

**The Language Situation in China**  
Volume 8

# Language Policies and Practices in China

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Edited by  
Li Wei (李鬼)

## Volume 8

# The Language Situation in China

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# Introduction

## 1 The language situation in China: 2014

In 2014, the cause of the spoken and written Chinese language achieved solid progress and steady development. The significant statements regarding language and culture in the series of important speeches by General Secretary Xi Jinping (习近平) exerted far-reaching influence from a commanding height. The system of laws and regulations on the spoken and written language essentially took shape, centered on the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language* (中华人民共和国国家通用语言文字法), and supported by local laws and regulations. The *Outline of National Mid- to Long-Term Plans for Language Reform and Development (2012–2020)* (国家中长期语言文字事业改革和发展规划纲要[2012–2020年]) improved national language ability and constructed a harmonious language life, becoming a major theme in the development of the spoken and written Chinese language.

## 1 Strengthening the construction of the institutionalization and standardization of language

In implementing the spirit of the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the 18<sup>th</sup> Central Committee regarding the rule of law, the construction of the institutionalization and standardization of language was further perfected, and significant results were achieved.

### 1.1 Essential formation of the legal system for language

The preparation of language legislation, standards and criteria for the new era drew a high degree of attention. In 31 provinces (regions, municipalities) nationwide, the task of provincial-level language legislation was fully completed, and the system of laws and regulations on the spoken and written language essentially took shape, centered on the *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language* (中华人民共和国国家通用语言文字法), and supported by local laws and regulations. Efforts were launched to

formulate measures for the implementation of the *National Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language* (国家通用语言文字法), and steady progress was made on the *Provisions for Regulation of the Use of Foreign Languages* (外国语言文字使用管理规定), which are currently being formulated.

## 1.2 Formulation and issuance of a series of standards and criteria

On the foundation of the two rounds of efforts for the determination of pronunciation in Putonghua successively launched in the 1950s and the 1980s, the third round for the determination of pronunciation proceeded smoothly, and a revised draft of the *Standard Table for Variant Pronunciations in Putonghua* (普通话异读词审音表) was completed. The *Standard Guidelines on English Translations in the Public Services Sector* (公共服务领域英文译写规范通则) were officially implemented; preparations were completed for special provisions on English translation standards involving 9 sectors, including “transportation,” “tourism” and “medicine and health”; and translation standards were initiated for Russian, Japanese, and the North and South Korean languages. 38 groups of recommended Chinese translations for foreign words were successively released under the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> batches. Efforts for the standardization of neologisms and technical terms in minority languages proceeded smoothly, and one batch of neologisms and technical terms passed final review. The State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television issued a call for use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language in radio and television programs and advertising, and completed special preparations for integrated national satellite television channels.

## 1.3 Deepening efforts for the promotion of the standard spoken and written Chinese language

29 provinces (regions, municipalities) nation-wide incorporated work on the spoken and written Chinese language into their education oversight. The 17<sup>th</sup> National Putonghua Awareness Week, which took the theme of “Speak Putonghua well, and our dreams will come true” (说好普通话, 圆梦你我他), adopted a novel format for its promotional activities, with abundant content. The completion of tasks for the construction of language standardization in 2<sup>nd</sup>-tier and 3<sup>rd</sup>-tier cities reached 80% and 40%. Support for the Central Western Region and minority areas was further strengthened, and the scale of Putonghua training for minority teachers expanded from 1000 to 2000 individuals annually.

## 1.4 Attention for the application of language in information technology products

The Internet has become an important sphere of language life: The State Council issued a notice calling for strengthened construction of the information content of government websites, and completed dynamic surveys of the use of language on the websites of government departments at all levels. The regulations specified that available foreign-language versions of websites must have professional, standards-compliant support capabilities, to ensure standard and accurate language. The National Working Conference on Language Informatization issued *Certain Recommendations of the State Language Commission on Further Accomplishing Language Informatization Work* (国家语委进一步做好语言文字信息化工作的若干意见). Beijing took the first steps to construct the Beijing Digital Museum for Language and Culture, and Jilin inaugurated its WeChat Open Platform on Language. The formulation of the *Provisions for Regulation of the Use of Language in Information Technology Products* (信息技术产品语言文字使用管理规定) proceeded smoothly.

## 2 Improving language ability

The issue of language ability drew unprecedented attention in 2014, and generated an enormous impact on society.

### 2.1 Important statements by General Secretary Xi Jinping indicate new direction for language work

Since the Party's 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping has made a series of important speeches, including significant statements regarding language and culture. The speeches emphasize the importance of language and culture, and that the strength and prosperity of a nation and a people is always sustained by culture; they emphasize that the excellent traditional Chinese culture, which takes the spoken and written language as its primary vehicle, is an important source for conserving core socialist values, and that the profound spirit of the excellent traditional Chinese culture is the foundation upon which we can gain a foothold amidst the agitations of global culture; they emphasize the important role of language in cultural exchanges, noting that a nation's cultural charms and a people's cohesiveness are primarily expressed and conveyed

through language, and that mastering a language means grasping the key to a nation's culture; and they emphasize the function of language in the perpetuation of culture, noting that the ancient literary classics must be ingrained in students' minds, becoming the genes for Chinese culture.

## 2.2 *Suzhou Conclusions* (苏州共识) reached at the International Conference on Language

In June, the International Conference on Language was successfully convened in Suzhou under joint sponsorship by China and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for the first time; more than 400 government officials, scholars and representatives of academic organizations from nearly one hundred countries and regions around the world attended the conference. Led by the Chinese government, the conference outcome document took shape as the *Suzhou Conclusions* (苏州共识), which proposed the concept of “language ability” for the first time at a conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, conveyed China's voice to the world, introduced China's plans, and contributed China's wisdom; this was our first successful endeavor to build discourse at an international conference.

## 2.3 Further attention for improving language ability

With respect to work on ethnic languages under the new circumstances, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council clearly stated that it is necessary to unswervingly implement education in the standard spoken and written Chinese language, comprehensively offer curricula for the standard spoken and written Chinese language, comprehensively promote the standard spoken and written Chinese language, and ensure that minority students basically master and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language, while simultaneously respecting and guaranteeing the right of minorities to use and receive education in their own ethnic languages, and continuously improving the standards for minority language education.

Efforts for the formulation of the *Language Education Syllabus for Citizens* (国民语言教育大纲) proceeded smoothly. The Central Advanced Study Program for Putonghua was resumed. Fundamental phase studies related to citizens' language ability progressively reached greater depths. Data surveys showed that outcomes in the study of practical writing among primary school students are not ideal, and that education and testing for writing should be further improved. Revisions were



completed for the *Chinese Character Usage Proficiency Assessment and Testing Guidelines* (汉字应用水平等级及测试大纲), and more provinces (regions, municipalities) launched the Chinese Character Usage Proficiency Test.

## 2.4 Capacity-building for language services draws attention

Pertinent documents from the Office of the Central Committee and the Office of the State Council clearly proposed the relevant requirements for capacity-building for language services. In minority regions, radio and television broadcasting organizations are to popularize the standard spoken and written Chinese language, while simultaneously offering frequencies and channels in minority languages, and improving the coverage for dubbing, creation, broadcasting and transmission of minority language programs. The construction of minority language websites was promoted. The Braille Publishing Project was implemented. A sign language comprehension survey for the China Central Television program *Focus On* (共同关注) indicated that it is necessary to adhere to the sign language usage regulations for hearing-impaired audiences, and engage in scientific efforts for sign language standardization.

# 3 Perpetuating and promoting Chinese language and culture

Perpetuating and promoting Chinese language and culture was an important part of language life in 2014. Many forms of language and cultural dissemination activities repeatedly took the stage in the mainstream media, stimulating widespread interest across society in improving citizens' language ability and perpetuating the excellent traditional Chinese culture.

## 3.1 Continuing to hold the *Chinese Character Dictation Contest* (中国汉字听写大会)

In the wake of the 1<sup>st</sup> *Chinese Character Dictation Contest* (中国汉字听写大会), the State Language Commission and China Central Television succeeded in jointly sponsoring the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Chinese Character Dictation Contest* (中国汉字听写大会): a total of 180 students, including students from the Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan regions as well as foreign students, participated in the rematch,

and the number of viewers reached 430 million. The long-term mechanisms of the *Chinese Character Dictation Contest* (中国汉字听写大会) gradually formed a brand effect.

