

**STANDARDIZATION PROJECT OF CHINA'S SPOKEN
NATIONAL LANGUAGE FROM THE LATE QING
DYNASTY TO THE END OF THE REPUBLICAN PERIOD:
A LITERATURE REVIEW**

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Standardization Project of China's Spoken National Language from the late Qing Dynasty to the End of the Republican Period

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Tiivistelmä

Tämän kandidaatintutkielman aihe on Kiinan puhutun kansalliskielen muodostuminen Qing-dynastian lopusta tasavaltalaisajan loppuun. Kandidaatintutkielma on kirjallisuuskatsaus, jonka aineistona on alan tutkimuksia, tietokirjoja, sekä artikkeleita. Tavoitteena on muodostaa kuva kansalliskieliprojektin eri vaiheista sekä käydä läpi ja analysoida siihen liittyntä politiikkaa, ilmiöitä ja ideologioita. Lisäksi tutkielmassa tarkastellaan Kiinan kansalliskielen ja mandariinikiinan suhdetta sekä kansalliskielen keinotekoisuutta. Kirjallisuuskatsaus etenee temaattisesti ja siinä hyödynnetään sociolinguistiikan tutkimusperiaatteita ja keskitytään kielistandardisaatioon sekä kielipolitiikkaan ja kielisuunniteluun.

Tarkastelu osoittaa, että Kiinan kansalliskielen ja modernisaation yhteys on hyvin läheinen, ja että puhuttu kansalliskieli nähtiin modernisaation onnistumisen kannalta tärkeäksi tekijäksi aikalaisnäkökulmasta. Ylhäältä alas (top-down) -lähestymistapa sekä kansalliskielen tavoite olla koko kansan kieli nähdään merkittävänä erikoispiirteenä Kiinan kansalliskielen muodostumisessa verrattuna muihin kansalliskieliin. Lisäksi tarkastelussa huomattiin, kuinka kiinan puhutun kansalliskielen ja nationalismin yhteys on merkittävä väittelyn aihe alalla. Mielenpitoita jakaa kysymys siitä, kuinka paljon Han-nationalistinen ideologia on ollut vaikuttavana tekijänä kielen muodostumisessa verrattuna puhtaasti pragmaattiseen ajatteluun. Tarkastelluista aineistoissa on kommentoitu myös Kiinan muiden kuin Han kielten vähäistä käsittelyä kansalliskielten valinnassa, kiinakeskeisten tutkimusmenetelmien puutetta ja sociolinguistiikan eurosentrismiä. Edellisten lisäksi viimeinen merkittävä huomio on termien Guanhua ja Guoyu epämääräinen käsittely aineistoissa sekä näiden historiallinen yhteys toisiinsa. Lisäksi tutkimusaineistosta voidaan havaita, että tärkeä osa kansalliskielen valintaa on ollut kielipreستیisyyden painottaminen.

Tämä kandidaatintutkielman löydöt, sekä nostamat puutteet ja väittelyt voivat toimia mahdollisena apuna Kiinan kansalliskielen tutkimisessa ja uusien tutkimustapojen tarpeen arvioimisessa. Lisäksi tutkielma voi toimia apuna Kiinan kansalliskielen nykytilan ymmärtämiseen, kuten kielipolitiikan tai lingvistisen historian suhteen.

Key words: national language, national spoken standard, Guoyu, Guanhua, nationalism, standardization, Chinese sociolinguistics, reform, language policies, modernization

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research Question and Objective

Language standardization has been and is a crucial part of different nations' way of controlling language usage and codification. As it is a constantly present phenomenon in nations nowadays, it can explain to us how the current languages we use every day even came to be. Language policy and planning is an essential part of research in sociolinguistics, and especially the existence of nationalism and its connection to language planning has fascinated scholars in the field (Wardhaugh, 2014). Language is not completely a natural creation; instead, for example, our politics, societal structures, and hierarchies are always present in language formation. China can be considered an excellent example of language planning and standardization, especially during the late Qing and modern China. The standardization of the Chinese language has evolved through numerous iterations and experiments. Throughout history, China did not have a designated “national language” or a standard form of Chinese, such as Putonghua. (Chen, 1999). It seems that the discussion of China’s project of standardization nowadays tends to focus more on the written rather than spoken language as it can be more touchable. However, the formation of China’s standard spoken language is not always in the spotlight.

How to make a standard spoken language has puzzled Chinese scholars and bureaucrats since the late Qing dynasty when it became a state-level concern to have a national language. People involved in the project shared vastly different opinions and could not even be sure if the project could be made into reality in the environment in which it was launched. Formation of standard spoken Chinese was a big and important project of which fruits can be seen in the way people view, and use spoken language in Chinese-speaking areas, most notably the People’s Republic of China. Therefore, in this paper, I will investigate and analyze research made on the very topic of the formation of China’s spoken national language, especially the choosing process and politics behind it, focusing on the time period from its starting point, the late Qing dynasty, to the end of the republican period. I will also pay attention specifically to the project’s relationship with Mandarin Chinese. While Mandarin Chinese can be regarded as the “base” for the national language, China’s national language has never just been Mandarin (or in the past referred to as Guanhua) but rather a hybrid of many Fangyan (dialects or languages). Due to the complicated origin of China’s national language, I will also highlight the naming question of the national language during that time.

1.2 Significance of the Study

In this paper, I wish to showcase the curious case of language standardization in China, focusing namely on the topic of spoken language. The language we speak and hear is a valuable tool to understand and study, especially in the case of Chinese, which has experienced rather strict policies during its codification. Studying China's spoken national language history also allows us to understand Chinese nationalism better. The role of spoken Chinese in society is very particular, often connected to nationalism and modernity (Tam, 2020; Zeng & Zhao, 2023). The connection between national and language planning and policies is also recognized as a major part of sociolinguistic studies, often under macro linguistics (Wardhaugh, 2014).

Understanding the historical background of the Chinese national standard language is also a valuable tool in navigating the current landscape of language politics in Chinese-speaking areas. During the republican period, the national language was referred to as "Guoyu." However, in the People's Republic of China, the national language is currently called Putonghua because of its renaming in 1955 (Chen, 1999). Putonghua has slight alterations done to it, separating it from the republican period Guoyu. However, I will not go into them in this thesis. Putonghua is currently in use to refer to the modern Chinese language in most Chinese-speaking areas. However, the name Guoyu is still in use in Taiwan, while in Singapore, it is referred to as Huayu (Shi, 2016).

China is a multilingual society due to the existence of current standard Chinese and the persistence of minority languages and other languages under the Chinese language group, sometimes referred to as Chinese dialects. Tam (2020) mentions in her book about nationalism and dialect in China that during the change of millennia, codeswitching was a very particular part of Chinese communication. Knowing that China's standard holds a specific spot in communication is beneficial, especially for people in positions of not only language policymaking but also for those who need to know how to use language in marketing as standard spoken language is not always favourable and vice versa.

