

The "Loong" Story

A Decolonial Thinking of Language Policy and Planning in
People's Republic of China

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Abstract

The word “Loong” had been widely used by the state media of the People’s Republic of China in 2024 to replace “Dragon” when referring to the mythological creature that considered to represent the spirit of China in English reports. However, “Loong” is a term connected with the country’s colonial history and is not a standard romanised spelling in the current language used in China. This recent linguistic phenomenon calls for a decolonial lens to investigate the two intertwined concepts, language and culture in China.

This thesis aims at evaluating the current language policy and planning as part of the cultural policy framework in China from a decolonial perspective. As a qualitative single case study with critical discourse analysis, the research focuses on the language standardisation and language ideology in post-1949 China, and their impacts on the intercultural communication strategies of the Chinese government. The theoretical framework and research methodology have created a continuum that places the language policy and planning in the decolonial social and cultural context.

The results indicate an internal colonialism shaped by the language standardisation from a Han-centric cultural perspective in China. Among the three instruments of the Chinese language policy and planning, Chinese Phonetic Alphabet functions as an intermediary between the rest two instruments simplified Chinese character and Putonghua, which is useful in a sense of language learning to increase the literacy rate. It also enables the ideographic Chinese language to form a globalised dialogue in the discourse of modernity, which is still dominated by European languages following the romanised spelling system. However, its function of decolonising the external colonialism in the cosmopolitan modernisation has been built on the Han-centric internal colonialism from the Chinese socialist ideology work lead by CCP, an identity work of defining “Chinese”. Further research on this Han-centric internal colonialism needs to be carried out in the future.

Keywords

Language Policy and Planning (LPP), Cultural Policy, Language Standardisation, Language Ideology, Decoloniality, Chinese Identity

Acknowledgement

This thesis research is formulated based on my personal experience of moving to Finland from China (P.R.C.) in 2022, a change of geographical residence that has brought unexpected impacts on myself – I have observed how language influences cultural and societal practices in a different way, and have also experienced an identity crisis for being a Chinese in the post-pandemic world. This thesis research is the process of me trying to find my own cultural identity through investigating language policy and planning. Along this journey, I want to thank Repkat Parhat for making me aware of the huge gap between being an ethnic majority and an ethnic minority in China; Rong-Ci Zhang for sharing the experience of having a different association with the Chinese language as a Taiwanese; Kristīne Tukre, Simone Spampinato and Yuto Obata for the discussions and experiments of language with music; Mark Reid Bulatović for making the cover artwork, good conversations, all the emotional support and company.

Chinese to English Translation

AI (DeepL) was used for assisting the author in Chinese to English translation in a meaningful way and not for content creation. Below are the different formats of presenting translated texts in this thesis.

Literal Translation

Word-by-word translation is in square brackets following the Chinese term.

E.g. “通用语 [commonly-used language]”, “汉字 [script of the Han people]”

Citing Chinese Text with Provided English Translation

The provided translation is cited, followed by original Chinese text in round brackets.

E.g. The Chinese language law Article V continued to mention that the standard Chinese language “shall be used in such a way as to be conducive to [...] socialist material progress and ethical progress (应当有利于 [...] 社会主义物质文明建设和精神文明建设)”.

Citing Chinese Text with Author’s English Translation

The translation is cited, followed by original Chinese text in square brackets.

E.g. It is to “use words as a spelling unit [以词为拼写单位]” and to “provide rules for participle hyphenation by grammatical word class in each subsection [按语法词类分节规定分词连写规则]” (National Standards of the People’s Republic of China, 2012).

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

According to the Chinese zodiac, lunar year 2024 is also known as the Year of Dragon. However, state media in the People's Republic of China (hereafter "China") struggled with finding an appropriate word in English to refer to the auspicious animal "龙".

With a background in Chinese language studies, linguistics and translation studies, I am interested in studying the Chinese language in a global context. Currently, I am living in Finland. This has provided me an outsider-perspective to evaluate the use of language in China. I have noticed several inconsistencies in the reports from the state-owned CGTN (China Global Television Network, international division of China Central Television) and Xinhua (state news agency). In Pinyin ("Chinese Phonetic Alphabet"), the standard romanisation of the Chinese character "龙" should be spelt as "Long". However, in CGTN's report, it was spelt as "Loong" ("Official Mascot Released", 2023). In two articles published by Xinhua, "Loong" was also mentioned as a preferred translation against the "ferocious, fire-breathing dragon of the West" ("Dragon or Loong", 2024; Yao & Lyu, 2024).

There have been many studies regarding the translation of "龙" from Chinese researchers. Zong and Wang (1996) have questioned the use of "龙" to translate the English word "Dragon" in English-Chinese dictionaries. They have pointed out that those two animals are different in shapes and cultural connotations – "Dragon" in Western concept is a fire-related symbol of evil, while "龙" in Chinese culture is a water-related symbol of luck. Thus, these two terms are not equivalent in meaning. Vice versa, Huang (2006), Qin (2014), Shi and Jia (2007), and Yang (2018) have considered "Dragon" as a mistranslation of the Chinese term "龙", and suggest "Loong" as a better choice.

It is an interesting phenomenon when the state media and researchers in China choose to use "Loong", a term connected with the country's colonial history as both phonetic transcription and translation of the character "龙", the noble cultural symbol as they have mentioned. But if they are looking for a phonetic transcription as the translation, why do they not choose the term "Long" spelled by the Phonetic Alphabets that is in current use? In my opinion, finding a phonetic transcription to translate "龙" is a catch-22 – "Long" follows language standardisation, but causes misunderstanding in English,

“Loong” as a disambiguated alternative is against the language standardisation and the decolonial ideology of the government. This reveals the limitation of the current language policy and planning (LPP) in China, in the framework of which decolonialisation is not incorporated.

“龙” as a symbol with long history, is considered to represent the national spirit and cultural heritage of China. Thus, it is an important cultural image to be translated into English to present Chinese culture and nationalism to the world from the intercultural communication perspective (Huang, 2018; Qin, 2013; Shen, 2019; Wang, 2024; Yang, 2018; Yao & Tang, 2018). Huang (2018) has considered that “Dragon” as the English translation facilitates Western countries’ demonisation of China and brings negative impacts on China’s foreign publicity. However, according to the survey from Yao and Tang (2018), 25 out of 30 interviewees could distinguish the nuance between the Chinese and Western concepts when “Dragon” was used as a translation. Hence, they have concluded that the historical use of “Dragon” as a translation has accumulated specific meanings to explain the Chinese cultural concept, because of cultural fusion and interconnectedness as a result of globalisation.

Wang (2024) has found that the evolution of “Dragon” in the English language originated from the term “Djargron” (meaning “snake-dragon”) in ancient Chinese and to consider the Western concept of “Dragon” as evil is stereotype. This etymological finding urged to facilitate a transcultural dialogue between “Dragon” and “龙”. Meanwhile, the term “Year of the Dragon” has been used in major global news media when covering Chinese New Year 2024, including China Daily, the English newspaper run by the State Council of the People’s Republic of China (“State Council” hereafter). Meanings of “Loong” in Mandarin or “Dragon” in English is nuanced and the choice of using either term should be context-based – “Loong” emphasises the cultural authenticity and origin, while “Dragon” is more globally recognised.

1.2 Problem Formulation

The etymological study of “Dragon” has provided a transcultural strategy to translate “龙” based on the context of intercultural communication (Wang, 2024). However, there is a lack of etymological studies regarding the term “Loong” and its recognition as a preferred translation.

Huang (2018) has mentioned that “Loong” first appeared as the phonetic transcription of “龙” in the book *Elements of Chinese Grammar* written by an English

missionary Joshua Marshman in 1814. He later corrected the finding on his website stating that “Loong” already appeared in Marshman’s earlier book *A Dissertation on the Chinese Language and Character* published in 1809 (Huang, 2024). According to Li & Meng (2019), Marshman created the first English-based phonetic transcription scheme of Chinese characters. The phonetic basis of Marshman’s 1809 and 1814 books was the standard pronunciation of his period (early 19th century) with some Cantonese features. So it is likely that “Loong” is the Cantonese pronunciation of “龙”. The names “Lee Siu Loong (Bruce Lee)” and “Lee Hsien Loong (former Prime Minister of Singapore)” that Huang (n.d.) has listed are both of Cantonese descent. Thus, as a phonetic transcription, “Loong” fails to reflect Mandarin, the modern standard pronunciation of “龙” in China.

Huang (n.d.) has also listed clues from the 19th century that “Loong” was commonly used by English people and the imperial government of the Qing Dynasty. It also appeared on the map *Plan of the English Settlement at Shanghai* as the name of a road “Loong Ze Yuen” in the British Concession. As this period of history is considered as a Semi-colonial period, (State Council of the People’s Republic of China [State Council], 2020), hence the suggestion made in Huang (2006) to use “Loong” as the translation of the culturally important symbol “龙” to “establish the positive images of China in the world” conflicts with the colonial etymology of the term shown in Huang (n.d.).

1.3 Aim of the Thesis

This master’s thesis aims at evaluating the current language policy and planning (LPP) in China from a decolonial perspective as part of the cultural policy framework by examining policies related to the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, an auxiliary tool to romanise Chinese characters in the Chinese writing system. The thesis research will focus on language standardisation and language ideology in China since 1949, and their impacts on the intercultural communication strategies of the Chinese government. I hope to utilise my knowledge in cultural policy frameworks and Chinese language studies to facilitate the epistemology of connecting the current language situation in China to a decolonial framework. Also, due to the current language policy, such a research topic will be censored in China. Thus, it is important for me to do this research in Finland without content censorship.

I will formulate this thesis by answering the research questions:

1. What are the most important instruments in the Chinese LPP? Why are they important?
2. What causes the conflict of language standardisation and language ideology in the current Chinese LPP?
3. What is the approach to think China as an agency of modernity through LPP in a decolonial world order?

1.4 About the Thesis Research

This is a qualitative single case study with critical discourse analysis. Research data consist of non-academic materials, i.e. news, websites, policy papers, and academic materials, i.e. journal articles, books. The Chinese research materials used for this thesis are translated by the author into English. Policy papers in Chinese are acquired on the respective Chinese government websites. Academic journal articles in Chinese are gathered from the data base CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure).

The gathered data are analysed based on research questions, with reflexive thematic analysis as an approach to rapid literature review.

The theoretical framework of the thesis combines language policy and planning (LPP) and decoloniality, and their connecting point in this case study is that China uses language standardisation and language ideologies as instruments of LPP in a decolonial approach.

1.5 Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured into five chapters followed by references and appendices.

Chapter 1 is the introduction, which provides background information, followed by problem formulation, aim of the thesis and research methodology.

Chapter 2 is the theoretical framework with two parts. The first part is Language Policy and Planning: 1) Chinese cultural policy framework and language as an ideological instrument, 2) definition of *language policy and planning*, 3) definition of *language standardisation* and *language ideology*. The second part is Decolonial Approach: 1) The *modernity/coloniality/decoloniality* triad, 2) definition of *compressed modernity*, and 3) a decolonial cultural perspective: from *China as Method* to *Asia as Method*.

Chapter 3 is research methodology of the thesis. The first part presents qualitative approach for my research process: single case study and rapid literature review. The

second part is data collection and analysis. The last part shows critical reflections and limitation of the study.

Chapter 4 is the empirical findings and analysis following the theoretical framework and research methodology.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of the thesis, first answering research questions and second giving recommendations for future studies.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Language Policy and Planning (LPP)

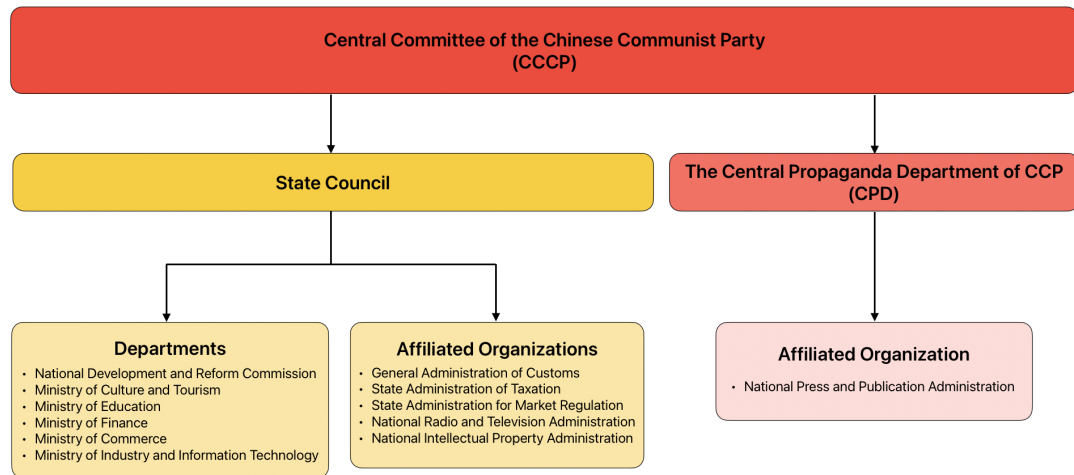
This part places language policy and planning (LPP) in the Chinese cultural policy framework. I will start with briefing the current Chinese cultural policy framework, in which language was first introduced as an ideological instrument. Then I will outline the definition and parameters of LPP by introducing the conceptual development of LPP as an integrative framework, types of language planning, approaches and goals of LPP. Lastly, I will introduce two linguistic concepts language standardisation and language ideology and place them into the framework of LPP. The LPP in China reflects the linguistic nature of the Chinese language, thus I will go through the concept and process of language standardisation, and language ideology as part of the LPP framework, to narrow down the object of thesis research to the Phonetic Alphabets in the modern Chinese writing system.

2.1.1 Chinese Cultural Policy Framework and Language as an Ideological Instrument

The cultural policy framework in China has gone through several phases of development. The current framework was developed since 2001 when China officially joined as a member state of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). To accommodate to the opening of domestic cultural market and the establishment of cultural industries, the cultural policy system was revised since then (Hu, 2019). It is a mixture of openness and protection – with the desire to incorporate into world capitalism while maintaining the traditions in culture and ensuring the governance of the Chinese Communist Party (“CCP” hereafter) (Miller & Yúdice, 2002).

Figure 1

Three levels of cultural policy makers



Note. The figure is created with public information from the Chinese government website (gov.cn), and incorporates the work of Hu (2019).

According to Hu (2019), the structure cultural policy-making entities can be divided into three levels, which corresponds with China’s political system. I have created Figure 1 accordingly based on the latest public information – from the top level, Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (“CCCCP” hereafter) does the general systematic design of the policies, or institutional policies, i.e. national cultural development strategy, cultural system reform. On the second level, the Central Propaganda Department of CCP (“CPD” hereafter) guides and coordinates the systematic reform and cultural undertakings. The State Council functions as the central government, and is the chief administrative authority that enacts cultural administrative regulations and rules. On the third level, relevant ministries and administrations under the State Council and CPD issue and implement cultural industry policies for different sectors (State Council, 2024). Apart from the three levels of decision-making in cultural policy framework, the National People’s Congress is the highest legislative body that formulates laws in the cultural sector.

