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A Review of “*A Study on the Status of HUAYU Life in Southeast Asian Chinese Communities*”

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Abstract: The Study on the Status of *HUAYU Life in Southeast Asian Chinese Communities* focuses on Southeast Asian Chinese communities as its core research subjects. It systematically investigates the acquisition, usage, attitudes, Chinese-language media consumption, and HUAYU education within Chinese communities across five countries: Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Laos. Building upon this foundation, the study zeroes in on Indonesia, using its five major cities as representative examples to provide a detailed account of the HUAYU landscape in Indonesia. Finally, it addresses current topics by analyzing the familiarity of international students from Belt and Road countries with trending Chinese words and phrases, alongside examining the usage of Southeast Asian Chinese-language buzzwords in Chinese-language media. Through substantial empirical research and a multidimensional analytical framework, this book not only reveals the diverse ecosystem of HUAYU life in Southeast Asia but also makes significant contributions to overseas Chinese studies, international HUAYU dissemination, and HUAYU education in terms of theoretical construction, methodological innovation, and practical guidance. It stands as an outstanding work combining academic depth and practical value.

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标题: 《东南亚华人社区华语生活状况研究》评介

摘要: 《东南亚华人社区华语生活状况研究》以东南亚华人社区作为核心研究对象, 系统调查马来西亚、新加坡、菲律宾、印度尼西亚、老挝五国华人社区在华语习得、运用、态度、华文媒体使用以及华文教育方面的情况。在此基础上, 聚焦印度尼西亚, 以其五大城市为代表, 详细描述印度尼西亚的华语生活状况。最后结合热点议题, 研究分析“一带一路”沿线国家的留学生对汉语热词热语的知晓度和东南亚汉语热词热语在华文媒体的使用情况。该书凭借翔实的实证研究与多维的分析框架, 既呈现出东南亚华语生活的多元生态, 更在理论建构、方法创新与实践指导层面, 为海外华语研究、中文国际传播以及华文教育领域作出重要贡献, 是一部兼具学术深度与现实价值的佳作。

关键词: 东南亚华人社区; 华语生活; 中文国际传播; 华文教育

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I. Introduction

Language life encompasses all activities involving the use, learning, and study of language, linguistic knowledge, and linguistic techniques (Li Yuming, 2016). Mandarin Chinese serves as the common language among Chinese communities, grounded in Standard Mandarin (Guo Xi, 2010). Southeast Asia holds significant importance as a region for China's political, economic, and cultural exchanges, playing a vital role in the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. “The Belt and Road Initiative is paved by language” (Li Yuming, 2015). Chinese serves as the bond and bridge connecting China with overseas Chinese communities worldwide. The state of HUAYU life offers a comprehensive, multi-faceted, and vividly authentic reflection of the dynamic linguistic realities of overseas Chinese communities. Concurrently, China's rising global influence elevates research on “HUAYU life” beyond an academic topic to a practical concern for language policy and cultural dissemination.

Published in 2021 by Jinan University Press, Research on the HUAYU Life in Southeast Asian Chinese Communities, edited by Professor Liu Hua of Jinan University and others, belongs to the “Language Service Series: Language Life Research” collection. Employing sociolinguistic and cross-cultural communication perspectives, the book utilizes systematic surveys and corpus analysis to depict the unique characteristics of Mandarin usage within Southeast Asian Chinese communities. This work not only provides a systematic overview of HUAYU life among Southeast Asian Chinese but also represents an

innovation in both theory and methodology within overseas HUAYU studies.

This review examines the book from three aspects: content overview, academic innovation, and thought-provoking insights, thereby exploring its academic value and significance in the fields of global HUAYU studies and international HUAYU dissemination.

II. Content Overview

Centered on the core theme of “HUAYU Life”, the book systematically presents a multidimensional ecological portrait of Southeast Asian Chinese communities across language use, education, media, and cultural identity through four main sections: “General Discussion”, “Comprehensive Overview”, “Case Studies” and “Hot Topics”. Its structure progresses logically from macro-level patterns to micro-level cases and cutting-edge explorations, demonstrating strong systematic coherence and academic rigor.

1. General Discussion

The General Discussion section begins with the research rationale, content, and methodology. It clearly summarizes the main findings of the investigation and proposes several key insights: the impact of HUAYU resource development and assessment on the HUAYU planning for the Belt and Road Initiative; the hierarchical nature of attitudes toward the HUAYU among Southeast Asian Chinese; the importance of recognizing the focal role of Chinese-language new media in HUAYU planning; and the significance of paying attention to the overseas dissemination of popular Chinese words and phrases and the unique status of Chinese-language media.

