

The History of Language Planning and Reform in China: A Critical Perspective

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In traditional studies of language policy in China, scholars mainly try to evaluate language policy's effectiveness in attaining goals such as national unity, economic development, and illiteracy reduction. Few people question the underlying framework of such language planning. This paper tries to call into question those basic assumptions. By adopting a critical theory perspective, this paper tries to locate the origin of the current language policy in China in its historical context and argues that the foundation for current Chinese language policy can be tracked back to colonialism: the framework of the current language policy is based on a Eurocentric model as part of a broader project of *governmentality* and the current simplified Chinese script is partially a colonial invention.

Scholars of language policy and education in China tend to use an unexamined framework to analyze Chinese language policy and planning mainly by evaluating its effectiveness in attaining goals such as national unity, economic development and illiteracy reduction (Dwyer, 2005; Lam, 2005; Sheridan, 1981; Zhou, 2000; Zhou & Sun, 2004). By doing this, they presume several ideologies for language policy study that have been critiqued by applied linguists such as Ricento (2006), who is skeptical of the view that "socioeconomic equality in developing countries was somehow connected to the establishment of national language," (p. 14). From a critical language policy perspective, Ricento claims, these traditional studies were based on "Western-based ideologies about the requisites for national development, which included the ideology of monolingualism" (p. 14).

Mair (2004), an expert on language policy of China, listed ten main goals of language policy in the People's Republic of China from 1949 to present, under which "most sociolinguistic issues in China can be subsumed" (p. xviii). I will focus on the first six, as the last four goals deal with policies relating to translation, pedagogical issues and foreign language instruction, which are not the main focus of this paper. Mair's six goals are:

1. simplification and standardization of the Sinographic script
2. promotion of Putonghua (Mandarin) as the national language
3. the design and refinement of Pinyin (the Romanized spelling of Putonghua) and its adoption for appropriate application
4. identification and mapping of languages, topolects, and dialects- both Sinitic and non-Sinitic

5. recognition and description of languages meriting official “minority” status
6. creation of scripts for languages that lack them and the streamlining of traditional non-Sinitic writing systems

(Mair, 2004, p. xviii)

When approaching language policy and planning, scholars have distinguished three dimension: status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning (Cooper, 1989; Kloss, 1969). According to Hornberger (2006), status planning refers to “efforts directed toward the allocation of functions of languages/literacies in a given speech community” (p. 28); corpus planning focuses on the adequacy of the form of languages/literacies; and acquisition planning as efforts directed toward creating opportunities and incentives for learners to acquire additional languages/literacies.

From the first three goals listed above, we see that the Chinese government pursues goals from three dimensions: selecting a national language, reforming its writing system (simplification, standardization and Romanization), and promoting it in the educational system. Script reform was used as a way to facilitate promotion of the national language and mass literacy.

Critical applied linguistics questions three interconnected assumptions of traditional language policy studies. First, language is seen as an invention of the colonial and modernist state, instead of the separate objects that “somehow exist as ontological entities with their attendant structure, boundaries, grammars, and forms” (Pennycook, 2006, p. 66). Second, academic knowledge is framed as a socio-historical construction rather than an *a priori* truth. Wiley (2006) noted how the theory of a great divide between alphabetic literacy and non-alphabetic literacy is related to a Eurocentric diffusionist perspective, which presupposes the West as a model for the world. Third, the necessity of a monoglot ideology and standard national languages in nation building is debunked as a myth (Blommaert, 2006). Blommaert (2006), for example, by studying the case of Tanzania and Swahili, argued that, singular projections of language onto national identity has little effect in general social domains.

In this article, I seek to understand how Western language ideologies influence language reforms and policy, as well as the manners with which they are examined academically in China. Specifically, I locate current language policy in China in its historic context and argue that the foundation for current language policy can be tracked back to colonialism: the framework of the current language policy is based on a Eurocentric model as part of a broader project of *governmentality*, and the currently simplified script of Chinese is partially a colonial invention.

