2 Ideologically driven divergence in Cantonese vernacular writing practices

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Introduction

In the Hong Kong context, terminology related the Chinese language (中文 *zung1man2*) is "fuzzy" (Bruche-Schulz 1997). In everyday usage, the term refers to Cantonese (廣東話 *gwong2dung1waa2*) as the default vernacular, with Written Chinese (書面語 *syu1min2jyu5*) as the unmarked, socially accepted written norm. This functional division of labour between Cantonese and Written Chinese is a classical (but increasingly rare) case of diglossia (Ferguson 1959) that involves a pair of two distinct but genetically related varieties. The Hong Kong variety of Standard Written Chinese (henceforth SWC), often labelled as the H-variety, has a lexicon and grammar that are generally compatible with Mandarin and is comprehensible to Chinese speakers outside of Hong Kong, despite being occasionally archaic, dialectal, foreign or unnatural in its words and phrases. In contrast, the Cantonese vernacular that dominates all aspects of formal and informal spoken communication, often considered to be the L-variety (See Li 2017; Leung and Li 2020), is unintelligible to Chinese users outside of Guangdong or Yue-speaking regions. Putonghua (普通話 *pou2tung1waa2*), the national language of the People's Republic of China that was standardized from the *Běijīng* dialect of Mandarin, is rarely used among local Hong Kong residents. To the broader community of Chinese users who use Mandarin as a daily language, it may not be immediately apparent how SWC texts are produced by Hong Kong users, but Cantonese elements in writing make Hong Kong SWC a unique written form. Written texts in Hong Kong have been widely studied linguistically as a variant of Global Chinese/SWC (Shi 2000; Shi et al. 2014; Tin 2020) or as a subset of Written Cantonese (Bauer 1988; 2016; 2018; Snow 2004; 2008). Most studies have analysed Cantonese lexical and grammatical elements in writing as learners' errors or deviations from the Mandarin-based standard, giving a depiction of SWC that is significantly different from Cantonese and requires significant effort to learn.

Apart from unintended uses of Cantonese elements, there are practical reasons to use vernacular elements in writing on purpose ("vernacularize") to bridge this gap, which result in "in-between" written forms that coexist with SWC texts. Despite the widespread use of vernacular writing, Cantonese-SWC diglossia is still upheld by most Hongkongers. Snow (2010) explains the stability of the diglossic

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relation by a delicate equilibrium between two forces: attachment to Cantonese as "an assertion of their distinct identity", which serves to resist being replaced by Mandarin in speech, and the affinity to the larger (Chinese) identity that helps avoid detachment from the external standard. This predicts a scale-tipping effect should any side gain ground, but the diglossic relation has been fairly stable despite changes in identity politics from the 2010s onward, thus there is a need to seek other explanations.

This study is a continuation of Snow's seminal work on Written Cantonese and vernacular development based on a renewed understanding of the writing process of typical Cantonese users from Hong Kong. This chapter tries to answer the research questions below:

1 What explains the choice of linguistic levels (words, phrases, sentences, quotes) for vernacularisation?
2 How do we explain the ongoing presence of diglossia in Hong Kong?
3 What is the role of vernacular writing in the diglossic dynamics?
4 How is increased vernacularisation going to impact the development of diglossia?

The discussion begins by arguing that diglossia in Hong Kong is *non-phonological* and is more adequately described as a division of labour between different flavours of Cantonese. This special diglossic configuration has a blurred linguistic boundary between spoken and written lects that allows two ways to vernacularize: namely the insertion of Cantonese elements in otherwise standard Chinese writing (*translanguaging*) and the development of a separate written norm from Cantonese verbatim transcriptions (*code-switching*). The linguistic properties of the two types of vernacularisation will be examined, along with an explanation based on individual differences in perceived psychological distance between spoken and written lects. The chapter concludes by providing predictions for the future development of Cantonese writing.

Non-phonological nature of diglossia in Hong Kong

This section is devoted to highlighting the non-phonological nature of diglossia in Hong Kong. Diglossia in Hong Kong is often described as one between Cantonese and Putonghua, which is an assumption shared by the general public and is treated as such in scholarly work (Shi et al. 2014, 6) and dictionaries (e.g. Commercial Press 2018). This section argues against this view and presents evidence to show that diglossia in Hong Kong is not the competition or division of labour between a Putonghua/Mandarin-based H lect that is written and formal, and a Cantonese-based L lect that is spoken and informal.[1] Instead, Hong Kong diglossia involves multiple written norms that are all Cantonese-based, which makes it akin to a non-diglossic language environment.

Shared grapheme-to-phoneme conversion rules

Traditional Han Script (繁體漢字) is the default Chinese script in Hong Kong. Like its simplified counterpart, this script is logographic in nature. Each character represents roughly a morpheme (or an etymon) rather than the phonemic composition of a syllable. Although most characters are phono-semantic compounds that contain a component that provides hints about the pronunciation of a character, the script does not dictate how a word should be pronounced. For example, the characters in (1) below all contain the phonetic component 昔 (Cantonese. *sik1*, Mandarin. *xī*), but they all have different pronunciations in both Cantonese and Mandarin. There is nothing in the script that is tied to the phonetics of one spoken vernacular.

(1) a. 惜 C. *sik1* M. *xī* "to reminiscent"
b. 借 C. *ze3* M. *jiè* "to borrow"
c. 錯 C. *co3* M. *cuò* "wrong"
d. 醋 C. *cou3* M. *cù* "vinegar"

The script's non-phonemic nature allows a person to learn only their native vernacular for the purpose of written communication. The multiple regional pronunciations associated with each of the characters can be traced back to historical rhyme books from the Middle Chinese period (i.e. from *Táng* to *Sòng* dynasty) from which vernaculars derive their pronunciation. There has been continuous codification for influential regional vernaculars since pre-modern times. For instance, a Cantonese rhyme dictionary 分韻撮要 *fan1wan5cyut3jiu3* was first published in 1757. The pronunciation of individual characters is also passed on through traditional and modern education. When a piece of Chinese text (SWC or Classical Chinese) is presented to an educated Cantonese-dominant speaker, only one set of grapheme-to-phoneme conversion rules needs to be employed.

Here is a typical example from Hong Kong Education Bureau teacher training materials that contrast between SWC and spoken Cantonese. Romanisation (Cantonese Literary/Colloquial and Mandarin) and English Gloss are added here for illustration.

