

Varieties of Spoken Standard Chinese

(Volume II)

Publications in Modern Chinese Language and Literature

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VARIETIES OF SPOKEN STANDARD CHINESE

Volume II: A Speaker from Taipei



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Preface

In 1981 a project was launched at the Sinological Institute of the University of Leyden, the Netherlands, to create a new set of materials for the training of western students in the comprehension of various dialect-accented versions of spoken standard Chinese. The first result of the project was the publication, in 1982, of Varieties of Spoken Standard Chinese, Volume I: A Speaker from Tianjin. The positive comments we have received since the publication of that volume have strengthened our conviction that these regional or dialect-accented variants constitute an area of urgent relevance for the training of students who will be realistically competent to handle present-day conversational Chinese as actually encountered outside the classroom.

The present volume will be of immediate interest and importance to practically all serious students of Chinese. For the many westerners and overseas Chinese who go to Taiwan every year to pursue linguistic and cultural studies, an introductory textbook like this will fill an obvious practical need. This book will equip the user from the outset with an insider's view of the differences -- sometimes marked, sometimes incidental, but always troubling to the beginner -- between what the standard Chinese heard in Taiwan "should" sound like and what the student actually hears from day to day. But for other students as well, this book will be a valuable source of insights into the functioning of Chinese vocabulary and grammar in the context of a rapidly modernizing society. The differences between typical Taiwan speech and standard Chinese lend themselves quite well to the kind of systematic analysis and schematic presentation employed in this volume. The Taiwan variant differs from the standard mainly through some prominent phonetic shifts and a few striking but straightforward grammatical deviations. Of the regional variants of spoken standard Chinese, it is actually one of the easiest to learn to understand. Once the student has "gotten the hang" of the most predictable correspondences, the speech of the "speaker from Taipei" will prove rapidly accessible. One reason for this is the somewhat paradoxical fact that many of the local citizens have learned standard Chinese as a non-native language which they have had to study and imitate consciously, in contrast to the native speakers of certain mainland "Mandarin" variants, who often presume their local speech to be naturally so close to the standard as to be automatically understandable with little or no alteration of their home-town pronunciation.

From a pedagogical point of view, an interesting feature of this book is the inclusion of conversational samples from informants of very different sociolinguistic background. The speech registers presented

here range from that of the university classroom, through that of the office and the kitchen, to that of the shop and the street. This situational variety, we think, adds much to the liveliness and intrinsic interest of the linguistic material.

The student will be in good hands with the authors of this book. Basing their work on years of teaching experience in Taiwan, Cornelius Kubler and George Ho have taken on a challenging job and succeeded admirably. We are happy to recommend their work to a wide readership.

James C.P. Liang
Lloyd Haft

Sinologisch Instituut
Rijksuniversiteit Leiden
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First, we must thank the four guest speakers with whom we recorded the conversations that form the core of this text: Mr. Chen Te-hsiung, Mr. Chung A-fu, Mrs. Kuo-Chou Shu-yen, and Prof. Eunice Y.H. Lii.

Next, we would like to thank our editors for their careful guidance and generous assistance offered at every step of the way. We would also like to thank Mrs. Eileen H. Seng for assistance with the typing of the camera-ready copy and Mrs. Wang-Chen Chien for her advice on difficult portions of the text.

Finally, we wish to express our appreciation to our spouses--Jerling G. Kubler and Tina Shyu Ho--for their patience and understanding when we spent time with this book instead of with them.

Taipei, Taiwan
May 1984

Cornelius C. Kubler
George T. C. Ho

Introduction

Background

Each year several hundred Western students flock to Taiwan for training or research in Chinese language and culture. For many of them, communication falters on their first arrival on the island. This is often because they have been exposed only to the relatively standard Peking speech of their teachers in the U.S. and Europe and are not accustomed to hearing any of the many different varieties of "accented Mandarin" that are spoken throughout most of China.

The fact is that whether in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, or mainland China, the great majority of Chinese do not speak standard Mandarin. Indeed, until quite recently, many people in Southeastern China--traditionally the site of most contacts with the West--were unable to speak any Mandarin at all. Although most Chinese now know some Mandarin, their Mandarin may vary considerably from the standard language for one of two reasons.

