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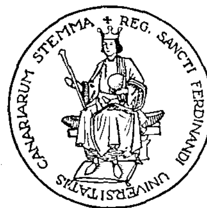

SEPARATA

TRANSPLANT & TRANSFORMS: PUBLIC SCHOOLS & MANDARIN CHINESE IN TAIWAN

SCHOOLS AS SOURCES OF LANGUAGE CHANGE

Throughout history people have learned “foreign” languages[1]. When large numbers of people in an area learn and use the same “foreign” language, the language itself can be said, to some extent, to have “moved” or “expanded” to include a new population. This can happen when one population is conquered by another, when a trade language develops over a broad area, or when peoples living in close proximity learn each other's languages. Naturally, second speakers of a language speak it a little differently from native speakers, since the habits of their native languages interfere with perfect reproduction of the models of the second language, and since they are not necessarily exposed to a full range of models. Thus Latin spoken in Roman Gaul differed somewhat from Latin spoken in Roman Egypt (or Rome), and English spoken in Malaysia differs from English spoken in Nigeria (or California).

For most people throughout most of history “foreign” languages have been “picked up” in the course of daily life, rather than studied in school. After all, at most times and in most places, teachers and schools have existed, if at all, only for the use of the privileged few. Over most of the planet, even the idea of universal education —let alone the possibility of achieving it— is a product of our own century.

Universal participation in a school system means that those who can control the content of a school curriculum can control what people learn. Suddenly it becomes possible to “force” people to learn (or anyway to study) particular languages: A Norwegian student must learn English whether he wants to or not. That force comes *not* from the usefulness of English to a Norwegian, but from a decision by school authorities that the study of English is to be a compulsory part of a school system which, in turn, is a compulsory experience in the life of all Norwegian children. Making Norway anglophone is feasible because Norway has a public school system.

It is only in the twentieth century, with the development of public systems over most of the planet, that substantial attempts have been made use public schools to teach new languages to all or most of a population. By mid-century this has typically involved one of three goals: (1) a language may be taught with the goal of a learner being able to use it in contacts with other citizens of the same

1 I am grateful to my colleagues Ping Hu and Matthew Chen for their helpful criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper. The errors that remain are the result of my own stubbornness. Mandarin words in this article are spelled in the widely known Pinyin system, except typographical limitations unfortunately prevent tones being shown. Hokkien words are spelled in Standard romanization, with tones.

region or country who speak that language. An example would be teaching French to English Canadians. (2) The goal may be to enable all citizens to use an internationally important language. An example is teaching English in Japanese schools. (3) The goal may be to use the language taught as the regional (most often national) language of a political unit containing several language communities. An example is teaching Pilipino in the Philippines. (The contrast between the Canadian and Filipino examples is important: Advocates of Pilipino aim to have it used in all contexts in which Filipinos of more than one language community may be involved, most conspicuously the institutions of the national government. Canadian policy, in contrast, aims to create a condition in which neither English nor French is the exclusive language of national institutions, but either may be used in any such context.)

A fourth goal is, in practice, often just an extremist interpretation of the second: Rather than advocating a single "national language" for use in government contacts or between language communities, the goal is actually to replace existing languages spoken by the population with the "new" language that they are learning. Thus the goal of language planners in Israel is usually not merely that Hebrew should be the language of State institutions, but that Israelis should speak Hebrew routinely at home (as indeed most of them now do).

Since we know that second-language speakers often do speak a slightly modified version of the language they are taught (because they are influenced by their mother tongues and so on), and since some national language policies have aimed to teach second languages universally and use them in all or most social institutions, and since the medium for this teaching is the school system, it follows that the school system ought to have an effect on language and its usage in many countries around the world today. Indeed, certain features about how language is taught may introduce consistent changes in how a language is spoken, resulting in distinctive dialect features.

By way of demonstration, this article seeks to identify some of the effects of teaching methods by examining certain differences between Mandarin Chinese as spoken in Taiwan and Mandarin Chinese as it is officialized under the names "National Language" *(Guoyu)* in Taiwan and "Common Language", *(Putonghua)* on the mainland.

VARIETIES OF CHINESE

The name "Chinese" refers to a family of closely related languages spoken in China and by ethnic Chinese in other countries. Traditionally these are referred to as "dialects" of Chinese, but they are normally not mutually intelligible, which has led linguists to prefer to call them separate languages. Each is itself divisible into dialects and subdialects and sub-subdialects, which Chinese traditionally name with geographical terms, potentially providing a different dialect label for

every village in China. The principal Chinese languages and their approximate numbers of speakers (Lane 1983: 195) are:

Mandarin	740,000,000
Cantonese	56,000,000
Wu	53,000,000
Min	43,000,000
Hakka	24,000,000

The term "Min" (*Min*) actually covers two, or possibly three, languages, spoken in Fujian province and by emigrants from Fujian: (1) Northern Min or Foochow (*Fuzhou*); (2) Southern Min, which in English is also called Amoy, Hokkien, Fukienese, or Taiwanese, and (3) Swatow (*Shantou*), a language spoken on the Guangdong border. Swatow is arguably a dialect of Southern Min, but is usually classed separately.