China's political elite has held the existence of a national language very important and has secured its position even on a legislative level, for example, in its constitution. Zheng and Zhao (2023) highlight in their article how the legislative level has been a crucial part of standardization, leading to many changes to laws confirming and executing standard Chinese's status since the beginning of formulating standard Chinese. Zhang and Zhao (2023) note that China's language goals based on the current laws and constitution are, first and foremost, the cohesion of the Chinese people. Since the beginning, the goals of Chinese language policies have always been unification and building a

nation-state that enjoys certain levels of cultural cohesion, as the standardization of Chinese started as a national language project.

Coming back to the aforementioned multilingualism of China, legislations and policies have greatly boosted this phenomenon since the 1800s. As different policies came to be, there have always been guidelines on how to execute them. In the case of spoken standard Chinese, this includes teaching teachers how to speak flawless standard Chinese and teach it, keeping the state media fully in standard Chinese, and starting to host public services such as bureaucracy in standard Chinese. People would need to switch from their mother tongue to standard in these contexts to adapt to modern changes. As Tam (2020) mentions in her book, everyday services were slowly switched to fit nationwide “standard language” through trial and error to fit the agenda of the standardization project. Researching and discovering these policies and their execution is crucial to understanding in a larger context how language standardization is formulated and how much of its success depends on host culture.

This paper can also be a helpful guideline to people, larger enterprises, or even nations wishing to not only understand but also employ spoken language standardization in their own projects of codification of language. As Zheng and Zhao (2023) point out, the policies and planning China has used over the years can be a significant source of reference, especially when looking for a language or, further, cultural cohesion. While it cannot be treated as the “correct way,” China’s project of standard spoken language has had many different periods, which all can be used as a foundation for how to move forward and what could possibly work.

In the field of Chinese sociolinguistics, examining the formulation of China’s spoken national language is important since it does not fall under popular, often Eurocentric sociolinguistic theories. Also, doing an overview of this topic will be helpful in pointing out topics that still need more research. Major debates and gaps can be useful to identify as they can be linked to other parts of Chinese language studies or sinology as a whole.

1.3 Thesis Overview

This thesis’s second chapter will first introduce and exhibit the historical background of the Chinese national language project going through major milestones such as the starting point, Lao Guoyin and Xin Guoyin. This chapter will mainly focus on giving a historical rundown of the topic but will also include some connections to socio-linguistic theory to support it. The third chapter will be a review of the literature, in which I will go through fourteen papers on the topic of the formation of

China's spoken national language. I have divided these papers into three groups, "modernization," "nationalism," and "Guanhua, Guoyu, and language prestige." In this part, I will go through major points about these papers, how they correspond to the research question, and their methodologies. In the fourth chapter, these papers will be analyzed and compared to see how they correspond to each other and the research question. I will also try to pinpoint any shortcomings or gaps literature might behold. The fifth chapter will conclude this thesis and summarize possible findings while also suggesting possible points that could be beneficial to study more in the field in the future.

This thesis will focus on the strict timeframe and will not discuss topics such as Putonghua or possible areal standard languages China might have had before the national language project, as the scope would be too large and hard to write in a concise matter. The focus will be from the late Qing to the end of the republican period and will mostly follow the state-led creation of the national language. However, I will be mentioning some more grassroots activism regarding the topic if it is considered major enough to affect state-led projects.

2 Background and Context

Jeffrey Weng (2020) describes in his paper regarding the relationship between the Chinese nation, human collectivities, and language standardization that Chinese can be seen as an “extreme” case of making a national language. He highlights that it is an occasion of language planning that should be researched in sociolinguistics in the frames of understanding that Chinese cannot be studied using euro-centric means. Rather, Chinese language standardization checks boxes in places generally not seen as possible when using theories that would generally work in European cases, such as Bourdieusian or Weberian theories.

Historically, when talking about the national language project in China, we need to pay great attention to big changes that happened in China during the end of the Qing dynasty and the republican period in the 20th century. In this chapter, I will give a rundown of the language politics the elite practiced and the historical milestones for the spoken national standard while also making some connections to sociolinguistic theory.

2.1 National language project during the late Qing Dynasty

2.1.1 Japan as an Inspiration

Chinese language as a concept has often been recognized as written rather than spoken in China (Chen, 2007). Additionally, dialects and languages do not have a codified distinction between them (Li, 2015). This view towards spoken language, however, started to shift urgently, especially due to Japan’s influence during the Meiji Restoration. As stated by authors such as Chen (2007) and historian Kaske (2004), Japan’s quick modernization made it the superpower of the East. China had to wake up to the reality that its time as a superpower was over, and the country was in a period of stagnation compared to the West and its Eastern neighbour.

Modernization and national development are often considered key factors in establishing a national standard in sociolinguistic theory (Rubin & Jernudd, 2018). As standardization is driven by modernization, it is no wonder that in China, there were urgent demands to have a national language. Especially, when neighbouring Japan had acquired a successful model of national language which helped it boost its own modernization immensely, as noted by Kaske (2004). Japan, therefore, was taken as a big inspiration among China’s educated, usually scholarly elite during the late 19th century. China’s current stagnation was especially blamed on the lack of educated citizens in the country and the low literacy rate by the elite. Seeing how Japan’s modernization efforts were

at least partially achieved through education, which was made possible by establishing a national language, motivated the Chinese elite to shift their eyes toward their own education system. Kaske (2004) also points out how the Qing government's new decision to create a national school system opened the question of what language should be used as a teaching language and sparked discussions about whether Japan's model of national language would be the best option.

2.1.2 Guanhua

While China's literacy language, known in Chinese as Wenyanwen, held the most prestige (Dong, 2020, p.147), there were also spoken languages that could be considered at least regional lingua franca. Out of these, Guanhua was the most influential. Defined by Kurpaska (2019), Guanhua was a language used in the imperial court between officials, sometimes translated as "the language of officials." However, Guanhua is often also translated as "Mandarin" English, as it represents a dialect of the Mandarin language spoken in ancient China. The position of Guanhua could be considered some koine of Northern China by Kaske (2004), although its reach, overall grammar, and vocalization are often defined slightly differently by different linguistics and historians. I will return to Guanhua more in depth in the next chapter to discuss more about its definition. However, what needs to be noted about Guanhua is the fact that it relates to the wishes for a national language and Baihua.

Although Guanhua could be considered a spoken lingua franca, it also held little to no status or prestige (Kaske, 2004; Chen, 1999; Chen, 2015). However, what gave Guanhua newfound popularity can be credited to the Baihua movement starting in the 1890's. Baihua refers to vernacular writing, which was especially popularized during the May Fourth -movement in the early 20th century and worked especially toward national enlightenment (Weng, 2018). The language that Baihua used to write from was often Guanhua, although not always, as noted by Kaske (2004). People partaking in using Baihua were mostly highly educated elite, usually active in media circles, literature, and education, who saw the benefits of using Guanhua not only in vernacular writing but also as a base for the newfound idea of making a national language.

In 1909, the Qing government accepted the usage of Guanhua as a language of education and made some guidelines to the curriculum to promote its usage in education. However, according to Kaske (2004), Guanhua also did not enjoy much more prestige as the Qing government saw giving a Guanhua too high of a status could be too risky politically, considering the very uncertain balance the country was in during the early 20th century with (Han) nationalism on the rise and dissatisfaction towards the Manchu rule of Qing.