I begin with the introduction of *nation-state / colonial governmentality* (Flores, 2013). I then provide an overview of the influence of nation-state/colonial governmentality on language ideologies in China, and how it produced a Eurocentric formation of knowledge during colonization. After listing the goals of current language planning in China, I explore China’s language practices and policy before Western invasion, and the evolution of China’s language policy and reforms from the end of Qing dynasty to the end of the Republic of China (1856-1949) in order to explain how Chinese government and intellectuals began to reappropriate nation-state/colonial governmentality and reproduce new forms of colonial knowledges.

Nation-State/Colonial Governmentality and Language Ideology

Foucault (2007) defines *governmentality* as:

the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit complex, power that has the population as its targets, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument. (p. 108)

Instead of focusing on how government imposes its will upon people, governmentality focuses on how power operates at the micro level of diverse practices, which includes language policy.

Governmentality emerged along with the rise of nation-states. With the decline of monarchical power in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, nation-states emerged and were “premised on a universalizing narrative of human progress that necessitated the cleansing of impurities from the national body” (Flores, 2013, p. 4). Therefore, nationalism was an essential part of nation-state governmentality. According to Dirlik (1996), the emergence of nationalism “tends to project itself over both space and time; homogenizing all differences across the territory occupied by the nation, and projecting itself back in time to some mythical origin” (p. 106). At the expense of different temporalities of the past, nation-states developed in a way that homogenized the differences in a society because the differences were seen as a threat to the collective self of nation-states. The rise of nation-state governmentality was interconnected with colonialism; when ideal subjects were produced in Europe, a similar process took place in European colonies. Flores (2013) uses the phrase *nation-state/colonial governmentality* to argue that the nature of the formation of nation-states and colonization are mutually constitutive. Later, I will illustrate how nation-state/colonial governmentality, part of a Eurocentric culture, was appropriated and reproduced by Chinese people.

As an intrinsic part of nation-state/colonial governmentality, languages as separate and enumerable objects were invented by European nation-states through codification and standardization. The language ideology behind these inventions was that a language as an enumerable object represents a people with rights to a land (Gal, 2006; Mühlhäusler, 2002). A standardized national language became indispensable for a nation-state in order to produce docile national subjects, “people who served the political and economic interests of the rising European bourgeoisie” (Flores, 2013, p. 8). Language policy became the question of which language to choose for effective governance. In alignment with this shift, standard grammars, lexicon and even accents were invented to cleanse impurities from a variety of language practices.

In European countries, the standardized national languages usually emerged out of the language practices of bourgeoisie. This process could be traced back to Spanish grammarian Antonio de Nebrija,

who worked on codifying Castilian as the language of Spain soon after the ‘cleansing’ of Spain of the last Moors and Jews as part of La Reconquista and at the same time as Columbus was beginning the process of expanding Spain’s empire abroad. (Flores, 2013, p. 7)

In Britain, Received Pronunciation, a regional prestige variety, became the national standard and status emblem (Dong, 2010). Parisian French was institutionally codified as the correct form of French in France (Dong, 2010).

When it comes to producing docile colonial subjects in colonies, language policy took on different forms but acted through the same language ideology: a national language should be adopted to represent the nation-state. In places such as Africa, North America and South America, although local language practices were also mapped, defined, codified and studied by colonizers and missionaries through the perspective of European nation-states, colonial languages like French, English and Spanish were directly imposed and promoted for more convenient governance (Phillipson, 1996). In other places, mother tongue education was promoted to achieve the same purpose; orientalist knowledge was encoded in mother tongue education to create the Other. As recorded by Pennycook (2002), in Malaysia, for example, based on the fear that English education might create a discontented class who was no longer satisfied with labor work, vernacular education was promoted; in Hong Kong, Chinese language education was used to promote traditional Confucian values such as loyalty and to counter nationalist sentiments. For countries that were under the threat of, but partially resisted colonization, such as Japan and China, language codification and reforms were triggered along with the attempt to build a modern nation-state.

An important part of the colonialist legacy was the production of culture and knowledge by the process of imposing Eurocentric categories upon colonized people and constructing the Other through a Euro-American lens. Spivak (1988) may have called this process a form of *epistemic violence*—an imposition of a Western epistemology on the world. In this respect, it is important to understand the notion of *invention* in Christian, colonial, and nationalistic projects in different parts of the globe (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Invention took place during the construction of nation-states in Europe and the formation of Eurocentric culture and knowledge during colonization. A homogeneous ancestry, race, history, tradition, language, and nation was invented, labeled and enforced through institutions.

