

Nationalism without Linguism?

Reevaluating the Chinese orthography in the context of language revitalization

Fang-Yu Wang

Abstract

Language revitalization has been promoted globally over the past 50 years. Of the four main types of writing systems widely identified---logographic, alphabetic, semi-syllabic, and consonantal---logographic writing has been the least desirable in language maintenance programs because of its low efficiency in the transmission of phonetic features. Chinese characters represent a logographic system that has been in use for more than 4000 years and is shared by roughly 200 unwritten regional languages. According to Susan Blum, Chinese nationalism, unlike cases of European nationalism, features a lack of linguism, or the notion that speech plays a central part in identity construction. Because Chinese people share language mainly through writing, despite the fact that this writing is based on the standard speech of the Beijing dialect, spoken varieties have received little attention from either the government or the public. Starting from this point, my paper aims to explore the idea of “Chinese linguism” in relation to its writing system. It argues that there is no lack of linguism in China. In fact, Chinese nationalism has long been promoted through the implementation of a linguism which favors the northern dialects and neglects other language varieties. It is “linguism for nationism” (a term coined by Joshua A. Fishman) rather than “nationalism without linguism.” This explains why the use of minority languages in politically sensitive regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet is discouraged or oppressed. Sociolinguists have long warned of the dominance of Chinese characters; as a result, there is a real fear that Mandarin will impede the revitalization of many endangered minority languages in China. Such linguism masterfully incorporates itself with orthography as well as speech and is in its nature a form of imperialism.

Keywords: language revitalization, Chinese orthography, linguism, nationalism, nationism

Nationalism without Linguism?

Reevaluating the Chinese orthography in the context of language revitalization

In theory, all varieties of language are equal. In essence, all human beings have the same ability to communicate all ideas...Yet this is not our perception of how the world works. We all assume that some languages possess greater economic and political resources than do others. The source of these inequalities is power. This power can often be expressed in terms of national prestige. ----- Robert McColl Millar

Language Death as a Moral Issue

The world's diminishing linguistic diversity has drawn solicitous attention from the international critics in the past fifty years. As is unanimously recognized, different local languages contain different local wisdoms, and every language demonstrates a distinctive way of life. It is linguistic and cultural diversity that ensures the permanent development of human civilization. The death of a language, therefore, equals the loss of a cultural heritage. Whether a language stays in continuous use decides the future survival of the culture that supports the use of the very language and the vitality of a language is assessed by the number of speakers it has. When a language becomes endangered, it often suffers from a decline in the number of young speakers. As sociolinguists have shown us, endangered language communities are often politically, economically, or culturally marginalized due to invasion, colonization, occupation and other forms of subordination. The imposition of a foreign language often leads to distorted perceptions of the value of mother tongues. Linguistic rights are part of human rights, and it is crucial that all language communities receive an education that enables their members to acquire full command of their own languages. In light of this, many countries have adopted multi-lingual policies that help maintain linguistic diversity and avert ethnic discrimination. These countries rightly perceive that the death of a language parallels the death of a specific culture. They further understand that the loss of a culture also exacts extensive (and potentially irreversible) political costs. However, the twin phenomena of less dialect variation and increasing language standardization and homogenization continue undeterred. Today's dominant languages continue to replace and eradicate other smaller languages. As such, English is the obvious "killer" language in Europe, Spanish in South America, Russian in the Soviet Union, Arabic in North Africa, and Mandarin in China and Taiwan. However, such linguistic and cultural homogenization makes it much easier for alien politicians to penetrate other societies in turn allowing for more non-native laws and beliefs to infiltrate government. Here, the curse of the biblical Tower of Babel is in fact a blessing; a multiplicity of languages and barriers to communication ensure the survival of minority groups.

The problem of disappearing native languages has initiated discussions particularly in the field of sociolinguistics. Michael Krauss considers it “a plausible calculation that—at the rate things are going—the coming century will see either the death or the doom of 90% of mankind’s languages” (1997:7). David Crystal warns that “to meet that time frame, at least one language must die, on average, every two weeks or so” (19). According to UNESCO’s *Initiative B@bel*¹, more than 90% of content on the internet exists in only 12 languages. Therefore, without independent writing systems, speakers of more than 6000 languages are denied the access to the Internet unless they can read one of the dominant languages. *Ethnologue* estimates that 96% of the world’s 6912 known languages are spoken by just 4% of the population, and nearly 2.4 billion people speak one of the 8 dominant languages: Mandarin, Spanish, English, Bengali, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian, and Japanese. In his definition, the endangered languages are those “coming to be used progressively less and less throughout the community, with some of the functions they originally performed either dying out or gradually being supplemented by another language” (Crystal 21). However, resuscitating vanishing languages can be a rather difficult task due to language’s inherent social and political value. Ideas about language are strongly connected to nationalism. As Benedict Anderson points out, the birth of nationalism requires an official/national language and orthography. Yet large countries commonly legislate national languages only at the cost of the marginalization and/or annihilation of other languages within the larger nation state’s political boundaries. The implementation of Monolingualism targets to diminish the use of smaller languages to ensure the survival and importance of another, larger language. Such implementation embodies linguistic imperialism, or an ideology acting upon “nation-nationism²” according to Joshua Fishman’s terminology.

According to *Ethnologue*³, the number of languages listed for China is 236. Of those, 235 are living languages and one (Jurchen) is extinct. Minority nationalities constitute roughly 6.5 % of the population and Han Chinese comprise about 93.5%. Due to geographical separation, people in different regions have developed numerous local languages, each with its own dialect group. The term “Chinese” is a generalized and collective term for 14 independent language groups: Gan, Hakka, Huizhou, Jinyu, Mandarin, Min Bei, Min Dong, Min Nan, Min Zhong, Pu-Xian, Wu, Xiang, and Yue. The more astonishing fact is that 211 languages within the Chinese territory are not labeled as “Chinese” in the language file of *Ethnologue*. A single form of “Chinese language or speech” is therefore an imagined term. However, a single writing system of Chinese characters has remained.

¹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001398/139844e.pdf>

² Some critics term it “civic nationalism,” which is opposed to “ethnic nationalism.”

³ http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=CN

Other than the case of Mandarin speech, the majority of regional languages in China do not have an independent writing system. Several facts are involved in such a phenomenon: First, Chinese governments have long focused on the development of Mandarin speech and have simultaneously disseminated a view that non-Mandarin speeches are nothing but “dialects” of Mandarin which possess no official status. Second, owing to the government’s linguistic stigmatization of minority languages, regional language speakers fail to recognize that their speech is just as fully-fledged as Mandarin which deserves an independent orthography. As a result, local populations mistakenly believe that the unified Chinese orthography is the only orthography for all local Han and most non-Han groups in China and that their speeches are merely “dialects” of Mandarin. The persistent denigration of small languages by the Chinese government has led many minority speakers to regard their languages as inferior to standard Mandarin and to accept Chinese characters. The legitimacy of Mandarin as the official language is rarely questioned. Third, China’s consistently high rate of illiteracy has been linked to the poor design of Mandarin characters. Chinese characters are numerous and complex in shape and deficient in sound indication. As a result, students find it difficult to learn and master them in writing. Besides, the illiterate population in China, mostly composed of those in the lower social strata, does not find writing necessary in life since local population mainly communicates with each other in local speeches rather than through writing. The speech-based community creates a vicious circle that on the one hand gradually reinforces the high social status of Mandarin and on the other impedes the development of local writing systems. Fourth, most of the well-educated regional intellectuals choose to be incorporated into the center of a power structure that favors Mandarin speech. When speaking Mandarin enables them to gain profits and privileges, they are willing to ignore the stigmatization of their mother tongue and maintain the status quo. Fifth, whenever a self-aware nationalist sentiment is detected in a region, it always receives immediate criticism or suppression from the Chinese government with its strong military force. When ethnic groups live under linguistic surveillance and warnings from the government, they rarely speak their minds or fulfill their nationalist aspirations.