(2) Standard Written Chinese

	我	和	弟弟	坐	校車	上學
CanL.	*ngo5*	*wo4*	*dai6dai6*	***zo6***	*haau6ce1*	*soeng5hok6*
CanC.	*ngo5*	*wo4*	*dai**4**dai**2***	***co5***	*haau6ce1*	*soeng5hok6*
Man.	*wǒ*	*hé*	*dìdi*	*zuò*	*xiàochē*	*shàngxué*
Gloss	I	with	y. brother	sit	school bus	attend school

"I go to school by school bus with my younger brother."

(3) Spoken Cantonese

	我	同	細佬	搭	校車	返學
Can.	*ngo5*	*tung4*	*sai3lou2*	*daap3*	*haau6ce1*	*faan1hok6*
Gloss	I	with	y. brother	ride	school bus	return to school

"I go to school by school bus with my younger brother."

The SWC sentence (2) is comprehensible to Chinese users (including Mandarin monolinguals) and is the accepted written norm in the formal education system. Chinese characters can be read entirely in Cantonese pronunciation. Sentences (2) and (3), on the other hand, are lexically different, with over half of the words in (2) not used in spoken Cantonese. However, since these words are pronounced with the same set of grapheme-to-phoneme conversion rules, e.g. 上 "to go up" is read as *soeng5*, 和 "with/and" is read as *wo4*, sentence (2) would be comprehensible to Cantonese monolinguals, though it would sound weird if used in a spoken Cantonese context (due to unnatural collocation).

There is a small subset of characters ("homographs" 多音字 *do1jam1zi6*) that come with a free choice[2] between a literary reading (文讀 *man4duk6*, *CanL* in the example) and a colloquial reading (白讀 *baak6duk6, CanC in the example*), in which case the literary reading is generally preferred when SWC text is read aloud. Even for this small subset of homographs, the use of the literary reading (i.e 坐 as *z̲o6* instead of *c̲o5*, 弟弟 as *dai6̲-dai6̲* instead of *dai4̲-dai2̲*) is a stylistic choice that gives the sentence a written, literary flavour and is usually not compulsory.

This is in stark contrast with Swiss German, another case labelled as "Modern diglossia" (Snow 2010), in which the H-variety is also a modern standard language. Although Swiss German speakers do avoid Standard German in day-to-day communication, they have to adopt grapheme-to-phoneme rules from Standard German when they read aloud Standard German text. This can be illustrated with this example[3]:

(4) Standard German

	Gestern	war	ich	**zu**	**Hause**.
IPA	gestɐn	vaːɐ̯	ɪçː	t͡su	haʊ̯zə
S.G. cognates	Gester	wär	I	di	hei
Gloss	yesterday	was	I	at	home

"I was at home yesterday."

(5) Swiss German

	Gester	bin-i	**dihei**	gsii.
IPA	gestɐ	bi.ni	di.heiˌ	gəʃiː
Std. cognates	Gestern	bin-ich	zu-Hause	gewesen
Gloss	yesterday	was-I	at-House	been

"I was at home yesterday."

All the words that are cognates in the example above must be read in Standard German instead of the pronunciation of the corresponding Swiss German cognates. For example, when reading the sentence above, Standard German *zu Hause* "at home" will be read out as "*zu Hause*" by Swiss German speakers, not "*dihei*", the Swiss German cognate. Every single segment of this sentence will sound like Standard German, not Swiss German.

This comparison with Swiss German diglossia demonstrates the psychological similarity between Spoken Cantonese and Written Chinese. In many cases of diglossia, one needs to learn new grapheme-to-phoneme rules in order to read or understand text written in the H-variety, as in the case of Swiss diglossia: the resulting reading pronunciation of Standard German is phonologically different from the Swiss German vernacular. For Cantonese, there is close to no new grapheme-to-phoneme rules. Despite the apparent dissimilarity at the lexical level, as long as the two are pronounced with the same set of grapheme-to-phoneme conversion rules, the difference is non-phonological. No "foreignness" will be detected when one reads SWC text in Cantonese.

The basis of the H-variety among the educated

Despite the visual similarities between SWC and Putonghua, the role of Putonghua is limited in the process of Chinese writing for the majority of Hongkongers due to the secondary role played by Putonghua as a spoken language in Hong Kong. Evidence shows that:

1 <u>*Putonghua is not commonly used as a daily language*</u>

Census data on daily language by Hong Kong residents aged 5 years or older (Census and Statistics Department 2022) show that Cantonese is the dominant daily language, with Putonghua accounting for less than 3%. Although close to 50% of the population reports proficiency in Putonghua, and despite the fact that it has been a school subject since the late 1990s, the use of Putonghua is generally limited to public announcements and occasional use in the media.

2 <u>*Negative views on Putonghua*</u>

Lai's (2005) survey on language attitudes for the first batch of post-handover secondary school students shows no great enthusiasm towards Putonghua, with a low score on both the integrative orientation (2.47 out of 4, cf. Cantonese 3.43, English 3.05) and instrumental orientation (2.66 out of 4, Cantonese 3.19, English 3.51). Lai's (2011) subsequent study with a wider range of participants shows that the attitude towards Putonghua is lower than the other two categories in all groups (including respondents who self-identified as "Chinese"). Hansen Edwards' (2019) study further shows that during the Anti-ELAB protest, respondents felt that Putonghua was a threat to Cantonese.

3 *Absence of Putonghua-Cantonese code-mixing*
Code-switching between Putonghua and Cantonese is highly stigmatized. Unlike Taiwan, where the use of Taiwanese is often code-mixed with Mandarin words, Hong Kong Cantonese is usually spoken without any switches to Putonghua, except for true communication needs. Any random sample of Cantonese speech from Hong Kong will reveal that normal speech does not contain any syllables that are pronounced in Mandarin/Putonghua. Major Cantonese language datasets (corpora) that aim at collecting or eliciting natural Cantonese conversations, e.g. HKCanCor (Luke and Wong 2015) and CantoMap (Winterstein et al. 2020) show no sign of code-switching or code-mixing of Putonghua.

A language with limited reception and restricted proficiency is not expected to play an important role in the population's writing process. There are occasional comments from prominent writers claiming that they read their manuscripts in Putonghua, but this is impossible for many others who do not speak the language. If there is any influence, they will be channelled through the written language, which is read out in Cantonese. After all, despite the apparent syntactic and lexical similarities between SWC and Putonghua, Cantonese has always been the basis of the majority's written language.