Although Taiwan was once principally settled by Malayo-Polynesian "aborigines", Chinese migration in the last three and a half centuries has resulted in a population that is today almost entirely Chinese. Most of that migration before the Second World War involved Hakka speakers from Fujian and Guangdong provinces and Southern Min speakers from southern Fujian. With the retreat of the Nationalist government and armies from the mainland provinces after the Second World War, a more cosmopolitan and diverse group of Chinese arrived, who are almost all native speakers of Mandarin. Thus today the population of Taiwan includes[2]:

Southern-Min speakers	71.3%	13.3 million
Postwar Mandarin speakers	11.4%	2.1 million
Hakka speakers	11.3%	2.1 million
Other prewar Chinese	4.3%	.8 million
Aborigines	1.7%	.3 million

Immigrants to Taiwan from Fujian speak Southern Min in a variety of dialects deriving from the areas around Quanzhou, Zhangzhou, less frequently Xiamen, and very occasionally Shantou. (Dong 1960 provides descriptions of these dialects.) Three centuries of independent evolution of Southern Min in Taiwan has led to the evolution of strictly Taiwanese variants of these dialects, so that Taiwanese people are more likely to identify accents as belonging to one or another location in Taiwan, rather than as part of larger dialect blockings associated with pockets of Quanzhou or Zhangjou settlers. Mandarin is divided

[2] The proportions are derived from Hsieh (1964: 206) and refer to 1963. The population estimates are the result of multiplying them by the December, 1983, population of Taiwan: 18,686,279 (reported in the Free China Journal 1(2):4, for January 8, 1984). The proportions have probably not shifted significantly in the two decades, since there has been little further migration of Chinese from the mainland to Taiwan.

into three major dialect areas (Northern, Southern, and Southwestern), each of which includes a wide range of subdialects. Speakers of all three regions now live in Taiwan, providing conflicting models for imitation, as we shall see.

Chinese is characterized by syllable-level semanticity. That is, although polysyllabic words exist, and present about two-thirds of all dictionary "words" (Li & Thompson 1981: 14), every syllable is understood by most Chinese as having its own semantic field. However, because the number of syllabic types is extremely limited —about 1200-1300 separate syllable types are permitted in most Mandarin dialects[3]— each spoken syllable can normally be associated with several unrelated semantic fields, rather like *to, too,* and *two* in English. In *spoken* language, the appropriate semantic field for a given syllable is selected by a listener by reference to (1) context, (2) extralinguistic cues, and (3) additional, redundant synonym syllables that expand potentially ambiguous cases into unambiguous compound words[4].

Written Chinese is composed of hieroglyphic "characters" (zi). Each character represents a syllable of the spoken language. However usually a different character exists for each of the homonymous semantic fields. Since the character representations are themselves distinct, written Chinese is unambiguous without resort to contextual cues, redundancy, and so on of the kind used in speech. Because of this, Chinese *writing* has traditionally enjoyed an economy of syntax and style that has not been possible in spoken language. Indeed, until well into this century, canons of written style were so distinct from spoken language that the same texts could be easily read by literate people anywhere in China, without regard to which Chinese language or dialect they actually spoke. In general, if one exploits the efficiencies of written Chinese, the style is compact and more information is packed into fewer syllables than in spoken language, and differences in spoken dialects are irrelevant. The cost, however, is that the badness-of-fit between spoken and written language leads to writing becoming a code so distinct from spoken habits that considerably more time is required to learn to write correctly. In short, efficient exploitation of the character system is inherently undemocratic.

3 Matthew Chen (personal communication) provides a syllable inventory for the Beijing dialect of 1256 excluding neutral tones and forms created by suffixing -r. (1946 with neutral tones; 1641 without neutral tones but with *-r* forms; 2507 including both neutral tones and *-r* forms.)

4 Some semantic fields are never referred to by a single syllable in speech, but are always "double labeled" by use of two syllables, each of which refers to the field. For this reason, linguists correctly insist that Chinese *words* are often polysyllabic. The instincts of native speakers lead them to the contrary view that, because the Chinese syllables are individually meaningful, it is the syllables and not their compounds that constitute "words" . This inclination is, of course, reinforced by isomorphism between written characters and spoken syllables. In ordinary Chinese, a single term, zi, designates both a semantic field labeled by a single spoken syllable and the written character which represents it.

TWENTIETH CENTURY LANGUAGE REFORMS AND CHINESE ATTITUDES TOWARD LANGUAGE

With the Chinese revolution of 1911 came winds of reform throughout Chinese life. In language, these reforms resulted in several important changes: (1) A Mandarin dialect roughly corresponding with the speech of Beijing was eventually selected as the single, official national language and named "National Language" *(Guoyu),* (later renamed "Ordinary Speech", *Putonghua,* by the Communist government). (2) In the so-called "vernacular literature" *(baihua)* movement, efforts were made to change literary style to follow spoken style more closely. In modern Communist usage, the fit is often nearly perfect. Following spoken style required the selection of a spoken dialect to follow, and the selection was, naturally enough, the new National Language, roughly the speech of Beijing. (3) A National Phonetic Alphabet (NPA, *Zhuyin Fuhao)* was created (later replaced with a Roman alphabet in mainland provinces) which was to be used to show official, standardized, Mandarin pronunciations in dictionaries and textbooks[5].