### 3.2 Successfully holding the first *Chinese Idiom Contest* (中国成语大会)

The State Language Commission and China Central Television jointly sponsored the first *Chinese Idiom Contest* (中国成语大会): a total of more than 30,000 people nation-wide registered, and 36 contestants reached the finals, while the number of viewers reached 559 million. The activity became another original trademark program in the language and culture category promoting the excellent Chinese culture, and cultivating and implementing core socialist values.

### 3.3 Calligraphy Masters Enter School Campuses

15 provinces (regions, municipalities) nation-wide successively launched the activity series “Calligraphy Masters Enter School Campuses” (书法名家进校园). By combining calligraphy exhibitions and lectures by master calligraphers, young people were guided to perpetuate Chinese traditions. The Traveling Calligraphy Exhibition for the cultivation and implementation of core socialist values and “My Youth • My Chinese Dream” (我的青春 • 我的中国梦) Exhibition Activity, which nominated one hundred college students and was jointly organized by the China Calligraphers Association, received 1486 submissions from college students enrolled at general institutions of higher education nation-wide.

### 3.4 Launch of the Project for the Translation and Communication of Key Concepts in Chinese Culture and Thought

The first batch of 81 term translations was released. The purpose was to allow the world to more objectively and comprehensively understand China by carrying out comprehensive and systematic compiling, annotation, translation, popularization and dissemination of concepts representing Chinese philosophical ideas, humanistic spirit, ways of thinking, and values, as well as core cultural terms, to promote peaceful dialogue between nations as well as exchanges and mutual learning between different civilizations. The Phase 1 Project for the Video Library

of Chinese Classics (中华经典资源库) reached its final stage, and the Phase 2 and Phase 3 projects were initiated.

### **3.5 Continuously expanding coverage in national language survey and resource conservation work**

National language surveys were comprehensively implemented, and special surveys on the state of the spoken and written language in the central Chinese Soviet areas, the Yan'an period, Silk Road Economic Belt, Shanghai Free Trade Zone and other special historical periods and special areas achieved ever-greater depths. The Hubei Branch of the China Language Resource Audio Database (中国语言资源有声数据库) was constructed; the Beijing and Shanghai branches completed construction and passed review; and Liaoning, Guangxi, Fujian, Shandong, Hubei and other places are currently making orderly progress. The Technical Platform Research & Development Project for the Construction of the National Audio Database obtained approval and support under the National Science and Technology Support Program and was officially launched, and the Chinese Language Resources Conservation Project won the support of the state fiscal administration.

### **3.6 “National Reading” (全民阅读) activities pervade the public consciousness**

The Government Work Report of the State Council proposed the concept of “promoting national reading,” and relevant reading activities have flourished across the country: Hubei Province and Jiangsu Province incorporated national reading into their provincial development strategies by means of local legislation, while Shenzhen Reading Month, the Beijing Reading Festival, the South China Book Festival and so on have become well-known trademarks for reading activities; several private charitable organizations have also made reading on school campuses the focal point of their financial support and planning projects, and private reading organizations of various categories and service characteristics have emerged one after another. A social atmosphere of valuing reading and respecting studies is currently taking shape. Reading activities in the Taiwan region have also displayed distinctive characteristics.

## 4 Paying attention to diverse social conditions behind popular words

In 2014, the momentum of popular words and phrases was unabated. A bevy of terms reflecting diverse social conditions were active in social language life, becoming records of social changes throughout the year. *Fa* (法, 'law'), *fan fu* (反腐, 'anti-corruption'), *shi* (失, 'lost'), and *Ma hang* (马航, 'Malaysia Airlines') respectively headed the lists for domestic character, domestic word, international character, and international word of the year, while the "Chinese Language Inventory" (汉语盘点) continued to exhibit its unique charm as a new cultural brand activity.

### 4.1 Neologisms

On the basis of a corpus of 1.17 million texts and 1.2 billion word-instances, the National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center extracted 424 neologisms. These neologisms truly recorded the emerging things, emerging concepts, and emerging situations in China in the year 2014, as well as quiet changes to the psyche and ideas of ordinary people during this year. *Xin changtai* (新常态, 'new normal') demonstrated that Chinese economic development had entered a new phase; *Hu Gang tong* (沪港通, 'Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock Connect') became a greenhouse cultivating the internationalization of the mainland stock market; *yi dai yi lu* (一带一路, 'One Belt, One Road') will open a window for exchanges and mutual benefit between China and the countries along the line; *bingtong tiaozhan* (冰桶挑战, 'ice bucket challenge') became a global coming together for charity; *APEC lan* (APEC 蓝, 'APEC blue') connotes the people's hope for a beautiful environment; *xiaoguan ju fu* (小官巨腐, 'little official, giant corruption') left people speechlessly staring in amazement; *Weixin hongbao* (微信红包, 'WeChat red envelope') promoted Internet finance; in addition, there was the forthright ice-breaking and risk-taking of *shen gai* (深改, 'deepening reforms'), while *kang Ai* (抗埃, 'fight against Ebola') presented an even greater challenge involving all of humanity.

### 4.2 Popular phrases

The top ten popular phrases, *yifa zhiguo* (依法治国, 'rule of law'), *shilian* (失联, 'lose contact'), *Beijing APEC* (北京 APEC, 'Beijing APEC'), *Aibola* (埃博拉, 'Ebola'), *yidai yilu* (一带一路, 'One Belt, One Road'), *Baxi shijie bei* (巴西世界杯, 'Brazil World Cup'), *Hu Gang tong* (沪港通, 'Shanghai-Hong Kong Stock

Connect'), *zhan zhong* (占中, 'Occupy Central'), *guojia gongji ri* (国家公祭日, 'National Memorial Day'), and *Chang'e wu* (嫦娥五, 'Chang'e 5'), truly recorded global phenomena and diverse social conditions from the perspective of the media, objectively reflecting focal points and hot topics in domestic and international politics, economy, culture, education, science and technology, and various other sectors, sketching an outline of human affairs, the state of the people, and social life from the media's perspective. *Yifa zhiguo* (依法治国, 'rule of law') headed the list of popular phrases, becoming the most important topic in current politics in the country this year.

### 4.3 Internet slang terms

The top ten Internet slang terms, *wo ye shi zui le* (我也是醉了, 'I was drunk too'), *youqian jiu shi renxing* (有钱就是任性, 'having money makes you headstrong'), *man pin de* (蛮拼的, 'making all efforts'), *wajueji jishu najia qiang* (挖掘机技术哪家强, 'who has the best excavator technology'), *baozheng bu dasi ni* (保证不打死你, 'I promise not to beat you to death'), *mengmeng da* (萌萌哒, 'so adorable'), *shijian dou qu na le* (时间都去哪了, 'where did all the time go'), *wo dushu shao ni bie pian wo* (我读书少你别骗我, 'I don't have much education, don't swindle me'), *huamian tai mei wo bu gan kan* (画面太美我不敢看, 'the image is so beautiful that I daren't look'), and *qie xing qie zhenxi* (且行且珍惜, 'cherish life'), represented the distinctive characteristics of online language usage among netizens in the year 2014, drawing a rough outline of the points of popular interest online.

## 5 Focusing on popular topics in language life

In 2014, a number of popular topics emerged in Chinese language life. Online language standards, Chinglish, and so on all attracted enormous attention from the people.

### 5.1 Online language standards incite heated debate

The issue of online language appearing in radio and television programs, entering textbooks, and making its way into dictionaries incited heated debate in society: despite differences in understanding, it is no simple matter to *yi dao qie*

(一刀切, ‘impose uniformity’) in language issues. The necessity of taming the vulgarization of online language and standardizing online language has gradually been recognized by society.

