The War on Language: Language Management and Resistance in Contemporary China

By

Siu-yau Lee

St. Antony's College

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Abstract

What explains institutional change in authoritarian regimes presiding over fragmented societies? A popular assumption is that, because the state is so powerful, major institutional change takes place *only* when certain actors within the state system see such change as beneficial for their personal or collective interests. In other words, institutional changes are necessarily top-down and elitist in nature. Challenging that position, this thesis articulates a theory of gradual institutional change in authoritarian regimes, arguing that authoritarian institutions, as distributional instruments laden with power implications, are likely to be unstable and ambiguous, allowing social actors to advance their personal or collective interests through gradual institutional modifications. As these resistances accumulate, the costs for state actors to maintain their increasingly ineffective institutions rise to an unsustainable level, incentivising them to revise their core practices—and, by extension, sometimes expand existing rights or extend new ones to their citizens. This argument is supported by a systematic examination of the Chinese state's historic attempts to promote the use of a standardised language form—*putonghua*—and simplified Chinese characters on a national scale, and a range of popular resistance efforts against them. Drawing upon newly available archival materials, survey data, and in-depth interviews, I conduct process-tracing case studies of three successive language management regimes—namely, top-down (from the 1950s to 1980s), incentivising (from the 1990s to mid-2000s), and selective (from the mid-2000s), demonstrating how they were challenged and gradually modified by their subjects. From this position I argue that the deployment of official language policy in the PRC is determined endogenously by the ambiguities of existing language institutions as well as exogenously by levels of economic development and communication technology. The casual arguments are then evaluated in light of evidence from the history of language management in the former Soviet Union and Tawian.

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Introduction

Cantonese people speak Cantonese; go home if you cannot understand it
—from a poster designed by a Chinese netizen in 2010

The foregoing slogan was taken from a poster designed by a Chinese netizen during a campaign directed against the state's efforts to delimit usage of the local Cantonese dialect in Guangzhou. On 5 July 2010, during the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a committee member Ji Keguang (纪可光), proposed that all Guangzhou TV stations should be required to broadcast more programs in putonghua or launch a new putonghua channel. Nothing was novel about this proposition: promoting putonghua has been an integral part of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) "civilisation" (*wenmin*g 文明) programme since the mid-1990s.[1] In many provinces, the use of local dialect has been restricted in schools. However, the public reaction triggered by the above incident was exceptional—even by today's standards, when popular incidents have become more commonplace. Apart from the usual petitioning on popular online bulletin boards (BBS), the angry dissidents in Guangzhou actually took their anger onto the street. Having been denied permission to demonstrate, more than a thousand people, most of them youngsters, "happened to drift together"—assembling as if by chance—outside the Jiangnanxi Metro Station at exactly 5:30 in the evening of 25

[1] Ann Anagnost, *National Past-Times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China* (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press: 1997), ch. 3.

July. Soon they were chanting a very pungent Cantonese slogan, in unison: "F**k your mother! Hit the hard!" (*Diao na ma, ding ying shang* 掉哪妈, 顶硬上).[2] The anti-putonghua campaign quickly attracted attention and support from other communities—particularly activists in Hong Kong, where Cantonese is the main language of communication. As the discontent continued to grow among the public, on August 1st, hundreds of protesters gathered again in Guangzhou to protest in support of the Cantonese language.[3] After the protests, the local government withdrew its proposal, saying that the state has "no plan to substitute Cantonese with putonghua in Guangdong"—it was just a malicious rumour.[4]

Whether the demonstration was the result of a rumour or not, the event reflects the growing discontent among many Chinese citizens about the loss of their languages and dialects. Indeed, one of the most commonly cited reasons for opposition to the putonghua programme was that it would undermine cultural diversity and destroy their valuable traditions. Such argument was articulated probably most clearly by a Hong Kong public intellectual Chin Wan (陈云), who insisted that Cantonese was inherently superior to putonghua because of its more varied pronunciation and richer vocabulary.[5] Nevertheless, what Chin and his proponents had missed was that the dominance of Cantonese in the Canton area was also a result of previous political struggles. In fact, until the early 1980s, not only Cantonese, but Hakka, Toishan, Seiyap, and several other dialects, were being used in the Canton region, including Hong Kong. It was not until the 1980s when the British colonial government, in view of the anti-colonial movements in Hong Kong fomented by the city's leftists linking up with their counterpart in mainland China, that Cantonese was required to be spoken in media and schools. Then following the investment of Hong Kong businessmen,

[2] "The medium is the message" (27 July 2010), *The Economist Blog*, available at: http://www.economist.com/blogs/asiaview/2010/07/protest_guangzhou (accessed 21 January 2011).
[3] "Protesters Stand Firm on Cantonese Rights," *Times*, 2 August 2010.
[4] "Move to limit Cantonese on Chinese TV is assailed," *The New York Times*, 26 July 2010.
[5] Chin Wen, "Baowei dayueyu" ("Protecting Cantonese"), *Xinbao* (*Hong Kong Economic Journal*), 20 July 2010.

Cantonese became the dominant language in the rest of the Guangdong province. Clearly, neither the official *wenming* discourse nor Chin Wan's claim of "Cantonese supremacy" were the last word in the language politics of contemporary China. Behind the demonstration in Guangzhou were struggles between the competing interests of the state and society, as well as the struggles between nationalism and localism.

"Language wars"—conflicts related to the usage and the production of language—have been gaining momentum in China, as well as in other parts of the world. While centripetal political forces from globalisation and regional integration remain powerful, the 21st century has also witnessed the rise of what Roland Robertson calls "glocalisation": a process by which people in a local place mediate and alter national and global processes.[6] China is no exception: apart from the anti-putonghua protests in Guangzhou, resistance against the central state's linguistic authority is also evident in minority areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang.[7] Meanwhile, in addition to those direct confrontations, resistance has also taken a more everyday and subtle form in unconventional areas such as the internet and dictionary market, through the rise of special netizen memes designed to circumvent censorship and the publication of private dictionaries.[8] These everyday forms of resistance, once become popular, may erode the foundations of a political system.[9]

Given the possibility of popular resistance, what motivates the state—which includes the central and local governments—to engage in language management? What institutions

[6] For empirical examples, see: Cyril I. Obi, "Globalization and local resistance: the case of Shell verse the Ogoni," in Barry K. Gills (ed.), *Globalisation and the Politics of Resistance* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 2000), pp. 280-294.
[7] This does not mean that the confrontations in Guangzhou, Tibet and Xinjiang share the same causes.
[8] See: James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven :Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 241-303; Perry Link, and Kate Zhou, "Shunkouliu: popular satirical sayings and popular thought," in Eugene Perry Link, Richard Madsen, Paul Pickowicz (eds), *Popular China: Unofficial Culture in a Globalizing Society* (Lanham, MD and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), pp. 89–109.
[9] Fantu Cheru, "The silent revolution and the weapons of the weak: transformation and innovation from below," in Stephen Gill and James H. Mittelman (eds.), *Innovation and Transformation in International Studies* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 153-169.

have been set up to achieve those goals? And what determines when and how these institutions change or even break down? These questions are important not only because language is crucial to human existence, but also because of their implications for institutional change in stable authoritarian regimes in which the state appears to be far more powerful than its opposition. Surprisingly, these important questions have remained understudied in political science. As this chapter will show, this is because most past scholarship has either assumed that language is an inherently powerful medium that shapes thought; or that it is a basically unambiguous and transparent vehicle for communication that can be managed by a static institution. These problematic assumptions have rendered language politics either too abstract or too trivial for more systematic examination.

Using newly available archival materials, survey data, and interviews, this thesis explores the Chinese state's historic attempts to promote the use of putonghua and simplified Chinese characters on a national scale, as well as a range of popular resistance against them. It proposes, first of all, that the state engages in language management because language is a highly valued *resource* that can be used either by the state or the society to achieve a wide range of political goals, such as nation building, surveillance, place branding, rightful resistance, and so on. This idea of language management is evident, for example, in China's internet censorship, in which the state struggles to maintain its political dominance through prohibiting the use and circulation of particular keywords in cyberspace. In this regard, language institutions—rules that govern the uses, status and production of language—are essentially "distributional instruments laden with power implications."[10] Different institutions have different and unequal implications for resource allocation. This motivates various actors to continuously pursue the creation, maintenance, modification, or subversion of different language institutions.

[10] James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen, "A theory of gradual institutional change," in James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (eds.), *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 8.

In relation to the strategies the central state has used to manage language since 1949, three major models have been observed in this thesis, namely: 1) a top-down model in the revolutionary era that aimed at direct control of the people; 2) an incentivising model in the early market reform era that aimed at motivating citizens to learn and use putonghua; and finally, 3) a selective model in the late market reform era that aimed at creating different zones of sovereignty for effective management of linguistic resources and practices. Each of these models emerged in response to a set of factors, and engendered significant and mourning resistance from social forces.

This leads to the central argument of this thesis, that the design of linguistic institutions in the PRC is determined endogenously by the opportunities for oppositional groups to develop within existing language institutions as well as exogenously by levels of economic development and communication technology. Certain concepts in this argument require a brief explanation. "Opportunities within existing language institutions" refer to language rules that are not enforced or can be interpreted in different ways. Institutions, as Mahoney and Thelen have aptly observed, are not unequivocal; and ambiguous rules are often the objects of political skirmishing.[11] While people who benefit from existing institutions will actively resolve ambiguities in their favour, those who wish to subvert the institutions will exploit their ambiguities and establish new precedents for action that can "transform the way institutions allocate power and authority."[12] The implication of my central argument is that institutions designed by the state to control language(s) are not static. The complexity of language and the linguistic diversity of China mean that any overarching schemes of the state to simplify and control language are bound to be challenged by its

[11] Mahoney and Thelen, "A theory of gradual institutional change," p. 12.
[12] Kathleen Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Adam Sheingate, "Rethinking rules creativity and constraint in the U.S. House of Representatives," in Mahoney and Thelen (eds.), *Explaining Institutional Change*, p. 169.

subjects when the original balance of power is shaken by advancements in the economy and communication technology. [13] And the opportunity structure—configuration of resources and institutional rules that facilitates the development of social resistance[14]—of the original institution determines the nature and direction of the resistance it encounters.

The content of language rules and practices is never just about language; it inevitably reflects the power each actor and institution possesses to act on reality. The comparative historical framework of this thesis allows it to map how the state and society interact with each other in the linguistic realm over a longer period of time. It proposes a cyclical model of state-society relations whereby state power, because of changing socio-economic conditions that give rise to new openings for resistance, has been intermittently challenged by forces from society. Faced with those challenges, state elites derive new strategies to re-capture social control. While the state has somehow been able to reinvent itself to meet new challenges, it has, as this thesis will suggest, conceded an increasing amount of authority to the society (e.g. commercial publishers, netizens) to define linguistic correctness. In this regards, this thesis shall move beyond its original concern with language, and shed new light on the discussions of state-society relationships and institutional changes in contemporary China.

The remainder of this chapter comprises, firstly, a review of the existing literature on Chinese language politics in which I argue that, despite forwarding some compelling insights, the existing scholarship is constrained by a number of major flaws; secondly, I provide an explanation of how my model could address those problems; and thirdly, I offer an account of

[13] As of 2006, 86.38 per cent of the Chinese population speak one of the Chinese dialects (such as Cantonese), whereas the figure for those who can speak putonghua is 53.06 per cent. See, Office of Chinese Language and Words Survey (ed.), *Zhongguo Yuyan Wenzi Shiyong Qingkuang Diaocha Ziliao* (*Survey on the Use of Chinese Language and Words*) (Beijing: Language Press, 2006), p. 2.

[14] This definition is adopted, with slight modifications, from Herbert P. Kitschelt, "Political opportunity structures and political protest: anti-nuclear movements in four democracies," *British Journal of Political Science* Vol. 16, No.1 (1986), p. 58.

research methods that delineates where the sources are found and analysed to justify the model.

Power, Language, and Politics: a Literature Review

1. "Internalist" Approach

Attempts to study language politics have largely been influenced by the "Sapir-Whorf" hypothesis, according to which, in its strongest form, language *determines* thought.[15] While today few scholars uphold the claim in its pure form, many proponents of this hypothesis still maintain that language *influences* how human beings understand reality because they respond differently to different word uses and grammatical structures, often in an unconscious manner. [16] For instance, according to Whorf, people are likely to behave more cautiously when they are around "gasoline drums" than "empty gasoline drums"—although the latter is actually more dangerous.[17] This view was popularised by Orwell's satirical novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which demonstrated if a despotic state (the USSR) were to restrict the range of things that are expressible in language, it could also restrict the range of things that are thinkable. In fact, many scholars in this camp maintain that because language is the medium people use to perceive, describe, and communicate their experience, it is, therefore, a useful means for state's power to operate and establish its own normality—the everydayness of institutional processes.[18] Edelman, for instance, therefore famously proclaimed in his article in 1985 that "political language *is* political reality".[19] Laitin, as another example, also concludes his study of Somali by arguing that the impact of certain political concepts is different when expressed

[15] Edward Sapir, *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture and Personality* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), p.15; Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality : Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1956).
[16] See: Michael L. Geis, *The language of Politics* (New York : Springer-Verlag, 1987), p.4.
[17] Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality*, p.135.
[18] Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany, GA.: State University of New York Press, 1999); Dariusz Galasinksi, *The Language of Deception : a Discourse Analytical Study* (London: SAGE , 2000).
[19] The emphasis is Edelman's. See: Murray Edelman, "Political language and political reality," *PS*, Vol.18, No. 1 (1985), p. 10.

in different languages, and therefore, to change the language of a population is to change the ways they think and act politically.[20]

Much of the research in Chinese language politics influenced by this hypothesis adopted an "internalist" approach that consists of a search for power *within* language. This research, mostly conducted by critical theorists, often accounts for the association between language and politics by pointing to the linguistic features—such as syntactic structures and word choices—that can be observed in the operation of the state. Although language systems are many, and there has not been conclusive evidence that word choice plays a significant role in affecting political outcomes, internalist scholars nevertheless believe that language can deceive people and is useful to tackle a range of "unspecific and general problems" such as maintaining solidarity of the subjects and expressing the power of the ruling elites.[21]

Schoenhals's study of formalised language—a form of language managed and manipulated by the state—in China is a classic illustration of this approach.[22] While Schoenhals believed formalised language can only solve "small" problems, he nevertheless argued that the PRC managed to control what could be expressed by its subjects through regulating the formal aspects of discourse.[23] A variant of this approach can be found in Kraus's attempt to connect Chinese calligraphy with political domination.[24] More often, however, political scientists are put off by the idiosyncrasies of language studies, leaving the

[20] David D. Laitin, *Politics, Language, and Thought : the Somali Experience* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977).
[21] Bob Hodge and Kam Louie, *The Politics of Chinese Language and Culture : the Art of Reading Dragons* (London: Routledge, 1998), p.48; Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric : the Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
[22] Michael Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), p.1.
[23] Ibid., p.21. For other scholars who share similar argument, see: Perry Link, *An Anatomy of Chinese Rhythm, Metaphor, Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); M. A. K. Halliday, *Spoken and Written Language* (Oxford : Oxford University Press , 1989); and Feng-yuan Ji, *Linguistic Engineering: Language and Politics in Mao's China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).
[24] Richard Curt Kraus, *Brushes with Power: Modern Politics and the Chinese Art of Calligraphy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991). Also see: Richard Curt Kraus, *The Party and the Arty in China: the New Politics of Culture* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

work of examining the role and impacts of language in Chinese politics to linguists and psychologists.[25]

Although the internalist approach and its variants yield valuable and influential insights, their problematic assumptions detract from their usefulness. First of all, as Bourdieu rightly noted, by trying to "understand the power of linguistic manifestations linguistically," the internalists fail to recognise that authority is exogenous to language, and that there are multiple sources of authority.[26] The fall of the USSR—the regime that inspired Orwell's aforementioned novels—has concretely exemplified this fact, for if there were indeed "power" within certain linguistic formulations, the state should have been able to maintain its dominance over its subjects despite its economic failures.[27] The discovery that Mao's use of language and even handwriting could be used to mobilise people derived not from the fact that Mao had correctly identified powerful words, but because Mao exerted power over political institutions (such as the military), which gave him authority.

2. Public Policy Approach:

Another dominant approach in the study of language politics adopts a public policy perspective, which based on a functionalist assumption that language is planned to solve problems (e.g. illiteracy).[28] Some scholars in this stream argued specifically that language policies are specific tools used by governments to tackle language and communication

[25] See, Chong Jen Chuang and Bor Shiuan Cheng, 'The psychological meaning of Chinese typographies and its application in advertising', in Henry S. R. Kao and Rumjahn Hoosain (eds.), *Linguistics, Psychology, and the Chinese Language* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong , 1986), pp.81-90; Kraus, *Brushes with Power*; and Geis, *The Language of Politics.*

[26] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), p.119.

[27] The author thanks Deborah Cameron for this example.

[28] Joan Rubin, Björn H. Jernudd, 'Introduction: language planning as an element in modernisation,' in Joan Rubin and Björn H. Jernudd (ed.), *Can Language be Planned? Sociolinguistic Theory and Practice for Developing Nations* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1971), p.xvi; Björn H. Jernudd and Jyotirindra Das Gupta, "Towards a theory of language planning," in Joan Rubin and Björn H. Jernudd (eds.), *Can Language be Planned?*; Francis X Karam, 'Toward a definition of language planning,' in Joshua A. Fishman (ed.), *Advances in Language Planning* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p.105; and John DeFrancis, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp.87-105.

problems.[29] Haugen is one of the pioneers of this approach. In 1966 he proposed that "language planning is called for wherever there are language problems. If a linguistic situation for any reason is felt to be unsatisfactory, there is room for a programme of language planning."[30] Therefore, for Haugen, a model that explains the formation of language policies should involve a series of technical procedures such as problem identification; grammatication; and correction.[31]

Haugen's assertion came under serious criticisms from other public policy academics for neglecting the political agenda that drives the process. Sociolinguists such as Cooper, for example, pointed out that such assumptions fail to recognise that language planning is essentially political in nature. According to Cooper, although language policies are indeed formulated partly to tackle communication problems, they often have covert agendas that are essentially non-linguistic. I concur with Cooper's observation. An example in the Chinese context is the "illiteracy problem" framed by many early Chinese leaders like Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in the 1950s.[32] However, following Cooper, it should be noted that those labelled illiterate are considered illiterate not (necessarily) because they are unable to communicate with others, but rather because the person in question lacks the ability to communicate with a specific group(s) of people in a specific way(s) preferentially defined by the authorities (ie. reading, speaking, or writing—in a recognised language). In fact, "illiteracy" had not been framed as an urgent problem until the Communist Party needed to gain greater control of the mobility of the peasants so as to collectivise the rural society in the

[29] For example: Joan Rubin, "Language planning: discussion of some current issues," in Joan Rubin and Roger W Shuy (eds.), *Language Planning: Current Issues and Research* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1973), p.1.
[30] Einar Haugen, "Linguistic and language planning," in William Bright (ed.), *Proceedings of the UCLA Sociolinguistics Conference* (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1966), p.52.
[31] Einar Haugen, "The implementation of corpus planning: theory and practice," in Juan Cobarrubias & Joshua A. Fishman (eds.), *Progress in Language Planning: International Perspectives* (Berlin ; New York : Mouton Publishers, 1983).
[32] Zhou Enlai, "Dangqian wenzi gaige de renwu" (Tasks for the Current Characters Reform) (10/1/1958), in The State Archives Administration of China (ed.), *Jianguo yilai zhong yao wenxian xuanbian* (*Selected Important Documents Since the Founding of the People's Republic*), (Beijing : Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1996), pp.23-26.

mid-1950s.[33] Thus, the Party's campaigns to stamp out illiteracy were driven not only by lingsitic problems, but by logistical and strategic aims as well.

Blachford, Spolsky, and Grin extend the focus of language policy studies to the language beliefs of a society, decision-making process of governmental decisions, and the consequences of those decisions.[34] In brief, they aimed to identify a number of major organisations and stakeholders in the process of language planning (such as bureaucratic structure of the state,[35] local officials, religious organisations,[36] families, and transnational organs) so as to explain variations in language policies and the conflicts that took place between different linguistic communities. In the field of political science, recent scholars follow a similar path of investigation but highlight the relevance of a set of political factors, such as the need for nation building, external threat, and systems of representation.[37]

Studies on Chinese language politics influenced by this approach tend to document the state's language policies and evaluate their effects on different social groups, many of them minorities.[38] A main theme occurring in those studies are the inequalities generated by the state's language policy. These authors have rightly argued that language policy can shape social mobility, and therefore contributes to a number of socio-economical inequalities.[39]

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[33] Glen Peterson, *The Power of Words: Literacy and Revolution in South China, 1949-95* (Vancouver : UBC Press, 1997), p.218.
[34] François Grin, *Language Policy Evaluation and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.39.
[35] Dongyan Ru Blachford, "Language Spread Versus Language Maintenance: Policy Making and Implementation Process," in Minglang Zhou and Hongkai Sun (eds.), *Language Policy in the People's Republic of China* (Boston ; London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), pp. 99-122.
[36] Bernard Spolsky, *Language Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press , 2004), pp.48-49.
[37] For example, see, Amy H. Liu, "Linguistic effects of political institutions," *The Journal of Politics* No. 73 (2011), pp 125-139; and Nazlı Avdan and Amber A. Díaz, "Words, words, words: a two-level analysis of language reform as a state-building strategy," paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 49th Annual Convention, San Francisco, CA, USA, 26 March 2008.
[38] See, for example, Linda T. H. Tsung, *Minority Languages, Education and Communities in China* (Basingstoke England ; New York : Palgrave Macmillan 2009); Blachford, "Language spread versus language maintenance," pp. 99-122; Shouhui Zhao and Richard B. Baldauf, *Planning Chinese Characters : Reaction, Evolution or Revolution?* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008).
[39] Florian Coulmas, *Language and Economy* (Oxford : Blackwell, 1992), p. 55.

This approach is particularly dominant in state-sponsored studies, which often justify the need for the state to improve putonghua education in schools.[40]

Collectively, such studies have enriched our understanding of language policy, but still fall short of providing a useful model to study how language as a social-historical phenomenon is being institutionalised to advance personal or collective interests. In other words, while public policy approaches have rightly focused on the institutional aspects of language management, they have not fully realised the dynamic nature of institutions. Institutions are human constructs and subject to constant challenge and change. Yet, favouring comparisons that include a large number of cases, the public policy literature often treats language institutions either as static, or as structures that only change in response to external shocks. Consequently, it fails to provide a historical model that can fully explain how language rules changed as a result of the long-term struggles between different players within the same regime. For example, such studies seldom take into account resistance to existing language norms, which has been a powerful force that shaped language politics in China. It is evident that language politics cannot be totally dominated by the state. In stead, it is often a site of ongoing and incremental struggle between state and society. As this thesis will affirm, domination and power are always multi-dimensional.[41] Volland, for example, found in his research that there were actually niches of greater linguistic diversity among ordinary people during the Mao era than the state formally allowed.[42] These findings suggest that a more comprehensive study of language politics that takes into consideration of the resistance from the bottom up is necessary.

[40] See, for example, Chen Zhangtai, "Dangdai zhongguo de yuyan guihua" ("Language planning in contemporary China"), *Yuyan wenzi yingyong* (*Applied Linguistics*), No. 1 (2005), pp. 2-12.
[41]Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Robert Hurley (transl.) (Harmondsworth : Viking , 1986), p.95.
[42] Nicolai Volland, "A linguistic enclave: translation and language policies in the early People's Republic of China," *Modern China*, Vol. 35 (2009), p. 467.

Towards a Model of Language Control and Resistance in Contemporary China

To move beyond the conventional approaches, this thesis proposes that the design of language institutions in the PRC is determined endogenously by the design of pre-existing language institutions as well as exogenously by levels of economic development and communication technology. This section further articulates the variables of this research, and delineates the complex theoretical relationships that are expected to observe between them.

1. Language Institutions:

Language institutions are rules that deliberately influence the behaviour of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes.[43] This definition neither restricts the actors of language politics to authoritative agencies (because those who are at the bottom can also influence those at the top), nor restricts the type of target group, nor specifies an ideal form of language planning. Following this definition, language institutions can be observed either in the form of explicitly stated language laws and regulations or implicit rules and beliefs about a language.[44]

As with other institutions, language institutions are not a unitary subject, but vary in form, objective, and target group. In this thesis, language institutions are classified into three types by their mode of enforcement (aggressiveness): *top-down, incentivising,* and *selective*. Top-down language management refers to the creation of new forms, the modification of old ones, or the selection from alternative forms in a spoken or written code, i.e. the corpus of a language. The defining feature of this type of rule is that it assumes there is a "correct" or "pure" form of the language, which needs to be articulated by a language planner/ authority.

[43] I take this definition generated from the case studies done by Robert L. Cooper in 1989. It encompasses a broad range of issues that are of relevance to the operation of language politics and has therefore been widely accepted today. See, for example, Spolsky, *Language policy*, pp. 5-8. Please note that unlike Cooper, I deliberately coin those efforts "language institutions" instead of "language policies," because some critics think that policies are necessarily top-down in nature and cannot be formulated by social groups. Moreover, in this thesis, the term "language institutions" will be used interchangeably with "language planning" and "language management."

[44] Robert L. Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), ch.1.

[45] "Linguistic correctness" is political because language is a vital resource for nation building, social mobilisation and issue framing. "Sound bytes," for instance, are important in politics not only because they can be used by politicians to attract public attention and support, but also because they are resources that can be "recycled" by other agents to evoke contradictions and problems that have begun to surface in society.[46] Language planners often seek to manipulate the range of concepts and words to their own favour. The French purification movement developed under the court poet François de Malherbe in the 1960s is a good example of this ideal type language politics. During the movement, obsure terms were prescribed from the literary vocabulary to reflect the superior status of the elite.[47] In China, as I argue in my second chapter, this kind of language manipulation can mostly be observed in the revolutionary era (1949 to the late 1970s).[48]

Incentivising language institutions emphasise the status, or values, of a language in society. This type of institution is not merely about the state's decisions regarding the legal status of one language in relation to another. It also refers to the allocation of languages or language varieties to given functions, such as civil services, education, and journalism. Unlike top-down institutions, which focus primarily on the corpus of a language, incentivising institutions deal with the role that a specific language should/ can play in society. Instead of a top-down approach of defining what is the right or correct thing to say, incentivising institutions often establish the legitimacy of a language through linking that language with certain economic benefits. By doing so, subjects are incentivised by the state to adopt language norms. In this sense, the success of status planning does not hinge on people's reliance on the state, but their desire to obtain certain goods (e.g. social status and economic

[45] Ibid.
[46] Francis L.F. Lee, "The life cycle of iconic sound bites: politicians' transgressive utterances in media discourses," *Media, Culture & Society* Vol.34, No.3 (2012), p. 346.
[47] Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change*, p. 8.
[48] For an initial discussion, see: Volland, "A linguistic enclave," *Modern China*, No. 35 (2009), p. 467.

power). In the fourth chapter of this thesis, I will demonstrate that this kind of language politics has been dominant since the reform era in China (early 1980s to late 1990s).

Finally, selective language institutions focus on the ways through which an individual or an entity can acquire or produce (elements of) a language. This type of institution is different from the previous two models in the sense that it is primarily oriented towards individuals that speak a language rather than at the contexts in which a specific language should be spoken. Traditionally, as an ideal type, this type of language politics is limited to those engaged with and connected to formalised language teaching in schools. However, such narrow focus on the process of language rules formulation would likely overlook some of the interactions between the governing elites and their subjects. Acquisition of forms of usage of language also takes place outside of classrooms, in a bottom-up fashion. This is particularly important in the age when the Internet has empowered ordinary citizens to formulate new terms and grammar. As demonstrated in the later chapters, the Chinese state, in order to keep track of internet activists, has derived an effective mechanism to acquire new languages generated by the netizens. It is therefore imperative to achieve a wider definition for this category of language politics.

Table 1.1. Major Modes of Language Politics in China

Mode of enforcement	Domain	Objectives	Examples
Top-down	Corpus of a language	Manipulate resources available for expression in the public sphere	Dictionary, Rommanisation of characters
Incentivising	Status of a language	Incentivising subjects to adopt certain kinds of linguistic behaviour so as to make the society legible	Language tests, legislation, civil servant recruitment exams, media regulations
Selective	Means of acquisition/ production of elements of a language	Controlling the generation of new languages/ linguistic elements	Internet keyword censorship, teacher training

A critical reader might argue that since these three types of language institutions are not mutually exclusive, it is therefore overly reductionist to argue that Chinese language politics has been conducted through the implementation of different models since 1949.[49] This criticism, however, is unwarranted. Although one can always identify elements of all three types of institutions in a comprehensive set of language planning schemes, it is implausible to assume that all of them work equally well under different social-economic circumstances.[50] This is particularly critical for understanding institutional change in a powerful authoritarian regime like China because the state rarely uproots the institutions it previously established. However, as this thesis will demonstrate in later chapters, each of the aforementioned types of institutions has different effectiveness in different conditions, and thus is emphasised by different political elites.

Realising these variations in language institutions propels us to our next inquiry: controlling for regime type, what determines the dominant model through which language politics is conducted in a specific time and location? Building upon standard theories in political science, this thesis proposes four interrelated factors to explore the variations.

2. Unitary Power of the State

Giddens proposes that "resources are the media through which power is exercised, and structure of domination reproduced."[51] Socio-economic factors can promote or discourage the use of certain language institutions through changing the balance of power between different actors. As mentioned, this thesis rejects the idea that there is inherent power within language:

[49] Robert B. Kaplan and Richard B. Baldauf, *Language Planning from Practice to Theory* (Clevedon : Multilingual Matters c1997).
[50] For scholars who identify different stages in China's language planning, see: Minglang Zhou, *Multilingualism in China: The Politics of Writing Reforms for Minority Languages 1949-2002*, (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003), ch.3; Yao Yaping, *Zhongguo Yuyan Guihua Yanjiu* (*Research on China's Language Planning*) (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2006), pp. 167, 213-239; Chen Zhangtai, *Yuyan Guihua Yanjiu* (*Research in Language Planning*) (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2005), p. 126.
[51] Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Basingstoke : Macmillan, 1979), p. 91.

the power of particular linguistic formulations derives from the organisations that use, recognise and/ or promote it. Organisations are groups of actors bound by some common purpose to achieve objectives. They include political bodies (central and local governments), economic bodies, and social bodies (intellectual organisations, churches, grassroots organisations).[52] The balance of power between different organisations in shaping language institutions hinges on the resources they process. Although the factors that determine the power of an organisation are many, the key themes, in brief, are as follow: 1) *Economic resources owned by the organisation concerned*: economic resources allow the central state to enforce its language policies. It is expected that the more economically dependent a city is on the central government, the more likely it is to faithfully implement the central language policies. This is because a higher prevalence and proficiency in the use of the standardised language allows the city to attract more investment.[53] Moreover, local officials, who are eager to get promoted, have a particular incentive in executing central policies. For example, Wuhan, which is one of the cities that this thesis surveys, is praised by the central state as a model of putonghua promotion. 2) (*Communication*) *Technology*: this factor can promote a comparatively more open linguistic environment for citizens. Among the many tools, much attention has been focused on the political impacts of the internet, which create a cadre of anonymous netizens whose posts both demand and receive government response.[54]

The relative distribution of these two resources between different organisations determines the "unitary power" of the central state—the degree to which the central state is sovereign relative to other organisations within a given territory. In other words, if the central state manages to control the majority of economic and communication resources available in the country, it enjoys a high level of unitary power. The unitary power enjoyed by the central

[52] Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.4-5.
[53] M.A.K. Halliday, *Language and Society* (London: Continuum, c2007).
[54] Guobin Yang, "Contention in cyberspace", in Kevin J. O"Brien (ed.), *Popular Protest in China* (Cambridge, MA. : Harvard University Press , 2008), p.129.

state has profound implications on its choices of institutions, because in authoritarian regimes like China where there are no formal channel of representation, institutions do not just regulate human behaviour; they also serve as tools for the powerful to co-opt their potential rivals.[55] As such, language institutions will contain more aggressive rules (i.e. it is more top down) if the central state enjoys a higher level of unitary power, *ceteris paribus*. This is because with strong unitary power, the central state faces little rivals that are capable of challenging the status quo, allowing it to use language institutions to extend its interests (such as nation building). In contrast, if the central state suffers from a deficit in unitary power, it will have a higher incentive to use language institutions to secure the support of its subjects, because heavy handed suppression of dissent, while possible, can be extremely costly.

3. Opportunities within Existing Institutions for Oppositions to Develop

Powerful actors do not always have the motivation and opportunity to challenge existing language institutions. To understand the strategies undertaken by resisters, it is important to analyse the logic and opportunities embedded in existing language institutions because these are areas where contestation is rewarding and possible. Institutions are not unequivocal.[56] Their ambiguities allow potential resisters to interpret and implement existing rules creatively so as to maximise their personal interests. Dictionaries in China, for instances, have long been treated by the state as a tool to define the boundaries of "correct" language. An underlying rule coming out of this is that dictionaries, in order to be considered authoritative, have to be "prescriptive" (*guifan* 规范). Yet at the same time what dictionaries prescribe and the norms they suggest have made them an arena of contestation between the state and various market actors. Whereas the state has tried to limit the use of this concept to the dictionaries it published, private dictionary publishers see it as a marketing gimmick and

[55] Jennifer Gandhi, *Political Institutions under Dictatorship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 74.
[56] Kathleen Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve*.

exploit it to boost the sales of their own products. By doing so, the profit-seeking behaviour of the private publishers eventually weakens the monopoly of the state in the dictionary market.[57]

No institution is immune to challenges. Yet, institutions with less aggressive rules generally leave more opportunities for potential oppositional groups to develop, because they were formulated by actors with weaker unitary power. In order to rally support from all sides, ambiguous language rules may be deliberately crafted, thus providing more opportunities for both intentional and unintentional institutional changes in the long run.

In short, "institutions shape change."[58] The complexity of language and the linguistic diversity of China mean that any overarching schemes of the state to simplify and control language are bound to be challenged by their subjects when the original balance of power is shaken by advancements in the economy and communication technology. But it is the logic and opportunity structure of the original institution that determine the nature and direction of the resistance it encounters.

4. Strategies of Resistance

Resistance (or non-compliance) is the endongeous driver for institutional changes.[59] Resistance can take many forms, but in an authoritarian context, it often has to be conducted subtly. Based on existing literature on social resistance and data collected from fieldwork in China, this thesis identifies and focuses on three strategies of subtle resistance, namely, mimicking, defection, and layering. Mimicking is the imitation of practices that are originally performed by the dominant agents in the institution concerned, with an anticipation of sharing their profit or privileges. In practice, mimickers often appear to follow the rules of the existing institution closely, and are

[57] I will come back to this in Chapters 2 and 3.
[58] Avner Greif, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 380.
[59] Throughout this thesis, the words *resistance* and *non-compliance* will be used interchangablly.

active in publicising or fabricating a close relationship with the powerful agents in the institution.[60] Mimicking is most likely to take place in a top-down institution where challengers face few opportunities within and outside the institution. The limited space of development within the institution means that direct resistance against the powerful is not likely to change the status quo significantly. Meanwhile, since there are few substitutes for the existing institution, defection is not an option either. Consequently, challengers—particularly those who are resourceful and ambitious—deliberately imitate the practices of the powerful, acting as if they are a part of the elitist group and thus share their benefits. While apparently mimicking will reinforce the authority of the powerful, it nevertheless confounds the top-down transmission of signals in the institution, undermining the effectiveness of top-down control in the long run.

Defection is a conscious abandonment of duty toward an existing institution. While defectors are not capable of launching direct confrontation against the powerful in the existing institution, they are, unlike mimickers, less dependent on the institution and, consequently, have little motivation to comply with its rules or retain its membership if they find them unfavourable to their own interests. As such, institutions that emphasise incentivisation are likely to experience this type of resistance because their subjects are encouraged to pursue individual interests. In Bran's words, incentivising institutions have made their subjects their "customers." [61] Once they fail to deliver the goods requested, or there exists a better alternative, defection will take place. Large scale and continuous defection can undermine the influence of the institution in the population at large and trigger further non-compliance among other subjects by weakening their confidence toward the

[60] Alastair I. Johnston, *Social State: China in International Institutions, 1980-2000* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 46. Please note that Johnston's concern is primarily on the behaviour of nation states in the international realm, and is not about non-compliance.
[61] Marleen Brans, "Challenges to the practice and theory of public administration in Europe," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol.9, No.3 (1997), pp. 396-399.

institution. The strategy can be even more detrimental if the defectors subsequently subscribe to a rival institution.

Layering is "the introduction of new rules on top of or alongside existing one."[62] Although no existing rules of the institution have been removed, the inclusion of new rules can nevertheless change the ways in which the original institution structure behaviour.[63] More importantly, since the new rules are not formulated by the original planners, they can take the institution to a completely unpredictable direction. Of course, creating new rules is not easy. The strategy is therefore most feasible when potential challengers enjoy ample opportunities to interact with one another so as to test and experiment with new ideas. Table 1.2 summarises the major characteristics of the three strategies of resistance.

Table 1.2. Strategies of Resistance

Strategy	Description	Potential Impacts
Mimicking	Imitation of practices that are performed by the dominant agents	Confound information flow within the institution
Defection	Abandonment of duty toward an existing institution	Undermine the overall influence of the institution in the long run
Layering	Introduction of new rules on top of or alongside existing one	Dilute the original intention of the planners for the institution

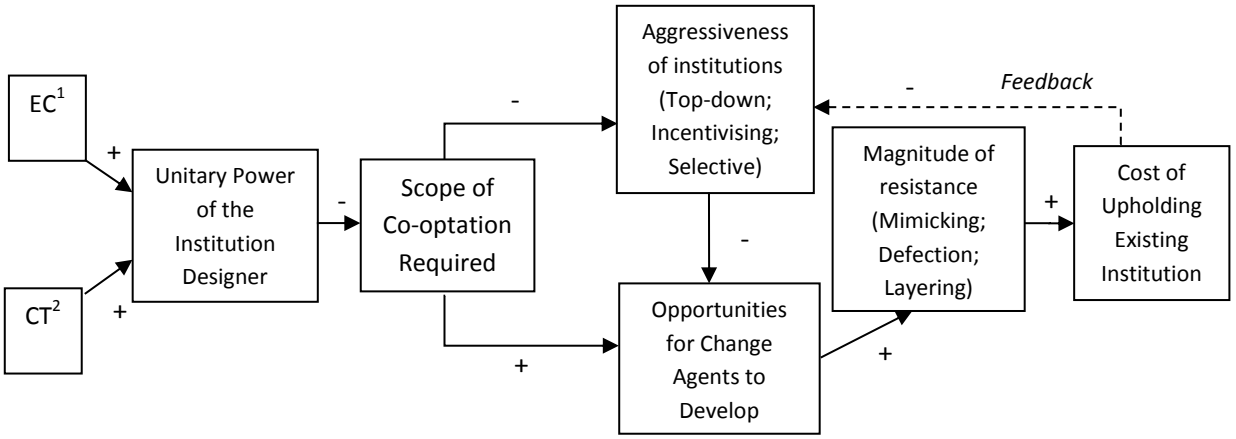
5. Cost of Upholding Existing Institution

The aforementioned subtle resistance cannot bring down an institution immediately, but over time they may significantly increase the direct and indirect costs to powerful actors in their upholding of the status quo, prompting them to discard the existing institution and invent a new one. Formally speaking, powerful state actors in China can veto any changes that are unfavourable to their interests. However, there are costs of exercising this power. To save a decaying institution, they may need to invest heavily on information collection, co-optation,

[62] Mahoney and Thelen, "A theory of gradual institutional change," p. 15.
[63] Ibid.

and human resources. For example, it is unimaginable for the Chinese state to maintain a tight control over the "correctness" of language being used by the netizens, because doing so will require the state to maintain a huge team of linguistic experts to censor communication on the Internet. In other words, the costs serve as feedback signals to the powerful state leaders, incentivising them to formulate new institutions, and at times responding to the demands of the grassroots. Here concludes the description of the key variables of this thesis. Their relationship is summarised in the following figure:

Figure 1.1 Framework of Institutional Change in Language Management in China



Notes:
[1] Level of centralisation of economic resources; [2] Level of centralisation of communication resources
The + and - signs represent positive and negative causality respectively.

Methodology, Sources, and Organisation

This thesis explores the complex dynamics between exogenous and endogenous factors in the process of institutional change through three in-depth case studies. Case study methods are ideal for describing complex relationships and generating theories.[64] They are also particularly appropriate for dealing with understudied phenomena, such as language politics

[64] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), p.21.

in China, because they can generate robust information to reveal "any unexpected aspects of the operation of a particular causal mechanism."[65]

Each of the three cases selected—1. *The Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (since 1951), 2. The Putonghua Proficiency Test (since 1994), and 3. Internet Word Filtering Scheme (since 2003)—represents a major language reform in contemporary China, and is compared in two ways. First, within each case, the distribution of economic and communication resources between the central state and socal actors *before* and *after* the implementation of the language institution concerned will be compared with each other. This most-similar cases design allows me to process trace how changes in the unitary power of the state affect the feasibility of the language institution. Second, in the concluding chapter, the three language institutions will be compared so as to articulate how resistance is shaped by institutional ambiguities. I will explain why some language institutions are particularly vulnerable to resistance. Such a combination of cross-case and over-time (or before-after) case comparisons shall increase inferential leverage of my research.[66]

The three cases in this thesis employ different methods of analysis, such as process tracing and content analysis, because they examine different aspects of language management (corpus, status and means of acquisition).[67] Yet, they are closely linked to one another because they respond to the same set of issues: first, the relationship between the design of language institution and the state's capacity to control economic and communication resources; and second, the relationship between the design of an institution and the resistance

[65] Ibid.
[66] Andrew Bennett and Colin Elman, "Case study methods in the International Relations subfield," *Comparative Political Studies,* Vol. 40, No.2 (2007), p.176.
[67] Although these methods have different strengths, they all belong to the qualitative research tradition. As such, the usual criticisms against mixed-method research design—which mostly concern the incompatibility between the assumptions of qualitative and quantitative methods—are not applicable here. See Gary Goertz and James Mahoney, *A Tale of Two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), ch. 1.

it encounters. These standardised concerns allow me to compare findings generated from the cases systematically.

This thesis draws on a variety of resources for the three case studies. In relation to the early development of the *Dictionary* and the early language reform, materials in the provincial and municipal archives in Shanghai, Guangdong and Hubei have been consulted. These archives collectively hold hundreds of reports regarding the language reform and the dictionary industry from the 1950s to 1970s. The Hubei Provincial archives, in particular, have recently declassified more than 140,000 documents,[68] many of which were compiled in the 1980s, allowing me to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject. For the chapters on language reform in the 1990s and the 2000s, the recently published *Survey on the Use of Chinese Language and Words* (*Zhongguo yuyan wenzi shiyong qingkuang diaocha ziliao* 中国语言文字使用情况调查资料), a nationwide survey programme conducted by China's Ministry of Education and Language Commission during 1998 and 2004, provides useful data for systematic inter-provincial comparisons. Finally, to understand the motivations of different actors in language management and resistance, I conducted in-depth interviews with language officers, examiners, linguists, students, and activists in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Wuhan.

The remaining chapters of this thesis are organised as follow: Chapter 2 explores the motivations behind the central state's top-down language management policies from the 1950s to the late 1970s. With reference to the early development of the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*, it argues that the needs to construct a united nation and conduct mass political and economic campaigns motivated the central state to reconstruct and standardised the corpus of the Chinese language.

[68] "Hubeisheng danganguan 14wan jian dangan duiwai kaifang ke mianfei cha zongpu" ("Hubei Provincial Archives declassified 140 thousand documents") (17 May 2012), http://news.jznews.com.cn/system/2012/05/17/010380313.shtml (accessed 15 September 2012).

Chapter 3 traces the development of the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* in the reform era, when market liberalisation has gained momentum and the central state has less control over the economic resources and printing presses. While it is found that the state has been struggling to clamp down on "problematic dictionaries" published by private publishers, market liberalisation has not really eroded the authority of the central state in the dictionary realm. In order to expand the market share of their products, commercial dictionary publishers struggled with each other to mimic the state-sanctioned dictionaries, presenting to the public a close affinity with the state and thus strengthened the state's perceived legitimacy in the linguistic realm.

Chapter 4, "Governing through incentivisation," examines the opportunity structure within which the Putonghua Proficiency Test, a major language institution in the second wave of language reform, was formulated by the central state in the 1990s. This chapter argues that it was developed preliminarily because economic reform rendered the traditional top-down language management strategy ineffective. To maintain its claim to exercise legitimate authority within the field of language, the state institutionalised the incentives for learning "proper" *putonghua* by setting up a nationwide language test, claiming that good performance in the test will lead to career or academic success.

Chapter 5 discusses how globalisation, which led to a significant increase in foreign investment in China in the late 2000s, has prompted many Chinese to master foreign languages and thus weakened the incentivising power of the Putonghua Proficiency Test. To sustain the number of test takers, local governments turned to more coercive strategies to promote the test (e.g. making it a compulsory requirement for graduation). Those strategies, however, have led more potential test takers to defect from the test, prompting the state to design a new Chinese language test.

Chapter 6 demonstrates how the Internet has lowered the communication costs associated with political activism. Through a study of the internet word filtering system, I investigate how a selective language management institution was formulated by multiple state departments so as to contain the new challenges from the grassroots. I argue that in the internet era, the state is in a continuous struggle with different sectors of the society in defining the boundary of its sovereignty. Consequently, the concept of "language correctness" becomes highly unsustainable.

Chapter 7 further demonstrates how ordinary people, with the aid of the Internet, are able to use language, often in a creative way, to express their discontent. One of the examples is the netizens' deliberate misuse of the word "*bei*" (被). Traditionally, "*bei*" is a preposition, and has to be used in conjunction with a range of verbs to signify a passive action (like "be" in English). In 2009, the word was used by the netizens to express their discontent with the state's propaganda in which social problems such as inflation, fall in real income have been covered up. Consequently, the Language Commission of the state has had to adopt a more interactive approach of language management.

Chapter 8 tests my arguments against historical evidence in the former Soviet Union (1922-1911) and Taiwan (1949-1987). These authoritarian regimes are relevant and comparable because both of them have experienced rapid changes in the state's unitary power. The framework developed in this thesis has clear predictions about the aggressiveness of language management institutions set up by these authoritarian states, as well as the type of bottom-up challenges they encountered in the long run. The analysis not only helps to confirm the key determinants of language institutions in an authoritarian setting, but it also helps to articulate the motivation behind states-led language management.

Finally, Chapter 9 compares the three language institutions in China and evaluates how market liberalisation, new communication technologies, and institutional ambiguities

have affected the position, opportunity structures, and strategies of the protest groups and their relationship with the state. The theoretical implications of the study for models of language politics, state-society relations, and institutional change are discussed.

2

Defining Correctness in the Revolutionary Era: A Case Study of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary

In August 1963, as the Chinese were preparing to celebrate the Mid-Autumn Festival, a notice drafted by the Beijing Price Commission (*Wujia weiyuanhui* 物价委员会) shocked the city's leaders. The notice listed the designated prices for mooncakes and was later modified and circulated among major department stores and food shops. On the price list was written "*fanmao yuebing*" (反毛月饼), which can be literally understood as "anti-Mao mooncake." In the revolutionary era when Mao's personality cult dominated political life, such "politically incorrect" mooncakes were destined to spark controversy. Investigations conducted by the Beijing police found that the notice had been approved by several state departments and factories without opposition, and that the term *fanmao* (反毛) had been used in many other commodities and official documents as well. In the confession of the drafters, they admitted that they had wrongly treated the character (反)—which means "anti-" —as the simplified version of 翻—which, when used with the character 毛, means "pastry" in baker's terminology. [69] The mooncake that sparked the original controversy is a traditional pastry

[69] State Council Office of Finance and Trade, "Guanyu beijing shi youde shangye bumen luanyong jiantizi fasheng zhengzhixing cuowu de fanying" ("Report on the misuses of simplified Chinese characters by some commercial departments that lead to political mistakes"), 19 October 1963, Shanghai Municipal Archives (SMA), No. B6-2-442-59, pp. 66-67. Further evidence of the chaotic linguistic situation can be found in hand-written official documents. See, for example, Hubei Department of Education, "Guanyu hubeisheng tuiguang putonghua gongzuo weiyunhui renwu ji 1956 nian gongzuo jihua de baogao" ("Report on the missions of

produced and consumed during the Mid-Autumn Festival particularly in the North. After the the brouhaha, warnings to use simplified Chinese characters properly were sent to state organisations at different levels.

The moral panic provoked by the "anti-Mao moomcakes" is indicative of the chaotic and highly politicalised linguistic environment of the early 1960s, and the consequent challenges this produced for the state. As mentioned in Chapter 1, language management in the early years of the PRC was characterised by a top-down mentality in which the state actively engaged in reforming Chinese characters, standardising the spoken language, and defining a legitimate range of expressions. In what follows, I document the motivations for the state to launch a massive language reform in the 1950s and 1960s, and examine the socio-economic context that rendered its strategies feasible. Then an in-depth analysis of the early history of the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (现代汉语词典, the *Dictionary* hereafter)—a key tool in the Mao-era state's linguistic arsenal—will be provided to illustrate how the central state actually maintained its control over the use of Chinese language by intellectuals, publishers, and local state agents. The central argument of this chapter is that the pressing needs of unifying a diverse and divided population, and then conducting mass political and economic campaigns to consolidate its control were the key motivations behind the central state's reconstruction and standardisation of the Chinese language corpus. The monopolisation of economic resources and communicative power in the form of national media provided a favourable condition in which this top-down language management scheme was implemented.

