

Examining Malaysian Chinese Lexical Variations in Newspaper Discourse: A Standard Chinese in China Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine Malaysian Chinese (MC) lexical variations in newspaper discourse from a Standard Chinese in China (SCC) perspective. Through qualitative content analysis, the research explores the reasons behind the formation of MC lexical variations, providing insights into the dynamic evolution of the Chinese language within diverse cultural and geographical contexts. Data for this research were collected from "Sin Chew Daily" (Online) during October to December 2023 in Malaysia. Microsoft Excel software facilitated data processing, aiding the researcher in analysis and interpretation. The theoretical framework guiding this study is grounded in the theory of language contact, seeking to understand how linguistic interactions and influences contribute to the divergence in MC lexical variations. The findings illustrate that the primary drivers for the emergence of MC lexical variations are the influences of Malay, English, Hokkien, and Cantonese. The study also acknowledges potential limitations and challenges in the analysis process, such as data availability and subjectivity in word classification. Through this comprehensive analysis, the study aims to enrich academic discussions on language dynamics in multicultural societies and provide insights for language planning and policymaking in diverse linguistic contexts.

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Contribution/Originality: The paper's primary contribution is finding include two aspects: Firstly, by comparing and analyzing the use of Chinese in a multilingual cultural context, the study deeply explores the impact of a multilingual environment on language evolution. Secondly, finding 16 MC lexical variations based on the "Malaysian Special Vocabulary Dictionary".

1. Introduction

Within the global Chinese community, the Chinese language manifests as various regional variants of Standard Chinese in China (SCC), collectively forming an organic whole. Despite sharing a common foundation, these variants exhibit notable differences (Xu & Peng, 2020). The societies inhabited by overseas Chinese speakers typically represent multilingual environments, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and even English-speaking nations like the United Kingdom and the United States, owing to their complex immigration histories (Wang, 2020). Taking Malaysian Chinese (MC) as an exemplar, within this unique multilingual and sociocultural milieu, distinctions arise between MC, SCC, and Chinese dialects present in places such as Singapore (Xu & Peng, 2020). For instance, MC commonly employs zero titles and English titles, a practice seldom observed in SCC, which rarely generalizes certain relative titles like “surname + uncle/aunt”. These disparities primarily stem from the influence of social context and Western culture on MC vocabulary (Fan, 2008).

Historically, by the late 19th century, Malaysian Chinese society had established an autonomous linguistic system, setting the stage for the propagation and preservation of SCC as well as dialects such as Hokkien and Cantonese (Xu & Peng, 2020). Over a century of development, MC has been profoundly shaped by foreign languages such as Malay and English, while being surrounded by Southern dialects like Hokkien, Cantonese, and Hakka (Khoo, 2012). Consequently, MC has gradually developed local characteristics, diverging somewhat from SCC, a phenomenon evident within Malaysia's multilingual and multidialectal social fabric (Xu & Peng, 2020).

In the era of globalization, primary channels for the dissemination of the Chinese language include migration, educational institutions, newspapers, ancient texts, and records. MC newspapers, for instance, play a pivotal role in disseminating information and reflecting public sentiments within Chinese society. They serve as crucial platforms for propagating Chinese culture and articulating opinions and stances. The distinctive vocabulary found in MC newspapers and periodicals mirrors local developments and evolving trends within SCC (Zeng et al., 2020).

In the multicultural landscape of Malaysia, Malay, English, Chinese, and Tamil stand as prominent languages, each accompanied by its respective dialectal variations. Among Malaysia's Chinese communities, Hokkien, Cantonese, and Hakka hold sway in spoken communication. However, within the realm of written Malaysian Chinese (MC), a discernible influence of Standard Chinese in China (SCC) is evident, resulting in a fusion of Malay, English, Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, and other linguistic elements (Fan, 2012). This amalgamation of languages in written MC has engendered distinct lexical variations, exemplified by terms like “巴刹” (market), “脚车” (bike), “安娣” (auntie), “电召车” (e-hailing), and “排屋” (link house), commonly observed in MC newspapers. Leveraging newspapers as a corpus source offers distinct advantages as they provide an objective platform for observing lexical variations within MC's written discourse, renowned for its formal language conventions. This method effectively captures evolving trends and shifts in language usage within the local Chinese community (Xu, 2017).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

It is evident that the academic community has conducted some research on Malaysian Chinese (MC), but there remains substantial room for further investigation in this area.

Many studies on MC lexical variations (e.g., [Au, 2013](#); [Fan, 2012](#); [Huang, 2010](#); [Wong, 2014](#)) were conducted about a decade ago. However, as [Long \(2021\)](#) points out, vocabulary is a dynamic system that evolves with societal progress, leading to the emergence of new terms and the disappearance of old ones. Therefore, research on vocabulary requires timely updates.

The focus is primarily on studying Malaysian Chinese (MC) independently, contrasting with past scholars who combined Singaporean Chinese and MC into a single language system for research. [Xu \(2017\)](#) argued that due to historical, geographical, and socio-cultural reasons (as Singapore was part of Malaysia until 1965), the Chinese languages in Singapore and Malaysia are highly similar. Consequently, many scholars from Mainland China have treated them as a unified entity, without considering MC as an independent linguistic system.

[Wang \(2010\)](#) proposed that “Singaporean Chinese is similar to MC”, while [Xu and Wang \(2009\)](#) noted that despite similarities in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar between MC and Singaporean Chinese, there are also notable differences. [Khoo \(2012\)](#) further analysed the social and linguistic environments of both Singapore and Malaysia, emphasizing the need to distinguish between the two. He identified four distinct differences in vocabulary: variations in foreign language influences, dialect influences, influences from other Chinese regions, and language planning factors. Based on these reasons, the researcher believes that treating MC as an independent system for research is imperative.

