

## Language Vitality and Endangerment: A Case Study of Hani (Akha) People Dwelling Village in Yunnan, China

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### บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้ เป็นการศึกษาเพื่อตรวจสอบสถานภาพของการใช้ภาษา และทัศนคติต่อภาษาของกลุ่มชาติพันธุ์ฮาหนี (อาข่า) เพื่อประเมินความเข้มแข็งและการสูญหายของภาษาในหมู่บ้านเมย์ซง โดยใช้วิธีการรวบรวมข้อมูลผ่านการสัมภาษณ์ระดับครัวเรือนแบบมีแบบสอบถาม และทดสอบคำศัพท์พื้นฐานภาษาฮาหนี 400 คำ ผลการศึกษา พบว่า คนฮาหนีที่เป็นผู้ใหญ่สามารถพูดภาษาแม่ได้อย่างคล่องแคล่ว ในทางตรงกันข้าม คนฮาหนีที่เป็นวัยรุ่นพูดภาษาแม่ได้ไม่ค่อยคล่องนัก ทั้งนี้ เนื่องมาจากภาษาแม่มีเสถียรภาพและมีความเข้มแข็งมากในหมู่ผู้ใหญ่ แต่ความสามารถในการใช้ภาษาแม่ได้ลดลงในกลุ่มวัยรุ่น ขณะเดียวกันชาวฮาหนีก็ยังคงรักษาการพูดและใช้ภาษาแม่ได้อย่างมั่นคง แต่ความต้องการที่จะรักษาภาษาแม่ไว้นั้นไม่ได้นำไปสู่การปฏิบัติอย่างแท้จริง กลับมุ่งสอนภาษาจีนแมนดารินให้เป็นภาษาที่หนึ่งให้แก่คนรุ่นใหม่เพื่อสามารถปรับตัวเข้ากับสังคมวัฒนธรรมแบบจีน และสามารถเข้ารับการศึกษาตามระบบได้

**คำสำคัญ:** สถานภาพของการใช้ภาษา ทัศนคติ พลัง ภาวะเสี่ยง หมู่บ้านเมย์ซง

### Abstract

This study was designed to investigate the status quo of the language use and language attitude of Hani people, and to evaluate the language vitality and endangerment in Meichong Village. The data was collected through family visits, questionnaires, interviews and a 400-Hani-core wordlist test. The findings indicated that the Hani adults were fluently speaking their mother language, in contrast, the Hani adolescents were influent; and the mother language was very stable among adults and its vitality was strong, while the adolescents' mother language ability is declining. Meanwhile, Hani people held strong desires to maintain their mother

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language, however, in reality, the maintenance of mother language was not being taken into action, instead, they taught the young generation Mandarin as the first language in order to adjust to the dominant culture and education

**Keywords:** The status quo of language use; Attitude; Vitality; Endangerment; Meichong Village

## Introduction

Meichong Village is a Hani people<sup>3</sup> concentrated village in Hongta District of Yuxi Municipality, Yunnan, China. It is about 2.5 kilometers away from the village committee, 10 kilometers from the township and 31 kilometers from downtown Hongta District of Yuxi. Totally, there are 236 people in 58 households, and it mainly consists of four ethnic groups and few Han Chinese, including 190 Hani people, 39 Yi people, one Li people, one Miao people, and five Han Chinese.

At present, the infrastructure in the village has improved and clean water, electricity and road are all easily accessible. Particularly, the television, telephone and mobile phone are already very prevalent. The transportation is very convenient as a concrete made road stretches all the way to the township, and all types of transports are used by the villagers. Among those vehicles, motorcycle and minivan are much more popular. However, there is no traditional Hani housing in the village any more. Instead, almost all houses are earth houses or modern brick concrete structured houses. The main income of villagers is from planting tobacco, rice paddy, corn, other cereals and raising poultry.

