

Laban

माताजी; पिताजी

روح

සමාජ

منزل

Gurbetçi

Asian Diaspora in The Hague

Masaya

幸福

A Multilingual Wordbook

卷

Aziatische Diaspora in Den Haag
Een Meertalige Woordenlijst

అర్ధంచేసుకోవడం

Compiled by Enrico Joaquin Lapuz and Cha-Hsuan Liu

よろしくお願ひします

สงกรานต์

ياخشىمۇسىز



Asian Diaspora in The Hague: A Multilingual Wordbook

This publication is an initiative of the Humanities Across Borders (HAB) of the International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden The Netherlands, a trans-regional network developing place-based, civically grounded pedagogies and resources relevant to participation in a global society.

Dedicated to all members of the Asian diaspora who call The Hague home.

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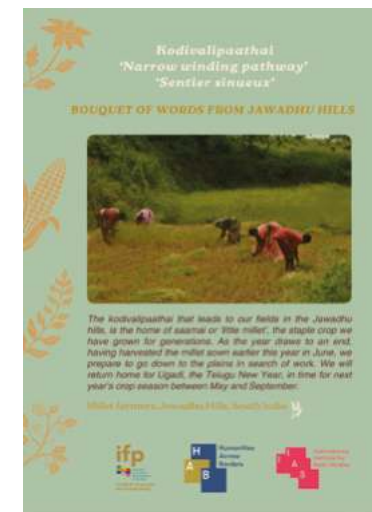
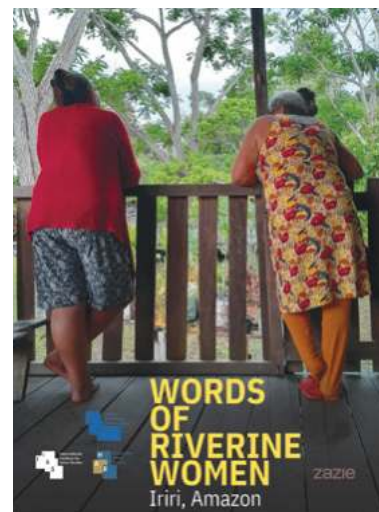
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HAB Wordbooks

In the spring of 2023, HAB launched the Wordbook Series project focusing on linguistic interactions between HAB researchers in Brazil, India, Netherlands, and Mali, and their local collaborators. HAB wordbooks inhabit the in-between world of words (nouns, verbs and phrases) as they are spoken and used in different socio-cultural

and geographical contexts. Unlike glossaries, lexicons, and dictionaries, wordbooks make visible and audible the communicative routines, and the invisible practices of reminiscing, disclosing, visualizing, longing, retelling, crossing, negotiating, that are often part of everyday speech exchange.



Foreword

Asian Diaspora in The Hague (Aziatische Diaspora in Den Haag) is a brief encounter into the world of those who have crossed many physical and mental borders in order to call The Hague their home. A quick search for the words *toko* ('shop' in Bahasa Indonesia) and *roti* ('flat bread' in Hindi) on a Google map of the city will reveal the neighbourhoods or locations of family-owned shops and restaurants belonging to Asian immigrants settled here. Both these words have entered into everyday Dutch and commonly refer to non-Dutch, Asian food, understood broadly. The 25 word stories presented here are a window into the world of some residents of The Hague who wanted to reveal their journey, through personal, even emotional utterances, inspired by this exercise in linguistic comparison.

In his intellectual biography, *A Life Beyond Boundaries*, Benedict Anderson (2016) writes on the human impulse of comparison, especially when one starts to live in



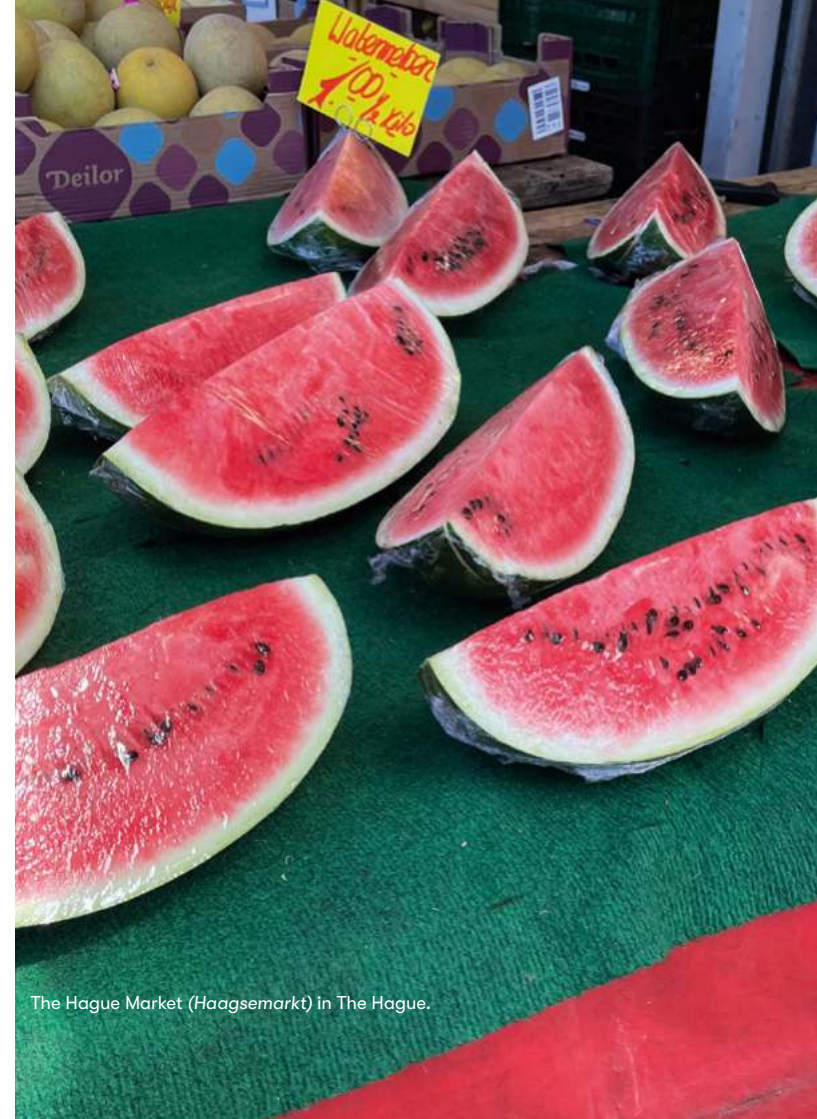
Chinatown Gate in The Hague.

another country. He says, “You cannot avoid making comparisons, but these are likely to be superficial and naive. But then, if you are lucky, you cross the language wall, and find yourself in another world ... You will begin to notice what is not there as well as what is there, just as you will become aware of what is unwritten as well as what is written ... Often it starts with words.”¹

The words disclosed by participants in this project convey a sense of attachment to place, one that somehow travels with, is carried along, and held by individuals as they seek a better life, or struggle to be united with their loved ones. We hope that this booklet of words shared by some members of the Asian diaspora in The Hague, alongside their Dutch and English translations, will offer insights into ways of relating with one another, whilst negotiating living with the familiar and the different, in an increasingly globalized, multilingual world.

