Char Siu is Better Than Guanxi? Identity in Hong Kong English

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Abstract—**Indigenized English varieties in Asia such as Singlish and Hong Kong English have attracted considerable attention amongst both scholars and the local public. Unlike Singlish which is widely accepted by Singaporeans, the local attitude towards Hong Kong English is more complicated. This paper explores the ideologies of Hong Kong English through a discussion of empirical surveys, and a case study about the word *guanxi* engaging analysis of media reports, complaint letters, and corpus data. Recent negative responses to the inclusion of *guanxi* as a Hong Kong English word in the Oxford English Dictionary suggest that the distinctiveness from the mainland is highlighted in Hong Kong identity, which Hongkongers want to be reflected in Hong Kong English. This paper shows that the perception of Hong Kong English reflects and is influenced by the construction of local identity, oriented to instrumental, cultural, and social aspects, which is fluid and dynamic given the changing social and political environment.**

Index Terms—**Hong Kong English, Guanxi, identity.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Authorities such as the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) constantly expand their scope. With the addition of hundreds of new entries each year, many local words become global and legitimized. Among the recent entries of OED, there are novel words in keeping with contemporary social changes such as the political neologism *Brexit* (Dec 2016) and initialisms in digital communications such as *MOOC* (Jun 2016). We also see that food vocabulary, especially exotic Asian cuisine, dominate the new entries; for example, *Afghan biscuit* (Jun 2016, N.Z.), *mofongo* (Jun 2016, Puerto Rico), *maitake, matcha* (Jun 2016, Japan), *soju* (Jun 2016, South Korea), *char siu* (Mar 2016, Singapore, Hong Kong), *milk tea* (Mar 2016, Hong Kong). A new feature has also been added in Oxford English online dictionary in 2016 that vernacular expressions are supplied with pronunciations of the most relevant local variety of English including Caribbean English, Singapore English, Hong Kong English (HKE), and so on. OED thereby endorses the official status of some world Englishes and codifies them. English is apparently evolving fast along with globalization and claiming its status as the world language with its up-to-date inclusion and worldwide assimilation.

OED's 2016 March release included a series of words from Hong Kong. When I explored the local media's attitude towards these HKE words by examining the relevant coverage of mainstream newspapers in Hong Kong, an interesting phenomenon arose that most news articles cast doubt on one particular HKE word, *guanxi* (introduced below), while tending to accept the others (e.g. *char siu*, Chinese barbecue pork). Is *char siu* better than *guanxi* as a HKE word?

> *Guanxi: 'the system of social networks and influential relationships which facilitate business and other dealings in China'* [1].

By examining the use of this controversially claimed HKE word *guanxi*, this essay discusses the ideologies that are at the root of the controversy, which ultimately leads to a discussion of aspects of identity. Methodologically anchored in analysis of media reports, complaint letters, and corpus data, this study reflects on the subtle attitude of the local public towards Hong Kong English, drawing on the changing socio-political context in Hong Kong. Through a small case study around *guanxi*, we may gain insights into the social nature of language and better understand the complexity and dynamism of language issues in multilingual societies.

We draw on existing literature to outline, firstly, the global context of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and secondly, ideologies relating to postcolonial Englishes. Then the linguistic profile of Hong Kong, especially Hong Kong English, is introduced.

A. English as the Global Lingua Franca

The worldwide spread of English in various domains has been unprecedented for any other language hitherto [2]. While its global diffusion can be traced back to imperialism and colonialism, the main contributor thereof in 21st century relates closely to globalization [3].

During the dying decades of the British empire when conquerors of prairie, veldt and outback had retreated into their comfort zone, their legacy, the English language, continued to grow apace. The continuation of English was largely maintained by migration and organic growth of Anglophone diaspora communities in North America and Australasia, whereas in Asia and Africa it was spread by English-medium schooling or informal contact [4]. While the former 'overseas cousins of Britain' were included in the Inner Circle of English communities in Kachru's concentric circles model (1985) [5], the African and Asian cases were mostly located in the Outer Circle where English is the second language and one of the official languages.

The high status of English in non-migration-based areas is explained by its economic and cultural functions in the world arena [6]. Globalization featured new communication and transportation technologies, which tremendously contributed to information mobility and human migration. English, geographically widely distributed with economically strong

speakers, was conveniently fitted in the role of common language for global communication. It is manifested not only in business processes, but also in political, technological, and academic domains. English is the most frequently used working language or procedural language in international organizations including the EU and the UN, the required language for major academic journals, the default language in IT, etc. In a word, English facilitates communication among leaders, scholars and scientists across the world. Such crucial roles make English imperative for access to scientific, technological resources and a valuable asset in one's linguistic repertoire. English, though a foreign language in the Expanding Circle, has therefore drawn a lot of attention, especially in education. It was due to the use of English among speakers from different L1s that its role of lingua franca was confirmed [2].

