

The effects of media exposure on grammaticality judgment

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The present study examines the effects of media exposure on Northern Mandarin speakers' perception of non-standard syntactic variables (i.e. postverbal *gei*-phrase and *you* as an aspectual marker) associated with Taiwanese Mandarin. Although there is a long-standing tradition in sociolinguistics against citing media exposure as a source of language variation, recent studies (Stuart-Smith, 2005, 2013; Carvalho, 2004) have shown that media exposure does have an effect on people's attitudes toward certain dialects, and speakers thereof, which can contribute to variation. This study aims to show 1) that media exposure can affect speakers' grammaticality (or acceptability) judgments of non-standard syntactic variables associated with the Mandarin varieties spoken in Taiwan and 2) that it is important to incorporate interactions among social factors (e.g. amount of media exposure and language ideologies) into the sociolinguistic analysis. Data were collected through an online survey consisting of a grammaticality judgment task and a matched-guise attitude test, followed by demographic questions about television viewing habits.

In Mandarin, the prepositional dative construction is usually headed by the preposition *gei*. In Standard Mandarin, the *gei*-phrase almost always appears before the verb, as in (1). Taiwanese Mandarin speakers, however, prefer a postverbal structure, as in (2). Peng (2011) found that Northern Mainland dialect speakers (preverbal-favoring) with more exposure to Taiwanese television shows (postverbal-favoring) prefer the postverbal structure more often than those speakers with less exposure. Another syntactic variable often associated with Taiwanese Mandarin is the use of the Chinese morpheme *you* as an aspect marker. It is a syntactic feature unique to Taiwanese Mandarin, which can be attributed to substratum influence from the local Chinese dialect (i.e. Taiwanese).

- (1) Wo dengyixia gei ni da dianhua (Preverbal)
 I later to you make phone call
 'I will give you a call later.'
- (2) wo dengyixia da dianhua gei ni (Postverbal)
 I later make phone call to you
 'I will give you a call later.'
- (3) wo you kan guo zhe budianying
 I ASP see-ASP this-CL movie
 'I have seen this movie.'

Forty-two valid responses from Northern Mandarin speakers were analyzed for this study. In the online acceptability task, they were asked to rate sentences with and without the aforementioned syntactic variables on a 7-point Likert scale. This task was followed by a matched-guise attitude task to gauge the informants' attitudes towards Standard and Taiwanese Mandarin. Finally, demographic questions were asked about informants' dialect backgrounds

and (Internet) TV-viewing habits, including how frequently and for how long they have watched Taiwanese TV programs.

Results from an online grammaticality judgment task showed that people who have media exposure to Taiwanese TV programs rated sentences with the *you* variable more favorably than those with no exposure. For the postverbal *gei*-phrase, however, no effect was found, possibly because speakers are not aware of the fact that the postverbal *gei* is also associated with Taiwanese Mandarin. The results suggest that media exposure raises speakers' awareness of the innovative form, but does not contribute to positive perception, nor does additional exposure give rise to higher grammaticality ratings.

Bibliography

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