However, the significance of these regional languages lies in that each is a fully-fledged linguistic system for an independent cultural entity. A region’s specific cultural products or ways of life can be expressed to the greatest extent only in its very language. Having neither a writing system nor governmental support does not harm their de facto independence in the field of linguistics. If an independent language does not have a writing system, there is often a need to create one, not a need to adopt any existing one that fails to express the language well. It is thus a misconception for local language speakers in China to regard characters as the only possible medium to represent all the linguistic varieties within the political territory of China. However, it is understandable that China, like the other countries, needs an

official language for administration, but the problem is that the adoption of a Mandarin-speech-based orthography is not a fair linguistic policy. In light of this, Chinese monolingualism has chiefly taken its roots in orthography rather than speech.

If monolingualism exists in China, why didn't these regional speeches die out? Regional speeches in China may have survived such a monolingual policy because of three possible factors: first, the size of the nation and the huge number of speakers of each language makes it difficult for a foreign language to replace the use of regional languages, at least over the course of a short period of time. Second, the uneven regional development and limited opportunities to school education hinders the spread of standard speech. Third, there has been an insufficient supply of qualified Mandarin teachers, particularly in remote areas, to supply demand.. As a result, the multilingual reality in today's China is actually a structural (demographic) and historical coincidence and has nothing to do with tolerance from the government. This point has been proven in the discouragement of minority languages in Tibet, Xinjiang and other "headache areas" for China. It demonstrates that the Chinese government will do anything to deter any nationalist sentiment based on either language or ethnicity. No tolerance has been observed. Since language is a central element in the birth of nationalism, lack of language awareness naturally leads to a lack of nationalism that features self-determination. Therefore "Chinese nationalism" becomes a problematic term. It is at best a product of official propaganda that tries to call for an unquestioned recognition of the ruling government from the people of diverse speeches and ethnicities.

In the article, *Nationalism without Linguism: Tolerating Chinese Variants*, Susan Blum quotes Clifford Geerts' discussion on "linguicism," a term to be explored later, to initiate her arguments. According to Geerts, linguicism is not an inevitable outcome of linguistic diversity not only because primordial conflicts can occur where no marked linguistic differences are involved but because numerous countries with great confusion of tongues do not demonstrate linguistic conflicts as a primary social concern. Blum follows Geerts' argument and develops an analysis of China's multilingual society. She ascribes this multilingual reality to China's tolerance towards the other spoken languages of China besides Mandarin. She describes China as "a type of society that is common in the world at present but that is quite different from the contemporary linguistic view of monolingualism that accompanies nationalism. (135)" In this society, an official language exists to represent the elite and the polity; most people do not speak this official language and the government "has little official concern about their lack of competence. (135)" In terms of this claim, Blum obviously fails to take the role of Chinese writing into consideration. All she mentions is the current speaking varieties in China. The political promotion of learning the single "authorized" Chinese orthography at the cost of the other possible or existing writing systems is entirely disregarded.

According to Blum, three types of society in terms of language are observed: boundary contesting, boundary shrugging, and boundary celebrating. Boundary contesting societies demand a national language that represents the polity; boundary shrugging societies refer to those nations that tolerate linguistic differences without demanding a unified speech. China belongs to the category of boundary shrugging for three reasons:

1. Linguistic difficulties are rarely mentioned in Chinese contexts.
2. Most attention in China has been paid to the written form of the language, and most people are scarcely aware of the characteristics of speech. Though there has been concern with literacy, it has not led to oppression of variation.
3. Many people acquire multiple varieties easily and often, leading to a disposition that tolerates linguistic differences. (137)

The above argument of Blum appears quite problematic if examined from the viewpoints on China's linguistic reality that have been previously enumerated. This paper thus aims to examine Blum's problematic logic in terms of China's multilingual reality and to scrutinize the problem of Chinese orthography as well as its influence on the historical formation of Chinese nationalism/nationism. In addition, from the perspective of language maintenance, it aims to reveal the hidden hegemony embedded in China's language policy and to uncover the ruthless nature of the Chinese rule over its "sensitive" minority areas. Based on Joshua Fishman's thesis on the relation between nationalism and language, it foregrounds one question: Does the language debate within China represent nationalism or nationism?

Nationalism or Nationism?

China's language policy, like most of its policies that favor the Han people, shows a strong emphasis on the promotion of a standard Han language. The speech, called *Putonghua* in China, *Guoyu* in Taiwan and Mandarin Chinese in the West, is taught to all Han and non-Han Chinese children. As China's language policy portrays, an imperial tendency is detected in the promotion of a standard official language attached with an ideography-based writing system. To avoid ambiguity, several loaded key terms should be defined first. According to UNESCO's 1953 report on *The Uses of Vernacular Languages in Education*⁴, a national language is defined as "the language of a political, social, and cultural entity," and an official language is "a language used in the business of government--legislative, executive and judicial." Vernacular, on the other hand, is defined as "a language which is the mother tongue of a group which is socially or politically dominated by another group speaking a

⁴ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000028/002897EB.pdf>

different language. We do not consider the language of a minority in one country as a vernacular if it is an official language in another country.” Regional language is “the language which is used as a medium of communication between peoples living within a certain area who have different mother tongues. (46)”

Discussions on the relation between language and nation are prolific. Heinz Kloss points out that a nation-state is defined as a state with a single official language which is also the mother tongue of the population majority. If a country has more than two official languages, it is a “multi-national state.” If the official language of a country is an imported language rather than a regional mother tongue, it is at best a “nationism-state” rather than a “nationalism-state.” A clear distinction between nationism and nationalism is crucial here. They are two key organizing dynamics that direct the development of a national language. In the nineteenth century the word, “nationalism” for Europeans referred to a political movement or a process of growing self-consciousness based on a feeling of common ethnicity. Of the several criteria for ethnicity, shared language is often paramount (Berghe 215). Today, this classical definition still prevails, but for most developing nations in the 20th century, nationalism broadly equals anti-colonialism. The term “nationism,” on the other hand, was coined by Joshua Fishman in 1968 and explained in his article *Nationality-Nationalism and Nation-Nationism*. Nationism refers to an attempt to form a collective identity from a disparate group of people. In the case of nationism, the forming of a nation takes precedence over the forming of national sentiment. The operation of nationalism aims at sociocultural integration while nationism pays attention to political- geographical integration:

Where the political boundaries are most salient and most efforts are directed toward maintaining or strengthening them, regardless of the immediate sociocultural character of the populations they embrace, we might prefer a term such as *nationism*. (42)

Simply put, nationalism is the process of “transformation from fragmentary and tradition-bound ethnicity to unifying and ideologized nationality (41)” though the conceptualization of nationality does not necessarily conform to the actual politico-geographical boundaries. On the contrary, nationism concerns “a politico-geographic base on which these sociocultural transmissions of ethnicity and nationality are realized. (41)”