Aarti Kawlra

¹ Anderson, Benedict. *A life beyond boundaries: A memoir*. Verso Books, 2018, 131-2.



The Hague Market (Haagsemarkt) in The Hague.

Words at a glance

روح

[ruh] Arabic

EN Spirit, Humanity NL Geest, Medemenselijkheid

Page 14

منزل

[man-zil] Urdu

EN Destiny, Destination, Path NL Bestemming, Levenspad

Page 16

تفاءلوا خيراً تجدوه

[tafa-aluu khy-ran taji-duh] Arabic

EN Hope for good and you shall find it

NL Wie goed doet, goed ontmoet

Page 18

خوشحالی

[gho-shali] Dari

EN Joy, Happiness NL Vreugde, Geluk

Page 20

සාමය

[saa-maya] Sinhala

EN Peace NL Vrede

Page 22

அமைதியான

[amai-ti-yana] Tamil

EN Serenity NL Kalmte

Page 24

Thiên Nhiên

[thi-yen ni-yen] Vietnamese

EN Nature NL Natuur

Page 26

幸福

[shing-fu] Mandarin

EN Fortune, Fortunate NL Geluk

Page 28

Saygı

[sai-geh] Turkish

EN Respect NL Beleefdheid, Manieren

Page 30

అర్థంచేసుకోవడం

[ard-ham che-su-ko-va-dam] Telugu

EN To understand NL Begrijpen

Page 32

卷

[ju-an] Mandarin

EN Involute NL Inwikkeling, verwikkeling

Page 34

Gurbetçi

[gur-bet-schi] Turkish

EN Immigrant, Outsider NL Allochtoon, Buitenstaander

Page 36

Laban

[laa-ban] Filipino

EN To strive, To fight NL Strijven, Vechten

Page 38

Masaya

[ma-sa-ya] Filipino

EN Joyful NL Blij

Page 40

よろしくお願ひします

[yo-ro-shi-ku o-ne-gai shi-ma-su] Japanese

EN Let's be good to each other

NL Laten we goed voor elkaar zijn

Page 42

Мен сені жақсы көремін

[men se-ni jak-se kore-min] Kazakh

EN I see you well NL Ik zie je graag

Page 44

ياخشىمۇسىز

[yak-shimu-siz] Uyghur

EN Peace be upon you NL Vrede zij met

Page 46

สงกรานต์

[Song-kraan] Thai

EN New Year's Day NL Oud en Nieuw

Page 48

Pasar

[pa-sar] Malay

EN Marketplace NL Markt

Page 50

Toko

[to-ko] Bahasa Indonesia

EN Store NL Winkel

Page 52

Sayang

[sa-yang] Malay

EN Love NL Schatting

[sa-yang] Bahasa Indonesia

EN What a pity NL Jammer

Page 54

خانواده

[khane-va-deh] Persian

EN Family NL Familie

Page 56

自家人

[chi-ka-ngin] Hakka

EN family member(s); one of us NL Eigen familie

Page 58

माताजी; पिताजी

[maa-taa-jee; pi-taa-jee] Hindustani

EN Mother; Father NL Mama; Papa

Page 60

روح

[ruh]
Arabic, Syria
Noun

EN
Spirit, Humanity

NL
Geest,
Medemenselijkheid

Compared to the Dutch, I think that Syrian people are relatively easy to make friends with. Don't get me wrong, Dutch people are very nice, and welcoming. Visiting other countries in Europe, I noticed that there were not many people that smiled, unlike here. But when it comes to connecting with others, there is a feeling of separation, people tend to be closed off to the possibility of having a deeper relationship with somebody than initially expected.

In Syrian culture, when we buy something at a shop, we are happy to have a conversation with the shopkeeper, maybe even becoming friends with them too! In Syria, being welcomed is the least that people can offer you. But here, being welcoming in that way comes off as naive or maybe even be labeled as a people-pleaser.

We look at helping people as important and having value in Syria. It doesn't matter if it means losing a bit of yourself. You can offer your house keys to someone in need and leave your house to them. It's that kind of sharing. But here if you don't have enough food for yourself, you say no. But in Syria it's quite the opposite and entails the simplest act of being human. Both extremes aren't healthy, but I do miss this collective spirit of being considerate and going out of one's comfort zone in helping others.

So, I would like to share the word *ruh*, which translates to the spirit, it's the feeling of your heart-beating and refers to something alive and shimmering. It is something that I think is missing in my life here.

S. Abdulazim (Centrum)



Mosaic seating outside the Peace Palace in The Hague.

“So, I would like to share the word *ruh*, which translates to the spirit, it's the feeling of your heart-beating and refers to something alive and shimmering. It is something that I think is missing in my life here.”
S. Abdulazim

منزل

[man-zil]
Urdu, Pakistan
Noun

EN
Destiny, Destination,
Path

NL
Bestemming,
Levenspad

I would really like to share the word *manzil*, which means destination. This Urdu word appears in a lot of poems and stories. I commissioned a bracelet from a Pakistani artist online a few years ago, and had one of my favorite poems engraved on it, which talks about *manzil*. And I just think it's a very interesting word, related to destiny.

The simple meaning of the word would be destination. But it's not normally used like that. Instead, the word has a much deeper meaning. When I say, 'Oh, this is not my *manzil* in life,' or 'This is not where I'm supposed to be,' or 'This is not my destination,' it refers to one's spiritual existence or destiny or faith.

My family traveled to The Hague from Pakistan, but I have lived here all my life. They traveled here for economic reasons, and have found their *manzil* in The Hague. For me though, I still feel like a passenger or a traveler. And I believe that this sense of destiny is pushing me or parts of my life in a certain direction, only not here.

A. Yusaf (Rijswijk)

Photo: A. Yusaf, 2023.

Poem on Bracelet (in Urdu)

*Tu Rah Na'ward-e-Shauq Hai;
Manzil na kar qabool*

"You are a traveller traversing the road
of love; Don't settle for your current
state or take rest from your mission"

Muhammad Iqbal

تفاءلوا خيراً تجدوه

[tafa-aluu khy-ran taji-duh]

Arabic, Yemen

Phrase

EN

Hope for good and
you shall find it

NL

Wie goed doet,
goed ontmoet

There is an Arabic saying that acts as a guiding principle in my life, ‘Be optimistic, you will find goodness.’ *Tafa’aluu khyran tajiduh*. It means looking at things with a positive and optimistic attitude, no matter how challenging the circumstances, and having confidence that things will get better in the future.

I am a person characterized by positivity and optimism. I left Yemen to complete my studies in business, and I had to say goodbye to many of my family members. Because of war, it was difficult to go back, and I had to say goodbye to my father, who died while I was here. It was very sad, but I cherish life and strive to instill vitality and motivation in my surroundings. The Hague, known as a city of peace and home to many institutions like the Binnenhof and the Peace Palace, has a uniquely optimistic spirit.

Every detail of this city exudes a spirit of optimism, whether it is in the encounters of people on its lively streets or in its ongoing efforts to promote understanding and peace through international dialogue and cooperation. I aspire to make a positive impact that leaves a lasting impression on my community. I believe that every day is an opportunity to bring about positive change that makes the world a better place.