In Taiwan, Southern Min and Hakka speakers remained largely monolingual until the island was ceded to Japan in 1895. With the development of a Japanese school system and the imposition of Japanese as the official language of adminis tration, many learned to speak and read Japanese. Indeed, toward the last years of the Japanese administration, teaching literary Chinese was prohibited. After the retrocession of Taiwan to China in 1945, one of the first acts of the Chinese administrators was to establish a Chinese school system. Since Mandarin had long been the official language of the Republic on the mainland, the new school system in Taiwan, like all new and newly transplanted organs of government in Taiwan, was to operate in Mandarin. Reactions to the language change were mixed, of course, but generally it was greeted with enthusiasm, even by those who were destined never to learn Mandarin themselves[6].

There had been Taiwanese school teachers in the Japanese schools. Most remained teachers, but they were confronted with the sudden need to teach a language, and to teach in a language, that was nearly unknown to them. One

5 The NPA may be written equally well vertically or horizontally, making it ideally suited to serve as annotation on character texts. Today textbooks and children's books using NPA are nearly always printed with type fonts that have NPA sidescripts for each character, so that providing phonological notation is inherent in the act of typesetting. Details of the reform need not detain us here. For a description of the general logic of the reform, see Chao 1971. For a history of the movement to promote Mandarin, see Fang 1965. For linguistic details, see Chao's introduction to the American edition of *Mathews' Chinese-English Dictionary* (Mathews 1943: ix-xxi). The simplification of written characters, although much publicized in the Western press, is linguistically less important, but in any case has not affected Taiwan. Neither has the Communist substitution of a Latin alphabet for the generally superior NPA.

6 For a discussion of the relation between conversational language choice and interethnic relations in Taiwan, see Jordan 1973.

retired school principal told me that in 1945 everyone in the schools was eager to abandon the Japanese textbooks and all other signs of the colonial administration, but there were still no modern Chinese texts available. He pulled out of hiding old copies of "children's" literature of the previous century (*The Three-Character Classic*, *The 1000-Character Classic*, *The Classic of Filial Piety*, and so on), books that had been the basis of education in literary Chinese for centuries. These had been used only in secret during the last years of the Japanese administration. The teachers pronounced the characters in the most "literary" readings that Southern Min provided, seeking to make them sound as much as possible like the Mandarin sounds proceeding from the mouths of newly arrived northern Chinese immigrants[7]. Eventually more modern school books could be imported and reprinted, and refugee teachers could be hired who actually spoke Mandarin as their native language. As it became possible to be strict, the school system adopted a policy that explicitly prohibited the use of Hakka and Southern Min except very occasionally with very small children. Taiwan's 50 years under the Japanese had led to widespread feelings of separatism from the Chinese mainland, it was felt, and every effort needed to be made to stress as emphatically as possible that Taiwan was part, only one part, of a much larger Chinese polity. With the Communist victories on the mainland and the lingering hope (and official government line) that the mainland provinces could nevertheless be recovered, the importance of ensuring Taiwanese loyalty to the Nationalist cause was increased further. The use of Mandarin by people who knew it, was a sign of Nationalist loyalty. The use of Hokkien by people who knew Mandarin suggested separatist leanings. Both schooling and publishing in Hokkien were out of the question[8].

MANDARIN AS CREOLE: CHARACTERISTICS OF SPOKEN CHINESE IN TAIWAN

With this background, we turn to the distinctive characteristics of Taiwanese Mandarin. By this, of course, we shall mean the Mandarin of ordinary people as spoken in the streets today, and as learned in school. We are specifically *not*

7 The extent to which Mandarin readings can be predicted from Min pronunciations has been studied by Zheng 1979. See also Zheng & Zheng 1977, especially pp. 209-217. In brief, the effort is more successful than one might at first imagine, but not successful enough to produce colloquial Mandarin.

8 Both the Nationalist and the Communist governments have taken the position that Mandarin is the only kind of Chinese that should be written, and vernacular literature inherently means Mandarin colloquial literature. Cantonese colloquial characters exist, and a Cantonese colloquial literature has grown up in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, a British colony, the official language is English, and there is no legal bar to non-Mandarin Chinese printing. A century of Missionary publication of Southern Min and Hakka texts in romanization has just about ended in Taiwan, and no underground system of colloquial characters has become standardized. Since the school system teaches spoken and written Mandarin (and literary Chinese in high school), younger Taiwanese inevitably write only in Mandarin, even if they normally converse in Southern Min or Hakka.

concerned with the Mandarin spoken by immigrants from Mandarin-speaking parts of mainland China or by their children[9].

There are two principal sources of difference between standard Mandarin (the "National Language" in all its details) and the normal standard of Taiwan. One is interference from Southern Min (and Hakka). Since nearly three quarters of the population is composed of native Min speakers, Minisms in Mandarin tend to go undetected much of the time, and some of them have been incorporated so routinely into Taiwan Mandarin as to be adopted also by children of mainland immigrants. A second source of distinctiveness (and the one that is of particular interest to us) is the school presentation of Mandarin. In this connection I shall trace some Taiwanisms to the National Phonetic Alphabet in particular, and to school treatment of phonology in general. Others I shall trace to the practice of teaching advanced Mandarin as principally a written rather than a spoken language.

