CrossMark

Multilingualism and policy making in Greater China: ideological and implementational spaces

Qi Shen[1] · Xuesong Gao[2,3]

Abstract

In this opening commentary, we draw on Ruiz's (NABE J 8:15–34, 1984) metaphorical representations of language to outline the ideological and implementational spaces for language policy making in Greater China. In particular, we highlight how the 'resource' orientation allows different stakeholders to negotiate the development of language policies that may help preserve linguistic diversity within a tradition of seeing linguistic unity as foundational to national unity. To illustrate this, we present an analysis of media texts on a major language policy initiative in mainland China and examine relevant discussions in other Chinese contexts. We contend that this 'resource' orientation has a significant role in defining the implementational space for language policy making in Greater China, despite the critique that may be levelled at it.

Keywords Language policy and planning · Greater China · Ideological space · Implementational space

✉ Xuesong Gao
xuesong.gao@unsw.edu.au

Qi Shen
shenqi928@hotmail.com

[1] School of Foreign Languages, Tongji University, Shanghai 200092, China

[2] School of Education, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia

[3] Institute of Languages, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China

Introduction

This special issue brings together scholars in the field of language policy for the exploration of policy making under different sociopolitical conditions in Greater China, including mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Since no policies are developed 'without first problematizing its territory' (Osborne 1997:174), we believe that it is important for us to understand the representation of language issues within these contexts before we can appreciate relevant language policy making processes. For this reason, we draw on Ruiz's (1984) seminal work on language planning orientations, with a focus on his metaphorical representations of languages as 'problem', 'right', and 'resource', as a way to understand the ideological and implementational spaces for language policy making in Greater China (Hornberger 2002; Hult and Hornberger 2016). First, the 'problem' orientation in language planning recognizes the practical needs and circumstances of language planners and policy researchers, conceptualizing 'linguistic diversity' as 'a threat to national unity' (Hult and Hornberger 2016:34). Second, the 'rights' orientation associates individuals and communities with their rights to 'use [their] languages in the activities of communal life' and 'freedom from discrimination on the basis of language' (Macías 1979:89). Third, the 'resource' orientation credits language with both 'intrinsic value in relation to cultural reproduction, […] identity construction, building self-esteem, and intellectual engagement', as well as 'extrinsic value with respect to, inter alia, national security, diplomacy, […] business, media, and public relations' (ibid:39).

Different policy making orientations mediate the development and implementation of relevant language policies by promoting particular ideological beliefs and defining implementational spaces for various agents that operate within them when implementing policies (Hornberger 2002). Though each orientation has its limitations and language policies have often been construed as 'serving the interests' of the powerful (Tollefson 2006:46), we believe that the 'resource' orientation (e.g. Hult and Hornberger 2016) deserves more attention in the Chinese context. The 'resource' orientation does not break away from instrumental beliefs in the utilitarian values of languages for individuals and communities in the tradition of language policy making, in particular the traditional emphasis on linguistic unity as foundational to national unity (e.g. Chen 1999; Coblin 2000; Pérez-Milans 2013; Li 2017). However, the 'resource' orientation arguably provides implementational space for different stakeholders to negotiate the development of policies that value linguistic diversity and help it co-exist with national unity in Greater China.

For this reason, despite the reservations we may have about this 'resource' orientation in language policy making, we place great hope in the implications that this 'resource' orientation is likely to have for language policy making in Greater China, and we focus in this commentary on presenting the implementational space that could be carved out by it. To achieve this, we will first undertake a brief overview of the sociolinguistic conditions in the Greater Chinese contexts. We will discuss relevant policy initiatives that have been developed in response to the aforementioned sociolinguistic conditions in these contexts to illustrate how the 'resource'

orientation has been played out in language policy making. In particular, we will highlight the Yubao (語言保護工程 or 語保) or 'the Preservation of Regional Chinese Varieties' Project in mainland China (Cao 2017), in which various agents/agencies may have been enabled by the 'resource' orientation to preserve linguistic diversity.

The context of Greater China

Greater China constitutes a huge and diverse linguistic context for language policy making. Mainland China alone has a population of 1.3 billion people, consisting of 56 officially recognized ethnic groups (National Bureau of Statistics 2013). In mainland China, the dominant *Han* (汉) group comprises 91.5% of the total population and speaks at least '2000 more or less distinct dialects or subdialects' such as Cantonese, Fukienese, and Shanghainese, all officially classified as varieties of the Chinese language (Li 2006:150; Coblin 2000). The other 55 ethnic minority groups, including Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur and Zhuang, speak over 290 languages (Lewis 2009). In Taiwan, the population includes at least 16 officially recognized Austronesian aboriginal tribes apart from the dominant Han Chinese, who can be further divided into three large ethnolinguistic groups speaking Fukienese, Hakka and Mandarin, which literally means the official speech and is the equivalent of Putonghua, the standard spoken Chinese variety, promoted in mainland China (e.g. Scott and Tiun 2007). In Hong Kong, the majority of the Chinese residents speak Cantonese as the regional lingua franca in the shadow of English, which is a crucial language for business and commerce, and Putonghua, the national language of People's Republic of China. Hong Kong is also home to a significant number of sociolinguistic groups, often categorized as 'ethnic minorities', including Indians, Nepalese, Pakistani and Filipinos speaking a variety of languages (Thapa and Adamson 2018).

