

Filipino, Chinese, neither, or both? The Lannang identity and its relationship with language

Wilkinson Daniel Wong GONZALES
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on a specific community of individuals who have mixed Southern Chinese and Filipino cultural heritage in the Philippines – the ‘Lannangs’. I investigate the Lannang identity and, with ethnographic interviews and survey data, propose that the identity should be broadly defined as comprising of four dynamic parts: being Filipino, being Chinese, being neither, and being both. Focusing on the Manila community, I show how the Lannangs navigate between these orientations depending on the social context and the interlocutors. Moreover, drawing on the notions of indexicality and simultaneity, I investigate the role of language in the characterization of the Lannang identity. I also show that Hokkien, Lánnang-uè, Tagalog, English are being used to embody the aspects of ‘Lannang-ness’.

Keywords: Lannang, language and identity, cultural hybridity, indexicality, Chinese, Filipino

1. Introduction

The notion of ethnic identity¹ is extremely complex and often controversial for a minority ethnic group in the Philippines – the Lannangs (an endonym of ‘Chinese Filipino’, arguably from the Southern Min or Hokkien phrase *lan lang* ‘our people’), a group of Southern Chinese settlers and their descendants (Doeppers, 1986). They are occasionally considered as Filipino by the Filipinos and Chinese by the mainland Chinese, but also ‘othered’ by both Chinese and Filipino groups for being either too Filipino or Chinese, respectively. For this reason, a straightforward answer is rarely given when any member of this group is asked to describe what they identify as ethnicity-wise. In one context, a Lannang might say they are Chinese and deny their Filipino-ness; in another, the same person might declare that they are Filipino and conceal their Chinese-ness. There are also cases when a Lannang will claim to be neither Filipino nor Chinese, and then, in the next interaction, claim that they are both Chinese and Filipino. On the surface, the whole situation gives an impression that this group of individuals is without a heritage of its own. However, this act of negotiating between Chinese and Filipino identities is in itself, I argue, an identity of its own – the Lannang identity.

I explore the different facets of the Lannang identity in the context of metropolitan Manila. I intend to identify situations that would condition a Manila Lannang (henceforth, Lannang) to assert one aspect of their identity over the others. Another objective is to investigate the relationship between the Lannang identity and language. Specifically, I adopt the notions of indexicality and the “indexical field” from linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics (Eckert, 2008, p. 453; Jaffe, 2009; Silverstein, 1976). And using a periphery-as-center framework, I adopt Woolard’s (1998) notion of simultaneity in multilingual communities. I aim to describe how the Lannangs “index” facets of their Lannang identity through language (Eckert, 2008, p. 455; Jaffe, 2009). Finally, I aim to show how the Lannangs use language to navigate this identity in different situations.

¹ I view ‘identity’ as compositional, fluid, and dynamic – meaning that individuals can decide to highlight only a part of their identity depending on the context.

Section 2 contextualizes the research by providing a sociohistory of the Lannangs. Section 3 discusses the contemporary Lannangs while Section 4 explains the methodology. This is followed by Section 5, where I discuss the different aspects of the Lannang identity. Section 6 focuses on how certain languages are used to embody (components of) this identity while Section 7 ends with some concluding remarks.

2. The Lannangs: A brief sociohistory

The first step towards understanding the Lannang identity is studying the context in which it emerged – in a Southern Chinese diaspora in the Philippines. The ancestors of most Lannangs came from the Fujian and Guangdong provinces of Southern China in the late 19th to 20th century (Doeppers, 1986). They left for the Philippines for various reasons, among which is escaping from famine and political instability (Tan, 1993). The most common motivation, however, was to conduct business(es). Retail trade, wholesale merchandising, manufacturing, and real estate were popular sources of livelihood for them (Tan, 1993, p. 28; Uytanlet, 2014).

Despite being economically influential, the overseas Chinese did not settle in the Manila region easily. Anti-Chinese sentiments from the Spanish era (1500s) were rampant even in the American colonization period (1898 to 1946) (Wickberg, 1965). And the overseas Chinese were referred to by the government and society as “alien” – a pejorative, exclusionary term used to refer to anyone who is culturally Chinese, regardless of their citizenship (Wickberg, 1965, p. 166). This cultural ‘othering’ transformed how the overseas Chinese viewed themselves and paved the way for the birth of the Lannang identity.

Before exclusion policies were implemented, the community members were not yet conscious of themselves as a national minority within the context of a nation-state. When the anti-Chinese sentiments began to peak and the overseas Chinese were officially ‘othered’ by the government and Philippine society in 1902 through the Exclusion Act (Tan, 1993), the overseas Chinese became more aware of their Chinese-ness and resorted to communalism. Around this time, the Chinese government also began to promote the idea of the *huaqiao*, an umbrella concept used by the Chinese government in the 19th to 20th century as an attempt to ‘claim’ individuals with Chinese descent who are living abroad (Hau, 2014, p. 12). This further gave the overseas Chinese a sense of national Chinese-ness (Duara, 1997). They established associations and institutions with the purpose of organizing the community to deal with these anti-Chinese pressures and oriented themselves towards China. From being ‘decentralized’ group of individuals in the 1850s (and perhaps even before that), the overseas Chinese became more ‘organized’ and established a community in Manila (Tan, 1969; Wickberg, 1965). There is insufficient documentary evidence, but it should be around this time when the term *lán láng* ‘our people’ (Hau, 2014) – later, *lánnáng* or *nánnáng* (Lannang) – began to be used by the community as a term of exclusion: us people or *lán láng* versus them (i.e. non-Chinese).

The anti-Chinese sentiments of the 1900s persisted through the commonwealth period (1935-1946) and into the post-colonial period (1946 onwards) (Chu, 2010; Uytanlet, 2014). The legal immigration bans on the Chinese and the 1958 ‘Filipino First’ policy that favored Filipino-owned businesses over foreign-owned ones were largely seen as discriminatory by the overseas Chinese (henceforth, the Lannangs). They magnified the already existent tension between them and the locals at that time.

One major milestone in Lannang history that helped alleviate the tension was the enactment of the Mass Naturalization Law in 1975. This law allowed many Lannangs who applied for Filipino citizenship to become lawful residents and citizens of the republic. It enabled them to purchase properties and venture into different professions that were impossible to get into without Filipino citizenship (e.g. medicine, law). It was followed by

the Filipinization of Lannang schools, which sought to streamline the Chinese-dominant educational system of the Lannangs to the national curriculum. This drastically decreased the amount of Chinese language education (e.g. Hokkien and Mandarin) and increased the Lannangs' proficiency in English and Filipino (henceforth, Tagalog) – the official languages of the Philippines. These two events accelerated the assimilation of the Lannangs to the larger Philippine society, although there are some Lannangs who refuse complete assimilation and orient themselves towards China.