Basic education for ethnic people have been improved after implementation of the Open Door Policy in the 1980s, the government began paying attention to the cultural education in minority regions and took some privileged measures to promote the school education. In recent years, the government emphasizes financially supporting minority education, new teaching buildings are built, and the teaching equipment is updated, so the learning environment has been improved (Committee of History Records of Hongta District of Yuxi. 2006: 342). In the 1990s, the community based primary schools sequentially combined village primary schools in order to improve the teaching quality, save funds and save human resources. In Meichong Village, all school aged children attended the community based primary in 1995, but the village-based

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<sup>3</sup>Hani people is a cross border ethnic group. It scatters in the southeastern Asian countries, such as China, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. They are known as Akha People in Thailand. In China, the Hani mainly live in the southwestern Chinese province of Yunnan, scattered across the Ailao Mountains between the Mekong River and the Red River.

kindergarten remains. (Committee of Yi Nationality of Luohe Township. 2003: 132). Thus, children have opportunity to receive basic education in good educational environment.

In terms of culture and festival, Meichong Village is deeply influenced by the outer cultures. Mainly, they are assimilated by Yi people in clothing, custom and belief. The Hani people in Meichong Village began believing in the mountain god 300 years ago, so that one mountain god temple was built beside the village. Every February 8<sup>th</sup> of the lunar year, the villagers kill pigs and chicken, and bring various food and alcohol to the temple to sacrifice the mountain god.

### The Situation of Language Use

Geographically, Meichong Village is surrounded by Yi villages, and the Hani people often communicate with Yi people and Han Chinese, so they also speak Mandarin dialect and Yi language except for their mother language. In this paper, Hani people's proficiency in Hani, Mandarin dialect and Yi were investigated among people of three age groups: (1) 6-15; (2) 16-25; (3) 26 and over. The criteria are settled with four scales from superior to inferior: "proficient", "fair", "poor", and "unable to speak"<sup>4</sup>.

Degree of mother language proficiency divided by age group was presented in table 1, 2 and 3 as followed.

**Table 1:** A comparison of degree of mother language proficiency among each age group

Age group	Number	Scale (number & percentage %)			
		Proficient	Fair	Poor	Unable to speak
6-15	31	30 (96.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.2%)
16-25	36	36 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
26-over	106	106 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	173	172 (99.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.6%)

Table 1 revealed that 99.4% of Hani people were proficient in Hani and only one person aged between 6-15 years old was unable to speak Hani. It implies that Hani is widely conducted among its native speakers and its vitality still remains. Factors which maintained the vitality of

<sup>4</sup>Detail of four scales: "proficient" presents a good master of speaking and listening to a language and being able to fluently communicate with it without any difficulties; "fair" presents being able to speak and listen to a language in daily communication with some difficulties; "poor" presents being unable to communicate with a language but can express some daily words and understand to some extent.



Hani were explored during the investigation, and it drew conclusions that: (1) Hani is the dominant language in Meichong as Hani people take up 80.5% of total population, and Hani has been descended to the young generation as the main communicating language; (2) intra marriage is prevalent among Hani people in Meichong Village and two Hani people concentrated villages in neighbor. The kinship and good friendship based on marriage offer them an extensive linguistic environment to use their mother language; (3) the non-Hani people who moved into the village because of exogamy are capable of speaking Hani due to the Hani's status as the dominant language in the village, and they are gradually influenced by the Hani culture.

In addition to the factors mentioned above, Meichong is far from the city and surrounded by the nature, Hani's status as dominant language is maintained even though people inhabiting in surrounding village mainly speak Yi and Mandarin dialect. What's more, nowadays parents mainly speak Mandarin dialect with their children from birth, but the children can speak their mother language through spontaneous acquisition in the later stage. Thus, almost all school aged children can use Hani to communicate in daily life.

**Table 2:** A comparison of degree of Mandarin dialect proficiency among each age group

Age group	Number	Scale (number & percentage %)			
		Proficient	Fair	Poor	Unable to speak
6-15	31	31 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
16-25	36	36 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
26-over	106	101 (95.3%)	5 (4.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	173	168 (97.1%)	5 (2.9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Table 2 indicated that 97.1% of the Hani people were proficient in Mandarin dialect and the other was fair except that 4.7% was fair with aged over 60 years for three persons, and aged between 26 to 60 years old for two persons. In the further investigation, it was perceived that one of the two was illiterate and another has language despair problem, which extremely limited their ability in conducting Mandarin dialect. The factors which contributed to proficiency of Mandarin dialect in the young generation and weakness in the old generation are mainly gauged as follows:

(1) Before the Open Door Policy which was implemented in the 1980s, people in Meichong were almost separated from outside due to lag behind of transports and telecommunication, so they lived in a pure mother language environment, and the linguistic ecology was not polluted;