Despite differences in political systems, these regions have been under the spell of a highly instrumental approach to language planning, which propagates popular discourses constructing 'majority languages as instruments of modernity and economic progress' and minority languages as (merely) carriers of 'tradition' and 'cultural identity' (Tan and Rubdy 2008:11; Pérez-Milans 2013). Policy makers in these contexts also see language 'as a symbol of ethnic identity and cultural solidarity' (Giles et al. 1977:307). Their efforts to address language issues in each context could be interpreted with reference to Ruiz's (1984) metaphors.

In mainland China, the government has been promoting Putonghua ('a common speech') as the national standard for spoken Chinese and standard written Chinese, in order to create a shared linguistic basis for the nation and as an important strategy for modernization (Chen 1999). Due to their less powerful positions compared to Putonghua, the vitality of these regional varieties (e.g. Cantonese or Fukienese) and minority languages has become much less certain, creating concern about a crisis for these regional Chinese varieties and minority languages. For this reason, there are increasing language policy-related discussions highlighting linguistic diversity as a resource (e.g.

Zhao 2016), and this particular orientation in language policy making has to be examined critically.

In Taiwan, the nationalist (KMT) government actively promoted the use of Mandarin as the medium of instruction in schools and communication in public spaces before the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) assumed power in the 2000s. Since then the pro-independence government, and especially pro-independence political groups, have attempted to promote Taiwanese as a new national language so that Taiwan can be rebranded linguistically for independence (Dupré 2013, 2016). In addition, the use of aboriginal tribal languages and regional Chinese varieties such as Hakka are officially promoted as a right of people who speak them or are imagined to speak them (e.g. Lin and Yudaw 2016). For this reason, there have been efforts to enhance the use of these languages in public spaces, including education and broadcasting.

In Hong Kong, Modern Standard Chinese in traditional characters with Cantonese as its spoken form has been regarded as an important route for ethnic minority populations to become integrated in the mainstream Hong Kong society (e.g. Loh and Tam 2016; Thapa and Adamson 2018). In fact, a lack of Chinese language competence among ethnic minority students is generally seen as a problem that needs to be addressed by language educators, researchers and policy makers. The government has been investing heavily in promoting the learning and teaching of Chinese among ethnic minority students, hoping that their improved Chinese competence will facilitate their academic progress and social integration.

The shared and subtly different language policy responses in each context raise important questions to be addressed by researchers. As for mainland China, one may wonder what it means for the government there to promote a discourse on language resources, and whether it reflects a fundamental shift in language policy making orientations or a makeshift delay tactic in response to linguistic diversity that is essentially seen as a problem. Concerning Taiwan, one might question whether the official policies can effectively address the inequality of different tribal groups and ethnolinguistic communities in relation to the dominant Han Chinese group solely by raising the status of their languages as media of instruction and public service. Since linguistic inequality reflects a deeper level of social inequality, these efforts might fall short of the grand objectives if they fail to address the fundamental inequality inherent in societal structures. With regard to Hong Kong, it is questionable whether the government's efforts to help ethnic minority students develop better Chinese language skills will indeed help them better integrate into mainstream society.

Given the significance of mainland China in all the three Greater China contexts and our familiarity with it, we feel more qualified to comment on the government's language policy initiatives in this context. We are aware that most of the challenges facing language policy makers and researchers in mainland China are also echoed in other Chinese contexts.

Linguistic diversity and language policy making in Mainland China

At present, mainland China is at a crossroads. It may move toward 'plural mono-culturalism' in which 'ethnic minority groups emphasize their cultural identities above those of the nation and limit their potential to take on multiple roles in national development (Postiglione 2014:43). It may also move toward 'harmonious multiculturalism' that would 'align with the Confucian tradition of 'harmonious yet different' and coincide with the state's campaign for a harmonious society' (ibid, also see Pérez-Milans 2013).