3. The contemporary Lannangs and the Lannang identity

The Lannangs of today consist of individuals who have Southern Chinese ancestry and a mixed Chinese and Filipino cultural heritage. In terms of race,² most Lannangs report having 'pure' Chinese ancestry. Those who report having mixed Filipino and Chinese ancestry are in the minority. In terms of citizenship, many Lannangs are Filipinos by birth or by naturalization, but there are some who do not have Filipino citizenship, despite being born and raised in the Philippines.

The Lannangs may seem like a heterogenous group from the perspective of Chinese ancestral 'purity' and citizenship. But, most, if not all, Lannangs experience a common (hybrid) culture: most of them are educated in a Lannang school with multilingual curriculum (English, Tagalog, and Chinese) and engage in Filipino, Chinese, and Lannang traditions and practices (Ang See, 1990, p. 108). They also typically know at least four languages – Tagalog, Hokkien (Southern Min), Philippine Hybrid Hokkien or Lánnang-uè,³ and English (Gonzales, 2018; Gonzales and Hiramoto, 2020; Gonzales and Starr, 2020). This hybrid culture is what makes them Lannang.

Broadly construed, the Lannang identity is a hybrid ethnic identity that has Southern Chinese and Filipino aspects. Note, however, that this definition is not explicitly regarded as a 'hybrid' identity by many community members, as the term 'Lannang' has historically been associated, if not equated, with being 'Chinese' (Hau, 2014). It is not widely promoted in wider society or used officially in government because 'Lannang' has historically been only used within the community as an in-group term, at least in Manila.⁴ In addition, note that the way the Lannang identity is defined here slightly overlaps with some of identities⁵ (e.g. Tsinoy) noted by scholars such as Hau (2014). For example, the term 'Tsinoy', like 'Lannang', emphasizes connections as well as distance from the notions of Chinese-ness and Filipino-ness.

Despite the overlap and lack of popularity, I opt to refer to this specific hybrid identity as the Lannang identity, as the term 'Lannang' is consistently used by (and only by)⁶ members of the community regardless of age, unlike some of the other terms. In fact, in my fieldwork, all of those who identified as Tsinoy, Chinese Filipino, and Filipino-Chinese also identified as

² Race here is operationally defined as a grouping of humans based on their phenotypic features. I distinguish this from ethnicity, which I define here as a grouping of humans based not only on distinctions drawn from physical appearance, but also cultural markers (e.g. language, food).

³ Many Lannang speakers also use this term to refer to the 'pure' Hokkien. Here, I distinguish it from Hokkien, the Philippine variety of Hokkien-uè. When I use the term Lánnang-uè, I refer to the mixed language Philippine Hybrid Hokkien.

⁴ Currently, many members, particularly the youth, no longer associate 'Lannang' with the 'racist' *lán láng* 'our people', perhaps in part due to the linguistic shift from *l* [l] to *n* [n] in the second word *láng*, among other reasons. Lannang is also sometimes pronounced as [la nan] instead of [lan lan] and could be perceived as a different, distinct word because of this.

⁵ For a tabulated comparison of the Lannang identity to related or intersecting identities, consult the supplementary files uploaded here: <https://github.com/wdwgonzales/files>.

⁶ The term *lan lang* to mean 'our people' is used in other Hokkien-speaking diasporas. However, to my knowledge, the term 'Lannang' to refer to the hybrid culture, language, and its adopters is unique to the Philippines. In fact, some speakers say *dân láng* instead of *lán láng* to distinguish between this concept and the phrase 'our people'.

Lannang, suggesting that the Lannang identity could be viewed as a distinct, broader identity. Another argument for the use of ‘Lannang’ to refer to this identity is specificity. Throughout this paper, I am referring to a particular subset of mixed-heritage individuals – those with Southern Chinese heritage and who are associated with the 20th century wave of migration. Terms like ‘Tsinoy’ may be used to refer to this group, but can also, for example, be used to refer to individuals with Filipino and Northern Chinese heritage – individuals who do not identify as Lannang.

Moving forward, with this definition, I should note that ethnic attrition is an issue in contemporary Lannang society; that is, many individuals with Lannang heritage no longer identify as Lannang. One possible reason for this is the deliberate and complete assimilation of its members into Philippine society. Many individuals with Lannang heritage (particularly, ex-Lannangs) no longer identify as Lannang because they want to be only Filipinos, a choice that is understandable given the relative success of the Filipinization movement. Another reason for the ethnic attrition is because many self-claimed ‘authentic’ Lannangs (typically elders) often equate Lannang membership with proficiency and the frequent use of Chinese languages; they want to preserve ‘authentic’ Lannang culture, which they think only means being Chinese. Using Filipino languages and using ‘broken Hokkien’ (i.e. Hybrid Hokkien or Lánnang-uè) would often get a Lannang in trouble with the ‘authentic’ Lannangs because doing so is ‘not Chinese’ and ‘too Filipino’. Specifically, they would be called *huānágòng*, a term that is loosely used to refer to a stupid person based on their Filipino ethnicity (Chu, 2010). For this reason, many younger speakers – under high pressure to abandon, if not minimize, the use of Filipino languages and speak in ‘proper’ Hokkien (Uytanlet, 2014, p. 181) – have given up or retaliated by intentionally using Filipino languages. In many cases, they have also abandoned Lannang heritage altogether.

As discussed in this section, the Lannang identity is complex and appears to have many components. And these components seem to be linked to language. After explaining the methodology, I examine the different aspects of the Lannang identity.

4. Methodology

I adopt a qualitative approach in my investigation. Apart from analyzing public social media posts, I draw on ethnographic observations and audio-recorded interview data that I collected from 77 Lannangs between May 2018 and August 2019. Around two-thirds of these participants were recruited online via social media. The other third was recruited using the snowball (friend-of-a-friend) method of sampling. 37 of the Lannang participants identified as male while the other 40 identified as female; the age of the Lannangs ranged from 21 to 90 years old (Table 1). All participants identified as ‘Lannang’.

Table 1. Participant matrix

Gender	Decade Group								Total
	21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99	
Female	5	5	5	5	5	5	9	1	40
Male	6	5	5	5	6	6	4	0	37
Total	11	10	10	10	11	11	13	1	77

The interviews were 30 minutes on average and covered topics on the Lannang community, their experiences, and language.⁷ In analyzing and coding the interviews, I used a matrix with four categories – ‘Chinese-oriented’, ‘Filipino-oriented’, ‘Both Chinese- and Filipino-oriented’,

⁷ The list of interview questions (in English) can be found here: <https://github.com/wdwgonzales/files>.

and ‘Neither Chinese- nor Filipino-oriented’. Each interviewee may be coded in more than one column in the matrix. For instance, if at one point in the interview they say they are Filipino, I quote them in the Filipino-oriented column. If they change their orientation to Chinese mid-way, I quote them in the Chinese-oriented column. The excerpts from these interviews that I use in this paper are transcribed and presented using Lannang Orthography (The Lannang Archives, 2020). All translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

Apart from analyzing interviews, social media posts, and ethnographic observations, I also performed linear regression analyses. Some of the results are shown when pertinent to the qualitative discussion.