In conclusion, this research identifies two significant gaps: first, the lack of recent comparative studies on lexical variations in newspapers of MC and SCC; second, the lack of studies treating MC as an independent language system. This research aims to reveal the nuances of Malaysian and Chinese culture, history, and language, thereby fostering friendly communication between the two countries. Additionally, this study advocates for the principle of localization in language dissemination, which can aid overseas Chinese in effectively using SCC. Finally, this research aims to provide insights beneficial for vocabulary and grammar instruction.

1.2. Research Objectives and Research Questions

This study aims to delve into the phenomenon of language contact within the Malaysian Chinese community, with a specific focus on MC lexical variations in newspaper discourse. In essence, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper comprehension of language dynamics within multicultural Chinese communities, promoting cross-cultural communication and nurturing linguistic cohesion while honoring the unique linguistic characteristics of MC newspapers. Thus, the objectives of this study are listed below:

- i. To investigate how MC lexical variations reflect the unique culture of Malaysian Chinese society.
- ii. To explore the factors influencing the emergence and dissemination of Malaysian Chinese lexical variations in newspapers.

This study aims to address the following research questions:

- i. How do MC lexical variations reflect the unique culture of Malaysian Chinese society?
- ii. What factors contribute to the emergence and dissemination of MC lexical variations in newspaper?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Historical Overview of MC Development

Malaysia stands as a multiracial and multicultural nation, thereby rendering the linguistic environment of Malaysian Chinese individuals exceptionally intricate. While Malay serves as the official language, English and Chinese enjoy widespread usage, complemented by Tamil and a variety of dialects and Indigenous languages. Malaysian Chinese people trace their lineage to immigrants from Guangdong, Fujian, Guangxi, Hainan, and other provinces in China during the late Qing Dynasty. Consequently, they often converse in their respective dialects, with some proficient in two dialects (Han, 2011). These individuals actively uphold and pass down traditional Chinese culture, including the use of the Chinese language and characters. To underscore their identity as descendants of Chinese immigrants, locals in Malaysia refer to the Chinese language as “Huayu,” meaning “the language of the Chinese people” (Wong, 2014). Through the interchange of Chinese and local languages and cultures, Malaysian Chinese (MC) has gradually forged a distinct localized style. While sharing a foundational and core resemblance with SCC, MC exhibits evident local characteristics in its vocabulary usage, influenced by Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, as well as Malay and English (Huang, 2010).

2.2. Previous Research on Linguistic Evolution

Standard Chinese in China is characterized by Beijing Mandarin as its fundamental pronunciation, Northern Mandarin as its foundational dialect, and Mandarin and vernacular writings as the grammatical norm and written style (Li, 2017).

In this study, “Malaysian Chinese” (MC) will be referred to as “Malaysian Mandarin” (MM), representing Mandarin Chinese in Malaysia. However, “Malaysian Chinese” (MC) is the term utilized herein. It has undergone a distinct evolution by Malaysian speakers, humorously dubbed “Mangdarin” (akin to “Manglish” for Malaysian English) (Vollmann & Soon, 2018). MC constitutes one of the common languages of the Han nationality; viewed as a common language, MC shares similarity with variants such as Singaporean Chinese, Taiwanese Mandarin, and Mainland Mandarin (Khoo, 2012). As per Khoo (2012), Malaysian Chinese in this context denotes a regional variant of SCC influenced by Malaysia’s social and linguistic milieu.

The term “特有词汇” (Lexical Variations) first emerged in Wang Huidi’s work “Lexical Variations in Huayu: A Portrait of Singaporean Society”. The “Lexical Variations” mentioned in the study denote words absent in Mandarin (Wang, 1999). Before delving into “MC Lexical Variations”, it is imperative to examine two foundational concepts: “社区词” (Community Words) and “地区词” (Regional Words). In December 1993, during Tian Xiaolin’s participation in the Hong Kong International Language Education Symposium, she presented a paper titled “Characteristics of Modern Chinese Vocabulary”, introducing the concept of “Community Words” for the first time. Community words signify lexemes that adapt to local social domains due to diverse social backgrounds, distinct social systems, and variations in politics, economics, and culture, along with differences in individuals’ psychological factors arising from these contextual disparities (Tian, 1993). In the journal “Attention to Regional Words in Chinese Vocabulary Teaching” published in Wang (2010) introduced the concept of “Regional Words”. Regional words denote terms found in Chinese communities worldwide that represent unique phenomena or objects in the region, or words that exist in Chinese communities globally with the same

name but different meanings, different names but the same meaning, or the same word with different uses, including Chinese loanwords with varied translations (Wang, 2010). Summarizing the definition of “MC Lexical Variations” from extensive literature review, this study underscores words that reflect distinctive elements, concepts, or phenomena specific to Malaysia. These terms have the capability to illustrate the unique aspects of Malaysia’s local political, economic, cultural, geographical, climatic, customary, and societal dimensions.

2.3. Previous Research on Lexical Variation

Fan (2012) examined the dialects of different origins within the Chinese community, explaining that Chinese is a dialect-based language. Furthermore, Fan (2008) studied the use of address terms in Chinese and Mandarin, highlighting that China and Malaysia have different usage habits due to variations in social environments. This research emphasizes the differences in social and cultural etiquette between the two countries and holds significant reference value.