Chinese cultural policy has two primary objectives. The first objective is to utilise culture and cultural policy as political propaganda by highlighting the long traditions of culture and art, as well as the socialist Chinese ideology. The second objective is to incorporate cultural industries into the national economy, emphasising the economic importance of culture (Shan, 2014; Yi et al., 2021).

The State Council makes the action plans of the Chinese cultural policies according to the Five-Year Plans. Currently, China is implementing *The Fourteenth Five-*

Year Plan for Economic and Social Development and the Vision 2035, which aims at developing a pioneering socialist culture and strengthening cultural soft power (State Council, 2021). As the latest cultural policy strategic plan is ideology-oriented, the research of this thesis will focus on the propaganda and ideology objective of the Chinese cultural policy framework to unpack the causes and effects.

Language was introduced as the first ideological instrument of Chinese cultural policy in the 1950s, based on Stalin's socialistic language theory that language was an instrument of societal changes in the development of socialism. President back then Mao Zedong took Stalin's advice that China could develop their own alphabetical system in language. Since then, developing the Chinese phonetic alphabets became part of the language reforming (Zhou, 1998).

Governmental-structure-wise, the Chinese Character Reform Association was established in 1949 to initiate the changes of the Chinese language as part of the cultural reformation (Wang, 2014). In 1954, the association reorganised into the Chinese Character Reform Committee affiliated to the State Council and later changed its name to State Language Commission ("SLC" hereafter) in 1985. In 1998, the SLC reorganised into the Ministry of Education ("MoE" hereafter) ("State Language Commission", 2024). SLC functions as the official language regulator, and is responsible for the language policy and planning as part of the Chinese cultural policy framework (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China [MoE], n.d. -a).

Policy-wise, *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* was officially launched in 1958, introducing the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet as an auxiliary tool of the writing system. As a participating linguist of the project Zhou Youguang remembered, the rising nationalism of the Chinese people at that time called for a unified pronunciation of the language in addition to a unified script. Thus, the *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* should reflect standard pronunciation of the Chinese language, and Beijing dialect was selected as the phonetic standard (Zhou, 1998).

2.1.2 Definition of Language Policy and Planning

The reinvigoration of language policy and planning (LPP) happened in the 1990s, when social theory was introduced to the field of research. Since then, language planning and language policy became an integrative framework "language policy and planning (LPP)" (Hornberger, 2006).

“Language planning” first appeared as a linguistic term in Haugen’s study of language standardisation in Norway, which includes developing normative orthography, grammar for a community that shares heterogeneous speeches (Hornberger, 2006). Since then, the attempts to change the form or function of the languages were considered as language planning. As “planning” of the language often involves policy decisions, language planning is always intertwined with language policy, thus they integrated into the term LPP (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014). LPP provides a comprehensive framework to explore the intricate dynamics between policy and planning, and their role in facilitating social transformation (Hornberger, 2006).

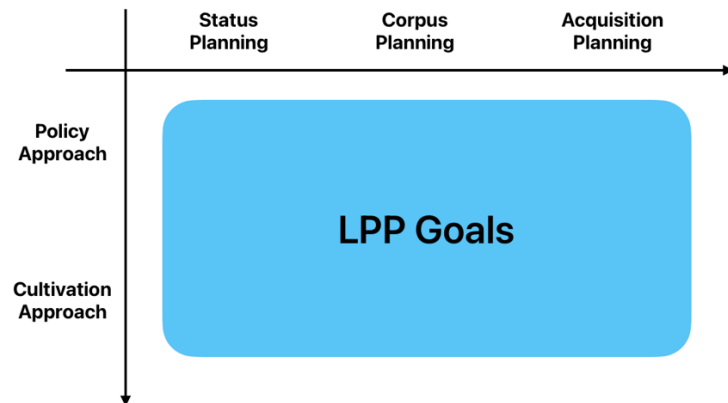
There are three types of LPP – status planning allocates the function of a language in the society; corpus planning develops and standardises variations of a language by enhancing its form or structure; acquisition planning influences the distribution and number of users of a language, which is achieved by creating or enhancing opportunities and incentives for people to learn and use the language (Hornberger, 2006). The three types of LPP are also interconnected, for example, decisions of corpus and status planning often co-occur, as a change in status also involves some internal change (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014).

According to Hornberger (2006), there are two major approaches of LPP – policy and cultivation. The policy approach examines societal and national issues from a broad perspective, highlighting language distribution and primarily focusing on standard language; it is frequently associated with status planning. In contrast, the cultivation approach addresses specific language matters at a more detailed, microscopic level, emphasising the forms of speaking and writing and their spread, and is often seen as synonymous with corpus planning.

The political nature of LPP brings the question that what are goals of LPP. As shown in Figure 2, the types and approaches form the axes of LPP, which creates the parameters to place the choices of goals. Instead of going towards one pre-determined dimension to develop one chosen language, the LPP framework works better with proceeding multiple dimensions at once to pursue the goals (Hornberger, 2006).

Figure 2

Parameters of LPP



Note. The figure is created based on “Figure 2.1 Language policy and planning goals: an integrative framework” from “Frameworks and models in language policy and planning,” by N. H. Hornberger, in T. Ricento (Ed.), *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method* (p. 29), 2006, Blackwell. Copyright 2006 by Blackwell.

2.1.3 Definition of Language Standardisation and Language Ideology

The linguistic nature of the modern Chinese language has influenced the framework of LPP in China. According to Chen (1999), there are three elements of Modern Chinese – spoken Chinese, written Chinese, and the writing system (script and phonetisation). Spoken-language wise, there are seven major dialect groups of Chinese: Mandarin (Northern dialects), Wu, Cantonese, Min, Hakka, Xiang and Gan. And each dialect group has different variations within. With such huge amount of language varieties, the Chinese government tried to define the language that is used within its vast territory by developing a national language to symbolise the unity of the nation – “从‘书同文’向‘语同音’前进 [stepping forward from ‘writing a unified script’ to ‘speaking a unified pronunciation’]” (Zhou, 1998, p. 13). As Wardhaugh and Fuller (2014) has pointed out, “the process of standardisation and the ideology involved in the recognition of a standard are key aspects of how we tend to think of language and languages in general” (p. 33).

Language standardisation is about reducing varieties. The process involves developing grammars, spelling books, dictionaries and a literature (Curzan et al., 2023; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014). Wardhaugh and Fuller (2014) considers the standard as an abstraction, meaning the non-linguist users would consider the standard language as an ideal form of language that would fit into the social condition. It is an idealised norm that perceived as a clearly defined language variety.

According to Holmes (2013), there are four interrelated steps of the language standardisation process:

(1) Selection. It is often a political decision to select one norm from existing dialects to develop as a standard. Choosing one specific variety means choosing a prestigious social identity and enhance the power of those who speaking it, in the meantime, diminishing other varieties and the power of their speakers (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014).

(2) Codification. It is the corpus planning process to standardise the linguistic features of the selected variety.

(3) Elaboration. It is to extend the functions of the selected variety through developing new linguistic tools to handle new concepts and contexts.

(4) Acceptance. It is the status planning of the language to motivate people to take pride in using the language and remain committed to the norm, by working on people's attitudes and associations with the norm.

The established standard is a preferred dialect and an empowered variety. It is no longer considered as a dialect anymore and is often regarded as a language. It becomes an ideology that takes on social, cultural and even political dimensions to be the “‘right’ and ‘proper’ language for the group of people” (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014, p. 38).

Language ideology is considered as “a mediating link between social structures and forms of talk” by Woolard and Schieffelin (1994, p. 55). It is the intersection of linguistic and social theories that links communicative microcultures with broader political and economic issues of power and inequality, addressing how big social forces affect language use (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). The different variations to define “ideology” divide the understanding of language ideology. Here I follow Ricento to define ideology as “[having] to do with legitimating the power of a dominant social group or class” (Eagleton 1991, as cited in Ricento, 2000, p. 209) to place language ideology in the framework of LPP.

According to Ricento (2000), language ideology is often studied in the specific domain of language policy, for example, the connection between ideology of the governmental power of modern politics and the language policy development, and how ideology is connected to language policies in education. Hegemony and ideology have been noticed as two research topics since the first period of LPP work in early 1960s, when decolonisation, structuralism, and pragmatism were central elements of LPP study. Researchers like Fishman see that language planning would reinforce sociocultural and

econotechnical disparities, and it is often related to Westernisation and modernisation process.

Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (hereafter “Scheme”) is an iconic language policy to romanise the Chinese language in China and is written into Article IXX of Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language of the People’s Republic of China (hereafter “Chinese language law”) published in 2000.

This thesis begins with my question about the dilemma of choosing either “Long” or “Loong” to romanise the Chinese character “龙”, after more than 60 years when the Scheme was made. While the standardisation of pronunciation should be reflected in the spelling of phonetic alphabets, the nationalistic ideology as Zhou (1998) mentioned when the Scheme was made seems to have shifted in the era of globalisation. I will further analyse the language standardisation and language ideology reflected in the Scheme and the Chinese language law in the following chapters, and place them into a contemporary global context for further discussions.

2.2. Decolonial Approach

According to Francis (1950), the initiatives of the Western missionaries to romanise the Chinese language excited the efforts of the Chinese people to reform the script, and started the experiments of writing Chinese with Roman alphabets. While such language reform was recognised in China as part of the process to enter modernity, the concept “modernity” was transplanted from a Western colonial context. The question is how do we place the East in the process of global modernity? As modernity is tangled with coloniality and decoloniality, this part will introduce how coloniality has been involved in the modernisation of China, and what are the decolonial approaches to the analysis of language and culture as part of modernisation in East Asia.

I will first start with the conceptual triad *modernity/coloniality/decoloniality* from Argentine researcher Walter Mignolo to outline the framework of decolonial thinking and explain why decolonial thinking should start from language in the Chinese context. Next, I will introduce the concept *compressed modernity* from South Korean researcher Chang Kyung-Sup to provide an East Asian perspective of “modernity”, and a continuum to place the changes that have happened to the modern Chinese language in the social and institutional changes that have taken place in China before and after 1949. Finally, I will outline a decolonial cultural perspective by introducing the development of conceptions from *China as Method* to *Asia as Method*, to locate the placement of China and Chinese

culture in the globalisation – How to relate China to the world? How to shift from the Eurocentric view to understand the complexity of cultural phenomena in China?

2.2.1 The Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality Triad

Coloniality/decoloniality was first introduced by Aníbal Quijano in 1990, when the Cold War was coming to an end and the new world order (globalisation, for example) was about to be established (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Mignolo (2018) has introduced *modernity/coloniality/decoloniality* as a conceptual triad to unpack the Western-oriented epistemology since 1500. He places *modernity/coloniality* as a compound expression – there is no modernity without coloniality, and decoloniality is engendered by modernity/coloniality.

“Modernity/coloniality means, in the sphere of knowledge, that Western institutions and philosophy encroached consistently over the wide and non-Western cultures and civilisations since 1500 whose praxis of living, knowing, and doing were mostly unrelated to Western civilisation” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 138). Such definition has touched upon the foundation of the Western ontology, which was shaped by the epistemology of the Western world to recognise their transcendence of the objects and ideas based on the Western cosmology.

Modern concepts like economy, politics, and history are defined through discourses and narratives (both oral and written) that render the diverse and often fluid activities of peoples intelligible within particular frameworks. As Mignolo (2018) notes, these practices serve to *distinguish, narrate, theorise, critique*, and ultimately *transform* social life into recognisable domains such as economics, politics, and history. This form of knowledge production is institutionally grounded within one civilisation, and, beginning around 1500, these institutions evolved into mechanisms for managing and controlling the processes of knowing and understanding across other civilizations as well. Mignolo (2018) introduces *university* as an example to show the device of Western expansion in fundamental epistemology – this concept of institution was first created by Medieval Christendom and continued during Renaissance, and has been widely spread to the New World alongside colonial expansion. For example, Harvard was established in 1636 as the first transplant of such institution in British America.

Thus, Mignolo (2018) conceptualises *global modernity* and *global coloniality* as two sides of the entangled *global modernity/coloniality*. He argues that modernity (particularly from 1500 to 2000) must be understood not as an isolated or autonomous

process but as a discourse fundamentally embedded within the logic of coloniality. This logic underpins and delimits the development of modernity across the various domains through which the modern world is classified and organised, including the political, economic, religious, epistemic, aesthetic, racial/ethnic, and gendered spheres.

Who are the narrators to portray and define the modern world then? Mignolo (2018) has named the languages in which the conversations have been formed: "...[there] have been and still are the six modern European imperial languages: Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese during the Renaissance; German, English, and French since the Enlightenment" (p. 144). In order to form a dialogue and enter the discourse of modernity, one civilisation has to communicate in at least one of those languages. When European missionaries started their journey to reach China since the 16th century, they were surprised to find out that they needed to learn the Chinese language to communicate and teach the doctrine. As Francis (1950) named the chapter of book "The West Shows the Way", Western missionaries believed their way of notating the Chinese language with Roman alphabets would not only benefit foreigners learning the language but make it easier for Chinese people to access the language as well. They initiated the language reform of Chinese by romanising the script and "were content to let the Chinese take over the further promotion of language reform" (p. 28). Such effort no doubt was to bridge the Chinese language with those European languages that Mignolo (2018) mentioned, to form a ground where modernity could enter China in the 19th century, "an upheaval in the internal order of China" that the Western missionaries imagined (Francis, 1950, p. 28).

When China was defeated in the Opium War in 1840, the whole country realised the superior Western power developed since the Industrial Revolution. Thus, they urged the modernisation process of China and language reform was one of the approaches (Chen, 1999). Since the end of 19th century, the modernisation of the Chinese language was started in terms of increasing literacy, promoting modern education, and establishing a national identity. And they believed that by eliminating the illiteracy and facilitating education with introducing a modern language, the country would turn into a unified modern society (Dong, 2021).

According to Chen (1999) and Dong (2021), the language reform during the modernisation period could be categorised in three dimensions:

(1) The Vernacular Writing Movement. Based on Classical Chinese, Literary Chinese used to be the written form of the language for more than 2000 years, which was difficult to learn and master, and was considered as an obstacle of promoting modern

education in Chinese. The New Cultural Movement took place in the early 20th century to advocate vernacular writing that would correspond better with the spoken language. Literary Chinese was then abolished by the government in 1920, and Vernacular Writing became the new official written language.

(2) Development of a national language. Seeing the successful example of Japan to facilitate the modernisation of the country by promoting a standard spoken language, several Chinese scholars started the National Language Movement. Developed from the Old National Pronunciation in 1919 to the New National Pronunciation in 1932, Beijing dialect was selected to be adopted as phonological basis of the national language in China.

(3) Script reform. Chinese characters used to be the only form of written Chinese since recorded history. However, in the early 20th century, phonetic scripts were considered as a more efficient way to record language, making them more effective for literacy and education. Thus, the script reform took place into two directions – to invent a phonetic writing system and to simplify Chinese characters. Two types of phonetic writing systems were developed. One was based on old and easy Chinese characters, like Phonetic Symbols in 1930. Another was based on Roman alphabets, like Romanised Symbols for the National Language, which was not widely in use because of the learning difficulty; and Latinised New Script, which was the only widely implemented romanised script in the practical literacy movement. From 1928 to 1931, a group of Chinese communist scholars visited the Soviet Union and collaborated with Soviet linguists to develop the system. In the early 1940s, the system was brought into regions of China that were under Communist control (Dong, 2021).

