

Journalistic Narrative Modes in both Mainland and Taiwan since 1949

MODES NARRATIFS JOURNALISTIQUES SUR LE CONTINENT CHINOIS ET À TAIWAN DEPUIS 1949

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Abstract: The evolution of journalistic style can be explored from multiple perspectives. The shifts of horizons between the narrator and addressee, the change of the communicative context and media, the similarities and differences of narrative modes, and the sequence of time structure can all constitute important research areas. The present essay is an investigation into the similarities and differences of journalistic styles between mainland China and Taiwan, with a view to proving that, apart from the subjectivity of the communicators, the change of communicative context is also a dynamic that brings about the accretion of alien elements in journalistic style as well as the formation of individuality. As journalism in the mainland of China has, since 1949, been developing in an isolated context, its style as a result is a combination of modernity, popularity and nationality. The journalistic style in Taiwan, on the other hand, has retained many of the characteristics of the journalistic style in the mainland in the late 1940s, evincing conspicuous family ties with the latter. With the continuous deepening of contact and exchange between the mainland and Taiwan since the former adopted the policy of reform and opening up in the 1980s, journalistic styles on the both sides have demonstrated more and more common features. The essay will, by way of examining the evolution of the journalistic style in both the mainland and Taiwan, seek out their respective narrative characteristics, which, under the influence of socio-cultural changes, have undergone a process of divergence and convergence. It is the author's hope that this academic effort will shed new light on the history of journalistic writing.

Key words: 1949, Main Land and Taiwan, journalistic narrative modes, socio-cultural context

Résumé: L'évolution du style journalistique peut être explorée dans de diverses perspectives. Le changement d'horizon entre le narrateur et le destinataire, la mutation du contexte communicatif et de médias, les similitudes et différences des modes narratifs et l'ordre horaire constituent tous des domaines de recherche importants. L'article présent procède à une investigation des similitudes et différences du style journalistique entre le continent chinois et Taiwan, dans le but de prouver que, à part la subjectivité de l'auteur, le changement du contexte communicatif est un facteur important qui introduit des éléments étrangers dans le style journalistique et dans la formation de l'individualité. Comme le journalisme sur le continent chinois, a développé, depuis 1949, dans un contexte isolé, son style est par conséquent la combinaison de la modernité, de la popularité et de la nationalité. Le style journalistique à Taiwan a gardé beaucoup de caractéristiques du style du continent dans la dernière période des années 1940, manifestant des liens évidents avec celui-ci. Avec l'approfondissement continu du contact et de l'échange entre les deux côtés, depuis la réforme et l'ouverture vers l'extérieur du continent chinois dans les années 1980, leurs styles journalistiques ont présenté de plus en plus de points communs. L'article présent, en examinant l'évolution du style journalistique sur le continent chinois et à Taiwan, recherche leurs caractéristiques narratives respectives, qui, sous l'influence des changements socio-culturels, ont connu un processus de divergence et convergence. L'auteur espère que son effort académique va éclairer l'histoire de la rédaction journalistique.

Mots-Clés: 1949, continent chinois et Taiwan, modes narratifs journalistiques, contexte socio-culturel

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1. THE EVOLUTION OF THE JOURNALISTIC STYLE IN THE MAINLAND AND TAIWAN

The development of the written language of modern Chinese in the 20th century can be divided into three phases, *viz.*, 1920s - 1940s, when the written language was a combination of the vernacular and archaic Chinese; 1950s - 1970s, when the written language tallied completely with the vernacular; 1980s - 1990s, when external elements found their way into the Chinese language. It goes without saying that as a branch of the written language of modern Chinese, the journalistic language also underwent three phases.

1.1 The Period of Combining the Vernacular and Classical Chinese

From the 1920s to early 1940s, in advocacy of the Vernacular Movement, people of the journalistic profession used a language identical with the vernacular to replace classical Chinese which had for centuries been in disconnection with the vernacular. Drawing impetus from Western missionaries' proselytizing and commercial activities, a kind of pidgin journalese, born of classical literary forms, began to take shape. The journalistic style at the time, on the one hand, began a process of maturing chiefly under the influence of Western journalistic writing and, on the other, still bore a strong tinge of traditional Chinese literary writing. The narrative mode was "new wine in old bottles" and a plethora of vernacular and everyday words and sentences in newfangled syntax—including Europeanized syntax—began to pour in.

In the late 1940s, the journalistic styles in the mainland of China and Taiwan began a process of bifurcation.

