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Sociolinguistic Dynamics of Yulinese: Usage, Attitudes, and Influencing Factors – A Comprehensive Statistical and Thematic Analysis

Socjolingwistyczna dynamika dialektu julińskiego
(miasta Yulin w Regionie Autonomicznym
Kuangsi-Czuang/Chiny) - kompleksowa analiza
statystyczna i tematyczna

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pt. Sociolinguistic Dynamics of Yulinese: Usage, Attitudes, and Influencing Factors – A Comprehensive Statistical and Thematic Analysis

Socjolingwistyczna dynamika dialektu julińskiego (miasta Yulin w Regionie Autonomicznym Kuangsi-Czuang/Chiny) - kompleksowa analiza statystyczna i tematyczna

.....

na Uniwersytecie im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu

i oświadczam,

że napisałam ją samodzielnie.

Oznacza to, że przy pisaniu pracy, poza niezbędnymi konsultacjami, nie korzystałam z pomocy innych osób, a w szczególności nie zlecałam/am opracowania rozprawy lub jej istotnych części innym osobom, ani nie odpisywałam/am tej rozprawy lub jej istotnych części od innych osób.

Jednocześnie przyjmuję do wiadomości, że gdyby powyższe oświadczenie okazało się nieprawdziwe, decyzja o wydaniu mi dyplomu zostanie cofnięta.

November 15, 2024

.....
(miejscowość, data)



.....
(czytelny podpis)

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List of Abbreviations

Avg	Average (statistics)
df	Degree of freedom (statistics)
KMO	The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test
MGT	Matched-Guise Technique
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PRC	People's Republic of China
RGB	RGB color model
SD	Standard Deviation (statistics)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

China is a multi-ethnic, multi-language and multi-script country. There is much more linguistic diversity in the People's Republic of China (PRC) than is generally believed (Feng and Adamson 2019: 45). According to research by Sun et al. (2007: 30), there are 129 languages in use in China, about 30 of which have scripts and are currently used and learned by members of a number of ethnic groups.

The modern Chinese is officially divided into standard language and dialects. The standard language is known as Putonghua (普通话), or Mandarin Chinese. Legally designated as the national common language of PRC, Putonghua plays a pivotal role in critical domains of social life, encompassing official business and government communication, education, broadcasting on television and radio, publications, public announcements, transportation, as well as interactions in diplomacy and foreign commerce (You 2006: 1). Meanwhile, minority groups and diverse communities maintain a prevalence of distinct languages and dialects within their respective regions.

According to estimations, over two thousand dialects and subdialects are spoken across various regions at the county and municipal levels in China (Li David C. S. 2006: 150)¹. Chinese dialects can be divided into ten main groups:

Mandarin supergroup (官话大区 *Guānhuà dà qū*),

Jin group (晋语区 *Jìnyǔ qū*),

Wu group (吴语区 *Wúyǔ qū*),

Hui group (徽语区 *Huīyǔ qū*),

Gan group (赣语区 *Gànyǔ qū*),

Xiang group (湘语区 *Xiāngyǔ qū*),

Min group (闽语区 *Mǐnyǔ qū*),

Yue group (粤语区 *Yuèyǔ qū*),

Pinghua group (平话区 *Píng huà qū*),

Hakka group (客家话区 *Kèjiā huà qū*)

(Li Rong 1989: 241; Li Rulong 2001: 29; Kurpaska 2010; Atlas 2012: A1).

¹ To avoid confusing the reader, as several Chinese authors share the same surname “Li”, I have included their full names in each citation. This approach has also been applied in similar cases throughout the thesis.

These dialect groups are morphologically and phonetically distinct, so much so that dialects from different regions are often not mutually intelligible (Feng and Adamson 2019: 45). Each of the main groups can be divided into several subgroups, clusters and local dialects (Li Rong 1989: 243-244; Li Rulong 2001: 31; Kurpaska 2010: 63-64). Based on estimations provided by Cao (2014: 207), out of the total population of 1.28 billion individuals who speak Chinese, approximately 14% or 0.18 billion individuals can be classified as native speakers of Putonghua. Dialect speakers constitute the larger proportion of the Han population, and around 70% of them possess comprehension skills in Putonghua and use it with a distinct regional accent (Li Yuming 2015: 116).

In 1955, Putonghua was declared by the government of the People's Republic of China the common language of the Han people (Cheng Zhangtai 2005: 107; Song 2004: 13-14, as quoted in Kurpaska 2010: 10). Putonghua is promoted in primary and secondary schools, in the army, by local Youth League branches and labor union organizations on all levels, by the government, on the radio, on television, in newspapers and magazines, on transportation (including the national railways), in the postal system, in hospitals, etc.

The status of Putonghua has been firmly established within China's legal framework, as evidenced by its recognition in the Constitution of China (1982), its explicit regulation in *the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language* (2000), and its endorsement through the enactment of *the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy* (1984, as quoted in Feng and Adamson 2019: 46). Since 1982, the popularity of Putonghua has been increasing.

According to the "Survey of the Language Situation in China" issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2004), the proportion of users of Putonghua in 2004 was 53.06%, the percentage of those who can communicate in one of the Chinese dialects was 86.38%, and those who can communicate in minority languages constitute 5.46% of the population. In 2017, the penetration rate of Putonghua reached 73%, and more than 95% of the population was using standardized Chinese characters (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2018). In 2020, the proportion of Putonghua users reached 80.72% (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China 2021). The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, the National Rural Revitalization Administration and the State Language Commission (2021) jointly released the "Implementation plan of the standard national language and promotion of Putonghua to help rural revitalization" (国家通用语言文字普及提升工程和推普助力乡村振兴计划实施方案), where the goal of the proportion of Putonghua users in 2025 is set at 85%.

Just as Will Kymlicka (2001: 156) pointed out: when the government decides which language is the official language, in fact the government decides which languages will survive and which will die. The official language ideology will affect the formulation of language policy and also determine the future of disadvantaged languages.

There has been a discernible decline in linguistic diversity over the past decades in PRC, primarily attributed to the sustained and occasionally coercive efforts by the government to promote Putonghua as a common language throughout the state. The rate of this decline has notably accelerated since the beginning of the new millennium, primarily due to rapid advancements in transportation and telecommunications. Both minority language speakers and Chinese dialect speakers from rural areas migrate to urban economic centers, there is also the pervasive influence of mass and social media, and the employment markets that prioritize individuals proficient in Putonghua (Feng and Adamson 2019: 45-46).

In addition to the language policies that have led to an increase in the use of Putonghua and a gradual weakening of the actual use of dialects, there is another factor that deserves attention: the diglossic coexistence of Putonghua and dialects in many parts of China. Ferguson once described the Chinese language as one that “probably represents diglossia on the largest scale of any attested instance” (1959: 337-338). According to Li Chris Wen-Chao (2014: 70), language communities in China can be specifically categorised as:

(1) monoglossic, where the local dialect in Mandarin-speaking regions differs minimally from Modern Standard Chinese, e.g. Beijing;

(2) diglossic, found in regional urban centers where speakers are proficient in both a mainstream dialect and Mandarin e.g. Guangzhou; or

(3) triglossic, prevalent in rural areas where speakers, in addition to the local vernacular, need to acquire both Mandarin and the mainstream dialect of the regional administrative or cultural hub, e.g. some villages and towns of the southern Guangdong province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

Most of the inhabitants of dialect areas speak both Putonghua and local dialects, and choose either Putonghua or dialects to communicate according to various scenarios; usually, the inhabitants of these dialect areas use Putonghua as the higher variety (H), while the dialects are known as the lower variety (L) (You 2006: 3). If individuals speak dialects or possess distinct regional accents, their linguistic abilities are usually not duly acknowledged or appreciated (Dong and Blommaert 2009: 11; Dong and Dong 2013: 174; Zhao and Liu 2021: 884). While a high variety is often perceived as possessing a certain beauty, enhanced logical structure, and superior ability to articulate significant ideas (Ferguson 1959: 330), the allure of

Putonghua is partially influenced by its perceived social prestige. The increasing impact of prestigious and dominant language is deemed an external, yet pivotal, factor that expedites the decline of vitality among the local dialects (Chen Litong 2023: 2).

In such a language policy and social context, people's language attitudes show a changing nature and are intertwined with temporal changes and socio-political circumstances. The study of language attitudes is an aspect of sociolinguistic research that cannot be ignored.

1.2 方言 *fāngyán* and Yulinese

方言 *fāngyán* is a term more often used by Chinese than Western scholars (Li Rulong 2001: 1) to refer to the language being used in certain regions, e.g. *Yùlín fāngyán* (玉林方言 Yulin variety) represents the local speech used in Yuzhou and Fumian districts of Yulin city. However, most non-linguists in China will use “XX 话 *huà*” to represent the local speech, e.g. *Yùlín huà* (玉林话 Yulin variety).

Most of the time, 方言 *fāngyán* is translated into English as “dialect”, but some linguistics argue that this is not the most appropriate translation (DeFrancis 1986; Mair 1991). “Dialect” is a more popular term in Sinology, and “it is deeply rooted in the tradition of Sino-logy” (Kurpaska 2010: 3). In my research, the focus will be on the local speech of the Yulin region. To avoid the redundancy of repeatedly using the term “Yulin dialect” throughout the dissertation, I will refer to it as Yulinese.

1.3 A brief introduction to Yulin City

Located in the south-eastern part of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Yulin city is a speech community in which Mandarin and dialects coexist, with a total area of 12,800 square kilometres and a resident population of 5,823,000 at the end of 2022, of which 2,975,300 were urban residents, accounting for 51.10% (Yulin Statistics Bureau 2022). In terms of ethnicity, 99.23% of Yulin's residents belong to the Han ethnic group, and 0.57% to the Zhuang ethnic group, in addition to residents belonging to one of 43 other ethnic groups, but in very small numbers (Yulin Municipal People's Government Office 2023).

Yulin's jurisdiction includes Yuzhou district, Fumian district, Yudong New district (a new district created in 2010, previously part of Yuzhou District), Beiliu county-level city, Rong county, Luchuan county, Bobai county and Xingye county (Yulin Municipal People's

Government Office 2023), of which Bobai county is the largest Hakka-populated county in PRC (Bobai County Government 2022).

1.4 Dialects in Yulin city

Yulin has a complex linguistic environment and is a typical triglossic community. In Yulin, Putonghua is the higher variety and is used in writing and in a variety of formal contexts, such as government offices, schools, television news and airport broadcasts. At the same time, within the county-level city, four counties and three districts of Yulin, there are four types of Chinese dialects: Cantonese, Hakka, Min and Southwestern Mandarin, which includes Yulinese, the Rongxian dialect, the Shinan dialect, the Shangli dialect, the Xiali dialect, the Luchuan dialect, Hakka, Dilao, Holo and the Liuzhou dialect (Hu Wenmin 2018: 265). In each county or district in Yulin, two or more spoken varieties are used (see Fig. 1 for details).

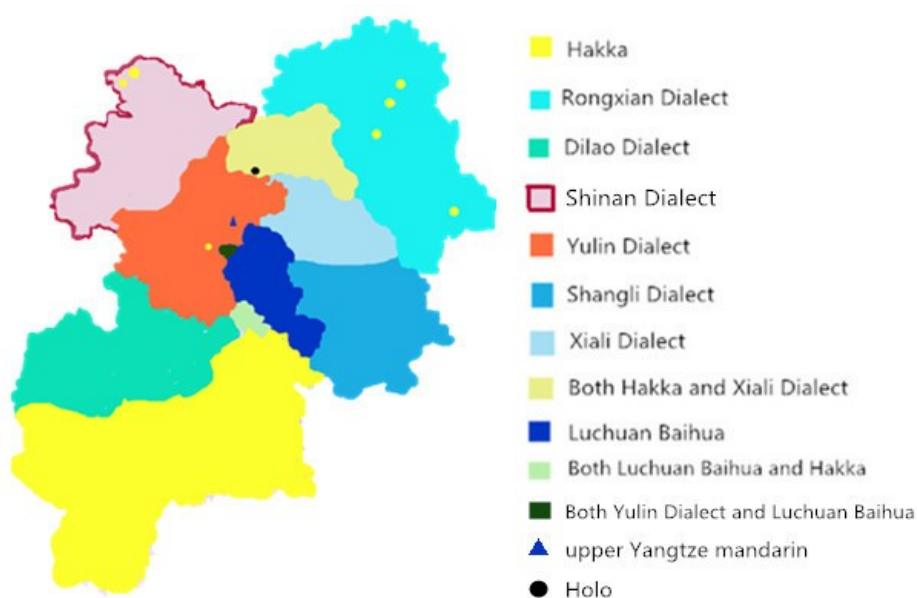


Fig. 1. Language Map of dialects in Yulin City (Hu Wenmin 2018: 265)

Yulinese researched in this dissertation belongs to the Goulou subgroup of Cantonese dialects, whose phonological inventory, according to Liang (2010: 7-10) contains 17 consonants, 83 rhymes and 10 tones, as well as tone sandhi. Yulinese is one of the most tonal dialects in China (Feng and Li 2010: 50).

Yulinese is mainly spoken in Yuzhou District, Fumian District and Yudong New District, which are the political, economic and cultural centres of Yulin: Yulin Municipal Government, Yulin Normal University, Yulin High School, Guangxi Yulin Pharmaceutical Group Co.

Ltd., Guangxi Yuchai Machinery Group Co. Ltd., Yulin Airport and the railway station are all situated in these three districts. Yulinese, which is a disadvantaged language, is being spoken less and less as the importance of Putonghua continues to rise and its use expands. As Feng and Li (2010: 51) point out, economic development has brought Yulin city into closer contact with neighbouring regions, Cantonese and the language varieties of neighbouring regions have had an impact on the Yulinese, which is facing a serious existential crisis.

1.5 Aims

The purpose of this study is to conduct a sociolinguistic investigation into the linguistic attitudes towards Yulinese and the underlying reasons among individuals who were born, raised, or settled in Yulin City. This investigation will be carried out through the administration of questionnaires and personal interviews to the respondents.

The study aims to address the following **research questions**:

- 1) What are the attitudes of respondents of different genders towards Yulin dialect?
- 2) What are the attitudes of respondents of different age groups towards Yulinese?
- 3) Are respondents whose native language background is Yulinese more likely to identify with their native language compared to those with Mandarin and other dialects as their mother tongue?
- 4) Do respondents who are fluent in Yulinese have more positive attitudes towards this variety than those who are not?
- 5) What are the attitudes of people of different socio-economic status towards Yulinese?
- 6) Do interviewees whose relatives encouraged them to learn Yulinese have higher opinion of this variety than those who were not encouraged?
- 7) How much do each of the following factors: age, gender, level of education, socio-economic status and cultural identity, influence language attitudes? Which factors combine to have a positive or negative effect?

Based on the above research questions, the **hypotheses** are framed as follows:

- 1) Concerning the attitudes of respondents of different genders, female respondents will exhibit more positive attitudes towards the prestigious language (Putonghua), whereas male respondents will demonstrate a stronger preference for the vernacular variety (Yulinese).

- 2) As for the factor of respondents' age, the younger respondents have a less positive attitude towards Yulinese; the higher the age group, the more positive the attitude towards Yulinese.
- 3) As regards the respondents' native language background, the respondents whose native language was Yulinese have more positive attitudes towards this variety.
- 4) Those born or living in Yuzhou county and Fumian county have more positive attitudes towards Yulinese.
- 5) In terms of socio-economic status, respondents with lower socio-economic status will show more positive attitudes towards Putonghua than Yulinese.
- 6) Respondents with higher levels of education have less positive attitudes towards Yulinese.

1.6 Methodology

In order to address the above research questions, both quantitative and qualitative analysis was conducted.

In the quantitative research part, questionnaire technique was used to collect data. Questionnaires were distributed through the WeChat, and Python (version 3.10) was used to analyse the data. The detailed description of the questionnaire design, data collection and analysis are provided in Chapter 3.

In the quantitative research part, the interview was used to collect the data, the detailed description of the interview design can be found in Chapter 3, and the questionnaire design can be found in the Appendix 3.

1.7 Significance of the study

At present, there are relatively few studies on Yulinese, and the existing ones focus mainly on the phonology, vocabulary and grammar of Yulinese. Examples include Li Puying's (1982) study on the tones and their variations of Yulinese; Zhou Lieting (2000) provides a discussion and analysis of the consonants, rhymes, and tones of Yulinese; Liang Zhongdong's study of sound change as a means of indicating diminutives in the dialect (Liang 2002), structural forms of overlapping adjectives in Yulinese (Liang 2002b), the modified tone and meaning of the structure "hao (好)+adjective+ding (定)" (Liang 2002a), the usage of the word "ba (把)"

(Liang 2006), “zhe (着)” (Liang 2007a), “zai (在)” (Liang 2009), comparison of the difference between Yulinese and Putonghua words (Liang 2007b), the common words of Yulin and Zhuang (Liang 2011), modified tone of vocabulary in Yulin Dialect (Liang 2015), and the interpretation of ancient Chinese words in Yulinese (Liang 2018); Sun Jingyun (2018) wrote on two-alliterated words in Yulin dialect, Zhong Wumei (2016) discussed the use of “guo (过)”; Zhou Yue (2016) focused on tetra-syllabic words, and Su Lihong – on kinship terms (Su 2006) and on yes-no questions in Yulinese (Su 2016). In addition to this, two scholars have discussed the attribution of Yulinese (Li Lianjin 2000; Liang 2006a). So far, none of the scholars studied the linguistic attitudes of Yulin people towards Yulinese, and it is unknown whether its speakers’ attitudes towards this language variety are positive or negative.

The study of language attitudes is a readily accessible and widely employed approach to assessing the societal standing, value, and significance of a particular language (Baker 1992: 9). Attitude surveys serve as valuable social indicators for gauging shifts in beliefs and assessing the prospects of policy implementation.

Individual Chinese scholars have called for the preservation of Yulinese, e.g. Feng and Li (2010), and I argue that in order to preserve this dialect, it is important to investigate the locals’ proficiency in it and the trends in its use, as well as to understand people’s attitudes towards Yulinese and their willingness to learn it. The purpose of my study is to help understand how people of different ages, genders and social status in Yulin perceive the status, value and importance of Yulin dialect under the language policy of promoting Putonghua, and to identify the factors that influence locals’ attitudes towards the language, which will provide important information for future language planning and language revitalisation in Yulin city.

1.8 Structure of the dissertation

The first chapter of this dissertation is the introduction, and the following sections of the dissertation are structured as follows. The second chapter mainly reviews the literature on language attitudes and their measurement methods, as no scholars have done research on language attitudes in Yulin before this dissertation, while there are many papers and books on language attitudes in Cantonese. This chapter focuses on reviewing the research on language attitudes in Cantonese conducted in Hong Kong and Guangzhou.

Chapter 3 deals with the research design, which mainly includes the research methodology, description of the target population, the research structure, the research process, the data processing, and the reliability and validity analyses of the study.

Chapters 4 to 6 are the results of the study and their analyses. Among them, chapter 4 contains a quantitative analysis, including the analysis of the collection of questionnaires, comprising t-test, one-way ANOVA, and Levenes' test.

Chapter 5 mainly uses PCA to analyse sub-sets of the questions, checking whether given answers consistently measure the intended feature, and whether their grouping is justified on the basis of the responses received.

Chapter 6 presents the qualitative analysis, focusing on the results of the interviews with the respondents in the qualitative study.

Chapter 7 contains the summary and recommendations. This chapter recapitulates the main findings of this study and suggests directions for further research in the future.

Chapter 2: Language Attitudes and Research Methodological Frameworks

The study of language attitudes is a multifaceted domain within sociolinguistics that focuses on individuals' perceptions, feelings, and evaluations towards languages, their varieties and their speakers.

This chapter embarks on an intricate exploration of language attitude and the contextual factors that contribute to the formation of language attitudes. It examines determinants and influencers such as gender, age, socio-economic status, family language, geographical location, and education level, illustrating their roles in influencing individuals' attitudes toward language. Building on this understanding, the chapter provides a comprehensive review of language attitudes in the context of Cantonese, discussing various research methods, including the Matched-Guise Technique, questionnaires, mixed-methods, and alternative approaches used by researchers to investigate language attitudes towards Cantonese.

2.1 Language Attitude

2.1.1 Attitude

In discussing attitudes, it is essential to consider Allport's definition, in which he described attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (1935: 810). He also highlighted that "Attitudes determine for each individual what [they] will see and hear, what [they] will think and what [they] will do" (Allport 1935: 806). However, in Ajzen's definition of attitude, which is the most widely referenced definition (Kircher and Zipp 2022: 2), he argues that it is "a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event" (Ajzen 2005: 3). Both Allport's and Ajzen's definitions point out that attitudes are socially constructed and can be influenced by experiences, education, people (e.g. friends, neighbors, acquaintances and so on), media and events; attitudes are something we learn rather than something we are born with,

and a person's attitude influences what they perceive, how they think, and the actions they take (Allport 1935: 806; Kircher & Zipp 2022: 2-3). Attitudes are orientations toward the evaluation of certain social, objects; thus, they can be considered as having a certain degree of stability and are capable of being identified (Garrett 2010: 20).

Attitudes are frequently analyzed through the lens of three fundamental components: affect, cognition and behaviour (Kircher & Zipp 2022: 4). Affect is the feeling caused by the attitude object and the main cause of influencing attitudes. Whereas cognition refers to the beliefs held about the attitude object, behavior is the actual behavior toward the attitude object (Banaji and Heiphetz 2010: 350-351; Garrett 2010: 23; Kircher & Zipp 2022: 4).

Banaji and Heiphetz (2010) argue that of these three components, affect takes primacy, and according to Verplanken et al. (1998), affect may be more accessible than the other two elements, and is also a better predictor of behavior than the cognitive component. When we review recent studies on language attitudes towards Cantonese, most of them are investigations on cognition and affect. In the fourth part of this chapter, I will review the major studies on attitudes towards Cantonese over the past few decades in terms of both findings and research methodology, and discuss their strengths and weaknesses in order to provide insights for this study.

2.1.2 Language Attitude

Dai (1993: 144) once mentioned in his study an interesting story about language attitudes in Chinese history. During the Warring States period, Chen Xiang came to see Mencius and praised Xu Xing for advocating that the monarch and the people should work together, while Mencius commented, "Xu Xing, a southern barbarian who speaks like a bird, dares to come and criticize the way of our ancestor, the Sage King!" (今也南蛮鴟舌之人, 非先王之道). Dai believes that this statement reflects Mencius' negative attitude towards the Chu dialect. As Trudgill (2003: 73) puts it: language attitudes refer to people's attitudes towards different languages, dialects, accents and their speakers.

Since the 1930s language attitudes have become an interesting topic for researchers (Kircher and Zipp 2022: 1). Traditionally, language attitudes are defined as "any affective, cognitive or behavioral index of evaluative reactions towards different varieties and their speakers" (Ryan and Giles eds. 1982: 7). But the scopes of language attitudes are not only about languages, dialects, accent and their users, but also include multilingualism, forms of

address, code-switching, vocal fry and quotatives (Kircher and Zipp 2022: 5). Language attitudes are frequently discussed in works on language-related topics, especially in multilingual research (Liang 2015: 47).

Coupland et al. (1999) posit that investigating language attitudes and perceptions holds significance due to its potential to enhance comprehension of language preservation and transformation, linguistic deterioration and revitalization, uninterrupted cultural transmission, and matters pertaining to identity.

Language users constitute an integral part of the definition of language attitudes. Due to differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, cultural background, skin color, and native language, each individual has multiple social group memberships that differ in their overall importance to the self-concept (Kircher & Zipp 2022: 5). Numerous studies have shown that language is one of the most important symbols of social identity, “an emblem of group membership” (Grosjean 1982: 117; as quoted in Kircher & Zipp 2022: 5). The symbolic nature of language is naturally expressed in people’s attitudes toward language varieties and their users: “If language has social meaning, people will evaluate it in relation to the social status of its users. Their language attitudes will be social attitudes” (Appel and Muysken 2005: 12). Thus, attitudes toward a language reflect people’s attitudes toward its speakers (Hill 2015: 147; Dragojevic et al. 2021: 61-62). The self-concept of speakers is linked to their membership in a particular social group (Tajfel and Turner 2004: 15). Kircher and Zipp (2022: 5) explain the relationship between language attitudes and language speaker in terms of ‘categorization and stereotyping’, i.e., we categorize a person’s social identity by his or her linguistic cues when we first encounter him or her, while at the same time we stereotype the person by some social group.

Research proves the profound influence of language attitudes on various facets of human interaction. Kircher and Zipp (2022: 7) have established that these attitudes not only shape individuals’ perceptions and treatment of others but also intricately impact their linguistic behaviors. Notably, language attitudes play a pivotal role in determining language acquisition decisions, as demonstrated by Gardner (1982), thereby impacting language choices individuals make. Furthermore, these attitudes extend their influence on the frequency of language use among individuals, as evidenced by Edwards and Fuchs (2018: 665).

Concurrently, language attitudes can also influence a person’s decisions about which language to use in which situations, and their decisions about which language to pass on to their children (Houwer 1999; Kircher 2022a; Kircher and Zipp. 2022). It is noteworthy that parental language attitudes could potentially imprint upon their children’s language attitudes

(Saravanan and Hoon 1997; Luykx 2005; Liang 2015). At the same time, the language attitudes of schools and teachers also affect the language attitudes of students. If the education system and teachers in schools have negative language attitudes towards dialects, this may have a negative impact on students' achievement, self-esteem and language attitudes (Seligman et al. 1972; Yiakoumetti 2007). As Munstermann (1989: 166) writes in his study, "almost all studies on dialects and education (in the Netherlands) have emphasized the importance of teachers' attitudes toward dialects".

2.2 Factors Related to Language Attitude

Various models concerning language attitudes have been formulated within the mentalist framework, as evidenced by studies conducted by Giles and Ryan (1982), Cargile et al. (1994), Cargile and Bradac (2001); these models collectively illuminate the intricate nature of language attitudes (Kircher and Zipp 2022: 9). Pertinent socio-demographic factors exerting influence on an individual's language attitudes encompass factors like age, gender, and geographical location, educational attainment, and the extent of interaction with the relevant linguistic community (Baker 1992; Shen 1992; Shan and Li 2018).

2.2.1 Gender

Many studies have shown that males and females differ in their language attitudes and motivation to learn languages (Labov 1990; Dörnyei and Csizér 2002; Bilaniuk 2003; Wang and Ladegaard 2008; Zhang Bennan 2011; Chan 2018). Reviewing thirty years of research in the field of sociolinguistics, Labov (1990) summarised the different language attitudes between genders. These findings can be succinctly encapsulated by the following three principles: "In stable sociolinguistic stratification, men use a higher frequency of nonstandard forms than women" (Labov 1990: 210). "In change from above, women favor the incoming prestige forms more than men" (Labov 1990: 213). "In change from below, women are most often the innovators" (Labov 1990: 215).

Women prefer languages commonly regarded as "High", denoting languages associated with elevated social prestige, and this inclination may be associated with the prevailing societal roles ascribed to women. An argument has been put forth suggesting that the success of women in many societies hinges more on symbolic communal factors than on material pos-

sessions or competencies. Consequently, through their linguistic choices women actively endeavor to attain symbolic membership within esteemed social circles (Eckert 1989, 1990, 1997; Bilaniuk 2003). The other argument is that the greater inclination of females towards adherence to standard linguistic norms may be attributed to their heightened sense of insecurity and a perceived lower social standing in male-dominated societies (Trudgill 2000: 62-63). Conversely, males tend to favor vernacular language varieties, as these are associated with notions of toughness and rugged masculinity (Piller and Pavlenko 2004: 490-491).

However, it is important to note that findings and explanations concerning gender-based linguistic differences have exhibited inconclusiveness and inconsistency across diverse contexts and temporal periods, as discussed by Polat and Mahalingappa (2010: 31). For instance, Zhang Sujie (2008: 102) conducted a statistical survey on the language attitudes of college students from the Dai ethnic group, and the results showed that female students' attitudes towards their own language are significantly more positive than that of males. Similar results were also obtained in his research on the Hani college students (Zhang Sujie 2009: 106).

2.2.2 Age

Llamas (2007: 69) underscores the significance of age as a pivotal factor in the analysis of language attitudes. Generally speaking, adolescents tend to use vernacular variables more, a phenomenon predominantly ascribed to their active participation in the development of personal identities that often contrast with, or at the very least operate independently from, those of their older counterparts (Chambers 2003: 194). As Yu's (2012: 93-95) study of Nanjing adolescents shows, as they grow older, adolescents begin to use Nanjing dialect heavily for interpersonal communication at home and at school because most adolescents believe that Nanjing dialect is kinder and nicer to listen to than Putonghua, and that they feel a greater sense of linguistic belonging if they are able to use it in their daily communication.

It is commonly observed that adults tend to employ linguistic expressions characterized by a higher degree of prestige or conservatism in comparison to younger individuals (Trudgill 1997; Williams and Kerswill 1999, etc.). This proclivity of adults to adopt linguistic forms associated with prestige is attributed to their active engagement in the standard linguistic milieu during their professional lives. Consequently, it is posited that the use of prestigious linguistic forms reaches its zenith during the middle years of adulthood, a period marked by the

perception of heightened societal expectations for conformity. Older speakers prefer local languages, because they no longer experience the pressure to use prestigious language from work and adult life (Llamas 2007: 72). For example, a survey by Duanmu et al. (2016: 256) shows that younger Shanghainese use Putonghua more frequently, while those more than 50 years old prefer to use Shanghai dialect instead; a similar phenomenon has been identified in other countries as well, e.g., in the study conducted by Ulysse and Masaeed (2021), an investigation into individuals' perspectives concerning Haitian Creole (Kreyòl) and French revealed a higher prevalence of positive attitudes toward Kreyòl among older participants compared to younger respondents.

2.2.3 Socio-economic status

Language attitudes are profoundly shaped by cultural, economic, and political parameters, leading to variations in linguistic perspectives among individuals of differing social strata (Holmes, 2013). According to Trudgill (1974), Milroy and Milroy (1978), and Cheshire (1978), individuals from higher social strata tend to employ more often standard linguistic expressions, while those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrate a predilection for vernacular language. A survey done by Li Jinyang (2018: 75) in Guangxi Zhuang ethnic group showed that when parents had a higher social status, they had a more positive attitude towards Putonghua and used it more in the family. In a study conducted by Liu Binmei (2020: 15-22) at Tianjin University, PRC, a questionnaire was administered to a cohort of participants who were stratified into four distinct social classes: the upper middle class, middle middle class, lower middle class, and lower class. The study's results revealed a noteworthy correlation, indicating that individuals belonging to the upper middle class exhibited markedly diminished positive attitudes toward local dialects. Furthermore, this same group exhibited the lowest prevalence of current usage of dialects within their households.

The concept of social class encompasses fundamental dimensions such as property ownership, wealth accumulation, occupational status, residential location, educational attainment, social connections, consumption habits, symbolic behaviors, spatial associations, mobility patterns, and life opportunities (Li Peilin and Zhang Yi 2008; Block 2012, 2014). According to Liu Xing's (2007: 8) research there have been five classes in Chinese society:

(a) Upper Class (comprising senior leading party cadres, executives of prominent enterprises, senior professionals, and proprietors of substantial private ventures);

(b) Upper Middle Class (middle-level leading cadres of party and government institutions, middle-level managers of state-owned enterprises, small business owners, managers of private enterprises, senior professional and technical personnel);

(c) Lower Middle Class (Cadres of low-ranking party and government institutions, low-ranking professionals and technicians, staff clerks with administrative grades, grass-roots managers in state-owned enterprises, low-ranking managers in private enterprises and managers of small private enterprises);

(d) Skilled laborers;

(e) Unskilled workers (farmers, the unemployed).

Given the established body of prior research emphasizing the role of socio-economic status in the examination of language attitudes, it is pertinent to undertake an inquiry into the impact of different socio-economic status on the individual's language attitude toward the local dialect.

2.2.4 Family language

The language used by families and their language attitudes have an impact on their children's language attitude Wang's (1999: 94-99) study showed that students from minority ethnic areas of China who lived with their grandparents had more positive attitudes towards the nominal language because grandparents tended to be more assertive and more inclined to use the ethnic language, which largely influenced their grandchildren's language attitudes.

The research by Hoon (2010: 76) in Malaysia revealed that when the parents predominantly use Cantonese in the family, the language most used by their children at home is also Cantonese, thus there is a positive correlation between the language adopted by parents and the language used by their children. At the same time, the language use of other family members, such as grandparents and siblings, also affects the respondents' choice of language at home. Wang Juan (2017: 172) conducted a study into the language attitudes of Uyghur college students in Xinjiang and found that the more positive the parents' attitudes towards mother tongue identity, the more positive their children's attitudes towards it too.

Since the family is the main place for children's early education and children are directly influenced by their parents, the parents' attitudes towards a certain language directly affect children's first language acquisition and their attitudes towards that language. Parents play an important role in language transmission and in the choice of first language acquisition.

2.2.5 Geographical location

A number of studies have shown that language attitudes towards Putonghua and dialects differ between urban and rural populations, depending on their living environments. Yang (2001: 59) pointed out that within the same dialect area, there is a significant difference between the dialect attitudes of students in urban schools and those in rural schools, and that urban schools tend to promote Putonghua more intensively, students have more opportunities to use Putonghua, and use the dialect less, so that the affective attitudes towards the dialect of students in urban schools are weaker than those of students in rural schools. Guo (2007: 139) conducted a survey on the linguistic attitudes of Lishui County residents and found that the affective attitudes towards urban dialects were better than those towards Putonghua. Wang Li (2009: 83) found that the language attitudes of ethnic minority college students who came from urban areas or from areas where Han Chinese and ethnic minorities lived in mixed communities were significantly higher than those of other languages.

2.2.6 Educational level

Dewaele and McCloskey (2015), as well as Kircher and Fox (2019) have posited in their respective investigations that language attitudes exhibit a discernible correlation with the educational attainment of respondents. Concurrently, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (2004) has disseminated a survey report elucidating a direct association between higher educational levels and an increased prevalence of Putonghua proficiency among the populace. A congruent pattern has been consistently identified by numerous Chinese scholars. For instance, Li Jinyang's (2018: 75) study of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region adolescents has indicated that a heightened educational background among their parents coincides with a greater utilization of Putonghua within the family environment. Furthermore, Huang (2021: 136) conducted a survey encompassing 147 residents in Yongle Village, situated in Tiandeng County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and found a noteworthy correlation between language attitudes and the educational levels of the respondents. Specifically, individuals with higher levels of education exhibited more favorable attitudes towards Putonghua while concurrently manifesting more adverse attitudes towards dialects.

2.3 A review and reflection on the study of language attitudes in Cantonese

Since no single scholar has done research on the language attitudes of Yulinese, there is no literature that can be directly drawn upon. However, Yulinese, as a sub-dialect of Cantonese, is phonetically similar to Cantonese (Liang Zhongdong 2010: 224), lexically highly consistent with Cantonese in Guangzhou (Liang Zhongdong 2010: 235), and grammatically has much in common with Cantonese (Liang Zhongdong 2010: 245). Therefore, I believe that related studies on language attitudes towards Cantonese can be useful for this paper.

2.3.1 Studies of language attitudes towards Cantonese using the Matched-Guise Technique

The Matched-Guise Technique (MGT) is also known as the ‘speaker evaluation paradigm’ (Garrett 2010: 37; Liang Sihua 2015: 40). It was first proposed by Lambert and co-authors (1960) in a significant research work to investigate attitudes towards English and French in Montreal. In the MGT experiment, one or more bilingual speakers read the same text in each of the two languages, and the experimenter made audio recordings and played these recordings to the respondents. Respondents were asked to rate some qualities of the speakers (e.g. friendliness, intelligence, etc.) on a Likert rating scale after listening to the recordings. The two languages spoken by the speaker needed to sound as if they were spoken by native speakers so that respondents would listen without realising that they were listening to a recording of the same person, so that when they rated the qualities of the speaker, any differences in ratings would be interpreted as respondents’ attitudes towards the linguistic variants and the groups associated with those variants, rather than the speakers themselves. Through MGT, researchers have been able to target and minimise the influence of extraneous variables, reducing the likelihood that an individual’s attitudes will be influenced by factors unrelated to the linguistic variant under study (Giles and Billings 2004: 190). Thus, the MGT enables the indirect and confidential elicitation of attitudes (Garrett et al. 2003; Giles and Billings 2004; Garrett 2010; Loureiro-Rodríguez and Acar 2022).

Many linguists have used the technique to study language attitudes e.g. Bourhis et al. (1975); Woolard and Gahng (1990); Hoare (2001); Rodriguez et al. (2004); Echeverria (2005). There is no doubt that MGT has contributed to the advancement of knowledge in the field of language attitudes. There are also several important studies of language attitudes towards Cantonese that have been conducted using MGT.

Kalmar et al. (1987) conducted an investigation into the dispositions held by students in Guangzhou towards Putonghua and Putonghua with Cantonese accent. Employing the MGT, their study revealed that the Putonghua guise garnered the highest favorability ratings with regards to societal advancement. However, the guise featuring a Cantonese accent received more favorable assessments in relation to personal empathy, especially among male participants.

Gao et al. (1998) used the MGT to investigate the attitudes of 304 undergraduates from the social science departments of the Hong Kong Baptist University, Peking University and Guangzhou Normal College towards Putonghua, English, Cantonese, and Putonghua with Cantonese accent, and found that Hong Kong respondents ratings of Putonghua and Cantonese were similar to those of mainland respondents, their rating of Putonghua with Cantonese accent were higher than those of Mainland respondents, and English lower than those of Mainland respondents. Gao et al. (2019) used MGT again two decades later to measure the attitudes of 372 undergraduate students from three universities in Hong Kong, Beijing, and Guangzhou towards Putonghua, English, Cantonese, and Putonghua with Cantonese accent. The purpose was to explore the changes in students' language attitudes in the three regions over the past 20 years. To achieve this purpose, Gao used the same recording as in 1997. The results of the experiment show that the language attitudes of the three places are more consistent with those of 20 years ago, but the Guangzhou respondents' evaluation of Cantonese has improved somewhat compared with the previous findings, and the distance between the overall high and low evaluations of the "standard variants" and "non-standard variants" of the three places has decreased; however, the Hong Kong students evaluation of Putonghua has also decreased. Nevertheless, Hong Kong students' affirmation of Putonghua is mainly at the status level, and their motivational tendency is mainly instrumental.

Shum et al. (2023) conducted an initial test with 174 undergraduate students in Hong Kong using the MGT in 2013. They repeated the experiment in subsequent years, testing 218 participants in 2015, 237 in 2018, and 200 in 2019. The study explores how large-scale social movements: Umbrella Movement (2014) and Anti-Extradition Bill Movement (2019-2020) impact language attitudes in Hong Kong.

However, MGT is not a perfect method for studying language attitudes and it has some limitations. Participants scored speakers based on long series of recordings of different language variants, which is different from hearing these language variants in the interaction. In an experimental setting, participants may focus on or amplify a feature of a language variant (Garrett et al. 2003; Garrett 2010; Liang Sihua 2015; Loureiro -Rodríguez & Acar 2022).

Meanwhile, another concern pertains to the lack of authenticity in the style of the stimuli used in MGT studies. Typically, the recordings involve speakers reading a written passage, which fails to capture the spontaneity and naturalness of oral speech. This artificiality in the stimuli has the potential to influence participants' ratings. Additionally, caution must be exercised when applying the MGT in diglossic settings, where two distinct linguistic varieties coexist. In such cases, participants' ratings may not solely reflect their attitudes towards the linguistic variety itself but rather its appropriateness within a specific domain of usage (Loureiro - Rodríguez & Acar 2022: 189).

Another point where linguists critically feel that MGT is not perfect is that it is difficult to find (or possibly impossible to find) a speaker fluent enough to speak all the languages needed for the study, in which case the recordings of the experiment are likely to be challenged by the participants (Liang Sihua 2015: 41; Loureiro -Rodríguez & Acar 2022: 189).

Finally, personal factors of the experiment participants can also influence the results of the experiment. The mood of the experiment participants on a particular day may also impact their scoring after listening to the recording (Dillard and Pfau eds. 2002; Nabi 2002; Garrett 2010); also the life expertise of the listeners may affect their language attitudes (Cargile et al. 1994; Garrett 2010; Perloff 2023).

In addition to the above-mentioned issues, I think there is yet another shortcoming of MGT: since the experiment needs to gather the respondents together to listen to the recordings, when the age and occupation of the respondents span over a wide range of ages and occupations, it is difficult to gather them together and use the MGT technique to measure their attitudes towards a certain language. As we can see from the above studies on attitudes towards Cantonese, all the research using MGT has been conducted with students on campus. Therefore, it is clear that MGT is not sufficient to provide a valid data sample when the research target is not limited to students.

Due to these limitations of MGT, most of the studies on language attitudes towards Cantonese were conducted using questionnaires or mixed methods.

2.3.2 Studies of language attitudes towards Cantonese using questionnaires

The questionnaire stands as one of the preeminent methodologies extensively employed in the domain of language attitudes research. It boasts a long standing legacy in serving as a potent tool for the elicitation of attitudes (Kircher 2022b: 129). According to Brown (2001: 6), ques-

tionnaires are defined as written instruments that present respondents with a series of inquiries or declarative statements, prompting them to articulate their responses in writing or select from preexisting response options. In some studies, questionnaires are also called: “inventories”, “forms”, “opinionnaires”, “tests”, “batteries”, “checklists”, “scales”, “surveys”, “schedules”, “studies”, “profiles”, “indexes/indicators”, or even simply “sheets” (Aiken 1997, as quoted in Dörnyei and Taguchi 2010: 3). Regardless of the names mentioned above, questionnaires are completed by the respondents themselves and are utilised as research instruments for the purpose of measurement, aiming to gather data that is both reliable and valid (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2010: 3).

Lai (2001) used a questionnaire to investigate the attitudes of 134 Hong Kong senior secondary school students towards English and Cantonese and Putonghua. These students were categorised according to their family background into middle-class elites and working-class low achievers. The results show that English is regarded as a more helpful language for academic and career purposes, Cantonese is emotionally closer, and Putonghua is a language for nation-wide communication. As for the relationship between social class and language attitudes, both groups of students have positive attitudes towards all the three languages, with students from middle-class family backgrounds favoring English, and working-class low achievers preferring Cantonese.

Lai (2005) surveyed 1048 secondary school students, and the findings indicate that participants exhibit the greatest inclination toward Cantonese in terms of integrative orientation. They attribute the highest instrumental value and social status to the English language. Conversely, Putonghua received the lowest ratings from both integrative and instrumental standpoints. Lai (2007) repeated the survey of the same 1048 students using the MGT, which yielded similar results to the 2005 study.

Wang and Ladegaard (2008) used a questionnaire to survey 174 students aged 13-16 years old in a Guangzhou secondary school. The participants were divided into two groups: students who were born and raised in Guangdong made up the first group, whereas the second group was composed of students who had moved to Guangzhou and whose first language was Putonghua. The survey showed that both the first and second groups of students preferred to use Putonghua in formal situations. Also, females in both groups preferred to use the standard, prestigious language, Putonghua, while males in both groups preferred to use Cantonese, and it was found that many group 1 students, who were born and raised in Guangzhou, used Putonghua at home, so the authors expect the use of Mandarin to increase in Guangzhou in the future.

Lee and Leung (2010) used a questionnaire to survey 1004 Hongkongers to find out the proportion of English, Cantonese and Putonghua in their daily life conversations and their attitudes towards these three languages. The survey proved that Cantonese is not a low variety of language used in informal situations as initially assumed: on the contrary, it turned out to be the most frequently used language in the workplace and daily life of the Hong Kong respondents.

Ng and Zhao (2015) used a questionnaire to survey 75 university students in Guangdong on their attitudes towards Putonghua, English, and Cantonese. Respondents were asked to rate Cantonese, Putonghua, and English on a five-degree Likert scale, and the results of the study showed that participants exhibited a pronounced affinity towards Cantonese, attributing significance to Putonghua due to its elevated national standing in the PRC. Conversely, English elicited the lowest degree of valuation among the three languages, garnering consideration solely for its instrumental or economic value.

The advantages of using questionnaires to investigate respondents' language attitudes outweigh their limitations. This is because they are easy to distribute and collect, and the researcher can gather more data in a relatively short period of time (Garrett et al. 2003: 26; Kircher 2022b: 129-130). Furthermore, Questionnaires can provide information about respondents' language attitudes related to affective attitude (Kircher 2022b: 130).

Questionnaires exhibit limitations in their ability to thoroughly investigate complex issues. Firstly, the questionnaire needs to be carefully designed, so that it is not so difficult to complete that the respondent does not want to answer it, but not so simple either that the respondent is bored with it. Respondents within this framework may display unreliability by misinterpreting queries or demonstrating challenges in reading and writing. Furthermore, they might - unconsciously or consciously - shape their responses to align with the perceived socially desirable answers, aiming to present themselves favorably (Kircher 2022b: 130-131). Additionally, a propensity to concur with statements exists, particularly in cases of ambiguous phrasing or uncertainty about the appropriate response. Respondents may express over or under rating because of their own likes and dislikes about something or someone. Furthermore, fatigue induced by the questionnaire format can lead to hastened completion, resulting in inaccurate responses or the omission of questions (Schleef 2014: 53).

The survey data could potentially be augmented through the integration of supplementary data collection methodologies, thereby facilitating a comprehensive and multifaceted comprehension of a given linguistic milieu. Methods such as focus groups, ethnographic ap-

proaches, and semi-structured interviews frequently provide invaluable perspectives concerning the intended interpretations of questionnaire participants (Schleef 2014: 54).

2.3.3 Studies of attitudes towards Cantonese using mixed methods

In the context of research methodology, the term “mixed methods” pertains to the utilization of diverse methodological frameworks (Kircher and Hawkey 2022: 330). When using mixed methods to investigate language attitudes, it is common to use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods to design questions, obtain data and conduct analyses (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003: 711). Mixed-methods research acknowledges the significance of both conventional quantitative and qualitative methodologies while introducing a compelling third paradigm option that frequently yields the most informative, comprehensive, well-rounded, and valuable research outcomes (Johnson et al. 2007: 129).

In the study conducted by Long (1998), a mixed-method approach employing questionnaires and interviews was employed to investigate a sample of 103 participants, spanning an age range from 12 to over 60 and representing diverse demographic backgrounds. The findings of the study indicated that respondents held generally positive attitudes towards both Cantonese and Putonghua, with a notable preference for Cantonese. Furthermore, the study revealed that Putonghua was perceived to enjoy higher prestige and value in comparison to other Chinese dialects, which were regarded as advantageous for personal development.

In the study conducted by Tang (2006), the researcher employed MGT and questionnaires to examine the language attitudes exhibited by a cohort of 600 secondary school students situated in Guangzhou. The investigation focused on their attitudes towards three languages: Cantonese, Putonghua, and English. The findings revealed that, in both aspects of language status and emotional perceptions associated with these languages, Putonghua received relatively low evaluations, while Cantonese was rated relatively higher. English, on the other hand, was positioned approximately midway in terms of evaluation. The language attitudes of the participants were found to be primarily influenced by factors such as their linguistic environments within their households, the duration of their residency in Guangdong Province, and the specific urban locales in which they resided. In contrast, variables such as age and literacy level were observed to have minimal impact on their language attitudes.

Lai (2010) conducted a comprehensive study using questionnaires plus interviews with 836 Hong Kong secondary school students, aiming to elucidate the correlation between social

class and language attitudes towards English, Putonghua and Cantonese in Hong Kong. These students were categorised into three groups according to the occupation of their parents and their education attainment level: middle class, low-middle class, and working class. The results of the survey showed that respondents from the middle class rated English and Cantonese the highest among the three groups, while their ratings of Putonghua were the lowest among the three groups. Conversely, respondents from the working class rated Putonghua more positively, which is reflected in the fact that the instrumental value and status of Putonghua was rated higher than by the other two social classes. Respondents from the low-middle class rated English and Cantonese slightly lower than those from the middle class and slightly higher than those from the working class, and rated Putonghua more positively than those from the middle class. Nevertheless, the interview component of the study did not demonstrate a strong aspiration among working-class respondents to establish Putonghua as their primary linguistic capital. Through questionnaires and interviews, Lai concludes that English is a symbol of higher socio-economic status.

Zhang Bennan (2011) used a questionnaire plus MGT to investigate the attitudes of 635 students from 17 secondary schools in Hong Kong, with regard to Cantonese, English, and Putonghua. The research findings demonstrate that students of both genders exhibited affective preferences for male speakers in Cantonese, while favoring female speakers in English and Putonghua. Moreover, the cognitive dimension of the study indicated that female students held a generally more favorable disposition towards foreign languages such as English and Putonghua in comparison to their male counterparts, although these gender-based disparities in preferences did not manifest affectively.

Lai (2011) conducted a survey on cultural identity and language attitudes among students from 36 schools in Hong Kong using questionnaires plus interviews. The results showed that those who identified themselves as 'Hongkongers' exhibited the most robust predisposition for integrating Cantonese and English languages, with relatively diminished inclinations towards Putonghua. Conversely, those identifying themselves as 'Chinese' displayed the least pronounced integrative orientation concerning Cantonese and English, while at the same time manifesting the most prominent affirmative orientation towards Putonghua. In order to make a comparison with the 2001 study, Lai (2012) adopted a similar research method, with a total of 1145 students who answered the questionnaire. The results of the comparison with the 2001 study showed that the respondents' attitudes towards the three languages were basically the same, but the attitudes towards Putonghua were significantly more positive.

Shan and Li (2018) used a questionnaire to investigate the language attitudes of 300 Guangzhou respondents who were born and grew up in Guangzhou, and were 18-50 years old. The researchers used interviews to conduct an in-depth investigation of 24 respondents. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate Cantonese, Mandarin and English on a five-point Likert scale. The results of the study show that more than 90% of the respondents were bilingual or multilingual, and in general the respondents rated Cantonese higher than Putonghua or English. However, through the cross-comparison analyses with the age, gender, and education level of the respondents, it was found that women, those with higher education, and those whose parents were non-Guangzhou residents, had more positive attitudes towards Putonghua.

Studies utilizing mixed-method approaches acknowledge the inherent significance of both conventional quantitative and qualitative research modalities, while concurrently presenting a potent tertiary paradigm option. This alternative frequently yields research outcomes that are most comprehensive, enlightening, harmonized, and practically valuable (Johnson et al. 2007: 129).

Interviews encompass the process of extracting information from a participant by a researcher within a speech event exhibiting characteristics akin to a one-on-one discourse. The principal objective revolves around the direct extraction of information regarding individuals' beliefs, cognitive processes, and emotional states concerning language, alongside the underlying rationales for such perspectives (Karatsareas 2022: 99).

2.3.4 Studies of attitudes towards Cantonese using alternative methods

Liang Sihua (2015) employs the methodology of linguistic ethnography to produce an extensive collection of novel, intricate, and semi-naturalistic interactional data. The researcher spent a week at each of the two schools in Guangzhou, during which she observed the language use of fifth-grade students in class, after school, during playtime; as well as the teachers in the office. She also conducted interviews with 26 students, two parents, and nine teachers. Liang in her study did not give a totalising, coherent conclusion of the interviewees' attitudes towards language, but rather recorded conversations with and between the interviewees.

Bacon-Shone et al. (2015) conducted a telephone survey encompassing 2,049 respondents, followed by an additional survey involving respondents who expressed willingness to undertake both an oral proficiency test and a written proficiency test. These surveys were ana-

lyzed in conjunction with language-related data obtained from the Hong Kong 2011 Census. The findings of this investigation revealed several significant trends. Firstly, Hong Kong is experiencing a gradual shift toward trilingualism, with the primary languages being Cantonese, English, and Putonghua. Secondly, Cantonese remains the dominant language for oral communication in various contexts within Hong Kong. Thirdly, English holds significant importance in the workplace, particularly in the realm of written communication. Additionally, Hong Kong exhibits linguistic diversity, with at least 27 different languages spoken within the region. The study also provided a geographical mapping of the distribution of various languages across Hong Kong and showed that young Southeast Asian immigrants residing in Hong Kong predominantly employ English, with some usage of Cantonese, whereas older Southeast Asian individuals do not use English, Cantonese, or Putonghua.

In my opinion, telephone interviewing is a project that requires a huge amount of human and material support, and furthermore, as Hoffman (2014: 31) notes, in the current epoch of telemarketing dominance, this approach could be interpreted as a vexatious imposition. As a result, the utilization of arbitrary sampling might exhibit diminished efficacy or suitability for attaining the authentically spontaneous linguistic expressions sought after in the majority of sociolinguistic investigations.

2.3.5 Summary of the above studies and the effects on the present study

Kalmar et al. (1987), Gao et al. (1998, 2019), Lai (2001, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2012), Ng and Zhao (2015), Shum et al. (2023) chose to study the language attitudes of university students only, whereas Tang (2006), Wang and Ladegaard (2008), Lai (2010) focused on the language attitudes of secondary school students, with Liang Sihua (2015) focusing on studying the language attitudes of students and their parents and teachers in two primary schools. It is noteworthy that these studies have primarily targeted distinct age cohorts as their subject populations.

It is pertinent to note that these investigations, despite their merit, have adopted a somewhat limited perspective by not considering a comprehensive array of factors that are known to influence language attitudes, including but not limited to social status, educational attainment, and geographical context. Consequently, the outcomes of these studies may be more accurately construed as indicative of the language attitudes within the particular demographic

under scrutiny, rather than offering a holistic portrayal of broader societal attitudes towards Cantonese.

Several prior studies, including those by Long (1998), Lee and Leung (2010), Bacon-Shone et al. (2015), and Shan and Li (2018), have incorporated age, gender, educational attainment, and other relevant variables into their research methodologies. Notably, the research approaches employed by Long (1998) and Shan and Li (2018) are particularly instructive. Long's (1998) and Shan and Li's (2018) investigations encompassed the distribution of questionnaires to a diverse range of respondents, encompassing various age groups, genders, and occupational backgrounds. This approach facilitated the examination of how diverse factors impact attitudes. Additionally, the inclusion of supplementary interviews in their studies allowed for a more comprehensive exploration of respondents' attitudes. The combination of questionnaires and interviews demonstrated a high level of feasibility.

In contrast, Bacon-Shone et al. (2015) conducted a telephone survey, which, while seemingly compelling, necessitates considerable support from a sizeable research team and substantial research funding. This requirement currently imposes limitations on the feasibility of undertaking a similar experiment.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In Chapter 2, I have discussed several methods commonly used in the study of Cantonese language attitudes – MGT, questionnaires, mixed methods. And I concluded that mixed-methods is the most commonly used and effective method for the study of Cantonese language attitudes, and also the most suitable method to be used in my research. In order to better demonstrate the relationship between each variable (gender, age, social-economic status, family language, geographical location, educational level) and language attitudes, this study will combine quantitative and qualitative analysis to study Yulin people's language attitudes towards Yulinese. In the quantitative analysis part, the questionnaire was mainly used, which has the advantages of high standardization, uniform and objective scoring, can be conducted on a large scale, and is accurate and objective (Yan 2018: 68). Additionally, to corroborate and delve deeper into the findings derived from the quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis through interviews is incorporated. All these will be described in detail in this section.

3.1 Quantitative analysis

There have been many references to quantitative research methods on language attitudes, as discussed in Chapter 2. Among these methods, questionnaires constitute a prevalent research methodology in language attitudes studies. Participants respond to a set of inquiries concerning their language evaluation, motivation to learn the language, and language preference. The researcher uses the collected questionnaires to examine the characteristics and phenomena evident within the sample and extrapolates conclusions about the broader population (Wang Yundong 2007: 141-143).

The qualitative analysis part of this dissertation uses questionnaires, with the difference that I used online questionnaires to collect the data. I consider the technology of the online questionnaire is well ready, especially after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic; moreover, the online questionnaire has been widely used by the statistical survey departments all over China (Gong 2021), and it is a familiar and acceptable way for the respondents of this study. Given the innovative nature of the method, I will explain the advantages of choosing

online questionnaires, the sampling method, questionnaire design, and survey steps in detail in the following sections.

