Practice-based Research

Suzhou Park

Geographical Location:
Central Gusu District (downtown area of the old city, a gathering place for local residents)
Area Positioning:
Public park for fitness and leisure
Target Group: Elderly people and children

Humble Administrator's Garden

Geographical Location: Gusu District
Area Positioning: World Cultural Heritage - Scenic Spot
Target Group: Tourists

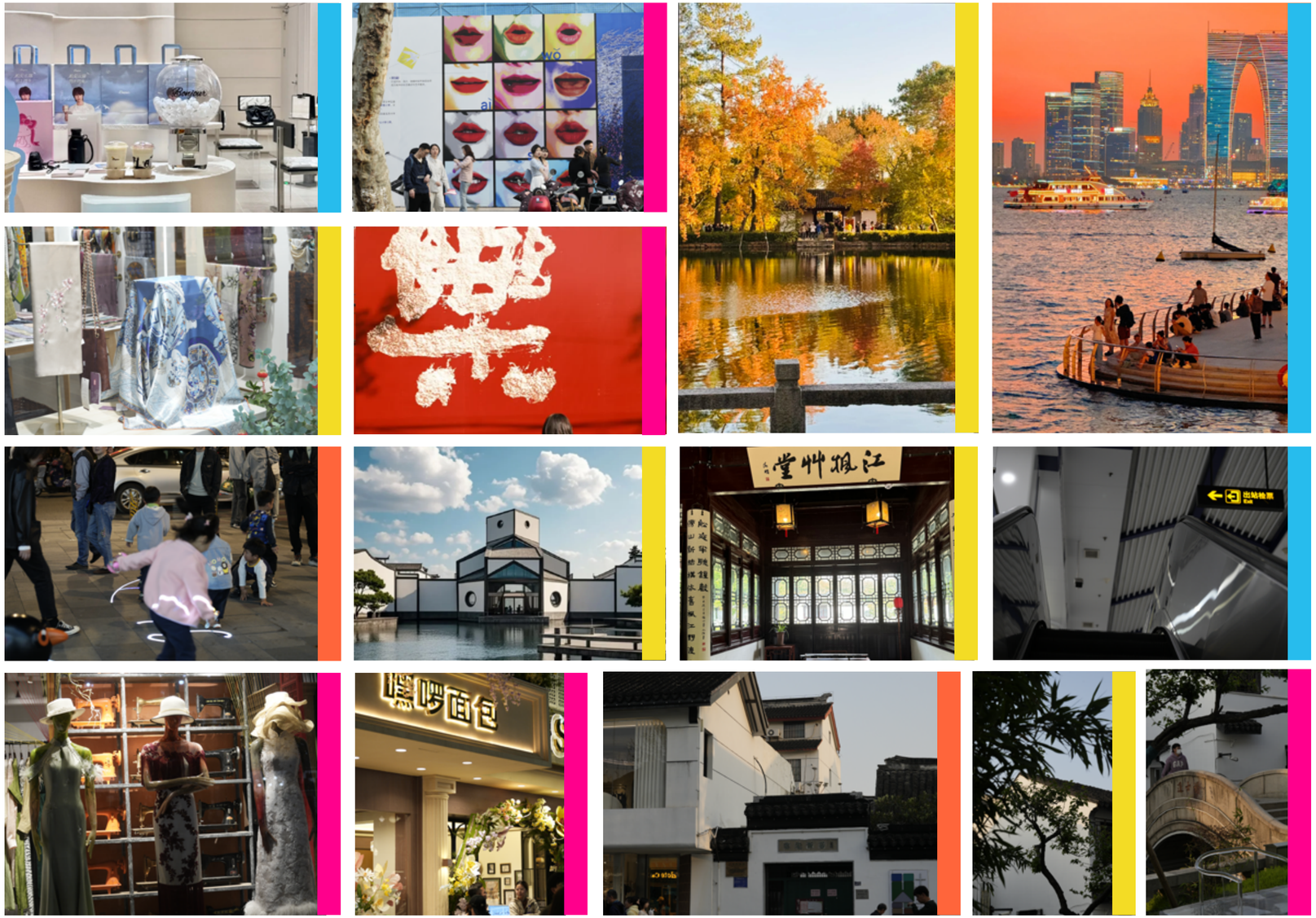
Suzhou Center (& Oriental Gate)

Geographical Location: Industrial Park
Area Positioning: Business core area-shopping mall& office skyscraper
Target Group:
People with certain spending power

