

On the Construction of Provincial Language Museums in Chinese Mainland

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Abstract

Building a language museum is the common aspiration of more and more people of insight. A comprehensive survey of language museums at home and abroad shows that language museums have both general museum attributes and characteristics. At present, there are not many theoretical discussions on the construction of provincial entity language museums in China. The construction of a provincial language museum is of great significance in many aspects. The provincial language and culture museum should have its own characteristics and level, and should be well planned. It should not only be comprehensive, but also balance the display relationship of various elements. The construction of the provincial language museum needs the strong support and joint efforts of the government, academia, and civil society.

Keywords

Chinese Mainland, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Dialects, Provincial Language Museum, Reflection

1. Introduction

At the beginning of 2017, the General Office of the Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued the Opinions on the Implementation of the Project for the Inheritance and Development of Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture, which clearly stated that “we should vigorously promote and standardize the use of national common language and characters, and protect and inherit dialect culture.” This is the first time that the highest level of the country stressed the need to protect and inherit dialect culture. This is an important decision to comply with the public opinion and inspire the people.

Over the years, many scholars in the field of linguistics have actively called for the establishment of a language museum, such as Wang Jianhua (see Lu & Sun,

2008); Cao (2010); Huang (2017)) and many non-linguists have also actively called for the establishment of a dialect museum, such as Zhu Xinjun (see Bao, 2002); Mi (2002); Yuan & Li (2008)). Some regions have also proposed the establishment of a dialect museum, such as Minnan Dialect Museum. However, there are no special achievements on the theoretical issues of the construction of provincial language museums. So what should be paid attention to in the construction of provincial language museums? This article tries to answer this question. This paper takes the provincial Lingnan Dialect Culture Museum as an example, analyzes its significance, points out several relationships to be dealt with, and discusses its basic structure and characteristics. Since 2015, the Ministry of Education has fully implemented the language resource protection project nationwide. It has carried out large-scale video surveys and collections of minority languages and dialects across the country, and issued a series of documents such as the Administrative Measures for the Chinese Language Resource Protection Project. The first phase has been completed and the second phase has been launched. The state attaches great importance to the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. This background provides a golden opportunity for the construction of a provincial language museum. It should be noted that the reason why the discussion object of this paper is limited to the provincial language museum in Chinese Mainland is limited by space, so as to make the discussion more focused.

2. It Is of Great Significance to Build a Provincial Language Museum

With the deepening of understanding, the academic community and even relevant departments have realized that language is an important resource. Resources need to be protected and can also be developed and utilized. At the same time, language (especially dialect) is a kind of vocal resource characterized by oral transmission, which should be paid attention to by the whole society. So far, China's provincial entity language museum has just started. There are 32 provinces and autonomous regions in Chinese Mainland, but only a handful of provinces and autonomous regions have built truly provincial language museums. It is of great value to build a provincial language museum, taking Guangdong as an example, after the completion of the museum.

First of all, it will serve as an important inheritance base of local excellent traditional culture in Guangdong Province and a business card for Guangdong to build a strong cultural province. Local drama is an important form of intangible cultural heritage. Local dramas such as Yue dialect opera, Lei opera, Hakka folk songs, etc. are inseparable from dialects. Without dialect carrier, these dramatic arts will become rootless and passive water. At the same time, it will become an important cultural tourist attraction: tourism resources focus on local characteristics. Dialects are having distinctive local characteristics, so local language resources can also become an important tourism resource after effective develop-

ment.

Secondly, it will become an important popular science education base for the traditional culture of primary and secondary students and an important teaching and research base for colleges and universities. The completion of the museum, as an important base for Guangdong primary and secondary schools to carry out local culture education, will be of great benefit to broaden the vision of primary and secondary students, cultivate their awareness of mother tongue, and increase their knowledge. At the same time, the language museum can also become a teaching and research base for Chinese, foreign languages, Chinese as a foreign language education, history and culture, tourism and other related majors in the university, and become an important supplement to the first class.

Third, it will help to protect, develop and utilize the language resources of Guangdong Province: the construction of a provincial language museum is a direct reflection of the protection and development of language resources, and is also a requirement after the prosperity of Guangdong language research to a certain extent. It has a demonstration effect on the development and utilization of Guangdong language resources and the rescue and protection of endangered language resources in Guangdong.

