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Zhuang Language Vitality

A sociolinguistic survey based on the ELDIA
EuLaViBar model

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<p>Zhuangit ovat Kiinan kansantasavallan suurin virallisesti tunnustettu etninen vähemmistö, ja zhuang-kielten väitetäänkin usein kuuluvan Kiinan parhaiten ylläpidettyihin vähemmistökieliin. Tämän tutkimuksen hypoteesi kuitenkin on, että zhuang-kielten puhujien joukossa on todellisuudessa tapahtumassa kielenvaihto mandariinikiinaan päin.</p> <p>Tämä tutkimus etsii viitteitä meneillään olevasta kielenvaihdosta 1980-luvulla tai myöhemmin syntyneiden zhuangin puhujien keskuudessa käyttäen työkalunaan muokattua kiinankielistä käännoästä ELDIA-projektin luomasta European Language Vitality Barometer -kyselykaavakkeesta. Tutkimuksen aineisto on kerätty osittain internet-kyselyllä ja osittain kahdella kenttämatkalla Guangxin zhuangien autonomiselle alueelle keväällä 2015.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen data osoittaa, että nuorten zhuangin puhujien joukossa esiintyy useita kielen elinvoimaisuuden kannalta merkittäviä ongelmia, joita ovat muun muassa kielenkäyttödomeenien määrän supistuminen, kiinan kielen käytön yleistymisen koodissa ja sukupolvien välisissä kielenkäyttökonteksteissa, zhuanginkielisen koulutuksen matala suosio, zhuang-kieliin kohdistuvat negatiiviset kieliasenteet, laajamittainen standardi-zhuangin ortografian luku- ja kirjoitustaidottomuus, sekä zhuanginkielisen median käytön harvinaisuus.</p> <p>Kerätyn datan perusteella tutkimuksessa myös lasketaan ELDIA:n European Language Vitality Barometer -mallin mukaisesti elinvoimaisuusarvosana zhuangin kielelle nuorten puhujien joukossa. Kolme neljästä zhuangin kielen fokusalueesta saavutti elinvoimaisuusbarometrin laskelmissa asteikolla arvosanan yksi ("akuutisti uhanalainen"), ja yksi neljästä saavutti arvosanan kaksi ("uhattu").</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat selviä merkkejä meneillään olevasta kielenvaihdosta nuorten zhuangin puhujien keskuudessa sekä sen, että zhuang-kieliin kohdistuu merkittäviä elinvoimaisuutta heikentäviä paineita. Tutkimuksen aineisto on kuitenkin kooltaan hyvin rajattu, ja laajempiotantainen jatkotutkimus on tarpeen varmemman tiedon saamiseksi tilanteesta.</p>			
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1 Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is a multi-ethnic state comprised by 56 officially recognized nationalities, while its minority languages number in the hundreds (Poa & Lapolla 2007: 337). One of these nationalities are the Zhuang 壮, a Tai-Kadai speaking people living in the south of the country, near the border of Vietnam. The Zhuang are sometimes listed as one of the ethnic groups whose language is one of the most well maintained in the country (Sun 2010: 23; Huang 2016: 61). In this thesis, I intend to bring this claim under questioning, however, as my hypothesis is that although on the level of legislation Zhuang is well protected, in practice it is facing many of the same language maintenance problems as the numerous threatened and endangered languages of China. My research question is whether there are signs of language shift among the “young” generations of Zhuang born in the 1980s or later.

As China rises on the international stage, the importance laid upon national unity and the growth of Chinese nationalist sentiments have become an internationally noted trend. Language campaigns aiming at spreading standard Mandarin or Putonghua are taking place, some say at the cost of local dialects and languages. Minority language maintenance seems to have been deemed low-priority and in some cases even actively stifled, often on the pretence of maintaining national unity and fighting separatism. Language shift to Chinese has been reported among even the relatively well-off minorities, such as the Koreans, often due to institutional causes.¹

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is very sensitive about activism related to ethnic minorities, especially the ones that have a recent history of statehood, such as the Tibetans, Uyghurs or Mongols. However, this thesis will concentrate on the Zhuang, who do not have such a background. For most of their history the Zhuang have lived in scattered communities, unable to unify as a nation state, and therefore have not formed a threat to Chinese political power. I believe, however, that language-wise they still do not fare much better than the others.

¹ See *The Diplomat* 9.6.2016: *How Beijing Turned Koreans Into Chinese* (<http://thediplomat.com/2016/06/how-beijing-turned-koreans-into-chinese/>)

The Zhuang are the largest ethnic minority in China, and thus should not be ignored when studying the country's minority (language) policies. For years, the Zhuang were thought to be practically Chinese, and did not attract much attention from western scholars. Most Zhuang-related studies have therefore been done by Zhuang and Chinese researchers and written in Chinese. The Zhuang seem to enjoy quite a good position in society by ethnic minority standards: they have their own autonomous region, their language has been granted many legal rights, and they seem quite well integrated into Chinese society. Still, anecdotes of Zhuang children not being able to speak their mother tongue keep appearing.

If the Zhuang were facing language shift, it would be significant on the scale of the entire PRC and all its minority languages. It would show that not even the largest and most well-maintained (or so it is thought) minority languages in the country are able to maintain their language perfectly and resist the spread of Putonghua in the current situation. Logically then, it could be assumed that many of the smaller and less well-recognized languages in the country may be facing even greater maintenance problems.

Why is this important then? Among other, perhaps more obvious reasons, minority issues are a key building block in state stability. This has been pointed out for instance in the case of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The USSR language policy was considered to be one of the most politically driven in the world, but nevertheless, during the Soviet collapse and dissolution, minority language issues and the problems that had accumulated during the years were amongst the most debated.²

In the heydays of the Soviet Union, China copied Stalin's system for defining nationalities, i.e. the four commons (a common language, common territory, common economic life and common culture), and used it to categorize the vast masses of people living in the country. Chinese minority policy has been lauded as more successful than the Soviet one, however, and it has been named as one of the reasons why the PRC avoided the fate of the Soviet Union. The PRC clearly recognized the weight of minority issues early on, since most of its borders are lined

² See Konstantin Zamyatin 2014: *An Official Status for Minority Languages? – A study of state languages in Russia's Finno-Ugric Republics*. University of Helsinki.

with autonomous minority areas. Even so, minority issues are still labelled as highly sensitive today, and targeted by censorship on the Chinese internet. There were initially over 400 groups applying for nationality status in the first years of the People's Democracy of China, and only 56 have been recognized so far, which could be one factor contributing to the tension (Kaup 2000: 73–74).

Since the 1990s, the direction of Chinese minority policy seems to have become stricter, shifting towards 'unity in homogeneity' rather than 'unity in variety'. Minority language schooling has since been decreasing, minority autonomy has been put under the supervision of Han Chinese CCP secretaries, and language activists have been arrested for subversion of state power.³ Since the 2000s, Han Chinese linguistic minorities, which speak so called "dialects", are also feeling the effects of campaigns such as "Spread Mandarin and Abolish Cantonese" (*tuī pǔ fèi yuè* 推普废粤) in Guangdong province. All this could be expected to increase friction between the PRC government and its non-Mandarin speaking citizens, and make China a more hostile environment for minority languages.

As one extreme example, Uyghur language education has been all but curbed in many schools in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region during the 21st century, as Uyghur language schooling is being replaced by Standard Mandarin even on the pre-school level, officially as a solution to employment problems (Ma 2012: 40, 43). In the case of the Zhuang, this kind of transition to Standard Mandarin education has been described as voluntary, as many parents neglect their mother tongue and urge their children to study Mandarin to get a good job. One should ask, however, how voluntary can such a decision be, if one finds himself living in a society where speaking Mandarin is the only option.

In addition to inducing political stability, there is also an intrinsic value to inclusive minority language policies, as they can help preserve the languages involved. Language is a vessel of a people's history and culture, and it can even influence the way we think. It is an often-cited cliché that in order to understand a culture, one must first understand its language. On a completely opposite note, it is also said that

³ See *The New York Times* 31.8.2016: *Police in China Push for Trial of Tibetan Education Advocate*. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/31/world/asia/china-tibet-tashi-wangchuk.html>)

to destroy a people, one must first destroy their language. A language harbours a way of thinking, and once lost, it can rarely be brought back to life again. Language is so central to who we are, that linguistic rights are even listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. One could even argue that languages should be listed as intangible cultural heritage!

One often hears that a state needs a common tongue to function, and how great it would be if we all spoke the same language. There is no denying the favourable aspects of such a world. However, the people stating such an argument often forget that most people in the world are actually already multilingual. Speakers of non-dominant languages often have no choice but to learn other languages than their mother tongue just to survive, and they don't necessarily have to go to university to do that. The human brain has evolved to work with language. That is what makes us unique. We are hard-wired to learn languages starting from early childhood. Most people learn languages informally, without even thinking about it, while others study languages formally at school. Nevertheless, the end result is similar. People are born to learn languages and therefore it would be a mistake to think we should all only learn one language. Multilingualism can be supported with inclusive minority policies, such as a bilingual education system, where both the minority language and the dominant language are acquired. This would give linguistic minorities a slightly more equal start in life in relation to the majority.

This finally brings us back to the topic in question of this thesis. Bilingual Zhuang-Han education has become increasingly rare in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in recent decades, and I have heard and read scattered reports of young Zhuang not being able to speak their mother tongues any more. As mentioned above, I discovered that lots of research has been made on the language education of Zhuang and other ethnic minorities, but very little has been written on Zhuang sociolinguistics, which prompted me to select this field as the topic of this thesis.

The fact that the Zhuang have been recognized at all by researchers can be attributed to the efforts of the forefather of Zhuang studies, Vangz Yenfanh (1899-1982, Chinese name Huang Xianfan 黄现璠), who published many ground-breaking histories, such as “A Brief History of the Zhuang of Guangxi” (*Guǎngxī Zhuàngzú*

Jiǎnshǐ 广西壮族简史, 1957), “Nungz Ciqgau” (*Nóng Zhìgāo* 侬智高, 1983) and “The Comprehensive History of the Zhuang” (*Zhuàngzú Tōngshǐ* 壮族通史, 1988). Mister Vangz’s works undoubtedly raised the profile of the Zhuang people both in the eyes of the domestic and the international community, enabling academics of various fields to conduct research related to the people and language. However, as mentioned above, Zhuang sociolinguistics are yet to be studied widely, as research related to the field seems to have started appearing only as recently as in the late 2000s and early 2010s (see for example Qin & Sun 2008, Bodomo 2010, Deng 2012) .

In this study I aim to provide a preliminary review on the issue of Zhuang language vitality among young adults by the means of a small-scale sociolinguistic survey based on the ELDIA European Language Vitality Barometer questionnaire. In chapter two, I will introduce the essential theory related to minority language vitality and revitalization. In chapter three, previous research relevant to the language situation of the PRC, and more specifically the Zhuang, will be introduced. In chapter four, the methodology of this study will be explained, while in chapter five, the data and results will be analysed. The results are then further discussed in chapter six, and conclusions are finally made in chapter seven.

1.1 A few words on terminology and other technicalities

In this thesis, I will discuss issues related to the group of Tai languages commonly known as “the Zhuang language”. However, as “the Zhuang language” is actually composed of several different languages, it poses a certain terminological problem. In my case, I have solved that problem by referring to the Zhuang macrolanguage (which includes all variants of Zhuang, including Standard Zhuang) in the indefinite form as “Zhuang language”. Single variants of Zhuang are referred to with their respective nomenclature.

What is commonly referred to as “Chinese”, I refer to as “Han language”, which encompasses all the different Sinitic languages and dialects often labelled under this title. This contrasts with “Standard Mandarin” or “Putonghua”, which I use to specifically refer to the Standard variant of Mandarin Chinese based on the Beijing dialect and used as the national language of the PRC.

Putonghua words or names are given in the *pīnyīn* romanization, and in a few cases, also Chinese logograms (*Hànzì*) are provided if relevant. The Chinese logograms are given in the simplified form currently used in the PRC, as the topic of this thesis mainly concentrates on phenomena taking place in that specific country. Zhuang words or names are given in the *sawcuengh* script of Standard Zhuang.

2 Theory

In this chapter, I will introduce the main theoretical framework relevant to this study, surrounding mainly the issues of language endangerment, language maintenance and language shift. These three phenomena form the focus of this thesis, and their definitions, causes and processes will be examined below, along with other essential topics and terminology.

2.1 Language or dialect?

Before discussing language endangerment, it would be wise to first define what constitutes a language, and what is a dialect. As a core concept of linguistics, it may not be a surprise that there is some disagreement over what these terms mean. In relation to each other, human languages, however, are usually divided into two categories, as introduced by Heinz Kloss in 1967. First, there are the *abstandsprachen*, or “distance languages”, which are clearly recognizable as separate languages by their distinctness from any other language, which is the case for example with any isolate language in the world. Second, there are the *ausbausprachen*, or “constructed languages”, which from a linguistic point of view might be considered dialects, but have become standardized languages due to political action. Therefore, *ausbausprachen* may be intelligible to speakers of other *ausbausprachen*, such as in the case of Czech and Slovak, or Norwegian and Danish, which are part of the West Slavic and Scandinavian dialect continuums. In linguistic terms, *ausbausprachen* do not necessarily constitute separate languages, since they are merely political constructs. (Trudgill 2006: 647).

Dialects are usually thought to be “non-standard” variants of a certain language. When distinguishing a language from a dialect, the general linguistic criterion is mutual intelligibility: if speakers of two language varieties are able to converse with

each other, then it's a question of dialects; if not, then it's a question of languages (Mesthrie 2006: 474). In actuality this is not always the case, however. Dialects may form continuums, where variants are intelligible only to the dialects located next to them in the continuum, meaning that variants located in the opposite ends of this dialect chain are mutually unintelligible, but may still be considered technically the same language (Edwards 2013: 9). In other cases, dialects of one language may be unintelligible, but still connected to each other through a shared standard variant, identity or literature (Ethnologue 2016b).

At this point, it becomes clear that in actuality, the distinction between a dialect and a language is often a political endeavor more concerned with state-building aspirations than linguistics. In Europe, this phenomenon has been witnessed dozens of times, perhaps most recently, for example, in the divisions of the Czechoslovak and Serbo-Croatian languages (Edwards 2013: 9–10). The resulting Czech, Slovak, Serbian and Croatian languages (as well as Bosnian and Montenegrin) are all examples of the aforementioned *ausbau* languages, that have been created through conscious political effort.

In China, the language/dialect question is also influenced by political concerns. Officially, “Chinese” is thought to be a single language called *Hànyǔ* 汉语 (“the language of the Han people”), made up of numerous dialects (*fāngyán* 方言). However, many of these “dialects” are mutually unintelligible, but since they are spoken by the Han ethnicity, according to the official logic, they must be part of the same language (see Background chapter for more details). However, outsiders often divide “Chinese” into at least seven languages: Mandarin, Wu, Min, Cantonese, Hakka, Gan and Xiang (Bradley 2006: 319). Also, the term usually considered to be equivalent to “dialect”, *fāngyán*, complicates the situation further. *Fāngyán* directly translates into local-speech and is actually not semantically equivalent to the term dialect. Historically, and sometimes even nowadays, *fāngyán* has been used to refer to any language or dialect, Sinitic or otherwise, that is different from the standard variant of Chinese of that time. Therefore, the term *fāngyán* should be translated as topolect instead of dialect. (Mair 1991: 4). The logic of grouping together several related languages under the title of a single language, and the generally unclear division of “dialect” and “language”, could on their behalf be contributing to

language endangerment in China, since non-standard variants may be considered less prestigious than the standard language and therefore more expendable.

2.2 Language endangerment

Language endangerment means the situation where a language is heading towards extinction, which happens when its speakers stop using it. If a language is not documented before this happens, it can never be revived again. Language endangerment is caused by both external and internal forces. External forces include military, economic, religious, cultural and educational subjugation, while internal forces mainly refer to the speakers' own negative attitudes towards their language. In order to survive, endangered languages need a meaningful role in the host society, preferably on all three levels of community, nation and the international setting. (UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages 2003⁴: 2).

In recent decades, language endangerment and revitalization have become a popular topic among linguists and minority language speakers alike. This is due to many reasons, some of which are related to globalization and increased consciousness towards the rights of minorities. Another reason may be that language extinction is now happening perhaps faster than ever, meaning that up to 90 percent of the roughly 6800 languages spoken in the world today may go extinct during the 21st century (UNESCO 2003: 2; Grenoble 2006: 137). From the point of view of linguistics, the diversity of human culture, and the speakers of the endangered languages themselves, this is of grave concern.

Before possible revitalization efforts for a language are undertaken, the vitality of the language in question should be assessed. The UNESCO Ad Hoc Group on Endangered Languages has defined nine factors crucial to language vitality (UNESCO 2003: 7–17):

1. Intergenerational language transmission
2. Absolute number of speakers
3. Proportion of speakers within the total population
4. Trends in existing language domains
5. Response to new domains and media

⁴ Referred to as UNESCO 2003 below.

6. Materials for language education and literacy
7. Governmental and institutional language policies, including official status and use
8. Community members' attitudes toward their own language
9. Amount and quality of documentation. (UNESCO 2003: 7–17).

These factors need to be considered in conjunction with each other. If one only looks at the total population of China's Zhuang minority for example, one may think that the language should have no problem surviving in the future. But when one considers the different factors in conjunction, it can be seen that the Zhuang are surrounded by an increasingly Mandarin speaking society of hundreds of millions of people. And if one looks even closer, one notices that there is actually not just one Zhuang language, but several, some of which are quite small on the scale of the PRC. Therefore, the Zhuang languages may not be as vital as initially thought.

The single most important factor contributing to language endangerment is the interruption of intergenerational language transmission, that is, when most children of a language community no longer learn the language from their parents (Grenoble & Whaley 2006: 6). Another factor whose importance is often stressed is the range of domains of language use. The most important domain is education, since language use in education also determines language use in other domains. If only the dominant language is used in education, the use of non-dominant languages in other domains will decline as well (Grenoble & Whaley 2006: 8–10). A local language does not have to dominate all domains to survive, a system of diglossia can suffice. That is when the local language is used in certain fixed domains and the majority language is used in others. However, bilingualism without diglossia, for example when the home is not strictly restricted for only local language use, is never long-lasting and will result in language shift and language endangerment (Fishman 1989: 187–188).

Language attitudes are also vital for the preservation and revitalization of a language, and should be assessed on three levels: governmentally, among the majority, and among the minority. Language revitalization almost always involves improving community attitudes about the endangered language (Grenoble & Whaley 2016: 14). The attitudes of the government and the majority can affect those of the minorities themselves. Positive attitudes are a prerequisite for the successful revitalization of a language.

Grenoble & Whaley (2006: 18) offer a six-way scheme for categorizing languages with respect to endangerment:

Safe: [--] all generations use the language in all or nearly all domains. [--] large speaker base relative to others spoken in the same region and typically functions as the language of government, education and commerce. Many safe languages enjoy official status within nation-states, and as such tend to be held in higher prestige than other languages.

At Risk: [--] vital [--] without any observable pattern of a shrinking speaker base, but lacks some of the properties of a safe language. For example, it is spoken in a limited number of domains or has a smaller number of speakers than other languages in the same region.

Disappearing: [--] observable shift towards another language in the communities where it is spoken. With an overall decreasing proportion of intergenerational transfer, the speaker base sinks because it is not being replenished. [--] a more restricted set of domains, and a language of wider communication begins to replace it in a greater percentage of homes.

Moribund: A moribund language is one that is not transmitted to children.

Nearly extinct: A language can be considered nearly extinct when only a handful of speakers of the oldest generation remains.

Extinct: An extinct language is one with no remaining speakers. (Grenoble & Whaley 2006: 18).

This study uses a questionnaire tool-kit developed by the European Language Diversity for All (ELDIA) project, which uses a slightly different scale for assessing language maintenance, which will be introduced in the methodology section of this paper. The results of this study will be viewed mainly in the light of ELDIA's own scale, but also compared to the one introduced above.

2.3 Language shift, language maintenance & language revitalization

Language endangerment is usually preceded by a long process of language shift, except in the cases of mass genocide or natural disasters, where a large proportion of a population is killed suddenly. Language shift is a symptom of an unequal power relationship between two languages or societies: essentially a relationship of dominance and submission (Edwards 2013: 73). When language shift occurs, the "submissive" or local language loses its functions, social or otherwise, in favor of the "dominant" language, also called the language of wider communication (LWC). In other words, the speakers of the local language start using the LWC in their daily lives at a faster rate than the speaker pool is being replenished by intergenerational language transmission (children acquiring the local language from their parents), leading initially to language endangerment, and finally to "language death" or extinction (Fishman 1989: 391).