As people in the media circles preferred to write in Guanhua-based Baihua, Guanhua started to have a nationwide reach, and this became a big pressure for the Qing government to also start using Guanhua to communicate with its subjects by 1903 (Kaske, 2004). As the language reformers were many and in high or strategic positions, the Qing government had to become more tolerable towards the idea of a national language.

2.1.3 Guoyu

However, people involved in the National language visioning and planning had quite a large catering of different opinions on what the language should even look like. As mentioned by authors such as Weng (2018, 2020) and Kurpaska (2019), even abandoning the Chinese to turn to Esperanto was seriously considered. Guanhua, however, held enough popularity for it to be accepted by many to use as a base later. Additionally, the term “national language” or Guoyu caused problems, as the term was brought back by scholar Wu Rulun from Japan, who went there to study Japan’s national language project (Chen, 1999). However, according to Kaske (2004) and Weng (2018), Guoyu generally referred to the Manchu language as they were the ruling ethnic group during the Qing dynasty. In this paper, I will primarily use the terms “national language” and “Guoyu” interchangeably.

In 1910, due to the increased popularity of having a national language and (Han) nationalism, there were rallies to establish a committee for the investigation of the national language, now commonly accepted with the name of Guoyu (Kaske, 2004; Chen, 2015). In 1911, rallies led to acceptance, and the Ministry of Education began to plan the new national language. One major guideline made by the committee was to use Guanhua, specifically the Beijing dialect, as a main base (Chen, 1999). However, as the Qing dynasty fell in 1912, the committee could never finish its work, leaving the project undone in its time.

2.2 Lao Guoyin

The Republic of China was established on 1.1.1912, and the newly established country quickly decided to continue the work left by Qing predecessors. As soon as next year in 1913, the Conference for the Unification of Reading Pronunciation was established to appoint a committee to prepare the new national language, Guoyu, for public use (Simmons, 2017). The committee started its work in February, and with regards to spoken language, they fixed pronunciations for 6500 Chinese characters and determined the basic rules of pronunciations and sounds used in the new national language. Based on Simmons (2017) and other authors such as Chen (1999) and Weng

(2020), the committee determined fixed pronunciations to 6500 characters based on a democratic vote. Simmons writes that each province had one representative who was allowed to cast a vote, and they voted pronunciations character by character until all the 6500 had agreed upon pronunciations.

Chen (1999) states that while the 1911 committee had been more in favour of the Beijing dialect-based approach to the national language, the 1913 decisions took a relative backtrack, opting for a more all-rounded approach, having more features from other Han Chinese dialects to accompany the Guanhua base. The most notable phonological decision came from tones, as committee members were very adamant about having a five-tone system, adding an entering tone (i.e., the Ru tone). Entering tone is a glottal stop found in southern languages such as Wu-Chinese but not found in Guanhua.

These decisions were compiled in the 1918 Dictionary of National Pronunciation, followed by the Ministry of Education's guideline to start full-on promotion of the new Guoyu all around the country (Chen, 1999). Simmons (2017) and Chen (1999) both note that the dictionary, however, had a slight revision in 1921, which finalized the form of this national pronunciation. This version is known today as Lao Guoyin, the old national pronunciation. Swiftly after the full-on promotion of the new national language, there were problems that made this national language impossible to put to use.

As stated by Chen (1999, 2015), the language committee could be considered completely unusable. While 90% of its words were based on the Beijing dialect, it had too much variation to be anyone's mother tongue or even something one could naturally speak or further teach in. The entering tone caused issues as it was not spoken in the Beijing dialect. This obviously created a goal that could not be fulfilled. In the theory of language planning (Rubin & Jernudd, 2018), there is a concept of language goals, one of which is "effective communication." If language is something no one can use to communicate with, it cannot be effectively in use and cannot become one. This was the case with Lao Guoyin. As it was impossible to use or teach, there quickly became a need for more thorough revision.

2.3 Xin Guoyin

2.3.1 Role of Education and Media

The 1920s can be considered a great turnaround for the national language project as Lao Guoyin's failure became clearer and revisions for it started. The wish for a switch came from especially

education circles and the teaching elite who could see the lack of usability in real life. Simmons (2017) mentions, for example, Nanjing Teachers College's (later Nanjing University) Chair of the English Department and a member of the national language planning committee, Zhang Shiyi, who was one of the main advocates for a revision, particularly putting the Beijing dialect truly the main base for the standard. Chen (1999) also highlights Zhang Shiyi's importance as he mentions how, as early as 1920, he published a book in which he criticized the Lao Guoyin (at that time still Guoyu) and proposed Beijing dialect's way of speech as an answer.

Chen (1999) further writes how, due to the backing of the elite, especially in the positions of education, in 1920, a decree was passed in which teaching of Guoyu would be ensured in primary schools. Previously, "Chinese" taught in primary education was "Guowen," referring to classical literary Chinese. This switch to try to educate people from a young age to use Guoyu was important because it encouraged students to speak the language they were taught rather than just knowing how to write it. The decree, according to Chen (1999), was taken very positively among teachers and academics. The degree would evolve overtime, and in 1944, a program by the Ministry of Education named the study of Guoyu pedagogy a major task in national language promotion.

Kurpaska (2019) also mentions how the Baihua Movement increased during the early republican period, and it gave a lot of publicity and support to (almost) a full-on Beijing approach rather than a hybrid. Media, therefore, was also in favour of renewed Guoyu. Beijing dialect was slowly gaining more and more supporters, which really divided the national language committee, which had to work out the problems that had arisen from the 1918 Guoyu. Chen (1999) mentions there emerged two groups: Guoyin, which supported the advanced hybrid approach, and Jingyin, which supported the Beijing dialect. Arguments for and against the Beijing dialect colored the 20's linguistic scene very actively. The Beijing dialect, however, struggled to get footing due to its societal status. As authors such as Kaske (2004), Chen (1999, 2007), Tam (2023), and Simmons (2017) mentioned, Beijing had a very low status, especially compared to its southern counterparts, which were seen as more elegant, complex, and closer to middle Chinese. Beijing, also being a Manchu capital, had a bad reputation because of Han nationalism and the establishment of the Republic of China.

2.3.2 Fixing Lao Guoyin

Within the Ministry of Education, formed in the early 1920s a group known as the "Society of Few Men". Members were language committee members who took as their agenda to work out on finding and fixing problems that had arisen in the new national language. Weng (2020) comments how all these men were linguistics in privileged positions who had a profound understanding of

how language standardization had been working out not only in Japan but also in Europe. Weng (2020) and Simmons's (2017) both put linguist Chao Yuenren as a leading member of the group, who Weng (2020) also says had been considered the only person who could speak the Lao Guoyin. This group started their revision work in March 1926 as a formal committee before doing their work in informal settings. There was a new formal choosing process that covered the revision of pronunciation for 12 219 characters and, for example, giving up on the entering tone and keeping the tones accurate to Beijing pronunciation, according to Kurpaska (2019). Changes favoured Beijing pronunciation much more than previously, switching up most non-Beijing pronunciations to Beijing dialect, although keeping some rare mixed elements mentioned by Simmons (2017).

