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# **Commodification of the Chinese Language: Investigating language ideology in the Irish media**

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## **Bio-note**

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## **Commodification of the Chinese Language: Investigating language ideology in the Irish media**

Despite the growing importance of Chinese in many contexts, the ideological orientations towards the Chinese language and its speakers embedded in the wider socio-political context remain under-researched. This study intends to bridge this gap by interpreting media representations of ‘Chinese’ in Irish print media. A combination of corpus linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis was employed in the study. Informed by Ruíz’s (1984) metaphorical representations of language, 85 valid news articles retrieved from the major Irish newspapers (2010-2018) were analysed. The results of analysis suggest that Irish media discourse focuses on highlighting the instrumental value of the Chinese language, promoting standard Chinese and marginalizing the Irish Chinese diaspora community. It can be argued that a community-oriented approach to promoting the learning and teaching of Chinese may help create a positive synergy between heritage language maintenance and recognition of the Chinese language as a valuable resource. This study will have implications for the wider discussion of language ideology and language planning with regard to modern language learning and heritage language maintenance.

Keywords: language ideology, commodification, the Chinese language, heritage language maintenance, media discourse analysis, CDA

### **Introduction**

The beliefs (attitude or ideology) of a language which are associated with ‘the values or statuses assigned to named languages, varieties and features’ is believed to be most significant for language policy and management (Spolsky, 2009, p. 6). Relevant beliefs underlying policy help to shape the development and implementation of relevant language policies by ‘defining implementational spaces for various agents that operate within them when implementing policies’ (Shen & Gao, 2019, p. 2; also see X. Gao, 2017; Gao & Shao, 2018; Shao & Gao, 2019). In other words, the interpretation and implementation of national language policies depends on the wider ideological beliefs of

a society (Hult, 2017; Hult & Hornberger, 2016). Language policies also have an impact on the wider ideological beliefs of a society, since they ‘determine what is thinkable about language in society’ (Ruíz, 1984, p. 16). Therefore, it is important to conduct further research on the ideological constructions of languages promoted in public space through the mass media, in order to understand how they interact with the development and implementation of language policies. In the Irish context, the implementation of the newly developed Irish foreign language strategy regarding the promotion of Chinese language demands that scholars and educators undertake critical examinations of the ideologies embedded in the Irish Foreign language strategy and the wider socio-political context.

The Department of Education and Skills launched the Languages Connect - Ireland’s Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026 (Department of Education and Skills, 2017). As part of the ten-year Foreign Language Strategy, the Chinese language (i.e. standard Chinese) is now to be added to the Leaving Certificate curriculum (a two-year senior cycle programme that prepares students for higher education and employment) by 2020. It is also noted that Chinese government agencies endeavour to project soft power through the promotion of Chinese language and culture globally (Li, 2019). For instance, Confucius Institutes (CIs) are used as the primary tool for promoting China’s soft power (Gong, Gao & Lyu, n.d.; Zhou & Luk, 2016). By the end of 2011, 861 CIs and Confucius classrooms (in secondary schools) have been set up in 105 countries and regions worldwide (Wang & Adamson, 2015). In Ireland, two CIs were established around 2007, in conjunction with University College Cork and University College Dublin separately.

Despite all the intensive efforts (including the establishment of the CI project) made by the Chinese government, few studies have explored the ideological constructions

of the Chinese language and its speakers in different contexts, including the Irish one. Thus, this paper addresses the following question:

How the Chinese language and language speakers are ideologically constructed in the Irish mass media?

### **Language ideologies and media discourse**

Situated in specific social, historic, and political contexts, language ideologies are turned into practice by the dominant group through language policies, and specifically through language-in-education policy (Reinhilde & Piet Van, 2014). Language policy is utilized to legitimize certain ideological preferences about language, though it is ‘rather about people and about the sites where underlying language ideologies are constructed, reproduced and challenged, including the media’ (Reinhilde & Piet Van 2014, p. 29; Hornor, 2011). Language ideologies are a ‘ubiquitous set of diverse beliefs, however implicit or explicit they may be, used by speakers of all types as models for constructing linguistic evaluations and engaging in communicative activity’ (Kroskrity, 2004, pp. 496-497). Therefore, language ideologies can be discursively constructed by people from all walks of life who engage with a multiplicity of discourses (for example, TV commercials, newspaper, magazines) and share those ideological talks with their acquaintances (Kobayashi, 2015; Gao & Shao, 2018; Shao & Gao, 2019).

Among the variety of ways to classify different ideological constructions of languages, this paper draws on Ruíz’s (1984) metaphorical representations of language as ‘problem’, ‘right’ and ‘resource’ as the theoretical framework to guide the analysis. From the language as problem perspective, the lack of competence in the dominant majority language is seen as a deficit or disadvantage. The language as problem orientation perceives linguistic diversity as ‘a threat to national unity’, which is in favour

of the development and assimilation of the dominant majority language (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 34). Meanwhile, the language-as-rights orientation is associated with the human and civil rights of the minority group to use and maintain their heritage language (Ricento, 2005; Ruíz, 1984). The language-as-resource portrays language as ‘a resource to be managed, developed and conserved’ (Ruíz, 1984, p. 28). The subordinate languages are perceived as individual and social assets instead of problems or deficits. Consequently, a language is ideologized as a marketable commodity and valued based on the extent to which it can be marketized, which can be described as the commodification of languages. The terms ‘language-as-resource’ ‘language as instrument’ and ‘language as commodity’ are used interchangeably by researchers (Heller, 2010; Ricento, 2005) to discuss this commodification of languages. Languages and language varieties are seen as other tradeable commodities, which have ‘an economic exchange value’ (Cameron, 2012, p. 352) in the linguistic market. Similarly, ‘language maintenance is only beneficial if it also serves the needs of the nation’ (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 40).