Although English has a remarkably coherent print standard, it is highly diverse in terms of its territories and functions [7]. Language change coincides with the emergence of stabilized English bilingual speech communities in Outer and Expanding Circles. An account of English in those contexts can no longer be separated from the other languages with which it has interacted. Apart from phonological variations, lexical items, pragmatic uses, morphological elements, and syntactic structures of other languages may be borrowed or transferred into English, resulting in English(es) sui generis such as Nigerian English, Indian English, and Singapore English. Though often criticized as bad English, they are simultaneously modelled as a new stage of the evolution of English.

B. Ideologies in Postcolonial English

Since the modern era English was standardized and codified, monumentally by OED in the late 19th century, which was considered as an important resource to unify national identities [3]. So was the Merriam-Webster's American English dictionary. Published shortly after America's independence, it was a linguistically decolonizing gesture and a pioneer that built authority of a local variety of English.

While the national unity ideology had its roots in the concept of native language or mother tongue in above two cases of Inner Circle, it hardly seemed to suit the justification for the formally institutionalized existence of English in some other postcolonial societies. A well-articulated conception has been linguistic imperialism [8], [9], focusing on the extension of western, especially Anglo-American, dominance and cultural hegemony. Another approach, more utilitarian in nature, interpreted postcolonial Englishes (PCE) as an instrument for diverse constituencies, and emphasized its potential of recreating multicultural identity [6]. Linguistic imperialism tends to underestimate what the wide range of bilingual speakers are imparting to PCE. Elements of language can be refashioned to accommodate social and political purpose. Analogous to feminists' effort to alter sexist language [10], the nativization or indigenization of English in Africa and Asia was conducive to distancing PCE from colonial language. Indigenized varieties of English, contrary to exonormative varieties, can be conceived in the postcolonial time frame as an overthrow of external colonial rule.

The concept of nativization in fact employs the same idea as the national unity ideology by making local people the native speakers of the new English(es). It nevertheless tends to exaggerate the local agency in developing the contact language.

The use of English in these postcolonial societies is subtle and complex. The homogenized standard English and local variety usually co-exist. For example, Singlish is increasingly stabilized in spite of the local government's attempts to impose the standard variety. English in Singapore is valued for its economic and instrumental use, and is appropriated in interethnic communication internally [11]. Alsagoff's glocalization model [11] allows more fluidity and hybridity in interpreting PCE in which the standard code and the indigenized code opted for global and local oriented discourses respectively are at the two ends of a continuum for speakers.

PCE in the Outer Circle on the one hand may be associated with colonialism, imperialism, and western hegemonic culture, while on the other hand it may indicate aspirations to development, involvement in the international community, and recreation of cultural identity. Language ideology is fluid and multidimensional. The following section reviews the demographics, language policy and practice in Hong Kong from a diachronic perspective, which lays the foundation for the discussion of HKE.

C. The Language Situation in Hong Kong

Hong Kong's linguistic status has received detailed study since the late 20th century when it was the durable Crown Colony. In Luke and Richards' (1982) survey [12], Hong Kong was a type of "diglossia without bilingualism" and English was merely an auxiliary language with restricted functions. Over a decade after the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China in 1997, Li (1999) gave an update on the previous survey and found out that Hong Kong was becoming a "polyglossia with increasing bilingualism" and that English as a value-added language had overshadowed Chinese [13]. Within these 18 years the language situation in Hong Kong had dramatically changed, even though the new language policy had only recently been initiated. The 1980s and 1990s were a period when many educated and professional Hong Kong people, in fear of political instability, migrated to western countries [14]. It was also a period when the majority (around 60%) of its Chinese population was born in Hong Kong [4], the social infrastructure was improving, and the service-oriented economy prevailed [15].

After the Handover, the overall language policy of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government has been "Biliteracy and Trilingualism", referring to the use of two written languages of English and standard Chinese, and three spoken languages of English, Cantonese, and Mandarin. More specifically in the domain of education, the Mother Tongue policy went into effect so that most English-medium secondary schools switched to Chinese as a medium of instruction, providing 9 years' free compulsory education conducted in Chinese. The educated middle class were not pleased about the retreat of English, the

very presence of which distinguished Hong Kong from other parts of China and East Asia in these elites' eyes [16]. It was mainly due to robust parental pressure that the Mother Tongue policy was ended after 10 years. Accordingly, the Fine-tuning policy allowing more flexibility in teaching modes was released, which essentially raised the use of English as medium-of-instruction in secondary schools. Parents' insistence on English medium in secondary schools was largely driven by the fact that six out of eight government-funded universities in Hong Kong are officially English medium and the remaining two adopt English and Chinese bilingual policy or trilingual if counting English, Mandarin and Cantonese [17]. English proficiency, therefore, serves as a gatekeeper for higher education and indirectly for careers in business, government, law, and academia.

