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Language Attitudes of Civil Servants in the Special Administrative Region of Macao

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied English

at the University of Macau

December 2010

Abstract of thesis entitled

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Submitted by Hao Chi Iok, Juddie (M-A4-5538-2) for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied English at the University of Macau in December 2010.

This study investigates the roles of Cantonese, Portuguese, Putonghua and English in the Macao government and civil servants' languages attitudes towards these languages ten years after the Handover in 1999. This is a questionnaire study involving a total of 55 civil servants from different government departments or bureaus and most of them joined the civil service after the Handover. A small scale follow-up interview was also conducted to investigate the possible reasons for respondents' evaluation. The interview data confirm the survey findings that respondents are inclined to all these languages in terms of instrumental motivations while they are positive to both Portuguese and Cantonese in integrative motivations. There are two significant findings. One, subjects show a positive attitude towards Portuguese although the majority of them cannot write or read Portuguese. Portuguese still enjoys a symbolic significance within the civil service today. Two, though Putonghua has become more and more important, it has not taken the place or the power of Cantonese in the government. It is simply rated as a language of communication.

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