Generational differences in the use of and attitudes towards the *Wu fāngyán* in China

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Abstract

China, a traditional out-migration country, has undergone rapid internal migration over the past thirty years, which has created a generation with expanded linguistic repertoires. While at the societal level China has always been multilingual, at the individual level there is a tendency for Chinese citizens to be mono-dialectal with limited mobility. Urbanization and top-down societal, economic and language policies have served to create a multi-dialectal society. The understanding of language policy in this study includes management, ideology and practices, which are reflected in interviews with participants. Thirty-three structured interviews were conducted with speakers aged between 16-77 years in the Wu dialect region, about their use and attitudes towards their dialect (fāngyán). Translingual practices are evident among the younger generation, with Putonghua and English, and middle generation, with Putonghua and a fāngyán, and perhaps reflect these groups' mobility. In contrast, the older generation, with less mobility, tend to be restricted by their linguistic competence in the local fāngyán only. It was evident in the data that the middle generation tend to be more remorseful of the fāngyáns' decline and the potential emergent national monolingualism. The older generation are more sanguine about the decline of the fāngyáns, and the young generation do not indicate strong conviction towards language maintenance. Nevertheless, all groups believe that a fāngyán's relationship to cultural heritage should be reason enough for its survival.

Keywords: *language maintenance, Chinese fāngyán, language ideologies, language policy*

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1 Introduction

China has a complex linguistic ecology, which includes not only minority languages tied to recognised ethnic groups, but also regional varieties or *fāngyáns*, translated into 'dialect' in English, that do not have status as languages. In China there are 56 recognized ethnic minorities speaking over 290 different languages including Mongolian, Tibetan and Uyghur (Fang & Yao, 2024; Kurpaska, 2010; Shen & Gao, 2019). The largest ethnic group is *Han*, comprising around 92% of the Chinese population, and they speak one of the *Han* dialects. *Putonghua* (Mandarin), the most widely spoken of the *Han* dialects, is based on the Beijing variety and has been promoted as Standard Chinese (Kurpaska, 2010; Tsung, 2009; Wang & Yuan, 2013; Zhang, 2013). In addition, there are seven smaller *Han fāngyáns*: *Wu, Min, Xiang, Gan, Jin, Hakka* and *Yu*. The *fāngyán*s are unintelligible to each other, and even within each *fāngyán* there are degrees of intelligibility of between 50%-90%, and perhaps in some instances less (Francis, 2016; Mair, 2013). The *Wu fāngyán* is usually sub-divided into northern and Southern *Wu*, which can be further divided into 6 or 14 subgroups depending on the classification criteria (Tang, 2018), and then further divided according to the specific city, town or village (Wurm et al., 1987).

The status of the *fāngyán*s is low in China's linguistic ecology, as they are not afforded the same kind of protections and opportunities as minority languages are in local media and education. Consequently, *Wu*, which is the language form discussed in this paper, and the other Chinese *fāngyán*s are positioned lower than *Putonghua* and minority languages, despite there being significant linguistic differences, which could constitute status as separate languages (Chao, 1997; Erbaugh, 1995). Several authors have challenged the politically motivated perspective that *fāngyán*s are dialects, with the implication that they are derived from *Putonghua;* and instead they suggest that they should be considered as different but related languages (Baxter, 1992; Bruche-Schultz, 1997; Chao, 1997; DeFrancis, 1984; Dwyer, 1998; Wang, 1997). Mair (1991, 2013), suggesting the alternative term 'topolect', argues that part of the problem is the mistranslation of *fāngyán* into dialect, as *fāngyán*s could be mutually intelligible or not, and therefore have a wider scope of meaning than dialects (Cai & Eisenstein Ebsworth, 2018; Kurpaska, 2010). However, the status of linguistic classification in China remains unresolved (Zhang & Ren, 2024), with other researchers highlighting the linguistic similarities between the *fāngyán*s and *Putonghua*, the written script which has been unified for 2000 years, and also the uniqueness of China's linguistic environment (Erbaugh, 1995; Li, 2006; Tang, 2018; Tsung, 2009; Wong & Xiao, 2010).

In this paper we use the term *fāngyán* for both the broad linguistic continuum of *Wu fāngyán* and its sub-varieties attached to local cities/towns/villages because of the disputed nature of terms translated into English such as 'dialect' and 'topolect'. Applied linguistics has been primarily a western dominated field of research, located in western epistemological knowledge frames (Charity Hudley & Flores, 2022; Motha, 2020; Toohey & Smythe, 2022), and consequently using western derived terminology can be problematic when terms for language classifications are applied to non-western societies. Although we have chosen to use *fāngyán*, this requires a translingual practice of blending English with Chinese to pluralise *fāngyán* by adding 's', because in Chinese the word does not have a plural form.

China finds itself at a transitional stage of multilingualism through mobility and immobility. The older generation aged 60+ are characterised by their immobility, having remained in their local communities while translingual practices developed around them through urbanization (Chang et al., 2022; Zhu & Qian, 2021). In contrast, the middle generation, aged 30-60, are characterised by their national mobility and translingual practices with proficiency in *Putonghua* and the local *fāngyán*, and some with the ability to use English (Chang et al., 2022; Zhu & Qian, 2021). The younger generation, aged 16-30, are characterised by experiences outside China, *Putonghua* as their first language,

high communicative levels of English as a second language, and a range of competencies in the local *fāngyán* (Chang et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2018; Zhu & Qian, 2021). Therefore, translingual practices have emerged through (im)mobility, though these practices are different between the generations, which is evident in the participants' language attitudes and use during the interviews. The older generation have the weakest linguistic dexterity in *Putonghua*, and the younger generation are similarly weaker in the use of a local *fāngyán*, as China passes through a period of language shift. Increasingly there have been calls within China by individuals, academics and activists to protect *fāngyáns* and minority languages which 'constitute invaluable, non-renewable resources of intangible cultural heritage and serve as the bedrock of cultural diversity' (Wang, 2018; Xu et al., 2024, p. 2). Although there are several factors which have contributed to the decline of the *fāngyáns,* such as inter-provincial marriage, family language policy, and the lack of a written form, these factors tend to be a direct or indirect result of government language policy or urbanization.

2 Background

2.1 Language ideologies

Language attitude research has a long history, investigating multiple contexts, utilizing different methodologies and tending to draw on social-psychology models (Garrett, 2010). Irrespective of the context, methodology or language, the research overwhelmingly suggests that people favour the standard over the non-standard language (Garrett, 2010). However, as Blommaert (1999) observes, language attitudes have often been perceived as ones that people 'happen to have', without fully considering where these attitudes come from, and the importance of how societies regulate people's attitudes. Language ideologies consider how peoples' language attitudes and practices are influenced by ingrained societal or community beliefs which have become accepted as normal, correct and common sense (Blommaert, 1999; Cooke & Simpson, 2012). Where ideologies end and attitudes begin is difficult to disentangle, and while individuals believe that they are giving an independent opinion, they may instead unconsciously be giving one that is reproducing societal values. The most prominent language ideology in modern societies is the acceptance of a standard language as the correct and normal version of a language, with its explicit connection to national affiliation, identity and related ideologies such as monolingualism and native speakerism (Kroskrity, 2022; Milroy & Milroy, 2012).

