



Discussion on Chinese Language Internationalization

DISCUSSION DE L'AVANCEMENT DU CHINOIS MANDARIN A L'INTERNATIONALISATION

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Abstract

Based on the analysis of Chinese language spreading and its influences during different periods of history, this article proposes that, in the new period, Chinese language must advance its internationalization innovatively. The principle problem of turning Chinese into an international language is to absorb the essences of Mandarin Chinese (including dialect), world-wide used Chinese (including district Chinese), thereby to seek understanding of Chinese language culture all over the world and the harmony of overseas Chinese in different districts. The internationalization of Chinese language goes with the localization of Chinese language, and they two influences and promotes each other internally. Only by handling well contradiction between openness and normalization, internationalization and localization, can Chinese language localization be dynamic rather the resistance of internationalization of Chinese language. Promoting Chinese language internationally is a work which needs government and university to actively and jointly participate in and build up an discipline system which gives due consideration to various fields nationwide and overseas and has both generality and individuality in order to actively promotes Chinese culture and Chinese language to the world.

Key words: Chinese language; internationalization; localization; reasons

Résumé

Le présent texte est basé l'analyse d'impact du langage de la communication dans les différentes périodes historiques, proposée dans la nouvelle étape historique de développement doit être fondé sur la pensée novatrice du Conseil de l'ouverture d'un nouveau processus d'internationalisation de la langue de Chinois. Dont son problème principal est le mandarin (y compris les dialectes chinois) et le chinois (y compris le chinois régionaux) se nourrir les uns et les autres, cherchant à la langue et la culture chinoises dans le monde de la communication internationale et la culture de l'identité chinoise à l'étranger. L'internationalisation est un préposé de la localisation chinoise et les Chinois orales, c'est un processus de promotion interactive. Au cours de l'ouverture de la langue et l'internationalisation du chinois, et la standardisation, l'internationalisation du chinois et la localisation de la contradiction entre les rapports de la langue chinoise. Le Conseil international du mouvement de localisation est devenue une force motrice pour aider plutôt que d'entraver le mouvement de la force. La promotion internationale du gouvernement chinois et les universités doivent participer activement et à établir un équilibre entre la maison et à l'étranger, il ya des similitudes, il ya des sujets individuels du droit international chinois du système d'enseignement des langues, et de promouvoir activement la langue chinoise dans le monde et la Chine de la culture exceptionnelle traditionnelles.

Mots clés: Internationalisation; Localisation; Langue Chinoise; Raisons

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INTRODUCTION

With the development of China economy and the rapidly improvement of China's overall national strength, there is a stirring of learning Chinese language throughout the world. Chinese language, as a dominant and powerful language, is now embarked on the way of internationalization, which, however, is not only an issue concerning language and culture exchange, but also a matter has a direct bearing on the process of China's reforming and opening up process, a key influences the development paces of China's politics, economy and culture. Promotion of Chinese language into an international level, as a part of China's international strategy, is, on one hand, the foundation work of spreading Chinese language, carrying forward fine traditional culture, driving China's culture into the world and fostering a good and healthy international image, on the other hand, the strategic measure to open wider to the outside world, enhance country's soft power and bring about peaceful development (XU: 2007, 108). This thesis, based on the analysis of Chinese language spreading and its influences during different periods, explores the way to accelerate the internationalization of Chinese language in the new stage.

1. HISTORY REVIEW OF CHINESE LANGUAGE INTERNATIONALIZATION

To look back into the history, Chinese language has always been the irreplaceable dominant language despite of the unifications and divisions in the Chinese territory. Even in the times when minority ethnics took over the power and ruled China, their languages such as Khitan language in Liao dynasty, Mongol language in Yuan dynasty, Manchu language in Qing dynasty has not supplanted the Chinese language. On the contrary, many languages including Turkic, Uighur, Chagatai script, Khotanese, Yanqi - Kucha script, Pagba language, Khitan language, Jurchen characters, Xia script, Dongba script, Manchu language and many other ethnic languages has been on the decline day by day and eventually became language fossils. The decline of these ethnic languages, from the perspective of today's China, is considered as the replacement of country's peripheral language by country's central language which, viewed from dynasty replacement, is a process of Chinese language internationalization.