M. Ghaleb Al-Amery (Laak)



The Binnenhof, The Hague.
Photo: Marjoline Delahaye
on Unsplash.

“The Hague, known as a city of peace and home to many institutions like the Binnenhof and the Peace Palace, has a uniquely optimistic spirit.”

M. Ghaleb Al-Amery

خوشحالی

[gho-shali]
Dari, Afghanistan
Noun

EN
Joy, Happiness

NL
Vreugde, Geluk

Our journey began in Afghanistan. We are originally from the city of Herat, but I lived most of my life in the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul. When the war started in 1979, we fled with my family to Pakistan. After five years, my father decided to move to the West for a better future for all of us. After living in a few different countries, like Belarus, Uzbekistan, we finally came to The Netherlands. My parents, my eldest brother and his family came here first.

When my family first arrived here, we were settled in an asylum center (in Dutch it's called *asielzoekerscentrum* or AZC). We are a family of 10 siblings: six sisters and four brothers. My eldest sister and her family left Pakistan and went back to Afghanistan; they never came with us to the West. Two of my brothers stayed behind in Belarus. From Belarus, one of my sisters and one of my brothers went to the UK. The rest of us all came to The Netherlands.

Because of our journeys, the word that I would choose is *ghoshali*. *Ghoshali* means joy and happiness. I really like it because I went through a very difficult time coming to the Netherlands, and not only me, but also my family. They say after every rain comes sunshine, and the sunshine for me is the *ghoshali* in life. The happiness and joy that we found in a safe country to continue our lives so that not only me but also my siblings could fulfill our dreams.

H. Hekat (Haagse Hout)



AZC, The Hague,
The Netherlands.
Photo: Frank Jansen.

“When my family first arrived here, we were settled in an asylum center. They say after every rain comes sunshine, and the sunshine for me is the *ghoshali* in life. It is the happiness and joy that we found in a safe country to continue our lives so that not only me but also my siblings could fulfill our dreams.”

H. Hekat

සාමය

[saa-maya]
Sinhala, Sri Lanka
Noun

EN
Peace

NL
Vrede

I grew up in a very remote village in Sri Lanka. It was very quiet there with not many activities or people. For some reason, I find The Hague has some very similar characteristics. Despite being a prominent Dutch city, it is hardly chaotic nor does it feel over crowded. In fact, I consider it peaceful, which is *saamaya* in Sinhalese.

Here in The Hague, if a place could magically connect me with Sri Lanka, it would be the Peace Palace (*Vredespaleis*). The entrance of the Peace Palace has the word 'Peace' inscribed in many languages, with one of them being *saamaya*.

After a 30-year civil war, we Sri Lankans believe our journey in pursuit of a prosperous country can only be built on the foundations of long lasting peace. For that we must believe in viewing our multi-ethnic, multi-religious society as our strength. That is why I associate The Hague with *saamaya*, as it is a demonstration of how an urban centre and seat of governance of a country can be so diverse and truly international in its composition and everyday life.

H. Hameem (Segbroek)



The Peace Palace, The Hague,
The Netherlands.

“Here in The Hague, if a place could magically connect me with Sri Lanka, it would be the Peace Palace (*Vredespaleis*). The entrance of the Peace Palace has the word 'Peace' inscribed in many languages, with one of them being *saamaya*.”

H. Hameem

அமைதியான

[amai-ti-yana]
Tamil, India
Noun

EN
Serenity
NL
Kalmte

I used to love cycling to Scheveningen and back at least once a week. It felt like being in a serene place, and I find it quite peaceful. I think there's a word for that feeling, *amaitiyana*. It's a good balance between modern buildings and the open vastness of the sea, people swimming and other activities like the Ferris wheel. I really find it fascinating.

That is what I like really about The Hague. Compared to my hometown back in India, which has about 20 million people, it's definitely more peaceful. In Indian cities everyday life is filled with a lot of hustle and bustle. There are just too many people. You hear a lot of cars, trucks and buses honking. I really cannot associate the word 'peaceful' to my city back home, by any means.

A. Elangovan (Centrum)



Scheveningen Pier.
Photo: Unsplash.

“I used to love cycling to Scheveningen and back at least once a week. It felt like being in a serene place, and I find it quite peaceful.”

A. Elangovan

Thiên Nhiên

[thi-yen ni-yen]
Vietnamese, Vietnam
Noun

EN
Nature

NL
Natuur

I was homesick for a long time, a very long time. In Vietnam, I used to live in the countryside. We ate fresh fish from the river, meat from the farm, vegetables from our garden or from the vendor who obtained these goods from farmers. It was all organic. The thing I missed most was *thi-yen ni-yen* or ‘pure nature’ if one were to translate it literally.

So it was a shock for me to find out that here, we have meat, fish and vegetables in cans. Fish doesn’t taste like the fish should taste, but has been frozen or cooked before we consume it. And the landscape here is filled with artificial or factory-made products. Nothing seems to be untouched, or directly from nature. Even the trees here are not allowed to grow without human intervention. It is only after coming to The Netherlands, I realized that we humans control the whole of nature. There is no place of nature here similar to the one I used to live in. Here, I need to rethink and adjust my whole social context and living environment.

The first month that I was in The Hague, every week I went a few times to Scheveningen. The beach clubs with the fresh drinks and cocktails and the seaside view helped to soften my feeling of homesickness. It was not exactly the same, but it did remind me of nature.

H. Pham (Rijswijk)



Rows of trees along straight canals in The Hague.

“Nothing seems to be untouched, or directly from nature. Even the trees here are not allowed to grow without human intervention. It is only after coming to The Netherlands, I realized that we humans control the whole of nature.”

H. Pham

幸福

[shing-fu]
Mandarin, Taiwan
Noun

EN
Fortune, Fortunate

NL
Geluk

Shing fu means fortune, or fortunate in Mandarin. It is actually a combination of two words. One is ‘幸’ or shing. *Shing* means lucky, or you can also say fortunate. ‘福’ or *fu* is fulfillment, well-being, and auspiciousness. When everything is good, it is *fu*.

Shing fu feels like, ‘Oh! How lucky am I to have this good fortune!’ I think it is the ultimate feeling of well-being in the material world that one can reach. When I feel happy, I always like to tell people that I feel very *shing fu*. Life can be a roller coaster, but in the end it is also balanced with good fortune. That is *shing fu*.

I have lived here for more than 20 years, and I perceive myself as Dutch in many ways. But maybe that feeling of *shing fu* is why I also did not feel like being in the Netherlands for too long a time. During Chinese New Year, there is a tradition where we make dumplings for the whole family, and hide a coin inside a few of them. If you find it, then it is considered very lucky. I try to carry on the tradition with my son here, but it does not feel the same. Everything in The Hague, or in the Netherlands is structured, and can feel excessively planned. To me it is like living in a Lego world.

Shing fu is all about luck. Our life is not always smooth. But when you find something by surprise and which is treasurable, you appreciate life a lot.

S. Liu (Centrum)



Preparing Chinese dumplings.
Photo: S.Liu.

“During Chinese New Year, there is a tradition where we make dumplings for the whole family, and hide a coin inside a few of them. If you find it, then it is considered very lucky. I try to carry on the tradition with my son here, but it does not feel the same.”