The choice of a national language is closely connected with either nationalism or nationism. In nationalism-directed language policies, a national language is usually a prominently idealized symbol. In order to foster nationalistic unity, the policy may pay much attention to the maintenance, reinforcement and enrichment of that language. Conversely, when the policy is directed by nationism, it aims to enhance horizontal rather than historical integration, and: “Quick language choice and wide

spread literary language use become crucial to the nation's functional existence per se. (43)" Nationalism emphasizes the sociocultural function (authenticity) while nationism emphasizes the political function (spread efficiency) of a language:

It is nationalism that views self-identity, group-identity and self-identity through group-identity as impossible (unthinkable) without a particular language rather than merely without a common language. For nationism, language questions are initially not questions of authenticity (identity) but of efficiency (cohesion). Only after efficiency seems likely can attention be divided between it and the search for as unified a version of national authenticity as is feasible. (44)

Fishman provides a typical case of a nationism-based language policy. Many new nations in Africa would rather choose foreign tongues as their national languages in order "to minimize internal linguistic divisiveness as they do not put any indigenous language at an undue advantage as the language of nationhood (46)." Such policies often result in a diglossian society where all nationals need to learn another language which is different from their indigenous mother tongues and used only in official and political domains.

Based on Fishman's theory, the language policy in China is a case of nationism since its main aim in promoting a standard Mandarin speech is political integration. It is a nation trying to form a unanimous nationalism by way of strong political interference. As for cultural integration that may stimulate people's sentiments of nationality within the territory, CCP leaves the job to the dissemination of the historically prestigious and widely accepted orthography of Chinese characters. This writing system is a readily available tool that helps reinforce the mythical idea of "Chinese nationalism." Very often people may mistakenly regard Chinese society as "diglossian." The term does not apply because Mandarin, the language used in the higher domain, is the mother tongue of a privileged small group of people in China who do not need to learn any other speech for higher social mobility.

Since ethnicity and language are two core elements that nationalism originated from, the Chinese government does not allow any chance for either case to happen. Its hegemonic nationism functions in two ways. On the one hand, it tries to build a mirage to convince people that the worldly specific, historical writing system of Chinese orthography is proof that China is a cultural and ethnic unity, regardless of the fact that hundreds of languages are spoken in China. Accordingly, all regional cultures are subordinated to the greater "Chinese culture," and all the specific ethnic groups in China belong to the abstract idea of "Chinese ethnicity (中華民族)." This ideology has been further propagated in education and media. Many ethnic groups within the territory are gradually persuaded and regard themselves as "Chinese." On the other hand, CCP attempts to prevent regional linguistic awareness through the

education and social immersion of standard Mandarin speech. Mandarin is the only official speech in the government; therefore, those who want to get a better job need to be fluent in Mandarin. The policy proves effective because more and more young people in China today speak better Mandarin than their parents, sometimes to the extent that their Mandarin is better than their mother tongue. Besides, with the wide spread of computer technology and mass media, particularly TV programs and songs, the opportunity of people's contact with Chinese orthography and Mandarin speech has been greatly increased. As regional people half-compulsorily and unconsciously immerse themselves in an environment unfriendly to the development of their mother tongues, these tongues without independent writing systems will gradually be replaced and disappear sooner or later. People's lack of either ethnic or linguistic awareness guarantees CCP a better chance to stay in power, maintain the de jure national territory and sociopolitical integration, and eventually extend its influence to the other regions in Asia. The mechanics behind its policy is completely totalitarian. It is nationalism operated at the cost of hundreds of indigenous speeches.

Nevertheless, people may still ask: could it be possible for these speeches to be preserved in Chinese characters? Edward M. Gunn provides an optimistic answer, but his point only applies to the varieties of Mandarin rather than all the regional languages in China. Besides, like Blum, Gunn ignores the poor performance of sound indication resulting from the logographic design of Chinese script. According to him, regional languages can be preserved with characters because regional populations are able to use characters to create local cultural terms. These terms contribute new elements to the traditional writing system and at the same time stand as a mark of regional identities. Local operas, puppet theater, story tellers and ballad singers in the past and popular music, films and video at present have all required written expression in local languages. Regional languages then serve as sites of cultural production. Like what happens in Taiwan and Hong Kong, such productions "could construct the nature of that culture, and through these affirm the existence and value of such a community. (204-6)" What Gunn fails to see is that Hong Kong and Taiwan are both economically advanced and culturally independent locations with histories very different from that of the Mandarin speaking areas in China. Without the support of economic capital and modern technologies, regional languages used in remote and primitive areas have little access to higher cultural domains and will in turn be marginalized and sacrificed. Besides, without official recognition from the government, standard Mandarin will continue its privileged association with symbolic capital and social status. The retention of local languages will be at stake as the standard speech is spread through education. Moreover, the adoption of characters poses another problem. As most linguists engaged in language maintenance projects have pointed out, Chinese orthography is not only one of the oldest logographic writing systems still in use but also one of the most inefficient orthographies for language preservation.

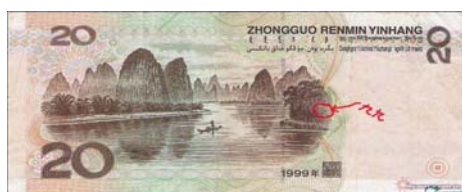
Chinese Orthography in Question

The creation of symbols to encode a spoken language is a precondition for any literacy in that language. Local literacy is a commonly desired aim of revitalization efforts. When it comes to writing, four main types of writing systems are generally identified throughout the world: logographic, alphabetic, semi-syllabic and consonantal. Both alphabetic and consonantal systems use single symbols to represent individual phonographic segments. Semi-syllabic writing systems use single symbols to represent syllables. A logographic system, however, use graphic signs to present neither a sound nor a syllable, but words and morphemes (Grenoble & Whaley 139). Chinese-derived writing systems are often connected with Confucianism. Confucianism is a code of conduct that has been directing the lives of Han Chinese since the Han dynasty (2nd century B.C.). It is an ancient Chinese ethical and philosophical system originally developed from the teachings of the early Chinese philosopher, Confucius. It is a complex behavior-shaping system made up of moral, social, political, and philosophical thoughts that has tremendously influenced on the culture and history of East Asian countries. Since Confucianism originated in ancient China and its main ideas are recorded in Chinese characters, characters have become a direct symbol of Chinese culture. Approximately, there are about 60000 characters in a Chinese dictionary. According to the CCP government, one is considered literate if s/he recognizes 800 characters. To be considered educated, one has to know about 6000 characters to read and write. However, recognizing these characters does not guarantee the mastery in article reading or writing. Words or phrases combined by different numbers of characters must be learned too. As a result, characters present “a barrier to full literacy, yet successive efforts at language reform have been powerless to bring any substantial change. (Hodge and Louie 46)”