Turning Cantonese into SWC-compliant text

The non-phonological nature and the absolute dominance of Cantonese made it possible to convert between Cantonese and SWC. Children learn to write by replacing colloquial expressions with synonyms that are more acceptable in writing as if they are transcribing Cantonese in a specific manner. This replacement process is discussed explicitly when introducing new sentence structures or formal expressions to students. The transcript below taken from a Chinese subject programme produced by the Curriculum Resources Section of the Education Bureau (2019) shows this process. The clip depicts a story that takes place in a local restaurant, and the audience is taught how to write given Cantonese sentences in SWC. The conversion rule is stated first: 「幾多」 *gei2do1*要寫成*jiu3 se2sing4* 「多少」 *do1siu2* "*Gei2do1*$_{[Cantonese]}$ needs to be written as *do1siu2*$_{[SWC]}$", followed by the original Cantonese line and the converted SWC line, both read out in Cantonese.

(6) The original line in the Cantonese dialogue: "Then how many do we need?"

咁	要	幾多	個	呀
gam2	*jiu3*	*gei2do1*	*go3*	*aa3*
then	need	how many	CL	SFP

(7) The converted line in SWC, read out in Cantonese

那	要	多少	個	呢
naa5	*jiu3*	*do1siu2*	*go3*	*ne1*
then	need	how many	CL	SFP

In addition to *functional* words, conversion is also needed for a number of *content words*, including common verbs (e.g. 講 *gong2* > 說 *syut3* "to say", 睇 *tai2* > 看 *hon3* "to look", 食 *sik6* > 吃 *hek3* "to eat", 飲 *jam2* > 喝 *hot3* "to drink", 郁 *juk1* > 動 *dung6* "to move") and nouns (e.g. 櫈 *dang3* > 椅子 *ji2zi2* "chair", 波 *bo1* > 球 *kau4* "ball", 面 *min6* > 臉 *lim5* "face", 衫 *saam1* > 衣服 *ji1fuk6* "clothes"). There are no reliable estimates on how many such pairs need to be memorized. Zeng (1991) listed 8,000 entries in an exhaustive list of Cantonese and Putonghua equivalents, but most Putonghua entries are rarely used in Hong Kong SWC, e.g. 瞧 (C. *ciu4,* M. *qiáo*) "to look", 咱 (C. *zaa1*, M. *zán*) "we". *TypeDuck*, an educational input tool created for ethnic minority students (Lau and Leung 2023), only marks 200 Cantonese words as "vernacular" that must be avoided when writing in SWC, which can be used as a lower-bound estimate.

These rules sometimes lead to hyperconversion. Words that are useable in SWC are sometimes unnecessarily replaced: 係 (C. *hai6*, M. *xì*) "to be" and 今日 (C. *gam1jat6*, M. *jīnrì*) "today", both formal words used in SWC outside Hong Kong, are often changed to 是 (C. *si6*, M. *shì*) and 今天 (C. *gam1tin1*, M. *jīntiān*), respectively, because the former words are coincidentally identical to Cantonese. The fact that this has never been considered a problem shows that the purpose of the conversion is to ensure compliance with the SWC norm, thus unnecessarily limiting one's word choice is never questioned.

Broadcaster conversion

The scripts for news reports and formal speeches are usually prepared in SWC, which usually require a real-time conversion process in the opposite direction than above, that replaces SWC words and phrases that violate spoken Cantonese conventions by Cantonese-compliant elements. The result of this conversion is a register of Cantonese that is minimally different from SWC. This can be done seamlessly in real time by broadcasters or even by non-professionals. Due to the high number of shared disyllabic words used in this register, most words can be used without any conversion. Compulsory conversions between the two varieties are listed below.

This conversion process explains occasional speech errors by broadcasters when proper nouns contain one of these high-frequency SWC words that must be converted into Cantonese. For example, Baltic Sea is translated as波羅的海 *bo1lo4dik1 hoi2*, where the last syllable of the word Baltic is 的 *dik1*, which is homographic to the structural marker for possession. The first two syllables are homophonous to 菠蘿 *bo1lo4* "pineapple". Anecdotally,[4] This name was more than once mistakenly read by broadcasters as 波羅嘅海 *bo1lo4 ge3 hoi2* "sea of pineapples", due to failure to suppress this conversion rule.

Table 2.1 Compulsory conversion of SWC-Cantonese functional words

Standard Written Chinese			*Cantonese*		*Gloss*
	Can	*Man*			
在	*zoi6*	*zài*	喺	*hai2*	"at"
是	*si6*	*shì*	係	*hai6*	"is"
東西	*dung1sai1*	*dōngxi*	嘢	*je5*	"thing"
的	*dik1*	*de*	嘅	*ge3*	(linker) "of"
也	*jaa5*	*yě*	都	*dou1*	"also"
不	*bat1*	*bù*	唔	*m4*	"not"
很	*han2*	*hěn*	好	*hou2*	"very"
些	*se1*	*xiē*	啲	*di1*	generic plural classifier
着	*zoek6*	*zhe*	住	*zyu6*	continuous marker
在	*zoi6*	*zài*	緊	*gan2*	progressive marker
了	*liu5*	*le*	咗	*zo2*	perfective marker
全	*cyun4*	*quán*	晒	*saai3*	universal quantifier
這	*ze3*	*zhè*	呢	*ni1*	"this"
那	*naa5*	*nà*	嗰	*go2*	"that"
甚麼	*sam6mo1*	*shénme*	乜/咩	*mat1/me1*	"what"

Conversion between High/Low Cantonese and Formal/Informal SWC

The discussion of conversion processes between Cantonese and SWC must consider the register of all lects involved. Luke (1998) identifies High and Low Cantonese as two separate lects, and the former is grammatically characterized by (i) the use of classical constructions, e.g. 以 *ji5* + N 為*wai4* "to use an N as an N", 以便*ji5bin6* + V "in order to V", etc., (ii) the use of classical lexical forms such as 往*wong5* (towards), 向*hoeng3* (in the direction of), 視乎*si6fu4* (depending on), 等*dang2* (and so on), etc., and a higher concentration of set phrases and idioms. The similarities between formal Cantonese and formal Mandarin have also been highlighted by Ouyang (1993) and Snow (2004, 49). This formal variety is syntactically Cantonese and lexically Cantonese-compliant, and highly similar to formal SWC. Dissecting Cantonese into a High and a Low register provides a better picture of the Cantonese-SWC correspondence. The conversion between High Cantonese and formal SWC is rule-based and effortless, so is the case of vernacular Cantonese and informal SWC. The properties of the four lects discussed are summarized below.