Inventions were not realities, but they had real effects. They were the criteria to define who the citizens of a nation-state were, and in doing so, they necessarily defined who would be marginalized. The understanding of governance was shifted away from defending against the centralized power to the impure elements of society, and the threats posed by the other race, the subrace and/or the counterrace (Foucault, 2003, p. 61-62, as cited in Flores, 2013, p. 6). In this process, certain citizens became aware of which behaviors were perceived as deviant, and therefore they policed themselves to avoid those activities. When the people began to identify with the labels of race, people, and nation, they were also willing to die for these labels to serve their country. Therefore, inventions were sometimes associated with militarization. Makoni and Pennycook (2007), for example, noticed the invention of the French “entailed forging relations between language, citizenship and patriotism, and the military and national service were crucial” (p. 9), and that the First World War reinforced the European associations between language and citizenship.

Invention took place in European states as well as in other parts of the world. Makoni and Pennycook (2007) argued that:

this project of invention needs to be seen not merely as part of European attempts to design the world in their own image, but rather as part of the process of constructing the history of others for them, which was a cornerstone of European governance and surveillance of the world. (p. 5)

In the Chinese context, which I will elaborate on later, this was true for orientalist inventions which characterized China as backward and stagnant, its resistance as negative, and western expansion as positive and crucial to China's modernization. The notion of orientalism was developed by Said (1985), which partially referred to, "the ideological suppositions, images, and fantasies about a currently important and politically urgent region of the world called the Orient" (p. 90). In other words, the colonialists formed knowledge about the East and constructed the Other by imposing their own ideologies to further facilitate colonialism. In this way, colonization was justified as a process of civilizing the Other.

Nation-state/colonial governmentality's epistemological framework and Eurocentric knowledge formation were entrenched in waves of nationalist and self-determination movements of the colonies that would happen later. During this time, nationalist language ideologies played a crucial role in the nation-state construction of former colonies (Flores, 2013). In African nationalism, the foreign languages of the colonizers were appropriated as the languages to represent their land; French, English or Portuguese remained the official language of most African countries (Phillipson, 1996). In countries such as Japan and China, where local languages were utilized for nationalist purposes, Eurocentric epistemic violence and orientalist knowledge were evident and hugely influential in their national identity formation and language reforms.

In what follows, I will examine the three products of the rise of nation-state/colonial governmentality in Chinese history: first, inventions of languages emerged as separate objects that "somehow exist as ontological entities with their attendant structure, boundaries, grammars, and forms" (Pennycook, 2006, p. 66); second, colonial and orientalist discourses about China and their influence in Chinese policy and scholarship; third, the Eurocentric nation-state model that presumes the monoglot ideology (Silverstein, 1996) that a society is monolingual and the connections among people, land and language.

Before Western Invasion

Before Western invasion in 1839, according to historians such as Fairbank and Goldman (2006), China in the imperial era was a society organized by culturalism, instead of nationalism. Harrison (1969), for example, argued that, "the traditional Chinese self-image has generally been defined as culturalism, based on the historical heritage and acceptance of shared values, not as nationalism, based on the modern concept of the nation-state" (p. 2). Instead of being a nation-state based on race, Chinese society was based on the Tianxia system. The Tianxia system envisaged a Sino-centric universe in which China was the middle kingdom and other tribes and kingdoms remained at the periphery (Chen, 2005). Chen goes on to argue that, "from a culturalist point of view, the primary identity of the Chinese was the general acceptance of traditional Chinese culture, namely, the Confucianism that dominated the minds of the Chinese for almost 200 years" (p. 36). Nowadays, *Chinese* is often equated with *Han Chinese* as a racialized term. In the

imperial era, however, once other peoples began to adopt the shared culture and values of Han society, they too began to think of themselves as Chinese regardless of their ethnicity. The Han Chinese writing system was an indispensable part of Han culture, and other peoples could become more closely affiliated with Han by learning their script. In this process, values and cultures, instead of nationalism, tied the empire together. From the perspective of Foucault's (2007) *governmentality*, power was manifested through deference to God or a monarch; in ancient China, power was manifested through culturalism and the Emperor.