Language shift is a delicate affair, caused by a multitude of factors. However, Fishman (1989: 212) has said that language shift is always a sign of dislocation: the breakdown of previously established social functions, relationships, situations and domains, that no longer call for the use of the language that was previously used. This can happen either among indigenous peoples or (im-)migrants, who find themselves surrounded by a powerful LWC, which they start using even internally, among their own community. On the contrary, sometimes the (im-)migrants' language takes over and replaces the indigenous local language, but this requires a forceful effort, such as in the era of colonialism, often coupled with serious crimes against humanity. The optimal situation, where neither of these happens and language maintenance is reached, requires diglossia as mentioned above: a situation where the LWC and local language have different social functions, and therefore do not compete with each other. (Fishman 1989: 202–215). For maintenance to be possible, the local language needs to retain control of the domains of necessity (home, school and work), as well as positive language attitudes (Edwards 2013: 74).

Language attitudes refer to the attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes people have about language communities, both positive and negative, and both of themselves and of others. Language attitudes are based on social connotations, and not on the inherent qualities of any language variant itself, although people project these attitudes onto the languages themselves. An important factor in determining attitudes towards a certain language are its levels of standardization and vitality. Language attitudes are primarily manifested as feelings and thoughts, but may sometimes even affect our actions in life, for example at school or at work. Attitudes towards standard variants usually connect them with high status and competence, while non-standard variants are perceived as low-status and expressive of a group identity. Language attitudes may speed up language shift if an instrumental value of usefulness is connected to the dominant language variant, or if one's own language relates to a value of uselessness. (Edwards 2006: 326–329).

When language shift is caused by attitudes instead of forceful imposition, it is at its core a manifestation of power relations. This form of language spread (of the LWC) is called language diffusion. In this case, the LWC can rely on its control of cultural and economic capital, access to power and resources, as well as the education system, to attract speakers of non-dominant languages. It should also be noted, that

the language diffusion process has been shown to result in mother tongue replacement more often among migrant populations than indigenous populations, since indigenous peoples usually still have a relatively intact social structure for the use of their languages, since they are less dislocated than migrants. (Fishman 1989: 242–244).

To avoid becoming an extinct language, endangered languages should secure dominance in the “low” strata of language use, instead of fighting for power in the “high” strata with the LWC, which is a fight which they are destined to lose. The “low” strata include family, neighborhood, elementary schooling, work and religion, while the “high” strata refer to government, art, science, etc. Having a presence on the lower levels of working life is crucial for a non-dominant language, since work is where most people spend most of their lives, and if the language is present there, there is at least some incentive to learn it. Only after security is reached in this intimate stratum of language use, can “higher” uses begin to be developed. (Fishman 1989: 396–401). Forcibly promoting the use of the endangered language in “high” domains that are controlled by the LWC has actually lead to a decrease in the use of the endangered language in the home, at least in the case of Basque between 1957–1987 (Fishman 1991: 54–55). For revitalization to succeed, favorable policies are required from the government, while community building efforts are needed from the populace. For what use are favorable policies and language rights, if no one is interested in utilizing them?

Language revitalization means a concerted and premeditated effort to bring back to use a language, which has for whatever reason fallen out of use. Revitalization efforts are often aimed at languages that are already dead (extinct), dying (moribund) or severely endangered. Some commonly noted examples of successful language revitalization are for example the cases of Cornish (last speaker died in 1777, now spoken by hundreds as a second language), Hebrew (only used in religious contexts for centuries until the 1880s, now vigorously used as the national language of the state of Israel), Hawai’ian, and Maori (Edwards 2013: 72,76). Also the recent revitalization efforts of Inari Sami in Finland have been considered successful (see Pasanen 2015). However, language revitalization efforts would be much easier if they were started already before a language reaches this critical stage. Since most

languages in the world are expected to go extinct by the end of this century, it could even be said that they could all benefit from revitalization efforts.

In order to revitalize a language or to reverse language shift, in case the language in question has not yet gone extinct, one's first priority should be restoring intergenerational language transmission and creating a language environment of stable diglossia, where both the local language and the LWC have their clearly defined functions or domains. This requires not only an effort from the language community in the form of cultural reconstruction and community building, but also from institutions in the form of allowing language communities to reclaim their linguistic rights and self-control. In the case of an extinct language, some preliminary steps are required, such as the reconstruction of the language and the initiation of adult second-language teaching (Fishman 1991: 17, 86, 399; Fishman 2001: 466). As stated earlier, language attitudes also play a key role in achieving vitality, and they often have to be improved. Negative language attitudes are perpetuated through stereotypes and legislation that defines the relative status of languages. For revitalization to be possible, these need to be changed for more inclusive ones, since speakers of low-status linguistic groups are generally less able to mobilize politically to improve their situation themselves (Bourhis & Barrette 2006: 247).

3 Background

The topic of this thesis falls into the field of sociolinguistics, which means that in order to reach an understanding of it, one needs to have a grasp of the social and societal background of the language in study. Therefore, a brief introduction to Zhuang language issues, Zhuang language education, relevant demographics, and the minority and language policies of China will follow.

3.1 The demographics and language situation of the PRC and Guangxi

As a country of over 1.33 billion people, the People's Republic of China is an ethnically and linguistically diverse state. According to the 2010 census, the Han Chinese make up 91.60 percent of the total population, totalling at over 1.22 billion people. The remaining 8.40 percent, or approximately 112 million people, is mostly composed of the 55 officially recognized ethnic minority groups (National Bureau of

Statistics of the People's Republic of China 2010⁵). There are 125 officially recognized minority languages in the PRC, although some sources list almost 300 different languages, depending on the way of counting (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 337; Ethnologue 2016c). The official PRC method groups all Sinitic languages or “dialects” together as one language, even though many of these dialects are mutually unintelligible. This same logic has been applied to minority languages, and therefore their official number should be considered lower than linguistic criteria would allow for (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 345–346). The languages of the PRC encompass several language families, including the Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, Austro-Asiatic, Hmong-Mien, and Indo-European families, as well as the Altaic typological group (of language families).

The 56 recognized ethnic groups of China range in size from over 1.2 billion, in the case of the Han, to about 3500 in the case of the Tatars. In addition to these recognized groups there are also over 640 000 people whose ethnicity has not yet been identified, which may mean there are still new groups to be recognized. It should be noted, however, that even the existing taxonomy includes some inconsistencies, because in some cases, people may have been included in a certain ethnic group solely based on their geographic location, while some groups may have been divided because of administrative borders, such as in the case of the Bouyei and the Zhuang (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 344). See appendix 1 for a complete list of the demographic composition of China according to the 2010 census.

With a population of almost 17 million, the Zhuang are the largest ethnic minority group in China. Almost 86 percent of them, or roughly 14.5 million people, live in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (GZAR). Other major concentrations are in the neighbouring provinces of Yunnan and Guangdong, which have Zhuang populations of roughly 1.2 million and 877 000 respectively. As populous as they may seem, the Zhuang make up only about 31.4 percent of the population of the GZAR. The largest ethnicity in the autonomous region are the Han, comprising 62.8 percent of the population. The remaining 5.8 percent are made up of several smaller ethnic groups. (National Bureau of Statistics 2010). Within Guangxi, the ethnic minority population, including most of the Zhuang, are concentrated in the western

⁵ Referred to as National Bureau of Statistics 2010 below.

part of the autonomous area, while the prefectures with a Han Chinese majority are all in the east, close to Guangdong province, as seen in figure 1 and chart 1 below. (Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Bureau of Statistics 2011).

Figure 1: Prefectures with ethnic minorities in majority (dark grey) (Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Bureau of Statistics 2011).

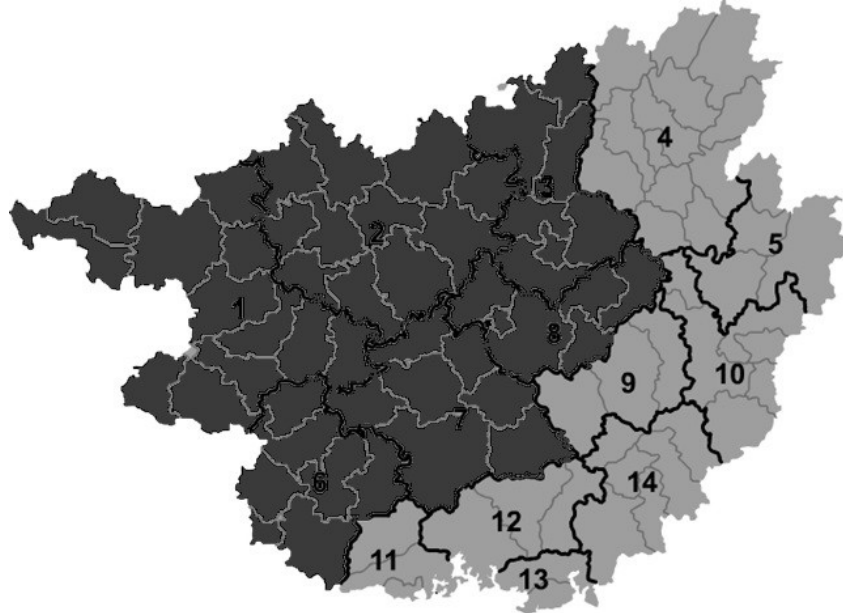


Figure 1: 1. Baise, 2. Hechi, 3. Liuzhou, 4. Guilin, 5. Hezhou, 6. Chongzuo, 7. Nanning, 8. Laibin, 9. Guigang, 10. Wuzhou, 11. Fangchenggang, 12. Qinzhou, 13. Beihai, 14. Yulin.

Prefecture	Minority Population	Mi. Percentage of total	Zhuang population	Zh. Percentage of total
Chongzuo	1 757 200	88,11 %	N/A	N/A
Baise	2 948 400	85,05 %	N/A	N/A
Hechi	2 826 400	83,89 %	N/A	N/A
Laibin	1 612 900	76,82 %	N/A	N/A
Nanning	3 536 600	53,09 %	3 390 400	50,90 %
Liuzhou	1 920 100	51,08 %	N/A	N/A
Fangchenggang	381 400	44,00 %	N/A	N/A
Hezhou	323 200	16,54 %	N/A	N/A
Guilin	734 700	15,47 %	N/A	N/A
Guigang	608 000	14,76 %	N/A	N/A
Qinzhou	325 100	10,56 %	N/A	N/A
Wuzhou	64 600	2,24 %	N/A	N/A
Beihai	29 900	1,94 %	N/A	N/A
Yulin	42 000	0,77 %	N/A	N/A
Guangxi total	17 110 500	37,18 %	14 448 500	31,39 %

Chart 1: Guangxi prefectures by minority population proportion (Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Bureau of Statistics 2011).

In addition to the Han and the Zhuang, all other 54 officially recognized ethnic minority groups are also present in Guangxi (National Bureau of Statistics 2010). However, only twelve have a population of over 10 000, which are listed in chart 2 below. In the late 1980s, Zhuang was still known to act as an inter-ethnic lingua franca at least in rural settings (Deng 2012: 143). Nowadays, however, the tool of communication between different groups in Guangxi is usually either Putonghua, Southwestern Mandarin or a variety of Cantonese (Yuan & Huang 2005: 65).

Ethnicity	Pop.
Han 汉族	28 916 096
Zhuang 壮族	14 448 422
Yao 瑶族	1 493 530
Miao 苗族	475 492
Kam 侗族	305 565
Mulao 仫佬族	172 305
Maonan 毛南族	65 587
Hui 回族	32 319
Vietnamese 京族	23 283
Bouyei 布依族	20 072
Sui 水族	13 559
Manchu 满族	11 159

Chart 2: Guangxi ethnic groups with populations of over 10 000 (National Bureau of Statistics 2010).

Although the Zhuang population is large, the Han population is twice its size on the Guangxi level and almost a hundred times larger on the national level. In the case of some smaller ethnic groups in Guangxi, language shift towards Zhuang has been reported to be taking place, while elsewhere reports of Zhuang language shift towards Chinese have begun to surface (Li & Luo 2006: 4; Deng 2012: 147). This is linked to a general trend in China: due to economic and societal change, contacts with other minority groups and the Han have increased, resulting in language shift towards more dominant minority languages and ultimately towards Han language (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 340).

In the 2010s, there have been several case studies suggesting ongoing language shift or even endangerment of varieties of Zhuang (see Deng 2012 & 2014, Huang 2013, Ye 2014). Huang's (2013) case study of Du'an Yao autonomous county found that the domains of Zhuang language use were decreasing, while the number of children learning Zhuang as their first language has dropped to around 40 percent, meaning

that in this particular case intergenerational language transmission has been disrupted (Huang 2013: 8–9). Also Deng’s studies (2012 & 2014) of the Bama Zhuang variety found that Zhuang use was restricted to the home and intergenerational transmission was in the process of being interrupted. These and other findings brought Deng to the conclusion that the Bama variety of Zhuang was in the process of becoming endangered, even though it functioned as the lingua franca of the county as recently as 1986. Language attitudes in Guangxi favour Han over Zhuang, which is leading to Zhuang-speaking parents opting for Han as their domestic language and the language of education, so their children would be able to advance in life outside of the village (Qin & Sun 2008: 77; Deng 2012: 146; Huang 2013: 9).

Literacy in Zhuang is reportedly rare among the younger generations (Bodomo 2010: 181, 188; Kaup 2000: 144–145). Zhuang has been written with two different orthographies during its history. The first one to come into use is called *sawndip*, meaning “uncooked/raw letters”, or *fāngkuài zhuàngzì* 方块壮字 (“square Zhuang characters”) in Putonghua. *Sawndip* was first created during the Tang Dynasty, and has been used at least in poetry, lyrics and religious texts, but was never standardized and received no support from the local government, which itself used *Hànzì* (Chinese characters) for writing (Zhang et al 1999: 429). In form, the *sawndip* characters are usually a combination of two *Hànzì* – one representing meaning and the other approximating the pronunciation of the word in the local Zhuang variant. Therefore, *sawndip* first requires literacy in *Hànzì*, as well as the local Zhuang variant in question, in order to be comprehensible. Bodomo (2010: 188–189) has reported *sawndip* still being used in 2003 in the worship rituals of *Baeugroxdoh* (布洛陀 in Chinese), the creator god and primogenitor in the Mo religion of the Zhuang.



Figure 2: The word “sawndip” written in the sawndip orthography (Author: Kanguole; Source: Wikimedia Commons).

Apart from *sawndip*, a Romanized orthography called *sawcuengh* (or *zhuàngwén* 壮文 in Putonghua) was created in 1955 by a linguistic work group sent from Beijing, led by professor Yuan Jiahua 袁家骅. The orthography is used for writing Standard Zhuang, which was also created during that time. Standard Zhuang is based on a mixture of Northern Zhuang dialects, and it uses the northern Wuming dialect as its phonetic standard. The original *sawcuengh* orthography uses the Latin alphabet and 11 additional non-Latin symbols to represent each phoneme. There are several tones in Zhuang, and in the orthography, the first tone is unmarked, while the rest are marked with the unpronounced letters “z”, “j”, “x”, “q” and “h”, and the pronounced letters “p” and “b”, placed in the end of each syllable. An orchestrated effort to popularize the script and standard language continued until 1966, when the tumultuous Cultural Revolution forced all language promotion work to be ceased and the related organizations to be disbanded. The work continued in 1980, and an improved version of the script was adopted in 1982, which is still in use today. This version of the *sawcuengh* removed all previously used non-Latin symbols from the orthography. (Zhang et al 1999: 429–430). In and after the 1980s, a complete bilingual Zhuang-Han education system reaching from preschool to university was also established. However, in the 21st century, this system has sunk into a crisis of unpopularity, caused by a lack of cooperation between various officials, serious employability problems among students, and a constantly worsening environment for the use of the Standard Zhuang language and script, among other reasons. (Yuan 2015: 35, 37–38).

The *sawcuengh* orthography was criticized immediately in the 1950s by some Zhuang people, who asked whether “this strange squiggly script which looks like a chicken’s intestines” could really be called writing, suggesting that the new system was too different from the traditional *Hànzì* or *sawndip* (Kaup 2000: 140). The script was also seemingly created without consideration towards the differences between Northern and Southern Zhuang variants. Apart from the script being often deemed unintuitive when people first saw it, the selection of the Wuming variant as the standard has also been criticized, as it is not easily intelligible with other variants. Probably at least partly for this reason, the orthography sees hardly any everyday use in Guangxi, apart from two newspapers published in Nanning (*Sam Nyied Sam* and

Gvangjsih Minzcuz Bau). Therefore, it is no surprise that literacy in the script is rare. (Bodomo 2010: 181, 188; Kaup 2000: 144–145).

Low literacy in Zhuang is also linked to a perceived “uselessness” of the language, the low funding of Zhuang language education, and the unstandardised, low-quality teaching materials (Kaup 2000: 143–146). The disruption caused by the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, and the subsequent shift to monolingualism and centralism has also been blamed for the failure in creating political, economic and cultural centres for the ethnic minority communities of the PRC, which would undoubtedly have helped in creating and promoting standardised prestige varieties of the minority languages (M. Zhou 2012: 24).

Even though Guangxi is officially an autonomous region of the Zhuang, Standard Zhuang does not play a significant role as an administrative language or an interethnic language in the region, as these functions are nowadays occupied by Han language. This is especially explicit in the cities, where Zhuang is hardly ever used in public contexts, and urban-born children predominantly do not learn Zhuang as their first language (Bodomo 2010: 181). In some areas, the dominance of Han language reaches even county-level towns, meaning that Zhuang remains relatively safe only in the most rural villages where the population is more ethnically homogenous (Deng 2014: 97–98).

Since most of the minority groups apart from the Zhuang are relatively small in population, it is safe to assume that the minority-dominated prefectures, in the west of Guangxi, are mostly populated by Zhuang. One could easily be mistaken to see this as a relatively large, continuous Zhuang homestead, beneficial for the use of the Zhuang languages. However, as we will learn below, the Zhuang are a “mix and match” nationality, made up of speakers of different Tai-Kadai languages dispersed around Guangxi and its vicinity, with pockets of unrelated peoples and languages, such as the Miao and Yao, mixed among them (Ostapirat 2000: 238). This heterogeneity, coupled with the twists and turns of history, has resulted in Han language, or more recently Putonghua, taking the role of the local lingua franca.

3.2 A short history of the Zhuang in light of ethnic minority policy

The Tai-speaking peoples nowadays known as the Zhuang, Bouyei (or Buyi), Dai etc. are indigenous inhabitants of Southern China and South East Asia, who first came into contact with the Chinese during the Qin and Han Dynasties, some 2000 years ago (Ballard 1981: 165; Kaup 2000: 26–28; Baker 2002: 4). During this period, the technologically advanced Chinese started moving into areas south of the Yangtze, which were already inhabited by Tai, Austronesian and Tibeto-Burman peoples, also known as the *Bǎi Yuè*, which could be translated as “the hundred peoples across the river Yangtze”. The *Bǎi Yuè* initially resisted colonization, but were ultimately absorbed into the growing empire. This resistance and hostility of small localities resulted in linguistic divergence, creating the linguistic mosaic zone that we nowadays see in Southern China. Linguistic mosaic zones, which consist of scattered local languages, typically inhibit the creation of nation states, which has also been the case in Southern China. (Edmondson 2007: 18–19). Chinese control over the South was finalised during the Song Dynasty, when Song armies defeated the Tai leader Nungz Ciqgau, after which the Tai of Southern China would never again have a chance at independence, although in the case of Guangxi, ethnic violence continued well into the 20th century (Barlow 1987: 250; Kaup 2000: 46). The Zhuang of China and the Nung of Vietnam still venerate Nungz Ciqgau as a national hero to this day.

The ethnic minority group known today as the Zhuang was created in 1953 by the PRC government by joining together Tai tribes that felt little connection or unity to each other. These tribes had even been engaged in warfare against each other in the past. (Kaup 2000: 4–5). These tribes are divided into two groups: one speaking Northern Tai languages and one speaking Central Tai languages. These language groups are what the Chinese call the “Northern Zhuang dialect” and “the Southern Zhuang dialect”. However, the mesh of languages and identities is more complex than that, as over a dozen autonyms have been recorded among the Zhuang, which should be considered when recognizing different communities (Zhang et al 1999: 3–4, 318). Some of the “Northern Zhuang dialect” speakers use autonyms akin to the name “Zhuang”, while some of them use the same autonym as their northern neighbours and linguistic relatives, the Bouyei of Guizhou province. Meanwhile,

“Southern Zhuang” speakers use the same autonyms as their southern neighbours and linguistic relatives, the Tho and Nung of Vietnam. (Luo 2008b: 319).