Summary

This section has argued that the extent attributed to diglossia in Hong Kong is somewhat *exaggerated*. The actual reading and writing processes do not involve translations between the most colloquial register of spoken Cantonese and Putonghua-compliant SWC texts. Diglossia in Hong Kong involves no new grapheme-to-phoneme rules, requires no word-order changes and can be handled

Table 2.2 Cantonese-SWC parallels

			Vernacular Cantonese	*Informal Hong Kong SWC*	*High Cantonese*	*Formal Hong Kong SWC*
Linguistic Feature	Modality		Spoken	Written	Spoken	Written
	Discourse Elements		High	Mid	Low	Low
	Word order		SVO	SVO	SVO	SVO
	Lexical Items	Word length	Mixed	Mixed	Disyllabic preference	Disyllabic preference
		Content words	Cantonese-vernacular and Shared words	Shared words, Cantonese-vernacular words replaced by SWC or shared words	Shared words, with limited Cantonese-vernacular words	Shared words, Cantonese-vernacular words further removed
		Functional words	Cantonese	SWC	Cantonese with Classical Chinese influence	SWC with Classical Chinese influence
	Sound	Base Vernacular	Cantonese	Cantonese	Cantonese	Cantonese
		Stylistic Literary Reading	Not preferred	Preferred	Not preferred	Preferred
Perceived Formality			Low	Mid	High	Highest

by "hardwired" replacement rules in real time. The mildness of diglossia in Hong Kong explains the divergence in vernacular writing practices by different communities.

Two vernacular writing practices

Following the above reconceptualisation of Hong Kong SWC as a Cantonese-based written norm, this section describes the processes through which Cantonese vernacular elements cross the diglossic boundary into the written context, referred to as "vernacularisation" in the literature.

Table 2.3 Classifying Chinese writing practices in Hong Kong

	Snow's (2004) classification	*Shi et al. (2014)*
Written Cantonese	1 Occasional Cantonese terms in Standard Chinese texts	Modern Standard Chinese (標準中文)
	2 *Saam kap dai* (三及第)	Hong Kong-styled Chinese (港式中文)
	3 Random mixing of Cantonese and Standard Chinese	
	4 Patterned mixing of Cantonese and Standard Chinese	
	5 Standard Chinese narration/Cantonese dialogue	
	6 Authentic Cantonese	Cantonese-styled Chinese (粵式中文)

Different sub-types of vernacularisation have been identified based on the division of labour between Cantonese and Standard Chinese (Snow 2004) or the ratio of non-standard elements in the texts (Shi et al. 2014). Table 2.3 summarizes the two sets of classifications. Some of these distinctions below are drawn from an external perspective, e.g. the distinction between Modern Standard Chinese and Hong Kong-styled Chinese is based on perceived comprehensibility by other SWC users, which is inaccessible by Hong Kong SWC users.

This section identifies two *practices* of vernacularisation[5] based on the diglossic dynamics outlined above, with the assumption that Hong Kong SWC is used as the written norm, instead of the national standard of Modern Standard Chinese. This allows us to limit the scope of the discussion to Cantonese elements that are intentionally inserted, excluding certain usages that will appear non-standard or Cantonese-flavoured in the eyes of Mandarin monolingual users, but could be seen as SWC norm-conforming to Hong Kong users. Following Chan (2015), I consider the majority of Hongkongers who use vernacular writing as *translanguagers* who insert Cantonese elements purposefully, thus challenging the written norm of SWC. In addition, I propose that there is a separate group of *code-switchers* who have developed a heightened awareness of language boundaries and consciously seek to create and maintain a new, separate written norm for Cantonese, which they can switch into and out of.

Vernacularisation through translanguaging

Translanguaging originated as a pedagogical practice that broke the rigid divide between the target language and mother tongues (García 2011; discussed in Li 2018). The concept was later used as a theoretical construct to capture the "fluid and dynamic practice" of multilinguals who "do not think unilingually" in one language (Li 2017), leading to the momentary, creative processes that "playfully manipulate the boundaries of named languages" (Li 2021). Chan (2015) observes that this can capture the status of Written Cantonese, as it "*challenges the literary*

norm that Chinese should always be written in Modern Standard Chinese" and *"problematizes the language ideology that a dialect, such as Cantonese, cannot be written"*. The relaxing of language boundaries is also used for communicative purposes when the use of elements from multiple language varieties allows a wider range of expressions at the users' disposal. The logographic nature of Written Chinese allows non-Cantonese users to guess the meaning from the characters, thus providing a "space" for writers to translanguage (i.e. utilize Cantonese lexical resources in a SWC context) to a greater extent. The actual translanguaging act can be done by either replacing an otherwise shared word (both Cantonese and SWC-conforming) with a word that is unique to Cantonese, or by selectively suppressing Cantonese-to-SWC conversion rules.

The intentional use of vernacular elements in Written Chinese, for literary purposes or just to make a point, is widespread in Cantonese-speaking regions (Fan 2014; Li 2011). The discussion of Written Cantonese in the literature is mostly about the translanguaging type of vernacularisation. If Snow's (2004) classification is to be used, then this refers to *Saam-kap-dai* (mixture of Classical, Standard and vernacular elements), random mixing of Cantonese and Standard Chinese elements in writing. This form of vernacularisation is found in literary work, including novels, poems, lyrics and blog posts from Hong Kong writers. Incidentally, this form of vernacularisation is also common in phone-texting by older generations.

