



THE INFLUENCE OF CIVILIZATIONS IN THE 15-20TH CENTURIES ON ASIAN LANGUAGES AND ITS LINGUISTIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: Civilization exerts a profound influence on language, thereby shaping and promoting culture. In the 18th century, Herder acknowledged the historicity of language, contextualizing it within the broader framework of human development and culture. This paper examines the impact of Western-dominated civilization from the 15th to the 20th centuries on Asian languages, identifying several key characteristics. Firstly, Asia did not witness widespread adoption of foreign languages on a large scale. Secondly, extraterritorial linguistic borrowing in Asia surpassed intra-regional one, resulting in the emergence of diverse hybrid languages. Additionally, Asia employed various strategies to preserve and perpetuate its languages and civilizations. Language and civilization play crucial roles in mutually reinforcing and advancing each other. Therefore, this paper aims to elucidate the influence of civilization on Asian languages since the Age of Exploration, uncovering the nuances of Asian civilization embedded within it, and exploring the intricate relationship between civilization and languages in Asia.


Keywords: 15-20th Centuries civilization. Asian languages. Linguistic borrowing. Language status. Philosophy of language.

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Resumo: A civilização exerce uma profunda influência sobre a linguagem, moldando e promovendo a cultura. No século XVIII, Herder reconheceu a historicidade da linguagem, contextualizando-a dentro do amplo contexto do desenvolvimento humano e da cultura. Este artigo examina o impacto da civilização dominada pelo Ocidente, dos séculos XV ao XX, sobre as línguas asiáticas, identificando várias características-chave. Em primeiro lugar, a Ásia não testemunhou a adoção generalizada de línguas estrangeiras, em larga escala. Em segundo lugar, o empréstimo linguístico extraterritorial na Ásia superou o empréstimo linguístico intrarregional, resultando no surgimento de diversas línguas híbridas. Além disso, a Ásia utilizou várias estratégias para preservar e perpetuar suas línguas e civilizações. A linguagem e a civilização desempenham papéis cruciais, ao se reforçarem mutuamente e avançarem juntas. Portanto, este artigo tem, como objetivo, elucidar a influência da civilização sobre as línguas asiáticas desde a Era das Explorações, revelando as nuances da civilização asiática embutidas nesse processo, e explorar a intrincada relação entre civilização e línguas, na Ásia.

Palavras-chave: Civilização dos séculos XV-XX. Idiomas Asiáticos. Empréstimo Linguístico. *Status* do Idioma. Filosofia da Linguagem.

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THE INFLUENCE OF CIVILIZATIONS IN THE 15-20TH CENTURIES ON ASIAN LANGUAGES AND ITS LINGUISTIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS¹

Jiaqi Liu²

Abstract: Civilization exerts a profound influence on language, thereby shaping and promoting culture. In the 18th century, Herder acknowledged the historicity of language, contextualizing it within the broader framework of human development and culture. This paper examines the impact of Western-dominated civilization from the 15th to the 20th centuries on Asian languages, identifying several key characteristics. Firstly, Asia did not witness widespread adoption of foreign languages on a large scale. Secondly, extraterritorial linguistic borrowing in Asia surpassed intra-regional one, resulting in the emergence of diverse hybrid languages. Additionally, Asia employed various strategies to preserve and perpetuate its languages and civilizations. Language and civilization play crucial roles in mutually reinforcing and advancing each other. Therefore, this paper aims to elucidate the influence of civilization on Asian languages since the Age of Exploration, uncovering the nuances of Asian civilization embedded within it, and exploring the intricate relationship between civilization and languages in Asia.

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INTRODUCTION

The Age of Exploration mainly refers to the era when Europeans sent ships during the 15th to 17th centuries in order to open up new trade routes on the world's oceans. This period can be viewed as a time of significant and rapid growth and transformation for humanity, marked by intense cultural exchanges and collisions among civilizations across different continents. Despite various turbulent factors, such as wars, human society has made substantial advancements in political, economic, cultural and academic domains.

The direct reason for the opening of the Age of Exploration was to carry out commercial activities and spread Christianity. Since the 15th century, the Atlantic trade connected Europe, America and Africa. Western languages, especially Spanish, French and English, had a profound influence on many regions. However, under the impact of Western civilization, the languages of Asia are different compared to those ones from Africa, America and Oceania.