The first reason why some Chinese speak non-standard Mandarin is quite obvious: they may be native to a part of the great Mandarin-speaking areas of Northern, Eastern, or Western China other than Peking and speak as their mother tongue a non-Peking variety of Mandarin such as Manchurian Mandarin, Shantung Mandarin, or Szechuan Mandarin. The first volume of this series, A Speaker from Tianjin, dealt with an example of this type of non-standard Mandarin.

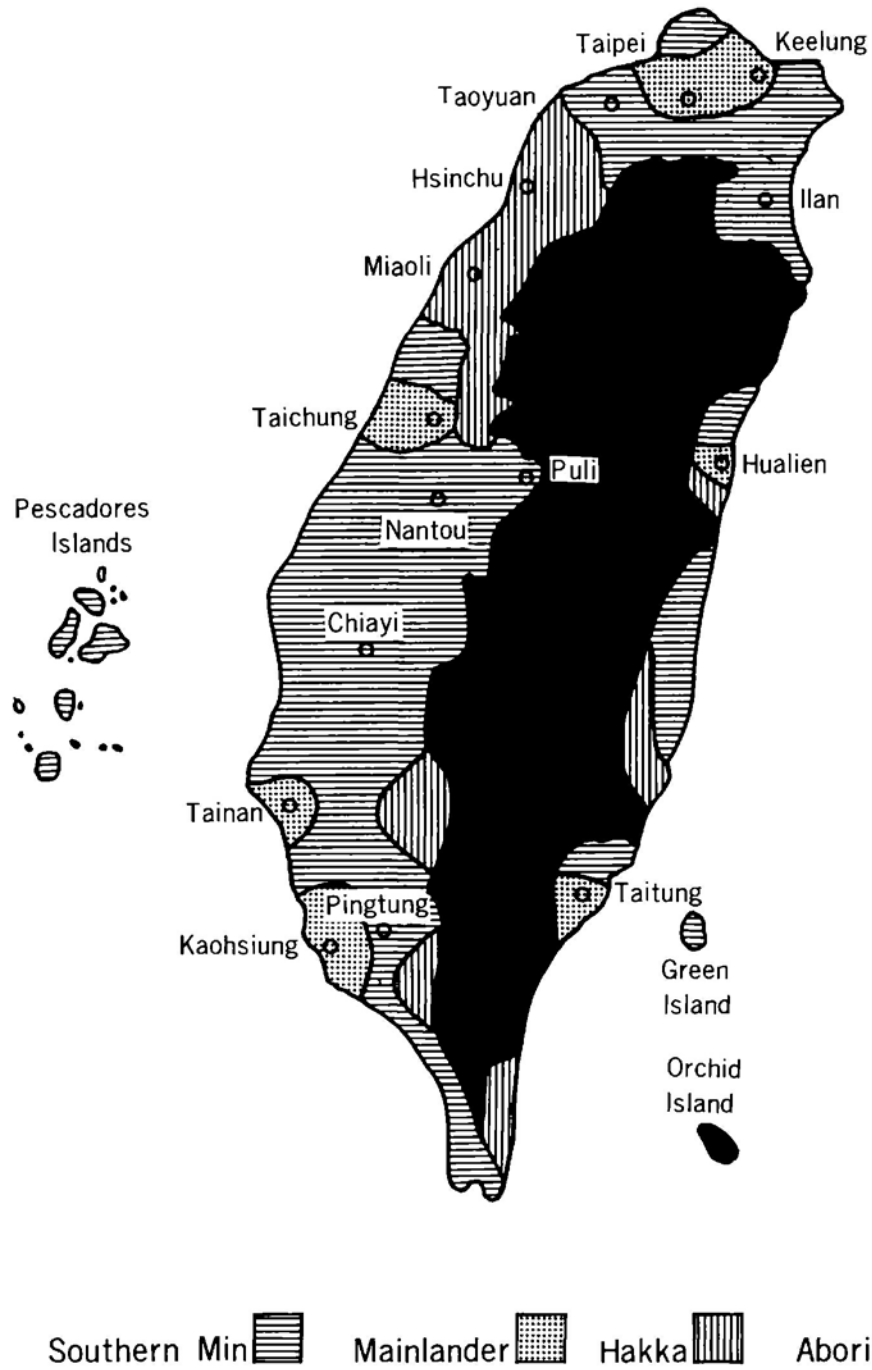
The second reason why Chinese may speak non-standard Mandarin is somewhat more complicated: many Chinese speak as their native language a non-Mandarin dialect such as Cantonese, Shanghainese,

