

INTERLINGUAL HOMOPHONY: NEIGE AS A DEMONSTRATIVE/FILLER IN MANDARIN CHINESE

Aiqing Wang
University of Liverpool

The demonstrative/filler *neige* in Mandarin Chinese is potentially contentious outside that language, as it bears resemblance in terms of pronunciation with a racial slur in English. Nonetheless, *neige* does not possess any racist connotation in Mandarin Chinese, and its analysis needs to take into consideration historical and contextual information. The form *neige* is a colloquialism of its formal equivalent *nage*, which has functioned as a demonstrative determiner/pronoun or a discourse marker in verbal communication since ancient periods. The derivation of *nei* from *na* is realised via suppression of the demonstrative with the numeral *yi* ‘one’, and this phenomenon occurred even before Mandarin was invented as a national lingua franca. Differently from languages such as English in which the number of homophones is limited, Chinese contains an enormous amount of syllables with myriads of homophones, owing to the fact that Chinese is a tone language that depends on tone implications to differentiate meanings and syllables/words are hence predominantly mono- or bi-morphemic. As a consequence, homophones pertaining to Chinese abound both language-internally and cross-linguistically. Among the repercussions of homophony are the literary inquisitions during the Qing era that sabotaged freedom of creation. Therefore, the interpretation and comprehension of *neige* need to be objective and impartial.

INTRODUCTION

Mandarin, also known as 普通话 *putong hua* ‘standard language’, is a Pekingese-based northern speech invented as a national lingua franca and the indispensable prerequisite to phoneticisation (Mills 1956; Coblin 2000; Taylor & Taylor 2014: 153). In 1955, Mandarin was officially promulgated nationwide by the Ministry of Education and the Committee on Reform of Written Language; it replaced Classical Chinese as a literary language during a short period of time after Mao Zedong’s statement in 1951, accelerated by a series of institutional efforts (Ministry of Education of the PRC 2006; Peng 2018). In 1958, a Romanisation system of standard Mandarin called Pinyin was introduced and promoted in mainland China, which has been comprehensively employed for education and transcription as well as for teaching standard Mandarin to non-Han Chinese peoples in China and non-Chinese speakers outside China (Matthews 2014; Butler 2017; Helicon 2018). In 1979, Pinyin was adopted as the official form of Romanisation; it has since been used by the New China News Agency, academic communities, the United Nations and other international institutions. Analogous to syllables in Western languages, Pinyin syllables are also

constituted of consonant and vowel letters. The function of Pinyin Romanisation, however, is not to substitute for Chinese characters, but to facilitate pronunciation standardisation and Mandarin popularisation (Egerod 2013; Taylor & Taylor 2014: 121–124). In this paper, I employ Pinyin to Romanise Mandarin and use syllables comprised of consonants and vowels to denote Chinese characters.

In this research, I investigate the demonstrative/filler 那个 *neige*, which may be contentious in English yet does not contain any derogatory connotations in Mandarin Chinese. Furthermore, when its original form, *nage*, is deployed as a discourse marker in daily conversations, it can introduce topics, change subjects, occupy pauses and preserve face (Xu 2008; Guo 2009; Li 2011; Liu 2015); significantly, utterances with it exhibit a higher degree of modesty and politeness (Liu 2005; Yin 2009). Therefore, the analysis of *neige* requires objective references to historical and contextual information.

On 2 September 2020, the University of Southern California temporarily suspended a communications professor for pronouncing a Mandarin word that sounds like a racial derogatory term. During an online teaching session, the professor was discussing filler words as vocal disfluencies in verbal communication and deployed Mandarin Chinese as a cross-cultural example (Example 1), which offended a group of black MBA candidates (Bernstein 2020; Soave 2020; Zeisloft 2020).

- (1) If you have a lot of ‘ums and errs’, this is culturally specific, so based on your native language. Like in China, the common word is ‘that, that, that, that’. So in China it might be ‘*neige, neige, neige, neige*’.

A similar situation also occurred to Yao Ming, a former basketball player of the Houston Rockets in the National Basketball Association (NBA). In a 2011 interview during the show *In Depth with Graham Bensinger*, Yao Ming described a locker room mix-up over *neige*: when his Caucasian interpreter talked to him in Mandarin with *neige* as a filler, which irritated other players who overheard the word and misunderstood it as a racial slur, Yao Ming vouched for his interpreter by assuring, ‘We don’t mean bad in all language’ (Bensinger 2016).

Owing to the controversial incident at the University of Southern California, a Chinese song *Sunshine, Rainbow, White Pony* (《阳光彩虹小白马》*Yangguang Caihong Xiaobaima*) released in 2018 has recently been subjected to censure, and its singer Zhang Wei (Wowkie Zhang), stage-named Da Zhang Wei, has been anathematised as a racist. Born in Beijing in 1983, Da Zhang Wei is a well-known singer-songwriter and the vocalist-guitarist of China’s first teenage band The Flowers (Sohu 2009); his music integrates various styles including traditional opera, hip-hop and techno, and is always marked by strong, hilarious, and sometimes absurd lyrics. Although being a light-hearted, cheerful hit song in China, *Sunshine, Rainbow, White Pony* recently became infamously known for a mondegreen during the chorus,¹ which is comprised of a string of the words *nei* and *neige*. Another of Da Zhang Wei’s songs, *Share Half of Juice with You* (《果汁分你一半》*Guozhi Fenni Yiban*), was adapted from Sasha’s *I Feel Lonely* and features sharing and friendship. This song was awarded the Most Popular Single at the China Music Awards, winning the Best Mainland Band prize in 2007 (Ifeng 2007; Niemi 2008). Its first few lyrics, however, also consist of a string of the word *neige*, which attracted international attention when it was released over a decade ago.

¹ Mishearing paradigms regarding lyrics are dubbed as ‘mondegreen’, which was coined by Sylvia Wright in 1954 to refer to ‘slips of the ear’, and can lead to malapropisms (McArthur, Lam-McArthur & Fontaine 2018).

NAGE IN CLASSICAL CHINESE AND MODERN MANDARIN

The contentious word *nage* in modern Mandarin Chinese bears resemblance in terms of pronunciation with the racist N-word in English, and it is constituted of two morphemes, *na* ‘that’ and *ge*.

Analogous to the English demonstrative ‘that’ of spatial distance, *na* in Mandarin is polysemous: it either acts as a demonstrative determiner or a demonstrative pronoun, with contrastive or appositive indications (Tsai 2003). The demonstrative ‘that’ in Archaic Chinese (fourteenth–third century BCE) takes the form of 彼 *bi*, complemented by an anaphoric 是 *shi* that lacks any implication of closeness or remoteness and means both ‘this’ and ‘that’ (Pulleyblank 1995; Peyraube 2008; Aldridge 2013). Since the Tang (618–907) and Song (960–1279) dynasties, in colloquial language *bi* has been substituted by *na*, which might have stemmed from a demonstrative pronoun 若 *ruo* or an interrogative pronoun (Lü 1984: 179–181; Wang 1957: 284; 2005: 68–70). In terms of the demonstrative 这 *zhe* ‘this’, it also occurred as early as the Tang dynasty, being analogous to ‘that’ (Mei 1986) yet different from *na*; *zhe* is not derived from any archaic archetype (Ye 1988). It is notable that during the Tang dynasty, neither *na* nor *zhe* could be used independently as a subject, needing to precede 个 *ge* and form 那个 *nage* and 这个 *zhege*, respectively. Such a requirement, however, became an optional choice in the modern period (Mei 1986; Ye 1988; Lü 1994: 10).

