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The Role of Parents in Heritage Language Maintenance in Malaysia

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Abstract

This present study intends to explore the role of parents in heritage language maintenance among selected Chinese Hakka communities. Field studies were conducted among three age groups spanning three to four generations in Sabah and Sarawak, East Malaysia. The data seem to suggest that changes in family language use started with the parents, when they chose to speak non-heritage language to their children. This eventually not only affected the language use of their children, but also their language proficiency in the heritage language which is Hakka. Evidence indicates that parents indeed play a crucial role in family language practices, and have an impact on the maintenance of heritage language. The preference for and actual use of Mandarin are prevalent among the younger generation. The findings confirm the general trend in Malaysian Chinese society today that current generation has a tendency to reduce the use of their heritage language and adopt Mandarin as their primary language of communication, including in the family domain. However, many young irregular (or infrequent) semi-speakers of Hakka claim the dialect as their mother tongue and continue to speak the dialect, albeit imperfectly. This also demonstrates that Mandarin has yet to become overwhelmingly dominant among the Hakkas.

Key words: Hakka, heritage language, inter-generational speakers, semi-speakers, Sabah and Sarawak

Introduction

The role of the family in language maintenance and language shift has been a central topic in sociolinguistics since the 1990s. Although these terms are not easily defined, there is nevertheless a common understanding that language maintenance is used to describe a situation in which individual speakers or a speech community continue to use their language in some or all spheres of life, in the midst of a competing dominant language, as the main or even sole language in these spheres; and language shift is used to imply a shift from the dominant use of

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one language to that of another language by these speakers or the speech community (Pauwels, 2005b). In his seminal paper, Fishman (1991) posits a model of Reversing Language Shift, in which the family remains as the domain for heritage language use;[1] and where supportive policies and educational provisions will only be of value if the family initiates mother tongue acquisition and provides a practice ground for its continued use. In other words, Fishman insists on the power of the family, and places inter-generational mother tongue transmission at the very centre, as language which is not transmitted cannot be maintained. Likewise, Hayden's study (1966) shows that one can still rely upon the home for the maintenance of the mother tongue. García (2003) suggests that the use of the mother tongue in the family and friendship networks and its trans-generational transmission are still of crucial importance. Various studies also support the view that the family is the last domain for language maintenance (Appel and Muysken, 1987; Coulmas, 2005; Fasold, 1984; Fishman, 1972). The important role played by the family in the context of bilingualism has also been highlighted in several studies (Alba *et al*., 2002; Fishman, 1996; Scanlan, 2011; Spielman, 2001; Wong Fillmore, 2000). In fact, in the context of globalization, Fishman's study (2001a) supports the conclusion that although mother tongue as the threatened language may share some of the functions of the non-threatened language, the informal domains of intimacy, especially the home, must be reserved solely for the threatened language. In other words, the possible destruction of inter-generational transmission of the threatened language in the family must be shielded from the invasion of the non-threatened dominant language. Similarly, Pauwels (2005a) views the role of the family, particularly the extended family, as a very significant support in the inter-generational maintenance of the mother tongue. Although several studies have been completed on the subject of Language Maintenance and Shift among the Chinese communities in Malaysia (see, for example, 洪丽芬/Ang Lay Hoon, 2008 and 2010; Ang and Shik, 2013; 陈湘琳、辜秋莹/Ding Seong Lin and Koh Qiu Ying, 2015; 郭熙/Guo Xi, 2003; Kow, 2003; 黎卓容/Li Zhuo Rong, 2012; 林冬梅/Lin Dong Mei, 2010; Puah and Ting, 2015; Ting and Puah, 2015), the role of the family (and parents) on heritage language maintenance can be further explored.

This study examines the language practices of Chinese Hakka families. The focus of attention is placed on identifying the key factors that determine the successful, as well as unsuccessful, heritage language maintenance in the family. The heritage language in question is Hakka. This is a major Chinese dialect in Malaysia, next to Hokkien and Cantonese in the number of speakers. In this study, the words "language" and "dialect" as applied to Hakka are used interchangeably. Since active use of the heritage language appears to be crucial for language maintenance and proficiency, inquiries were made concerning both preference for and the use of the mother tongue compared with Mandarin in various situations. Consideration is given to the "actual use" of Hakka, and their "preference in using" Hakka if they are given a choice in daily communication. These ideas of "use" and "preference" are related to those of "constraints" and "facilitation" (which will be explained further in the analysis). Insights from the case study and their implications on heritage language maintenance will be discussed.