Bob Hodge and Kam Louie regard Chinese characters as the “Chinese ideological machine” because of the two features that make Chinese unique: firstly, its writing system is more saturated with ideological functions and ideological content than any other writing systems. Secondly, this writing system has existed longer than any rival systems. According to them, however, its most miraculous achievement is that it also “plays an important role in holding together the idea of China across the many different sites and systems of Chinese diaspora and seems to operate so elegantly without apparent interventions from outside. (49)” In other words, this writing system “carries with it an ideological underpinning of traditional Chinese culture. (61)” The process of learning Chinese characters becomes a process of committing to the memory of Chinese history and cultural values such as ethnic relationships, social categorizations, power structures, and philosophical heritages. Despite the fact that the characters are not an efficient means of communication even for common native speakers of Chinese, this process has survived for thousands of years mainly because of one reason:

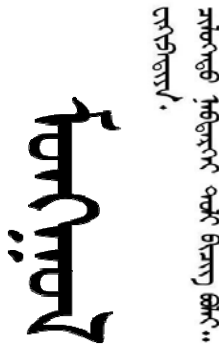
Given the fact that the social power and privilege rest on a knowledge of these characters, it is not surprising that those who have made the effort and succeed in mastering the written language would be reluctant to support drastic reforms which would result in the simplification or abolition of these characters. As a Chinese language expert remarks, the greatest opposition for language reform comes primarily from intellectuals, especially from high-level intellectuals. (Hodge and Louie 62)

Some Chinese revolutionary writers, such as Lu Xun in the 1930s, have denounced the script as a major obstacle to mass literacy, but abolishing it or superseding it with one of the other writing systems seem to be rather difficult and even impossible in the near future. However, most the discussions so far on characters have centered on the literacy of Han languages. As for ethnic minority languages in China, such as Mongolian, Tibetan and Manchurian, their writing systems are marginalized to the extent that almost no attention has been paid to them in these discussions. The pictures below demonstrate the writing symbols of these languages. On the back side of the bills issued by the Chinese government today, four minority languages are printed on the top right.



Four minority languages are printed on the top right⁵: Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur, and Zhuang.

⁵ The images of RMB are available on numerous websites. This image file is retrieved from <http://ox.icxo.com/htmlnews/2006/07/05/873200.htm>



Mongolian⁶



Manchu⁷

漢文訓字(-)

漢文訓字(-) 漢文訓字(-) 漢文訓字(-)

ka 漢人	k'a 漢人	k'a 漢人	pa 漢人	tea 茶	te'a 茶	te'a 茶	na 那
ku 漢人	ku 漢人	ga 葛	ngu 古	ca 茶	ca 茶	ja 家	nye 那
ta 他	r'a 他	r'a 他	na 那	pa 他	p'a 他	p'a 他	ma 馬
tsa 他	ts'a 他	ts'a 他	wa 他	ca 茶	ca 茶	a 他	ya 他
za 他	la 他	ga 他	sa 他	ha 他	a 他		

ka	k'a	k'a	pa	tea	te'a	te'a	na
ku	ku	ga	ngu	ca	ca	ja	nye
ta	r'a	r'a	na	pa	p'a	p'a	ma
tsa	ts'a	ts'a	wa	ca	ca	a	ya
za	la	ga	sa	ha	a		
tu	lu	sha	sa	ka	ca		

Tibetan⁸

Uighur Alphabet	ق ك گ ل م ن ه ئو ئۆ ئۇ ئى ئې
English Alphabet	f g h x s j z r d h q j t p b e a
Uighur Latin Alphabet **	f g h x s j z r d h q j t p b e a
Uighur Alphabet	ق ك گ ل م ن ه ئو ئۆ ئۇ ئى ئې
English Alphabet	y i e v ü ö u o h n m l n g k kh
Uighur Latin Alphabet **	y i e v ü ö u o h n m l n g k k

Uyghur⁹

字 形 音 义 文 字	古壮字	新壮文	标 音	对应汉字	
自创字	𠵼	gvaz	ku ²	上	
会意字	𠵼	lej	ka ³	下	
形声字	左形右声	𠵼	bya	pja ¹	鱼
	右形左声	𠵼	loeg	lo ⁸	鸟
	上形下声	𠵼	bya	pja ¹	山
	下形上声	𠵼	naz	na ²	田
借汉字	外形内声	𠵼	gyaeng	kyaj ¹	关、禁闭
	借音表义	𠵼	muz	mu ²	育
音义全借	𠵼	sim	θim ¹	心	

Zhuang¹⁰

These different writings on the monetary bill reveal the hegemonic mentality of CCP in its attempt to include these ethno-linguistically independent and theoretically de facto nation-states under its governance. These areas also happen to be those that bring most social unrests to China. Manchu's exclusion is also suspect; Manchu has traditionally not been an area resistant to the Chinese government. Despite the fact that these independent writing systems are direct proof of independent ethnic and cultural identities, the promotion of character literacy and Mandarin education will eventually erase these languages and replace them with Chinese characters.

It is impossible for a single logographic system to represent more than 200 spoken languages in China. With the promotion of only one official language, many languages are fated to be sacrificed. The problem of illiteracy is most acute in multilingual societies or countries where the spoken languages lack orthographies. According to John Bowers, the attack on illiteracy in a multilingual society must be preceded by decisions of language policy and the solution of linguistic problems (382).

⁶ Source of the image file: <http://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%92%99%E5%8F%A4%E8%AF%AD>
<http://zh-classical.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%92%99%E5%8F%A4%E6%96%87%E5%AD%97>

⁷ Source of the image file:
<http://zh.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=%E6%BB%BF%E8%AA%9E&variant=zh-tw>
<http://crysaldj.spaces.live.com/blog/cns!6FCF820C105654F4!815.entry>

⁸ Source of the image file: <http://www.nhu.edu.tw/~society/e-j/34/34-37.htm>

⁹ Source of the image file:
http://www.gps.caltech.edu/~rkanda/GPS_TienShan2006/GPSFieldTrip_LanguageReligion.html

¹⁰ Source of the image file: <http://www.rauz.net/write.htm>

One of the actions generally involved in such planning is the choice of script. Chinese orthography is unquestionably artistic, but as far as language maintenance is concerned, it is of little help for the endangered speeches in urgent need of efficient orthographies. Primarily, characters represent abstract ideas rather than sounds:

In PRC, there are roughly 200 living indigenous, many of which are endangered. Logographic systems are particularly difficult to adapt to new languages because the writing does not correspond to the sound system in any way. The underlying principle upon which these systems are based (one symbol = one morpheme) is unwieldy for languages with extensive morphology. Finally, the morpheme inventory in any language is much greater than the phonemic inventory, so that the total number of the symbols which a learner needs to read in a logographic system can take many years to master. Accordingly, we do not recommend creating logographic systems for unwritten languages. (Grenoble & Whaley 140)

For example, the acquisition of literacy in Chinese takes much more time than other phonographic systems¹¹. As Ping Chen points out, this inefficiency in the acquisition of Chinese characters has long been a problem to China and is widely believed to be a major cause of China's low literacy rates (Chen 75-76). As a result, it has been the assumption among literacy workers and linguists that the "best" orthography is an alphabetic orthography.

The adoption of characters in writing regional languages is therefore undesirable and will hinder the full development of the languages as well as the speakers' awareness. It is such awareness and the need for graphization that has led China to discourage in numerous "Mandarin variations;" the choice of new scripts carries certain political associations that highlight the desire for political or cultural unity. Besides, having an independent, standard orthography increases a language's status in the community and reinforces the values of the community, which in turn fortifies the group's sense of identity and enables a group to gain recognition and official status.

