Chineseness as a moving target
Intermediate report for the HERA Project,
Tilburg Case Study

by

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Jinling Li
(with Kasper Juffermans, Sjaak Kroon and Jan Blommaert)

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Preface

This report is written in the context of the HERA project and in the research programme language and globalization. The project, investigating discourses of inheritance and identities in four multilingual European settings (IDII4MES) is coordinated by Adrian Blackledge at the University of Birmingham and involves, besides Tilburg University, also partners at the Universities of Copenhagen and Stockholm; see http://www.heranet.info/idi4mes/index.

The report consists of six sections. The first section introduces the history of Chinese migration in the Netherlands, the Chinese language and sketches the research sites. The methodology of the research is discussed in section two. The section 3, 4 and 5 present the data collected in and around the Chinese school and the relevant analysis on the broader Chinese community. Section 6 draws conclusions.
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1 Introduction

1.1 History of Chinese migration in The Netherlands

The Chinese are one of the oldest established immigrant communities in the Netherlands, and they form one of the largest overseas Chinese populations in continental Europe. In July 2011 the Chinese community celebrated its centennial: one hundred years of Chinese in the Netherlands (Wolf 2011). The first Chinese immigrants were seamen who settled in harbor cities like Rotterdam, Amsterdam where they built Chinatowns. Later, Chinese immigrants and their children spread all over the county. Figures of the number of Chinese residing in the Netherlands vary a lot depending on the source and on the definition of ‘Chinese’. According to the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics, there were around 78,500 Chinese, (i.e. persons who were born or one of whose parents were born in mainland China, Hong Kong) in the Netherlands in 2011. Among them, 51,000 are first generation. In official statistics third and subsequent generation migrants are invisible and are registered only in terms of citizenship and country of birth).

Until 1990, Hong Kong people were the largest group within the Chinese community. However, this has been changed since the 1990 because of the political and economic changes in China. In the period of 1991-2000, people from mainland China, especially from Zhejiang province has increased dramatically to over 50 percent (CBS, 2011:4). After 2000, more and more Chinese students came to the Netherlands to study. From this period onwards, Chinese immigrants originated from all over China. This increase of diversity in the Chinese diasporic population meant a dramatic change of the status of Cantonese from main language of the diaspora, to only one of the dialects. The Chinese variety of the north, Mandarin or Putonghua steadily gained importance, both in China itself (see Dong 2009; Dong 2010) as well as in the diaspora (J. Li & Juffermans 2011).

The history of Chinese immigration to the Netherlands happened grosso modo in three stages. The first stage took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when Chinese pioneers began to immigrate to the Netherlands for a variety of reasons. As a push factor, there was the Taiping Rebellion against the ruling Qing dynasty between 1850 and 1864, a civil war that cost the lives of 20 million people. As a pull factor, there was the economic opportunity of being hired by Dutch shipping companies to break the Dutch seamen’s strike of 1911 (Pieke 1992). The Chinese pioneers who came directly from mainland China to the Netherlands were mainly from the provinces of Guangdong and Zhejiang. More precisely, the majority of them came from the Wenzhou and Qingtian districts in Zhejiang and the Bao On district in Guangdong (Pieke 1988; Pieke 1992; M. Li 1999).

This initial flow was followed in a second stage in the 1950s to 1970s by Chinese of various ethnic and regional backgrounds that had previously migrated to Java, Sumatra, Suriname, Vietnam, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong. These double-migrants were mostly engaged in the catering business, i.e. in running Chinese restaurants thereby introducing Chinese-Indonesian (Chinees-Indisch) cuisine to the Netherlands. After the Second World War, there was an economic rebirth in the Netherlands. In 1947, there were only 23 Chinese restaurants in the whole of the Netherlands (Chen
Towards the end of the 1970s, the total number had reached about 2000. Business was excellent for almost everyone. They were so popular that there were shortages of cooks and workers. During that time, China was undergoing political and cultural turbulences, i.e. the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and had strict control of emigration. So it became very difficult for the Chinese settled in the Netherlands to bring over workers directly from their hometowns in mainland China. So in order to augment their manpower, the restaurateurs had to look for workers in areas outside mainland China. As a result, the Hongkongnese became the largest Chinese immigrant group in the Chinese immigrant community in the Netherlands. Until the 1990s therefore, Cantonese was the dominant language of the Dutch Chinese diaspora. The Hong Kong people became the largest group of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands, representing 70 percent of the Dutch Chinese until the 1990s (CBS, 2010:6). Some Zhejiang restaurateurs commented that, because the only workers they could recruit were Hong Kong people, the Zhejiang restaurateurs had to learn Cantonese to be able to communicate with their employees. Li (1999) documented that in the same period, the Chinese immigrants who re-emigrated from Southeast Asia, like Singapore and Malaysia formed another labour source for the Chinese catering business in the Netherlands. Also in the same period, another re-emigrated group included Peranakan Chinese from Indonesia and political refugees from Indochina. Also between 1975 and 1982, the Dutch government accepted about 6,500 Vietnamese as political refugees. Among them, about one-fourth were ethnic Chinese (Li, 1998).

A third stage in the history of Chinese migration to the Netherlands is marked by a sudden rise of immigration from Mainland China after 1976 and more distinctly since the 1990s. The reason behind this third wave was the political and economic transformation in mainland China, of the People's Republic of China (PRC) where the social position of emigrants had shifted from being “betrayers of the motherland” to one of admiration (Li, 1999). Since the pursuit of material well-being was no longer considered taboo in mainland China and since the Chinese government had softened its severely defined emigration policies in the late 1970s. Many mainland Chinese migrated to western countries. As a result, in the final quarter of the twentieth century, the Chinese emigration was far greater than anything experienced during the first three-quarters of the century. This third stage is also characterized by the so-called liuxuesheng, i.e. Chinese students abroad and their dependents.

In short, the flow of Chinese migration to the Netherlands is multi-layered and highly diverse in terms of the place of their origin, individual motivations and personal or family trajectories. And the demographic changes in the constitution of Chinese diaspora and their linguistic changes have far-reaching consequences for people’s language and identity repertoires, which is the theme of this research project.
1.2 The Chinese language

According to Ethnologue (2009), there are 292 indigenous languages in China. Ethnologue recognises Chinese in their list of languages of China not as a language, but as a macrolanguage, i.e. ‘multiple, closely related individual languages that are deemed in some usage contexts to be a single language’. As a macrolanguage, Chinese has thirteen ‘member languages’, listed alphabetically as Gan, Hakka, Huizhou, Jinyu, Mandarin, Min Bei, Min Dong, Min Nan, Min Zhong, Pu-Xian, Wu, Xiang and Yue.

The official discourse in China, however, is that there is only one Chinese language that comprises variation in the form of many fangyan or dialects. However, this variation only exists or is supposed to exist on the level of spoken language varieties. Chinese is unified by a homogeneous writing system that enables communication across a wide geographical area and among speakers of widely varying and mutually largely unintelligible vernaculars. This unification has a long and complex history, dating back to 246 BC. Qinshihuang, the first emperor of unified China, is a pivotal figure. After unifying China, he and his advisor passed not only a series of major economic and political reforms, but also cultural reforms. One of them is the script unification in China.

Further, since 1913, considerable means have been invested in creating a standard or common spoken language based on the northern, Beijing variety of Chinese (see Dong 2010). This standard was spoken by officials and the educated elite in China during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties (Coblin 2000), and is internationally still referred to as Mandarin, but is in China itself, currently known as Putonghua (‘common speech’).

Linguists traditionally divide Chinese fangyan into seven or eight major language/dialect clusters. DeFrancis (1984, : 67) recognizes eight ‘mutually unintelligible regionalects’ that make up Chinese and Ramsey (1987, : 87) identifies seven ‘dialect groups’. These include Mandarin (官) as the language/dialect of the north (also the most widely spoken language/dialect) and Wu (吴), Yue (粤), Xiang (湘), Hakka (客家), Gan (赣) and Min (闽) as languages/dialects of the south and coastal southeast. Shanghainese and Wenzhounese are varieties of Wu. Yue is often used interchangeably with Cantonese, the language/dialect spoken in Hong Kong and the Guangdong province. Min – the fangyan of Fujian, Taiwan and Hainan – is the entity with the largest internal variation and is sometimes split up in two or more varieties using the cardinal directions east and west and/or north and south.

In mainland China, the new standard (Putonghua) coupled with simplified characters and a new romanization, pinyin (‘phonetic writing’) have been promoting by the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) nationwide for decades. Prior to the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Communist Party had set up a committee to reform the Chinese Language. The simplified Chinese characters are now officially used in mainland China and Singapore.

The political, economic and linguistic changes in China in the last three decades have transformed the composition of the Chinese population and linguistic situation in the Chinese communities in the Netherlands. Before 2000, Cantonese was taught in Chinese heritage schools and used as the lingua franca in the Chinese communities. Today, Putonghua is taught. In the period of
2000 to 2010, we witnessed a process of linguistic transformation in the Chinese communities. Almost all of the Chinese community schools have gradually changed the lessons from Cantonese to Putonghua, from traditional to simplified script curriculum, and from Cantonese speaking to Putonghua speaking teachers.

1.3 The city of Eindhoven and Chinese in Eindhoven

The Chinese sites for this study had been chosen to be in Eindhoven, the largest city in the Dutch province of North Brabant with a total city population of 330,152 in 2011 and together with its neighboring regions, it has nearly 750,000 inhabitants. Eindhoven was once a small village, but it has grown to one of the biggest cities in the Netherlands, much of its growth is due to Philips and DAF Trucks. The population of Chinese immigrants in Eindhoven is sizable.

Unlike the traditional Chinese communities in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague that have concentrated Chinatowns, Eindhoven has an ‘unconcentrated Chinatown’ due to the historical development of the city. Eindhoven was a small village in an economically backward and mostly agricultural area. Cheap land, cheap labor and the existence of pre-industrial home-sourcing (huisinjverheid in Dutch) made Eindhoven an attractive area for developing industries. Eindhoven has been a migrant city attracting internal and transnational migrants. During the 19th century, Eindhoven grew into an industrial town with factories for textile weaving, cigar manufacturing, match making and hat making. Most of these industries disappeared again after World War II.

The major driver for growth of Eindhoven in the 20th century has been the presence of Philips. It attracted and spun off many hi-tech companies. In 2005, a full third of the total amount of money spent on research in the Netherlands was spent in or around Eindhoven. A quarter of the jobs in the region are in technology and ICT, with companies such as FEI Company (once Philips Electron Optics), NXP Semiconductors (formerly Philips Semiconductors), ASML, Toolex, Simac, CIBER, Neways, Atos Origin and the aforementioned Philips and DAF. The city therefore presents an interesting case in studying demographic changes as a result of more recent forms of globalization in the composition of the Chinese community. According to the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics, the Chinese population counts 3,000. Traditional and new Chinese immigrants are engaged with cultural transmission. Changes in concepts of Chineseness are likely to be more visible in Eindhoven than in the older Dutch Chinatowns. The Eindhoven Chinese community is younger than the Chinese communities in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague and has a slightly different social-demographic make-up in the sense that many Eindhoven Chinese are students or so-called knowledge migrants that are attracted to Eindhoven by the High Tech Campus, the Eindhoven University of Technology and the various multinational high-tech companies.

1.4 Chinese schools in the Netherlands and in research sites

In all major cities in the Netherlands there is at least one Chinese school focusing on teaching Chinese as a community language. The Stichting Chinees Onderwijs Nederland ‘Foundation Chinese Education The Netherlands’ lists more than forty schools. These schools are community run and self-
financed. The traditional population of those schools was children of Cantonese background. However, the political, economic and linguistic changes in China in the last three decades have transformed the composition of the Chinese population and linguistic situation in the Chinese communities in the Netherlands, together with the geopolitical repositioning of China, Chinese schools now attract people from all kinds of ethnic, linguistic, cultural backgrounds. The Chinese school now is a site of immense diversity.

The research reported here takes place mainly in and around one Chinese school in Eindhoven. For triangulation purposes we also visited two other Chinese Schools, one in Utrecht and one in Tilburg. The Chinese school Eindhoven was one of two oldest Chinese schools in The Netherlands. It was established in 1978 by the Chinese Protestant Church of Eindhoven and provided Cantonese lessons to children of Cantonese origin in a café restaurant. There were only about twenty students at that time. At the time of this research in 2010, the school had around 280 students and the number of students has increased to more than 310 in 2011.

Like many other Chinese community schools, the Chinese school in Eindhoven also rents classrooms from a Dutch mainstream secondary school for four hours per week on Saturdays when students and teachers are free from their daily education and/or work, and when the school premises are available to be rented. Classes in the Chinese school in Eindhoven start from 9.15 to 11.45 a.m. and include a 20 minute break, during which there are regular staff meetings for the teachers. The school has classes starting from kindergarten and progressing to level 1 through level 12. The lower grades typically have up to twenty pupils whereas the higher grades usually have less than eight pupils. There is also one Taiwanese mandarin class for the children whose parents are expatriate staff and temporarily residing in The Netherlands. The Taiwanese children go to the international English school from Monday to Friday. In addition, in the school there are four levels of adult language classes offering to non-Chinese speakers who wish to learn Chinese. There is also a Dutch class for people of Chinese origin that is attended, among others, by teachers that are not yet proficient in Dutch.