3.1.1 The advantages of the proposed research instruments

Online questionnaires are becoming increasingly popular in research due to the rapid development of the Internet and the increase in the number of Internet users (Gurău 2007; Dewaele and McCloskey 2015). Compared with traditional paper questionnaires, online questionnaires have a few advantages, first of all the lower cost of data collection, where the cost is not only monetary but also in terms of time. Gurău (2007: 113) in his study gives the observes that Internet surveys incur only 10% of the cost associated with telephone surveys and merely 20% of the expenses attributed to traditional mail surveys. And Buchanan (2007: 448) points out that online questionnaires enable the automated acquisition of substantial datasets, substantially reducing both cost and time requirements in comparison to traditional pen-and-paper counterparts.

In addition to the advantages of research costs, online questionnaires offer a streamlined and expeditious means of data collection, facilitating the broadening of research participant demographics by enabling researchers to access more extensive and globally diverse sample populations (Dewaele and McCloskey 2015: 229). At the same time, online questionnaire facilitate the selective engagement of minority and specialized demographic groups that might otherwise pose challenges in terms of accessibility (Buchanan and Smith 1999: 126; Regmi et al. 2016: 641).

For respondents, online questionnaires afford a heightened degree of respondent anonymity, thereby enhancing self-esteem and concurrently mitigating levels of social anxiety and social desirability (Joinson 1999: 437, as quoted in Fox et al. 2003: 167). Also, the respondent can answer the questionnaire at a time convenient to him/her, or he/she can answer the questionnaire slowly or quickly according to his/her own habits, in addition to completing the survey in a number of instalments (Regmi et al. 2016: 641-642).

In my opinion, there is another point to consider: a reasonably designed online questionnaire can help the researcher to get real and reliable data and receive fewer invalid questionnaires. Just as Regmi et al. (2016: 641) pointed out in their research, respondents must answer one question before moving on to the next, so the construction of an online questionnaire can also help to increase the response rate for each item. Nayak and Narayan (2019: 34) also have a similar opinion, arguing that online questionnaires exhibited a reduced incidence

of errors, uncompleted items, and instances of item refusal when compared to traditional paper-based surveys .

All the above arguments show that online questionnaire is economical and efficient. Since my survey respondents are all in China, it is very important to find a platform that is familiar and convenient for them. After comparing several Chinese online questionnaire platforms, I chose Wenjuanxing (问卷星), which is a professional, technologically mature Chinese online survey platform with a large number of users. By December 2022, more than 200 million questionnaires have been distributed through this platform (Wenjuanxing 2023). In addition, questionnaires released through Wenjuanxing can be disseminated and answered through WeChat, which is the number one instant messaging software in China in terms of the number of its users (QuestMobile 2022). It is a very effective way to find respondents and send questionnaires. As for how to ensure the authenticity and validity of the data, I set a condition on Wenjuanxing that each WeChat account is only allowed to fill out one questionnaire, so the same respondent cannot fill out the questionnaire multiple times by logging in again.

3.1.2 The design of the questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of three distinct sections.

(1) The first section, pertaining to language attitudes.

Unlike common questionnaires, I did not include questions to collect respondents' personal information as the first part of the questionnaire, because I wanted the respondents to see the questions related to the study directly, rather than answering some questions related to themselves first, for fear that the respondents would get bored and would not want to continue to answer the questions.

This section consisted of 20 sentences that encapsulated various aspects of language attitudes. The design of these sentences drew from comprehensive references such as Long (1998), Chen Songchen (1999), Lai (2005, 2007), Wang Limei (2008), Shan and Li (2018), as well as Gardner's (2010) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery.

The language attitudes section aimed to evaluate different dimensions. Specifically, questions 1-5 assessed the affinity of Yulinese, these questions shedding light on the perceived importance of Yulinese for identity, inclusion, and understanding of the culture.

Questions 6-10 gauged the practical value of Yulinese and of learning it, e.g., knowing Yulinese is helpful in finding a job or in future promotion.

Questions 11-15 examined the attitudes towards the speakers of Yulinese; as Dragojevic et al. (2021: 60) said, attitudes towards speakers of different languages are also part of the study of language attitudes. The respondents' positive or negative attitudes towards speakers of Yulinese can be a side effect of how they view Yulinese.

Questions 16-20 focused on language anxiety, i.e. whether the respondents would feel uncomfortable or anxious when using Yulinese in different scenarios. If the respondents felt anxious when using Yulinese, this would have a negative impact on their attitudes.

Questions 21-25 focused on the attitudes of the respondents' family members towards Yulinese. Question 21 probed whether the respondents' parents thought it was important to learn Yulinese, and the respondents' choices were "strongly disagree", "disagree somewhat", and "neutral", "agree somewhat", "strongly agree", which represent the degree of importance of Yulin dialect as perceived by the parents. Questions 22-25 focus on how often the respondents' parents and family members talk to the respondents using Yulinese at home and in public, and the respondents had "never", "rarely", "sometimes", "often" and "always" as the choice to reflect the extent.

The questionnaire employed a Likert scale to provide five possible answers to a statement or question that allows respondents to indicate their positive-to-negative strength of agreement regarding the statements, with each option corresponding to a numeric value for statistical analysis (see Table 1).

Table 1: Answers to each section and their corresponding scores

<i>Questions number</i>	<i>Options and the numeric value they represent</i>				
Questions 1-15	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree Somewhat 2	Neutral 3	Agree Somewhat 4	Strongly Agree 5
Questions 16-20	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree Somewhat 2	Neutral 3	Agree Somewhat 4	Strongly Agree 5
Questions 21-25	Never 1	Rarely 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Always 5

(2) The second section on language acquisition and use

In the section on the respondents' ratings of their own Yulinese, these ratings were categorised as "not at all", "a little bit", "not bad", "good" and "very fluently". The

respondents' answers were easily coded using five Arabic numerals: "1, 2, 3, 4, 5", with "1" representing the most negative option "Not at all", and "5" as the most positive option "Very fluent". Converting this section into a numeric scale is compatible with the first section, allowing the data from both sections to be processed together. Similar techniques are not uncommon in survey research (Oppenheim 2004: 243).

The section on languages/dialects first learned and used by the respondents when they were children was a multiple-choice question. Considering that the number of Chinese languages and dialects is too large to list them all, all Chinese dialects were listed in the form of a dialect group (see § 1.1 for a discussion of dialect groups), except for Putonghua and Yulinese, which were listed in the form of a specific option. At the same time, considering that some interviewees do not know to which dialect group their own regiolect belongs, the dialects spoken in Yulin are specifically labeled in the sections of Hakka dialect, Guangdong dialect, and Southwest official dialect. Other languages in China are represented by "other", as shown as following:

- a) Putonghua
- b) Yulinese
- c) Hakka or varieties of Hakka (e.g. Bobai dialect, Dilao dialect, Luchuan dialect)
- d) Cantonese or other varieties of Cantonese (e.g. Shangli dialect, Xiali dialect Rongxian dialect, Shinan dialect)
- e) Min or other varieties of Min (e.g. Holo)
- f) Xiang or other varieties of Xiang
- g) Gan or other varieties of Gan
- h) Hui or other varieties of Hui
- i) Wu or other varieties of Wu
- j) Jin or other varieties of Jin
- k) Southwestern Mandarin (e.g. Sichuan dialect, Guiliu dialect)
- l) other

In the section on the language used in different contexts, a grid was used. A grid represents an enhancement of the typical inventory format, resembling more of a two-way inventory. It serves as an uncomplicated and direct method to efficiently gather information without the need for extensive questioning (Oppenheim 2004: 247-249). In the vertical axis of the grid, I list seven contexts: at home, at school, at work, at the food market, on buses, in hospitals, and in the offices of government organisations. Again, because of the large number of languages spoken in China, and because it was not the focus of the study to determine which dialects other than Yulinese were spoken by the respondents, in the horizontal axis of the grid I only

list “Putonghua”, “Yulinese” and “other”, respondents could choose one or more options according to their own situation. The use of the repertory-grid technique can also be found in Oppenheim’s (2004: 242) study.

(3) The third section, demographic information.

This section collects background information about the people who participated in the questionnaire, such as: age, gender, place of birth, permanent place of residence, level of education, and occupation.

Li Mingyu (2016: 221) contends that the age range of 19-40 represents the primary period of language usage and that individuals within this age group serve as the predominant “spokespersons” of society, exhibiting mature thinking and proficient language application skills. Thus, their perspectives best reflect the overall linguistic landscape and competition within society. Consistent with Shan and Li’s (2018: 35) study, which emphasizes individuals aged 18-50, I concur with their viewpoint. However, to account for the potential influence of age on language attitudes, this research extends its consideration to respondents across various age groups. By adopting a more comprehensive categorization approach, this study enables an examination of language perspectives across different generations. Accordingly, respondents are classified into seven distinct groups: 19 and under, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, and 70+.

Considering the identity and transmission of the Yulinese language, Yulinese people who were born and raised in Yulin city are the main target of this survey, while at the same time, Yulin has attracted people from other cities to settle here because of its industrial development, economic prosperity, and the development of the education sector (see § 1.2.1, for details). Therefore, when exploring attitudes towards Yulinese, those who move to live and work in the Yulin city were also included in the survey. Taking all these factors into account, I classified the respondents’ places of birth and long-term residence in the questionnaire as: Yulin district, Fumian district, Rong county, Beiliu county level city, Luchuan county, Bobai county, Xingye county, and other cities.

This categorization helped to compare the attitudes of respondents born and living in different areas towards Yulinese. In addition, the place of birth and permanent residence of respondents are useful for identifying whether respondents are native Yulinese or first-generation immigrants.

In contrast to Shan and Li’s (2018: 35) study, which categorizes respondents’ educational level as “below bachelor’s degree” and “bachelor’s degree and above”, a more nuanced

classification is employed in this research. Due to the educational policies between the 1960s and the 1990s, it is observed that few respondents over the age of 50 possess a “bachelor’s degree and above”. Therefore, the education level is divided into four main categories: high school and below, college, undergraduate, and postgraduate and above, better reflecting the education level of the surveyed individuals in Yulin.

Sørensen (2005: 122) points out that factors such as occupation, education, income, sources of income, and residence are elements of social class. However, I believe that asking my respondents about their housing, income and sources of income in the questionnaire will make them feel that their privacy is invaded; therefore, I did not use this criterion to classify the respondents’ socio-economic status. With reference to Shan and Li’s (2018: 35) study, this study classified respondents’ occupations as follows:

- a) Students
- b) White-collar workers (e.g. civil servants, clerks, teachers, legal professionals, medical professionals, financial professionals, accountants, administrators, designers, journalists, etc.)
- c) Blue-collar workers (e.g. manual laborers, operators, renovators, maintenance staff of various public utilities, etc.)
- d) Self-employed/entrepreneurs
- e) Farmers
- f) Housewives/ house husbands
- g) Retired individuals

Meanwhile, in order to give respondents a better understanding, I labeled the specific occupations engaged by white-collar and blue-collar in the questionnaire based on the examples given on the Chinese premier online brand, SOUHU website (2016).

This classification effectively captures the varying attitudes towards Yulinese among individuals with different income levels, while avoiding detailed inquiries about income and occupation that may lead to respondent resentment.

3.1.3 Sampling method

According to Hoffman (2014: 31), there exist two primary methodologies for data acquisition: the method of random sampling and judgment samples. The former involves the selection of individuals’ names or addresses from sources such as electoral lists or telephone directories. While random sampling adheres closely to representativeness, it might not seamlessly align with project objectives concerning specific demographic criteria. At present, only a limited

number of studies make use of random sampling techniques. Alternatively, judgment samples encompass methodologies like the snowball or friend of a friend techniques to establish connections. Judgement samples stand as the prevailing approach due to both methodological and pragmatic considerations. These samples target individuals who conform to predefined study criteria, including pertinent social categories. They leverage the researcher's extended social networks and community contacts, employing the "friend of a friend" or snowball strategy to enlist additional participants: individuals within the study and community contacts are solicited for recommendations of potential participants who would be open to engaging in the research (Hoffman 2014: 31). The most commonly used sampling method in qualitative research is snowball sampling (Parker et al. 2019: 4) , and snowball sampling was employed as an effective approach to identify relevant individuals through personal connections (Naderifar et al. 2017: 2).

Therefore, in this study, I choose the snowball sampling method. Firstly, I contacted a retired state institution employee and a professionally active healthcare worker, both of whom worked and lived in Yulin and met my requirements for respondents. I asked them to help me fill out the questionnaire and send it to respondents they knew who also met the requirements that I specified. Through their help, I contacted respondents in several villages around Yuzhou District and asked them to complete the questionnaire. I then contacted five Yulin teachers employed in either high schools or colleges , all of whom were born and raised in Yulin, and asked them to send the link to the questionnaire to their friends, family, and colleagues, and in turn to ask their contacts to help forward the link to more respondents who met the requirements. In addition, I contacted 50 students who graduated from one of Yulin high schools in 2008 and 44 students who graduated from one of Yulin's middle schools in 2005, and asked for their permission to fill out the questionnaire and to help me contact more respondents who volunteered to fill out the questionnaire. Initially, suitable individuals were identified, and then they helped to distribute the questionnaire to their respective WeChat social groups through snowball sampling, thereby reaching a larger number of potential respondents. This method proved effective in reducing the number of invalid questionnaires. The distribution of questionnaires took place between June 16, 2023 and September 16, 2023. A total of 406 questionnaires were received.

3.1.4 Research process

The study was conducted in three parts. In the preparation stage the main focus was to ensure the accuracy of the questionnaire and its Chinese translation, see § 3.1.4.1 for details; in the pilot stage, I sought ten respondents to fill in the questionnaire and conducted a statistical reliability and validity analysis of their responses, see § 3.1.4.2 for a detailed analysis. After ensuring the viability of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was formally released to a wider range of respondents via WeChat and Wenjuanxing, as explained in detail in § 3.1.4.3.

3.1.4.1 Preparation stage

During the preparation stage, an extensive review of existing literature on language attitudes was conducted. This review served as the basis for identifying the dimensions of language attitudes and formulating relevant questions for this study. The questionnaire was initially designed in English, considering the advice and guidance of my supervisors. Subsequently, the English version of the questionnaire was translated into Chinese (the participants' first language), and further consultation with a Chinese expert to ensure linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness.

In order to enable the respondents of all educational levels to understand the questionnaire well without any misunderstanding due to the level of their English-language proficiency, only the Chinese version of the questionnaire was presented to all respondents during the survey. At the same time, the wording and question format used in the questionnaire were kept as simple and consistent as possible, and there were only closed-ended questions.

3.1.4.2 Questionnaire pilot phase and reliability and validity analysis

Following the revision process, a pilot survey was conducted with a sample size of 10 participants from June 7, 2023 to June 12, 2023. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents through WeChat. Subsequently, the collected responses were subjected to reliability and validity analysis using Python (version 3.10), a versatile programming language widely employed in data science and artificial intelligence research due to its flexibility and high level of abstraction.

Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of study results, indicating the degree of stability under repeated measurements conducted in the same conditions (Chen Xiangming 2000: 99; Wang Yundong 2007: 84). Cronbach's alpha, a widely used indicator of internal consistency, assesses whether the questions in a questionnaire effectively measure the same underlying concept (Zhang and Dong 2013: 366). Shan and Li (2018: 36-38) employed Cronbach's alpha for reliability analysis in their study. A Cronbach's alpha value above 0.8 indicates excellent reliability, values above 0.7 are deemed acceptable, values above 0.6 require revision but still retain some value, and values below 0.6 necessitate questionnaire redesign with new items (George and Mallery 2022: 260). Cronbach's alpha and standardized Cronbach's alpha were computed for each group of questions in the questionnaire (results are presented in the table below). The reliability coefficients for each question group exceeded 0.7, with some surpassing 0.9, indicating high reliability and passing the reliability test.

Table 2: Reliability analysis

<i>Section</i>	<i>Cronbach α</i>	<i>Standardized Cronbach α</i>
The affinity of the Yulin language	0.77	0.773
The practical value of Yulinese	0.74	0.741
Attitude toward Yulinese speaker	0.73	0.711
Language anxiety	0.9	0.899
Encouragement from family members	0.94	0.936

Validity pertains to the degree of accuracy in measuring the intended concepts or variables within a study (Wang Yundong 2007: 88). In statistical terms, validity can be assessed through factor analysis, which involves two essential parameters: the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. A KMO value exceeding 0.6 and a p-value below 0.05 for Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicate that the observed relationships align with the anticipated patterns established by domain experts (Zhou Jun 2020: 51). I found out that all questionnaire items exhibited reliability values exceeding 0.6, and the corresponding p-values were less than 0.05.

Table 3: Validity analysis

<i>Section</i>	<i>KMO</i>	<i>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</i>		
		<i>Approx. Chi-Square</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P value</i>
The affinity of the Yulin language	0.75	123.914	10	<0.0001
The practical value of Yulinese	0.689	131.041	10	<0.0001
Attitude toward Yulinese speaker	0.763	155.468	10	<0.0001
Language anxiety	0.843	308.703	10	<0.0001
Encouragement from family members	0.828	619.747	10	<0.0001

The results of the reliability and validity analyses indicate that while the questionnaire is not without flaws, it exhibits a high level of practicality.

Additionally, I incorporated two modifications to the questionnaire based on the feedback received from the respondents. Firstly, I refined the Chinese wording of questions 1 and 16-20 to enhance colloquialism and improve comprehension among the participants. Secondly, considering that some respondents encountered difficulties in interpreting the numerical values of the Likert scale, I replaced the numerical values with descriptive terms in Chinese, such as “strongly disagree”, “disagree somewhat”, “neutral”, “agree somewhat”, “strongly agree” or “never”, “rarely”, “sometimes”, “often” and “always” also listed them vertically in accordance with the customary Chinese questionnaire.

3.1.4.3 Formal questionnaire survey

Commencing on June 16, 2023, the official distribution of the questionnaire took place through the China-based Questionnaire website- Wenjuanxing (问卷星). Promotion of the survey was carried out using China-based WeChat, and all respondents completed the survey online.

3.1.5 Data processing

In order to ensure validity, I first conducted a preliminary data cleaning of the 406 questionnaires that were returned. According to my definition of the target population, only those respondents who were born and raised in Yulin and have lived there for a long period of

time are the main target population of this survey, so those who were not born in Yulin and have not lived there long enough will be excluded from the data sample. Finally, a total of 393 questionnaires were used for data analysis. In order to ensure that each independent variable had a sufficient number of responses to be statistically analyzed, the number of cases for the different subgroups was immediately counted, and the results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Respondents' demographic characteristics

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Number of Valid Cases</i>
Gender	Male	169
	Female	224
Age	19 and below	33
	20-29	63
	30-39	137
	40-49	70
	50-59	68
	60-69	13
	Above 70	9
Educational level	High school or below	127
	Three-/two- years college	96
	BA	153
	MA and above	17
Family background	Native	334
	Migrant	59
Occupation	Student	74
	White-collar worker	113
	Blue-collar worker	38
	Self-employed/ Entrepreneur	70
	Farmer	35
	Homemaker	22
	Retiree	41

In relation to the gender composition of the respondents, 43% are male, and 57% female, indicating a greater representation of female participants. As traditional statistical studies indicate, women are more likely to participate in questionnaires than men (Curtin et al. 2000: 414; Moore and Tarnai 2010: 203). Furthermore, Becker (2022: 4) also mentions in his study that women are more likely than men to respond to online questionnaires after receiving an invitation. Given the non-significant difference in the proportion of male and female respondents in this study, the survey data is representative of language attitudes among different gender groups.

Regarding age distribution, the highest percentage of respondents fell within the 30-39 age group (34.9%), followed by the 40-49 age group (17.8%) and the 50-59 age group (17.3%). The 20-29 age group comprised 16% of respondents, while those under 19 years old

constituted 8.4%, and respondents aged 60-69 and 70 years and above accounted for 3.3% and 2.3%. Several factors contribute to this age distribution. Firstly, in accordance with Moore and Tarnai (2010: 203), younger individuals are more inclined to participate in questionnaires, leading to fewer responses from individuals over the age of 60. Secondly, the lower utilization of smartphones among those over 60 contribute to their lower representation in the survey. Lastly, as reported by the Statistics Bureau of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (2021), Yulin city's population aged 0-14 years accounted for 29.04%; the population aged 15-59 years accounted for 55.16%; the population aged 60 years and above accounted for 15.8% of the population. It reveals a higher concentration of people in working age or approaching it, with only a relatively small proportion of the elderly. Consequently, the limited number of respondents aged over 60 is deemed unlikely to exert a substantial impact on the study results, given its representativeness of Yulin city's overall age distribution.

In this survey, 32.3% of the respondents possessed a high school education or below, 24.4% held a degree from a two or three-year college, 38.9% had obtained an undergraduate degree, and 4.3% possessed at least a graduate-level degree. The sample adequately represented various educational attainment levels, except for those with postgraduate and advanced degrees. However, the proportion of individuals with educational levels beyond graduate studies in China is relatively small, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2022), less than 1% of the 1.4 million individuals in the national sample (6 years and older) have attained a MA degree or above. Consequently, the observed 4.3% of respondents in this questionnaire holding MA degree or above aligns with the national demographic distribution and provides insights into the perspectives of the more educated Yulin City population.

In the context of occupational distribution among survey respondents, 28.8% identified as white-collar workers, 18.8% as students, 17.8% as entrepreneurs, and 10.4% as retired individuals. Notably, these groups represent the more educated and economically affluent segments of China's society and economy. Conversely, 9.7% were categorized as blue-collar workers, 8.9% as farmers, and 5.6% as unemployed homemakers, comprising the economically disadvantaged segments. According to Curtin et al. (2000: 419-420), the better educated and more affluent segments were more likely to participate in the survey than the less educated and less affluent. Therefore, the number of blue-collar workers, farmers and unemployed homemakers is relatively small in this study.

In addition to the variables mentioned above, the respondents' birthplace and residence are factors that may exert influence on their attitudes toward Yulinese. A majority of respondents were born within the primary Yulin dialect-speaking region, comprising 55.7% in Yuzhou

district and 8.1% in Fumian district. The attitudes of this subset of respondents reflect the language attitudes of native-born inhabitants of Yulin. Conversely, respondents born outside Yulinese-speaking areas constituted 36.2% (with 6.6%, 3.8%, 4.1%, 5.1%, 1.5%, and 15% born in Xingye, Beiliu, Bobai, Luchuan, Rongxian, and other cities, respectively). The attitudes of this group reflect the language attitudes of non-native speakers toward Yulinese.

Furthermore, in terms of current permanent residence, a majority of respondents (74% in Yuzhou district and 3.1% in Fumian district) reside in areas where Yulinese is spoken. Notably, 14.5% of respondents reported permanent residence in other cities. Considering the initial data filtering process, this subset probably comprises individuals who were born and raised in Yulin but later relocated to another city for occupational or familial reasons. The percentages of respondents residing in Xingye, Beiliu, Bobai, Luchuan, and Rongxian, which all are cities and counties within the area of Yulin City, were 2.8%, 1%, 0.8%, 3.1%, and 0.8%, respectively.

In brief, the composition of the respondents is an adequate representation of the various types of people in Yulin. I believe that the data samples obtained are good enough to carry out the next step of the analysis.

3.1.6 Analyzing tool

In analyzing the questionnaire, I enlisted the help of experts in statistics, and with their advice data analysis and visualization will be conducted using Python (version 3.10)², as indicated above.

Demographic characteristics of the analyzed population will be visualized using pie charts with the library `matplotlib.pyplot` (version 5.14.1)³. Since Likert scale questions on language attitudes are unlikely to follow a normal distribution, as assumed in more basic statistical models, additional steps are taken. Firstly, the results will be visualized in the form of violin plots (library `matplotlib.pyplot`) to depict their actual distribution, reveal any skewness, and identify potential cases of bimodal distribution. Secondly, correlations between them would be calculated and visualized in the form of a heatmap. Kendall's Tau was chosen over Spearman's rank correlation and Pearson's correlation in this analysis due to several key factors. The data under investigation primarily consists of ordinal variables with non-normally distributed Likert scale responses, making Tau's robustness to outliers and ability to handle

2 Python is a high-level, interpreted programming language widely used in data analysis, artificial intelligence, scientific computing, and automation.

3 a versatile Python library dedicated to generating static, animated, and interactive visualizations.

ordinal data a more suitable choice. Additionally, Tau assesses monotonic relationships, which is appropriate for cases where variables move in the same direction without assuming linearity, a crucial advantage over Pearson's correlation. Moreover, the preference for Tau aligns with the need for a more intuitive and interpretable measure, particularly relevant in this context. Overall, Tau's flexibility, resistance to outliers, and applicability to the specific characteristics of the data make it the preferred correlation coefficient for this analysis. Results with statistical significance of $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$ were marked on the heatmap accordingly. Nevertheless, it should be noted that while Tau was chosen for its robustness, it is somewhat less sensitive in detecting relationships between the analyzed variables.

Questions on language attitude will be analyzed using cluster analysis, which is a data exploration technique that groups similar data points or objects based on their similarities or dissimilarities without imposing any preconceived theories or assumptions about the data. It is particularly suitable for analyzing Likert scale questions because it offers a data-driven, flexible, and exploratory approach. Likert scale data often involves ordinal responses, nonlinear relationships, and complex patterns that may not adhere to a researcher's theory. Cluster analysis can uncover hidden relationships, segment respondents with similar response patterns, and provide interpretable groupings, aiding in the exploration of nuanced attitudes or behaviors within the data. Kmeans function from library `sklearn.cluster` version 0.0.1 post would be used.

Data will be divided into 2 to 9 clusters and analyzed accordingly. However, it's important to acknowledge that cluster analysis has its limitations. One significant limitation is that it allows researcher to choose an arbitrary number of clusters, which can introduce subjectivity into the analysis. Therefore, subsequently created clusters will be tested for statistically significant differences among them. This test will not be limited to attitude questions but will also encompass demographic questions that were not considered by the algorithm during cluster formation to prevent bias. This approach allows for the characterization of these groups in a manner that is both easy to interpret and directly derived from observational data.

The test of statistical significance within clusters was performed using Fisher's Exact Test for binary variables and Kruskal-Wallis Test for Likert scale questions. Fisher's Exact Test was chosen over the Chi-squared test due to the specific circumstances of the analysis. Fisher's Exact Test is particularly well-suited for situations with small sample sizes or when expected cell counts in a contingency table are low. In such cases, the Chi-squared test may produce less reliable results as it relies on approximations that may not hold when the sample size is small. The choice of the Kruskal-Wallis Test over ANOVA and t-tests is justified in

several scenarios. Firstly, the Kruskal-Wallis Test is non-parametric, making it suitable for data that doesn't follow a normal distribution, which is a common real-world occurrence. This is especially important for Likert scale data, which is often ordinal and not normally distributed. Additionally, the Kruskal-Wallis Test is robust to outliers, ensuring reliable results even in the presence of extreme values. When comparing multiple groups, it can effectively handle the analysis without the assumptions and limitations of ANOVA. Statistical significance was of $p < 0.05$ was assumed, while statistical test were performed using library `scipy 1.11.2`. Data visualization, in form of Sankey diagram depicting flow of respondents between increasing number of clusters was performed using library `plotly 5.14.1`.

3.2 Qualitative analysis

Questionnaires can provide a large amount of data for this study, but a combination of qualitative and quantitative research is needed to explore the details of the perceptions behind the respondents. Just as Lund (2012: 157) argue, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods allows researchers to use multiple sources of data or methods to validate and cross-verify research outcomes. By comparing and contrasting results from different methods, researchers can increase the reliability and validity of their findings. What is more, qualitative data can help explain the “why” behind quantitative results and add depth to the findings, so researchers can enrich their analysis and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

3.2.1 Research instruments

In the qualitative part of this dissertation, I chose interview as the research method. Traditionally, face-to-face interviews have been recognized as a useful method of collecting qualitative research data (Irani 2019: 3), but with advances in communication technology and the spread of the internet, videoconferencing is gaining traction as an alternative to the traditional face-to-face interview (Irani 2019: 3). COVID-19 has not only accelerated the online survey use, but it has also similarly accelerated the citation of video technologies for live communication (de Villiers et al. 2021: 1764). Compared to online methods such as email interviews, telephone interviews, and online forums, video-conferencing is closer to face-to-face interviews (Tuttas 2015: 123), and video-conferencing not only has the flexibility of scheduling to avoid

geographic and cost constraints, but it also allows interviewees to be interviewed in their own familiar and comfortable environment, which makes them more relaxed. Most importantly, the researcher can see the participants' expressions and movements through the screen (Irani 2019: 4; de Villiers et al. 2021: 1770).

In the study by Krouwel et al. (2019: 5-6), which specifically compared the data and quality generated by face-to-face interviews and videoconferencing, the findings indicated that in this comparison, face-to-face interviews only exhibited a slight superiority over videoconferencing, as interviewees said more. However, it is worth noting that this difference was minimal, so that time and budget limitations could rationalize the inclusion of video call interviews in qualitative research studies.

Considering the advantages and data effects of video calls, this study also used video calls to collect data for the qualitative analysis.

In order to better guide the interviewees to express their true feelings, semi-structured interviews were used in the interview section. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and have the advantage of maintaining the consistency of the interview questions and content. The researcher designs the interview outline according to the research questions and objectives before the study and adjusts it flexibly according to the actual situation during the interview (Lune and Berg 2017: 69).

This interview was presented according to a set outline of questions (see Appendix 1) and also allowed interviewees to ask questions that they felt were relevant. To ensure a high level of reliability, all interviews were conducted by the same researcher (myself). The discussions were all conducted in Putonghua or Yulinese, transcribed and translated into English by myself. After transcription, an academic fluent in both Chinese and English was invited to confirm the accuracy of the translation.

3.2.2 Sampling strategies

Based on the needs of this study, I look for interviewees based on age groups, with each age group consisting of two male and two female interviewees. Thus, a total of 24 respondents were interviewed.

The researcher first found two interviewees and then used them to snowball sample other interviewees who were willing to be interviewed and qualified for the study. The basic information of the interviewees will be shown in § 3.2.6, which includes the gender, age, occupation and so on of the interviewees. The content of the basic personal information of the

interviewees is detailed in the Appendix 1.

3.2.3 Design of the interview

The outline of this interview is based on the studies by Lai (2010, 2011) and Shan and Li (2018).

The interview outline consists of six parts, the first part is the basic information of the interviewees, including which language they would like to use for the interview, their age, occupation, whether they were born and raised in Yulin city or moved to Yulin city to settle down.

The second part is the respondents' language use, including the language they usually use, which language is more useful and a rating of their own and their relatives' Yulin dialect and Putonghua.

The third section is about the respondents' attitudes towards Yulinese, with questions about their attitudes towards Yulinese, about which aspects of using Yulinese they find helpful, the channels via which they have learned Yulinese and Putonghua, and their opinion on how much Yulin dialect is valued in Yulin city.

The fourth section concerns language choice, with questions about the language the respondents use on different occasions, the language they use to communicate with their male and female friends, parents, and children, and whether or not they would let the next generation learn Yulinese.

The fifth section regards the respondents' outlook on language trends. Questions include how respondents think the number of Yulin dialect speakers will change in the future, whether Putonghua will replace Yulinese, whether the younger generation should learn Yulinese, and the necessity of starting a Yulin dialect teaching program in Yulin City.

The sixth section is devoted to other factors affecting language attitudes, which includes questions about the respondents' evaluations of the willingness of locals of different ages to learn Yulinese.

3.2.4 Research process

Based on the issues identified in the questionnaire, I designed an outline of the questions that would be asked in the interviews, which I afterwards discussed with the supervisors and revised accordingly.

Then I contacted the respondents via WeChat, explaining the purpose of this study. After obtaining the consent of the respondents, I agreed on a convenient time for the interview and conducted the interview based on the interview outline.

In the interview process, I used audio recording or transcription form to record the interview. I let the interviewees talk about their point of view as much as possible. However, the order of the interview questions can be changed, some questions can be ignored or I may add other related questions, or the wording of the questions may be changed, based on the situation of the interview.

3.2.5 Data analysis

In the data analysis section of the qualitative research, I used coding and thematic analysis. The data analysis was informed by Guest et al.'s (2012) study.

The initial step involved the comprehensive application of coding to the interview data on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis. Table 5 shows the meaning of codes:

Table 5: Meaning of codes

<i>Coding</i>	<i>meaning</i>
A1, A2, A3, A4	Coding of four interviewees younger than 19 years old
B1, B2, B3, B4	Coding of four interviewees aged 20-29 years old
C1, C2, C3, C4	Coding of four interviewees aged 30-39 years old
D1, D2, D3, D4	Coding of four interviewees aged 40-49 years old
E1, E2, E3, E4	Coding of four interviewees aged 50-59 years old
F1, F2, F3, F4	Coding of four interviewees above 60 years old
01-100	Symbols for the paragraphs in interviews

For example, according to this code list, “A1-01” represents the first paragraph of interviewee A1’s interview within the textual data of his interview.

After the initial coding, I continued to read through the coded data, grouping similar expressions into a theme and naming the theme to help categorize each subsequent theme and to make sense of the implicit meanings of the interviewees, for example, Table 6 shows an example of labeling and coding of the interview data:

Table 6: Examples of categorization of themes

<i>Case ID</i>	<i>Quote</i>	<i>theme</i>
A2-05	I don’t feel competent enough.	Language proficiency of interviewees
F3-13	At home, we usually speak Yulinese. But now, my grandson, because he speaks Putonghua at school, so I can only speak Putonghua with him.	Family language

I then further analyzed the themes by adding new ones or merging them into one broad theme. The final step consists in presenting the themes in each domain in a logical and structured manner, with the ultimate goal of deriving plausible conclusions from the dataset.

3.2.6 The participants involved in the interview

In this study, 24 respondents were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews to address issues that couldn't be explored in depth in the questionnaire. Each interview was limited to 30 minutes. Table 7 below shows the codes and basic information about the respondents.

Table 7: Basic information about the respondents

<i>Cod- ing</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Place of birth</i>	<i>Educational level</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Respondents' own evaluation of the level of Yulin dialect</i>
A1	female	19	Fumian district	university student	student	7
A2	male	19	Yuzhou district	university student	student	7
A3	male	19	Yuzhou district	university student	student	5
A4	female	18	Yuzhou district	university student	student	7
B1	female	28	Yuzhou district	bachelor's degree	self-employed	9
B2	male	24	Yuzhou district	bachelor's degree	freelancer	4.5
B3	male	21	Yuzhou district	university student	student	4
B4	female	29	Yuzhou district	middle school	housewife	10
C1	male	36	Xingye county	high school	driver	5
C2	male	35	Yuzhou district	high school	sales	8
C3	female	35	Yuzhou district	bachelor's degree	teacher	3
C4	female	35	Yuzhou district	master's degree	lawyer	3
D1	male	46	Yuzhou district	middle school	machine operator	10
D2	female	49	Guiguang city	two- years college	accountant	8
D3	female	45	Xingye county	middle school	warehouse management	9.8
D4	male	47	Fumian district	middle school	driver	10
E1	female	54	Yuzhou district	two- years college	retiree	10
E2	female	50	Bobai county	two- years college	factory worker	8
E3	male	53	Yuzhou district	high school	manager of private sector	9.5
E4	male	50	Xingye county	two- years college	musician	9
F1	male	60	Yuzhou district	two- years college	retired industrial workers	9

F2	female	60	Yuzhou district	three- years college	retired medical personnel	10
F3	female	61	Yuzhou district	bachelor's degree	retired government staff	9
F4	male	65	Yuzhou district	-	retired government staff	10

3.3 Research ethics

The ethics issue is often discussed when conducting research using online questionnaires. The fundamental ethical framework of online research encompasses the essential tenets of autonomy, justice, and beneficence (Gurău 2007: 114; Gupta 2017: 4). Autonomy means that every participant has the power to decide whether or not to take part in research; justice means that all research participants should be treated fairly and equally; beneficence mandates that researchers thoroughly assess the potential physical, social, psychological, or medical detriments or risk that participants may encounter as a result of their involvement in the research, while exerting all feasible efforts to minimize these adversities and optimize the advantages extended to them (Kitchin 2007, as quoted in Gupta 2017: 2).

In order for the online questionnaire to fulfill the ethical requirements of autonomy, justice, and beneficence, Gurău (2007: 114) proposes the following requirements in his study:

- a) The provision of comprehensive and unambiguous information concerning the identity of the researcher or researchers, the study's objectives, the intended utilization of collected data (including the dissemination format and level of detail in research results publication, and the individuals with access to such results).
- b) A clear declaration ensuring the safeguarding of participants' privacy.
- c) Guaranteeing the security of both the Internet connection and the data transfer process.
- d) Transparently presenting all potential advantages and disadvantages associated with study participation.
- e) Supplying contact information enabling participants to seek further clarification regarding the research project, as well as the data collection and analysis methodology.

In order to meet the high ethical requirements as mentioned above, my study strictly adhered to the above guidelines throughout the investigation, with special attention paid to the protection of the rights of the research participants. In the first paragraph of the online questionnaire, the researcher's real information as well as the purpose of this study and the form in which the research results were presented were communicated to the respondents, and the respondents were clearly informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and at the same time anonymous (see Appendix 1 for details).

The names of the respondents were not recorded in the questionnaire, and it lacked any inquiries that could provide insights into their personal information, therefore this questionnaire is not problematic in terms of anonymity.

In the interview section, all interviewees participated voluntarily, and before the interview started I would inform the interviewees that they had the freedom to refuse to answer any questions at any time, and were also free to end the interview, most important being the fact that I would not disclose the identity of the interviewees. At the same time, I asked them if they agreed to be recorded; if they agreed, I would use my cell phone's recording software to record the conversation, labeling each recording with a date and filing it on my computer; if the interviewee did not agree to be recorded, I would use a transcript to record the conversation, also naming it with the date the conversation took place and filing it on my computer. At the end of the interview, the content of the conversation was transcribed into a text file, and after the researcher listened to it again to confirm that it was correct, this part of the text file and the audio recording of the interview were sent to the interviewee and the interviewee was asked to confirm that there were no errors in the recording of his views or that there were no views that he/she did not want to show in the study.

Due to the non-sensitive nature of the research topic, the research participants expressed their views voluntarily and cooperatively, thus avoiding the possibility of the researchers falling into unethical practices.

Chapter 4: Statistical findings concerning the respondents' language use

4.1 Language use by respondents

4.1.1 The language variety respondents learned and used in childhood

By analysing the languages learned and used by the respondents in childhood, I found that the vast majority of the respondents (73.79%) had learned and used Putonghua in that period of their lives (see Fig. 2), with 62.85% of the respondents who had learned and used Yulinese as children.

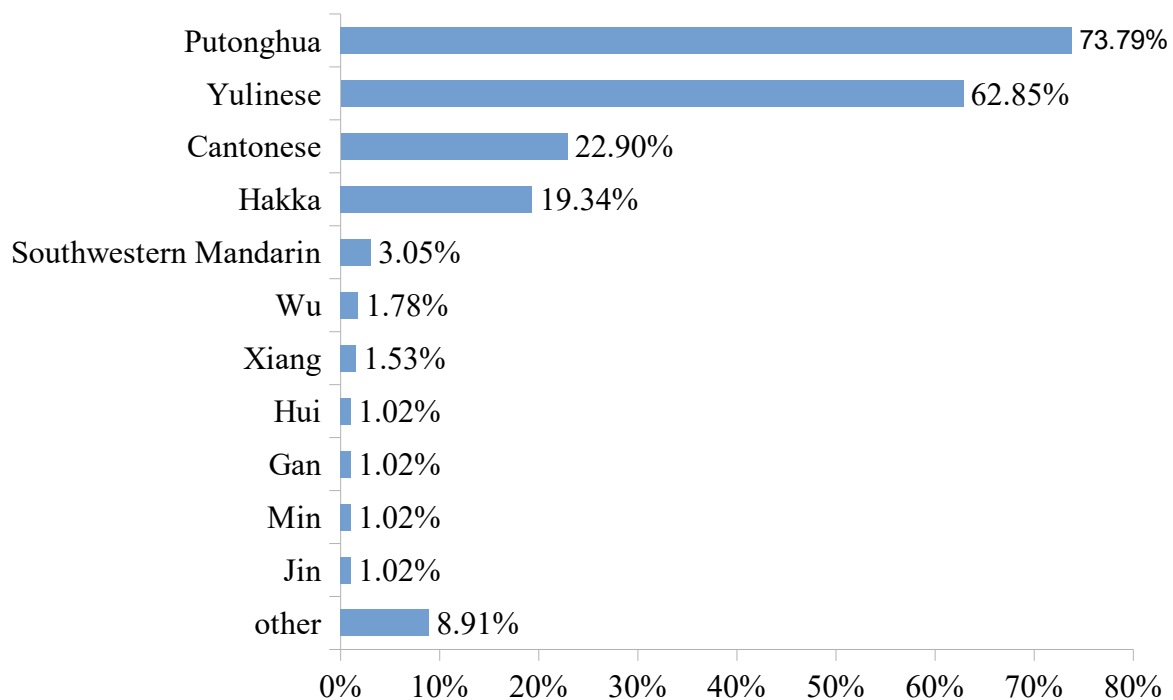


Fig. 2. Language variety respondents learned and used in childhood

There exist other options than Putonghua and Yulinese: some respondents learned Hakka (19.34%), Cantonese (22.9%) or other language varieties (8.9%) in their childhood, because a small percentage of respondents were from other districts or cities.

Based on the repertoire of language varieties learned by respondents and used during their childhood, it can be assumed that some respondents were originally bilingual or even

multilingual. A detailed analysis of the specific combinations of dialects spoken by the respondents during their childhood is not particularly relevant for this study. Therefore, in the following analysis in §4.2, I will categorize the respondents' linguistics profiles into three main types: monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. Specifically, the profiles will be labeled as follows: Putonghua; Yulinese; Putonghua & Yulinese; Putonghua & other(s); Yulinese & other(s); Putonghua & Yulinese & other(s); and other(s).

4.1.2 Respondents' competence in Yulinese

In accordance with the argument of Garrett et al. (2003: 4), if you don't speak a particular language, you can't tell which features of that language are more standard or more graceful, or which variant is more prestigious. So for this survey to be meaningful, I think the vast majority of respondents should know about Yulinese to some degree.

After statistically analysing the respondents' level of Yulinese, the results are shown in Fig. 3, within the present investigation, a mere 5.3% of participants (n=21) reported no proficiency in Yulinese, whereas 17% (n=67) declared a basic understanding of this variety, 26.46% (n=104) assessed their proficiency as fair, 21.88% (n=86) as fluent, and an additional 21.88% (n=115) as relatively fluent. As many as 29.26% (n=115) of respondents asserted their proficiency in Yulinese as very fluent. Given that 94.7% of all respondents know Yulinese to some degree, their attitudes toward the language may be considered indicative of the broader sentiment within the Yulinese speaking community. Consequently, the limited responses from the 5.3% of participants lacking proficiency in Yulinese are anticipated to have minimal impact on the overall study outcomes.

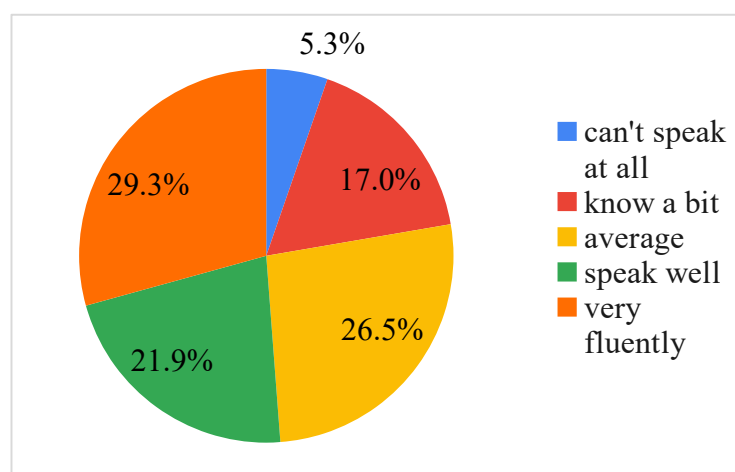


Fig. 3. The proportion of respondents' Yulinese proficiency

4.2 All respondents' language use in different settings

Using *matplotlib.pyplot* (version 5.14.1) ⁴ to visualise and plot the data from questions 26 and 27 of the questionnaire, I generate pie charts illustrating the distribution of language use among the respondents in different contexts. Fig. 4 shows that 61.6% of the participants used two or more languages during their childhood.

Specifically, 28.2% of respondents reported learning Putonghua and Yulinese during their childhood, while 20.4% reported learning Yulinese, Putonghua and other language varieties. In addition, 12% of participants reported that their childhood language repertoire included Putonghua and other language variety(ies) (but not Yulinese), while 1% of respondents reported acquiring proficiency in Yulinese and other language variety(ies) (excluding Putonghua). Interestingly, a distinct subset of 13.2% of respondents had acquired in their childhood proficiency in Putonghua only, while the same percentage reported having acquired proficiency in Yulinese only. In addition, 12% of respondents reported being exclusively proficient in other dialects/languages during their early language development.

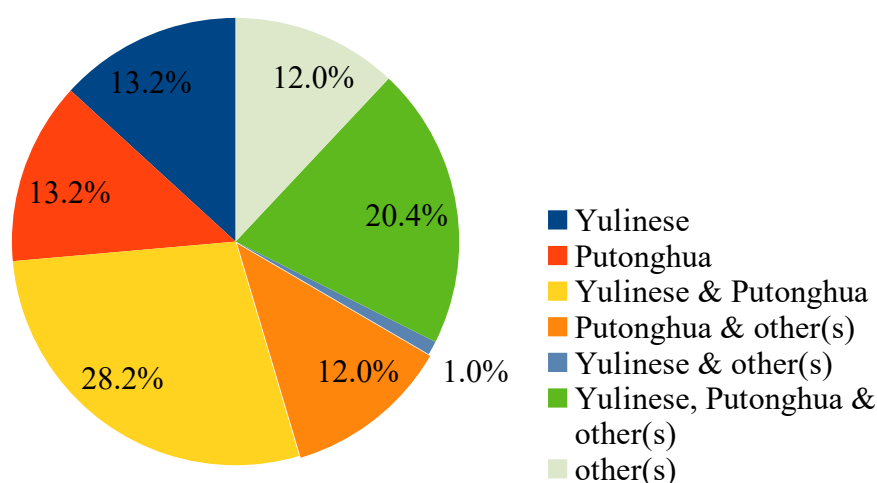


Fig. 4. Childhood language

In terms of language use at home (as shown in Fig. 5), 36.9% of respondents reported using Yulinese exclusively, 21.9% reported using both Yulinese and Putonghua, 19.6% used Putonghua exclusively, 11.7% used other dialect(s), 4.1% chose a combination of Putonghua

⁴ a versatile Python library dedicated to generating static, animated, and interactive visualizations, details about the analyzing tool in § 3.1.6.

and other dialects, 3.6% used a combination of Yulinese, Putonghua and other dialects, and 2.3% reported using a combination of Yulinese and other dialects.

These data highlight the diversity of languages used by respondents at home and underline that a significant percentage of respondents use Yulinese in their daily lives alongside Putonghua and various other language varieties.

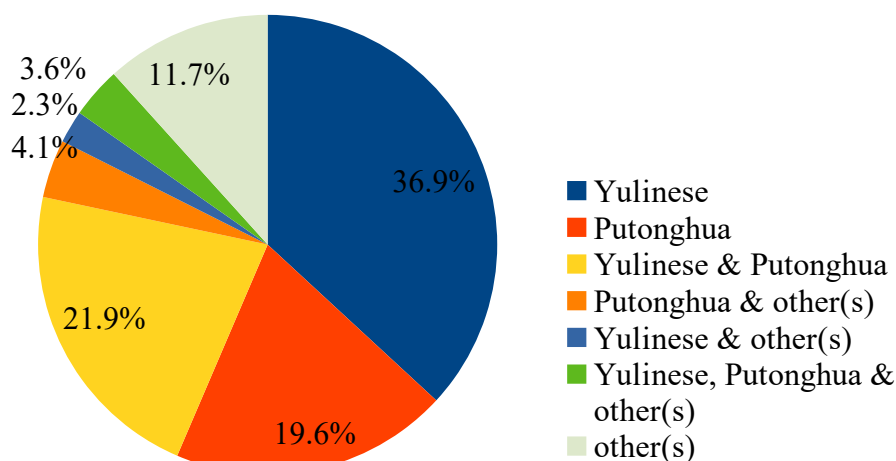


Fig. 5. Language use at home

In regard to language use at school (as shown in Fig. 6), this survey finds that 67.4% of respondents reported using only Putonghua, while 17.8% reported using Putonghua and Yulinese. Other combinations were less common: 8.9% of respondents claimed to use only Yulinese, 2% said they use Putonghua and other language variety(ies), 2% of respondents answered that they use Yulinese, Putonghua and other language variety(ies), 0.3% of respondents said they use Yulinese and other language variety(ies), and 1.5% of respondents said they use other language variety(ies).

Respondents showed a higher propensity to use Putonghua at school, which may be influenced by the language policy of promoting Putonghua on campus. The limited number of respondents who reported using only dialects rather than Putonghua while at school is likely to be related to the experiences of people over 50 during their schooling. This observation is consistent with the broader context described in the first chapter regarding China's language policy, particularly the promotion of Putonghua.

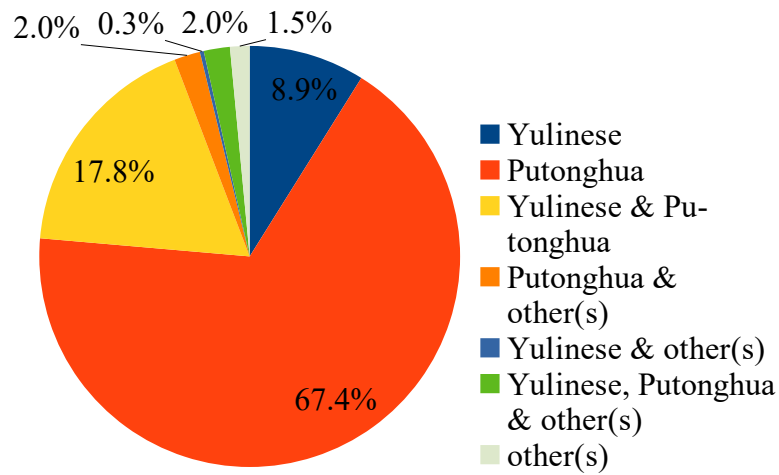


Fig. 6: Language use at school

In terms of language use in the workplace (as shown in Fig. 7), 58.8% of respondents reported using only Putonghua, 22.1% reported using both Yulinese and Putonghua, 11.2% used Yulinese exclusively, and 3.3% claimed to use more than three languages at the same time – Putonghua, Yulinese and other dialect(s). In addition, 2.3% of respondents reported the use of other dialects, 1.8% reported the use of Putonghua along with other dialects, and 0.5% reported the use of Yulinese along with other dialects.

Obviously, the majority of respondents showed a preference for using Putonghua at work, followed by those who integrated both Yulinese and Putonghua, with a smaller percentage opting for the exclusive use of Yulinese. Therefore, we can conclude from the data that Putonghua is the most commonly used language in the workplace in Yulin.

In Yulin city, the popularization of Putonghua has been done very well, the majority of the residents can understand Putonghua, with only a small percentage of older Yulinese residents may not be able to understand or speak Putonghua. Knowing Yulinese may be helpful in a sales job, but for other jobs knowing Yulinese is not a mandatory requirement (We will see examples given by the interviewees in the interview section in Chapter 6). Thus, Yulinese is not a language that is necessary to know for work, nor does it bring significant benefits to the respondents' careers.

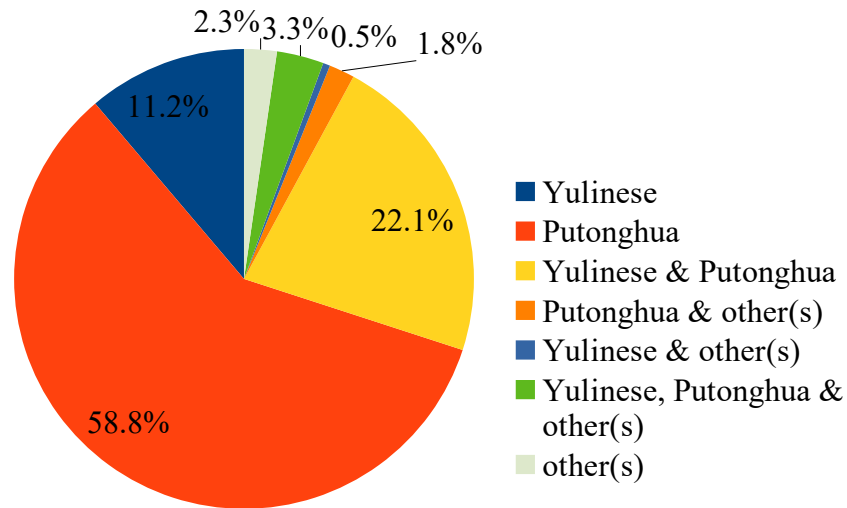


Fig. 7. Language use at workplace

The survey results indicated that while shopping, 44.8% of the participants exclusively used Yulinese for communication, 22.6% employed both Yulinese and Putonghua, while 20.6% solely relied on Putonghua. Additionally, 4.3% reported using a combination of Yulinese, Putonghua, and other language variety(ies), 3.6% use other language variety(ies), 2.5% communicated in Putonghua along with other language variety(ies), and another 1.5% used a combination of Yulinese, Putonghua, and other language variety(ies) (as shown in Fig. 8).

These findings underscore the predominant use of Yulinese among the respondents during market shopping, with Putonghua emerging as the second most used language.

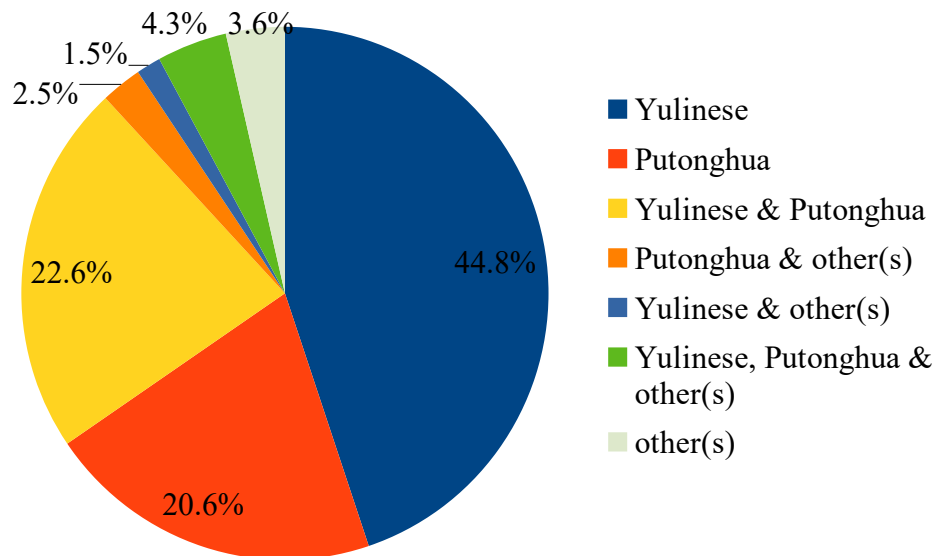


Fig. 8. Language use at market

When on the public transportation (as shown in Fig. 9), 55.2% of the respondents said they would use Putonghua, 19.8% said they would use Putonghua and Yulinese, 19.6% said they would use Yulinese only, while 2.3% said they would use Yulinese, Putonghua and other dialect(s), 1.8% of the respondents said they would use Putonghua and other dialect(s), and 1.3% of the respondents said they would use other dialect(s).