Mignolo (2018) has named two trajectories of coloniality: *the colonisation of time*, which outlines the achievement of the European civilisation after the Renaissance; and *the colonisation of space*, which outlines the invention of the New World. The narratives of modernity differ in these two trajectories. The prefix *post-* is used in the first trajectory, indicating the non-linear appropriation of time. *Newness* is used in the second trajectory, celebrating the ideas of revolution and innovation. *Post-* and *newness* together create the *rhetoric of modernity*, with which modernity “captures the feelings and the imaginary of the population” (p. 140).

Hence, Mignolo (2018) defines coloniality as the enduring and often unintended outcome of modernity’s foundational narratives – an outcome that emerged in the Third World and is deeply rooted in Europe’s external historical expansion. This dynamic underwent a significant transformation through the processes of revolution and

decolonisation. Struggles for independence did not dismantle colonial power structures but rather reshaped them. Direct European control, or outward coloniality, was replaced by internal colonialism, wherein local elites took over the governance of newly independent nation-states, continuing to structure them according to the European model of modernity (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

While 16th-century Western missionaries considered Chinese culture “was in many respects even higher than that of the Europeans themselves” (Francis, 1950, p. 14), after the defeat of the Opium War in 1840, Chinese people started to consider Western culture more superior and adopted the concept of modernity as a more advanced form of culture. This change of mindset has made China fall into the risk of internal colonialism since the 19th century. What is the best way to understand such *rhetoric of modernity* brought to China by coloniality? And how do we find a decolonial approach in the Chinese context?

“Decoloniality is first and foremost liberation of knowledge” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 146). Instead of relying on the entities and institutions that create the narratives of modernity, decoloniality proposes to create its own imaginary of modernity and delink from the modernity/coloniality entanglement. Decoloniality calls for an awareness of the multiplicity of worldviews, resisting the imposition of Western ontological frameworks onto non-Western epistemologies. As Mignolo (2018) notes, while Western thought tends to prioritise entities and discrete objects, many cultures and civilisations around the world conceptualise reality primarily through relationships – forms of understanding that are often excluded from what is conventionally considered ontological. It is what Mignolo (2018) has named “pluriversality” – a shift from being universal to pluriversal, not a single totality.

Since language was considered as one of the most effective instruments in early modern China from 1840 to 1949, the decoloniality should also start from here by applying decolonial approaches to the LPP in China from 1949 on. This includes a reflection of the historical impact of the language reform during the early modern China before 1949, and seeking a decolonial lens through the current Chinese LPP. Also, an alternative definition of “modernity” is needed to provide a contemporary Asian perspective to understand the current social context where language and modern culture grow in China.

2.2.2 Definition of Compressed Modernity

The 2020 Oscar winner film *Parasite* reveals the struggling life of underclass people in South Korea to the world. The everyday realities reflected in the film is what South Korean researcher Chang Kyung-Sup has conceptualised as *compressed modernity* to explain the “extreme changes, rigidities, complexities, intensities, and imbalances in South Korean life and [...] interrelationships among such traits and components” (Chang, 2022, p.5).

Compressed modernity is an important theory developed to be part of the global debates on comparative modernities in the field of research, providing the Korean/Asian perspectives. It is a condition in which economic, political, social, and cultural transformations characteristic of modernity occur in an extremely condensed time frame and coexist in a highly compressed form. This results in overlapping and contradictory social changes, where traditional and modern, authoritarian and democratic, and local and global elements interact intensely within a society (Chang, 2010b).

It emphasises a *time-space condensation* and describes the postcolonial social changes since the late 20th century, addressing the intricate and ambiguous social realities caused by the rapid modernisation movements within extremely condensed framework of time and space in the late modern world (Chang, 2022). Asia as mentioned in this thesis is specifically referring to East Asia, and to clarify the East Asian countries involved in the thesis research, I apply Chang’s (2010a) categorisation of East Asia as Northeast Asia that excludes Southeast Asia, mainly about South Korea and China, sometimes involving Japan.

Chang (2010a) introduces the concept of compressed modernity to characterise the rapid and multifaceted trajectory of South Korea's modernisation. This process encompassed intense phases of capitalist industrialisation, economic expansion, urbanisation, proletarianisation, and democratisation – all occurring within remarkably condensed timeframes. Despite these accelerated transformations, South Korean society continues to exhibit pronounced traditional and indigenous elements across various dimensions of personal, social, and political life. It is recognised by scholars that compressed modernity is a broad experience of East Asian countries as well. For example, Japan went through a condensed catch-up modernisation paradigm in the early modern history. Then the experience from Japanese Meiji Restoration became a reference for South Korea during the Park Chung Hee’s government to stage an autocratic restructuring

of politics, justified by claims of political stability and economic catch-up, known as the “October Refurbishment”. As a political economic race between the state-socialist and capitalist countries, the Stalinist heavy industrialisation adopted in the newly established socialist China was perceived to boost the economy with a strategy of condensed industrialisation (p. 320).

To differentiate from the influence of Western modernity in the early modern history of East Asia, the concept *second modernity* from socialist Ulrich Beck has been adopted by the compressed modernity theory, as into the 21st century, the mutually competitive nature of national development has propelled East Asian societies into a civilisational race toward greater prosperity and global prominence (Chang, 2010a). Beck and Grande (2010) acknowledges “a fundamental transformation of society and politics *within* Modernity (from First to Second Modernity)” (p. 410). That is, to adapt the classical (first) modernity values to different social contexts and pursue them with different social institutions under a cosmopolitan framework – the “methodological cosmopolitanism” that Beck advocates. The concept serves as a foundation for understanding compressed modernity, as it engages directly with and mirrors the global dynamics and structural conditions that critically shape the experience of modernity within societies undergoing late modernisation (Chang, 2022).

East Asia’s second modernity is interpreted by Chang (2010a) “within a continuum of compressed modernity that has civilisationally characterised East Asian societies in diverse periods and to varying extents since the late 19th century”(p. 319). Consequently, compressed second modernity has been the aim of East Asian countries to achieve development, as an unavoidable result of their subjection to cosmopolitan forces. Emerging patterns of structures and changes in the society comprise the different dimensions of compressed modernity. In order to analyse the formation and transformation of compressed modernity in one country, a complete and systematic examination of the country’s historical and structural conditions within the global framework is needed. Thus, the theory *entangled modernities* from socialist Göran Therborn is adopted by the compressed modernity framework to describe the series of interactions and connections between different agencies of modernity (local and international), and their social and institutional outcomes (Chang, 2010a, 2022).

These two dimensions are what Therborn (2003) has named two “general processes of the making of modernity”. First, modernity is inherently entangled with certain elements of tradition, due to the constant incompleteness of modern ruptures with

the past and the inherent adaptability of most traditions. Second, the diverse and interrelated socio-political trajectories have created the geo-historical entanglements to and through modernity

Chang (2010a) sees that compared to South Korea, the socialist institutions, values, and interests have made the modernity even more compressed in contemporary China. The important role that language played in the early Chinese modernity (first modernity) has been acknowledged in the development of the modern Chinese language. However, the historical linguistic perspective is not able to fully cover the social institutions and structures that contribute to the language reform. Due to the change of ideological structure and political force in power in 1949, there is a lack of continuity of the discourse to reflect such social and institutional changes that influenced the shape of the Chinese national language. By placing the pre-1949 Chinese language reform and post-1949 Chinese LPP in a continuum of compressed modernity, two dimensions can be brought to my later analysis of language standardisation and language ideology in China – the modernity-tradition and geo-historical perspectives in correspondence with the two axes of compressed modernity.

2.2.3 A Decolonial Cultural Perspective: From China as Method to Asia as Method

Currently, China implements “soft power” as a comprehensive approach towards second modernity, and culture as an instrument (Chang, 2010a; De Kloet et al., 2020). Li et al. (2023) have termed a “decolonial cultural perspective”, which offers a critical framework for re-evaluating dominant epistemologies. Within this framework, they propose the concept of *China as Method* as a valuable approach for scholars across the humanities and social sciences. This approach encourages a critical interrogation of Eurocentric assumptions while simultaneously cautioning against the adoption of an essentialist Sinocentric stance, particularly in the context of Asian studies.

To understand China’s position in the East Asian compressed modernity, it is important to emphasise China’s historical impacts with neighbouring Asian countries (Chang, 2010a). For thousands of years of history, China has always been a source of epistemological ambiguity regarding the societal structures of Asian civilisation. The physical threat and cultural influences from China have pushed Korea and Japan to develop their national consciousness and relevant state systems. China does not align with the typical framework of a modern nation-state. Instead, its structure has historically been shaped by a dynamic and fluid system that blends political and military influence – often

exercised without direct governance – with expansive ethno-social networks, shared cultural practices, and commonly held, though sometimes contested, political and historical narratives (Chang, 2010a).

The starting point *China as Method* was first introduced by Mizoguchi (2016) to describe the power and influence of sinology and place the discussions of Chinese culture into a pluralistic framework of modernity. It emphasises the use of China not only as an object of study but as a methodological lens for understanding historical and social development beyond rigid nation-state frameworks shaped by Western modernity. It is a pluralistic world that takes China as a constitutive element and Europe as another constitutive element. Shifting from “China vs. the outside world” or forcing the “world” history staged by the Europeans on China, one should be aware that different stages of the historical changes in China took place in a different social historical context and “one could also rethink the meaning of history for humanity based on the recognition of a plurality of stages of development” (p. 518).

With China’s rising power in the global order, power dynamics among Asian countries are increasingly unbalanced. Different researchers have demonstrated several conceptions to further shift from the Western-oriented perspective to make definitions such as “Sino”, “China” and “Chineseness”, and “locate various discourses of China in the cross-border/cross-national cultural interactions in and beyond Asia” (Li et al., 2023). Seeing the assumption of “China as an externalised, separate, and self-contained ‘Other’” (Franceschini & Loubere, 2022, p. 6), Franceschini & Loubere (2022) considers that China cannot be studied in an isolated context, and proposes *Global China as Method* “as a broader theoretical approach to the country, its position in the world, and its international engagements” (p. 7).

Zhang (2023) has described *Chineseness* as “an open process of identity work” (p. 514) – one is from the European perspective that uses “Sino” to name Chineseness in order to understand such a different ancient civilisation; the other is from the post-1949 geopolitical “Greater China” region questioning “who holds the authority to define Chineseness” (p. 514). With the paralleled existence of several different “Chineseness”, apart from the “ethnically, linguistically, geopolitically, or culturally” (p. 515) defined Chinese from one’s own perspective, “identity also means how others see oneself, and even force oneself into certain categories” (p. 515). It would also be helpful in the case of Chinese diaspora to analyse the identity struggle. Thus, Zhang (2023) proposes

Chineseness as Method to treat Chineseness as “a constitutive element of the world” and as “relational to other identity works such as Thainess or Malaysianness” (p. 516).

Regarding knowledge production, Chen (2010) argues that global histories of colonialism and imperialism have profoundly influenced the development of Eurocentric perspectives within academic traditions, particularly those rooted in the West. In response to this, *Asia as Method* is proposed as a way to reposition Asia not merely as an object of Western analysis, but as a historically active and dynamic participant in global processes. Although many Asian scholars receive their academic training within Western systems, they often employ Western theoretical frameworks to analyze and interpret Asian contexts. Keane (2023) highlights the ongoing challenge faced by Chinese scholars, who frequently attempt to reconcile Western theories (usually Marxist in orientation) with indigenous discourses. This tension is evident in recurring debates within cultural studies, particularly those centred on the relationship between Chinese and Western forms of modernity. Keane observes that China stands apart from both the West and other Asian regions in distinct ways, and it is precisely these differences that open up new possibilities for cross-cultural dialogue.

When colonial era ended in Asia in the late 20th century, China began to draw upon narratives such as the “century of humiliation” to foster nationalistic sentiment and promote a sense of unity. Keane (2023) contrasts this with Western models of governance, which tend to emphasise individual autonomy through mechanisms of governmentality. In contrast, China places a stronger emphasis on social cohesion and order, drawing on Confucian values that prioritise harmony over dissent. This emphasis on societal homogeneity and a collective discourse of governance contributes to a sense of national stability. Meanwhile, Western societies – shaped by immigration, refugee movements, and diverse identity politics – operate through different power structures, where individuals often seek personal validation and the assertion of individual discourse power (Keane, 2023).

From *China as Method* to *Asia as Method*, this theoretical framework provides a decolonial cultural perspective to see the Chinese culture through the Chinese language, especially the discourse of Chinese culture within the policies and plannings of the language in China. It also provides a decolonial methodology that resonates with the research methodology in the following chapter. It emphasises first my own identity as a Chinese person living in Europe (my definition of “Chineseness”); second the resources of the knowledge that I have acquired to carry out this thesis research are mostly based

on Western theories; third the placement of discourse in my analysis when relating China to the global context. Moreover, I must deal with the Sinocentrism reflected in the enclosed Chinese academic database due to language and resources. Thus, the decolonial cultural perspective in this thesis is double-sided – one is to admit the limit of applying Western theories into the Chinese discourse and find a way to reveal the Chinese discourse; the other is to make the knowledge written in Chinese accessible to the non-Chinese-speaking world and make aware the plurality of conceptions.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the design of this thesis research. While my interest of research is in language, the research topic I choose to study LPP in the cultural policy framework, which is at the intersection of cultural policy and sociolinguistics. Meanwhile, I hope to analyse the LPP in China specifically with a decolonial approach to reflect on the current global context. Thus, I am seeking a multidisciplinary methodology for this research.

This is a qualitative single case study with critical discourse analysis. Research data consist of non-academic materials, i.e. news, websites, policy papers, and academic materials, i.e. journal articles, books. The Chinese research materials used for this thesis are translated into English by me. Policy papers in Chinese are acquired on the respective Chinese government websites. Academic journal articles in Chinese are gathered from the data base CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure). The gathered data are analysed based on research questions, with reflexive thematic analysis as an approach to rapid literature review.

3.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research pins research *practice* at the centre (Seale et al., 2007). It first started in the research of human disciplines like anthropology, and has subsequently been widely used in other social science disciplines. It is multimethod in focus to place the study in their natural settings, and interpret the phenomena from the subjective perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research entails the purposeful gathering and analysis of diverse empirical materials – such as case studies, personal narratives, introspective accounts, life histories, interviews, observations, historical documents, interpersonal interactions, and visual media, capturing both everyday experiences and complex, meaningful events in individuals' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Apart from these research materials (or “data”), qualitative research also engages with various things and people, for example “social theories, philosophical debates, values, methods texts and traditions, reports of other research studies, research participants, research audiences, funders and commissioners, publishers, conference organisers, teachers and examiners, the researcher’s own past experience and present hopes” (Seale et al., 2007, p. 3).

As the research topic of this thesis is at the intersection of cultural policy, sociolinguistics and decolonial studies, it is critical for me to incorporate diverse research materials and methods to make sense of such a plural research subject. Thus, qualitative research is the most suitable methodology in the scope of social science that enables me to develop my research framework with multiple approaches.

3.1.1 Single Case Study

I place my study of language policy and planning as part of the Chinese cultural policy framework, which is deeply related to the societal and political context of China.