Students in the school are mainly from the area of Eindhoven, but some students also travel considerable distances to attend the school, including from towns across the border in Belgium. Altogether there were 25 teachers, including teachers for calligraphy, music and Kong fu. Many of the teachers are long-term residents in the local area. Both teachers and students at the School come from a wide range of social and linguistic backgrounds. Some of the teachers are well-paid professionals working at the High Tech Campus or for one of the hospitals in the city. Others are housewives or househusbands or work in the catering business, managing or working for a Chinese restaurant. Yet others are researchers or doctoral students who recently arrived in the Netherlands from Mainland China. Recruitment of teachers is mainly from the community through personal introductions, and the school website. Student recruitment, likewise, is through word of mouth, the website, and advertisements in local Chinese supermarkets and restaurants.

With the changing composition of Chinese immigrants in The Netherlands in the last decade, lessons have gradually shifted to Mandarin. And since 2006, there are only Mandarin classes left, the
school no longer employs textbooks prepared in Hong Kong and Taiwan but by Ji Nan University in Mainland China for the 12 grades class. The textbooks, provided by the Chinese embassy in The Netherlands, were originally targeted for children of overseas Chinese in the United States and Canada. Therefore, the language of instruction in the textbooks is English. In our fieldwork sites, some teachers speak English in addition to, or sometimes instead of Dutch, and flexibly switch between Chinese, Dutch and/or English in the classroom (cf. A. Creese & Blackledge 2010, for similar findings in UK complementary classrooms).

The shift in the school is not just linguistic, it also includes a shift towards what we could call ‘Chinese core values’. One incident from our field notes can illustrate this.

**Data example 1: Teacher’s annual staff meeting (Fieldnotes August 2010)**

| It is the annual staff meeting of the new school year (2010-2011). This year the meeting is held at the Qingfeng Tearoom. Many teachers just came back from their holidays in China. Some old teachers are chatting about their encounters in China this summer, the culture shock they have experienced. Mr. Wu, the chairman of the school went to China as well this summer and has brought a box of “Analects of Confucius” along with him to The Netherlands. In the meeting, he is handing out the books to the teachers and gave a talk to express his concerns about the unharmonized and problematic contemporary Chinese society, especially the concerns for the impolite Chinese kids. According to him, the children are too spoiled and have no respect for their parents and elders. The traditional Chinese core values, like Confucianism, have disappeared in China. He asked the teachers to pay more attention to these issues and teach pupils some “Analects of Confucius” as well. |
2 Methodology

2.1 Research design
This case study is a multi-site ethnography. The fieldwork starts from the institutional context of the Chinese language and culture classroom at the Chinese school Eindhoven, but we also see the school as deeply situated in a wider context, and as a non-autonomous sociolinguistic space. Thus we move from the classroom to wider Chinese communities, ethnographic observations made both in offline Chinese communities (Qingfeng tea-room, Chinese restaurants and other organized community celebrations and activities such as Tai qi and Ping Pong activities as well as in online cybercommunities (Asian and proud forum, Gogodutch, Facebook)

The ethnographic perspective thus includes on the one hand the ‘traditional’ objects of ethnography (sound recordings, observation of situated events, interviews), but it adds to this two other dimensions: (1) attention to visuality in the field of language (language in public space, multimodal analysis); (2) attention to macro-sociolinguistic aspects influencing and constraining micro-events. In this section, we will begin by presenting the access gained to the research sites Chinese school Eindhoven, and also the access to the other two Chinese schools in Tilburg and Utrecht for research triangulation purposes.

2.2 Some conceptual tools
The research reported in this paper is strongly influenced by the work on language and superdiversity performed in the context of the INCOLAS consortium (International Network on Language and Superdiversity), focused on how superdiversity spawns new and complex sociolinguistic environments, demanding new analytical tools (e.g. Blommaert & Rampton 2011). The guiding assumptions underlying this work can be sketched as follows:

1. In the context of superdiversity, we need to look at the actual ‘bits’ of language and other semiotic means gathered in complex repertoires, and we need to see them as flexibly deployed in relation to imagined ‘standards’ and to specific communicative targets. We thus focus on the actual resources people deploy in communication, and we prefer ‘languaging’ over ‘language’ (Jørgensen 2008; A. Creese & Blackledge 2010; Juffermans 2010).

2. We also consider these resources to be tied to communities in new and unpredictable ways. ‘Speech community’ is a troubled notion when it is read as a sedentary community of people maximally sharing the linguistic, cultural and social conventions associated with a ‘language’ (Rampton 1998). Instead, we see mobility as a key feature of contemporary sociolinguistic economies, with resources being made for mobility and ‘exported’ and ‘imported’ by mobile groups of users; contemporary communication technologies obviously play a massive role in these processes (Blommaert 2010; Otsuji & Pennycook 2010; Pennycook 2010).
3. We see identity work as proceeding by means of intricate semiotic work in which even the smallest features of language or other semiotic resources — ‘accent’ — can acquire crucial values as an indexical identity diacritic (Rampton 2006; Agha 2007).

4. The mobility of semiotic resources leads to several analytical implications. In general, we see people operate in a polycentric sociocultural environment, in which they need to orient to a variety of orders of indexicality prevailing at different intersecting scales in communication (Blommaert 2005; Blommaert 2010). The three core terms of this proposition warrant further clarification.

Social arenas for identity work are by definition polycentric, in the sense that at any moment, actors in communicative events are facing more than one ‘centers’ from which norms can be derived. Such ‘centers’ can be institutions of a formal as well as of an informal kind. Formal ones could include, for instance, the school, church, the state; informal ones can include peer groups, role models, popular culture icons and so forth. In any act of communication, participants can orient towards any of those centers for templates of ‘good’ versus ‘bad’ forms of communication. Thus, in a classroom, both the teacher and the classmates can be seen as ‘centers’, and what counts as a ‘good’ answer in relation to the teacher can be simultaneously understood as a ‘bad’ one by the classmates.

The ‘norms’ emanating from such centers have varying degrees of solidity — the norms of a formal institution typically being more solid than those of e.g. a peer group. And norms need to be understood here as orders of indexicality: social and cultural values attached to specific resources in an ordered, non-random way, so that they begin to structure communication in relation to specific emblematic templates for social action (Blommaert 2005; Agha 2007). The choice of resources — or the use of resources by absence of choice — thus provoked non-random, culturally and socially scripted interpretations.

Polycentric environments offer several such orders of indexicality, but they are rarely equivalent: the social and cultural ‘order’ is stratified and operates at different scales — different ranges of cultural and social recognizability, of recognition/recognizability and scope of use. Again, the scale of formal institutions such as the school would typically be higher than that of an informal peergroup, even if some subcultural groups — think of groups oriented towards hiphop, or communities of online gamers — operate at extremely high, global scale levels.

By means of this analytic vocabulary, we are able to see the tremendous complexity of communication in superdiverse contexts, and of the identity work and effects such communication involves. The high level of unpredictability implied in this framework compels us to a momentous methodological choice: we can only investigate these complex processes ethnographically.
2.3 Gaining access to the field sites: my linguistic auto-ethnography

Before entering the field as researcher, I was a teacher of the Eindhoven Chinese school giving the course practical Chinese to Dutch adults. The access to the research site ‘Chinese school’ was therefore not problematic. After four years’ deep hanging out in the school as a language teacher, I was regarded as a member of the teaching staff and a member of the Chinese community. I observed much regularity in the school, attended numerous teachers’ meetings and had many conversations with various teachers, students, administrators and parents regarding the school information, identity, Chinese language teaching in the Netherlands. In the period of my master study in Intercultural Communication, I took the course ‘Ethnography’ and as a migrant myself, I have been very interested in language and identity. In what follows, I will illustrate the access I gained to the fieldwork sites, Chinese teaching activities where I got to know other members of the Chinese schools and the ethnographic observation I made.

As a former language teacher in the Chinese School Eindhoven, I participated in two-week training programmes for overseas Chinese teachers organized and sponsored by the Ministry of Overseas Chinese Affairs in different cities in China (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wenzhou, Jiujiang, Xiamen, Daliang) in July 2006 and 2007. For two weeks overseas teachers from all over the world are given the opportunity to take advanced Chinese language courses (Putonghua for teachers, Multimedia for teaching, Pedagogy for teaching young children, etc.). I attended the Putonghua course in Shanghai Normal University in 2006 and the Multimedia course in Daliang Normal University in 2007. With various classes of forty participants going on at the same time, there were over a hundred overseas Chinese teachers with whom a social programme was shared. This was an opportunity to get to know the worldwide network of Chinese heritage schools and to get acquainted with language teachers working within them. Thus, contacts were established with Chinese teachers from diverse parts of the world, including Canada, USA, Norway, Germany, Britain, Luxembourg, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Singapore... and also from the Netherlands. In Shanghai, I got to know Mrs. Deng, the grade 8 teacher from the Utrecht Chinese school that I later observed her class.

Every year around Chinese new year, the IOC (Inspraakorgaan Chinezen ‘Chinese participation organisation’), the umbrella organization of Chinese associations and community-based organizations in the Netherlands, and the Dutch organization for Chinese language teaching (Landelijke organisatie voor Chinees taalonderwijs) organize a new year party in Amsterdam to celebrate the Chinese new year with all the heritage Chinese school teachers. I joined the party three times from 2007 to 2009. This was another occasion to get to know the Dutch national network of Chinese complementary schools and to get acquainted with fellow Chinese language teachers. Thus, contacts were established with Chinese teachers from diverse parts of the country, including Amsterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, Rotterdam, Groningen, and Zwolle... At one of these occasions, I
met Mrs. Liu, the head teacher of the Chinese school in Utrecht, whom she later met again in a preparatory meeting for the 2007 Overseas Chinese Teachers Training in Utrecht.

In 2008, I started writing a personal blog (in Chinese) about my experiences as a teacher of Chinese and about my personal experiences of being an immigrant woman in the Netherlands. It also contains reflections about my present work as a researcher. Through this blog, contacts with various Chinese women in the Netherlands and world-wide were created. Some contacts or friendships that emerged out of this blogging activity were with Mrs. Xie who migrated to the Netherlands one and a half year ago. Originally from Beijing, she has become a teacher at the Chinese school Utrecht. She is an avid follower of my blog and frequently writes back about her own teaching and migration experiences. The other contact that I have established from the blogging activity was with Jessie, a former Cantonese language teacher at Eindhoven Chinese school from 1999 to 2003. In the section 3.1, more detailed information about the background of the teachers is presented.

In the early 2000s, Chinese is being introduced as an optional language subject for students in selected secondary schools across the Netherlands. Around the same time colleges (HBOs) around the Netherlands also begin to offer courses in Chinese for special purposes (e.g., business) in their curricula. There soon appears to be a shortage of Dutch-speaking qualified teachers for Chinese. In response to this, in 2006 the IOC begins to co-ordinate a training programme to prepare Chinese language teachers teaching in the complementary school system for jobs in the mainstream secondary and tertiary education system. I participated in the second time this programme. Here, I met Mrs. Lin who was a teacher at one of the Chinese schools in Rotterdam. On the basis of my contact with Lin and the experiment I conducted in the school, I felt that it ought not be very difficult to gain access to the Rotterdam school again. The school, however, appeared to have a very strict school director who was unfavourably disposed towards welcoming researchers in her school. Her reply to a recent e-mail sent by me in which contact with the school was sought.

Data example 2: E-mail from school director Rotterdam Chinese school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>锦玲女士：</th>
<th>Mrs. Jinling:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>我很真诚地告诉你：每所学校都会有自己校内资料，我们是不方便公开的。</td>
<td>Hereby I inform you sincerely that every school has its own private information. Danhua school is a regular school, classroom observation is not possible. This is to protect the students and parents’ privacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你也应该了解丹华学校是比较正规的学校，任何老师都不可以随便让朋友来听课和调查等等。我们有安全规则，也要保护学生资料和为学生家长着想。</td>
<td>I’m sorry, I can only let you know that there are about 550-600 students at Danhua school. We have 23 classes. For any other questions or enquiries, we have the right to keep them confidential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>对不起！我只能告诉你：丹华学生人数是550-600 左右，我们有 23 个班级。其它问题</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 Chinese schools in the Netherlands typically have a head teacher, who is responsible for the overall class and teacher arrangements, a director who is responsible for the administration (students and teacher’s admissions) and is superior in the organisation to the head teacher, and a chairperson (chairman) who is the sponsor and the highest in the hierarchy. In case of a conflict, the chairman finds a new director rather than the director finding a new chairman.
The tone of this e-mail is clear. No research possibilities in the Rotterdam school. To avoid Lin from getting into trouble with her school director, it was therefore decided to leave the Rotterdam school out of our research. The Chinese school in Utrecht was approached instead. The response of Liu, the head teacher whom I had met four years ago at the New Year’s party in Amsterdam, by contrast, was much more friendly and welcoming.

Data example 3: E-mail from the head teacher Utrecht Chinese school

锦玲女士：
我很真诚地告诉你：每所学校都会有自己学校的内部资料，锦玲：你好，没问题，看看我们学校在哪方面能对你的研究有帮助，我们都积极配合！

Mrs. Jinling:
Jinling: how are you? It’s no problem to observe the classes. If there are any things we can help, we would very happy to cooperate!
http://www.acsu.nl/files/2010_2011.pdf this is the school agenda. Just give me a call before you come, so we can make relevant arrangements.

The tone of this e-mail is equally clear. The Utrecht school promised a much more conducive environment for our comparative field visits. The school is established in 1981 and has around 500 students in 2011.

