

Survey Study of Non-local College Students' Attitudes Toward the Chongqing Dialect in Chongqing

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the linguistic attitudes of non-local college students in Chongqing towards the Chongqing dialect and to analyze how such attitudes affect their social integration in Chongqing. Through in-depth interviews with non-local college students from different provinces, the study found that although initially non-local college students had some difficulties in understanding and adapting to the Chongqing dialect, their acceptance of the dialect gradually increased with the increase in the time spent in Chongqing and they gradually began to use the dialect in their daily lives. This change in language attitude doesn't not only reflects their gradual identification with the local culture, but also shows the key role of language in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. This study provides a new perspective for understanding the role of dialects in social integration and gives insights into how non-local students can better adapt to the local language environment.

KEYWORDS

Chongqing Dialect; Non-native University Students; Language Attitude; Social Integration; Cross-cultural Adaptation.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of higher education in China, more and more non-local students are traveling to universities in different provinces and cities. This cross-regional study life not only exposes students to new cultural environments, but also makes them face the challenge of language adaptation. In Chongqing, a city in southwest China, the use of dialects is very common in daily life, which has become a major obstacle for non-local students to integrate into the local society. The Chongqing dialect belongs to the Southwest official language and has unique phonetic, lexical and grammatical features, which increases the difficulty of language adaptation for foreign students who are used to Mandarin or other dialects.

Language attitudes are an important area of study in sociolinguistics, involving an individual's affective reactions, cognitive evaluations, and behavioral tendencies toward a particular language or dialect [1]. Positive language attitudes can promote language learning and cultural adaptation, while negative language attitudes may hinder social interaction and cultural identity. In the special language environment of Chongqing, the attitudes of non - local college students toward Chongqing dialect will directly affect their learning and living experiences in the area.

This study focuses on interviews with non-local university students in Chongqing to explore their attitudes towards the dialect and its evolution during their lives in Chongqing, and to analyze the impact of such attitudes on their social integration. The study will focus on the following questions: How does the Chongqing dialect affect the learning of non- local students? What are the challenges

of Chongqing dialect to the social integration of non-local students? What are the attitudes and adaptation strategies of non-local students towards Chongqing dialect? By exploring these questions, this study will provide new empirical data for the study of language attitudes in the context of cross-cultural communication, and provide insights and suggestions for universities in Chongqing and other dialect areas in terms of students' language adaptation.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1. Language Attitudes and Social Integration

Language attitudes refer to people's affective responses, cognitive evaluations, and behavioral tendencies toward a language or dialect [4]. Positive language attitudes can facilitate language learning and cultural adaptation, while negative language attitudes can hinder social interaction and cultural identity [2]. For non-native college students who are in a dialect area, their language attitudes can directly affect their level of integration in the local society.

Research has shown that language attitudes have a significant impact on second language learning; Gardner and Lambert [12] found that the more positive the learners' attitudes towards the target language, the better their motivation and learning outcomes. At the same time, language attitudes also affect people's social interactions and cultural identities. Ryan found that people's attitudes toward a language or dialect affect their perceptions of the speakers of that language or dialect, and thus affect their social interactions [3].

2.2. The Sociolinguistic Background of the Chongqing Dialect

The Chongqing dialect belongs to the Southwest Official Dialect, which has unique phonetic, lexical and grammatical structures. In recent years, with the economic development and urban expansion of Chongqing, the dialect has been used in an increasingly wide range of contexts, and it has played an important role in the local culture [5]. However, with the influx of residents from other cities and provinces outside of Chongqing, the use of the dialect has gradually been restricted, and the inheritance and use of the Chongqing dialect by the younger generation has shown a declining trend [6]. This trend reflects the challenges faced by dialects in the development of modern society and the importance of dialect preservation and transmission.

2.3. Status of Language Adaptation among Non-native University Students

In recent years, with the development of education and the construction of Chongqing as a tourist city, and the favorable policies for talents in the economic development zones, more and more non-local college students have come to Chongqing to study, which means they need to study and live in a new language environment. For non-local college students, learning and adapting to the Chongqing dialect is not an easy task. They may face difficulties in language comprehension, cultural differences, and identity, which may affect their learning, socializing, and living experiences in Chongqing.

Relevant studies have shown that non-native college students go through a process of language adaptation when they study and live in a dialect area [7] [8]. This process includes understanding the dialect, using the dialect, and integrating into the local culture. For those students who have not been exposed to the Chongqing dialect, learning and adapting to the dialect will be more difficult. They need to overcome the language barrier, understand the local culture, and establish new social relationships.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore in depth the linguistic attitudes of non-native students in Chongqing universities toward the Chongqing dialect and their impact on social integration. Given the individual nature of the research subjects and the complexity of the research questions, this study adopts a qualitative research methodology to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of this social phenomenon.

