



Challenging Linguistic Uniformity in Canada

The Case of the Chinese Diaspora in Vancouver, BC

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OVERVIEW

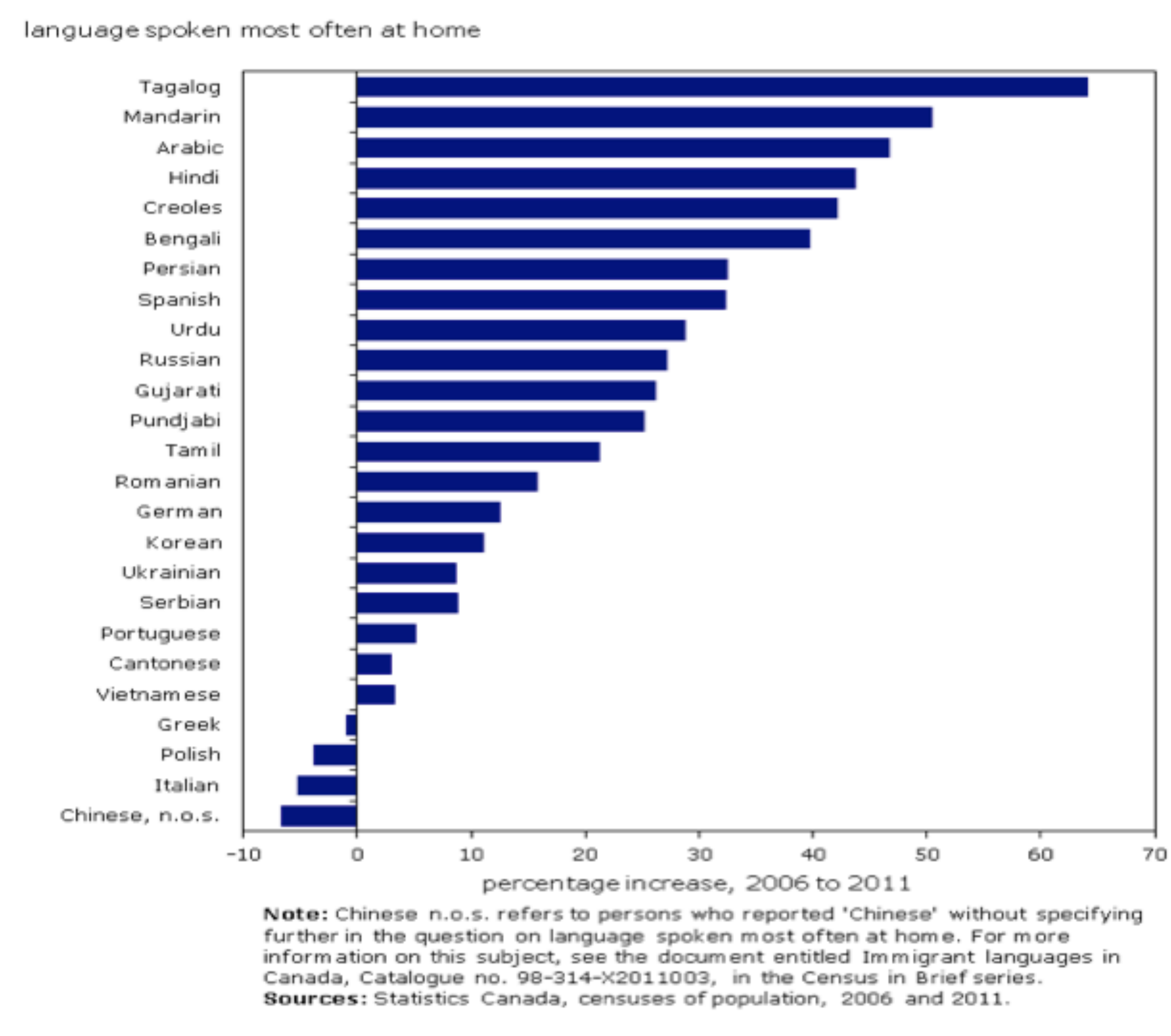
The current literature in migration studies argues that second and third generations of immigrants tend to lose their native language to adopt the language of the host society for economic, social and political reasons (Rudnyckyj 1983, Li 2003, Duff 2006). However, the current Chinese diaspora in Vancouver, BC, may prove this statement wrong.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

To demonstrate the limitations of this approach, by showing that shifting demographics and cultural traits have not only affected Canadian official bilingualism, but have also questioned our limited linguistic diversity.

Canada: Immigrant Languages Most Often Spoken at Home

Around 200 languages are spoken in Canada. 20.8% of the population, around 6.8 million, speak a language other than English or French.