5. The four facets of the Lannang identity

I argue that the Lannang identity has four major components: (1) Completely Filipino, (2) Completely Chinese, (3) Both Chinese and Filipino, and (4) Neither Chinese nor Filipino. This section briefly explains each of these dynamic components and explores the conditions on which a participant would be more inclined to orient as one of these over the others.

5.1 Completely Filipino

One situation in which the Lannangs orient completely as Filipino is when they are in the company of Filipinos, specifically to establish rapport and to ‘blend in’. The Lannangs do not necessarily have to interact with the Filipinos to do so, but the likelihood of attempting to stress their Filipino-ness increases when they interact with them. This is captured in (1a), where the speaker, in response to the question of whether or not they identify as Filipino, notes asserting their Filipino-ness when trying to ‘blend in’ in a market that is Filipino-dominant.

(1a) *Tsî si khuâ hîge tsienghiêng, na guâ khi tshaîtshi... lang kông dî sî huîdîpîn láng, guâ kông hò. guâ tsitâ-â tshûtsî. guâ ân tsiá tuahàn.*

‘It depends on the situation. If I go to the market and people ask me if I am Filipino, I say yes. I was born and raised here.’

(PC0044: Female, 63 y/o, teacher, Hokkien/Lánnang-uè)⁸

Lannangs also position themselves as Filipino to avoid being mis-identified by Filipinos as a Mainland Chinese (henceforth, Mainlanders). During my interviews, most of the Lannangs had negative attitudes towards the Mainlander group – a group that consists of new Southern Chinese immigrants and temporary workers from other parts of China. Many perceived the Mainlanders as uncultured and disrespectful to locals; they explicitly tried to distance themselves from the group, claiming that they are not like them. However, despite their stance, many of the Filipinos tend to lump the Lannangs with the Mainlanders (Figure 1), most likely based on their common phenotypical characteristics. Some Filipinos do acknowledge the distinction between Lannang and Mainlander, but most Filipinos still tend to conflate both groups. To avoid being considered by the Filipinos as a Mainlander, many Lannangs resort to identifying as Filipino explicitly (1b).

⁸ At the sentence level, it is sometimes hard to distinguish between Lánnang-uè and Hokkien because Lánnang-uè occasionally features clauses with no overt English or Tagalog elements, particularly in shorter clauses.

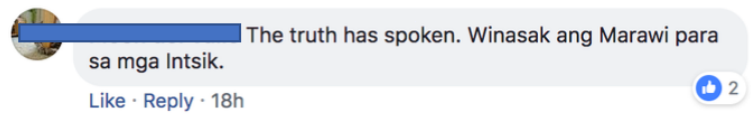


Figure 1. A Facebook post in August 15, 2018 featuring the Filipino-Chinese (Lannangs), commented by an individual: ‘The truth has spoken. Marawi was destroyed for the Chinese.’

- (1b) *Filipino priority kasí na dí sêh Chinêse ó, e khâ hó misinterprêrê bá na paláng thiãtioh Chinêse hó ín shusêh Taĩdiók e láng kô....*
 ‘Being a Filipino is a priority because if you say Chinese, others would misinterpret it. Others would hear ‘Chinese’ and think you’re someone from the Mainland.’
 (PC0114: Male, 34 y/o, manager, Lánnang-uè)

Yet another situation in which Lannangs align with Filipinos is when they describe their Filipino upbringing to individuals who are not aware of it. As mentioned in Section 3, most if not all Lannangs have spent most of their lives in the Philippines. When their Filipino-ness is questioned, many would often bring up their Filipino citizenship (if they have one) (1c) and state that they were born and raised in the country. They would orient as completely Filipino and conceal their Chinese-ness. The following is a response to the question: ‘If someone says you are Chinese, what will you tell them?’.

- (1c) *Guâ sī ân tsiá huĩdĩpĩn tshũtsì e a... guâ ũ huĩtsíp*
 ‘I was born in the Philippines and I have Filipino citizenship.’
 (PC0119: Female, 76 y/o, translator, Hokkien/ Lánnang-uè)

5.2 Completely Chinese

83.7% of the Lannangs who provided citizenship information (n = 37) have Filipino citizenship. Yet, in the right conditions, many of them would conceal their Filipino-ness and orient completely as Chinese. Many Lannangs, especially those with mixed race, would often be tagged by other community members as ‘less Lannang’. Some of them noted that their ‘pure’ Chinese Lannang classmates would often discriminate against them and treat them differently. This is because having a mixed ancestry, for many Lannangs, has negative connotations. As a result, these ‘mixed-blood’ respondents would often conceal their true ancestry and present themselves as Chinese.

These ‘racist’ tendencies towards individuals with mixed ancestry is a common theme in some of the interviews. For example, the speaker in (2a) – in a response to the question ‘Do you identify as Filipino-Chinese (a type of Lannang) or Chinese?’ – resorted to shifting from a mixed identity to a completely Chinese one during the interview. Instead of saying that they are Filipino-Chinese, they denied it and choose the option ‘Chinese’. They did this because they wanted to avoid being tagged as ‘mixed-blood’ and to align themselves with the

majority Lannangs who claim to have a purer Chinese ancestral lineage. Positioning themselves as Chinese, for them, helps resolve any ambiguity that their phenotypical characteristics and current performance (e.g. language use) present, making them more ‘authentic’ Lannangs.

- (2a) *Yá khangkhô identify as Fil-Chì kasî tsiá e lánng e identify dí as tshûtsî-â là; guá e hiau kông huĩdĩpĩn-uè í khâ síong siusêh ânĩ ã.*
‘It is hard to identify as Filipino-Chinese [Lannang] because the people here will identify you as mixed-blood. I can speak Filipino and they will think it all the more.’
(PC0090: Female, 55 y/o, manager, Lánngang-uè)

Sometimes the Lannangs want to be treated with more respect, in which case many would orient themselves as Chinese. In (2b), the interviewee was presented with a choice – Chinese or Filipino – and was asked to justify it. They said that positioning themselves as Chinese commands more respect from Filipinos than orienting themselves as Filipino.

