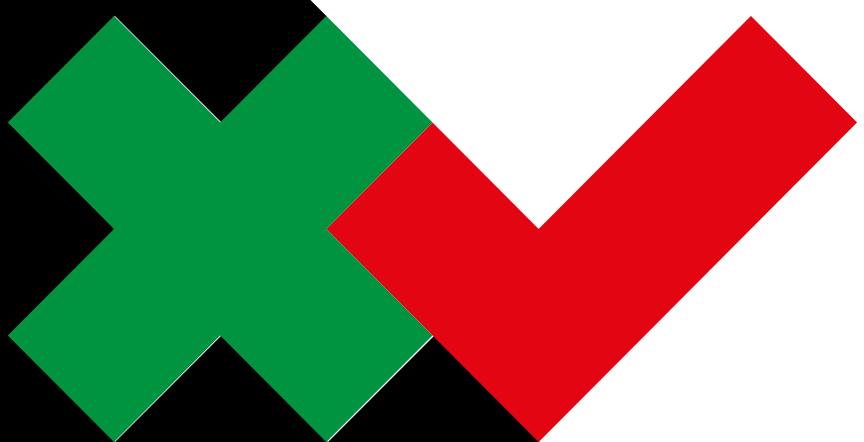


The “Language Wars”





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Preface 引言

Everyone uses language, but not everyone treats it in the same way. We have the “language police” who catch every language mistake:

語言，人人都會用到，但不是人人以同樣眼光看待語言。有人充當「正字刑警」，不放過別人任何語法錯誤，必會加以糾正：

A new study suggests that people who finish messages with full stops are perceived as insincere. Apparently, millennials have rewritten the rules of punctuation.

“Incentivise” is a horrible word. Can we just remove it everywhere?

“Irregardless” shouldn't exist because so many people got it wrong for so long, we shouldn't have to suffer the ignorance of some at the expense of language and culture.

“Literally” apparently now also means figuratively... they even put that in the dictionary. It's just so stupid.

呢套電影名為“Ferdinand”，但係不可[sic]故，其香港譯名俾人翻譯為《快d啦牛牛》；眾所周知，廣東話入面嘅di1正字為「啲」，但係喺網上、以及其他地方(例如文宣)，都俾人簡化為「D」。 [...] 嘴呼！連做翻譯嘅都變成5p仔，唔通就要喺我哋呢一代，即將見證廣東話文化嘅墮落？

我們曾經輝煌的漢字文化，細膩而能傳遞出細水般情感的文字將會被Leh, mai, Bao, ngo所取代。

But there are some who rebel against the “language police”.

但亦有人不服從「正字刑警」：

These must be the same people who hate Picasso, because he couldn't keep the paint inside the lines and the colors never matched the numbers.

其實我真係唔明點解成日都有人喺捉人錯字。成人話“吾你XX”又唔俾人用lah leh尼etc。 [...] 駛唔駛下下捉人錯字？依家翻學交作文呀？洗唔洗用埋書面語呀？我leh就中2用leh d字geh係mai吾俾？捉bao佢lor同ngo逐gor改lah「正字刑警」們！ [...]

“又唔系睇唔明 又有效率 方便快捷”

“何必咁執著呢
明咪得囉”

“放鬆d啦年輕人-.-”

“死咬住人吾放 又話咩有
損校風 敗壞名聲 誇唔誇
d呀 樣樣野都吹毛求疵
甘負面 開心咩？”

Should we all fight with the “language police”? Or should we defend our language from forced corrections by the “language police”? Whose side should we be on?

In this booklet, we will explore the arguments presented by both sides, and present a scientific view on the matter. Maybe — just maybe — we can stop arguing; most things are never just black and white, and language is no exception.

This booklet is another milestone of our efforts in promoting linguistics to the public. We are grateful for the support of the teaching staff of Department of Linguistics and the Executive Committee Members of Linguistics Society; without them, this booklet would not exist.

我們應該與「正字刑警」並肩作戰嗎？還是抵抗他們強迫我們接受的「正確」？我們應該支持哪一方？我們會在這本小冊子中探討雙方論點，以科學方法分析，希望改變雙方爭持不下的局面。世事大多絕不是非黑即白的，語言亦不例外。

這本小冊子是我們對外推廣語言學的另一個里程碑。本書得以面世，有賴語言學系教職員的鼎力相助，和語言學學會內部籌委會成員的支援，特此表達謝意。

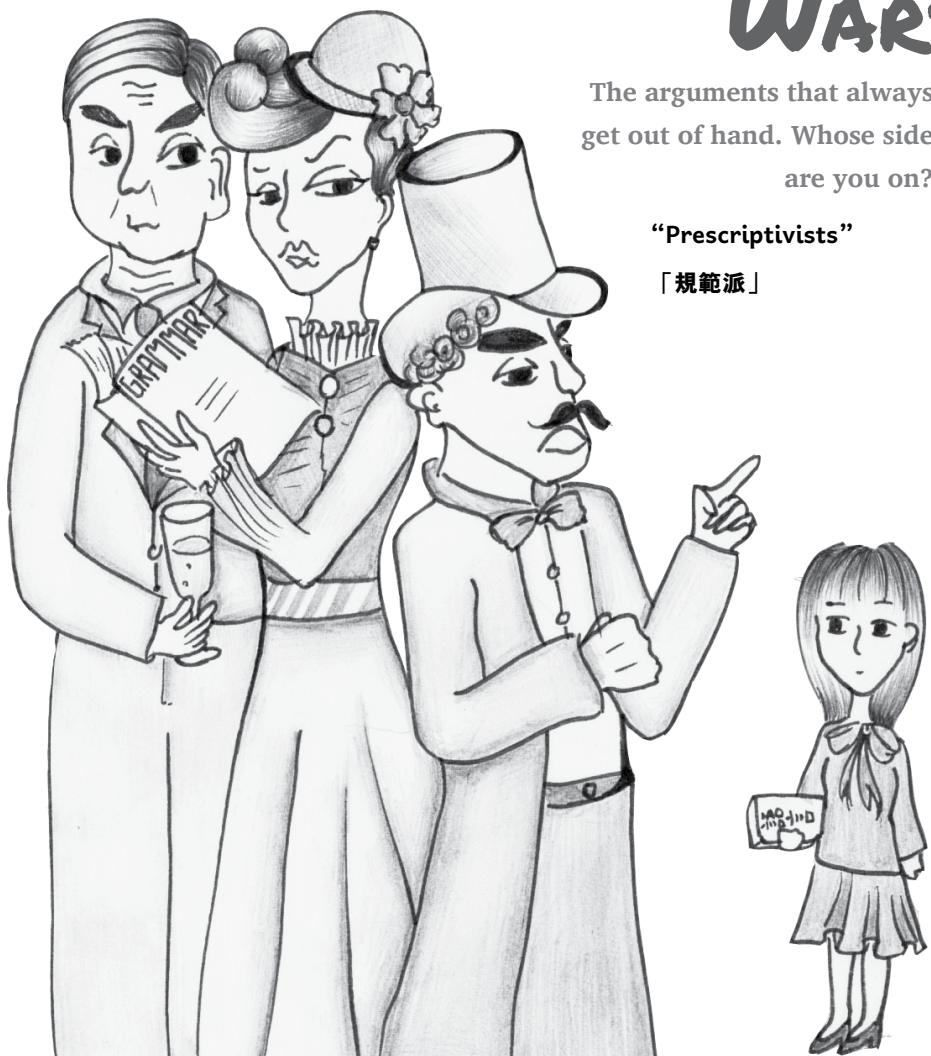
“Pick a side” 誰是誰非

THE SO-CALLED LANGUAGE WARS

The arguments that always
get out of hand. Whose side
are you on?

