

Keep Dialects Alive: Chinese Experience in Building **Dialect Archives**

YUJIAO DU (YUQIAO DU)

School of Information Management

Sun Yat-Sen University

E-mail: duyj7@mail2.sysu.edu.cn

中山大學
SUN YAT-SEN UNIVERSITY





CONTENTS



Background



Case of Zhejiang Province



Experience of Chinese Dialect Archiving



Summary



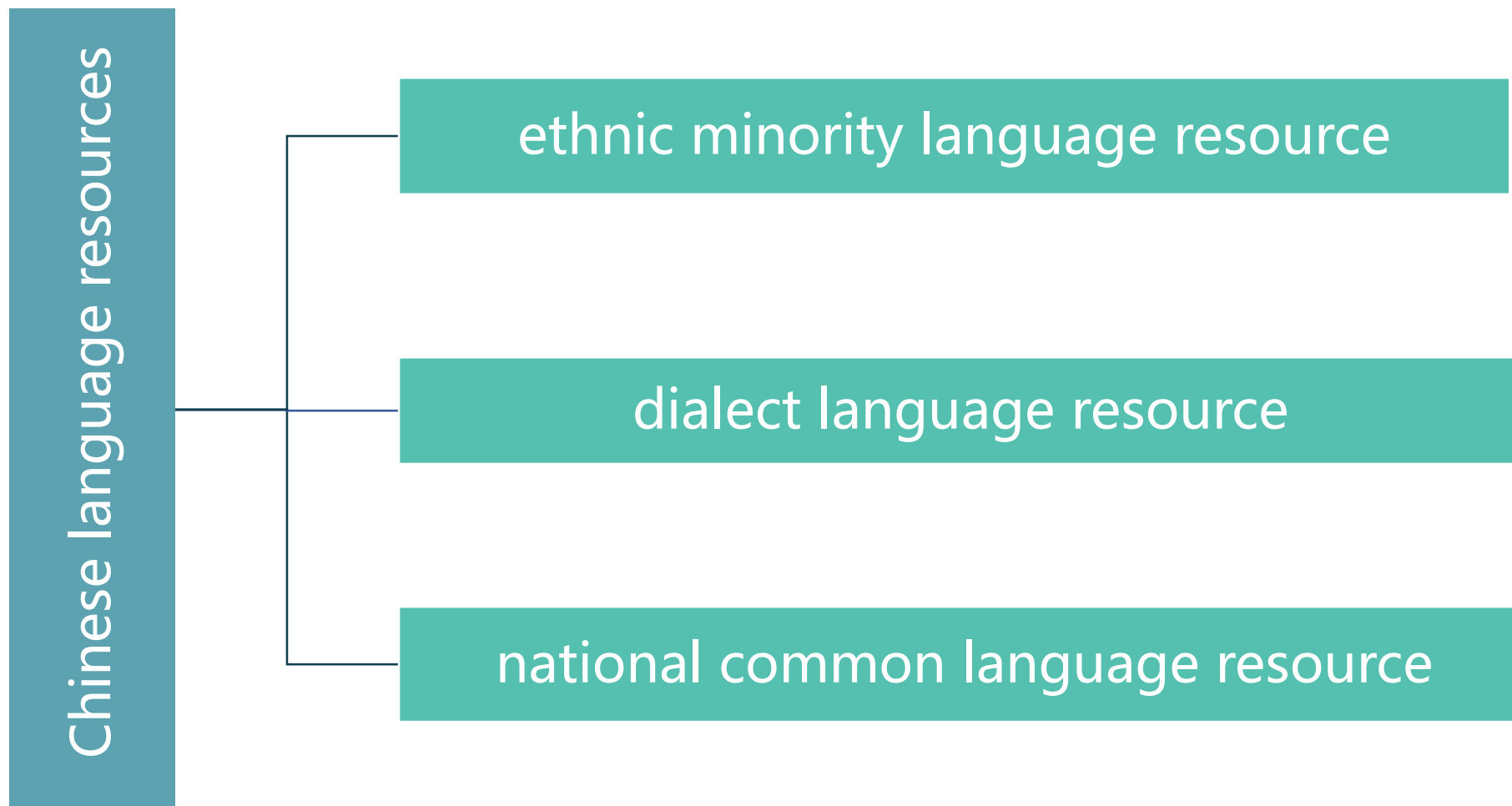
Background



Background



China is a multi-ethnic, multi-regional and multilingual country.





