

SOCIAL MOTIVATIONS FOR THE REVIVAL OF ADDRESS TERMS IN CHINA

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From some sociolinguistic perspectives, this article describes and explains the phenomenon of language change and revival in terms of the relationship between language and society. It focuses on some once abandoned but now revived address terms in today's Mainland China. It relates language change to social change with a focus on social motivations for the revival of address terms and claims that any language change or revival of an abandoned address term reflects a change in a human relationship, and such a change or revival is driven by socioeconomic changes in a society. Based on the natural language data collected from a project investigating the address terms and their variable usages, and based on some sociolinguistic analysis and explanation, the study concludes that any society which is undergoing socioeconomic change may show some change in its language; address terms are social identifications of people in a particular society (i.e., 'social markers'); although speakers may still use certain address terms belonging to their generation, changes of address terms or language change in general are predictable in a changing society.

Sociolinguistic Phenomenon of Language Revival

From some sociolinguistic perspectives, this paper describes and explains the phenomenon of language change and revival in terms of the relationship between language and society. It focuses on some once abandoned but now commonly used address terms in today's Mainland China. Unlike most previous studies of address terms which linked their unitary and prescribed social value to their normative use in a society (e.g., Ervin-Tripp 1973;¹ Hong 1979²), or those which focused on cases where usage of a particular address term is variable for the dynamic negotiation for rights and obligations within a talk exchange (e.g., Scotton and Zhu 1983),³ this paper relates language change (to be more accurate, language

1 Susan Ervin-Tripp, "The structure of communicative choice," *Language Acquisition and Communicative Choice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973: 302-373). Ervin-Tripp presents a flow chart delineating static features with their hierarchical arrangement, which constitute the social structure in which address terms are embedded. Thus, the value of an address term is linked to the normative priority within the social structure.

2 B. Hong., "Language change and social integration in small groups in China," paper presented at the International Conference on Communication, University of Hawaii, 1979. Hong claims that the value of a particular address term is embedded in the social structure in which it is used, and address term usage reflects overall societal norms.

3 Carol Myers Scotton and Wanjin Zhu, "Tóngzhì in China: Language change and its conversational consequences," *Language in Society* 12 (1983): 477-494. Scotton and Zhu focus on cases where tóngzhì is used as a tool and an index in the dynamic negotiation within the exchange of discourse participants' rights and obligations. They regard tóngzhì usage as a discourse strategy.

revival)⁴ to social change with a focus on social motivations for the revival of address terms (Fang and Heng 1983).⁵

As observed, most of the traditional Chinese address terms such as *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’, *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’, *fūren* ‘wife’, *xiǎojiě* ‘Miss.’ *nǚshì* ‘lady’, *lǎobǎn* ‘boss/proprietor’ and the like have been replaced by terms such as *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’, *àiren* ‘lover’ (=husband/wife) and *fúwùyuán* ‘attendant/waiter/waitress’ since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976),⁶ which caused a social, political, and economic disaster in China, all such traditional address terms were regarded as dregs of the old society and feudal, bourgeois, or revisionist elements and thus were totally abandoned. Since China launched its social and economic reforms to accomplish its Four Modernizations⁷ (the Four Modernizations include the modernizations of agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defense) announced by Deng Xiaoping, who assumed control of the Communist Party of China (CPC), in late 1978, China has witnessed the revival of those traditional address terms and their actual usages in Chinese daily life. Although address terms like *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ and *àiren* ‘lover’ (=husband/wife) are still used by some people belonging to particular generations and by people for interactions in particular contexts, the social values of the traditional address terms are much raised and appreciated by most people for interactions in various social contexts.

This paper claims that any language change or revival of an abandoned address term reflects a change in a human relationship. In other words, such a change or revival is driven by socioeconomic change in today’s Mainland China. Based on the natural language data collected from a project investigating the address terms and their variable usages, and based on some sociolinguistic analysis and explanation, this paper claims that any society which is undergoing social change may show some change in its language (Ju 1991);⁸ socioeconomic change in a society in a particular historical period is a driving force for language change or revival; address terms are social identifications of people in a particular society (i.e., ‘social markers’ (Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog 1968;⁹ Scotton and Zhu 1983)); although speakers

4 The term ‘language revival’ is used in this paper to mean some ‘old’ (traditional) Chinese address terms which were abandoned in some particular historical periods in China are now restored for usage. Such a language revival is commonly called language change.

