



## The Influence on Chinese Language from Postcolonial English

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### Abstract

From the point of view on postcolonial theories, this paper explores English language's influence on normal Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese, and concludes the advantage and disadvantage of this phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, Chinese, English, Vocabulary, Syntax, Influence

### 1. Introduction

One of the most important characteristics of modern cultural globalism is the majority of the study of postcolonialism. On the aspect of language, postcolonialism utilizes its cultural hegemony to penetrate the language of nucleus countries, especially English, into the eged or undeveloped countries by all kinds of means to influence or change their language and culture. Thus makes these nations' language become stranger and more complex, and their dependence on this nucleus countries has produced. On the one hand, it is unavoidable that English, the powerful language, has the strong effect on Chinese language's changing into the state of Postcolonialism and the richness of Chinese's vocabulary and its ability of expression. On the other hand, the Postcolonial penetration to Chinese can be negative, too. This paper aims at the point of the theory of Postcolonialism to explore the influence on Chinese language's dictionary and syntax owing to English language's penetration.

### 2. The influence of borrowed English words

Although postcolonialism has no similarity on Colonialism, military occupying and economic grabbing on those undeveloped nations, they penetrate on their language and culture and enlarge their influence step by step by the means of economy assistance, culture and education, communication, movie and TV transmission, and the enlargement of expenditure habits, etc. because of their international influence on politics, economy and culture.

Since the Chinese mainland carried out the policy of reformation and liberalization, the influence on Chinese language from Postcolonialism has been much deeper than ever, especially on vocabulary and syntax.

#### 2.1 *The tendency on the initial abbreviation of English letters*

As China is facing with the enormous intrusion of politics, economy, science and technology, education, culture and consumer goods from those nucleus countries, in Chinese language a large number of English initial-letter abbreviation appears. For example,

The abbreviation of politics: UN, APEC, WTO, USA, NATO

The abbreviation of science and technology: IBM, WWW, Modem, DNA, SRS

The abbreviation of measuring units: am, pm, A.D. , B.C., Km, mm

The abbreviation of news language: BBC, VOA, NBC, ABC, CBS, etc.

#### 2.2 *The tendency on the combination of English and Chinese*

Vocabulary on technology and message: BP ji, IT ji shu, IC ka, B chao, IDD dian hua

Vocabulary on culture, education and advertisement: GRE kao shi, HB qian bi, DM guang gao, GEMAT kao shi, TOFEL kao shi

Vocabulary on politics and economy: san K dang, BOT jiao yi, T xu shan, etc.

#### 2.3 *The tendency on imitated translation*

Qian nian chong (Millennium), re gou (hot dog), dian zi you jian (E-mail), mi yue (honeymoon), wei ruan (microsoft), etc.

#### 2.4 *The tendency on direct utilization of English words*

Tuo kou xiu (Talk show), bo che (park), bo yin (Boeing), nuo ji ya (Nokia), kua tuo (quart), qiang sheng (Johnson), etc.

### 2.5 The tendency on using English words' affixes

The following Chinese affixes have close relationship according to the introduction of English ones:

Prefixes: fan- (counter-) duo- (multi-) bu- (un-, non-) wei- (micro-)

Suffixes: -zhu yi (-ism) -hua (-fy) -ba (-bar)

The affixes from English have great instructive ability. For instance, wei bo, wei guan; di shi, mian di; duo yuan hua, quan qiu hua; she hui zhu yi, zi ben zhu yi, etc.

### 3. The meaning of evolution and quality transformation of borrowed English terms in Chinese language

In the context of postcolonialism, owing to the western cultural shock, a new trend has appeared recently. That is, the meaning of those foreign words in Chinese has changed because of the meaning's change of English words. For instance, in Chinese, jiao fu (Godfather) means the man who has the responsibility of giving baptism and religious education to children. Now, because of the changing meaning of the corresponded English words, its new meaning is the powerful man who has strong influence in an organization of community. Another example, the word "mail" in "E-mail" refers to the message transmitted by computer rather than the traditional mail sent by post. Its meaning has changed already.

The transformation of words' quality is another trend and feature of Chinese receiving influence from English. This is an apparent phenomenon in Hong Kong's publications. According to some scholar's research, in Hong Kong Chinese, the deformation owing to the transforming of some words' quality occupies an outstanding position. Most typical examples are "Xian dai hua", "He li hua", "Fu za hua", etc., which are used as transitive verbs rather than intransitive. For instance, Yi xie wai yong gu zhu zhi ze wai ji yuan gong, cong er *he li hua* wai yong xin chou xing wei. This kind of transformation is so universal in Hong Kong, showing the English language's penetrating ability into Chinese under the context of postcolonialism. Fortunately, this shock wave hasn't had factual effect on Chinese mainland's normal Chinese.

### 4. English language's influence on Hong Kong Chinese language grammar

In language, grammar is the steadiest factor that is the least changeable. However, in the New Culture Movement, some translation methods made Chinese grammar's evolution, showing the westernized syntax, that is, the structure of a sentence being lengthy and complex. But under the context of postcolonialism, a new characteristic coming from Chinese grammar appeared due to the influence of English. Hong Kong's Chinese transformation is the most obvious because of long time's colonialism and postcolonialism.