## 5.2 Chinglish enters English slang dictionaries

“No zuo no die” (*bu zuo si jiu bu hui si* [不作死就不会死, ‘you won’t find trouble if you don’t go looking for it’]) and a group of other Chinese “popular words” and “popular phrases” (Internet slang terms) have been included in the American online slang dictionary *Urban Dictionary* as slang expressions of Chinese origin: these English slang terms with a *Hanyu qiang* (汉语腔, ‘Chinese intonation’) have drawn widespread attention from major media outlets around the world.

## 5.3 Language usage among rural migrant workers exhibits intergenerational differentiation

The earlier generation of rural migrant workers speaks non-standard Putonghua but still makes great efforts to speak Putonghua; the newer generation of rural migrant workers is fairly proficient in Putonghua. However, dialects still serve as important regional identifiers, providing sustenance for nostalgia. Comparatively speaking, those proficient in Putonghua are able to obtain higher economic returns, and have a better capacity to adapt to cities.

# 6 Promoting cooperative exchanges on language and culture

In 2014, cooperative exchanges on language and culture continued to be expanded and deepened. General Secretary Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang (李克强) offered congratulations for holding the world’s first Confucius Institute Day. A biweekly session of the CPPCC focused on the discussion of overseas Chinese language education.

## 6.1 Strengthening cross-strait cooperative exchanges on the spoken and written language

The 10<sup>th</sup> round of talks on Cross-Strait Efforts for Collaborative Compiling of Chinese-Language Reference Books was successfully held, and the *Cross-Strait Dictionary of Divergent Terms* (两岸差异词词典) and *Reference Handbook on Common Words in Cross-Strait Life* (两岸生活常用词汇对照手册) were compiled and published. The formulation of the “Simplified and Traditional Chinese Character Smart Text Conversion System” (汉字简繁文本智能转换系统) was completed, and it was provided for free use by the public, with accuracy reaching 99.991%, resolving key problems in the cross-strait conversion of simplified and traditional terms, conversion of punctuation marks, and so on, playing an important role in facilitating cross-strait popular communication and promoting cross-strait cultural exchanges. Cross-strait academic exchange activities on the spoken and written language were organized and launched, along with the Chinese Character Calligraphy and Art Exchange Summer Camp activity for one hundred cross-straits university students, establishing self-confidence and self-awareness for the joint promotion and perpetuation of the excellent traditional Chinese culture.

## 6.2 Promoting cooperative exchanges on language and culture

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Chinese-French Language Policy and Planning Symposium was convened in Paris as one of the series of commemorative activities marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France, as well as an important part of the Mechanisms for High-Level Chinese-French Human Exchanges; the *Joint Declaration on the 1<sup>st</sup> Conference on Mechanisms for High-Level Chinese-French Human Exchanges* (中法高级别人文交流机制首次会议联合宣言) formally included “strengthening cooperation on language education, and continuing to cooperate on holding the Chinese Language Policy and Planning Symposium.” The China Exchange Program for International Senior Language Experts was implemented, absorbing lessons from overseas research achievements on spoken and written language.

### 6.3 Confucius Institutes

The Confucius Institutes welcomed the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their founding, and the inaugural ceremony for the world's first "Confucius Institute Day" was held in Beijing. In the last 10 years, the Confucius Institutes have grown and expanded out of nothing: 475 Confucius Institutes and 851 Confucius Classrooms have already been established in 126 countries and regions, cumulatively registering 3.45 million students.

### 6.4 Overseas Chinese language education

The state attaches a high degree of importance to overseas Chinese language education. The CPPCC convened a biweekly session focused on discussing the issue of promoting overseas Chinese language education. The Office for Overseas Chinese Affairs of the State Council held the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Conference on Overseas Chinese Language Education, introducing significant measures to support the development of overseas Chinese language education, and promoting the transformative upgrading and leapfrog development of overseas Chinese language education. Various sectors of society continued to provide strong support to overseas Chinese language education. Efforts for teacher training were expanded, and fresh progress was achieved in the compiling of "localized, country-specific" Chinese language teaching materials.



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## Part I **Special report**



Guo Xi (郭熙)

## 2 One decade of *The Language Situation in China*

This year is the 10-year anniversary of the publication of *The Language Situation in China* (中国语言生活状况报告; abbreviated below as *The Language Situation*). Over the last ten years, *The Language Situation* has flowered from nothing, developing from domestic Chinese-language editions into international English-language editions, evolving from an isolated report into a companion work alongside *The Concise Language Situation in China* (中国语言生活要况), continuously exploring and advancing, and increasingly attracting attention. As of the writing of this paper, *The Language Situation* had reached 2140 citations on the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (中国知网, CNKI). It is said that *shinian shumu* (十年树木, ‘it takes a decade to grow a tree’). Indeed, the seedling planted by a group of enthusiasts ten years ago has now grown tall.

### 1 Evolution of the framework of *The Language Situation*

As there was no precedent to guide the publication of a report on the language situation in China, the editors of *The Language Situation* have experienced some changes in their understanding following developments in their undertaking, thus the framework of *The Language Situation* has not remained entirely unaltered over the last decade.

*The Language Situation 2005* (报告[2005]) was originally divided into two volumes. Excluding the summary and appendices, Volume 1 consisted of 5 sections: (1) “Area Studies” (领域篇); (2) “Special Research” (专题篇); (3) “Language Focuses” (热点篇); (4) “Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan” (港澳台篇); and (5) “Reference Works” (参考篇). Volume 2 was divided into two sections: survey reports and survey data. “Special Research” (专题篇) encompassed laws, regulations and policies on the spoken and written language as well as advances in language work over the course of the year, and was distinct from “Area Studies” (领域篇) (which addressed the language situation in a particular field, such as radio and television or education, et cetera). The second volume provided survey reports and statistical data on certain aspects of the use of language in the

media: relative to the work as a whole, it could be referred to as “Data Studies” (数据篇), complementing and supplementing “Area Studies” (领域篇), “Special Research” (专题篇), and the other sections in Volume 1.

Beginning with *The Language Situation 2006* (报告[2006]), language work was differentiated under the section “Language Work” (工作篇), while “Special Research” (专题篇) replaced “Area Studies” (领域篇).

In 2011, *The Language Situation* was revised. This revision was completed on the foundation of a summary of work over the previous five years. Considering the conventions of various types of authoritative reports, the editorial board decided to switch the labeled year of *The Language Situation in China* (中国语言生活状况报告) from the “year of content” to the “year of publication.” For instance, for *The Language Situation 2005* (报告[2005]), 2005 was the year of content for *The Language Situation*, while the year of publication was 2006; but for *The Language Situation 2011* (报告[2011]), 2011 was the year of publication, and the report presented content on the year 2010. At the same time, the original two-volume format was combined into one book, and the data section which had previously been presented in the second volume was recorded on a CD-ROM provided with the book. The relevant section headings were also correspondingly adjusted.

In 2013, “Special Contributions” (特稿篇) were presented in *The Language Situation* for the first time.

In 2014, *The Language Situation* was again revised on the basis of experiences over the years. With respect to its framework, the content of the “Special Research” (专题篇) section was restructured, and the “Area Studies” (领域篇) section was restored, while the content of “Data Studies” (数据篇) was entirely placed onto a CD-ROM, greatly condensing the length of each report. Emphasis was also placed on the conciseness and readability of the report. In terms of the operating model, a system of section chairs was implemented. The framework of *The Language Situation* was thus essentially finalized. Apart from the preface, summary, and appendices, it is divided into a total of 8 sections: (1) “Special Contributions” (特稿篇); (2) “Special Research” (专题篇); (3) “Language Work” (工作篇); (4) “Area Studies” (领域篇); (5) “Language Focuses” (热点篇); (6) “Characters and Words” (字词语篇); (7) “Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan” (港澳台篇); and (8) “Reference Works” (参考篇).

In addition, two events of note shall also be addressed here.

The first is the publication of foreign-language editions of *The Language Situation*. In April 2013, Volume 1 of the English-language edition of *The Language Situation* was published by De Gruyter Publishing House of Germany. As of the present, two volumes have already been released in English, and Volume 3 has

been submitted to the publisher; the translation of a Korean-language edition has been completed, and the work is currently being reviewed.