Under the category of a classifier, or measure word, 个 *ge* is a functional word. In modern Chinese, it is obligatory for classifiers to intervene between numerals/determiners and nouns, in that all nouns behave like English mass nouns and hence require the positioning of nominal classifiers (Zhang 2013: 1; Li 2020). The shift of nouns from mass to count status initiated circa the second century BCE, when classifiers started to expand in terms of quantity and diversity in categorical function (Wang 1957: 107–112) and the Altaic contact between the second and sixth centuries served as a turning point that marked the development of classifiers analogous to their modern counterparts (Liu 1965: 27; Wang 1957: 112–113). Compared with its equivalents, *ge* emerged as a classifier relatively late in the Chinese language; it was employed for persons, animals, plants, ghosts, and body parts in the Weijin-Nanbei dynasty (220–581 CE), and for temporal, locative, numeral and linguistic units, and abstract concepts in the Tang and Wudai (618–960 CE) (Wang 1989; Lü 1984: 139–144). Then, *ge* became the most frequently used classifier in Mandarin. Moreover, *ge* is referred to as the general or ‘default’ classifier, in that it is completely void of semantic sorting function and thus is interchangeable with other classifier(s) in the vast majority of contexts (Ahrens 1994; Myers 2000; Zhang 2013: 46–48).

The expression *nage* appears in literary works composed in Ming-Qing (1368–1912) vernacular Chinese. For instance, in *Dream of the Red Chamber* (aka *Story of the Stone*, 《红楼梦》 *Hong Lou Meng*), the *chef d’oeuvre* of Cao Xueqin (1724–1764) and the pinnacle of Chinese literature, there are 165 instances of *nage* throughout the entire novel. As can be seen from Example (2), *nage* can function as a demonstrative pronoun and occupy the object position on its own, or as a demonstrative determiner introducing a noun phrase. It is notable that the other demonstrative *zhege* ‘this’ also occurs in Example (2) as the counterpart of *nage*.

- (2) 凤姐半晌道: ‘这个我看着不大好。等明年正月里烟火灯烛那个大宗儿下来, 再派你罢。’ 贾芸道: ‘好婶子, 先把这个派了我罢。果然这个办的好, 再派我那个。’
 Feng jie ban shang dao: ‘*Zhege* (‘this’) wo kan zhe bu da hao. Deng ming nian zheng yue li yan huo deng zhu *nage* (‘that’) da zong er xia lai, zai pai ni ba.’ Jia yun dao: ‘Hao shen zi, xian ba *zhege* (‘this’) pai le wo ba. Guo ran *zhege* (‘this’) ban de hao, zai pai wo *nage* (‘that’).’
 ‘Xi-feng thought for a while. “I don’t know that it’s a very suitable job for you. Perhaps we’d better wait until next New Year and put you in charge of lanterns and fireworks. That’s a much bigger job.” “Look, Auntie: you give me this planting job now, then; if you’re satisfied with the way I do it, you can give me the other job later on.”’
 (*Hong Lou Meng* Chapter 24. Tr. Hawkes 1973)

Parallel to *zhege*, *nage* also appears in daily conversations among Mandarin-speaking people as a discourse marker (Xu 1988; Shen 1999; Cao 2000). It has undergone grammaticalisation from a pronoun to a discourse marker (Zhang & Fang 1996: 155–189; Fang 2002), the employment of which is impinged upon by the occasions, contents, and atmospheres of conversations, as well as the gender, occupation, and age of speakers (Liang 2002; Guo 2009). The functions of *nage* as a discourse maker are to introduce topics, change subjects, fill pauses, and preserve face (Xu 2008; Guo 2009; Li 2011; Liu 2015). Significantly, in sharp contrast to *zhege*, which is predominantly used in utterances addressing interlocutors in an inferior position, *nage* is deployed to mark discourses taking place between interlocutors of an equal status or those addressing listeners in a superior position. Consequently, when *nage* serves as a discourse marker, utterances exhibit a higher degree of modesty and politeness (Liu 2005; Yin 2009).

To obtain spontaneously occurring discourse data, I deploy the browsable databases of a corpus called CHILDES (<https://childes.talkbank.org>). CHILDES is the child language component of the TalkBank system (<https://talkbank.org>) developed by Brian MacWhinney at Carnegie Mellon University for sharing and analysing conversational interactions. Among 19 databases in Mandarin, I randomly chose two databases that record spontaneous conversations between children aged between 27 and 54 months and their adult caretakers. There are 56,109 tokens consisting of 285,901 Chinese morphemes in total, and there are altogether 464 instances of *nage* produced by either children or adults. In Example (3), *nage* is used as a demonstrative determiner by the mother and as a demonstrative pronoun by the child, respectively. In Example (4), however, *nage* is used as a meaningless filler in daily verbal communication.

- (3) [母亲] 把那个盖盖好, 坐那边去吧。我们坐下来画画啊?
 [Muqin] Ba *nage* (‘that’) gai gai hao, zuo na bian qu ba. Wo men zuo xia lai hua hua a?
 [孩子] 这个也像我们家那个。
 [Haizi] *Zhege* (‘this’) ye xiang wo men jia *nage* (‘that’).
 ‘[Mother] Put that lid back on and sit over there. Shall we sit down and draw something?
 [Child] This one also looks like that one in our home.’ (CHILDES: Zhou3. Tr. mine)
- (4) [孩子] 我, 我, 那个, 那个, 你看我。
 [Haizi] Wo, wo, *nage* (‘that’), *nage* (‘that’), ni kan wo.
 [母亲] 讲话讲清楚。什么?
 [Muqin] Jiang hua jiang qing chu. Shen me?
 ‘[Child] I, I, um, um, look at me. [Mother] Be clear when you’re talking. Say that again?’
 (CHILDES: Zhou2. Tr. mine)

NEIGE AS A COLLOQUIALISM

The colloquial equivalent of *na* is *nei*, which causes *nage* to be pronounced as *neige*. In some linguistic research such as Cheng and Sybesma (1999) and Tao (1999), *na* and *nei* are analysed as interchangeable variants of the identical demonstrative, so *nei* and *neige* occur in examples to indicate ‘that’ (Examples 5–6).

- (5) Cong *nei-ge* jing-zi, wo keyi kandao wu-ge wo.
from that-CL mirror I can see five-CL I

‘From that mirror, I can see five copies of myself (five I’s/me’s).’ (Cheng & Sybesma 1999: 538)

- (6a) Wo gen *nei* laotou zuo zai yiqi a.
1SG with that old:man sit at together PRT

‘(Because) I was (on the same jeep) with that old man (on our way to the police station).’
(Tao 1999: 73)

- (6b) Na jian *nei* ge bao de ren zai nar ne?
that pick that CLF wallet REL person be:at where PRT

‘Where is the guy who picked up your wallet?’ (Tao 1999: 85)

In terms of the derivation of *nei* from *na*, it is realised via suppression. In colloquial language, *na* can combine with a reduced numeral — *yi* ‘one’, generating *nei* ‘that one’. Similarly, the demonstrative *zhe* ‘this’ and *yi* can form *zhei* as the variant of *zhe* (Zhu 1982: 85; Wu & Bodomo 2009). Owing to reanalysis, *nei* and *zhei* can also act as pure demonstratives preceding numerals other than *yi* ‘one’ (Zhang 2013: 144). Significantly, both the compressed *nei* and *zhei* require obligatory classifiers following them (Cheng & Sybesma 1999; Wu & Bodomo 2009).

