

A CRITICAL POLICY ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BI-LITERACY AND TRILINGUALISM LANGUAGE POLICY IN HONG KONG: FROM A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

YULONG LI

City University of Macau



Abstract

On 1st of July, 1997, the sovereignty of Hong Kong was transferred to the People's Republic of China and the Bi-literacy (Chinese and English) and Trilingualism (Cantonese, Mandarin, and English) Language Policy was initiated by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government in order to include Mandarin alongside English and Cantonese as the official languages of Hong Kong to be taught in the public school curriculum. However, there was much resistance to this policy and cases of discrimination against Mandarin and its speakers, even in schools, were reported. Using the framework of Contexts of Policy Making, this study examined the implementation of the Bi-literacy and Trilingualism language policy in Hong Kong. The analysis reveals that the resistance to Mandarin on the part of the populace of Hong Kong can be understood from the perspectives of postcolonialism and anti-cultural imperialism. This analysis makes a useful resource for policy makers to refine the Bi-literacy and Trilingualism Language Policy in the future.

Keywords: language policy, postcolonialism, anti- cultural imperialism, language beliefs, Hong Kong

1. Introduction

In 1960, the United Nations issued the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, declaring its resolution to liberate former colonies for the purpose of safeguarding fundamental human rights and freedoms (The Declaration, 1960). The adoption of a national language subsequently became an important focus for the newly independent nation states to forge a national identity among their people (Wright, 2016). On 1st July, 1997, the sovereignty of Hong Kong was transferred to the People's Republic of China (PRC), and the Bi-literacy (Chinese and English) and Trilingualism (Cantonese, Mandarin, and English) Language Policy (BTLP) was initiated by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (HKSARG), in order to include Mandarin, alongside English and Cantonese, as the official languages of Hong Kong, to be taught in the public school curriculum (Education Bureau, 1997). However, there was much resistance to this policy (Lai & Byram, 2006), and cases of discrimination against Mandarin and its speakers, even in schools, were reported in Hong Kong (Gu & Tong, 2012; Gu & Qu, 2015). Mandarin has been the national language of China since the late feudalist Qing Dynasty; it continued to be used throughout the Republic of China, and later the PRC (Wang, 2014; Zhang & Jing, 2011). Since the majority of the inhabitants of Hong Kong are immigrants from the Chinese mainland and their descendants, their resistance to such a Chinese language incurred the author's confusion and curiosity. Moreover, in 1960, UNESCO published the Convention against Discrimination in Education, which prohibited language-based discrimination (The Convention, 1960).

This policy analysis assesses the resistance to Mandarin as part of the implementation of the BTLP in Hong Kong. The analysis is conducted from the perspectives of postcolonialism and anti-cultural imperialism and includes suggestions for refinements to the policy which seek to safeguard language diversity and the dignity of Mandarin users in Hong Kong.

2. Policy background

There has been a considerable amount of debate in Hong Kong regarding language planning, the majority of which was concerning three languages: English, Cantonese, and Mandarin (Lai & Byram, 2006). Due to Hong Kong's British colonial history, English has long been regarded as the official language, and it is widely used in the areas of legislation, government administrative policy, international commerce, and as the medium of instruction in pre-tertiary education and higher education (Pierson, 1992). A language hierarchy usually exists in a colonial setting, with a particular language being dominant, and others marginalized (Thompson, 1991). In Hong Kong, English is regarded as the higher language and is a symbol of the elite; while Cantonese, the vernacular of the majority of the inhabitants, is treated as a lower language and is considered unsuitable for intellectual activities (Baker, 1997). Meanwhile, the use of Mandarin Chinese, a sibling of the Cantonese language, was restricted before the handover (Adamson & Lai, 1997).

Mandarin shares the same writing system as Cantonese, but differs in its articulation, intonation, grammar, and vocabulary (Wang & Kirkpatrick, 2018) and speakers of one language

cannot understand the other. Unlike Cantonese, which derives from, and is spoken in, the Pearl River Delta area in the southeast of China, Mandarin is based on the dialects of northeastern China. Mandarin possesses an important status as the national language of China. It was appointed as the national language of the country in the late Qing Dynasty (1616-1912), which was the final reigning dynasty of the feudalist empire of China (Zhang & Jing, 2011). The language was further legitimized by its connection to Chinese nationalism in the May Fourth Movement, an anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism movement led by progressive intellectuals and university students in the Republic of China between 1912 and 1949. Moreover, when the communists came to power in the PRC in 1949, Mandarin was recognized as the national language (Wang, 2014; Zhang & Jing, 2011). Despite the political significance of Mandarin, other than the several waves of Mandarin speaking immigrants from mainland China entering Hong Kong in the twentieth century, and a short-lived fashion in Hong Kong for using Mandarin in films and music (Yu & Kwan, 2017), Mandarin speakers were soon assimilated into speaking Cantonese (Pierson, 1992).