Hubei putonghua promotion committee and work plan for 1956"), 22 May, 1956, Hubei Provincial Archives (HPA), No. SZ118-02-0236-001, in which the character 汉 (*han*) was written as □ (*kou*).

Motivations of the State to Manage Language

Although the majority of language reform policies were made and carried out in or after 1955, the idea of reforming the Chinese language system emerged among the top CCP leaders shortly after they came into power. In fact, the early leaders of the Party state were very much concerned about the political impacts of language.[70] On 22 November 1950, Mao Zedong ordered Hu Qiaomu (胡乔木), the head of the News Office (*Xinwen zongshu* 新闻总署), to draft a detailed instruction for cadres at different levels to standardise their writing style and word choices in all internal and official documents.[71] In addition to formal instructions, similar messages were also constantly conveyed by the senior party officials in the forms of "guidance lectures" and casual remarks during an inspection tour of the provinces.[72]

Beginning on 6 June 1951, under the auspices of the leaders of the central state, the *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报) published a series of articles penned by prominent Chinese linguists such as Lü Shuxiang (吕叔湘) on the importance of maintaining the "purity and health" (*chunjie he jiankang* 纯洁和健康) of the Chinese language.[73] Many of these articles argued that there were too many dialects in Chinese. In order to complete the "important mission of unifying the people, developing the culture, and accelerating the construction of Socialism," it was necessary for the people to share a common language.[74]

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[70] For example, Mao Zedong once instructed his aides how the word "absolute power" (*juedui quanli* 绝对权力) should be used. See: Party Central Committee Document, "Mao zhuxi de pishi" (Mao's Prescriptions), 21 December, 1967, in The State Archives Administration of China (ed.), *Gongheguo 50 nian zhengui dangan* (*The Republic's Valuable Documents in the Past 50 Years*) (Beijing: The State Archives Administration of China Press, 1999), p.985.

[71] Central Committee of the State, "Zhonggong zhongyang guanyu jiuzheng dianbao, baogao, zhishi, jueding de wenzi quedian de zhishi" ("Instructions on the correction of linguistic problems in telegraphs, reports, instructions, and announcements") (1 February 1951), http://baike.baidu.com/view/6542916.htm, (accessed 4 September 2012).

[72] Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics*, p.31.

[73] Lü Shuxiang, "Zhengque de shiyong zuguo de yuyan, wei yuyan de chunjie he jiankang er douzheng" ("Use the language of our mother country correctly, and fight for the purity and health of language"), *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*), 6 June 1951.

[74] See Lü Shuxiang, "Tantan xiandai hanyu guifanhua gongzuo" ("Comments on the contemporary Chinese standardisation project"), *Renmin Ribao*, 26 November 1959.

Then on 26 December 1952, a research institute for characters reform (*Wenzi gaige yanjiu weiyuanhui* 文字改革研究委员会) was set up under the instruction of Zhou Enlai.[75] These efforts were consolidated in two working conferences on Chinese language and writing held in October 1955. Their key findings were summarised in two policy documents issued by the State Council in 1956: "Resolution on Announcing the 'Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters" (*Guanyu gongbu hanzi jianhua fangan de jueyi* 关于公布汉字簡化方案的决議) and "Instructions for Promoting Putonghua" (*Guanyu tuiguang putonghua de zhishi* 关于推广普通话的指示). The former delineated a schedule to implement simplified Chinese characters; whereas the latter designated Beijing pronunciation as the standard pronunciation and listed twelve tasks to be undertaken to promote a national and standardised language (*putonghua*), including teaching putonghua in all primary and secondary schools, designing a system to transcribe Chinese characters into Latin script (*pinyin* 拼音), etc. The top-down nature of language change was evident in that the state was not just asking the people to master the pre-existed Chinese language, but was actually trying to prescribe a "correct" form of language based on the judgements of the political and linguistic elites.

The personality of the leaders—many of whom had backgrounds in publishing and editorial work—partly explains their sensitively to language;[76] but such a wholesale reform requires a deeper explanation. To this end, traditional Chinese linguists have argued that language reform was necessary in order to popularise knowledge and reduce illiteracy and

[75] Su Peicheng (ed.), *Dongdai zhongguo de yuwen gaige he yuwen guifan* (*Language Reforms and Language Standardisation in Contemporary China*) (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2010), p.122.

[76] For instance, Chen Duxiu had served as the chief editor of *New Youth Magazine* (*Xin qingnian* 新青年), Zhou Enlai as the chief editor of *Tianjin Student Newspaper* (*Tianjin xuesheng lianhebao* 天津学生联合报), Mao Zedong as the chief editor of *Xiangjiang Review* (*Xiangjiang pinglun* 湘江评论); Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 as chief editor of *Rexie Daily* (*Rexue ribao* 热血日报), and Hu Qiaomu as head of the General Press Administration of the Central People's Government (*Xinwen zongshu* 新闻总署). See Li Baijian, *Zhongguo Chuban Wenhua Gaiguan* (*An Overview of China's Publishing Culture*) (Nanning: Guangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999), pp. 100-101.

was therefore apolitical.[77] Such ideas were not new: they had been raised intermittently since the 1919 May Fourth Movement, and were reiterated throughout the 1920s during a series of campaigns in the Soviet Union to stamp out illiteracy there.[78] By the 1950s, most Chinese peasants were still classified as illiterate, a social issue that many Chinese leaders like Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai attributed in part to the complexity of traditional Chinese characters.

However, the early CCP language reform efforts were hardly apolitical. In other words, the language institutions were not just set up to tackle communication problems. To the contrary, the political nature of the reform was emphased in many party documents. In his seminal speech on the missions of language reform, Wu Yuzhang(吴玉章), the head of the Chinese Character Reform Committee (*Zhongguo wenzi gaige weiyunhui* 中国文字改革委员会), stressed that promoting putonghua is an important "political mission" (*zhengzhi renwu* 政治任务).[79] Likewise, in a report on the promotion of putonghua in Shanghai, the local linguistic work team mentioned that one of their goals was to help the people understand the "political implications" (*zhengzhi yiyi* 政治意义) of putonghua.[80]

What exactly were these "political implications" referring to? A deeper analysis reveals two particular concerns, namely the need to build a united nation and launching of mass political campaigns. To discuss nation building, first, a common language is a powerful

[77] See, for example, Zhou Youguang, "Guanyu wenzi gaige de wujie he lijie" (Misconceptions and understandings about the language reform), *Yuwen jianshe* (*Language Construction*), No. 2 (1982), p.6.
[78] Yingjie Guo, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary China: the Search for National Identity under Reform* (London, New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), p.93; John DeFrancis, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp.87-105. According to DeFrancis, the USSR devised a system of Latinisation for Chinese so as to reduce the illiteracy rate amongst the Chinese immigrants in the 1920s.
[79] Wu Yuzhang, "Guanyu dangqian wenzi gaige gongzuo he hanyu pinyin fangan de baogao" ("Report on the current work of character reform and Chinese Romanisation"), in Su (ed.), *Dongdai zhongguo de yuwen gaige he yuwen guifan*, pp.208-211.
[80] Shanghai State Language Commission, "Guanyu tuiguang putonghua qingkuang zongjie" ("Report on putonghua promotion") (July 1973), SMA, No. B105-4-959-54.

group identifier.[81] A shared language is the medium people used to perceive, describe, and communicate their experience.[82] As a resource, it can be used by the state to establish the normality—the everydayness of institutional processes—and thus promotes national unity; but it can also be used by other parties, such as separationists, to challenge the authority of the state.[83] Therefore, language is often amongst the first arena for a new state to exert its power upon. This does not limit to the production of exceptional language like "socialism with Chinese Characteristics," but also, as Geis observes, ordinary language that does not draw attention to itself.[84] Words that describe our daily life, values, etc, are effective in creating a sense of unity amongst the people and making sense of their existence through special syntactic structures, metaphor, and metonymy.[85] Furthermore, languages are somehow rooted in history and thus function as links between the contemporary societies and the past.[86] Through a common language, historical stories, traditions, myths and rituals are preserved. This allows the new state to legitimise its power through claiming continuity with the nation's past.

Indeed, the language reform in China was among the priorities of the socialist reform in the 1950s, when the Communist leaders claimed a mandate to rule China by virtue of the nationalist quest for greatness and modernisation.[87] They aimed at creating a broadly defined Chinese nation that included various social classes and ethnic groups so as to build a strong and centralised state after decades of disunity.[88] Such an emphasis on commonality is well reflected in the narrative of the language reform. For instance, in a speech given by Zhang

[81] Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, p.2.
[82] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), pp. 9-10, 25.
[83] Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, pp. 2, 339.
[84] Michael L. Geis , *The Language of Politics* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1987), p.26.
[85] Murray Edelman, *Political Language: Words that Succeed and Policies that Fail* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp.71-81.
[86] Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, p. 2.
[87] S. Robert Ramsey, *The Languages of China* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p.27.
[88] Suisheng Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism*, (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp.175, 210.

Xiruo(张奚若), the head of the Ministry of Education, in 1955, Zhang asserted that promoting putonghua was a "serious political task" (*yansu de zhengzhi renwu* 严肃的政治任务) because it could "respond to the whole nation's demand, strengthen national unity, improve national culture, and meet the demands of building socialism."[89] Similarly, a newspaper article that stressed the importance of maintaining the "purity" of Chinese language began by tracing the "glorious tradition" (*guanghui chuantong* 光辉传统) of using proper Chinese language by such historical figures as Li Bai (李白) and Du Fu (杜甫), and connecting them with the contemporaries—Mao Zedong and Lu Xun (鲁迅).[90]

The ultimate goal of Mao era nation building, which led to the second concern of the state in language reform, was to transform the population into subjects that were capable and supportive of its mass campaigns/ "revolutions." As the State Council clearly emphasised in its "Instructions for Promoting Putonghua," "language is a tool not only for communication, but also for social struggle and development."[91] During the second half of the 1950s, China enjoyed a period of relative growth and stability. Flush with the economic growth brought about by land reform in the rural areas and consolidated under the first Five-Year Plan (1953-1957), Chinese leaders were more confident and optimistic in carrying out reforms to strengthen the country. A wide range of reforms, from economics to education, were hammered out during that period. Dominating the policies of the time was a strong will to build a strong and centralised nation that could help the country achieve a fast rate of development. In addition to the large scale nationalisation of industries and the implementation of Five-Year Plans, the resident permit (*hukou* 户口) system—an ambitious

[89] Zhang Xiruo, "Dali tuiguang yi Beijing yuyin wei biaozhunyin de putonghua" (Striving to promote the Beijing-dialect-based putonghua) (October 1955), *Chinese Social Science Net*, available at: http://www.cssn.cn/news/175497.htm (accessed 8 September 2012).
[90] Lü Shuxiang, "Zhengque de shiyong zuguo de yuyan."
[91] State Council, "Guanyu tuiguang putonghua de zhishi" ("Instructions for promoting putonghua"), (6 February 1956), available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2004-12/30/content_2394629.htm (accessed 4 September 2012).

scheme implemented in 1958 to control and suppress internal migration—is also a good example of such mentality.[92] One of the common discourses of those days promoted by the Communist Party was that the Chinese model could replace the Western capitalist system in the long run.[93]

All these required effective communication, both within and outside the bureaucratic system. And the diversity of languages and high rate of illiteracy in the 1950s did present a serious obstacle for the central state to implement its schemes. Party documents reveal that by 1975, there were still village cadres unable to understand and promote Mao's basic directives because of their lack of proficiency in putonghua.[94] And that was considered a serious problem by the political leaders because of the centralised nature of politics, and the increasingly sophisticated organisational and production models required for centralised economic planning. As Peterson oberves, "illiteracy" came to be framed as an urgent problem when the Communist Party sought to control the mobility of the peasants for the purpose of collectivisation.[95]

Mao and his allies within the party leadership became more aggressive in reforming the language as they began to launch a series of political campaigns to substantiate their power. The most violent example was of course the Cultural Revolution. During the campaign language became a centre of contestation as Mao's enemies Liu Shaoqi and Lin Biao allegedly undermined the value of simplified Chinese and putonghua by saying that the

[92] The Hukou system was an integral part of the command economic system, which aimed at pursuing an industrialisation strategy premised on unequal exchange of industry and agriculture. See Kam Wing Chan, "The Chinese hukou system at 50," *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (2009), p. 199.
[93] The State Archives Administration of China, *Gongheguo 50 nian zhengui dangan* (The Republic's Valuable Documents in the Last 50 Years), Beijing: The State Archives Administration of China Press, 1999, p.964.
[94] Hubei Department of Education, "Linxian renmin poqie xuyao putonghua" ("People in the Lin prefecture are in great need of putonghua"), 18 January 1975, HPA, No.SZ118-04-0390-004.
[95] Glen Peterson, "Peasant education and the reconstruction of village society," in Glen Peterson, Ruth Hayhoe and Yongling Lu (eds.), *Education, Culture, and Identity in Twentieth-Century China* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2001), p.218.

new language systems were "useless" (*wuyong* 无用).[96] Liu and Lin lost power or died by the early 1970s, but the criticisms against them continued as Mao and the Gang of Four went on to identify new political enemies, such as Zhao Enlai. Using and teaching the new language systems thus became an expression of loyalty to Mao and his socialist revolution. Furthermore, as later sections in this chapter will demonstrate, people were strongly discouraged and ultimately prohibited from using terminology that did not fit the revolutionary mentality (defined by the leaders in power).[97] Of course, such a violent event did not happen overnight. The Great Cultural Revolution was preceded by a number of cultural revolutions (*wenhua geming* 文化革命) in the 1920s and the late 1950s[98]—such as the anti-illiteracy campaign (*saomang yundong* 扫盲运动)—during which traditional Chinese characters were considered a symbol of the old China and an obstacle for knowledge popularisation.[99]The central political elites needed to maintain a tight top-down control over language because it determined the scale of the political campaigns. Using ambiguous and vague terminology, as Mao explained in a party circular in 1968, would "result in the confusion of the two kinds of contradictions and the widening of the scope of attack."[100] Therefore, to control the size and direction of political campaigns, leaders of the central state also needed to control the meanings of words. All these implied that the power to decide whether a linguistic formulation is "appropriate" had to be available only to a small group of powerful elites at the top.

[96] Department of Education in Xianning Area, "Tuiguang putonghua he tuixing hanyu pinyin fangan di qingkuang baogao," ("Report on the promotion of putonghua and Chinese pinyin system"), 25 August 1974, HPA, No. SZ118-04-0299-003.
[97] Link, *An Anatomy of Chinese*, p. 15.
[98] Patricia Thornton, "The cultural revolution before the Cultural Revolution: rethinking 'high Maoism'," presentation on 14 January 2012 at Fudan University.
[99] See, for example, Guangdong Propaganda Department, "1959 nian tuiguang putonghua gongzuo jihua baogao" ("Report on the plan to promote putonghua in 1959"), 6 August 1959, Guangdong Provincial Archives (GPA), No. 214-1-193-079~081.
[100] Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics*, pp. 38-39.

Favourable Circumstances for Top-down Management

One of the core arguments of this thesis is that the central state's ability to control economic and communicative resources, which jointly determine its unitary power, is primary in explaining the design of its language management institutions. In fact, as the coming chapters will demonstrate, state leaders often need to work within constraints of information and economic resources, and concede their goals to accommodate the demands of other actors, such as intellectuals, private publishers, and ordinary citizens. It is therefore important to consider the motivations of the party leaders in a broader socio-economic context, and explain the opportunity structure that made the top-down strategy feasible from the 1950s to 1970s.

In terms of economic resources, most of them were under the control of the state after a series of nationalisation in the cities and land reform in the countryside. It is believed that by 1956 approximately 67.5 per cent of the gross output value was from state owned enterprise (SOE), and the remaining 32.5 per cent were from enterprises under joint public-private ownership. And there were no privately owned firms.[101] In the countryside, by 1957 about 93.5 per cent of all farm households had joined advanced producers' cooperatives.[102] The linguistic implication of these economic reforms was that people were incorporated into the official communication system in which the state was responsible for communicating production needs, budgeting, human resourcing, and setting production targets and commodity prices. The highly centralised economic model meant that there was little room and demand for alternative communication methods to develop.

Although as Shue observes, in Mao era the reach of the central state was actually limited because "local marketing systems," comprising of peasant villages and the nearby

[101] Alexander Eckstein, *China's Economic Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 76.
[102] Ibid., p.71.

larger market towns they surrounded, remained powerful,[103] the socialist and Mao ideologies legitimised the language officers from the centre to criticise local cadres and people who did not comply with the linguistic requirements for committing ideological errors, which could bring about serious punishments at times. For example, in Hubei Province, the language reform did not arouse much interest amongst local cadres and citizens in 1957. Plans to teach putonghua were not strictly followed in many schools as teachers found speaking putonghua "inconvenient."[104] This issue was soon framed as an ideological problem in which those who did not actively support the reform was considered having "insufficient understanding of the meanings of putonghua promotion," or even having "faulty thoughts" (*cuowu de xiangfa* 错误的想法).[105]Similarly, in other regions, officials connected resistance to the new language system with right-deviationism (*youqing zhuyi* 右倾主义) because it indicated unwillingness to surmount difficulties in the course of the socialist revolution, and argued that the key to successful promotion of the standardised language was to "arm the people's mind" (*wuzhuang sixiang* 武装思想).[106] Obviously, the appeal to socialist ideology did not mean that the central state was actually able to get all the problems solved. By 1975, there were still reports complaining the lack of compliance in the Southern regions.[107] Yet, small pockets of sporadic local resistance did not immediately curtail the state's ambitious language reform. Unlike the 1980s, in the 1970s there was no conclusive evidence, either from the state or the

[103] Vivienne Shue, *The Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politic* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 48-50.
[104] Hubei Department of Education, "Hubeisheng 1956 nian tuiguang putonghua gongzuo jiankuang ji 1957 nian gongzuo jihua de baogao" ("Report on the work of putonghua promotion in 1956 and plan for 1957"), 20 March 1957, HPA No.SZ118-02-0293-001.
[105] Hubei Department of Education, "putonghua tuiguangchu gongzuo qingkuang baogao," ("Report on the work of Putonghua Promotion Department"), 5 June 1957, HPA, No. SZ118-02-0293-003.
[106] Guangdong Department of Education, "1960 nian tuiguang putonghua gongzuo jihua" ("Plan to promote putonghua in 1960"), 4 March 1960, GPA, No. 314-1-199-66-68; Research Institute for Characters Reform, "Women shi zenyang tuiguang putonghua di" ("This is how we promote putonghua"), 20 October 1965, SMA, No.B105-8-499-89.
[107] Guangzhou Municipal Revolution Committee, "Zhongguo wenzi gai ge weiyunhui zai woshi jiancha tuiguang putonghua di qingkuang baogao" ("Report on inspection by the Institute of Character Reform regarding putonghua promotion in our city"), 31 October 1975, GPA, No.314-A1.4-40~10. I will come back to this in next chapter.

society, that the legitimacy of the state to carry out its ambitious language reform was in doubt.

In terms of communication technology, means of communication were controlled by the state too. Setting up and maintaining an effective language system can be extremely difficult and costly. An effective language is not just a list of symbols being randomly grouped together, but is a systematic way to convey meanings in a community. It is, as Halliday observes, a "*social* semiotic."[108] Information regarding new language elements requires certain platforms—such as dictionaries, textbooks, popular novels, newspapers, and propaganda—to be disseminated in a linguistic community. Also, to avoid confusions, language rules need to be applied consistently. In a time when the means of communication were largely controlled by the state, the costs of constructing an effective language were sufficient to prohibit most people from resisting the state's language system, because there were few meaningful alternatives available.

Several figures are sufficient to illustrate the situation. In 1950, the Guangzhou branch of the Bank of Communications (*Jiaotong yinhang* 交通银行), a state-owned bank, conducted a survey on the supply of stationery—such as pencils, ink, and chalk—in the city, and was baffled by the fact that most of them were in their infancy. The 48 factories in the city, many of which were family-based, altogether only received ¥1.1 billion of investment.[109] The private book retailing industry is crucial for new language elements to emerge from the society, but it was also fading quickly. In 1953, the industry's total revenue was ¥17.1 billion. A year later that figure plunged by 40.6 per cent to ¥10.2 billion as the

[108] M. A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: the Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (London: Edward Arnold, 1978), p.1.
[109] Bank of Communications, "Guangzhoushi wenhuaye yiban gaikuang" ("Cultural industries in Guangzhou at a glance"), October 1950, GPA, No. 206-1-127-54~61.

state began to control the industry.[110] People need a language system to communicate with each other, and the implication of the underdevelopment of the private sector in basic communication tools during the revolutionary era is that they needed to adherent to the language rules set forth by the state.

A Case Study of the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*

Given the strong motivations of the central state to implement an ambitious language reform and the favourable opportunity structure whereby both economic resources and means of communication were largely controlled by the state, what kind of language institutions was constructed? And to what extent those institutions reflected the ideas and interests of the political elites in power? The questions will be answered with reference to the history of the compilation of the *Dictionary*, which was, as an article in *the People's Daily* explicitly described, "the most important task in the language reform."[111] Officially published in 1978, the 1st edition of the *Dictionary* contained about 56, 000 entries, ranging from words, phrases, colloquialisms to idioms, listed alphabetically by their *pinyin* pronunciations. In addition to definitions, most entries also provide examples of proper usage in context. In the decades since 1978, the *Dictionary* has been revised five times, with the most ambitious overhaul taking place in 1999-2005. Today, the *Dictionary* (6th edition, published in 2012) has 69, 000 entries and is the most popular and perhaps, the most "authoritative" reference book on Chinese language.[112]

[110] Guangzhou Municipal Government, "Siying shukan faxingye diaocha zongbiao" ("Summary of investigation of private publishing industry"), 19 February 1955, Guangzhou Municipal Archives (GMA), No.1955-199-175-80.
[111] See Lü Shu-xiang, "Tantan xiandai hanyu guifanhua gongzuo" ("Comments on Contemporary Chinese Standardisation Project"), *Renmin Ribao*, 26 November 1959.
[112] According to the publisher, as of 2004, 40 million copies of the *Dictionary* have been sold in China. See, "Hanyu cishu dazhan xiaoyan chuqi" (A battle between Chinese dictionaries has begun) (12 March 2004), www.xinhuanet.com (accessed 7 September 2012).

Some observers may doubt the political significance of a dictionary. Indeed, dictionaries are so commonplace that people today tend to take them for granted. Yet, it is precisely the quotidian nature of dictionary compilation that marks the task as a potential site for the exercise of ambitious political power. "Dictionary" is actually a very powerful word. It suggests authority, scholarship, and precision. In the history of modern politics, dictionaries have played a central role in nation building. According to Anderson, nation building in the 19th century Europe was fortified by the emergence of printing press because it allowed a process by which enormous numbers of people could know of one another and imagine themselves as a community possible.[113] Underlying this influential argument is an affirmation to the importance of a common language, which is a medium of communication. As Eisenstein has rightly argued, without a common language, the capacity of printing press could have been less effectively exercised.[114] It is therefore not surprising that dictionaries were amongst the first genre of books that appeared with the emergence of printing.[115] Furthermore, it was the popularity of dictionaries that made language standardisation, and ultimately, many nationalist movements, possible.

Dictionaries were often used by ambitious political leaders who want to control its population precisely because of the following two unique functions that they perform in language standardisation: First, unlike other genres of publication, dictionaries *define* words, which are the most fundamental component of language. As Romaine observes, words are names that we give to our experiences.[116] Yet, lacking precise and commonly agreed definitions, language can cease to serve as an effective vehicle for political as well as social

[113] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp.71-73.
[114] Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.117-118.
[115] Raymond G. McInnis, "Discursive communities/interpretive communities: the new logic, John Locke, and dictionary-making, 1660-1760," in Raymond G. McInnis (ed.), *Discourse Synthesis : Studies in Historical and Contemporary Social Epistemology* (Westport, CT.: Praeger, 2001), p.325.
[116] Suzanne Romaine, *Language in Society: an Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 25.

communication. For example, during the Cultural Revolution, the label "capitalist roaders" (*zouzipai* 走资派) could conjure up ideas of an array of different crimes. Such latitude in grassroots usage prompted Mao to clarify the "proper" meaning of the term and request his subjects not to "automatically assume that all of those referred to as 'capitalist-roaders' are bad persons."[117] Hence, given its apparent impartiality and scholarship, a state-sanctioned dictionary can serve as an authority for words, and ultimately, meanings, in a community. This feature has made dictionaries a genre of reference that is demanded not only by the political elites who want to promote their ideas and policies, but also by the ordinary people who want to climb the social ladder.

Dictionaries are unique also because they reflect the boundaries of "legitimate" words. We make sense of our world through the use of words. Mountain people will have a word for mountains; people who live on plains and have never seen a mountain may not have such a word. Similarly, as Miller suggests, the more important something is, the more related words there are likely to be.[118] Hence, be it possible or not, manipulating the range of "legitimate" words that people can get access to is a potential means to exert control upon human's behaviour. This is another reason that explains why dictionaries are important to social researches. Dictionaries are limited in coverage and cannot cover all the words in a language that is still in use.[119] The process of dictionary compilation, therefore, inevitably involves the selection of words which need to be defined, involved or excluded.[120] In this regard, the corpus of dictionaries can serve as an ideal representation of the political elites' effort in presenting or constructing social reality that are perceived as "correct." This does not mean, of course that the state can restrict the range of words that can be expressed in language

[117] Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics*, pp. 38-39.
[118] George A. Miller, *The Science of Words* (New York : Scientific American Library, 1991), p.4.
[119] Williams, *Keywords*, p. 15.
[120] Tony Crowley, "Encoding Ireland: dictionaries and politics in Irish history," *Éire-Ireland*, Vol. 40, Nos. 3&4 (2005), pp. 119-139.

through dictionaries. There are many sources from which people can learn new words. Although a dictionary can legitimise the words in its corpus, and thus can strengthen or weaken the power of certain uses of a language, its boundary-drawing power is never absolute.

The *Dictionary* is particularly representative of the mentality and operation of the top-down language management scheme in the revolutionary era. In lexicography, there are generally two approaches in defining words: prescriptive and descriptive. Dictionaries compiled according to the latter approach aim at describing the language being used in a given society. In English speaking world, this descriptive tradition was established by the *Oxford English Dictionary* and then followed by American dictionaries such as the *Webster's New International Dictionary*. These dictionaries present themselves as "descriptive" dictionaries mainly because they collect non-standard English such as slang. In contrast, a prescriptive dictionary, which the *Dictionary* has claimed itself to be, aims to stabilise the language, and prevent it from changing.[121] Consequently, it tends to be more concerned about the "correctness" of the language. As Raymond Williams argues, the so called "correctness" of language is not natural, but instead a reflection of the power of a dominant group.[122] In this regard, the fact that the *Dictionary* is compiled as a prescriptive dictionary is more likely to explicate the politics of lexicography mentioned above.

Furthermore, contrary to the conventional perception that dictionaries are rarely consulted by the people, dictionaries were one of the most important sources of language learning, or even knowledge in general, whereas the condition of state education remained lamentable. The ability to self-learning through consulting dictionaries was often emphasised

[121] McInnis, "Discursive communities," p.328.
[122] Williams, *Keywords*, pp. 9-10.

by schools in promoting putonghua in the 1960s and 1970s.[123] In Guangdong Province the provincial government even specifically requested (in 1962) that there should be at least one language dictionary in every five students.[124] In fact, the reliance on dictionaries has remained significant in the countryside of today's China. In December 2010, a broadcaster of the state-owned China Central Television reported that students in a village elementary school in Guangxi Province were so poor that many of them could rely only on "problematic" dictionaries (will be discussed in next chapter) for their learning. The story sparked wide concern: within just a few months, the school received thousands of dictionaries donated by citizens and corporations nationwide.[125] This suggests how important dictionaries are in the view of the state and the public.

Indeed, the compilation of a medium-sized prescriptive text—the *Dictionary*—that could be consulted conveniently by the people was among the twelve tasks that the State Council listed in the seminal document "Instructions for Promoting Putonghua." Unlike many other dictionaries, the compilation of the *Dictionary* was entrusted to the Language Research Institute (*Yuyan yanjiusuo* 语言研究所) of the Chinese Academy of Science, a national academy founded by the State Council in Beijing on 1 November 1949 under the control of the Department of Propaganda, with a remit that expanded beyond the bounds of scientific research to include broader social and cultural concerns. Its first president (1949-

[123] For example, see: "Jianchi tuiguang putonghua: shanghaishi jingan qu yi zhongxin xiaoxue zhibu" ("Upholding putonghua promotion: a branch of a primary school in Shanghai Jingan District"), *Renmin Ribao*, 6 July 1973; Revolution Committee of Shanghai Department of Education, "Yangpuqu zhong, xiaoxue tuiguang putonghua he tuixing hanyu pinyin di qingkuang huibao" ("Report on the situation of promoting putonghua and implementing pinyin in primary and secondary in Shanghai Yangpu District"), 11 April 1973, SMA, No. B105-4-959-54, pp. 9-10.

[124] Guangdong Department of Education, "Baobu qingyu zengyin 'xuesheng zidian'18 wan ce" ("Request to print 180, 000 more copies of *Student Dictionary*"), 29 November 1962, GPA No., 308-1-87-017.

[125] "Guangxi bufen nongcun haizi zidian kuifa wotai baodao yinfa shehui guangfan juanzeng" (Massive donation from the public in response to our report on the lack of dictionaries in some villages in Guangxi province) (26 December 2010), www.news.cntv.cn (accessed 7 September 2012). For examples of similar incidents, see Ding Liu, "Xinwenchuban zongshu zhengdun cishu zhiliang liezhi cishu jiang yifa shoudao chachu" ("The General Administration of Press and Publication rectifies the quality of dictionaries. Low quality dictionaries will be investigated and punished in accordance with the law"). *Zhonghua Dushubao* (*Chinese Reader's Weekly*), 9 July 2003.

1978), Guo Moruo (郭沫若), was a versatile poet who had close relationships with the Party leaders, especially Mao Zedong.[126] Through Guo's appointment, the Party exerted a steady influence over the compilation of the *Dictionary*. In May 1956, the State Council likewise become involved in the process with the establishment of a Dictionary Editorial Organ (*Cidian bianjishi* 词典编辑室) within the Institute under the order of Zhou Enlai.[127] Twenty-four editors were recruited or assigned to join the project,[128] many of whom held faculty appointments at different tertiary educational institutes in Beijing; others were assigned from other departments of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. While division of labour was practised amongst the editors, all the draft entries needed to be finalised by one person—the chief editor—to ensure the *Dictionary*'s uniformity.[129]

Although the list of editors had to be approved by the State Council, the editors were highly professional linguists. Lü Shuxiang, the chief editor/lexicographer of the project, was a prominent Chinese linguist trained at both the University of Oxford and the University of London, one of the founders of modern Chinese linguistics Research. [130] Such scholars were often quite sensitive to the need to balance political objectives with the broader educational mission of the project. For example, in the first edition of the "Compilation Manual" written

[126] For instance, he once captioned a picture in which Mao was working on the plane as follow: "no wonder here is so bright, there are two Suns—one in the plane and one outside the window!" See: Ji Guoping , *Mao Zedong yu Guo Moruo* (*Mao Zedong and Guo Moruo*) (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1998).

[127] The Institute of Linguistics, "Guanyu zai yuyan vanjiusuo nei sheli cidian bianji jigou de baogao" ("Report on the founding of a dictionary editorial organ within the Institute of Lingistics") (May 1956), in The Institute of Linguistics (ed.), *Xiandai hanyu cidian 50 nian* (*Fifty Years of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*) (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2004), pp.12-13.

[128] Administrative and temporary staff members are not included. For a complete list of the members, see Institute of Linguistics, *Xiandai hanyu cidian 50 nian*, pp. 57-58.

[129] This requirement created a serious deadlock in the compilation process. The workload of the chief editor was later shared by a small group. See: Liu Qinglong, "Xiandai hanyu cidian bianxie gongzuo ershi nian" ("Twenty years of compilation of the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*," in Han Jingti (ed.), *Xiandai hanyu cidian bianzuan xueshu lunwenji* (*Collected Papers on the Compilation of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*) (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2004), p.15.

[130] The Institute of Linguistics, "Guanyu xiandai hanyu cidian bianxie gongzuo he chengli shending weiyuanhui wenti de baogao" ("Report on the compilation progress and setting up a validation committee for the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary") (1956), in The Institute of Linguistics (ed.), *Fifty Years of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*, p.16.

by Lü in 1958, he instructs his team that "examples given (in the *Dictionary*) need to be 'authentic'… don't make them look like propaganda."[131] However, central control over the process continued unabated with the further appointment of three officials solely responsible for conducting political censorship to join a Validation Committee (*Shending weiyuanhui* 审订委员会).[132] In part because of persistence of such censorship, the review process of the *Dictionary*, which began in 1960, took more than six years.[133] Furthermore, despite Lü's instruction to keep the *Dictionary* apolitical, political/ ideological concerns remained a dominant concern of the editors, three of them even wrote an article in *Chinese Language* (*Zhongguo yuwen* 中国语文), a premium linguistics journal in China, to address the importance for the *Dictionary* to "correctly" present the proletarian's position, the party state's policy directions, and the principles of Marxist-Leninism.[134] Indeed, a retrospective account issued by the Institute of Linguistics in 2004 also observed that, "in reality," the principles that Lü set inside the Compilation Manual were not strictly followed by the *Dictionary*'s team of lexicographers.[135]

Temporary Suspension of the Project during the Cultural Revolution

Not surprisingly, the politicised nature of compilation process peaked when it was suspended during the decade of the Cultural Revolution, during which a broad definition of the Chinese nation gave way to a narrowly defined Chinese nation built upon class struggle against the "enemies of the people." In 1973, a "trial edition" (*shiyongben* 试用本) of the *Dictionary* published for students immediately incurred harsh criticism from leftist radical in

[131] Lü Shuxiang, "*Xiandai hanyu cidian* bianxie xize" ("Compilation manual for the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*") (1958), in The Institute of Linguistics (ed.), *Xiandai hanyu cidian 50 nian*, p.120.
[132] In addition to the Validation Committee, there were more than 100 linguists responsible for reviewing the entries.
[133] Han Jingti, "Pipan 'siren bang' esha xiandai hanyu cidian de zuixing" ("Criticising the gang of four for suspending the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*") (1978), in Han Jingti (ed.), *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian Bianzuan Xueshu Lunwenji*, p.54.
[134] He Meicen, Mo Heng, and Wu Chongkang, "Cidian li ruhe biaoxian sixiangxing" ("How to present ideology in a dictionary"), *Zhongguo yuwen* (*Chinese Language*), Vol.12, No.99 (1960), p.401.
[135] The Institute of Linguistics (ed.), *Fifty Years of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*, pp.76, 79.

power. Beginning in March 1974, Yao Wenyuan launched a large scale political campaign (*pidou* 批鬥) against the *Dictionary*, criticising it as a "return of revisionism and capitalism," "a disruption of the anti-Confucianism movement."[136] Labelled a "poisonous" book, the Commercial Press was ordered to destroy all copies of the *Dictionary*; as a result, few copied of this edition survived.

According to Chen Yuan (陈原), who was working at the Commercial Press (*Shangwu yinshuguan* 商务印书馆) and was responsible for the publication of the trial edition of the *Dictionary*, mass criticism of the edition centred on three key areas. First, critics charged that the *Dictionary* included words associated with reactionary elements that describe or invoke the structure, values, or operation of the imperial or pre-revolutionary eras. Entries for "imperialism (*diguo zhuyi* 帝国主义)" and "tenant-peasant (*diannong* 佃农)" were particularly condemned.[137] In a few extremely cases, words considered too common or simple, such as scallions and fresh ginger, were also labelled as "reactionary" because, according to the critics, they were only unfamiliar to the landlords and the bourgeoisie, who were out of touch of the daily life of the proletarians. As Chen Yuan recounted:

> There were some lunatics who roared: "Scallions, fresh ginger—who doesn't know what these things are?*"*... They said: "Only the landlords and the bourgeoisie don't know what scallions and fresh ginger are; and yet you have included these words in the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*. What is your intention for doing this? You are wholeheartedly serving the landlords and the bourgeoisie."[138]

[136] Yang Deyan, "Wenge zhong de chen yuan xiansheng yu 'xian han'" ("Chan Yuen and the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* during the Cultural Revolution"), *Wenhui Dushu Zhoubao* (*Wenhui Reading Weekly*), 5 August 2005.
[137] Chen Yuan, *Yuyan yu shhui shenghuo: shehui yuyan xue zha ji* (*Language and Social Life: Notes on Sociolinguistics*) (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Company Limited, 1979), p.102.
[138] Ibid, p.98.

Second, the *Dictionary* was criticised for its conspicuous lack of particular revolutionary terms and leftist elements such as "Great Leap Forward," "Mao Zedong Thoughts," or "Chinese Communist Party." This was considered a serious error because during the Cultural Revolution dictionaries were tasked not only with the responsibility to facilitate communication, but also the duty to promote the official ideologies and revolutionary directions. As a delegate emphasised in a conference organised by the State Department of Publication (*Guojia chuban shiye guanliju* 国家出版事业管理局) in 1975:

> Chinese and foreign language dictionaries have always been a tool for ideological and political struggles. People from different classes always use dictionaries to serve their political line. There exists no "pure reference" that is non-class, non-political, and nonpartisan.[139]

Finally, some charged that the *Dictionary* contained too many "pessimistic/ negative" terms **(***xiaojici* 消极词), defined as words that involve denial, prohibition, refusal, absence or removal of something that causes happiness or stimulation (such as diseases and immoral behaviours).[140] Following the pattern set by the Revolutionary Model Operas (*yangbanxi* 样板戏) promoted by Cultural Revolution Small Group (*Wenhua geming xiaozu* 文化革命小组) member Jiang Qing, people argued that the *Dictionary* should reflect the happy and optimistic characters of life under revolutionary socialism. Therefore, "sorrow (*bei* 悲)" and related terms were ordered to be removed. [141]

Of course, the *Dictionary* was not the only dictionary being criticised in the Cultural Revolution, during which dictionaries—particularly those published prior to 1949—were seen by the radicals as a "hereditary territory of the bourgeoisie" (*Zichan jieji de shixi lingde*

[139] State Department of Education, "Zhongwai yuwen cidian bianxie chuban guihua zuotanhui de baogao" ("Report on the conference regarding Chinese and foreign dictionaries publication planning"), 22 March 1975, SMA, No. B167-3-290-1.
[140] Wen Yuanchao and Wang Jingfang, "Wenhua, fumian wenhua, fumian wenhua xue" ("Culture, pessimistic culture, the studies of pessimistic culture"), *Qiusuo* (*Quest*), Vol. 2 (1994), pp.72-76.
[141] Chen, *Yuyan yu shhui shenghuo*, p.101.

资产阶级的世袭领地). The professionalism once valued in dictionary compilation now became a "pernicious influence" (*liudu* 流毒) of the capitalist society.[142] To replace those problematic dictionaries, the State Department of Education requested provincial and municipal governments, as well as publishing organisations to support the compilation and publication of new dictionaries.[143] The turbulent political atmosphere of the time prompted major publishers to be extremely cautious in publishing dictionary so as to ensure the "political quality" (*zhengzhi zhiliang* 政治质量) of their products.[144] As a result, it was reported that during the 1970s there was no dictionary for students to use at all.[145]

Because of the Cultural Revolution, the *Dictionary* underwent a large scale, highly politicised revision process. According to the lexicographers who compiled the *Dictionary*, the impact of the Cultural Revolution was most evident in the 1st edition (1978) of the *Dictionary* because, although Mao's death in 1976 and subsequent arrest of the ultra-leftist "Gang of Four" quickly followed, signalling a sea change in Chinese politics, the edition had gone to print and there was no time to remove the revolutionary elements.[146] As a result the first edition of the *Dictionary* not only contains entries for "Mao Zedong Thought" and "Chinese Communist Party," but also a significant number of "revolutionary elements" added to the definitions and examples of usage. For example, the entry for the verb "to lead/ to direct (*yindao* 引导)," carries the example: "direct to revolution (*daoxiang geming* 导向革

[142] State Department of Education, "Zhongwai yuwen cidian bianxie chuban guihua zuotanhui de baogao."
[143] Ibid.
[144] The Commercial Press, "Tongzhi xinhua cidian deng san zhong hanyu xiao zidian zanting zuxingzaohuo" ("Notice on the termination of outsourcing publication of Xinhua Dictionary and two other small-sized Chinese dictionaries"), 18 July 1963, GPA, No. 308-1-173-016.
[145] Yang, "Wenge zhong de Chen Yuan xiansheng yu 'xian han'."
[146] Gao Lizhi, "Wo jianzheng zhe 50 nian——zhuanfang 'xianhan' de 'liuchao yuanlao' Liu Qing-long xiansheng" (My 50 years testimony—an interview with the veteran editor of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary, Mr. Liu Qinglong), *Wenhui Dushu Zhoubao* (*Wenhui Reading Weekly*), 5 August 2005.

命)."[147] Likewise, "patriotism (*aiguo zhuyi* 爱国主义)" defined as "the love of one's own country," but further explicated as "a concept with class character. The patriotism of the working class is consistent with the fundamental interests of our country's workers."[148]

Conclusion and Discussion

With reference to the early development of the *Dictionary*, the key features of a top-down institution become clearer. First of all, the focus of such institutions is on the corpus of the language, which includes decisions related to the characters, definitions and pronunciations of the words in a language. Furthermore, the right to make those decisions is confined to a small group of elites usually comprised of top leaders of the state and linguists. Input from the general public is little. The language institutions are designed such that, in Schoenhals's words, "only a few CCP leaders are able to manipulate rather than be manipulated by formulations (linguistic correctness)."[149] Finally, because the corpus is manipulated only by a relatively small group of elites, it tends to follow a specific pattern and logic. However, this does not necessarily mean that the linguistic environment created by those institutions is stable because the authority's attitude of how reality should be generalised and conveyed through words can shift quickly. Therefore, to a certain extent, the institutional logic of top-down management is arbitrary and full of ambiguities.

With that in mind, the temporary suspension of the *Dictionary* in the Cultural Revolution should not be surprising. The *Dictionary* was planned in the early-1950s, when the Chinese leaders were more inclined to a gradualist developmental approach. Political or ideological concerns of course mattered, but as reflected in the composition of the editorial

[147] Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian* (*Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*) (1st edition) (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1977), p. 195.
[148] Ibid., p. 278. The definition in Chinese characters: "爱国主义是有阶级性的, 工人的爱国主义是跟本国劳动人民的根本利益相结合的, 是跟国际主义联繫着的".
[149] Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics*, p.22.

team, professionalism was still the guiding principle in dictionary compilation. However, because of a variety of reasons ranging from internal power struggles between top party leaders to conflicts with the United States (and later the Soviet Union), since the mid-1950s such relatively gradual developmental approach became increasingly shrouded by an overlay of utopian communism, which eventually led to the Cultural Revolution. To sustain the image of a utopian Communist society, the leftist leaders in power needed to carefully eliminate all the elements that did not conform to that image. Not surprisingly, such a radical and ahistorical approach to nation building would foster creations that are extremely flexible and arbitrary, allowing those in power to define words based on their own political needs. In this regard, the *Dictionary* was suspended by the state not because it was neutral or apolitical, but because it represented a different approach to development, one which emphasised stability and responsible use of language.

Also demonstrated in this chapter is that a top-down institution is likely to exist when the language planner enjoys a clear comparative advantage over other actors such as ordinary citizens in terms of economic resources and communication capacity. In the case of China, the ambitious language reform was considered feasible not only because the leaders were eager to reconstruct the nation and launch socialist campaigns, but also because the publishing industry, media, and most economic resources were under state control after the civil war in the 1940s. In fact, the ideas and attempts to simplify and Romanise Chinese characters had emerged long before the Communist Party came into power. Similar reforms were launched by the Nationalist Government in the 1930s as well. In August 1935 the Nationalist Government announced its "First List of Simplified Chinese Characters" (*Diyipi jianti zibiao* 第一批简体字表) and requested all primary school textbooks and popular

publications to use simplified Chinese characters starting from 1936.[150] The proposal was quickly abandoned because of strong oppositions from within and outside the state. Legislators in the Guangxi Province, for example, opposed fiercely by calling the provincial government to request the central state to prohibit the use of "simplified and baroque characters" (*jianti ji guaiyi wenzi* 简体及怪异文字), arguing that using those characters would—contrary to what the Communist leaders proclaimed—fragment the nation.[151] The failure of the Nationalist Government to reform the Chinese language demonstrates the difficulties of launching a top-down language management programme, which can hardly succeed without a set of favourable socio-economic conditions. As I will explain in next two chapters, as market liberalisation began to take momentum in the 1990s, the top-down language management institutions became increasingly unsustainable, forcing the state to engage in competitions with different actors in the society, who either mimicked the state's language promotion strategy or looked for other language platforms to maximise their personal gain.

[150] Su (ed.), *Dongdai zhongguo de yuwen gaige he yuwen guifan*, p. 111.
[151] Guangxi Provincial Government, "Guangxisheng cenyihui yijue jinyong jianti ji guaiyi wenzi de xunling""Senate of the Guangxi Province has decided to prohibit the use of simplified and baroque characters," 12 September 1939, HPA, No. LS1-7-0858-001.

3

Mimickers of the State

On July 1 2011Associated Director of the General Administration of Press and Publication (*Xinwen chuban zongshu* 新闻出版总署, GAPP hereafter) Wu Shulin (邬书林) attended a national training programme for lexicographers and delivered a speech outlining the directions of the state in regulating and developing the dictionary industry. One of the catchphrases of Wu's speech was that dictionary publication is "an exemplification of a state's discursive power" (*cishu chuban shi yige guojia huayuquan de tixian* 辞书出版是一个国家话语权的体现). According to Wu, although dictionary was one of the most important literacy forms, he derided the dictionary industry in China as chaotic, with publishers evincing weak "legal conceptions" (*fazhi guannian* 法制观念). In response, Wu emphasised the need for the state to regulate the market more robustly through legal, administrative, economic, and cultural means, and, of course, through the powerful linguistic tool of a number of state approved dictionaries.[152]

Wu's speech clearly reflected the challenges that the state faced in regulating the dictionary market in the 21st century. This should come at little surprise. As Chapter 2 suggests, during the revolutionary era, language dictionaries were compiled to reproduce the preferences of a small group of linguistic and political elites in the state apparatus. Given the

[152] Jiao Qingchao, "Gaozhiliang cishu chuban shi guojia hua yu quan de tixian" ("Wu: 'dictionary publication is "an exemplification of a state's discursive power"'") (4 July 2011), *Zhongguo xinwen chuban wang* (*China News Publication Net*), available at: http://data.chinaxwcb.com/epaper/2011/2011-07-04/12014.html (accessed 11 October 2013).

vast population and diverse linguistic practices in China, compliance with this type of top-down language management can only be ensured when the state can effectively monopolise economic and communication resources. Considering the great socioeconomic transformations brought about by marketisation and globalisation in the reform era that have diversified the distribution of these resources, both within and outside the state, a dictionary market that is "chaotic" to the defenders of the top-down institutions falls within the expectation of the model of institutional change presented in Chapter 1. Dictionary publishing is a profitable business. This chapter will explain how market reform has prompted publishers to adopt a more profit-oriented strategy, and in the process increased the cost to the state to defend a top-down style of language management.

Contrary to what some might have expected, the need for profit maximisation did not drive publishers to directly challenge the authority of the state's language institutions. Instead, the publishers competed with one another to proclaim to the public that they followed the state's directions. Not only did they publish dictionaries that looked similar to the state-endorsed dictionaries (in terms of titles, cover design, and contents), many of them deliberately publicised the involvement of the state in the production process of their dictionary. As this chapter will show, in the reform era, making "the state" present became a profitable marketing strategy, because the state was widely seen as a source of linguistic correctness. Consequently, the profit-driven behaviour of the publishers reinforced the authority of the state and thus sustained the continuation of the top-down institution. Yet, ironically, by mimicking the state, these market actors also sent signals that contradicted with the state's linguistic prescriptions to the society and eventually weakened the state's ability to define correctness through dictionaries.

Dictionary Publishing in the Reform Era

After a series of Chinese "revolutions" —from the socialist transformation in the mid-1950s to the anti-rightist movement of 1975, the Great Leap Forward of 1958-1960, and finally the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976—many Chinese political elites, intellectuals and citizens came to believe that the political turmoil in Mao's era had seriously hampered their country's economic and social development. It was against this backdrop that Deng Xiaoping returned to power and ousted the Maoist Gang of Four faction, clearing the way for economic reforms in the 1980s. As the *de facto* leader, Deng's policies were opposed by party conservatives but were extremely successful in increasing the country's wealth, in part by withdrawing the state's control over the economy and providing incentives for citizens and corporations to accumulate wealth.