The case study methodology is used when the qualitative inquiry falls into a specific context (Sneed et al., 2020). As defined in Schwandt & Gates (2018), “a case is an instance, incident, or unit of something and can be anything – a person, an organization, and event, a decision, an action a location like a neighborhood, or a nation-state.” Single case study as an approach is “appropriate in cases that are understood to be rare and unique, where document of the case is essential” (Sneed et al., 2020, p. 2).

In this thesis research, the case to be examined is the LPP in China, a single bounded cultural policy system. And the aim of the research is to find the instruments and features of the system that are unique in the world. It is also important to address such uniqueness of LPP in China through this single case study, to make aware of the Chinese cultural policy model in the contemporary global context.

3.1.2 Rapid Literature Review

The research subject of this thesis is language, that is dynamic and under constant change. Thus, there are always newly generated research materials to be collected and analysed. In this case, I choose to use rapid literature review (RLR) instead of the standard systematic literature review (SLR).

RLR is a defined methodology in 2021 to be an alternative to SLR (Smela et al., 2023). Methodologically, RLR is designed to be conducted within shorter timeframes and through more streamlined procedures than SLR, while still upholding transparency and minimising potential bias. Essential elements of the RLR process include the formulation of a clear research question, the development of a search strategy, a simplified approach to selecting studies, systematic data extraction, and measures to ensure quality and reliability (Smela et al., 2023).

Also, when handling policy-related studies, RLR is a practical and effective tool given the limited timeframe and resources to stay focused on specific questions and reaffirm the existing recommendation statements (Smela et al., 2023). Thus, instead of going through the historical materials of the Chinese LPP, i.e. ancient period, pre-modern period or pre-1949, this thesis research will focus on analysing the materials that are related or contributed to the current LPP in China.

3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis is an important part of this thesis research design, and the principles are as follows: reflective to the current language-related issues in China, meanwhile not isolating China from the other parts of the world. Thus, the research data consist of academic and non-academic materials in both Chinese and English languages.

Due to the different internet service policies between China and European Union, I mainly use Google as the search engine, which is not available in China, for non-academic materials (news, websites, policy papers etc.) to avoid potential content censorship of the search results. Meanwhile, I use Baidu, the search engine based in China, as a cross-reference for the non-academic materials in Chinese.

Policy papers in Chinese are acquired on the respective Chinese government websites. Academic journal articles in Chinese are gathered from the data base CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure). All Chinese research materials used for this thesis are translated into English by myself if there is no English version available, which reflects my subjectivity during the qualitative research process.

3.2.1 Research Data

Even though this thesis begins with reflecting on how to translate “龙” in 2024, it has been a long-addressed research topic in China since the 1990s. Also, the LPP that is related to the problem can be dated back to the period when China was first established in 1949. Thus, in addition to the data regarding current LPP in China, I also include research data that can provide the historical context with the timeframe from 1949 on. The research data consist of non-academic materials, i.e. news, websites, policy papers, and academic materials, i.e. journal articles, books.

3.2.2 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

“Knowledge production is political; the knowledge produced through qualitative approaches is validated or contested differently in different places” (Braun & Clarke,

2024, p. 385). As a recent approach to centre the active role that the researcher plays in analysing data, *reflexive* thematic analysis was named in 2019 as a specific approach to thematic analysis. It conceptualises coding and theme development as organic processes, and addresses the unavoidable subjectivity of the interpretative work of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2024).

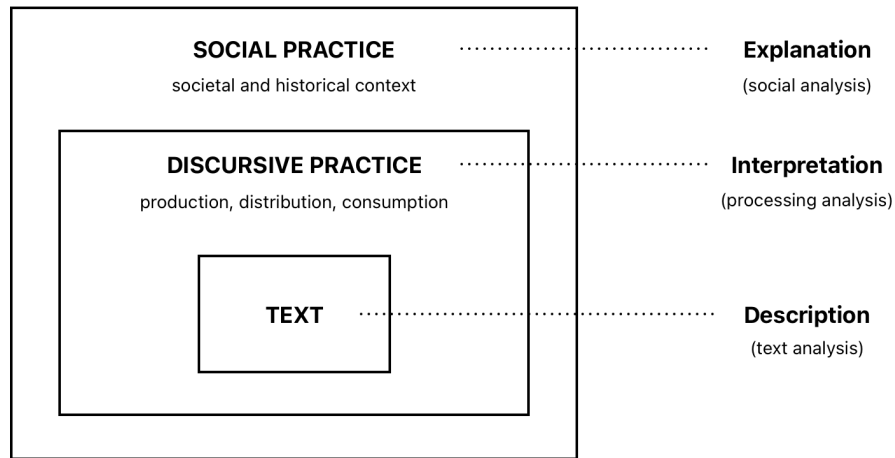
There are six analytic phases of doing reflexive thematic analysis: “(1) data familiarization; (2) data coding; (3) generating initial themes; (4) reviewing and developing themes; (5) refining, defining and naming themes; and (6) writing the report” (Braun & Clarke, 2024, p. 390). The process provides much flexibility around research questions. It enables the research questions to evolve as the data collection and analysis deepens the understanding (Braun & Clarke, 2024).

Doing reflexive thematic analysis can take into account the subjectivity of translated research data of this thesis. Also, given the theoretical frameworks of LPP and decoloniality, reflexive thematic analysis enables the potential development of my research questions towards different directions where cultural policy, sociolinguistics and decolonial studies intersect.

3.2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

The “linguistic turn” in the 20th century thought has centred language as the discourse functioning ideologically within social contexts. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was thus developed to work with language and consider it as a fragment of political and socio-cultural contexts (Locke, 2004; Statham, 2022). CDA acknowledges the interrelation between discourse, power, and ideology, aiming to uncover and question the influence of dominant systems that sustain and maintain societal hierarchies and inequalities (Statham, 2022).

Fairclough developed a CDA model that analyses language with three dimensions: text, discursive practice and social practice. Each dimension corresponds with description, interpretation and explanation that are segments of analysing the social role of language (see Figure 3). Description is to identify the form of text, i.e. lexicon, grammar, metaphor. Interpretation is to analyse the processes of production and consumption of text, especially the different ways of interacting with the text through intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Explanation is to analyse the relationship between interaction and social context, evaluating how the text interacts with ideologies and power relations in the societal and historical context (Statham, 2022).

Figure 3*Three-dimensional model of CDA*

Note. This figure is created based on Fairclough's CDA model and incorporates the work of Statham (2022)

Linguistic analysis is involved and unavoidable in this thesis research. However, it is not the focus of this thesis to analyse the linguistic nature of the Chinese language. Instead, the semantic feature of the language prompts the discursive practice as a way of categorising social classes – different interpretations of the same text reflect the classification of different social groups.

LPP falls into the discursive practice of the social group in power. Language standardisation reallocates the hierarchy of language in social practice. While CDA takes the ideology of language into account, interpretations of the policy-making processes and explanations of the societal impact of the LPP will be the main approaches of my analysis.

3.3 Critical Reflections and Limitation of the Research

Language and culture are two intertwined concepts in the Chinese context. Thus, I choose to focus on LPP as my study of cultural policy framework in this thesis. And academic research materials in Chinses are all within a closed ecosystem – database CNKI monopolises academic materials in China, making Chinese academic materials even more inaccessible to researchers outside the country. Such Sinocentrism reflected from the language and discourse echoes with the decolonial theme of my thesis, which is to connect China with the current global context. This choice is based on my cultural and educational background, and I try to frame the theoretical background in LPP and

decolonial approach to make sense for readers to understand the context of this thesis research.

Language standardisation in China took place in both characters and pronunciations. To accommodate to the scope and framework of this thesis research, I limit my study of the language standardisation to the Phonetic Alphabet that annotates the pronunciations of Chinese characters. Also, I have decided to include limited decolonial analysis of the late modern history in China (1840-1949). Even though that period is strongly connected to the country's colonised history, the CCP was not yet the governmental power. Thus, in order to reduce interference of different discourse ideologies, I only include materials related to language reform from late modern China as a cross-reference of the relevant research materials generated after 1949. The focus of decolonial study in this thesis will be limited to the timeframe from 1949 onwards.

Apart from my political bias and values, my subjectivity is strongly presented in this thesis research – the language used in the thesis and way of approaching Chinese materials. My previous studies of linguistics were mainly based on Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics and Michael Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, both have shaped my view of language as a semiotic system where meanings are generated and exchanged. Thus, my understanding of the Chinese language is placed in an academic-linguistic context that is different from the daily language used in China.

It is important to acknowledge the limitation of the research due to the translation between Chinese and English, given the nuance of terminologies in different research languages. Especially when I include materials from researchers both in China and Europe, I must take into account the different positions and ideologies of the researchers. There can be misreading based on my position and ideology as a Chinese person living in Europe, and using reflexive analysis will also reflect my ideological struggle of a native Chinese-speaking person living outside China.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter introduces empirical findings of the research data following the theoretical framework LPP and decolonial approach. I will first define LPP in the Chinese context given the nuance of translating terms in different research languages. Then, I will list my findings with preliminary analysis about language standardisation in China and how language ideology is constructed. Finally, I will give my further analyses with decolonial approach and categorise them into three themes that are related to the goals of the Chinese LPP.

4.1 Definition of LPP in the Chinese Context

As mentioned in Chapter 2, “language policy” and “language planning” are two concepts created since the 1960s in Europe and then became an integrated system “language policy and planning (LPP)”. The concept and term LPP did not exist in Chinese in first place until it was translated and used by Chinese scholars in the 1990s (Zhou, 2019). “Policy” was translated into 政策, and “planning” was translated into 规划. In Chinese, the word 政策 emphasises a broad perspective and is placed on the official level; 规划 emphasises an overall strategic design for a long term (Li, 2016).

Thus, Chinese researchers usually understand “language policy” and “language planning” as two equivalents. Language planning is all the planned and organised works and activities regarding language and scripts done by the government or social entities to solve the problems occurred in the language communication. It is the concrete embodiment of language policy. There are two levels of language policy. On the macro level, it is to decide and promote the official standard language of the country, or a national common language; to decide or reform the script and promote the script as the written form of the national common language or the standard language. On the micro level, it is about making norms and standards. For example, the pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar of the national common language or the standard language; detailed guides to promote the script, written form of the national common language or the standard language. The macro and micro levels are very close to the concepts “status planning” and “corpus planning” respectively from the original definition of LPP (Li, 2016).

It is worth mentioning that Chinese terms “通用语 [commonly-used language]” and “共同语 [a jointly-spoken language]” are both translated into “common language” by Chinese researchers, and “national common language” in Chinese means “国家通用语 [a nationwide

commonly-used language]”. Meanwhile, “national common language” and “standard language” in English are in mixed use by Chinese researchers and policy papers, but the Chinese term “标准语 [a standardised language]” is rarely used. Instead, “通用语 [commonly-used language]” has been used in a way to mean “标准语 [a standardised language]”.

According to Zhou (2019), the Chinese government usually uses the term “语言文字工作 [language and script work]” or “语文建设 [language construction]” to refer to language policy and language planning. As the conceptions “language policy” and “language planning” are intertwined in the Chinese context, I use LPP to refer to the policies and documents related to language published by the central government of China. I will categorise three dimensions of language standardisation by going through the Chinese LPP from 1949 to present day and provide a context and continuum for further analysis.

4.2 Three Dimensions of Language Standardisation in China

As a continuing movement of the previous language reform carried out by the Republic of China government and the Chinese Soviet Republic (a state within China founded by the CCP) before 1949, Language Reform was still the focus of the CCP central government in the early years of the newly established People’s Republic of China, which was about to simplify the Chinese characters, to promote Putonghua [common language] and to make the *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* (Zhou, 2019). These three intertwined reforms have formed the three dimensions of language standardisation in China since 1949.

On October 24, 1955, *Guangming Daily* published a leading article “The Great Beginnings of Script Reform Work”, which pointed out that at the current stage of the country’s development, the Chinese characters can no longer be fully adapted to the needs of all aspects of modern life and meet the demands of the people. The country’s script must be reformed, and the direction of the reform was to switch to the phonetic spelling script. Before the phonetic spelling can be achieved, the two urgent issues of simplifying Chinese characters and promoting Putonghua must be first resolved (*Language Planning Editorial*, 1985).

On 31 October 2000, the Chinese language law was published as the first legal document for language and script. Since then, simplified Chinese character has been enacted as the standard written script; Putonghua has been enacted as the standard spoken Chinese language; and *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* has been enacted as the standard romanisation of Chinese characters.

4.2.1 Simplified Chinese Character: Standard Modern Chinese Script

Chronicle of Simplifying Chinese Characters. According to MoE (n.d.-b), on 10 October 1949, the Chinese Character Reform Association was established and was reorganised into the Chinese Character Reform Committee directly affiliated to the State Council in 1954. In 1953, CCCP founded the Central Committee for Script Issues and the “Instruction on the Discussion of Simplifying Chinese Characters” was published in 1954. In 1955, Ministry of Culture and the Chinese Character Reform Committee together published the *First Collation of Variant Characters*, which included 810 sets of character variants. In total, 1865 Chinese characters were simplified into 810 characters.

In 1956, layout of all newspapers in China were changed from the traditional way of vertical reading to the modern way of horizontal reading. On 31 January 1956, People’s Daily, the official newspaper of CCCP published the *Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters*, which included three parts: part one was the “First List of Simplified Chinese Characters” containing 230 simplified Chinese characters, which were already on trial by most newspapers and magazines and would be in common use nation-wide on all printed and written materials since 1 February 1956. And apart from reprinting ancient documents or for special purposes, all traditional Chinese characters should no longer be used in printing. Part two was the “Second List of Simplified Chinese Characters” containing 285 simplified Chinese characters. Part three was the “List of Simplified Chinese Character Radicals” containing 54 simplified Chinese character radicals (the indexing component of a Chinese character, based on which the list of a dictionary is created). The listed 515 Simplified characters contain 4206 strokes in total, with an average 8.17 strokes per Chinese character that is half the amount of strokes of the equivalent traditional characters (“Simplification of Chinese Characters”, 1991).

In 1964, the Chinese Character Reform Committee, Ministry of Culture and MoE published the Joint Announcement about Simplified Characters under the approval of the State Council. Later that year, *General List of Simplified Chinese Characters* was published, containing three lists – 350 simplified Chinese characters that cannot be used as character radicals were contained in the first list; 132 simplified Chinese characters that can be used as character radicals and 14 simplified Chinese character radicals were contained in the second list; the third list contained 1753 simplified Chinese characters created based on combining characters from the second list.

The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) paused almost all the works related to the language reform, including the continuing effort to simplifying Chinese characters. From 1975 to 1977, the Chinese Character Reform Committee resumed the work on the *Second Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters (Draft)* that was published on 20 December 1977. The Second Scheme contained two lists of 853 simplified characters in total, and 248 simplified characters on the first list were put on trial use on newspapers and magazines since the publication. About six months later, those newly-created simplified characters received negative feedback for causing misunderstandings and were thus stopped in use from late 1978 (Fu, 1982; Xie, 2006). In 1986, the State Council approved SLC's motion to abolish the Second Scheme and republish the *General List of Simplified Chinese Characters* to solve the confusion of usage and to keep the form of Chinese script unchanged for a longer period of time ("Simplification of Chinese Characters", 1991; State Council, 1986).