5 Hanquan Fang and J. H. Heng, “Social changes and changing address norms in China,” *Language in Society* 12 (1983): 495-507. Fang and Heng are concerned with the changing address norms as a result of the drastic political and social changes since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949.

6 The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was launched by Mao Zedong, the Chairman of the CPC, on May 16, 1966. It started as a political campaign to rid China of its “liberal bourgeoisie” elements and to continue revolutionary class struggle, but it was a struggle for power within the CPC. It was widely recognized as a method to regain control of the party after the disastrous Great Leap Forward led to a significant loss of Mao’s power to rivals Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, which eventually manifested into waves of power struggle between rival factions both nationally and locally. It grew to include large sections of Chinese society, which eventually manifested into wide-scale social, political, and economic chaos and brought the entire country to the brink of civil war.

7 The Four Modernizations were first introduced by Zhou Enlai in 1975 at the Fourth national People’s Congress. After his death and Mao’s soon thereafter, Deng Xiaoping assumed control of the CPC in late 1978. The Four Modernizations became the goals of Deng’s reforms. Deng announced the official launch of the Four Modernizations at the Third Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in December 1978, which formally marked the beginning of China’s reform era.

8 Zhucheng Ju, “The “depreciation” and “appreciation” of some address terms in China,” *Language in Society* 20 (1991): 387-390. According to Ju, the Cultural Revolution brought about the “depreciation” of certain traditional Chinese address terms, and China’s ‘open-door’ policy has changed people’s mental outlook and brought about the “appreciation” of those address terms.

9 Uriel Weinreich, William Labov and M. Herzog, “Empirical foundations for a theory of language change,”

belonging to a particular generation may use the address terms which they are used to, changes of address terms are predictable in a changing society (Fang and Heng 1983; Liu 1990¹⁰; Ju 1991; Wardhaugh 2002¹¹).

Tóngzhì: Its Past and Present

“Originating some 2,200 years ago, the label *tóngzhì* was initially defined as ‘pertaining to people who have the same ethics and ideals’” (Wong 2005: 210).¹² The term was appropriated by political activists for Chinese revolutionary discourse to address those who sharing the same will or same purpose. The term was introduced into modern Chinese by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, who led the Chinese Democratic Revolution in 1911, as a way of describing his followers. Its political and revolutionist connotations became stronger during the Communist Revolution (1921-1949). Following the founding of the PRC in 1949, the term was used to mean ‘comrade’ in the Communist sense, and it also became a popular social address term among the general public. During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, this address term’s political and revolutionist connotations became so strong that if a person was no longer addressed as *tóngzhì* by his/her colleagues or the general public, he/she was regarded as a class enemy. Although in those years the term was used to address those who were classified as belonging to the same class (i.e., the proletariat), it was also commonly used as a natural address term in most social contexts where people didn’t know each other’s class background. In today’s Mainland China, however, the term *tóngzhì* has fallen out of common usage, except within Communist Party discourse and among people of older generations.

Before the CPC assumed power in 1949, the meaning of *tóngzhì* was generally defined as ‘having the same will or interest’. The promotion of *tóngzhì* to specifically mean ‘comrade’ by the CPC for three main political purposes: (1) to identify those who have the same political goals as the CPC and support the political leftist or subversive causes; (2) to replace titles for property owners, such as *lǎobǎn* ‘boss/proprietor’ and *gǔdōng* ‘shareholder/stockholder’ because no individuals were allowed to possess personal properties, and to replace all honorific titles, such as *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’, *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’, *fūren* ‘wife’, *xiǎojiě* ‘Miss’, and *nǚshì* ‘lady’, which were regarded as the spawn of feudalism and bourgeoisie; (3) to eliminate social and economic distinctions among all the people with the equal footing in the new Chinese society. However, professional titles were still retained, such as *júzhǎng* ‘bureau head’, *chǎngzhǎng* ‘factory director/manager’, *xiàozhǎng* ‘(school) principal/(university) president’, *zhūrèn* ‘director/chairman/head’, *gōngchéngshī* ‘engineer’, *lǎoshī* ‘teacher’, and *jiàoshòu* ‘professor’. For skilled manual and industrial workers, *shīfu* ‘master worker’ was used as a general term.

During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, *tóngzhì* became more widely used with such extremely strong political connotations that only those who were classified as belonging to proletarian

Directions for Historical Linguistics (Winfred Philipp Lehmann and Yakov Malkiel, eds., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968: 95-188). These authors use the term ‘social marker’ to describe the variable usage of a linguistic form which represents a language change in progress and this variable usage is linked to certain social features.

