



National Language Movement- An Indispensable Perspective of Literary Revolution

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Abstract

The development and formation of Mandarin has spawned the emergence of modern Chinese literature. Mandarin and literature are intertwined and inseparable in the process of modern reform. The unity of national language movement requires the affirmation of the important social status of vernacular, and the initiative of “54” vernacular literature resolves the original language elegance of national language movement, making the value pattern of national language movement free from its bondage. From the perspective of Mandarin, we can better recognize some phenomena in the occurrence and development of modern literature. In the process of carding national language movement, we can be more truly aware of the significance of the literary revolution contained in the value concept of Mr. Hu Shi’s vernacular literature.

Key words: Mandarin; National language Movement; Literary revolution

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INTRODUCTION

In 1917, Hu Shi first put forward the “Literary Revolution” with the publication of “*literature Improvement Discussion*”, and Chen Duxiu further promoted the literary revolution to the depth and breadth of the literary revolution. Hu Shi thought that

to revolutionize literature, we must reform the tools of literary creation first, because “the literary revolution in history is all about the revolution of literary tools”(Hu & Jiang, 1998). “A history of Chinese literature is only a history of the metabolism of literary forms (tools). It is the history of living literature taking place of dead literature. The life of literature relies on fresh tools to represent the thoughts and feelings of an age. The tools are out of date and must be replaced with new ones, which is the literary revolution (Ibid). Therefore, he believed that the first problem literary revolution facing was to solve language problems. In addition to the theory of historical evolution, Hu Shi’s explanation has repeatedly stressed the demand for “Mandarin”. Systematic reading of Hu Shi’s discourse related advocacy of vernacular through his life, the most common word in vernacular is “mandarin”. In order to fully understand the reform of Hu Shi’s literary revolution and the historical background of the transformation of literary language, it is necessary to sort out and discriminate mandarin movement in the process of modern language reform, to pursue its trend and result in the period of “54”, and then to further understand the significance of literary revolution in the whole process of language change.

1. THE PROCESS OF FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MANDARIN

Mandarin is used by all nations to communicate and maintain unity in the process of formation and development of a country. In different historical periods of ancient China, the appellation of “common language”, such as “Ya Yan”, “Tong Yan” and “Mandarin”, appeared successively. The concept of “Mandarin” appeared in the late nineteenth Century and early twentieth Century. Under the historical background of national peril, the consciousness of the modern state of the people began

to awaken. In the name of modern language, mandarin came into being in the appellation of modern language. The early use of the word “Mandarin” in modern China was by Huang Zunxian, a famous scholar in the late Qing Dynasty. He mentioned “mandarin” many times in *“Japanese National Chronicles”* before and after the war of 1894 (1894). At that time, the chief teacher of Beijing Normal School and the ancient literature master of Tongcheng, Wu Ruguan was the first to put forward the concept of ‘national language’. In 1902, Wu Ruguan suggested that we should learn from Japan, vigorously advocate “Mandarin” and promote it to the society. His initiative had a profound influence on the language reform in modern China, and the academic circle began to explore the relevance of the “national language” and the educational problems.

In the early twentieth Century, the appellation of “Guoyu” has become a public discourse in academic circle. “Guoyu” was associated with popular Mandarin at that time. In 1912, the Ministry of education of northern China established the “pronunciation Unification Association” and launched many proposals to construct the framework of national common language. In 1916, the National Language Research Association was founded and its backbone members were mostly the officials of the Ministry of Education. Under the background of the “new cultural movement”, the national language movement came to a climax with the help of the people of the “National Language Research Association”. The Ministry of Education officially announced the “national sound” letters in 1918, and founded “Guoyu Unified Preparation Association” in 1919. It ordered national schools all over the country to change the “national language” to mandarin. Then, the *National Pronunciation Dictionary* was published in 1919, and the national phonetic alphabet disc was successfully issued in 1920. In particular, in 1920, the national language was changed into “Mandarin” so that the National language Movement was recognized from the system. In the general description of literary history, this is an epoch-making event of the victory of vernacular movement. It is the victory of the national language movement.

