

The Social Distinctiveness of Two Code-mixing Styles in Hong Kong

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1. Introduction

1.1 Code-mixing¹ as styles of speaking

One of the major foci of sociolinguistics is the study of language practices and their social meanings. This can be seen from classic study of language and identities in Martha's Vineyard (Labov 1963, 1972) to current work on community of practice in suburban Detroit (Eckert 2000). Eckert's adolescent ethnography, for instance, demonstrates how salient phonological variations, along with other social practices such as dress and non-verbal actions, constitute group 'styles' (Eckert 2001) which are associated with participant-negotiated categories of jocks and burnouts. Individuals act in response to these essentializations: they categorize people in the community into Jocks, Burnouts or in-betweens; they identify themselves in one or more of the categories; they form ideas about how people of a particular category act; and these ideas become resources for them to act like or unlike a category and to build up their own personal styles.

Group style is the basis upon which people identify others as members of such categories as "Valley Girl" or "New York Jew" or, at a more local level, "burnout" or "hard rock." Such public naming of styles is a process of stereotyping – a reification of the named group as sufficiently constituting community to develop a joint style, and as sufficiently salient to public life to name and learn to recognize. These reifications then turn around and serve as resources for other styles – for those who may want to incorporate in their own style a bit of what they see as attractive, interesting, or striking about New York Jews or Valley Girls (Eckert 2001: 123).

The process of categorizing and stereotyping also occurs in bilingual situations when different ways of using code-mixing and borrowing constitute contrasting styles. Gumperz (1982: 69) notes that most bilinguals "have at least a comprehensive knowledge of usage norms other than their own, and that they can use this knowledge to judge speakers' social background and attitudes in much the same way that monolinguals use pronunciation and lexical knowledge in assessments of social status." A bilingual is able to tell much about another person's social background from the way the other person code-mixes and uses borrowings. When a generalization is formed with reference to speakers of a particular way of speaking, the knowledge becomes a resource to which people respond.

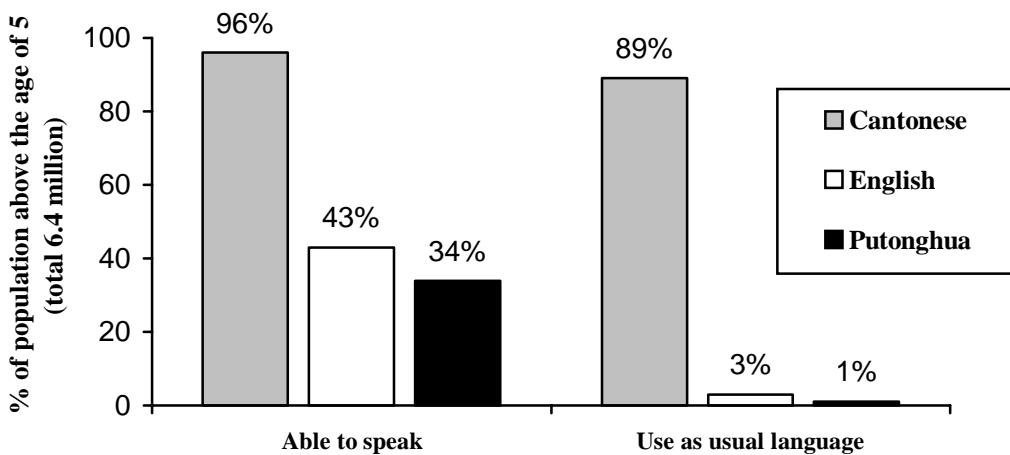
This study takes Irvine's (2001) conception of 'style' to investigate how the language practices of code-mixing in Hong Kong constitute different 'styles' of speaking, as well as how these styles index distinctive social and linguistic identities. A group style is meaningful to the social participants only when it is considered in 'a system of distinction, in which a style contrasts with other possible styles' (Irvine 2001: 22). The burnout style of speaking, for example, is a meaningful category only when it is

¹ In Muysken's (2000) framework, code-mixing refers to all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence, and code-switching refers to only the alternation type of mixing. This paper adapts Muysken's definition of using code-mixing as a more general term while code-switching as specifically referring to alternation. In the alternational type of code-mixing, however, this study uses a turn as a unit of analysis instead of a sentence.

in contrast with other styles in the system, namely of jocks and in-betweens. A particular way to code-mix can only be considered as a style of speaking when it is in contrast with other ways of speaking in a system which are meaningful to the participants. The contrast is meaningful because it helps participants to identify in-group members, in contrast to out-group people who code-mix differently or who do not code-mix at all. Hong Kong is particularly interesting because of the coexistence of distinctive code-mixing styles which index different social categories in the society. The two code-mixing styles identified in this papers seem to be related to the speakers' access to societal resources of English as well as societal ideologies of language purity, in particular purity of the Cantonese language. In order to understand how these two factors relate to how code-mixing is used and considered, it is first necessary to understand the sociolinguistic background of Hong Kong.