Standard language ideologies tend to be a reflection of the elites' control of various institutions of power such as government, education and the media (McLelland, 2021; Milroy & Milroy, 2012; Woolard, 2020). However, they still coexist with other language ideologies and depending on the community may be in competition (Kroskrity, 2022; Woolard, 2020). Therefore, this may restrict a state's ability to impose language ideologies on groups, which may have their own pre-existing practices and beliefs which have developed over hundreds of years and are tied to religious or other cultural practices (Kroskrity, 2022). In China there is significant variation in language practices between different ethnic and social groups and 'differences of ideology within and between groups' (Spolsky, 2014, p. 175), presenting a challenge for successive Chinese governments to impose a unifying language ideology through state enforced language policies.

2.2 Language policy and language maintenance

Spolsky (2004, 2009) divides language policy into language management, language ideologies, and language practices. Practices are the everyday language use of individuals.

Language ideologies are societal beliefs about language which are seen as natural and common-sense and underpin people's language attitudes, while language management is the concerted effort by authorities to control language use. It is important to note that while there is a division between these contributory factors to the development of language policy in a society, as Spolsky (2004, 2009) argues, these aspects are interrelated.

One of the key language policies introduced by the Chinese government, which has had a direct impact on the survival of minority languages and *fāngyáns,* is the institution and promotion of *Putonghua* as the Standard language since 1949 (Li, 2006; Li, 2015; Spolsky, 2014; Tsung, 2009). One aim of this language policy was to nurture national identity among the Chinese people through sharing a common language and also enable intelligibility between speakers (Dwyer, 1998; Gao, 2017; Guo, 2004; Shen & Gao, 2019; Tsung, 2009; Zhou & Ross, 2004). Erbaugh (1995), Chen (1999) and Guo (2004) argue that there was no intention with this policy to eradicate *fāngyáns*, but instead to create domains of use for different languages and fāngyáns. This has been broadly successful in educational contexts, with Li (2015) noting that *Putonghua* is the predominant language for communication in schools.

However, M. Zhou (2012) asserts that the central government had an underlying intention, through its polices, to assimilate *fāngyán* and minority language speakers. If it was the intention of the government to eradicate the *fāngyáns*, then the policies that were introduced were only moderately successful. Tsung (2009) argues that there were insufficient resources dedicated to implement the polices to promote *Putonghua*. Moreover, as Spolsky (2009) notes, language policies which conflict with deep-seated language attitudes and practices may not be successful. This is evident in China with speakers demonstrating a strong attachment to their *fāngyán*, viewing non-speakers as outsiders (Erbaugh, 1995; Gong et al., 2011; Jiang et al., 2023), and in large cities, such as Guangdong and Shanghai, *Guangdonghua* and *Shanghainese* remain the first language of the majority of speakers, respectively (Miao & Li, 2006). Therefore, in certain regions and cities, the local *fāngyán* competes with *Putonghua* in terms of both speaker solidarity and social status (Zhao & Liu, 2021), indicating continued affiliation towards local languages.

While in China there remains a strong connection to 'the local', the influence of language policies to encourage an attachment to *Putonghua* as the Standard language and China as a unified country is evident. Among families that have migrated from rural areas to cities, a generational shift of language use from *fāngyán* to *Putonghua* would seem to be underway (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Liang, 2015; Shen, 2016; Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2021). Yang and Curdt-Christiansen (2021), investigating the family language policy of migrant families, note that parents have an expectation that their children will switch to *Putonghua*, as this indexes city life and is more versatile being utilized in most domains, in comparison to *fāngyáns* which index rural life and reflect shifting language ideologies in China. *Fāngyáns* are perceived as having little socioeconomic value in the modern world (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Li, 2006), and their discontinued use is seen as inconsequential and not essential for children to learn (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018).

While rural migrants to cities have tended to adopt a view that their transported family *fāngyán* has limited value, residents of in-migration cities have increasingly become more vocal about the 'dialect crisis' in their cities (Gao, 2015, 2017; Gao & Shao, 2018; Shen, 2016; Xia & Shen, 2019). This has seen an increase in the volume of regional and national newspapers voicing support for protecting Cantonese (Gao, 2015) and *Shanghainese* (Shen, 2016), despite tight controls of the media in China. Individual stakeholders are becoming more vocal about challenging government policy decisions (Shen, 2016; Shen & Gao, 2019; Xia & Shen, 2019), and consequently the 'recognition of diversity' by the central government is a result of 'grassroots resistance to the complete imposition of *Putonghua*' (Spolsky, 2014, p. 173). State media has gradually allowed businesses and citizens to voice opinions (Gao, 2015), which has led to a reformulation of government

policies that serve to preserve and document regional varieties and minority languages. *Fāngyáns* are positioned as a resource which helps preserve cultural diversity and is a further example of where language practices and ideologies can influence language policy at the management level.

These language ideologies are also evident in studies which have examined family language polices of *Teochew fāngyán* speakers, a branch of the *Min fāngyán* continuum (Fang & Yao, 2024; Huang & Fang, 2024). These studies found that while the participants felt a strong affiliation with *Teochew* and strived for intergenerational transmission, pressures from the implementation of *Putonghua* at the societal level impacted language practices in the home environment, to the extent that translingual practices were sanctioned by parents, impacting the younger generations' proficiency in *Teochew*, despite the grandparents predominantly communicating in *Teochew* (Fang & Yao, 2024; Huang & Fang, 2024). While government language polices have been important in promoting *Putonghua* as the national language in formal institutions of power, arguably, it is the rapid transformation of the Chinese economy and urbanization that has seen *Putonghua* gradually taking over the *fāngyáns'* domains of use.

2.3 Internal migration

China has undergone rapid internal migration over the past thirty years (Chang et al., 2022; Ma & Tang, 2020), occurring at a time of heightened social, economic and cultural globalization (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Zhou & Ross, 2004). This urbanization was facilitated by the relaxation of the *Hukou* system in the 1980s (Dong, 2009; Gong, 2024; Liang, 2016; Ma & Tang, 2020; Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2021; Zhao et al., 2018). The *Hukou* is a household registration system, established in 1958, to determine social service provision such as housing, health care, benefits and schooling, but tied rural people to their ancestral homes, as they would be unable to look for work in cities without this government support (Zhao et al., 2018).