In the long history of China, most dynasties in Central Plains were founded by Han Chinese, who influences neighboring countries in various aspects due to their strong political, economic and military superiority. Their language, Chinese language, also been widely spread and became the dominant language at that time. The spreading ways of Chinese language are usually divided into overland and maritime traffic line. The overland traffic line, also known as "Silk Road" firstly began with Zhang

Qian, an official diplomat during the time of the Han Dynasty, then developed continually in Sui and Western Han Dynasty, and finally formed a cross-continental overland traffic line which starts from Chang'an on the West, crosses Hexi Corridor, Tarim Basin and Central Asian, then goes south to India, or goes west to Iran, and finally reaches the east coast of the Mediterranean. The Silk Way, although exploited originally for military purpose, promoted, on the one hand, political, economic and cultural exchanges among China, Central Asian and other countries, on the other hand, the spreading of Chinese language in countries which are in the northwest of China.

Besides northwest countries, Chinese culture and politics has had a great influence on northeast countries such as Korean and Japanese throughout history. Chen (1993: 5) states that: due to historical and geographical conditions, Chinese language, along with the Chinese culture, was transmitted to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, finally formed "Chinese Cultural Circle". Lacking of writing language, Chinese language has been used by North Korean people to record their history until mid-15th century. After hundreds years of transition period, North Korean and South Korea banned and discontinued the usage of Chinese language together with Korean language respectively in 1949 and 1968. The trace of Chinese in Japanese is even more obvious. For a long time in Japanese language history, it does not have the writing language, only has the spoken language. In 5 century onwards, Chinese language, known as "kango" entered the Japanese language. The early time Japan literatures are recorded only with Chinese language. After that, the Japanese people created "Hiragana" and "katakana", together with the borrowed Chinese character (kango), which formed the Japanese language at present. Nowadays, there are 2,000 frequently used Chinese characters in Japanese language, which means that Chinese people can have a general idea of the meaning of some Japanese literature although they are unfamiliar with the Japanese language.

The south of China, commonly known as Southeast Asian, is composed of China Peninsula and the Malay Archipelago. The spreading of Chinese language to these areas can be divided into overland and maritime traffic ways. The overland traffic way to those also known as "South Silk Route" which begins from Sichuan, goes through Yunnan, then to Burma. Besides this traffic line, there is also a traffic line goes through the Lancang River and the Mekong River which connects China and Southeast Asian together. The expeditions of maritime way to Southeast countries begins in Han dynasty and continues in Three Kingdom, Sui dynasty, Tang dynasty, Song dynasty and Yuan dynasty. Among the expeditors, the most influential one is Zheng He who commanded seven voyages in 28 years during Ming dynasty. His longest voyage has reached Africa, which built up a

“Marine Silk Road” connecting China and countries on the India Ocean. His voyages strengthened the ties and communications between China and Asian-Africa countries politically, economically and culturally; also promoted the spreading of Chinese among those countries, especially in Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia and other countries.

During Vietnam history, Chinese language was the only available method for writing Vietnamese until the 13th century when Vietnam people created their own written language which is a kind of modified Chinese script. Later, Vietnam people created a modified Latin script, which leading to Vietnam script and Chinese script together forms the Vietnam language, which in turn was discontinued by Vietnam government’s banish of using Chinese characters in Vietnam language. Even so, Vietnam language boasts a considerable amount of words which pronunciationally similar to Chinese words. Chinese language can be considered as one of the official languages of Singapore since it has a population of Ethnic Chinese and foreign citizen of Chinese origin that is form 75 percentage of the its total population.

2. CHINESE LANGUAGE INTERNATIONALIZATION IN NEW PERIOD

Incomplete statistics show that there are 2000 kinds of languages in the world, among which Chinese language, English language, French language, Russian language, Arabic language and Spain language are six UN working language. In addition to those six languages, Hindi language, Portuguese language, German language and several widely-used languages which are also attracted widely attention due to rapid political, economical and cultural globalization. Kazuyuki Kitamura (1984: 122) stipulated that “internationalization of a language involves a number of subject and object and has different development levels. The leading indicators of language internalization level are generality, communicating and openness. The internationalization trend of Chinese, compared with other powerful languages, can be summarized as follows.

