chinese ah? What... what Chinese you speaking ah? You know, maybe initially when I didn't speak so well, they will discriminate against me. Like, "Ay, what are you saying?" You know, they will say such things but it's not that... you... you know that how it feels to be discriminated against. And therefore you find that actually... but that's not who you are. Or that is not what you are. There are other things to this person than the way he speaks or the way he talks all the way but the thing is that certain things are just blown out of proportion sometimes. And sometimes

- that is... that's the things that we focus on which... sometimes like we focus on really small things. Sometimes, I find.
- 37:46 So, I want to go back to when in the incident you just described when you are asked "What are you saying?" you know?
- R90 Ya.
- But before we do that, then the thing is the problem of, you know, people being PRCs or whatever. Isn't that the problem of race and nationality?
- R91 Ya.
- You know what I mean?
- R91 In a way, yes, of course.
- Because without focusing on the, sort of, anti-social behaviour, you're focusing on the race or the national and then, that...
- R92 generalizing everything
- that changes the whole problem.
- R93 Ya. But I cannot change the way how people look at China Chinese. I cannot change the way my peers think. I... I... because when it's a group of them talking about it, it's like everybody just, you know, keep talking and then...
- encourage it
- R94 encourages and it's like adding oil to fire and everybody, like, you know, having a good time just laughing about it. I mean I just listen and, you know, but it's not... it's not the occasion to say anything, I don't think because that will not help. To have a shift in the concept, such a concept that they have in their minds, is that they have to experience it themselves in a way that PRC is not like that. Because the way that I... the way that I have experienced PRCs is not... is not maybe what they have seen. I mean certain examples that they have seen.
- 39:47 But then, your experience of it is of individual or individuals, not PRC. What I'm trying to say is that the adjective used in front of someone who does something.
- R95 I mean, okay, that means you are experiencing a person and not his nationality. That I can... that... it means I see you as [...]. I don't see you as anything else. Like I see [...]. I don't see she's Malay. I see she's [...]. Exactly, she's a lady. Okay, fine, maybe that's it. Like ...uh... so it doesn't... it's the first impression, I see you. What is it, of course... I see you as a Chinese male..... but the thing is that upon talking more indepthly, it's something else. There is a... there is a somebody behind this, what I see and... and... and... and that makes the difference. That makes alot of difference but... maybe I... maybe they don't see it that way. Because maybe they don't have a relationship with people... China Chinese people or you know, Banglas or whatever.
- Or maybe they just have a, sort of a passed down narrative about these people.
- R96 Ya.

I mean, there are too many reasons
R97 There's too many people talking about them.

You know, I'm not suggesting that you change but I'm just saying that in my opinion, part of the problem is because of the attitude. You don't need the attitude. You actually need to focus on the action and that is an individual. And once you see that, whether good or bad, it's just an individual.

R98 Ya. It's very difficult to...

Ya, it's very difficult, it's very prejudiced and xenophobic .
R99 Yes.

It's racial.

R100 Yes. But... but... but I think ...uhm... Singaporeans tend not to see this. I don't... I don't understand why. I mean there... there has been change. Like say for instance, ...uhm... my cousin. She... she... for a period of time, she had to work in a company that hired alot of China Chinese, China Chinese programmers. So that was a start-up company so she had to... So, initially, you know, she's thinking. "These people from China" Like the way she spoke you know, like "These people from China" So it's like she has a certain way of thinking and after that, "Ay, actually they're not bad leh. You know, I tell you, they are quite funny one, you know". So she'll start telling me different stories about her encounter with these people. And that led to a change in her way of... her perception of China Chinese, mainland Chinese. And... and... and that's it. Actually, that's all that is... that is stopping us. It's that person to person interaction. That will actually stop all that "I thought they were like that" or "they are like that in my mind" you know.

...

43:44 What was that first question I wanted to ask you? Oh ya, when you were asked "What are you doing?"

R101 "Saying what!" It's like, how did I feel, is it?

Or what is it that brought it up and how did you feel?

R102 Uh... I think it's... normally it will be in class, like, you know, like trying to express certain things. You know you have to speak in class, right? If not, you know, you don't participate and you're like "What's wrong with you?" That kind of thing. Nothing, so you just... you just... I think that was kind of like a struggle because I was still trying to get to know the language like how to express myself. "What do you want to say?" so that would sometimes come up during, you know, when I'm talking to my classmates or Taiwanese except another one who is from Sabah also. Like, you know, our Chinese is like half-past ten that kind. And it's like ...uh... but it was... it was just a period of... not a very long... not a very long period, it was just a short period of time. And then... I think it's as long as you don't resist it and you don't feel ashamed of it, like people questioning you, then you don't dare to speak already. You know, it's more like the language it's like you have to speak it. You have... the more you speak it, the more confident you are and then just slowly you get the hang of it. Ya, riding a bicycle, right? (Pause)

...

45:42

R103 How do you think other people here view you? I don't know. I don't... (pause) I don't know. (laughs) What advice would you give Chinese immigrant? Chinese, this context is ...uh... going where... and from where going to where... from me here, or from me in Taiwan or from me in Australia? Which context or any...

or China.

R104 What advice would you give Chinese immigrant? Actually I saw alot of Chinese immigrants in Australia. And ...uh... I think there's a... there's a big cultural difference between Chinese... the Chinese over there. ...uh... what to say? In a way, they... they kind of show that they are very extravagant. I cannot say all, ya but certain... some people and that's what give... that's... that's giving the Australians a very bad impression of what Chinese people are because then they will stereo-type you – Chinese, wah, you're like that one. And... and the thing is that the Australians don't care whether you are Malaysian Chinese, Singaporean Chinese or China Chinese, Taiwanese Chinese, Hongkonger or whatever, they don't... they are just Chinese. And then all of us get a bad name because we're all Chinese. We look Chinese, right? They don't care what. Like 'angmoh'... you will think that the 'angmoh' is from England. You know, maybe we can, you know, decipher whether from England or whether from ...uh... America or from different places. But maybe to somebody who is not so familiar with, you know, where they are from, "oh, angmoh is angmoh, lor" like, you know. So there is like... (makes a sound)... what advice would I give a Chinese immigrant? I think... I think that's really difficult advice to give anybody. Ya, because if you are very culturally sensitive, you are culturally insensitive then you are culturally insensitive regardless of... regardless of anything, you know. So I don't think there's a... I don't think I'm in a position to say anything to anybody. (Laughs) But I can just... I just... I just want to comment that they are... say for instance, my cousin just came back from Australia. They went on a holiday. My cousin and her husband. They were complaining so much about the China Chinese. You know, they... ah, they... Oh, my cousin's husband was in the toilet. So... they were in a restaurant. There was a toilet behind. He was going into the toilet, he was going to take a dump. Later on, he hears outside, two Chinese women. They didn't go into the Ladies because it was crowded or something like that. They walk into the men's toilet. There were guys pissing. My cousin was in the toilet. You know, he was trying to take a dump. He's in the cubicle and they keep banging on the door. They want him to come out of the toilet so that they could go in. And, unashamed that they walked into the men's toilet demanding that the guy come out and ya, they were not embarrassed or anything. Like, I mean, why? I mean... they don't understand the context of the toilet or in a toilet when it's in Australia and a toilet when it's in China, I don't think you even do that when in China, right? I mean, I don't... I haven't seen that happening in China. You don't go and demand something but why has the behaviour become like that when you're overseas? Anyway if you're talking about open, yes, but then not that open, right? I mean, not to that extent, lah. (laughs) So, he was like... he was so horri... he was so disgusted by the way these ladies were, you know, talking and of course he

couldn't take his dump. Zipped up his pants and he just opened the door and walked out. He couldn't do anything. He's just completely speechless, you know, and appalled by their behaviours. And... ya, I mean what advice do you expect to give? I mean, can we give to people like that? What... (laughs) I don't know what kind of advice these people can... can listen... Seriously, they are so themselves. They are so, I don't know, about themselves that they don't care where they are, who they are. What context, doesn't matter any more. So I don't think any advice is necessary. Seriously.

51:12

R105 What are my future plans? My plans right now? No. Just to finish my MA, write my thesis. I'll be very happy and then ...uh... Do I intend to stay in Singapore? ...Uh... I think for family reasons right now, I would still stay in Singapore. Ya. So... (pause)

51:37 So, the background information do I have to continue?

...

R106 Ya, it's okay. Ya, so I studied ...uh... until Uni in Singapore. So, I don't know how many years that is, lah. So, you can calculate. (Laughs)

I don't know that. I don't know the system here.

R107 Six years, primary school; four years, secondary school; two years, Junior College; three years, Uni. Ya, so, but now continuing with MA, four and a half years. Still doing, okay.

52:17

R108 Then prior... my occupation... actually I was working in a DVD authoring company. DVD authoring means that we do ...uhm... the company did master discs for like, home video. The... you know, the dvds that you buy from shops like games. They make it into... we did the authoring. Authoring means the programming. Then the disc goes to ...uh... the disc goes to a... ...uh... a replicator. And then they churn out all the discs out. And so I was working in that company. I was doing... I was their Assistant GM then and then ...uhm... so it was a huge difference for me because entertainment line, monastery. Okay, enough said.

53:13

R109 And then ...uh... currently, I'm ...uh... I'm working for my cousin doing interior design but I kind of like stopped because school is a bit too hectic for me right now so I'm taking a... I told her, say that I would do it on a project basis but because now I'm still writing like, you know, there are alot of assignments so I kind of like stopped.

53:40

R110 Then, my ability to speak English. Okay, good. Ya. My ability to speak Chinese. Well, okay, good. Okay.

...

54:30

R111 So, the first one is a general one then individually, is that right? Is there supposed to be a difference? Like... (Pause) strangers (Pause). I think very well, lah, hor. (Pause) I would say very well, now. (Laughs) How well do you speak English on TV or at a... (Pause) sometimes I don't understand the newspaper. Over the phone. (makes sounds) Sometimes. (Pause)

Please indicate to what extent are the following statements true to you when using the term Chinese. I am referring to someone who spent most of the...

(Pause) I don't quite understand this part, you know.

Like, please indicate to what extent are the following statements true to you in using the term Chinese. I am referring to someone who spent most of their growing up years in China.

...

You don't grow up in China so I would say, like, for instance, you actually gave me a... you actually answered this question because in your context, it would be Taiwanese. It's when you were in China because of your work and the fact that you represented the monastery, you had thought of yourself as Taiwanese.

R112 Ya.

So I mean...

R113 A little bit, lah.

Ya, you change all of that to your own context. This is ...uh... this was for Chinese.

R114 So I don't have to answer this part?

If you wish to or what you can do is to change it like for you, it's not... what's that?

R115 Canadian?

Ya, so for you, it's not Canadian. It would be ...uh... Taiwanese or Australian or PRC, you know what I mean?

R116 But I don't think of myself most of the time as that.

Ya, but when you did, ...uh... like when you were in China...

R117 Uhm hmmm, ya.

So...

R118 A little bit.

That's why. Ya. Exactly.

R119 So I should replace all the Canadian to...

Sure, ya.

R120 Taiwanese, right?

In context. You context it.

R121 I context it that way.

57:20

R122 Actually, I don't at all, already, or the rest.

Then none then.

R123 Not at all, right? I could... (pause) But it seems weird if I do it that way.

Which is it? What question is that?

R124 I think of myself as being Taiwanese. But that was only at that instance only.

- Ya, so...
- R125 So, it can't... I can't really say... I can't really even take this one at this time because it's only at that instance...
- At a specific time...
- R126 At a specific time.
- And situation, I would say.
- R127 Ya. (Pause) The rest, no. Not at all.
- So, even when you're... even when you were in Taiwan...
- R128 mmm...
- Two years.
- R129 Ya.
- You were very clearly, Singaporean.
- R130 I was (pause) I was only Singaporean when I was singing National Day songs, lor. With my Singaporean friends, lor. With my Singaporean...
- So, otherwise?
- R130 I don't think of myself as anything.
- Oh, okay.
- R131 Ya. It's like when you're in Taiwan, and speaking... to, you know, whoever, unless they bring up the topic of Singapore, yes, ah, then I would. Yes, I Singaporean, yes. Or, yes, gang of Singaporeans speaking, yes, Singaporean. But if that context didn't come up...
- National Day?
- R131a National Day, ya, maybe like sing a bit of songs, you know, with my Singaporean friends, or like, you know, monastics or you know, yes, that would be the occasion but if not, no, not at all.
- 59:43
- R134 Think of myself being Chinese. Also, occasionally, lah. Not... it's also... it's like I don't have to consciously think of myself as Chinese. I don't... there's no... it's like there's no occasion, if there's no occasion, I don't think of myself as Chinese. I don't think of myself as anything. So, how do I rate that? I don't know how to rate that.
- Then don't, don't rate it.
- R135 Not at all?
- Uh, you can always say "I don't think of myself as ...
- R136 Not applicable?
- Ya, yes, exactly. Not applicable.
- R136 Not applicable. Ya. (Long pause)
- 1:00:30

R137 At times... when I... I think when I... when I have a strong sense of being Chinese when I was back in my hometown. That was the strongest feeling that I had being Chinese. (Very long pause)

1:01:22

R138 So, consider myself more Chinese than Singaporean or...

It's up to you how you want to take this. (Very long pause)

R139 Actually, equal, lah. (Long pause) Oh, should be this one, sorry. (Very long pause)

1:03:03

R140 When you think of yourself, what culture... (Pause) Rojak. Seriously, I think of myself as rojak. (Very long pause) Chinese most (muffled)... Rojak. (Pause) Okay.

Thank you.

R141 You're welcome.

1:04:48How old did you say you were?

R142 37 this year.

ResG

Date of Interview: 6 March 2015
Venue: Tanglin Club, Singapore
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00:01

R1 OK. So, what year did I leave Hong Kong, is around 1992 when I was, like, years... 1993 which is one years old plus then... Er, ya, I left Hong Kong around one years old plus. Then how long did I live in Singapore is ever since *lah*. So I'm 24 this year so it's like 22 or 23 years since I've been living in Singapore.

Before you left, how did you think of yourself culturally?

00:28

R2 So bef-, I can't think of what am I culturally 'cause (inaudible) when I was brought over to Singapore I am still a infant. So actually I don't have much on that.

Think about your feelings when you were living in Hong Kong/Singapore. Describe a feeling or experience in which you were happy or glad to be living there.

Describe an experience that was confusing.

Describe an experience that was unpleasant or made you wish you had never left your country.

00:38

R3 So, like the feeling in living in Singapore is like, there's for me it's a bit of too many constraint, some of the laws *lah*. Like, er, air guns, you cannot play air guns, you can't play... Er, you can't eat with chewing gum (inaudible) or all this usually when, during holidays, I went back to Hong Kong, is, is, er, allowed. So, 'cause playing air guns is one of my interests, so actually, in Singapore when they say air gun was banned, is a bit sad for me because I can't play with (inaudible) guns, *lah*. So, er, actually I'm ok-, I am quite happy, living both in Hong Kong and Singapore because actually both sides has their own good things, *lah*. Like for Hong Kong, it's more on the food and the things I play with. In Singapore, actually the area I stay in is a small neighbourhood which is very quiet and the housing is big in Singapore compared to Hong Kong. So, ya, I'm actually quite happy to live in these two countries concurrently at times. Mmm, but I don't really have any confusion when I'm in, er, Singapore and Hong Kong but the only thing is, some of the... Even though I stay in Singapore for quite some years already, right, some of my personal habits, right, is still keeping on with the Hong Kong side. Like Hon-, many people understand that Hong Kong is a very hi-, fast-paced country so actually I, at times, I am very fast-paced also *lah* compared to local Singaporeans.

So, the... Mmm, unpleasant that... leave my country... actually I don't have a really, a unpleasant feeling because I still don't know a thing when I was brought over here.

Describe where you lived – the neighbourhood, your friends and co-workers.

02:14

R4 So, but if compares to, er, neighbourhood and friends, I definitely have more friends and er, in Singapore compared to Hong Kong *lah* because literally I am living in Singapore most of the time.

Describe some particular situation that shows the extent to which you thought like a Hong Konger/Singaporean.

Describe a specific situation in which you could have acted in either a Hong Konger/ Singaporean way or a Chinese way.

02:29

R5 Then... Er, describe some situation that shows the extent... Mmm, actually I just, actually I like to been called a Hong Kong people more than called a Singapore, I have no idea why, it's just a personal... Even though, even I'm holding a pink card, er, IC, (Singaporeans are issued pink identity cards (IC), compared to blue cards for Permanent Residents) I will still tell people I'm from Hong Kong. So, ya *lah*, so I just prefer people calling me from Hong Kong.

How would you describe yourself on forms or documents when you were asked about nationality and ethnicity?

02:58

R6 But actually for the nationality-wise eh, nationality-wise I got not much, erm, preferences *lah*, but the only thing is I holding a Singaporean nationality, I must go NS (all 18-year-old male Singaporeans are conscripted into military National Service (NS) for two years) which in Hong Kong we don't need to go NS, so actually I feel like the 2 years NS cost me like, cost me some trouble because maybe that 2 years I can go find a job and I can earn better money than when I will be going to NS. So, ya lor.

Please describe your thoughts about returning to your country.

Would you decide to return? Why?

Describe your emotions – how would you feel about leaving Hong Kong/Singapore?

03:30

R7 If I... But for now if you ask me if I want to decide to go back to Hong Kong I may not decide to go back because due to the current, er, government situation like the previous protest and stuff that which related to the China government, because personally I feel China government is giving quite some er..., a lot of problems to, er, Hong Kong people so if you ask me if I will go back, may (inaudible) or maybe *lah*.

Think about your first day back.

Describe how the city looked, smelled, felt.

Where did you go?

Who did you see?

03:59

R8 Ok, so, mmm... Actually when I first... Sometimes when I go back to Hong Kong, mmm... Actually everything feels the same for me because I have been ((R use a word which sounds like *concur- ing*)) going both places together but sometimes its.... Some is like... Actually like for Singapore, we have this, er, food court called The Food Republic. When I go back Hong Kong, once I walked into this place also Food Republic, is under the same company, I will unintentionally speaking to the stall..., the vendors using the very typical Singapore Singlish and after that then noticing, eh, I am not in Singapore. So, ya, it will get confused with me if I'm at The Food Republic at times.

Describe your emotional reactions to returning home. Happy? Confused? Relieved? Stressed?

Did your emotional reaction change (that is, do you feel the same way about returning as you did the first time you returned?)

04:45

R9 Mmm, so, what's my emotion reactions to return home? Actually quite happy, *lah* because I can go, wah, eat, eat the street-side food. Actually Hong Kong is famous of the street-side food and the entertainment shopping and stuff. And ya, I like to go back to buy some, er, some model kits. Like those action figures (inaudible) because the action figures is quite cheap, cheaper than Singapore and some electronic stuff, *lah*. So, mmm, ya *lah*, so I just feel happy when I go back because I can do many shopping which Singapore is quite (inaudible), more of the time.

Describe the way in which you think or act like a Hong Konger/Singaporean regarding family practices. E.g. think about the goals you have for your children versus what goals they have.

05:19

R10 So, describe the ways in which you think... Mmm, I think I act like a Hong Kong people when I doing work and get into public transport because er... Let's take a very simple example. In Singapore non-peak hour, the train comes every three minutes. Eh, ah no, peak hours they come every three minutes, non-peak is six but in Hong Kong, if non-peak hour it goes greater than three minutes, we consider as slow already. Because the peak hours right, the train comes every minute and, er, the way we work we, sometimes I feel like local Singaporeans is not as efficient cause they will... Many things they need to wait for the procedures procedures but sometimes in Hong Kong, at least how I feel is that we just want to make sure the thing is done and is not illegally or the wrong manner. So, ya.

Describe your neighbourhood where you live now. Think about your neighbours.

Describe one way in which you feel similar to them or have a lot in common. Describe one way in which you feel different.

06:15

R11 Describe your neighbourhood where you live now. Mmm, actually the neighbourhood where I live now is rea-, I stay in Simei now. Simei is very small neighbourhood in Singapore *lah*, so it's like, er, which end you walk to

the other end you only spend 30 minutes walking. That's the whole end of the whole (inaudible) of Simei. So I've been staying there since I'm a kid, *lah* so I know many people from there, like my primary school friends and staff or maybe some from the other neighbourhood, the east-side neighbourhood. I know a lot of my friends there so actually I am very comfortable staying in the place I stay now, *lah*.

Where do your children attend school? Why this choice?

06:49

R12 Ah, so, mmm... This one I don't think I need to answer. Number 12.

Describe your relationship with your spouse and how it has changed.

07:06

R13 Next one. I don't need to answer this one also. 13 I no need to answer also.

Describe food preferences – seafood? Chinese food? Western food?

07:08

R14 Food preference, ok for food preference... There's also a very big cultural crash between Hong Kong and Singapore, *lah* because actually er... My memory is er... in Hong Kong as long the kitchen has the thing and you can say out, they can cook, they will cook. But in Singapore, it's like sometimes the noodle you want to change the different kind of noodle, they will tell me, "No, cannot because the menu is like that." They are quite erm... Not so flexible compared to Hong Kong, *lah*. So, ya, but the food-wise it's around the same. It's always Western. Because it's still at the Asia area, so it's still ok.

Describe work style. Western? Chinese?