1.2 Sociolinguistic background of Hong Kong

Figure 1. Current societal language pattern (2001 Hong Kong Census)



Hong Kong is a multilingual society and each of the three major languages, Cantonese, English and Putonghua, carries different political, economic, social and cultural values locally. Cantonese is spoken by 96% of the 6.4 million people aged 5 and older (see Figure 1). It is the usual language used by 89% of the population and a carrier for cultural and social identification of Hong Kongness. Cantonese is the socially preferred language in Hong Kong. Speaking the Hong Kong variety of Cantonese, i.e. Cantonese with a Hong Kong accent and a Hong Kong lexicon, signifies one's status as a local person in contrast to city newcomers, who either do not speak Cantonese or do not speak with a local accent and lexicon. English is spoken by 43% of the population, but only 3% use it as their usual language. English is economically and socially valued in Hong Kong, making a key to education and career advancement, but English-only conversation is seldom found outside of its economically pragmatic contexts or in intraethnic communication for the majority of Hong Kong people. Putonghua is spoken by 34% of the population, but fewer than 1% use it as their usual language. Because of Putonghua's association with China, it has an economically pragmatic function for people who have a Chinese business connections and serves as a sign of cultural affiliation with 'the mother-land'.

The census data does not contain information about multilingualism on an individual level, but the historical context of Hong Kong's political and education development explains why mixed code speakers are mostly of the younger generation, and why they code-mix Cantonese and English but not Putonghua. For hundreds of years, *Yueyu* or Cantonese, the language of Canton city, has been the *lingua franca* and a sign of cultural unity among Guangdong people of South China who speak different dialects to varying degrees of mutual intelligibility. The situation in China changed after 1949 when the Chinese government implemented the national language policy of Putonghua. Cantonese, however, continued to flourish in colonial Hong Kong and played a crucial role in the development of

a local culture and identity. In Hong Kong, spoken Cantonese is used as a medium of instruction at the majority of schools and as a common language for communication among friends and colleagues in daily life. It is used in the media, in law courts, in the legislative and executive councils, in urban and district councils, and many government departments. This is very different from its use in China where Cantonese is a dialect for non-official use. Such a difference in the function and status of Cantonese is also partly due to the colonial government's non-interference, or even encouragement, in the continued use of Cantonese in education and in the wider context of Hong Kong society.

Hong Kong became a British colony in 1842. English, which is a key element in code-mixing, however, was not generally accessible to the public until the early 1970s. In 1972, the Hong Kong government implemented a nine-year-compulsory free education policy for children between age 6 and 14. Since then all school children in Hong Kong have had access to English as a subject, or as a medium of instruction, and the practice of Cantonese-English code-mixing has developed into a societal norm, despite the fact that mixed code is overtly and negatively criticized in the society.

1.3 Research goals

Code-mixing has been observed as a speech norm among the Hong Kong youth as early as 1979 when Gibbons reported that students at the University of Hong Kong (HKU), an English-medium university, frequently mixed English lexical items in an otherwise Cantonese conversation. Previous code-mixing studies in Hong Kong have focused on the structural constraints of code-mixing and/or on the pragmatic functions of using two codes instead of one. The code-mixing pattern studied in the literature is the common norm of speaking found amongst the younger generation in Hong Kong, and hereafter will be termed the mainstream code-mixing pattern. The mainstream pattern is characterized by having a base language in Cantonese with some English items inserted on an intrasentential level. Some linguists (such as Bolton 1994, Li 2000) note that there are other ways of mixing Cantonese and English in Hong Kong, e.g. the speech style of disc jockeys of 'FM Select'² in which there are alternations between English and Cantonese in an intersentential level. As far as I am aware, however, no detailed analysis has been done on any non-mainstream code-mixing patterns, nor has any work been done on how distinctive bilingual speech patterns index or reflect contrasting social categories and identities in Hong Kong.

This study aims to fill the current gap in the literature where non-mainstream code-mixing and its contrast with the mainstream norm is understudied. In this study, a code-mixing pattern other than the mainstream norm was found among a small group of young people who have had an extended period of overseas experience in English speaking countries. A comparative study of the linguistic patterns as well as the speakers of both styles are therefore made possible. It is a pilot and first study to identify different styles of code-mixing in Hong Kong and to examine them within a sociolinguistic framework. Code-mixing in this study is considered as a form of social practice with social meaning. The main goal, then, is to look at the way in which styles of code-mixing are used indexically to construct distinctive social and linguistic identities in Hong Kong. This paper reports some preliminary findings in the study.

1.4 Methodology

In this study four types of data were collected: (1) natural conversation recordings of the two patterns of Cantonese-English code-mixing, (2) interviews with the speakers, (3) a language attitude study with speakers of the mainstream pattern, and (4) participant observation. There are a total of 30 participants in this study, all of them are current students or recent graduates at the University of Hong Kong. These participants were either approached on campus or introduced to me via my friendship network at the university. The mainstream code-mixing speakers in this study, except two who studied abroad for a year as exchange students, receive their entire education in local government schools. The

² FM Select was a relatively short-lived radio channel (1992-2000) which was geared towards the more westernized younger generation in Hong Kong and had a reputation for recruiting overseas-educated bilingual disc jockeys.

three speakers who speak a non-mainstream code-mixing pattern when they are among themselves, have had a substantial period of time (5 to 12 years) spent overseas in English speaking countries. Two of the three non-mainstream speakers also studied in private international schools in Hong Kong when they were younger. These international schools are taught by native English speakers and follow either British or American school curriculum.

