An exploratory study on national language policy and family language planning in the Chinese context

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Abstract: National language planning and family language planning may converge or diverge. As 2019 marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the new China, we examined language planning at both the national level and the family level in China. We first revisited language policy and planning in China over the last seventy years through a policy document analysis method, and then explored family language planning among 16 families through questionnaires and interviews. We compared and contrasted national language planning and family language planning in Mandarin, English, and dialects. We found that China has already undergone three language planning stages including importing, localizing, and integrating language theories over the last seven decades. It strives for multilingualism, which, however, is embodied through a language hierarchy but primarily promoting Mandarin’s status. The language hierarchy does exist but varies from national language planning to family language planning, which causes the primary tension between the two language planning systems. In other words, while Mandarin is greatly promoted at the national level, English is still dominant in family language planning among the surveyed families. The primary tension in language hierarchy further drives the two language planning systems to differ in their

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

National language planning and family language planning may converge or diverge. As 2019 marks the 70th anniversary of the new China’s establishment, we examined language planning at both the national level and the family level in China. We found that China has already gone through three language planning stages, including importing, localizing, and integrating language theories over the last seven decades. It strives for multilingualism, which, however, is embodied through a language hierarchy primarily promoting the Mandarin’s status globally in the current and future eras. While Mandarin is greatly promoted at the national level, English is still dominant in family language planning among the surveyed families. The primary tension in language hierarchy further drives national language planning and family language planning to differ in their language ideologies, practices, and management across language planning systems and generations.
language ideologies and language practices and management, which forms further
tensions within and between different generations. We argued national language
management or language policy implementation may take time to inform family
language planning and also discussed how political and economic factors may
inform these tensions.

Keywords: National language planning; family language planning; tensions;
multilingualism

1. Introduction
Language planning is the management and measurement of the existing language issues or
problems in a nation, social community, or even family. In a broad sense, language planning
goes far beyond the traditional communication domain, but instead closely relates to national
security, diplomatic negotiation, and international status. J. Hu (2019) pointed out that language is
the core factor of cultural identity and civilization identity; every single language conveys rich and
unique humanistic knowledge which includes a complete and comprehensive record of the profound humanistic heritage of that nation or ethnic group. It may also be a critical factor to
determine whether a nation can stand firm in the world.

Bourdieu (1991) has been a classic tenet on how economic changes and social class reclassifica-
tions influence language policy and planning over the decades. This is typically true when
a country experiences or suffers from dramatic economic and political changes. With the trade
war between China and the United States having been a hot issue over the last two years,
language planning in China at both national and family levels has also changed dramatically.
Also, as one of the political strategies, China strives to implement the Belt and Road initiative (THE
BRI), which greatly helps promote Chinese heritage language culture and strengthen international
exchanges and cooperation between China and the countries along the B&R initiative. In addition,
2019 is the year when China celebrates its 70th anniversary of the establishment of the new
country. Quite a few state departments and the ministry of education in the country have issued
language policies and planning initiatives in the celebration period (Gao, 2020). All that has been
discussed so far indicates a good timing to explore the language policy and planning in this
country.

Another trigger to conduct the current study is an exploration of the tension, if any, between
national language policy and family language planning (FLP). FLP is an essential component in
national language planning research (Spolsky, 2004). While national language planning is impor-
tant, it may or may not affect the language planning within the family. Specifically, as English has
been an important curriculum and subject at school in China over the decades, will its importance
be changed at the national level or affected at the family level due to the country’s updated
ideological and political strategies? This is also something we would like to explore in this current
study.

2. Literature review

2.1. Language policy and planning
The field of language policy and planning (LPP) primarily derived from sociolinguistics and then has
been developing as an independent discipline over the last five decades. Initially, Haugen (1959)
introduced the concept of “language planning” as “the activity of preparing a normative ortho-
graphy, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a nonhomogeneous
speech community” (p. 8). Ruiz (1984) proposed a trifold classification of language planning in
education which included language-as-problem, language-as-right, or language-as-resource.
Tollefson (1991) critiqued earlier research for hardly taking the sociopolitical and ideological
constructs into language plans and policies, and instead proposed language practices and policies
can be ideologically positioned. Tollefson (2013) further suggested that understanding and studying language processes of a certain speech community or nation requires to take the national, ideological, economic, and political factors into consideration. Tollefson (2013) further distinguished the power of language policy from that of language policy agents and argued the tension between the two research bodies.