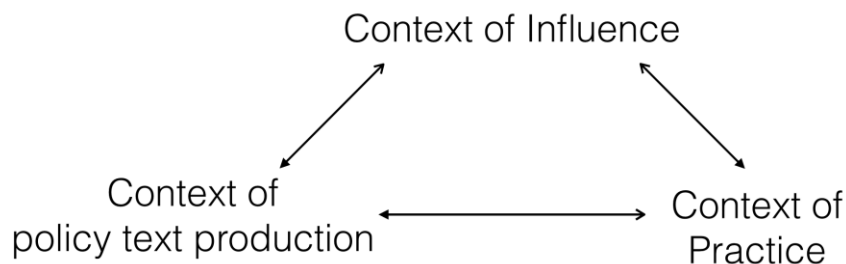
Following the handover of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China in September 1997, the HKSARG enacted the BTLP which sought to change the medium of instruction from English to Chinese in most secondary schools, and included Mandarin as a formal subject in the curriculum (Education Bureau, 1997). The most significant innovation of the policy was to reinforce the use of Mandarin in the local education system, as English and Cantonese were already in use in Hong Kong schools to differing extents. As the short term plan of the BTLP, Mandarin was introduced as a subject to both primary and secondary schools, and then in 2000, Mandarin became an elective subject in Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (Wang, 2019). Mandarin gradually evolved as a core subject in the pre-tertiary education curricula (Evans, 2013). As the long term plan of the BTLP, the Hong Kong SAR is determined to transform Mandarin into the medium of instruction (MoI) of Chinese lessons initially at the secondary school (Wang, 2009). Though the policy did not declare its intention to instantly promote Mandarin as MoI in primary schools, through a large scale survey of 474 primary schools, Wang (2019, pp. 322-323) found out that already "65 schools (41.94%) used almost 100% Putonghua in teaching this subject (Chinese language subject)". Though the HKSARG allows schools to make the final decision in choosing the MoI language suitable for them, a six-year sponsoring scheme to support schools in using Mandarin as MoI to teach or to pilot the course of Chinese Language has been released in the 2008/9 academic year (HKSAR Press Release, 2018). To Cantonese native speakers in Hong Kong, learning Mandarin is nothing easier than learning any foreign languages, as Li (2017) emphasized that the two languages, though share many vocabularies, are found to have major differences in their tone systems and have different extent of social acceptance and usability in Hong Kong. However, additional assistance to those who has challenges in using Mandarin as MoI was not included in the BTLP.

3. Policy analytic framework

Policy is commonly understood to be a linear, top-down, unproblematic public document that aims to resolve certain problems, and which is stipulated by the policymakers or experts following a rigorous process of design and evaluation. Policies are expected to be adhered to by the populace. While this view is generally too reductive and static (Trowler, 2003), this static process of policy making is sometimes adopted by a centralized government (e.g., the UK's Thatcher government 1979-1990) (Bowe et al., 1992). Contrary to this static approach to policy making, Hill (2013) argued that the nature of policy is a power relationship while Bourdieu (1984) explained that the hierarchy between the classes, such as those ruling and those being ruled, is produced through the classes' struggle in the field to retain capital, and that those with the advantage will possess greater power to shape the field in a way that is beneficial to them. Public policy is an instrument of this hierarchy for the ruling class, which imposes on and controls the will of those being ruled (Goodin et al., 2006). Moreover, Knoepfel, et al. (2007) argued that a winner group and a loser group are often derived from the policy process. Therefore, the process of public policy making is considerably more complicated than the aforementioned commonly held static process. In response Bowe et al. (1992) developed a triangular model, known as the Contexts of Policy Making, to explain the influence of stakeholders on policymaking and enactment.

Figure 1

Contexts of Policy Making



Note. From *Reforming Education and Changing Schools: Case Studies in Policy Sociology* (p. 20), by R. Bowe, S. J. Ball, and A. Gold, 1992, London: Routledge. Copyright 1992 by R. Bowe, S. J. Ball, and A. Gold.

In this policy cycle, the first stage is defined as the context of influence, which represents the starting point of a policy, in which different interested parties struggle to ascertain the meaning and ideology of the policy. In the second stage, context of policy text production, power relations also prevail, with different parties struggling and compromising, often in an unpublicized manner, to determine the text that should be employed to represent the meaning of the policy which in turn will be used to persuade the public. The third stage, context of practice, delivers the message via the policy enactment, and the actors may mediate the policy's meaning

in line with their own interpretation and particular context (Braun et al., 2011). According to Ball (1994, p. 10) “policy is both text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended.” There are also other renowned models of language policy study like Spolsky’s (2007) framework, in which he suggests that research in language policy could investigate language management (how authorities regulate a language policy), language beliefs (the ideological aspect of a community’s attitude towards a language), and language practices (the norm of language use among people). Spolsky’s (2007) framework can indeed be transferred to many contexts. However, the reason this analysis follows Bowe and colleagues’ version is because their model is addressing the process of policy making, so to discuss the possible factors influencing the context of practice of BTLP is claiming that the policy making process of BTLP should be unfinished, more resilient and more self-reflexive.