Generally speaking, the reform was backed up by a neo-classical ideology. Instead of condemning foreign investment ("open door") as a "national betrayal," slogans like "let some prosper first so that others may follow" and "to get rich is glorious" (both by Deng Xiaoping) had taken root in Chinese society and policy circles from the 1980s to 1990s.[153] And alongside a series of reforms that promoted privatisation—such as the household responsibility system—was a set of market values, or "qualities" (*suzhi* 素质), such as efficiency (e.g., lower-price but higher-quality goods), individual material enjoyment (e.g., investment, buying new flats, etc.), and individual responsibility for one's personal fate.[154]

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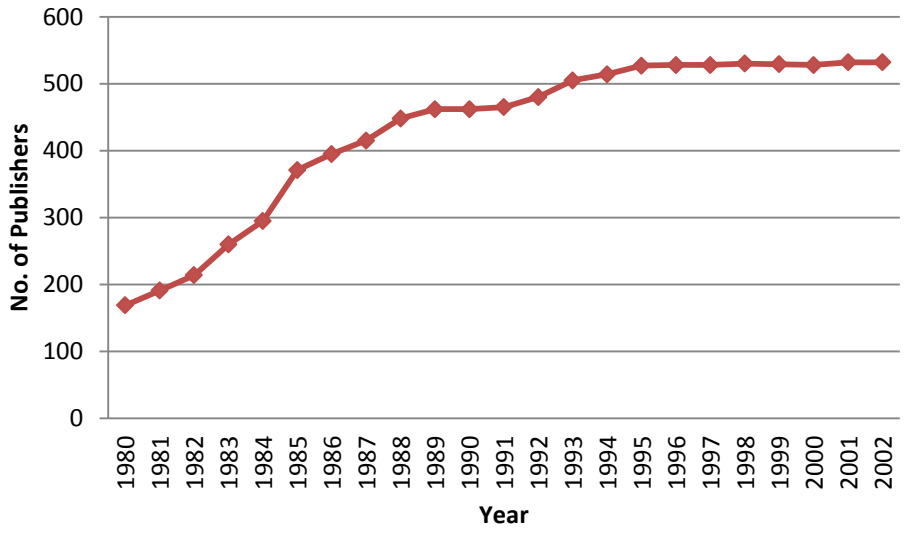
[153] John Gittings, *China Changes Face: the Road from Revolution, 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.244; and L.H.M. Ling, "Hegemony and the internationalizing state: A post-colonial analysis of China's integration into Asian corporatism," *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), p. 10

[154] Ibid. Also see, Marc J. Blecher, "Hegemony and workers' politics in China," *The China Quarterly* No. 170 (2002), p. 283-303. Here someone like Xiaoying Wang may disagree with me that "individualism" has not yet been developed in China because Chinese people are not encouraged to participate in politics. This might be true if we define the concept of "individualism" within a liberal democracy framework; however, what I have been trying to analysis in this section is more related to the economic aspect of the reform. See: Xiaoying Wang, "The Post-Communist personality: the spectre of China's capitalist market reforms," *The China Journal* No. 47 (2002), p.15

The Dengist policies of reform and opening likewise transformed the publishing industry. Most publishers, including the Commercial Press, were restructured such that they needed to be responsible for their profit and loss. Consequently, many of them were prompted to pursue a more commercial publishing strategy.[155] To maximise their publishing capacity and meet the growing market demands for books, many state publishers formed partnerships with private and foreign publishing houses. This led to a rapid rise in the number of publishers in China (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Number of Publishers in China from 1980 to 2002



Source:
China Economic Information Network, *Zhongguo hangye fazhan baogao: tushu chuban faxing ye* (*China industry development report: Publishing*) (Beijing: Zhongguo Jingji Chubanshe, 2004), p. 50.

Given the fundamental role dictionaries play in education, it is not surprising that during the same period dictionaries published by both state-owned and private ("unregistered") publishers also increased significantly. According to Li Xingjian 李行健, between 1979 and 2008, nearly nine thousand titles of Chinese dictionaries were published in

[155] Please note that, however, according to the Regulation on the Administration of Publication (*Chuban guanli tiaoli* 出版管理条例), ISBN numbers—a necessary prerequisite for a book to be legally circulated in the market—are assigned only to publishers owned by provincial or national state organisations. Consequently, all publishers in China are still officially owned by the state.

China.[156] The rapid expansion of dictionary publication created a highly competitive market in which publishers needed to struggle to expand or defend their market share. Contrary to what some Western observers have expected, dictionaries have remained very influential in China in the 21st century—despite the rapid expansion of the Internet. They were widely seen by the population as a symbol of authority and entrance to knowledge. For example, in December 2010, the CCTV reported that students in a village elementary school in Guangxi province were so poor that many of them could rely only on "problematic" dictionaries for their learning. The story sparked wide concern: within just a few months the school received thousands of dictionaries donated by citizens and corporations nationwide.[157] The news report, as well as the attention it received, demonstrated how important dictionaries were to ordinary Chinese.

As such, the reform era presented dictionary publishers with a new opportunity structure. On the one hand, the public continued to view dictionaries as a crucial channel to knowledge, and thus provided ample opportunities for publishers to profit from dictionary publication. Yet, on the other hand, because of market reform and popularisation of printing technology, more publishers were allowed to enter the dictionary market, creating a more competitive business environment. As a result, dictionary publishers, be they new or established, needed to adopt a more commercial publishing strategy. Since the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* (the *Dictionary*) was the focus of the last chapter, it is important for this chapter to trace its development in the 21st century and provide a systematic account on how the market reform has affected its contents.

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[156] Li Xingjian, "Zongjie jingyan, jixu qianjin" ("Draw lessons from experience and move forward"), in Zhu Ruiping and Shi Jianqiao (eds.), *Zhonghua zidian yanjiu* (*Research on Chinese Dictionaries*), vol. 2.1. (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2010), p. 20.

[157] Wang Meng, "Guangxi bufen nongcun haizi zidian kuifa wotai baodao yinfa shehui guangfan juanzeng" (Massive donation from the public in response to our report on the lack of dictionaries in some villages in Guangxi province) (26 December 2010), *CCTV*, available at http://news.cntv.cn/program/xwlb/20101226/104532.shtml (accessed 11 October 2013).

A Content Analysis of the *Dictionary*

> The main audience of the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* is the [Chinese] youth. Given the severe consequences of deceiving future generations and the problem of the political "revision" of Marxism-Leninism, which has been the basis of our country's security, I am burning with anxiety! [158]
>
> —Shi Shushu (师叔树), a Chinese linguist

For some analysts, like Shi Shushu, the consequence of market liberalisation on the *Dictionary* was straight-forward: a betrayal of the state's ideology and political agenda. Of course, the contents of the *Dictionary* have changed significantly. However, it is important to note that the state's political agenda has also changed throughout the years. Therefore, to determine whether the *Dictionary* has truly derided from the state's political agenda, one need to first articulate the ideological shifts that took place in the reform era, and then cast out clear hypotheses that can subsequently tested by a carefully administered content analysis of the *Dictionary.* If the *Dictionary* is still in line with the state's political agenda, we should be able to identify some striking examples from the corpus that can reflect the changing nation-building discourses promoted by the state.

To perform this task, I compare the first and the fifth editions, published in 1978 and 2005 respectively. They are worth studying not only because they were the first and latest editions of the *Dictionary* when I conducted this study, but also because they represent two significant shifts in the nation-building scheme of the state, which were marked by two important events—the Cultural Revolution and the economic reform. By comparing the two editions, we will be able to better track the impacts of the economic reform on the contents and orientation of the *Dictionary.*

[158] Shi Shushu, "Guifan hai shi wudao, xiuding hai shi 'xiuzheng'— xiandai hanyu cidian xiuding ben wenti zhanlie yu pinglun" (Prescription/ deception? Revise/ 'revisionism'?—an exploration and commentary of the problems of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary revised edition), *Wenyi lilun yu piping* (*Theory and Criticism of Literature and Art)*, 2000, Vol.1, p.9

Revision for the fifth edition, which began in 1999 and concluded in May 2005, was the most comprehensive since *the Dictionary*'s initial publication. Apart from adding and removing entries, the lexicographers revised the existing entries by adding/removing examples, giving new definition(s) for words, updating pronunciation, providing further specifications of the words, and so on.[159]

The differences between the revolutionary and reform eras are of course many, and no one can reasonably be expected to exhaust all of them. However, in order to formulate testable hypotheses for the content analysis, I focus on the ideological shifts that define the nation-building project of the state in the reform era.

One such shift, as mentioned, was the rise of market/capitalist values. While discourses in the revolutionary era were characterised by socialist values aimed at building an egalitarian state under the leadership of "centralised planning," the reform discourse is decidedly more market-oriented. When Deng Xiaoping came to power in 1978, he took action to reverse Mao Zedong's revolutionary path in order to guide China in a new market-oriented direction. [160]

Another major shift in the reform era has been the rising emphasis on social "harmony." Although it was not until the 2005 National People's Congress that the notion of "constructing a harmonious society" was explicitly proposed, similar concepts—such as "stability"—had been emphasised by the Chinese leaders after Mao. The notion and practice of revolutionary class struggle has been officially repudiated by the Chinese leadership since 1984.[161] The increasing calls for a harmonious society have been in response to the problems that the rapid pace of economic development has brought to the country, including, but by no

[159] Commercial Press "Xiandai hanyu cidian di 5 ban xiuding yaodian" ("Major revisions in the 5th edition of the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*") (23 August 2005), *The Commercial Press Website*, available at: http://www.cp.com.cn/xh/newsdetail.cfm?iCntno=2118 (assessed 23 May 2009).
[160] Dorothy J. Solinger, *Chinese Business under Socialism: The Politics of Domestic Commerce, 1949–1980* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 12-16.
[161] L. H. M. Ling, "Hegemony and the internationalizing state,"pp. 1–26.

means limited to a highly divided society, government corruption, and illegal confiscations of land. By the time Hu Jintao officially came into power in 2002, "public order disturbances" in China had increased in scope, size, and frequency, and continued to escalate thereafter, growing by nearly 50 per cent from 2003 to 2005 according to official sources.[162] As a signature of Hu's policy drive, therefore, the concept of building a "harmonious society" was put forward and became a new vehicle of nation building in China. In general, it encourages stability and sustainable development rather than conflicts and uncontrolled economic growth. To deal with the immense social inequalities, the Chinese government has promoted the principle of "putting people first" (以人为本) in policy making. Equality and justice thus have come to be linked to the maintenance of a stable society. For example, in 2002, a Shanghai mayor's office staffer said, "The rich have to realise that irresponsible spending could threaten stability."[163]

The final ideological shift in the reform era has been the advent of pragmatic nationalism. In the reform era, the state could not hope to continue to unify its subjects with socialist ideology. The market system and the widening income gap are hardly consistent with socialist egalitarian principles. Therefore, throughout the reform era, Chinese leaders have been searching for a new ideological justification for their leadership. While it is true that the leaders have not put much effort in developing a coherent set of normative principles, the reform has nevertheless been characterised by a strong inclination to a loosely defined "pragmatism" and a flexible approach to different ideologies, as long as they can help create a strong and productive country. Therefore, the reform era has witnessed a number of ambiguous theories generated by the central leaders, such as "socialism with Chinese

[162] William Hurst, "Understanding contentious collective action by Chinese laid-off workers: the importance of regional political economy." *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2002), pp. 94–120.
[163] Hannah Beech, "Flush with the spoils of capitalism, China's fledgling multimillionaires are living large. Mao would have had a cow," *Time Magazine*, 23 September 2002.

characteristics," which have tried to combine the relevant elements in socialism and capitalism to justify one-party rule on the one hand and the market system on the other. In addition, cultural elements such as history, language, and myths have been deployed again to craft a national identity that can be traced back two thousand years.[164]

The above ideological shifts, then, provided the context in which the *Dictionary* was revised. If the *Dictionary* has continued to be a part of the state's nation-building project, then we should be able to see how it has been modified in accordance with the changing nation-building discourses. Based on what this chapter has discussed so far, I propose two hypotheses:

1. In the fifth edition of the *Dictionary*, compared to the first edition, there will be more entries/explanations (examples, definitions, etc.) that link the state or the people (the readers) to the structure and operation of the market economic system and the concept of the harmonious society; and
2. In the fifth edition, there will be fewer entries/explanations that link the state or the people to the structure and operation of socialism and class conflict**.**

These hypotheses are tested with reference to the data collected from a systematic content analysis. In order to yield a manageable set of entries, Chapman suggests that random sampling of the corpus should be used.[165] First of all, to allow each page of the *Dictionary* to have an equal chance of being selected, seven numbers, ranging from 12 to 1830 (the total number of pages in the 5th edition), are drawn randomly through a random number generator. A ten-page sample is then selected from the 5th edition *Dictionary* accordingly. For example, if a number, say 18, is picked up randomly, then a sample ranging from p.18 to p. 28 will be

[164] Zhao, *A Nation-State by Construction*, p.227.
[165] Robert Chapman, "Dictionary reviews and reviewing: 1900-1975," in J.C. Raymond and I.W. Russell (eds.), *James B. McMillan: Essays in Linguistics by His Friends and Colleagues* (Tuscaloosa, AL.: University of Alabama Press, 1977), pp.143-161.

selected from the 5th edition *Dictionary*. Using this method, 70 pages are selected from the 5th edition of the *Dictionary.* Finally, the relevant pages in the 1st edition are selected. As entries in the *Dictionary* are listed alphabetically by their *pinyin* (the Chinese phonetic systems) pronunciations, the range of entries that needs to be studied in the 1st edition can be located conveniently with reference to the 5th edition.

For the purpose of this analysis, only differences between the two editions are coded and analysed. Within the 70 randomly selected pages of the 5th edition (i.e. 3.5per cent of the total pages) that this analysis has examined, 1028 entries are found to be different from the 1st edition. These differences are in one of the following forms: adding entries, deleting entries, adding definition/ examples, deleting definition/ examples, or changing the definition of the words/ vocabulary items.[166] The data is summarised in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1 An Overview of the differences between the 1979 and 2005 editions

Types of changes		Number of entries	%	95%Conf. Interval
Additions: entries in the 5th edition that were not available in the 1st edition		507	49.32	46.26% - 52.38%
Deletions: entries in the 1st edition that are no longer available in the 5th edition		104	10.12	8.28% - 11.96%
Changes:	New examples/words (without deletion of words/ meaning) 264	417	40.56	37.56% - 43.56%
	Deleted examples 60			
	Change in meaning (either because of addition of examples/ definitions/ etc) 93			
		N=1028		

Source: Content analysis on the 1st and 5th editions of the Dictionary conducted by the author

From the above table we can see that out of the 1028 differences between the two editions, 49 per cent of them belong to new entries. This conforms to the official description that the corpus of the *Dictionary* has expanded throughout the years.

[166] Please note that there are other types of change in the *Dictionary*. However, for the purposes of this chapter, what I am focusing here are revisions that directly affect the meaning it conveys. Therefore, changes regarding styles, pronunciation, organisation, and grammar will not be examined. Minor changes that have no impact on meaning are also not considered.

In order to test the two aforementioned hypotheses, the revisions are further categorised as "reform," "revolutionary," "sciences and technology," "arts and humanities," and "other." For the purpose of clear presentation, it is important to briefly define each of the above categories here. The "reform" category consists of entries that demonstrate the specific characteristics of the reform era discussed above. Words and revisions within this category might include "harmonious society (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会)"[word], "Mortage (*an jie* 按揭)"[word], "To lay off a baby-sitter (c*itui baomu* 辞退保母)"[example], etc.[167] In contrast, the "revolutionary" category consists of entries that demonstrate the specific characteristics of the revolutionary era discourse, which involves promotions of class struggles, disapprovals of capitalist system, anti-imperialism, etc. Words and revisions within this category might include "distribution according to need (*anxu fenpei* 按需分配)" [word], "defeat the furtive (*zhansheng xiesui* 战胜邪祟)" [example], etc.[168] Finally, there are also entries that are not specific to either the reform or revolutionary eras. As these entries are less relevant to our analysis, they are going to be included in other broad categories: "sciences and technology," "arts and humanities," "religion," or "others."

"Categories" are inevitably artificial.[169] They were created, however, because they could provide an overall description of the revision. Rather than relying only on using a sporadic selection of examples alone to examine the nature of the revisions to the 5th edition

[167] Please note, however, if a "reform" word (entry) is defined in a way that detaches the reader from the word, then it will not be classified in the "reform" category. For example, if the word "capitalism" is defined as "a socio-economic system that *was* used in the past or in the Western world," then it will not be included in the "reform" category. For a more precise description, please refer to the Coding Manual.

[168] Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun, "Revolutionary Rudeness: The Language of Red Guards and Rebel Workers in China's Cultural Revolution," *Indiana East-Asian Working Paper Series on Language and Politics in Modern China*, No.2 (1993), pp.1-18.

[169] M. W. Bauer, "Classical content analysis," in M. W. Bauer, & G. Gaskell (ed.), *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound : a Practical Handbook* (London : SAGE, 2000).

of the *Dictionary*, a content analysis can provide us with a more objective and systematic description of the revision, provided that the categories are well defined.[170]

To ensure that the results of the content analysis are valid, it is important to measure interrater reliability—the degree to which two or more coders evaluate data and reach the same conclusions. A high interrater reliability rating suggests that others can recognise and interpret these categorisations in the same way. To perform this task, a female political science undergraduate was recruited to act as a second coder. A coding manual that delineates the definitions of all the categories was constructed to assist the coding process.[171] Training comprised familiarising the second coder with the categories was also provided. Finally, a pilot test was also conducted using samples drawn from other pages of the *Dictionary*.[172] The following table reports the number of agreements between the two coders:

Table 3.2 A contingency table showing the number of agreements between two coders

		1st coder					
		Reform	**Revolutionary**	**Sci. & Tech.**	**Art & Humanities**	**Religion**	**Other**
2nd coder	**Reform**	252	0	1	0	1	11
	Revolutionary	0	81	0	0	1	2
	Sci. & Tech.	2	4	194	2	0	0
	Art & Humanities	6	0	0	69	0	1
	Religion	0	0	0	0	14	0
	Other	27	6	2	1	0	351

Notes: N=1028; Kappa = 0.91 (p <0.001)

Source: Content analysis on the 1st and 5th editions of the Dictionary conducted by the author and his research assistant

[170] K. A. Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis Guidebook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).
[171] The coding manual is available in the Appendix.
[172] This is a standard procedure in communication studies. See, for example, Kimberly R. Johnson and Bjarne M. Holmes, "Contradictory messages: a content analysis of Hollywood-produced romantic comedy feature films." *Communication Quarterly* Vol. 57, No.3 (2009), pp. 352-373.

Interrater reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa. As a convention, scores between 0.41 and 0.60 are considered moderate interrater reliability, 0.61 and 0.80 as substantial, and 0.81 and above as almost perfect.[173] The interrater reliability for the coders in our exercise was found to be Kappa = 0.91 ($p < 0.001$), which is not surprising given that the categories in our analysis are highly distinctive.

Using the data generated above, a cross-tabulation analysis is conducted to test the two hypotheses. The results are summarised in Table 3.3 below:

Table 3.3 Summary of classification

	Addition	Deletion	Change in Explanation			Total
			Addition	Deletion	Change	
Reform	156	2	92	6	31	287
	(142)	(29)	(74)	(17)	(26)	
Revolutionary	22	21	11	32	5	91
	(45)	(9)	(23)	(5)	(8)	
Sci. & Tech.	97	51	16	12	21	197
	(97)	(20)	(51)	(12)	(18)	
Art & Humanities	35	6	22	2	7	72
	(36)	(7)	(19)	(4)	(7)	
Religion	13	0	2	0	1	16
	(8)	(2)	(4)	(9)	(1)	
Other	184	24	121	8	28	365
	(180)	(37)	(94)	(21)	(33)	

Notes: The figures in parentheses give the expected values for each cell; N=1028; Chi^2=311.23; df=20; p<0.001
Source: Content analysis on the 1st and 5th editions of the Dictionary conducted by the author

Firstly, from the above table, we can see that there are indeed more entries in the fifth edition that link the state or the people to the reform nation building discourse. Within the "reform" category, there is a very big net addition of entries (=156). We also see that changes in the explanations of existing entries working in favour of the reform discourse. There are 100 revisions that are classified in the "reform" category, suggesting that the newly added examples or definitions can reflect the reform ideological shift defined above. A Chi-square test has also been conducted to examine the statistical significance of the relationship. It (χ^2=

[173] Richard J. Landis and Gary G. Koch, "The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data," *Biometrics* Vol. 33, no. 1 (1977), pp. 159-174.

311.23, $p < 0.001$) suggests that the relationship presented in Table 3.3 is extremely unlikely to be obtained due to chance variation.

This finding shall be strengthened by a number of examples:

1. **Vision/ Hope (*yuanjing* 愿景) & Recognition (*tiren* 体认):** these two words were included in the *Dictionary* shortly after the historical visit to China by Lien Chan, the then-chairman of Taiwan's Nationalist Party in May 2005, which was the first by a Nationalist leader since the end of China's civil war in 1949. The visit was considered a landmark breakthrough of the relationship between China and Taiwan. The two words, "*yuanjing*" and "*tiren*," which are very popular in Taiwan, became keywords of Lien's visit and examples of the peaceful development of China. They expressed the leaders' hope for mutual understanding and recognition in the future and were therefore emphasised by Lien at the joint press conference after the meeting. In fact, according to the lexicographers, by the time they decided—or were asked—to add these words to the corpus, the 5th edition of the *Dictionary* was already put in-print. Nevertheless, in order to get this words included, the printing was suspended by the Commercial Press. The incorporation of these two Taiwanese words into the *Dictionary* was obviously not just a gesture of respect; it also symbolised the unification of China and Taiwan. Given this background, these two words are significant examples of how political agenda has played a determined role in the *Dictionary*'s revision.
2. **Advent/ arrive (*Daolai* 到来) and Ascend (*Pasheng* 爬升)**: Apart from the above obvious moves, a comparison of the two editions has allowed us to unveil changes on a more subtle level. The entries "Daolai"[174] and "Pasheng"[175] are two of the many

[174] Institute of Linguistics, "Guanyu Xiandai hanyu cidian bianxie gongzuo he chengli shending weiyuanhui wenti de baogao" ("Report on the compilation progress and setting up a validation committee for the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary") [1956], in Institute of Linguistics (ed.), *Xiandai hanyu cidian wushi nian* (*Fifty Years of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*) (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2004), pp. 15-16.

instances in which reform era ideology are conveyed through inserting new examples such as "the new climax of economic development has arrived" and "sales continues to ascend."

Secondly, the data also suggests that revolutionary terms/ explanations have been removed from the corpus of the *Dictionary*. This seems to be a false conclusion at the first glance because the number of deleted "revolutionary" entries (=21) is smaller than the number of newly added revolutionary terms (=22). But what we have to consider here is the fact that the corpus of the *Dictionary* has been expanding. Therefore, proportionally speaking, the reduction of revolutionary terms should still be fairly significant. In order to confirm this point, a null hypothesis which proposes that the *Dictionary*'s revision is independent to China's nation building project is formulated. The bracketed "expected values" in Table 3.3 delineate the number of entries that one should expect to see if the null hypothesis is true. And it is very clear that the number of revolutionary entries that are actually deleted (=21) is well above the expected number (=9).

Having said that, someone may still wonder why the 5th edition of the *Dictionary* contains so many revolutionary terms. This criticism is reasonable. In fact, a more in-depth examination of the *Dictionary* also suggests such a complicated picture. On the one hand, there are examples that clearly suggest the revolutionary ideas are removed from the entries. For example, the entry "undercurrent (*anchao* 暗潮)" has been included in both editions of the *Dictionary*. However, its definition was revised. In the 1st edition, *anchao* was defined as "an analogy of things that is still in the planning stage (it manly refers to social struggles and

[175] Ibid., p. 1014.

social movements).”[176] In the 5th edition, the bracketed “revolutionary” element was removed from the definition.

However, there are also plenty of examples suggesting that revolutionary entries, such as “class struggle (*jieji douzheng* 阶级斗争),” “Mao’s thoughts (*Mao zedong sixiang* 毛泽东思想)” are still in the corpus of the latest *Dictionary*. This gives rise to one question: “if class struggles are no longer promoted by the state, why the political authority still keeps these entries in the *Dictionary*?” Would this be a sign that the *Dictionary* is no longer political?

Contrary to the above proposition, the fact that these not-often-used revolutionary terms have been kept in the *Dictionary* is a clear case that the *Dictionary* is still very political. In fact, as we review the political culture of the Chinese Communist Party, we will soon discover that claiming to follow the previous path has been a means used by the political leaders to maintain their ruling legitimacy. This explains why even China has already gone through three decades of market reform; its leaders still insist that they are developing socialism, but not capitalism.

In addition to following the state’s changing political agenda in revising the *Dictionary*, in the reform era the Commercial Press also published numerous books and articles describing its relationship with the party state.[177] Incidents such as the press serving as a secret focal point for the Communist Party’s communication during the 1920s, or the Commercial Press building on Baoshan Road (宝山路) being selected by Zhou Enlai as a Military Command Center in one of the Communist Party’s military uprisings,[178] have been

[176] Institute of Linguistics, *Xiandai hanyu cidian* (*Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*) (1st ed), (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1977).
[177] See, for example, Wang Shouben, “Shangwu yinshuguan yu dang de zaoqi huodong” (“Commercial Press and the Communist Party’s Early Activities”), in Commercial Press (ed.), *Shangwu yinshuguan yibai nian* (*Commercial Press: Centenary*) (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1998), pp. 257–275.
[178] Ibid., p.259.

reiterated in those books, creating an image that the press, which was actually established by the Jesuits in 1897, is a long-standing partner of the Communist Party.

Mimicking Behaviour of Market Actors

In view of the evidence presented above, it is clear that the *Dictionary*—by following closely the state's changing political agenda—was still functioning as a tool for top-down language and political control. This is intriguing at the first glance. Given the fact that the Commercial Press has to be responsible for its own profit and loss, what drove it to comply with the state's agenda in language management and political development?

Of course, as mentioned, to a certain extent, all publishers in China were still under state control in the 1990s and the 2000s. However, this certainly cannot explain incidents in which the publisher willingly publicised how political agenda of the state has influenced the contents of the *Dictionary*. In addition to the aforementioned books that portrayed the Commercial Press as a close ally of the state in the revolutionary era, another example, also discussed earlier in this chapter, can be found in the news stories released before the publication of the fifth edition, in which the lexicographers of the *Dictionary* mentioned how the incorporation of the words *vision* and *recognition* led to the postponement of the printing of the *Dictionary*. The story was widely circulated on the Internet. There is no reason to believe that the lexicographers experienced any political pressure to release a story like this. It is also unlikely that they did so simply out of ignorance.

Clearly, the behaviour of the lexicographers should be considered within the wider context of China's highly competitive dictionary market, in which making the state present has become a marketing strategy. One of the most striking examples occurred in 2004 when an academic press, the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (*Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe* 外语教学与研究出版社), published a dictionary

entitled the *Prescriptive Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese* (*Xiandai hanyu guifan cidian* 现代汉语规范词典, the *Prescriptive Dictionary* hereafter).[12] According to the publisher, the *Prescriptive Dictionary* is "prescriptive" in the sense that it strictly complies with the linguistic regulations and standards issued by the state, such as the "List of Generally Used Characters in Modern Chinese" (*Xiandai hanyu tongyong zibiao* 现代汉语通用字表). Thus, as its name suggests, the proclaimed strength of the dictionary is the involvement of the state. Like the Commercial Press, the publisher also claimed that the *Prescriptive Dictionary* was commissioned by the state in line with its project to regulate the Chinese language.[179] A book launch of the dictionary was held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to symbolise this relationship.[180]

The *Prescriptive Dictionary* is not as authoritative as it claims to be, at least in the view of Jiang Lansheng (江蓝生), who was a vice president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and a delegate of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). During the CPPCC in March 2004, she criticised the *Prescriptive Dictionary* for claiming to be "prescriptive."[181] We cannot tell if this criticism was made in order to protect the authority of the *Dictionary*, but it was echoed by many scholars and netizens, whose comments were later collected in an edited volume titled *Rescuing Dictionaries* (*zhengjiu cishu* 拯救辞书), published in August 2004, by Xing Dongtian (邢东田).[182] According to the

[179] Foreign Language, Teaching, and Research Press, "Xiandai hanyu guifan cidian youwen bida" ("Questions and answers regarding the Prescriptive Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese") (26 August 2010), *Website of Foreign Language, Teaching, and Research Press*, available at http://chinese.fltrp.com (accessed 17 September 2010).
[180] Liu Pengyun "Xiandai hanyu guifan cidian shouci na 'guifan' shuoshi" (The Prescriptive Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese pioneers the use of "prescription" in explaining words) (23 April 2004), *Huaxia jingwei wang* (*Huaxia.com*), available at: http://www.huaxia.com/zt/zhwh/2004-28/800091.html (accessed 15 October 2010).
[181] Feng Xiaofei, "Yuyanxue zhuanjia huyu: Cishu buke lanyong 'guifan'" ("Linguists warn against the misuse of the word 'prescriptive' in dictionaries") (20 March 2004), *Renmin wang*, available at: www.people.com.cn (accessed 12 October 2013).
[182] Xing Dongtian (ed.), *Zhengjiu cishu: guifan bianzheng, zhiliang guankui ji xueshu daode kaoliang* (*Rescuing Dictionaries: Examining Claims of Prescription, Quality, and Academic Ethics*) (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2004).

critics, the *Prescriptive Dictionary* is full of mistakes and therefore the term "prescriptive" in the title is misleading. Some of them argued that this incident revealed a long-standing problem in the Chinese dictionary market in which many greedy publishers produce "low-quality dictionaries" (*liezhi cishu* 劣质辞书) to make money.[183]

Nevertheless, the *Prescriptive Dictionary* was able to survive the criticisms—mostly because of the inaction or even support of the state. State media such as *Renmin wang* (人民网, the *Renmin ribao* website) maintained a rather impartial stance in the dispute by just creating a special coverage page titled *"Should the term 'prescriptive' be used cautiously in titling a dictionary?"* (*cishu ying shenyong "guifan" guanming?* 辞书应慎用"规范"冠名?) that listed both criticisms and defences of the *Prescriptive Dictionary*. On occasion, the state has taken more supportive action such as advertising the publication of the *Prescriptive Dictionary* on the website of the State Language Commission (*Zhongguo yuyan wenzi wang* 中国语言文字网).[184] This kind of support has boosted the market's confidence in the dictionary. According to the publisher, by June 2010 approximately two million copies of the *Prescriptive Dictionary* had been sold.[185]

The controversy raised by the publication of the *Prescriptive Dictionary* is significant in that it demonstrates how a top-down institution set up by the state has been mimicked—in terms of title and marketing strategies—by market-oriented publishers so as to maximise their

[183] See, for example, Liu, "Xiandai hanyu guifan cidian shouci na 'guifan' shuoshi"; Lu xinning, "Cishu lingyu chaozuo xianxiang yanzhong" ("Dishonesty is endemic in the dictionary market"), in Xing Dongtian (ed.), *Zhengjiu cishu: guifan bianzheng, zhiliang guankui ji xueshu daode kaoliang (Rescuing Dictionaries: Examining Claims of Prescription, Quality, and Academic Ethics)* (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2004), pp. 311–312.

[184] State Language Commission, "Xiandai hanyu guifan cidian" ("The Prescriptive Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese") (3 March 2004), *Zhongguo yuyan wenzi wang* (Website of the State Language Commission), available at: www.china-language.gov.cn (accessed 21 October 2013).

[185] Foreign Language, Teaching, and Research Press, "Xinban Xiandai hanyu guifan cidian mianshi, di 200 wan ce fengxian duzhe" ("Release of the new edition of the Prescriptive Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese, offering readers the two millionth copy of the dictionary") (23June 2010), *Website of Foreign Language, Teaching, and Research Press*, http://chinese.fltrp.com (accessed 12 October 2013).

profit. The socio-economic conditions in the 1950s allowed the political and linguistic elites of the party state to position themselves as the sole authority of linguistic correctness, and thus to manage language uses in a top-down manner. While the market reform since the 1980s has decentralised the distribution of economic and communication resources to different local and market actors, the image of the state being a source of linguistic correctness has already been deeply rooted in the society. As such, proclaiming a close relationship with the state will enable a dictionary publisher to claim authority in defining linguistic correctness, which is widely deemed a crucial feature of a "good" dictionary in China.[186]

Unlike the revolutionary era when the state actively controlled the compilation of dictionaries and intellectuals tried to mediate between the state's prescriptions and their individual inclinations, the reform era has witnessed a more sophisticated mechanism in which publishers deliberately compete for and publicise directives from the state.[187] As such, it is not surprising to see state officials being invited by dictionary publishers to attend conferences on their dictionaries, or publishers working with local governments to promote literacy in the countryside.[188]

While mimicking activities of market actors can strengthen the authority of the state, it can also send out confusing signals, and thus gradually increase the cost of upholding the top-down institutions. In fact, the *Prescriptive Dictionary* was just one of the many

[186] See, for example, Cui Luan, "Yiben zui shihe xiaoxuesheng shiyong de zidian" ("The best dictionary for primary and secondary school students to consult"), *Yuwen jiaoxue tongxun* (*Language Education Bulletin*), No. 27 (2010), p.66.
[187] Volland, "A linguistic enclave," pp. 467–494.
[188] Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, "Xiandai hanyu guifan cidian (di 2 ban) shangsha, chuban zuotanhui zai jing zhaokai" ("Release of the 2nd edition of the Prescriptive Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese: a book launch was held in Beijing") (28 August 2010), *Website of Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press*, available at http://chinese.fltrp.com (accessed 12 October 2013); Zhang Hong, "Xiandai hanyu cidian xinban di 5 ban chulu" ("The 5th edition of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary is published") (27 July 2005), *Xinhua Net*, available at: www.xinhuanet.com (accessed 12 October 2013); and Qu Dakai, "Longshanxian wei nongcun xuexiao juanzeng 5806 ce Xiandai hanyu cidian" ("Longshan county government donates 5,806 copies of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary to rural schools") (20 May 2011), *Website of Hunan Longshan County*, available at: www.xxls.gov.cn (12 October 2013).

dictionaries that try to imitate the *Dictionary*. As more publishers found dictionary publishing profitable, they began to join the market by publishing their own dictionaries. Similar to the *Prescriptive Dictionary*, many of them share similar title and design with the state endorsed dictionaries (i.e. the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* and *Xinhua Dictionary*), giving rise to a "dictionary market with Chinese characteristics" (Figure 3.2).

The problem with these new dictionaries was that they looked too similar to the dictionaries that were truly endorsed by the state. This led to two problems for the state's top-down language management programme. First, these mimickers undermined the profitability of the existing publishers that have invested human resources and time in compiling the dictionaries. The *People's Daily* once claimed that due to the spread of pirated books, the Commercial Press's revenue from dictionary publishing diminished by nearly a hundred million RMB.[189] Second, the new dictionaries sent the population mixed messages regarding linguistic correctness, thus confounding the state's top-down language management scheme. Although dictionaries produced by profit-oriented publishers deliberately mimicked the state-endorsed dictionaries, in order to avoid charges of copyright infringement, they often needed to define or explain words in alternatively ways, which often ended up with embarrassing errors, such as defining a "steamed bun" (*mantou* 馒头) as a "breast" (*rufang* 乳房).[190] While poorly compiled dictionaries are problematic for all linguistic communities, those communities that adopt a top-down approach to language management are particularly vulnerable to this type of challenge because they place heavy emphasis on objective linguistic "correctness." Consequently, the mimickers not only create confusing messages to the market

[189] "Woguo cishu shichang qingli zhengdun po zai meijie" ("There is a pressing need to regulate the dictionary market") (31 July 2003), *Xinhua Net*, available at: http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/book/2003-07/31/content_1002667.htm (accessed 12 October 2013).
[190] Pan Zhen, "Jingti cidian" ("Be cautious to dictionaries") (2001), *Shanghaishi zhengxie* (*Website of the Shanghai Committee of Chinese Political Consultative Conference*), available at: http://shszx.eastday.com/epublish/gb/paper163/866/class016300003/hwz485386.htm (accessed 12 October 2013).

regarding the meanings of prescription, but also threaten the market of the state-endorsed dictionaries.

Figure 3.2 Mimickers of *Xiandai hanyu cidian* and *Xinhua zidian* in a bookstore in Shanghai

Source:
Photo taken by the author in January 2012

The "chaotic" dictionary market has prompted the state to reinsert its control over the arena. In 2006, GAPP issued series of new regulations (*Guanyu guifan tushu chuban danwei ci shu chuban yewu fanwei de ruogan guiding* 关于规范图书出版单位辞书出版业务范围的若干规定) which prohibited new publishers from entering the dictionary market, and required existing publishers to submit their dictionaries for state inspection.[191] In addition, all dictionary editors must attend dictionary compilation training (c*ishu chuban yewu peixun* 辞书出版业务培训) and tests organised by GAPP. Yet, the effectiveness of these new measures remains doubtful. As suggested by Wu's speech in 2011, the dictionary market has remained "chaotic" in the view of the state five years after the regulations were implemented.

[191] General Administration of Press and Publication, "Xinwen chuban zong shu yin fa guanyu guifan tushu chuban danwei ci shu chuban yewu fanwei de ruogan guiding tongzhi" ("Notification from the General Administration of Press and Publication regarding its new regulations on dictionary publication") (10 March 2006), *Fazhi ribao* (*Legal Daily*), available at: http://www.legaldaily.com.cn/misc/2006-04/27/content_308256.htm (accessed 12 October 2013).

Conclusion: the Limits of Top-down Institutions

The changing contents of the *Dictionary* and the competitions it encountered in the reform era allow us to examine the development of top-down institutions in an authoritarian context when economic and communication resources became more diversified. Market forces have prompted existing publishers to remain faithful to the state's political agenda. However, as the dictionary market became increasingly open, the number of commercial dictionary publishers increased significantly. To maximise their profit, the new publishers deliberately mimicked the state in promoting their dictionaries. Their behaviour, as the struggles between the *Dictionary* and the *Priscriptive Dictioanry* suggest, simultaneously sustained and weakened the top-down institution of the state, leading it to declare a battle against "problematic dictionaries."

From a distributive standpoint, the decline of top-down institutions in the market reform era is expected. The design of these institutions allows only a small group of elites to extract resources exclusively from their subjects. In the case of dictionary compilation and production, the emphasis on "prescriptions" (*guifan* 规范) has once granted a small group of political and cultural elites the privilege to define correctness and ensure a good market for their dictionaries. Yet, as the publishing market continued to liberalise and printing technology popularised, more actors became interested and capable in seizing the profit enjoyed by the elites. Confirming the general theoretical prediction presented in Chapter 1, this chapter demonstrates how forces for bottom-up institutional change accumulate when economic and communication resources diversified.

This chapter also helps us gain a more nuanced understanding of the process through which top-down institutions are challenged by everyday activities of social actors. In fact, contrary to conventional assumption, market liberalisation has not immediately undermined the claim of the state to legislate the field of language. As this chapter suggests, the struggle

between dictionary publishers for the authority to prescribe language was likely to strengthen the legitimacy of the state as the producer of "correct language" in the first place. This conforms to Gramsci's proposition that the formation of hegemony can be a "spontaneous" process in which different social groups deliberately partake in practices that disseminate certain paradigmatic "direction[s] imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental groups."[192] Yet, as the number of publishers continued to increase and mimicking became popular, the information regarding language correctness became confusing, prompting the state to search for new strategies to reassert its authority in the linguistic arena.

As such, the tale of the *Dictionary* vividly illustrates the characteristics and limits of top-down institutions. While it is good at generating considerable resources for a small group of elites, it falls short in co-opting a large group of more autonomous actors whose concern is to maximise their individual or organisational gain. This is because as the scope of co-optation expands, the likelihood for new actors to bring in contradictory ideas to the institution also increases. Top-down institutions in authoritarian regimes are particularly vulnerable to this type of challenge since information in these institutions is in the debt of the powerful to the inferior. Ambiguous directions from the top provide room for the bottom to manoeuvre and thus undermine the power of the powerful. In the arena of language management, the power of the state is realised in its "prescriptions," which are then disseminated to the society through dictionaries. Dictionaries produced by other publishers are "problematic" in the view of the state because they often provide alternative or contradictory interpretations of its prescriptions. In this sense, Chinese dictionaries are indeed an exemplification of the state's "discursive power."

[192] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (ed. and trans.), (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), pp. 12–13.

Why did the state open the dictionary market to other commercial publishers in the first place? If the state was indeed keen to uphold its claim to be the sole authority in defining correctness in language, allowing the liberalisation of the dictionary market would present an almost insurmountable obstacle to that goal. As next chapter will suggest, although the state seemed to remain keen in maintaining its authority in the dictionary market, it has long recognised the weaknesses of top-down language management, and has taken steps to supplement it with a more bottom-up form of institution since the 1980s.

4

Governing through Incentivisation: the Putonghua Proficiency Test

> I didn't use putonghua in order to save face; now I use it to make money
>
> —from a Cantonese businessman

The Chinese have a long and venerated history of submitting to examinations. Since the Sui Dynasty, national tests have been used by emperors to select government officials, and most importantly, to normalise their power over intellectuals. As Man-Cheong has rightly argued, the most salient impact of the examination system was the production and reproduction of a unitary, centralised state.[193] The imperial examination system was a process that shaped test takers through the necessary disciplinary training as servants of the state. As the intellectuals submitted themselves for examination, they also invested the emperor with the authority to rule.[194] These mechanisms, together with the social responses toward the imperial examination system, have been widely discussed.[195] What has attracted less scholarly attention is the fact that the imperial examination was also a form of language management. In the Qing Dynasty, for example, candidates were required to answer questions on the *Four Books* in the "eight-legged" (*pa-ku*八股) style, a highly structured essay in eight parts.[196] In

[193]Iona Man-Cheong, *The Class of 1761: Examinations, State and Elites in Eighteenth-century China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 2.
[194] Ibid, p.3
[195] See, for example, F. Allan Hanson, *Testing Testing : Social Consequences of the Examined Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), ch.7; Kai-wing Chow, "Writing for success: printing, examinations, and intellectual change in late Ming China,"*Late Imperial China*, 1996, Vol.17(1), pp. 125-157.
[196] Chow, "Writing for Success", p. 125.

addition, there were specific requirements regarding handwriting (calligraphy) and word choices.[197] These are important features of the examination process not only because in late imperial China the avoidance system required that officials be able to communicate in a common language, but also because tests are important mechanisms through which incentives to use "appropriate" language are institutionalised. Indeed, it was precisely because of the examination system that the "eight-legged" (*pa-ku*八股) style was championed by many Qing literati as a fashionable form of writing.[198]

The linguistic aspect of examination deserves closer analysis, particularly in the contemporary context when the state is frequently perceived as withdrawing in order to allow market forces room to operate. The *Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi* (普通话水平测试 hereafter, the PSC) serves as an excellent case study in this regard. Since its implementation in 1994, the PSC has been an influential language test administered by the PRC to measure and reward the putonghua proficiency of its citizens. Through process tracing and an examination of the design of the test, this chapter examines the opportunity structure within which the PSC was formulated by the central state, arguing that it was created to serve the logistical concerns of the state in supporting its programme of economic reform, and to maintain its claim to exercise legitimate authority within the field of language, even as alternative commercial publishers began to enter the fray in increasingly numbers.

Language Tests as a Means of Governance

Power relations are not static. They involve constant construction and reconstruction in various practices and areas of human knowledge. A state emerges as a "powerful" organisation in this contextual field only when it succeeds in establishing and maintaining its

[197] Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology : Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China,* (Cambridge, MA : Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1984)
[198] Benjamin A. Elman, "Eight-legged essay," in Linsun Cheng (ed.), *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China : Modern and Historic Views of the World's Newest and Oldest Global Power* (Great Barrington, MA.: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2009), p. 696.

leadership. And throughout history administrating examinations of various sorts has emerged as a common and powerful tool by which the state seeks to achieve this goal. The hypothesis that standardised tests are means for the powerful actors to make their subjects more productive and compliant has been advanced by a number of critical theorists such as Foucault, Hanson and Blackledge.[199] Central to their concern is the often imperceptible yet pervasive influences that tests exert on ordinary people's lives, two of which are particularly prominent.[200]

First, tests provide incentives for individuals to perform certain acts deemed desirable by the test designer.[201] As Hanson argues, tests are not measures or indicators of some purely objective, independently existing state of affairs, but are instead cultural constructions.[202] In other words, they fabricate the personal constructs they purport to measure. The introduction and modification of citizenship tests, for example, are in line with changing attitudes towards immigration in those countries that utilise them.[203] It is therefore not surprising to see such questions on tests targeting Muslim traditions as "Is it right that women obey their husbands," as is the case of the immigration test of Baden-Württemberg (a German state).[204] Through rewarding good results and punishing bad results, standardised tests exert its normalising, judging power over the individuals, leading them to compulsory objectification.[205] This idea is well demonstrated when Michel Foucault proclaims that "the examination is highly

[199] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.) (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Hanson, *Testing Testing*; Adrian Blackledge, "Inventing English as convenient fiction: language testing regimes in the United Kingdom," in Guus Extra, Massimiliano Spotti and Piet Van Avermaet (eds.), *Language Testing, Migration, and Citizenship: Cross-national Perspectives on Integration Regimes* (London: Continuum, 2009), pp. 66-86.
[200] Hanson, *Testing Testing*, p.2; O*ded Löwenheim* and *Orit Gazit, "Power and examination: a critique of citizenship tests," Security Dialogue, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2009), pp. 145-167.*
[201] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 187.
[202] Hanson, *Testing Testing.*
[203] Amitai Etzioni, "Citizenship tests: a comparative, communitarian perspective," *Political Quarterly*, Vol.78, No. 3 (2007), p. 353.
[204] Ibid., p.356.
[205] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 189

ritualised. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth."[206]

The linguistic aspects of tests have emerged in recent times as particularly powerful barometers of national belonging because shared language is a core component linking individuals to state authority, and to broader membership in communities of nationhood. The ability to communicate in a specific language reflects not only linguistic competence, but also identity, social status, and belonging. For example, from 1901 to 1973, Australia required prospective immigrants to pass a *Dictation Test*, in which a passage was dictated to unwelcome immigrants at the port of entry: those who could not copy a passage of fifty words dictated to them were turned away at the border. [207] These passages were changed every two weeks and were available in a number of European languages.[208] This test gave authorities a lot of power in managing not only the numbers, but also the national origins of immigrants admitted. In more recent times, the United Kingdom government has introduced an English language test as a requirement for overseas spouses (from outside Europe) wanting to move to the country to join their British partner, which has reportedly deterred immigration from non-English speaking countries.[209]

Second, results obtained by administering standardised tests render individuals into "cases" through a process of documentation.[210] In the absence of standardised testing strategies and practices, the skills and attributes of individuals are difficult to assess and compare. Goffman, for example, observes that in societies without tests, heterogeneous

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[206] Ibid, p.170-171.
[207] Please note, although the Dictation Test was not officially abolished until 1973, it fell into disuse in the 1930s. See, Tim McNamara, "The spectre of the Dictation Test: language testing for immigration and citizenship in Australia," in Extra, Spotti, and Avermaet (eds.), *Language Testing, Migration, and Citizenship*, p. 227.
[208] McNamara, "The spectre of the Dictation Test," pp. 226-7.
[209] Catrin Nye, "Does migrants' English test split families?" (1 December 2012), *BBC News*, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20540425 (accessed 18 October 2013).
[210] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 189

individuals can present and perform their social selves in a variety of ways, making them more difficult to compare and measure.[211] Standardised tests, by contrast, allow authorities to expose, describe, judge, measure, and compare subjects in ways that at least appear to be more systematic, and are therefore often associated with the rise of modern bureaucratic states. Indeed, as Hanson notes, testing can be seen primarily as "a representational technique applied by an agency to an individual with the intention of gathering information."[212] The information gathered allows authorities to both produce and to discipline subjects. Deviants can be trained or corrected, normalised, or excluded.[213] In this sense, the rise of examinations in the modern era echoes sociologist Mann's famous "infrastructural power" proposition, in which modern states are active in enhancing their capacity to penetrate society and to use this penetration to enforce policy throughout their entire territory.[214]

The documentation of linguistic skill is a common manifestation of the "infrastructural power" of political authorities in modern societies. The process is often used not only to record candidates' linguistic competency *per se*, but also to predict their future success. For example, the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), an entrance examination that is widely used in graduate admissions, is considered by many schools a valid indicator for candidates' ability to achieve good performance in their graduate studies.

The arguments proposed above are useful in explaining the motivations of the state in launching the PSC in the reform era and will be further discussed in the remainder of this chapter. However, it is also important to note that these critical readings of the practice of testing frequently assume that individuals are easily subdued. This assumption is problematic. Tests may well shape individual behaviour, but they can also equip citizens with knowledge,

[211] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London : Penguin, 1990).
[212] Hanson, *Testing Testing*, p. 19.
[213] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 191
[214] Michael Mann, "The autonomous power of the state: its origins, mechanisms and results," *European Journal of Sociology*, Vol.25, No.2 (1984), p.189.

skills, and mentality that are useful for challenging the status quo. It would therefore be a mistake to assume that the disciplinary process of testing is unilateral in scope. Interacting with the more contingent elements of intellectual fashions and social ambitions, examinations become a site of collaboration, contestation, and conflict.[215] This is particularly evident in the late reform era in China when people began to challenge the utility of the PSC and other policy-driven language tests, as discussed in the next chapter.