Hong Kong linguists generally distinguish between code-mixing and code-switching and match them with intrasentential code-mixing and intersentential code-switching respectively. The mainstream pattern is usually referred to as intrasentential code-mixing, while the disc jockey speech of FM Select is usually referred to as intersentential code-switching. However, I do not find this distinction useful in my own data for reasons that will become obvious. In the bilingualism literature I found Muysken's (2000) typology a suitable one to use in this study. Muysken attempts to generalize a current vast and confusing discussion of code-mixing into an economical typology. He describes three structures of code-mixing: (1) Insertion in which a single constituent B is inserted into a structure identifiable as belonging to language A. (2) Alternation in which a constituent from language A is followed by a constituent from language B. The language of the constituent dominating A and B cannot be specified. (3) Congruent lexicalization in which languages A and B share the grammatical structure, and words from both languages are inserted more or less randomly (*ibid.*: 7-8). The last type is only found between two related languages that share a lot of structural similarities; it is, however, not relevant to the data found in this study.

The structural difference of the two styles are analyzed using Muysken's (2000) typology and the findings will be described in Section 2. Section 3 discusses speakers' attitudes towards different styles of speaking.

2. The linguistic findings: structural difference of the two code-mixing styles

I recorded a total of 9.5 hours of natural conversation, 5.5 hours were the mainstream code-mixing pattern and 4 hours of non-mainstream pattern (see Appendices for details of the speakers' profile and recording settings). Among the recordings I have collected, I selected two 30-minute excerpts from the mainstream style and one 30-minute excerpt from the non-mainstream style for analysis. The mainstream style excerpts are from recording of a house party in which I selected the last 30 minutes of each side of the two-hour tape. The non-mainstream style excerpt is recorded in an afternoon-tea gathering in which I selected the last 30 minutes of side A of the first tape. Both settings are equivalent in which they are causal gathering among friends. Using Muysken's framework, I counted the number of insertions, both English and Cantonese, and the number of alternational switches that occurred in each excerpt. I aim to set out salient patterns across the excerpts but do not intend any statistical analysis because of the small sample size. The result of the comparison is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the two code-mixing patterns are clearly distinctive in their structures. The mainstream code-mixing pattern is uniformly insertional while the non-mainstream pattern includes both insertion and alternation. The number of English insertions in each of the 30-minute excerpts does not vary a great deal (34 and 39 for the mainstream code-mixing pattern and 37 for the non-mainstream one), while the non-mainstream pattern has 27 Cantonese insertions and 209 instances of alternation that the mainstream pattern does not have. The insertion used in each pattern is different as well. The insertion found in the mainstream code-mixing pattern was confined only to English insertion into Cantonese (34 and 39 items respectively) but no Cantonese is inserted into English. This is because the mainstream code-mixing excerpts have a clear dominant language, Cantonese, while it is difficult to tell which language is dominant in the non-mainstream code-mixing excerpt. The non-mainstream code-mixing excerpt includes both English insertions into Cantonese (27 items) and Cantonese insertions into English (37 items). In the remainder of this section, I will describe the characteristics of each style of code-mixing with specific examples and discuss some of the problems of classifying some cases into insertion and alternation.

Table 1. Comparison of the two styles

	The mainstream style		The non-mainstream style
	30-minute excerpt 1	30-minute excerpt 2	30-minute excerpt 3
<i>Insertion</i>			
Cantonese Insertion into English	0	0	27
English Insertion into Cantonese	34	39	37
<i>Alternation</i>			
Alternation occurs within a single turn	0	0	110
Alternation occurs across turns	0	0	99
Total	0	0	209

2.1 The mainstream style

Using Muysken’s typology, the mainstream code-mixing pattern is insertional only, and the insertion is one-way English insertion into Cantonese but not vice versa. See (1) below:

Example (1): English insertion (the mainstream code-switching style in excerpt 1 and 2)

Frank: ze m hai ngo m hang gong, ji hai ze hou lou sat gong ze e mou di
not that I don’t want to speak, that is, very honestly speaking, that is without some

moderate zung sing di get yan ze dou wui gok dak ngo hai deoi si
moderate neutral sort of people would all feel that I am speaking of the matter

m deoi jan ze o: zi gei **personally** ze o jau hou siu tai pin le ze o m wui jan
and it is not personal. I myself personally I seldom get too biased. I will not

The two English words *moderate* and *personally* are inserted into Cantonese. Note that this is a case of code-mixing but not borrowing because I found no evidence that these words have become a regular part of Cantonese. Furthermore, the speakers themselves made metalinguistic comments on this kind of speech as ‘Chinglish’ (a blend of Chinese and English) or ‘Chinese-English mix’, indicating their awareness of two codes being used. In the two 30-minute excerpts I found, respectively, 34 and 39 English items inserted into the Cantonese conversation. There are five items which are difficult to be classified because they are commonly used among many Cantonese speakers. These are *call* (verb, meaning to call a person on the phone or on a pager), *DVD*, *VCD*, *K* (short for *Karaoke*), and *O.K.*. All 5.5 hours of natural conversations I recorded among the locally raised young people proceeded in the same pattern.

