Journeys of Mainland Chinese Students in English-Medium Education in Hong Kong

Shiyu Zhou

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
http://knowledge.library.iup.edu/etd/1259

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Knowledge Repository @ IUP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations (All) by an authorized administrator of Knowledge Repository @ IUP. For more information, please contact cclouser@iup.edu, sara.parme@iup.edu.
JOURNEYS OF MAINLAND CHINESE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM EDUCATION IN HONG KONG

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Shiyu Zhou

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2014
Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
School of Graduate Studies and Research  
Department of English

We hereby approve the thesis of

Shiyu Zhou

Candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

____________________________________
Sharon K. Deckert, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English, Advisor

____________________________________
David I. Hanauer, Ph.D.
Professor of English

____________________________________
Gloria Park, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of English

ACCEPTED

____________________________________
Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.
Dean  
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Title: Journeys of Mainland Chinese Students in English-Medium Education in Hong Kong

Author: Shiyu Zhou

Thesis Chair: Dr. Sharon K. Deckert

Thesis Committee Members: Dr. David I. Hanauer
                        Dr. Gloria Park

This qualitative study aims to explore Mainland Chinese students’ language learning experience during their educational journey in Hong Kong and focus on the relationship between their context-dependent language choices and their processes of identities constructions.

Data were collected through individual interviews with eight participants. Grounded in post-modern notion of social identity theories, the results of the individual analysis on each participant were presented as a form of narrative. The individual analysis showed participants’ language choices in relation with their identities constructions. Five themes that respond to the research questions emerged from the results. From the discussion of the first four themes, a model of identity construction process was developed. The model explains the three cases of the participants as an explanatory tool for identity construction in trilingual context.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely believe that this study would not be completed without the supporting of many people. I would like to express my sincere thanks.

First, my sincere appreciation goes to my thesis advisor, Dr. Sharon K. Deckert. Her professional advice, support, and unique understanding helped me to complete my thesis. Every single word of her advice helped me improve the academic writing skills, and the quality of the contents. Her continuous care encouraged me to develop my thesis at the level of which I am most capable. I sincerely appreciate all her support, as well as the time she extended for my thesis.

I would like to express my great gratitude to my program advisor, Dr. Gloria Park, who supported me through the whole process of writing this thesis. Without her academic advice and encourage, I would not be able to go through the bottleneck. Without her continuous care and support, I would not be able to conclude this thesis writing project. I sincerely appreciate her care and encourage in my professional growth in this program. Also, I am truly grateful for the academic support from Dr. David I. Hanauer. His insightful guidance both inside and outside the class helped me design and structure this thesis. His professional advice and technical support helped me develop this thesis.

This thesis would not have existed without the contribution from my dear friends in Hong Kong. I would like to express my great appreciation for their interests and support in my study, their willingness to share their experiences, and their hope for the
success in my thesis. I hope that their experiences in participating this study helped them to reflect on their learning experiences and to learn something meaningful.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my dear cohorts in the M.A. TESOL program, as well as my other friends in this program. Specially, I would like to thank Miss. Suryaningsih Hartati for her spiritual and technical support throughout the thesis writing process. Also, I would like to thank Mrs. Jocelyn Amevuvor and Miss. Elizabeth Witherite for the considerable amount of their academic advice. All of my friends’ care, support, and advice from academic to spiritual helped me and encouraged me to develop every step in my thesis. I cannot fully appreciate all their support and advice they gave me.

Lastly, I am thankful for my parents and my grandparents for their wishes for my successful thesis writing. Their selfless support helped me a lot to continue my work on my thesis. I am also thankful for my friend in Mainland China, in Hong Kong, and in Japan, who sent me their care and wishes for my thesis. They supported every stage in my thesis. I am thankful for all the people who directly and indirectly supported my thesis in various stages. I would like to express my appreciation for their support and understanding. Again, I give my sincere thanks to all the people who are involved in my thesis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION ........................................................................ 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement of the Problem and Research Site ........................... 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Questions ................................................................... 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization of the Study ..................................................... 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction ............................................................................... 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Colonialism ........................................................................ 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical Background ................................................................ 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linguistic Situation of Hong Kong .......................................... 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English Language Policy in Postcolonial Context ....................... 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity .................................................................................... 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positioning of Identity ............................................................ 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link Between Language and Identity .......................................... 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processes of Identity Construction ......................................... 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>METHODOLOGY ......................................................................... 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction ............................................................................... 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Design .......................................................................... 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative Research ................................................................ 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-Structured Qualitative Interview ..................................... 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Site ........................................................................... 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focal Participants ..................................................................... 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data Collection .......................................................................... 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants Selection ............................................................. 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Information of the Participants</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure of the Interviews</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection on Data Analysis</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four DATA AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiang</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiang’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jie</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jie’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Identity and Majority/Minority Identity</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xing</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xing’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xing’s Majority/Minority Identities in Hong Kong Context</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meng</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meng’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meng’s Majority/Minority Identities in Hong Kong Context</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hao</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hao’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hao’s Majority/Minority Identities in Hong Kong Context</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi’s Majority/Minority Identities in Hong Kong Context</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Identity in Trilingual Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bilingual and Trilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language Identities and Majority/Minority Identities in Trilingual Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme One: Difference Between Cantonese Learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme Two: Cantonese Learner Identity as Changing over Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme Three: Sense of Majority Identity on Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme Four: Sense of Majority Identity in Trilingual Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theme Five: Context-Dependent Individuals’ Identities’ Construction in Relation to Language Choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wei’s Case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xing’s Case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summer’s Case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summary of the Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limitations of the Present Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implication for Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suggestion for Future Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Summary of Participants’ Information</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relationship Between Participants’ Language Identities and Majority/Minority Identities</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Participants’ Language Choices in Trilingual Context</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Language choices in relation to contexts, language identity and majority/minority identity</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many universities in Hong Kong have started attracting a large number of applicants from Mainland Chinese students. I should be one of them, but I missed two chances to go for my further study in Hong Kong. Therefore, I have more interested in hearing the experiences from people who are studying in that context. Hong Kong is very special, people live there have a trilingual environment, English, Putonghua, and Cantonese. After the transfer of power from the United Kingdom to China in 1997, English remained the official language at most educational institutions, and the usage of Putonghua, or Cantonese depends on different institution’s language policies.

In this study, the students and professors were required to use English as a medium based on the language policies in Hong Kong universities. However, students use Putonghua and Cantonese to communicate with each other after class. Under this circumstance, many scholars have investigated on this field. For instance, many researchers explored how the power transfer or trilingual contexts affected the Hong Kong educational system (Edward & Flora, 2003; Mark & Ramsey, 2004; Gao, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). Some of Mainland Chinese students study in Hong Kong felt “they were sometimes welcomed by local students and other times there was a ‘wall’ between them and local students” (Gao, 2010, p. 289), but some students who are now studying in Hong Kong told me different stories. Since things in Hong Kong may change rapidly, I
believe the research about Mainland Chinese students’ experiences and their perceptions of English, Putonghua, Cantonese, and their identities construction needs to be update very year.

With the above as the background and origin of my research, I conducted a qualitative research, grounded in post-modern notion of social identity theories, which focused on exploring the language learning experiences of Mainland Chinese students who enrolled in graduate programs in Hong Kong universities. In order to analysis their language learning experiences and narratives in Hong Kong, this study explores the students’ language identity construction in relation with their language choices through interacting with different communities in Hong Kong in their academic and social life. It is significant to explore the participants’ language learning experiences and stories in order to investigate how the participants’ language choices inform their identities construction. Through analyzing their narratives, the study sheds light upon how some Mainland Chinese students’ identities are constructed while they navigate the trilingual contexts in Hong Kong. In this study, I will explore the Mainland Chinese students’ learning experiences in Hong Kong, which mainly focus on the construction of their language identities and majority/minority identities in relation to the language choices in trilingual context.
Statement of the Problem and Research Site

In this study, I explore language-learning experiences of eight Mainland Chinese students during their educational journey in Hong Kong. Understanding and exploring how trilingual contexts influence the ways in which Mainland Chinese students perceive their language identity and their majority/minority identity in English-medium universities in Hong Kong is one of the major concerns of my research. With Hong Kong’s historical and language background, I focus on exploring how trilingual context impacts on Mainland Chinese students language choices and their identities constructions.

Hong Kong’s trilingual environment was formed gradually after the transfer of the sovereignty. In 1997, Hong Kong was transferred the sovereign from the United Kingdom to China. After the transfer from a British Dependent Territory to a Chinese Special Administration Region, the identity of Hong Kong changed. After that, English remained the official language at most interaction situation. Some universities offered bilingual (Putonghua, English) or trilingual (Putonghua, English, and Cantonese) courses based on their language policies. Ever since then, the usage of the words and notions such as “trilingual,” “postcolonial,” “identity construction,” “regime transition” has appeared commonly in the research field all over the world. There is an emerging trend in studying how postcolonial contexts have influenced the students’ learning experiences and identity construction in Hong Kong (Brenda, 2001; Edward, 2003; Mark, 2004; Gao, 2007, 2008,
Since Hong Kong developed and changed fast, ongoing research is needed. The ongoing research is needed to explore the changes that are happening in Hong Kong universities as a result of the trilingual context and postcolonial language policies impacting students’ language learning journeys.

The Chinese government in Beijing established a “one country, two systems” policy after the transfer of power of Hong Kong. Under the policy, Hong Kong was allowed to keep its capitalist economic. Based on Hong Kong’s situation, the core systems such as its educational system were also allowed to keep. It is a win-win policy for both Mainland China and Hong Kong especially in educational system. For instance, the policy encouraged Mainland Chinese students who had planned to pursue education outside Mainland China to come to Hong Kong to receive English-medium education. In return, they added knowledge and economy benefit to the Hong Kong educational system. As a result, more and more universities in Hong Kong increased the enrollment of Mainland Chinese students. There has been a visibility of increasing number of Mainland Chinese students studying in universities in Hong Kong (Li & Bray, 2007). Therefore, a critical area of research began to focus on the trend of increasing enrollment of Mainland Chinese students in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong has a trilingual language environment. English is still the dominant language in business, professional, and higher education fields. Cantonese is widely used in daily life in Hong Kong, which is treated as the regional dialect. Putonghua, which
promoting in Hong Kong after the transfer of power in 1997, is the national language of the People’s Republic of China. The English-medium learning environments provide the Mainland students with opportunities to use English in their academic studies. The trilingual context provided the Mainland Chinese students opportunities to choose and use different languages. This qualitative research examined the Mainland Chinese students’ language learning experiences through interacting with different communities in their academic and daily life in the Hong Kong, and explored the Mainland Chinese students’ identities construction in relation to their language choices.

Based on the above background, this research focuses on the narratives of eight Mainland Chinese students who were living and studying in Hong Kong. The participants were all grew up in Mainland China and enrolled in graduate program in Hong Kong universities. They experienced a totally new cultural and language environment, which may have influenced on their perception of English, Putonghua, and Cantonese. Under this trilingual circumstance, it is worthwhile to explore the participants’ learning experiences and their identity construction in relation to their language choices. This research focuses on analyzing the narratives of participants’ interviews. The abundant data from the participants illustrate their academic and social life in Hong Kong and further explore how their learning experiences influence their language choices and identity constructions.
Research Questions

This study will explore the eight Mainland Chinese students’ construction of their language identities and majority/minority identities in relation to their language choices while adapting to multicultural and trilingual social contexts during their learning process in Hong Kong universities. In order to investigate the participants’ learning and living experiences in Hong Kong, I pose a research question for this study.

How do Mainland Chinese students construct their identities during their language learning process in Hong Kong?

Organization of the Study

The rest of this study is organized as follows: Chapter Two provides an overview of research, including: general historical and linguistic background; and the fundamental concepts of identity. The pervious researches also noted that further investigation should be conducted to explore and illustrate Mainland Chinese students’ majority/minority identities construction within the trilingual context in Hong Kong.

Chapter Three presents the qualitative methods and the eight participants in the study. The qualitative method guided my study to focusing on Mainland Chinese students’ experiences and analyzing the data from participants’ narratives. The narrative analyzing approach was useful in helping me gain a better understanding of the students’ language learning experiences in trilingual context in Hong Kong.

Chapter Four presents the data in a narrative form. The participants’ narratives as
individual analysis were based on the data sources from their individual interviews. Each participant presented different stories according to his/her experiences of language learning in Hong Kong, which illustrates his/her language choices in relation with identities construction.

Chapter Five provides the discussion of five themes based on the analysis in Chapter Four. The theory of post-modern notion of social identity construction is used to further analyze the participants’ narratives. The discussions focus on exploring the relationship between participants’ language identities, their majority/minority identities, and their context-dependent language choices. It also informs the pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for the future research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The present study examines the Mainland Chinese students’ interviews of their learning experiences in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, after transfer of power from the United Kingdom to China in 1997, people live and work in a trilingual environment. Meanwhile, globalization and China’s recent economic development have created unprecedented momentum for learning English among learners on the Chinese Mainland (Jiang, 2003; Pang, Zhou, & Fu, 2002). Under these circumstances, many scholars have studied how the power transfer or trilingual contexts have influenced the educational system and students’ learning experience in Hong Kong. In particular, they have studied the Hong Kong language education policies (Edward & Flora, 2003; Mark & Ramsey, 2004; Gao, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). Gao (2010) found that some Mainland Chinese students who were studying in Hong Kong felt “they were sometimes welcomed by local students and other times there was a ‘wall’ between them and local students” (p. 289), but other students who are now studying in Hong Kong have told me their learning experiences that are different from those that Gao (2010) found. Therefore, this research aims to further explore this issue guiding by the following research question:
How do Mainland Chinese students construct their identities during their language learning process in Hong Kong?

This study is designed to procure further insights on the focal issues, based on that research question. It aims to generate an academically impact on the field of English language learners’ identities construction in relation with context-dependent language choices in Hong Kong context. Furthermore, this study may not only helps Mainland Chinese students, who are studying in Hong Kong, gain a clearer understanding of their identities construction, but it also may help students, who want to study in Hong Kong, have a better preparation before they make the decision.

As represented by this research question, the topic of this study consists of the issues of Mainland Chinese students’ experiences, and students’ language identities and majority/minority identities construction in Hong Kong. In this chapter, I first review the general historical background of the political transition from colonial to postcolonial government in Hong Kong, and then explore how postcolonial trilingual contexts influence its educational policy and English-medium language-learning environment. Secondly, I review the fundamental concepts of identity as well as the previous theories about how the language learners’ identities were constructed when they adapted to a new cultural environment. I also present how the present study approaches identity. Finally, I review the methodology, including the nature of qualitative research, such as narratives analysis and semi-structured interview, which are used to explore Mainland Chinese
students’ experiences in Hong Kong. These studies include the issues of English language learning, and the learner’s identity constructions.

Post-Colonialism

Historical Background

Hong Kong was colonized by the United Kingdom from 1842 to 1997. In July 1st, 1997, the sovereignty of Hong Kong was returned from United Kingdom to China. After transfer of power from the United Kingdom to China, the identity of Hong Kong was changed from a British Dependent Territory to Chinese Special Administrative Region. This shift means Hong Kong formally entered postcolonial time. Meanwhile, this historical transformation gives Mainland Chinese students more opportunity to gain further study in Hong Kong. According to Li and Bray (2007), universities in Hong Kong have started attracting a large number of applicants form Mainland China. According to online calculating, in 2006 alone, 10,230 Mainland Chinese students applied for 270 undergraduate places allocated to these applicants by the Hong Kong University (Editorial, 2006; Mainland applicants, 2006).

Since Hong Kong was ceded to the British in the 19th century, “the Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese have dramatically different social cultural, historical, and political experiences” (Gao, 2010, p.276). According to Simon (1998), the reality of Hong Kong was defined with a conceptual frame including people’s free right, urban styles, national symbols, cultural forms and social identities. Since the political changes
in past decade, the language policy was changed, which has great impacted on language environment in Hong Kong.

**Linguistic Situation of Hong Kong**

Many previous researchers’ studies show that Hong Kong has a fluid, complex linguistic situation (Bolton & Lim, 2000; Davison & Lai, 2007; Lai, 2001; Morrison & Lui, 2000). They confirm that Cantonese (treated as a regional variety of Chinese) is the dominant language in daily life. The Cantonese is also the favored language in Hong Kong for most social, cultural, and political occasions. Since the universities have a high percentage of international faculty members and students, Cantonese is also commonly used for socialization on the campus (Gao, 2010). Gao (2010) said, “English is widely used in the business and professional sectors and is constantly promoted as an important asset for individuals’ career and social development, as well as a crucial means for Hong Kong to retain its international standing.”(p.276). Since the power transfer in 1997, the importance of Putonghua has been promoting in Hong Kong. Mainland Chinese students, who are studying in Hong Kong, expect for those from the neighboring regions such as Guangdong, speak Putonghua, and little Cantonese.