That is to say, the derivation and frequency of *neige* in colloquial Mandarin are attributed to four facts: 1) *na* ‘that’ is one of the only two demonstratives; 2) *na* and *yi* ‘one’ can be suppressed and compressed into one syllable; 3) the mono-syllabic *nei* must precede a classifier; and 4) *ge* is the default, most commonly used classifier. Therefore, it is not unexpected for *neige* to come across in verbal discourse to a prodigious degree.

It is noteworthy that the linguistic phenomenon of phonetically combining two morphemes into one also occurs in Classical Chinese, and hence has been observed and discussed by pre-modern scholars. For instance, as pointed out by Shen Kuo (1031–1095) in his monograph *Meng Xi Bi Tan* (《梦溪笔谈》), which unravels the natural and social sciences, the process of combining two sounds into one existed prior to his era (Example 7); similarly, the compiled phonetic collection *Guang Yun* (《广韵》) in 1008 addresses the phenomenon and further illuminates the reverse process of splitting one character into two (Example 8).

- (7) 然古语已有二声合为一字者, 如 ‘不可’ 为 ‘叵’。

‘But in the ancient language, there had already been single characters combined from two, such as “po” from “bu” and “ke”’. (*Meng Xi Bi Tan – Yi Wen* 2. Tr. mine)

- (8) 缓读则为二字, 急读则为一音。

‘Pronouncing one character slowly makes it two, while pronouncing two sounds fast makes them one’. (*Guang Yun – Wu Juan*. Tr. mine)

NEIGE IN HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXTS

The employment of *neige* as a colloquialism has existed in the Chinese language for nearly a century. On 16 August 1946, China's last emperor Aisin-Gioro Puyi (1906–1967) presented testimony at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (informally known as the Tokyo War Crimes Trial) as one of the significant witnesses for the prosecution, which was recorded in his autobiography *From Emperor to Citizen* (《我的前半生》 *Wode Qian Ban Sheng*) (Jenner [1989] 2010: 431). In the recording footage, Puyi spoke in a reserved and relaxed manner by employing an informal language style and colloquial expressions. As can be seen from Example (9), in addition to repetitions, there is a considerable number of fillers, including 这个 *zheige* 'this', 那个 *neige* 'that', and the counterpart of *neige*, viz. 那什么 *nei shenme* 'that what'. It is noteworthy that the interpreter also demonstrated the habit of using *zheige* as a filler. Additionally, the interpreter also pronounced the interrogative determiner 哪 *na* 'which' as *nei*. Owing to the fact that the determiner *na* 'which' and the demonstrative *na* 'that' share identical pronunciation (except for their discrepant tones), I presume that the derivation of *nei* 'which' is analogous to that of *nei* 'that', namely, through an integrating process combining *na* 'which' with *yi* 'one'.

- (9) 我们在视察那什么,也是关东军方面给造的,他们一手做成的那什么。我们自己一步不能出门,所以他们制定那个时候,那个视察的这个上奉天去的时候,上奉天去的时候那个时候,因为我的这个祖墓啊,离着那个奉天,就在奉天很近,想着去。吉凶说不能去,因为这个梅津司令官的这个命令,说是这个满洲国的这个皇帝满洲国的皇帝不能上自己祖坟去。

Wo men zai shi cha *nei shenme* ('that what'), ye shi guan dong jun fang mian gei zao de, ta men yi shou zuo cheng de *nei shenme* ('that what'). Wo men zi ji yi bu bu neng chu men, suo yi ta men zhi ding *neige* ('that') shi hou, *neige* ('that') shi cha de *zheige* ('this') shang feng tian qu de shi hou, shang feng tian qu de shi hou *neige* ('that') shi hou, yin wei wo de *zheige* ('this') zu mu a, li zhe *neige* ('that') feng tian, jiu zai feng tian hen jin, xiang zhe qu. Ji gang shuo bu neng qu, yin wei *zheige* ('this') mei jin si ling guan de *zheige* ('this') ming ling, shuo shi *zheige* ('this') man zhou guo de *zheige* ('this') huang di man zhou guo de huang di bu neng shang zi ji zu fen qu.

'We were made by the Kwantung Army to go and inspect things. We could not step out of my house. When they made me go to inspect the Mukden area, since my ancestral graves were near Mukden, I wanted to pay a visit there. Yoshioka said I couldn't, because Umezu had given the instruction that the Emperor of Manchukuo State was not allowed to visit his ancestral graves.'

[译员] 这个事情是在哪年?

[Yi yuan] *Zheige* ('this') shi qing shi zai *nei* ('which') nian?

'[Interpreter] Which year was it?'

这个就在这个梅津司令官的这个时代的。你问是哪一年,这个是不大记得了。

Zheige ('this') jiu zai *zheige* ('this') mei jin si ling guan de *zheige* ('this') shi dai de. Ni wen shi na yi nian, *zheige* ('this') shi bu da ji de le.

'During General Umezu's rule, but I could not recall the exact date.'

Therefore, Puyi's pronunciation of *nage* as *neige* in 1946 indicates that *neige* has been functioning as a colloquialism even prior to the invention of Mandarin as an artificial language.

In contemporary China, *neige* is frequently employed in colloquial Mandarin either as a demonstrative determiner/pronoun or as a discourse marker. For instance, in a 26-minute interview with the 'Memory' programme of Beijing TV, the singer Da Zhang Wei, his parents, and two hosts

use *naige* 43 times as a demonstrative and 57 times as a filler. Da Zhang Wei employs particularly informal expressions accompanied by fillers such as 然后 *ranhou* ‘then’, in addition to *neige* (Example 10). It is notable that all speakers in the interview pronounce *na* as *nei* and *zhe* as *zhei*.

- (10) [大张伟] 然后那个, 然后那个, 然后后来我就去就去唱歌了嘛, 然后, 是我小时候最喜欢的是画画, 是画画。啊, 因为我觉得画画能够...

[Da zhang wei] Ran hou *neige* (‘that’), ran hou *neige* (‘that’), ran hou hou lai wo jiu qu jiu qu chang ge le ma, ranhou, ke shi wo xiao shi hou zui xi huan de shi hua hua, shi hua hua. A, yin wei wo jue de hua hua neng gou...

‘[Da Zhang Wei] Then I started singing, but when I was a kid, I liked drawing the most, cos I could...

[主持人] 照着小人书上的那些英雄画?

[Zhu chi ren] Zhao zhe xiao ren shu shang de *nei* (‘that’) xie ying xiong hua?

[Host] Draw comic book heroes?

[大张伟] 一个是这个。其实我最开始画画的原因是因为我特别讨厌的人我不敢打人家, 我打不过人家, 我只能用那个画画来侮辱他。然后自个儿看着爽, 是那种感觉。

[Da zhang wei] Yi ge shi *zheige* (‘this’). Qi shi wo zui kai shi hua hua de yuan yin shi yin wei wo te bie tao yan de ren wo bu gan da ren jia, wo da bu guo ren jia, wo zhi neng yong *neige* (‘that’) hua hua lai wu ru ta. Ran hou zi ger kan zhe shuang, shi *nei* (‘that’) zhong gan jue.