Language policy makers in mainland China face challenges related to the promotion of the national standard, and of foreign languages in contexts characterized by linguistic diversity and dramatic demographic changes caused by internal and cross-border migrations. As mentioned earlier, the promotion of national standard languages undermines the existence of ethnic minority languages, an issue that has been critically examined in previous language policy research in China (e.g. Wang 2016). While this is a clearly significant challenge for policy makers to address, it is also important to see what opportunities (e.g. better employment and economic development prospects) emerge for individuals, and how these opportunities can help us critically reflect on relevant policies and sociopolitical contexts. In addition, the implementation of the national standard has resulted in the side effect that regional Chinese varieties (or 'dialects') are on the verge of disappearance as their use is increasingly confined to private spaces (e.g. Gao 2012, 2015, 2017; Shen 2016). Migration by speakers of languages other than those spoken by host communities creates challenges for the migrants and host communities to identify and use particular language varieties for promoting social cohesiveness and improving migrants' educational and social experiences. The default solution is often the national standard language, thereby reducing further the space for using language varieties spoken by the migrants and host communities.

The mainland Chinese government has stressed the importance of English language competence for effective global engagement over the years (e.g. Pérez-Milans 2013; Tollefson and Tsui 2004). However, in recent years the government has planned to implement 'one belt, one road' as its new development framework, which connects China to countries west and southwest of its borders (Wen 2016). This strategic initiative may potentially undermine the dominance of English, since multiple languages other than English are used in countries west and southwest of China's borders. It is interesting to note that the recently elected government in Taiwan has also vowed to promote a 'New Southbound' policy to reduce its dependence on mainland China and expand business opportunities in South East Asia. Despite differences in their political systems between mainland China and Taiwan, both strategic developmental initiatives require individual citizens to acquire competence in languages other than English. However, the continual rise of English as a strategically important language in the last few decades might have undermined the prospects of other foreign languages such as Spanish, Arabic or Russian. This constitutes a challenge for governments in both contexts to create a linguistic reservoir for new development blueprints.

The complexity of language policy making in mainland China is further exacerbated by dramatic sociocultural shifts, because of which political establishments and institutions are increasingly unable to control, define and regulate individuals' aspirations, desires and identification (e.g. Yan 2010). Individual stakeholders (e.g. students or parents) are also becoming more vocal, often challenging policy decisions, which necessitates a methodological paradigm shift in relevant language policy research so that these voices can be accommodated in language policy making (e.g. Pérez-Milans 2015). It must be noted that research on language policy making in mainland China has been dominated by grand policy narratives, to capture how political establishments and institutions, responsible for top-down language policy making, have been changing their understanding of socio-linguistic realities and reformulating relevant policies (Zhao 2016). In recent decades these institutions have felt the need to respond to individual demands about language policy making (Gao 2015; Shao and Gao 2017, in press). Whether individuals can affect policy significantly without invoking the constraints of the society or the state has been discussed and debated in the past (Pennycook 2006).

This special issue, consisting largely of studies on individual experiences of relevant policies, projects a nuanced understanding of the role of the nation-state and individuals in language policy making in Greater China, where governments like those in many other contexts have been characteristically interested in managing linguistic diversity for political ends. To illustrate this further, in the next section we focus on the official media coverage of the preservation of regional Chinese varieties (the Yubao Project, 語言保護工程 or 語保), one part of the nationwide initiative to preserve valued language resources in mainland China, in order to unpack the characteristics of language planning and policy making underpinning the 'resource' orientation.

The Yubao Project as a policy response to linguistic diversity in mainland China

The Yubao Project refers to a series of nationwide efforts initiated and funded by the State Language Commission, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance to preserve and document regional Chinese varieties and ethnic minority languages, as these varieties and languages are considered to be on the verge of extinction due to demographic and socio-cultural shifts in mainland China (e.g. Gao 2012, 2015; Shen 2016). The project can be regarded as an example of how governments in Greater China manage linguistic complexities through language policy making. It is associated with some reportedly nuanced shifts in ideological framing of language and language-related works underpinning national language policy, since policy documents have started putting explicit stress on preserving different linguistic varieties as strategic resources for the country (Zhao 2016). The 'resource' discourse does not deviate from the highly instrumental approach to language policy making that was adopted in the past, but it does create a well-defined implementational space where top-down policy making apparently engages with bottom-up calls for the preservation of regional Chinese varieties.

The project is associated with the eleventh five-year plan of the State Language Commission, in which language is mentioned for the first time as 'a national resource that needs to be protected and utilized'. The 'resource' frame highlights the material benefits that languages can bring to the nation in 'pushing forward historical development and social progress'. The plan also emphasizes that 'language is an essential element of culture and a defining marker for culture (文化的基礎要素和鮮明標誌). In response, the State Language Commission has started funding projects that initially documented disappearing language varieties through recordings of the spoken use of a particular language variety. Such measures turned out to be effective in recording and documenting these disappearing varieties for later revitalization, but they have limited effects on bringing these varieties to life. For this reason, recent Yubao initiatives promote the lively use of regional Chinese varieties, especially in the arts and in cultural forms such as folk songs. There have been efforts to disseminate the folk cultural products associated with particular language varieties in schools and even in the mass media.