**English Language Policy in Postcolonial Context**

Since the transfer of power in 1997, Hong Kong formally entered postcolonial time. The definition of postcolonial in this research is different from the one we used widely in academic field. In this study, the notion of postcolonial in Hong Kong focuses
on the cultural, language, and educational domain rather than a broader definition. The broader definition of postcolonial includes political, geographic, cultural, social status, and educational factors. Postcolonial impacts on education in Hong Kong are presented on its language policy. In September 1997, the Education Department Bureau of Hong Kong published the new language policy.

From September 1998, most schools were to adopt Putonghua for teaching all academic subjects. If the schools wished to use English as the medium of instruction, they had to apply to the Education Department Bureau and demonstrate that their teachers, students and support structures met the requirements for the effective use of English as the medium of instruction.

(Education Department Bureau, 1997)

In 1998, based on the evidenced illustrated by those schools, the Education Department Bureau announced that 114 schools would be allowed to use English as the medium of instruction, while the rest of schools were required to adopt Putonghua as the medium of instruction for all subjects except for English language (Education Department Bureau, 1997). English language remains the major medium at universities and intra-governmental fields (Education Department Bureau, 1997). However, the language policy was different at each university or institution. In this study, the two universities that the participants from attended fell into this category.
Many prior researchers explored on the language policy in postcolonial trilingual context. English is the medium of universities in Hong Kong, but in practice, English is not used as widely as it thought to be. Therefore, people who have high English proficiency are treated as groups: “the English-knowing bilinguals” (Kachru, 1986), the upper class. In Tung, Lam and Tsang’s (1997) study, parents and students showed different perspectives of English-medium. Most of the parents hoped their children would study in an English-medium environment, but the students still preferred to be taught in Putonghua or Cantonese, which was their first language. Tung, Lam and Tsang (1997) noted, “parents hoped their children would study in an English-medium in order to achieve the goal of learning English.” Some parents also encouraged their children to learn English. They treated English as a passport from the middle class into the upper class (Evans, 2000). Yang (2002) said, “postcolonial authorities also view English as an essential tool for access to international knowledge.” According to those findings, all of the positive attitudes to English-medium educational system were formed by the ‘labor-market-driven’ ideology (Lin, 1997) in Hong Kong.

However from the students’ perspectives, Tung, Lam and Tsang (1997) argued, “the promotion of English in the classroom, to some extent, felt threatening to students.” Most of the students still preferred to be taught in Putonghua or Cantonese. The students claimed to be better understand the subject matter by using their first language (Cantonese or Putonghua). He and Zhang (2010) and Waring (2012) showed students’
perspective in EFL/ESL classrooms. According to their findings, the most desirable teaching models are “the native speaker-based norms and models” in English classroom in Chinese contexts, but they are not “the most appropriate pedagogic models and norms” (He & Zhang, 2010, p. 770). Though the students preferred to be taught in their first language in their classes, except the English class, they realized the importance to use English for interacting with classmates for academic purposes. Based on this situation, students chose to use different languages depending on different communication situations. According to Evans (2002), “students used a fair amount of English and Cantonese for answering and asking questions, as well as in class discussions.”

The postcolonial social context provides a chance for students, especially for the participants of this study, an English-medium learning environment and a trilingual living environment. However, the English-medium educational environment challenges Mainland Chinese students’ English proficiency and ability to learning. Based on this situation, the number of English centers rapidly increased after 1997 for help enhancing students’ English learning. Edward and Flora (2003) noted that the curriculum setting in Hong Kong was deeply influenced by pedagogy and assessment in Western educational contexts. Critical thinking and analysis were required to be told and emphasized in class (Edward & Flora, 2003). As the eight participants mentioned in their narratives, they experienced great difference between their undergraduate study (in Mainland China) and graduate study (in Hong Kong). According to previous researches, the data imply that the
participants will achieve their goal from the English-medium educational policy as they expected. Apart from the linguistic barrier, Mainland Chinese students also challenged by several issues, such as a different social, cultural, historical, and political environment in Hong Kong.

**Identity**

**Positioning of Identity**

The term *identity* functions outside of linguistics to cover a variety of concepts. In linguistics field, Mendoza-Denton (2008) understood identity as “the active negotiation of an individual’s relationship with larger social constructs” (p. 478). He pointed out that the identities are multivalent. Bucholtz and Hall (2004) explored two key concepts of language and identity, sameness and difference. They also found out that the interconnections between language and identity are multiple, complex, and contextually specific (Hall, 1995; Hall & O’Donovan, 1996). Bucholtz and Hall (2004) explained that identity inheres in actions. Identities are products of “situated social action, they may shift and recombine to meet new circumstances” (p. 376). Norton (1997) linked identity and language with desire. She treated *identity* as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (p. 410). In Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s (1985) study, they explained that there are two meanings of identity: one is to single out a particular person, and the other is to recognize a person as part of a
larger group (p. 2). The former is interpreted as an individual-level identity, which concerns the individual’s personal features. The latter is interpreted as a group-level identity, which concerns the individual’s relationship with the others. Since my participants in this study contend with both language learning and adapting to new culture social contexts in their language learning contexts, following the previous researchers’ notion of identity, I develop an understanding of identity in this study as a person’s recognition of who he/she is, especially through choose different languages when interacting with different social communities e.g. Mainland Chinese students, local Hong Kong Chinese, English language speakers.

**Link Between Language and Identity**

During the colonial and postcolonial time, English-speaking countries could be put into three concentric circles (Kachru, 1985). The USA, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where English is the primary language, are in the inner circle. Ghana, Malaysia, and some other countries and regions where English is institutionalized in non-native contexts are outer circle. Where English is recognized as the major international language was expanding circle. As the wide spread of English in the world, a new paradigms of English was born, which called *World Englishes* (Seargeant, 2010). It emphasized the movement toward embracing the differences of English as resources, and argues against the marginalization (Cook, 1999; Halliday, 2009; Jenkins, 2006; Jenkins, 2009; McKay, 2002; Park, 2012). The notion of *World Englishes* raised some researchers’
interest to explore the relationship between language and identity. For example, Jenkins (2006) points out that the issues of World Englishes (WEs) are in relation with the strong link between language and identity. She claimed that English learners needed to build confidence in their own English varieties, and reduce the ideology of “native-like English” (p. 174). She also emphasized the importance of a pluricentric approach rather than a native-based monolithic approach to language learning. Other researchers are also raising awareness of English varieties as resources to support learners’ identity (Li, 2009; McKay, 2002; Park, 2011; Park, 2012). For the study of English variety, the issue of identity is playing a significant role. The notion of identity is becoming inseparably when exploring English learners’ studying process. Along with this trend, this study focuses on exploring the Mainland Chinese students’ identities, and their multiple identities construction in relation with context during their English learning process in Hong Kong.

**Processes of Identity Construction**

As the emergence of post-structuralism, situated at the forefront of discussions of late modern or postmodern societies, theorists started to establish identity as a multidimensional, dynamic, flexible and temporal entity rather than monolithic, static, solid and perpetual one (Block, 2007; Deckert & Vickers, 2011; Norton, 1997). As in people’s day-to-day interaction with their environments, individuals are constantly constructing their sense of self and the accumulated past experiences (Block, 2007). Wenger (1998) pointed out that learner’s relation to communities of practice involves
both participation and non-participation, which both help participants shape their identities on a moment-to-moment and day-to-day basis, and indeed throughout their lifetimes.

Interaction in identity construction. Many researchers agreed that interaction couldn’t be neglected when exploring identity construction. Liang (2006) asserted that people “constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world” (p. 145) through day-to-day interaction. Richards (2006) also stated that identity is “something that is formed and shaped through action” (p. 3). These studies implied that through recognizing who we are in interactions, we construct our identities. However, it is a complex process to construct people’s identity through interaction. For example, in Gao’s (2010) study, students’ interaction with others not only improve their linguistic competence but also achieve nonlinguistic objectives, such as membership in a community and desired self-identities, making language learning a form of belonging. In the language-learning process, linguistic competence build an entrance to a new social network for learners while the membership in the social group also help them improve their linguistic competence. Unconsciously, the learners’ identity has been constructed while they make efforts to acquire a membership in a particular social group.

From analyzing the information in Gao (2010), Chen (2010), Liang (2006), and Shin (2010), the learners’ classroom code switching has relationship with their individual and group identity. According to Liang (2006), the learners have multiple and conflicting
feelings about L1 and L2 use in the western education contexts. The learners using of their L2 in group discussion and social activities rather than L1 aims to enhance their social relations or acquire the membership in a particular social group. They choose to use their L1 in daily life, because they were afraid of being excluded from the Chinese-speaking groups. If they spoke English with their Chinese friends, these friends may resist and not talk to them. The findings corroborate the statements were disclosed by various authors that language-learning process reflect learners’ identity, and identity negotiation is an important component of Chinese students experience during their study in western education contexts. Pervious researchers found that the learners’ participation in such events is their strategic effort to improve their English, which is equivalent to strategies such as ‘find as many ways as possible to use English’ and ‘practice with others’ listed in Oxford’s (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. Socio-cultural perspectives, language learning as learners’ socio-political acts contributing to their identity construction and mediating their social relationships in particular contexts, apart from the metacognitive and cognitive activities taking place in their brains (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Oxford, 2003; Palfreyman, 2003; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Watson-Gegeo, 2004). In other words, language learning combines “personal transformation with the evolution of social structures” (Wenger, 2000, p. 227); it is also “both a kind of action and a form of belonging” (Wenger, 1998, p.4).
Motivation in identity construction. In the Mainland Chinese context, motivation studies confirm that Chinese learners are not simply motivated instrumentally to learn English. For instance, Gao (2004) have identified three categories of motivation for Chinese learning English, including instrumental, cultural and situational motivation. Other studies also reveal that learning English plays an important role in Chinese learners’ identity construction (Gao, Cheng, Zhao, & Zhou, 2005; Gao, Li, & Li, 2002; Gao, 2007). Gao, Cheng, Zhao, and Zhou (2005) made it clear that Chinese learners are “particularly motivated by self-esteem needs”, which include “positive attitudes towards life, pursuit of social positions, and fulfillment of individual potentials” (p.50). These studies seem to confirm the necessity of moving beyond the traditional dichotomies in motivation theories and adopting socio-cultural perspectives that see learners’ motivation as a multiple-faceted, dynamic, and complex phenomenon. In socio-cultural research, learners’ motivation has a historical origin, dynamic nature and inseparable connection to learners’ identity construction (Norton, 1995; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Thorne, 2005).

Desire in identity construction. Person’s desire is an important component in identity construction. In West’s (1992) study, person’s identity construction promote by the desire for recognition, affiliation, and protection. Based on West’s view on desire, Norton (1997) used the term investment when she explored the language learners’ socially and historically construction. She also supported West (1992) asserts that such desires cannot be separated from the distribution of material resources in society. “People
who have access to a wide range of resources in a society will have access to power and privilege” (p.410), which, in turn, influence their identity construction and their possibilities in the future.

**Struggles in identity construction.** According to Ma (2009), multiple struggles, triumphs, and dilemmas across the two educational settings could not be ignored, though the students are bilingual and bicultural. Nearly all of Mainland Chinese students will experience a transformation before and during their programs in western educational setting. Park (2012) noted that review many nonnative-English-speaking teachers’ and students’ study experiences, they not only improved their English language proficiency but also encountered their linguistic identities reconstruction prior and during their programs. What is the most obviously difference in learners’ linguistic identities across two educational settings is their learning strategies. Chinese students’ exam-oriented learning strategies are “at the core of their efforts to pursue desirable identities in a competitive academic environment” (Gao, 2008, p. 169). The learners’ strategy use clearly demonstrates the tight relationship with social, cultural, and political contexts.

To summarize, interaction and desire are two essential elements of identity construction. Both of them are socially depended factors, which implies that the identity construction cannot be separated from social factors. As Deckert and Vickers (2011) stated that identity “is dependent on the contexts of that construction” (p. 10).
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research aims to explore Mainland Chinese students’ learning experiences in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, after transfer of power from the United Kingdom to China in 1997, people live and work in a trilingual environment. Under these circumstances, many scholars have studied how the power transfer or postcolonial contexts have influenced the educational system. In particular they have studied especially the language education policies in Hong Kong (Edward & Flora, 2003; Mark & Ramsey, 2004; Gao, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). Gao (2010) found that some Mainland Chinese students who were studying in Hong Kong felt “they were sometimes welcomed by local students and other times there was a ‘wall’ between them and local students” (p. 289), but other students who are now studying in Hong Kong have told me about experiences that are different than those that Gao (2010) found. Therefore, this research aims to further explore this issue guiding by the following research question:

How do Mainland Chinese students construct their identities during their language learning process in Hong Kong?

This study is designed to procure further insights on the focal issues, based on that research question. It aims to generate an academically impact on the field of language learners’ identities construction in western educational contexts. Furthermore, this study
may not only help Mainland Chinese students, who are studying in Hong Kong, gain a clearer understanding of their multiple identity construction, but it also may help students, who want to study in Hong Kong, have a better preparation before they make the decision. This chapter explains the methodology of this study and the methods it applied to achieve the aims. In the next section, I explain the detailed design of the study.

**Research Design**

This study applies a qualitative research method for its research design. This qualitative research uses personal narratives from eight Mainland Chinese students. I will exam their construction of their multiple identities during their language learning process in Hong Kong. It is important to state that a study of the students’ multiple identities is intangible. As the primary researcher, I follow Bucholtz and Hall’s (2004; 2005) implication of identity construction that it cannot be observed directly, but it can be interpret indirectly through linguistic interaction that emerges from the social context. As the investigator, I notice that the study of Mainland Chinese students’ multiple identities cannot be interpreted freely. Therefore, it is one of the most possible ways to study and understand their identities through analyzing their personal narratives.

**Qualitative Research**

As being mentioned in the introduction, this research aims to explore the construction of Mainland students’ multiple identities during their language learning process in Hong Kong. To achieve the purposes, this study is designed as a qualitative
study. The qualitative research provides an in-depth description and understanding of the human experiences in a certain context setting (Lichtman, 2006; Ponterotto, 2005). And personal narratives provide insights to human condition that are based on human needs (Nunan, 2003). Using personal narratives allow researchers to analyzing participants’ perspectives of the world. As Bell (2002, p. 209) says, “Participants construct stories that support their interpretation of themselves, excluding experiences and events that undermine the identities they currently claim. Whether or not they believe the stories they tell is relatively unimportant because the inquiry goes beyond the specific stories to explore the assumptions inherent in the shaping of those stories. No matter how fictionalized, all stories rest on and illustrate the story structures a person holds. As such they provide a window into people’s beliefs and experiences.” Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) note that people’s views are complex, and behaviors are affected by the context. It means the participants’ perceptions and understanding of their identities are filtered through the researcher’s perspective (Lichtman, 2006). In other words, in qualitative study, the researchers’ perspectives are reflected in data collection. So as the primary researcher, I carefully designed to minimize the researcher’s perspective on the data.

**Semi-structured Qualitative Interview**

This research applied the qualitative interview as a means to collect data from the participants. The participants are productive meaning makers, rather than passive
pipelines who transmit information from existing answers (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Warren, 2002). In other words, the purpose of the qualitative interviewing is to understand the participants’ interpretation from the interview.

Collecting and analyzing personal narratives is a good way to “study the lived experiences, daily activities, and social context of everyday life from the perspectives of those being studied to gain an understanding of their life world” (Bush & Staller, 2007, p. 188). Among several types of interviews, semi-structured interviewing is the most frequently used method in qualitative studies (Bryman, 2006). The reason why I applied the semi-structured interviews as a way to explore Mainland Chinese students’ identities in Hong Kong context is that the researcher could negotiate with the participants and elicits their interpretations of the reality through face-to-face interactions. Each of the interviews lasted no longer than 45 minutes that I will digitally audio record.

The questions were designed carefully “to provide more freedom and flexibility for the participants to express their answers to the questions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 419)”. Eight interview questions were created for this study. These semi-structured interviews were focused on the following factors:

a. First, they were asked to introduce some basic demographic information about themselves, such as their educational background, their academic major, and their English proficiency;

b. Second, they were asked to talk about their activities on and off campus in
Hong Kong;

c. Third, they were asked to talk about their experiences they have had since they
began their studies in Hong Kong;

d. Finally, they were asked to give some examples about their changes in their
experiences that they have most noticed during their language learning process
in Hong Kong.

For the conduction of each one-to-one semi-structured interview, and
interview guide approach was applied, in which the sequence of the questions kept
flexible to increase the comprehensiveness of the data and close the logical gaps which
occurs during the interview (Patton, 1980, p. 206). In this study, the one-to-one helped
me to enrich my understanding of Mainland Chinese students’ perspectives during their
language learning process in Hong Kong. Since I, as the researcher, am located in the
United States of America and my participants are currently studying in Hong Kong, the
interviews were conducted via Skype. Interviews were digitally recorded and relevant
portions were transcribed and translated.