S. Liu

Saygı

[sai-geh]
Turkish, Turkey
Noun

EN
Respect

NL
Beleefdheid,
Manieren

Sometimes a word holds a much heavier weight than the meaning given to it in the process of translation. This is true for the Turkish word *saygı* or *saigeh* which translates as ‘respect’ in English. In Dutch and English, *saigeh* is much more than respect and much more than talking about manners, or the acts of giving respect or of being respected. In Turkish, it holds a much loftier and deeper value.

I think it’s more a language thing because the Turkish language is more complex and poetic. When I want to say something beautiful, I would rather say it in Turkish than in Dutch because the pronunciation is more lyrical. It’s like how sometimes people like to hear French because it has a romantic tone and sensibility. You would say the same about Turkish. If I write poems, I prefer to do it in Turkish because I can make it more beautiful or make it hold more meaning than when I do it in Dutch.

E. Sahin (Haagse Hout)

Basiswoordenboek Temel sözlük

Cover of a imagined Turkish/Dutch dictionary.

Nederlands – Turks
Turks – Nederlands

Hollandaca – Türkçe
Türkçe – Hollandaca

“If I write poems, I prefer to do it in Turkish because I can make it more beautiful or make it hold more meaning than when I do it in Dutch.”

E. Sahin

అర్థంచేసుకోవడం

[ard-ham che-su-ko-va-dam]
Telugu, India
Verb

EN
To Understand

NL
Begrijpen

I would say, there are a few words that I consider meaningful, but the one that immediately comes to mind is the word for ‘understanding’. In Telugu, we say *ardham chesukovadam*.

It is the courtesy of trying to understand the other person. There is a ‘ready to reject’ mentality that people have here, where – at least the ones I have met – when they first meet you, they immediately start thinking, ‘What are my reasons to reject this person?’

I think if someone understands, there is an acknowledgement that not everyone is the same. We have cultural differences that can conflict with each other in everyday interactions. So before trying to reject someone, we should at least give them the benefit of doubt – ‘Okay, is it because of where he came from? Maybe he doesn’t know this? Or does he mean something else?’ People (in the Netherlands) don’t even ask, ‘What do you mean?’. Instead, they write the person off and say, ‘Oh, okay.’

Because India is a country of thousands of languages, cultures, and religions, being quick to judge and quick to reject is not something that I think is common in Indian culture, and we try to find common ground. So understanding or *ardham chesukovadam* is a really nice word.

D. Buddha (Escamp)



Escamp, The Hague.
Photo: Vera de Kok on Wikimedia
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Commons License.

“There is a ‘ready to reject’ mentality that people have here, where when they first meet you, they immediately start thinking, ‘What are my reasons to reject this person?’”

D. Buddha

卷

[ju-an]
Mandarin, China
Adjective

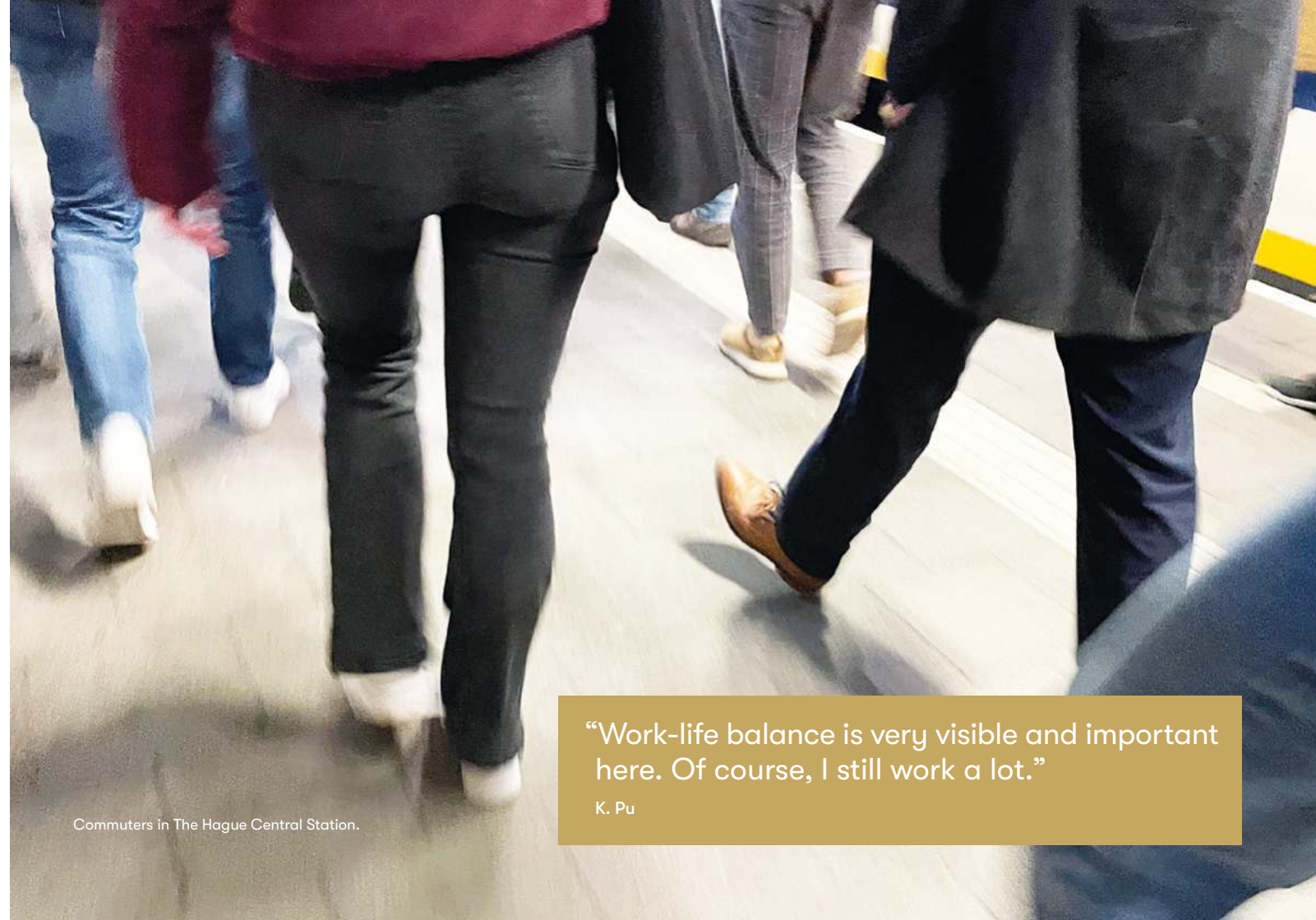
EN
Involute

NL
Inwikkeling,
verwikkeling

Juan (originally from ‘内卷’ or *neijuan*) is a popular expression online, and I use it to describe the current environment in China, whether it’s work or study. It is basically the feeling of being overworked and continuously coiled up. In China everyone is very competitive, so you are pressured to work more than needed, and become very tired. Since everyone is working, I am embarrassed to leave so I would rather stay and work longer. This is the same for other people. Everyone is desperately moving forward, but in fact, they are all very tired, you know? Then you’re not very productive, and then you’re working more than you should be able to tolerate, and that’s a vicious cycle.