To demonstrate how the project is being implemented in different parts of mainland China, a total of fifty-two news texts were taken from the Yubao project's website and analyzed, with a focus on the key words used to describe what the Project is about. The analysis revealed that these texts tend to portray the Chinese governments at different levels as full of action and initiative for implementing the Yubao project in a highly coordinated manner. In the texts, the Thirteenth Five-Year National Language Enterprise Development Blueprint is constantly referred to as the guideline that all the Yubao project initiatives have been following; and the Blueprint is presented as being integrated in educational planning in various provinces such as Guangdong and Fujian, usually with modifiers such as 'actively' (積極) to describe the momentum of relevant initiatives [e.g. the 'Guangdong Provincial government is actively working on integrating the Yubao project into the province's Thirteenth Five Year Educational Development Blueprint (廣東省要積極爭取把語保工程列入本地教育的"十三五"規劃')'].

We also examined the keywords in these texts to identify the discursive boundaries that frame the project. Our analysis has revealed that the following keywords were frequently used to describe what the Yubao Project is about: (1) resource, culture, serve, history, and tradition (to do with 'language'); (2) standard, science, outcome, quality and techniques (do with 'the project'). These keywords reflect the implementational space where the use of regional Chinese varieties and minority languages can be supported and promoted (Table 1). Though the space appears to be quite restrictive, it does allow initiatives to promote the use of regional Chinese varieties and minority languages without incurring much opposition from the government.

First, the project is a top-down initiative from the Chinese government through its language planning agency, the State Language Commission, to preserve regional Chinese varieties and minority languages that are on the brink of extinction. It must be noted that the project is not intended to be seen as a challenge to the national language policy that is committed to building and consolidating a shared linguistic basis for a unified nation. Instead, it is supposed to address the problems that may be generated by such commitment to unity, such as disappearing diversity. The media

Table 1 Frequently used terms to describe the Yubao Project

Keywords	Those to do with 'language'						Those to do with 'project'				
	Resource 資源	Culture 文化	Serve 服務	History 歷史	Tradition 傳統		Standard 規範	Science 科學	Outcome 成果	Quality 品質	Techniques 技術
Counts (=n)	473	198	28	18	13		115	81	46	40	39

texts reflect that the mainland Chinese government still wishes to control the language planning process in mainland China and does wish to assert its authority in the process (e.g. Shao and Gao 2017).

This nature of the Yubao project is also reflected by the key word 'serve' (服務), which means that it is subject to a higher order demand or objective. For instance, the texts stress that the Yubao project is meant to 'serve the country', 'contributes to national security', or is part of 'the efforts serving government's mission'. In addition, the project involves a large public investment, which requires the project team to implement it in a highly accountable manner. For this reason, there is repeated stress on 'outcome' and 'quality' through 'scientific management'. Given the guiding ideological principle of 'scientific management' as advocated by the Chinese government, the project is also managed through a rigorous monitoring mechanism to ensure that it delivers what is expected of it. As a result, 規範 ('standard') and 科學 ('Science') are used 115 and 81 times in the dataset. 技術 ('Technique') is used 39 times to refer to the technical support and teams needed to undertake the Yubao project in a highly standard and scientific manner. They emphasize that Yubao project researchers must follow the same criteria when documenting and archiving the language varieties in different places. Those involved in the project are also expected to observe scientific conventions and scientifically plan and implement their project-related endeavors. All these efforts are intended to ensure that the project leads to an output (成果), which will go through a series of quality assurance procedures such as public demonstration or dissemination. In short, these keywords are used to project the Yubao project as a well-coordinated planned scientific project.

Second, the media texts on the Yubao project reflect a discursive space for regional Chinese varieties and minority languages to be considered as an important resource. One of the most frequently used keywords in the dataset is, unsurprisingly, 'resource' (資源) (473 times), since the project title 'Language Resource Preservation' appears regularly in all the media coverage. The collocations that this keyword appears in also speak for the foci and mission of the Yubao project. For instance, 'resource' is used in collocations such as 'language resource database' (語言資源庫), and 'a platform to archive China's language resources' (中國語言資源採錄平臺). These collocations suggest that the Yubao project is largely an archiving effort to document disappearing language varieties. 'Resource' also appears in sentences such as 'Language is also … an economic resource' and 'mining language resources' (開發語言資源), where language varieties are metaphorically represented in terms of physical and material wealth to be capitalized through the Yubao project. Texts stress that language resources can be used to generate material wealth, indicating that the ideological framing of language in the Yubao project does not differ from the highly instrumental approach in the tradition of language policy making in China.