The standardized form of speech in imperial China is generally considered *Guanhua* (literally "the speech of officials"), widely translated as Mandarin, a term coined by Jesuit missionaries. The Qing emperors set up the Correcting Pronunciation School, in which the aristocracy and government bureaucrats learned a particular way of pronouncing the language. The main reason for setting up such a school was because the Emperor was angry that he could not understand the southern bureaucrats when they were reporting political affairs to him. An attempt to standardize characters was also initiated and included publications like the Kangxi dictionary. Such movements were seen as irrelevant to most of the population, who were expected to fulfill their roles as laborers in farming, which had little, if anything, to do with formal literacy. As a result, the illiteracy rate at the end of the Qing dynasty was as high as 90 percent (De Francis, 1950).

The only time the Chinese script and Mandarin were relevant to the masses was when the the Emperor's decrees were distributed to them (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006). First, there was no expectation that everyone needed to know how to read or write. When the Emperor wanted to inform his subjects about new government policy, the text was modified to suit the audience, "either in simple vernacular or embellished with classical allusions or with memorable jingles for the simple country folk" (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006, p. 156). When the officials brought messages from the Emperor to the masses, they first needed to translate the classical written Chinese into vernacular Chinese, as written Chinese was distinct from spoken Chinese. An official's vernacular, however, was Mandarin, which was not comprehensible to many people either. Then, the local gentry would interpret the Mandarin spoken by the officials into the local dialect. Only through this complex process could an ordinary person learn about government policy. Access to literacy and the standardized language was the privilege of the gentry-class and bureaucrats.

Monarchists strongly opposed the idea of mass literacy. Gu Hongming, an extreme conservative and zealous advocate of Chinese tradition and Confucianism, said that:

It seems to me that instead of complaining, all of us, foreigners, militarists, politicians and especially we returned students, who are now still having such a good time here in China, should give thanks to God every day in our lives for the fact that 90 per cent of the four hundred million people in China are still illiterate. Imagine what a fine state of things we would have, if here in Peking, the coolies, mafoos, chauffeurs, barbers, shopboys, huxters, loafers and vagabonds, hoc genus omne, all became literate and wanted to take part in politics as well as the university students. It is said that recently five thousand telegrams were sent to the Chinese delegates in Paris on the Shantung questions. Now calculate out

the number of telegrams that would have to be sent and the amount of money it would cost to send the telegrams, if the 90 per cent of the four hundred million people in China all became literate, and wanted to be patriotic like us returned students. (cited in De Francis, 1950, p. 245)¹

The underlying assumption in Hongming's argument is that the power of literacy could make common laborers politically active citizens, which could in turn become a subversive force capable of challenging society's stability. This view was in direct contrast to nation-state/colonial governmentality, which socialized people into governable citizens who avoided deviant behaviors. Before Western invasion, a Chinese national identity did not exist, a national language did not exist, and classical Chinese was not considered an inferior medium of communication that hindered national progress.

Beginning of the Invention

The policy of reforming Chinese script for mass literacy and promoting a national language can be traced back as early as the Wuxu reform in 1898 after the First Sino-Japan War (1894-1895). Two Opium Wars (1839-1842, 1856-1860) with Britain precluded a series of foreign invasions and colonial attempts from Western countries including France, Germany and the United States. However, the defeat in the first Sino-Japan war was humiliating and troubling to the Qing government (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006; Kaske, 2008). At first, what impressed the Royal court of the Emperor was limited to Western technologies, such as modern arsenals and shipyards, which were the results of the Industrial Revolution. The reform was limited to learning technology, and the Chinese elites still clung to Confucianism and were hostile to Western ideas. As a response to the Qing dynasty's failures in the battlefields, the Qing dynasty initiated the "Self-Strengthening Movement" under the doctrine of "Chinese learning as the fundamental structure, Western learning for practical use" (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006, p. 217). This movement used Western science, knowledge, and products, including steamships, trains, and weapons, all of which could be utilized to protect the Dynasty from foreign invaders. The movement ended in the first Sino-Japanese war when the Beiyang Fleet, widely known as the most advanced equipped fleet in Asian, was totally destroyed by the Japanese navy. China appeared to be weak not only in front of Europeans, but also in front of Japan, a small Asian country. Later on, Chinese reformers and revolutionaries were fascinated with how Japan had become so powerful and built up a modern nation in such a short period of time. At this stage, only learning technology from the West was not enough for them. The defeat from the first Sino-Japan War led to the first major political reform within Qing dynasty called the Wuxu reform. According to Fairbank and Goldman (2006), "these radical reformers at heart were ardent nationalists but still hoped that the Qing monarchy could lead China to salvation" (p. 228-2299). The Wuxu reform was the first attempt of the Qing dynasty to build a modern nation-state and become a constitutional monarchy.

