

PROCEEDINGS ARTICLE

The Preservation and Inheritance of Chinese Dialects: Reflections on the Phenomenon of Chinese Dialect Loss in the New Era

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ABSTRACT

Language is not only a social phenomenon, but also the most basic tool and element commonly used by people to communicate with each other. In the complex reality of life, language is the richest and most intuitive form of expression. Not only that, the level of civilization and the state of social life of a country can be fully expressed in its language. When a language disappears, the entire civilization that corresponds to it is likely to gradually die out with it. The local languages of China are in danger of disappearing as a result of internationalization, the internet and many other factors. Preservation of dialects is essential for the inheritance and development of China's ancient civilization, as well as national unity and social stability. The protection of Chinese dialects is a matter of great urgency, given the current situation of "enemies at the front and the rear" (Chen Lu, 2022).

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is because of the vastness of the Northeast that the Northeastern dialect is so bold and generous. It is because of the small bridge over the flowing stream in the South that there is gentle and lovely language of soft words. Each dialect carries traces of a long history of a region. It can be said that dialects are living cultures. However, with the current economic boom and technological progress in China, there have been huge changes in all aspects of society. In this period of rapid historical change, Mandarin has become more popular. However, another problem arises, that is, the dialect that records the social history and human evolution has been "neglected", and some dialects even face the crisis of extinction. The need to preserve dialects has become urgent, and an inch of nostalgia must be preserved. To protect the dialects, it is suggested to preserve the roots of culture.

2. CHINESE DIALECTS AND CURRENT SITUATION OF APPLICATION

Chinese dialects are diverse, rich in connotation and have been passed down for thousands of years. They are an important part of the treasures of the Chinese nation. The researcher has learned from a review of sources that the majority of accepted accounts of the classification of local languages in China are divided into two main categories: regional dialects and social dialects. The regional dialects are linguistic variants resulting from geographical differences, while the social dialects are mainly another linguistic variant resulting from different social conditions, such as income levels and levels of knowledge and culture. Some researchers have pointed out that most Chinese languages share similar rules of pronunciation, as well as commonalities in word and syntax, and that in this sense the dialects are not separate languages but are an integral part of the Chinese language. In 2019, the

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Ministry of Education stated in the Survey of Chinese Languages and Characters that dialects in China generally include "official dialect, dialects of Shanxi, Jiangsu, Anhui, Fujian, Guangdong, the Hakkas, Jiangxi and Hunan, and monologue storytelling". Some of these ten dialects are also divided into subdialects, which in turn are divided into 'dialect subdivisions', and ultimately defined into individual localities [1].

A survey published by Nanjing University of Finance and Economics showed that only 46.15% of the respondents felt they were particularly familiar with the dialect, but 37.61% thought they were not proficient enough to speak it, and only a paltry 16.24% of the respondents could understand it. Based on the above data, and taking into account the specific social reality, it is easy to see that in recent years, as the pace of urbanization in China has increased, the frequency and scale of population movement has increased, Mandarin has been promoted and popularized in the process, and the dialects have been greatly impacted as a result. At the same time, some people believe that dialects are not popular and that using them is degrading them. Therefore, people not only avoid using them, but also consciously reduce the number of dialects taught. For the people who are born in post-00s and post-10s, they have been learning Mandarin since they were young with their parents. When they go to school, they communicate with their teachers and classmates in Mandarin, and they have no opportunity to learn and use dialects [2].

3. ANALYSIS ON CAUSES OF MARGINALIZATION OF CHINESE DIALECTS

According to the researcher's analysis, there are many reasons for the gradual marginalization of dialects. Firstly, there is the influence of Mandarin on dialects. The widespread use of Mandarin among people led to an increasing decline of dialects, whose importance is diminishing under the impact of Mandarin [3].

Secondly, there is the decline of dialect-using groups. With the development of society, a vast number of peasants have been gradually liberated from the farmlands and moved into cities on a large scale. As they worked in cities for a long time, these peasants have naturally diluted their original vernacular and moved towards Mandarin in order to communicate smoothly and maintain a normal life in the cities.

Once again, there is the increase in transportation in China. The increasing ease of transport has led to closer links between different parts of the country, and people are moving more rapidly and frequently than ever before, which has made the weakening of the dialects more serious to some extent [4].

In addition, the younger generation has developed a sense of alienation from dialects. Language education begins at an early age. With the progress of the times, the promotion of Mandarin in schools has led to a growing alienation from the dialect among many young people. In an environment where Mandarin is being promoted, young people regard those who learn Mandarin well as a sign of quality and adaptability to The Times, and thus psychologically resist dialects.

Finally, dialects suffer from deficiencies in both conservation and transmission. While the status of dialects as a communication tool is declining in Chinese society today, their influence as a traditional culture is growing considerably. And the so-called preservation of dialect culture, to a large extent, is also the preservation of dialect culture. People do not have a deep enough understanding of dialects and their preservation, and they still treat them as an ordinary communication tool and do not take strong measures to protect and preserve them, thus leading to a gradual decline in the number of dialects and even a crisis of extinction now.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF CHINESE DIALECTS AND THEIR PROTECTION

4.1. Dialects Should Be a Bond of Group Identity

Due to the needs of human social and cultural life and changes in the transportation environment, communication among different regions and languages has become more and more active. People in the same language area will quickly establish a sense of identity, and often help each other in learning, life, work and so on. Dialects play a link role in this process, and people in the same language area are virtually linked together [5].