- (2b) *Guá khâ ái tsuê Tiōngkôkláng ĩnwĩ Huĩdĩpĩn lánng khâ khuá dí u lesò.*
‘I would rather be Chinese because Filipinos would look at you with more respect.’
(PC0070: Male, 28 y/o, pastor, Hokkien/ Lánngang-uè)

The Lannangs also assert their Chinese-ness when talking about Mainland China’s accomplishments (e.g. 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing or about the fast growth of China’s economy (2c)). Note that they only do this when discussing the positive accomplishments of China. They notably distance themselves from their Chinese identity when discussing events involving the Mainlanders that tarnish the reputation of the Lannang community (e.g. drugs and gambling).

- (2c) *Dí ē feèl proúd na ĩn-e industry ĩn e thaulò yá gaú*
‘You will feel proud that their [China’s] industry and employer is really good.’
(PC0014: Female, 51 y/o, housewife, Lánngang-uè)

Although many Lannangs have negative sentiments towards the Mainlanders, this does not mean that there is no contact between both groups. The Lannangs interact with them, such as in travel or when conducting business with them, for example. In cases where they do, the Lannangs orient themselves as Chinese to establish rapport with their group, highlighting similarities between them (2d).

- (2d) *Guá na ti nánng e sótsaĩ.. guá e kông guá sī nánng...*
‘If I am in a place with many Chinese, I will say I am Chinese’
(PC0124: Female, 86 y/o, retiree, Hokkien/Lánngang-uè)

5.3 Both Chinese and Filipino

In addition to identifying only as Filipino or just Chinese, many Lannangs also assert that they are both Chinese and Filipino. This notion of individuals having more than one identity simultaneously has been studied extensively by Woolard (1998) through her framework of “simultaneity” as a strategy in multilingualism (p. 3). Woolard states that individuals who have more than one identity available for claiming do not need to choose one over the other(s). Specifically, she argues that an individual can simultaneously lay claim to both (or all) identities as long as the identities are accessible, inhabitable, and desirable to them. As an example, they note how second-generation Catalans of “Castilian-speaking immigrant

origins” (p. 21) in Catalonia – a region that is politically independent from Spain – embrace both Castilian and Catalan identities despite integration to Catalan society. This is because both identities are valuable to them, apart from being available for them to claim and perform.

This notion of “simultaneous identities” (Woolard, 1998, p. 20) seems to also apply to the Lannangs. Many Lannangs would publicly claim both Chinese and Filipino identities not only because they are available for claiming (due to their Filipino/Chinese citizenship and race, for example), but because being Chinese and Filipino each has its desirable characteristics. In other words, the Lannangs would sometimes simultaneously hold on to both identities because both identities complement each other. The simultaneity or being *both* Chinese and Filipino contrasts the previous subsections where the situation calls for the suppression of one identity in favor of the other.

One situation where the Lannangs would simultaneously stress their Chinese and Filipino heritage would be one where they are told to identify what makes them distinct from Filipinos and Mainlanders. The Lannangs said that being both Filipino and Chinese allows them to draw from the positive aspects of both cultures and leaving negative ones behind, allowing them to be distinctively better than the two groups (3a and 3b).

- (3a) *Tiōngkôkláng ũ ín e hôtshù ... Huĩdĩpĩnláng ũ ín ē hôtshù ; Tiōngkôkláng khâ siong khâ u tsí, Huĩdĩpĩnláng khâ ... tageláng tsĩn khâlan piēng-iũ.. khâ sãthià.*
‘The Chinese have their benefits, the Filipinos have theirs too. The Chinese typically have more money and the Filipinos are more friendly.’
(PC0055: Female, 85 y/o, retiree teacher, Hokkien/Lánnang-uè)

- (3b) *nân u bêst of both wôrlds kô... shiōng hô e kuāndiàm... hapsuê tsigé ... tsĩn okày la.*
‘We have the best of both worlds. Combined together, It’s really good!’
(PC0112: Male, 43 y/o, entrepreneur, Lánnang-uè)

The Lannangs would also assert their mixed Chinese and Filipino heritage when they want to appeal more to Filipinos but also maintain some of their Chinese-ness. In (3c), for instance, the Lannang speaker reported having pure Chinese ancestry but intentionally deceived the Filipinos, saying that they are both Filipino and Chinese, with the hopes of the Filipinos perceiving them as better than those who are ‘pure’ Chinese.

- (3c) *Guâ tākmaĩ phièn in kông guâ sī tshûtsîyâ, na guâ kông guâ sī tshûtsîyâ huānâ pārang e khâ thià gua.*
‘I always lie and say I am half-Chinese and half-Filipino. If I say that, the Filipinos will love me.’
(PC0122: Female, 82 y/o, retiree, Lánnang-uè)

5.4 Neither Chinese nor Filipino

Being neither Filipino nor Chinese is another component of the Lannang identity. In many cases, the Lannangs would *neither* acknowledge being Filipino nor Chinese. This contrasts the notion of being *both* Chinese and Filipino where the Lannangs acknowledge their Filipino-ness and Chinese-ness simultaneously and publicly. Distinguishing between these two components – *both* Chinese and Filipino vs. *neither* Chinese nor Filipino – is important because of its implications to the relationship between language and identity, which will be made clear later. Briefly, it is important to do so because the Lannangs can use mutually exclusive linguistic resources to index the ‘both’ and ‘neither’ components of their Lannang identity (e.g. code-switching to index ‘both’, not ‘neither’).

Now, why would a Lannang refuse to orient as Filipino or Chinese? Distancing themselves from Chinese and Filipino groups is a strong motivation. Many participants claimed being discriminated against by both the Mainlanders and Filipinos. A notable number of Mainlanders would call them ‘too Filipino’ based on their phenotypical characteristics (especially for those with mixed ancestry) and foreign lifestyle, while many Filipinos would refer to them as ‘too Chinese’ for the same reasons (4b and 4c). Caught in between being Chinese and Filipino (4c), many Lannangs are forced to distance themselves from both groups and orient themselves as belonging to neither group.