**Research Site**

The study was carried out in two mid-sized universities in Hong Kong, Hong
Kong Baptist University and Hong Kong Polytechnic University. As the research site,
Hong Kong has three distinctive characteristics. First, it has two official languages,
English and Putonghua, and one local language Cantonese. Second, universities in Hong
Kong give increasing admissions to Mainland Chinese students. Third, the professors in these two universities are required to use English as the only language on the class. Therefore, all the participants in this study are studying and living in trilingual environment.

**Focal Participants**

The participants of this study were selected from two mid-sized universities in Hong Kong. The participants were selected with two criteria: (1) Mainland Graduate Chinese students are currently studying in Hong Kong, but who come from different parts of Mainland China, and (2) have a Bachelor’s degree in Mainland China. Since this study is focused on exploring students’ multiple identities’ construction during their studying process in Hong Kong, these two criteria allow the researcher to select the suitable participants for this study. Based on the previous empirical studies, which explore the Mainland Chinese identities’ construction in Hong Kong, the number of the participants was set to be about ten. For example, Gao’s (2010) study was with 6 participants.

**Data Collection**

**Participants Selection**

I started searching for prospective participants after the IRB approved this study. I began this process by talking to prospective participants who were my acquaintances at undergraduate university. Later, by using the snowball technique (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), I broadened my pool. As the primary researcher, I sent an invitation email to all
the prospective participants. The students who were interested in participation and responded back to me were given a further explanation of the research. Those who accepted participating voluntarily were asked to sign on the consent form. Those who signed on the consent form were finally invited to the interviews.

**Demographic Information of the Participants**

Out of the eight participants who joined the present study, six of them were female while two of them were male. All of the participants were master degree candidates. The length of their stay in Hong Kong ranged from three months to six months. Detailed information for each participant is illustrated in Table 1.

**Procedure of the Interviews**

Each participant had private one-to-one interview with the researcher through the Skype. Since this study was focusing on explore their living and studying experiences in Hong Kong, and the participants and me are all multilingual, both Putonghua and English could be used for the interviews. Considering the time difference, most of the interviews were appointed at the time that fitted the participants’ schedules. Each of the interviews was held in a quiet place, for protecting the privacy of the participants where was minimal access to the public (King & Horrocks, 2010; Shipley & Wood, 1996). Most of the interview places in this study were selected at researcher’s apartment. Each interview was digitally audio-recorded (King & Horrocks, 2010). *QuickTime Player 10.1 (501.29)*, *Voice Memos for Iphone*, was used for recording. At the beginning of each interview, I
confirmed on audio-recording the interview with each of my participant, and they all agreed on it. I started the interaction with introduction of myself, statement of the purposes of the research, and my personal experiences that led me to become interested in the research topic. Through the pre-interview interaction, I tried to make the participants feel more comfortable with the interviews. During the interviews, leading questions and judgmental responses were avoided as much as possible not to bias the participants’ responses and to reduce the possibility of putting participants on the defensive (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 52). The conversation was kept less formal to let the participants feel more comfortable to sharing their experiences rather than asking each questions systematically. At the end of each interview, I expressed my appreciation to my participant. After the interview, all the conversation was transcribed and relevant portions were translated.

**Data Analysis**

After the data collection, I got rich information related to my research topics. These thick descriptions could show me the detailed explanations of participants’ social and academic experiences and provide me with rich data to code. I analyzed my data with the theories of post-modern notion of social identity construction.

The present study employed three stages of data analysis. In the first stage, transcriptions were read through several times to understand the different kinds of information that the participants provided during the interviews. During the process of
coding, two formative categories emerged. These are: (1) language identities in trilingual context; and (2) majority/minority identities in Hong Kong context. These formative categories helped me to coded data in relation to the research questions of this study.
Table 1

*Summary of Participants’ Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Qiang</th>
<th>Wei</th>
<th>Jie</th>
<th>Xing</th>
<th>Meng</th>
<th>Hao</th>
<th>Yi</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>International Journalism</td>
<td>Media Management</td>
<td>Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language</td>
<td>Teaching English as an International Language</td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>English Education</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree in Hong Kong</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the second stage, I used the two formative categories, which was not only allowed me to navigate the coded transcriptions, but also helped me to organize each participant’s narrative. Therefore, each narrative contained elements of the two formative categories. This was the most important part of the process to help me pock out information most relevant to my research questions. In this study, I presented the data along each individual, since the analysis focused on each individual participant.

In the third stage, building on the analysis from stage two, I looked at each formative category in the narratives across all the participants. In this stage, I analyze the data as a whole across all the participants based on the formative categories. In this study, the third stage of analysis helped developing five themes. The five themes are discussed in Chapter Four.

**Reflection on Data Analysis**

The purpose of this study was exploring how trilingual context influence the ways in which Mainland Chinese students reshaping their identities during their language learning process in Hong Kong. By interacting with my participants, I first gained their language and educational background before their arrival in Hong Kong. Later, in the interview, we talked about the participants’ learning and living experiences in Hong Kong. Most importantly, we tried to explore the Mainland Chinese students’ perception of Putonghua, English and Cantonese. I finally found new aspect identities of my participants, which I did not aim to explore and expect to find out before this research.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the eight participants’ narratives that I collected through the individual interviews. Each participant’s narrative presented a detailed description on his or her language learning process, which was mainly focusing on his or her language identities and majority/minority identities construction in trilingual context. I organized each participant’s data based on the two formative categories: (1) language identities in trilingual context; and (2) majority/minority identities in Hong Kong context. The order for discussing the participants was based on those two formative categories. The three participants, Qiang, Wei and Jie only showed their language identities, so I presented them before the others. The other participants, Xing, Meng, Hao, Yi, and Summer presented both their language identities and majority/minority identities construction, so I presented them later in this chapter within those two large sections. The organization of each participant’s order was based on the length of the time he or she stayed in Hong Kong. The selected data were presented in order to reflect particular themes that emerged from the data as they relate to the research questions about the Mainland Chinese students’ language learning process that may influence the constructing of their multiple identities in a new learning context. In this chapter, I will present data along each individual, including he or she multiple identities reshaping and constructing. In this chapter, the
choosing to call the language “普通话 (Putonghua)” or “国语 (Mandarin Chinese)” was based on the participants’ choice.

**Qiang**

Qiang, a pseudonym chosen by the participant, is an example of an individual who was constructing his language identities as a Putonghua and English bilingual, and a Cantonese learner in a trilingual context. Qiang is a graduate student majoring in International Journalism in Hong Kong Baptist University. He grew up in a big city in northwest China with a population of 37.61 million. He said that he had never been far away from his hometown until he finished his undergraduate study. After he got his Bachelor Degree in Mainland China, he went to Hong Kong for his graduate study. At the time, he changed his major because that he was interested in Journalism.

**Qiang’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context**

At the time of the interview, Qiang had spent three months in Hong Kong. He said that he had a great sense of stress, which came from both language and study, when he first arrived Hong Kong. In Qiang’s interview, he said that he spent around one month to adapt into the new learning context. Qiang’s interview showed that he experienced identities transformation in trilingual context. He constructed himself as someone who began as a bilingual speaker in the interview. Qiang identified himself as someone who was a Putonghua and English bilingual, and a Cantonese learner in trilingual context through using different languages after three months learning period in Hong Kong.
Qiang’s identities construction through using Cantonese. In the interview, Qiang was constructing himself as someone who could not speak Cantonese when he first arrived Hong Kong. Qiang said that Cantonese was one of the biggest “language obstacles.” He said, “I totally could not understand Cantonese at all.” Due to the Cantonese language obstacle, he said that he did not act as he used to when he was in Mainland China. The Cantonese language obstacle reshaped Qiang’s identities. He said that he used to be an outgoing and optimistic person. He said that he always stayed with his friends when he was in Mainland China, but in Hong Kong, he felt lonely all the time. There was one type of language identities constructed when he talked about his daily life in Hong Kong. He identified himself as someone who was not a Cantonese listener or speaker. Qiang said, “I could not understand anything when I am listening Cantonese, and I also could not speak Cantonese.” He felt distance from Cantonese speakers, indicating that Cantonese made Qiang feel lonely. He also said that he did not attend any activities in and out of campus because of Cantonese. In this situation, he said that Cantonese was one of the biggest obstacles preventing him from attending the activities. Qiang said,

“出去了，他们都说粤语，我也听不懂，而且也没法交流，所以也不愿意参加。

就感觉吧，自己现在感觉稍微有点自闭。因为粤语真的是一点都不懂，听也
As local people speak Cantonese, I have no idea about Cantonese, so I don’t want to hang out with them. I felt, I felt I am a little bit depressed. I could not understand or pronounce a single word of Cantonese. When they talk with each other in Cantonese, I could understand nothing. Many times later, I didn’t want to attend any activity. I felt speaking English would be better for me; at least I could understand English, rather than Cantonese. I am familiar with English. I cannot understand anything in Cantonese. However, I nearly hear nobody speak English in my daily life. If I speak English, the others may think why do you speak English?

While Qiang said that he could not understand or pronounce a single word of Cantonese, he said that he felt better to use English, “不过要是说英语对我来说还能好点, 最起码能听懂能交流, 而且很亲切。(I feel speaking English would be better for me, at least I can understand English, rather than Cantonese. I am familiar with English.)”

At this point, he identified himself as not a Cantonese speaker. However, he felt better to use English, indicating that he constructed himself as someone who was a Putonghua and
English bilingual in a trilingual context. Though Qiang said that he was familiar with English, he still wanted to learn Cantonese. Qiang said, “我报个粤语班，想学粤语。（I add a Cantonese course to learn Cantonese.）” Qiang said that he wanted to learn Cantonese, indicating that he realized the importance of Cantonese in his daily life.

**Qiang’ identities construction through using Putonghua and English.** While Qiang could not understand Cantonese, Qiang said that he preferred to use Putonghua and English. In this situation, Qiang was constructing himself as a Putonghua and English bilingual. The following data showed the reason why he mostly used Putonghua and why he mostly stayed with his Mainland Chinese friends, who came with him.

20 students in my undergraduate program came with me. They are all Mainland Chinese students. Eight of them are in the same major as me. So we build a small group with only my old classmates and friends. We sometimes hang out together. We also communicate and encourage one another. It is enough to use Putonghua to communication in my daily life.

Qiang said that eight of the students who came with him were majoring in
International Journalism in Hong Kong Baptist University as him. So they built a small community. They shared their experiences and motivated one another. When talking this, Qiang identified himself as a Putonghua speaker, with which he demonstrated his sense of sameness with other Mainland Chinese students. He said that he and his Mainland Chinese friends used Putonghua mostly in their daily life, indicating that he saw himself as a Putonghua speaker even in the trilingual context. In the interview, Qiang repeated that Putonghua was enough for living a convenient life in Hong Kong context, as he said, “像地铁，餐厅，还有商场什么的，都现在用三语播报，先说粤语，再说英文，再说普通话，还有一些标示什么的，也都有中文在上面。(For example, subway, restaurants and malls are all using three languages to broadcast, Cantonese, English, and then Putonghua. The signs are also writing in Chinese and English.)” Under this trilingual environment, he said that he still preferred to use Putonghua, indicating that he constructed himself as someone who was a Mainland Chinese student and a Putonghua speaker.

Another reason Qiang saw himself as someone who was a Putonghua and English bilingual was that he was required to use both English and Putonghua in class. So he identified himself as an English speaker and Putonghua speaker. For example, he said, 我们是学国际新闻嘛，就是四节课都是英文教，剩下一节是普通话。我们几乎都是外籍教授，所以跟我们都用英文交流。
I am majoring in International Journalism. Four courses are taught in English, and one course is taught in Putonghua. Most of my professors are foreigners, so they use English to communicate with us.

Qiang said that he was required to use English in four courses and Putonghua in one course due to the language policy in his university. So he had to use English or Putonghua based on the language requirement. Qiang said that he had no choice but to use English to communicate with his professors because “我们几乎都是外籍教授。 (Most of my professors are foreigners.)” Under this situation, Qiang had no choice but to saw himself as a Putonghua and English bilingual. Since Qiang was required to use English in class, he was supposed to improve his English during his study in Hong Kong. However, he felt that he did not have any improvement in his English. He said,

英文没提高！几乎没提高。因为我以前是英文专业的么，所以主要学的就是英文，功课都是英文方向的。现在是新闻专业，相当于跨专业了，所以区别还挺大的。而且感觉学的面越来越窄了，所以也几乎用不上英文. 所以感觉没提高。

I don’t have any improvement on my English! Almost nothing. My undergraduate major was English, so I mainly focus on learning English. But now, I changed my major into Journalism. So, it’s very different. Meanwhile, the knowledge I learn
becomes narrower. So I nearly have no chance to use English. So I didn’t feel any improvement.

Qiang explained that he was majoring in English, which he was only focused on learning English. He changed his major to Journalism in Hong Kong. The courses in Journalism had great difference from the courses in his undergraduate study. So he said, “英文没提高! (I have nothing improvement on my English!)” Qiang indicated that his English had not improved as his expectation. He was majoring in English, which means he was an English learner. He thought that he was not focusing on learning English now, so he said, “ I have nothing improvement on my English.” However, he had to use English in class. So he was transforming from an English learner into an English speaker. Qiang identified himself as someone who was an English speaker, but for whom English was not working well in a Cantonese dominant context. Qiang said that he wanted to use English to communicate with local Hong Kong community. However, the local Hong Kong community would not use English for communicating with him, a Mainland Chinese student, as he said, “不过我几乎很少听见别人说英语，他们感觉你干嘛说英语啊? (However, I nearly hear nobody speak English in my daily life. If I speak English, the others may think why do you speak English?)” Under this situation, English was a potential element that made Qiang felt distance from local Hong Kong Chinese. He said, “平时很少听到有人说英语。(I rarely hear someone speak English in my daily life.)”
Qiang also indicated that his English might have improved if Hong Kong provides an English language environment in his daily life.

However, Qiang said that the English-medium context provided an English language environment in the classroom to help with his professional development in Journalism. He said, “新闻方向的，是有提高，词汇用法什么的，这些英文倒是有提高。(I have improved my English related on Journalism, including vocabularies and usages.)” Qiang said that he had improved his English in the field of Journalism. Though he had improved his English in Journalism, he still expected to improve his English speaking skills through communicating in English in his daily life. In Qiang’s interview, the identity he constructs was that he was transforming from an English language learner into an English language speaker. He wanted to have more opportunities to use English in and out off campus.

In sum, Qiang’s interview showed that he was constructing himself as a bilingual speaker, and moved to a trilingual learner in trilingual context. Qiang was required to use Putonghua and English in his class, but he chose to use Putonghua in his daily life. It means that Qiang treated language as an index of his national, demographic, linguistic, and academic identities. However, Qiang chose to learn Cantonese for adapting into Hong Kong context. Though he was a bilingual speaker and a trilingual learner in first three months learning process, he might become a trilingual speaker in the future.
Wei

Wei, a pseudonym chosen by the participant, is a good example of an individual who was constructing her language identities as a trilingual in a trilingual context. Wei is a graduate student majoring in Media Management in Hong Kong Baptist University. She grew up in northeast China, and started her undergraduate study in northwest China. After she got her Bachelor Degree in Mainland China, she went to Hong Kong for her graduate study.

Wei’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context

At the time of the interview, Wei had spent five months in Hong Kong. She identified herself as someone who transformed from a bilingual to someone who was a trilingual in a trilingual context. During her Cantonese learning process, she was not satisfied with her Putonghua accent when she spoke Cantonese. She wanted to speak Cantonese without a Putonghua accent. So she tried to construct herself as someone who was not only a Cantonese speaker, but also a Cantonese speaker without Putonghua accent. Wei constructed herself as someone who in her five months journey was a student to a student with critical thinking.

Wei’s identities construction through using Cantonese. When Wei talked about her living experience in the interview, she said that she always moved to different cities, which made her easy to adapt into a new environment. So when she arrived in Hong Kong, she decided to be a member of local Hong Kong community. In this
discussion, she was constructing herself as someone who did not like Cantonese, but moved to someone who was a Cantonese learner,

我觉得我比较 open minded, 就是不管这个怎么, 我都想积极的融入这个社会。就是虽然我一开始不喜欢粤语, 但是我就觉得他那个发音不好听, 但是既然他存在, 你又在这里面生活, 你就要去更好的了解他。

I am an open-minded person. I want to adapt into this society actively no matter how hard it is. I didn’t like Cantonese at the very beginning, because I didn’t like Cantonese pronunciations. However, it exists. Since I lived in this language environment, I thought I have to have a better understanding about it.

Wei said that she did not like Cantonese at first because of the pronunciation. However, she realized that Cantonese was a tool to help her adapt into Hong Kong culture. So she pushed herself to like and learn Cantonese. Wei said, “你又在这里面生活，你就要去更好的了解他。（Since I lived in this language environment, I thought I have to have a better understanding about it.)” In this conversation, she constructed herself as someone who didn’t like Cantonese to someone who was a Cantonese learner.

When Wei decided to adapt into Hong Kong culture, she said that she tried hard to learn and practice Cantonese. Wei assumed that using Cantonese to communicate with the local people might be the key point to break the ice, as she said,
After coming to Hong Kong SAR, I was forced to speak Cantonese in order to get into their community. I have to pretend to be more local, so I have to speak Cantonese to avoid being discriminated. I try to use Cantonese to interact with local people, like landlord and services, now.

