

The Impact Of Language To Social And Economic Change In China

Posted on September 27, 2019

1. Background To The Topic And Selected Issues

China has grown rapidly and is being classified as a developed country (Gil, 2008). This is because of a united country and a formidable language called Chinese language that everybody uses in the daily communication and transaction of business.

Gil (2008) reports that the concepts and terms employed in the general usage by Chinese, especially in the translation to think about language, are dissimilar from those put to use in the West. This is partially due to the unifying effects of the characters used in writing Chinese and also as a result of differences in the social and political development of China as one would want to compare with, for example, Europe. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Europe disintegrated into small states and nations; these states' identities became only known according to the [Chinese language basics](#) (Liu & Lo Bianco, 2007). On the other hand, China was able to preserve political and cultural unity just in the same period when Europe was differentiating. China maintained a universal standard in its writing style throughout its entire history.

As per Liu and Lo Bianco (2007) about 1.3 billion people are active speakers of the Chinese language; this is estimated to be one-fifth of the world. It makes the dialect language to be the most used among most native speakers. Chinese also have a strong cultural inclination that is solidly attached to its dialect. Liu and Lo Bianco (2007) say that in the 11th to 7th centuries B.C., the use of Archaic Chinese was so frequent that it was inscribed on bronze artifacts, common in the Shijing poetry and history that has lasted to date.

A more important phenomenon took place after the civil war of 1949 that saw the split of wider China. It emerged two blocs: to Republic of China (ROC) and the People's Republic of China (PRC), a system that committed to Modern Standard Chinese teaching that embraced the common Chinese language in the elementary school education system (Liu & Lo Bianco, 2007). This standard Chinese language is what they call Mandarin, which is now part of the main dialect of the mainland PRC and Island ROC. On a more important note, Hong Kong never used this Mandarin during colonial times. Hong Kong, which was the heart of the British colony, can now enjoy using it.

2. Objectives Of The Study

The study will be guided by the following objectives

- To ascertain the significance of a common language to the realization of social and economic development in China
- To find out different languages that have been assimilated or neutralized by Mandarin (the main Chinese Language) that is being spoken by the majority in China.
- To find out whether these minor languages can still influence the social and economic development of the Chinese.
- To find out how the Chinese themselves perceive their language about the socio-economic development in China.
- To find out how globalization has affected the Chinese culture and its social and economic development

3. Relevant Literature Review And Sources Of Information

The importance of language is not only vested in little normal conversation but in the business parlance, it is important if it can be used in the daily transaction of business. China has mastered the art of ensuring that Chinese is the only language that is being used in the country for the transaction of business. We want to see shortly through the demonstration of Khokhlova (2014) how employing language in the use of business is important. The meaning of language death can come from the study of Khokhlova's (2014) work. He says that language death does not necessarily mean the extinction of a language from being used but that it also means the use of a language by many people, yet it is not recognized as a national language or is not officially used in a business transaction.

In his paper titled "Majority Language Death," Khokhlova (2014) states how Punjabi in Pakistan and Asia is used by the majority of people. At 44.5%, he termed it dead because, despite the fact that it claims the largest percentage of its speakers, the Punjabi speakers transact business in Urdu or English (Khokhlova (2014 p, 21): the languages that they think are superior to Punjabi. This perspective has seen all professional activities, cultural events, and intellectual interactions being done in Urdu or English. The main reason why Khokhlova is terming Punjabi as a 'dead' language is because the Punjabi speakers have grown accustomed to a situation where the official language is different from their mother tongue. If you look at the case of China, you will find out that China has ensured that all the transactions, officially or formally and non-formally, are done in Chinese. Even teaching in school is done in Chinese.

As much as this paper by Khokhlova (2014) gives us the reason why it terms Punjabi as a dead

language, the current one seeks to look into why the Muscogee Creek language is on the verge of being lost altogether. The difference is that the Muscogee Creek language is growing less in its use while, on the other hand, Punjabi is being used by its speakers (making it the most extensive language that is being used in Pakistan), but only it is neglected regarding official use. This is what I think is the start of language extinction, while Khokhlova believes that the language (Punjabi) is already dead.