- (4b) *Guā bō huāt thāng sēh ... guā bō huāt thāng kuī Tiōngkôkláng ĩnwī kūmpūn ó, Tiōngkôk bo siēngdīn guā sī Tiōngkôkláng ā...ī kiō sēh huīhuā lo. Huānā lò. My generation, yakō bō siēngdīn guā sī Huanā là.*
I can’t really say. I can’t choose to be a Chinese because the Chinese don’t regard me as one of their own. They say I am Filipinized. A Filipino already. My generation does not recognize being a Filipino [either].’
(PC0138: Male, 70 y/o, businessman, Lánang-uè)

- (4c) *Nán khâlang tiaū lê puā không tiōng. ũmtsāi-iā guā sī Huīdīpīnláng āsī Tiōngkôkláng... Taīdiók e láng khuā guā sī Huānā là. Tsitāh Huānā khuā guā sī lánáng là. Tsia e láng kā dī kōng "intsik yun ah"; Taīdiók khuā dân tsuē ō sō sō ... khuā dân tsuē Huānā. Paláng kōng guā sī yayá.*
‘We are like caught in between. We don’t know if we are Filipino or Chinese...The Mainland Chinese regard me as Filipino. Here, the Filipinos say I am Chinese. They would say, that you’re a Chinese. The Mainlanders would say we are too black, regarding us as Filipinos. They even said that I was a domestic helper.’
(PC0124: Female, 86 y/o, retiree, Lánang-uè)

There is another scenario where the Lannangs avoid orienting as Filipino or Chinese. This is when they are unable to definitively pick a side (i.e. Filipino vs. Chinese). A quintessential example would be the West Philippine Sea/South China Sea dispute. Often, the Lannangs would be forced to choose a side. Many would side with the Filipinos but there are those who are unable to choose a side based on their political stance, ancestry and/or cultural upbringing. These individuals also choose to align as neither Chinese nor Filipino despite not being othered, as in the previous scenario (4d and 4e).

- (4d) *Guā bo huāt thang choōse between Filipino and Chinese ...ĩnwī gún thuēh tiōh Filipinò ē tradiōns,...Nánáng huīh.*
‘I can’t choose between Filipino and Chinese because we got Filipino traditions and Chinese blood.’
(PC0115: Female, 38 y/o, undisclosed, Lánang-uè-English codeswitching)
- (4e) *Guā kāmāk guā sī lánáng bukuò guā māsī accustomed to the Filipino culturè... so I identify myself as neither Chinese nor Filipino.*
‘I feel that I am Chinese but am accustomed to the Filipino culture. So, I identify myself as neither Chinese nor Filipino.’
(PC0113: Female, 31 y/o, manager, Lánang-uè-English codeswitching)

6. Language and the Lannang identity: A closer look

As shown earlier, language and the Lannang identity are intimately connected. The link between the two is clear in my observations of and interviews with the Lannangs, who drew

on their linguistic repertoire to describe and justify their identity as a Lannang. Some Lannangs report switching between languages in specific scenarios to navigate the Lannang identity.

6.1 Language as an index of the Lannang identity

Many of the Lannangs cited their broad linguistic repertoire or their ability to speak in different languages as the key characteristic of their identity. They use their multilingualism as an attribute that distinguishes them from non-Lannang groups like the Mainlanders and the Filipinos. In (5a), for example, a Lannang speaker indicates that being a Lannang entails fluency in at least four languages – English, Lánnang-uè, Tagalog, and Mandarin. They view the ability to adapt to different cultures quicker and multilingualism as an asset of the Lannang community. Knowing a broad set of languages, for instance, allows one to be more aware of their surroundings in case non-Lannang people become hostile to them (5b). This observation echoes the results of Chuaunsu's (1989) study on the speech communication patterns of the Manila Lannangs, where she found correlations between multilingualism and the Lannang identity.

- (5a) *Dân e good poiñts si dân u huât thang kông four languages minimùm... ãn TDK si only òne.... ãn bue reách hîge levèl of fluency. Dân tsiá khâ kîn adâpt to other languâges and adapting two culturês.*
'Our advantage is that we can speak at least four languages. The Mainlanders only know one. They cannot reach the level of fluency we have. We tend to adapt to other languages and cultures faster.'
(PC0070: Male, 28, pastor, Lánnang-uè)
- (5b) *Lân e láng tìoh u advantâge... no matter hòw dî leàrn Chinêse, dî tìoh leàrn Filipinò, Bisayâ, Ilonggò... At lêast na u láng mà di ó, dî e biengpiak láng...*
'Our people have the advantage. Even if you have learned Chinese, you should also learn Filipino, Visayan, Hiligaynon. At least when someone scolds you [in the local languages], you can understand.'
(PC0134: Male, 65, factory staff, Lánnang-uè)

Among the many languages that they speak, Hokkien is regarded by many Lannangs as the ancestral language. Despite knowing several languages, the Lannangs believe in maintaining it to preserve their Chinese-ness, as part of being a Lannang (5c). Lannang parents would send their children to Lannang schools hoping that their children would acquire Hokkien and not forget their Chinese heritage (Uytanlet, 2014, p. 181). Some families would also enforce the use of Hokkien in the house. In evangelical churches, Hokkien is still the preferred medium of communication for gatherings, especially in those that cater to older Lannangs: hymns are sung in Hokkien, for example. Hokkien is also reported to be enforced in other Chinese traditions, such as in *Kaŭkâh* 'Chinese opera', funeral and temple rituals, as well as lineage or clan association meetings (Nicolas, 2016). Hokkien, as observed, is associated with Chinese-ness, and subsequently, the Lannang identity.

- (5c) *Pag dî ái iêng Huaná-uè... Dân mǎng buekî dân-ē Tiōngkók-uè. Í talagà sī connectêd talagà to tsíge sê ng láng.*
'If you like using Filipino, you should not forget Chinese (Hokkien, etc.). It is really connected to our group of people.'
(PC0016: Male, 26, architect, Lánnang-uè)

Tagalog and other Philippine languages can also be used to embody (part of) the Lannang identity, due to its associations with Filipino-ness. To reiterate, the Mainlanders and the Lannangs are often conflated by the Filipinos as a Chinese group because they share the same phenotypical characteristics. One way the Lannangs distinguish themselves from the Mainlanders is to claim fluency in a local language, such as Tagalog for Manila. In (5d), for example, a speaker is asked to pinpoint differences between the Lannangs and the Mainlanders. As shown, the speaker was quick to capitalize on their proficiency of Tagalog.

(5d) *Taidiokláng bue hiau kóng Tagalóg ê. Tagalóg si buē sún là putol-putól kô. Dân tsia̍puntuè, í lê kóng Tagalóg e khâ hōsè.*

‘The Mainlanders don’t know how to speak Tagalog. Their Tagalog is choppy. The Tagalog of locals [the Lannangs] is better.

(PC0001: Male, 59 y/o, pastor, Lánnang-uè)

While Hokkien and Tagalog are the primary languages to index the Chinese-ness and Filipino-ness of the Lannang identity, respectively, Lánnang-uè – a mixed language that systematically incorporates Hokkien, Tagalog, English, and Mandarin (Gonzales, 2018) – is commonly cited as a language that reflects the ‘neither Chinese nor Filipino’ aspect of their Lannang identity. Some Lannangs do not acknowledge its existence as a language, claiming that it is a random mix of the four languages, with Hokkien as the base. Even if they regard it as part of their Lannang identity, a number of Lannangs would also say that it is a result of failure to acquire Hokkien (5e).