[Da Zhang Wei] This was one reason. Actually, I started to draw cos I couldn’t beat up those boys I disliked, so I drew caricatures to make fun of them. That made me piss myself laughing.’ (Tr. mine)

HOMOPHONES WITHIN AND ACROSS LANGUAGES

Homophones refers to words that are identical in pronunciation but different in spelling and meaning, the occurrence of which is predominantly attributed to historical changes entailing words of distinct meanings becoming phonologically coincident (McArthur, Lam-McArthur & Fontaine 2018). Interlingual homophones, or cross-language homophones, denote words that have substantial phonological overlaps across languages but not in terms of orthography or definition, such as the English word ‘leaf’ and the Dutch word ‘lief’ (‘sweet’), which are pronounced the same yet diverge in meaning and spelling. From a psycholinguistic perspective, cross-linguistic overlaps in phonology may function as ‘false friends’ involving distinct meanings across languages (Lemhöfer & Dijkstra 2004; Brenders, Van Hell & Dijkstra 2011; Lefever, Labat & Singh 2020). From a morphological perspective, alphabetically simplex words are more prone to homophony across multiple languages, which indicates a correlation between cross-language coincidences and the limited range of sounds within human vocabulary (Carrasco-Ortiz, Midgley & Frenck 2012; Friesen & Jared 2012; Christoffels et al. 2016).

To circumvent homophony, lexical tones can be employed. Albeit not being obligatory cross-linguistically, tones are widespread and deployed in 60–70% of existing languages (Yip 2002; Best 2019), including Asian, African, and indigenous American languages, as well as some European and South Pacific languages (Hyman 2011; 2016; Maddieson 2013). The origin and development of tones (take Chinese as an example) can be dated back to poetic rhyme sequences in the compilation *Book of Odes* (《诗经》*Shi Jing*) in the middle of the first millennium BCE, and the terminology 声 *sheng* denoting tones has been in use since the fifth

century BCE (Sagart 1999). Chinese tones are accounted for on the basis of a quantity distinction in Old Chinese (Wang 1957: 102), and the source of modern tones lies in their Early Middle counterparts (Sagart 1999). For instance, the departing tone is correlated with a derivational suffix *-s* (Haudricourt 1954; Pulleyblank 1962; Sagart 1986), and the rising tone is derived from an earlier glottal stop ending (Mei 1970; Zhengzhang 2000).

Homophony frequently occurs within the Chinese language. In Chinese, the vast majority of morphemes (i.e. the smallest meaning units) are monosyllabic, apart from a trivial number of exceptions to this general pattern, such as the diminutive or endearing suffix *-r*, which lacks a vowel and is sub-syllabic (Norman 1988: 154; De Francis 1990: 187; Chung 2006: 7–8; Taylor & Taylor 2014: 25). Analogous to other languages, Chinese does not have sufficient morphemes to represent all concrete and abstract concepts: of all words, 90% are only comprised of one or two morphemes/syllables, and mono-morphemic words are particularly frequent in casual discourse, accounting for two-thirds of the entire volume of words and covering virtually all common words (Wu & Liu 1988; Xing 2006; Basciano & Ceccagno 2009). Consequently, Chinese, as a tone language, highly depends on tones, or pitch variations, to differentiate the meanings of morphemes, which means a complete morpheme entails a syllable and a tone. It is noteworthy that the pivotal function of tones is salient not only in Mandarin but also all other varieties of Chinese, although the amount of tones varies across different dialects; among the seventy Chinese dialects, there exist eight tone systems of various sizes, ranging from three to ten tones (Sagart 1999; Lee & Zee 2014). For instance, in Mandarin there are four tones, whereas in Cantonese the number is six or arguably nine or ten (Yip & Matthews 1999: 11–12; 2000: 7–9; Taylor & Taylor 2014: 24–26). The overall typological tendency is that the tone systems of the Wu, Yue, Min, and Ping dialect groups are comprehensively larger in size than their counterparts in the Northern dialect groups and others, such as Kejia, Hui, Gan, Xiang, Jin, and Tu (Lee & Zee 2014). These facts indicate that homophones are predicted to be common across all varieties of the Chinese language, particularly in Mandarin, which possesses relatively fewer tones.

Therefore, it is not unexpected that Mandarin abounds in homophones, especially under circumstances when tone marks are absent from syllables. As identified discrete phonological and prosodic units, the total amount of syllables in Mandarin is merely 1,277, and without tonal distinctions, the number falls to 398–418 (Jordan 1963: xxi; De Francis 1990: 42). Nonetheless, in *A Dictionary of Variant Characters* (《异体字字典》 *Yitizi Zidian*), there are 106,230 characters in total, some of which entail multiple meanings (Taylor & Taylor 2014: 25, 48). Given the prodigious quantity of characters but a trivial number of syllable combinations, a mono- or bi-morphemic syllable in Mandarin could potentially correspond to a wide range of words and hence even more plentiful meanings. That is to say, homophony in Mandarin would be in sharp contrast to that in languages like English, which may contain at most five words as a set of homophones. This prediction is indeed borne out: there exist tone syllables that represent more than 100 homophones (e.g. *yi* with a falling tone could indicate 149 distinct homophones, or up to 200, depending on the size of the examined dictionary) (Taylor & Taylor 2014: 80).

A representative paradigm in Mandarin is an article entitled *Story of Stone Grotto Poet Eating Lions* (《施氏食狮史》 *Shi Shi Shi Shi Shi*), which was composed by linguist Yuen Ren Chao (aka Zhao Yuanren) in order to illuminate the uniqueness of the Chinese language in terms of the correlation between oral and written systems as well as between Romanisation/Pinyinisation and characters (Chao 1960; 1968: 115–122; 1980: 149–151; Fang 1999; Yan

2005; Feng 2010; Zhang 2011; Wang 2013; Behr 2015). The entire 96-character article is only comprised of one single sound *shi* (Example (11)), while it demonstrates discourse flexibility in wording and has a number of possible versions related to characterology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics. Such implications illustrate that a group of the identical sounds can induce a variety of homophonic texts (He 2018), which is justified by other homophonic texts, such as *Auntie Yi's Pancreatic Cure* (《易姨医胰》*Yi Yi Yi Yi*), *Xi Who Plays with Rhinoceros* (《熙戏犀》*Xi Xi Xi*), and *Narration on Starving Chickens' Assembly at a Rift* (《饥鸡集矾记》*Ji Ji Ji Ji Ji*).

- (11) 石室诗士施氏,嗜狮,誓食十狮。施氏时时适市视狮。十时,适十狮适市。是时,适施氏适市。施氏视是十狮,恃矢势,使是十狮逝世。氏拾是十狮尸,适石室。石室湿,氏使侍拭石室。石室拭,施氏始试食是十狮尸。食时,始识是十狮尸,实十石狮尸。试释是事。

‘There once was a poet in a stone grotto whose surname was Shi. He was addicted to lions, and swore to eat ten lions. He often went to the market to see lions. At ten o’clock (one day), ten lions happened to arrive at the market. And just then, he coincidentally arrived there. He saw the ten lions, and made them pass away with the power of his arrows. He collected the bodies of the ten lions and made for his stone grotto. As the stone grotto was wet, he ordered his servant to wipe it dry. When the room was wiped, he began to try eating the bodies of the lions. When eating, (he) began to realize that they were actually the bodies of ten stone lions. Try to explain this thing.’ (Tr. He 2018: 151–153)

LITERARY INQUISITIONS IN QING CHINA

A detrimental result of the enormous amount of homophones in Chinese is that in a sense it facilitated the so-called 文字狱 *wenzi yu* ‘literary inquisition’ (i.e. systematic, large-scale persecutions of the educated elite) in imperial China for insurgent writing or suspect forms of thought.

