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LANGUAGE CONTACT ACROSS TIME:
CLASSICAL CHINESE ON MODERN PUBLIC SIGNS
IN TAIWAN

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ABSTRACT

Classical Chinese has been “dead” for over two millennia, but continues to exert significant influence. This article uses a corpus of modern public signs in Taiwan to explore how the interplay between modern and classical Chinese in formal register both resembles and differs from other types of language contact. In particular, it looks at the influence of classical Chinese on content words, function words and grammatical structure. This kind of “language contact across time” resembles other kinds of language contact in having L1 as a “grammar language” and L2 as a “lexifier language.” However, L2 influence on content words, though including some basic vocabulary, is more limited than usual, and while L2 influence on grammatical structure is fairly limited, its influence on function words is more extensive than in other types of language contact. A number of structural, functional and pragmatic explanations are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Language contact across time Borrowing from the past Formal style
Public signs Grammatical loan Vocabulary loan

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跨時代的語言接觸 ——現代台灣牌示上的文言

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摘要

古代漢語雖可說已消逝兩千多年，然其對現代漢語的影響至今仍相當可觀。本文用台灣牌示的語言材料來探討文言與白話在正式語體中的互動關係，尤其是這種互動與其它類型的語言接觸之異同：文言如何影響著實詞、虛詞及語法結構？所謂“跨時語言接觸”與其它類型的語言接觸一樣，是將 L1 當“語法語言”、L2 當“詞彙語言”。然而，L2 對實詞的影響雖包括一些基本詞彙，卻比大部分的語言接觸少，而雖然 L2 對語法結構的影響不大，可是對虛詞比其它類型的語言接觸卻也大得多。本文試圖從結構、功能及語用各角度來解釋這樣的異同。

關鍵詞

跨時語言接觸 跨時外來語 正式語體 牌示 外來語法 外來詞彙