It has now been 20 years since the Handover. Cantonese, Mandarin[1] and English have all been incorporated into local citizens' oral linguistic repertoire. According to the latest government report published in 2016, 95.6% of all persons aged 6 to 65[2] perceived their language competence in Cantonese as average or above, and the corresponding figures are 65.8% and 64.9% for Mandarin and English respectively (see Fig. 1, data from Census and Statistics Department of HKSAR). In terms of actual use, Cantonese still predominates over communications among families and friends in daily life as well as clients and colleagues at work. It is fairly reasonable given that 88.1% reported that Cantonese is their mother tongue. Mandarin with slightly higher rate of perceived competency, however, is less frequently used than spoken English in daily life or at work. These figures manifest the rise of bilingualism from elite bilingualism in Luke and Richards' time to common bilingualism or even trilingualism nowadays. The formation of a bi(multi)lingual speech community is key to the language change of indigenization, according to Brutt-Griffler (2002)'s macroacquisition framework [6].
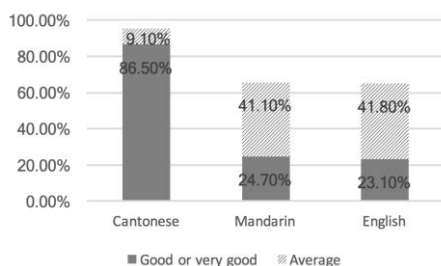

Fig. 1. Perceived language competency among all persons aged 6 to 65.

The need for learning or further studying standard English is still significant in workplaces. Among employees aged 15 to 65 who indicated the necessity of improving written language skills for the sake of work (37.0%), 91.8% expressed their willingness to learn English [18]. Similarly, among those who claimed to need spoken language training (40.1%), 73.3% went for spoken English [18]. These figures suggest their linguistic insecurity in the use of English in workplaces where English is subject to exogenous norms.

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[1] Mandarin refers to Standard Mandarin or Putonghua in this article.
[2] Excluding persons with speech and hearing difficulty.

II. THE PARADOX OF HONG KONG ENGLISH

Although Cantonese is most frequently used in Hong Kong, English is integrated into a myriad of aspects of Hong Kong life especially in an era of mass English-medium education. The crucial role of English in the domains of education and the workplace makes Hong Kong an ideal habitat for developing an indigenized variety. The distinct Cantonese-flavored English accent together with anglicized Cantonese vocabulary and code-switching has long been the main characteristics of English spoken by the majority in Hong Kong. HKE varies among individuals on a continuum in which one end is close to standard English and the other involves much more localized features [19]. In other words, the HKE heard among vendors at a wet market or an open-air bazaar is highly likely to differ from HKE used among local university students. Apart from inter-speaker variation, HKE can exhibit context-related intra-speaker stylistic variation: the HKE used in chit chat with friends may be different from its counterpart addressed to professors in lectures.

In recent years HKE has attracted a lot of attention in the literature in light of research on Englishes used in other post-colonial societies. The scholarship regarded local varieties of English as concomitants of the globalization of English, usually characterized by L1-influenced phonology and lexical borrowings. The L1 elements at various levels tend to provide intrinsic access to local identity, which was the main argumentation for justifying indigenized Englishes. The burgeoning HKE literature ranges from analysis of phonetic, phonological, syntactic and semantic aspects of HKE (e.g. [20], [15]) to sociolinguistic topics (e.g. [21], [22]) and educational and pedagogical discussions (e.g. [23]). Cummings and Wolf's *A dictionary of Hong Kong English: words from the fragrant harbor* [24], though not as authoritative as other lexicographic works such as OED, was a milestone in scholarly attempts to give HKE the status of an autonomous variety. The compilation of local reference work is one of Butler (1997)'s five criteria for defining world Englishes [25] and the barometer of the fourth phase endonormative stabilization of Schneider's Dynamic Model (2007) on the evolution of PCE [26].

Notwithstanding HKE has attracted considerable scholarly interest, it is not on a par with other Asian English varieties such as Indian English, Singapore English, and Philippine English, which have been well-established and widely accepted over the past decades ([20], [21]). HKE has not yet been well accepted by Hong Kong people, analogous to the 'linguistic self-hatred' phenomenon in Labov (2006)'s observation on the New York accent [27]. In a recent language attitude study [23], English with heavy HKE features, described as Hong Kong Broad Accent, was perceived most negatively in terms of both status and solidarity among three standard varieties from the Inner Circle, two alien, unfamiliar varieties, and two relevant Asian varieties including Mainland China English and Filipino English. English with light HKE features, termed as Hong Kong Educated Accent, was perceived more positively than Hong Kong Broad Accent, but less positively than Inner Circle varieties, and surprisingly, the Mainland China variety. Zhang (2014)'s study [23] was consistent with Sung (2014)'s investigation [22] showing that a native-like English accent is

associated with positive self-image in Hong Kong. As Sung (2014) suggested, "a deterministic relationship between accent and identity among users of ELF is not tenable" [22]. HKE tends to be more of a stigmatized variety associated with lack of education or failure in language learning than a congenial variety that expresses a unique local identity.