The Qing dynasty (1644–1912) was characterised by institutionalised purges of the literati, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Qing rulers were Manchu conquerors from the northeast region of China, who had forced the collapse of the golden age of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) through a violent transition. Resistance and hostility maintained by the Han elite against the Qing ruling class lasted until the 1680s; the legitimacy of the Chinese Empire was seen as based on the role of the emperor in protecting the sedentary Chinese from nomadic invasion mounted by ‘barbarians’ like the Manchus (Brook 1988; Rhoads 2000: 11; Dennerline 2002; Harrison-Hall 2014: 7; Yang 2016; McKenna 2019). As a consequence, the Qing rulers exercised a crude sovereignty over China by endeavouring to control and suppress the highly sophisticated elite class, punishing the slightest hints of ideological heterodoxy or political dissent, such that the tension characterising Manchu-Han relations undermined the Qing monarchy and social stability (Guy 1987: 18; Elliott 2001: 2–6, 25; Adler 2004).

As Manchu rulers became increasingly attuned to subtleties of Chinese words that potentially conveyed Ming loyalism and insurgency, repressive campaigns in the form of literary inquisitions were initiated by the Shunzhi Emperor (1644–1661) and adopted by subsequent emperors (Zelin 2002; Chiem 2017). Furthermore, during the High Qing era (1660–1794), scholar-officials who were candidates of a meritocratic empire-wide examination system called 科举 *keju* also fell prey to massive purges in the form of literary inquisitions, which sabotaged the perceived benefits of studying for the examination system (Wong 2012; Koyama & Xue 2015). Despite being regarded as the pinnacle of the Qing dynasty, the eventful Qianlong reign (1736–1795) is simultaneously construed as a debased, stagnant era that still impinges upon modern China, in that it was one of the most stringent periods in terms of imposing cultural

regulations (Woodside 2002; Rawski 2004; Liu 2006: 169; Wang 2014: 155). The empire-wide campaign of relentless literary inquisitions was conducted via house-to-house searches for the prohibited production or possession of anti-Qing texts, thereby censoring undesirable literature composed by Ming loyalists (Woodside 2002; Schmidt 2003: 369).

A typical example of such persecution in relation to homophones is a poem composed by the Qing intellectual Xu Shukui (1703–1763), a victim of one of the four most devastating literary inquisitions in the Qing dynasty. In Example (12) which is extracted from Xu's collection entitled *One-Pillar Mansion Poetry* (《一柱楼诗》 *Yi Zhu Lou Shi*), the noun 壶 *hu* and its diminutive suffix 儿 (*er*) in the poem denote 'pot', whereas its homophone 胡儿 *Hu er* 'people of northern ethnic minorities' was interpreted by censors as a derogatory allusion to Manchus. Since Xu was deceased when his work was exposed, the Qianlong Emperor vented his acrimony by ordering executioners to slaughter Xu's clan and students and dismember his corpse (Chen 1985; Zhu 1992; Zhao 2008). Regarding Example (13), extracted from the chapter *Death Sentence Caused by a Poem* (《吟诗杀身》 *Yin Shi Sha Shen*) in the historical compilation *Qing Bai Lei Chao* (《清稗类钞》), although it involves homonymy, it is subtly different from (12) concerning homophony, in that the poem contains a character 清 *qing*, which can be interpreted as a pair of homographs indicating 'Qing dynasty' as a noun and 'refreshing (breeze)' as an adjective, respectively. The poem in (13) is a scholar's casual comment on a breeze flipping his book, yet it was overanalysed and read as his sarcasm of Qing rulers being benighted; this led to the scholar's death penalty (Wu 2015). Furthermore, even expressions without homophones or homographs were possibly subject to scrutiny or overinterpretation. For instance, in Example (14), the characters 日 *ri* and 月 *yue* may constitute a new character 明 *ming* 'bright', another meaning of which is 'Ming dynasty' as a proper noun. Accordingly, under Qianlong's reign, the author was put to death by body dismemberment and penalties applied to his posterity (Chen 2009; Wang 2009).

- (12) 举杯忽见明天子，且把壶儿抛半边。

Ju bei hu jian ming tian zi, qie ba hu er pao ban bian.

'When raising my cup, I suddenly saw a visionary monarch, so I tossed my pot.'

(*Yi Zhu Lou Shi*. Tr. mine)

- (13) 清风不识字，何必来翻书？

Qing feng bu shi zi, he bi lai fan shu?

'The refreshing breeze is illiterate, then why is it flipping the book?'

(*Qing Bai Lei Chao – Yin Shi Sha Shen*. Tr. mine)

- (14) 千秋臣子心，一朝日月天。

Qian qiu chen zi xin, yi zhao ri yue tian.

'(I have) everlasting loyalty as a subject, and (I wish for) a day with the bright sky.'

(Qiao Yanying. Tr. mine)

In the aftermath of Qing's literary inquisitions, educated elite were intimidated by such persecutions and resorted to writing in a conservative manner by means of merely extracting content from established literature. As pointed out by the intellectual Gong Zizhen (1792–1841) in his poem *On History* (《咏史》 *Yong Shi*) (Example 15), composing was reduced to a passive means of making a living (Wang 1987; Wu 1989; Liu 2014).

(15) 避席畏闻文字狱, 著书都为稻粱谋。

Bi xi wei wen wen zi yu, zhu shu dou wei dao liao mou.

‘With profound reverence, scholars are awed by literary inquisitions,
so they write just for a living.’

(Yong Shi. Tr. mine)

There is no denying the fact that homophony indeed functioned as a prerequisite for the misinterpretation and miscomprehension inextricably intertwined with literary inquisitions. Nonetheless, the preeminent factor triggering misinterpretation and miscomprehension lies in readers’ subjectivity. An accurate analysis of specific expressions needs to be conducted in context, rather than arbitrarily, as illustrated in Examples (12–14). Therefore, gaining an understanding of the expressions from both historical and contemporary perspectives is most critical. Similarly, in circumstances of interlingual homophones, such as that in Example (1) and those concerning Yao Ming and Da Zhang Wei, listeners need to take into account the speakers’ linguistic background, so as not to derive the meanings exclusively based on their own linguistic knowledge. More significantly, listeners and readers are expected to adopt an objective attitude and not be biased themselves when interacting with interlocutors and text producers. In other words, a willingness to be impartial is indispensable in addressing potentially contentious expressions within languages and cross-linguistically.

CONCLUSION

In Mandarin Chinese, *nage*, which is constituted of *na* ‘that’ and the general classifier *ge*, has been employed as a demonstrative determiner/pronoun or discourse marker in verbal communication since pre-modern periods. In informal colloquial language in modern and contemporary contexts, the pronunciation of *nage* becomes *neige*, triggered by a phonetic compression of *na* and the numeral *yi*, and such a process occurred even prior to the invention of Mandarin as a national lingua franca.

While *neige* coincidentally bears resemblance in terms of pronunciation with the English N-word, a racial slur, homonymy abounds both language-internally and cross-linguistically, especially under the circumstance when the number of syllables is limited. Moreover, as a tone language relying heavily on tonal implications to differentiate meanings, Chinese is characterised by a one-to-many match between syllables and characters/words.

Homophony within and across languages may potentially contribute to literary inquisitions in the contemporary era, similar to those that prevailed in Qing China, in that homophones may be miscomprehended and misinterpreted, leading to political consequences. Therefore, the treatment of homophones should be prudent, with the prerequisite that a profound understanding of the target language has been gained from contextual information as well as historical and modern perspectives.