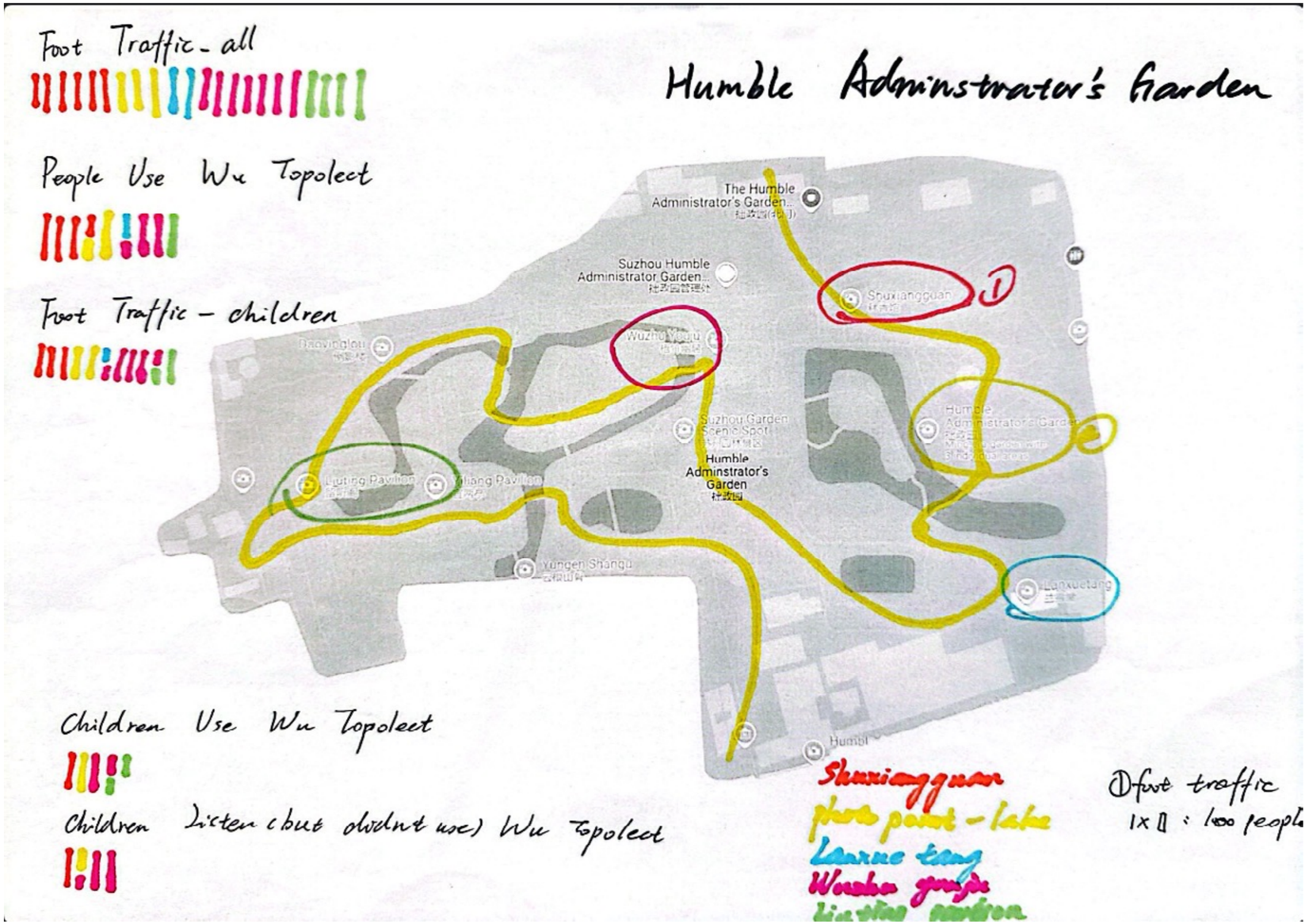
Shiquan Street

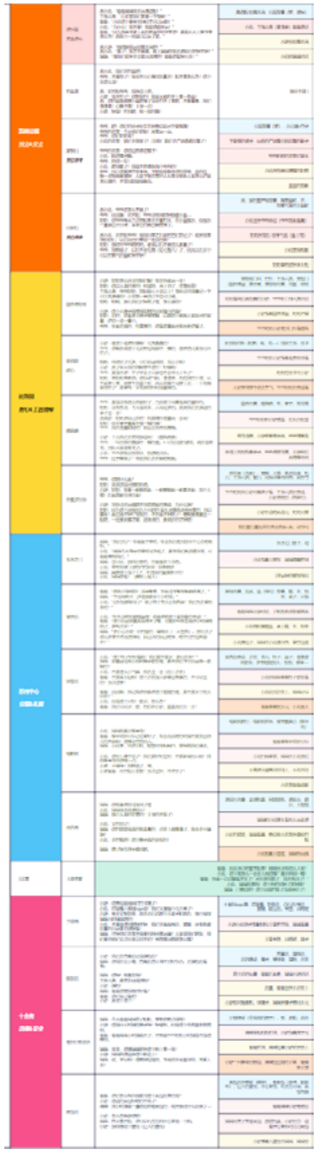
Geographical Location: Southeast part of the old city in Gusu District
Area Positioning: Urban-renewed cultural and commercial street
Target Group: Young people

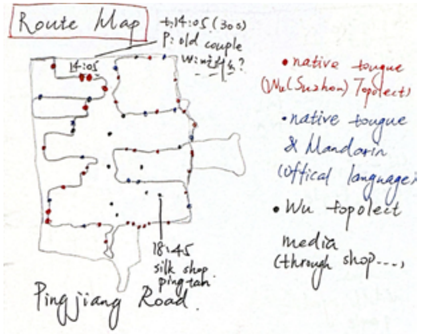
Figure 22-39: Photos of 4 areas, took in April, 2025.



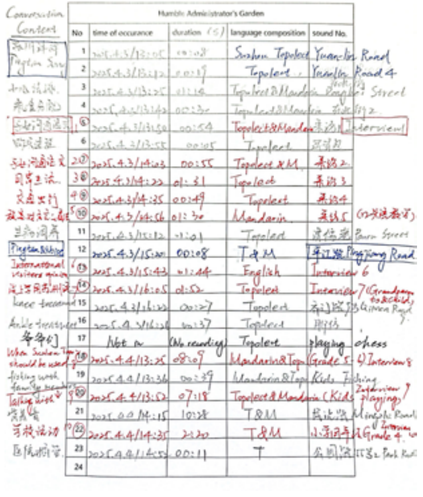
Listening&recording speakers' stories







Place	Pingjiang Road	Gate of the Orient	Hanshan Temp
times	295	41	314
(total) duration	2h50m (15%)	15m (1%)	4h15m(50%
people	153	14	201.
media	45	2	18
Tips	Grandparents spoke Wu with children.	Few young people / children speake Wu	Most old people spoke Wu.



Liitle Workshop with different age groups of children

Following my initial fieldwork, I contacted the group of pupils I had encountered. After discussions with their teachers and parents, I was unable to secure permission to enter the school or their homes. However, they facilitated a one-hour workshop for me outdoors after school on Friday.

The workshop theme was 'What does data visualisation mean to you?' I gathered feedback from two groups: ten-year-olds and five-year-olds.

The 10-year-olds, having recently studied charts in their mathematics lessons, possessed a foundational understanding of chart elements, drawing methods, and conventions, which they recalled quite clearly. They brought their maths textbooks and showed me the relevant content. The 5-year-olds, however, had not yet undergone systematic learning and were exposed only to simplified mathematics through children's picture books.

However, I preferred them to create visualisations on the spot, so we embarked on a collaborative creation process. Upon completion of the works (detailed in the research method section), I observed that **the 10-year-olds'** interpretations of data visualisation were remarkably consistent, predominantly featuring **abstract charts** (including tables, bar charts, pie charts, line graphs, etc.). In contrast, the **5-year-olds** predominantly depicted **concrete objects** (using physical items to represent quantities).

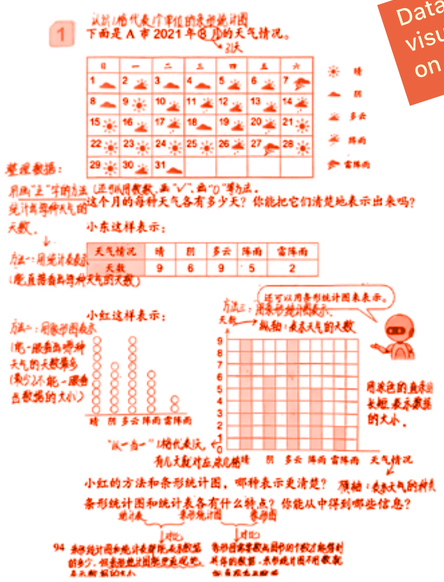
Following this, I invited them to join me in a brainstorming session to explore potential output formats. Together we produced a word cloud (see research methods for details), and afterwards one child sent me a collage. I was extremely grateful to her and ultimately drew inspiration from her work.