The second is the publication of *The Concise Language Situation in China* (中国语言生活要况). In their use of *The Language Situation*, leaders, experts and readers proposed refinements and improvements that could be made on the basis of *The Language Situation*, concentrating its abundantly detailed content into an “abridged edition,” which would allow readers to quickly grasp the full picture and quintessential elements of language life in the course of the year, pairing detailed and summary versions of the work, each of which would have their own strengths. *The Concise Language Situation* (要况), which was subsequently published by the editors, is not merely an abridgement: it also highlights the unique facets of language life throughout the year, focusing on the selection of important texts, focal issues, policy recommendations, and new viewpoints on language life in the given year, achieving “refinement, novelty and uniqueness.”

## 2 Principal content

The aim of *The Language Situation* is to analyze the current state of the use of language in China, reflect new characteristics and changes in the use of language in each sector of society, set forth the key theories and practical issues in the use of language in China throughout the year, predict trends in the development and transformation of language, and propose corresponding policy recommendations. Over the last ten years, *The Language Situation* has always adhered to these objectives, publishing a total of 444 reports, monographs, and other works. The specific details on the number of works under each section are as follows (see Table 1).

Below, a general description is provided for the content under the relevant sections.

### 2.1 Preface

By the time of *The Language Situation 2014* (报告[2014]), a total of 7 “Preface” (总序) pieces had been published. The topics included the construction of healthy and harmonious language life (2005), preservation and development of language resources (2008), language problems in the course of China’s urbanization (2009), living a good virtual language life (2011), scientific preservation of

**Table 1:** Statistics on the number of publications under various sections in the past decade of *The Language Situation*.

Section	Preface	Summary	Special Research / Special Contributions / Language Work / Area Studies	Language Focuses	Characters & Words / Data Studies	Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan	Reference Works	Appendices
Number of Works	8	10	187	44	70	32	53	40

ethnic languages in spoken and written form (2012), calls for language consciousness across society (2013), as well as diglossic, bilingual life and diglossic, bilingual policies (2014). These topics were all based on the reality of language life in China, and oriented toward China's social development and national construction, with a lofty approach, forming an integral whole alongside *The Language Situation*, and serving as the finishing touch for the report.

## 2.2 Summary

The “Summary” (总述) serves as a summarization of the heights of the language situation throughout the year. It reflects the characteristics of language life in the given year, major efforts, the advancement of the cause, and other aspects. The press releases issued to the public by the State Language Commission always take this piece as their basis. The “Summary” sketches the general contours of language life throughout the year, but it also provides clear answers to some of the questions concerning the public. For instance, apart from specifically noting the characteristics of the given year, *The Language Situation 2005* (报告[2005]) also clearly stated that, “Although the number of foreign language learners is continuously increasing, and practical proficiency has also improved to some extent, there is still some way to go with respect to the needs of national construction and development,” “Society has devoted insufficient attention to the study of certain other languages, particularly minority languages,” et cetera, revealing approaches to certain difficult issues in society revolving around foreign language education.

## 2.3 Special Contributions / Language Work / Area Studies / Special Research

As these sections have experienced intersecting changes, they are discussed together.

From the number of pieces (187), we can see the weight of these sections in *The Language Situation*. Over the last 10 years, these sections have addressed national development, changes to social language life, and existing and imminent problems from different perspectives for presentation to the public. For instance, *The Language Situation 2013* (报告[2013]) published four special contribution pieces for the first time. Among these, the *Outline of national mid- to long-term plans for language reform and development (2012–2020)* (国家中长期语言文字事业改革和发展规划纲要[2012–2020年]), “Implementing the language plan outline and promoting

the scientific development of language” (落实语言文字规划纲要, 推进语言文字事业科学发展), and “Setting a new course for the cause of language – Interpretation of the language plan outline” (开启语言文字事业新里程 – 语言文字规划纲要解读) served as important references for the development of spoken and written language, while “Stylistic improvement” (改进文风) recorded different aspects of stylistic improvement, as promoted by the central authorities. The “Language Work” (工作篇) section reflected relevant documents on the cause of national language issued over the years by the central authorities to various national departments, particularly the various local-level language commissions under the State Language Commission and the State Ethnic Affairs Commission, as well as the important work which they implemented.

*The Language Situation* has given great attention to the survival of minority languages and dialects, minority language education, minority scripts, and the informatization of minority languages, publishing a series of reports, such as: “Recent developments in the Jino language” (基诺族语言近况) (2006, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of bilingual education among minority groups” (少数民族双语教育状况) (2005, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Survey on informatization of the Tibetan language and use of software” (藏语文信息化及软件使用情况调查) (2006, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Bilingual education and social harmony in the Altay region of Xinjiang” (新疆阿勒泰地区双语教学与社会和谐) (2008, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Issues in the use of minority languages in court trials in minority regions” (民族地区法庭审判中少数民族语言使用问题) (2009, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Survey on language use by ethnic Russians in Ergun city, Mongolia” (内蒙古额尔古纳市俄罗斯族语言使用调查) (2011, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Decline of native languages and language preservation among the smaller northern ethnic groups” (北方较小民族母语衰变与语言保护) (2013, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Issues in the use of new and old scripts by the Lisu ethnic group” (傈僳族新老文字使用问题) (2013, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of trans-border minority languages” (2013, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Reclamation, perpetuation and application of the Manchu language” (满语文的抢救、传承与应用) (2014), “The state of minority-language websites” (少数民族语文网站现状) (2014), and “Survey on the state of sign language research and use among ethnic minorities” (少数民族手语研究和使用情况调查) (2015, “Area Studies” [领域篇]).

National language proficiency and national security are closely linked to national development and the country’s international status. *The Language Situation* places great emphasis on these issues, with articles such as “Language barriers and language support during the Qinghai Yushu disaster relief” (青海玉树救灾中的语言障碍与语言援助) (2011, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Use of sign language and relevant issues” (手语使用及相关问题) (2009, “Special Research” [专题篇]),



“Survey on the use of Braille” (盲文使用状况调查) (2013, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Survey on the use of sign language” (手语使用状况调查) (2014), “Survey of sign language comprehension in the CCTV program *Focus On*” (央视«共同关注»节目手语理解调查) (2015, “Area Studies” [领域篇]), “The state of development of the language information industry” (语言信息产业发展状况) (2009, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Protection of intellectual property rights for digitalized Chinese character libraries” (数字化中文字体库的知识产权保护) (2013, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of national foreign language proficiency” (2012, “Special Research” [专题篇]), and “Interest in China’s neighboring languages” (关注中国周边语言) (2014, “Area Studies” [领域篇]) all reflecting the patriotic sentiment of *The Language Situation*.

Native-language education and the language proficiency of the next generation affect every family nation-wide. *The Language Situation* has published “Survey on the use of Putonghua and Shanghai dialect among Shanghai students” (上海市学生普通话和上海话使用情况调查) (2006, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Native-language education at institutions of higher education” (2007, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Recent trends in changes to essay questions in the national college entrance examination” (近年高考作文试题变化趋势) (2014), “Comparison of character and word usage in primary school language textbooks of the Republic Period and textbooks published by People’s Education Press” (民国时期小学语文教材与人教版教材的用字用词比较) (2014), “Concise review of recent essay questions on the high school entrance examination” (近年中考写作试题要况) (2015, “Area Studies” [领域篇]), “Survey on the state of practical writing studies among Nanjing primary school students” (南京市小学生应用文学习状况调查) (2015, “Area Studies” [领域篇]), and “Diverse and colorful national reading” (色彩斑斓的全民阅读) (2015, “Area Studies” [领域篇]), recording reflections on native-language education across each sector of society.