(5e) *Sālāmtshām e Hōkkiên-uè si pârt ng guâ e identity... pērō sī bō choice.*

‘Mixed Hokkien [Lánnang-uè] is part of my identity, but I don’t have a choice.’

(PC0014: Female, 51 y/o, housewife, Lánnang-uè)

Lánnang-uè is, however, regarded by many as a distinct, systematic in-group language, especially by those who explicitly identify as Lannang ($\beta = 0.36$, $SD = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$).⁹ Those who orient as Lannang typically regard it as a prestigious language in the community. Many Lannangs, especially those who are younger ($\beta = -0.01$, $SD = 0.005$, $p < 0.05$),¹⁰ are also proud of it (5f and Figure 5).

(5f) *It emphasizes the halohalo culture ... na-eemphasize yung pagka-Chinese mo, pagka-Filipino mo and somewhere else in between. is still important because yun yung nature natin... origin natin sa person... nakakaproud ba kung saan ka galing.*

‘It [Lánnang-uè] emphasizes the mixed culture – your Chinese-ness, Filipino-ness and in between. [Lánnang-uè] is important because it is our nature. It makes me proud of where I come from.’

(PC0083: Male, 24 y/o, chef, English-Tagalog code-switching)

⁹ Linear regression, dependent variable: language/not a language; Predictors: Lannang, Filipino, Chinese orientation (from the interviews), age (old vs. young), gender (male vs. female)

¹⁰ Linear regression, dependent variable: pride of Lánnang-uè (7-point Likert scale); Predictors: age (continuous), gender (male vs. female)

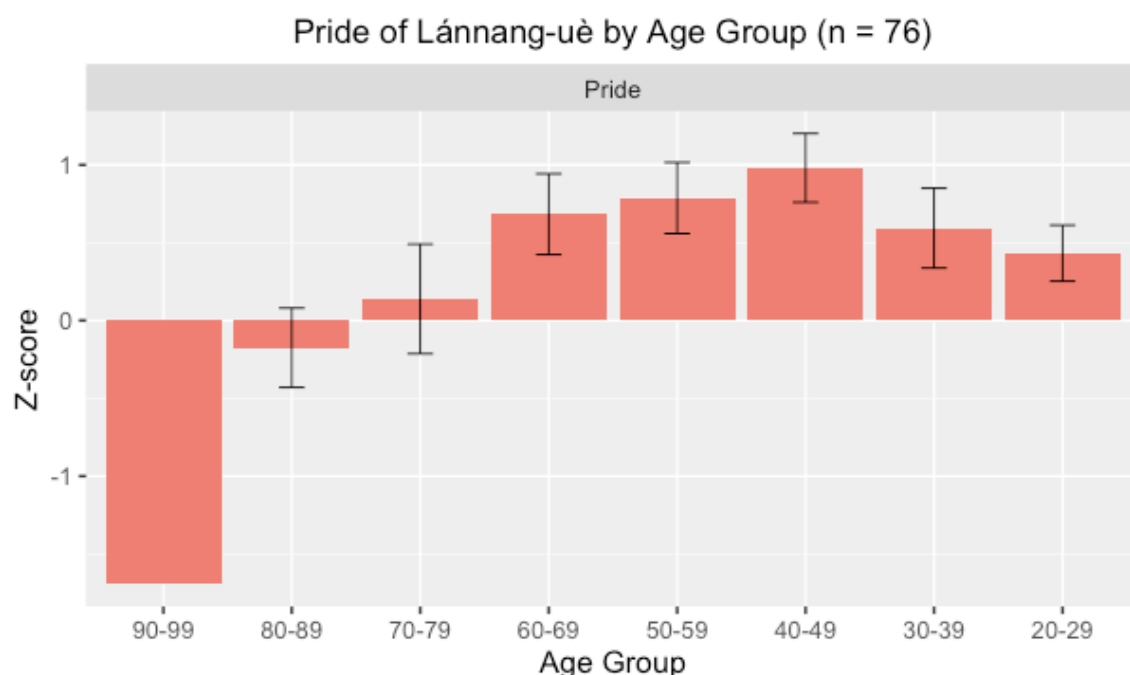


Figure 5. Pride towards Lánnang-uè on a 7-point Likert scale (z-scores, by age group, n = 77; higher z-scores indicate higher pride of Lánnang-uè, graph is mine)

In Chuaunsu's (1989, pp. 175–177) work, Lánnang-uè (Pilipino-Chinese code-switching in her terms) was reported to be used by Lannang young professionals and teenagers as a means to establish community-wide belonging and to avoid sounding “strange and alien” in the Lannang community. Little has changed thirty years after, where young professionals in particular still regard it as a language that began with them and a language that allows them to connect with other Lannangs (5g). In fact, Lánnang-uè is preferred by many over Hokkien as a language of in-group communication (5g). Evidence of this can be found in most of the examples in this paper, where speakers predominantly use Lánnang-uè to communicate with me, a Lannang, during the interviews. For some Lannangs, Lánnang-uè functions as a secret in-group language (5i).

(5g) *Tsap tshai lomì a . So hîge si guâ e generatiòn, guâ e pég lo kô... Guâ na kâp ín kong uè guâ e thiã hōsè la. Guâ bue left ôt. Kasí kông bue tui. Hîge wavelêngth khâ sáng â.*

‘Everything is mixed. This came from my generation [young generation]. If I talk with them, I can understand them. I won’t feel left out because [if I speak Hokkien], there would be miscommunication. The wavelength would not be the same.’

(PC0041: Female, 48 y/o, freelancer, Lánnang-uè)

(5h) *Hîge mîxed e language ... î tsigê sî tsîge community lo rîn ê. Na dân lê kong-uè piêntsuê yá phóthông lo kâyâ hîgé na dân ũhuâtthāng communicâte... khâ kín communicâte kâysâ hîge yá pùre e bá.*

‘The mixed language is part of our community. It is a common thing that we use to communicate better compared to the pure Hokkien.’

(PC0071: Female, 49, minister, Lánnang-uè)

- (5i) *Only the Chinese Filipino can understand the trilingual Chinese Filipino. Guà na kóng tampo Tagalôg, Iengbún, kap Lánnang-uè dī e bingpiak guà. Filipinò bue understând guà, Americàn bue understând guà, Taidiokláng ma thia bó dñ dība.*
 ‘Only the Lannangs can understand the trilingual Lannangs. If I speak a little bit of Tagalog, English, and Lánnang-uè, you [a Lannang] can understand me. Filipinos, Mainlanders, and Americans won’t understand me.
 (PC0005: Female, 46, professor, Lánnang-uè-English code-switching)

In general, I have shown how various languages can index Chinese-ness, Filipino-ness, and the quality of neither. Hokkien indexes the Chinese-ness of the Lannang identity whereas the local languages (in this case, Tagalog) indexes its Filipino aspect. Being neither Chinese nor Filipino, on the other hand, is primarily indexed by the mixed language Lánnang-uè.