10 Xuexin Liu, “The forms of addressing ‘wife’ and their semantic implications and social functions,” *Nihongogaku Ronsetsu* 16 (1990): 467-474 (Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyuusho (National language Research Institute), ed.). Liu explains the difference between the *airen* usage and the *aijin* usage in Japanese society.

11 Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (Malden, MA: Balckwell Publishing, 2002). Wardhaugh introduces address terms and their variations and changes in various societies.

12 Andrew D. Wong, “Language, cultural authenticity, and the *tóngzhì* movement,” *Texas Linguistics Forum* 48 (2005): 209-215 (Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Symposium about Language and Society – Austin, April 16-18, 2004). Wong reviewed the history of *tóngzhì* usage and Chinese revolutionary discourse.

classes (i.e., workers, peasants, and soldiers) and only those who supported the Cultural Revolution against those in power within the Communist Party taking the capitalist road. All governmental and administrative positions at national, regional, and local levels were taken over by revolutionary committees consisting of members of proletarian classes. Consequently, official titles such as *júzhǎng* ‘bureau head’, *chǎngzhǎng* ‘factory director/manager’, *xiàozhǎng* ‘(school) principal/(university) president’, *zhǔrèn* ‘director/chair-man/head’, and professional titles such as *gōngchéngshī* ‘engineer’, *lǎoshī* ‘teacher’, and *jiàoshòu* ‘professor’ were often replaced by *tóngzhì* on the condition that the person must be politically ‘qualified’ for the term. In those years, because only members of proletarian classes were regarded as being dependable for class struggles, and manual workers were highly respected and trusted, *shīfu* ‘master worker’ became a popular address term like *tóngzhì*. Both terms became so popular that they were even used without their political connotations between strangers in everyday life.

In late 1978, the CPC launched the Four Modernizations by reforming China’s socioeconomic system and structure in the first place. To ‘let a small number of people get rich first’ became the CPC’s slogan, and personal ownership of properties was encouraged. Individuals were allowed to run and possess companies, factories, stores, restaurants, hotels, and other enterprises. Many government-owned enterprises were sold to individuals who were willing to take the risk and who had potentials to become capable and promising entrepreneurs. Although government and private enterprises coexist, China’s economic reform adopted capitalism. Private owners of enterprises have the right to hire or fire employees. An individual’s social status is now mainly based on his/her wealth. As a result, once abandoned terms like *lǎobǎn* ‘boss/proprietor’ were revived to address any private enterprise owner. Also, individual roles in society became clearly identified to eliminate the so-called ‘social equality’. As a result, once abandoned terms such as *júzhǎng* ‘bureau head’, *chǎngzhǎng* ‘factory director/manager’, *xiàozhǎng* ‘(school) principal/(university) president’, *zhǔrèn* ‘director/chairman/head’, *gōngchéngshī* ‘engineer’, *lǎoshī* ‘teacher’, and *jiàoshòu* ‘professor’ were revived to address administrators and professionals. *Tóngzhì* is now no longer a common address term and is mainly used within political discourse and among people who have long been used to it.¹³

Contemporary and Popular Address Terms as Observed in China

Reported in this paper are the data on some address terms commonly used in today’s Shanghai, China.¹⁴ For the comparative purposes, such data were collected from natural language use by two generations of people involving 52 participants. Group A had 26 participants from age 20 to age 35, and Group B also has 26 participants from age 45 to age 60. The participants were given two questionnaires, one about usage of ‘spouse address terms’ and the other about usage of ‘social address terms’. The

13 The term *tóngzhì* is mainly used by members of the CPC on political occasions, and to a much lesser degree, by members of the Kuomintang in Taiwan. Today, however, the term is also associated as a slang term for “homosexual.” In the PRC, homosexuality has always conflicted with the traditional importance of marriage and posterity, but rarely been regarded as a crime. In the 1980s, homosexuals in the PRC developed their own subculture, referred to as ‘*tóngzhì* culture’. About Chinese homosexuality and *tóngzhì* culture in China, see ‘Tongzhi Culture’ by Leiden Davision at <http://leiden.dachs-archive.org/tongzhi/index.html>. In “Language, cultural authenticity, and the tongzhi movement,” *Texas Linguistic Forum* 48 (2005): 209-215 (Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Symposium about Language and Society – Austin, April 16-18, 2004), Andrew D. Wong reviews the history of ‘*tóngzhì*’ used in Chinese revolutionary discourse and examines gay rights activists’ use of the term in Hong Kong.