Wei indicated that she wanted to speak like a local Cantonese speaker for fear of being discriminated against. When Wei started having contact with Hong Kong Chinese, Wei separated people from Mainland China and people from Hong Kong into two different groups of people, as Wei said, “就免得别人家歧视，装的比较 local 一点，你就要说粤语。I have to pretend to be more local, so I have to speak Cantonese to avoid being discriminated against.” In the interview, Wei showed that she wanted to gain a membership in local Hong Kong community, so she learned to speak Cantonese. She made efforts to transform from someone who was a Cantonese learner to a local Cantonese speaker.

Since Wei learned Cantonese, she was surrounded by a group of local Hong Kong students. So she got more chance to practice and acquire Cantonese, as she said of one local friend,
When he first contacts with you, he will speak Putonghua for you. Many Hong Kong Chinese and my local friends are all OK with that. They know you came from Mainland China. Though you can speak Cantonese, when you are stuck by a word, they will shift to using Putonghua to talk with you. Then you will communicate with each other smoothly. Now, like me, I will require them to speak Cantonese with me. I may speak Putonghua when I am stuck by some words. But you could not speak Putonghua. You have to speak Cantonese. You have to help me to practice my Cantonese. I want to speak Cantonese better.

When she first connected with local Hong Kong Chinese, she said that the local people chose to use Putonghua to communicate with her. Wei described that the local people knew she came from Mainland China, so they interacted with her in Putonghua to make her feel comfortable. All of them were satisfied with this mode of communication.
at the very beginning. In the interview, Wei repeated that she wanted to learn and speak Cantonese better. She said, “我如果在这学习还说不好粤语我会鄙视我自己。(I am studying in Hong Kong now. If I could not speak Cantonese well, I will despise myself.)” Wei also said, “我要说的更好一点。(I want to speak Cantonese better.)” So she used every opportunity to practice her Cantonese with her local Hong Kong Chinese friends. She required her local friends to speak Cantonese with her to help improve her Cantonese proficiency. She said, “你要跟我说广东话.我说我有时候跟你说普通话，就是我有个词儿我不会说我说，但是你不能说普通话，你要说广东话.你要陪我说广东话。(I may speak Putonghua when I am stuck by some words. But you could not speak Putonghua. You have to speak Cantonese. You have to help me to practice my Cantonese.)” Wei indicated that she was not satisfied with speaking Cantonese with a Putonghua accent, and she wanted to speak Cantonese like local people, as she said, “我要说好粤语，我要说的更好一点。我不想一张口，就让人听出来我是说普通话的人在说粤语。(I want to speak Cantonese good. I want to speak better. I don’t want to let people know that I am a Putonghua speaker when I speak Cantonese.)” As discussing the accent in the interview, Wei reported that she was constructing herself from someone who started as a Cantonese learner to someone who was a Cantonese speaker without a Putonghua accent, indicating that she was tried to adapt into Hong Kong culture and gain a membership in local Hong Kong community.

Wei’s identities construction through using Putonghua and English. Wei said
that Putonghua was “最舒服的语言 (the most comfortable language)” for her. In the interview, Wei said that she still preferred to share her feelings and experiences with her old friends, who came with her from Mainland China, indicating that she was constructing herself as a Putonghua speaker and a Mainland Chinese in a trilingual context. Wei said, “还是觉得以前大学一起过来的同学最亲密。(I still think the old classmates who are coming with me are my closest friends.”) Wei also said that she could understand her professors easily when the professors speak some Putonghua in class, “普通话是我们用的最舒服的语言，有的老师课程太难，他说一点点普通话，我们就全懂了。(Putonghua is the most comfortable language for us. Some of the courses are very hard. When the professors use a little bit Putonghua, then we will totally understand everything.)” In the interview, Wei said that she preferred to use Putonghua most of the time though she could speak Cantonese. She said that she could not only express herself better in Putonghua, but also easily understand her professors through using Putonghua. When discussing this, she was constructed herself as someone who was a Putonghua speaker in a trilingual context.

However, Wei said that she was not allowed to always use Putonghua in class. English was the dominant language in class. So she said that the English-medium teaching environment provided her an English-speaking environment. She had more opportunities for exposure to English in academic and social occasions on campus. Wei said that when she first arrived Hong Kong, she identified herself as a Putonghua and
English bilingual because she used to majoring in Translation. She thought that she should not have any problem with English. However, Wei felt a sense of challenge and pressure on her English, as she said,

来香港读书之后发现他们电子邮件都是用英文，都是地地道道的英文写电子邮件哦。然后你突然会质疑，我以前学习的英文到底到一个什么水平，我是大学本科毕业的，学翻译的，然后我反而一个电子邮件我要写半个小时。然后一开始英文方面就觉得特别挫败。现在就好多了。

Since I study in Hong Kong, I found that they are all using English to write emails. They are all written like native English writer. Suddenly, you will question your English proficiency. I graduate from good university, and I was major in Translation. However, I have to spend half an hour to write one email. So at the beginning, I felt depression on my English. It is getting better now.

Wei said that she felt depressed about her English in English-medium curriculums. As the students and the professors were all use English in writing emails, Wei began to question her English proficiency, as she said, “一个电子邮件我要写半个小时。然后一开始英文方面就觉得特别挫败。（I have to spend half an hour to write one email. So at the beginning, I felt depression on my English.）” She said that she was majoring in Translation in her undergraduate study, so she thought she would not have any problems with English, especially with English email writing. However, when she arrived Hong
Kong, she found that her local students could write and reply to the emails like “native English speakers.” However, Wei had to spend more than half an hour on writing only one email in English. In the English-medium context, she felt that she had a long way to go in her English learning journey. After a period of time, Wei acquired writing emails like “a native English speaker.” In this conservation, Wei was constructing herself as someone who began as a good English speaker, moved to someone who questioned her English ability, and finally transformed to someone who was writing emails like “a native English speaker.”

Wei said that she was trying to enter the local community and using Cantonese as much as possible after arriving in Hong Kong. However, she found that she needed to balance the use of different languages when she adapted into different groups. She planed to improve her English speaking, as she said,

感觉在香港如果说一口流利的英文会很有优越感。有一次我去我那个朋友英文的教会，然后因为他英文好，然后我看他们在教会各种各样的朋友，然后就会 say hi 啊，你最近怎么样啊，how are you 啊我自己就不行。因为你英文很好的话，你就可以跟外国人交流，你就多了一个渠道嘛。

I will have the notion of superiority if I can speak English fluently in Hong Kong. Once I went to my friends’ church, they are all good at English. They have many friends there. They will “say hi”, and “how are you” to communicate with each
other. I cannot do it. So if your English is very good, then you can communicate with foreigners. You will have more chances.

In the interview, Wei showed that she wanted to adapt into different communities in Hong Kong. Her first experience to attend her local friends’ English church, where people use English freely to greeting and interacting with each other, raised her attention on English in a trilingual context. She admired their way of communicating and their beautiful English. Wei found that it would be an advantage if she could speak English fluently. So she tried hard to improve her English proficiency. As discussing this, Wei was constructing herself as someone who started as not a good English speaker to someone who could speak English freely.

In sum, Wei was the only one of the eight participants who could use Cantonese fluently. Wei said that she mostly used Putonghua as a way to keep her national identity, however, she also engaged herself to participate in the local communities in order to acquire Cantonese and English. After nearly half a year living period in Hong Kong, Wei was constructing herself as someone who started as a bilingual moved to a trilingual in a trilingual context.

**Jie**

Jie, a pseudonym chosen by the participant, is a good example of an individual who was constructing her language identities as a Putonghua and English bilingual and
Cantonese learner in a trilingual context. Jie is a graduate student majoring in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language in Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She was born in a small city in northeast China. She began to learn English in her primary school. After she got her Bachelor Degree in Mainland China, she was admitted by Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

**Jie’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context**

At the time of the interview, Jie had spent six months in Hong Kong. She was the only one of the eight participants who chose to use English in the individual interview. She identified herself as someone who began as a Putonghua and English bilingual and moved into a bilingual speaker and Cantonese learner in a trilingual context. She also identified herself as a Putonghua teacher.

**Jie’s identities construction through using Cantonese.** Jie said, “Cantonese is hard to understand because pronunciation and tone patterns were quite different from Mandarin.” Jie said that Cantonese was hard to learn. Jie also said that Cantonese was preventing her from interacting with local community. As Jie planed to live and work in Hong Kong after graduation, she said that she tried hard to learn Cantonese.

With its emphasis on bilingualism and general education, Hong Kong is really a nice place to study and live. I have to learn Cantonese, so I can choose to work and live here after graduation.
Jie was satisfied with language environment in Hong Kong. Due to Jie’s future career planning, she said that she had to learn Cantonese. Under this situation, Jie was constructing herself as someone who wanted to learn Cantonese.

**Jie’s identities construction through using Putonghua and English.** Jie said that though she wanted to learn Cantonese, she still felt better to speak Putonghua than Cantonese. So she said that she preferred to stay with her Mainland Chinese friends. She explained, “Stay with Chinese friends is much more convenient because we have no language barriers.” As discussing this, Jie was identified herself as a Mainland Chinese and a Putonghua speaker. However, when I asked, “Which language do you prefer to use in your daily life in Hong Kong?” she said, “Putonghua and English.” At this point, she emphasized that she was not only a Putonghua speaker, but also a Putonghua and English bilingual.

Jie was the only one of the eight participants who chose to use English in the individual interview, indicating that she identified herself as an English and Putonghua bilingual. Moreover, she might indicate that she was a good English speaker, so she chose English rather than Putonghua.

Jie said that she was satisfied with English-medium context, because most activities were held in English, which provided Jie more opportunities to improve her English. Under this language environment, she acquired English, as she said,
There is no better and more effective way to learn a language than to be immersed in a culture that speaks the language you are learning. I am surrounded by the language on a daily basis and are seeing and hearing it in the proper cultural context. Language learning happens most quickly under these circumstances.

Jie was enjoyed studying in Hong Kong, which provided not only English language environment, but also English cultural background. She said, “I am surrounded by the language on a daily basis and are seeing and hearing it in the proper cultural context.” Everyday, she saw and listen English in this new learning context. She indicated that her English has a great improvement in this context. At this point, she was constructing herself as someone who was on the way to be a better English speaker. In Jie’s interview, she was not only identified herself as an English speaker, but also a Putonghua teacher.

Jie repeated that she not only gained new knowledge in class, but also learned more about herself and the different cultures in Hong Kong. She said that Hong Kong integrated multiple cultures, which provided her a chance to explore multiple cultures. At the same time, she pointed out that she constructed her beliefs and values, as she said, “I experience cultural differences personally, and finally adapt myself to the new culture, and I can come to truly understand this culture.” The understanding of different cultures helped her with her teaching career, as she said,
I am major in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. So I suppose to teach people from different culture. I have two students now from USA and Finland. I teach them Chinese, but now, they are beginners and cannot pronounce a single Chinese word. But I can teach them in English. I learned English before, so I know how they felt.

After Jie understood the cultural diversity, she had more opportunities to contact with foreigners who wanted to learn Chinese. Jie chose to use English to interact with her students because her students were all beginners. At this point, Jie was constructing herself as someone who was a second language learner to someone who was a language teacher. Her identity shifted from a student to a teacher. However, part of her teacher identity based on her second language learner identity, as she said, “I can teach them in English. I learned English before, so I know how they felt.”

In sum, Jie was constructing herself as a Putonghua and English bilingual, and she was also constructing herself as a Chinese teacher after she understanding culture diversity. After 6 months, she was constructing herself as someone who was a Putonghua speaker and teacher, English speaker, and Cantonese learner in a trilingual context.

**Language Identities and Majority/Minority Identities**

After discussing first three participants, Qiang, Wei and Jie, who were only reporting their language identities, I present the other participants’, Xing, Meng, Hao, Yi
and Summer, language identities and majority/minority identities in the following paragraphs. In the individual interviews, Xing, Meng, Hao, Yi and Summer showed how they constructed those two types of identities, and how their majority/minority identities influenced their language identities.

**Xing**

Xing, a pseudonym chosen by the participant, is a good example of an individual who showed that her majority/minority identities influenced her attitudes toward Cantonese in a trilingual context. Xing is a graduate student majoring in Teaching English as an International Language in Hong Kong Baptist University. Xing was in her 20s and came to Hong Kong for higher education right after graduating from her undergraduate university in Mainland China. She lived and studied in northeast part of China before she came to Hong Kong.

**Xing’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context**

At the time of the interview, Xing had spent four months in Hong Kong. In Xing’s interview, Xing was constructed herself as someone who started as a Putonghua and English bilingual and a good English speaker, and moved to a Putonghua and English bilingual speaker and Cantonese listener. She also treated herself as a majority in Hong Kong context.

**Xing’s identities construction through using Cantonese.** Xing was constructing herself as not a Cantonese learner, and she did not intend to learn Cantonese for gaining a
membership in local Hong Kong community. However, Xing acquired her Cantonese
listening skills in her daily life. She said,

粵语比较难学。但是我跟他们讲普通话的话，他们会用粤语回答我，所以我
现在听得懂，但是不会讲。

Cantonese is hard to learn. When I talk with them in Putonghua, they will
response me in Cantonese. So I can understand Cantonese, but I don’t know how
to speak.

Xing said that she could not speak Cantonese when she first arrived Hong Kong.
She identified herself as someone who did not intend to be a Cantonese speaker and
cantonese leaner. She said, “因为粤语比较难学，而且我以后也不会留在香港工作，
所以也没有特意去学。(Cantonese is hard to learn, and I will not work in Hong Kong
in the future, so I did not intend to learn Cantonese.)” During her four months learning
journey in Hong Kong, she showed that she did not treat Cantonese as important, because
she did not plan to work in Hong Kong. However, she acquired Cantonese listening skills
through her daily life interaction with local Hong Kong Chinese. As discussing of this,
she was constructing herself as a Cantonese listener.

Xing also shared her working experience in Hong Kong, which led Xing to not
intend to learn Cantonese and plan to work in Hong Kong after graduation. Xing said that
her first job was an English teacher to teach children in one institute. She said,
像我英文很好，然后同学们也都很喜欢我，但是如果家长过来问我说，我孩子
怎么样这种问题的话，如果我用普通话回答，我的老板会骂我，他就会说，
如果被香港的家长知道我们找个大陆的人来给他们孩子教英文，那他们肯定
会不愿意的，然后我要说英文跟家长呢，他们又听不懂，所以呢我就必须要说
粤语，但我又不会说，这也就是后来我为什么辞职的原因。

My English is very good and my students all like me. However, when the parents
come to me to ask something about their children, I cannot use Putonghua to
response. If I use Putonghua, my boss will blame me. He will say that the parents
will get angry if they know that a Mainland Chinese teaches their children. If I
speak English to the parents, they will not understand. So I have to speak
Cantonese. However, I can’t speak Cantonese. That is the reason why I quit the
job.

Xing’s unpleasant working experience made Xing see herself as someone who
was not a Cantonese speaker. She said that her English was good, and her students liked
her. However, the employer required her to speak Cantonese with the students’ parents.
In Xing’s interview, Xing said that the parents did not like their children to be taught by
an English teacher who was coming from Mainland China. So she quitted, and decided
not to work in Hong Kong after graduation.
When discussing this unpleasant working experience, Xing identified herself as someone who was not a Cantonese speaker. Her first working experience did not make her to become a Cantonese learner. In contrast, she quit the job, indicating her strong will to keep her Mainland Chinese identity.

**Xing’s identities construction through using Putonghua and English.** Xing showed that she did not intend to learn and speak Cantonese, and kept using Putonghua was not only as a way to express herself but also as a proper way to interpret her identity as a Mainland Chinese. In Xing’s interview, there were at least two types of identities construction, which she perceived in her language learning process. One type of identity she constructed that she was a Putonghua and English bilingual. The other type of identity she constructed that she was a hard working English language learner.

Xing said that she chose to stay with her friends, who came from Mainland China with her. She said,

我还是会跟一起来的朋友在一起，我觉得这个跟个人性格有关，我个人性格就是不太喜欢跟不太熟的人特别热乎，我基本上都是跟以前的同学一起玩。

I still stay with my friends, who are coming with me. I think it is related to personal characters. My personality is that I don’t like to talk too much with people who I am not that familiar with. So I mainly play with my old friends.
In Xing’s interviews, she said that she mainly played with her old friends, who came with her from Mainland China. She said, “我觉得这个跟个人性格有关。(I think it is related to personal characters.)” Xing indicated that she did not prefer to have many interactions with people that she was not familiar with. It also demonstrated that Xing had no struggle with what group she should belong to, as she said, “我基本上都是跟以前的同学一起玩。(So I mainly play with my old friends.)” Xing said that she mostly used Putonghua in her daily life.