#### 4.1 The tendency of using more nouns

In Hong Kong Chinese, one of the most common phenomenon is the nouns could be used as adjectives or verbs, which is so different from normal Chinese. Here are three examples:

- a. Wo bi xu dui shi min you *cheng dan*.
- b. Jue ce zhe xu yao te bie ju you *min gan*.
- c. Zhun bei di er fen shi zheng bao gao jiao di yi fen geng *tiao zhan*.

The above three sentences are obviously mistaken and unacceptable in normal Chinese. However, in Hongkong Chinese, they are not only acceptable but easy to be seen anywhere. It owns to the word -for -word translation from English. *cheng dan* in example a is from *to have a commitment*; *min gan* in example b probably comes from *Tension is mounting/ rising/ escalating*; *tiao zhan* in example c has its resource from *to present a greater challenge* or *to be more challenging*.

#### 4.2 The tendency of using more verbs

In Hong Kong Chinese, nouns, noun phrases, and adjectives could be transformed into verbs, which is rare in normal Chinese.

For example,

- a. Ta men zhou yi qing chen jiao xing zong li nei ta ni ya hu, *jian bao* zhe ci xi ji.
- b. Shou xian yao *di diao* zi ji.
- c. Ta *guan shi fang wen* wai di.
- d. Ta ming xian *nao nu* lai wen si ji.
- e. Bai fen zhi wu shi de ren shuo *hai xiu* gou mai.

*jian bao* in example a is from *to believe*, *di diao* in example b comes from *low key*, *guan shi fang wen* is from *official visit*, *nao nu* in example d is received from *be annoyed/ irritated/ angered by*, *hai xiu* gets from *ashamed that*. Those

words can absolutely not be used in normal Chinese, so this situation can only be shown under the context of the intrusion from English colonialism and postcolonialism.

#### 4.3 The tendency of putting attribute to the end

In normal Chinese, the attribute can be put before the central noun and rather short. In English, it can be put before or after the central noun, and as a attributive sentence, being put to the end is a regular way. Owing to this phenomenon, in Hong Kong Chinese, the attribute tends to be put to the end. For instance,

- a. Xian zai shi shi dang shi hou tui xing zhe xiang ji hua.
- b. Zheng fu wei you qi xian bei li sha li kai ben guo.
- c. Zuo ri shou tian jie dao tou su cheng shi dian xun guang gao tai bao li.
- d. Shi shi hou tan tan xiu ci fa le.

Example comes from *It is time to do something*, and normal Chinese should be *Xian zai shi tui xing zhe xiang ji hua de shi dang shi hou le*. Example b is from *The government has not set a date for Berithar to leave the country*, the normal Chinese is *Zheng fu mei you gui ding bei li sha li kai ben guo de qi xian*. Example c imitates the pattern of *complaint about excessive violence*, the normal Chinese is *Zuo ri shou xian jie dao chang shi dian xun guang gao tai bao li de tou su*. Example d has the same situation as example a. In a word, attribute being put to the end as a new tendency in Hong Kong Chinese, could not be allowed in normal Chinese.

### 5. The advantage and disadvantage of the influence on Chinese language from postcolonial English

In the context of postcolonialism, the transmission and enlargement of English all over the world tend to be accelerating. America and Britain promotes policies on English language colonialism. The culture commission and overseas volunteer service agency in Britain and some governmental and civil agencies in America play an important role in carrying out global English colonial policy and oversea English teaching. And many sorts of media resource and expenditure culture accelerate this wave.

Following the joining in WTO and the communication with other countries, the Chinese language has absorbed quite a lot of foreign words, especially from English. This advantage is obvious. International culture can be mixed with regular rules, the rubbing and barrier can be lessened, Chinese can be full of energy supplied with new blood to turn into an international language some day. Therefore, in this opportunity to absorb some necessary vocabulary is full of benefits. However, too much borrowing activity also leads Chinese into subcolonialization, with the lost national characteristics in Chinese culture. For example, You Piao in Chinese needn't be taken its place by Shi dan (stamp). Also, if faced with some strange words from Hong Kong Chinese, we should treat them as universally accepted, the point being whether it is available for the mainland's idiom expression. Especially its syntax structure owing to the deep influence from English language should be used without any reformation, though it's been conceived in Hong Kong in a long period. If we imitate this structure, the rules of Chinese grammar may be destroyed and the Chinese character's authority may also be doubted. Unfortunately, more syntax structure imitating Hong Kong Chinese emerges in our daily life, which has disadvantage on children's normal language learning. Therefore, effective language policy should be made to defend the negative influence on English postcolonialism. It is so essential that it needs the highly stress from our government and mutual supporting from every class of our society.

### 6. Conclusion

The globalism and postcolonialism of English are both chance and challenge for Chinese. On one hand, we'd better borrow not deluge English terms, especially on science, technology and expenditure culture, etc.. On the other, secure the root of Chinese grammar, decrease the using of English syntax and avoid the strangeness of grammatical structure.

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