It is difficult to calculate precise rural migration figures. Ma and Tang (2020) suggest a rural-to-urban migration figure of 340 million in 2005, Liang (2016) quote a figure of 221 million according to the 2010 national census, and Yang and Curdt-Christiansen (2021) point to a 2018 survey which indicated that rural migrant workers constituted around 250 million of China's urban workforce, while the National Bureau of Statistics puts the figure at 292 million in 2022 (Jiang et al., 2023). Part of the difficulty in gaining an accurate figure is being able to determine the extent to which the migration is transient, or the rural migrants settle permanently in the city (Gong, 2024; Liang, 2016; Zhao et al., 2018).

One of the designated special economic zones which encouraged migration is in the Yangtze River Delta which includes Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Shanghai (Liang, 2016), the provinces and cites where the *Wu fāngyán* is spoken. In Shanghai alone, according to the 2021 census, there were 10.48 million migrant workers, accounting for around 50% of the resident population (Gong, 2024). This migration has contributed to pressure on the sustainability of the local *fāngyáns*. For example, in Shanghai, Li (2015) notes in a survey conducted in 2004 that there were 357 migrant schools in Shanghai, educating 364,000 migrant children, meaning that there was a ratio of 2:5 migrant children to locally born children. This would correspond with a report in 2012 which highlighted that 40% of children in primary and secondary schools in Shanghai could not communicate in *Shanghainese* (Shen, 2016; H. Zhou, 2012). This rapid population change in the *Wu* speaking area is reflected in figure 1.
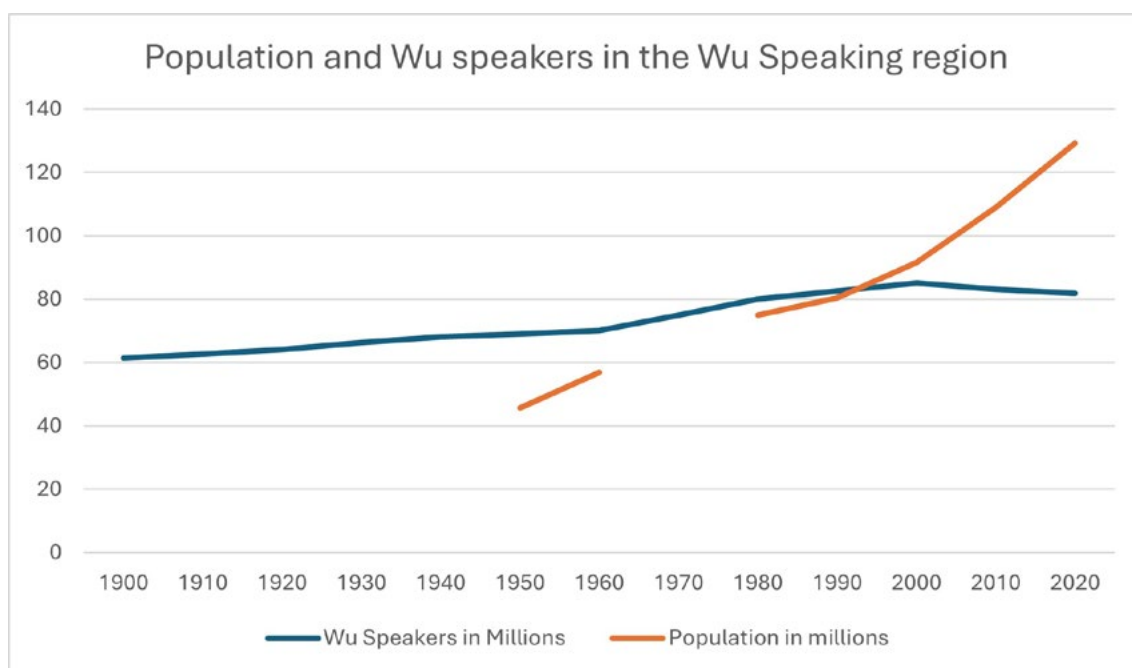
Figure 1.   *Wu-speaking Chinese population*

It can be noted in the graph that there is a gap in census data between 1964 and 1982, where no census was conducted. Moreover, until 1990 there was no consistency in the timing of the census, with censuses held in 1952, 1964, 1982, 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2020. The *Wu* speaking area is in the economically prosperous eastern region of China which includes Shanghai, Zhejiang, southern Jiangsu, and a small part of eastern Anhui. The lack of accurate data on the Chinese population, and even less so about languages, until the turn of the century, makes it difficult to give a precise assessment of the impact of urbanization on language. Statistics on population and languages in China are based on unreliable data and estimates until 2000, and Figure 1 is based on multiple data sources (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2023; Norman, 1988; Simons & Fennig, 2017; Statistics and data, 2021; Tang, 2018). This has also involved some extrapolation on our part in regard to the number of *Wu* speakers, given that that the census does not include questions related to *fāngyáns*, and that the *Wu fāngyán* is spread over four provinces. This includes most of Zhejiang province and the Shanghai prefecture, around 40% of Jiangsu, and around 5-10% of Anhui province. While noting that the data before 2000 was unreliable, what can be discerned is the change brought about by migration into this region from 1990-2020. The population of *Wu* speakers slowly increased after the Second World War and has only recently plateaued and declined in the last 20 years. In addition, the area of *Wu* speakers would seem to have contracted, with more *Wu* speakers than population between 1950-1990, in those regions currently identified as being in the *Wu* speaking regions. Due to internal migration, the percentage of *Wu* speakers in the *Wu* speaking area has declined from 93% in 2000 to 63% by 2020. While it can be observed that urban migration has had an impact of the demographics in these regions, there is still a density of *Wu* speakers in these provinces which helps to contribute to language maintenance.

There have been several studies which examine language attitudes among migrants to cities (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Shen, 2016; Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2021), but few studies which address the language attitudes among residents in in-migration regions (Fang & Yao, 2024; Huang & Fang, 2024), which this study hopes to contribute to through the following research questions:

1. How have urbanization and government language policies contributed to participants' attitudes towards the *Wu fāngyán*?
2. What are the participants' beliefs about the survival of the *Wu fāngyán*?

While both research questions evolved during the research process, RQ.1 stemmed directly from the data that we collected from the interviews.

3 Methodology

This study reports on 33 structured interviews with speakers aged between 16-77 years conducted by 7 research assistants across the *Wu fāngyán* region, about their use and attitudes towards their *fāngyán*. The interview questions used can be found in appendix 1. The interview questions were developed by the researchers to focus on participants' usage of and attitudes towards the *Wu fāngyán* and then discussed with the research assistants regarding their relevance and appropriateness and modified accordingly. Ethical approval was sought and approved through the university's Faculty of Humanities and Social Science ethics committee. Participants were provided with information in Chinese about the study and its purpose through written or oral form by the research assistants. The participants were asked to sign consent forms, which outlined their right to withdraw from the study, and the scope and purpose of the interview. In situations where the participant was not literate in Chinese characters, consent was sought orally from the participant.