(1) China is a country with vast territory and powerful national strength which lay important basis for Chinese language internationalization.

The word of “China”, in Chinese language, means “central field” or “Middle State”. Old China is isolated from the rest of world due to the geographic limitations like oceans, mountains and deserts, which makes Old China unfamiliar with other cultures in the world and self-proclaimed “center of the world”. Nevertheless, during the past thousands of years, China has always stood graciously east of the world. Moreover, China, after thousands of years of vicissitudes, has always been a

powerful nation, which is rare in the human history.

English is one of the leading languages of international discourse. However, English is only used in the British Isles, with millions of population. In late 18th century to the first half of 19th century, British finished Industrial Revolution which led British into heyday of British Empire and became the first colonial power whose colonies are 111 times bigger than its mainland. The British people and government named their country as “the empire on which the sun never sets”. During this period, English language dispersed to the colonies of British Empire and became the most powerful language in the world.

After World War I and World War II, although the colonial system gradually collapsed, British Empire also declined day by day, the power of English language never withdraw. Nowadays, there are 63 countries that still use English as their official language. Therefore, the national strength determines the nationalization degree of its language. This case also goes to the internationalization of French, Russian, Arabic, Spanish, Hindi, Portuguese, and German. On the contrary, weak national strength with a powerful language has never been possible during the human history. Therefore, the vast territory and powerful national strength lay the most important foundation for the internationalization of Chinese language,

(2) Chinese language is the most native spoken language, with the largest spoken population.

Ethnic Chinese and overseas Chinese, about one-fifth of the world’s population, or over 14 million people, speaks some variety of Chinese as their native language, which is three times more than the English-speaking population. According to the statistics and estimation of International Organization for Migration, Chinese people is the largest overseas immigrates group, with a population of 3500,0000, who scattered to 150 different countries in 5 continents. These immigrates is an important factor that promotes the internationalization of Chinese language.

In 1950s, Singapore, Malaysia and other countries where Chinese Ethnic are densely populated got rid of colonial rule and became independent. It is in these counties that the notion of “Chinese” and “world-wide used Chinese” came into being. “world-wide used Chinese” refers to a modified Standard Chinese language which is popular among overseas Chinese communities. Generally speaking, “world-wide used Chinese” and “standard Chinese” overlapped each other while “world-wide used Chinese”, with standard Chinese as its core, features itself with the obvious standard Chinese characters.

Therefore, Chinese language, with standard Chinese as its inner core, world-wide used Chinese as the middle layer and with minor nationalities’ languages as its outer ring, has formed “a large Chinese language circle” (Wang Lingling 2006:35). This classification is consistent with the diversification fact of Chinese language. World-

wide used Chinese is part of “Big Chinese Language” which initially goes aboard, therefore, the crucial issue of promoting the internationalization of Chinese is to strengthen the connection between the world-wide used Chinese and other parts of Chinese, and between all parts of Chinese languages, namely, standard Chinese language, district Chinese, dialects and the languages of minor nationalities, thereby to learn from each other and get nourishment from each other to reinforce the understanding among the whole world and to seek the regional identity.

(3) China’s long history and profound culture attracts the rest of the world to learn Chinese language and know more about the China.

As early as 20 million to 170 million years ago, Yuanmou Man, Lantian Man, Peking Man and other ancient human beings has already lived on this land in the far-away primitive society. The Chinese history goes on with enormous beautiful legends including legendary emperors -- Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns, the Sky Goddess -- Nu a who Mends the Sky, a beautiful woman -- Chang E who flies to the moon, an ancient engenderer -- DaYu who tams river, etc. Until 21 century BC, the first dynasty of China – summer emerged which means China has a recorded history with at least 4,000 years. China’s long history creates a group after group of politicians, thinkers, strategists; lefts China land various famous monuments; produces a wealth of poetry and literature; generates many developed science and technology, such as four great inventions. Doubtlessly, China’s long history and profound culture provokes many people’s desire to learn Chinese.

(4) Ancient civilization endows Chinese characters rich culture deposit and unique charm.

