ЯЗЫКОВАЯ СИТУАЦИЯ В СООБЩЕСТВЕ РЕГИОНА ЧАОШАНЬ: ПИЛОТНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ

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Чаошань, расположенный на восточном побережье провинции Гуандун на юге Китая, представляет собой регион с культурными и языковыми особенностями. Данное исследование посвящено изучению языковой ситуации в городе Шаньтоу региона Чаошань. В нем рассматриваются такие ключевые социолингвистические вопросы, как языковая политика, отношение к языку, самоидентификация и взаимопонятность между разновидностями чаошаньского диалекта. Предыдущие исследования в основном были посвящены языковому сдвигу и сохранению языка, но данное исследование в большей степени изучает социолингвистические особенности внутри субсообществ и проблемы взаимопонятности [Lin, 1994, 2005, 2017; F. Chen, 2017; H. Chen., 2020; Huang, Fang, 2021]. Результаты, полученные от 142 участников, свидетельствуют о значительных различиях в языковой практике, отношении к языку и самоидентификации носителей в трех субсообществах. Районы Хаоцзян, Чаоян и Чаонань, составляющие южное субсообщество и его диалект, отличаются от двух других – центрального и северного, в первую очередь, языковой практикой, языковыми отношениями и самоидентификацией носителей. Исследование также дает представление о сложности языковой ситуации в регионе и дает оценку взаимопонятности между тремя разновидностями диалекта Чаошань.

Ключевые слова: *Китай, китайский язык, чаошаньский диалект, регион Чаошань, языковая ситуация, языковой сдвиг, языковая политика, языковые установки*

LANGUAGE SITUATION IN THE CHAOSHAN COMMUNITY: A PILOT STUDY

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Chaoshan, located on the east coast of Guangdong Province in South China, is a region with profound cultural and linguistic distinctiveness. This pilot study investigates the language situation in the Chaoshan region, focusing on the city of Shantou. It addresses key sociolinguistic issues such as language policy, attitude, identity, and mutual intelligibility among varieties of Teochew. Prior research mainly concentrated on language shift and maintenance, but this study delves deeper to explore sociolinguistic peculiarities within sub-communities and mutual intelligibility issues [Lin, 1994, 2005, 2017; F. Chen, 2017; H. Chen, 2020; Huang & Fang, 2021]. Results from 142 participants highlight significant intra-community differences in language practices, attitude, and identity among the three sub-communities. The South Shore sub-community - Haojiang, Chaoyang and Chaonan Districts and its variety stand out in interactions with other sub-communities: Downtown and Chenghai, primarily in language practices, attitudes and identity. The study also provides insights into the mutual intelligibility among three Teochew varieties, revealing the complexity of the language situation.

Keywords: *China, Chinese language, Chaoshan dialect, Chaoshan region, language situation, language shift, language policy, language attitude*

1. Introduction

According to Ferguson [1996], the term language situation is a collection of language varieties and the ways wherein they are acquired, used, and employed among diverse linguistic communities in a specific area. Chaoshan[14], located on the east coast of Guangdong in South China, is a region with profound cultural and linguistic distinctiveness and thus a good case in point. Prior sociolinguistic research examined its language shift resulting from state language policies, encompassing crucial facets such as language practices, proficiency, attitude, and identity (see: [Lin, 1994, 2005, 2017; F. Chen, 2017; H. Chen, 2020; Huangб Fang, 2021; Liuб Fang, 2022]). This study addresses the multifaceted language situation of Chaoshan in an intra-community context, by exploring sub-communities and the mutual intelligibility among their varieties, which were previously overlooked. The research objectives are formulated as follows: (1) mutual intelligibility of the sub-communities' Teochew varieties; (2) language practices of the sub-communities, their interactions and influencing factors; (3) individual language attitudes toward different dialectal varieties, including opinions on prestige varieties and stereotypes, and (4) identities of members of sub-communities.

The paper is structured as follows: the first two chapters explore theoretical concepts, including language situation, shift and maintenance, policy, attitude, and identity, while providing necessary contexts for understanding the language situation. Chapter three introduces the data collection method, and Chapter four summarizes the collected data and delves into data analysis, covering social factors, linguistic details, mutual intelligibility, language use, attitude, and participants' identities, highlighting interactions among sub-communities. The last chapter draws conclusions on the language situation based on the data analysis, addressing study limitations and offering insights for prospective investigations.

2. Conceptual framework and research background
2. 1. Conceptual framework

Language situation pertains to language maintenance and language shift, as defined by Fishman [1964], concerned with the interplay between language change or stability and ongoing psychological, social, and cultural processes when linguistically diverse populations interact. Given that language shift is both a process and an outcome, and influenced by factors such as language attitude and policy; these concepts will be examined in the current study (see: [Pauwels, 2016]). Spolsky [2004] outlined a three-part framework for understanding a speech community's language policy, encompassing language

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[14] The region is home to tens of millions of Teochew people, who are a small branch of the Han nationality influenced by traditional Chinese culture, and their culture also bears many unique local features [Cheng, 1997]. Their mother tongue - Teochew/Teo-Swa/Chaoshan Min is a dialect of the Southern Min languages.

practices, language beliefs or ideologies, and language management. Language attitude shares commonalities with language beliefs and ideologies within the context of language policy. Agheyisi and Fishman [1970] categorized past studies on language attitude into three major groups: the first group evaluates languages, the second involves community-wide stereotypes regarding particular languages and their speakers, and the third pertains to various language behaviors. The trio of elements is denoted as the affective, cognitive, and behavioral facets [Llamas et al., 2007]. Prestige is a persistent element in language attitude research; it denotes the societal worth or standing linked to a given language, dialect, or linguistic variant in a community [Meyerhoff, 2006]. Lastly, identity is indispensable in language situation research [Bucholtz, Hall, 2005].

3. 2. Research background
2. 2. 1. An overview of Chaoshan[15]

There are two stances regarding the composition of Chaoshan[16]. From a traditional standpoint, Chaoshan comprises three cities: Shantou[17], Chaozhou, and Jieyang, while a broader perspective includes Shanwei or Swabue, forming the Greater Chaoshan Area. However, Shanwei has distinct cultural and linguistic differences and was historically governed by neighboring divisions. Therefore, this study adopts the traditional definition of Chaoshan.
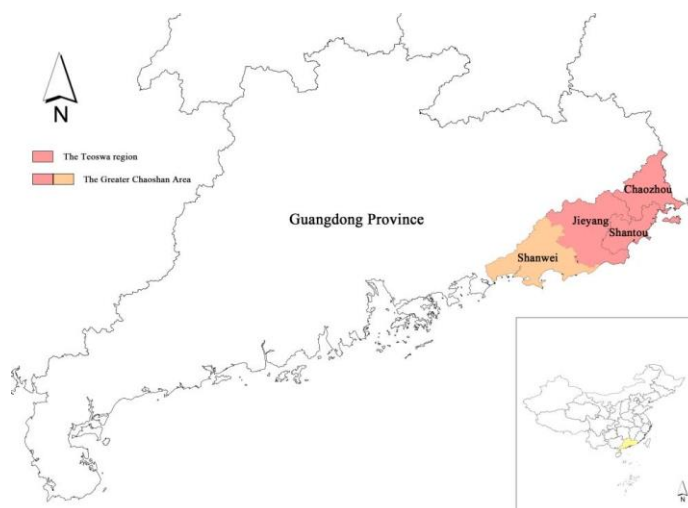

Fig. 1. Chaoshan and the Greater Chaoshan Area in Eastern Guangdong

(Fig. 1, 2, 3, and 5 were generated from data by Xu (2023) and modified by author)

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[15] 'Chaoshan' is the Pinyin romanization and 'Teoswa' is the romanization based on the pronunciation of the local dialect. Same with 'Teochew', 'Swatow', 'Kityang', and so forth. In this study, certain names follow this romanization tradition to show regard and appreciation toward the land, its people, culture, and language.