The division of autonyms as well as linguistic features within the northern and southern groups have been explained as the two groups having divergent roots among the ancient *Bǎi Yuè* people. Chinese Zhuang researchers agree that the Northern Zhuang group, as well as the Bouyei, are descended from the ancient *Xī'ōu* 西瓯 people, who used to live in the region some 2000 years ago. Meanwhile, the Southern Zhuang group, including the Tho and Nung of Vietnam, originates from the *Luòyuè* 骆越 people, who inhabited southern Guangxi and northern Vietnam at that same period. These two peoples started to mingle and finally amalgamated together only after Emperor Qin Shi Huang invaded the *Bǎi Yuè* in 221 BCE, forcing them under a unified administration. (Zhang et al 1999: 6–8).

The mosaic-like ethnic composition of the Guangxi area, and Southwestern China in general, has undoubtedly been further complicated over time by the rugged landscape of the area. The poor infrastructure and communication networks of the past made interaction over long distances impractical, which meant that the many scattered peoples of any given area usually only had made contact with their immediate neighbours – often in this case, peoples of different ethnicities that spoke non-Tai languages. Even if there were people beyond the neighbouring villages who could be considered part of the same group, they would anyhow be excluded, as there was no frequent communication with them. This resulted in many interspersed groups that all had developed a separate identity of their own. And to complicate the situation even further, Guangxi has seen many forced population transfers at different stages of history, that have further mixed the ethnic map of the area (Zhang et al 1999: 13). The Zhuang never had the chance to develop a unified script, and neither have they had any recent experiences of independent statehood that would have created a sense of nationalism among the different groups (Kaup 2000: 56–58). After the Communist revolution, this posed a problem for the CCP that wanted to unite the Zhuang to fight for the common cause of socialism.

After seizing political power, in order to implement its economic and social plans, the CCP had to gain control of the entire territory of the PRC. To achieve this, it first

had to integrate vast minority areas into the PRC state, which was done by appealing to the ethnic minorities with promises of autonomy. During the first four years of its administration, the CCP received calls for recognition from over four hundred different groups that sought official minority status, seeking the benefits that came therein, such as autonomy. The CCP could not grant autonomous government to all the different groups in western Guangxi, so they decided to convince several local groups of belonging to a larger group called the “Zhuang”. (Kaup 2000: 73–74).

Few Zhuang actively promoted Zhuang autonomy and many actually resisted it, claiming that their nationality was not Zhuang, but Zhuang-speaking Han instead, perhaps out of fear of the ethnic clashes that had continued until the founding of the PRC, or of previous experiences of exploitation by the ruling class (Kaup 2000: 46–47, 87). In the first national census of 1953 many Zhuang still registered themselves either as Han or as a member of their local tribe or branch, while only 6.61 million registered themselves as Zhuang. (Kaup 2000: 87, 91). Therefore, the CCP dispatched ethnic identification teams to clear out the situation. Political factors weighed in heavily and nationality was sometimes defined more by geographical location than the characteristics of any individual groups. (Kaup 2000: 88). Finally, in 1958, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous region was founded as the autonomous area of the newly-created Zhuang nationality, radically altering the existing local conceptions of ethnic identity (Kaup 2000: 73–74).

3.3 One Zhuang language or several Zhuang languages?

The Zhuang languages are a group of Tai languages spoken mostly by the Zhuang nationality in the GZAR and the adjacent provinces of Guangdong and Yunnan, as well as in Vietnam near the Sino-Vietnamese border (Zhang et al 1999: 1). The Zhuang languages belong to the Tai language group, which is usually classified as a subgroup of the Tai-Kadai (Kra-Dai) language family. Tai-Kadai is a language family of almost 100 million speakers, and it is most diverse in Southern China. Meanwhile, its largest population centre and spread zone lies in South-East Asia, where for example Thai and Lao are spoken, which are the only Tai-Kadai languages that serve as national languages. (Diller 2008: 31; Enfield 2005: 184).

There is still an ongoing debate about the definition of Tai-Kadai and it could be discussed in length, along with the related terminology, which is still evolving. Traditionally the Tai languages have been linked with Sino-Tibetan, forming a language family called Sino-Tai, a theory still supported by Chinese scholars. Elsewhere the theory has been abandoned since the 1940s, since the similarities between Sinitic and Tai are only due to borrowings (Smyth 2006: 481). Nowadays, the Tai languages are usually grouped together with the Kadai (Kra) languages, forming the Tai-Kadai (Kra-Dai) family, which is considered non-controversial outside of China. A more controversial connection between Tai and Austronesian has also been suggested (Benedict 1997, Sagart 2004). Overall, the nature of the connections of Tai-Kadai still remains somewhat unsettled (Pittayaporn 2009: 5; Luo 2008a: 9–24).

There are different opinions about the classification of Zhuang as well. Chinese linguists often consider it one language divided into two dialects (*fāngyán* 方言), northern and southern, which are further split into local variants (*tǔyǔ* 土语). For example, Zhang et al (1999: 12–13) divide the two dialects into 13 local variants. However, outside of China, the northern and southern dialect groups are usually considered to be different languages (Smyth 2006: 481). Some even suggest that also the local variants could be considered separate languages (Pittayaporn 2009: 298; Ethnologue 2016a). Ethnologue (2016a) lists 16 different languages grouped under the Zhuang macrolanguage, two of which are classified as threatened, and one as moribund. According to Ethnologue (2016a) the largest of these languages is Yongbei Zhuang, with almost two million speakers, while the smallest is Lianshan Zhuang, with 48,000 speakers.

The two so-called Zhuang dialects actually belong to different branches of the Tai language family: Northern Zhuang is a part of the Northern Tai branch and Southern Zhuang belongs to the Central Tai branch. Northern Zhuang is more similar to its northern neighbour Bouyei than to Southern Zhuang, while Southern Zhuang is more similar to its southern neighbour Nung than to Northern Zhuang. (Li 1976; Edmondson & Solnit 1997: 2; Luo 2008b: 318–319).

It is quite safe to say that at least Northern and Southern Zhuang are separate languages. Chinese scholars will hardly recognize this fact, however, as it seems natural to them that dialects of one language may be unintelligible to each other. This

is as much a political question as it is a terminological one. The Chinese often use the term *fāngyán* indiscriminately of both languages and dialects, but perhaps even more importantly, if one were to recognize, for example, that all the unintelligible Zhuang “dialects” were separate languages, it would logically lead one to the realization that all the unintelligible Chinese “dialects” must also be separate languages. And from the point of view of Chinese nationalism, this is indeed a dangerous idea.

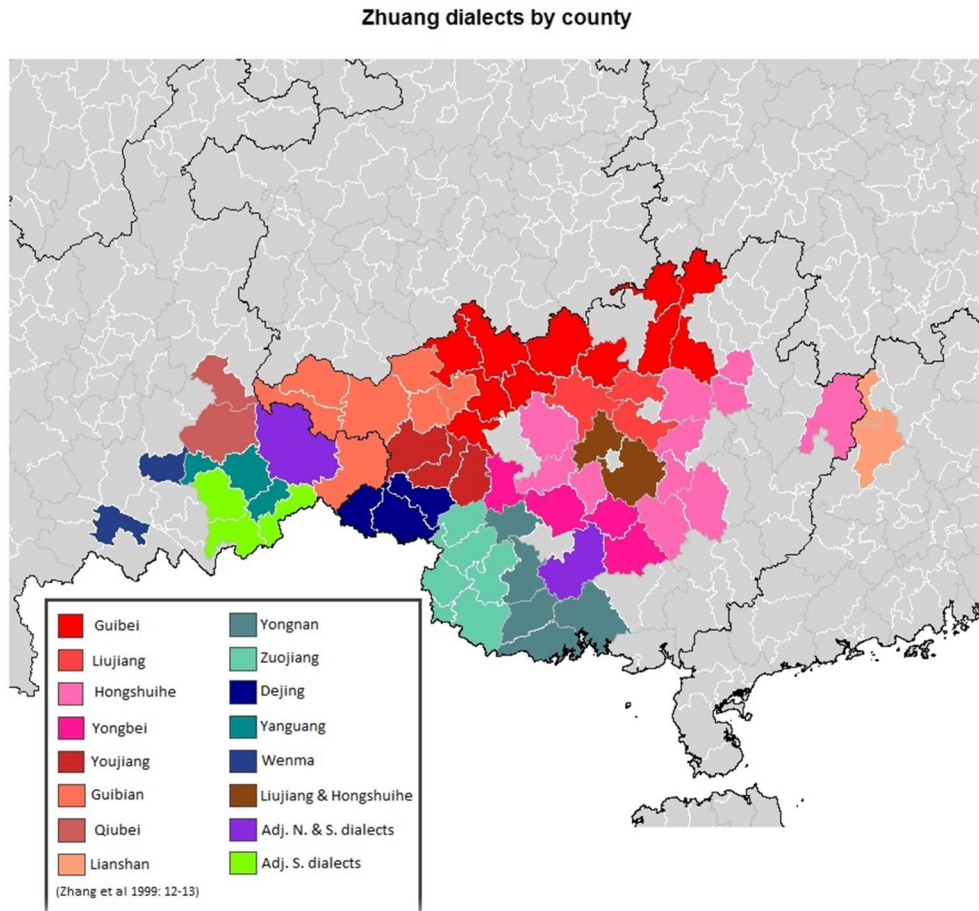


Figure 3: Zhuang dialects by county based on Zhang et al (1999: 12–13).

Figure 3 above illustrates the areas of the different Zhuang “dialects” spoken in Guangxi, Guangdong and Yunnan provinces, as classified by Zhang et al (1999: 12–13). Provincial borders are represented by black lines, prefecture-level city borders by grey lines, and county borders by white lines. Bouyei, which is spoken in Guizhou province to the north, as well as Tho and Nung, which are spoken in Vietnam to the south, are not presented on the map, as they are not officially classified as Zhuang, although they are intelligible to speakers of Northern and Southern Zhuang respectively. In this map, Northern Zhuang variants are represented by different shades of red, while Southern Zhuang variants are shades of blue. Counties where

more than one variant is spoken, are marked with special colours: brown in the case of both Liujiang and Hongshuihe being spoken, purple in the case of both an adjacent northern and a southern variant being spoken (Yongbei and Yongnan; Guibian and Yanguang), and lime in the case of two adjacent southern variants being spoken (Wenma and Yanguang). Counties where the Zhuang do not form a majority of the population are in grey, except for the counties in Guangdong province that are coloured to highlight the presence of the Lianshan Zhuang variant.

Although Zhang et al (1999: 30–50) calls them dialects, many of these variants are not mutually intelligible. Mutual intelligibility is only mentioned in the case of the Southern variants of Zuojiang, Dejing and Yanguang, even in which case conversation is only possible with difficulty. Some variants are described as having notable internal variation that impedes communication, which, as for example in the case of the Yongnan variant, can reach such levels, that even Yongnan speakers from the same county cannot necessarily converse with each other. In the case of many of the northern variants, intra-variant communication is possible, however. Lexical similarity between northern and southern variants is only around 60–68 percent, while among the variants spoken in Yunnan province it is only between 50–65 percent. This can be compared for example to German and English, between which lexical similarity is about 60 percent. (Zhang et al 1999: 309; Ethnologue 2016b). The dialect divisions proposed by Zhang et al (1999) are solely based on phonology, and it is clear that his model does not reflect actual speech communities. Therefore, the division of Zhuang into more than two languages and 13 dialects should be considered.

Apart from the various Zhuang languages, there are also some members of the ethnic group who speak Kra languages, which form the second, and linguistically quite different, branch of the Tai-Kadai (Kra-Dai) language family (Ostapirat 2000: 238). The Kra languages spoken by a part of the Zhuang ethnicity include Lachi, Paha, Buyang and Pubiao, whose speakers can be found for example in the Wenshan Zhuang and Miao autonomous prefecture in eastern Yunnan province (Huang 2016: 22). Although language is supposed to be a major factor in nationality identification in China, these Kra speakers are still classified as belonging to the Zhuang ethnic group. This is not unheard of, as somewhat crude methods were utilized in the ethnic identification process of the PRC, meaning that different ethnic or linguistic groups

were sometimes grouped together because of their geographic location, or because the linguistic affiliation of the language spoken by the group was unclear (Kaup 2000: 88; Huang 2016: 23).

The exact number of speakers of the Zhuang languages is unknown, since the PRC census does not record the mother tongues of its citizens. Some estimates do exist however, but the numbers vary widely. Some estimates that include also the related but differently named languages in the surrounding countries and regions, give a number as high as 20 million, while those that only include the Zhuang ethnic group often end up at 16 million (Bodomo 2010: 180). These estimates seem slightly unconvincing, since both researchers and many Zhuang people themselves consider the Zhuang languages to be decreasing in popularity, and most cities in Guangxi function in Putonghua. The number of Zhuang speakers was estimated at roughly 12.8 million already in the end of the 1990s, but this estimate was based on a survey from 1982, and is therefore highly outdated (Zhang et al 1999: 29–30). Although the Zhuang population has grown since the 1980s, it would be highly unlikely that the speaker population would reach such a high level as in the 1980s, since language policy emphasis has shifted generally away from Zhuang after that time (see below for details). A more believable estimate is given by Qingsheng Zhou (2016: 101) based on Grant D. McConnell’s 1995 study, reaching a total of 11,317,900 speakers. The Zhuang population in 1995 was roughly 16 million (Bradley 2006: 322). I would expect that the current speaker proportion would not be much higher. This would mean that roughly one third of the 16.9 million Zhuang living in the PRC do not speak Zhuang.

This paper will mostly be referring to the Zhuang languages as simply “Zhuang”, referring to the macrolanguage that includes the numerous individual Tai-Kadai languages and dialects, as this is how it is officially called by the PRC government, and it can be expected that this official stance has also influenced the views of the speakers of the Zhuang languages themselves. Working on the macro-level was necessary for the sake of successfully finishing this study, as many young Zhuang have migrated to different parts of China, meaning it would have been quite difficult to find sufficient numbers of young adult speakers of a certain Zhuang language, given the limited budget and timetable of the study.

3.4 The minority and language policies of the PRC

Minority policy lays the basis of the language environment of a country. In the case of the PRC, minority policy was of central importance already in the beginning, since ethnic minority areas span large swathes of land in the north, west and south of the country, taking up 60 percent of the total area of the PRC (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 337). In practice, however, PRC minority policy has swayed back and forth between supportive and rejective stances according to the political whims of the CCP. Most of the roughly 110 million strong ethnic minority population is indigenous, a status which the PRC does not recognize (M. Zhou 2012: 18; Beckett & Postiglione 2012: 4).

Apart from forming a major part of the landmass, minority areas also contain large proportions of the natural resources of the PRC. Therefore, gaining the support of ethnic minorities and having a well-formed minority policy early on was crucial to the CCP. The party strived to accomplish this by offering favourable conditions and outright privileges to ethnic minorities, quickly recognizing 55 official minority groups after the revolution. The CCP copied the criteria for ethnic recognition from Joseph Stalin's nationality theory, which were "a common language", "a common region", "a common economic life" and "common psychological characteristics" (Feng & Cheung 2008: 249–250). However, in many cases, non-related groups or peoples were labelled under one title, and in some cases, such as the Hui, the groups were not created based on ethnicity but other factors, such as religion.

Initially, the PRC's minority policy was inspired by the Soviet model, which was altered to suit Chinese needs. Instead of adopting a state model of a union of republics, China opted for a system of a central seat of power, that ruled over local governments. Ethnic minorities, or "nationalities", as they were called back then, were granted regional autonomy and guaranteed linguistic freedoms. This system endorsed multilingualism in a way that placed Putonghua as the centre of gravity, around which minority languages would revolve as satellites. (M. Zhou 2012: 22). At this point, Putonghua was still treated as a supplementary language, and speaking it was not an essential prerequisite for being a PRC citizen (Beckett & Postiglione 2012: 5).

PRC minority policy centred on the idea of national unity, meaning that although minorities would have the right to self-governance, they would not have the right to separate from the state. Another basic tenet was that all nationalities were equal under Socialism. However, the ideology also stated that during the transition to Communism, nationalities would naturally cease to exist and converge into a new, united Chinese nation. (Feng & Cheung 2008: 254–255; M. Zhou 2012: 23).

To speed up this convergence, standard languages were created for different nationalities, including 16 standards for minority languages (M. Zhou 2012: 23). One of these is also Putonghua – an artificial standard language based on the Beijing dialect of Mandarin Chinese, and as such is not the true first language of any part of the population of the PRC (Huang 2016: 24). Putonghua was first meant to be the common language of the Han nationality only. It was created to unify the numerous Sinitic languages and dialects, and meant to consolidate a united Han identity. (M. Zhou 2012: 22–23).

This remained true in the first years of the PRC, during which the CCP garnered support from ethnic minorities by granting them autonomy and economic privileges, preferential treatment in education, poverty alleviation programs, etc. These policies were very successful in uniting minority groups under the CCP and improving their conditions in the early years of the People's Republic, and they may even be one of the reasons why the PRC avoided the fate of the Soviet Union. (Feng & Cheung 2008: 257).

Already in the late 1950s, however, when the Great Leap Forward began, Putonghua was brought to the forefront of minority policy to function as an inter-ethnic language, that would speed up the convergence of nationalities, and the evolution to Communism. The idea of a single Chinese nation was stressed even further during the Cultural Revolution, when Putonghua was spread to public domains all over the PRC, and minorities were forced to adopt the language and assimilate into the Han majority. (M. Zhou 2012: 23–24; Ma 2007: 14–15).

After the Cultural Revolution, the minority policies of the 1980s saw a sway back towards acceptance, as for example minority language education was resumed (Ma 2007: 15). However, the Cultural Revolution had already irreversibly changed the linguistic landscape of the PRC, and this was quickly recognized in an amendment to

the constitution in 1982, which made Putonghua the official common language of all nationalities in the PRC (M. Zhou 2012: 24).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the PRC shifted to a market economy and replaced the Soviet style multinational state with a more monolingual model based on the slogan of “one nation with diversity” (*zhōnghuámínzú duōyuán yītǐ* 中华民族多元一体), which is still used today. This model endorses Putonghua as a “super language” that occupies political, legal, financial and other public functions, while marginalizing minority languages into being merely a symbol of diversity. (M. Zhou 2012: 26). During this time, minority language use began to fall out of priority and the ongoing campaign of “Mandarinisation” began (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 347).

The position of Putonghua was further propped up in the language law of 2000 (*guójiā tōngyòng yǔyán wénzì fǎ* 国家通用语言文字法), which stipulated for the first time, that Putonghua is the national language (*guójiā tōngyòng yǔyán* 国家通用语言) of the PRC. This law also stipulates that public servants working in government, media, education and other services have an obligation to study and use Putonghua. The freedom of ethnic minorities to use and develop their own languages, as granted in the constitution, is retained. However, the law places the languages of the PRC in an unequal position, making the PRC a monolingual Putonghua state, that retains multilingualism only on the local level. (Zhou 2016: 93, 99). In the 21st century, the language environment of the PRC has turned increasingly assimilationist, with for example Uyghur and Tibetan language instruction being replaced by Mandarin instruction in many schools, as well as the use of Cantonese being restricted in media (Beckett & Postiglione 2012: 3–4).

The ethnic minorities of the PRC and their languages are currently facing increasing pressures from society. This is often blamed on a disconnection between minority legislation and practice, which has been caused by a lack of rule of law, and the transition from a planned economy to a market economy. Minority autonomy is not being effectively implemented, which can be seen for example from the fact that the autonomous areas’ CCP secretaries, who hold the most power in local government, are usually Han Chinese. Also many of the preferential economic policies have fallen out of use, because of being economically unviable in the new Capitalist system. (Feng & Cheung 2008: 257). In the current situation, many minorities are faced with

a choice between (personal) economic development and cultural preservation, meaning that many are shifting to use Putonghua out of economic necessity (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 347).

The ethnic minorities of the PRC are granted several rights in the country's constitution, but these rights are not universally realized, as there are large regional differences caused by ambiguity in the legislation and the lax enforcement of these laws (Shi 2016: 16). The basis of China's minority policy after liberation was the equality of all nationalities, and minority languages were granted equal legitimate status to the Han language (Ma 2007: 11). It is these rights that are nowadays not being effectively protected. In a somewhat similar manner, minorities were promised full autonomy and the right to separate from the PRC at their own will, but this promise was taken back soon after the revolution (Gladney 2004: 11). The linguistic rights currently granted to ethnic minorities in PRC law include the following:

1. The right to use and develop the language and script of one's ethnic group.
2. When carrying out their duties, institutions of ethnic autonomy must use the language and script of the local ethnic group as ruled by law.
3. Ethnic minority education shall be carried out either in Putonghua and Standard *Hànzì*, or bilingually.
4. The studying of the language and script of each ethnicity shall be encouraged.
5. The development of the use of ethnic minority languages shall be aided, and a suitable environment for such activities shall be provided.
6. A workforce that can use the languages and scripts of ethnic minorities shall be trained in great numbers.
7. In affairs of justice, the language and script of the ethnicity in question shall be used. (Huang 2016: 57–58). [Author's translation.]