The above cited empirical studies provided valuable insights into current local attitudes towards HKE, but a common drawback was that their informants were all university students. Those relatively well-educated young people, who grew up under the new language policy, were thought to be most tolerant of HKE [23]. Yet they could also be most conservative over standard English, the norm they subscribed to for years in schools, since long apprenticeship "gives you an inbuilt incentive to defend its practices" [10]. Especially for those students who have mastered the standard code, positive evaluation comes from a sense of achievement that implies learning gift or persistent efforts, which further translated into intelligence and diligence, cultural traits highly valued in Chinese culture.

Accompanying the reluctance to accept HKE, there are discourses of deteriorating English standards in Hong Kong if looking at worrying online news articles [28], which encourage consolidating education for standard English. Under the pressure of Hong Kong's complaint tradition on falling standards of English [20], the government invested a huge amount of money in English education and has introduced the Native English Speaker scheme [29] for over 15 years. The following sections examine discourses of HKE brought up by OED's updates, and analyze the language ideologies by drawing on miscellaneous evidence around a particular controversial HKE word *guanxi*.

III. THE BAFFLING CASE OF GUANXI IN HONG KONG

In May 2016, major newspapers reported on OED's list of new Hong Kong English words: *char siu, siu mei, milk tea, yum cha, dai pai dong, wet market, sitting-out area, kaifong, lucky money, shroff, sandwich class, compensated dating,* and *guanxi*.

Table I summarizes the comments in relevant coverage by each newspaper. It includes three articles from *Wen Wei Po*, two from *Apple Daily* and *Sing Tao*, and one from the rest in the table. In addition, content analysis was performed and newspapers were labelled with positive, neutral, and doubting attitudes towards HKE words. A typical neutral article introduces and describes those new words without much subjective evaluation.

From Table I, most of the mainstream newspapers kept a neutral or positive tone, focusing on reporting the meaning and word formation of these words. These words mostly relate to facets of local life, culture, and social phenomena. For instance, there are local food names such as *char siu, siu mei* and *milk tea,* and also aspects of eating culture such as *yum cha, dai pai dong* and *wet market*. Such an inclusion was viewed positively as a gateway to Hong Kong culture for foreigners and as a sign of internationalization. The media tend to have an affinity for these English words with the local flavor, but they do have concerns for the intelligibility thereof. *Apple Daily* indicated that even internationals with

some experience in Hong Kong had little clue of what these HKE words mean having conducted several random informal interviews. On the other hand, the media identified two main ways of forming a HKE word, i.e. loanwords of Romanized Cantonese and English compounds chiefly used in Hong Kong. Consequently, the only loanword of Mandarin *guanxi* drew the attentions of the media and was particularly mentioned in four newspapers.

TABLE I: A SUMMARY OF HONG KONG MAJOR NEWSPAPERS' COVERAGE OF OED'S INCLUSION OF HKE WORDS

Newspaper	Language	Attitude	Remarks
Oriental Daily News	Chinese	Neutral	(exclamation mark used for HKE) - *Guanxi* is a Mandarin word.
Apple Daily	Chinese	Positive	- HKE is unintelligible to even English native speakers. - HKE implies the rise of indigenousness/ local awareness. - HKE has authentic local flavor. - HKE helps foreigners to know more about HK.
Ming Pao	Chinese	Neutral/ positive	- HKE has local flavor. - Half of the list is food-related. - *Guanxi* is a Mandarin word.
Sing Tao	Chinese	Positive	- Brits for Hong Kong (a group) writes to OED that "*guanxi* is not a HK word". - *Guanxi* is a Mandarin word. - *Guanxi* represents (Mainland) Chinese way of doing business; their special social system and reciprocal relations.
Wen Wei Po	Chinese	Positive	- HKE is Hongkongers' honor. - HKE matches with HK's status as the oriental food center. - HKE indicates east-west cultural exchange. - HKE manifests globalization and internationalization of HK. - HKE helps foreigners know more about Chinese culture and even learn Cantonese. - These new HKE words can be included in schools, enriching their use.
Headline daily	Chinese	Neutral	- *Guanxi* is a Mandarin word.
Hong Kong Economic Journal (ejinsight)	English	Neutral	- Non-speakers of HKE may find it hard to follow. - Editor's note: *guanxi* is a Putonghua word.
South China Morning Post	English	Neutral	- Food-related terms dominated the list.
China Daily Hong Kong Edition	English	Doubting	- HKE never challenges the rules and structure of English. - HKE represents decentralized imperialism of English. - HK food names represent the stylistic trend toward exoticism.