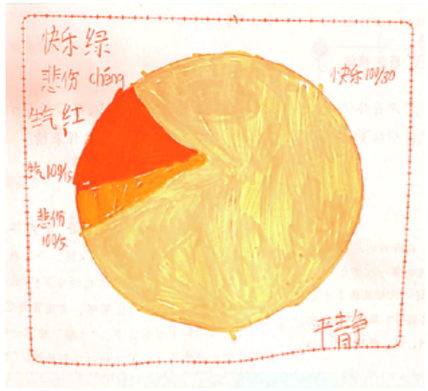
Figure 46: The group of 10-year-old children participating in the workshop, with consent from both the children themselves and their guardians, appeared on camera.

Figure 47: A child's drawing of the recommended output format

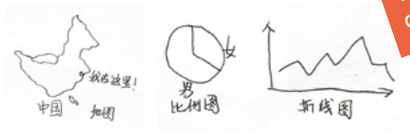
Little Workshop with children based on The Double Diamond in August, 2025

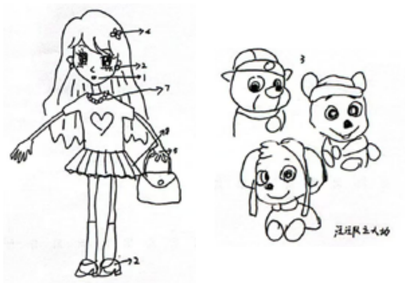
Data visualisation on textbook

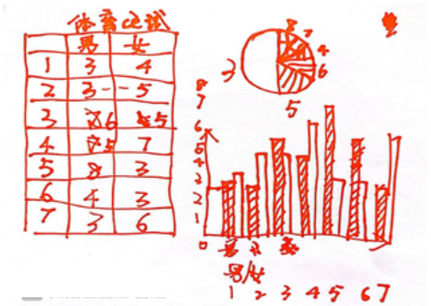




Data visualisation children drew

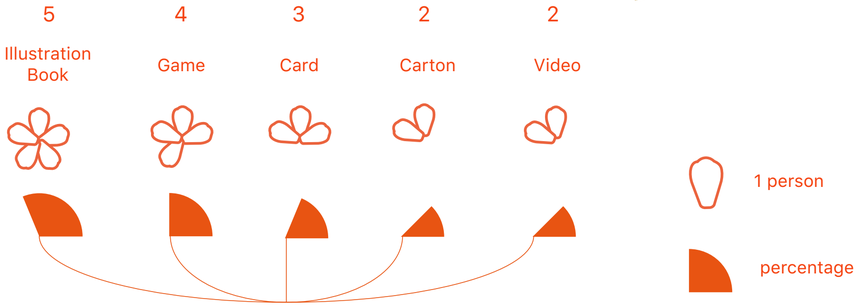






CHILDREN'S FAVOURITE DATA VISUALISATION FORM

Figure 17-19: During the summer holidays, I encountered several children at the children's activity room in Suzhou, and we held a brief brainstorming.



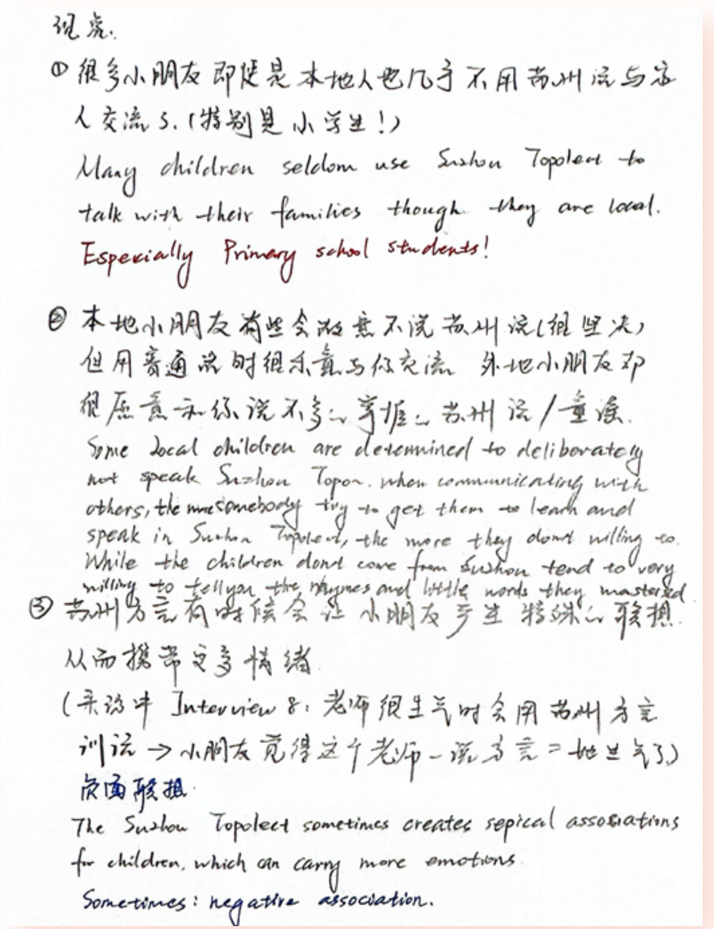
Talking with the speakers

Proportion of Non-Local Population:
The convenience of using a common language (Mandarin) has replaced the use of dialects.

Identity Identification:
Some individuals feel ashamed to speak dialects, fearing mockery from other children or being hurt by internet memes.
Association with Negative Emotions-Negative

Psychological Cues:
Adults tend to use dialects when they are angry or criticizing children. As a result, children form a conditioned reflex that "adults are angry when they speak dialects".

Lack of Understanding of Meanings:
A non-local child learned a dialect nursery rhyme at school and confidently demonstrated it to me, but did not understand its meaning.