“Prescriptivists”

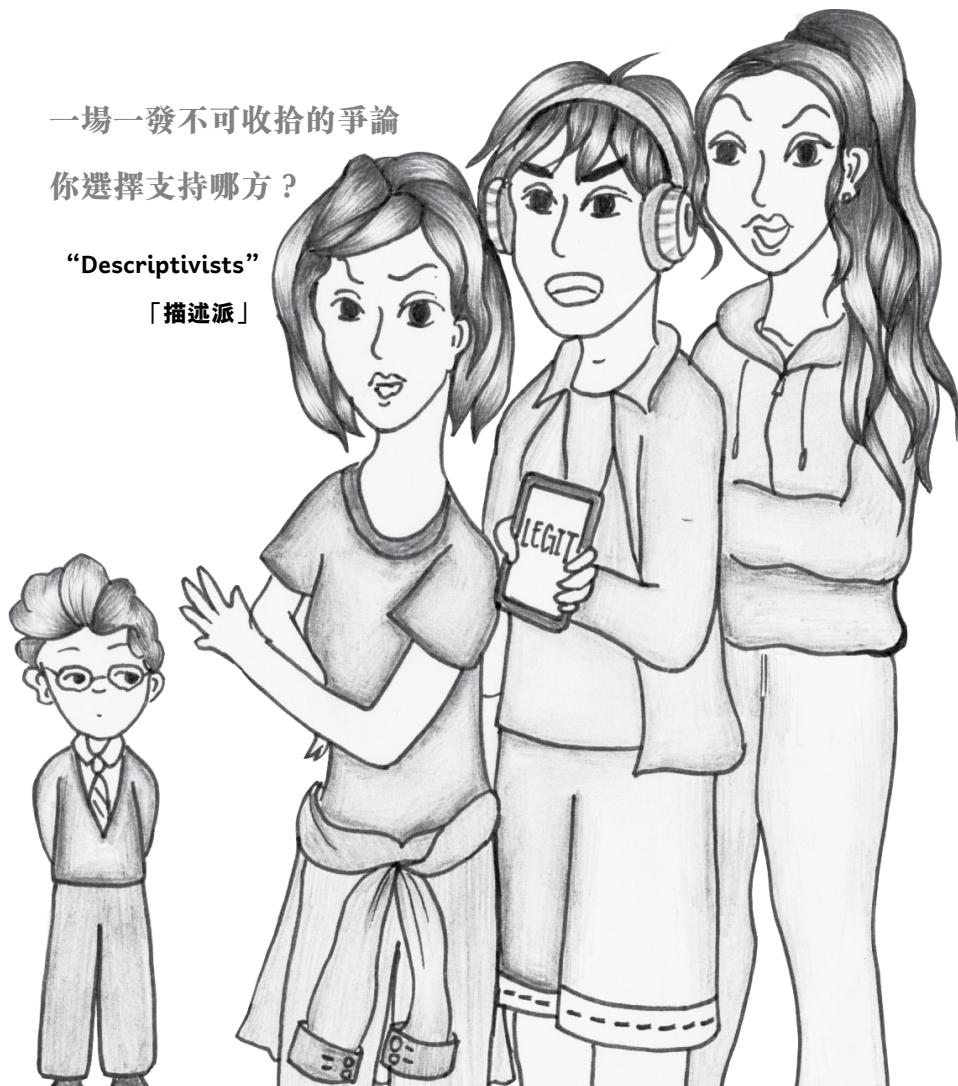
「規範派」



所謂 語文警民戰

一場一發不可收拾的爭論
你選擇支持哪方？

“Descriptivists”
「描述派」



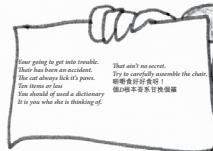
Dear reader! You are our last hope!

哀哉！哀哉！兄弟，你係我哋最後嘅希望啦！



Only you can save our language!

得你先至可以救我地嘅語言嚟咋！



Look at these abominations! Disgusting!
你睇下？搞成咁嘅樣呀，死啦！

Your going to get into trouble.
Their has been an accident.
The cat always licks its paws.
Ten items or less
You should of used a dictionary.

THINK!

*It is you who she is thinking of.
That ain't no secret.
Try to carefully assemble the chair.
啲嘢食好好食呀！
個D根本吾系甘挽個羅*

THIS is how it should be!
咁寫先啱呀！

Some of the sentences should not be on the list. Can you tell which ones are they? 某些句子其實不應該寫在表上，你能分辨出是哪些句子嗎？

You're going to get into trouble.
There has been an accident.
The cat always licks its paws.
Ten items or fewer
You should have used a dictionary.

*It is you of whom she is thinking.
That isn't a secret.
Try to assemble the chair
carefully.
啲食物好好食呀！
啲嘢的根本唔係咁玩嘅*

colloquial, but they are not wrong. (這些句字不是錯，而是口語而已)
Answer: "Ten items or less", "It is you who she is thinking of" (These sentences are just more

WRONG!

CORRECT!



We ought to respect our culture, our language, not to sink it with sloppy grammar!

我哋應該尊重我哋嘅文化同埋語言嘅嘛！呢啲亂咁㗎 grammar 簡直係我哋文化嘅災難呀。

Indeed, because if you don't, our society will devolve into a bunch of illiterate apes!!

鷄線，你驚死
我哋變文盲咩？



THINK!

Prescriptivist 規範派

A person who thinks language should follow rules of correctness. A prescriptivist believes that language has standards. By upholding purity, logic, history or literary excellence, a high standard is maintained. Deviating from these norms is corruption and signs of low social status. (Crystal, 2011, p.384)

規範派認為語言應該跟從正確規則，他們認為語言跟隨著一套標準。只要確保語言純淨、合邏輯，再配合歷史和文學藝術的考慮，就能維持高水平的語言。違背這些法則則是語言敗壞和文化水平低下的表現。 (Crystal, 2011, p.384)

Descriptivist 描述派

A person who thinks rules should follow how language is used. They think language is constantly changing and has no ideal state (Crystal, 2011, p. 139); so the rules of a language comes from how the language is written or spoken.

描述派認為語言的規則應視乎人們如何使用它而定立。他們認為語言正不斷變化，並且沒有一個最理想的形態 (Crystal, 2011, p. 139)；故此這些法則需要因應大眾如何使用語言於寫作和說話而決定。

Who is the prescriptivist? Who is the descriptivist?