Background



In China, each region has more than one dialect and until now there is no authoritative statistics on the number of dialects. However, general speaking, there are 10 dialect distributions:

Mandarin Dialect Distribution

Jin Dialect Distribution

Wu Dialect Distribution

Min Dialect Distribution

Hakka Distribution

Cantonese Distribution

Xiang Dialect Distribution

Gan Dialect Distribution

Hui Dialect Distribution

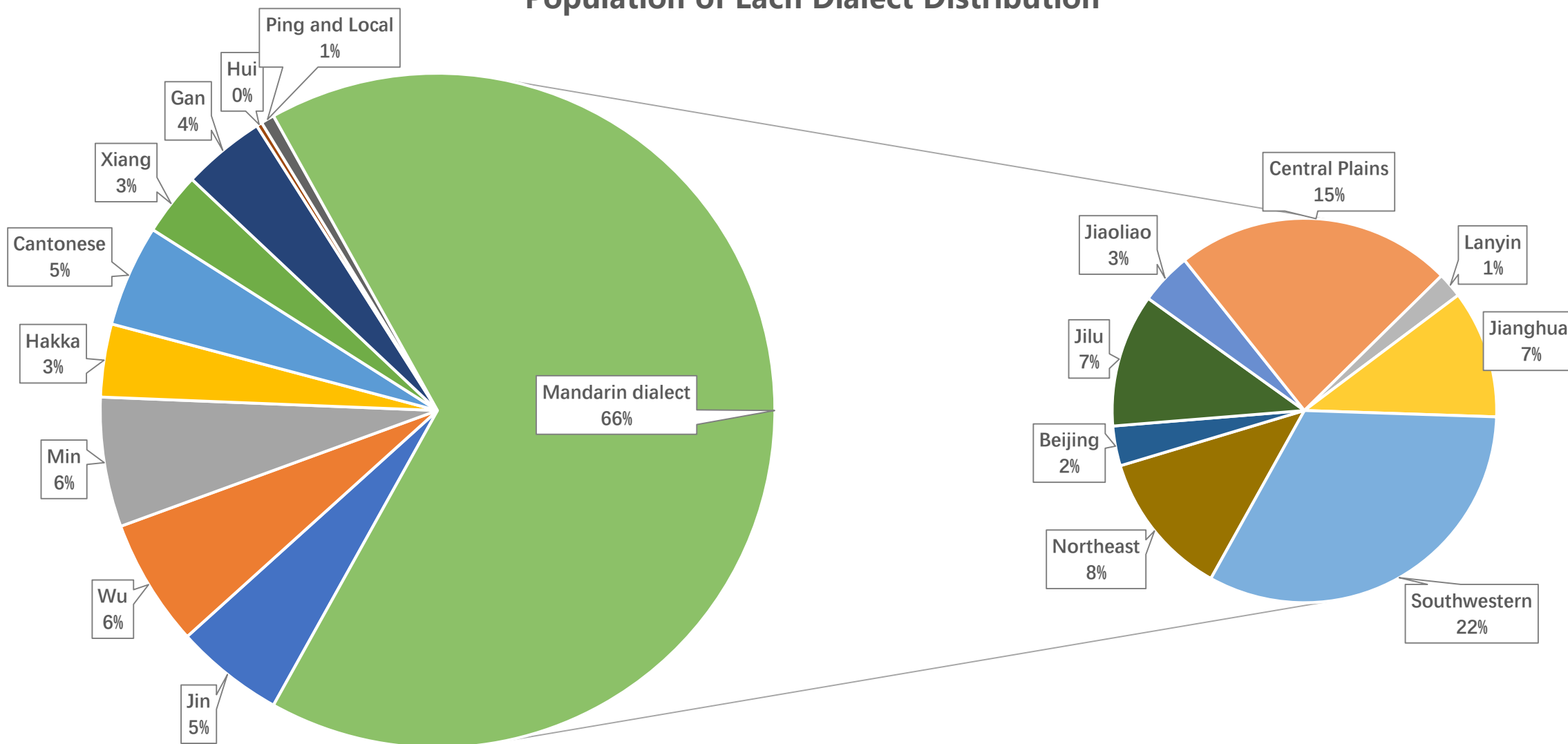
Ping and Local Dialect Distribution



Background



Population of Each Dialect Distribution

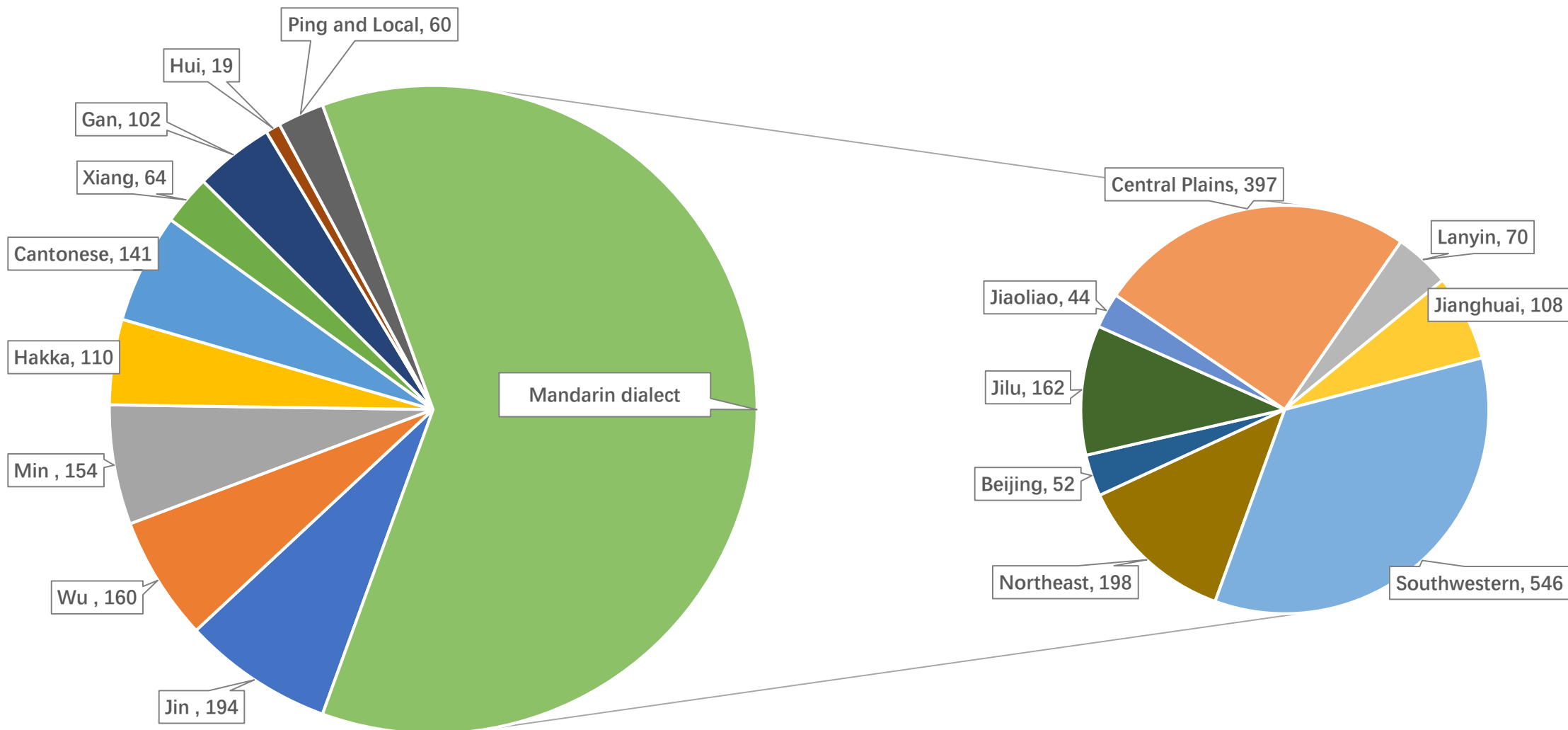




Background



Number of Administrative Districts Covered By Each Dialect Distribution