The target groups in this study comprise three age groups spanning the generations from grandparents, parents, and children. Field research was conducted among selected Hakka communities in the states of Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia. The respondents are the descendants of Hakka immigrants into these states in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While it is rather uncommon to find immigrant communities that exhibit stable bilingualism beyond the third generation (García, 2003), this is not the case among the Hakkas in East Malaysia. While Mandarin is the medium of instruction in Chinese primary schools, Hakka is still widely spoken in the Hakka community. Three towns in Sabah, namely, Inanam, Menggatal and Telipok which are situated near the state capital of Kota Kinabalu, and the district of Bau near the state capital of Kuching in Sarawak, are selected for the present study. Dominated by the Hakkas, both these localities consequently exhibit a greater degree of dialect homogeneity than other parts of these two states.

Background

The Chinese form the second largest community in the multi-ethnic population of Malaysia. Numbering 6.4 million in 2010, the community made up 24.6 per cent of Malaysian citizens, and 22.6 per cent of the total population which includes substantial numbers of foreign workers (DSM, 2011: 15). Each ethnic community in turn comprises several regional-cum-linguistic groups. Among the Chinese, there are seven primary linguistic or dialect groups, namely, the Hokkien (Fujian in Mandarin), Hakka (Kejia), Cantonese (Guangfu), Teochew (Chaozhou), Foochow (Fuzhou), Hainanese (Hainan), and Kwangsai (Guangxi). According to unpublished data of 2000 from the Department of Statistics, the Hakka population stood at just more than a million, ranking joint second with the Cantonese and following behind the Hokkien (see 文平强/Voon Phin Keong, forthcoming). Although Malaysian Chinese of diverse linguistic origins share the same script and many are proficient in Mandarin, they do speak distinctly different, sometimes mutually untelligible dialects.

Chinese dialect communities tend to show distinct regional patterns of distribution that reflect their different migration histories. The Hakka presence is particularly evident in Sabah while the Foochows are overwhelmingly concentrated in the district of Sibu in Sarawak. The dominance of the Hakkas in Sabah may be attributed to the work of the Basel mission which acted as a recruiting agent for the North Borneo government from the 1880s though it was not until 1910 that the inflow grew considerably in volume (张德来/Chong Tet Loi, 2002: 10; Jones, 2007: 41-42). The Hakkas of Sarawak originated from two sources. One was West Kalimantan to which the Hakkas had been attracted by its gold fields from the 1760s, and the other was south China which supplied substantial numbers of Hakka and Foochow immigrants from the 1900s. The expansion of Dutch influence into West Kalimantan and the subsequent colonial oppression forced large outflows of the Hakkas across the border into the Bau district of Sarawak (Jackson, 1968: 57). As for the Foochows, the heavy concentration in Sibu was the

result of the initial work of a Foochow recruiting agent contracted by the Brooke government in 1901.[2]

In 1960, the Chinese population of Sabah (then known as British North Borneo) numbered 104,542 persons, of whom 55 per cent or 57,338 persons were Hakkas. In Sarawak, out of 229,154 Chinese in 1960, 70,221 were Hakkas and 70,125 were Foochows, each comprising 31 per cent of the Chinese (Jones, 1962a: Table 4; 1962b: Table 4). In 2000, there were 148,000 Hakkas in Sabah and 162,000 in Sarawak, comprising 58.0 and 31.5 per cent respectively of the Chinese communities in these states. The relative position of the Hakkas in these territories has changed little since then (DSM, 2003 and 2010).

Until the mid-twentieth century, a resident of East Malaysia could follow a lifestyle by living as a member of a virtually mono-dialectal community in a multiethnic society. This was particularly true among the Chinese whose different "dialect" groups had their own identifiable settlements in various parts of the country. Like all other Chinese communities in Malaysia, the Hakkas of Sabah and Sarawak are highly conscious of the importance of preserving their dialect identity. The manner by which this objective is achieved is by speaking their dialect and forming their own clan associations (see张德来/Chong Tet Loi, 2002; 石沧金/Shi Cangjin, 2005).[3]

The Chinese seem to be more versatile linguistically than other ethnic groups in Malaysia. Many grow up learning and using two or more different languages, and at the same time speak two or more dialects. This remains true in the case of the Hakkas in East Malaysia.