(8) Excerpt[6] from *Children of Darkness* 烈佬傳 by Wong Bik-wan (黃碧雲)
大佬叫我**們脫下**白袍，**說**，以後大家**是**兄弟，你**們不**要成**天在**酒吧**睡**覺打啤牌，要出去賣嘢。原來賣**那**啲「嘢」，**是**白粉。阿牛**給**我食煙，**說**有嘢，我就接過來食，不到幾分鐘 就天旋地轉，想嘔，我就**走**到廁所去嘔，又**沒甚麼**嘔出來。出來**還是**好暈，阿物**說**，第一次**是這樣**。

(9) Excerpt from poem <樣貌娟好> by Yam Gong (飲江)
主佑吾王 // 主佑吾土 //主佑吾民 // 難怪主**說** // 我頂你地唔順

In the case of translanguaging, both Cantonese and SWC words are expected in the text. The high proportion of SWC words that violate the Cantonese norm indicates that SWC conversion rules are in place and the use of Cantonese can be a deliberate act. There are Cantonese-violating words in every single sentence of (8), coexisting with other distinctively Cantonese elements, inserted to break the boundary between Cantonese and SWC. It is also expected that Cantonese function words will be rare, since the boundary-breaking is best done by using distinctively Cantonese elements to contrast with the standard, which can happen even at the sub-lexical level. An example is the use of 那啲 (*naa5 di1*), which consists of 那 (M. *nà*), a SWC morpheme and 啲, a Cantonese classifier. The use of Cantonese will also coincide with discourse-related elements as a way to exert orality to the text, which is apparent in the use of 頂你哋唔順 (*ding2 nei5dei6 m4 seon6*, "I can't stand y'all") in (9).

The literary circle has explored different ways to insert Cantonese elements in literary work (Chan 2020; Lai 2017). Their purposes include appealing to the audience, providing lively expressions, highlighting orality and making cultural references. This playful or instrumental use of Cantonese elements will inevitably confine the use of Cantonese elements to cultural references and colloquial expressions (e.g. expletives), as this is how it functionally serves to add depth to existing work.[7]

Vernacularisation through code-switching

Code-switching (Myers-Scotton 1997) describes a switch from one code (language) to another within a clause or at clause boundaries, presuming that the two codes involved can be clearly identified. Certain mixed-code interactions between multilinguals cannot be explained under these premises, which led to the discussion of translanguaging, but the term is an apt description when two separate codes are actively maintained by bilinguals for different scenarios. Cantonese users who are proficient in Putonghua (including a small minority who speak Mandarin as a home language) need to use Cantonese expressions in written communication and at the same time refuse to blur the boundaries between SWC and Cantonese. This group of users call for a clear demarcation between the two and make a conscious effort to strengthen their distinction in writing, and have sought to develop a Cantonese-based written lect that can be stayed in or switched to whenever necessary.

Maintaining a separate written form for Cantonese may be a way to address the linguistic needs of these bilinguals, since their access to Putonghua and standard SWC will cause dissonance and practical issues, such as failure to suppress the inner voice that reads out Hong Kong SWC in Putonghua, or dealing with false friends (homographs mistaken as cognates) between Hong Kong SWC and the standard. An oft-cited example is 奶奶 (C. *naai4naai2*, M. *nǎinai*), which is a kinship term (that tends to be understood as a vernacular word even when written) with different meanings in the two lects ("mother-in-law" in Cantonese and "grandmother" in Mandarin/SWC). There are also cases of word-for-word translations of Cantonese grammatical structure into SWC (e.g. sentence-final verb *to be* 嚟喺 *lai4gaa3* translated as 來的 C. *loi4dik1* M. *láide*). To bilinguals, it is difficult to strike a balance between an acceptable written form and the optimal vernacular influence. When these bilinguals see the need to express themselves in Cantonese, instead of inserting colloquial words deliberately or selectively suppressing conversion rules, they may need to go through a different vernacularisation process, working from a different perspective. This dissonance can be solved easily by maintaining two separate codes: a form of writing that always follows the Cantonese lexical and grammatical norms, and another that always follows the SWC norms.

Patterned switching between narrative and dialogues and authentic Cantonese fall under the code-switching type of vernacularisation. The use of Cantonese is not necessarily limited to functional insertions of elements, but instead a complete switch that removes the learned SWC-conversion rules. Apart from being the

default language for texting[8] and online forums, this has been increasingly popular in the past decade as a writing norm and can also be found in formal genres. There are Hong Kong-based writers who write exclusively in this code, and this is also the default code choice for government-run social media accounts. It has also recently been made into a category of the Hong Kong Youth Literary Awards (青年文學獎) (2021).

(10) 〈如果你愛我〉, an award-winning essay by 鴦走蛋寺 *joeng1zau2 daan2zi6*
我心入面有好多說話想講，但呢度冇多一張床，聽日佢可能有其他節目。我哋只不過係有血緣關係嘅陌生人。何必想像太多呢。

(11) Tenancy agreement drafted by Benjamin Au Yeung (歐陽偉豪)
業主同租客雙方以詳列喺附表一嘅租期同租金，分別 租出同租入附表一嘅物業，並同意遵守同履行下列條款

The two cited examples contain no Cantonese-violating elements at all, which is the result of the conscious suppression of conversion rules. In certain cases, there are occasional occurrences of some SWC elements (in particular, 了 *liu5* "already", and less commonly, 是 *si6* "is", 的 *dik1* the structural particle), which could be a failure of such suppression. The use of Cantonese elements is not linked to informality or orality and is not limited to the dialogues. Code-switching vernacularisation has a high ratio of shared vocabulary with SWC. In fact, the ratio can be so high (as in the tenancy agreement) that causes the text to be misclassified as an example of SWC.

Comparison between the two modes

This section outlines the linguistic and functional differences between translanguaging and code-switching vernacularisation practices, as summarized in Table 2.4. The distinction is reflected in how writers name the act of vernacularisation. Literary scholars, who tend to prefer the translanguaging type of vernacularisation, often use the term粵語入文 (*jyut6jyu5 jap6man4*) "Cantonese entering text" or "Cantonese-in-writing", which captures the view that inserting Cantonese into text transcends the pre-existing boundary of the "written norm". Venues of code-switching vernacularisation tend to use粵文 *jyut6man4* (e.g. 粵文維基百科 *jyut6man4 wai4gei1 baak3fo1* for Cantonese Wikipedia) "Written Cantonese" or 寫廣東話 *se2 gwong2dung1waa2* "writing-in-Cantonese", suggesting that Cantonese is seen as a written norm by its own.