Other choices in orthography are also often considered as markers of identity in different ways; choices in orthography reflect the desire of a group to distinguish itself from surrounding groups, or sometimes to align itself with certain groups. (Grenoble & Whaley 143)

In the pursuit of identity, languages awareness is a key factor that decides whether a

¹¹ Chen's example is based on the report of H. Ni (1948): It takes only 300-400 hours for complete illiterates to learn and to read and write Chinese in New Writing of Latinization, ten days for junior high school students and three days for senior high school and college students. In contrast, it takes at least two years to gain literacy in traditional Chinese script. (85)

language will continue to stay alive. A speech group with language awareness will continue to use their language, but those groups that lack language awareness will eventually give up their languages and adopt a foreign tongue. Simply put, orthography devising, language planning and the cultivation of language awareness are the three main tasks in a project of language maintenance.

Linguicism and Blum's Blind Spots

From the perspective of language maintenance, the central argument proposed by Blum appears quite problematic. As Blum herself points out, nationalism incorporated with linguicism refers to the notion that a single language embodies the spirit of a nation (138). In her opinion, China does not belong to this type of nationalism since she detected a lack of linguicism in China. To begin with, the term “linguicism” (or “linguism”) is not defined in most dictionaries. According to Tove Skutnabb-Kangas¹², linguicism refers to “ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language. (13)” In other words, linguicism involves an unequal relationship between two or more languages. In such cases, language becomes a means of control and domination. In education, as Craig Muller explains, linguicism is the discrimination against an individual because of differences in language¹³. Often students are treated differently or believed to be less intelligent by teachers because the language used in school is a second or foreign tongue for the students. Linguicism appears when one language is being socially and politically confirmed or validated while others are being stigmatized. If such inequality lasts extensively, it will be internalized as natural and normal and the public will fail to recognize it as an unequal access to power and resources.

The first sociolinguist that elaborates on the definition of “linguicism” with regard to imperialism is Robert Phillipson. In his famous work *Linguistic Imperialism*, Phillipson clearly elucidates the theory of imperialism and its application in language education. He mentions the six mutually interlocking types of imperialism proposed by Johan Galtung¹⁴: economic, political, military, communicative, cultural, and social. Imperialism by its nature is a type of relationship where one society can dominate another and when four mechanisms are usually involved: exploitation, penetration, fragmentation and marginalization (52). Based on Galtung's theory, Phillipson considers linguistic imperialism to be a distinct type of imperialism because it permeates all the other types of imperialism. It is a primary component of cultural

¹² Danish linguist, professor of the Department of Languages and Culture at the University of Roskilde, Denmark.

¹³ <http://www.mce.secretcouriers.com/Pages/linguism.htm> 2008/08/15

¹⁴ Phillipson's elaboration is mainly based on Galtung's analytic work “A Structural Theory of Imperialism.” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1971), pp. 81-117.

imperialism and center to social and communicative imperialism. Linguicism thus stems from the idea of linguistic imperialism:

Linguistic imperialism on the part of the speaker of any language exemplifies linguicism. Linguicism may be in operation simultaneously with sexism, racism, or classism, but linguicism refers exclusively to ideologies and structures where language is the means of effecting or maintaining an unequal allocation of power and resources...Linguicism is in operation if the Center language is always used and periphery languages are not accorded enough resources to develop so that the same function could be performed in them. (Phillipson 55-57)

Actors of linguicism are often supported by an imperialistic structure embedded in the language in question. The imposition of standard speech education is imperialism while the operation of the policy is linguicism. Like racism and other forms of imperialism, linguicism is the key medium of Center-Periphery relations and its operation may be conscious or unconscious, overt or covert, abstract or concrete. Languages of the Center are instantly renewed, with those of the Periphery remaining in a dependent situation (55-56). With structural support in every social and cultural aspect, the values and norms of dominant groups are transmitted by hegemonic processes, promoting a set of dominant ideas that have gradually been taken for granted. Put simply, linguicism is the promotion of one language irrespective of the needs and claims of the others. By classifying a language as a “dialect”, the Center language succeeds in stigmatizing the Periphery language. In Phillipson’s view, all education in a language other than the student’s mother tongue is imperialistic, even if the motive of the educator is to help students rise out of poverty and obtain career opportunities. Today, access to mother tongue education has gradually been recognized worldwide as a basic human right ever since the *The Uses of Vernacular Languages in Education* was declared by UNESCO in 1953. However, as China’s language policy shows, it obviously offends this global conviction.

In the constitution of the People’s Republic of China, only ethnic minorities in China have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. Such minority groups refer to only the population in Xinjiang, Tibet and Yunnan (Blum 140). As for non-ethnic minorities, the preservation and development of other local speeches are entirely dismissed. Due to the early advent of orthography unification in Chinese characters, speakers of local languages in China seem to have accepted this orthography as the only legitimate way to write down what they speak. In Blum’s supposition, there are three possible explications: First, all the local languages are mutually intelligible. Second, most all the local languages are similar and breed little difficulty in communication. Third, most Chinese people take a tolerant attitude towards languages and do not care about the linguistic differences.

These citizens are used to accommodating and adjusting themselves to other linguistic varieties. This third explication is what Blum believes to be the most possible case.

However, the intertwining relation between official language and its embedded power structure is absent in Blum's discussion. In fact, several other factors should be mentioned in explaining why these local languages had little chance to develop independent orthographies. For instance, literacy rate should be considered as an important index for the possibility of developing any new writing system. As stated previously, the design of Chinese orthography is based on ideographic rather than phonographic symbols. This reliance on the ideographic makes the Chinese written language difficult to learn and impedes learning efficiency. China has long been suffered from poor literacy rates, and local communication is enhanced mainly through speech rather than the script. Only a very limited portion of the huge population such as governmental and local scholars knows how to read and write well.. The privileged group has tried to maintain their advantageous status by claiming Chinese orthography as the only acceptable form of writing. Power has thus remained in the hands of those literate people who speak the administrative vernacular, *guanhua*.

According to Benedict Anderson, public literacy and the cultivation of reading habits are two of the most important factors that give rise to a sense of "nationality." When the majority of people are illiterate and choose to continue their traditional life without ready access to publications, "ethnic nationalism" does not have a chance to develop. Moreover, the concept of "nationalism" was not introduced to the Chinese public until the 20th century. As China calls for a unified polity to resist foreign invasions, regional speech differences have often been neglected because a unified orthography must exist for these political pursuits. Under such circumstances, writing is regarded as unimportant for the majority of Chinese commoners. Besides, since writing is difficult and educational opportunities limited, people use their native speeches as the chief means of communication.

The phenomenon of linguisticism in China actually can be inspected from two angles: for the privileged group in the higher social strata, a unified orthography and speech are necessary for efficient communication between different language groups; for the general public without an awareness of the existence of linguisticism, there is an abivalence to this power struggle as they fail to recognize the authority embedded in the characters. For this second group, language is merely a tool rather than a mark of identity. Ethnolinguistic nationalism therefore matters only to those who seize power. The politics of identity have usually been manipulated and portrayed as unimportant to the public. In such cases, nationalism is realized by the operation of linguisticism.

