



Les Cahiers de l'AFPC

Association française des professeurs de chinois

Call for Papers: “Neologisms and New Forms of Expression in the Chinese World: Linguistic, Cultural, and Societal Transformations”

KTV, 卡拉 OK, 躺平, 二维码, 网红, 点赞, 白左, 低头族, 团购, 外卖, 共享经济, 表情包, 吃播, 小鲜肉, 大数据, P 图, PK, 卷, 打卡地 ... ! A Chinese person from the 1970s waking up in 2025 would undoubtedly be perplexed by such an inventory! Indeed, the accelerated evolution of contemporary Chinese vocabulary renders any dictionary obsolete upon its publication.

However, the spectacular transformation of the Chinese language is not limited to vocabulary. Beyond idiomatic expressions, it also affects syntax and style. Every level of discourse is impacted by this evolution. The reasons are manifold, and this acceleration can broadly be linked to the profound political, social, and cultural changes that China has undergone since the 1980s. These include Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening-up policy on the mainland, the lifting of martial law in Taiwan (1987), and the handovers of Hong Kong (1997) and Macau (1999). Rapid economic growth, integration into the global economy—especially after China's accession to the WTO in 2001—the emergence of a consumer society built on a collectivist legacy, and more recently, the rise of digital socialization, have all left a profound imprint on the language. Language undoubtedly provides a gateway to writing the history of China after 1980.

The one-child society now faces a troubling economic downturn amid geopolitical tensions that affect daily life. Recent years have also seen the rise of health and environmental concerns, while artificial intelligence increasingly permeates human activities. Language serves as a seismograph for this intense and complex activity, which spares no domain. A detailed analysis of the linguistic and discursive dynamics at play would undoubtedly help us better understand the underlying cultural, societal, and political issues.

A comparative perspective could also shed light on these new modes of expression. Can parallels be drawn with other languages undergoing similar transformations? Is the current situation comparable to that of the early 20th century, when the Chinese language underwent an unprecedented *aggiornamento*, suddenly exposed to modern realities?

This issue aims to explore these linguistic and discursive transformations by integrating approaches from linguistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, language teaching, literature, social sciences, and even politics. The objective is to examine the causes of these changes, their geographic, dialectal, and sociological reach, as well as their significance for contemporary Chinese society.

This issue seeks to answer these questions through multidisciplinary analyses, shedding light on the interactions between language and society in today's China.

Possible Research Questions

Here are some potential questions related to the broad theme of linguistic evolution since 1980:

What are the dynamics behind the creation and dissemination of neologisms and new forms of expression? For example, what are the main linguistic mechanisms used in neologism formation in Chinese (borrowings, calques, internal innovations)? What role do new technologies and social media play in the diffusion and adoption of popular expressions?

How have linguistic practices been reinvented in daily interactions? How have social contexts influenced the creation of new words to express contemporary malaise (e.g., 躺平, 内卷)?

Literature is inevitably sensitive to this linguistic wave: how does it incorporate new ways of expression? What poetry or rhetorical figures emerge from it?

The rapid evolution of the language poses new challenges for educators and teachers: how are neologisms integrated into the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language?

Observers of Chinese society and institutions may also ask how the ruling class uses language as a political tool. Conversely, how does it mimic trendy expressions to appear closer to the people, as encapsulated in the neologism “capturing the terrestrial breath” (接地气)?

This issue is resolutely interdisciplinary and open-ended in its questioning.

Bibliography

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Submission Guidelines

Articles should preferably be submitted in French, but submissions in Chinese and English are also accepted. Articles should not exceed 55,000 characters (including spaces, excluding bibliography) and should be submitted via the Cahiers de l'AFPC website before September 30, 2025.

If unsure about the suitability of a submission, authors may first submit a 500-word abstract to the issue coordinators (see contact information below).

Articles should be uploaded via the Cahiers de l'AFPC website (“Submit an Article” section).

Important Dates

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