This framework helps narrow down the author’s analysis of the BLTP to focus on the context of practice among Hong Kong’s inhabitants, particularly those who resisted the adoption of Mandarin. Resistance to Mandarin was not directly discussed by the policy makers or HKSARG. Therefore, this analysis employed some third party sources, such as some peer reviewed journal articles concerning the resistance to Mandarin in Hong Kong and some media reports of Mandarin confrontations in Hong Kong. The sociological perspectives of postcolonialism and anti-cultural imperialism is used to analyse the resistance.

4. Postcolonialism

Before discussing postcolonialism, it is first necessary to introduce colonialism, which can be defined as “the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods” (Loomba, 2005, p. 8). Colonialism assisted in the development of the capitalism of European countries, via their territorial expansion, and the exploitation of the resources obtained from their colonies (Loomba, 2005). The decolonization activities in the latter half of the twentieth century marked the end of the colonial epoch, and the study of the inhabitants of the ex-colonies located around the world is now termed ‘postcolonial’. Beyond the exploitation of the colonies’ resources and territory, colonialism altered the inhabitants’ identity and knowledge. As Asante (2006, p. ix) observed, “The colonizer did not only seize land, but also minds.” As a result of the changes they made to education, language, and culture in their colonies, the colonizers stifled the agency of the inhabitants, forcing them to forego resistance thereby legitimizing the colonial ruling (Asante, 2006; Dei, 2006). Moreover, the independence of a colony is not necessarily defined by the total liberation of its territory (Dei, 2006), as the colonial legacy, in the form of the ideology of race, ethnicity, and social class, continues to influence the inhabitants’ knowledge (Sylvester, 2017). In general, the later the liberation of a colony, the greater the challenge for its inhabitants to dispense the colonial legacy (Sylvester, 2017), as is the case with Hong Kong, whose British colonization ceased in 1997. Postcolonial studies seek to unveil the colonial history and legacy of the former European imperial countries (Loomba, 2005) in order to raise the ex-colony inhabitants’ awareness and to truly emancipate them from the colonial chains (Dei, 2006).

5. Anti-cultural imperialism

As previously stated, it is a postcolonial reality that the inhabitants of former colonies may continue to be influenced by the view of their former colonizers. Indeed, the inhabitants of Hong Kong exhibit a preference to British, rather than Chinese governance (Carroll, 2007). The Chinese government's attempts to unite the national identity of the inhabitants of Hong Kong are seen by Hong Kong people as a pan-Chineseness ideology with the intent to "mainlandize" Hong Kong (Lowe & Tsang, 2017). In other words, the people of Hong Kong feel that China's actions constitute a form of cultural imperialism.

Neo-Marxists view cultural imperialism as an arbitrary cultural influence of a dominant nation over a peripheral nation by exerting political and economic measures to force the latter to accept the values, perceptions, beliefs, and even the way of life of the dominant nation (Salwen, 1991). According to Beltran (1978), a precondition of cultural imperialism is that the dominant nation imposes its culture at the expense the local culture of the peripheral nation. However, cultural imperialism may not be successful in assimilating local cultures, as localism often revitalizes as a form of anti-cultural imperialism, a resistance to such homogenization protecting the local cultural integrity and identity (Tomlinson, 1999).

6. Policy analysis: resistance and possible reasons

Many years after the BTLP policy enactment, Cantonese remains the predominant vernacular in the media, the Legislative Council, artistic performances, and local communication, while English retains its status as the language of business and academia, leaving little room for Mandarin usage in the society (Bolton, 2011). In recent years, academic publications and public media have even reported cases of Hong Kong residents' resistance to learning and using Mandarin. For example, Gu and Tong (2012) and Gu and Qu (2015) found that students whose mother tongue was Mandarin were forbidden to speak the language in lessons other than Mandarin, and certain teachers reinforced the opinion that Mandarin is both useless and not respected. Moreover, Gu and Tong (2012) discovered that many Mandarin speaking students in schools were isolated by their Hong Kong peers while Gu and Qu (2015) reported that using Mandarin when shopping can provoke confrontations. In 2018, Hong Kong university students' occupation of the Language Centre of Hong Kong Baptist University to oppose the Mandarin test as a graduation requirement was headline news (BBC, 2018). Furthermore, a local legislator openly prevented a foreign guest from using Mandarin when making a presentation in a Legislative Council meeting stating, "I think the presentation... is quite unnecessarily done in Putonghua (Mandarin). This is Hong Kong. We stick to, we tend to, at least, use English and then Cantonese" (Speakout, 2019, 01:2). These anecdotes represent only a few of many such cases of the resistance to Mandarin. The following sections explore this resistance from the perspective of postcolonialism and anti-cultural imperialism.

6.1. The emergence of the Hong Kong identity as a postcolonial legacy

Hong Kong was under British colonial rule from the mid-19th century until 1997, with the exception of the period of Japanese occupation between 1941 and 1945, which represented a watershed moment for the British colonial government's treatment of the Chinese residents in Hong Kong (Lau Chan, 1994). Before the Japanese occupation, the British rulers had no intention of integrating with the local Hong Kong Chinese, instead they adopted a racial segregation policy by residing on the mountains of Hong Kong island and forbidding the Chinese to reside in the locale, claiming that they introduced an unhygienic and unsafe environment (Wesley-Smith, 1994). From the founding of the colony, conflicts between the Europeans and the Chinese were frequent, some caused by some street vendors and harbour workers' resistance to the unfair treatment of the colonial government (Tsai, 1994), while later conflicts, such as the Canton-Hong Kong railway workers' strike and the 1967 strike, were due to rising Chinese nationalism (Tsai, 1994). In some urgent cases, the British rulers even introduced a curfew to limit the activities of the resident Chinese (Wesley-Smith, 1994).