Huang (2010) and Wei (2020) conducted research on lexical differences between Malaysian Chinese (MC) and Standard Chinese (SCC). Huang (2010) employed Malaysian Chinese newspapers as her corpus, concentrating on six leading Chinese newspapers in Malaysia. Her study scrutinized word forms, meanings, and origins, discerning three categories of differences: peculiar words, homographic words, and alien synonymous words. She ascribed these variances to influences from Chinese dialects, Malay, English, and archaic Chinese words on Malaysian Chinese. On the other hand, Wei (2020) also investigated vocabulary differences between MC and SCC, employing Malaysian Chinese newspapers as the corpus. His research categorized words into homograph words, alien synonymous words, and peculiar words. Wei's (2020) focus was on how Malaysian Chinese is influenced by various languages, particularly analysing peculiar words within Malaysian Chinese. Both studies highlight the influence of local languages and historical factors on Malaysian Chinese vocabulary, revealing distinct differences from Standard Chinese due to its development in a diverse and exotic environment.

Wong (2014) compiled 233 examples of unique Chinese vocabulary from representative Chinese newspapers, magazines, and books in Malaysia. She conducted a detailed analysis of their semantic and pragmatic aspects and highlighted that the differences in Chinese vocabulary between China and Malaysia are influenced by geographical environment, dialects, loanwords, and English-Malaysian bilingualism.

2.4. Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in the theory of Language Contact. The theoretical framework is established within the domain of language contact, a fundamental aspect of language development inherent to human linguistic evolution. For the theoretical foundation, the author adopts the concept of language contact as proposed by Fan (2012). Language contact manifests when speakers of two or more languages or dialects engage in interaction, thereby influencing each other (Hadzibeganovic et al., 2008).

Ethnic groups cannot exist in complete isolation; they inevitably engage in communication with one another. Furthermore, different ethnic groups within a nation also interact, leading to instances of language contact (Fan, 2012). The process of language contact can be categorized into cultural borrowing and dialectal borrowing. Cultural

loanwords are terms borrowed from different languages, whereas dialectal loanwords are borrowed from the same language (Bloomfield, 1984). When Chinese immigrants settled in Malaysia, they brought with them Standard Chinese in China (SCC), Hokkien, Cantonese, and other dialects. The interaction between the Chinese language and Malay, English, and other languages has resulted in the adoption of cultural loanwords, while interactions among Chinese dialects have led to the incorporation of dialectal loanwords (Fan, 2012).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employs qualitative content analysis as its research method, utilizing data sourced from "Sin Chew Daily" (Online). Qualitative content analysis, as elucidated by Drisko and Maschi (2016), Sukur (2023), and Mayring (2014), is a method employed to systematically code and analyse qualitative data derived from various sources such as textbooks, essays, newspapers, novels, and magazine articles. The objective is to extract meaningful insights and elucidate the content within written texts. This method is particularly suited for exploring intricate linguistic phenomena, elucidating subjective meanings, and offering in-depth analysis and interpretation of Malaysian Chinese (MC) lexical variations in newspapers. Hence, this study has opted for content analysis in qualitative research as its research method.

3.2. Data Collection

For this study, "Sin Chew Daily" (Online) will serve as the primary source of corpus analysis data, focusing on Malaysian Chinese (MC) lexical variations found in the domestic and local news sections from October 1 to December 30, 2023. Microsoft Excel software will be utilized as the data collection tool. Following the research method outlined by Huang (2009), the data collection procedure is structured as follows: Firstly, MC lexical variations will be categorized into groups such as "Geographical Environment", "Education", "Customs and Culture", "Religious Beliefs", "Clothing, Food, Housing, Transportation", and "Politics and Titles", as well as "Medical Hygiene". Subsequently, 5 to 10 lexical variations will be selected for each category based on the classification. Further details are provided below.

Drawing from the above guidelines, the researcher created an Excel file titled "MC Lexical Variations," establishing a table structured around date, section, classification, MC lexical variations, translation, source, and meaning. The researcher then proceeded to review news articles from the domestic and local sections of "Sin Chew Daily" from October 1 to December 30, 2023, extracting 5 to 10 MC lexical variations per category. Additionally, to ensure the validity of the collected data, corresponding word explanations will be appended to each entry using resources such as the "Malaysian Special Vocabulary Dictionary" or other relevant tools.

3.3. Data Analysis

Following data collection, the researcher systematically organized the data based on date and category. Subsequently, each word's definition was queried in the dictionary and recorded in a table to validate the data. In consideration of space constraints within this article, only the lexical variations, translations, sources, and meanings of MC (main

corpus) terms are presented. This data collection methodology serves the purpose of ensuring precise data categorization, diversity, and comprehensiveness. By augmenting the dataset with word explanations, the credibility and efficacy of the data are enhanced, thus adhering to the rigorous and scientific standards characteristic of academic research.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. MC Lexical Variations Reflect the Unique Culture of Malaysian Chinese Society

Based on the results of data analysis, various types of MC lexical variations were identified, with some reflecting local phenomena such as political terms within a specific political system, educational terminology within a particular educational framework, and activity-related words influenced by distinct natural and cultural contexts. To systematically present the collected data, the researcher categorized the content into five distinct aspects and presented it in tabular form.

4.1.1. Geographical Environment

The vocabulary associated with Malaysia's geographical environment exhibits distinctive cultural and ecological features, highlighting the country's diverse natural and cultural landscapes. The terms collected by researchers predominantly pertain to plants, place names, and natural disasters. Details can be found in [Table 1](#).