Shan (2001) has mentioned that, for the requirements of language teaching, codification of dictionaries and information processing of Chinese characters, SLC started to work on *List of Frequently Used Characters in Modern Chinese* and *List of Commonly Used Characters in Modern Chinese* since 1986. "Frequently used characters" refer to the characters that are often used in a period of time and must be mastered in order to read general newspapers and books. "Commonly used characters" belong to a larger scope than "Frequently used characters", that is the characters that are used in publication and printing, the compilation of dictionaries and the mechanical and information processing of Chinese characters for a period of time. "Commonly Used Characters in Modern Chinese" refer to the characters used in the modern times; and "commonly used characters" are characters for general purposes, excluding the specialised characters used only in specialised disciplines and industries.

On 26 January 1988, *List of Frequently Used Characters in Modern Chinese* containing 3500 characters was published by SLC and MoE jointly. The first section of the list contained 2500 characters for primary-school level of literacy and the second section of the list contained 1000 characters for secondary-school level of literacy. On 25 March 1988, *List of Commonly Used Characters in Modern Chinese* containing 7000 characters was jointly published by SLC and the National Press and Publication Administration to replace the *List of Printing General Chinese Character Glyphs* containing 6196 characters published by Ministry of Culture and the Chinese Character Reform Committee in 1965.

The State Council announced and published the *List of General Standard Chinese Characters* made by MoE and SLC in 2013. It is the current reference of the standard Chinese characters. The List has developed and merged the *First Collation of Variant Characters* (1955), *General List of Simplified Chinese Characters* (republished 1986), *List of Frequently Used Characters in Modern Chinese* (1988) and *List of Commonly Used Characters in Modern Chinese* (1988). It contains in total 8105 characters of three levels: the first level contains 3500 frequently used characters to serve the needs for basic education and literacy; the second level contains 3000 characters that are of less frequent use than level one. The 6000 characters from the first and second level are for the general use in publication and printing, the compilation of dictionaries and processing Chinese characters with computer technology. The third level contains 1605 characters that are used in family names, first names, place names, scientific and technical terms, and characters frequently used in the Literary Chinese texts from primary and secondary school textbooks that are not included in the previous two levels. The third level of characters meet the needs of specialised fields closely related to the life of the general public in the information age (State Council, 2013).

Script of the Han People. The standard modern Chinese script mentioned in the Chinese policy papers is 汉字, which is literally translated into “the script of the Han people”. The English version of the Chinese language law uses the translation “Chinese character” to mean “汉字 [the script of the Han people]”. To be consistent with the policies, this thesis uses the English term “Chinese character”, and the difference between the two translations reflects the ideological choice and the hierarchy of social groups reflected in the LPP, which will be further discussed in the language ideology. Also, the choice of using the English translation “Chinese character” in the official documents instead of the standard romanisation of the term “Hanzi” conflicts with the standard itself, which will be analysed later in the goals of LPP.

4.2.2 Putonghua: Standard Modern Chinese Pronunciation

Chronicle of Promoting Putonghua. From 15 to 23 October 1955, the First National Conference on Script Reform was held in Beijing. Wu Yuzhang, Director of the Chinese Character Reform Committee made a presentation titled “Characters Must be Reformed Under Certain Conditions [文字必须在一定条件下加以改革]”; and Zhang Xiruo, Minister of Education made a presentation titled “To Vigorously Promote the Use of the Beijing Dialect as the Standard Pronunciation of Putonghua [大力推广以北京语音为标准音

的普通话]”。After the heated discussions, the conference concluded that the Chinese characters must be reformed, and that the fundamental reform of the Chinese characters should take the direction towards phonetic alphabet, which was common to all scripts in the world; and that at present, the gradual simplification of the Chinese characters and the vigorous promotion of the Putonghua (the common language of the Han people, with the Beijing phonetic system as the standard), were suitable to the urgent demands of the people of the whole country and the needs of the socialist construction of the country. The promotion of Putonghua [common language], in particular, would prepare important conditions for the fundamental reform of the Chinese characters (“First National Conference”, 1985).

In 1956, the State Council established the Central Working Committee for the Promotion of Putonghua and published the Instructions on the Promotion of Putonghua (hereafter “Instructions”). The Instructions pointed out that the basis for the unification of the Han language [汉语] pronunciation already existed, which was “Putonghua”, with phonetics from Beijing dialect as the standard pronunciation, Northern dialects (Mandarin) as the basic dialect, and standard modern vernacular writings as the grammatical norm. The promotion of this common language in the cultural and educational system and in all aspects of people’s lives was the main method of promoting the complete unification of the Han language (State Council, 2005).

According to Li (2022), there have been three phases of promoting Putonghua. Phase one was from 1955 to 1985, when dialects still dominated daily communications, and the literacy rate of the whole country was at a lower point. The 1955 conference decided the strategy of “Focused Implementation, Progressive Popularisation [重点推行, 逐步普及]”, which was updated to “Vigorous Promotion, Focused Implementation, Progressive Popularisation [大力提倡, 重点推行, 逐步普及]” in 1957. The southern part of China was the focused region to promote Putonghua, because of the great variety of southern Chinese dialects. Cities, schools, adolescents, public service institutions (e.g. transportation, post office, business) and their employees were the target groups to promote speaking Putonghua.

Phase two was from 1986 to 2020, when the 1982 published Constitution of the People’s Republic of China included “the country promotes the common language Putonghua that is used nationwide (国家推广全国通用的普通话)” in Article IXX. In 1986, the National Conference on Language and Script Work (“National Conference” hereafter)

concluded that promoting Putonghua should be focused on the vigorous promotion and active popularisation (Secretariat of the National Conference on Language and Script Work, 1987), which was later in 1992 phrased as an updated strategy “Vigorous Promotion, Active Popularisation, Gradual Improvement [大力推行, 积极普及, 逐步提高]” by SLC in *Outline of the Ten-Year Plan and the Eighth Five-Year Plan for National Language and Script Work* (Wang, 1995).

The 1997 National Conference for the first time decided a timeline for promoting Putonghua – Putonghua should be mainly popularised nationwide before 2010, when the communication barriers of speaking dialects would be basically removed and people who had received secondary or upper secondary education should be capable of communicating in Putonghua, and to consciously use Putonghua on necessary occasions. Also, people working in occupations closely related to oral expression should have attained the appropriate level of proficiency in Putonghua. Putonghua should be completely popularised nationwide before 2050, when there would be no more communication barriers caused by dialects (Xu, 1998).

“To promote Putonghua (推广普通话)” has been included in the Chinese language law Article III since 2000 as a national policy, and later also appeared for the first time in the national strategic plan in the *Outline of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development* (State Council, 2006). In the *Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Language and Script Work*, the previous goal to reach the majority popularisation of Putonghua in 2010 was postponed to 2020. The goal was clarified to reach the popularisation rate of 80% by 2020 in the *Action Plan for Popularising and Tackling the National Standard Language and Script Project* (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China & State Language Commission [MoE & SLC], 2016, 2017).

Phase three is from 2020 onwards, when the *Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Comprehensively Strengthening Language and Script Work in the New Epoch* (“Opinions” hereafter) was published after the National Conference 2020. The Opinions mentioned the new strategy of promoting Putonghua “Priority-Focused, Comprehensive Popularisation, Consolidating Improvement [聚焦重点, 全面普及, 巩固提高]” and have stated the goal to reach 85% of Putonghua popularisation rate by 2025 (General Office of the State Council, 2021).

Common Language of the Han People. The term “汉语” is used in the Chinese policy papers to refer to the standard modern Chinese pronunciation, the literal translation of which is “language of the Han People”. Due to historical reasons, the Han people’s language has not been unified before. The huge differences of different dialects have created obstacles for people from different parts of China to communicate with each other. Such disparity not only existed in the spoken language, but in the written language as well. In the written language, even on publications, the inconsistencies of vocabulary and grammar were quite common. Thus, the standard pronunciation of Han People’s language was decided to be Putonghua (普通话) in the Chinese language law, which means “common language”. A more comprehensive definition is “[...] the common language of modern Han people and the national language of China” (Li, 2022, p. 512). Using Han people’s language to represent the Chinese language and promoting Putonghua, the common language of the Han people as the common language of all ethnic groups in the country reflects the ideology of the LPP and hierarchy of social groups, which will be further discussed and analysed respectively in language ideology and goals of LPP.

4.2.3 Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (CPA): Standard Romanisation of Chinese

Introducing Phonetic Alphabet to the Chinese Language. President Mao Zedong’s statement in 1951 that “the script must be reformed to follow the common phonetic direction of the world’s scripts [文字必须改革, 要走世界文字共同的拼音方向]” started the Language Reform or the standardisation process of the language in China (Wu, 1955). The term “拼音” has been used in the Chinese policy papers since then, which is literally translated into “spelling phonetics”; the standard way to spell the phonetics of the Chinese language is referred to as “汉语拼音 [spelling phonetics of the Han people’s language]”, which is translated as “Chinese Phonetic Alphabet” in the English version of the Chinese language law. This thesis uses the term “Chinese Phonetic Alphabet” (CPA) in accordance with the policy papers. The choice of using the English translation in the official documents instead of the standard romanisation of the Chinese term “Pinyin” conflicts with the standardisation itself, which will be analysed later in the goals of LPP.

According to Cui (2019), in the early 1950s, the study and development of the *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* was not only for the purpose of phonetic transcription of Chinese characters or as a tool for teaching Putonghua, but was also used for experimenting on phonetic spelling and writing. There were several rounds of discussions on the choice of an alphabetical system that could work to notate the

pronunciation of the Chinese language. The ideas were divided into three categories – to use a national form based on Chinese characters, to use Cyrillic alphabets based on the Russian language, or to use Roman alphabets. The debates were not only linguistic but were also ideological, which was related to the socialist alliance with the USSR and anti-Western imperialism. I will further discuss this in the following language ideology section.

Mao at first was up to developing a national form based on the Phonetic Symbols adopted by the Republic of China government in 1930, as it was a phonetic script invented based on components of Chinese characters. In 1953, Mao stated that simplified Chinese characters should be created during the first five-year plan of the country. At the same time, Phonetic Symbols should be studied as it had a long history. In the future, phonetic alphabets should be created from the Phonetic Symbols based on Chinese characters. The first step of the Script Reform was to use simplified characters along with phonetic alphabets, and the second step was to introduce phonetic spelling to the language. After several rounds of discussions with scholars and the public, Mao agreed that Roman alphabet was a more suitable choice. In 1956, Mao expressed his support for the script reform and to adopt the Roman alphabets for making the Phonetic Alphabet. The CCCP then published the Instruction on Issues Concerning the Work of Script Reform, deciding to publish the *Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters*, to promote Putonghua and to plan the final *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* as soon as possible. The Instruction clearly stated that it was considered more appropriate for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet to adopt the Roman alphabets (Cui, 2019).

Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet. Published in 1958, the function of the *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* is a compromise of two different approaches – “the phonetic notation [注音派]” and “the phonetic script [文字派]”, the intersection of both approaches is the phonetic alphabet (Pan, 2018). This struggle of function could be found in the process of making the Scheme. On 24 December 1955, the Chinese Character Reform Committee changed the working title *Scheme for the Phonetic Script* to *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet*. Before the change took place, “拼音文字 [phonetic spelling script]” was used in the discussions and official documents (*Language Planning* Editorial, 1985). According to Pan (2018), this biased definition if the CPA is a script or not also exists in the Chinese language law published in 2000.

The Chinese language law stipulates that “[t]he ‘Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet’ shall be used as the tool of transliteration and phonetic notation for the standard

spoken and written Chinese language (国家通用语言文字以《汉语拼音方案》作为拼写和注音工具。))”. The word “transliteration” corresponds to the Chinese word “拼写 [spelling and writing]”, and “phonetic notation” matches the literal translation of the word “注音” used in the Chinese version of the law. While Pan (2018) considers the Chinese term “拼写” used in the Chinese language law vaguely defined the CPA as a script, the non-literal English translation “transliteration” clearly stated that it is a script different from the Chinese character. According to the common definition of the term on Wikipedia, the term “transliteration” indicates CPA as a writing system different from the Chinese characters (“Transliteration”, 2025). Thus, CPA carries the dual functions of phonetic notation and phonetic script according to the Chinese language law. It is worth mentioning that these two approaches do not conflict with each other. However, if CPA is supposed to be a tool for phonetic notation, then each alphabet should correspond to one only sound, and each sound should correspond to one only alphabet. The design of the CPA has incorporated the apostrophe to divide syllables within a word to avoid ambiguity, as well as some rules for variant pronunciations and spellings, which are features of a phonetic script and they increase the difficulty to learn and master CPA as a tool for phonetic notation.

The National Standard. The struggle of defining the function of the CPA continues in the development of national and international standard of the CPA. According to Peng (1998), 30 years after the publication of the Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, in 1988, the MoE and SLC published the *Basic Rules of the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet Orthography*, which was later published as the National Standard GB/T 16159-1996 in 1996. The current National Standard in use is GB/T 16159-2012 amended in 2012.

The basic principle of GB/T 16159-2012 is to standardise the rules of spelling words developed from the rules of spelling syllables defined by the *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet*. It is to “use words as a spelling unit [以词为拼写单位]” and to “provide rules for participle hyphenation by grammatical word class in each subsection [按语法词类分节规定分词连写规则]” (National Standards of the People’s Republic of China, 2012). The national standard treats CPA as a different script, as the participle hyphenation does not exist in writing a sentence with Chinese characters. Also, due to the nature of the Chinese language, it is difficult to classify the grammatical function to group characters

into a word within a Chinese sentence – a historical debate among Chinese linguists (Pan, 2018).

The International Standard. The international standard ISO 7098 has taken a different approach to consider CPA as a romanised transcription of Chinese. International Organisation for Standardisation (2015) defines romanisation as:

[T]he conversion of non-Latin writing systems to the Latin alphabet by means of transliteration or transcription. [...] It is possible to use either transliteration or transcription or a combination of these two methods, according to the nature of the converted system. (p. 3)

Chinese character is a type of ideophonographic character. International Organisation for Standardisation (2015) defines that the “transcription of ideophonographic characters is merely a matter of phonetic notation in Latin letters of characters of the language which use them, identical characters will require different transcriptions depending on whether they are found in Chinese, Japanese or Korean” (p. 3); and it specifically defines Pinyin with the *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* that is “used to transcribe Chinese” (p. 4).

The making of the international standard started in 1975, when China first participated at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names held in New York, USA. The Chinese representative proposed to use the *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* as the only spelling for geographical names in China, in consonance with the single romanisation principle stipulated by the first United Nations Conferences on the Standardisation of Geographical Names (UNCSG) in 1967. For example, “Beijing” should be the only romanised spelling for “北京”, to replace spellings such as “Peking” (in English and German), “Pekin” (in French), “Pechino” (in Italian), “Pequim” (in Portuguese). In 1977, the proposal was approved by the third UNCSG to adopt the *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* as the standard spelling of geographical names in China, and to stop using the Wade-Giles system (Feng, 2022).