Third, the discursive space implied in the media texts on the Yubao project permits regional Chinese varieties to be actively promoted as a way to preserve regional and traditional Chinese cultures. The second most frequently used keyword in the dataset is 'culture' (文化) (198). Like 'language resource', 'cultural resource' is also used to capture the mission of the Yubao project. Therefore, collocations such as 'cultural preservation' and 'cultural database' are used to reflect the idea that the

Yubao project is meant to preserve 'cultural diversity' and 'cultural heritage' in the database of archived language varieties. Keywords such as 'history' (歷史) and 'tradition' (傳統) are used to emphasize that the Yubao project is a historical opportunity to preserve 'traditional core culture' by preserving regional language varieties. For this reason, a range of initiatives has been undertaken to promote the use of regional Chinese varieties and minority languages (e.g. Gao 2015). For instance, programs in these language varieties were created and aired on regional TV channels. Competitions were organized for people to produce movies in regional Chinese varieties, as well as popular songs. Dedicated websites appeared to allow the use of regional Chinese varieties and minority languages. Such efforts are also seen as being closely associated with different regional governments' efforts to promote their image—a form of soft power through cultural attractions. Preserving regional language varieties has become an important means for these governments to create and promote cultural images (文化名片, cultural name cards). In addition, the media texts also describe the efforts of regional governments to integrate the Yubao project with regional education and cultural tourism. In other words, these news texts depict the Yubao project as not only preserving regional language varieties but also bringing real material benefits to the relevant regions.

Echoes from Taiwan and Hong Kong

Despite the differences in political systems and language policy making mechanisms, ideological discourses concerning the Yubao project in mainland China are similar to what is found in the mass media coverage of the crisis of 'Taiwanese' and other regional language varieties in Taiwan. A series of media reports surrounding International Mother Tongue Day (2017) in Taiwan highlight the critical role of mother tongues in preserving regional cultures, reflecting a tendency to associate regional Chinese varieties with 'tradition' and 'cultural identity' (Giles et al. 1977; Tan and Rubdy 2008). Pro-independence politicians in Taiwan such as Lai Ching-te have reiterated that culture is the root of ethnic communities and mother tongue is the root of such culture (as in *The Commons Daily*, March 14th, 2017). A number of initiatives to promote mother tongue in Taiwan have in fact been quite similar to efforts to preserve regional Chinese varieties via the Yubao project in mainland China. These include activities such as organizing cultural events or competitions where regional Chinese or language varieties can be used, promoting language varieties through popular culture such as songs, and even recording disappearing regional language varieties for posterity, which may help to prompt ways to revive them.

   Given these similar discussions taking place in two very different political systems, it is not surprising to see that a highly prominent theme in the relevant media discussions relates to the promotion of Taiwanese as a constitutionally legalized national language. Such discussions reflect the discourses of language use as an inalienable right, but the notion that an independent political entity needs to be supported by a linguistic one is quite pronounced in such discussions as well (Dupré 2016). It is noteworthy that the relevant proposal to establish Taiwanese as a

constitutionally legalized national language has not been without contention, as linguistically diverse populations such as those speaking Hakka or other regional Chinese varieties in Taiwan felt that they cannot be defined as legitimate members of Taiwanese society if a language variety other than theirs is legalized as the national language (Dupré 2013, 2016). In other words, the promotion of particular social groups' language rights in a given context may undermine the feeling of entitlement to similar language rights among other social groups (e.g. Wee 2010). It seems that those who are committed to the legalization of Taiwanese as the national language (i.e. the pro-independence groups) may regard linguistic diversity as a problem due to their desire to identify a linguistic foundation for independence.

The Taiwan experience raises the question of whether relevant language policies need to be built on the traditional faith in linguistic unity as foundational to national unity. In Greater China, this deeply entrenched belief has worked well since a unified language facilitates communication among millions and has brought them together into a unified nation in the past. Yet in the present world, such a belief drives the launch of national language policies that might have disastrous consequences for various languages other than the national ones on a national scale. It is also a double-edged sword that undermines governments who wish to achieve national unity through linguistic unity, since a subordinate political entity could claim the right to speak particular regional languages and become a separatist political entity to challenge the central authority. Given the vastness and diversity of China, one may wonder whether the central government may back down from this traditional association between linguistic unity and political unity and become much more pragmatic in its approach to language policy making. We suspect that this is the reason why linguistic diversity has been suggested to be a resource rather than a problem or right. Such a shift may allow mainland China to redefine its cultural and ethnic boundaries, which could accommodate more linguistic and cultural diversity (e.g. Wee 2010). The 'resource' orientation may also help to reduce the dominance of Han Chinese and re-ethnicize the Chinese nation by transforming it into a multicultural and multi-ethnic political entity. Likewise, in Taiwan, maintaining linguistic diversity helps the nation reengage with the rest of the world, while in Hong Kong, viewing linguistic diversity as a resource may help strengthen Hong Kong's multilingual and multicultural community.