2.2 The non-mainstream style

The non-mainstream code-mixing style has a more complex structure than the mainstream type. It has both insertion and alternation, and the insertion is more creative than the kinds used in the mainstream style.

Example (4):

1. Dana: ...very very nice body and her face and she look quite good as well and when
2. she told me when she told me that keoi heoi wa jan gin gung I nearly
she went for a job interview at wa jan
3. slapped her nei gam ge yeong lei heoi wa jan gin gung? nei cyun haau ge
you that face you have you went to wa jan for a job interview? You
4. laam sang wa gan zyu lei fan uk kei {laughs}
the male students of the entire school would just follow you home

In this example, the alternation between English and Cantonese occurs within a single turn. The underlined text is in Cantonese and the rest is in English. The speaker, Dana, alternates from English to Cantonese in line 2, and alternates again at the end of line 2 to English, then to Cantonese in line 3. Using Muysken's typology, this is a case of alternation and not insertion because neither the Cantonese constituents nor the English ones are inserted into the other language. Rather, it is a constituent of Cantonese followed by a constituent of English, and the dominant language is not specified. Alternation within a single turn is the most common type of alternation found in that 30-minute excerpt as over half, 110 alternations, belong to this type. The switch from one language to another can occur in high frequency within a single turn. Kelly took up the floor most of the time in the second half of the 30-minute excerpt because she was narrating an event to Dana and Rita. Kelly was in a hurry to finish her story so her speed of speaking was fast and she took up longer turns with more words in each turn than I observed in the rest of the recording. For example, in one of her turns which she uttered 396 words, she made 26 alternational switches. In other words, she switched language on an average of every 15 words in this single turn. This is not a rare case as when I counted her other longer turns, she did the same in all of them: one of her turns has 248 words and she made 10 alternations, another turn has 205 words and she made 10 alternations as well.

Alternations across turns take different forms. Example (5) belongs to this category.

Example (5):

- Dana: that I can do it too then everyone was coming every night I was that holding
mystical session in my boarding school room they just got so
- Rita: why did you chuck it I wouldn't ve chuck it if I were you so badly your life
- Dana: maai hai lo mou si gan zou kei ta ye lo
yeah (I have) no time for my own work

The example above shows that the conversation was carried out in English for two consecutive turns, but when Dana took up her second turn she initiated a switch to Cantonese. Dana's action is both a switch from her own previous turn in which she uses English, and a switch from the last adjacent turn taken by Rita in English. Dana is initiating a switch of language that is different from the conversation right before this turn. There are 24 out of 99 occurrences of this type of alternation within the 30-minute conversation.

3. Speakers' attitudes towards different styles of speaking

In the previous section, I have demonstrated that the two code-mixing patterns I found in Hong Kong are structurally distinct. In this section I will discuss some observations and preliminary findings about the speakers' attitudes towards distinctive code-mixing styles.

3.1 Non-mainstream speakers' awareness to different code-mixing patterns and their associated social stereotypes

I conducted short interviews with the three non-mainstream speakers, Dana, Kelly and Rita, after I recorded their natural conversation. All three of them were partially raised and educated overseas. Dana moved to Hong Kong from Singapore at age 12 and later went to the UK for two years for matriculation. Kelly was educated in the US for 5 years between ages 14 and 19 while Rita studied in Australia for 6 years between ages 6 and 12, then attended an English-speaking international school for secondary school education. Kelly and Rita were friends from childhood while Dana met Kelly at the University of Hong Kong, and Kelly later introduced Dana to Rita.

Dana speaks English as her first language. Kelly and Rita learned English in a native environment when they were overseas but they speak Cantonese (and for Rita, both Cantonese and Mandarin) at home. All three of them mentioned that their Chinese was not good, even for Kelly and Rita who speak Cantonese as their native language at home. They probably mean that they cannot speak Cantonese without mixing a lot of English in it. Their language background is very different from the majority of the locally raised younger generation in Hong Kong who do not have much contact with a native English-speaking environment but have learned English as a subject and/or a medium of instruction since kindergarten. However, not everyone who has an international-school-educated and overseas-educated background speak the same way. During my fieldwork I encountered a group of young people with similar background but they use only the mainstream style, including when they were talking among close friends of the same background.

During the recorded conversation, Rita, an HKU student at the time, switched to speak in the mainstream code-mixing pattern when she talked on the phone, while when she spoke to the other three of us (Dana, Kelly and me) she used the non-mainstream pattern. I asked her later in the interview if she noticed that she spoke differently from her other classmates at school and if so, why? She answered:

I blend in, and as I do so, my English degrades and my Chinese improves. I study in X department and there aren't that many people with a similar background as me, unlike in Y department [where Dana and Kelly studied] there are more of those. When I'm with them [Dana and Kelly] I can be more of myself but when I am with my friends at the university, I'm still myself but I mostly speak Chinese unless I can't. I don't want them to feel awkward. (My translation, original in Cantonese-English mixed-code).