07:44

R15 So the working style of, mmm, the Chinese ah? Actu-, I think actually, the people I encountered before all works around the same way, it's just maybe more on the efficiency base, *lah*, some like they will... Er, for me, when I work I usually sometimes I won't follow procedures but I make sure it still works, totally functionable, but I just doesn't follow procedures 'cause I think that if everything we need to wait for the standard procedure, it will waste much longer time, *lah* but for working style-wise, still around the same, *lah*, 'cause however, still Chinese, *lah*.

The answer to the next question may be a little difficult to put into words but I would like you to describe to me who you think you are culturally. Chinese? Hong Konger? Singaporean? Combination? Different than both Hong Konger/Singaporean and Chinese? Depends on the situation? Walk with me through a specific situation that you experience which is an example of how you feel about yourself culturally.

08:21

R16 [ResG reads the question]

For this one, ah, actually I don't really particular, I'm not really so particular with it, I just recognize myself as a Chinese, *lah* but for myself, it's I will get irritated when I say I'm from Hong Kong, I will tell you... 'Oh so you are pa-, so you are from China.' I say "No!" I will very (inaudible). I will say

'No!' Yes, correct, Hong Kong is part of China but I don't recognize myself as a China citizen. I recognize myself as a Hong Kong citizen. It's a very big difference I always tell them 'cause now many people still mistaken. 'Cause I understand is like that Hong Kong is under China but we don't... Some... Most of the Hong Kong people, they don't really like to being called under China 'cause actually it's a... It's some of the history back then *lah* which I am not so familiar with it. So, ya *lah*.

How do you think other people here view you?

09:24

R17 So, how do you think other people here view you? Oh, actually they, most of them, they think I'm just a typical Singaporean, *lah* 'cause I've been living in Singapore like almost twenty over years already so I, so actually they can't tell I'm from Hong Kong unless I really speak in Cantonese because my... Because I speak Cantonese in, erm, at home, so actually I got the Hong Kong Cantonese accent compared to the Singapore, *lah*, so whenever I open my mouth to speak Cantonese, it's quite obvious.

What advice would you give Chinese immigrant?

09:53

R18 So, what advice would you give Chinese immigrant? The Chinese immigrant is as long as is Chinese only right? OK. For Chinese immigrant, actually I not, say, no need... Not much, *lah*. Just need to get adapt to the, mmm, language, ah. 'Cause Singapore language, we..., we tend to mix up with like, eh, Malay, Indian, Hokkien, all those... We tend to mix everything together, *lah*, so for... Not say Chinese immigrant, *lah*, I mean like any country when they first step into Singapore they don't really used to the accents and the choice of words that we use so maybe just try to understand the language first, lor. Don't... Just step by step.

What are your future plans? Do you intend to stay?

10:36

R19 So, for my future plan, do I intend to stay here in Singapore. If I'm getting a wife, having kids, maybe I will stay in Singapore, *lah*. But if I still like single, I will just maybe go around *lah*, see any other place that suits me then maybe I will just stay there.

Background information

How many years of formal education did you have?

What was your occupation prior to your leaving the country? What is your occupation now?

How do you rate your ability to speak English? Very good? Good?

Somewhat good? Not very good? Hard to communicate in English?

How do you rate your ability to speak Chinese? Very good? Good?

Somewhat good> Not very good? Hard to communicate in Chinese?

10:55

R20 So, how many years of formal education did I have? So, ok, erm, kindergarten, primary school, secondary school, er, ITE. I went four years ITE (inaudible). I just finished my diploma, *lah*. So, studies I think also

almost twenty years already. Study for twenty years. So what's your occupation...

- R21 So how do you rate your ability to speak English? Somewhat good, *lah*. Can't say I'm very good in, er, communicating in English 'cause I'm still more Chinese-based, er, speaking. So but it doesn't hard for me to speak in English, *lah*. Just having time, some of the words that I don't use often, I'm having hard time pronouncing it. But for Chinese, I think I, compared to my friends in Singapore, I speak very good in Chinese whether in, er, in write... Not say writing *lah*, reading and speaking of it, I will be very much better than my friends, 'Cause, ya ... 'Cause actually in Singapore we are using simplified Chinese but in Hong Kong, we are using traditional Chinese right? So, when I young I was, so called, taught in two different types of Chinese words. So for me it's really quite hard as a normal kid 'cause I, two different types of Chinese but my friend will always say, "Ah, learning Chinese in Singapore is so hard." I will say, "Try going to Taiwan and Hong Kong. You will feel the toughness of Chinese they have there." Ya, *lah*, so that's about it and... Ah, ya, definitely I can speak Cantonese, *lah* 'cause, er... My parents... I was thinking like since the school teach me speaking in Mandarin and English already, so they must teach me how to speak in Cantonese.
- R22 So, er, what's the difference between the Hong Kong Cantonese and the Singapore Cantonese? Ok, actually Hong Kong Cantonese is like during the years of changes, right, we have many type of terms like, usually like some of the English terms we have like *ll*, all those is like... in Hong Kong we also have different types of terms *lah*. So it's like in Hong Kong now what we have is, what we call it the modern Cantonese already. So for Singaporean Cantonese right, it's more (inaudible) they're using a very traditional, old school Cantonese which is like my-, during my parents', er, youth age, *lah*. It's very, er, like, feel thirty-over, forty-over years type of Englis-, er, Cantonese already.

13:43.614

STE-002

- R23 就噉 啖 我曾是 ...
gam² ngo⁵ zau⁶ ...

00.41.426

STE-003

- R24 So in, er, Hong Kong Cantonese, right, okay, speaking of, ah, writing in words first, *lah* there's some types of words like, er, only Cantonese Chinese have, which normal Chinese doesn't have like, er, *you*³ (有), *have*, we have something (inaudible), *you*³ for... But if we don't have that thing, it's in Chinese, we call *mei*¹ *you*³ (没有) but in Cantonese, we have..., we only use it in one word, (inaudible), er, *mou*⁵ (冇) which is only the *you*³ *zi* (有字) inside, without the two strokes inside.
- R25 So actually that's one of the difference (sic) and some of the idioms we use, are actually is quite familiar with the Hong Kong Chinese but in Singapore even I directly translate to Mandarin, they are not really familiar with it. Like, er, a very example is like *Gwai*² *m*⁴ *zi*¹ *nei*⁵ *ge*³ *a* *maa*¹ *hai*⁶ *nei*⁵ *jan*⁴ means like sometimes one say something very obvious, is like you say, er, er, is like, you are stating the obvious but if I directly translate to Mandarin *ni*³

bu4 dong3 ni3 ma1 xi4 nu ren2, (你不懂你妈系女人) my friend doesn't understand. 'Cause actually that is really a Cantonese idiom. So, ya, that's one of the examples of the things they don't..., we have but Singapore Chinese doesn't have *lah*, the different types of idioms. And any other things like, er, ya, just around there. Ya, I can't think of any other idioms that they don't understand because I use too often already. So which..., some of my friends already know me for long they already get used to the Chinese I speak, so they don't really, er, they won't have a hard time understanding.

01:35.283

So do you speak Cantonese to your friends?

R26 No, I don't.

01:38.411

So you speak Mandarin?

R27 Ya, but sometimes, some of the idioms I will ended up direct translating from, er, Cantonese.

01:43.983

You speak Hong Kong Cantonese?

R28 Hmm ((nods in agreement))

01:49.776

ResH

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Venue: HDB Hub
Toa Payoh, Singapore
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What year did you leave your country?
How old were you when you left your country?
How long did you live in US/Canada/Hong Kong/Singapore?

00:22

R1 Erm, OK. Actually I left my hometown in 2001. Erm, that time I was, er, 22 years old. I stay in Singapore for more than seven years.

Before you left, how did you think of yourself culturally?

00.44

R2 And erm, I think myself, I still feel I am a Chinese and as a Singapore PR, I never feel I am a Singaporean. Erm But to be frank I think there's no difference in Singaporean or Chinese but of course, they have different culture or they like different food and they speak differently but I still feel we are Chinese. They speak differently because in my mind, the pure Chinese, they speak Chinese and very pure Mandarin but Singaporeans, sometimes actually for young ones new generation a lot of them couldn't speak good Mandarin. I think that's their only regret but I think in future because they have emphasize on this part, and in future, I believe that they can speak better Mandarin.

Think about your feelings when you were living in US/Canada/Hong Kong/Singapore. Describe a feeling or experience in which you were happy or glad to be living there.

Describe an experience that was confusing.

Describe an experience that was unpleasant or made you wish you had never left your country.

Describe where you lived - the neighbourhood, your friends and co-workers.

02:12

R3 I don't really interact with my neighbour because we have a very busy life but we just say 'hi', say 'bye' and greet each other but we don't really talk in deep. Describe some particular situation that shows the extent to which you thought like a North American (US/Canadian)/Hong Konger/Singaporean.

02:38

R4 I never notice that probably ((laughs)) I haven't had the moment. I don't know.

How would you describe yourself on forms or documents when you were asked about nationality and ethnicity?

02:51

R5 Myself and nationality under ethnicity-wise, ya I strongly feel I'm a Chinese and ya, I'm proud to be a Chinese.

How do you understand yourself as Chinese? How do you know that you are Chinese?

03:12

R6 When I think about Chinese, you think about the lifestyle, the language...

Lifestyle?

Ya Lifestyle and the... They are more family type which means they put more effort on the family and they also respect their parents and, I mean, the parents take care of the grandson or grandchildren so which means a big family, extended family. Ya, when I think about Chinese, I will think about that and when I think about Chinese, of course I will think about skin colour and the hair colour and all the facial, I will think about that. ((laughs))

04:09

R7 Ah, you will ask, OK, so what's the difference between Chinese, Korean and Japanese? They are almost the same, right? But I still feel there are slightly difference in between. When we see features we can find the difference. Sometimes maybe we are wrong but most of the time actually we are right and the manner, the manner they talk and the manner they act. Ya, it's a bit different.

So if you have a Chinese who grew up in Canada and never been to China, is that person still a Chinese?

04:52

R8 Yes, they are Chinese but it's a different type of Chinese. We should see in their blood, they are Chinese but in their culture and other sense, I don't think they are Chinese. If, like say they inherit anything from their parents like language-wise, like habit-wise, like culture-wise and I don't know, if like say they separate from their parents which means they live there independently from when they were very young, I would think they have no difference with the foreigners, I mean other nation. Ya, ya, ya, ya. So, erm.

Please describe your thoughts about returning to your country.

Would you decide to return? Why?

Describe your emotions – how would you feel about leaving US/Canada, Hong Kong/Singapore?

Think about your first day back.

Describe how the city looked, smelled, felt.

Where did you go?

Who did you see?

06:07

R9 OK, when the first day I came back to Singapore, actually start from beginning, I like Singapore because of the environment, the weather and the people because they are very polite and wherever they go, they will queue there, ya, they won't push each other or they don't squeeze and I really like that but the only thing sometimes you will find certain Singaporean, they will ask you, they will say, 'Why you come to Singapore? Actually in China is very good. How come you choose to leave your own country?' and certain people even ask 'How many pigs you feed in your country?' I mean, er, so we just feel, oh, it's ridiculous because they don't know about China nowadays, but they still will comment about certain thing. But the first time actually I, of course, I don't feel happy but after some time, I've already get used to this kind of, ya, comments or anything and, or just ignore and I know, wherever you go, no matter Singapore or Canada or Australia, because you go to a strange place and the people there definitely will give you, will look you differently so that's very common. I think if somebody come to my hometown and they..., and we will also have, er, we don't call that discrimination but anyway, we will feel differently, ya.

- R10 So that's fine, I think and after stay here for certain time, I really feel no matter where you go or which place you stay, and er..., make no difference. Ya. So you have to work hard and you have to, erm, really upgrade yourself and er, if you respect people, the people will respect you. Ya.

Describe your emotional reactions to returning home. Happy? Confused? Relieved? Stressed?

Did your emotional reaction change (that is, do you feel the same way about returning as you did the first time you returned?)

08:35

- R11 And er, of course when I go back to China I was really, really happy because I can, ya, I can stay together with my parents and we have a big reunion and they really miss me so much. I miss them as well so I always think when we can stay together longer and they are getting older and we got no time to take care of them. I really feel very guilty in my heart, ya. I have one sister only and he's [sic] away from my parents as well. He's staying in another city in China and he has married with one boy as well so as we grow up and our parents getting old, they are really lonely.

- R12 Ya, but when I go back to China, the one thing I don't like is the weather, the air pollution is very bad but of course ((laughs)) please don't record this... although I can criticize my own country but I don't really like others to criticize my country. Ya. Like say, yes, we know in China we have a lot of problems but I believe in future, we'll get, well, getting better and better.

- R13 Ya. [pause] and sometimes really confused where's my home because I left my hometown very early and I was born in my, I was born in Yichang and later on, I study in Wuhan so when I left my home, I was only 14 years old. Ya, so after I finish my study in Wuhan I came to Singapore so compare the time I stay in one place, I really don't know where is my home so that's my confusion part. But anyway, I think because of that, now I'm used to stay anywhere if I have to, ya.

Describe the way in which you think or act like a North American/Hong Konger/Singaporean regarding family practices. e.g. think about the goals you have for your children versus what goals they have.

11:36

- R14 Actually my boy is very young, is only one and a half years old. I send him in to the child care and the neighbourhood child care is near my home and I think he adapt the environment quite well but anyway, he cried in the first days and after that he's okay.

12:03

- R15 Why I send him there, because I want him to learn some new things, to make friends, especially to make friends and to learn to speak English and Mandarin and how to really manage these two well because you see, like Singaporean a lot of new generation, they don't speak good Mandarin but for Chinese, they cannot speak good English. So, I think now for this young boy, he has the advantage because anyway the government emphasize bi-lingual so he could have this opportunity. That's why I send him there. And er.

But when he learns to speak Mandarin, he learns to speak Mandarin the way the Singaporeans speak Mandarin.

12:58

- R16 Because he can't speak a lot now, he can only speak a little bit so I couldn't see if he's following the Singaporean way or following the Chinese way. Ya, I don't know about that. Probably in future, after a few years I believe most probably he will

follow the way Singaporeans speak because most of his classmates and friends are Singaporean. Ya, but I think it's fine. It's fine. Ya. Really.

Describe your neighbourhood where you live now. Think about your neighbours.

Describe one way in which you feel similar to them or have a lot in common.

Describe one way in which you feel different.

Where do your children attend school? Why this choice?

14:00

R17 Why I came back to Singapore is because really for my boy and we feel that the education system in Singapore is better than in China although in China and in Singapore, both sides, they have very tight competition which means if you want to get the good school, if you want to study in the well-famed school and you really have to study hard and you have good result and as I said, he has more opportunity in Singapore but in future, whether we will go back or we will continue to stay, we really don't know. It's up to God to decide. Ya, it's his choice as well but in the meantime, we will try our best to stay here and to get along with the people in Singapore. Actually I like Singaporean. They help me a lot. I have a lot of Singaporean friends and they are very kind to us. Ya.

Describe your relationship with your spouse and how it has changed.

21:05

R18 My husband and I, we get along very well and he's very gentle but I'm a bit hot-tempered and ya, he's the one always give in and ((laughs)) but I know I have to change my character and have to change my temper and I try but I think now I'm getting better and I always blame myself and how come I will hurt him so badly, I'm sure it's my fault but anyway after I throw temper on him and I will just apologise to him. I say 'oh, I'm sorry, I don't intend to hurt you but ((laughs)) but next time I let go again.

Describe food preferences - seafood? Chinese food? Western food?

22:00

R19 Okay, I like seafood but I try not to eat too much seafood because I was a nurse before so I know that seafood is not so good for your health especially when you are getting old and you cannot take too much seafood otherwise your cholesterol will rise up. Ya. Chinese food, ya, most time we eat Chinese food and I cook as well ... ah ... but not every day. Occasionally if I have time, I will cook for them and I will make the hotpot and I will steam some *bau*¹ like ah we call *man*²*tou* (馒头) and *bau*¹*xi* (包子)? And we also make dumplings and we fry, we boil and Western food? Yes. Ah, we like, erm, certain times we go out to eat Japanese food and Italian food, Korean food but not so often because my husband doesn't like.

Do you have problems with curry?

15:26

R20 Curry? Oh, okay, no, I love that. I love curry, I love durian. Also I don't have any problem with that. yup. ((laughs))

R21 I really don't understand. This thing happen because, you know, when I work in National Kidney Foundation, my colleagues are from Philippines, from Myanmar, from India so we have different we are really multi-nationality and multi-cultural. But we can get along very well. Yes, I have a Chinese colleague, they couldn't stand the body odour or something like that but for me, quite okay with that because I think probably it's not because of the odour, it's because of their feeling. If you

really don't like certain people, you don't feel good and you really emphasize on that part, it will make you feel really bad, otherwise I don't think that's a problem.

- R22 Ya, so for Indians, they cook curry or other nationality, they cook their own foods, it's not so bad. I would like to try, to see whether it's nice or not. Ya, I think I am adventurous so, ya, I think that's not a problem for me. Because if you stay here, you really have to respect them. And Singapore, they have different race, ethnic group, they have different nationality, they have a lot of foreigners coming to work here so you really have to be flexible. Ya, you really have to adapt all the different diversity, I mean, culture diversity and the custom diversity. Ya.

Describe work style Western? Chinese?

23:17

- R23 The work style of Western and Chinese, actually in my mind I still feel Chinese is more hardworking than Western people because as I work with my colleagues and I saw the Western people, when they go off duty, really on time which means if five o'clock, they will just leave at five o'clock but for Chinese, they always stay back but I don't know whether it's because their work style is different or because Chinese are not so efficient [giggle] I don't know about that.

The answer to the next question may be a little difficult to put into words but I would like you to describe to me who you think you are culturally. Chinese? American Chinese? Canadian Chinese? Hong Konger? Singaporean? Combination? Different than both North American/Hong Konger/Singaporean and Chinese? Depends on the situation? Walk me through a specific situation that you experience which is an example of how you feel about yourself culturally. How do you think other people here view you?

24:06

- R24 Other people here view me, erm, this one I really didn't think about that but I think not so bad and, er, because, er, I'm always wearing a smile and I'm quite friendly, approachable so I think they quite like me.

What advice would you give Chinese immigrant?

24:41

- R25 Okay, so the only advice I give to them is 'don't be too sensitive' which means if others look down you or give some bad comment on you, just ignore. Ya, don't take too hard. Ya, don't hurt yourself. Ya, and also to, I mean to spend the way the local does because if like say, you want to stay here, you want to interact with them. If you want to immerse among them, you have to, you have to try to change yourself. That's why. Adapt the way they are speaking, adapt the way they are acting. Ya, and respect them I think you will gain the respect from them. Ya.

What are your future plans? Do you intend to stay?

25:32

- R26 My future plans ... mmm ... I, I haven't really planned for my future but I think if lets see my husband can get PR, probably we are going to buy a house here and we are really going to stay here longer and to settle down here. Yes, we intend to stay but it depends. If we couldn't buy a house and that's really hard.

So now do you own your flat?

R27

No, actually I rent a house.

A house?

Ya, I rent a flat, I mean, the whole flat because the house in Singapore now is very expensive. Ya, it's unaffordable. [giggle] Okay.

18:40

R28 Although I like to go back to China to stay with my parents, but after some time I will still feel, okay, maybe it's time to, of course, normally I would only have one month holiday or I would only get certain time to go back and when the time being I will think oh I will have to go back. And at that point of time, I also don't know whether it's right or wrong. Ya, to go. Also, I don't know when I can go back especially this time I bring my family here and we have to settle down here and we face a lot of challenges like my husband has to find a job and my son has to attend child care and we got nobody to take care of him and my parents couldn't help me because my grandparents are very old so they have to take care of my grandparents. So, but I think sometimes, because of all these challenges, so we really have to work hard and have to try and it's a good thing for us to make us to grow. I think if you don't leave your own country, you stay with your parents, you will never grow up. Ya, I think it's a good thing and after we really have to pass through all this and overcome all this difficult times and we realize our parents are really great people. Ya, they raise up us and they have sacrificed a lot. Ya. They are almost 60 years old. Ya.

Background information

How many years of formal education did you have?

26:30

R29 Formal education I have is about ... ah ... about, around 14 to 15 years.

What was your occupation prior to your leaving the country? What is your occupation now?

26:43

R30 My occupation previously was nursing so ... ah ... my occupation now is a Recruitment Agent.

How do you rate your ability to speak English? Very good? Good? Somewhat good? Not very good? Hard to communicate in English?

27:05

R31 How do I rate my ability to speak English? Not so good but can cope with native speaker and can cope with my work and can manage my daily life. That's it. Okay. How to communicate in English? Ya, the only thing because we are not native speaker that's why sometimes we really don't know how to describe use the native ways. We don't know how to do that and the words we are using, we don't know whether it's proper or not proper. Ya, that's the only thing.

How do you rate your ability to speak Chinese? Very good? Good? Somewhat good? Not very good? Hard to communicate in Chinese?

27:50

R32 Of course, the ability to speak Chinese is perfect. ((laughs)) Okay it's not so hard to communicate in Chinese. If you don't believe, try. Okay.