Table 1: Geographical Environment

No.	MC Lexical Variations	Translation	Source	Meaning
1	亚答	Attap	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	棕榈树。马来语 Atap 音译 (Wang et al., 2022) Palm tree. Transliteration of Malay "Atap" (Wang et al., 2022)
2	武吉拉惹	Bukit Raja	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	马来西亚雪兰莪州八打灵县的一个巫金，现位于巴生县内 (Sin Chew, 2023a) A town in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, now located in Klang (Sin Chew, 2023a)
3	树胶	Gum	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	橡胶 (Wang et al., 2022) Gum (Wang et al., 2022)
4	豪雨	Heavy Rain	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	指降水强度很大的雨 (Sin Chew, 2023b) Refers to rainfall with great intensity (Sin Chew, 2023b)
5	加影	Kajang	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	马来西亚雪兰莪州东南部的一个镇 (Sin Chew, 2023c) A town in southeastern of Selangor, Malaysia (Sin Chew, 2023c)

6	奎笼	Kelong	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	渔民为了捕鱼而在海上建的类似高脚屋的捕鱼设施。马来语 Kelong 音译 (Wang et al., 2022) A stilt-house-like fishing facility built by fishermen on the sea for fishing. Transliteration of Malay “Kelong” (Wang et al., 2022)
7	浮罗交怡	Langkawi Island	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	位于马六甲海峡，是马来西亚吉打州海岸 104 个大小群岛中最大的一个 (Sin Chew, 2024) Located in the Strait of Malacca, it is the largest of the 104 islands on the coast of Kedah, Malaysia (Sin Chew, 2024)
8	半山芭	Pudu	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	半山芭是吉隆坡的一个区，位于联邦一号公路半山芭路沿线 (Sin Chew, 2023d) Pudu is a ward of Kuala Lumpur located along the Federal Route 1 Pudu Road (Sin Chew, 2023d)
9	士毛月	Semenyih	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	一座位于马来西亚雪兰莪州乌鲁冷岳县的小镇 (Sin Chew, 2023c) A small town located in Hulu Langat, Selangor, Malaysia (Sin Chew, 2023c)
10	丹绒士拔	Tanjung Sepat	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	位于马来西亚雪兰莪州瓜拉冷岳县南部沿海，南面滨临马六甲海峡 (Sin Chew, 2023e) Located on the southern coast of Kuala Langat, Selangor, Malaysia, with the Strait of Malacca to the south (Sin Chew, 2023e)

In summary, the vocabulary related to Malaysia’s geographical environment is extensive and varied, encompassing natural science terms as well as significant cultural and historical meanings. Malaysia’s tropical location provides a wealth of plant resources, and many terms reflect the unique aspects of its rainforests. For instance, “Attap”, a locally distinctive tree, is both a botanical term and a cultural symbol, exemplifying Malaysia’s ecological diversity. The country’s geographical variety underscores its rich cultural and historical heritage. The place name “Kajang” illustrates this, combining Malay transliteration with remnants of colonial history. Such examples are prevalent in Malaysia, a multi-ethnic nation comprising Malays, Chinese, Indians, and others, each contributing different linguistic and cultural elements. Malaysia’s geography also predisposes it to natural disasters like floods and landslides. Terms related to these phenomena are crucial not only in geography but also in sociological and environmental research. For example, “Heavy Rain” denotes a natural event and signifies societal challenges and responses. Studying this vocabulary aids in understanding the local natural environment and is vital for comprehending its social culture.

4.1.2. Education

Malaysia's education system stands out for its uniqueness, with its educational vocabulary serving as a mirror of its rich and diverse cultural heritage and historical evolution. This is exemplified in [Table 2](#), which provides detailed insights into the intricacies of Malaysia's educational lexicon and its profound connection to the country's multifaceted societal fabric.

Table 2: Education

No.	MC Lexical Variations	Translation	Source	Meaning
1	华社	Chinese Associations	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	"华人社会"的缩略 (Wang et al., 2022) Abbreviation for "Chinese Associations" (Wang et al., 2022)
2	华教	Chinese Education	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	"华文教育"的缩略(Wang et al., 2022) Abbreviation for "Chinese Education" (Wang et al., 2022)
3	华文	Chinese Language	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	华族的共同语言文字。又称：“中文”（京、港、澳）；“国文”（台） (Wang et al., 2022) The common language of the Chinese people. Also known as: "Chinese" (Beijing, Hong Kong, Macao); "Guowen" (Taiwan) (Wang et al., 2022)
4	华校	Chinese School	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	"华文学校"的缩略 (Wang et al., 2022) Abbreviation for "Chinese School" (Wang et al., 2022)
5	年终假期	End of School Year Holidays	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	学校一个学年结束后的长假，通常在年底 (Wang et al., 2022) A long holiday after the school year ends, usually at the end of the year (Wang et al., 2022).
6	国民中学	National High School	"Sin Chew Daily" (Online)	政府全津贴并以马来语为教学媒介语的中学，简称“国中” (Wang et al., 2022) A secondary school that is fully subsidized by the government and uses Malay as the medium of instruction, referred to as "Guozhong" (Wang et al., 2022)

7	国民小学	National Primary School	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	政府全津贴的小学，教学媒介语是马来语。马来语 Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan 音译(Wang et al., 2022) The primary schools fully subsidized by the government, the medium of instruction is Malay. Transliteration of Malay “Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan” (Wang et al., 2022) 学校年中假期在5月中旬至6月上旬，具体日期视最高元首的诞辰而定，在最高元首诞辰后结束年中假期 (Sin Chew, 2023f)
8	年中假期	Term 1 Holidays	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	The “Term 1 Holidays” of school run from mid-May to early June. The specific date depends on the birthday of the Supreme Yang di-Pertuan Agong. The mid-year holiday ends after the birthday of the Supreme Yang di-Pertuan Agong (Sin Chew, 2023f)
9	董总	UCSCAM	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	“马来西亚华校董事联合会综合”的缩略 (Wang et al., 2022) Abbreviation for “United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia” (Wang et al., 2022)
10	教总	UCSTAM	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	“马来西亚华校教师会总会”的缩略，是一个由全马各地区华校教师公会以及州级华校教师工会联合会组成的教师组织(Wang et al., 2022) Abbreviation for The United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia” (Wang et al., 2022)