In addition to the overall account on LPP research development, Spolsky (2014) might be regarded as one of the most comprehensive synthesis on LPP, which proposed that language policy must be seen ecologically and dynamically, evolving from “a complex set of social, political, economic, religious, demographic, educational and cultural factors” (p. ix). The tenets from Bourdieu (1991) on how economic change and social class considerations influence individual language choice have influenced Spolsky’s work. In particular, Spolsky argued that studies on language planning departed from an official, national policy (Chapter 7) and further discussed the agent to determine that national policy (Chapter 12).

2.2. Family language planning
Together with his contribution to language policy studies, Spolsky (2012) also contributed further analysis of FLP to the existing literature. Specifically, he categorized language ideology, language practices and language management as three constructs that can be closely connected with FLP. Language ideology entails beliefs and attitudes towards cultural practices and identity, which may fall into two extremes. On one hand, some people in a given community may hold strong heritage identity and consider their heritage language as an advantage (King & Fogle, 2006), or an investment (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009). On the other hand, some people may regard their heritage language unimportant or even useless (e.g., Schüpbach, 2009).

Language practices, as Spolsky (2012) defined, refer to how people “embrace conventional differences between levels of formality of speech and other agreed rules as to what variety is appropriate in different situations. In multilingual societies, they also include rules for the appropriacy for each named language.” In other words, language practices help understand how much or often people use different languages in their family.

Language management is broadly defined as the choices people made to use heritage or community languages at home. King and Fogle (2006) proposed two main sources to explain family decisions regarding FLP: parents’ personal experiences with language learning, and other families’ experiences in the same community. They found that parents overall believed in their own experiences over other families’ experiences.

While the existing literature on both LPP and FLP has fruited over the decades, studies to explore the tension between the two fields are far less developed. To address this gap, we conduct the current study. The study is of great significance in the Chinese context: we assume that the economic and political power of China has been soaring over the years would influence its national language planning; however, whether this influence would also inform family language planning in China is something we would like to explore in the study.

2.3. Tensions between national and family language planning
Studies over the years have been yielded on tensions between national and family language planning (e.g., Curdt-Christiansen, 2016; Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Garcia, 2015). In Singaporean context, Curdt-Christiansen (2016) explored conflicting language ideologies and contradictory language practices among three multilingual families, i.e. Chinese, Malay, and Indian. She revealed tensions between the bilingual policy in mother tongues and English as official languages and the educational policy which recognizes English as the medium of instruction in that context. Likewise, Garcia (2015) explored tensions between the promoted multilingualism in the educational systems in France and Germany and the teaching of utilitarian European standard languages rather than that of minority and migrant languages. Garcia explained the tensions
through a cultural and utilitarian perspective and argued that the tensions are consequences of separate institutionalization between general foreign language policies and heritage, regional, and minority language courses.

Curdt-Christiansen and Wang (2018) examined how Putonghua (Mandarin), fanyans (dialects, subdialects, or regionalalects), and English are perceived by eight Chinese, middle-class families. Through children's language audits, family literacy practices, and parental language ideologies, they explained how these studied constructs help shape children’s language development and found that parents as agents in China have strong influence in making FLP decisions. While the study provided the reader with a detailed analysis on the FLP in the studied families, it took the premise that national language planning in China had shifted over the years and thus did not go deeper in discussing how national language planning and FLP in China may converge or diverge. The current study aims at addressing the gap through the following questions:

1. How the national language planning initiatives have evolved over the decades in China? What are the national language planning initiatives in China at present, typically for Mandarin, English, and dialects?
2. What are parents’ language ideologies, practices, and management? How these constructs inform their FLP in Mandarin, English, and their regional dialects?
3. Are there any tensions between the macro national LLP and the micro FLP? If so, what are they?