For the reality of modern China, the advocacy of Mandarin is the call of reality for the survival of the nation. It is precisely because of the demand for salvation that we are so eager to open up the wisdom of the people, and opening up the wisdom of the people undoubtedly demands the most accessible and universal language. In the process of popularizing common language, modern language reformers began to realize the importance of language unification. First of all, unified language can enhance social communication and information exchange. Wang Zhao, one of the founders of the Chinese phonetic alphabets, has also recognized the great shortage of the existing language pattern: “If the words can not express

the language, the accent will accelerate its flow. Some people are not in contact with each other in a year living 100 li away, and some people are not contact with each other during a life time living 1000 li away. The people in the same country are not like living in the same country little by little because of different accents, which is harmful to all the people and has bad effects. More importantly, unified language is an important resource and condition for national identity, and is also a necessary foundation for the establishment of a unified nation .

The National language Movement has gradually become the mainstream of the modern language change movement as people’s sense of identity towards modern nation has been strengthened. The national language movement should aim at creating common language, and its popularization should be based on the unified standard, and the establishment of its standard should be beneficial to the popularization of language. “Mandarin should not only be easy to understand, but also have certain standards, that is, the” unity “of Mandarin. The general requirement is the primary problem of the national language movement. For the popularization of the common language, the alphabets selected by the phonetic language, whether it is the Latin alphabets, the strokes of Chinese characters or the unique ancient Chinese characters, should be unified, and the “sound” used in the phonetic alphabets should be common. The largest area of the country and the largest population are in the northern dialect area. Its pronunciation is represented by Beijing dialect, and Mandarin has gradually become a common consensus. Lu Gan Zhang, the father of modern Chinese phonetic alphabets, advocated the ten ways of enforcing the sound and character book, including “(1) to unify letters to avoid divergence.””(2) to publish the Mandarin , so as to unify the language of the world. The official documents, deeds, documents and communications all recognize Beijing Mandarin as a common language, so as to unify the language of the world (*Collection of characters*, 1958). With the further development of Mandarin Movement, scholars have gradually realized that the standard of written language should also be established. The Procedures of the Unity Meeting of Pronunciation, which was issued in 1913, referred to the problem of the unification of language and thought that the “language” should be “the elegant language of the near language” The articles of association made by the “National Language Research Association” have also been made clear the request for “language near” is (“National Language Research,” 1974). Before that, the work of national language movement focused on the unification of pronunciation, however, the practice of teaching and promotion showed that it was also based on some written language. According to the universal requirements of the national language, the Beijing dialect is regarded as the “national sound” and the northern dialect is the basic

dialect of the common language. Then the vernacular language should be the basis of the common language.

After a period of time, the national language movement was handed down and continued to achieve some achievements. The movement has been strongly supported by famous scholars which include the masters of the new cultural movement, like Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Qian Xuantong and so on. In essence, the national language movement from the late Qing Dynasty to the early Republic of China was a modern enlightenment movement aimed at unifying the pronunciation, eliminating the barriers of language communication between different regions, popularizing culture, improving the education level of the people, reforming Chinese characters and introducing advanced western cultural and scientific knowledge (Wang, 2016).

2. THE ISSUE OF LITERARY REVOLUTION AND THE MOVEMENT OF MANDARIN IS AN INSEPARABLE TOPIC.

The general requirements of the national language movement is inconsistent with the traditional “elegant and vulgar” language concept, and the unification of the national language must break through the existing pattern, so as to construct the true national language. The scholars of the “54” literary revolution clearly realized that the literary revolution played an important role in solving the dilemma of Mandarin Movement. Hu Shi pointed out: “vernacular literature does not become authentic literature, so vernacular has never become the standard Mandarin.”(Hu, 1935, p. 133) “The national language has the value of literature and is naturally appreciated by the literati, and can then be used as a tool for education, and then it can be used as a tool to unify the national language.”(Hu, 1935) Using “vernacular” as a bridge, the literary revolution and the national language movement found a joint. Li Jinxi thought: “the unification of the national language” and the “Literary Revolution” were the two major trends, in which the “Vernacular Literature” that had “identical language and words” was a powerful medium (Li, 1934, p. 71). Hu Shi later concluded that, “we carried out the battle slogan of” Mandarin literature and literary language “, and achieved two things: on the one hand, it saved the half dead national language movement at that time; on the other hand, the ‘vernacular literature’ was renamed as ‘Mandarin literature’, which reduced the disgusting prejudice to slang and vulgarism (Hu, 1935). “Literary Revolution” and the National language Movement have become two different but related movements. In the *Literary Revolution of Construction*, Hu Shi put forward the slogan of “literature of national language, the national language of literature”, and pointed out the interactive relationship between national language and literature, and then advocated and publicized the idea greatly, which had a great influence. The issue of literary