Location	People	Conversation context	Mood	Languages
Landscape Road Pingtan Restaurant	Middle-aged and elderly people around the age of 50	They talk about pingpianla kind of traditional opera) and haven't used the radio for a long time.	Happy & relaxed	Wu topolects
North East Street, roadside seats	A couple in their 60s with friends	The youngest son is getting married, and the bride's family is providing gold and silver jewelry. The division of labor between the bride's family and the groom's family, the details of the wedding, and the concern about the youngest son's independent life are all part of the wedding preparations.	Joyful & worry	Wu topolects
Clothing rental and shooting point near the outside of the scenic spot	A 60-year-old woman selling sachets	Selling sachets, chatting about their husbands' jobs after retirement, and complaining about the heavy housework and what to cook at home	calm	Wu topolects& unskilled Mandarin
Clothing rental and photography spots near the exterior of the scenic area (McDonald's)	A mother and her 5-year-old daughter in their 30s	The mother asked her daughter to wait for her in the children's play area and not to dirty the clothes she had just bought (Hanfu). She would take her to the garden to take photos later. She asked if the braided hairstyle would pull on her hair and make her feel very painful	Worry	Wu topolects&Mandarin
Shopping Street Outside the Scenic Area	A pearl seller in the neighborhood, about 70 years old	The family member underwent surgery for a lumbar disease and recovered well. We asked others if they had experienced similar situations and discussed postoperative care precautions, where to buy the doctor's prescribed medicine and plasters, and how to avoid lumbar injuries.	Sad, emotional	Wu topolects
Ticket counter at the entrance	A couple in their 60s with a granddaughter in their 30s	Grandfather asked his granddaughter if she wanted to drink water, about her school experience at kindergarten yesterday, her relationships with the other children, the content of her classes, and whether she needed help with any extracurricular craft assignments.	joyful	Wu topolects
center	about 35 years old and a daughter of about 8 years old	spot yielded the most fish. The girl was jumping and running on the rocks when her father stopped her, warning her to be careful of slipping and to move to a spot farther from the water. She responded in Mandarin.	worried, serious Daughter: happy	number of Mandarin and a small number of Wu dialects
Chess region	Fourth grade students and teachers	The teacher took the students to sketch, and the students shared the content and meaning of the paintings, and the teacher encouraged the students to communicate with each other and learn from each other.	Students: Excited	Mandarin&Wu topolects
Park Square Open Space	Grandma and her 11-year-old granddaughter in grade 5	The girl sat down with her head down. Her grandmother asked her how she was doing in the exam and what she wanted to eat.	Grandma: mellow, granddaughter: sad	Wu topolects
Park Square Open Space	Grandma and grade 6 granddaughter / neighbor's 4th grade granddaughter	Two girls were playing and roughhousing in the square. The grandmother watched them with a smile and urged them to slow down. When the granddaughter ran too fast and fell, the grandmother told them not to run and said, "You must have fallen by accident." The granddaughter got up.	Grandma: mellow, granddaughter: excited, happy	Grandma: Wu topolects; granddaughter: Mandarin
Flower and Planting Area	Grandma, who is about 70 yo, and her granddaughter, who is about six years old, along with other elderly people watching	The old man praised the girl for her good drawing and asked if she was a local and had studied painting. The girl explained that it was a hobby and discussed the theme of painting.	Grandma, granddaughter: Mellow	Wu topolects
Chess area	Grandfathers and their grandchildren	One of the boys was playing chess with a grandfather, and many other grandfathers were watching and trying to tell him what to do next.	Grandpa playing chess, boy: anxious, Grandpa watching: anxious, excited	Wu topolects

The Humble Administrator's Garden-Pavilion	A 20-year-old girl talking to her family while traveling with friends	The family asks where to go, who their friends are and when they will return home, and whether they need to eat dinner at home	anxious and fretful	大量 Mandarin 和很少 Wu topolects
Zhuzheng Garden Pedestrian Path	A couple in their 60s with a 6-year-old grandson	Grandpa explained to his grandson that the Zhuzheng Garden was once a private garden of a wealthy family, and the origin of the artificial hills in the garden.	joyful	Mandarin for Wu dialects and proper nouns
Commercial Street (noodle shop) outside the scenic spot	Mother, son and daughter (both around 5 years old) around 30 years old	To teach children to eat properly, instruct them not to look around or leave their seats during meals, demonstrate the correct way to use chopsticks, avoid playing with their mother's phone, prevent the soup from spilling, and avoid wasting food.	Calm+Angry, serious	Mandarin 和 Wu topolects（when angry）
Nearby bus stops	A female friend around 50 years old	Yesterday, I went to the hospital for a follow-up examination. One of my knees was injured and the other had a sprained ankle. We discussed the causes of the injuries, which doctor at the hospital had better skills, the approximate cost of treatment, and the effectiveness of the plasters. Finally, we talked separately.	calm, annoyed	Wu topolects and (used separately) Mandarin
Open space in the square	Grades 5-6 with their grandmothers	Grandma mentioned that her granddaughters have a lot of homework, but after finishing it and during breaks, they spend all their time staring at phones and computers. Their myopia has reached over 300 degrees and keeps worsening every year. Despite her advice, they don't listen. The kids are playing with bamboo kites, discussing who will release and catch them (Mandarin), while chatting with Grandma about wanting snacks (Wu dialect).	Grandma: worried, Child: happy	Wu topolects&Mandarin
fishing center	A mother in her 30s and her 10-year-old son	The son lacked patience in fishing. When he couldn't catch any fish, he'd get upset. At first, his mother patiently guided him, but when he started throwing tantrums, she grew angry and lectured him in Wu dialect, saying he was wasting bait and teaching him proper fishing techniques.	Mother: angry, anxious; Son: distracted, annoyed	Mandarin&Wu topolects
fishing	A father of	They were fishing together, discussing which	Father:	A large

Chess region	Grandma and Grandson	Next to it are staggered stone pillars and steps, two children running on them, a grandmother watching, telling the children to slow down and pay attension to safety	Running child: happy, excited. Grandma: happy.	Wu topolects
In the restaurant	A family of five (a girl around 11 years old)	The whole family celebrated the girl's first-place performance in the midterm exams and congratulated her. Her mother promised rewards for placing in the top three at the final exams. Grandparents served her food and encouraged her to eat more, emphasizing a balanced diet with both meat and vegetables.	Family: Excited Child: Mellow	Wu topolects
Old Bridge	A mother in her 30s and a child in her 30s	The mother held a camera and guided the girl in posing for photos. The girl was wearing a Hanfu, and the mother said to lift the skirt a little so it wouldn't trip her.	Mom, daughter: happy	Wu topolects

Survey on Familiarity and Usage of Suzhou Topolect

Dear Respondent:

Thank you for participating in this survey on the familiarity and usage of Suzhou Topolect. This questionnaire aims to understand the awareness, current usage, and attitudes towards Suzhou Topolect among different age groups. Your responses will provide valuable data for our research. This survey is anonymous, and all information will be used solely for statistical analysis. Please feel free to fill it out.