Jones (2013) did a study under the European Parliament on the “Endangered languages and linguistic diversity in the European Union” and made very insightful findings that the current study would find resourceful. From the onset of the paper, the author makes it clear that a language is only termed as in danger when its natives or speakers cease to use it. That means that the speakers cannot pass it from one generation to a generation. This, therefore, disqualifies Khokhlova’s (2014) work that only looked at the negligence of the Punjabi language at the level of the business transaction. Jones’s (2013) paper also reveals that multilingualism in Europe is an approach that has been used to promote linguistic diversity and learning languages over the past decade (this is an aspect that this researcher finds applicable in the current study). “Civil Society Platform on Multilingualism” has been emphasized to enhance this.

Another important piece of literature that the current study will rely on is the report done by UNESCO on “Language Vitality and Endangerment,” a report that emphasizes language diversity as an essential element in human heritage. The report indicates that six thousand languages can be approximated as still existing. The most important part of the story that the researcher finds relevant to the current study is the information on the measures that need to be taken to sustain endangered languages (Hoffmann, 2009). One such action is what they call primary language and pedagogical training. This means that teachers of a language that is on the verge of extinction should be trained in basic linguistics and provided with proper teaching materials and curriculum, among other approaches. This kind of attitude is actually what the Chinese government embarked on in ensuring that all language is taught at the elementary education level so that the student gets acquainted with them early and become part of the culture.

On a much more robust finding, Jones (2013) endorses technology as an essential tool to provide comfortable and accessible means of communication as far as enhancing the discussion among the endangered language speakers to use it in group communication or personal communication. She also emphasizes the need to empower endangered language communities so that they can promote their languages through the utilization of knowledge and expertise available in this area. This includes the resources to show and persuade the young people from among the communities that their languages were still relevant and desirable and that they were still useful.

There are significant things that also go with the loss of a language. Just as Hoffmann argues that the extinction leads to the loss of valuable cultural practices, like traditional poetry, oral histories, and traditional songs, among other art forms that find their leaning on language; Hoffmann (2009) confirms this by saying that most the culture is located in the dialect and that it is only expressed in

the language. This means that taking away the language takes away cultures like songs, riddles, oral literature, laws, and words of wisdom, among many things that lean on language. By doing that, people tend to forget their language faster; this is why China, on her part, decided to ensure that it keeps her mother tongue through the culture, like poetry and songs and the inscriptions of words in the bronze artifacts.

There is also an important argument by Hoffmann (2009) that language stands for a whole culture. It represents the culture in the minds of the speakers and the minds of outsiders who listen to the speaker. It sums up the ethos of the speaker; this means that the whole healthcare system, economy, religion, and philosophy all put together are represented in the languages. Of importance is the fact that the mother tongue is tied to kinship. Many people are asked why they are talking in the language they talk; then they will say that this is the language that my mother and father speak. This means that language is a form of identity and a means of claiming kinship.

Lastly, other people say that their language is a responsibility to them, and that is why they must speak the language they speak. To this group, losing a language will mean that they lose their responsibility. This translated means that they cease to be responsible people because they have no language for the individual's identification.

4. Research Philosophy Research Design And Methodology

Research Design And Research Approach

In this study, the researcher will mainly involve an ethnographic research design. The main reason why it is so is that it is relevant to the kind of qualitative data that would be collected, as Creswell (2013) explains. The ethnography research design will help in the analysis of the social and cultural changes that have led to the rapid development of both social and economic fronts. As an empirical data analysis method, this approach will help in achieving the following:

- Since the study will be carried out on an everyday basis, ethnography offers the life environments of participants that will help in the identification of discrepancies between what the participants say they do and the actual thing they do on the ground.
- The ethnography research study will help determine the social life changes that have led to the rapid development of China.
- The ethnographical approach lays a strong emphasis on exploring nature, in this case, the Chinese language, which is a social phenomenon; thus, it does not in any way set a hypothesis about it.
- The ethnography research design also goes beyond gathering data on variables but also attempts to explain the relationship between the variables.