The problem of language maintenance and language shift arises, nonetheless, from the very fact that the use of two or more languages within one community is usually dependent on one language serving a function while the other does not. This functional separation is most often seen along the lines of a "High language", and a "Low language" (Fishman, 2000).[4] Hence, if two languages could be used interchangeably on all occasions by all speakers, one would be superfluous and ultimately dropped from the repertoire of languages serving the community. In other words, it is the fulfillment of separate functions by different languages which permits persistent bilingualism (or multilingualism) within the community (Fishman, 1972). As Mandarin is used widely in schools, business and religious places, and in the family, the question of Hakka language maintenance becomes an issue of critical importance to the community.

Methodology

This study is based on a survey conducted intermittently between 2013 and 2015 involving 946 Hakka individuals in the three towns in Sabah and the Bau district of Sarawak. Interviews were conducted at the respondents' houses or shops, and some at schools, churches and temples. Denscombe's (1998) sampling process based on recommendations and referrals made by informants and respondents was adopted during different stages of the fieldwork.

Three cohorts based on the periods of birth in the years of 1922 to 1961, 1962 to 1989, and 1990 to 2001 were identified. The first cohort comprised persons approximately 55 to 94 years of age (the grandparent generation); the second cohort between 27 and 54 years of age (the parent generation); and the third cohort between 15 and 26 years of age (the third generation). The year 1990 is chosen as a point of demarcation of the youngest generation because it marked the beginning of free and unrestricted travel among Malaysians to visit, travel, work or study in China. Since then, China's political, economic and cultural impacts are felt throughout the world, and the use of Mandarin among the Chinese overseas has become increasingly common.

A questionnaire consisting of 60 questions was used to gather information on family background; social and educational strata; frequency and preference of Hakka use in different domains; and a person's Hakka speaking ability. Questionnaires can be filled either in Chinese or English. In addition, a 30-50 minute semi-structured interview was conducted with selected parents (the majority of whom in the 1962-1989 cohort) from 52 families to further explore their language use patterns. All interviews were conducted in Mandarin.

Analysis

The questionnaire solicits information on the frequency of Hakka use compared with Mandarin use among family members and non-family members. Five different categories of language practices, ranging on a continuum from "Almost always in Hakka" to "Almost always in Mandarin/English" were devised to measure the frequency of language use and the preference for using Hakka with 13 types of interlocutors among the parent and grandparent generations. Members of the 1990-2001 cohort were too young to answer questions on spouses and children or grandchildren. The findings suggest that Hakka is still the dominant language compared with Mandarin. However, while parents and grandparents speak to each other in Hakka, many parents opt to speak to their children in Mandarin. Across the generations, the progressive decline in the number of frequent Hakka users is evident (Table 1).

The data seem to suggest that changes in family language use started among the parents. While there are speakers in every age group who would prefer to use languages other than Hakka in various domains, a significant change in favour of Mandarin occurs when respondents of the 1962-1989 cohort comment on preference and use in conversations with their children and grandchildren. Only 33 per cent of the respondents from this cohort chose to speak "almost always in Hakka" or "more Hakka than Mandarin /English" with their children, compared with the much higher proportion of 74 per cent for the older generation. This drastic drop appears to conform to the language practice of the younger generation where Mandarin (and/or English) is preferred and used, as in the case among the 1990-2001 cohort. These figures confirm the general trend in Malaysian Chinese society today that the younger generation tended to use

heritage language less frequently and adopted Mandarin as their primary language of communication, even in the family domain.

Table 1. The "Preference" and "High Use" of Hakka in Communication among Different Age Cohorts in Sabah and Sarawak, 2013-2015