The results of the survey indicate that Putonghua is the main language used on public transportation.

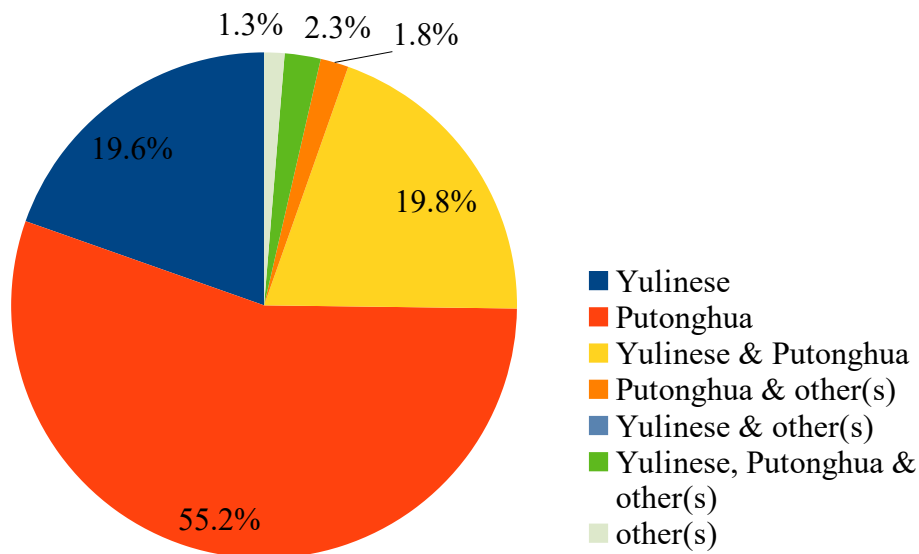


Fig. 9. Language use on public transportation

Regarding the language used by the respondents in hospital (as shown in Fig. 10), 63.4% of the respondents indicated that they would use Putonghua, 19.6% indicated that they would use Putonghua and Yulinese, 12.2% claimed that they would use Yulinese only, 2% reported that they would use Yulinese, Putonghua and other dialect(s), 1.8% of the respondents said they would use Putonghua and other dialect(s), and 1% of the respondents said they would use other dialect(s) only.

The majority of respondents prefer using Putonghua only while in hospital, while the use of Yulinese was the choice of only a small number of people.

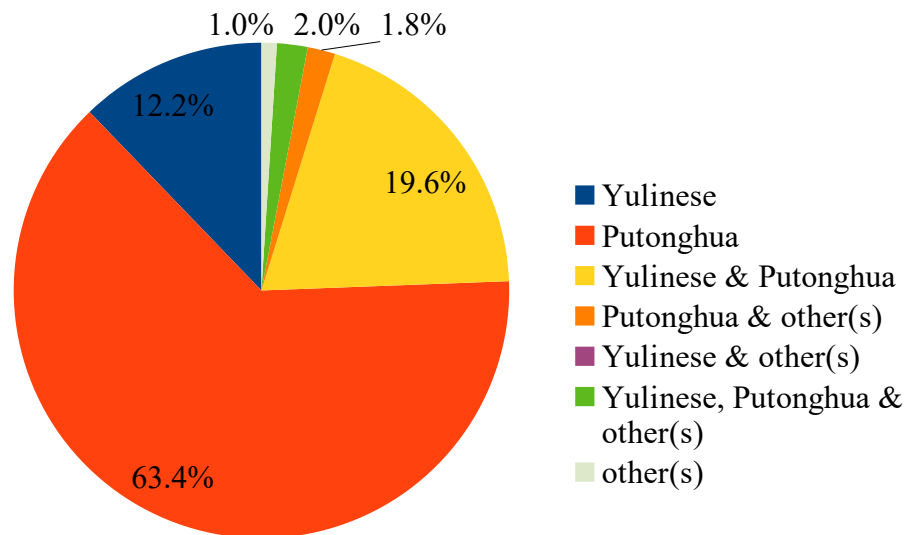


Fig. 10. Language use at hospital

In government offices or agencies (as shown in Fig. 11), 69% of those surveyed responded they would use Putonghua, 17.6% said they would use Putonghua and Yulinese, 8.7% claimed they would use Yulinese only, 1.8% reported they would use Putonghua, Yulinese and other dialect(s), 1.5% of respondents indicated that they would use Putonghua and other dialect(s), and 1.4% said they would use other dialect(s).

Within governmental offices and organizations, the predominant language employed by respondents is Putonghua, with the utilization of Yulinese being minimal across all settings. As mentioned in §1.1 of the discourse on China's language policy, Putonghua is obligatory within governmental entities. Consequently, Yulinese assumes a restricted role during interactions between respondents and individuals within government organizations.

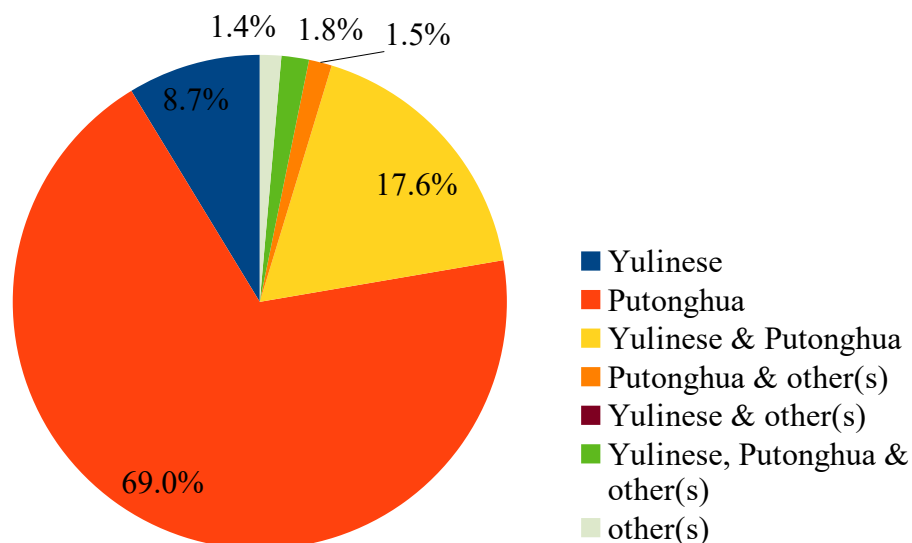


Fig. 11. Language use in government offices or agencies

The above data on respondents' language use shows a tendency to use Putonghua in formal contexts, such as educational institutions, the workplace, public transport, healthcare facilities and government offices. Conversely, Yulinese emerges as the preferred choice in domestic settings and for shopping. The respondents' patterns of language use are consistent with Ferguson's (1959: 336) definition and description of diglossia. In this situation, Putonghua is a prestige language in the linguistic community, primarily acquired through formal education, and used for written and formal spoken communication. Conversely, Yulinese is the lower variety, mainly used in informal settings with a limited range of domains.

4.3 Significant differences between cohorts in language use

4.3.1 Language use by respondents of different genders

In the analysis of the languages learned and used in childhood by representatives of both genders, male respondents show a higher percentage of having learned and used Yulinese. However, it would be premature to conclude that males had a preference for acquiring Yulinese during childhood compared to females. This disclaimer arises from an analysis of the curves depicted in Fig. 12, revealing that the language preference curves of female is inclined towards other dialects, which may be due to the fact that some of the female respondents were born in areas where Yulinese is not being spoken.

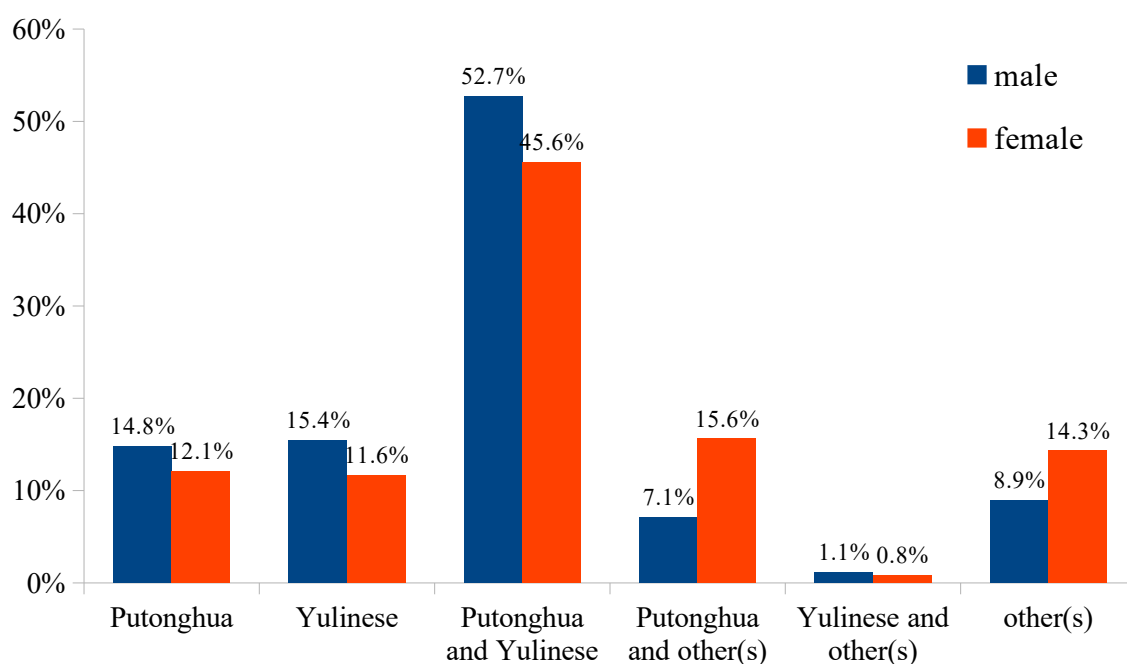


Fig. 12. Languages learned and used in childhood by male and female respondents

When analysing the language use within the households of both male and female participants, distinct gender-based language preferences emerge more prominently (as shown in Fig. 13). At home male respondents tend to favor using Yulinese or a combination of Putonghua and Yulinese, whereas female respondents exhibit a slight inclination towards exclusively using Putonghua at home, compared to their male counterparts. This marginal preference for using only Putonghua at home among female respondents may be attributed to several factors. It could be indicative of a preference for a prestige language among females, as mentioned by Labov (1990: 215) in his study, women tend to be the main innovators in bottom-up change. Therefore, the female respondents in this study have a slightly higher percentage of Putonghua use in the household than the male respondents. Or it might be influenced by the fact that some respondents did not acquire proficiency in Yulinese during their early years. Consequently, even if they later learned Yulinese, their willingness to use it at home may not be particularly strong.

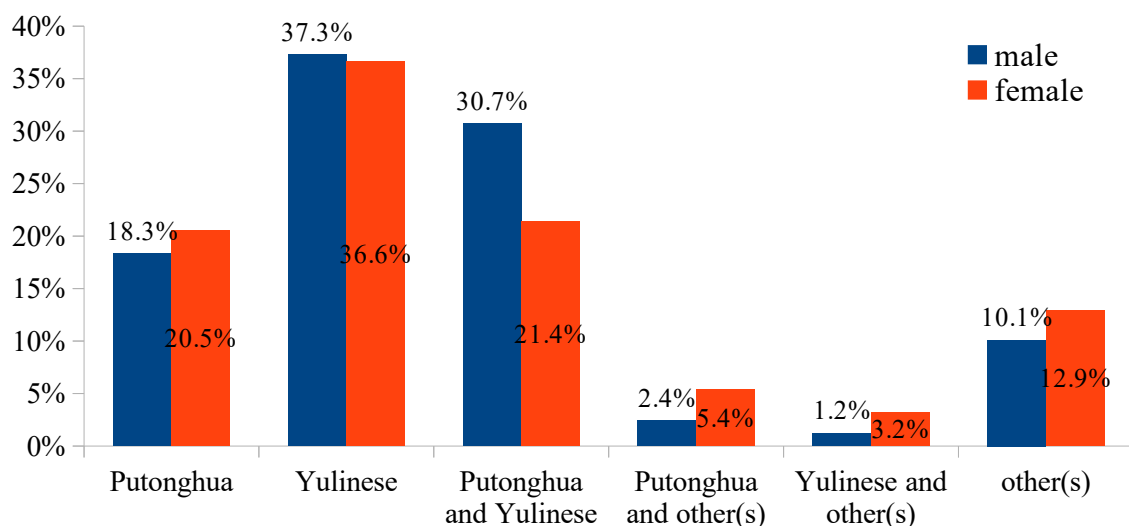


Fig. 13. Language use within the households of both male and female respondents

Concerning language use at school among male and female respondents, it is evident that female participants display a greater inclination towards using Putonghua (as shown in Fig. 14). In contrast, male respondents exhibit a higher propensity for Yulinese compared to female.

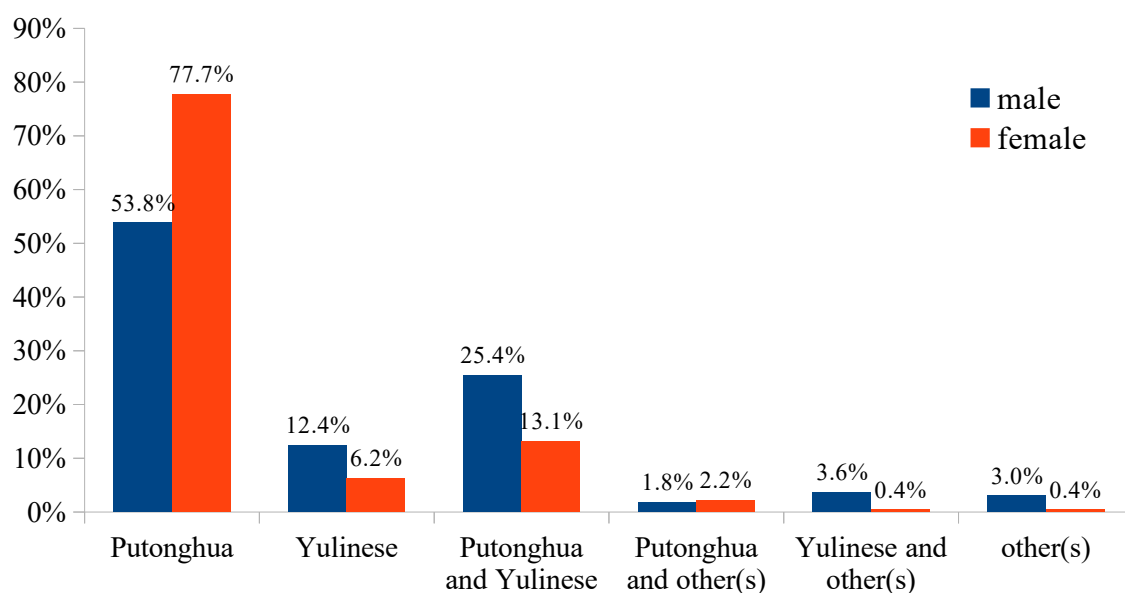


Fig. 14. Language use at school among male and female respondents

In terms of the use of the working language by both male and female respondents, it is noteworthy that female respondents exhibited a greater inclination towards using Putonghua (as shown in Fig. 15). However, in contrast to the language use observed at school, the percentage of female respondents exclusively using Putonghua is lower. Simultaneously, the proportion of female respondents using Yulinese, or a combination of Putonghua and Yulinese, is markedly higher. Nevertheless, it is essential to underscore that, regardless of the shift, the willingness of female respondents to use Yulinese remained lower than that of their male counterparts.

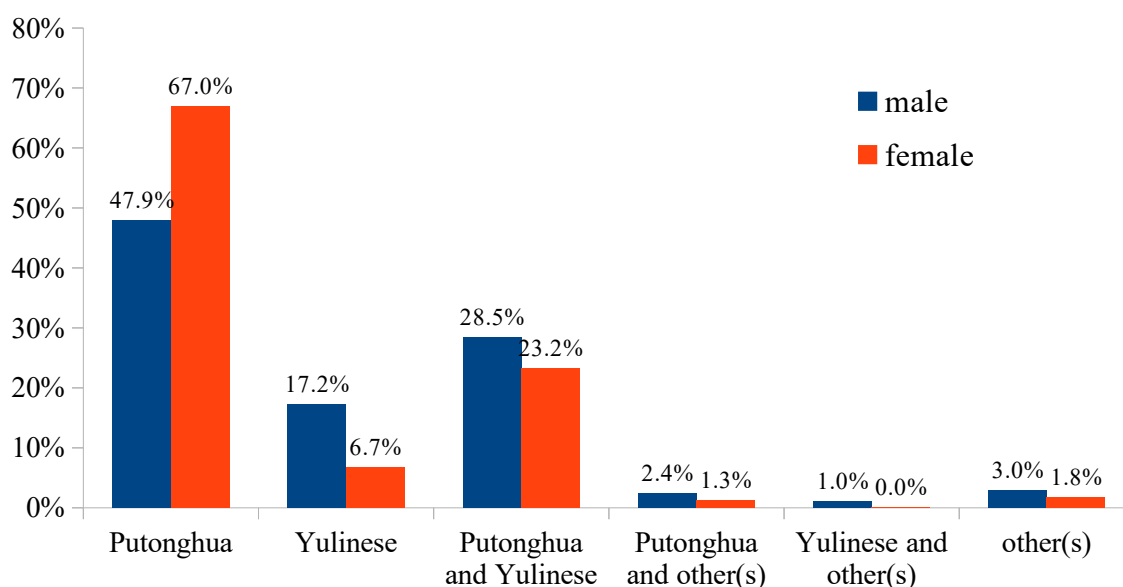


Fig. 15. Language use in workplace by male and female respondents

In the marketplace, respondents of both genders leaned towards Yulinese, with males expressing a more pronounced preference for Yulinese compared to females (as shown in Fig. 16). Conversely, females exhibited a stronger inclination towards Putonghua.

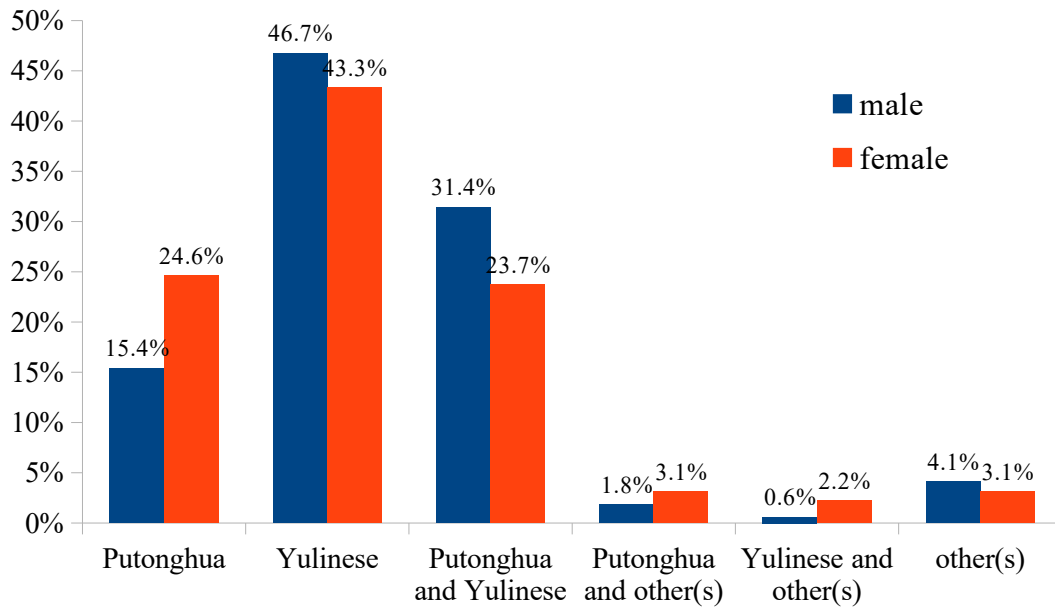


Fig. 16. Language use in the marketplace by male and female respondents

When it comes to public transport, both male and female respondents generally favor Putonghua. Nevertheless, data in Fig. 17 indicate that on public transport a higher percentage of respondents use Yulinese or a combination of Putonghua and Yulinese, in contrast to contexts such as schools, work, hospitals, and government institutions. This suggests that respondents perceive public transport as a context that falls between formal and informal settings. Consequently, despite their tendency to use the high variety (Putonghua), respondents also feel confident using the low variety (Yulinese). However, the preference for Yulinese remains more pronounced among males than females.

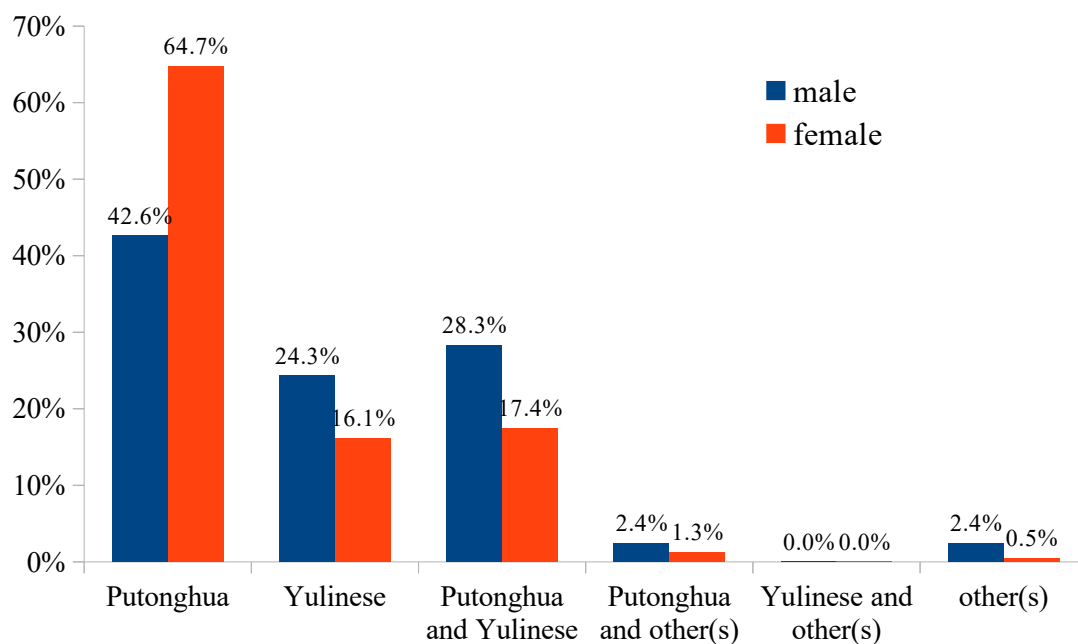


Fig. 17. Language use on public transport by male and female respondents

In healthcare institutions, respondents, both male and female, predominantly opted for Putonghua (as shown in Fig. 18). Some individuals also use Yulinese, either independently or in conjunction with Putonghua. Interestingly, among Yulinese users, males markedly outnumbered females.

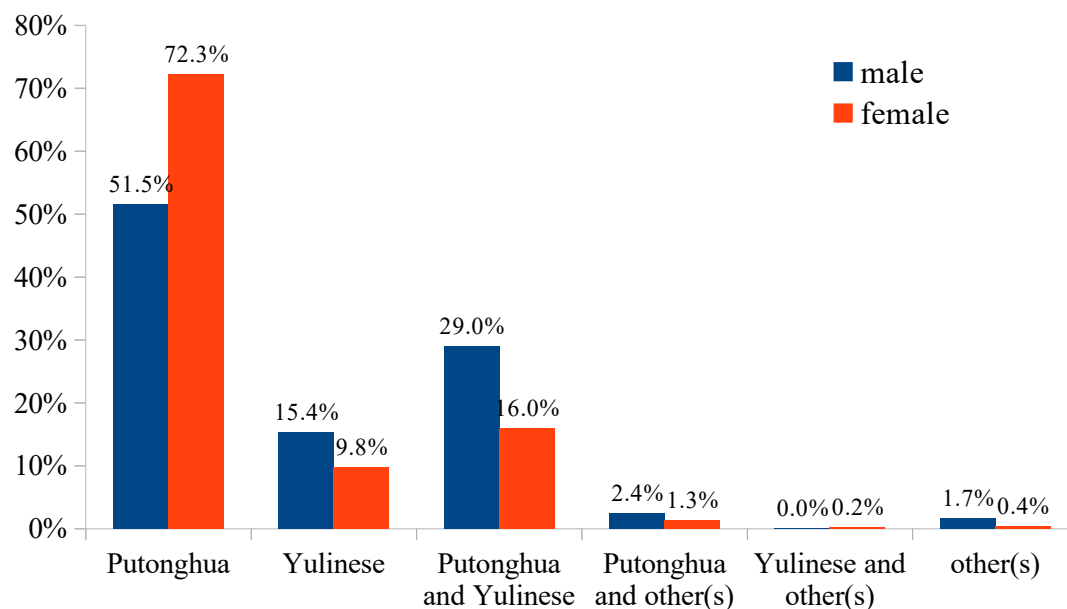


Fig. 18. Language use in healthcare institutions by male and female respondents

In terms of government organizations, both male and female participants indicated a predominant use of Putonghua (as shown in Fig. 19). Female respondents exhibited a more pronounced preference for Putonghua compared to their male counterparts. The use of Yulinese in government settings was the least among all contexts, suggesting a general inclination among respondents to employ high variety in official situations.

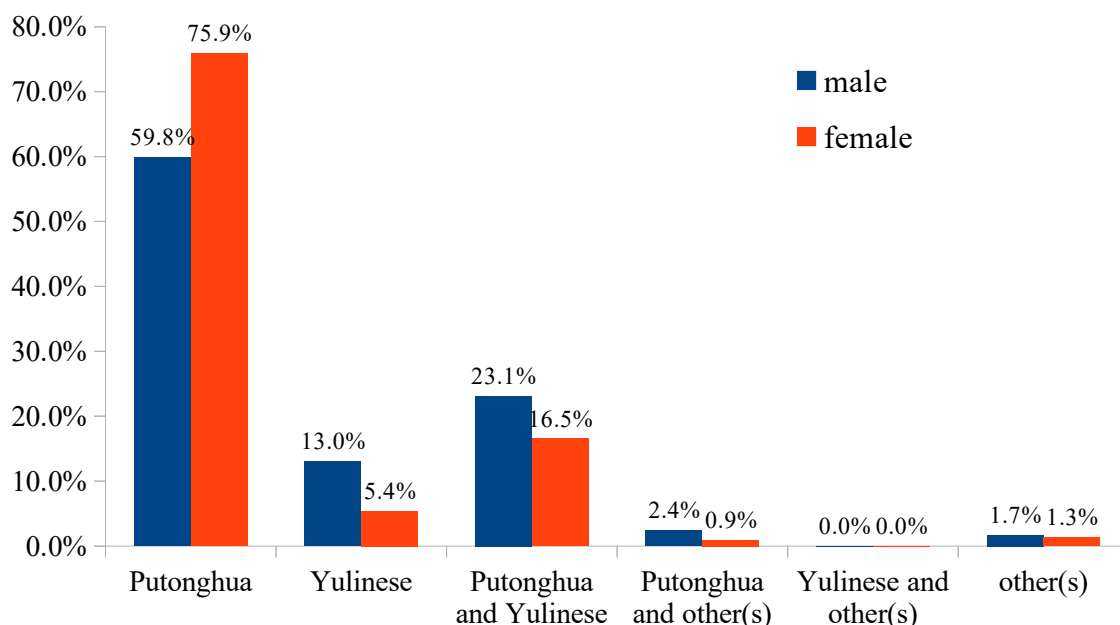


Fig. 19. language use in government organizations by male and female respondents

In sum, it was observed that, irrespective of the context (home, school, work, market, bus, hospital, government institutions), males exhibit a greater tendency to employ Yulinese, while females demonstrate a predilection for Putonghua. In informal settings such as home and market, the gender-based disparity in the utilization of Yulinese is marginally narrower. However, in formal settings, the contrast in the proportions of male and female respondents utilizing Yulinese becomes more pronounced.

This outcome aligns with the observations made by Long (1997) concerning different genders who speak Cantonese in Hong Kong, as well as the findings of Wang and Ladegaard (2008) in Guangzhou, Zhou Minglang (2001) in Guangzhou and Shanghai. In their studies, female participants exhibited preference towards Putonghua, whereas the male counterparts demonstrated a preference for the local variety.

4.3.2 Language use by respondents across various age cohorts

In this section, I will only analyse the use of Yulinese, Putonghua and mixed use of Putonghua and other language variety(ies) by respondents of different ages cohorts in different contexts.

(1) Languages learned and used during childhood by respondents across various age cohorts

Upon analyzing the linguistic acquisition and use patterns across distinct age cohorts during childhood, a discernible trend emerged (as shown in Fig. 20). Notably, a negative correlation was observed between age and the exclusive acquisition and use of Yulinese among respondents. Furthermore, individuals under the age of 49 exhibited a higher prevalence of having exclusively learned and used Putonghua during childhood compared to those who exclusively learned and used Yulinese. This trend aligns with the discourse in Section 1.1, which discusses China's concerted efforts in promoting Putonghua as the official language across diverse domains.

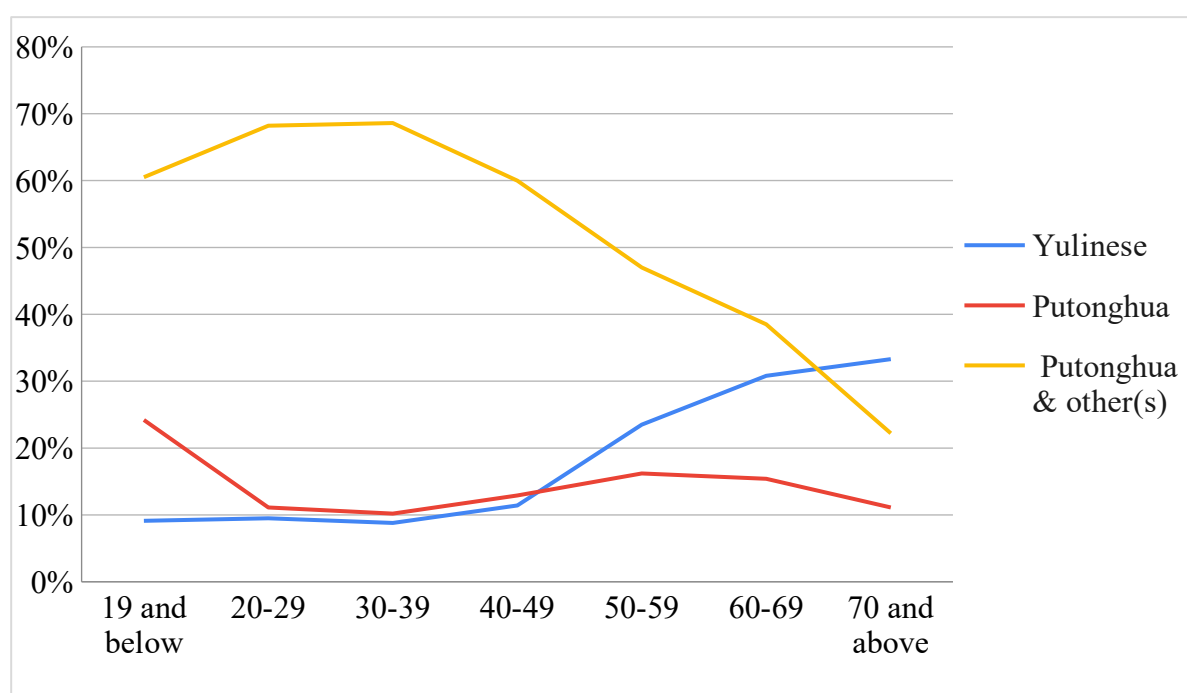


Fig. 20. Languages learned and used during childhood by respondents across various age cohorts

The ascendancy of Putonghua as the official language, propelled by state initiatives, elucidates the observed phenomenon. Consequently, a substantial proportion of individuals in the study acquired proficiency in both Putonghua and Yulinese during their formative years. Particularly noteworthy is the higher incidence of Putonghua – only speakers among respondents under the age of 19, suggesting an increasing significance of Putonghua in the linguistic edu-

cation of the younger generation in Yulin. This shift underscores a diminishing emphasis on teaching Yulinese.

In addition to the age-related decline in the exclusive acquisition of Yulinese, the survey outcomes unveil an augmented prevalence of bilingualism or multilingualism (Putonghua and other language variety/varieties) among younger respondents. This aligns with findings by Shan & Li (2018: 36), who identified a comparable phenomenon in their investigation of Guangzhou, wherein the proportion of individuals whose mother tongue was Cantonese only diminished across generations; simultaneously, there was an increase in bilingual or multilingual individuals, indicative of an intergenerational language shift in the respondents' mother tongue.

(2) Language used at home among respondents across various age cohorts

Regarding the linguistic preferences at home among respondents across various age cohorts, the tendency to use of Yulinese predominates among individuals aged 30 and above (as shown in Fig. 21). A discernible pattern emerges wherein the prevalence of Yulinese at home correlates with the age of the respondent. Conversely, a contrasting trend is observed in younger respondents, where Putonghua gains prominence as the primary language used at home. Among respondents under the age of 30, Putonghua, either exclusively or in combination with other linguistic varieties, emerges as the predominant mode of familial communication. The incidence of exclusive use of Yulinese is notably lower in this age group compared to other age cohorts. Once again, this observation aligns with the concept of diglossia, signifying a diminishing emphasis on the use of the low variety in familial discourse.

Not only does the data reveal a positive correlation between age and the use of Yulinese, but it is also interesting to note that individuals aged 40-49 prefer a combination of Putonghua and Yulinese at home, compared to other age brackets. This inclination may be attributed to the prevalent use of Putonghua by their children. Considering that respondents aged 40-49 are likely to have children below 19 years old or in their early 20s, it is evident that Putonghua holds greater popularity among the youth (as indicated in Fig. 21). One can envision a scenario where a parent in the 40-49 age group communicates in Yulinese with their child, only to receive a response in Putonghua, which forces the parents to continue the conversation in the child's language (Putonghua). That explains the observed trend of mixed Putonghua and Yulinese use among respondents aged 40-49 and those aged 19 and under. While this scenario is speculative, its veracity can only be verified through interviews with the participants in the subsequent interview section.

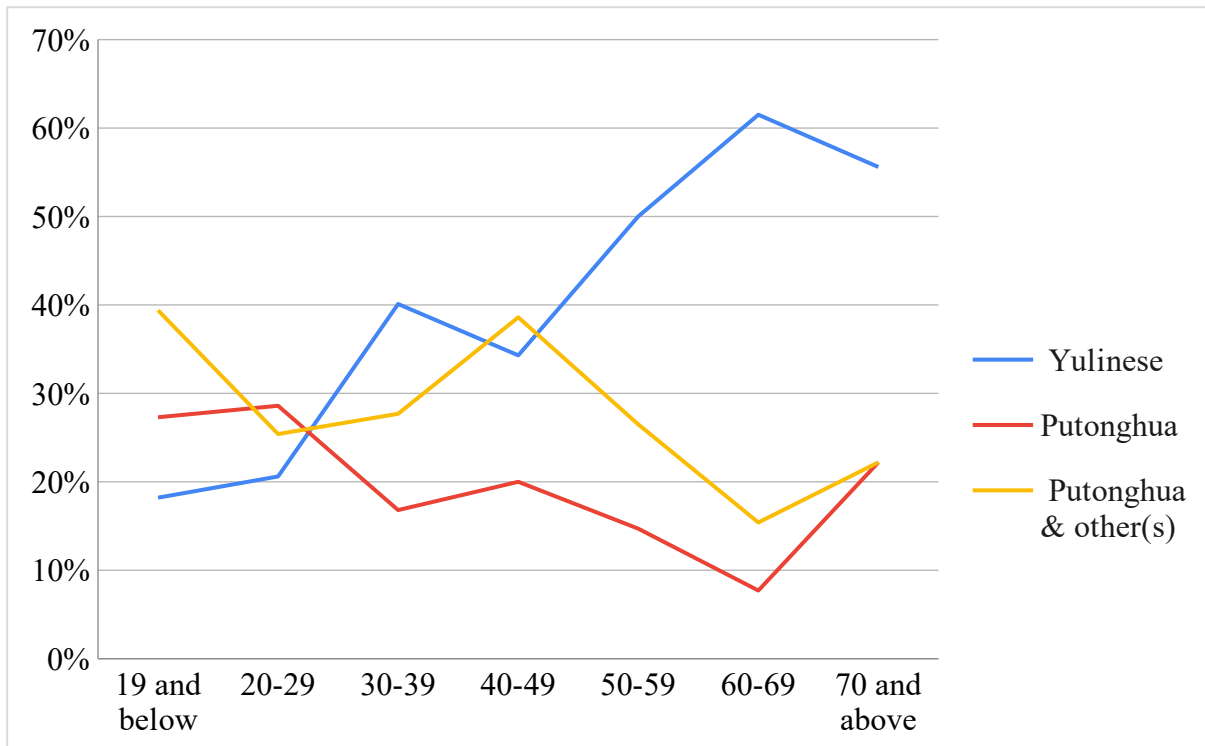


Fig. 21. Language used at home among respondents across various age cohorts

(3) Language used in school among respondents across various age cohorts

Just as Fig. 22 shows, the prevalence of Yulinese among respondents across all age groups in educational settings consistently remains notably lower than the dominance of Putonghua, which serves as the primary language in schools for respondents of all ages. This discrepancy is unsurprising given the established role of educational institutions as pivotal platforms for the propagation of Putonghua. However, it is intriguing to observe that, among respondents aged 19 and below, the incidence of Yulinese use has not continued its downward trajectory but has exhibited a modest increase in comparison to respondents aged between 20 and 29. Respondents aged 19 and below represents one of the cohorts with the highest proclivity for early exposure and proficiency in Putonghua. Hence, a comprehensive exploration of this phenomenon is warranted during the interview phase to ascertain the precise factors contributing to the observed augmentation in the use of dialect in educational settings.

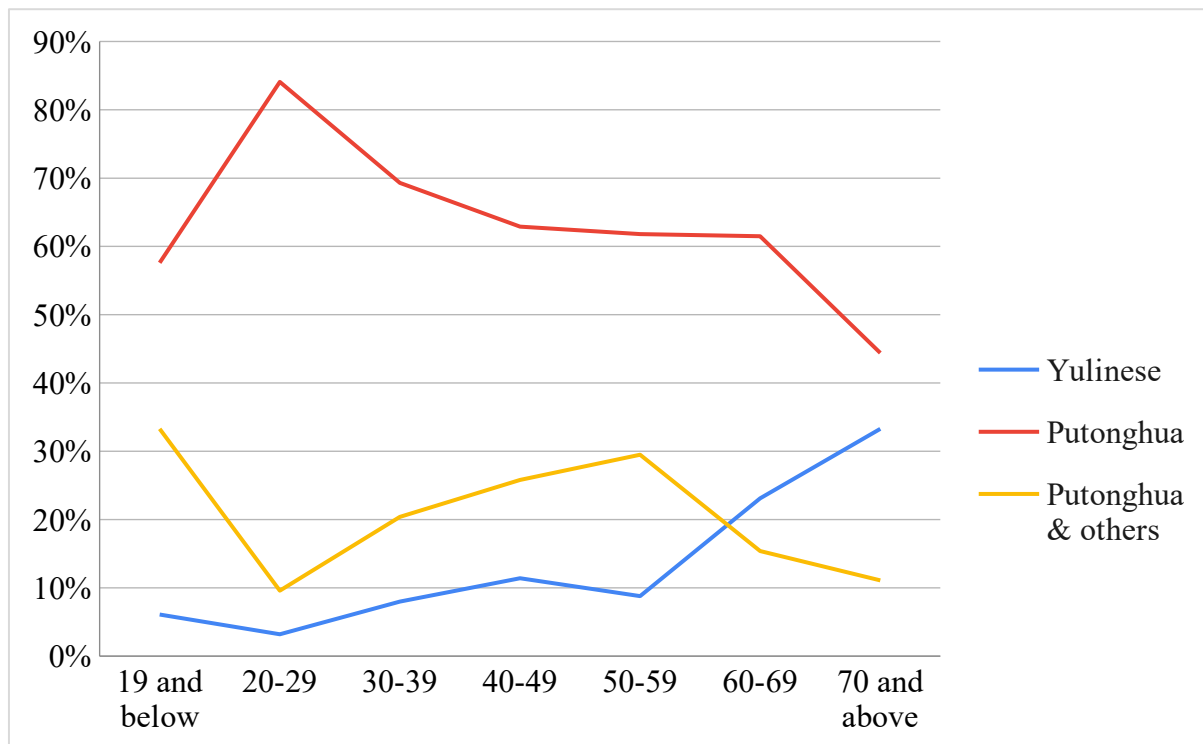


Fig. 22. Language used in school among respondents across various age cohorts

(4) Language used at workplace among respondents across various age cohorts

Observations derived from Fig. 23 reveal that, across all age groups, Putonghua serves as the predominant language employed in professional settings. A discernible trend is evident in the use of Yulinese: a positive correlation is observed between the respondent's age and the proportion of Yulinese used in the workplace. Specifically, respondents aged over 50 exhibit a significantly higher prevalence in the use of Yulinese in the workplace compared to their counterparts in other age brackets.

Within the age cohort of 20-29, the lowest proportion of the use of Yulinese is observed, with a greater inclination toward employing Putonghua. What is interesting, respondents aged 19 and below manifest an increase in the use of Yulinese at workplace. Given the limited representation of respondents under 19 in the workforce, the reliability of this particular segment of their responses warrants further scrutiny, also to ascertain the potential factors influencing this shift.

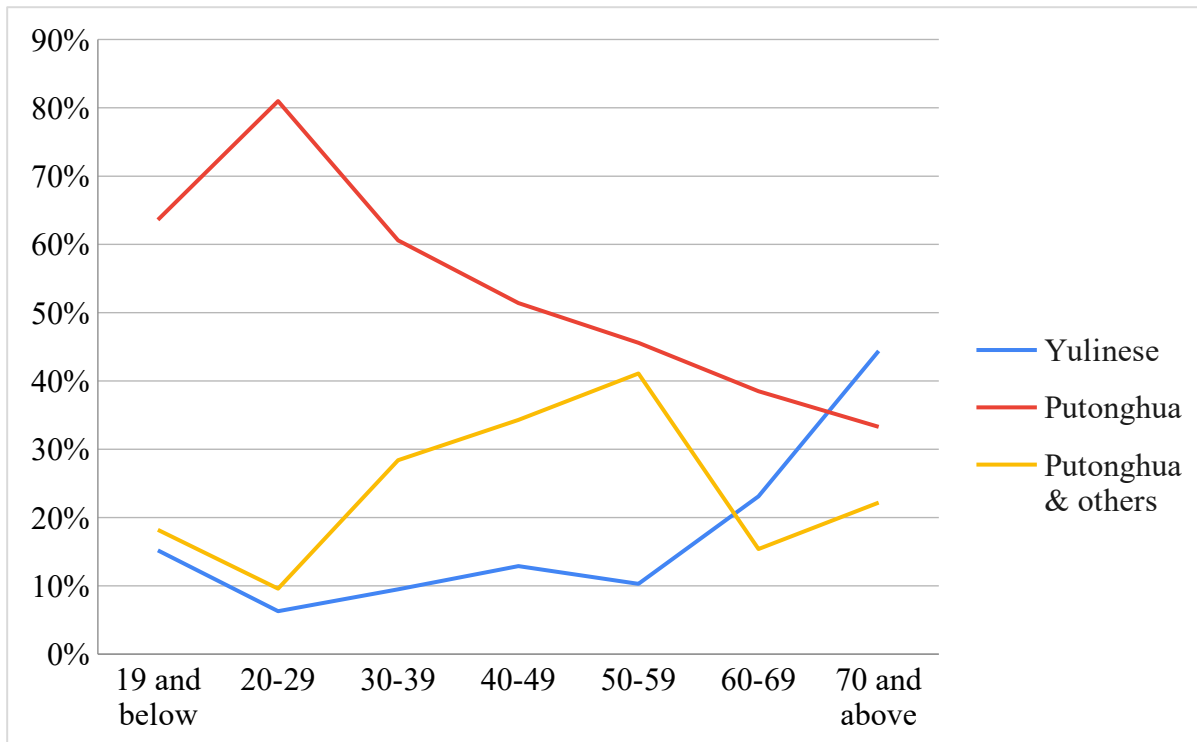


Fig. 23. Language used at workplace among respondents across various age cohorts

(5) Language used at market among respondents across various age cohorts

The data indicates that respondents predominantly use Yulinese in market settings, with a discernible age-related correlation where increased age corresponds to a higher prevalence of Yulinese use (see Fig. 24). Excluding respondents aged 20-29, all other age cohorts exhibit a marked preference for Yulinese in market interactions. Within the age range of 30-59, there is a comparable and notably high incidence of the use of Yulinese. An intriguing observation is that respondents over 60 years of age tend to use Yulinese. In the 20-29 age group, the preference for Putonghua – at the expense of the other two options – is the highest of all the age groups.

The analysis of Putonghua and other dialect(s) use patterns reveals that individuals aged 49-59 represent the age group with the highest proportion of respondents engaging in bilingual or multilingual practices in market settings. I believe this is attributed to their proficiency in Yulinese during childhood (refer to Fig. 24) and their systematic acquisition of Putonghua throughout their school years. Consequently, individuals aged 49-59 acquired a greater mastery of both languages, enabling them to use both languages with more flexibility and confidence. When engaging with sellers in the market, they feel at ease switching between Putonghua and Yulinese as needed for effective communication. Conversely, re-

spondents aged 20-29 might prefer using Putonghua in market interactions due to potential limitations in their knowledge of certain dialect words. This hypothesis will be examined in the interview section with respondents from the corresponding age group (see Chapter 6).

Besides, there is a higher prevalence of Yulinese use in the market section among respondents aged 19 and below compared to those aged 20-29. However, I hesitate to conclude that this indicates a preference for Yulinese among respondents 19 years old and below in the market. Instead, it is possible that the group aged 19 and below may be misdiagnosed. After all, respondents in this age bracket generally exhibit a declining trend in using the local dialect as both their first language and within their families. Further exploration of the language employed by respondents aged 19 and below in the market will be delved into during the interview section.

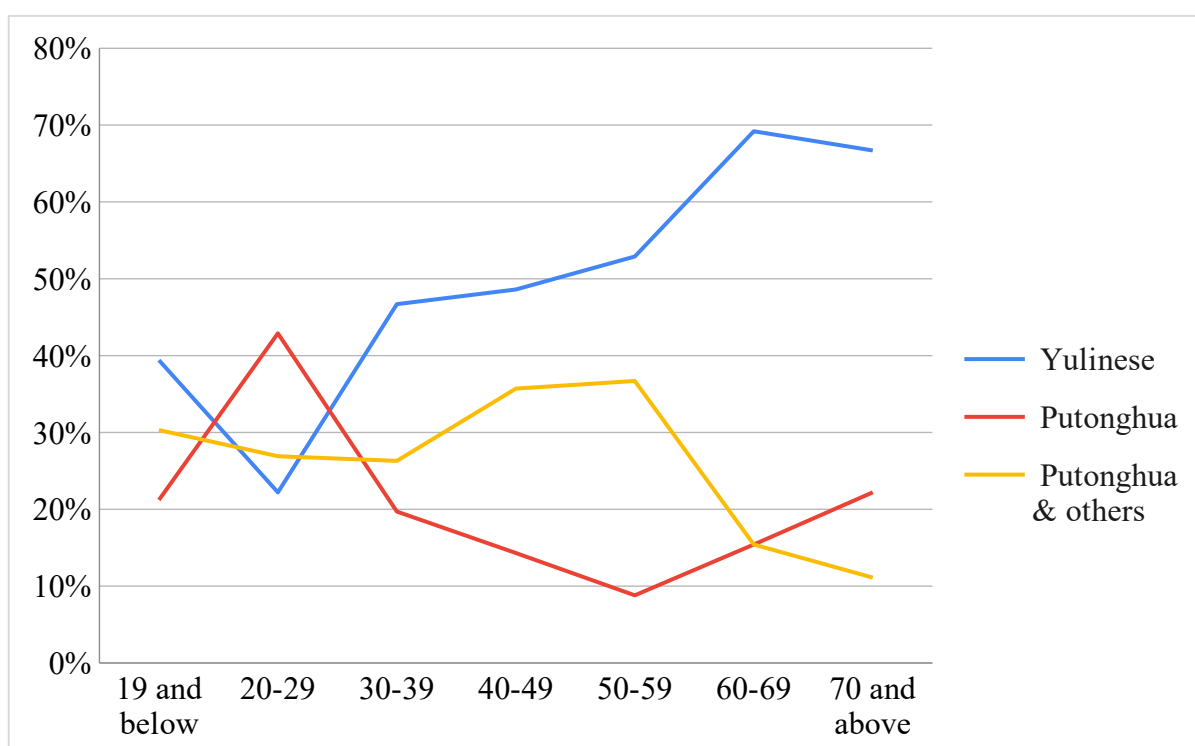


Fig. 24. Language used at market among respondents across various age cohorts

(6) Language used on public transport among respondents across various age cohorts
On public transport, Putonghua remains the primary language employed by respondents across all age cohorts. Individuals under the age of 39 exhibit a predominant use of Putonghua in this setting (see Fig. 25). The highest proportion of Putonghua speakers is found in the 20-29 age group. Conversely, in terms of Yulinese utilization in public transportation, individuals

aged 20-29 display a limited inclination towards the local dialect. Simultaneously, the proportion of bilingual (or multilingual) respondents in the 40-59 age group remains relatively substantial, implying a considerable comfort level among respondents over 40 years old in using both Putonghua and the local dialect(s).

In conclusion, the examination of linguistic patterns on public transport across diverse age groups reveals intriguing trends. Younger individuals, particularly those aged 20-29, exhibit a pronounced inclination towards Putonghua, while the prevalence of Yulinese increases with age, reaching its zenith in the 60-69 age bracket. Bilingual is notably prevalent in the 40-59 age group but experiences a decline among older adults.

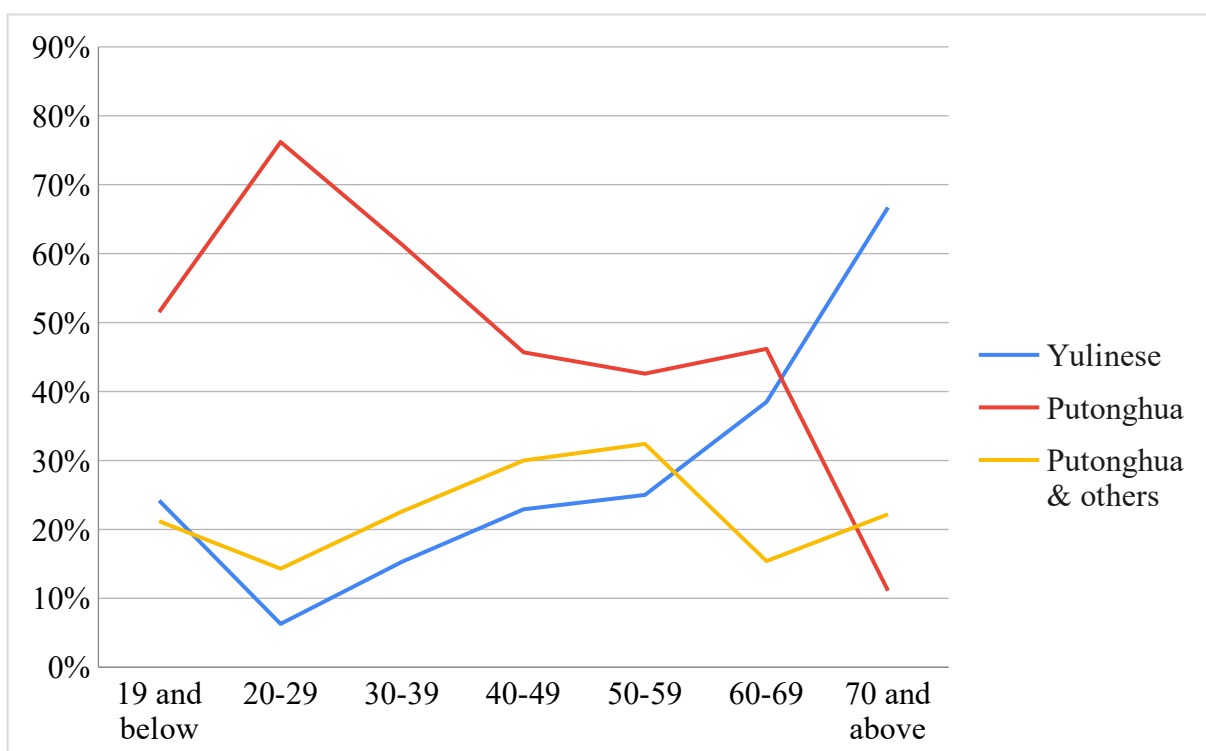


Fig. 25. Language used on public transport among respondents across various age cohorts

(7) Language used at hospitals among respondents across various age cohorts

Within the hospital context, respondents of all age groups predominantly employ Putonghua as their primary language (see Fig. 26), with a discernible proclivity towards its use, particularly among individuals under the age of 39. In contrast, the use of Yulinese exhibits a positive correlation with the age of respondents. Nevertheless, across all age groups, the use of Yulinese remains relatively low, consistently below 50%. Notably, individuals under the age of

59 demonstrate a markedly low inclination towards Yulinese use in the hospital setting, with proportions falling below 20%.

Despite government mandates requiring the use of Putonghua in healthcare settings, my discussions with respondents revealed that many healthcare professionals do not exclusively use Putonghua; rather, they demonstrate the ability to seamlessly switch between Putonghua and Yulinese based on patient needs (additional insights will be discussed in the interview section). Hence, the prevalence of Putonghua as the primary language in hospitals is not solely dictated by China's language policy but rather reflect the voluntary choice of the interviewees.

Examining the coexistence of Putonghua and other dialect(s), it is evident that respondents aged 40-59 display a heightened likelihood of bilingualism (or multilingualism) when seeking medical care.

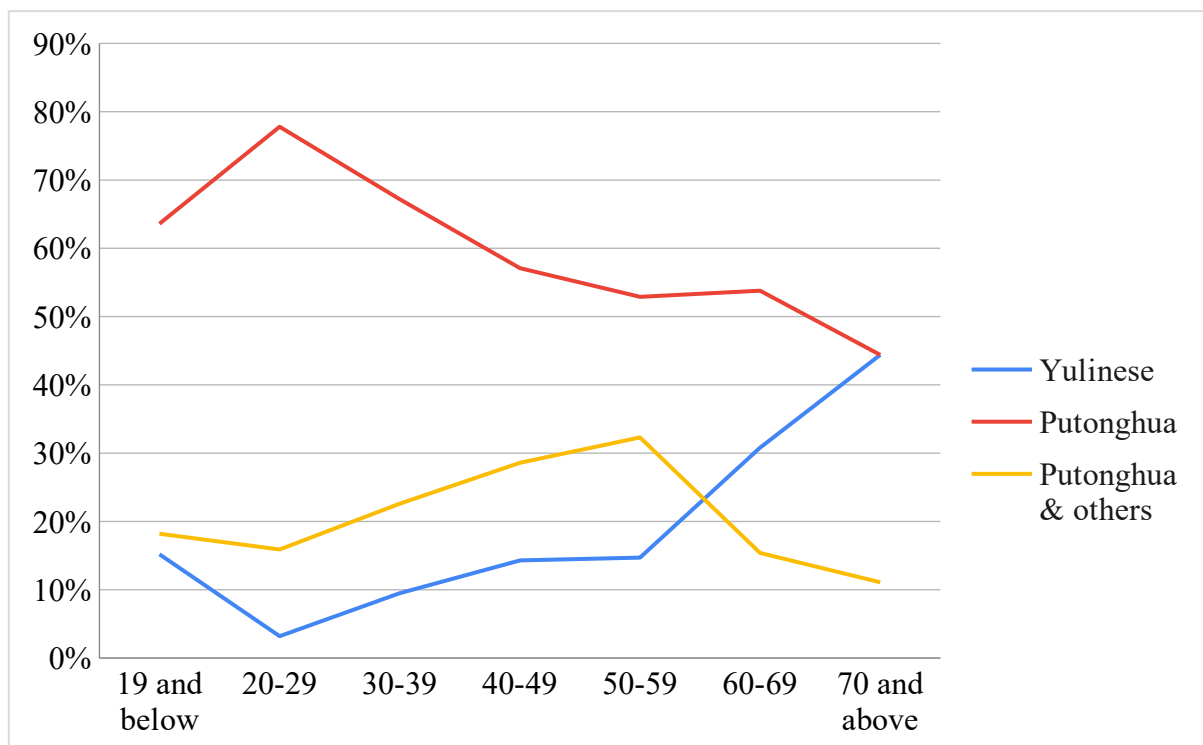


Fig. 26. Language used at hospitals among respondents across various age cohorts

(8) Language used at government institutions or agencies among respondents across various age cohorts

Within government organizations, respondents across all age groups predominantly use Putonghua as their primary language (see Fig. 27). Individuals under the age of 39 exhibit a

conspicuous inclination towards the use of Putonghua, reaching a peak, particularly within the age range of 20-29 years. The use of Yulinese correlates positively with the age of respondents, revealing an escalating trend wherein older respondents exhibit a higher preference for employing the local dialect within government institutions or agencies. Furthermore, respondents aged 40-59 exhibit a higher preference for both Putonghua and other variety(ies) within government settings compared to respondents in other age cohorts.