3. Research methods

We took steps in designing and completing the research, with different steps collecting different sorts of data. We argued this study had been done in a mixed-methods design but would be cautious to conclude it as a traditionally defined mixed method study with both quantitative and qualitative data. We did include policy and document analysis method to report the national language planning and its evolution over the decades; we also conducted surveys and interviews among 16 families. The research is thus divided into three major steps: First, we revisit and summarize the national language planning policies over the 70 years since the founding of People’s Republic of China. Second, we explore and analyse parents’ beliefs and attitudes towards family language planning. Third, we compare and contrast findings from the two levels of language planning and explore the consistency or inconsistency between LPP and FLP.

3.1. Policy document analysis

The research design directs how the data has been collected in the study. For the data on national language planning, we used a policy document analysis method by reviewing two major sources of documents: first, analysis report or publications from leading scholars, linguists, and authorities in the country who have been over the years working for certain state-level language planning institutes or bureaus, e.g., the Ministry of Education or its subsidiaries including the State Language Planning Commission (see Table 1).

We also analysed language policies pertinent to national development planning from 2006 to 2020 in the country (see Table 2). It should be mentioned that for the analysis from leading scholars or linguists, it was conducted from a historical perspective by revisiting language planning from 1949 to 2019. 2019 is a unique timing when China celebrates its 70th anniversary of new China establishment. For the analysis on the language policies and planning over three five-year plans (2006-2020), it was directed towards how the country plans their languages in each stage.

3.2. The participated families

When exploring parents’ opinions and attitudes on FLP, this study analyzed and compiled questionnaires for parents of two different age groups (see Table 3) to improve the reliability and validity and comprehensively reveal parents’ perspectives and attitudes on language learning. That
Table 1. Leading linguists publication on language policy and planning in China

| Scholars         | Affiliates & positions in state language institutes                                                                 | Publication year selected | Content synopsis                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wen Qiufang      | Beijing University of Foreign Studies & Former Director of National Research Center for Foreign Language Education     | January 2019              | The development of foreign language teaching theory over the last 70 years in China                                                               |
| Zhou Qingsheng   | Jiangsu Normal University & Member of State Language Commission                                                        | July 2019                 | Seventy years of China’s language policy studies                                                                                                 |
| Hu Zhuanglin     | Peking University, professor emeritus in universities including Tsinghua University, Beijing Normal University, etc. Foundational linguist in China | November 2019             | National language strategy under the integration of pluralistic civilization                                                                      |
| Huang Xing       | Institute of Ethnic and Anthropological Studies at Chinese Social Science Academy                                       | August 2019               | Seventy years of policies and management of ethnic minority languages in China                                                                  |
| Guo Xi           | Jinnan University & Director of Overseas Chinese Studies Center; Research Fellow in the Beijing Advanced Innovation Center of Language Resources | September 2018           | Changes and influences of Higher Education construction over the last 70 years in China                                                        |
| Feng Zhiwei      | Institute of Applied Linguistics in MOE                                                                               | April 2019                | From Chinese character processing to natural language processing over the last 70 years in China                                                      |

is, eight parents (Group One) average age of 35 with their children aged around five, and eight parents (Group Two) average aged of 50 with their children aged around 20.

During the interview, the researchers classified and analyzed the participants in the form of questionnaires combining with records and notes, and the researchers adjusted the content of the questionnaires accordingly. During the process, the researchers encouraged the participants to report their real thoughts, opinions, and views referring to the interview transcript.

### 3.3. Design of questionnaire

When designing the questions in questionnaire and interviews, we referred to the primary three theoretical categories as prevailed and accepted in language planning studies, including language ideologies, language practices, and language management (Spolsky, 2009). We particularly referred to and highly adapted the questions from Curdt-Christiansen and Wang (2018). We did not go strictly with the three categories, as we found some questions (for example, questions about language beliefs and attitudes) may fall into two categories. We thus designed the questions and categorized them in somewhat different ways from the traditional categories.