The laws that stipulate on minority languages and bilingual education include the fourth article of the constitution of the PRC, the minority regional self-governance law (*mínzú qūyù zìzhì fǎ* 民族区域自治法), the national common language and script law (*guójiā tōngyòng yǔyán wénzì fǎ* 国家通用语言文字法), the education law (*jiàoyù fǎ* 教育法) and the law on compulsory education (*yìwù jiàoyù fǎ* 义务教育法) (Wan & Liu 2012: 82).

It is worth noting, that PRC legislation on minority languages is ambiguous in its expression of the priority of languages. For example, the constitution calls for the use of minority languages in education, but also says the promotion of Putonghua should be prioritized at the same time (Ma 2007: 15; Poa & LaPolla 2007: 347). This is also visible in the national curriculum:

“Drive bilingual education forward with great force. Comprehensively offer Putonghua language courses; comprehensively promote the national common language and script. Respect and ensure the right of minorities to receive education in their own language and script. Comprehensively strengthen preschool bilingual education. The country offers its support to the education of teachers, educational research, and the development and publishing of educational materials for bilingual education” (Wan & Liu 2012: 81). [Author’s translation.]

This same trend is also present in the law on regional ethnic autonomy, which states in a similar tone, that minority languages should be used in education when possible, but stresses that Putonghua teaching shall be provided in senior grades:

“...schools where most of the students come from minority ethnic groups should, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use these languages as the media of instruction; classes for the teaching of Chinese (the Han language) shall be opened for senior grades of primary schools or for secondary schools to popularize Mandarin.” (Xia 2008: 39).

These policies do leave some room for the development of minority languages, although they do make it very clear that proficiency in Putonghua is the ultimate goal. Even though officially minority languages are equal to Putonghua, in actual society they take a submissive role, and are replaced by Putonghua or Han language outside of private language use situations. Where bilingualism exists, it is often of an unequal nature, meaning that minorities learn Putonghua or Han language, but the Han living in the area do not learn the minority language, which is the case at least with Tibetan and Mongol (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 340; Ma 2007: 11).

On one hand, the legislation encourages minority language education, but on the other, it demands the spread of Putonghua. The execution of this legislation leaves no ambiguity, however, as a clear instrumentalist approach is adopted: offering minority language instruction on junior grades (if even then) and Putonghua instruction on senior grades. In other words, the minority language is used as a tool for learning Putonghua. This instrumentalist approach becomes even more obvious when one considers the fact that almost all higher education is in Putonghua (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 348). The sudden shift to this policy in the 2000s has caused some problems, as ethnic minorities are experiencing difficulties in education around the country. Under-performance in entrance examinations, illiteracy, employment difficulties, high drop-out rates and general backwardness in education quality have been reported among many ethnic minority groups and their institutions of higher education (Ma 2012: 40; Y. Zhou 2012: 75; Wang & Postiglione 2012: 101; Tsung et

al 2012: 105; Wu et al 2012: 137–138). The negative developments in minority learning results in Putonghua schooling come as no surprise, as many international studies have stressed the importance of the students' first language in learning and in the efficient acquisition of second and further languages (Kosonen 2005: 87–89, Nikièma 2011: 606–611, Schwartz et al 2012: 565–567).

In the year 2007, only 20 out of the 55 ethnic minorities had a system of bilingual education in use, as it has not been made compulsory by law (Xia 2008: 40; Zhou 2016: 99). There is, however, an existing policy on bilingual education with three different models for organizing it, but, here as well, the core idea seems to be the use of the minority language as a stepping stone or “crutch” on the way to learning Putonghua, with the minority language being phased out on higher levels of education. This can be seen for example in the present system of bilingual education in use in Tibet, where most children attend pre-school and primary school in Tibetan, but from junior high school onward, education is in Putonghua. Tibetan instruction is offered in only one vocational high school. In the case of higher education, there were three universities with instruction in Putonghua, while Tibetan instruction was available only in three majors. (Ma 2007: 18).

The autonomous regions and areas of the PRC have the right to choose their language of education, therefore there are large differences between different parts of the country in the practice of bilingual education. For example, in the north-eastern Korean minority areas, bilingual education is widely in use, whereas in the southwestern minority areas bilingual education is struggling. In some cases, students have problems understanding what is being taught, as textbooks are only available in Putonghua, and in other cases, instruction in the mother tongue is available only to a fraction of the population. (Xia 2008: 44). However, instruction in Putonghua is often the wish of the parents, as for example according to a poll from 2006, 93 percent of parents in Guangxi wished for teaching to be conducted in Putonghua (Huang 2013: 3).

Xia (2008: 44–45) lists three reasons for the state not requiring minority schools to offer instruction in minority languages. Firstly, offering bilingual education or teaching in minority languages would require a financial investment too large for the average minority area, which are often poor and remote. Second, economic demands

drive people towards an emphasis on Mandarin, as the minority languages are almost never used as working languages anywhere. Third, minority languages are not widely recognized as an important factor in preserving ethnic culture and identity. (Xia 2008: 44–45).

The current system of minority language education and policy seems to stem from a time when the ethnic minorities of China were still largely monolingual in their own languages and cut off from the rest of the country. The system aims at making minorities as proficient as possible in Putonghua, while neglecting the minority languages, which do not have any official function in government or business. Ethnic minorities are still significantly poorer than the Han (Cao 2010: 979), which may mean that many of them view language learning from a purely utilitarian point of view. This makes for a situation where minorities are not interested in teaching their own languages to their children, since knowledge in them is not easily translatable into a higher income in current society. Due to this, and the enormous volume of the Han population among other things, it could be that even large minority languages could be facing a maintenance crisis in the near future. Since the campaign to spread Putonghua began in the 1990s, people born in the 1980s or later have received most of their education in Putonghua. Therefore, it could be expected that language shift from minority languages to Putonghua is currently happening among this generation. Some of them might still be bilingual, but unless something is done about the current situation, the following generations can be expected to be increasingly monolingual Putonghua speakers.

Language shift is already a common phenomenon in China, and apart from minority and education policies, it is caused by at least three factors: economic change, migration, and language attitudes (Poa & Lapolla 2007: 339–341). The economic transformation of China has meant that many minority groups have moved from an agricultural economy to a cash economy, increasing contact with other groups in the process. The economic change has also led to widespread migration, meaning that ethnic minorities are leaving their autonomous areas for big cities in the more economically developed parts of China, which are mostly Han Chinese. These minority migrants are surrounded by Han language and culture, and are in danger of either forgetting their mother tongues or not passing them down to their children.

This migration also goes the other way, with Han migrants moving to minority areas, “diluting” the minority populations of the autonomous areas. This has caused increased ethnic tension in some areas, especially Xinjiang. Another important factor is that Chinese minority policy is designed to regulate minorities in their home areas, and does not address the migration issue in any way. (Feng & Cheung 2008: 259–261).

Among other things, the PRC minority policy has been criticized of laying emphasis on the values of “globalization” and “modernization”, and not advocating the protection of minority language rights strongly enough. Minority language rights are mentioned in legislation, but there is no law that would clearly and bindingly protect them. Minority languages are also not bindingly defined as the languages of administration, justice or media of autonomous areas, leading to a situation where minorities are often unable to access public services or even news reports in their own languages. (Fan 2016: 115–116).

The realization and protection of the language rights granted to ethnic minorities in PRC legislation is the first task to be completed in order to protect the many endangered languages of China, as well as creating a functional role for all minority languages in the Chinese society, beyond being merely being a symbol of diversity. To achieve this, an urgent and extensive effort is required also in the standardization and digitalization of the minority languages of the PRC. (Huang 2016: 66–69; State Ethnic Affairs Commission of the PRC 2010).

Although not a question of policy, Han chauvinism, or the belief that Han culture and language are the pinnacle of sophistication, is also a problem for the maintenance of minority languages. Although the PRC constitution vows to fight Han chauvinism, shifting to Putonghua is still often seen as a method of raising one’s cultural level, which spells problems for both Sinitic and non-Sinitic minority languages. For non-Han minorities’ language attitudes, it is also problematic that all levels of administration and education are totally dominated by Putonghua. (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 341).

The current PRC language policy model endorses an unbalanced language ideology, where minorities are expected to use Putonghua as their primary language and their

native languages as only supplementary languages, in an effort to construct an all-inclusive, Putonghua-speaking Chinese national identity (*Zhōnghuá mínzú* 中华民族). The expansion of the power of Putonghua in the language law of 2000 has caused increased drop-out rates, failing education and decreasing social mobility among the ethnic minorities, and may cause serious social problems in the future. (M. Zhou 2012: 27–28). The recurrent shifting of minority policy during the history of the PRC has undoubtedly damaged the vitality and development of minority languages in the country, as minority education, for example, has not had the chance to develop steadily due to constant changes in the political objectives of the time. This instability has not only affected minority education, but also the minority languages as a whole, weakening their relative position in comparison to Putonghua, which has been developed continuously.

4 Methodology

The goal of this study is to look for preliminary signs of language shift among young Zhuang, using a modified version of the ELDIA European Language Vitality Barometer questionnaire. The situation of the Zhuang languages (as noted in chapter 3) suggests that it may be possible that language shift is already occurring among the Zhuang. If language shift is indeed happening, it could be a sign that other, less-privileged minority languages in the area could be facing even greater threat. This study aims to provide a preliminary assessment about whether language shift is occurring among young Zhuang, and make some conclusions about the general language maintenance situation of the Zhuang languages.

4.1 The ELDIA European Language Vitality Barometer and the methods of this study

The questionnaire used in this study is based on the European Language Vitality Barometer (EuLaViBar) questionnaire compiled by the ELDIA research project. The EuLaViBar questionnaire toolkit was produced by and is the intellectual property of the international ELDIA research team, a collection of sociolinguistics scholars cooperating across Europe, including countries and areas such as Germany, Finland,

Austria, Sweden, Estonia, Åland and Slovenia, funded by the European Commission between 2010–2013.

The ELDIA project's goal was to create a systematic and generalizable tool for assessing multilingualism in Europe, while laying special emphasis on situations where linguistic diversity, use of different *linguae francae* and/or questions of language vitality, preservation or endangerment exist. For these reasons, I was intrigued to see if the method could be used for surveys outside of the European context.

The ELDIA project produced 12 language-specific case reports of minority languages spoken in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Estonia, Germany, Austria and Slovenia, all of them belonging to the Finno-Ugric language family. ELDIA stresses that data or figures acquired with the EuLaViBar toolkit should not be used to predict the future faith of minority languages, since any unforeseen changes in several factors may affect the outcome as well. EuLaViBar data should always be assessed with an understanding of the relevant linguistic, social, political and cultural situation.

It should be noted that the questionnaire used in this study is based on the EuLaViBar toolkit, but it is not entirely similar. A few questions were left out for the sake of brevity, while others were slightly modified in the process of translation. The questionnaire was translated into Putonghua by the author, and some questions about participants' personal views had to be altered slightly to correspond to the East Asian culture of avoiding expressing one's personal thoughts or feelings. In other words, questions were modified to prompt a more personal response. The number of questions related to the participants' children was decreased, as most of target demographic was not expected to have children yet.

By using the modified EuLaViBar questionnaire, this study aims to provide some qualitative data about the use and domains of, as well as attitudes towards the Zhuang languages among young people. Some limited quantitative data was also gathered on specific issues, such as knowledge of standard Zhuang orthography and experiences of Zhuang language education.

The participants were selected randomly, with (at least partial) Zhuang ethnicity and being born in the 1980s or later as the only prerequisites for participation. This age

group was selected as they have grown up and gone through the educational system during a time when PRC minority policy has experienced significant changes towards emphasising Putonghua over minority languages, which to an ever-increasing degree is still the case today. Therefore, this age group may possibly show signs of ongoing language shift.

Most of the data was gathered in the spring of 2015 by the means of an online questionnaire distributed through the University of Helsinki “E-lomake” website. The participants of the online questionnaire were found by asking local contacts to forward a message advertising the study on Chinese social media. The questionnaire received 29 replies in a couple of days, mainly from different cities in Southern China. In order to guarantee a higher demographic variety, I also made two field trips to rural villages in Guangxi in the spring of 2015, where I managed to gather data from nine randomly selected informants through assisted questionnaire completion.

The first field trip was to the southern part of Guangxi, or more precisely, Kanwei township of Daxin county of Chongzuo city. The area is part of the Zhuang heartland next to the Vietnamese border, with a sweeping majority of the population being ethnically Zhuang. Unfortunately, this area proved to be largely empty of young people of the target age, as most of them had migrated to the big cities. As I did not have time to head for Chongzuo city proper without any local connections, I was only able to find a few suitable individuals in the villages around Kanwei township.

Wisened from my earlier experiences, on the second field trip I headed for a livelier area, albeit still in the countryside. Ping’an village is a popular tourist destination sitting amidst the famous Longji rice terrace scenic area of Longsheng various nationalities’ autonomous county, in the northern mountains of Guilin city. The village is mostly habited by Zhuang people, and due to the successful tourism business, many young locals have stayed there to run guesthouses and restaurants, providing a better supply of participants compared to the first field trip.

On both field trips, I offered a small monetary compensation for the participants’ time, which almost all of them adamantly refused to accept. In some cases, the refusal was made from modesty and the money was accepted in the end, while in other cases participants demanded to treat me as their guest and there was simply no way of giving them the compensation.

After these field trips, it was quite clear that county-level or perhaps even prefecture-level cities would be the most desirable destinations for conducting this kind of field work, due to the migration current heading out from the countryside, even if most cities in Guangxi are linguistically dominated by Han language. In the case of cities, however, it would be recommendable to have local contacts that could help with finding informants, as city dwellers are generally busier and warier towards strangers than people in the countryside. Unfortunately, I was unable to procure this kind of help despite repeated attempts to contact local Zhuang researchers and professors.

4.2 Materials

The questionnaire used in this study is based on the ELDIA EuLaViBar questionnaire, with slight changes made during translation, as well as a few omissions made for brevity's sake. This study is not connected to the ELDIA project in any way, and the data gathered here is not comparable to that provided by a full-scale EuLaViBar survey, which usually involves hundreds of participants.

The modified questionnaire spans 13.5 pages, including questions about the participant's personal information, linguistic background, language skills, background information about language use, language attitudes, public and private language use and media use. The questionnaire is divided into sections ranging from A to G, and include 40 questions in total, some of which are divided into several sub-questions.

- Section A: personal information – sex, age, ethnicity, place of birth, place of residence, academic background and employment status.
- Section B: linguistic background – mother tongue, where they have studied Zhuang, what languages each of their grandparents used with them, what languages their parents used with each other, what languages each of their parents used with them in their childhood and now, what languages they used with their siblings in their childhood and now, whether someone tried to stop their parents from using Zhuang with them, whether Zhuang use with children is frowned upon by the common people or officials, whether they have attended a bilingual Zhuang-Han school or university, in which

languages they have received education, and whether they have attended Zhuang language classes at school.

- Section C: language abilities – self-assessment of skills in Zhuang (speaking, listening, writing and reading with the choices of “very good”, “good”, “fairly good”, “bad” and “no skills”).
- Section D: frequency of Zhuang language use in different domains (“at home”, “with relatives”, “at work or school”, “with friends”, “with neighbors”, “shopping”, “on the street”, “at the library”, “at religious events”, “with officials”, “in community events” and “other”).
- Section E: language attitudes and desire to use language – whether the participant was encouraged to use Zhuang in childhood, whether they have tried to make their own children learn or use Zhuang, whether they agree with four different statements saying that Zhuang people should speak Zhuang language, whether they agree with four different statements about social interaction with Zhuang speakers, in which public language use situations do they think they should be able to use Zhuang language, whether they think Chinese law supports the use of Zhuang language, whether they think Chinese law hinders the use of Zhuang language, whether they know if language legislation has been translated into Zhuang, whether they know if legislation about Zhuang language education exists, whether they think that Zhuang language is useful in gaining employment, whether they know about people or official institutions conserving or developing Zhuang language, whether they have felt that using Zhuang language in life is more difficult than using Han language, and whether they think that Zhuang language development should receive official support.
- Section F: public and private language use – whether the participant is aware of any recent language revitalization efforts, and which domains in their area see Zhuang language use (national parliament, police office, tax office, social security office, labor office, hospital, courts of law, government offices, local government offices, education, print media, radio, television, advertisements in public spaces, and advertisements in media).
- Section G: Zhuang language media use (newspapers, books, plays, concerts, radio broadcasts, television programmes, music albums, films, websites,

email, text messages, social media, online games, letters, diaries, blogs, essays, lyrics, songs, poetry and other forms of performances).

The EuLaViBar toolkit aims to assess the vitality and maintenance status of a potentially endangered language. The questionnaire examines language use in four different focus areas: capacity, opportunity, desire and language products. These four focus areas are further divided into four dimensions: legislation, education, media, and language use and interaction. Each focus area and dimension is connected to a set of relevant questions. Each question is scored according to the model explained in “Statistical Explanations of the EuLaViBar Scaling System” (ELDIA 2013B: 1–20). The scores of each answer varies by question and ranges from 0 to 4, where 0 stands for exclusive majority language use and 4 stands for exclusive minority language use. The scores of all the questions of each dimension of each focus area are added together and an average score is calculated, also ranging from 0 to 4. The numeric values of each dimension and focus area are then graphically represented in a polar diagram to give a clear idea of what the strong and weak points of the language’s vitality are. The higher the score, the more well-maintained the language supposedly is. Any additional questions that were added by the author to the questionnaire were not included in the calculations. The ELDIA Language Maintenance Scale is as follows (ELDIA 2013A: 3–5):

- 0) Language maintenance is severely and critically endangered. The language is “remembered” but not used spontaneously or in active communication. Its use and transmission are not protected or supported institutionally. Children and young people are not encouraged to learn or use the language.
 - Urgent and effective revitalisation measures are needed to prevent the complete extinction of the language and to restore its use.
- 1) Language maintenance is acutely endangered. The language is used in active communication at least in some contexts, but there are serious problems with its use, support and/or transmission, to such an extent that the use of the language can be expected to cease completely in the foreseeable future.
 - Immediate effective measures to support and promote the language in its maintenance and revitalization are needed.
- 2) Language maintenance is threatened. Language use and transmission are diminishing or seem to be ceasing at least in some contexts or with some speaker groups. If this trend continues, the use of the language may cease completely in the more distant future.
 - Effective measures to support and encourage the use and transmission of the language must be taken.

- 3) Language maintenance is achieved to some extent. The language is supported institutionally and used in various contexts and functions (also beyond its ultimate core area such as the family sphere). It is often transmitted to the next generation, and many of its speakers seem to be able and willing to develop sustainable patterns of multilingualism.

→The measures to support language maintenance appear to have been successful and must be upheld and continued.

- 4) The language is maintained at the moment. The language is used and promoted in a wide range of contexts. The language does not appear to be threatened: nothing indicates that (significant amounts of) speakers would give up using the language and transmitting it to the next generation, as long as its social and institutional support remains at the present level.

→The language needs to be monitored and supported in a long-term perspective.

Regrettably, I was only able to translate the questionnaire into Putonghua, the lingua franca and dominant language of the GZAR. Providing a version of the questionnaire in Standard Zhuang would have been desirable, not least as a gesture of support for the language, but I was unable to acquire assistance from local contacts in time. However, there was concern that some participants might not be able to make use of the Standard Zhuang version of the questionnaire, as many young people are reportedly not skilled in reading or writing the language. Therefore, a Putonghua version of the questionnaire had to suffice.

As mentioned above, I made some changes to the original ELDIA questionnaire. In some cases, questions specific to this study were added, and in other cases, some questions of the original form were left out. Also, some minor changes were made to the structure of a few questions to facilitate translation and comprehensibility in Mandarin, but these modifications should not have affected the quality of the data acquired from those questions.