The first edition of *Information and Documentation—Romanisation of Chinese* (ISO 7098) was published in 1982 and went through a minor amendment in 1991. Since then, there has been a discussion to incorporate the Chinese national standard GB/T 16159 into the international standard. The main debate has been about whether to use words as a spelling unit. Feng Zhiwei, leading researcher of the ISO 7098 revision working group,

suggested to include spelling rules of “named entity” (including personal, geographical, linguistic, ethnic and religious names) to partially incorporate GB/T 16159 into the international standard. This was approved and has been included in the 2015 published *Information and Documentation—Romanisation of Chinese* (ISO 7098:2015) (Feng, 2022).

The Conflict between the National Standard and the International Standard.

Even though China has been actively trying to incorporate the CPA national standard into the international standard, there is a fundamental conflict between them, which is the different definition of CPA’s function. The Chinese language law defines CPA as a “transliteration” of the Chinese characters, while *Information and Documentation—Romanisation of Chinese* (ISO 7098:2015) defines CPA as a “transcription” of Chinese characters. As previously mentioned, the phonetic notation and the phonetic script functions of CPA defined by the Chinese language law do not conflict with each other. Other than the common understanding of the terms, “transliteration” and “transcription” have different definitions according to International Organisation for Standardisation (2015). “Transliteration” focuses on script-to-script character mapping with reversibility, and it is primarily used for writing systems that are entirely alphabetical or alphanumeric; while “transcription” focuses on sound representation, which is dependent on pronunciation rules and is not reversible, and is essential for representing non-alphabetical or ideophonographic systems, such as Chinese or Japanese, where sound rather than script is the basis for conversion.

Although not mentioned in the document title, “romanisation of Chinese” implies “romanised transcription of the Chinese language”. Given the different definitions of “transliteration” and “transcription” used in International Organisation for Standardisation (2015), these two terms should be translated differently into Chinese. However, in the Chinese translation of the first edition ISO 7098:1982 published by MoE, I have noticed several inconsistencies.

In the Chinese translation of ISO 7098 published on the MoE website, “transliteration” is translated into “字符转写 [character converting]” and “transcription” is translated into “语音转写 [phonetic converting]”. “Romanisation” is translated into “罗马字母拼写法 [way of spelling and writing with Roman alphabets]” (MoE, 2005). As mentioned earlier, “拼写” in the Chinese language law Article IXX is translated into “transliteration” in the provided English version. Regarding the function of CPA, the word “transcribe” is

translated into “拼写” (alternatively used as “transliteration”) again, while the word “transcriber” following right after is translated into “转写者 [people who do the converting]”. Reading the whole translated document gives me an ambiguity of whether CPA is used as a transliteration or transcription. However, if reading the Chinese translation of the document title “中文罗马字母拼写法” alone, the literal meaning “way of spelling and writing the Chinese language with Roman alphabets” implies that CPA is a “romanised transliteration” of Chinese, which is not the “romanised transcription” implied by the intention of ISO 7098.

In my opinion, twisting the intention of the international standard in the Chinese translation supports the national standard and justifies CPA as a phonetic script. This corresponds with the ultimate goal of the Language Reform stated by Mao in 1951 as mentioned in the beginning of this subsection – “the script must be reformed to follow the common phonetic direction of the world’s scripts”. However, the international standard acknowledges the capability of transcribing ideophonographic scripts (Chinese included) into Roman alphabets and set the standard for the use of language in international communication, which questions if Mao’s statement is still the goal of LPP and if CPA’s function has changed. I will further analyse this in the goals of LPP.

4.3 Language and the Chinese Socialist Ideology

P.R.C. Const. has stated that “[t]he People’s Republic of China is a socialist state. [...] The socialist system is the fundamental system of the People’s Republic of China (中华人民共和国是 [...] 社会主义国家。社会主义制度是中华人民共和国的根本制度。)” in Article I and the term “socialist legal system (社会主义法制)” is used in Article V to describe the ideology of laws in China. Thus, the ideological basis of the Chinese LPP should correspond with the socialist legal system, and the language ideology should correspond with the Chinese socialist ideology. In the Opinions published by the State Council in 2021, it is stated more precisely that the “guiding ideology” of the language and script work is the socialist ideology proposed by Xi Jinping, the current general secretary of the CCP and the current president of China (General Office of the State Council, 2021).

There are two terms that have been repeatedly used in the LPP policy papers in relation to the Chinese socialist ideology – “社会主义建设 [socialist construction]”, which has been used since the beginning of the language and script reform; and “文化自信 [cultural confidence]”, which has been officially introduced by Xi Jinping since 2016.

4.3.1 Language and the Socialist Construction

The Instructions started with “at present, the Han language is serving the great cause of socialist construction undertaken by our people. Learning the Han language well is of great significance to the development of our socialist cause [目前, 汉语正在为我国人民所进行的伟大的社会主义建设事业服务。学好汉语, 对于我国的社会主义事业的发展具有重大的意义。]” (State Council, 2005). This has set the tone for the process of standardising the Chinese language to follow the socialist cause. Thus, when Putonghua was first made the standard spoken language in China, the Chinese language law Article V continued to mention that the standard Chinese language “shall be used in such a way as to be conducive to [...] socialist material progress and ethical progress (应当有利于 [...] 社会主义物质文明建设和精神文明建设)”. We can conclude from here that the Chinese language should serve the socialist construction.

Following the socialist ideological context, language and script has been named as the “language and script cause” since 2012 by MoE and SLC, which defines the important position of language and script work as part of the socialist discourse of China (MoE & SLC, 2012).

According to the P.R.C. Constitution, China has transformed into a socialist society after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, and the socialist construction in all aspects of the society (for example, politics, economy, culture, science and technology) has been carried out under the leadership of the CCP after the ideological transformation (State Council, n.d.). Thus, the socialist construction can be understood as the ideological work of the CCP to apply the defined socialist ideology to all aspects of the Chinese society.

For example, the decision-making process of choosing which alphabetical system to develop the CPA has reflected the application of socialist ideology in the socialist construction of language. The reason why some people suggested Cyrillic alphabet rather than Roman alphabet was that Roman alphabet was the writing system used by the Western imperialist invaders, and Cyrillic alphabet was used by the socialist ally USSR. Adopting Cyrillic alphabet would make the scientific, technological and cultural communications with USSR easier and more efficient, and would be beneficial for Chinese people to learn knowledge from USSR to carry out the socialist construction in China. They believed the Script Reform should serve the goal of creating a communist world – Cyrillic alphabet could be the tool for people to learn both Chinese and Russian

languages, languages of the communist pioneers in the world (Language & Culture Press (Ed.), 1957).

The consensus of adopting Roman alphabet was based on an ideological decision that writing system did not have a class, which was not the Western imperialist ideology that China should be against. Also, it would take long for a newly-invented national form of writing system to be recognised worldwide. But if the Roman alphabet would be used long enough in the Chinese language, it would be adapted and considered as a Chinese national form (Language & Culture Press (Ed.), 1957; Zhou, 1998).

When the standard Chinese language should serve the socialist construction, it is serving the ideological work of the CCP. This corresponds with the structure of policy makers as shown in Figure 1 that the LPP is part of the cultural policy system where CCCP has the supreme voice for policy design. If considering language and script work as part of the socialist cause led by the CCP, the process of language standardisation is ideological too and the standardised spoken and written Chinese language should serve the ideological cause of the CCP as the governmental power in China. Thus, the Chinese language ideology is entangled with the purposes of utilising language to fulfill the goals of the socialist construction led by the CCP, which will be further analysed in the goals of the Chinese LPP.

4.3.2 Language and Cultural Confidence

In 2016, in his speech at the celebration of the 95th anniversary of the founding of the CCP, Xi Jinping has included “cultural confidence” in addition to the existing “three confidences” (road confidence, theoretical confidence, institutional confidence) into the CCP’s Chinese socialist ideology. The “culture” Xi has mentioned includes the “the excellent traditional Chinese culture nurtured in the development of more than 5000 years of civilisation, the revolutionary culture and advanced socialist culture nurtured in the great struggles of the Party and the people [在 5000 多年文明发展中孕育的中华优秀传统文化, 在党和人民伟大斗争中孕育的革命文化和社会主义先进文化]”. And he has believed that such culture “has accumulated the deepest spiritual pursuit of the Chinese nation and represents the unique spiritual identity of the Chinese nation [积淀着中华民族最深层的精神追求, 代表着中华民族独特的精神标识]” (“Speech”, 2021).

In 2023, Xi has elaborated “cultural confidence” with “cultural subjectivity”, “which is established with the Chinese Communist Party leading the Chinese people on the land of China. [...] The creation of the Chinese socialist ideology in a new epoch is

the most powerful embodiment of this cultural subjectivity [这一主体性是中国共产党带领中国人民在中国大地上建立起来的 [...] 创立新时代中国特色社会主义思想就是这一文化主体性的最有力体现。]” (State Council, 2023).

From both Xi’s speeches, the “cultural subjectivity” is the ideological subjectivity of the CCP, which is the “Chinese socialist ideology in a new epoch” meaning specifically the Chinese socialist ideology proposed by the current CCP leader Xi. While including both the cultural heritage of China and the socialist culture of CCP, the concept “cultural subjectivity” associates the subjectivity of the CCP and its leadership with a collective subjectivity of the Chinese nation and Chinese people. Thus, “cultural confidence” is not an ideological instrument for intercultural communication, instead, it is an instrument for CCP to apply the Chinese socialist ideology to the Chinese culture, and to associate the ideological work of Chinese socialism to all works in the cultural sector. It is an ideological instrument to construct the national identity.

Following such guiding ideology, SLC considers language and script as the source of cultural confidence and can be utilised to develop cultural confidence (Yao, 2020; Tian, 2022). As Yao (2020) states:

The promotion efforts, popularity and standardised level of the standardised spoken and written language are important manifestations of the high cultural self-awareness and cultural confidence of the Chinese nation. Promoting the language and script via international communication and internet is conducive to demonstrating the Chinese national spirit of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-empowerment, and self-reliance to world. [国家通用语言文字的推广力度、普及程度和应用规范水平, 是中华民族具有高度的文化自觉和文化自信的重要体现。促进语言文字的国际传播和网络传播, 有利于向全世界展示自尊自信、自强自立的中华民族精神。]

Why does the level of language standardisation represent the level of cultural confidence of the Chinese nation? Why does the Chinese language represent the named Chinese national spirit (self-esteem, self-confidence, self-empowerment, and self-reliance)? The given phrasings from SLC seem to be informal fallacies. However, as mentioned earlier, “cultural confidence” is not a method of intercultural communication, it is the CCP’s ideological work to establish a collective socialist ideology of the Chinese nation. Thus, language is the tool for this ideological construction, and the level of

language standardisation is the evaluation criteria for the level of the Chinese national identity, which has the characteristics related to cultural confidence.

The Chinese LPP and CCP's ideological work are intertwined. Chen Jie, director of SLC, presented at the most recent National Conference on Language and Script Work 2024 and stated “to thoroughly study and implement the guiding ideologies from General Secretary Xi Jinping's important instructions on language and script work [要深入学习贯彻习近平总书记关于语言文字工作的重要指示批示精神]” (MoE, 2024). Published on the official theoretical journal and news magazine of CCP, Li (2024) considers the Chinese character as a remarkable symbol of the cultural confidence, as it is the only ancient and self-originated ideographic writing system that is still in use today. And to preserve the Chinese character is to preserve the glorious Chinese cultural heritage that is the strong anchor of the cultural confidence. He has quoted the General Secretary Xi's comment during the visit of Yinxu (the archeological site in China where the first oracle bone script was excavated) that “the Han civilisation's script in China is remarkable, and the formation and development of the Chinese nation was made possible by it [中国的汉文字非常了不起, 中华民族的形成和发展离不开汉文字的维系]”.

I have noticed that the term Xi used was not “汉字 [the script of the Han people]” as mentioned in the policy papers, but was “汉文字”, which has an additional implication of the civilisation created by the Han people on top of mentioning the ethnical group. Thus, I have translated it into “the Han civilisation's script”. China is a multiethnic state where Han people are the majority, and 55 other ethnical groups are the minorities. If the Chinese national identity is a collective identity of all 56 ethnic groups, Xi seems to have emphasised merely on the Han people's cultural heritage and implied the Han civilisation's fundamental role of developing the civilisation in China – the Chinese civilisation has been developed based on the Han civilisation and the Han cultural heritage. This choice of cultural and national discourse of the national identity work is related to the goals of LPP, which I will further discuss and analyse in the following section.

Also, Xi's intention to preserve the ideographic Chinese character is opposite to Mao's initiative of the Language Reform to follow the phonetic direction in the 1950s. This change of direction reflects the change of course in the socialist ideological work, which is subjective to the CCP leadership. Meanwhile, the goals of LPP have remained the same, and have been interpreted and applied accordingly with the Chinese socialist ideology developed by generations of CCP leaders.

4.4 Goals of the Chinese LPP

Based on my findings and preliminary analyses of the language standardisation and language ideology of the Chinese LPP, language standardisation is part of the socialist ideological work lead by the CCP to utilise language for the construction of Chinese socialist ideology, which includes the development of the Chinese society, establishment of the Chinese national identity, and raising the status of the Chinese language and culture in the world. Thus, the concepts of “Chinese language” and “Chinese culture” are defined based on CCP’s subjectivity alongside the socialist ideological work. This aligns with one of the objectives of the Chinese cultural policy, which is to utilise culture and cultural policy as political propaganda by highlighting the long traditions of culture and art and the Chinese socialist ideology. The long traditions of culture and art are to serve the socialist ideological discourse.

The goals of the Chinese LPP corresponds with CCP’s purposes of applying the socialist ideology to all aspects of the Chinese society. I have categorised them into three topics – the socialist modernisation, a unified country and the Chinese discourse. I will analyse them further from a decolonial cultural perspective to first understand the essence of the Chinese socialist ideological framework, and then to think of “Chinese language” and “Chinese culture” outside this ideological framework.

4.4.1 *Towards the Socialist Modernisation*

“Socialist modernisation” is a term used to describe the prime goal of China as a country in the P.R.C. Constitution Preamble – “[t]he fundamental task for our country is to concentrate on achieving socialist modernisation along the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics (国家的根本任务是, 沿着中国特色社会主义道路, 集中力量进行社会主义现代化建设。)”. A latest definition has been made by Xi in his report at the 20th National Congress of the CCP that “the Chinese approach towards modernity is the socialist modernisation under the leadership of CCP, which has the common features of modernisation in other countries, but also has Chinese characteristics based on the conditions of the country [中国式现代化, 是中国共产党领导的社会主义现代化, 既有各国现代化的共同特征, 更有基于自己国情的中国特色。]” (State Council, 2022). It ideologised the process of China entering modernity with the socialist ideological work of CCP.

There are two dimensions of “socialist modernisation” – first is to apply the concept “modernity” in the Chinese context; second is to make aware the socialist

ideology introduced by the governmental power CCP. As mentioned in previous chapters, it is a compressed modernity as Chang Kyung-Sup has defined, and the socialist ideology makes it even more compressed. If considering Mao's period as the first modernity and Xi's period as the second modernity, there is a conflict in the goal of LPP during these two periods – the first modernity is to develop a new language for the modern China, and the second modernity is to maintain the traditional feature of the Chinese language to associate to the Chinese cultural heritage. Thus, the goal of the Chinese LPP towards socialist modernisation can be divided into two stages correspondently – stage one is to reform the Chinese language into a phonetic language to approach the linguistic feature of Western languages, in which modernity is originally defined; stage two is to utilise the Chinese language for developing a definition of modernity that is not based on the Western ontology, but the Chinese cultural traditions.