The original Chinese language, invented four or five thousand years ago, is an unique yet continuously develops language which runs in itself the profound history of Chinese nation and features itself the fascinating charm of Chinese profound culture. Different from Western alphabetic words, Chinese character is hieroglyphs, most of which are either pictographs or ideographs. Take the Chinese “众” (means many people) for example, from the composition of “众”, that is three “人” (means a person), we can easily find out or guess the meaning of it, that is, more than three people, the public. The Chinese character “刀” (means a knife) is another example. The Chinese people put a stoke on the “刀”, thereby forms“刃”which means the point of a knife. Besides, Chinese language also owns a large amount of pictographs, simple ideographs, compound ideographs, phonetic loans, phonetic compounds and derivative characters. Due to its unique features, it is believed that learning Chinese characters can improves people’s imagery thinking and abstract thinking; it is also stipulated by some scholars that Chinese people benefit their high IQ from the Chinese characters. In addition, different from English monophonic words,

Chinese monophonic character not only has abundant accurate meaning, but also is rhythmically beautiful. All of those features provoke foreigners to learn Chinese language.

(5) The rapid development of China serves as the unprecedented power of Chinese language internationalization.

In this new era, world culture intertwining with economy and politics, China’s comprehensive national strength and competitive power are increasingly prominent. With China’s sustained economic growth, China joined the World Trade Organization in 2003, won the bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games, all of which bring China into the spotlight of the whole world. Besides its steady economy after Reform and Opening up, China government’s administrative ability also withstood and proves itself again and again, especially in its dealing with 2008 “5.12 Wenchuan Earthquake” as well as the financial crisis. In all these emergency cases, Chinese government took prompt measures to cope with problems, thereby minimized the losses to the least, which not only proves the world the administrative ability of Chinese government, wins worldwide admiration, attracts much concerns, but also makes Chinese language and Chinese culture attracting to the whole world. According to the statistics of the Chinese Language Council International, there are more than 100 countries, 2,300 universities around the world, with 600 universities in American, have opened Chinese language courses, leaving 25,000,000 overseas Chinese language learners. According to Wang (2004: 33), “in the new period, the trend of studying Chinese language has been developed from learning Chinese, knowing China and studying China to learning Chinese, knowing well of China and coming to China”.

3. THE STRATEGIES OF PROMOTING CHINESE LANGUAGE INTERNATIONALIZATION

While globalization makes countries closer and closer, economic integration makes it necessary that each country must open up to the rest of the world. Only by get a well understanding of the world, and by learning from each other the excellent culture and language, can a country find its own way. The past few years has witnessed the globalization and the changes it takes. Although globalization is now in its primary phase, it finally will change the whole world economically, politically, militarily, culturally. Besides, globalization has been a powerful impetus for language internationalization. In this new period, every country around the world, on the one hand, has put enormous effort to make its own language international, on the other hand, tries its best to train its people masters of languages of other countries.

Since its joining of WTO, China expands opening to

the outside world. With the rapid economic development, China's position on the international stage is getting more and more important and attracting more and more attention in economic, political and cultural aspects. China also contributes much to the world's economy. Ever since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese government has made lots of effort to promote Chinese language to the whole world and has achieved great success after years of effort. In the year of 2004, Chinese government made the Chinese international promotion one of nation's international strategies. In this year, China, co-operating with universities around the world, established the Confucius Institute, which starts rounds of Chinese language craze. China's universities also actively run the Confucius Institute or Confucius Classroom jointly with other countries' universities to promote Chinese language and China's profound culture.

Whether the slow Chinese internationalization which depends on trades and population immigration, or the rapid language internationalization of English, French, Portuguese and Spanish accompanied by colonization, they were both results under the special historical background. However, nowadays Chinese language internationalization can only be promoted creatively through economic exchange, cultural exchange and social activity, which can be summarized as follows.

(1) The internationalization of Chinese language will inevitably leads up to diversification and territorialization of Chinese language. Along the internationalization of Chinese language, Chinese will intertwined with the local language and culture which in turn generates localization-al Chinese. Different kinds of localization-al Chinese symbolize different cultures and different social systems, which will gradually penetrate into the lives of local people and stabilize. With the aim to facilitate communication and seek identity, the localization-al Chinese will voluntarily reduce the disparity and finally convergences with the local language. Therefore, we should adopt an objective view and approach of development towards the localization of Chinese language since during the localization process, Chinese language itself can take nutrients from the local politics, economy, society, culture and language, which actually is the foundation for Chinese language to continue and develop.