In summary, Malaysia’s education vocabulary not only plays a key role in understanding the local education system but also deeply reflects the uniqueness of its multicultural society. For example, “国民中学” (*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan*) is the primary type of secondary school in the Malaysian education system, using Malay as its primary medium of instruction. This vocabulary amalgamates elements of Malay and Chinese, thereby fully reflecting the integration and coexistence of Malaysia's multicultural cultures. The term “national” derives from the Malay word “国民” (*Kebangsaan*), and “中学” (secondary school) is from Chinese, demonstrating the blend of different cultures and languages. This term mirrors the national education policy implemented by the Malaysian government after independence, aiming to foster national unity and identity through a unified education system. Additionally, “董总” (Malaysian Chinese School Directors Association, referred to as *Dong Zong*) is also a significant educational term. As the management and coordination organization for Chinese education in Malaysia, “Dong Zong” was founded in 1954 and is dedicated to promoting and preserving Chinese education. This term not only underscores the Chinese community’s focus on education but also underscores efforts in language preservation and cultural inheritance in a multicultural society. It is evident that

Malaysian education terms such as “National High School” and “Donggong” not only aid in comprehending the local education system but also mirror the complexity and uniqueness of a multicultural society. These terms not only depict cultural integration and historical legacy but also exemplify governmental and societal policies and practices in education.

4.1.3. Customs and Culture, Religious Beliefs

The customs, culture, and religious beliefs vocabulary in MC embody its multicultural and multiracial nature, stemming from a rich historical tapestry that integrates Aboriginal, Malay, Chinese, Indian, and other ethnic cultures. Table 3 provides additional insights.

Table 3: Customs and Culture, Religious Beliefs

No.	MC Lexical Variations	Translation	Source	Meaning
1	大伯公	Dabogong	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	南洋一带民间膜拜的神灵。相当于中国大陆的土地神、福德祠一类的神明。源自闽南方言 (Wang et al., 2022) A god worshiped by people in Southeast Asia. It is equivalent to gods such as the Land God and the Fude Temple in mainland China. Originated from Hokkien (Wang et al., 2022)
2	贵人符	Guirenfu	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	一种传统的符咒，被认为能够带来好运和保佑 (Sin Chew, 2023g) A traditional charm believed to bring good luck and protection (Sin Chew, 2023g)
3	回教	Islam	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	伊斯兰教、清真教的旧称 (Wang et al., 2022) The old name of Islam (Wang et al., 2022)
4	彩米图	Kolam	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	彩米图源自南印度，多用染色白米绘制 (Sin Chew, 2023h) Kolam originate from South India and are mostly drawn with dyed white rice (Sin Chew, 2023h)
5	捞生	Laosheng	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	马来西亚、新加坡华人庆祝农历新年（春节）的习俗之一。“捞”（粤语）：①拌和；②（引申）谋生；“鱼生”（粤语）：生鱼片。也称“捞鱼生”。源自粤方言 (Wang et al., 2022) One of the customs of the Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore to celebrate the Lunar New Year (Spring Festival). “Lao” (Cantonese): ①mixing; ②(extension)

				making a living; “Yusheng” (Cantonese): sashimi. Also known as “Laoyusheng”. Originated from Cantonese (Wang et al., 2022)
6	美娘	Mek	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	马来西亚登嘉楼州的女性土生华人 (Sin Chew, 2023i) Female Peranakans in Terengganu state, Malaysia (Sin Chew, 2023i)
7	回教堂	Mosque	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	供穆斯林群众使用的宗教场所 (Sin Chew, 2023j) A religious place for Muslim people (Sin Chew, 2023j)
8	班顿	Pantun	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	一种马来歌谣。马来语 Pantun 的音译 (Wang et al., 2022) A kind of Malay song. Transliteration of Malay “Pantun” (Wang et al., 2022)
9	大宝森节	Thaipusam	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	兴都教（印度教）节日，每年在淡米尔历的“泰月”（第十个月）满月时进行，是虔诚的印度教徒赎罪、奉献及感恩的时节 (Wang et al., 2022) The festival of Hindu is held every year during the full moon of the “Thai month” (the tenth month) of the Tamil calendar. It is a time for devout Hindus to atone for their sins, give sacrifices and give thanks (Wang et al., 2022)
10	送王缸	WangKang Festival	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	马六甲历史悠久的神明绕境游行活动 (Sin Chew, 2023k) Malacca’s historic procession of gods around the country (Sin Chew, 2023k)

To conclude, these words are not only evident in daily life, festivals, eating habits, and more, but also in art, architecture, traditional customs, and so forth, imbuing Malaysia with a unique cultural charm. For instance, the term “捞生” (*Laosheng*) exemplifies Malaysia’s distinctive cultural and culinary traits. Originating from the Teochew dialect’s “Lou Sang”, it denotes the traditional fish and raw platter served during New Year celebrations. This term reflects Malaysia’s tradition of prioritizing family reunions and the sharing of delicious food during festive occasions. These words reflect Malaysian lifestyle and social culture, fostering connections among people from diverse ethnic groups and regions and establishing common cultural symbols and values in their daily lives. Utilizing this unique vocabulary not only enhances Malaysians’ cultural identity but also presents the country’s rich and colorful cultural landscape to the outside world.

4.1.4. Food, Clothing, Housing and Transportation

The vocabulary related to MC clothing, food, housing, and transportation reflects the diversity and richness of Malaysian culture, showcasing the country’s unique lifestyle and cultural characteristics. Table 4 provides additional insights.