Accounting for the differences

Snow (2013) outlines a developmental pathway that vernacularisation follows, starting from the informal register and moving upwards to well-regarded genres over time. Since code-switching vernacularisation is used in more formal genres, it may appear to be a more developed form of vernacularisation compared to

Table 2.4 Comparison between translanguaging and code-switching vernacularisation

	Translanguaging	*Code-switching*
Written Norm(s)	SWC, which can be challenged by translanguaging	Standard SWC (which may be closer to Putonghua than translanguagers' SWC) and Cantonese as a separate norm
Labels (given by its users)	Cantonese-in-writing	Written Cantonese Writing-in-Cantonese
Functions	To convey informality, friendliness or local references; to create a sharp contrast with SWC	To strengthen the distinction between Cantonese and SWC; to ensure Cantonese words are correctly interpreted in a written context
Linguistic features	Features linked to vernacularity, including discourse elements, vulgar language and speech-related features	Covers a wide range of formality, not limited to less dialogue-like, less discourse elements
Formality of Vernacular Content	Mostly informal	Depending on the genre of the text
Mechanism	Insertion of Cantonese elements to SWC text	Suppression of all (or most) hardwired SWC-conversion rules

translanguaging. This section presents a view that the two vernacular-writing practices presented above are upheld by users that are not necessarily different in terms of the level of supportiveness or proficiency of Cantonese. The divergence between these two groups of (presumably) equally supportive users of Cantonese may stem from underlying differences in perceptions of Cantonese status and the notion of "Standard Chinese", which can be vastly different even within the same community. The following explores whether there are known ideological differences within Hong Kong that may explain this divide, and how this may affect the future development of vernacular writing in Hong Kong.

This can be explained under the framework of linguistic ideologies of authority, which encapsulate code-choices as competing authenticity and anonymity ideologies (Gal and Woolard 2004). Authenticity is a set of ideologies that "locate the value of a language in its relationship to a particular community" and celebrates its "linguistically marked form" or idiosyncrasies (Woolard 2016). Anonymity ideologies prefer a language that is shared across different communities, not attached to a particular place ("comes from nowhere"), and belongs to the public space, which are often used to support a hegemonic language.

Wong (2019) discusses ideologies of authenticity by two groups of Cantonese advocates in Hong Kong: *traditionalists*—who claim to be "true guardians of traditional Chinese cultures" by "linking the present to the past" and believe in the superiority (age, purity, proximity to Classical Chinese) of Cantonese over

Putonghua—and *localists* who embrace the "here and now" and consider Cantonese as "a core symbol of the local identity".

A similar divide in the two groups can be extended to discuss ideologies about SWC within members of the larger Hongkonger community. *Traditionalist-sympathisers* are likely to seek authenticity in the diglossic Chinese writing tradition through linking to the past, as Hong Kong is one of the best preservers of traditional Han script and Chinese values. From this perspective, the intermixture of Cantonese elements in SWC is the result of pursuing a balance between 達 *daat6* (expressiveness) and 雅*ngaa5* (elegance), which is a standard upheld by contemporary writers of Chinese. The authenticity-anonymity tension is between the traditional (the traditional script, Cantonese, SWC) and the standard (the simplified script, Putonghua, Mainland SWC). Hong Kong SWC is therefore an internal, endoglossic standard that can be maintained by Hongkongers and does not require external (as in outside of Hong Kong) judgement. This positive view towards SWC and the functional use of Cantonese is aligned with the translanguaging mode of vernacularisation. *Localist-sympathisers*, in contrast, consider authenticity to be a code that resembles the present, which corresponds to the Cantonese vernacular. They may have considered SWC a member of the hegemonic Standard Chinese paradigm, due to SWC's clear lexical differences when directly compared with the vernacular and the view that SWC is a written lect of Putonghua (Shi et al. 2014). Equating SWC with Putonghua has an unexpected effect of promoting an exoglossic standard for SWC, meaning that Hong Kong users do not have a say in what is good or correct SWC, in stark contrast with traditionalist-sympathisers' conclusion. This negative view towards SWC leaves them with no choice but to defend a new Cantonese-based code that fits their linguistic ideologies.

Dialect/standard constellation and the future of diglossia

The following discussion conjectures how the two modes of vernacularisation will shape the development of diglossia and the Cantonese-SWC dynamics in the near future, with reference to the dialect/standard constellation by Auer (2005; 2011). Auer's constellation captures the dialect/standard dynamics in European languages with five configurations, which correspond to different stages of standard languages taking over traditional dialects. The standard language starts off as an exoglossic standard used only by the elites (Type 0), and later develops into a written form with a local (endoglossic) standard alongside the vernacular (Type A *medial diglossia*), then becomes an alternative formal spoken norm (Type B *spoken diglossia*) or a source for further intermixing (Type C *diaglossia*), and finally replaces the original vernacular through levelling or shift (Type D *dialect loss*). Switching from one type to another is conditioned by the structural distance between the vernacular and standard(s), with the possibility of reversal or language shift. Although logographic scripts are not discussed in Auer's original work, the generalisations on how diglossia develops into other dynamics fit well into the observations about Cantonese-SWC diglossia.

Diglossia in Hong Kong has been a case of *medial diglossia* (Type A) for a sustained period of time. Classical Chinese (文言文 *man4jin4man2*) was used as the main written language, and its status was gradually replaced by SWC in the past century, transforming the original diglossia into one between Cantonese-based vernacular and Cantonese-sounding SWC. This is the departure point, from which traditionalist and localist views lead to different strategies for vernacularisation, according to their perceived structural distances between lects.

Translanguaging: moving towards diaglossia (Type C)

Translanguaging as a vernacularisation practice aligns with the traditionalist/pluricentric view that all Chinese users, including users from Hong Kong, can make adaptation to SWC to serve practical needs. This act shrinks the already small structural distance between Cantonese and SWC by deflating the linguistic and formality axes. Cantonese elements (associated with informality, localness or vulgarity) continue to make way into Hong Kong SWC through informal genres (Snow 2013), and previously unspoken SWC elements enter the spoken domain through High Cantonese. This is a sign of a progression into *diaglossia (Type C)*. This is represented schematically in the cone model below. The vernacular base of Cantonese (oval) gets closer to the standard (moving upwards), and the standard spectrum (cone) has become more embracing (growing downwards), taking in Cantonese words and expressions as part of Hong Kong SWC.

Code-switching: leading to a new endogloassic standard (Type 0)

Code-switching vernacularisation addresses the need for a written norm to record Cantonese for users who feel that SWC cannot be used to faithfully represent Cantonese. This need stems from higher awareness of the differences between school-taught SWC and Cantonese, which could be a result of higher Putonghua proficiency, pushing Hong Kong SWC towards Putonghua-based SWC. The reflex results in the development of a new Cantonese-based endoglossic standard that is in the hands of the speakers. This can be represented in the diagram as the further shrinkage of the cone. If SWC writing must be Putonghua-based, the diglossic standard will have become inaccessible to local users. This will free up the space for a new standard built from Cantonese.