I made a phone call to Mrs. Liu at the same day and informed Mrs. Liu about my visits with Kasper and thank Mrs. Liu for her cooperation and kindness. A few hours later, I received an email from Liu that she wrote to the teachers about our visit.

Data example 4: E-mail from the head teacher Utrecht Chinese school

各位老师好：
本周六，李锦玲，提尔堡大学文化学院的博士生。正在做一项关于欧洲周末学校的研究生，会到你们班级听课，请给与配合和支持，谢谢！
祝好！

Hello teachers:
This Saturday, Li Jinling, a PhD student from Tilburg University, will pay a visit to our school for her research regarding complementary education. She will come to your classes, please be supportive and cooperative, thank you! Best wishes!

On our visit to the Utrecht school, an elderly assistant teacher whom we met on the bus informed us that there were only two schools (one in Amsterdam, one in Rotterdam) in the Netherlands that are still offering Cantonese classes among the more than forty Chinese schools in the Netherlands. According to her, even there the numbers of Cantonese learners are decreasing. She believed that Eindhoven also still provided a Cantonese class. But we knew that the last Cantonese class in
Eindhoven stopped in 2006. This seems to be different from the situation in the UK as we read in the literature.

We have similarly been welcomed in the Chinese school in Tilburg. I had met with the chairman of this school, Mr. Deng, in the City Park of Eindhoven, which is located at a five-minute walk of my house. The chairman of the Tilburg school is the instructor of the Tai Chi lessons that are organized all year around on Sundays in the Eindhoven City Park (as well as in the Chinese school of Tilburg). I had participated a few Tai chi sessions in the park in the autumn of 2010. This is where I met with chairman Deng. Official contacts with the Tilburg Chinese School have thus been established at various fronts and like in Eindhoven and in Utrecht we are also welcome to do our fieldwork in the Tilburg school. The Chinese School in Tilburg is a relative young, small scale weekend school. Located in the Tilburg city centre, the Tilburg Chinese School rents the classrooms from a local secondary school for Saturdays. The building is shared by a Japanese weekend school on Saturdays as well. Founded in in the spring of 2006 by the local Chinese community and a number of Chinese students from mainland China, who were studying at the University of Tilburg, The school now has around 90 students grouped from level one to level six. I observed the two highest grades in November 2010. The age of the students fluctuated from 8 to 11. The population of the students is significantly younger than that of Eindhoven (and Utrecht).
3 The polycentric classroom

Traditionally, the Chinese school taught Cantonese since the majority of students were from Hong Kong, and Cantonese areas of China. However, in the last two decades, due to the increasing mobility of PRC citizens and the changing place of the PRC in the globalized world system, Mandarin gradually superseded Cantonese as the predominant language in Chinese schools in the Netherlands. Consequently, we witness the Chinese school undergoing a transformation, both linguistical and cultural. Linguistically, Cantonese classes are replaced by Mandarin classes. As a result, Cantonese teachers are facing the situation to either give up their teaching position or retrain themselves to meet the new demand, while Mandarin speaking teachers are becoming a major force in the school. Contestations and conflicts on normativity and authenticity of Chineseness from different centers have emerged. Culturally, since the school does not provide Cantonese lessons, the teaching materials provided by the PRC, in the curriculum, we witness a collaborative memory of Chinese history and culture. In this section, I will document and analyse these processes which the school has been undergoing.

3.1 The backgrounds of the teachers

Intuitively, many people see the teacher in a class context as the repository of the target knowledge, as a stable figure whose input would always be directed towards the focus of the class activities, the curricular knowledge s/he is supposed to transfer.

In the context of our research, however, we came to see the teachers as a highly heterogeneous, ‘unstable’ group of people. The reason for this is twofold. One: the teachers themselves have a complex repertoire and a complex sociolinguistic biography, involving sometimes dramatic and traumatizing language shift during certain phases of their lives, and in some instances in the process of ‘learning’ the target language resources – Putonghua and its scripts – themselves at present. The consequence is that language teachers themselves are, in actual fact, language learners. The second reason is that teachers from the PRC arrive with a teaching style and a set of language-ideological assumptions that are often at odds of those of the learners. This results in mutual frustration and in incidents over class activities and interpretations of tasks.

To start with the first reason: teachers have a chequered sociolinguistic biography and a complex repertoire, and are thus in no way ‘stable’ repositories of simple and singular language norms. And they are facing students with very similar, complex and dynamic repertoires. Consider the following fragment from an interview with Jessie, a teacher from the Chinese school Eindhoven in the year 1999 to 2003. The interview was conducted in the summer of 2011.

Data example 5: Interview with Jessie, a former teacher of Chinese school Eindhoven

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Jessie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JLi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>JLi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JLi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Jessie** 我们的小学是这样子，上课用国语，但同学们之间的交流都是广东话。我刚去的时候听不懂。那时候广东人都是看香港台，都不看大陆台。但是上课老师虽然普通话很蹩脚，但还是讲普通话的，除了像体育这样的课，她那普通话我刚去的时候听不懂。所以我可以说是外来移民。

4. **JLi** 后来就要学会广东话？

5. **Jessie** 我刚到广东的时候可害怕了，街上全是讲广东话，我去读小学的时候，就是说除了学校和家里的环境可以讲讲普通话之外，你要走在街上你不会讲广东话，你要丢了，家都找不到，特别是小孩。所以非常害怕，要努力学，努力学。看电视，那时候还不好意思开口讲，因为你一讲，有口音，给人笑。我读小学的时候呢我一般不敢开口讲，很自闭的。我读初中后，因为没人认识我，不知道我是外来的人，我就以一个完全会讲广东话的人出现。没人质疑我是外来的人。但是发现到了初中很多人都不讲广东话了。

6. **JLi** 就一下子都不说了？

7. **Jessie** 后来我中学考的比较好到了重点中学，到了重点中学就没人说广东话了，交流都不讲广东话。大家交流都是讲普通话。这是我的心理。一个普通话讲不好的人，一定没受过什么好的教育，特别是你要考过高考的话，没有一个好的语言教育，你是考不过那些试的，所以从语言上可以判断一个人的教育程度。到了大学反而又换过来了，到了大学呢，大家因为没有什么压力了，又开始讲广东话了。

8. **JLi** 好，我们现在回到荷兰。你以前在安多分的中文学校教过书。

9. **Jessie** 教过，教粤语，教过4年。从99年开始。
Jessie underwent traumatic language change in her own lifetime: the forced transition towards Cantonese left her intimidated and scared (“it was very scary when I just moved to Guangdong”). Community pressure marginalized her as a speaker of Putonghua and accented Cantonese. Yet, the school exam system pushed her peers towards intense efforts in Putonghua, because “if your Putonghua is not very good, you won’t be able to pass all the exams”. And then, when she started teaching, she saw herself confronted with the strong polycentricity of ‘Chinese’: Cantonese had to be taught using Taiwanese textbooks, raising linguistic and literacy issues that she found hard to manoeuvre, the more since the parents demanded the teaching of simplified script to their children.
Her teaching experience dated to a decade ago, probably the very early stage of the process of language shift we currently see in full force. Right now, Jinling observes a conflict between old and new styles of teaching, due to the fact that the PRC sends teachers and teacher trainers to the West to streamline Chinese teaching (in the Netherlands, often performed by the Confucius Institute of Leiden University).

This brings us to the second reason: different teaching styles. In the school, differences between ‘old’ teachers and newer ones directly from the PRC were striking. While the older generation of teachers tended to have a rather relaxed and tolerant attitude during teaching sessions (and were themselves sometimes struggling with Putonghua, see below), new arrivals from the PRC displayed an outspokenly ‘native’ teaching style, with emphasis on rigor, discipline, and monological teaching. It is interesting in this respect to refer to the research report by Wang (2011) on Chinese teachers in the UK. Wang interviewed a number of Chinese teachers who became employed in the UK as an effect of the ‘stampede towards Chinese’ currently underway in schools in the UK and elsewhere. Many of the teachers, she demonstrated, were frustrated because of what they saw as a lack of commitment from their pupils, and a lack of support for their efforts from the school and the parents. Chinese, however, was a minor subject in the programs in which they were deployed, and pupils experienced the demands set by their Chinese teachers as exaggerated and out of proportion with the relatively minor weight of the subject in their program. Teachers tended to emphasize hard work, intense exercise and great effort to learn Chinese, and their pedagogy and didactics were strongly axed on reproduction and learning by heart. These modes of instruction, evidently, clashed with more interactive teaching approaches, emphasizing students’ initiative and creativity rather than submission and submersion. We observed very similar phenomena in our schools.

The point of these observations is that the ‘input’ given by teachers during the Chinese classes is in itself a conflict-ridden and polycentric feature: not always without contradictions and contestation, and not always unambiguous in terms of learning. The teachers themselves bring along a baggage of complex sociolinguistic biographies, matching the complexity of those of their students. The classroom episodes regarding these contestations are presented in section 4.1.

3.2 The range of language and literacy practices of Chinese-Dutch youth

The languages used and their occurrences in the classrooms vary in individual classes according to teacher’s proficiency in Dutch, cultural background, personal experiences and language pedagogy awareness. The Chinese school in Eindhoven offers courses in Chinese; in practice at least three languages (Chinese, Dutch and English) and various dialects appear in the daily conduct of business. The three languages (Chinese, Dutch and English) are used in the classroom context. In the 300 emails I received from the head teacher and a few from other colleges in the last four years, more than 70% of the emails is written in Dutch, 25% in English and Chinese altogether. Cantonese is practiced at the level of administration. And Wenzhounese and Cantonese are used by the parents chatting because the large population is from Wenzhou and Guandong area. The data presented here are essays written by students of grade 12 that were obtained as voluntary homework. There
were officially nine students registered for the class (Table 1): Wendy, Tongtong, Esther, Xiaoxia, Dan, Hua, Weimin, wah and Xian and one regular class teacher, Mr Zhou (all pseudonyms), but the actual number of attendance fluctuated each time. At the time of our research at the end of the school year 2009/10, the class consisted of five students: Three of the students and the teacher were of Cantonese and the other two students of Wenzhounese background. We had observed this class and discussed the general purpose of our research with Mr. Zhou. In a conversation with him, the idea emerged to ask the students to write their personal experiences with learning Chinese in an essay. The teacher supported the idea because this way the students could practice writing in the form of voluntary homework while at the same time providing useful data for our research.

Zhou’s class is ethnolinguistically very heterogeneous. Key information about this class is provided in Table 1 below. Two of the students present, Esther, Wah, were of Hong Kong Cantonese background, one Wendy of Wenzhounese background, and Tongtong had a mixed Guangdong and Hongkong background. According to Zhou, there are also students from Fujianese and Malaysian Chinese backgrounds in his class. Seven of the nine students attended mainstream Dutch medium school, the two Malaysian students attended English-medium international school from Monday to Friday. Six of the students in Zhou’s class were born in the Netherlands, one in mainland China and two in Malaysia. In sum, Mr Zhou’s class is made up of students with highly diverse sociolinguistic backgrounds.

Table 1: Grade 12 class of Eindhoven Chinese school (June 2010, school year 2009-2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>role and name</th>
<th>sex</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>place of birth</th>
<th>(parents') home town</th>
<th>home language</th>
<th>mainstream education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Wenzhou</td>
<td>Wenzhounese</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongtong</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Guangdong/Hong Kong</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wah</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xiaoxia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Fujian</td>
<td>Fujianese</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Nanjing</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weimin</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>China, Guangdong</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>English-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>China, Guangdong</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>English-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Guangdong</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three of the nine students returned their essays to Mr. Zhou who passed them on to me. Copies of the essays were made and the originals were given back to the students. Wendy was the first to hand in her voluntary homework. Tongtong and Esther handed in theirs a few weeks later, just before the summer holidays. Esther, however, wrote her essay not about her experiences with
learning Chinese but about what she wanted to become later in life. The other two students in this class, Xiaoxia and Weimin choose either not to write or not to hand in their homework. With Wendy and Tongtong contact was continued outside the school, also after their graduation (online on the social network sites Facebook and Hyves, but also in the ‘real world’ – see Varis, Wang & Du 2011/forthcoming, for a critique of a reality vs. virtuality opposition). With the other three students in class, no further relation was developed. Here, we will focus on Wendy and Tongtong’s essays and compare their experiences with learning Chinese.

Let us start by introducing Wendy’s essay in its original version on the left accompanied by a translation in English on the right.

**Data example 6: Wendy’s homework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Zhou Wendy</strong></th>
<th><strong>My experience of learning Chinese</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 我学汉语的经历 | 我的父母都是在中国出生，所以在家会说家乡话。可是，用家乡话不能跟每一个人沟通。所以在六七岁的时候，爸爸妈妈每个月都会带我去中文学校学习汉语。刚开始学中文，什么都听不懂，一个字也不会说，不会读，不会写，真的不喜欢去中文学校。妈妈一直坚持到今天。我现在每天都去中文学校学习。在家里我尽量努力学习，做作业。妈妈不在我身边的话，我就问妈妈，直到我明白为止。我现在学中文水平渐渐提高了，现在中国经济发展很快，中文越来越重要，不少在中国出生的中国孩子都学中文，所以我觉得学汉语很有必要。我现在每天在中文学校学习，如果我有不会的，我会请老师帮我。谢谢你们！ | My parents were born in China, so we speak home dialect at home. However, by speaking home dialect we are not able to communicate with all the Chinese immigrants. So when I was about 6 or 7 years, my parents sent me to the Chinese school to learn Putonghua.