Lanqing Guanhua was the main way of speaking during this time when making decisions about the revisions, according to Weng (2020). Lanqing Guanhua, 'blue-green Mandarin,' was a term that emerged after the publicization of the 1918 dictionary to mean a language that was based on Mandarin (Guanhua) but still held features of their own mother tongue, as defined by Weng (2020). Simmons (2017), however, defines Lanqing Guanhua as a near synonym of Lao Guoyin. Lanqing Guanhua, as a Guanhua-based way of speaking, was favored by the elite when communicating with each other and strengthened Beijing's position during the 20s.

The revision was finished in April 1932, and a new dictionary was published according to these changes. The Guoyu this dictionary showcased was named the new national pronunciation, Xin Guoyin. The revisions were crucial as according to Weng (2020), these changes freed up in some estimates over a million teachers who could teach Guoyu the people. Weng (2020) states that practicality played a huge part in this decision. And the results were indeed the right call, as Xin Guoyin could be distributed across the country. When doing language planning, there is a concept of "language decisions" (Rubin & Jernudd, 2018). Criteria for these language decisions are efficiency, adequacy, and acceptability. While the Lao Guoyin lacked these, the Xin Guoyin was based on practicability which favoured the fact of it being fit to be not only taught but also learned and used in a wider concept as a linguistic curiosity.

Guoyu's promotion continued up until the establishment of the People's Republic of China and, even after that, in Taiwan. Simmons (2017), however, does mention how its position was challenged from time to time as competing systems did emerge; for example, communist favour enjoyed Lantinxuea Sinwenz, which was a mixed system, like Lao Guoyin. Nationalists did favor the Xin Guoyin, and it managed to hold its position due to the aforementioned benefits. The latest decisions about Guoyu that were made during the Republic of China era happened in 1944, as

mentioned by Chen (1999) before China entered a turmoil era of wartime. Ministry of Education introduced a program which was to strengthen and concretize the National Language Movement in which it ruled that Guoyu's promotion should reach the whole country and there should be more work to be done on its promotion and research. In the PRC, Guoyu's tale is considered to have ended when Zhou Enlai gave a speech in 1956 about Putonghua, having it as a new name for the country's national language (Kurpaska, 2019).

3 Review of the literature

3.1 Modernization and the National Language

Chen, in his paper “Language Reform in Modern China” (2015), talks about how the reasons and motivations of the Chinese national language project at the turn of the 19th century are rooted in the isolated and backward situation of China. He highlights how the wishes for modernization to turn the tide came from the overall political situation China was in. Being exploited by Western and neighboring forces in instances such as the Opium Wars and the First Sino-Japanese War caused the inner political situation to make efforts to seek change. These thoughts were given more force as Japan had implemented a successful national language which inspired Chinese scholars to try it out themselves, according to Chen (2015). Modernization was, therefore, heavily influenced by foreign powers with the intention to “sit at the same table” with the Western powers. However, Chen (2015) does state that the methods of standardization were heavily China-focused. As the problem of mutual intelligibility was perceived as something that held the country back, the relationship between national language and modernization was to benefit the country from the inside. Therefore, the national language was modeled to China’s needs, which differs from the national languages of the West or Japan. However, this view has been criticised by other authors like Keeler (2008), who will be covered later in the chapter. Overall, the question of whether China’s modernization was just Westernization in disguise is unclear in Chen’s (2015) text and remains unclear in many following authors’ texts in the literature review.

Opium wars are also considered to be a starting point in Kurpaska’s paper “How to create a language for the whole people? On the codification of Putonghua pronunciation” (2019) for the wish for a more capable, modern society. Kurpaska notes, though, that the concrete idea for a “national language” came from Chinese students who went to Japan to study and discovered how, in Japan, there was a successful project of language standardization that had sparked from the Meiji restoration. Kurpaska writes how these students saw a possibility for China in Japan’s successful national language to make China also one. Chen (2015) also writes how Japan’s influence and successful modernization activated the educated Chinese to ponder if language and modernization had a connection. Many periods’ scholars viewed China’s lack of unity, low literacy, and minimal education rates as the main reason why it could not stand strong anymore compared to its neighbour, new superpower Japan or the West, Chen (2015) writes.

In “Two millennia of language planning in China” (Zheng & Zhao, 2023), writers mention how the fact Japan’s “Tokyo dialect” took the form of a national standard shaped the scholarly landscape of that time when it came to discussions of the national language in the Chinese context. Japan’s influence was undeniable and academically important, as many Chinese scholars and officials have received an education in Japan. Additionally, Zheng and Zhao write concerning the formation of spoken language and how the link between it and China’s wishes for modern society was important, as the educated elite of the time saw that the lack of mutual understanding caused problems when it came to accepting new ideas into Chinese society. People could not become wise and educated if there was no way for them to do so. Having a language as a vessel could erase these problems. Wishes for these kinds of changes went through, and China started to create a national language during the late Qing, although most work was left undone and continued by the Republic of China.

Jeffrey Weng, in his paper “What is Mandarin? The Social Project of Language Standardization in Early Republican China” (2018), starts his text with the sentence, “The artificiality of China’s standard language is no secret.” In his paper, Weng (2018) makes it clear that the Chinese language we know today, “Mandarin,” has constructed roots, and this standard language was language meant to serve a new Chinese society. Weng (2018) describes this “new society” as something that the elite of the newly established Republic of China wished to achieve: a strong China. Bringing up the May Fourth movement, Weng (2018) also makes it clear how China’s national language process was a top-down kind of approach, as the people creating the national standard were the intellectual elite. Elite’s goal, however, was first and foremost to make the language “people’s language,” not just for the chosen few. Language was seen as a tool to unite a nation to reach the goal of a strong, modern China in which people were all educated. Agreed by not only Weng (2018) but also Chen (2015), Kurpaska (2019), and Zheng and Zhao (2023), education would lead to modernization.

This top-down approach is also in focus in Keeler’s article “Linguistic Reconstruction and the Construction of nationalist-era Chinese Linguistics” (2008). Keeler states how republican-era China saw language and dialects in a very practical manner, and the linguistics politics were by nature “ultimately political.” In the article, Keeler argues that there were republican-era elite who saw Chinese culture as something that prevented modernization (which in this case refers to the European model of modern society) and others who envisioned that culture could become modern if it was handled in a scientific way. Chinese language, in this case the spoken one, can become modern if it is researched and shaped by using science, by the latter viewpoint. There was research made by linguistics who wished to prove that the Chinese language was “civilized” and that it could be put into the European framework, and many linguists saw that as China was already a nation,

therefore it must have a language, even if the language at that moment “incomplete.” Keeler argues that during the republic era, scholars did not necessarily want to make a new language; rather, they believed that they were using modern science to reinvent a modern national language for the people and the Chinese nation.

State involvement and the imagined receivers of the language are a focus of Weng’s article “Uneasy Companions: language and Human Collectivizes in the Remaking of Chinese Society in the Early Twentieth Century” (2020). Weng (2020) emphasizes how the Chinese case is unique, even extreme, when compared to its European counterparts when studying language standardization and the state’s connection. What Weng (2020) thinks is important to understand is how in republican China’s state simultaneously created a new language and forcefully made this language a community based on its goal, in this case, uniting the Chinese nation and people. The Chinese case is also important because, unlike many European cases of the national language, in republican China, the elite actively tried to create a language that was easy to speak and learn and that could be mass-circulated across China. According to Weng (2020), in a lot of Eurocentric cases, the national language was made hard to learn, and for the elite, however in China, it was promoted to the people by means of seminars, schooling, and media. Weng (2020) also shares with other authors that the goal of national language policy was to increase literacy to strengthen the new nation-state. There is a wish for cohesion.