[16] So far, compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan and overseas Chinese still call Teoswa/Chaoshan Region Teochew/Chaozhou. Now it also refers to the city of Teochew or Chaozhou.

[17] Shantou, also known as Swatow, is a prefecture-level city on the eastern coast of Guangdong Province. Swatow borders Teochew to the north, Kityang to the west. Swatow was originally a small fishing village subordinate to the County of Chenghai in Teochew. Swatow has been well known for being one of the earliest Special Economic Zones in China since 1981.
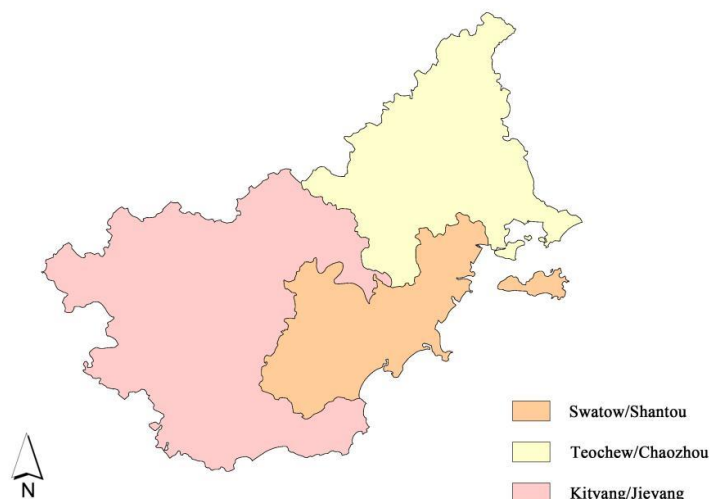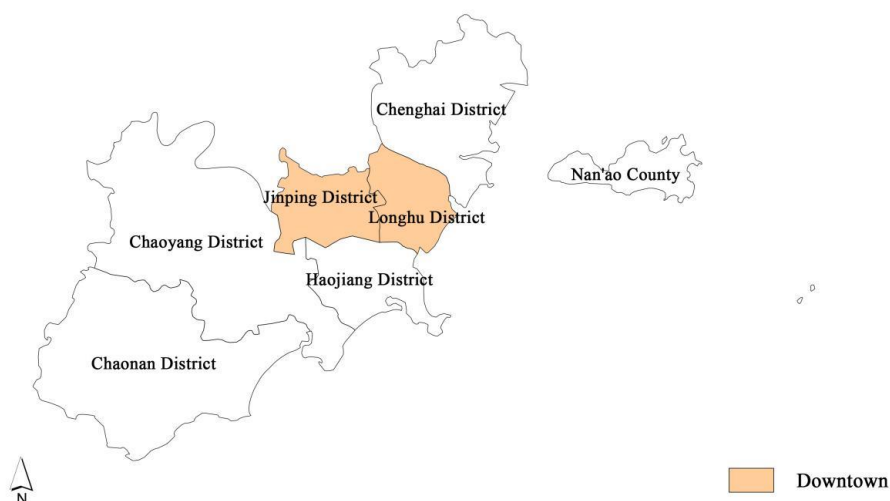
Fig. 2. Three cities of Chaoshan

Fig. 3. Shantou

2. 2. 2. Sub-classification of the Teochew dialect

Teochew[18] is a dialect of the Southern Min languages spoken by the Teochew people in the region and other diasporas outside Mainland China (see Fig. 4). Scholars proposed different sub-classification methods for Teochew. Y. Li's trichotomy [1986] includes Downtown and Chenghai (hereafter: North Shore; see Fig. 5) into the "first dialect area" and Haojiang, Chaoyang and Chaonan

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[18] Teochew preserves many similarities to Old Chinese in its pronunciation and vocabulary that have been lost in most of the other Sinitic languages. As such, Teochew is considered to be one of the more conservative Chinese languages and its written language only exists in classical literature [Lin, 2017]. Despite efforts in the modern orthography of Teochew, today very few people are able to write Teochew and it is by large extent a spoken language.

(hereafter: South Shore) into the "third dialect area"[19]. The trichotomy is similar to X. Li's [1994], which puts varieties spoken in the North Shore into "Shantou cluster", and the others into "Chaopu cluster". Lin [1997] introduced the urban vernacular of Shantou (Downtown variety), which is widely recognized as standard Teochew. The Downtown variety is the language contact product of different Teochew varieties in Downtown Shantou and it lost salient features of other Teochew varieties and became a somewhat neutral variety [Lin, 2015]. This means that the Downtown variety is different from the variety spoken in Chenghai despite proximity.

Therefore, in light of scholarly consensus (see: [Y. Li, 1986; X. Li, 1994; Lin, 1997; Shao, Gan, 2007; Pan, Zheng, 2010; Lin 2015], the Teochew varieties spoken in Jinping, Longhu, and Chenghai districts exhibit significant phonological, tonal, and lexical differences from varieties in Haojiang, Chaoyang, and Chaonan. In this study, Teochew varieties in Shantou (see Fig. 5) are thus classified into the North Shore varieties (NSV: Downtown and Chenghai) and the South Shore varieties (SSV: Chaoyang, Chaonan, and Haojiang). Although maintaining good mutual intelligibility with the Downtown variety (DTV), the distinctiveness of the Chenghai variety (CHV) demands examination along with DTV and SSV.
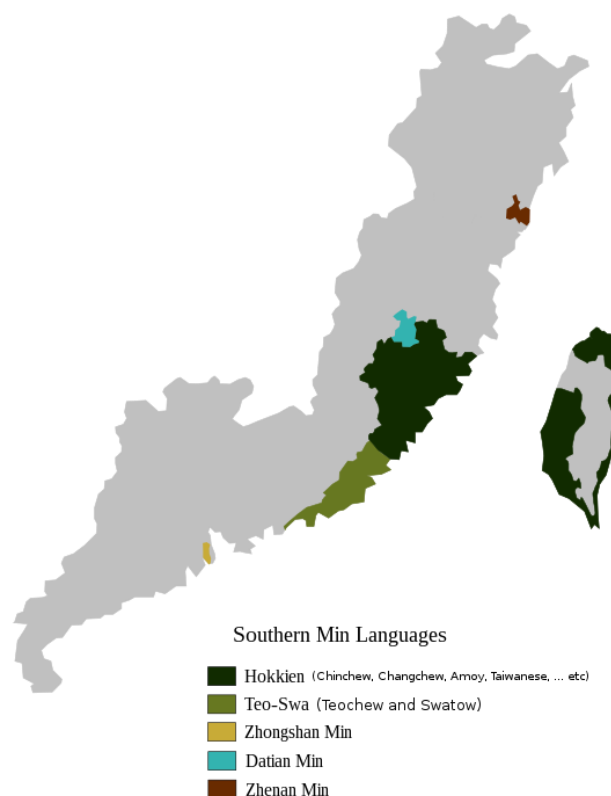