3.1. Study Design

This study used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Compared to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews are more flexible, allowing the researcher to follow up and adjust according to the respondents' answers to uncover deeper information. This method is conducive to capturing interviewees' real feelings and experiences of the Chongqing dialect, as well as their personal experiences in the process of language adaptation and social integration.

3.2. Respondent Selection

The interviewees for this study were non-local college students who had lived in Chongqing for at least one year. The selection of specific interviewees was based on the following factors: (1) Dialect exposure: One year is sufficient for non-local university students to be fully exposed to the Chongqing dialect and to develop certain cognitive and affective attitudes towards it; (2) Acculturation: One year or more of residence allows students to go through the initial process of acculturation and to reflect more deeply on the impact of the dialect on their social integration; (3) Data saturation: Ten students from different provinces in southeast and northwest China, with different study backgrounds, were selected for this study, aiming to increase the diversity and representativeness of the sample in order to achieve data saturation. The aim was to increase the diversity and representativeness of the sample to achieve data saturation and ensure the credibility of the findings.

3.3. Content of Interviews

The interviews centered on the social integration of Chongqing dialect for non-local college students, and the main issues involved were Chongqing dialect and interpersonal communication and Chongqing dialect and study life. Specifically, the following dimensions were covered:

Language Exposure and Understanding: Frequency of exposure to the Chongqing dialect in daily life, level of understanding, and experiences and challenges in learning the dialect.

Affective Attitude and Cultural Perception: Preference for Chongqing dialect, emotional connection, and understanding of the cultural connotations carried by the dialect.

Language Use and Behavioral Choices: Willingness and actual behaviors in using the Chongqing dialect in different contexts, and reflections on the relationship between dialect and identity.

Social interaction and acculturation: the impact of dialect on interactions with local people, and the opportunities and challenges encountered in integrating into Chongqing society.

3.4. Interview Implementation

Interviews will be conducted on a one-to-one, face-to-face basis. Research ethics will be strictly adhered to in this study: before the interviews begin, the researcher will introduce the purpose, content and process of the study in detail to the interviewees and obtain their informed consent to ensure their voluntary participation. At the same time, the researcher will keep the personal information of the interviewees strictly confidential, and all the interview data will be used for academic research only, and will be processed and presented in an anonymous manner. During the interview process, the

researcher will always maintain an attitude of respect and equality, encourage interviewees to speak freely, and show understanding and respect for their views and feelings.

3.5. Data Analysis

This study uses a qualitative data analysis method, to reveal the meaning behind the data by identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes or patterns from large amounts of textual data. After the interviews, the researcher will transcribe the audio recordings and analyze the interview texts using thematic analysis.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Through interviews with ten non-local university students in Chongqing, this study explores in depth the impact of Chongqing dialect on their life experience and their adaptation process to this unique language environment. The results of the analysis show that for non-local university students in Chongqing, the Chongqing dialect presents complex and diverse influences on their interpersonal interactions, academic life and cultural adaptation, and that non-local university students face different challenges due to dialect differences while actively integrating into the local society.

4.1. Chongqing Dialect and Interpersonal Communication: Coexistence of Integration and Disconnection

Dialect, as a regional language variant, carries unique cultural connotation and social significance. In the context of cross-cultural communication, dialects are both a bridge for social integration and a barrier to communication.

Some respondents believe that learning and using the Chongqing dialect helps them to integrate into the local circle of friends and enhance their friendship with local friends. Interviewees A and F both said that actively learning and using the dialect brought them closer to their local friends and increased their sense of intimacy with each other. Interviewee A said: " I think for me going to learn the Chongqing dialect is an opportunity for me to actively want to get closer to them, and it doesn't cause any barrier between us." (Interviewee A).

Her efforts were also positively received by her friends, who would make a point of communicating with her in some simple Chongqing dialect to make her feel accepted and valued, as she said, "If I feel like it's my friends, they think I want to learn Chongqing dialect, which is one of the things in itself that can enhance our friendship." (Interviewee A). This phenomenon confirms Giles and Coupland's theory of linguistic adaptation, which states that individuals tend to adapt their linguistic behaviors to accommodate each other when trying to establish positive social relationships[10]. Meanwhile, Krashen's "affective filtering" hypothesis in second language acquisition theory also mentions that when learners feel accepted and encouraged, their affective filters will be lowered and it will be easier for them to acquire a new language[11]. By learning and using the local dialect, non-native students convey a willingness to integrate into the local culture and society, which makes it easier for them to gain acceptance and recognition from the locals.