Xing said that she chose to use Putonghua rather than Cantonese to interact with local Hong Kong Chinese, “因为他们普通话说的挺好，所以我们才会一起玩，有一些根本不会讲普通话的，也不会来找我，所以跟我在一起的当地学生普通话都很好。(We will hang out together because they could speak Putonghua well. Some of them totally could not speak Putonghua, they will not to communicate with me. So all the local students, who hang out with me, could speak Putonghua very well.)” At discussing of this, Xing not only identified herself as a Putonghua speaker, but also preferred to make friends with Putonghua speakers. She was not trying to learn Cantonese to gain a membership in local Hong Kong community. In the contrast, the local Hong Kong students had to speak Putonghua to interacting with Xing and other Mainland Chinese students. Under this situation, Xing was constructing herself as a Putonghua speaker and Mainland Chinese student even in a trilingual context.
Xing said that her English improved after studying in Hong Kong. Since all of her courses were required to be taught in English, the professors and the students completely used English to interact with each other in class. Xing repeated that she was satisfied with her new learning context. She felt that it was different from her learning experience before. She said proudly that she had a great improvement on her English, as she said,

我英语提高了很多，因为写作是特别锻炼语言能力的.我来了香港之后，就是讨论的机会很多，像我们每次大课两个小时之后，都会有一个小时的讨论时间，然后还有跟同学的小组讨论什么的.而且我很刻苦，所以在口语和写作两方面，锻炼的还挺好，我觉得英文水平提升挺多的。

I improve a lot in my English, because writing can improve linguistic competence.

I have more chances to discuss in class after I am studying in Hong Kong. For example, we have one hour for group discussion after every three-hour class. I am also a hard working student. So I have great improvement in my English speaking and writing. My English improved a lot.

Xing said that the language environment in Hong Kong provided her a better English learning environment. She had a great improvement in her English, especially in English speaking and writing. According to English-medium curriculum, she had at least one hour to discuss with her classmates in English. Xing said that she improved her English speaking skills through group discussions. She reported that one of the reason
why she improved her English was that she was a hard working student, indicating that
she made efforts to improve her English, as she said, “我很刻苦，所以在口语和写作两
方面，锻炼的还挺好，我觉得英文水平提升挺多的。（I am also a hard working student.
So I have great improvement in my English speaking and writing. My English improved a
lot.)”

Xing said that she was not only a hard-working English learner, but also a better
English speaker, with which she demonstrated her sense of difference from local Hong
Kong students. She said, “我发现跟我们同一班的香港的本地的学生，英语不如我们
好。”I find the local Hong Kong classmates’ English is not better than us. Compared
with local Hong Kong students, Xing said that her English was better than theirs. She also
pointed out that her English was very good when she talked about her first working
experience, as she said “我英文很好。”My English is very good. So during her four
months learning process, she was constructing as someone who began as an English
learner, and move to someone who was a better English speaker.

In the interview, Xing was also constructing herself as someone who as a better
English speaker, and moved to an English writer. She demonstrated her English writer
identity transformation through learning how to finish her assignments. She said,

我们所有的课程是没有考试的，我们是按照作业来评成绩，一学期呢大概有
四次作业，每一次作业就是2000多字3000字的论文。这些作业是要求你要有一
We don’t have exams but four assignments in each course. I should write around 2,000 or 3,000 words for each assignment. Those assignments are required to put your own ideas into them. So it is hard to finish. However, the library of Hong Kong Baptist University is awesome. My Mainland Chinese classmates and I make full use of library resource. Because the professors taught us how to do the research, we followed their instructions step by step. Later, I adapt into it.

Xing pointed out that she made full use of resource in the library of Hong Kong Baptist University to finish her assignments. She said that she followed her professors’ instruction step by step. After that, she learned how an English research paper should be written. Under this circumstance, Xing was constructing herself as someone who knows how an experienced student should be, indicating that she adapted into the English-medium learning context.

**Xing’s Majority/Minority Identities in Hong Kong Context**

Xing said that she met some difficulties when she contacted with local Hong Kong Chinese who could not speak Putonghua when she first arrived Hong Kong.
However, she said that she did not intend to learn Cantonese because she felt that she was part of the majority. She said,

因为班上学生分全职和兼职这两种。。。他虽然在一个班，但是这两个群体基本上是……不太……有太多交集的。因为兼职的学生他们除了上课跟我们在一起，其他时间就完全都不在学校里面,所以全职的里面，剩下那两个本地的话，我们就。。。跟他用普通话，或者是，基本上是普通话居多，因为我们人多么。我们也不会为他说粤语，而且我们也不会。

Since our classmates were separated into full-time and part-time... We didn’t have too... many... interactions, though we are in the same class. The part-time students are only on campus when they have classes. Only two local students are full-time students like us. We use... Putonghua with them, or, almost Putonghua, because we are the majority. We didn’t use Cantonese for interacting with them, besides we didn’t know how to speak Cantonese.

Xing said that there were two groups of students in her class, full-time students and part-time students. Those two groups of students nearly did not have any interaction with each other. She said that there were only two full-time students who came from Hong Kong, and the others were all coming from Mainland China. So Xing defined the students from Hong Kong as the minority, and the students from Mainland China as the majority. Xing’s interview showed that the local students had to interact with Mainland
Chinese students by using Putonghua, as she said, “我们就……跟他用普通话。（We use... Putonghua with them.）” Xing said that she would not speak Cantonese instead of Putonghua for interacting with local Hong Kong Chinese students, even in a trilingual context. So Xing said that if the minorities wanted to mediate in majorities’ community, they had to speak Putonghua. She said, “我们也不会为他说粤语, 而且我们也不会。（We didn’t use Cantonese for interacting with them, besides we didn’t know how to speak Cantonese.）”

Xing’s interview showed that Xing’s language identities were influenced by her majority/minority identities. One reason she treated herself as a Putonghua speaker, the group she saw as the majority, was the large number of the Mainland Chinese students on campus. It influenced her attitudes toward learning Cantonese. The local Hong Kong students chose to use Putonghua to interacting with her. So Xing said that she had no need to speak Cantonese for studying in Hong Kong. Speaking Putonghua and English were enough for her academic life. The other reason Xing saw herself as the majority was that speaking Putonghua was convenient enough for her to living in Hong Kong. Xing acquired Cantonese listening skills, so Xing had no problem with understanding the local Hong Kong Chinese. However, Xing said that she still chose to speak Putonghua when some local Hong Kong Chinese speak Cantonese. Since the power transfer of sovereignty from the United Kingdom to China, a large number of applicants from the Chinese
mainland were enrolled in Hong Kong universities. So, Xing’s sense of majority might have related with the relationship between Mainland China and Hong Kong.

In sum, Xing reported adding new aspects of her identities through interacting with people through using different languages. Though she was not intended to learn Cantonese, she was transforming from “not a Cantonese learner” to “a Cantonese listener.” Xing kept using Putonghua mostly in a trilingual, indicating that using Putonghua was not only as a way to express her but also as a proper way to interpret her identity as a majority, a Putonghua speaker, and a Mainland Chinese student.

**Meng**

Meng, a pseudonym chosen by the participant, is a good example of an individual who showed that her majority/minority identities influenced her language identities in a trilingual context. Meng is a graduate student majoring in Translation in Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She was majoring in translation during her undergraduate study in northwest China. Based on Meng’s good performance, she was assigned into an advanced class, which would be admitted by Hong Kong Polytechnic University after she got her Bachelor Degree in Mainland China. So she went to Hong Kong for her graduate study in the same major, Translation.

**Meng’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context**

At the time of the interview, Meng had spent five months in Hong Kong. Meng was constructing herself as someone who began as a bilingual, and moved to a bilingual
speaker and Cantonese learner in a trilingual context. She also treated herself, a Mainland Chinese student and Putonghua speaker, as a majority in Hong Kong context.

**Meng’s identities construction through using Cantonese.** Meng said that she did not like Cantonese at the very beginning. She was struggling in a period of hard time to decided to learn to speak Cantonese, as she said,

刚开始没有说是我想学粤语，我觉得就语言这么难听，然后怪怪的，然后我可能不会再继续呆，平时也都跟内地的同学朋友一起，就说国语，所以就没有去学。然后就像我们之前租房子住的话，房东就跟我们说你们要学一点粤语啊，不然人家骂你都不知道。后来就觉得，一方面是就是说首先，你在这生活，你还是就是多一些了解多一些当地的文化会比较好，语言也是一个比较重要的。。。因素吧，然后第二个的话就是，如果你毕业了想找工作啊，当然香港本地的公司他肯定是要求你会粤语，这样的话如果会了粤语，又会英语，又会国语的话，这样选择也会比较大，选择的机会也会比较多，对，然后，对，在一个就是生活嘛，生活方面，可能就是有的时候，嗯，有的人，特别是年龄大一点的当地人真的听不懂国语的话，你不会说一点点，就会影响到生活。

I didn’t want to learn Cantonese at the very beginning. Cantonese sounds not good. The pronunciation is weird. So I choose to stay with my Mainland Chinese friends and classmates. We all speak Mandarin Chinese. So I didn’t learn Cantonese.
Later, my landlord told me that you have to learn some Cantonese or you may not know when other people blame you. I realized first, I have to contact more with local culture since I lived here. So the language is very important…issue. Second, if you want to find work after graduation, the local companies are required you to speak Cantonese fluently. Since you can speak Cantonese, English and Mandarin Chinese, you also have more choice. In the living aspect, some people, especially the old generation, they could not understand Mandarin Chinese. If you could not speak basic Cantonese, it will influence your life.

In Meng’s interview, she said that she did not like Cantonese because of the pronunciation when she first arrived in Hong Kong. As she always stayed with her friends who came from Mainland China with her, she thought there was no need to learn Cantonese. She was identified herself began as a Mainland Chinese student and Putonghua speaker. After she getting well with her landlord, the landlord suggested her to “要学一点粤语 (learn some Cantonese).” Meanwhile, she realized that she had three reasons to learn Cantonese. The first reason was that it was better to learn Cantonese and Hong Kong culture during her learning process in Hong Kong. The second reason was that it was easy to find a job in Hong Kong if she could speak Cantonese, English and Mandarin Chinese, indicating that she had a long-term career plan after her graduation. The third reason was that not all local Hong Kong Chinese, especially the old generation,
could understand and speak Mandarin Chinese.

Meng said that she wanted to explore more Hong Kong culture, so she tried to learn Cantonese, as she said, “语言也是一个比较重要的……因素吧 (the language is very important…element). ” Under this situation, she tried to transform herself from a Mandarin Chinese speaker to a Cantonese learner.

Meng also said that she changed her attitude to learning Cantonese. In the interview, she said that she was constructing herself as a positive Cantonese learner, because she wanted to live a convenient life in Hong Kong. She said, “我有一个朋友, 他是香港的, 我跟他说活的时候用粤语说, 然后他帮我纠正。(I have a friend, he was a local Hong Kong Chinese. We communicate with Cantonese, and he helps me with correcting my Cantonese pronunciation.) ” Meng said that she asked her local Hong Kong friend to correct her pronunciation. To some extent, she said that her competence of Cantonese provided her conveniences in socializing into the local Hong Kong communities.

However, Meng said, “还是有很多小细节让你觉得你自己不是这个地方的, 就是没有归属感。(There are still some details to remind you that you are not a Hong Kong resident. It’s just no sense of belonging.)” Her nonsense of belonging indicated that she perceived her identity as a Mainland Chinese student rather than local Hong Kong Chinese. Though she tried to construct herself as a Cantonese speaker, she still was a Mainland Chinese.
Meng’s identities construction through using Mandarin Chinese and English.

Meng identified herself as a Mandarin Chinese and English bilingual. She used Mandarin Chinese and English both in her daily life and academic life. Meng said that she adapted into Hong Kong context together with her friends, who came with her from Mainland China. Meng said, “和我一起来的有很多朋友，关系都很好，大家一起适应过来的，就感觉很开心吧。(Many friends came with me from Mainland China. We get along well with each other. We adapt into new context together, so I feel very happy.)” Meng said that they motivated one another, so she did not feel lonely in the new learning context.

Meng also made friends with local Hong Kong students. Some local students communicated with her in Mandarin Chinese, as she said, “如果他国语讲的可以的话，他就会跟我说国语。(If he could speak Mandarin Chinese, he will speak Mandarin Chinese to me.)” However, if someone could not speak Mandarin Chinese well, Meng preferred him or her to speak Cantonese, because she could understand Cantonese. Under this situation, Meng adapted in Hong Kong culture through learning Cantonese and making friends with local Hong Kong students. From her interacting with local students, she was constructing herself as someone who was a Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese bilingual in a trilingual context.

In the interview, Meng was not only constructing herself as a Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese bilingual, but also a trilingual. Meng said that English-medium context provided her a Mandarin Chinese and English bilingual environment. She had more
opportunities to use English, as she said,

香港毕竟是一个双语的文化，所有的东西，无论是你平时衣食住行吧，就是所有，哪怕你看到的东西，标志，就是你看到的都是双语的，听到的也都是，因为可能周围经常有些外国人，走到哪里，可能地铁里啊，商场里啊，也都是。

Hong Kong has a bilingual culture. All the things, everything related to your daily life, everything, everything you saw, the sings, are all written in bilingual. Everything you heard is the same. Since you can usually meet the foreigners, no matter where you go, maybe the subway, the malls, all of things are in both English and Mandarin Chinese.

Meng said that she had many methods to use and acquire English. Her experiences showed that she had much more exposure to English in her daily life. She identified herself as a Mandarin Chinese and English bilingual, as she said, “就是所有，哪怕你看到的东西，标志，就是你看到的都是双语的，听到的也都是。（All the things, everything related to your daily life, everything, everything you saw, the sings, are all written in bilingual. Everything you heard is the same.）” Hong Kong provided her a bilingual environment, which helped her acquire and improve English. Since she was majoring in Translation, the bilingual environment helped with her professional development.
Meng’s Majority/Minority Identities in Hong Kong Context

Even though she had no sense of belonging in Hong Kong, Meng said that she treated herself as a majority. She said,

在校园里吧，就是他们比较弱势，我们的气势比较大。就可能我们的人群比较多，他们就是，像他们跟我们说话就不用粤语，因为我们都说普通话，他们就也得说普通话（笑）。而且像跟我们年纪差不多的这一代人，有学术修养的啊，普通话都很好的。

On campus, the local students are the minorities. We are the majorities. If they want to interact with us, they have to speak Mandarin Chinese. Since we speak Mandarin Chinese, they have to speak Mandarin Chinese too. Like the young generation as me, if they have higher educational experience, they could speak Mandarin Chinese very well.

In Hong Kong context, the Cantonese speaker should be identified as the majorities. However, Meng said that Mandarin Chinese speakers were the “majorities,” indicating that the local Hong Kong students were the “minorities” on campus. One reason made Meng have the sense of majority was that Mainland Chinese students were the largest group on campus. Most of the Mainland Chinese students continued to use Mandarin Chinese and English at the most of time, while the local students preferred Cantonese. So Meng said that when local students, the “minorities,” interacting with
Mainland Chinese students, “the majorities,” the local students had to choose to use Mandarin Chinese. Another reason made Meng identify the Mandarin Chinese as the “majorities” was that most of local young generation with higher education could speak Mandarin Chinese fluently, indicating the Mandarin Chinese language had more power in Hong Kong than before. As discussing this, Meng was constructing herself as a Mandarin Chinese speaker, the “majority,” with which she demonstrated her sense of difference from the minorities or local students. The sense of majority also helped her adapt into the new learning context smoothly, because Meng changed her attitudes toward learning Cantonese. Since Meng had no language obstacles when using “the majorities’ language,” Mandarin Chinese, for living in Hong Kong, she tried to learn “the minorities’ language,” Cantonese to know more about Hong Kong culture. Even though Meng was trying to learn Cantonese, she still preferred to use Mandarin Chinese, indicting that her strong sense of Mandarin Chinese speaker in a trilingual context.

In sum, Meng was constructing herself as someone who began as a Mandarin Chinese and English bilingual to Mandarin Chinese, English and Cantonese trilingual in a trilingual context. In her five months learning period in Hong Kong, Meng saw herself as a “majority” who mostly speak Mandarin Chinese even in a trilingual context.

Hao

Hao, a pseudonym chosen by the participant, is a good example of an individual who showed that his majority/minority identities influenced his attitudes toward learning
Cantonese in a trilingual context. Hao is a graduate student majoring in Translation in Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He was majoring in Translation and Interpretation during his undergraduate study in Xi’an International Studies University. After he got his Bachelor Degree in Mainland China, he was admitted by Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He was enrolled in a one and a half years translation program in Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Hao’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context

At the time of the interview, Hao had spent five months in Hong Kong. He was constructing himself as someone who began as a Putonghua speaker and good English speaker, and moved to a Putonghua speaker, good English speaker, and beginning level Cantonese speaker in a trilingual context. In the interview, Hao also constructed himself as a majority.