In classical definition, nationalism is a bottom-up process rather top-down. In Blum's article, she states that only the national standard and a few of the minority languages have pedagogical support. As for the other regional languages including Han varieties that lack orthographies, CCP disregards their development. In view of

this, Blum's claim that China's nationalism works without linguisticism appears contradictory with the reality. According to Fishman, there are two types of nation: in the first type, the concept of a nation emerges before the emergence of language awareness among people. In the second type, language awareness exists before the political realization of nationhood. In the first case, strict language policy is usually applied to fortify the ruling power, as is the case of China. A national language is chosen to enhance the solidarity of an existing nation. The latter type is what was observed in eighteenth century Europe. A shared national language enhanced the formation of a nation. For most local language groups in China, either language or ethnic awareness has not been strong enough to develop national ethos. The traditional version of Chinese nationalism that the government propagates is an idea inherited from the previous empire. The aim of CCP is not to build a modern nation-state, but to maintain their power with the help of the old Chinese ideology of "empire" saturated with linguisticism. As a result, local language awareness must be oppressed for this official nationalism. The development of local orthographies must be discouraged.

According to Blum, CCP's language policy centers on three issues: script reform, Romanization and standardization of the spoken languages. In 1955, the standard pronunciation for Putonghua was decided to take its base in Beijing dialects. Since some of the northern sounds do not exist in the southern languages, there are always jokes made of the poor southerners who mix up these sounds or just cannot pronounce them correctly. Language education since then has been conducted entirely in Putonghua. All these are typical cases of linguisticism. In spite of these facts, Blum awkwardly concludes that linguisticism and linguistic stigmatization do not exist in such a policy:

Implementation of language policy is only one goal. The statement of the policy embodies a wish, but the reception depends on shared assumptions about how language functions. In China people know that local varieties are not stigmatized, so the unitary ideal will continue to coexist with multi-lingual reality. (144)

Blum fails to acknowledge that with the affirmation of Putonghua in law, the multi-lingual reality is not stable anymore. Putonghua will gradually replace the use of local languages as more and more young people learn to speak it and use it as a medium for upward social mobility. In today's China, one's rise through the social ranks is obviously conditioned by one's ability to write and speak the standard language.

As is stated in Blum's article, Chinese teachers from the northern, metropolitan areas are often reluctant to move to remote, poor, southern or minority areas. Schools in these areas often provide handsome salaries to attract those qualified

teachers from the north. As is demonstrated here, teachers who speak Putonghua enjoy more advantages such as well-paid jobs. The structural and cultural inequalities embedded in language ensure the continued allocation of more material resources to Putonghua than to other local speeches and benefit those who are proficient in Putonghua. Based on Phillipson's definition, this is a typical case of linguistic imperialism. Linguicism occurs when there is a policy that supports several languages but the priority is given to only one language in teacher training, curriculum development, and school timetables (47). The promotion of standard speech in China and its neglect on local speeches will eventually lead to not only linguistic genocide but cultural genocide, however impossible it may currently look and however harmless the process may seem to be. Linguicism based on Putonghua and Chinese orthography is legitimated in two forums: the political discourse on language issues on the one hand and the language pedagogy on the other.

Further, Blum even uses the modern history of China to prove that the society lacks linguicism. In Blum's articulation, neither Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Republic of China, nor the CCP government made any appeal to linguistic (speech) unification. In her view, the only case of the ruthless oppression of local speech by Mandarin Chinese took place in Taiwan, where the KMT regime found it necessary to develop a national speech that helped strengthen its control over the local people. Blum's reasoning appears quite problematic here because it fails to acknowledge the mentality of Sun which is similar to that of the previous Chinese emperors. For Chinese people, the unified script of characters itself is a powerful indicator of language unification. Ever since the Chin Emperor unified the writing system in the third century B.C., successive leaders of China have been free from worrying about the choice of national language. The status of Chinese characters is just like that of Latin during the Middle Ages in Europe. Therefore, it is very problematic for Blum to negate the existence of linguicism without problemizing the existence a single Chinese "orthography." The current co-existence of multiple "Chinese speeches" does not guarantee their existence in the future if the orthography remains the only way to encode these speeches.

Following Blum's logic, if the existence of numerous local speeches stands for "a tolerance of linguistic varieties," there is no country in the world that does not tolerate language variants. Most nationalities today are built upon multi-lingual and multi-cultural societies, and the existence of speech varieties is a common phenomenon. However, contrary to Blum's belief, the existence of speech varieties in China is actually generated with complex social and geopolitical factors. The language problem of China lies in that it has a policy that favors only one single speech. Such policy has created an unfriendly environment for many local languages to survive or develop independent writing systems of their own. According to Blum, despite lack of intelligibility, Chinese varieties are "felt as somehow sharing a language." The way they share a language is through being inconsequential and

subordinated to writing (146). By this conclusion, Blum keeps repeating her faulty point that little stigma is detected in local varieties. Quite interestingly, she later subverts her own argument with her personal research conducted in Yunnan: among the thirty-three college students, only one reported using Putonghua at home. This indicates that local languages feature more effective characteristics and function to increase social and familial solidarity. Even if Putonghua is spoken by the locals, their versions of Putonghua with strong accents are deemed as a devalued approximation of the standard. They are “scorned because they fall short of the standard. (147)” Therefore, Blum’s conclusion that “there is no inevitable social advantage to the possession of the standard in China (150)” is not true. The second counter proof found is in Blum’s description that after the implementation of Putonghua education policy, ethnic minorities are forced by the realities to abandon their native languages in favor of Putonghua. Blum notes that such language-shift does not occur with any sense of betrayal of one’s native place. Rather, these people believe they are heading in a correct direction with the pull of the center:

In interviews and conversations, students of minority background failed to understand my question: Do you feel you lose anything of your own culture when you function entirely in the majority language for your education? Incomprehensiveness was consistent. There was no linguisticism. (150)

This is exactly what happens to every case of endangered language in the world: no one ever feels loss at the very beginning. No one expects that the primary home language will be replaced by any foreign one. What the case particularly shows is the lack of language awareness, not a lack of linguisticism. Local speeches in China are not regarded as significant by the public, so most efforts are made to promote a standard at the cost of local tongues. In Blum’s opinion, China’s promotion of a national standard “presupposes a continuation of multilingualism. (153)” However, China is different from most European nations in that it has devoted most of its efforts to maintaining and reforming a unified orthography, not speech. Here again, Blum shows her ignorance of the Chinese reality. She fails to see that the CCP government also has long viewed the “politically threatening” ethnic groups and their languages with a cautious eye. As Blum herself points out, language policies regarding minority languages such as Zhuang and Uighur “have been harsh and deliberately created to disrupt potential continuities with their literary and religious past as well as with similar peoples across international borders (150).” If a minority group’s language awareness is strong enough to create a sense of independent identity with the intent a nation-building pursuit, ethnic and linguistic oppression by the CCP takes place almost right away, as the recent history of Tibet shows us. In other words, local speeches are allowed only on three conditions: the locals must show loyalty to CCP’s rule, a collective “Chinese identity” must be recognized, and local spoken languages

must be addressed as dialects of the standard Chinese language.