When it comes to working in The Hague (or in Dutch culture), you learn or you work at your own pace, and it’s not so competitive. That feeling of *juan* is less present. Nobody here says this is how it needs to be done. Work-life balance is very visible and important here. Of course, I still work a lot. You will hear a lot of colleagues and bosses tell you not to put so much pressure on yourself. Then you have to learn how to create a work-life balance. You may work extra to finish your task, and they’re going to give you a lot of trust. They’re going to give you a lot of flexibility. It’s giving you a lot of freedom.

K. Pu (Haagse Hout)



Commuters in The Hague Central Station.

“Work-life balance is very visible and important here. Of course, I still work a lot.”

K. Pu

Gurbetçi

[gur-bet-schi]
Turkish, Turkey
Noun

EN
Immigrant,
Outsider

NL
Allochtoon,
Buitenstaander

I have lived in The Hague my entire life, but I was raised in Turkish culture. My parents are Turkish, but my dad moved here when he was 10 years old. He and I speak Dutch to each other while I speak Turkish with my mom. If I go back to Turkey, my extended family wouldn't consider me as Turkish because I have never lived there. They are not so familiar with the Netherlands or the Dutch language and somehow confuse it with German because a majority of Turkish immigrants live in Germany. So, whether you are in France or in Netherlands, it does not matter. You are just German for them.

We are called *gurbetschi* back in Turkey, which means immigrant. Here, we are also immigrants. When it comes to nationality, the question is like ... 'where do you belong?' I think that you will find generally not just Asian diaspora but all kinds of people with immigrant backgrounds is that they will never be able to find themselves 100% something because we have this identity crisis: 'Why are we here? Who are we?' That is the question.

E. Sahin (Haagse Hout)



Turkish flag displayed above market stall in The Hague Market (Haagsemarkt) in The Hague.

“We are called *gurbetschi* back in Turkey, which means immigrant. Here, we are also immigrants. When it comes to nationality, the question is like ... ‘where do you belong?’”

E. Sahin

Laban

[laa-ban]
Filipino, Philippines
Verb

EN
To Strive, To Fight
NL
Strijven, Vechten

It wasn't my wildest dream to have a restaurant in Den Haag. We bought it from a government auction, the previous owner was deported and they were looking for someone to take the entire property. We have been at our location in Centrum for almost 9 years, and I work very hard to run it, I'm usually here or at our Toko near Herengracht.

For the business, I always say 'I want to work hard for my money now because later on I want my money to work hard for me.' If I had to share one word about how I feel about work, it's *laban*. You can use it in different ways, when someone's facing a sort of challenge, with family or within yourself. When it happens, you are fighting against these obstacles and is something you say to keep on going, to never give up.

V. Knol-Tinapay (Centrum)



Interviewees enjoying the *kamayan* communal feast at Ms. Knol-Tinapay's restaurant, Baryo Pilipinas. Photo: Cha-Hsuan Liu, 2024.

“If I had to share one word about how I feel about work, it's *laban*.”
V. Knol-Tinapay

Masaya

[ma-sa-ya]
Filipino, Philippines
Adjective

EN
Joyful
NL
Blij

For a long time, I ran a restaurant in Chinatown. It was named after my son, and was originally a passion that my husband and I had to share Filipino food with people. We closed it last November but decided to continue it as a catering business instead. I am still very busy even though our restaurant has closed. We cater at special occasions as well and I'm still getting to pursue my hobby/passion which is cooking and baking. I feel so satisfied when I cater, compared to running a restaurant, because I have more time for myself and my family.

Every Sunday is a family day since my husband (who is an engineer) and son (who is a recent graduate and a financial analyst) are off work. We go to Mass, then we eat out and try different kinds of food like Thai, Japanese, Korean, and many more. We also go to the mall to watch movies. Sometimes we go shopping at The Hague shopping center in Centrum as everything one needs is available there.

Whether it is with my family or with my catering business, I am very joyful and satisfied, or *masaya* in Filipino, about our life in Den Haag. We are very thankful to God for everything. For me, whatever kind of work we do, as long as we're happy, that's the most important thing.

N. Lacorum (Centrum)

Lumpiang Shanghai, a Filipino fried spring roll, from Nordrick's Catering, Ms. Lacorum's home business in The Hague. Photo: N. Lacorum, 2024.

“For me, whatever kind of work we do, as long as we're happy, that's the most important thing.”