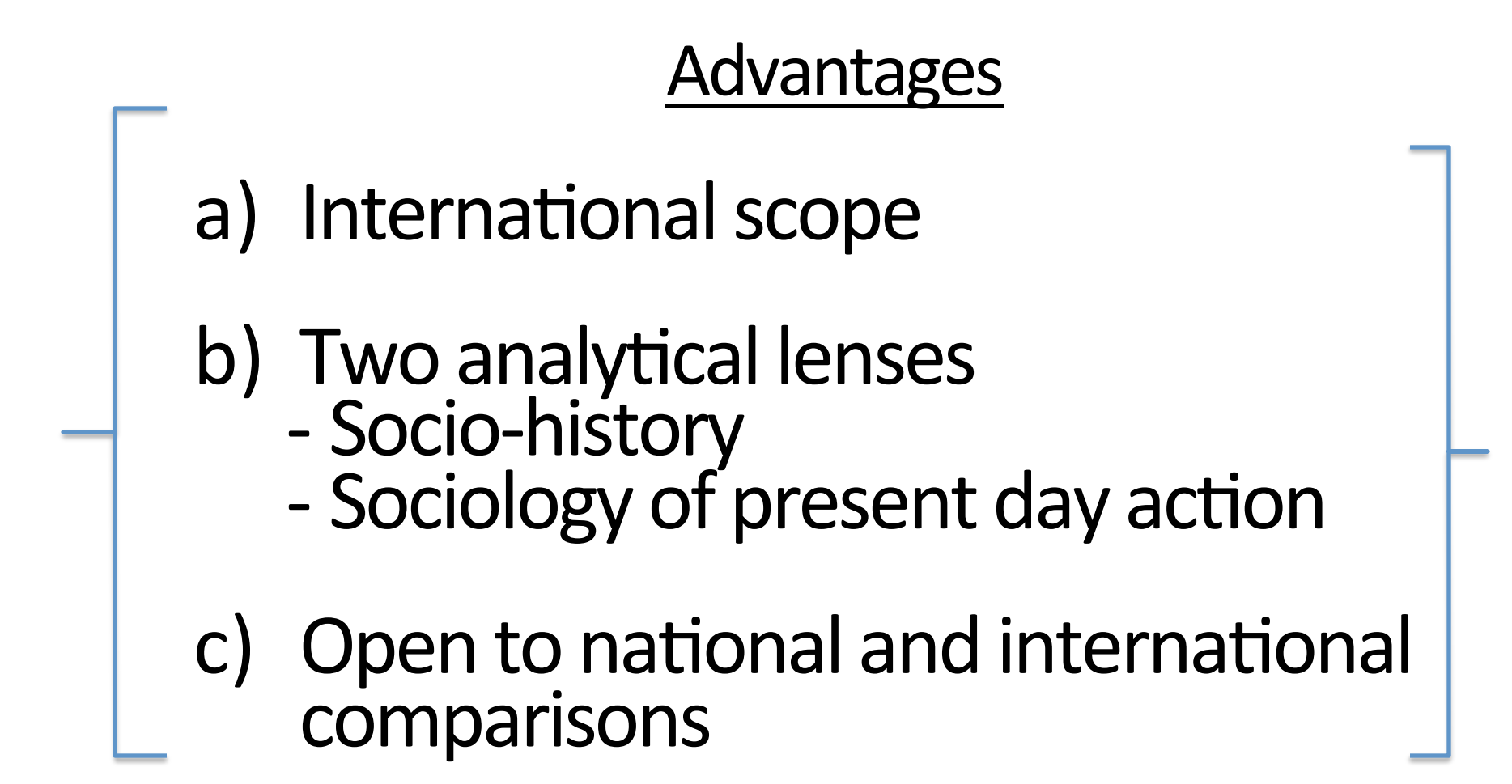
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2006 and 2011.

HYPOTHESIS

- Non-native Canadians may be able to pass on their mother tongue to their children.
- Canadians whose mother tongue is an official language may learn a non-official language.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Sociological approach to public action



