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5. Writing Chinese Characters

The Hong Kong Blind Union has adopted computer software that enables visually impaired people to input traditional Chinese characters via Braille (p.c. Stella Ho, Hong Kong Blind Union, February 8, 2013). The software uses 8-dot-Braille and the user can choose the right character with the help of an explicative dictionary (Grotz 1996:87). Computer based Braille-character transformation like the type sketched above is so far the only method for visually impaired people to write Chinese characters. In Japan and Korea, Braille systems representing Chinese characters have been created (Grotz 1996:83–87), but they have not been adopted in Chinese-speaking regions. Draft versions of character decoding were also made by the western scholars Grotz (1996) and Brady (2012). To decode a character in Braille, the system of Grotz (1996) used a combination of various features of a character, such as its components, pronunciation, or a distinctive marker.

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Eleni Andrist

Written Language versus Spoken Language

Up until the May Fourth Movement of 1919, the literary language of classical Chinese, known as *wényánwén* 文言文, was the written standard. Although there had been proposals for writing in the vernacular in the late Qīng Dynasty (1644–1911) by people like Huáng Zūnxiàn 黃遵憲 (1947–1905) who promoted the view that "my hand writes [what] my mouth [says]" (*Wǒ shǒu xiě wǒ kǒu* 我手寫我口), the shift from writing in literary Chinese to writing in the vernacular did not actually occur until the Literary Revolution (*Wénxué gémìng* 文學革命) launched by Hú Shì 胡適 (1891–1962) and Chén Dúxiù 陳獨秀 (1879–1942) in 1919. Today, after almost 100 years of reformation, written Chinese has all but completely changed into writing in the vernacular (→ *bái huà wén* 白話文).

Although hardly anyone uses literary Chinese anymore when writing, today's written Chinese is more complex than one would expect. Among various factors, two stand out. First, written Chinese is a variety of Mandarin (or Northern Chinese): speakers of other varieties of Chinese, such as Cantonese or Hakka, cannot write in their own vernacular if they want to communicate with someone in another language area; for them, learning to use written Chinese comes down to learning another language. Secondly, even if written Chinese is a variety of Mandarin, it is quite distinct from what a Mandarin speaker speaks on the street. Recent studies show, that today's written Chinese, be it from the Mainland, Táiwān, Hong Kong, or elsewhere, is quite distinct from everyday speech despite the fact that it is intelligible both visually and auditorily. (In fact, the written language used in Táiwān, Hong Kong, and Mainland China is not exactly the same.) In the beginning of the Literary Revolution referred to above, the philologist Huáng Kǎn 黄侃 (1886–1935) pointed out that "the separability of written language from spoken language...is inevitable" (*Wén yǔ yán pàn...fēi gǒu ér yǐ.* 文與言判…非苟而已。(*Huáng Kǎn rìjì* 黃侃日記 [Diary of Huáng Kǎn], p. 199, written in 1922). One reason is that there are formal and informal occasions and that written language tends to be used more often in formal occasions than spoken language.

In view of developments in modern written Chinese after the May Fourth Movement, linguists paid renewed attention to, and developed some new ideas on, the distinction between written and spoken Chinese. In Táo (1999), Zhāng (2007), and Feng (2009, 2010, 2015), for example, it is recognized that the linguistic devices for communication are different for different groups (or categories) of people on different occasions for different subjects, which subsequently leads to different grammars. Intriguingly, for Chinese, there seem to be two different grammars: one for the written (formal) and one for the spoken (informal) language. A typical example of the diglossia is the following.

1. a. *今天我們買和讀了美國憲法。
      *Jīntiān wǒmen mǎi hé   dú   le
       today   1PL   buy and read ASP
      Měiguó   xiànfǎ.
      American constitution
      'Today we bought and read the American Constitution.'
   b. 今天我們購買和閱讀了美國憲法。
      Jīntiān wǒmen gòumǎi hé   yuèdú
      today   1PL   buy   and read
      le   Měiguó   xiànfǎ.
      ASP American constitution
      'Today we bought and read the American Constitution.'

The disyllabic verbs *gòumǎi* 購買 'buy' and *yuèdú* 閱讀 'read' are the formal counterparts of the informal monosyllabic *mǎi* 買 'buy' and *dú* 讀 'read', respectively. However, the informal monosyllabic verbs cannot be conjoined by a conjunction like *hé* 和 'and' while it is perfectly allowable for the formal disyllabic verbs to be conjoined by *hé* 'and' (or *yǔ* 與 'and'). In other words, the grammar of spoken Chinese is different from that of written Chinese.