Why should we build the dialect archives?

- With the popularity of Mandarin, the speaking language in China has been gradually normalized and unified. However, some dialects which a small number of people speak or of which distributions exists sporadically may be gradually faded out.
- It is necessary to archive these dialect resources to keep social memory.



Background



Chinese dialect preserving projects



Ministry of Education & Chinese Language Council

The Chinese language audio database resource Project (2008)
The Chinese Language Resource Protection Project (2015)



National Archives of Provinces and Cities

eg: Zhejiang Province, Jiangsu Province, Shanxi Province



Non-government individuals or organizations



2

Case of Zhejiang Province



Why do I choose this case?

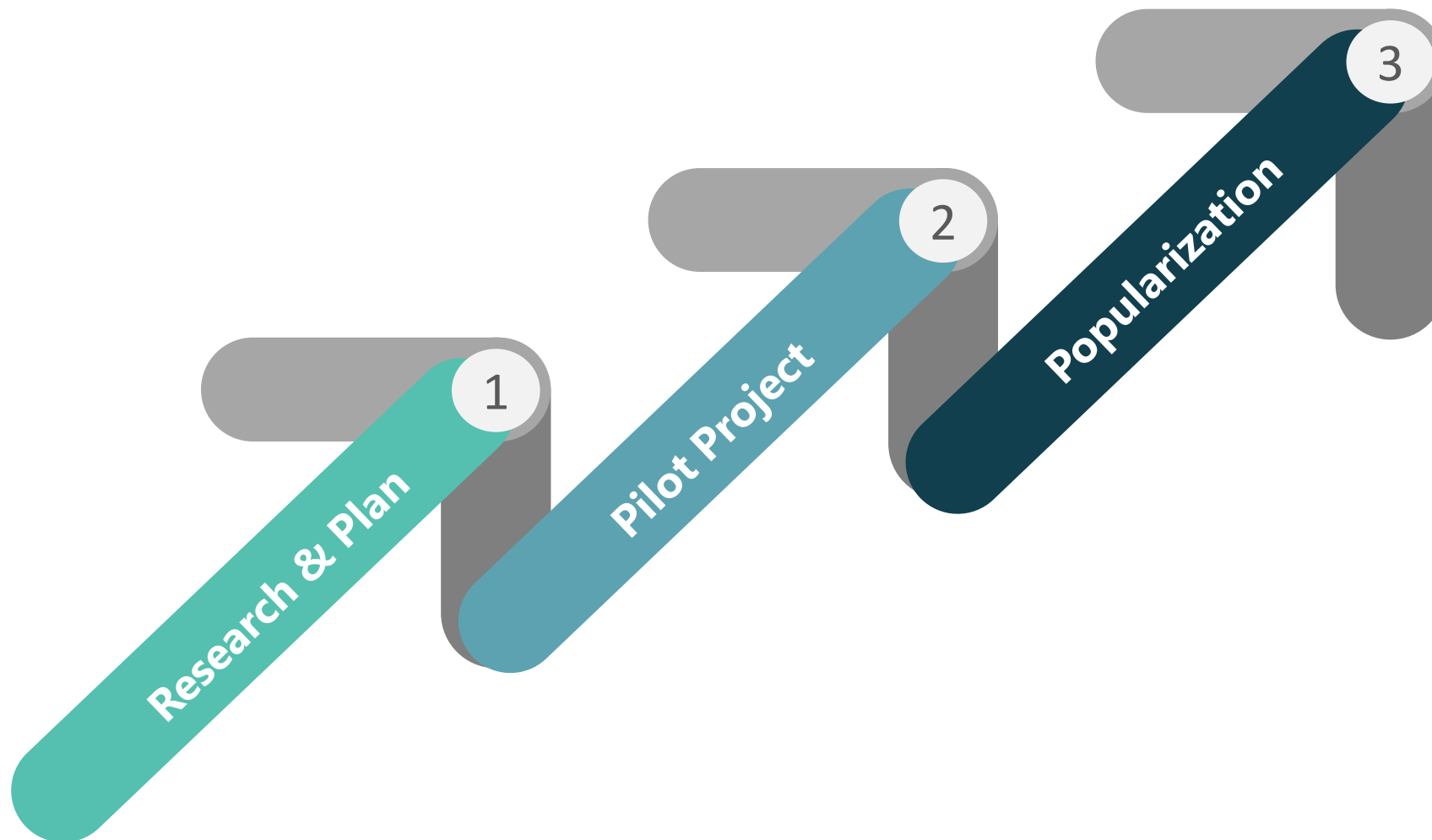
- National Archives of Zhejiang Province is the first provincial archives to start dialect archiving work.
- Zhejiang province belongs to Wu dialect distribution. Wu dialect is the one of the oldest languages in China. Compared with mandarin, Wu dialect retains more ancient pronunciation and has special words and grammars.
- Many cities of Zhejiang province have taken part in the work and much progresses have been made. Until 2015, 96 kinds of languages belonging to Wu dialect across 11 cities in Zhejiang province have been recorded and the Zhejiang dialect audio database has been built.