As the only national[3] newspaper published in Hong Kong, it seems not surprising for China Daily to have a different voice. Its article was published in the Hong Kong Comment section taking an imperialist's perspective:

"Different places naturally have different ways of roasting pork (*char siu*), and it is absolutely natural that locals will have different names for the dishes. As such, these Hong Kong food names represent the stylistic trend toward exoticism, nothing more, nothing less. The OED's inclusion of Hong Kong words is representative of an advanced form of decentralized imperialism." [30]

While China Daily's article reflected on what is essentially HKE, and was oriented to exoticism and decentralized imperialism, some active readers and groups have written letters to OED asserting what is not HKE, namely, the word *guanxi*. The following TABLE II summarized the main

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[3] The only mainland newspaper published with a Hong Kong edition.

opinions in the letters.

From the letters, their attitudes towards OED's inclusion was generally very positive. Words encoded with positive emotion (e.g. *glad, thrilled, happiness*, and *encouraging*) were used in the letters. Similar to the view in most newspapers, the letters associated HKE words with local knowledge and culture, and expressed gratitude to OED's inclusion which contributed to the global recognition and spread of Hong Kong culture.

TABLE II: A SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT LETTERS

Attitudes towards OED's inclusion of HKE	Evidence against *guanxi* as a HKE word
Pleased: positive affective words such as *glad, thrilled, happiness* and *encouraging* are used in the letters.	Linguistic perspective: – Formation: *guanxi* is a Mandarin loanword instead of a Cantonese word – Usage: not used in daily life by the majority of Hongkongers; Cantonese pronunciation is "*guaan hai*"
Appreciated / Grateful: – It contributes to informing the world about HK – It represents the global recognition of HK's unique culture – It shows the global use of HK words	Sociocultural perspective: – Origin: *guanxi* originates from social values in mainland China – History: *guanxi* does not work out in Hong Kong's business environment which was guided by the British colonial government – Institution: *guanxi* associating corruption contrasts values protected by HK Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) – Repercussion: *guanxi* as HKE essentially gives rise to political outcry
	Hong Kong characteristics and values: **no guanxi** – High respect for rules and regulations – Justice and fairness

The letters built up their argument that *guanxi* is not a HKE word mainly from two aspects: linguistic and socio-cultural evidence. The linguistic evidence relates to its form of a Mandarin Pinyin [4] and its Mandarin pronunciation which results in little use in daily life. With regard to the sociocultural aspect, *guanxi* has a negative connotation of nepotism and corruption (demonstrated below, emphases mine), from which Hongkongers intend to keep a distance in order to polish up their business culture.

"…**rule-evading workarounds** like *guanxi* (**exploitation** of personal relationships) and **bribery** are prevalent among wealthier men…" [31]

Corresponding positive values such as high respect for rules and justice were reiterated, and interestingly, the institution Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) was mentioned in the letters to emphasize the monitored and transparent business environment in Hong Kong. *Guanxi*, Mandarin in form, is naturally a representation of Mainland China, which seems to easily trigger the politicized reading. The reference of British colonial government and ICAC accentuates the contrast with Mainland China, highlighting Hong Kong's unique history and governance system. The sociocultural evidence in the complaint discourse tends to open the ideological discussion of Hong Kong against the background of Mainland China.

The following section first examines the use of the word

guanxi in the Hong Kong context and then accounts for the discrepancy in scholarly evidence and local acceptability.

A. The Use of Guanxi in Hong Kong: Indicator of Economic Role

Less straightforward than other native Cantonese words such as *char siu*, the labelling of *guanxi* with a Mandarin origin as a HKE word seemed to be displeasing to some people. As suggested in the letters, *guanxi* in Mandarin pronunciation is scarcely used in street talk or casual talk in daily life. While the data examining oral use of *guanxi* is hardly available, this study made use of two corpora, the Global Web-based English (GloWbE) corpus and the corpus of News on the Web (NOW), to investigate the use of *guanxi* in web-based materials including blogs, newspapers, magazines, and company websites. The high level of digitization nowadays has made web materials a rich pool for written languages. The GloWbE corpus released in 2013 contains 1.9 billion words of web-based texts from 20 countries [5] and NOW is currently a 4.3-billion-word corpus of online English newspapers and magazines that maintains a daily update since 2010. These two up-to-date corpora contain a Hong Kong section, which allow us to explore web English use in Hong Kong.