We first framed our interview questions about the language ideologies. We attempted to explore what interviewed parents’ beliefs about language, language functions, and the role of the language in human communication and civilization. The questions were designed broad and open
with the aim of providing parents’ much room to brainstorm and respond. In addition, we also framed some questions about parents’ expectation in language investment for their children, including questions about curricula or extra-curriculum they had invested for their children.
These questions in a way connect language ideologies with language practices and management. We also included a few questions about the parents’ language learning experiences, with an attempt to explore how their experiences had informed their way of investment in their children language education. These questions pave the way to further explore parents’ language ideology and management. Also, we designed a few other questions about comparison and contrasts between Mandarin, dialects, and foreign languages in China, English in particular.

Therefore, questionnaire in this research mainly involves four aspects: First, parents’ beliefs about the language itself (including their understanding and opinions on English as well as their awareness of their heritage languages or dialects); Second, the attitude of parents to language investment (such as the universality and importance of English training classes, the intention to enroll in the classes, etc.); Third, the role of language in parents’ social networks (mainly related to the use of language in the workplace); Fourth, the motivation and history of parents’ language learning. Through research and investigation on these four items and analysis of the collected data, the outcomes were compared with the current national language policy for both consistency and conflict.

4. Findings

4.1. Language planning in China

Over the decades, Chinese language policy has been adjusted in response to the call of the times and also informed the language planning of Chinese families to varying degrees. Generally, national language plan in China can be divided into three categories: 1) national language planning, 2) regional dialectical or minority language planning, 3) foreign language planning.

4.1.1. National language planning

China currently advocates to continue its national infrastructure development, improve the well-being of the people, and promote the BRI globally. From the political and economic perspective, Li (2015) explained that languages should be the key to promote and fully implement the BRI. On one hand, China attempts to promote Chinese as a lingua franca or at least a common language globally (Guo, 2019; Hu, 2019a). On the other hand, China holds a language pluralism or multilingualism perspective by learning from other languages and making connections with the Chinese language (Hu, 2019a). In November 2019, Hu (2019a) presented his belief on national language strategy in Beijing Forum, the theme of which is the harmony and mutual prosperity of civilization—the changing world and future of mankind. He emphasized that language serves as a core factor in civilization and human development and many nations have been working on promoting a pluralistic and diversified civilization. Two of the sub-themes were developed from his paper: internationalized foreign languages and internationalized Chinese. Hu further explained how the internationalized Chinese would help China implement its BRI.

Prior to the language pluralism or multilingualism policy, China has undergone quite a few stages in its national language planning. Back in the 1950s when the first group of the national leaders including Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, introducing and promoting the Chinese as a common language to the world has already been the national language strategy in its emerging stage (Huang, 2019; Hu, 2019a). However, the Culture Revolution in 1960s suspended the national language strategy and delayed its implementation process (Chen et al., 2019), and the national language strategies went through a recovering stage in 1970s. In 1980s, the national language strategies, exclusive of its advocate to promote English as a major, important subject in the educational system, re-attached its importance to the Chinese language planning strategy. It should be mentioned that ethnic and minority languages while being paid attention at that time were still not in the dominant language planning. Language planning strategies about the Chinese common language and its ethnic and minority languages at that time diverged (Huang, 2019). The turn of 21st century marked the language planning in China with some adjustments; ethnic and minority languages have been granted weight to protect the heritage languages in the country and also reserve its minority cultures.
Then, language planning strategies about the Chinese common language and its ethnic and minority languages converge at this point (Huang, 2019; Hu, 2019a).

To sum up, national language planning over the last seventy years in China has made some achievements. Guo (2019) stated:

“The success is demonstrated in the following aspects: nation-wide popularization of the national common language (Guojia Tongyongyu); realization of the linguistic goal of the unification of speech and writing for the first time in the Chinese history; continuous improvement of overall language use across the whole society; and healthy development of language use towards pluralism and harmony. This paper concludes that the use and development of Chinese over the past seven decades deserve further studies”. (p. 14)