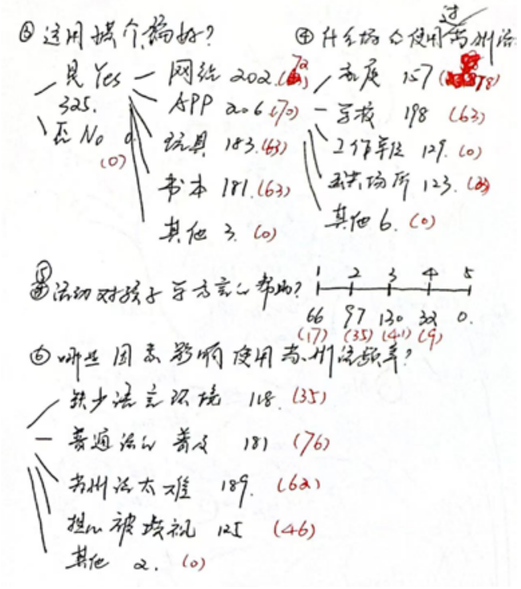
I. Basic Information

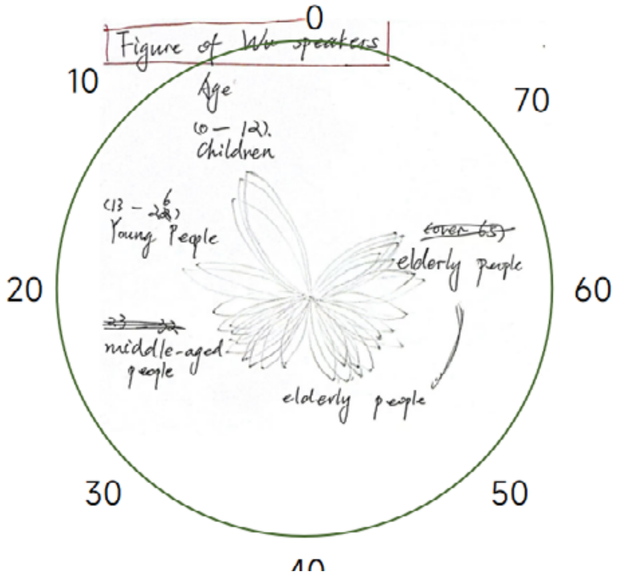
1. What is your age? (Single choice)
   - 3-12 years old
   - 13-22 years old
   - 23-32 years old
   - 33-42 years old
   - 43-52 years old
   - 53-62 years old
   - 63-72 years old
   - 73-82 years old

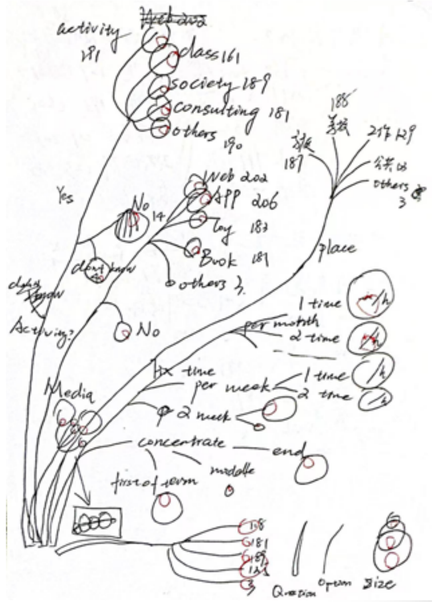
2. What is your occupation? (Single choice)
   - Student
   - Staff of educational institutions
   - Corporate/Company employee
   - Civil servant/Public institution employee
   - Freelancer
   - Self-employed
   - Retiree
   - Other

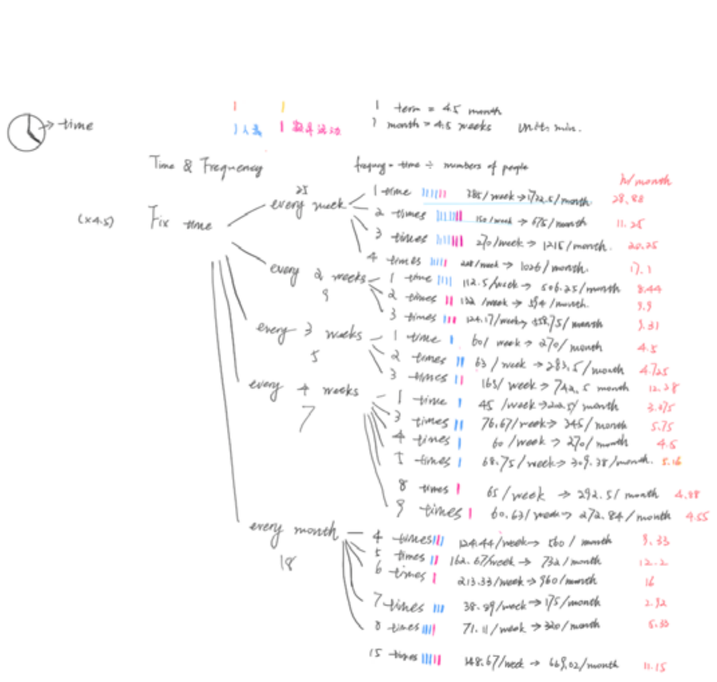
3. How long have you lived in Suzhou? (Single choice)
   - Less than 1 year
   - 1-3 years
   - 3-5 years
   - 5-10 years
   - More than 10 years