Case of Zhejiang province



There are mainly 3 stages in the Zhejiang dialect archiving project:





Case of Zhejiang province



To establish the Zhejiang Dialect Audio Archival Database by arranging the pronunciations, vocabularies, grammars, voice stories, folk songs, and operas of Zhejiang dialects.



- Conduct survey & investigation about Zhejiang dialects
- Develop texts about what should be preserved
- Make the audios
- Archiving



- Pilot Step
- Popularization Step



About Voice Providers...

Voice Providers refer to those citizens who have native accent and join the dialect archival audios project by reading out the dialect words or other dialect works given. Their voices would be recorded and made into audios.

Persons who sign up would be selected after a series of strict examinations, for example they may be required to read out a dictionary or an article in dialect.



Case of Zhejiang province

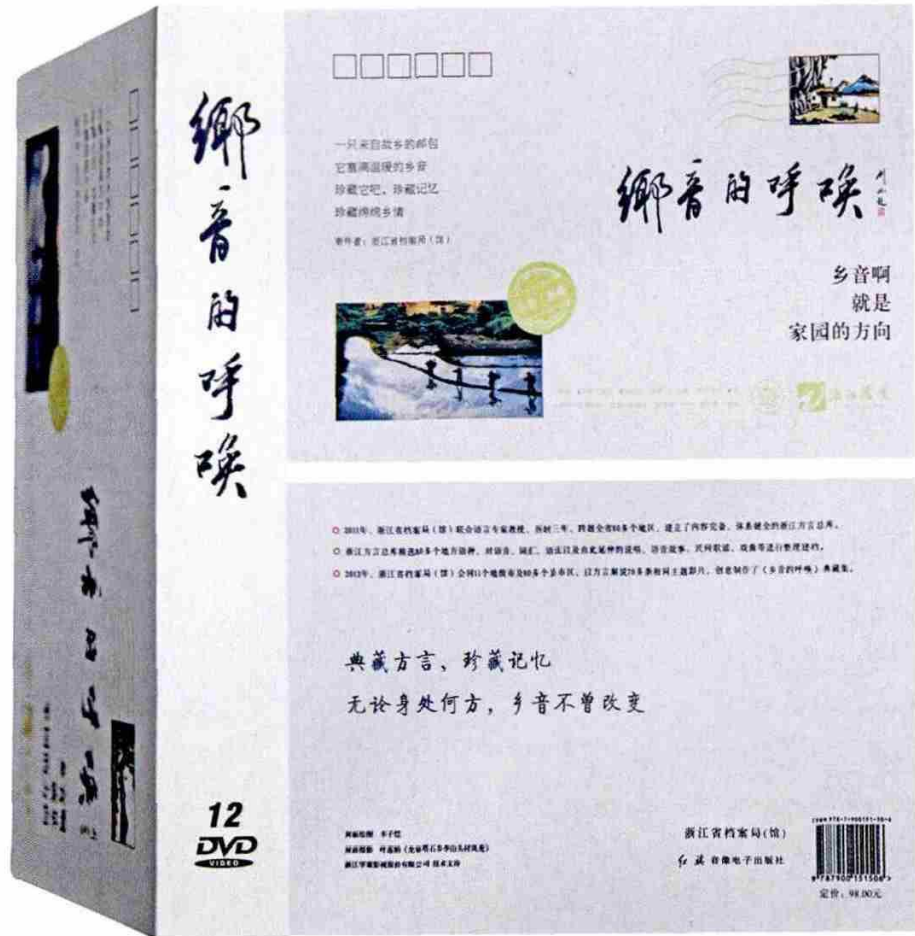
What kind of person can be **Voice Provider**?

- Gender** → Both males and females
- Age** → Middle aged and elderly
- Education** → Primary school - High school
- Experience** → Have not been away from hometown for long term
- Family** → Not only himself/ herself but also parents and spouse are native local persons.
- Health** → With complete front teeth





Case of Zhejiang province



In 2013, *Call of the Local Accent* was finished by National Archives in Zhejiang based on Zhejiang dialect archival database. It includes 12 DVDs exploring the relationships between dialect and culture, dialect and Zhejiang merchants, dialect and archive.