Table 1 shows the distribution of different *fāngyáns* across the *Wu* speaking region and the ages of the participants. Of the participants, 21 are female and 12 are males. In terms of their work/study experience over 5 years outside of their hometown, half of the younger generation and mid-generation had worked or studied outside their hometowns, while only two of the older generation had worked or studied outside of their hometown for over 5 years. Perhaps this is unsurprising as many of the participants' hometowns are in-migration cities such as Hangzhou and Ningbo and therefore they are less likely to have left the city to look for employment.

Table 1.　*Participant information*

Fangyan	16-30	31-60	60+	Total
Hangzhou Hua	2	3	4	9
Zhuji Hua	-	2	-	2
Changxing Hua	1	2	-	3
Ningbo Hua	2	1	2	5
Taizhou Hua	3	2	1	6
Zhoushan Hua	5	1	-	6
Fenghua Hua	1	-	-	1
Jiaxing Hua	1	-	-	1
Total	15	11	7	33

The reason for using structured interviews was because there were multiple research assistants conducting interviews across the *Wu* speaking region with different *fāngyáns* being spoken by the interviewers and interviewees. The research assistants were all undergraduate Applied Linguistic students in their second or final year of study. All the research assistants had undertaken a module on research methods in linguistics, which included sections on interviews, transcription and translation. A further one-hour training was provided for the research assistants on conducting interviews for this

specific research project, and monitoring of the process was facilitated through email communication. The questions were given to the research assistants in English, who were tasked with translating them into either *Putonghua* or the *fāngyán* depending on the fluency levels of the interlocuters. The research assistants were tasked with conducting up to 8 interviews, across generations, and it was indicated that family members and friends could be participants, and ultimately the selection of participants was determined by the research assistants. Further, the research assistants were directed to find participants who had a communicative ability in the local *fāngyán*, though it is acknowledged that some of the younger generation's communicative ability in the *fāngyán* is weak.

The interviews were conducted in *Putonghua* and/or *Wu fāngyán* depending on the interviewers and interviewees different competencies in the distinct linguistic repertoires and interviewee's preference. The research assistants organised the interviews in locations which were convenient to the interviewee, be that in a home environment or a local café. The interviews themselves were sites of translingual practices, with the interviewers and interviewees utilizing their varied linguistic resources. This is because some of the interviewers could understand the *Wu fāngyán*, but they have limited ability to speak it. Similarly, some of the older generation could understand *Putonghua*, but have low proficiency in terms of the spoken language.

The interviews were intentionally designed to be short to encourage participation and focus on key themes, with each interview lasting between 10 and 20 minutes, and depended on how much the participant was willing to discuss about these topics. While it is acknowledged that more experienced interviewers could have provided more in-depth interviews providing richer data, the project's research design necessitated linguistic ability in multiple dialects for data collection. Then the interviews were translated into English by the research assistants, and the transcription and translation were checked by the second author, a fluent *Wu fāngyán*, *Putonghua* and English speaker. As noted above, there are degrees of intelligibility between the *Wu fāngyán* varieties, and where there were intelligibility issues with certain words and phrases that the second author was not familiar with, we used Chinese online social media resources to check the understanding and accuracy of the translation. China has several social media websites, such as *Weibo* and *Xiao Hong Shu* (The Little Red Book), which have forums on diverse topics. We identified discussion forums related to dialects, and uploaded speech samples of sentences and phrases to clarify meaning if the second author was unsure. This provided responses from users on the meaning and use of certain phrases and lexis, ensuring the accuracy of the translation.

Once we were confident in the accuracy of the transcription and translation, we used NVivo 11 software to code the data, using no *a priori* codes, around the themes of use and attitudes which was confirmed by the two authors. After all the data had been coded, we reviewed and refined the codes, removing, re-coding and merging codes (Bazeley, 2013). Then we linked together what we had identified as the most relevant parts of the data and organised the data into a hierarchal structure (Bazeley, 2013). Further, a cross-comparison method was used to identify differences within and between the generations (Charmaz, 2006).

It should be noted that the research assistants always translated *fāngyán* as 'dialect' with none of the seven research assistants choosing 'topolect' or keeping *fāngyán*. As Kaltenegger (2020, p. 250) notes, the misinterpretation *fāngyán* 'has been around for so long that the Chinese term itself has partially adopted the meaning of dialect' and therefore it is unsurprising that the research assistants would choose to translate *fāngyán* into dialect. As noted in the introduction we prefer to use *fāngyán*, as neither topolect or dialect would seem satisfactory to discuss the *Wu fāngyán* and its subvarieties (Kaltenegger, 2020). Nevertheless, we have chosen to retain the translation, by the research assistants of *fāngyán* into dialect in the data Extracts, though not in the analysis. *Fāngyán* could include the broader *Wu fāngyán* continuum or could refer to the local

language attached to a city, town or village. Therefore, we use the term *fāngyán* for both, though we will also use *fāngyán* variety in places for clarity.

Furthermore, it should also be noted that the interviews were a site of translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013) as the participants switch between *fāngyáns* and *Putonghua* in some interviews, while the younger generation of participants also switch into English. The principal 'language' used in the Extracts is *Putonghua*, and switches into *fāngyáns* are underlined, in both the original and the English translation. If the entire Extract is in *fāngyán* then it is underlined. We have included the English translation of the data in the main body of the paper, and the original Chinese transcription of the interview Extracts can be found in appendix 2. Transcription conventions are adapted from Potter (2004), Clayman and Gill (2004) and VOICE (2013) and can be found in appendix 3. We have used transcription conventions for the English translation, but we have kept the original transcription by the research assistants as much as possible.

In analysing the data, we adopt a post-structuralist position, where it is evident in the data that attitudes towards *fāngyán*s must be seen in relation to various institutions of control such as government, the media, judiciary and schools (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 2015; Spolsky, 2009). It is argued that language choice and attitudes are determined by power relations, political arrangements, language ideologies and also the individuals' views of their own and others' identities (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 2015; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2003). Moreover, our stance in analysing the data is to understand the data as not having a singular meaning, and instead where relevant consider multiple interpretations.

4   Findings

We will now discuss the findings in relation to the participants' attitudes towards the *Wu fāngyán* and their beliefs about its survival, drawing on relevant data Extracts that were conducted with the participants.