誰是規範派的人？誰是描述派的人？

Answer: Left: prescriptivist; right: neither. 答：左：規範派；右：兩者皆不是。



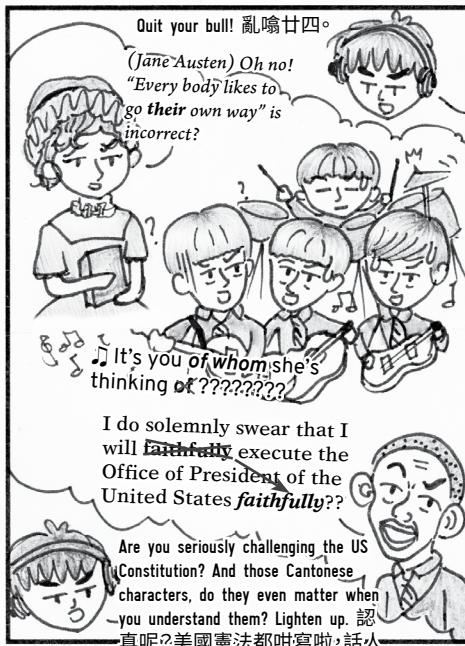
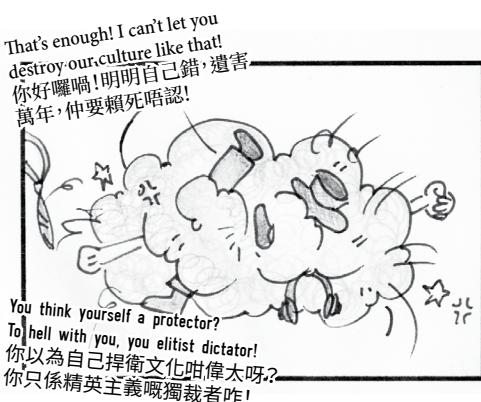
See, language definitely has rules. Rules that keep the language whole. Rules revered by our culture for years.
學吓啲啦！語言一定有規則。我哋嘅語言，就係靠我哋世世代代遵守呢啲規則，嚟保持完整。

ENGLISH

- A sentence must not end with a preposition
- Don't start a sentence with a conjunction
- No double negatives
- Don't split infinitives
- Don't use singular "they." A student should do ~~their~~ his homework
- ...

CANTONESE 廣東話

- Don't leave out/change radicals in Cantonese native words 粵語字要寫咗部首
- Write the canonical character 寫粵語正字



The War that Never Existed

不存在的語文戰爭

Yes, you've got that right. The “language police” and the rebel have been arguing over a war that never existed. Confused? This is how people have been seeing the “Language Wars”.

沒錯！「正字刑警」同他們的反對者一直爭論的「語文戰爭」其實根本不存在。甚麼意思？以下就是大家眼中所謂的「語文戰爭」。

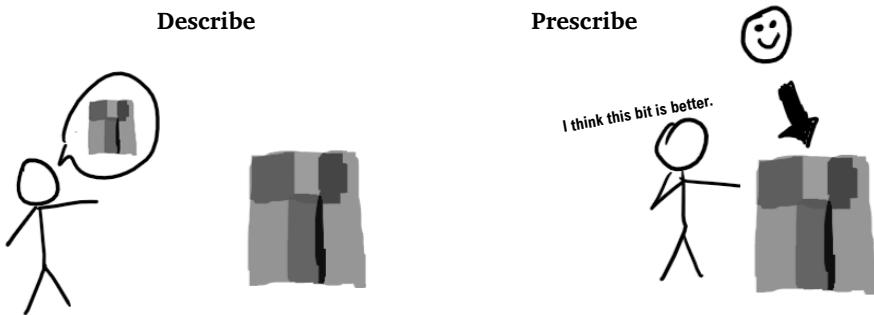
Prescriptivists 規範派	Descriptivists 描述派
 <p>Real identity: Language Police (Language mavens) 真正身份： 「正字刑警」</p> <p>“Grammar controls language.” Language should follow grammar.” 「文法控制語言。 語言應跟從文法。」</p>	 <p>Real identity: (Non-language police) 真正身份： (不是「正字刑警」)</p> <p>“People should be liberated to speak and write as they please” 「人們應隨心所欲地說話使用語言。」</p>

That's how a lot of people see the Language Wars. In the English-speaking world, they fight over sentence structures (syntax), word choice and pronunciation; in Hong Kong, the War is mostly over Cantonese “correct pronunciation” or “correct characters”.

大部分人眼中的「語文戰爭」中，雙方對立，互不退讓。在英語世界當中，大家對於句子結構（句法）、用詞與發音的爭論。在香港，這戰爭大多圍繞著粵語的「正確讀音」和「繁簡字體」。

The reality is quite different..

但事實並非如此.....



Descriptivism is basically the act of describing language. Prescriptivism is the act of giving suggestions on how to use language.

描述基本上是描述語言的行為。規範是對如何使用語言提出建議的行為。

“Prescriptivism vs. descriptivism” is a false dichotomy. Grammar is acquired by native speakers when they learn to speak as a child; we observe how native speakers use language and describe the patterns in their speech; the patterns tell us about the grammar, a.k.a. descriptive rules. Prescriptive rules, on the other hand, are taught: they tell speakers which variant is considered ‘good’; people may frown when these rules are not obeyed.

規範派與描述派的對立其實是假兩難，換而言之，兩者不是對立。母語使用者小時候便自然習得語言的文法；我們觀察母語使用者的談吐，進而描述他們運用語言的模式；這些說話模式正正讓我們知道他們的文法，即描述規則。另一方面，規範法則（用法）是要刻意傳授的：它們告訴說話者，怎樣的說話方式才算是「良好」；當說話者不遵守這些規則的時候，聽者可能會反感。

Here's an analogy: It's like making a sculpture. There are “aesthetic rules” to tell if a sculpture is good or bad looking (prescriptive rules); sculptors have these “rules” because they have seen a lot of sculptures that they think are “lowly”. But all sculptures must obey the laws of physics (descriptive): you can hate the laws of physics all you want, but they are quite real. You can't disobey them. You cannot talk about prescriptive rules without obeying descriptive rules first.”

打個比喻，就如製造雕塑一樣，有一些「美學原則」決定一件雕塑好看與否（用法）；雕塑家看過許多他們認為低俗的雕塑，所以得出這些「原則」。然而，無論如何，所有雕塑均要遵循物理定律（文法）：你可以對物理定律恨之入骨，但他們是不能違背的事

實。要談論「美學」（用法），就必須先遵從「物理定律」（文法），否則就是空中樓閣了。

Descriptive rules and prescriptive rules are useful in their own ways. Important literature of our civilisation, dictionaries and language education are all dependent on prescriptivism. Effective communication between non-native speakers also depend on prescriptivism offering a recommended usage. Descriptive rules allow us to understand how people use and change language, and how people in different places and eras use language differently.