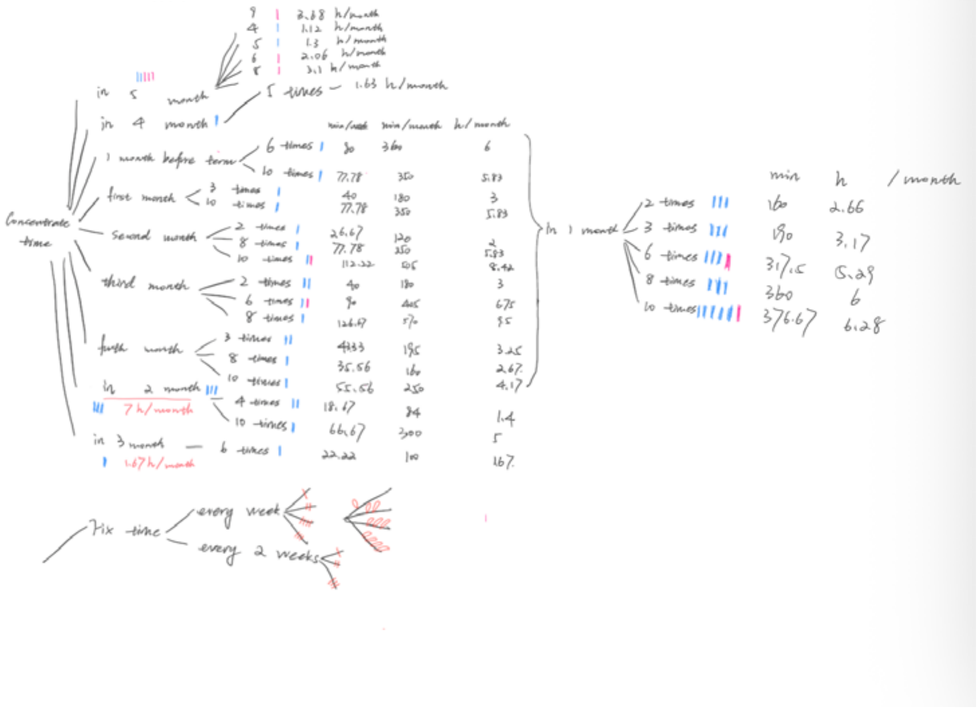
II. Familiarity with Suzhou Topolect











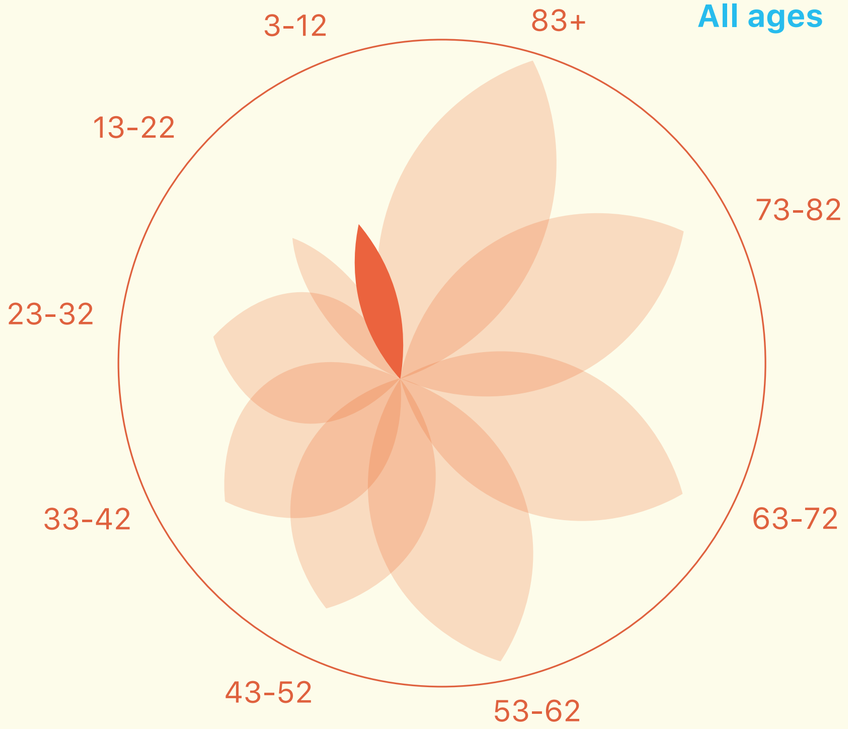
According to the questionnaire, children aged 3-12 primarily use dialect at home (75%) and school (62%), with the prevalence of Mandarin being the main reason for their reluctance to use Suzhou dialect (74%).

The duration and frequency of dialect education vary considerably across Suzhou's schools. Data indicates that classes scheduling dialect activities periodically spend significantly more time using Mandarin than those concentrating dialect education into intensive periods each term. Children in weekly dialect classes receive approximately ten times more dialect training than those in intensive sessions. Most respondents rated the effectiveness of current school dialect programmes as poor (average score: 2.13/5).

Position
Age of interviewee

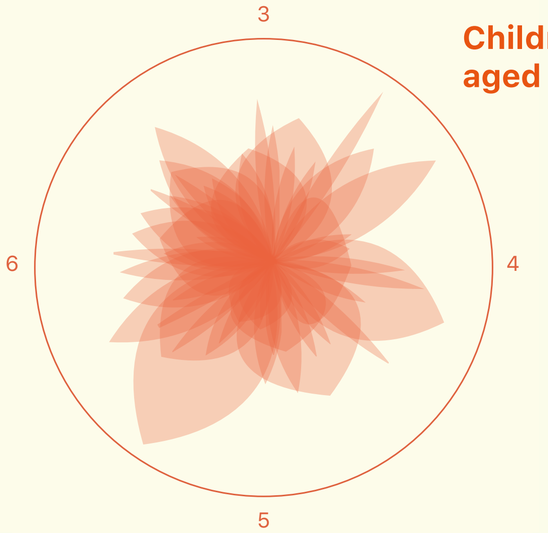
Width (0-12)
Number of years living in the region

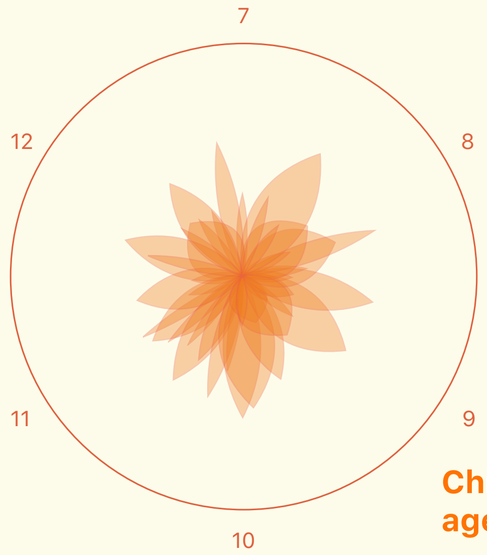
Length (0-5)
Mastery of the topolect (Merely understand-Matery)



Proficiency in Suzhou Dialect

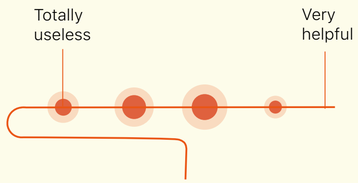
Through a floral visualisation, the linguistic proficiency of respondents across different age groups in the questionnaire is illustrated. Across all age brackets, younger speakers demonstrate a lower command of Suzhou dialect. Notably, kindergarten pupils (aged 3–6) exhibit greater linguistic proficiency than primary school pupils (aged 7–12), with the former displaying a more pronounced proficiency gap.



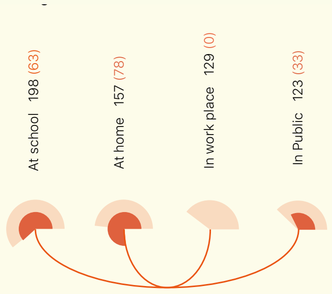


The Implementation of Suzhou Dialect Education

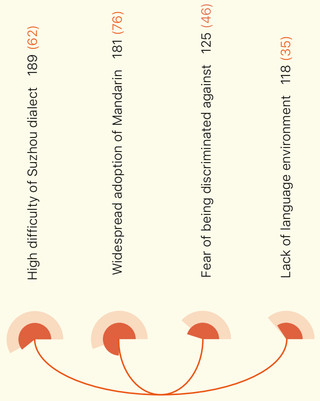
Practice-based Research



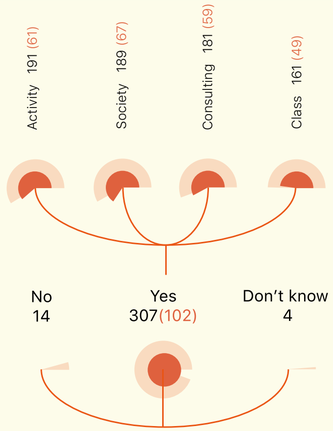
Whether Toplolect Activities Are Effective