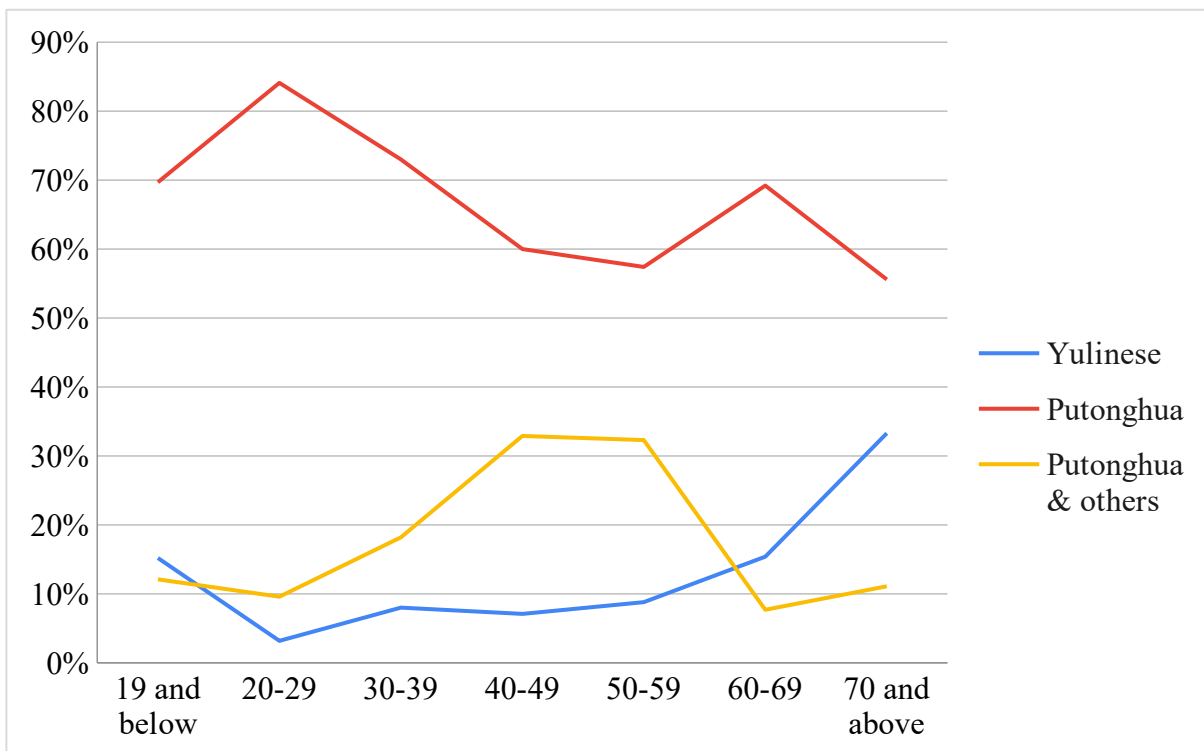


Fig. 27. Language used at government institutions among respondents across various age cohorts

Through a comprehensive examination of respondents' language use across various contexts within distinct age groups, several noteworthy findings emerge:

a. The data indicates a diminishing proportion of respondents who learned and used Yulinese during childhood, as well as a decrease in its use at home. This trend reflects a notable shift in early language education within Yulin city, with an evident inclination towards Putonghua. This observation aligns with the findings of Shan & Li (2018: 36) and Liang Sihua (2015: 100-101), who found with regard to Cantonese vis-à-vis Putonghua that the proportion of respondents whose mother tongue was only Cantonese (or a regional dialect) was declining, and they tended to switch to the early learning and use of Putonghua and a regional dialect.

b. Despite China's language policy designating Putonghua as the national lingua franca and promoting its use, there is no strict prohibition against using Yulinese at work, on public transport, in hospitals, or in government organizations. Respondents have the freedom to choose either language in these scenarios. However, in formal situations like school, work, public transport, hospitals, and government organizations, respondents still exhibit a spontaneous preference for Putonghua. This preference is in line with Ferguson's (1959: 336) definition of diglossia, and again shows that Putonghua is considered a high variety, while Yulinese is viewed as a low one.

c. Both in formal and informal settings, there is a discernible decline in the proportion of Yulinese use among younger people. Notably, the younger generation, particularly respondents aged 20-29, demonstrates a pronounced shift towards Putonghua in both formal and informal contexts. This trend is most conspicuous on informal occasions, where Putonghua attains the highest percentage of use.

This trend resembles findings by Yu and Yang (2016: 32), who studied language use among Shanghai adolescents. As they observed, a greater number of adolescents in Shanghai spoke Putonghua rather than Shanghainese as their native language, and used Putonghua more frequently both publicly and at home.

d. Generational shift in language preferences: The analysis underscores a clear generational shift, with respondents over 60 years old exhibiting a higher inclination to use Yulinese, primarily driven by emotional or habitual reasons. However, in this age group Putonghua prevails on formal occasions, even though it is possible to use a local dialect in formal settings. Respondents aged 40-59 also exhibit a higher proportion of exclusive childhood learning and use of Yulinese compared to Putonghua. This suggests that individuals in this age group maintain a high level of proficiency in Yulinese and display a more flexible linguistic approach, adept at using both Putonghua and Yulinese.

For individuals aged 20-39, a higher percentage exclusively learned Putonghua during childhood. Consequently, they may be less acquainted with Yulinese and may encounter challenges expressing certain ideas or words in the dialect. That might be the reasons this group shows a decreasing desire to use Yulinese and a preference for Putonghua.

Respondents aged 19 and under predominantly learned only Putonghua in childhood, using a mix of Putonghua and Yulinese at home. It can be assumed that their language use closely resembles that of the 20-39 age group, with a greater inclination towards using Putonghua in various situations.

4.3.3 Language use by respondents with different educational levels

The relationship between respondents' educational levels and their utilization of Yulinese in informal settings exhibits a clear negative correlation (as presented in Fig. 28). Individuals with a high school education or lower are notably inclined to employ Yulinese, evident in the fact that over 50% of respondents in this category exclusively use Yulinese at home and in market contexts. Moreover, this educational group manifests the highest proportion of the use of Yulinese in formal settings such as schools, the workplace, hospitals, and government agencies among all compared groups.

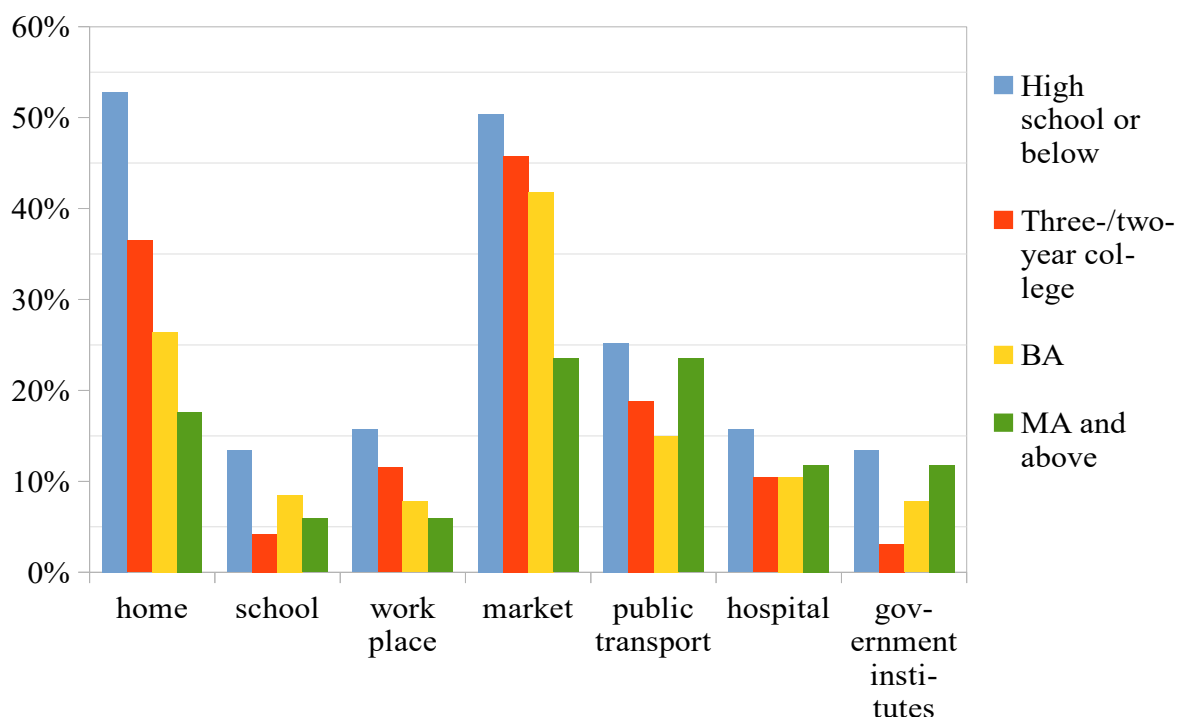


Fig. 28. Respondents with different levels of education using Yulinese

As respondents progress to a three/two-year college education, there is an observable decline in the proportion of individuals exclusively using Yulinese at home and in the marketplace, falling below the 50% threshold. This trend intensifies further as respondents attain higher education levels, reaching Bachelor's (BA) and Master's (MA) or above, where the proportion continues to diminish. In formal settings, a similar downward trend is discernible in the use of Yulinese among respondents with educational backgrounds of three-/two-year college, BA, MA, or higher, albeit with varying degrees of prominence across different settings.

Additionally, a noteworthy observation is the heightened preference for Putonghua among individuals with higher education levels in formal situations (as presented in Fig. 29).

The data illustrates a positive correlation between elevated educational attainment and an increased inclination to use Putonghua in formal settings such as schools, workplaces, hospitals, and government organizations. This may be due to the fact that the more highly educated respondents had spent most of their time in schools where Putonghua was the dominant language, so they were more accustomed to Putonghua and more inclined to use it.

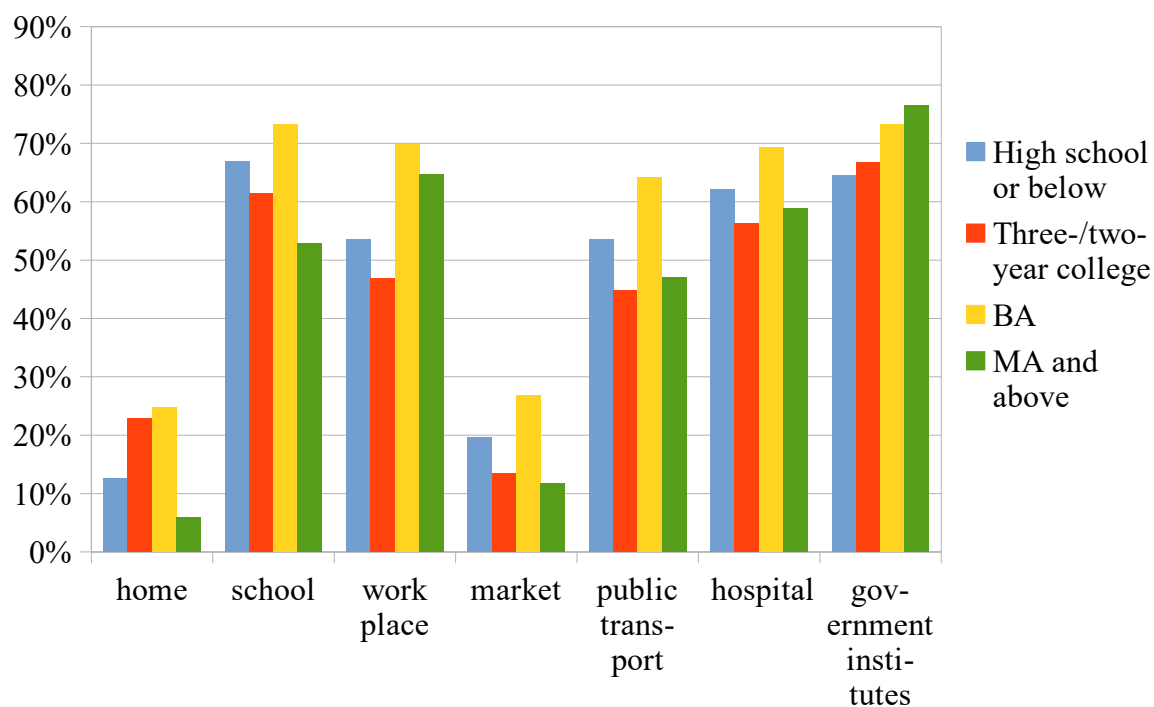


Fig. 29. Respondents with different levels of education using Putonghua

4.3.4 Language use of respondents born in Yulinese speaking areas versus non-Yulinese-speaking areas

As illustrated in Fig. 30 and 31, in the context of respondents born in Yulinese-speaking area (Yuzhou and Fumian district), there is a notable prevalence of concurrent acquisition of both Putonghua and at least one language variety (including Yulinese) in childhood, surpassing the instances of exclusive learning of Yulinese or Putonghua alone. A parallel trend is observed among respondents who were not born in Yulinese-speaking area, indicating the simultaneous learning and use of multiple languages, irrespective of birthplace.

Within the household setting, a higher proportion of respondents born in Yulinese-speaking area predominantly use Yulinese exclusively (48.2%), in contrast to their counterparts not born in this dialect-speaking area (25.9%). A substantial portion of the latter

group opts for the exclusive use of other dialects within the familial context (23.6%). On a broader scale, the prevalence of exclusive dialect use in family life closely aligns between respondents born in and outside Yulinese-speaking area, suggesting a shared inclination toward local dialects. However, respondents not born in Yulinese-speaking area exhibit a higher incidence of exclusive Putonghua use in their familial environment (25.9%) compared to those born in this area (13.5%).

In the market domain, respondents born in Yulinese-speaking area manifest a higher inclination towards utilizing Yulinese (51.4%), surpassing the use observed among respondents not born in this area (36.8%). Conversely, individuals not born in Yulinese-speaking area demonstrate a pronounced proclivity for employing Putonghua in marketplace interactions (31.6%).

Furthermore, respondents not born in Yulinese-speaking area exhibit a pronounced preference for using Putonghua in various spheres such as school (79.9%), work (72.4%), bus (66.7%), hospital (74.7%), and government sectors (78.2%)—(as shown in Fig. 32). This emphasizes a distinct linguistic pattern in formal contexts favoring the utilization of Putonghua among respondents who were not born in Yulinese-speaking area.

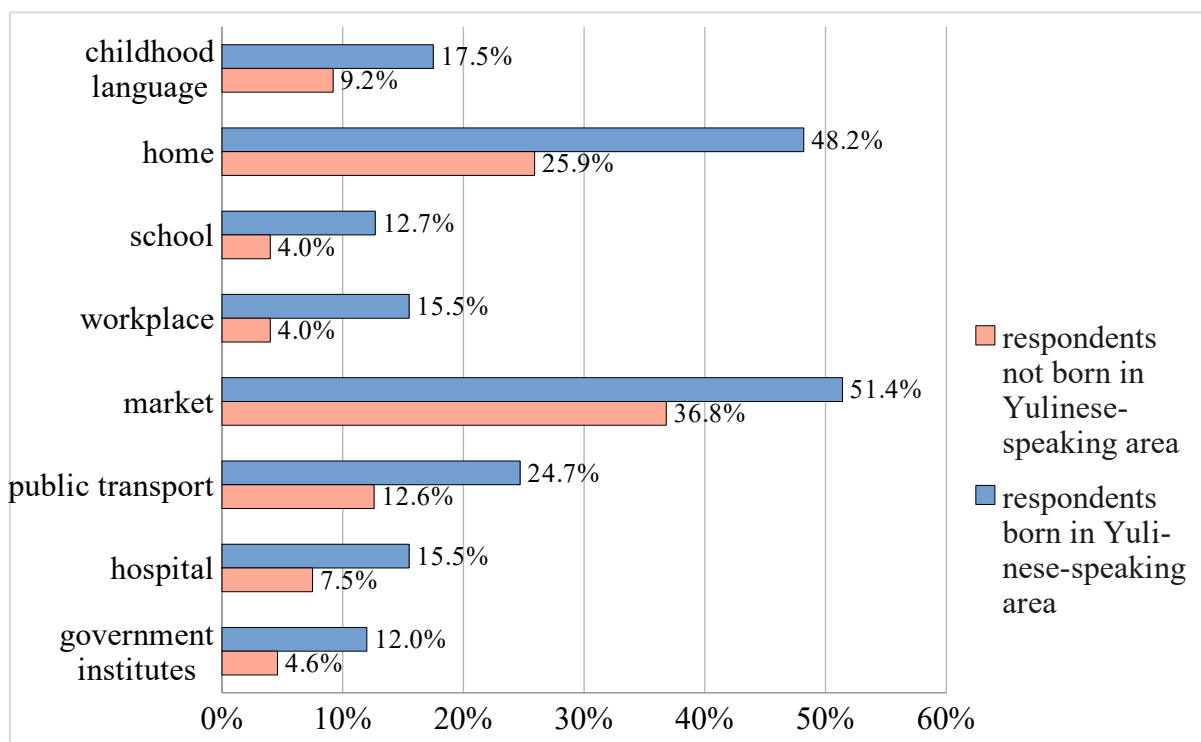


Fig. 30. Use of Yulinese by respondents born in Yulinese areas versus non-Yulinese areas

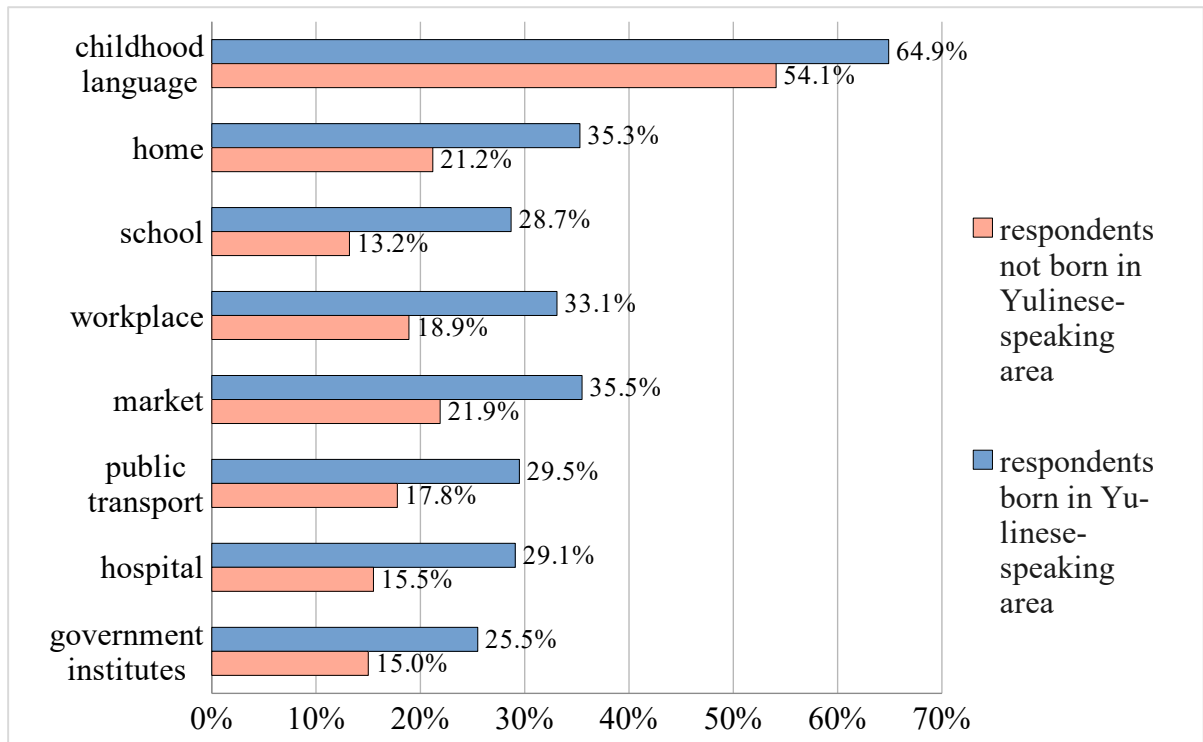


Fig. 31. Use both of Putonghua and other variety(ies) by respondents born in Yulinese areas versus non-Yulinese areas

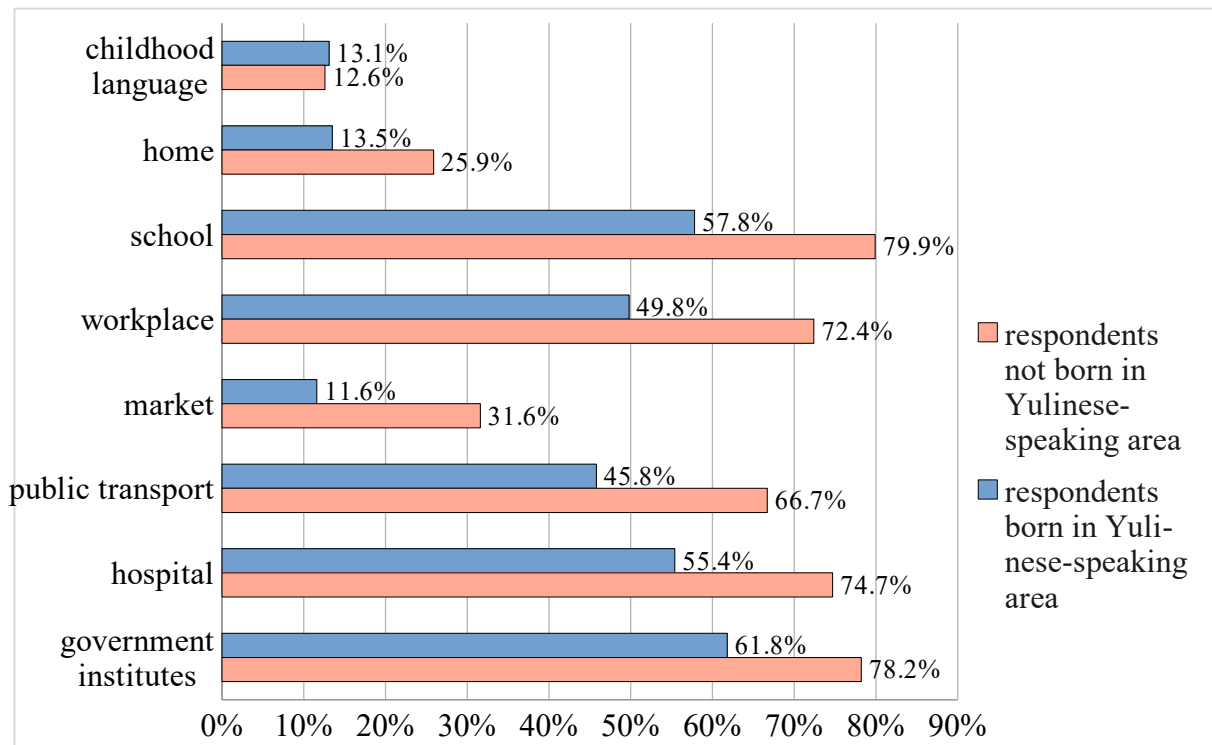


Fig. 32. Use of Putonghua by respondents born in Yulinese areas versus non-Yulinese areas

4.3.5 Language use by respondents in different occupations

Respondents identified as farmers and retirees tend to use Yulinese in both informal and formal settings (see Fig. 33). Conversely, students exhibit the lowest inclination to use Yulinese.

Noteworthy patterns emerge among white-collar workers, self-employed/entrepreneurs, and homemakers, where a uniform trend in the use of Yulinese is observed. These groups display a comparatively lower incidence of Yulinese utilization in informal settings, coupled with a discernible reluctance to employ the dialect in formal contexts.

An intriguing observation arises from the survey data, particularly regarding blue-collar workers. While displaying a notable utilization of Yulinese in the domestic sphere, these respondents exhibit a contrasting pattern in other settings, demonstrating a reduced propensity for Yulinese use beyond home.

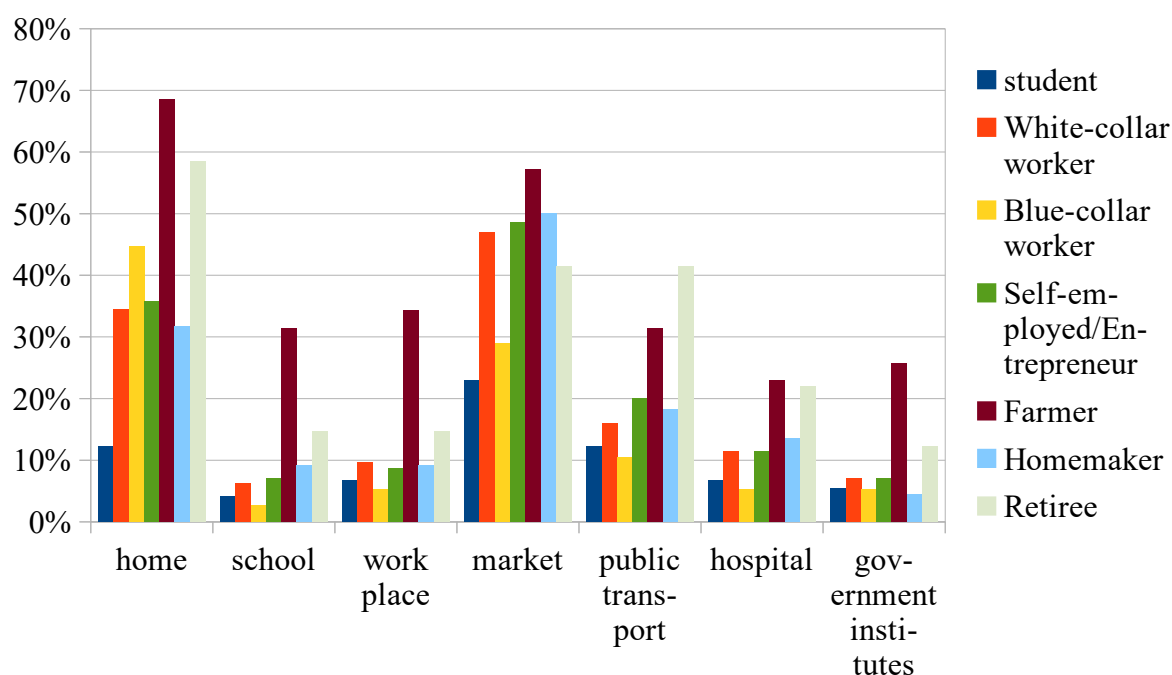


Fig. 33. Use of Yulinese by respondents with different occupations

In the context of Putonghua utilization (see Fig. 34), students emerge as notably predisposed to its use, substantiated by compelling evidence. Across diverse formal settings, students exhibit a robust inclination, with over 70% reporting consistent employment of Putonghua. Even within familial interactions, 29.7% of students express a preference for exclusive Putonghua communication, and in marketplaces, Putonghua adoption reaches a substantial 41.9%.

Conversely, in informal settings, farmers and retirees exhibit the lowest proclivity for Putonghua. However, in formal domains, these groups predominantly employ Putonghua, albeit at lower rates compared to other demographic cohorts. White-collar workers (20.45%), blue-collar workers (26.3%), and self-employed/entrepreneurs (15.7%) share comparable tendencies in using Putonghua exclusively at home and demonstrate analogous use in formal settings. Nevertheless, a noteworthy disparity surfaces in the marketplace, where blue-collar workers (39.5%) exhibit a higher incidence of Putonghua use compared to white-collar workers (14.2%) and self-employed/entrepreneurs (8.6%).

Of particular interest is the observation that homemakers (18.2%) exhibit a similar exclusive Putonghua use rate in home language as their counterparts in white-collar, blue-collar, and self-employed/entrepreneurial occupations. However, in various other settings, homemakers manifest a pronounced inclination for Putonghua. Particularly noteworthy are instances in schools, where 81.8% of homemakers express a preference for Putonghua, and in government agencies, where 90.9% exclusively opt for Putonghua – surpassing even the rate reported by students.

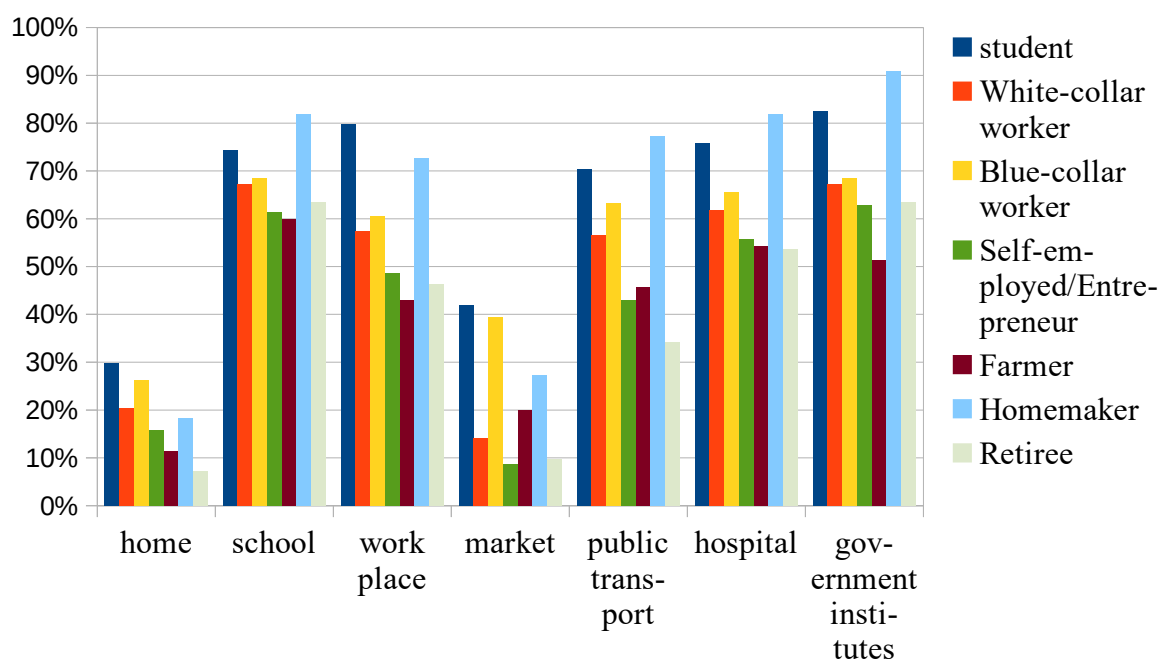


Fig. 34. Use of Putonghua by respondents with different occupations

As shown in Fig. 35, students (35.1%), self-employed/entrepreneurs (40%), and homemakers (36.3%) exhibit a higher likelihood of employing both Putonghua and dialect(s) in household communication, surpassing those who exclusively use Yulinese or Putonghua. Notably, the

self-employed/entrepreneurs display an elevated propensity for the concurrent use of Putonghua and dialect(s) in markets and formal settings compared to students and homemakers.

White-collar workers and blue-collar workers demonstrate comparable rates of simultaneous Putonghua and dialect(s) use across diverse settings. This suggests that occupational distinctions exert minimal influence on the concurrent linguistic practices of these two respondent groups. While their proportions of simultaneous Putonghua and dialect(s) use are lower than those of students, self-employed/entrepreneurs, and homemakers, they surpass those of farmers and retirees in various contexts.

Farmers and retirees exhibit the lowest proportions among all occupational groups in terms of simultaneously using Putonghua and dialect(s) in diverse contexts. This implies a lack of distinct preference for the simultaneous use of Putonghua and dialect(s) within these occupational cohorts.

It is noteworthy that among self-employed/entrepreneurs, white-collar workers, blue-collar workers, and students, the use of both Putonghua and dialect(s) is the second most frequent choice across various contexts.

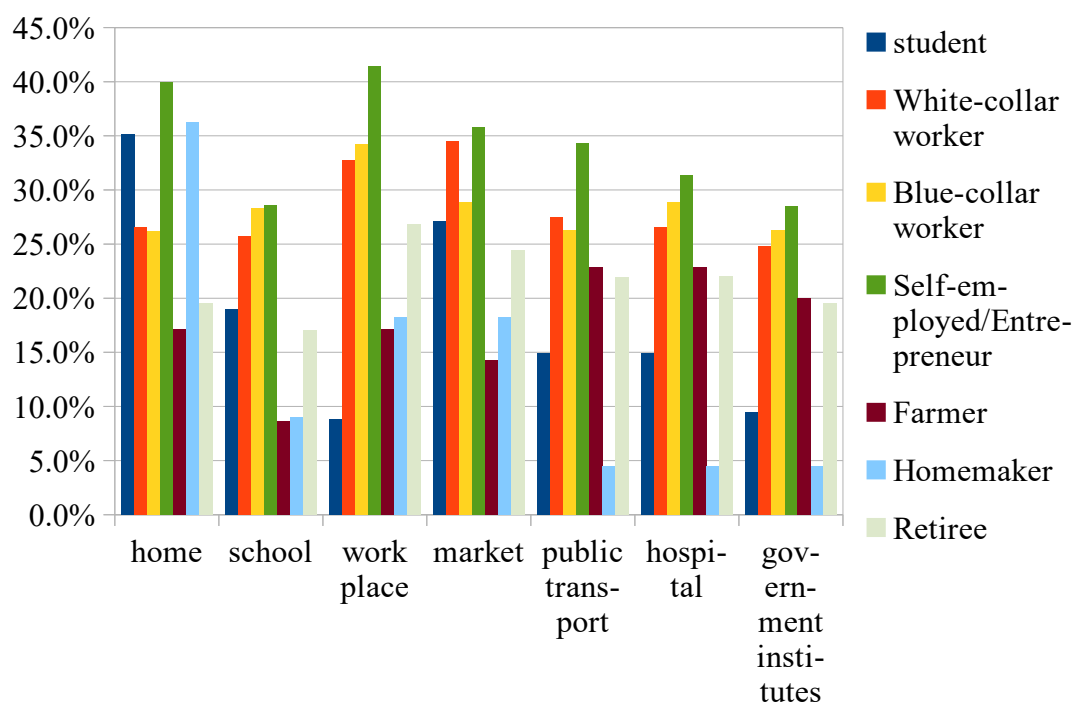


Fig. 35. Use of Putonghua and other variety(ies) of respondents of various occupations

Adopting Liu Xing's (2007: 8) categorization⁵, white-collar workers are categorized within the upper middle class, self-employed/entrepreneurs within the lower middle class, and blue-collar workers as skilled laborers. Farmers and homemakers are classified as unskilled workers. The analysis reveals a proclivity among the upper middle class, lower middle class, and skilled laborers towards the utilization of standard language, particularly Putonghua, in comparison to their counterparts in the lower social stratum, categorized as unskilled workers.

An intriguing observation arises in the context of homemakers, who, despite belonging to the lower social class, exhibit a notably high incidence of Putonghua use in formal settings. As caregivers responsible for familial and child-related duties, homemakers demonstrate a heightened social responsibility. Consequently, their language choices in schools, government offices, and hospitals reflect a tendency to align with the linguistic preferences of their interlocutors.

While socio-economic status undeniably influences respondents' language choices, it is crucial to acknowledge the substantial impact of the communication context on language selection. Unfortunately, due to the lack of information on the students' and retirees' social class, these groups were not classified for comparative analysis. Thus, the broader implications of socio-economic status on language preferences warrant further investigation.

4.4 Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was an attempt at exploring the relationship between language use and language attitudes among respondents from different cohorts. In this study, distinctions in language preferences emerged between male and female participants, with females exhibiting a greater inclination towards Putonghua, while males showed a higher preference for the local dialect. Examining language preferences across age groups revealed that respondents aged over 60 from Yulin displayed a distinct preference for the local dialect, aligning with Bai's (1994: 133) observations on older respondents in Shanghai. Conversely, participants aged 40-59 demonstrated a stronger inclination towards a blend of Putonghua and Yulinese, while those under 30 exhibited a pronounced preference for Putonghua, paralleling findings in studies by Zhou Minglang (2001), as well as Shan & Li (2018):

a) There is an intergenerational shift in language use, distinguishing between young and middle-aged respondents.

⁵Liu Xing's (2007) theory and the classification of different occupations into different social classes is discussed in detail in § 2.2.3, as is the study of language choice among different social classes.

b) The younger generation leans towards high-prestige language (Putonghua), while the middle-aged respondents favor a mix of high and low variety.

This phenomenon in Yulin can be attributed to two factors:

Firstly, the higher prestige of languages like Shanghainese and Cantonese in previous studies (Zhou Minglang 2001; Xue 2009; Shan and Li 2018) led to a shift towards a combination of Putonghua and the local dialect. However, Yulin lacks the social, economic, and political status of cities like Shanghai or Guangzhou, resulting in the local younger generation favoring the higher-prestige language (Putonghua), over the local dialect.

Secondly, differences in language proficiency were noted, with middle-aged respondents in this research being more proficient in both Putonghua and Yulinese, facilitating their comfort in using both languages. In contrast, younger respondents were predominantly taught Putonghua in school, leading to their lack of proficiency and discomfort in using the local dialect. This explanation extends to the lower preference for Yulinese among more educated respondents, who, having spent more time in school, are more comfortable with Putonghua. Additionally, disparities in Yulinese proficiency explain why respondents born in Yulinese-speaking area exhibit a stronger preference for the local dialect compared to those born outside this area.

Socio-economic factors also have some influence on the respondents' language use preference, although according to Puah and Ting (2015: 463), economic status is supposed to work in conjunction with factors such as gender and age. In this study, unskilled workers (farmers) with the lowest socio-economic status showed a stronger preference for Yulinese compared to respondents from other social classes. Differences in preference among the upper middle class, lower middle class, and skilled workers were less pronounced, aligning with Zhou Minglang's (2001: 246) observation of diminishing social disparities between Putonghua and dialect speakers.

Irrespective of gender, age, education level, birthplace, and occupation, Putonghua is considered a high variety and is used in formal settings. The increased prevalence of Putonghua can be attributed to China's language policy promoting its use. Additionally, economic considerations play a notable role, as discussed in Zhou Minglang's (2001: 247) paper: factors such as rapid industrialization, commercialization, and subsequent population movements have led to heightened demand for a common language, to facilitate effective communication among individuals from diverse regions. Consequently, these economic dynamics have contributed to an expanded functionality and widespread adoption of Putonghua in contemporary society.

Although statistics show that Yulinese is widely used in family settings and for shopping, there is a noticeable downward trend in its use in both contexts. This decline is particularly evident among the younger generation, especially those under the age of 30. If the local population fails to recognize Yulinese as a vital symbol of their cultural heritage and does not actively value it, this downward trajectory in its use may persist, resulting in a diminishing presence among the younger demographic.

Chapter 5: Statistical findings about the respondents' language attitudes

5.1 Analyzing the respondents' attitudes toward Yulinese from the perspective of mean values and standard deviation

Within this section, notable findings within each area will be highlighted to answer the question: what are the attitudes of the Yulin people towards Yulinese? The findings will then be explained with statistical results, including means and standard deviations.

As described in section 3.1.2, the attitudes towards Yulinese are analysed in terms of affinity to the Yulin language, practical value of Yulinese, attitudes towards its speakers, as well as language anxiety and the respondents' relatives' attitudes towards learning Yulinese. In the following sections, the mean for each statement and the composite mean for each factor are presented to elucidate the language attitudes in general and attitudes towards Yulinese. Except for the statements in language anxiety, mean value (Avg) above 3 indicate a favorable predisposition, while scores below this threshold indicate a negative predisposition. For the verbal anxiety statements, Avg below 3 indicate a favorable predisposition.

In terms of Standard Deviation (SD), a higher value indicates a greater variance in perceptions among participants, while a lower SD value reflects a greater degree of consensus.

5.1.1 The affinity towards Yulinese

Respondents expressed positive attitudes about their association with Yulinese. Specifically, when rating the statements "Yulin people should be able to understand and express themselves in Yulinese" and "knowing Yulinese is the only way to understand the Yulin culture", the Avg were 3.83 and 3.67 respectively (see Fig. 36 and 37). This identification is highlighted by the positive mean scores and agreement on the importance of Yulinese, indicating a widespread belief among respondents that Yulinese is an important part of the local culture. And it also implies a strong sense of agreement that Yulinese is integral to understanding and appreciating the broader cultural context.

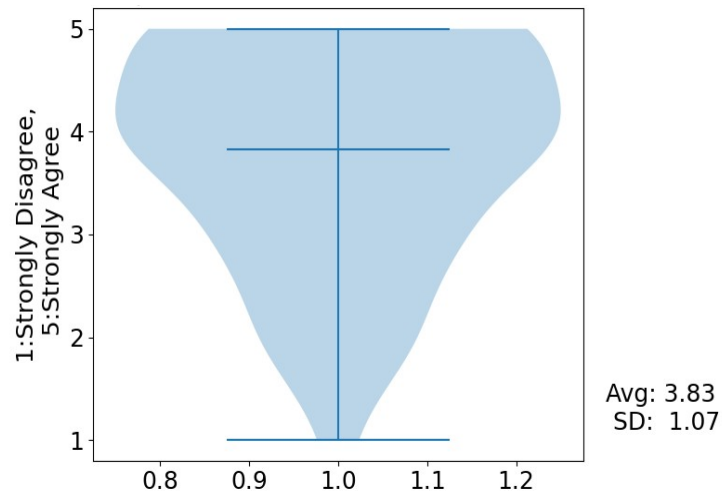


Fig. 36. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 1st statement: "Yulin people should be able to understand and express themselves in Yulinese"

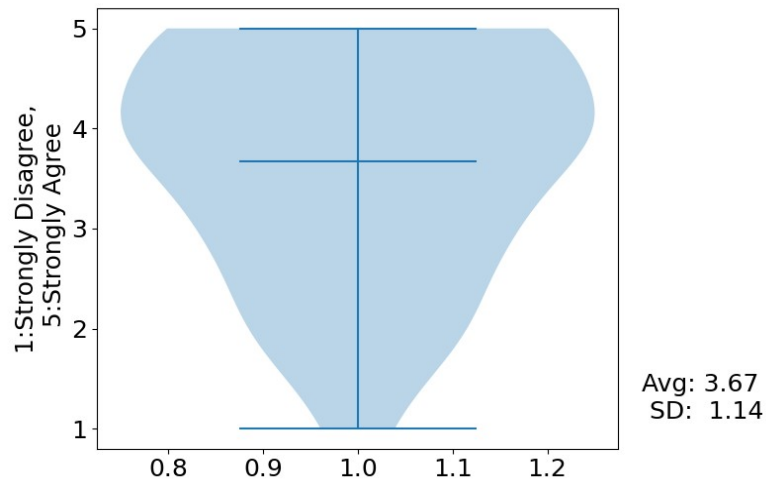


Fig. 37. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 2nd statement: "knowing Yulinese is the only way to understand the Yulin culture"

However, when rating the 4th statement "all native Yulin speakers can speak Yulinese" (see Fig. 38), the Avg is 3.24, which could indicate that while there is an expectation for native speakers to know the dialect, it may not be a universal skill among them.

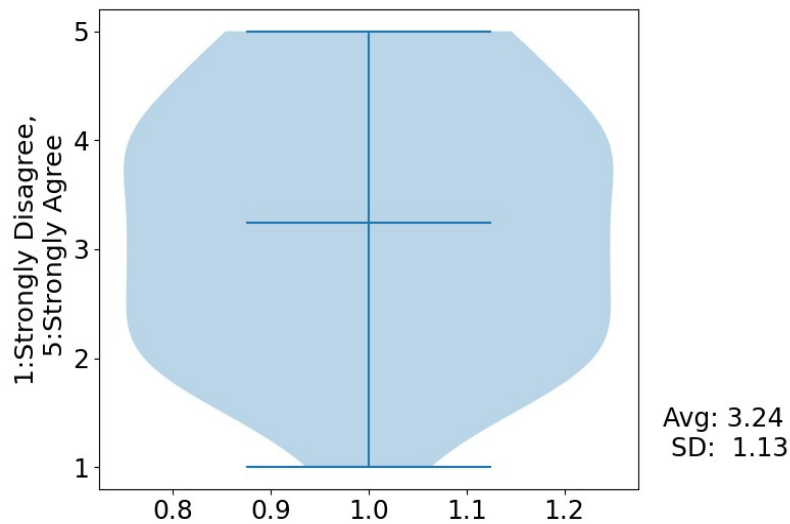


Fig. 38. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 4th statement: "all native Yulin speakers can speak Yulinese"

In the case of the statement that "people who do not speak Yulinese are outsiders", the Avg is only 2.54 (see Fig. 39), which shows that the majority of the respondents do not agree with it. This suggests that most respondents do not associate language with identity.

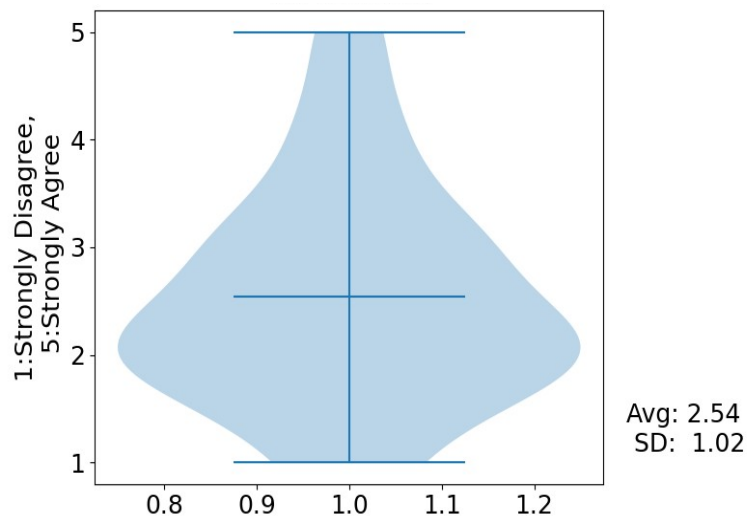


Fig. 39. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 3rd statement: "people who do not speak Yulinese are outsiders"

When evaluating the statement "if I don't speak Yulinese, I will be bullied by the locals, so I need to know Yulinese" the Avg is 2.37 (see Fig. 40), indicating a relatively low level of agreement. This suggests that respondents may not strongly believe that a lack of proficiency in Yulinese would lead to bullying, although there is still some expressed concern.

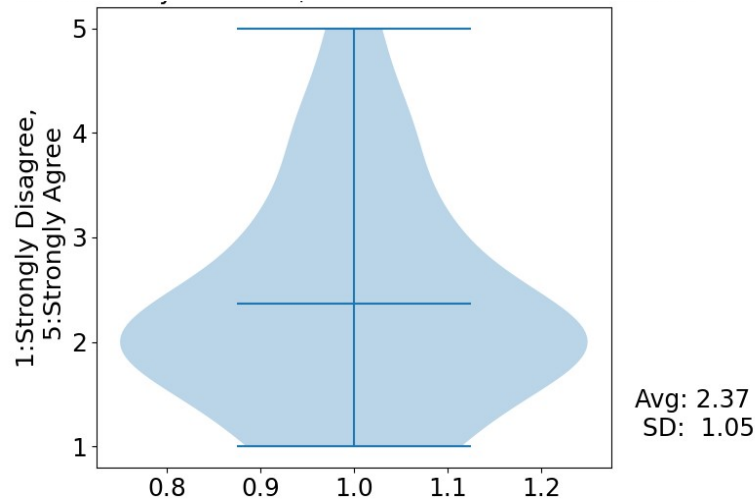


Fig. 40. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 5th statement: "if I don't speak Yulinese, I will be bullied by the locals, so I need to know Yulinese"

In summary, the analysis reveals a positive and strong association between respondents and Yulinese, emphasizing its importance as a cultural identifier. While there is an expectation for native speakers to know the dialect, the attitude towards non-Yulin speakers is more neutral, and concerns about potential bullying due to language proficiency are less pronounced.

5.1.2 The practical value of Yulinese

Based on the statistical analysis shown in the graph below, the respondents show a slight tendency to perceive the practical value of Yulinese as negative, although the standard deviation shows that there are differences in the respondents' opinions.

Regarding statement 6 "you need to know Yulinese to work in Yulin", the Avg of respondents' views is 2.98, slightly below 3, with a standard deviation of 1.09 (see Fig. 41), indicating a polarisation of attitudes. A significant proportion of respondents feel that the knowledge of Yulinese is not necessary for employment in Yulin, while others feel that it is necessary. Furthermore, the analysis of the respondents' language use in different contexts, as presented in § 4.2 of the dissertation, suggests a predominance of Putonghua over Yulinese in formal settings, underlining that Yulinese is not necessary for work.

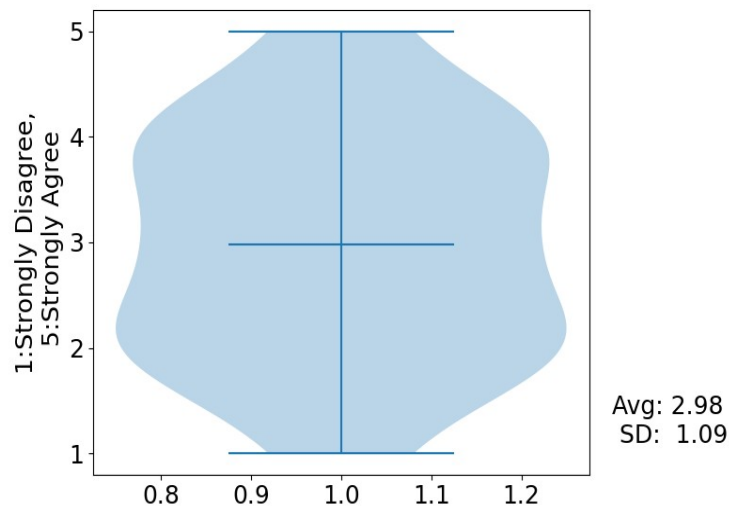


Fig. 41. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 6th statement: "you need to know Yulinese to work in Yulin"

The assessment of Statement 7 "being fluent in Yulinese will help you get a good job", the Avg (2.84) and SD (1.09) (see Fig. 42) of the respondents' opinions collectively indicate a prevailing opinion that fluency in Yulinese does not have any significant advantages in improving employment prospects. However, a detailed examination of the distribution using violin plots reveals a concentration of opinions in the range of 2 to 4. This concentration suggests that the respondents' attitudes are characterized by a degree of uncertainty overall: fluency in Yulinese may not contribute significantly to securing employment, but it might confer subtle advantages in terms of promotion opportunities, though that impact is perceived to be minimal.

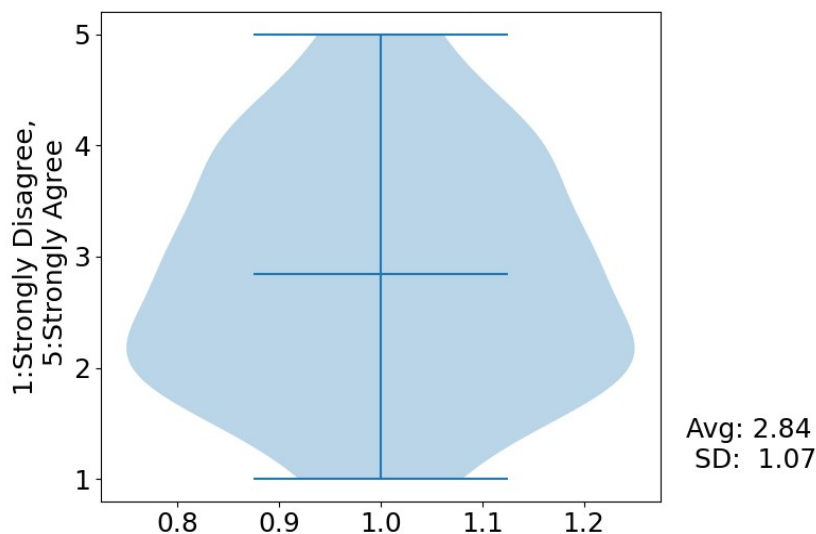


Fig. 42. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 7th statement: "being fluent in Yulinese will help you get a good job"

In the context of the effectiveness of shopping and interpersonal communication with local people, respondents showed a favorable inclination towards Yulinese. Specifically, for statement 8, “knowing Yulinese is helpful when buying things in Yulin”, respondents provided an Avg of 3.74 (see Fig. 43), accompanied by a small SD of 0.99. This high mean combined with low variance indicate widespread agreement with the statement. It suggests that the knowledge of Yulinese significantly facilitates improved communication with local residents.

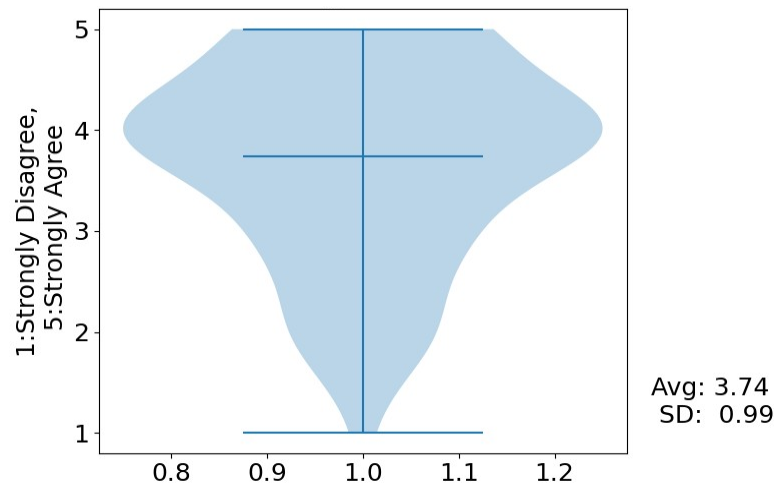


Fig. 43. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 8th statement: “knowing Yulinese is helpful when buying things in Yulin”

For statement 9 “knowing Yulinese is helpful when communicating with local people in Yulin”, the respondents' answers yielded an Avg of 3.96, with an SD of 0.87 (see Fig.44). The high mean and low standard deviation indicate a relatively even distribution of opinions, reinforcing the notion that the majority of respondents believe that knowing Yulinese is an advantage when shopping in Yulin.