2. Comprehensive Overview

The Overview Chapter employs a unified analytical framework to conduct a comparative study across five countries: Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Laos. It examines six dimensions: basic demographics of respondents, Mandarin acquisition, Mandarin usage, attitudes toward Mandarin, media consumption, and the state of HUAYU education. The survey reveals significant variations in Mandarin education policies across Southeast Asian nations, with distinct national differences emerging in Chinese learners' approaches to Mandarin acquisition, usage patterns, and attitudes toward the language. The extent of Chinese-language media usage correlates closely with the Mandarin proficiency levels of ethnic Chinese communities.

3. Case Studies

The Case Studies section focuses on Indonesia as a representative region, conducting micro-level research in five cities: Jakarta, Surabaya, Medan, Pontianak, and Batam. Through recorded interviews, corpus analysis, and field observations, the book meticulously documents Indonesian Chinese oral language usage (personal and familial Mandarin speech), records of Mandarin activities within Chinese communities (festive celebrations, religious ceremonies, wedding rituals and banquets, exchange events, and competitions), and the landscape of HUAYU carriers. The research reveals distinctive linguistic phenomena in the pronunciation, expressions, and organizational structures of Mandarin used by Indonesian Chinese. It highlights the relative autonomy of Chinese communities in Indonesia, which have preserved largely intact traditional cultural customs while incorporating only limited local cultural elements. The study analyzes characteristics in the use of Chinese characters, vocabulary, linguistic

symbols, and their combinations on road signs, advertisements, and house numbers in Indonesian cities. Frequency and lexical diversity analysis of Indonesian Chinese media vocabulary, coverage statistics, high-frequency character usage analysis, and distribution of idioms across all terms and high-frequency terms were conducted. Comparisons with the Chinese National Language Resource Monitoring Corpus were performed using automated segmentation and manual intervention to extract terms characteristic of Indonesian Chinese, followed by descriptive and classificatory investigations.

4. Hot Topics

Trending words and phrases represent the rapid development and vibrant landscape of China's linguistic life, indirectly reflecting China's social progress. Their usage in overseas Chinese communities promotes understanding of the motherland among overseas Chinese and fosters deeper identification with HUAYU and culture. This section explores the overseas discourse dissemination of trending Chinese words and phrases through two dimensions. First, research on overseas students' cognition of Chinese hot words and phrases. This study targets students from 29 countries along the Belt and Road Initiative to obtain the most objective cognitive responses in terms of second language acquisition. By reviewing existing research on hot words and phrases, it clarifies their conceptual definitions and analyzes the distinctions between buzzwords, neologisms, and keywords. It investigates students' acquisition pathways and learning attitudes toward hot words, proposing teaching principles and recommendations. Second is the study of the dissemination of Chinese buzzwords and slang in overseas Chinese-language media, primarily targeting major Southeast Asian countries. The propagation of Chinese buzzwords and slang within overseas Chinese communities relies heavily on overseas Chinese-language media, which constitutes a vital component of the linguistic life of overseas Chinese. Based on statistical analysis of buzzwords' usage patterns (overall and categorized) in overseas Chinese media, this book summarizes their general and specific usage characteristics. It describes both high-frequency and low-frequency typical instances according to statistical findings and explores underlying reasons. Finally, it examines the driving forces and characteristics of Chinese buzzwords' dissemination in overseas Chinese communities, offering guiding recommendations ranging from macro-level suggestions to concrete measures.

III. Academic Evaluation and Research Significance

Research on the HUAYU Life in Southeast Asian Chinese Communities is an academic work that combines macro-level vision with empirical depth. It demonstrates significant innovation in its research subjects, theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches. Not only does it expand the research dimensions of international HUAYU dissemination and sociolinguistics, but it also provides a new paradigm for understanding the global HUAYU ecosystem.

1. Broader Research Perspective

Centering on Southeast Asia as its primary research arena, the book spans five nations, presenting a cross-cultural and cross-contextual research framework. Centered on the core concept of "HUAYU life", the authors comprehensively demonstrate the interactive relationship between language and society, culture, and identity—spanning HUAYU acquisition, usage, and attitudes, as well as HUAYU education and media

consumption. This “language-as-life” research perspective powerfully breaks through the limitations of traditional linguistic structural analysis, grounding language studies more firmly in real-life contexts.

2. Empirical and Systematic Research Methodology

The book employs diverse methodologies including questionnaires, audio-visual recordings, and corpus analysis, establishing a robust investigative foundation and a highly comparable data system. Particularly in the Overview and Case Studies sections, the author designs a unified research framework and analytical dimensions, enabling cross-national comparisons of Mandarin usage across different countries and regions to reveal regional variations. This multi-method research approach demonstrates the rigor of sociolinguistic and applied linguistics studies while providing methodological references for future cross-regional comparative research.