N. Lacorum

よろしくお願ひします

[yo-ro-shi-ku o-ne-gai shi-ma-su]
Japanese, Japan
Phrase

EN
Let's be good
to each other

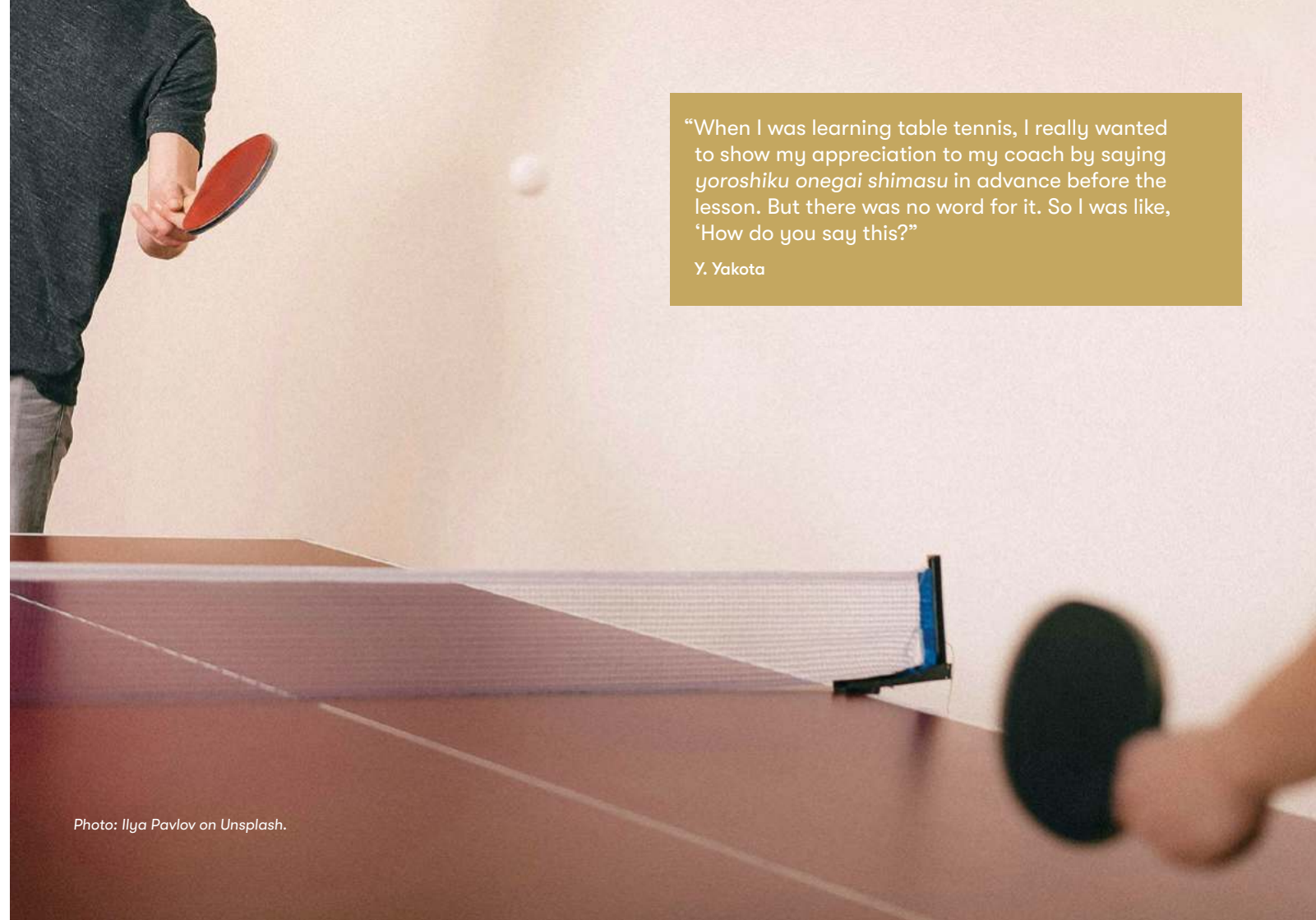
NL
Laten we goed
voor elkaar zijn

I was thinking about the Japanese phrase, *yoroshiku onegai shimasu*. It's often translated as 'thank you in advance' in English, but that's not really true. It's more like 'Let's do something good (without hurting each other) or something like that ... or 'let's be good to each other.' It is so hard to translate, but we use that phrase very, very often. We use it as a way to say that we look forward to talking or working with someone.

So in the beginning, my English and Dutch were not that great, but I really wanted to use this phrase. For example, when I was learning table tennis, I really wanted to show my appreciation to my coach by saying *yoroshiku onegai shimasu* in advance before the lesson. But there was no word for it. So I was like, 'How do you say this?'

I think Japanese people care a lot about relationships. Sometimes there is something negative, but you don't say it directly. It's better to keep harmony rather than get to the point critically, about what is right, or what is wrong. They understand that it is important to have harmony in relationships. Maybe that's why Japanese people are more indirect about conveying what is right, or what is wrong to one another. Through time, I started to appreciate that sense of respect, appreciating harmony. That's also a beautiful part of culture. When I was younger, I thought, 'Yeah, direct is better.' But now I'm more like both cultures, have positive sides.

Y. Yokota (Haagse Hout)



“When I was learning table tennis, I really wanted to show my appreciation to my coach by saying *yoroshiku onegai shimasu* in advance before the lesson. But there was no word for it. So I was like, ‘How do you say this?’”

Y. Yokota

Photo: Ilya Pavlov on Unsplash.

Мен сені жақсы көремін

[men se-ni jak-se kore-min]
Kazakh, Kazakhstan
Phrase

EN
I see you well

NL
Ik zie je graag

Technically there's no word or phrase in Kazakh for saying 'I love you.' When it comes to showing affection, we like to show it like Asians, with active service or encouragement in general. Kazakh people can come off as a bit reserved when it comes to overt affection. When you say *men seni jakse koremin*, it refers to more than just loving someone. It means you see or resonate well with the person that they are.

I'm in a different environment though here as a student, so there are different rules, different acceptable ways of behaving. I used to study at De Haagse Hogeschool, and for the most part I was with other international students. People are more verbally affectionate, so I just say it like everyone does. I like you. I love you. I don't mean it often, but I just say it because it's acceptable.

G. Yerezhinova (Centrum)



De Haagse Hogeschool, The Hague.
Photo: Denhaag.com

“I used to study at De Haagse Hogeschool, and for the most part I was with other international students. People are more verbally affectionate, so I just say it like everyone does. I like you. I love you. I don't mean it often, but I just say it cause it's acceptable.”

G. Yerezhinova

ياخشىمۇسىز

[yak-shimu-siz]
Uyghur, China
Phrase

EN
Peace be upon you

NL
Vrede zij met u

All people in Kashgar, the Uyghur autonomous region of Xinjiang in far western China, are mostly Muslim. When we see each other, we say *yakshimusiz*. It's a simple hello or a salutation showing mutual recognition. If it's someone I know such as a friend or a relative, we also hug and shake hands along with this greeting.

I am happy to be a Dutch citizen, but I came to the Netherlands as a refugee without my family. So I was homesick. When I moved to The Hague two years ago, it was because I wanted to meet more Uyghurs and to be close to the five or six families I knew who lived here. I know over 70 Uyghurs now, and I use this salutation in my restaurant on a daily basis. The way Uyghurs and Dutch people greet each other is very different, and so being able to say *yakshimusiz* helps with my homesickness.

M. Memet (Centrum)

M. Memet standing next to a rug depicting the Id Kah mosque hanging in his restaurant Pamir Uyghur, located in Centrum.
Photo: Enrico Joaquin Lapuz, 2023.

“I was born behind this mosque, the first and oldest mosque in East Turkestan. Every time I see this picture, I am reminded of my house. It was around 20 meters away from this mosque.”

M. Memet

สงกรานต์

[song-kraan]
Thai, Thailand
Noun

EN
New Year's day

NL
Oud en Nieuw

I think of Thai New Year or *Songkraan*. It's the beginning of the new year in Southeast Asia, in April. I have a Buddha statue in my house, I take it out of the cabinet and offer it some water, just as we celebrate the New Year in Thailand. I'm not particularly religious, but when I see the statue, I feel safe and at home.

Normally I do not celebrate *Songkraan* with other Thai people in the Netherlands. Instead I use the three days in April marked by the Thai New Year to clean my house, offer the Buddha water and call my family in Thailand. My husband is Austrian but we do these activities together because I also celebrate Christmas with his Austrian family, every year in December. However, last year I went to the Thai temple in Almere to celebrate *Songkraan* with my parents when they came visit me. There was Thai music, food, and other fun activities like building a sand pagoda, which I used to do in Thailand. The Embassy's staff was there as well and helped out with organizing the event for all of us Thai diaspora in the Netherlands.

What I miss the most from *Songkraan* here is the water fight. I understand they celebrate something similar in India with paint or powder. We celebrate it with water. It is because water symbolises purity. And since it's scorching hot, it's nice to splash water at each other as part of the festivities. However, here in the Netherlands, the month of April is still too cold to do that. Still, I always drop some water on my husband's shoulders, just to let him know that it's *Songkraan*.

W. Eichinger (Leidschenveen-Ypenburg)

Pouring water is a traditional ritual, meant to wash away one's sins and bad luck. Photo: W. Eichinger, 2023.



"I have a Buddha statue in my house, I take it out of the cabinet and offer it some water, just as we celebrate the New Year in Thailand. I'm not particularly religious, but when I see the statue, I feel safe and at home."

W. Eichinger

Pasar

[pa-sar]

Malay, Singapore

Noun

EN

Marketplace

NL

Markt

The Singaporean community in The Hague is not very large. But if someone is talking to me here, they will know I am from Singapore. If I am walking on the street, and someone hears me, they will say, ‘Oh, you are Singaporean!’ I don’t really know why other people can tell that I am Singaporean, but maybe there is a Singapore slang in my words.