4.2. Dialects Should Be a Carrier of Traditional Chinese Culture

Dialects carry rich and varied traditional folk culture of China. Taking folk art as an example, it is well known that China is a country of opera, with a rich variety of local drama and rap folk art, also known as rap art. In the case of drama, there is the well-known Huangmei opera and Han opera, while the rap art is represented by the northeast song-and-dance duet and the Shaanxi opera. However, both local drama and rap are presented in the distinctive local dialects. Without the large number of local languages, these outstanding folk cultures would not exist.

4.3. Dialect Protection Is Conducive to the Development of Society in a Pluralistic Direction

In a truly pluralistic society, the protection of dialects and the promotion of Mandarin are not contradictory or incompatible, but rather their co-existence is a reflection of the equal inclusion of society and the development of cultural diversity. Dialects themselves have distinctive and colorful characteristics, and they are the essence of traditional culture. Songs, movies, sketches and literary works created in one's own language can fully reflect the unique charm of local dialect culture. As China is vast and abundant, dialects and cultures of various ethnic groups gather together, which is an indispensable part of the Chinese culture. They make Chinese culture blossom and enrich. Therefore, as Mandarin continues to be promoted, corresponding policies to protect dialects should be introduced at the same time. Then, the cultural essence in local dialects can be inherited and carried forward. At the same time, dialect culture and Mandarin culture can promote each other and merge together, in order to facilitate the development of society in a more diversified direction.

4.4. Protecting Dialects Is Conducive to the Further Development of Mandarin Promotion

From the surface, a dialect is a cultural symbol. But at a deep level, it is our cultural memory brand. In China, the older generation treats dialects with a great deal of reverence. However, with the spread of Mandarin, the centrality of the dialect in a region is gradually being replaced and the number of people using it is decreasing, which has led to hostility towards Mandarin from some people who are extremely loyal to it. At the same time, many experts and scholars have recognized the importance of preserving dialects and have issued calls for protection [6]. A number of professional organizations and civil groups aimed at protecting dialects have sprung up, and the government has taken many corresponding policies and measures to take advantage of the situation, hoping to protect the local languages in China and eliminate the negative feelings of some groups towards Mandarin, and to welcome the popularization of Mandarin with an open and inclusive attitude. The difficulties in the spread of Mandarin can be solved when those minority groups no longer shun it.

4.5. Dialect Protection Is of Great Significance to the Implementation of the Rural Revitalization Strategy

Dialect culture is an inseparable part of China's intangible cultural heritage and its preciousness cannot be overstated. Recently, the State Language and Writing Commission and other departments promulgated the "Implementation Plan for the Project of Popularizing and Enhancing the Common State Language and Writing and the Plan of Revitalizing the Countryside", proposing to "prosper and develop rural language and culture", "excavating and organizing rural rules and regulations, local operas, proverbs and folk songs, and other rural language and cultural resources. Through chanting, writing, performing, singing and other forms of innovative interpretation", the language and cultural resources mentioned above are the core and foothold of dialect protection [7]. At present, the National Language and Culture Project, represented by China's National Language Resources Protection Project, has carried out research on relevant Chinese dialects and ethnic languages. At the same time, it has conducted research on oral cultures across the country, such as poetry, hysterics, fables, poetic chanting, cryptic language, jingle, proverbs, traditional opera, drama, ritual rhetoric, etc. In addition, China has investigated and protected 68 endangered dialect sites across the country, etc. These endangered dialect sites are usually located in poor areas that are physically backward and geographically remote, which are also the focus areas for the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy. It can be seen that the construction of a series of resources for the purpose of dialect conservation can provide important data resources for implementation of the rural strategy [8].

5. RESEARCH ON DIALECT PROTECTION STRATEGIES IN THE NEW ERA

Dialects are a concentrated expression of the language and culture of a region and an emotional link between the people of that region, playing a role that cannot be ignored in all aspects of social interaction. In the new era, with the spread of Mandarin and the increasingly close communication between different regions, the status of dialects is gradually being replaced, the number of speakers is decreasing, the space for development is increasingly compressed, and even some disadvantaged dialects have ceased to exist. Based on the critical situation of dialect development,

there is an urgent need to take measures to protect the dialects and preserve the fundamentals of culture.

5.1. Introducing Policies to Protect Dialects While Promoting Mandarin

The state should give dialects space to survive and develop in all aspects, forming a pluralistic pattern that complements Mandarin, respecting the great significance of Mandarin as a common language and protecting the importance of dialects as linguistic resources and cultural elements. In recent years, the state has also realized the need to protect dialects and has included the protection of dialects as a major national cultural heritage project. The Central Propaganda Department, the State Language and Script Work Committee, the Ministry of Education and other relevant departments have also further strengthened their efforts to promote and disseminate excellent traditional Chinese culture, and have included the transmission and protection of dialects in relevant planning and work plans.