Rita also mentioned that during her first semester at the University of Hong Kong she was very much isolated from the other classmates. 'They do not dare to approach me', she said, 'it was until I speak more Chinese and be more initiative there are more people willing to befriend with me'. Dana told me about a similar feeling that she and Kelly had at HKU. She recalled 'when I first met Kelly at school, we clicked instantly. She said to me "Oh my God! I can't believe I found someone who speak English here. Oh my God! You know how hard life has been here," and I felt exactly the same way.'³ Dana told me that at the university, students who speak more English, like they do, tend to hang out together because they do not feel that they 'fit in', though all three of them reported that they have friends 'from both kinds of backgrounds', i.e. friends who speak more English and have a similar background (having studied overseas) and friends who are 'Hong Kong people'. The attitudinal study I did later also confirms the isolated situation these three speakers experienced at the university, as only one out of 22 mainstream code-mixing speakers I asked said he is willing to be a close friend to someone who speaks like Dana and Kelly (see Section 3.2 for details). Dana said that many of her friends with a similar background ran into the same problems with 'fitting in':

I have many friends who have gone to western countries, even for those who are pure Hong Kong people, when they returned they felt that many things had changed. They no longer think the same as the ordinary Hong Kong people, and it's difficult

³ Cantonese dominated code-mixing is the norm among university students in Hong Kong, English only conversation seldom occurs in intraethnic communication. Kelly's comment addresses this phenomena on HKU campus.

to fit into the culture. These friends would talk to me because they feel that I would understand, which I do, but there is nothing you can do about it except live. You carry on, you know somehow you'll blend in again. And an example is Rita, she did very very well. [...] She really put effort in it, she really tried hard. Her Cantonese wasn't very good but she is willing to speak it, and so now she has a lot of friends. And that's why she said when she's with her Hong Kong friends she speaks more Chinese. (My translation, original in Cantonese-English mixed-code).

In short, there are a few things I observed from the interviews with these non-mainstream code-mixing speakers. First, they are aware that the way they speak is different from other students at the University of Hong Kong where they studied, and in the Hong Kong society in general. This can be seen from the comment Dana and Kelly made about having few students who speak English at HKU (on a social level), and Rita's comments about her adaptation to the speech norm of her classmates. Second, they perceive distinct social categories associated with different ways of speaking: people with a background similar to theirs, who use more English in their speech, and people such as their other classmates at HKU or Hong Kong people in general, who speak more Cantonese. Rita's conscious effort to 'blend in' by modifying her speech indicates her perception of the two categories and her willingness to break out of the category assigned to her. Third, they are aware of the negative stereotypes associated with their social background and the way they speak. Dana mentioned that some people called her a banana (a derogatory term referring to western raised Chinese, from the metaphor of a banana of yellow outside and white inside), a BBC (British born Chinese), a zuk sing (bamboo stem, one interpretation of this term is the analogy that a bamboo stem is hollow inside, referring to a western-raised Chinese who has lost one's culture and become empty inside). These observations provide a perspective from the non-mainstream code-mixing speakers which will complement the perspective of the local mainstream code-mixing speakers in the attitudinal study in the next section.

3.2 Mainstream speakers' awareness to different code-mixing patterns and their associated social stereotypes

I conducted an attitudinal study which aims at exploring language attitudes and awareness of the mainstream code-mixing speakers. The twenty-two participants are university students and recent graduates whom I approached on campus (13 out of 22) or introduced (9 out of 22) to me via friendship network. They are all speakers of the mainstream code-mixing style, i.e. they insert English into a structure of Cantonese. I asked these students to be "judges", and to listen to some audio clips and then comment on the language use and the social background of the speakers on the audio clips.

I prepared five short audio clips to be played to the judges (see Appendix 2 for the five speakers' profiles). Two of the prepared audio clips are in the mainstream code-mixing style, which involves English insertion into Cantonese (speakers Karen and Frank), and two in the non-mainstream style in which there are both insertion and alternation switches in one conversation (speakers Dana and Kelly). I extracted these four clips from the recordings I collected in natural conversation. I also included a fifth clip by a mainland Chinese speaker, Iris, who speaks Cantonese with a non-Hong Kong accent. The clip is in a mixed code in which the speaker has inserted some English items in her Cantonese speech. Iris is a graduate student at HKU introduced to me by my former colleagues. I included Iris in the study because her speech is similar to the mainstream code-mixing pattern except that her Cantonese pronunciation is non-local. In Hong Kong, speaking Cantonese with a non-local accent is associated with mainland Chinese or new immigrants from China, while speaking with too much English is associated with overseas Chinese or 'over-westernized' Hong Kong Chinese, both of which are perceived as non-local. It was my hope that including Iris's speech in the audio clips might provide some insights about Hong Kong identity and its relationship to social background. After the judges listened to the clips, I asked them a series of questions and in the following paragraphs I will present the results of three of the major questions. In this paper I will omit the result of the fifth speaker, Iris, because the category she is identified as is not part of the focus of this study.

One of the first questions I asked the judges is whether his/her own way of speaking similar to the speaker in the audio clip. The results is striking in which the judges were clearly aware of the difference in those code-mixing styles.