In addition, Blum also fails to see the reality that China's target of writing and tolerance of spoken varieties has been a decision made with careful assessment and contemplation based on two practical principles. First, not a single "unified" speech has ever existed in Chinese history, only several versions of official language and a unified written form. To avoid resistance from regional people, the best method is to leave regional languages the way they are and gradually replace them with Mandarin through manipulation of power-relation in education, mass media and social structure. Second, as long as the status of orthography is recognized by regional speech groups, little nationalist sentiment that questions and threatens the unified "Chinese identity" will emerge. In other words, the linguistic stigmatization is unperceivable in China since perceivable stigmatization comes from direct political oppression of a native language, and unperceivable stigmatization comes from daily-habit cultivation of language use. Ethnolinguistic conflicts happen only when oppression is understood. When oppression is structural and has been internalized, it is unperceivable. Most language groups in China accept the broad concept of "Chinese nationalism" and celebrate the elegant design of Chinese characters.

Chinese Nationalism: Han Nationism and Imperialism

To subvert the logic of Blum's article more dynamically, it is necessary to elaborate on the abstract ideas of "Chinese ethnicity" and "Chinese nationalism" in the following section. Chinese nationalism has been an interesting topic in the discussion of Asian nationalisms as contrasted with those witnessed in Europe. The word "China" originates from the Chin Dynasty. Without Emperor Chin, the concept of "Chinese" and "Chinese language" would not exist today. Foreseeing the problem of a multilingual society, Emperor Chin unified the writing orthography as soon as he attained political power. This cautious approach enhanced effective administration upon various ethnic groups, maintained a sense of social unity and eventually reinforced his rule. All successive emperors have followed Chin and stuck to this language policy. Chinese orthography has gradually become viewed as a unified written language that represents and embodies the national spirit of China. Chinese characters themselves can be said to be relics of the most initial version of "Chinese" nationalism and every character has a history.

According to Peter Hays Gries, China's nationalism after World War II has long been viewed by the West as "party propaganda" constructed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to legitimize its rule (489). By way of promoting this civic nationalism, the Chinese government maintains its grip on power and its control over the multi-ethnic population. The western idea of nationalism originally derives from a commitment to protect and maintain an individual's identity within a national group. It is an autonomous will of the individual rather than a means of control promoted by

the government. The initial practice of Chinese nationalism, however, is a “top-down” approach rather than a “bottom up” one. Since the end of World War II, Chinese nationalism has been enhanced by the elite instrumentalism of CCP. With the invasion of global capitalism and drastic development in economy, such nationalism in China also has undergone great transformation from party propaganda to autonomous identification. The term “Chinese” has gradually become more cultural, emotional and personal. Gries neatly points out that the formation and development of today’s Chinese nationalism is framed in three main discourses in Chinese history: 1. the 5000 Years of Civilization, 2. the Century of Shame and Humiliation from the West and Japan and 3. the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution carried out by Mao Zedong. Today, the CCP is losing its control over nationalist discourse:

Under Mao, the Party claimed that because it led the revolutionary masses, the Party and the nation were fused into an inseparable whole. Only Communists could be genuine Chinese nationalists. Under Deng and especially under Jiang, however, the CCP’s nationalist claims are increasingly falling on deaf ears. Popular nationalists now regularly speak of the “Motherland” and the “Chinese race” without reference to the party. (496)

Gries’ observation and understanding of Chinese nationalism is actually a viewpoint which ignores the fact that from the party to the land, CCP government is sugarcoating and disguising its nationalist sentiment as “people’s will.” Compared with fostering an outdated communist ideology, the pursuit of protecting the “motherland” and the “Chinese race” is certainly more feasible in a modern society and in turn more beneficial to CCP’s rule. With this claim of “Chinese race,” CCP blurs the dynamic ethnic boundaries within the China territory.

In Michael Yahuda’s research and contemplation on Chinese nationalism, he points out that modern Chinese nationalism is generally believed to have been sparked off by the defeat of China by Japan in 1895. The concept of “nationalism” appeared in China for the first time in 1901 and was adopted by Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Chinese Republic, in 1904. Sun claimed that five main nationalities together constitute the nation China: the Han Chinese, the Manchus, the Mongols, the Tibetans and the Hui. The message behind such claim ensured “the retention of Chinese claims to the territories ruled by the Qing dynasty (27).” Due to Sun’s assimilationist approaches on non-Han ethnic groups, he was later criticized as a racial nationalist. Both his successors Mao Zedong and Chang-Keishek shared Sun’s ethnic nationalist sentiment.

Yahuda further distinguishes patriotism from nationalism. He contends that the former instead of the latter is strongly encouraged in China. Nationalism is often confused with patriotism and xenophobia. According to the definition of Elie Kedourie, patriotism refers to affection for one’s country, loyalty to its institutions and

zeal for its defense; xenophobia is dislike of the stranger or the outsider. Both patriotism and xenophobia are universal sentiments of human beings. However, the concept of nationalism is a combination of patriotism and xenophobia that originated in Europe in the 19th century (252). PRC's preference for patriotism reveals its imperial nature and lack of authenticity in claiming the territories that belong to non-Han groups. As Yahuda points out, the patriotism fostered by the Chinese government is useful to the leadership because it demand loyalty to not only the country but also its leader. The history of China is narrated by whoever is in power and serves the purposes of the leaders. Yahuda provides the following example:

Contemporary historians apparently feel it incumbent upon them to show that the current territories encompassed by borders of the PRC have always belonged to China and the inhabitants have always been members of something known as the "Chinese Family." (34)

Consequently, whenever there are wars between different ethnic groups within the "Chinese family", they have always been historically portrayed as civil wars. Such an encompassing approach "leaves no room for the exercise of self-determination or for different ethnic groups to develop their own accounts of their history. (34)" Chinese nationalism, therefore, is Han-patriotism in disguise. Intra-nationally, it lays emphasis on the Han people and tends to accentuate Han assimilation-ist tendencies. Internationally, it calls upon the patriotism of oversea Chinese and includes them as "fellow descents of the Yellow Emperor". This message carries the connotation that Chinese nationalism is in effect based on the racial or ethnic ideology of the Han, a primordial type of nationalism. Even though Chinese economy has been greatly boosted by the CCP's financial reform and openness, the innate political conservatism of preserving CCP rule remain unchanged. The ruling mentality is similar to that of the old Chinese emperors, which excludes the will and political participation of the people. The problematic of Chinese identity thus lies in that it is a product of patriotism from above rather than a cultural or linguistic one from bottom. As Yahuda concludes, the idea of Chinese identity stays unclear and confusing to both Chinese people and others, despite the efforts CCP have made to present and delineate it.

Conclusion: Rebels for Liberty

Chinese nationalism is therefore a form of nationism aimed at preserving one ethnic group and language at the expense of another. Based on the above discussions, the sinister face under the mask of "Chinese nationalism" is unveiled. It is by nature ethnolinguistic Han imperialism. Other than Mongolia and Tibet that have developed independent orthographies, Taiwan, a Han-based society, has been trying hard to make a difference and create a mother-tongue-friendly language environment. The most

difficult task, and one not yet attempted, is to alter people's attitudes towards their mother tongues. A lot of young people prefer speaking Mandarin in public because they falsely believe that mother tongues are useless and vulgar dialect varieties of Mandarin. Today, learning to write Hoklo Taiwanese goes beyond mere linguistics and stands as the most complex issue in Taiwanese native language education programs. Out of all of the native languages in Taiwan, Hoklo is the only one that has developed a comprehensive writing system¹⁵. Though Hakka and Formosan users today regard the adopted roman script as merely a set of phonetic symbols that facilitate the learning of speaking, the users of Hoklo roman script have employed the writing scheme as a literary medium that supersedes Chinese characters. The promulgation of Hoklo writing provides an excellent, feasible example that rebels against the hegemonic ideology of Mandarin Chinese, both in orthography and speech.