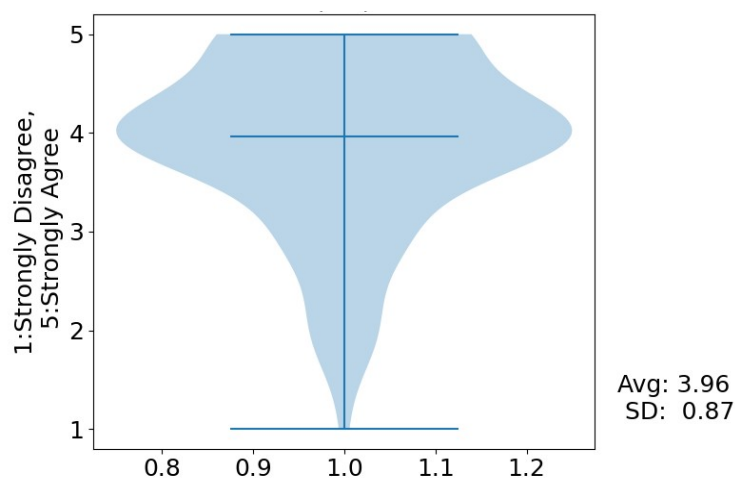


Fig. 44. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 9th statement: “knowing Yulinese is helpful when communicating with local people in Yulin”

In the assessment of the statement 10, i.e. “knowing Yulinese makes the locals respect me more”, respondents expressed a degree of disagreement, with an AVG of 2.94 and an SD of 1.1 (see Fig. 45). The distribution of ratings depicted in the violin plot highlights a substantial portion of the respondents disagreeing with the statement, but a portion of the respondents concurrently acknowledge that knowing Yulinese may indeed enhance local respect to some extent.

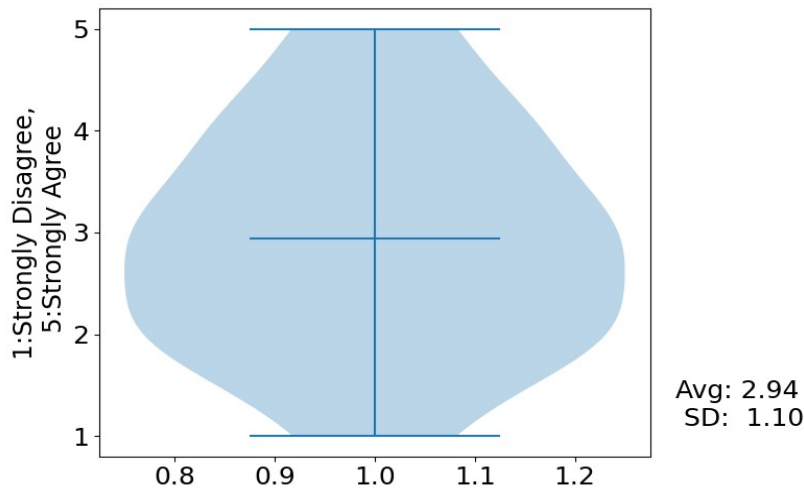


Fig. 45. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 10th statement: “knowing Yulinese makes the locals respect me more”

Overall, respondents tend to think that the lack of competence in Yulinese does not necessarily result in disrespect from locals. However, they also indicate that the use of the dialect can facilitate greater recognition and closer connections with the local community.

In sum, it becomes evident that respondents predominantly recognize the practical value of Yulinese in daily life activities such as shopping and communication. However, when considering aspects related to employment and career advancement, proficiency in Yulinese does not appear to confer significant convenience or assistance to the respondents.

5.1.3 Attitude towards speakers of Yulinese

Upon assessing statement 11: “most people who speak Yulinese are friendly and easy to get along with”, the Avg is 3.52, accompanied by the SD of 1.02 (see Fig. 46). These findings suggest a considerable level of consensus among respondents of positive perceptions of individuals who speak Yulinese.

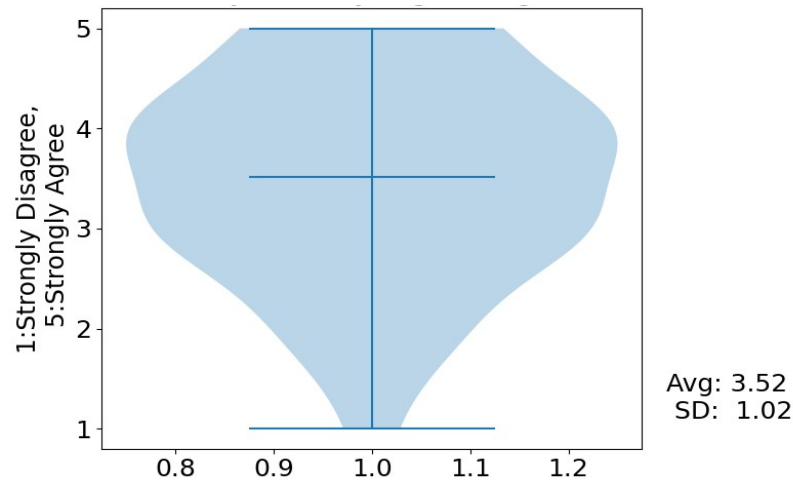


Fig. 46. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 11th statement: "most people who speak Yulinese are friendly and easy to get along with"

In the assessment of statement 12, "not being able to communicate fluently in Yulinese is a big loss for the local", the Avg recorded is 2.78, with the SD of 1.08 (see Fig. 47). This implies that respondents may not perceive it as a considerable loss if they are not able to communicate in Yulinese fluently. Meanwhile, the relatively diminished mean value also suggests that a majority of respondents do not deem it obligatory for Yulin locals to attain proficiency in Yulinese.

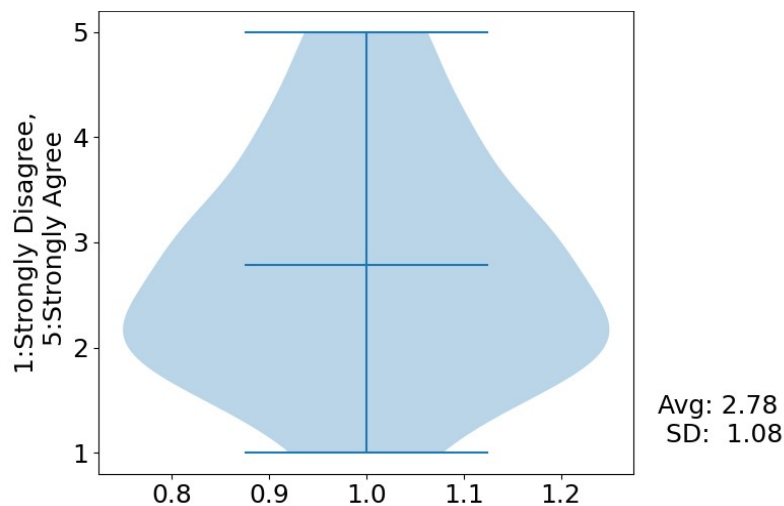


Fig. 47. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 12th statement: "not being able to communicate fluently in Yulinese is a big loss for the local"

When evaluating statement 13, "I would like to have lot of Yulinese-speaking friends", the Avg is 3.49, accompanied by the SD of 0.94 (see Fig. 48). These results indicate a high level of evaluation and consistency among respondents, reflecting a willingness to establish friend-

ships with individuals who speak Yulinese. This desire may be driven by the perceived cultural significance or personal preference for connections with those who share a common language and cultural background.

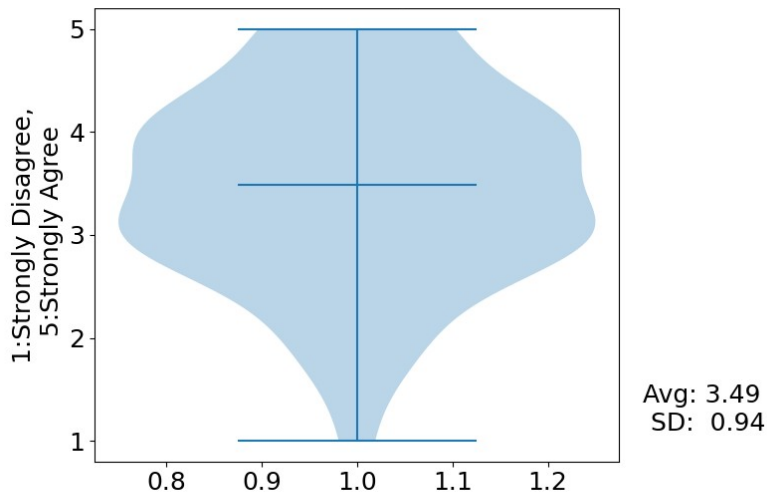


Fig. 48. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 13th statement: "I would like to have lot of Yulinese-speaking friends"

The analysis of data pertaining to sentence 14, "I wish my friends would use Yulinese when they tweet or call me", reveals the Avg of 3 (see Fig. 49). The score of 3 falls precisely at the midpoint of the scale, suggesting an absence of a strong inclination towards either agreement or disagreement with the statement. It indicates that respondents, on average, express a neutral stance or ambivalence regarding their desire for friends to communicate with them using Yulinese in tweets or calls.

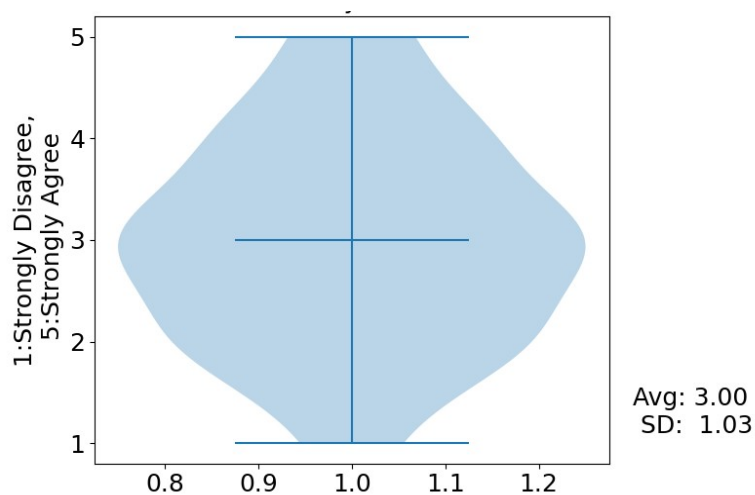


Fig. 49. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 14th statement: "I wish my friends would use Yulinese when they tweet or call me"

The Avg assigned by respondents to the statement 15, “People who speak Yulinese have a low level of education”, is 1.7, accompanied by an SD of 0.78 (see Fig. 50). This outcome suggests disagreement among the respondents. The corresponding violin plot distribution illustrates that most respondents assigned ratings falling within the 1 to 2 range. Specifically, respondents predominantly expressed disagreement with the assertion that “speakers of Yulinese have a low level of education”.

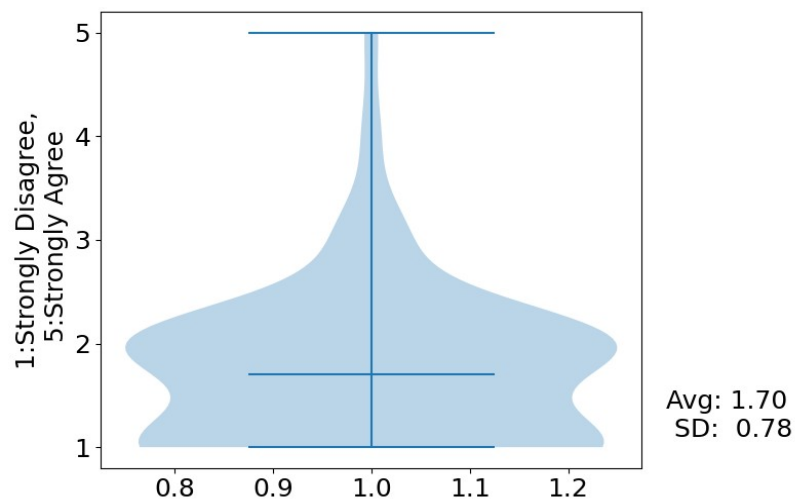


Fig. 50. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 15th statement: “People who speak Yulinese have a low level of education”

It is noteworthy that, in § 4.3.3, I found respondents with an educational background of high school or below used Yulinese in various contexts more often than those with a higher level of education. However, it is important to emphasize that such patterns do not mean that respondents associate speakers of Yulinese with a lower level of education.

This nuanced perspective suggests a complex and varied attitude among respondents. On one hand, respondents expressed a positive perception of Yulinese speakers, highlighting their friendliness and willingness to establish friendships. Respondents did not link speaking Yulinese with a lower level of education, as evidenced by their low mean rating on the corresponding statement. On the other hand, respondents were neutral about their friends' preference for using Yulinese in communication. They showed no strong tendency to desire or reject such linguistic preferences among their friends. Furthermore, respondents did not express any specific expectations for local people to be proficient in Yulinese.

5.1.4 Language anxiety in connection with Yulinese

In the context of language anxiety, participants showed a markedly positive disposition towards Yulinese. This survey used inverted questions, where a rating of 3 or less indicated a positive attitude.

Specifically, responses to statements 16 and 17 (see Fig. 51 and 52), denoting sentiments such as “It is a headache to make phone calls in Yulinese” and “I find it repulsive to order food in Yulinese”, yielded the Avg of 2.55 and 2.21, respectively, with SD of 0.99 and 0.9. Taken together, these figures indicate a consensus among respondents, reflecting a lack of discomfort using Yulinese in these situations.

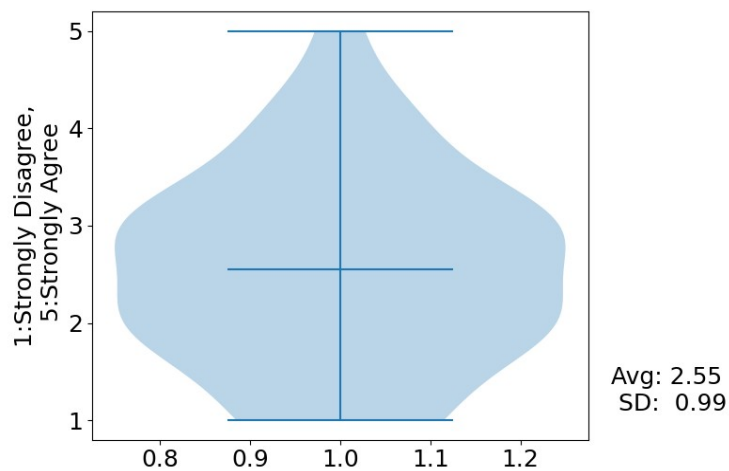


Fig. 51. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 16th statement: "It is a headache to make phone calls in Yulinese"

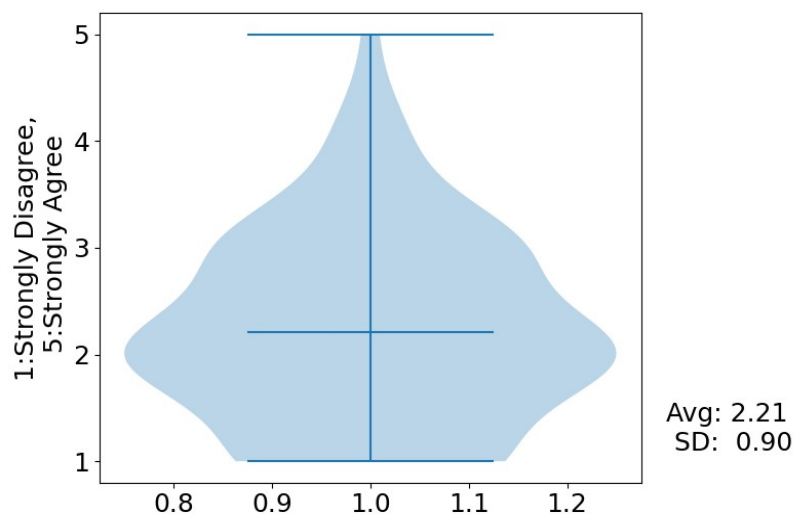


Fig. 52. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 17th statement: "I find it repulsive to order food in Yulinese"

Further examination of statement 18 “If someone asks me a question in Yulinese, I feel disgusted” and statement 19 “I feel embarrassed if I have to answer someone’s question in Yulinese”, revealed Avg of 2.3 and 2.2, with SD of 0.95 and 0.91 (see Fig. 53 and 54).

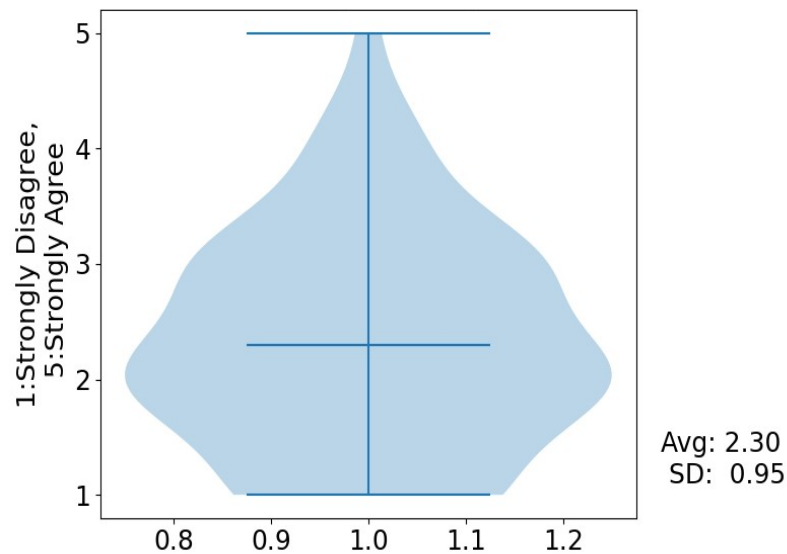


Fig. 53. Statistical results of participants’ responses to the 18th statement: “If someone asks me a question in Yulinese, I feel disgusted”

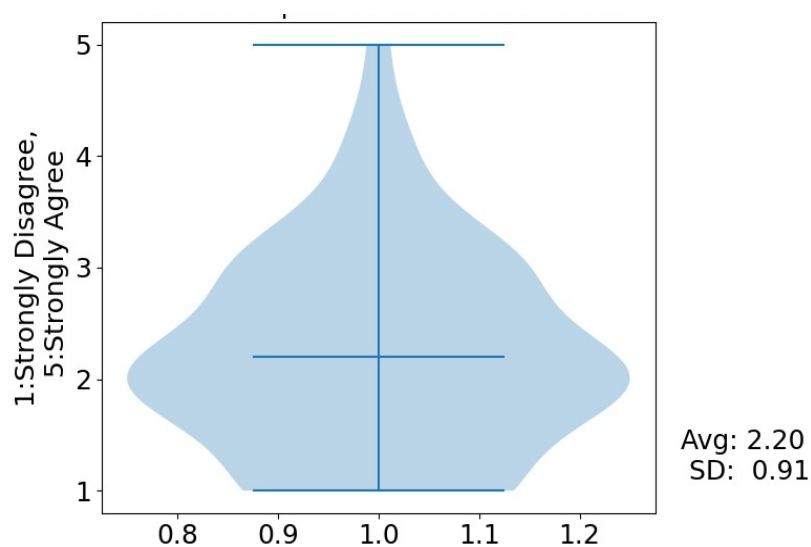


Fig. 54. Statistical results of participants’ responses to the 19th statement: “I feel embarrassed if I have to answer someone’s question in Yulinese”

In the evaluation of the 20th statement, “I find it repulsive to hear advertisements/broadcasts in Yulinese”, the Avg of 2.53, coupled with an SD of 1 (see Fig. 55), implies that respondents accept Yulinese in advertisements or broadcasts.

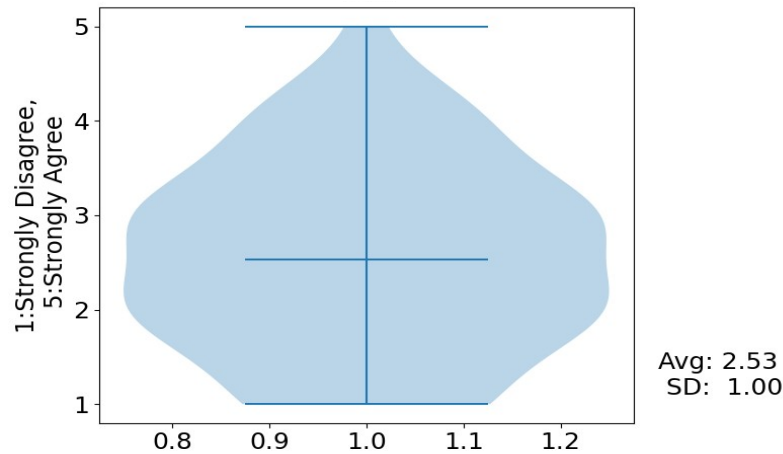


Fig. 55. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 20th statement: "I find it repulsive to hear advertisements/broadcasts in Yulinese"

The consistently positive trend observed in these daily life scenarios underscores the participants' overall openness to hearing and using Yulinese in public space.

5.1.5 Encouragement from family members to learn and use Yulinese

Regarding familial encouragement, respondents consistently provided highly positive assessments, signifying substantial support from their parents and relatives for learning Yulinese. This was reflected in the responses to three further statements. The statement, "My parents think it is important to learn Yulinese because we live in Yulin", has an Avg of 3.68 with an SD of 1.00 (see Fig. 56). This homogeneity in responses indicates a consensus among respondents that their parents consider learning Yulinese crucial, aligning with a majority perspective.

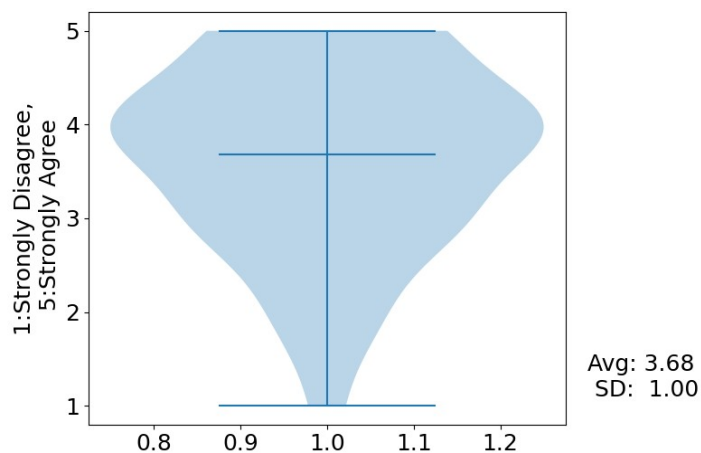


Fig. 56. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 21th statement: "My parents think it is important to learn Yulinese because we live in Yulin"

Similarly, the Avg for the 22nd statement, “My parents use Yulinese to communicate with me at home”, is 3.74, with an SD of 1.34 (see Fig. 57). This suggests that a substantial majority of respondents’ parents actively engage in using Yulinese for family communication. However, variations in frequency were noted, with some parents employing the dialect only occasionally.

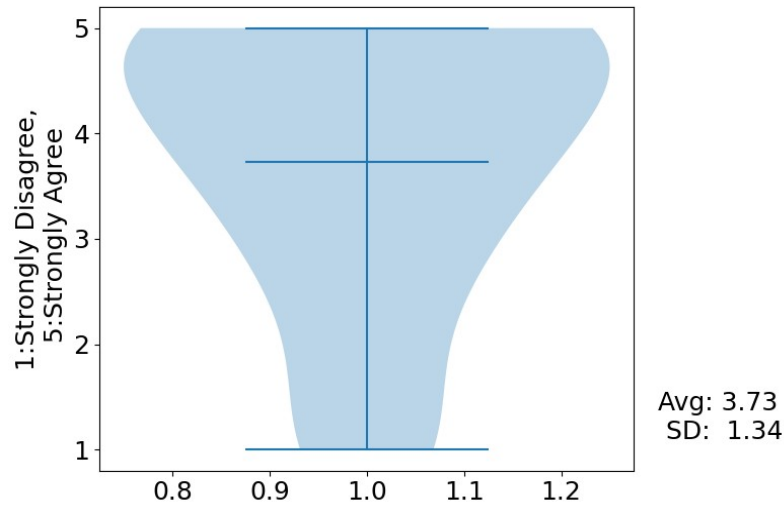


Fig. 57. Statistical results of participants’ responses to the 22nd statement: “My parents use Yulinese to communicate with me at home”

Evaluation of the 23rd statement, “My parents use Yulinese to communicate with me in public places”, resulted in an Avg of 3.63 and an SD of 1.33 (see Fig. 58). This data revealed a decline in motivation compared to dialect use at home, despite a prevailing tendency for parents to use Yulinese in public places when talking with their children.

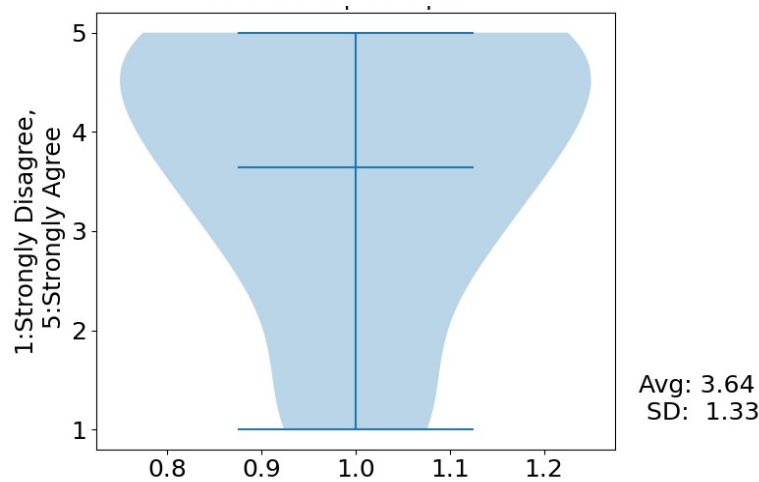


Fig. 58. Statistical results of participants’ responses to the 23rd statement: “My parents use Yulinese to communicate with me in public places”

Responses to statements 24 and 25, concerning the use of Yulinese by relatives or partners at home and in public places, respectively, garnered Avg of 3.6 and 3.52, accompanied by an SD of 1.21 (see Fig. 59 and 60). This indicates a comparable level of dialectal communication within these familial and social contexts.

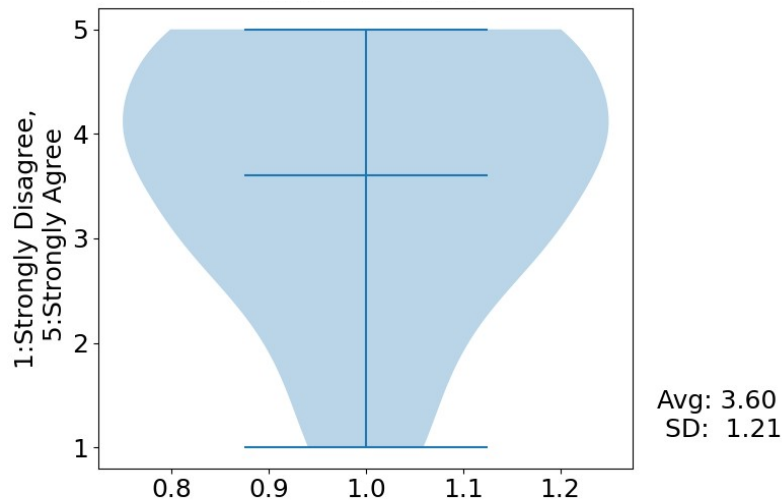


Fig. 59. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 24th statement: "My relatives/partner use Yulinese to communicate with me at home"

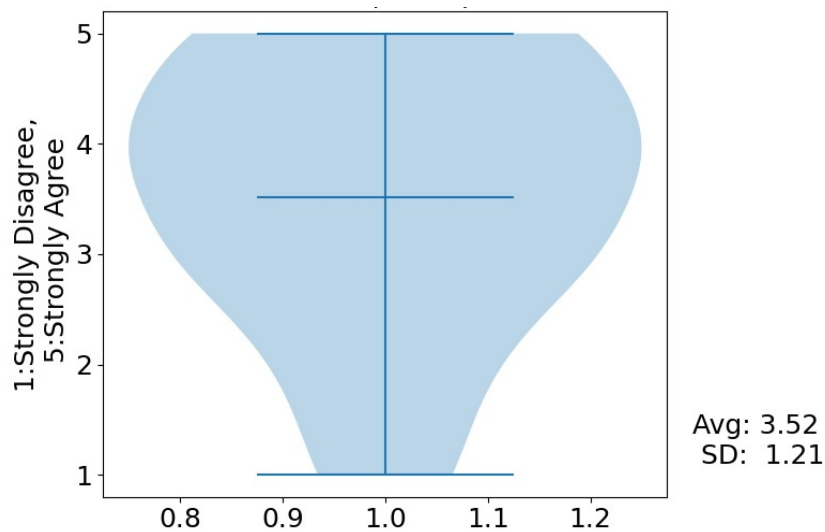


Fig. 60. Statistical results of participants' responses to the 25th statement: "My relatives/partner use Yulinese to communicate with me in public places"

The collective findings indicate that a significant majority of respondents receive encouragement from their family members to learn and use Yulinese. This endorsement extends beyond cognitive attitudes, manifesting in frequent Yulinese interactions within their daily lives.

5.1.6 The respondents' general attitudes toward Yulinese

Overall, when interpreted in terms of mean and standard deviation, respondents have favorable attitudes towards Yulinese, perceiving it positively in terms of emotion and cultural significance. They consider it to be an integral part of Yulin culture and have positive opinions of Yulinese speakers, reflecting a willingness to interact with them. The respondents do not perceive Yulinese as a 'low-rank language', nor do they feel being treated differently based on whether or not they can speak Yulinese. They comfortably integrate Yulinese into their daily lives and show a lack of anxiety in using it.

However, when it comes to the transmission of Yulinese, the respondents' attitudes do not match this positive trend. Despite being encouraged by parents and relatives to use the dialect, there is a noticeable lack of awareness or inclination among respondents to actively transmit Yulinese. Many respondents do not express a particular desire to use Yulinese and, to some extent, do not consider it necessary to acquire proficiency in the dialect. This reluctance may be due to the perceived low practical value of Yulinese, which does not help the respondents in their actual work and career development.

5.2 Using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and cluster analysis to study the respondents' attitudes towards Yulinese

In prior research, the T-test, F-test, and One-way ANOVA have commonly been employed to assess the impact of specific factors on respondents' language attitudes (e.g., Li Jin-feng 2020; Groves 2010; Gao et al. 2019; Shan and Li 2018; Su Cheng-Chieh 2011). However, these traditional statistical methods exhibit certain limitations. For instance, the T-test is applicable only to questions featuring two response groups (e.g., attitudes of male and female respondents). When dealing with more than two distinct groups, the utilization of One-way ANOVA, F-value, and post hoc tests (LSD, Scheffe, Bonferroni, and Tukey methods depending on the number of comparison groups and samples) is computationally intensive and primarily indicates statistical significance without detailed insight. Moreover, and of paramount significance, one of the underlying assumptions of ANOVA is that the values of the dependent variable adhere to a normal distribution (Fernandez 1992: 297). Nevertheless, when employing Likert scales in most questionnaires, the resultant data typically deviates from a normal distribution. Data sets generated through Likert-type scales often exhibit skewed or polarized distributions, as observed in studies such as Jamieson (2004: 1218).

To overcome these limitations, I opted for an alternative approach in my research, employing a combination of Kendall's Tau, Principal Component Analysis (PCA), and cluster analysis. This methodological innovation provided a fresh perspective for interpreting respondents' linguistic attitudes towards Yulinese, offering a comprehensive understanding beyond traditional statistical techniques.

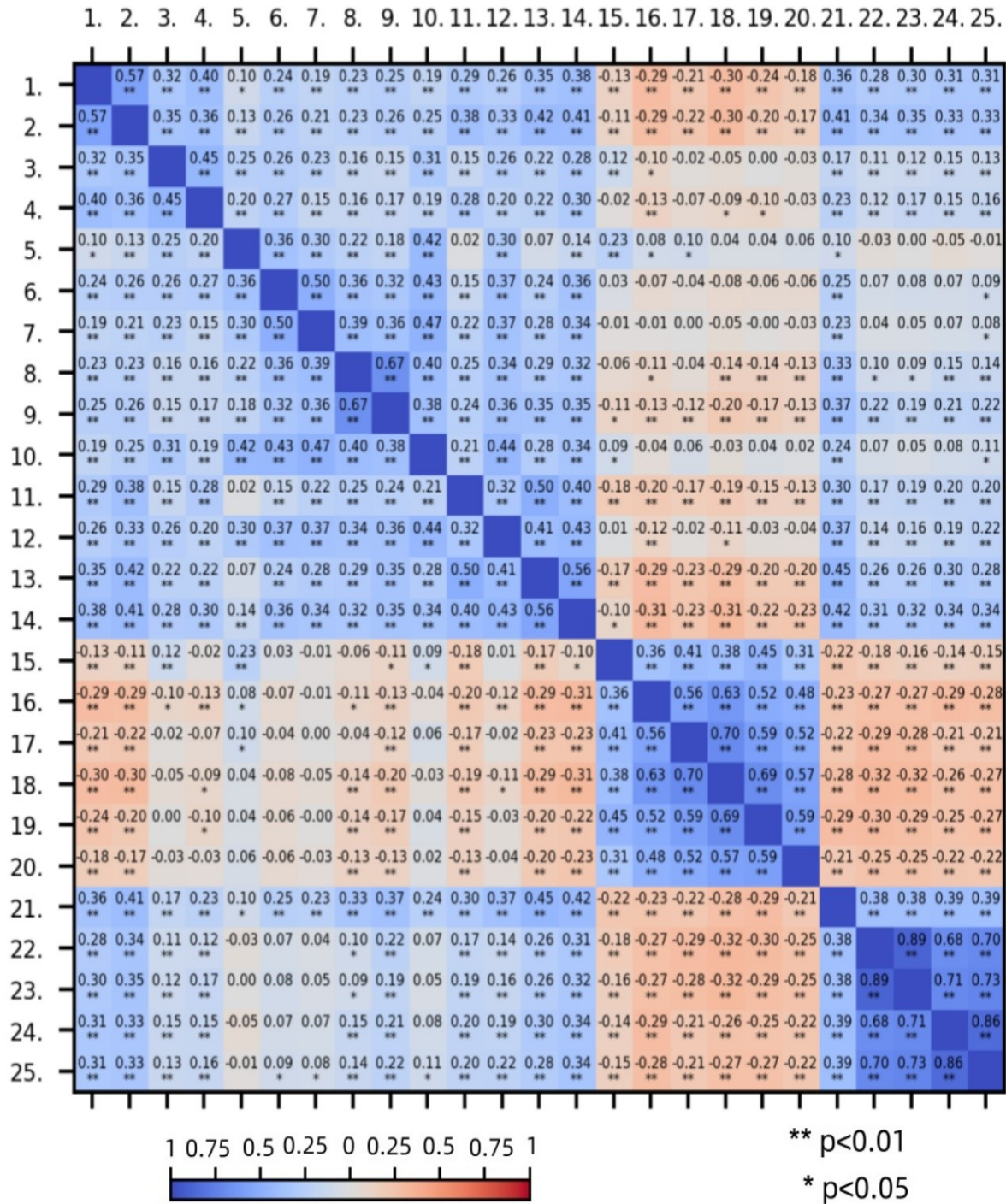


Fig. 61. Kendall Tau correlation between each statement

Given the unlikely normal distribution of answers, as evidenced in the presented violin plots (as shown on §5.1), the application of Kendall Tau correlation became imperative. For questions 1-25 within the questionnaire, Kendall's tau correlation was computed pairwise, and the outcomes were graphically represented through a heat-map (see Fig. 61). Each cell in the heat-map corresponds to the correlation between a pair of variables, with the actual correlation coefficients provided within each cell. To expeditiously convey the correlation patterns within the dataset, a color scheme utilizing blue and red was employed. Specifically, blue signifies a positive correlation between the variable pairs, whereas red indicates a negative correlation. The intensity of the colors serves as an indicator of correlation strength, with darker shades of blue representing stronger positive correlations and darker shades of red denoting more robust negative correlations, while lighter hues correspond to weaker associations in both cases.

The analysis conducted through the heat map (Fig. 61) reveals a notable correlation between affinity towards Yulinese (questions 1-5) and the attitude towards speakers of Yulinese (questions 10-14). This correlation is observed to be relatively high, suggesting that respondents who harbor a sense of closeness to Yulinese tend to exhibit a more amicable disposition towards speakers of Yulinese, coupled with a more favorable stance towards Yulinese.

Furthermore, the correlation between the perceived practical value of Yulinese and the attitude towards its speakers (questions 10-14) is also quite high. In essence, respondents who acknowledge the practical value of Yulinese tend to perceive its speakers as more affable and exhibit a more favorable disposition towards Yulinese itself.

Additionally, a positive correlation is noticed between the affinity towards Yulinese and the perceived practical value of the dialect. However, this correlation is not as obvious as the factors mentioned above. In fact, respondents who feel an affinity towards Yulinese are more likely to hold a positive attitude towards its practical value, and vice versa.

The positive correlation between encouragement from family members and the attitude towards Yulinese speakers is less apparent than the correlation observed between affinity value and practical value. This diminished correlation can be interpreted on the assumption that respondents who are encouraged by their family members to learn and use Yulinese exhibit slightly more positive attitudes towards the local dialect than those lacking such encouragement.

Notably, the 15th statement is the only one that reverses the correlation direction in comparison with questions from the same group. This question was reversed intentionally

and was asking about the opinion on the education level of people using this dialect, while local people with a positive attitude were actually more likely to hold a negative view towards this statement. It was thus confirmed that the respondents did not rate blindly, but read the questions carefully and answered truthfully.

The primary departure from positive correlations was observed in a distinctive band formed by the reversed order in questions 16-20. In this segment, dedicated to investigating the respondents' language anxiety, an argument can be made that individuals with positive attitudes towards Yulinese are less likely to experiencing language anxiety.

From the most obvious cases of strong correlation, it was noticeable for subsets where questions were intended to inquire about related concepts. In terms of strong correlation outside the intended groups, the perceived opinion of parents (Question 21) was strongly related not only to the intent to have friends using this dialect (Question 13) but also to the chance that they would use this dialect for communication (Question 14), with respective τ values of 0.45 and 0.43. Interestingly, there were also questions that, while strongly correlated within their group, stood as very weakly correlated or even outright unrelated to questions on "Encouragement from family members" and "Language Anxiety". Such paradoxical behavior was noticeable regarding people not knowing the dialect as outsiders (Question 3) and bullying outgroup members (Question 5), as well as usefulness at work (Question 7) of knowing the dialect or earning local respect (Question 10).

As the heatmap was somewhat inconclusive and may have given the impression that almost all answers are related to each other, PCA was applied. However, is the genuine attitude of respondents towards Yulinese truly as straightforward as it appears? Following the application of PCA, subsequent discoveries were made:

The first PCA axis (the blue line in Fig. 62), accounted for only 31.5% of the variance. Thus, while crucial, this axis was evidently not revealing the entire narrative. The first axis consistently explained both the "Encouragement from family members" and "Language Anxiety" sections. Its relationship with other sections was more nuanced. If we interpret very low weights as a genuine relationship and not merely as the mathematically best fit in dimension reduction, this dimension had a split role in the first section. It weakly agreed with all questions except for disagreeing with the 5th question on negative attitudes towards outsiders not speaking the language. While estimated weights for the practical value of the language did have a logical and consistent direction, they were surprisingly weak, implying that people who otherwise have a very positive attitude about this dialect are willing to reluctantly admit that the actual usefulness is somewhat limited. The attitude is also split – it combines a mod-

erately strong positive attitude towards locals using this dialect with open admission that most of the speakers are uneducated.

The second PCA axis (the orange line in Fig. 62) is weaker and explains 13.6% of the variance. This axis primarily combines a very strong family opinion on language attitude in conjunction with modest language anxiety. This is further combined with a less-than-flattering opinion of the speakers of this dialect and a strongly negative opinion of the practical value of that dialect. This finding appears to encompass people who effectively consider Yulinese to be slightly embarrassing and to be a vestige deprived of practical value, though somehow cherished by their family and friends.

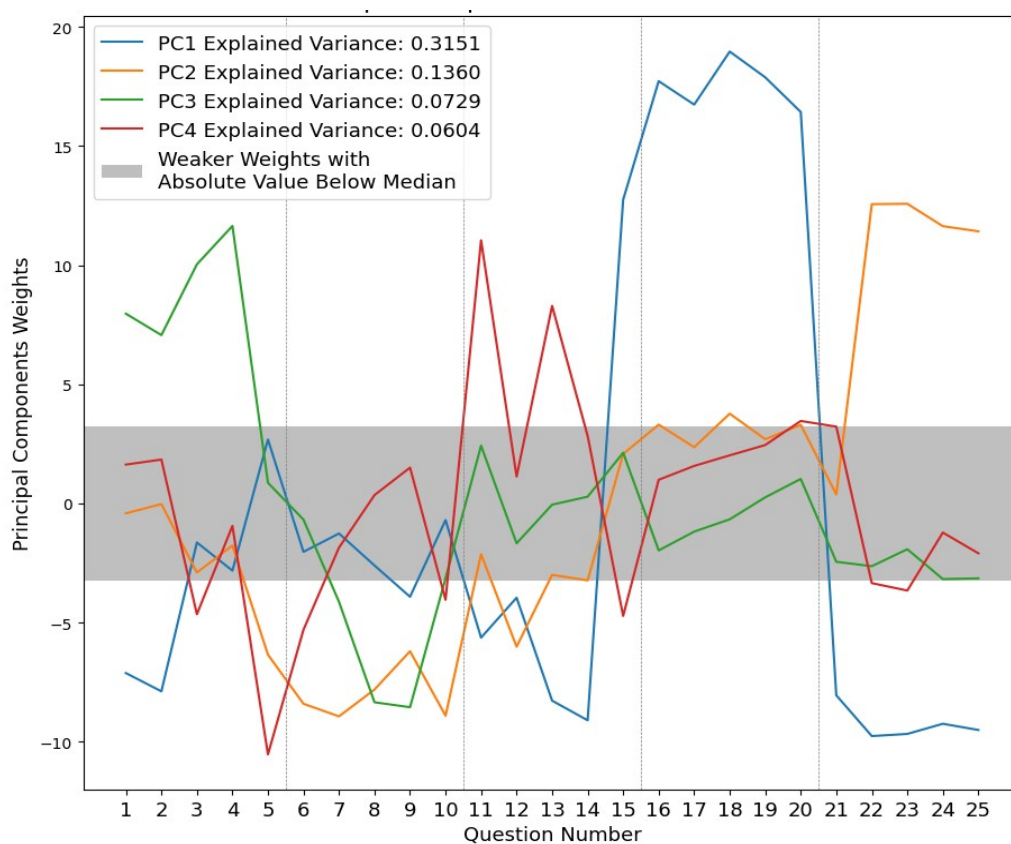


Fig. 62. Principal component analysis of language attitude questions

The third and fourth PCA axes combined have comparable explanatory power to the second axis as they explain respectively 7.3% and 6.0% of the variance. The third axis (the green line in Fig. 62) appears to represent a strong affinity to the dialect combined with a tacit admission that its practical value is limited. Respondents in this category share similarities with the young professionals in Yang Chunsheng's (2014) study conducted in Shenyang – they converse in the Northeastern dialect, work and reside in the region where the Northeastern dialect

is prevalent, thereby establishing an emotional affinity with it. However, a notable distinction lies in the fact that participants in this study, while expressing emotional closeness to the local dialect, also indirectly conveyed that the dialect holds limited practical value for them.

The fourth axis (the red line in Fig. 62) encompasses both a willingness to acquire more Yulinese speaking friends and disagreement on whether non-speakers would be bullied. These aspects seem not to be directly related to language attitude *per se*, but, rather, the model seems to start detecting personality features of respondents and their outgoing disposition, therefore we can choose to ignore it.

Following PCA analysis, we identify three primary axes. Hence, a more suitable interpretation of these axes is as follows:

The first dimension pertains to anxiety-related factor, indicating whether respondents perceive stress when employing Yulinese.

The second dimension relates to external motivation factor, signifying whether respondents receive encouragement from family members to learn and use Yulinese.

The third dimension concerns value, encompassing emotional affinity towards Yulinese and its perceived instrumental worth.

Based on these three dimensions, identified by the PCA, a cluster analysis was conducted. Initially, each dimension of analysis was visualized independently. The first axis, denoted as “anxiety” and depicted in green, represents the stress levels associated with using Yulinese (see Fig. 63). Darker shades indicate lower stress, while lighter shades signify higher stress.

The second axis, labelled in blue as “external motivation” (see Fig. 64), reflects the degree of encouragement or pressure from parents and relatives to use Yulinese. Darker blues indicate lower encouragement, while lighter blues signify higher encouragement.

The third axis, depicted in red and termed “value” (see Fig. 65), encompasses the emotional, instrumental, and social value of Yulinese. A deeper shade of red suggests lower values, while its lighter hue indicates higher values.

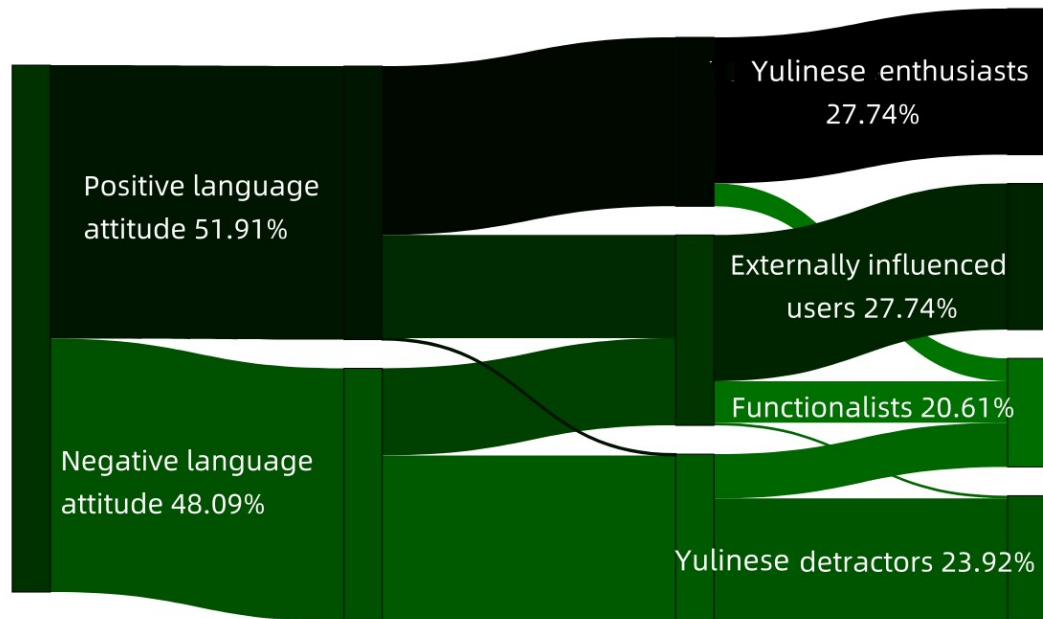


Fig. 63. The first axis: anxiety (statements 15-20)

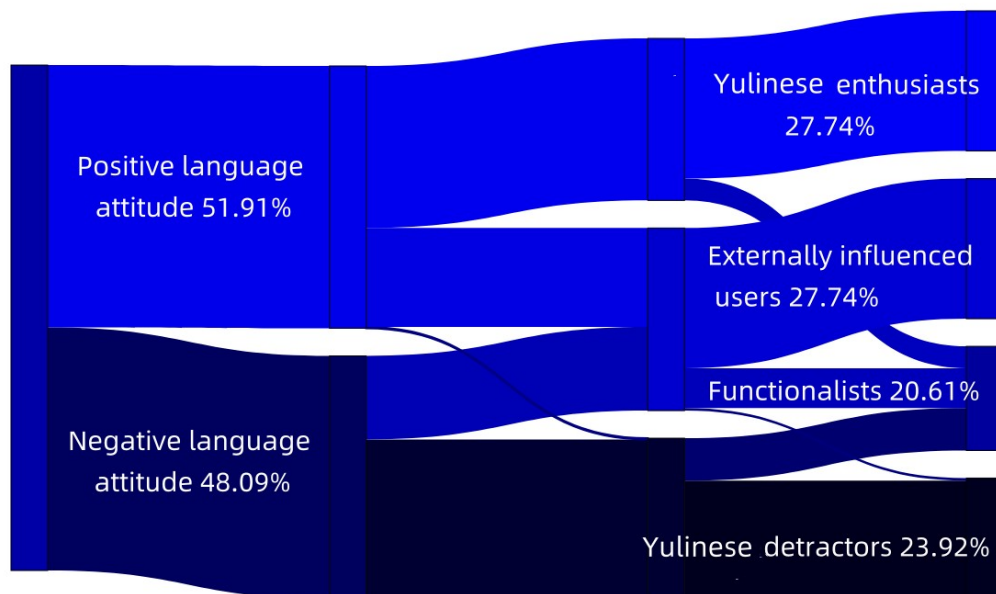


Fig. 64. The second axis: external motivation (statements 21-25)

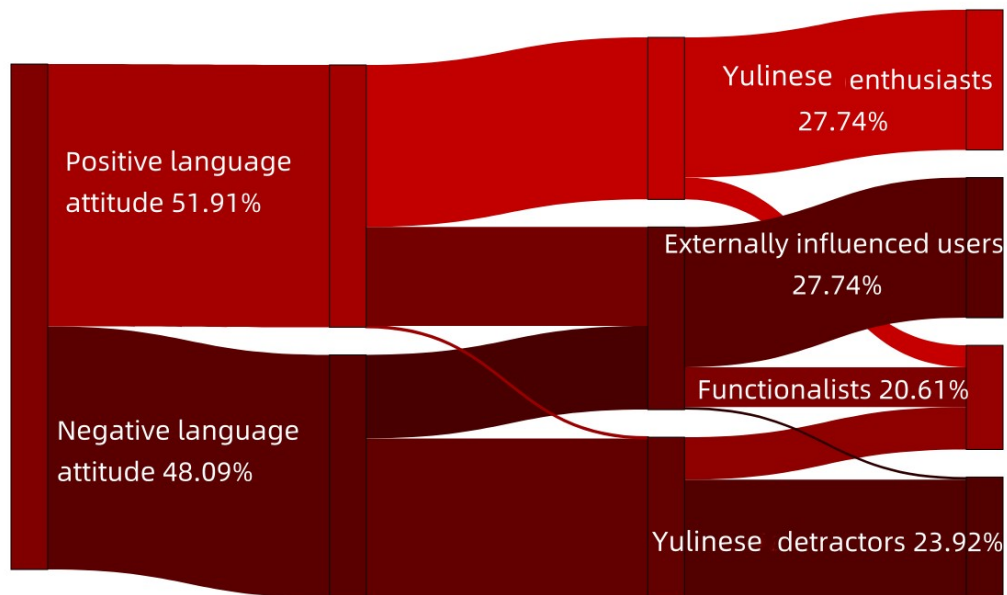


Fig. 65. The third axis: value (statements 1-14)

Combining these red, blue, green colors produces a spectrum where the intensity of each factor corresponds to the hue of the color in a single graph (see Fig. 66). This makes it easier to interpret the interaction between the three factors.

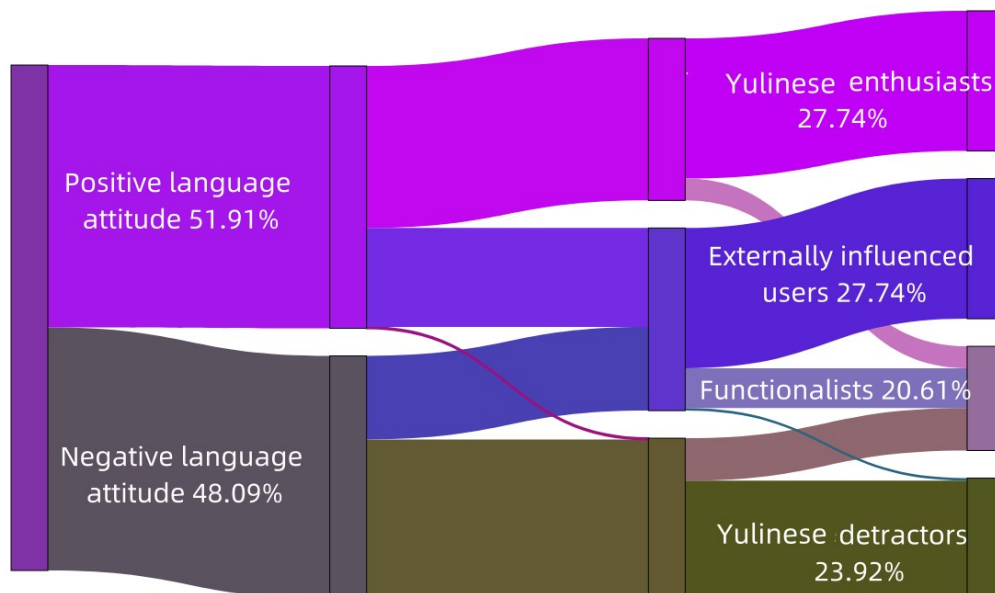


Fig. 66. RGB color blend superimposing prior graphs (R 1-14, G 1-20, B 21-25)

The initial clustering revealed two primary groups representing positive and negative attitudes toward Yulinese. Further subdivisions produced intermediate groups, with the most informat-

ive distinction occurring at K=4 (see Fig. 66). Those with positive attitudes were classified into “Yulinese enthusiasts”, “Functionalists”, and “Externally influenced users”, while those with negative attitudes were termed “Yulinese detractors”. Upon applying K=5, “Yulinese detractors” were subdivided into a subgroup exhibiting similar characteristics but with a little encouragement to learn Yulinese from parents. Despite the apparent heterogeneity, a thorough examination of this subgroup revealed no significant correlation with the hypothesized influence of such factors as age, gender, place of birth, mother tongue, education, or social status, leading to the abandonment of further grouping.

In previous studies on dialect attitudes (Long 1998; Lai 2005; Ng and Zhao 2015; Fat 2005; Lai 2001, 2010, 2011; Su Cheng-Chieh 2011; Liu Hui 2013; Shan and Li 2018; Zhang Bennan 2011; Zhou Minglang 2001; Lai 2007; Li and Liang 2010; Chan 2018; Gao et al. 2019; Liu and Li 2020), scholars have not used cluster analysis to subdivide respondents’ attitudes. Therefore, there is no existing research to refer to when naming respondents with different degrees of “anxiety”, “external motivation”, and “dialect awareness”. Therefore, I named the groups based on their significant characteristics.

The distinct characteristics delineating the four primary groups, and the names I have assigned to the four primary groups based on these characteristics are as follows:

a. Yulinese enthusiasts: 27.74% of respondents belong to this group. These individuals recognize the emotional and practical value of Yulinese. They feel no pressure when using it and are actively encouraged by their social circle to embrace and use the dialect. Respondents in this group are mainly between 30-59 years old, primarily originate from the Yuzhou and Fumian districts. Their acquisition and habitual use of Yulinese trace back to their formative years. Moreover, they exhibit a marked preference for utilizing Yulinese across various domains, including domestic settings, the marketplace, educational institutions, public transport, healthcare facilities, governmental agencies, and professional environments.

b. Functionalists: Those who believe that Yulinese is practical for life in Yulin but have no emotional attachment to it. They feel some anxiety when using it and do not receive encouragement from their social circle to learn or use it. This group consists mainly of people aged 19 and under and those aged 20-29, and is largely made up of students. As data indicate, 20.61% of respondents belong to this group.

c. Externally influenced users: 27.74% of respondents belong to this category. Respondents within this cohort believe that Yulinese holds little practical value, and they do not associate it with the culture of Yulin. They experience anxiety when employing Yulinese, yet are actively prompted by their parents and relatives to use it. Most of the respondents within

this cohort are between 30 and 39 years old, originating from counties within Yulin, and they use Yulinese at home, the marketplace, and in healthcare facilities.

d. Yulinese detractors: People who feel no emotional connection to Yulinese and see no usefulness in it. They feel anxious when attempting to use it and receive no encouragement from their family or peers; 23.92% of respondents belong to this group.