Table III displays the frequency information of *guanxi* in the two corpora. Since the total size of the web materials in each region is different, standardized frequency is shown under the column of 'Per million'. The standardized frequencies are ranked in descending order, and the top 6 regions are listed. It is apparent that *guanxi* is predominantly used in Hong Kong, followed by Singapore. It is also used in economically strong Inner Circle countries such as Australia, the United States, United Kingdom and Canada.

TABLE III: THE FREQUENCY OF *guanxi* IN GloWbe AND NOW

	GloWbE Corpus			NOW Corpus (until 3rd May 2017)		
		Raw Frequency	Per million		Raw Frequency	Per million
1	Hong Kong	146	3.61	Hong Kong	23	1.33
2	Singapore	17	0.40	Singapore	20	0.16
3	Australia	30	0.20	Malaysia	15	0.15
4	UK	31	0.08	Australia	33	0.10
5	Ireland	7	0.07	US	63	0.08
6	US	19	0.05	Canada	45	0.08
	Total	262			266	

TABLE IV: FREQUENT COLLOCATES OF *guanxi* IN GloWbE AND NOW

GloWbE Corpus		NOW Corpus (until 3rd May 2017)	
Frequent Collocates Span:4; Direction: left/right	Raw Frequency	Frequent Collocates Span:4; Direction: left/right	Raw Frequency
Chinese/China	44	Chinese/China	30
connection(s)	40	good	19
relationship(s)	32	network(s)	19
network(s)/networking	23	connections	16
personal	15	importance/important	15
build/building	13	relationship(s)	14
emphasis	9	personal	6
practice	8	build	5
concept	6	resources	5
importance	5	form	5

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[4] The official Romanization system for Standard Chinese in Mainland China.

[5] The 20 countries or regions include United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Hong Kong, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Jamaica. (From http://corpus.byu.edu/glowbe/)

Table IV lists the frequent collocates of *guanxi* within the span of 4 words on both the left and right sides. It co-occurs the most with *Chinese* or *China*, where *guanxi* originates, and is often patterned with its synonyms such as *connections*, *networks,* and *relationships*, which serve the function of explaining its meaning in an article. Words indicating its significance such as *emphasis* and *importance* are also often patterned with *guanxi*.

Within the Hong Kong section, this study examines the metadata of concordances of *guanxi*, which represent the domains and macro-context in which the word frequently occurs. Table V, for example, summarizes the website information and article titles of the texts that contain the word *guanxi*. Websites containing at least two instances of *guanxi* are included in Table V.

TABLE V: METADATA OF GUANXI IN HONG KONG SECTION IN GLOWBE

Website	Frequency	Article Title
raineight.com *(Western marketing firm specializing China marketing)*	79	China: Cultural insights for business success – Part 1: Introduction – Part 3: Guanxi – Part 4: Mianzi – Part 5: On the ground
thinkingchinese.com *(Introducing modern China to foreign readers)*	17	Slang term – 'Guan erdai'
		Preference of a son - A tendency preserved mainly by women?
		Guanxi and Amauru, the driving force of social interactions in China and Japan?
chinabusinessservices.com *(UK consultancy specializing China business services)*	4	Villains, villas and mistresses. Corruption in China
		Briefly…Top Ten Tweets (From Sponsors, Millionaires & Acquisitions, To IP, Corruption & Holiday Reads)
		China bets on black (stone)
chinalegalblog.com *(China-related news and blog posts that pertain to China's latest laws and regulations)*	4	Trust but verify, or paranoia won't destroy you
cefc.com.hk *(French center for research on contemporary China)*	4	Sexual cultures in East Asia. The Social construction of sexuality and sexual risk in a time of AIDS
		Obedient autonomy. Chinese intellectuals and the achievement of orderly life.
thefragranthabour.blogspot.com *(A Hong Kong Journalist's blog)*	3	China's daunting challenges ahead when cultivating guanxi fails
en.prnasia.com *(UK registered company providing communication and marketing services globally; blogging communications topics in Asia)*	2	101 things about China – #4 – Why we Weibo
marketingtochina.com *(Marketing agency for China market)*	2	Food in China
		Top 10 rules for doing business in China
hkgirltalk.com	2	Jumping queue in subways: Comparison of the Chinese and Hong Kong People
biglychee.com *(A review of a drama inspired by pro-democracy march in 2003)*	2	A review of high degree of atrocity
sinolicious.com *(A forum for expats in China sharing opinions on life in China)*	2	Shanghai laowai is the worst in China
51voa.com *(Voice of America updates)*	2	The economics report in special English

Guanxi is mainly used in three types of discourse in Hong Kong: business persuasion, cultural insights, and social critique. It is most frequently used in the business persuasion discourse, which comprises texts demonstrating practices in China market for western companies, or providing them advice on business services in China. The cultural insights

discourse consists of texts that introduce Chinese culture to foreigners and that assemble foreigners' opinions of cross-cultural experiences in China. Lastly the social critique discourse reflects journalists' interpretation of *guanxi* in Chinese social events. The main readership of the *guanxi* discourse tend to be foreigners or westerners, especially business investors and executives who are interested in extending or enhancing businesses in China.