28:23

R33 我是一个中国人 *Wo³ shi⁴ yi¹ ge⁴ zhong¹ guo² ren²*

Res J

Date of Interview: 1 May 2018

Venue: FaceTime

Project Title: The Phrasebook of Migrant Sounds

Recording No: 18 05 01 ResJ STE-005. mp3

Total Recordings: 1

Format: Digital .mp3

Language: English

Running Time: 01:12:53

What year did you leave your country?

00:44

R1 2009

How old were you when you left?

00:53

R2 Er, 44.

How long did you live in the US, Canada or Singapore? Would it be nine years with [...]?

01:17

R3 Yes same time.

Before you left, how did you think of yourself culturally?

01:28

R4 Ahh, culturally, I suppose I consider myself Singaporean in sort of a more cosmopolitan kind of Singaporean, not, not too, not just Asian but a bit more international.

... how do you mean by Singaporean?

01:57

R5 Ya, that's difficult to define. [laughs] But I guess, eh, Singaporean is not Asian but a little bit more tilted towards the western culture so it's not too, not really very Chinese or Malay, but ah educated in the West in western ways. Working style is also more western, more businesslike rather than Asian which is usually understood as more relational, more in-depth relationships and "quanxi" kind of thing so ya, more western style I would say, ya,

Think about your feelings when you were living in US, Canada or Singapore.

Describe a feeling or experience when you were living in US, Canada or Singapore.

Describe a feeling or experience when you were happy or glad to be living there or describe an experience that's confusing, an experience that might be unpleasant and make you wish that you never left.

03:38

R6 Ok, first the happy part is I think, ah, unlike Singapore, living in Canada or the US or even in United Kingdom when I was studying there, ah, I think there's less of feeling constrained. There are more choices, ah, you can go to places, ah, you know any day you want. You are a little bit more free to do

what you like. [] Ya, either in Canada or United States or even in United Kingdom. In Singapore, it's always a constraint of space, there's lots of rules and regulations and ah, so you are sort of prevented from doing a lot of things. Ah, unpleasantness I suppose ah, in the US, Canada even UK, sometimes I dislike the inefficiencies, things get a long time to be done and ah, very slow-moving and so on. And also, I think for me, it's ah, a lot of the politics. Ah, I know in Singapore I don't like the politics as well but in some of these other countries, the politicians especially, they just talk and they do nothing and they sometimes make things worse so [laughs] some of things I don't like to hear is the politics, the politicking and lots of talking and nothing done so, ah, whereas, I think in Singapore, things do get done. Ah, sometimes not the way we want it but ah, at least you know, it's done and ah, resources are available for things whereas in the western countries, a lot of times, ah, we don't have enough money to do a lot of things that should be done so, especially like infrastructure. Ya, I guess infrastructure and things like that.

Any experience that was confusing?

00:06:15

R7 Ah, confusing? Not, not really but I would say ah, things have changed quite a lot. Ah, I think the time when I left Singapore to go to the UK to study, it's almost 30 years already, ah the Western countries appeared to be a little bit more ah, orderly and I guess from the perspective of a Singaporean, they are the developed countries so things were generally running well. Unlike today, I would say uhm, in many of these countries especially in the US, it's chaotic. It's a lot of, ah, I don't know what you call that but uhm, partly because of terrorism, ah, things are a lot more restrictive and they are, I don't know, there's a lot of racism, a lot more obvious racism in these countries and, ah, it's also a lot more dangerous because of the current violence and crime and terrorist activities. So, these are some of things which Singapore is a little bit more insulated from.

why would Singapore be insulated? Do you mean the policies that cause the insulation?

00:08:33

R8 No, I think, eh, as a smaller country, it's easier to manage so you can control the borders, you can prevent the guns from coming in, if you have any crime it's much easier to arrest the criminal whereas in the bigger countries, it's much more difficult. ... Ah, very, very difficult to control, ah, drugs, guns especially in the US. ...

Describe where you live.

09:08

R9 I think some of it is with [...] but I think, ah, in terms of the environment, ah, it is ah, more suburban, it's a new neighbourhood so most of the residents are immigrants. Not all but I think a bulk of them are immigrants so besides the Chinese and the Koreans, there are also Iranians, there are Indians, South Asians. Uhm I think there are also some other new immigrants, I don't know, from the Philippines or whatever. Uhm, in terms of the natural environment, is, ah where we are actually located is at the foothills of a mountain so, ahm,

we get fresh air, lots of greenery. Lots of parks also because it's a new neighbourhood so they planned everything better so there are more open space. They deliberately put in the parks, the walking trails, ah, not so good in terms of infrastructure because it's new but we can easily drive five to ten minutes to the large shopping area,

One of the things that ah, all the things that you say about the natural environment and space and the sense also of expansiveness that Canada affords is, I think I agree with you, but I did find that unless you drove or you drive, it's quite impossible to get around.

...

Describe a particular situation that shows the extent to which you thought like a North American.

12:12

R10 Err... I think when we first came. No, not when we first came but I think a lot of times, ah, if you want to go somewhere, you just drive. I think that's typically North American, not even European and I think in terms of housing choices, you know you want to have a house with a yard and things like that rather than thinking in terms of, you know, condo or apartment, I think that's typically North American. Uhm, maybe in terms of shopping also, I think we tend to go to the big stores, ah, Walmarts and large supermarkets where we can get the best price. Ah, and of course we do a lot of shopping online as well. Uhm because it's so much more convenient than sometimes going to the store so I think these are some of the examples.

Describe a specific situation in which you could have acted in either a North American or a Chinese way.

13:45

R11 Uhm, I'm not quite sure. I suppose maybe looking for bargains and things like that. That could be both [laughs]. You want to get the best price for stuff so.

How would you describe yourself on forms or documents when asked about nationality and ethnicity?

14:17

R12 Ya, I think now we put us down as Canadians. Er, ethnicity I guess it's still Chinese.

Just as a sort of continuation of that, how do you think of being Chinese?

00:14:42

R13 Of being Chinese? Mmm....

What tells you of being Chinese? What informs of your Chineseness?

14:56

R14 OK for me, partly it's the language and history. Ah, the Chinese, I mean, whether you are from Mainland China, Taiwan or Hong Kong, I think there's that sense of history, ah, like a thousand years of history, then all the culture that comes along with it which I think while being in Singapore, we did learn quite a lot of it. Ah, besides learning the language, learning about the history of China in movies and so on. Uhm, and there are certain values I would say like filial piety, ah, loyalty to your family and things like that so some of

these ya, I would guess so.

When you say Chinese language, what language do you mean?

16:05

R15 Ah, I'd say Mandarin. Ah, I mean my Cantonese I only know how to speak and how to understand when I listen to it but I don't write Cantonese so it's mainly Mandarin which I studied in school, ya.

So, when you say Mandarin, you mean Huayu as opposed to Putonghua or Guoyu?

16:36

R16 Eh, I'm not sure of the difference. [laughs] I mean, what I got in Singapore so, ya.

So is Cantonese your familiar language?

16:49

R17 Yes, ya I speak it at home.

Both you parents are Cantonese?

16:57

R18 Er, my father is Cantonese. My mother is Khek but we never speak Khek. It's a bit too complicated for us. Ah, so we always speak in Cantonese and I think as a....(lost video connection)

00:17:32

R19 We only speak Cantonese at home but I think as the government push Mandarin as the common language, ah, my parents also started speaking Mandarin at home, So, I mean in the earlier years, we spoke only Cantonese but I think as it goes on, we spoke more Mandarin as well.

Extending from that question, what language then describes your Chineseness?

18:07

R20 Er, I think for me it's Mandarin. Although I speak Cantonese at home, I somehow associate Cantonese with Hong Kong. [laughs] Maybe it's the TV shows and things like that so because I study Mandarin in school and so on, I think it's more important, ya.

How would you describe your ethnicity?

18:14

R21 Chinese, ya.

Please describe your thoughts about returning to your country. Would you describe your return and why?

19:16

R22 Ya, I think same as [...], ah, now I consider you know, Canada and Vancouver as my home, so, ahm, ya when we go back to Singapore, it's just for a visit.

....When you first went back to Singapore, it's when mother fell sick?

19:55

R23 Yes. Well, we were actually planning to go back but sickness made us

advance our trip back so we went back a little bit earlier and uh, we only had two weeks. Ah, because we, uh, couldn't leave our dog here for too long so we had, two weeks and then we rushed back. The second trip, ah, we were actually planning to stay for about slightly more than two weeks I think but we had to extend the stay because, uh, ResK's mother fell ill so we extended by another two weeks. And I think the second trip we really felt the difference because we were there for a long time, about a month. All the, I guess for us now, all the unpleasantness of being there, the weather was so hot and humid. Ah, there were too many people. You know, everywhere we go ... ya, so I think that sort of reaffirmed for us, you know, that is not where we want to be so...

Describe the way in which you think or act like a North American.

21:35

R24 Ay, I though we covered that just now.

Well in terms of family practices for example, thinking about goals you have for your children. [...] talked about ResK.

21:53

R25 Besides that, I don't think. OK, I think I'm still quite Asian or Chinese in terms of the family values. Ah, I know ResK sometimes say I sort of care too much for my family but I feel sort of a sense of obligation to my parents, to take care of them, ah, either financially or at least whatever especially since my mother fell ill, uhm, I felt I had to contribute to you know, her care, so, uhm, although they don't really need the money and also we don't have that much to give but symbolically I felt I needed to as an obligation to them.

Do you have any siblings?

00:23:12

R26 Oh ya, I have one younger brother, that's all. Just the two of us so both my parents are now living with him.

...

00:23:25

R27 Well initially, I bought a place for my parents. Uh, but because my mother had a stroke so it was not convenient for them to stay separately so they moved in with my brother.

Describe your neighbourhood that you felt similar to them or have a lot in common or that you felt differently.

24:22

R28 I think ok in a way because there are so many immigrants, uh, because there are so many immigrants here, ah, there are similarities in terms of how we adapt to the life here. Ah, but because they come from other countries where things were very different. Many of them actually came from a place where it was not as I guess as pleasant, life was not as pleasant as what we had in Singapore. In Singapore, I guess besides being so crowded and so on, expensive but ah, on balance, it wasn't too bad. So we are to really like escaping from an unpleasant place and coming to a better place. Ah, but I think some of them do have debt back home so in that, we are quite different and I think in terms of the background, ah, well I guess because educational level and so on, uhm, in this neighbourhood I guess most of them are

professionals or that level so we are not that different in that sense but I guess in terms of cultural practices, some of them do still have, not all, but some of them they still keep their traditional practices. So, for example, our Indian neighbour, uh, they are still very Indian in things that they do although I think they've already been in Canada for quite a few years, maybe for as long as us. Ah, but the other neighbour, they are an Iranian family. Ah, I think they are very Westernised. They still have a lot of friends and so on especially their daughters are already educated here and Westernised so I think their thinking are [have sort of evolved over time] ya, I think they have been in Canada for more than ten years, so ya.

Describe your relationship with your spouse and how it has changed.

27:18

R29 [laughs] but I heard what he said so ... I think it is quite similar. We do have a lot more time with each other now. Uhm, you know, not having to work or study has meant that we can actually do things together and be together most of time. I think initially, when I first came, I had my studies to worry about so, ahm, that took up quite a bit of my time but I think now I'm done with that so we can actually plan you know, what we want to do or not plan, just leave it, whatever, so I think we are much more relaxed in that sense so and ah, being you know, around all the time, uh, I think then we sort of feel a bit more sensitive to what each other feels, ya.

...

30:32

R30 ... I think in Singapore really you have very little time for a relationship. I mean, most of the time you are working or you are doing something else you know, to, and I think in that stage of life or so, you know, we have to make sure that we are, you know, secure for the future, and if you want to advance in your career, to get a pay raise and so on, you have to prove yourself. Uh, but I think the other thing is that, uh, in Singapore, here, because uh, our marriage is legal, our relationship is not, uh, something that we have to hide and uh, I think one of the big reasons why we are here is because we are able to be who we are and to let other people know who we are. In Singapore we cannot be a couple. You know we can be good friends and we can be at family events but, uh, I mean people know but, you know, it's never openly said but here it's totally legal. We go to the bank, we open a joint account, we buy a house together and all this are, you know, official and we are not the only ones so we don't need to feel odd about it. We can be open about being together and being able to express ourselves so I think that is also the other reason, uh, which is nothing to do with, you know, I guess the stage of our lives.

...

Describe food preferences - seafood? Chinese food? Western food?

35:16

R31 I think now I eat what, most of the time, [...] cooks so [laughs]

35:27

R32 ... I guess it's a little bit more Western. I still like a bit of Chinese every now and then. Ah, we like to go for dim sum. Ah, we also like our Japanese food. uhm but again the day to day is more and more I guess what is available here.

Ah, so, ya it's not so much ethnic, more local you know, what's available, what's seasonal and so on, so, yup.

How would you describe your work style?

36:20

R33 Uhm, I don't know. I don't work now so [laughs] Ok but previously I suppose, ah, I guess maybe I will say Singaporean, ah, very businesslike, uh, I don't really get side tracked a lot. I like to focus on what's to be done so, ya.

The answer to the next question may be a little difficult to put into words but I would like you to describe who you think you are culturally. Chinese? American Chinese? Canadian Chinese? Singaporean? Combination? Different than both North American/Singaporean and Chinese? Depends on the situation? Walk me through a specific situation that you experience which is an example of how you feel about yourself culturally.

37:40

R34 It's very difficult to say. Uh, I suppose, uh, maybe deep, deep within me I'm still very Singaporean, uh, in the sense that I subscribe to the values, uh, of generally of the Singaporean society, uhm, in terms of being, uh, efficient and being caring for I guess the majority views. I don't know, culturally - what do you mean by culturally? What culture? Singapore? What is Singapore culture, right? So, ah, ya, I would say my preferences are a bit more towards the Western culture, uh, like the European arts and uhm, for the visual and performing arts, uhm, I do like a bit of Chinese movies now and then you know but ah I guess, predominantly, it's, uh, it's Western, uh, ya, you would say, uh, the concerts and so on would be all Western, ya.

Western performances? When you say Western, you mean North American and European rather than say Chinese, Hong Kong, Taiwanese, Indian?

00:39:38

R35 Yes, yes, ya. Uhm I guess the newer things will be more North American because that's where most of it comes from. Ah, but I think the more classical ones will be the European, ah, arts and music which I like. Uhm, I don't, ya, I mean I don't really but I do like some of the pop culture but uhm maybe not that much of the American but maybe some of the music but to, not things like rap or [laughs] not all of it lah.

Who do you listen to? Who are your favourite composers, performers?

40:43

R36 Composers, uh, are you talking about the modern or [whichever] Uh, I guess the modern ones will be more like, uh, ... Katie Perry [laughs] a few of them, not too noisy or too rock but I do like also the classical crossover, you know the cross over between classical and pop. Uhm, so, uh, some of the music from the musicals and those musicians that have crossed over from the classical, so, like Sarah Brightman, ah, Andrea Bocelli, yup.

How do you think the people there view you?

00:42:08

R37 Er, it's hard to say. Uh, I guess, I guess they will know that I'm not naturally, I'm not a locally born Canadian. Ah, uhm, maybe not because of the accent

but ah, I guess it's hard to find a locally born Canadian anyway. [laughs]
Most people are from somewhere else. Uhm but ah, I don't, I don't really know.

How would they know that you are not locally born if not from your accent?

43:13

R38 Uhm, actually I don't know but I suppose, I suppose it's very difficult to tell now. Ah, because the whole character of a Canadian has changed so much. Ah, in the city like Vancouver, it's hard to tell. Uhm, most people are from somewhere else really and it's hard to find a person who's really born and bred here. Even then, but ah, maybe from the way we do things or our dressing, I don't know, ya.

What advice would you give a Chinese immigrant?

44:23

R39 [laughs] why do you have that question? Ah, I guess they should, ah, try to, I mean, they have to make sure their English is better. I mean, as a working, as a working language. I know it is possible now more than before to actually get by with your Mandarin or Cantonese or whatever local language you have, uh, from where they come from but uh, I think in most occasions or circumstances or work or transactions you do need to have good English, ah, here, ya or French elsewhere but ah, I guess that's what's important. If you want, you can.

What are your future plans? Do you intend to stay?

45:43

R40 Uh, yes of course, we are here. Uhm, ya like what was said, we don't make very, uh, a lot of plans. We just take it as it comes. Uhm, you know if we want to do something we just go and do it. Uh, not wait too long and I suppose we have already set in motion our financial plans so that's something which we did last year so I think that's something off our minds now so we don't really make any big plans.

Background information

How many years of formal education did you have?

00:46:52

R41 18

Can you break it down for me?

47:00

R42 Ya, six for primary school, four for secondary, two for JC, three for undergraduate in the UK [that was your PPE?] PPE, ya, three years or so for my Masters. I think I took a bit longer than... I was already in the program to do a PhD, accelerated so I actually skip Masters and go straight to PhD but, uh, I changed my mind so... I thought that would take too long [laughs] so I just.

What was your occupation prior to your leaving your country?

48:14

R43 Uh, I would say Administrator. Ya, my last one was at Nanyang

Technological University.

What is your occupation now?

48:28

R44 [laughs] Retired [laughs]

How do you rate your ability to speak English? Very good? Good? Somewhat good?
Not very good? Hard to communicate in English?

48:47

R45 Uh, very good.

How do you rate your ability to speak Chinese? Very good? Good? Somewhat good?
Not very good? Hard to communicate in Chinese?

49:01

R46 Uh... good although I am very rusty and I am actually most of time it's
because I'm afraid to say, to speak. I do understand and uh, I'm sure I can
speak but I need some time to think what to say.

So when you watch a Chinese language movie, probably Mandarin Chinese movie,
do you understand it without the subtitles? [...]

49:39

R47 Uh, most of it unless they are speaking very fast. Or sometimes when they
use certain words which, uh, are not very common. Other than that, I can pick
it up and understand perfectly.

Would you be able to go to a Chinese Mandarin karaoke lounge?

50:03

R48 Uh, if they have the song lyrics there then I can. [laughs]

...

How do you rate your ability to speak English?

50:43

R49 Four

With your colleagues?

50:48

R50 Ya, four for everything.

...

OK how would you rate your ability to speak Chinese?

50:59

R51 Uhm maybe three

How well do you understand English on TV or at the movies?

51:11

R52 Uh, four. Ya, English is all four.

Yes, how well do you understand Chinese?

51:20

R53 Four

Indicate which are true of you:

-I think of myself as being Canadian.

51:48

R54 Uh, three.

-I feel good being Canadian

51:56

R55 Four

-I have a strong sense of being Canadian

52:03

R56 Three

-I'm proud of being Canadian

52:08

R57 Four

-I think of myself as Chinese

52:14

R58 One

-I feel good being Chinese?

52:20

R59 One

-I have a strong sense of being Chinese.

52:25

R60 One. This is according to your definition of being Chinese, right? i mean,
having grown up in China, right?
And that sense of being Chinese as one would in China

52:45

[...] if they were a Chinese in Singapore?

How would you rate that then?

52:52

R61 Ya, ok, so, ah I guess as a Chinese in Singapore, I do feel like a Chinese and
ya, I do feel good about being Chinese so four.

So we will change all of that to four then?

53:12

R62 Uh, what are the questions again?

-I think of myself as Chinese. I should say Chinese in Singapore, right?

53:23

R63 Yes, then four.

-I feel good about being Chinese as practised in Singapore

53:29

R64 Yup, four.

-I have a strong sense of being Chinese as practised in Singapore

53:37

R65 Yes, uhm, wait, hold on. Uhm maybe three because I think in, I don't practise all the things that being Chinese in Singapore does so i will say three.

Do you have a sense of what those things might be?

54:00

R66 OK I think being, uh, really Chinese, uh, you know, I guess most of the Chinese in Singapore would, uh, maybe watch the Mandarin serials, they would watch the Chinese variety shows, you know, shop at whatever Chinese [laughs] Chinatown or whatever. I think I don't do a lot of that but other than that and I also don't read the Chinese newspapers in Singapore, uh, although sometimes if I do come across a Chinese news cast, I can of course understand. I can listen to them, uh, but I don't especially you know, watch those and I, uhm, don't particularly like the Mandarin serials and so on. I don't mind watching them now and then but it's not what i would prefer to do, ya.

-I am proud of being Chinese as practised in Singapore.

55:23

R67 Uh, yeah, four.

How do you think of yourself a) consider myself more Chinese than Canadian b) consider myself more Canadian than Chinese c) I feel Chinese and Canadian equally d) I feel I don't really belong to either Chinese or Canadian culture e) none of the above.

55:53

R68 Uh, more Canadian than Chinese.

With this question, how do you understand the word Chinese?

56:08

R69 Uh, as in being born and raised in China and having I guess having more Chinese values.

What if we consider it as being Chinese as practised in Singapore? Would you still hold to the same?

56:36

R70 Uhm I think I'm still more Canadian or to Western as compared to Chinese.

When you think of yourself, what culture is deep inside? Chinese, Singaporean, Canadian, Westerner, Easterner?

57:10

R71 I think I said earlier I feel a bit more deep down I'm still quite Singaporean but Singaporean in the sense that, ah, it's more tilted towards the Western culture rather than the Chinese culture.

To what extent is the following statement true about things that you do, again we use the term Chinese to refer to a culture shared by residents of China.

How much English do you speak at home, with your neighbours and co-workers?

57:59

R72 Uh, four.