We appreciate that the reethnicization and redefining of China is not without criticism. Standardization and the relevant scientific discourses dominate the Yubao project, as reflected in the relevant media coverage. There are those who demand that the national policy of promoting standard spoken Chinese (Putonghua) need to be reconsidered, but there is no sign of such reconsideration, even though the media portrays the mainland Chinese government at all levels as actively making efforts to preserve and maintain regional Chinese varieties. It might be the case that the government does not want language issues to become another source of political dissension (Gao 2017). However, it is impossible for language policy issues to become less political, because language policies are always associated with access to particular resources and power (Tollefson 2006). For instance, another round of controversy with regard to the legalization of Taiwanese as a national language would have been unlikely if the pro-independence government had not been elected in 2017. In the

context of mainland China, we appreciate why language policy researchers focus on the immediate task of preserving linguistic diversity, since language policy making remains a top-down process and the Chinese government retains control over policy making. Nevertheless, we feel that conceptualizing linguistic diversity in terms of resources helps to create and maintain the implementational space for the urgent work that is necessary to preserve languages. Hopefully, we can then deal with problematic regulations and the control of language use that are often associated with inequitable access to resources and power later.

Having elaborated the ideological and implementational spaces for language policy making in Greater China, we now turn to this collection of studies that examine the relevant issues as experienced by individuals in these contexts.

Introducing the special issue

With newly collected empirical data, the special issue highlights the opportunities that these challenges present for language policy makers and researchers in promoting and sustaining the multilingual ecology in a context that is often mistakenly perceived to be homogenous and monolingual. Contributors in the special issue address the challenges of promoting ethnic minority languages (i.e. Tibetan), planning languages within multilingual migrant families, and publishing research internationally by non-Anglophone scholars in mainland China. They also look at mothers' voices with regard to mother tongues in migrant families in Taiwan, and explore how a flexible medium of instruction can be adopted to enhance the educational experience of learners of Chinese as a second language in Hong Kong. Since the challenges addressed in the aforementioned studies are not confined to the Greater China region alone, it is hoped that these studies have implications for language policy makers and researchers in contexts where they have to respond to similar challenges resulting from ongoing socio-cultural changes such as mass internal and cross-border migration.

In the lead article of this special issue, Xu draws on the theory of the linguistic market to explore the impact of the promotion of Putonghua on ethnic minority students' social interactions and linguistic identities through an extended engagement with the participants. The findings speak for the complex interaction between the participants' language competence, their investment in acquiring the relevant language competence, and identity transformations. They also reveal that Putonghua functions as an entrance to the linguistic market where different language competencies can be exchanged in favor of the participants. If such structural realities do not change, one may wonder whether ethnic minority students should be encouraged to use Putonghua as a resource that enables them to acquire, deploy, and exchange competence in other languages, or risk shutting themselves out of the current linguistic market.

Zhang and Pérez-Milans continue an ongoing discussion about how minority languages have received decreasing recognition and reduced access to the increasingly confined institutional space because of the promotion of Putonghua as the medium of instruction for minority students in China. They draw on linguistic ethnographic

fieldwork conducted at a secondary school in southwestern China where Tibetan is offered as an academic subject to examine the dynamics of language, culture, and identity as enacted by the ethnic minority. Drawing on Williams' (1977) notion of 'structures of feeling', or emergent communicative forms, Zhang and Pérez-Milans demonstrate how school actors enact, challenge and shape an institutional logic that marginalizes the Tibetan section within the school. They highlight the conditions under which school actors construct Tibetan language education as a pedagogical space without room for Tibetan religious content while, at the same time, shedding light on a variety of interaction forms of negotiation that allow teachers and students to deal with this perceived sensitive religious content.

Han, De Costa and Cui draw on a multi-level transdisciplinary framework for second language acquisition in a multilingual world as well as Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of investment to explore a Muslim student's learning of Putonghua in mainland China over a span of sixteen years. This paper demonstrates how second language acquisition and language policy planning research can be integrated to develop a sophisticated understanding of the roles of identity and agency in individual minority students' responses to and negotiation with top-down national language policy initiatives. The findings have important implications for researchers who are interested in further examining the complexity of linguistic challenges in mainland China from individuals' perspectives.

In Taiwan, Lin dissects the linguistic diversity associated with cross-border marriages and migration, arguing that the government should regard such linguistic diversity as an opportunity rather than a problem. As in many other developed societies, an increasing number of men of low income lose their competitiveness in the marriage markets and seek 'foreign brides' from developing countries such as those in Southeast Asia. Informed by a feminist poststructuralist approach to identity (Weedon 1997), the study examines immigrant mothers' language ideologies to interpret how they made language choices mediated by changing contextual conditions. The study reveals the dilemma that these mothers experienced when making decisions about languages, and stresses the importance of social recognition in facilitating their decision making. Lin contends that the linguistic diversity brought to Taiwan by these immigrant mothers should be celebrated as resources for building an equitable and multilingual society in Taiwan.