Hao’s identities construction through using Cantonese. Hao was majoring in Translation, and he had confidence in English. So he thought that he could at least use English to communicate with people who could not speak Putonghua. However, when he first arrived Hong Kong, he found that English was not working well for him. Hao faced the challenge of language, as he said,

我觉得语言上面沟通很困难，因为香港那边都说粤语，然后，所以，当时因为粤语不好，然后呢就感觉首先沟通上就会很困难，嗯，我也想到他们会说
I found that it was hard to communicate in Hong Kong. Since people in Hong Kong speak Cantonese, I could not speak Cantonese. So I felt difficulty to communicate. I thought they could speak English, so I tried to use English to interacting with them. However, their English is not good. If you want to speak with them totally in English, they also have problems...obstacles. So, the language obstacles are very big at the very beginning. Later, of course, I learned some Cantonese. Then...then...it becomes more convenient. However, I didn't intend to learn Cantonese.

Hao could not understand or pronounce a single word of Cantonese before he came to Hong Kong. Hao said that expressing himself in Cantonese was a bigger problem than in English for him. He said, “所以，语言上面的障碍是，刚开始是挺大的。(So, the language is very big obstacle at the very beginning.)”
Hao’s interview also showed that he wanted to break the language barriers. He said that he was not intended to learn Cantonese, but he acquired it through his daily life. So he constructed himself as someone who was not a Cantonese speaker to someone who could speak some basic Cantonese. As he acquired more and more Cantonese, he found it was easy to mediate into the local groups, as he said, “慢慢慢慢之后学，学了一点点粤语吧，然后……就……会方便一点。(Later, of course, I learned some Cantonese. Then...then...it becomes more convenient.)”

Hao said that he could speak some basic Cantonese, which was enough for communicating with local people in his daily life. He also tried to find a balance with his languages when interacting with different local communities, as he said,

比如像我如果去吃饭的话，或者买东西，因为这种，就是接触性语言不太多，顶多问，问你要不要这个啊，就是或不是这种，我会用简单的粤语跟他们去说，但是如果跟当地同学去聊天，去谈一些事情的话，我可能会拿普通话，因为（笑）我的粤语不太好。用英语的时间比较少，除非是碰到一些外国人，因为刚才也说过，就是香港他们本地人的英语也不是很好，所以你正儿八经全部拿英文去跟他们沟通他们也听不懂。

For example, I can use simple Cantonese when I go out to eat and buy something. They will ask you whether or not you want it. I can use simple Cantonese to talk with them. However, if I discuss with my local classmates, I may use Putonghua,
because my Cantonese is poor. I have few chances to speak English, except when I meet the foreigners. As what I said before, local Hong Kong Chinese’s English is poor. They could not understand if you interact with them totally in English.

Hao mostly preferred to use basic Cantonese to interact with local Hong Kong Chinese. When he discussing with his local friends, he preferred to use Putonghua because his said that his Cantonese was poor. As discussing of this, he was constructing himself as someone who was a poor Cantonese speaker and a Putonghua speaker.

**Hao’s identities construction through using Putonghua and English.** In Hao’s interview, he repeated, “香港他们本地人的英语也不是很好 (Local Hong Kong Chinese’s English is poor),” so he nearly had no chance to use English in his daily life, except interacting with foreigners. Though he was identified himself as a good English speaker, English still did not work well for him in his daily life. However, Hao explained that Putonghua and English were the denominate languages in his academic life. He said,

平时在学校，因为我们班上人，都是大陆来的同学，所以我们一般会用普通话去沟通，就不会说粤语，然后，偶尔会用英文，当然就是牵扯到翻译的东西了。

On campus, all of my classmates are coming from Mainland China. So we usually use Mandarin Chinese to communicate. We will not speak Cantonese. Sometime, we use English when discussing about our course work.
Hao said that his classmates were all came from Mainland China. They used Mandarin Chinese to interact with each other. When they discussing about translation, they shifted to use English. He also said that they were required to use Putonghua and English in class due to his major, Translation. As discussing this, he was constructing himself as someone who was a Putonghua and English bilingual. He said,

I am majoring in Translation, so my professors use part of English and part of Chinese in class. The Chinese means the Mandarin Chinese. I remember clearly that my interpretation professors required use to speak Mandarin Chinese in class. He required it at the beginning of the semester. In his class, you have to use Mandarin Chinese to communication. That’s what he said to us.

Hao emphasized that the students were allowed to use Putonghua in class. One of his professors even made Putonghua as a dominant language in class. Hao explained why his professor wanted them to use Putonghua in class, “虽然说我们母语是汉语，但老师
Though Mandarin Chinese are our first language, our professor thought many students still need to improve more on their Mandarin Chinese." It showed that his professors required them to improve more on their Putonghua proficiency rather than English. Though he was a native Putonghua speaker, he still was required to improve his Putonghua proficiency. In Hong Kong context, the Putonghua’s position was raising quickly, which making Hao had more opportunities to speaking Putonghua. So he was constructing himself as someone who began as a Putonghua and English bilingual to a Putonghua and English learner.

Hao also said that he made some local friends. Some of his local friends learned Putonghua from him. In this situation, he was constructing his language identity as a Putonghua teacher. He said,

I met my local friend in a badminton contest. Local students held the contest. After that, we keep connect with each other. Sometimes, we hang out together. They learn Putonghua from me. For example, they ask me how to speak it in Putonghua. Then I will teach them.
Hao met his local friends on a badminton contest, which was held by local students in Hong Kong. After that, Hao built up good relationship with them. They learned language from each other. At this point, Hao was constructing himself as someone who was not only a Cantonese learner, but also a Putonghua teacher. He taught Putonghua to his local friends when “他们就会问我用普通话怎么说。（they will ask me how to speak it in Putonghua.）” During this process, Hao and his local friends acquired language together.

In Hao’s interview, he identified himself as a good English speaker. Before he entered the English-medium context, he thought that he could at least use English to communicate with local people if they could not speak Putonghua, but he found that local people’s English were “也不怎么样 (not good).” At this point, he constructed himself as a good English speaker, with which he perceived through his interaction with local Hong Kong Chinese.

**Hao’s Majority/Minority Identities in Hong Kong Context**

Focusing on improving Putonghua in class made more and more students interacting in Putonghua. Meanwhile, Hao said that most of his classmates were Mainland Chinese students. So he said that he was constructing himself as someone who was a “majority.” Hao said,

虽然再香港上学，自己也有自己的一个小帮派，就是还是大陆的学生居多，
Though I study in Hong Kong, I still have my own small community. Since Mainland Chinese students are majority, we seat together in class. We naturally use Putonghua to communicate with each other. So we have less interaction with local Hong Kong students.

In the conversation, Hao was constructing himself as someone who was a majority, indicating that the local Hong Kong Chinese were the minorities. Hao said that he and his Mainland Chinese students built up a “small community”. Since most of his classmates came from Mainland China and they mostly used Putonghua, Hao treated that the Putonghua speakers or Mainland Chinese students were the majorities. While he mostly stayed with Mainland Chinese students, he had less chance to communicate with local Hong Kong students, indicating his strong will to keep his Mainland Chinese identity.

Hao’s sense of majority changed his attitudes towards Cantonese. He said that he did not intend to learn Cantonese. He learned some basic Cantonese due to local Hong Kong Chinese’s poor English ability, which pushed him to learn some basic Cantonese. After learning some basic Cantonese, he did not pay attention to learn more because he used Putonghua mostly in his daily and academic life. There were at least two reasons made Hao saw himself as a majority. One reason was that he was surrounded by the
Putonghua speakers. So, he had no need to learn Cantonese. Another reason was that his professors required them to use Putonghua in class. In the interview, he was constructed himself as a majority, though he was supposed to be treating as a minority in a trilingual context.

In sum, Hao preferred to use Putonghua and simple Cantonese in his daily life, and use Putonghua and English for academic purpose. Hao was constructing himself as someone who began as a Putonghua and English bilingual, and moved to a Putonghua learner, good English speaker and poor Cantonese speaker in a trilingual context. Even in a Cantonese-speaking context, Hao still identified Putonghua speakers as the majorities.

Yi

Yi, a pseudonym chosen by the participant, is a good example of an individual who indirectly showed that her majority/minority identities influenced her attitudes toward learning Cantonese in a trilingual context. Yi is a graduate student majoring in English Education in Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She was born in a small city in northwest China. Last Spring, she got married with her husband, who was studying and working in Canada. After she got her Bachelor Degree in Mainland China, she was admitted by Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She was majoring in English, and gained a high score in IELS examination, so she has no difficulties with English.

Yi’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context

At the time of the interview, Yi had spent five months in Hong Kong. She was
constructing herself as someone who began as a bilingual in a trilingual context. Yi wanted to learn Cantonese due to her future career plan, but she never took any action. However, she acquired some Cantonese vocabulary in her daily life. She was the only one of the eight participants who pointed out the gender issue. She identified herself as a Mainland Chinese female. She also treated herself, a Putonghua speaker, as a majority on campus.

**Yi’s identities construction through using Cantonese.** Yi said that the most excited thing to study in Hong Kong was that she could meet different people from different culture. However, when she arrived this new learning context, she realized that the language and culture became the challenges for her. She found that she could not understand or pronounce a single word of Cantonese. She said that her husband suggested her to learn Cantonese. She said,

```
其实我是有私心的，因为我老公一直跟我说加拿大这边香港人特别多，所以过来的话，这说粤语，工作比较好找，所以我有这个想法学粤语，但是一直也都没有时间去学，但是环境会逼迫你去学。
```

My husband told me there are many Hong Kong Chinese in Canada. So if I could speak Cantonese, it is easy to find a job. So I want to learn Cantonese. I didn’t have time to learn Cantonese, but the environment will push me to learn.

As Yi said in the interview, she wanted to learn Cantonese due to her future career
planning. Yi’s husband told her that it might easy to find a job in Canada if she could speak Cantonese. So she wanted to learn Cantonese. At this point, she was constructing herself as someone who was a Putonghua and English bilingual and wanted to learn Cantonese. She said that she did not have time to learn Cantonese, but the Hong Kong context forced her to acquire Cantonese. She said when she went to the restaurants,

有一次去点菜啊，有时候就听不懂，而且他们的饭馆都特别忙，根本就顾不上你，然后有时候就感觉，就默默的坐在那。刚来的时候就会很害羞，就在想，还是等等吧，然后后来，你大方了，你就会学他们，喊“唔该”，然后你在那呆着你就会知道只要你喊“唔该”他们就会过来。

I go to the restaurants, and I could not understand Cantonese. They are so busy everyday. So sometimes, I have to sit there silently, because I am shy at the very beginning. Later, I am not that shy. I learned to call “mu gai” like them. I know if I call “mu gai”, the services will come to me.

Yi said that she was very shy to speak even simple Cantonese when she just arrived Hong Kong. She said that if she did not call the services when she went to the restaurant, she would have to seat silently with no food. When she got use to Hong Kong culture, she used simple Cantonese, like “mu gai” to call services. In Yi’s interview, Yi identified herself as someone who could only speak some simple Cantonese words.
Though Yi said that she had no time to learn Cantonese, she acquired Cantonese in her daily life, indicating that she was transforming from not a Cantonese speaker to a poor Cantonese speaker. Yi also said that she did not want to become a Cantonese speaker. Yi explained, “因为我已经 26 岁了，重新学一个语言是非常难，对，我觉得作为一个大陆学生我就已经和 OK 了。（I am already 26 years old, so it is hard to learn a new language. I feel I am OK to be a Mainland Chinese student.)” She insisted that she was a Mainland Chinese student, and she did not have passion to learn a new language, indicating that she was constructing herself as not a Cantonese learner though she knew how to speak some Cantonese words.

_Yi's identities construction through using Putonghua and English._ Yi said that she was identified herself as a Putonghua and English bilingual. She could easily understand people who came from Mainland China, because they shared the same culture. So she chose a landlord who came from Mainland China as her, and she chose to live with three Mainland Chinese friends, who could also speak Putonghua, as she said,
It is easy to understand when I was in Mainland China. After I came to Hong Kong, I find, Un, the languages. Sometimes, they are all speaking Putonghua, but I still have problems to interacting with them. When I choosing the apartment, I choose to live with people from Mainland China. We are all sharing the same culture background, and we are all young generation. So it is easy to communicate. My landlord is from Mainland China too. Whenever I meet some problems, I prefer to share with them. We are in the similar situation, so they understand me. We can solve the problem together.

Yi said that she felt she had no difficulty in communicating with her roommates and landlord in Putonghua. She indicated that she felt it was much easier to communicate with the person who shared the same language and cultural background with her. When Yi met some problems, she preferred to share with her roommates, as she said “遇到什么问题也跟他们 share 他会比较有同感。 (Whenever I meet some problems, I prefer to share with them. We are in the similar situation, so they understand me.)” They could understand her feelings, which was not only because they speak the same language, but also because they were in the similar situation or have same cultural background. At this time, only her roommates could help her relieve the stress and became her motivation. She also indicated that though some of the local Hong Kong Chinese could speak
Putonghua, she still found that they could not totally understand her words, because they
shared different culture with her.

Yi said that using different languages was only a superficial reason for the deeper
differences between the two groups, Mainland Chinese and local Hong Kong Chinese. As
these two groups of people had different culture backgrounds, Yi highlighted the
behavior differences between the two groups of students,

像跟我们一起玩的香港本地人，那个 local，她其实都，她非常好接触，我原
本觉得她跟我们内地的女孩没有太大差异，后来发现她，可能更，因为香港
的文化环境，她可能会更努力一些，她就是会想要说我要工作，学的东西要
跟工作挂钩，然后将来要怎么样，她是想的比内地的学生，她会对自己的专
业和以后的工作的那种关联度啊什么的，比较在意，我觉得她比较积极，我
觉得是香港女孩的这种特点，可能是她们的一种属性，可能她们要想，她们
那种文化是必须要靠自己非常努力啊然后怎么样样的，那个女生是典型的
香港女孩，就是很想要，就是事业方面，顺一些什么样的。反正说她是典
型的港女。

I have a local friend. She is an easygoing person. I thought she has no big
difference with girls from Mainland China. Later, I found I am wrong. Maybe, the
Hong Kong cultural environment pushes them to work harder and harder. She
always thinks about her job. Everything she learned needs to relate to her future
career. She will think more about her future. I think she is very positive. It is a characteristic of Hong Kong girls. They have to work harder to get what they want.

She just wants to have a brighter career. She is a typical Hong Kong girl.

Yi said one of local students, a girl, interact with her in Putonghua freely and they became good friends. In Yi’s interview, she said that she thought her friend should not have big difference from Mainland Chinese females. However, Yi found that her friend was a typical Hong Kong female. Yi explained that it was due to “香港的文化环境 (Hong Kong culture).” The Hong Kong culture pushed both males and females to work harder in order to achieve their goals. It was the reason why Yi’s friend, the typical Hong Kong female, had more sense of stress on future career planning. Yi was the only person in eight participants who pointed out gender issue. Yi was constructing herself as someone who was a Mainland Chinese female, with which she perceived her sense of difference from Hong Kong females.

In the interview, Yi said that she was constructing herself as a Putonghua and English bilingual, because she preferred to use Putonghua and English in her daily and academic life. Yi said that using Putonghua and English were enough for her to live a convenient life in Hong Kong, so she did not pay attention to learn Cantonese. When I asked Yi about her English, she said that she had improved her English in two aspects,
In living aspect, they like to use Chinese and English on the signs. You saw it everyday, you will learn from it… In studying aspect, some terms, you have to use it. You have to use it in your writing, because you show it to foreigners. So you have to more careful about it. And you have to know how to use some English words as a native speaker.

Yi improved English in both daily life and academic life. Yi pointed out that Hong Kong had a bilingual environment, as she said, “那些标牌好像都喜欢写一些汉字再写一些英文（they like to use Chinese and English on the signs）,” which made her acquiring English in her daily life. Yi also improved her English on campus. She said that she was more careful on her writing than before, since she was studying in Hong Kong. She mentioned that she tried to write like a native English writer, because her professors were foreigners. At this point, she was constructing herself as someone who was a Putonghua and English bilingual to someone who was a Putonghua speaker and English learner, indicating that she also wanted to construct herself as a native English writer.

Yi pointed that, as a student and an English learner, she felt the requirements of
the assignments were stricter in Hong Kong universities than in Mainland Chinese universities, as she said,

You have to find the references. Professors’ requirements of the references are very high. You have to find some persons’ articles and read them. You cannot use the online references. Each assignment needs more than ten references.

Yi said that her professors have high requirements on the reference. So she had to search and read more articles than before for finishing the assignments. She was constructing herself as someone who began to know how references should be searched and how a research paper should be written after her five months learning period in English-medium context. She said that she focused more on references and ideas, rather than grammars. Yi said,

但是写的时候我觉得更重要得其实是内容吧，其实我觉得像以前本科做的那些作业或者写那些论文也会有这些理论的东西，但是接触的很少，然后就是后来接触这些理论上的东西很多，就是渐渐学会怎么样看待一个理论，或对一个理论开始有自己的看法，像以前就是看一下就过去了，不回去思考他是
I focus more on ideas when I am writing. Like the assignments I finished in my undergraduate study, I contacted with few theories. Now, I contact more with theories. Gradually, I learned to know how to treat the theories, or I began to have my own opinions on the theories. I would just read the theories without thinking whether the theories were right or not. Now, when I read a theory, I will think about if it is reasonable.