How much do you read Chinese books, newspapers or magazines?

58:13

R73 One. One is not at all ya? Oh, now is one. I used to read some Chinese books.

...

58:30

R74 [i]n Singapore. Ya. I think now it's, uh, too much of a struggle. [] I think in Singapore it'll be two.

... eat at Chinese restaurants?

58:59

R75 [laughs] Uh, I guess two.

...watch Chinese movies at home or at the theatre?

59:10

R76 Only at home. Two. Occasionally. Two a year. [laughs]

... eat Chinese food.

59:42

R77 Uh, two.

...attend a Chinese concert, exhibition?

59:49

R78 [laughs] One. Never. [laughs]

...shop at Chinese grocery stores.

59:58

R79 Uh, two.

...go to a Chinese-speaking doctor.

01:00:05

R80 Never. [laughs]

...socialise with Chinese friends.

01:00:13

R81 Uh, two, maybe.

...participate in Chinese clubs or events.

01:00:22

R82 One.

Now, please use any words to describe yourself. Can you give me ten words to describe yourself? I am ...

01:00:49

R83 [laughs] Uh, can we skip this one? Very difficult. Can you describe for me? Meticulous. Oh, ok, organised, logical [laughs], uhm, artistic? Somewhat, I don't know. [] I like to appreciate art but I'm not very good at creating something, so, ya, I don't know. Uh. ..

ResK

Date of Interview: 1 May 2018
Venue: FaceTime
Project Title: The Phrasebook of Migrant Sounds
Recording No: 18 05 01 ResK STE-003
Total Recordings: 1
Format: Digital .mp3
Language: English
Running Time: 01:43.23

What year did you leave your country?

02:17

R1 2009, We actually left the country

How old were you when you left your country?

02:38

R2 ...50

How long did you live in UK/US/Canada/Hong Kong/Singapore?

03:20

R3 ...9 years

Before you left, how did you think of yourself culturally?

03:40

R4 ...Well you know, I've been overseas quite a bit throughout my life. Right, I went overseas, I went to Washington State to go to school... I repeat my Bachelors and Masters and after that I went back to the US again to San Francisco and did my culinary studies so ah culturally, I would say I am pretty much, very exposed to living in other countries in particular, in America, so as far as the western culture is concerned, ah I think I've always been very much exposed to it because I travel a lot...

00:04:19

R5 I am very much influenced by the western culture that kind of thing because I travel so much, you know, if I'm not going there to live or to go to school but I'm always going for holiday, to US or to Europe and everywhere else you know.

... why [did] you choose to go to the States or Europe?

04:55

R6 I think maybe, ya, a large part will be the culture of this... well maybe not so much as the US, probably there's not so much culture there. Ah, more like Europe and everything. I notice that when I go away to live somewhere else, it's because I'm intrigued by what uhm the places offer, I mean, what they have there. In Europe it will be the rich culture where the art... the... the... the performing arts and so on, the music and so on but for the US, I think it's more like ah, the lifestyle. You know, culturally it will be lifestyle. In terms one will be able to do what one desire so I can be whoever I want and do whatever I want because of the environment there that encourages that. That's why I was in the US. I was quite tired of the educational system, you know,

that was always going on in Singapore. When I was there, everything was so restrictive. Then all of a sudden when it comes to having the opportunity to go away, so when I went to the US, I found that, you know, hey, I eventually became who I wanted to be. So, it was, culturally, it was kind of a break away from old traditions.

...

00:07:14

R7 [...] ah there's also a lot of common ground because English language is spoken, I mean like my whole life, everything was in English, right, in education and everything else. I mean second language was very minimal and well in terms of education or in terms of ah... even spoken, right, I mean I don't speak very much Chinese in the first place. Uhm... and because of that, I think, like... why the US? I would say even before Europe, is because in US there's no language barrier, there's no, there's a lot of common ground and so it's very easy to blend in, you know that kind of thing because English is no big kind of thing you know.

You found Singapore English and American English [comparable]

08:22

R8 Yes [] comparable. Ya but you know how it is, right. I mean when you start speaking with them, there's always like they can pick up your accent or something or you know you don't speak exactly the same way. But then, after a while, you tend to also pick up the way they say certain things and then you pick them up and then you use it within your vocabulary and within your, your speech pattern and then what happens is that eventually you find that you blend in really well because you sound like this or them. [] Initially there was a difference like "where are you from?" that kind of thing, you know, they always ask, like you know that kind of thing. And then ah, the bad thing was when I was teaching, when I was doing my Masters especially ah and then I had to teach classes right[] because you had to teach classes for the undergraduates because it's part of my program... ahhh a lot of them were very surprised that I spoke English that well and then I said, "So, do you know where Singapore is?" And then a lot of them, some of them even thought Singapore was part of China or something, you know, which I took offence to because I was really upset with them. I said "What in the world, you know, are you trying to say?" That kind of thing. Ah, they were very, very surprised that our command of English was so good, you know. And then, ahm, so I say, "Okay, so let me then educate you where Singapore is and we all speak English and a lot of us speak English just as well as any of you for that matter because English is actually our first language, our kind of thing because it's not a second language, it's our first language. Ya, so in that sense, you tend to work your way around it and then you know, with exposure, they get very used to whatever accent you have.

Would it be fair to say that ... between you and your class, your undergraduate class, there was a kind of negotiation with accents and probably ... vocabulary because of the difference in usage, ... there was that negotiation and at some point of time you came to an understanding of how you might expect each other to sound ?

10:38

R9 Ya, yup.

How long did that process take?

10:53

R10 Ya, no but you see the Masters, you know there was actually I have already been in school for the past three years, my undergraduate was like three years, right, so the undergraduate was the process of the time frame that allowed me to kind of blend in more with everything. When I was doing my Masters, I was there already, I mean it wasn't a question of even them not understanding me or me not understanding them so three years already been an undergraduate and everything but you see, the three years when I was an undergraduate, I spent a lot of time with Singaporeans... uhm... Singaporeans because you know, it's very typical of us when we go over seas to study, we tend to, like, you know, to kind of stick together that kind of thing which wasn't a good deal because I felt that was really bad because you are not there to create Singapore again. You are there to be a part of the society, to be a part of the culture, right [] so the first year of my undergraduate, I had Singapore roommates, I had Singapore friends, I only hung out with the Singapore guys and girls and it was for me everything Singapore at least for the first year, ya, for the first year. But second and third year onwards, I started moving out from that group. I wanted to have American friends, you know like blond and blue eyes. You know, I wanted to be as American as I can get, you know, so I had American roommates who happened to be blond and blue eyes that kind of thing so that part of it was a major change for me as far as everything was concerned because I had American roommates, I met their family, I was invited to spend Christmas and special occasions with the family, you know, who are Americans, who are Caucasians and then ah, then I had other friends, you know, other church friends and everything. That was the church part of my life, a distant past. Ah and I had church friends and church was the... one of those, oh seriously, it might scare you a little bit, but the charismatic, very charismatic church you know, the Blacks and Caucasians namely. Very few Asians, Chinese like me. Ahm and that really took everything of a different form. From second year onwards, my whole life was just changed because I kind of like moved away from my comfort zone and I went all the way you know, and so on, so that actually changed, I mean like it changed the way I think, the way I speak, the way I spent time and look at stuff (?) so...

How did that change the way you thought?

13:34

R11 Oh, because being exposed, because I was with them, I mean I was exposed to how they feel, how they think, you know, how they accepted me despite my differences. I mean, visibly you can tell that I am totally you know, yellow skinned and brown skinned and not brown eyes and stuff like that. But, ah, almost uhm that went beyond that. They didn't see me... they saw me as one of them very, very comfortably and I, I... in fact one of my roommates became very close to the family. In fact both my roommates, both my American roommates aah, and the family and the parents treated me like I was one of the sons. So I was number, like if they had five sons or three sons, then I'd be son number 4 who just came back from wherever, you know, just join the family. So, you know, I met the aunts, the great aunts and everything

and so it was like the whole roots you know, I became part of the root thing, the tree, so the family tree and then it was really, ya, that changed a lot of things. That changed the way I perceived things and everything, how I perceived myself even. I don't see myself as that different anymore. I mean as I was very much accepted so I don't see the difference between ... as much as I did when I first went there because I could physically feel I was different.

Can you elaborate on that difference because uhm it seems as though there is sort of a change in perception of self?

15:08

R12 Yes. Yes. Perception of self, I, I, you know, I guess in Singapore you tend to be a little bit restrictive in vocalising your thoughts sometimes, right... You don't say anything which I think is a big problem, you know, like, with the family, people don't say what they should be saying. You know, like they don't say, they don't express themselves. How am I supposed to read your mind you know that kind of concept you know, its like I don't read minds so how do I know, how will I ever know that you think this way and you feel this way. So, what, how it changed me was a lot of things. It taught me like, okay, you express yourself, what you feel. If you feel like this then you should express yourself so that ...? That kind of thing. Accept yourself for who you are and of course, in the education process like in the States, I was telling others many many times that many many times that I've never done so well in school in Singapore as I ever did when I went to university. It was when I really blossomed. My grades were good, I had very good grades, I had, you know, even opportunity to do the Masters because I did so well in my undergraduate right? You could do that. Ah and everything so it was like, I mean, all this acceptance and expressing and this letting yourself go and oh ya be a dreamer that kind of thing, right. And so that's what I learnt too, it's like if you dream big then you get big things happen in your life so if you don't dream then you're not going to get anything. You know, it's the basis of that so that has changed the way that I, I mean besides the education and exposure that has changed the way I see things, the way I do things and the way I want things to be done, you know, that kind of thing which is very liberating.

Think about your feelings when you were living in the US, Canada or wherever. Describe a feeling or experience in which you were happy or glad to be living there and I think you've just...

17:23

R13 Ya, yes it pretty much covers that.

Describe an experience that was confusing and was there ever an experience that was confusing, or kind of, you know

17:43

R14 You know, you mean an experience here?

Yes. Well whether you want to speak of it in terms of the US or in Canada or in both. Have you been confused by anything there?

18:05

R15 Well, [laughs] surprisingly I don't think I'm confused by anything. I think, I

guess I've always managed my expectations so ah, I am confused by certain things but then if I manage my expectations, then I realise that different people do things very differently, kind of thing. So, ah, having that set in my mind already, I don't think I was ever confused. I may not like it, you know, I know there are a lot of things that people do I absolutely hate but I do not, I'm not confused by them. I am... I just refuse to, how shall I say, not confused, I may not accept it, I just as it is but I don't think I will say I am confused by it.

What about an experience that might have been unpleasant or made you wish you had never left?

19:05

R16 Oh, er, not that bad [laughs]. Definitely no, nothing beats the fact that I'm here ya, basically, to be honest, ah, something unpleasant that will cause me to regret being here you are saying?

Well, I suppose regret might be too extreme, sort of give you a momentary pause, you know.

19:39

R17 No. Not really, no. Nothing, ah, you know I am a firm believer of never looking back, kind of thing so, ahh, anyway looking back is not bad too, ahh, no I don't think that I even consider anything that is really remotely something I will, that causes me to feel that whether it's regret or whatever, might be too strong a word, but no, I don't think there is anything that really causes that.

Describe where you lived - the neighbourhood, your friends, co-workers, etc.

20:33

R18 Er, to be honest, we don't have that many friends here. ... No, we did, we did have friends but we have many, many unfortunately unpleasant, unpleasant experiences with friends. Ahh, many because of poor choice of friends. Ahh, I always see it as I think we made poor choices where it comes to certain people that we classify as friends and that has taken me a long time to get to this position because we had certain experiences then that friends that we thought as friends were just there, just for the ride. I mean, you know, seriously, I just think that they were just making use of us or something. Ah, so, because of that, so yes, I mean those will be ones that I, and that's why now, now I have this new tag line that, uhm, because I thought that we were reaching out to a lot of people, ah, because we were new in this country and we wanted to set up this network of friends, you know, really close friends, uhm, but then we find in the process of doing that, ah, we have been greatly disillusioned because some of these people that we so-called call friends, have this kind of like, they come and go. So you have this sort of friends that come and go but not your family kind of thing ah, that's a rude awakening so my philosophy now is I'm not going to reach out that much. In fact, I may not even reach out at all because, why should I or why do I need to, right, because seriously, maybe, maybe my focus was a little bit thrown off because I thought this friend thing was very important part of my life and I was reaching out to a lot of people that sort of thing but that has changed since in the past months that kind of thing. So, now my method, my philosophy is if they want to reach out to me, then they should reach out to me. I am not

going to be the one who should be reaching out and be that nice guy again.

And these, ah, they are, are they uh, from the community or is it a professional or leisure?

23:08

R19 I think most of them were, eh, some of them are people that live in the community like our neighbours and so on. So neighbours will be some of these people that we thought you know were friends. And then there were also people that we, ah, well I was also working part-time here and there so professionally, yes, I, I had some colleagues so-called that I felt were friends but of course, not so much now. But, ya, so basically people at work or in the community, like neighbours and people you meet who knows, grocery store, supermarkets, shopping centres. You know, strangely, that's the way I am, you know. I am very good in reaching out to people and that's why I have friends who are still people who work in the departmental store. You know, like, it's like because I try, right, but since then that's in the **past**. I'm not doing that anymore. I don't want to do that. It's too time consuming and it takes too much out of you and then when things don't work out like now, ah, it kind of puts you in a bad place, you know. I mean, it's like, oh, you invested all this time and it came to nothing this kind of thing... it's like, why bother?

24:40

R20 Ya, we live in a house, so we live in a housing community. Basically most of the houses here are houses. I mean, then there are a few apartments, a few apartments somewhere. So, it's a, ya, it's a small suburb, city kind of thing.

And so you have your own compound. There's no shared, common wall, right?

Typical

25:05

R21 Which is heavenly because I don't really care who my neighbours...you know, I don't really care about them anyway, so we don't have to care about what's going on you know, even next door because the houses are self-contained. So, yes, I have an old friend here. I don't have to fuss about anybody or they don't have to bother me if I choose not to answer my door that sort of thing.

25:51

R22 Well, when we first moved here, we lived in a condo. So that was, that was well maybe bad because of the fact that you have no control over what your neighbours upstairs are doing because when they walk very loudly, you can actually hear them and then when they throw cigarette butts down from their balcony and it landed on yours which i didn't like. And then you know, you have some crazy... One of our neighbours a few doors away, ah, I think it was like... you know it's like one of those bad hats - I don't know if he was peddling drugs ... he had like strange people and in the middle of the night they have fights, everything, and they punch a hole in the wall, you know, everything and it's like, oh come on and people downstairs some crazy homeless or whatever, screaming downstairs. Maybe someone's trying to kill him or something. So we had all these things going on you know and the place was really small. The condo was very very small. Ah, I mean ya, it was so small that we kind of like bang into each other, everytime we turn around,

we see each other. [...] and myself, it's like, you know, you don't have to look very far to see each other because that's the size of it and there we are. We had [...] at that time, you know, our dog. It was the same thing, he had nowhere to go, because everywhere he went, we would be there. It was his quiet spot so, ahm, that was different. That was totally different because that was that time your life is determined by the environment quite a bit. You know, what your neighbours do and what your neighbours say you know, ah, stuff like that. Then when you go down, when you go down and walk [...] which we always do at that time, ah, then you meet someone crazies, you know, some of them pass racial slurs and things like that. I mean, that was also part of my experience. We had that, I mean, you know, everything wasn't perfect as it is now. There were people, crazies who would say crazy things to us and then we would get angry and then after a while we would say... So, after a while, ya.

[lost video connection]

28:22

R23 Oh I said, like when we go for walks, everything, we do have people who pass comments and racial slurs and everything. There are always crazies around everywhere right, I mean, not just here. I mean in Singapore there are crazies too as well so ahm ya, and those are the times when we get upset but I think we've learnt since, you know, it's like, it's not our problem, it's his problem so it's like it's not on us. It's on him. ...since it's his comments, it's his problem so we don't have to lower ourselves and even acknowledge. So, I don't get even acknowledge. If I get a little worked up, I just scream back something that I just want to make sure that the person knows that this is not called for something like that but ah, ya those are the things that can, you know, and that, that changes with the environment.

Is that, your neighbourhood right now, it is a mixed neighbourhood?

29:24

R24 This area is really nice in a way but ah predominantly Asians, a lot of Chinese. A lot of Chinese, Koreans. Chinese, Koreans, not so many Japanese. Ya, Koreans and Chinese. They are from mainland China and then the Koreans are from Korea I guess and then ah, you have the, ah a lot Indians and so on. So we do have a lot of, this area ...because of the fact that this housing encourages a certain group of people that purchase homes like that and ya, most of them are actually the Koreans and Chinese.

Did you find there to be a language situation that, you know, sort of, a return to the first three years of undergraduate where you have to sort of work yourself around the languages that you are dealing with although everyone might be speaking in some form of English?

30:36

R25 No, a lot of the Korean families and Chinese China families, ahm, they all speak their own languages. They don't even speak English. A lot of them don't even speak English. And it's very strange because you will be walking around, you know, the shopping centre, then there is this Korean family speaking their own Korean little thing and there is this Chinese family speaking this Chinese thing and they just go on, you know, throughout doing

that. And then of course, you have the Caucasian and that's when. And then for us, we don't speak anything else but English to anyone else right, so, ah, ya that was the strange thing when we moved here in ...well I thought it was a little too much in that way but it is because it is the fact that they are the ones who are able to buy houses like that. You see, a lot of the, you know, like how real estate is in BC Vancouver, right? The house prices are very pricey and so on. So, it just happens in this ... area, the houses, this is a very new estate. It's brand new in fact. Right? It's ah where we live, it's only been like five years. In total I think it's like this community or this housing estate came up in the past seven years. So because of that, ah, everything is relatively new. People who live here are also not your typical, ah, other cities where it could be predominantly Caucasian or something. Here, it's more tilted more towards the Asian community, more the Koreans and Chinese.

32:33

R26 We live somewhere called Burke Mountain so it is like Coast Meridian road so you know, one of the, so it's all the way it's about 45 minutes drive from Vancouver so it's quite a ways, quite a ways, ya. [...]

33:00

R27 We were just going around, we wanted to move to a bigger place like now ... Ya, because the condo was getting very small and we wanted to buy, to move to a bigger place so our next option was supposedly, we only wanted to go into a townhouse because it was a psychological move right, not something super huge but something bigger, so townhouses we were also looking for. When we were shopping around for townhouses because we kind of moved away because we know that there's nothing we can buy of a decent size in Vancouver itself. No way. Because it was way too expensive and there are not too many around. And all the townhouses are away from the city centre, the Vancouver area, right, because there are many high rises and condos. So we were looking for townhouses and then we saw a few that we liked and everything. We were thinking about it and then, lo and behold, we were walking. We were just walking, we were just walking around, just driving around and then we saw this area and then we kind of instantly say, hey this is a possibility but of course I think we are not looking at ours for sure, it's like, no way we can afford this, that kind of thing, right. And, eh, ya, and then we just fell in love with the place. It wasn't even built, it was just a land, right, but it had show homes. So when we walked into the showroom and we sat in, we actually sat in there for quite a bit ah, to get a feel for the place. Then we said, ya, we can do this, you know. We, we will make it work, that kind of thing and it took us a while but eventually ah, but you know how it is, right, the demand here is quite high, I mean, it's very quick. Once they release the homes, you have to be quick about deciding whether you want to buy it or not because if you don't, someone else will. ... So, at that time because when we were looking, when we bought this house, at the time, real estate was sky rocketing and it was like people were just buying. Not now, though. Not now but before. Ah, during the first time before we bought this place so, ya, that's how we came to this lot and we fell in love with the area and since then, saved up for what we were going to see through.

[...] it looks as though from my calculations that you basically came at the same time as the entire community did together rather than being sort of parachuted into

an existing community.

35:44

R28 That's right, ya.

Describe some particular situation that shows the extent to which you thought like a North American (US/Canadian)/Hong Konger/Singaporean.

36:31

...

38:14

R29 ...Because Vancouver is a little bit ah ... because Vancouver is a little bit different because of the large population of Asian here, I find that it's very easy for us, you know, or let's just talk about Singaporeans in general or for any Singaporean to come here and then feel at home almost instantly without having that "oh, this is not Singaporean or oh, this is Canadian" that kind of thing, ahm, I've never had that so far as almost ten years now, right. So, here, it's like I think it's because of the configuration of the population here because this area here in Vancouver when you go down town, you walk around the city and all the shopping malls and shops, everything, you see a lot of Asian faces so you don't even feel like, I used to say, I used to joke and say, I don't really feel American in Canada because this doesn't look like a western community because everybody's Asian. Everybody looks like you. you look like them kind of thing. So, ahm, there's, there's very little cultural shock kind of thing. Nothing, nothing is shocking because they have a lot of Chinese restaurants, they like Chinese food, you know they like Japanese so ya, we didn't, I don't think I have that moment. Ah, the only thing that shock people was, the only thing that that I felt that I, ah, whether I sounded like Canadian because the only person that reminded me was, I had ah, I was doing ... I was skypeing with my mum actually, ah, one time and my uncles from Australia happened to be there visiting my mum, right and my uncles and my aunt and so on. So they have an Australian accent, a very Australian kind of, right. So there they were all listening to me talking my mum and then of course then ... and then my aunt said "you don't sound very Canadian" so I kind of like "huh? What does a Canadian sound like? You mean you want me to say "eh whatever you know. I said it's actually not the case here. I said to come here everybody sound like from where they come from you know so it's like everybody sounds like a Canadian so except maybe some have that very strong uhm, western, I don't say Canadian accent, I say western accent because you know how it is when they speak, they do sound kind of thing. And then, those base Chinese who are born, I have a very good friend, she is born in Canada, right, so she's in her thirties or something but when she speaks, you can tell that she speaks with a kind of an accent, you know, a Canadian or western accent because she was born here. She went to school here so she speaks like this so when she opens her mouth and talks to us, she sounds a typical Caucasian. If you don't look at her, you will think that she is a Caucasian blond hair and blue eyes, right. Ahm, so here I think, yes, almost like you are who you are like that is why it's so liberating to be who you are because nobody is going to say "you are a foreigner" kind of thing, you know.