Zheng and Guo note China's efforts to expand the national foreign language expertise repertoire as a strategic response to enhance economic and cultural communication with non-Anglophone countries and people in light of the Belt and Road initiative. This emphasis on the non-English linguistic repertoire is apparently in contradiction to the drive for the internationalization of China's higher education through the medium of English, in which Chinese academics are pressured to publish their works in high impact international journals. These journals are usually published in the medium of English and function as a mechanism that effectively devalues Chinese academics' multilingual capital. Despite the Chinese academics' efforts to cope with these institutional constraints, the findings raise a significant question for policy makers to address, so that these scholars can be empowered to fully use their multilingual resources and effectively participate in knowledge production and circulation.

In contrast to the articulation of linguistic diversity as a resource in the studies mentioned above, Loh, Lau and Tam report on Hong Kong scholars' efforts to cope with linguistic diversity as a problem in enhancing minority students' learning of Chinese as a second language (CSL). Because Putonghua is likely to replace Cantonese as medium of instruction in teaching the Chinese language subject, many Hong Kong schools have invested resources in adjusting to the new medium of instruction for teaching the Chinese subject. How non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) students are affected by this shifting medium of instruction is little known, though NCS students probably experience challenges stiffer than those suffered by their local Cantonese-speaking counterparts. Likewise, their Chinese language teachers might also feel disempowered as they need to deal with a new medium of instruction when teaching NCS students. The study reminds policy makers of the need to fully appreciate the difficulties facing NCS students in adapting to a new medium of instruction, and reminds them to consider NCS students' linguistic experiences as a starting point for developing relevant CSL curricula.

Concluding remarks

All of the studies in this special issue reflect how individuals (learners and teachers alike) interact with relevant policy discourses and make efforts to achieve their personal goals within the implementational spaces created by the discourse of language as resource in three Greater China contexts: mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong (Hornberger 2002). The 'resource' orientation reflects the highly instrumental approaches that governments in Greater China contexts have adopted in language policy making, often promoting standard languages to facilitate socio-economic development and regional language varieties/minority languages as carriers of 'tradition' and 'cultural identity' (Tan and Rubdy 2008:11). It must be noted that there is always an aspect of economic rationalization in governments' language policy making (Ruiz 2010). Inevitably, the economic rationalization inherent in relevant policy discourses undermines the existence of specific language varieties.

Studies in this special issue also show that not all languages have been valued as resources that are entitled to space for their continued existence. However, we cannot negate the breathing space, however confined, that the 'resource' discourse helps to create for different language varieties. It is essential for disadvantaged individuals and social groups to appropriate the 'resource' discourse effectively within the given implementational space so that they can empower themselves with the discourse to achieve what they desire to have.

References

Cao, Z. Y. (2017). Guanyu yubao gongcheng yubao gongzuo de jige wenti [Major Issues about Project for the Protection of Language Resources of China]. *Yuyan zhanlue yanjiu [Chinese Journal of Language Policy and Planning], 4,* 11–16.

Chen, P. (1999). *Modern Chinese: History and sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Coblin, S. W. (2000). A brief history of Mandarin. *Journal of the American Oriental Society, 120,* 537–552. https://doi.org/10.2307/606615.

Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2015). Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 35,* 36–56. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190514000191.

Dupré, J. (2013). In search of linguistic identities in Taiwan: An empirical study. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 34*(5), 431–444. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2013.783037.

Dupré, J. (2016). Legislating language in Taiwan: From equality to development to status quo. *Language Policy, 15*(4), 415–432. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-015-9376-9.

Gao, X. (2012). Cantonese is not a dialect: Chinese netizens' defence of Cantonese as a regional lingua franca. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 33*(5), 449–464. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2012.680461.

Gao, X. (2015). The ideological framing of 'dialect': An analysis of mainland China's state media coverage of 'dialect crisis' (2002–2012). *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 36,* 468–482. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2014.943234.

Gao, X. (2017). Linguistic instrumentalism and national language policy in Mainland China's state print media coverage of the 'Protecting Cantonese Movement'. *Chinese Journal of Communication, 10*(2), 157–175. https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2016.1207694.

Giles, H., Bourhis, R. Y., & Taylor, D. M. (1977). Towards a theory of language in ethnic group relations. In H. Giles (Ed.), *Language, ethnicity and intergroup relations* (pp. 307–348). London: Academic Press.

Hornberger, N. (2002). Multilingual language policies and the continua of biliteracy: An ecological approach. *Language Policy, 1*(1), 27–51. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1014548611951.

Hult, F., & Hornberger, N. (2016). Revisiting orientations in language planning: Problem, right, and resource as an analytical heuristic. *Bilingual Review, 33,* 30–49.

Lewis, M. P. (2009). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world* (16th ed.). Dallas: SIL International.

Li, D. C. S. (2006). Chinese as a lingua franca in Greater China. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 26,* 149–176. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190506000080.

Li, Y. M. (2017). Yuyan shenghuo yu yuyan shenghuo yanjiu [Language life and study of language life]. *Yuyan zhanlue yanjiu [Chinese Journal of Language Policy and Planning], 1,* 15–23.