Interlocutor		1922-1961 Cohort Number (%)		1962-1989 Cohort Number (%)		1990-2001Cohort Number (%)	
		1	2	1	2	1	2
Grandparents	Prefer	229(95.4%)	5(2.1%)	261(85.6%)	9(3.0%)	151(55.7%)	26(9.6%)
	Use	228(96.2%)	5(2.1%)	265(88.9%)	18(6.0%)	161(62.2%)	26(10.0%)
Father	Prefer	239(94.5%)	8(3.2%)	276(79.3%)	12(3.4%)	135(43.5%)	34(11.0%)
	Use	245(96.5%)	7(2.8%)	290(83.8%)	22(6.4%)	147(47.6%)	22(7.1%)
Mother	Prefer	247(95.7%)	6(2.3%)	285(80.1%)	17(4.8%)	131(42.4%)	27(8.7%)
	Use	249(96.9%)	5(1.9%)	305(85.9%)	22(6.2%)	139(45.4%)	19(6.2%)
Siblings	Prefer	235(90.4%)	10(3.8%)	262(74.9%)	27(7.7%)	109(35.0%)	25(8.0%)
	Use	229(88.8%)	15(5.8%)	270(77.1%)	33(9.4%)	121(39.9%)	19(6.3%)
Spouse	Prefer	219(85.5%)	10(3.9%)	180(60.4%)	18(6.0%)	NA	NA
	Use	209(82.6%)	10(4.0%)	150(60.5%)	18(7.3%)		
Own children	Prefer	187(72.5%)	16(6.2%)	95(32.5%)	27(9.2%)	NA	NA
	Use	168(65.1%)	23(8.9%)	44(19.0%)	32(13.9%)		
Own grandchildren	Prefer	119(55.9%)	10(4.7%)	71(39.9%)	16(9.0%)	NA	NA
	Use	55(37.9%)	11(7.6%)	9(52.9%)	0(0.0%)		
Close relatives	Prefer	222(83.8%)	21(7.9%)	230(64.6%)	37(10.4%)	99(31.5%)	34(10.8%)
	Use	219(82.6%)	24(9.1%)	234(65.9%)	46(13.0%)	104(33.0%)	39(12.4%)
Friends	Prefer	195(73.9%)	25(9.5%)	166(46.2%)	43(12.0%)	51(16.1%)	24(7.6%)
	Use	184(70.0%)	35(13.3%)	169(47.1%)	55(15.3%)	38(12.0%)	22(7.0%)
Acquaintances	Prefer	188(71.2%)	22(8.3%)	137(38.3%)	38(10.6%)	42(13.3%)	19(6.0%)
	Use	163(62.0%)	41(15.6%)	123(34.4%)	52(14.5%)	29(9.2%)	17(5.4%)
School mates/ Colleagues	Prefer	171(65.5%)	17(6.5%)	130(36.2%)	33(9.2%)	36(11.4%)	15(4.8%)
	Use	143(55.2%)	31(12.0%)	111(30.9%)	52(14.5%)	24(7.6%)	17(5.4%)
Sales persons	Prefer	118(45.2%)	28(10.7%)	78(21.8%)	24(6.7%)	25(8.4%)	14(4.7%)
	Use	75(28.7%)	36(13.8%)	45(12.7%)	37(10.5%)	13(4.5%)	10(3.5%)
Members of religious groups	Prefer	169(65.8%)	17(6.6%)	141(40.4%)	34(9.7%)	42(14.1%)	19(6.4%)
	Use	159(62.8%)	25(9.9%)	135(38.8%)	42(12.1%)	34(11.6%)	19(6.5%)

1: Almost always in Hakka 2: More Mandarin/English than Hakka

Based on the study by Hayden (1966), another table is devised on the direction of differences between frequencies of preference and frequencies of use (Table 2).

Table 2. The Direction of Differences between Expressions of "Preference" for and "Use" of Hakka

Interlocutor	1922-1961 Cohort	1962-1989 Cohort	1990-2001 Cohort
Grandparents	+	+	+
Father	+	+	+
Mother	+	+	+
Siblings	+	+	+
Spouse	-	+	NA
Own children	-	-	NA
Own grandchildren	-	+	NA
Close relatives	0	+	+
Friends	-	+	-
Acquaintances	-	0	-
School mates/Colleagues	-	0	-
Sales persons	-	-	-
Members of religious groups	+	+	-
Agreement: Percentage (0)	7.7	15.4	0.0
Constraint: Percentage (-)	53.8	15.4	50.0
Facilitation: Percentage (+)	38.5	69.2	50.0
	100.0	100.0	100.0

\+ the percentage of use is higher than the percentage of preference

\- the percentage of actual use is lower than the percentage of preference

0 the percentages of both use and preference are identical

By using signs to denote the actual use of Hakka compared with the preference for the language, an index of Hakka constraint and facilitation may be devised. More precisely, if the percentage of actual use is lower than the percentage of preference (as indicated by the sign -), the use of the heritage language could be seen as being "constrained", and thus indicating some negative factors coming into play in the society, and resulting in Hakka being used less often than the speakers would prefer to. The use of heritage language may be said to be "facilitated" if the percentage of use is higher than the percentage of preference (as indicated by the sign +), suggesting that some facilitating factors have brought about a greater use of Hakka than expected or preferred. Identical percentages of both use and preference would indicate some form of "agreement" (as indicated by the sign 0).