ABBREVIATIONS

1SG	first person singular
CL	classifier
CLF	classifier
PRT	particle
REL	relativizer

REFERENCES

- ADLER, Joseph A. 2004. The Qianlong Emperor and the Confucian 'Temple of Culture' (Wen miao) at Chengde. In: R.W. DUNNELL, M.C. ELLIOTT, P. FORET & J.A. MILLWARD (eds), *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde*: 109–122. NY: Taylor & Francis.
- AHRENS, Kathleen 1994. Classifier Production in Normals and Aphasics. *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 22: 203–247.
- ALDRIDGE, Edith 2013. Survey of Chinese Historical Syntax: Pre-Archaic and Archaic Chinese. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 7: 58–77.
- BASCIANO, Bianca & Antonella CECCAGNO 2009. The Chinese Language and Some Notions from Western Linguistics. *Lingue e Linguaggio* VIII(1): 105–135.
- BEHR, Wolfgang 2015. G. Sampson, 'A Chinese Phonological Enigma': Four Comments. *The Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 43(2): 719–723.
- BENSINGER, Graham 2016. *Yao Ming: Racial Slur Locker Room Mix Up*. [Video] YouTube. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXJ3d53MeKs>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- BERNSTEIN, Brittany 2020. USC Professor Placed on Leave after Black Students Complained His Pronunciation of a Chinese Word Affected Their Mental Health. *National Review* 3 Sept. 2020. <<https://www.nationalreview.com/news/usc-professor-placed-on-leave-after-black-students-complained-his-pronunciation-of-a-chinese-word-affected-their-mental-health/>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- BEST, Catherine T. 2019. The Diversity of Tone Languages and the Roles of Pitch Variation in Non-tone Languages: Considerations for Tone Perception Research. *Frontiers in Psychology* 10, Article 364. DOI <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00364>
- BRENDERS, Pascal, Janet G. VAN HELL & Ton DIJKSTRA 2011. Word Recognition in Child Second Language Learners: Evidence from Cognates and False Friends. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 109(4): 383–396.
- BROOK, Timothy 1988. Censorship in Eighteenth-Century China: A View from the Book Trade. *Canadian Journal of History* 22: 177–196.
- BUTLER, Susan (ed.) 2017. Hanyu Pinyin. In: *Macquarie Dictionary*. 7th edn. Sydney: Macquarie Dictionary Publishers. <http://ezproxy.lancs.ac.uk/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/macqdict/hanyu_pinyin/0?institutionId=3497>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- CAO, Xiuling 2000. 汉语“这/那”不对称性的语篇考察 Hanyu 'zhe/na' bu duichenxing de yupian kaocha [Study on the asymmetry of Chinese 'this' and 'that']. *Hanyu Xuexi* 8: 7–11.
- CARRASCO-ORTIZ, Haydee, Katherine J. MIDGLEY & Cheryl FRENCK-MESTRE 2012. Are Phonological Representations in Bilinguals Language Specific? An ERP Study on Interlingual Homophones. *Psychophysiology* 49(4): 531–543.
- CHAO, Yuen Ren 1960. Chinese Language. In: *Encyclopædia Britannica*, V: 567–571. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- CHAO, Yuen Ren 1968. *Language and Symbolic Systems*. Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- CHAO, Yuen Ren 1980. *Yuyan Wenti* [Language Issues]. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- CHEN, Xianghua 1985. Xu Shukui ji qi Yi Zhu Lou Shi yu kaolv [Research on Xu Shukui and the Case of his One Zhu Lou Poetry]. *Wenxian* 2: 27–44.
- CHEN, Yunlu 2009. *Ting Zhu Guangqian jiang meixue* [Listening to Zhu Guangqian's aesthetic study]. Xi'an: Shaanxi Normal University Press.
- CHENG, Lisa LAI-SHEN & Rint SYBESMA 1999. Bare and Not-So-Bare Nouns and the Structure of NP. *Linguistic Inquiry* 30: 509–542.
- CHIEM, Kristen 2017. Painting, Peonies, and Ming Loyalism in Qing-Dynasty China, 1644–1795. *Archives of Asian Art; Durham* 67(1): 83–109.
- CHRISTOFFELS, Ingrid, Kalinka TIMMER, Lesya GANUSHCHAK, & Wido LA HEIJ 2016. On the Production of Interlingual Homophones: Delayed Naming and Increased N400. *Language, Cognition and Neuroscience* 31(5): 628–638.
- CHUNG, Karen Steffen 2006. *Mandarin Compound Verbs*. *Taiwan Journal of Linguistics: Book Series in Chinese Linguistics*. Taipei: Crane Publishing.
- COBLIN, W. South 2000. A Brief History of Mandarin. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120(4): 537–552.
- DE FRANCIS, John 1990. *The Chinese Language: Facts and Fantasy*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- DENNERLINE, Jerry 2002. The Shun-chih Reign. In: W.J. PETERSON (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China*: 73–119. Cambridge, UK: CUP.

- EGEROD, Søren Christian 2013. Chinese Languages. In: *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Chinese-languages>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- ELLIOTT, Mark C. 2001. *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*. Stanford: SUP.
- FANG, Hongxi 1999. Zhao Yuanren he ‘Shi shi shi shi shi’ [Zhao Yuanren and ‘Story of stone grotto poet eating lions’]. *Yaowen Jiaozhi* 4: 15.
- FANG, Mei 2002. 指示词“这”和“那”在北京话中的语法化 Zhishici ‘zhe’ he ‘na’ zai beijinghua zhongde yufahua [The grammaticalisation of ‘this’ and ‘that’ in Beijing dialect]. *Studies of the Chinese Language* 4: 343–353.
- FENG, Shouzhong 2010. Zhao Yuanren ‘Shi shi shi shi shi’ yu hanyu pinyinhua wenti [Zhao Yuanren’s ‘Story of stone grotto poet eating lions’ and the Romanisation of the Chinese language]. *Journal of Jiangsu Teachers University of Technology* 1: 35–39.
- FRIESEN, Deanna & Debra JARED 2012. Cross-Language Phonological Activation of Meaning: Evidence from Category Verification. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition* 15(1): 145–156.
- Helicon 2018. Chinese Language. In: *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*. Abington: Helicon. <http://ezproxy.lancs.ac.uk/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/helicon/chinese_language/0?institutionId=3497>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- GUO, Fenglan 2009. 北京话话语标记“这个”、“那个”的社会语言学分析 Beijinghua huayu biaoji ‘zhege’ ‘nage’ de shehui yuyanxue fenxi [A Sociolinguistic analysis of discourse markers ‘this’ and ‘that’ in Beijing vernacular]. *Studies of the Chinese Language* 5: 429–437.
- GUY, R. Kent 1987. *The Emperor’s Four Treasuries*. Cambridge, MA: HUP.
- HARRISON-HALL, Jessica 2014. *Ming Art, People and Places*. London: The British Museum Press.
- HAUDRICOURT, André G. 1954. Comment reconstruire le chinois archaïque. *Word* 10(2–3): 351–364.
- HAWKES, David (tr.) 1973. *The Story of the Stone: The Golden Days*, I. Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- HE, Hengxing 2018. The Discourse Flexibility of Zhao Yuanren [Yuen Ren Chao]’s Homophonic Text. *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 46(1): 149–176.
- HYMAN, Larry, M 2011. Tone: Is it different? In: J.A. GOLDSMITH, J. RIGGLE, & A.C.L. YU (eds), *The Handbook of Phonological Theory*: 50–80. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- HYMAN, Larry, M. 2016. Lexical vs. Grammatical Tone: Sorting Out the Differences. *Tonal Aspects Lang*: 6–11.
- Ifeng 2007. Huaer yuedui sanjie chanlian quanqiu huayu bang. [The Flowers band tops the global Chinese music ranking for three consecutive years]. *Ifeng* 10 Oct. 2007. <http://ent.ifeng.com/music/mainland/200710/1010_1838_252927.shtml>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- JENNER, W.J.F (tr.) 1989/2010. *From Emperor to Citizen: The Autobiography of Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press.
- JORDEN, Eleanor 1963. *Beginning Japanese*. New Haven: YUP.
- KOYAMA, Mark & Melanie Meng XUE 2015. *The Literary Inquisition: The Persecution of Intellectuals and Human Capital Accumulation in China*. Labor: Human Capital eJournal.
- LEE, Wai-Sum & Eric ZEE 2014. Chinese Phonetics. In: C.-T.J. HUANG, Y.H.A. LI, & A. SIMPSON (eds), *The Handbook of Chinese Linguistics*: 369–399. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- LEFEVER, Els, Sofie LABAT & Pranaydeep SINGH 2020. Identifying Cognates in English-Dutch and French-Dutch by Means of Orthographic Information and Cross-lingual Word Embeddings. In: *Proceedings of the 12th Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC 2020)*: 4089–4094. Marseille: European Language Resources Association.
- LEMHÖFER, Kristin & Ton DIJKSTRA 2004. Recognizing Cognates and Interlingual Homographs: Effects of Code Similarity in Language-Specific and Generalized Lexical Decision. *Memory & Cognition* 32: 533–550.
- LI, Chris Wen-chao 2020. Classical Chinese. In: Sin-Wai CHAN (ed.), *The Routledge Encyclopedia of the Chinese Language*: 408–419. London: Taylor & Francis Group.
- LI, Heng 2011. 话语标记语“这个”和“那个”的语用功能分析 Huayu biaojiyu ‘zhege’ he ‘nage’ de yuyong gongneng fenxi [The pragmatic function analysis of discourse makers ‘this’ and ‘that’]. *Data of Culture and Education* 11: 25–26.