Table 4: Food, Clothing, Housing and Transportation

No.	MC Lexical Variations	Translation	Source	Meaning
1	亚答屋	Attap House	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	用亚答树叶搭盖屋顶的简陋房屋 (Wang et al., 2022) A simple house with a roof made of attap leaves (Wang et al., 2022)
2	沙爹	Barbecue	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	马来风味的烤肉串。马来语 sate 的音译 (Wang et al., 2022) Malay style kebabs. Transliteration of Malay “sate” (Wang et al., 2022)
3	巴士	Bus	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	公共汽车。英语 bus 的音译 (Wang et al., 2022) Bus. Transliteration of English “bus” (Wang et al., 2022).
4	辣椒仔	Bird Eye's Chili	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	小辣椒、朝天椒。源自粤方言 (Wang et al., 2022) Bird Eye's Chili, Facing Heaven Pepper. Originated from Cantonese (Wang et al., 2022)
5	啦啦	Clam	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	蛤蜊，源于闽南语 (Sin Chew, 2023l) Clam. Originated from Hokkien (Sin Chew, 2023l)
6	卡峇雅	Kebaya	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	一种马来民族女式上装，半圆凿形领，长袖。也称“可峇雅”。马来语 Kebaya 的音译 (Wang et al., 2022) A Malay women's top with a gouge collar and long sleeves. Also known as “Kebaya”. Transliteration of Malay Kebaya (Wang et al., 2022)
7	人民组屋	People's Housing Project	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	由政府拨款修建的供低收入家庭居住的低价楼房 (Wang et al., 2022) Low-cost buildings built with government funding for low-income families to live in (Wang et al., 2022)
8	红吉罗鱼	Red Mahseer	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	一个原生于东南亚的鲤科结鱼属的物种 (Sin Chew, 2023m) A species of Cyprinidae native to Southeast Asia (Sin Chew, 2023m)
9	红龟粿	Red Tortoise Cake	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	一种龟形的糕点，因颜色为红色而得名 (Wang et al., 2022) A turtle-shaped pastry named after its red color (Wang et al., 2022).

10	纱笼	Sarong	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	马来族的传统服饰——直筒状围裙。也称“沙笼”“沙龙” (Wang et al., 2022) The traditional costume of the Malay people - straight apron. Also known as “沙笼”“沙龙” (Shalong) (Wang et al., 2022)
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To summarize, words have been gathered from the realms of clothing, food, housing, and transportation, each carrying unique linguistic qualities while also reflecting Malaysia's rich and diverse cultural essence. Clothing vocabulary such as “卡峇雅” (Kabaya) and “纱笼” (Sarong) not only delineate local attire but also encapsulate the traditional cultures and historical contexts of Malaysia's ethnic groups. Exploring these words deepens our understanding of the clothing customs and national identities across Malaysia. Food-related terms like “辣椒仔” (Bird Eye’s Chili) and “啦啦” (Clam) depict Malaysia’s varied culinary landscape. Delving into these terms unveils eating habits, cultural nuances, and the societal significance of food. Accommodation terminology such as “人民组屋” (People’s Housing Project) and “亚答屋” (Attap House) highlights Malaysia’s unique residential architecture, reflecting societal changes due to economic growth and urbanization. Transportation words like “巴士” (bus) reveal Malaysia’s travel patterns and transportation culture, offering insights into local commuting habits and urban transport developments. Academic exploration of these distinctive words in food, clothing, housing, and transportation realms provides profound insights into Malaysia’s cultural diversity and unique allure.

4.1.5. Politics and Titles

The vocabulary pertaining to MC politics and titles reflects Malaysia’s multicultural characteristics, encompassing political and titular concepts from diverse ethnic groups such as Malays, Chinese, and Indians. Table 5 provides additional insights.

Table 5: Politics and Titles

No.	MC Lexical Variations	Translation	Source	Meaning
1	安娣	Auntie	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	阿姨。用于称呼中年或已婚妇女。英语 auntie 的音译 (Wang et al., 2022) Auntie. Used to address middle-aged or married women. Transliteration of English “auntie” (Wang et al., 2022)
2	堂费	Court Costs	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	案件审判、过堂的费用 (Wang et al., 2022) Case trial and court fees (Wang et al., 2022)

3	上诉庭	Court of Appeal	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	具有民事与刑事上诉管辖权的法庭；专门接受上诉的法庭(Wang et al., 2022) Courts of civil and criminal appellate jurisdiction; A tribunal dedicated to appeals (Wang et al., 2022)
4	消防局	Fire and Rescue Department	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	“消防和拯救局”的缩略 (Wang et al., 2022) Abbreviation for “Fire and Rescue Department” (Wang et al., 2022) 对资源按照一定比例进行分配的制度 (Wang et al., 2022)
5	固打制	Gudazhi	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	A system that allocates resources according to a certain proportion (Wang et al., 2022)
6	反贪会	MACC	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	“反贪污委员会”的缩略 (Wang et al., 2022) Abbreviation for Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (Wang et al., 2022)
7	清道夫	Sanitation Workers	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	道路清洁工 (Sin Chew, 2023n) Road cleaner (Sin Chew, 2023n) 马来西亚国家元首赐封的第二等封号。马来语 Tan Sri 的音译 (Wang et al., 2022)
8	丹斯里	Tan Sri	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	The second-class title bestowed by the head of state of Malaysia. Transliteration of Malay “Tan Sri” (Wang et al., 2022)
9	头手	Toushou	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	在某一行业范围内技术最好的人。源自闽南方言 (Wang et al., 2022) The person with the best skills within a certain industry. Originated from Hokkien (Wang et al., 2022)
10	安哥	Uncle	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	叔叔。用于称呼中年或已婚男子。多用于口语。英语 uncle 的音译 (Wang et al., 2022) Uncle. Used to address middle-aged or married men. Mostly used in spoken language. Transliteration of English “uncle” (Wang et al., 2022)