The data indicate that *the use* of Hakka was constrained more frequently than it was facilitated for the old generation. In other words, *the preference* for the heritage language might be so strong as to cause respondents of this generation to want to use it on more occasions than

was practical. This was in contrast with those born between 1962 and 1989, who used Hakka on more occasions than they would like to. Apparently, the 1962-1989 cohort was more likely to use non-heritage languages compared with the older generation. As such, though there were some facilitating factors that had prompted them to use Hakka more than they intended to, the initial preference of using less Hakka might lead to a less favourable effect on Hakka language maintenance.

While considerable facilitation appears in the case of the 1962-1989 cohort, particularly in connection with family members, there is one exception, i.e. using Hakka with their own children. In other words, in addition to their children, parents use Hakka more frequently than they would like to in their communication with family members, close relatives and friends, even with other members of religious groups that they belong to. This is perhaps the so-called "internalized preferences", as suggested by Hayden (1966) in his study – not so much for English in this case, but for Mandarin. It is particularly obvious for the parents when constraint occurs not because of the strong preference, as in the situation of the old generation, but due to the extremely low usage of Hakka between parents and children for this cohort.

Among the young respondents, the results show an agreement between their preference and use of Hakka. Interestingly, the facilitation within the family domain indicates that this young generation uses more Hakka than they wish to with family members; while the constraint found outside the family domain reveals low preferences for speaking in Hakka within the Hakka communities in the two areas of study.

The parents' choice of language practice and their preference may eventually affect the ability of their eldest child to speak Hakka (see Table 3). Clearly, the child's proficiency in Hakka increases with the frequency of Hakka being used among the parents. Among parents who used Hakka frequently, 63.3 per cent of the children possessed good to very good ability to speak the dialect. The corresponding proportion of 17.7 per cent is significantly lower among those whose parents used Hakka infrequently. Again, the impact of parents' language use on their children's language ability has diminished over time. Among the older cohort who used the dialect frequently, 81.8 per cent of their children were able to speak it well. However, the corresponding proportion has dropped to 38.6 per cent for those in the 1962-1989 cohort.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study suggests that parents' decisions play a major role in the language practices in the family and consequently have a strong influence on children's language use and proficiency. As Huffines (1980) posits, the perceptions held by the respondents of the languages in their repertoires and their ability to use them are of major concern if these languages are to be transmitted to the next generation. The findings agree with those of Dorian (1981) who describes the typical phenomenon that bilingual speakers use their minority language, and resent disloyalty towards it, but *do not teach it* to their children.

Table 3. Association between the Frequency of Hakka use by Parents and the Hakka Speaking Ability of the Eldest Child

Hakka use by Parents	Hakka speaking ability of eldest child					Total
	Very good	Good	Moderate	Little	None	
1922-1961 Cohort						
Low use	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Moderate use	4.8%	33.3%	38.1%	19.0%	4.8%	100.0%
High use	31.8%	50.0%	12.7%	4.5%	1.0%	100.0%
Total	29.2%	48.6%	15.2%	5.8%	1.2%	100.0%
1962-1989 Cohort						
Low use	6.7%	6.7%	26.7%	6.7%	53.3%	100.0%
Moderate use	4.0%	18.0%	16.0%	44.0%	18.0%	100.0%
High use	14.5%	24.1%	34.3%	23.5%	3.6%	100.0%
Total	11.7%	21.6%	29.9%	26.8%	10.0%	100.0%
Both Cohorts						
Low use	5.9%	11.8%	29.4%	5.9%	47.1%	100.0%
Moderate use	4.2%	22.5%	22.5%	36.6%	14.1%	100.0%
High use	24.4%	38.9%	22.0%	12.7%	2.1%	100.0%
Total	20.7%	35.4%	22.4%	16.0%	5.5%	100.0%

Note: Chi-square statistic (p-value) for test of association is 25.64 (0.001), 57.40 (0.000), and 115.19 (0.000), respectively, for the 1922-1961 cohort, 1962-1989 cohort, and both cohorts together.

The overall results show the facilitation within the family domain for all birth cohorts. However, this facilitation does not tell the entire story. With the low preference of speaking Hakka (and even lower percentage of actual usage) with one's own child/children for the 1962-1989 cohort, and the generally low usage and even lower preference amongst the younger generation, the results indicate that the former used less Hakka than they would prefer, and the latter used more Hakka than they preferred. Given the overwhelming usage of Mandarin within the family, the seemingly "facilitation" of Hakka may well not necessarily be a good sign for heritage language maintenance, especially by the younger generation among whom the percentage of frequent Hakka users was already low, while the desire to use Hakka could be even lower.