- LIANG, Jingmei 2002. “这-”, “那-”的语用与话语功能研究. ‘Zhe’ ‘na’ de yuyong yu huayu gongneng yanjiu [Study of pragmatic and discourse functions of ‘this’ and ‘that’]. PhD thesis, University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.
- LIU, Chuqun 2015. 老年人口语填充性“这个/那个”调查研究 Laonianren kouyu tiansaixing ‘zhege/nage’ diaocha yanjiu [Analysis of fillers ‘this/that’ used by aged people]. *Nankai Linguistics* 2: 103–111.
- LIU, Liyan 2005. 汉语口语中的话语标记研究 Hanyu kouyuzhong de huayu biaoji yanjiu [Research on the discourse marking in colloquial Chinese]. PhD thesis, Zhejiang University.
- LIU, Qizi 2014. Du Gong Zizhen Yong Shi yi yun he zhi [Analysis of Gong Zizhen’s Yong Shi]. *Shikan* 3: 77.
- LIU, Shiru 1965. *Weijin nanbeichao liangci yanjiu* [Studies on classifiers in Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties]. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- LIU, Zepeng (ed.) 2006. *Common Knowledge about Chinese History*. Beijing: Higher Education Press.
- LÜ, Shuxiang 1984. 汉语语法论文集 Hanyu yufa lunwen ji [Collection of essays on Chinese grammar]. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- LÜ, Shuxiang 1994. 现代汉语八百词 Xiandai hanyu babaici [800 words in modern Chinese]. Shenyang: Liaoning Education Press.
- McARTHUR, Tom, Jacqueline LAM-McARTHUR & Lise FONTAINE (eds) 2018. *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. 2nd edn. Oxford: OUP.
- McKENNA, Amy 2019. Qing Dynasty. In: *Encyclopædia Britannica*. <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Qing-dynasty>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- MADDIESON, Ian 2013. Tone. In: M.S. DRYER & M. HASPELMATH (eds), *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. <<https://wals.info/chapter/13>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- MATTHEWS, Peter H. 2014. Pinyin. In: *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*. 3 edn. Oxford: OUP. <<https://www-oxfordreference-com.ezproxy.lancs.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780199675128.001.0001/acref-9780199675128-e-2567>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- MEI, Tsu-lin 1970. Tones and Prosody in Middle Chinese and the Origin of the Rising Tone. *Harvard Journal of Asian Studies* 30: 86–110.
- MEI, Tsu-lin 1986. 关于近代汉语指代词 – 读吕著《近代汉语指代词》 Guanyu jindai hanyu zhidaici – Du Lü zhu Jindai hanyu zhidaici [About modern Chinese determiners – Reading Lü’s Modern Chinese determiners]. *Studies of the Chinese Language* 6: 401–412.
- MILLS, Harriet C. 1956. Language Reform in China: Some Recent Developments. *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 15(4): 517–540.
- Ministry of Education of the PRC 2006. Xinzhongguo chuqi yuyan wenzi gongzuo zhongyao dashi [Important work on oral and written language after the founding of the PRC]. <http://www.moe.gov.cn/s78/A19/yxs_left/moe_810/s228/201001/t20100129_130359.html>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- MYERS, James 2000. Rules vs. Analogy in Mandarin Classifier Selection. *Language and Linguistics* 1(2): 187–209.
- NIEMI, Petra 2008. The Flowers: From Punk Pop to Hip Hop. *GBTimes* 7 March 2008. <<https://web.archive.org/web/20161008140146/https://gbtimes.com/life/flowers-punk-pop-hip-hop>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- NORMAN, Jerry 1988. *Chinese*. Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- PENG, Lijing 2018. Language Ideologies in Early History of Modern Mandarin: A Study of Shen Congwen’s Minor Literature. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 29(3): 417–435.
- PEYRAUBE, Alain 2008. Ancient Chinese. In: R.D. WOODARD (ed.), *The Ancient Languages of Asia and the Americas*: 136–162. Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- PULLEYBLANK, Edwin G. 1962. The Consonantal System of Old Chinese. *Asia Major* 9: 58–144, 206–265.
- PULLEYBLANK, Edwin G. 1995. The Historical and Prehistorical Relationships of Chinese. In: W. WONG (ed.), *The Ancestry of the Chinese Language* (The Journal of Chinese Linguistics Monograph Series 8): 145–194. Berkeley: UC Press.
- RHOADS, Edward J.M. 2000. *Manchus and Han: Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861–1928*. Washington: University of Washington Press.