In this context, literacy and mass education were seen as essential for a strong

¹ Unfortunately, the original works of many historically prominent Chinese scholars are no longer available. Therefore, this paper cites books by John DeFrancis, whose writing documents much of their work though often without direct citation.

nation, and language reform became was a necessary step. The first proposal for language reform was made by Lu Zhuangzhang, a language teacher and translator at the time:

The wealth and strength of a country depend on science. The growth of science depends on everyone--men and women, young and old- having a love of learning and a knowledge of theory. Their ability to have a love of learning and a knowledge of theory depends on using a phonetic system of writing; then, once the alphabet and spelling have been mastered, everything can be read by oneself without a teacher. It depends on speech and writing being the same; it also depends on a simple script which will be easy to learn and write. This will save more than ten years' time. If all this time is applied to the study of mathematics, the natural sciences, chemistry, and all sorts of practical studies, how can there be any feat that our country will not be rich and strong? (cited in De Francis, 1950, p. 107)

There are three important points in Zhuangzhang's view: first, everyone in a country should master literacy for learning; second, a phonetic system of writing, which was the Western way of writing, led to the development of science, and science was the cornerstone of a rich and strong nation; third, a non-phonetic system of writing, which was the Chinese system of writing was too hard to learn so it hindered mass literacy and led to backwardness. In this view, a unified script and speech for every Chinese dialect was the most important factor for a nation's scientific development. The reformer thought a lack of mass literacy was the reason for China's defeats.

Lu's proposal, the first language reform proposal advocating for a national language and reforming the Chinese script for mass literacy, can be seen as the original model for later language policies and reforms, they all pursued the same two goals. However, this reform proposal was a product of colonialism and nation-state/colonial governmentality. First of all, it presumes the superiority of alphabetic literacy. Wiley (2006) argued that the great divide between alphabetic and non-alphabetic literacies was related to a Eurocentric diffusionist perspective, which presupposes the West as a model for the world. Second, the schemes for the romanization of Chinese were first developed in 1583-1588 not by Chinese scholars, but by Catholic missionaries, Matteo Ricci and Michele Ruggieri, for their Portuguese-Chinese dictionary. Later, numerous Romanized scripts for Chinese dialects were developed by Westerners to map out Chinese regional language practices from the eastern and southern coastal regions for their missionary propaganda and activities. The idea that the Chinese written system was backward, extraordinarily difficult to learn, and needed to be alphabetized in order to unify speech and writing, originated from these missionaries (De Francis, 1950; Tong, 2000). The fact that Lu Zhuangzhang himself was Christian and helped the English missionary John Macgowan to develop an English and Chinese Dictionary of the Xiamen Dialect showed the influence exerted by Western missionaries on the language reformers of China (De Francis, 1950). Although the argument for alphabetizing the Chinese script almost ceases to exist now, the scheme to simplify Chinese characters for mass literacy can be seen as a compromise, and paradoxically at the same time, a continuation of Latinized/alphabetized Chinese, as it is based on the same premise that Chinese traditional

writing systems and traditional characters are too hard to learn (De Francis, 1950; Kaske, 2008; Ramsey, 1987).

This era was the first stage in which Chinese began to appropriate nation-state/ colonial governmentality and Eurocentric knowledge to design their national language policy. Chinese scholars attempted to enforce a national language based on the monoglot ideology, and tried to invent a Chinese language that existed as a separate entity that unified speech and script. At the same time, influenced by colonial formation of knowledge, they presumed the superiority of Western alphabetic script over Chinese traditional system.