5.3 Factors that influence attitudes

Once the respondents' attitudes have been categorised, I can apply the p-value to analyse the specific factors influencing respondents' attitudes. A p-value of less than 0.001 indicates a strong correlation and is marked in the table with two asterisk; a p-value of less than 0.05 indicates a statistically significant but weaker correlation and is marked with a single asterisk; negative correlations are denoted by "--"; and blank cells indicate that no correlation was found between the groups. Factors that do not correlate with any group are not listed. The influence of each factor on respondents' attitudes is shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Factors that influence attitude

		<i>Yulinese enthusiasts</i>	<i>Yulinese detractors</i>	<i>Externally influenced users</i>	<i>Functionalists</i>
Mother tongue	Yulinese	**	--**		
	Hakka		--**		
	Cantonese		--*		
Age		**	--*	*	--**
Gender		*	**		
Place of birth	Beiliu City		**		
	Fumian District	*	--**		
	Luchuan County	--*			
	Other	--**	**	--*	
	Shinan County		--**	*	
	Yuzhou District	**	--**		
Place of residence	Luchuan County	--*			
	Shinan County				*

5.3.1 Gender

In §1.5, the first assumption states that female respondents are expected to exhibit more positive attitudes towards the prestigious language (Putonghua), while male respondents are anticipated to demonstrate a stronger preference for the vernacular variety (Yulinese).

Upon examining Table 8, it becomes apparent that gender only correlates ($p < 0.05$) with Yulinese enthusiasts and Yulinese detractors; but not with Externally influenced users and Functionalists. Upon analyzing the gender distribution among respondents with four different attitudes types (referenced in Table 9), it is observed that among Yulinese enthusiasts, there is a slightly higher proportion of males (52.29%) compared to females (47.71%), whereas among Yulin dialect detractors, females constitute the majority (69.15%). Although in Table 9, among Externally influenced users and Functionalists there are 60.55% and 50.62% female respondents respectively, this merely reflects numerical representation and doesn't necessarily imply a distinct difference in attitudes between male and female respondents.

Table 9: Proportions of different language attitudes in each gender

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Yulinese enthusiasts</i>	52.29%	47.71%	109
<i>Yulinese detractors</i>	30.85%	69.15%	94
<i>Externally influenced users</i>	39.45%	60.55%	109
<i>Functionalists</i>	49.38%	50.62%	81

Therefore, based on the study's findings, it can be inferred that the gender factor has a limited impact on the respondents' attitudes towards Yulinese. It primarily influences those who hold a particularly strong preference for or aversion towards the language; among these respondents males tend to exhibit slightly more enthusiasm towards Yulinese compared to females, while females are more inclined towards negative attitudes. For respondents whose attitudes are not polarized, gender appears to have no discernible effect.

5.3.2 Age

In § 1.5, I put forward the hypothesis that the younger respondents have a less positive attitude towards Yulinese; the higher the age group, the more positive the attitude towards Yulinese. Analysis of Table 10 indicates a trend where older respondents display a higher

propensity towards Yulinese, whereas younger counterparts do not exhibit a corresponding increase in detractive attitudes. Notably, respondents aged 20-29 demonstrate a higher proportion of Yulinese detractors (38.1%), while those aged 19 or younger exhibit a similar proportion to respondents aged 30-39 and 40-49. Moreover, respondents aged 19 and below primarily identify as Functionalists (48.48%), characterizing their perception of Yulinese as utilitarian for local life but lacking emotional attachment. However, their familial environment does not actively promote the use of Yulinese, elucidating the observed discrepancy between their use of the dialect in public domains versus familial settings, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Table 10: Proportions of different language attitudes in each age group

	<i>19 and below</i>	<i>20-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60-69</i>	<i>70 and above</i>
<i>Yulinese enthusiasts</i>	18.18%	7.94%	29.93%	37.14%	33.82%	30.77%	44.44%
<i>Yulinese detractors</i>	24.24%	38.10%	23.36%	22.86%	16.18%	7.69%	22.22%
<i>Externally influenced users</i>	9.09%	22.22%	32.12%	27.14%	32.35%	53.85%	0.00%
<i>Functionalists</i>	48.48%	31.75%	14.60%	12.86%	17.65%	7.69%	33.33%
<i>Total</i>	33	63	137	70	68	13	9

Conversely, individuals aged 20-29 predominantly identify as dialect detractors (38.1%), expressing minimal emotional attachment or perceived utility in Yulinese, paralleled by little family encouragement. Consequently, this age cohort exhibits the lowest rates of Yulinese use across contexts, as the results in § 4.3.2 indicate. The proportion of Functionalists in this age group is not negligible at all (31.75%) and proves that a third of respondents among this age group consider Yulinese to contain practical value.

The 30-39 age group, in which Externally influenced users make up the largest group (32.12%), comprises those influenced by family encouragement despite personal indifference to the usefulness of Yulinese, explaining the findings in §4.3.2 that respondents increased the use of Yulinese within the family but decreased it elsewhere. In addition, significant proportions of this group identify as Yulinese enthusiasts (29.93%) and Detractors (23.36%), highlighting the complexity of their attitudes towards the dialect.

Respondents aged 40-49 predominantly identify as Yulinese enthusiasts (37.4%), indicative of a positive attitude towards the dialect, resulting in mixed Yulinese and Putonghua use. Furthermore, the prevalence of externally influenced users (27.14%) suggests a passive acceptance of familial encouragement despite personal reservations about the dialect's utility. Similarly, respondents aged 50-59 exhibit comparable attitudes, with one-

third identifying as Yulinese enthusiasts (33.82%) and a similar proportion as externally influenced users (32.35%), reflecting ambivalence towards the dialect.

This explains the findings in §4.3.2 that among respondents aged 40-59 there exists the highest proportion of mixed use of Yulinese and Putonghua; I hypothesised that this might be because those in the 40-59 age group can use both dialects flexibly. But now that I have analysed their attitudes, I think another factor is that most of the respondents in the 50-59 age group are enthusiastic about Yulinese.

In the 60-69 age group, the prevalence of externally influenced users (53.85%) suggests a higher degree of passive acceptance. As the sample size for the over 60s was limited, this result may be biased, but it is worth noting that the percentages of Yulinese enthusiasts in the 60-69 and 70+ age groups are 30.77% and 44.44% respectively, similarly to the proportions in the 40-49 and 50-59 age groups.

Collectively, these findings underscore the influence of age on attitudes towards Yulinese, with younger cohorts demonstrating less affinity and motivation for its acquisition, contrasting with older individuals who exhibit greater attachment and encouragement towards its use.

5.3.3 Childhood language

In § 1.5, the third hypothesis posits that respondents whose native language is Yulinese have more positive attitudes toward this linguistic variety. Table 8 illustrates that the acquisition and use of Yulinese in childhood exhibit a positive correlation with the number of Yulinese enthusiasts and a negative correlation with the number of Yulinese detractors. Essentially, individuals who learned and used Yulinese at a young age tend to hold more favorable attitudes compared to those who did not. However, no significant correlation exists between early exposure to Yulinese and the number of Externally influenced users or Functionalists.

It's noteworthy that early acquisition and use of Putonghua do not correlate with any of the four types of attitudes. This suggests that despite China's language policy promoting Putonghua, it does not influence Yulin residents to adopt negative attitudes toward Yulinese. The primary factor affecting respondents' attitudes is whether they have learned Yulinese.

Additionally, Table 8 indicates that individuals who learned and used Hakka and other varieties of Cantonese as children also exhibit a negative correlation with the number of Yulinese detractors. Considering that Hakka and other Cantonese varieties are spoken in neighboring counties within Yulin, it can be inferred that individuals who were exposed to

these language varieties as children are less inclined to display entirely negative attitudes toward Yulinese.

5.3.4 Place of birth and residence

The fourth hypothesis of this dissertation, suggests that individuals born or residing in Yuzhou county and Fumian county tend to hold more positive attitudes towards Yulinese. The analysis presented in Table 8 reveals a positive correlation between being born in Yuzhou county or Fumian county and enthusiasm for Yulinese, as well as a negative correlation with the group of Detractors. This correlation does not extend to Externally influenced users or Functionalists. Essentially, respondents hailing from these Yulinese-speaking regions are inclined to hold affection for the dialect and are less likely to hold negative perceptions of it.

By contrast, one's birthplace in Beiliu, Luchuan, and Xingye counties within Yulin City distinctly impacts the respondents' attitudes. Those born in Beiliu is positively correlated with the number of Detractors, it suggest that respondents born in Beiliu county are more likely to hold negative attitude towards Yulinese; while being born in Luchuan is negatively correlated with the number of Yulinese enthusiasts, indicating a lower tendency to become Yulinese enthusiasts. A birthplace in Xingye, in turn, shows a negative correlation with the number of Detractors and a positive correlation with Externally influenced users, suggesting that a familial environment encourages language use. However, given the limited number of respondents from Yulin-subordinate counties, these findings may not be fully representative of the general sentiment in those regions. Nonetheless, it can be inferred from the data that respondents born in non-Yulinese-speaking areas are less inclined to express unbounded enthusiasm for the dialect.

Furthermore, respondents born in other cities exhibit a negative correlation with Yulinese enthusiasts and Externally influenced users, while positively correlating with Detractors of the dialect. This underscores that individuals not native to Yulin are more likely to hold negative attitudes toward Yulinese.

Conversely, the data shows no significant relationship between respondents' current residential location and their attitudes toward Yulinese. Specifically, residing in Yuzhou or Fumian counties does not influence the respondents' attitudes, as indicated in Table 8. Among the listed eight options, only residing in Luchuan county exhibits a negative association with Enthusiasts of Yulinese, and living in Xingye county is positively associated with Functionalists.

5.3.5 Socio-economic status

The fifth hypothesis posed in this dissertation suggests that individuals of lower socio-economic status will have more favorable attitudes towards Putonghua compared to Yulinese.

Section 4.3.5 discussed the classification of respondents into different socio-economic groups, with farmers representing the lowest socio-economic status. However, an examination of Table 11 shows that farmers are negatively correlated with Yulinese detractors and positively correlated with externally influenced users. Contrary to the hypothesis, respondents with the lowest socio-economic status do not have negative attitudes towards Yulinese. Furthermore, the lower middle class, especially the self-employed or entrepreneurs, show a negative correlation with Functionalist attitudes and no significant correlation with other attitudes.

In addition, the analysis of language use among respondents of different socio-economic status in 4.3.5 indicates that differences in the use of Yulinese and Putonghua are not significant.

Table 11: Respondents' occupation influence on their language attitude towards Yulinese

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Yulinese enthusiasts</i>	<i>Yulinese detractors</i>	<i>Externally influenced users</i>	<i>Functionalists</i>
Farmer		--**	*	
Self-employed/Entrepreneur				--*
Student	--**	*	--*	**

The only respondents who show a significant influence on attitudes towards Yulinese are those categorised as students, who show positive correlations with Yulinese detractors and Functionalists, and negative correlations with Yulinese enthusiasts and Externally influenced users. This pattern is more consistent with the characteristics of respondents under the age of 29, and should be interpreted with caution, as age may indeed influence attitudes towards Yulinese.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the fifth hypothesis is not supported.

5.3.6 Educational level

The sixth hypothesis states that individuals with higher levels of education would have less positive attitudes towards Yulinese. However, an examination of Table 12 reveals that the

respondents' level of education is only correlated with attitudes categorised as negative towards Yulinese. In particular, there is no statistically significant correlation observed between the educational level and attitudes classified as Yulinese enthusiasts, Functionalists or Externally influenced users. Therefore, it would be premature to conclude that the respondents' language attitudes are negatively correlated with their level of education.

Table 12: The influence of the respondents' educational level on their language attitudes towards Yulinese

	<i>Yulinese enthusiasts</i>	<i>Yulinese detractors</i>	<i>Externally influenced users</i>	<i>Functionalists</i>
Educational level			*	

5.4 Conclusion

In this section, an analysis of the respondents' attitudes towards Yulinese was first conducted using mean values and standard deviation, respondents revealed generally positive attitudes towards Yulinese. The use of mean and standard deviation to measure respondents' attitudes toward a language is not invalid, and this method was used in Lai (2001, 2012) and Ng & Zhao (2015) in their research, and found to be feasible.

However, recognising the limitations of relying solely on mean values and standard deviations, PCA and cluster analysis were used to gain a more comprehensive understanding. These analyses revealed four distinct categories of attitudes towards Yulinese: Yulinese enthusiasts, Externally influenced users, Functionalists and Yulinese detractors. Yulinese enthusiasts account for 27.74% of the respondents, 27.74% are Externally influenced users, 20.61% are Functionalists, and 23.92% are Yulinese detractors.

What is more, statistical analysis revealed that only certain factors significantly influenced attitudes towards Yulinese. Specifically, gender, age, native language and place of birth showed significant effects, while place of residence, socio-economic status and educational level did not significantly affect the attitudes studied.

a. Age emerged as a significant factor influencing attitudes, with those aged 40 and over holding predominantly enthusiastic attitudes towards Yulinese, those aged 30-39 holding mixed attitudes, those in the 20-29 group being predominantly Detractors, and those aged 19 and below holding predominantly Functionalist attitudes. This is consistent with previous research and highlights the language use preferences of different age groups, which is similar to the findings of Llamas (2007) and Duanmu et al. (2016) (as discussed in § 2.2.2), and also explains the language use preferences of respondents in different age groups in § 4.3.2, in

particular why the proportion of Yulinese use is the lowest among all age groups for those aged 20-29, while respondents aged 19 and under show an increase in the use of Yulinese.

b. Gender was found to influence the attitudes of Enthusiasts and Detractors. However, males were found to be more likely to be Enthusiasts and females – more likely to be Detractors (which is similar to the findings of Labov 1990; Dörnyei and Csizér 2002).

c. Mother tongue significantly influenced the attitudes of Enthusiasts and Detractors, with those who learned Yulinese in childhood having more positive attitudes than those who did not, which aligns with the results of the research by Wang Yuanxin (1999, 2017) and Hoon (2010). I consider one finding very interesting, learned Putonghua in childhood did not affect the respondents' attitudes towards Yulinese, while on the contrary, learned topolect(s) did influence. Therefore we should highlight the importance of early topolect learning for the local people.

d. Place of birth had a significant influence on Enthusiast, Externally motivated learners and Detractor attitudes. Individuals born in Yulinese-speaking areas are more likely to be included in the Enthusiast group, while those born in nonYulinese-speaking areas are more likely to display Detractor attitudes, possibly owing to limited opportunities for exposure to Yulinese in childhood.

Chapter 6: Qualitative study of interviewees' proficiency in Yulinese, language use and language attitudes towards Yulinese

This chapter is focused on the analyses of the interview content of 24 respondents. In the statistical analyses of chapters 4 and 5, I found that age significantly influenced the respondents' language use and attitudes. Therefore, in this chapter, I decided to divide the respondents into different age groups and explore the differences in their proficiency in Yulinese, their use of Yulinese, and their attitudes toward Yulinese within each age group. I sorted my respondents into the following age groups:

- 19 or younger (4 respondents),
- 20-29 (4 respondents),
- 30-39 (4 respondents),
- 40-49 (4 respondents),
- 50-59 (4 respondents), and
- 60 or older (4 respondents).

6.1 Interviewees aged 19 and below

6.1.1 Language proficiency

While conducting the interviews, I discovered an interesting phenomenon: the youngest interviewees (19 years old and below) were not particularly interested in talking to me in Yulinese. When I asked them about language they prefer for the interviews, all the four interviewees in this age group chose Putonghua without hesitation, and when asked why, interviewees A3 and A4 gave the following reasons: "My Yulinese is not very good" (A3-09, A4-02), while A2 said "I don't feel competent enough" (A2-05).

These four interviewees are all university students who are not currently studying in Yulin, so they have less opportunity to use Yulinese, as A1 said: "I think my Yulinese is a little bit not so good because I have spent a lot of time in the university, and I use it a little bit less often" (A1-03).

And when I tried to encourage them to say one or two words in Yulinese during the interview, A2, A3 and A4 refused, and only A1 agreed to try, although many times A1 was unable to say some words or sentences in Yulinese and so switched to Putonghua. When I asked her why she interspersed her Yulinese with Putonghua, she replied: “We (the interviewee and her friends) speak like this most of the time” (A1-26), later adding: “Because there are some words I don’t know how to say (in Yulinese)” (A1-27).

When talking about their level of Yulinese, I asked them to rate themselves on a scale of 1-10, with 1 standing for the lowest level and 10 representing the highest proficiency, and the four interviewees rated themselves as shown in Table 13 below.

Table 13: Language proficiency of interviewees aged 19 and below

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Interviewees' own evaluation of their Yulinese competence level</i>	<i>Language varieties that interviewee can speak</i>	<i>Best mastered language</i>
A1	7	Putonghua, Yulinese, English, Cantonese	Respondent didn't feel best mastering any of those language varieties she knows
A2	7	Putonghua, Yulinese, English, Cantonese	Putonghua
A3	5	Putonghua, English, Yulinese	Putonghua and English
A4	7	Putonghua, Yulinese, English	Putonghua

When I asked them why they could not get 10 points in Yulinese, A1 told me: “Sometimes I can’t remember some proper nouns, but there’s no problem in normal communication” (A1-14). Then I asked A1 to say two words in Yulinese – “cockroach” and “broom”, these two words are commonly used in everyday life, but their pronunciation is different from both Putonghua and Cantonese, making them the Yulinese shibboleth. She only remembered how to say “cockroach” in Yulinese and was not sure if she had got it right.

A3 expressed a similar view as A1, explaining his ranking of Yulinese competence as only 5: “I don’t speak well, I don’t know how to express some words and sentences in Yulinese” (A3-17).

For interviewees in this age group, lack of vocabulary in Yulinese limits their ability to express themselves fluently in Yulinese and causes their reluctance to speak it. For example, A2 said: “I would only say what I’m sure I can say correctly (in Yulinese). I won’t say what I’m not sure about” (A2-07).

Most of the interviewees aged 19 and below believed that they speak Putonghua better than Yulinese because they often used Putonghua at school and had systematically learned

how to pronounce, read and write it correctly, so there would be no situation where they would not be able to express themselves in Putonghua when using it.

However, there are exceptions. Thus A1 considers herself to be influenced by her Yulinese accent, with her Putonghua pronunciation not so standardised: “So far I have found that I don’t speak Yulinese well at home, and I don’t speak Putonghua well here [at the university]” (A1-12); in the further part of the interview she added: “I think I speak Putonghua well, but I have met my roommates whose Putonghua is better, I felt that I have no language that I speak well” (A1-32). This is why she believes that she does not have the best command of a language.

6.1.2 Language use

6.1.2.1 Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese

As all the four interviewees aged 19 and below were born and live in the Yulinese speaking area and their parents speak Yulinese, they indicated that their main channels for learning Yulinese are their family members (parents, grandparents) and their neighbours (see Table 14). However, three of the four said that they could understand Yulinese but did not speak it when they were in primary school (7-12 years old), and they started to speak Yulinese only when they were older (usually meaning over 12 years old): “I became more proficient in Yulinese around middle school. Before middle school, including primary school, I could only understand what adults said, but I couldn’t say it myself” (A2-09). “Because Putonghua was promoted in primary school, then everyone spoke Putonghua and rarely spoke Yulinese. I learnt Yulinese when I was older” (A4-07).

Table 14: Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese of interviewees aged 19 and below

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Childhood language</i>	<i>Methods of Learning Yulinese</i>
A1	Yulinese	My family members speak Yulinese. I started listening to Yulinese from a young age, and gradually understood and learned it (A1-20).
A2	Putonghua	Mom and Dad communicated in Yulinese, I was listening to them and learned it (A2-09).
A3	Putonghua	Grandma speaks Yulinese. I’ve heard her speak it since I was little, so I know it (A3-10).
A4	Putonghua	The people around me speak the Yulin language, I listen to them, and I learn it (A4-09).

Three of the four respondents in this age group learned and used Putonghua in their childhood. Both A2 and A4 mentioned that when they were in primary school, Putonghua was pro-

moted at school, so they spoke Putonghua and rarely used Yulinese. A4 said that her parents tried to get her to learn some Yulinese when she was a child, but she insisted on using Putonghua to communicate with them:

“I speak Putonghua at school, so when I come home I also speak Putonghua. My parents wanted me to learn some Yulinese at that time, but there was no way” (A4-31).

A1 said: “Generally, the daily communication (with my parents) is in Yulinese, and when there is a quarrel I use Putonghua” (A1-33). She also emphasised that in the event of an argument, her parents would continue to use Yulinese while she would use Putonghua, the reasons why A1 speak different languages during argument is because: “If I argue in Yulinese, I don’t speak fast and I feel I can not keep up with the logic” (A1-34).

A4 also mentions similar situations: “There is no way for me to win an argument in Yulinese” (A4-49). This also reflects that the interviewees are not proficient in Yulinese, so when they are emotional or need to express themselves quickly, they are not able to use Yulinese to do so, instead they have to choose Putonghua as the language in which they are more proficient.

6.1.2.2 Language used to communicate with relatives

When asked about the language used to communicate with relatives, A2 told me that he would use Putonghua to communicate with them “because I feel nervous talking to my relatives, so I can’t speak Yulinese” (A2-26). At the same time, A2 also said, “I speak Putonghua with all my relatives, but older relatives usually use Yulinese to communicate with each other” (A2-27). A2 thought this was because his older relatives follow his language use and deliberately switch to Putonghua to communicate with him.

A4, on the other hand, said that her grandparents spoke Yulinese and when communicating with them, “they speak their Yulinese and I speak my Putonghua” (A4-20). She also mentioned that some of her relatives speak other language varieties and when these relatives communicate with her in other language varieties, “I can understand them, but I speak to them in Putonghua” (A4-37).

Both of A3’s parents spoke Yulinese, and he thought that both of his parents’ Yulinese was good enough to score nine points. However, A3’s parents and other relatives used Putonghua to communicate with him, only his elderly grandmother had spoken Yulinese to him since he was a child, so he learnt his Yulinese from his grandmother, not from parents: “I

mainly speak Putonghua with my uncles and aunts, but when I talk to my grandmother, I use Yulinese” (A3-22).

A1 said that she speaks Yulinese with the elderly at home, but she also mentioned her cousin, who is around 10 years old and does not speak Yulinese: “My cousin communicates within the family in Putonghua, and my uncle, he deliberately learnt Putonghua to be able to communicate with his son” (A1-58). When her cousin has to communicate with the elderly, there is a problem: “He depends on my uncle to translate” (A1-60). A3 also explained the reason why his cousin did not speak a word of Yulinese: “My cousin doesn’t know how to speak a word of Yulinese because his grandparents don’t speak Yulinese, and his mum and dad do not speak it to him either” (A3-59).

6.1.2.3 Language used to communicate with friends

When asked about the language used to communicate with friends, A2, A3 and A4 said that they all use Putonghua to communicate, whereas A1 characterised his communicating with friends in Yulin as “half Putonghua and half Yulinese” (A1-24), explaining: why, A1 said: “There are some words I don’t know how to say in Yulinese, and sometimes there are some words that are more authentic to say in Yulinese” (A1-27). When asked male and female friends around her preferred to speak Yulinese or Putonghua, A1 said, “(Male friends) definitely speak Yulinese because they want to say dirty words” (A1-54), and “Girls generally speak more Putonghua, and when they see the other side speaking Yulinese, they also show a little bit preference for speaking Yulinese” (A1-55).

6.1.2.4 Language used in school

The four interviewees said that their teachers used Putonghua in class when they attended primary, middle, and high school in Yulin, but when it came to the language used to communicate with their classmates, the four interviewees gave very different answers.

A1 mentioned that she spoke Yulinese with her classmates in primary school, but switched to Putonghua once she entered middle school. She explained, “Because my area (referring to the location of her primary school) was considered underdeveloped” (A1-42).

A4’s experience, however, was the opposite. She said that in primary school, she only spoke Putonghua with her classmates, but in middle school, “sometimes we spoke Yulinese, and sometimes we spoke Putonghua” (A4-22). Reflecting on her high school education, A4

said: “In high school, we mostly spoke Putonghua because there were also students from other regions” (A4-23).

I believe that the difference between A1 and A4 is not only related to the geographical location of their schools, as A1 mentioned. It is more about the number of students who are fluent in Yulinese. A1’s primary school is located in the suburbs, where most of the students are local Yulin residents. Their parents and grandparents all speak Yulinese, so these students tend to have a better command of it and are more willing to use it with their classmates at school. However, in middle and high school, many students may not speak Yulinese well or do not know it at all, so they have no desire to use it, which is why A1 switched to using Putonghua for communication. On the other hand, in middle school A4 met more classmates who spoke Yulinese, which in consequence led to more Yulinese use on her part.

All four interviewees are currently attending college away from their home town. Both A1 and A2 report communicating in Yulinese when they meet fellow students from Yulin. A1 believes that “speaking Yulinese has an encrypting effect, so we can talk with our friends and others won’t understand, which I find a bit fun” (A1-22). A2 feels that it adds a sense of closeness.

A4, on the other hand, said that even when meeting fellow students from Yulin at university, she would not speak Yulinese. “We usually speak Putonghua because even those from Yulin do not speak Yulinese” (A4-24).

6.1.2.5 Language used to communicate with neighbours

When asked about the language they use to communicate with their neighbors (referring to their neighbors in Yulin), A1 said that she communicates with her neighbors in Yulinese. A3 said: “Both Yulinese and Putonghua are used; if a neighbor asks a question in Yulinese, I will answer in Yulinese” (A3-15). A4 responded: “The neighbors seem to be similar to me; they know a little bit of the dialect, but not very well. So most of the time we use Putonghua” (A4-41).

6.1.2.6 Language used at local markets

When shopping in Yulin, interviewees A1 and A2 stated that they choose the language based on the age of the seller. They use Putonghua when communicating with younger sellers, and Yulinese when communicating with older ones. As A1 explained, “I think it’s more conveni-

ent to communicate with my peers in Putonghua, because our generation has to think a bit when using Yulinese” (A1-53). A2 said: “If the seller is an older person, I will use the Yulinese because the older generation uses it more often and it’s usual to communicate with them that way. But if the seller is younger, I use Putonghua” (A2-23).

A3 and A4 expressed a preference for using Putonghua when shopping. When asked what they would do if they encountered an older shop assistant who spoke Yulinese, A3 said, “If I can say this sentence, I will use Yulinese. If not, I will use Putonghua” (A3-31).

The four interviewees generally believe that the older generation in Yulin speaks Yulinese better, while the younger generation’s Yulinese is not as good as that of the older Yulin people. The problem of not being able to use certain words or phrases limits their use of Yulinese. As a result, when shopping, they choose to use Putonghua when they see young sellers because it is the most comfortable language for both parties. I think this is not just a problem for the four interviewees; the entire population 19 and below probably shares this view and faces this problem.

6.1.2.7 Language(s) at work

The four interviewees mentioned that during their winter and summer vacations, they took part-time jobs or volunteer work in Yulin.

A1 had a part-time job in sales, so she had to use Yulinese: “In the job I found, the person in charge of hiring asked if I could speak Yulinese because they thought it would be easier to communicate with clients” (A1-48).

A2 worked as a tutor during the holidays, so her working language was mainly Putonghua. A3 was a volunteer and said, “Sometimes I use the Yulinese, sometimes Putonghua. It depends on what language the other person is using with me. But most of the time it’s Putonghua” (A3-29).

A4 also did voluntary work during the winter holidays, such as writing couplets and teaching in rural schools. As she said, “I can’t speak Yulinese very well, so when I write couplets, I had to ask my elder to help me to translate. Yes, they had to translate for me, because the old ladies spoke the dialect so authentically that I couldn’t understand them without some Putonghua mixed in” (A4-73). While teaching in rural schools, A4 used Putonghua, but she noted: “People in the countryside probably speak the Yulinese very often, and I had problems to communicate with children there” (A4-74).

In the statistical analysis of the languages used by interviewees of different age groups at work (§4.3.2), the proportion of Yulinese use among interviewees aged 19 and below does not follow the trend of decreasing use with younger age. On the contrary, it has increased compared to the usage of the 20-29-year-olds. I previously speculated that many of them had not yet entered the labor market, so the authenticity of the data needs further investigation. After the interviews, however, I found that my earlier speculation was not entirely correct. This is because it is very likely that the interviewees had part-time jobs during the holidays. Considering that most part-time jobs for students during holidays are salesmen, restaurant servers, or other similar positions, the proportion of using Yulinese at work would definitely be higher.

6.1.2.8 Use of Yulinese in traditional performances and in the media

When asked whether they had ever seen traditional performances in Yulinese (such as singing folk songs or local puppet shows), A2, A3, and A4 all said that they had never seen such traditional performances in their lives. A4's reason was, "I have never seen them, maybe the promotion is not sufficient" (A4-65).

On the other hand, A1 mentioned that she had seen such traditional performances in her childhood. She said, "Yes, I watched them, but I was too young at that time, I couldn't understand, I just feel it was lively when everyone was together" (A1-75), and added, "As I grew older, I stopped watching those traditional performers, I didn't have the time and I wasn't at home, or the conditions didn't allow it" (A1-76).

However, when asked if they watched videos in Yulinese on TikTok, all four interviewees said they did. A1, A2, and A3 mentioned that they would click on such videos when they saw them pushed on TikTok or WeChat.

A1's reason was "because they are a bit funny" (A1-68). A4 also found these Yulinese videos very interesting. She said, "I think it's very interesting. Nowadays, it seems that fewer and fewer people speak Yulinese. Making these rustic short dramas can let more people understand Yulinese, so I think it's quite good" (A4-55).

When asked if they had seen any articles written in Yulinese characters online, or if there were any introductions to Yulinese vocabulary, texts, local legends, or historical stories, all four interviewees said that they had not read any such articles. However, they all mentioned that they would see or use some Yulinese vocabulary written in Chinese characters when chatting online with family or friends from Yulin. For example, A3 mentioned that he

and his classmates would use Chinese characters to write “𐄂了 $leŋ^{54}le^0$ ” (which means “okay” in Yulinese)⁶, and he said, “We use some commonly used ones that everyone can understand” (A3-51).

A4 mentioned that she saw such characters, but she couldn’t write them. She said, “(When I see these characters) I read them one by one, translate them slowly. Translate and understand, like doing reading comprehension” (A4-61).

6.1.3 Reasons not to use Yulinese

For interviewees in this age group, the biggest issue is their lack of fluency in Yulinese and their inability to express many words and sentences in Yulinese. Therefore, when they encounter words whose equivalents in Yulinese they don’t know, they switch to Putonghua. As a result, their Yulinese is often intermixed with a lot of Putonghua. As A1 said, “When I can’t say a word in Yulinese, I just use Putonghua” (A1-29). This is reflected in the data in §4.3.2, where interviewees aged 19 and under tend to mix Putonghua and Yulinese in their speech.

Another consequence of their lack of fluency and fear of speaking is that they reduce their use of Yulinese. As A2 mentioned, “I generally only speak those Yulinese words I am sure I can say correctly” (A2-07). Similarly, A4 noted, “I usually only speak Yulinese with my parents” (A4-13).

Regarding the reasons for not learning or using Yulinese, A1 offered another possible explanation: admiration for the prestige language (Putonghua). She gave the example of her cousin: “I feel like my uncle probably doesn’t want to teach my cousin Yulinese because they might want to cultivate the child’s ability to speak more standard Putonghua” (A1-62). She explained, “Because if we speak too much Yulinese, it’s a bit difficult for us to speak Putonghua” (A1-63).

6.1.4 Language attitudes

6.1.4.1 Interviewees’ attitudes toward Yulinese

When asked if they like speaking Yulinese, A1 said, “When I was young, I thought Yulinese was a bit rustic and didn’t like it, but as I grew up, I felt more and more that Yulinese must be preserved, so sometimes I deliberately try to learn some of it” (A1-44).

⁶ Pronunciation of Yulinese are based on Liang Zhongdong’s research (2010), and transcribed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

A2 said: “I have mixed feelings. I haven’t learned everything, but I feel that many people around me, including those of my generation, don’t really speak Yulinese anymore. It makes me a little sentimental to think that many Yulinese words might disappear” (A2-38).

When asked whether they would teach their children Yulinese in the future, both A1 and A2 replied that they would want their children to learn it from the perspective of language preservation. A1 said, “Of course I want my child to understand Yulinese. Whether they speak it is up to them, but ideally they should both speak and understand it” (A1-67). A2 added, “Definitely, because Yulinese must be heritage no matter what” (A2-34).

On the other hand, A3 and A4 approached the question from a practical point of view and gave a different answer.

A4 believed that teaching her child Yulinese would give him an additional skill. She said, “I feel that when I talk to my parents about something private, speaking in Yulinese means that I don’t have to worry about other people understanding. I think it’s cool to have this encrypted way of speaking. I want to have an encrypted conversation with my children too” (A4-47).

However, as A3 remarked, “If we don’t live in Yulin in the future, there’s no need to learn it” (A3-43).

Putonghua is the main language of the four interviewees, although Yulinese is sometimes spoken. When discussing their reasons for using Yulinese, both A1 and A4 mentioned its encryption function: “Speaking Yulinese has an encryption effect, so we can talk to friends and others won’t understand, which I find a bit funny” (A1-22). A4 in turn uses Yulinese to call his parents at university: “I use Yulinese with my parents because sometimes I talk about more private things, and my roommates don’t understand” (A4-48). A4 also chooses to use Yulinese when discussing secrets with friends that they don’t want others to know.

A2 believes that it is a language that can bring fellow townspeople closer together and also express the most genuine emotions. He said: “When I go out to meet my fellow towns people, I speak Yulinese with them. Some phrases in Yulinese can express feelings that Putonghua cannot, such as ‘very hot’, in Yulinese you can just say ‘热捺捺 $\eta\epsilon t^l t\zeta^{2l} t\zeta^{2l}$ ’” (A2-15). A4 also thinks that Putonghua cannot convey the feeling of being both hot and angry. He said, “I can’t express this feeling with Putonghua because Yulinese has a bit of onomatopoeia and is full of a sense of grievance” (A2-17).

In the statistical analysis of the language used in schools by interviewees of different age groups in §4.3.2, I found that interviewees aged 19 and under use Yulinese more frequently in campus communication compared to those aged 20-29. This might seem like an

error in statistical data, but after the interviews I realized that it was not so. The reason is that many interviewees in this age group are university students studying outside their hometown. They use Yulinese as an encrypted language to discuss private topics with their family and friends or as a social language to communicate with fellow townspeople. Therefore, they tend to use Yulinese more often on campus.

6.1.4.2 Family members' attitudes towards Yulinese

When asked about her family members' attitudes towards Yulinese, A1 told me that although most people around her did not require their children to learn Yulinese, they still spoke it to their children. From this perspective, she said, "I think the people around me appreciate it" (A1-79).

A2's experience was more direct, as his parents deliberately communicated with him in Yulinese during his middle and high school years: "My parents said that as a child from Yulin, I must know Yulinese. So they deliberately used some relatively rare Yulinese words with me. Sometimes, when they saw TikTok videos in Yulinese, they would send them to me, saying, 'There are some words you don't understand now, but you must learn them'" (A2-36).

According to A4, although her Yulinese is not good, she feels that her parents and older peers still value it: "My parents used to say, 'Why don't you speak Yulinese? As a native of Yulin, why don't you speak it?' Even my elders said, 'As a Yulin native, how can you not speak Yulinese?' Actually, I have my worries. I feel that I don't speak it well, and if I make mistakes I'll be laughed at, so I'm a bit reluctant to speak it. That's the way it is now" (A4-68).

6.1.4.3 Concerns and perspectives of the future of Yulinese

When discussing the future of Yulinese, all four interviewees expressed negative attitudes. A1 remarked: "Because young people are moving away, the frequency of using Yulinese will decrease. If everyone communicates in Putonghua, this language will be used less and less. For example, I used to speak Yulinese in primary school, but now I do not often speak it" (A1-82). A4 held a similar view, saying, "I feel Yulinese is slowly disappearing. In primary schools and among us who were born in the 2000s, most of us speak Putonghua. It seems like fewer young people are speaking Yulinese. Now, most people who speak it are the older generatio

—uncles, aunts, grandparents—while we usually speak Putonghua. I think in the future, even fewer people will use Yulinese” (A4-66).

Although A2 does not believe Yulinese will become extinct, he thinks that some traditional local vocabulary will be lost. Based on his own experience, he believes that some daily vocabulary will still be preserved and used: “I think Yulinese will definitely not disappear, but some less common terms might be lost” (A2-54).

All four interviewees acknowledged that Yulinese is gradually being abandoned. They suggested that if the government and schools offered Yulinese courses (including online courses), it would be a good idea, though not the best way to preserve the heritage. They all agreed that family education is the best method to preserve Yulinese. A1 said, “I feel that family influence is better because it’s a passive process and creates an atmosphere. If you force children to learn something through courses or other methods, they might strongly resist” (A1-87). A3 added, “I don’t think it’s necessary to have special courses because no one would specifically go to learn it. If they want to learn, they can just listen to the people around them. In this environment and city, they will naturally learn it” (A3-62).

6.1.5 Findings

Based on the four interviewees’ descriptions of their everyday language use, their attitudes towards Yulinese closely match the profile of functionalists as outlined in §5.2:

a) They recognise the practical value of Yulinese. It can be used as a coded language to communicate with family and friends, and it helps to strengthen ties with fellow townspeople. However, respondents do not emphasise the emotional value of Yulinese because they rarely, if ever, encountered traditional performances or written materials in Yulinese, e.g. concerning pronunciation, or vocabulary, as well as traditional stories, or tongue-twisters during their childhood, therefore it is difficult for them to associate the dialect with Yulin culture.

b) They feel some pressure when using Yulinese because many words and phrases cannot be expressed in it. In addition, they have mainly learned and used Putonghua since childhood. Their parents and relatives do not force them to speak Yulinese, often opting to use Putonghua instead. Consequently, their social environment has not strongly encouraged them to learn and use Yulinese.

In a random sample interview, if all four interviewees share the same issues, I believe this indirectly indicates that these problems are common among people aged 19 and below: a lack of lexical competence in Yulinese, difficulty in expressing complex sentences, difficulty

in associating Yulinese with Yulin culture, and a focus solely on the practical value of Yulinese.

Interviewees aged below 19 are already aware that Yulinese is facing a decline in usage, but they have not recognized their role in language revitalization. They do not push themselves to use Yulinese more frequently or plan to ensure that their children learn it in the future. This contradictory mindset may stem from their lack of emotional attachment to Yulinese, leading to a passive approach to its preservation.

6.2 Interviewees aged 20-29

6.2.1 Language proficiency of interviewees

Among the interviewees aged 20-29, three chose to be interviewed in Putonghua and only one chose Yulinese. B1 explained her reason for not choosing Yulinese: “Because most people around me use Putonghua, especially during school, we mostly spoke Putonghua” (B1-09).

B4, who chose to be interviewed in Yulinese, is a housewife who lives in a town. She said: “I have been speaking Yulinese since I was a child” (B4-09) and she considers her Yulinese to be better than her Putonghua. She also said, “I started primary school around 2001, and there were still teachers who spoke Yulinese. Some teachers were in their fifties or sixties and about to retire; they didn’t know Putonghua, so they taught in Yulinese” (B4-26). I think this is because she lives in a town in Yulin where the atmosphere of speaking Yulinese is strong, so she always used Yulinese at home. In addition, she used Yulinese extensively during her primary education. Therefore, she communicates more easily in Yulinese and does not have the problems that other interviewees have, such as not being able to express herself fluently in Yulinese.

Similarly, I asked them to rate themselves on a scale of 1-10. The self-assessments of the four interviewees aged 20-29 are shown in Table 15.

Table 15: Language proficiency of interviewees aged 20-29

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Interviewees' own evaluation of Yulinese skill</i>	<i>Language varieties that interviewee can speak</i>	<i>Best mastered language</i>
B1	9	Putonghua, Yulinese, Cantonese	Putonghua
B2	4.5	Putonghua, English, Yulinese	Putonghua
B3	4	Putonghua, English, Yulinese, Hakka	Putonghua
B4	10	Putonghua, Yulinese, English, Cantonese	Yulinese

B2 and B3 rated their Yulinese competence as very low. When asked to give reasons for their ratings, B2 said, “I know a little, but I’m not very good. I can understand it, but I cannot express myself fluently” (B2-10). B2 even thinks that his English is better than his Yulinese, “because English was a compulsory subject in middle school, high school and university. I understand it a little better” (B2-23). B3 made a similar assessment, stating that his Yulinese is only good enough to “barely understand everyday conversations” (B3-11).

B1 believed that her Putonghua is better than her Yulinese, but she still gave herself a high score of 9 for her Yulinese. She said, “My Putonghua is better because I have been learning and speaking it since school. Yulinese is mainly spoken at home” (B1-16). B1 also noted that she cannot determine whether her Yulinese is standard because pronunciation varies from region to region, unlike Putonghua, which has a standardized pronunciation. She said, “There are differences in pronunciation in other places, such as Fumian. Yulinese in our Yuzhou district has a slightly different accent compared to other places, so I don’t dare to give myself a full score” (B1-14).

The competence of Yulinese among these four interviewees aged 20-29 is uneven. The two interviewees who are not proficient in Yulinese, like those aged 19 and below, often struggle due to a limited vocabulary, making it difficult for them to express themselves or understand others. On the other hand, B1 and B4, who are more proficient, benefit from a conducive language learning environment: B1 has always spoken Yulinese at home, and B4, in addition to speaking it from an early age, received instruction in Yulinese from teachers in primary school.

6.2.2 Language use

6.2.2.1 Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese

When asked about the languages they learned and used in childhood, B1 and B4, who are from small towns around Yuzhou District, said that their parents communicated with them in Yulinese from an early age, and they still use Yulinese to communicate with their parents. B1 said, “It’s just the environment. My parents mainly spoke Yulinese, so I communicated with them in Yulinese” (B1-19).

B2 and B3 from Yuzhou District said that their parents knew Yulinese, but they communicated with them in Putonghua. B2 mentioned that his parents’ proficiency in Yulinese was at a level of 9 out of 10, but they mostly spoke to him in Putonghua. He learned Yulinese mainly

from his classmates in middle and high school: “Classmates would chat in Yulinese during breaks” (B2-15), and “When joking around, classmates naturally used Yulinese, so I naturally learned it” (B2-17).

B3 told me that his parents sometimes spoke to each other in Putonghua and sometimes in Yulinese, but they always used Putonghua to communicate with him. He said that his parents did this because they were afraid that he would use dirty words in Yulinese. He said, “I actually asked my parents about this. My father’s answer was that he was afraid that I would use dirty words in Yulinese. He felt that it’s easy to say dirty words in Yulinese, so no one intentionally taught me Yulinese” (B3-44).

Table 16: Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese of interviewees aged 20-29

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Childhood language</i>	<i>Methods of learning Yulinese</i>
B1	Yulinese	Taught by parents (B1-10).
B2	Putonghua	Learned mainly from classmates (B2-13).
B3	Putonghua	Learned a bit from hearing family speak Yulinese (B3-10).
B4	Yulinese	Spoke Yulinese from an early age with parents (B4-09).

6.2.2.2 Language used to communicate with relatives

When discussing the language used to communicate with relatives, B1 and B4 said that they always use Yulinese. However, B2 and B3 had different experiences. B2 explained, “Communicating with relatives depends on whether they are from the urban area or the countryside. In the urban area, fewer people use the dialect, while in the countryside, especially the elderly use it more. It mainly depends on the region and the age group. Older people tend to use the dialect, city dwellers tend to use Putonghua, and people in the countryside prefer the dialect” (B2-44).

B3 has mentioned that he also communicates with his grandparents in Yulinese: “Because my grandparents’ generation has always spoken Yulinese, they don’t really understand Putonghua well, so it’s better to talk to them in Yulinese” (B3-21).

Regarding younger relatives, B1 said, “But most of the younger generation mainly speak Putonghua” (B1-32). Both B2 and B3 noted that they mainly use Putonghua when talking to relatives around the age of 10.

The four interviewees’ use of family language with their relatives reflects two patterns:

a) Age-based language use: With older relatives (e.g., grandparents), they mainly use Yulinese, while with younger relatives they mainly use Putonghua. This may be because their younger relatives, like them, are not fluent in Yulinese, making Putonghua a more convenient means of communication. On the other hand, their older relatives are more fluent in Yulinese, so they prefer to use it. Out of respect, interviewees switch to Yulinese when talking to their elders. Another reason may be that the topics of conversation with older relatives tend to be more routine (e.g., what to eat, whether school or work is tiring), which the interviewees can understand and discuss in Yulinese, making them less nervous about using Yulinese in these conversations.

b) Region-based language use: They tend to use Putonghua with relatives living in urban centers and Yulinese with those living in the countryside. This is probably because Putonghua is more common in urban areas, and people are more accustomed to using it to communicate with the younger generation.

6.2.2.3 Language used to communicate with friends

B1 and B3 said that they mainly use Putonghua to communicate with friends. B1 said, “Most of my friends mainly speak Putonghua” (B1-28).

B2 believes that the language he uses with his friends depends on the situation. He said, “When I talk to girls, it’s mostly Putonghua, very rarely Yulinese. With boys, it depends. If they’re from the countryside, we might joke around in Yulinese, but if they’re from the city, we use Putonghua. But with girls, I mainly use Putonghua” (B2-42).

B4, who has the best command of Yulinese among the four interviewees, described a situation similar to B2’s when it comes to using the language with friends. She said, “I speak Yulinese more with male friends” (B4-12) and “I use Putonghua more when communicating with female friends” (B4-13).

This is consistent with the findings in §4.3.1 where it was noted that women prefer to use the prestige language, Putonghua, while men tend to use Yulinese.

6.2.2.4 Language used in school

B1 and B3 mentioned that both their teachers and classmates in primary, middle, and high school mainly used Putonghua. B3 said that there are different dialects in Yulin city, which makes it difficult for people to communicate with each other. Therefore, students from differ-

ent areas prefer to use Putonghua to avoid communication barriers. He said, “I mostly speak Putonghua with my classmates because to be honest, although it’s called Yulinese, I feel it’s more like the language of Yuzhou district. My other classmates are from Bobai, Rongxian, Luchuan, Beiliu. They speak either Cantonese, Hakka or local dialects. In fact, the people who speak Yulinese are mostly from Yuzhou district” (B3-27).

B2 informed me that while his teachers never spoke Yulinese, some of his classmates did. He said, “The language used to communicate with classmates depends on the person. When I studied in Yulin, students from the urban area tended to use Putonghua, while those from towns or the countryside preferred dialects” (B2-31).

B4, who came from the town, recalled that even older teachers used Yulinese when she was in primary school, but the language of communication with classmates was different. She explained: “In primary school, we spoke Yulinese, but in middle school, it was Putonghua. My middle school classmates preferred Putonghua because some of them were from other places, so we communicated in Putonghua” (B4-28).

From the interviews, I made three observations:

a) Although Putonghua is the official language in schools, Yulinese is not forcibly expressly prohibited in Yulin schools. In a non-urban environment around the year 2000 some older teachers still used Yulinese to teach. In addition, students in schools were free to use Yulinese.

b) Students from different regions have a variety of dialects, making Putonghua a *lingua franca*.

c) Students from urban areas are not fluent in Yulinese (or don’t speak it), so they are unwilling to use Yulinese and prefer Putonghua.

6.2.2.5 Language used at local markets

B1 mentioned that when she meets Yulin sellers or elderly sellers at local markets, she uses Yulinese. She explained: “After all, older people have been speaking Yulinese since they were young. They mainly use Yulinese in their daily lives. Unlike us young people who have learned Putonghua since childhood, it’s easier to communicate with older sellers in Yulinese” (B1-27).

B4 also stated, “I speak Putonghua when shopping in supermarkets and Yulinese in local markets”. She elaborated, “Most of the sellers in local markets are older, and they will

ask you what you want to buy in Yulinese. But if a younger person asks me in Putonghua, ‘What are you looking for?’ I’ll answer in Putonghua” (B4-32).

Since B2’s Yulinese is not very good, he said that he always uses Putonghua when shopping in Yulin. According to his experience, the seller can understand Putonghua and respond to him in Putonghua.

B1 and B4 are proficient in Yulinese, so they can switch more fluently between Putonghua and Yulinese. Therefore, they can adapt their language according to the language used by the salesperson. However, since B2’s Yulinese is not good, he can only communicate in Putonghua.

In §4.3.2, I found that the use of Putonghua in the market is higher than the use of Yulinese among interviewees aged 20-29. This may be because there are more interviewees like B2 who are not proficient in Yulinese, so they choose to respond in Putonghua rather than flexibly adapting to the language used by different sellers.

6.2.2.6 Language(s) at work

Regarding workplace language, B1 and B2 indicated that their primary language at work is Putonghua. Since B3 is a student and does not have a part-time job, and B4 is a homemaker, they did not provide a response. Although only two interviewees replied, it suggests that interviewees in the 20-29 age group tend to use Putonghua more in their workplaces.

This observation aligns with the broader trend observed in §4.3.2, where Putonghua serves as the dominant language in many professional settings. It’s not surprising that interviewees aged 20-29, who are likely to be more exposed to formal education and urban environments, lean towards using Putonghua as their primary language in the workplace.

6.2.2.7 Use of Yulinese in traditional performances and in the media

B1 and B4 mentioned that they have watched puppet shows performed in Yulinese: “If there’s one nearby, I’ll go take a look” (B1-45). However, both B1 and B4 feel that such performances are becoming increasingly rare. As B1 added, “We might not see one in a year, and most of the audience are elderly” (B1-46).

On the other hand, B2 and B3 reported that they had never watched puppet shows or singing programs performed in Yulinese. B3 remarked, “I feel like there are very few cultural events performed in Yulinese” (B3-41).

None of the four interviewees had ever seen videos in Yulinese on TikTok. Interestingly, B4, who has the highest proficiency in Yulinese, admitted to never watching Yulinese videos on TikTok, stating, “I usually watch videos in Putonghua” (B4-41). Similarly, B1, also highly proficient in Yulinese, told me: “Well, some elderly people like to watch live broadcasts or TikTok videos in Yulinese” (B1-40). However, B2 expressed a preference for Cantonese programs and movies: “Oh, well, I understand that Yulinese and Cantonese are quite similar linguistically, so I can understand Cantonese quite well. When I watch movies from Hong Kong, I really enjoy listening to Cantonese dialogue. It’s a language I understand, it’s also a dialect” (B2-49).

None of the four interviewees showed an interest in Yulinese performances, whether traditional or on TikTok. They associate Yulinese entertainment with older generations. From my conversations with them, I sensed that they view Putonghua and Cantonese as more prestigious languages, making them more inclined to watch content in these languages.

When asked if they would use Chinese characters to type out the pronunciation of Yulinese words, all four interviewees stated that they only use Putonghua when communicating with friends via messaging apps such as WeChat or QQ. B1 explained, “Um, well, my friends sometimes mix in some Yulinese sounds when speaking Putonghua, but when we chat on WeChat or QQ, we use Putonghua to type” (B1-43). She further clarified, “Older people prefer to do this (use Chinese characters to type out Yulinese pronunciation), but my friends and I have always written in Putonghua, so we’re not used to writing in Yulinese” (B1-44). Similarly, B2 said that his parents occasionally send voice messages in Yulinese for everyday communication, but he had never used Chinese characters to represent the pronunciation of Yulinese words when chatting with family or friends: “Oh, if it’s phonetic characters in dialects, I wouldn’t understand. I prefer to use Putonghua” (B2-51).

6.2.3 Language attitudes

6.2.3.1 Interviewees’ attitudes toward Yulinese

When asked if they liked speaking Yulinese, B1 and B4 showed very positive attitudes. B1 said, “This language is naturally the language of the local people” (B1-12). B4 added, “Yulinese is an important language” (B4-48). Their affection for Yulinese is also evident in their commitment to passing the language on to future generations. Although B1 does not have children yet, she told me that if she had children in the future, she would teach them this lan-

guage: “I must teach them Yulinese from an early age because this language should not be lost, it must be passed down” (B1-31). B4 has actively taught her child Yulinese and is proud that her child is fluent in both Putonghua and Yulinese.

In contrast, B2 and B3 did not express a strong preference either for or against Yulinese. B2 mentioned that he doesn’t particularly like or dislike using Yulinese, but if a friend speaks to him in Yulinese, he will respond in Yulinese. When asked if they would teach their children Yulinese, neither B2 nor B3 showed a strong desire to do so. After some thought, B2 replied, “I hope my child will be like me, able to understand it” (B2-48). B3 said, “Regarding this question, my choice would be not to teach them consciously. I’ll let them decide for themselves. If they want to learn, I can teach them” (B3-42).

6.2.3.2 Family members and friends’ attitudes towards Yulinese

When I asked interviewees whether their relatives and friends taught their children Yulinese, B1 replied, “It seems that the younger generation does not really pay much attention to it, but the older ones try to encourage the younger children in the family to learn it. But the young parents don’t really care. Their attitude is that as long as the child can communicate, it doesn’t matter whether it’s in Yulinese or Putonghua” (B1-49). She added, “Some people think Yulinese is too rustic, and others just didn’t learn it from their parents. They learned Putonghua from an early age in school and kindergarten. Since they can communicate with Putonghua, they don’t think it’s necessary to learn Yulinese” (B1-55).

B2 and B3 also observed that their relatives, friends, and classmates did not value Yulinese. B3 remarked, “From my observation, people don’t really think about it. They don’t make a conscious choice to preserve Yulinese culture or traditional culture” (B3-45). B2 mentioned, “For older people, it might be more important, but for young people, it’s not really emphasized. They think it’s optional” (B2-55).

6.2.3.3 Concerns and perspectives of the future of Yulinese

When discussing the future of Yulinese, interviewees between the ages of 20 and 29 expressed both pessimistic and optimistic predictions. Pessimistic interviewees believe that Yulinese will gradually disappear. For example, B1 said, “I think that if society, the state, and the government promote and encourage the preservation of this language, people might start to appreciate it. Without such initiatives, I suspect that it will slowly disappear because the younger gen-

eration pays very little attention to this language” (B1-51). Another pessimistic view is that some sounds and vocabulary of Yulinese will disappear: “In my opinion, some sounds of Yulinese may change, possibly incorporating sounds from Hakka or Cantonese. Simply put, the future Yulinese may not be as traditional or authentic as it is now” (B3-46).

On the other hand, optimistic interviewees believe that Yulinese will experience a revival. B2 opined, “I think it might become popular. I’m optimistic because, like Cantonese on the Internet, people suddenly like to say some words, like some dirty words. People might get interested in it. People from other provinces might look at it with curiosity, and many local young people might start learning it again” (B2-58).

However, both pessimistic and optimistic interviewees agree that offering Yulinese courses in schools or by the government is not an effective solution. They believe that the preservation of Yulinese relies more on family or everyday use. B1 remarked, “About the local children learning Yulinese, it depends on how their family views it. If the adults think it’s unnecessary, the children probably won’t learn it. If the adults think it is important, formal classes may not be necessary because many local people, especially the older generation, speak it and can teach it directly. In other words, if parents don’t value it, children are unlikely to take language classes or online courses in order to learn Yulinese” (B1-52).

6.2.4 Findings

The use and proficiency of Yulinese in the 20-29 age group are varied, and their language attitudes also differ significantly. Those interviewees who learned and used Yulinese during childhood, such as B1 and B4, have a higher proficiency in the language variety and a more positive attitude towards it. They are also more willing to pass Yulinese on to the next generation. On the other hand, interviewees who did not learn Yulinese in childhood and rarely used it at home with their parents, such as B2 and B3, have lower proficiency in the language variety and display a more negative attitude and awareness towards its preservation.

Most interviewees show a preference for Putonghua. They tend to use Yulinese mainly due to external influences, such as speaking with older family members or when sellers at local markets use the dialect. However, when communicating with friends, working, or watching entertainment videos online, they prefer Putonghua. I believe their preference for Putonghua is partially due to its status as a prestige language, and partially due to their lower proficiency in Yulinese.