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This paper makes a comparative discussion of the responses of Asian languages to the collision of civilizations. It also aims to identify the influence of civilization on Asian languages from 15-20th centuries and the characteristics of Asian civilization from these aspects: first, Asia has not formed a large area of foreign languages; second, extraterritorial linguistic borrowing in Asia exceeds intra-domain linguistic borrowing; third, civilizations have had a certain influence on the current language status. Asian languages have adopted various methods to protect their languages and civilizations. Language is formed, developed and propagated with human beings. The philosopher Herder (1998, p. 106) once expounded the law of the formation and development of language, and proposed the necessity of analyzing language with the whole human culture and civilization. Therefore, taking the above three aspects as clues is helpful to define the status of language, further explore the characteristics of Asian civilization and languages, and their relationship.

1 THE CHANGE OF ASIA'S LINGUISTIC MAP SINCE AGE OF EXPLORATION

Shepherd (1911, p. 176) described the general distribution of major languages in Europe. English, French and Spanish occupy the mainstream. In other areas, French and Spanish accounted for a relatively high proportion, such as the Spanish areas in Latin America, the English areas in America and Australia, and the French areas in Africa. While Asia mainly has Arabic-speaking areas, Chinese-speaking areas and other language ones, even in India, where the language is complex, English co-exists with the local language.

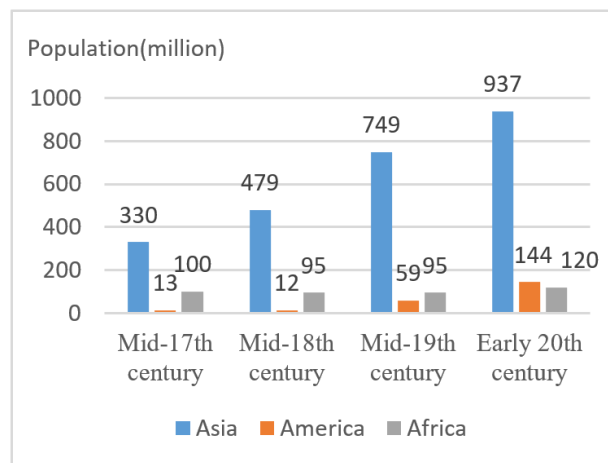
National language serves as the outward manifestation of national thought. Colin Renfrew (1987, p. 437; 1992, p. 11) and Peter Bellwood (1991, p. 88; 1996, p. 594) suggested that agriculture, by providing stable and ample food sources, facilitated the development of languages. Asia, with its well-established agricultural industry, historically occupied a central position in global civilizations. From a macroscopic perspective, not only have Asian languages resisted displacement by Western languages, but also religions, such as Islam and Buddhism, have endured as predominant components of Asian religion. "In contrast, the Americas and Africa, which were pillaged by a large number of human and natural resources, could hardly resist the invasion of foreign civilizations" (Shu, 2018, p. 210-216).

Their native languages also suffered significant impact, resulting in the formation of various Western language enclaves, such as French-speaking areas in Central Africa and English-speaking areas in Central and Southern Africa. The establishment of French colonial zones in Africa began in 1830, when France created its first colonial territory. "By 1913, French had become the dominant language in a third of Africa" (Ostler, 2019, p. 379). In addition to French, the number of speakers of English, Spanish and Portuguese in the colonies even exceeded the number of native speakers. As Ostler (2019, p. 481) puts it: "[...] the current status of the major European languages is attributable to the colonial occupation

of the globe in the last 500 years of the second millennium”. The organic growth of these European languages has also been helped by the immigrant populations’ rise and at the expense of the native languages of the colonized lands.

Colonial expansion predominantly utilized sea transportation, focusing on geographically proximate regions with extensive coastlines, such as Africa and America. These areas were favored due to their reduced local populations, which facilitated cultural penetration. For instance, Africa’s population was noted to have decreased from 100 million, in 1650, to 90 million by 1800 (Wu, 1997). Similarly, North America’s native population declined significantly from 1.89 million, in 1500, to 530,000 in 1900 (Ubelaker, 1988, p. 289), in stark contrast to the demographic trends observed in Asia (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Asia’s, America’s and Africa’s populations from the 17th to the 20th centuries