(2) Many parents were not willing to send their children to school in the past as they did not realize the importance of education, and they even held a negative attitude towards school education. For instance, in interviewing an exclusive retired teacher in the village, he recalled that two of his students were once admitted by the top high school in Yuxi City, but they all dropped out because their parents did not support their schooling. As a mother blamed the teacher: “I raise my children for sharing farm work, while you intentionally send him out, then who is going to raise my big family?”. Therefore, the teacher finally failed in persuading the two students to achieve their high school. Thus, many children did not have opportunity to receive education because of parents’ backward attitude toward education and hardship of life, which contributes to a situation where a small proportion of people over 26 years old are fair in Mandarin dialect.

(3) With the development of transportation and communicating technology, the Hani people have an extensive social network with outside, where they frequently use Mandarin dialect. Consequently, many people are proficient in Mandarin dialect.

Currently, many young and middle aged people take job opportunities in the local city, and some even go to find job in big cities, such as in Shanghai and Guangzhou. Particularly, after the implementation of Nine Year Compulsory Education in 1986, many school aged children attend the township based middle school. As a result, the Hani people are gradually influenced by the Han culture and language, which accelerates all people under 26 years old and some over 26 are fluent in Mandarin dialect.

**Table 3:** A comparison of degree of Yi proficiency among each age group

Age group	Number	Scale (number & percentage %)			
		Proficient	Fair	Poor	Unable to speak
6-15	31	1 (3.2%)	22 (71%)	5 (16%)	3 (9.7%)
16-25	36	1 (2.8%)	32 (88.9%)	3 (8.3%)	0 (0%)
26-over	106	49 (46.2%)	55 (51.9%)	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)
Total	173	51 (29.5%)	109 (63%)	9 (5.2%)	4 (2.3%)

Table 3 showed that 29% of the Hani people were proficient in Yi, among them, 3.2% are from age 6 to 15, 2.8% are from age 16 to 25, and 46.2% are from age 26 and over. There are 63% were fair in Yi, and 2.3% were poor or unable to speak Yi.



Based on the fieldwork investigation, the Hani people vary widely in Yi ability are bound up with the factors: (1) Yi is the dominant language in Luohe Township and Meichong is the exclusive Hani village in this township, so the Hani people acquire Yi in the extensive linguistic community where Yi is dominant and Hani is subordinate. For instance, the Hani people could fluently speak Yi when the investigator greeted them in Yi during the investigation; (2) the exogamy with Yi people is very prevalent in the village. At present, there are 38 households are intermarriage with Yi people among 58 households. These Yi people are used to communicating among them with their mother language, and the Hani people who speak Yi also communicate with them in Yi. During the investigation, we accidentally heard few women chatting in fluent Yi, out of curiosity, we made inquires and knew that some of them are Hani origin and some are Yi origin. They said that this happened frequently in the village; (3) the exogamy produces many Yi relatives and friends from outside. Thus, the Hani People have also an enormous linguistic environment to conduct Yi. Hence, partly, all these elements have positive effects on the Hani people's Yi competence to some extent.

## The Domain of Language Use

### 1. Language use in domestic domain

In this study, five Hani households were selected by random to explore the condition of language use in family. The basic information of informants is presented below. The basic information of informants is as follows: a. Wang Lianxin, female, 52 years old, farmer; b. Zhangwei, Male, 24 years old, odd job in the city; c. Zhang Haiyan, female, 15 years old, student; d. Wangkang, male, 10 years old, student; e. Wang Zicheng, male, 40 years old, village leader. The result of language use in various family settings was presented in table 4.

**Table 4:** Language use in domestic settings

Participants		a	b	c	d	e
The elder to the younger	Parents to children	Ha、 <b>Ma</b>	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ha
	Grandparents to grandchildren	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha
	Parents to the daughter in law	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha、 <b>Yi</b>
The younger to the elder	Children to parents	Ha、 <b>Ma</b>	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ha、 <b>Ma</b>
	Grandchildren to grandparents	Ha、 <b>Ma</b>	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ha