6.3. Interviewees aged 30-39

6.3.1 Language proficiency of interviewees

In conversations with interviewees aged 30-39, three chose to conduct the interviews in Putonghua. Their reasons for not using Yulinese varied.

C1, who was born in a non-Yulinese speaking area, explained: “I don’t choose to use Yulinese for the interview because I worry some of my pronunciation is not accurate” (C1-02). According to C1, he moved to Yulin at the age of five and learned Yulinese from the people in his village and the children he played with. However, “after I started working, I rarely spoke Yulinese, because I worked in another city for several years, and another reason is that my hometown is in a county where we speak Hakka, not Yulinese”, he said (C1-04). Since Yulinese is not his native language and he rarely uses it in his job, he feels nervous speaking Yulinese and does not dare to use it for the interview: “I feel nervous because my Yulinese is not very authentic and I’m afraid of making mistakes” (C1-14).

An interesting incident occurred during the interview with C4. At first, due to a slip of the tongue, I suggested that the interview be conducted in Yulinese, to which C4 nervously replied, “Oh, don’t scare me, because I can’t speak it” (C4-02). C4 was born and raised in a Yulinese speaking area, and her parents also speak Yulinese. However, she noted that her parents always communicated with her in Putonghua at home, so her level of Yulinese is “basic, but native Yulinese people can tell that my pronunciation is not standard” (C4-03). For her, speaking long sentences in Yulinese is a challenge.

Table 17: Language proficiency of interviewees aged 30-39

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Interviewees’ own evaluation of Yulinese skill</i>	<i>Language varieties that interviewee can speak</i>	<i>Best mastered language</i>
C1	5	Hakka, Putonghua, Shinanese, Yulinese	Hakka
C2	8	Yulinese, Putonghua, Cantonese	Yulinese
C3	3	Putonghua, English, Dilaonese (a Hakka variety)	Putonghua
C4	3	Putonghua, English, Yulinese, Shinanese	Putonghua

C1, C3, and C4 all believe that their Yulinese is below the passing level. C1 reported that he rarely spoke Yulinese after graduating from junior high school and assessed his Yulinese proficiency by saying, “I think it’s below passing level because there are many things I can’t say. I only know simple everyday phrases like ‘eat’, ‘sleep’, and ‘go out to play’. I can’t say cer-

tain nouns or make certain sounds” (C1-22). Because C1 grew up speaking Hakka, he thinks his Hakka is better than his Putonghua and Yulinese.

C3 and C4 also feel that their Yulinese is poor due to inaccurate pronunciation, limited vocabulary, and difficulty forming long sentences.

C2 was born and raised in Zhoupei Village, Yuzhou District, a place considered by locals to have the most authentic Yulinese accent. He had a good linguistic environment for using Yulinese. He said, “My family spoke Yulinese at home, and the environment, including playing at neighbors’ houses and making friends, was all in Yulinese. Before primary and middle school, the language environment was mainly Yulinese” (C2-21). He believes that among the languages he knows, his Yulinese is the best. However, he admits some shortcomings in his Yulinese skills: “I am not being humble. I’ve been speaking Yulinese since I was a child, which gives me an advantage, but there are many local words I can’t pronounce. I can only handle daily conversation, so I give myself an 8 out of 10. For more in-depth communication, like writing in Yulinese, I can’t do it. But that’s just my self-assessment” (C2-16).

6.3.2 Language use

6.3.2.1 Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese

C1 spoke Hakka as a child. He learned Yulinese from his playmates because his parents also spoke Hakka and did not speak Yulinese.

C3 was born in Yulinese speaking area, but her parents spoke Putonghua with her. She learned Yulinese only after she got married. She said, “When I was in high school, I could understand about 60-70% of Yulinese, but I couldn’t really speak it” (C3-24). After marrying her husband and living with her in-laws, she gradually started to speak Yulinese because they always communicated with her and her husband in Yulinese.

C2 and C4 learned Yulinese from their parents, but in different ways. C2’s parents always communicated with him in Yulinese, so he speaks it very well. On the other hand, C4’s parents only communicated with her in Putonghua, so she has problems with pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure in Yulinese. The way 30-39 year old respondents learn Yulinese is shown in Table 18.

Table 18: Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese of interviewees aged 30-39

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Childhood language</i>	<i>Methods of learning Yulinese</i>
C1	Hakka	Learned from playmates and neighbors (C1-06).
C2	Yulinese	Parents spoke Yulinese from an early age (C2-21).
C3	Putonghua	Learned from in-laws after getting married (C3-22).
C4	Putonghua	Learned by listening to parents speak Yulinese (C4-05).

6.3.2.2 Family language

C1's wife is from Bobai County, and her mother tongue is also Hakka. However, C1 and his wife, as well as their children, communicate in Putonghua. He explained why they don't use Hakka with each other: "She is from Bobai. There, they also speak Hakka, but the pronunciation is slightly different from mine, so we always use Putonghua" (C1-28). C1's two children speak only Putonghua. During the interview, his children were nearby, and I heard them communicating with other children in Putonghua. I asked C1, "Do your children speak any dialects?" He replied, "No, because we never taught them" (C1-31). C1 told me that his children used Putonghua at school, in the playground with friends, and when talking to neighbors. As for teaching them Yulinese or Hakka, C1 said, "I want to teach them Hakka. As for Yulinese, they can learn it if they want to; if not, they don't have to" (C1-32).

When C3 talked about the language used at home, she said, "Apart from speaking Yulinese with my in-laws, I mainly speak Putonghua" (C3-11). C3, her husband, and her children only speak Putonghua to each other. However, her husband switches to Yulinese when speaking with his parents. She explained, "My husband has communicated in Yulinese with his parents since he was a child" (C3-16). When asked why her husband did not speak Yulinese with her, she said, "We have tried to speak Yulinese many times, but after a few sentences, we go back to Putonghua. It's a habit, and also because I can't express certain things well in Yulinese. So from the time we met until now, we've always spoken Putonghua" (C3-13). I asked her if she came across any Yulinese words she did not understand when talking to her in-laws. She replied, "Yes, and then I'll ask them or my husband how to say it in Yulinese" (C3-14). I was curious about what language her children used with their grandparents, and C3 said, "You're asking about my children with their grandparents, right? Sometimes their grandparents will follow their lead and speak Putonghua, but when they can't express

something in Putonghua, they switch to Yulinese, and the kids understand” (C3-18). C3 reflected on her family’s language use: “Now that I think about it, it seems quite complex, but over the years we’ve gotten used to it. It naturally formed this way without feeling awkward” (C3-21).

Of these four interviewees, C2 is a native Yulinese speaker, and his home language is Yulinese. C1, who is from a non-Yulinese speaking area; C3, and C4, who did not grow up with Yulinese in their homes, all chose to use Putonghua as family language. It is interesting to note that when parents choose to use Putonghua to communicate, their children will also choose Putonghua even though their grandparents speak a dialect, which does not affect children’s choice of language.

6.3.2.3 Language used to communicate with relatives

Of the four interviewees aged 30-39, only C2 stated that he used Yulinese to communicate with his relatives. C1 said, “I’m from Xingye. I use Shinanese or Hakka to communicate with relatives, and if my relatives are in Yuzhou district or talking to others locals, they will use Yulinese” (C1-50).

C3 claimed sometimes using Putonghua and sometimes Yulinese when communicating with her husband’s relatives, saying, “It depends on the other person. If they are accustomed to speaking Yulinese, I will follow suit” (C3-41). C4 has noted that her relatives do not speak Yulinese, and she does not speak their dialect, so they communicate in Putonghua.

When faced with relatives who speak different dialects, the interviewees use Putonghua as a *lingua franca* (e.g., C4, C2), rather than as a substitute for regional dialects.

C2 has a different perspective. He believes that Putonghua has crowded out the use of Yulinese. He illustrated this with an example of his little nephews: “A very obvious example is my cousin’s two children. When they were young, before they went to kindergarten, they spoke Yulinese at home and communicated with us in Yulinese. But once they started school, they now speak Putonghua at home” (C2-28). He believes that his two nephews now can only understand Yulinese but are unwilling and unable to speak it fluently.

6.3.2.4 Language used in school

C3 and C4 said that when they studied in Yulin, both their teachers and classmates spoke Yulinese. However, C1 and C2 gave different answers. C1 said, “In middle school, my classmates spoke Yulinese. But later, when I went to high school, there were many people from other places, so we usually spoke Putonghua” (C1-43).

C2’s situation was quite unique. During his primary school years, his teachers spoke Yulinese. He believed that this was due to the location of the school. He said, “The teachers spoke to us in Yulinese. They probably had very little education in Putonghua, so except for reading texts in Putonghua, most of the teaching was done in Yulinese” (C2-22). In middle school, his Chinese teacher thought that Yulinese retained many ancient phonetics, so they used it to read classical Chinese texts.

The two men (C1 and C2) loved to communicate with their classmates in Yulinese during middle school and still use it when meeting their middle school friends today. However, the two women preferred using Putonghua in their school interactions. This confirms the findings of the quantitative part of my study that gender influences language choice to some extent – men tend to favor the local language, while women prefer the more prestigious language (see § 4.3.1).

6.3.2.5 Language used at local markets

C2 mentioned that whether he uses Putonghua or Yulinese when shopping depends on the situation and the age of the seller: “If I’m buying things in the local market, I’ll definitely speak Yulinese” (C2-51). But in shopping malls or supermarkets, he said, “It depends on the age. In supermarkets, if the clerk is in their early 20s, they’ll speak Putonghua to me, maybe their working language is Putonghua, or maybe they can speak Yulinese, I don’t know, anyway, I’m just there to buy things, not to ask questions” (C2-52).

C3 and C4 believe that the choice of Putonghua or Yulinese while shopping depends on the situation. They both mentioned that they use Yulinese in places like the local market where bargaining is common. C3 said: “Sometimes when I go to the market to buy food, I speak Yulinese, especially when I’m haggling. But when they hear my accent and realize that I’m not from there, they don’t continue speaking Yulinese and switch to Putonghua”(C3-33).

6.3.2.6 Language(s) at work

C1 works as a courier and primarily uses Putonghua as a *lingua franca* because most of the people he interacts with do not speak Yulinese. He explains, “Because my job is to deliver goods, I usually interact with people from non-Yulinese speaking area, mostly from towns and villages, who mostly speak Putonghua and rarely speak Yulinese” (C1-18).

C2 is a salesman and uses both Putonghua and Yulinese in his work. “It depends on the situation: inside the company, I use Putonghua; outside with customers, I mostly use Yulinese” (C2-37). He uses Putonghua at the company because most of his colleagues are women. He clarifies “it’s easier to communicate with women in Putonghua” (C2-44). As he says, “If clients are not from Yulin, I speak Putonghua; if they are local, I speak Yulinese” (C2-39).

C3 is a primary school teacher, so Putonghua is her working language. She says she uses Putonghua with students and colleagues at school. Although the school promotes Putonghua, Yulinese is not completely banned, except dirty words in Yulinese are totally not allowed on school grounds. As C3 notes, “Some male teachers who are local sometimes chat in Yulinese” (C3-35), but she rarely hears female teachers communicating in Yulinese. She even mentions that the head master speaks Yulinese in private conversations. Few students at the school speak Yulinese, but she knows that some can. She attributes this to the school’s location in an area that resembles an urban village, where students may still speak Yulinese at home.

C4 is a lawyer who usually works in Putonghua, but sometimes encounters clients who speak Yulinese. In such cases, she has two options: have a colleague who speaks Yulinese deal with the client, or communicate with the client in a mix of languages. “I don’t speak Yulinese, but most elderly people who don’t speak Putonghua, understand it, so we can communicate in such a way that they use Yulinese and I speak Putonghua” (C4-27). She notes that her law firm does not mandate the use of Putonghua, which allows for flexibility in communication. In court, if a client does not speak or understand Putonghua, “court staff, including clerks and judges who speak Yulinese, will use it to explain” (C4-31).

C4 says that she mostly uses Putonghua when chatting with colleagues because her Yulinese is not fluent. However, “colleagues who are fluent in Yulinese often switch between Putonghua and Yulinese in conversation” (C4-35).

6.3.2.7 Use of Yulinese in traditional performances and in the media

C1, C2, and C3 have all seen traditional performances in Yulinese, although C2 feels that these performances are becoming rarer and has not seen any in recent years. C1 mentions that there are traditional performances in Yulinese every year on the third day of the third month of the lunar calendar in his village. C3 remembers seeing a traditional performance in Yulinese on a commercial street in Yulin just before the interview; she happened to be passing by and decided to watch it.

In addition, C1, C2, and C3 all watch Yulinese videos on TikTok. C2 is particularly interested in these videos and said, “If you have any recommendations for TikTok videos in Yulinese, please send them to me. I’m really interested in this language. I have a strong curiosity about Yulinese” (C2-61). C3 and her husband like to watch these videos, follow some video creators who use Yulinese, and share good videos with each other. She said, “One day, I saw some TikTok channels where some influencers specifically speak Yulinese and make videos in Yulinese. I find their Yulinese very pleasant to listen to” (C3-53).

C4, on the other hand, has never seen traditional performances or TikTok videos in Yulinese. She explained, “Well, because I don’t speak Yulinese well, sometimes I can’t even understand the joke” (C4-49).

Despite the differences in their experiences with traditional performances and Tiktok videos in Yulinese, all four interviewees mentioned receiving messages on WeChat where their friends use Putonghua characters to write in Yulinese⁷. Some interviewees also use this method of texting. For example, C2 often texts in this way with friends who speak Yulinese, but only for common phrases. He gave examples such as “ ‘着车你吗 *tʃa²¹tʃ^hε⁵⁴ni²⁴ma³³*’ (Do you need a ride?), ‘囊什么料 *nɔŋ³²ʃi²¹lat²liu²¹*’ (What are you eating?), and ‘去是里搅 *hy⁴²ʃin⁵⁴li³³kεu³³*’ (Where are you going to hang out?)” (C2-68). C3 and her husband text each other in this way, but rarely do so with other people.

6.3.3 Language attitudes

6.3.3.1 Interviewees’ attitudes toward Yulinese

C1 does not particularly enjoy speaking Yulinese and often mentions during the interview that his pronunciation is not standard and he is afraid of making mistakes. Although he currently resides in Yuzhou District, he does not consider himself a Yulin native. He frequently refers to

⁷ Yulinese doesn’t have its own script

himself as an “outsider” in the interview, saying, “Maybe [Yulinese] doesn’t mean much to us outsiders, but it means something different to the locals” (C1-65).

C2 is very interested in Yulinese and mainly uses it to communicate with his parents and friends. He expressed his interest in studying the dialect during the interview by saying, “I bought a book by Chua Lam, a Hong Kong writer. It can be read in Putonghua or Cantonese. I wondered if some of the articles could be read in Yulinese” (C2-62). When asked if he would teach his children Yulinese in the future, he replied, “Definitely” (C2-57).

C3 also has a positive attitude toward Yulinese. She and her husband believe that it should be passed on to the younger generation. She said, “I always wanted my husband to speak Yulinese to our children, because my Yulinese is not standard, I speak Putonghua to them instead. The children probably found it strange, so they decided to speak Putonghua” (C3-78).

C4 does not express a strong preference for or against Yulinese. She sees it as a means of communication: “Those who can speak Yulinese will naturally do so within Yulin. Those who can’t speak Yulinese, still can learn basic conversational over time if the talk frequently with dialect speakers. Personally, I think language is basically a communication tool, and I will use it when needed” (C4-68).

6.3.3.2 Family members’ attitudes towards Yulinese

C2 observed that his classmates, friends, and relatives do not place a high priority on preserving Yulinese. He mentioned, “They don’t deliberately teach Yulinese. At home, it depends on the linguistic environment of the family. If the family speaks Yulinese, the younger generation will also speak it. If they come back from school speaking Putonghua, then it’s Putonghua. There’s no strict enforcement” (C2-58). He believes that many of his friends and relatives are unaware of the importance of Yulinese and its preservation. He noted, “Their level of education is such that they don’t think about these things. They don’t understand the importance of language preservation and don’t consciously try to pass it on or ask about pronunciation. Their focus is on earning money and supporting their families” (C2-73).

C3 feels that the government is gradually starting to promote the revival of Yulinese. “Because recently there is a growing trend, places like the local library or other institutions would organize activities to promote local dialects, so there isn’t much resistance to Yulinese anymore” (C3-45). Although her school has not specifically conducted activities to revive

Yulinese, she believes that the dialect will gradually gain more importance among the people around her. She hopes that the next generation will not forget Yulinese.

C4 mentioned, “People around me haven’t reacted much to this issue. Sometimes the older generation will complain that the younger generation is increasingly unable to speak Yulinese when they see young people struggling with it. Personally, I haven’t felt that anyone attaches special importance to Yulinese. Given the number of dialects in Guangxi and the fact that different counties and districts in Yulin have their own languages, I haven’t felt that there is any particular crisis or emphasis on preserving Yulinese” (C4-67).

6.3.3.3 Concerns and perspectives of the future of Yulinese

When discussing whether it is necessary for the government or schools in Yulin to offer courses in Yulinese, interviewees’ opinions are divided into two camps. Those who have a positive attitude toward Yulinese, C2 and C3, believe that such courses are absolutely necessary. On the other hand, those who have a more negative attitude toward Yulinese, C1 and C4, think that this is unnecessary. They feel that Yulinese does not need to be taught in language courses, and that it can be learned just by listening.

6.3.4 Findings

In section 4.3.2, I found that the proportion of Yulinese speakers among interviewees aged 30-39 is higher than that of younger interviewees, but lower than that of older interviewees. Through interviews, I discovered the following reasons why interviewees aged 30-39 do not use Yulinese:

a) Their proficiency in Yulinese is not high; some words, sentences, and even pronunciations cannot be expressed in Yulinese. This is similar to interviewees aged 19 and below and those aged 20-29.

b) Putonghua as a *lingua franca*. Yulinese speakers often choose to use Putonghua as a *lingua franca* when they do not know the dialect of the other speaker or for convenient communication with speakers of different dialects. Also, some settle in Yulin (e.g., interviewee C1), their native language is not Yulinese, and there is neither motivation nor necessity to learn Yulinese in their work and life, so they use Putonghua as a *lingua franca*.

c) Putonghua is used for emphasis. For example, interviewee C2 mentioned in the interview that sometimes when chatting with friends in Yulinese, he would suddenly insert a few words of Putonghua. This is not because he does not know how to say it in Yulinese, but for a different reason: “If my friend’s Yulinese vocabulary is not as rich as mine, and I worry that I use a Yulinese word he doesn’t understand, I use Putonghua to emphasize it” (C2-75). C4 also believes that her friends sometimes mix Putonghua into their Yulinese to ensure understanding. She said: ‘Sometimes it is to accommodate those who are not very fluent in Yulinese, so they can understand what he is trying to express’ (C4-37).

In exploring the language attitudes of the four interviewees towards Yulinese, I felt a diversity, similar to the findings in section 5.3.2. Among them, the proportions of Yulinese enthusiasts, externally influenced users, and Yulinese detractors are quite high. Both interviews and statistical data indicate that interviewees in this age group have complex attitudes toward Yulinese. They seem to be a contradictory generation: they neither love Yulinese as much as older interviewees nor consider Yulinese a cryptic language like interviewees aged 19 and below (because if one is living in Yulin, the language loses its cryptic function); their Yulinese is not good, but those around them occasionally influence them to use it; they mainly spoke Putonghua from a young age and now see that the Yulinese proficiency of the next generation is even worse; they want to do something about it but do not know what they can do. Perhaps it is precisely because of these reasons that their attitudes towards Yulinese are so complex.

6.4 Interviewees aged 40-49

6.4.1 Language proficiency of interviewees

All four interviewees aged 40-49 chose to use Yulinese for the interviews, and when asked to rate their Yulinese, all four interviewees gave high marks to their Yulinese (see Table 19).

Table 19: Language proficiency of interviewees aged 40-49

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Interviewees’ own evaluation of Yulinese skill</i>	<i>Language varieties that interviewee can speak</i>	<i>Best mastered language</i>
D1	10	Putonghua, Yulinese	Yulinese
D2	8	Putonghua, Yulinese, Guigangese, Cantonese	Putonghua
D3	9.8	Putonghua, Yulinese, Shinanese, Cantonese, Hakka	Shinanese
D4	10	Putonghua, Yulinese, Cantonese, Hakka, Guilinese	Yulinese

D1 and D4 were born and raised in areas where Yulinese is spoken, so they have been speaking Yulinese since childhood and believe that their Yulinese is better than their Putonghua. D4 proudly told me that although his Yulinese pronunciation may not match the authentic accent, he has no problems with vocabulary and expressions. He said, “I can even write Yulinese using Putonghua characters, which is quite impressive” (D4-08).

D2 and D3 were not born or raised in areas where Yulinese is spoken. D2 moved to Yulin only when she was in middle school. She thinks that her Putonghua is better than Yulinese, “Because from a young age, um, the educational and linguistic environment was Putonghua, and Putonghua is widely used” (D2-21). Even so, she believes her Yulinese is also quite good. D3 moved from Shinan County to Yuzhou District as an adult. She said that she had spoken Shinanese from a young age, so of course her Shinanese is better than her Putonghua and Yulinese.

6.4.2 Language use

6.4.2.1 Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese

D1 and D4, who were born and raised in areas where Yulinese is spoken, learned Yulinese mainly from their parents. They said they picked it up naturally by speaking Yulinese with their parents from an early age. In contrast, D2 and D3, who were born and raised in non-Yulinese speaking areas, learned Yulinese mainly by listening to their classmates and colleagues.

Recalling her experience of learning Yulinese, D2 said, “I was born in Guigang and later moved to Yulin with my parents due to their job transfers. In the environment of Yulin, I gradually learned Yulinese. In the first year after I moved, I couldn’t speak Yulinese, and it wasn’t until almost four, or five years later that I began to speak it” (D2-12). D3 joked that she learned Yulinese “out of pressure” (D3-09) as her colleagues all spoke Yulinese, so she started speaking it as well. The ways in which the four respondents learned Yulinese are shown in the Table 20.

Table 20: Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese of interviewees aged 40-49

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Childhood language</i>	<i>Methods of learning Yulinese</i>
D1	Yulinese	Spoke with family members from childhood (D1-10).
D2	Putonghua	Learned by listening to people around me (D2-10).
D3	Putonghua	Learned by listening to people around me (D3-09).
D4	Yulinese	Listened to parents speak Yulinese and spoke Yulinese with parents from childhood (D4-07).

6.4.2.2 Family language

D1 said that he communicates with his wife, daughter, and parents in Yulinese at home. However, when he mentioned the language his daughter uses to communicate with him, D1 switched to Putonghua and said, “Daughter sometimes speak Putonghua and sometimes Yulinese. Because when she watches TV or uses her phone, it’s all in Putonghua, so she speaks Putonghua. Then we speak Putonghua to her” (D1-29). Apart from this instance, the rest of the interview was conducted in Yulinese. He himself did not know why he used Putonghua in this instance, but I suspect it is probably because he often uses Putonghua to communicate with his daughter at home, which has become a habit. Therefore, when he was asked this question, he unconsciously used the language he often uses with his daughter.

D2, whose parents are from Guigang and do not speak Yulinese, communicates with her parents in Guigangnese or Wuzhounese. She always uses Putonghua to communicate with her husband and son, but she mentioned that Yulinese is only used at home when family members talk to her mother-in-law. She gave an example of her son: “My son has been taught in Putonghua throughout kindergarten, primary, middle and high school. He spends most of his time at school where the teachers speak Putonghua, so he rarely uses Yulinese. He speaks Putonghua with everyone except his grandmother, but his Yulinese is very awkward. Really, he speaks Putonghua with everyone else” (D2-25).

D3 said that she uses Shinanese to communicate with her parents, Yulinese with her husband, but only Putonghua with her son. She explained, “Because he is taught in Putonghua, my son doesn’t speak Yulinese or Shinanese” (D3-17).

D4 said that he speaks Yulinese with his parents and his wife. His daughter can speak Yulinese, but most of the time he speaks Putonghua with her. “It’s like this: she speaks Putonghua, so I have to speak it to her. Sometimes she also speaks a little bit of Yulinese” (D4-18).

All four interviewees mentioned using Putonghua to communicate with their children at home, and the reason was that their children speak Putonghua, so they chose to continue the conversation in the child’s language. In §4.3.2, I found through statistical data that interviewees aged 40-49 have a higher proportion of mixing Putonghua and Yulinese at home. I speculated that many interviewees might use Putonghua to communicate with their children. The descriptions of the four interviewees confirmed my speculation that the children’s use of Putonghua has, to some extent, influenced the language used by parents in the home.

When discussing why their children do not use Yulinese, all four interviewees felt that the lack of a Yulinese speaking environment among young people was a key factor. They believe that students communicate mainly in Putonghua at school, so they continue to use Putonghua at home. D1 said, “Many children also speak Putonghua because it is taught more in school, so they also speak Putonghua at home” (D1-44).

D2 explained, “Yulin is a very unique place. What I mean is that most children speak Putonghua with their classmates at school. In a few cases, perhaps in rural areas where parents speak Yulinese to their children from an early age, the children can speak it and have peers to talk to in Yulinese. But in most cases, about 80% of the children in a class speak Putonghua” (D2-33).

D3 used her own child as an example: “At school, everyone speaks Putonghua, and with time it becomes a habit. For example, my son couldn’t form sentences when he started kindergarten. Although I taught him Yulinese from an early age, he was slow to speak. When he started kindergarten, they taught Putonghua, so he never learned Yulinese” (D3-50).

6.4.2.3 Language used to communicate with relatives

D1 and D4 said they communicated with their relatives using Yulinese. D3 mainly communicates with relatives in Shinanese because they are all from Xingye County and speak this dialect. D2 adjusts the language she uses to communicate with relatives based on whether they speak Guigangnese, Cantonese, or Yulinese. If the relative uses any of these language varieties to talk to her, she will respond accordingly. However, relatives aged 10-20 mostly speak Putonghua.

6.4.2.4 Language used to communicate with friends

All four interviewees said that they mainly use Yulinese to communicate with friends. However, when their friends come from non-Yulinese speaking areas, these respondents use Putonghua to communicate with them. D4 explained, “Well, if someone speaks Putonghua, I’ll speak Putonghua to them. If they speak Yulinese, I’ll give priority to Yulinese. This is hospitality” (D4-10). In addition, D4 mentioned that he speaks Yulinese more often with male than female friends, stating, “I think in Yulin men tend to speak a little more. Women, because of their jobs, have to speak Putonghua at work” (D4-11).

Although D2 told me that both her male and female friends like to speak Yulinese, she noted a difference in how they write Yulinese using Putonghua characters. She said, “My middle school classmates formed a chat group. Those male classmates, really like to use Yulinese characters to write messages on WeChat. However, in individual communication with me, it’s all Putonghua. I thought it’s because the males like that way of chatting. But with female classmates, they prefer to use Putonghua characters, so they switch to using Putonghua to write” (D2-48).

Based on the descriptions of the four interviewees, it seems that people aged 40-49 in Yulin prefer to communicate with friends using Yulinese, with men showing a stronger preference for its use compared to women.

6.4.2.5 Language used in school

When discussing the language used in school, both D1 and D4 revealed that during their primary school years, Yulinese was primarily used. D1 stated, “During primary school, the teacher used Putonghua in Chinese class, but teachers in other subjects would use Yulinese” (D1-18). However, in middle school, both D1 and D4 mainly used Putonghua in class. D1 mentioned that communication with classmates in middle school had been “half Yulinese, half Putonghua” (D1-19). D4 stated that “teachers spoke Putonghua, but after class, he and classmates spoke the local dialect, Yulinese” (D4-28).

D2 and D3 said they spoke the local dialect in primary school. After arriving in Yulin, D2’s classmates communicated in Yulinese, so initially, she used Putonghua. However, once she learned Yulinese, she switched to it in order to communicate with her classmates.

Compared to the three groups of interviewees aged 30-39, 20-29, and 19 and below, the proportion of interviewees aged 40-49 who used Yulinese in school was much higher. It can be seen that three to four decades ago, the promotion of Putonghua in schools was not as strict, and students still liked to use dialects in school. Perhaps there was an environment of using Yulinese in schools, and thus the proficiency level of Yulinese among interviewees aged 40-49 is better than that of the three younger age groups.

6.4.2.6 Language used at local markets

Four interviewees said that the language they used when shopping mainly depended on the language used by the seller, but that they would be accustomed to using Yulinese if they were

the first one to ask, with D2 citing an example: “Well, I usually speak Yulinese when I buy things. If I ask a question in Yulinese and seller replies in Putonghua, I will switch to Putonghua. Let’s say a bread seller from the north, he doesn’t know how to speak Yulinese, so he would just ask: “Nǐ yào shénme bāo (what kind of bread do you want 你要什么包)?” ” (D2-30). Although, similarly to the interviewees aged 30-39, they would adopt different languages depending on the seller’s language use, the difference was that they would start a conversation in Yulinese, something that interviewees younger than 40 could not do. This shows that the level of Yulinese of the interviewees aged 40-49 is higher than that of the three younger groups of interviewees.

6.4.2.7 Language(s) at work

D1 is a machine operator and D4 is a driver, so at work they encounter on a daily basis people who speak Yulinese or other dialects. They claim to be speaking both Putonghua and Yulinese at work, depending on the language used by the customers. The same applies to communication with colleagues.

D2 is an accountant in a company. She has said that she uses Yulinese at work. The company she works for does not require Putonghua or Yulinese as the working language, but everyone speaks Yulinese naturally. When communicating with her co-workers, she adjusts her language depending on whether her co-workers speak Yulinese. She said, “If they speak Yulinese, we communicate in Yulinese. If there are some people don’t speak Yulinese fluently, or they just started working in Yulin, we use Putonghua” (D2-18).

D3 is a warehouse manager. She said that Putonghua is mainly used at work, not because it is a company requirement, but because everyone has naturally chosen to speak Putonghua. As she said, “Everyone speaks Putonghua. I don’t know why, but I just follow what others do. Maybe it’s because some of them are not from Yulin. If those from other counties speak Putonghua, then everyone just gets used to speaking Putonghua” (D3-24).

The language used at work by the four interviewees indicates that in Yulin there are no strict requirements for the working language. Interviewees often use a language based on the person they are talking to. Since the interviewees in this age group are proficient in Yulinese, they can comfortably use Yulinese when interacting with others who speak the same language.

6.4.2.8 Use of Yulinese in traditional performances and in the media

When asked if they had seen traditional performances in Yulinese, all four interviewees said that they had. D2 mentioned, “I have heard and seen traditional performances, but they have become much rarer in recent years. When I was in middle school, there used to be puppet shows performed on the corner near our school. They set up a small stage with puppets, and you could hear them during brake time. There was even music. But slowly this stage disappeared and this tradition disappeared” (D2-51). Through our conversations, I could sense his regret for the loss of traditional Yulin culture. D2 further explained, “Recently, we had a new female mayor. She organized an event using the local culture in Yulin. At that time, there should have been traditional puppet shows. I have seen videos posted by friends or netizens on TikTok. Now is the time to slowly revive this culture” (D2-52).

As D4 also observed, “This year traditional performances have been alive. Since the mayor changed last year, the new one has been very active and organized many traditional activities. I even participated in transporting the plum-blossom pile lion, it was so lively” (D4-51). “The government held the Yulin Cultural Festival, which showcased and promoted the local culture. For example, at the cultural festival there were banners with the pronunciation of ‘clean’ in Yulinese written in Putonghua” (D4-53).

In contrast to their enthusiasm for traditional cultural performances, when asked about watching programs in Yulinese on the Internet, the attitudes of the four interviewees were more indifferent. They all said that if they came across videos of Yulinese performances on TikTok, they might occasionally watch them, but they would not actively seek them. D3 chuckled awkwardly and said, “I think Yulinese is very rustic. Making videos in Yulinese is really very rustic” (D3-36). She added that it was not just her; her friends also shared the same opinion about Yulinese videos on TikTok.

When asked if they would use Putonghua characters to write out the pronunciation of words in Yulinese, all four interviewees said they love to do so. D2 said, “I really like using Putonghua characters to represent the pronunciation of words in Yulinese. I really enjoy using these dialect characters. We (Yulinese) understand these characters, but if you don’t know Yulinese, you won’t understand them” (D2-50).

D4 mentioned that he had an online friend who could use Putonghua characters to represent the pronunciation of words in Yulinese, and could even write paragraphs of two or three hundreds characters that way. He said, “When I saw him type like that, I thought it was great, very satisfying and funny. The fact that he could use words to represent these characters

proves his proficiency in Yulinese. One of my friends also writes comments in Yulinese on WeChat, I think he's so talented" (D4-45). D4 mentioned that both male and female friends around him like to type in this way, saying, "The girls do it too, just the same. For example, if they want to go somewhere, they type '去是呢 *hy⁴²ʃin⁵⁴ne⁵⁴*' (where shall we go), When having breakfast, they type '吃朝 *hek⁵tʃu⁵⁴*' (have breakfast), people understand it" (D4-50).

6.4.3 Language attitudes

6.4.3.1 Interviewees' attitudes toward Yulinese

The four interviewees in the 40-49 age group all believe that Yulinese should be passed down and are optimistic about its future. D1 said, "I'm not worried about Yulinese disappearing. This language won't disappear; there will always be people who speak it" (D1-45).

During our interviews, the phrase "How can Yulin people not speak Yulinese?" was often mentioned. It seems that every interviewee strongly hopes that the local people will preserve and pass on Yulinese. D2 remarked, "It seems that the education bureau is carrying out activities to promote Yulinese. I fully support the idea of passing on Yulinese. Children should speak both Putonghua and Yulinese. Isn't it strange if a native child can't speak the local language? Anyway, I saw a news report supporting this initiative. I think there could be more of such activities" (D2-55). D4 said, "You have to speak Yulinese. If you can't, people will definitely laugh at you" (D4-62).

It is worth noting, however, that in practice they have not shown much proactive behavior in passing on Yulinese. This is evident in their family language use; none of the four interviewees insists on communicating with their children in Yulinese. Instead, they adapt to their children's language habits by using Putonghua. I think this is because the interviewees have not realized the importance of family language use in preserving Yulinese. They think that the social environment will naturally lead the younger generation to learn and use Yulinese. As D2 mentioned, "I think Yulinese will be preserved because the native Yulinese people won't lose it. It will be passed down no matter what. Even if they do not speak it now, they will speak it when they get older. It won't decline. I think it will maintain its level, not decline or regress. It won't become overly popular or flourish, but it should stay at that level" (D2-53).

The interviewees seem to forget that their children primarily use Putonghua to communicate with their classmates and friends. Who can guarantee that these children will change

their language habits and choose to speak Yulinese with their peers when they are in their 20s, 30s, or 40s? Based on their descriptions, the children have already lost the ability to form long sentences in Yulinese.

Another reason is that the interviewees believe that the government's language policy will encourage the revival of Yulinese. As D4 said, "If Yulinese isn't taught, Putonghua will gradually replace parts of it. But it will never disappear completely, just like Cantonese. Everyone wants to preserve Cantonese, and the government takes it seriously. There's a dedicated effort to teach Cantonese" (D4-58).

6.4.3.2 Family members' attitudes towards Yulinese

When discussing their relatives' and friends' attitudes toward Yulinese, all four interviewees have said that people around them think Yulinese is important. D2 said, "My friends all value Yulinese; most of them speak it. But young people mainly speak Putonghua, that is a fact. More and more young people speak Putonghua, but I've noticed that when they get older, they go back to Yulinese. For example, when we were in middle school, I had lessons in Putonghua, but talked with classmates in Yulinese. Later, when we entered society and had reunions, everyone used Yulinese to communicate. We became very fluent. Well, only those classmates who work in other cities were used to speaking Putonghua, but most of them spoke Yulinese" (D2-52). D3 said, "All my friends think that Yulinese is important, but everyone says, 'Each generation is worse than the last'. If this continues, everyone will become '捞佬 *ləu⁵⁴lau²⁴*' (outsiders)" (D3-51).

From the statements of D2 and D3, it seems that the attitudes of those around the interviewees are very similar to theirs – they believe that Yulinese is important and they hope next generations can preserve it. However, they do not actively create an environment to encourage their children to speak more Yulinese because they do not realize how important their role in protecting Yulinese is.

6.4.4 Findings

The four respondents aged 40-49 use Yulinese in various situations, but do not refuse to use Putonghua. This is because they know both Yulinese and Putonghua well, so they can speak both languages fluently.

Among the four respondents, two moved to Yulin from other regions. Their proficiency in Yulinese is higher than that of respondents aged 30-39 who also came from non-Yulinese speaking areas. In addition, they are more confident in using Yulinese. I think this may be due to a better linguistic environment – their classmates and friends prefer to speak Yulinese.

In terms of attitudes toward Yulinese, the 40-49 year olds are also quite positive and hope that Yulinese can be passed down from generation to generation. However, when it comes to dialect preservation, they overlook the impact of the family language on the next generation. As a result, they do not emphasize the use of Yulinese when communicating with their own children.

6.5 interviewees aged 50-59

6.5.1 Language proficiency of interviewees

The four interviewees aged 50-59 all rated their Yulinese highly (see Table 21), indicating a strong confidence in their language skills. During the interview, E2 and E4 initially said it was okay to use either Putonghua or Yulinese, but after I hesitated, they proactively chose to use Putonghua. Their reason was that they were concerned that I might not have spoken Yulinese for years and might struggle with some sentences or have difficulty understanding.

Table 21: Language proficiency of interviewees aged 50-59

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Interviewees' own evaluation of Yulinese skill</i>	<i>Language varieties that interviewee can speak</i>	<i>Best mastered language</i>
E1	10	Yulinese, Putonghua, Cantonese	Yulinese
E2	8	Hakka, Putonghua, Yulinese Cantonese	I don't think I speak any language well
E3	9.5	Yulinese, Putonghua, Cantonese, Beiliunese	Yulinese
E4	9	Putonghua, English, Yulinese, Cantonese	Putonghua

E1 is a native of Yulin and believes that Yulinese is the language she speaks best. She even joked that a score of 10 would not do justice to her Yulinese proficiency and that she should rate herself 100. E1 mentioned, “My Yulinese is the best, especially when it comes to quarrelling and cursing; it's much more fluent” (E1-20). E1 has a rich vocabulary in Yulinese and uses it frequently, so she tends to choose the language she is most proficient in when she is emotionally agitated. Interestingly, during interviews with interviewees aged 19 and under,

the issue of arguing language also arose, and these younger interviewees indicated that they could only express themselves fluently in Putonghua when emotionally charged. I must state that E1 and the young interviewees have no relationship, so they are not describing a mother-daughter language use, but this somewhat reflects that the older interviewees indeed have a better command of Yulinese compared to the younger ones.

6.5.2 Language use

6.5.2.1 Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese

E2 and E4 were not born in regions where Yulinese is spoken, so they grew up with their local dialects. They learned Yulinese only after they came to Yulin. E2 said, “I learned Yulinese after I started working. The older colleagues, who were all Yulin natives, taught me Yulinese. They said that when you live in Yulin, you have to speak Yulinese to communicate” (E2-11). However, when I asked if she liked speaking Yulinese, E2 replied, “Well, back then, interacting with them was about adapting to the local customs and speaking their language. But now, when I go out with friends or colleagues who prefer Putonghua, I speak Putonghua” (E2-12).

E4 indicated that he had learned Yulinese after his parents moved to Yuzhou district: “It was probably during primary or middle school when some of my classmates spoke Yulinese. So I gradually learned it over three to five years” (E4-12). Although Yulinese is not E4’s native language, he expressed a preference for using this dialect, saying, “Yulinese gives a sense of closeness when speaking with locals. It allows precise expression of emotions, and simple words are easily understood by others” (E4-14). The ways in which the four respondents learned Yulinese are shown in Table 22.

Table 22: Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese of interviewees aged 50-59

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Childhood language</i>	<i>Methods of learning Yulinese</i>
E1	Yulinese	It was naturally learned from parents and the surrounding environment where everyone spoke Yulinese (E1-12).
E2	Hakka	I learned it at work from colleagues (E2-09).
E3	Yulinese	As a child, the other kids and parents around me all spoke Yulinese (E3-09).
E4	Shinanese	I learned it by listening to my classmates speak Yulinese (E4-12).

6.5.2.2 Family language

E1 has said that she uses Yulinese at home with her parents and husband, but she speaks Putonghua more often with her child, Yulinese being used only occasionally. She explained, “Since he was young, we taught him Putonghua. He picked up Yulinese by listening to it a lot” (E1-23). She believes that her child prefers to speak Putonghua, so she and her husband mainly use Putonghua to communicate with their child at home.

E2’s child is in a similar situation. She said, “My son can’t speak Yulinese either. He can understand a few sentences and say a few words, but he doesn’t really speak Yulinese. My husband and I both speak Putonghua to him” (E2-27). Because E2’s mother tongue is not Yulinese, she only uses Yulinese to communicate with her mother-in-law at home. When she goes back to her own parents’ house, she communicates with them in Hakka.

E3 has told me that he speaks Yulinese with his parents and wife, but uses Putonghua to communicate with his child. He explained, “My child knows very little Yulinese. He can understand it, but he can’t speak it, because now, in schools, children are taught in Putonghua. As a result, the local language is gradually disappearing” (E3-30).

E4 said that he used Yulinese to communicate with his parents, brother, and sister. Although they didn’t speak Yulinese when they were younger, the whole family learned it after moving to Yulin and got used to using it. E4’s wife can speak Yulinese, but she is not a native of Yulin, so 90% of their communication is in Putonghua. As E4 said: “Since we first met, we spoke Putonghua, and we continued that. She rarely speaks Yulinese to me” (E4-27). In addition, E4 said that he had always spoken Putonghua to his child. As he revealed, “My mom is the only one who spoke Yulinese to him, but since my wife and I always communicate in Putonghua, we naturally spoke Putonghua to our child” (E4-43).

Similar to the 40-49 age group, interviewees aged 50-59 primarily use Putonghua when communicating with their children. The interviewees generally believe this is because their children learn and use Putonghua at school, so they continue to speak Putonghua at home, especially since the children are not very proficient in Yulinese. However, an interesting phenomenon emerged from the interviews: when the mother in the household is reluctant to use Yulinese, the children are less likely to speak Yulinese at home compared to children in households where the mother frequently uses Yulinese (e.g., E2 and E4’s wives). This finding is similar to Yusuf et al. (2022: 26-42), who studied 12 pairs of young parents and found that mothers have a greater influence on the family’s language use than fathers, perhaps because mothers spend more time with the children.

Additionally, Winter and Pauwels (2005: 153-168) and Ong (2021: 59-75) also found that mothers' language attitudes play an important role in their children's heritage language.

Therefore, I also believe that the choice of family language among the interviewees in this study is closely related to the language choices of the wife/mother.

6.5.2.3 Language used to communicate with friends

E1 stated that she primarily used Yulinese when communicating with both male and female friends. However, she clarified: "But when I'm talking to female friends and I'm excited, to show off a bit, I'll throw in a few sentences in Putonghua to highlight key points" (E1-15). E1 believes that Putonghua can be used to emphasize and highlight important parts of a conversation, which reflects her perception of Putonghua as a prestige language.

E2 has said that she mainly communicates with her friends in Putonghua and also switches the language depending on what her friends use. She feels that many of her female friends prefer to speak Putonghua, explaining, "Some people think that Yulinese sounds a bit rough" (E2-13).

E3 and E4 mentioned that they mostly communicated with their friends in Yulinese. E4 said, "If they are completely born and raised in Yulin, they prefer to use Yulinese to communicate" (E4-18). When asked if they ever mix in some Putonghua for emphasis, they admitted that they do, but not for emphasis – just out of habit without a clear reason.

According to the descriptions of the four interviewees, the two male interviewees preferred to use Yulinese with their friends, while the female interviewees preferred to associate Yulinese with low-rank variety.

6.5.2.4 Language used in school

E1, E3, and E4 all mentioned that their teachers used Yulinese in the classroom during their primary and middle school years. E3 noted, "At that time, the teachers' Putonghua was quite poor, and many of the teachers were old" (E3-18). He added, "It could also be because most of my teachers were male, and while some female teachers could speak Putonghua, many male teachers just taught in the local dialect" (E3-20). E4 mentioned that after attending a two-year college in the 1980s, he encountered teachers who used Putonghua in the classroom. However, he believes that this varied from place to place and probably in some places Putonghua may have been used in primary and middle schools.

Similar to the 40-49 age group, the 50-59 age group mainly used Yulinese in school. This suggests that before the 1980s, Yulin schools did not strictly promote Putonghua, allowing teachers to teach and students to communicate in the local dialect.

6.5.2.5 Language used at local markets

When discussing the language she uses while shopping, E1 mentioned that she chooses the language based on the gender, age, or what the salesperson is saying. She explained, “If I see a young girl (salesperson), I speak Putonghua to her, but if it’s someone my age, I use Yulinese” (E1-29). She believes that it is necessary to speak Putonghua to young salespeople because “today’s young people, when they were children, their parents, who are our age, spoke Putonghua to them or in social interactions. They’ve developed this habit. So you have to use Putonghua with them, especially nowadays, those young people from Yulin don’t speak authentic Yulinese. Their Putonghua is more fluent” (E1-30). According to E1, young people speak Yulinese poorly, and among them, young women are especially less proficient in Yulinese. Her perspective may be biased, but it may also reflect a broader trend: young people, especially women, tend to prefer the prestige language of Putonghua.

E2, E3, and E4 all noted that they predominantly use Putonghua in shopping malls and supermarkets, but prefer Yulinese in local markets. They observed that the young sellers in malls and supermarkets often have poor Yulinese skills, while the sellers in local markets, usually older women, are fluent in Yulinese, making it easier to communicate in Yulinese.

6.5.2.6 Language(s) at work

E1 is retired, but she recalls that she mainly spoke Yulinese at work because there was no language usage requirement in her workplace. E2 and E3 mentioned that they used both Putonghua and Yulinese at work, depending on the language used by their conversation partners.

E4, a musician, said that he mainly uses Putonghua at work and performs in Putonghua, English or Cantonese. He has never tried to sing in Yulinese. He explained, “I’ve heard local Yulin singers perform Putonghua songs in Yulinese, but I haven’t tried it. I feel that Yulinese doesn’t quite fit the musical melody; it feels awkward and doesn’t properly convey the emotions of the song. That’s the main problem. I don’t feel comfortable with it” (E4-34).

6.5.2.7 Use of Yulinese in traditional performances and in the media

When discussing traditional performances in Yulinese, interviewees E1, E2, and E3 all told me that they had seen such performances. However, E1 and E2 feel that these traditional performances are quite rare now. E3, on the other hand, said, “In recent years, there are still some. They usually take place on weekends, holidays, or during festivals” (E3-39). E3’s love of Yulinese programs extends beyond traditional performances. He also follows Yulinese performances through modern media such as TikTok: “I watch a lot of Yulinese videos on TikTok. These local videos are quite unique” (E3-33). He also mentioned a local television program: “We used to have a TV show in Yulinese, a chat show in Yulinese. It was about legends and other topics, and it had a good audience in Yulin” (E3-43).

E1 and E3 mention reading articles written in Yulinese on the Internet. However, E1 finds it necessary to translate these articles into Putonghua to fully understand their meaning because she has difficulty reading them. She often communicates with friends by typing out the Yulinese pronunciation using Putonghua characters, but she avoids using complex words and sticks to common Yulinese phrases that are easier for everyone to understand. For example, she said, “If you type ‘威火 *uai⁵⁴uo³³*’, people will understand that you’re saying ‘amazing’ in Yulinese. We only type the common phrases, not the less common ones, because some Yulinese pronunciations are hard to represent with characters” (E1-48).

6.5.3 Language attitudes

E1, E3, and E4 enjoy using Yulinese, but they have different views about its future:

E1 observes a decline in the use of Yulinese among young people, leading her to speculate, “It won’t go far, Yulinese won’t go far” (E1-53). When asked if young people should be taught Yulinese, E1 invoked the example of her friends: “They all teach their children English or Putonghua, they said it comes naturally to Yulinese, not necessary to be taught” (E1-55), and added: “I don’t think it’s necessary. They have to keep up with international standards” (E1-56). It is unclear whether E1 prefers the prestige language because she associates Yulinese with a low-rank language, or because she observes that the children of her friends and relatives don’t usually speak Yulinese.

E3 expressed concern about the future of Yulinese, saying, “In the future, many locals will probably use Putonghua because education from kindergarten to high school and college is all in Putonghua. So the citizens have this fear that the local language will die out, so they

teach their children Yulinese” (E3-41). Although E3 uses Yulinese frequently and follows both traditional and modern Yulinese programs, he does not use Yulinese when communicating with children.

E4 believes that regional languages will survive for a long time. He says, “Even though Putonghua is being promoted nationwide, many regional languages, including Yulinese, as well as other ethnic languages such as Zhuang and Miao, are still being preserved. They won’t disappear all at once. Over time, maybe in a thousand years or so, they might be assimilated, but not in the near future” (E4-56). He suggests that local media should broadcast in local languages to preserve cultural heritage.

E2 sees limitations in the use of Yulinese, noting, “It is convenient to communicate with locals in Yulinese, but once you leave Yulin, you use Putonghua for communication” (E2-41).

6.5.4 Findings

From the language use of participants in the 50-59 age group, it’s clear that they have a strong affinity for Yulinese. This affection is manifested in their extensive use of Yulinese in work, daily life and social interactions. They even show interest in traditional Yulinese related activities and modern media performances in Yulinese. A succinct description of their attitude toward Yulinese would be that they recognize the need to preserve Yulinese, but fail to recognize their own role in its transmission. Thus, they emphasize the impact of school and government language policies on Yulinese while overlooking the impact of family language policy.

6.6 Interviewees aged 60-69

6.6.1 Language proficiency of interviewees

When interviewing the four participants aged 60-69, I found that all of them chose to converse in Yulinese. F2, F3, and F4 were born in Yulin and grew up speaking Yulinese from childhood, so they feel more fluent. F1 moved to Yulin after junior high school, so he might have a slight accent when speaking Yulinese: “I have a bit of accent. I grew up in a state-owned factory area where there are fewer locals. But I’ve been speaking Yulinese for many years” (F1-12). However, F1 does not feel nervous when he speaks Yulinese; in his opinion,

even if someone notices his accent, they will not make fun of him. As a result, he enjoys chatting in Yulinese and rates his proficiency at 9 out of 10. F3, who comes from the outskirts of Yuzhou District, feels that her Yulinese accent is not as authentic and rates herself a 9.

When asked which language they feel they speak best, the three participants who grew up in Yulin feel they speak Yulinese better than Putonghua. However, F1 considers his Putonghua to be superior because “Putonghua is the language I have to use for work. It’s necessary for work. This is the basic requirement: to know Putonghua” (F1-19). Their Yulinese proficiency levels are indicated in Table 23.

Table 23: Language proficiency of interviewees aged 60-69

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Interviewees’ own evaluation of Yulinese skill</i>	<i>Language varieties that interviewee can speak</i>	<i>Best mastered language</i>
F1	9	Putonghua, Yulinese, Cantonese	Putonghua
F2	10	Putonghua, Yulinese, Shinanese, Cantonese, Hakka	Yulinese
F3	9	Putonghua, Yulinese, Cantonese, Hakka	Yulinese
F4	10	Yulinese, Putonghua, Cantonese	Yulinese

6.6.2 Language use

6.6.2.1 Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese

When discussing how they learned Yulinese, the three participants who grew up in Yulin mentioned that they were surrounded by people who spoke Yulinese (see Table 24), so they naturally acquired it from a young age. On the other hand, F1, who came from outside the area, mentioned that he learned Yulinese from his classmates when he came to study in junior high school. After that, while working in Yulin, he continued to communicate in Yulinese when buying groceries and chatting with locals, which enriched his vocabulary and fluency in Yulinese.

Table 24: Childhood language and the way to learn Yulinese for interviewees aged 60-69

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Childhood language</i>	<i>Methods of learning Yulinese</i>
F1	Putonghua	Mainly learned from classmates (F1-14).
F2	Yulinese	My parents, neighbors, classmates, friends, and relatives around me all speak Yulinese, so I learned it from a young age (F2-11).
F3	Yulinese	Yulinese is my mother tongue. I have been speaking Yulinese since I was a child (F3-08).
F4	Yulinese	Learned it from a young age (F4-05).

6.6.2.2 Family language

All four interviewees indicate that they communicate with their spouses and children in Yulinese at home. F3 referred to her son, daughter-in-law, and grandson: “My son, he is a native Yulinese, we all speak the local dialect” (F3-17). However, she also noted: “At home, we usually speak Yulinese. But now, my grandson, because he speaks Putonghua at school, I can only speak Putonghua with him” (F3-13). However, she does not think that her grandson does not want to learn Yulinese: “He is willing to learn, and I also teach him one or two sentences, and he learns very fast, but he still doesn’t understand completely” (F3-15). “My daughter-in-law is from Guilin, she doesn’t understand Yulinese, so we speak Putonghua” (F3-19).

6.6.2.3 Language used to communicate with friends

When discussing the languages used to communicate with friends, the four interviewees gave two different answers.

Two male interviewees (F1 and F4) thought that their male friends preferred to speak Yulinese, while their female friends preferred to speak Putonghua. F4 said, “Male friends mostly speak Yulinese, while female friends seem to speak more Putonghua” (F4-20).

Two female interviewees said that they did not feel any difference in language use between male and female friends. Instead, they believed that the language used with friends mainly depended on whether the other person was a local or not. F3 said, “When locals are together, they generally speak the local language, whether they are male or female friends. There is no difference. Everyone is a local, and Yulinese people speak Yulinese” (F3-35).

I think this may be because the two female interviewees both like to use Yulinese, so when their male friends know that, they use Yulinese to communicate with them. In the previous interviews with interviewees from other age groups, many male interviewees said that they usually used Putonghua with women and only switch to Yulinese when they know that the women can speak Yulinese.

6.6.2.4 Language used in school

Regarding the language used in school, the four interviewees are divided into two groups. F1 and F2 recall that their teachers used Putonghua in the classroom, while F3 and F4 mention that teachers used Yulinese in primary and middle school and use Putonghua only in high

school. F3 said, “The teachers spoke Yulinese because they were local teachers. I remember that they spoke Yulinese in primary and middle school, but in high school they used Putonghua” (F3-25). I think this might be because these four interviewees went to schools in different areas. In previous interviews, some respondents mentioned that around the year 2000, schools in suburban areas still used Yulinese for teaching.

Regarding the language used with classmates, all four respondents unanimously answered that they communicated with their classmates in Yulinese.

6.6.2.5 Language used at local markets

Regarding the language used while shopping, all four respondents claim that they choose between Putonghua and Yulinese based on the language spoken by the salesperson. As F4 said, “If they speak Putonghua, I speak Putonghua too, I respond based on what they say” (F4-18). However, F4 also added, “I usually speak Yulinese, but nowadays most people in the malls speak Putonghua. In big malls, they don’t use Yulinese anymore. But at the street stalls, they speak Yulinese” (F3-31).

6.6.2.6 Language(s) at work

F1 is a worker in a state-owned industrial factory. When discussing the language used at work, he mentioned that he spoke Putonghua with his superiors and colleagues. However, he switches to Yulinese for casual conversations with coworkers and for after-work gatherings with coworkers and supervisors because he finds Yulinese appropriate for informal occasions.

F2, by contrast, works in a hospital. She said that she mostly speaks Yulinese at work when interacting with colleagues: “At work, we usually speak Yulinese with each other, but when we meet colleagues from other places who don’t speak Yulinese, we use Putonghua” (F2-26). Regarding her patients, she added, “Most of the patients are local people who speak Yulinese. If a patient comes in and doesn’t speak immediately, we speak to them in Yulinese first. They usually respond in Yulinese. If a patient starts to speak in Putonghua, we switch to Putonghua, but if we find out that they speak Yulinese, we switch back to Yulinese” (F2-32). F2 noted that the hospital does not require the use of Putonghua, and there is no problem explaining medical terms in Yulinese. Therefore, Yulinese is often used to communicate effectively with local residents.