- The ethnography involves the analysis of a few cases and includes unconstructed data, and this will help in describing the cultural values and activities of Chinese society.
- Ethnography serves to engrave the research team in the lives of participants, thereby enabling relationships coupled with friendly rapport to be built with the research participants during the entire period of the study.
- Another importance of ethnography is that it puts a human face on the data by offering real-life stories that the target population can relate to and remember.
- Moreover, the ethnography research design was selected since it is field-based, multi-factorial, personalized, and inductive.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation plan is composed of many decisions that require checking before re-beginning the study (Saul, 2008). These decisions are made to determine what data is needed to answer the research questions. Some of the choices are how to gather the data, when to gather the data, where to gather the data, and how to analyze the data. On this matter, the data will be collected using the interview guide and the structured questionnaires (open-ended for the qualitative data).

Data Collection Procedures

Having stated that the study takes the ethnographic approach of research, this study will employ the use of in-depth interviews and questionnaire methods in data collection from the target population that has to gather the data. The scope of the survey shows that effect. The in-depth interviews are good because they are personal and well-structured interviews and this will help in analyzing and collecting the participant's emotions, feelings as well as opinions, and perspectives regarding the research subject (Saul, 2008). In most cases, personal interviews help in promoting own as well as direct contact between the interviewers and the interviewees and this can lead to faster and adequate response rates.

According to Creswell (2013), the interviewer must have the necessary skills and abilities to carry out the interview successfully without confusion and challenges. When used efficiently, in-depth interviews can help in generating new ideas that were not the initial plan and objective of the researcher. The study aims to use in-depth interviews and the use of the questionnaire method to create and collect data from the participants and the respondents in the field. The researcher will also develop the research tool to gather information from various respondents. The researchers will obtain approval from the community leader to be allowed to conduct the research and receive data. The researchers will seek permission from the community leaders and school officials by writing a letter to the authorities and informing them that the collection of data will be done using interviews and questionnaires.

Interviews

The interviews in this study will be semi-structured individual interviews with participants and respondents sharing their opinions and perspectives on the revival of the Chinese language through a language immersion program. The researcher will include more than five open-ended interview questions and all the drafts of interview questions will be sent out to respondents in the study. The expectation is that this will promote the reliability and validity of the study.

5. Timetable And Plan Of The Main Phases Of The Project Over The Allocated Period Of Time

Critical stage	Resources	Duration
Initiation	Will conceive the idea and present it to professionals, will need a technical advisor on both data handling and traveling logistics.	Three weeks
Planning	Together with professionals, we will discuss the dynamics of the project and draw a full budget. Checking if there is any risk involved that might need mitigation in the field. Come up with full team members, including research assistants. Ask for permission from the relevant government authorities and acquire relevant authorizing documents to go to the field.	One month
Execution	Collection of the data collection tools from the store, checking whether all the needed things are available, going to the field for actual data collection, after data collection, sorting out the collected data, analyzing the data, and looking whether it conforms to the objective of the study	Four months
Closure	Presentation of the data and return of the data collection materials to the store for use in the next exercise.	Two weeks

References

Creswell, J. W. (2013) Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gil, J. (2008) The Promotion of Chinese Language: Learning and China's Soft Power, Journal of Asia Social Science. 4 (10): 1 – 7

Hoffmann, M. (2009) *Endangered Languages, Linguistics, and Culture: Researching and Reviving the Unami Language of the Lenape* (Bachelor of Arts). Bryn Mawr College.

Jones, (2013) Endangered languages and linguistic diversity in the European Union. Retrieved from [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/495851/IPOL-CULT_NT\(2013\)495851\(SUM01\)_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/495851/IPOL-CULT_NT(2013)495851(SUM01)_EN.pdf)

Khokhlova, M. (2014) Majority Language Death. Language Documentation & Conservation Special Publication No. 7.

Liu, G. Q. & Lo Bianco, J. (2007) Teaching Chinese, teaching in Chinese and teaching the Chinese. Language Policy, 6, 95-117.

Montgomery, M., & Johnson, E. (Eds.). (2014) *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 5: Language*. UNC Press Books.

Saul, H. (2008) *Research Methodology*. 2nd ed. Knoxville publishers. USA.