1. Is your own way of speaking similar or different from the speaker? (Interviewees were asked to compare all five clips before they answered this question.)

- ✓ Yes, it is similar
- ✗ No, it is different

	Mainstream code-mixing speakers		Non-mainstream code-mixing speakers	
	Karen	Frank	Dana	Kelly
Total	22 ✓ 0 ✗	17 ✓ 5 ✗	2 ✓ 20 ✗	0 ✓ 22 ✗
% of ✓	100%	77%	9%	0%

The above table shows the answers of all of the judges. The pattern is interesting in the sense that all judges consider Karen’s speech to be similar to their own, and Frank is second as the majority of the judges (17 out of 22) consider his speech as similar to their own. Though over half of the judges commented that Frank ‘uses too much English’. Although the judges themselves are code-mixing users, many perceive the use of English in Cantonese generally inappropriate. They commented, however, that many times mixing English into Cantonese is ‘unavoidable’, and speech with no English at all is ‘strange’, ‘unnatural’, and also, like using too much English, ‘pretentious’.

Dana and Kelly consistently are at the lower ends of the similarity ratings. The judges were able to identify the key features that distinguish the speech patterns of Dana and Kelly from their own. Many commented that Dana and Kelly speak much more English than the judges themselves do. Many also commented that the English accents of Dana and Kelly are ‘native-like’ which is rather unusual in Hong Kong. A few judges were able to describe the difference in more details. They noted that Dana and Kelly switch to speak a whole sentence of English instead of only inserting individual items of English into Cantonese. Their answers in the above table indicate that the judges, who are themselves speakers of the mainstream code-mixing pattern, can clearly distinguish a speech pattern that is different from their own. They might not be able to describe the linguistic difference in detail, but many of them grasped that Dana and Kelly use more English.

2. Do you have friends you usually hang out with who speak like the speaker?

- ✓ Yes, some of my friends speak like the speaker.
- ✗ No, none of my friends speak like the speaker.

	Mainstream code-mixing speakers		Non-mainstream code-mixing speakers	
	Karen	Frank	Dana	Kelly
Total	13 ✓ 0 ✗	13 ✓ 0 ✗	1 ✓ 12 ✗	0 ✓ 13 ✗
% of ✓	100%	100%	8%	0%

The answers given by the judges on this question are quite striking; only one judge has a different pattern from the rest of the judges. He has a group of friends who studied in some Hong Kong international schools whom he met in various tennis tournaments and practices since high school. They all belong to the same tennis club now. He said these friends speak like Dana but not like Kelly. He commented that Kelly speaks with an African American English accent. He also commented that Dana speaks ‘exactly’ like his sister who studied in the US since age 15. The results of this question indicate social circle formation within the university (and presumably in the society as well) in that these judges who are mainstream code-mixing speakers seem to hang out only with those who speak the same way.

3. Where do you think the speaker comes from?/Who do you think the speaker is?

In general the answers given by the judges are fairly consistent in terms of how they described the speakers. Karen and Frank are generally grouped as one type of people and are described as heung gong jan 'Hong Kong persons', while Dana and Kelly are grouped as another type and are described by various names referring to overseas Chinese.

Even though some judges started off by commenting on the voice quality of the speakers or the content of speech, once I asked them from where they thought the speaker originated, their answers became more focused. The two mainstream code-mixing speakers, Karen and Frank, are both considered as Hong Kong people by all 22 judges, though Frank was commented on somewhat negatively for using more English and having an 'ugly English pronunciation'. Because the judges were asked to answer these questions after they had listened to all five audio clips, some judges noticed the differences among the recorded speakers and modified to their descriptions to make a contrast. Instead of describing Karen and Frank as simply a 'Hong Kong person', these judges added they are 'local born and raised Hong Kong person', 'Hong Kong person from head to toe', 'typical Hong Kong youth', 'Common Hong Kong person', 'Pure Hong Kong person'. Presumably these description are given in contrast to the other three audio speakers who are not considered as Hong Kong people, or at least not as authentic as Karen and Frank. Other descriptions of Karen and Frank include 'bilingual', 'local', and 'normal'. Karen is the only person among the five speakers who is not given any negative comments and all judges consistently said they speak in a similar way to Karen. Although Frank is grouped in the same category as Karen, some judges commented that he is as 'a Hong Kong person but he is pretentious', 'a university student who tries to tell others he's a university student so he adds a lot of English [in his speech]'.