4.1.2. Regional dialect or minority language planning

The protection, standardization, and informatization of ethnic language resources are important components of ethnic work, and these are also important parts of national language work (Huang, 2019). Since the proposal of the “11th Five-Year Plan” in China in 2006, the protection of multi-ethnic language resources has been included in its unremitting development goals for the coming 30 years, and the Chinese Language Resource Protection Project (referred to as the language protection project) was officially launched in 2015. The ‘Chinese Language Resources Audio Database Technical Specification and Platform Research and Development Project’ advocates making full use of the results of informatization. In the third Five-Year plan, the “13th Five-Year Plan” has pointed out that promoting the standardization, normalization, and informatization of national regional dialects is a new development of ethnic language work in the information age. Continuing to implement the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy and relevant national policies, the standardization of ethnic languages and characters can be promoted by focusing on the construction of ethnic language standards and norms and based on scientific research and language engineering. However, Huang (2019) ethnic minority languages, while being given an increasing amount of attention, are still expected to play a more important role in language protection, identity, and minority rights in the near future.

4.1.3. Foreign language planning

Wen (2019) summarized the three paths or stages of foreign languages development in China, including “importing theories abroad and then adapting them to the local context”, “forming theories rooted in the Chinese context”, and “constructing theories by integrating the best from the Chinese and foreign theories” (p. 22).

Specifically, the development of language planning in a broad sense originates from the introduction and learning of language education theories or linguistic theories from English-speaking countries, particularly from 1980s to 1990s. For example, foundational linguists including Saussure, Chomsky, and M.A.K Halliday paved the way not only for linguistics field in the world, but also are treated as the first group of classic, canonical theorists in China.

From 1990s till now, applied linguists including Stephen Krashen, Rod Ellis, Lantolf, Diane Larsen-Freeman are still important figures influencing Chinese scholars studying linguistics and language education. These linguists and their works have been so far one of the most influential and powerful groups in China (Wen, 2019).

The turn of 21st century has marked a new era in the foreign language education in China: scholars in language education and linguistics with the sponsorship from state-owned language institutes or the Ministry of Education in China have been contextualizing, localizing, and developing imported theories from the previous two stages. All the three stages, “being complementary to each other and moving forward together”, have made contributions to the development of foreign language education in China (Wen, 2019, p. 22).
4.2. Staging language planning strategies

From a macro perspective, national language planning in China can be divided into three stages: importing, localizing, and integrating stages.

4.2.1. Theory importing stage

Looking back on the 70-year development of foreign language teaching theories in China, the early foreign language teaching theories were introduced from abroad. Wen (2019) pointed out that since the founding of China, foreign language education has fluctuated. The Soviet Union’s intensive and extensive reading teaching theory, also known as “text-centred method”, was introduced in 1973, which is applied to learn English repeatedly from words to sentences, from paragraphs to entire articles, and to recite them. The “speaking and listening method”, rising from the United States, was introduced in 2008, and the Content-Based Instruction (CBI) from North America is applied currently (2019). China continuously learns from foreign experiences and absorbs them, implements localized transformation, and opens the way for foreign language teaching and dissemination.

4.2.2. Theory localizing stage

With the full swing of the BRI construction, China is getting closer to the center of the world stage, and Chinese language and culture have been widely spread. Language and cultural brand events such as the Chinese Classics “Reading and Narrating” and the Chinese Poetry Conference (2016) have attracted wide attention. Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms have a global reputation. Five hundred and forty-eight Confucius Institutes have been held in 154 countries and regions since 2018, which has greatly promoted Chinese communication both domestically and overseas and the international dissemination of Chinese language. The international dissemination of Chinese language and culture presents an unprecedented new situation, which promotes the trend of “Chinese language globalization”.

4.2.3. Theory integrating stage

With the continuous expansion of language communication channels, the content of international cultural cooperation is extremely enriched. In March 2015, China successfully launched the “Chinese-German Language and Culture Study Tour” and signed the first bilateral agreement of the National Language Commission with France, named the Chinese-French Language Policy Exchange and Cooperation Agreement, becoming an important part of the humanities exchange mechanism between China and foreign countries. Also, in September 2017, China held the first Beijing International Language and Culture Expo which filled in the gap in Chinese language community. Meanwhile, China actively participated in the joint establishment of young scholars’ overseas training programs, strengthened the World Conference on the Protection of Language Resources (2018), advocated the concept of language resources protection, and transmitted Chinese voices.