文法與用法其實對我們生活各有各用處。由人類文明上舉足輕重的文學作品，具參考價值的辭典資源，以致我們的語文教育，都是建基於用法。用法幫助我們訂立語言的一貫標準，讓非母語使用者也能有效地使用語言溝通，減少誤會。而文法讓我們明白現今人們運用語言的方式，亦讓我們明白，在不同國家，不同時間，人們運用語言的方法也會不斷改變，不斷有更多新的演繹。

As a native speaker you naturally obey descriptive rules. But no one is forcing you to follow prescriptive rules, unless you want others to regard you as speaking/writing in the ‘standard’ way.

身為母語使用者，你會本能地遵從文法。用法是刻意遵從的，沒有人強迫你去遵從，除非你希望其他人覺得你的語言夠「標準」。



Did you know?

- As scientists of language, academic linguists are descriptivists. Linguists aims to understand language. To do that, they describe language, and use scientific methods to prove their theories.
語言學家作為專門研究語言的科學家，均屬於描述派。語言學家志在了解語言，所以他們會描述語言，並從科學角度去證實有關其描述的理論。
- English dictionaries are usually descriptive. They study how people use words and make suggestions based on evidence they have collected. The suggestions they make are prescriptive. If the suggestions are evidence-based, we call these suggestions “scientifically prescriptive”. Most dictionary editors do not recommend seeing dictionaries as the authority of language.

英文辭典通常是描述性質的。英文辭典的編纂師研究人們如何使用

詞語，並根據所得的證據提出建議。他們提出的建議是規範性質的。經過引證的規範建議，以「科學規範」稱之。大部分字典編纂師均不建議人們視辭典為語言的權威。

- Some languages have language regulators and they prescribe guidelines of proper use. But whether people follow their advice is something else.

某些語言有自己的語言規範機構，來訂立正確使用語言的準則，但這並不代表人們定必遵循它們的建議。



THINK!

Which of the following expressions made by native English speakers are grammatical in “Standard English”? Which are prescriptively preferred? You can look them up in the dictionary.



Did you know?

Linguists put an asterisk (*) before an ungrammatical sentence.

Example

She is going to the store anyway. (Grammatical; prescriptively preferred)

She is going to the store anyways. (Grammatical)

*She are going to the store anyway. (Ungrammatical)

1. To whom are you talking?
Who are you talking to?
2. I didn't do nothing.
I didn't do anything.
3. I am taller than him.
I am taller than he.
4. Are our children learning?
Is our children learning?
5. If it fits, I sits.
If it fits, I sit.
6. (After a meal) I'm done.
(After a meal) I'm finished.



Ungrammatical; prescriptively preferred: (a) Grammatical; (b) Grammatical, prescriptively preferred.
dialects; (2b) Grammatical, prescriptively preferred; (1a) Grammatical; (2a) Ungrammatical in most “Standard Englishes”, but grammatical in 1a) Grammatical, prescriptively preferred; (1b) Grammatical, prescriptively preferred; (3a) Grammatical; (3b) Grammatical; (4a) Grammatical; (4b) Ungrammatical; (5a) Grammatical, prescriptively preferred; (5b) Grammatical; (5c) Grammatical, prescriptively preferred.

Suggested answers:

All About How You Speak

盡在語言中

Writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by visible marks.

— Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (1933)

[**W**riting is] the use of graphic marks to represent specific linguistic utterances.

— Henry Rogers, *Writing systems: A linguistic approach* (2005)

/'langwidʒ/

- Many people mistake writing for language; but in fact it is only a visual form of language.
很多人誤以為文字就是語言，但事實上，文字只是語言的可見形態。
- The word itself is just the sound. You associate the sound with a meaning. You convert it into writing by following the writing rules of your language.
詞語本身是一段無形的聲音。我們為這一段聲音與某個意思聯繫，再根據書寫系統的規則，將這段聲音轉錄成文字。
- Language came into being around 150,000 years ago, but writing has only existed for around 5000 years.
語言與文字兩者不是同一樣東西，語言在約15萬年前就已出現，文字卻是約5000年前的產物。
- Language is an innate ability of humans, while writing is an ability acquired by formal instruction.
人類天生就能用語言說話，而書寫文字則是透過教育而學會的技能。



- Grammar, as a set of rules of language we follow as we speak, is not based on writing.
文法是語言法則的集合，說話時我們會自然跟從的。文法並不是建基於文字之上。
- Writing and language can affect each other. To fit new changes in language, writing also has to change accordingly.
文字和語言經常互相影響。要反映語言的改變，文字亦須改變。
 - The English word “cow” (/kau/) was originally “cu” (/ku:/, koo). Since Old English, sound changes have been changing how the word is pronounced. The spelling created in 1085 reflects an older pronunciation of the word.
例如英語 cow (/kau/ 牛) 在古英語讀 /ku:/ (koo)，寫作 “cu”。古英語聲音演變，改變了這個詞的讀音。這個詞在公元 1085 的拼法反映了這個詞的語音改變。
 - Writing does not have to reflect changes in language; in Tibetan the word for “language” is /ke:l/ (kê), but is spelt like how it used to be pronounced: “་ (skad)”.
語言改變，但文字可以不變。譬如藏語「語言」一字讀 /ke:l/ (kê)，但以古讀音拼寫 “་ (skad)”。
- Sometimes, writing can affect how we speak.
有時候，文字會反過來影響語言。
 - E.g. A previously unwritten language can evolve more complex constructions once their people learn how to write.
例：語言有了書寫系統後，句子建構會變得複雜。
 - E.g. Because the imported printing press lacked the letter <ȝ> (yogh), it was

replaced with <z> in printing, causing the Scottish surname Menzies /'mɛnɪz/ (MING-is) to eventually become /'menzi:z/ (MEN-zeez).

例：由外國進口至不列顛群島的印刷機沒有 <ȝ> (yogh) 這個字母，因此印刷時以 <z> 取代。蘇格蘭姓氏 Menzies /'mɛnɪz/ (MING-is) 亦因而讀成 /'menzi:z/ (MEN-zeez)。

- Prescriptive rules (usage, mentioned in chapter 2) usually arise from one of the many ways of speaking, usually the way of the upper class. These rules usually govern formal writing. Sometimes people forcibly apply the same rules to everyday speaking.

規範法則（第二章節提及的「用法」）通常採用自不同說話方式的其中一種（通常是上流社會的說話方式）。規範法則通常規範文字。有時候，人們會強行將規範法則套用在日常語言中。

- Casual speech is constrained by short term memory, much more paratactic (short and simple), much less complex. Writing is not, so it is much more complex. Speaking and writing are two different phenomena; there is no need to force the rules of one on the other.

受短暫記憶所限，我們平時說話時，句子較簡短。寫作不受短暫記憶所限，因此句子較長較複雜。說話和寫作是兩種不同的現象，沒有必要強行將一邊的規則套用到另一邊。

Writing is generally done more deliberately than speaking, so finished written pieces are much more carefully crafted than a typical spoken sentence. — Amalia E. Gnanadesikan, *The Writing Revolution* (2009)



Side-note

A new perspective suggests that when we text, we are not writing at all. we are simply transcribing what we are saying.