Source: Our elaboration

In contrast to Africa and America, Asia’s geographical distance from Europe necessitated long and arduous land and sea transportation routes. Additionally, Asia boasts a substantial local population (see Figure 1) and maintains distinct cultural and linguistic spheres, posing challenges to foreign cultural penetration. Shepherd (1911, p. 136) depicted a colonial map from 1700 to 1763, highlighting that “European colonists colonized America at a swifter pace”. According to Ostler (2019, p. 483), foreign conquerors aiming to alter local languages required a sizable immigrant contingent to effectively propagate the foreign language. As Peter Bellwood (2020, p. 254) puts it: “If the conquerors had relied on imperial conquest itself, instead of large-scale permanent migration, there would have been few native speakers in the long run”. Asia has the world’s largest population, speaking more than 2,000 languages. Asia’s profound cultural heritage and diverse linguistic foundations render it more resistant to foreign languages. Additionally, the geographical distance makes it challenging

for European nations to send large populations to Asia, thus limiting the extent of Western language penetration. For example,

India's vibrant religious culture, China's strong national foundation, and the thriving literature in the Arabia highlight their profound civilization. Despite colonization, their civilizations and languages endured (Liu, 2021, p. 49-54).

The Portuguese were the pioneers who arrived in Southeast Asia's maritime regions under royal mandate, establishing permanent settlements along trade routes. By 1535, Macao had become a crucial Portuguese trading port (Chao, 2019, p. 79). Portugal's early successes in the region sparked interest among other European nations. Spain, for instance, established viceroalties in the Philippines by 1571, while the Netherlands occupied Taiwan in 1642, introducing a significant influx of foreign vocabulary. These developments prompted Asia to assertively preserve its distinct national characteristics.

Around the feudal Tokugawa period (1603-1867), as the shogunate allowed Western businessmen to trade in Japan at that time, "Lanology" emerged, a translation science specially designed to introduce Western science and technology. When the West invaded Asia in the 19th century, Japan was forced to introduce a number of Western languages. By 1900, a commercial trade had developed in which foreign languages, such as Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch, were mixed with native languages.

India's linguistic landscape is notably intricate. Its geographical proximity to Europe and extensive coastline facilitated early maritime connections. With a vast land area and borders touching several landlocked countries, India became strategically accessible for colonial endeavors. India stands out globally for its linguistic diversity, with approximately 19,569 languages. Among these, 121 languages serve as mother tongues for over 10,000 people each. Notably, the eighth schedule of the Indian Constitution recognizes 22 languages as "scheduled languages," highlighting their formal status in national discourse.³

British merchants and missionaries brought English to India around the 15th and 16th centuries. "The British colonized India for more than 180 years and established the East India Company in 1600, which controlled almost all the trade in India" (Liu, 2021, p. 49-54; Liu, 2014, p. 247-249). As the British population in India grew, so did the number of people who traded and communicated with English. Hindi and other languages began to seek to maintain their system, constantly absorbing words from various languages, and some words of Sanskrit also began to be active again.

At the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the beginning of British rule in India, language was a key point. The process of Indian language development, during this period, can be divided

³ See the Census of India Website for data on the 2011 Indian Census at: https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/population_enumeration.html.

into language development, during the reign of the East India Company, and the reign of the Queen of England (Schiffman, 2000, p. 159).

During the reign of the East India Company, native Indian people began to learn English; officials also carried out the activities of learning native Indian languages and teaching native languages (Mir, 2006, p. 395).

It was not until India's independence in 1947 that Hindi became an official language in the Constitution of the Union of India in 1949. Although there are still many shadows of English in the Indian language, Hindi won the victory of linguistic colonization.

The development of Hindi has the following characteristics: first, based on the colloquial language of Sanskrit. Hindi has a variety of etymologies, of which an important one is the Sanskrit protoform. Second, absorbed many dialect words. As early as the 18th century, philosophers, such as Johann Gottfried Herder (1998, p. 44-45) and Wilhelm von Humboldt (2009, p. 55), proposed that "[...] human beings achieve cultural inheritance and development through language, and that language is the external expression of national spirit and language is the historical link of human development". Hindi also has dialect words that are quoted from dialects, with their pronunciation or form slightly adjusted to suit life or other needs. Third, Hindi absorbs and blends local and foreign languages. Most of loanwords were written in Hindi, but have changed their sound. Language is the basis for people to understand and transform the world. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004, p. 615), "[...] what can be understood is language". As a repository of tradition and history, language is a chain for the continuation and development of human civilization. Through continuous development, Sanskrit enables people to inherit and develop, which also reflects the philosophical relationship between language and cultural inheritance.

Regardless of changes in pronunciation and word forms, Indian languages continue to bear the rich connotations of national culture, religious beliefs and civilization. This diversity does not diminish native languages, but instead fosters a pluralistic environment where Indian languages coexist. Over time, this has evolved into a three-language model encompassing Hindi, English and regional languages, showcasing India's linguistic richness and cultural complexity.