**Table 4:** Language use in domestic settings (next)

Participants		a	b	c	d	e
	Daughter in law to parents	Ha、 Ma	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ha、 Yi
Among peers	Between grandparents	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha
	Between parents	Ha、 Ma	Ha	Ha	Ha、 Yi	Ha、 Yi
	Between children	Ma	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ha
	The son to the daughter in law	Ma	Ha		Yi	Ha、 Yi
Master to guest	To Hani guests	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ha
	To Hani leaders	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha
	To non-Hani leaders	Ma	Ma、 Yi	Ha	Ma	Ma、 Yi
	To non-Hani guests	Ma	Ma、 Yi	Ma	Ma	Ma
	To Hani teachers	Ha	Ma、 Ha	Ha、 Ma、 Pu	Pu	Ha
	To non-Hani teachers	Ma	Ma	Ma、 Pu	Pu	Ma
	To strangers	Ha	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma

Note: Ha= Hani language, Ma= Mandarin dialect, Yi= Yi language, Pu= standard Mandarin

Table 4 demonstrated that Hani families mainly conducted Hani and Mandarin dialect at home in addition few people conducted Yi. Hani and Mandarin dialect are the predominant community languages. On the contrary, the Hani people regularly conduct Mandarin dialect when communicate with non Hani leaders, and guests, and conduct standard Mandarin Putonghua with teachers.

The factors contributing to these phenomena are estimated as follows: (1) there are 38 households are exogamy family with Yi people among 51 households, these non-Hani people learn to communicate in Hani after moving into the village for quite few months, many people are able to speak fluent Hani after dwelling there for a year. Thus, people mainly use Hani at home; (2) nowadays, parents speak Mandarin dialect with children after birth, the elder and the young mainly communicate in Mandarin dialect, the elder conduct Hani among themselves at home; (3) the Yi people who move to the village because of exogamy sometimes speak Yi with their family members, similarly, their children are able to speak Yi. When interviewing the village leader, it was perceived that his domestic language use are complex as his wife is Yi native and he is able to speak Yi personally, so they regularly use both Hani and Yi at home and their children are also fluent in Yi.



## 2. Language use in public domains

Because the majority of Hani people in Meichong are trilingual, the condition of language use in different circumstances was investigated. The basic information of informants is as follows: a. Zhangwei, male, 24 years old, odd job in the city; b. Wangyan, 20 years old, student; c. Wang Zhiwen, male, 45 years old, farmer; d. Long Guiying, female, 60 years old, farmer. The result of their language use in various public domains was presented in table 5.

**Table 5:** Language use in public domains

Target	To Hani people				To non-Hani people				To both Hani and non Hani people			
	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d
Daily greeting	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha	Yi	Ma	Ma	Yi, Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha, Ma,
Chatting	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha	Yi	Ma	Ma	Yi, Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha, Ma,
Farm work	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha	Yi	Ma	Ma	Yi, Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha, Ma,
Market	Ha	Ha	Ha	Ha, Ma	Yi	Ma	Ma	Yi, Ma	Ma	Ma	Yi	Ha, Ma,
Hospital	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha, Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Yi, Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha, Ma,
Opening meeting	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ma	Yi	Ma	Ma	Yi, Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha, Ma,
Reading document	Ha, Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma, Ha	Ma	Ma	Ma	Yi, Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha, Ma,
Discussion	Ha, Ma	Ha	Ma	Ha	Ma	Ma	Ma	Yi, Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha, Ma,
Office	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha	Ma	Ma		Yi, Ma	Ma	Ma		Ha, Ma,
Broadcast	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ha	Yi	Ma	Ma	Yi, Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha, Ma,
Classroom	Pu	Pu		Ha	Ma	Pu		Yi, Ma	Ma	Pu		Ha, Ma,



**Table 5:** Language use in public domains (next)

Target	To Hani people				To non-Hani people				To both Hani and non Hani people			
	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d	a	b	c	d
Setting												
After class	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ha	Ma	Ma	Ma	Yi、Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha、Ma、
Festival	Ha	Ha		Ha	Yi	Ma		Yi、Ma	Ma	Ma		Ha、Ma、
Wedding	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ha	Yi	Ma	Ma	Yi、Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha、Ma、
Funeral	Ha	Ha	Ma	Ha	Yi	Ma	Ma	Yi、Ma	Ma	Ma	Ma	Ha、Ma、

Note: Ha= Hani language, Ma= Mandarin dialect, Yi= Yi language, Pu= standard Mandarin