As Millar concludes from his exploration on the relation between language and nation-building, language is undeniably a central element in the construction of a nation and its identity. However, when the nationalist route of choosing a national vernacular is taken, it can be dangerous because ethnolinguistic tensions may simultaneously develop, particularly in a multilingual and multiethnic society. This explains why China has encountered enormous resistance and social unrest in its disputed territories. The various independent orthographies in Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia are all good examples that demonstrate the irrational logic of Han-based Chinese nationalism. Chinese nationalism is based on neither a shared language nor a shared ethnic identity, but a geo-politically based national prestige that is rooted in the past. In view of this, the illegitimacy of CCP's rule in these areas can't be clearer. The repeated suppression of Tibetan and Turkish nationalism reveals CCP's hegemonic tendency. Since orthography is a strong indicator for any independent cultural unity, language loss will certainly decrease the sense of solidarity in these de facto nation-states. Tensions between Chinese nationalism and other non-Han national sentiments have been frequently identified to foreground the illegitimacy of PRC. With regard to language preservation, imposing Chinese orthography on the numerous unwritten vernaculars in China is undoubtedly linguistic imperialism motivated by Chinese nationalism. Taiwan, a nation-state internationally silenced and neglected under the threat of PRC must be cautious with such cultural assimilation and take immediate action not only to establish an independent linguistic identity based on the various mother tongues on this island but also a liberal, nationalism-based national identity.

¹⁵ "Peh-oe-ji" (POJ), literally means "vernacular word." It is a phonetic orthography in roman script designed by Protestant missionaries in the early 18th century and imported to Taiwan from southern-east China in 1865 by Dr. James L. Maxwell (1836-1921). In the beginning, it served as a regular writing system used to translate the Bible and other religious materials into Taiwanese. Later on, the publications cover a wide range of topics besides religion. In 1955, the KMT regime banned the use of POJ in Taiwan.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Benedict. "Imagined Communities." *Nationalism*. Eds. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994. 89-96.
- Berghe, Pierre L. van den. "Does Race Matter?" *Nationalism : Critical Concepts in Political Science*. Eds. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Vol. 1. London: Routledge, 2000. 187-99.
- Blum, Susan D. "Nationalism without Linguism: Tolerating Chinese Variants." *The Contest of Language : Before and Beyond Nationalism*. Ed. M. Bloomer. Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 2005. 134-64.
- Bowers, John. "Language Problems and Literacy." *Language Problems of Developing Nations*. J. Fishman, C. Ferguson and J. Das Gupta, eds. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1968. 381-401.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Chen, Ping. "Functions of Phonetic Writing in Chinese." *Language Planning and Language Policy: East Asian Perspectives*. Eds. Ping Chen and Nanette Gottlieb. Richmond: Curzon, 2001. 75-94.
- Crystal, David. *Language Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000.
- Fishman, Joshua. "Nationality Nationalism and Nation-Nationism." *Language Problems of Developing Nations*. J. Fishman, C. Ferguson and J. Das Gupta, eds. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1968. 39-52.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Primordial and Civic Ties." *Nationalism*. Eds. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994. 29-34.
- Grenoble, Lenore A., and Lindsay J. Whaley. *Saving Languages : An Introduction to Language Revitalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.
- Gries, Peter Hays. "China and Chinese Nationalism." *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*. Eds. Gerard Delanty and Krishan Kumar. London: SAGE, 2006. 488-99.
- Gunn, Edward M. *Rendering the Regional : Local Language in Contemporary Chinese Media*. Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 2005.
- Hodge, Bob, and Kam Louie. *The Politics of Chinese Language and Culture : The Art of Reading Dragons*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Millar, Robert McColl. *Language, Nation and Power: An Introduction*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Phillipson, Robert. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.
- Schein, Louisa. *Minority Rules: The Miao and the Feminine in China's Cultural Politics*. Durham: Duke UP.
- Yahuda, Michael. "The Changing Faces of Chinese Nationalism: The Dimensions of Statehood " *Asian Nationalism*. Ed. Michael Leifer. London: Routledge, 2000.

21-37.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. "Multilingualism and the Education of Minority Children."
Minority Education: From Shame to Struggle. Eds. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas &
Jim Cummins. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters: 1988. 9-44.

蔣為文教授評論內容

首先，要先稱讚發表人撰寫這篇論文的努力與用心。由於發表人接觸社會語言學、臺灣羅馬字等研究領域的時間不長，大約僅有一年多的時間，而能提出這樣的論文成果，確實不易，值得肯定。以下我就提供幾點看法，給芳語及在座各位參考。

我先以胡志明的《獄中日記》為例，在漢字文化圈中，較老一輩的人多半有能力以漢字進行漢詩或文言文創作，但其實胡志明並不會說北京話。所以同樣的道理，臺灣以往的漢學私塾，也是以台語來讀四書五經。如此一來，加上時代落差，常使得年輕一輩的人，誤以為像這樣以漢字創作的詩詞或文言文，即是「中國人」的作品。這是漢字文化圈中，一個共同的現象，也是一種迷思。例如李白的〈靜夜思〉，同樣地可以用越南語、韓語、台語來誦讀。對漢字的迷思，讓人誤以為我們的口說語言只是方言。

就像在中國，其實就是透過漢字模式，來進行方言與官方語言的區別。例如中國認為上海話、閩南話、廣東話都是漢語方言，但是如新疆、西藏的語言並不會威脅到官方語言的推行，所以承認新疆、西藏的語言為獨立的語言文字。那為什麼這樣的模式會成功呢？因為我們往往認為漢字，用台語、廣東話、客語都能閱讀且是共通的，也就自認為自己在地的語言就是方言。那為什麼這樣的模式在歐洲無法推行呢？歐洲在中古世紀時代，也是用拉丁文進行書寫。但到了宗教改革以後，開始用地方母語書寫聖經，各族群用母語書寫成爲一種風氣。其間差異的重點就在於使用的文字，西方用羅馬字來創作，表現不同的語音、不同的內容。但用漢字創作，就讓人認為是相同的內容。

過往我們認為漢字是表意文字，但這樣的看法在現代似乎已經不適當，例如「麥當勞」，即是一組表音的漢字。過往用表音、表意來區分文字，其實是較不適當的方法。最好是能夠用表達語音的單位大小，來分類是比較適當的方式，如Gelb所提出的：詞素、音節、音素三個部分。漢字即是一種詞素音節文字，漢字能造成迷思，就是因為漢字能表達區別語意的一種最小的語言單位。由於它具有這種功能，故會造成迷思。若是音素文字，則由於它的單位就是在表達音素，而無詞素的功能，故用音素書寫，讀不懂即無法理解，但用詞素來書寫即會有誤解的可能性。所以我希望發表者能以漢字的迷思與區分語音單位的角度，來切入分析使這篇論文更具說服力。

另外，引用參考文獻的時候，發表者有提出一些的看法與意見，但這些是自己的或別人的看法則必須註明清楚。最好是能引用在這個領域著名的學者，才能具有論述上的說服力。引用也要直接引用，減少轉引的方式。以上是我的幾個簡單意見，供大家參考。感謝！