After WWII, waves of anti-colonial movements had challenged the British rulers. In a final attempt to maintain the British Empire's control over Hong Kong, the colonial government introduced a benevolent policy that sought to pacify the population and obtain their support (Lau Chan, 1994). More importantly, Britain's alliance with the US during the Cold War meant that the borderline between Hong Kong and mainland China was a bulwark against the communists in the same way that the Berlin Wall was against communist Eastern Europe (Tang, 1994). Therefore, the Hong Kong colonial government adopted a series of measures including altering its language planning and distancing its inhabitants from China to guard against the interference of communism, and therefore to sustain the legitimacy of the colonial governance.

6.1.1. De-nationalising the Chinese language, and differentiating Cantonese from Mandarin speaking mainland China

The British colonial government of Hong Kong denationalized the Chinese language in education to avoid the ideological interference of Taipei and Beijing through Chinese language since WWII (Wong, 2012). A government committee was formed in 1953 to review the Chinese language courses in schools, and to determine a course of action based on the principle of strengthening "the intimate ties that bind Hong Kong to Great Britain" (Hong Kong Government, 1953, p. 1). The committee criticized the Chinese curriculum adopted by the schools in Hong Kong, claiming that it was strongly influenced by the Republic of China (Taipei) and resulted in a curriculum that produced "arrogant and bigoted Chinese nationalists" (Hong Kong Government, 1953, p. 19). As Wong (2012) explained, it was claimed that the curriculum portrayed Western cultures as invaders of China, who were therefore not suitable for the legal rule of Hong Kong's inhabitants. The colonial government subsequently regulated that the aim of learning Chinese was only to articulate the mother tongue, to appreciate Chinese tradition and literature, and to "make their way in Hong Kong" (Hong Kong Government, 1953, p. 17).

Moreover, under colonial rule, the Hong Kong curriculum presented Chinese history from a white European-centric perspective that stereotyped other races as uncivilized (Yip, 2013). The history textbooks were adapted to a version that disregarded the invasion by European countries, but stressed the invasion of China by Japan and Russia (Wong, 2012). The May Fourth Movement (an anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism patriotic movement led by intellectuals and students in 1919) was depicted as a literary reform (Wong, 2012), and all the content regarding the contemporary China was not covered in the textbooks (Yip, 2013). Rather than viewing westerners as enemies, Hong Kong pupils were required to study western culture, in order to obtain “a liberal, balanced, and international outlook” (Hong Kong Government, 1953, p. 19). These represent only a few of many such examples of a curriculum that detached the learning of China from acquiring Chinese nationalism.

In addition, the colonial government implemented an arbitrary cultural exclusion of Mandarin (Wong, 2017), e.g., intentionally omitting the Mandarin subject from the official school curriculum (Yip, 2013) and eliminating it from public usage (Pierson, 1992). Mandarin therefore became taboo in Hong Kong, despite the presence of a large number of Mandarin speaking immigrants from mainland China (Yu & Kwan, 2017), who were quickly assimilated into speaking Cantonese (Pierson, 1992). As Holmes (2008) observed,

Where one group arrogates political power and imposes its language along with its institutions - government administration, law courts, education, religion - it is likely that minority groups will find themselves under increasing pressure to adopt the language of the dominant group. (p. 57)

The 1974 confirmation of Cantonese as the co-official language of Hong Kong along with English (Bolton, 2011) strengthened the ties between the Cantonese language and the identity of Hong Kong citizens. Concurrently, the intentional connection between Hong Kong identity and Cantonese language imposed an invisible boundary between the people in Hong Kong and those in mainland China who use Mandarin as national language. This connection ultimately distanced Hong Kong people from recognizing themselves as a part of China. What happened in Hong Kong illustrates Wright’s (2016) claim that language differentiation strengthens political borders, and dilutes the national identity of the inhabitants of adjacent regions.