Yi said that her previous English writing experience in Mainland China had come to contact with few theories. During her learning process in Hong Kong, she had more contacts with theories in her research field. The more references she read, the more she thought. She began to put her own ideas on different theories, and she was trained to become an experienced student with critical thinking. In Yi’s writing experience, she was constructing herself as someone who began as a student to someone who was an experienced student with critical thinking. Her learning experience in Hong Kong also helped her transforming from someone who was not a native English writer to someone who made efforts to become a native English writer.

Yi’s Majority/Minority Identities in Hong Kong Context

Yi said that more than 60 percent of her classmates came from Mainland China.
They were all full-time students. The others were local Hong Kong Chinese, who were teachers in international schools. So they were all part-time students. Only two local Hong Kong students were full-time students in her class. Though Yi did not say that the Mainland Chinese students were the majorities directly, she showed her sense of the majority in her interview from two places. First, Yi said 60 percent of the students in her class were Mainland Chinese students, and she made friends with local Hong Kong students, who could speak Putonghua. It indicated that she treated Putonghua as the only communicating language in her life. It also demonstrated that she treated Putonghua speakers as the majorities. The other place she saw herself as a majority was that she did not take any actions to learn Cantonese, though she lived in a Cantonese dominant environment. It indicated that Putonghua was enough for Yi to communicate with her classmates in Hong Kong. Though Yi should be the one who was treated as the minority in Cantonese-speaking environment, Yi still saw herself as a majority, who did not plan to learn Cantonese.

In sum, Yi was constructing herself as someone who began as a Putonghua and English bilingual, moved to someone who was a Putonghua and English speaker and a native English writer. In the interview, Yi was also constructing herself as someone who was a majority, and not a Cantonese learner after five months learning process in a trilingual context.
Summer

Summer, a pseudonym chosen by the participant, is a good example of an individual who indirectly showed that her majority/minority identities influenced her attitudes toward learning Cantonese in a trilingual context. Summer is a graduate student majoring in Mathematics in Hong Kong Baptist University. She was born in the capital city in middle China. She was majoring in Mathematics in full-time comprehensive university in South Coastal city, which is the nearest city bordering Hong Kong. After she got her Bachelor Degree in Mainland China, she was admitted by Hong Kong Baptist University. She was the only one who had spent four years in Cantonese speaking area.

Summer’s Language Identities in Trilingual Context

At the time of the interview, Summer had studied in Hong Kong for five months. Summer was constructing herself as someone who was transforming from a Putonghua speaker and Cantonese listener to a Putonghua speaker, a Cantonese listener, and an English learner. She also identified herself as a majority in a trilingual context.

Summer’s identities construction through using Cantonese. Summer said that she did not speak Cantonese, but she could understand Cantonese. She said,

像食堂里有香港本地人，我在深圳上的大学，所以大部分的粤语我都听得懂，但是我没说过……有时候心里想出来它是怎么说的，但是说出来就不是那个味道了，所以就不说。
In dining hall, there are some local Hong Kong Chinese. I finished my undergraduate study in Shenzhen, so I could understand most of Cantonese, but I never speak Cantonese...Sometimes I know how they speak it in Cantonese in my mind, but whenever I speak it out, the pronunciation changed. So I never speak Cantonese.

Summer said that she never speak Cantonese, because her pronunciation was different from local Hong Kong Chinese when she speak Cantonese. In another word, she known how to speak Cantonese and she could understand most of Cantonese, but she refused to speak it due to the accent issue. At this point, she was constructing herself as someone who was a Cantonese listener and not a Cantonese speaker, as she said, “大部分的粤语我都听得懂，但是我没说过。（I could understand most of Cantonese, but I never speak Cantonese.）”

Summer’s identities construction through using Putonghua. Summer said that she was a Putonghua speaker. She said that she always stayed with Mainland Chinese students, so she did not feel any changes. She said,

我没什么感觉，我就同学都是内地的，平时就跟他们在一起。所以我没觉得有什么改变。我才来半年，能有什么改变啊。

I didn’t feel any change. All of my classmates are from Mainland China. So I didn’t have any change. I just have been here for half a year. It is too short to have
changes.

In the interview, Summer insisted that she was constructing herself as someone who was still a Mainland Chinese student without any changes during her graduate study in English-medium context. She said that her classmates were all from Mainland China and they stay together on and out off campus. She also said that she had only stayed half a year in Hong Kong, so the time was too short for Summer to experience any changes.

**Summer’s identities construction through using English.** Summer’s learning experience in Mainland China did not have much contact with English. Though the professors were required to use English to teach in class in Hong Kong, she said that she still did not have many access to English. She said,

上课都是要用英文。但是我们数学英文用的东西比较少嘛，都是数学上的东西，而且简单的语言什么的，得到了什么啊，有什么啊，就推出来。你看的论文看的多了，你自己就知道怎么写了。我现在跟导师做研究，论文需要用英文写。我觉得英文厉害的人太强了。

We use English in class, but we don’t contact many English because of my major. Simple English is enough when using it in Mathematics. Meanwhile, the more you read, the more you know how to write. I am doing the research with my advisor now. I have to write my research paper in English. I think people who are good at English are very great.
Summer said that English, which used in Mathematics, were very simple. She acquired English writing in her field after she read many references, which were assigned by her professors, as she said, “你看的论文看的多了，你自己就知道怎么写了。(The more you read, the more you know how to write.)” So Summer was constructing herself as someone who known how a mathematics research paper should be written.

Summer admired people who were good at English, as she said, “我觉得英文厉害的人太强了。(I think people who are good at English are very great.)” At this point, Summer identified herself as someone who was not good at English. It also showed that she wanted to improve her English, as she said, “论文需要用英文写。(I have to write my research paper in English.)” As discussing this, she was constructing herself as someone who was an English learner. However, she said that there was not an English-speaking environment around her. She said,

現在沒有這個語言環境。而且中国人跟中国人说英文就是很别扭，哪有中国人跟中国人还说英语的啊。所以我不会想说英文啊。

There is no [English] language environment in Hong Kong. It is weird to speak English with a Chinese. So I don’t want to speak English.

Summer said that she felt strange to speak English with Chinese people. So she would not like to speak English. She was struggling that she wanted to learn English, but
she was someone who did not want to speak English. She said that the language environment in Hong Kong did not provide English-speaking environment for her. She also said that there was another reason prevent her from speaking English,

就是香港人自己的英语也不怎么样。我其实也在想, 香港人英语会这么差吗？ 但是他们会有语调，然后挺难说的。一般老师上课要求都用英文，所以他们说的都还可以。但是其实我的英语是很差的。我平时不怎么用，但是要上课的话，可能要跟老师上习题课，所以还要练，哎呀，好惨，还要练英语。

Hong Kong Chinese’s English is not good. They have the Cantonese accent when they speak English. It is hard to understand. My professors are good in English. Actually, my English is very poor. I don’t use it in my daily life. However, I have to use it in class. So I have to practice my English, so suffering.

Summer said that the professors used English in class, including the nonnative English-speaking professors. The professors English were good, but other local Hong Kong Chinese’s English was not good. She said that the local people had Cantonese accent when they speak English, and she could not get use to it. So Summer felt that the Cantonese accent made her more difficult to interact with local people in English. She emphasized, “我的英语是很差的。(My English is very poor.)” In the conversation, Summer identified herself as a poor English speaker. She said, “还要练英语。(So I have to practice my English.)” At this point, she was constructing herself as someone who was
a poor English speaker to English learner, indicating that she wanted to become a good English speaker. In order to adapt into English-medium context, she had to practice English. However, she said, “我这个学数学的真的很讨厌学英语。\textit{(I am major in Mathematics, I really hate to learn English.)}” She was forcing herself to learn English, though she did not like to learn English.

**Summer’s Majority/Minority Identities in Hong Kong Context**

Most of the time, Summer said that she was surrounded by Mainland Chinese students, so in the interview she was identified herself as a majority. She felt using Putonghua was enough in her daily life, as she said,

因为学校里面内地人毕竟比较多啦，所以他们就是，嗯，能讲。所以我听得懂。他们应该也都听得懂普通话。应该都听得懂，因为很多内地的。而且平时就有一些内地的过来访问的，很多内地人来交流，所以他们都能讲普通话。

We are the majority on campus. So the local students can, Un, speak Mandarin Chinese. We can understand each other because of many Mainland Chinese. By the way, there are a lot of Chinese teachers and scholars traveling to Hong Kong to communicate. So they have to speak Mandarin Chinese.

In the interview, Summer said that she identified herself as a majority. One reason made Summer have the sense of majority was that more and more Mainland Chinese students and teachers came to Hong Kong to learn and teach. In addition, there were
many Mainland Chinese scholars came to Hong Kong universities to attend conferences. So most of the local students and teachers should speak and understand Putonghua, indicating that Putonghua was an important communicating language on campus. Another reason was that Putonghua was enough for summer to live a convenient life in Hong Kong, indicating that more and more people using Putonghua in Hong Kong now. Moreover, Summer’s sense of majority indicating that Putonghua had more power in recent years in Hong Kong. According to those reasons, Summer thought that she had no need to speak Cantonese, and did not intend to learn Cantonese.

In sum, Summer was experiencing identities construction though she said that she did not feel any changes. Since Summer studied Mathematics in Hong Kong for 5 months, she was constructing herself as someone who began as a Putonghua speaker and Cantonese listener to someone who was a Putonghua speaker, Cantonese listener and English learner in a trilingual context.

**Conclusion**

In sum, the findings in this chapter reveal the participants’ demographic information and learning experience during their language learning on and out of campus in trilingual context. These details provided me with a clear picture, as shown in Table 2, and facilitated me to better understand their language learning experiences in trilingual context. The information presented in the Table 2 shows the relationship between participants’ language identities and majority/minority identities. I presented
five themes that have significant impacts on my study. These themes are: (1) difference between Cantonese learners, (2) Cantonese learner identity as changing over time, (3) sense of majority identity on campus, (4) sense of majority identity in trilingual context, and (5) context-dependent individuals’ identities’ construction in relation with language choices. The first two themes respond to the first formative category, language identities in trilingual context. The third and forth themes respond to the second formative category, majority/minority identities in Hong Kong context. The last themes respond to the both formative category, how context-dependent individuals’ identities’ construction in relation with language choices. In the following chapter, I further analyze majority/minority identities in relation to language identities in trilingual context.
Table 2

*Relationship Between Participants’ Language Identities and Majority/Minority Identities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Language Identities</th>
<th>Majority/Minority Identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qiang</td>
<td>Putonghua and English bilingual; Cantonese learner</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wei</td>
<td>Trilingual</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jie</td>
<td>Putonghua and English bilingual; Cantonese learner</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xing</td>
<td>Putonghua and English bilingual; Cantonese listener</td>
<td>Majority in trilingual context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meng</td>
<td>Putonghua and English bilingual; Cantonese learner</td>
<td>Majority in trilingual context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hao</td>
<td>Putonghua and English bilingual; beginning level</td>
<td>Majority in trilingual context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cantonese learner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yi</td>
<td>Putonghua and English bilingual; not Cantonese learner</td>
<td>Majority on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Putonghua speaker; English learner; Cantonese listener</td>
<td>Majority in trilingual context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

In this study, I explored the Mainland Chinese students’ language learning experience during their educational journey in Hong Kong. I conducted the research using qualitative method, associated with individual interview data collection. Collecting data though individual interview provided me with the data to examine the language learning experiences of eight Mainland Chinese students on and off campus. Based on the findings and analysis presented in Chapter Four, I used the theory of post-modern notion of social identities construction to analyzing the participants’ construction of their language identities and majority/minority identities.

I conducted the research by collecting and analyzing the participants’ interview interpretations of their experiences with language learning and communication of their daily lives and academic lives. The data allowed me to identity a range of participants’ perceptions and self-reflections on their language identity construction and majority/minority identity construction after they arrived in Hong Kong. In this chapter, the analysis focused on examining the relationships between their language identities and their majority/minority identities. The overall discussions seek for the insights that have direct bearings on these study purposes. The pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for the future research are also shared in this chapter.
Language Identity in Trilingual Context

The participants in this study showed their different attitudes toward Putonghua, English and Cantonese, and their language identities in Hong Kong context. As Jenkins (2006) said, there is a strong link between language and identity. Language is the key to understanding how people recognize themselves and how they construct their identities through using different languages (Mukherjee 1980; Srivastava 1984). After analyzing data, this study explores how individuals’ identities affect their language choices. For example, Jie saw herself as someone who was a Putonghua and English bilingual, so she chose to use English in the individual interview to show that she could use English and she was an English speaker.

The participants’ perceptions of Putonghua, English and Cantonese and understandings of their language identities were reported in individual analysis in Chapter Four. For example, Qiang, Jie, Xing, Meng, and Hao constructed themselves as Putonghua and English bilingual and Cantonese learner. Wei constructed herself as someone who was a trilingual. Summer constructed herself as someone who was a Putonghua speaker and English learner. Meanwhile, Yi identified herself as not a Cantonese learner. The data from participants’ individual interviews provided me with a clear picture, as shown in Table 3, and facilitated me to better understand their languages choices in trilingual context.

In Table 3, all of the eight participants chose to use Putonghua when
communicating with Mainland Chinese to show their language identity as Putonghua speakers. Wei chose to use Cantonese interacting with local Hong Kong Chinese, which demonstrated her trilingual identity. According to Wei’s interview, she indicated that she was tried to adapt into Hong Kong culture and gain a membership in local Hong Kong community. That was the main factor for Wei to learn and choose Cantonese in Hong Kong context. However, Xing hold different attitude towards Cantonese with Wei. Xing did not want to work and live in Hong Kong after graduate. Meanwhile, Xing treated herself as a Majority in Hong Kong context. As a result, Xing chose to use Putonghua rather than Cantonese to communicate with people in Hong Kong. The participants’ identification of their language identities indicating that the shifting and reshaping of language identities are indexed in the act of speaking different languages. In other words, the participants’ choice of using languages depended on their contexts in Hong Kong, and also represented their language identities.
Table 3

*Participants’ Language Choices in Trilingual Context*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Choices in Trilingual Context</th>
<th>Qiang</th>
<th>Wei</th>
<th>Jie</th>
<th>Xing</th>
<th>Meng</th>
<th>Hao</th>
<th>Yi</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With Mainland Chinese</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With local Hong Kong Chinese students</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With local Hong Kong Chinese</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With English speakers</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E and P</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Interviewer</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note* “P” is Putonghua. “C” is Cantonese. “E” is English.
Bilingual and Trilingual

Mendoza-Denton (2008) explained the variation of identity in her study, which Jenkins (2006) pointed out that there is a strong link between language and identity. From using different language, the participants showed their language identities shifting when interacting with different communities. For example, Qiang, Wei, Jie, Xing, Meng, Hao, Yi identified themselves as bilinguals. One reason was that their majors of Bachelor’s degree had related with English. So they were familiar with the Putonghua and English bilingual environment. The other reason was that they were all enrolled in graduate program, so they must meet the English language requirements in universities in Hong Kong.

The results and findings of the study implied that the participants experiencing language identities’ transformation during their language learning process in Hong Kong context. When the participants interacting with local Hong Kong Chinese, Qiang, Jie, Meng, Hao were shifting their language identities to Cantonese learners. Wei identified herself as someone who was a Cantonese speaker and a trilingual. Yi saw herself as someone who was not a Cantonese learner. Although some of the participants saw themselves as Cantonese learners, their attitudes toward Cantonese were different. In next section, I discuss the relationship between language identities and majority/minority identities showed in participants’ narratives.
Language Identities and Majority/Minority Identities in Trilingual Context

There were several findings from the individual analysis in the narratives across all the participants. First, it was found that the participants processed three different perceptions of Cantonese. Qiang, Wei, Jie, Xing, Meng, and Hao were identified themselves as someone who was Cantonese learners. Yi was identified herself as someone who was not a Cantonese learner. Summer felt that she did not have any change, and she saw herself as someone who could understand Cantonese but did not want to speak Cantonese.

From the individual analysis across all the narratives, it was found that three of the eight participants showed their language identities construction in the individual interviews. Five of the eight participants showed both their language identities and majority/minority identities negotiation during their language learning process in Hong Kong.

Though seven out of eight participants identified themselves as Cantonese learners in the interview, their Cantonese learner identities were different. Xing, Meng, Hao, Yi, and Summer explained that majority/minority identities played an important role when they studying in a trilingual context. The participants’ narratives showed that their sense of majority/minority changed their attitudes toward Cantonese, and reshaped their language identities.

From the results of the individual analysis, I presented five themes that have
significant impacts on my study. These themes are: (1) difference between Cantonese learners, (2) Cantonese learner identity as changing over time, (3) sense of majority identity on campus, (4) sense of majority identity in trilingual context, and (5) context-dependent individuals’ identities’ construction in relation to language choices. Themes do not propose that all the eight participants demonstrated the features that can be categorized under them. Rather, each theme represents the essential features that are shared by many participants. Each theme is discussed in relation to the previous individual analysis.