(2) During the process of Chinese language internationalization and international promotion, it is crucial to handle well contradictions between openness and normalization, internationalization and localization. The vigor of language comes from its openness and inclusiveness, which are two features of international language. Only by being open and inclusive, a language can continually absorb other excellent language and enrich itself, and only by evolving continuously, can Chinese advances with the times and becomes the most adaptable language. Meanwhile, localization is an inevitable phenomenon, which is the necessary result

of the joint action of different nations' history, culture, politics and economy. It is a natural phenomenon that a language once leaves its original place to a new place, will necessarily integrates with the new language to thrive and survive in the future. Therefore, along its evolutionary path Chinese language should, on one hand, assimilates and absorbs other languages to enrich itself, on the other hand, pay special attention standardization construction. During standardization construction, Chinese need to firstly, transfer the new load words into basic words of Chinese language; secondly, modify the nonstandard yet widely recognized expressions and grammars with unified procedures and norms into standard ones. However, localization of an international language is not optional and unrestricted, or it will never be an international language. The fact is if Chinese language internationalization is allowed unrestrained freedom, it will end up just like Latin, that is, it will split into many separated, different languages that are unable to communicate. Only by handling well contradictions between openness and normalization, internationalization and localization, can Chinese language localization be dynamic rather than resistance of internationalization of Chinese language.

(3) Worldwide impact of Chinese language depends on the supported human resources, physical resources, related policies and measurements, more importantly, on the discipline support. Without discipline support, the progress of Chinese internationalization will definitely lag behind. To construct a solid discipline support, we must, in the first place, study up on Chinese language's structural rules, combinational rules and expression rules; in the second place, investigation into diverse teaching models and teaching methods considering the features of Chinese language and Chinese character, the characteristics of teaching environment, teaching object and teaching demand, thereby to build a comprehensive discipline system that can give due consideration to various fields nationwide and overseas and has both generality and individuality. Only through this discipline system, can we achieve the high-quality and high-benefit teaching effect to quicken the step the Chinese language internationalization.

(4) We should focus on the promotion base construction, actively run Confucius institute jointly with the foreign countries and oversea universities. Confucius Institute (CI) is financed by the Office of Chinese Language Council International, a non-profit organization affiliated with the Ministry of Education, the objectives of which are to carry out Chinese language teaching and promote the educational, cultural and economic exchange and communication between China and other countries. As the overseas Chinese language promotion institute, CI has already become an important part of China's cultural go-global strategy. Initially started in Seoul, South Korean in 2004, this program has already established more than

300 Confucius Institutes all over the world. As of October 2009, there were 282 Confucius Institutes and 241 Confucius Classrooms in 87 countries and regions. At home, there are 61 universities participating in the program who provide CI with overseas Chinese teachers and volunteers. Using foreign culture and language promotion organizations as references, aiming at promoting Chinese language and Chinese culture and endeavoring Confucius's principle of "he", CI has already been an international brand and platform who contributes much to construct a peaceful, prosperous and harmonious world.

CONCLUSION

As an objective process, Chinese language internationalization, on the one hand, is a necessary result of China's opening up to the world, on the other hand, is a self-conscious international promotion process. These two aspects of Chinese language internationalization are organically tangled up (Gao 2007: 104), which should be realized by various kinds of activities that, in turn, constantly changes as times progress and education advances. Language is an integral part of culture (both material culture and intangible culture), therefore the process of learning language is actually the process of learning culture, and the process of teaching language is the process of transmitting culture. The Chinese international promotion is not merely the activity of language teaching, rather the responsibility of spreading

Chinese culture. Since mid-1990s, Chinese language fever continues to heat up internationally which not only is a reflection of China's great achievements after reform and opening up, but also marks the rapid development of China's soft power. China's development brings opportunities to the world while mastering Chinese language is important for many people to grasp opportunity and seek development. Therefore, both the government and universities should actively participate in, and take advantage of this favorable opportunity to vigorously promote Chinese language international.

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