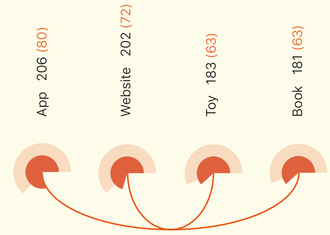
Topolect Usage Scenarios



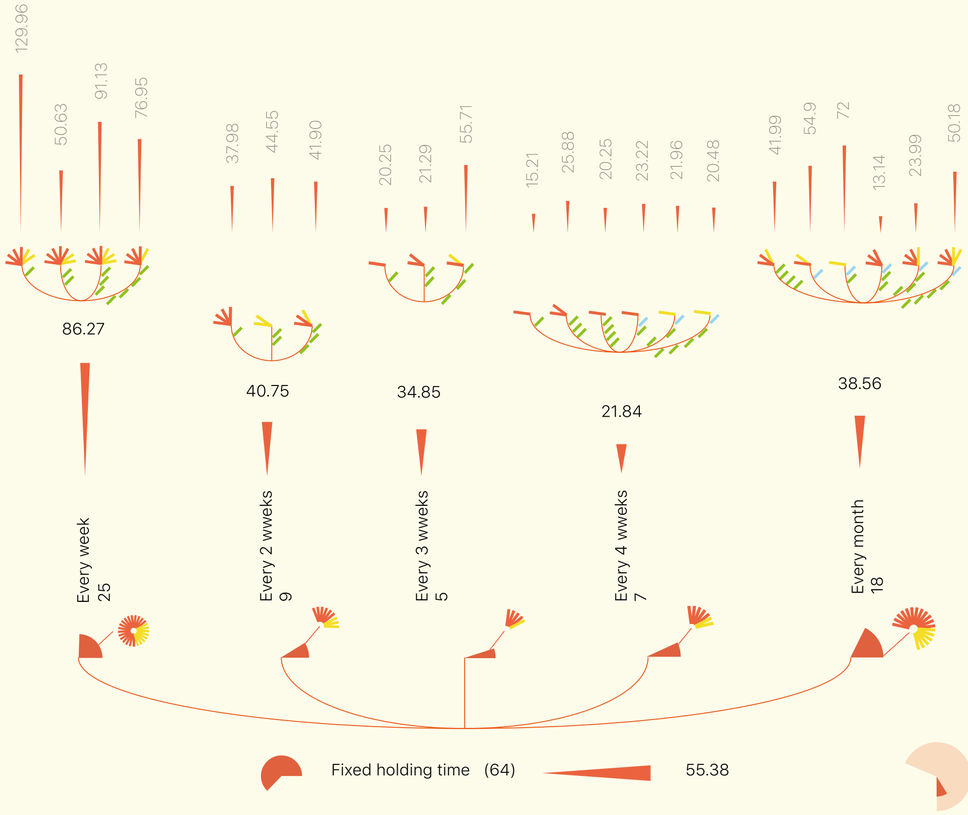
Factors Influencing Frequency of Usage



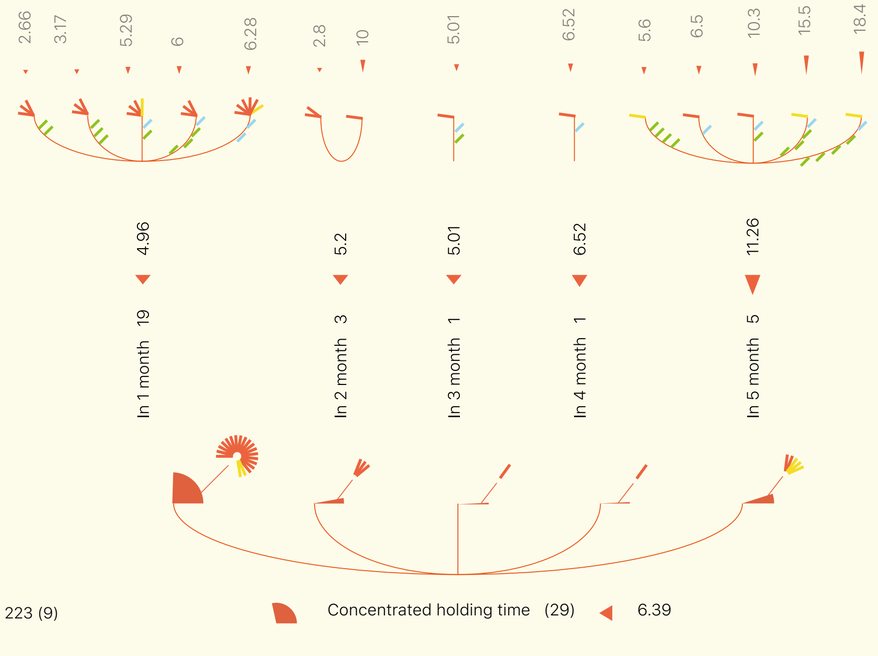
Topolect Education Forms



Topolect Education Media Preference



Activity Time and Frequency



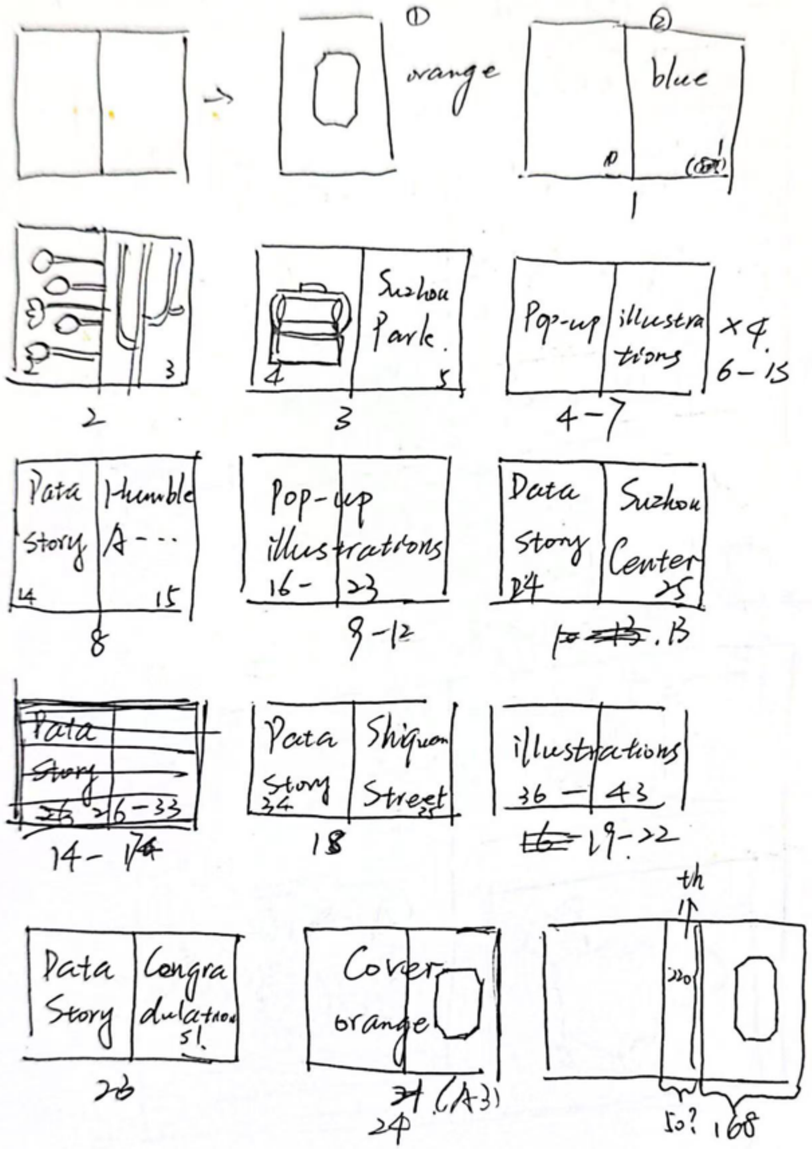
DETAILED MAP

NEWS PAPER: ①

TOPOLECTS
CONCEPTS INTRO.
WORLD MAP.
ACTIVITY INTRO
SUZHOU MAP.
EXPLAINA TION
DETAIL ED

guide to topolect & dialect.
topolect flower
→ treasure maps → tickets.

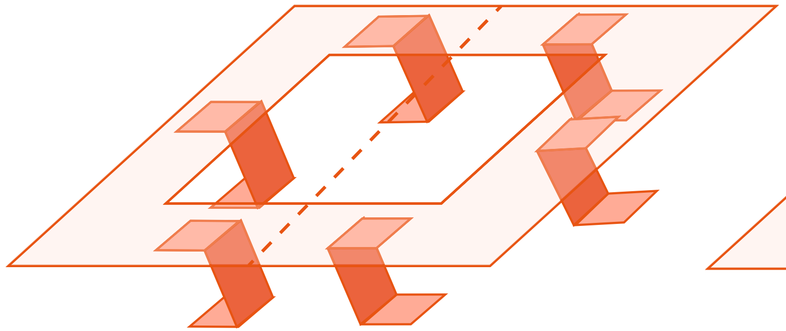
TOPOLECTS INFLUENCED BY....
(Region) Mastery
(Age) Mastery

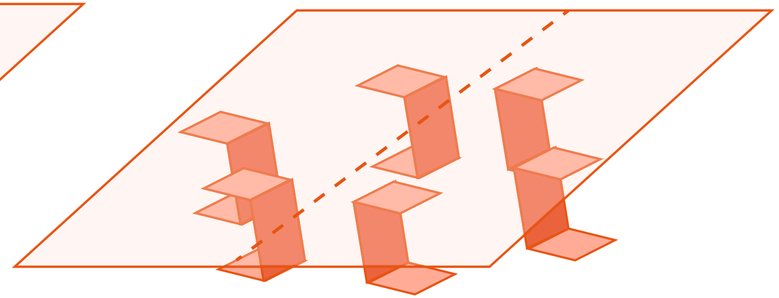