Dana and Kelly are grouped together by the majority of the judges. Some descriptions of Dana and Kelly are neutral and some are negative; most of the descriptions refer to them as overseas Chinese or Hong Kong people who once studied abroad. The neutral descriptions include 'Native speakers of English', 'someone who grew up in the west', 'mix' (Eurasian), 'back-flow⁴ who studied abroad at a young age', 'Hong Kong persons, either studied overseas or in international schools', 'Hong Kong person who studied in British-style noble schools', ABC (American Born Chinese), BBC (British Born Chinese), zuk sing ('bamboo stem'), 'overseas Chinese'. Some of the descriptions are negative: 'a person who intentionally likes to speak in English', 'pretentious', 'Bun tong faan ('half Tang half western') who is mixed and not pure', 'gwai po' (literally means 'devil woman' – a term referring to Caucasian woman in Hong Kong, depends on context it can be neutral or negative, but when it is used to describe an ethnic Chinese it is considered negative), 'gaa yoeng gwai zi' (literally means 'fake western devil's son' – a derogatory term referring to a Chinese person who pretends to be a westerner), 'sung yeong' ('worships the west'). Some judges have opinions about Dana's and Kelly's English accents. One judge said Kelly has a Singaporean accent, another said she speaks African American English. The nine judges who had the interview at my house had very diverse opinions about Dana and Kelly; they argued mainly about whether or not Dana and Kelly have studied overseas and whether they intentionally used more English for 'showing off'. Some judges think that because the Cantonese part of Dana's and Kelly's clips are in native Hong Kong accents, i.e. they sound like they are Hong Kong-raised, there was no reason for them to speak like that unless they intentionally did so to 'show off' their English. Some think that Dana's English accent is non-native while Kelly is more native-like (native in the sense of from the west), and therefore Dana is pretentious but Kelly simply cannot control how she speaks.

The description these judges gave to the speakers reveal that by listening to the speech of a person, these judges were able to fairly accurately describe the social backgrounds of the speakers. The judges' generally classified the speakers into three groups: Hong Kong person, overseas Chinese and mainlander (Iris, whose results were not included in this paper). This also shows that these judges have

⁴ The term 'back-flow' refers to returned emigrants who once moved out of Hong Kong to western countries during the 1980's and early 1990's because of the 1997 Hand-over. They were typically middle class educated professionals and their leaving of Hong Kong was described as 'brain-drain', their return as 'back-flow'.

formed an association between a particular linguistic pattern and a group of speakers, which reflects the way the judges perceive social categories in Hong Kong. The judges' comments, whether neutral or negative, reveal their perceptions about individual social categories. These perceptions are likely conditioned by cultural and social ideas about language and its speakers.

In short, the attitudinal study reveals a few things about these 22 judges, who are speakers of the mainstream code-mixing pattern: (1) They are aware of the linguistic differences between other ways of using code-mixing. (2) They are aware of the association between a particular code-mixing pattern and speakers of a particular background. (3) Their social circles are very much limited to people who speak the same way they do although they do have some contacts with people who speak differently. (4) There is a negative social attitude about the non-mainstream code-mixing pattern because of its 'excessive' use of English. (5) This negative social attitude is associated with the speakers using such speech patterns as can be seen from the negative descriptions given to Dana and Kelly. In other words, the speech pattern carries an indexical function referring to a particular social category. (6) Once this association is formed, it might have a social effect on participants of the linguistic community. In this particular case, speakers have attitudes about a particular way of code-mixing and its speakers, and their attitudes affect the way they interact with people who speak the same or differently from them.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Code-mixing, in general, is socially stigmatized in Hong Kong, yet in practice it is a common norm for the young. People who oppose code-mixing often have an ideological reason to it. The ideology involved here is on language purity and the purity of Chinese language and culture. Extreme believers consider using English in Cantonese a 'contamination' and 'betrayal' of the rich heritage of Chinese culture that the Cantonese language embodied. This ideology, in an extreme case, is vividly expressed in the following metalinguistic comment given by a university professor of Chinese language and literature:

This kind of Chinese-English mixing freak speech is total rubbish not only [when it is used] outside of Hong Kong. Even within Hong Kong, it is totally useless for communicating with grass roots offspring of the Emperor Huang [i.e. ethnic Chinese people], or with the ethnic white leaders at the tip of the pyramid. Some people said, this kind of speech is like a special dermatological disease, [with a symptom of having] a piece of yellow [skin] and a piece of white [skin here and there]. (My translation, Chan, Yiu Nam (1993) *Fate and civilization*, Chapter 5.7 at http://isubculture.ichannel.com.hk/U/U002/U002_038.html.)

This comment is probably a bit extreme, but it is in no way an uncommon attitude shared in Hong Kong about code-mixing. As can be seen from the comments given by the judges toward the non-mainstream code-mixing speakers. Despite the prevailing negative attitude, however, code-mixing is the norm of speech among the younger generation. The following quote was from a university student who felt that she was 'an alien' for not using a particular English term in her speech, she refers to the way English is inserted in Cantonese as 'Hong Kong speech':

[I] think that 'Hong Kong speech' is a big trend, there is no way to fix it. [If I] don't use 'Hong Kong speech', [I] will be considered an alien. ...[Once][I] used the [Cantonese] word *grouping* and was laughed to an extent that [my] face turned yellow because the students of the University of Science and Technology use [the English term] *reunion*.