In Fishman's words (2000), different languages should have different functions, and for most respondents in the present study, Hakka had limited functional domains. Hakka was commonly used within one's intimate domain, primarily in the family and with friends, and also in religious activities among the older generations in East Malaysia. As Hakka is not a medium of instruction in schools, some parents expressed the concern that speaking Hakka might affect their children's academic performance. In effect, it was this concern that might have caused the gradual decrease in the number of Hakka language users.

The study by Li *et al*. (1997: 45) lends support to Fishman's (1991) proposition that language shift is very rarely "across the board"; instead, it is "differential", being more rapid and far-reaching in some domains and sub-populations than in others. The present study shows that language shift is indeed happening more rapidly in domains other than that of the family. Nevertheless, language shift might also take place "across the board" if parents were to continue their current language practices at home.

Moreover, many parents during the interviews speak of communication accommodation within the family (see Giles and Noels, 1997). While these accommodations had resulted in the "better communication" between the older and younger generations, it might also have led to the decline in proficiency in Hakka. This reminds us of the issue of the "semi-speaker" raised by Dorian (1973, 1977, and 1981) in her discussions on the death of East Sutherland Gaelic which is a Scottish Gaelic dialect. Thus, the issue brings up the question of what it means to have only *partial* or *imperfect* knowledge or competence in a language as in the case of the semi-speakers.

From the study, it is clear that the use of Hakka in communication is in a state of flux. On the one hand, although many Hakkas claim to have strong feelings for and value their mother tongue to a great extent, they do not try hard enough to safeguard its survival. In other words, Hakka is not often used between the generations. The concern is that, without drawing on their multilingual repertoire, most Hakka speakers from the young cohort would be unable to generate arguments and sophisticated ideas using the Hakka dialect. On the other hand, despite the imperfect knowledge of Hakka, many young semi-speakers claim Hakka as their mother tongue and use Hakka more than they would prefer to. These linguistic behaviours of young semi-speakers who chose to continue speaking in imperfect Hakka also indicated that it had yet to be totally superseded by Mandarin.

To sum up, the language environment in East Malaysia has changed in recent years. Many families and individuals had significantly re-aligned their linguistic repertoires in daily communication within and outside the family domain. Mandarin, as the language of the Chinese schools and the common language of the Chinese, has effectively encroached upon the traditional Hakka speaking domestic territory. This is an inevitable trend of development which would have a great impact on heritage language maintenance among the Hakkas now and in the future. This study has not taken into account the considerable appeal of English to the young as an essential language of commerce and social interaction. It is too soon to speak of the demise of the Hakka dialect in East Malaysia. However, if increased institutional support from communities, schools and religious groups is not forthcoming, the fate of Hakka as a heritage language may become progressively more precarious with the passage of time.

Notes

1 The term "heritage language" is used to identify languages other than the dominant language (or languages) in a given social context (Kelleher, 2010), a language spoken in the home. Fishman (2001b) identifies three types of heritage languages in the United States, namely immigrant languages, indigenous languages and colonial languages.

2 In 1901, the Brooke government in Sarawak contracted Wong Nai Shang, to recruit Chinese immigrants. Wong was a Foochow and he naturally recruited his clansmen. This work was later taken over by an American Methodist missionary, Rev. James Hoover (Kiu, 1997:1; Lockard, 2003: 53; Jones, 2007: 43).

3 In North Borneo, the earliest Hakka association was established in Sandakan in 1886 (张德来/Chong Tet Loi, 2002: 61). The outbreak of hostilities between China and Japan and the lack of protection among Hakka immigrants in Sabah compelled the need for dialect associations. The North Borneo West Coast Hakka Association was established in 1940, with members of its governing board coming from 13 towns. Several of its board and ordinary members took part in resistance and guerilla warfare against the invading Japanese army. The association was revived in 1947 when representatives from 18 West Coast towns serving as board members. With the formation of Malaysia, a state-wide Hakka Association was formed, with branches in seven major towns later in the same year (张德来/Chong Tet Loi, 2002: 65-69).

4 The High (H) and Low (L) language or variety was first introduced by Ferguson (1959) in his study of diglossia in a society, whereby a H variety is used in religion, education and other public domains, and a L variety in the home and lower work sphere.

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