42:13

R30 In this place because everybody else looks like this. You walk down the

street, every other person is an Asian you know, a Chinese I mean, very basically.

Has any Asian person mistaken you for a, when I say 'Chinese', I mean the PRC?
42:37

R31 Ah, no, no. They always think I am Filipino. I don't know why. [] They think I am a Filipino. They think I am, what else eh, definitely not mainland China for sure. I would have taken offence to that [laughs]. If they say, " You are from mainland China", I'll say "What? Are you mad?" I'll say, "No way." But maybe I think, ya, Filipino or and then they are not surprised if I say we are from Singapore. Oh that figures ... because we all do speak better English, a little bit more sort of, in tuned with that kind of thing and we are not so Asian Asian, you know how Singaporeans are, right. Singaporeans are, we are really a melting pot. We are really mixed here and there kind of thing so it's very easy for them to say, "Oh you must be from Singapore."

[...] is there a accent? Do they identify you as Singaporean [] recognise you as Singaporean by the way you look?

43:45

R32 Ya, by the way you look, the way you, well, sometimes the way you speak like... some of them say it's the way you speak but a lot of times, they say it's the way you look that kind of thing.

Describe a specific situation in which you could have acted in either a North American/Hong Konger/Singaporean way or a Chinese way.

44:16

R33 [laughs] Acted in a Chinese way? You know, I don't even see a difference. I don't see a difference. I don't, I don't compartmentalise the way I am, whether this is Chinese, this is Asian. I just act the way I do, you know, that kind of thing and maybe that's why ... ah, sometimes it's like maybe this is unexpected that kind of thing, you know. They might think, maybe it's just the way it is but I don't compartmentalise things.

How wouldl you describe yourself on forms or documents when you were asked about nationality and ethnicity?

45:10

R34 Er, I think I'm pretty much, ah, you see I can't say I am still Singaporean Singaporean, I can't say I am Canadian, Canadian. I am just where so like it's like I don't ah I've never actually seen myself as the norm you know. I do not place myself as the, the, the Johns and the Joes or the Joe kind of thing. I am who I am so maybe that's why I don't have to compartmentalise - you know it's like this is Asian, this is Canadian - I am just doing ah in fact I think I'm even more myself all these things together. Singaporean, Canadian, all everything is just background but I am who I am already so, ya.

If you have to be, if you are travelling and you have to, and the form, the immigration form says nationality and then what would you say?

46:23

R35 Oh, er, what would I say? I think now it's in terms of relevance, ah, I'm very happy to say I am Canadian because you know it's like it's very nice to be able to say that finally because I am a Canadian citizen already, not even PR

kind of thing, right, so it's good. It's a good feeling, it's like a new identity. I mean it's now I am where I am or where I want to be. Ya, you know, not like I'm embarrassed to say I'm Singaporean. Because when they say "Oh, so where are you from originally?" then I will very happily, very proudly say, "from Singapore of course". And then people are always quite impressed you know when you say originally you are from Singapore because they say, "Oh, Singapore. Singapore is very clean. It's very, ah, food is great, everything's nice" kind of thing so, ya. Maybe that's why - it's so clean and the food is so great, ah, ya, so you come from a great place you know that kind of thing so it's not very difficult to, you know, to express that. Ya.

What about your ethnicity?

47:35

R36 Ethnicity, ah, actually sometimes I am a little afraid to say Chinese, I guess when you say Chinese people always associate it with the China Chinese PR you know the Chinese People's Republic kind of thing, you know, which we are totally or I am totally different than that. I see myself as totally different. I don't even want to put myself in the same canon. You know, we know what they are like, we've been with them and ... to be called that you are from mainland China, I take offence but ethnicity, I always... you know I am Peranakan and being so actually being a Peranakan means I have Portuguese influence, I have Malay influence, you know I was even born in Malacca, you know that right? I mean ... we were not even born in Singapore, you know [laughs] We are true blue Peranakan because we were born in Malacca you know, our, ya, it's like, of course because we grew up in Singapore but I think I am more comfortable with the fact that and proud to be Peranakan because the Peranakan culture is the colourful nature of the Peranakans culture is what I represent. Ya, that's why what I do is so colourful because of the fact it is my cultural thing so I think being a Peranakan has made a lot of difference. []

[...] how do you understand your Peranakaness?

49:18

R37 I think it's innate. It's just in me. Sometimes I wonder why do I, why do I look at thing this way? Why do I think this way? And then sometimes in my art form everything like now I'm experimenting different things right? I just realise that all this comes from the fact that I see things the Peranakan way because the Peranakan culture symbolises colour, diversity you know that kind of thing and all so I think the way I am is because of my heritage. The things that I like, you know and stuff like that. You know whatever I do, there's always this injection of this Peranakaness into it. It's whether it's the cooking or everything. You know, when I do cook Peranakan stuff right so you know the stuff and things like that. So in terms of ethnicity, I think, ya, it's because of all this influence I have even a little bit of Portuguese. Ya.

I noticed that ... you started with Portuguese and Malay. Can you trace that genealogy?

50:34

R38 Er, I've never tried doing that. I just can go as far back as my grandparents you know and so on like my grandmother who has since passed and then my

other grandmother, my maternal grandmother, ah, the one that we used to, have you met her?

Yes, in Selegie.

R39 Yes, in Selegie right. She's as Peranakan as you can get. A pure true blue 100%

right? ... So, ya, that's how, you know, I relate with her very well you know as far as that's concerned. So if you talk about going back and so on, everything that I grew up and know, I've always gone back to that now that more her. You see my mother is a little bit diluted. Mother somehow becomes a bit more, more Singaporean kind of thing, right but because she doesn't like to cook as much as my grandmother and everything else but she did pick up some of things from there and so did some of my sisters and all but ahm that's where I think I picked up a lot of the, when you talk about going back, you know. Ahm, ya, as far back as that and ya, I remember all the days when I visit Malacca and used to go there to visit my relatives kind of thing and the kind of houses we used to stay in the kampong kind of thing. We actually stayed in the kampong when we visit them, you know, eat the kind of food the Peranakans do and everything else. Other than the only thing is we don't dress. I've always wanted to but I haven't worn the Peranakan attire for men and so that's the only thing I am really hoping that one day I can get my hands on but I do have Peranakan-wares, you know, like the plates that we actually bought from Singapore and brought it here and it's on display in my own kitchen ah that kind of thing so all these things remind me of where I come from. And there's this colour thing you know I like colourful because that's in my art, it's in the way I see things, the way I express myself, and the things that I like.

Do you remember where in Malacca was your kampong?

52:51

R40 Oh, I forgot the name. Ah, [Is it Selat?] No, not that one. The one where there's this very large Peranakan community that the houses are still on stilts and everything. Now, what's that called? And the outhouses. [] You know, there's lots of mosquitoes [] Yes, lots of coconut trees, yes and then eating with the hands. You know I stopped doing that when I was in Singapore but eating with the hands and everything, we did all that so as far as going back and being a, ah, in tune with that, very much so I would say you know as this was concerned. The only thing was, and my grandmother you know she always wears, she still wears the sarong kebaya kind of thing and my mother used to but these days she doesn't do any more I guess because it's too fussy kind of thing but ah ya, it's right there.

Please describe your thoughts about returning to your country.

55:07

R41 Well, yes, I guess it's hard to say return to your country because this is my country now you know that kind of thing. It doesn't even say return to my country but I always say ah, when I go visit the family back in Singapore. That's how I say now because it just doesn't make sense any more because even the word 'home' you know, it's like, where is home? People sometimes say "Where is home?" Then I say "What do you mean?" "This is home"and

then they say "Oh okay" that kind of thing. Ya, and then when we were to go back to Singapore which we haven't done in a while now ah, [laughs] ya so it's like, I would put it as a visit. So I would always tell [...], I would say "Okay maybe it's time for a holiday back in Singapore so the next time we go back to Singapore, well maybe in two years from now or something, I wouldn't say we are going home because this is home and that is not home any more but to go and visit Singapore and visit family for a holiday that kind of thing so that's how we put it.

When was the last time you visited your family?

56:26

R42 Er, 2015. Not bad right? [] Well, every time we go back to Singapore, since the last two times, something bad happens so that's why we.. The first time we went back since we moved here, [...] mum had a stroke. ... His mum, she still has a stroke, She hasn't recovered very much from it. She's still paralysed er, one side, so she's doing you know, not better but not too different from that time. I think hers was pretty serious. I think from a very, very severe stroke. I didn't think there was very much they could do from there. And then three years ago, we went back and then my mum was okay then you heard about this right? You know my mum got really sick. Ya, my mum was really, really sick. We thought we were going to lose her but er so that put a dent on my, you know, like this fear thing, it goes beyond anything. It's just like every time we go back, there's this bad thing that happens so I told [...], "You know I am so afraid to think about going back because I can't live through that again." You know, I don't want to live through that again. It's really scary. People won't understand that. You know what I mean, it's like I don't even know if my family understands that. It's just that that really took a lot from me, so you know, they don't even realise how bad it was that I even, that till today, I don't even want to, I cannot escape that feeling that I have when we were there. It's like "oh no" you know. I don't want to go back again and then cause that to happen, that kind of thing. []

The first time you went back to Singapore, do you remember it?

59:01

R43 Vaguely I remember it because we went back because we wanted to visit. The reason for going back that trip was because his mum got sick. So it was for a very different reason. We really didn't, it wasn't by choice. It was a necessity, it was something we had to do. So, ya, that was a different experience altogether. The second visit was a holiday. It was really to go back and spend time with my mum. That was the ultimate but it didn't turn out that way. Yes, we did spend time with my mum but it was hospital visit every day, all the time that we were there, throughout the whole time. Every day for four weeks, right? Four weeks! I mean you know, it's like, hey, I think that changed everybody. I think all of us were just freaked out, so.

Describe the way in which you think or act like a North American/Hong Konger/Singaporean regarding family practices. e.g. think about the goals you have for your children versus what goals they have. You don't have children.

01:00:51

R44 Maybe, [laughs] We had [...]. [...] was our child so to be honest, you

know well he is as much of a child as, I think more a child than the real child can be to a family I think.

So did you have goals for [...]?

01:01:06

R45 Yes. You know that we bought this house because we wanted more space for him as well. It's just unfortunate he didn't live long enough to enjoy it, you know. That's the reason, it's one major reason was we wanted to give him all the space that we could, you know, in our life time.

How do you spell [...]?

01:01:32

R46 [...]. It's one of those, I think it was a story, Disney story, I think about bears and then there were two brothers. So one was [...] and one was something else so that's how the name came about but it was a very unique name because I don't think anybody else has [...] Just us.

...

01:02:02

R47 Ya, that's why it was unique because it was [...] and so you know... I think as far as think we being a parent, I think that will be as close as anybody can claim to be a parent because I treated him or we, we, he was a part of our life that, very much so I think I wouldn't say he was any less than my sister having a daughter or something you know. I don't think it will be any different from there because the whole process, you know, that we went through with him ah, ya [...] It's just that people just don't understand. I always tell my sister, I say "No one else can understand this." It's it's, ah, it's the only thing, you know, that's how we felt about him and this is how he, you know, it's kind of unconditional love kind of thing. That this is probably the first time that this kind of thing, this unconditional love made sense or materialise because I think it's very difficult. You know when you say, unconditional love, what do you mean? A lot of people can't say what it means because they never experience it but you know in our case we have experienced that so that's why it's very hard to move away from this.

... Describe your relationship with your spouse and how it has changed.

01:03:53

R48 Ah, how it has changed? Er, I think a good way to put it is in terms of focus because before, there was a lot of things. You know, like meeting people, friends so called, er, education, school, you know [...] went to school when he was here right, so that kind of things so

...

01:04:22

R49 Yes. He went to UBC. He did, yes. Well, unofficially actually he has a Masters from Oxford. But uhm he did a Masters program, ah, he told you right, his American studies right? So when he went to school it was a different life altogether. There was me and [...], he had to go off to school and come back normally quite late and that kind of thing. So there were little things that were different but I think the focus now is, is on us. What matters most to us. Anything else is just plus, frills you know, whatever, kind of thing. Uhm, but as long as we have the life that we so deserve, I always say

that we deserve this and we made this happen so you know as far as we have what we deserve, things are good. Anything else is just going to be ... so we try not to allow other things you know, unpleasantness to, to, to affect us in any way. You know, of course it might bother for a little bit but you put it aside and say that it remains there. You put it in the drawer that kind of thing but it's more like as long as it makes us happy, as long as we live life that we have always wanted for ourselves then we're happy. And that's very good.

[...] is there a change in the way you relate to each other or in the way you relate to him?

01:06:46

R50 I think maybe I try to put things in perspective better these days. Ah, you know, I, that kind of thing. I guess it's always sometimes with me it's always a debate like, okay, you know, don't get too emotional, you know you are such an emotional person... was saying you know. But, since I think emotions is not a bad thing. I think it's better to be emotional than being not emotional because being emotional, you say the things that mean the most. I always tell [...], I say, "If you want to say something, say it, now. Don't wait." You know, like, I hate it when it's like at the deathbed you say, I wish I've done this, I wish I did this. No. It's not for me because if I want to say something, I say it now. If I want to do something, I do it now. I'm not going to wait til I, I, I, like this. That's why we don't have a bucket list. We don't believe in people who make bucket lists because we don't have buckets in the first place. We [laughs] have no buckets. Uhm, so we don't believe in bucket lists because we, whatever you want to do and if you are able and the timing is right, just do it. So we don't need to wait until we have buckets, we just do it, ya.

So, this sort of no bucket list condition, had it always been present when you are in Singapore and say in the United States?

01:08:27

R51 In Singapore, we tend to be a little bit, ah, we are not as communicative, I think not as expressive honestly, ah, ya, and uhm, because I, I think you know, by, just by nature, by environment you know in Singapore right this cannot, that cannot, this cannot, that cannot. It's like oh come on, uhm, I think because it becomes liberating living in the US and now here, it's very liberating. So I think that we say, we do a lot more easily ... than we ever did when we lived in Singapore. US was a good start already, so from the US, the whole thing, the process has brought here to Canada because it isn't very long from there, right? But from Singapore to, to the US, is a vast difference in the way, you were saying, they communicate because they are definitely not more expressive, definitely not as communicative as we are now. Now we are constantly talking but not that we stopped talking in Singapore because you know why? We don't have time to talk because we are always working. We are always in the office. I work till eight or nine o'clock that kind of thing. When I come home I don't even cook dinner. Now I do dinner every day, you know, so it's like, even have lunch and dinner here, all the meals, ah, ya. We just have time.

[...] What is your food preference?

01:10:01

R52 What is my preference? ... Food preference? Oh, now I think I'm moving more and more towards ah, I used to like a lot of Asian, a lot of Singaporean stuff, the curries and everything. I find that we are a little less that but as I say we are more and more closer to the fusion. I mean, I like certain elements of the Chinese thing but ah, I kind of westernise a little bit. You know, like uh, recently what we did, oh, like we had fried tarot cake is it? Okay, we have fried carrot cake but we put arugula on top of it. There you go, so I don't like 100% Asian Asian but I like to modify them and put in western ingredients or spices. I use a lot of western spice so, ah, like herb... sort of thing which I never use but now I use in everything. So it's like ... because of my culinary training [] so, ah, ya that's still towards Asian-Western.

What about your work style?

01:11:25

R53 Work style? ... Er, I think there seems to be a greater drive. Er, you know I get very passionate about something, then I just go full swing into it. You know, I like, I just, endlessly I can do it, I mean I don't have to sleep. If I don't want to sleep or if [...] doesn't call me and say "Sleeping time" you know that kind of thing, I will just probably paint throughout. Currently I am working on this huge umbrella project. I painted the, you know on the deck we have this huge umbrella. It's really big. Ah, so that was my project. I started a few days back. I think the project took about four, five days. Today, I just completed it, in the afternoon I just completed it so I would say in terms of work style, I think I approach things more passionately, with greater drive and everything and I feel really good about it, so, like I don't feel I need to prove anything any more. I, I, I'm just doing this because it's beautiful. It's just something I always wanted to do so there's no longer that pressure. Not really lah, no pressure but do it with 100% ... and passionate.

01:13:02

R54 I keep mostly at home, both of us. Ahm, ya, so we do everything either in the back yard, front yard or in the house. So, basically like all my paintings I, why I can bring my umbrella in the house because it was really warm and sunny but now it's cold and wet. It's like the weather here is like, you know, like within a day it'll change from spring to autumn, from winter to summer that kind of thing, you know. ... Ya, it's really cold today, so but the umbrella's in the living room. So, ah, things like this I just bring it in because it's not practical to work outside. ... because I, you know, like, like certain places like if it's sunny and nice, I would paint it outside but... So, we are mainly working from home.

The answer to the next question may be a little difficult to put into words but I would like you to describe to me who you think you are culturally. Chinese? British? American Chinese? Canadian Chinese? Hong Konger? Singaporean? Combination? Different than both North American/Hong Konger/Singaporean Chinese? Depends on the situation? Walk me through a specific situation that you experience which is an example of how you feel about yourself culturally.

01:14:05

R55 Culturally who I am? You know, I've never, like I said earlier, I don't see

myself as the Johns and Joes and so on because when I see them, I see myself as me. So, if you ask me do I see myself, Asian, Caucasian, Canadian, Singaporean or whatever, you know, I really don't. I see myself as, well, you know, I will say I see myself as a gifted person because I am able to do all these things, so I see myself as very, ah, artistically inclined you know. I just, I, you know it's like, uhm, if I want to do something, it's also something that I want to do and it's very easy for me to start and then finish it and then do it kind of thing so I've gone beyond barriers like there's nothing I would say I can't do. It's a matter of if I want to do this or if I don't want to do this. So if I put my mind to it, I can do it so if you ask me how I see myself as a person who is able to express whatever is inside. You know, it's in my painting, in my art form, in my whatever, in my music, in my dance whatever kind of thing so you know, and, and all these are my channels and everything as I see myself, ya, I am not fitting into any particular mould.

[...] do you think people there understand you? ... When they ask, "What do you do?"

01:16:48

R56 [laughs] Okay, well... you want me to be honest and sincere? [] You know, I don't care. You know, like seriously, I've come to a point in time that I am so comfortable in my own skin that I do not care what someone else think besides you know who. So, besides us, no one else, no one else, seriously, there's absolutely no one else. It doesn't matter what they think, what they feel, how they want to think I am, uhm, you see, I'm like an open book, I am this is what you get you know. It's like, it's not, I'm not pretending to be somebody. I don't have to pretend. The good thing is that I don't have to be anybody that you think I should be. I am who I am. So when I speak to people although it's the first time, I know where I am, you know. So why are you so friendly but it's like, that's me, why are you so upset that kind of thing so it's like, ah, like uh, ya, I don't, ya, it doesn't matter to me.

What advice would you give a Chinese immigrant?

01:18:09

R57 Chinese immigrant? From China? [laughs] Oh, I had to say that. Uhm, what do I say? Okay, I think maybe I would say "You don't have to try too hard to fit in. Not trying too hard to fit in, just be yourself, just be comfortable in your own skin. It's probably the best way to go." I see a lot of people trying so hard to be like the people from wherever there are in, it becomes always irritating and stupid because it is like you are not your own person. Why do you need to be like anybody else you know so just shine, you know, be. Do whatever you know that kind of thing, so I would just tell the person, "Ya, don't try too hard, you don't have to try too hard to fit in. Just be natural, just let the process work itself out."

What are your future plans?

01:19:14

R58 Future plans? Actually now, it's like. Don't really have future plans because we've done so much travelling that we are, now we are taking a back seat. We have travelled so much but we will always start again next year, we'll both see. Uhm, but this year is, the rest of this year is more like just sitting

back and, and enjoying the experiences that we have had and kind of recap something and try to solidify our thoughts, that sort of thing. But, uhm, I think my style of living is more like just let every day come. I don't have to have future plans and everything. I think I don't need it, you know, like next year, we'll have to go on this European trip. I think that as long as we make every day count for us, it's like, today matter, tomorrow, next day and everything, I think I'm happy. I think I'm happier that way that we are able to do that right now is like, whatever happens, we, we try to do as much as we can and be as much to each other every day rather than saying, "you know we'll do this more this year or the year after."

This might be a given, but do you intend to stay?

