
A Note on Language

Modern Chinese, or standard Mandarin, has (at least) three nominations or forms: Guoyu (national language), Putonghua (common language) and Huayu (Hua language). It is based on *baihua* (plain language), which the literati of the May Fourth New Culture Movement promoted and popularised in Republican China during the second decade of the twentieth century. As a form of vernacular language, *baihua* is distinct from *guanhua*, the language of officialdom or Chinese classicism. Given its elitist history, *guanhua* was thought to be a major cause of widespread illiteracy in China, and hence the country's backwardness. The KMT (Guomindang) government adopted *baihua* as the Guoyu of Republican China.

The national language of the People's Republic, Putonghua, a derivative of Republican China's Guoyu, has distinct features, however. It uses simplified Chinese characters (*jiantizi*) and Pinyin for romanisation. It is most widely used in mainland China. Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau, on the other hand, have retained the Guoyu variety, which uses complex or traditional Chinese characters (*fantizi*) for writing, Zhuyin or Mandarin Phonetic Symbols (colloquially known as *bopomofo*) for transcribing speech sounds, and Wade-Giles for Romanising Chinese scripts.

Standard Mandarin is most commonly called Huayu, especially in the 'Nanyang' (South Sea) region. Huayu has the form of Guoyu or Putonghua, or a hybrid of the two. In Singapore, for example, Huayu had the *guoyu*-form until the late 1960s. Nowadays, its written script is closer to the *putonghua*-form and Pinyin is normally employed for transcription. When it comes to given names, however, the transcription system is neither Pinyin nor Zhuyin/Wade-Giles. For instance, for the surname 陳 (*fantizi*) or 陈 (*jiantizi*), Putonghua would use the latter character and renders it as 'Chen' (Pinyin). In Guoyu, the former character is used instead and its romanisation would be 'Ch'en' (Wade-Giles). In Huayu, the transcription is mostly determined by the 'mother tongue' of the person concerned: 'Tan' if the person is of Hainanese or Hokkien descent, or 'Chan' if of Cantonese stock, and so on. Finally, Huayu is one of Singapore's four national

languages (Guoyu) but the *guo* (nation) in the *guoyu* has nothing to do with the *guo* of the KMT's and Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) geo-political imaginaries, as it specifically refers to the independent nation of Singapore.

The name order for Chinese names is normally written with the family name first—for example, 'Chen' (Pinyin) or 'Ch'en' (Wade-Giles), and if based on the 'mother-tongue' modalities, 'Tan' or 'Chan'—and then followed by the personal (given) name. The latter may have either one character (syllable) or two—for example, Chan Pei (a well-known Cantonese filmmaker in the 1950s) or Lai Man-Wai (the 'father' of Hong Kong cinema), respectively. In this book, generally speaking, hyphenated given names indicate names belonging to the Guoyu or Hanyu paradigm of romanised nominations. At the first mention or reference, their Pinyin rendition is given immediately after—thus 'director Chan Pei/Chen Pi' or 'Lai Man-Wai's (Li Minwei) films'. By the same token, two-syllable names without a hyphen accede to the Pinyin system for transcribing a person's given name—for example, Cai (surname) Chusheng (given name) of pre-war Shanghai cinema. Pinyin romanisation is used in part because the person concerned is a mainland China entity and also in part because, unlike Hong Kong residents of Chinese ancestry, including China- or Hong Kong-born filmmakers, and other Chinese descendants elsewhere in the Chinese diaspora, such entities usually have only Pinyin names. Additionally, whether from Mainland China or the Chinese diaspora, Chinese people have been known to adopt a Western or Westernised name such as Griffin or Sally, as in the respective cases of Griffin Yueh Feng (in Pinyin: Yue Feng), who was born in China but relocated to Hong Kong, and Taiwanese-Canadian actress Sally Yeh Sin-Man (in Pinyin: Ye Qianwen). This is the name order used in the body of the book, but in the back matter these names are rendered as 'Yueh (surname) Feng, Griffin' and 'Yeh (surname) Sin-Man, Sally.

Throughout this book I use the *guoyu*-form, *putonghua*-form and *huayu*-form to distinguish the three varieties of standard Mandarin used in the Republic of China (Taiwan), the People's Republic and the Chinese diaspora. For Hong Kong, I use the '*guoyu-huayu*' descriptor since, as a British colony until 1997, it never had an official national (Chinese) language.

In the body of the book I use the English title to identify a particular film, together with its year of production and the name of the director in parenthesis: for example, *The Dream of the Red Chamber* (1978, Dir. Lee Han-Hsiang/Li Hanxiang). Its Chinese-language title is given in the Filmography, along with the name of the director and year and place of production, and the Pinyin equivalent as well where appropriate. For example: '*The Dream of the Red Chamber/Jinyu liangyuan Hong Lou meng* (1977) Dir. Lee Han-Hsiang/Li Hanxiang. Hong Kong: Shaw Brothers'. This also applies to titles of Chinese-language publications

(print or digital) in the References section, where appropriate: for example: Huang Zhaohan (2009) *Yam Kim-Fei, 1913–1989: Portrait of a Chinese Opera Performance Prodigy/Changtian luo caixia: Ren Jianhui de juyi shijie*. Hong Kong: San Lian Bookstore. Appendix 2, the Glossary of Chinese-language Film Titles, provides the titles with their corresponding Pinyin name and Chinese scripts (both *fantizi* and *jiantizi*). Appendix 3, the Glossary of Chinese-language Persons, Film Companies/Studios, Opera Troupes and Media, offers a catalogue of Chinese-language names in the Zhuyin/Wade-Giles or Pinyin romanised form; all such names also have their Pinyin equivalent and corresponding *fantizi* and *jiantizi*. Finally, Appendix 4 is a compilation of Chinese terms and phrases used in the main body of the book, with a translation in English, as well as their *fantizi* and *jiantizi* equivalents.

Not all Chinese-language films come with an official English title. Where they do not, I use the English translation of the title found in Hong Kong Film Archive publications, Hong Kong Movie Database (hkmdb.com) and other authoritative sources.