Modernization is the most visible goal of China’s national language project, which was catalysed by the realization of 1800’s how China’s position as a superpower was already history. Multiple authors note how the top-down method was a key component to creating a national spoken language, as they all share a view that education leads to power. Some authors focus more on the Japanese influence, like Kurpaska (2019) and Zheng and Zhao (2023), while others see that European influences were, in the end, more important, like Keeler (2008). However, the language goal was ultimately the same. The result would be Guoyu – a national standard language that will serve modern China’s needs and work as a tool to create Chinese national cohesion.

3.2 Nationalism and National Language

Tam, in her book “Dialect and Nationalism in China, 1860-1960” (2020), argues how language, more importantly, the concept of Fangyan, served as a way for China to establish a nation and its people to support its goal of modernization. However, this project was always linked to nationalism. Tam (2020) points out how starting from the late Qing, certain Han scholars and -linguists viewed language (or Fangyan) in a nationalistic way, seeing language to almost prove Han “grace” and

culture that had been in the past. Tam (2020) gives Zhang Binglin, a Han scholar, as an example who can be seen as a trendsetter before the republican period. Zhang saw that creating a national language was a means to bring back ethnic Han China and viewed creating it again to make a language free from “barbarian” traces. Tam (2020) quotes Zhang, who expresses that to make a “unified oral language,” the sound of previous Han states must be used to ensure the correct result. Zhang would go on to inspire the language movement even during the republican period, as his writings reached important figures in language circles.

Tam (2020) points out that even after 1912 and the establishment of the Republic of China, nationalism and language were tightly together. Tam (2020) argues how, even though today it is often seen that the Beijing dialect became the base for the national language, it was, of course, victorious, which is problematic due to national languages’ nationalistic roots. As the elite’s view was that language should represent the core of Chinese culture, Beijing or Guanhua, for that matter, were not popular options because of Manchu connections. Lao Guoyin represented much more the ideal view of the majority, although later there were needed revaluations, and Beijing did end up becoming the base for Guoyu out of practicality. Tam (2020) writes that this did not hinder nationalism; rather, there continued to be studies on the Chinese language and how it correlates to Han culture with the goal of making the national language the ideal means of cohesion for China.

Chen, in his article about China in the book “Language and National Identity in Asia” (2007), views language’s role in nationalism as less meaningful than Tam (2020). Chen (2007) argues that language did not have as high of a status to represent national identity in republican China within the nationalists. As language itself was seen as outdated, even a reason for lack of modernization, and unable to serve the new China, it was not worthy to represent the nation. Language reform and the creation of a universal spoken language were needed not to highlight Han ethnicity’s core but rather to create a modern China where communication was not a hindering problem. The disdain toward one’s own language, according to Chen (2007), is quite unique compared to, for example, European counterparts; the reasons lie in the lack of political dimension language and the overall there being no widespread spoken language uniting the people. Language reform was done more due to utilitarian reasons rather than ideological. However, according to Chen (2007), reform was done by *nationalists*, who, although they did not view language as a symbol of Han Chinese cultural heritage, still saw the use of national language as a means to unite scattered China into one. Guoyu under the republican rule was a tool to reunite China, as it would be used in education, governance and ultimately in all life’s sectors. Only one language would be easiest to work with.

As established by both Tam (2020) and Chen (2007), the national spoken standard did have ties to nationalism, either more symbolically or more practically. This might give an answer to a key question regarding China's national language's creation: why Mandarin? Li, in his paper "Late Qing Scrip Reformers' View of Dialects" (2015), goes through the language attitudes of the late Qing elite while also discussing the prestige of the languages and dialects. As stated by Li, China lacked a clear distinction between dialect and language still during the late Qing, often just using the term *Fangyan* to represent those. Mandarin, amongst other *Fangyan*, enjoyed the highest prestige in Qing China, according to Li, its southern counterpart more than the northern. Scholars of the time viewed Mandarin as something that was used during many, mostly Han dynasties and, therefore, representing the culture and elegance it should.

Tam, in her research article "Our Roots Are the Same": Hegemony and Power in Narratives of Chinese Linguistic Antiquity, 1900-1949" (2023), argues how national language would, regardless of any circumstance, be a Sinitic language. Tam (2023) argues how reasoning lay in the fact that China's majority ethnicity was Han, and later, during the republican era, how the new elite nationalists were majority Han. Tam (2023) does state that northern Mandarin was supported by Westernized scholars who took inspiration from countries that used the language of capital as a base for their national language. However, Beijing Mandarin and *Guanhua*'s position was not secure due to the nationalistic ideals of the Han scholars. Tam (2023) also writes how, in China, there was going around a belief in educated circles that not all *Fangyan* were equal, viewing how southern Chinese languages were ultimately purer than their northern counterparts. Northern Chinese languages, most notably northern Mandarin, were thought to be "contaminated" by non-Han people's speech. Tam (2023) states, that these very extreme viewpoints did start to disappear after the failure of Lao Guoyin. However, rather than complete erasure, Tam (2023) argues that there was more of a shift in how nationalism was presented in national language conversation. As Tam puts it: "[nationalists] began to cloak Han superiority in civic nationalism by wordlessly treating Han-ness as the default, presumed embodiment of Chinese national identity" (2023, p.39). The turn to Beijing Mandarin was not done because of accepting just practicality but also as a rhetoric way, associating the Chinese national language with modern China's capital rather than the Manchu capital.

The lack of other representation than Han languages is also noted in Weng's paper "What is Mandarin? The Social Project of Language Standardization in Early Republican China" (2018). Weng (2018) argues, however, that the national language's Sinitic destiny was not set in stone, as had been surveyed from used historiography. Noting a case like Esperanto, although extreme, did have notable supporters. The favor, however, was still on Chinese, and Weng (2018) notes how there

were no non-Han Chinese languages really in consideration when planning truly started for the new national language. Weng (2018), however, doesn't disclose the reasoning for this, even though, based on his research, there were other ethnicities as representatives when deciding the national language began, and the Republic of China was technically a multiethnic nation. Weng (2018) states that the national language was meant to serve a newly united nation and was made with people in mind under a nationalistic umbrella.

Nationalism's role in the Chinese national language project can be seen as a means to achieve the goal of the national language, but also as a goal itself that creating a language will achieve. Most authors surveyed through the perspectives of late Qing and Republican scholars find clear favoritism towards Han languages and, overall, Han culture over the others. However, language's position was also seen as non-favorable, for example, in Chen's (2007) study, and not always seen as wanted in the lenses of nationalists. Language position in the nationalism spectrum is also seen as more dismissive by Weng (2018), not as motivating as argued by Tam (2020, 2023), and not as hated as argued by Chen (2007). How much nationalism did it have meaning? It truly seems to be a very notable debate.