In recent years, researchers have systematically investigated the differences between written and spoken Chinese (among others see Zhū 1987; Hú 1993; Táo 1999; Zhāng 2007; and especially Wáng Yǐng 2003; Feng 2005; Wáng Yǒngnà 2010). One of the findings is that there are differences in different components of the grammar. For example:

2.   SPOKEN/INFORMAL   WRITTEN/FORMAL
   Morphology: noun suffix -*zi*   nominal suffix -*zhě*
              桌子   思想者
              zhuō-zi   sīxiǎng-zhě
              'table'   'think-er'
              椅子   革命者
              yǐ-zi   gémìng-zhě
              'chair'   'revolution-ary'

Vocabulary:	號	日
	hào	rì
	'date'	'date'
	塊	元
	kuài	yuán
	'unit of money'	'unit of money'
	爸爸	父親
	bàbà	fùqin
	'father'	'father'
Syntax:	[V O]_{VP}	[O V]_{NP}

Syntax:

	[V O]$_{VP}$	[O V]$_{NP}$
	編教材	教材編寫
	biān jiàocái	jiàocái-biānxiě
	compile textbook	textbook-compiling
	'to compile textbooks'	'textbook compilation'

General expressions:

a.	(不)一樣	(不)同
	(bù) yíyàng	(bù) tóng
	'(not) the same'	'(not) the same'
b.	A 和 B 一樣	*A 和 B 同
	A hé B yíyàng	*A hé B tóng
	'A and B are the same.'	'A and B are the same.'
c.	一樣的東西	*同的東西
	yíyàng-de dōngxī	*tóng-de dōngxī
	same-SUB thing	same-SUB thing
	'the same thing'	'the same thing'

The formal expressions seen above are used not only in writing but also in formal speech; they are, however, never used in everyday conversation.

Note that the formal counterparts of the informal in (b) and (c) above are ungrammatical. This points at another feature of written Chinese worth noting: formal expressions are subject to specific prosodic patterns. For example, the so-called "big word" (i.e., polysyllabic words such as 'benevolent' vs. monosyllabic synonyms like 'kind') in English actually corresponds to "small words" (i.e., monosyllabic words) in Chinese. They are often referred to as *qiàn'ǒucí* 嵌偶詞 'monosyllabic word used in disyllabic template'. For example, the formal counterpart of the vernacular word *xuéxiào* 學校 'school' is the monosyllabic *xiào* 校 'school', which, however, is always used in combination with another word to form a disyllabic unit (Feng 2003, Wáng Hóngjūn 2000, Dǒng 2004).

3. a. [我校]不雇非法移民。
   [Wǒ xiào] bú gù fēifǎ yímín.
   1SG school not hire illegal immigrant
   'Our school does not hire illegal immigrants.'

a' *[我們校]不雇非法移民。
   *[Wǒmen xiào] bú gù fēifǎ yímín.
   1PL school not hire illegal immigrant

b. 今天下午畢業生開始[離校]。
   Jīntiān xiàwǔ bìyèshēng kāishǐ [lí xiào].
   today afternoon graduates start leave school
   'Graduated students started to leave the school this afternoon.'

b' 今天下午畢業生開始*[離開校]。
   Jīntiān xiàwǔ bìyèshēng kāishǐ *[líkāi xiào].
   today afternoon graduates start leave school

These examples ((3) as well as (2b)–(2c)) show that written Chinese can be characterized by the use of "small word" like *xiào* 'school', which seem bound when one considers (3a'–b'), but which appear syntactically free in that they can be modified by a pronoun as in (3a) and used as an object as in (3b). What seems to be the matter here is that they are only bound in terms of prosody: they are limited to disyllabic templates. It has become clear that being intelligible does not make something effable. The examples in (2) and (3) show, that, in written Chinese, words and phrasal patterns are ineffable without a proper prosodic shape.

Since grammar is influenced by register/style, it is expected that cultural, political and economical differences among Táiwān, Hong Kong, and Mainland China will be reflected in the methods used to formalize their language. It has been noted that the years of political upheaval since 1949 in Mainland China and especially during the 10 years of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the standard formal written language has been shaped profoundly by political formality. Formal expressions such as the disyllabic light verbs only taking disyllabic gerunds as their object (i.e., *hé'ǒucí* 合偶词 'disyllabic word used with another disyllabic word'), illustrated in (4), are found mostly in newspapers and government documents of Mainland Mandarin, or in as far as they have spread, started there (Wáng Yǒngnà 2010).