Fig. 4. Varieties of Southern Min languages [Luuva, 2020]

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[19] The "second dialect area" mainly comprises the city Jieyang/Kityang, which is not in the scope of investigation in this paper.
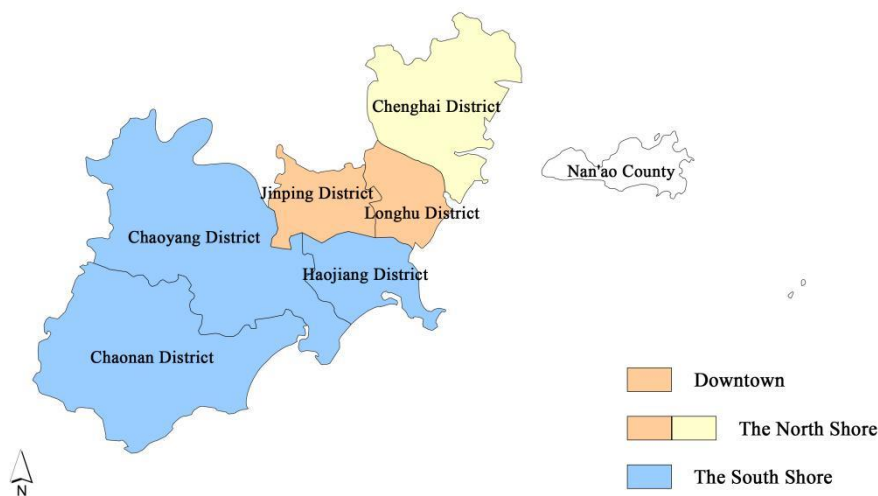
Fig. 5. Sub-classification of Teochew varieties spoken in Shantou in this study (excluding Nan'ao County[20])

2. 2. 3. Previous research on the language situation

Research on Chaoshan's language situation dates back to the 1990s. Since China's economic reform, the region had witnessed the popularization of Cantonese and Putonghua[21] (hereafter: PTH), and marginal local dialects homogenized [Lin, 1994]. Lin [2005] attributed the early language shift to sociolinguistic and extralinguistic factors such as language policy, language attitude, Cantonese culture contact, and population diversification. His prediction of the language shift, PTH as the high variety and Teochew as the low [Ibid.], was validated in later research on language practices, language proficiency, language attitude, and identity. Firstly, scholars agreed on the Teochew proficiency decline of the young, including speaking [F. Chen, 2017] and cultural competence [Lin, 2017]. Despite the proficiency decline in younger generations, some scholars claimed that the younger generations still had a fairly good command of Teochew, and were able to communicate in Teochew fluently. H. Chen [2020] focused her sample on preschoolers and pupils; the latter practiced more Teochew and PTH code-switching than kindergartners did. Moreover, pupils in rural areas spoke better Teochew than those in towns. Other scholars were concerned with family language policy, Teochew was used for communication with parents and grandparents since these generations usually do not have a good enough command of PTH and Teochew was the language they used to raise their offspring. Huang and Fang [2021] showed that parents' Teochew proficiency was the key factor influencing children's

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[20] The Nan'ao variety is excluded due to its distinct linguistic background.
[21] Putonghua comes from the Chinese word 普通话 (Pǔtōnghuà in pinyin), which means "common tongue". Putonghua is the national language of the People's Republic of China and is used in schools and workplaces throughout the country. It is commonly referred to as Standard Mandarin.

language planning in the family domain, and parents with higher levels of education were more positive toward multilingualism. Their participants believed that the language symbolizes their Teochew identity and felt a strong connection to the language and a sense of solidarity with people who spoke the same language. Liu and Fang [2022] chose young adults as their sample and discovered that those who had higher Teochew proficiency had more positive language attitudes. The use of PTH among young adults from different sub-communities was attributed to communication barriers caused by their different native Teochew varieties. Workplace was a domain where PTH was more often used for formality reported by the participants.

3. Methodology and data

This research utilizes a survey that is divided into four sections: (1) General information containing social variables and linguistic details; (2) Mutual intelligibility of Teochew varieties; (3) Language attitude, and (4) Language practices of the sub-communities. The adaptation of the second section is inspired by Haugen [1966] and Gooskens [2013]. The structure of the language attitude section aligns with three components of attitude as outlined by Llamas et al. [2007]; the investigation of prestige and identity are also included. Spolsky [2007] and prior studies form a theoretical basis for the last section—language practices. The methodology and framework employed in this study align with those used in analogous empirical investigations conducted in culturally, linguistically, and geographically diverse societies [Kansakar et al., 2011; Dweik, Al-Obaidi, 2014; Dweik, Qawar, 2015]. The survey was designed and distributed on an online platform *Wenjuanxing*[22].

Given the nature of the pilot study, participants were recruited from Shantou, excluding Nan'ao County, with their Teochew categorized into three variety groups: DTV, CHV, and SSV, as outlined in the preceding chapter[23]. The study targeted individuals aged 18 to 60 and they met the following criteria: (1) speak Teochew as L1 and identify as Teochew people; (2) capable of distinguishing among the three varieties. Ultimately, 142 out of 182 questionnaires are valid. It is essential to emphasize that the findings presented in this study may not be universally applicable to the entire population; instead, this research represents a limited subset of Teochew speakers in the region. Stringent research ethics were observed throughout the study.

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[22] Wenjuanxing is an online platform. It helps with scholarly online questionnaires, surveys and data analysis. https://www.wjx.cn
[23] DTV: Downtown Variety; CHV: Chenghai Variety; SSV: South Shore Variety

4. Analysis and interpretation

4. 1. Social variables and linguistic information

The survey showed a relatively balanced distribution between male and female participants (see Table 1). A significant majority (74 %) of the participants belonged to the younger generations, with over half born in the 90s and nearly one-fifth born between 2000 to 2005. Among the older generations, a portion (5 %) was born in the mid and late 60s, while others (15%) were born in the 70s. A smaller proportion of the total population, born in the 80s, constituted the middle generation. The data reveals that a larger percentage of participants were from urban areas, in contrast to those from rural areas.