The *Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi* and Language Reforms in the 1980s

The foundation of the PSC was laid as the call for marketisation finally gained momentum among the central leaders in the 1980s. Parallel to the beginning of market reform was a turn in the course of the language planning scheme, under the direction of the State Council, following a national conference on linguistic work in 1986. The Chinese Language Reform Commission (*Zhongguo wenzi gaige weiyuanhui*中国文字改革委员会, see Chapter 3), which was formed in 1954 during the first wave of language reform, was renamed the State Language Commission (*Guojia yuyan wenzi gongzuo weiyuanhui* 国家语言文字工作委员会). Instead of refining the corpus of *putonghua*, the new organisation was charged with the mission of promoting the use of the language in people's ordinary social lives, signifying the beginning of a new phase of language planning in China.

The new economic approach adopted by the top Chinese political leaders in the 1980s arguably required a population that is more legible and mobile, less hampered by diverse dialects and more responsive to the shifting demand of trans-local production. However, the former top-down strategy of language standardisation has become increasingly ineffective in addressing the new problems brought by market reform. First of all, the original top-down language promotion strategy encountered increased challenges from intellectuals and

[215] Man-Cheong, *The Class of 1761*, p. 2.

ordinary citizens. Whereas intellectuals found loopholes of the state's control so as to preserve their style and some freedom of expression,[216] labour in some cities was unresponsive to the state's call to learn the official language and words. Many of them did not regard language learning as an important issue and chose to concentrate on production.[217]

Contrary to the official and popular narrative, the central state was actually very active in promoting *putonghua* before the 1980s, but the lack of incentives to encourage compliance at the grassroots made the task difficult. In the opening speech of the national conference on linguistic work delivered by Wan Li (万里, the then Vice Premier), those linguistic problems were mentioned:

> The use of language and words, and their correctness and level of standardisation, often reflect a country's and a nation's level of civilisation (*wenming chengdu* 文明程度). Today the use of words in our society is chaotic: traditional Chinese words are still widely used, words are simplified without permission. Wrong words are written causally. … These are unfavorable to the construction of two civilisations (*liangge wenming jianshe* 两个文明建设). [218]

The "two civilisations" to which Wan referred included both material and cultural advancements, and corresponds to what Scott coined as "legibility" of a nation to the state. To central leaders, dialects and "non-standard" words in local linguistic communities imposed a serious communication barrier that blunted the effectiveness of propaganda, slowed policy implementation, and hampered efforts to coordinate productive activities.[219]

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[216] Volland, "A Linguistic enclave," pp. 467-494.
[217] Please note that, however, this didn't happen in all cities in China. Putonghua promotion in Shanghai, for example, was very well received. I will come back to this point later.
[218] Su Peicheng, *Dangdai zhongguo de yuwen gaige he yuwen guifan* (*Language Reform and Standarisation in Contemporary China*) (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2010), p.484.
[219] James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 72-73.

Top-down strategies also created confusion over multiple versions of "prescriptive" language. In the early history of language management in PRC, there were two major attempts to simplify Chinese characters. The initial effort, which was commonly referred to as the "First Round," was promulgated in 1964. The *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* described in the previous chapters was compiled precisely to sustain this definitive list of character simplifications. Later in 1977, however, a second round of simplifications (the "Second Round"), was announced. Nearly 4,500 characters were modified. Unsurprisingly, instead of simplifying the writing system, the scheme actually generated confusion and disagreement. 'Simplifications' in the new list were taught inconsistently in schools, and people used characters at various stages of official or unofficial simplification.

The second round of simplification was rescinded by the state council at the aforementioned linguistic conference in 1986. In his concluding remarks at the conference, Hu Qiaomu stressed the importance of departing from the old (top-down) way of language planning:

> Some comrades might feel that at this conference we have not repeated what we had proposed before. Comrades, the historical changes represented by those proposals cannot be deal with simply through repeating or endorsing those proposals … We who are familiar with the language reform know that many advanced intellectuals have made some magnificent claims in the past. Although they are still important today, repeating those claims is not the same as realising them … History progresses through the power generated from all kinds of activities. That is, in order to move forward, we need the active participation and support from the whole population.[220]

[220] Su, *Dangdai zhongguo de yuwen gaige he yuwen guifan*, p.494.

Hu's scepticism regarding the the "magnificent claims in the past" was detailed by others at the conference who documented the failures and partial successes of the state's effort to standardise and simplify Chinese in the 1950s. Putonghua was not being adopted in many parts of the country where local dialects were still dominant, a situation not favourable to economic development in the view of the conference participants.

The national conference on linguistic work in 1986 marks the beginning of a new era in language planning in China. After the conference, a series of campaigns were launched to promote putonghua. These included conferences on promoting putonghua in public transport, in the southern region and in the cities (1988, 1990, and 1993), national putonghua speech competitions (*Quanguo putonghua guangbo dasai* 全国普通话广播大赛), and, perhaps most importantly, initiatives to design and implement a national language test (1988). According to language planners consulted, instead of reforming the corpus of the language, the new language promotion strategy proposed in 1986 aimed at achieving four main objectives. First, the new strategy should fully realize the importance of putonghua (i.e. to raise the status of the language).[221] Second, it should strengthen the intensity of putonghua promotion, not only in the Southern provinces, but also in the north where local dialects are also spoken. Third, putonghua should be made the lingua franca in four areas—education, public administration, media, and daily conversation—before the end of the 20th century. Fourth, clear standards should be created for measuring people's putonghua proficiency. This was not a new idea: since the early 1980s, some intellectuals began advocating intermittently a system to classify people's putonghua proficiency.[222]A linguistic society in Beijing (*Beijingshi yuyan xue hui*北京市语言学会), for example, set up a research group to explore possible ways to measure putonghua proficiency, which resulted in a proposal (*Putonghua dengji biaozhun tiaoli caoan*

[221]Li Haiying, *Putonghua shuiping ceshi (PSC)de shehui yuyanxue chanshi* (*A Sociolingistic Examination of the Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi*) (Jinan: Qilu Press, 2006), p.10.
[222]Su, *Dangdai zhongguo de yuwen gaige he yuwen guifan*, p.511.

普通话等级标准条例草案) published in 1982. Three levels of proficiency—standard, medium and basic—were proposed. According to the proposal, people were expected to achieve certain level of putonghua proficiency before earning the necessary qualifications to work in a specific sector (e.g. education).

It was the fourth target that laid the foundation of PSC. The need to classify people into different categories according to their putonghua proficiency prompted the state to formulate a standardised language test that could be administered nationwide. This development echoes with Foucault's analysis on standardised tests, in which tests are created by the powerful actors to make each individual a "case" through documentation for convenient administration.

Design of the PSC

After nearly eight years of discussion and preparation, *PSC* was launched in October 1994. In an announcement jointly made by the State Language Commission, Department of Education, and the Ministry of Broadcast and Television, the test was defined as a 'proficiency test by reference to a standard, aiming to examine and accurately assess candidates' mastery of putonghua for conversation and their ease to function in the language.' [223] While this test is designed to measure and therefore to improve the population's ability to communicate in putonghua, teachers, broadcasters and government officials are explicitly required to take the test and attain certain level of proficiency. The chief document that prescribed the management and implementation of PSC was the *Outline for the Putonghua Attainment of Level Test* (*Putonghua shuiping ceshi dagang* 普通话水平测试大纲) (first edition: 1994; revised edition: 2003) and the *Outline for the Implementation of the Putonghua Proficiency Test* (*Putonghua shuiping ceshi shishi gangyao* 普通话水平测试实施纲要) (published in

[223] Ibid.

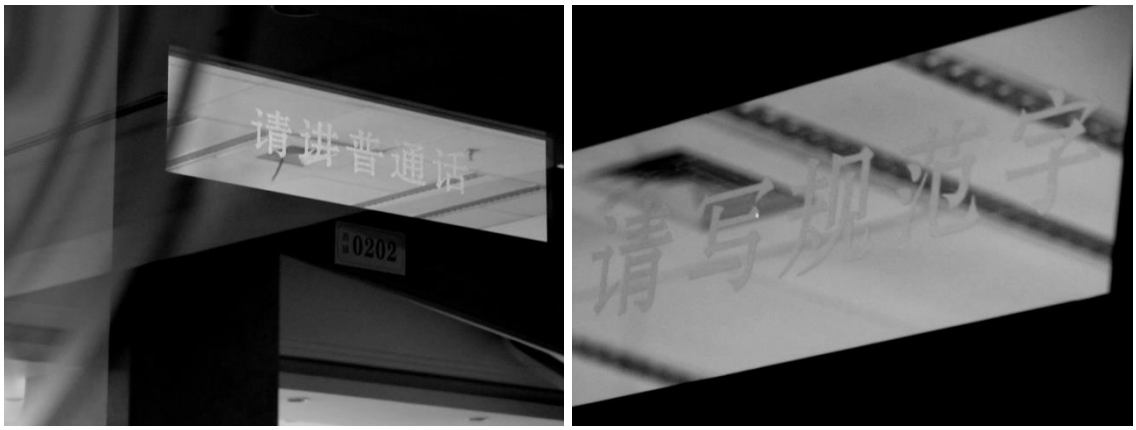
2003) to regulate respectively the overall policies governing the administration and contents of the test.

The PSC is administered through a three-level management system. The chief organisation responsible for its provision is the State Language Commission, a division within the Ministry of Education (after 1998).[224] It is responsible for the overall management of the test including standard setting, test-related policy making, macro-planning, supervising and evaluating the progress of promoting PSC in different provinces. The provincial units, however, have a lot of power in adjusting the contents and implementation of the test with reference to local conditions. Many of them conduct research of PSC and publish their own guidelines in a pamphlet format. Shanghai Putonghua Training and Testing Centre (*Shanghaishi putonghua peixun ceshi zhongxin* 上海市普通话培训测试中心),[225] for instance, publishes its own *Handbook for Putonghua Attainment of Level Test* (*Putonghua shuiping ceshi shouce* 普通話水平測试手冊) addressing the common problems that Shanghaiese are likely to encounter in learning putonghua. Inter-regional comparisons are done intermittently as a feedback mechanism.[226] Local schools and cities are responsible for the logistics of carrying out PSC and meeting the targets set forth by their provincial government. They set up testing and training centres and make sure that test regulations are properly followed. Finally, to ensure that targets of the central state are met and that PSC is effective, evaluations and site visits are conducted by provincial and national language commissions from time to time. During the evaluation, the working language of party and governmental organisations, schools, news media, and other public sectors are examined to see if putonghua and "prescriptive/ standard" characters are used. In some places where

[224] State Language Commission, "Zhize, lishi yange, lingdao" ("Responsibilities, history, and leadership"), http://www.china-language.gov.cn/6/yuyanwei.htm, accessed 15 September 2012.
[225] Shanghai Putonghua Training and Testing Centre is managed by the Shanghai Linguistics Work Committee.
[226] For example, Yang Yun, "Fangyanqu putonghua ceping zhong de fumian yinsu" ("Negative factors in the putonghua proficiency testing in dialectal areas), *Yuyan Wenzi Yingyong* (*Applied Linguistics*) No.3 (2001), pp.33-36.

putonghua promotion is taken seriously, public organisations are required to mobilise their staff to sit the PSC, and are punished for not meeting the requirements by such means as rejecting or delaying their application for being classified as an "advanced organisation" (*xianjin danwei* 先進單位).[227] It is therefore not surprising for those organisations to install explicit reminders (Figure 4.1) to use standard language in their buildings. The three-level management system helps to ensure that the targets of the test can meet its nation-building needs. It also leaves local governments with a high degree of flexibility to experiment the best way to implement the test in accordance with local conditions.[228]

Figure 4.1: Reminders to use "standard language" in a university in Shanghai



Note:
The reminders read as (from left to right): 'Please speak putonghua,' 'Please use prescriptive/ standard characters'
Source:
Photos taken by the author on 16 January 2012

Another important issue in the administration of the PSC is the training of examiners. Prior to 2012, grading in the PSC is still carried out entirely by human effort, which inevitably involves some subjective differences between the evaluators.[229] To ensure the

[227] Personnel Department of the Shanghai Municipal Government, "Gongwuyun putonghua shuiping ceshi" ("Putonghua proficiency test for civil servants"),1 January 2001, SMA, No. AA4315002-2004-001. Yu Zhijun, "Dazao wuhan pinpai shixian zhongbu jueqi" ("Build a brand for Wuhan and realize the rise of central China"), in Yu Genyuan (ed.), *Xinshiqi tuiguang putonghua fanglue yanjiu* (*Research on the Strategies for Promoting Putonghua in the New Era*) (Beijing: China Economic Press, 2005), pp. 200-201.
[228] Sebastian Heilmann, "Policy experimentation in China's economic rise," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2008), p.1.
[229] Please note, however, from 2010 onwards, computer-based PSC has been introduced. See, Ministry of Education, "Jisuanji fuzhu putonghua shuiping ceshi pingfen shihang banfa" ("Preliminary instructions for

validity of the PSC, the State Language Commission requires all examiners to attain a top grade in the PSC, attend training sessions and pass a qualifying examination. There are two types of examiners, national and provincial. National PSC examiners are more experienced than the usual provincial examiners. Typically, these examiners have had at least two years of experience working as provincial examiners, before being nominated by the provincial linguistics work committees to receive further training offered by the State Language Commission in Beijing. Examiners are usually hired from among teaching staff, broadcasters, or cradles of a language commission, on a part-time basis.

While the exact figure remains unknown, financial subsidies from the central government to promote putonghua are very little, according to an official of the Shanghai Language Commission.[230] As a result, different provinces use their own way and resources to finance the operation of the PSC. For example, in Shanghai, where all university graduates are entitled to take the PSC once without paying a fee, the education bureau of the municipal government is responsible for most of the costs, including training and testing fees, administrative expenses, and so on. In contrast, universities and district governments are only required to provide equipments and venues for the test.[231]

In terms of test contents, there are five sections in the PSC. Their contents and requirements are summarised in Table 4.1 below. It is evident that the main goal of the test is to evaluate not just the candidates' proficiency in "correct" pronunciation, but also their ability to communicate with others. According to Canale's and Swain's approach of communicative competence, three components are particularly important in this regard: 1. Grammatical competence (knowledge of words and grammar rules); 2. Sociolinguistic

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computer-assisted PSC") (31 May 2010), *Putonghua Peixun Ceshi Xinxi Ziyuanwang* (*Putonghua Information and Resources Net)*, available at: http://www.cltt.org/GuiZhangZhiDu/2010/119.html (accessed 21 April 2012).

[230] Interview SH02, an official of the Shanghai Language Commission, 30 May 2012.

[231] Shanghai Language Commission and Shanghai Education Committee, "Guanyu zuohao benshi zaixiao daxuesheng he zhongzhi xuesheng putonghua shuiping ceshi gongzuo de tongzhi" ("Notes regarding the successful implementation of PSC among current university and vocational school students"), 27 March 2008, SMA, No. AA4312009-2008-003.

competence (knowledge of sociocultural rules/norms and rules of discourse); and 3. Strategic competence (potential to communicate in multiple ways).[232] From the organisation of the PSC we can observe how these competencies are tested:

Table 4.1 Sections and contents of PSC

Section	Task	Competencies examined
1. Pronunciation (1)—10 marks	Pronouncing mono-syllabic words	Grammatical competence
2. Pronunciation (2)—10 marks	Pronouncing multi-syllabic phrases /word combinations	Grammatical competence
3. Judgment—10 marks	Differentiating quantity phrases in combination with nouns, word order or judgment in mode of expression in three minutes	Sociolinguistic competence
4. Reading—30 marks	Reading aloud a 400-word short prose passage	Grammatical competence
5. Consveration—30 marks	Thematic conversation for 3 minutes	Grammatical competence; Sociolinguistic competence; Strategic competence

Several sections require further analyses as they demonstrate some key features of the management system presented above. Section 1 tests students' ability to pronounce words. Some provinces, in view of the difficulty in deciding which word should be included, remove that section from the test. Section 3 "judgement" requires candidates to decide if the terms presented belong to "official language" or "local dialect." It is this section where local research and authorities are of relevance because these terms are selected to reflect the common errors made by speakers of a particular dialect. However, even if this is done, in the final section when candidates talk to the examiner, the examiners will still discriminate against people who use vocabulary items of local dialects. Examiners are asked to see if local terms are used in the conversation. My informants report that the test requires them to

[232] Michael Canale and Merriel Swain, "Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing," *Applied Linguistics*, No. 1, Vol. 1 (1980), pp.29-31.

memorise terms that are not commonly used in their daily lives.[233] One of them, a graduate student coming from a Northeast province, complained that the study guides for the PSC impose "cultural hegemony," as many terms that she commonly uses are considered "dialectic," and therefore, unacceptable.[234]

Unlike the imperial examinations and university entrance tests, the PSC is designed to encompass a far wider spectrum of people in the population. In January 2001, the state enacted a law on the standard spoken and written Chinese language (*Guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi fa* 国家通用语言文字法). It requires practitioners of education, broadcasting, entertainment, and other related industries (Table 4.2) to attend the PSC. Since then, it is reported that many other public sectors, especially governmental organisations, join the state's initiative and requires their employees to take the PSC.

Table 4.2 People who are required to attend PSC

Education	Secondary and primary schools teachers Graduates of teachers' colleges (normal schools) Teachers working in teachers' colleges Teachers teaching arts and humanities in tertiary institutions
Broadcasting	Broadcasters, presenters and hosts of TV and radio stations at all levels Voice Talents for movies, soap opera, drama, etc.
Other industries	Teachers and graduates of foreign language or tourist colleges, or vocational training centers Civil servants

Note:
The above requirement only applies to people who were born after 1946 and are above 18 years old.

Candidates who take the PSC receive one of six grades in a ranked scale based upon their performance. Different jobs and provinces have different requirements on the grade that a candidate needs to attain. By assigning test takers to various categories in which they are treated, act, and come to think of themselves according to the expectations associated with the categories, the PSC is designed to transform people in terms of their behaviour, attitude

[233] Interview WH02, a graduate of Yunan Normal University, conducted on 16 May 2012 in Wuhan.
[234] Interview SH01, a graduate student, conducted on 16 January 2012 in Shanghai.

towards putonghua, and ideally, loyalty toward the central state. This is evident in a speech given by Han Qizhou (韩其洲), Associate Director of the National Putonghua Training and Testing Centre (*Guojia putonghua peixun ceshi zhongxin* 国家普通话培训测试中心), as he reviews the development of the PSC in Hong Kong and Macau:

> Candidates who perform well in the PSC can be employed more quickly or receive a higher salary…We are happy to see that more people in Hong Kong and Macau can now communicate in putonghua. This strengthens their affection toward Chinese culture, deepens their sense of belonging toward their home country, and therefore has important and far-reaching political implications.[235]

Actual Implementation

Constructing a lingua franca is not easy. It involves considerable and sustained investment of human resources and financial resources. In places such as Guangzhou, language standardisation programmes may even produce conflicts between different ethnic groups. Therefore, although the regulations regarding the PSC are set by the central state, they are not unitarily implemented. Flexibility is given to governments at lower levels to tailor the test to balance the need of putonghua promotion and local concerns. The Language Commision of provincial governments plays an important role in this process. They are responsible for setting actual targets (regarding the extent of implementation, mainly expressed in terms of the number of test takers), allocating resources, recruiting and training examiners, establishing local test centers, and conducting research and evaluations for the PSC.[236]

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[235] Han Qizhou, "Guojia putonghua shuiping ceshi huigu yu zhanwang —jinian kaizhan putonghua shuiping ceshi 15 zhounian" ("Retrospect and prospect of PSC: celebrating the 15th anniversary of PSC"), in the State Putonghua Training and Testing Centre (ed.), *Di si jie quanguo putonghua peixun ceshi xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* (*Proceedings of the 4th National Conference on Putonghua Training and Testing*) (Beijing: Yuwen chu banshee, 2010), p. 18.

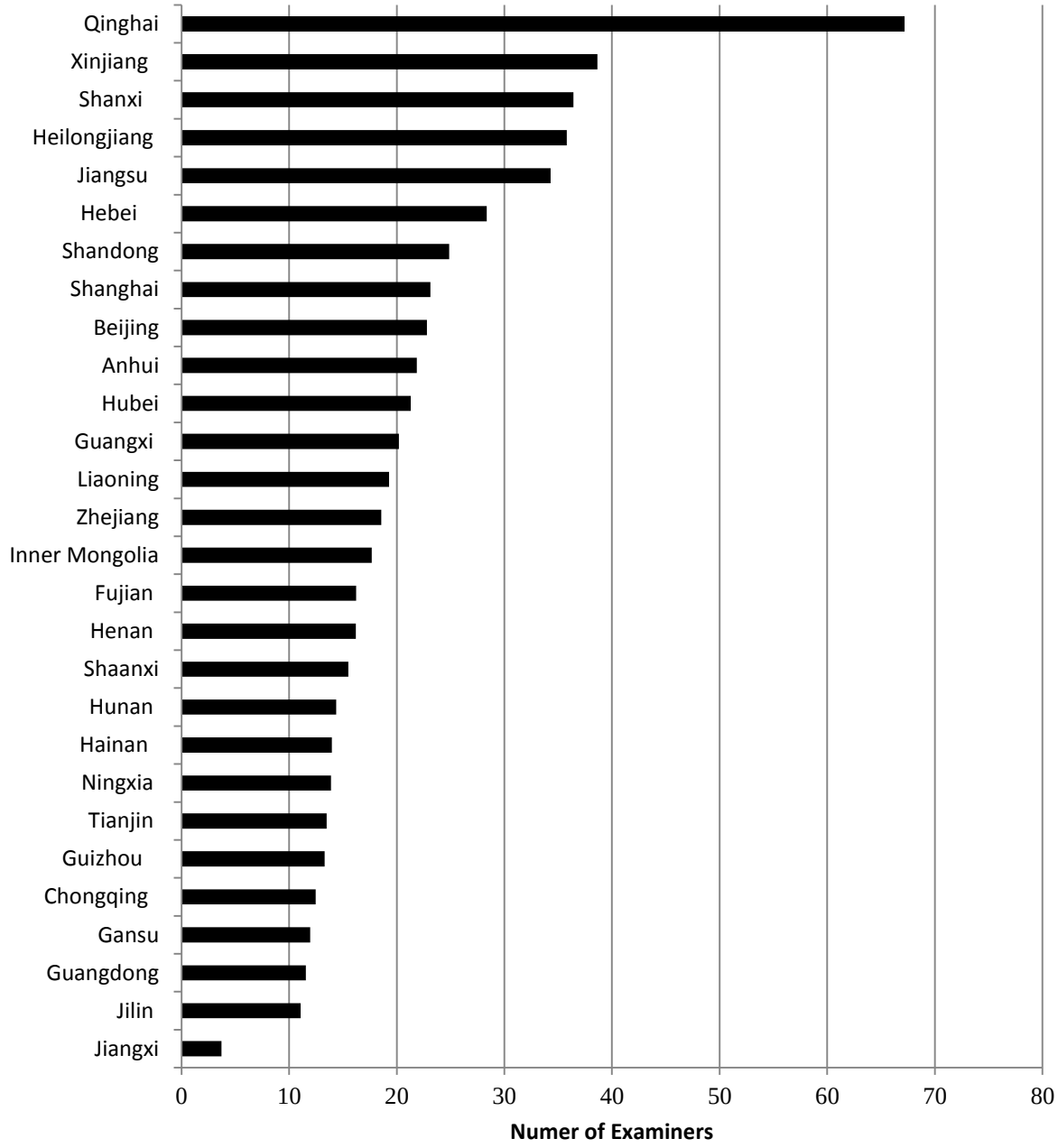
[236] Ministry of Education, "Putonghua shuiping ceshi guanli guiding" ("Regulations regarding the administration of PSC") (21 May 2003), *Official website of the Ministry of Education*, http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_621/200409/3172.html (accessed 13 August 2012).

To estimate and compare the intensity of implementation of different provinces systematically, I measure the number of the PSC examiners in every one million population ($\frac{the\ number\ of\ PSC\ examiners}{population} * 1000000$). The amount of resources required to maintain a team of the PSC examiners implies that, controlling for the size of population, provinces that hire more the PSC examiners are expecting more test takers and are therefore likely to be more determined in promoting the test.[237]

Figure 4.2 lists and compares the average number of the PSC examiners per every one million in each region in 2001. With the exception of Qinghai, the population of which is quite small, the figure does not suggest a huge gap between regions. Nevertheless, explaining their variations is thorny as there doesn't show a clear pattern at the first glance. In terms of geographical location, regions in different parts of the country spread across the spectrum. Although northern regions generally implement the test more intensely, many middle or southern regions like Guangxi, Jiangsu and Shanghai also achieve a high level of implementation. Similarly, the east-west distinction does not seem to be apparent. In terms of economic performance, although poorer regions like Jiangxi and Henan do have a lower level of implementation, economically advanced regions like Guangdong also appear at the lower end of the spectrum. Finally, although autonomous regions seem to be slightly more concentrated at the middle-higher end (e.g. Xinjiang, Guangxi), missing data from Tibet and Yunan render any analyses on those regions infeasible. Moreover, ethnic composition in those regions is significantly different from the rest of China (except Qinghai). Since PRC has different language policies for Han Chinese and the minorities, the latter are less relevant to my examination.

[237]Each local test centre is responsible to set a precise target of test takers in accordance with the general direction of the province. See, Xiong Ying, "Cong putonghua peixun ceshizhan jianshe tan putonghua tuiguang gongzuo" (Discussing the promotion of Putonghua with reference to the building of test and training centres), *Xiandai Yuwen* (*Modern Chinese*) No. 7 (2007), pp. 32-33.

Figure 4.2 Number of PSC examiners per one million people in different regions



Notes:

People enrolled in the Chinese People's Liberation Army are not included in the calculation of regional population. Data on Sichuan, Tibet and Yunan are not available.

Sources:

National Bureau of Statistics, *China Population Statistical Yearbook 2001* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2001); Ministry of Education, "2001 nian quanguo ceshiyuan, shidaoyuan duiwu qingkuang tongji"(Number of examiners and supervisors of China in 2001), http://202.205.177.9/edoas/website18/58/info6158.htm, accessed 12 September 2012.

A more in-depth comparison is needed. To this end, Guangdong, Shanghai, Hubei and Chongqing are selected, for a number of reasons: First, the foregoing cases, which include both centrally administered municipalities and provinces, allow me to examine and control for the potential impacts of different administrative structures. Some scholars argue that provinces are substantially different from centrally administered municipalities because the latter are smaller in size and are usually more economically developed.[238] Therefore, to ensure that cases are similar enough for comparison,[239] it is necessary to include more than one sample from both provinces and centrally administered municipalities.

Second, this selection of cases provides me with sufficient variation in the dependent variable (intensity of implementation) to examine, with Shanghai and Hubei serving as positive cases (because the PSC was implemented intensively) and Guangdong and Chongqing serving as negative cases. Further to the number of the PSC examiners to population ratio, I check the variation observed among the selected regions with their language requirements for civil servants from 1999 to 2003. The result suggests a similar pattern. Although it is a national requirement that all civil servants should use putonghua in their work and thus participate in the PSC, among the four regions I examined, only Shanghai and Hubei have seriously followed this instruction. Officials in these two regions who fail to meet this requirement were threatened to be retrained or fired.[240] On the contrary, in Guangdong and Chongqing, dialects were tolerated, encouraged, or even required in public

[238] Yanrui Wu, "Income disparity and convergence in China's regional economies," in P. J. Lloyd and Xiao-guang Zhang (eds.), *China in the Global Economy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2006), pp. 261–281. Figure 2, however, suggests that institutional setting alone is not a sufficient factor to account for regional disparities in PSC promotion. While municipalities such as Shanghai appeared at the top end of the spectrum, Chongqing and Tianjin ended up at the lower end.

[239] Theda Skocpol, "Emerging agendas and recurrent strategies in historical sociology," in Theda Skocpol (ed.) *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 378.

[240] Hubei Department of Education, "Shanghai 10 wan gongwuyuan: bu hui jiang Putonghua jiu xiagang" ("For Shanghai's 100 thousand civil servants the options are either to speak putonghua or to leave their post"), 16 April 2004, http://jwc.hubu.edu.cn/yw/ywdt2.htm, accessed 19 April 2012; "Wuhan gongwuyuan jinnian qi yaojiang putonghua" ("Wuhan's civil servants need to speak putonghua from this year on"), *Yuyan Wenzi Zhoubao* (*Language and Words Post*), 12 February 2003.

services. This was particularly common in lower-level bureaucracy. The Panyu (番禺) District Government in Guangzhou, for example, listed the ability to speak Cantonese as a requirement for many of their jobs in 2002.[241]

Finally, the four selected cases all feature some forms of economic reform and thus have the *potential* to implement the test intensively. As Mahoney and Goertz suggest, in choosing negative cases for case studies, those where the outcome of interest is possible should be selected.[242] The outcome of interest is possible in a case if it is positively related to at least one independent variable. The earlier sections of this chapter suggest that the PSC is introduced mainly to support China's economic development in the reform era. Therefore, it is intriguing that Guangdong and Chongqing did not implement the PSC intensively in 2001.

Table 4.3. Typology of selected cases

	Municipality	**Province**
High level of implementation	Shanghai *No. of examiners / 1M people:23.12* *% of native putonghua speaker: 6.82* *GDP growth rate: 10.2%* *Major dialects: Shanghaiese*	Hubei *No. of examiners / 1M people:21.3* *% of native putonghua speaker: 5.02* *GDP growth rate: 9.1%* *Major dialects: Huguang, Xiangfan*
Low level of implementation	Chongqing *No. of examiners / 1M people:12.45* *% of native putonghua speaker: 3.93* *GDP growth rate: 9%* *Major dialects: Sichuan*	Guangdong *No. of examiners / 1M people:11.56* *% of native putonghua speaker: 7.32* *GDP growth rate: 9.6%* *Major dialects: Cantonese, Fujianese, Hakka*

Note:
All data are in 2001.
Sources:
National Bureau of Statistics, *China Population Statistical Yearbook 2001& 2002* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2001, 2002); Zhongguo Yuyan Wenzi Shiyong Qingkuang Diaocha Lingdao Xiaozu Bangongshi (Office of Chinese Language and Words Survey) ed., *Zhongguo Yuyan Wenzi Shiyong Qingkuang Diaocha Ziliao* (*Survey on the Use of Chinese Language and Words*), (Beijing: Yuwen chubanshe, 2006); Ministry of Education, '2001 nian quanguo ceshiyuan, shidaoyuan duiwu qingkuang tongji'(Number of examiners and supervisors of China in 2001), available at: http://202.205.177.9/edoas/website18/58/info6158.htm (accessed 11 October 2013).

[241] "Guangzhou zhaokao gongwuyuan yaoqiu hui jiang Guangzhouhua yinfa jilie jiaofeng" ("Recruitment practice of Guangzhou government sparks controversies"), *Xinxi shibao* (*Information Times*), 24 October 2002, http://www.china.com.cn/chinese/difang/222217.htm, accessed 19 April 2012; Yang Yuerong and Ren Chongfen, "Chongqingshi chuangkou hangye putonghua shiyong qingkuang diaocha baogao" (Report on the use of Putonghau in Chongqing's service industry), *Chongqing Shizhuan Xuebao* (*Journal of Chongqing Teachers College) Vol. 18, No.1 (1999), pp. 46-51.*
[242] James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, "The possibility principle: choosing negative cases in qualitative research," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 98, No.4 (2004), p. 657.

A closer examination reveals that determination to achieve economic growth and the source of capital are important factors in determining the intensity of the PSC implementation. Regions with an effective development plan and relying on capital from other language communities are more likely to implement the PSC aggressively. This is particularly evident in Hubei, where central policies have not been favorable to its development until 2004 when the target to achieve a "Rise of Central China" (*zhongbu jueqi* 中部崛起) was officially proposed by Wen Jiabao. Facing with a slow growing economy, there was a widespread worry among the leaders of the province that the province would be "marginalised" (*bianyuanhua* 边缘化).[243] The "fear of marginalisation" prompted them to adopt a 'catching up model' to surpass their competing regional competitors, in particular through "internationalisation, commercialisation, and urbanisation." All these targets, according to Guo Shenglian (郭生练), Director of Hubei Language Commission, require the province to promote putonghua and create an environment that is favorable for effective communication.[244] The test became a means for the province to demonstrate their competiveness and thus expanded quickly in the 2000s. As of 2007, 1.3 million people have taken the test.

A similar mentality is observed in Shanghai as well. Following sporadic and sustained political unrest in 1960-70s, which largely split Shanghai off from the global financial system, the city was designated by Deng Xiaoping to be China's financial centre again in 1991. This prompted Shanghai to embrace internationalisation swiftly. Among a series of development plans, the decision in 1999 to host the World Expo was probably the most significant one. It

[243] Yu Zhijun, "Dazao wuhan pinpai shixian zhongbu jueqi," pp. 191-192. Also see, Fa Wu and Lu Jie, "Baituo bianyuanhua ganga; Jiusheng tongqu bai longyao" ("The thoroughfare to nine provinces is about to get over the embarrassment of being marginalized"), *Zhongguo Jingji Zhoukan* (*China Economic Weekly*) (4 April 2005), available at: http://finance.sina.com.cn/review/observe/20050404/16121485949.shtml (accessed 12 April 2012).
[244] "Hubeisheng jinian tuiguang putonghua xuanchuanzhou shi zhounian ji yuyan wenzi gongzuo biaozhang dahui zai wuchang longzhong zhaokai" (Grand opening of a ceremony in Wuchang celebrating the 10th anniversary of putonghua promotion week in Hubei Province) (14 September 2007), available at: http://hbyw.e21.edu.cn/content.php?id=535 (accessed 15 September 2012).

impelled the municipal government to undertake aggressive steps to reshape the city. The PSC promotion was also intensified as a result. The government obliged all civil servants to take the PSC, and launched a website to provide test preparation materials to the public.[245] In an interview, one Shanghai Language Commission official observed that the city needed to promote putonghua because its popularity reflects the city's "level of civilisation."[246] As of 2002, over 200 thousand citizens were reported to have taken the test. [247]

In contrast, Guangdong and Chongqing represent two extremes in terms of developmental strategies. Although it is the largest city in the western region and was upgraded to the status of a provincial-level municipality under direct central control in 1997, Chongqing's growth did not take place until 2002. Poor or unstable leadership was the core reason. From 1997 to 2001, the city experienced three leadership changes. In 1997, Zhang Delin (张德邻) was appointed as Chongqing's founding Party secretary and Pu Haiqing (蒲海清) its founding mayor. The pairing did not work for long, and was soon replaced by He Guoqiang (贺国强) and Bao Xuding (包叙定) respectively in 1999. He and Bao left the city in 2002 and their offices were taken up by Huang Zhendong (黄镇东) and Wang Hongju (王鸿举).[248] These political shifts prevented Chongqing from implementing effective and coherent economic development plan.

While Chongqing experienced serious delays in its development because of recurrent leadership crises, Guangdong maintained a steady and rapid growth, but for a reason that was quite different from other Chinese provinces. In the late 1970s, Guangdong, which adjoins

[245] "Shanghairen wangshang xue putonghua canjia ceshi renshu yi da 20 wan renci" ("Two hundred thousand Shanghaiese have learned putonghua online and participated in PSC") (22 September 2002), http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2002-09/22/content_570240.htm (accessed 19 April 2012).
[246] "10 wan Shanghai gongwuyuan: buhui jiang putonghua jiu yao xiagang"(Hundred thousand of civil servants will be fired if they do not speak putonghua) (18 June 2002), http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2002-06/18/content_446373.htm (accessed 15 September 2012).
[247] "Shanghairen wangshang xue putonghua canjia ceshi renshu yi da 20 wan renci."
[248] Bo Zhiyue and Chen Gang, "Bo Xilai and the Chongqing model," *East Asian Policy*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (2009), pp. 42-49.

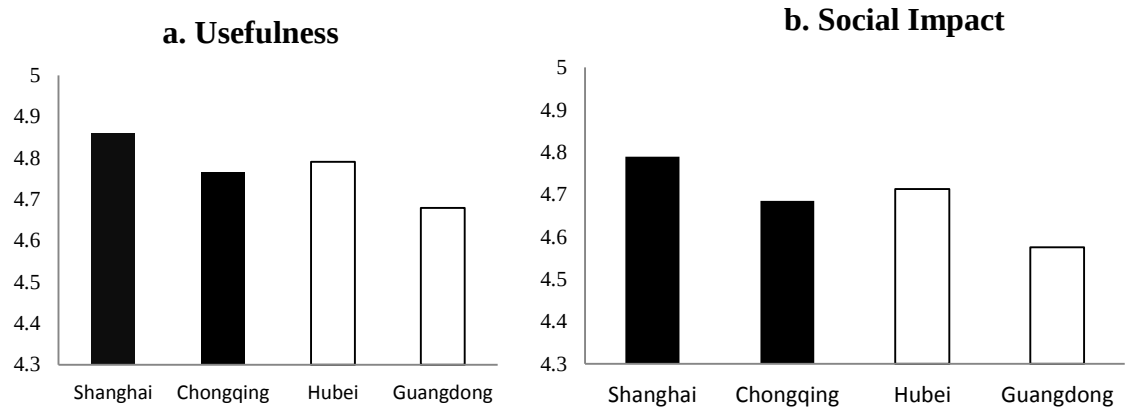
Hong Kong, was designated by the state as the vanguard of the new "Opening and Reform" policies. These policies were implemented first in Guangdong (and neighboring Fujian) because of its spatial proximity, convenient transport links, and close ethnic connection with British colonial Hong Kong. By the end of 1995, there were 15,615 foreign-invested manufacturing enterprises in Guangdong, of which 83 per cent originated from or have foreign capital from Hong Kong.[249] The economic dependence of Guangdong upon the Cantonese speaking Hong Kong implies that putonghua promotion was less urgent among both government officials and ordinary citizens.[250] This is further confirmed by a telephone survey conducted by Xu Guanglie in 2002 which involved calling ten government departments in Guangzhou, the capital city of Guangdong. Among the ten departments called, only one of them used putonghua at the beginning of the conversation.[251] By 2003, only 70 thousand people in Guangzhou had taken the PSC.[252]

As mentioned in the previous section, the PSC aims at incentivising citizens to learn and use putonghua. Hence, a good way to examine the connection between economic development, reliance on other language communities, and implementation of the PSC is through observing popular perceptions toward the "utility" of putonghua. The particular economic conditions of a region shape its people's view on putonghua and hence incentive to participate in the PSC. Assuming that local governments are more likely to implement the test intensively if grassroots demand is higher, we should be able to observe a high degree of correlation between the perceived "utility" of putonghua and the intensity of the PSC implementation. I obtained data regarding people's perceptions toward putonghua from the

[249] Victor F. S. Sit, "China's WTO accession and its impact on Hong Kong-Guangdong cooperation," *Asian Survey*, Vol.44, No.6 (2004), pp. 815-835.
[250] Interview GD01, a Guangzhou citizen, conducted on 5 August 2011 in Guangzhou; Office of Education of Guangzhou Development and Reform Commission, "Guanyu zhongguo wenzi gaige weiyuanhui zai wo shi jiancha tuiguang putonghua qingkuang baogao" (Report on the putonghua promotion inspection carried out by the National Committee for Language Reform), 31 October 1975, GPA, No. 314-A1.4-40~10.
[251] Xu Guanglie, "Guangzhoushi putonghua xianzhuang sikao" ("A reflection on the status quo of putonghua in Guongzhou"), *Xueshu Yanjiu* (*Academic Research*), No. 7 (2003), p.139.
[252] Ibid.

Survey on the Use of Chinese Language and Words (*Zhongguo Yuyan Wenzi Shiyong Qingkuang Diaocha Ziliao*中国语言文字使用情况调查资料), a nationwide survey programme conducted by China's Ministry of Education and Language Commission during 1998 and 2004. The survey sampled 475,000 Chinese and thus provides valuable data on people's linguistic behaviour and their attitude toward putonghua and dialects.[253] From this survey I selected two relevant questions to measure the perceived utility of putonghua among citizens of the four regions. The first question asks the respondents directly to evaluate the utility of putonghua (1 lowest and 5 highest); whereas the second serves as a diagnostic check and asks them to assess the social impact of putonghua. The results are presented in Figure 4.3. Both questions generate similar results, suggesting that respondents' evaluation on putonghua is consistent.

Figure 4.3 Perceived Usefulness of Putonghua in Four Regions



Notes:

Black bars denote centrally administered municipalities; white bars denote provinces. The mean value is calculated by quantifying all individual responses into 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 marks according to their degree of endorsement, where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest, and then calculating the sample mean.

Sources:

Office of Chinese Language and Words Survey (ed.), *Zhongguo Yuyan Wenzi Shiyong Qingkuang Diaocha Ziliao* (*Survey on the Use of Chinese Language and Words*), (Beijing: Yuwen chubanshe (Language Press)), 2006, pp. 115-116.

[253] Office of Chinese Language and Words Survey (ed.), *Zhongguo yuyan wenzi shiyong qingkuang diaocha ziliao*, p. 327.

Figure 4.3 reports that people in Shanghai and Hubei, where aggressive economic development plans focused on attracting resources from other language communities, on average, saw putonghua more useful than those in Guangdong and Chongqing, where economic development was either restrained or driven by investment from other sources. This difference becomes even more apparent when we take into consideration the distinction between provinces and centrally administered municipalities. Since Guangdong and Chongqing also rank lower than Shanghai and Hebei in terms of their intensity in implementing the PSC, we can assume that the PSC is more successfully implemented if the perceived importance of putonghua is higher. I will discuss this again in the next section.

Conclusion

This chapter reveals how market reform spurned the state to revise its language promotion strategy. The decision to embrace marketisation and modernisation to boost national economic growth in the early 1980s demanded a population that is more self-reliance and productive. These requirements intersect with the design of the second wave of language reform, which is exemplified by the PSC. One essential feature of the PSC lies in its attempt to connect economic benefits with candidates' achievement in the test. A good grade on the PSC not merely demonstrates a high level of putonghua proficiency, but also more opportunities to attain a higher social status. Consequently, the PSC provides, at least partially, a source of incentive for the population to comply with the state's language rules. Moreover, the test also serves as an explanation for personal well-being in reform era China, when the state has largely retreated in the arena of resource redistribution. This strategy echoes with what Murphy observed in rural China (classifying peasants in relation to their "quality") since the 1980s but also extends it to a more urban setting.[254]

[254] Rachel Murphy, "Turning peasants into modern Chinese citizens: 'population quality' discourse, demographic transition and primary education," *The China Quarterly*, No. 177 (2004), pp.1-20.

The PSC is also connected to the market reform in that the latter has rendered the top-down language management scheme in the 1960s and the 1970s less effective. As market reform continued in the 1990s, maintaining an effective top-down control over the society as well as the local governments has become increasingly infeasible. This holds true in the linguistic realm as well. As this chapter suggests, the introduction of the PSC in the 1980s was not a contingent decision made by the party leaders, but a rational response to the socioeconomic pressures and needs of the time. Instead of coercing its subjects to use "correct language," the state made putonghua a prerequisite for some desirable social positions. Incentive to learn and use "proper putonghua" is thus institutionalised through the PSC. This governing technique matches closely with what Rose refers to as "governing from a distance," in which modern governing agents attempt to govern their subjects by means other than direct intervention by an agent identified with the state.[255]

The introduction of the PSC was a watershed event in the history of language management in contemporary China. Since the May-Forth Movement, plans to reshape language in China, either through simplifying Chinese characters, or romanising them have appeared sporadically in Chinese history. The PRC followed this trend and deepened it through defining correct meanings for words, making language a tool for spreading revolutionary ideologies. Decisions regarding the "correctness" of language were exclusively made by official and intellectual elites at the top and imposed on those below. The use of test to incentivise citizens outside the regular education system, in contrast, is a comparatively bottom-up strategy to mobilising people. Although tests are designed by the state to shape their takers' behaviour, their success hinges on its relevance to other goods (such as jobs and social status) that are desirable to the population. Participation in the PSC is relatively

[255] Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 49-50.

voluntary in that citizens have the freedom to decide their occupations. It marks the beginning of a more bottom-up style of language management in China.

Indeed, the widespread use of examinations to discipline populations appears as an increasingly normal and normalising feature of modernity. It allows the state to collect information of its subjects and to direct their behaviour and attitude to such a way that is beneficial to its political agenda. These are important to a modern state because people and resources are highly mobile in modern era. A quick survey of other countries' experience shall further confirm this point. In Europe, the face of migration changed dramatically after the end of the Cold War, before which migrant groups were easily identifiable as they often became sedentary in their host country.[256] Ethnic communities like "Chinatowns" and "Japantowns" can easily be observed. Since the 1990s, however, a new pattern of migration emerged during the course of European integration. People who speak in different languages arrived not only as traditional labour migrants but also as short-time migrants, transitory migrants, highly educated work forces and so forth. This topping up of the original diversity brought about by the migratory flux before 1991 caused difficulties for states to manage their population.[257] Consequently, in 1991 the Swiss Federal Authorities held an intergovernmental symposium in Rüschlikon on the evaluation and certification of language proficiency in Europe. The symposium found that a common European framework for languages was needed to improve the recognition of language qualifications.[258] As a result of the symposium, the Swiss National Science Foundation set up a project to develop levels of proficiency, to lead on to the creation of a "European Language Portfolio"—certification in language proficiency which can be used across Europe. Similar to the PSC, the framework

[256] Guus Extra, Massimiliano Spotti and Piet Van Avermaet, "Testing regimes for newcomers," in Extra, Spotti and Avermaet (eds.), *Language Testing, Migration, and Citizenship*, p. 3.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Council for Cultural Cooperation, *Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning in Europe: Objectives, Assessment and Certification* (1992), available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Ruschlikon1991_en.pdf (accessed 10 July 2013).

divided learners into six levels according to their competency in a language. The actual measurement or evaluation was done through a range of language tests, including Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera (for Spanish) and IELTS.[259] Many countries like Britain and Netherland use this as a reference and require immigrants to attain certain level of language proficiency.

My investigation into the composition and use of the PSC also suggests how language reform can be driven by changes in domestic factors. To date, many students of language politics have focused either on the international environment or static institutional arrangements as the principal sources of power that prompt states to engage in language reform. For instances, Avdan and Díaz suggest that states facing territorial claims from other states are expected to legislate language homogeneity, and states that have been consolidated for longer periods of time face fewer incentives to enforce linguistic uniformity.[260] Liu's article explains language policies in terms of institutional arrangement such that "power-sharing institutions" such as parliamentary systems and federalism are less likely to recognize minority languages than their "power-concentrating" counterparts (e.g. presidential systems).[261] What most of them have neglected is that language policies are often driven by domestic needs and *changes*; the importance of the domestic threat posed by internal economic development has been largely overlooked. However, at least in the case of the PSC, domestic factors are a more important stimulus for the deployment of a new language management system/ nation building scheme. The case of the PSC provides strong evidence

[259] Ibid.
[260] Although they also recognise the role of internal factors, they argue that when these two set of factors interact, international factors are still more important. See Nazlı Avdan and Amber A. Díaz, "Words, Words, Words: A Two-Level Analysis of Language Reform as a State-Building Strategy," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 49th Annual Convention, San Francisco, CA, USA, 26 March 2008.
[261] Liu, "Linguistic effects of political institutions," pp 125-139.

against some scholars' convictions that language management is ultimately determined by external factors or static institutional arrangement.[262]

If internal economic needs and development plans are crucial in explaining the introduction of the PSC, it should not be surprising to observe regional variations when the test is implemented. Given the power of the test in collecting citizens' information and promoting putonghua, regions with a higher need to attract people and capital to develop its economy are more likely to implement the test intensively. In this sense, my examination of Hubei, Shanghai, Chongqing, and Guangdong not only confirms the relationship between economic changes and the use of examination in language standardisation, it also provides more robust information to support the causal mechanism in between. As the experience of Shanghai and Hubei suggests, an aggressive economic development plan is associated with the implementation of PSC because it often requires the removal of communication barriers so that the region is more "legible" in the view of foreign investors and labor. Moreover, the test, which is implemented nationwide, measures not only the "level of civilisation" of individuals, but also regions. As a result, regions with a coherent developmental strategy are likely to use the test as a ladder to demonstrate their value/ competiveness.