MANDARIN AS PIDGIN: LEAST-COMMON-DENOMINATOR PHONOLOGY AND ITS EFFECTS

Although Chinese are certainly aware of the tremendous and very fluid dialectical variation that is found across their land, it does not follow that they are particularly precious about phonological details when they shift from one Chinese language or dialect to another. The widespread view that the writing system is more standardized and (therefore?) more demanding of care than mere sounds militates against a Chinese having much interest in producing in a new dialect sounds that are missing in his own. It follows that neither teachers nor parents pressure schoolchildren to take much care in Mandarin pronunciation. In addition, the Mandarin models available to children (or initially available when Mandarin was first introduced to Taiwan) came from all over China, and exhibited a wide range of dialects, all of which stood in contrast to Hakka and Min and all of which were proudly represented as examples of the National Language.

What developed was a kind of "least-common-denominator" phonology. That is to say, phonological features that were shared both by the commonest Mandarin dialects and by Min tended to be preserved in Taiwan Mandarin. Features peculiar to the Beijing National Language tended to be replaced with more familiar features of Min. Taiwan Mandarin thus has fewer distinctive phonological contrasts, for example, than does *either* Min *or* the Beijing standard.

9 As far as I can discover, the Mandarin spoken by the children of such immigrants is in fact nearly always indistinguishable from the Mandarin spoken by those whose native language is Hakka or Southern Min, and who have learned Mandarin in school. Apparently children imitate each other's speech to such an extent that only those children who live in compact colonies of mainland immigrants actually can remain uninfluenced by the Mandarin of the vast majority of non-native-speaking children around them. (See Chao 1968b for an examination of a similar phenomenon among Chinese children in America.)

Consonants. "Least-common-denominator" phonology appears to be at the basis of the most striking of the distinctive characteristics of Taiwan Mandarin (and of southern Mandarin in general): the assimilations of f- into h- and of retroflex sounds zh-, ch-, and sh- into non-retroflex z-, c-, and s- in all contexts. The f-/h-, zh-/z-, ch-/c-, and sh-/s- distinctions are not phonemic in Min. In the case of zh-/z-, ch-/c-, and sh-/s-, they also are not in contrast in the Southern and Southwestern Mandarin dialect groups. Despite their presence in the official National Language, they stood little chance of striking the Taiwanese car as important contrasts[10]

For some speakers of Southern Min, there is no firm distinction between Min l- and j-, or between Min 1- and n-, and these sounds are interchanged between subdialects even in dialects that do distinguish them. (Thus southern Taiwanese Min *jít* [Mandarin *ri*], "day", corresponds to northern Taiwanese *lít,* and so forth. For speakers who do not make these distinctions in Min, they are lost also in Mandarin, and 1-, r-, and n- are often freely intermixed.)

The use of the retroflexes (zh-, ch-, and sh-) is the object of complex attitudes among Taiwanese. On the one hand, distinguishing them is a sign that one's Mandarin is close to the National standard, that it is "normative" or "model" *(biaozhun)*. Often a foreigner is politely told how *biaozhun* his Mandarin is if the retroflexes can be heard in it. On the other hand, the same sounds are the mark of the unassimilated mainland immigrant, and unassimilated mainland immigrants are too often unassimilated largely because of negative attitudes they carry with them about Taiwan. Use of these sounds by Chinese in contexts which do not specifically call for *biaozhun*-ness are therefore pretentious, alienated, and even tinged with hostility. On the other hand, the fact that the retroflex sounds *are* normative means that they are appropriate to very formal occasions. Ihave heard Taiwanese drop into the retroflex sounds when they knew they were being tape recorded, or when singing songs, or even when giving lectures; but these same people would not think of talking that way normally[11].

Tones. The four tones of standard Mandarin have direct cognates with the seven tones of most dialects of Southern Min. However the cognate tones do not necessarily resemble each other in sound, and most speakers seem to be unaware

10 In the case of f- becoming merged with h-, the change usually entails some associated vowel changes. Mandarin f- is a relatively complicated initial sound phonologically anyway because of its influence on subsequent vowels. But when it becomes h-, a following -e- normally changes to -o-. Thus Mandarin *feng* (first tone) "wind" becomes *hong* "explosion", *feng* (fourth tone) "phoenix" becomes *hong* "clamor", etc.

11 In standard Mandarin, zh-, ch-, and sh- are in phonemic *contrast* with z-, c-, and s-. Most Taiwanese do not normally observe such a contrast; when they "build it back in" in honor of more formal speech, hypercorrection occurs, and *all* occurrences of the series move to retroflex; that is, zh- and z-, normally both pronounced z- in Taiwan, both become zh-. Similarly both ch- and c- move from c- to ch-, and both sh- and s- move from being pronounced s- to being pronounced sh-. Thus the retroflex/non-retroflex contrast no longer distinguishes phonemes, but survives in a new role to distinguish formality levels.