6.2 Language as a tool to navigate the Lannang identity

Because languages such as Tagalog and Hokkien have indexical value, the Lannangs can use them as tools to present themselves as Chinese, Filipino, both, or neither, depending on the context and the interlocutor(s) (Figure 6). For instance, in Figure 6, I show that the ‘neither’ component of the Lannang identity is primarily indexed through the use of Lánnang-uè.

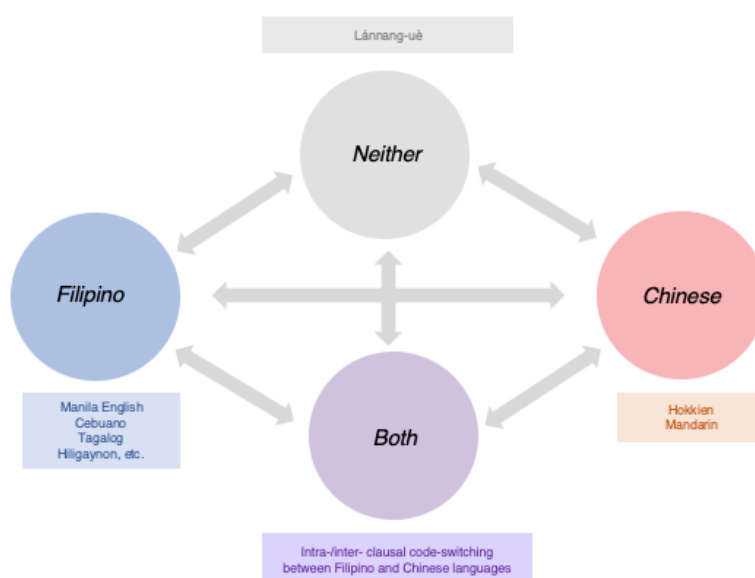


Figure 6. A model of the Lannang identity (circles indicate macro-identity components, boxes indicate main linguistic index/indices for each component, double-sided arrows indicate that speakers can switch from component X to Y, and vice versa)

As implied by the arrows in the figure, the Lannangs can code-switch from one language to other depending on the situation. This practice of code-switching has been described as an attribute of Lannangs as well (Chuaunsu, 1989; Gonzales, 2016; Zulueta, 2007).

To present themselves as Chinese, for example, the Lannangs switch from Lánnang-uè to Hokkien when conversing with new immigrants or Mainlanders with Hokkien heritage, in an effort to establish rapport with Mainlander friends, employees, or business partners, among others. This is exemplified in (6a), where a Lannang indicated that they actively switch Tagalog-sourced Lánnang-uè words with Hokkien words in conversations with Hokkien-heritage Mainlanders. In some cases, the Lannangs use Mandarin instead of Hokkien (e.g. to communicate with non-Hokkien mainlanders, etc.).

- (6a) *Dân lê kâp Taīdiōkláng kong-uè e sītsùn ... kóng ‘pero’ dī kuakîn uā ‘tansi’ ...*
 ‘When we talk with Mainlanders, we quickly change the [Hokkien] word *tansi* ‘but’ with the [Lannang] word *pero* ‘but’.
 (PC019: Female, 76 y/o, translator, Hokkien/Lánnang-uè)

To orient themselves as Filipino, the Lannangs can deliberately choose not to use ‘Chinese-sounding’ languages to conceal their Chinese-ness with a different audience. The Lannangs, for instance, may intentionally not use Hokkien and Lánnang-uè, the latter of which can be perceived to have a phonology that is similar to Hokkien and other Chinese languages on the surface. They do this, for example, when they are in small groups (or alone) and with Filipinos. According to some participants, such as the one in (6b), using Lánnang-uè and Hokkien could trigger a hostile response from the Filipinos. Some Lannangs in my interviews have claimed that Filipinos would call them derogatory names upon hearing them use their languages and said that they refuse to use Hokkien and Lánnang-uè outside.

- (6b) *Tiēngpaī suēhàn gūn nā tshûkī e sí kô ó, ūmká kóng Lánnang-uè ...kasī dī na tshûkī...Huīdīpīn yá paihuá lâ hīge tiámstsiēng. Í na thiānn tiōh dī kóng Lánnang-uè í e ka dī kóng ‘ching chong ching chong’ ânī kô.*
 ‘When I was small and wanted to go out, I don’t dare use Lánnang-uè. Because if the Filipinos heard you, they would call you ‘ching chong ching chong’, like that.’
 (PC0108: Female, 77 y/o, retiree, Lánnang-uè)

The Lannangs can also intentionally use the regional languages like Tagalog to stress the Filipino aspect of their Lannang identity. They can also use varieties of Philippine English such as ‘mainstream’ Manila English to index (aspects or “characteristics” of) Filipino-ness (Eckert, 2008, p. 453; Gonzales, 2017; Gonzales and Hiramoto, 2020).

In my ethnographic work, I have observed many Lannangs switching from a Chinese-sounding language to a historically indigenous language or Philippine variety to blend in and let nearby Filipinos know that they share the same culture as them. For example, in a plane trip full of Filipinos, I noticed my Lannang friend who is knowledgeable in Mandarin intentionally refusing to speak in Mandarin to a Mainlander passenger who wanted to get their reserved seating without permission. Instead of using Mandarin, they used a local variety of English, saying that it presents them as Filipino. When asked further how exactly ‘Filipino’ it is, they said that it evokes the sense of being ‘local’, ‘respectful’, and ‘not condescending’. Using Eckert’s (2008) notion of the indexical field, this suggests that the Lannang is using the local English to index characteristics of Filipino-ness, rather than directly Filipino-ness itself. The passenger also mentioned that Mandarin is too ‘Chinese’ because it can be perceived to be ‘impolite-sounding’, ‘unrefined’, and ‘Chink’. If Mandarin were to be used, they said it might also evoke unintended effects of camaraderie between them and the passenger, which they did not want because they were trying to distance themselves from the Chinese Mainlander passenger.

Another example is a scenario in a marketplace run by Chinese-employed Filipinos from different parts of the Philippines. A female 63-year old Lannang explicitly reported going to this marketplace and meeting a vendor from Central Philippines, where Bikol and Hiligaynon are spoken. She claimed to switch from Hokkien to Hiligaynon and Bikol to let the Filipino vendor know that they are both alike (6c).