01:20:40

R59 [laughs] Yes. Forever. Quite sure. Uhm, I don't think we'll have it anywhere else. I don't think we will have it any other way because how things are and how things have become and how things are going ah, to be, uhm, ya, I think this is, this is it. You know, this is it. I think, you know, I won't say, maybe that kind of thing or now that kind of thing because as I said earlier on, I don't, I think what's in the past, let's put it in the past. Let's move forward. Now it's forward.

How many years of formal education did you have?

01:21:34

R60 How many years? Oh plenty. Wait let me see. So you know in Singapore, it's, it's Junior College right? And after, it's University and then I have my Masters, then I had my culinary...

How many years in Singapore?

01:21:54

R61 ...I lost count even. Wait, Primary 6, Sec 1, Sec 2, Sec 3, Sec 4 right? So, ten years and then PreU I, PreU II so twelve. University was five years. [] ya, Singapore University.

So did you do your undergrad in Singapore?

01:22:24

R62 No, no. All in Washington State here. So undergrad was, was three years, Masters was two years, so, 12+5 so it's like 17 right? Already. So 17 and then culinary school was about 18, 19.

Culinary school was in San Francisco, right? So three years in culinary art?

01:22:50

R63 Ya, ya. []

Okay, what was your occupation prior to leaving your country?

01:23:06

R64 Uh, I quit, no [laughs]. Ya, I think the last job I was, was it about polytechnic [...] oh, I was teaching at Shatec. You know Shatec? [] Singapore... Shatec, I was in Shatec, teaching.

So what were you teaching in Shatec?

01:23:32

R65 Oh, communications. Mass communications. Oh, that was fun. I mean, it was very different. I was doing all the techniques that I learnt when I was in the States. I was doing classes very differently. I was making them sitting in circles, making them sit on the tables instead of sitting on the chair. So, it was all very experimental. It was fun, it was really fun. I was able to do all that.

So why did you quit?

01:24:11

R66 Ya, it was because I was dying to go to do something else. Also, I think they were on a two-year, three-year contract thing. I mean they hired the lecturers based on that. Oh ya, I quit also because I was making plans to come here. That's why I could quit and then, you know, and make plans to move here. That's my very last job here.

What's your occupation now?

01:24:37

R67 Occupation? Oh, occupation now? Now? You know what I tell people? I say I'm a bit of an artist. Ya.

How do you rate your ability to speak English?

01:24:54

R68 Scale of one to ?

'very good, good, somewhat good, not very good'.

01:25:01

R69 I think it should be very good. I don't think people have problems understanding me.

How would you rate your ability to speak Chinese? Very good, good, somewhat good, not very good, hard to communicate.

01:25:15

R70 [laughs] I went to a Chinese dinner and I spoke Mandarin to the people from China, uhm, because we were sitting at the same table right? You know, one of those Chinese dinners, uhm, that's organised by the bank, uhm, so what happened was I was speaking in Mandarin and they understood me. And others thought my Mandarin was good when, when, of course when I was speaking, he was laughing, I'm sure he was laughing, because when I speak Mandarin, it's really funny. Because, honestly I think you just cry I said when people who understand Mandarin suddenly listen to me but uhm I would say, I'm definitely not very good. I would say, just good. I mean for someone who did not study, whose second language is even not Chinese. My second language is Malay. For someone who doesn't have any Chinese formal education that's pretty good so, I think, good.

Your second language you mean what you did in school?

01:26:17

R71 Ya, in school Malay was my second language.

How did you pick up Mandarin?

01:26:23

R72 Oh, just by talking, by listening. Ya, all by, by, by encounters and by experience.

What language did you speak at home?

01:26:36

R73 English

What about with Grandma?

01:26:41

R74 Grandma? Malay.

Was it a kind of Peranakan Malay? Malacca Melayu rather than Malay in Bahasa?

01:26:48

R75 Ya. Malay Malay. It's a little bit more colourful. Like a little bit sing-song. You know they call it sing-song, ya. And then of course I speak, I spoke ah, somehow we spoke Cantonese at home a little bit to my mum especially because, I don't even know why. I think our neighbours were Cantonese-speaking. So, somehow I picked up Cantonese. If you ask me, I have no formal training in it but I picked it up.

But your mum is not Cantonese. Is she Cantonese?

01:27:31

R76 No, my mum is not Cantonese at all, that's the trouble. She's Hainanese. Ya, we're supposed to be Hainanese. So my mum speaks Hainanese very well but when she's talking to us, we all spoke Cantonese to her and we're not sure why. I really don't know. Ya.

How would you rate your ability to speak English at work? One is not at all, four is very well.

01:28:17

R77 Four

With native English speaking friends?

01:28:28

R78 Oh, English speaking friends? Definitely four, ya.

On the phone?

01:28:33

R79 On the phone? Ah, four.

With strangers?

01:28:46

R80 Four

Overall?

01:28:51

R81 overall, four, ya.

How would you rate your ability to speak Chinese? One is not at all, four is very well.

01:29:00

R82 Okay, you know, not bad, I would say maybe, I don't know. Maybe two or three so you know that kind of thing so you know depends on the situation, depends on whether I like the person or not but ahm, ya between two or three so two, three, ya.

How well do you understand English on TV or at the movies?

01:29:27

R83 Oh, four.

In newspapers and magazine?

01:29:31

R84 Four

On the phone?

01:29:35

R85 On the phone? Four

Overall?

01:29:38

R86 Four

How well do you understand Chinese?

01:29:42

R87 How well do I understand Chinese? Not bad, three. [] Yes, surprising.

Please indicate to what extent are the following statement is true of you in using the word Chinese, [...] I think of myself as Canadian. One, not at all, four, very much?

01:30:28

R88 Very much.

I feel good being Canadian.

01:30:40

R89 Four

I have a strong sense of being Canadian.

01:30:45

R90 Four

I am proud of being Canadian.

01:30:51

R91 Four

I think of myself as being Chinese.

01:30:57

R92 I'm what? Chinese? I think of myself as being Chinese? Oh no.

...

01:31:15

R93 So, one. Not at all.

Feel good about being Chinese?

01:31:23

R94 [laughs] oh, sure. Ah, three.

Strong sense of being Chinese.

01:31:40

R95 Oh, you know what, I don't even know how to answer that. Ah, strong sense of being Chinese? I think, I don't know, I don't, would be even one or two or maybe not at all. Ya.

Proud of being Chinese.

01:32:03

R96 Oh, that doesn't count also right? I guess, ya, there's nothing to be proud of because I don't see myself as different so, one, ya.

[...]there are five possibilities here. How do you think of yourself a) consider myself more Chinese than Canadian b) consider myself more Canadian than Chinese c) I feel Chinese and Canadian equally d) I feel I don't really belong to either Chinese or Canadian culture e) none of the above.

01:32:36

R97 Oh, I think I feel more Canadian than Chinese.

When you think of yourself, what culture is deep inside? Chinese, Singaporean, Canadian, Westerner, Easterner?

01:32:56

R98 Oh, does it count if I say it's all my world? I mean I'm, what counts is what's me. I don't really, you know, ya, it's what is important to me, what matters to me.

To what extent is the following statement true about things that you do, again we use the term Chinese to refer to a culture shared by residents of China.

How much English do you speak at home?

01:33:31

R99 How much of English I speak at home? English right? ... All the time. Four.

With your neighbours?

01:33:47

R100 Neighbours? Same. Only English.

Friends?

01:33:54

R101 Only English. Four.

Co-workers?

01:33:58

R102 English. Four.

Now, I want to slightly go back. When you were at Shatec, do you remember if you spoke any language besides English to your co-workers in Shatec when you were at

Shatec?

01:34:14

R103 No. Only English. no one speaks in anything else.

How much do you read Chinese books, newspapers or magazines? One is not at all, four is very much.

01:34:33

R104 Zero.

Eat at Chinese restaurants?

01:34:36

R105 I don't even know what, you know I might try like one two three or something, but that's it, you know.

How often do you eat at Chinese restaurants?

01:34:50

R106 Oh, although we do like dim sum, ah, how often? Very seldom. Between one to four, I think only two.

Watch Chinese movies?

01:35:06

R107 [laughs] Oh that's a funny one. I do like some of the Chinese movies although I may not understand what they are saying but it's very seldom. Two.

Eat Chinese food.

01:35:22

R108 Oh, two also.

Attend a Chinese concert, exhibition?

01:35:27

R109 [laughs] Never. What kind of Chinese concert are you talking about? Really we have this dance, you know this Chinese dance thing that comes to Vancouver every year. We just ... whenever see the ad, it's like you will never catch me going to that one.

What if it's from Hong Kong?

01:35:55

R110 Okay, Hong Kong if it's in Cantonese, maybe the singing is better, no, it is better. It is 100% better. Ah, Cantonese songs are nicer than... songs to be honest. And maybe because I understand Cantonese. You know Cantonese singing when they sing in Cantonese, I don't understand a single word because I don't know what kind of words they use. They use very different Cantonese not those that I know. Ya.

Shop at Chinese grocery store.

01:36:33

R111 Oh, you'll be surprised. We do go on location but maybe just two.

Go to a Chinese-speaking doctor.

01:36:41

R112 Oh, no way. Not at all.

Socialise with Chinese friends.

01:36:48

R113 Chinese friends? Oh, you know I try to speak English to them as well.

How many Chinese friends do you have?

01:36:58

R114 Oh, do we have Chinese friends? Oh, Josephine is Chinese. Erm, you know I mean if you ask me to count how many, one that matters, will be one, one, Chinese girl that's born here, ya, is 100% Cantonese.

Participating in Chinese clubs or events. Remember the bank dinner.

01:37:30

R115 [laughs] Oh you see that's Canadian bank that organised a Chinese New Year dinner for their Chinese clients. So, yes, that one I will go because it's held in a restaurant that I absolutely like, that we like because it sells, it's the best Chinese restaurant ever in Vancouver so if you come to this area, you have to go that one, ah, and because it's held in that restaurant, if it's held somewhere else, we were not going to go. So we know what we want so. ... Vancouver City also has one, it has three branches. ... One is Vancouver City, one is in Richmond and one is in New West. Ya.

[...] Please use any words to describe yourself. Can you give me ten words to describe yourself? I am...

01:38:48

R116 Er [laughs] what is this, a memory quiz or something? ... I don't know, I think if I can come up with ten but I think one good word to start off with would be, I would say I am colourful because I am colourful, I am multi-faceted in many different dimensions because I do different things. I am good at different things. Ah, if I am a, I am a firm believer, let's say I am expressive so I don't hold myself back if I can help it. You know, I can be, in life that's a liberating process. Ah, free. I will say I am free, I am passionate about everything I do so I am creative. I say, er, I guess in another dimension I can say I think I am very artistic in all forms of art, all art forms whether it's dance or performing arts or painting or drawing or sculpturing or whatever so, ya.... Dance, music, painting and different mediums and so on, ya. Actually I am a little bit of a photographer as well. Did I mention the last time? Ya. ... An eye for creating. I think it comes with the creative process so I think I'm very good in taking what I feel and then translating to form that's visible so that process which I think I feel very blessed I have that ability because it's very frustrating if you have all these ideas, and the emotions that you are not able to translate, visualise it so ya, I feel I'm very good at visualising my emotions.

01:42:13

ResL

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00:00:28

- R1 The year I left China, I think it's 1988, but it could 1989, it's right around the Chinese Massa-, er Tiananmen Square Massacre, er, I think shortly before that. Erm, I was 27 and er, it has been 23 years, erm, telling you my age ((laughs))
- R2 Before I left, I didn't think I ever thought of myself in, you know, in the context of culture. Everybody ... was the same in China.
- R3 I did move from my hometown to Shanghai and then I lived in Shanghai, erm, for 10 years. So I was aware that I was from the North. You know, that there are many different er, customs, I suppose, between my hometown and Shanghai.

00:01:38

Where's your hometown?

- R4 Shenyang. I had to learn the dialect ((interview/conversation was interrupted and recording paused))

00:02:02

- R5 Well, my experience ... it's hard to separate my experience and, er, how I feel about living in Canada, er, from, you know, from a person who'd normally experience it as you go through your twenties and thirties and forties. Since I had, when I came, I didn't have a family and now I have a family. So, I guess even if I was in China, you will not feel the same way anymore because your priority changes, your focus changes so on and so forth.

00:02:45

- R6 Erm, it's not something I think a lot, you know. You get up in the morning, you think about you feed the children, get them to school on time and get to work. And come home, drive them to their activities, your weekends ((inaudible))
- R7 So er, now both my boys are in hockey and I think once in a while, I was aware that you don't see too many Chinese hockey mothers in the rink but ((laughs)) especially when people kind of know you or know of you and you have to kind of get to know all the parents of the team in a short period of time and there is not as, erm, er, a ... a ... a great dis-, the characteristics to

distinguish them. Whereas they can say you're not Asian woman and so it seems that I'm always at a disadvantage of knowing all the parents and whereas they seem to know me, erm, first because I guess, I'm, I'm different. So that is a kind of, that's one of the occasions I would realise I am not the same with everybody else.

00:04:20

R8 Erm, well, I, neighbourhood, I think it's kind of a typical neighbourhood, erm, in Halifax. Erm, most of the families have children of various ages, erm most parents work ((chuckles)) so I guess, working family neighbourhood. And it seems, you know, af-after work, the children are the focus of most families in the neighbourhood. So, and er, ... to a certain extend the children go out to play but mostly their activities are organised in their, erm, who to play the parents have to call each other, that's quite different from what I'm used to, right, when we grow up, when we were growing up.

00:05:24

R9 I think, sometimes, I couldn't believe, myself, sitting in the rink, screaming at the top of my lung. So un-Chinese-like ((laughs)) you know but everybody else seems to be doing the same ((laughs))

Do you mean in a hockey rink?

R10 Yea, in a rink, in a basketball ga-, you know when you cheer them on, right?

R11 I, in, in filling out the forms, I always describe as Chinese because there is no other to describe myself ((laughs)). If they ask for citizenship, that's different story.

00:06:19

R12 Er, I have to say, you know, it was not something that, you know, that's the way it is. But the older I get, I feel like there's more substance in being a Chinese. We know more, you know, I have lived more than the people who, you know, like my husband. He, he grew up in the same neighbourhood we live in right now. I realise how much more we have experienced. I kind of er, feel, er, have er, a pride in that, being a Chinese, and have chosen to live in Canada rather than just accidentally being born here.

00:07:03

So is that from being Chinese or having moved away from your hometown?

Being Chinese, er both I suppose, I suppose.

So 'being Chinese' because of the long Chinese history?

R13 Erm, wisdom. Like you were taught. You didn't realise that you were taught.

Can you walk me through that difference between ... erm, it's clearly about, also it touches on our, the way we ... relationships with other people too right? How is that different, say, in the way we were taught, how is that different from the Chinese way or the Canadian way?

00:07:51

R14 Erm, ... I don't know if erm, er, I can say systematically, you know there are many incidents that you realised, you know that somebody, er, in the past have thought about this and had written about it and had talked about it. For instance, I can give an example, that you know, one of the things for kids being in sports, sometimes you have to encourage them and so on and so forth. And er, a story in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* it was came back to me and er, I didn't see the Chinese translation, the English translation, so I translated to myself. There is, you know, this small group of army tried to defend a fort, and the enemy attacking them are greater in numbers and better equipped and they have very small chance to succeed. So the leader knew the psychology, knew this that to make the soldiers fight harder, he sank all the boats so there's no escape and the only way to survive, erm, was to fight, hard as they could. And so I tried, you know, to encourage, not to think about what happens, just play. And the other day I was watching the new network of Oprah's and he had told me Robin, the famous motivational speaker, and what he said one thing and Oprah jot down as if the great wisdom, is a to take the island you sink the boat. I said, you know I have been saying it. I just didn't know how to put it in four words, not to, you know, I give you a long story. All along we have been talking about it all along. Now here, in the phone, I hear white person say it! ((laughs)) Things like that, I thought, er even though I was not particularly philosophical, but I have learned all these things. Just by listening to people talk, you know listen to the stories on the radio and things like that. I think I have read that book from beginning to the end myself. I find all the wisdom over the years trickle down to us. Even I grew up during the Cultural Revolution was not encouraged. It was actually banned. But we still picked up those things, and at the time, when we were living, when we decide to leave, I think you don't ..., you focus on the reason why you want to leave, (inaudible) basically the negative, and now, I guess, it's not a common, you own, what's the ... romanticise?

Oh, romanticize

Romanticize that relationship, you remember all the good things.

The nostalgia

R15 Yes, yes. And you know, it's not, I don't think that's made up. It's just always there. It was just the things we focused.

00:11:28

R16 Returning ((laughs)) I guess not consciously. Perhaps sub-consciously. Really. You know things er, I can't imagine my children will survive in China. So, it was not ever a plan. I do have plan to take them to visit. However you never know. I grown up, I never thought I would live in Canada either. You never know. But ... when ... when I went home to visit them you mean? Ya, when I went home ... since I left to China, I went home twice. I think the first time, I was more aware the differ-, of the differences. And the lack of personal space is the first thing you notice

In China?

R17 Yeah

How long is it since you ... when was the first time you returned to China?

R18 Might ... be ... 19? 18 years ago that is the first time I went back to visit. It was a two ... (inaudible) must be four, five years after I came here. And the second time was 15 years ago.

00:13:20

R19 Yeah, The first thing I noticed was at ... It was very crowded. The people come right to you. Have no business to come right to you but they come right to you anyways. Er ... And it was in the winter so there was not whole lot er ... gatherings outside. So other than getting from point A to point B, er, I mostly stayed with family and friend.

R20 The second I went back I was, I was er, ... prepared. It's not first time anymore. So I guess the differences are no longer er ... striking. You know. I was not consciously aware of that.

00:14:09

R21 Now the second I went home, I did go to my old neighbourhood because I knew I probably won't be back any time soon. But er, ... the change was so great I couldn't find my old neighbourhood ((clears throat)) So that was disappointing, almost kind of like a piece of my past is lost forever.

00:14:40

Do you remember when you first left China, when you came here. Did you notice that difference of space?

R22 Yes. Yes.

It was the other way around?

R23 It was actually quite a, you know, uncomfortable. ((laughs)) Kind of you feel like a, you're lost. But you get used to that very fast.

R24 I came here, the contrast, because I left from Shanghai, and it was a very, very crowded ci-, er, place. You know, I remember, I was on the fifth floor of Nanjing Lu ...

Yup

R25 and I was looking out the window and the street was black

Yup, from the heads of people

R26 Yes. You can only see the heads. And then er, ... I remember going out to get something. There's no way you can walk a straight line. You basically just got pushed around. And the, I guess, the, the, twenty hours later I was in Halifax or something. And the professor who picked me up told me there is a..., a..., a gathering that evening. And he er, er, it's a, has something to do with the Chinese scholars and the students in the Uni want to go. So I said where it is. He said it's just down the street, you can hardly miss it. And of course I missed it. I couldn't find it. And then, you know, I was trying to find

somebody to ask for direction and it was nobody around ((laughs)). Yes so that I realised Wah, this will never happen in China.

00:16:43

R27 Now this part is actually quite confusing to me now. Like the goes for, for children, erm. Because I think from what I read, I'm not quite up to par as a Chinese parent. ((laughs))

You're not like a tiger mum?

R28 Er not ... No! like er ... ((clears throat)). Yeah, that I ... you know I just read like this is the (inaudible) of the Chinese child comes home with a B. In the first place in will never happen ((laughs)). And secondly, you know, what ... er ... I can't ... you know erh ... I think yo- ... I think, you know, I, I don't have my parents anymore so I don't really ... I find that, I find that I need to check with somebody to say – what do you think? What shall I do? You know, what's the proper parent should do and I, you know, I kind of er, don't have anybody to ask that question to, to and I kind of er doubt myself a lot. I would do certain things and, what a second, I was too Chinese, too strict or not, or strict enough? So. So right now I'm ... the recent resolution is to be more strict, because you know they, they have, erm, they have developed this, they need to play everyday. They need to socialize everyday. They have the idea they have lots of rights but when you ask them their responsibilities, they can't ... they don't like to think about it. They don't like to talk about that. They do occasionally say, my friends are allowed to do such and such a thing. And so I'll have to say, "Well, I'm not your friend mother and your friend did not have Chinese either." ((chuckles)) So that's my answer to them.

00:18:47

R29 Erm ... my children ... erm go to the school, yes, by their choice because we have moved since they started their school and they choose, they chose to remain in same school because they didn't want to leave ... erm ... their friends.

00:19:24

R30 Now, erm, with my spouse, erm, I have to say, he's not one of, he's, some people have interest in Chinese culture, language or something and then they attracted to a Chinese person and marry the Chinese person. I can't say that about him, you know. A- ... he, he's not very, in his words, he's not international person ((laughs)) so, you know, I think er ... you know, if I tell him things about the Chinese, you know he listens but I don't think he has a burning desire to, kinda, to learn anything more than, more about China than, let's say, about India. That kind of thing. And I er, think that, yes, there are, there are things I have to er, remind myself he's not Chinese, he does not have the same value on certain things and then cut him slack ((chuckles))

00:20:41

R31 Er, we er, we eat, we eat er ... everything. We eat everything. We eat Chinese. And they have this notion that 'my mother is Chinese, he can, she can cook all these Chinese dishes'. They don't know I just go ((chuckles)) on

the internet ((laughs)). The most er, Chinese dishes, I cook, I learn in Canada but they have this, you know, exotic notion that I cook, that you know, that I know where to get these exotic spices and cook these dishes. They don't even know how to name them.