4.1 Wu fāngyán attitudes across generations

While it is acknowledged that there are several factors that contribute to the participants' language attitudes in respect to the *Wu fāngyán*, it was evident in the data that government language policy and urbanization were significant considerations. During the interviews of the 33 participants, urbanization is mentioned by 11 of the participants and government language polices noted by 13 of the participants. That the participants were not asked directly about these topics would seem to underline their relevance to their language attitudes. Both topics could be considered politically sensitive in China and to ask directly and discuss in depth could result in the participants' discomfort or withdrawal from the research. It is also evident in the data that there is an interrelationship between urbanization and government language policy. In the Extracts presented in the study, the participants are denoted by their age and the associated *fāngyán* rather than the use of a pseudonym.

> **Extract 1** 50-Changxing:
>
> Although Putonghua is the formal mother language which needs to be promoted (.) however (.) I think (.) there should be some inheritance (.) the old generation should talk to the young generation in dialect (1.5) I think dialect will exist
>
> **Extract 2** 21-Jiaxinghua
>
> Also (.) now in China (.) we support the widespread and use of Putonghua (.) so in this way (1.0) dialects will more like cultural heritage (.) but not a practical tool of communication

Extract 3 52-Zhujihua

Although the popularization of Putonghua is important in the process of world integration and communication between cities and provinces (.) we should not ignore the role of dialects

These participants believe in the importance of *Putonghua*, all noting that it should be promoted, using words such as 'need', 'support' and 'important'. The implication is that this is achieved not only through government action, but also that Chinese individuals have a responsibility to promote *Putonghua*. Both 21-Jiaxinghua and 52-Zhujihua also allude to urbanization and inter-provincial contact as one of the key reasons for the promotion of *Putonghua*. Despite this, it is also noticeable that the three participants comment on the importance of the survival of the *fāngyáns*. Although the Chinese government through its language and education policies aimed to create a cohesive Chinese society, replacing local affinity with a national consciousness (M. Zhou, 2012), there was not a strong endorsement of this evident in the data. Nine participants indicate a stronger affinity to China compared to a local affinity, with six participants neutral on this question, with no evident differences across generations. 18 out of the 33 participants stated they felt a stronger affinity with their hometown than China, though their affinities depended on their location. Nevertheless, an individual's affinity towards group identity is made in respect to others (Tajfel, 1974), and given the vast size of China and the diversity of cultures and languages, it is perhaps to be expected that people's affinity would be closer to their local hometown, with nation building an ongoing project in China. The participants in the following Extracts express their feelings towards people from their local area and outsiders.

Extract 4 20-Taizhouhua

I feel it depends on where I am (.) if I am in my hometown (.) then I may (.) er:: (.) relatively speaking (.) er:: (.) I mean that I live in the social group of my hometown, and I won't be so (.) how to say (.) is it 'sensitivity' (.) should be perception (.) but I will be more perceptive to the outsiders (.) but once I go to places outside my hometown (.) I will definitely have a preference for perceiving people from my hometown, and also people from Zhejiang.

Extract 5 45-Zhoushanhua

If I travelled to other regions (.) I would certainly feel stronger affinity with people from Zhoushan (.) I saw (.) previously I went to Jiuhua Mountain (.) I saw a car whose number plate started with Zhe B (a number plate belonging to Ningbo city) (.) wow (.) I was very happy (.) Ningbo's (.) I could get a free ride (.) as to how I feel when I see people from other regions in Zhoushan (.) last time a person from Dalian (.) I ask him (.) I don't know him (.) I asked where you came from (.) he said he was from Dalian (.) I feel (.) it is far away for him to come here

Both 20-Taizhouhua and 45-Zhoushanhua express an affinity for people from their hometown rather than those who they note are 'outsiders', denoted as other Chinese people. Neither participant specifically notes that it is language which determine this distinction between groups, though 20-Taizhouhua notes sensitivity to outsiders which implies this would be determined by language and culture, rather than ethnicity which they would share. 45-Zhoushanhua mentions recognising an insider by their vehicles' number plates, and there is an expectation that this affinity could be strong enough to result in being offered a lift, even though they would be strangers. Perhaps this draws on an imagined community (Anderson, 1983), and indicates an expectation of trust between people from the same hometown. This division of insiders and outsiders within China corresponds with previous research on delineating Chinese language groups (Erbaugh, 1995; Gong et al., 2011; Jiang et al., 2023).

45-Zhoushanhua mentions meeting a stranger implying he used *Putonghua* as a lingua franca to ask where they are from, potentially identifying him as an outsider from his accent. He does not really mention his feelings towards the stranger, except to note that the Dalian person had come from a distant place, suggesting both geographic and cultural distance from the individual. This is further evident, where 45-Zhoushanhua uses the plural from of you in Chinese, (你们) implying that he identifies this individual as part of a broader group distinct from his own. It could be argued that government policies have helped to cement local affiliations by facilitating migration polices which enact insiders and outsiders, and in this way the *fāngyán*s and local culture become symbolic of the divisions within linguacultural groups.

In attempting to describe the characteristics of the local *fāngyán* the participants conflate the *fāngyán*s with the speakers, using descriptive terms such as hard-working, relaxed, straightforward, polite and warm. Some participants make distinctions between the *Wu fāngyán* varieties, as in the following Extracts.

Extract 6 72-Hangzhouhua

Hangzhouhua speaks relatively hard tone (.) in comparison to those of Ningbo (.) Suzhou spoken languages (.) or that of Shanghai (.) it sounds harder.

Extract 7 23-Zhoushanhua

Hm:::::: that is (.) that is (.) although Zhoushan belongs to Wu Yu (.) but I feel that it unlike Shanghaihua and Suzhouhua these kinds (.) these gentle feelings (.) (Zhoushanhua) sounds rough (.) and Zhoushan (.) it is formed by many different islands (.) therefore possibly (.) every area (.) its dialect actually has its own characteristics (.) so (.) still there are minor differences

In the above Extracts the participants make a distinction between the *fāngyán* varieties, underlining how the language contributes to insiders and outsiders, with some classified as hard, aggressive or loud and some classified as soft varieties. However, participants may not be negative toward their *fāngyán*, as potentially their *fāngyán* being 'hard' or 'aggressive' may indicate a positive attribute in comparison to other *fāngyán*s which are considered soft. It is important to note here that 72-Hangzhouhua uses *Hangzhouhua* to communicate and would seem to classify other *fāngyán*s she mentions differently. She expresses this in a more formal way referring to them as *Hua Yu*, perhaps emphasising the familiarity and insider view of the 'localness' of her own *fāngyán*.

There was no consistency among the participants in their characterization of *fāngyán*s, for example one participant described *Hangzhouhua* as soft, while another described *Hangzhouhua* as hard, in comparison to other *Wu fāngyán*s. Moreover, when a negative attribute was applied this is not only made in comparison to other *Wu fāngyán*s, but some participants also measured their *fāngyán* against *Putonghua* or another 'language', such as Japanese, as in the following Extracts.