In the beginning of learning Chinese, I could not understand anything, I could not speak a word, could not read and write. I really disliked going to the Chinese school and even thought about quitting. But my mum insisted on sending me to the Chinese school. And now, I start to like going to the Chinese school.

I study very hard every day and do my homework carefully. If I encounter difficulties in learning Chinese, then I would ask my mum until I understand completely. So, my Chinese is getting better and better.

Nowadays, the economy in China is growing very fast, and Chinese is becoming more and more important. Not only are the children of Chinese immigrants learning Chinese, but also people from all over the world like to learn Chinese. Therefore, I cannot stop learning Chinese.

I have learned a lot at the Chinese school, so I want to thank every teacher who has taught me.

The text, in simplified characters, is superscribed with Wendy’s name and a title and is organised in five paragraphs of three sentences each and one paragraph of two sentences. From a normative, schooling perspective, Wendy’s style is clear, well-structured, grammatically transparent, but rather colloquial and is exempt from complex stylised lexical items.

The first paragraph identifies Wendy’s parents as first generation immigrants from China and as dialect speakers, and mentions the limit of using dialect in the Chinese community. So she was sent to the Chinese school to learn Putonghua at the age of 6 or 7 by her parents. The second paragraph is about her initial experience with and (negative) feelings about learning Chinese, and the parental pressure to continue, and her present (positive) attitude toward her complementary schooling. The third paragraph is about the efforts she makes in learning, the help she gets from her mum and the results obtained so far. The fourth paragraph is about the changing position of China and Chinese in the world as a motivating factor for to continue learning Chinese. The fifth paragraph is the coda of the story and expresses gratitude to her teachers.
Let us now introduce the second essay, by Tongtong. Again, the original is on the left and our translation on the right.

Data example 7: Tongtong’s homework

我学汉语的心路历程

My experience of learning Chinese

I started to learn Chinese when I was four years old. I had two years of Cantonese lessons in the beginning, and then my mum sent me to the Mandarin Class. At first, I really did not like Mandarin, because I could not understand anything. At home, we speak in Cantonese, so I do not know much about Mandarin. My mum speaks Mandarin fluently. In the beginning, when my mum spoke in Mandarin, I got the feeling that she was speaking a foreign language, which made me curious about Mandarin. In the first year of learning Mandarin, my mum taught me pinyin and the pronunciation. At first I felt it was very difficult and thought that I would never master it, because I only had Chinese lessons once a week and I did not have much chance to practice. About six years ago, my Mandarin started to make remarkable progress, because my mum deleted the Cantonese television channel TVB, there was only Phoenix channel left, so there was only a Mandarin channel. In this way, if I wanted to watch television, I could only watch Mandarin channel. I was not used to it at all, but later on, I listened slowly and learned constantly, my Mandarin started to make progress. In the same year, the school textbooks were also changed. The new textbooks made me really want to learn Chinese. The content of the new textbook is much richer than what we had before. The old ones only emphasise how to write characters, how to pronounce the words, but no explanations for the words and the context of using the words. The new textbooks not only teach us characters and the pronunciation, but there were also different articles in which I learn about Chinese history, geography and culture. This is very important for those Chinese children who grow up in foreign countries, because we can learn a lot about China, and also the place where my parents grew up. Beside this, the new textbook also teaches us how to use the words and how to make sentences and how to write compositions... Because of this textbook, I want to continue with Chinese learning. After so many years of learning, I can understand Mandarin and even more importantly, I can write Chinese. As time progresses, I can also read Chinese newspapers and watch Chinese and Taiwanese televisions. In this way, my Mandarin progresses remarkably.

In 2006, my classmate from the Chinese school and I participated in a summer camp to China, and communicated with the Chinese youth in China. In 2007, I participated in a reading contest. Even though I did not win, because of the contest, I learned the reading skills. All these activities make me know more about the Chinese culture.

Nowadays, I participate in all the Chinese tests and contests that occur, because I want my Chinese to be excellent.

2006 年我和中文学校的几位同学参加了回中国的夏令营，接触了真正的中国文化，还有跟中国的青少年交流，2007 年我还参加朗读比赛，虽然当年没有的任何名次，但经过这次的朗读比赛，让我学习到朗读的技巧。参加了这些活动也让我了解了很多中国的文化。

现在每当有关于中文的测验和比赛我都踊跃参加，因为我想让我的中文更好。
Tongtong’s text, also in simplified characters (however with the title in traditional characters), is also presented on a single A4-sized page, but is about three times as long as Wendy’s essay (852 vs. 290 characters). Her style is, like Wendy’s rather colloquial and indexical for a hardworking Chinese-speaking learner of Chinese outside of China.

The long first paragraph can be divided into four blocks. The first block is about Tongtong’s earliest period of being a learner of Chinese. Tongtong mentions that she started learning Chinese at the age of four and describes that she has undergone a shift from Cantonese to Mandarin education after two years of learning Chinese. She also writes about the initial difficulties as a result of this shift. She also names her mum as a key agent in her learning process ('my mum sent me to Mandarin classes', ‘my mum speaks Mandarin fluently’, ‘my mum taught me pinyin and the pronunciation’, ‘my mum deleted the Cantonese television’). The second and third blocks provide explanations for what she describes as 'a remarkable progress' in her learning about six years ago (i.e., at the age of 11). The first explanation for this sudden progress is ascribed to her mum deleting the Cantonese television channel so that she was exposed more to Mandarin. The second reason is the changes in textbooks and teaching and learning style from a traditional grammar and pronunciation-based approach to a more socio-cultural, contents and usage-based approach. In the fourth block she concludes with the observation that the results obtained so far are satisfactory (although not complete, as she emphasises progress and a continuous learner identity). The second paragraph recounts two events that further motivated her learning and improved her Chinese, i.e., participating in a summer camp and in a reading contest. The third and final paragraph reflects with a sense of ambivalence on the fact that her Chinese education has come to an end: she fears that her Chinese may become less fluent without routine opportunities to practice, but puts this in perspective with the prospect of a job for which proficiency in Chinese may be an asset.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Wendy and Tongtong’s metalinguistic lexicon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wendy’s metalinguistics</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 The title of Tongtong’s home work is 我學漢語的心路歷程; in simplified characters this would be 我学汉语的心路历程, whereby the second, third, fourth and eighth characters have fewer strokes than in the traditional version. Simplified Chinese is used in mainland China since the language reform of 1956, while traditional characters continue to be used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and by some of the Chinese communities overseas. The use of traditional characters indicates that Tongtong has been exposed to Cantonese and traditional Chinese through schooling and Cantonese/Taiwanese television that is often subtitled.
We will now comparatively analyse the two essays with a focus on the metalinguistics of Chinese, i.e. on the ways of speaking about and referring to ‘Chinese’ in relation to identity and education in the two texts described above. Wendy uses three different terms for ‘Chinese’, *Jiaxianghua* (家乡话), *Putonghua* (普通话) and *Zhongwen* (中文) and uses a fourth term, *Hanyu* (汉语), in the title of the assignment. The title was literally copied from how the class teacher formulated the assignment and not part of Wendy’s personal narrative. Her education is presented as a struggle (‘really disliked’, ‘thought about quitting’, ‘my mum insisted’), but with a harmonious and satisfying result in the end (‘and now I start to like going to the Chinese school’). The trajectory takes her from nothing to something, i.e. from not understanding anything and not being able to speak a word, to a positive self-identification as a speaker and learner of Chinese (‘my Chinese is getting better and better’). The satisfactory results of her education are brought in connection with the rapid economic developments currently undergoing in China and its changing geopolitical position in the world.
What is metalinguistically remarkable about this short text, are the changing terms of reference for Chinese. In the first paragraph, Wendy constructs an opposition between (an unnamed) ‘home dialect’/jiaxianghua and Putonghua, an opposition that is resolved by her education. We know that her parents are from Wenzhou and that their home dialect/language is Wenzhouhua, but this is not explicitly mentioned in the text. She chooses to leave the respective dialect/language unnamed and to contrast this with Putonghua only once. From the second paragraph onwards, Wendy no longer uses the term Putonghua for what she is learning, but uses the generative Zhongwen. Zhongwen is made synonymous with Putonghua. She simply refers to the object of her education as Zhongwen. The unnamed (Chinese) dialect that she speaks at home is thus disqualified as being Zhongwen/Chinese.

This is not a discursive construction made locally and individually by Wendy here, but is something that also exists on a higher scale level. Wendy’s disqualification of the home dialect as being (a part of) Chinese, has of course much to do with the micropragmatics of the word for Chinese school (中文学校 Zhongwen xuexiao), which carries Zhongwen rather than Putonghua in its name. To an important extent, Wendy voices a larger Chinese ideology of language that sees the Chinese language as an exclusive, monoglot, homogeneous entity, and discards the diversity existing underneath it.

Tongtong in her essay uses four different terms for ‘Chinese’, i.e. Guangdonghua, Yueyu, Guoyu and Zhongwen, and a fifth term, Hanyu, in the title given by her teacher. She starts using the term Zhongwen in the first sentence of the text. In the second sentence she divides the term Zhongwen into two: Yueyu and Guoyu. Yueyu is the dialect/language spoken in Guangdong Province and the Hong Kong and Macau special administrative regions in the south of China, and is used as a synonym for Guangdonghua and is usually referred to as Cantonese in English, after the old name for the province and the capital, Canton. (Yue is, like Han, an ethnonym and is also the one-character identification for the Guangdong Province, e.g. on car number plates.) Guoyu literally means ‘national language’ and was used until 1949 to refer to the standard northern variety of Chinese, but is now associated with the Republic of China (Taiwan) since the new Maoist government proposed a language reform and introduced Putonghua (‘common speech’) as a name for the and standard variety of Chinese spoken. Both Guoyu and Putonghua (and Huayu) correspond to ‘Mandarin’ in English.

Tongtong’s trajectory of learning starts from learning Yueyu (Cantonese) to a struggling with learning Guoyu (Mandarin) and the trajectory ends with an enthusiasm in learning Chinese (‘Participate in all the Chinese tests and contests’, ‘will miss Chinese’). In the beginning of her learning trajectory, she considered Guoyu as a foreign language, i.e., ‘really did not like Mandarin’, ‘could not understand anything’, ‘a foreign language’, ‘very difficult’, ‘thought that I would never master it’. She mentions her home language is Guangdonghua (Cantonese) in the fourth sentence, and she did not know much about Guoyu. In her learning trajectory, her mum is the crucial factor (‘my mum sent me to the Mandarin class’, ‘my mum deleted the Cantonese television channel’).
From a metalinguistic point of view, Tongtong starts using the term *Zhongwen* in the first sentence as the object of her education. From the second sentence onwards in the first paragraph, she constructs an opposition between *Yueyu/Guangdonghua* (Cantonese) and *Guoyu* (Mandarin). *Zhongwen* corresponds with *Yueyu* in first years of Tongtong’s Chinese education. Then, after two years, *Zhongwen* is synonymous with *Guoyu*. The object of her education has shifted from Cantonese to Mandarin. From the second paragraph onwards, Tongtong no longer uses the term Cantonese, but uses the term *Zhongwen* and *Guoyu*. The satisfactory result of learning *Guoyu* is mentioned in the end in connection with the fastly growing economy in China. Tongtong’s learning trajectory goes through a few stages, marked by different metalinguistics.

The text written by Tongtong reflects more than a local and individual discursive construction, but voices a discourse at a higher, institutional scale level. In an interview with Tongtong’s mother, who has been educated in China and has worked as an editor at a television station in Guangzhou before her emigration in the late 1980s, she stresses the importance of speaking Putonghua for educational and general success in life. Data example 3 is a classroom episode from Tongtong’s class.

**Data example 8: Tongtong correcting Mr Zhou’s accent (classroom observation, 22nd May 2010)**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mr Zhou 你们造句也行把荷兰文的意思说出来也行，“本质”。 You can make sentences or say the meaning in Dutch: “property” [bĕn zhí].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tongtong 本质 [bĕn zhí]？某某东西的本质 [bĕn zhí] eigenschap van ( )? Property? Something’s property? Property of ( )?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr Zhou eigenschap. Property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tongtong 不是本质 [bĕn zhí] 吗? Should it not be bĕn zhí? [with falling tone]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mr Zhou (looks at the book again)) 本质啊，应该读第四声啊，对不起。 Bĕn zhí ah, should be pronounced with the fourth tone ah, sorry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mr Zhou 下一个，“比较” [bǐ jiào]. The next one, “comparing”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tongtong 比较 [bǐ jiào]? 比较 [bǐ jiào] 嘛? Bǐ jiào? Should it not be bǐ jiào?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Class ((all four students correcting his pronunciation))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mr Zhou ((nods in agreement, repeats the corrected pronunciation)) bǐ jiào ah. I made again a mistake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Class ((students look at each other and laugh))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr Zhou is an earlier migrant from Guangdong province and is a speaker of Cantonese. The day when Zhou and I arrived in the classroom, he greeted and chatted with the students in Cantonese. When the lesson started, Zhou switched from Cantonese to Mandarin as the language of instruction. During the lesson, Zhou and the students were practicing synonyms in the HSK exam exercise for level 5. The HSK test is the Chinese equivalent of the TOEFL and IELTS tests for English. It is a Chinese language
proficiency test designed and developed by the HSK (*Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi*) Center of Beijing Language and Culture University to assess the Chinese proficiency of non-native speaking foreigners and overseas Chinese. HSK has in total six levels ranging from elementary level 1 to advanced level 6. What is interesting is that the term for Chinese in the name of the test is *Hanyu* (汉语) – the language of the Han, the majority nationality (zu, 族) in China. In practice this means Putonghua.