Of course, a discussion of external factors is still relevant in understanding the introduction of the PSC. Developmental plans that involve internationalisation or hosting mega international events like the World Expo can foster the development of the PSC. In fact, the test not only makes the population more unified and legible in the view of the state, but also in the view of foreigners.[263] While maintaining a national language is still widely

[262] I will come back to this issue again in the final chapter.
[263] This kind of reasoning can be found in many essays used to promote putonghua. See, for example, He Chuanjia, "Jianghao putonghua xiaosa zou tianxia" (Master putonghua and take the world), in Zheng Liqun, Huang Li, and Liao Wen (eds.), *Daxuesheng putonghua xuexi shouce* (*College Students Handbook for Putonghua Learning*) (Wuhan: Wuhan University Press, 2002), pp.1-3.

considered necessary for the legitimisation of a modern nation state,[264] variations of that language (local vernaculars) make the state complicated in the international realm. And it is therefore not uncommon for those local vernaculars to be eliminated when internationalisation takes place. The Francophone community in Canada serves as a good example. As Heller's ethnographic study of a French-language minority school reveals, because of an influx of foreign students, school officials began to emphasize the legibility of language, and promoted a standardised communication which devalued the French varieties of the Francophone community. "Standardised" French was used on campus and local vernaculars are mocked by some as "bad" French, or "not real" French.[265] Back in China, in addition to Shanghai and Hubei, similar attempts to simplify the linguistic landscape because of internationalisation have later been observed in Guangzhou, when it hosted the Asian Games in 2010. The proposal to switch television broadcasts from Cantonese to putonghua ahead of the event in particular sparked a series of protests in the city (discussed in Chapter 1).[266]

The 2010 protest in Guangzhou is neither the first nor the last popular resistance against putonghua.[267] The recurrent confrontations in Tibet, Guangzhou, and later Shanghai, suggest that there are political costs to the state in pursuing language conformity. Traditionally, tests are perceived as a means used by the powerful to remain in power and decide what knowledge is to be valued; and test takers are mere objects that have no choice but to comply with the demands of the powerful. This chapter traces the origin of the PSC and argues that it was introduced by the state to support its market reform and maintain its dominance in the linguistic and cultural realm. I tried to articulate the causal mechanism

[264] Monica Heller, "Alternative ideologies of la francophonie," *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, Vol.3, No.3 (1999), p. 338.
[265] Ibid., p. 354.
[266] "In China, protests underscore a rift over dialects," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 August 2010.
[267] "Chinese regions fight back against surge of Mandarin," *Reuters.com* (22 November 2010), available at: http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/22/us-china-language-idUSTRE6AL16K20101122 (accessed 20 April 2012).

through which economic concerns are transformed into testing policies. But as I will argue in next chapter, the design of PSC, like many other schemes in authoritarian regimes, is not without loopholes. As globalisation and communication technology continue to advance, people find ways to get around the requirements set forth by the state and thus weaken the power of the test.

5

Resistance to the PSC

It is not uncommon to hear how people trying to find loopholes to escape or profit from examinations. Indeed, the history of people resisting examinations is as long as examination itself. And grievances toward the examination process can be very violent at times. The Taiping Rebellion from 1850 to 1864, which claimed some 20 million lives, had its roots in the frustration of the Qing's imperial examination system. Hong Xiuquan (洪秀全), the leader of the rebels, failed the examination four times and in the process accumulated grievances against the state system, which eventually prompted him to curse the examiners, denounce the Qing Dynasty, and mount a rebellion so that he could give his "own examinations to select the literati of the empire" (*deng wo ziji lai kaike qu tianxia shi ba* 等我自己来开科取天下士罢).[268]

To be sure, most resistance to examinations tends to be routine and secretive. In a survey conducted by Smith, Ryan, and Diggins in two American universities, 91 to 97 per cent of respondents reported that they have cheated in examinations.[269] While such "silent resistance" is not as detrimental to the testing system as the Taiping Rebellion, it can nevertheless attenuate the system's validity, and impose a higher administrative cost to the test provider to maintain the system. The PSC is not an exception. While the test has remained fairly popular in the 21st century, the actual demand for the test has been falling in

[268] Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 369-370.
[269] Charles P. Smith, Edward R. Ryan and Dean R. Diggins, "Moral decision making: cheating on examinations," *Journal of Personality*, Vol. 40, no.4 (1972), p.646.

big cities such as Shanghai and Beijing. In order to maintain the number of test takers, universities in some of these cities have made the test compulsory for their students, triggering a range of non-cooperative behaviours among them. As this chapter will argue, the causes for the resistance against the PSC were rooted in its own institutional logic and the changes brought about by globalisation. The former rendered the fall in utility of the PSC a legitimate reason for prospective test takers to resist the test; and the latter weakened the state's control over economic resources, making it less capable of providing incentives sufficient to encourage people to take part in the PSC.

Motivations for Test Takers to Resist the PSC

To understand the motivations behind the resistance against the PSC, we have to first analyse the costs associated with test participation.[270] For the PSC, which is usually financially subsidised by the local state, time for test preparation is the most significant cost to test takers. Test preparation can be time-consuming if the tasks of the test concerned are neither simple (so that preparation is easy) nor unpredictable (so that preparation is meaningless). The PSC is a case in point. Contrary to the common perception that questions in speaking tests are unpredictable, most tasks in the PSC can be prepared well beforehand, because the test was designed precisely to "promote putonghua training through test preparation" (*yice cuxun* 以测促训).[271] As mentioned in the last chapter, there are five sections in the PSC, namely: pronunciation (two sections), judgement, reading, and conversation. The first three sections encompass a wide range of words and are thus indeed

[270] Surprisingly, this aspect of examination has largely been ignored in the existing literature, which mostly focuses on the costs of implementation instead. For example, see Daniel A. Wagner, Andrew Babson, and Katie M. Murphy, "How much is learning measurement worth? Assessment costs in low-income countries," *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (2011), pp. 3-23; Barry Topol, John Olson, and Ed Roeber, *The Cost of New Higher Quality Assessments: A Comprehensive Analysis of the Potential Costs for Future State Assessments* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, 2010).

[271] Hunan Provincial Language and Work Committee, "Putonghua shuiping ceshi xuzhi" ("Examination rules") (May 2005), *Website of the Hunan Provincial Language and Word Committee* (*Hunansheng yuyan wenzi wan*), available at: http://yywz.hnedu.cn/web/4160/200505/11174431265.html (accessed 21 September 2011).

very difficult for prospective test takers to prepare effectively, but collectively they only account for 40 per cent of the total marks of the test. The remaining 60 per cent of the marks go to the reading and conversation sections. Unlike other speaking tests, the range of topics for reading and conversation in the PSC—about 90 altogether (60 and 30 for the reading and conversation sections respectively)—are available to the public through two test preparation books published by the Language Commission—*Passages for the PSC* (*Putonghua shuiping ceshi yong langdu zuopin* 普通话水平测试用朗读作品) and *Conversation topics for the PSC* (*Putonghua shuiping ceshi yong huati* 普通话水平测试用话题). So it is possible for prospective test takers to practise the essays (for the reading section) or to draft and recite model answers (for the conversation section) beforehand. Zhao Jing, a Chinese expert in the PSC, suggests that these preparations usually take a year.[272] The possibility to achieve good results has motivated many potential candidates to prepare for the test seriously.[273] According to Zhao, around 90 per cent of students who took the PSC recited sample scripts for the "conversation" section.[274] In addition, many students attended pre-test training course and studied the sample test questions to prepare for the PSC.[275] To obtain a satisfactory result, some even needed to take the test several times.[276]

The costs associated with test taking have to be considered against the utility of the test. As an incentivising institution, the test has long been promoted by the Language Commission as a career booster, especially in state organisations, the media, and schools. The impact of this promotion strategy was obvious: In a survey conducted by researchers at the Shanghai Putonghua Proficiency Test Centre (*Shanghai putonghua ceshi zhongxin*上海普通

[272] Zhao Jing, "Cong 'yingshi' kan putonghua shuiping ceshi" ("An examination of PSC from a test taker perspective"), *Du yu xie zazhi* (*Periodical of Reading and Writing*), Vol.8, No.9 (2011), p. 85.
[273] Common words are often prohibited in the test.
[274] Zhao, "Cong 'yingshi' kan putonghua shuiping ceshi," p. 85.
[275] Interview WH02, a graduate of Yunan Normal University, interview conducted on 16 May 2012 in Wuhan.
[276] Interview SH01, a graduate student, interview conducted on 16 January 2012 in Shanghai.

话测试中心) in 2003 and 2004, 67.8 per cent of the 2,098 respondents reported that they took the PSC because of job-related reasons. In contrast, only 26.9 per cent of them took the test just to learn about their own level of language proficiency (Table 5.1).[277] Clearly, the tie between the PSC and career has fuelled the popularisation of the test. This was particularly true when we consider the fact that the PSC is a prerequisite for most jobs in the Chinese government, which has remained the largest employer in China. Indeed, contrary to the general perception that the size of the Chinese bureaucracy is shrinking, according to Ang, the absolute and relative size of public employment has actually grown at a steeper rate in the reform era than in the revolutionary era.[278] In 1960, there were 11 million public employees, accounting for 1.7 per cent of the population. Thirty years later, in 1990, the number of personnel had jumped to 33 million, or 2.9 per cent of population. [279] By 2005, there were 47 million functionaries staffing the entire party-state apparatus. Even if population growth is taken into account, the per capita size of public employment still increased from 1.5 per cent in 1972 to 3.7 per cent in 2005.[280] Since putonghua is the working language of the Chinese government, the state has been able to incentivise a significant proportion of its labour force to participate in the PSC.[281]

[277] Qiao Lihua and Zhu Qingchun, "Putonghua shuiping ceshi gongzuo de shehui pingjia diaocha yu fenxi" ("Investigation and analysis regarding the social perception toward the PSC"), in the State Putonghua Proficiency Testing and Training Centre (ed.), *Di er jie quanguo putonghua shuiping ceshi xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* (*Proceedings of the 2nd National Conference on the PSC*) (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2006), pp.20-22.
[278] Yuen Yuen Ang, "Counting Cadres: A Comparative View of the Size of China's Public Employment," *The China Quarterly*, No. 211 (2012), p. 691.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid.
[281] For a more detailed discussion on the strategies used to promote putonghua within state organisation, please refer to Chapter 5.

Table 5.1 Reasons to attend the PSC

	Percentage
To test/ demonstrate one's abilities	26.9
Career-related reasons[1]	67.8
Requests of *lingdao*	2.4
Unclear	2.9

Notes : [1] Career related reasons include boosting one's career prospect and meeting job requirements (for those)
Source: Survey conducted by officials at the Shanghai PSC centre, which surveyed 2,098 Shanghai PSC test takers in the broadcasting, education and public sectors during March 2003 to July 2004. The researchers did not specify the criteria of sample selection and their survey only reflects the opinion of the people who have taken the test. See Qiao and Zhu, "Putonghua shuiping ceshi gongzuo de shehui pingjia diaocha yu fenxi."

Internal Loopholes of the Test

Clearly, the success of the PSC depends on the incentives it provides. Prospective test takers turn away from the test when they expect less utility from test taking than from other options, which was the case in the mid-2000s. Ironically, the fall in utility of the test was initiated by the test designer's attempts to improve the test's reliability. The PSC is a speaking test—a genre of test that is particularly difficult to attain a high level of objectivity and reliability because results of a candidate can only depend on the subjective evaluation of examiners. In the case of the PSC, there are usually two examiners in a group to evaluate a candidate's performance. Examiners, however, are human beings whose judgements are inevitably affected by a range of arbitrary factors, such as their background, alertness, emotions, and feelings. Indeed, ample evidence has suggested that there are significant differences between examiners from different backgrounds in their way of assessment. For example, Brown finds that examiners with an industrial background are less lenient than those with a teaching background in accessing candidates in a speaking test.[282] These

[282] Anne Brown, "The effect of rater variables in the development of an occupation-specific language performance test," *Language Testing*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1995), pp. 7-8. For other examples, see: Hui Teng Ang-Aw and Christine Chuen Meng Goh, "Understanding discrepancies in rater judgement on national-level oral examination tasks," *RELC Journal*, Vol. 42, No.1., pp. 31-51; Michael Orr, "The FCE speaking test: using rater reports to help interpret test scores," *System,* Vol. 30, No. 2 (2002), pp. 143-154; and Gillian Wigglesworth, "Exploring bias analysis as a tool for improving rater consistency in assessing oral interaction," *Language Testing*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (1993), pp. 305-319.

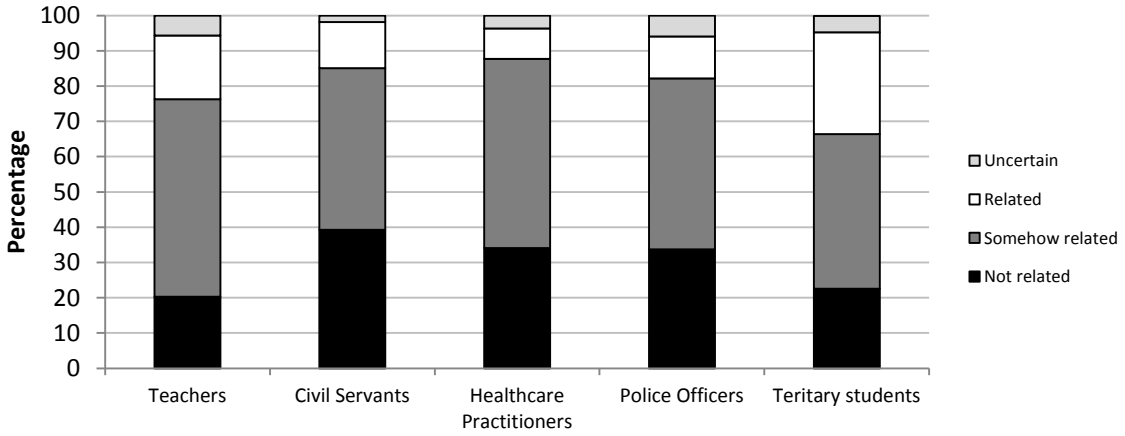
potential problems were considered in the planning stage of the PSC by the linguists who were responsible for designing the test.[283] To make performance measurable and reduce the room for examiners' personal judgement, the test was designed such that candidates' grades can be largely determined by counting the number of mistakes they make.[284] In practice, 0.5 to two marks from a total of 100 are deducted for each mistake, including mispronunciation of words, hesitation, using dialectic words, whereas the marks required for attaining the top and bottom grades are 97 and 70 respectively.[285]

The intention to measure performance reliably, however, rendered the test less relevant to the reality. Language is a complex social instrument. It involves attributes and knowledge that can hardly be objectively measured. An effective communicator who can present his ideas persuasively needs not to be an expert in "standard" pronunciations and vocabulary items. Furthermore, while it is the intention of the state to minimize diversity in the language realm, in reality language does require a lot of variations because of the diverse experience, culture, and needs of people from different industries or regions. As a result, after ten years of implementation, the test has increasingly been criticised for being irrelevant to the real world.[286] In the academia, critics argued that the grading criteria of the test allowed candidates to obtain a good grade in the speaking section even if their responses lack substance, as long as they could pronounce each word correctly. Survey results of suggest a similar picture. In a survey conducted in 2006 that randomly sampled employees of different industries and tertiary students in Shanghai, a general disapproval of the PSC is revealed. As shown in Figure 5.1 below, a significant portion of respondents from different sectors thought

[283] Sun Xiuzhang, "'Putonghua shuiping ceshi biaozhun' de yanzhi yu shijian" ("Research and implementation of 'Standards for Putonghua Proficiency Test'"), *Yuyan wenzi yingyong* (*Applied Linguistics*), No. 1 (1992), p. 14.
[284] Ibid.
[285] Shanghai Putonghua Training and Testing Centre (ed.), *Putonghua shuiping ceshi zhidao yongshu* (*Training Manual for the PSC*) (Shanghai: Li xin kuaiji chubanshe, 2010), pp. 23-25.
[286] Zhao Jing, "zong 'ying shi' kan putonghua shuiping ceshi" ("Analysing the PSC from a test taker perspective"), *Du yu xie zazhi* (*Reading and Writing*), Vol. 8, No.9 (2011), pp.85-86.

that the PSC was not related to their work. This laid the foundation for the resistance that the test encountered in the later years.

Figure 5.1: Perceived Relevance of the PSC to Work



Source: Jiang bingbing and Wang Yijia, "Putonghua shuiping ceshi xingye ke jieshou xing yanjiu" ("The acceptability of PSC in different disciplines"), in Shanghai Language Commission (ed.), *Yuyan wenzi shuiping ceshi yanjiu* (*Research on Language Tests*) (Shanghai: Lixin Accounting Publishing House, 2010), p. 217

Changing Economic Structure in the 21st Century

The motivations of the test takers to avoid the test have to be considered within the wider socio-economic environment. As depicted in the general model presented in Chapter 1, the extent of state control over economic resources is one of the determinants of changes in language institutions. This is evident in the case of the PSC. After 30 years of economic and administrative reform, the economic power of the society, the business groups in particular, has grown significantly. As Brødsgaard observes, unlike the old economic command system in which business enterprises and factories were highly dependent on the ministries of the state for authority and resources, enterprises in the reform era have increasingly been responsible for their own economic operations and operate under market conditions.[287]

[287] Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard, "Politics and business group formation in China: The Party in control?" *The China Quarterly*, No. 211 (2012), pp. 630-633.

Similarly, in contrast to the early reform era when losses were common among inexperienced enterprises, during the reform process they have accumulated considerable experience and abilities to make profit on their own, making them less dependent on state subsidies. Consider the case of the Commercial Press discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. While its publishing strategies were largely planned by the state in the 1950s, in the reform era it needed to be accountable for its own profit and loss, which prompted it to adopt a more market-oriented strategy in order to defend the market share of its products. Very often, the huge profits generated by these successful enterprises are not returned to the state, which is their major shareholder, in the form of dividends, but are retained in the enterprises and used for the payment of comparatively high salaries to their staff. [288]

These enterprises helped transmit the power of globalisation into the Chinese language realm. Following the "going out" (*zouchuqu* 走出去) strategy of the state in the 2000s, many of them—such as Haier(海尔), Konka (康佳), TCL, Jianlibao (健力宝), and Tsingtao Brewery (青岛啤酒)—began to play an active role in international capital markets by listing their enterprises abroad and investing overseas.[289] By the end of 2007, nearly 7,000 Chinese enterprises have engaged in overseas foreign direct investment in 173 countries, establishing over 10,000 overseas enterprises.[290] Consequently, they needed to respond to international market conditions and demands. Employees who were proficient in foreign languages became a much sought after resource. Two examples are particularly illustrative. In 2002, Ren Zhengfei (任正非), founder of Huawei (华为) Technologies Co. Ltd., stressed the importance of English by telling his colleagues that "in the future, the official language of the board of directors is English; I am 58 years old and I am still learning English." He went

[288] Ibid.
[289] Eunsuk Hong and Laixiang Sun, "Dynamics of internationalization and outward investment: Chinese corporations' strategies," *The China Quarterly*, Vol. 187 (2006), p. 611.
[290] Yadong Luo, Max Cacchione, Marc Junkunc, and Stephanie C. Lu, "Entrepreneurial pioneer of international venturing: The case of Huawei," *Organizational Dynamics* Vol.40, No.1 (2011), pp.67-74.

on to complain that his company has not yet gotten rid of their "guerrilla style", and that "the new management style for international expansion has not yet been established." [291] Similarly, the foreign managers at Haier also complained in an interview that language had been a major barrier for them to "brainstorm" with their Chinese colleagues new ideas for the company.[292] Not surprisingly, with better remunerations, the enterprises' demand for foreign language talents became a powerful source of incentives for Chinese people to acquire foreign languages and attain the relevant certifications.

Of course, foreign direct investments (FDI) in China also contributed to the growing popularity of foreign languages and foreign language tests in the country. According to the State Statistical Bureau, by 1997 China had attracted over US$283 billion of FDI.[293] With China's accession into the World Trade Organisation in 2002, the growth of FDI in China has been speeding up. From 2010 to 2011, for example, FDI in China surged 33 per cent to US$12.5 billion.[294] Generally, foreign direct investment can be made either through a joint venture (with a Chinese partner) or a wholly-owned entity in China. However, in both ways foreign investments weaken the state's control over economic resources because they are highly mobile and resourceful. Powerful foreign organisations, in particular, can drain away people and local resources that were used to be dominated by state-owned enterprises. As an English student at Shanghai International Studies University (*Shanghai waiguoyu daxue*, 上海外国语大学) has explained to me, multi-national companies in China, particularly those headquartered in Europe, have gradually replaced state organisations and other local

[291] Yadong Luo, Max Cacchione, Marc Junkunc, and Stephanie C. Lu, "Entrepreneurial pioneer of international venturing: The case of Huawei," *Organizational Dynamics*, Vol. 40, No. 1, (2011), pp. 67–74.
[292] Hong Liua and Kequan Li, "Strategic implications of emerging Chinese multinationals: the Haier case study," *European Management Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 6 (2002), p. 703.
[293] Ji Li, Gongming Qian, Kevin Lam, and Dennis Wang, "Breaking into China: Strategic Considerations for Multinational Corporations," *Long Range Planning* Vol. 33, No. 5 (2000), pp. 673–687.
[294] Chinmei Sung, "Foreign Direct Investment in China Rises 33% on Fast Growth" (19 April 2011), *Bloomberg News*, available at: http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-04-19/foreign-direct-investment-in-china-surges-33-as-zhou-eyes-excess-of-cash.html (accessed 10 October 2013).

enterprises as the most desirable place for many Chinese to develop their career because of their management style and remuneration package.[295] As foreign language skills are important for effective communication in these corporations, there is a strong incentive for Chinese youth to acquire them. English is especially popular because of its global influence. In a survey conducted by linguist Lin Pan in 2008 which sampled 637 students in six universities in Beijing, 75.5 per cent of respondents admitted that getting more career opportunities is a reason for them to learn English (Table 5.2). In contrast, less than 10 per cent learnt the language for non-career reasons (such as understanding western culture).[296] Such an emphasis on the utility of English clearly resembled the people's attitude toward putonghua in the early 2000s.

Table 5.2 Reasons for Chinese students to learn English

I learn English because:	**%**
English is a kind of capital which can bring more opportunities to my career	75.6
English opens a window to the world for me	58.3
English improves my status	45
I have to pass English exams to graduate	44.6
I have an intrinsic interest in it	30.7
I want to go abroad to study	20
English can raise my profile among my classmates, friends and colleagues	17
I want to live abroad	7.7
I adore western cultures and traditions	5.8
English brings me competitive edge in studying, work, and promotion	3.3

Note: The questionnaires were distributed to 637 students in 6 universities in Beijing, covering respondents majoring in different subjects such as humanities, social science and science and engineering. The return rate was 100%.

Source: Lin Pan and David Block, "English as a "global language" in China: An investigation into learners' and teachers' language beliefs," *System,* No. 39, (2011), p. 396.

Many state organisations have contributed to the rise of English in China as well. To promote economic growth, which is a core criterion for promotion within the Chinese bureaucracy, cities and provinces compete to attract foreign investment by enhancing their

[295] Interview SH04.

[296] Lin Pan and David Block, "English as a 'global language' in China: An investigation into learners' and teachers' language beliefs," *System*, No. 39, (2011), p. 396.

capacity to communicate in English. For example, in 2009, the Guangzhou Municipal Government required all its employees aged 35 or below to receive intensive English training.[297] Similarly, since the mid-1990s English has been seen by the Ministry of Education as a necessary ability for graduate training and university teaching—despite the fact that Chinese is still being widely used in reality.[298] Consequently, as of 2009, it was estimated that over 300 million Chinese are studying English in China.[299]

All these combined to bring about a rapid growth of English tests in China. Despite the limited number of test centres and high test fees, the demand for such popular English tests as TOEFL and IELTS grew steadily. According to official reports, the number of test takers of IELTS grew from 89,535 in 2005, to 127,793 in 2006, and eventually to 200,516 in 2007.[300] These figures cannot fully reflect the real demand for the tests. The limited number of test centres in China means that prospective test takers needed to go through keen competition in order to participate in these foreign language tests. There were incidents in which students stayed up overnight just to wait for the opening of the test registration website.[301] Furthermore, registration hotlines for the tests were nearly impossible to get

[297] Zhou Yu, "Guangzhou dui gongwu yuan jinxing yingyu peixun he tongkao yinfa guangfan zhengyi" ("English training and examination for Guangzhou public servants spark controversies") (20 May 2009), *Xinhuawang* (*Xinhua News*), available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/legal/2009-05/20/content_11406398.htm (accessed 30 October 2012). According to ABC News, by 2015, all state employees younger than 40 will be required to master at least 1,000 English phrases. See: "Ganbei!! China embraces English language" (15 November 2010), *ABC World News*, available at http://abcnews.go.com/WN/China/china-pushes-english-language/story?id=12154435#.UI-hUYYtYWk (accessed 30 October 2012).

[298] Ning Wang, "Global English(es) and Global Chinese(s): toward rewriting a new literary history in Chinese," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 19, No. 63, (2010), p. 161.

[299] James T. Areddy and Peter Sanders,"Chinese learn English the Disney way," *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 April 2009.

[300] Chen Ke, "Haiwai kaoshi" ("Foreign exams") (26 November 2009), *Zhongguo jiaoyu he keyan jisuanji wang* (*China Education and Research Network*), available at http://www.edu.cn/nj06_16_8928/20091126/t20091126_425186.shtml (accessed 10 October 2013).

[301] Tan Jiaying "Peng shang shenqing gaofeng qi ya si tuo fu kao wei jun jinzhang" ("Places for IELTS and TOEFL in tight demand during peak application season") (13 December 2011), *Sina.com*, available at: http://edu.sina.com.cn/yyks/2011-12-13/1935320733.shtml (accessed 10 October 2013).

through, with calls coming from nearly all provinces and regions throughout China tying up the lines.[302]

Intuitively, as foreign language tests became popular, the number of PSC test takers should fall as prospective test takers found other more attractive alternatives to boost their career prospects. However, although officials interviewed admitted that the demand for the PSC fell significantly in major cities like Shanghai and Beijing, the overall number of PSC test takers has nevertheless continued to increase in China.[303] In 2005, the number of PSC takers was 2,884,895. This figure rose by 45 per cent to 4,179,800 in 2010.[304] There are two explanations for this. Firstly, demand for the test remained strong in provinces and cities where internationalisation has not yet taken full momentum. In other words, people's perception toward the utility of the PSC may be negatively correlated with the intensity of globalisation they experience. While this hypothesis cannot be confirmed directly because cross-province data on people's attitude toward different language tests is not available, it is supported by a number of qualitative evidences. For example, in Zhejiang Province, many students in 2012 still considered the PSC an important stepping stone (*qiaomenzhuan* 敲门砖) for a good career. Their perception about the PSC in relation to other English tests was particularly revealing. As a graduate at Zhejiang Agriculture & Forestry University (浙江农林大学) said:

> In seeking a job, a certificate of proficiency in putonghua is not inferior to a certificate of proficiency in English. This is especially true for those who want to join a company

[302] "China Becomes Biggest Market for English Learning" (27 September 2002), *People's Daily Online*, available at: http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200209/27/print20020927_103980.html (accessed 10 October 2013).
[303] Interview SH02. His comment is echoed by some published articles by other language officials. See Zhang Ripei, "Putonghua shuiping ceshi he yuyan guihua" ("PSC and language planning"), in Shanghai PSC Test Centre, ed., *Yuyan wenzi shuiping ceshi yanjiu* (*Research on Language Tests*), (Lixin Accounting Publishing House, 2010), p.40; Xu Minjie, "Bawo xingshi, mingque renwu, goujian hexie yuyan shenghuo," ("Understand the environment, articulate the missions, and construct a harmonious language environment"), in Shanghai PSC Test Centre, ed., *Yuyan wenzi shuiping ceshi yanjiu*, p.34.
[304] Zhongguo Yuyan Shenghuo Zhuangkuang Baogao 2005, p.92.

that has better quality employees. The ability to speak fluent and standard putonghua can be a great merit.[305]

This comment sharply contrasts with the opinion of the students that I interviewed in Shanghai,[306] as well as those interviewed by Pan and Block in Beijing.[307] In both cities students generally assigned to English a higher and superior status.

Secondly, and more importantly, although the demand for the PSC in big cities was falling, local governments maintained the growth of the test by making it free and compulsory for university students. In Shanghai, for instance, the municipal government invested more than $160,000 (USD) to provide free testing PSC testing service to all tertiary students in the city. Under the scheme, all students were required to take the test before graduation.[308] By doing so, the PSC has continued to grow in the city. By the end of 2008, more than five hundred thousand people have taken the test in Shanghai.[309]

This strategy represented a departure from the original institutional logic of the PSC, which emphasised voluntary participation induced by the incentive provided by the state. Not surprisingly, the strategy received little support from the prospective test takers. In a survey conducted among 3,076 Shanghai tertiary students in 2006, more than 60 per cent of the respondents opposed the proposal of making the PSC a compulsory requirement for graduation.[310] Therefore, by making the test compulsory, the local

[305] Mao Chenyi, Chen Shengwei, and Wang Ting, "Putonghua kaozheng re xiaoyuan" ("PSC certificates popular on campus") (16 October 2012), *Zhejiang News*, available at: http://zjnews.zjol.com.cn/05zjnews/system/2012/10/16/018875923.shtml (accessed 10 October 2013).
[306] Interview SH04, 7 September 2011 in Shanghai.
[307] Pan and Block, "English as a 'global language' in China," p. 398.
[308] Huang yefang, "Shanghaishi yuyan wenzi gongzuo gaigehe fazhan de sikao" ("Reflections on the reform and development of language planning in Shanghai"), in Shanghai PSC Test Centre (ed.), *Yuyan wenzi shuiping ceshi yanjiu*, p.25.
[309] Zhang, "Putonghua shuiping ceshi he yuyan guihua," p.37.
[310] Tan Hongyan, Xiao Ji, and Gu Xiankai, "Shanghaishi daxuesheng putonghua shuiping ceshi xianzhuang ji yingdui celue" ("The implementation of the PSC among tertiary students in Shanghai: issues and solutions"), in Shanghai PSC Test Centre (ed.), *Yuyan wenzi shuiping ceshi yanjiu*, p.195.

governments transformed the test from a tool of incentivisation to a tool of top-down control.

Such a policy change not only required local states to invest more financial resources to maintain the system, but also intensified the resistance it faced. Experimental research suggests that in a knowledge assessment, incentive plays a key role in determining the participants' performance.[311] This is because incentives are highly correlated to the effort that an individual is willing to pay in recalling his memory. Test takers may perform poorly in a language test not because they are incapable of using the language, but because they are unmotivated to perform well. Specifically, researchers found that two otherwise identical candidates may not be equally likely to perform well in a test if one is more motivated than the other to perform well.[312] This is evident in the operation of the PSC in the late reform era. In addition to the criticism of "cultural hegemony" mentioned in the last chapter, candidates were also reported to have expressed their dissatisfactions through taking the test unprepared,[313] reading sample scripts with the help of a smart phone in the conversation section (this is possible mainly in the computerised PSC), using "non-standardised" internet phrases deliberately,[314] using obscene language in the reading section, asking others to take the test on their behalf (*tikao* 替考), [315] or skipping the test (*quekao* 缺考) altogether.[316] Table 5.3 below lists the non-attendance rates among students of some tertiary institutions in Shanghai in 2010. Although the selection of schools here is limited by data availability, there is no convincing reason to believe that these universities, which exhibited wide variations in

[311] Markus Prior and Arthur Lupia, "Money, time, and political knowledge: distinguishing quick recall from political learning skills," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (2008), pp. 168-182.
[312] Ibid., p. 170.
[313] Liu Lihua, "Cong putonghua shuiping ceshi toushi daxuesheng xuexi putonghua xianzhuang" ("The current stage of Putonghua learning among college students: the case of the PSC"), *Yuwen xuekan* (*Journal of Language and Literature Studies*), No.7 (2011), p. 120.
[314]Ibid., p. 121.
[315] Han Liang, "Tan putonghua shuiping ceshi de beikao" ("Preparation for the PSC"), *Zhongguo xiao wai jiaoyu* (*China Out of School Education*) No. 2 (2012), p. 87.
[316] Zhang, "Putonghua shuiping ceshi he yuyan guihua," p.40.

non-attendance rate, were systematically different from other Shanghai universities. Among the schools sampled, it is worth noting that Shanghai International Studies University had the highest non-attendant rate. As students who choose to attend that university are generally more interested in foreign languages and culture, it is plausible to infer that they are less motivated than other local students to participate in the PSC.

Table 5.3 Non-attendance Rates[+] among Students in Selected Schools in Shanghai

	%
Shanghai International Studies University(上海外国语大学)*	8.7
Shanghai Jianqiao University(上海建桥学院) [#]	8.5
Shanghai Theatre Academy(上海戏剧学院)*	6.9
Shanghai Vocational Technical College of Forestry and Agriculture (上海农林职业技术学院)	2.9
Shanghai Sipo Polytechnic (上海思博职业技术学院)	2.8

Notes: [+] $attendance\ rate = \frac{number\ of\ registered\ test\ takers\ who\ didnt\ shown\ on\ the\ test\ date}{total\ number\ of\ registered\ test\ takers} \times 100$; **schools that had a higher non-attendance rate in the previous year; [#] 2009 data

Sources: "Wo xiao 2010 nian putonghua shuiping ceshi shunli juxing" ("Our school has successfully organised the PSC 2010) (12 October 2010), *Shanghai International Studies University*, available at: http://yywz.shisu.edu.cn/Default.aspx?tabid=215&ctl=Details&mid=540&ItemID=1512&language=en-US (accessed 11 October 2013); and
"Wo xiao nian putonghua shuiping ceshi shunli juxing" ("Our students participated in PSC 2010") (June 2010), *Shanghai Theater Academy*, available at: http://jw.sta.edu.cn/yuyanwenziwang/content.aspx?id=21945 (accessed 11 October 2013).

Chinese Language in "Crisis"

Although the evidence presented above are suggestive, without nationwide and precise data on the extent of the above resistance against the PSC, some may argue that the evidence presented so far is insufficient to establish a concrete casual argument that the falling utility of the PSC has triggered a range of non-cooperative behaviours among the test takers. In fact, the behaviours depicted above can take place in nearly all popular tests. Probability theory suggests that it is normal to obverse outliners in a sizable population. If those non-cooperative behaviours reported in the PSC were caused by just a tiny fraction of the test takers, they should not be treated as a phenomenon peculiar to the PSC.

Data regarding the situation of non-compliance in the PSC are of course unavailable to the public. However, it is still possible to estimate the scale of resistance through analysing the responses of the state. State officials' decisions were influenced by the information they receive. Therefore, if the scale of non-compliance in the PSC was minimal, we should observe little reaction from the state as well. Furthermore, if the resistance against the PSC was unrelated to its falling utility, we shall also expect little effort from the state to promote the utility of its language tests. In contrast, if the resistance against the PSC was significant, and was caused by the rise of alternative language tests, then we should identify major reforms in the testing system, as well as discourses put forward by the officials against foreign languages. Tracing for evidence along these lines will allow us to conduct what Van Evera describes as a "hoop test" and a "smoking gun test," which, when deployed together, can eliminate the aforementioned alternative hypothesis and provide strong support for the central argument of this chapter.[317]

A major shift in the state's language management strategies has indeed occurred since 2008. The full details of this reform will be discussed in the next chapter. What is of interest here is the launching of a new Chinese language test—the *Chinese Language Proficiency Test* (*Hanyu Nengli Ceshi* 汉语能力测试, hereafter HNC)—in 2011 by the Ministry of Education. Similar to the PSC, the HNC was designed for native Chinese speakers to improve their Chinese language skills. Also, participation in the HNC was incentive-driven. As of 2012, the test has not been made compulsory for any particular group of people. In promoting the test, state officials highlighted its role as an objective measurement of the test takers' language abilities, which were highly relevant to their job performance.[318] They envisioned that the test would eventually become a popular tool for screening job

[317] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 31-33.
[318] "Woguo tuichu Hanyu nengli ceshi jiang fen liu ge dengji" ("HNC will have six grades") (26 July 2011), *Sina News*, available at: http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2011-07-26/160222879977.shtml (accessed 10 October 2013).

applications.[319] Nevertheless, in two important aspects the HNC showed significant departure from the PSC. Firstly, in addition to listening and speaking, the HNC also tests candidates' abilities on reading and writing. Secondly, unlike the PSC, the HNC examines not just the linguistic knowledge (e.g. pronunciations or vocabulary) of the candidates, but also their eloquence, logical reasoning, and manner. In other words, to perform well in the HNC, candidates cannot simply recite sample essays and standard pronunciations of words—they need to acquire a broader range of communication skills. Since the contents of the test are less predictable, test preparation becomes less time-consuming.

These changes were made to eliminate the factors that have undermined the utility of the PSC. To discuss the new orientation towards eloquence and manner first, the PSC, as mentioned, was blamed for being irrelevant to the "real world" because of its emphasis on "proper" pronunciation and vocabulary items. The new emphases on practical skills like eloquence can therefore be seen as an effort by the test designer to preserve the utility of the state's language tests. In relation to the inclusion of reading and writing sections, as many observers have noted, this was a move to make the new Chinese language test looked more similar to popular English tests like TOEFL and IELTS, which also examine candidates' reading and writing skills.[320] Given the similar objectives of the HNC and the PSC, it would be highly unlikely for the state to design and launch a new test if the PSC had remained effective in achieving its goals.

The strongest supporting evidence for the resistance encountered by the PSC lies in the official discourses in promoting the HNC, which clearly suggested that they were very concerned about the falling status of Chinese in relation to foreign languages. As Dai Jiagan

[319] "Hanyu nengli ceshi: ni zenme kan?" ("HNC: What is your view?") (8 August 2011), *Xinhuan Net*, available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/newmedia/2011-08/08/c_121828683.htm (accessed 10 October 2013).
[320] Zhang He, "Kao yi kao ye hao" ("It is good to give the test a try"), *Renmin ribao*, 20 January 2012.

戴家干, the director of the Testing Centre of the Ministry of Education (*Jiaoyubu kaoshi zhongxin* 教育部考试中心), explained in an interview with the *People's Daily* in 2011:

> The phenomena of foreign language fever and native language chill (*waiyu re, muyu leng* 外语热, 母语冷), as well as westernised Chinese and non-standardised internet language have been widespread in society in the recent years. Therefore, in 2008, the Ministry of Education and the Language Commission entrusted the Testing Centre with the task to design the *Chinese Language Proficiency Test*. It is hoped that the test can promote the learning and uses of Chinese.[321]

Similar discourses can be found in other state media such as *Xinhua Net* and CCTV, in which the state stressed its goal to "revive the culture of native language that has been passed on for thousands of years" (*fuxing chuancheng shuqiannian de muyu wenhua* 复兴传承数千年的母语文化).[322] Altogether, these discourses confirm the argument that the popularisation of foreign languages has become so widespread that it has caught the attention of the state. As the language official that I interviewed mentioned, while the state recognises the utility of English for development, it is important for them to ensure that Chinese remains the *only* official language in China, and that people's proficiency in Chinese should not be undermined by their acquisition of foreign languages.[323] As such, the launching of the HNC not only rejects the alternative hypothesis that the resistance to the PSC was just some random artifact, but also confirms the force—the popularisation of foreign languages—that triggered the resistance.

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[321] "Woguo tuichu Hanyu nengli ceshi jiang fen liu ge dengji."
[322] "Guowai yuyannengli ceshi you meiyou muyu kao ji" (Do language tests overseas assess native language capacity?) (10 August 2011), *Xinhuan Net*, available at: http://edu.163.com/11/0810/18/7B48598S00294IJE.html (accessed 10 October 2013)
[323] Interview SH02.

There is another worth noting point in the account given by Dai. In addition to the spread of English, he also mentioned the impacts of the Internet on Chinese language. Indeed, compared with the spread of foreign language, the rapid popularisation of the Internet has led to an even more significant change in the balance of power between the state and the society in the language realm. With the advent of this new communication technology, ordinary citizens are empowered to invent new language items so as to pursue their own goals. These will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter presents evidence of resistance to the PSC, arguing that the resistance was triggered by the institutional design of the test and the diversification of economic resources, which jointly contributed to the falling utility of the PSC. The findings of this chapter confirm two major propositions of the general model of language management presented in Chapter 1. First, it reaffirms the negative causal relationship between the state's capacity to control economic resources and the strength of resistance its language institutions are likely to encounter. Second, it demonstrates how the design of the state's language management institution can contribute to resistance that the state is going to encounter in the long run. Both of them have theoretical implications that extent beyond the field of language politics.

To elaborate the relationship between the state's capacity to control economic resources and the likelihood of language resistance first, the case of the PSC allows us to better understand the mechanism that connects the two variables, particularly in the context of an incentivising institution. As argued in this chapter, China's economic reform and open door policy have on the one hand encouraged local enterprises to adapt to international market conditions, and on the other hand attracted foreign investments. Both of them provided new sources of economic resources that were previously less available to the

general public. These economic forces provided new incentives for private and public organisations, as well as the population, to acquire and favour foreign languages such as English.

Foreign languages are problematic to the Chinese state not really because they might threaten national unity, as what the state officials have proclaimed, but because they cannot easily be manipulated and managed by the state. A case in point here is the controversy over a 22-year old man who had used the letter "C" as his given name for his entire life. It took place in 2009 as the man tried to upgrade his identity card to a second-generation version, and was asked to change his name by the local Public Security Bureau because "C" is not a standard Chinese character.[324] Despite his efforts to retain his name, the man eventually reached an agreement with the state to change his name "voluntarily." To justify their position, state officials explained that their database was not equipped to handle "non-standard characters."[325] The case demonstrates how language can increase the logistic costs of the state to maintain its political control. As next chapter will demonstrate, the issue of "standard" Chinese has remained highly political in the 21st century because the invention of new words and the uses of foreign languages have become a new avenue for the public to express their political discontents and circulate information that is otherwise blocked by the state.

It should therefore not be surprising to see the state struggling to maintain the utility and influence of the PSC in the late- 2000s. As demonstrated in this chapter, the downfall of the PSC was triggered by its falling utility. The emphasis on utility has once sustained the growth of the test in the reform era when the state was no longer able to maintain a top-down language control. But it also justified a utilitarian understanding of test that was easily

[324] Joel Martinsen, "Zhao 'left crescent' needs a new name" (27 February 2009), *Danwei*, available at http://www.danwei.org/language/zhao_left_crescent_needs_a_new.php (accessed 10 October 2013).
[325] Ibid.

exploited by organisations and individuals intent on avoiding the hassle of test taking and learning the "standard" language. Here it is important to note that complaints regarding the utility of a state-led language standardisation scheme are not new. Archival materials suggested that even back in the 1950s, there were people in Guangzhou who refused to follow the state's direction to acquire the standard language. They argued that doing so would hamper their production progress. However, as I argued in Chapter 2, their dissatisfaction had not evolved into a significantly powerful resistance that could prompt the state to reformulate its language institutions, as in the case of the PSC. In contrast, through appealing to ideological correctness, the state even managed to intensify its top-down language management scheme to suit its political needs during the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, the fact that utilitarian concerns have been able to trigger the gradual decay of the PSC implies that a deeper understanding of the specific characteristics of incentivising institutions is needed.

Indeed, incentivisation is a modern governing technique that links incentives—anything that spurs individuals/ organisations to accomplish something—to performance in accordance with certain pre-specified standards.[326] Although incentivising institutions are designed by the powerful political elites to manipulate human behaviour, when compared to the top-down institutions discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, they show a greater degree of concession of power from the elites to their subjects. This is because in specifying the standards or goals of the institution, the elites need to ensure that meeting those goals is in the interests of their subjects. If the goals are not something that an individual will naturally want to achieve, additional benefits have to be provided. For example, workers in a modern factory generally are not are self-motivated enough to produce more, but are incentivised to do so through a payment system that links their output with something they desire—salary. Of

[326] Gambhir Bhatta, *International Dictionary of Public Management and Governance* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), p. 279.

course, all sensible institutions provide some kinds of incentives to their subjects for achieving the institutional goals. The People's Commune (*Renmin gongshe* 人民公社), for example, can be said to "incentivise" its members to work for the good of other members through appealing to certain socialist ideals. However, to serve as a useful concept, "incentivisation" must mean something more than the mere provision of incentives. Incentivising institutions are institutions that encourage individualistic calculations and competitions.[327] Following the tradition of the public choice school which assumes that human beings are self-interested utility maximisers, incentivising institutions encourage their subjects to seek the most efficient way to maximize their self-interests. And it is the responsibility of the institutional designers to provide the right incentives to motivate their subjects to help sustain the institution. As Brans aptly observes, such an institutional design often shapes actors within the institution as customers who are likely to use "the exit option"—ignoring or passively following the requirements of the institutions—as a tool to express discontent.[328]

It is under this specific conception of incentivisation that the resistance to the PSC, as well as the reaction of the state, become understandable. As this chapter demonstrates, utilitarian concerns have largely characterised the unfolding of events leading to the downfall of the test. As such, this chapter confirms one of the central arguments of this thesis that the mode of resistance to the state's language institutions is predetermined or shaped by the design of those institutions.

[327] Jeroen Maesschalck, "The impact of NPM reforms on public servants' ethics: towards a theory," *Public Administration*, Vol.82, No.2 (2004), pp. 471-472.
[328] Brans, "Challenges to the practice and theory of public administration in Europe," pp. 396-399.

6

Selective Governance through Word Filtering

"Whatever else Internet culture may be, it is still largely a text-based affair," Wilbur concluded in his 1995 study of emerging Internet culture.[329] Surprisingly, after nearly twenty years of technological advancement, his observation remains valid. Of course, the Internet today is a platform that displays not only text, but also graphics, video, and sounds. However, written language is still the most efficient and popular way to transmit information in cyberspace. With the rise of blogging, instant messaging, social-networking services, and search engines, there is no doubt that text-based linguistic resources still play a central role in the cyber world. As China deepens its engagement with the information age, it also witnesses new initiatives from the state to control the language used on the Internet, as well as a new wave of resistance from the internet users (netizens). Since the 2000s, internet politics in China has been a subject of intense intellectual investigation. Collectively, these efforts have generated valuable data and knowledge regarding the operation of internet censorship and the behaviour of netizens, providing a solid foundation for this chapter to investigate the linguistic aspect of the Internet. With reference to these accounts and data, as well as interviews with internet activists, this chapter traces the early development of internet linguistic control and argues that the decentralised distribution of economic and communication resources has prompted the state to adopt a different strategy for language

[329] Shawn P. Wilbur, "An archeology of cyberspaces: community, virtuality, mediation, commerce," in David Porter (ed.), *Internet Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 6.

management, in which the state selectively compromises with the society and various actors in defining correctness in the linguistic realm.

Changing Communication and Economic Landscape in the 21st Century

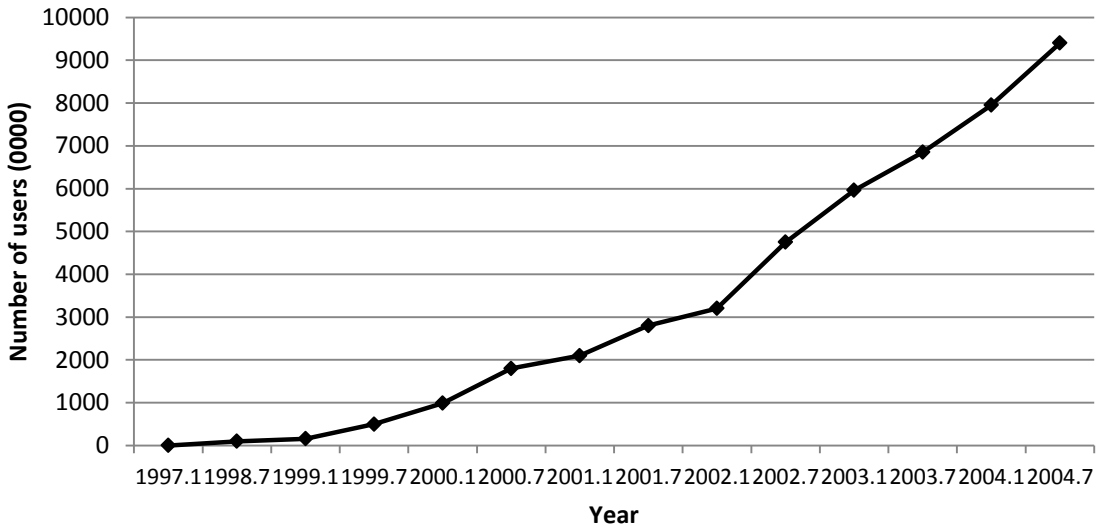
The Internet was first introduced into China in 1987 mainly for academic uses. It then became commercially available to the public in 1995.[330] State control was relatively minimal at the beginning—most of the rules regarding the Internet had remained unpublished until the late 1990s. This was because the state recognised the importance of the technology for the country's modernisation.[331] According to Yang, in the early and mid-1990s, the Chinese media was full of talk about the information superhighway. Many commentators in the media proposed that informationalisation was the key to economic development. Thus, to the extent that they were aware of its informational value, Chinese leaders saw the Internet as another tool for transmitting party policies to the citizens. Of course, there were concerns about potential security issues, however, since the Internet was yet to become a tool for citizens' everyday communication, the leaders of the central state believed that the technology can give them both modernisation and enhanced powers of central control and stability.[332] Consequently, instead of suppressing the development of the Internet, the state played a very active role in laying down the infrastructure to deepen its penetration.[333] This was evident in the mission statement of The Ministry of Information Industry in 1998, in which it stressed its role in areas such as "planning network construction and expansion, developing standards

[330] Xiao Qiang, "The battle for the Chinese Internet," *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 22, No. 2 (2011), p. 50; Rebecca MacKinnon, "China's 'Networked Authoritarianism'," *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 22, No.2 (2011), p. 34.
[331] Eric Harwit and Duncan Clark, "Shaping the Internet in China: evolution of political control over network infrastructure and content," *Asian Survey* Vol.41, No. 3 (2001), p. 394.
[332] Guobin Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p.54.
[333] Yongnian Zheng, *Technological Empowerment: the Internet, State, and Society in China* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008), p. 38.

and coordinating production, and promoting 'informatisation' (*xinxihua* 信息化) of the economy."[334]

Because of state support, the Internet expanded in China at an exceptional rate. Figure 6.1 below shows the diffusion of the Internet in China since 1997, in which the number of netizens increased from 630,000 in early 1997 to around 87 million in 2004.[335] The number of Internet hosts also increased from 1004 in 1997 to 126,146 in 2004.[336] More recent data suggest a similar picture. In 2006, there were 64,864,000 broadband ports in China. In 2010, the figure rose to 197,811,000.[337] As of 2009, 95.6 per cent of towns are connected to broadband, and 99 per cent of villages can access to the Internet.[338]

Figure 6.1 Number of internet users in China, 1997-2004

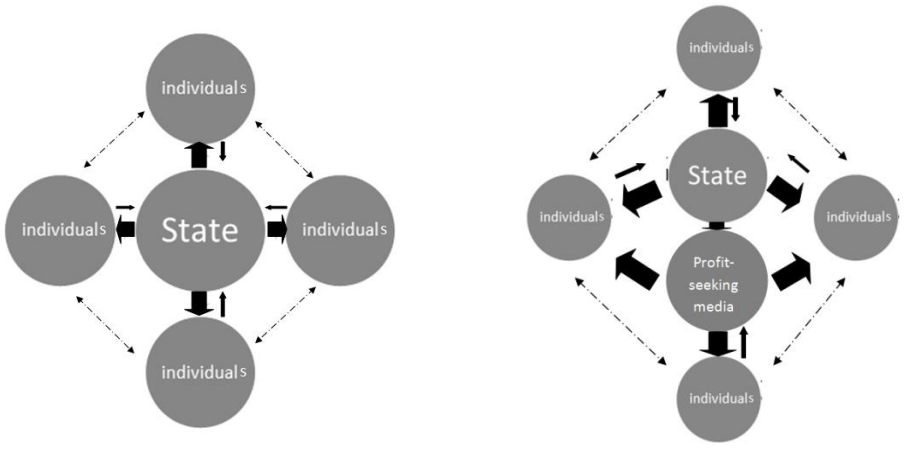


Source
Xiang Fang and David C. Yen, "Demographics and behaviour of Internet users in China," *Technology in Society* Vol. 28, No. 3 (2006), Figure 2.