3.3 From Guanhua to Guoyu and Language Prestige

Guanhua's and Guoyu's relationship and definitions have been shown in studies to be quite blurry. Kaske, in her paper "Mandarin, vernacular and National Language – China's Emerging Concept of National Language in the Early Twentieth Century" (2004), does a historical study of the language political landscape of the era while paying special attention to naming the "national language" and its further promotion. Kaske's view on Guanhua specifically is that it is considered a northern koine. While it did enjoy some status as a language official used as lingua franca, it was still low. However, Kaske argues that as Guanhua had broad reach, it aided the spread of Beijing-based Mandarin around the country, therefore also later reaching the support of media, education, and literature circles. Kaske writes how as Guanhua gained status and became a language used in education, later Guoyu would be its sort of direct successor linguistically, just under a different name. However, the latter would have a much wider impact and status later in the line. Guanhua's impact stayed in the smaller, often intellectual circles as it was mostly used in governance and later in media. However, these were still something only literate people could enjoy, and the general, uneducated population had no means to access them.

Wang, in his paper "Guanhua, Guoyu, and Putonghua: Politics and "proper names" for standard language in modern China" (2016), takes a more critical standpoint on differentiating Guanhua and

Guoyu from each other. He notes how, while commonly both are seen as representatives of standard Chinese, just from different time periods, there is a difference. Wang writes how according to texts from the early 1900s, Guanhua was treated as Guoyu's synonym. However, a deeper look into these sources shows that Guanhua was compared to other dialects, and Guoyu was compared to larger-scale languages, in this case referring to French or Japanese. Guanhua was something that people shared, but it did not have a standard form, as opposed to Guoyu. Wang argues that the shift from Guanhua to Guoyu was not smooth, but rather quite dismissive, as Lao Guoyin was an artificial project. Wang also employs Anthony D. Smith's method to make a distinction to the nation and ethnic group to further prove his point, concluding that what Guoyu had, that Guanhua lacked, was a "standard form" and "it could be applied to all members of the intended user group. Guoyu's intended use was to be people's language and easily accessible. Mastering Guanhua was rather a privilege than a state-implemented reality.

Zhou, in his paper "Modernization of Chinese language" (1986), while paying more emphasis on the standardization of written Chinese, does group Mandarin and Guanhua as synonyms. He also considers Guoyu as something that followed Guanhua. Guanhua itself seems to lack other definitions and is only slightly mentioned by Zhou to have been used by officials during dynasties. Zhou's quite vague definition of Guanhua is something to pay attention to, as seen before with Wang (2016) and Kaske (2004), who are more modern-day researchers than Zhou (1986); Guanhua's definition and its relationship with Guoyu, or Mandarin for that matter, are argued.

Chen, in his book "Modern Chinese: History and Sociolinguistics" (1999), recognizes the hazy definition of Guanhua while also discussing its connection to the Beijing dialect in the first place. While he treats it as a premodern national spoken standard, its lack of form and accessibility hindered the real status. The Beijing dialect being connected to Guanhua was also a bit hard as it was more of a mix between regions, and each region had its own forms of Guanhua, although Beijing did end up gaining some status at the end of the 1800s. Beijing's status is something Chen (1999) also focuses on in his text. When talks happened about what should be the national language, Beijing's position was problematic, as was stated by Tam (2020) and Li (2015). Chen (1999) argues that before 30's Beijing had low prestige, and while it was the base for the national language, the national language itself should also include features from important Chinese dialects, such as Wu. Chen (1999) refers to guidelines from the 1911 conference, which specifically notes how national language should reflect values such as "...elegant, correct, and popular..." (p.16). Chen (1999) argues that the hybrid system was due to the wish to stay within "tradition," and only after failure the Beijing dialect could be the actual main base due to its practicality.

When Beijing's status became clear, Simmons argues in his paper "When Came Mandarin? Qing Guanhua, the Beijing Dialect, and the National Language Standards in Early Republican China" (2017) was only in the 50's. While he writes that Beijing did gain status over Southern variants only in the 20-30's, there was still competition. Guanhua, Simmons sees as a koine, just like Kaske (2004), but with a higher focus on the users being officials, and it had quite many features from Ming. Simmons, in his paper, explores the language attitudes of creating a national language, highlighting the South's strong linguistic prestige over the North. Southern Chinese languages, especially the Nanjing variant of Mandarin, held the five-tone system, which had, according to Simmons, a long history of being the preferred tone amount in China among the elite. As Simmons notes, this preference persisted up until the 1920s as when Lao Guoyin was in the making, there was almost unanimous agreement that the national language should include the fifth, Ru-tone. Overall, southern features were favored. However, as the Lao Guoyin was deemed unusable, Beijing gained attraction in the 1920s and won over the hybrid system due to its practicality. Simmons does argue, though, that while the majority of the nationalist elite supported Xin Guoyin, there emerged competition in the form of communist-supported Latinxua Sinwenz. Being also a mixed system, it did compete with Xin Guoyin in popularity but, due to its form, failed to win. Simmons does, by this example, wish to prove how unstable the status of the Beijing-based national language truly was up until the establishment of the PRC.

This last theme of the review of literature highlighted the complex names of the national language, especially how Guanhua's definition switches from author to author and how its relationship with Guoyu is blurry. Language prestige in Mandarin is also a theme not just among nationalistic views but overall as a linguistic preference that did hinder Beijing's status. There are also disagreements concerning which period of time the Beijing dialect truly did gain the high prestige it is known today.

4 Critical Evaluation and Synthesis

In this final chapter, I will analyze, compare, and connect the literature introduced in chapter three. The purpose of this chapter is to see how and what kind of studies the topic of the formation of the Chinese spoken national language has to offer and what is the current landscape in the field. I will first focus on studies with modernization as their focal point, going through how they present their views of the goal of modernization by means of language and by whom the language was intended. Second, I will look at studies that present nationalism as a means of national language standardization but also it is the goal as well, or contrary if language truly had nationalistic goals. Lastly, I will take a look at topics of Guanhua and Guoyu's relationship and how the national Chinese spoken language serves as an idealistic entity determined by its prestige.

The goal of modernization is a key motivational player in Chen (2015), Kurpaska (2019), and Zheng and Zhao's (2023) papers. All authors agree that China's low position compared to its past was due to stagnation and a lack of education among Chinese people. These papers also share quite cohesive similarities about motivation and goals that the national language project was based upon, for example, how people during the late Qing took Japan as a major inspiration. Additionally, Kurpaska (2019) and Zheng and Zhao (2023) mark down how higher education in Japan was crucial for the information flow from Japan to China, as many people in the elite received higher education there.

The language problem of not having mutual understanding is highlighted as a major question by the authors. However, Zhang and Zhao (2023) argue most critically how the problem was a cause of Chinese society's lack of ability to take in new ideas for modernizing China. Chen (2015) does argue more carefully how the language problem was more of a secondary problem under the bigger question about national cohesion and lack of education while still stating that these could not be resolved without answering the language question. The research methods of all these papers are approximately the same; all linguistic-historical papers were written using already-made studies and historical records to formulate a timeline for the creation of a national language. Being written in quite recent years, these papers showcase quite well how currently there have been formulated very mutually accepted views regarding spoken national language's position during the late Qing. However, as these have been established values, these types of papers might not bring anything new to the field.