(From a personal website <http://www.geocities.com/gallacehk/chin1.html>)

University students, in particular, are subject to strong peer pressure to use code-mixing, but note that the accepted norm of code-mixing is the mainstream style but not the non-mainstream one. As a similar ideological parallel occurs which prompts the mainstream group to evaluate the non-mainstream speakers negatively. Irvine (2001) explains that styles in language cannot be explained in

isolation but in the ‘relationships among styles’: ‘their contrast, boundaries and commonalities’ (ibid.: 22). A university student who does not use the mainstream style is working against the commonalities s/he is supposed to have with other people who do it. This commonality, or shared style, works with a fine tuning of using both English and Cantonese in a conversation. The style carries an aura of westernness and education but cannot be overdone, or else it is considered to be a different style which is associated with a different social kind, in this case the overseas returnees. This delicate distinction is made from the perspective of an in-group, be it university students or Hong Kongers, and its realization can be found in the metalinguistic comments about distinctive speech styles and their association with particular group of speakers.

The two code-mixing patterns identified in this study are distinctive in terms of the social categories they are associated with, whether or not the association holds true at all time. The idea that one type of speaker speaks in one way but not the other is ideological, and this ideology is important because it tells us something about the essentialization process that occurs within the community, of how speakers consider themselves and others as social beings. The essentialization is important to us as participants who maneuver in the society because it affects how we see and deal with ourselves and others as members of particular social categories, how we negotiate our identities, how we construct our social networks, whether we cross a perceived social group boundary or not, etc.

In the above sections I have established the existence of two different patterns of code-mixing, a mainstream pattern which is widely used in Hong Kong, and a non-mainstream one which is used among a minority of people who have an overseas-educated background. I demonstrated that the two patterns are structurally different by using Muysken’s (2000) typology to show that the mainstream code-mixing pattern includes only English insertion into Cantonese, while the non-mainstream pattern includes insertions from both directions and frequent alternations. Using Irvine’s concept of ‘styles’, I then investigated the speakers’ awareness of the difference between the two patterns and it turned out that both speakers of the mainstream code-mixing pattern, as well as speakers of the non-mainstream pattern, are aware of the difference between the two patterns. They are also aware of the association between a particular linguistic pattern and speakers of a particular background. These findings are useful for us to understand not just the phenomena of code-mixing, but also the language ideologies of the society at large.

Keys to transcription

text in bold	insertion
<u>text underlined</u>	Cantonese text in alternation code-mixing
<i>text in italic</i>	English translation of Cantonese utterance
➔	alternation switch point in a new turn
=	latching, i.e. there is no gap between the previous line and the next line
(text)	an item literally not in the actual conversation but is added by the researcher to make the English translation more coherent
{text}	non-verbal information about the interaction
(.)	a short pause
(.5)	a pause in second, 1.0 equals to one second
(...)	unclear utterance
[speech in overlap
?	rising intonation, used in question
Romanization	Cantonese utterance in this paper is transcribed using the Jyutping system developed by the Linguistic Society of Hong Kong. Tone marks are omitted in this paper.

All of the consultants’ names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

Appendix 1: Settings and participants of the recordings

Setting and topics of conversation	Length of recording	Participants	Location
Mainstream code-mixing pattern			
Informal student meeting – 2 ex-members sharing committee work experience with current committee members	2 hours	3 current HKU students, 2 recent graduates	University campus – a student meeting room
Informal student meeting – an ex-member discussing details of a joint project between the student travel agency she worked in and the association	1 hour	2 current students, 1 recent graduate (speaker Karen) and the researcher	University campus – a café
Informal student meeting – an ex-member sharing committee work experience with a current member	30 minutes	1 current student (speaker Frank), 1 recent graduate and the researcher	University campus – a meeting room
Social gathering – the researcher as an ex-member provided a place for regular ‘reunion’ party for past and current members of the student association	2 hours	4 current students, 5 recent graduates and the researcher	The researcher’s house
Non-mainstream code-mixing pattern			
Social gathering – the three participants are close friends to each other and regularly meet for afternoon tea. The recording took place in one of their regular gathering	4 hours	1 current HKU student (Rita), 2 recent graduates (Dana and Kelly) and the researcher	A hotel coffee shop

Appendix 2. Profiles of speakers of the five 1-minute clips in attitudinal research

Mainstream speakers:

1. Karen

Female, age 23. Hong Kong-born and -raised. Educated in local public schools. Home language: Cantonese. A recent HKU graduate. Now working as a travel agent.

2. Frank

Male, age 21. Hong Kong-born and -raised. Educated in local public schools. Home language: Cantonese. A second-year student at HKU.

Non-mainstream speakers:

3. Dana

Female, age 24. A recent HKU graduate. Now works in a bookstore and as a bartender. Born in England and stayed there until 5 years old. Lived in Singapore for 6 years (age 6-12), went to an International school in Singapore, understands Mandarin and some Cantonese but cannot write Chinese. She stayed in Hong Kong for 5 years at age 12 to 17 and studied in an elite local school. She is able to read some Chinese characters and has learned to speak Cantonese, but still can't quite write Chinese. She then studied in England at a boarding school for 2 years (age 17-19). Stayed in Hong Kong since age 19. Home language: she speaks English but understands Cantonese, her parents speak Cantonese and English to her.

4. Kelly

Female, age 23. A recent HKU graduate, now works as a secondary school teacher. Hong Kong-born and raised except between age 14 and 19 when she studied in USA for 5 years. Her home language is Cantonese.

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