Concerning the participants' place of origin, a majority were from Downtown, covering two districts of Longhu and Jinping, while 16 % of the participants were from the South Shore districts of Haojiang, Chaoyang and Chaonan (see Table 2). The smallest cohort comprised participants from Chenghai. Participants were prompted to specify the group with which they identify, with three-quarters identifying as Downtown people, 18 % as South Shore people, and 7 % as Chenghai people. It is crucial to acknowledge that participants' places of origin did not consistently align with their asserted identities, as individuals may grow up in one area but identify with another community for various reasons. In this study, the classification of participants into three distinct groups—Downtown, Chenghai, and the South Shore—was based on their self-identification, as it held greater significance than their places of origin.

Table 1

Social variables of the participants

Social variables of participants				
			Number	Percentage
Sex:	Male		75	53%
	Female		67	47%
	Total		142	100%
Generation:	1964-1979	'Old'	29	20%
	1980-1989	'Middle'	8	6%
	1990-1999	'Young'	78	55%
	2000-2005		27	19%
	Total		142	100%
Settled in:	Urban		103	73%
	Rural		39	27%
	Total		142	100%

Table 2

Places of origin and self-identification of the participants

Place of origin:			Number	Percentage	
Jinping	Downtown		73	52%	78%
Longhu			37	26%	
Chenghai	Chenghai		9	6%	6%
Chaoyang	The South Shore		11	8%	16%
Chaonan			9	6%	
Haojiang			3	2%	
Total			142	100%	
Identify as a member of:	Jinping Longhu	Downtown people	107		75%
	Chenghai	Chenghai people	10		7%
	Chaoyang Chaonan Haojiang	The South Shore people	25		18%
	Total		142		100%

As depicted in Fig. 6, 91 participants (64 %) asserted that they exclusively speak one Teochew variety. These are monodialectal speakers. On the other hand, 51 people (36 %) reported speaking two or more varieties, they are multidialectal speakers. These results indicate that speaking more than one Teochew variety is not an uncommon practice in Shantou.
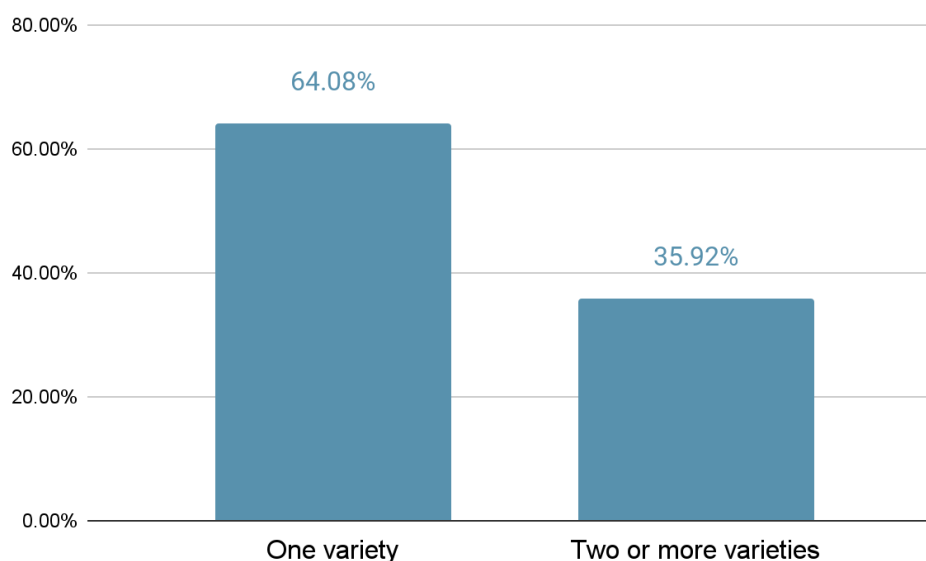

Fig.6. Percentages of monodialectal and multidialectal participants

The majority of participants (75 %) primarily spoke DTV, followed by SSV and CHV speakers (see Table 3). However, there is a notable incongruity between the Teochew variety that participants use most frequently and their self-claimed identities, regardless of the fact that they are monodialectal or multidialectal. Participant 59-D[24], a monodialectal speaker, is a good example. He identifies as a downtown urbanite but predominantly speaks CHV, not DTV. Similarly, participants 124-D and 177-C speak mainly SSV and DTV, respectively, instead of aligning with their identified varieties, which are DTV and CHV. This discrepancy is more prevalent among multidialectal speakers: 123-S, 159-S, and 156-C predominantly speak DTV; 31-D and 176-D predominantly speak CHV. However, this may not be a common phenomenon since there are only 8 participants of this kind, representing roughly 5 % of the participants.

Table 3

Participants' major varieties of Teochew

Proportions of the three varieties of Teochew:			
DTV	Jinping - 68	107	75%
	Longhu - 39		
CHV	Chenghai - 11	11	8%
SSV	Chaoyang - 13	24	17%
	Chaonan - 7		
	Haojiang - 4		
Total	142	142	100%

As indicated in Table 4, in addition to DTV, there are more multidialectal Downtown participants who speak SSV than those who speak CHV. Nearly one-third of the multidialectal Downtown participants can use both CHV and SSV. Conversely, multidialectal participants from Chenghai and the South Shore are all capable of speaking DTV. Some of them even speak DTV along with another distinct variety (CHV or SSV), but none exclusively speaks the different variety without being able to speak DTV. Therefore, it can be inferred from this phenomenon that DTV plays a crucial role as a bridging Teochew variety in Shantou, connecting speakers from various sub-communities.

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[24] '59' denotes the number originally assigned to a participant, the 'D' after indicates that this participant identifies as a member of the Downtown Swatow community. If 'C', Chenghai, and 'S', the South Shore.

Table 4

Varieties of Teochew spoken by multidialectal participants

Identify as:	Speaking X additionally	Number	Percentage	Total
Downtown people	CHV	5	14%	35
	SSV	19	54%	
	CHV and SSV	11	32%	
Chenghai people	DTV	3	75%	4
	SSV	-	-	
	DTV and SSV	1	25%	
The South Shore people	DTV	10	83%	12
	CHV	-	-	
	DTV and CHV	2	17%	
Total				51