3. Overview of Language Museums at Home and Abroad

According to the of the High Sharp Innovation Center for Language Resources ([Language Resources High-Tech Innovation Center, 2017a, 2017b](#)), at present, the foreign language museums mainly include: the American Language Museum, the Badhurfield Kingdom of Words in Germany, the Vienna Esperanto Museum, the Canadian Language Museum, the Ugambe Museum in Australia, the National Museum of Western Asia (which contains some content related to language), the Portuguese Museum in Brazil The Afrika Museum in South Africa (Afrika is a language of South Africa), and the Japanese Kanji Museum (text).

The domestic language and character museums mainly include: Anyang Museum of Chinese Characters (characters), Beijing Dialect and Culture Museum (see [Language Resources News \(2017\)](#) for details), Esperanto Museum of Beijing Foreign Studies University, Language Museum of Guangxi University for Nationalities, Hezhou University Language Museum, Chinese Ethnic Ancient Characters Exhibition Hall (in the National Museum of the Central University for Nationalities) Shuishu Cultural Exhibition Hall and Shuishu Museum (in the school of Qiannan Normal University for Nationalities in Guizhou Province), Women's Book Garden and Women's Book Ecological Museum and Women's Book Digital Museum (in Pumei Village, Shangjiangdeng Town, Jiangyong County, Hunan Province), and Shanghai Dialect Literature Database (in the library of Minhang District, Shanghai) ([Cao, 2010](#)).

Foreign language and writing museums are mainly concentrated in developed countries, while those in developing countries are few, and the overall number is small. Some language collections are only part of the museum, such as the Na-

tional Museum of Western Asia. In addition to the Anyang Museum of Chinese Characters, most of the domestic language museums are still in a small scale and at a low level, or are only part of the library. For example, the Shanghai dialect literature library is stored in the Minhang District Library of Shanghai. The Anyang Museum of Chinese Characters is mainly in the category of characters, and there are also some aspects to be improved in terms of management and collection (Huang, 2017). As a provincial language museum, Beijing Dialect Culture Museum is also an online digital museum, which is not an entity. So far, the strictly substantive language museums in China are mainly the Lingnan Dialect Culture Museum built in Foshan. Liu Zongyan (2016) summarized some measures taken for the construction of the museum, which has a certain impact. However, its establishment for a certain university or its main content is limited to Hezhou, not provincial. The theoretical discussion on the construction of provincial entity language museums is still in a blank state.

However, some existing domestic language museums have more or less room for improvement, such as:

1) The exhibits are mostly modern, and there are few ancient or modern language materials.

Most of the exhibits in some language museums are modern, and few are modern or ancient. At present, this is caused by objective factors, but from the perspective of perfection, it may be better if it can be more comprehensive.

2) Homogenization phenomenon is obvious, lacking local or provincial characteristics.

Some language museums display more common language exhibits from different places, and less distinctive and exclusive local language exhibits. If the common language exhibits are displayed, the provincial language museum cannot live up to its name.

3) The audience mainly visited in one-way way, and failed to interact effectively.

In some language museums, although there are some information display machines, most of them are embellishments, which cannot be used or play a real role. This kind of display is still traditional one-way, lacking the interactive participation of visitors.

4) The focus of museum exhibits can also be more prominent.

Some of the exhibits in the language museum are arranged in a row. In terms of internal priorities, further consideration can be given. For example, the location and mode of display can also be optimized.

4. Several Important Relationships Need to Be Handled in the Construction of Provincial Language Museums

First of all, we should deal with the relationship between language museums and general museums.

1) The language museum has the attributes of a general museum: the language

museum will also have items such as exhibition area layout, display of exhibits, and visiting guide signs. The display instructions should also be as clear, accurate and comprehensive as possible. A language museum should have the basic parts of a general museum.

2) Language museums also have characteristics different from ordinary museums: language is audio and video, which is different from ordinary works of art. The language museum should make more use of multimedia digital technology and pay more attention to the display of audio and video. However, it should also be noted that multimedia should not be used too much just for the sake of display, but how to combine the essence of language with multimedia skillfully.