In 2015, the Ministry of Education, the State Language and Writing Commission and other departments launched the Chinese Language Resources and Environment Project, and conducted a nationwide project focusing on the research, preservation, display and utilization of Chinese dialects and traditional ethnic language materials. In the past five years, the project has had a remarkable effect, with a good response from all sectors of society and a great impact at home and abroad. The Chinese Language Resource Bank and the collection and display platform were built at the same time as the project was underway. Now, it brings together data on more than 10 million dialects of 123 languages and localities, making it the largest Chinese dialect resource bank in the world.

In 2017, the General Office of the State Council and other departments promulgated the Opinions on Implementing the Project of Inheritance and Development of Excellent Chinese Traditional Culture, which clearly stated that the culture of dialects should be protected, inherited and promoted. In order to further promote the project of carrying forward and developing fine traditional Chinese culture, the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee supports the establishment of a series of sub-projects, such as the "Project of Inheriting and Revitalizing Traditional Chinese Opera" and the "Project of Publishing Folk Literature Dramas", and includes local cultural projects based on the inheritance and protection of dialects into the project construction.

The Central Radio and Television Station have also launched a number of programs in dialects, taking into account the needs of audiences in different

regions. Among them, the Voice of China is broadcast in Hokkien and Hakka dialect. In addition to Cantonese programs, the Voice of Hong Kong and Macao also has Hakka and Teochew programs, such as "Sounds of the Four Seas" and "Cantonese". By September 2019, the Voice of the Greater Bay Area and the New Media Platform has been launched simultaneously. The programs are mainly in Cantonese, but also in Hakka, Chaoshan and other dialects to suit the language habits of the people in the Greater Bay Area.

5.2. Creating a Language Environment With the Use of Media Resources

The "Regulations on the Administration of Radio and Television" stipulate that Mandarin shall be the basic broadcasting language for radio and television stations, but at the same time, radio and television stations at all levels should be actively guided to promote the production and broadcasting of programs on the theme of intangible cultural heritage, such as opera, in dialect.

The Ministry of Education and National Language Commission of China actively support and guide local governments to combine Chinese language resource protection projects with cultural construction, and fully display local language and cultural resources through information technology. Currently, Beijing, Liaoning, Heilongjiang, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Guangxi, Sichuan and other provinces have built or plan to build their own language resource libraries or online language museums. Hunan plans to build a physical "Chinese Language and culture center" within the provincial museum. The Ministry of Education and the State Language Commission will continue to support and promote the construction of language museums, experience museums and other language and culture experience display environments in various regions [9].

5.3. Including Dialect-Related Education in School Education Appropriately

The education sector can provide effective and interesting dialect courses within schools and universities, so that students can accept the dialect, enhance their enjoyment of it, and in turn gain a deeper understanding of it [10]. According to the "Law on the General Use of the State Language and Script", the education and teaching of language in schools and other educational institutions should be paid attention to with the consideration of Mandarin and standard Chinese characters. However, as society becomes more concerned about dialect culture, some places have made exploration on teaching dialects

outside the classroom in areas. For example, some provinces and cities offer extra-curricular activities in primary and secondary schools with the content of teaching dialects. In conjunction with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has promoted the entry of non-traditional items using dialects, such as traditional drama into schools. For example, Anhui Province combined non-hereditary heritage with quality education and cultural exchange, promoting the entry of non-heritage items such as Huangmei opera into 572 schools.

5.4. Two-Pronged Approach to Cultural Undertakings and Cultural Industries to Build a Broad Stage for Dialect Preservation and Inheritance

It is found that dialect protection can also be approached from cultural industries and cultural undertakings, and the two can complement each other and contribute to dialect protection together. In the cultural sector, the local dialects can be recorded in a centralized manner through the compilation and updating of local dialect histories. A dialect museum can also be established to present the dialects in a more visual way. In the cultural industry, it is possible to build on the current booming film and television industry. For example, shooting more dialect films is a feasible measure. In recent years, the refreshing and humorous Wuhan dialect used in "Embracing You in the Winter", and the memorable "Shanghai gossip" interspersed in the "Love Myth" are all good uses of dialects, which also provide people with great reference for spreading and protecting dialects [11].

5.5. All People Should Be Aware of the Need to Protect Dialects and Be Protectors and Inheritors of Dialects

It is not helpful to rely on one region or a small group of people to do a good job of preserving the dialects. Only if all people form an awareness of the need to protect the dialects, abandon the utilitarian view of language, abandon the instrumentalism of language, and protect their own dialects, will the treasures of Chinese dialects be better protected.

6. CONCLUSION

Dialects carry a variety of cultures, and different forms of dialects produce different communication effects and can be explored for their profound value. In the new era, dialects are slowly being lost, and the

prospect is worrying. Only by building up the spirit of dialect preservation and continuing the path of protecting dialects will they be able to take root and flourish in an evolving society [12].

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