Given the risk of being incomprehensible for readers, the form of *guanxi* is still retained in these texts to signal its Chinese origin and to highlight its distinctiveness, that is, the locally adapted concept of human connections. By borrowing the word, the consultancy based in Hong Kong demonstrates their knowledge about China so as to increase the persuasiveness of the texts. The use of *guanxi* in Hong Kong web materials manifests the economic role that Hong Kong plays in the contemporary globalized world: it is branded as a gateway into the immense but unfamiliar China market for foreign investment and trade. It indeed corresponds with the reality that Hong Kong is hitherto the largest foreign investment source of Mainland China and has been a popular staging post for a lot of foreign or multinational companies to manage their business in the Asia Pacific, particularly Mainland China [32].

If the cliché talk of *guanxi* is often used as a branding strategy for Hong Kong business elites, it seems an eligible candidate of a Hong Kong English word. Why then has it become the focus of complaints? The following section probes Hong Kong's socio-political context diachronically.

B. Rejecting Guanxi: The Distinctiveness from the Mainland

In the late 19th and early-mid 20th century, Hong Kong's population mainly consisted of transients and a small portion of settlers [4]. The former group comprising largely of British colonists, Chinese businessmen in urban Hong Kong and Mainland China refugees of the Sino-Japanese war and Chinese civil wars greatly outnumbered the latter, the indigenous communities whose livelihood depended on fishing and farming. During this calamitous war period, Hong ('*fragrant*') Kong ('*harbor*'), as its very name indicated, was a geographically and psychologically safe harbor for those Chinese exiles and transients who were still concerned by their beloved hometown in Greater China, or who aspired to the Gold Fields of California or Victoria.

In mid-late 20th century, the second generation of sojourners and refugees has significantly changed the local demographics in which the locally-born Chinese became the majority. The Nationalism ideology inspired them to strive for the status of local language Chinese (Cantonese). Simultaneously, the notorious Peter Godber [6] Bribery Scandal resulted in an anti-corruption movement and the establishment of ICAC in 1974. A distinctive local identity 'Hongkongers' attached to elements such as Cantonese and incorruptibility gradually emerged. The word Hongkonger first appeared in Hong Kong Legislature Council proceedings in 1987 [33]. Subsequently there were several political events that shaped the political landscape of Hong

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[6] The chief Superintendent of the Royal Hong Kong Police Force at that time.

Kong and provoked the Mainland-Hong Kong conflicts, including the June Fourth Incident 1989 in Beijing, the July first protest 2003 in Hong Kong, the Pro-Cantonese movement 2010 in Guangzhou, and the Occupying Central/Umbrella Movement 2014 in Hong Kong, which touched on issues of democracy, freedom of speech, language use, and the electoral system.

No longer a mere harbor for transients, Hong Kong has now been an overpopulated home for around 7 million settlers. The local awareness that prioritizes local interests is inevitable. Political conflicts tend to dramatize the typical immigration problems between the mainland and Hong Kong in recent years. Mainlanders are negatively associated with 'anchor babies[7]' or maternity tourism, milk powder limits and ostentatious luxury-buyers, who have also been blamed for the overcrowded Mass Transit Railway and the rocketing rental. Their negative perception is reflected in the use of the word '*locusts*' in the media, an epithet for Mainlanders in the Hong Kong context. Accordingly, Mandarin has low social prestige in Hong Kong, despite its economic value. The preserved use of Cantonese is seen as a protection over local culture against the permeation of mainland centralized culture. The claim of refusing the use of Mandarin signals the distinctiveness of Hong Kong vis-à-vis the mainland. As Deborah Cameron [10] wrote, "the social analogue of a 'breakdown in communication' is a breakdown in cultural and political consensus, the eruption into public discourse of irreconcilable differences and incommensurable values." The rejection of *guanxi* as HKE, therefore, is the rejection of mainland influence in Hong Kong language use and business culture, which implies the political breakdown with the mainland and the rise of local awareness since the Handover.

IV. Hong Kong English in Dilemma: The Construction of Unique Identity

Against the multilingual linguistic landscape in Hong Kong, HKE, still a stigmatized spoken variety, is more socially acceptable in terms of its lexis. The way that Hongkongers evaluate HKE tends to reflect and relate to the utilitarian, cultural, and social aspects of their identity.