Fig. 7 illustrates that a larger proportion of participants exhibited proficiency in Teochew compared to those with less expertise. Approximately 41 % of participants demonstrated the ability to engage in discussions on specialized and sophisticated topics in Teochew, with one-third expressing fluency in understanding and speaking the language. However, some participants expressed less confidence in their Teochew skills: 16.2 % mentioned, 'I usually do not have trouble with Teochew,' roughly 8 % acknowledged occasional difficulties, and only one participant reported often having trouble with Teochew. On the other hand, the majority of participants displayed high proficiency in PTH (see Fig. 8). About 73 % claimed to be bilingual in both Teochew and PTH. Over one-fifth rarely experienced difficulties in understanding and speaking PTH with a mild accent. Only a few encountered challenges with PTH.
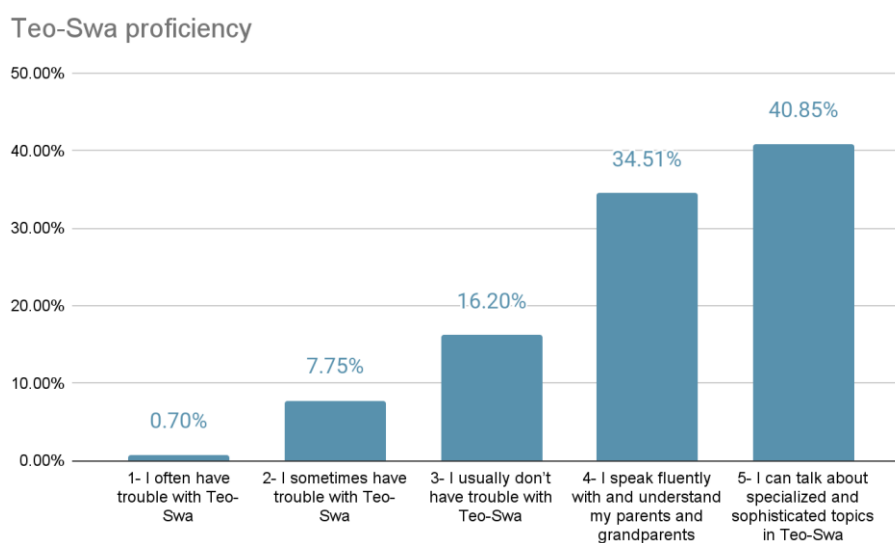

Fig. 7. Participants' Teochew proficiency
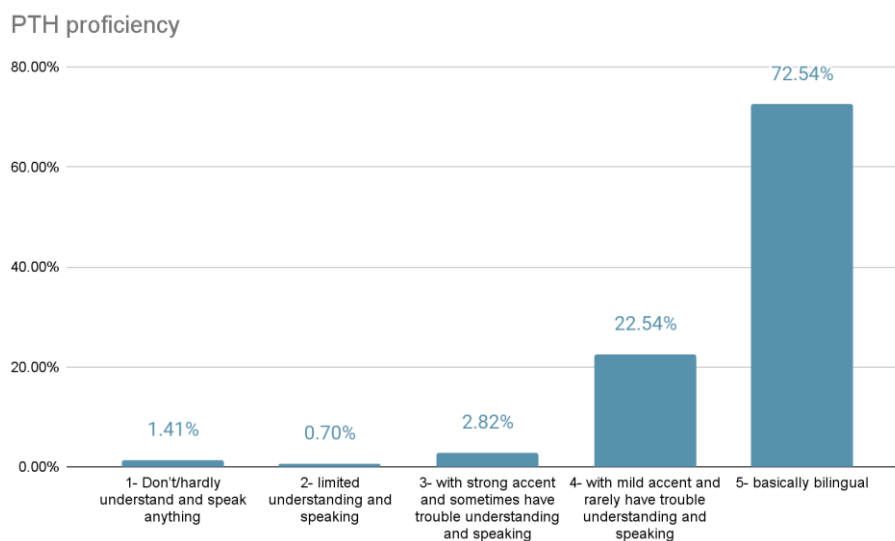
PTH proficiency

Fig. 8. Participants' PTH proficiency

4. 2. Mutual intelligibility of three Teochew varieties

According to Table 5, DTV and CHV participants exhibited a strong mutual understanding, but it was relatively more challenging for them, particularly CHV participants, to comprehend SSV participants. SSV participants had a relatively better understanding of DTV than CHV. DTV appeared to be more easily understood for both CHV and SSV participants during first encounters, whereas SSV were more challenging for the others to understand. Participants also expressed their current perceived level of understanding of the different Teochew varieties. Generally, DTV participants understood CHV much better than SSV. Only a tiny fraction of DTV participants understood less than 60% of CHV speech, while nearly one-quarter of them struggled with SSV speech. Regarding SSV participants, almost one-fifth of them encountered difficulty understanding CHV participants, but less than 10% faced challenges with DTV. Finally, all CHV participants had a strong comprehension of DTV, but nearly two-fifths found it challenging to understand SSV.

Table 5

Mutual intelligibility among DTV, CHV and SSV during first encounters

How well participants understand other varieties	Participants and different varieties					
	Downtown people		Chenghai people		The South Shore people	
	CHV	SSV	DTV	SSV	DTV	CHV
1 - not at all	1 (1%)	0	0	0	1 (4%)	2 (8%)
2 - with great difficulty	0	6 (6%)	0	2 (20%)	0	0
3 - had to listen intently	6 (6%)	27 (25%)	0	4 (40%)	4 (16%)	4 (16%)
4 - all but a few words	36 (33%)	41 (38%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	6 (24%)	11 (44%)
5 - understood everything	64 (60%)	33 (31%)	7 (70%)	0	14 (56%)	8 (32%)
Total	107	107	10	10	25	25

An interesting observation was revealed by Table 6: Downtown and Chenghai participants expressed a perception that their Teochew varieties were easier to be understood by one another than by SSV participants. Conversely, SSV participants appeared to recognize the difficulty their Teochew varieties might present for both DTV and CHV participants. The data provides insight into the levels of mutual intelligibility among these Teochew varieties. CHV and SSV are located near the two different extremes of the dialect continuum, while DTV is in the middle with a slight inclination to the end where CHV is located. DTV speakers have better understanding of CHV than SSV; for CHV speakers, DTV is easier to understand than SSV. Ultimately, SSV speakers comprehend DTV better than CHV. Both CHV and SSV speakers would encounter greater difficulty in understanding one another compared to comprehending DTV speakers.

Table 6

Perceived levels of understanding one believes they receive from others

How well participants believe they were understood by others	Participants and different varieties					
	Downtown people		Chenghai people		The South Shore people	
	CHV	SSV	DTV	SSV	DTV	CHV
1 - not at all	0	0	0	0	0	0
2 - with great difficulty	0	3 (3%)	0	1 (10%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)
3 - had to listen intently	5 (5%)	19 (18%)	0	3 (30%)	5 (20%)	5 (20%)
4 - all but a few words	39 (36%)	44 (41%)	3 (30%)	6 (60%)	10 (40%)	11 (44%)
5 - understood everything	63 (59%)	41 (38%)	7 (70%)	0	9 (36%)	8 (32%)
Total	107	107	10	10	25	25

4. 3. Language practices of the Teochew sub-communities

All participants communicated more frequently with individuals who spoke the same Teochew variety at home and in their daily lives compared to school and workplace domains. When interacting with those speaking different Teochew varieties, the use of Teochew was more evenly distributed across all domains. In particular, it is worth noting that, in school and workplace domains, the percentages of Teochew speech when participants spoke with different varieties speakers showed comparable importance with those in other domains. A number of Downtown participants reported regular encounters with individuals speaking different Teochew varieties, especially during interactions with relatives and in marketplace environments (see Table 7).