To summarize, these words are indeed more than just symbols of political identity; they also carry rich cultural meanings that reflect the values and social order across diverse cultural backgrounds in Malaysia. They not only showcase the diversity of political and social systems but also encompass a wide range of titles and honorifics. These range from official political titles like “丹斯里” (Tan Sri), typically conferred upon individuals who

have made outstanding contributions in various fields, to traditional folk terms such as “安娣”(Auntie), “安哥”(Uncle), and so forth. These words play a pivotal role in Malaysian society by not only indicating social status and power structures but also by mirroring the integration and evolution of Malaysia's multicultural fabric. For instance, the esteemed title “丹斯里” (Tan Sri) signifies honor and dignity, whereas titles like “安娣”(Auntie), “安哥”(Uncle) underscore the close familial and communal bonds along with mutual respect. The diverse usage and widespread adoption of these terms underscore the intricate nature and inclusivity of Malaysian society. They also shed light on the societal order and values prevalent across different cultural backgrounds.

4.1.6. Medical Hygiene

The medical hygiene terms examined in this study primarily concentrate on vocabulary associated with travel in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Table 6 provides additional insights.

Table 6: Medical Hygiene

No.	MC Lexical Variations	Translation	Source	Meaning
1	TRIIS 原则	(TRIIS) framework	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	“TRIIS” 原则, 即检, 通报, 隔离, 通知和求医 (Sin Chew, 2023o) IRIIS is Test, Report, Isolasi, Inform and Seek framework (Sin Chew, 2023o) 抗原检测用于快速诊断(或排除)活跃冠状病毒感染, 又称快速检测、抗原快速检测, 快速自测等不同说法, 用鼻咽、鼻或咽喉试子或唾液样本, 查病毒表面的蛋白质 (Sin Chew, 2023p)
2	冠病检测	Antigen Test	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	Antigen testing is used to quickly diagnose (or rule out) active coronavirus infection. Also known as rapid testing, rapid antigen testing, rapid self-testing, etc., it uses a nasopharyngeal, nasal or throat test or saliva sample to check for proteins on the surface of the virus (Sin Chew, 2023p)
3	冠病	COVID-19	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	2019 冠状病毒病 (COVID-19) 是由 SARS-CoV-2 病毒引起的一种传染病 (Sin Chew, 2023o) Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Sin Chew, 2023o)
4	激增	Growing Rapidly	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	感染新型冠状病毒的人数激烈增长 (Sin Chew, 2023q) The number of people infected with COVID-19 is growing rapidly (Sin Chew, 2023q)

5	防疫 SOP	Standard Operating Procedures for Epidemic Prevention and Control	“Sin Chew Daily” (Online)	政府应对疫情所制定的标准作业程序 (SOP) (Sin Chew, 2023r) Standard operating procedures (SOP) formulated by the government in response to deal with pandemics (Sin Chew, 2023r)
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Studying these words enables us to attain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on the medical and health sectors, alongside society's measures and strategies for addressing the epidemic. For instance, the “TRIIS 原则” (TRIIS Framework) (which denotes the close integration of tourism and public health) and the “防疫 SOP” (Standard Operating Procedures for Epidemic Prevention and Control) (which refers to the standard operating procedure for epidemic prevention) represent two typical examples. These terms not only depict the changes and response measures within the medical and health sectors during the epidemic but also illustrate the efforts and planning of governmental and social institutions in addressing the epidemic.

4.2. Factors Lead to the Emergence and Spread of MC Lexical Variations in Newspaper

To investigate how Malaysian Chinese lexical variations reflect the unique culture of Malaysian Chinese society, the researchers combined the aforementioned words and discovered four main reasons: language contact and adaptation, cultural hybridity, historical and sociopolitical factors, as well as media influence. The researchers will provide detailed explanations from four perspectives and will attach relevant evidence words from the collected vocabulary to each reason. Further details are as follows.

4.2.1. Language Contact and Adaptation

After Malaysia became independent in 1957, Malay became the national language due to the Malay majority. Malay is the common language for communication among all ethnic groups in the country. Malay is used by Malaysian Chinese people every day in local life. Before Malaysia became independent, it was under British colonial rule for nearly two centuries. English became the official language during that time, which laid a certain foundation for Malaysia's multilingual environment. Therefore, even after independence, English is still widely used in administration, business, science and technology education, services and media communication in Malaysia. It can be seen that MC is deeply influenced by Malay and English in a rich multilingual environment, so there is also the phenomenon of borrowing words from Malay or English, more details can be seen in [Table 7](#) and [Table 8](#).

Table 7: Malay Transliteration Vocabulary

Number	Malay	Malaysian Chinese
1	Atap	亚答
2	Kelong	奎笼
3	Pantun	班顿
4	Sate	沙爹
5	Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan	国民小学

Table 8: English Transliteration Vocabulary

Number	English	Malaysian Chinese
1	Auntie	安娣
2	Bus	巴士
3	Uncle	安哥

The cultural influences (e.g., Malay, English) contribute to lexical borrowing, code-switching, and creating a hybrid linguistic form. Lexical variations reflect negotiation processes between heritage languages, Malaysian identity, and global influences. It reflects the dynamic interaction between different language systems of the Malaysian Chinese community in the multicultural context of Malaysia. MC speakers often seamlessly integrate Malay or English words into their MC discourse, demonstrating effective pragmatic communication and expressing novel linguistic expressions for different social contexts.

4.2.2. Cultural Hybridity

The Chinese immigrated to Malaysia on a large scale at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, mainly from Fujian, Guangdong, Hainan, Guangxi and other provinces along the coast of China. Most of them were poor laborers with low educational levels. These immigrants brought with them a variety of native languages, resulting in many southern Chinese dialects being widely spoken in Malaysia to this day. Chinese people of different origins communicate frequently in Malaysia through various dialects. Therefore, dialect words such as Hokkien and Cantonese are relatively easily integrated into the Chinese language, resulting in the phenomenon of borrowing words from Hokkien and Cantonese, more details can be seen in [Table 9](#) and [Table 10](#).