4.3. Family language planning

(1) English learning to serve a practical and utilitarian purpose

We thus explored the characteristics of language beliefs from the parents or families, which reflect their language ideologies. We found that most parents pay more attention to the instrumentality and practicality of a language but ignore cultural capitals and identity that may be conveyed through that language. Specifically, most, if not all, of the parents believed English is still a powerful weapon in helping their children achieve academic and professional goals and thus planned and invested in the children’s English education. On the other hand, they believed Mandarin, as their mother tongue, can be acquired through the daily communication and schooling contexts. In that vein, extra training or language classes for Chinese or Mandarin become unnecessary. For example,

R: Have you registered or paid any English or Chinese Mandarin courses for your kid?
P4: Yes. For English only, but not for Chinese.

R: Why? I mean why not Chinese?

P4: I suppose there are abundant learning resources (for Chinese), either at home or at school, as we live in a Chinese speaking context.

The response from P4 (the participated parent 4) and R (one of the researchers) represented a typical belief or language ideology among most of the parents. Similarly, in terms of children's language development, although most Chinese parents were willing to afford their children to receive bilingual education as early as possible, they primarily accounted for the decision as a way to better their children's skills in entrance exams or job market. In other words, they cared more about practical and utilitarian purposes than cultural or identity purposes that could be achieved through a language. For example,

P6: We (my husband and I) paid English courses for her (our kid), because we are not sure if in the future she will study in China or abroad. We thus believe English is way more important than Mandarin, at least for schooling purposes.

Similarly, another interviewed parent (the participated parent 9, or P9) emphasized the importance of English through job interview experiences.

P9: Yes. From our own experiences in hunting for the jobs, we understand English is like a bottle opener. Without a good English language proficiency or certificate, the employers won't hire you.

With that practical and utilitarian perspective, parents invested in more English training courses for their children. This reflects their language practices and management in FLP. In terms of investment in children's foreign language learning, education expenditures such as training classes have also become one of the major economic contradictions of Chinese families. According to incomplete statistics, parents who work as teachers pay more attention to the language education of their children.

(2) Mandarin learning to sustain cultural values and capitals

Different from English learning classes, which can either be for academic/schooling purposes or extracurricular purposes, off-campus Mandarin classes in most interviewed contexts were only for academic purposes. Chinese as one of the compulsory courses at school required parents to invest for their children. However, there were hardly any Chinese Mandarin courses offered simply as an extracurricular which aims at fostering students’ interests or sharpening their language skills. However, there were quite a lot of extracurricular courses pertinent to Chinese Mandarin learning, including presentation and speech, broadcasting, and performing arts courses. These courses in a roundabout way improved children’s Mandarin input and proficiency and attracted parents to invest. For example,

P2 (the participated parent 2): We are wondering if Chinese language courses are provided more than they used to be. But from our experiences, we used to take courses or training classes about Chinese in the form of presentational skill courses, broadcasting courses, etc. While these courses were not titled Chinese courses, they were in a way connected to the Chinese. It is in the same way that an increasing number of sinology classes or courses are nowadays offered in my community and they aim at improving children's Chinese proficiency as well. Behind these sinology courses stand the increased emphasis on Chinese cultures and identity.

(3) Regional dialects as neglected and biased languages
Most of the parents argued they hadn't deliberated to provide any dialect training or classes, or even any resources to their kids. For one thing, they believed the dialect would be a hindrance to their children's schooling. Children at school would not be able to communicate in a single dialect, unless the children share the same dialect. For another thing, parents also believed when their children travel or study in another province or state, speaking dialects would not be used as a medium of communication. For example,

P3 (the participated parent 3): It is no use of speaking dialects. Kids in the kindergarten do not even share the same dialect, how come they can communicate with their dialects. When they enter the primary school, the medium of instruction would be Chinese Mandarin. Then, why bother to learn and speak dialects?