14 In 2007, Xuexin Liu designed and carried out a research project on contemporary Chinese address terms in Shanghai, China. The data were collected from the questionnaires about usage variations of some common address terms. The participants in the project involved two age groups, presumably two generations of people, who were local company staff or university students. Only a few address terms and their respective frequency of occurrence are selected for the current discussion.

participants were asked to choose the address terms which they most frequently used based on the human relationships and the speech situations as given in the questionnaires. As observed, there were variations in language use by different people in different speech contexts. The data indicate that both ‘old’ address terms (i.e., terms commonly used after the founding the PRC in 1949) and ‘revived’ address terms (i.e., terms commonly used before 1949) are used by both generations. The data reported in this paper focus on the social address terms (‘social address terms’ are those which are used in public contact situations, such as in restaurants, in department stores, in supermarkets, in convenience stores, on buses, on streets, and so on): *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’, *shīfu* ‘master worker’, *xiǎojiě* ‘Miss’,¹⁵ and *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’, and the spouse address terms (‘spouse address terms’ are those which are used for introducing one’s own husband/wife to other people or addressing other people’s husbands/wives): *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’,¹⁶ *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’,¹⁷ and *àiren* ‘lover’ (= husband/wife) for the purpose of revealing the difference between the two age groups in using the old and revived terms in the same speech situations.

Table 1. Chinese Social Address Terms

Age Group Differentiation (26 participants in each age group)	Social Address Terms							
	<i>xiānsheng</i> ‘Mr.’		<i>shīfu</i> ‘master worker’		<i>xiǎojiě</i> ‘Miss’		<i>tóngzhì</i> ‘comrade’	
	Frequency		Frequency		Frequency		Frequency	
	√	X	√	X	√	X	√	X
Group A: ages 20-35	26	Ø	26	Ø	26	Ø	2	24
Tokens & %	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	8%	92%
Group B: ages 45-60	25	1	26	Ø	24	2	22	4
Tokens & %	96%	4%	100%	0%	92%	8%	85%	15%
Total	51	1	52	Ø	50	2	24	28
Tokens & %	98%	2%	100%	0%	96%	4%	46%	54%
Difference between Group A & Group B	1	1	Ø	Ø	2	2	20	20
Tokens & %	4%	4%	0%	0%	8%	8%	77%	77%

Note: √ = used, X = not used

15 The term *xiǎojiě* is used as an honorific to refer to young and unmarried women. It follows the surname of the woman or can be used alone as an address term. Today, however, it can also be associated as a slang term for “prostitute” or can be used in restaurants to address waitresses.

16 As a spouse address term, *xiānsheng* is used as an honorific to refer to married men. It is added after the surname of the husband (e.g., *Wang xiānsheng* ‘Mr. Wang’ (in this case, calling someone’s husband whose surname is ‘Wang’)) or preceded by a possessive pronoun (e.g., *wǒ xiānsheng* ‘my husband’, and *nǐ xiānsheng* ‘your husband’) or preceded by the possessive case of a noun (e.g., *wǒ mèimei de xiānsheng* ‘my younger sister’s husband’, and *nǐ péngyǒu de xiānsheng* ‘your friend’s husband’).

17 The term *tàitai* is used as an honorific to refer to married women. It is added after the surname of the husband (e.g., *Wang tàitai* (i.e., the wife of the man whose surname is ‘Wang’) or preceded by a possessive pronoun (*wǒ tàitai* ‘my wife’, and *nǐ tàitai* ‘your wife’) or preceded by the possessive case of a noun (e.g., *wǒ péngyǒu de tàitai* ‘my friend’s wife’, and *tā gēge de tàitai* ‘his older brother’s wife’). (In Chinese culture, women do not change their surnames to their husbands’ surnames after they get married.) *Tàitai* can also be used alone as an address term. It is usually used in familial and personal relations.

The frequency counts (i.e., tokens) of the four social address terms in Table 1 indicate that Group A used extremely few *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ (only 2 tokens/8% of its total use of the term), but Group B used the term far more frequently than Group A (22 tokens/85% of its total use of the term). It is also important to see that all the participants in Group A used *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’, *shīfu* ‘master worker’ and *xiǎojiě* ‘Miss’, and almost all the participants in Group B also preferred to the these terms. Although the difference between the two groups in using *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ is very big, the difference between the two groups in using the other three terms is very small.