There were four notable additions to the original questionnaire. The first and most obvious one was to adjust the age choices in the personal information section. In the original questionnaire, the age choices scaled from 18 to over 65, but since this study aimed at studying the language use of young people, the choices were adjusted to range from 15 to 35 years, and divided into four age groups. Also in the personal information section, a question was added to inquire on the participant's ethnicity, as all registered Chinese nationals are classified into one at birth. This is relevant since in many cases, people who no longer have any connection to the language or culture of their ancestors' ethnic group may still be counted as belonging to said ethnicity, as for example in the case of the Manchu. In section B, a question about whether the

participant had attended a bilingual Zhuang-Han school at any stage of their education was added. This question was interesting, as it makes it possible to see if there are differences in attendance between different age groups. In section C, in question 26 of the original form, where the participant is asked whether they have attempted to teach Zhuang to their children, an additional choice was added, saying “if I will have children, I will attempt to teach them”. Again, for the sake of the young informants who do not yet have children, but would in theory be interested in teaching their children the language, thus providing more information on the participants’ language attitudes and perhaps also shedding some light on the possible future of the intergenerational language transfer.

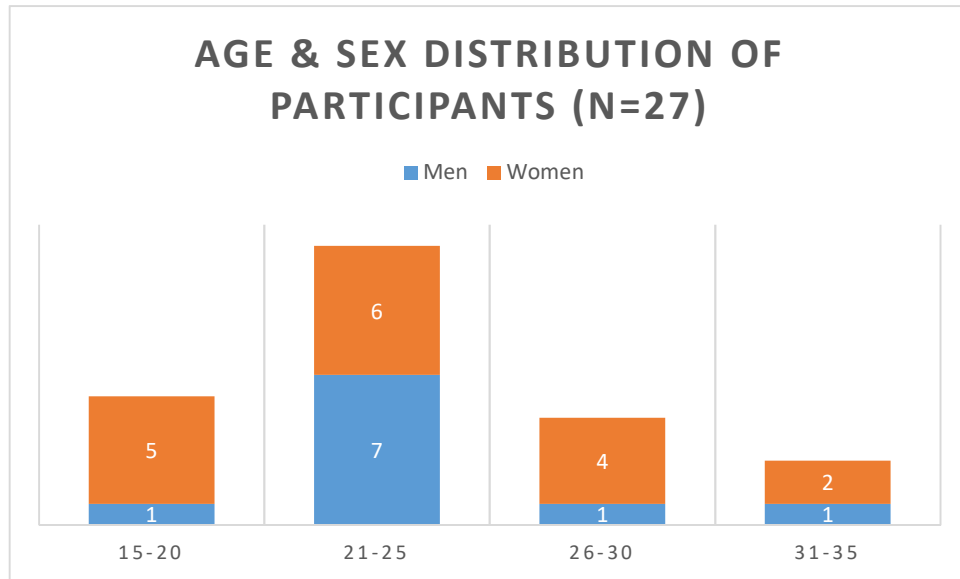
I made some omissions to the ELDIA form to make the completion of the questionnaire slightly faster. In the personal information section, the question about whether the participant had spent time abroad was left out. Questions 16, 17 and 18 were omitted from section B, as language use with one’s spouse, children and grandchildren were covered by other questions to at least some extent. Sub-question 40i was omitted purely due to human error, however. Luckily the question was only about the availability of Zhuang language computer software in the participant’s area, which presumably is not the case at the moment.

Out of the total 38 replies gathered, 11 replies had to be left out from the final analysis. Out of these replies, nine were from online informants that stated their ethnicity as Han and judging by their answers, had no personal connection to the Zhuang language. Due to the anonymity of the online participants, I was unable to contact them for confirmation. The final two unusable replies were duplicates of existing replies.

5 Analysis

In total, I received 38 replies to my questionnaire. 31 were received through the online questionnaire system and 9 were taken during field work in the GZAR by the means of assisted questionnaire completion. In the end, 27 replies were included in the final data analysis, as 9 online replies came from people who seemingly had no connection to the Zhuang ethnic group or the Zhuang languages. These 9 replies

were used as control group for comparison in relevant situations. The age and sex distribution of the included informants can be seen in graph 1 below.



Graph 1: Age & sex of survey participants

As can be seen in graph 1, most informants were women. Only in the age group 21–25 the majority were men. This age group is also numerically the largest, which reflects the author’s personal connections to university-age people. Continuing with the personal information section, 24 out of 27 informants stated their ethnic group as Zhuang, while three listed it as Han. The three Han informants who were included in the data analysis had used Zhuang language with some of their parents or grandparents, which indicates partial Zhuang heritage.

All participants were born in the People’s Republic of China, and in 26 out of 27 cases, in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. One participant was born in Jiangmen city of Guangdong province. The Guangxi-born participants’ birthplaces were spread out over most of the Zhuang-speaking part of the Autonomous Area, including cities such as Laibin, Guilin, Nanning, Chongzuo, Baise, Hechi and Qinzhou (listed in order of frequency). Therefore, the Zhuang-speaking participants can be expected to speak different Zhuang languages and dialects.

All online participants, except two who did not provide relevant information, had moved away from their birthplaces. In 13 out of 18 cases, the current place of residence was outside of the GZAR, in cities such as Wuhan, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hangzhou, and in one case even Japan. Out of the nine informants

interviewed during field work, eight were still living in their birthplace or its vicinity, i.e. within the prefectures of Chongzuo or Guilin. One informant had moved to Chongzuo from Baise city in the north-western part of Guangxi.

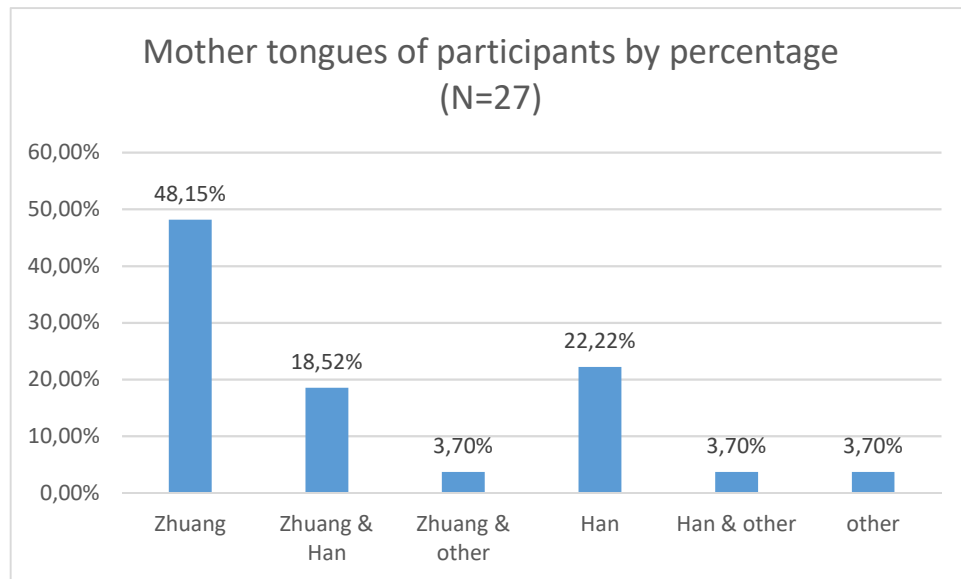
There was a marked difference in education levels between the online participants and those who were interviewed in the field. 14 out of 18 online participants had attended university or vocational university and three had attended only high school or vocational secondary school. Among field work informants, seven out of nine had received only primary education, one had attended high school or vocational secondary school, and one had attended university or vocational university.

A clear difference between these two participant groups also appeared regarding occupations. Out of the online participants, 15 were either working or studying outside of the home, two were working within the home, and one was unemployed. Among the field work informants, eight out of nine were working within the home, while only one was working or studying outside of the home.

Based on their background information, the online participants and field work participants formed two quite clearly defined groups: one consisting of mostly highly educated people who had generally migrated out of Guangxi, and the other consisting in most cases of people with a basic education, living usually in or near their places of birth. The data gathered from these two groups will be compared in more detail below.

13 out of 27 participants stated Zhuang as their only mother tongue, while five selected both Zhuang and Han, and six chose Han as their only mother tongue. In addition, one chose Zhuang and “other”, one chose Han and “other”, and one chose “other” as their mother tongue (see graph 2 below). This statistic shows a fairly high number of bilinguals from birth, 26 percent of the group. In comparison, there were only 11 percent of bilinguals in the control group. The number of participants selecting Han as their only mother tongue is notably high. Also, the low number of “other” choices can be interpreted so that most participants accept that their language or dialect is labelled as simply “Zhuang”. In a case like this however, where the ethnic group studied speaks several languages or dialects, it would have been interesting, and perhaps preferable, to leave the options blank, and have the

participants fill out their mother tongues' names themselves. This change should be considered for the ELDIA EuLaViBar questionnaire form in the future.



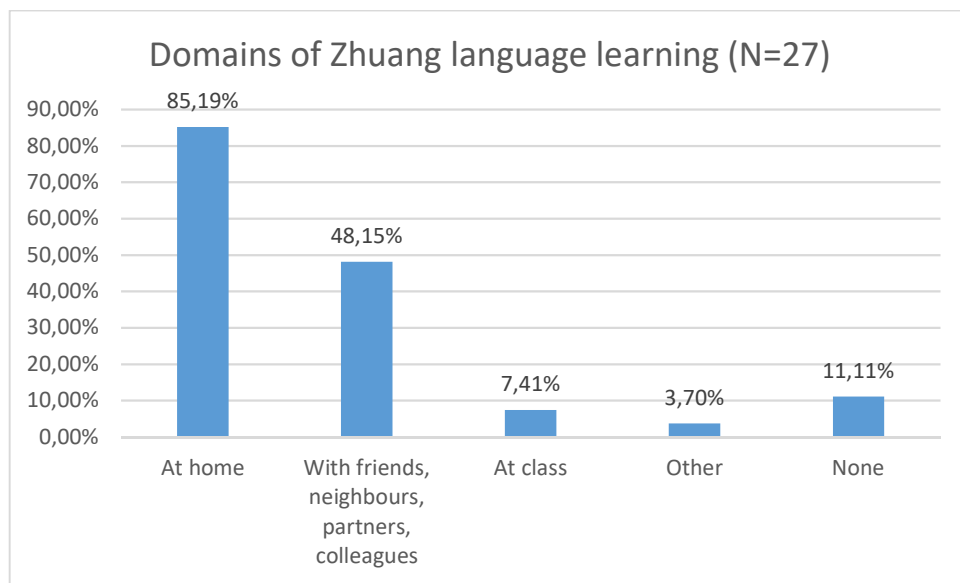
Graph 2: Mother tongues of survey participants

It should be noted, that all field work informants selected only one mother tongue: eight Zhuang and one Han. This shows a marked difference with the online informants' (migrant) group, out of which seven, or 39 percent, selected two mother tongues. This could have a connection with the state-level monolingualism of the PRC, in the sense that people who have the advantage of knowing Han language from birth, have a better chance at moving to the big cities where there are more education and job opportunities (for Han-speaking people).

85 percent of the participants had learned Zhuang at home from parents or other relatives, and 48 percent had learnt Zhuang outside the home, from friends, neighbours, colleagues etc. (see graph 3 below). It should be noted, that only 11 percent had attended a Zhuang-Han bilingual school or kindergarten (a question I added to the survey), and 11 percent had not learnt the language anywhere at all. This could be a sign of the low popularity of Zhuang language schooling, and a possible sign of some parents choosing not to teach their children Zhuang language, which would be an alarming trend from the point of view of language vitality.

Once again, the country-side-dwelling field work informants showed a marked difference from the online informants: all of them had learnt Zhuang language both at home and in the community. 11 percent had also learnt it at school or class. Out of

the online informants, on the other hand, only 28 percent had learnt the language anywhere outside of the home, and only six percent had learnt it at school, while 22 percent had not learned the language even at home. This would suggest that the field work informants have lived in an environment where Zhuang language use is common-place, while the online informants have probably lived in cities where the lingua franca has been Han, as is common (Yuan & Huang 2005: 65). This would be in line with the claim that the Zhuang language environment is more intact in rural communities. Also, the proportion of online participants stating they have not learned Zhuang at home is notably high.



Graph 3: Participants' domains of Zhuang language learning

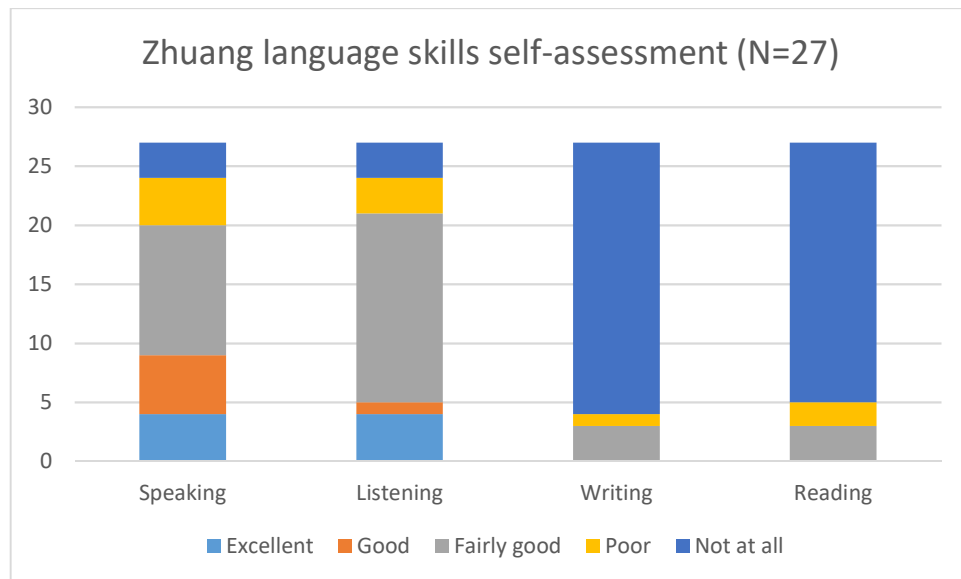
Also in connection to Zhuang language learning, seven percent reported that some of their relatives or school personnel had tried to stop their parents from teaching Zhuang to them. In addition, 26 percent thought that some or many members of the common populace or the officials were against parents teaching Zhuang to their children. This would suggest at least some negative attitudes towards the Zhuang languages. This is further supported by the participants' other answers in the survey. The participants very clearly expressed negative expectations about the usefulness of Zhuang in the labour market, as seen in graph 4 below. Depending on the question, only 11 to 22 percent of the participants agreed that Zhuang language skills would be useful in the job market. 33 to 41 percent thought it was difficult to say, and between 41 and 52 percent denied any advantage received by knowing Zhuang language. These negative attitudes are probably linked to the fact that Zhuang language does

not play any significant role even in the society of the GZAR, and jobs, where Zhuang language skills are useful, are limited.



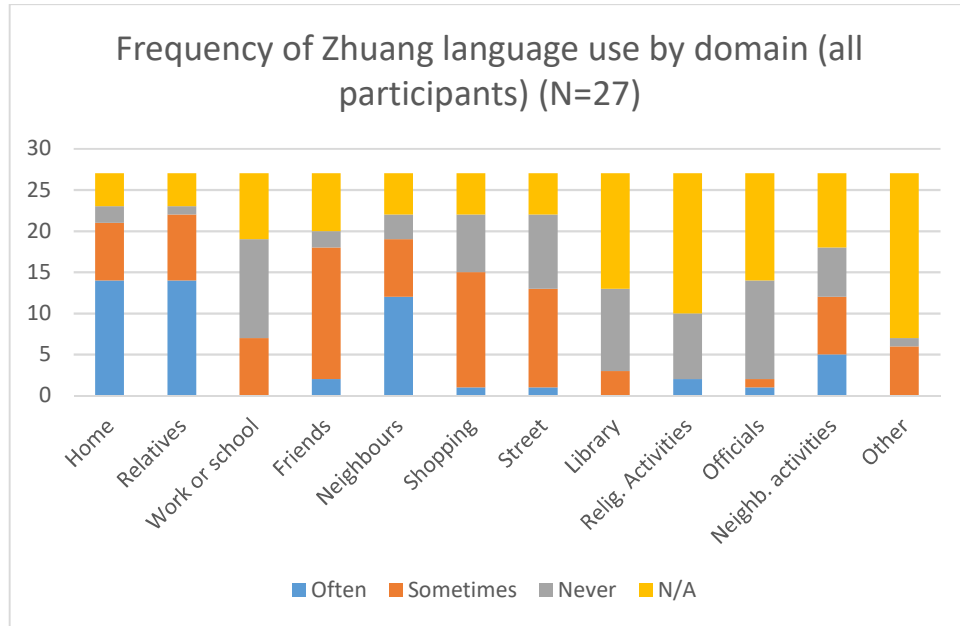
Graph 4: Participants' attitudes towards Zhuang language in the labour market

Some of the most interesting data surfaced, when the informants were asked to assess their own Zhuang language skills. As can be seen from graph 5 below, 81 to 85 percent expressed no skills in reading or writing Zhuang. This could be interpreted as failure in popularizing the Zhuang orthography created originally in the 1950s. This failure is likely to be caused by multiple reasons, including the lack of incentive and the lack of any functional role for the script in media or society. Also, the number of informants stating their Zhuang language speaking and listening skills as poor or lower was fairly high. 26 percent expressed poor or worse skills in speaking skills, and 22 percent in listening skills. The large number of “fairly good” (“*hái kěyǐ* 还可以”) choices may have received a boost from the modesty of the participants, as this option is the standard self-deprecating answer in Mandarin for assessing one’s own skills.



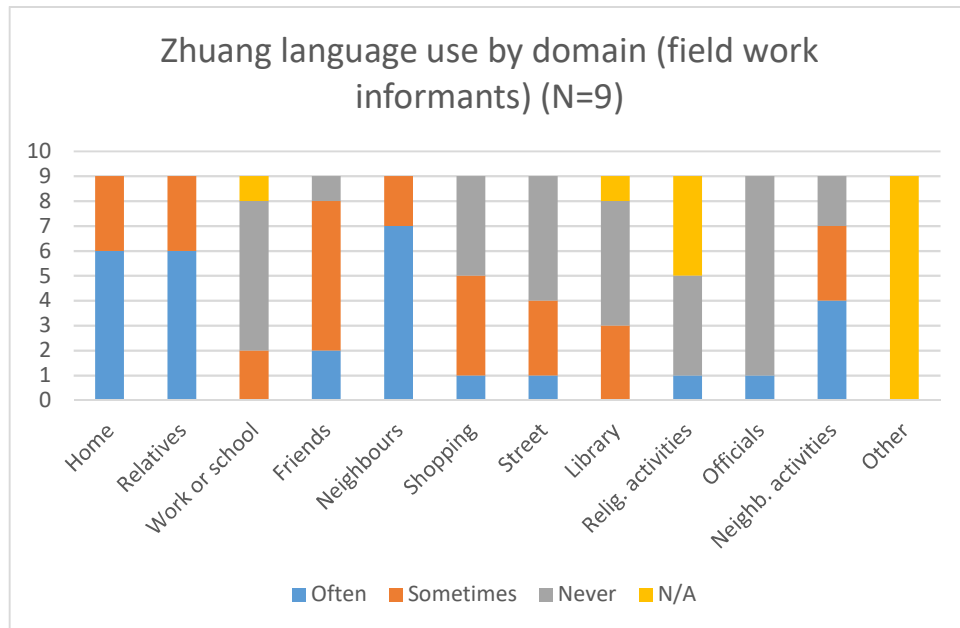
Graph 5: Participants' Zhuang language skills self-assessment

“At home”, “with relatives”, “with friends”, “with neighbours” and “shopping” were the only domains of language use where most informants used Zhuang at least sometimes (see graph 6 below). It is noteworthy, however, that even in these domains, the percentage of informants who used Zhuang “often” was relatively low. Among family and relatives, the percentage was at its highest, reaching 52 percent. The domains that saw the least Zhuang language use were “at work or school”, “at the library”, “at religious activities”, and “with officials”. On the absolute bottom rung was “at religious activities” and “with officials”, both of which saw any reported Zhuang use from only seven percent of informants. This shows a tendency in Zhuang language use to be limited into the private and local spheres. The more prestigious public spheres of work, education, religion and officiality were less likely to see Zhuang use. This data is reflecting the monolingual Putonghua/Han organization of the PRC state and public sphere, but also as a sign of ongoing language shift, as almost a half of the informants would not necessarily use Zhuang language even at home or with relatives. Meanwhile, the relatively low frequency of using Zhuang even with friends, on the street or while shopping may be caused by the lack of a Zhuang variety of wider use. Since friends or passers-by may come from areas of a different Zhuang variety or an entirely different language, it may be that communication happens in one of the local dominant languages: Southwestern Mandarin, Standard Mandarin or varieties of Cantonese (Yuan & Huang 2005: 65).