It can be seen that civilization, at that time, has a lower influence on Asia's linguistic map. The fundamental reason is that Asia has its own unique civilization circle, with its own solid linguistic and religious foundation, cultural paradigm and civilization deposits. In addition, due to the large population in Asia, its distance from Europe and the major reliance on shipping for intercontinental trade, it is difficult for Western migrants to realize large-scale population migration and significantly change local languages and cultures. At the same time, Asia already had a certain economic and national cultural foundation, with a large

number of ethnic groups, presenting a pluralistic situation of multiple countries, civilizations and languages. The process of language colonization in Asia was slow, and it was difficult to form a clear and large Western language area.

2 THE TRANSFORMATION OF LINGUISTIC BORROWING RELATIONSHIPS IN ASIA

2.1 LINGUISTIC BORROWING IN ASIA UNDER THE IMPACT OF CIVILIZATION

National language is the link of national culture and history. The need of communication makes direct or indirect contact among speakers of different languages. Linguistic borrowing is mostly attributed to language contact, which essentially reflects cultural contact and the influence of foreign culture. In addition to the cultural exchange, the ethnic contact and cultural influence caused by war, religion and other factors can be well demonstrated through loanwords.

A loanword serves not only as a linguistic expression, but also as a cultural one. Before the Age of Exploration, cultural exchanges, among Asian countries, predominantly occurred within Asia, with limited interaction with Western nations. For instance, Sanskrit borrowed significantly from Chinese and Japanese, with Chinese alone integrating over 35,000 words from Buddhist scriptures. Similarly, during Japan's formative years, nearly half of its vocabulary consisted of borrowed Chinese words. Following the Meiji Restoration, Japanese began importing numerous terms into China, such as "philosophy" and "romance". As Johann Gottfried Herder (1998, p. 106) asserted, "[...] language is formed, developed, and transmitted alongside human beings". Each nation possesses its own distinct historical and cultural traditions. Wilhelm von Humboldt (2009, p. 72) further emphasized that "[...] every language encapsulates a unique worldview". This distinctive worldview is expressed through national languages and reflects the cultural heritage to a considerable extent. In linguistics, the most conspicuous manifestation of this phenomenon is observed in loanwords and their direction of transmission.

"The breadth and depth of cultural communication in cross-cultural cultural contact also affect the breadth and depth of language contact" (Hong; Yeshe, 2007, p. 23). Due to geographical proximity and minor cultural differences, intra-Asian communication fosters deep exchanges. Throughout history, Chinese traditional Confucian culture has been a cornerstone of Japanese education, contributing to a significant presence of Chinese vocabulary within the Japanese language.

Although there are cultural exchanges between Asia and Western countries, they are far less effective than intra-regional exchanges due to the great distance and cultural differences. For example, in the two-way cultural exchanges between China and Asia's Western regions, Chinese has borrowed many words from the languages of the Western regions, such

as “grape”, while the Western regions have also absorbed some Chinese words, such as “silk” and “porcelain”, which have gradually spread to Western countries and become loanwords. However, the number and form of loanwords were far less than those generated by intra-Asian communication at the time.

After the 15th century, Britain led the way in completing the bourgeois revolution and establishing maritime hegemony. In response to the influence of Western civilization, Asia did not adopt entirely conservative policies, but instead borrowed extensively from advanced Western science, technology and culture, resulting in an influx of foreign languages. Most of these changes in loanwords, across Asia, were initiated autonomously. While preserving their own civilizations, Asian societies actively assimilated elements from foreign cultures. For instance, countries, like India, the Philippines and Singapore, have embraced English, which plays a pivotal role in their societies. Additionally, Vietnam’s writing system has been significantly influenced by France.

Taking China as an example, during the establishment of foreign treaty ports primarily in southern coastal cities, such as Guangdong and Fujian, significant encounters between English and Chinese languages took place. With more missionaries’ arrival, translation of newspapers, as well as language teaching, gradually gained momentum.

For example, Wood founded *Guangdong Record* in 1827, Bridgeman founded *China Gazette* in 1832 and other relevant newspapers and periodicals introducing China and Chinese have played a vital role in the communication between Chinese and foreign languages (Tao, 2011, p. 11).