or Fukienese and have had to learn Mandarin as a second language, which they speak imperfectly due to influence from their native tongue. It is this latter type of non-standard Mandarin that is the focus of the present book.

The purpose of this text is to provide materials for training in listening comprehension of Taiwan Mandarin, an important and frequently encountered variety of modern spoken Chinese. Additionally, the conversations transcribed here, being samples of spontaneous speech, may also be of interest to those studying discourse structure or error analysis. It should be stressed that most of the special features that set Taiwan Mandarin apart from standard Mandarin are not limited to Taiwan alone. Many are also typical of the Mandarin of Southern Fukien, Eastern Canton, and Hainan, as well as--to a lesser extent--of Southern Mandarin in general. We should emphasize here that active production in students' own speech of the sounds and special structures of Taiwan Mandarin is not encouraged. For their own use, students would ordinarily do best to stick with the standard Mandarin they have learned.

It will be helpful at the outset to review briefly the sociolinguistic situation of Taiwan. Taiwan, a large island in the Pacific Ocean about 100 miles off the southeast coast of the Chinese mainland, has together with several neighboring islands a total land area of 13,892 square miles and a population of about nineteen million. The population is composed of four distinct ethnic groups, each with its own language; the Southern Min people, who emigrated to Taiwan from Southern Fukien several centuries ago and speak the Southern Min dialect of Chinese; the mainland Chinese, who came to Taiwan from various provinces in mainland China after 1945 and speak mostly some variety of Mandarin; the Hakka, who came from Canton province at about the same time as the Southern Min people and speak the Hakka dialect; and the aboriginal people, who have been in Taiwan for several thousand years and speak about a dozen different Malayo-Polynesian

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languages. Population estimates for the four groups in 1983 were as follows:

Southern Min	13,622,091 (71% of the population)
Mainlander	2,796,610 (15% of the population)
Hakka	2,315,180 (12% of the population)
Aborigines	364,095 (2% of the population)

Mandarin, the official language of the Republic of China government on Taiwan, is spoken natively by the mainland refugees of 1948-50 and their children and grandchildren, and as a second language learned mainly in school by most of the rest of the population. Vigorous efforts by the government to promote Mandarin have helped greatly in increasing knowledge of it, so that today all but a few older people in the countryside can understand and speak their national language at least to some degree. Although the type of Mandarin decreed as the official standard is based on the dialect of Peking, the Mandarin commonly spoken in Taiwan differs considerably from that standard in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. This is due primarily to influence from Southern Min, the native language of the majority of the population.

Southern Min belongs to the Min group of dialects, one of the seven major dialect groups within Chinese. Besides Southern Min, which is the preferred linguistic term, various of these dialects are commonly referred to as Fukienese, Hokkien, Amoy, and Taiwanese. About 28,000,000 people on the Chinese mainland and Hainan speak Southern Min with another 13,000,000 speakers on Taiwan. In addition, there are fair-sized Southern Min-speaking communities among the overseas Chinese in the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Of all the Chinese dialects, the Min dialects are the most divergent from any of the others. The main reason for this is that they had already broken off from the ancestor of the modern Chinese dialects to begin their separate development during Han times (around 0 A.D.) while the other dialects did not separate until approximately Tang (700-800 A.D.)

The Min dialects have preserved many of the features of Old Chinese. The outstanding features of the modern Min dialects include voiced initial consonants b, j, and g; nasalized vowels; and final p, t, k, and glottal stop. In addition, tones in Southern Min, which vary depending on the dialect from seven to eight, have a basic form that occurs in isolation or at the end of a phrase or sentence and a changed form that occurs immediately before any other tonal syllable. This could be compared to the situation in Mandarin where a tone 3 syllable changes to tone 2 before another tone 3 syllable, except that in Southern Min every tone changes to another tone before any other syllable that follows it directly without juncture.