The classroom was organized in rows. All four students sat in the middle row. Wendy and Hil wah were in the middle of the first row in the classroom with Esther and Tongtong sitting in the row behind them. There was a whiteboard in the front of the classroom and the teacher sat between the whiteboard and the students. The researcher took position in the back of the classroom, making notes and video recording at selected moments while audio recording the entire lesson. Before the start of the lesson and during the break, JLi interacted with the students (and the teacher) about her research, each others’ language and educational backgrounds, learning Chinese and sociolinguistic life in general.

The classroom episode presents a serious deviation from the traditional Chinese language class where the teacher has all the ‘knowledge’ and is assumed to be a model language user, with respect to vocabulary, grammar, orthography and also pronunciation. However, in this classroom, we see another scenario. The language teacher’s pronunciation is corrected by his students. From a traditional educational point of view, one might raise doubts about Mr Zhou’s qualification as a teacher of Chinese. Is he a qualified language teacher?

In order to answer this question, from a sociolinguistic point of view, we need to look at what happens outside the classroom. Schools as institutions are non-autonomous sociolinguistic spaces and are deeply situated in a wider societal context (cf. Blommaert 2011). Chinese heritage schools are situated at the intersection of two or more different political, social, economic, linguistic and sociological systems or regimes. Our analysis sets out from a sociolinguistic perspective that involves different scale-levels. Different scales organize different patterns of normativity (Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck 2005b; Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck 2005a). The analysis of our classroom interaction requires a processual epistemology in which the classroom interactions at one level of social structure need to be understood in relation to phenomena from another level of social structure. Time and space are the two key concepts in understanding of what is happening here.

For a long time, Cantonese was taught at Chinese school overseas. Mr Zhou is a first generation migrant of Cantonese background, who started his voluntary teaching career as a Chinese language teacher teaching Cantonese but had to reeducate himself to teach Mandarin. His reeducation is self-taught, but also partly taken care of by his students as could be seen in Extract 1 above.

The point here is not about the pronunciation of *ben zhi*, but to document the emergent and problem-ridden transition from one language regime to another. This little classroom episode reveals big demographic and geopolitical changes of global Chineseness – i.e., changes in spatial configurations: (1) the language teacher becomes a language learner; (2) the school surrenders the old language regime to capture a (new) audience; (3) the traces of worldwide migration flows impact on the specific demographic, social and cultural dynamics of the Chinese presence in Eindhoven.
migrant makes communicative resources like language varieties and scripts globally mobile and this affects the normativity in the diaspora classroom; (4) the Chinese philosophy of cultural, political and sociolinguistic ‘harmony’ is not strongly enforced in the diaspora, but is brought in – with force – by new immigrants from the PRC; and (5) on the whole we witness a geopolitical repositioning of China: the emergence of PRC as new economic world power.

3.3 Language shift in comparative perspective
Francis, Archer and Mau (2009) in their article on UK Chinese complementary school pupils' perspectives on the purposes and benefits of complementary schools, report that pupils they interviewed "overwhelmingly considered the learning of the Chinese language to be the primary purpose of Chinese schooling" (5342, in contrast to findings in the USA for instance where Chinese schools are described to be primarily focused on "improving mainstream educational performance" (and seen as supplementary rather than complementary to mainstream schooling) (534). They explain that Chinese complementary schools in the UK focus principally on teaching in Cantonese rather than Putonghua and that their primary or sole purpose is "to perpetuate the Chinese spoken and written language in younger generations" (520). This leads Francis et al. to conclude that Chinese schools may therefore be seen as "'mother-tongue' institutions", although systematically writing 'mother tongue' between inverted commas. After a long and extremely interesting discussion of pupils' articulations of the various benefits of learning Chinese for economic and identity reasons, at the end of their paper, they present a counter-discourse of learning Chinese (Cantonese) as a pointless exercise, a discourse voiced by the pupils that positions Cantonese as "archaic and 'under threat'; as the property of an older generation, irrelevant to younger generations in both social and economic terms" (533). Such discourse, they claim "stands in opposition to those of Chinese as fundamentally relevant in its constitution of Chinese identity, as well as those of Chinese language as capital" (Francis, Archer & Mau 2009). There is a flaw in the argument of Francis et al., i.e. of speaking about "the" Chinese language throughout their paper and of equating Chinese complementary education with mother tongue education, which it clearly is not given the complex relation between the tongue and the script and the diversity of vernaculars (jiāxiānhuà) or fāngyān/dialect that is assembled under the umbrella of Chinese both in China and in Chinese diasporas. In the Netherlands, the shift from Cantonese to Putonghua has already taken place. It may be the case, however, that, due to the long colonial connection of Hong Kong and Britain (until 1997), the British Chinese community is more conservative than other European Chinese diasporas that diversified earlier bringing together Chinese persons of various regions (and their communicative practices) which has accelerated the shift from Cantonese to Putonghua or Mandarin as the language of the Chinese diaspora.

This leads us to a few remarks about the notion of “Chinese community”. In popular and scholarly discourse, this notion is used both on a national scale (“the Chinese community in the Netherlands”) and on a regional scale (“the Chinese community in Tilburg”, “the Chinese community in Eindhoven”, “the Chinese community in Utrecht”, etc.). There appear to be close links between
the Chinese communities in Tilburg and Eindhoven in particular, and also on a higher, national level, justifying a notion of "a Chinese community in the Netherlands". However, obviously not everyone within this community knows each other, but teachers (or cooks, practitioners of kung fu or tai chi) invariably have contacts beyond their city within a professional network with a shared sense of community. Also, young people participate in a wider social networks online. The Asian and Proud hyve discussed in section 5.2 is a case in point. So, is there a Chinese community in the Netherlands, or are there several Chinese communities in the Netherlands?

Tao, a student from the Chinese school in Eindhoven we interviewed on 20-11-2010 comments in the following way:

Data example 9: Interview with Tao, 20-11-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Er zijn verschillende groepen Chinezen in NL die weinig tot niet met elkaar omgaan, door taalverschil, en verschillende “文化水平”</th>
<th>There are different groups of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands who have little or no contact with each other because of the difference in language use and educational level. For instance, university graduates who were born in the year of 60s and 70s and restaurant owners...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bijvoorbeeld: universitair opgeleiden geboren in 60'-70' en restaurant eigenaren. . .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The idea of there being one Chinese community is too simplistic to address the complex social reality of “the” Chinese community (as probably any other community). As much as there are uniting factors (being/acting Chinese, speaking Chinese, eating Chinese, learning Chinese, going to China, etc.) there are also dividing factors in terms of ethnolinguistic, regional and migration background.
4 Negotiation of inheritance and identity in and outside the classroom

In the previous section, I have shown language and literacy practices in Mr Zhou’s class in relation to the changing hierarchies in Chinese language varieties. Observations in other classes reveal that the languages used and their occurrences in the classrooms vary in individual classes according to teacher’s proficiency in Dutch, cultural background and language pedagogy awareness. Besides looking at the language practices in the classroom, in this part, I examine the teaching of language and culture, and in particular the use of folk stories and national fairy tales as curriculum in Ms. Sun’s Class, and in 4.2 I look at the activities observed outside the school context in relation to the pupils’ identity work.

4.1 Negotiation of inheritance and identity in the classroom: teacher-pupil interactions on a national fairy tale and a folk story

As mentioned in section 1.4, the Chinese school uses textbooks provided by PRC for overseas Chinese children. A glimpse of the whole series of curriculum, many folk stories and national fairy tales appeared in the curriculum. Prinsloo and Baynham (2008, p.2) argue that literacy “as situated practices embedded in relations of culture and power in specific contexts” (Prinsloo & Baynham 2008). This indicates that literacy practices, their teaching and learning are situated in their social, cultural, political and historical contexts. In this sense, literacy education is often an ideologically laden process.

Drawing on ethnographic observation data from Sun’s class, I examine in this section how the social and cultural knowledge embedded in textbooks for literacy education in the Chinese complementary school, and through a focus on one classroom genre i.e folk stories and national fairy-tale to investigate how teachers and students use these stories to organize their identity work.

The following extract is from the literacy event teacher-led discussion on a curriculum text. In Ms. Sun’s class, the literacy event started routinely with 1) review of homework done in previous week. 2) Teaching of a new word list for upcoming reading. 3) Reading text from a new chapter. 4) Teacher-led discussion on the new text context. 5) Homework announcement. The classroom discussion text in this section was written in 1959 during China’s Great Leap Forward. The author uses the metaphor of a little brook to describe the socialist revolution and socialist construction in China to praise hardworking and achievement. The text as printed in the textbook is reproduced below, followed by a transcription of a classroom episode discussing this text.
Data example 10: The song of the little brook

小溪流的歌

小溪流着歌，是永远也唱不完的。

小溪流着歌，是永远也唱不完的。
Translation of the Song

The little brook has a song that never runs dry.

A happy little brook sings, running day and night without stopping. The sun comes out smiling towards him and the moon does as well. The little brook is playing and running. He is patting over the colorful pebbles and also touching the little young grass on the way...... If there is a big rock in the way, he jumped lightly over it. Nothing can stop him from running. He sings high and clearly all the way and the valley echoes his high and melodious song which makes people forget weariness and anxiety. He arrives at a bend and there are a dead branch and dry grass who are surprised to see the little lively brook running and they try to persuade him to take a rest. But the little brook looks at them and says: "why? I will not stop running." Very quickly, the branch and grass were left far behind.

The little brook runs without stopping and gradually some other brooks join him and they form together a little stream.

The little stream sings and runs day and night. Nothing can stop him. If there are stones, he rushes over them, overcoming all the resistance and obstacles. The crow feels strange that the little stream is so invigorated and in such a hurry and therefore says to him: "hey, stop running, there is nothing interesting in this road". The little stream doesn’t forget that he was a little brook and smiles to the crow, but continues running.

The little stream runs indefatigably. Successively, there come are other streams joining him, together, they become a big river.

The big river sings with his sound and deep voice cherishing every second to rush. He becomes very strong and has an enormous amount of power. The mud and sand sink silently and grudgingly to the bottom, but the big river rushes along. He passes by many bustling cities and prosperous villages, helping many people on the way.

The big river runs and runs and finally he flows into the sea.

The boundless happy blue sea sings majestically. At the bottom of the sea, there is a rusty iron boat that is tired of the vigorous sea and says to him: "Why don’t you take a rest? Why don’t you take a rest? Like the little brook, the sea answers him high and clearly: "Take a rest? Why? I shall not do that."

His endless waves billow forth, never stopping. The moon comes out smiling to him, and the sun also does. He rushes forth and forth and in to all directions.

The large ocean sings the song of the little brook: “never stop to take a rest, never stop running!"

The song of the little brook is infinite, and never runs dry.

[Field Recording JLi_ 2010-10-16-Yang; 48:01]

1  MS Sun   这样一篇文章，大家有什么感受？涛   Such a text, what do you think of it? Tao,
2       涛，你有什么感受？   how do you feel about this text?
3       我没有什么没感受。   I don’t have any feeling.
4  MS Sun   没有感受？没有 gevoel？它这样一篇   No feeling? No feeling? Such a text, what
5       文章讲的是什么意思？   does it tell us?
6       没意思。   Nothing.
7  MS Sun   没意思啊？他用，就用东西写成人   Nothing? He personifies things,
8       啊，拟人化，对吧？拟人，然后写小   personification, right? He personifies the
9       溪流呢，他非常努力。从不休息，从   brook, the brook works very hard, never
10      不停留，直奔大海。其实写得，其实   takes a rest, running straight to the sea. In
11      写得，跟人的一生差不多，是吧？你   fact, it is just like the life of people. From the
12      自从你生下来到你死，经历地就跟他   moment you were born until you die, the
13      经历地差不多。懂吗？   experience of our life is just like the brook, understand?
MS Sun: Not necessarily? He tells us that people should always work hard until the day you die. Do not stop, understand?

Tao: I don’t.

MS Sun: [not mee eens? Hehe…] I disagree with you, ok, then tell us about your opinions.

Mei: [×××] ((In Dutch))

MS Sun: Yea, what kind of life do you want? You just want to be like the Dutch, have a comfortable life?

Tao: You do what you want to do.

MS Sun: ((Smiling)) The brook also does what he wants to do; he wants to go to the sea. Doesn’t he mean the same?

Tao: Not the same.

MS Sun: The goal of his is very clear. He is just being personified.

Tao: Not the same? He wants to go to the sea. His goal is clear. He is just being personified.

MS Sun: Yes, so it is even more difficult, even more difficult for you, but one point to be stressed is that you should always work hard, pursue and explore. This is how you should lead your life, right?

Qiang: But that brook, he doesn’t have a single friend. He flows without stopping. He can’t stop to play.

MS Sun: Who says that he doesn’t? He meets various brooks and together they form a stream, and then various streams go together, they form a river. He talks about these friends who have the same interests, cherish the same ideals and follow the same path, do you understand?

Qiang: No, he has only himself.