In the globalized economy, the commodification of language has received increased attention from various researchers (Tan & Rubdy, 2008; Heller, 2003, 2010; Cameron, 2005; Petrovic, 2019; Guo & Shen, 2019). Relevant studies (such as Heller, 2003; Leeman & Martínez, 2007) indicate the shifting conceptions of language as a marketable commodity on its own, away from the understanding of language as a marker of ethnonational identity. Analysis of the commodification of language is mainly illustrated in the economic spaces of tourism, marketing (Blommaert, 2009), language teaching, translation, communications (especially call centres) (Heller, Pujolar & Duchene, 2014), and performance art (Heller, 2010). Two ways in which the globalized new economy has resulted in the commodification of language are summarized by Heller (2003, 2010). Language is commodified as a technical, universally available skill,

standardized and invented for industrialization, for example in the call centre industry (Duchêne, 2009; Heller, 2003). The other way is through commodifying authenticity, which serves as a means for niche marketing and localization dimensions of globalization (Heller, 2003, 2010; Kelly-Holmes, 2000, 2005).

The language orientations can be employed to guide deductive analysis about the values that are embedded in messy policy debate and negotiation to help foster understandings of ‘what is thinkable about language in society’ (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 43). According to Hult and Hornberger (2016), the notion of orientation proposed by Ruíz (1984) is believed to be compatible with the concept of discourse made by Gee (1999, p. 13). Ruíz (1984) clarifies that ‘orientation’ refers to a ‘complex of dispositions toward language and its role, and toward languages and their role in society’ (p. 16). Discourse is defined as the way that language relates to ‘ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, believing, and using symbols, tools, and objects...[in order to] give the material world certain meanings, distribute social goods in a certain way, make certain sorts of meaning connections in our experience, and privilege certain symbol systems and ways of knowing over others’ (Gee, 1999, p. 13).

Media discourse is perceived as a powerful ideological mediator since it acts ‘as a resource from which individuals can draw speech patterns and the cultural capital with which they are linked’ (Popp, 2016, p. 345). As Hill (2007) puts it, ‘media discourse, with its privileged penetrating powers, is a crucial part of the representation economy in which we all live’ (p.138). However, the potential role of media in misleading people’s understanding of languages is also highlighted (Heller, 1999; Wolfram, 1998). Therefore, media acts as one of the important language policy mechanisms (Shohamy, 2006, p. 45), which has the potential to ‘mediate ideology and practice’ like other covert forms of language policy, including language-in-education policy and language testing (Hornor,

2011, p. 28). Researchers (such as Blackledge, 2002; Kelly-Holmes & Milani, 2011) call for scrutinizing the language of media elites in order to fully understand ‘the ways in which hegemonic ideologies are constantly constructed and reconstructed in public discourses’ (Blackledge, 2002, p. 89).

It must be noted that the majority of studies carried out on the commodification of language focus on the commodification of native varieties of English (e.g. Tan & Rubdy, 2008; Rahman, 2009; Cowie, 2010; Lorente, 2010, 2012) and the commodification of Standard French (Heller, 1999, 2003; Roy, 2003; Boutet, 2012). For the commodification of the Chinese language and its varieties, only a few research studies (Teo, 2015; Wee, 2003; Duff et al. 2015) have been carried out. For example, Teo (2015) and Wee (2003) focused on the commodification of Chinese in the Singapore context as a result of the Speak Mandarin Campaigns (SMC) initiated by the government. Sharma (2018) highlighted the power, prestige and commodity value of Chinese in the context of Nepal’s tourism and related businesses. In the Chinese context, S. Gao (2017) focuses on the divergent ways that English and Chinese are commodified in the neoliberalization of the Chinese economy. S. Gao (2017) illustrates how the Chinese government adopted the logic of economic transaction to create a Chinese learning market worldwide by analysing the mass media coverage in mainland China. In English speaking countries such as Canada, the UK and USA, Duff *et al.* (2015) investigated changes in media constructions of Chinese language education, with a strong focus on how political ideologies embedded in the media discourse manipulate these changes. The shift from picturing Chinese primarily as a minority/heritage language to an important international language with economic values since 2004 were noted as an example of the ‘hype cycle’ of Chinese media coverage including hope, hype and fear (Duff et al. 2015). As far as the authors have noticed, no published research has been carried out which analyses social



context and discourses in which Chinese language education is embedded in the Irish context. For this reason, the ideological constructions of the Chinese language in the Irish media discourse deserve attention in research.