CPA has been the most important LPP instrument to reach the goal of stage one set by Mao “to follow the common phonetic direction of the world's scripts”. Putonghua and simplification of Chinese characters have been serving the purpose of applying CPA as the only script to the Chinese writing system. This is an unachievable goal, because it is against the nature of the ideographic Chinese language. However, it still has been applied not only because of the leadership of CCP to follow Mao's ideological work, but to serve the purpose of increasing literacy and developing a modern education system in the Chinese society, which is the same as the goal of language reform from late 19th century to before 1949. And CPA has been working as the tool for teaching Putonghua and Chinese characters.

60 years after introducing CPA, in 2018, the literacy rate in China has increased from 20% to 95.92%, and more than 95% of the literate population can use standard Chinese characters. Also, CPA has been used in developing other modern social services such as the Chinese sign language, Chinese braille, dictionaries, cataloguing system for achieves. With the development of computer science and the internet, in the era of information technology and globalisation, since 1990s, CPA has become the tool to develop input methods for using the international keyboard to type Chinese characters on computer; also, CPA has been used in the language pedagogy for non-native Chinese speakers to learn Chinese (MoE, 2018).

The choice of developing CPA with Roman alphabets and reform the ideographic Chinese language into a phonetic language indicate that the goal of stage one is based on the *rhetoric of modernity* Mignolo has phrased. It recognises the superiority of Western

discourse and has been trying to adapt the Chinese language to match the international standard set by the Western discourse formed by European languages. I think a Chinese idiom “削足适履” can perfectly describe such situation, which means “to cut one’s feet to fit the shoes”. Giving up the Chinese characters is an impossible goal due to the ideographic linguistic nature of the language, and CPA has its limitations to function with the semantic-oriented grammar and the existing large number of polyphonic words in the Chinese language. Thus, I consider the goal of stage one is partially fulfilled by introducing CPA as a romanised phonetic transcription of the Chinese language, which shares the commonly used Roman alphabet writing system with Western languages and is beneficial to establishing intercultural communication in multiple facets of developing a modern Chinese society.

In stage two, the goal of the Chinese LPP is to inherit the Chinese cultural traditions and apply them to establish the Chinese national identity. It is to define China as an entity and to reintroduce Chinese character as the instrument to formulate the Chinese discourse of modernity based on the achievement of CPA in stage one to help with developing a modern society in China since 1949. The emphasised “cultural confidence” and “cultural subjectivity” as mentioned earlier are utilised by the governmental power CCP to clarify “Chinese” as an adjective (often referred to in the official documents as “中国特色 [with Chinese characteristics]” in the ideological context of socialist modernisation – what is considered as the modern Chinese language? What is considered as the modern Chinese culture? Who is considered as the modern Chinese people and the modern Chinese nation?

According to previous discussions, the modern Chinese language is composed of simplified Chinese character (standard script), Putonghua (standard pronunciation) and CPA (standard romanisation). To be more precise, the standard script is the simplified script of the Han people; the standard pronunciation is based on the Northern Han dialect. Thus, the cultural traditions to inherit are the ones developed based on the script of the Han people; and the modern Chinese culture can be understood as the culture developed from the Han civilisation’s heritage that uses simplified Chinese character, Putonghua and CPA. Both language and culture are standardised to fit into the criterion of “Chinese” defined by CCP in order to enter the discourse of Chinese modernity, another form of “cutting one’s feet to fit the shoes”. Consequently, the Chinese identity and the Chinese

national identity are formulated with the standardised Chinese language and culture from the socialist modernisation.

4.4.2 A Unified Language, A Unified Nation

According to Qing & Jiang (2023), language standardisation is not new to the Chinese language. China as a nation-state, in the ancient Chinese history, every dynasty had their own common language. But to relate language to the “大一统 [great unification]” started with Qin Shi Huang, known as the first emperor of China lived in 2 century B.C.E. He promoted the concept “书同文 [writing a unified script]” after he unified the six kingdoms to form the first unified empire in ancient Chinese history. He had unified the languages and scripts of the six kingdoms and adopted the common spoken and written language in the empire of Qin dynasty. Since then, “the establishment of ‘national common language’ is the pursuit of the central governments in all dynasties” (p.13) and the national common language should continue to serve the current goal of building a socialist country. The term “forging the strong sense of community for Chinese nation” is introduced by Xi as the guideline of CCP’s ideological work to unify all ethnic groups in China to create a Chinese national identity (“Forging strong sense”, 2024). This appears in the Opinions as a goal of the Chinese LPP, which is to create a unified Chinese nation by promoting education of standard Chinese language in the ethnic regions (General Office of the State Council, 2021).

As mentioned before, the standard Chinese language is composed of 汉语 [language of the Han People], 汉字 [the script of the Han people] and 汉语拼音 [spelling phonetics of the Han people’s language] that is the language used by the ethnic majority in China. Providing education of the standard language has been included in the Chinese LPP regarding language standardisation since the 1950s as part of the nationwide campaign of promoting Putonghua. It was mentioned in the Instructions as “in all ethnic minority regions, Putonghua should be vigorously promoted among the Han Chinese people in each region [各少数民族地区, 应该在各地区的汉族人民中大力推广普通话。]” (State Council, 2005), which was to promote Putonghua only among the Han-language-speaking population living in the ethnic minority regions. It was also considered during the making of the Chinese language law that the language standardisation would only be applied to the national common language and script, not to the languages and scripts of the ethnic minority groups (MoE, n.d. -c).

However, this does not mean the languages and scripts of the ethnic minority groups have not been standardised. The State Council has started designing scripts for ethnic minority languages based on CPA since 1957 and has created 17 scripts for 12 ethnic groups. Those new scripts share similar features with CPA, and it is easier for minority children to learn CPA after learning the new scripts. Thus, the newly invented CPA-based minority scripts are useful tools to promote Putonghua and help ethnic minority peoples to learn Chinese characters, the common script of the country that is the script of the Han people (Huang, 2012; Zhou, 2013). The language standardisation of the ethnic minority groups has taken place in a different framework by utilising CPA to incorporate the minority languages into a romanisation spelling system which the national common language also shares. Gradually, Putonghua and the standard Chinese character have been popularised not only among the Han people living in the ethnic minority regions, but to all ethnic minority population. In Opinions, the section “To comprehensively strengthen national common language and script education in ethnic regions [全面加强民族地区国家通用语言文字教育]” has mentioned that:

To ensure that ethnic minority junior high school graduates have a basic grasp and use of the national common language and script, and that ethnic minority senior high school graduates have a good grasp and use of the national common language and script [确保少数民族初中毕业生基本掌握和使用国家通用语言文字、少数民族高中毕业生熟练掌握和使用国家通用语言文字]. (General Office of the State Council, 2021)

Language standardisation reallocates the hierarchy of language in the society. In the Chinese LPP, the language and script of the majority Han people is on the top level, which is not only the cultural majority, but is also made as the standard to other minority languages. By standardising minority languages with Han people’s language, minority cultures are gradually replaced by the Han people’s culture. Thus, the sense of community for Chinese nation is based on the consensus of Han people’s culture; and the goal of creating a unified Chinese nation is to make all ethnic groups in China to adopt the Han people’s language and culture – it is the same “大一统 [great unification]” as the first emperor of China has achieved in ancient times, but this time it is achieved by language standardisation of the Chinese LPP in modern era. The word “Chinese” in all English terms related to the standardised language and ideologised culture should be “Han” instead, and “汉字 [script of the Han people]” is translated into “Chinese characters” to represent a unified

Chinese cultural identity developed from the Han civilisation. Accordingly, the term “Chinese nation” should be “Han-ised nation” (nations that assimilated by the Han culture).

From a decolonial cultural perspective, the establishment of the Chinese national identity within China is Han-centric. Inheriting the idea of unifying the languages from the ancient Chinese imperial dynasties is not consistent with the ideology thinking of the current existing entity of China being a modern society in the contemporary world. Instead, it shares similar features of the European colonisation that took place during the First Modernity. It is indicated in the discourse of the Chinese LPP. For example, the regions where minorities live are specified for more attention in the policy papers to make sure the language standardisation applied in those regions as well, as if “conquering” the part of area with the Han language to enlighten them.

The ideological and identity work of the Chinese nation is part of the socialist modernisation, where the Han ethnic group and the Han culture is dominating. To enable the non-Han ethnic groups to enter the discourse of socialist modernisation, the Han group colonises the non-Han ethnic regions with the Han culture by making them adapt their own languages and cultures to the Han language and culture. Thus, even though there is no difference between singular or plural form in the Chinese grammar, the concept “Chinese nation” is a singular form that refers to the cultural dominant. The socialist modernisation is another “*rhetoric of modernity*” in the Chinese discourse that works for the internal colonialism in which the Han culture is considered superior. I consider “Chinese nation” as the Han-centric internal definition of the cultural identity “Chinese”, and the externalised identity work is to establish the narrative of the country “China” where the Chinese culture lives.

4.4.3 To Establish the Chinese Discourse in the World

As mentioned in previous chapters, China implements “soft power” as a comprehensive approach towards second modernity, and culture as an instrument (Chang, 2010a; De Kloet et al., 2020). The cultural soft power is the externalised identity work based on CCP’s ideological work to establish the Chinese discourse in the world, which means to establish discourse with the Chinese language in the world. Xi’s speech in CCP’s Symposium on News Reporting and Public Opinion 2016 has stated that “China’s image in the world is still to a large extent ‘shaped by others’ rather than ‘shaped by self’ [中国在世界上的形象很大程度上仍是“他塑”而非“自塑”]” (“To tell China’s story”, 2021).

According to Tian (2022), “language is the key to a country’s culture, the symbol that shows the country’s image, and the link that promotes mutual understanding of civilisations and enhances people-to-people communication. [语言是通往一国文化的钥匙, 是展现国家形象的符号, 是促进文明互鉴、增进民心相通的纽带。]”. The goal of establishing the Chinese discourse is to increase the global influence of the Chinese culture with the Chinese language. There are two action plans mentioned in Tian (2022), the first is to carry out the project “Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture: Communication Through Translation” that “extracts and displays the spiritual symbols and cultural essence of Chinese civilisation [提炼展示中华文明的精神标识和文化精髓]”; and the second is to “strengthen the innovative development of international Chinese language education from a global perspective, building a brand of language and cultural exchange, and promoting Chinese culture to the world [加强全球视角下的国际中文教育创新发展, 打造语言文化交流品牌, 推动中华文化更好走向世界]”.

I will further analyse the first project that standardises the English translation of “the essence of what is considered the best of traditional Chinese culture [... and] accurately defin[es] China’s core concepts”. It “has so far selected and translated into English 81 key concepts in Chinese thought and culture, based on careful research and repeated discussions by more than 70 well-known experts in literature, art, history, philosophy, and translation” (“Project overview”, n.d.). Eventually, I have found the English definition of “龙” in the project’s term base. It is translated as “Chinese Dragon” in the entry, one of the most ancient totems in Chinese culture, initially emerged as an imperial symbol since the Qin and Han dynasties. It then gradually evolved throughout history to become a widespread cultural emblem that represents the spirit of the Han Chinese people and the Chinese nation (*Chinese Dragon*, n.d.).

I think this officially considered “accurate” English definition of “龙” summarises the process of establishing Chinese discourse in the world from both ideological and cultural perspectives of the Chinese language – a “loong” story that begins with the word “Loong” and finishes with the word “Chinese Dragon” for now. It reflects the shift from an internalised to an externalised perspective of language standardisation to connect the Chinese language and Chinese culture with the world. However, this does not involve a pluralistic world view where China is also part of the world. In the establishment of the Chinese discourse, China has excluded itself from the world and has been emphasising the world as a different entity that needs to be unified.

The language standardisation in China has internally unified the linguistic and ideological basis for the culture of the Han people to represent the Chinese culture and the Chinese people, an internal Han colonialism developed with CPA that is ready to expand externally. In 1977, when CPA was approved by UNCSG to replace the Wade-Giles system as the international standard spelling of geographical names in China, it is considered by the Chinese officials as a victory of CPA defeating the Wade-Giles system and become the only system in transcribing Chinese characters. According to Feng (2022), Zhou Youguang, one of the founding linguists of *Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet* suggested to ISO/TC in 1979 to fully adapt CPA as the international standard. Zhou stated, “Wade-Giles system, according to the decision of the third UNCSG, has exited the stage of history already in 1977 [‘威妥瑪式’拼音, 根据联合国第三届地名标准化会议的决定, 在 1977 年已经退出了历史舞台。]”. Using CPA as the international standard spelling of geographical names in China does not mean CPA is the international standard spelling for all Chinese characters. Even now, when the national standard GB/T 16159 has been partially incorporated to the international standard ISO 7098:2015, it still does not mean CPA is the only standard romanised transcription for all Chinese characters. For example, in Taiwan, there are four different spelling systems considered as official romanised transcriptions for names when a Taiwanese citizen applies for a passport. In Figure 4, I have listed the four different romanised spelling options for the name “張龍 (traditional Chinese characters for ‘张龙’)” according to the website tool (“Chinese-English System”, n.d.):

Figure 4

Four standard romanised spelling options for personal name “張龍” in Taiwan

Enquiry Name [查詢姓名]	Wade-Giles [威妥瑪 (WG) 拼音]	Hanyu Pinyin (CPA) [漢語拼音]	Tongyong Pinyin [通用拼音]	Mandarin Phonetic Symbols II [國音第二式拼音]
張龍 (ㄓㄨㄥˊ ㄌㄨㄥˊ)	CHANG,LUNG	ZHANG, LONG	JHANG, LONG	JANG, LUNG

I have noticed from Figure 4 that in Taiwan, the standard romanised transcriptions for the traditional Chinese character “龍” (equivalent to simplified Chinese character “龙”) can be either “lung” or “long”, both have different meanings in English and they are not modified for disambiguation in English.

However, when the character “龙” carries the cultural meaning to represent the Chinese national identity, the Chinese government have to violate its own language standardisation to change the CPA spelling “long” into “loong” for disambiguation, considering the international cultural exchange would happen in English, the cosmopolitan language in the current world. I think this imperfection feature of CPA has restricted its function to fully establish the Chinese discourse with utilising a romanised transcription of the Chinese language to explain the Chinese culture to the world. But adopting the official English name “Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (CPA)” instead of “Hanyu Pinyin” has shown the Chinese government’s determination or at least a trial to enter the international discourse with CPA, as the name gives a hint to the international phonetic notation system International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), but “with Chinese characteristics” as guided by CCP’s socialist ideology. The coincidence that the disambiguated “Loong” spelling was also used by English colonies in pre-1949 China brings a metaphor to this thesis research, as if the extra “o” is a symbol of an empty step to escape from colonialism – the step away from the external colonialism is the step into the internal colonialism.