Watch John McWhorter on this topic:

短訊語言新觀點：打短訊的時候，我們並不是在寫作，而是『我手寫我口』。語言學家 John McWhorter 探討此觀點：

https://www.ted.com/talks/john_mcwhorter_txting_is_killing_language_jk

txtn
lol

Language Is Alive 活生生的語言

The rules of language... emerge as a rough consensus within a community of careful writers without explicit deliberation, agreement, or legislation. And the conventions evolve... they organically change over time.

— Steven Pinker, *Linguistics, Style and writing in the 21st century*

彌
須
語

讀
語

?

“Downfall?”

Yes, yes. You might cringe when people use irregardless, anyways, impactful, ain't, or when people say “because grammar!” It is easy to think that the people who use language sloppily are threatening our language. But our language won't die simply because those who speak it are using it “improperly”. Instead, think of it as language evolving on its own.

當別人說 irregardless, anyways, impactful, ain't 或是 “because grammar!”，你或許會不禁倒抽一口涼氣。見到別人字也寫不好，詞又用不對的時候，你可能會感嘆他們漸漸在蠶食我們精緻的語言。然而，這些只是語言自身的演變過程而已，語言不會單純因為有許多人犯下同樣的錯誤，而變得蕩然無存。

Here's an example in English, “peruse (v.)”. The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (5th ed., 2011) has a usage note that says, “[p]eruse has long meant ‘to read thoroughly’. But the word is often used more loosely, to mean simply ‘to read’. Further extension of the word to mean ‘to glance over, skim’ has traditionally been considered an error, but our ballot results suggest

that it is becoming somewhat more acceptable. When asked about the sentence I only had a moment to peruse the manual quickly, 66 percent of the [Usage] Panel found it unacceptable in 1988, 58 percent in 1999, and 48 percent in 2011.”

以英文中的一字“peruse (v.)”為例，《美國傳統英語詞典第五版》（2011）中，該條目附有「用法備註」：「該字長久以來的意思是『讀得通透』，但偶然亦純粹用來表達『閱讀』的意思。解作『隨便一瞥』的引申義，傳統上被視為錯誤用法，但我們的投票結果反映引申義正漸漸被接納。1988 年，[用法]小組有 66% 成員認為 “I only had a moment to peruse the manual quickly.” 屬於病句，1999 年減少至 58%，到 2011 年下降到 48%。」

It is only natural to feel that our language is being threatened by people's mistakes. A lot of people in the past feel the same too:

因為別人誤用詞語或犯下文法錯誤，而對語言文化安危感到擔憂，乃人之常情。以前很多人也有同樣的反應：

1961 “Recent graduates, including those with university degrees, seem to have no mastery of the language at all.”
— an unknown commentator

1956 “[many] cannot write grammatically, and seem to have been trained to hate mental exercise... often they cannot read intelligently, and dislike any reading.”
— an English professor at a small college

1917 “From every college in the country goes up the cry, ‘our freshmen can't spell, can't punctuate.’ Every high school is in disrepair because its pupils are so ignorant of the merest rudiments.”
— a Connecticut schoolteacher

1875 “Desirability is a terrible word... Reliable is hardly legitimate. We do not rely a man, we rely upon a man; so that reliable does duty for rely-upon-able. ‘Trustworthy’ conveys all the meaning required.”
— Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury

1871 “Bad spelling, incorrectness as well as inelegance of expression in writing, ignorance of the simplest rules of punctuation, and the almost entire want of familiarity with English literature, are far from rare among young men of eighteen otherwise prepared for college studies.”
— Charles Eliot, President of Harvard University

1855 “*The new fashionable pronunciation of several words is to me at least very offensive: cóntemplate — is bad enough; but bálcony makes me sick.*”

— Samuel Rogers, reckoning that it should've been balcóny

1841 “*For a long time I have noted with regret the almost entire of neglect of the art of original composition of our common schools... hundreds graduates from our common schools with no well-defined ideas of constructions of our language.*”

— County superintendent of schools

1785 “*Our language is degenerating very fast... I begin to fear that it will be impossible to check it.*”

— an unknown commentator

And so have a pedant writing in Latin in 63 AD, “spoken Latin has picked up a passel of words considered too casual for written Latin, and the grammar people use when speaking has broken down.” Little did he know, that the “Latin” he was worrying about, eventually became what we would now call French.

公元 63 年，一名學者以拉丁文寫道：「口語拉丁文多了太隨便而不堪入文的詞語，而人們說話時，文法已蕩然無存。」他卻想不到，他在擔心的「拉丁文」，最終變成了我們口中的法文。

We all care about our language, but we should be reasonable about it too. In her blog, lexicographer Kory Stamper explains how we should look at a language reasonably; in short, read descriptive records (i.e. learn the facts about language), distinguish between facts and opinion, and realise that “you’re not the centre of the linguistic universe.” People are always innovative with language everywhere in the world; how they speak or write is part of who they are. Depending on context, sometimes they speak/write how they like, sometimes they refine their language. We are entitled to prefer one way of speaking/writing over another. However, when people speak/write differently than you do, don’t force your own standards on them. (Imagine telling someone that they have been saying their name wrong — how ridiculous)

我們都很緊張自己的語言，但亦應保持理性。字典編纂師 Kory Stamper 在她的部落格中，解釋我們應如何合理地看待語言。簡單來說，是要細讀語言的描述（即有關

語言的事實），分清事實和意見，和了解「自己不是語言宇宙的中心」。世界各地的語言都充滿無限創意，人們如何說話如何書寫，是他們身份的一部分。人們能根據不同語言環境，選擇隨心所欲地說寫，還是將自己的語言加以修飾。我們擁有權利去決定如何說話和寫作。要是別人說話或寫作的方式與你自己的不同，也不要強迫他人跟從自己的準則。（試想像，你跟別人說他們讀錯了自己的名字，而你的讀法才是正確的，多麼荒謬啊。）

Our language has a life of its own. It changes. It evolves depending on how we use it. As long as we keep speaking and writing it, it stays alive.

我們的語言有着它們自己的生命。它會改變。我們如何使用我們的語言，它就會跟著進化。只要一天我們口中仍然說著它、筆下寫著它，它將流芳百世。



Learn more

<https://youtu.be/F6NUODMjv0Y>

Anne Curzan: What makes a word “real”?

“One could argue that slang words like ‘hangry,’ ‘defriend’ and ‘adorkable’ fill crucial meaning gaps in the English language, even if they don’t appear in the dictionary. After all, who actually decides which words make it into those vaulted pages? Language historian Anne Curzan gives a charming look at the humans behind dictionaries, and the choices they make on a constant basis.”



Side-note

Language Death 語言死亡

People often confuse language death with language change. A language dies when there are no native speakers of the language. The natural change in language, including new pronunciations, neologisms and inventions by speakers of the language, is not necessarily an indicator of language death.