Table 5 exhibited that the Hani people mainly spoke their mother language to Hani native speakers in various settings except in some places such as in hospital, in the meeting, and in the office and so forth, in which they mainly spoke Mandarin dialect. Thus, they often conducted Mandarin dialect and Yi with non - Hani people. Besides, children mainly communicated Mandarin at school and other circumstances, but they also spoke Hani and Yi with Hani and non-Hani people sometimes. During the investigation, the author further explored few factors contributing to the phenomena as follows: (1) they feel comfortable communicating with Hani native in Hani; (2) they conduct Mandarin dialect when see a doctor in the community clinic as doctors and nurses are Yi nationality, and they are not able to speak Hani; (3) people conduct Mandarin dialect when cadres attend in the meeting, while they conduct Hani among the Hani natives; (4) Mandarin dialect and Yi are used as main communicating languages among Hani people and non-Hani people in order to facilitate communication.

### 3. Language use at school

In the investigation, the first hand material was collected via visiting the village kindergarten, interviewing the teacher and participating in children's class and games. According to the exclusive village teacher, the village kindergarten was founded in September of 1982. She was born in the village and has being taught here for 18 years. She is in charge of the kindergarten and teaches all children. In the 1980s, children were not able to speak Mandarin dialect, so they all encountered a tough dilemma: language barrier. In order to induce children to be adapted to teaching with Mandarin as media of instruction, transitional teaching was applied in the beginning. That is, bilingual teaching of Hani and Mandarin was employed in children of level A;



Mandarin was the main media of instruction, but Hani is sometimes used to facilitate children in level B; Mandarin monolingual teaching was applied in children of level C.

With applying transitional teaching method, children could completely communicate in Mandarin when they are in level C. However, parents nowadays have changed way of language teaching to children. The parents speak Mandarin dialect to children from birth and Hani is simply acquired spontaneously in the linguistic community where Hani is the dominant language. Thus, children already get over language barrier after attending elementary school. Standard Mandarin Monolingual teaching is applied in place of transitional teaching in recent years, so the children can easily accommodate to it and get used to speaking standard Mandarin with the teacher in any circumstances.

Because there was only one teacher in the kindergarten, the compound pedagogy was applies. It is a type of pedagogy that a teacher teaches more than one grade and subject in the same classroom. In order to make both teaching and management convenient and easy, the teacher gathers all children in a classroom and divides learning task to different grades based on their levels. For example, when the teaching carries out formal teaching to level C children, level B children are required to do exercise and level A children are required to watch picture story. As a whole, the teacher emphasizes teaching level C in order to lay a strong foundation for elementary schooling. Thus, the children in level C are capable of writing number 1 to 10, calculating basic mathematics and writing some basic Chinese characters.

The teacher conducts standard Mandarin in teaching so as to facilitate children's learning in elementary school, and all children are required to speak standard Mandarin. The children proved to speak fluent standard Mandarin after the author communicate with them during the investigation. The teacher said the children get used to speaking standard Mandarin when greeting her in the village. The kindergarten teacher further mentioned that she is required to attend teacher training class monthly which is held by the township kindergarten. Standard Mandarin competition for children is held in the township every year, her students once earned prizes.

As the kindergarten is a pure Mandarin environment and parents also carry out Mandarin teaching at home, we inquired the teacher whether the pure Mandarin teaching model could threaten their mother language, she answered: "probably not, because Hani people have being inhabited in the village for hundreds years and the Hani adults are used to conduct their mother language, children will be able to speak their mother language when they grow up even if they are tending to use Mandarin right now".

In a word, the children grow up in a pure Hani environment from domestic settings to the community, the language input to the children by interlocutors is Mandarin centered, and the

school media of instruction is also standard Mandarin. Therefore, the language teaching focuses more on Mandarin than their mother language and Hani as mother language is mainly learned by children through spontaneous acquisition.

#### 400-Hani-Core Wordlist Test

In order to acquaint with the mother language ability of Hani people from different age groups, we used 400-Hani-core wordlist to test ten people by random. These core words were carefully selected based on basic vocabulary collected by the Committee of Tibetan-Burmese Phonetics and Vocabulary (Committee of Tibetan-Burmese Phonetics and Vocabulary. 1991), from which, 400 basic words<sup>5</sup> were picked.