MS Sun: In our life, those who don’t share the same
<p>| | | |</p>
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<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>了。其实讲的很像。他其实你一段打篮球的朋友，他跟你真正意见不统一的时候，跟你兴趣爱好不一样的时候，他早晚就走的。懂不懂？</td>
<td>interests and do not follow the same path will eventually split up. Just like your basketball friend, if he holds a different opinion than you, and has different interests and hobbies than you, he will eventually leave you, do you understand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Qiang:</td>
<td>He has no friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Tao:</td>
<td>He has friends; brooks, streams and rivers are all his friends!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>MS Sun:</td>
<td>Once a friend always a friend, right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Mei:</td>
<td>He has no friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Qiang:</td>
<td>He has no friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>MS Sun:</td>
<td>Not his friends!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Mei:</td>
<td>Not his friends!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Qiang:</td>
<td>He has no friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Tao:</td>
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<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>MS Sun:</td>
<td>Not his friends!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Mei:</td>
<td>Not his friends!</td>
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<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Qiang:</td>
<td>He has no friends.</td>
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<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Tao:</td>
<td>He has friends; brooks, streams and rivers are all his friends!</td>
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<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>MS Sun:</td>
<td>Not his friends!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Mei:</td>
<td>Not his friends!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Qiang:</td>
<td>He has no friends.</td>
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<td>77</td>
<td>Tao:</td>
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<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>MS Sun:</td>
<td>Not his friends!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Mei:</td>
<td>Not his friends!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Qiang:</td>
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<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>MS Sun:</td>
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<td>83</td>
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<td>Not his friends!</td>
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<td>Qiang:</td>
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<td>86</td>
<td>MS Sun:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Mei:</td>
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<td>88</td>
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<td>Tao:</td>
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<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>MS Sun:</td>
<td>Not his friends!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Mei:</td>
<td>Not his friends!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Qiang:</td>
<td>He has no friends.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let us first take a look what is happening. The classroom episode is taken from the literacy event, teacher-led discussion on a new text. At the moment of the research, there were eight students present, ages 17 to 20. Four students, Ming, Xin, Qiang and Dan were university students at Tilburg University or the University of Technology Eindhoven. The remaining four, Tao, Mei, Hong and Yuan attended Dutch VWO³ secondary school. Ethnolinguistically, like Mr. Zhou’s class, Sun’s class is also very heterogeneous. Key information about the class is provided in Table 2 below. Xin, Mei and Qiang, are of third generation Hong Kong Cantonese background; their home language is mainly Dutch. Hong, Yuan and Ming are of Wenzhou and Fuzhou background respectively. Tao, who is the central character in this classroom discussion, of Mandarin background; his parents came to the Netherlands in the late 1980s to pursue postgraduate university education and settled in Eindhoven after they completed their study. They worked as researchers at the High Tech Campus Eindhoven. Table 2 below summaries the educational and ethnolinguistic diversity in the classroom at the moment of our research.

The class teacher, Ms. Sun has been engaging in teaching at the Chinese school Eindhoven for more than ten years in various classes. Born in Fujian in the late 1950, Sun experienced the political turbulences (the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution) and later the economic reform in the 1970s in China; she completed her university study in Beijing in the mid-1980s and moved to The Netherlands in the early 1990s with her husband. Like Jessie, Ms Sun also has a complex sociolinguistic biography.

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³ There are three levels of Dutch secondary school. The highest level is the pre-university school (VWO), and which is followed by two types of general high school (HAVO and MAVO). After secondary school students can apply for an MBO (lowest level), HBO (medium level), or university (highest level) education.
In the first day of the new school year, she made the announcement that “students are to speak only Chinese in class and ask and answer questions only in Chinese”. The students seem to be very interested in learning Chinese. They listen very carefully and write notes translanguagingly in Chinese and Dutch, and ask questions at the right moments (classroom observation 11th Sept. 2010 JLi). The peer talk in the classroom, during the break and outside the school, is exclusively in Dutch.

Table 2: Grade 12 class of Eindhoven Chinese school (October 2010, the school year 2010-2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>role and name</th>
<th>sex</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>place</th>
<th>(parents’) place of birth</th>
<th>home language</th>
<th>mainsteam education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tao</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Fuzhou</td>
<td>Fuzhou, Zhejiang</td>
<td>Fuzhounese/Mandarin</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xin</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mei</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiang</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Fujian</td>
<td>Fujianese</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Wenzhou, Zhejiang</td>
<td>Wenzhounese</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuan</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>Wenzhou, Zhejiang</td>
<td>Wenzhounese</td>
<td>Dutch-medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Ms Sun</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>Fujian</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The classroom episode started with a question raised by teacher Sun, expecting the students to tell their own understanding of the story. However, the students showed little interest in the assignment (“I don’t have any feeling”). The teacher did not give up, continued to ask the students about the implication of the story. The second attempt was confronted with little interest again (“nothing”). In the next turn, the teacher explained the context and moral implication of the story. Tao contested the teacher’s point of view again. Contestations and negotiations on the interpretations of the story ran through the whole discussion (for detailed description see Li, Jinling. “My way of thinking is Dutch”: Constructing Chinese-Dutch identities through classroom talk.)

While the teachers believed that teaching ‘language’ and ‘culture’ by folk stories was a means of reproducing ‘Chinese’ identity in the young people, the imposition of such identities was explicitly challenged and re-negotiated in the classroom. The students assertively considered themselves Dutch nationals fully participating in Dutch culture and society, but in the process they also displayed a thorough understanding of contemporary China and Chinese culture. The teaching of ‘heritage identity’ through national fairy tales and folk stories was often contested and subverted. For Chinese students in the UK, Creese, Wu and Blackledge (2009) conclude that folk stories are globally circulated distant literacies that are productively taken up in complementary schools and viewed by teachers and staff as “iconic, culturally authentic artifacts” that are “symbolic footprints of a culture and community” and useful resources to “endorse traditions, values and beliefs, and to invoke features of the collective memory of community.” By the young people they are often used to
question some of these notions, including their central messages of authority and acceptance of elders”.

Rather than assuming that young people’s identities would necessarily be ‘dual’ or ‘fragmented’, we consider that people articulate a whole repertoire of inhabited and ascribed identities and that they do so by means of a complex display and deployment of cultural resources. The learning of Chinese language and literacy in the complementary schools generates a particular enregistered set of resources, allowing the organization of different micro-identities. Thus while the teacher sees the classroom as a site to introduce and reproduce the traditional Chineseness to the young people, the students contested the teacher’s imposition and upscale the traditional Chineseness into a higher scale level.

**Data example 11: Essay by Tao, “My experience of learning Chinese” (25-2-2011)**
The following data example is Tao’s essay, written in English. In addition to classroom observation, I also observed the language use of the key participants outside the classroom, as well as in a virtual context. While chatting online, Tao used mostly English and Dutch. During an online chat with Tao, I asked him whether he was interested in writing an essay on his experience of learning Chinese. And he could choose the language he feels most comfortable to write in. I received the following essay from him per email in English in the winter 2011.

---

My first memories of studying Chinese date back to when I was six. I was sat behind a small desk an copied endless amounts of 生字 on sheets with little boxes to write the characters in. At first I did not like studying Chinese at all. The characters were rather difficult to write and there were too many characters to learn. My parents were the only reason why I studied Chinese.

At the age of 8, I enrolled at the Eindhoven Chinese school. Around this time, I did not mind studying Chinese as much anymore, because I got accustomed to the characters and I had an easier time learning those. Also, the lessons.

Now, studying the Chinese language is tug-of-war game between my parents and I. My parents constantly tell me that studying Chinese is a must, because the Chinese language is a vital part of our cultural heritage and Chinese language skills will be extremely important in my future career. I do acknowledge the importance of studying Chinese, but often cannot be bothered to make the homework for the lessons at the Chinese school or study for the HSK. After finishing the coursework for regular school, I often don’t feel like doing any more homework for Chinese, which I secretly deem slightly less important. Also, I feel that the study material does not target my age group at all; the texts we read in class are rather childish. Luckily my parents don’t really push me anymore now I am a little grown up; I should be able to decide what is best for me on my own now.

---


Even though I hardly put any effort in studying Chinese, I always keep telling myself (in vain probably) that I am going to study seriously in after the exams in May. And even though I do not enjoy studying the Chinese language much, I do like Chinese culture and Chinese food. In order to enjoy both of these in China, I do need to study hard and be proficient in Chinese.

The following data is from the classroom observation in Ms. Sun’s class during the literacy event, a discussion on a new text.

Data example 12: Ma Liang and his magic brush

The story is based on a folklore story written in the 1950s. There was a boy called Ma Liang. He liked drawing and worked very hard, but he was too poor to afford a drawing brush. One day, an immortal gave him a magic paintbrush that could turn everything painted real and asked him to use it to help poor people. From that day on, Ma Liang used the brush for poor peasants. Once, a greedy official summoned him, forcing him to paint a mountain of gold. Ma Liang agreed and drew a golden mountain, but he also drew a big ocean around it. After the officer and his servants sailed across the sea, Ma Liang waved his brush and the officers sank into the water. After that, he was free to paint things the laboring people needed.

Below, the text is reproduced as printed in the textbook used in the highest grade of the Chinese school in Eindhoven. Following the scans from the textbook is the transcribed episode from the classroom in which the story of Ma Liang and his magic brush is discussed.
Transcript: teacher-pupil classroom interaction on the folklore story: Ma Liang and his magic brush

[Field Recording JL_2010-09-18-Yang.WMA, 00:32:20]

1. Ming: 老师这是给小孩子讲的故事吧？
   Teacher, is this story for kids?
2. Ms Sun: 对,没错! 你们都不是小孩子啊
   Yes, right! You all are not kids.
3. Ming: 那, 这个故事里有什么人生大道理
   So, are there any life philosophies in this
   story?
4. Ms Sun: 当然有了。
   Of course.
5. Ming: 那有什么道理啊?
   So, what kind of life philosophies?
6. Ms Sun: 我觉得你们自己要理解啊。
   I think you should figure it out by yourself.
7. Ming: 理解不出来。
   I can’t figure it out.
8. Ms Sun: 夏, 你说你理解了没有？这个故事。
   Xia, do you understand? Do you
   understand this story?
9. Xia: Hmmm, [Pause] 就是......不可以用贪心?
   Hmmmm, [Pause], is.... not to be greedy?
10. Ms Sun: 这也是一个意思, 另外一个意思呢, 就
     是你要勤奋, 努力, 就会感动上帝。人家, 神仙就会给你一个笔, 给你个幸福
     福, 懂吗？是不是？有这意思吗？所以
     鼓励你们要努力学习, 做好事情, 对
     吧？还有一个呢, 里面讲马良心眼好,
     关心穷人, 对不对？那个大官呢, 就
     是, 就跟金鱼的故事一样, 太贪心, 最
     后死了, 太贪心。这个故事当然有意思
     了。中国的故事都有寓意在里头。明白
     了?
     This is one aspect of the story, and other
     aspects are, you should work hard, be
diligent, then God will be moved by you.
And He, the God will give you a magic
brush, and you will get happiness, do you
understand? So it encourages you to work
hard and have good deeds, doesn’t it?
Furthermore, Ma Liang has a kind heart.
He is concerned with poor people, isn’t
he? And the official just like in the story of
the Golden Fish, too greedy, and die
eventually, he is too greedy. There are
sure moral implications in this story. All of
the Chinese stories have implications, do
you understand?
11. [Silence....]
12. Ming: 可不可说呢这个马良表面上是一个好
     人, 但内心里呢, 也有杀人之心呢？
     Can we say that Ma Liang is a good person
from the outside, but in reality, he is a
killer?
13. Ms Sun: 哈哈, 杀人之心, 呵呵呵呵......就是这
     么说呢, 你在这儿长大的, 这个概念可
     能不一样。在中国的概念里头, 对好人
     要好心, 对坏人不可以好心。Ja, 你这
     种想法是错的。我们学过东郭先生, 对
     吧？我们学过东郭先生, 他是很好心, your way of thinking is wrong. We have
| MS Sun | 他对蛇都好心，最后蛇把他咬死了，对不对？就教你，中国的故事都教你，对坏人不可以好心。 | learned about Mr. Dongguo, right? He had a kind heart, even kind to snakes. And in the end, the snake bites him to death, right? The Chinese stories teach you that you shouldn’t be merciful to bad people. |
| MS Sun | 我们现在回到马良来说。呃，欣，我提一个问题，马良是怎么学会画画的呀？那个老爷爷为什么给马良一支神笔呢？ | Let’s go back to Ma Liang. Xin, I have a question for you, how did Ma Liang learn to paint? Why did the old grandpa give Ma Liang a magic brush? |
| Ming | 他多做了一支笔。 | He made an extra brush. |
| MS Sun | 呵呵，他多做了一支笔，呵呵呵，我发现你这人的思维跟别人都不一样，还是存心斗我们笑呢？ | Hehe, he made an extra brush, hehehe. I find that your way of thinking is different from others, or do you just want to tease us? |
| Ming | 是真的 | I mean it. |
| MS Sun | 那是你自己想的，文章里头是什么意思？ | That’s your own imagination. What does this text tell us about? |
| Ming | 如果卖了他可以赚钱。 | He can make money if he sells the brush |
| MS Sun | 我跟你说文章里头是怎么说得？认真点啊。我并不问你自己想象啊。 | I’m asking you what the text tells us about. Be serious, he. I didn’t ask you to use your imagination. |

| Ming | [Pause] | |
| Ming | 为什么呀？ | Why? |
| MS Sun | 真不知道 | I really don’t know. |
| MS Sun | 你还假不知道呢！ | Don’t you really don’t know! |