In other words, the choice of vernacular writing practices is linked to the perceived structural distance between SWC and vernacular Cantonese, which combinedly determine whether or not SWC can be used as a vehicle for transmitting Cantonese elements in writing. This translates into the two strategic actions in handling Cantonese elements in their writing practice. Cantonese and SWC started as medial diglossia, and individuals departed from this point towards different directions. Translanguaging is the result of assuming a short structural distance between SWC and Cantonese, and upholding SWC as a written form that is owned by Hongkongers. The ultimate form is a Type C configuration, words and structures from SWC and Cantonese form a formal-to-informal spectrum in both writing

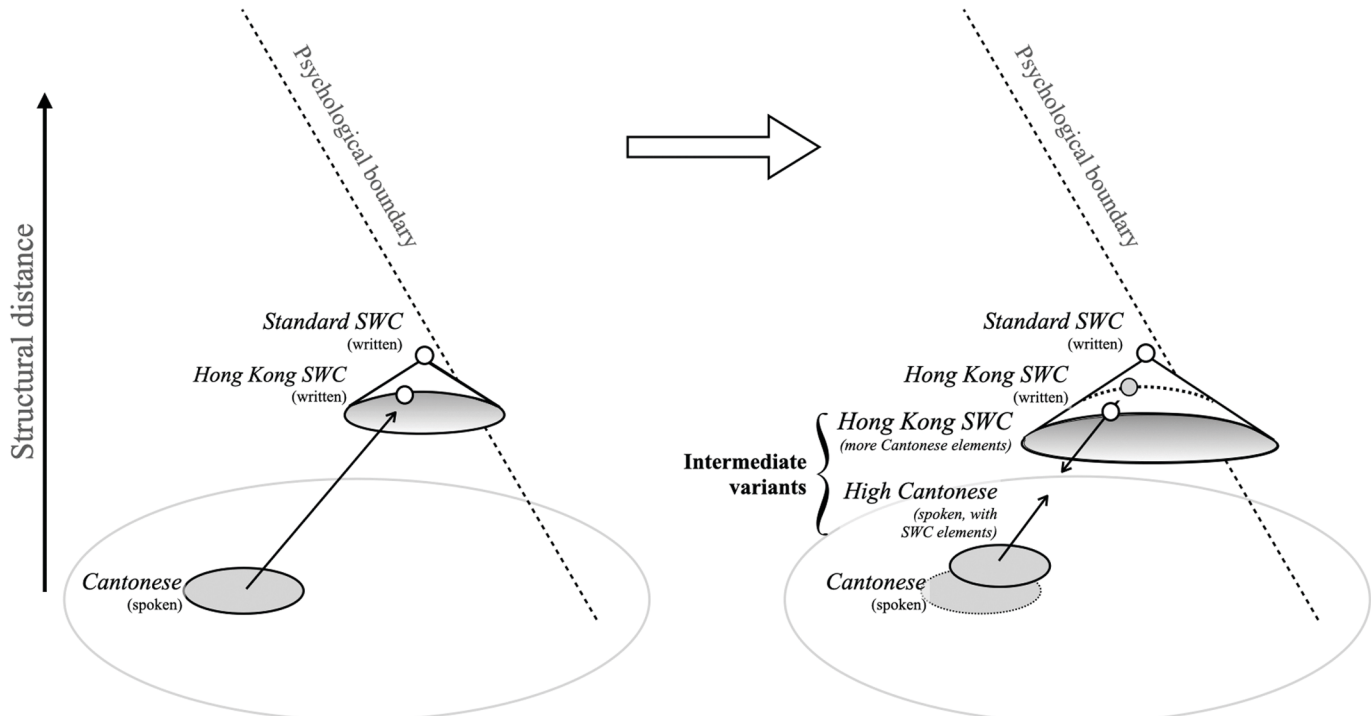

Figure 2.1 The translanguaging mode of vernacularisation.