Nevertheless, even now, two decades after the end of the Cold War and the return of Hong Kong to China, Hong Kong inhabitants fear the manipulation of themselves and future generations by the mainland communist Chinese government. As a result, “language has become for them an important front in the struggle for control over the destiny of Hong Kong” (Wong, 2016, p. 200). Subsequently, the cornered opportunity for Mandarin to be used in Hong Kong (Bolton, 2011) reduced it into merely a symbolic language rather than a language of utility. This loss of utility damages the competent use of the language (Wright, 2016) not to mention the language’s real status. In consequence, in Hong Kong society Mandarin is more typical of a foreigner than a second language (Li, 2017):

In speech, the Chinese variety that is recognized and used as the co-official language is Cantonese rather than Putonghua, the latter being used mainly for transactional and ceremonial purposes; Putonghua is rarely used by local people for intra-ethnic communication among themselves. (p. 93)

6.1.2. A colonial technology: Cantonese popular culture reinforces a Hong Kong identity

The rise of a Hong Kong identity through the purposeful differentiation between Mandarin and Cantonese was accompanied, in part, by the colonial government's promotion of local popular culture spread via Cantonese. Following the 1967 strike¹, the colonial government feared further communist uprisings by the citizens; therefore, they encouraged the development of the local culture to mollify the populace's relationship with the government, and to create a Hong Kong lifestyle that differed from that of the mainland (Ho, 2009). Previously, cultural activities during the colonial period were for the elite, and the emergence of a local identity was suppressed (Ho, 2009.), but the post-1967 rejuvenation of local culture witnessed the flourishing of the television, film, and music industries, which were instrumental in disseminating a modern Hong Kong lifestyle (Yu & Kwan, 2017) using Cantonese. Concurrently, many of the films and television programs portrayed mainland China as a "chaotic, poor, and backward" place (Ho, 2009, p. 81), despite the fact that mainland China was involved in a class struggle cultural revolution.

While the support of the development of popular culture can be viewed as evidencing the colonial government's increasing concern for the well-being of the citizens of Hong Kong, in reality it functioned as a soft precaution against the inhabitants' participation in anti-colonial social activities, such as the 1967 strike. According to Marcuse (1991), public entertainment can be considered a new technological means of ruling people as it eradicates the sense of class differences by encouraging the audience to use the same products and to enjoy the same shows. Furthermore, the encouragement of a local identity represented another means of preventing the mainland's communist ideology from influencing Hong Kong (Ho, 2009). Most citizens of Hong Kong were unaware of these covert intentions of the colonial government, and at least on the surface they began to regard themselves as Hong Kong people living in a modernized, international city that differed considerably from the chaotic backwater, or 'other', China (Chan, 2014). Since the popular culture concern was generally delivered via Cantonese in films and on the radio, the Hong Kong identity that emerged was one that favoured Cantonese (Yu and Kwan, 2017), in contrast with mainland China, where the national language is Mandarin. However, the creation of the Hong Kong identity, or Hong Kongness, (Lowe & Tsang, 2017) was not only an act of justice, as it was also the colonizer's means of oppressing the populace of the colony to maintain their colonial governance (Loomba, 2005).

¹ A large scale violent communist-led workers' demonstration against the British colonial rulers in Hong Kong,

6.1.3. The anti-colonial context of Hong Kong against the backdrop of the UN Declaration of Decolonization

Colonial discourse(s) and influence may linger after the independence of a colony is achieved (Sylvester, 2017), due to the fact that colonizers employed all means of education and consumption practices to reshape the beliefs of the inhabitants of a colonized nation, subjugating them to sponsor their ruler, and belittling their own original culture and language (Dei, 2006). Perhaps these could explain why, two decades after the 1997 return of Hong Kong to China's sovereignty, the citizens still have a preference for the rule of their former British colonizer to that of the Chinese government (Carroll, 2007).

Studying and exposing such a colonial legacy in an ex-colony is the focus of postcolonialism (Loomba, 2005), together with highlighting the excluded past of the peoples of ex-colonies, and their shared history with their mother country, which was of great importance for resisting the colonization, and promoting emancipation (Dei, 2006). Decolonization proved to be an irresistible and irreversible historical process, and the UN's Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples states: "the continued existence of colonialism prevents the development of international economic co-operation, impedes the social, cultural and economic development of dependent peoples and militates against the United Nation's ideal of universal peace." (The Declaration, 1960, para.8) The end of colonialism was deemed to be not only a respect of people's human rights, but also of their inalienable right to complete freedom (The Declaration, 1960). A restoration of national language education is a powerful weapon for resisting any lingering remnants of colonialism, and to recollect the agency of the inhabitants of the former colony (Dei, 2006). As language was once the vehicle by which the colonizers warped the inhabitants' perceptions and produced the discourse of oppression in the colonies (Sylvester, 2017), just like how the British colonizers detached Chinese from Chinese nationalism.

However, the text of the BTLP made no mention of postcolonialism nor did it make any justification for why Mandarin, as the national language of China, should be learned in Hong Kong, or the ways in which is it important for Hong Kong citizens. Without such justification, any pragmatic justification or administrative enforcement of Mandarin may look pale. Rather, the BTLP merely expressed the hope that in future, the citizens of Hong Kong would be proficient in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin (Education Bureau, 1997).