With respect to language services, “The state of language in the service industry, public infrastructure, and other fields” (2005), “The state of language in tourism services” (2006, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of language use in product manuals” (产品说明书语言文字使用状况) (2006, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of language use in medical documents and pharmaceutical packaging” (医疗文书及药品包装用语用字状况) (2006, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of language use on the Qinghai-Tibet railway” (青藏铁路语言使用状况) (2007, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Terminology of psychological support following earthquakes” (地震灾后心理援助用语) (2008, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The current state of language service concepts and the language services industry” (语言服务理念与语言服务产业现状) (2012, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Language services and language elements at the Guangzhou Asian Games” (广州亚运会语言服务与语言元素) (2011, “Special Research” [专题篇]),

“Current state of the language services industry” (语言服务产业现状) (2012, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Survey of the economic value of languages in the service industry” (服务行业的语言经济价值调查) (2012, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of language services in the healthcare industry” (医疗行业语言服务状况) (2014, “Area Studies” [领域篇]), “The state of language services in banking” (银行语言服务状况) (2015, “Area Studies” [领域篇]), “Survey of language in public service announcements in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou” (北京、上海、广州城市公益广告语调查) (2015, “Area Studies” [领域篇]), and so on all revealed efforts on society related to the study and operation of language services.

In the course of urbanization, language has experienced enormous changes; these have been faithfully documented in *The Language Situation*. Examples include: “The state of language among rural migrant workers” (农民工语言状况) (2006, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Survey on the state of language work at schools for the children of migrant workers in Shanghai” (上海市民工子弟学校语言文字工作状况调查) (2008, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Survey on language use and identity among the children of rural migrant workers in Beijing” (北京农民工子弟语言使用与身份认同调查) (2011, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Putonghua proficiency, social interactions and identity among urban laborers” (城市务工人员普通话水平与社会交往及身份认同) (2013, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Language life for migrant workers of Sichuan origin” (四川籍外出务工人员语言生活状况) (2014, “Area Studies” [领域篇]), “Survey on the state of language among early and recent rural migrant workers” (2015, “Area Studies” [领域篇]), and so on.

China is currently advancing along the path of rule of law, and it is fair to say that *The Language Situation* has diligently tracked the historical progress of statutes on language and other areas. Examples include: “Issues in language legislation” (立法语言问题) (2008, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Issues in language standards in criminal courts” (刑事法庭语言规范问题) (2008, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Issues in the use of minority languages in court trials in minority regions” (民族地区法庭审判中少数民族语言使用问题) (2009, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Further standardization in language legislation from the perspective of the new *Criminal Procedure Law*” (从新《刑事诉讼法》看立法语言的进一步规范) (2013, “Special Research” [专题篇]), et cetera.

China is increasingly engaged in international exchanges and international trade activities, and the language situation in this field is also a focal point of *The Language Situation*. Examples include “The state of construction of the language environment for the Beijing Olympics” (北京奥运会语言环境建设状况) (2006, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of construction of the language environment for the Shanghai World Expo” (上海世界博览会语言环境建设状况) (2007, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of language use in the

international trade markets of Beijing – In the example of Xiushui market” (北京涉外集贸市场语言使用状况 – 以秀水市场为例) (2007, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of language life in the workplace of foreign enterprises: in the example of Shanghai” (外企职场语言生活状况: 以上海为例) (2008, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Use of diverse languages at the Beijing Olympics” (北京奥运会多种语言使用) (2008, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “On ‘Chinglish’” (关于“中式英语”) (2009, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “The state of language use in China Commodity City of Yiwu, Zhejiang” (浙江义乌中国小商品城语言使用状况) (2008, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Construction of an international language environment in Beijing” (北京国际语言环境建设) (2011, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Survey of Chinese language skills among foreign employees of multinational corporations in Jiangsu” (江苏跨国公司外籍员工汉语技能调查) (2012, “Special Research” [专题篇]), and “The state of language life for foreign residents on Xiaobei road, Guangzhou” (广州小北路外国居民语言生活状况) (2012, “Special Research” [专题篇]).

Language issues among immigrants have also been closely followed by *The Language Situation*: although few pieces have been published on this subject, they are of great value. Examples include “Preliminary study of the state of language use among Three Gorges immigrants” (长江三峡移民语言使用状况初步考察) (2007, “Special Research” [专题篇]), and “Language survey of immigrants in border regions with the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps” (新疆生产建设兵团戍边移民语言调查) (2007, “Special Research” [专题篇]).

A variety of other fields have also been addressed, with “The state of language in film and television dramas” (影视剧语言状况) (2009, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Issues in the standardization of English translations for Chinese-language menus” (中文菜单英译规范问题) (2008, “Special Research” [专题篇]), “Issues of language preservation in the protection of non-material cultural heritage” (2008, “Special Research” [专题篇]), and so on all presenting their own bright spots.

## 2.4 Language Focuses and Characters and Words

Over the last ten years, linguistic events have frequently emerged in China, and hot topics in language life have been never-ending. There has been the debate over simplified and traditional Chinese characters, *zimuci* (字母词, ‘alphabetic words’), the *Yingyu re* (英语热, ‘English craze’), bilingual education, the debate over classical and vernacular Chinese, the preservation of dialects, updating of local place names, critically endangered languages, Weibo language, the *Hanzi shuxie weiji* (汉字书写危机, ‘Chinese character writing crisis’), and so on. These issues have been intensively reflected in the “Language Focuses” (热点篇) section.

The authors and editors of *The Language Situation* make impartial observations so as to present the most objective record possible, expressing their own voices on major issues in timely fashion, and providing correct guidance for society.

Developments and changes to words and expressions represent the most up-to-date minutes on developments and changes to society. The “Characters and Words” (字词语篇) and “Data Studies” (数据篇) sections have published a slew of language monitoring data, the contents of neologism inventories, as well as tracking of popular words, online terms, word cases, and so on. The annual language inventories and a few major language events are all reflected in the words and terms. Examples include: *Zhongguo meng* (中国梦, ‘Chinese dream’), *meili Zhongguo* (美丽中国, ‘beautiful China’), *zheng nengliang* (正能量, ‘positive energy’), *ni xingfu ma* (你幸福吗, ‘Are you happy?’), and *Diaoyu dao* (钓鱼岛, ‘Diaoyu Islands’) in 2012, as well as *zhongyang baxiang guiding* (中央八项规定, ‘Central Eight-Point Regulation’), *Zhongguo dama* (中国大妈, ‘Chinese dama’), *tuhao* (土豪, ‘local tyrant’), and *wumai* (雾霾, ‘haze’) in 2013, et cetera, which not only encapsulated language life in China and reflected society’s concerns, but also revealed ephemeral changes in the international situation. “PM2.5 amidst the haze on all sides” (十面霾伏中的 PM2.5) gave heft to the small, obliquely reflecting the ubiquity of language competition in Chinese language life, and revealing patterns in the emergence, survival and development of words.

## 2.5 Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan

Research on the state of language life in China must perforce give attention to Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. Considering the unique social backgrounds of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, *The Language Situation* separately established the “Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan” (港澳台篇) section, for focused reports on the situations in these three regions. The reports that have previously been published have provided us with a clearer understanding of the language situation, language education, language communities, language policies, and distinctive language in these three regions, offering beneficial lessons for language planning and the formulation of policies. The authentic re-creation of language life in each region also allows us to see the relevant impact of local language life.

## 2.6 Reference Works

48 works containing information on every aspect of global language life have provided us with a window to the world. Examples include “The state of language

and language policies in the European Union” (欧洲联盟语言状况及语言政策) (2005, “Reference Works” [参考篇]), “The state of regional language legislation in the Soviet-Aligned Republics” (苏联加盟共和国地区语言立法状况) (2006), “The course of language policies and planning in Australia” (澳大利亚语言政策与规划进程) (2007), “Foreign-language education policies in New Zealand: actions and challenges” (新西兰外语教育政策: 举措与挑战) (2007), “Language policies and planning in Nigeria” (尼日利亚语言政策与规划) (2007), “Language policies and language conflicts in Georgia” (格鲁吉亚语言政策和语言冲突) (2008), “Challenges faced by the official policy of language equality in the European Union” (欧盟官方语言平等政策面临的挑战) (2009), “The state of language and language policies in Brazil” (巴西语言状况与语言政策) (2009), “The state of language and language planning in Pakistan” (巴基斯坦语言状况与语言规划) (2009), “Strategies for addressing the threat of language extinction in Botswana” (博茨瓦纳应对语言消亡威胁的策略) (2009), “Language problems and government crisis in Belgium” (比利时语言问题与政府危机) (2011), “Recent developments in language education policies in the United States and Australia” (美国、澳大利亚语言教育政策近况) (2011), “The popularization and international dissemination of the Russian national language” (俄罗斯的国语推广与国际传播) (2013), “New mechanisms, new concepts and new actions for the dissemination of French in France” (法国法语传播的新机构新理念新举措) (2013), and “Intensifying language conflict in Ukraine” (乌克兰语言冲突升温) (2014). These pieces have provided us with much enlightenment.