- (6c) *Phílun gūn tī Dīvīsōrià guâ tsâ sêh "tsī niâ bo phaīkhua nâ" Huānâ e khuâ gūn kóng sêh "intsik pala". Guâ tsâ sêh "taga saan ka? ilonggo da-ay ilonggo naman parang*

ga... mag-usap kita ibara-barato mo ini ". Guâ tū kóng in-e uè .. î buē kìdit lo...

Huahî... The secret is to integrate myself

‘For example, when I am in Divisoria, I would say, *tsi nia bo phaikhua na* [Hokkien] ‘this shirt is not bad’. The Filipinos would say, “She’s Chinese”. And then I would say, *taga saan ka? Ilonggo...* [Hiligaynon] ‘You’re also Ilonggo. Let’s talk. Can we make this cheaper?’ If I speak their language, they would forget I’m Chinese and be happy. The secret is to integrate myself.’

(PC0133: Female, 63 y/o, surgeon, Hokkien/Lánnang-uè-Hiligaynon-English code-switching)

To appear as *both* Chinese and Filipino, the Lannangs typically resort to code-switching between Lannang languages of Chinese and Filipino origin. Under Woolard’s (1998) framework, code-switching is a strategy that individuals use when they, at the point of utterance, simultaneously identify with more than one social identity. For instance, a 70-year old Lannang pastor who identifies as both Chinese and Filipino, preaching to an audience with Filipino and Lannangs, switched from English to Hokkien and back and forth to show the audience that they are both Chinese and Filipino (6d). This code-switching can be intra-clausal (e.g. phrases, words), as is the case of this example, or inter-clausal.

(6d) *The word for lamb is **iúnn** ‘lamb’.*

(ethnographic notes, Male, 70 y/o, pastor, English-Hokkien code-switching)

To stress that they are neither Chinese nor Filipino, many Lannangs use Lánnang-uè, a language that neither the Mainlanders nor the Filipinos speak. Many of them use it deliberately to demarcate ethnic boundaries between them and the other group, particularly in situations where the Lannangs form a group that is not at threat of being discriminated in that particular context. For instance, in (6e), a Lannang narrates how her kids attended a religious conference for Christian evangelism that is open to anyone. In this context, the Lannang group is not at threat of being othered by the Filipinos. The group of Lannang kids simply did not want to associate with the Filipino group and switched from Tagalog to Lánnang-uè to draw the boundaries between them and the Filipinos (6e). This act of othering the Filipinos through language, which may be deliberate in this scenario but not in others, could also stem from the fact that the Lannangs feel more comfortable with individuals who have the same background as them – including speaking Lánnang-uè (6f).

(6e) *Guâ kâp tsikuâ gīnnâ khî tshāmkā tsīgē missiòn e conferēnce... Ín tū yá aī kóng Tagalóg ... So, guâ lēh shiūnn in yā aī kiaū huīlīpīnláng adapt. Eh? Bō nâ. Bō bēh kiau î tsuē tsi-è... Diaū in hūdiēnkān lēh kōng Lánnang-uè.*

‘I was with some kids [9-12 years old] attending a missions conference. They loved speaking in Tagalog, so I thought they would easily adapt to the Filipinos. But they did not. They did not want to be with the Filipinos. And then they would suddenly use Lánnang-uè.’

(PC0116: Female, 55 y/o, pastor, Lánnang-uè)

(6f) *Guâ e khâ more comfortàble kâp Filipino-Chinēse kāysā Filipino Bastă ehiaú kōng Lánnang-uè guâ e khâ feèl more comfortablè a compared to Huīdīpīnláng.*

‘I am more comfortable with the Lannangs compared to the Filipinos. As long as they can speak Lánnang-uè, I feel more comfortable.’

(PC0001: Male, 59 y/o, pastor, Lánnang-uè)

7. Conclusion

This article has explored in depth four aspects of the Lannang identity: Chinese-ness, Filipino-ness, being both Chinese or Filipino, and being neither. Drawing on interview data, I identified the conditions in which a Lannang would be more likely to assert aspects of their identity. The observed fluidity and multifaceted-ness of the Lannang identity echo studies of 'Chinese' ethnicity in the context of the Philippines (Chu, 2010; Hau, 2014).

I have also investigated the relationship between the Lannang identity and language and shown that both are inextricably intertwined. I have specifically discussed how Hokkien, the regional languages (e.g. Tagalog, Philippine English, and Hiligaynon), and Lánnang-uè respectively index Chinese-ness, Filipino-ness, and being neither Chinese nor Filipino in the Lannang community. Given that certain languages in their repertoire have acquired indexical value, a Lannang may use these as tools to embody changes in their ethnic orientation, depending on the context and situation.

Overall, I argue that Lannang identity is multi-faceted, dynamic, and closely connected to language. What may appear as a paradox on the surface (i.e. being Chinese, Filipino, neither, and both) is resolved when one considers the Lannang identity as a broad 'macro-'identity that consists of all of these complementary, interacting parts – a truly hybrid identity whose components are constantly negotiated in various social contexts through language.

This article explores the nature of Lannang identity and accounts for how language and identity are connected. It is quite relevant to contemporary Philippine society, as the ethnic Lannang community is at risk of becoming dissolved, as mentioned at the outset of this paper. The process of cultural and language shaming – berating Lannangs for their frequent use of Filipino languages and 'improper' use of Hokkien/Mandarin to preserve 'authentic' Lannang (really Chinese) culture – can have negative effects on these Lannang-heritage individuals. As pointed out earlier, instead of the intended effect of encouraging these individuals to hold on their Lannang identity, criticizing the language use of the so-called 'in-authentic' Lannangs appear to have those (un)intended effects. It could cause them to either give up their 'in-authentic' Lannang identity or retaliate by opting to be only a Filipino. And for many, the best way to embody this stance is to intentionally use only languages that are not 'Chinese'. The intra-community othering described here may eventually result in the (unintended) abandonment of the Lannang identity and the demise of the hybrid-heritage Lannang community.

This paper has shown that 'Lannang-ness' is better conceptualized as having multiple, dynamic parts, rather than as having only one static component – 'Chinese-ness'. While the Lannang identity did indeed emerge from a 'Chinese' context and, historically, one's ability to speak Hokkien (Hau, 2014), it can change; it can evolve and result in different facets, as argued in this paper. Given the connections between language and identity, this means that languages other than Hokkien can be used to index the Lannang identity. Denying individuals with Lannang heritage their Lannang identity simply based on their choice to use the regional languages or even 'broken Hokkien' (Philippine Hybrid Hokkien or Lánnang-uè) may be problematic because using these languages is also an essential part of being a Lannang. To mitigate ethnic attrition in the Lannang community and help ensure the survival of the rich cultural heritage of the Lannangs, embracing the complexities of the Lannang identity and acknowledging the role languages other than Hokkien play in its characterization have become critical.

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