### **The study**

In order to explore the ideological constructions of the Chinese language in the Irish print media, a corpus-assisted Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used, as the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is perceived to be more fruitful and rigorous (Baker, Gabrielatos & McEnery, 2012; Leeman & Martínez, 2007). CDA is defined as ‘primarily studying the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context’ (Dijk, 2008, p. 352). CDA is often employed by social and educational researchers to explore, expose, intervene and ultimately resist the perceived abuse of power and social inequalities. The corpus analysis helps researchers to generate the initial focus in their data, and to enhance methodological rigor by counteracting the criticism that researchers within CDA selectively choose small amount of data to support pre-conceived ideologies (see Widdowson, 2004). Using large collections of electronically encoded data facilitated by computer software, such as AntConc, the corpus approach allows ‘the analysis be driven by whatever is frequent or salient in the data’ and can also ‘lets users to test pre-existing hypotheses’ (Baker et al., 2012, p. 260). Corpus-driven analysis of language in the media discourse allows for ‘the quantification of recurring linguistic features to substantiate qualitative insights as well as the qualification of quantified findings’ (O’Keeffe, 2006, p. 50).

In the study, an Irish Press Corpus was constructed, which includes 85 valid news articles with 5,6624 words retrieved from the major Irish newspaper agents (i.e. Irish

Examiner, Irish Daily Mail, Irish Independent and Irish Times) (see Table 1). The criteria for choosing the newspaper agent is its' circulation rate and popularity in Ireland. These four selected Irish press agents cover a cross-section of national, daily print and digital media 'representing a variety of outlooks on the political spectrum' (O'Regan & Riordan, 2018). Initially 89 news articles were gathered from the Lexis Nexis database (articles were identified with the refining keywords 'Chinese language' and 'Ireland') from 1/1/2010 to 01/10/2018. The year 2010 was chosen as a starting point for data collection, because this year marked the first official step taken by the Ministry of Education and Skills to pilot Chinese as a transition year unit in the Irish post-primary schools. Four identical newspapers are considered as invalid, therefore, there are 85 valid articles in this study.

The paper focuses on the contribution of corpus research to (critical) discourse analysis and, more specifically, on the collocational analysis of the word 'Chinese'. Collocations are frequent co-occurring choices and patterns, which can denote the salient ideas associated with a particular phenomenon. As Stubbs (2001) states, collocations are 'widely shared within a speech community' and are often 'nodes around which ideological battles are fought' (p. 35). By investigating the collocation profiles of the search term 'Chinese', we will provide attested evidence of salient discourse patterns, and consequently discourse prosodies surrounding the word Chinese in the Irish media discourse. The corpus toolkit AntConc (Anthony, 2014) is employed (also see Lei & Liu, 2019).

First, the collocation list of the search word 'Chinese' was generated based on the frequency. The function/grammatical words were excluded at the first step because the focus is on lexical items (Baker, 2006). In total, 365 types of collocate with 1622 words (token) were generated. The list of collocates was generated by using Manual Information

(MI) statistics and scored by frequency. The MI measures the collocation strength of the co-occurrence in the corpus. As Table 2 (see Appendix) illustrates, the top 30 most frequently occurring collocations reveal the dominant theme of the media's ideological constructions of Chinese language.

All 365 collocates were then manually coded and categorized into semantic groups in order to identify recurrent discourse patterns that surround the search term 'Chinese'. It is noted that some words can belong to more than one thematic category, depending on their use and meaning in the discourse by examining their concordance lines. As shown in Table 3 (see appendix), the main collocates that are associated with the search word 'Chinese' are listed. Following that, discourse analysis is employed to fully investigate how the media text portrays 'Chinese', and what the frequent associations of the word 'Chinese' are. This stage of our analysis is more qualitative, since the full article discourse rather than the concordance line is examined.

### **Ideological constructions of Chinese: Language commodification of Chinese in Irish press media discourse**

The findings that emerged from the above analysis reveal the language-as-resource orientation unpinning the ideological constructions of the Chinese language and its speakers, as well as the standardization of the Chinese language as a technical, universally available skill (Duchêne, 2009; Heller, 2003) invented for commerce and trade. In addition, the analysis identified the marginalization of the Chinese diaspora community as a result of the commodification of Chinese in Ireland (Hornberger, 2002; Hult & Hornberger, 2016).

### *Language-as-resource orientation*

It was found in the analysis that the Irish press media discourse contributes to the construction of the Chinese language as a resource (or commodity) of economic competitiveness in a globalized world. This falls into the ‘language - as- resource’ orientation based on the categorization of language planning ideology proposed by Ruíz (1984).

Language-as-recourse is often associated with a dominant state-driven social-political agenda, which claims to benefit the nation as a whole in areas including national security, trade and law enforcement (Ricento, 2005). In the Irish context, these results indicate that the growth of Irish trade and economy is set as the agenda behind the promotion of the Chinese language. In particular, the Irish education industry and Irish agriculture/food exports seem to be the focus of the Irish-China trade promotion based on the Irish press media. As shown in Table 3, Chinese is associated with words denoting its instrumental value, for example, students (36); business (12 in total; business with Chinese courses 9; Chinese economy 3); market (8); trade (4); economy (4); commerce(4); job (3); investment (2); beef (2). The word ‘Students’ has 36 concordance hits with 15 denoting Chinese students in Ireland. This reflects the Irish Government strategy to grow the economic value of international education by targeting the Chinese students in higher education. Similarly, the collocational words market (8), trade (4), economy (4), commerce (4) and investment (2) in the discourse all refer to the importance of the Chinese economy and market for Irish business sectors.

As illustrated above, the rationale for promoting the Chinese language is justified by the Irish press media by relating the language to potential economic growth and the market value of China. However, the ideological construction of ‘language-as-resource’ in serving particular socio-economic interests underscores the importance of the social-

political, culture and linguistic benefits of the language speakers in the Irish press discourse. As an example, “Amid vague talk about culture and mutual understanding, cold hard economics continually emerges as the key reason for learning Mandarin Chinese.” (The Irish Times, October 16, 2012 Tuesday; No.49).

