



Study on Language Protection: A Book Review on Comparison Study on Language Protection in China and Abroad

Dongwei Li^{1*}

¹*School of Foreign Languages, North China University of Science and Technology, China.*

Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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Scholarly Book Review

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ABSTRACT

The book entitled *Comparison study on language protection in China and abroad* is written by Chunlin Yao, an associate professor in Tianjin Chengjian University. It is published by a Chinese influential press China Social Science Press. The book is composed of six chapters and describes two cases of language protection in China and abroad, respectively. At the last part the author gets his own views on language protection: language protection has little connection with protecting "language purity" and does not contradict with language change. The aforementioned views are creative and meaningful in language protection activities.

Keywords: Language protection; language purity; language change.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is the spiritual home for human beings and one of the representatives of ethnic culture, which distinguishes human beings and animals.

Therefore it is human beings' longing to protect the varieties of language. However, in the current time "language convergence" is the main tendency in language life and more and more languages are on the way to be extinct (Yao and

*Corresponding author: E-mail: weiwei5858108@sina.com;

Zuckermann [1]). It is a heatedly discussed issue on how to protect the diversity of language worldwide. In recent time the associate professor Chunlin Yao published a book entitled *Comparison study on language protection in China and abroad* (ISBN 978-7-5203-0629-4; CIP: 2017150441) with China Social Science Press. The associate professor Chunlin Yao is a young and potential scholar, who got his PhD degree in 2008. Now he is an associate professor in Tianjin Chengjian University, China. He is the author of the following books such as *Comparison Study on Language Protection in China and Abroad* (Chinese Social Science Press, 2017), *Study on Vitalities of Chinese Neologism: Perspectives on Language Change and Language Protection* (Kaiming Press, 2016), *Study on Minority Preparation College Students' Identity and Their English Acquisition* (Guangming Daily Press, 2014) and *Research on Native Chinese College Students' Acquisition of English Spatial Prepositions: a Cognitive Perspective* (Beijing Yanshan Press, 2013). In the book the author analyses and compares four cases of language protection. The book sheds light on the theories and practices on language protection.

2. ABOUT THE BOOK

The book entitled *Comparison study on language protection in China and abroad* is composed of six chapters. Chapter one introduces the current trends on language change in current time and reviews the studies on language protection in China and abroad. In addition, it also points out the structure of the book.

In the second chapter the author describes Hebrew revival and analyses the enlightenments of Hebrew revival on language protection. Classical Hebrew was the only language for the Jews, with which they created the splendid ancient civilization (Fellman [2]). After their kingdom was invaded by other ethnics the Jews were exiled in the world. From that time on the Jews began to take some mixed languages as their oral language, such as French-Hebrew, Judaeo-Spanish, Yiddish language, and so on (Ayturk [3]). However, during the Hebrew "sleeping" period some writers still created literature with Hebrew language, which not only inherited but also extended the using domain of Hebrew. These writing activities extended Hebrew language beyond the realm of religion and into secular life, and enriched the Hebrew vocabulary. In the late 19th century the Zionism

inspired many Jews to return to the Palestinian territories and to revive the Jewish kingdom. As the Jews lived in different parts of the world before they backed to Palestinian, most time they could not communicate with each other. In addition for political consideration the future Jewish country required a *lingua franca* as the national language. As the symbol of the ancient Jewish kingdom, the Classical Hebrew was selected as the future national language. From that time on the Hebrew was on the way to be revived. After many years' effort the Jews revived the Hebrew successfully in some fields. The *British Mandate of Palestine September 29th 1923* and the *Law and Administration Ordinance* have confirmed the Hebrew language, together with other language(s), as Israel's official languages. In the book entitled *Comparison study on language protection in China and abroad* the author reveals that the Modern Hebrew language (some people call it "Israel") is different from the Classic Hebrew on voice system, lexicon and grammar system in some degrees, which has become a multi-leveled and multi-sourced mixed language of Afro-Asiatic languages and Indo-European languages (Zuckermann and Walsh [4]). From this perspective of view the author concludes that the Hebrew revival cannot be regarded as a successful language corpus planning.