Table 7

Domains wherein Teochew is spoken with individuals who speak the same and different varieties[25]

Domains/Occasions	Participants of					
	Downtown		Chenghai		The South Shore	
	Same V	Different V	Same V	Different V	Same V	Different V
At home	88 (82%)	37 (35%)	9 (90%)	3 (30%)	21 (84%)	10 (40%)
School	48 (45%)	33 (31%)	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	13 (52%)	10 (40%)
Workplace	49 (46%)	49 (46%)	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	6 (24%)	10 (40%)
Daily life	78 (73%)	66 (62%)	7 (70%)	8 (80%)	16 (64%)	13 (52%)
Additionally mentioned by participants						
Relatives		1				
Marketplace		1				
As long as one is Teochew	1					
Does not matter where	1	1				

Table 8

Language choices of the sub-communities

When participants interacting with	Participants of			Choices
	Downtown	Chenghai	The South Shore	
DTV speakers	-	8 (80%)	9 (36%)	Mostly Teochew
	-	1 (10%)	4 (16%)	Mostly PTH
	-	1 (10%)	12 (48%)	Mixing
CHV speakers	76 (71%)	-	9 (36%)	Mostly Teochew
	5 (5%)	-	6 (24%)	Mostly PTH
	26 (24%)	-	10 (40%)	Mixing
SSV speakers	54 (51%)	2 (20%)	-	Mostly Teochew
	11 (10%)	4 (40%)	-	Mainly PTH
	42 (39%)	4 (40%)	-	Mixing

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[25] 'V' stands for 'Varieties of Teochew'.

Concerning language choices, the participants were presented with three options when communicating with individuals who speak different Teochew varieties: primarily in Teochew, primarily in PTH, or a combination of both. The predominant language choice among all participants was the use of Teochew, with language mixing of Teochew and PTH being the subsequent choice. The preference for communication primarily in PTH was almost universally low across all groups, except when CHV participants interacted with SSV participants. It is noteworthy that when interacting with SSV participants, both DTV and CHV groups experienced a visible decline in individuals who chose to primarily communicate in Teochew. SSV participants leaned toward language mixing when communicating with other groups, and there was no discernible difference in their language choice patterns when interacting with speakers of DTV and CHV.

Overall, participants chose to communicate in Teochew because they perceived it as a natural choice that fosters a sense of connection. Remarkably, a higher proportion of SSV participants articulated that, when engaging in conversation with CHV speakers in Teochew, their intentions leaned toward seeking entertainment. Certain participants voluntarily emphasized the significance of adhering to Teochew to preserve both the language and culture. However, a number of participants opted to switch to PTH when conversing with individuals who speak different varieties, primarily due to discomfort stemming from diverse accents and communication barriers. Other motives, including an affection for the language and considerations of prestige had only a marginal impact.

The primary motivations for mixing Teochew and PTH were to navigate communication barriers and address the challenge of articulating specific concepts in Teochew. The practice of language mixing has become commonplace among certain participants.

4. 4. Language attitude and identity of the Teochew sub-communities
4. 4. 1. The affective facet

As observed in Table 9, it is evident that, in general, all three groups exhibited a preference for their respective Teochew variety over others, placing it in the top position. A high proportion of DTV and CHV participants considered SSV as their least preferred variety. For SSV participants, 40 % of them manifested a predilection for alternative varieties, diverging from an inclination toward their own.

Table 9

Participants' fondness toward the three varieties[26]

Fondness ranking	Participants of		
	Downtown	Chenghai	The South Shore
DTV>CHV>SSV	73 (68%)	1 (10%)	3 (12%)
DTV>SSV>CHV	21 (19%)	0	6 (24%)
CHV>DTV>SSV	5 (5%)	9 (90%)	1 (4%)
CHV>SSV>DTV	4 (4%)	0	0
SSV>DTV>CHV	1 (1%)	0	10 (40%)
SSV>CHV>DTV	3 (3%)	0	5 (20%)
Total	107	10	25

4. 4. 2. The cognitive facet

Regarding prestige (see Fig. 9), more than half of the DTV participants concurred that their variety was prestigious, while a comparable proportion of CHV participants expressed precisely the opposite viewpoint. For SSV participants, they had a rather evenly distributed spectrum of opinions concerning prestige. The data imply that CHV might represent a more substantial potential challenge to the prestigious status of DTV compared to the South Shore varieties.
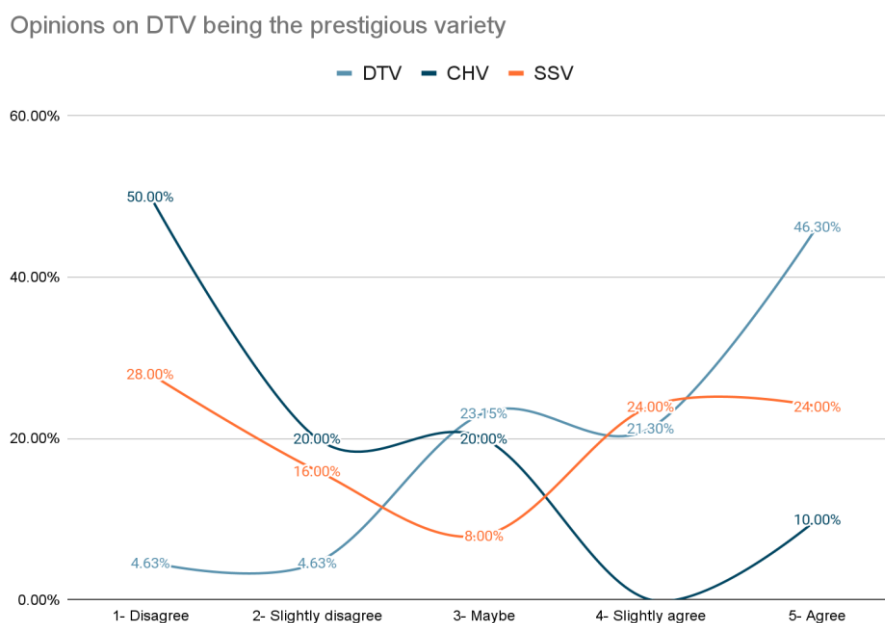

Fig. 9. DTV's prestigious status according to the participants

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[26] For example, 'DTV>CHV>SSV' indicates that one prefers DTV over CHV and SSV; SSV is the least favored of the three.

Participants who disagreed with DTV as the prestigious Teochew variety were requested to provide their own responses. The Fucheng[27] variety was mentioned and regarded by some participants to be of high prestige. Participants of CHV and SSV expressed more assertively that their respective varieties should be deemed prestigious; in particular, some contended that SSV held influence, considering the substantial number of its speakers. However, some of DTV participants rejected the concept of prestige, advocating for the equal status and rights of all Teochew varieties.