The Chinese language is seen as valuable economic and social capital, which benefits Irish business and industries. The importance of the extrinsic value of language is highlighted over the intrinsic value of language (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 39; Ruíz, 1984). The findings in this study corroborate with those of Heller (2003) and Leeman and Martínez (2007) indicating the shifting conceptions of language as a marketable commodity on its own, away from the understanding of language being primarily a marker of ethnonational identity.

Apart from being emphasized as both social capital and resource, the recurrent themes in the Irish Press Discourse indicate that Chinese is being portrayed as an important professional skill and personal asset for career development. As described by the Irish examiner:

“Languages have become one of the core competencies that engineers need to have in their suite of skills,” said Mr Harney. He said that demand for Mandarin had been growing and in response Engineers Ireland decided to provide Chinese lessons for chartered engineers.” (Irish Examiner, February 25, 2012 Saturday; No.63).

Here, language ‘is seen as an important type of economic and social capital which can enhance their professional opportunities in a broad range of fields’ (Leeman & Martínez, 2007, p. 53). This is evident throughout the Irish media discourse. The frequent co-occurrence of the pattern of university degree courses in Business and Chinese in this discourse further indicates the growing commodification of Chinese in the education

industry and the ‘reconceptualization of a university education in recent years as career preparation’ for the labour market. (Leeman & Martínez, 2007, p. 53).

Last but not the least, languages are being valued and prioritized as commodities or resources based on their economic importance by the Irish press media, which means ‘the association between a language and its geopolitical importance will determine its relative market worth as a “resource” ’ (Ricento, 2005, p. 363). As reported by article No. 46, “Northern European countries, in particular, are ditching languages like German, French and Spanish in favour of Chinese” (The Irish Times, November 27, 2012 Tuesday; No. 46). This is explained by the article as follows:

“The growth of the Chinese economy and the enormous business potential to Ireland is far greater than that provided by countries such as France and Germany, whose languages are currently promoted by the post-primary Languages Initiative”. (Irish Independent, June 1, 2011 Wednesday; No. 68).

The ideology embedded in this discourse is the commodification of language, which seems to privilege economic rationales for developing and promoting ‘learning or speaking any given language or language variety’ (Leeman & Martínez, 2007). As illustrated in this study, Chinese language is perceived to be more valuable than French and German in the Irish education system due to its economic and geopolitical importance for Irish society. This kind of language hierarchy based on economic variables seems to conflict with the promotion of multilingualism and is problematic morally and ethically (Petrovic, 2005, p. 400; Ricento, 2005, p. 361). Concerns over this commodifying ideology will be illustrated in the Discussion section.

### ***The standardization of Chinese language***

‘Chinese’ is strongly associated with ‘Mandarin’ in the Irish media discourse, as can be seen by the fact that ‘Mandarin’ is listed as the top 10 most frequent collocates of the

search word ‘Chinese’ (see Table 2 in Appendix). As the standard language for the Chinese government, education and national official media, Mandarin is promoted by Irish government foreign language policies (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2016; Department of Education and Skills, 2017).

The choice of promoting Mandarin Chinese by the Irish press media and government language policy is an obvious indication of a movement towards the language commodification of Chinese in Ireland. As argued by Bourdieu (1991), competence in the legitimate language constitutes the most valuable linguistic capital on the standard linguistic market. Speakers have to possess and accumulate this kind of linguistic capital if they want to profit from the market. Standard language ideology often associates the standard language with prestige and authority. As illustrated by article No. 68 below, Mandarin has ‘privileged status as the official national language of mainland China’ (Teo, 2015, p. 123). More important is its increasing importance as a trade language because of China’s expanding economic market (Kuo & Jernudd, 2003).

“China has overtaken Germany as the world's largest exporter and is now the world's second-largest economy after the United States. Mandarin is the official language of China and, unsurprisingly, interest in learning the Chinese language has surged”. (Irish Independent, June 1, 2011 Wednesday; No. 68).

Following the recent trend of global capitalization and commodification of language, language teaching is increasingly packaged and delivered as a standardized product in the global corporatization of language teaching, selling standardized, marketable language products (e.g., ‘BBC English’, ‘Wall Street English’) (Mahboob & Lin, 2016). Intensive research has focused on the standardization of English language in the global context. In the modern English Language Teaching industry, the English language is treated as a highly valued commodity and a standardized set of knowledge

items and skills that can be passed on to students in the ‘transaction’ of language teaching (Cameron, 2012). Similarly, the promotion of the standard Chinese language is part of language commodification and possibly a necessary step in selling the language internationally as a global commodity. As discussed earlier, language is often commodified as a technical, universally available skill, standardized and invented for industrialization (Duchêne, 2009; Heller, 2003), commerce and trade. The promotion of Standard Chinese (Mandarin) ‘represents China’s attempt at establishing linguistic hegemony on the global stage, in particular via the establishment of CI worldwide’ (S. Gao 2017, p.35). As regulated by the Constitution and By-Laws of the CIs, ‘The Confucius Institutes conduct Chinese language instructions in Mandarin, using Standard Chinese Characters’ (Hanban, 2004, p. 2).