Extract 8 51-Taizhouhua

Int: In your opinion (.) what are the distinctive features of the local dialect (.) that are these of Xianjuhua

Relatively hard tone (.) relatively hard tone (.) and personally I think it is close to Putonghua @@

Extract 9 22-Zhoushanhua

Actually if say that (.) many people say to me (.) the outsiders (.) they say that Zhoushan people speak Zhoushanhua sound a bit aggressive @@@@ a bit like Japanese @@@ however (.) actually we are just gossiping normally (.) but some (of this gossiping) sound like how you are quarrelling this kind of feeling.

As noted, the interviews were sites of translingual practice and in Extract 8 the interviewer uses *Putonghua* to ask questions, while the interviewee responded in *Xianjuhua*, a sub-variety of *Taizhouhua*. Extract 9 highlights the identification of insiders and outsiders by using a *fāngyán*, with 22-Zhoushanhua noting that outsiders may misinterpret 'normal conversation' as arguing. This also suggests the fundamental difference between this *fāngyán* and *Putonghua*, with not only people who do not speak the *fāngyán*, being unable to understand the content of what is being said, but also the emotion embedded within the *fāngyán*. This division between insiders and outsiders is also evident in Extract 10 below, with 18-Zhoushanhua use of the 'we', 'us' and 'our' pronouns suggestive of collective ownership of the *fāngyán*. A further aspect mentioned by the participants is how the *fāngyán* is connected to the local culture, with some using metaphorical language to denote this connection. For example, some participants mention that the *fāngyán* sounds like the countryside or the sea, such as in Extract 10.

> **Extract 10** 18-Zhoushanhua
>
> That is there is strong flavour of the sea (.) then we are on the seaside (.) during the long period we live our lives (here) unintentionally the ocean gives us some special emotion (.) for example (.) our *Yumin Haozi* (a traditional fisherman's song) (.) or that is during labour work (.) these things integrated to our dialect (.) become part of our life

In terms of affinity and attitudes towards *fāngyáns*, there are no obvious differences across generations with predominantly positive attitudes. There are also no obvious differences between the participants in terms of location. It might be anticipated that those who speak a *fāngyán* from a small town/village such as *Changxing* would be more positive than a *fāngyán* in a large metropolis such as *Hangzhou*, but this is not evident. In fact, it could be the case that internal migration in China has exacerbated the division between insiders and outsiders. This suggests that if the Chinese government's language policy aim was to project an ideology of a linguistically unified nation to the detriment of local affiliation (M. Zhou, 2012), it has only been nominally successful up until now.

There were significant differences between the generations in terms of self-declared use, which is to be expected due to socio-economic changes. Three of the younger generation of participants explicitly mentioned during the interviews that their ability to use the local *fāngyán* is not very good. The younger generation asserted greater use of *Putonghua* which included interaction with peers and parents, and only used *fāngyáns* with local people, specifically mentioning grandparents and old people. The younger generation also mention that if they were using the *fāngyán*, they would often switch to *Putonghua* if they do not know the word or to make the expression clearer, using their translinguistic skills for meaning making. Several of the young generation also mention using the *fāngyán* to swear, underlining the informality of a *fāngyán*, (Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2021), and also perhaps their characterisation as 'hard' or 'aggressive'. The younger generation also used certain English expressions, utilizing the translinguistic skills available to them.

The mid-generation, who are all bilingual in a *Wu fāngyán* and *Putonghua*, envisaged codeswitching as a normal language practice and used the different language forms interchangeably depending on the context. Some of these participants also note the unconscious use of their *fāngyán*. The older generation mention using their *fāngyán* on most occasions and their weak *Putonghua* fluency, with two participants noting that they do not speak *Putonghua*. The varied use of *fāngyáns* and *Putonghua* between generations and the decline of *fāngyán* use among the young generation would seem to be reflective of statistical data on population movement and language use (Shen, 2016; H. Zhou, 2012). This is also reflected in the context of the interviews where, even if the younger generation claimed proficiency in a *fāngyán*, they still opted to use *Putonghua*.

4.2 Wu fāngyán survival

Although all the younger generation believe that *fāngyán* use would decline in the future, the majority also believe that they will survive. Six out of the fifteen young generation of participants believe that it is not essential to maintain the *fāngyán* with these participants noting that communication can be achieved through *Putonghua*, similar to how migrant parents' justified prioritizing *Putonghua* for their children (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Shen, 2016; Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2021). Twelve of the young generation believe that the cultural inheritance embedded in *fāngyáns* is a sufficient reason for it to be to be maintained, as evident in Extract 11.

> **Extract 11** 22-Ningbohua
>
> That is I feel, under current system (.) actually I feel dialects possibly will be ignored gradually later […] just because nowadays many schools promote teaching in *Putonghua* (.) and parents are required to speak *Putonghua* to their children at home (.) then about dialect this kind of thing if learn a dialect after (someone is) 20 (.) it becomes something you are difficult to understand (.) the sentiments and growth that are contained in it (.) sometimes it needs to be taught in childhood. Because dialects are part of culture (.) it becomes weaker with the unitary and urbanization these kinds of things (.) although dialects are part of the language system, it will encounter some crisis in the future (.) in other words (.) when fewer and fewer people speak them (.) with the development and widespread use of *Putonghua* by everyone (.) it would become weaker and weaker

22-Ningbohua mentions some of the key factors which have contributed to the decline of the *fāngyáns*. He mentions that schools are required to use *Putonghua* and also that parents are 'asked' to use *Putonghua*, perhaps by schools or local government (Li, 2015; Tsung, 2009). Potentially, 22-Ningbohua's perception that parents 'enforce' *Putonghua* on their children is from his own personal experience. 22-Ningbohua also mentions the other key factor of urbanization which is weakening the use of the *fāngyáns* (Jiang et al., 2023; Liang, 2016; Ma & Tang, 2020; Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2021). Similar to the majority of the young generation group in this study, 22-Ningbohua highlights the connection of *fāngyáns* with culture and sentimental attachment and contrasting this with *Putonghua* which would appear to have a functional use for *Wu fāngyán* speakers. In this respect, government policies to create domains of use between *Putonghua* and *fāngyáns* would seem to be reflected in 22-Ningbohua's belief system (Chen, 1999; Erbaugh, 1995; Guo, 2004).

Also evident is 22-Ningbohua ideological construction of the *fāngyán* as being part of the 'Chinese language system', tending to lower the *fāngyáns* status to mere dialects, and subordinate to *Putonghua*. The *fāngyáns'* status is also evident with 22-Ningbohua using the word 忽视, which translates as 'ignored', suggesting that people do not care about the declining use of the *fāngyáns* because their importance is negligible. This contrasts with the so-called 'dialect crisis' (Gao, 2015; Shen, 2016; Shen & Gao, 2019; Xia & Shen, 2019), which has been mainly driven by elites, but perhaps does not reflect the attitudes of the majority of *fāngyán* speakers, who may be less concerned about language maintenance.