4.4. Tensions between national language policy and FLP

(1) Language hierarchy does exist but vary from national language planning to family language planning, which causes the primary tension between the two language planning systems.

On one hand, the national language policy and characteristics also have a profound impact on family language planning. Since the Chinese reform and opening up, there was a time when running a socialist way in China had undergone a developing but chaotic stage, especially during the Culture Revolution period. In response to this, in 1982, the Chinese Ministry of Education proposed that the language setting of middle schools across the nation should be mainly English. Thus, English has become China's veritable first foreign language. By 1987, the College English Test (CET) Four and CET Six exams had officially started, and the popularity of Chinese English education had been strengthened worldwide. With the increasing trend of globalization, English has become one of the important vehicles of China's foreign exchange. Together with the policy, families in China ever since 1980s have set up English as an investment in their children education. This phenomenon has been developing and extending till the present, as most families still believe English as the most important subject at school. However, this language imperialism belief which sets up English as the most important language contradicts with the current language policy and planning (i.e., the language pluralism) at the national level. In other words, there exist some tensions between national language planning and family language planning in the Chinese context, at least at present.

The increasing economic and political power helps redefine or adjust language policies within a nation. The current study indicates over the 70 years in China, the country has gradually shifted from a policy-importing stage to a policy-integrating stage. Implementation of a state language policy and planning takes time. The strength of that implementation also determines how the specific policy will inform family language planning within the nation. This is in a way closely connected with language management (Spolsky, 2017) in a country. In the current study, the direct implementation of language policy with English being a dominant language in the curriculum has informed parents over the last three decades (from 1980s to 2010s) of their family planning or language investment decisions. While the new language planning with Chinese heritage languages being given an increasing weight has not so far informed family language planning to its maximum, we may predict a trend in next ten years. The scalar factor that it takes time to implement a national policy across the nation may cause tensions between national language policy and family language planning. In the current study, while the younger generation of parents do hold certain beliefs about language multiplicity which in a way mirrors the national policy, we hardly found any connection between their beliefs and national language policy with our interview records.

(2) The primary tension in language hierarchy further drives national language planning and FLP to differ in their language ideologies and language practices/management, which forms sub-tensions within and between the two language planning systems.
1) Ideologically, national language planning aims at promoting the national identity and its cultures, whereas family language planning holds beliefs that are market-oriented. These ideological differences caused differences in language practices and management. Tensions between family language planning and parents’ actual investment in China thus exist due to multiple factors including the large population, artificial intelligence, and standards to re-define an ideal job in the current era. Specifically, the large population in China makes the job market quite competitive; while students may expect to learn a foreign language that they like, they may in fact choose a foreign language that is more practical and fit to the job market. Also, the fourth industrial revolution with AI being the dominant power makes the headcounts in job markets shrink; an increasing number of labor forces are replaced by the AI technique. In that vein, parents may expect their children to learn something more practical and helpful instead of simply helping their children achieve a sense of self-actualisation. In addition, with the fierce job market competition and the advanced AI technique, parents may re-define what might an ideal job for their children and thus re-invest a foreign language for their children.

2) Socioeconomic and utilitarian purposes outperform cultural and identity values in language planning and practices. After discussing and analyzing the two subdivisions of parents’ or families’ attitudes towards language and the characteristics of national language policy, it is not difficult to conclude that both groups believed that English outperforms Mandarin and dialects in the linguistic hierarchy. From the macro, national perspective, English as a universal language serves as a communicative medium for multinational trade which is under construction, facilitates interpersonal communication, cultural prosperity, foreign exchanges and cooperation, promotes modernization and social harmony; and opens the way for the mutual learning and spread of civilizations domestically and overseas. From the familial perspective, English education is conducive to addressing language barriers and thus bettering children’s chances of entering a higher level of education and seizing a decent job.

3) Tensions in language ideology also exist between different generations of parents in China. For the younger generation of parents, their beliefs about language investment direct towards a language pluralism or multilingualism; for the elder generation of parents, however, their beliefs about language investment direct towards a language imperialism. Specifically, while the younger generation of parents still believe English as a lingua franca plays a very important role in the world, they are also open to invest another foreign language including Spanish, Japanese, or French for their kids. This is something different in nature from that in the elder generation of parents’ beliefs which still believe English outperforms other foreign languages as an investment to their children’s language education. Interviews of these participated families in two different generations may lead us to a witnessed tension between linguistic imperialism and multilingualism.