[334] Harwit and Clark, "Shaping the Internet in China," p. 393.
[335] Xiang Fang and David C. Yen, "Demographics and behaviour of internet users in China," *Technology in Society* Vol.28, No. 3 (2006), p. 365.
[336] Ibid.
[337] National Bureau of Statistics of China, *China Statistical Yearbook 2011* (Beijing: China Statistics Press, 2012), Table 16-35.
[338] "China builds world's largest Internet infrastructure," *People's Daily Online* (3 November 2009), available at: http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90778/90860/6802372.html (accessed 13 January 2013).

The advent of the Internet transforms the communication landscape in China and has momentous implications on the unitary power of the Chinese state. Traditional communication platforms such as printed media, radio, and television all share one characteristic: they do not allow massive lateral person-to- person communication. Without the Internet, information is mainly disseminated through a powerful middle agent such as the state (e.g. 1950s) or a combination of the state and commercial enterprises (the 1990s). Of course, telecommunication and postal system could facilitate lateral person-to-person communication, but the number of people involved in each conversation is limited. Beyond a certain threshold of complexity and volume of exchange, these traditional ways of communication become less efficient than hierarchically organised social structures, leaving the grassroots with little choice but to rely on the resourceful social elites in communication.[339] Figure 6.2 below illustrates how information was communicated in China before the ascent of the Internet.

Figure 6.2 Modes of Communication without the Internet



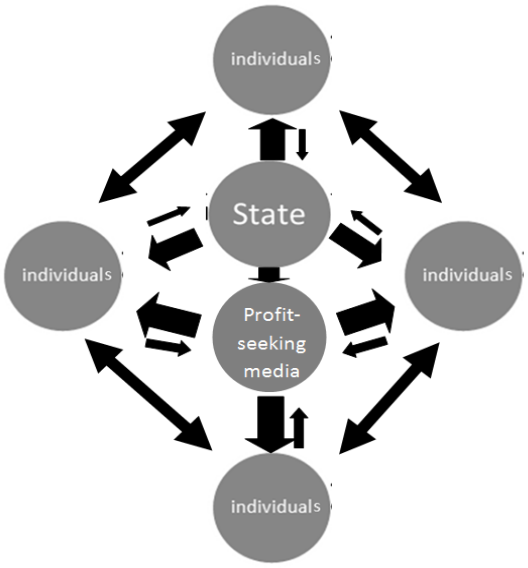
2a. Mao era **2b. Reform era**

Note:
The arrows indicate the direction and volume of information flow between actors.

[339] Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 22.

Figure 6.3, in contrast, presents a new mode of information flow brought about by the Internet. By dramatically reducing the cost of the replication and distribution of information, the Internet allows people to assemble—often at a distance—and communicate with many others simultaneously. Meanwhile, online settings such as chat rooms, online forum and blogs serve as platforms for the formation of various communities serving a diverse range of purposes.[340] These communities strengthen the connections between people who share similar interests or causes, and thus giving their members a stable source of attention. No longer are ordinary people mere recipients of information from large organisations—in the internet era they too become "publishers" (sources of information) as well.

Figure 6.3 Communication in the Internet era



Note:
The arrows indicate the direction and volume of information flow between actors.

Not surprisingly, as the Internet changed the ways people communicate; it also became an arena of political contestation. Deprived of the right to participate in politics, activists began to use the new technology to circulate information that was otherwise blocked

[340] Paul DiMaggio, Eszter Hargittai, W. Russell Neuman, and John P. Robinson, "Social implications of the Internet," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 27 (2001), p. 317.

by the state. Also, in the early days when the Internet could still be accessed anonymously in China, netizens used it as a platform to comment on social and political affairs. Realising its potential threats, the state began to tighten its control over the Internet. The first prosecution of an internet crime in China took place in 1998 when software engineer Lin Hai (林海), a member of the China Democracy Party, was arrested for sending some 30,000 email addresses to an on-line, pro-democracy newsletter in the United States. In the same year, the Golden Shield project was started. Then in mid-2000, another activist in Sichuan Province named Huang Qi (黃琦) was arrested for posting information on his website about victims of the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations.

These prosecutions revealed the increasingly contentious relationship between the state and the society in the cyber world. In addition to activities who directly challenged the political authority of the state, the advent of the Internet also created serious linguistic problems in the view of the leaders of the State Language Commission, promoting them to design a new Chinese language test—the *Chinese Language Proficiency Test* (*Hanyu nengli ceshi* 汉语能力测试, see Chapter 5), and called for legislation to regulate the spread of the then emerging internet language.[341]

Furthermore, as Chapter 5 clearly demonstrated, the late reform era also witnessed an economy that was more open to overseas capitals and competitions. As capital and people became more mobile and diverse, the incentivising institutions set up by the state during the early market reform period fell short of regulating the linguistic practises of the ordinary people, who have gradually been exposed to the influence of foreign cultures.[342] And even within the state system, divergence of interests between sub-national administrative units

[341] State Language Commission (ed.), *Zhongguo Yuyan Shenghuo Zhuangkuang Baogao 2005* (*Language Situation in China 2005*) (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2006), pp.225-226.
[342] Michelle Mingyue Gu, "Identities constructed in difference: English language learners in China," *Journal of Pragmatics*, Vol. 42, No.1 (2010), pp.139-152.

(such as provincial governments and state-owned enterprises) can often be so wide and antagonistic that the traditional hierarchical state institutions—be they top-down or incentivising—cannot effectively contain.[343]

The socio-economic changes depicted above pose mounting difficulties for the central state to maintain effective control over its subjects through incentivisation alone. Managing online activities has been particularly difficult due to their enormous volume. To prevent the Internet from becoming a breeding ground for opposition and disharmony, the Chinese state introduced an extensive censorship scheme, which in turn gave rise to a new type of language management institution.

Internet Censorship and Selective Governance

Language is a crucial vehicle for political control and activism. So it is not surprising to see that the state's attempts to control internet activism have, in effect, become a form of language management. Planned in the late 1990s, the internet censorship system in China is arguably the most sophisticated in the world, with a wide range of techniques being deployed, including Access Control List (ACL) control, Domain Name Servers (DNS) blocking, Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) hijacking, and keyword filtering.[344] Sophisticated as they may appear, their ultimate purposes are rather straight forward—to identify and block online website and contents that the state considers problematic. Consequently, they can be categorised in terms of their relevance to language management. Website blocking, commonly known as "The Great Firewall of China," has little to do with language management because once the decision to block a website (such as Facebook) has been made; the entire website will be blocked regardless of its linguistic content. On the contrary, content

[343] Scott Moore, "Hydropolitics and central-local relations in China: the pursuit of localized preferences in a centralized system," *The China Quarterly*, forthcoming.
[344] Guangchao Charles Feng and Steve Zhongshi Guo, "Tracing the route of China's Internet censorship: An empirical study," *Telematics and Informatics* Vol. 30, No. 4 (2013), pp. 335–345.

censorship is a form of language management because it is triggered by the linguistic behaviour of the Internet users. It either stops users from posting or searching text that contain banned words or phrases, or removes contents that are objectionable in the view of the censors.[345]

Nationwide censorship schemes can also be distinguished from regional schemes. The latter can take place at organisational, city, and provincial levels. Many local telecom providers and governments have their own censorship scheme. As a result, people living in different cities are likely to experience different levels of blocking. In the same vein, content censorship, if conducted manually, is likely to exhibit variations between censors. The majority of blocking, however, arises at the national level. Censorship at this level is more centralised, with eight major cities—namely, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Nanjing, Wuhan, Shenyang, Chengdu, and Xi'an severing as the pivotal nodes of the network to which all the network nodes in other cities are linked. Furthermore, before domestic requests for foreign websites go out or overseas requests for websites inside China come in, they have to pass through the international Internet gateways, which are mostly owned by the two largest operators—China Telecom (*Zhongguo dianxin* 中国电信) and China Unicom (*Zhongguo liantong* 中国联通)—with international Internet gateways in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. It is at this level that keyword filtering is most intense. Through its national network of administrative offices, the state propaganda machine compiles the blacklist, and issues it to departments of lower ranks, such as State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, and Ministry of Cultural Affairs, directing them to intercept foreign media or information accordingly.[346] Table 6.1 presents a typology of internet censorship techniques.

[345] Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, "How censorship in China allows government criticism but silences collective expression," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 107, No. 2 (2013), pp. 326-343.
[346] Feng and Guo, "Tracing the route of China's Internet censorship."

Since I am only interested in language management, my focus will be on techniques that are national and linguistic—the word filtering system.

Table 6.1 Types of major blocking mechanisms deployed by the State

	Linguistic	**Non-linguistic**
Nationwide	Filtering keywords	Blocking websites
Regional	Manual content censorship	Blocking websites

Word Filtering as Language Management

Unlike the previous language management programmes discussed in this thesis, the main state organisation responsible for the word filtering programme is the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. Of course, this does not mean that the role of the Language Commission has been completely diminished. Instead, due to the all-encompassing nature of the Internet, the Ministry of Education, to which the Language Commission belongs, as well as other ministries such as the Central Publicity (or Propaganda) Department, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Ministry of Culture were often involved in the planning and implementation of the censorship scheme. In fact, since the majority of communications on the Internet are text-based and the filtering system can only screen out characters that are already in its database, language standardisation often goes hand-in-hand with the effective operation of the word filtering system. The interweaving relationship between internet security and language standardisation became evident when a spokesperson from the Language Commission mentioned in a press conference that "as the Internet becomes popular…so does the non-prescriptive usage of characters, which hampers the standard of the

common language of our country, and increases the difficulty in maintaining internet security."[347]

The widespread use of keyword filtering technique in internet censorship probably began in 2002.[348] Observers reveal that the filtering system will be triggered when users seek a web address (URL) or share contents that contain sensitive keywords. URL filtering targets searches through search engines like Baidu and Google. It blocks attempts to retrieve any URL containing words or phrases that are deemed to be inappropriate by the state. In addition to being redirected to an error page which shows no result or an error message (e.g. 404—Not Found), netizens who search with those keywords may also experience a "timeout" period of five to 30 minutes during which either the target site or even all sites (including otherwise-unfiltered sites) became inaccessible. And even when the page does not feature a URL with sensitive search terms, it might nonetheless be inaccessible if the page itself contained any of those terms. According to Zittrain and Edelman, such pages are often "truncated"—i.e. interrupted midway through their display.[349] As such, the keyword filtering system manifests a selective form of language management. Whereas the list of sensitive keywords sets the boundary of free communication, the "timeout" periods and interruptions associated with the use of sensitive keywords penalise netizens who breach that boundary. It is therefore not surprising for Zittrain and Edelman—after conducting numerous tests with the word filtering system—to conclude that the system can "train" internet users to avoid using sensitive terms, and change their linguistic practices in the long run.[350]

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[347] Liang Jie, "Guojia yuwei da jizhe wen: xinban tongyong guifan hanzi geng jie deqi" ("State Language Commission: 'the new version of prescriptive characters is more down-to-earth'") (28 August 2013), *Zhongguo jiaoyu xinwenwang* (*China Education News*), available at: http://www.jyb.cn/china/gnxw/201308/t20130828_549628.html (accessed 12 October 2013).
[348] Jonathan Zittrain and Benjamin Edelman, "Internet filtering in China," *Internet Computing, IEEE,* Vol. 7, No. 2 (2003), pp. 70-77.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid.

The contents of the list shift from time to time and are not publicly disclosed. Yet, a document released in 2004 by some Chinese hackers which is believed to be one of the keyword lists used for online filtering has allowed observers to get a glimpse of the actual operation of the keyword filtering system.[351] Given the political nature of language in China, as well as the potential threat of online activism to regime survival, it is not surprising that political terms account for the largest proportion (around 80 per cent) of sensitive words on the list. To be more specific, these are words that are believed to be commonly used in critical discourses against the state, including Falungong related concepts (e.g. master 师父), "Western" political ideas (e.g. democracy 民主), nationalistic issues (e.g. defending Diaoyu Island 保钓), as well as names of Chinese political leaders, dissidents, and intellectuals.[352]

Conclusion

When compared to previous language management institutions, the word filtering system represents another type of language management, in which the state selectively exercises its power in manipulating human linguistic behaviour. With selective management, the state controls the information which is regarded as vital to its interests but allows social forces to freely access other information.[353] Unlike top-down or incentivising institutions which are created to promote a holistic set of language rules, namely the "prescriptive language," selective institutions only target at a confined area of language at a specific period of time. Instead of upholding a static account of linguistic correctness, operators of the keyword filtering system update the list of banned words frequently in response to the

[351] Xiao Qiang, "A list of censored words in Chinese cyberspace" (30 August 2004), *China Digital Times*, http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2004/08/the-words-you-never-see-in-chinese-cyberspace/ (accessed 13 September 2013).
[352] For a full list of the words, see Qiang, "A list of censored words in Chinese cyberspace."
[353] Yongnian Zheng, "The political cost of information control in China: the nation-state and governance," in Xiaoling Zhang and Yongnian Zheng (eds.), *China's Information and Communications Technology Revolution: Social Changes and State Responses* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 143.

outbreak of political events, as well as the changing behaviours of the netizens. The boundaries of "legitimate" language can shift quickly.

Tracing the institutional evolution of language management in China, the rise of selective management clearly exhibits how the political elites have tried to cope with the defects of the incentivising institutions, which are intensified by the steady decentralisation of economic and communication resources in the 2000s. The diffusion of the Internet has transformed the way people communicate in China. Instead of relying on a central agency for dissimilating information, the Internet has allowed enormous amount of information to be exchanged between individuals. Through the Internet, individuals are no longer mere receivers of messages from the elites; instead, they become capable of disseminating messages and communicate information among themselves. To be more specific, the Internet provides a vital platform for multidirectional and continuous flow of interactive information among different actors in the society, thus granting them considerable autonomy from the central state.[354] The incentivising institutions designed specifically for co-opting market actors can hardly respond to these new actors who are driven by more diverse interests. The ascent of the Internet in China gave rise to a more complicated linguistic landscape in which ordinary people can enter the electronic public sphere with little cost. Due to the high volume of communication and diversified interests of the population, the state can only identify key areas for intensive management.

To a certain extent, the word filtering system in the internet era exhibits the characteristics of what Ong coins as "zoning technologies," through which the state creates different zones of governing regimes within the broader landscape of normalised rule, and

[354] Castells, *Communication Power*, p. 23.

thus "generating a pattern of variegated but linked sovereignty."[355] Although Ong's concern is mostly on geographical zoning of economic and political entities, such as the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), it is clear that the technique can also be applied to manage human communication. While Chinese netizens enjoy various freedoms of expression in the internet era, the list of prohibited words, in essence, defines the boundaries of communication that are deemed to be "exceptional"—in the name of obscenity or national security—and thus can be legitimately controlled by the state. This technique not only provides the state with flexibility to respond to the changing political environment in the internet era, but also allows it to concentrate its resources to issues that it deems more crucial—such as collective expressions of political demands.[356]

Of course, the boundaries of the "zones" on the Internet are far more ambiguous and arbitrary because—unlike the boundaries of SEZs—the list of sensitive keywords is not disclosed to the public and is revised from time to time. In fact, today scholars are still investigating the patterns of blocking in the Chinese censorship system. The ambiguities embedded in the filtering system gives rise to two possibilities. One is that such ambiguities will magnify the regulatory power of the filtering system. This is because netizens, being uncertain about the boundaries of permissible communication, may be intimidated into censoring their own web content. According to the research of Stern and Hassid, this is preciously how the Chinese state manages to keep journalists and lawyers in line with the state agenda with limited use of coercion.[357]

Another possibility, which seems to fit the evidence that will be presented in the next chapter better, is that those ambiguities will foster the invention of alterative communication

[355] Aihwa Ong, "The Chinese axis: zoning technologies and variegated sovereignty," *Journal of East Asian Studies* Vol.4, No.1 (2004), pp. 69–96.
[356] King, Pan, and Roberts, "How censorship in China allows government criticismbut silences collective expression."
[357] Rachel E. Stern and Jonathan Hassid, "Amplifying silence: uncertainty and control parables in contemporary China," *Comparative Political Studies* Vol. 46, No. 9 (2012), pp. 1230-1254.

systems. As most experts of Chinese internet censorship observe, the biggest loophole of the selective management scheme is that it can only censor a specific list of linguistic resources at a time, no matter how frequently it is updated. However, human beings can use multiple ways to convey the same meaning. The obscure principles according to which the state compiles its filtering word list imbues netizens with a sense of uncertainty, and thus further encouraged them to look for unconventional ways of communication. It is therefore not surprising to observe the rise of "internet language" in the 21st century. And I will explore this phenomenon in greater detail in the following chapter.

7

Toward an Interactive Approach to Language Management

Internet Language as a Form of Institutional Layering

> The invention of Chinese characters should have been a collective event. Back in the age when there was no authoritarian power, everyone could be Cangjie (仓颉).[358] Characters invented by ordinary people pictorially depicted their object, and were established by popular usage. It was not until Qin eliminated the other six states, and used its state apparatus to promote Qin language, that the popular word creation movement was terminated.
>
> —Yu Shaolei, *Zao wenzi de fan* (*A Linguistic Rebellion*), 2011[359]

Yu Shaolei (余少镭), a keen advocate of internet language and a popular columnist of *Southern Metropolis Daily* (*Nanfang dshi bao* 南方都市报), offers a romantic—if not unrealistic—interpretation of the origin of Chinese characters. In fact, long before Qin's attempt to promote a standardised writing system across the territories it acquired in the 3rd century BC, the rights to use, acquire, and invent characters had already been exclusive only to a handful of powerful political elites, such as the royal priestly class and the aristocrats. Archeological evidence suggests that, for example, in the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600 - 1046 BC), characters were mainly used in religious activities and were considered key to understanding the supernatural order, which was a crucial source of legitimacy in the ancient period.[360] In other words, characters were symbols of political power and were not accessible

[358] Cangjie is a legendary figure in ancient China, and was claimed to be the inventor of Chinese characters.
[359] Yu Shaolei, *Zao wenzi de fan: yige caomin de zaozi yundong* (*A Linguistic Rebellion: the Word Creation Movement of an Ordinary Citizen*), (Guangzhou: Huacheng Press, 2011), p. 3.
[360] David Curtis Wright, *The History of China* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2011), p. 14.

by the public. And contrary to Yu's assertion, this monopoly of literacy was largely not a result of state coercion, because centralised bureaucratic administration had not been developed until the Warring States period (481-221 B.C.).[361] Structural factors, instead, played a more important role. In a society with multiple spoken languages, establishing a writing system that can spread across time and space is costly. New characters or words require certain platforms—such as dictionaries, textbooks, and propaganda—to be disseminated in a population. Also, to avoid confusion, rules concerning their usage need to be applied consistently across different communities.[362] These are all very costly infrastructures that ordinary people could hardly afford. In other words, the communication technology and sociolinguistic landscape of the day simply did not encourage characters to be invented by ordinary people casually.

Yu's view of the origin of characters is heavily influenced by his experience with the Internet, on which language usage is, in Baron's words, "anything but conventional or constrained."[363] Language play is routine. The Internet provides platforms, such as chatgroups, for individuals to express their personal opinions and characters, often of an extreme kind.[364] The spontaneous creation of new characters, words, and grammar structures by Chinese netizens has caught media attention since as early as 1998, when the phenomenon of netizens inventing such linguistic resources as acronyms of pinyin or English, and using them effectively in their everyday communication was first observed.[365] Many of them, as seen in Table 7.1 which lists examples of linguistic resources produced by a variety of techniques in the late-1990s to mid-2000s, were created to shorten the time of communication.

[361] Edgar Kiser and Yong Cai, "War and bureaucratization in Qin China: exploring an anomalous case," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (2003), p. 511.
[362] A similar account can be found in Einar Haugen, "Dialect, language, nation," *American Anthropologist* Vol. 68, No. 4 (1966), p. 932.
[363] Naomi S. Baron, "Language of the Internet," in Ali Farghali (ed.) *The Stanford Handbook for Language Engineers* (Pala Alto, CA: CSLI Publications, 2003), p. 63
[364] David Crystal, *Language and the Internet* (2nd ed.) (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.168.
[365] Min Dahong, "Wangluo shijie zhong de yuyan" ("Language on the Internet"), *Hulianwang Zhoukan* (*China Netweek*), No. 6 (1998), p. 61.

These techniques were useful primarily because Chinese characters are difficult to type, and the cost of using the Internet was calculated by the time one spends online.[366] Therefore, to speed up typing, netizens have developed a range of linguistic items among themselves, mainly in informal communications, such as chatgroups, BBS, etc. Of course, internet language in China evolved not just for convenience; it is also a tool for netizens to evade state censorship since the keyword filtering system stops them from posting or searching text that contain banned words or phrases. In this sense, the rise of internet language serves as a form of institutional layering because it provides an additional avenue for the netizens to communicate sensitive massages.

Table 7.1 Examples of linguistic resources invented by netizens

	Internet words/ symbols	Meaning	Technique used
1.	T-T	Crying	Symbol
2.	BTW	By the way	Acronyms of English words
3.	CU	See you	Homophones & Acronyms
4.	tmd	Foul language (他媽的)	Acronyms of Chinese pinyin
5.	sjb	Mental illness (*shenjingbing* 神经病)	Acronyms of Chinese pinyin
6.	sg	Handsome guy (*shuaige* 帅哥)	Acronyms of Chinese pinyin
7.	7456	Extreme anger (*qisi woliao* 气死我了)	Homophones
8.	米国	USA	Homophones
9.	H 国	Korea (*hanguo*)	Homophones & Acronyms
10.	GCD0 是在说/	The Communist Party (*gongchandang* 共产党)	Homophones
11.	537	I am angry (*wo shengqi* 我生气)	Homophones
12.	殃视	Central Television (*yangshi* 央视)	Homophones
13.	語ㄚ文ㄚ測ㄚ試 [1]	Language test	Chrysanthemum script
14.	钚缃信ye否有痈	Useless to be sceptical (*bu xiangxin ye meiyou yong* 不相信也没有用)	Martian Script
15.	17 斗 4 幻 j	Everything is illusion (*yiqie doushi huanjue* 一切都是幻觉)	Martian Script

Note:
[1] Produced by the author using an online translator: http://www.toolmao.com/tool/juhuawen.htm

[366] Xie bo, "wangluo shijie zhong de yuyan" ("Language in the cyber world"), *Hulianwang zhoukan* (*China Netweek*), 21 September 1998, p.61.

While most of these examples of language play do not challenge the state directly, through everyday practice, they gradually evolved into what Yang recognises as "rituals" that accelerate the speed and scale of contention through providing channels for the expression of identities and solidarity.[367] Two are specifically worth noting. The first is the ritual of invention. As mentioned, inventing new linguistic resources can be time-consuming. However, throughout the years the netizens have developed a number of techniques to efficiently perform this task. In terms of primary ideas for invention, they have learnt to move beyond the traditional language rules and acquire resources from a wide range of sources such as pinyin, traditional Chinese characters, dialect, algebra, and foreign languages (e.g. English, Korean and Japanese) characters. In terms of formulation, again, a variety of means have been developed. In addition to the uses of acronyms and homophones, netizens even managed to invent new scripts of writing. The "chrysanthemum script" (*juhuawen* 菊花文, see example 13), for instant, is a font that first began to be used on Tencent microblogs. Basically, it is just a combination flowery symbols and Chinese characters, and can be easily read by Chinese readers.[368] This sets them apart from the so-called "Martian Script" (*huoxingwen* 火星文, see examples 14-15 in Table 7.2), which is probably the most sophisticated formulation.[369] Literally referring to the language of Martian, the Martian Script is an assembly of symbols that—in the most extreme cases—cannot be understood without specialised translation tools. Despite its apparent complexity, the Martian Script shares a similar root with other forms of language play in that it was originally invented to speed up communication and evade censorship.[370] To facilitate mass production and dissemination of

[367] Yang, *The Power of the Internet in China*, pp. 64, 83-84.
[368] "Chrysanthemum script," *China Digital Times*, available at: https://meilizhongguo.biz/space/Chrysanthemum_script (accessed 13 January 2013).
[369] Jiong de, "Wangluo wenhua zhong de xinyuyan" ("New language in internet culture"), *Zhongguo qingnian keji* (*Science and China Youth Technology*), No. 3 (1997), p. 37.
[370] Zuo Mingxia, "Huoxingwen de lailong qumai" ("The ins and outs of Martian Script"), *Yuwen xuexi* (*Language Learning*), Vol. 12 (2007), p. 69.

the script, netizens later engineered online as well as downloadable input systems.[371] There are also manuals compiled by bloggers to assist other netizens in inventing their own characters or script.[372]

The second ritual that evolves over time is acceptance, through which a newly invented language resource is decoded and circulated among a group of users. This is important because a new script is not likely to proceed very far unless it can be decoded conveniently. To help decoding those scripts, netizens compile online dictionaries and developed numerous online platforms. Blogs have played a particularly crucial role because they allow readers to comment, and often contain links to other blogs and sites, allowing netizens to form a dynamic and interconnected community—the "blogosphere"—in the process of compiling online databases. As next section will demonstrate, this community has been a major power engineering the word creation campaign in 2009. In addition to blogs, there are also websites, such as *Daheiyu* (大黑鱼, www.wdnd.cn/), offering instant translation service to help readers decode Martian Script. However, due to the complexity of the scripts, even these online tools cannot always perfectly decode them. Decoding internet language often requires profound knowledge of internet culture, as well as imagination and creativity. This makes internet language a partial social identity marker. As the remainder of this chapter will argue, through those practices, a new sense of identity has been evolved in the cyber world, which gradually increased the cost to the state to manage language. The power of such rituals was particularly impressive as we consider the events in 2009, during which the state tried to regain its control over the Internet through language management, but was beset with powerful resistance from the Internet.

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[371] They are available on such websites as *Huoxingyu* (*Martian Language*), http://www.huoxingyu.com/, (accessed 19 January 2013).

[372] See, for example, Hao Tian, "Ruhe caineng kandong huoxingwen?" ("How to read the Martian Script?") (1 October 2009), *Sina Blog*, available at: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_5ecf8daa0100eeh2.html (19 January 2013).

Grass-mud Horse, Rebellion, and the "Passive" Generation

The Chinese state has aggressively monitored traffic on the Internet since the late 1990s, but the oversight increased markedly in December 2008, after a pro-democracy movement led by highly regarded intellectuals, Charter 08, released an online petition calling for an end to the Communist Party's monopoly on power.[373] Shortly afterward, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Ministry of Culture, together with four other state departments, launched a nationwide campaign against "Internet pornography and other forms of deviance" (*Zhengzhi hulianwang disu zhifeng xingdong* 整治互联网低俗之风行动).[374] In practice, of course, not only were web sites, blogs, forums, and cell phone text messages that feature pornographic or obscene contents removed, but those that contained political and other sensitive issues were also blocked. As a result, by mid-February 2009, it was reported that the state had shut down more than 1,900 web sites and 250 blogs—including *bullog.com* (*Niubo wang* 牛博网), a widely read forum of which liberal-minded bloggers had written in detail about Charter 08.

The state's anti-smut campaign triggered a new wave of resistance, mostly facilitated by a newly invented wordand mythic icon—the grass-mud horse (*Caonima* 草泥马). Ostensibly referring to a mythical creature, it was actually a code word for its near homophone, "f**k your mother," in obvious mockery of the state's campaign against obscenity. Netizens, quickly and collectively expanded the popularity of grass-mud horse by creating catchy songs and fake nature documentaries on YouTube and other video sharing

[373] Michael Wines, "A dirty pun tweaks China's online censors," *The New York Times*, 11 March 2009.
[374] Yi Shi, "Ruhe jian changxiao? qi bumen liangjian, hulianwang di er pi disu wangzhan puguang" ("How to achieve long-term result? Seven departments take action and the second list of obscene websites is exposed") (9 January 2009), *Xinhua Net*, available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/forum/2009-01/09/content_10626964.htm (accessed 19 January 2013).

sites.[375] They also invented other mythical creatures (*shenshou* 神兽) that sound the same as Chinese profanities or sensitive words, forming an "ecosystem of grass-mud horse."[376] The political nature of grass-mud horse, and its homophonic twin—the "river crab" (*hexie* 河蟹), as a vehicle of netizens' discontent has been well documented by many recent studies.[377] The mythical "river crab" heaped particular scorn on Hu Jintao's "Harmonious society" (*hexie shehui* 和谐社会), in the name of which much internet censorship was presumed to have taken place. As this practice became fashionable, the state censored the word "harmonious" on the Internet as well.[378]

In a similar vein, during the popularisation of grass-mud horse, netizens codified the meaning and usage of the word, allowing more people to join the language play. A lengthy article published in the early 2009 on the grass-mud horse on *Baidu Encyclopedia* (*Baidu baike* 百度百科), the Chinese equivalent of Wikipedia, was believed to be one of the triggers of the popularity of the word. Written in an encyclopaedic style, the article allowed other netizens to grasp the meaning of the word conveniently. The crowd-sourced format of *Baidu Encyclopedia* also enabled netizens to collectively edit and expand the contents of the entry. As such, the rise of the grass-mud horse exemplifies how the everyday behaviour of numerous individuals has gradually accumulated power for them to resist a powerful state.

The saga of the grass-mud horse reached a new peak when netizens produced an online video "Song of Grass-mud Horse" (*Caonima zhige* 草泥马之歌) in which the grass-mud horses were said to go into battle with, and eventually defeated, the river crabs.

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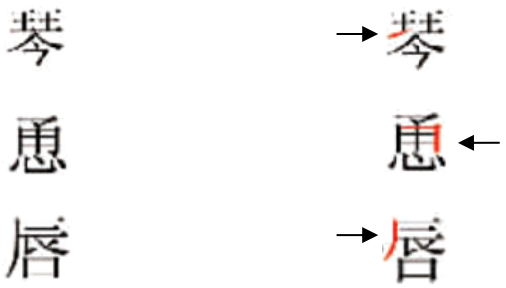
[375] "Grass-mud horse," *China Digital Times*, available at: https://meilizhongguo.biz/space/Grass-mud_horse (accessed 19 January 2013).
[376] The Digital Times has maintained a good collection of the creatures, see: https://meilizhongguo.biz/space/Grass-Mud_Horse_Lexicon
[377] See, for example, Perry Link and Xiao Qiang, "China at the Tipping Point? From 'fart people' to citizens," *Journal of Democracy* Vol.24, No.1 (2013), pp. 79-85.
[378] "The grass-mud horse, online censorship, and China's national identity: an interview with Xiao Qiang" (5 December 2012), *Website of the UC Berkeley School of Information*, available at: http://www.ischool.berkeley.edu/newsandevents/news/20121205grassmudhorse (accessed 18 April 2013).

According to Lam, an expert on Chinese internet censorship, as a result of the popularity of the video, forum and website mangers were told on 18 March by the Chinese censor team that "the issue has been elevated to a political level."[379] On 23 March, Youtube was blocked in China. Seven days later, the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television issued a directive to highlight 31 categories of content prohibited online, including violence, pornography, and content which may "incite ethnic discrimination or undermine social stability." Following the state's directive, most Chinese essays and blog postings made about the Grass Mud Horse, including the entry on *Baidu Encyclopedia*, have been removed from the Internet after being discovered by the state censors.[380]

The apparent success of the state did not last long. A few months later, another wave of linguistic resistance was sparked by the Ministry of Education and State Language Commission's decision to reform Chinese characters. On 12 August, the state unveiled a list of standardised Chinese characters in common usage, including 44 characters that were slightly revised to solicit public opinions on them. Language officials claimed that they had spent eight years to review 8,300 commonly-used Chinese characters, and found that 44 of them needed to be revised so that they could be consistent to the rules of Song typeface, a standard typeface used in China.[381] Revisions were mostly minor, including changes to the angles and length of the writing strokes (Table 7.2).

[379] Oiwan Lam, "China: Goodbye Grass Mud Horse," *Global Voices* (18 March 2009), available at: http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/03/18/china-goodbye-grass-mud-horse/, (accessed 19 January 2013).
[380] Vivian Wu, "Censors strike at internet content after parody hit," *South China Morning Post*, 3 April 2009.
[381] Chen Siwu, "Rewriting the rules of language triggers controversy," *China Daily* (28 August 2009), available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-08/28/content_8628161.htm, (accessed 19 January 2013).

Table 7.2 Examples of character revisions proposed by the State

Original	**Revised**
	

Note:
The revised areas are marked by arrows.
Source:
"44 ge hanzi zheng xing kai zheng minyi; shimin danxin yao huan shenfenzheng" ("Consultation regarding the revision of 44 characters") (26 August 2009), *Xinhua Net*, available at: http://www.yn.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2009-08/26/content_17507951.htm (12 October 2013)

Although officials at the Ministry of Education claimed to be codifying already widely accepted writing habits, criticisms swept Chinese cyberspace in the form of more satiric language play.[382] On 31 August, a blogger who claimed to have mastered the "essence" of the state's proposal invented three new characters. Unlike the Martian Script, the new characters can be understood without much explanation because they were combinations of existing Chinese characters.[383] For example, the invented character **𤣩** (*nan*) was obviously a combination of two existing characters—**脑** (*nao*, brain) and **残** (*can*, handicap)—that make up the word, or internet meme, "mentally challenged" (*naocan* 脑残). To make the character even more satirical, the blogger also prepared a dictionary-like explanation for each

[382] "44 ge hanzi 'zhengxing' gefang jibian buxiu, gaokaosheng keneng yao liushen?" ("Controversies over the reform of 44 characters; A-Level candidates may need to be careful"), *Yangcheng Wanbao* (*Yangcheng Evening News*), 2 March 2010.
[383] Interview GD02, an internet activist, interview conducted on 15 May 2012 via QQ.

characters invented. As for the character *nan*, it was defined as "extraordinary" aesthetic and intellectual capacities.[384]

This practice was soon followed by other netizens. Whereas some of them extended the satire by revising the shape of English characters (Table 7.3), [385] others followed the existing rituals and set up infrastructures to codify the ways of invention and explanation. Influential bloggers collected interesting new characters, wrote essays summarising the ways of invention, and invited their readers to create and share their own characters.[386] By doing so, their blogs served as platforms for communicating new ideas and grievances. Furthermore, there were also efforts to connect the new character movements to current affairs by conducting psuedo-archaeological genealogies of self-invented characters. Activists saw these "investigations" as opportunities to criticise social and political affairs in a subtle way.[387] Yu Shaolei, the aforementioned columnist, was probably the most influential activist in this movement. From 2009 to 2011, Yu invented more than a hundred of Chinese characters—each of them was accompanied by a psuedo-archaeological explanation in his column in *Southern Metropolis Daily* satirising social and political problems. These articles were then widely circulated on the Internet, echoing the booming grassroots online character creation movement.

[384]Hua Jingyan, "Wangyou zichuang hanzi e'gao wenzi zhengxing feng jiaoyubu xiazheteng" ("Netizens create characters to mock the Ministry of Education for its time-wasting character reform"), *Xinkuaibao* (*New Express Daily*), 2 September 2009.
[385] Meng Mu, "Hanzi zhengxing jiujing zheteng liaoshui?" ("Who have been troubled by the character reform?"), *Sina News* (10 September 2009), available at: http://news.sina.com.cn/pl/2009-09-10/100118621143.shtml (accessed 19 January 2013).
[386] See, for example, Zhuo Bielin, "Zaozi bing bunan, dajia yiqi lai!" ("Creating characters is easy. Everyone please try!") (25 October 2009), *Sina Blog*, available at: http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_5c6dde2f0100fu5f.html (accessed 19 January 2013).
[387] Interview GD02.

Table 7.3 Examples of English character revisions proposed by the netizens

Original	Revised	Original	Revised
A		H	
E		P	
O		Q	
V		Z	

Source:

Zhao Jian, "Wangyou zichuang hanzi egao wenzi zheng xing; feng jiaoyu bu xia zheteng" ("Netizens invent new characters to mock the Ministry of Education") (2 September 2009), *Sohu News*, available at: http://news.sohu.com/20090902/n266379960.shtml (accessed 12 October 2013).

As Yu has rightly commented in his writings, the word creation movement in 2009 was a de facto grassroots rebellion in the linguistic realm, in which the authority of the state to create and define characters was challenged by ordinary citizens. Through the movement, participants not only expressed their refusal of obedience to the state's proposal, but also partially subverted the power of the state in language management. Under the cover of the new characters, activists could express their criticisms toward current or historical events that would otherwise be considered politically sensitive by authorities. For example, through inventing a character 兇(*xiong*),[388] which is a combination of the characters 血(*xue*, blood) and 死(*si*, death), Yu conveyed his scepticism regarding the official death count during the 1958-61 famine that followed the Great Leap Forward. Despite media censorship, he was able to publish those characters—as well as their "explanation"—in his column in *Southern Metropolis Daily* without experiencing significant, if any, intervention from the state.[389]

[388] Yu, *Zao wenzi de fan: yige caomin de zaozi yundong*, p. 65.
[389] Interview with Yu in May 2012. Name is disclosed with Yu's permission.

The movement this time achieved partial success. Although state language officials insisted that their proposal received support from the majority, they nevertheless withdrew the proposal at the end of the consultation period. Informants suggested that due to fierce resistance from the society, the proposal might be abandoned forever.[390] State media such as *Xinhua Wan* (*Xinhua Wang* 新华网) also maintained an indifferent, or even critical, attitude toward the proposal, suggesting that it had not secured unanimous support among major central state leaders.[391] Compared to the grass-mud horse case that unfolded earlier in 2009, the outcome of the word creation campaign was more favourable to the netizens in that the language organ of the state eventually gave up, or at least slowed down, its plan to reform Chinese characters. To understand the causes of variation in the degree of success, it is important to consider the sensitivity of the issues concerned, as well as the institutions that the movements were challenging. The grass-mud horse attracted significant foreign attention and was perceived by the Party as a direct challenge of its legitimacy to rule. As such, it triggered a strong and unanimous response from the state system. In contrast, the word creation movement targeted mostly a particular policy of the state, in which case only certain offices (e.g. the Language Work Commission) had the incentive to suppress. The power generated by the movement was thus sufficient to influence the state's decision.

In addition to homophones and characters, traditional grammar rules can also be bent to expand the freedom of expression of ordinary citizens. And the year 2009 witnessed the power of such technique when netizens applied it to the character "bei" (被). In traditional grammar rules, "bei" is a preposition, and has to be used in conjunction with a range of verbs to signify a passive action (like "be" in English). But netizens turned it to convey a sense of

[390] Li Xiaoming, "Jiaoyubu: hanzi diaozheng yin fandui shengyin jiaoduo, keneng buhui gai" ("The Ministry of Education: the character reform might be abandoned because of oppositions"), *Xinwen Chenbao* (*Shanghai Morning Post*), 1 September 2009.
[391] Ji Xuetao, "Hanzi zhengxing shuyu zhuanjia xia manghuo" (Character reform is a meaningless endeavour of experts), *Xinhua Wan* (*Xinhau Net*) (23 August 2009), available at: http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/comments/2009-08/23/content_11927038.htm, accessed (19 January 2013).

helplessness in deciding one's own fate. It was probably originated when an official investigation said Li Guofu, a businessman in eastern Anhui Province who had petitioned the central government over local abuses of power, "committed suicide" in a local detention centre. Doubting the official account, netizens invented the term "being suicided*"* (*bei zisha* 被自杀) to expose the lack of transparency in the investigation.[392] Since then, the character "bei" has been used to illustrate people's frustration when confronting powerful administrative force or mainstream ideas. For example, people used "being volunteered" (*bei ziyuan* 被自愿) to ridicule state actors who forced others to do something while alleging they do it voluntarily. Unemployed college graduates and job seekers also used the word "being found a job" (*bei jiuye* 被就业) to express their doubts toward the official employment statistics which boosted a low unemployment rate.

Contrary to the fate of the grass-mud horse, *bei* was not banned by the state. Instead, it was widely reported by state media such as the *People's Daily*, and was later even recognised in a state-run poll of buzzwords, Chinese Inventory (*hanyu pandian* 汉语盘点), in which the character was selected as the "domestic character of the year." In explaining the election result, the organisers stated that the popularity of the character "reflects the people's desires for civil rights and responsibilities in name as well as in reality."[393] The response of the state made some Chinese optimists believe that the state began to "recognise the rise of right conscious of the people."[394]

It is of course premature to conclude that the Chinese state has indeed recognised the creative communicative rights of its subjects, but the three cases presented in this section

[392] "Passive voice employed by ordinary Chinese to call for freedom" (16 February 2010), *English.news.cn*, available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/indepth/2010-02/16/c_13176690.htm (accessed 19 January 2013).
[393] Gui jie, Shi Xisheng, and Liu Xiao, "'Bei' dangxuan hanyu pandian niandu zi: 2009, ni 'bei' liao ma?" ("'bei' is chosen as the character of the year. Have you been 'bei' in 2009?"), *Zhongguo Qingnian Bao* (*China Youth Daily*), 9 February 2010.
[394] "Passive voice employed by ordinary Chinese to call for freedom."

vividly demonstrate the how language play of the grassroots, facilitated by the introduction of the Internet, gradually accumulated power overtime, have eventually allowed them to exert considerable influence or constraints over the actions of the state actors. To be more specific, first of all, those language plays have increased the costs of censorship. Automated censorship programmes such as keyword filtering have proved ineffective in blocking sensitive massages as they can be bypass by the netizens' creative use of language. Consequently, most of the censorship has to be conducted manually, which greatly increases the monitoring cost to the state. According to King, Pan and Roberts, to censor the cyber world manually, approximately 20,000–50,000 internet police and internet monitors as well as an estimated 250,000–300,000 "50 cent party members" at all levels of the state— central, provincial, and local—are hired by the state.[395] And despite this huge investment by authorities, the redundancy of clusters and links in the cyber world forms a networked information environment that makes absolute top-down control of content nearly impossible.[396] On 8 September 2011, Liu Yunshan (刘云山), Head of the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee, went on the record as saying that China is facing a "crisis in internet management," and that the state cannot completely control over five hundred million Chinese netizens.[397]

This has an even more significant implication on language management institution, for it is simply impossible for the language organs of the state to censor linguistic correctness on the Internet manually—doing so will require a huge team of linguists. As such, the cost of

[395] King, Pan, and Roberts, "How censorship in China allows government criticismbut silences collective expression," p. 326.
[396] Xiao Qiang, "The battle for Chinese Internet," in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds.), *Liberation Technology: Social Media and the Struggle for Democracy* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 65.
[397] Tong Qian, "Zhongxuanbu zhang Liu Yunshan chengren guan bu liao wuyi wangmin" ("Head of the Propaganda Department of the CPC Central Committee admits that he cannot manage five hundred million Chinese netizens") (8 September 2011), *BBC Chinese*, available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/zhongwen/trad/chinese_news/2011/09/110908_china_netizens_control.shtml (accessed 19 January 2013).

maintaining a hierarchical language management institution—in which the state has the sole authority to define linguistic correctness—has become unsustainable, prompting the state to reinvent its linguistic institution.

Toward an Interactive Approach of Language Management

In fact, when put into a comparative perspective, the year 2009 was a telling case of the dramatic change in the relationship between the state and society in the linguistic realm. Primarily motivated by the desires to speed up communication and evade censorship, the netizens constructed a range of infrastructures and rituals that were later evolved into campaigns with considerable effectiveness in attaching new linguistic elements to the language rules formulated by the state. As this thesis posits, the everyday language play performed by the netizens has nuffilied the automated keyword filtering system and thus increased the cost to the state to maintain a hierarchical institution for language management. Consequently, while the state has continued to maintain its selective censorship system, the internet era has also witnessed the birth of a new set of language institutions. Since 2005, the Ministry of Education has created the Research Center of State Language Commission (*Guojia yuwei keyan jidi* 国家语委科研基地), under which a range of research institutes were hosted. The State Linguistic Resources Monitoring and Research Center (*Guojia yuyan ziyuan jiance yu yanjiu zhongxin* 国家语言资源监测与研究中心, LRMRC hereafter), the chief organiser of the aforementioned poll (Chinese Inventory), was among them. Unlike their predecessors, the design of these new institutions is neither "top-down" nor "incentivising," but is mostly "interactive." An interactive institution, according to Torfing and his, focuses on the complex process through which a plurality of state and non-state actors with diverging interests interact in order to formulate, promote, and achieve certain

common objectives.[398] Two characteristics of interactive institutions are particularly apparent in the Chinese case.

First, compare to other types of institutions, interactive institutions are less elitist in nature.[399] While both top-down and incentivising institutions rely heavily on linguists or political elites in formulating standards of "proper" language, interactive institutions see them only as one of the possible sources of authority. The process of defining correctness within an interactive institution is a process of social construction in which a wide range of actors—experts, state actors, and citizens—can serve as knowledge providers. This interconnection is addressed vividly in an article written by Li Yuming (李宇明), head of LRMRC, in which he stressed that in the internet era, "the subjects of setting language standards need to be diversified. In addition to the state, academic organisations, and standardisation committee, we need to promote private enterprises and individuals to give their suggestions."[400] Li's proposal was later echoed by Yuan Guiren (袁贵仁) in 2004, when he served as the director of the State Language Commission:

> Since the establishment of new China, our country has made significant—and sometimes historical—progress in language education, language standards construction, linguistic information processing technology, and policy making. However, most of these achievements relied on experts' direct observations of language life and facts. Such methods can no longer tackle the many pressing issues today, and are likely to render our judgments incomprehensive, unreliable and unscientific. As research methods have advanced significantly, we need to understand the language situation more quantitatively.[401]

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[398] Jacob Torfing, B. Guy Peters, Jon Pierre, and Eva Sørensen, *Interactive Governance: Advancing the Paradigm* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.3.
[399] Frank Fischer, *Citizens, Experts and the Environment: The Politics of Local Knowledge* (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 43-46.
[400] Li Yuming, Zhongguo yuyan guihua lun (On Chinese Language Management) **(**Beijing : Shangwu yinshu guan, 2010**)**, p,237.
[401] Yuan Guiren, "Zai 'Guojia yuyan ziyuan jiance yu yanjiu zhongxin (pingmian meiti)' chengli ji jiepai yishi shang de jianghua" ("Speech delivered at the inaugural ceremony of the National Linguistic Resources Monitoring and Research Center (printed media)"), 1 July 2004.

In addition to Li's open acknowledgement of the limited power of experts to language rules, perhaps even more revealing is his proposal of "dynamic management" (*dongtai guanli* 动态管理) in the internet era:

> We should treat language as a resource, a resource of the state. It changes as socio-economic conditions change. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct dynamic analysis and research on language resources in the print media, audio media, and the Internet, and furthermore to strengthen dynamic management and development.[402]

Yuan's proposal represents a break from the previous mentality of language management in two important senses. First, it realises that language change is not a state-led process. Recall, in the 1950s it was common for language reformers to argue that the state needed to fight for the "purity" of language, and that language management, as seen in the case of the positioning of the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary* as a prescriptive reference, was about maintaining a stable or static linguistic environment. Furthermore, the notion of "dynamic management" recognises the need to construct institutions that are inclusive of different actors. In practice, instead of setting language standards for the society to follow, experts of the new language institutions are mostly responsible for what Ehrmann and Stinson coined as "fact-finding"—understanding the language used by ordinary citizens.[403] The *Dictionary of Internet Languages* (*Wangluo cidian* 网络词典), which is maintained and updated by LRMRC, is a good example of this initiative.