Language death can be caused by natural disasters, plague, genocide, colonialism, nationalism and language shift. For Hong Kong Cantonese (HKG), the most obvious threat is language shift. Language shift is “the

gradual or sudden move from the use of one language to another, either by an individual or by a group.” A more prestigious language can displace a local language if the latter is stigmatised, and people stop using the local language. During this process, the local language may lose some native words, and the sound system and grammar may liken to that of the prestigious language.

If you are interested in “protection” and “revitalisation” of Hong Kong Cantonese, check out *Móuhyúh Gau Góng* by Dr Au Yeung Wai Hoo Ben.

人們常常擔心語言會因為它的轉變而面臨死亡，其實一個語言只會因為沒有人以它為母語才會死亡。一些語言上的自然轉變，例如新讀音、新詞的出現，都不一定是語言死亡的象徵。

導致語言死亡的因素，包括自然災難、瘟疫、種族屠殺、殖民主義、民族主義和語言遷移。香港粵語現時面臨最明顯的語言危機是語言遷移。若一個人或一組人，漸漸或突然由慣用本地語言轉變成慣用另一種語言，都能稱之為語言遷移。當外來語言受更多人尊崇，使本地語言被邊緣化和捨棄，外來語言就會取代本地語言。在這個過程中，本地語言可能會失去一些固有詞彙，而發音系統及語法亦會與外來語言融合。

如果你對保護和振興香港粵語有興趣，可以參閱歐陽偉豪博士的《母語救港》一書。



In American English, the word “nuclear” — usually pronounced /n(j)ukliər/ (NOO-klee-ur) — is sometimes pronounced /'n(j)ukjelər/ (NOO-kyu-lur, like “nucular”). If you were a lexicographer (dictionary-editor), would you include the “nucular” pronunciation? Why or why not?

在美式英語中，“nuclear”（核，原子）一詞通常讀成 /n(j)ukliər/ (NOO-klee-ur)，有時候亦讀成 /'n(j)ukjelər/ (NOO-kyu-lur, 類似“nucular”）。若你負責編纂字典，你會把後者編進字典裏嗎？為甚麼？



Open for discussion. 自由討論時間開始。

Debunking Common English Myths

Splitting Latin vs English infinitives



Why were we told not to split infinitives? Because that is not possible in Latin.

“Not a word”

Let’s begin with the ones that rile people the most. You might have heard the complaint that goes, “irregardless is not a word”, or any other complaints about *anyways*, *impactful*. Truth be told, linguists and lexicographers often groan at these complaints, because people who make these complaints are mixing up facts with their preferences. A word is a word, because people use it and know what it means; to a linguist, whose definition of a word is much more technical and debatable¹, that is more than enough. As editors at Merriam-Webster have repeated for years, “if a word is used with regularity by a certain number of people, for a certain length of time, to mean a certain and specific thing, it becomes a word, whether we like it or not.” Your condemnation of notawords does not magically make them disappear.

In the meantime, we shall leave it to the professionals at Merriam-Webster to debunk all arguments against the existence of irregardless here: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/news-trend-watch/the-cubs-won-the-world-series-and-irregardless-is/>

¹ Linguists use the term **lexeme** instead of **word** to represent the idea, because the latter can mean vastly different things. A lexeme can be thought of as a “dictionary entry”. A lexeme is a sign which has a sound form (pronunciation), meaning, and syntax (where to appear in a sentence), is uninflected (in its most basic form) and belongs to nouns, verbs or adjectives.

a-word-20161103. Of course, although irregardless is a word, that doesn't mean you should use it.

“Sentences cannot end with a preposition”

And now we take four bogus “prescriptive rules” that the “language police” drool over, from OxfordWords Blog.

The “sentence cannot end with a preposition” rule is not applicable to English. This rule was engineered in the 17th century to fit more neatly with Latin grammar. In English, it is usually more natural to end sentences with a preposition, especially:

- passive structures (she enjoys being fussed over);
- relative clauses (they must be convinced of the commitment that they are taking on);
- infinitive structures (Tom had no-one to play with); or
- questions beginning with who, where, what, etc. (what music are you interested in?)

“Don’t start a sentence with a conjunction (e.g. and, or, but, so)”

You can start a sentence with a conjunction. It is actually widely accepted by many writers (Susan Sontag, Vladimir Nabokov, Kingsley Amis, P.G. Wodehouse, and Albert Einstein) and highly respected grammar and usage guides (such as Fowler and Garner). But you should avoid doing so when your writing style (or the style that you are adhering to) does not prefer starting a sentence with a conjunction.

“Don’t use double negatives”

not ≠ -1

This rule is somewhat true, but not at all.

In most Standard Englishes around the world, double negatives are only used to express and reinforce an affirmative by way of denial or understatement. In other words, in most Standard Englishes, it is ungrammatical use a double negative to communicate a negative.

I couldn’t not help him. (I strongly felt I should help him)

However, in dialects, double negative is construction also used to communicate a negative. Before the 16th century, double negative was a standard usage to express a double negative. Now the construction lives on in dialects. In dialects and non-standard English, double negative constructions that express a negative are grammatical.

We didn't do nothing. (= We did nothing)

The argument of two negatives make a positive is not always correct, because language is not maths. In languages like French, you actually need two negative words to make a single negative: *Je ne parle pas français*. The same rationale goes for other languages: a negative word does not necessarily mean “reversing the polarity of a sentence”. English in fact used multiple negatives to express a negative meaning until some time after the 16th century.

“Don’t split infinitives”

This is another unjustified rule based on Latin grammar. In Latin, infinitives cannot be split because Latin infinitives are one word: dicere, for example. In English, infinitives have the complementiser to before the verb, like to talk. There is no need to apply Latin grammar to English. If not splitting infinitives make your sentence sound clumsy, or your intended meaning can only be delivered by splitting infinitives, then by all means split them. For example, compare the following two sentences and their differences in meaning, that is distinguished by whether or not splitting an infinitive:

You have to really watch him. (split)

You really have to watch him. (unsplit)

Wrapping up

Oxford Dictionaries’ advice aside, here is a rule of thumb: if you have to force yourself to uphold “a grammatical rule”, that rule probably isn’t very grammatical to begin with. If in doubt, look it up in a dictionary: dictionaries will offer a scientifically prescriptive suggestion. They are evidence-based suggestions made by lexicographers. These suggestions are not entirely infallible, but are much more credible than whatever “rules” that a layperson tells you.



THINK!

You might have heard of other English “rules”, like the ones below. How real are they? Try looking for a credible source for advice.

- Don’t use the passive voice.
- Don’t start a sentence with hopefully.
- Whose (relative pronoun) may not refer to things
- “Orientate” is not a word
- You cannot use “they” for singular nouns, e.g. *A student should do their homework* is incorrect.

粵語爭議之正懶音辯

時

有古今，地有南北；字有更革，音有轉移，亦勢所必至。

——【明】陳第《毛詩古音考•自序》

我 ngo5?
o5?