English, as a crucial *lingua franca* during that era, contributed a plethora of loanwords to Asian languages. Wang (1982, p. 516) highlighted that the history of Chinese loanwords can be divided into three main periods. The first period occurred during the Han Dynasty, influenced by interactions with Western regions and northern peoples. During this phase, loanwords primarily involved items, such as food and utensils, mainly exchanged within Asia. The second period spanned from the Eastern Han Dynasty to before the Opium War, characterized by the introduction of Buddhist terminology. The third period, following the Opium War, saw an influx of loanwords primarily from Western countries, marking a shift towards external imports. Some scholars extend this third period to include the reform and opening up era, as noted by Xin and Song (2012, p. 220), and Song (2009, p. 36). Alternatively, contemporary introductions of foreign words in Chinese are sometimes considered a fourth period, as discussed by Wei ZhiCheng (2003). Regardless of the classification framework, it is evident that Chinese loanwords evolved from intra-Asian exchanges to extraterritorial imports or exports (see Table 1).

Table 1- Chinese civilization and language exchange since Tang Dynasty

Period	Trend of cultural exchange	Main exchange countries (regions)	Main communication content	Mainly language
Tang dynasty	Exported from Asia to Europe	North Korea, South Korea, Japan, India, Iran, Arab countries, European countries	commerce, institutions, education, customs, architecture	Chinese, Sanskrit, West Asian, Japanese and South Korea
Ming and Qing Dynasties	Import from Europe	Portugal, Netherlands, England, France, Japan, etc	Technology, industry, Western culture, language	English, Portuguese, Japanese
the Republic of China (1912-1949)	Imported from other countries	Japan, Britain, France, the United States, etc.	Politics, system, economy and trade, language, science and technology, war	English, French, Japanese
People's Republic of China	Active absorption, outward propagation	Conducting diplomacy for peace with many countries	It involves politics, economy, culture, language and so on	multilingualism

Source: Our elaboration

2.2 LANGUAGE CONFLICT, FUSION AND THE GENERATION OF MIXED LANGUAGES

The transformation of borrowing relationship has resulted in a large increase of loanwords from outside the region and even produced a lot of mixed languages. “Mixed languages is one of the products of language contact, which refers to a new pidgin language due to the continuous strong mutual contact and influence of two or more languages” (Ma; Ding, 2011, p. 54). Thomason (2003, p. 21) argues that “[...] the syntactic and lexical subsystems of a mixed languages cannot be fully traced back to a single source language”. Mixed language occurs when language contact occurs in an unbalanced state. It mainly consists of a large number of locals who need to communicate with a small number of outsiders of higher status, and a small number of people who move to another region. In the former state, local groups have simplified their own languages based on foreign languages, forming pidgin and even developing into Creole languages, such as “market Malay”, which is commonly used in commerce in the East Indies.

In the latter state, the ethnic group not only wants to maintain its own national language, but also wants to integrate with the local ethnic group, so it will adopt the way of cross-merging the grammar, word order, phrases and morphology of the two languages (Bakke; Mous, 1994, p. 54).

After the opening of the new shipping routes, the foreign civilization and the Asian civilization began a wide range of cultural exchanges and mutual learning activities. In the process, a variety of mixed languages were formed in Asia. Singlish is a good example. In 1819, the British signed with the locals to open Singapore as a free port. Since then, Singapore, as a major trading place in Southeast Asia, has seen its language gradually develop to be based on English, borrowing Chinese, Chinese dialects, Malay, Tamil vocabulary and the mixed language of Chinese intonation.

Asia, in general, exhibits tolerance towards the blending of foreign languages. When the Portuguese occupied Macau, they facilitated economic trade between China and the West. China, demonstrating an open and inclusive attitude towards foreign civilizations and languages, witnessed the emergence of “Cantonese Portuguese”. Cantonese Portuguese originated as a pidgin language and later became one of the primary languages used in trade in Guangzhou, absorbing a significant number of Portuguese trade words in the process. In the 17th century, Guangzhou emerged as the sole foreign treaty port, attracting a diverse array of Chinese, English, Portuguese and other merchants. To facilitate communication and trade, a pidgin language evolved based on Chinese grammatical structures, incorporating Cantonese pronunciation and English vocabulary (Ma, 2005, p. 190). During the Opium Wars, British and American colonialists established treaty ports in Guangzhou, Shanghai and other locations. A new pidgin language, combining English and Chinese, emerged, supplanting the previous prominence of Cantonese and Portuguese. Concurrently, the Qing government began fostering proficiency in foreign languages by sending students to study in the United States, aiming to promote both foreign language acquisition and Western cultural understanding. In addition to Chinese, Japanese also underwent linguistic changes influenced by English and other foreign words during the course of foreign trade. Many loanwords in Japanese are phonetically based on English, such as “チヨコレート”(cho-ko-ree-to, chocolate) and “ソファア” (so-faa, sofa).