When CPA cannot take the standard Chinese language any further to explain the Chinese culture in the globalised world, English is reintroduced as an extended instrument to standardise the way of expressing the Chinese culture. Thus, to establish the Chinese discourse is not only to promote the standard Chinese language in the international Chinese language education, but also to incorporate English as an extension of CPA to create a romanised discourse to represent the Chinese characteristics that are different from the West, and to construct the Chinese national identity and cultural confidence defined by CCP’s ideological work. Thus, “Chinese Dragon” as the selected cultural and identity symbol can be a “dragon” in English, but it has to “represents unity, power, reverence, dignity, excellence and good luck, which is quite opposite to the evil and greedy dragon in Western mythology and tradition” (*Chinese Dragon*, n.d.).

5. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis begins with “Loong” – my observation in 2024 that state media in China have used this word in to refer to the auspicious animal “龙” in English reports, which is the starting point of this the thesis research to study the Chinese LPP from a decolonial perspective. Language and culture are two intertwined topics in the Chinese cultural policy framework, which jointly create the “Loong” story of this thesis.

Language was introduced as the first ideological instrument of Chinese cultural policy in the 1950s, based on China’s socialist alliance with USSR to apply Stalin’s socialistic language theory to utilise language as an instrument to develop a socialist society. By applying decolonial theories to LPP in China, I have decided language standardisation and language ideology to be my research topics, both have formed the criteria of designing the goals of the LPP. Instead of doing linguistic research, I have chosen to concentrate on a decolonial cultural perspective of the Chinese LPP to form the critical discourse analyses and reflective thematic analyses of this thesis research, which investigates the shaping of Chinese culture in a globalised world with the shaping of a standard Chinese language – how language functions both as an internalised instrument to form the Chinese national identity and an externalised instrument to form the discourse of “Chinese”.

To conclude, I will first summarise the results to answer the three research questions I have listed at the beginning of the thesis. I will recap the three instruments of the Chinese LPP and their different roles in the process of language standardisation. Following next, I will utilise the Han-centric cultural perspective developed from the thesis analyses to explain the internal confliction of language standardisation and language ideology in the current Chinese LPP, and the establishment of an external discourse of “Chinese” in the world.

Second, I will reflect on how the translation work between Chinese and English languages has affected this thesis research – what has lost and what has been found in this “Loong” story.

Lastly, I will summarise the possible research topics to be further developed based on this thesis research and give suggestions for further research.

5.1 Instruments of the Chinese LPP

There are three dimensions of the language standardisation of the modern Chinese language – standard script, standard pronunciation and standard romanisation. These three dimensions have been gradually categorised since the late 19th century by different governmental powers in terms of literacy, education, and national identity, sharing the same goal of modernising the Chinese society. Simplified Chinese character, Putonghua, and Chinese Phonetic Alphabets (CPA) have been developed as three instruments in accordance with the three language standardisation dimensions of the current Chinese LPP since CCP came into power in 1949, serving the socialist construction to achieve socialist modernisation.

As the ultimate goal of the Chinese LPP was first decided to be reforming the Chinese language from ideographic to phonetic, language standardisation started with the script and pronunciation to create the basis for developing a phonetic spelling system of the Chinese language. Thus, Chinese characters have been simplified to ease the difficulty of learning the written form of the language and simplified Chinese character has become the standard script of Chinese; and Putonghua has been normalised based on the Beijing dialect and Northern dialects as the standard pronunciation of Chinese.

CPA was created based on Roman alphabets for the purpose of phonetic transcription of Chinese characters and as a tool for teaching Putonghua. It was also used for experimenting phonetic spelling and writing as a transliteration of the ideographic Chinese language. CPA orthography (standard in spelling and writing words in CPA) has been made into the national standard GB/T 16159 and partially entered the international standard ISO 7098 as standard romanised transcription for personal, geographical, linguistic, ethnic and religious names in China. The ideographic nature of the Chinese language has stopped CPA to be further adopted as a phonetic script to replace the Chinese characters, given the grammatical and lexical complication of the Chinese language. Thus, CPA in the current Chinese LPP functions as the standard romanised phonetic transcription of Chinese characters, an auxiliary tool for teaching Chinese characters (standard script) and teaching Putonghua (standard pronunciation) in language pedagogy.

Among the three dimensions, I think CPA is the most important instrument in the Chinese LPP, even though it is an imperfect device of transliterating Chinese into the romanised spelling system. First, it works as an intermediary between simplified Chinese character and Putonghua, which is useful in a sense of language learning to increase the

literacy rate. Having introduced CPA for 60 years, in 2018, the literacy rate in China has increased from 20% to 95.92%, and standard Chinese characters can be used by more than 95% of the literate population. Second, by providing a romanised transcription of the script, CPA enables the ideographic Chinese language to form a globalised dialogue in the discourse of modernity, which is still dominated by European languages following the romanised spelling system. In this case, more modern social services that are related to language have been introduced to the Chinese system, such as the Chinese sign language, Chinese braille and Chinese document archiving catalogue. Also, it has enabled the Chinese language to be included in the scientific and technological development in the information era as well, for example to process the Chinese language on a computer with keyboard in Roman alphabets.

5.2 The Han-Centric Cultural Perspective

From a decolonial perspective, while CPA has been helping the Chinese language to enter the modernity discourse and form the Chinese discourse in the world of globalisation, it is still following the *rhetoric of modernity* to transform the Chinese language into a romanised form shared by English and other European languages. In this case, the decision of introducing any form of phonetic alphabet other than the Chinese character is coloniality, which indicates the otherness of the Chinese language. Such coloniality arises from the language ideology developed with the language standardisation by defining the language that is “Chinese”. In official documents, “汉字 [the script of the Han people]” is translated as “Chinese character”; Putonghua (the common language of the Han people, with Beijing dialect as the standard pronunciation) is translated as “spoken Chinese language”; and “汉语拼音 [spelling phonetics of the Han people’s language]” is translated as “Chinese Phonetic Alphabet”. This Han-centric cultural perspective has caused the conflict of language standardisation and language ideology – to establish a unified Chinese national identity is to establish internal colonialism.

To establish the Chinese socialist ideology by means of language is inheriting the idea of “大一统 [great unification]” from the ancient Chinese imperial dynasties, which has created the polarised concepts of the Han majority ethnic group and the non-Han minority ethnic groups, an internalised pair of counter parts that corresponds with the external “Chinese” and “non-Chinese” coloniality.

Language standardisation reallocates the hierarchy of language in establishing a modern Chinese society, among which the language and script of the Han people is on

the top level and is considered superior. By learning the standard language, minority ethnic groups can be enlightened by the Han people's language and culture. Thus, the sense of community for Chinese nation can be created based on the consensus of Han people's culture; and the goal of creating a unified Chinese nation is to make all ethnic groups in China to adopt the Han people's language and culture. The way of creating CPA-based standard scripts for ethnic minority groups to incorporate the minority languages into a CPA spelling system is similar with the purpose of CPA itself to incorporate the Chinese (Han) language into the romanised spelling system. It is an internalised colonialism initiated by the Han people and Han culture towards the non-Han peoples and non-Han minority cultures.

The Han-centric definition of "Chinese" is an ethnically, linguistically, geopolitically, and culturally defined "Chinese" from China's internal perspective according to Zhang's (2023) *Chineseness as Method*. By pushing the establishment of a Chinese discourse, China is pushing its internally defined "Chinese" to be the external definition of "Chineseness" based on the long history of Han people's cultural heritage. However, even though for thousands of years, China has been a source of other Asian civilisations regarding culture and societal structure, it is there no more. East Asian countries like Korea and Japan both have developed their own national consciousness and social systems.

Thus, in a globalised world, "Chineseness" should shift from the Han-centric "Chinese" cultural perspective. It should remain as an open identity work that is not restricted by the collective Chinese national identity. Instead, it should allow each Chinese individual to have their own discourse in relation to their ethnic group, language, culture, and place of residence. For example, my definition of "Chineseness" as a Han ethnic currently living in Finland as a cultural minority can be different from another Han ethnic who is currently living in China as a cultural majority, given the different political, linguistic and social contexts that we are daily exposed to. It is based on a cultural subjectivity of one's own instead of a defined collective ideological discourse of the governmental power in China.

5.3 The "Loong" Story: Lost in Translation

Behind the "Loong" story is the research subject "Chinese LPP", which I have to translate from simplified Chinese into English to carry out this thesis research that is

written in English. The nuance of terms in different languages is lost in translation, especially in regard of different cognitive approaches toward language and culture.

The first and foremost important concept is the term “语文” in Chinese. “语” means “语言”, which can be understood as either “spoken language” or “language as a general concept”. “文” means “文字 [script/written language]” or “文化 [culture]”. Together the two characters form a concept that covers both the written and spoken forms of a language, and the culture that grows from and is written with the language. Thus, language and culture are intertwined in the Chinese context, and language is usually considered as a representation of culture (the level of language is equivalent to the level of culture). This has shaped my view of language and culture as a native Chinese speaker, which may be different from native speakers from other languages.

Many Chinese academic journals uses the term “语文” in their names, and they have been translated differently in their English names as shown in the list of references. This might be related to the specialisation of different research fields, for example, language planning, Chinese language etc. But the concept of interrelated language and culture, and the different facets of the Chinese language is lost in the translation.

Also, some Chinese words have been designated with specific ideological meanings according to Chinese socialist ideology defined by CCP. The language ideology of the term is lost in the translation. For example, the word “改革” in the policy papers has been translated into “reform” in this thesis. However, it also implies the meaning of a revolution that is socialist. Thus, “改革” in the Chinese socialist political discourse is to praise the socialist revolution lead by CCP, and such ideological reaction can only be triggered in the Chinese language, which is not as obvious in the translated English term “reform”.

5.4 The “Loong” Story: Found in Translation

However, the official English translations of some policy papers have provided me with unexpected findings during the research. For example, I have only realised the Chinese terms “普通 [common]”, “通用 [general]” mean “standard” when I read the official English translation of the Chinese language law. This is an interesting finding about the definition of “standard” in Chinese for me to reflect that the collective ideology is already applied in the choice of terminology during language standardisation – what is in common use or generally accepted should be followed.

Also, I have observed the Han-centric cultural perspective when comparing the English translations of the three dimensions of standard Chinese language with the original Chinese terms. I could only be aware of this because I have changed from a cultural majority living in China to a cultural minority living in Finland. This shift of perspective has provided me with a relatively objective outside view to investigate the Chinese LPP in English, and make aware the hierarchical changes in the society that is related to language.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis research is at the intersection of sociolinguistics, cultural policy and decolonial studies. While cultural policy and decolonial studies are my main emphases of the results, I will give suggestions for further research based on these two directions.

This thesis has analysed how language works as an ideological instrument of the Chinese cultural policy, what are the other instruments? As mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, the Chinese cultural policy framework is a mixture of openness and protection – with the desire to incorporate into world capitalism while maintaining the cultural traditions and ensuring the governance of the CCP. How is this mixture of openness and protection reflected in the current Chinese cultural policy framework? What is considered as openness and what is considered as protection?

I have concluded a Han-centric cultural perspective that has caused the conflict of language standardisation and language ideology in China. Further research can be carried out by applying decolonial studies to the LPP for ethnic minorities in China. For example, how does the standard Chinese language pedagogy in primary school affect the preservation of the minority language and culture? Is it possible for an ethnic minority individual to live in China without speaking the standard Chinese language?

The conflict of language standardisation and language ideology can also be further studied, which is related to the internalisation of the external discourse. Research topics can be the establishment of cultural confidence as an internalised national identity work, and the different choices of terminology regarding the internal and external propaganda.

Lastly, based on the traditional Chinese culture or the Chinese cultural heritage, the definition of modern Chinese culture can be further investigated. For example, what is modern Chinese culture? Why is the Chinese national identity based on the cultural heritage instead of the modern Chinese culture?

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APPENDICES

Glossary of translated titles for Chinese policy papers (A-Z)

Action Plan for Popularising and Tackling the National Standard Language and Script Project [《国家通用语言文字普及攻坚工程实施方案》]

Basic Rules of the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet Orthography [《汉语拼音正词法》]

Constitution of the People's Republic of China (《中华人民共和国宪法》)

First Collation of Variant Characters [《第一批异体字整理表》]

General List of Simplified Chinese Characters [《简化字总表》]

Instruction on Issues Concerning the Work of Script Reform [《中共中央关于文字改革工作问题的指示》]

Instructions on the Promotion of Putonghua [《国务院关于推广普通话的指示》]

Joint Announcement about Simplified Characters [《关于简化字的联合通知》]

Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language of the People's Republic of China (《中华人民共和国国家通用语言文字法》)

List of Frequently Used Characters in Modern Chinese [《现代汉语常用字表》]

List of Commonly Used Characters in Modern Chinese [《现代汉语通用字表》]

List of Printing General Chinese Character Glyphs [《印刷通用汉字字形表》]

List of General Standard Chinese Characters [《通用规范汉字表》]

Outline of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development [《中华人民共和国国民经济和社会发展第十一个五年规划纲要》]

Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Comprehensively Strengthening Language and Script Work in the New Epoch [《国务院办公厅关于全面加强新时代语言文字工作的意见》]

Outline of the Ten-Year Plan and the Eighth Five-Year Plan for National Language and Script Work [《国家语言文字工作十年规划和“八五”计划纲要》]

Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters [《汉字简化方案》]

Containing:

“First List of Simplified Chinese Characters” [《汉字简化第一表》]

“Second List of Simplified Chinese Characters” [《汉字简化第二表》]

“List of Simplified Chinese Character Radicals” [《汉字偏旁简化表》]

Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet (《汉语拼音方案》)

Scheme for the Phonetic Script [《拼音文字方案》]

Second Scheme for Simplifying Chinese Characters (Draft) [《第二次汉字简化方案(草案)》]

The Fourteenth Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development and the Vision

2035 [《中华人民共和国国民经济和社会发展第十四个五年规划和 2035 年远景目标纲要》]

Thirteenth Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Language and Script Work

[《国家语言文字事业“十三五”发展规划》]

Glossary of translated Chinese terms (A-Z)

20th National Congress of the CCP [中国共产党第二十次全国代表大会]

CCP's Symposium on News Reporting and Public Opinion [党的新闻舆论工作座谈会]

Central Working Committee for the Promotion of Putonghua [中央推广普通话工作委员会]

Chinese Character Reform Association [中国文字改革协会]

Chinese Character Reform Committee [中国文字改革委员会]

Chinese nation [中华民族]

Chinese socialist ideology in a new epoch [新时代中国特色社会主义思想]

cultural confidence [文化自信]

cultural subjectivity [文化主体性]

forging the strong sense of community for Chinese nation [铸牢中华民族共同体意识]

guiding ideology [指导思想]

Key Concepts in Chinese Thought and Culture: Communication Through Translation

(中华思想文化术语传播工程)

language and script cause [语言文字事业]

Language Reform [文字改革]

Latinised New Script [拉丁化新文字]

Literary Chinese [文言文]

national common language and script [国家通用语言文字]

National Conference on Language and Script Work [全国语言文字工作会议]

National Conference on Script Reform [全国文字改革会议]

New Cultural Movement [新文化运动]

Phonetic Symbols [注音符号]

Putonghua (普通话)

Romanised Symbols for the National Language [国语罗马字]

State Language Commission [国家语言文字工作委员会]

simplify the Chinese characters (简化汉字)

“three confidences” (road confidence, theoretical confidence, institutional confidence)

[三个自信: 道路自信, 理论自信, 制度自信]

Vernacular Writing [白话文]

with Chinese characteristics [中国特色]