In professional and educational domains, English is deeply entrenched, which gives Hong Kong an advantage over other cities in Asia in engaging in international business and trade. The lack of enthusiasm for the HKE accent tends to relate to the concern for intelligibility as indicated in Zhang (2014)'s study [23]. Such a concern is determined by the service-oriented nature of Hong Kong's economy and its internationalized base of clients. Intelligibility is key to effective and efficient communication and thus critical to an individual' career prospects. This explains why the widespread standard accent has gained considerable prestige. The stigmatization of the HKE accent also relates to social class in that the lower class has limited capability of acquiring English-teaching resources in which standard English is the model. Such linguistic prejudice surfaces with

class and mobility concerns, similar to the UK [34], which explains why the Mainland English (ME) accent is relatively positive in Hong Kong where ME speakers tend to be new immigrants working as professionals and elite personnel [23]. Essentially, from a pragmatic point of view, HKE does not prevail over standard English in fulfilling the lingua franca function in the professional domain in Hong Kong.

The lexical dimension of HKE, unlike the phonology, is generally acknowledged (except for *guanxi*) based on the media coverage and complaint letters. It is natural and normal for the English-educated Cantonese-speaking Hongkongers to create localized and contextualized lexis to serve their communicative needs. Direct access to local culture through the localized lexis helps spread the local culture internationally. Yet the cultural aspect of HKE is rather superficial because HKE loses out to Cantonese in terms of intrinsic representation of local culture. As Choi [35] states, Chinese language, grounded in life, is the "basis for nurture of minds and for cultural construction." The Chinese language itself is an indispensable part of the local culture. This is what contrasts with the case of Singlish or Indian English, in which no single native language can represent the local culture and the English variety serves an inter-ethnic function.

Apart from Cantonese, HKE also contains loanwords from other languages such as *godown* (Malay), *shroff* (Persian via Indian English), and *praya* (Portuguese), which reflect the colonial history of Hong Kong, an integral part in forming Hong Kong culture. Similarly, loanwords from Mandarin such as *guanxi* reflect its close relationship with Mainland China economically, historically, and culturally. HKE with diverse sources can potentially be a site of multifaceted identity. While OED's HKE list has rather objectively recorded the English language change based on historical and statistical evidence, the local perception of HKE is interwoven with considerations of its social functions, cultural representativeness, and economic and political implications, especially when it is stylistically switched to and from other available linguistic codes including standard English and Cantonese. Sung (2014) indicated that arguments for identity construction are weakened if for most speakers HKE is non-volitional without much control [22]. The recent complaint discourses manifest the process of engaging HKE in local identity by viewing it as something Hongkongers created without outside norms. That the claiming of *guanxi* not being a HKE word is part of the ideology of protest against mainland influence or anti-mainlandization, flared up by political activism.

The postcolonial Hong Kong is still redefining its identity within an increasingly powerful China. The *guanxi* case shows that Hong Kong identity is partially defined in relation to the mainland, in which characteristics of respect to rules and a heightened sense of justice, cultivated since the colonial period, are marked in Hong Kong. Hong Kong identity is also defined to how Hongkongers understand possibilities in the future. Hong Kong's status as one of Asia's financial centers is attributed to not only its strategic position in the South China sea, proximity to the hinterland China, and deep-water Victoria harbor, but also the sophisticated infrastructure, low-tax regime, well-trained

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[7] A pejorative term describing that a mainland mother-to-be delivers baby in Hong Kong for the purpose of acquiring Hong Kong citizenship for the baby.

bilingual talents, and a long-established rule of law. Competition in the regional economic arena, nevertheless, is fierce among Singapore, Tokyo, and rapidly developing cities such as Shanghai, Seoul, Bangkok, etc. In order to maintain its distinctiveness, Hong Kong needs to identify its uniqueness and repackage its advantages.

V. CONCLUSION

Motivated by extra attention to the particular word *guanxi* in the media, this essay provides insights on ideologies reflected in HKE given the current socio-political context, through discussing empirical surveys and illustrating the case of *guanxi*. *Guanxi* is predominantly used in web materials in Hong Kong compared to other English-speaking countries or regions. It is frequently employed as a strategic branding device for marketing agency or consultancy oriented to foreign, especially western, investors and entrepreneurs who are interested in business in (Mainland) China. It is also used in cultural readings and social critique in which the theme is always China. The use of *guanxi* in Hong Kong is reflective of Hong Kong's economic role of being a gateway into China and culturally a window to know more about China. People's intolerance of *guanxi* as HKE reflects a desire for protection from the imposition of Mandarin in Hong Kong culture and protest against political interference by the mainland. The acquiescence of other HKE words with evident cultural associations implies the rise of local awareness. The fragrant harbor is no longer a mere stopover for transients, but a home for Hongkongers. The self-image of Hongkongers was no longer based on the elite class in the late-colonial period. In the period from post-colonial Hong Kong to HKSAR, Hongkongers have been trying to establish a unique identity with instrumental, cultural, political, and social dimensions, which is related to but distinct from Mainland China.

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