3

Experience of Chinese Dialect Archiving



Experience of Chinese Dialect Archiving



Stage 1

Collection &
Preservation

Stage 2

Protection

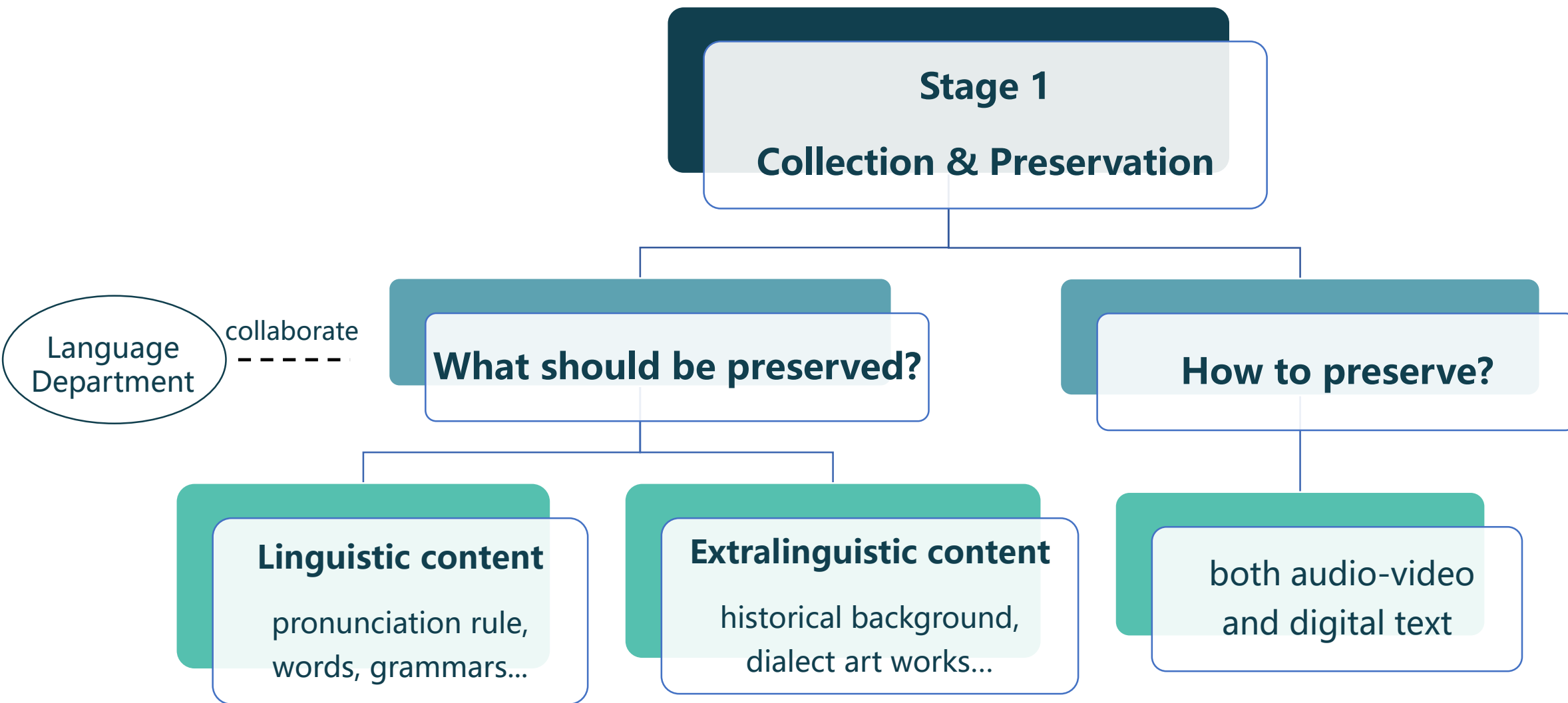
Stage 3

Exploitation &
Utilization

Each stage could be led by the Archives and involved with some other organizations.



Experience of Chinese Dialect Archiving



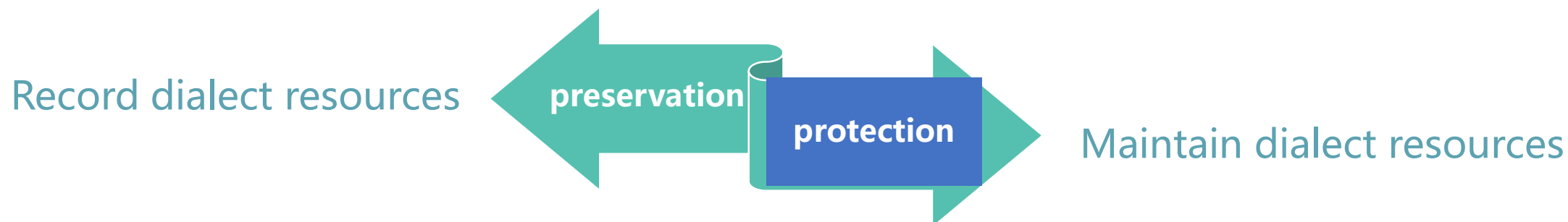


Experience of Chinese Dialect Archiving



Stage 2: Protection

- Archives could collaborate with intangible cultural heritage protection association and education department.





Experience of Chinese Dialect Archiving



Stage 3 : Exploitation & Utilization

- Language department could give some advice in making dialect archive more available because linguists would be important users of dialect archives. The way of using these archives is supposed to be multicultural and it should aim at meeting needs of users and enhancing the vitality of dialects.



Summary





Summary



Language resource is an important part of social memory. To build dialect archives is not just maintaining dialect resources integrally like antiques displayed in the museum. It aims at keeping dialects alive and making them more valuable.



THANK YOU!

YUJIAO DU (YUQIAO DU)
School of Information Management
Sun Yat-Sen University
E-mail: duyj7@mail2.sysu.edu.cn

中山大學
SUN YAT-SEN UNIVERSITY