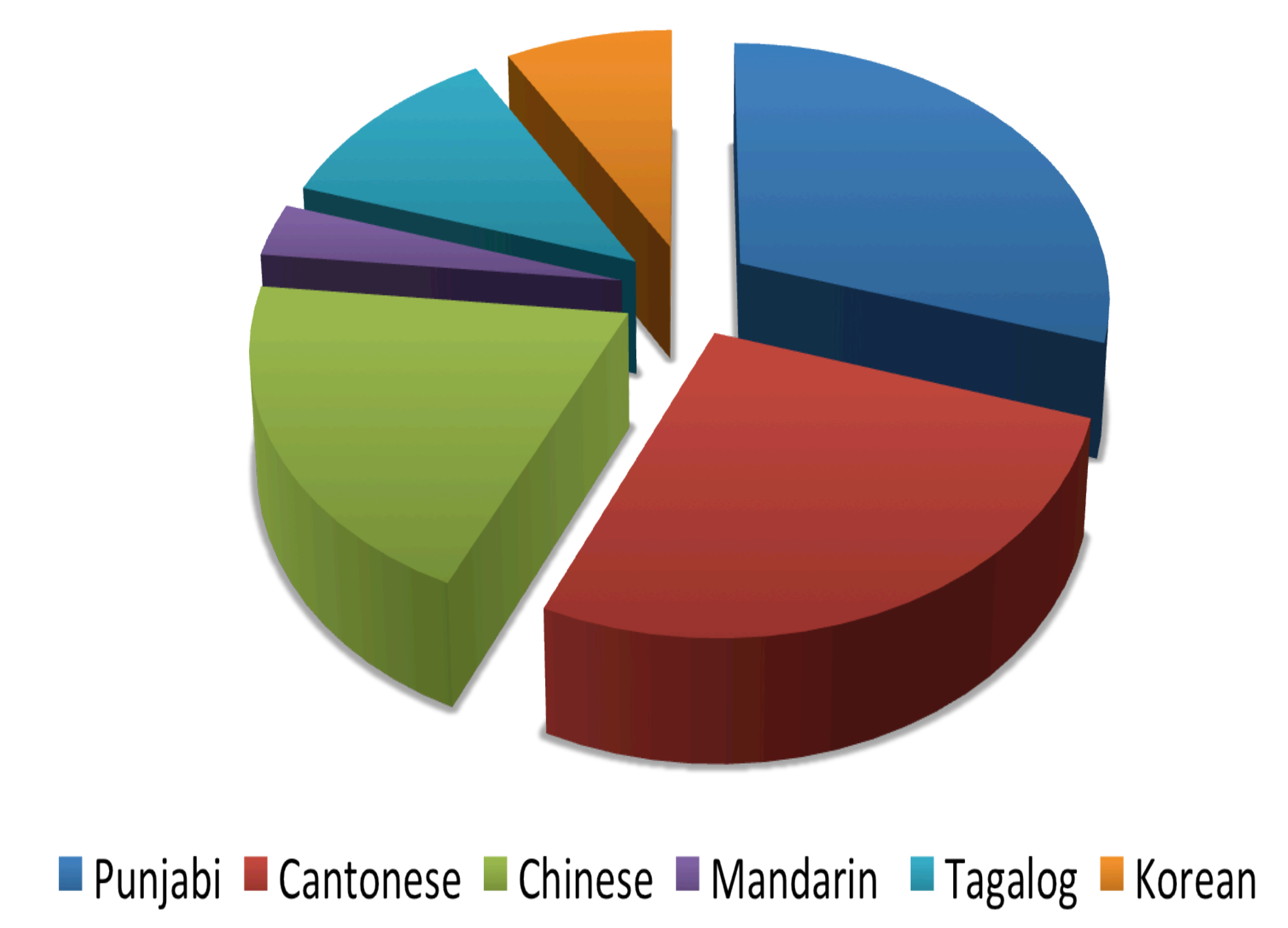
CASE STUDY

This research will focus on second and third generations of Canadian born children of Chinese origin in Vancouver. They tend to keep Mandarin and Cantonese as their first mother tongue, instead of leaving it to English.

Potential factors explaining this change in linguistic diversity will be examined, which will lead to a key question:

Is this socio-linguistic evolution restricted to one diaspora in a specific geographic context, or is it revealing a broader shift in Canadian society that can be observed in other groups and provinces?

Vancouver: Immigrant Languages Most Spoken at Home



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2011

Vancouver: Percentage of Chinese speaking homes increases as school grades progress

Grade	Home language is Chinese %	Canada is country of birth %
K	16	88
1-3	20	82
4-7	27	77
8-12	34	40
K-12	28	74

Source: District Reception and Placement Centre (DRPC) Vancouver, 2013

METHODOLOGY

(i) A qualitative analysis of scholarly, government and civil society documents and publications, including 1996 Census, 2001 Census, 2006 Census and the 2011 Census available from Statistics Canada on population, immigration, language diversity, language retention, and labor.

Objective: To understand how the practices, structures and representations of the Chinese diaspora and Canadian-born people in Vancouver have contributed to resisting linguistic conformity in Canada and promoting Mandarin and Cantonese as useful non-official languages.

(ii) Semi-structured interviews of key informants in several sectors. Interviewees will be selected using existing contacts, snowballing method and other qualitative research techniques.

Objective: To explore the factors leading to linguistic change in Vancouver, BC

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