Unlike the established dominant status of English, a linguistic market for Chinese does not exist and cannot simply be formed on its own (S. Gao, 2017). S. Gao (2017) argues that the formation of a linguistic market for Chinese demand state intervention, which is the rationale for the foundation of the CIs by the Chinese government. Findings in this study provide further evidence for this argument. A point worth noticing is the frequent use of various terms to address the education agent Confucius Institute (CI) in the Irish press media. As shown in Table 3, the collocates Institute (15), Confucius (13), Hanban(6), Institutes (4), council(4), government(18) all refer to the Confucius Institutes. It is interesting to see the frequent media coverage of CIs in the Irish press media when discussing Chinese language teaching and learning. This provides evidence for the successful formation of a Chinese linguistic market by the Chinese government through the CIs in Ireland.

The Chinese government is commodifying the Chinese language through the CIs. S. Gao (2017) elaborates on how the ideology of language-as-commodity underpins the



conceptualization of the Chinese language through the provision of language textbooks, as well as through the implementation of Chinese language tests (HSK) initiated by Hanban. Confucius Institutes, as the instrument for Chinese language standardization and commodification by the government, have been criticized extensively as ‘a propaganda tool and a threat to academic freedom and the local community’ (Zhou & Luk, 2016, p. 628) in many countries, especially in the US. Surprisingly, findings reveal overall positive attitudes and representations of CIs in the Irish press media discourse (see Figure 1). Only three articles (No.17, No.22 and No.45) expressed concerns over the association of CIs with government propaganda and restricted academic freedom. 17 articles showed CIs in a positive perspective, acknowledging their efforts and contributions in providing free language resources and facilitating collaborations between Ireland and China. As argued earlier, soft power should be evaluated based on the receivers’ perceptions of the image and the political acceptance of the same (Breslin, 2011). It seems that the two CIs in Ireland have successfully fulfilled their function as a Chinese government soft power initiative, helping to create a standardized Chinese linguistic market and portraying a positive image and branding of themselves in the Irish media discourse.

### ***The marginalization of Chinese diaspora community***

Despite the popularity of the commodifying ideology of the Chinese language in the Irish context, the instrumental value of Chinese heritage language speakers and the Chinese diaspora in Ireland are overlooked by this resource-oriented ideology embedded in the media discourse. This study indicates that the Irish press media downplays the Chinese community, Chinese heritage speakers in Ireland and the socio-political dimensions of language acquisition.

The concordance analysis of the words used to describe the Chinese community in Ireland shows extremely low coverage of the Irish Chinese community. Only one news article reported on the Irish Chinese community. The concordance hits for ‘Chinese immigrant’ or ‘immigrant’ is 0. The concordance hits for ‘Chinese society’ is 3 with only 2 relevant discourses, referring to the Irish Chinese Society in Galway in one news article, No.6 (see Figure 2). There is only one concordance hit for ‘Chinese community’, denoting the same Chinese community in Galway shown in the same news article (No.6) as mentioned above.

The lack of the coverage of the Irish Chinese community in Irish media discourse indicates the marginalization of the Chinese diaspora group. As discussed earlier, the Language-as-resource orientation (Ruíz, 1984) underpins the ideological constructions of ‘Chinese’ in the Irish media discourse. Under this commodifying ideology, we would assume that the language skills of the Chinese heritage speakers and community will be recognized as a valuable asset in this resources discourse. On the contrary, data in this discourse indicates further marginalization of the Chinese heritage speakers and community. In order to investigate who are the implied learners of Chinese and what sort of learning is envisaged in the texts (new learning as L2 or continued learning), a concordance analysis of the search terms ‘learn/teach/student/study’ was carried out and the full articles were scrutinized. Table 4 (see Appendix) clearly indicates that the implied learners of Chinese in the Irish media discourse are non-Chinese Irish learners, who study Chinese as a new language, rather than heritage learners studying the language as continued learning. For example, the search term ‘learn’ appeared 103 times in the discourse of Chinese language learning. Detailed analysis of the concordance lines denotes that only four concordance hits refer to the learning Chinese as a heritage language. Most of the implied Chinese learners are Irish post-primary school students

studying Chinese as a ‘short-course’ or ‘leaving certificate’, as well as university students perusing business and Chinese combined degree programmes. As an example, “I note with interest that a new Transition Year module will provide Irish teenagers with the opportunity to learn Chinese language and culture.” (Irish Independent, May 7, 2012 Monday; No.58)

Further, Chinese heritage speakers are also marginalized by the Irish language policy. The Irish foreign language strategy (Department of Education and Skills, 2017) clearly states the implied learners of Chinese in the Irish education context are non-Chinese Irish and the learning envisaged is new learning of Chinese as L2, not continued learning. Chinese is highlighted as ‘a new language’ instead of a heritage language by the Irish foreign language strategy, as shown below:

“Introduce a curricular specification for new learners of Mandarin Chinese for Leaving Certificate and curricular specifications for heritage speakers for Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese. Irish foreign language strategy” (Department of Education and Skills, 2017, p. 6).