Table 9: Borrowed from Hokkien

Number	Hokkien	Malaysian Chinese
1	lā-lā	啦啦
2	thāu-tshiú	头手

Table 10: Borrowed from Cantonese

Number	Cantonese	Malaysian Chinese
1	laat6 ziu1 zai2	辣椒仔
2	lou4 saang1	捞生

Cultural hybridity in MC lexical variations contributes to the negotiation of identity among Malaysian Chinese people individuals. Lexical variations convey nuances of identity, social hierarchy, and interpersonal relationships within Malaysian Chinese society. The use of MC lexical variations carries cultural symbolism and meaning, often conveying subtle nuances of identity, belonging, and cultural affiliation. Certain words or phrases may evoke shared experiences or traditions within the Malaysian Chinese community,

establishing cultural resonance and connectivity.

4.2.3. Historical and Sociopolitical Factors

Language policies, education reforms, and migration patterns have influenced lexical variation and dissemination in newspapers. This localization process highlights the dynamic nature of language as it interacts with cultural practices and societal norms. Policies promoting Malay language (Bahasa Malaysia) as the national language also influenced language preferences and linguistic practices among Malaysian Chinese. Language practices and identity construction have been influenced by Malaysia's socio-political efforts to build the nation and promote national unity, especially in the education sector. Sociopolitical changes in Chinese education in Malaysia have influenced the language attitudes and behaviors of Malaysian Chinese, more details can be seen in [Table 11](#).

Table 11: Historical and Sociopolitical Contexts

Number	Category	Malaysian Chinese
1	Migration and Settlement Patterns	固打制
2	Language Policies and Education Reforms	国民中学
3	Economic and Social Changes	人民组屋
4	Cultural Revival and Heritage Preservation	大伯公

In conclusion, historical and sociopolitical factors have played a significant role in shaping Malaysian Chinese lexical variations, reflecting the complex interplay between linguistic, cultural, and societal influences within Malaysia's multicultural context. The historical legacy of colonialism, migration patterns, and settlement dynamics has contributed to the linguistic diversity observed among Malaysian Chinese speakers. Furthermore, language policies, education reforms, and nation-building efforts have influenced language dynamics and lexical dissemination, impacting the evolution of Malaysian Chinese lexical variations over time.

4.2.4. Media Influence

Newspapers serve as platforms for linguistic experimentation and cultural expression, amplifying the visibility and adoption of MC lexical variations. The lexical variations in MC that are observed in newspapers are tailored to various language environments, reflecting the communication requirements and preferences of Malay Chinese. The presence of MC words in newspapers also demonstrates the resilience of the reporting community and its capacity for linguistic innovation. The impact of newspapers on shaping lexical changes and the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and media discourse in Malaysia's multicultural context is evident from this discovery, more details can be seen in [Table 12](#).

In summary, newspaper media factors play a crucial role in the emergence and spread of Malaysian Chinese lexical variations, influencing language use and cultural representation within the community. Newspaper media serves as a powerful tool in shaping the linguistic landscape of Malaysian Chinese communities, reflecting the dynamic nature of language evolution and identity formation. Through the dissemination of lexical

variations and cultural representations, newspapers contribute to the preservation and innovation of language practices among Malaysian Chinese speakers. As such, a deeper understanding of newspaper media factors is essential in examining the intricate relationship between language, culture, and society within this diverse community.

Table 12: Media Influence

Number	Category	Malaysian Chinese
1	(TRIIS) Framework	TRIIS 原则
2	Antigen Test	冠病检测
3	COVID-19	冠病
4	Growing Rapidly	激增

5. Conclusions

In essence, the presence of lexical variations among Malaysian Chinese (MC) reflects unique facets of Malaysian Chinese society, setting it apart from other regions. These variations serve to reinforce the national identity of Malaysian Chinese by preserving their Chinese heritage while accommodating it to the local Malaysian milieu. Furthermore, these lexical choices communicate cultural values, beliefs, and social norms prevalent within the Malaysian Chinese community. The lexical variations of MC adapt to Malaysia's multicultural environment by assimilating various linguistic elements, including Malay loanwords and English expressions, into Chinese discourse. This linguistic adaptation underscores the community's embrace of cultural diversity and linguistic hybridity, reflecting a sense of intergenerational belonging, cultural resilience, and the negotiation of multicultural identities within Malaysian society. In summary, these findings highlight the intricate interplay among linguistic, cultural, historical, and socio-political factors that shape lexical variations in Malaysian Chinese newspapers, mirroring cultural identities, adaptation strategies, and dynamic responses to sociolinguistic challenges within Malaysia's diverse multicultural landscape.

Given Malaysia's multilingualism and multiculturalism, differences between MC and Standard Chinese (SCC) arise in their spread and development processes. To facilitate better understanding of these differences, the researcher advocates incorporating MC lexical variations into language teaching materials to reflect real-world language usage. Additionally, introducing comparative linguistic analysis in language classes can enhance students' awareness of linguistic diversity and language evolution. Understanding the factors driving the emergence and spread of MC lexical variations can deepen comprehension of language dynamics and identity construction among Malaysian Chinese individuals and communities.

MC plays a pivotal role in global Chinese. The researcher advocates for increased postgraduate research focusing on MC, particularly in investigating the influence of social media and digital communication on the development of new lexical variations. Furthermore, comparing MC lexical variations with those in other Chinese-speaking communities globally can identify commonalities and unique features.

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