Secondly, handle the relationship between the provincial dialect culture museum and the general language museum.

1) The Provincial Dialect Culture Museum has the attribute of a general language museum: therefore, it also has the component of a general language museum, as well as the display of text, pictures, audio, video and other contents.

2) The Provincial Language Museum is also different from the General Language Museum, taking Guangdong Province as an example:

a) Guangdong dialect is the most powerful dialect in Guangdong. Although Yue dialect dialects are also distributed in Guangxi, Hong Kong, Macao and overseas, there is no doubt that the headquarters are in Guangdong. The Lingnan Dialect Culture Museum should highlight the characteristics of Guangdong. Guangdong dialect can be said to be the distinctive feature of Guangdong. On the whole, Yue dialect dialect has more or less influence on the language and dialect of Guangdong.

b) Although there are also minority languages in Guangdong, they are mainly Chinese dialects. Unlike some provinces in the south, the languages of Guangdong are mostly Chinese dialects, although there are minority languages such as Yao, She and Biao. The three major dialects of Guangdong are Guangdong, Fujian and Hakka, and there are also some small dialects, but on the whole, they are mainly: Guangdong, Fujian and Hakka.

c) The academic circle of Guangdong dialect has an influential research center and a strong team. For example, recently, Professor Zhan Bohui, Professor Zhang Zhenxing as chief editors, Professor Gan Yuen and Professor Qiao Quansheng as deputy chief editors published the first “Dictionary of Chinese Dialects” in the history of Chinese dialect discipline, which is of great significance and marks the new height of Chinese dialect discipline. Many research achievements have provided academic support for the construction of Lingnan Dialect Culture Museum, which is also an indispensable basis for the construction of Guangdong Dialect Culture Museum.

Thirdly, we should properly handle the relationship between academic and popular nature of provincial language museums. The language museum should be both academic and popular, because the objects it faces are mostly ordinary

people, and it can be an important scenic spot for people's tourism culture. The construction of Lingnan dialect culture museum should balance these two aspects.

5. Main Framework of the Provincial Language Museum

From the perspective of composition, the language museum can be divided into exhibition area, viewing experience area, leisure area, etc. Therefore, in different areas, different themes can be combined to display different ideas. Strive to enjoy both refined and popular tastes. Taking Guangdong as an example, based on the actual situation of the province's language.

Firstly, there is the content framework.

1) Chinese Dialects.

a) Yue dialect. Guangfu film (Guangzhou), Goulou film (such as parts of Zhaoqing), Siyi film (such as Jiangmen), Gaoyang film, etc.

b) Min dialect. Chaozhou and Shantou in eastern Guangdong: such as Chaozhou and Shantou; Leizhou in western Guangdong: such as Leizhou Peninsula; Other sporadic Min dialect points, such as Guangzhou, Zhongshan, Yunfu, etc.

c) Hakka dialect. Eastern Guangdong: such as Meizhou and Heyuan; Northern Guangdong: such as Shaoguan; Western Guangdong: Zhanjiang, Maoming and other places; Central Guangdong: Hakka dialect of cities in the Pearl River Delta.

d) Other dialects. For example, northern Guangdong dialect, old Zhenghua, military dialect, etc.

2) Minority Languages. Minority Languages Distributed in Guangdong, such as Yao, Zhuang, She, and Biao.

Secondly, there is the formal framework.

These materials include not only original language materials (such as recordings of local nursery rhymes, stories, proverbs, etc.), but also language research materials (such as language research works, publications, etc.).

1) Video. For example, the video data of various points in Guangdong Province in the language resource protection project can also be supplemented with local dialect oral culture (such as saltwater songs, Hakka folk songs, children's songs, etc.).

2) Audio. It includes the investigation and recording of dialect points, including standard word recording and natural recording.

3) Pictures. It includes pictures of language survey, pictures related to language vocabulary survey, and pictures of local language folk customs.

4) Text. In terms of time, it includes not only the language materials of modern and contemporary Guangdong, but also the ancient and modern materials. From the perspective of research, it includes not only language ontology materials, but also language-related materials (such as local chronicles, local folk written materials, etc.). Among them, language ontology materials also include pure language materials and language research materials.