Table 10

Participants' attitudes toward the three varieties

Participants of	Varieties	1 - negative	2 - Slightly negative	3 - neutral	4 - Slightly positive	5- positive
Downtown	CHV	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	62 (59%)	10 (10%)	27 (26%)
	SSV	2 (2%)	17 (16%)	59 (55%)	9 (8%)	20 (19%)
Chenghai	DTV	0	0	8 (80%)	0	2 (20%)
	SSV	0	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
The South Shore	DTV	0	1 (4%)	12 (48%)	4 (16%)	8 (32%)
	CHV	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	15 (60%)	1 (4%)	7 (28%)

Overall, participants held neutral to positive impressions when exposed to different Teochew varieties. In contrast, for sub-communities of Downtown and Chenghai, the data reveal a discernible aversion toward SSV. In addition, using DTV may serve as a viable strategy to prevent eliciting a negative impression from other groups, as DTV received the least negative opinions from other sub-communities. The attitudes of South Shore participants toward DTV and CHV do not show noticeable divergence.

Participants were then prompted to provide stereotyped opinions of the three Teochew varieties and members of other sub-communities (refer to Table 11).

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[27] The variety spoken in the city of Chaozhou/Teochew.

Table 11

Participants' opinions and stereotypes[28]

Participants of	Toward others	Stereotypes
Downtown	Chenghai	Gentle, soft-spoken, interesting, cute, mean Soft, high-pitched, pleasant to hear
	The South Shore	Aggressive, harsh, uncouth, loud, rustic, straightforward, rich Falling tone, hard to understand, unpleasant to hear
Chenghai	Downtown	Hooligan, pretentious, snobbish
	The South Shore	Aggressive, countrified, rustic Hard to understand,
The South Shore	Downtown	Energetic, amiable, gentle, urban, friendly Pleasant to hear
	Chenghai	Cute, gentle, Soft, high-pitched

Chenghai individuals were commonly described as 'cute,' 'gentle,' 'interesting,' and 'soft-spoken,' attributed to the perception that CHV is 'high-pitched,' 'soft,' and 'pleasant to hear.' Nevertheless, certain Downtown participants perceived Chenghai people as 'mean.' 'Loud', 'straightforward', 'rustic', 'uncouth', and 'aggressive' are stereotypes of the South Shore people, according to participants from other sub-communities. A notable characteristic of SSV is an abundance of falling intonations, which other participants find it challenging to grasp, describing it as 'weird' and 'unpleasant to hear.' 'Pretentious,' 'snobbish', and 'hooligan' are stereotypes of Downtown individuals perceived by Chenghai people, while according to the South Shore participants, Downtown people are 'urban,' 'gentle,' 'amiable,' and 'energetic.' In summary, Chenghai individuals are associated with largely positive stereotypes, while those of the South Shore people tend to be predominantly negative. On the other hand, participants from Chenghai predominantly offered negative stereotypes of others, whereas those from the South Shore participants typically portrayed individuals in a positive light. Perceptions of Downtown individuals are generally well-balanced, with more negative stereotypes originating from Chenghai participants, while those from the South Shore participants being more favorable.

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[28] Words highlighted in red have negative connotations under the original contexts of participants' answers.

4. 4. 3. The behavioral facet

Overall, the prevailing consensus among participants indicates an agreement that Teochew people, sharing a common identity, should predominantly engage in communication with one another using Teochew rather than resorting to PTH. Participants of Downtown and the South Shore demonstrated a marginally stronger inclination toward using Teochew among the Teochew community in comparison to their Chenghai counterparts.
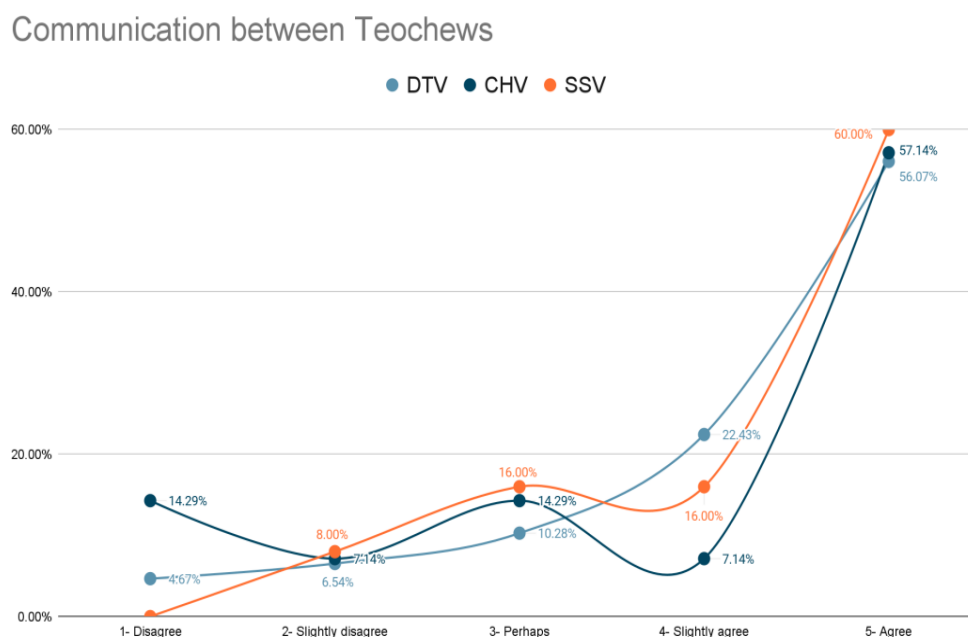

Fig. 10. Opinions on communication primarily in Teochew among Teochew people

Concerning communication among sub-communities, the predominant consensus among participants was to use Teochew; however, the number of DTV and CHV participants holding this opinion witnessed a decline when the need of conversing with SSV speakers emerged. A major proportion of SSV participants held favorable views on sub-communities communication in Teochew, and no noticeable distinction in their attitudes toward communication in Teochew with DTV and CHV speakers was found.

Table 12

Opinions on communication primarily in Teochew among sub-communities

Participants	With sub-communities of	1 - disagree	2 - Slightly disagree	3 - neutral	4 - Slightly agree	5 - agree
Downtown	CHV	7 (7%)	6 (6%)	10 (9%)	22 (20%)	62 (58%)
	SSV	7 (7%)	12 (11%)	15 (14%)	18 (17%)	55 (51%)
Chenghai	DTV	1 (10%)	0	2 (20%)	0	7 (70%)
	SSV	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	5 (50%)	0	3 (30%)
The South Shore	DTV	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	4 (16%)	2 (8%)	17 (68%)
	CHV	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	3 (12%)	2 (8%)	18 (72%)