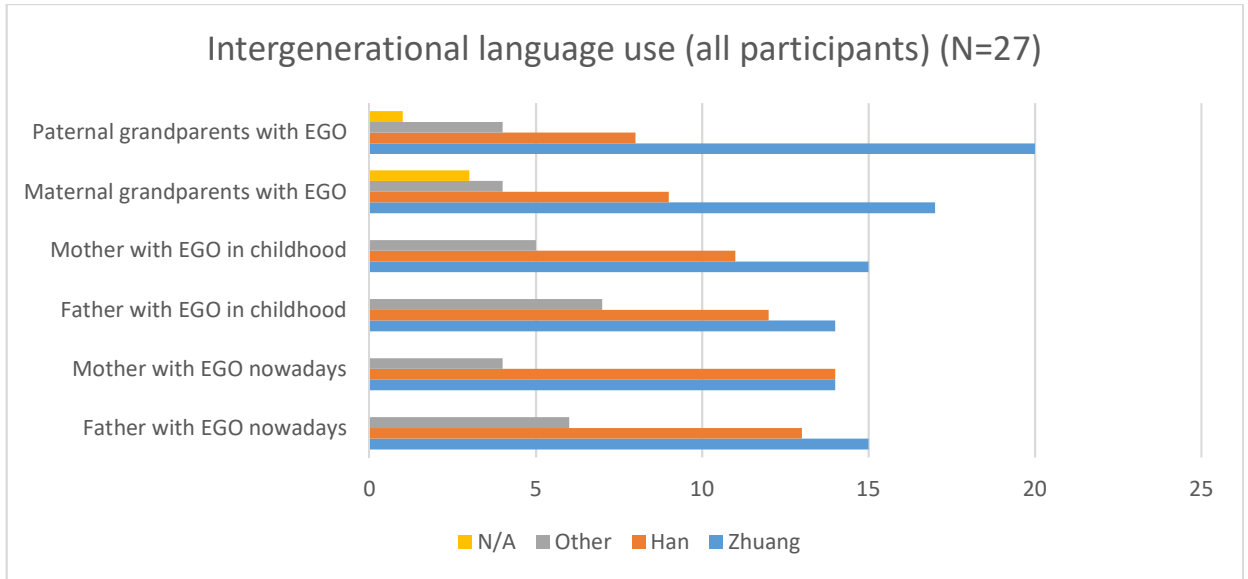
Graph 6: Frequency of Zhuang language use by domain (all participants)

When examined separately, the mostly non-migrant field work informant group seemed to constitute quite a large proportion of the Zhuang language use of the general data (see graph 7 below). The field work informants were clearly more likely to use Zhuang at home, with relatives, with friends or neighbours, or at neighbourhood activities. However, even among this group, Zhuang usage was relatively low in the domains of work/school, friends, shopping, street, library, religion or with officials, repeating the same tendency of Zhuang being restricted to the private and local spheres. What is striking, is that even among these relatively vital language communities, Zhuang still saw very little use in work/school (two informants reported some use), religion (one informant reported frequent use), or when conversing with officials (also one informant reported frequent use). The domain “on the street” (在街上) also saw surprisingly low Zhuang use frequency, which may be due to an interpretation of “the street” as “the town” or “the city”, as strictly speaking the areas where the informants lived did not have streets, but merely roads or tracks. The reason for non-migrants tending to use more Zhuang in their daily lives may be a two-way relation: non-migrants may use more Zhuang, because they are situated in a more suitable linguistic environment, or it could be that they have not migrated, because their Han language isn’t good enough. The latter is possible, since it has been shown that minorities need to adopt the Han language to advance in society (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 341).



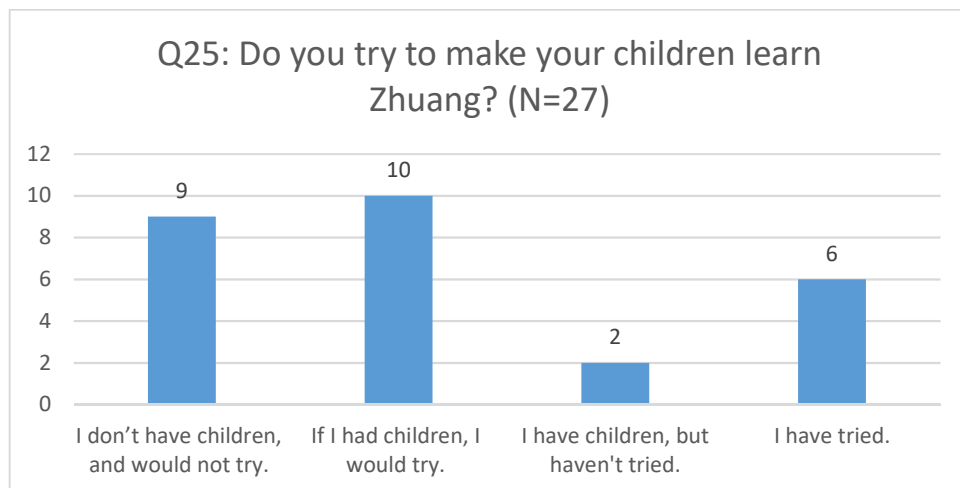
Graph 7: Frequency of Zhuang language use by domain (field work informants)

Looking at intergenerational Zhuang language use, the data seemed to show a slight increase of Han use when moving towards the present (see graph 8 below). When it comes to the balance of Zhuang use versus Han use, a notable change can be seen when moving towards the present. In one extreme, the ratio of Zhuang use versus Han use was 2.5:1 in the case of the language used by one's paternal grandparents, which changes to 1:1 when moving to the language used by one's mother nowadays. In other words, Han use goes up in intergenerational contexts when moving towards the present, while Zhuang use goes down, both ending up at roughly equal levels. This kind of shift towards Han-Zhuang bilingualism has become a common phenomenon in China in recent decades, due to increased contact with the dominant Han ethnicity, and may result in Han language finally replacing the minority languages in question altogether (Poa & LaPolla 2007: 340).

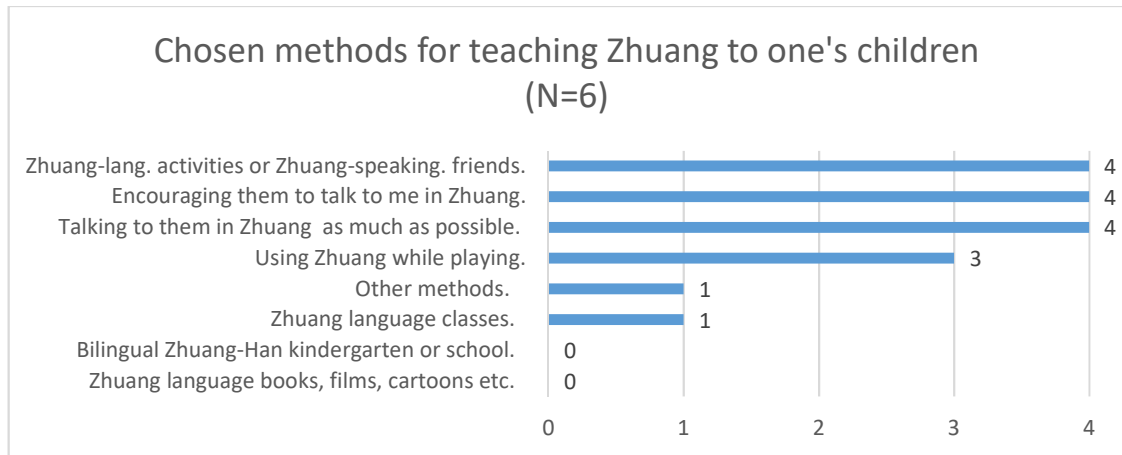


Graph 8: Intergenerational language use (all participants)

As many of the participants did not yet have children of their own, language use in this case was studied only in question 25, which required the informants to express their attitudes towards teaching Zhuang to their (in some cases) prospective children. If not wishing to teach Zhuang to one’s prospective children and not having taught one’s existing children Zhuang are labelled as having a negative attitude, and vice versa, then 41 percent of the informants had a negative attitude towards intergenerational Zhuang transmission, while 59 percent had a positive attitude (See graph 9 below).

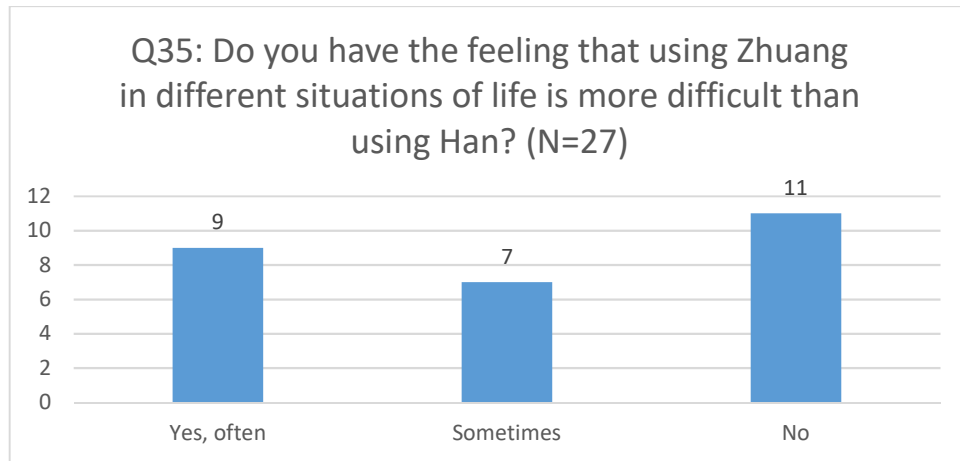


Graph 9: Participants’ attitudes towards intergenerational language transmission



Graph 10: Participants' methods of teaching Zhuang to their children

Looking at graph 10 above, it can be seen that among those who had tried to teach Zhuang to their children, the most popular methods utilized were all belonging to the informal and private language domains: organizing Zhuang-language activities or making Zhuang-speaking friends, encouraging the child to speak Zhuang to his/her parents, and speaking Zhuang to the child. Only one had enrolled their child in Zhuang-language classes, and no-one had enrolled their child in a bilingual Zhuang-Han kindergarten or school. Neither had anyone used Zhuang-language books, films, cartoons et cetera as a language teaching method. The low rate of enrollment in Zhuang-language schools shown in the data may represent an equally low interest in formal Zhuang-language education in general, although in this case many of the children in question may still be below school age, and thus decrease the level of enrollment. The total absence of Zhuang-language cultural products such as books or films in this case may be caused by the simple lack of Zhuang-language products perceived interesting or useful enough, or by the difficulty of obtaining such materials. The relatively high level of disinterest towards transmitting Zhuang language to one's children is likely to be connected to the perceived sense of "uselessness" of the language, which was already shown above in the case of the job market. This may be further supported by the fact that 59 percent of the participants stated that they had felt that using Zhuang language in different situations of life was more difficult than using Han language (see graph 11 below).



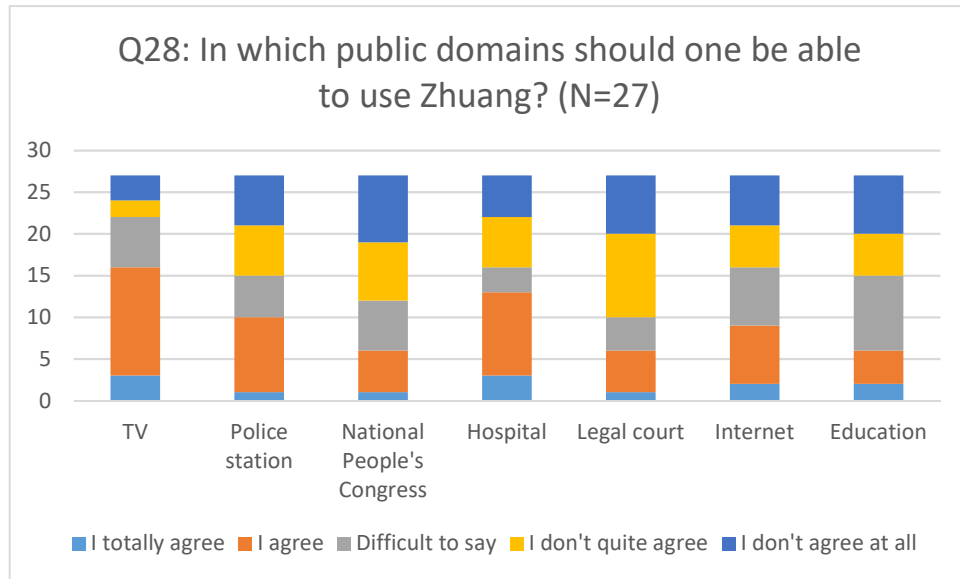
Graph 11: "Is using Zhuang more difficult than Han?"

The increasing use of Han and the decreasing use of Zhuang in intergenerational contexts, combined with a large proportion of informants showing a disinterested attitude towards transmitting Zhuang to their own offspring, may indicate an increasing language shift rate in the future, posing a threat to the continued existence of the Zhuang languages. A larger study with a wider base of participants is needed, however, to make more certain conclusions about the situation.

When it comes to the participants' attitudes towards Zhuang language use in public domains, the data shows little support for Zhuang in most domains (see graph 12 below). Only in the case of "television" did a majority of 59 percent support Zhuang use. In second place was "hospital", although with the support of only 48 percent of the participants. In all other domains, those objecting outnumbered those supporting Zhuang use. It is interesting to note the low level of support for Zhuang use in the National People's Congress and legal courts, even though national minority members are legally allowed to use their respective languages in government and court proceedings.

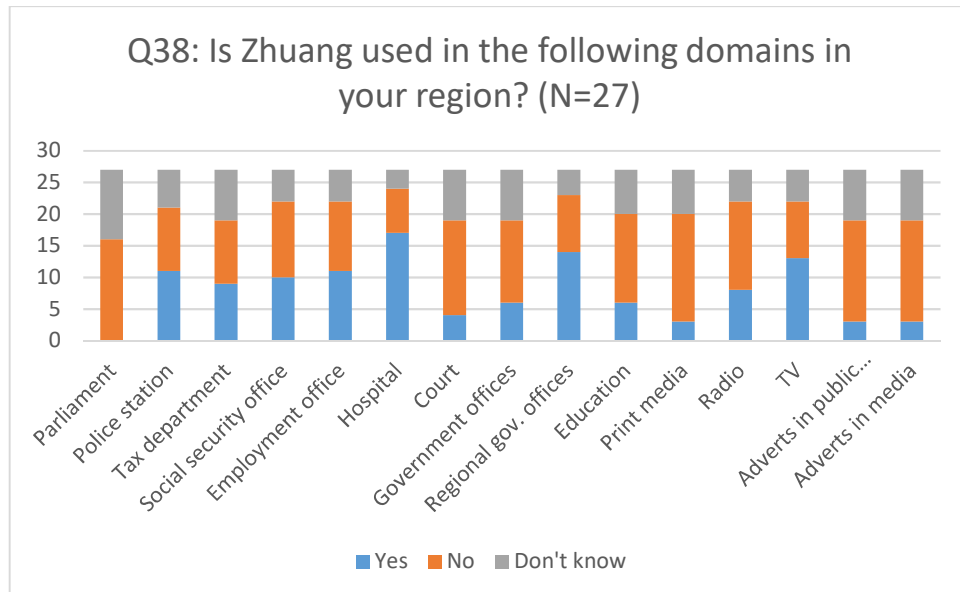
This climate of negative attitudes towards Zhuang use may be caused by several reasons. One reason may be the efforts of the national government to make Standard Mandarin the national language in order to "modernize" the country and create national unity. Another reason may be poverty – Guangxi is one of the poorer regions of China, and this may cause people to connote the Zhuang languages with backwardness and poverty. This way, shifting to Mandarin may also be seen as a way of "catching up" with the Han. Third, Zhuang may also be thought of as unfit

for public domains, because of a lack of a prestigious standard variety, the popularisation of which was disrupted by the Cultural Revolution.



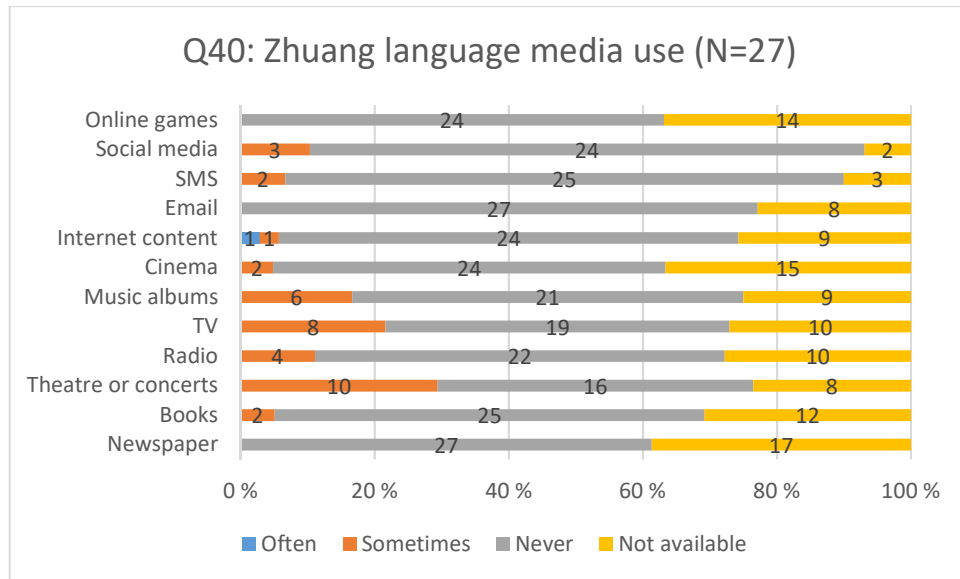
Graph 12: Participants' attitudes towards Zhuang use in public domains

When asked which public domains actually see Zhuang language use, only two were named by a majority of participants (see graph 13 below). “Hospital” was named by 63 percent and “Regional government offices” were named by 52 percent of participants. “TV” came a close third, with 48 percent of informants saying there was Zhuang television programming available in their region. Hospitals are likely to stand out due to the possibility of many Zhuang-speaking elderly patients populating them. Meanwhile, regional government offices are likely to be populated by Zhuang cadres, who at least in the past have been known to receive an education that raises ethnic consciousness, which may translate into language proficiency (Kaup 2000: 131–132).



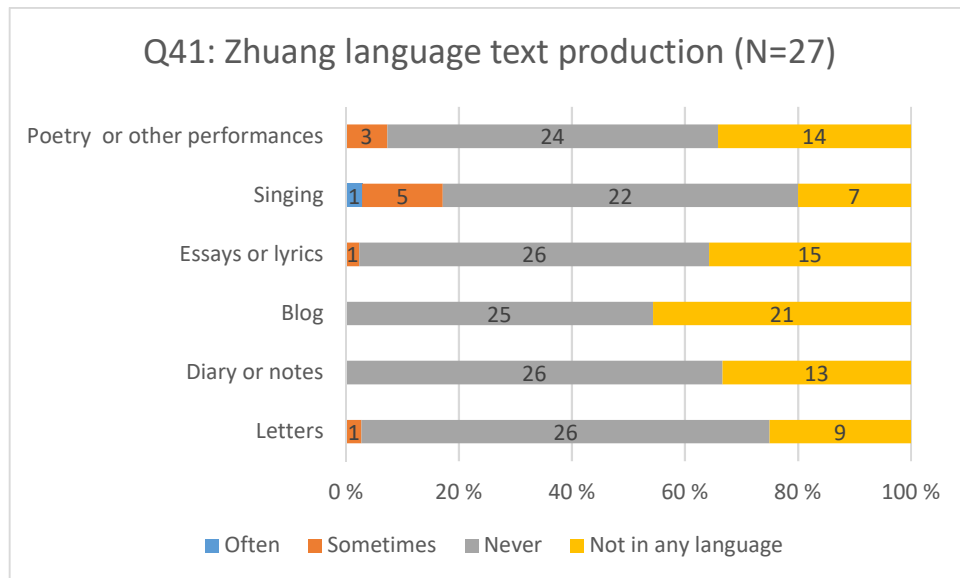
Graph 13: Which public domains see Zhuang use in participants' regions

The use of Zhuang language in different media was not very common among the participants, which is probably due to the fact that most of them claimed illiteracy in Zhuang. In all included media forms, most participants stated they never used them in Zhuang (see graph 14 below). The media that saw most Zhuang language use were “theatre or concerts”, “TV” and “music albums”, possibly because these are more easily available and require no literary skills from the observer. Traditional plays and music concerts may also be organized even in small towns from time to time. The yellow bar on the right side of the graph also shows that in all instances there were informants who expressed that the medium in question was not available in Zhuang. The usage of Zhuang in so-called modern media contexts, such as online games, social media, SMS messaging, email or other internet content was very rare. Out of these, social media was the most common, with three participants sometimes using Zhuang in its context. None of the participants ever read newspapers in Zhuang, although they should be available at least in the GZAR capital of Nanning. This indicates a low circulation, or that the state-run newspapers are not seen as interesting enough by the public.