It is evident that, during that era, the influence of civilization led to extraterritorial linguistic borrowing in Asia, surpassing intra-regional borrowing. Prior to this period, Asian countries engaged more in intra-regional exchanges, influenced by geographical constraints and cultural distinctions. The primary catalyst for this shift was Asia’s receptivity to foreign civilizations and linguistic vocabulary, coupled with its independence in adopting certain elements from these civilizations and languages. While preserving their distinct national characteristics, Asian nations actively or passively embraced advanced ideas and vocabulary, leading to the development of various hybrid languages.

3 THE RESPONSE TO CIVILIZATION IMPACT AND CURRENT LANGUAGE STATUS

3.1 THE RESPONSE POLICY OF ASIAN LANGUAGE UNDER CIVILIZATION IMPACT

In the face of the impact of foreign civilization and language, Asian languages have also adopted various methods to protect themselves. Most Asian countries' national languages still occupy the main position.

In the Arab region, the French expedition to Egypt, in 1789, marked a significant turning point. This expedition catalyzed the Arab people's engagement with advanced science and technology, highlighting the crucial importance of language translation. Muhammad Ali opened new schools, newspapers, foreign language schools and a translation bureau⁴. A large number of books have been translated into Arabic, and some new words continue to enrich the Arabic vocabulary and grammar system. In the middle and late 19th century, the French parliament and legislative system, the British university system and other multinational systems and ideologies were used for reference and application. At the same time, a great deal of local literature, such as Abbasid documents, poetry collections and works on language, was collated and published. This led to the consolidation and enrichment of Arab culture.

In the early 20th century, a multitude of Western literary and scientific works were extensively translated into Arabic, leading to the incorporation of numerous foreign words into the language. Alongside original poetry and essays, a diverse range of novels and dramas emerged. These exceptional literary contributions enriched Arabic with a varied linguistic repertoire, establishing a robust foundation for the development of the language.

World War II marked a new stage in the development of the Arab region, ending the period of British rule in the Middle East and French rule in North Africa. The return of political sovereignty and the consolidation of independence and nationality provided a political foundation for the development of language. Arab countries began to vigorously develop standard Arabic language and education. A plethora of terms from social systems, ideologies, theoretical scholarship, religious philosophy, literature and art have been assimilated into the Arabic language. This integration has enabled Arabic to flourish while maintaining adherence to the fundamental grammar rules of classical Arabic.

In 1971, the Federation of Arabic Language Societies⁵ was established to organize and safeguard Arab national culture and classical literature. Collaborating with Arabic linguists, the federation undertook initiatives to revise and compile Arabic dictionaries, thereby promoting standard Arabic. These efforts have enabled the Arabic language to adapt

⁴ Muhammad Ali (1769-1849) was a modern Egyptian statesman, governor of the Ottoman Empire in Egypt, and founder of the Muhammad Ali Dynasty (1805-1848).

⁵ The Federation of Arabic Language Societies was established on the basis of the Damascus Arabic Language Society, the Cairo Arabic Language Society, the Baghdad Arabic Language Society and the Amman Arabic Language Society.

to contemporary societal developments and achieve greater standardization. Today, Arabic serves as the official language in 18 Arab countries and regions and is recognized as one of the official working languages in international organizations, such as the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Through those efforts, Arabic actively assimilates and integrates achievements from modern civilizations, continually expanding its linguistic repertoire to align with social advancements. Consequently, the Arab region does not adopt a multilingual or predominantly Western language framework. Instead, it consistently expands and enriches its own linguistic system.

Take Hebrew, for example. In the 19th century, the Zionist movement established Hebrew as the official language of the State of Israel. Ethnic language serves as the outward expression of ethnic thought. National culture and religious beliefs serve to unify the nation, with the continuity of language embodying this belief and ideological unity. Promoting national revival, through language unification, became a critical policy for the Jewish nation during this period. Various literary works, written in Hebrew, played a significant role in the revival of the language. From Mishnah, Talmud and Midrashim⁶, Ben Yehuda extracted usable Hebrew, Aramaic⁷, and even Greek and Latin loanwords. He also draws on Aramaic forms and suffixes to label unusual biblical words. With continued efforts, the number of Hebrew speakers grew until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, when Hebrew was established as an official language.