As mentioned above, higher education was the birthing place for the national language project. In papers made by Weng (2018, 2020) and Keeler (2008), a top-down approach to a modern new national language is considered a key element in the Chinese case of language planning. Weng (2018, 2020) argues how especially language was a tool for the educated elite to create a modern Chinese society and forcefully have a userbase for this new language to help achieve the goal of modernization. In Weng's (2020) opinion, there has been a lack of studies that focus on researching China's spoken national language that doesn't use Euro-American sociolinguistic theories of language standardization. Weng's major point in his 2020 study is that what makes China unique is how the state can create an artificial new language and also create a community to it. The positive attitude towards the creation of spoken standards can also be seen in both of Weng's papers (2018, 2020) as he views the top-down method to be very much Chinese people's first kind of method. Although there was elite planning, the national language was not something only the chosen few could access as the goal was strong, modern China with educated people.

Weng's papers, 2018 and 2020, are both very argumentative, bringing out the reality of a very limited understanding of language policies and the planning of non-European cases. While the elite doing the planning is considered the norm in the field of sociolinguistics (Wardhaugh 2014), Weng's (2018, 2020) research shows more nuanced goals of that elite. While Weng's (2018, 2020) point is that the national language is made for the people, he does not really touch on the topic of status planning. The question of whether this really was for the people or for the ideal itself is not discussed.

Keeler's (2008) paper, compared to Chen (2015) or Zhang and Zhao (2023), gives more credit to European influences rather than Japanese as a national language. Keeler's 2008 article goes through historical records of the late Qing and early republican eras and, based on them, presents how, at the time, there was a belief among the elite that there was already an incomplete national language in China that just needed to be invented by using modern, Eurocentric science to be useable for masses. Keeler's argumentation also puts language not just as a means but also as a goal for modernization since language needed modern linguistic knowledge to be created. Keeler (2008) writes how many people of the time, like Zhang and Zhao (2023), saw language as preventive to modernization, although Keeler's viewpoint is wider as she writes how many of the elite saw the whole Chinese culture as a problem. Keeler's 2008 study also showcases how the study of national languages in China has been, since the start, very Eurocentric, even within its own country. This rises the importance of how Weng (2020) and Keeler (2008) both point to the lack of sociolinguistic studies of national language standardization that focus on China without a Euro-American

framework. Keeler's text is also the only one that discusses how the modernization of the language was closer to Westernization.

Nationalism and national language are very close to each other, as language is often considered a vital part of identity (Wardhaugh, 2014). Tam (2020) argues very strongly for the crucial role language played in late Qing and early republican era Han nationalism. The ideal Chinese language was something that would prove Han culture's superiority and, therefore, should sound as close as possible to the "purest" form of Chinese. Tam (2020) remarks how nationalists saw that a unified, pure Chinese national language would bring national unity, and while the hybrid Lao Guoyin failed, the Beijing dialect's usage as a national language had purely nationalistic intentions, as it would replace the history as a Manchu capital to "Chinese" one. These goals can also be linked to modernization. Nationalism and modernization can often be seen to overlap in the covered papers, especially on the topic of unification. Uniting China via national language is not only to make a modern strong country, but also to make its citizens feel connected to each other. While Tam's (2020) findings lean originally on finding historically correct language (Lao Guoyin), its failure does connect the creation of Xin Guoyin to nationalistic ideas that are more inspired by modernization

Chen (2007), however, presents an opposite viewpoint to Tam (2020). According to Chen (2007), the Chinese language was generally disliked in nationalistic circles as it was seen to be the reason why China was left behind in modernization. While Chen (2007) agrees that nationalists did use language to create a national language, the majority viewed it practically, the main function being mutual understanding and that way national cohesion, rather than something reinventing Han Chinese cultural core and that way national unity. Both authors regard national language as having something to do with nationalism but have different standpoints. Both works also use historical records as the main base, which might indicate that while authors share a main goal and a way to achieve it equally, as the historical situation is complicated, contradictory viewpoints color the landscape quite a lot. If the timely views contradicted this largely, authors should mention this in their texts.

Han Chinese nationalists, being the leading group creating a national language, can be seen in Li's (2007), Weng's (2023), and Weng's (2018) papers, as well as Chen's (2007) previously mentioned paper. However, the answer to why the national language became Mandarin does involve an in-depth investigation of the literature. Tam (2023) points out how the Sinitic national language was unavoidable as the majority of China was Han Chinese, while Li (2007) remarks on the historical

prestige Mandarin enjoyed in China, especially its southern counterpart. While Li (2007) presents more carefully how favourability came from it, southern Chinese Fangyan has more connection to the Han dynasty and middle Chinese, therefore showcasing more originality and elegance. Tam (2023) shares this viewpoint, although adding up how northern Chinese were also considered “contaminated” by non-Han people by the elite. Weng (2018) does, however, challenge Tam’s (2023) claim of the Sinitic density of the national language, as Esperanto was a trending alternative among intellectuals. While Weng (2018) also considers this extremely unlikely outcome as well this does indicate the uncertainty of the whole national language situation.

China, however, was a multilingual and multicultural society, which is why it is quite interesting how, as noted by all the authors, the language goal was only one national language. Taking the Finnish national language case as an example, which was happening approximately at the same time to compare while the starting point was the nationalistic goal was to have a bilingual national language (Finnish & Swedish) situation to better serve the multilingual society of Finland (Saarinen & Ihalainen, 2017). This point is not particularly researched in used literature about the topic, and Weng (2018) does state that the multilinguistic situation of China was somewhat considered when the national language was being decided. Although this was only done in Chinese languages, the result was the hybrid, Lao Guoyin.

Synonymity of Guanhua and Guoyu is something that seems to be under debate and especially Guanhua’s definition is explained differently by authors. While Kaske (2004) defines Guanhua as northern koine, Zhou (1986) defines Guanhua as the equivalent to Mandarin, Chen (1999) as a premodern spoken standard with regional differences, and Simmons (2017) sees Guanhua as koine used by officials, similar to Kaske (2004).

While Guanhua historically has been officials’ language, its usage has varied and obtained few meanings along the way. Whether Guoyu is a direct continuation of Guanhua can be considered a bit debatable, seeing Guanhua’s inconsistency. Kaske (2004) treats Guanhua quite closely to being a direct predecessor to Guoyu, underlining its connection to being spoken equivalent to baihua and its gaining of status during late qing in education, media, and literature and being stressed to be used in national language projects. Wang (2016), on the other hand, while he does not dismiss the widespread meaning of Guanhua, does argue that what denies terms being close synonyms is their intended counterparts. Guanhua was something that can be looked at with other Fangyan while Guoyu is comparable with other national languages. Wang (2016) does also state that because Guanhua lacked a standardized form and how Guoyu was a hybrid with other features from another

Fangyan and a standardized form, the two cannot be seen as synonyms. Wang takes a more modern approach to this. As we can see in Zhou's (1986) paper, the definition of Guanhua and Guanhua's and Guoyu's relationship being synonyms are treated quite simply.