F3 and F4 are both retired government officials. When discussing the language used at work, they recall that Putonghua was mainly used, especially during meetings. Communication with colleagues depended on whether they were locals; with locals, they used Yulinese. As F3 said, “We generally use Putonghua for work and meetings. However, I speak Yulinese with my colleagues if they are local people. If the other person is from another place, I use Putonghua” (F3-26). When interacting with the public, they could use either Putonghua or Yulinese. F3 explained: “When people come for services, we respond according to the language they use. If they speak Putonghua, we respond in Putonghua. If they speak Yulinese, we respond in Yulinese. There are no strict rules; it depends on the situation. Some people, especially from rural areas, may not understand Putonghua well, so we use the local dialect” (F3-29). F3 believes that while there is an emphasis on promoting Putonghua in the workplace, it is not strictly enforced and the choice of language is determined by the specific circumstances.

6.6.2.7 Use of Yulinese in traditional performances and in the media

When discussing traditional performances in Yulin, F1 and F2 expressed great enthusiasm and interest. F1 said, “Yes, there are many more now because when there are village events like weddings or funerals, they invite puppet shows that can last for ten days. The whole village comes, young and old, so it’s very lively” (F1-47). F2 noted that she had recently noticed an increase in these traditional performances.

In contrast, F3 and F4 have mentioned that they used to see such traditional performances, but they have not seen many lately. F3 said, “Nowadays, you only see these traditional performances during festivals. Like during the March 3rd festival, there were some performances, but otherwise there aren’t many. I haven’t seen puppet shows for decades” (F3-44).

When asked about watching Yulinese performances on TikTok, F1 and F2 said they enjoyed them, while F3 and F4 said they did not watch many. As F3 remarked, “The problem is that there are hardly any TV shows in Yulinese anymore. Even the Yulin TV station broadcasts in Putonghua, not the local dialect. On TikTok, there are very few videos in the local dialect; most are in Putonghua” (F3-38).

Regarding chatting online with friends using Putonghua characters to represent Yulinese sounds, all four respondents said they enjoyed communicating in this way. As F3 explained, “Yes, older people use Yulinese characters when typing messages. For example, they might

type ‘吃着饭某有 *hek⁵tfa²¹fɔn²¹mau²⁴iau²⁴*’ to say ‘Have you eaten?’, using the character ‘某 *mau²⁴*’ as a ‘not yet’. That’s just an example” (F3-43).

6.6.3 Language attitudes

All four respondents expressed a strong preference for using Yulinese, with F4 even confessing that “Speaking Yulinese feels more intimate” (F4-45). They also believe that Yulinese will not die out. F2 said, “If you are born and raised in Yulin, you will definitely speak Yulinese. When children go to kindergarten or school, or later to university, they will speak Putonghua, but when they return to Yulin, they will speak Yulinese because the environment is predominantly Yulinese” (F2-68).

F4 shared a similar view, using his own children as an example: “My son didn’t speak Yulinese until he was over 10 years old. As he got older, he started speaking Yulinese after interacting with others. Before the age of 10, he didn’t speak it” (F4-42). He added: “If the young generation is native Yulinese, they speak the local dialect. If they’re from somewhere else, they’ll speak another dialect. That’s usually the case” (F4-44). In his opinion, “Yulinese won’t disappear. Even if children don’t speak it when they are young, they understand it. For example, the children of my relatives from rural areas all speak it when they get older. It’s all about the environment; you speak the language of the people around you. If my child goes to school in another city, from primary school to university, he may not speak Yulinese. But when they graduate and return to Yulin, most of them will speak Yulinese. So, there’s no fear that it will die out” (F4-47).

6.6.4 Findings

The four respondents aged 60-69 have a more positive attitude towards Yulinese than the 40-59 age group. This is evident not only in their own use of the language, but also in their efforts to pass on Yulinese to their children by speaking it at home, thus actively ensuring that the next generation learns the language. However, the 60-69 age group tends to be overly optimistic about the current state of Yulinese. They fail to realize that the younger generation is becoming less inclined to speak Yulinese. This may be because their friends and family members all speak and enjoy using Yulinese, leading them to be unrealistic about the future of the language.

6.7 Discoveries and discussion

By analyzing the proficiency and use of Yulinese among respondents of different age groups, I found that respondents over 40 years old have a significantly higher proficiency in Yulinese compared to those under 40 years old.

For respondents under 40, there are some common issues concerning their use of and attitudes to Yulinese:

a). Lack of vocabulary: Because they did not speak Yulinese from a young age, their vocabulary is limited compared to respondents over 40. As a result, many respondents under the age of 40 have difficulty expressing themselves fluently in Yulinese or even forming complete sentences, which reduces their willingness to use Yulinese in shopping, socializing, working, and even communicating with their families.

b). Problems in pronunciation: Pronunciation problems cause them to feel nervous when speaking Yulinese for fear of saying something wrong or being misunderstood. In addition, their pronunciation problems cause sellers to assume that they do not speak Yulinese well, which prompts sellers to switch to Putonghua. This reduces the younger respondents' opportunities to practice Yulinese and perpetuates their pronunciation problems.

When discussing why those under 40 are less proficient in Yulinese, people over 40 generally attribute this fact to language policy – respondents under 40 were educated primarily in Putonghua, so they continue to use it at home. However, when we consider the perspectives of those under 40, they acknowledge that while Putonghua was dominant in school, their parents also spoke Putonghua at home, which contributed to their limited Yulinese proficiency. This creates a “chicken or the egg” dilemma as to whether school or home language use was the original cause.

When we analyze both perspectives, we see that many respondents over the age of 40 mention that school was an important avenue for learning Yulinese. They encountered teachers who taught in Yulinese and classmates who often spoke it, giving them ample opportunity to practice. Of course, they assume that respondents under the age of 40 who were educated in Putonghua are less proficient in Yulinese.

However, communicating with classmates is also an important way to learn Yulinese. Specifically, respondents under the age of 40 have said that although schools do not prohibit students from speaking Yulinese, they usually communicate in Putonghua. This is likely due to their own limited proficiency, which makes them reluctant or unable to speak Yulinese fluently. Thus, unless they encountered classmates who spoke or preferred Yulinese, their use of

Yulinese would be minimal. The root cause appears to be a reduced emphasis on speaking Yulinese at home, a fact acknowledged by both younger and older respondents, who fail to recognize the crucial role of family language practices in maintaining language skills.

The importance of family language practices is also reflected in the respondents' attitudes toward Yulinese and its transmission. Respondents over the age of 40, who use Yulinese more at home, generally have a positive attitude toward it and hope to pass it on to future generations. However, except for the four respondents aged 60-69, others have not chosen Yulinese as the family language or strongly encouraged their children to learn it well, indicating a lack of awareness of the importance of family language policy.

Respondents under the age of 40, having spoken less Yulinese at home, do not exhibit the same positive attitude towards the language as their elders. When discussing its transmission, most respondents under 40 view it as non-essential.

Beyond family language, do gender, place of birth, and socioeconomic status influence respondents' Yulinese usage and attitudes? Interviews reveal that gender does affect these aspects. Male respondents tend to use Yulinese more and have a more positive attitude towards it, caring more about its transmission. Many female respondents prefer Putonghua and are less positive about Yulinese and its transmission. However, female respondents, particularly mothers and wives, significantly influence the language used by children and husbands at home.

Place of birth does not seem to significantly affect language use or attitudes. Comparisons of respondents who moved to Yulin from elsewhere show that they do not use Yulinese less or have negative attitudes toward it.

As for the socio-economic status, it does not seem to directly influence Yulinese usage or attitudes. Among the respondents, there are those with high social status as well as ordinary workers or housewives. I did not find that people of higher social status disliked or had a negative attitude toward the Yulinese.

In summary, I believe that family language has a significant impact on the respondents' use of Yulinese, on their attitudes, and on its transmission.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Discussion

7.1 Summary of Findings

In the previous chapters, I explored the use of Yulinese and the language attitudes of respondents who were born, raised, or living in Yulin City through a mixed-methods approach of both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The findings from surveys and interviews corroborate and complement each other. The main findings can be summarized as follows:

7.1.1 Intergenerational Shift in Yulinese Proficiency

Through qualitative analysis, I found that older respondents have higher proficiency in Yulinese compared to younger respondents. Specifically, respondents over the age of 40 are more fluent in Yulinese, with almost no problems in pronunciation and vocabulary. In contrast, respondents under the age of 40 show more difficulty communicating in Yulinese – they may not know certain words or pronunciations, or they may struggle to construct longer sentences in the dialect.

The decline in dialect proficiency with age is not an isolated phenomenon. Shan Yun-ming et al. (2023: 144-145) found a similar trend in their survey of 1,281 respondents in nine cities in Guangdong Province, where Cantonese proficiency also declined with age among respondents aged 20-59. Similarly, Liu and Li (2020: 113) found that the dialect skills of the younger generation in eastern Guangdong Province are weakening, with fluency decreasing with age, similarly to my research finding. Liu and Li (2020: 114-115) believes that urbanization and the promotion of Putonghua have had a significant impact on the decline of Cantonese proficiency among the younger generation.

I agree that the promotion of Putonghua influences my respondents' proficiency in Yulinese. Those over 40 years old who participated in this study were taught Yulinese during their school years and frequently used Yulinese to communicate with their classmates. In Chapter 4, statistical data showed that respondents over 40 used Yulinese more frequently in school than those under 40. In interviews, all respondents older than 40 who attended primary and secondary schools in Yulin reported communicating with classmates in Yulinese, and some even mentioned that their teachers used to teach them in Yulinese. On the other hand,

respondents under the age of 40 said that the use of Yulinese among classmates was lower, and it was rare for teachers to use Yulinese in the classroom. This lack of a Yulinese speaking environment in school meant that respondents from other counties had little opportunity to learn Yulinese. The current language policy in China's education system requires students to learn Putonghua as the common language. Mandarin Chinese has been a compulsory subject since primary school, making it a necessary tool for students to enter university and achieve higher socio-economic status. As a result, respondents under the age of 40 began to systematically learn Putonghua from primary school, reducing their chances of learning and using Yulinese at school.

Thus, it is clear that schools serve as agents of cultural capital (Bourdieu and Whitehouse 1974: 26), where students' positive attitudes toward the prestigious language are nurtured and reinforced by the Putonghua environment provided by schools.

Although the authorities do not intend to replace dialects with the standard language (Putonghua) (Li David C. S. 2006: 155), its vigorous promotion of Putonghua by the central government has gradually changed the linguistic landscape (Curdt-Christiansen and Wang 2018: 4). As part of the policy to promote Putonghua, its use in schools has indeed shifted students' primary language from dialects to Putonghua.

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, another important factor is the family language policy. Respondents over the age of 40 have spoken Yulinese with their family members or neighbours since childhood, creating an environment in which they learned a more practical version of Yulinese and had more opportunities to use it than those under the age of 39. Parents of younger respondents were more likely to use Putonghua at home with their child, and Yulinese – to communicate with older relatives. This finding is consistent with Curdt-Christiansen and Wang (2018: 11), who observed that parents use local language varieties when interacting with grandparents, but switch to Putonghua when interacting with their children.

In their survey-based study, Zhang and Shao (2018: 19) found that in Jinan, Shandong Province, parents did not strictly require their children to use either Putonghua or the local dialect at home. However, in practice, mothers were more likely to speak Putonghua with their children, while fathers tended to speak the dialect slightly more than Putonghua. This is very similar to my findings from the interviews: while parents did not require their children to speak Yulinese at home, mothers were nevertheless more inclined to speak Putonghua. Thus, in my study, Putonghua shows a strong developmental trend in family language use.

As Shan and Li (2018: 37) and Shan et al. (2023: 150) pointed out in their studies, the transmission of dialects mainly relies on families, especially on mothers, whose attitudes toward dialects have a significant influence on their children's use of dialects.

However, in this study, most of the respondents' parents did not recognize the importance of family language use for their children's dialect proficiency. In fact, many respondents lamented the declining proficiency of Yulinese in the next generation while neglecting its use as the family language.

In my view, both China's language policy and my respondents' family language policy have had a negative impact on the younger respondents' proficiency and use of Yulinese. The introduction of Putonghua has had the unintended consequence of confining local language varieties to private spaces (Shen and Gao 2019: 5). As parents choose Putonghua as the family language, the younger generation has even fewer opportunities to speak Yulinese. This creates a vicious cycle: the younger generation lacks Yulinese vocabulary and proper pronunciation, and this in turn is making them less likely to use Yulinese with the next generation in the family.

7.1.2 Language Use

In formal settings, such as schools, workplaces, hospitals, and government institutions, the respondents in this study predominantly use Putonghua. In contrast, Yulinese is more commonly used at home and when shopping. The interviews revealed that although Putonghua is mandatory for school instruction and required by some government and state-owned enterprises, it is actually permissible to use Yulinese in conversation and at work within Yulin City. Despite this permission, respondents chose not to use Yulinese in these formal settings. Their language use habits suggest that they perceive Putonghua as a high variety, which makes them more inclined to use it in formal contexts. Conversely, Yulinese, as a low variety, is reserved for informal situations.

The perception of dialects as low variety and mainly being used in informal contexts is not unique to Yulinese. Studies on the use of Cantonese by Liu Hui (2013: 152), Li and Huang (2017: 79), Shan and Li (2018: 38), Liu and Li (2020: 109), and Shan et al. (2023: 149) have similarly found that respondents prefer to use the high variety (Putonghua) in formal settings, while the low variety (Cantonese) is preferred in informal contexts.

Putonghua is considered a high variety, and one of the main reasons of this fact is the policy of actively promoting Putonghua. This intensive, top-down promotion has significantly

raised the status of Putonghua and restricted the settings and frequency of dialect use. Wu (2020: 56) argues that the widespread promotion of Putonghua is a major factor in the decline of dialects.

Beyond language policies, Zhang and Xu (2008: 51), Li and Huang (2017: 84), Liu and Li (2020: 111), and Wu (2020: 56) also believe that economic development, urbanization, and population mobility have promoted the use of Putonghua; these factors have made it an important language for work and daily life. It is undeniable that as urbanization and population mobility increase, people move away from areas where their dialect is spoken, increasing the frequency of Putonghua use and decreasing the use of dialects. In fact, the respondents in this study also said they use Putonghua as a *lingua franca* to communicate with people from different regions, especially in formal settings.

The increasing frequency of Putonghua in formal settings is an inevitable trend (Su Jinzhi et al. 2012: 28). However, in informal settings, this study found a surprising result: the use of Yulinese among respondents has decreased, while the use of Putonghua has increased. This trend is particularly pronounced among younger respondents. Respondents over the age of 60 still frequently use Yulinese in daily and social interactions; those aged 40-59 tend to mix Putonghua and Yulinese; among respondents aged 30-39, the use of Yulinese drops significantly, showing a preference for Putonghua; and those under 29 predominantly choose to use Putonghua. I believe that this shift in language preference in informal settings is mainly because the younger generation is not proficient in Yulinese, lacks the knowledge of some words, and has difficulty forming long sentences in Yulinese.

Lin (2005: 74) found similar results in his study of eastern Guangdong, where Putonghua use increased not only in formal settings, but also in places such as markets and public transportation. Similarly, Shan and Li (2018) and Shan et al. (2023) observed changes in family language use in other Cantonese-speaking cities, with more people adopting Putonghua instead of local dialects. Shan and Li (2018: 36) refer to this as “intergenerational transfer of the mother tongue”. Wu (2020: 56) predicts that traditional dialects are at risk of extinction through “intergenerational replacement” within the next 20 to 30 years.

In the study by Shan and Ru (2022: 83), the most important factor driving the transmission of Cantonese has been found to be the residents’ perception of the instrumental value of the dialect, particularly its impact on communication, income enhancement, and competitiveness in entrepreneurship and employment. Shan et al. (2023: 149) also noted that language users tend to invest money, time, and effort in learning high-value, profitable languages.

However, in my questionnaires and interviews, I found that Yulinese did not help the respondents with employment or income enhancement, which led to a lack of motivation among the younger generation to learn and use this dialect in daily life. As a result, the use of Yulinese is declining among younger people even in informal situations.

7.1.3 Factors Influencing Language Use

Statistical analysis revealed that gender, age, education level, and place of birth influence the respondents' use of Yulinese.

(1) Gender

Males in this study are more likely to use Yulinese, while females tend to prefer Putonghua. The difference in language preferences between males and females is smaller in informal settings, such as family and markets. In formal settings, however, this gender difference becomes more pronounced. Hu Zhuanglin (2007: 107) points out that gender influences language use patterns, and Mei (2003: 178) notes that language use choices are related to gender, with gender differences in language use present in all languages. Studies by Long (1997), Wang and Ladegaard (2010), and Ni (2017) found similar patterns, indicating that men tend to use informal language variants in communication, while women prefer more formal language variants.

(2) Age

Age has a significant impact on language use among respondents. Respondents over the age of 60 frequently use Yulinese at work, in daily life conversation, and in social interactions. Respondents aged 40-59 tend to mix Putonghua and Yulinese. Among those aged 30-39, the use of Yulinese drops significantly, showing a preference for Putonghua, and respondents under 29 prefer Putonghua overwhelmingly. I believe that this shift in language preferences in informal settings is mainly due to the younger generation's lack of proficiency in Yulinese, their vocabulary deficiencies, and difficulty in forming long sentences, as discussed in §7.1.1. This phenomenon is largely due to the promotion of Putonghua and the neglect of dialect education in family language policies.

(3) Education level

Education level also shows a negative correlation with the respondents' use of Yulinese. Respondents with higher levels of education tend to prefer the use of Putonghua. This is because highly educated individuals spend more time in educational institutions where Putonghua is the primary language, leading to greater familiarity and preference for its use.

(4) Birthplace

Those born in Yulinese - speaking areas are more likely to use Yulinese than those born elsewhere. This difference is particularly visible in family language and market interactions. Shan et al. (2023: 146) found in their study that respondents born in Guangdong still commonly use Cantonese as the primary language of family communication. In contrast, it is common for those who moved to Guangdong from other provinces to use Cantonese less frequently at home. My results are similar to these findings.

7.1.4 Attitudes Toward Yulinese

The standard deviation and mean value indicate that 51.91% of respondents have positive attitudes toward Yulinese. They show an affinity for the dialect and value its use in daily activities such as shopping and communication. However, regarding its practical value, respondents find Yulinese less beneficial for employment or career advancement. They are neutral about their friends using Yulinese and do not expect locals to be proficient in the language. Additionally, most respondents receive encouragement from their families to learn and use Yulinese, as reflected in their frequent daily interactions.

After further analysis using principal component analysis and cluster analysis, I categorized the respondents' attitudes toward Yulinese into four types.

1. Yulinese enthusiasts: This group absolutely loves Yulinese and highly values both its emotional and instrumental aspects. They feel no pressure to use it and are encouraged by their social circle.
2. Functionalists: These respondents find Yulinese practical in life, but they lack emotional attachment to it, feel some anxiety when using it, and in its use are not encouraged by their social circle.

3. Externally influenced users: This group sees little practical value in Yulinese, feels anxious about using it, but is encouraged to use it by the family.

4. Yulinese detractors: These respondents have a negative attitude toward Yulinese, feel no emotional connection to it or see its usefulness, they experience anxiety when using it, and receive no encouragement from their family or peers.

After segmenting the respondents' attitudes, it became clear that gender, age, native language, and place of birth influence these attitudes, while place of residence, socioeconomic status, and educational level do not.

In particular, males were found to be more likely to be Yulinese enthusiasts, while females were more likely to be Yulinese detractors. This finding contrasts with Zhou Minglang (2001: 244), who found little difference between male and female attitudes toward Cantonese. This discrepancy may be due to the greater influence and utility of Cantonese in Guangdong Province, while Yulinese does not significantly benefit the respondents' work. As Labov (1990: 215) noted, "In change from below, women are most often the innovators". Women are socialized to use standard language and to speak "like a lady" (Anderson et al. 2022: 645). In this study, women may prefer Putonghua for better job opportunities and social image, leading them to be more critical of Yulinese, a language with little diversity.

In terms of age, those aged 40 and above are mainly enthusiasts, those aged 30-39 have mixed attitudes, those aged 20-29 are mainly detractors, and those aged 19 and below are mainly functionalists. Shan et al. (2023: 147) also found that positive attitudes toward Cantonese decrease with younger age groups, but their study only divided attitudes into positive and negative. My study offers a more nuanced analysis. Older respondents (40+) are more proficient in Yulinese and have many Yulinese-speaking friends, which leads to more positive attitudes. Those aged 30-39 are characterised by varying levels of proficiency and are more accustomed to speaking Putonghua due to their education and work environment, which results in more diverse attitudes. Respondents aged 20-29 and those under 19 generally have lower proficiency in Yulinese and live in families that increasingly prefer Putonghua. Therefore, the 20-29 age group with poor Yulinese skills and a Putonghua-speaking environment tend to be critics. Meanwhile, those under 19 see Yulinese as a useful secret language for communicating with parents when away from home, making them more likely to be Functionalists.

Age correlates with the respondents' attitudes toward Yulinese, actually reflecting their proficiency in the dialect. Liu and Li (2020: 117) also found that higher dialect proficiency leads to more positive language attitudes, which is consistent with the results of my study.

Mother tongue also influences the respondents' attitudes. Those who learned Yulinese in childhood have more positive attitudes towards it. This is similar to the findings of Wang Yuanxin (1999, 2017) and Hoon (2010), who noted that respondents who learned and used a dialect in childhood are more likely to have positive attitudes towards it. Additionally, my study found that learning Putonghua in childhood does not affect attitudes towards Yulinese. This finding contrasts with other studies on attitudes towards different Chinese dialects (Zhou Minglang 2001, Shan and Li 2018, Zhang and Shao 2018, Curdt-Christiansen and Wang 2018, Liu and Li 2020, Shan et al. 2023). Unfortunately, my research focused solely on analyzing the respondents' attitudes towards Yulinese and the factors influencing these attitudes. It did not explore the respondents' attitudes towards Putonghua and its influencing factors. A further comparative study could investigate the impact of mother tongue on the respondents' attitudes towards both prestige and low-ranked languages.

Regarding the respondents' place of birth, individuals born in Yulinese-speaking areas are more likely to be Enthusiasts, while those from non-Yulinese-speaking areas tend to be Detractors. In the interview section, I found that respondents over 40 from non-Yulinese-speaking areas have a more positive attitude towards using Yulinese compared to 30-year-olds from the same areas. The older respondents had more exposure to Yulin's traditional culture and a better Yulinese-speaking environment, leading to higher recognition of the region's local culture. However, most respondents from non-Yulinese-speaking areas were less positive about passing on Yulinese compared to those born and raised in Yulinese-speaking areas. These respondents showed little interest in teaching Yulinese to their children, often expressing attitudes that could be epitomised as "it doesn't matter if they learn it" or "Yulinese is useless in other cities". My findings are more detailed than those of Shan and Li (2018: 37), who only noted that respondents who moved to Guangzhou had more positive attitudes towards Putonghua. Their study did not find that the place of birth affected attitudes towards Cantonese. In contrast, my study reveals the tendencies of respondents who moved to Yulin regarding their attitudes towards Yulinese and potential reasons for these tendencies.

In another study in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Shan and Ru (2022: 83) found that local sentiments influence language transmission. The cultural recognition and sense of belonging to a city affect the residents' willingness to use and transmit the local dialect. This conclusion aligns with my findings. It appears that Yulin's local culture has not been widely accepted by most respondents from non-Yulinese-speaking areas, making them more likely to have negative attitudes towards Yulinese.

7.2 Significance of the research

The majority of quantitative studies on Chinese dialect use and dialect attitudes to date have used variance and mean analyses (Long 1998; Lai 2005; Ng and Zhao 2015; Fat 2005). In examining the factors that influence the respondents' attitudes, some studies have employed t-tests (Lai 2001, 2010, 2011; Su Cheng-Chieh 2011; Liu Hui 2013; Shan and Li 2018) to assess the significance between two groups of factors, while others have used one-way ANOVA (Zhang Bennan 2011; Zhou Minglang 2001; Lai 2007; Li and Liang 2010; Gao et al. 2019; Liu and Li 2020) to analyze significance among three or more groups. However, both t-tests and ANOVA assume that samples follow a normal distribution. In reality, data collected using Likert scales do not necessarily adhere to a normal distribution (Jamieson 2004: 1218). Consequently, some researchers have incorporated post-hoc analyses (Zhou Minglang 2001; Gao et al. 2019) to evaluate the differences among multiple groups of variables. This process, involving t-tests, ANOVA, and subsequent post-hoc analyses, can be cumbersome and prone to errors from incorrect post-hoc method selection. As a result, researchers have started to employ alternative statistical methods. For example, Shan and Ru (2022) used Amos to analyze dialect inheritance intentions among respondents in the Greater Bay Area; Shan Yunming et al. (2023) applied logistic regression to examine language attitudes in the same region; and Chan (2018) used Principal Component Analysis to investigate gender differences in second-language learners' attitudes toward different varieties of English in Hong Kong secondary schools.

Building on previous studies (Long 1998; Lai 2005; Ng and Zhao 2015; Fat 2005; Lai 2001, 2010, 2011; Su Cheng-Chieh 2011; Liu Hui 2013; Shan and Li 2018; Zhang Bennan 2011; Zhou Minglang 2001; Lai 2007; Li and Liang 2010; Chan 2018; Gao et al. 2019; Liu and Li 2020), I have refined the statistical analysis methods. Initially, I used variance and mean to analyze the respondents' attitudes broadly. Following this, I employed Kendall's tau to investigate the correlations between different factors. Upon identifying strong correlations, I applied Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to determine which factors could be grouped and to uncover the underlying information within these groups. Through this method, I identified three primary categories influencing respondents' attitudes: anxiety about using Yulinese, encouragement from family members to learn and use Yulinese, and emotional affinity and perceived practical value of Yulinese. Finally, I conducted a cluster analysis based on these three factors, identifying four distinct attitudes towards Yulinese among the respondents.

This methodological innovation offers a novel perspective for interpreting respondents' linguistic attitudes towards Yulinese. Previous studies typically classified respondents' attitudes towards dialects as either positive or negative (Lai 2011: 257; Ng and Zhao 2015: 363; Shan et al. 2023: 147). By employing cluster analysis, I demonstrated that the respondents' attitudes are not merely binary (positive or negative), but rather complex and multifaceted. Based on the components of anxiety, encouragement, emotional affinity, and perceived practical value within each attitude, I identified and named four distinct attitudes: Yulinese enthusiasts, Functionalists, Externally influenced users, and Yulinese detractors. This classification elucidates the differences among respondents with varying attitudes.

Furthermore, through cluster analysis, I also discovered that gender, age, mother tongue, place of birth, place of residence, social status, and education level each have varying degrees of influence on the four different attitudes (detailed in §5.3). This finding is unprecedented in previous research (Long 1998; Lai 2005; Ng and Zhao 2015; Fat 2005; Lai 2001, 2010, 2011; Su Cheng-Chieh 2011; Liu Hui 2013; Shan and Li 2018; Zhang Bennan 2011; Zhou Minglang 2001; Lai 2007; Li and Liang 2010; Chan 2018; Gao et al. 2019; Liu and Li 2020). This provides a completely new perspective for the study of dialect attitudes.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

Although this research employed both qualitative and quantitative analyses to explore the respondents' linguistic attitudes towards Yulinese, and use more precise statistical methods for quantitative analysis, there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. I will discuss the limitations of this study in the following aspects, hoping to assist in improving future research.

(1) The narrow range of sampling on social class

In investigating the impact of socioeconomic status on respondents' use of and attitudes towards Yulinese, I used the respondents' occupations as the basis for classification, following Liu Xing's (2007) theory to categorize different occupations into various social classes. However, this classification basis is incomplete. According to Sørensen (2005: 122), a person's social status should be determined by a combination of occupation, education, income, sources of income, and residence. I was unable to comprehensively consider these factors when categorizing respondents into different social classes. Additionally, when categorizing

based on Liu Xing's (2007) theory, occupations such as students and retirees could not be accurately placed into any social class, which I find to be a significant shortcoming. In this survey, the classification of respondents' occupations was not comprehensive. Future research should consider asking students for information about their parents' occupations and retirees for information about their pre-retirement occupations and levels.

(2) Limited social class diversity in the sample

Moreover, I found that the data samples were primarily focused on the upper middle class, lower middle class, and skilled laborers, with the upper class being absent from the sample. The contrasts between social classes are minimal, making it impossible to comprehensively compare the differences in language use and attitudes among respondents of different socioeconomic statuses.

(3) Limitations of the applied statistical methods

While my sample was clearly sufficient for quantitative analysis, due to sample size there was clearly limited sensitivity in detecting genuine differences that were too faint to obtain statistically significant differences. The methods applied, such as cluster analysis or PCA, do not have clear-cut rules determining how many clusters or dimensions are supposed to be derived, and the ultimate decision is based on whether the observed division appears within analyzed theoretical framework as reflecting reality or pure mathematical constructs. In no way does it invalidate detected relations, but, rather, suggests that in the case of increased sample it could have been possible to go one level deeper and detect more nuanced differences. PCA left almost half of the variance unexplained, while most of that appears to be simply random factors, there is a potential for underdetecting some minor dimension. In the case of cluster analysis the obtained number appeared the right one for the analysis. Nevertheless, in the case of their comparison a bigger sample would not only increase the number of analyzed variables with detectable statistically significant difference, but also allow to measure the difference with confidence intervals.

7.4 Future research directions

In this study, I found that the respondents' language attitudes can be categorized into four types: Yulinese enthusiasts, Functionalists, Externally influenced users, and Yulinese detractors. Future changes in the Functionalist group are particularly worthy of further study. Shan and Ru (2022: 83) found that the respondents' perceptions and recognition of the functional value of a dialect influence their attitudes toward it, especially their willingness to transmit the dialect. In my research, most respondents under the age of 19 are Functionalists, the main reason being that they perceive Yulinese as a secret language for communicating with family and friends. However, it is uncertain whether their attitudes will change after they graduate from university and return home. If Yulinese loses its function as a secret language and does not add value to their work, will these Functionalists become Externally influenced users or Yulinese detractors? I think this is a very interesting topic, worthy of further research.

In addition, the development of Externally influenced users is also worth following. Shan and Ru (2022: 83) pointed out that emotional attachment to a region and language can influence the respondents' language attitudes. In the interview section of my study, several respondents over the age of 40 mentioned that they had seen relatives and friends who were not very fond of using Yulinese at first, yet gradually grew to like it as they got older. For the Externally influenced users in this study, it remains to be seen whether they will develop a greater cultural affinity for Yulinese as they age, turning into Yulinese enthusiasts, or whether their attitudes will become more negative. This is also a topic that deserves a further in-depth study.

Another finding of this study is that learning Putonghua in childhood does not affect the respondents' attitudes toward Yulinese, while those who did not learn a dialect in childhood are more likely to have negative attitudes toward Yulinese. Scholars have long believed that Putonghua promotion negatively affects the use and spread of dialects (Lin 2005: 75; Chen Litong 2023: 2; Wu 2020: 56), but there is little research on how Putonghua promotion affects dialect speakers' attitudes toward their dialect. Whether my finding is a data error or truly proves that Putonghua promotion does not affect the respondents' attitudes toward dialects requires an extensive analysis with data from different regions.

Finally, family language policies also warrant further analysis and discussion. In my study, I found that Putonghua is beginning to replace Yulinese as the primary language used in the respondents' households, significantly reducing the opportunities for many respondents to speak Yulinese in everyday life. Many respondents are not even aware of the importance of

family language in the transmission of Yulinese. Family language policy in the Yulin area is a virtually unexplored topic, and research on this topic will undoubtedly have a positive impact on local language transmission.

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Appendix 1

The questionnaire

I am a PhD student at Adam Mickiewicz University, and I have recently been surveying language attitudes towards Yulin dialect to provide data for my doctoral dissertation. If you are born and raised in Yulin, or if you are currently living and working in Yulin, please take about ten minutes to fill out this questionnaire, as your detailed answers will help me to understand the actual situation. This survey is anonymous, the results of the questionnaire are only for academic research, and not individually disclosed to the public, please feel free to fill out the answer. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your help and support!

Wenmin Hu

Adam Mickiewicz University, Sinology Department

There are 25 sentences below, please circle the statement which best indicates what you think about the following statements

1. Yulin people should be able to understand and express themselves in Yulinese.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
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2. Knowing Yulinese is the only way to understand the Yulin culture

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
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3. People who do not speak Yulinese are outsiders

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

4. All native Yulin speakers can speak Yulinese

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

5. If I don't speak Yulin dialect, I will be bullied by the locals, so I need to know Yulin dialect.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

6. You need to know Yulinese to work in Yulin

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

7. Being fluent in Yulinese will help you get a good job

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

8. Knowing Yulinese is helpful when buying things in Yulin

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

9. Knowing Yulinese is helpful when communicating with local people in Yulin

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

10. Knowing Yulinese makes the locals respect me more

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

11. Most people who speak Yulinese are friendly and easy to get along with

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

12. Not being able to communicate fluently in Yulinese is a big loss for the local

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

13. I would like to have a lot of Yulinese-speaking friends

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

14. I wish my friends would use Yulinese when they tweet or call me

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

15. People who speak Yulinese have a low level of education

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

16. It's a headache to make phone calls in Yulinese

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

17. I find it repulsive to order food in Yulinese

Strongly Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neutral	Agree Somewhat	Strongly Agree
----------------------	----------------------	---------	-------------------	----------------

18. If someone asks me a question in Yulinese, I feel disgusted

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Somewhat		Somewhat	

19. I feel embarrassed if I have to answer someone's question in Yulinese

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Somewhat		Somewhat	

20. I find it repulsive to hear advertisements/broadcasts in Yulin

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Somewhat		Somewhat	

21. My parents think it is important to learn Yulinese because we live in Yulin

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Somewhat		Somewhat	

22. My parents use Yulinese to communicate with me at home

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
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23. My parents use Yulinese to communicate with me in public places

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
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24. My relatives/partner use Yulinese to communicate with me at home

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

25. My relatives/partner use Yulinese to communicate with me in public places

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
-------	--------	-----------	-------	--------

The following questions 26-34 are some basic questions about you

26. Which language/ dialect you learned and used in childhood? (multiple choice)

- a) Putonghua
- b) Yulinese
- c) Hakka or varieties of Hakka (e.g. Bobai dialect, Dilao dialect, Luchuan dialect)
- d) Cantonese or other varieties of Cantonese (e.g. Shangli dialect, Xiali dialect Rongxian dialect, Shinan dialect)
- e) Min or other varieties of Min (e.g. Holo)
- f) Xiang or other varieties of Xiang
- g) Gan or other varieties of Gan
- h) Hui or other varieties of Hui
- i) Wu or other varieties of Wu

- j) Jin or other varieties of Jin
- k) Southwestern Mandarin (e.g. Sichuan dialect, Guiliu dialect)
- l) other

27. Which language/dialect would you use in different situations? (multiple choice)

	Putonghua	Yulinese	Other dialects/languages
At home			
At school			
At work			
At the market			
On public transport			
At hospital			
In government institutions/ offices			

28. Rate your Yulin dialect on a scale of 1-5 (1 meaning you don't speak it at all and 5 means very fluent).

1	2	3	4	5
Can't speak at all				Speaks very fluently

29. Age:

- a) 19 and below b) 20-29 c) 30-39 d) 40-49 e) 50-59 f) 60-69 g) above 70

30. Gender:

- a) male b) female

31. Place of birth:

- a) Yuzhou District
- b) Fumian District
- c) Rongxian County
- d) Luchuan County
- e) Bobai County
- f) Beiliu City
- g) Shinan County
- h) Other

32. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- a) High school or below
- b) Three-/two-year college
- c) BA
- d) MA and above

33. Where are you living now?

- a) in Yuzhou District
- b) Fumian District
- c) Rongxian County
- d) Luchuan County
- e) Bobai County
- f) Beiliu City
- g) Shinan County
- h) in another city

34. What is your job?

- a) Student
- b) White-collar worker
- c) Blue-collar worker
- d) Self-employed/Entrepreneur
- e) Farmer
- f) Homemaker
- g) Retiree

Appendix 2

对玉林话的态度调查

您好：

我是亚当·密茨凯维奇大学的一名博士生，最近在做一项关于玉林话的语言态度的调查，为我的博士论文写作提供数据。如果您是一名在玉林出生长大的玉林人，或您现在在玉林工作生活，请您花十分钟左右的时间帮忙填写一下这份问卷，您的详实回答有助于我了解实际情况。本项调查是无记名的调查，问卷结果仅用于学术研究，个别对外披露，敬请放心填答。由衷感谢您的帮助和支持！

亚当·密茨凯维奇大学汉学系 胡文敏

以下有 25 个句子，您对这些句子的说法是否赞同呢？请选择您赞同的说法。

1. 玉林人应该能听懂玉林话，并且能说玉林话。 [单选题] *

- ☐ 很不赞同
- ☐ 不赞同
- ☐ 中立
- ☐ 赞同
- ☐ 很赞同

2. 懂得玉林话才能了解玉林文化 [单选题] *

- ☐ 很不赞同
- ☐ 不赞同
- ☐ 中立
- ☐ 赞同
- ☐ 很赞同

3. 不会说玉林话的是外地人。 [单选题] *

- ☐ 很不赞同
- ☐ 不赞同
- ☐ 中立

- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

4. 土生土长的玉林人都能说玉林话。 [单选题] *

- ☐很不赞同
- ☐不赞同
- ☐中立
- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

5. 如果不会说玉林话，会被当地人欺负，所以我得会玉林话。 [单选题] *

- ☐很不赞同
- ☐不赞同
- ☐中立
- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

6. 在玉林工作得懂玉林话。 [单选题] *

- ☐很不赞同
- ☐不赞同
- ☐中立
- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

7. 能流利使用玉林话对获得一份好工作有帮助。 [单选题] *

- ☐很不赞同
- ☐不赞同
- ☐中立

- 赞同
- 很赞同

8. 在玉林买东西，懂得玉林话很有帮助。 [单选题] *

- 很不赞同
- 不赞同
- 中立
- 赞同
- 很赞同

9. 在和玉林当地人沟通时，懂得玉林话很有帮助。 [单选题] *

- 很不赞同
- 不赞同
- 中立
- 赞同
- 很赞同

10. 懂得玉林话，当地人更尊重我。 [单选题] *

- 很不赞同
- 不赞同
- 中立
- 赞同
- 很赞同

11. 大多数说玉林话的人都很友善且容易相处。 [单选题] *

- 很不赞同
- 不赞同
- 中立

- 赞同
- 很赞同

12. 不能用玉林话流畅沟通对我是重大损失。 [单选题] *

- 很不赞同
- 不赞同
- 中立
- 赞同
- 很赞同

13. 我希望我能有很多说玉林话的朋友。 [单选题] *

- 很不赞同
- 不赞同
- 中立
- 赞同
- 很赞同

14. 我希望我的朋友给我发微信或者打电话的时候使用玉林话。 [单选题] *

- 很不赞同
- 不赞同
- 中立
- 赞同
- 很赞同

15. 说玉林话的人受教育程度低。 [单选题] *

- 很不赞同
- 不赞同
- 中立

- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

16. 我不喜欢用玉林话打电话。 [单选题] *

- ☐很不赞同
- ☐不赞同
- ☐中立
- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

17. 我反感用玉林话点餐。 [单选题] *

- ☐很不赞同
- ☐不赞同
- ☐中立
- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

18. 我不喜欢别人用玉林话问我问题。 [单选题] *

- ☐很不赞同
- ☐不赞同
- ☐中立
- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

19. 用玉林话回答别人的问题，让我觉得难为情。 [单选题] *

- ☐很不赞同
- ☐不赞同
- ☐中立

- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

20. 我不喜欢用玉林话播报的广播或者广告。 [单选题] *

- ☐很不赞同
- ☐不赞同
- ☐中立
- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

21. 我的父母认为，因为我们生活在玉林，学会玉林话很重要。 [单选题] *

- ☐很不赞同
- ☐不赞同
- ☐中立
- ☐赞同
- ☐很赞同

在以下五个场景中您经常使用玉林话吗？

22. 我的父母在家使用玉林话和我沟通。 [单选题] *

- ☐从不
- ☐很少
- ☐有时候
- ☐经常
- ☐很经常

23. 我的父母在公共场合用玉林话和我沟通。 [单选题] *

- ☐从不

- 很少
- 有时候
- 经常
- 很经常

24. 我的亲戚或者另一半在家用玉林话和我沟通。 [单选题] *

- 从不
- 很少
- 有时候
- 经常
- 很经常

25. 我的亲戚或者另一半在公共场合用玉林话和我沟通。 [单选题] *

- 从不
- 很少
- 有时候
- 经常
- 很经常

以下 26-34 题是关于您的一些基本问题

26. 你觉得自己的玉林话怎么样。 [单选题] *

- 完全不会
- 会一点
- 还可以
- 比较流利
- 很流利

27. 你小时候学习和使用哪种语言/方言？ [多选题] *

- ☐ 普通话
- ☐ 玉林话
- ☐ 客家话或其他客家方言（如：新民话、地佬话、僮话）
- ☐ 广东话或其他广东方言（如：北流话、上里话、下里话、容县话、石南话、陆川白话）
- ☐ 福建话或其他闽南方言
- ☐ 湖南话或其他湖南方言
- ☐ 江西话或者其他江西方言
- ☐ 安徽话或其他安徽方言
- ☐ 吴语或者其他江浙方言
- ☐ 山西话或者其他山西方言
- ☐ 西南官话（如：桂柳话、四川话、湖北话等）
- ☐ 其他

28. 在玉林不同地方你会使用哪种语言。 [矩阵多选题] *

	普通话	玉林话	其他方言/语言
在家	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
在学校	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
在工作场合	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
在菜市	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
在公共汽车	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
在医院	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
在政府机关或办事处	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

29. 您的年龄 [单选题] *

- ☐ 19 岁及 19 岁以下
- ☐ 20-29 岁
- ☐ 30-39 岁
- ☐ 40-49 岁
- ☐ 50-59 岁
- ☐ 60-69 岁
- ☐ 70 岁以上

30. 您的性别 [单选题] *

- ☐ 男
- ☐ 女

31. 您的出生地 [单选题] *

- ☐ 玉州区
- ☐ 福绵区
- ☐ 容县
- ☐ 北流
- ☐ 陆川
- ☐ 博白
- ☐ 兴业
- ☐ 其他城市

32. 您的学历 [单选题] *

- ☐ 高中及以下
- ☐ 大专
- ☐ 本科
- ☐ 研究生及以上

33. 您现在的长居地 [单选题] *

- ☐ 玉州区
- ☐ 福绵区
- ☐ 容县
- ☐ 北流
- ☐ 陆川
- ☐ 博白
- ☐ 兴业
- ☐ 其他城市

34. 您现在的职业 [单选题] *

- ☐ 学生
- ☐ 白领（如：公务员、职员、教师、法律行业从业者、医护人员、金融行业从业者、会计、行政、设计、新闻行业从业者等）
- ☐ 蓝领（如：工人、操作员、装修工、各类民生水电设施的维护人员等）
- ☐ 个体户/企业家/创业者
- ☐ 农民
- ☐ 家庭主妇/家庭主夫
- ☐ 退休人员

Appendix 3

Guiding questions for semi-structured interviews

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Hu Wenmin, and I am currently pursuing my doctoral studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poland. My research focuses on investigating linguistic attitudes of the Yulin people towards the Yulin dialect. This study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions and opinions held by the Yulin community regarding their native language.

I am reaching out to invite you to participate in this research through a confidential interview. Your insights and personal experiences are invaluable to the success of this study, and I assure you that your identity will remain completely anonymous throughout the research process. Any of the information referring to you personally will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and will never be disclosed to the public.

To facilitate the organization and analysis of the data collected during the interview, I kindly request your permission to record our conversation. However, if you are not comfortable with audio recording, I am equally open to capturing the content in a written transcript format. Rest assured that both the recording and transcript will be used solely for research analysis, summarization, and organization, with no intention of public disclosure. If you would like to read and confirm my transcript of this interview, I will send it to you after I have finished organizing the text. Your feedback on the accuracy and context of the transcript will be greatly appreciated.

It is important to note that you retain the right to withdraw from the interview at any time, without the need for justification. Additionally, you may decline to answer any questions that you find uncomfortable, and you have the authority to terminate the recording and interview at your discretion. Your comments on the study are welcomed after the interview, and you have the autonomy to decide to withdraw from the study at its conclusion.

I sincerely appreciate your willingness to contribute to this research, and your participation will undoubtedly enhance the depth and quality of the study. If you have any inquiries or require further clarification, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you once again for considering participation in this study.

Basic information

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. Where is your place of living?
4. What is your occupation?
5. What is your education level?
6. Are you born in Yulin?

If not born in Yulin, where is your hometown? And when did you move to Yulin?

Language use

7. Do you speak the Yulin dialect? Would you like to start today's interview in the Yulin dialect or Putonghua?
8. How did you learn the Yulin dialect? (If the respondent does not speak the Yulin dialect then skip this question)
9. Do you like speaking the Yulin dialect?
10. May you list the language varieties you speak? Which one do you speak the best?
11. Which language varieties do you use at home?
12. Which language varieties do you use at school?
13. Which language varieties do you use at work?
14. Which language varieties do you use when shopping?
15. Which language varieties do you use when communicating with your male friends?
What about female friends?
16. Do your relatives speak the Yulin dialect? How well do they speak it?
17. Does your father more willing to speak the Yulin dialect or your mother?
18. Do you have child / children?
(If yes) Do you speak the Yulin dialect with your child / children?
(If not) Do you want him / her to learn the Yulin dialect in the future?
19. Do you watch TV programs or videos in the Yulin dialect?
20. Do you read internet posts / tweets / web articles written in the Yulin dialect?
21. Will you type the Yulin word to communicate with friends on WeChat or QQ (Two of China's most famous apps)?
22. Have you ever been to a Yulin "mokŋəu hi" (traditional puppetry)? Or other traditional programs perform in the Yulin dialect?

Expectation

23. Do you think the Yulin dialect is valued by locals?
24. What do you think about the future development of the Yulin dialect?
25. Do you think there is a need to provide courses or video courses to teach the Yulin dialect?

Appendix 4

半结构式访谈提纲

亲爱的先生/女士，您好：

本人胡文敏目前正在波兰亚当密茨凯维奇大学中文系就读博士。目前，我正在写关于玉林人对玉林话的语言态度的论文，为了更好地了解玉林人对玉林话的态度，我恳请您进行此次访谈，说说您个人的经验与真实看法，以协助本研究进行。本访谈是匿名的，您的个人信息绝不会对外泄露，请您放心。

为了访谈后对资料进行整理与分析，我希望您能同意我对我们的对话进行录音。如果您不同意录音，对话内容将以笔录的方式记录，录音或笔录内容仅作为研究者分析资料以及归纳整理之用，绝不对外泄露。如果您想阅读、确认我对本次访谈的记录内容，我会在整理完文字资料后发给您。如果您能对笔录的准确性和上下文提出反馈意见，我将不胜感激。

访谈期间，您有权力选择退出，且不用告知原因。访谈过程中，面对不想回答的问题也可以拒绝回答，也有权力随时终止录音以及访谈的进行。访谈结束后，如果您对本研究有任何意见，也随时欢迎提供，同时，您也有权在访谈结束后决定退出研究。我衷心感谢您愿意为本研究做出贡献，您的参与无疑将提高本研究的深度和质量。如果您有任何疑问或需要进一步说明，请随时与我联系。

再次感谢您参与本研究。

亚当密茨凯维奇大学中文系 胡文敏

基本情况

- 1.年龄
- 2.性别
- 3.居住地
- 4.职业
- 5.教育水平
- 6.是否出生在玉林。

如果非出生在玉林，那您老家是哪里的？什么时候移居到玉林的？

语言使用情况

- 7.您会说玉林话吗？您想用玉林话还是普通话开始今天的访谈？

（如果选择普通话，那么提问：为什么不想用玉林话开始今天的访谈呢）

- 8.你是怎么学会玉林话的呢？

- 9.你喜欢说玉林话吗?
- 10.您会说几种语言? 哪种说得最好?
- 11.您在家里会用到哪几种语言?
- 12.您在学校会用到哪几种语言?
13. 您在工作中会用到哪几种语言?
- 14.您在购物中会用到哪几种语言?
- 15.您在和男性朋友沟通时会用到哪几种语言? 女性朋友呢?
- 16.你的亲人说玉林话吗? 说得怎么样?
- 17.你爸爸比较爱说玉林话还是妈妈比较爱说玉林话?
- 18.您有孩子吗?
(有) 您会跟孩子说玉林话吗?
(没有) 希望他将来学玉林话吗?
- 19.您平时会看玉林话的电视节目或者网络视频吗?
- 20.您会阅读用玉林话来写的网络文字吗?
- 21.您用微信或者 QQ 和朋友交流时会打玉林字吗?
- 22.您听过玉林话的“木鬼戏”吗? 或者是其他用玉林话表演的传统节目?

展望

- 23.你觉得玉林话被重视吗?
- 24.你觉得玉林话将来发展前景怎么样?
- 25.你觉得有必要开设一些教玉林话的课程或者视频课程吗?

Abstract

Yulinese, a sub-dialect of Cantonese, is spoken mainly in the Yuzhou and Fumian districts of Yulin City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. As Putonghua is heavily promoted in China, will it influence the use of Yulinese? What are the attitudes of Yulin residents towards it, and what are the factors that influence respondents' attitudes?

To explore these questions, I conducted a survey with 393 valid responses, using statistical analyses such as mean, standard deviation, PCA and cluster analysis. I also interviewed 24 Yulinese speakers of different ages to gain deeper insights. The main findings are:

Respondents over the age of 40 show higher proficiency in Yulinese due to its regular use in school and family communication. In contrast, those under the age of 39 have lower levels of proficiency because Putonghua predominates in schools, limiting their opportunities to learn Yulinese. Family language policy also influence the transmission of Yulinese, with parents more likely to use Putonghua at home, younger respondents has less opportunities to use Yulinese. In addition, respondents show preference of using Putonghua in formal settings, while Yulinese is mainly used in informal, social contexts. This reflects the fact that respondents perceive Putonghua as high variety and Yulinese as low variety.

The use of Yulinese is influenced by factors such as gender, age, level of education and place of birth, i.e. men are more likely to use Yulinese than women; older respondents are more likely to use it; those with higher levels of education are more likely to use Putonghua; and those born in Yulinese areas are more likely to use Yulinese than those born in non-Yulinese areas.

Respondents' attitudes towards Yulinese can be divided into four types: Yulinese enthusiasts, Functionalists, Externally influenced users, and Yulinese detractors. Yulinese enthusiasts value Yulinese both emotionally and practically, feel comfortable using it, and receive encouragement from their social circles. Functionalists recognise only the practical value of Yulinese, feel nervous about using it, and lack encouragement from peers. Externally influenced users see minimal practical value in Yulinese, feel nervous about using it, but receive encouragement from friends and family. Yulinese detractors have feel no emotional attachment to Yulinese and don't consider it as useful, feel anxious about using Yulinese, and have no encouragement from others to use it.

Respondents' attitudes towards Yulinese are influence by factors such as gender, age, childhood language and place of birth. Men are more likely to be Yulinese enthusiasts and

women are more likely to be Yulinese detractors; respondents aged over 40 are mainly Yulinese enthusiasts, while respondents aged 30-39 have mixed attitudes, those aged 20-29 are mainly detractors, and those aged 19 and below are mainly functionalists; Respondents who learned Yulinese in childhood generally have positive attitudes towards Yulinese, but my research also shows that learning Putonghua in childhood does not affect respondents' attitudes towards Yulinese; finally, respondents from Yulinese speaking areas tend to be enthusiasts, while those from non-Yulinese speaking areas tend to be detractors.

Streszczenie

Yulinese, subdialekt języka kantońskiego, jest używany głównie w dzielnicach Yuzhou i Fumian miasta Yulin w Autonomicznym Regionie Guangxi Zhuang. Ponieważ język putonghua jest mocno promowany w Chinach, czy wpłynie to na używanie języka yulinese? Jakie są postawy mieszkańców Yulin wobec tego języka i jakie czynniki wpływają na postawy respondentów? Aby zbadać te pytania, przeprowadziłem ankietę z 393 ważnymi odpowiedziami, wykorzystując analizy statystyczne, takie jak średnia, odchylenie standardowe, PCA i analiza skupień. Przeprowadziłem również wywiady z 24 osobami posługującymi się językiem julińskim w różnym wieku, aby uzyskać głębszy wgląd. Główne wnioski są następujące:

Respondenci w wieku powyżej 40 lat wykazują wyższą biegłość w języku julińskim ze względu na jego regularne używanie w szkole i komunikacji rodzinnej. Natomiast osoby w wieku poniżej 39 lat mają niższy poziom biegłości, ponieważ w szkołach dominuje język putonghua, co ogranicza ich możliwości nauki języka julijskiego. Rodzinna polityka językowa również wpływa na przekazywanie języka julijskiego, ponieważ rodzice częściej używają języka putonghua w domu, a młodszy respondenci mają mniejsze możliwości używania języka julijskiego. Ponadto respondenci preferują używanie języka putonghua w sytuacjach formalnych, podczas gdy język juliński jest używany głównie w nieformalnych kontekstach społecznych. Odzwierciedla to fakt, że respondenci postrzegają język putonghua jako wysoce urozmaicony, a język juliński jako mało urozmaicony.

Na używanie języka Yulinese mają wpływ takie czynniki jak płeć, wiek, poziom wykształcenia i miejsce urodzenia, tj. mężczyźni częściej używają języka Yulinese niż kobiety; starsi respondenci częściej go używają; osoby z wyższym poziomem wykształcenia częściej używają języka Putonghua; a osoby urodzone na obszarach Yulinese częściej używają języka Yulinese niż osoby urodzone na obszarach innych niż Yulinese.

Postawy respondentów wobec języka Yulinese można podzielić na cztery typy: Entuzjastów języka Yulinese, Funkcjonalistów, Użytkowników pod wpływem zewnętrznym i Krytyków języka Yulinese. Entuzjaści języka Yulinese cenią go zarówno pod względem emocjonalnym, jak i praktycznym, czują się komfortowo w jego używaniu i otrzymują zachętę od swoich kręgów społecznych. Funkcjonaści uznają tylko praktyczną wartość Yulinese, czują się zdenerwowani jego używaniem i brakuje im zachęty ze strony rówieśników. Użytkownicy pod wpływem zewnętrznym dostrzegają minimalną wartość praktyczną języka Yulinese, denerwują się jego używaniem, ale otrzymują zachętę od przyjaciół i rodziny.

Krytycy Yulinese nie czują emocjonalnego przywiązania do Yulinese i nie uważają go za użyteczny, czują niepokój przed używaniem Yulinese i nie mają zachęty ze strony innych do korzystania z niego.

Na stosunek respondentów do języka Yulinese mają wpływ takie czynniki jak płeć, wiek, język dzieciństwa i miejsce urodzenia. Mężczyźni częściej są entuzjastami języka Yulinese, a kobiety częściej są jego przeciwnikami; respondenci w wieku powyżej 40 lat są głównie entuzjastami języka Yulinese, podczas gdy respondenci w wieku 30-39 lat mają mieszane postawy, osoby w wieku 20-29 lat są głównie przeciwnikami, a osoby w wieku 19 lat i młodsze są głównie funkcjonalistami; Respondenci, którzy uczyli się języka Yulinese w dzieciństwie, mają ogólnie pozytywne nastawienie do języka Yulinese, ale moje badania pokazują również, że nauka języka Putonghua w dzieciństwie nie wpływa na nastawienie respondentów do języka Yulinese; wreszcie, respondenci z obszarów mówiących po julijsku są zazwyczaj entuzjastami, podczas gdy ci z obszarów nie mówiących po julijsku są raczej krytykami.