4. 4. 4. The identity facet

The overwhelming majority of the participants (82.9 %) concurred that the Teochew language served as a symbol of Teochew people, while a smaller percentage (9.6 %) expressed a mild agreement. However, participants held varied viewpoints on whether their sub-community identity should be prioritized over the shared Teochew identity (see Fig. 11). Participants of the South Shore and Downtown exhibited a greater inclination to assert their sub-community identity compared to those of Chenghai.
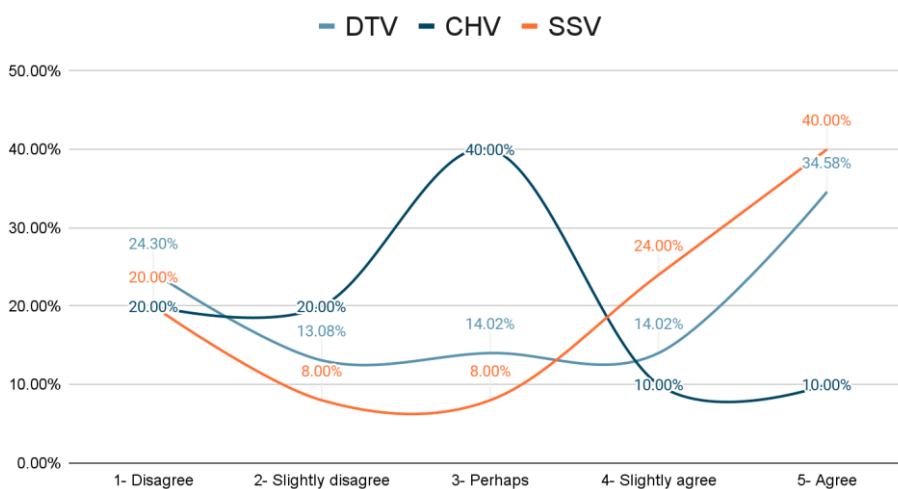

Fig. 11. Participants' opinions on sub-community identity more important than the common Teochew identity

5. Discussion and conclusion

With a particular focus on the city Shantou, the pilot study is devoted to an investigation of the language situation of Chaoshan within the context of sub-communities dynamics. The mutual intelligibility of the three varieties of Teochew, language attitude, language practices, and identity are the main subjects of the study.

Several preliminary issues and findings deserve attention. First of all, the data clearly indicates that the places of origin of the participants do not consistently align with their asserted identities; individuals might have grown up or spent the majority of their childhood in one location but identified as loyal members of another sub-community. Moreover, multidialectal speakers constitute a population that cannot be overlooked particularly in the urban setting of Shantou, if not the entire region. Discrepancies exist between the variety that participants predominantly use and their self-asserted identities, regardless of whether they are monodialectal or multidialectal. Last but not least, the data has highlighted signs of potential conflicts between the sub-communities, particularly the North Shore (Downtown and Chenghai) and South Shore, with the latter being in a disadvantaged position. These issues and findings unveil the intricacies of the language situation in Chaoshan; however, they also offer insights that could inform future research endeavors.

5. 1. Language practices

Among all participants, their language practices predominantly involve Teochew, with the subsequent occurrence of language mixing of Teochew and PTH. Engaging in PTH-only sub-communities communication is notably infrequent in the community. When communicating with SSV speakers, both DTV and CHV sub-communities experience a significant decline in individuals who opt to primarily communicate in Teochew.

Regarding participants' motives for language choices, individuals exhibit a preference for communication in Teochew due to its inherent naturalness and its capacity to foster a sense of connection among community members. Those who resort to PTH communication often cite discomfort with unfamiliar Teochew varieties, encountered communication barriers, and an inability to articulate specific ideas effectively in Teochew.

Domain-wise, the use of Teochew is more prevalent in family and daily life domains compared to its application in school and workplace settings for communication among same Teochew variety speakers. In contrast, communication between sub-communities exhibits a more balanced distribution across the various domains explored in the study.

5. 2. Language attitude and identity

For the affective aspect of language attitude, overall, each of the three sub-communities tends to prioritize their respective variety over the other Teochew varieties. Among them, SSV is commonly regarded by the other groups as the least favored variety.

Regarding the cognitive aspect of language attitude, firstly, Downtown participants predominantly concur that their variety is the prestigious variety of Teochew, a standpoint that faces significant disagreement from the majority of Chenghai participants. Certain members of Chenghai and the South Shore sub-communities attribute prestige to their respective varieties. Additionally, there is acknowledgment of the Fucheng variety as prestigious among some participants. Generally, participants harbor neutral or positive impressions of the Teochew varieties. Nevertheless, a discernible aversion toward SSV speech is evident in the data. Individuals may adopt DTV strategically to mitigate the risk of forming negative impressions among members of other sub-communities. Stereotypes about Chenghai members tend to be predominantly positive, while those about the South Shore population often lean toward negative perceptions. Impressions of Downtown individuals are more evenly distributed, with Chenghai participants expressing more negative stereotypes of them and the South Shore offering more positive views.

Last but not least, for the behavioral facet, overall, the overwhelming majority of participants concur that Teochew people should primarily communicate with one another in Teochew rather than in Standard Mandarin. This is also the case for communication among sub-communities. It is noteworthy, however, that fewer participants of DTV and CHV prefer exclusive Teochew conversations when interacting with speakers of SSV. Moreover, most participants have marked the significance of preserving the dialect by promoting the increased use of Teochew.

It can be asserted that the Teochew language is seen by the people as a symbol of their Teochew identity, which is in accordance with prior research [Huang, Fang, 2021]. Certain members of the sub-communities do exhibit a stronger sub-regional identification than that of the all-embracing Teochew identity. Among the three sub-communities, members of the South Shore display the highest eagerness in asserting their own sub-regional identity.

5. 3. Mutual intelligibility of DTV, CHV, and SSV

Primarily, DTV and CHV exhibit a high degree of mutual intelligibility; but their speakers face increased difficulty in understanding SSV, and this is the case particularly for CHV participants. SSV participants demonstrate a slightly better understanding of DTV compared to CHV. DTV appears to be more easily understood by speakers of CHV and SSV upon first encounters, while SSV proves to be the more challenging for the others to comprehend. Overall, DTV participants better comprehend CHV than

SSV, CHV understand DTV better than SSV, and, SSV speakers understand DTV better than CHV participants. There is a greater challenge for speakers of CHV and SSV to understand each other compared to their understanding of DTV. It can be inferred from the data the degrees of mutual intelligibility among these three varieties. CHV and SSV are close to the two opposite extremes of the dialect continuum, while DTV is situated in the middle, leaning slightly toward where CHV is located.

6. Implications and limitations

This study does not aspire to provide a comprehensive sociolinguistic description of the entire Chaoshan region and is subject to certain limitations. Primarily, the data were collected from specific participants from the major city of Chaoshan: Shantou, and the proportion of participants studied is sub-optimal. Secondly, participants' age range could be expanded to cover individuals over the age of 60 as well as teenagers and children. Moreover, the presence of monodialectal and multidialectal populations complicates and poses challenges to the sociolinguistic research in the region. Ultimately, the data illustrates that individuals from the South Shore, or SSV participants, are prone to encountering less amicable judgments and, at times, subtle forms of discrimination from other sub-communities. The intriguing nature of these phenomena extends to the perspectives held by both the South Shore population and their counterparts of other sub-communities.

It is advisable to conduct future research which includes a broader geographical as well as age range to delve into nuances and either corroborate or challenge the existing findings. Examining the population that speaks multiple Teochew varieties and addressing disadvantaged or targeted sub-communities will provide valuable perspectives for a comprehensive examination of Chaoshan's language situation.

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