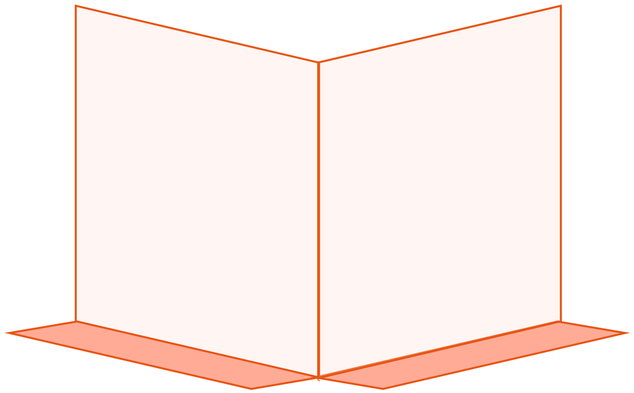
Pop-up book production

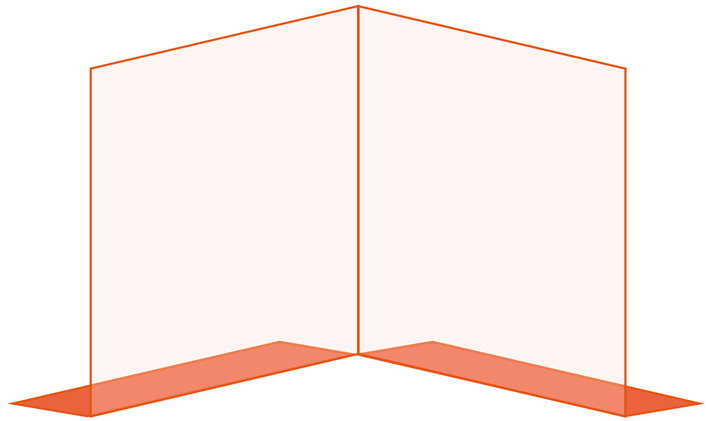
Pop-up books are organised into distinct chapters across four zones, with narrative-driven illustrations collaged onto cardstock. After trimming, the pages are folded into four distinct configurations as illustrated on the right, incorporating twistable text mechanisms to maximise the book's interactivity and appeal.

On the first page of each chapter, a designated area is provided for readers to affix their own photographs or make written notes, thereby crafting their own personal data story.

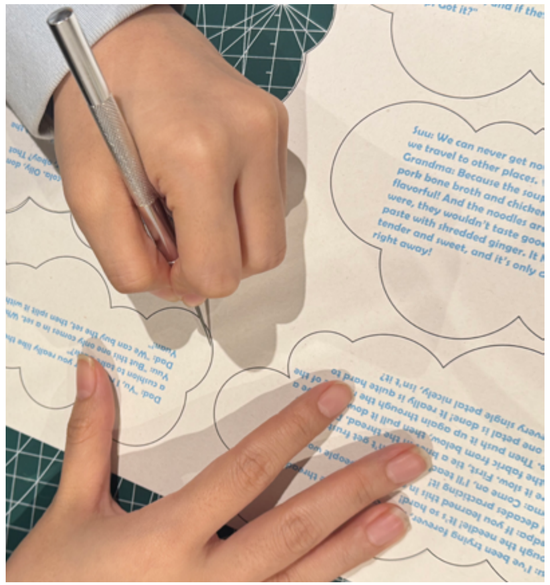








Critical Making



Critical Making