Singaporeans are Chinese, Indian and Malay. But because the original inhabitants of Singapore were Malay, we are heavily influenced by the Malay language. Like, we have Malay names for our streets. And we like to say, ‘la la la’. That’s what you could call the Singapore slang.

For example, if I speak English, there is a Singapore slang to it, and similarly if I speak Dutch. There is a Chinese sound in the way I speak it. But if we go to China, they will know you are not Chinese the moment we speak. Well, we are Chinese, but not born in China.

I think a good example here is when going to the market, Chinese say, ‘big market’ (大市场), but we say, *pasar*. *Pasar* is Malay.

J. Lin (Bezuidenhout)



The Hague Market (Haagsemarkt) in The Hague.

“The Singaporean community in The Hague is not very large. If I am walking on the street, and someone hears me, they will say, ‘Oh, you are Singaporean!’”

J. Lin

Toko

[to-ko]
Bahasa, Indonesia
Noun

EN
Store
NL
Winkel

Toko means 'store' in Bahasa. In Indonesia, it's pretty flexible and can be any kind of retail shop. In The Hague, tokos are mostly food places, they might sell Asian groceries or serve Southeast Asian food like a small family-run canteen or restaurant. It used to be just groceries, but now it's not as clear.

The word is a sign that identifies itself as being Asian. It's more like a sign to gather, and enjoy some Asian food, usually Javanese/Surinamese or Indonesian. But really it's just any food that's not Dutch.

D. Sofia (Centrum)

It's a common word in Dutch. When we started our toko near Herengracht, Toko Pilipinas, during the pandemic, we needed to earn money. We do have a similar word in Filipino, *sari-sari*, but most people don't know what it means, unlike toko. It isn't just for Indonesian or Thai food anymore, so we used it.

V. Knol-Tinapay (Centrum)



Toko Pilipinas, The Hague.

“It's a common word in Dutch. When we started Toko Pilipinas during the pandemic, we needed to earn money. We do have a similar word in Filipino, *sari-sari*, but most people don't know what it means, unlike toko.”

V. Knol-Tinapay

Sayang

[sa-yang]
Malay, Singapore
Noun

EN

Love

NL

Schattig

[sa-yang]
Bahasa, Indonesia
Noun

EN

What a pity

NL

Jammer

Singapore is a melting pot of Southeast Asian cultures. However, there is this word *sayang* or S-A-Y-A-N-G. And everybody there, regardless of which language they speak at home, knows what *sayang* is and use it commonly as a term of endearment. *Sayang* means love. For example, you would call a child *sayang*. You would also, like, if you have a cat, and you stroke the cat, and you go, oh, *sayang* ... But it's not a direct translation of love because if you say, 'I love God', you don't say, 'I *sayang* God'. It's really weird. It's specifically used for a child for that feeling of love. Non-sexual. Not higher love. It's just, you know, that coziness. You love something or someone, but it's more like a loving word to call or refer to that thing or someone. You could also say between siblings, friends, for example.

Y. Smits (Haagse Hout)

The word that comes to mind is *sayang* in Indonesian because it means two things ... Well first of all it means love but it also means also kind of ... means like grief, like loss ... It's not all entirely positive because it has a negative meaning too, it's sort of how I feel about my life here. I love it but I also know that there's a lot of grief to loving... there's a lot of things that I have lost because I came here, One example is the familiarity with the native languages that I speak back home. I lost those by being here for a certain amount of time, and not making a serious effort to make friends who also speak the same language or make friends out of my comfort zone.

But now I think you know I didn't really approach much things with love. I look a lot in my last three years with a lot of grief. But I think that now I'm able to sort of access that love a little bit more because I'm able to take a little bit more distance from, you know, things, like cultural ideas and habits that I don't necessarily like about being here.

D. Sofia (Centrum)



Love locks on Scheveningen Pier.
Photo: Enrico Joaquín Lapuz, 2023.

“Like I love it but I also know that there's a lot of grief to loving ... there's a lot of things that I lost because I came here.”

D. Sofia

خانواده

[khane-va-deh]
Persian, Iran
Noun

EN
Family
NL
Familie

The word family or *khanevadeh*, has always been the most important word and concept to me. Ever since I can remember, I have tried to bring members of our family together.

Due to my father's job, we lived in different cities across Iran, so it was difficult for our extended family to gather often. However, there was a period of time when we had the opportunity to live in my father's hometown of Isfahan. Every weekend, during our time in Isfahan, was a time to gather together in the garden or at a relative's home for quality family and fun time.

Although I didn't form a family of my own after immigrating to the Netherlands, this idea of familial togetherness has always been valuable to me.

The Netherlands is a very law-abiding country, and part of the reason I value this is because of my upbringing. I grew up in a military family so my mindset is such that I like everything to be orderly, with no lies involved. Of course, lies exist everywhere, but I think they are less common here. All the laws and procedures here have been intelligently and thoughtfully set, and everything is systematic for the better. This has always been very important and what has convinced me to stay.

A.C. (Leidschendam-Voorburg)



Persians (Iranians) in the Netherlands
Celebrating Sizdeh-Bedar.
Photo: Pejman Akbarzadeh on
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Commons license.

“Ever since I can remember, I have tried to bring members of our family together.”

A. C.

自家人

[chi-ka-ngin]
Hakka, China
Noun

EN
family member(s);
one of us

NL
Eigen Familie

My wife and I emigrated from Suriname to the Netherlands. We are from there, but we are descended from the Hakka group of Han Chinese. We have been in the Netherlands for a long time now though, so now when I think, it is in Dutch instead of in Chinese. My family and I used to live near Zuiderpark in the 80s, and I would play football with my friends from Schilderswijk (a neighborhood in Centrum), whose families had lived in Den Haag for multiple generations. We were very close to them, they did not treat us differently because we were Chinese. They let us into their family system, and were always welcomed.

When I think about sharing a particular word, since we are talking about the feeling of family, I think about *chikangin*. I am part of a Chinese cultural organization here, and whenever we see other Hakka Chinese in the congress - everywhere, in The Hague, Singapore, and Malaysia, we refer to each other as *chikangin*. It is used in a similar way to 'bro' in English. There is a feeling of familiarity, you feel at home... you belong somewhere. That we are family, we stick together. *Chikangin*.

So, every time you meet Hakkanese, you can always just say *chikangin*. And then the door is open. If I hear somebody speak in the Hakka language, the first thing that comes out of my mouth is likely 'Oh, *chikangin*.'

M. Chang (Leidschenveen-Ypenburg)



Photo: Mari Carmen del Valle Camara on Unsplash.

“My family and I used to live near Zuiderpark in the 80s, and I would play football with my friends from Schilderswijk. They let us into their family system and were always welcomed.”