The data in Table 1 reveal that the ‘old’ terms like *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’ and *xiǎojiě* ‘Miss’ have been fully revived for common use as social address terms with almost no age difference; *shīfu* ‘master worker’ remains as one of the most popular social address terms, but *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ becomes a rather restricted variable.

Table 2. Chinese Spouse Address Terms

Age Group Differentiation (26 participants in each age group)	Spouse Address Terms					
	<i>xiānsheng</i> ‘Mr.’		<i>tàitai</i> ‘Mrs.’		<i>àiren</i> ‘lover’	
	Frequency		Frequency		Frequency	
	√	X	√	X	√	X
Group A: ages 20-35	20	6	21	5	4	22
Tokens & %	77%	23%	81%	19%	15%	85%
Group B: ages 45-60	18	8	17	9	23	3
Tokens & %	69%	31%	65%	35%	88%	12%
Total	38	14	38	14	27	25
Tokens & %	73%	27%	73%	27%	52%	48%
Difference between Group A & Group B						
Tokens & %	2	2	4	4	19	19
	8%	8%	16%	16%	73%	73%

Note: √ = used, X = not used

The frequency counts (i.e., tokens) of the three spouse address terms in Table 2 indicate some difference between the two age groups in their preferred use of these terms. What makes Group A obviously different from Group B is its extremely few tokens of *àiren* ‘lover’ (= husband/wife) (only 4 tokens/15% of its total use of the term), but Group B used this term far more frequently than Group A (23 tokens/88% of its total use of the term). What also become obvious is the very high frequency of *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’ and *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’ used by both groups (Group A: 20 tokens/77% of its total use of *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’ and 21 tokens/81% of its total use of *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’; Group B: 18 tokens/69% of its total use of *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’ and 17 tokens/65% of its total use of *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’). The difference between the two groups in using *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’ and *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’ is rather small (only 4% difference in using *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’, and only 8% difference in using *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’).

The data in Table 2 reveal the fact that the ‘old’ spouse address terms like *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’ and *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’ have been revived for common use by both age groups, but *àiren* ‘lover’ (=husband/wife) becomes a rather restricted variable.

Socioeconomic Change as a Driving Force for Language Change and Revival

“A society undergoing social change is also likely to show certain indications of such change if the language in use in that society has or had a complex system of address (Wardhaugh 2002: 272). China is one of such societies (Scotton and Wanjin 1983; Fang and Heng 1983). Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, China has gone through several tremendous social changes. Right after the CPC took over the power of governing the whole country, to build a socialist country, a system of social organization in which the means of production and distribution of goods are owned by the government or controlled collectively, it eliminated all forms of personal ownership. To abolish the old social hierarchical structure based on individuals’ wealth and political power and to establish a society where all people have an economic equality and share the same political views and goals, the CPC promoted the use of *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ to replace all the address terms containing bourgeois or feudal connotations. As a result, address terms for property owners and employers like *lǎobǎn* ‘boss/proprietor’ and honorific titles like *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’, *tàitai* ‘Mrs.’, and *xiǎojiě* ‘Miss’ were abandoned. In addition to *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’, *shīfu* ‘master worker’ became another most commonly used term for skilled workers or anyone who served the public. Both *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ and *shīfu* ‘master worker’ became the most popular social address terms. The difference between the two is that *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ can be used to indicate political power, affinity or solidarity, and it can also be used as a neutral term to address a stranger or someone in public situations without its political connotation.

During the ten years of the Cultural Revolution, *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ became more political than ever before. Millions of Chinese were classified or reclassified as ‘class enemies’ who were *lǎobǎn* ‘boss/proprietors’, capitalists, landlords or rich peasants in the old China or counter-revolutionaries, bad elements or persons in power taking the capitalist road in the new China. Such class enemies could not be addressed as *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’. During the Cultural Revolution, *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ was reserved for those who carried out the class struggle against all Chinese class enemies. In those years, *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’, together with *shīfu* ‘master worker’, remained as a neutral social address term for use among the general public who might not know each other.