### 4.2 Negotiation of inheritance and identity outside the classroom

How do Chinese-Dutch youth identify themselves? I have chosen four key participants from grade 12 (the highest grade of the school) from HT school to observe their language use outside of their classroom and their identity work. Two of them, Wendy and Tongtong were from the previous grade 12 in the school year 2009-2010. After initial five times of observation on six different grades before the summer holiday 2010, I found out that the age group of the twelfth graders was more in line with our research target group. Observation regarding language practices outside of the School, and topics as identity, belonging, feeling at home were brought up with the key participants. I chose the key participants on a voluntary basis, and informed them about the project at the beginning of the observation. Below is the demographic detail of the key participants.
Key participants from the Chinese school in Eindhoven

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Father’s origin</th>
<th>Mother’s origin</th>
<th>Parents’ profession</th>
<th>Place of birth</th>
<th>Age at arrival</th>
<th>Edu-</th>
<th>Home language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wendy</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Wenzhou, Zhejiang</td>
<td>Wenzhou, Zhejiang</td>
<td>Employees at a Dutch company</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>VWO</td>
<td>Wenzhou-nese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tongtong</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Guangzhou</td>
<td>Restaurant owners</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>HBO</td>
<td>Cantonese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tao</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>Scientists</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>VWO</td>
<td>Putonghua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Taizhou, Zhejiang</td>
<td>Taizhou, Zhejiang</td>
<td>Restaurant employees</td>
<td>Taizhou, Zhejiang</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Taizhou-nese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2010, I have followed them in different social contexts, in their real life as well as in virtual communities. During an outing with Wendy and Tongtong, the language we used was Dutch. In the beginning, I greeted them in Chinese, but soon when Tongtong started to introduce a Dutch dish, she switched to Dutch. The conversation in the rest of the evening was in Dutch. Regarding the identity construction, Tongtong said the following:

**Data example 13: Interview with Tongtong, 24-11-2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that I am Dutch. I was born in the Netherlands. I know Dutch culture better than Chinese culture. But in friend’s eyes, I’m still a foreigner. You look different from them. Even though you have Dutch passport, you speak Dutch, they perceive you as Chinese and say ‘I have a very good friend, a Chinese girl. Who you are and how people perceive you are often not the same. I feel like a mango, yellow from the outside and the flesh, but white in the core.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other social space I observed is at *Qingfeng tea-room* (清风茶馆, abbreviated as QF tea-room here). QF tea-room is located on the second floor of a local Chinese supermarket in the centre of Eindhoven. The annual teacher meeting of the Chinese school Eindhoven 2010 and 2011 had taken place at QF tearoom. Opened in August 2010 by Mr. Wu, the chairman of the Chinese school in Eindhoven, QF Tearoom is a space to practice Chinese culture by providing tea ceremony classes, Chinese cookery classes, and there is also computer class for the elderly Chinese immigrants. Unlike
the Chinese school in Eindhoven that borrows the space from a local Dutch secondary school, and
where is not allowed to change the classroom layout and make any decoration of classrooms, QF
tearoom is a space that cultural practices can be fully observed and “Chineseness” is present in many
Chinese cultural artefacts, e.g. the Chinese calligraphy and Chinese paintings on the wall, and the
space is furnished with the Chinese style.

John, from the cookery class in the Qingfeng Tearoom, also expressed the same feeling in a
correspondence after the class:

**Example 14: Conversation with John, 24-11-2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sommige vrienden van mij zijn hier geboren en denken dat ze Nederlanders zijn, maar ja, in de ogen van Nederlanders, ze zien je nog steeds als Chinezen door je uiterlijk.</th>
<th>Some friends of mine think they are Dutch. But in the eyes of Dutch people, they think you are still Chinese because of your appearance.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Besides observing the language use and literacy practices outside of the school at group level, I also
carried out internet ethnography, observing the youth language use and literacy practices. Tao has
mentioned to me online about his Chinese class:

**Example 15: Online chat with Tao, 20-11-2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>我们班上经常会讨论到中国社会和荷兰社会的区别。何兰人经常会比较随意，跟中国人不同。老师的观点和我们的观点还是有些不同。虽然她在荷兰生活了许多年，还是受到了中国教育，观点比较传统。我的同学们可以算是荷兰人了。</th>
<th>We often discuss the difference between Chinese and Dutch society in our class. Dutch people are quite different from Chinese. The opinion of our teacher on the two societies is different from us. Even though she has been living in the Netherlands for many years, but because of the education she had in China, her attitude is very conservative. My classmates can be considered as Dutch.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Example 16: Interview with Tao, 20-11-2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Er zijn verschillende groepen Chinezen in NL die weinig tot niet met elkaar omgaan, door taalverschil, en verschillende &quot;文 化 水 平&quot;. Bijvoorbeeld: universitair opgeleiden geboren in 60'-70' en restaurant eigenaren, etc...</th>
<th>There are different groups of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands who have little or no contact with each other because of the difference in language use and educational level. For instance, university graduates who were born in the year of 60s and 70s and restaurant owners.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In an interview with Tao, he said that they have no contact with the Chinese group that work in the
catering business, and there are different groups of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands. This also
reflects the complex composition of the Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands in terms of linguistic, history of migration and socio-economic position.

However, there are also other voices that can be heard.

**Example 17: Interview with Ming, 11-11-2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>我以后肯定是会回中国的。每次我都是说回中国，不是说去中国。我的根是在中国嘛。虽然我在荷兰长大，但你长的就是和荷兰人不一样，看上去就是不一样，总是很特殊，在中国就不一样，长的不会那么特别。</th>
<th>I will definitely return to China in the future. Every time I say <strong>return</strong> to China, not <strong>go</strong> to China. Because for me, my root is in China. Even though I grow up in the Netherlands, but I look different from Dutch which makes me quite peculiar, but it will be different in China. I will look not so much different from the rest.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-11-2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The school within the broader Chinese community

5.1 The social, cultural and linguistic significance of the Chinese school in Eindhoven

The Chinese school is a space which not only provides Chinese courses but is also an important space for Chinese-heritage people at various age, young and old, students and parents to socialize as a Chinese-heritage group in the Netherlands. Jinling often observed parents sharing experiences and exchange information on child-rearing, community activities, and handling technology such as computers and mobile phones. For the students, the Chinese school is a space where they can meet other Chinese-heritage youth, and build an identity that is different from the mainstream school identity. Furthermore, at the community level, the space that the Chinese school borrows from the local secondary school for once a week on Saturday morning is also becoming an importance place for the members of various other Chinese associations to socialize, meeting each other and practicing cultural activities. The school website also illustrates this phenomenon:

Data example 18: description of the school on the school’s website, www.hantang.nl

| De rol van de Eindhovense Chinese School in het culturele leven van het Chinese gemeenschap in de omgeving van Eindhoven wordt ook steeds belangrijker. Zo gebruiken de Vereniging van de Chinese Ouderen, de Chinese Vrouwengroep Eindhoven, de Chinese Sportvereniging, de Chinese Dansschool, onze locatie Eckart College voor allerlei zaterdagse activiteiten. | The Eindhoven Chinese school is getting more and more important in enriching the cultural life of the Chinese Community in the region of Eindhoven. The Chinese Elderly Association, Chinese Women Group, the Chinese sports association, Chinese Dance school all use our location at Eckart College for all kinds of Saturday activities. |

5.2 Chinese-Dutch youth identities in social media

Social network site Hyves is the Dutch alternative for Facebook and MySpace and is tremendously popular among youngsters and almost everybody else using the Internet in the Netherlands. According to the official figures provided by Hyves itself, the social network site had 10.6 million members in 2011 (of which 9 million in the Netherlands, i.e. more than half of the population or three quarters of those using the Internet). Hyves started in the same year as Facebook, in 2004, but stayed local and did not expand to become a global medium like Facebook which now has 600 million users, i.e. close to ten per cent of the world’s population. In the Netherlands, Hyves still has a bigger market share than its global competitors Facebook and Twitter. Like Facebook, Hyves is an onymous (non-anonymous) site and provides a virtual forum to create and articulate identities and engage in networks of friends that are partly – or greatly – overlapping with one’s real-life identities and networks. Varis, Wang and Du (2011/forthcoming, 2) explain that “Virtual’ reality is quite a misnomer, because what is ‘virtual’ is very ‘real’ in the lives of many people, especially when identity processes are concerned’. For most of the personal profile details, you are given the choice to fill
them out or to leave them blank and to set restrictions on who is able to see the information (only friends, friends of friends, Hyvers, everybody).

Through students of the Chinese school in Eindhoven we found out about the Asian and Proud community on Hyves (http://asian-and-proud.hyves.nl/), which is described as ‘The place to be for all proud asians ;p’. This network of Asian-Dutch was established on 21 July 2007 by the then 13-year-old ‘Wingy’ who also moderates the community together with ‘Vietpride’. Wingy is a Cantonese-speaking Chinese-Dutch girl who studies Chinese (Mandarin) in complementary education in Amsterdam. One of the most important corners of activity on the Asian and Proud hyve are the discussion forums that are both playful and serious. The forum we have focused on is Welk Chinees dialect spreken jullie? (Which Chinese dialect do you speak?). Within the Asian and Proud community, this forum is a bit more exclusive than some of the other forums as here Asian identity is narrowed down to Chineseness, thereby creating a sub-community of Chinese speakers within the Asian and Proud community. This particular forum was introduced by Leon on a Sunday night in April 2008 with the post in Fragment 2 below. Selected fragments are reproduced here.

**Data example 19a** (opening of the forum by Leon, 20 April 2008, 21:37)

| Ik ben zelf kantonese 😊,sik op chinese school in eindhoven, ik moet Sinas leren van me ouders -. -, | I’m cantonese myself 😊,i’m going to chinese school in eindhoven, i have to learn [Chinese] from my parents -. -, |
| Maja kvind mandarijns moeilijk xD! kan het wel beetje verstaan maar kan het niet spreken >.< stomme klanken | But yeah I find Mandarin hard xD! can understand it a little, but can’t speak it >.< stupid sounds 😞 |
| Maja vul hieronder maar in of je mandarijns bent of Kantonees of Wenzhounese etc. etc. | But yeah just fill out down here if you’re mandarin or Cantonese or Wenzhounese etc. etc. |
| ^ ^ kanto rules~ xX | ^ ^ canto rules~ xX |

**Data example 19b** (Leon, 3 June 2008, 19:10)

| Chinese school = 1 woord,: IncredibleSuperDuperBoring =/ ik ben de oudste van de klas,De op een na oudste is 13 O_- ksit in een klas vol met kinderen tusse 5 en 13 - - xD ksit bij hun in de klas omdat ik de basis niet ken, + i Suck @ mandarijns \( \text{\textbackslash} \) kheb kantonese/nederlands accent XD stel je voor hoe ik Ni hau ma? zeg :) | Chinese school = 1 word,: IncredibleSuperDuperBoring =/ I’m the oldest of the class,The second oldest is 13 O_- im in a class full with children between 5 and 13 - - xD im with them in class because I dunno know the basics, + i Suck @ mandarin \( \text{\textbackslash} \) ive got cantonese/dutch accent XD imagine how I say Ni hau ma? :) |
| Achja kheb nog vrienden op school daar dus,, kan me nooit vervelen tijdens de pauze =] | Well yeah i still got friends at school there so,, i can’t get bored during the break =] |
### Data example 19c (Lisa, 28 November 2008, 16:17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ik spreek een dialect wat uit suzhou komt (nooit van gehoord zeker 😊) kan mandarijns verstaan en beetje spreken. heb een paar jaar op chinese school gezeten maar vond het niet leuk dus gestopt, maar ik moet weer op school in amsie van me moeder 😊</th>
<th>I speak a dialect which comes from suzhou 😊(never heard of I guess 😊) can understand mandarin and speak it a little also with canto I can understand but not really speak it. have been to the Chinese school for a few years but didn’t like it so quitted, but I have to go back to school in amsie from my mother 😊</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Data example 19d (Ellen, 17 June 2009, 17:40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chaozhou(hua) , bijna niemand spreekt dat whuahha, voel me echt dom, iedereen spreekt van die standaard talen kom ik aan hoor. En ik kan een beetje mandarijns en viet verstaan ^^</th>
<th>Chaozhou(hua) , hardly anyone speaks that whuahha, I feel really stupid, everybody speaks those standard languages and then there’s me. And I can understand a little mandarin and viet ^^</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Data example 19e (Chris, 27 December 2009, 02:59)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kantoow van mijn ouders, dus ik kan wel gewoon kanto praten en verstaan. Manderijns kan ik niet dus volg ik lessen in Arnhem met allerlei kindjes van 4, 5 lol xd</th>
<th>Cantoow from my parents, so I can of course speak and understand canto. Mandarin I don’t know so I’m taking classes in Arnhem with lots of little children of 4, 5 lol xd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Data example 19f (Onki, 6 October 2008, 20:43)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cantonese 😊(ben daar geboren en gebleven tot mijn 6e dus..&lt;3) Ik kan een beetje Manderijns verstaan en spreken maar echt ver kom ik er niet mee -.-' Ojaaaaa ik probeer het ook zelf te leren schrijven en lezen sinds ik in niemandsboerendorp woon is de chinese school vet ver hiervandaan zucht XD</th>
<th>Cantonese 😊(was born there and stayed there until my 6th..&lt;3) I can understand and speak a little Mandarin but it doesn’t get me really far -.-' O yeah I also try to teach myself to write and read it since I live in a nobody’s provincial village the Chinese school is bloody far away from here sigh XD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Data example 19g (Seline, 21 April 2008, 00:04)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yeah Ik spreek zelf ook cantonees.. Ik ben zelfs opgevoed er mee omdat mijn ouders ook cantonees spreken.. Ik zat op chineses school in utrecht..maja nu allang niet meer..Too busy of everything..</th>
<th>Yeah I speak cantonese myself too.. I’m even raised with it cuz my parents also speak Cantonese.. I went to Chinese school in Utrecht..but not anymore for a long time now. Too busy of everything.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Data example 19h (Seline, 21 April 2008, 00:04)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yeah I speak cantonese myself too.. I’m even raised with it cuz my parents also speak Cantonese.. I went to Chinese school in Utrecht..but not anymore for a long time now. Too busy of everything.</th>
<th>I would wanna learn mandarin cuz it’s important for later if you wanna achieve something in china</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
On the basis of detailed ethnographic analysis of these posts and others we argue that knowing Chinese in the Netherlands can mean a plurality of things. First of all, for the young people on the Asian and Proud hyves it invariably also means knowing Dutch. The Chinese-Dutch hyvers studied here come together in the context of a broader Dutch-Asian virtual network, the vehicular language of which is Dutch, not Chinese. All members are highly proficient in Dutch, especially in what we call ‘netnolectal Dutch’, in ways that makes them indistinguishable from indigenous ‘native speakers’ of Dutch. Ethnicity (being Chinese) or the ‘mother tongue’ (Chinese, Wenzhounese) therefore is not a valid criterion for determining native-speakerness in this context. The sub-community of Chinese-Dutch youth within the Asian and Proud community is eventually a community of native Dutch speakers-and-writers.