As 400 wordlist cover various areas and parts of speech, it could objectively examine the informant's real Hani ability, with which, degree of the informant's mother language ability could be objectively evaluated. When conducting 400 words, the author read each word in Mandarin, the target was required to respond in Hani. The same criteria applied in language proficiency test are used also with four scales from superior to inferior: "proficient", "fair", "poor", and "unable to speak" except that the new item "loanword" is added. The result of the test was shown in table 6.

**Table 6:** A presentation of Hani competence of informants

No	Age	Hani (Scale: number & percentage %)									
		Proficient		Fair		Poor		Unable		Loanword	
		num	%	num	%	num	%	num	%	num	%
1	9	4	1	0	0	1	0.2	395	98.8	0	0
2	10	140	35	32	8	56	14	102	25.5	70	17.5
3	15	224	56	47	11.8	39	9.8	30	7.5	59	14.8
4	19	224	56	58	14.5	26	6.5	32	8	60	15
5	20	297	74.3	11	2.8	19	4.8	1	0.3	72	18

<sup>5</sup>The 400 words referred to various areas, such as nature, natural phenomena, position, time, animals, plants, body parts, appellation, housing parts, wearing apparel, food, utensil and others; and various parts of speech were concerned, such as verb, adjective, numeral, classifier, pronoun, adverb and so on.



**Table 6:** A presentation of Hani competence of informants (next)

No	Age	Hani (Scale: number & percentage %)									
		Proficient		Fair		Poor		Unable		Loanword	
		num	%	num	%	num	%	num	%	num	%
6	24	295	73.8	9	2.5	2	0.5	22	5.5	72	18
7	40	265	66.3	66	16.5	27	6.8	5	1.3	37	9.3
8	45	325	81.3	45	11.3	7	1.8	6	1.5	17	4.3
9	52	317	79.3	11	2.8	3	0.8	6	1.5	63	15.3
10	60	320	80	21	5.3	9	2.6	1	0.3	49	12.3

Note: A= proficient B= fair C= poor D= unable to speak

Although the investigation of degree of Hani proficiency referred in the paper reveals that the Hani people interviewed are proficient in their mother language, and their mother language is not declining, instead, they hold a strong vitality in using their mother language. On the contrary, the result of random sample investigation from ten Hani people of different age groups shows that the mother language competence of Hani people is declining to some extent. Based on table 6, it explores that the mother language ability of Hani people under 25 years old was deteriorating more than people over 25 years old. In detail, the average of the mother language ability of Hani people under 25 years old ranged from level A to D is 49.35%, 6.6%, 41.8%, 24.3% respectively, and the average of loanwords from Mandarin is 10.9%; the average of the mother language ability of Hani people over 25 years old is 76.7%, 9%, 3%, 1.1% respectively, and the average of loanwords from Mandarin is 10.9%.

The words which are all not known to each age group were further analyzed. It is summarized as follows: (1) 6-15 years old: due, back, palm, crinkle, the cripple, sister in law, sparrow, louse, wild fruit, seedling, mustard, mat, door sill, stair, rice cooker base, jar, bamboo blow, bamboo pipe and so forth. These are all frequently used daily words and refers to various aspects of life, such as appellation, parts of body, animals and plants, natural phenomena and so forth; (2) 16-24 years old: anus, louse, wild fruit, door sill; (3) 25 years old and over: sickle.

In addition, based on the analysis of loanwords used by different age groups, it is found that informants over 25 years old used less loanwords than the informants under 25 years old, and all informants use the following loanwords from Mandarin, such as various fruits, vegetables, transports, communicating tools, house utensils, construction materials, appellation and so that. During the test, some common problems were found, for instance, the informants were not able

to fluently speak some basic vocabularies in Hani. Nevertheless, it is much easier for them to express some words in Mandarin rather than in Hani.

Based on the 400-Hani-core wordlist test to the informants, the reasons of declination of mother language were analyzed, the result is as follows: (1) with the development of modern technology, the Han culture and language, as the mainstream in the modern society, have being influenced and threatened the Hani culture and language to some extent. Thus, the Hani people used many loanwords from Mandarin when conducting their mother language; (2) some new words emerged with coming into being of new inventions in modern society, especially, the words loaned in communication and transportation industry are very popular, which is normal phenomenon for Hani people as they did not have these words originally in their mother language. On the contrary, some words referring to fruits and vegetables are handed down from the ancestor, these can be found in Hani, but the Hani people nowadays are used to using loanwords to replace them; (3) with the popularity of modern products and the improvement of people's life standard, some vocabularies are disappearing from people's life, such as flea and bamboo horn and so forth.