Graph 14: Participants' Zhuang language media use

Probably for the same reason as above, in other words illiteracy, most participants stated that they never use Zhuang language to produce literary works, such as letters, diaries, blogs, essays, lyrics or poetry (see graph 15 below). However, six participants stated that they use Zhuang for singing at least sometimes. Again, singing does not require one to be literate in the language.



Graph 15: Participants' Zhuang language text production

All in all, based on these selected data, the situation of Zhuang language among young adults does not look promising. The limited domains of language use, the relatively high proportion of people speaking Han even in the domestic context, the negative attitudes, the challenging language environment, the high illiteracy in the

Zhuang script, the low responsiveness to modern media and so forth indicate an ongoing language shift and a generally bleak future for the language, unless revitalization efforts are undertaken. In the following chapter I will introduce the general vitality score for the Zhuang languages among young adults based on the complete data I gathered, according to the ELDIA EuLaViBar model.

5.1 Language vitality barometer for Zhuang language among young people in China

In this chapter, a language vitality barometer score for Zhuang language among young adults in the PRC will be presented based on the European Language Vitality Barometer (EuLaViBar) model created by the ELDIA project, used in gathering the data for this study. ELDIA (2013A) created EuLaViBar for assessing the vitality and maintenance status of a potentially endangered language by measuring the speakers' (i) ability and will to use the language at issue, (ii) chances of using it in public and private contexts, (iii) ability to develop it further, and (iv) ability and will to transfer it to the next generations (ELDIA 2013A: 3). In the EuLaViBar, language use is examined in the following way as explained in ELDIA 2013A:

“Thus, we must examine language use in different contexts, and factors influencing language use. In the ELDIA terminology, we speak of the following four focus areas:

- **Capacity:** *the subjective capacity, or, in other words, the speakers' confidence in their competence to use the language;*
- **Opportunity:** *the existing institutional arrangements (legislation, regulations at schools or workplaces, etc.) that allow for, support or prohibit the official and/or public use of the language;*
- **Desire:** *the speakers' wish and readiness to use the language, also reflected in their attitudes and in their emotional reactions to the use of the language;*
- **Language products:** *products or services available in the language at issue (material or immaterial: books, papers, web pages, news broadcasts, concerts, plays, localised software etc.) and the demand for such language products.*

Across all four focus areas, or within each focus area, language vitality will be evaluated along the following four dimensions:

- **Legislation:** *whether there are laws which support the language at issue or multilingualism in general, whether the speakers know (about) these laws and what they think of them;*
- **Education:** *all types and levels of education (both language classes/courses and the use of a language in education), people's opinions, attitudes and feelings about education;*

- **Media:** *all questions relating to all types of media (traditional, electronic, social and interactive media), for instance: media use, language(s) used in media, minority issues in majority media, existence, accessibility, and types of minority media.*
- **Language use and interaction:** *how the languages are used in communication and social interaction in different situations, with different people etc.” (ELDIA 2013A: 3–4)*

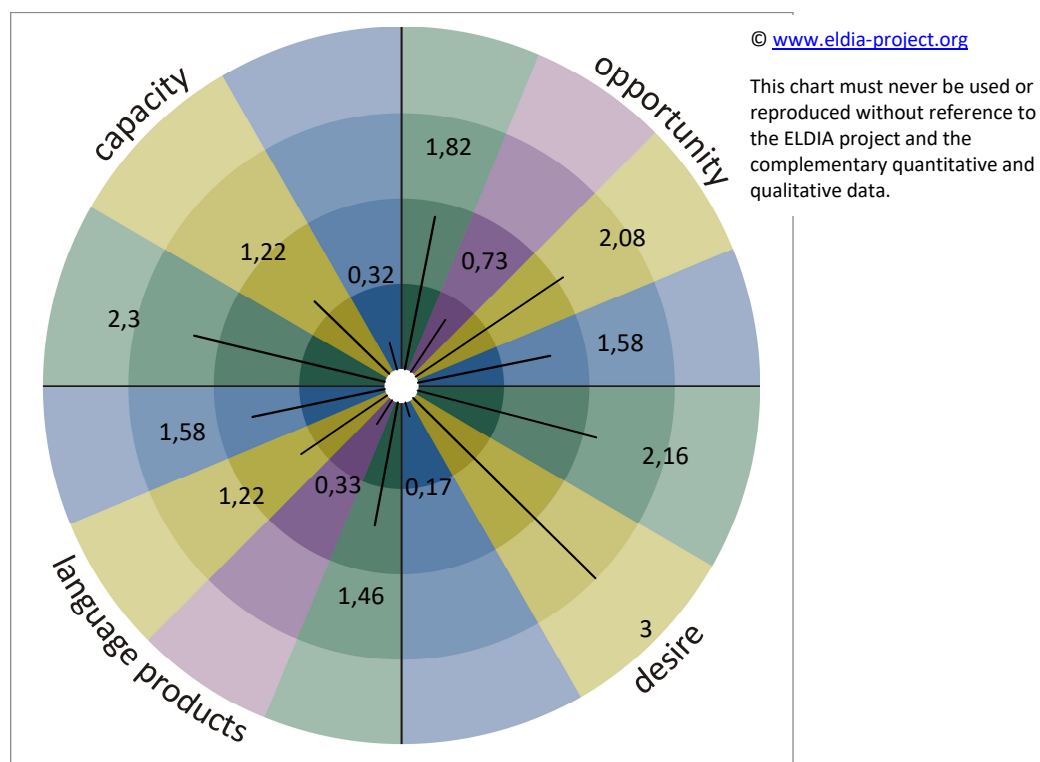
For each dimension of each focus area, a numeric value was calculated based on the replies to the questionnaire. The replies were evaluated per the scaling system explained in detail in ELDIA 2013B (2–22). The scale ranges from 0 (critical endangerment) to 4 (maintained at the moment), and is graphically represented in a polar diagram designed by the ELDIA project.

The data included in the calculations for the barometer include the answers already introduced in the previous chapter, as well as all yet-unintroduced data beginning from question 7 of the survey questionnaire. As an exception, additional questions or answer options included by the author into the questionnaire were omitted from the barometer score calculations. These include question 19 (“Have you received bilingual Zhuang-Han schooling?”) and one option in question 20 (“[I have learned Zhuang] at university/vocational university”). It should also be noted that the representativeness of the scores in the “language use” dimension is slightly limited, due to the omission of questions 16, 17 and 18, which were related to language use with one’s children and spouse.

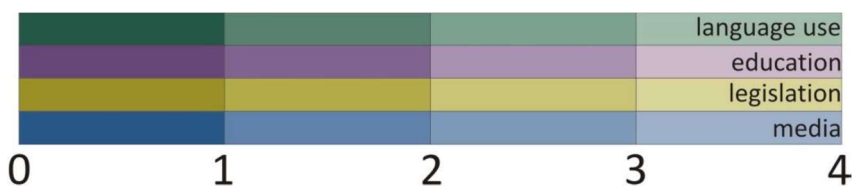
Graph 16 below represents the vitality and maintenance of the Zhuang language among the participants of the survey. Due to the small number and demographical limits of the participants, it should neither be taken as representative of the vitality of any single Zhuang language nor as of all the Zhuang languages in general. It should only be viewed as an indicator of possible minority language maintenance issues among young people born with an ethnic Zhuang background in the PRC.

EuLaViBar scores are calculated based on a multitude of questions; this means that similar scores may result from different combinations of variables, and the results cannot be interpreted without background knowledge of the language situation in question. The EuLaViBar also must not be used for predicting future developments, or the fate of any individual language.

In graph 16, the four focus areas (capacity, opportunity, desire, and language products) are shown divided into the four different dimensions (language use, education, legislation, and media) marked by different colours. It should be noted that the “education” dimension is not included in the focus areas of “capacity” and “desire”, as per ELDIA’s design. The black lines indicate the calculated vitality scores – the longer the line, the higher the vitality. At the end of each line is the numeric value of the score. The graph is divided into four zones of a different shade, representing the different grades of language maintenance on the ELDIA scale – the darker the shade the more endangered the language, as explained below the graph.



Graph 16: Language vitality barometer for Zhuang language among young adults



Grade	Description
0	Language maintenance is severely and critically endangered. The language is “remembered” but not used spontaneously or in active communication. Its use and transmission are not protected or supported institutionally. Children and young people are not encouraged to learn or use the language.

→ *Urgent and effective revitalisation measures are needed to prevent the complete extinction of the language and to restore its use.*

- 1 ***Language maintenance is acutely endangered.*** *The language is used in active communication at least in some contexts, but there are serious problems with its use, support and/or transmission, to such an extent that the use of the language can be expected to cease completely in the foreseeable future.*

→ *Immediate effective measures to support and promote the language in its maintenance and revitalization are needed.*

- 2 ***Language maintenance is threatened.*** *Language use and transmission are diminishing or seem to be ceasing at least in some contexts or with some speaker groups. If this trend continues, the use of the language may cease completely in the more distant future.*

→ *Effective measures to support and encourage the use and transmission of the language must be taken.*

- 3 ***Language maintenance is achieved to some extent.*** *The language is supported institutionally and used in various contexts and functions (also beyond its ultimate core area such as the family sphere). It is often transmitted to the next generation, and many of its speakers seem to be able and willing to develop sustainable patterns of multilingualism.*

→ *The measures to support language maintenance appear to have been successful and must be upheld and continued.*

- 4 ***The language is maintained at the moment.*** *The language is used and promoted in a wide range of contexts. The language does not appear to be threatened: nothing indicates that (significant amounts of) speakers would give up using the language and transmitting it to the next generation, as long as its social and institutional support remains at the present level.*

→ *The language needs to be monitored and supported in a long-term perspective.” (ELDIA 2013A: 5).*

The focus area “capacity”, i.e. the participants’ ability to use the Zhuang language, received a general score of 1.98, falling into the category of “acutely endangered”. The dimension with the highest score in this focus area was “language use”, with a score of 2.30, meaning that some groups still use the language actively, while its use in other groups is diminishing. The score of “legislation” in this case was 1.22, meaning that many respondents were unaware of legal support for Zhuang capacity. The media dimension got the lowest score of this focus area, a mere 0.32, meaning that respondents are not able to actively use Zhuang in media contexts. This is most

likely connected to the almost total illiteracy in Zhuang language among the participants, as well the somewhat limited opportunities to use Zhuang in media contexts.

The “opportunity” focus area, which refers to legislation and regulations that support or hinder language use, was also labelled “acutely endangered” with a general score of 1.49. The dimension that scored the highest was “legislation” with a score of 2.08, meaning that language legislation is seen as quite supportive, but problems still exist. The dimension of “language use” came second with a score of 1.82, meaning that most respondents did not think Zhuang use was being actively obstructed, but the language environment did not favour its use, and efforts for revitalizing Zhuang were few. In third rank was the “media” dimension with a score of 1.58, meaning that opportunities for using Zhuang language media were scarce for most respondents. In the last place was the “education” dimension with a score of 0.73, as very few of the respondents had learned Zhuang in a classroom setting, and even fewer had received their education in Zhuang.

The “desire” focus area got the highest general score, 2.01, barely reaching the grade of “threatened”. In this case “desire” refers to the people’s will and mental preparedness to use the language. The “legislation” dimension came in first place, with a score of 3.00, meaning that the respondents mainly viewed PRC language legislation in a positive light. “Language use” received a score of 2.16, which was largely due many of the respondents still having skills in Zhuang and using it in a family context, as well as having a strong wish for the language to be developed by professionals. However, the score was pulled down by limited language use domains, low incentive for the use of the language in public, partly negative language attitudes, and few efforts for revitalization. The “media” dimension received the lowest score of this focus area, only 0.17. The respondents showed little desire to use Zhuang in media or in text production. This is probably connected to not only the common illiteracy, but also to the lack of a prestigious language variety understood by everyone in the ethnic group, as well as the scarcity of Zhuang language media available.

The “language products” focus area of the barometer refers to the availability of Zhuang language products and their demand. The general score of “language

products” was slightly below 1.00, but had to be rounded up, therefore placing the focus area barely in the category of “acutely endangered”. The dimension of “media” had the highest score of this focus area, 1.58, which is still quite low. This means that the respondents thought that Zhuang language media is not very common, but it still exists. “Language use” followed close with a score of 1.46, which is caused by the respondents’ negative opinions about Zhuang language use in public domains, and their pessimistic view about the extent of Zhuang use in their country. In third place was “legislation” with a score of 1.22, also quite low, caused by many respondents being unaware of language laws being available in Zhuang. Finally, in the last place was “education”, with a score of 0.33, which is caused by Zhuang being rarely used as a language of instruction or being taught as a school subject according to the respondents. For example, only one respondent had attended a middle school with instruction in Zhuang, and none had studied Zhuang at university. Only two had attended Zhuang language classes.

All in all, the barometer shows that among the younger generations born in the 1980s or later, Zhuang language falls into category 1 or “acutely endangered” in three focus areas (capacity, opportunity and language products), and into category 2 or “threatened” in one focus area (desire). These results undoubtedly indicate a decreasing trend for the Zhuang languages. Unless revitalization efforts are undertaken and the use of minority languages is encouraged in various fields, some Zhuang languages could be facing endangerment and eventual extinction in the future. The low score of desire for Zhuang language media indicates that the language attitudes of young people should be paid special attention to. Also, the capacity for media use was especially low, meaning that literacy in Zhuang should be increased urgently. The education score was also worryingly low both in the fields of opportunity and language products, requiring immediate attention.

6 Discussion of results

In this chapter, I will compare the results of this study with the theory and background introduced in chapters two and three. Notable results will be brought up for discussion and possible problems will be noted. All in all, the results of this study seem to support the hypothesis that, despite their size, the Zhuang languages seem to

be facing maintenance problems and their vitality level seems lower than would be desirable.

First of all, the distribution of different mother tongues among the participants of this study seem to support the estimate that quite a large number of Zhuang do not speak the language. 30 percent of the Zhuang participants of this study selected other languages than Zhuang as their mother tongue, with Han language being the most common choice among them. This is quite close to the estimate of one third of the Zhuang population not speaking Zhuang, and this is only considering the question of mother tongue. If one were to include those that have shifted from Zhuang to Han after childhood, the percentage could be higher. Of course, the participants of this study do not represent the entire population demographically, but the proportion is still notable, especially when one considers that the urban areas of Guangxi are largely Putonghua-speaking. The proportion of monolingual Zhuang-speakers by mother tongue was also notably low, less than half of the entire participant group. It should be noted, however, that the set-up of the mother tongue question was problematic. In this kind of complicated language situation typical of the PRC, it would have been preferable to have the participants name their mother tongues themselves, instead of offering preselected choices. This way, the participants' answers would provide information relevant to mapping the linguistic divisions of the speakers' themselves. This change should be considered for any future studies using the ELDIA model in a similar setting.

There seemed to be a marked difference in mother tongue and language use patterns between the online questionnaire participants (mostly urban migrants) and the fieldwork informants (mostly rural non-migrants). Almost all fieldwork informants selected Zhuang as their only mother tongue, while most of the online questionnaire participants selected either two mother tongues or Han as their only mother tongue. This is coherent with earlier theories of migrants being more susceptible to mother tongue replacement than indigenous populations (in this case the non-migrant participants). The non-migrants were also clearly living in a more intact language environment than the migrants, which could be seen from their higher number of Zhuang language use domains, and the fact that all of them had learned the language also outside of the home, while only less than one fourth of the migrant group had learnt the language anywhere outside of the home. This supports the claim that

Zhuang languages are safe mostly in rural villages, and highlights how the mass migration currently happening in the PRC poses a threat to the speaker numbers of even the largest minority languages in the country.

The results of this study also align with claims of the unpopularity of Zhuang language education and the Standard Zhuang script. Only around 11 percent of the participants had attended bilingual schools and only 22 percent stated that Zhuang was used in education in their area. Illiteracy in the Zhuang script among the participants was staggeringly high, as over 80 percent declared they had no skills at all in reading or writing it. Illiteracy in Zhuang is undoubtedly linked to the low popularity of Zhuang language education as well as the rarity of Zhuang language media products available to the public. Many speakers considered Zhuang to be “useless” in the job market and society, which probably also plays a role in the unpopularity of the Standard Zhuang script, which is quite different from any other orthographies in the area, except perhaps Chinese *pinyin*. It is unclear to what extent the attitudes of Zhuang speakers towards the Standard Zhuang script have influenced its unpopularity, and this could be an interesting question for a future study. If speakers consider the script too strange or useless to bother learning it, it raises the question of why didn't the original designers of the Zhuang script in the 1950s adopt some adaptation of a script already in use by other Tai languages, as was done with the Dai languages spoken in Yunnan. This would have at least carried the added value of facilitating the learning of other Tai languages.

The participants expressed somewhat negative attitudes towards Zhuang language in society or among themselves. One fourth of the participants thought that members of the community or state/CCP officials were against teaching Zhuang to children. Only between 11 to 22 percent of participants thought that knowing Zhuang would be useful in the job market. Also, over 40 percent of the participants thought negatively about teaching Zhuang to their own children. Furthermore, almost 60 percent of the participants felt that using Zhuang in different situations of life was at least sometimes more difficult than using Han. Finally, television was the only public domain in which most participants wished Zhuang language to be used. All this indicates that (i) many speakers themselves may have negative attitudes towards Zhuang language, namely a sense of “uselessness”, and (ii) society may not actually be very supportive towards Zhuang language use.

The negative language attitudes are likely connected to Zhuang language not being granted a functional role even in the society of the GZAR, as explained in chapter three, and these claims were supported by the data I gathered. Zhuang language use by the participants themselves was most common in the domains of “home”, “relatives” and “neighbourhood”, while the public domains that saw Zhuang language use, according to a majority of the participants, were limited to hospitals and regional government offices. It is positive that these domains see at least some Zhuang language use, but what is worrying on the other hand, is that the usage rate was not very high. For example, in the cases of the “home” and “relatives” domains, only roughly a half of the participants selected “often” as the frequency of their Zhuang language use. In regards to the use of Zhuang language in public domains such as “hospitals” and “regional government offices”, only about 62 percent and 52 percent reported any usage to take place. Considering that Zhuang variants used to function as local *linguae francae* not too long ago, all this would indicate that Zhuang language use domains are diminishing. Control of even the “low strata” of language use is possibly being lost to Han language, which would further increase the threat to the maintenance of the Zhuang languages.

In intergenerational contexts, Han language seemed to be making an entry into the domestic setting of Zhuang families. When asked about language use with their grandparents, a clear majority of the participants stated that they use Zhuang. In the case of their parents however, Han language use became roughly as common as Zhuang use. Almost one fourth of the participants confessed in the survey to having poor or no spoken language skills in Zhuang, which is probably connected to a shift in domestic language use. Also, roughly 40 percent of the participants had a negative attitude towards teaching their own children Zhuang. All this would seem to suggest that there has been an ongoing decline in the intergenerational transmission of Zhuang among the age group of the participants, which could even be worsening among the current generation of children or in the future. A larger sample of participants would be necessary, however, for a more accurate view of the situation.

The unpopularity of Zhuang language education was clear from the data. Only a fraction of the participants had attended bilingual schools themselves, and none had enrolled their children in a bilingual kindergarten or school. Only one had enrolled their child in a Zhuang language class. Neither had anyone used Zhuang language

books or films or any other language products in teaching their children the language at home. This is probably as much connected to the limited availability of these products (and the limited ability of the parents to use them), as it is to limited interest on the part of the parents, since only about one fifth of the participants wished that Zhuang language would be used in education. The same number of participants also stated that Zhuang language was actually used in education in their area, which is a notably low proportion.

When it comes to Zhuang language media consumption, most participants said they never used any of the listed media in Zhuang. Zhuang language media does exist though, at least in the form of TV and radio broadcasts, music, drama and print, but it may be that they are not interesting enough, or that their availability is too limited. To get a clear picture of the reasons for such a low media consumption rate, the attitudes of young people towards Zhuang media should be studied, although illiteracy in the language almost certainly plays its part in the issue. Based on the data, Zhuang language also did not seem to be very responsive to the so-called modern media. Almost none of the participants used Zhuang language in social media, emails, online games, SMS messaging or other internet related contexts. Neither did almost any of the participants ever use Zhuang for any literary production. These issues are obviously connected to the fact that most participants were illiterate in the language.