Researchers argue that one of the potential dangers of language-as-resource orientation is the further marginalization of heritage language speakers (Hornberger, 2002; Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Ruíz, 1984, p. 27). With the language-as-resource orientation (Ruíz, 1984) having gained currency in government language policies, the recent emphasis on globalization often portrays language as a world commodity available to all, rather than an entitlement of heritage and identity (Heller, 2010). Language learning is often linked to learners’ ethnocultural identity, reflecting ‘the predominance of ideologies that conceive of ethnocultural identity as embodied in language’ (Leeman, 2015, p. 100). The extremely low coverage of the Chinese diasporic community in the Irish press media regarding the teaching and learning of Chinese language and culture

further indicates the tendency of deemphasizing Chinese as a marker of ethnic identity linked to Chinese heritage learners' ancestral past in the Irish context, and reinforces the view that commodifies Chinese as a standardized, marketable universally available skill (Duchêne, 2009; Heller, 2003). Unfortunately, Chinese heritage speakers and learners are also overlooked by the Chinese government when promoting the Chinese language and culture overseas. When Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban) was set up to promote the Chinese language worldwide, Hanban failed to take the large number of overseas Chinese diaspora community into consideration; no official policy has been developed by Hanban to include ethnic Chinese learners in the Confucius Institutes and Classrooms (Zhu & Li, 2014). According to Zhu and Li (2014), the Chinese community in the UK are unhappy with this investment in the CIs (and the lack of support for their complementary schools) by the Chinese government. More importantly, they are concerned with the expansion of the standard Chinese at the cost of Cantonese, which used to be the lingua franca of the Chinese diaspora in the UK, and other dialects. As discussed earlier, the promotion of standard Chinese indicates the Chinese government endeavouring to establish linguistic hegemony globally (S. Gao, 2017). The Chinese government uses CIs mainly to create a global linguistic market to promote Chinese for its political influence; the interest of the Chinese diasporic community is not taken into consideration by the CIs.

Due to the lack of the attention and support from the Chinese government, Chinese heritage language maintenance is a major concern for the Chinese diaspora community (Zhu & Li, 2014). The Chinese community schools or complementary schools were set up by overseas Chinese communities. This kind of bottom-up heritage language maintenance is embedded with language-as-right orientation (Ruíz, 1984), which associates individuals and communities with their rights to 'use [their] languages in the

activities of communal life’ and ‘freedom from discrimination on the basis of language’ (Macías, 1979, p. 89). As illustrated in the article on the Irish Chinese society in Galway, the purpose for funding the society is to preserve the Chinese language and its culture:

“According to the Irish Chinese Society in Galway, there are an estimated 3,000 Chinese people in Galway. This Society was founded in 2011 by Mr Kam Chin, who set up the society to preserve Chinese language, culture and traditions among the local Chinese community in the West of Ireland”. (The Irish Times, January 27, 2017 Friday, No.6)

These complementary schools, which are self-funded and voluntarily organized by the diaspora community, provide space for immigrants and ethnic minorities to transmit their heritage language and culture and exercise their language rights (Francis, Li & Mau, 2009). The complementary schools cater for educational and social needs that are usually not available in mainstream schools. However, their contributions are not always acknowledged by mainstream schools and policy-making authorities (Gaiser & Hughes, 2015, p. 6; Hutchings & Matras, 2017; Kenner & Ruby, 2013). There are thirteen Chinese complementary schools with more than 1000 students in Ireland. The analysis of concordance hits for Chinese complementary schools in Ireland shows the neglect of Chinese complementary schools by the Irish press media. There are no concordance hits for ‘Chinese school’. The concordance hits for the commonly used alternative words for complementary schools ‘voluntary|community|complementary|supplementary|weekend school’ is 16. However, these are irrelevant to the Chinese complementary schools.

## **Discussion**

This study indicates the commodification of the Chinese language in the Irish social and political context, which seems to reflect the growing commodifying ideology of Chinese internationally. Researchers such as, Sharm (2018), Teo (2015), Wee (2003) and Duff *et*

*al.*(2015), highlight the commodification of Chinese in other international discourse about Chinese. As stated by Duff *et al.*(2015), there has been a shift from picturing Chinese primarily as a minority/heritage language to an important international language with economic values since 2004 in the context of Canada, the UK and USA. With Mandarin Chinese increasingly becoming a world language (Graddol, 2006), the commodification of Mandarin Chinese is an interesting aspect to explore. The economic value of the Chinese language is heavily emphasized by the Irish press media and the lack of presence of the Chinese community and speakers in Ireland is also identified. Findings in this research corroborate with those of researchers such as Heller (2010) and Ricento (2005), which indicate the tendency of language increasingly being ideologized as a marketable commodity, and the deemphasizing of language as a marker of ethnic identity linked to learners' ancestral past.

It is probably 'naive' to exclude economic considerations in language planning (Ruiz, 1984). However, it is believed that heritage language maintenance should go beyond the national and economic interests that language can generate, with recognition being paid to the intrinsic values of the language (Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Ruíz, 2010). Researchers have raised concerns over the commodification of language, which 'equates the value of learning or speaking any given language or language variety to its economic potential' (Leeman & Martínez, 2007, p. 59). The ideological construction of 'language-as-resource' to serve particular socio-economic interests undermines the importance of the social-political, culture and linguistic benefits of heritage speakers, which does not benefit long-term sustainable preservation of the heritage language. While the Chinese language is increasingly popular worldwide, it may not always be the case. For sustainable development of Chinese heritage language maintenance, the ideological construction of 'language-as-resource' is not sufficient. Moreover, if the presumed

monetary value of knowledge of Chinese does not correlate positively with economic personal gain, students are then left with no reason to keep learning Chinese. Further, the model of language worth being evaluated by its' economic or military value does not favour language variety and multilingualism; 'language maintenance is only beneficial if it also serves the needs of the nation' (Hult & Hornberger, 2016, p. 39). Language-as-resource is a solution for the maintenance of a heritage language if it also serves the 'capitalistic and materialistic wants of the dominant group' (Petrovic, 2005, p. 404). In contrast, the language of the minority community will be further marginalized, which is not in accordance with fostering sustainable societal multilingualism and linguistic diversity. This kind of hierarchical relationships among speakers of different languages needs to be reassessed and adjusted.