However, not all students were able to successfully transform their dialect into social capital. Interviewees G and E reported that the dialect difference became a barrier for them to integrate into the local circle of friends or to communicate with the older generation of Chongqing people. Interviewee G said:

"I think it might be sort of a barrier actually, it seems like there are only a few people in our class who are outsiders, but then the rest of them are basically locals of Chongqing, and then if they talk together, they'll just keep speaking the Chongqing dialect only, and it'll feel like there's a bit of a disconnect over there." (Interviewee G).

Respondent E stated that when communicating with the older generation of Chongqing people, due to the dialect problem, he would choose to "learn Chongqing dialect, which becomes a hindrance to communicate with the older generation." (Interviewee E) This result echoes Bourdieu's theory of "linguistic capital", which states that linguistic competence is a form of social capital that affects an individual's status and power in society [9]. Students who are not familiar with the local dialect in a particular language environment are at a disadvantage in communication, as they have difficulty in expressing themselves adequately and in understanding what the other person is saying, which affects the process of building good interpersonal relationships.

For other informants, although some respondents saw the social advantages of learning dialects, more respondents still preferred the safer and more efficient Mandarin when communicating with locals. Respondents D, E, and F all indicated that they preferred to communicate with Mandarin-speaking Chongqing natives because it is easier to understand and avoid communication barriers. For them, Mandarin can effectively ensure the efficiency and fluency of communication.

It is reassuring to note that respondents' attitudes towards local people speaking in dialect are generally more positive and understanding. They believe that Chongqing people speak dialects as a cultural habit, and they do not feel rejected or negatively towards them because of this. Respondents H and I respectively said.

"If I don't try to listen to it, don't try to remember it, and don't accept it, I'm sure I'll have a depressing time right here in Chongqing. It's going to be able to make it a little bit easier for me to live in Chongqing." (Interviewee H)

"I think Chongqing people are quite warm and friendly" (Interviewee I)

The above shows that the interviewees generally realize the convenience of dialects and respect their existence as a cultural symbol, and are willing to learn and understand them with an open mind, which lays the foundation for building a harmonious cross-cultural communication environment.

4.2. Chongqing Dialect and Learning Life: Adaptation and Challenges

Dialect does not only affect the social circle of non-local college students, but also penetrates their study and life scenarios, bringing new challenges and opportunities.

4.2.1. Classroom Learning: Mandarin Oriented

In terms of classroom learning, most of the respondents said that the Chongqing dialect had less impact on them. Since classroom teaching in colleges and universities is dominated by mandarin, even if the teacher occasionally uses the dialect, it does not pose too much of an obstacle to the understanding of course content. Interviewees D, E, F, G, H, and I said that they seldom encountered any trouble in classroom learning due to the dialect problem.

4.2.2. Daily Life: Inconvenience Caused by Dialects

However, in their daily lives, non-local university students inevitably encounter inconveniences due to dialect differences. Interviewees A, C, F, and J all shared the dialect challenges they encountered in their daily lives, such as difficulties in understanding local dialect speakers when ordering food, shopping, and asking for directions. Interviewee A recalled a joke she made during a medical checkup because she could not understand the Chongqing dialect pronunciation of "Neiko", which refers to "internal medicine" in Mandarin: "I ended up looking around the place, and I said, "Where is the doctor named Nei, Neiko?" But I couldn't find him. But I didn't find it." (Interviewee A) Interviewee C, on the other hand, said that if she encountered a dialect - speaking owner when ordering food, she would simply choose to change the restaurant. These experiences suggest that dialect differences may cause inconvenience and affect the daily life experience of non-local college students.

4.2.3. Dialect: A Window to Cultural Experience

Despite the challenges, some interviewees agreed that the Chongqing dialect is a window to understanding and experiencing the local culture. Interviewees E and G both said that by learning the dialect, they could better understand the personality traits and lifestyles of Chongqing people as well as the local history and culture. Dialect, as a carrier of culture, contains rich historical information and social values. For non-local college students, learning dialect can help them better integrate into the local culture and gain a more direct and authentic cultural experience.

4.3. Dialect Adaptation among Non-native Students in Chongqing Universities: Active Integration Versus Going with the Flow

Facing a new language environment, non-native university students need to actively adjust their language behaviors to adapt to the local language and culture and better integrate into the local society to better survive.

4.3.1. Active Learning vs. Going with the Flow

Respondents generally agreed that non-local college students should learn and adapt to the Chongqing dialect. They believed that learning the dialect would not only help them communicate better with locals, but also be a positive cultural adaptation behavior, reflecting their respect for and identification with the local culture. However, there were differences in their perceptions of the extent of learning. Respondents A, B, C, and I preferred to actively learn to speak the dialect to better integrate into the local society, while Respondents F, G, and H believed that it was sufficient to be able to understand the dialect to meet the needs of daily communication. Interviewee F's view is quite representative: "I don't think it is necessary to learn it completely, but for daily communication, we should at least have the ability to listen to it, but not necessarily the ability to speak it" (Interviewee F).