The language legislation of the PRC was mainly viewed positively and seen as quite supportive by the participants. However, as claimed by many researchers, PRC language legislation is not being effectively implemented, which is further supported by the results of this study. Three out of the four EuLaViBar focus areas ranked as grade 1 or “acutely endangered”, while one focus area was ranked as grade 2 or “threatened”, meaning that “immediate effective measures to support and promote the language in its maintenance and revitalization are needed”.

Using previous research and the data gathered in this study, a comparison to the UNESCO language vitality assessment scale (UNESCO 2003) also shows that the situation of Zhuang language does not seem very secure. Only the factors of “absolute number of speakers” and “amount of documentation” are mostly positive. The factor of “governmental and institutional language policies, including official

status and use” is mixed, since especially Standard Zhuang receives support in PRC policy, but on the downside, language policies are not being effectively implemented and Standard Zhuang sees only limited actual use. The situations of the other six factors are mostly negative: intergenerational language transmission seems to be decreasing, the proportion of speakers on both the national and provincial level is small, language domains seem to be diminishing, there is little response to new domains or media, language education materials are few, and the community members’ language attitudes seem somewhat negative. Based on the limited data gathered in this study, it would seem that the situation of Zhuang as a whole would fit the category of “disappearing” in the language endangerment scheme designed by Grenoble & Whaley (2006; see chapter 2). However, this is only a small-scale preliminary study, and undoubtedly there are differences in the maintenance situations of each Zhuang language, which should be studied further in the future.

There were some minor problems in the study typical of conducting an online survey, namely some inconsistencies in some replies. For example, 11 percent of the participants (three people) claimed to have attended bilingual schools, while only seven percent (two people) named schools or language classes as a domain for their Zhuang language learning. Most likely this is only a case of human error on the part of one of the participants, and in any case, does not change the fact that very few of the participants had attended bilingual schools.

Another small problem in the questionnaire surfaced when the participants were asked to assess their own Zhuang language skills. A major part of the participants chose the option of “fairly good” (“*hái kěyì*” in Mandarin), which did not raise any suspicions until I observed some highly fluent Zhuang speakers choose this answer on my field trips. It became clear that many participants were possibly selecting this answer out of modesty, downplaying their language skills in the process. It may also be so, that the participants’ illiteracy in their mother tongue causes them to assess their language skills more negatively than necessary. Either way, it should be assumed that the participants’ spoken language skills may be better than the replies lead one to believe. Learning from this, a more suitable translation for “fairly good” should be used in future surveys. Although a simple improvement of translation may not be able to solve the problem caused by a wider culture of modesty. If a question was included where the participants were asked to name specific domains or

situations in which they have difficulties in using the language, and perhaps even select the degree of difficulty as well, it would provide more specific data on their language skills.

A perhaps slightly bigger problem in the methodology was caused by the fact that the EuLaViBar questionnaire does not consider the special needs of handling data from both migrant and non-migrant participants. A slight majority of the participants in this survey had migrated out of the GZAR, and it is unclear whether these participants were answering some questions based on their experiences inside or outside the GZAR. This may have affected the data concerning for example language use domains. When looking at the data on language domains, it seems however, that most participants were answering based on their experiences inside the GZAR, as for example most participants stated that Zhuang is used in the hospitals in their area. In future studies with a similar sociolinguistic context, it would be best to modify the survey to fit both participant groups, or just concentrate either on migrants or non-migrants for the sake of more accurate data.

All in all, the methodology of this survey provided interesting results, and the combination of field trips and an online survey gave the data a bit more demographic variety. In the end, however, the number of participants is too low to form a solid picture of the maintenance situation of the Zhuang languages in general. What this survey does provide, however, is a preliminary view on the issue, which can guide future studies to address the most critical questions regarding Zhuang language maintenance with more accuracy and perhaps a wider sample of informants.

7 Conclusions

The objective of this thesis was to test the claim that the Zhuang, the largest minority ethnic group in the People's Republic of China, are facing language shift and possible language endangerment. According to the data, there are indeed visible signs of language shift among young Zhuang – namely the diminishing language use domains, the spread of Han language into the home, and the increasing frequency of Han language use in intergenerational contexts. Also, through the examination of previous research, this study found that there is reason to question the official

taxonomy of Zhuang as a single language, a significant consideration for anyone assessing Zhuang language vitality in the future.

This study was executed in the form of a 14-page questionnaire, which was distributed to young adults of Zhuang ethnicity born in the 1980s or later, between the ages of 15 and 35. The questionnaire was translated into Standard Mandarin Chinese from the ELDIA European Language Vitality Barometer questionnaire. Some changes were made to the original ELDIA questionnaire, including the addition of some Zhuang-specific questions and a decrease in number of questions related to the participants' language use with their children, as many of the participants were unlikely to have children yet. These changes were considered in the final calculation of the language vitality barometer score based on the ELDIA method. The omission of some of the questions related to children proved unnecessary, as many of the field work participants actually did have children.

This specific age group was selected because its members have gone through the education system at a time when tremendous changes have happened in PRC language policy, including a shift towards a monolingual Putonghua state and the emphasis of Putonghua even in the education of ethnic minorities. Being the generation that is currently or in the near future bearing children, they are also a good indicator of future developments in the trends of Zhuang language use. The survey was conducted by the means of an online questionnaire coupled with two field trips to two different rural areas of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in the spring and summer of 2015.

A total of 27 usable replies were gathered from participants through the online survey and field trips. The participants of the online survey and the field trip informants formed two distinct groups based on their replies. The online survey participants had received a higher education than the field trip informants, and they were also more likely to have migrated away from their place of birth, with a slight majority migrating out of the GZAR. The field work informants were more likely to be monolingual Zhuang speakers by birth, and were more likely to use Zhuang more frequently and in a larger variety of language use domains.

On a general scale, the results of this study support the hypothesis that the Zhuang languages are endangered or in the process of becoming endangered. The language

vitality barometer score calculated in chapter five was grade one (acutely endangered) for the linguistic focus areas of capacity, opportunity and language products, and grade two (threatened) in the focus area of desire (to use the language). When the results were compared to the nine factors critical to language maintenance as per the UNESCO language vitality scale (UNESCO 2003), the situation of the Zhuang languages did not seem stable either, since most of the factors scored negatively. A major single factor contributing to the problems of Zhuang language maintenance is undoubtedly the common-place illiteracy in the *sawcuengh* script, which was the case among the participants of this study.

The results of this study are, however, based on a narrow sample of informants, and do not allow for wide generalizations. The results should be considered preliminary at best, and further study in this issue is required to produce concrete evidence of the endangerment of the Zhuang languages. A preferable course for future studies to take would be to concentrate on a single variety of Zhuang, while including a larger sample of informants. Another relevant research question would be the language attitudes of Zhuang speakers, especially concerning the unpopular *sawcuengh* orthography. In a language attitude study, one could perhaps also look at whether Zhuang speakers themselves consider different Zhuang variants to be dialects or languages, and draw a language map based on the experiences of the speakers.

The endangered minority languages of the PRC are legion, and it may well be that the Zhuang languages will soon be counted among them. However, Chinese society is still very much in the process of development and it is constantly undergoing tremendous change. A grass-roots society is yet to be formed, and this may be one reason for the still undeveloped ethnic identity among the Zhuang, which may also be a contributing factor in the problems that the Zhuang languages are facing. However, as China develops further and its people increase their quality of life, the growing middle class may eventually start developing a sense of ethnicity, once life is no longer only about survival. The urban Zhuang, who have opted for Han language and lifestyle, may once bump into a glass ceiling in society, starting a return to their roots. This process, while initially impoverishing a minority of their brightest minds, may result in a surge of ethnolinguistic movements, as the rejected minority elite re-enculturates itself and starts to cultivate an ethnic and linguistic identity separate from mainstream society, as Fishman (1989: 482) has described. As

of now, it is yet to see whether the Zhuang can form a united identity, be it Zhuang or Tai, which recognizes the importance of language to cultural heritage. Lately there have been also some positive signs from the side of the PRC and Guangxi government, which could be a sign of increased inclusiveness in society towards minority languages, such as the start of Standard Zhuang language testing in the GZAR, which hopefully will be further cultivated upon in the future. Considering the speed of change happening in China at the moment, however, I do wish that positive change takes place and a Zhuang identity is formed before the Zhuang languages become endangered to such a degree that revitalization efforts will prove near-impossible.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Ethnic groups of the PRC by population

1 Han 汉族	1,220,844,520	31 Sibe 锡伯族	190,481
2 Zhuang 壮族	16,926,381	32 Kyrgyz 柯尔克孜族	186,708
3 Hui 回族	10,586,087	33 Jingpo 景颇族	147,828
4 Manchu 满族	10,387,958	34 Daur 达斡尔族	131,992
5 Uyghur 维吾尔族	10,069,346	35 Salar 撒拉族	130,607
6 Miao 苗族	9,426,007	36 Blang 布朗族	119,639
7 Yi 彝族	8,714,393	37 Maonan 毛南族	101,192
8 Tujia 土家族	8,353,912	38 Tajik 塔吉克族	51,069
9 Tibetan 藏族	6,282,187	39 Pumi 普米族	42,861
10 Mongol 蒙古族	5,981,840	40 Achang 阿昌族	39,555
11 Kam 侗族	2,879,974	41 Nu 怒族	37,523
12 Bouyei 布依族	2,870,034	42 Evenki 鄂温克族	30,875
13 Yao 瑶族	2,796,003	43 Vietnamese 京族	28,199
14 Bai 白族	1,933,510	44 Jino 基诺族	23,143
15 Korean 朝鲜族	1,830,929	45 Palaung 德昂族	20,556
16 Hani 哈尼族	1,660,932	46 Bonan 保安族	20,074
17 Li 黎族	1,463,064	47 Russian 俄罗斯族	15,393
18 Kazakh 哈萨克族	1,462,588	48 Yugur 裕固族	14,378
19 Dai 傣族	1,261,311	49 Uzbek 乌孜别克族	10,569
20 She 畲族	708,651	50 Monpa 门巴族	10,561
21 Lisu 傈僳族	702,839	51 Oroqen 鄂伦春族	8659
22 Dongxiang 东乡族	621,500	52 Derung 独龙族	6930
23 Gelao 仡佬族	550,746	53 Nanai 赫哲族	5354
24 Lahu 拉祜族	485,966	54 Gaoshan 高山族*	4009
25 Wa 佤族	429,709	55 Lhoba 珞巴族	3682
26 Sui 水族	411,847	56 Tatar 塔塔尔族	3556
27 Nakhi 纳西族	326,295	Yet unrecognized group	640,101
28 Qiang 羌族	309,576	Foreign-born nationals	1448
29 Monguor 土族	289,565	Total	1,332,810,869
30 Mulao 仫佬族	216,257		

Appendix 1: Ethnic groups of the PRC by population (National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China 2010)

*Located on Taiwan and categorized into several different ethnicities by the Republic of China government.

Appendix 2: Standard Mandarin translation of the modified ELDIA EuLaViBar questionnaire

壮语使用习惯调查

这份问卷是针对于较年轻的壮族人士而编写的语言学类匿名调查。作者保证对所有通过本问卷而得到的信息进行保密，并不会给第三方露出任何个人信息。通过本问卷而得到的信息仅可在非盈利语言学研究工作中使用。查询详情，请联系：arttu.anttonen@helsinki.fi。

请逐项在空白处用中文或英文大写字母填写，或在口内打“√”选择。
如有关项目不适用，请填写“无”。

请注意：关于用语的小贴士

“壮语”：各种壮语方言和标准壮语的统称。

“标准壮语”：官方教学中提倡的标准化壮语。

“壮语方言”：地方壮语土话。

A. 基本信息

1 性别

男 女 其他

2 年龄

15-20
 21-25
 26-30
 31-35

3. 民族

4 出生地

中国

其他：

省、市、县：

现居地（省、市、县及居住开始年份）：

5 学历

- 无
 基本教育：小、中学
 中专、高中
 大专、大学

6 就业情况

- 家外工作、学习
 家内工作（如家庭妇女、农民）
 已退休
 求职、失业
 其他：

B. 语言背景

7 您的母语是什么？（可多选。）

- 壮语
 汉语
 其他：

8 您在哪里学过壮语？（可多选。）

- 在家里（跟父母、亲戚）
 跟朋友、邻居、配偶、同事
 在学校或语言培训班
 无
 其他：

9 您祖父母跟您讲过什么语言？（可多选。）

- 无（没见过祖父母）
 壮语
 汉语
 其他：

10 您外祖父母跟您讲过什么语言？（可多选。）

无（没见过外祖父母）

壮语

汉语

其他：

11 您父母俩人之间讲什么语言？（可多选。）

无

壮语

汉语

其他：

12 您小时候，您母亲跟您讲什么语言？（可多选。）

无

壮语

汉语

其他：

13 您母亲现在跟您讲什么语言？（可多选。）

无

壮语

汉语

其他：

14 您小时候，您父亲跟您讲什么语言？（可多选。）

无

壮语

汉语

其他：

15 您父亲现在跟您讲什么语言？（可多选。）

无

壮语

汉语

其他：

16a 小时候，您跟兄弟姐妹（包括同母异父、同父异母的兄弟姐妹）一般讲什么语言？
（可多选。）

无（没有兄弟姐妹或者不认识）

壮语

汉语

其他：

16b 您现在跟兄弟姐妹讲什么语言？（可多选。）

无（没有兄弟姐妹或者失去了联系）

壮语

汉语

其他：

教育经验及儿童语言使用

17 小时候，有没有人试图阻止您父母跟您讲壮语？（可多选。）

不记得

无

有，那些人是家人或亲戚

有，那些人是学校工作人员

有（其他）

18 如今，普通民众或者官方官员是否觉得家长不应该跟孩子讲壮语？

不知道

否

是，但是这些人不多

是，这些人很多

教学语言

19 您是否上过壮汉双语学校？（可多选。）

否

是，壮汉双语幼儿园

是，壮汉双语小学

是，壮汉双语中学

是，壮汉双语高中或中专

是，壮汉双语大学或大专

20 在您上过的学校里，教学中使用过哪些语言？

- 只用汉语（除了一些语言课以外，所有课程都用汉语讲课）
- 只用壮语（除了一些语言课以外，所有课程都用壮语讲课）
- 用汉语以外，一部分课程或者一部分学校还用壮语讲课
- 用其他语言

21 您是否在学校里上过壮语课？（壮语作为课程主题，比如在母语课或外语课）
（可多选。）

- 否
- 是，在幼儿园
- 是，在小、中学
- 是，在高中、中专
- 是，在大学、大专

C. 语言能力

22 请评估自己的壮语水平，在合适的一项打钩。

	非常好	好	还可以	差	完全不会
壮语口语	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
壮语听力	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
壮文写字	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
壮文阅读	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

D. 语言使用

23 请选择您在下列情况使用壮语的频率。如果您从未遇到某个情况，请选择最右边的一项“无”。

	经常	有时候	从不	无
在家里	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
跟亲戚	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在单位或学校	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
跟朋友	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
跟邻居	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在商店	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在街上	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在图书馆	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在宗教活动	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
跟官方官员	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在社区活动	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
其他：	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

E. 语言态度及语言使用欲望

24 小时候，您父母是否鼓励您讲壮语？

是 否

25 您是否试图过让您孩子学习或使用壮语？（可多选。）

- 我没有孩子，而不想试图。
- 如果有了孩子，我就想试图
- 有孩子，但没试图
- 是，我尽量跟孩子讲壮语
- 是，我让孩子跟我讲壮语
- 是，我让孩子玩耍时用壮语
- 是，我让孩子看壮语书、电影、动画片等
- 是，我给孩子举办壮语活动，或者让他交会说壮语的朋友
- 是，我让孩子上壮语课或壮语培训班
- 是，我让孩子上壮汉双语幼儿园或学校
- 其他：

壮语交流

26 不同年龄和不同性别的人常常偏向于不同语言。您同不同意下列几句话？

	非常同意	同意	难说	不太同意	完全不同意
大部分人觉得年轻壮族男孩子应该说壮语。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
大部分人觉得年轻壮族女孩子应该说壮语。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
大部分人觉得成年壮族男人应该说壮语。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
大部分人觉得成年壮族女人应该说壮语。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

27 下列的是一些关于说壮语的人的看法。您同不同意下列几句话：

	非常同意	同意	难说	不太同意	完全不同意
跟会说壮语的人交朋友很容易	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
了解一个会说壮语的人很容易。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
跟会说壮语的人合作很容易。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
跟会说壮语的人容易玩得很开心。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

壮语使用习惯

28 您觉得在哪些场合应该能使用壮语？请按照自己的看法打钩：

	非常同意	同意	难说	不太同意	完全不同意
在电视上	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在警察局	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在全国人民代表大会	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在医院	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在法院	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在互联网上	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
在课上	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

语言法律法规

29 中国法律法规支持使用壮语吗？

是 否 部分支持 不知道

30 中国法律法规妨碍壮语的使用吗？

是 否 部分妨碍 不知道

31 语言法律和语言使用法律法规有没有翻译成壮语？

有 没有 部分翻译过 不知道

32 有没有关于壮语教育的法律法规？

有 没有 有一些 不知道

语言和就业

33 壮语对就业有用吗？您同不同意下列几句话

	非常同意	同意	难说	不太同意	完全不同意
壮语能力 对就业有帮助。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
壮语能力 对得到加薪有帮助。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
壮语能力 对得到升职有帮助。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
壮语能力 对跳槽有帮助。	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

语言的保养和发展

34 在中国有没有保养、发展或者规范化壮语的人物或者官方部门？

有 没有 不知道

35 在自己的生活的不同方面，您有没有感到使用壮语比汉语困难？

有，常常感到 有时候 没有

36 为了让壮语更实用，它应不应该得到官方的支持和专门发展措施？
(比如新词汇、更好的文字写法、更清楚的语法等等。)

是 否 难说

F. 公开和私下的语言使用习惯

37 最近有没有发生试图复兴壮语的运动？

有 没有 不知道

38 在您所在的地区，在下列场合有没有人使用壮语？

	有	没有	不知道
国会	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
警察局	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
税局	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
社会保险局	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
劳动局	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
医院	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
法院	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
政府部门	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
地方政府部门	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
教育	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
平面媒体（报纸、杂志等）	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
收音机	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
电视	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
公共场所里的广告	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
媒体里的广告	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

G.（现代）媒体中的语言使用习惯

请打钩回答下列的媒体使用问题。如选肯定的答案，请继续选择“常常”、“有时候”和“从不”中合适的一项。

40a 您所在的地区是否能获取壮语报纸？

否

不知道

是，比如：

我自己__看壮语报纸：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40b 您所在的地区是否能获取壮语书籍？

- 否
 不知道
 是, 比如：

我自己__看壮语书：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40c 您所在的地区是否能看壮语戏剧或音乐会？

- 否
 不知道
 是

我自己__看壮语戏剧或音乐会：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40d 您所在的地区是否能听收音机里的壮语广播？

- 否
 不知道
 是, 比如：

我自己__听壮语广播：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40e 您所在的地区是否能看电视上的壮语节目？

- 否
 不知道
 是, 比如：

我自己__看壮语电视节目：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40f 您所在的地区是否能获取壮语唱片？

- 否
 不知道
 是

我自己__听壮语唱片：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40g 您所在的地区是否能看壮语电影？（影碟、电视、电影院等）

- 否
 不知道
 是

我自己__看壮语电影：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40h 网上有没有壮语网络内容？（网站、新闻、博客等）

- 没有
 不知道
 有

我自己__浏览壮语网站：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40j 您写电子邮件吗？

- 不写
 写

我自己__用壮语写电子邮件：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40k 您发短信吗？

- 不发
 发

我自己__用壮语发短信：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40l 您玩社交网站或软件吗？（比如人人网、微博、微信、QQ、BBS等）

- 不玩
 玩

我自己__用壮语玩社交：

- 常常 有时候 从不

40m 您玩网络游戏吗？

- 不玩
 玩

我自己玩网络游戏时用壮语：

- 常常 有时候 从不

壮语写作和文化作品

41a 您写信吗？

- 不写
 写

我自己用壮语写信：

- 常常 有时候 从不

41b 您写日记或者记事吗？

- 不写
 写

我自己用壮语写日记或记事：

- 常常 有时候 从不

41c 您写博客吗？

- 不写
 写

我自己用壮语写博客：

- 常常 有时候 从不

41d 您写文章或歌词吗？（散文、故事、歌词等）

- 不写
 写

我自己用壮语写文章或歌词：

- 常常 有时候 从不

41e 您唱歌吗？

- 不唱
- 唱

我自己__用壮语唱歌：

- 常常
- 有时候
- 从不

40f 您是否朗诵诗歌或者做其他表演？

- 否
- 是

我自己__用壮语表演：

- 常常
- 有时候
- 从不

谢谢您参加调查！