3. Positive Implications for HUAYU Planning in the Belt and Road Initiative

Language planning refers to deliberate attempts within a linguistic community to regulate the functions, structures, and acquisition of a language and its variants. Guo Xi (2009) notes that actively pursuing HUAYU planning while fully considering its typology holds positive significance both theoretically and practically. Li Yuming (2015) notes that language planning encompasses the social status and applicable contexts of languages and their variants, reforms, standardization, and refinement of language and script, as well as the value and role of linguistic phenomena across functional levels. Guo Xi (2009) emphasizes that achieving a shift from viewing language as a “problem” to recognizing it as a “resource”, transitioning from management to service provision, expanding from single-nation or regional contexts to transnational or cross-border frameworks, and moving from mandatory enforcement to market-driven regulation holds significant theoretical and practical value for the preservation, development, and dissemination of Chinese in its host countries. This book examines Mandarin usage within Southeast Asian Chinese communities, conducting a comprehensive survey of basic conditions through aspects such as personal profiles, Mandarin application, Chinese-language media, and HUAYU education. It provides objective foundations for overseas HUAYU planning. As stated in the book: “Only by understanding the attitudes of Southeast Asian Chinese toward Mandarin can Mandarin planning tailor services to market demands and implement country-specific strategies”.

4. Opening avenues for subsequent scholarly research

While groundbreaking, this book leaves room for further exploration. First, certain countries (e.g., Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam) were excluded from the survey, leaving gaps in the comprehensive map of Mandarin usage across Southeast Asia. Second, the survey period focused on specific recent years, limiting dynamic tracking of linguistic evolution. These areas present new research directions for future scholars.

IV. Insights and Reflections

Through its research, this book arrives at several key insights: First, the development and monitoring of HUAYU resources influence language planning for the Belt and Road Initiative. Second, Southeast Asian Chinese exhibit hierarchical attitudes toward the HUAYU, with its usage demonstrating diversity. Third, attention should be paid to the dialogues within Chinese-language new media and the focal role of

language planning. Fourth, the overseas dissemination of popular Chinese words and phrases, along with the unique status of Chinese-language media, warrants emphasis. These findings offer the following insights:

First, language resources form not only the foundation of cultural dissemination but also a crucial pillar of national discourse power and cultural soft power. Systematic, data-driven monitoring of HUAYU resources provides objective grounds for formulating language policies and facilitates dynamic assessments of overseas HUAYU usage, enabling targeted interventions and sustainable development.

Second, language dissemination must fully consider audience factors such as linguistic proficiency, social identity, educational background, and cultural affiliation. Significant variations in Mandarin acceptance and usage frequency exist across countries, regions, and generations. This necessitates abandoning a one-size-fits-all approach in language promotion. Instead, a tiered, multi-pathway system should be developed, tailored to local education systems, community cultures, and economic levels.

Third, Chinese-language new media serves as a new engine for language dissemination in the digital age. New media has become a primary platform for transnational communication and cultural identity building, with its interactivity and immediacy reshaping language dissemination patterns. Future Chinese promotion should actively integrate into the social media ecosystem, leveraging content creation, algorithmic recommendations, and cross-language interactions to form a more influential “digital language community”.

Finally, language dissemination transcends mere information transfer; it embodies the export of cultural significance. Trending words and phrases reflect the evolution and landscape of China’s linguistic life, while their dissemination pathways and reception abroad mirror the international influence of Chinese culture. The propagation of Chinese linguistic trends within overseas Chinese communities relies heavily on overseas Chinese-language media, which itself constitutes a vital component of the linguistic life of overseas Chinese.

V. Conclusion

The Study of HUAYU Practices in Southeast Asian Chinese Communities is an outstanding work that combines academic rigor with practical relevance. Centered on HUAYU practices within Southeast Asian Chinese communities, the book comprehensively depicts the survival and development of Mandarin in a multicultural context, spanning from macro-level linguistic ecosystems to micro-level social practices. The book not only traces the historical evolution and cultural context of the HUAYU in Southeast Asia but also delves into the challenges and opportunities facing contemporary HUAYU dissemination. It demonstrates solid investigative capabilities and profound theoretical insights. This work provides valuable academic references for overseas Chinese studies, HUAYU planning, international HUAYU dissemination, and HUAYU education, while also offering new perspectives for understanding linguistic identity and cultural inheritance within Southeast Asian Chinese communities.

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