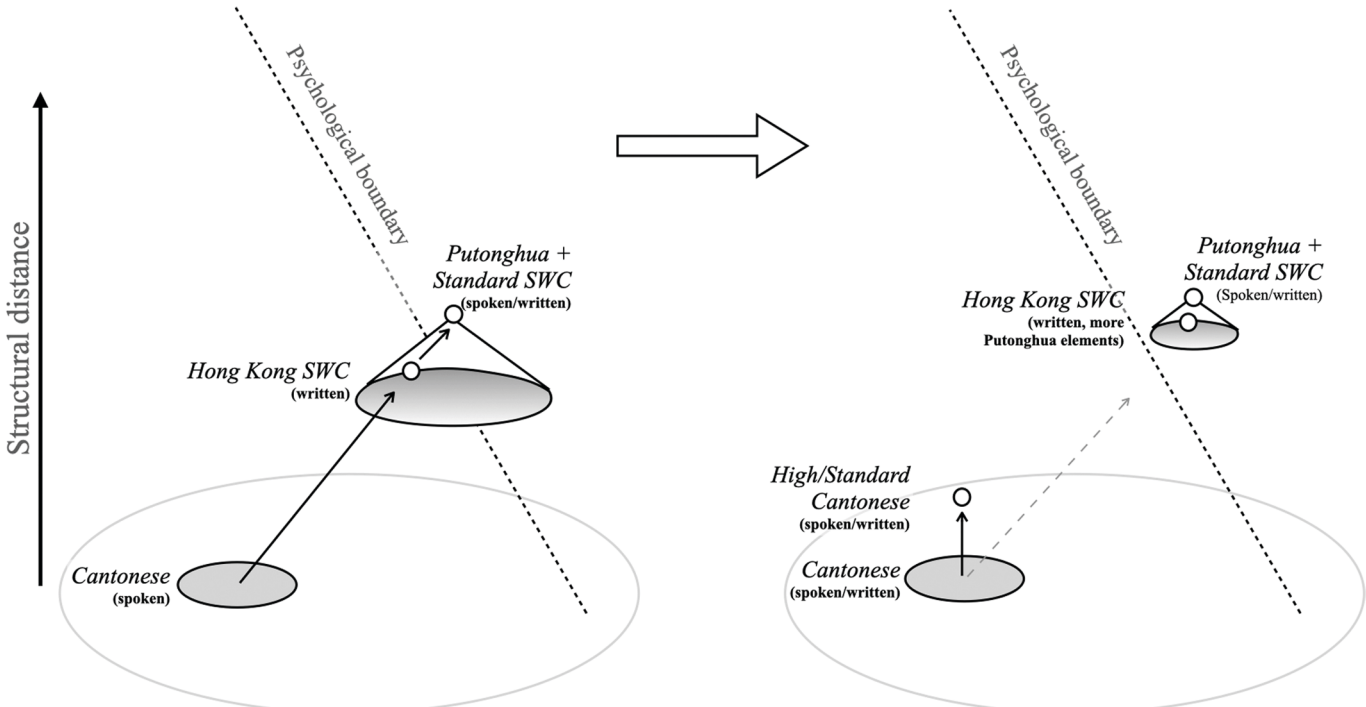

Figure 2.2 The code-switching mode of vernacularisation.

Table 2.5 Ideological differences

	Translanguaging	*Code-switching*
How is Chinese viewed?	Pluricentric	Monocentric
Ideological Orientation	Traditionalist	Localiser
Status of SWC	Endoglossic standard	Exoglossic standard
Structural Distance between Can. & SWC	Shrinking	Growing
What is achieved through vernacularisation in formal texts	Informalisation of the texts	Uplifting of vernacular status

and speech. The consequence of translanguaging is the informalisation of certain genres. Code-switching results from assuming a long structural distance between the two lects, which necessitates a new endoglossic standard that can represent Cantonese alongside SWC as an exoglossic standard, which is a reversal from Type A to Type 0 configuration. This will help uplift the status of the vernacular to the status of a standard language.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a detailed description of diglossia in Hong Kong and investigated the main vernacularisation mechanisms for Hong Kong Cantonese. A major contribution of this chapter is the suggestion that this process is governed and can be explained by drawing a distinction between *translanguaging* and *code-switching* as two distinct vernacularisation practices. Hongkongers can effortlessly convert Cantonese into SWC by applying "hardwired" conversion rules. If vernacular elements are purposefully inserted into SWC, this is an act of *translanguaging*, which results in a written form that is mixed with non-SWC Cantonese and non-Cantonese SWC elements. Alternatively, two separate codes can be maintained, with SWC as the school-taught written norm that follows learned "hardwired" vernacular-to-standard conversion rules on one side, and the Cantonese vernacular-based written norm with the rules suppressed. This divergence, which is argued to be linked to the perceived structural distance between SWC and Cantonese, results in two modes of vernacular writing that differ in word choice, linguistic structures, formality and genre distribution.

The working of vernacularisation shows why diglossia in Hong Kong can outlive other forms of diglossia in East Asia, which were almost completely wiped out. The first reason is its non-phonological nature, which allows speakers to operate in Cantonese entirely by applying easy-to-maintain lexical and grammatical conversion rules. The second reason is that the insertion of local, Cantonese elements to writing in translanguaging vernacularisation provides an extra leeway in shaping the written language towards a localized variety, lowering the need to abandon SWC as the written norm.

Language ideology determines how vernacular elements are used and lead towards different developmental directions. Users of translanguaging tend

to consider SWC as part of their indispensable writing system, which is an endoglossic standard controllable and challengeable by the users themselves, and can be tweaked to convey Cantoneseness. Code-switching users tend to see SWC as the hegemonic language that they are fighting against, or as a representation of Putonghua. This view could have pushed SWC over the psychological threshold and led some speakers to reconceptualize it as an exoglossic standard (Type 0 repertoire). Then there is a need for a newly developed, psychologically close endoglossic standard developed solely for Cantonese. The code-switching kind of Cantonese vernacular writing may seem to be a more progressive form than the more widespread translanguaging vernacular writing, but the choice of the two does not imply how much the user supports Cantonese.

Likely, proficiency in Putonghua in Hong Kong will further improve, which may favour the development of a code-switching form of Cantonese vernacular writing (counterintuitively). Having said that, given the number of Cantonese speakers who left Hong Kong in the 2020s and the likelihood that their children may not learn Putonghua, it is possible that they will maintain a traditionalist-like ideology and continue using translanguaging-type vernacular writing. It is therefore possible to assume that the two practices will continue to coexist in the future as long as Cantonese continues to be used in Hong Kong and its diaspora. The competition between the two and the sociolinguistic variables behind the two user groups shall be the topics for further research.

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Notes

1 In practice, Cantonese is the default vernacular choice and enjoys a high status in the Hong Kong society. The label is based on perceived status, and there are alternative ways to label the lects.
2 Sometimes the use of literary or colloquial reading for a character is lexically predetermined, e.g. 打坐 *daa2zo6* is always read with the literary reading, and 排排坐 *paai4paai4co5* is always colloquial.
3 This example is from the Langfocus YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfX1OFMXUh4
4 This is mentioned in several column articles and blog posts written by broadcasters: https://eastweek.my-magazine.me/main/117983
5 The idea that there can be both translanguaging and code-switching in the same community is not new. Chan (2021) analysed Cantonese-English mixing in his radio talk data as primarily a translanguaging act and identified some instances of speakers "languagize" code-switched words as English.

6 Elements that are Cantonese-violating (i.e. must be converted into another word when spoken) are marked with **bold and underline**; elements that are SWC-violating (i.e. against the school-taught standard, must be converted when SWC norm is observed) are enclosed in boxes. Other elements without any special formatting are shared between SWC and Cantonese.
7 There are exceptions. Dung Kai Cheong (董啟章), quoted in Chan's (2020) article, discusses how he experiments ways to reverse the common association that lively (生鬼 *saang1gwai2*) or vulgar (市井 *si5zeng2*) things are expressed in Cantonese, and serious (正經 *zing3ging1*) or affectionate (深情 *sam1cing4*) dialogues are not.
8 This online forum post from LiHKG (https://lihkg.com/thread/763275/page/1) discusses how the older generation fail to observe this written norm and use random mixing of Cantonese in Standard Chinese text, e.g. one example is the use of "不是 (*bat1si6* "not", SWC only) 太 (*taai3* "very", shared) 好 (*hou2*, good, shared) 喎 (*wo3* "sentence-final particle for advice", Cantonese)".

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