(or only subconsciously aware) of the fact of tone cognation. Here is a table of cognates[12]:

Min Tone No.	Min Citation Sound	Min Sandhi Sound	Mandarin Sound	Mandarin Tone No.
1	˥	˧	˥	1
2	˥˩	˥	˨˩˦	3
3	˨˩	˥˩	˥˩	4
4	˩	˧		
5	˨˦	˧	˧˥	2
7	˧	˨˩	˥˩	4
8	˧	˩		–

What is most important about the above table is that, while Mandarin has two tones that rise in pitch (2nd and 3rd), Min has only one (5th)[13]. Since the schools make no explicit reference to the phonology of Min when teaching Mandarin, children are never told that they can remember that the Mandarin 2nd tone is cognate with Min 5th, while Mandarin 3rd is cognate with Min 2nd. Instead, the children go by ear. But their ears are trained to hear anything that goes up as Min 5th, and the result is that Mandarin 2nd and 3rd tones are not distinguished by most speakers in most situations, even though any speaker can produce a paradigm (the syllable *pa* in each of the four Mandarin tones, for example), and even though rote learning has left most students with fairly firm ideas about the hypothetical tone of a given syllable. (One little girl told me that, although the 2nd and 3rd tones —like f- and h- and the others— were identical, the schools insisted that one write them differently in phonetic script, like homonymous characters.)

One effect of the loss of the 2nd/3rd tone distinction is to lump together for some speakers syllables regarded as separate by others, which sometimes results in the development of distinctive turns of phrase designed to disambiguate the

12 Min tones are manifested in "sandhi" form in non-phrase-final positions, and hence the second column shows the "sandhi" form. A syllable in isolation is given its "citation" pronunciation, which is also how it is marked in dictionaries. There is no 6th tone in Southern Min. The 4th and 8th tones occur only in syllables ending in stops, are distinguished in some areas only by the sandhi rule that applies to each, and differ considerably in phonological form from one dialect of Min to another, even within Taiwan. When final stops vanished in Mandarin dialects, the syllables that carry Min 4th and 8th tones were redistributed over the four remaining Mandarin tones in ways unpredictable from the tone cognate table given here.

13 For many Pekinese speakers, the 3rd loses its rising portion and becomes nearly indistinguishable from 4th (Chao 1968a: 27), but I have the impression that even mainlanders in Taiwan find that disconcerting, and that the phenomenon is mainly limited to North China.

now identically pronounced words. Thus in standard Mandarin a *li* (second tone) is a pear, but a *li(-z)* (third tone) is a plum. In Taiwan *li* (second tone) becomes *Riben li* (second tone) ("Japanese pear") or *da li* (second tone) ("big pear") to preserve the distinction.

MIN SYNTACTIC INTERFERENCE IN MANDARIN

In contrast to phonology, Min syntax seems to exert little influence on Taiwan Mandarin usage, except perhaps that Mandarin usages that do not have Min analogues may to be of lower frequency than in the National Language properly construed. The process here is not peculiar to Mandarin; syntactic irregularity is readily identified and discussed by speakers. While some speakers, of course, do carry Min forms into Mandarin, the results have a rather rustic quality that tends to get them laughed out of court early on. And because such borrowings are evident in written language (unlike the phonological idiosyncrasies we have discussed so far), they are easily available for correction by teachers and examiners reading student essays. Students eventually divest themselves of most of them.

Perhaps the most common portmanteau construction is the Min use of auxiliary verbs before stative verbs (and in questions centered on stative verbs). Four Min auxiliaries are used this way: *u* ("have", Mandarin *you*), *bô* ("lack", Mandarin *meiyou*), *e* ("can", Mandarin *hui*), and *be* ("cannot", Mandarin *buhui*). In general, u and bo are used to indicate the presence or absence of desirable qualities, while e and be indicate undesirable qualities. Thus *I bô kin* "Unfortunately, he is not fast", contrasts with *I be kin* "Fortunately, he is not fast". Similarly, one asks *I u súi bô?* "Is she beautiful?" but *I e phái*-kuòa* be?* "Is she ugly?" because beauty is desirable, while ugliness is not. Mandarin lacks comparable syntactic devices for indicating opinion, but because there are cognate words, Mandarin syntactic calques can easily be built, producing Mandarin-like but un-Mandarin sentences. For example, an uneducated Min speaker of Mandarin might ask: *Ta you piaoliang meiyou?* "Does she have pretty or not?" and *Ta huibuhui nankan?* "Can she ugly?". When this sort of transformation is imposed on the phonological ones, such sentences as *Li (second tone) nong buhui?* for *Ni (third tone) lengbuleng?* "Are you cold?" are sometimes found inscrutable by mainland immigrants.

Schools & Mandarin. In all this we have been concerned with Min interference in Mandarin learning. The role of the schools, of teaching methods, and of attitudes toward language teaching and learning have been minor. Now we turn our attention to some of the differences between Taiwan Mandarin and the Beijing standard that cannot be explained that way, but must be explained mostly by reference to how Mandarin is taught rather than by the prior language habits of those to whom it is taught. I return to the issue of tone.