revolution and the movement of Mandarin has become an inseparable topic. Many people in the new literary camp are exploring the relationship between them. Shen Yanbing said: “our current new literature movement has the nature of the Mandarin Movement. Chinese language movement really needed the help of literature at the time of starting and testing. I believe that the final purpose of the new literary movement is not just so, but the original success must be the language of literature. “Cheng Fangwu, the (Shen, 1935, p. 146) Creation Society, also expressed a similar view:” our new literary movement, is a national language movement from its bursting. “(Cheng, 1935) “We need to create some new and rich expressions of our words. We must not forget that part of the mission of the new literature is here! “(Cheng, 1935) Until 1942, there was still a conclusion that, “we are going to create new literature. In order to make the new literature successfully developed and popularized, the national language movement must be carried out first; at the same time, the implementation of the literature of Mandarin language will also be able to have effect on Mandarin. From this, we can see that the new literature movement and the National Language Movement are consistent, cooperative and mutually compatible (Peng, 1942). Up to now, some researchers still think: “the confluence of the national language movement and the new literary movement is magnificent feat of the reciprocity. Depending on the confluence, the national language movement expanded its voice, and the new literary movement established its legitimacy.”(Liu, 2010) Mandarin is closely related to literature. Both of them are complementary to each other in the specific historical environment of modern intellectuals to save the nation from extinction and to enlighten the masses.

3. THE GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

The confluence of the national language movement and the literary revolution has made great achievements. The greatest achievement is that the vernacular has entered into the textbook, which is the reciprocity outcome of the literature and the national language. The language of the new literature won the status of the written language and became the only literary tool. The vernacular literature has also obtained the recognition of the literary system and became the standard written expression. The struggle against the old literature has won the decisive victory. The entry of vernacular literature into textbooks has greatly expanded the ranks of authors and readers, nurturing new aesthetic habits, and further expanding the public influence of new literature (Yuan, 2005).

By this token, the emergence of modern Chinese literature began with the transformation of literary language. Vernacular taking place of ancient Chinese is

not only literature but also national language. To some extent, the characteristics and modality of literature are influenced by the “national identity” of the language. The deep development of the National language Movement has challenged the universality of ancient Chinese writing. The unification of the national language movement ensured the authentic status of the vernacular. The vernacular became the only literary tool, which provided a solid material basis for the language reform of the literary revolution, and the popularization of the vernacular literature solved the language predicament of the existing coexistence of refined and vulgar language in the national language and eliminated the value predicament of the national language movement. Mandarin and literature intertwine and coexist in the context of modern literature. The two are complementary to each other in a specific historical context. Modern literature has been accompanied by the national language movement from the date of its birth. The national language movement is regarded as one of the important historical backgrounds of the development of the new literary movement. It has also become an indispensable angle of view on the study of the “54” literary revolution. (Wang, 2016)

CONCLUSION

It can be said that one of the backgrounds of the emergence and development of modern Chinese literature is the formation and development of Mandarin. From the perspective of Mandarin, we can recognize some phenomena comprehensively in the process of modern literature’s occurrence and development. From the unique perspective of language, to examine literature has rich cultural significance. We can have a comprehensive and profound understanding of the influence and radiation effect of language change from the close connection between the National language Movement and the literary revolution. In the process of carding the process of the national language movement, we can make a clearer understanding of the revolutionary significance of HuShi’s

vernacular literature in social values, which is one of the significances of the literary revolution. It further enlightens us on the cognition and in-depth study of the relationship between modern literature and language.

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