1.2 The Period of Tallying with the Vernacular

Modern Chinese, after the Vernacular Movement in the 1920s, the Plebeian Language Movement in the 1930s, and the nationalistic Linguistic Construction Movement in the 1940s, became gradually mature and normalized in the middle and late 1950s. During this process, two sets of factors had exerted great influence. One was the theoretical advocacy and teaching practice of some philologists and educators; the other was the writing practice of modern authors such as Mao Zedong, Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Lao She, Mao Dun and Ba Jin. These outstanding philologists, educators, politicians and writers had not only a broad historical horizon, but the ability of advancing theories as well as literary creation. Perceiving the laws and principles inherent in the development of a language, they pointed out the direction in which the Chinese language should be

reformed, thus playing a decisive role in the transformation of the Chinese language from an archaic language to a language identical with the vernacular and then to the lingua franca of the Chinese people, making the Chinese language, formerly a language disconnected with the vernacular, now a modern language that could be easily grasped by everybody. Their writings were full of individualized, fresh, lively, and easy expressions of the common people, setting examples for writings in modern Chinese and realizing the harmonious unification of the modernization, popularization and nationalization of the Chinese language. With regard to the modern Chinese language, it can be said that "its phonetics is based on that of the Beijing dialect, its language on that spoken in the northern part and its grammar on exemplary modern writings in the vernacular". Here, a large part of the "exemplary modern writings in the vernacular" was done by the people mentioned above.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the journalistic style, still with the modern vernacular as its carrier, became increasingly lucid and easy to understand.

In the 1970s, when the Cultural Revolution was in full swing, journalistic writing, burdened with a strong political function, preached personality cult and revolution and developed a rather abnormal style.

Meanwhile, the journalistic style in Taiwan evolved in another direction. Although influenced by Japanese, the language of the Hakkas and Austronesian, it still retained much of the characteristic of the 1940-50s. Cao Fengfu, in his *Taiwanese Japanese and Taiwanese Chinese: A Study of the Contact between Two Languages in Taiwan in the Past Hundred Years*, provides a comparative analysis². In his *History and Status Quo of the Taiwanese Language*³, Cao further states that,

The promotion and development of the Mandarin owes much to the government. In 1945 those who went to Taiwan knew nothing about the aboriginal language, and few of the natives could speak the Mandarin. Policies on language education either copied those used in the mainland or were made offhand, giving no consideration to the long-run development.

Communication among people called for translation and interpretation. On April 2, 1946, the Commission for the Promotion of Mandarin in Taiwan was set up, and the platform of "national language movement in Taiwan province" was promulgated. Requirements were also made of how the language of mass media should be used. In 1972, the draft of the Language Law stipulates the following:

- a. Mandarin must be used in public places (where

² (Taiwan) *Sinology Research*, special issue, volume 18, December 2000.

³ (Taiwan) *Sinology Research*, second issue, volume 17, December 1999.

there are more than three persons); b. Spelling should be in compliance with the standard characters promulgated by the Ministry of Education;

c. New characters and words can only be used after approved and made public by the government.

These regulations reduced the influence of non-Chinese languages and dialects on Mandarin and ensured that, though developing along a different path, the journalistic style in Taiwan still retained many of the common features it shared with that in the mainland.

1.3 The Period of Absorbing Alien Elements

In the 1980s and 1990s, the more tolerant political atmosphere in the mainland of China, the increasing economic and cultural contact and exchange between the mainland and the rest of the world formed a favorable environment in which journalism across the Taiwan Straits entered a new phase of development, gaining more and more in common. On both sides, alien elements began to appear in journalistic writing.

1.3.1 The Percolation of Alien Elements

With the increasing international exchange and wide spread of modern media, foreign terms, together with new things and new concepts, have been pouring into the Chinese vocabulary. This is the fourth wave of word borrowing in the history of the Chinese language, the preceding three being the borrowing of words from the Xi-yu (a Han-dynasty term for the region corresponding roughly to present-day Xinjiang and Central Asia) in the Han dynasty, the borrowing of Buddhist terms from India in the Han, Wei, Tang and Song dynasties, and the borrowing of scientific and cultural terms from the West in modern times. Words of foreign origin include transliterations such as *kelong* 克隆 (clone) and *maidanglao* 麥當勞 (McDonald's), those translated based on both pronunciation and meaning such as *jiyin* 基因 (gene) and *tuokouxiu* 脫口秀 (talk show), those translated half by pronunciation and half by meaning such as *sakesifengguan* 薩克斯風管 (saxophone), IP *ka* 卡 (IP card), and AA *zhi* 制 (AA), and those consisting only of initials, such as WTO, MBA, APEC and MTV. The last has also led to the creation of words like CBA (Chinese Basketball Association) and CCC (Chinese Compulsory Certification).