Lin, M. A., & Yudaw, B. (2016). Practicing community-based Truku (indigenous) language policy: Reflection on dialogue and collaboration. *The Asia Pacific Education Researcher, 25,* 735–762. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-016-0318-x.

Loh, E. K. Y., & Tam, L. C. W. (2016). Struggling to thrive: The impact of Chinese language assessments on social mobility of Hong Kong ethnic minority youth. *The Asia Pacific Education Researcher, 25,* 763–770. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-016-0315-0.

Macías, R. (1979). Language choice and human rights in the United States. In J. Alatis (Ed.), *Languages in public life* (pp. 86–101)., Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

National Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *The 2010 population census of the People's Republic of China*. Beijing: China Statistics Press.

Osborne, J. (1997). Of health and statecraft. In A. Petersen & R. Bunton (Eds.), *Foucault, health and medicine* (pp. 173–188). New York: Routledge.

Pennycook, A. (2006). Postmodernism in language policy. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method* (pp. 60–76). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Pérez-Milans, M. (2013). *Urban schools and English language education in late modern China: A critical sociolinguistic ethnography*. New York: Routledge.

Pérez-Milans, M. (2015). Language education policy in late modernity: (Socio) Linguistic ethnographies in the European Union. *Language Policy, 14*(2), 99–107. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-014-9354-7.

Postiglione, G. (2014). Education and cultural diversity in multiethnic China. In J. Leibold & Y. Chen (Eds.), *Minority education in China: Balancing unity and diversity in an era of critical pluralism* (pp. 27–43). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *NABE Journal, 8,* 15–34.

Ruiz, R. (2010). Reorienting language-as-resource. In J. E. Petrovic (Ed.), *International perspectives on bilingual education: Policy, practice, and controversy* (pp. 155–172). Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Scott, M., & Tiun, H. (2007). Mandarin-Only to Mandarin-Plus: Taiwan. *Language Policy, 6*(1), 53–72. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-006-9040-5.

Shao, Q., & Gao, X. (2017). 'Noisy guests shall not unseat the host': Framing high-stakes English examinations in mainland China's state-controlled print media. *English Today, 33*(3), 25–30. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078416000419.

Shao, Q., & Gao, X. (2018). Protecting language or promoting discitizenship?: A poststructural policy analysis of the Shanghainese Heritage Project. *International Journal of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education.* https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1451482. **(in press)**.

Shen, Q. (2016). Saving Shanghai dialect: A case for bottom-up language planning in China. *The Asia Pacific Education Researcher, 25,* 713–722. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-016-0312-3.

Tan, P., & Rubdy, R. (2008). Introduction. In R. Rubdy & P. Tan (Eds.), *Language as commodity: Global structures, local marketplaces* (pp. 1–15). London: Continuum.

Thapa, C., & Adamson, B. (2018). Ethnicity, language-in-education policy and linguistic discrimination: Perspectives of Nepali students in Hong Kong. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural development, 39*(4), 329–340. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2017.1389947.

Tollefson, J. W. (2006). Critical theory in language policy. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method* (pp. 42–59). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Tollefson, J. W., & Tsui, A. B. M. (Eds.). (2004). *Medium of instruction policies: Which agenda? whose agenda?*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wang, P. (2016). Assessment on language rights in education domain: Shift-oriented, maintenance-oriented or something else? *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 19*(1), 89–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2014.969678.

Wee, L. (2010). *Language without rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Blackwell.

Wen, Q. F. (2016). Yidai yilu yuyan rencai de peiyang [Producing language-qualified personnel for "the Belt and Road Initiatives"]. *Yuyan zhanlue yanjiu [Chinese Journal of Language Policy and Planning], 2,* 26–32.

Yan, Y. (2010). The Chinese path to individualization. *British Journal of Sociology, 61,* 489–512. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2010.01323.x.

Zhao, R. (2016). Xin shiqi duoyuan yiti yuyan zhengce de bianhua yu fazhan [Unity in diversity: Changes and developments of language policies in modern China]. *Yuyan wenzi yingyong [Chinese Applied Linguistics], 1,* 2–9. https://doi.org/10.16499/j.cnki.1003-5397.2016.01.001.

Qi Shen is Shu Guang Scholar and professor of Applied Linguistics in the school of foreign languages at Tongji University, China. He holds a Ph.D in Comparative Education from Nanjing Normal University. His research focuses on the interrelationship between language policy and language education and on the sociology of multilingualism. He serves as a Think Tank consultant and a member of Board of Scientific Committee for Language Policy and Planning Research for State Language Commission of China.

Xuesong Gao is an associate professor in School of Education, the University of New South Wales, Australia. He is also a visiting chair professor (Eastern Scholar awarded by Shanghai Institutions of Higher Learning, JZ2015008) at the Institute of Languages, Shanghai International Studies University. His research interests include language learner autonomy, language education policy and language teacher education.