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Discussion 1E

Analysis Paper 1

1. Introduction

I grew up in a Chinese-speaking household. While my parents are bilingual due to their time spent in America, we also lived with our grandparents, who only spoke Mandarin. This resulted in the majority of spoken communication occurring in Chinese, which is why I first started picking the language up. Most of this communication occurred in Standard Mandarin, but, because of my mom's time in Shanghai and Hong Kong, I was also exposed to the regional dialect of Shanghainese and Cantonese. Of course, I still spoke English in most situations, but was pushed to learn Mandarin by my family members. Throughout high school, I was enrolled in a Chinese course as my language requirement, and ended up taking the AP test at the end of my senior year. These courses were mostly taught in English, but some Chinese was woven throughout in order to test our listening comprehension. We focused on expanding our vocabulary and gaining a practical understanding of the language. Recently, while my parents have continued to speak Mandarin at home, I usually just respond in English.

2. Slang

I use a lot of slang in my day-to-day life, especially through text. My most used slang word is "bruh". I usually use it as a replacement to "man", "dude", or "bro" when addressing someone. Sometimes, I end up using it when I'm expressing disappointment towards someone in a lighthearted way. While I use this in a lot of casual settings, I tend to only use it with people

I'm friends with.

The slang word I use most in-person is probably "bet". "Bet" can be used as an affirmative to a question or request. You can also use it in a question form when responding to a question, such as responding "Bet?" to "You want to get lunch later?". I typically hear this used by all my friends in casual situations.

Finally, my favorite slang word is "yeet". "Yeet" has two fairly distinct meanings. The first is a verb that describes the action of throwing something. When you throw a baseball far, you "yeeted" that ball. In addition, it can be used as a celebration, in a similar context to "yay". Both meanings are generally used as an exclamation, with very high energy. While the use of "yeet" died down a few years ago, it's been making a small comeback in the past year.

Other than those, there are many slang words that have fallen out of common use. If someone were to use these words today, they'd likely get weird looks from anybody that heard. One such word is "dawg". This word is actually fairly similar to "bruh" from above. "Dawg" was also used to address another person, often someone you're familiar with. While "bruh" can be used to refer to any gender, "dawg" was typically directed at males.

A more recent slang word that also has faded out of common use is "swag". "Swag" rose to prominence in the early 21st century as a shortened form of the word "swagger". Having "swag" was seen as a good thing, and very similar to having confidence. It was associated more with hip-hop culture, and survived in that realm longer than in common use.

Finally, a more regional slang word is "tubular". This word was typically used in the surfer community to describe something that was really good. It gets thrown in with the "surfer vocabulary", like "dudette" or "gnar". This word was generally spread in the SoCal area in the 80s, and has since fallen out of use.

3. Dialect

I believe I speak the standard dialect of English. The dialect I speak has acquired a written form, as the majority of publications use this dialect. This includes formal materials like textbooks and research articles, which leads me to believe it is the prestige dialect of English. It has also been standardized in terms of grammatical rules. The rules that a high school or college class would teach are the same rules that apply to my use of the language. It also has an authoritative dictionary in the Oxford dictionary, as well as online sources like Merriam-Webster. Finally, as I mentioned in previous points, this dialect is what was taught to me throughout my education. Since these are examples of use in public life, this is further evidence that the dialect I speak is considered as Standard English.

On the other hand, the variation of Chinese I speak isn't exactly standard. Most of my formal teaching in high school was the standard variation, however, since my family spoke it at home, not all of my speaking practices fall within that category. For instance, due to my mom's experience with Shanghainese, a dialect mutually unintelligible from Mandarin, I sometimes mix words from that vocabulary with my Mandarin. This results in my occasional use of an extra fifth tone that is not found in standard Mandarin. Another example of this is how I pronounce the "w" sound in Chinese, such as in the word "wei". In standard Mandarin, this is pronounced the same as in English, however, in some northern areas of China, like where my dad is from, it's replaced with a "v" sound. This substitution also found its way into my speaking habits.

4. Comparison of Sounds

One of the most basic features of Chinese is the intonation of syllables. Tone adds another dimension to Chinese words that allow us to distinguish between words that would otherwise be identical, like hão (good) and hão (number). These tonal shifts are heard as changes

in pitch as the syllable is enunciated. The first tone, [á], is typically spoken at a steady, high pitch. There isn't really an equivalent to this in English, although the tone can be loosely compared to a speaker's "singing" voice. The second tone, [ǎ], rises from a lower pitch to a higher one. In English, this tone can be heard as a questioning tone, such as when a confused person says "What?". The third tone, [à], falls from a middle pitch to a low pitch, and is occasionally accompanied by a quick rise in pitch at the end of the syllable. Much like the first tone, the third tone has no real analog in English. Finally, the fourth tone, [â], is a sharp drop from high pitch to low pitch. In English, this could be related to a sharp exclamation, like "No!".

Although these tones can sometimes be identified in the English language, they don't have any impact on the meaning of the words, and instead affect the tone of the sentence as a whole. In Chinese, while sentences can also be impacted by intonation, these tones serve a much more fundamental purpose, as they differentiate between sounds just like place and manner of articulation, voicing, etc. do in English.

5. Conclusion

I think this comparison was interesting for me because applying the aspects of linguistics that we've learned seems almost obvious when applying it to English. However, since I don't speak Chinese natively, having to put more thought into the language's phonology gives me a very different perspective into how languages work mechanically.