4.3.2. Diverse Learning Strategies

During the interviews, the interviewees shared various strategies and methods they used to learn Chongqing dialect, such as communicating more with locals, imitating their friends' pronunciation, watching dialect videos, and listening to dialect songs. Interviewees E, F, and G all mentioned that they learned Chongqing dialect mainly by communicating with locals, while Interviewee J thought that they could learn it by watching videos and listening to music (e.g., rap), etc. Interviewee F thought that they could learn Chongqing dialect by watching videos and listening to music (e.g., rap). According to Interviewee F, in daily life, "when I hear my friend speak Chongqing dialect, I will ask him what he means, and then I will try to imitate it, and then I will ask him if it is right" (Interviewee F). These strategies are in line with the concept of "immersion learning" and "natural acquisition". By immersing themselves in authentic language environments and actively listening, speaking and imitating, they can eventually master a new language (dialect), i.e., language learners can acquire a language (dialect) naturally through exposure to and use of the language in natural contexts.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Building a Pluralistic and Inclusive Language Ecology

Colleges and universities and society should work together to build a pluralistic and inclusive language ecology that respects and protects dialects and cultures while at the same time promotes Putonghua and cross-cultural communication. It is recommended that colleges and universities offer dialect courses that incorporate cultural experiences, and cooperate with social organizations to develop diversified dialect learning resources, such as dialect learning platforms that incorporate digital technologies, and dialect and cultural experience programs that are both educational and entertaining. In addition, the promotion and use of Mandarin should be strengthened in the public

service sector to provide non-local residents with more convenient living services, and residents should be encouraged to emphasize language choice in cross-cultural exchanges to create an inclusive and friendly language environment.

5.2. Enhance Students' Intercultural Communication Skills

As the main body of cross-cultural communication, non-local university students should establish a positive language attitude, take the initiative to learn and adapt to the local dialect, and regard it as a bridge to integrate into the local society and experience the local culture. It is recommended that colleges and universities carry out dialect-related entrance education, guide students to correctly understand the cultural value and social function of dialects, and provide diversified learning resources and practice opportunities, such as organizing language partnership programs and dialect culture study tours, in combination with the theory of language acquisition and students' individual differences, to help students improve their language proficiency and cross-cultural communicative competence in real situations.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, non-local university students in Chongqing were used to further analyze their language attitudes toward the Chongqing dialect and its impact on social integration. The findings show that language attitudes are of great significance in cross-cultural adaptation. Gardner and Lambert's social psychological model states that a learner's attitude toward the target language directly affects his/her motivation and effectiveness in learning. In conjunction with this theory, those students in this interview study who had positive attitudes toward the Chongqing dialect were indeed more likely to succeed in their studies and lives, and to develop stronger social ties with the local population.

Specifically, students with positive attitudes not only excel in language learning, but also adapt more quickly to the local social environment. This confirms Byram's notion that positive language attitudes can mitigate cultural conflicts and promote mutual understanding and social integration among different cultural groups. From the opposite perspective, those students who were resistant or indifferent to the dialect were more likely to feel communicative pressure in socializing and had difficulty in integrating into the culture of Sichuan and Chongqing, which in turn affected their life experience in Chongqing.

In addition, research has also found that the role of language policy in social integration cannot be ignored as well. Polsky points out that language policy not only affects language usage, but also has a profound impact on the cultural identity and social integration of social groups. In a multilingual environment such as Chongqing, how to strike a balance between the popularization of Putonghua and the preservation of dialects is crucial for promoting the social integration of non-native students. On the one hand, the promotion of Mandarin eliminates communication barriers to a certain extent and facilitates cross - regional communication; on the other hand, the role of the inheritance and use of dialects, as an important part of local culture, in preserving the cultural diversity of the society should not be underestimated.

All in all, this study provides new perspectives for understanding the role of dialect in social integration, but there are still many shortcomings. Such as the limitation of sampling data, the limitation of age group and the objectivity and fairness of interviews. In the future, the study can keep focusing on the following topics: are there differences in the attitudes of non - local college students with different professional backgrounds and different cultural backgrounds towards Chongqing dialect? How do language attitudes affect their social adaptation process in Chongqing? How to construct more effective language policies and educational models to promote the positive interaction between dialect transmission and social integration? An in-depth discussion of these issues will help to better understand the complex relationship between language, culture and social integration, and

provide more effective theoretical guidance and practical paths to promote cross-cultural communication and harmonious social development.

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