**Theme One: Difference between Cantonese Learners**

The first theme emerged from the juxtaposition of all the participants’ narratives is the difference between Cantonese learners. This theme directly shows the participants’ language identities negotiation during language learning process in trilingual context. The results and findings of this study demonstrated that, the participants showed two different attitudes toward Cantonese during their studying in Hong Kong. The first three participants, Qiang, Wei, and Jie, who did not talk about majority/minority identities, treated Cantonese as the key to live in and adapt to Hong Kong context. For example, Wei said that she wanted speak Cantonese when interacting with local Hong Kong Chinese for fear of being discriminated against, “I have to pretend to be more local, so I have to speak Cantonese to avoid being discriminated against.” Qiang, Wei, and Jie treated Cantonese as the
language obstetrical, so they eager to learn Cantonese to adapt to and gain memberships in Hong Kong culture. In the interviews, four participants, Xing, Meng, Hao, and Yi, who talked about both their language identities and their majority/minority identities, also identified themselves as Cantonese learners when they first arrived in Hong Kong. However, they said that they did not intend to learn Cantonese, but acquired some Cantonese in their daily life through interacting with local Hong Kong Chinese. For example, Xing and Hao said that they acquired some basic Cantonese, but they still preferred to use Putonghua. The last participant, Summer, could understand Cantonese, but never want to speak Cantonese. They did not treat Cantonese as important due to their sense of majorities. Though they constructed themselves as Cantonese learners in the interview, the last five participants’ perceptions of Cantonese were different from the first three participants’. Overall participants’ perceptions of Cantonese demonstrated that their attitudes toward Cantonese indexed their identities.

In sum, the group analysis on the narratives revealed that the participants’ attitudes toward Cantonese influenced the ways participants perceived themselves. Their sense of who they are also influenced their language identities. The participants’ different perceptions of Cantonese were represented by their sense of majorities and minorities.

**Theme Two: Cantonese Learner Identity as Changing over Time**

The second theme that emerged from the narratives is involved with the participants’ attitudes toward Cantonese and the changing of their Cantonese learner
The concept of Cantonese learner identity changing over time indicated that the participants felt differently about themselves, while they reported their sense of majority identities. The changing of someone’s identity gradually processed through a period of language identities negotiation. This process of identity construction, represented by Xing, Meng, Hao, Yi, and Summer, strongly depended on the context. Therefore, this process is considered as a context-dependent identities construction. In analyzing the participants’ data, it can be seen that the identity in this study is not defined as the subject thoroughly changing from one identity to another new identity, but reshaping the original identity or exploring different aspects of identity. After analyzing the participants’ data, I found four of my participants, Xing, Meng, Hao, Yi changed their attitudes toward Cantonese after several months’ living and studying in Hong Kong.

When Xing, Meng, Hao and Yi first arrived Hong Kong, they planned to learn Cantonese to live a convenient life in a trilingual context. However, after several months living and studying in the new context, they saw themselves, the Putonghua speakers, as the majorities on and off campus. Since then, they did not treat Cantonese as important as they used to. For example, Xing pointed out that the local students had to interact with Mainland Chinese students by using Putonghua, as she explained, “我们人多么. 我们也不会为他说粤语，而且我们也不会。(We are the majority. We didn’t use Cantonese for interacting with them, besides we didn’t know how to speak Cantonese.)” Xing also identified herself, a Putonghua speaker, as a “majority,” and local Hong Kong
Chinese, the Cantonese speakers, as the “minorities.” Xing’s narratives represented her attitudes toward Cantonese in relation to her sense of majority. In the interview, Yi also identified herself as a “majority”. Yi was constructing herself as someone who did not plan to learn Cantonese. Yi said that she was satisfied as a Mainland Chinese student and a Putonghua speaker.

The majority/minority identities were considered as one of the important findings in this study. The group analysis on the narratives revealed that since the five participants treated themselves, the Putonghua speakers, as the “majorities,” they did not see Cantonese as important as they used to be. For example, Yi even constructed herself as not a Cantonese speaker. The participants’ narratives showed that the language identities and majority/minority identities impacted on one another. In next section, I discuss the participants’ sense of majority/minority identities on campus and in trilingual context.

**Theme Three: Sense of Majority Identity on Campus**

In this study, there was not any interview question in relation to majority/minority identities. The participants were supposed to be seen as the minorities in trilingual context. However, five of the eight participants showed their sense of majority in this study. Xing, Meng, Hao, Yi, and Summer identified themselves as the majorities, while identified the local Hong Kong students as the minorities on campus.

From the individual analysis across the five participants’ narratives, it was found that two major reasons cause their sense of majority on campus. One reason was that the
participants saw that the Mainland Chinese students were the largest group on campus. According to Li and Bray (2007), universities in Hong Kong have started attracting a large number of applicants from Mainland China. As consistently increasing number of Mainland Chinese students enrolled in Hong Kong universities, the participants’ sense of majority on campus was reasonable. The other reason was that Putonghua allowed to be used in class, but not Cantonese. For example, one of Hao’s professors required the students to use Putonghua as the dominant language in class. Under this circumstance, the participants were surrounded by the Putonghua speakers.

The participants’ sense of majority made them mostly use Putonghua on campus. The local Hong Kong Chinese students even chose to use Putonghua when they want to interact with the participants. As discussing this, Xing, Meng, Hao, Yi, and Summer showed their perception of their identity and using languages with desire (Norton, 1997). West’s (1992) conclusion showed that desire is the fundamental element for identity construction. The participants’ desirable language on campus gave them more power, and let them saw themselves as Putonghua speakers. As more and more Putonghua speakers on campus, they treat themselves as the “majorities.” Since they were the “majorities” they saw them to be, they had no need to learn the “minorities’” language, Cantonese. So, Xing and Summer identified themselves as Cantonese listeners, Hao identified himself as beginning level Cantonese learner, and Yi was constructing herself as someone who was not a Cantonese learner. Though Meng was constructing herself as a Cantonese
learner, her attitudes toward learning Cantonese were different from the first three participants, Qiang, Wei and Jie. Meng tried to learn Cantonese because she said that not all of the local Hong Kong Chinese could understand Putonghua, rather than that Meng could not understand Cantonese. The participants’ sense of majority on campus made them change their attitudes toward learning Cantonese. Moreover, it made the participants reshape their language identities. This interpretation is compatible with Norton’s (1997) idea that desire cannot be separated from the distribution of power and privilege, which, in turn, influence the identity construction (p.410).

**Theme Four: Sense of Majority Identity in Trilingual Context**

The narratives from four of the eight participants revealed that the participants did not only treat themselves as the majority on campus, but also in trilingual context. It is important to note that the construction of identity, which is driven by the power. So the participants’ sense of majority might have related with the relationship between Mainland China and Hong Kong government. Since the power transfer of sovereignty from the United Kingdom to China, Putonghua became one of the official languages in Hong Kong. Since then, more and more local Hong Kong Chinese could speak Putonghua, indicating the raising power of Putonghua and Chinese government in Hong Kong. Since the growing power of Putonghua, four of the eight participants in this study saw themselves as the majorities in Hong Kong context.

In the interviews, the participants reconstructed their language identities after the
participants realized that speaking Putonghua was convenient enough for living in Hong Kong. For considering the “poor” Putonghua and English proficiency of some of the local Hong Kong Chinese, Meng, Hao chose to learn and use some basic Cantonese in their daily life. While Xing, and Summer chose to speak Putonghua, rather than Cantonese even when the local Hong Kong Chinese speak Cantonese because of Xing’s and Summer’s Mainland Chinese identity. They said that if the local Hong Kong Chinese wanted to interact with them, the local people have to at least can understand Putonghua, because Xing, and Summer insisted to choose to speak Putonghua. Yi also satisfied to use Putonghua to interact with people in Hong Kong. Yi said that she had no need and time to learn Cantonese, because she would not live in Hong Kong after graduate. After analyzing the participants’ attitudes towards Putonghua and Cantonese, and their sense of majority in trilingual context, the next theme focused on exploring context-dependent individuals’ identities’ construction affect language choices.

**Theme Five: Context-dependent Individuals’ Identities’ Construction in Relation to Language Choices**

In this study, the language usage can be dictated by the context. For example, the participants were required to use English in classroom, which means they could not make language choices in certain context. However, the data showed that the participants have different language choices in different contexts. The contexts influenced participants’ identities’ construction. Meanwhile, the participants’ identities affected their language
choices. Based on participants’ language choices in different contexts, this study had a deeper layer of analysis on participants’ construction of their identities. From the discussions about the processes of identity constructions that the participants demonstrated, I developed a model of Mainland Chinese students’ language choices in relation to their contexts, their language identity and their majority/minority identity. The model is illustrated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1](image)

*Figure 1.* Language choices in relation to contexts, language identity and majority/minority identity.

From context-dependent language choices, one participant can experience both
majority/minority identity and language identity constructions depending on the context. This model was developed from the Table 2 and Table 3 in this study. In other word, this model is a mere description of the process of the construction of majority/minority identity and language identity that was demonstrated in this study. Therefore, the model does not aim to be generalized as a theory of identity construction. It is considered as an explanatory tool that can be applied to analyze the process of identity construction in relation to context-dependent language choices. In the rest of this section, I explain how this model can explain the identity constructions that were demonstrated in three participants’ cases.

**Wei’s Case**

The model introduced in this study can be used to explain the processes of identity construction that Wei experienced in relation to her context-dependent language choices. In Wei’s narrative, Wei made efforts to practice Cantonese with her local Hong Kong friends. In her interaction with her friends, she asked her friends to use Cantonese. It was demonstrated that Wei chose to use Cantonese rather than Putonghua or English when interacting with local Hong Kong Chinese, indicating that the Cantonese-speaking context affect her language choices. However, Wei not only wanted to speak Cantonese, she also wanted to speak Cantonese like a “native Cantonese speaker.” It was also indicated that Wei tried to gain a membership in local Hong Kong community. In other words, her story demonstrated that the Cantonese-speaking context affected her language
choices, and her language choices reflected her language identity. In the model, this process can be seen in the right part as the relation between context, language choice, and language identity. The context affected Wei’s language choices, and the language choices reflected her language identity. In Wei’s case, the model can be used as a tool to explain the process of her identity construction in relation to her context and language choices.

Xing’s Case

The model introduced in this study can be used to explain the processes of identity construction that Xing experienced in relation to her context-dependent language choices. Xing’s narrative demonstrated that when she worked as an ESL teacher, who came from Mainland China, teaching local Hong Kong Chinese students, she perceived herself as a “good English speaker.” However, this unpleasant working experience influenced her to perceive herself as not a “Cantonese speaker.” In Xing’s interaction with local Hong Kong Chinese students, it was demonstrated that Xing chose to use Putonghua rather than Cantonese, and perceive herself as a “Putonghua speaker.” Xing’s classroom context and living context influenced Xing to choose Putonghua to interacting with people, indicating that Xing saw herself as a “Putonghua speaker.” Xing’s context also affected her perceived herself as a majority. Meanwhile, Xing’s majority identity affected her language choices. Also, it was demonstrated that Xing’s majority identity and language identity affected one another. In other words, Xing’s majority identity and language identity were mutually influential in the context. In the model, this process of
identity construction can be seen in the whole part. First, her *Context* had influences on her *Language Choices* and *Majority/Minority Identity*, which are illustrated by the left part of the model. Second, her *Language Choices* reflect her *Language Identity*, which is illustrated by the right part of the model. Finally, her *Majority/Minority Identity* and *Language Identity* affected one another, which is illustrated by the lower level of the model. In this sense, the model serves as a useful explanatory tool for Xing’s identity constructions.

**Summer’s Case**

The model introduced in this study also can be used to explain the processes of identity construction that Summer experienced in relation to her context-dependent language choices. In Summer’s experience of using English in her major, Mathematics, she demonstrated that she had difficulty with English, and she started to perceive herself as an “English learner,” who was different from “English speaker.” Summer’s major and learning context influenced her language choices. She chose to use Putonghua mostly, which she explained in relation with her major. However, the English writing context influenced Summer’s language choices. She chose to learn to use English. Summer’s language choices reflected that she perceived herself as a “Putonghua speaker” and “English learner.” In this model, this process can be seen in the right part of the model, which explains the language choices in relation with context and language identity.

Summer’s narrative demonstrated that from the interaction with Cantonese
speakers, she perceived herself as a “Putonghua speaker,” a “Majority,” and a “Cantonese listener” who would not like to speak Cantonese. She could understand Cantonese, but chose to use Putonghua to interact with Cantonese speakers, which demonstrated that her context influenced her language choices and her majority identity. Her majority identity also affected her language identity. In other words, Summer’s majority identity and language identity mutually influential in the context, which illustrated by the model. In this sense, the model served as a useful tool to explain her identity construction.

**Summary of the Themes**

From the juxtaposition of the narratives, five themes that respond to the present study’s research emerged. Theme one provided the brief idea of the difference between participants’ Cantonese learner identity. In theme two, the participants who were identified themselves as the majorities held different attitudes toward learning Cantonese from the participants who were not talking about majority/minority identities. As for the third theme and forth theme, the participants’ sense of majority in and out off campus influenced their language identities. The last theme provided significant insights on the participants’ context-dependent identities’ construction in relation with language choices.

**Limitations of the Present Study**

This study has two limitations. One limitation is that this is not a long-term study, like Hansen and Liu (1997) note that onetime research cannot be adequate to study complex phenomenon no matter how detailed and carefully the research methodology is
undertaken. The present study had no chance to observe the participants’ multiple identities reconstruction before and after their learning process in Hong Kong by myself. Hansen and Liu (1997) also mention that data gathered through onetime research are problematic since the identity is context dependent. These limitations will be minimized by the applications of multiple data collection methods, such as autobiography and observation. If I can work and extend this study in the future, I will interview my participants individually at the very beginning of their programs, and keep observing and interviewing them during their study in Hong Kong. Combination of multiple data collection methods is suggested for the future research.

The other limitation is that this study only focuses on how the participants’ construct their identities during their Master degree program. However, many factors in trilingual context might lead the participant reshaping or constructing their identities. For future work, it might be useful to do a long-term research, and explore other factors and elements, such as examining their identity construction from the direction of their families.

**Implication for Pedagogy**

As many researchers have been exploring the Mainland Chinese students language learning process in English-medium context, not many second language learners and even the second language teachers are aware of the importance of majority/minority identities in and out of class. Reflecting on this reality, the present
study provides some pedagogical implications for second language teaching.

One of the most important discussions in this study is that the second language learners’ language identity constructions in relation to their majority/minority identities. Hence, if the teachers could pay attention on students’ majority/minority identities, the teachers may fully understand how the students perceive their language identities. This is a challenging reality for the second language teachers who are trying to understand and embrace their students’ identities, and it even seems to be overwhelming. However, the lack of the trial to understand second language learners’ diverse identities has a potential danger of generating linguistic hegemony over the learners. As a reaction to this reality, the present study can provide a pedagogical implication for the teachers.

Another pedagogical implication for the teachers was that language learners’ attitudes toward different languages represented their social identities. This process of identity construction was also related to the speakers’ perceptions of different languages. Reflecting on this result, teachers can have an influence on second language learners’ construction of their language identities and social identities by encouraging their sense of majority.

**Suggestion for Future Research**

Since the identity is not a yes or no issue, it is not a problem that can be solved and stop investigating forever. Hong Kong is very unique, and things always changed in Hong Kong. I reemphasize the importance of conducting studies concerning Mainland
Chinese students’ majority/minority identities. This study provided the practical understanding of how Mainland Chinese students construct their identities during their language learning process in Hong Kong. The study also provided the relationship between language identities and majority/minority identities. For future research, I suggest a longitudinal study to investigate how Mainland Chinese students perceive their majority/minority identities and understanding how Mainland Chinese students’ language identities can shift over time, as well as to investigate how the majority/minority identity impact on participants’ other aspects of identity. As far as I know, there is no longitudinal study which focuses on the relationship between Mainland Chinese students’ language identities and majority/minority identities. Therefore, the findings of such a study will be very significant in the literature in this field.

**Final Reflection**

This entire study relies on the participants’ personal narratives about their study and living experiences in Hong Kong. By analyzing the participants’ narratives, this study mainly focused on exploring their language identities and majority/minority identities construction through their language using behavior when they interacted with different communities in trilingual context. In my journey of conducting this research, I started to pay more attention to my majority/minority identities. During the study, I constantly reflected on the relationship between my language identities and my majority/minority identities.
This empirical study might not only help the second language teachers understanding their students, helped with Mainland Chinese students, who are studying in Hong Kong, in their language identities construction, but also help the students, who plan to study in Hong Kong, have a better preparation before they make the decision.

Meanwhile, this study may also benefit educators, and researchers, like Norton (1995) says, it may allow them “to gain insight into the way their students’ progress in language learning intersects with their investments in the target language” (p.26).
References