6.2. Localism clashes with Chinese nationalism: The Hong Kong people against China's cultural imperialism

6.2.1. Mandarin is 'mainlandizing' Hong Kong

In the wake of decolonization, many new independent nation states were founded, and in order to achieve self-determination, these newly forged states sought to promote a national language to create a national identity and shared culture (Wright, 2016). For example, in Ghana, a former British colony in Africa, English has been the official language since the period of colonization and is used in almost all the public communications (Agykum, 2018). English

formulated an arbitrary discourse in Ghana, and even after the country's independence, few newspapers were printed in local newspaper, which seriously endangered the local language (Agykum, 2018). When some broadcasting media started to use local language like Ga, Agykum (2018, p. 94) believes that it "serves as a mechanism for the storage of expressions, reservoirs and reference points for the circulation of words, phrases and discourse, proverbs and other aspects of Ghanaian language and popular culture", which are the preservation of the shared culture to the Ghanaian people. The mainland China adopted Mandarin as its national language in 1955 and when Hong Kong was restored to China in 1997, the Chinese government encouraged the HKSARG to stipulate the adoption of BTLP to create a Chinese identity for the inhabitants of Hong Kong, with the policy stating: "Our community is essentially Chinese. We speak, read and write Chinese in our daily life. The government has therefore been promoting the use of Chinese over the years" (Education Bureau, 1997, para.2).

However, national cultures, and even nations, are imagined communities forged by the elite (Tomlinson, 1999), and the construction of a common national identity is inevitably pre-conditioned by a people sharing common memories, values, emotions, and destiny. As discussed previously, an identity that differentiated Hong Kong citizens from mainland Chinese was created gradually from the 1960s onward (Ho, 2009), and Hong Kong citizens eventually developed a common life experience and destiny after more than a hundred years of colonial governance (Yu & Kwan, 2017). The recognized Hong Kong identity potentially clashes with the Chinese nationalism that the mainland imposes. Therefore, to the inhabitants of Hong Kong, promoting Mandarin threatens their local identity and culture, and they are inclined to consider it an act of China's cultural imperialism that attempts to 'mainlandize' and culturally homogenize Hong Kong (Chan, 2014; Yu & Kwan, 2017).

6.2.2. Localism as a form of anti-cultural imperialism

Cultural imperialism is viewed as one of the earliest theories of cultural globalization (Tomlinson, 1999). It is considered to be the product of the dystopian imagination fearing a hegemonic culture that threatens cultural diversity due to the increasing interaction of ethnicities, races, and countries (Tomlinson, 1999). Localism emerges in opposition to such homogenization, and it can be defined as a populace's persistent recognition and support for their local culture (Cohen & Kennedy, 2013). Hence, the resistance of the populace of Hong Kong to Mandarin can be argued to be the product of their fear of China's hegemonic culture. Such fears result in the inhabitants of Hong Kong adopting a Hong Kong ethnocentric perspective that specifically positions the Hong Kong identity and culture in opposition to that of mainland China, in order to create a sense of cultural superiority over their mainland counterparts (Tomlinson, 1999). Therefore, the localism of Hong Kong citizens represents a form of resistance to mainland China's cultural homogenization and explains why Mandarin speakers are subject to confrontations and limitations in Hong Kong when speaking Mandarin. As Wright (2016, p. 49) explained, "Nationalist ideology discouraged minority language use with a variety of sanctions from mockery to punishment". While this Hong Kong form of localism does not

constitute a national ideology, the above quote illustrates the role localism had in expelling the use of Mandarin in Hong Kong.

6.2.3. Beware of locality as destiny

The handover of Hong Kong to China and the subsequent promotion of learning Mandarin gave many Hong Kong citizens, such as those who transferred their industries to the mainland, the opportunity to prosper (Cheng, 2014). However, interactions between Hong Kong and mainland China as part of the process of globalization does not distribute resources equally, and as such can lend priority to some, while marginalizing others (Tomlinson, 1999). Those who retain Hong Kong ethnocentrism as a form of resistance to Mandarin and mainland China culture may have a locality as their destiny “as their life chances are gradually reduced and they are increasingly stuck in the micro-territories in which they were born” (Morley & Robins, 1995, p. 219). However, there is no pure form of localism that can segregate itself from the outside (Morley & Robins, 1995). Therefore, the citizens of Hong Kong may want to reconsider the barrier they have created with mainland China through language differentiation, not only because Hong Kong is now part of China, but more importantly because Mandarin Chinese as a lingua franca is growing (Crystal, 2003).

Mandarin may therefore represent an opportunity for the marginalized and the poor to transform their destinies that are currently embedded in the locality (Tomlinson, 1999). It should be noted that BTLP failed to highlight the value of learning Mandarin in the globalized world. Such an omission may have also inevitably resulted in the emergence of a rift among the Hong Kong people: those who supported Mandarin as the medium of instruction on one side, and those in opposition on the other (Lai & Byram, 2006).