In fact, the above aspects are sometimes not completely separated when displayed. For example, when using virtual technology to display language, both audio and video pictures and text are available, and even can have interactive functions. On the one hand, these materials encourage donations from all walks of life, on the other hand, they can also be collected for the whole society. Books and physical objects from all walks of life, whether donated or paid, need to be confirmed in the form of certificates. In addition, it can also be collected from local libraries, archives, museums, cultural centers and other collections through local government departments. In addition, recently published treatises can be obtained through the purchase of bookstores.

5) The provincial language museum should highlight the characteristics of the province

To build a language museum that matches the political and economic status of the province, we should adhere to high standards and not be mere mediocrity. To build a provincial language and culture museum, we should not only refer to the general practice of those who have built it before, but also form its own characteristics and make innovations. Both the hardware facilities of the museum and the internal display contents should be scientifically planned, demonstrated by experts and carefully organized and implemented, taking Guangdong as an example.

First of all, we should focus on displaying Guangfu culture. Its foothold is the Yue dialect, dialect represented by Yue dialect (Yue dialect is often referred to as “Yue dialect” in folk or overseas). The influence of Guangdong dialect film and television audio-visual works in China is beyond the reach of other Chinese dialects. In the last century, Yue dialect songs spread all over the country, and Yue dialect films and TV dramas were popular nationwide, which had a great impact on both Yue dialect and non-Yue dialect regions.

Based on this, in the Language Museum, you can set up a Yue dialect opera viewing experience area, as well as a Yue dialect song and Yue dialect film appreciation area. It can give an overall introduction to the history of Yue dialect opera, Yue dialect songs, Yue dialect films, etc., and display representative works of different periods, which can arouse high resonance among the audience and tourists.

Secondly, we should fully display the important achievements of academic institutions and university research teams in dialectology, and we should not ignore the achievements of folk research. At the same time, we should highlight the close relationship between language and regional culture, such as dialect and food, dialect and ballad, dialect and opera, dialect and folk customs, which can fully display the characteristics and beauty of dialect and enrich the connotation of Lingnan Dialect Culture Museum.

Third, it can better display dialect oral literature. Whether it is the Yue dialect of Guangdong, or the Hakka dialect of Meizhou, Heyuan and Shaoguan, or the Min dialect of Chaoshan and Leizhou Peninsula, the dialect oral literature is

extremely rich and colorful, and these contents are worthy of deep exploration.

6) The Construction of the Provincial Language Museum needs full Support from all Sides

The construction of a multi-functional and panoramic dialect culture museum cannot rely on the “one’s own efforts” of a certain department, but requires the cooperation of many parties.

First of all, it needs the strong support of the government, universities, culture, tourism and other relevant departments. The construction of a provincial language museum involves such decisive factors as approval, funds, venues, personnel, and can only be solved with the strong support of the government or colleges and universities and other relevant departments. Therefore, it is necessary to reach a consensus in all aspects to build it well.

Secondly, it needs strong support from the academic community. The language museum displays language recordings, videos and other related materials. No matter what kind of display materials are collected, sorted and processed, they cannot be separated from the support of the academic community.

Third, a coordinating body needs to be established. We should organize and coordinate all people of prefecture-level cities or universities in the province to work together to build provincial language museums. Since the construction of the museum involves many aspects, a similar organization called “Provincial Language Museum Construction Project Coordination Group” was established to integrate human, material, financial and cooperative efforts to carry out the work.

Fourth, we also needs the active support of enthusiasts and volunteers who love language (dialect): whether it is the collection of relevant materials, or the collation and processing of a large number of language materials, as well as other related work of building a language museum, it is inseparable from the active participation of social enthusiasts and volunteers, and pool their wisdom and strength to avoid numerous omissions.

Language is an important intangible cultural heritage. The construction of a language museum is a major measure to respond to the call of the state to inherit and protect the excellent traditional Chinese culture, and an important embodiment of rescuing and protecting local culture. The construction of the provincial language museum is an important window to display the intangible cultural heritage of the province. How to set up a provincial language museum needs the joint discussion and efforts of the government, academia and the people. It is reasonable to believe that with the continuous development of economy, society and culture, the establishment of local provincial language museums will be put on the agenda of all provinces and regions in the future.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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