### 3 New concepts

Over the last ten years, a series of new concepts have been presented more broadly to society and have drawn greater attention through the publication of *The Language Situation*. These principally include (in order by Chinese pinyin):

*Binwei yuyan* (濒危语言, ‘critically endangered language’), *da Huayu* (大华语, ‘greater Chinese’), *diyu Putonghua* (地域普通话, ‘regional Mandarin Chinese’), *dongtai liutong yuliaoku* (动态流通语料库, ‘Dynamic Circulating Corpus’), *guojia yuyan* (国家语言, ‘national language’), *guojia yuyan nengli* (国家语言能力, ‘national language ability’), *guoyu* (国语, ‘national language’), *guojia gongzuo yuyan* (国家工作语言, ‘national working language’), *Hanyu* (汉语, ‘Chinese language’), *hexie yuyan shenghuo* (和谐语言生活, ‘harmonious language life’), *Huayu* (华语, ‘Chinese language’), *Huayu shehui bianti* (华语社会变体, ‘social variants of the Chinese language’), *Huayu shequ* (华语社区, ‘Chinese-speaking community’), *jiaoting yuyan* (家庭语言, ‘home language’), *jiaoyu yuyanxue* (教育语言学, ‘educational linguistics’), *kexue de baohu ge minzu yuyan wenzi* (科学地保护各民族语言

文字, ‘scientific preservation of the spoken and written language of all ethnic groups’), *shuangyu* (双语, ‘bilingual’), *shuangyu ren* (双语人, ‘bilingual person’), *shuangyu shehui* (双语社会, ‘bilingual society’), *shuangyu zhengce* (双语政策, ‘bilingual policy’), *shuangyu zhuyi* (双语主义, ‘bilingualism’), *xianxing yuyan zhengce* (显性语言政策, ‘explicit language policy’), *yinxing yuyan zhengce* (隐性语言政策, ‘implicit language policy’), *yuqing* (语情, ‘language sentiment’), *yuyan anquan* (语言安全, ‘language security’), *yuyan baohu* (语言保护, ‘language preservation’), *yuyan chanye* (语言产业, ‘language industry’), *yuyan chongtu* (语言冲突, ‘language conflict’), *yuyan fuwu* (语言服务, ‘language services’), *yuyan gongneng* (语言功能, ‘language functions’), *yuyan guanli* (语言管理, ‘language management’), *yuyan guihua* (语言规划, ‘language planning’), *yuyan hongli* (语言红利, ‘language dividends’), *yuyan jiance* (语言监测, ‘language monitoring’), *yuyan jingji* (语言经济, ‘economy of language’), *yuyan jingjixue* (语言经济学, ‘economics of language’), *yuyan jingguan* (语言景观, ‘language landscape’), *yuyan jingzheng* (语言竞争, ‘language competition’), *yuyan kongzhi* (语言控制, ‘language control’), *yuyan lingyu* (语言领域, ‘language domain’), *yuyan maodun* (语言矛盾, ‘language contradiction’), *yuyan nengli* (语言能力, ‘language ability’), *yuyan shangpin* (语言商品, ‘language commodities’), *yuyan shengtai* (语言生态, ‘language ecology’), *yuyan shitai* (语言实态, ‘language reality’), *yuyan shichang* (语言市场, ‘language market’), *yuyan weihu xitong* (语言维护系统, ‘language maintenance system’), *yuyan wenti* (语言问题, ‘language problem’), *yuyan yulun yindao* (语言舆论引导, ‘guidance of linguistic public opinion’), *yuyan yuqing fenxi* (语言舆情分析, ‘language sentiment analysis’), *yuyan yuqing jiance* (语言舆情监测, ‘language sentiment monitoring’), *yuyan yuqing jiance fangfa* (语言舆情监测方法, ‘language sentiment monitoring methods’), *yuyan yuqing jiance lilun* (语言舆情监测理论, ‘language sentiment monitoring theory’), *yuyan zhanlüe* (语言战略, ‘language strategies’), *yuyan shenghuo pai* (语言生活派, ‘School of Language Life’), *yuyan ziben* (语言资本, ‘language capital’), and *yuyan ziyuan* (语言资源, ‘language resources’).

A few examples are given below (listed in order of the classification number used by China National Knowledge Infrastructure; the figure in parentheses is the CNKI classification number).

### 3.1 *Yuyan shenghuo* (语言生活, ‘language life’) (973 912)

From the sources we reviewed, the first formal definition of the concept of *yuyan shenghuo* (语言生活, ‘language life’) was found in Mouzi (眸子, aka Li Yuming [李宇明]) (1997): The various social activities and individual activities involving the utilization and application of the spoken and written language,



which can be generally termed *yuyan shenghuo* (语言生活, 'language life'). Thereafter, Guo Xi (郭熙) (2004), Guo Xi and Zhu Deyong (郭熙, 朱德勇) (2006), et cetera, all adopted this definition. However, it was the decade of publication of *The Language Situation* which caused this term to truly pervade the public consciousness. Today, it has developed into an academic term with extremely rich connotations. The number of papers on CNKI with the term *yuyan shenghuo* (语言生活, 'language life') appearing in the title has reached 476. This demonstrates that this term has not only kindled people's interest in language life itself, but has moreover promoted understanding of the relationship between language and language life, as well as the relationship between language and society, and spurred further academic development. Constructing a health and harmonious language life has become a consensus in society.

### 3.2 *Yuyan ziyuan* (语言资源, 'language resources') (482 190)

The concept of *yuyan ziyuan* (语言资源, 'language resources') was proposed by Qiu Zhipu (邱质朴) (1982) in the 1980s, and was later continuously deepened and expanded by academic circles, while the State Language Commission founded the National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center. However, that the term *yuyan ziyuan* (语言资源, 'language resources') has continuously been impressed upon the public's mind, drawing attention from all sectors of society and becoming a highly regarded academic term, is likely inseparable from its decade of dissemination in *The Language Situation*. In the past, people were accustomed to viewing the diversity of language phenomena and language life as a problem: the expansion of the concept of *yuyan ziyuan* (语言资源, 'language resources') led to great changes in academic circles on the concept of language. People have gradually realized that language is not only national resource, but also a personal resource; it is not just an economic resource, but also a cultural resource.

### 3.3 *Yuyan fuwu* (语言服务, 'language services') (463 404)

*Yuyan fuwu* (语言服务, 'language services') have been among the central topics in *The Language Situation* over the last ten years. Outstanding achievements have been made with respect to language services for the Olympics, language services for the Asian Games, as well as language services for the World Expo. Language services for disadvantaged groups, language services for foreigners, language aid, and so on have all become focal points in language life.

### 3.4 *Yuyan anquan* (语言安全, ‘language security’) (239 317)

The degree of emphasis which society places on *yuyan anquan* (语言安全, ‘language security’) has increased significantly. Language and national security, language and cultural security, and language and economic security have all become popular topics both in academic circles and in society.

### 3.5 *Yuyan baohu* (语言保护, ‘language preservation’) (228 610)

The “scientific preservation of the spoken and written language of all ethnic groups” was written into the *Decision of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Certain Major Issues Related to Deepening the Reform of Cultural Institutions and Promoting Great Development and Great Prosperity of Socialist Culture* (中共中央关于深化文化体制改革 推动社会主义文化大发展大繁荣若干重大问题的决定) (October 2011). Discussions on the preservation of critically endangered languages and dialects have multiplied, and some preservation measures have begun to be implemented, while the establishment of audio databases to record dialects and ethnic languages has proceeded in scintillating fashion.