- RAWSKI, Evelyn S. 2004. The Qing Empire during the Qianlong Reign. In: J.A. MILLWARD, R.W. DUNNELL, M.C. ELLIOT & P. FORÉ (eds), *New Qing Imperial History: The Making of Inner Asian Empire at Qing Chengde*: 15–21. London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- SAGART, Laurent 1986. On the Departing Tone. *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 14(1): 91–112.
- SAGART, Laurent 1999. The Origin of Chinese Tones. In: S. KAJI (ed.), *Proceedings of the Symposium/Cross-Linguistic Studies of Tonal Phenomena/Tonogenesis, Typology and Related Topics*: 91–104. Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.
- SCHMIDT, Jerry Dean 2003. *Harmony Garden: The Life, Literary Criticism, and Poetry of Yuan Mei (1716–1798)*. London: Routledge.
- SHEN, Jiakuan 1999. 不对称和标记论 Buduichen he biaoji lun [Theory of asymmetry and marking]. Nanchang: Jiangxi Education Press.
- Sohu 2009. Huaer yuedui jiesan [The Flowers broke up]. *Sohu* 22 June 2009. <<http://music.yule.sohu.com/s2009/haerjs/>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- SOAVE, Sobby 2020. USC Suspended a Communications Professor for Saying a Chinese Word that Sounds Like a Racial Slur. *Reason* 3 Sept. 2020. <<https://reason.com/2020/09/03/usc-greg-patton-chinese-word-offended-students/>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- Talkbank*. [database] <<https://talkbank.org/>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- TAO, Hongyin 1999. The Grammar of Demonstratives in Mandarin Conversational Discourse: A Case Study. *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 27(1): 69–103.
- TAYLOR, Insup & M. Martin TAYLOR 2014. *Writing and Literacy in Chinese, Korean and Japanese*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- TSAI, Wei-Tien Dylan 2003. Three Types of Existential Quantification in Chinese. In: A. SIMPSON & Y.A. LI (eds), *Functional Structure(s), Form and Interpretation Perspectives from East Asian Languages*: 161–179. London: Routledge.
- WANG, Kaiyang 2013. Zhao Yuanren sanduan tongyinzhi ‘qiwen’ de yuyanxue chanshi – Jinian Zhao Yuanren xiansheng danchen 120 zhounian [A Linguistic explanation of Zhao Yuanren’s three ‘exceptional articles’ in homonyms – In memory of Mr. Zhao Yuanren’s 120th birthday]. *Xiandai Yuwen* 1: 4–11.
- WANG, Li 1957. *Hanyu shigao* [History of Chinese]. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju.
- WANG, Li 2005. *Hanyu yufa shi* [History of Chinese grammar]. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- WANG, Shaoxin 1989. Liangci ge zai Tangdai qianhou de fazhan [The Development of the classifier ge around the Tang Dynasty]. *Yuyan Jiaoxue yu Yanjiu* 2: 98–119.
- WANG, Wensheng 2014. *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates: Crisis and Reform in the Qing Empire*. Harvard: HUP.
- WANG, Xianchun 1987. Gong Zizhen Yong Shi shi yibian: Yu Dai Hongsen shangque [Questions on Gong Zizhen’s Yong Shi poem: A Discussion with Dai Hongsen]. *Social Science Research* 4: 124–127.
- WANG, Xinlong 2009. *Da Qing wangchao* [The great Qing dynasty]. Beijing: Theatrical Publishing House of China.
- WONG, R. Bin 2012. Taxation and Good Governance in China, 1500–1914. In: B. YUAN-CASALIA, P.K. O’BRIEN & F.C. COMIN (eds), *The Rise of Fiscal States: A Global History, 1500–1914*: 353–378. Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- WOODSIDE, Alexander 2002. The Ch’ien-lung Reign. In: W.J. PETERSON (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China*: 230–309. Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- WU, Jei-Tun & In-Mao LIU 1988. A Data Base System about the Psychological Features of Chinese Characters and Words. In: I.-M. LIU, H.-C. CHEN & M.-J. CHEN (eds), *Cognitive Aspects of the Chinese Language*: 171–186. Hong Kong: Asian Research Service.
- WU, Tiaogong 1989. Xi Gong Zizhen Yong Shi [Analysing Gong Zizhen’s Yong Shi]. *Mingzuo Xinsang* 1: 44–47.
- WU, Xiaobo 2015. Qianlong yu Huashengdun de zuichu xiangyu [An Initial meeting between Qianlong and Washington]. *The Paper* 2 June 2015. <https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1337460>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- WU, Yicheng & Adams BODOMO 2009. Classifiers ≠ Determiner. *Linguistic Inquiry* 40(3): 487–503.
- XING, Janet Zhiqun 2006. *Teaching and Learning Chinese as a Foreign Language*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- XU, Dan 1988. 浅谈这/那的不对称 Qiantan zhe/na de buduichenxing [On the asymmetry between this and that]. *Studies of the Chinese Language* 2: 128–130.

- XU, Jiajin 2008. 汉语自然会话中话语标记“那(个)”的功能分析 Hanyu ziran huihuazhong huayu biaoji ‘na (ge)’ de gongneng fenxi [Discourse Marker Na(ge) (那(个)) and Its Functions in Spoken Chinese]. *Linguistic Sciences* 7(1): 49–57.
- YAN, Hongming 2005. ‘Shi shi shi shi shi’ buneng zhengming hanzi buyi pinyinhua [‘Story of stone grotto poet eating lions’ cannot prove the unsuitability of Chinese characters being pinyinized]. *Yuwen Jiaoxue Yu Yanjiu* 10: 86.
- YANG, Nianqun 2016. Moving Beyond ‘Sinicization’ and ‘Manchu Characteristics’: Can Research on Qing History Take a Third Path? *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 47(1): 44–58.
- YE, Youwen 1988. “这”的功能嬗变及其他 ‘Zhe’ de gongneng shanbian ji qita [The Changing functions of ‘this’ and others]. *Studies of the Chinese Language* 1: 17–21.
- YIN, Shulin 2009. 话语标记“这个”、“那个”的语法化和使用的影响因素 Huayu biaoji ‘zhege’ ‘nage’ de yufahua he shiyongde yingxiang yinsu [A Study of grammaticalisation and influencing factors in use of the discourse markers ‘zhege’ and ‘nage’]. *Foreign Language Research* 4: 92–96.
- YIP, Moira 2002. *Tone*. Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- YIP, Virginia & Stephen MATTHEWS 1999. *Basic Cantonese: A Grammar and Workbook*. London: Routledge.
- YIP, Virginia & Stephen MATTHEWS 2000. *Intermediate Cantonese: A Grammar and Workbook*. London: Routledge.
- ZELIN, Madeleine 2002. The Yung-cheng Reign. In: W.J. PETERSON (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China*: 183–229. Cambridge, UK: CUP.
- ZEISLOFT, Ben 2020. USC Prof No Longer Teaching after Using Chinese Word that Sounds Like Racial Slur. *Campus Reform* 2 Sept 2020. <<https://www.campusreform.org/?ID=15580>>, accessed 25 Sept. 2021.
- ZHANG, Bojiang & Mei FANG 1996. 汉语功能语法研究 Hanyu gongneng yuyan yanjiu [Research on the functional grammar of Chinese]. Nanchang: Jiangxi Education Press.
- ZHANG, Chenyun 2011. Cong ‘Shi shi shi shi shi’ kan hanzi de tezheng [Analysis of the characteristics of Chinese characters from the perspective of ‘Story of stone grotto poet eating lions’]. *Journal of Hubei Institute for Education* 5: 24–26.
- ZHANG, Niina Ning 2013. *Classifier Structures in Mandarin Chinese*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.
- ZHAO, Xiaogeng 2008. Yi Zhu Lou Shi an: Qing chao qi an xilie [The Case of Yi Zhu Lou Poetry: An exceptional case in Qing dynasty]. *China Trial* 10: 94–96.
- ZHENGZHANG, Shangfang 2000. *The Phonological System of Old Chinese*. Tr. Laurent Sagart. (Collection des Cahiers de Linguistique – Asie Orientale 5) Paris: L’École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Centre de Recherches Linguistiques sur l’Asie Orientale.
- ZHU, Dexi 1982. *Yufa Jiangyi* [Lectures on grammar]. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- ZHU, Guichang 1992. Jingdong Tu Yuelong yu Xu Shuxie Yi Zhu Lou Shi an [Tu Yuelong from Jingdong and the case of Xu Shuxie’s Yi Zhu Lou Poetry]. *Journal of Yunnan Normal University* 6: 68–72.