4. a. 進行改革
     jìnxíng   gǎigé
     carry.out reform
     'to carry out a reform'
   b. 加以保護
     jiāyǐ   bǎohù
     put   protection
     'to put in effect a protection'
   c. 導致失敗
     dǎozhì   shībài
     cause   defeat
     'to cause a defeat'
   d. 實現計劃
     shíxiàn   jìhuà
     fulfill   plan
     'to fulfill a plan'

One could say that formal language in Mainland China has developed away from that in Táiwān and Hong Kong, in which elevated expressions based on classical Chinese still prevail.

There is one more factor that helped shape the written language and which also illustrates the dynamics in the interaction with the spoken modality, and that is a factor sometimes called the "principle of auditory intelligibility". To give one example, the monosyllabic counterpart of *zhīdào* 知道 'know' is *zhī* 知: it is auditorily intelligible to (educated) native speakers *and* it is frequently used in modern formal writing. In contrast, the monosyllabic counterpart of *jiěshì* 解釋 'explain' is *shì* 釋: this form is neither auditorily intelligible nor is it used in modern written Chinese. Note that both monosyllabic forms, *zhī* 'know' and *shì* 'explain', are free-standing, common words in classical Chinese. Apparently, the written Chinese is still informed in a fundamental way by the principle of auditory intelligibility.

In short, modern formal/written Chinese is a new language which developed after the May Fourth Movement. It is new in the sense that it developed a distinctive diglossic grammar composed of a syntactic system based on modern vernacular Mandarin, with some prosodic constraints on words and expressions.

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Shengli Feng

Wú 吳 Dialects

The Wú 吳 dialects are also known as Jiāng-Zhè huà 江浙話 (i.e., the speech of Jiāngsū and Zhèjiāng provinces). Wú is distributed over most of Zhèjiāng province, the city of Shànghǎi and the southern part of Jiāngsū province, as well as the cities of Shàngráo 上饶, Yùshān 玉山, Guǎngfēng 廣豐, and Déxīng 德興 in northeastern Jiāngxī province; Lángxī 郎溪 and Guǎngdé 廣德 in the south of Ānhuī province; the ancient Xuānzhōu 宣州 area to the south of the Yangtze River and to the east of Huángshān 黄山; and Púchéng 浦城 in the north of Fújiàn. There are about 69,750,000 people currently speaking this language within Chinese territory (Yán and Zhèng-Zhāng 1988). Among all the major dialects spoken in China, the number of Wú dialect speakers is only less than the number of Mandarin speakers. Abroad, Wú (mostly the Wēnzhōu 温州 and Shànghǎi dialects) is primarily used in Europe and North America, Hong Kong, and Táiwān. The number of speakers is approximately a few hundred thousand.

The history of Wú can be traced back to three thousand years ago when, according to the "Wú Tàibó shìjiā 吳太伯世家" ("Family of Wú Tàibó") section of the Hàn Dynasty historical work *Shǐjì* 史記, the two eldest sons of King Tài 太 of Zhōu 周, Tàibó 太伯 and Zhòngyōng 仲雍, fled south to the modern Wúxī 無錫 and Sūzhōu 蘇州 areas of Jiāngsū when their father appointed the throne to their younger brother Jìlì 季歷, and there founded the Kingdom of Wú. This record, while perhaps legendary, in fact reflects the historical truth that there were a number of northern immigrants who moved south to the modern Jiāngnán 江南 area at that time. The northern Chinese language of that time that they brought with them became the oldest layer of Wú. After a thousand years, this language had already become very different from the northern language spoken in the central plains region by the Eastern Jìn period. After the early 4th-century fall of the Western Jìn capital, when a large number of northern Hàn people moved south into the Wú area, they realized that the Chinese spoken there was different from their northern language. This fact is demonstrated in transmitted texts. In the "Páidiào piān 排調篇" of *Shì shuō xīnyǔ* 世說新語 by Liú Yìqìng 劉義慶 of the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, it is recorded that "Liú Zhēncháng 劉真長 met Chief Minister Wáng 王 for the first time . . . When Liú left, someone asked about his meeting with Wáng. Liú said: 'I did not see anything strange, but only heard him speaking Wú.'" Liú Zhēncháng was particularly sensitive