Toneless syllables. An interesting difference between Beijing Mandarin and Taiwan Mandarin involves the use of toneless syllables, referred to in Chinese as

bearing the *qing* or "neutral" tone (sometimes wrongly called the "fifth" tone). Tonelessness occurs when a syllable is given very slight stress and short duration. This happens with grammatical particles (such as *de, le, ne, ma,* etc.), reduplicative compounds (such as *kan.kan* "have a look" from *kan*, "look" , where the second syllable is neutralized), and some polysyllabic words[14]. A toneless or neutral syllable stands in contrast to the standard four tones in that (1) tonelessness nearly always falls on syllables which in isolation are already assigned to one of the four tone categories and which are thus changed in pronunciation because of it; (2) the pitch a neutral syllable assumes depends upon the tones of syllables preceding it in most cases and on the tones of both preceding and following syllables in four specific cases; and (3) tonelessness almost never occurs on a phrase-initial syllable and never on a stressed one.

In standard Mandarin a neutral syllable is of even pitch, but in comparison with the pitch of adjacent syllables, it may be medium low (after 1st tone), medium (after 2nd tone), high (after 3rd tone), or low (after 4th tone). Thus we have a pitch contrast between the neutral tones of the following three expressions. (The suffixed numbers show tones.)

tal -de jial "his home"
tal-de hai2-zi "his/her child(ren)" *wo3-de hai2-zi* "my child(ren)"

In standard Mandarin the *de* of the first and second phrases each has a medium-low pitch, precipitated by the preceding first tone. In contrast, the *de* of the third phrase has a high pitch, brought on by its following a third tone. However, in four three-syllable combinations the pitch is affected by the tone of the following syllable as well: l-high-4, 2-high-4, 3-low-1, 3-low-2. We can represent these changes as transformations of the preceding and say, for example, that the third syllable raises the pitch of the second in the environment 2-neutral-4 in

xue2-de-hui4 "can learn"

in contrast to the *de* of

wo3-de jial "my home",

which drops in the tonal environment 3-neutral-1[15]. In Taiwanese Mandarin, the scheme is much simplified. For my (southern Taiwan) informants, all neutral

14 The classic example of this last is *huo-ji* (with toneless *ji)* "waiter", as against *huo-ji* (with full first tone on *ji)* "turkey". If given its full tones, "waiter" would be *huo-ji* (with fourth tone on *ji)* and would still contrast with turkey, however.

15 This description closely follows Chao & Yang (1947: xvi-xix) and Chao's *Mandarin Primer* (1948). In *A Grammar of Spoken Chinese* (1968a: 35-39), Chao presents a slightly different analysis involving four pitch levels conditioned only by the preceding tone, but affecting some adjacent vowels and consonants. The later analysis is accepted without comment by Li & Thompson in their recent

syllables are high in pitch unless *both* preceded and followed by first tones (as in *tal-de jia1*), in which case the neutral tone becomes low in pitch. There are no middle pitches. Whether there is influence of speech patterns from Min, where each phonemic tone has two allophonic variations, is unclear. Min does have occasional neutral tones, but they are less common than in Mandarin and used on different syllables. My impression is that they do not form the basis of simplified neutral tone in Taiwanese Mandarin.

The frequency of tone neutralization among native speakers of Northern Mandarin appears to vary a great deal. A reflection of this can be seen in the instability of neutral tone markings in textbooks and dictionaries intended for foreign learners. Some dictionaries (e.g. Wang 1967) designate a very large proportion of tones as neutral, and some mark full tones on almost all syllables. Neither extreme position even remotely agrees with the efforts of the Chao-Yang dictionary (1948) or Chao’s textbooks (1948, 1968c) to distinguish among compulsorily neutral, optionally neutral, and compulsorily unneutral syllables. Although Chao does not discuss the conditioning factors for tonelessness in optional cases, there seems to me to be a high probability that the frequency and distribution of neutral tone use *may* have sociolinguistic implications in Beijing and other northern cities. Wang's general tonelessness and Chao's moderate tonefullness may, for example, reflect different social class affiliations, different political stances, or any of the other things that can be patterned psychologically and sociolinguistically under the general linguistic rubric of “free variation” (McQuown 1954).

In Taiwan Mandarin neutral tones are rare indeed except for grammatical particles (such as the “genitive suffix” *de* in our earlier example). So rare and under-discussed is the neutral tone, in fact, that Taiwanese high school students imagine the term to refer to the first tone and seem to know little of neutral tones. And broadcasters in training are given special instruction and practice in avoiding full tones in selected expressions where full tones are thought to be unacceptably parochial (learning to say as *Zhongl-guo-hua4,* rather than *Zhongl-guo2-hua4,* “Chinese language”, for example). Since neutral tones also exist in Southern Min, first-language interference does not seem to be the explanation[16]. Instead, the low frequency of tonelessness in Taiwan Mandarin appears to be the result of the way Mandarin is taught, which brings us back to the issue that we began with: the ability of pedagogy actually to change the language being propagated.

reference grammar (1951: 9). Ma sense is that the present example is better explained by the 1947-8 analysis.