China's spoken language situation before the implementation of the national language was nonconfirmed and seen as unimportant. This compared to the role of Finnish, which, although lacking position, had an active user base, and was slowly being codified (Saari, 2012). While the Chinese national language and Finnish national language can be considered to have gone very similar ways of becoming national languages, such as heavy media and school influences and top-down nationalistic planning, what can be considered a major difference is the fact that Finnish as a national language was not a result of pure artificiality, compared to Chinese national language. Guanhua lacked the same usage as Finnish, and its relationship with Guoyu is blurry.

The relationship between Guoyu and Guanhua is also a reflection of the social hierarchy embedded in language use. Guanhua was seen as the language of the officials and smaller, quite privileged groups, as mentioned by Simmons (2017) and Kaske (2004). Guoyu on the other hand was intended for all citizens. On the other hand, the exitance of Guoyu does complicate the existence of minority languages or other Chinese Fangyan. The national language question seems to always have a connection to language prestige.

Guoyu's and Beijing dialect's relationship and overall language prestige were also important parts of the creation of the national language. Guanhua, which is nowadays seen as a base for the national language Guanhua, uses Beijing Mandarin, according to Chen (1999). Therefore, it was also the version of Mandarin that took off during the late Qing in media and education. Additionally, later during the republican period, rather than talking about Guanhua, the elite spoke about the Beijing dialect when choosing a base for the national language. Beijing dialect, however, was considered problematic, and while it enjoyed some popularity, Chen (1999) notes how it did have low prestige and did not represent the sound or values that the new spoken standards should have, for example, the entering tone. Chen (1999) takes straight quotes from the 1911 conference showcasing the wishes for prestigious language to prove his point, making a very convincing argument for the reality of the choosing process. Chen (1999) argues that due to language prestige problems, Beijing's dialect only gained its status, which is known today as the 30s Lao Guoyin, failed.

Simmons (2017) shares the same views with Chen (1999) for the most part. Beijing dialect lacked the features its more prestigious southern counterpart had, such as the five-tone system, whose implementation was considered crucial to national pronunciation by the elite. What Simmons

(2017) disagrees with Chen (1999) is the time Beijing gained unbreakable status. While Chen (1999) links it to Xin Guoyin, Simmons (2017) argues that it was only in the 50s after the establishment of the PRC. Simmons (2017) presents his reasoning for the appearances of rivals to Xin Guoyin, the most notable one being the language Latinxua Sinwenz, the hybrid system made by communists. The political atmosphere in linguistics and the idealization of the national language did not disappear after Xin Guoyin as Antique Sinwenz did have its supporters. However, as Simmons (2017) notes, the usability of Xin Guoyin turned out to be victorious and due to this, Beijing gained its position today.

In this chapter, I have gone through some more notable debates regarding national language and tried to showcase the different trends that influenced and shaped it during early modern China, such as the debate over what nationalism meant in making a national language and how language prestige affected the Beijing dialect being used as a base for national pronunciations base. I wish that this evaluation of material has shown the still impeding questions in the field but also compiled what I believe are the main points of formation of spoken national standards so that they are easy to use in future research.

5 Conclusion and Future Directions

In this paper, I have undergone a timeline of China's national language establishment and showcased research made on the topic. The national spoken language, according to used literature, has been an important vessel in China's modernization project, and its importance to the goals of the new nation has been remarkable, the most major one being national cohesion. Higher education and the elite of Chinese society have been notable forces in achieving this subgoal of a spoken language, but it also tells us the nuanced reality of this top-down approach. Because China's national language is an extreme case of an artificial language, as noted in a few referenced studies, the Eurocentric research methods lack the means to explore it. How China's spoken standard came to be and how it was intended for people to use to establish a modern, united society was a result of trial and error; it also had unique goals that demanded more understanding in the field.

Researching the link between modernization and spoken standards has also shown us its complex relationship with nationalism. The central contradiction is the key role nationalism played in making the national spoken language. While a couple of studies highlight how important it was to embed nationalist ideas to create an "ideal" language to serve the new Han society, the other side of this debate argues that China's lack of a cohesive language was a hindrance to modernity, as it was a relic of the past and should only hold more practical usage. Additionally, deciding the base for the national language with the options being only Sinitic shows the homogenous background for the national language and how the Han majority held power in language making. However, some authors do point out how Sinitic languages did have competition, and among the more modern side of the elite, there were people who would suggest languages such as Esperanto to completely replace Chinese.

Names of the spoken standard are also a complicated issue. The definition of Guanhua and how it relates to Guoyu has been debated in the field and might need more united defining in the future. Overall, the languages used for the national language showcase a noticeably clear atmosphere of language prestige, such as the clear favoring of southern features. The Beijing dialect's position was hard to pinpoint until the near end of the republican period, showing the highly moveable landscape of language politics and that views of what national spoken language should be were divided.

How China's spoken national language came to be from the late Qing dynasty to the end of the republican period has been the guiding main research question. I have provided a background and analyzed more larger themes and trends that affected its choice progress from political ideologies to

practical ways. Additionally, I have tried to answer the question of China's national language's relationship with Mandarin Chinese. As I later came to understand, Mandarin played the main actor in the process of formulating the national language, but it also had a few different forms, from the Beijing dialect to southern Mandarin and Guanhua.

The hybrid nature of the national spoken language of China has seen different versions over time and has been affected by ideologies such as nationalism when it came to deciding which Fangyan to go with. Considering how spoken language lacked any position in Chinese society prior to the national language project, I found it remarkably interesting how much the sound and origins of the national spoken standard mattered eventually. While at the beginning, I was expecting that the formulation of national language was based on more practical aspects, ideological views were covered widely among all the research I have viewed. However, practical viewpoints could also be found in the papers primarily focusing on modernization.

There were certain debates, such as the nationalism question, that would need more research to formulate a more cohesive answer to whether the national language was meant to be the very ideal of the Chinese Han language or not. Additionally, while the researched papers were very historically cohesive, they often did not bring much added information to the field. However, I could notice a shift to this, as papers that were written more recently often explored a deeper investigation than their predecessors.

China's formation of spoken national language has been relatively well documented and doing more research around it could give more input for Chinese sociolinguistic studies in the future. Analyzing the trends and more practical ways on how the national language project was managed can give us wider viewpoints to understand it. As the field of sociolinguistics is still very much Euro-American oriented, we lack the means to study cases such as Chinese effectively as we cannot apply methods that we can use in, for example, middle-European cases. Chinese linguistics needs to have something that can analyze the Chinese case that is often dubbed "extreme." If this topic of how China formulated its national language receives larger coverage, it can be useful to understand China's and Chinese speaking area's language politics. Similar cases that wish to see how China has done its standardization can also apply this as a reference to learn from and possibly even apply its methods to their own use. Additionally, China's national language project cannot be considered done currently as the reach of the national language still only covers around 80% of the overall population (Ministry of Education PRC, 2022). There is a need to study why there is still a large number of people who cannot use standard language and if it has a connection to the national

language's early stages. Hopefully, this paper can serve as a pointer to what could be focused on in terms of language standardization and what is still lacking understanding. China's spoken language is everchanging, and it has a unique history that can still be seen today.

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