The Min dialects have a set of dialect characters that, in conjunction with the regular Chinese characters, can be used to write the colloquial language. However, even in the past, this type of writing was limited to folk plays or other very colloquial writings. Today, most Southern Min people speak their native dialect and Mandarin but read and write in Mandarin only. One other characteristic of Southern Min is that the majority of characters have two different pronunciations: the so-called "colloquial" and "literary" readings. This situation can be compared to Mandarin doublets like 校, which can be pronounced either jiào 'to collate, compare' or xiào 'school', but such dual readings are the exception in Mandarin while they are the rule in Southern Min.

This series of monographs is based on the hypothesis that the most efficient way to improve one's understanding of a given type of non-standard Mandarin is first to have the differences pointed out and then to practice listening to actual speech samples (cf. A Speaker from Tianjin, p. 6). Accordingly, we shall give next an overview of the main points of difference between Taiwan Mandarin and standard Mandarin and then follow this with four conversations involving Taiwan Mandarin speakers recorded on tape and presented in the text with transcriptions and annotations.

Characteristics of Taiwan Mandarin

Below are described the major points of difference between Taiwan Mandarin and standard Mandarin. Naturally, individual speakers will vary in the degree of their deviation from standard Mandarin because of factors such as native dialect, age, sex, educational level, urban vs. rural upbringing, language aptitude, etc. Moreover, some speakers are able consciously or unconsciously to adjust certain features of their speech depending on their interlocutors and the sociolinguistic situation, so that they may be closer to the standard on some occasions and farther from it on others. Nevertheless, almost all speakers who spent their formative years in Taiwan will exhibit in their speech some, if not all, of the characteristics listed below.

Pronunciation

1. Initials

a) zh }
ch } → z
sh } c
s

The retroflex initials zh-, ch-, and sh- have for many speakers lost their retroflexion to merge with their corresponding dental sibilants z-, c-, and s-, e.g., zhū 豬 'pig' sounds like zū 租 'to rent', chū 出 'to go out' like cū 粗 'to be coarse', and shū 書 'book' like sū 酥 'to be crisp, flaky'. Although some speakers have learned how to make the retroflex sounds in school and try to use them in careful speech, they tend to use them indiscriminately, thus producing hybrid forms like chéngjīng (for SM céngjīng 曾經 'to have [done something]') and gàoshu (for SM gàosu 告訴 'to tell').¹ Also, retroflex initial r- is sometimes pronounced to sound like an English

¹ SM=Standard Mandarin, TM=Taiwan Mandarin

"z". As there is no symbol for this sound in the Pinyin system of transcription, we shall adopt the phonetic symbol [z] to write this sound. For example, standard Mandarin rúhé 如何 'how' becomes Taiwan Mandarin [z]úhé.

b) f - —————> h(u)

Initials f- and h- are often confused in Taiwan Mandarin.

Thus, zhèngfǔ 政府 'government' sounds like zènhǔ and zǎofàn 早飯 'breakfast' becomes zǎohuàn.

c) $\left. \begin{matrix} l \\ r \end{matrix} \right\} \longrightarrow \check{r}$

Initial l- and r- sometimes sound like Spanish flapped [ɾ]. For example, SM lái 來 'to come' may sound like [ɾ]ái, SM dàlù 大陸 'continent' like dà[ɾ]ù and SM pìrú 'for example' like pì[ɾ]ú.

d) $n \longleftrightarrow l$

Initials n- and l- are at times confused. This usually occurs before nasal finals. Examples include TM lán 南 (cf. SM nán 'south') and TM něng 冷 (cf. SM lěng 'to be cold').

e) $\left. \begin{matrix} b \\ p \\ m \\ f \\ w \end{matrix} \right\} + \text{eng} \longrightarrow \left. \begin{matrix} b \\ p \\ m \\ f \\ w \end{matrix} \right\} + \text{ong}$

Syllables that in standard Mandarin begin with the labial sounds b-, p-, m-, f-, or w- and end in -eng are often pronounced in Taiwan Mandarin with final -ong. Examples: fēng 風 'wind' becomes hōng, pèng 碰 'to hit' becomes pòng, and lǎowēng 老翁 'old man' becomes lǎowōng.