7. Conclusion

The resistance to Mandarin on the part of the populace of Hong Kong can be understood from the perspectives of postcolonialism and anti-cultural imperialism. This policy analysis makes a useful resource for policy makers to refine BTLP in the future. Without the presence of the British colonial legacy and its remaining influence on Hong Kong and without an emphasis on the damage that localism and a resistance to using Mandarin might cause, the people of Hong Kong may not fully comprehend either the decolonization intentions of the country, or the opportunities that mastering Mandarin can bring. Most importantly, as the UNESCO 1960 Convention declared, a world with no language discrimination should be founded, in order to guarantee education for all and to safeguard the true democracy (The Convention, 1960). Furthermore, through the lens of Bowe and colleagues’ (1992) policy making model, readers may change from seeing BTLP as a static and completed policy to seeing it as an on-going process remained to be refined. However, this policy analysis model was not specifically designed for language policy research, and from the analysis, ideological issues regarding the three languages in Hong Kong emerge. Therefore, future studies can try to use more language-oriented frameworks like the Spolsky’s (2007), particularly the framework’s language belief

component, to investigate the language beliefs of Hong Kong people as more concrete feedbacks to the BTLP policymakers. This study is mainly following the postcolonial perspective the author holds, and it means the author has a bias that decolonization should be the mission and destiny of all the people in the colonies or ex-colonies, which may inevitably influence the author to over-generalize a heterogeneous community of people.

References

- Adamson, B. & Lai, W. A. (1997). Language and the curriculum in Hong Kong: dilemmas of triglossia. In M. Bray & W. O. Lee (Eds.), *Education and political transition: implications of Hong Kong's change of sovereignty* (pp. 87–100). Hong Kong: The University of Hong Kong.
- Agyekum, K. (2018). Linguistic imperialism and language decolonisation in Africa through documentation and preservation. In J. Kandybowicz, T. Major, H. Torrence, P. T. Duncan (Eds.), *African linguistics on the prairie: Selected papers from the 45th Annual Conference on African Linguistics* (pp. 87–104). Berlin: Language Science Press. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1251718>
- Asante, M. K. (2006). Foreword. In G. J. S. Dei & A. Kempf (Eds.), *Anti-colonialism and education* (pp. ix-x). Rotterdam, Holland: Sense Publisher.
- Baker, C. (1997). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Ball, S. J. (1994). *Education reform: A critical and post-structural approach*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- BBC (2018, January 24). *Xianggang Jinhui Daxue Putonghua Huominashi Fengbo: Zhenglun jiaodian shishenme* [The affair of the exemption of Mandarin exam in The Hong Kong Baptist University: What is the debate. <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp/chinese-news-42784690>
- Beltran, L. R. (1978). Communication and cultural domination: USA—Latin America case. *Media Asia*, 5, 183-192.
- Bolton, K. (2011). Language policy and planning in Hong Kong: Colonial and post-colonial perspectives. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 2, 51-74.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bowe, R., Ball, S. J., & Gold, A. (1992) *Reforming education and changing schools: Case studies in policy sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Braun, A., Ball, S. J., & Maguire, M. (2011). Policy enactments in schools introduction: Towards a toolbox for theory and research. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 32(4), 581-583.
- Carroll, J. M. (2007). *A concise history of Hong Kong*. Hong Kong University Press.
- Chan, C. K. (2014). China as “Other”: Resistance to and ambivalence toward national identity in Hong Kong. *China Perspectives, Special Issue*, 25-34.
- Cheng, J. Y.-S. (2014). The emergence of radical politics in Hong Kong: Causes and impact. *The China Review*, 14(1), 199-232.
- Cohen, R. & Kennedy, P. (2013). *Global sociology*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language*. Cambridge University.

- Dei, G. J. S. (2006). Introduction: Mapping the terrain - towards a new politics of resistance. In G. J. S. Dei & A. Kempf (Eds.), *Anti-colonialism and education* (pp. 25-42). Rotterdam: Sense Publisher.
- Education Bureau (1997). *Medium of instruction*. <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/education/system/primary-secondary/applicable-to-secondary/moi/guidance-index.html>
- Evans, S. (2013). The long march to biliteracy and trilingualism: Language policy in Hong Kong education since the handover. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 33, 302-324.
- Goodin, R. E., Rein, M., & Moran, M. (2006). The public and its policies. In M. Moran, M. Rein., & R. E. Goodin. (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of public policy* (pp. 2-38). Oxford University Press.
- Gu, M. & Qu, X. D. (2015). Ideological disqualification in language use: Being newcomers in primary education. *Research Papers in Education*, 30(4), 506-522.
- Gu, M., & Tong, H. K. (2012). Space, scale and languages: Identity construction of cross-boundary students in a multilingual university in Hong Kong. *Language and Education*, 26(6), 501-515.
- Hill, M. (2013). *The public policy process*. Harlow, England: Pearson.
- HKSAR Press Release (2018, February 7). LCQ21: The use of Putonghua as the medium of instruction for teaching the Chinese Language Subject in primary and secondary schools. Retrieved on January 22, 2021 from <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201802/07/P2018020700609.htm>
- Ho, O. H.-k. (2009). China: The process of decolonization in the case of Hong Kong. In P. Gassert & M. Klimke (Eds.), *1968-Memories and Legacies of a global revolt* (pp. 79-82). German Historical Institute.
- Holmes, J. (2008). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Hong Kong Government. (1953). *Report of the Chinese studies Committee*.
- Knoepfel, P., Larrue, C., Varone, F. & Hill, M. (2007). *Public policy analysis*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Lai, P.-S. & Bryam, M. (2006). The politics of bilingualism: A reproduction analysis of the policy of mother tongue education in Hong Kong after 1997. In H. Lauder, P. Brown, J.-A. Dillabough, & A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Education, globalization & social change* (pp. 490-504). The Oxford University Press.
- Lau Chan, K.-c. (1994). Hong Kong in Sino-British Diplomacy, 1926-1945. In M. K. Chan (Ed.), *Precarious balance: Hong Kong between China and Britain, 1842-1992*, (pp. 71-89). Hong Kong University Press.
- Li, D. C. (2017). *Multilingual Hong Kong: Languages, literacies and identities*. Gewerbestrasse, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
- Loomba, A. (2005). *Colonialism/postcolonialism*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Lowe, J. & Tsang, E. Y.-h (2017). Disunited in ethnicity: the racialization of Chinese Mainlanders in Hong Kong. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 51(2), 137-158.
- Marcuse, H. (1991). *One dimensional man*. London: Routledge.