Secondly, the Chinese component of one’s Chinese-Dutch identity cannot be taken for granted. Breaking it down into its regional variants (Cantonese, Wenzhounese, Mandarin, etc.) does not tell us everything about someone’s Chineseness. Equally important is the extent of socialisation into the school-taught variety of Chinese, Mandarin or Putonghua someone has undergone. Someone’s respective success in Chinese complementary education determines in important ways someone’s identification with his or her Chinese linguistic and cultural heritage.

Thirdly, ethnicity seems no longer solely or even primarily to be determined by one’s biological descent (one’s ‘race’), but is increasingly renegotiable through engaging with other forms
of ethnicity. It becomes evident that ethnicity is not in the first place the property of fixed groups (young) people simply belong to and that researchers may work with as unproblematic taken-for-granted social units (Brubaker 2002). ‘Chinese-Dutch’ is certainly not the only or best ethnic denominator for all situations. Importantly, the online network studied here is not entitled ‘Chinese and Proud’ but ‘Asian and Proud’. The broad participation of young people of Chinese background within this community suggests that Asianness is at least as productive a marker of ethnic identity than is Chineseness, probably in more pervasive and meaningful ways than was the case for their (grand) parents’ generation.

5.3 Linguistic landscaping: Eindhoven’s old and new Chinese restaurants

In addition to the school-focused and we also plan a paper about food as cultural heritage that explores the potential of taste for linguistic landscape research. Along with language, food is one of the most meaningful diacritics of transnational experience. Restaurants, prominently visible in a city’s landscape, offer useful insight into demographic transformations and shifting diversities. Still in planning stage, the working title of this paper is “Transformations in the ‘multculinary’ landscape”. In this paper we think about the Asian presence in Eindhoven in terms of an ‘unconcentrated Chinatown’ (as opposed to Amsterdam and Rotterdam for instance).

A search for Chinese restaurants within its broader South and East Asian context in the online telephone directory resulted in a list of 65 oriental restaurants, including Chinees-Indisch (Chinese-East Indian), Chinese, Indian, Japanese, wok, International-Asian, Mongolian, Thai, Indonesian and Surinamese restaurants. 24 of these are so-called ‘Chinees-Indisch’ restaurants. Chinees-Indisch is a creolised Chinese-Indonesian cuisine that was imported to the Netherlands after the Independence of the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) in 1949 by returning Dutch families and Chinese double migrants in the 1950s. Chinees-Indisch restaurants are now almost invariably run by Chinese immigrants without links to Indonesia that continues to offer the Chinees-Indisch food to Dutch clientele. The food was used to and recognized as Chinese food. Under conditions of superdiversity, Chinese food in the Netherlands is being reinvented which is (partly) visible in the landscape. Old restaurants are forced to close down or change their menus, while new ones offering more diversified tastes for a more diversified audience are opening.

We intend to combine a genre analysis of the multilingual, multisciptal, multimodal (and multilayered) identity discourses displayed on the facades of the Chinese restaurants in Eindhoven with more detailed ethnographic descriptions of selected restaurants and their diverse responses to the challenges and opportunities posed by a diversifying market.

One of these could include a newly opened, centrally located restaurant that presents itself in Chinese characters, Japanese romaji and English (not Dutch) as a seafood restaurant while offering both Cantonese dim sum specialties and Japanese sushi and grill for a predominantly Chinese customers. Another such restaurant is a small Chinees-Indisch family restaurant in the northern periphery of Eindhoven that saw a steep increase in its customers after publishing an alternative, authentic Chinese menu on the online Chinese student and expat forum gogodutch.com
Data example 20: Shop facade of Lung Hing restaurant in traditional Chinese character (龍興) and Cantonese Pinyin (Lung Hing)

In a view from the outside, three scripts are presented: traditional Chinese characters, Cantonese Pinyin (Lung Hing) and Dutch. Take a close look at the menu on the window, like many other Chinees-Indisch (Chinese-Indonesian) restaurants, Lung Hing offers Indonesian food such as ‘Babi Pangang’, ‘Fu Yung Hai’, ‘Chap Choi’, Saté, etcetera. The linguistic landscape and the menu in detail suggest that this restaurant offered (either to eat in or to take away) for a predominantly indigenous Dutch audience. However, walking into the restaurant, we see a different picture: customers are mainly new mandarin speaking Chinese students and ‘knowledge migrants’. The following field note illustrates the transformation.

Data example 21:

The first time I visited this restaurant was one year ago in spring 2010. The restaurant provided exclusively Chinees-Indisch dishes. It was dinner time, but there were few customers. The small restaurant is in my neighbourhood. Every time when I passed by, I noticed it was rather empty and I wondered whether this restaurant like some other Chinees-Indisch restaurants in The Netherlands now faced difficulties in their business. A few months later, I saw many Mandarin speaking Chinese people standing in front of the restaurant, waiting to enter. Through the window I could see it was very busy inside the restaurant. I was puzzled and wondered why this restaurant has become so popular all of the sudden with Chinese people. Were the Indonesian dishes such as ‘Babi Pangang’, ‘Fu Yung Hai’ ‘Chap Choi’ becoming very popular among Chinese people? The question was answered by
entering the restaurant. When I walked into the crowded restaurant to the counter, the owner gave me a new menu with simplified characters and the names of authentic Chinese dishes on it. And I observed that the Chinese customers sitting around the table were all reading the same menu to order. Two teachers from the Chinese school were having dinner. We greeted each other and they were very happy that the restaurant provided authentic Chinese food.

(Fieldnotes, 28-11-2010, JL)

The next day, I found that the menu was posted on the online Chinese student forum, gogodutch.com for a few weeks already and commented frequently by the readers that this is one of the best Chinese restaurants and some dishes are the most authentic Chinese dishes they have ever had in The Netherlands. Some people even travel for a long distance from other cities to come here.

Data example 22: The menu of Lung Hing (龙兴) restaurant, posted on the forum www.gogodutch.com in simplified characters and offered authentic Chinese dishes

![Menu](image)
Data example 23: Online comments on Lung Hing restaurant
6 Conclusions

The main findings from our team can be summarized as follows.

1. The Chinese diaspora members investigated in The Netherlands are organizing complex identity work at a variety of levels and in a variety of domains. They do so on shifting ground: the main foci of orientation – the normative ‘centers’ of their identity work – are shifting and changing rapidly and intensely. Consequently, we can see much of the phenomena we have detected in our research as forms of identity adjustment or catching up, by a heterogeneous, polycentric community to a surrounding world in which the centers are moving targets for the moment.

2. Consequently, in the case of the Chinese diaspora in The Netherlands, the orientations towards the nation-state are particularly intriguing. The historical diaspora did not accept the People’s Republic of China as a ‘homeland’; the homeland was a particular region of the PRC (the South and South-East), Hong Kong and other parts of the wider China region. On the contrary, the social and cultural regime of the PRC was long explicitly and implicitly rejected by the Chinese diaspora. This was emblematized by their persistent use of (mainly) Cantonese and of traditional character writing and non-PRC forms of romanization. The changing place of the PRC in the globalized world system, however, has had important effects, both material and ideological. Materially, the demography of the Chinese diaspora changed because of the influx of large numbers of PRC citizens, both as labor force (elite as well as proletariat), as foreign students (i.e. members of a future elite) and as often affluent tourists. Ideologically, the growing confidence of the PRC as a superpower, and its strong insistence on pride and assertiveness regarding Chinese identity, had an effect on the diaspora: (1) the diaspora is now a far more heterogeneous community, partly resident partly transitory, rich and poor, PRC and non-PRC. (2) The focal point for orientations regarding Chinese identity has shifted from the ‘homeland’ of the past (i.e. a real, ‘organic’ region of origins and descent) to the ‘nation-state’ of the present. This is reflected in the rapid and profound shift towards the use of Putonghua and simplified character writing (annex PRC Pinyin romanization).

3. The way in which this shift from ‘homeland’ to ‘nation-state’ is effected differs from social domain to social domain. In the school context, we saw how this shift takes the form of (1) a strong and strict emphasis on Putonghua and Pinyin during teaching sessions, notwithstanding the multilingualism that appears before and after class hours; (2) an emphasis on ‘core’ values and meanings belonging to the new PRC cultural canon: re-emphasis on Confucian values, on ‘hard work’ and dedication to being a ‘true’ Chinese. In the online contexts, we could see that pupils articulate far more diverse orientations towards this new (and old) Chineseness, and often express orientations towards multiple belongings, including Dutch, PRC-Chinese, regional-Chinese (e.g. Cantonese, Indonesian) and pan-Asian. And in the linguistic landscape, we see how the shift towards a more PRC-focused
recognizable identity leads to new forms of layered multilingualism, with ‘old’ (non-PRC) inscriptions gradually being complemented by new (Putonghua) inscriptions.

4. The dominant image we get from these contexts is that of intense polycentricity. Chinese diaspora people organize their identity work in relation to a number of simultaneously occurring but context-specific ‘centers’ – Dutch, PRC, regional, age, gender, etc. identities. These different centers provoke differing orientations towards normative complexes – ‘being adequate’ as a Dutch-Chinese is a different thing in class from in the online forum environment, and in each of these spaces, different norms prevail and different openings for legitimate identity work exist.

5. Consequently, ‘cross-over’ moments, i.e. moments where fragments from various contexts meet and are blended, can and do lead to forms of contestation and conflict. Teachers are corrected by students, and students challenge the fundamental Chinese values contained in a reading task. Similarly, students themselves wrestle with the heterogeneity of their Chinese heritage – which now requires streamlining, or mainstreaming, towards one particular set of emblematic features (those of the PRC). Evidence for this could be found in the variety of terms used to denote the Chinese language in student essays: an old vocabulary can be seen here to be in a stage of gradual transformation towards a new one.

6. One important reason we identified for the conflictual and complex nature of learning in these contexts is the background of the teachers themselves. These backgrounds included often painful and traumatic language shifts, a struggle with teaching resources, and a legacy of older teaching styles that may come into conflict with new and different teaching styles. The sociolinguistic biographies of teachers are complex and not without their problems, turning language teachers sometimes effectively into language learners, thus effacing the distance between themselves and their students required for the authority they need to articulate as teachers. The proficiency of certain teachers in the target language resources – Putonghua, simplified script and Pinyin – is not markedly superior to that of some of their students. This too indicates the ‘unfinished’ character of the present situation of rapid language and identity shifts among this community.

7. These findings demand innovative forms of interpretation, as widespread metaphors of ‘mixed identity’, ‘growing up in two cultures’ etc do not appear to offer the precision required here. What we witness is a dynamic process, operating at a variety of levels and scales and in relation to a range of different foci, each of which is undergoing rapid and fundamental transformation at present. The Tilburg team has developed a framework of ‘micro-hegemonies’ to capture this dynamic complexity (see Blommaert & Varis 2011). We see how in this complex process judgments are continuously being made about specific, micro-hegemonic features of being and behaviour, ranging from speech and accent all the way to values and explicit acts of belonging. Since we are also addressing a heterogeneous community, part of which has been entrenched in Dutch society for generations.
while another part of it is transitory and non-resident (yet culturally and ideologically of increasing influence), the ‘rules of the game’ are also dissipated over different (and differently organized) units of the ‘community’ – which now receives scare quotes, because we best see the ‘community’ not as one social unit but as a polycentric complex that has the capacity to close itself down and focus on a limited range of identity targets (e.g. Putonghua, Confucian values), as well as to open up towards more heterogeneous and fluid forms of mixing and pluriform incorporation and belonging.
Note

A great part of this report and data are used previously in our working papers and as part of Jinling’s PhD dissertation:


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