### 3.6 *Yuyan chanye* (语言产业, ‘language industry’) (106 913)

China is a major country for language resources and language consumption: the concept of the *yuyan chanye* (语言产业, ‘language industry’) is tied to the *yuyan jingji* (语言经济, ‘economy of language’), *yuyan xiaofei* (语言消费, ‘language consumption’), *yuyan fuwu* (语言服务, ‘language services’), and so on, forming a new chain. Beijing also held the first Language Industry Forum (语言产业论坛).

### 3.7 *Guojia yuyan nengli* (国家语言能力, ‘national language ability’) (31 969)

Language ability is an oft-mentioned concept, but the proposal of *guojia yuyan nengli* (国家语言能力, ‘national language ability’) is closely tied to national development, national construction, national security, national harmony, et cetera,



causing people to reevaluate their understanding of foreign languages, dialects, and the diverse social variants of language.

### 3.8 *Yuyan zhanlüe* (语言战略, ‘language strategies’) (96 663)

Many of the issues discussed in *The Language Situation* involve *yuyan zhanlüe* (语言战略, ‘language strategies’). China is a multiethnic, multilingual state, with a complex language structure: added to foreign-language education and Chinese going global, issues such as how to strengthen universal language consciousness, uphold native language, protect minority language and dialects, carefully study the actual needs of foreign-language education, et cetera, can all be considered using the concept of *yuyan zhanlüe* (语言战略, ‘language strategies’).

### 3.9 *Dongtai liutong yuliaoku* (动态流通语料库, ‘Dynamic Circulating Corpus’) (570)

Seeking to use dynamic methods to process complex and variable language phenomena is an important tool in language monitoring. The data published in *The Language Situation* is sourced from the large-scale Dynamic Circulating Corpus (动态流通语料库); at the same time, it also generates a greater impact for the concepts in the Dynamic Circulating Corpus (动态流通语料库), thus promoting the expansion of language research fields based on the corpus.

### 3.10 *Yuyan shitai* (语言实态, ‘language reality’) (495)

The term *yuyan shitai* (语言实态, ‘language reality’) does not appear with great frequency in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure. However, the significance of the proposal of this concept has been profound and far-reaching. Recording the *yuyan shitai* (语言实态, ‘language reality’) is tantamount to recording the progress of human civilization. Research on *yuyan shitai* (语言实态, ‘language reality’) is always indispensable, whether with regard to language education, or understandings of the development of language.

These concepts have already become or are now becoming the foundation of the theoretical system for future research on language life in China.

## 4 New ideas

The new ideas proposed and formulated in *The Language Situation* can be divided into two areas: the first is the idea of a language report itself, while the other consists of the ideas in the research found in *The Language Situation*. Zhou Hongbo (周洪波) (2014) summarized the idea of *The Language Situation* in five points: (1) From language problems to language resources; (2) From language homogeneity to language pluralism; (3) Language planning as language guidance; (4) From language preservation to language development; and (5) From language research to language services. From the perspective of research, the new ideas of *The Language Situation* have manifested in the following few areas.

### 4.1 International perspective

Global interactions are currently accelerating. Language issues are no longer a matter for one country or one region. While focusing on the state of language life in China, *The Language Situation* has always remained committed to studying diverse phenomena from an international perspective, guarding against populism, national nihilism, and national chauvinism. For instance, in Chinese language life, the issues of how to handle the relationship between native-language education and foreign-language education, language standardization and the absorption of loanwords, national standard language and minority languages, national standard language and dialects, simplified Chinese characters and traditional Chinese characters, et cetera, how to engage in the international dissemination of the Chinese language, how to handle Chinese-language issues in overseas Chinese language education, and so on are not only inescapable, but also go against the tide.

### 4.2 Issue-driven

In the selection of topics, *The Language Situation* is committed to being issue-driven. Being issue-driven originates from concerns in society. The colleagues at *The Language Situation* refer to this as *jie diqi* (接地气, 'being grounded'). In surveying the topics in *The Language Situation* over the last decade, the vast majority are directly connected to social life, while also assuming the responsibility of arousing society's language consciousness. The topics focus on language life in the virtual world as well as the language life of foreigners in China, devoting great efforts to fields in which language life experiences more prominent problems and conflicts. Examples include language problems emerging in the course

of urbanization, the state of language use within ethnic groups, sign language issues for deaf-mute individuals, the state of language among rural migrant workers, language in textbooks, language aid, place name and street sign issues, and so on.

### 4.3 Serving the nation

*The Language Situation* has always placed the greatest emphasis on serving the nation, putting national interests in first place, upholding academic services for society, and focusing on social life. For instance, the international dissemination of the Chinese language and overseas Chinese language education have always been essential subjects to be reported on annually since *The Language Situation* was first created. This spirit has also been embodied with respect to issues such as recent language developments Taiwan, the state of national foreign-language ability, and so on. *The Concise Language Situation 2014* (要况 [2014]) presented a special column on language and national security, publishing a series of important recommendations, such as the urgent need to formulate strategies and plans on national security and language, the need for the construction of solid language guarantees with respect to national security, attention for the issue of neighboring languages, how the Ukraine language conflict is endangering its national security, and the United States' language strategies and plans for national defense. The special column for policy recommendations has published proposals regarding the construction of a national language think tank, how it is unsuitable for elementary school language textbooks to return to the Republican period, calls for appropriately addressing the "preservation of dialects," language communication issues of concern to both doctors and patients, attention for language issues arising within the floating population, how the government should increase its level of support for minority-language websites, the urgent need for attention on the phenomenon of declining numbers of *yang jiaoshi* (洋教师, 'foreign teachers') of the Chinese language, attention for the organization of foreign scholars to translate contemporary Chinese works in the humanities and social sciences, and so on.

### 4.4 Discussion of data (materials)

Another important idea of *The Language Situation* is to engage in discussion on the basis of data, materials and facts. Publishing an array of relevant data is one of the central missions of the report. The various survey reports also require

engagement in analysis and consideration on the foundation of materials or data, as well as the proposal of focused recommendations. Over the last decade, apart from publishing detailed data with respect to character, word, and phrase usage in the media and online, including BBS, blogs, WeChat, et cetera, *The Language Situation* has also presented copious data on other areas. Examples include “survey of characters, words and word meaning in teaching materials for Chinese as a second language” (汉语作为第二语言教材字、词和词语义项调查) (2006, Vol. 2), “Survey of character usage and terminology in teaching materials for new language and literature courses in basic education” (基础教育语文新课标教材用字用语调查) (2007, Vol. 2), “Survey of character usage and terminology in Chinese-language media in Southeast Asia” (东南亚华文媒体用字用语调查) (2008, Vol. 2, “Appendix” [附录]), “Survey of Chinese character usage in elementary school language and literature teaching materials in the basic education stage” (基础教育阶段小学语文教材汉字使用调查) (2009, Vol. 2), “Survey of word usage on websites in modern Uyghur script” (现代维吾尔文网站用词调查) (2009, Vol. 2), “Survey of word usage in teaching materials for new Tibetan language courses in elementary schools” (小学藏语文新课标教材用词调查) (2009, Vol. 2), “Survey of word usage in Uyghur-language primary and junior secondary school language and literature teaching materials” (维吾尔语小学、初中语文教材用词调查) (2011), “Survey of word usage in Uyghur-language senior secondary school language and literature teaching materials” (维吾尔语高中语文教材用词调查) (2012), “Survey of word usage in Kazakh-language primary school language and literature teaching materials” (哈萨克语小学语文教材用词调查) (2012), “Survey of word usage in Kazakh-language secondary school language and literature teaching materials” (哈萨克语中学语文教材用词调查) (2013), “Survey of word usage in Tibetan-language junior and senior secondary school language and literature teaching materials” (藏语初中、高中语文教材用词调查) (2011), “Survey of character usage in overseas Chinese-language teaching materials” (2011, “Appendix” [附篇]), “Survey of character usage in Chinese-language teaching materials and texts in Southeast Asian primary schools” (东南亚小学华文教材课文用字调查) (2011, “Appendix” [附篇]), “Table of alphabetic words in Chinese-language media in Southeast Asia (examples)” (东南亚华文媒体字母词表[示例]) (2011, “Appendix” [附篇]), “Survey of word usage in Tibetan-language newspapers and online (news) in the year 2010” (2010 年度藏文报纸、网络(新闻)用词调查) (2012), “Survey of character and word usage in mathematics, physics and chemistry teaching materials in basic education” (基础教育数理化教材用字用词调查) (2012), “Survey of usage and terminology for the word *Huawen* [华文, ‘Chinese language’] in Chinese-Language Primary School Language and Literature Teaching Materials in Malaysia” (马来西亚华文小学语文教材《华

文》用词用语调查) (2012), “Comparison of texts selected for cross-straits primary and secondary language and literature teaching materials” (海峡两岸中小学语文教材选文比较) (2013), “Survey of the usage of general standard Chinese characters” (通用规范汉字使用情况调查) (2014), and so on.