- Morley, D. & Robins, K. (1995). *Spaces of identity: Global media, electronic landscapes and cultural boundaries*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Pierson, H. (1992). Cantonese, English, or Putonghua-unresolved communicative issue in Hong Kong's future. In G. A. Postiglione (Ed.), *Education and society in Hong Kong* (pp. 183-202). Hong Kong University Press.
- Salwen, M. B. (1991). Cultural imperialism: A media effects approach. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 8, 29-38.
- Speakout (2019, January 17). *Guoxing Mao Meng Jing! Mu Zhun Ren Jiang Putonghua?* [Awaking Mao Meng Jing! Forbidding others speaking Putonghua?] Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJ0Sg2PacSo>
- Spolsky, B. (2007). Towards a theory of language policy. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, 22(1), 1-14.
- Sylvester, C. (2017). Post-colonialism. In J. Baylis, S. Smith, & P. Owens (Eds.), *The globalization of world politics: An introduction to international relations* (pp. 174-188). Oxford University Press.
- Tang, J. T. H. (1994). World War to Cold War: Hong Kong's future and Anglo-Chinese interaction, 1941-55. In M. K. Chan (Ed.), *Precarious balance: Hong Kong between China and Britain, 1842-1992* (pp. 107-129). Hong Kong University Press.
- The Convention (1960, December 14). *Convention against discrimination in education 1960*. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12949%26URL_DO=DO_TOPIC%26URL_SECTION=201.html
- The Declaration (1960, December 14). *Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples*. The United Nations and Decolonization. <https://www.un.org/en/decolonization/declaration.shtml>
- Thompson, J. B. (1991). Editor's Introduction. In P. Bourdieu & J. B. Thompson (Eds.), *Language and symbolic power* (pp. 1-31). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Tomlinson, J. (1999). *Globalization and culture*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Trowler, P. (2003). *Education policy*. London: Routledge.
- Tsai, J.-f. (1994). From antiforeignism to popular nationalism: Hong Kong between China and Britain, 1839-1911. In M. K. Chan (Ed.), *Precarious balance: Hong Kong between China and Britain, 1842-1992*, (pp. 9-25). Hong Kong University Press.
- Wang, D. J. (2014). Guanhua, Guoyu and Putonghua: Politics and the modification of standard language in Modern China. *Academic Monthly*, 46(2), 155-170.
- Wang, L. (2019). The "biliterate and trilingual" policy in Hong Kong primary school education. In B. L. Reynolds & M. F. Teng (Eds.), *English literacy instruction for Chinese speakers* (pp. 317-332). Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wang, L. X., & Kirkpatrick, A. (2018). Students' and parents' perceptions of trilingual education in Hong Kong primary schools. *International Journal of Multilingualism, Online First*, 1-18.

- Wesley-Smith, P. (1994). Anti-Chinese legislation in Hong Kong. In M. K. Chan (Ed.), *Precarious balance: Hong Kong between China and Britain, 1842-1992* (pp. 91-105). Hong Kong University Press.
- Wong, A. D. (2016). *On the iconization of simplified Chinese*. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 26(2), 184-203.
- Wong, T. -H. (2017). *Nine lectures on critical sociology of education*. Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press.
- Wong, T.-H. (2012). De-universalizing hegemonies: Chinese school policies in postwar Singapore and Hong Kong. *Multicultural Education Review*, 4(1), 90-118.
- Wright, S. (2016). *Language policy and language planning: From nationalism to globalisation*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Xiaosi (2015). *Xianggang Wenxue Sanbu*, [Walking in the Literature of Hong Kong]. Shanghai, China: Shanghai Translation Publishing House.
- Yip, K. Y. (2013, April 19). *Xiang gang Zhimindi Jiaoyu*. [Education in Colony Hong Kong]. Spark. <https://sparkpost.wordpress.com/2013/04/19/colonial-education/>
- Yu, F.-L. T., & Kwan, D. S. (2017). Social construction of national reality: Chinese consciousness versus Hong Kong consciousness. *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal*, 3(2), 657-686.
- Zhang, X. D., & Jing, F. Z. (2011). Qingmo minchu yuyan Biange zhong de guojia yishi. [The sense of nation in the language reform at the interchange between late Qing Dynasty and the start of the Republic of China]. *Shehui Kexue Luntan*, 8, 48-57.