00:19:24

So because ... did you cook before you c-, come-, came here?

R32 You cook, er, just erm, very little, very little. Because I lived in a dorm, after I left home. So not necessary to cook for myself. But also, I think, people from my part of the country are not known to be very domestic, you know. People don't do that for fun. At least not my family. We don't do that for fun.

So do you do it for fun now?

00:22:19

R33 More so now because er, you know, just to see their reactions ((laughs heartily)) Wow! You know really! I mean you know, pasta! Like they thought I was so nifty, so great you know.

So what do you cook that you think that ...Peking Duck

R34 ((laughs)) no no nothing that sophisticated. Erm ... actually my spring rolls, they really like. And then lately I have been trying some dimsum. And er, some are not even Chinese but they don't know. Like I cook samosas ((laughs)) (inaudible) Far enough. Indian, neighbour of China.

R35 But er, they seems to be er, you know, really appreciative whatever I cook. So (inaudible) more fun to do that.

00:23:22

R36 Now, I'm sure other people see me as Chinese. Erm, some people ask me if I'm Native Indian

Interesting!

R37 Ya.

Native Indian ... Oh okay... First Nation ... ya.

R38 Mi'kmak. M'ikmak

First Nations

R39 First Nations. Yes right. Probably the correcter? correct word. I guess, you know, probably they are more aware than ... I don't go through they ... to think about that right? But I am sure it's different.

00:24:07

R40 What advice would I give to Chinese immigrant? That is a hard one. I, you know, I wouldn't, pass that. I really don't know. Like I have advice if you go to improve your English. I always give this advice. To read out loud and record your own reading and learn to listen to yourself. And somebody gave me that tip long time ago and I find that it was a very good one.

So you did that before you left Shanghai?

R41 No nope. I did that when I was here.

00:24:51

R42 Erm, my future plans. I think ... I will stay ... but you never know. And now I truly believe you never know. Before when I say that ... I'm not sure. I'm just saying. Now I really don't know because I woke up ((laughs)) last night. It was like a ... holy cow ... I actually moved to Canada permanently?

00:25:28

R43 How many years of formal education I have? This is from post-secondary?

From primary

R44 I never left school! I am still in school! ((laughs)) Er ... ten ... I would say twenty years maybe? More or less. I was teaching at the University when I left. And I'm still doing that.

How many years were you a student?

R45 Twenty years? Like high school, all the way up to ten years, and er, no it's more than twenty years. And then graduate, four years. And ... I have two Masters degrees, another four years and I have PhD degrees, five years. So work out twenty-three years. Yes.

00:26:34

R46 I think my English is adequate. And I think my Chinese. Erh, is adequate ((laughs)) Will bet-, will be better if I had a little time to get use, to acquaint with that again. But when I was in China, I don't think, you know, even though I won university, I don't think I used language as rigorously as I am required to do it now.

R47 Like what when, when, when I write research paper you have to be very precise. So every sentence you have to think two or three times, kind of thing. So professionally, probably my English would be better.

When you were in China, when you went to school in China, the er, the lessons were taught in Mandarin?

R48 Yes.

And I am assuming you've heard er Mandarin spoken in the States and Mandarin spoken in Canada, Is there ... do you hear any difference or along the way as you have travelled, do you hear a difference in Mandarin spoken?

R49 Oh yes. Well even in China. When I was elementary, in the junior (inaudible) high school, I was in Shenyang, so most people would speak with the accent. And the when I was in university, er, I think the professors had even more diverse accent because they are from different er hometowns and then they lived in Shanghai for an extended period so their, their Chinese would have the influence of their hometown dialects or accents and then they pick up from Shanghai, living in Shanghai.

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[...]

R50 I think of it and I say it in, in, in English because ((laughs)) I haven't used the Chinese for quite a while. One sentence is ((laughs)) Yup [...]

I am Chinese *Wo³ shi⁴ zhong¹ guo² ren²* (我是中国人)

R51 I am a Chinese woman *Wo³ shi⁴ zhong¹ guo² nu³ ren²* (我是中国女人)

R52 *Wo³* ... I have er ... lived in many places and I have, er, never imagined er, how my life ((chuckles)) had turned out. It's, er, I guess erm life is truly unscripted. That's how I feel.

ResM

In Conversation with Respondent M

Email 11 May 2020-5 May 2021

What year did you leave your country? How old were you when you left your country?

R1 I was 4years 3months when I left Shanghai in April 1949¹ with my grandparents, on the last plane out. As he carried me on the last section of the trip to the airport, my mother's eldest cousin said, "Always remember that wherever you may be going, there will be people who have never met Chinese before. Behave in a way that will help people to respect China."

Were you born in Shanghai?

R2 Yes, I was born in Shanghai.

How long did you live in UK/Hong Kong/Singapore?

R3 We landed in the hinterland of HK and were in a refugee camp for a short time before going into Hong Kong. From then until the summer of 1951, we lived in HK in a little flat. I started school there (in Cantonese). In 1951, my grandparents & I came to Britain, where my parents were studying at Edinburgh University. In 1953, my father took a post at Cambridge University, so we all moved down south to England. In 1956, my father went to Singapore to the (then) University of Malaya; in '57, he went with the team to start up the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, and immediately after Merdeka we moved back to Singapore, where my father rejoined the English Department at what was now the University of Singapore. In 1959, we all moved back to the UK, for my parents felt it was time I should settle down to consistent schooling (by this time I had been in at least 8 schools! in 4 different languages!) before taking 'O' levels. Since 1959, apart from a year in Taiwan after I graduated, I have lived & worked in the UK pretty much consistently.

Before you left how did you think of yourself culturally, assuming that as a young child you would have begun to speak at about 18 months, and certainly by 2 years old?

R4 I began some formal education at this point, though Grandmamma never told me she was teaching me. When she did the household accounts, I was fascinated by the abacus, and after she had completed her sums and checked them twice, she would allow me to go through them item by item, placing the beads in position on the abacus, and then reading the total at the end. She also asked nanny to take me into the kitchen from time to time, and there, held up so that I could see, I would watch how some dish was prepared. Afterwards, when we were eating the dish at dinner, Grandmamma would ask me how the dish was cooked. it was OK when the dish was a simple one, but I got confused if there were too many processes. We ate in the dining room, and I

¹ Historical context - Apr 7 South Pacific opens in Majestic Theatre NYC; Apr 23 Chinese Red army conquers Nanjing. Airlines in operation in 1949 - CNAC, Cathay Pacific, Hong Kong Airways.

was expected to sit up - but was still using a spoon most of the time. My grandparents believed in simple food nicely cooked, so generally we had one or two dishes only to go with the rice.

What was your day like when you were a toddler? Did you have siblings?

R5 Grandmother's big house had, in addition to my parents & me, rooms in which my father's two older brothers stayed with their families when they were in the area; eldest uncle & his wife were in residence, so I had two older cousins - both boys - to play with most days when they came home from school (year 1 of schooling) My father's sister visited frequently, so I had two more first cousins - a girl & a boy - to play with at least once a fortnight. Second uncle had no children at that time, being newly married. My playmates in this house were my maternal (second) cousins - two girls & a boy (the other boy was still a babe in arms) - and my two aunts when they were at home, and the man who was courting my aunt; he always had time for me, and came early to visit so that we could play together for a little while before aunty got home after work.

What did you play with? Did you have a favourite toy or game?

R6 I remember having a big teddy bear, several nice picture books, and those little puzzle cubes that stack up like building blocks or make pictures when assembled correctly. If I had been especially good, Grandmother would have me on her lap while she drew & painted a picture for me, and she would always tell me stories if I asked nicely. These were often stories about the famous people in Chinese history or the folk-tales & legends she considered suitable, and very occasionally, she would talk about her own childhood. I had some lovely toys to play with. The most special was a set of little books that had been bought for my mother. They were child-sized and the 10 volumes were in a folding-case that closed with the bone-tagged ribbons of her childhood. [This set is now with my niece.] These volumes contained stories, songs, a simple reader etc. I also had a dolls' tea set, with tiny cups that would fit over my fingers, and - my most favourite - a set of building blocks from Switzerland that were shaped with cones, pyramids & cylinders as well as the standard cuboids. In addition, there were my mother's toys - a wooden 'man' with a cat's face; when I pulled the string that made his tail, all the arms & legs stuck out from the torso.

What was/were the language/s of the picture books?

R6a In Grandma's house Chinese and a book of rhymes written in English
What was your Grandmother's childhood like?

R6b Grandmother learned to write (calligraphy) and paint.

What were meals like? What did you eat?

R7 In Grandmother's house, meals were eaten together, in the big dining room with its portrait photo of Great Grandmother. I don't remember much of what I ate, but I know that my breakfast was always fed me in the bedroom before my parents took me into breakfast. My breakfast was milk/rice porridge/soya milk and something soft & soggy - maybe rusks.

What do you remember of your home in Shanghai? Where in Shanghai was it?

R8 I don't remember much about the house, except that the kitchen was downstairs and that it was a treat to be taken down there (in an adult's arms) to say good-morning to the staff. The major-domo considered me his special responsibility, so I was taken down there only when he was around. There was a garden with a terrace. The terrace had stone. If you can visualise - I remember getting my head stuck in them!

Was Grandmother's house in Shanghai?

R8a Yes. When I was 2 and 4 months, my parents took up their scholarships to study at Edinburgh. As Grandmother had several grandchildren, and I was the first one for my mother's parents, they asked if they could have me while my parents were away. So then I went to live with Grandpapa & Grandmamma. [This is why, even now, I still speak Sichuan dialect more fluently than Mandarin.] In this house, I had a nanny - her mother was nanny to my mother, and my nanny had been to school alongside my mother, with the schooling fees paid Grandpapa. ... & his brother had bought matching houses (in mirror reflection as to layout) side-by-side with a moon gate in the wall between the properties. the downstairs rooms were mostly used for storage (rice-jars & containers for dry goods, a wonderful place for hide & seek!) and guest rooms for when the two eldest daughters of the clan came to visit. Upstairs, there was my grandparents' bedroom - in which I had my bed with a big window looking out over the courtyard & facing the moon gate. There were two doors out of this room; one led to the sitting room, where visitors would be received, and the other into the upper corridor. There may have been a screen placed in the angle so that people could go along the corridor without being seen by the visitors. Behind the bedroom were several bedrooms (occupied by my mother's two sisters before they married, & the smallest one by my nanny) and a room for the chamber-pots (we each had our own). This room was also used for when we washed in the mornings & evenings. Above the back stairs that led to the kitchen, etc, the smoked ducks, hams & sausages would be hung well-wrapped and out of reach of rats, and protected from rain by the sloping roof over the corridor. The kitchen had a barred window that looked out into the lane. Sometimes the man with the performing monkey would stand in the lane and put on a performance for me, and I sit on the quern to watch; afterwards, one of the maids would go out with some money for the man and some fruit or peanuts for the monkey.

At the top of the front stairs was a glass-fronted cupboard with the family shrine in it. Grandpapa himself dusted this at new moon and at full moon, standing on a stool. Grandmamma would stand by telling him to take care. There was a standpipe in the garden & electricity, for this was a modern house! The drain holes in the garden were covered by metal animal sculptures, a frog, a tortoise and a third that I can't remember. We also had a telephone.

What language did you speak at home when you were in Shanghai?

R9 In that house we all spoke Hunan dialect with the family and some of the house-staff (who considered themselves part of the family, and had been with my grandmother since her marriage). My parents spoke Shanghai dialect

between themselves (& to me sometimes) as they had met at the University of Shanghai, and also to some of the younger maids. My mother's parent's spoke Sichuan dialect, so when we were visiting Grandpapa & Grandmamma we all spoke Sichuan dialect. [I'll come on to that later.] We spoke Sichuan dialect as a family, and to the older staff, some of whom had gone to Shanghai from Chengdu when Grandpapa had moved the family eastward. Grandpapa's family was from Hunan, so he spoke Hunan dialect whenever Grandmother came visiting. They spoke Shanghai dialect to the younger servants, and when shopping - whether buying from visiting pedlars or going into the shops themselves.

"Always remember that wherever you may be going, there will be people who have never met Chinese before. Behave in a way that will help people to respect China." Did your mother's eldest cousin advised the above in English, hence 'Chinese' and 'China' or were 'Chinese' and 'China' described in another language. If so, what was it?

R10 Eldest Maternal Uncle to me spoke in Sichuan dialect when he instructed me to remember.

Can you write how he said 'Chinese' and 'China' either in the Chinese characters or phonetically?

R10a Eldest uncle's words were 'Chung Kuo' (as in Wade Giles romanisation). The characters are 'middle kingdom' & 'middle kingdom man'

Think about your feelings when you were living in UK/Hong Kong/Singapore. Describe experience in which you were happy or glad to be living there, an experience that was confusing and one that was unpleasant or made you wish you had never left your country.

R11 I can't think of any experience that made me glad to be in the UK when we reached there (in 1951), but I can remember sensing my grandparents' relief at being safe. Once I had readjusted to having parents again (not having seen them for four years) I felt glad that we were all together. The confusing experience was when I was in secondary school. By this time, I was thinking of myself as British, and learning about the Opium Wars with China was most confusing - though, to be fair, the teacher made no attempt to 'whitewash' the British government of that time. The knowledge that the country which had adopted me had declared war on the country where I had been born would have been sad enough; but the pretext for the war was so patently false that I felt shame at the dishonourable behaviour. I would like to think that I would have felt just as distressed & confused if Britain had declared war on another country for the same reasons, but emotionally I would not have been torn apart in the same way. There have been unpleasant experiences, but none that made me sorry to have left China; I was too young to have set down much root there.

Describe where you lived - the neighbourhood, your friends and co-workers.

R12 I live in a close (like a cul-de-sac) at the edge of this little town. If you think of a block of say 40 apartments, imagine these flats to be set as separate houses round a lane with a bend in it and gardens in front of & behind each house, you will have an idea of what the neighbourhood is like. The

houses are small with space to park two cars in front. This is a strictly residential street, the nearest shops are about 1 km away, but the doctor & dentist are about 200m from my front door. Across the road, beside the vet's surgery, there is a green with a small set of cottages for the elderly; this is maintained by the local council. The neighbours are of mixed ethnic background - in fewer than 40 houses, we have at least three other ethnic minorities, which make around 10%.

The next street has a little parade of shops with two takeaway restaurants (Chinese & Indian), a launderette, a mini-market and a community space (meaning an empty shop which is being used temporarily for people in need of advice while unable to make contact with the local council services. This is run by volunteers. Opposite the parade of shops is one church, and round the corner there is another church, each running community activities for the unemployed, the youngsters needing help and so on. These are staffed by members of the respective churches. Beside the parade there is also a mini-supermarket, carrying more than the mini-market but smaller than the supermarket in the High Street. [The advantage is that for these shops, you walk uphill with the empty bags & downhill when the bags are full; the reverse is the case for the town centre supermarket.] Also there is another vet's surgery. In the space between the close & the next street, there is a primary school. Looking at the children when they come out, there must be around 15% - if not more - who come from ethnic minorities.

The most important point all of us in this neighbourhood have in common is that we are all humans. My neighbour across the road may be elderly, fragile & 'white' and the one two doors from me along may be a Russian car mechanic while the family two doors from her is Moroccan, a doctor & nurse couple. But each individual helps the rest of this community when there is need. [I have seen it in action at this time, and thought how lucky I am to be amongst such a courteous group of people.] I suppose I feel different because I read more than most of the people in this neighbourhood. Certainly I don't feel conscious of being in any way ostracised, and if I were to make more effort, I would be included in every little neighbourhood happening - however, I tend to avoid that as much as possible because I like to have time for reading Chinese, to keep up the language, and I am not keen on gossip.

Describe some particular situation that shows the extent to which you thought like a British/Hong Konger/Singaporean. Describe a specific situation in which you could have acted in either a British/Hong Konger/Singaporean way or a Chinese way.

R13 Thinking like a Brit -well, the situation I meet quite often and have to explain to the Chinese immigrant men, is that men are expected to let women go through the door first! I am caught out every time and have to do some quick shuffling to reverse if I'm likely to bump into the man, or to take a long stride if I can go through before he does. This is more to save him from being 'shamed' for bad manners than from any pride in my importance. I think that illustrates both the thinking & the acting like a Brit. Once my nephews & nieces reach their teens, I make a point of saying they are not bound to address me as 'aunt'. Surprisingly, the English nephews & nieces (my late husband was English) are much more punctilious about using the 'aunt' until they are given permission to drop the title. I also encourage all the children I

know to ask questions and discuss matters openly, though sometimes I ask them not to discuss certain matters at meal-times for the sake of the other adults at the table. Probably the most important 'British' action regarding family behaviour is admitting to the children I don't know something, or apologising if I have misinformed them.

How would you describe yourself on forms or documents when you were asked about nationality and ethnicity?

R14 In all documents, I describe myself as British citizen of ethnic Chinese origin, meaning my nationality is British.

Have you ever been questioned about your British nationality?

R14a No, I've never been questioned about my statement of British nationality. I think my voice carries conviction! If the form is very important, I do give my nationality as British (naturalised) - but usually I only have to open my mouth.

Have you travelled to places you might have identified as 'home' e.g. Huanan, Shanghai, Edinburgh?

R15 No, home is where people I love happen to be.

Where do your children attend school? Why this choice?

R16 No children. [I'm infertile.] However, if I were placing a schoolchild, I would find look for the school where the children are happiest. Academic standards can be improved with help from home, but if a child is unhappy at school he/she will never enjoy studying. In fact, in the UK, unless the parents can afford to send the child to a private school, they are expected to send him/her to the nearest one. If a school has a poor reputation, the family moves house to where schools are better.

Describe your relationship with your spouse and how it has changed.

R17 I married an Englishman and was very happy. We had met at lectures, and his cousin & I shared rooms while we were in our second year. The marriage was the best thing that ever happened to me. He died of cancer 30 years ago. Our marriage was all too brief. My parents-in-law were devastated, but continued to treat me as an extra daughter, and even now, my in-laws cause confusion by forgetting to add 'in-law' when introducing me to their friends.

Describe food preferences - seafood? Chinese food? Western food?

R18 Food? Well, I enjoy it! Insofar as I have preferences, it is for 'clear' tastes, not heavily spiced or sauced flavours. Certain foodstuffs that I don't eat: any dish that has garlic in the cooking, raw onion, durian, the very hot curries, the cheeses that smell like football socks and raw meat or fish. Otherwise, I tend to choose what my friends recommend, for they will know the 'local' specialities. If I am catering for myself, it will be food that suits the climate of wherever I happen to be - meaning, for example, that I rarely have ice-cream in winter, and avoid lots of potatoes in hot weather.

Describe work style Western? Chinese?

R19 I was an Advanced Maths teacher before retirement. My classes were, to a

large extent, shaped by the quality of the students in any 'A' level class. As the purpose of Maths is to teach people to think logically, I tended to concentrate on basics and use the Socratic method so that my students were not afraid of relying on their own judgement. The other thing I made a point of doing was marking the exercises myself, and returning the marked homework for the next lesson. This kept the students alert because they knew I was not asking them to do something I would not do myself. I don't know what style that is considered to be!

The answer to the next question may be a little difficult to put into words but I would like you to describe to me who you think you are culturally. Chinese? British? Depends on the situation? Walk me through a specific situation that you experience which is an example of how you feel about yourself culturally.

R20 I have never felt any need to identify myself with any cultural label. I am myself.

How do you think other people here view you?

R21 My European friends all say how Chinese I am, and all my family & Chinese friends tell me I'm totally English - so I assume I am well-balanced!

What advice would you give Chinese immigrant?

R22 This is serious advice - Sometimes people say or do things that you will consider offensive. Try to clarify what the intention was before losing your temper. If your children are having problems with schoolwork, instead of yelling at them, try asking if they have understood all the lesson; and if they do well in one subject, make sure you tell them that you are proud of their progress. (I spend a lot of time with the Chinese families here pointing out that dear Ming would have much more incentive to work harder at school if he was given his new Xbox as a reward for improved marks, and that dear Bao would work more willingly if he was praised instead of being asked, "Why can't you get 100% every time in every subject?")

What are your future plans? Do you intend to stay?

R23 Actually, at 75, I hope to stay put! My plans? One thing I would really, really like to do is to get Malacca Lace going again near its origin. Singapore is a possible place ...

How many years of formal education did you have?

R24 Formal education, by which I assume you mean something with an exam & a certificate - I went through school, then university as a full-time student & have an Honours degree in Mathematics. After I had enough money to fund myself, I took a part-time course in Embroidery & a further part-time course in Lacemaking. I have diplomas in both, so teach these as non-exam classes. Each of these two courses would have been a 2-year course full-time, but as I was also working for my living, I took 4 years to complete each diploma.

What was your occupation prior to your leaving the country? What is your occupation now?

R25 All my working life I was a Maths teacher. Now I do some work with school as a volunteer, helping children from immigrant families with language problems.

How do you rate your ability to speak English? Very good? Good? Somewhat good? Not very good? Hard to communicate in English?

R26 My spoken English is quite good.

When and where did you first speak English?