Second, interactive institutions emphasise partnership. This does not mean that the relationship between different actors within the institution concerned is non-contentious. On the contrary, partnership is formed as no one is powerful enough to ignore other stakeholders. On the one hand, the language organs of the state have remained keen to maintain a strong

[402] Yuan also mentioned that the new language institution should enhance the international status of Chinese language. But this is less relevant to our discussion here.
[403] John R. Ehrmann, and Barbara L. Stinson, "Joint fact-finding and the use of technical experts," in Lawrence Susskind, Sarah McKearnan and Jennifer Thomas-Larmer (eds.), *The Consensus Building Handbook: a Comprehensive Guide to Reaching Agreement* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1999), pp. 375–400.

hold over the Chinese language system, but they were baffled by increasingly powerful resistance from the society. The rise of blogging, instant messaging, social-networking services, and search-engine and RSS aggregation tools have given netizens an unprecedented capacity for communication. These tools exact only a very low cost of entry. Anyone with internet access can start a blog on a hosting service, or participate in online discussions. The rituals practised, linguistic resources invented, and infrastructures constructed by this enormous population have rendered the state's attempt to uphold a hierarchical language institution increasingly infeasible. Consider the case of Shanghai in 2005, when the Shanghai Municipal Language Committee proposed a new language law (*Shanghaishi shishi guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi fa banfa caoan* 上海市實施國家通用語言文字法辦法草案) to explicitly prohibit the use of internet language in all Chinese printed publications, official documents, and teaching. This was the first attempt of the state to limit the circulation of internet language through legislation, and was soon followed by other provinces such as Jilin and Fujian.[404] Not surprisingly, the proposal drew severe criticism from social groups and individuals.[405] A ten-thousand-word essay on the importance of internet language written by a netizen was widely circulated.[406] Significant concession was made by the state in the final version of the law, in which internet language was only banned in official documents and teaching, but not other Chinese printed publications. In other occasions, the state even recognised and adopted the language invented by grassroots social forces. In addition to the aforementioned "word of the year" campaign organised by LRMRC, the occasional

[404] "Jilin xin gui: luan yong yang ming ji wangluo yuyan keneng weifa" ("New regulation in Jilin Province") (22 August 2005), *Xinhua Net*, available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/edu/2005-08/22/content_3386749.htm (accessed 12 October 2013); "Wangluo shehui: xiandai hanyu zenyang shaixuan wangluo yuyan" ("Network society: How does modern Chinese eliminate internet language") (12 April 2006), *Renmin wang*, available at: http://art.people.com.cn/BIG5/14759/21864/4290767.html (accessed 12 October 2013).
[405] Pan jia, "'Lifa fengsha wangluo yuyan shuofa buzhunque' zhuanjia zhichu dui 'Shanghaishi shishi Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia tongyong yuyan wenzi fa banfa' cunzai wu dou xianxiang" ("It is not right to say that the new language law prohibits the use of internet language"), *Wenwei po*, 14 March 2006.
[406] Yu jin, "chuwei huoxingwen wangmin jiti 'kuangding'" ("Netizens share bizarre Martian script"), *Wenwei po*, 2 April 2007.

appearances of popular internet language such as *geili* (给力, astonishing or powerful) and *diaosi* (屌丝, loser) in the *People's Daily* have also caught many people by surprise.[407]

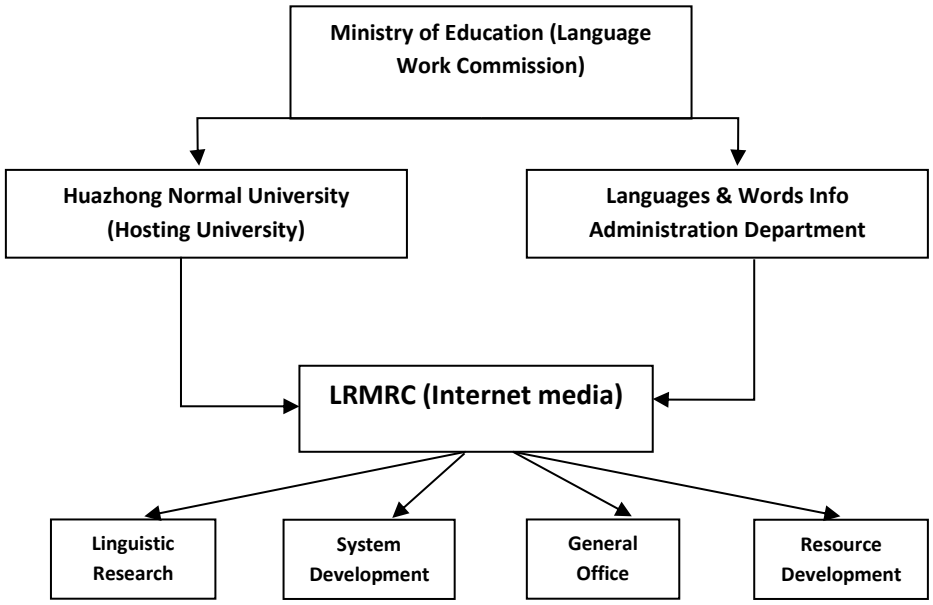
On the other hand, although many citizens have apparently overtly rejected state intervention in their language lives, in reality they still recognize the importance of the state in maintaining a stable linguistic environment. This holds true even amongst some of the most outspoken proponents of internet language. For instance, when asked about his attitude towards the state's language standardisation programme, one of the leading activists I interviewed called "it a double-edged sword," and admitted that "if there is no certain prescription for language, and everyone creates their own set of characters, the result will definitely be a mess." Clearly, as a proponent of internet language, what he has been calling for is just greater recognition of popular characters and words, but not a total dismissal of the state in the linguistic realm.[408] The balance of power between the language organs of the state and other non-state actors fosters partnerships between them through an interactive institution, in which the state selectively recognizes new linguistic elements in the society, and in the process helps maintain stability in the realm of language.

Partnerships can be formed in many ways. In the Chinese case, formal partnership between state and non-state actors is built into the design of the new language management institutions. LRMRC is not a centralised research unit of the state, instead, it is an umbrella organisation of five research institutes located in five different universities. While the Language Work Commission is responsible for overseeing the general direction of LRMRC, day-to-day operation of each institute is collectively managed by the hosting university and the Languages and Words Info Administration Department (*Yuyan xinxi guanli si* 语言信息管理司). The institute is responsible for allocating research grants to research projects

[407] "Renmin Ribao huiying yong diaosi deng ci: mei ren guiding dang bao de yuyan" ("the People's Daily: No regulations on the language of the Party's newspaper") (11 November 2012), *Xinhua Net*, available at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2012-11/11/c_113657129.htm (accessed 12 October 2013).
[408] Interview GD02.

through an open and competitive process.[409] Figure 7.1 below shows the structure of internet media research institute of LRMRC:

Figure 7.1: Organisation Chart of LRMRC (Internet media)



Source:
LRMRC Official Website, available at: http://pop.clr.org.cn/centerStructure.jsp (accessed 12 October 2013)

Interactive institutions also facilitate informal partnerships between different sectors. Research projects conducted by LRMRC reflect latest changes in the linguistic habits of ordinary citizens, helping them to gain greater recognition across the population. The *Chinese Inventory* poll, for example, demonstrates this informal partnership in which the characters were selected through three stages: nomination from netizens, evaluation by experts, and online polling.[410] By strategically adopting internet language, the state also gain a closer relationship with the society.

[409] The Ministry of Education, "Guojia yuwei keyan jidi guanli banfa (shixing)" ("Instructions regarding the management of the Research Center of State Language Commission (draft)"), *The Ministry of Education Website* (8 June 2012), available at: http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s233/201206/136935.html, (accessed 20 January 2013).
[410] " 'Meng' ying nianduzi; wangyou chao duijiliao" ("'Dream' is selected as the character of the year; netizens mock the result"), *Ming Pao* (*Ming Post*), 21 December 2012.

Table 7.4 Character of the Year (Domestic), 2006-2012

Year	Character	Meaning	Official Explanation
2006	炒 (*chao*)	To speculate	Originally refers to a cooking method. Here it means speculations—on stocks, on bonds, on staff, on boss, on properties, on new stocks, and etc.[411] The world is large. Many things can be speculated, but the only problem is that they can be messed up.
2007	涨(*zhang*)	To inflate	The character refers either to rising water level or to inflation. The character is highly relevant to almost all of us in 2007. It may be the blue-chip that is high in the air; or the property prices that are soaring. But the most famous one was the "Marshal Canopy" (*Tianpeng yuanshuai*, 天蓬元帅), a character in Wu Chengen's classic novel. In 2007, a new paragraph should be added to the novel, in which Tang Seng (唐僧) told the Pig (*Zhu Bajie*, 猪八戒): "my disciple, your meat is now more valuable than mine!"[412]
2008	和 (*he*)	Harmony	The character "*he*" is a sketch of China in 2008. This year, Chinese people collectively experienced and withstood the challenges of snow storms and earthquakes, reflecting a "harmony of hearts." During the Beijing Olympics, the people of China and the peoples of the world chorused a peaceful song "You and Me" (*Wo he ni*, 我和你), showing a harmony between insiders and outsiders. Then in the Financial Tsunami, the Chinese government spent a huge sum of money to fight the crisis with European and American countries. This is the best illustration of "harmony." Among all the elements for success, harmony between men is the most crucial.
2009	被 (*bei*)	Passivity	The character, pronounced as "bei," refers to "passivity" when it is used as a preposition. Inspired by new words such as "being suicide" and "being got a job," a large number of new words that shared the "bei-[verb]" structure were created in 2009, such as "being donated," "being got a pay rise," "being felt happy," "being infected with HIV." Their popularity reflects the people's desires for civil rights.
2010	涨(*zhang*)	To inflate	Originally refers to rising water level, it implies inflation. In *Hanyu pandian* 2007, this character was elected as the domestic character of the year. And it remains popular this year. "Not only does the price of pork rise, but the prices for of a whole spectrum of other goods such as garlic and ginger rise too. The prices are so high that people in Shenzhen needed to shop in Hong Kong." The government is doing everything to control inflation. Inflation in some areas is under controlled, and prices begin to fall. The biggest wish of the people is that their salary can rise, too.
2011	控 (*kong*)	To control	When there is inflation there is control, and a need for control. The government works hardly to control the prices of properties and other goods. And the people hope that the government can succeed in performing this task. Meanwhile, a range of "kongs" were invented to signify a feeling of deep affection towards something, or people who are being controlled. In 2011, the character "*kong*" became widely popular, reflecting a more lighthearted atmosphere and colorful linguistic landscape.
2012	梦 (*meng*)	Dream	Good fortune has come to our country and it cannot be stopped. Our dreams for the Olympics, aviation, aircraft carriers, Nobel prizes, and a GDP that surpasses France and catches up Britain have all been realised. The great power dream (qiang guo meng, 强国梦) belongs to the state, and every Chinese. The people want a more reliable social security system, better medical service, a higher quality of living, and a fairer social environment. China is a country with abundant resources. The key to a "China dream" is the realisation of the great rejuvenation of the *Chinese* nation.

Note:
Explanations favourable to the state are underlined
Sources:
"Hanyu pan dian huodong luomu: sida guanjian zici jiexiao" ("Election of the character of the year completed, with four keywords announced") (22 April 2007), *Sina News,* available at: http://edu.sina.com.cn/l/2007-04-22/1512138091.html (accessed 12 October 2013); "Linian niandu zici huigu: kong zi zouhong, zhang zi liangdu dangxuan" ("Characters of the Years") (31 December 2012), *Huaxia jingwei wang* (*Huaxia.com*), available at: http://hk.huaxia.com/zhwh/whxx/2012/12/3136643.html (accessed 12 October 2013).

[411] Note that not all the applications of the character by the experts were indeed widely accepted.
[412] The second half of the explanation involves a number of imaginary characters in a famous Chinese novel—*Journey to the West* (*XiyouJi* 西游记). The underlying message of this is that the price of pork increased significantly in 2007.

Of course, as MacKinnon has rightly warned, it is important not to exaggerate the power of non-state actors in the internet era.[413] Although interactive institutions have apparently granted ordinary citizens considerable leverage in setting the norms of language use, state actors remain very influential in those institutions. In fact, interactive institutions not only help the language organ of the state adapt to changes in social media through the data they collect, but also allow the state to use internet language in ways that may booster its legitimacy. By engaging in the language play of netizens, the state in effect participates in shaping the meaning and usage of the invented language. This is evident in the *Chinese Inventory* poll. Despite its seemingly open and interactive selection process, LRMRC retains the power to interpret the meaning of the character elected through providing official "explanation" (*jieshuo* 解说) alongside with the announcement of results. The explanation it offers is then widely quoted by bloggers and the printed media, and thus giving the state a lot of influence over the meaning of popular linguistic resources. Table 7.4 lists all the characters elected since the campaign first organised in 2006, as well as the official explanations provided. Clearly, perhaps with the exception of 2009, the explanations provided are mostly favourable to the state (underlined).This is most evident in 2012, when the character "dream" (*meng* 梦) was elected. The official statement explained that the character was elected because the Chinese nation has realised a series of "great power dreams" (*qiangguomeng* 强国梦).[414] Some of them even attempted to turn a character that would otherwise imply a policy failure of the state into a propagandistic statement, as in the case of "inflation" (*zhang* 涨) in 2010, in which the official explanation emphasised that "the government is doing everything to control inflation," and that "inflation in some areas is under control." At the

[413] Rebecca Mackinnon, "China's 'Networked Authoritarianism'," *Journal of Democracy*, 2011, Vol.22, No. 2, p. 36.
[414] Disagreeing with the official explanation, one netizen commented that the character was elected simply because everything in China is just a dream. See, "'Meng' ying nianduzi; wangyou chao duijiliao."

same time, the state has continued to monitor its people and to censor and manipulate online conversations to such a degree that no collective movement can be organised through the Internet. Therefore, although unilateral top-down steering seems to be partially supplanted by multilateral interaction among a host of different actors, the rise of interactive institutions in language management should not be viewed as a result of the state's willingness to extend the rights of ordinary citizens. Instead, the institutions invented in the late 2000s should be viewed as another attempt of the state to legitimate its power, using the means at its disposal.

Conclusion

When considering the prospect of authoritarian rule in China, journalist McGregor boldly asserts in *Foreign Policy* that the Communist Party can rule forever—or at least in the foreseeable future.[415] Such an assertion can hardly be tested. The vagaries of historical contingency render any speculative exercises unproductive.[416] To be sure, high politics in China has remained strictly dominated by a small group of elites. However, if we examine the historical development of institutions that are not immediately related to the survival of the state, but are actually crucial for the formation of identity and political culture—such as those that manage the use of language—we can grasp the magnitude of changes that have already taken places. This chapter explores how netizens have exploited the loopholes of the word filtering system, developed their own linguistic resources for communication, and eventually brought about another major institutional shift in language management in contemporary China throuogh continuous layering.

[415] Richard McGregor, "5 myths about the Chinese Communist Party" (January/February 2011), *Foreign Policy*, available at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/01/02/5_myths_about_the_chinese_communist_party (accessed 19 January 2013).
[416] Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth J. Perry, "Introduction," in Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth J Perry (eds.), *Mao's Invisible Hand: the Political Foundations of Adaptive Governance in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), p. 2.

In relation to the central explanatory variables of this thesis, this chapter demonstrates how advancement of communication technology, which leads to decentralisation of communication capacity, has allowed ordinary citizens to communicate among themselves, and thus reduced their reliance on the state in dissimilating information and maintaining language stability. Instead, through everyday practice, people gradually developed rituals and infrastructures that can share some functions of the traditional state apparatus. As such, it has become increasingly costly for the state to maintain its monopoly on linguistic correctness, prompting it to adopt a more interactive approach of language management. State actors must learn to engage in the complex process of participate in complex policy interaction, develop their reflexive and monitoring capacities, and find ways of governing governance that do not rely on brute force and imperative command.

Likewise, economic development has continued to play a role in strengthening the power of non-state actors. Although forum managers and website companies such as *Sina.com* are tasked with the responsibilities to censor contents in their website, they are mostly private corporate entities, and many are listed in overseas stock markets. This made them not as motivated as the state in controlling the communication of the netizens. Driven by market demand, they provided services and platforms such as *Baidu Encyclopedia* that can be used by the netizens to codify linguistic resources they invented.

Most importantly, the language play of the netizens confirm the hypothesis that resistance of non-state actors are shaped by institutional ambiguities. Exploiting the loopholes of the keyword filtering system, alternative linguistic resources are invented, discussed, and codified. In the process netizens strengthen their solidarity. This gradually increases the cost to the state to defend its monopoly over linguistic correctness. Despite intermittent protests from teachers and linguistics, the notion of "prescriptive language" has pretty much lost its market in the internet era.

The interactive language management institutions introduced in the late-2000s represented a very different style of governing than that associated with more traditional, state-centric forms of language management. While traditional language institutions rely on hierarchical imposition of authority, interactive institutions assume that decisions will be made through interactive processes, and empowered participation is orchestrated, and even sometimes initiated, by state actors. This form of institution is argued by its advocates to provide both a more effective and a more democratic form of governing. It is thought to be more effective because it involves individuals and groups who are knowledgeable about the policies in question and are capable of finding among themselves good means of solving policy problems. The traditional instruments of language management depended heavily on command and control, and tended to permit little interaction with the "targets" of the policy. The instruments of interactive institutions depend more on fact-finding and contentious partnership to achieve their policy goals than on authority so that interaction shapes these more proximate connections to the delivery of public services and may make them more effective.

As demonstrated in the grass-mud horse case, the power of gradual institutional change discussed in this chapter is largely confined within the linguist realm. The state has remained highly repressive in many key areas of politics. Yet, the potential impacts of language play should not be underestimated, because ideas require linguistic resources to transmit and develop amongst a population. The abilities of the grassroots to produce their own linguistic resources mean that they are in a better position to organise and resist the power of the state. Consider the rise of "bei," which effectively exposed the self-contradictory elements that can be found within many statements issued by the state. And this can at times drive the state to act in a more consistent and transparent manner. For example, after the word "being suicided" (*bei zisha* 被自杀) was invented, it was reported that the

police were far more cautious in disclosing the details of deaths found in police stations.[417] The wider political impacts of linguistic resistance will be one of the main focuses of the final chapter, but before examining them in greater detail, it is important to evlaute the theoretical framework that has emerged from the previous three Chinese cases in light of comparative evidence from other authoritarian regimes.

[417] For example, in December 2009, when Xing Kun, who was suspected of theft, was said to have committed suicide in a local police station in Yunnan Province, the police invited reporters to the police station to explain the details of the incident. The police also reconstructed the suicide scene, which, to an extent, alleviated public skepticism. See: "Passive voice employed by ordinary Chinese to call for freedom."

8

The Politics of Language in the Soviet Union and Taiwan

Observers of Chinese language politics often contend that state actors play a central role in the evolution of language institutions, and that language policies in the regime serve their interests, such as nation building and social control.[418] Yet, it would be incorrect to assume, as some students of authoritarian regimes do, that language policies are necessarily top-down and that grassroots demands can become influential in shaping the state's policy direction only when state actors see those demands as beneficial to their particularistic interests.[419] After all, language is a crucial resource for disseminating ideas, shaping identity, and social advancement. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that intense contestation between different actors has long shaped the development of language institutions, even under the CCP's authoritarian rule. As previous chapters in this thesis have demonstrated, institutional changes in language management have not been a smooth process. State officials often need to struggle to uphold the institutions they set up, and—when the cost of doing so reach an unsustainable level—abandon defective institutions and replace them with new mechanisms.

[418] See for example, June Teufel Dreyer, "The evolution of language policies in China," in Michael E. Brown (ed.), *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), p. 353; JoAnne Kleifgen, "Afterword: Theories, policies, practices," *Current Issues in Comparative Education* No. 2, Vol. 5(2003), p. 126.

[419] Yuanyuan Hu , "China's foreign language policy on primary English education: What's behind it?" *Language Policy* Nos. 3-4, Vol. 6 (2007), p. 370; Dreyer, "The evolution of language policies in China"; David J. Francis, Mohamed C. Kamanda, "Politics and language planning in Sierra Leone," *African Studies* No. 2, Vol. 60, (2001), pp. 225, 241. For scholars who hold this assumption in other policy areas, see Chelsea Chia-chen Chou, *The Expansion of Social Rights in Authoritarian Regimes: The Politics of Labor Policy Reform in China, 1978-2009* (PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 2011).

Adequate explanation thus demands an explication of the roles of external socio-economic development and the everyday, subtle choices of non-state actors living within the institution.

This thesis focuses on the rise and decay of three language management regimes in China in order to build a more comprehensive and systematic explanation for institutional change in language management. Regarding the initial design of language institutions, this thesis argues that language institutions are likely to be more top-down when the central state enjoys—compared to other actors in the political system—more control over available economic and communication resources. Just like any other institutions, language institutions are "distributional instruments" that allocate resources unevenly.[420] Consequently, there are always motivations for certain social actors to resist the imposition of language institutions by the state, or seek opportunities for self-advancement. As "second movers," their strategies for non-compliance are confined and shaped not only by the structural factors specified above, but also the design of the institutions they intend to challenge. As a result, while bottom-up institutional changes can happen rapidly, they are mostly conducted in a gradual manner through the everyday activities of different social actors who exploit the loopholes or ambiguities of the targeted institutions for their benefits. As these activities continue and the costs to the state for maintaining language institutions become increasingly unsustainable, the state is pressed to formulate a new—often less ambitious—system.

This chapter reaches beyond China and considers the experience of two other authoritarian regimes—the former Soviet Union (1922-1991) and Taiwan (1949-1987). These regimes are relevant because, firstly, similar to China, they both experienced rapid changes in the state's ability to monopolise economic and communication resources. The former Soviet Union went through rapid industrialisation in the late 1920s and adopted various attitudes

[420] James Mahoney, *Colonialism and Postcolonial Development: Spanish America in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.15.

toward publications in indigenous languages from the 1930s to the 1970s. In a similar vein, Taiwan rapidly marketised and eventually democratised since the early 1980s. The framework developed in this thesis will have clear predictions about the aggressiveness of language management institutions set up by these authoritarian states, as well as the type of bottom-up challenges they encountered in the long run.

Secondly, differences in the governing structure of the Soviet Union and Taiwan make them good choices for analysis. The Soviet Union, at its point of greatest expansion, encompassed some 8,649,490 square miles with 15 union republics. Observers have identified great variations in the language policies across different republics. Explaining these variations will shed lights on the factors that shape the design of language institutions. Taiwan is of special interest here because of its shared cultural root with the PRC. Similar to its mainland counterpart, the Nationalist government of Taiwan adopted aggressive policies to control language uses of its population in the 1950s. Yet, those policies did not last long. Most of them were removed by the state in the 1990s as they suffered from serious internal decay orchestrated by the grassroots in their everyday activities. Given that Taiwan and the PRC conducted similar reform in similar time but with contrasting results, much can potentially be learnt from a detailed analysis of the transformation in Taiwan.

The two authoritarian regimes thus offer, in their own ways, leverage for assessing the arguments of this thesis. The Soviet Union—with its fifteen republics—allows me to examine whether there is, on average, a positive causality between the state's abilities to control economic and communication resources and the aggressiveness of its language institutions. Whereas the case of Taiwan—through process tracing—will allow me to reveal how creative strategies performed by social actors can gradually contribute to a large scale institutional change.

Language Politics in the Former Soviet Union

Like China, the USSR was a multi-ethnic state. According to the 1989 Soviet census, there were approximately 130 ethnic groups with a varying percentage of each group speaking its heritage language.[421] As its name suggests, the USSR followed a federal structure and was organised into fifteen Union Republics, each represented around one of the major nationalities.[422] The federal system, however, was designed as a transitional compromise between a relatively strong central power headed by the Bolsheviks and weak peripheral groups. The political leaders of the Soviet Union did not intend for the federal structure to be a permanent organisational feature of socialism. Evidence suggests that the arrangement was planned to be an intermediary stage on the path to a unified socialist society.[423] Indeed, when Stalin came to power, a series of "Russification" policies were implemented. As Stalin argues, those policies are for the "merging of the backward nations and nationalities" of the Caucasus "within the general stream of superior" culture. [424]

Given the vast scale of the Soviet language management project, my analysis has to focus only on the most highly aggregated patterns, and examines whether evidence broadly conforms to theoretical expectations. Data collected from Soviet census and specialists are revealing here. On the one hand, the dependent variable—aggressiveness of language institution described in Chapter 1—can be estimated by the percentage of indigenous population switching native language to Russian. On the other hand, the independent variables—central state control over economic and communication resources—can be estimated by the number of blue collar workers and the number of books published in

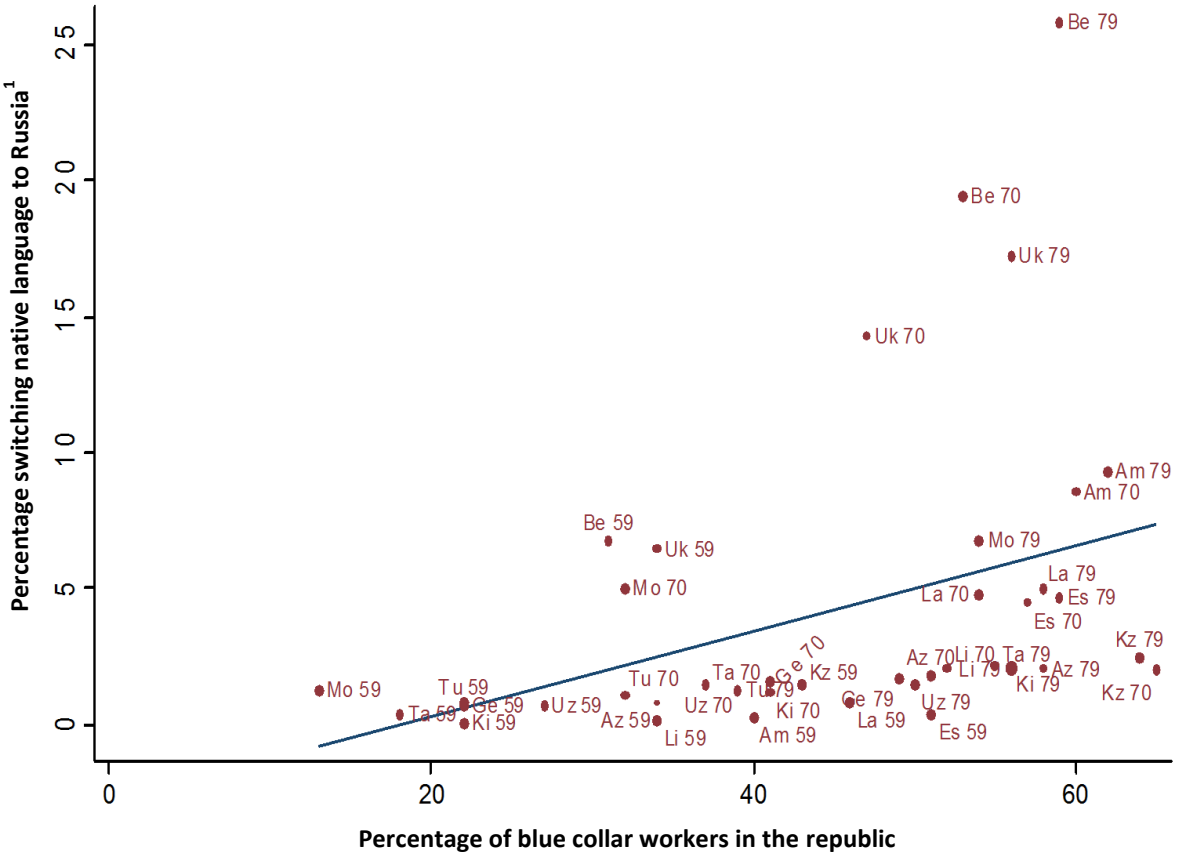
[421] Lenore A. Grenoble, *Language policy in the Soviet Union* (Boston, MA.: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003).
[422] It is, however, important to note that the the Union Republics are delineated by political, not strict ethno-linguistic, boundaries. See: Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, p.5.
[423] Gregory Gleason, *Federalism and Nationalism: the Struggle for Republican Rights in the USSR* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990), pp. 19, 32-33.
[424] Grenoble, *Language policy in the Soviet Union*, p. 35.

indigenous languages respectively. The number of blue collar workers is an appropriate proxy to measure economic control because it indicates the size of industrial sector in different republics. Although the USSR followed a federal system, extreme economic centralisation took place during the First Five Year Plan, the war, and the late Stalin period. During this process, the industrial sector was most vulnerable to state control because it had a high requirement on capital investment. In contrast, the agriculture sector was more independent because it was labour-intensive. More industrialised republics were therefore, in general, more economically dependent toward the central state.[425] Similarly, the number of books published in indigenous languages can be used to estimate the level of state control over communication resources because those books—whether censored by the state or not—helped sustain a vibrant indigenous linguistic community.

Figures 8.1 plots the rate of blue collar workers of fourteen USSR republics (Russia is excluded) against their rate of language assimilation in 1950, 1970, and 1979. The figure shows that the rate of blue collar workers is positively correlated to the rate of language assimilation. In other words, on average, republics that were subjected to more economic control from the central state were also more likely to adopt aggressive language policies.

[425] Donna Bahry, "The evolution of Soviet fiscal federalism," in Rachel Denber (ed.), *The Soviet Nationality Reader: the Disintegration in Context* (Boulder, CO: Westviewp, 1992), p. 315.

Figure 8.1 Relationship between industrialisation and language assimilation (1959-79)



r= 0.38; n=42; p=0.01

Notes:

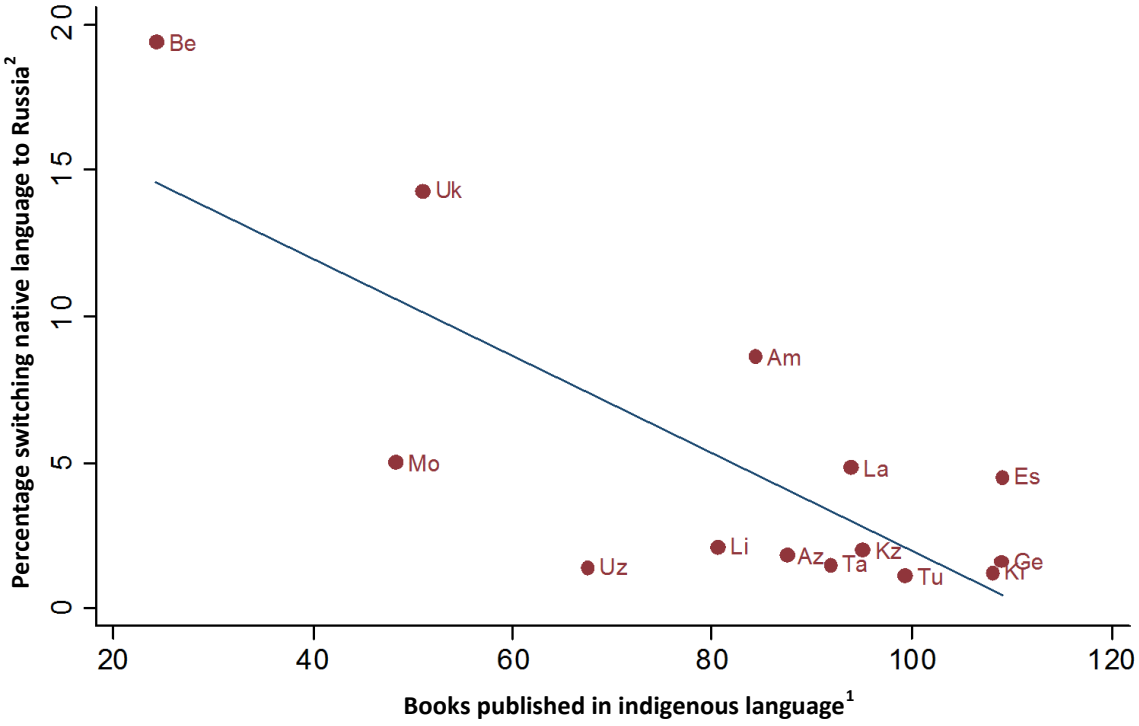
[1] The data include members of each nationality living outside their republic and therefore overstate the switch to Russian for Titulars living in their republics.

Sources:

Robert John Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994), Table 5.12.; David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: the Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), Table 2.1; and Brian Silver, "Social Mobilisation and the Russification of Soviet Nationalities," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Mar., 1974),p. 55.

Figure 8.2 plots the percentage of indigenous language publications in the fourteen republics against their rate of language assimilation in 1970. Although data in 1959 and 1979 are unavailable for us to analyse, the figure clearly presents a statistically significant negative correlation between the two variables—a result that is in line with the prediction specified earlier this chapter.

Figure 8.2 Relationship between books in indigenous language and language assimilation (1970)



r= -0.77; n=14; p≤0.001

Notes: [1] Figures represent the indigenous language percentage of total publications in each union republic indexed to the indigenous percentage of the republic's population. A figure over 100 represents a higher proportion of indigenous language publications than indigenes in the homeland, and a figure under 100 represents relative underrepresentation; [2]the data include members of each nationality living outside their republic and therefore overstate the switch to Russian for Titulars living in their republics.

Sources: Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR*, Table 6.3; and Laitin, *Identity in Formation*, Table 2.1.

These correlations are not sufficient to make a convincing case for causality. From a statistical standpoint, one would want to control for various potential confounding factors, such as the size of urban population, linguistic proximity to Russian, and education level. However, as in the case of Chinese studies, there is a danger in relying on census data collected by the state because they were primarily collected and processed based on the ideological and political motives of the political elites.[426] Therefore, a more productive strategy, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, is to supplement this overview with a systematic comparison of a number of carefully selected republics. To this end, Laitin's account of peripheral control in the Soviet Union has provided a good starting point to classify the republics. Laitin shows that there were three different models of Russian state control, namely, "colonial", "most-favoured-lord", and "integralist." The colonial model represents the most repressive control mentality in which local elites' power was suppressed and monitored by the Russian elites from the centre.[427] The integralist model represents another extreme, in which local elites enjoyed such a high level of political, cultural, and economic autonomy that even the Russian rulers needed to adapt to their culture.[428] Falling in between the two extremes is the most-favoured-lord model in which local elites were incentivised to align with the centre through promotion within the central party system. These models match closely with the three language management models (top-down, incentivising, selective) proposed in this thesis and thus can be fitted into our discussion with few modifications (Table 8.1).[429]

[426] Barbara A. Anderson, Kalev Katus and Brian D. Silver, "Developments and prospects for population statistics in countries of the former Soviet Union," *Population Index* Vol. 60, No. 1 (1994), p. 5. pp. 4-20
[427] David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: the Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 65.
[428] Ibid, 67.
[429] This coincidence should not be surprising because language management is a major component in cultural management. This is particularly true in Soviet Union, where russification focused mainly on language engineering.

Table 8.1: Models of culture management in the Soviet Union

Models of language management	Corresponding models of central control	Examples
Top-down (Ch. 2)	Colonial	Kazakhstan, Belarussia
Incentivising (Ch. 4)	Most favoured lord	Ukraine
Selective (Ch. 6)	Integralist	Latvia, Estonia

Three republics— Belarussia (currently the Republic of Belarus), Ukraine, and Latvia—are therefore selected for more in-depth examinations. The selection is largely identical to Laitin's work. Belorussia—a republic that Laitin did not examine—is included in this analysis not only because it exhibits the highest level of state control over economic and communication resources (Figures 8.1 and 8.2), but also because of its similarities with Ukraine in terms of linguistic and geographical proximity to Russia, and education level of the population. A comparison between the two republics will therefore allow me to control for these potential confounders.

Language Management in the Belorusan Republic

Although the Belorusans were one of the largest ethnic groups of the former USSR, their economy and communication means had historically been controlled by foreign powers, including Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. Consequently, throughout most of its history there was no independent organisation to promote and develop Belorusan language and culture. In fact, with a few exceptions, the Belorusan language was widely considered a symbol of backwardness and inferiority. As Belorusan expert Vakar vividly recounts, "one may go back to the eighteenth century and find a few short plays written for schools, where the text was in

Laitin or in Polish, but the rural characters, stupid and uncouth, spoke in Belorusan to amuse the audience."[430]

Without a vibrant local economy and communication system, the Belorusan Republic was exposed to the direct influence of the central state during the Soviet era. The rise of Stalin, in particular, marked the beginning of aggressive Russification in the republic. In 1924 Belarusan was banned from use in the upper echelons of government and education, and Belarusan history was revised and refocused to create a single Belarusan–Russian narrative.[431] To disseminate revolutionary ideas and strengthen the control of the Soviet state, a new lexicon was developed to reflect the changes in political structure brought about by the Soviet Revolution.[432] Russian became the preferred source for this new vocabulary. Belarusan was relegated to the private sphere and to only very limited public usage in rural areas. This aggressive Russification process continued right up to the 1980s when Gorbachev introduced his *glasnost* (i.e. openness) policy reform.

There were periodic efforts, both from within and outside of the Belarusan state, to slow the homogenising influence of Russian in the region, but they were ineffective, and often ended up reinforcing the legitimacy of the hegemonic language. In fact, even after the Belarusan state gained independence in 1991, its reliance on Russian has continued, leaving the Belarusan language with little popular support. In 1993, polls revealed that 72.3 per cent of Belarusans favored a bilingual government. In May 1995 the government held a referendum asking, among other things, whether Russian should be reintroduced as an

[430] Robert John Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 41; Nicholars Vakar, *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 78-79.
[431] Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*.
[432] Similar policies were also implemented in other republics as a part to develop an international political language, but they were most intensely implemented in the Belarusan Repbulic. See Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, p.52.

official language. The referendum passed with between 75 and 83 per cent approval. [433] Even before this time, the government was lax in enforcing the 1990 law making Belarusan the sole official language, which encountered resistance from the general population as well. Government officials, for example, refused to give interviews in any language other than Russian.[434]

In short, the historical dependence of the Belarsuan Republic to foreign powers allowed its Soviet occupier to dominate the region's economic and communication resources, and subsequently adopted a top-down approach to manage language in the republic. The experience of the Belarsuan Republic thus confirms the hypothesis that language institutions are likely to be more aggressive when the central state is able to monopolise economic and communication resources.

Language Management in the Ukrainian Republic

Like the Belarsuan Republic, the Ukrainian Republic neighboured with Russia and had historically been influenced by its culture. Its language was treated as a branch of the Russian and did not gain an independent status until 1905.[435] The difference was that Ukraine had a more complicated social structure. Prior to the Soviet era, only around 85 per cent of the Ukrainian population was under the control of Russia. The others were divided in Austrian Ukraine, the territories of Eastern Galicia and Bukovina, and Transcarpathia. This gave rise to complicated nationality issues that the Soviet leaders later found difficult to reconcile. Two initial attempts at Soviet rule in the region—first in the period from December 1917 to March

[433] Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, p. 89.
[434] Ibid.
[435] Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR*, p. 42.

1918, and second in the period January to August 1919—failed. The latter even forced the Soviet Ukrainian government to seek asylum in Moscow.[436]

These failures led to a rethinking of policy among the Soviet leaders. Consequently, in Lenin's Draft Resolution of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party on Soviet Rule in Ukraine, which was ratified in November 1919, it was mandated that the "free development" of the Ukrainian language and culture should be protected and that employees of all state institutions should be conversant in Ukrainian. In the summer of 1920, the Council of People's Commissars ordered plans to be made to establish Ukrainian as the language of instruction in all schools. Books and newspapers were to be published in Ukrainian, and language courses were to be organised by government officials as well. Change was relatively slow, and in 1923 only 61 per cent of elementary schools were Ukrainian, while nearly twelve per cent were Russian–Ukrainian.[437] By 1925, these numbers had improved to 71 per cent all-Ukrainian and over seven per cent mixed.[438]

As in Belarussia and other Soviet republics, there were attempts to promote Russsian language and culture in Ukraine, especially after Stalin came into power. However, when compared to Belarussia, Russification in Ukraine was conducted through a mix of repressive and incentivising techniques. While activists who sought Ukrainian independence were brutally attacked by the Soviet authorities, those who were willing to comply with Soviet rule were granted access to positions in Russian and Soviet structures.[439] This distinguished Ukraine from Belarussia because elites in the latter were mostly barred from those important positions. Table 8.2 compares the proportion of important seats in Ukraine and Bularussia held by natives. Education, of course, was another arena in which incentives to learn Russian

[436] Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, p. 83.
[437] Ibid., p.84.
[438] Ibid.
[439] Laitin, *Identity in Formation*, p73; Geoffrey Hosking, *The Awakening of the Soviet Union* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.101.

could be provided. While Ukrainian was not banned at schools, in 1938 the Central government decreed the study of Russian to be obligatory in Ukrainian schools.[440] Since children who were proficient in Russian had better academic and career prospects (because they could take up jobs outside Ukraine), schools that used Russian, or Russian and Ukrainian, became extremely popular among Ukrainian parents. Consequently, by 1988, in Kiev, the capital of the Ukrainian republic, only 34 out of 274 schools (12 per cent) were Ukrainian, while 152 (55 per cent) were Russian.[441] The strategies for promoting Russian in Ukraine clearly exhibited the characteristics of incentivisation outlined in Chapters 5 and 6 in that the state encouraged the spread of Russia through linking the language with goods that were desired by the population.

Table 8.2: Native occupancy of leading positions in Belarussia and Ukraine

	Belarussia	**Ukraine**
CC Secretary	76.5	100
First Secretary	67	100
Organisational Secretary	100	100

Source:
Paul Kolstoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*, Table 4.3.

Chapter 5 argues that incentivising institutions are vulnerable to widespread defection. This argument receives further confirmation in the case of Ukraine, in which the decline of Russian was triggered by Ukrainian elites who held important positions in the republic. One of the most striking events took place in 1958, when the USSR Council of Ministers decided to rescind obligatory mother-tongue instruction in the native schools of Ukraine, high-ranking Ukrainian Party officials, including two deputies who were involved in drafting the Supreme

[440] Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, p. 84.
[441] Hosking, *The Awakening of the Soviet Union*, p.102.

Soviet decision, came out to oppose the proposal fiercely. Of course, the status of Russian was in no way diminished immediately because Russian remained very useful for the Ukrainians, particularly those living in the cities, to achieve academic and career success in the Soviet Union.[442] However, with Ukrainians dominating local politics, policies favouring the Russian language were gradually superseded by successive nation-building attempts in the late- and post-USSR years.[443]

Language Management in Latvia

Unlike Belarussia and Ukraine, Latvia was among the last territories annexed by the USSR. Situated in the Baltic region, Latvia remained independent from Soviet control until 1940.[444] And while the USSR took immediate and forceful steps to promote Marxist-Leninist ideology in the republic, they were interrupted in June 1941 by the German invasion of the USSR, an invasion that resulted in German control of the Baltics.[445] The USSR resumed its sovereignty over the territory in 1944–45. However, engaged in post-World War II reconstruction, the Soviet government did not have the economic resources to develop an effective Russian-based educational programme again after the annexation.[446] In fact, even if we put economic concerns aside, the USSR would still find russifying Latvia difficult because the latter had a relatively self-sufficient—if not superior—cultural system in relation to Russia. Latvian is a Baltic (Indo-European) language which has been used in publications since the sixteenth century.[447] Also, education level of average Latvian was higher than that in Russia. In 1911, there was 39 per cent of school-aged population in Latvia enrolled in

[442] Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, p. 84.
[443] Laitin, *Identity in Formation*, pp. 100-101
[444] A Latvian Soviet Republic was established in 1919, but it was dismantled by Latvian nationalist troops, who worked with the support of Western allies. Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, p. 99.
[445] Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, p. 96.
[446] Ibid.
[447] Ibid.

school, whereas the figure in Russia was only 29 per cent.[448] There was little incentive for Latvians to move to Russia for work or education.

Since the USSR did not have strong control over Latvia's cultural and economic resources, it was fully possible for Latvians to experience a complete cultural, professional, and social life without entering into the Russian world.[449] Consequently, language standardisation in Latvia had to be conducted in an interactive manner. Instead of promoting Russian through repressive means or incentivisation, the Russian leaders of the republic had to adapt to Latvian culture so as to achieve effective governance of the republic.[450] Bilingual schools were set up to promote interaction between Russian and Latvian.[451] But the Russian language never took root in the republic. When the Soviet Union collapsed, language policies changed in a swiping manner under the leadership of Latvian nationalises. The Russians living in Latvia were asked to assimilate instead of keeping their own culture.[452]

The Soviet experience demonstrates the role of structural factors in shaping institutions for language management. Among the three selected republics, top-down Russification was most intense in Belarussia in which the natives had a long history of economic and cultural dependency toward the Russian. In contrast, because of its contact with the Western European countries, Latvia was able to retain a high level of linguistic autonomy. It confirms the general hypothesis of this thesis that language institutions tend to be more top-down/ aggressive when the state can achieve a higher level of control over communication and economic resources.

[448] Laitin, *Identity in Formation*, p. 64
[449] Ibid., p. 67.
[450] Ibid.
[451] By 1965, nearly all Latvian schools were bilingual. Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union*, p. 97.
[452] Laitin, *Identity in Formation*, p. 94.

Language Politics in Taiwan

Language management in Taiwan in the 1950s was at least as repressive as the PRC. Soon after the Nationalist Party retreated to the island following its defeat in the civil war in 1949, the Ministry of Education began to standardise pronunciations and writing system, publish official dictionaries, as well as limit the use of native languages in schools (1951), cinema (1953), and television programming (1963).[453] Proclaiming to represent "authentic Chinese culture," the Nationalist government intensified its language standardisation programme between the 1960s and the 1980s, making Mandarin—the "national language" (*guoyu* 国语)—mandatory in nearly all public areas such as schools, factories, and public transports.

Clearly, similar to the PRC, language control in Taiwan prior to the 1990s followed a top-down management approach. Of course, this was not a random coincidence. The two regimes set up similar institutions because both of them were—in varying degree—able to control economic and communication resources in their territory. In the economic realm, most leading mainland capitalists did not follow the Nationalist government and retreated to Taiwan—they, instead, went to more stable economies such as Hong Kong or the United States.[454] This left the Nationalist government, which was anxious to defend its last bastion against the Commmunists, room to dominate economic resources on the island. Although Western countries like the United State provided a large sum of financial aid to support Taiwan's industrial development, it was essentially distributed by the Nationalist government. To benefit from the aid, private industrialists still needed to comply with the directions set out by the state. Trade was regulated by the state and untrammelled private foreign presence was prohibited. In the cultural realm, Taiwan's old intellectual and political elites had been

[453] Ministry of Education, "Guomin xuexiao fan jihui koutou baogao ying cao guo yu" ("All public speeches in national schools should be conducted in Mandarin") (31 January 1951), in Zhang Bo-Yu (ed.), Qingzhu Taiwan guang fu sishi zhounian Taiwan diqu guo yu tuixing ziliao hui bian (*Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Retrocession: Collected Documents of Language Standardisation in Taiwan*) (Hsinchu: Xinzhu shehui jiaoyu, 1987), p.356.
[454] Thomas B. Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle* (Armonk, N.Y: Sharpe, 1986), pp.64, 73.

liquidated during the 228 Incident—an anti-government campaign that was brutally suppressed by the government—in 1947. With all these favourable conditions, the Nationalists enjoyed an unprecedented power to implement aggressive institutions in Taiwan.[455]

However, since the late-1980s, the Nationalist government found it increasingly necessary to recognise the status of various indigenous languages (e.g. Taiwanese). A process of "Taiwanisation" took place in which the state began to, through policy changes, encourage the study and use of indigenous languages. Today, although Mandarin is still the lingua franca of the island, politicians—including those who originally came from the mainland—have increasingly used Taiwanese in their political campaigns.[456] To protect indigenous languages, the government set up research institutes and museums on Taiwanese culture, and, in 2001, made the subject "Native Language" (*xiangtu yuyan* 乡土语言) compulsory in all elementary schools.[457]

What explains the removal of the top-down language management institution in Taiwan? The conventional answer to this question is that there was a change in interests among the elites of the Nationalist Party. Proponents of this proposition generally emphasise the need of the Nationalist government to re-legitimise itself after its mainland counterpart successfully launched its first nuclear test and obtained the China seat in the United Nations—both of which rendered the Nationalist's long proclaimed goal to "retake the mainland" (*fangong dalu* 反攻大陆) infeasible.[458] The decision made by the Nationalist leader Chiang Ching-kuo (蒋经国) in 1987 to abolish martial law, according to these

[455] Ibid., p. 64.
[456] June Teufel Dreyer, "The evolution of language policies and national identity in Taiwan," in Michael E. Brown (ed.), *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), p. 386.
[457] Malte Philipp Kaeding, "Taiwanized 'new Taiwanese', the effect of Taiwanization on the 2008 presidential election campaign of Ma Ying-jeou," *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review* Vol.9, No.2 (2009), pp. 19- 34.
[458] Gold, *State and Society in the Taiwan Miracle*, p.93.

accounts, presented a "critical juncture" not only in democratisation, but also in language management.[459]

The interests of political elites of course mattered, but they cannot fully explain the relaxation of language control. This was evident in the controversies in 1985 surrounding the legislation of language law (*yuwenfa* 语文法). The law, which was drafted by the Ministry of Education, attempted to maintain the dominance of Mandarin by prohibiting the use of indigenous languages in all communications in the public (defined as any venues that have more than three people). It was only under strong opposition from the society that Yu Kuo-hwa (俞国华), the then Premier of the government, decided to terminate the order.[460] This incident on the one hand suggested that there was actually an on-going interest among the Mandarin-speaking political elites to restrict the uses of indigenous languages. On the other hand, it also demonstrated the rising bargaining power of various social actors such as the intellectuals. A comprehensive explanation for the relaxation of language control since the mid-1980s, therefore, should look beyond the interests of elites and take into consideration the motivations and opportunity structure that facilitated creative institutional change from below.