16 However neutral tones may be less common in Taiwan dialects of southern Min than in mainland ones. For example, in Fujian *kiá*-sí* (with full tone on *sí*) “to fear death; be cowardly”, contrasts with *kiá*-sí*, “scared to death” (with neutralized *sí*). The same contrast apparently does not occur in Taiwan, where only the full-tone variant seems to occur, but with the meaning “scared to death”. Similarly *kiâ*-lâng* (full tones) “dirty” as against *kia*-lâng* (with neutralized *lâng*) “to fear (or frighten) people”. Both are apparently given full tones in Taiwan, resulting in a need for disambiguat ing localisms.

HOW TAIWAN SCHOOLS HAVE CHANGED MANDARIN NEUTRALIZATION RULES

The best explanation for the excessive lack of neutralization in the tones of Taiwan Mandarin *may* be another appeal of the kind made earlier to "leastcommon-denominator phonology". On the face of it, however, another explanation is probably actually simpler: Mandarin pronunciation in Taiwan, both in school textbooks and in dictionaries, is indicated by use of the National Phonetic Alphabet (NPA), mentioned earlier. NPA standards call for tone to be marked except where *all* Mandarin speakers omit it. A pedagogical advantage is, of course, that the student learning a new Mandarin word has reinforcement of the tone of each of its constituent syllables. The disadvantage is that, as in the textbooks and dictionaries for foreigners that follow this procedure, it produces artificially "overtoned" Mandarin. Students who take on Mandarin as their second language thus learn to maintain full tones on words which, for most Beijing speakers, "ought" to lose them. For a mainlander, "Chinese" is *Zhongl-guo-hua4* (with a neutralized guo); for a Taiwanese speaking Mandarin it is *Zhongl-guo2-hua4* (with full tones). When this is done for nearly all words, the effect is quite distinctive. In its tones Taiwanese Mandarin is in a sense less ambiguous than mainland Mandarin because it includes greater phonological redundancy. What is sacrificed by the full tones is probably Pekinese sociolinguistic nuance of little interest in Taiwan. Unlike the consonantal distinctions (zh-/z- and the others), the frequency of tonelessness seems to be out of focus for speakers of Taiwan Mandarin[17].

The visible influence of the NPA is not limited to tone, although tone provides good examples. In some cases alternative pronunciations of the same word are in competition in mainland Mandarin dialects, and the NPA users have tended to select one rather than the other(s). In doing so, they are bound both to tread on some linguistic sensibilities and to lead to a uniformity of usage in Taiwan that does not exist in the National Language itself. Where both possibilities are colloquial, Nationalist standard usage officializes so-called "ancient sound", *(guyin)* pronunciations, while Communist planners have officialized so-called "spoken-sound" *(yuyin)* pronunciations. Thus the word "with" is pronounced either *he* (second tone) or *han* (fourth tone) in the National Language standardized pronunciation lists. Of the two, *han* is the "ancient-sound" pronunciation. Lin Yutang, however, regards *han* as a Beijing localism, and in the introduction to his dictionary (1972: xxi) laments its universal use in Taiwan: "...owing to the adoption of the dialect sounds used in matrices with Chinese phonetic notation for schoolbooks, the effect is overwhelming on the younger generation".

Quite aside from the NPA and its effects, language planners in the school

17 They may recognize it even so, however. Some Taiwanese boast that the best Mandarin in the world is Taiwan broadcast standard, which retains Northern use of the f-/h-, zh-/z-, ch-/c-, and sh-/s- distinctions, but also includes the characteristically Taiwanese low frequency of tonelessness.

system also have influence upon the style of Taiwan Mandarin. As indicated earlier, economies that are possible in written Chinese have always been conducive to a disjuncture between written and spoken style. Despite the pressure to fit written style to spoken language in this century, certain literary expressions linger on. For students who pick up spoken language partly from textbooks that use written language, classical expressions slip readily enough into speech. Thus the expression *eryi,* "this and only this", is both idiomatic and common in Taiwan, while on the mainland it is quaintly bookish at best.

Ignoring the Models: Student Shortcuts & Language Evolution. I have argued that the NPA fails to encode tone neutralization (or, seen the other way, encodes too much tonal information), and accordingly there is no way, if one takes NPA textbooks as one's standard, that one can produce authentically Northern Mandarin. In fact, however, students do not follow the lead of the NPA in many cases even though it does provide guidance. The reasons for this are several, and bear individual examination, since each represents a process that can occur in any language teaching situation, and that can cause changes in a language propagated by a modern school system.

One common way to ignore the NPA is to regard certain of its alphabetic characters as representing different writings for the "same" sound. One elementary school child was quite emphatic in stressing to me that h- and f- were written differently in NPA, but sounded "exactly the same". The model was, of course, a teacher who herself tended to ignore the distinction. The casualness with which Chinese generally regard matters of phonology is not conducive to children being required to make all of the distinctions that NPA represents.

More interestingly, there is a tendency for frequently occurring phenomena to obscure rare ones. It is a commonplace that in European languages it is the most common verbs that tend to be irregular, while rare ones tend to be or become regular. Apparently constant reinforcement is necessary for speakers to remember the additional information necessary to keep a European verb irregular. For a second-language speaker, more of the language is uncommon than for a first-language speaker, and, just as foreign learners of European languages tend to regularize irregular verbs, so it should not surprise us that Taiwanese students tend to generalize regular patterns across more cases than Beijing speakers do. By way of concrete example, let me return to the subject oftones.