1.3.2 Interaction of the Alien Elements between Mainland and Taiwan

Xie Zhenlin, in his essay “Yuanjing 願景” (vision) in *Vogue in the Mainland*, “Airen 愛人” (husband or wife) Appearing in Taiwan: The Linguistic Interaction between the Mainland and Taiwan, discusses the impact of microscopic linguistic changes upon the macroscopic development of the Mandarin. Many faddish words in

Taiwan have found their way to the mainland and settled there. Words like Yuanjing 願景 (vision), kaoliang 考量 (considerate), zaoshi 造勢 (build up the momentum), fuzhi 福祉 (welfare), gumin 股民 (individual stock marker investor), banmaxian 斑馬線 (zebra crossing), guan'ai 關愛 (care for), and cehua 策劃 (plan) make increasingly frequent appearances in the media and official documents. Some words have become so popular that they have been included in the “New Words and New Senses” Section of the Contemporary Chinese Dictionary, such as *suqiu* 訴求 (request), *zhenghe* 整合 (integrate), *jiedu* 解讀 (interpret), *zuoxiu* 作秀 (show) and *zhangkong* 掌控 (control).⁴

Xie also makes an analysis of twenty or thirty pairs of words that, though consisting of different characters in Taiwan and the mainland, bear the same meaning.

To summarize, after 1949, the journalistic styles in mainland and Taiwan, which were of the same origin, underwent first a process of bifurcation due to different socio-cultural environments in the two regions. Since mainland adopted the policy of opening up and reform, however, the increasing contact and exchange across the Taiwan Straits have caused the journalistic styles on both sides to share more and more in common. The evolution of the journalistic style in both mainland and Taiwan demonstrates the functioning of synchronic and diachronic factors in a language's development as well as the dialectical unity of the general and specific characteristics of language.

2. SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JOURNALISTIC NARRATIVE MODE IN MAINLAND AND TAIWAN

By journalistic style is meant the systematic linguistic characteristics of journalistic writing in a certain context and for a certain purpose. The two most conspicuous features of journalistic writing are stability and endurableness, meaning in the context of information communication, a series of phonetic symbols, words, phrases, rhetorical devices, textual structures are regularly and repeatedly used, resulting in a set of systematic characteristics unique to journalistic writing. Within the system, these characteristics constitute a powerful constraint, and outside the system they distinguish journalistic writing from other types of writing.

The journalistic styles in mainland and Taiwan are of the same origin, and therefore their narrative modes evince conspicuous systematic similarities. However, as dictated by different communicative contexts, they have also acquired, respectively, different features.

⁴ *Wenhui News*, Xie Zhenlin, April 8th, 2006.

2.1 Apart from continuing to use the complex forms of Chinese characters and vertical typesetting, journalistic writing in Taiwan has retained the concise and compressed style characteristic of the journalistic writing in mainland in the late 1940s. It is embodied by,

A. The small size of the text

The small size of the text is an inevitable choice because of the space requirement of the publications and the mentality of the addressees. The size of the news item in Taiwan in the 1950-70s was in the main quite small. In extreme cases dozens of news items were placed in one page, carrying the concise style to a great extent.

B. Short titles

News titles, couched in the written language, are usually rhythmical, balanced and dignified, having few modifiers. An abundance of short titles rich in meaning are suggestive of the conciseness of journalistic narratives. Take the following for an example⁵,

(Plans of) Building Villas in Miaotian (name of a place) Were Protested by Local Citizens
Tucheng Cleaning Team Won Double Championship
Paddling Forbidden in Dabao Brook, Objection Arises

C. Short sentences

The sentences in news items are usually short and brief. One seldom finds long and complicated sentences laden with modifiers. For instance,

12th is the anniversary of Sun Yet-sen's (founding father of the Republic of China) birth. The ceremony of commemoration is to be held in the Jieshou Hall of the President's House in the morning. (Central Daily, November 10, 1959)

D. Use of classical Chinese words and syntax

This was proved by the Language Information Science Research Center of City University of Hong Kong when they were constructing the "LIVAC Synchronic Corpus of Chinese". The conclusion is further supported by the *Contemporary Dictionary of Chinese used in Hong Kong and Taiwan*⁶ compiled by Zhu Guangqi, which has more than 5000 entries. Following are a few examples,

Liding 厘定(confirm), *pingjian* 評鑒 (evaluate), *zhaoyin* 肇因(cause), *diding* 底定(affirm), *baopin* 報聘 (diplomatic return visit), *kangli* 伉儷(husband and wife), *gongqin* 躬親(in person).