Language carries the spirit, reflects the nation's way of production and life and the concept form it produces. Hugh Seton-Watson (2009) points out that "[...] the formation and use of an official language is a decisive factor in the integration and formation of nations, as evidenced by the resurgence of Hebrew".

Furthermore, other Asian countries have implemented diverse strategies to uphold their civilizations and languages. For instance, India has not designated English as the sole official language, but has adopted a multilingual policy to safeguard its national identity. Singapore has developed its own distinctive language framework. The Uyghur Mongolian script, derived and employed through interactions with neighboring nationalities, underscores its ethnic distinctiveness. Despite not being within the kanji cultural sphere, Korea maintains its official language without Westernization, among other examples.

It is evident that Asian languages are rooted in their respective countries and people's deep cultural reservoirs. Asian nations have embraced an inclusive and open approach

⁶ The Mishnah is the first half and the text of the Talmud, a collection of Jewish oral law. The Talmud, second only to the Bible, is a collection of oral laws and regulations of Judaism from the 2nd century BC to the 5th century AD, including traditional customs and sacrificial rites. Midrashim Pointers to additional biblical exegesis on the Hebrew Bible.

⁷ Aramaic is believed to be the Jews' language at Jesus Christ's time. It belongs to the Semitic language family and is closely related to Hebrew and Arabic.

towards foreign cultures while employing various methods to safeguard their languages and civilizations. The diverse language responses across Asia reflect its rich ethnic diversity and the ongoing evolution of Asian civilizations. As Karl Jaspers (2003, p.44) put it, “[i]t is in the ‘world created out of the heritage of the past’ that man obtains the ‘substantial assurance’ of the evolution of civilization”.

3.2 THE INFLUENCE OF CIVILIZATION ON LANGUAGE STATUS

Today, the current status of languages has been intricately linked to the historical influence of foreign civilizations since the Age of Exploration. Having navigated through past upheavals, Asian countries now possess a profound appreciation for the significance of language and culture. The central challenge in Asian linguistics lies in effectively fostering the preservation and advancement of Asian languages and civilizations. This necessitates a comprehensive understanding of how civilizations have shaped languages.

In today’s academic research landscape, journals serve as primary vehicles for disseminating academic information. Consequently, the language choice of journals can reflect the status of a language to some extent. Academic research is inherently linked to the vigor of scientific inquiry, the level of national prioritization of research and the economic underpinnings, all of which also embody facets of civilization. In 1962, Japanese scholar Mitsukasu Yuasa quantitatively analyzed modern scientific achievements. He found that, from the 16th to the 20th century, the world’s scientific center shifted approximately five times in cycles of about 80 years, known as the “Yuasa phenomenon.” Comparisons with relevant events from that period show significant correlations.

Table 2 - Changes of world science centers from the 16th to the 20th century

Period	World science center countries (cities)	Related events of the same period
1540—1610	Italy (Florence, Venice, etc.)	Renaissance, Reformation
1660—1730	United Kingdom (London)	Triangular trade, bourgeois revolution, Industrial revolution
1770—1830	France (Paris)	The Enlightenment, the French Revolution
1810—1920	Germany (Berlin)	The Communist Manifesto, the Second Industrial Revolution
1920—now	United States	The third scientific and technological revolution

Source: Our elaboration

Based on Table 2, the evolution of scientific research and academic communication has been closely intertwined with advancements in science and technology. Italy's Renaissance and religious reforms propelled Italian into prominence across Europe. During the Age of Exploration, Portugal, Spain and Britain spread their languages globally. The third scientific and technological revolution made German and English the primary languages of scientific research. Post-World War II, German's influence waned, leading to the increasing prominence of English as the dominant academic language.

Michel Zitt, François Perrot and R. Barré (1998, p. 30) observed that “[...] scientific publishing and communication are increasingly adopting transnational modes, with a shift from national languages to English”. According to Ulrichsweb⁸, a comprehensive database of over 300,000 periodicals, there are currently 143,304 academic journals in circulation. Among these, 68.28 percent are published in English, ranking first, followed by 6.71 percent in Spanish and 6.66 percent in Chinese (see Table 3).

Table 3 - Main published languages of the world academic journals

Rank	Language	Number of academic journals	Proportion of total academic journals
1	English	97,841	68.28%
2	Spanish	9,616	6.71%
3	Chinese	9,541	6.66%
4	Russian	7,813	5.45%
5	French	6,859	4.79%
6	German	6,849	4.78%
7	Portuguese	4,146	2.89%
8	Japanese	2,809	1.96%
9	Italian	2,714	1.89%
10	Polish	2,024	1.41%
.....			