2. Finals

a) $\begin{matrix} \text{ing} \\ \text{eng} \end{matrix} \longrightarrow \begin{matrix} \text{in} \\ \text{en} \end{matrix}$

Finals -ing and -eng tend to merge with -in and -en. Thus, the very sizeable difference between jīnyú 金魚 'goldfish' and jīngyú 鯨魚 'whale' is often lost and yīshēng 醫生 'doctor' is pronounced as yīsēn, bùnéng 不能 'can't' as bùnén, etc.

b) $en \longrightarrow [E]n$

The vowel in standard Mandarin final -en changes from a mid central articulation, phonetically [ə], to a lower mid front articulation, phonetically [E]. Since there is no corresponding symbol in the Pinyin system of romanization, we shall adopt the phonetic symbol [E] to write this sound. For example, SM hěn 很 'very' becomes TM h[Ē]n, which rhymes with English "hen".

c)
$$\begin{matrix} \emptyset \\ e \\ \ddot{u} \\ an \\ n \end{matrix} \longrightarrow \begin{matrix} \emptyset \\ e \\ i \\ an \\ n \end{matrix}$$

Standard Mandarin final -ü loses its rounding in Taiwan Mandarin and becomes -i. Thus, SM xiàiyǔ 下雨 'to rain' becomes TM xiàiyǐ, SM dàxué 大學 'university' becomes TM dàxié, SM yuánzé 原則 'principle' becomes TM yánzé, and SM yùndòng 運動 'movement' becomes TM yìndòng.

d)
$$u \begin{matrix} o \\ ei \end{matrix} \longrightarrow \begin{matrix} o \\ ei \end{matrix}$$

Standard Mandarin finals -uo and -ui lose their rounding, becoming -o and -ei. For example, SM Měiguó 美國 'America' may sound like Měigó and duì 對 'to be correct' may sound like dèi.

e)
$$\begin{matrix} zh \\ ch \\ sh \\ r \\ z \\ c \\ s \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} i \\ \\ \\ \end{matrix} \longrightarrow \begin{matrix} zh \\ ch \\ sh \\ r \\ z \\ c \\ s \end{matrix} \begin{matrix} u \\ \\ \\ \end{matrix}$$

Standard Mandarin -i changes to -u in the syllables zhi, chi, shi, ri, zi, ci, and si. Examples: SM zhīdao 知道 'to know' becomes TM zūdào, SM chīfàn 吃飯 'to eat' becomes cūhuàn, SM Rìběn 日本 'Japan' becomes TM [ʐ]əb[ɛ̃]n, etc.

f) e → o

Standard Mandarin final -e may sound like -o. For example, SM héfǎ 合法 'to be legal' sometimes sounds like hóhuǎ and SM kě'néng 可能 'to be possible' like kǒ'nén.

g) r → ∅

The final -r is rare in Taiwan Mandarin. Standard Mandarin huàr 畫兒 'painting', yīdiǎr 一點兒 'a little', wá 玩兒 'to have fun', and èr 二 'two' all are usually pronounced without the final -r as huà, yīdiǎn, wán, and è.

3. Tones

a) ˩ → ˨˨˩

The third tone has only the dip and no rise even when in final position. For example

SM		TM		
xǐwǎn	˩ ˩	xǐwǎn	˩ ˩	'to wash dishes'
kāishǐ	˩ ˩	kāishǐ	˩ ˩	'to begin'
Rìběn	˩ ˩	[ʐ]əb[ɛ̃]n	˩ ˩	'Japan'

The neutral tone occurs much less frequently in Taiwan Mandarin than in standard Mandarin. Such words as standard Mandarin xiānsheng 先生 'gentleman', zhīdao 知道 'to know', and zuótiān 昨天 'yesterday', for example, are pronounced in Taiwan Mandarin as xiānsēn, zūdào, and zótiān.

As a summary of the above section on pronunciation and as a reference for reading the transcriptions of the conversations,