粵語本身甚有爭議。先前的章節說過，語言學家作為語言的科學家，多依描述派 (descriptivism) 的客觀原則描述語言，避免加入主觀意見。

正音目前在學術界甚有爭議，沒有共識。但無論學術界爭議多大，語音轉變是語言必然發生的現象。今時今日社會上公認所謂的「正音」，是社會認為高尚、純正的發音。然而事實上，此套所謂「正音」跟其他規範派的主張一樣，是沒有科學理據支持的，而且目前公認「正音」之所以是「正音」，是機緣巧合，隨機選定而已。

語言學界就廣東話正音議題，粗略分野，可大致分為「古音派」和「今音派」。其中，古音派主張根據《廣韻》等古籍，「淨化粵語混亂不堪的語音」，此派佼佼者有何文匯教授。古音派的取態是典型的規範和純化主張，視與古籍不符的讀音為錯誤語音。此取態令其所謂「標準」異於大眾通行的語音，逆語音轉變而行，因而引起巨大爭議。另一邊廂的今音派以現今大眾通行讀音作準，此派佼佼者有李卓敏博士[†]。今音派認為粵語的正懶音，只是語音轉變的現象而已，不必放棄現時已約定俗成的語音，來遷就已經死去的古音，只要所發語音足夠辨義，即可作準。

我們應如何是好呢？歐陽偉豪博士提出此見解：古今兩讀，兩者皆正，可同時使用；嚴肅場合，宜用古音，日常生活，宜用今音。舉例「友誼」的「誼」，歐陽博士主張在嚴肅場合中讀古音「義」（如面試、講學），日常讀今音「兒」。其正音根據，摘自語言學大師趙元任先生在《語言問題》〈何謂正音〉提出的三種根據：正確

(參考辭書記載的事實)、正路(參考大眾慣用音)、正宗(參考不同背景知識份子的語音)。各字正音，可查詢字典，但必須謹記字典審音保守，或未記載其他通行的慣用音和目前的語音轉變，宜只作參考用，不宜用以魯莽定奪讀音對錯。



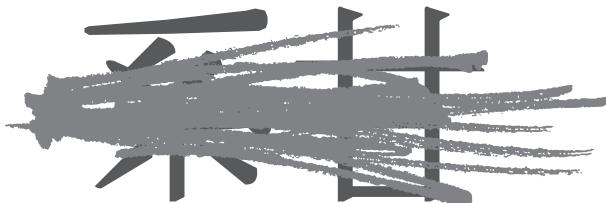
THINK!

「你」字的讀音亦經歷了不少的轉變。十九世紀讀「níh」（與「以」押韻），然後衍生「neíh」，然後 1930 年起 /n/ 始變成 /l/，繼而得出「leíh」（音同「里」）。三個讀音，你會在什麼情況用什麼讀音？為什麼？

題目：甲 乙 丙

✗ ⌈ ✗ ✓

粵語爭議之 5p 字



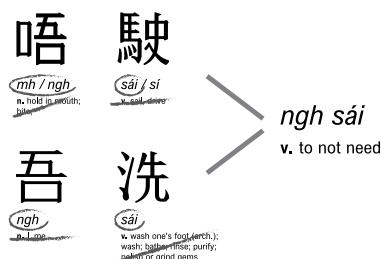
文字是記載語言的工具。我們須從語言層面出發，考慮它與文字的關係，而不是從文字出發考慮語言的問題。近來網絡上聲討 5p 字（亦稱火星文，兩者難以區分）聲音不斷，因此我們在此探討其的現象。

5p 字，亦稱「MK 字」、「火星文」，是香港粵語入文的現象之一，常見於電子媒體。5p 字的名稱來自「三男二女討論區」。5p 字主要特色是省略部首和以音近的字或形近的字代替「本字」。

	唔	係	玩	咁	喎	都	啲	鍾意	返	到	好	歲	心	我
5p 字	吾 5 ng	系 系 T系	挽	甘 貢 拱 金 錦	果	刀	D	中 意	番 fan	島	巧	碎	蕊 蕊	禾 義

分析

漢字需兼顧讀音和表達的意思。以上 5p 字中的中文字，大多數利用假借原則 (rebus principle) 達意。假借，即取其讀音，不取字義。「吾、系、挽、錦、刀」等，都是取其讀音，不取字義的假借字。現時亦有不少粵語字是假借而來的，譬如粵語 mh 字，可以寫成「唔」或「吾」。假借英文字母或數字來表示發音，也是同一道理。



其他 5p 字，是選取一個額外加了部首的古字，或選取一個部件疊堆的冷僻字。例子有以「忄、蕊」替代「心」，「莪」替代「我」。這些字的部首是沒有作用的。

5p 字是錯字嗎？

要解答這個問題，我們必須摒棄「語言對錯」的兩極化觀點。語言學家發現，我們如何使用語言，語言就會跟着改變；語言是約定俗成的，而不是永恆不變的。因此，語言學家只會「描述」語言，而不會斷言誰對誰錯。（有關描述和規範的概念，請參考第二章節。）

那麼 5p 字是錯字嗎？首先，香港粵語入文一向都沒有明文標準，我們依賴約定俗成的入文方法，因此一個粵語詞可以有很多寫法。而且，對語言學家而言，5p 字只是一種粵語入文的新現象，是近年電子媒體所帶起的潮流。作為研究語言的科學家，語言學家不會將任何語言用法（包括 5p 字），定性為「錯誤」，無論多麼人憎恨也好。然而，我們仍然會見到不少人對 5p 字有偏見，認為 5p 字是錯誤的。

有人指 5p 字扭曲字義，因此是錯誤的；可是，粵語亦有其他現時流通的假借字，譬如「呢度、唔駛」，這些詞語的每個單字都有自己的字義，但我們就是偏偏只取讀音，不取字義。如果我們接受「呢度、唔駛」，那麼「吾、系、挽、錦、刀」等「扭曲字義」的說法，就不能成立了，因為假借的原意就是不取字義。

有人指 5p 字錯誤使用部首；的而且確，部首是義符（表達字義的符號），我們不會無緣無故為一個字加上部首。而 5p 字正是作者特意在輸入法選一個古字／冷僻字來加上沒有作用的部首，如此一舉是別有用心，通常是為了裝飾文字。

那麼 5p 字豈不是與「正字」平起平坐？

當然不是。5p 字不是「錯誤」的文字，並不代表它是無時無刻都是合適的書寫方法。我們之所以要謹慎使用 5p 字，不是因為「錯誤」，而是 5p 字連帶的社會意味。

假借的 5p 字有個弊病，就是不被大眾接受。假借有個大前提，就是「本無其字」才算是假借。如果有字不寫（「通假」），就很容易被人指責使用「錯別字」。有一些 5p 字會有比較多人接受，譬如異讀字（「挽」、「番」替代「玩」、「返」的異讀音），因為並非所有人都知道這些字有異讀音，所以通假並不出奇。可是常見常用的字，譬如「都、到、好」等，人們會預期其他人都用同一種寫法，如果寫成「刀、島、巧」，雖然代表的詞語一樣，但看起來標奇立異，會使人反感。