Source: Our elaboration

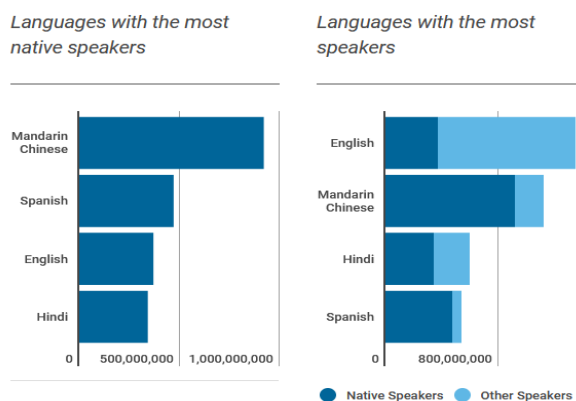
From Table 3, European languages predominantly constitute the major publishing languages of academic journals globally, with English emerging as the predominant language. Among the top ten major publishing languages, Chinese and Japanese are the sole representatives from Asia. The diffusion of English can be attributed to Britain's pioneering role

⁸ Ulrichsweb is an easy to search source of detailed information on more than 300,000 periodicals (also called serials) of all types. The website is: <http://ulrichsweb.serialssolutions.com/>.

in the industrial revolution and extensive colonial network, which facilitated its widespread adoption across continents. Moreover, during the 19th and 20th centuries, Britain held a prominent position in global politics, economics and technology. Concurrently, the United States' rapid development, less affected by the World Wars compared to Europe, significantly bolstered the global influence of the English language.

Not only in the academic field, but also in the world language usage, English still occupies an unshakable position. According to the authoritative website *Ethnologue: languages of the world*⁹, although Chinese is the world's most spoken language because of its large population, English is the world's most dominant when secondary, tertiary and advanced language speakers are considered (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Mother tongues and languages with the largest number of speakers in the world



Source: *Ethnologue* (2023)

Thus, it is evident that since the Age of Exploration, the influence of foreign civilizations has been rooted in advanced industrial technology and religious ideologies, significantly impacting Asia, particularly its languages. English and other Western languages remain widely accepted as the primary languages for academic research and communication worldwide. Despite being centers of civilization with extensive history and rich cultural heritage, Asian languages have not fully attained commensurate recognition in the international academic arena.

CONCLUSION

From the preceding discussion, several points emerge. Firstly, unlike Africa and the Americas, Asia did not witness widespread adoption of foreign languages under the influence

⁹ Ethnologue is a catalog of the “metadata” of language — information about how languages are used around the world, who uses them, where and for what purpose. The website is <https://www.ethnologue.com/>.

of globalization. Factors contributing to this include Asia's vast population, geographical distance from Europe, limited transportation infrastructure and the Asian nations' deep-rooted cultural heritage, all of which collectively hindered significant foreign cultural penetration into local languages. Secondly, the phenomenon of extraterritorial language borrowing in Asia surpasses intra-regional one. This shift has transformed language transmission within regions into a complex interplay of influences, resulting in the emergence of various hybrid languages. Additionally, Asian languages have employed diverse strategies imbued with national cultural nuances to respond to external influences, thereby safeguarding their respective civilizations.

Language is the most important carrier and expression form of national culture, and the external embodiment of national character and spirit. Herder (1998, p. 44) has also examined the human beings' nature and history through questioning and reflecting on language. Nowadays, the philosophy of language still has an important influence on the fields of linguistics, language and civilization.

However, the connection between civilization and language has not been sufficiently explored. Merely examining language in isolated regions fails to fully elucidate the relationship between Asian languages and civilizations. Li (2013, p. 1) underscored that “[a]ll popular languages in the world derive charm from their associated cultures”. Wang (2016, p. 69) further elaborated that “[t]he cultural diversity underpinning languages forms the foundation of contemporary linguistic diversity”.

In conclusion, the transmission of a language is shaped by its internal characteristics, such as pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, alongside the depth of its cultural connotations and deposits. Current research on the impact of civilization on language is insufficient, necessitating a comprehensive exploration of how ancient and modern Asian civilizations, and global influences, shape Asian languages. Leveraging Asia's rich cultural heritage, scholars can better understand its role in shaping cultural identity, fostering social cohesion and driving national development in Asian societies (Cheng; Liu, 2022, p. 87).

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