The mid-generation, similar to the younger generation, do not express confidence about the survival of the *Wu fāngyán*, with all these participants mentioning this language form will decline. However, only two of this group of eleven participants believe that the *Wu fāngyán* will completely disappear, including 59-Zhujihua in Extract 12.

> **Extract 12** 59-Zhujihua
>
> The future development of dialect (.) this is a bit worrying (.) because now we have this kind of education (.) children basically speak *Putonghua* from the beginning of schooling (.) in education basically speak Putonghua (.) and this kind of language environment (.) dialect will gradually fade away from the children

59-Zhujihua mentions that schools' use of *Putonghua* is a key factor in the *fāngyáns'* decline (Li, 2015; Tsung, 2009), and suggesting it will eventually disappear. However, there does appear to be a lack of urgency about the 'dialect crisis' by 59-Zhujihua, who notes that it 'is a bit worrying'. This lack of urgency was evident among other participants, with some mentioning 'it is a pity', but not expressing overt concern. It is the perception of the slow decline evident in 59-Zhujihua use of 'fade away' which perhaps explains this lack of urgency about the survival of *fāngyáns*. Perhaps also the muted response reflects the pollical climate in China, where individuals are perhaps unable to do anything because of the power of the state. Though some authors have positioned the *fāngyáns* decline in the media as a crisis (Gao, 2015, 2017; Shen, 2016; Xia & Shen, 2019), it does not appear to resonate with these participants. All of the mid-generation begin by asserting that it does not matter if people do not speak the *fāngyán,* noting the importance of *Putonghua* for communication, reflecting how government language policy positions the *fāngyán*s in relation to *Putonghua* (Li, 2006; Li, 2015; Spolsky, 2014; Tsung, 2009). However, they all subsequently note the importance to maintain *fāngyáns* because of cultural inheritance, as in the following Extract.

> **Extract 13** 45-Zhoushanhua
>
> Well (.) let it be (.) they are all tools for communication
>
> Int: do you feel this is a serious thing or not
>
> Dialect disappears (.) I feel it is quite serious (.) dialect (.) dialect (.) it is a local language (.) it disappeared this is the characteristic disappeared (.) everyone become outsider @@@@
>
> Int: are you worry about it disappeared one day
>
> It shouldn't disappear (.) at least Zhoushan won't (.) but (I) do worry (.) since better Zhoushan people all go to universities (.) then (they) don't come back (.) an increasing number of outsider come to our place (.) *Putonghua* become dominate (.) it is possible

Similar to other mid-generation participants, 45-Zhoushanhua initially asserts that the *fāngyán* is not necessary if communication is achieved through *Putonghua*, reflecting government language policies. However, 45-Zhoushanhua goes onto mention the situation is 'quite serious', similar to the use of modifiers by other participants in this study, which soften any urgency around a 'dialect crisis', albeit in this Extract the participant is guided by the interviewer. 45-Zhoushanhua, again, similar to other mid-generation participants, notes the importance of the *fāngyán* to reflect local culture. In many ways the participants' attitudes reflect the, sometimes conflictual, government policies to promote *Putonghua* at the same time as striving to protect local culture. While it is evident that the government promotes *Putonghua* as a means for inter-regional communication, at the same time the government also highlight and actively engage in the protection of local heritage which includes linguistic resources (M. Zhou, 2012). 45-Zhoushanhua also notes the reasons for the decline of out-migration and in-migration which is reducing the use of *fāngyáns* (Li, 2015; Shen, 2016; H. Zhou, 2012).

In contrast, the older generation tend to stress the importance of learning *Putonghua,* and this perhaps reflects their own lives and language use, and the government's promotion of *Putonghua* for shared communication. Perhaps some of the older generation feel that they have been restricted in their life goals through having a weaker use of *Putonghua*. All of the older generation assert that *fāngyáns* would decline, and all believe, except one, that it is not very important for *fāngyáns* to survive.

> **Extract 14** 65-Ningbohua
>
> It's better for young people to speak *Putonghua* since they need go out need speak *Putonghua* and speak local dialect is not suitable in other places

65-Ningbohua asserts that *Putonghua* is more important and points out that young people are more mobile. This view would seem to present language in binary terms of either *Putonghua* or *fāngyán* and reflect government policies to create domains of use (Chen, 1999; Erbaugh, 1995; Guo, 2004). Among several of the participants there would appear to be the ingrained idea that it must be either the *fāngyán* or *Putonghua*, and as *Putonghua* has greater mobility, then it should be prioritised to the detriment of the *fāngyáns*.

5   Conclusion

To conclude, we will discuss the findings in relation to the research questions, outlined above, in respect to *Wu fāngyán* speakers attitudes towards their *fāngyán*, and their beliefs about the potential for *fāngyáns* to survive in the future. The findings reveal that urbanization and government language policies have had a moderate impact on the participants' affective attitude towards their local *fāngyán*. The participants express their affinity towards the local *fāngyán* through a description of its attributes and connection to local culture. Therefore, if the aim of government language polices were to replace local affiliation with national affiliation, as some authors have claimed (M. Zhou, 2012), the findings suggest that this is not necessarily the case. As Spolsky (2009, 2014) notes the implementation of macro language policies may not be successful if they challenge existing established language practices. Nevertheless, it would seem that urbanization and government language policies have had a direct impact on the cognitive aspect of their attitudes, as the utility of the *fāngyán* has declined, which would seem to have impacted family language policies and language practices inside and outside the home environment (Spolsky, 2004). Across the generations, the participants were not optimistic about the current position of *fāngyáns*, and while twelve of the participants assert that ultimately *fāngyáns would* survive, others were less optimistic, noting less confidently that they *should* survive. Perhaps this reflects how attempts by the government to establish language ideologies through language management, coexist with existing language ideologies, rather than replacing them (Kroskrity, 2022; Woolard, 2020), or the more recent changes in government polices to protect cultural heritage (Spolsky, 2014).