Some Mandarin syllables, though different in spoken language, are written with the same characters for a variety of historical reasons. Thus the syllable *pu in* the fourth tone means "bed" or "sleeping place", and *pu* in the first tone means "to spread out". Both are traditionally written with the same character. The spoken syllable *pu* (fourth tone) also means shop, usually used in a compound *(puzi* or *pudian* on the mainland, *xiaodianpu* in Taiwan). It has its own character, but the tendency is to confuse the two characters, and they tend to get used interchangeably for both "shop" and bed[18]. In books used in Taiwan schools, the words

18 On the mainland, character reform abolished the "shop" character, leaving the "spread/bed" character to cover all three meanings.

"shop" and "bed" occur more commonly than the word "spread out". The NPA fourth tone reading therefore occurs more often than the first tone reading, and most schoolchildren come to assume that a fourth tone *pu* is the "correct reading", for all contexts.

Similarly the syllable *hun* (fourth tone) means "to mix up or confuse" (as in the common verbal compound *hunluan),* but that which has been mixed up or confused is said (by mainland speakers) to have been *hun-le,* using a third-tone *hun.* Both the fourth-tone and the third-tone words are written with the same character. The same character also writes a closely related syllable, *hun* in the second tone, which means "dunderheaded churl", and is used in the common phrase *hundan.* The commonest of these three semantically similar but phonologically distinct syllables, however, is the fourth-tone one, and Taiwanese high school students, learning to curse by the characters, misread even their condemnations and blasphemies, and call each other fourth-tone *hundan* rather than second-tone *hundan.*

Broken Sound Characters. The phenomenon is not limited to tone, however. Indeed, characters with several different pronunciations (referred to as "broken sound characters" *poyinzi)* are sufficiently numerous that the schools pay special attention to at least the commonest of them, and guidebooks and dictionaries of them are published, and many of the cases involve more extreme differences than merely tone[19]. To a native speaker, "broken sound character" means simply that the same character has been used for more than one "word". To the newcomer who does not yet control the spoken words and learns them at the same time that he learns the character representing them, a "broken sound character" is one with several different "readings". To the native speaker it represents a few less characters to learn and simplifies his path to literacy. To the newcomer it represents a dictionary task every time he encounters such a character in a text. Taiwanese schoolchildren, like foreigners, tend to over-generalize the commonest reading so that it becomes the pronunciation for all of the Mandarin lexemes originally represented by the character. This regularizes the system, but in a way that is opposite to the intuitions of a native speaker, for whom the spoken language is primary, and for whom regularization would normally entail creating additional characters to reflect the spoken distinctions. Handbooks and the NPA fight a losing battle against schoolchildren mispronouncing characters that they think they know.

A clear example is the syllable *tuo* (fourth tone), which occurs most often in the phrase *kaituo* "to open up undeveloped regions". But the character used to write *tuo* is also the traditional abbreviated writing for an unrelated syllable, *ta* (fourth tone), "to make a rubbing from an incised stone". Five out of five high school graduates I consulted assured me that such a rubbing was to be called a *tuopian,* not a *tapian,* which is the name that is in fact used by native speakers of

19 One popular handbook of characters easily confused and characters having multiple readings (Fang 1976) includes nearly 800 characters with well over 1800 readings.

mainland Mandarin. Dictionaries do of course list both pronunciations and distinguish between their uses. However it is rare for a student to look past the first pronunciation. When I challenged each of my five informants to look up the word, each in turn triumphantly showed me the pronunciation *tuo* and looked no further. In Taiwan today, a rubbing is simply called a *tuopian.* If a practice that is universal cannot long be regarded as substandard, then *tuopian* must be understood as part of a new emergent standard Mandarin of Taiwan. But the process that gave birth to this difference is a function of the fact that Mandarin is being learned as a second language, and that the school system teaches it with stress on the written language and without stress on "broken sound" variations. Both of these conditions, together, are changing the language in the process of its transfer to Taiwan.

CONCLUSIONS

The Taiwanese population today is nearly 100 percent Mandarin speaking. Many people speak only Mandarin. For a larger proportion of those who do not speak Mandarin natively, the use of Mandarin begins so early and is so frequent that their Mandarin ability exceeds their ability in Hakka or Southern Min for many purposes and is at least equal to their Hakka or Min native-language ability for many others. The universalization of written and spoken Mandarin is one of the major successes of the school system. Unlike the Latin of ancient Gaul, the Mandarin of Modern Taiwan has been introduced methodically, as a matter of policy, through a centralized school system that has exercised both deliberate and accidental control over what has been taught. At the same time, educational custom and policy have interacted with the exigencies of the linguistic background and historical situation in Taiwan to produce a distinct Mandarin subdialect. In some respects, the creation of Taiwan Mandarin represents the very thing envisioned by the National Language policy when it was created. Whether planners realized it or not, it was not going to be possible to transplant the speech of Beijing whole cloth to other parts of China. Speech is too closely tied to local culture for that, and school systems are molders as well as transmitters of the skills they teach. The National Language campaign has succeeded in Taiwan and has succeeded well. But its success also teaches us that the twentieth century has brought the dawn of a new force in linguistic evolution: the public school.

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