In addition, from the late last century on, Mandarin as the media of instruction at school offers children better environment to approach the Han culture and language in place of developing their mother language competence. All school aged children from Meichong attend the community based primary school. It is a fully boarding school, so children are required to aboard at school on weekday. Hence, the children grow up in a pure Mandarin environment in a critical period of language acquisition. Furthermore, parents conduct Mandarin dialect after children are born, which strengthens their ability in Mandarin rather than Hani. On the other hand, children's mother language competence is declining overall. Therefore, all these factors result in a phenomenon that the mother language competence of young generation is weaker than that of the old generation.

### **Language Attitude**

Three informants were selected respectively from each age group to conduct the questionnaire on interviews on attitudes towards language learning and education. The result was presented below:

(1) All informants took Mandarin as a useful language. They considered learning Mandarin not only facilitate communicating with non - Hani people but also get access to better education and obtain well paid job. Therefore, more than half of the informants hoped that their children were capable of conducting fluent standard Mandarin, and they were tended to send



their children to bilingual school of standard Mandarin and English. Meanwhile, they prefer to listen to the local broadcast in standard Mandarin. What's more, more than half of the informants took standard Mandarin as the most important language in communication.

(2) In terms of the attitude towards language education, almost all people neglect teaching children their mother language in domestic and community settings, Mandarin dialect is emphasized instead. Besides, more than half of the informants deem that Hani can be spontaneously acquired and they hoped to teach their children Mandarin from birth. On the contrary, they also hold a dream that the children would become Hani and Mandarin bilingual in order to preserve their mother language and get adapted to the modern society.

(3) In terms of national sentiment, more than half deem that Hani symbolizes their national identity, so they do not hope to become Mandarin monolingual. Nevertheless, they also deem that mastering Hani not only facilitates communication with the Hani native speakers, but also preserve and descend their national culture and history.

(4) In terms of attitudes towards language use, a small proportion of the informants could accept the Hani people who work outside for years refuse to speak Hani as they think this group of people mainly conduct Mandarin outside and are used to it. However, still a few informants consider that it is not acceptable, and some even strongly reject it. Furthermore, these informants reflect that this group of Hani native discriminate their nationality and even despise their fellow native. In addition, a half of the informants are likely to teach their children Hani, and they can not accept children who refuse to speak Hani. As a whole, all informants hope to learn Hani characters.

(5) In terms of getting adapted to the modern society, all the informants realize that it is of great value to preserve their mother language but they also hold the attitude that they have to learn both Hani and Mandarin, and even English in order to survive and develop in the modern society.

In a word, the informants emphasize positive attitudes toward their mother language, Mandarin and other languages. They do not worry the mother language could die out in the future and they are good at learning non-native languages and cultures. This is the main reason why the majority of Hani people are capable of speaking more than one language. The Hani people have a wide social network to keep contact and communicate with the Han Chinese and some other ethnic groups through learning their languages. Thus, more and more Hani people speak Mandarin. Meanwhile, they are struggling for their mother language maintenance. Overall, they still hold strong desires to maintain their mother language when being influenced and assimilated by the Han culture and language. However, the maintenance of mother language is not being taken into action even if the Hani people hold strong desire continuously.

## Conclusion

In brief, the investigation is manifested that the language use among different age groups is entirely two folds: (1) the Hani adults are speaking their mother language fluently while the adolescents are influent in speaking Hani; (2) the mother language is very stable among adults and its vitality is strong, while the adolescents' mother language is declining and they mainly use Mandarin in daily communication. Although there is no clear evidence shown Hani is declining among all Hani people, but it implies that Mandarin is tending to be popularized in the future. The result further implies that the majority of Hani people own strong national identity and esteem to maintain and descend their native language. However, even if the Hani people hold strong desires to maintain their native language, with the economic globalization, the Han culture and language have being popularized gradually not only in the city but also in this remote village, in a sense, which would threaten the preservation of Hani language.



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