In order to take a holistic view on multiple languages in relationship to one another in multilingual societies, it is proposed that the 'bi/multilingualism-as-resource orientation' (De Jong et al., 2016, p. 209; 2019) should be highlighted to extend and advance Ruíz (1984) 'language-as-resource' orientation. Language-as-resource orientation emphasises proficiency in one language (minority, regional or international language) that becomes a resource for economic, social and political access, while 'bi/multilingualism-as-resource orientation' intends to broaden the focus from one language to the notion of multilingualism as a resource. Different languages can be positioned as different types of resources by different groups in society. Instead of weighing one language against another, the multilingualism-as-a resource orientation encourages the cooperative, inclusive policies and practices in language planning and education (De Jong et al., 2016). In the Irish social and political context, promoting multilingualism-as-a resource might help the inclusion of Chinese heritage speakers and the Chinese diaspora in language policy making and education practice.

Additionally, the Chinese complementary schools and diaspora community in Ireland have received relatively little attention from the Irish media discourse and the Chinese government. The marginalization of heritage language speakers is a consequence of the growing commodification of Chinese as a foreign or modern language (Hornberger, 2002; Hult & Hornberger, 2016). However, it is believed that there might be a possibility to create a positive synergy between the commodification of the Chinese language and heritage language maintenance. Researchers (Hutchings & Matras, 2017; Maylor, 2010) have emphasized the important role language minority community and other language education actors (for example, complementary schools) can play in promoting foreign language teaching. Language policy researchers have long been calling for a bridging of the gap between top-down and bottom-up language policies and for a more holistic approach and less binary view of the process (Kelly-Holmes, Moriarty & Pietikäinen, 2009; McCarty, 2011; Shohamy, 2006). Complementary schools are generally seen as an example of bottom-up or grassroots language policy; while national foreign language policy is seen as top-down (Hancock, 2014). In general, these do not meet, something which researchers (e.g. Hutchings & Matras, 2017; Maylor, 2010) have criticized. Hutchings and Matras (2017) have argued that foreign language teaching should embrace community languages, and that universities and other language education actors should build close partnerships with their multilingual communities.

Following from that, many studies have been carried out to investigate the integration of community-based learning into the language learning curriculum, and have demonstrated the success of such courses (O'Connor, 2012; Polansky, 2004). Community-based language learning can not only enhance language acquisition, but also increase intercultural awareness and understanding (Jouët-Pastré & Braga, 2005; Weldon & Trautmann, 2003). Under the new 10-year foreign language strategy in Ireland, it



would seem that this may be a situation where bottom-up heritage language maintenance and top-down government foreign language strategy could meet and create synergy. The potential role that the language minority community and other language education actors (for example the complementary school) can play in promoting foreign language education has to be emphasized (Hutchings & Matras, 2017; Maylor, 2010).

### **Conclusion and implications**

This paper focused on analyzing ideologies embedded in the mainstream Irish media; the growing commodification ideology towards the Chinese language and its speakers is identified. It intends to draw further attention to the Chinese diaspora community for sustainable language preservation and maintenance of that community.

The ideological constructions in wider society mediate the interpretation and implementation of national language policies (Hult, 2017; Hult & Hornberger, 2016; Shen & Gao, 2019). Interestingly, the results in this study indicate that ideological constructions of Chinese in the Irish media context are in accordance with that of the newly developed Irish foreign language strategy regarding the promotion of Chinese language. Both highlight the increasing economic value of the Chinese language, and both promote learning Chinese among non-Chinese Irish as a foreign language. It is argued that more efforts should be made to facilitate the language maintenance of the heritage speakers by various agents including the CIs in Ireland. For the Chinese government, the attempt at establishing linguistic hegemony on the global stage does not contradict efforts to support Chinese heritage language maintenance overseas. In fact, there is a potential role that language minority community and the complementary school can play in promoting Chinese as a foreign language globally (Hutchings & Matras, 2017; Maylor, 2010). Complementary schools can be used as another instrumental space to create and consolidate the linguistic market, especially in countries where CIs are

unwelcome due to political concerns. Such efforts help to create a positive synergy between the community-based resource and the government educational agents to help create community-based learning and a more inclusive, multilingual society.

To bridge the gap between top-down government-initiated language policy and bottom-up community language maintenance, there is a need to further investigate how language ideology is constructed at community level. Language ideologies reflected in the discourse of the Chinese immigrant community would be a very interesting topic to further explore views on the commodification of the Chinese language. In addition, it would be interesting to further investigate whether the increasing awareness of the Chinese language and its culture in Irish language policy have any impact on the Chinese diasporic community towards their perceptions on the Chinese language.

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## Appendix

Table 1. The Irish press corpus (1/1/2010 - 01/10/2018).