M. Chang

माताजी; पिताजी

[maa-taa-jee; pi-taa-jee]
Hindustani, Suriname
Noun

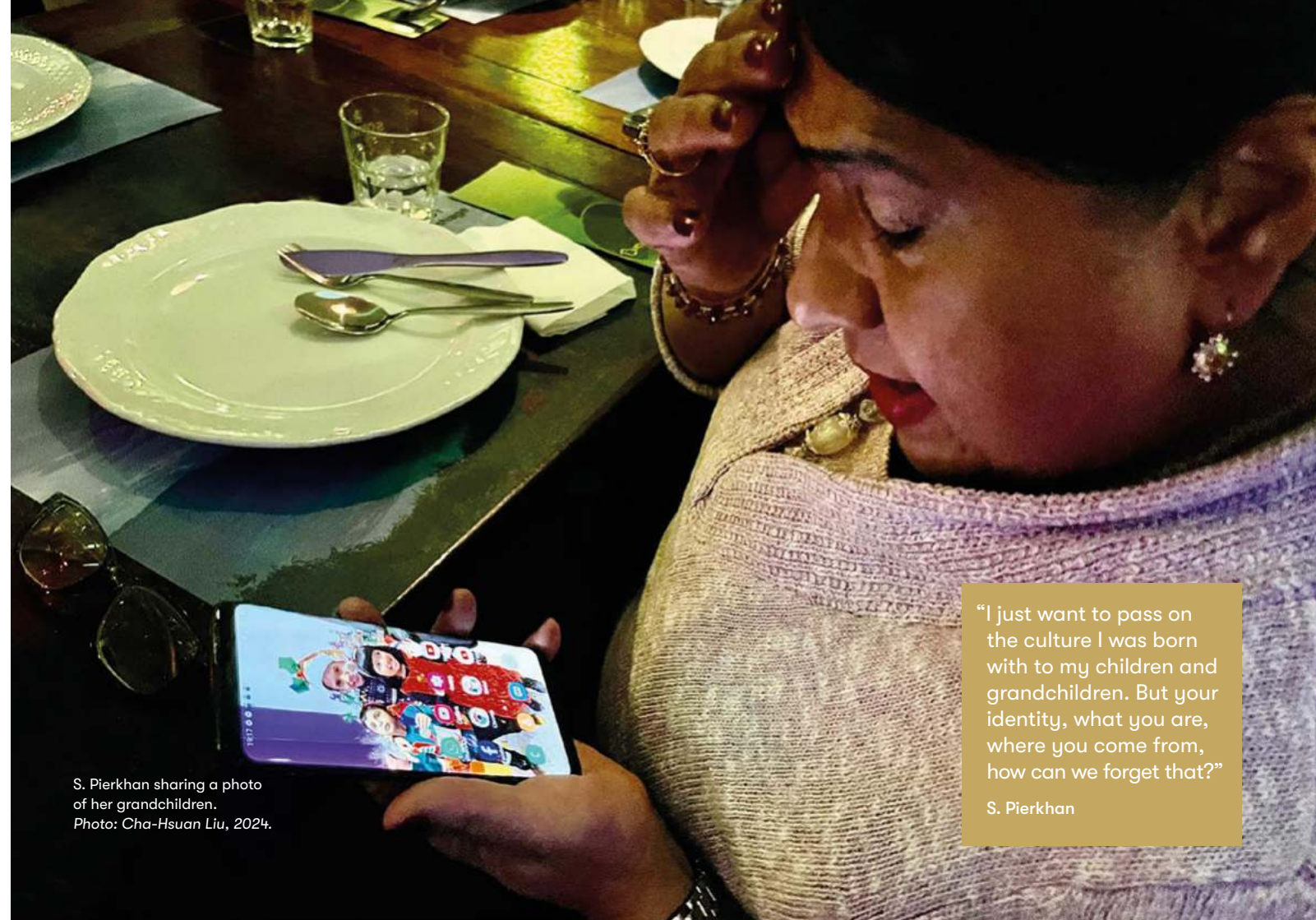
EN
Mother, Father

NL
Mama, Papa

When we talk about a word with emotional load ... that's always the word we use for our parents, right? In Hindi it's *maataajee* and *pitaajee*. I do speak Hindustani with my children, yes. They understand everything, but they don't speak much. And for my grandchildren, these are a few Hindustani words they understand. We mostly speak Dutch at home, but it is often mixed with Hindi words in between.

I just want to pass on the culture I was born with to my children and grandchildren. I am Hindustani, born in Suriname, but of Indian ancestry. I arrived in the Netherlands at the age of 17 and have lived here ever since. My children and my grandchildren were born and brought up in the Netherlands, and see themselves as Dutch citizens. But your identity, what you are, where you come from, how can we forget that? I like to think I'm Hindustani. But I'm also Dutch. So you could say I'm Dutch-Hindustani.

S. Pierkhan (Segbroek)



S. Pierkhan sharing a photo of her grandchildren.
Photo: Cha-Hsuan Liu, 2024.

“I just want to pass on the culture I was born with to my children and grandchildren. But your identity, what you are, where you come from, how can we forget that?”

S. Pierkhan

Compilers' notes

Over a period of three months in 2023, HAB researchers, a team of student from Leiden University College The Hague (LUC), and a few volunteers reached out to a variety of people with Asian backgrounds living in The Hague. We endeavored to find as diverse a group as we could in an attempt to provide a wider linguistic variation and stories. Our interviewees were of different age groups, occupations, and living in the different districts that make up The Hague. The group of volunteers first met with the researchers at an HAB workshop conducted in LUC, where they were introduced to the project and its overall goals. The volunteers also got a chance to practice how to conduct an interview amongst themselves and received feedback.

It was originally envisioned to match an interviewer with an interviewee who spoke the same native language, however this proved to be difficult to find interviewers representing the diversity of language. To address this, interviewers spoke with the interviewees in the common language they were most comfortable with, which was often English or Dutch. These were then recorded and transcribed for compilation. While presented as an interview, the informal structure allowed for the interviewee to dictate the flow of the conversation, with the researcher asking prompting questions about their life to obtain as many details as possible. A general topic list was used by the researchers to help guide these prompting questions during the orientation session. Questions like “What is one place in Den Haag that plays an important role in your

daily life” or “What is something you encounter here that reminds you of your homeland” would then open up the conversation to details specific to the person and their story (ie. the feelings associated behind their answers), which were followed up on to get insight into the person’s voice and their relationship to The Hague.

Being residents of The Hague and having come from Asian backgrounds ourselves (Philippines and Taiwan), we have a personal connection to this project, a connection that brought on self-reflection on what it means to be a member of Asian diasporas and how we are meant to present the stories of those interviewed. This connection was amplified once we made contact with our interviewees. In the end, this responsibility led to some difficulty in putting together

the final list of words and presenting the stories, as the concept of the project during this stage often clashed with the traditional role of an academic researcher. Conventional research requires the researcher to act as a bridge between their subject and the rest of the world, interpreting and representing their stories on their behalf. However, in doing so, this perpetuates an “outsider looking in” or top-down point of view that inevitably takes away from the voices of the interviewees themselves. In participating in this project, not only were we as researchers able to connect with our interlocutors, but many members of the Asian diaspora were able to meet and connect with each other, further enriching our local communities in The Hague.

Joaquin Lapuz (Philippines, Laak),
Cha-Hsuan Liu (Taiwan, Centrum)

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Мен сені жақсы көремін

Pasar

Saygi

خانواده

خوشحالی

அமைதியான

Toko

Thiên Nhiên

تفاءلوا خیرًا تجدوه

自家人

Sayang



Universiteit
Leiden

Leiden University College
The Hague