A Newborn Nation-State

When the Qing dynasty collapsed due to the Xinhai revolution (1911-1912) and the Republic of China was established in 1912, the task of having a national language as the medium for mass literacy and mass education became urgent (Ramsey, 1987). Within a few months after the founding of the Republic of China, the Ministry of Education held a Conference on Unification of Pronunciation, “the avowed purpose of which was to create national standards for language use, both written and spoken” (Ramsey, 1987, p. 5). The founding of the Republic of China was a historic moment in the transition from culturalism to nationalism, as the old empire collapsed, and a modern nation was expected to be built. From then on, the Chinese increasingly imported European ideas, including language ideologies and orientalism for its own nationalism. Flores (2013) noted that:

the formation of nation-states along with the European colonization of the world was inextricably entwined with particular language ideologies that presented languages as enumerable constructs that represented the essence of a people. As part of the creation of docile national subjects, standardized language was codified in an attempt to unite the people into one nation. (p. 11)

In China, the goal of uniting people with a standardized language was urgent during the construction of the nation-state.

As the revolutionaries reached a compromise with Han bureaucrats within the Qing government, the new Republic of China inherited all the territories of the Qing Empire, including Tibet, Mongolia and Xinjiang. As the old empire was multi-ethnic, Han bureaucrats worked to homogenize it under the Republic of China by claiming that Han, Manchu and Tibetans were all of the same ancestry. Starting from the Conference on the Unification of Pronunciation, *Guoyu*, the national language policy, began to promote Mandarin as the national language. *Guoyu* regulated the standard language for all people in China and required Mandarin be taught in the educational system. De Francis (1984) states:

Guoyu sought to achieve a single national language at the expense of the languages spoken by the Tibetans, Mongols, and other ethnic groups and also the regional forms of speech spoken by Chinese in Canton, Shanghai, and other non-Mandarin areas. The sooner all these lesser forms of speech were eliminated the better, some felt, for national unity. In general, this approach reflected the view, which was held to some extent in imperial times but became firmly established with the growth of nation-

alism, that linguistic diversity was retrograde and linguistic unification represented progress. (p. 225)

This line of thinking could be directly traced to the language ideologies derived from nation-state/colonial governmentality. The Chinese government began to adopt a Eurocentric language model and a monoglot ideology. One territory, one people and one language was a standard formula for European nation-states. At the time, nation-states were seen as the only way to organize modern society, and China could only imitate European countries as their model. Therefore, it was a matter of national priority to have a standardized and unified Chinese language for all the people in China to build a modern nation. Viewing linguistic diversity as retrograde and linguistic unification as progress was identical with the premise of nation-state/colonial governmentality that is based on “a universalizing narrative of human progress that necessitated the cleansing of impurities from the national body” (Flores, 2013, p. 6). A national language was also the medium to provide education, and produce docile subjects who were able to self-regulate and self-monitor and who were easy to mobilize in the face of foreign threats. The Eurocentric ideology that viewed “monolingualism and cultural homogeneity as necessary requirements for social and economic progress, modernization and national unity” (Ricento, 2006, p. 14) was appropriated.

In terms of script reforms, De Francis observed that, for Yuan Shikai, the first president of Republic of China, inventing a new script was justified:

They saw that the countries with the greatest literacy were also the countries with the greatest power. They were particularly struck by the fact that their island neighbor to the east possessed, hardly by coincidence, an army which was able to read as well as to fight. It seemed especially significant that in contrast to China the literate and powerful countries of the world, including even Japan with its several scripts, made use of some form or other of alphabetic writing. They concluded from this that perhaps in China, too, literacy might be utilized in the search for power and a modernized script might help in developing a modernized army. (As cited in De Francis, 1950, p. 45)

Dr. Arthur H. Smith (as cited in De Francis, 1950, p. 45) argued, “the leaders of the New China had learned that one chief element in the amazing efficiency of the Japanese soldier lies in the fact that he can read.” Here the same argument was made again by politicians at the time that literacy was linked to national strength and military power, and alphabetic writing was superior. Both of them saw the link between European models and national strength, and thereby saw the justification in appropriating European models and Eurocentric knowledge.