Newspaper title	Frequency of publication	Type of publication	Circulation*	Articles	Words(token)
Irish Examiner	Daily	Broadsheet	30,090	9	4,044
Irish Daily Mail	Daily	Tabloid	41,149	14	11,578
Irish Independent	Daily	Compact	97,104	25	14,176
Irish Times	Daily	Broadsheet	66,251	37	26,826
<b>Total</b>				<b>85</b>	<b>56,624</b>

\*Note: The daily newspaper circulation for the second half of last year (July to December 2016) provided by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) at: <https://www.prii.ie/news/february-2017/newspaper-circulation-down,-despite-increases-in-digital-subscriptions.html> (retrieved on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2018)

Table 2. The top 30 most frequent collocates of ‘*Chinese*’ within a -5 to +5 span.

Collocate	Status (MI)	Frequency
Language	4.45759	115
Culture	5.50969	59
Year	3.63403	46
Students	3.38947	36
Irish	2.20756	27
Teaching	5.31154	25
Ireland	2.67264	25
Food	4.4344	21
Studies	4.69263	20
Mandarin	4.09653	20
Chinese	1.17346	20
Schools	3.44499	19
People	3.47504	18
Learning	4.23898	18
government	4.21201	18
Learn	4.425	17
Institute	3.1647	15
confucius	2.85355	13
education	2.51157	12
China	1.40465	12
Business	3.33754	12
Dublin	2.91655	11
Courses	3.30221	11

Table 3. The most frequent collocates of ‘Chinese’.

Themes	collocates
<b>Education system</b>	students(36 in total; Chinese student in Ireland 15; Irish uni student 10; Irish Secondary student 11); schools(19); Teaching(25); studies(20);learning(18); learn (16); Education(12); courses (11);ucc (10);ucd (3); international(9);commerce (3); Institute (15 confucious institute); confucius (13; CI); hanban(6); Institutes (4;Confucian Ins); council(4; hanban3; NCCA 1); government(18; Confucius institute-ucd 17;1 gender issue); ministry (4; Chinese ministry of Education);
<b>Foreign Language policy (short course; TY; leaving cert)</b>	subject(7; leavingcert 5;TY 1; module 1); leaving(7;leaving cert); cert (6; leaving cert); transition (5;TY);short(4; short course); council (4; hanban3; NCCA 1); School(6; Irish school 5; 1 uni school); schools(19; 2 Chinese schools; 2 British schools;15 Irish schools); languages (4); demand(4);interest (2); exams (2); exam(2); curriculum (2); spanish(4); japanese (2); arabic (2);french (3);russian(2); official(5; Chinese as UN official lang 3);
<b>Linguistic</b>	language(115); Mandarin(20); Chinese(20); characters(8); English(7); dialect (2);native(2)
<b>Cultural aspects</b>	culture(59);new (Chinese new years); year (46); years; festival; festivals(2; chinese new year); celebrations(Chinese new years); people (18; Irish people 2; Generic term, general people 2; People in China 11; Chinesepeoplein Ireland 3); Traditional(7); traditions; food(21); cuisine(5);restaurant(2); restaurant (3);
<b>Political aspects</b>	government(18); propaganda (2;hanban); authorities(5); president (6 xi and Wen); xi(5); state; politics(4); party(4;the communist party); communist(4);promote (4); website(2; sensor);webizen; japanese (1);
<b>Economic aspects</b>	students(36); business(12); market (8);understanding; trade (4); give(4); economy(4); commerce(4); website (1); job (3); investment (2); beef (2); enormous(2);
<b>Geographic:</b>	irish (27); ireland(25); dublin(11); galway (5); Cork(6);china(12); shanghai(4); Asia (4); capital(3); beijing (3); europe(2); european(3); American (4);
<b>Organization(localization and internalization):</b>	society(6); community (2); nationals (2);

Table 4. Who are the implied learners of Chinese and what sort of learning is envisaged in the texts?

Search term	Relevant total Concordance hits	Concordance hits on Non-Chinese/L2	Concordance hits on heritage learner/continued learning	Irrelevant Concordance hits
learn	103	99	4	6
teach	120	117	3	15
student	165	164	1	45
study	191	191	0	19

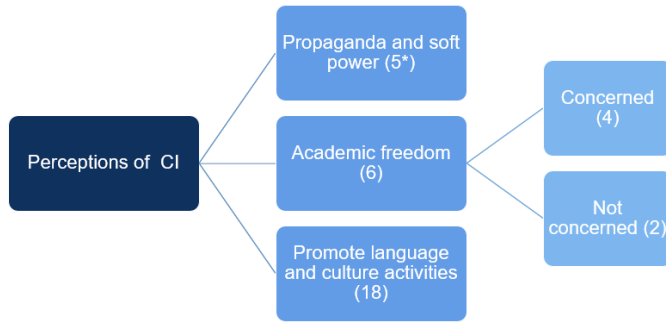


Figure 1. key themes associated with the CIs emerged in the Irish Press Corpus.

Concordance		
Concordance Plot	File View	Clusters/N-Grams Collocates Word List Keyword List
Concordance Hits 3		
Hit	KWIC	File
1	nfucius Institute in Cork. According to the Irish Chinese Society in Galway , there are an estimated 3,000 Chinese	6.txt
2	nd online marketing manager. This year, The Irish Chinese Society in Galway will hold their now annual	6.txt
3	, would be a milestone heralding a change in Chinese society s traditionally conservative attitude towards hom	75.txt

Figure 2. Concordance hit for ‘Chinese society’.