R26a I learned English when I started school in Scotland (!) at the age of 7. My parents, who were very polite people, sent me off with the four-phrase vocabulary 'yes', 'no', 'please' & 'thank-you' and told me that would cover every situation. The problem began when I needed to empty my bladder! Mercifully, the wonderful teacher in the reception class worked out the problem by drawing little stick figures on the blackboard and sent me off to the toilet with a girl to show me where this was. After that, she asked two girls to look after me in school time. As soon as I had enough English to cope, I was sent up into the next class, and kept jumping up each term until I was with my own age group. Children started school in the year of their 5th birthday at that point. I spoke English with a Scots accent - inevitably - until my father was offered a teaching post in Cambridge. After a few weeks in the new school, I worked out that my Scots accent made it easy for the teacher to catch me if I had been talking in class; so I worked at developing a 'pure' Oxford accent. (My mother was a phonetician, so there was help at hand.)

How do you rate your ability to speak Chinese? Very good? Good? Somewhat good? Not very good? Hard to communicate in Chinese?

R27 The spoken Chinese is less fluent, mainly because my vocabulary is out-of-date. While I can make myself understood, all the phrases I use date from my parents' youth, and I don't know the words for many of the modern gadgets (such as microwave oven, or antibiotic). Thus I end up speaking 'Chinglish' sometimes. I think six weeks' stay in a totally Chinese-speaking community would probably be enough to get me up to standard. However, I found it hard to communicate in either language in Singapore last year when I was shopping for something trivial - a pair of scissors, or a bottle of shampoo, I think - because (I was told) my "accent was too pure"!

What do you understand a pure accent to mean or sound like?

R27a 'Pure' accent. I'm not sure how to explain this, but if I speak English over the phone, it usually comes as a shock to a strange individual at the other end of the line to find that I am Chinese. Similarly, every time I meet a new Chinese individual, they comment on how accurate my pronunciation is, and how 'textbook' my grammar. It's all to do with the silly things like plurals - a pair of spectacles & a pair of trousers have different words for 'pair' in Chinese, while in English a length of cord & a length of cloth use the same 'length' and in Chinese they have different words. On the whole, I get that sort of thing correct, and this may be what people mean by 'pure' accent.

Selia Tan (S) in Conversation with Gerard Choy (I1) and Fizah Hassan (I2)
Kaiping Office of Protection and Management of Diaolou and Villages
KaiPing, Guangdong, China
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I¹ So you were saying you were born here?

S1 yeah I erm I was born here and in a -- in a overseas Chinese family actually.
(inaudible) my great, great grandfather went to Montreal and he was there for his whole life. And he, he went in about 1907. So erm, but ... he, he was not able to come back until 1959. So sixty, almost like sixty years you know after he left. Erm ... his wife died in 1960, half year later. You know, after they met in Hong Kong. But you know at that time, he had to go back to Canada and he brought my ... erm, uncle, his, first ... er ... grandson to Montreal. So that's that trip. And then er, 19... early 1970s, he tried to come back, but he stop in Hong Kong, because, that's Chinese – China's Cultural Revolution. So he was, he dare not come back. So he was in Hong Kong and die in 1976. So he never came back. So um, I remember, you know, 1976, I was very little. And, and um, in, in loc... the local area here, we have ... um, ceremony, to receive the spirit, you know, er ... er... er ... of dead person you know, from outside. So you see how many ... I can guess, you know, lots of them die, you know, in ... in the United States or Canada, and people use this kind of ceremony to summon their spirit back to their home. So I remember that. And ... so um ... so that's my, my experience, being a descendent of an overseas Chinese.

00:02:25

S2 So um, (...) and then ... er ... in ... I was very interested the ... you know, in the architectural features, you know, on top. So, er ... In eight... 1990s I was in university. And I ... I was, you know, very interested in taking, you know, photos of the ... the top, the rooftop of the towers. That was my plan. I wanted to take pictures of all of the buildings. ((Laughter)) But you know, when I, you know, when I was doing that, I found that, it was something like, I wanted to know, you know, because all those buildings, are empty right? So I ... I was trying to ask people, and who's, you know, who used to use this house. And who are they, and where are they. Nobody could understand - could answer me. They said, "Oh they go to Canada; oh they go to the United States." And that's it. Nothing more.

00:03:42

S3 So in ... in 2002 I went to the United States and as a visiting scholar, in LA area. So ... That's where my base. So I base ... I was based there and travel all of the

Chinatowns and ... and like er ... China camps ... and you know ... and ... I ... I was ... I was, like, to follow the footsteps of the, er ... our ... ((Laughter)) ancestors in America. So I ... I visited lots of place and read some books to know the, er, whole context of the overseas Chinese in North America.

S4 So with that knowledge I came back in two-oh-oh-four to join the... er ... the application (inaudible) the UNESCO, you know, the world heritage application office. You know I was helping them to do the ... er ... to prepare the application dossier. And so ... And then I found that I didn't know heritage management, I didn't know heritage conservation, you know, in terms of like architectural conservation. So in two-oh-oh-five I went to Hong Kong U, Hong Kong University, to study architectural conservation. So that's a ... you know, an exact major that, you know, I can learn and then use the knowledge in the application. So (inaudible) ... And then, yeah, I got a master degree there, and I keep on doing the PhD, yeah, in there Hong Kong U. ((University))

I¹ So you did your PhD at Hong Kong U

S5 Yeah, I'm not finished, still doing it.

00:05:37

I² You're still doing it. And what's your PhD on?

S6 Oh... on the *lu*. (inaudible) On the architecture. The *lu* mansions, you remember? Because the *diaolou* ... (inaudible) lots of *diaolou* are communal, you know, for public use, so and the styles are not as interesting as the *lu* and *lu* you know, because people, those who live in *lu*, you know, *lu* is their ... private ... you know, private home, their own house, they use their money, use their thoughts, use their everything to make it as beautiful as they can. So, so *lu* actually improves more information than *diaolou*.

I¹ Because it becomes a visual sign of themselves. It is their expression of themselves ... it's in the *lu* itself, rather than the *diaolou*, it is more pragmatic and practical and you know ... for a very purposeful function.

S7 Yes. Yes. And *lu*, lots of *lu*, keep the traditional layout, of the traditional, we call it three section, two gates traditional village house layout.

00:07:05

I¹ So putting my own research aside, and just going to go with what's [inaudible], the very interesting questions coming out of your presentation. I was wondering. Well first of all, do you know how many people left from Kaiping at that 1900s?

S8 Um, 1900s I'm not sure. But and I had read in some newspaper or (inaudible) magazines about the vacuum. The overseas Chinese totally at that time, there were ...200,000 people in this area. One-fourth ... one fourth ... ah ... Overseas Chinese.

I¹ 200,000 population?

S9 Population.

I¹ That's in the 1900s?
 S10 um, er ...1920s. Yeah. 1920s.
 I¹ And a quarter of them are overseas?
 I² Went overseas.
 S11 Ya. Ya. Overseas. So actually like, you know ... among the er ... 200,000, they ... they ... they have older people, [inaudible] the women and the kids. Actually, actually, like, old people, and women – wives, and kids. And the men, right? So that's one fourth.

I¹ The quarter that went away.
 S12 Yah. And those at home are old, young kids and women.
 I¹ Defenseless
 S13 That's why they need the *diaolou*.

00:08:54

I¹ I have another question. Of the quarter that went away, how many actually returned to live in Kaiping?
 S14 Oh ... I don't know. Very few. Very few. Because, you see, they, they went to Canada, so far, and they don't enough have money.

I¹ And also the Exclusion Act?
 S15 And also the Exclusion Act. Once they came back, they might not be able to go again.

00:09:33.669

S16 And, and ... and this made another, er ... we call it, er ... tradition in the area. Because the husband was not home, so they don't, they could not have a kid. So they had to buy a kid. A son, usually they would buy a son, not a girl, from other counties, to be their son. I interviewed quite some families like that. It is very popular. More than ... (inaudible) I do research of ... on one village. Eighty-two percent family have, they adopted sons. So that's why we call ... and ... and, locally we have a name for this kind of son. We call it *ming⁴ling⁴ zi²* ((caterpillar son¹)). Yeah. And it's a very popular word in the newspaper at that time. It's, it's kinda very common. Everybody knows that.

I¹ Because at that time, you would need a son to look after the old people, the mother, the women and all that, younger children.
 S17 Yeah, yeah, and to carry the family name.

00:11:13:272

I¹ What is the difference between a Returnee and Overseas Chinese?
 S18 return?

¹ Allee, M. (1994) *Law and Local Society in Late Imperial China: Northern Taiwan in the Nineteenth Century*, Stanford: Stanford University Press. p. 95

I¹ Yes, because after being here for about a week, we still know so little, because we have been here only one week. I hear a lot about the Returned Chinese – the Federation of the Returned Chinese. But when I ask people how many actually returned to live, they say very few. So is the Returned Chinese the same as an Overseas Chinese?

S19 The same, what do you mean the same? Some of them return; many of them do not. So, what do you mean the same?

00:12:01:635

I¹ ... I have been talking with some people; some of them are local people. Some of them are ... one of them is from the Federation of the Overseas Chinese. The phrase that was used is “the Returned Chinese”. So when I ask them, “Where are these Returned Chinese?” they say, “Well no, they live overseas.” So you know, there is a sort of slippage there, because they’re not really returned.

S20 They are returned for some years, and went away.

I¹ So they returned to build, to establish things ...

S21 Some of them came back by themselves. Some of them only send money back. So some of them have never seen.

I² So the local people build it for them?

S22 They have families right, they have a wife, they have parents. So they send money back to the parents, to the wife. And the parents might, you know, invite other people to help, you know, or like uncles.

00:13:13.751

I² So why is it that they eventually become empty? As you said, when you started looking, they were all empty. [...]

S23 After 1949. You know, after 1949, lots of things changed. Right? The lots of them support *Kuomindong*. Right? ((*Kuomintang*, also known as *Guomindang*, the Chinese Nationalist Party)) So and *Kuomindong* went to Taiwan. So, and then some of them left, for Hong Kong. Lots of them stay in Hong Kong. And, and that’s one reason. Like the other reason is like, er, after 1960s, 60s, you know the American, and, and, you know, and Canada can have, you know, they have new laws, right? To allow for Chinese immigration, they have a new way, you know, they have ways to go to, you know, North America for family reunion. Yeah, that’s one reason. And er ... and then actually in 1970s, there still – there was still lots of people living in the villages. You know. Because in the 1960s and 70s they have limited quarters right? Um ... er ... quota ... they have limited quota for Chinese right? You can go, but not many, so, so still there are lots of, um, these families, you know, living in the villages, but after 1979, you know Deng Xiaoping came into power, and he said, we, we should respect the overseas Chinese, we should have new union policy for this people to go over, you know, to North America for family reunion so ... so ... so they, you know- ... You know during the, er, Cultural Revolution, people were so poor ... you know, they have- ... they didn’t have enough food, they t- they didn’t- ... don’t even

have shoes. So ALL of them ... if they can, apply ... to, to United States and Canada. So at that time, from 1979 to 1989, I think like that ten years, lots, lots of them move out. And then from ... from- ... and then to like 1990s to- ... from 1990s, I think only ...er ... the first half of 90s, still there are people going. But, but now, still but not many. Not many. After 2000, not many.

00:16:13.761

I¹ I am referring to the architectural, going back to the architectural, this is the artist in us, isn't it - by the way, I'm a sculptor so, yeah. I'm going back to the architectural thing. Have you -- Do you recognize some of the western influence in these architectural facades, I mean besides the Corinthian columns, there are some of these um, plaster motifs, right. Have you recognized any of them?

S24 Yeah, yeah. I have to do that for my thesis. But I haven't started. [Laugh]. I need to do that.

I¹ Were there only *Diaolous* built by overseas Chinese, or did the local Chinese build?

S25 locals, the locals do.

I¹ They do?

S26 They do.

I¹ And what about the *lu* mansions?

S27 They do. They do. Some of them um, made money in China, some of them. But most of them are overseas ... money.

00:17:24.194

I² But, ... Were there any that were- ... that went to South East Asia – Singapore,

S28 [Yes]

I² [Malaysia?]

S29 Yes. Yes.

I² And build [those]

S30 [The same thing.]

I¹ Do you know where these, they are?

S31 You mean the *Diaolou*? ... Yeah. I know some of them.

I¹ You mean the South East Asia ones?

S32 Yeah.

I² In which village?

S33 Umm. Just in in ... Actually many villages. *Zhi Li* village, you, have you been there?

I² No. Have you been to *Ma Jian Long*?

S34 Yeah, *Ma Jian Long* too. They have Australian, they have New Zealand, they have ... Yeah they have Singapore, they have North America, but the percentage ... is different. Usually, they are more, (inaudible) North America.

I¹ But they build the same kind of architectural...

S35 Yeah, because the same [people]

I² [Builders.]

S36 Yeah, same builders, you know. Same company. They just send money back.

I² So it's not the owners, the owners didn't say, I want this design or that design..

S37 Yes, sometimes the owners would say "I want this, I want this", but because you know, they are, they are from this area. For example, you are, you are all of this people from the same village, right, you are from North America, I am from Singapore, and you know, and you build this, and I just follow you. And at that time, you know, North America was more powerful than South East Asia right, and, and all people would think, you know, North America is better. So actually you know, I, I, I was tracing why they build this kind of architecture. Why right. Why they don't build their traditional houses, so that is one of, the purpose of my thesis.

I¹ That was one of the questions I was going to ask.

00:19:31.489

S38 Yeah, that's my cultural, we call it cultural origin. (Laughs) Cultural origin of the *diaolou* or the *lu* architectural style. Because. You know, I was ... I'm doing this, but um. but I think you know because, you know, they're from America right, they have seen, you know, how advanced at that time, and how backward back here in local, um, area, and the other reason was, they were discriminate, right, they, in North America, like, they, so they had no chance to live in that kind of building, you know, grand houses in North America. They could not. So ... But Chinese, you know, they could not raise their head in America, but they want to have their face in their hometown. That's why we said, they want to save their face here. And want to show off, you know, because you know, they ... I mean, mentally, in North America, they were, they were looked down. You know. They, they have, they had no ... um ... How can i say, they had no like social status. But here ... but when they come back here, you build a nice house, you would, you are become ... becoming, like higher class, in the local area. And this would help you to save more face. So I think this ... is one of the main reasons.

00:21:39.380

S39 Yeah, for example, like my uncle, and my aunt, they're in San Francisco. When I was in L A, I went there to visit them. My, my aunt was, she was uh, she was, er,

in Montreal when she get married um to my uncle. They were working in a laundry, erm laundry, they, they had a laundry but they had to work hard. That's a French area, right, and so, yeah, and and I was told that the French people were not friendly to them. So um, and, so but, in, I think in like 19...60s, they sold the laundry, they sold the house, and moved to San ... Santa Rosa ... in San Francisco area. So when I, when I was there, she is like, um, first, she didn't like me to go there because ... I was from China, I was poor, so ... Second, she wanted to be like higher class than me, and she, she said, "look at you", and ... and, I was like you, you know, jeans and t-shirt and she said, *zou⁶ msi¹ man⁴ (bu⁴ si¹wen* 做唔市民/不斯文) you know. How you say it, you don't look very nice, something like that.

I¹ It's not only "not look very nice", but "it's not proper", "it does not suit the occasion".

00:23:34

S40 Yah, yah! And then, and then, um, I didn't bring the, you know, *sau² sung³* (*shou³song⁴* 手送), gifts. I didn't remember, you know. (Laughs) and she, she was not happy, and she said. And when I, and I mention I went to K-Mart, Wal-Mart, in the United States, "We don't go to those places. We go to Macy. If someone saw you pass the gate of Wal-Mart, or K-Mart, you will lose face. You'll have no face." See?

[...]

00:24:58

I² [...] it's just like our ... [families] do not want to remember about the old times.
S41 Oh yah! When you interview them this about, when I went to Chinatown, I went to the family associations, you know, I went to many associations. Not many of them liked to talk to me about this. But those who were born in America, ABCs. Yah. Those people would be very willing to talk to me.

The Cantonese at the Tip of My Tongue

Chiang Wai Fong

Recently, Guangzhou Native Culture Website (<http://gznf.net>) produced a video that was circulated online. Entitled 舌尖上的粤语 (“The Cantonese at the Tip of My Tongue”), it discusses the origins and development of the Cantonese language and features considerable research by its production team. One of its messages to the audience is that Cantonese is a language on its own, just like Mandarin (or *Putonghua*), rather than a “dialect” of the latter.

The video explains that Cantonese is a language that was formed by the long-term mixing and integration of the ancient language spoken in the historical Central Plains of China and the tribal dialect of the Baiyue people in Lingnan, Southern China. Comparing the histories of Cantonese and other world languages, English originated around the 1550s, during the time of Shakespeare, and became widely spoken in England in the 17th century. In comparison, Cantonese originated 600 years before English, and had record of usage since AD 900. What we call “Mandarin” in Singapore was the language of officials during the Qing Dynasty; the Qing government had set up the Mandarin Review Committee in 1909, officially branding the language spoken by officials at that time, Mandarin, as 国语 (“National Language”). It was later renamed 普通话 (*putonghua*, or “the common language”) to show respect for the cultures of the minority ethnic groups.

There is a saying in sociolinguistics that “a dialect is a language without an army”. This statement suggests that language is often used as a political tool, sometimes by dominant groups to assert their statuses. In many places, conflicts often arise when official languages are set, with different communities vying for an official status for their own languages. In most cases, despite the eventual failure to become institutionalised as an official language, a mother tongue is still recognised as the language of origin for its people.

In the case of Singapore, when the government chose four languages as the official languages of the country, it effectively gave many of its citizens new “mother tongues”. Most first-generation Chinese immigrants came from the southern provinces of China, and only a small minority of the ethnic Chinese community then had Mandarin as its mother tongue. After the official language policy was implemented, English and Mandarin became two new languages that many had to learn, given the Chinese majority within the population.

Humans are creative beings and naturally choose the most efficient way to communicate. When the lingua franca becomes a forbidden language, a new common language would be established within the shortest time frame.

When Singaporeans had to use a newly acquired, non-mother tongue in daily conversations, the mixing of codes within the same utterance became an apparent and inevitable trend. Localised varieties of Mandarin and English started to develop, with linguistic features of the various heritage languages previously widely-used in the community. This matured into a unique language environment.

Singlish is not a local variety that developed from mere “laziness” of speakers to use “proper English”, neither is it evidence of poor acquisition of “standard English”. (If that were the case, Singlish would have emerged during the colonial era). Rather, Singlish is a product of our language policies — developed by having various languages come into contact — and the same linguistic phenomenon can be found in many other places in the world.

Many of our ancestors were bilingual and bicultural; it was also not difficult to find people who could speak three or more languages. And no matter if one were English-educated or Chinese-educated, one would be able to speak one’s heritage language fluently. Even illiterates were able to use two or more common social languages to communicate with one another. However, Singapore’s official language policy severed the ties to one’s heritage language, and Chinese Singaporeans were encouraged to speak in the “official” mother tongue even at home and with friends and relatives. To many, learning that and a working language is a daunting task. The choice is apparent when one has to choose which language to master out of the two; English is the working language, a language that is tied to social and economic mobility, as well as a language of the former colonial rulers. It seems unfair to label ethnic Chinese who are English monolinguals as 香蕉人 (“bananas”, a demeaning term that suggests one is yellow on the outside but white on the inside). If they had been born 20 years earlier, they would likely be fluent in their respective Chinese heritage languages, be familiar with Chinese culture and values, and feel affiliated to their specific heritage.

Changing language behaviour may not necessarily reverse language trends. It may work to a certain extent, but it would require strong intervention with rigorously promoted campaigns, which may no longer be acceptable in today’s society. To understand language trends, the community needs to review and understand the motivational forces that exist in the community, and when necessary, take decisive and bold measures to realign and correct misconceptions and attitudes at the various societal and governmental levels.

My paternal grandmother is 106 years old. Her Cantonese is heavily accented with the Sei-Yap dialect. Although she had left home at a young age, lived in Singapore for over 80 years and watches Mandarin drama series on television, from as far back as I can remember, she speaks to everyone in her accented Cantonese. Her intonation has always been natural, decisive, pure and beautiful. She shows no tendency of

wanting to adapt to any dominant language policies, neither does she display any signs of embarrassment or the need to conform to a more common accent. This determination to speak her own mother tongue shows her confidence and respect for her own heritage. If you were to ask her why she does not speak Mandarin, she would merely give a nonchalant smile, seemingly oblivious to the possibility that the issue even exists.

Cantonese is my mother tongue. I have been speaking Cantonese since I was born, and only learned Mandarin and English when I went to school. I have a special bond with the Cantonese language, because it is my heritage language, the language that I grew up with. I have the same strong feelings for Mandarin, because it is the language that I use to acquire knowledge and to perform intellectual thinking, as well as the first language I use to express my emotions.

My daughter was born a century after my grandmother. I used Cantonese with her when she first learnt to speak, in order to ensure that Cantonese remains a language at the tip of her tongue if she wants to use it. Although she uses mainly Mandarin after entering pre-school, she can still greet her great-grandmother in Cantonese. This is not only an issue regarding inter-generational communication, but also an issue regarding cultural heritage, identity and the respect people should display to one another when we communicate.

It takes determination to protect and maintain one's heritage language, and each individual who does it in his or her own little way is already contributing a lot. Would you do it?

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