



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO

DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE
DELLA MEDIAZIONE LINGUISTICA
E DI STUDI INTERCULTURALI

CARC
CONTEMPORARY ASIA RESEARCH CENTRE

Language, Teaching, and Politics in Arabic and Chinese

December 16, 2021

University of Milan (Italy)

Department of Studies in Language Mediation and Intercultural Communication

Standard Arabic and Standard Chinese are both official languages of the UN with a huge number of users. However, as is well known, their respective impact on the cultural identity and political culture of speakers is vastly different.

Standard Arabic (MSA) - the official language of 22 countries - lacks a centralized language policy as a consequence of the political fragmentation of the Arab-speaking world. This results in several competing national language academies, with different degrees of authority, ideally ruling over one and the same language, but *de facto* allowing (if not promoting) some degree of variation on a geographical basis, as well as different national educational policies. The status of the standard variety is increasingly challenged by the competition with the local varieties and an increased demand for foreign languages.

Conversely, besides its international recognition, Standard Chinese (*putonghua* 普通话) is the official language of the People's Republic of China; national cohesion is connected to the existence of centralised language policies, also enacted by institutions which are directly under the control of the government. Although the usage of other dialects and languages within the country is recognised by law, the prominent status of the Standard Chinese is not questioned on the official level.

However, several similarities between Standard Arabic and Standard Chinese can be identified in common features of the language and educational policies. These include: how the ideal language unity reflects and consolidates the status of the standard; how the perceived unity of cultural identity is reflected in the unity of an ideal language; how language education policies are influenced by specific ideologically-oriented perception of the language; how language use and teaching are employed as vehicles of underlying cultural and political ideas; how educational policies result in the production of teaching materials and tools.

Keeping in mind these and other divergencies and contact points, the conference aims to explore the ways in which politics and ideology intersect with language and its teaching. In particular, we will focus on the theory, methodology, and contents of teaching Arabic and Chinese as either a first or second language.

We welcome state-of-the-art contributions that approach these topics from different scholarly perspectives. Prospective contributors may consider the following macro-topics:

1. The relationship between language and ideologies, where “ideology” is intended as a system of beliefs, theories, and values, and a way of perceiving the world and reality, e.g., the influence of linguistic, political, and social ideologies on language, both in shaping meanings and in terms of vision and expectations of its users, learners, and teachers.
2. How different ideological approaches (political, sociological, religious, pragmatic, and so forth) determine the contents, methodology and practice of language teaching, with regards to the choice of the variant(s), linguistic structures, vocabulary, textual typologies, curricula, syllabi, materials, and evaluation methods.

Contributions may focus, amongst others, on the following topics:

- Ideology in/of the language and language policies:
 - Language, nationalism, and national identities
 - Language standardization and nationalization of varieties
 - Language policies and institutions in contemporary and historical perspective
 - Politicization of language teaching/learning

- Teaching policies:
 - The choice of which variety to teach and underlying ideologies
 - Ideologically-oriented choice of teaching contents and methodological orientations
 - Ideological orientations in syllabi, textbooks, and other language teaching support materials (e.g., textbooks, dictionaries, etc.)
 - Agencies and flagships language programs and their syllabi

- Language of politics and its teaching:
 - Teaching genres and registers
 - Building and using corpora in teaching practices
 - Building and using lexicographical and terminological resources
 - Translation practices

Abstract submissions:

Abstracts must be submitted **in English** (300-500 words, with maximum 3 bibliographic references).

For questions and submitting your abstract, please contact:

For Arabic: marco.golfetto@unimi.it

For Chinese: chiara.bertulesi@unimi.it

Important dates:

Abstract Submission: September 15, 2021

Notification of acceptance: September 30, 2021

Conference date: **December 16, 2021**

Conference venue:

Due to the pandemic, the conference will be held **online**. However, should the local and international situation allow, the possibility of making it a mixed online and on-site event will be reconsidered.

Online venue: on Microsoft Teams.

On site: Department of Studies in Language Mediation and Intercultural Communication, Sesto San Giovanni (Milan).

Hosting University: University of Milan, Department of Studies in Language Mediation and Intercultural Communication

Advisory board:

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