Later, from 1910 to 1920, the New Culture Movement was started by intellectuals in Beijing to examine Chinese traditions for national redemption. The New Culture Movement was seen as the intellectual preparation for the later nationalist and anti-government May Fourth Movement. This movement was triggered by the news that peacemakers at the Paris Peace Conference decided to transfer the German concessions to the Japanese. At this time, orientalist ideas about China reached their climax in Chinese nationalism, and Chinese script became something evil that had to be abolished. According to Tong (2000), “the spirit of

the May Fourth cultural movement was manifested in its uncompromising and radical rejection of China's tradition, its history, its social and culture practices" (p. 7) and therefore, China needed a new language to reinvent and redefine China's modern identity.

Along with the attempt to abolish the Chinese writing system, the Baihua Movement, initiated by some intellectuals, began in 1917 but gained impetus from May Fourth movement. As classical written Chinese was different from what people spoke, scholars saw the unification of speech and script as a necessary preliminary step for any reform of script. They therefore claimed that Baihua (translated as "the plain language" or "vernacular language") should replace classic Chinese written language. While the Chinese writing system was not abolished, there was a trend that Baihua, once looked down upon as vulgar form of writing, gradually became the norm for writing (De Francis, 1984). The Baihua movement can be seen as the first step towards alphabetization of Chinese script.

The relationship between the Chinese language, Confucianism and China's state of being backward and impoverished was further articulated by another intellectual Qian Xuetong in the same period. He pointed out abolishing Confucianism and using a foreign language or Esperanto was the only way to save China, and further observed:

If you want to abolish Confucianism, then you must first abolish the Chinese language; if you want to get rid of the average person's childish, uncivilized, obstinate way of thinking, then it is all the more essential that you first abolish the Chinese language. To abolish Confucianism and eliminate Taoism is a fundamental way to prevent the fall of China and to allow the Chinese to become civilized nation in the twentieth century. But a more fundamental way than this is to abolish the written Chinese language, in which Confucian thoughts and fallacious Taoist sayings are recorded. (Ramsey, 1987, p. 3)

Qian was one of the examples of people who radically appropriated the products of nation-state/colonial governmentality, orientalism, to critique the Chinese script. radical appropriation of orientalism was common among Chinese intellectuals at the time. Dirlik (1996, p. 106) argued that in the twentieth century, "the Euro-American orientalist perceptions and methods become a visible component in the formulation of the Chinese self-image. The process was facilitated by the emergence of nationalism." He argued that nationalism shared the culturalist procedures of orientalism at the scale of the nation due to "metonymic reductionism" mentioned above: "The Euro-American assault on imperial China both provoked the emergence of Chinese nationalism and, ironically, provided it with images of the Chinese past that could be incorporated in a new national identity" (Dirlik, 1996, p. 106). Consequently, Western discursive knowledge about China played an essential role in Chinese nationalist movements and was used as the justification for revolutions. Tong (2000) shared a similar conclusion that "western discursive knowledge about China based on the knowledge created by travellers and missionaries warmly embraced and appropriated by Chinese intellectuals for self-negation and self-hatred" (p. 19). In other words, Chinese reformers used a Eurocentric formation of knowledge in Chinese language reform.

In the same era, a different language reform proposal in the 1930s was developed

by the Communist Party, the opposition party at the time, which started the Latinxua movement. Latinxua (Latinization), also called “New Writing” or “Latinized New Writing” (de Frances, 1986, p. 246), was first developed in the Soviet Union by Chinese Communists and Russians to reduce illiteracy of the Chinese immigrants. It opposed the idea of a national language, and created separate Latinization schemes for different regional dialects of China, including Cantonese, Hakka, Shanghai, Min and others. It was a different form of nationalism, which opposed the nationalism of the Nationalist Party. While trying to map out China’s regional dialects, it unified and homogenized countless varieties within the regional dialects. This approach was in alignment with Mao’s idea for self-determination of Chinese provinces in the 1920s, as well as with the fact that the Communists only governed several small regions which were separate from each other. This was also consistent with the communist belief that class interest, rather than language, unites the people. Moreover, this approach to Chinese language was effective for the governing of a party in opposition. On the one hand, the subjects were united within their own territories, and on the other hand, they did not identify with the unity and nationalism of the incumbent government; governmentality worked in micro-ways serving communists.