In the third chapter the author describes the Kaurna language revival. The Kaurna language is an aboriginal language in Australia, which is the native and everyday language for Kaurna people (Amery [5]). As the result of the killing, plague and discrimination for many years, the number of Kaurna speakers became less and less. In 1929 the last native Kaurna people Ivaritji died (Martin [6]). From that time on Kaurna language began to be in "sleep" status. In 1990 with linguists' help Kaurna people began to revive Kaurna language. After 20 years' effort, Kaurna language revival has achieved some achievements. The revivalists have identified the voice system of Kaurna language, drafted the *Kaurna-English Dictionary*. They have also distinguished the syntactic structure for Kaurna language and subject-object-predicate order, while they still have some confusion in conjugation for the Noun and the Verbs. Another achievement is the popularization of Kaurna language education in schools and training agencies. By the year of 2011 there were 10 schools offering Kaurna language courses in South Australia. In addition, the author also indicates that the Kaurna language has not

gotten any official language status; there are only some parks, buildings, rivers named by both English and Kaurna language and the Kaurna name is less popular than the English name among Non- Kaurna people. From these facts the author refers that Kaurna language revival doesn't succeed politically and linguistically.

Chapter four discusses the Hakka dialect protection. Hakka is one of the Chinese dialects, which is the mother language and the first language for Hakka people pictorially (Wu [7]). Owing to the Hakka dialect contacting with other language varieties such as Minnan dialect, Japanese and Mandarin in different periods, some Hakka people transferred their first language into other languages or dialects. In June 2001 Taiwan set up the Council for Hakka Affairs (now Hakka Affairs Council) to manage the affairs about Hakka language and culture protection. The Council issued a number of regulations on the protection of Hakka language. On the one hand the Council tries to cultivate Hakka people's Hakka language abilities; on the other hand, it builds the social environment for Hakka people to speak Hakka language. After comparing the social vitality of Hakka within 20 years, the author comes to the conclusion that the aforementioned efforts do not seem to enhance the vitality of Hakka in Taiwan; the number of Hakka speakers decreases a little although the decrease trend becomes slow gradually. That is to say, the Council's efforts can slow the speed for Hakka dropping into an endangered situation but cannot enrich the Hakka' vitality.

Chapter five describes the protection of Tibetan dialects in Tianshu Autonomous County, which is located in the eastern end of the Hexi Corridor (Yao [8]). Due to the special geographical and social environment, the local Tibetan language environment is weaker than other Tibetan areas relatively (Yao [9]). Some Tibetan transferred into Bilingual speakers, and even Chinese speakers. After 1949, the Chinese central government and the Tibetan local governments issued a number of laws and policies to protect the vitality of Tianshu Tibetan language. These laws and regulations are mainly focused on Tianshu Tibetan political planning and Tianshu Tibetan education planning. The invested data between 1980s and 2010s witnessed that the aforementioned measures can protect Tibetan language vitality in Tianshu Tibetan Autonomous County. The author believes that the protection on Tibetan dialects in Tianshu Autonomous

County is a successful case of language protection.

In the last chapter the author compared the aforementioned four cases and analyzed the feature of language protection. He points out that language protection is a systematic project, which includes protecting not only the language vitality, but also the user's language identity. The author believes that language protection has little connection with protecting "language purity" and does not contradict with language change.

3. CONCLUSION

The aforementioned view on language protection is creative and meaningful. Language developing and changing are the nature requirements for language, which are accompanied with language borrowing, even language shifting. Language protection cannot keep language corpus static but can help maintain the user's language identity even the language corpus has changed greatly. The ideal way to protect language is not to exclude the language change, especially the "unconscious change", but to cultivate language users' language identity (Yao and Jia [10]).

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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