Unlike my comparison of language institutions in different Soviet republics, the purpose of the Taiwan case is to explicate the gradual process of institutional change, which can be seen most clearly in the television broadcasting industry. Analysts generally agree that television is a major platform through which language is acquired by individuals, and is

[459] Dreyer, "The evolution of language policies and national identity in Taiwan,"399; Steve Tsang, "Chiang Ching-kuo, the Nature of the Kuomingtang and the Democratic Breakthrough in Taiwan," in Academia Sinica (ed.), *Change of An Authoritarian Regime: Taiwan in the Post-Martial Law Era* (Taipei: Institute of Taiwan History, Academia Sinica, 2001), pp. 119-149.
[460] Lee Hsiung-huei, "Taiwan lishi ge shiqi yuyan zhengce zhi fenxi bijiao" ("Language policy in different periods in the history of Taiwan: a comparative analysis") (2004), paper presented at National Taitung University, available at: http://ip194097.ntcu.edu.tw/giankiu/GTH/2004/LanguageRights/lunbun/1A03-hionghui.htm (accessed 13 October 2013).

therefore a common site over which ambitious language planners exert their power.[461] In the case of Taiwan, state regulations limiting the percentage of non-Mandarin programming on television were imposed violently in the 1960s and were subsequently abolished in 1993. During this period the regulatory regime experienced significant evolution in the face of growing opposition from the society. The television broadcasting industry thus offers a perfect case for examining the broader dynamics that triggered the relaxation of language control in the 1990s.

Motivations for Resistance: From Monopoly to Competition: 1962-1972

The reason for the Nationalist government to impose explicit limitation on the percentage of non-Mandarin programming was hardly surprising. Although the Mandarin-speaking mainlanders achieved a high level of control over economic and communication recourses, they only accounted for a tiny fraction of the population in Taiwan, of which around 80 per cent was native Taiwanese who spoke a different language (mostly a variety of Minna).[462] Without state regulation, broadcasters would have naturally produced more programmes in native languages to cater the market. Therefore, when the first broadcaster—Taiwan Broadcasting Enterprise Limited (*Taiwan dianshi gongsi* 台湾电视公司, TBE hereafter)—was established in 1962, the state explicitly required that non-Mandarin programming should not exceed 50 per cent of the total broadcast time.

At first, TBE complied with the regulation because it was the only broadcaster in the market.[463] Complying with the state regulations allowed it to maximise its profit through monopoly. However, as new broadcasters joined in the industry in 1968 and 1970, viewers

[461] Mabel Rice, "The role of television in language acquisition," *Developmental Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1983), pp. 211–224; Francis M. Hult, "Swedish television as a mechanism for language planning and policy," *Language Problems and Language Planning*, Vol. 34, No.2 (2010), pp. 158–181.
[462] Robert L. Cheng, "A comparison of Taiwanese, Taiwan Mandarin, and Peking Mandarin," *Language*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (1985), pp. 352-377.
[463] Guan Ren-jian, *Ni Buzhidao di Taiwan ・Yingshi Mixin* (*The Taiwan You Don't Know: Secrets behind the Film and Television Industry*) (Taipei: Wenjingshe, 2013), Ch 2.

and advertisements became something that TBE needed to compete for. To maintain its market share, TBE began to defect and produce more non-Mandarin programming. By 1970, non-Mandarin programming in TBE accounted for 58 per cent of its total broadcast time and was spotted on in the Department of Cultural Affairs.[464]

Tightened Control and Creative Resistance: 1972-1993

Non-compliance of the broadcasters prompted the Nationalist government to tighten its control. In April 1972, the proportion of non-Mandarin programme allowed was reduced to 16 per cent of the total broadcast time, with monitoring conducted by the Department of Cultural Affairs on a daily basis. Of course, as demonstrated in previous chapters, control and resistance are often mutually reinforcing. The broadcasters soon found loopholes in the new regulations and came up with creative strategies in response. First, they extended their total broadcasting time by rebroadcasting previous Mandarin programmes. Since the new regulation concerned only about the proportion, but not actual hours, of non-Mandarin broadcasting, this strategy allowed broadcasters to minimise the actual impact of the new regulation. Furthermore, the three broadcasters also avoided broadcasting their non-Mandarin programme at the same time of the day so as to maximise the power of their non-Mandarin programme in attracting viewers. Consequently, while all broadcasters had met the formal requirements set out by the state, ordinary Taiwanese viewers could still watch television in their language unobstructed for around three hours, simply by switching channels.[465]

To fill the loopholes, the Nationalist government tightened its regulation again in December 1972. Instead of limiting the proportion of non-Mandarin programme, the new regulation granted each broadcaster only a maximum of one hour for non-Mandarin broadcasting per day. Moreover, between 6:30 to 9:30 pm—the "prime time"— every day,

[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid.

only one broadcaster was allowed to deliver non-Mandarin programming. These requirements were later codified in the "Radio and Television Act" (*Guangbo dianshi fa* 广播电视法) in 1976.

The revised regulations left little room for non-Mandarin programming, but did not stop the broadcasters from responding to market demand completely. From time to time broadcasters tested the boundaries of the regulatory regime by including Taiwanese dialogs in Mandarin programming. Although there was no reliable statistics recording the proportion of Taiwanese dialogs in Mandarin programming, from the repeated warnings issued by the government during the late 1980s against the "deliberate" inclusion of Taiwanese dialogs in Mandarin programming, we could infer that this practice was quite phenomenal.[466]

The restriction on non-Mandarin programming was lifted in 1993. Of course, this could not be brought about by the strategies depicted above alone. Since 1987, Taiwan had already embarked on its process of democratisation. Nevertheless, to fully understand the apparently dramatic institutional changes in the 1990s, one must take into consideration of the kind of everyday activities of social actors depicted above. By utilising every chance to broadcast in indigenous languages, the broadcasters managed to keep those languages relevant to the public and thus laid an important foundation for the later relaxation of linguistic control. In fact, in addition to the broadcasters, recent literature suggests that a range of social actors—such as recent university graduates, filmmakers, indigenous groups, workers, and local politicians—have also partaken similar activities to extend or protect their interests (such as political participation and linguistic rights).[467] Collectively, these activities

[466] From 1984 to 1988, the Nationalist government had at least issued four such warnings. For a detailed record, see: Huang Xuan-fan, *Yuyan, shehui yu zuqun yishi: Taiwan yuyan shehuixue di yanjiu* (*Language, Society and Ethnic Consciousness: Sociolinguistic Research of Taiwan*) (Taipei: Wenhe chuban youxiangongsi, 1995), pp.53-73.

[467] For example, see: Ming-sho Ho, "Beyond tokenism: The institutional conversion of party-controlled labour unions in Taiwan's state-owned enterprises (1951–86)," *The China Quarterly* Vol. 212 (2012), pp. 1019-1039;

gradually increased the cost to the Nationalist government to uphold its top-down institutions, making democratisation an increasingly feasible alternative to the political elites.

Conclusion

The evolution of language management institutions in the USSR and Taiwan allows me to assess the utility of the theoretical framework outlined in this thesis, which has already been applied to make sense of the Chinese experience. My propositions regarding the relationship between the state's ability to control economic and communication resources and the aggressiveness of its language management institutions hold up well when they are applied to analyse the general pattern of language management in the USSR, where republics that were more dependent to the central state were, on average, more likely to experience top-down linguistic control from the centre. This coincides with the Chinese experience in that the unitary power of the central state is also positively correlated with the repressiveness of language institutions.

However, the value of the Soviet case reaches beyond merely confirming the relationship between the central state's unitary power and the repressiveness of language institutions. It also provides solid evidence that language institutions do not just vary over time, but also across different geographical regions within the same political regime. As demonstrated in my analysis, although the USSR apparently had a unified strategy of language standardisation, the strategy varied significantly across different republics according to their particular context. Among the three selected Soviet repbulics, Russification was most intense in Belarussia because of its economic dependence on Russia. Latvia, in contrast, was able to maintain its language and cultural traditions because of its ties with Western European countries, which reduced its reliance on Russian assistance. In the Chinese case, similar

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Wang Fu-chang, "Zuqun zhengzhi yiti zai Taiwan minzhuhua zhuanxing zhong de juese" ("The role of ethnic politics in the process of democratization in Tawian"), *Taiwan minzhu jikan* (*Taiwan Democracy Quarterly*) Vol.5, No.2 (2008), pp. 89-140.

variation was presented in Chapter 5 in which provinces (e.g. Hubei) that were more eager to attract economic resources from the centre were more likely to implement and promote the PSC faithfully.

My analytical framework also guides me to look for previously-overlooked evidence that is crucial for a more comprehensively understanding of the politics of language in Taiwan, which shared many similarities with its mainland counterpart prior to the 1980s. More specifically, the case of Taiwan provides another example of how social actors can exploit the ambiguities of an institution to maximise their personal gains. Similar to the mainland Chinese, social actors in Tawian used a range of creative strategies to alter the language rules formulated by the state. To a certain extent, the incremental inclusion of Taiwanese dialogues in Mandarin programming resembles the layering technique depicted in Chapter 7, in which Chinese netizens created their own linguistic rules and attached them to the existing language system, thus undermining the influence of the state in the linguistic realm.

Of course, in stressing the similarities between Taiwan and the PRC in the linguistic realm, one must not overlook their differences in other areas, which can in turn influence the velocity and scale of institutional change. For example, the Nationalist Party in Taiwan never enjoyed the high level of unitary power as the CCP did during the Mao era. The private economy in Taiwan, in particular, was far more vibrant than that in China in the 1950s.[468] This may explain why the top-down language institution in Taiwan was removed much earlier than that in the CCP.

[468] Bruce J. Dickson, "China's democratization and the Taiwan experience," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (1998), pp. 350.

9

Conclusion: Explaining Institutional Change in Authoritarian Regimes

> Owing to the partial communication between distant parts of so great a country and mass of people, that it is evident if this bond of union [the Chinese characters] was removed by the substitution of an alphabetical language, the Chinese would soon be split into many small nations, as is the case in India.
>
> —Samuel Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom*, p.484[469]

Writing in the mid-19th century, when Chinese nationalism began to take shape, American sinologist Samuel Wells Williams observed that the "Chinese," despite their linguistic diversity and the enormous size of the country, have remained relatively unified, as compared with their Indian counterparts. Williams attributed such unity to the linguistic features of Chinese characters. According to Williams, Chinese characters are logograms (i.e. visual symbols representing words) and are thus, in contrast to alphabetical scripts such as Latin, difficult for local communities to alter in order to accommodate the sounds of dialects. As one of the earliest attempts to study the language politics in China in the West, Williams' investigation remains highly pertinent today. Yet, considering the declines of many other ancient logographic writing systems, such as the ancient Egyptian script, as well as the continued rise of Chinese nationalism after the introduction of the *pinyin* system by the Communist Party, one must look beyond the linguistic features of Chinese characters and consider the institutions that have promoted and stabilised the script over time, because, as

[469]Samuel Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Literature, Social Life, Arts, and History of the Chinese Empire and its Inhabitants* (Volume 1), (New York: Wiley and Putman, 1848).

North rightly argues, institutions are powerful in shaping political, social and economic interactions.[470] The imperial examination system, for example, had been a major source of incentives for the intellectuals to use and learn the official language. The institution was sufficiently resilient that it was able to survive even when the country was annexed by other linguistic communities. Clearly, it is because of the resilience of those institutions that the Chinese language has remained a unifying force for the "Chinese."

Adopting a comparative historical analysis framework, this thesis examines and compares three major types of institution that were adopted by the Chinese state for language standardisation since 1949. The collective impact of these institutions alone justify a serious investigation: China's contemporary language engineering programme has been one of the most ambitious in human history, affecting a vaster number of people than any predating ones.[471] While the scholarly community has a good understanding of how people in the minority regions are, often negatively, affected by official language policies, the impacts of everyday grassroots resistance, as well as the subtle evolution of language institutions have largely been ignored. By explaining how grassroots resistance has gradually transformed the language institutions set up by the state, this thesis offers a more comprehensive understanding of language politics in China. Theoretically, the present examination of language politics in China shall contribute to a growing body of literature on institutional change in political science. As the most populous surviving authoritarian regime, China provides a valuable case for studying the evolution of institutions in a stable authoritarian context. In recent years political scientists have gained noteworthy advancement in theorising the process of institutional change, recognising that institutions often evolve gradually and

[470] Douglass C. North, 'Institutions', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* Vol. 5, No.1 (1991), p. 97.
[471] Minglang Zhou and Heidi A. Ross, "Introduction: The Context of the Theory and Practice of China's Language Policy," in Minglang Zhou and Hongkai Sun (eds.), *Language Policy in the People's Republic of China: Theory and Practice Since 1949* (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), p.1.

shift without breaking down completely.[472] However, most of these studies are based on data drawn from democratic countries in which the grassroots are granted formal rights to organisation and political participation.[473] In relation to institutions in a stable authoritarian regime like China, it is common to assume that bottom-up institutional changes are unlikely unless they serve the interests of powerful state agents, as the state enjoys veto power to abort changes that it deems unfavourable. However, through studying the evolution of language institutions over a long period of time, this thesis explains how the social grassroots exploit instabilities created by structural change—as well as ambiguities within the existing institutions—to advance their interests, and over time, manage to accumulate force that can (in effect) displace an existing state institution. Compared to the more radical attempts for change that have attracted media attention, gradual changes promoted by the grassroots, being both less noticeable at the beginning and mostly non-confrontation, are harder to avert by state actors. Over time, these changes increase the costs—including the costs for information, monitoring, and enforcement—to the powerful state actors to uphold the status quo, prompting them to replace an existing institution with a new one.[474] The mechanism derived through this investigation shall therefore be relevant to the wider political science discipline.

Language Management in China and Beyond

To elaborate my empirical findings in greater detail, this thesis identified three types of institution that has been used by the Chinese state to manage the linguistic arena, namely, top down, incentivising, and selective. They were different in terms of aggressiveness (the extent of intervention from the central state) and time of implementation. The most relevant

[472] James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen, "A theory of gradual institutional change,"p. 2.
[473] An example is Kathleen Thelen's seminal book, *How Institutions Evolve: the Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[474] These costs are commonly known as transaction costs in economics. See Adrienne Windhoff-Héritier, *Explaining Institutional Change in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 17.

set of variables in explaining this divergence is the relative capacity to control economic and communication resources, which jointly determine the state's unitary power. Economic development and advancement in communication technology shape the structural background of language management. As these factors change over time, they create what Thelen coins as "structural instabilities," empowering rival actors who were previously on the periphery to partake in activities that are detrimental to the effective operation of the state institution.[475] In other words, the new structural environment is "unstable" because of the rise of new competitors. As the power of these new actors accumulates over time, they become stakeholders whose interests have to be addressed by the powerful. Institutions are distributional tools. The inclusion of new stakeholders thus requires existing institutions to expand their scope of co-optation. Yet, such expansion is not always feasible as institutions are designed under specific historical circumstances. When existing institutions fail to contain issues of non-compliance without resorting to costly measures, there will be a strong incentive for the powerful in the state to craft out new institutions.

Each of the three types of institution is examined through a detailed process tracing of a particular language management scheme: the *Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*, the Putonghua Proficiency Test, and the Internet Keyword Filtering System. In each case study I demonstrated how the scheme concerned was designed and then evolved against a general trend of decentralisation in economic and communication resources. The top-down management institution was implemented in the 1950s, when the central state enjoyed a clear comparative advantage over other actors such as ordinary citizens in terms of economic resources and communication capacity. Such strategy is presumably the most direct way for powerful state agents to maintain their political and symbolic dominance. This does not, of course, mean that compliance from

[475] Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve.*

the subjects was voluntary. In fact, the top-down institution allowed only a small group of elites to monopolise the power to define correctness in language. Intellectuals lost their freedom to use language in their own style, and the general public was prompted to adopt a mode of communication that was very different from their linguistic practice at home, but the socio-economic conditions of the time meant that resistance could only take place in a subtle manner, and they could not form a force that was sizeable enough to prompt the ambitious language planners to take their demands into consideration. The positive relationship between the unitary power of the state and the creation of top-down language management institution is by no means peculiar to China alone. As demonstrated in Chapter 7, language management in Belarussia and Taiwan was similarly ambitious when the state dominated both economic and communication resources.

The market reform that began in 1978 decentralised the distribution of economic and communication resources previously controlled directly by the central state. Chapter 3 demonstrated how decentralisation of economic and communication resources have empowered profit-oriented publishers to enter the dictionary market, which eventually challenged the state's monopoly over the definition of "prescription" through their mimicking behaviour. Chapter 4 moved beyond dictionaries and examines how decentralisation of economic and communication resources prompted the state to craft new language management institutions to recapture the increasingly chaotic linguistic arena. Instead of merely defining the contents of "standard language," the state made putonghua a prerequisite for many desirable social positions. The influential *Putonghua Proficiency Test* (PSC) implemented in the early 1990s is a key example of this attempt. Although some test takers complained that the PSC exerted a hegemonic influence over them, the test should be considered a bottom-up approach of language standardisation in that participation in the PSC

is largely voluntary. In other words, the PSC is a tool to institutionalise the incentive to learn and use "proper putonghua." Most test takers were motivated by the possible economic or career benefits associated with good results in the test. This type of institution was not designed by the state in a contingent manner. In fact, as Chapter 3 revealed, the language planners of the state recognised the problems associated with top-down institutions in the 1980s, and struggled to replace the increasingly ineffective top-down institutions, such as the Second Scheme of Character Simplification. A similar pattern, as the case studies in Chapter 8 suggested, was found in Ukraine when the Soviet authorities decided to grant access to positions in Russian and Soviet structures to those Ukrainians who were willing to comply with Soviet rule.[476]

By the late 1990s, the Chinese state's dominance over economic and communication resources was once again challenged by forces of globalisation and the spread of the Internet. The incentivising institutions designed specifically for co-opting market actors needed to response to a more diverse set of interests. This change is first demonstrated in Chapter 5, which traced how test takers deflected from the PSC as they saw foreign languages—English in particular—more useful for boosting their career prospect. Again, state actors struggled to defend the institution in the first place. While, for example, some local governments made the test compulsory for all university graduates, the State Language Commission invented a new Chinese language test more similar to foreign language tests.

The arrival of the Internet in China further decentralised the state's capacity to control communication resources. With the introduction of the Internet, individuals were transformed from mere recipients of messages from the elites into "publishers" who were capable of disseminating information across different sections of society. Thus, the

[476] Please refer to Chapter 8 for a more detailed discussion.

Internet empowered diverse groups of ordinary people who had formerly been deprived in the decision making process of language management into participants therein. While some of them exploited the opportunity to directly confront the authority, many others used the Internet as a platform for language play. Either way, new communities and values were formed, allowing the netizens to organise themselves in ways that allowed them to bypass the state's language regulations, which eventually prompted the state to take a more open attitude towards language resources devised by the grassroots. The interactive style of language management depicted in Chapter 7 was formulated by the State Language Commission in the late 2000s, after it had suffered several failures in regulating "non-prescriptive" internet language. In this respect, the three cases fit well with the general predictions of the model presented in the first chapter.

Although the three institutions were invariably challenged by new actors during periods of structural instability, they followed varied paths of decay, because different types of institution created different opportunity structures, which subsequently shaped the characteristics of change agents and the strategies of resistance they adopted.

This thesis identifies three types of resistance—mimicking, defection, and layering—that led to the decline of the state's language institutions. Each of them corresponds to a particular type of institution. Mimicking behaviour was observed in the case of the *Dictionary*, in which profit-oriented publishers imitated the state model in publishing and promoting their own dictionaries. As argued in Chapter 3, this mimicking strategy was adopted by the market actors because it could generate the greatest return. The design of top-down institution granted only a small group of elite with exclusive power to define the rules within the institution, leaving nearly no room for its subjects to interpret those rules alternatively. While the majority of them will therefore choose to follow the directions given by the elites, those who are more ambitious and

resourceful—in terms of communication and economic resources—are likely to be attracted by the enormous profit-making power enjoyed by the elites. To share the power of the elites, these ambitious market actors deliberately imitated their practices, acting as if they were a part of the elitist group. Such imitation is necessary because alternative practices are not likely to be supported by the rest of the subjects who are used to following the directions from the top.

The connection between institutional design and the resistance it faces later was even more straightforward in the case of the PSC, in which a considerable scale of defection took place in the mid-2000s, mainly in the forms of test evasion and cheating. The design of incentivising institutions stresses on the creation of incentives and the link between those incentives and behaviour deemed desirable by the institution designers. Such an emphasis on utility has once sustained the growth of the PSC in the reform era, but it also justified a utilitarian understanding of language learning that was later exploited by subjects who wanted to avoid the hassle of test taking. Not surprisingly, institutions that rely on incentivisation often need to compete with other similar institutions in the provision of incentives to their subjects, who are likely to express their dissatisfaction by defection.[477] This was evident in the case of the PSC when young Chinese, motivated by the greater "utility" of English, chose to ignore the PSC requirements and took foreign language tests instead in the late-2000s, making the former increasingly irrelevant.

Finally, selective institutions emphasise flexible application of rules. They are usually adopted by the powerful when they need to cope with a sizable population with diverse and fast-changing interests. Since the scope of management is extensive, intensive interventions from the top can only take place in certain crucial areas. Consequently, selective institutions

[477] Marleen Brans, "Challenges to the practice and theory of public administration in Europe," *Journal of Theoretical Politics,* Vol.9, No.3 (1997), pp. 396-399.

tend to leave ample room for their subjects to create new rules themselves and, gradually, influence those within the existing institution. As observed in the case of the Internet Keyword Filtering System, while communication that contains "sensitive" keywords was closely censored by the state and the state is able to revise the keyword lists in accordance with the changing political climate, casual or non-political communication has been less intervened. This left the netizens with the space and time to test and experiment with new ideas. To facilitate their communication, netizens, through collective collaboration, invented alternative linguistic resources and grammar systems. Their activities gradually increased the cost to the state of defending its monopoly over linguistic correctness, prompting it to adopt a more liberal approach when interacting with society.

Here it becomes apparent that the three modes of resistance differ in terms of their impacts on existing institutions. Mimicking has mixed impacts on the strength of the existing institution because although it confounds the signals sent by the institutional leaders to their subjects, it also helps disseminate the authority of the former. In other words, since the success of mimicking hinges on the authority of the existing institution, the strategy is not entirely detrimental to the latter's survival. As evident in the case of the *Dictionary*, the mimicking behaviour of profit-oriented publishers has reinforced the public perception that good dictionaries are those that follow the state's directions.

In contrast, defection and layering bring little positive impact to the existing institution in question. Actors who adopt the former strategy abandon the rules or requirements of the existing institution and turn to its competitors. These defectors may not be hostile to the existing institution, but collectively they can still threaten the survival of the institution through draining away its subjects and thereby strengthening the influence of its rivals. In the case of the PSC, as the test became less attractive to the Chinese youth,

language planners struggled to maintain the number of test takers by reinventing the testing system, which in the process effectively altered the institutional configurations of the PSC.

Layering produces even more radical changes. Instead of defecting to institutions introduced by other parties, as in the case of the PSC, activists engagement in layering activities actually create alternative rules on top of or alongside existing ones, thereby changing the ways in which the original rules structure behaviour.[478] Layering can significantly deteriorate an existing institution because the new rules introduced can alter its logic.[479] For example, when netizens started introducing new meanings for characters and use them interchangeably with conventional uses for characters, they effectively broke down the keyword filtering system, making internet censorship increasingly a costly and labour-intensive business. Consequently, the state is impelled to allow more bottom-up participation in language management in the late 2000s.

By comparison, it is observed that the three strategies of resistance are adopted by social actors with different mentalities. This is because different institutions leave different space for them to set up the necessary infrastructure among themselves for collective actions. Top-down institutions generally faced little need to co-opt a large group of actors when they were formulated. Those institutions give tremendous power to the elite in rule setting and enforcement. Although structural changes can empower certain previously peripheral social groups to challenge the status quo, they receive little support from other social actors who are either too weak to benefit from institutional changes or accustomed to the existing rules. Consequently, potential change agents need to rely on existing infrastructures that are set up by the elite to rally support from the society. They tend to have a higher incentive to sustain the existing institution. In the case of dictionary publishing, customers lack the necessary information to evaluate the quality of dictionary and, as a result, new dictionary publishers

[478] Mahoney and Thelen, "A theory of gradual institutional change," pp. 15-16.
[479] Ibid.

need to mimic dictionaries endorsed by the state so as to gain market confidence. On the contrary, selective institutions are more likely to exist when the elite can only defend their core interests against an increasingly "ungovernable"—stratified and chequered—society by concentrating their limited resources in selected areas. Social actors can utilise the space left by the elite to develop their own communication systems and are thus less dependent on the existing institution. These actors are likely to challenge the status quo in an increasingly confrontational manner—as evident in the "linguistic rebellion" discussed in Chapter 7—so as to extend their interests and rights.

In short, this thesis demonstrates that the process of language management in China has been contentious and dynamic. While the authoritarian state has remained the most powerful actor in the linguistic arena in the 21st century, the institutions it sets up to manage language have experienced substantial transformation. This process is triggered by structural changes associated with marketisation and advancement in communication technology. In determining the direction of changes, this thesis argues that the interests of the grassroots are at least as significant as those of the powerful. Exploiting the loopholes in the state institutions with their everyday choices, the grassroots gradually increased the cost to the powerful to maintain the status quo, reaching a threshold at which change or liberalisation becomes the most feasible option. As such, the present disquisition increases our understanding of language politics in China. Critical theorists and linguists who have long focused on analysing the linguistic features of the language used by state officials shall benefit from the institutional analysis in the previous chapters. Word choices and writing style might indeed allow the powerful to influence their subjects' perception for a limited duration, but it is language institutions that provide the necessary incentives and rules through which certain linguistic practices can be stabilised over a relatively long period of time. This thesis highlights the importance of institutions in laying down rules through which meanings

are fashioned and circulated in China, and explains how structural changes—in combination with creative strategies adopted by various social actors—have spurred those institutions to evolve over time.

Understanding how language institutions in China evolve over time can also redirect the scholarly focus of language politics from linguistics to broader institutional studies. As mentioned, to date the studies of language politics in China are still very much confined to the linguistic arena, where the best known accounts focus on linguistic features—such as syntactic structures and word choices—that can be observed in the operation of the state, with the understanding that language rules constructed by powerful state actors should reflect their interests, such as maintaining solidarity of the subjects and expressing the power of the ruling elites. Yet, meanwhile, we have yet to see any concrete evidence that those techniques can affect their subjects in any significant ways. In contrast, as archival materials and recent historical accounts suggest, even in Mao-era China intellectuals were able to find loopholes in the state's control, so as to preserve their style and some freedom of expression.[480] Moreover, labour in some cities was unresponsive to the state's call to learn the official language and diction,[481] and there even were times when the state needed to, albeit reluctantly, rescind its language policies. All these suggest that in order to better understand the linguistic behaviour of the Chinese, a deeper understanding about the origins and development of the institutions that shape language rules is necessary.

[480] Volland, "A Linguistic enclave," pp. 467-494.

[481] See, for example, Hubei Department of Education, "Hubeisheng 1956 nian tuiguang putonghua gongzuo jiankuang ji 1957 nian gongzuo jihua de baogao" ("Report on the work of putonghua promotion in 1956 and plan for 1957"), 20 March 1957, Hubei Provincial Archives, No.SZ118-02-0293-001; and Guangzhou Municipal Revolution Committee, "Zhongguo wenzi gai ge weiyunhui zai woshi jiancha tuiguang putonghua di qingkuang baogao" ("Report on inspection by the Institute of Character Reform regarding putonghua promotion in our city"), 31 October 1975, Guangdong Provincial Archives, No.314-A1.4-40~10.

Prospect for Bottom-up Political Changes in China

Language is a resource with political and economic significance. Given that linguistic behaviour is primarily regulated by official language management institutions, changes in the ways through which those institutions are designed may well presage a larger transformation in the broader politics of China. Altogether, the previous chapters suggest that from Mao's China to the reform era, ordinary people have exerted increased influence over the formulation of language rules. And while the state is still the main agent in deciding when and how an institution is to be completely removed, its decisions are largely shaped by the resistance of the grassroots which gradually increase the cost of upholding the status quo. To date, most students of Chinese politics maintain that the core political institutions of the Chinese state remain highly effective in containing bottom-up challenges.[482] Research along this line will remain meaningful, but the findings in this thesis complement the existing literature by suggesting that while the state is still powerful in the core political arenas (such as elections and media), salient bottom–up transformations have already taken place in less sensitive areas.

The three case studies, each in their own way, contribute to more specific on-going discussions in Chinese politics. The case of the *Dictionary*—by arguing that market-oriented publishers are driven by profit to stay closely with the state—deepens our understanding of the relationship between marketisation and state power. The lasting presence of the state in the dictionary market is at least partly the result of the keen competition among profit-oriented publishers, which induces them to maintain, or even exaggerate, their relationship with the state. This finding not only provides a more viable explanation for the political imprint on Chinese dictionaries, but also extends Cho's recent study of the health-care sector

[482] For example, see Ying Sun, "Independent candidates in mainland China: Origin, development, and implications for China's democratization," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (2013), p. 268.

in Harbin, where the state is similarly mimicked and appropriated by market actors.[483] It is possible that this kind of compliance is more likely to take place when information cost is high.

The analysis on the PSC provides a concrete case on how incentives to learn and use "proper" putonghua were institutionalised, and therefore sheds new light on the role of incentive design.[484] In particular, the case of the PSC demonstrates that the use of the incentivising technique is conducive to the formation of opportunistic agents who can—in a competitive market economy—easily defect to other rival institutions. This finding contributes to the growing body of research on the limits of incentivisation in China, where it is commonly observed that individuals respond to the technique by developing various collusive behaviours—such as deception and formalism—that can in turn hamper the efficiency of the institution.[485] The relationship between incentivisation and the rise of unfavourable opportunistic behaviours should not be underestimated. After all, as the studies of Kuran and Beissinger suggest, opportunistic agents constitute the majority of the population, and are often the most crucial force in determining the course of political transformations.[486]

Finally, the evolution of language management institutions in the internet era shall be useful for studying "the online discourse competition within the state-imposed boundary."[487] While traditional studies on internet activism focus on censorship techniques through which

[483] Mun Young Cho, "'We are the state': an entrepreneurial mission to serve the people in Harbin, Northeast China," *Modern China*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2011), pp. 422–455.
[484] Xueguang Zhou, Hong Lian, Leonard Ortolano, and Yinyu Ye, "A behavioral model of 'muddling through' in the Chinese bureaucracy: The case of environmental protection," *The China Journal*, No. 70, (2013), pp. 120-147.
[485] For example, see Andrew Kipnis, "Audit cultures: Neoliberal governmentality, socialist legacy, or technologies of governing?"*American Ethnologist*, Vol. 35 (2008), p. 285.
[486] Timor Kuran, "Now out of never: the element of surprise in the East European revolution of 1989," *World Politics* Vol. 44, No. 1, (1991), pp. 7-48; and Mark R.Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[487] Rongbin Han, "Manufacturing consent in censored cyberspace: The rise of fifty cents army on Chinese Internet forums," Paper presented in the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, New Orleans, 31 August 2012.

the state sets boundaries for what can be expressed, recent studies begin to consider the capacity of the state to manufacture favourable public opinion.[488] The case of online language management shall contribute to this area of research by suggesting how state officials have actively engaged with the social actors in codifying new linguistic resources (e.g. internet memes), and in the process alter the meaning and usage of those that are deemed to be potentially unfavourable to the authority. As social dynamics become increasingly complicated, it is expected that this interactive style of governance will begin to play a more important role in other policy domains.

Explaining Institutional Change in Authoritarian Regimes

Recent years have seen major advancements in the studies of institutions. While traditional institutional analyses focused on explaining the emergence and break down of institutions at "critical junctures," recent accounts begin to recognise that institutions can evolve gradually over a long period of time. Although institutions can stabilise and regulate human behaviour, they are not static artefacts. Instead, compliance to an institution is conditioned by numerous factors, which are subjected to constant contestation and negotiation between different actors. In fact, long before an apparently dramatic moment when an institution is replaced with fundamentally new ones, there are often massive but piecemeal efforts on the ground modifying the institution concerned. Understanding how institutions evolve over time thus becomes a growing enterprise in political science.

To date, students of institutional change have already provided useful theoretical insights on the factors that account for when and how institutions change.[489] Yet, the existing comparative literature—drawing heavily upon the developmental experience of the West—is not explicitly geared for explaining institutional evolution in a stable

[488] For example, Patricia Thornton, "Retrofitting the steel frame: from mobilizing the masses to surveying the public," in Heilmann and Perry (ed.), *Mao's Invisible Hand*, pp. 237-268.
[489] For example, see Avner Greif and David Laitin, "A theory of endogenous institutional change," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 98, No. 4 (2004), pp. 633–652.

authoritarian regime such as China, where ordinary citizens have little formal channels to exert their influence over existing institutional rules. Many institutional theorists assume that powerful actors in authoritarian government are less active in institutional reengineering than their democratic counterparts, because they are sheltered from the challenges from the bottom.[490] However, evidence clearly suggests the contrary to be true in the case of China: even though the regime as a whole has remained remarkably stable for over six decades, many of its institutions have actually undergone significant internal transformations. In fact, while the language of gradual institutional change has rarely appeared in Chinese studies, scholars in the field have nevertheless focused on strikingly similar phenomena, such as "adaptive governance" and "continual experimentation."[491] From rural healthcare to national financial regulations, these scholars present convincing evidence that institutions set up by the Chinese state have evolved over time, and that their evolution was by no means entirely contingent to short term shifts in preferences of the ruling elites. All these entail that a systematic account of institutional evolution in China would contribute to the generalisation of theories of gradual institutional change.

Specifically, this thesis calls for greater awareness among institutional theorists regarding the different functions that institutions perform in democratic and authoritarian regimes. In democracies where representation plays a central role in the operation of politics, institutions are set up primarily to restrain the behaviour of different agents so as to ensure stable patterns of representation—a crucial element of effective democracy. However, in authoritarian regimes, the prime objective of the

[490] Peter A. Hall, "Historical institutionalism in rationalist and sociological perspective," in James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (eds.), *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 219.
[491] Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth Perry, "Embracing uncertainty: guerrilla policy style and adaptive governance in China," in Heilmann and Perry (ed.), *Mao's Invisible Hand* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), pp. 1-29.

institutions set up by the state is to ensure its ultimate survival. Regime survival is a crucial concern for authoritarian leaders because staying in power not only gives them continued access to the various benefits associated with their office, but also protects them from prosecution by their enemies. Contrary to what is commonly assumed in the comparative literature, authoritarian governments often have strong incentive to rally and secure popular support, because they too are constrained by limitations of both resources and information, particularly in the age of globalisation in which people and capital are extremely mobile. Without formal channels for ordinary citizens to participate in politics through negotiation and elections, authoritarian institutions play an important role in preventing the regime from a total breakdown. In other words, authoritarian institutions are tools not just for control, but also for co-optation.[492] This explains why although authoritarian leaders often enjoy immense political power, they still have reasons to reinvent existing institutions to incorporate the interests of their subjects. In articulating the links between institutional set up and the strategies of resistance in language management in China, this thesis explains how social actors—despite numerous interventions coming from the state—can exercise their creativity in challenging the status quo. Although powerful state actors have tried to defend existing language institutions, they were baffled by the high management cost that accumulated over time. This revised understanding of authoritarian institutions shall help explain the vibrant gradual institutional change taking place in stable authoritarian regimes.

In a related fashion, my analysis in the preceding chapters also suggests a more productive way of explaining the magnitude of institutional change. In considering the strategy that is most likely to be adopted by potential change agents, previous scholars argue that "vetoing possibilities" of the defender of the status quo is a crucial

[492] A similar argument can be found in Gandhi's book *Political Institutions under Dictatorship*. However, her book focuses more on personalistic dictatorships, which are very different from stable authoritarian regimes like China.

determinant. According to these scholars, if the defenders enjoy strong veto power—meaning that they have good "access to institutional or extra-institutional means of blocking change"—change is likely to be less confrontational and less radical.[493] Yet, as some critics have rightly argued, "vetoing possibility" is a vague concept which can hardly be measured objectively.[494] The analytical model presented in this thesis may help solve this problem by shifting the focus from "vetoing possibilities" to the costs required to maintain the status quo. There are two benefits to this revision. First, this revised focus can still be used to assess the possibilities of veto because the veto power of an actor is effectively lost when the cost of maintaining the status quo (i.e. exercising the power to veto) is significantly high. Second, this revised concept gives scholars a better prospect in producing testable hypotheses. While this thesis did not quantitatively measure and compare the costs for the Language Commission to uphold existing language management institutions, future research may, by focusing on a number of costs (such as information cost), test the claims put forth in this thesis against a larger and more varied sample of institution change in authoritarian regimes. Of course, similar strategies can be applied to examine other models of gradual institutional change that involve the concept of vetoing possibilities.

The above remarks also point to the need for further work to generalise the arguments presented in this thesis. There are many forms of authoritarianism. What China, Taiwan (prior to the 1990s), and the Soviet Union represent is just a particular group of authoritarian regimes in which the state is/was ambitious in pursuing a variety of developmental goals, which leads to rapid socio-economic transitions. China's extraordinary changes over the past three decades allow China specialists to have the privilege to analyse the impacts of structural factors in a relatively clear way. For other

[493] Mahoney and Thelen, "A theory of gradual institutional change," p. 19.
[494] Jennifer A. Widner, "Review: *Explaining institutional change: ambiguity, agency, and power*," *Governance* Vol. 23, No.4 (2010), pp. 693-695.

less ambitious authoritarian regimes, the processes depicted in this thesis may unfold over a much longer period of time, or take a completely different shape. Similarly, although language plays a pivotal role in politics, there is little doubt that the process of institutional change can vary across policy domains or spheres of the political system. The dynamics present in language policy-making should not be directly replicated in other arenas, such as electoral system reform and central-provincial relations. This arises partly because language proficiency is less transferable than other goods. It is therefore possible that institutional change in language management may be slower than those in the economic realm. So far little work has been done in this area yet. Further research along these lines will help generalise the insights presented here.

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Appendix

CODING MANUAL FOR CODERS

STAGE ONE

Objective: To record and classify the most basic types of differences found between the two editions of the Dictionary.

OPERATION

Selecting Samples: all samples, except the first ten pages, will be selected randomly. To conduct this task, a number, ranging from 12 to 1830, will be drawn randomly using the *Random Number Generator* before coding. A ten-page sample will then be selected from the 5th edition *Dictionary* accordingly. For example, if a number, say 18, is picked up randomly, then a sample ranging from p.18 to p. 28 will be selected from the 5th edition *Dictionary*. Finally, depending on the content of the 5th edition *Dictionary*, the relevant pages in the 1st edition will be selected. By doing so, different sections of the *Dictionary* shall have equal chance to be selected.

Using the method above, the following numbers were generated:

269 1401 1011 219 1503 1284 1762

Classification: At this stage, only the most unambiguous classification criteria will be used. Differences shall be classified according to the following categories:

1. Addition: Words/ Vocabulary items that were not available in the 1st edition but appear in the 5th edition.

2. Deletion: Words/ Vocabulary items that appeared in the 1st edition but are no longer present in the 5th edition

3. Change in Explanation: Words/ Vocabulary items that are explained in a differently. Entries in this category will be further classified into the following groups:

   3.1 EA: refers to “addition”. This includes additional definitions and examples.

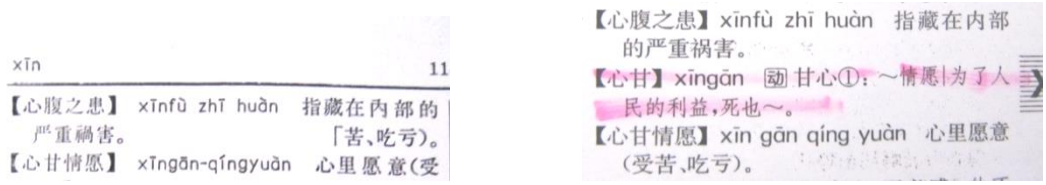
   3.2 ED: refers to “deletion”. This includes examples or definitions that are no longer used.

3.3 EC: refers to "Change". When an example or explanation is being replaced by another definition or example, it will be considered as a "change".

Examples:

Addition:

1st edition *5th edition*

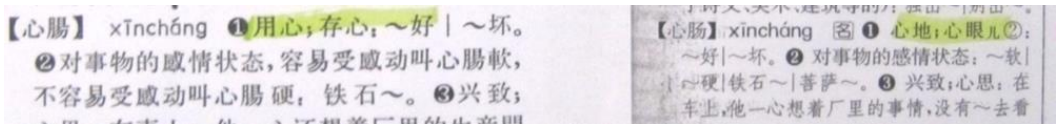


Change in Explanation—EA: (addition of examples/ definitions)

1st edition *5th edition*

Change in Explanation—EC: (A definition is being replaced by another definition)

1st edition *5th edition*



STAGE TWO

Objective: To classify the changes between the two editions of the *Dictionary*.

OPERATION

Samples: all samples are selected from data obtained in stage one

Classification: Words, definitions or examples that have experienced revision(s),[495] shall be classified according to the following categories:

Reform/ Revolutionary/ Sciences and Technology/ Arts and Humanities/ Others

i. **Reform:** Characteristics of the nation building discourse during 1999-2005, which include:
   - Core values in a market economy (mainly articulated since Deng's era):
     1. *Efficiency*: using less to achieve the same result; or achieve more with

[495] On the other hand, if a reform word is added to the 5th edition, then it will be classified into the category of "reform." However, in some entries in which their old definitions are deleted and replaced by new definitions, then we will consider the nature of change.

less input: e.g. 效能 (Performance, efficiency); 努力赶上去，别泄劲 (Don't lose hope and keep up your work)

2. *Individual material enjoyment/ pursuit*[496]: e.g. 爱财如命, 无处安身(no place to live), 醇香 (sweet-smelling), 旅游鞋 (Travel Shoes)
3. *Individual responsibility toward his/ her own fate*:[497] e.g. 理财(Wealth management); 当时听劝，何至于此(if you have had listened to warnings, you should not have ended up like this); 安贫乐道 (be contented in poverty and devoted to things spiritual)
4. *Private property rights:* e.g. 安家立业 (to establish one's career while taking care of his/her family)
5. *Pragmatism (result-oriented thinking):* e.g. 理性 (rationality), (从简是) 采取简单的方法或方式 (to keep things simple)
6. *Civilization/ Suzhui [498]: e.g.* 提高思想水平和业务水平 (to reach a higher level of thought and business performance)
7. *Modernity:* e.g. (邪教是) 指冒用气功、宗教等名义危害社会秩序、侵犯人身权利的非法组织 ([evil cult] refers to those illegal organizations that use *qigong*, religion, etc as a pretext to jeopardize social order and individual's rights); 祖国到处是欣欣向荣的景象 (everywhere of the country signifies a sign of prosperity)
8. *Westernisation:* e.g. 外资 (foreign investment); 英语词汇 (English vocabulary)
9. *International standards of labour discipline and orderly behaviour in public places:*e.g. 从前的搬运工干的都是力气话儿(portaging *in the past* was all about laborious physical work); 歇礼拜 (take a rest on Sunday); 疵品 (Product defects [it assumes that there is a standard to meet])

- Operations, structure and life styles of a market society: e.g. 效益工资 (achievements-related wages), 晚恋 (be in love at a mature age), 晚班, 按金 (deposit), 资金到位(secured funding), 笑星 (comic star)
- Moral values/ virtues in the harmonious society (articulated in Hu & Wen's era):[499]
  1. *Revival of traditional Confucian virtues/ "traditions":[500]* e.g. 孝顺(to be obedient to one's parents); 王位 (Throne)
  2. *(Explicit) expression of love: [501] e.g.* 爱人又多寄来…(my lover sent…)
  3. *Humanitarianism (putting human first): e.g.*你这话伤了他的面子 (what you said has humiliated him)

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[496] L. H. M. Ling, "Hegemony and the Internationalizing State," p. 10.

[497] Marc J. Blecher, "Hegemony and Workers' Politics in China," pp. 283-303.

[498] For characteristics 7 to 10, see Ann Anagnost, *National Past-Times: Narrative, Representation, and Power in Modern China* (Duke University Press: 1997), p.75

[499] Institute of Linguistics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian* (*Contemporary Chinese Dictionary*) (5th edition) (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 2005), p.552

[500] Arif Dirlik, "Culture against History: The Politics of East Asian Identity," *Development and Society*, Vol. 28 (2) (1999), p. 175.

[501] Sex and open expression of love between different sexes were discouraged in the revolutionary era. See John Gittings , *China changes face : the road from revolution, 1949-1989* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1990), p.244.

4. *Harmonious relationship with others and the environment (ie. sustainable development):* e.g. 经过多次婉商，他才同意这个方案 (he agrees with the proposal after many rounds of mild and tactful persuasion); 晚上要去看望一个朋友 (I go to visit a friend tonight); (次生林是)原有森林经采伐或破坏后又自然恢复起来的森林 (Secondary forest); 純然 (pure)

* **Technological / scientific advancements, though specific to the reform era, should not be included in this category.**

ii. Revolutionary: Characteristics of the nation building discourse during 1956-1978, which include:

- Values specific to the Socialism: e.g. 矛盾的斗争无所不在 (struggles of contradiction exist everywhere)
- Operations, structure and life styles of a socialist society: e.g. 按需分配(distribution according to need); 按勞分配(distribution according to effort)
- The acts that aim at creating, eliminating enemies: e.g. 拍手称快 (clapping hands with joy), 挨批, 挨整 (being criticized by the mass)
- Martial words:[502] e.g.发起总攻 (staging general offensives)
- Disapproval of capitalist system: e.g. 没有工人的劳动，资本家就无从取得利润 (The capitalists won't be able to profit without the labor of the workers); (校花是)旧时指被本校公认的最漂亮的女学生([campus belle] referred to the most beautiful girl in the school)
- Anti-imperialism: e.g. (冷战是)以美国为首的帝国主义集团对社会主义国家进行的挑拨… ([the Cold War is] an instigation towards the social countries by the American-led imperialist cabal)
- Disapproval of traditions: e.g. (礼教是)…旧传统中束缚人的思想行动的礼节和道德([Confucianism/ moral norms is(are)] norms and morality in the old traditions that chain human's thoughts and actions)

iii. Sciences and Technology: knowledge or a system of knowledge covering general truths or the operation of general laws especially as obtained and tested through scientific method.

- Technical engineering terms: 磁卡机 (card machine)
- Mathematical terms: 纯小数 (Decimal fraction)
- Medical terms: 帕金森綜合征 (Parkinsonism)
- Names of other species, places: 鸥 (seagulls)
- Geographical concepts and jargon: 湾泊 (berth)

iv. Arts and Literature: 蛋雕 (eggshell carving)

v. Religion: e.g. 礼拜天 (Sunday)

vi. Other:

- General terms and practices that are applicable to both revolutionary and capitalist societies: e.g. 雌伏 (doing nothing)
- Name of a place/ ethnic group/ nation/ : e.g. 僾尼 (Hani—an ethnic group)

Special cases:

Dealing with words/ definitions/ examples that were deleted:

- if a revolutionary word that was available in the 1st edition was no longer available in the 5th edition (i.e. it was deleted), coders should still classify this word as "revolutionary".
- if a "reformist" word that was available in the 1st edition was no longer available in

[502] Elizabeth J. Perry and Li Xun, "Revolutionary Rudeness."

the 5th edition (i.e. it was deleted), coders should still classify this word as "reformist".

Dealing with entries that have multiple meanings:

Situation	**Appropriate category in which the word should be counted**
A "reformist" word with a revolutionary definition	Revolutionary (we only care about how the word is defined in the *Dictionary*, whereas its "original" meaning is irrelevant)
A "revolutionary" word with a reformist definition	Reform
A "scientific"/ "religious"/ "art" word with revolutionary definitions/examples	Revolutionary
A "scientific"/ "religious"/ "art" word with reformist definitions/ examples	Reform
Words with one revolutionary definition/example and one reformist definition/example	Other
A revolutionary definition/example is *replaced* by a non-revolutionary definition/ example (i.e. it is in the EC category)	Reform