News items in Taiwan bear a heavy tinge of written language, irrespective of the fields they cover. By way of illustration let's look at some items in the Central

Daily on November 2 and 4, 1959,

(Government) Mayor Huang Spurs His Staff On

(Military) Local Young Men Enlisted in Two Batches Today

(Business) Price of Taiwanese Cement Remains High, Price of Taiwanese Paper Drops, Commerce and Banks Continue on Their Way to Prosperity.

The third item is a piece of business news, in which is also found classical Chinese.

2.2 As mentioned earlier, journalistic writing in the mainland takes as its aim the harmonization of modernization, popularization and nationalization. News reports are expected to be grammatically correct, lucid, with few archaic or westernized phrases, and easy to understand. The narrative mode is conditioned by ideology, as best borne out by what happened during the Cultural Revolution.

The narrative mode during the Cultural Revolution had a unique tinge typical of that particular period, and its extent of politicization and formulization saw no parallel in Chinese history. Drawing on possible-world semantics we once conduct an investigation on the New Year Editorials in the *People's Daily* from 1966 to 1976, analyzing their characteristics as "false, high-flown and empty", arriving at the conclusion that the semantic logic inherent in those narratives was to regard the possible as the inevitable and the impossible as the possible or inevitable.⁷

Using twenty-five New Year Editorials in the *People's Daily* from 1979 to 2004 as research material, Huang Min made an analysis of the types of metaphors used in these articles.⁸ Huang's research, complementary to ours, demonstrates the characteristics of journalistic writing in mainland after the policy of opening up and reform was adopted. Huang seeks out the types of metaphor according to the themes of the editorials. For example, with regard to "the change of times" there are three types of metaphor: road, historical record and boat; with regard to "socialist modernization" there are twelve types: road, cabin, war, music, historical record, engineering, flower, spring, fruit, drama, family, and war; with regard to "thought and culture" there is only one type: engineering. Huang points out that according to the frequency of the metaphors, the higher the frequency, the more possible the addressees would grasp the textual meaning based on their experience, and the lower the frequency, the more acceptable they would

⁷ Zhu ke-yi. The Utterance of the New Year's Day Editorial in "the Great Cultural Revolution". *Journal of Guizhou University*, 2001(4).

⁸ Huang Min. Metaphor and Politics: An Investigation on the Metaphor Frame Seen in the New Year Editorials in the *People's Daily* from 1979 to 2004. *Rhetoric Study*, 2006 (2).

⁵ China Times, July 11 th, 2007.

⁶ Shanghai Dictionary Press, 1994.

seem.

The authors of these editorials have, consciously or unconsciously, all chosen metaphor as part of their rhetorical strategy, for the purpose of using vivid and concrete images to replace empty moralizing so as to arouse the readers' feelings and to make cold, serious ideological theories more endearing and acceptable. This type of narrative is totally different from that of the Cultural Revolution period, which was either ungrounded praise or extremely harsh criticism or one-sided comments in the name of class struggle. Chen Songcen summarizes the characteristics of news-writing in the Cultural Revolution period as follows:

A. Frequent and unusual use of some words to demonstrate extreme extent, for example "most most most" and "forever forever"; words or phrases defying common sense, for example "highest peak" and "one sentence equals ten thousand sentences";

B. An increase in the use of imperative and exclamatory sentences in contrast to a decrease in the use of declarative sentences;

C. Use of parallelism, antithesis and repetition becoming prevalent;

D. Frequent citation from works of Marxism and Leninism and Quotations from Chairman Mao to lend political authority to the narrative;

3. CONCLUSION

Since 1949 the journalistic styles in mainland and Taiwan, which are of the same origin, have undergone a process of divergence and convergence, which demonstrates that journalistic style is inevitably subject to the needs of the socio-cultural environment. The similarities shared by both sides are dictated by the national cultural mentality, while the differences between them are caused by their respective socio-political and geographical cultures. Journalistic writing in China has gone through nearly a century's conflict and clash between tradition and modernity, between native and foreign cultures. Were it not for the comparison between the journalistic style in mainland and that in Taiwan, we would not have come to a better understanding of the "Chinese style" and "Chinese manner" of the journalistic writing in mainland and its tendency towards lucidity and simplicity and better acceptability by the masses. Nor would we have understood that the journalistic style in Taiwan differs so much from that in the mainland. It can be inferred that the journalistic styles in Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore, all of the same origin, must also possess something of their own. It is therefore necessary, theoretically and practically, to make comparisons between these different regions in order to get a full picture.

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