The findings indicate that the mid-generation of participants are the most remorseful about the emergent national monolingualism. The older generation displayed a more pragmatic perspective, asserting that *Putonghua* is more useful, and expressed how limited competency would restrict mobility. The younger generation appear to be more influenced by a neoliberal ideology (Martín Rojo, 2020), and view language as a means to pursue their economic objectives, with the *Wu fāngyán* not being seen as able to contribute to these. The differences in attitudes across the generations reflect the dynamic changes that have occurred in China over the past 60-70 years and how government directives and socio-economic changes have contributed to a layering of different language ideologies and the consequent impact on the language practices of the Chinese people. Previous research in this area has been limited, and has predominantly focused on family language polices among rural migrants (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Shen, 2016; Yang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2021) and institutional discourses in in-migration cites (Gao, 2015, 2017; Gao & Shao, 2018; Shen, 2016; Xia & Shen, 2019). Therefore, this study is only able to provide a 'snapshot' of the developing language situation in China and therefore more extensive research is needed to measure the extent of China's *fāngyán* decline and understand the processes which contribute to this. It is hoped that the young generation of Chinese linguistics will become engaged with issues related to Chinese *fāngyán*, mobility, and translingualism so this can be realized.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix 1: Interview questions

Could you please tell me about work you do/did or study?
How often do you usually go to travel?
Do you feel a stronger affinity to China or your home city? Does it change depending on where you are?
Do you feel the same affinity with all Chinese people as you do with people from your hometown?
What are people from your hometown famous for?
What in your opinion are the distinctive features of the local dialect?
What do you think of the way your family members and friends speak the local dialect? Grandchildren/children/parents/grandparents etc.
What language do you speak at home?
What language did you speak at school?
When did you start learning Putonghua?
Do you often switch between the local dialect and Putonghua?
On what occasions do you use the local dialect? On what occasions do you use Putonghua?
Do you find the local dialect useful in daily life?
What do you think will happen to local dialects in the future? Why?
Does it matter if young people do not speak (very well) the local dialect?

Appendix 2: Chinese transcriptions

Extract 1 50-Changxing
虽然说普通话是ge ge ge ge正宗ge母语呢要推广，但是呢ng感觉认为呢，传承还是有ge，老一辈带小一辈过程当中还是要讲方言，ng认为ge ge方言，继续会存在下去。

Extract 2 21-Jiaxinghua
现在是推行普通话这种，可能方言会更加作为那种文化遗产来存在，而不是实用的交流工具。

Extract 3 52-Zhujihua
普通话是重要的，在世界融合交流过程中，城市与城市之间，省与省之间，这种交流普通话普及是重要的，但是对于方言来说，绝对不能偏废掉

Extract 4 20-Taizhouhua
我觉得这个得看我所在的地方，如果我在家乡的话，那我可能，额，相对来说，额，就是觉得自己是，生活在家乡这个群体当中，会对他们没有那么多…嗯…很…怎么说呢，是敏感？…应该就是感知吧。但是对于外地人会有更多的感知。但是一旦我到家乡之外的地方，我肯定会优先的去感知我家乡的人，包括就是浙江省的人。

Extract 5 45-Zhoushanhua
那出去了(我)肯定对舟山的人比较亲和感。我看到以前去九华山的时候看到有一辆车子是浙B开头的，哇，我很高兴，宁波的，可以还可以顺便搭个车。在舟山看到外地人，个像上次有一个大连的，我问他哦，我不认识的。我就问你们是哪里的，他说是大连的。那我觉得他们到这边来挺　的哦。

Extract 6 72-Hangzhouhua
杭州话说着比较硬腔，比宁波啊、苏州啊个种说话语噢，或者上海个种都要硬腔。

Extract 7 23-Zhoushanhua

嗯，就是，就是，舟山虽然是属于吴语，但是我觉得它没有像上海苏州的那种，就是比较细腻的那种感觉，还是比较粗犷的。而且舟山它是有很多不同的岛屿组成，所以可能每个地域的它的方言其实都是各有特点的，所以还是会有一些细微的区别。

Extract 8 51-Taizhouhua

Int: 您认为地方方言，也就是仙居话最独特的特点是什么？

比较硬。比较硬，还有我个人认为它是比较接近于普通话的 (laughs)

Extract 9 22-Zhoushanhua

其实如果说是，很多人跟我说，外地人吧，他们说，舟山人说舟山话就是有一点凶（笑），有点像日本话（笑）。但其实我们就是在正常地唠家常，但是有些可能听起来啊你们怎么在吵架啊这种感觉。

Extract 10 18-Zhoushanhua

就是有非常浓重的海味啊。然后我们毕竟是在海边，在我们长期的生活过程之中就会不自觉地带上海洋给予我们的一些比较特殊的情感。就比如我们的号子啊，或者是，就是在劳作的这些过程之中。这些东西都融入到了我们的方言里面，成为了我们生活的一部分。

Extract 11 22-Ningbohua

就是我觉得以在现在这种机制下，其实吧，我觉得方言可能在以后会被越来越被忽视。就是因为感觉现在很多学校里都提倡的是普通话教育，而且要求父母在家里也跟小孩子讲普通话，然后其实方言这种东西，要是到了20岁再学，它就是一种你就很难理解里面那种情怀和成长的那种东西了。那有时候就需要小时候就方言教育。因为方言其实也是文化的一部分，它其实也是随着这种统一化，城市化，就是"urbanization"这种事情，方言的发展会越来越弱。虽然它也是语言系统组织的一部分，但它以后肯定会遭遇一些危机。就是说随着说它的人越来越少，随着普通话发展，所有人的普及，它的发展会越来越差。

Extract 12 59-Zhujihua

方言未来的发展这个是有点担忧的，因为现在我们这种教育，小人，一从上学就基本上是讲普通话，教育基本上是讲普通话，而且这种语言环境，以后方言从小人会慢慢淡化掉。

Extract 13 45-Zhoushanhua

那顺其自然了。反正都是交流的工具嘛。

INT：那你觉得这个事情严不严重啊？

方言没了嘛，我觉得比较严重，方言方言，是一个地方的语言，没有了，那就没有地方特色了，都变成外地人了(笑)。

INT:那你会担心它有一天消失了没有了吗？

应该不会消失的，至少舟山人不会，不过也有这个担心，因为舟山人好一点的都出去上大学了，然后不回来了，个我们这边都外地人来得多了，个变成都是以普通话为主了，也有可能。

Extract 14 65-Ningbohua

年轻人总讲普通话好。年轻人总是走出去要讲普通话，讲土话其他地方不适合的。

Appendix 3: Transcription conventions

(@@@@)	Laughter: The length of the @ indicates the length of the laughter
Yumin Haozi	Words in italics indicate that *Pin Yin* has been used in the translation. *Pin Yin* is a Romanised version of the Chinese language.
<u>Future</u>	Underlined words indicate that this was spoken in *Wu fāngyán*
(parents)	Words in parentheses indicate transcriber's comments not transcriptions, which are either used to give contextual information or to provide clearer understanding in the translation process from Chinese
(.)	Indicates a pause in talk of less than 0.2 seconds
	Indicates a pause with the time indicating the length of the pause in seconds
:::	Colons indicate the sound was prolonged 'sensitivity' said in a questioning tone
[…]	Parentheses with three dots indicate that there is a gap between the sections of the transcription which were not included