#### 4.5 Building the *Yuyan shenghuo pai* (语言生活派, ‘School of Language Life’)

Research on language life is a burgeoning field in China. This emerging field comprises an assembly of scholars on linguistics, computer science, information processing, ethnology, public opinion, and so on. They include well-known professors and experts as well as PhD candidates and Master’s students, civil servants, corporate leaders, and professionals. In terms of their age, they are a mix of old, middle-aged and young, though the young and middle-aged are in the majority. A few individuals of high prestige take part in reviews, participating in proposals and manuscript revisions year after year. Under their leadership by both precept and practice, a group of scholars with shared research ideas has gradually taken shape, referring to themselves as the *Yuyan shenghuo pai* (语言生活派, ‘School of Language Life’). Building the School of Language Life was an idea of the colleagues at *The Language Situation*. The growth of the School of Language Life has also been broadly supported by academic circles and government departments. A number of Chinese academic conferences on sociolinguistics have taken language life as their theme, while the State Language Commission has specially sponsored the “Training Program for Outstanding Young and Middle-Aged Scholars for Applied Research on Spoken and Written Language” (语言文字应用研究优秀中青年学者培训班). This represents an effort to cultivate an academic cohort in the new generation. The State Language Commission has supported the construction of a group of research centers (bases), which have currently reached 17 in total. Beijing Language and Culture University, Beijing Foreign Studies University, and Shanghai International Studies University have established doctoral programs for language planning and language policy studies. The National Social Science Fund, Humanities and Social Science Fund of the Ministry of Education, and Scientific Research Program of the State Language Commission have also stepped up their efforts with respect to research on language life. According to the statistics by Su Xinchun (苏新春), the category of *yuyan shenghuo* (语言生活, ‘language life’) includes 13 key projects, as well as 13 major projects, amounting to 26 projects in total, and representing one tenth of the total number of 269 projects.

## 5 Conclusions and reflections

On the whole, the achievements of *The Language Situation* over the past decade have primarily manifested in the following few areas: (1) Observing and understanding language as part of language life, chronicling the various facets of language life in China, and setting down precious records in history; (2) Proposing and expanding new concepts, and laying the foundation to build the theoretical system for research on language life in China; (3) Presenting a series of new research ideas, views on language, and research perspectives, enriching Chinese sociolinguistics and even the theories and methods of linguistics; (4) Publishing a series of focused surveys and policy advice reports, and proposing substantive recommendations with respect to issues in language life; (5) Building a research time with shared ideals and convictions, and objectively forming the academic concept of the *Zhongguo yuyan shenghuo pai* (中国语言生活派, ‘Chinese School of Language Life’).

In the course of its development and growth, *The Language Situation* still requires further improvement with respect to many issues.

First, the represented fields are not comprehensive. At present, while *The Language Situation* of course already has its fundamental team, its composition is still somewhat homogeneous, its sources for manuscript contributions are not ideal, and it lacks the capacity to address certain fields. A number of special topics which have previously been considered still have yet to become a reality. Examples include issues involving literature and language in the new era, Chinese translations of foreign-language texts, foreign translations of Chinese-language texts, and so on.

Second, the survey reports are still too few, while the scientific nature of the survey methods and approaches must be enhanced. The depth of analysis remains insufficient, while theoretical improvements must be augmented.

Third, the readability is still not ideal. In recent years, great improvements have been made with respect to concise language, but the report is still not sufficiently lively. Continuing efforts must be devoted to properly handling the relationships between popularization and refinement as well as academic research and service to the public in *The Language Situation*.

In the future, *The Language Situation* should reinforce its top-down design, further strengthen the construction of a youth cohort, and make efforts to cultivate interdisciplinary talents. Consideration should be given to building a website and exercising the advantages of the Internet. It must also further widen its field of vision and expand its fields of research. It must *zou chuqu* (走出去, ‘go global’) to address language life in overseas Chinese societies, as well as language life in Chinese-speaking societies.

Hou Min (侯敏) and Yang Erhong (杨尔弘)

### **3 Ten years of language monitoring and research in China**

Language monitoring is a large-scale social language project guided by linguistics, applied linguistics and relevant theories, taking information processing technology as its primary tool and field surveys as its fundamental method, with participation by scholars in multiple disciplines, the aim of which is to provide timely reports on the state of language life and describe the realities of language usage, so as to better develop and utilize such language resources, and achieve the objectives of preserving the language ecology and establishing harmonious language life. China's language monitoring project was implemented beginning in 2005, and has experienced ten years of development to date.

#### **1 Organizations and resources**

Language monitoring work in China is pursued with the support and guidance of the government. In 2004, the National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center was established under the guidance of the Department of Language Information Management of the Ministry of Education; the Department of Language Information Management also founded six branch centers for print media, broadcast media, online media, educational materials, minority languages, and overseas Chinese language at Beijing Language and Culture University, Communication University of China, Central China Normal University, Xiamen University, Minzu University of China, and Jinan University, respectively.<sup>1</sup> The subjects of language monitoring include mass media, which is best able to represent the public's sense of language, as well as basic education, which has the greatest impact on language development in an ethnic group, encompassing both the national standard language as well as minority languages.

Language monitoring work primarily takes place through the National Language Monitoring Corpus (国家语言监测语料库). The National Language Monitoring Corpus includes three sub-databases: the Standard-Language Media

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<sup>1</sup> Due to considerations that the overseas Chinese language was not a suitable subject for monitoring, the Center for Overseas Chinese Language Research was later established as a separate institution, and only five branch centers remain under the National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center.



Corpus (通用语媒体语料库), Educational Materials Corpus (教育教材语料库), and Minority Languages Corpus (少数民族语言语料库). The Educational Materials Corpus has already collected a teaching materials corpus of 19 million characters; the Minority Languages Corpus currently includes Tibetan, Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Mongolian, and other languages, and the scale of the corpora for each language is growing by 200 million words per year; the Standard-Language Media Corpus is further divided into three sub-databases for print media, broadcast media, and online media, with rolling construction at the scale of 1.0 billion character instances each year. Typical and representative data is selected from the different media on the basis of the degree of circulation.

These language resources reflecting language life are the foundation and the living heart of language monitoring. On the foundation of the National Language Monitoring Corpus, we have completed one language monitoring project after another, making achievements in language monitoring.

## 2 Practices and achievements

On the basis of large-scale corpora, we have completed a series of surveys on the realities of language usage, including surveys of character and word usage, neologisms, and alphabetic words in standard-language media, language in new online media, language in teaching materials, and minority languages, obtaining abundant and valuable language data, and discovering certain patterns of language usage. Below, a brief explanation shall be provided by way of several examples.

### 2.1 Surveys of character and word usage in standard-language media

For the last ten years, a large-scale annual survey of character and word usage<sup>2</sup> has been launched each year once the Standard-Language Media Corpus reaches

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<sup>2</sup> See the five works: National Language Resources Monitoring and Research Center (国家语言资源监测与研究中心) (ed.), *The Language Situation in China 2005* (中国语言生活状况报告[2005]) (Vol. 2) through *The Language Situation in China 2009* (中国语言生活状况报告[2009]) (Vol. 2); see also the five works: Department of Language Information Management, Ministry of Education (教育部语言文字信息管理司) (ed.), *The Language Situation in China 2011* (中国语言生活状况报告[2011]) through *The Language Situation in China 2015* (中国语言生活状况报告[2015]). The above works were all published by the Commercial Press (商务印书馆).