5p 字不會妨礙閱讀嗎？

現時沒有研究顯示 5p 字會妨礙閱讀。但據以往研究所得，閱讀漢字時，大腦會直接存取字義，而閱讀拼音，則需要先解構發音，然後透過發音存取字義，讀起來更加費神 (Fu, Chen, Smith, Iversen, & Matthews, 2002)。5p 字多以假借原則達意，究竟會不會像拼音般妨礙閱讀，就有待進一步研究了。

5p 字會不會影響寫作能力？

這並不一定，因為 5p 字、粵文和我們寫作常用的標準漢語（書面語）屬於不同的語域 (register)，是三種不同的書面變體。

語域是指在不同社會情景使用的語言變體 (lect)。目前，香港的標準漢語（書面語）適用於大部分社會情景，粵文（亦即所謂的「正字」）適用情景比書面語狹窄，而 5p 字則適用範圍就更加狹窄，不僅只限非正式情景使用，而且通常是因為電腦輸入法無法輸入粵語字才會使用，書寫時幾乎不會出現。這三種其實是不同社會情景中使用的語域。能同時掌握這三種語域，就等同於掌握三種書寫的語言變體，而兼顧多種語言變體的能力與雙語能力 (bilingualism) 是同出一轍的。越來越多研究顯示，雙語有利於認知上的能力，而兼顧多種語言變體亦同樣有利。因此，能兼顧粵文、5p 字、標準漢語（書面語）或更多語言變體和語言，區分三種不同的語域，是有利於認知的。當然，大前提是分辨到不同語言變體/語言之間的分別，知道甚麼時候使用書面語、粵文或 5p 字。

結語

我們眼中所謂的「語言錯誤」，背後可能蘊藏很多有趣的語言現象。與其強行將自己的語言標準套用在別人身上，我們應該要明白，語言是群體的不明文溝通習慣，而每個人的語言亦有不同的習慣，所謂的「標準」只是最多人用的習慣而已。無論你認同 5p 字與否，在網上批評他人使用 5p 字前，也許我們應嘗試換個角度想想，不要只管喊打喊殺。

5p 字將來如何，無人能知曉。它會被世人唾棄，靜靜地從地球上消失嗎？還是會在網絡上的某一個角落頑固地生存下去？未來終有一天，你會再撿起這本小冊子，重溫此章節。屆時，5p 字的命運，將會水落石出。



THINK!

你在網上見過其他「5p字」嗎？你是如何得知，該字所表達的是甚麼字詞？
你接受該用法嗎？

Open for discussion. 自由討論問題。



Side-note

網絡上亦會見到純拼音入文，譬如「ngo dei ting yat wui hui lau bing ah（我哋聽日會去溜冰呀）」。相比閱讀漢字直接存取字義，閱讀純拼音需要先解構發音，然後透過發音存取字義，讀起來更加費神 (Fu, Chen, Smith, Iversen, & Matthews, 2002)，雖然始終能達意，但對讀者而言甚是不便。少用為佳。



Side-note

目前香港粵語入文，沒有所謂的「正字」和「標準」，現在常見的寫法都是約定俗成的。漢語語言中，談入文習慣，最特出的必然是香港的粵語。粵語入文的習慣存在已久 (Yau, 2004, pp. 263–264)，而香港粵語入文，不但在使用廣泛，更富有本地特色，在語言學界不少學者對香港粵語現象感興趣 (Cheung & Bauer, 2002, pp.1–2, 41)。

惟香港粵語入文一直以來都沒有定下標準，因此粵語書寫習慣五花八門，視乎作者表達方式，一個粵語詞往往有數種寫法。隨著粵語入文在香港不斷廣泛應用，香港粵語入文衍生了約定俗成的習慣。雖然部分粵語字的慣用寫法已漸趨穩定，但一些與標準漢語無關聯，或從英文借來的香港粵語詞，仍然有多種慣用寫法。

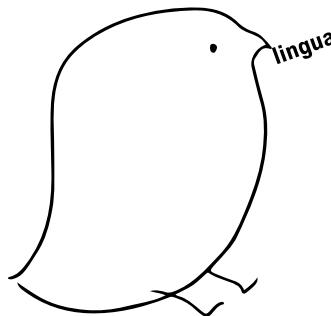
據張群顯博士和包睿舜教授在 2002 年發表的《以漢字寫粵語》，香港粵語書寫習慣，可歸納作十條原則 (Cheung & Bauer, 2002, pp. 12–15)：

詞類	原則		釋義	舉例	
				標準漢語	粵語
文白同詞	1	原字原用	標準漢語與粵語詞彙相同，直接使用原本用字。	上帝、創造、應該	
	2	沿用俗字／異體字	標準漢語與粵語詞彙同源同義，但採用香港沿用俗字。（部分俗字現已不流通）	韭菜 褲 芒果 鹹/鹹 蝕 賺	韮菜 祫 / 褲 杧果 / 芒果 番梘 / 鹹 餎 / 蝶 / 蝕 瞓 / 賺
粵語固有詞彙	3	原字新用	粵語採用標準漢語同義字或其引申義，但該字在粵語有自己的用法和配詞。	是 說 衣服 吃 喝	係 話 衫 食 飲
	4	假借	借字，取其讀音，不取字義。	這裡 不用	呢度 唔駛
	5	訓讀	借字，取其字義，讀成粵語固有詞。	歪（音讀 wāai；訓讀 mé） 舐嚥（音讀 sáai yéh；訓讀 láai yéh） 孖（音讀 jī；訓讀 mā）	
	6	新造形聲／指示字	以《六書》的形聲或指示原則造字。	形聲：佢、嚥 指事：冇	
	7	借英文字母	取英文字母中近音字母來代表粵語字，或替代粗言穢語。	好 D 哋 K (yaak kē) E 家 麻 Q 煩 (màh kūu/lán fāahn) X 你老母 (dúu néih lóuh móu)	
外來詞	8	英詞廣譯	以漢字音譯源自英語的外來詞。	士多 貼士 巴士 的士 天拿水 科文 (foreman)	
	9	中英混寫	英文字母與漢字併合，以音譯詞語。	T 恤 BB 女	
	10	英詞廣讀	源自英語的外來詞，以英語拼寫，但以粵語讀出。	阿 SIR (a sèuh) FACE (fēi sí) OK (ōu kēi) CALL (kō)	

Conclusion: A New Way to Look at Language 語言新角度

Languages will inevitably change. We may not like these changes, and we might think these changes mark the decline of our language. But we should be less quick to say that all changes are bad. We should appreciate how language evolves on its own, like how nature can form wonderful landscapes and vivid colours. We should look at our languages in a more sophisticated way, and be objective and ask questions about it, just like a scientist does.

語言轉變是必然會發生的。我們未必喜歡這些轉變，也可能會擔心這些轉變是語言衰落的徵兆。但我們不應該二話不說，就斷定所有轉變都是壞事。我們應欣賞語言的生命力，欣賞它如何進化，就如欣賞雲霞雕色、草木賁華。我們像科學家般，從不同角度客觀地看待語言，並就語言提出問題。



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