At the same time, the orientalist point of view that the Chinese language system was backward and stood in the way of mass literacy, an unquestioned assumption, became a dominant view for many Chinese communists. Mao expressed in 1936:

we believe latinization is a good instrument with which to overcome illiteracy. Chinese characters are so difficult to learn that even the best system of rudimentary characters, or simplified teaching, does not equip the people with a really efficient and rich vocabulary. Sooner or later, we believe, we will have to abandon characters altogether if we are to create a new social culture in which the masses fully participate. (as cited in De Francis, 1984, p. 247)

For these Chinese Communists, the product of colonialism--a latinized script based on phonetics for Chinese--was an advanced way to strengthen the nation. Liu Shaoqi, a Communist leader in 1950, even admired the writing reforms that took place in the Koreas and Vietnam, which were all products of colonialism. Both Korea and Vietnam used to adopt Chinese characters as their writing system and invented new phonetic system. Liu said, “But now our neighbors, Mongolia, Korea, and Vietnam, have already been successful in their writing reform. From a certain point of view, their writing reform is more advanced than ours” (quoted in De Francis, 1984, p. 256). He argued that the Chinese should study the language reforms in those countries and look for experience for language reform.

In this era, intellectuals and politicians saw that language played an essential role for governing people when the nation-state was being constructed. The Chinese intellectual circle increasingly used Eurocentric knowledge for self-negation and reform. The three products of the rise of nation-state/colonial governmentality were evident in different language policy proposals. First, the reformers tried to map out different language practices in China, and develop a national standard language. Second, they tried to abolish the Chinese writing system, influenced by orientalist discourses. Third, they saw the need to impose a standard language upon every citizen for a powerful nation.

Conclusion

As we can see from the Wuxu reforms and language planning in the Republic of China to the current goals of language policy in People's Republic of China, all the policy and reform schemes were based on the same assumptions: first, China needed a national language for national progress; second, the Chinese traditional script should be reformed, whether it be through simplification, alphabetization, or latinization, because it hindered mass literacy and thereby hindered national progress; third, language practices ought to be mapped out as separated objects. These assumptions were identical with the products of nation-state/colonial governmentality, as mentioned above, which were: languages as separate ontological entities, the idea that alphabetic literacy was superior, and the monoglot ideology. Therefore, it is safe to say that the model of standardized national language was developed as part of the project of governmentality in European nation-state construction and colonization, and the attempt to invent a new Chinese script was a product of orientalism. Orientalism, the Eurocentric representation of the East, can be seen as another product of nation-state/colonial governmentality, where colonizers invented ideological constructs for governance. This paper, through a historic investigation, has shown that the reformed simplified Chinese script was partially a European invention, and Chinese language policy and planning was based on a Eurocentric model. Chinese intellectuals and leaders, in turn, reappropriated a Eurocentric nation-state ideology about language by taking for granted that a people ought to be represented by a language, and further reappropriated orientalism by firmly believing that the ideograph system of Chinese script was backward and an impediment to education.

If these assumptions about language policy were not examined, colonial discourses would still be reproduced in the study of language policy and planning in China. By adopting the perspective of governmentality and pointing out the Eurocentrism and orientalism that is perpetuated in language policies and planning in China, this paper attempts to become aware of the historicized construction of languages and to rethink the relationship between languages, identity, geographical location. It does so in order to "move beyond notions of linguistic territorialization in which language is linked to a geographical space" (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007, p. 3). Instead of asking questions such as how effective the current language policy is in promoting standard language, or how language and literacy education can lead to economic development and national unity, I pose several alternative questions for further studies: First, is it necessary for China to promote a national language? Second, does a standardized national language and mass literacy lead to China's or any country's national unity and progress? Third, what might disinventing languages in China look like, once scholars move beyond traditional ways of thinking?

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Nelson Flores for introducing me to the field of sociolinguistics and his guidance during my study at Penn and Frances Kvietok for editing this paper.

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