5. Discussion
A language hierarchy does exist among the languages planned in China, but may require further alignments between the national level and family level for sake of a better linguistic ecology (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018). From the perspective of language ideology, Chinese parents pay more attention to the instrumentality rather than cultural values that a language conveys. The reason why parents recognize the need to learn English is because they have seen the current environment of foreign language learning and regard English as one of the indispensable skills for their children’s future job promotion. Parents consider Mandarin as their mother tongue instead of dialects, and placed an equally important status to the mother tongue compared to English. However, for their regional dialects, parents placed them in an unimportant position (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018).

Social norms and collectivist culture drive parents to make FLP decisions. It can be concluded from the analysis of language investment data that Chinese parents choose to enroll their children in English training classes as early as possible because they adhere to the notion that children cannot fall behind from the starting line. However, when enrolling their children in training classes, parental agency rather than children’s interest lead the parents to the decision (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang,
2018). Meanwhile, in a typical collectivist culture as in China, parents follow the lead by their peers. In other words, parents refer to their colleagues’ or other parents’ class selection to make their own decisions. Since the Chinese language can be heard every day, parents said that daily communication provides an immersive language learning environment for the learning of their mother language, so there is no need to invest in learning Chinese language. As to the emergence of the sinology classes in the recent years, parents believed that these classes are necessary to promote traditional Chinese culture but hardly enrolled their kids in any of these classes.

Parents’ reflective practices are highly required to inform better FLP decisions. When addressing the language learning process and motivation of parents, the analysis of the results shows that their contact with English began with the English lessons required by the school, and it started later than contemporary children. On the one hand, it is because the parents lived in an era when they did not pay much attention to English learning. On the other hand, English learning requires a lot of energy investment, and parents themselves chose to give up English learning because they lacked sufficient motivation or had not realized the importance of English learning. However, when discussing language effects brought about by parents’ social relations, parents stated that they generally choose to communicate in Mandarin in the workplace, but also have different choices, such as dialect, based on the target and the occasion of the conversation. In the workplace, parents who work as teachers have more opportunities to hear English in communication than parents in other professions. As to the parents, communicating in English in the workplace is a way to demonstrate their personal abilities. Overall, the FLP decisions are highly parent agency-based (Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018), which requires parents to think about whether children’s own interests, agency, and preferences should be included in the FLP process.

6. Conclusion
We revisited the historical development of language policy and planning in China over the last seven decades in the study. In addition, we also explored beliefs about family language planning through parents in 16 families and then compared their beliefs with language policy and planning at the state level. To conclude this paper, we would like to talk about some hidden theme behind our findings and discussion which may offer insights to scholars interested in the topics related to the study. We talked about the national language planning strategies which attempt to promote Chinese to be internationalized and advocate a language pluralism among different foreign languages, typically among the BRI countries; however, we have not presented much about how the country plans the English or identifies its status in the future. While it might not be safe to conclude the country deemphasizes the English status in its educational system, we may at least predict that the status of English has been transformed in a way that differs from its past status. With the political and economic status of Chinese being changed or transformed, we will see how the current language policy in multilingualism or language pluralism would make some achievements in the next few years.

In addition, the primary tension between national language planning and FLP in the current study lies in the unaligned language hierarchy: the national language planning features a hierarchy with promoting Mandarin to be globally recognized language; however, a hierarchy with English still being a dominant and practical language is rooted in most, if not all, Chinese families. It takes time for the language planning at both levels to align or match. We will see how this might change in the following years or decades.

Last but not least, as previously reported (e.g., Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018), most FLP decisions in Chinese context are parent agency-based, with few concerns from the Children themselves. While parents are the language investment providers for their kids, it is still highly suggested that they took suggestions from children or at least think about how they may better their decisions from their children’s perspective.
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