1978 saw the beginning of the political and socioeconomic reforms in China under the slogan of ‘building four modernizations with socialist characteristics’. All those classified as ‘class enemies’ were rehabilitated, and some personal properties confiscated during the Cultural Revolution were returned to their original owners. Individuals were allowed to run their own enterprises ranging from small stores and restaurants to big factories and companies. The ownership of personal properties was encouraged. Business owners became employers. For the economic reform, China actually adopted the capitalist system with some modifications to match its national conditions. Most of the traditional ranking systems and titles were restored to identify individuals’ administrative, social or economic status. As a result, almost all of the address terms commonly used in the old China (i.e., before the founding of the PRC in 1949) were revived. For example, a business owner who is also an employer is now called *lǎobǎn* ‘boss/proprietor’, a university teacher is now called *jiàshòu* ‘professor’, a person having a doctoral degree is called *bóshì*, a shareholder/stockholder is called *gǔdōng*, and so on.

In addition, some social address terms used before 1949, such as *xiānsheng* ‘Mr.’ and *xiǎojiě* ‘Miss’ are now commonly used as the address terms in almost all social contexts to show addressees respect. The data in Table 1 show that both younger people (Age Group A) and older people (Age Group B) now frequently use such social address terms. Although older people still frequently use *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’, younger people almost do not use it anymore. The simple reason for older people to continue to use *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ as a neutral term lies in the fact that they were ‘growing up’ with the term in a particular historical period and they are ‘used’ to it. It is also interesting to find that *shīfu* ‘master worker’ remains to be one of the most frequently used social address term by both generations. The fact is that

China's socioeconomic reforms still keep most of its population as ordinary 'workers', whether they are skilled or not. *Shīfu* 'master worker' is now commonly used among 'ordinary' people in most social contexts. Different from *xiānsheng* 'Mr.', *xiǎojiě* 'Miss' and *shīfu* 'master worker' (and other revived terms), *tóngzhì* 'comrade' may become obsolete sooner or later, but it will remain to be used in rather limited contexts, especially in political contexts.

Since China's socioeconomic reforms, most traditional spouse address terms before 1949 have also been revived. The Chinese address term for a spouse was always *àiren* 'lover' (= husband/wife) after 1949 and especially during the Cultural Revolution. The term *àiren* originally meant 'lover', which had the same meaning as *qíngren* 'lover'. After taking charge in 1949, the CPC started simplifying and reforming the language. Instead of the classic and arguably-sexist words for husband and wife, in order to indicate the equal status of man and woman in monogamous marriage (Lu 2003;¹⁸ ZhurnalWiki 2004¹⁹), a genderless term was promoted: *àiren*, built from the characters for loving people and taken to signify 'spouse'. The term *àiren* has been used as a general term for both husband and wife for several decades. The data in Table 2 show that though *àiren* remains commonly used by older people (Group B), younger people (Group A) seldom use it. Most of younger people prefer to use *xiānsheng* 'Mr.' and *tàitai* 'Mrs.', and even older people tend to use them to address their own or other people's husbands and wives. In old China, *xiānsheng* 'Mr.' was used to address a man with a respectful or high social status or from a rich or decent family, and *tàitai* 'Mrs.' was used to address a wealthy man's wife who did not need to work for living. In today's Mainland China, these terms can be used to address anyone's husband or wife without much of such connotations. In other words, they are now used as respectful spouse address terms.

As claimed by those studying the relationship between language and society, it is social change that brings about language change. As observed and discussed in this study, the elimination, change and revival of Chinese address terms were caused by China's political, social and economic changes in a particular historical period. The 'old' address terms were eliminated after the founding of the PRC in 1949 because those address terms signified the 'old' social structure and human relations. Instead, the few 'new' address terms were promoted to reflect the 'new' social structure, socioeconomic equality and human relations. Such new terms' social and political connotations were further strengthened during the Cultural Revolution to consolidate the so-called proletarian class (i.e., workers, peasants, and soldiers) for the common socialist goal. The dramatic revival of the Chinese 'old' address terms were caused by China's profound socioeconomic reforms launched in late 1978 to accomplish the four modernizations with Chinese characteristics. The once so-called 'old' (i.e., feudal, bourgeois or revisionist address terms) were revived to signify the 'reformed' (i.e., restructured or recovered) socioeconomic system and the 'new' human relations. In other words, it is socioeconomic change that drives language change and revival.

Sociolinguistic Implications of Language Change and Revival

From some sociolinguistic perspectives, this paper briefly reviewed the changes of Chinese address terms against Mainland China's social, political and economic backgrounds over some specific historical periods. Based on some representative data, it describes and explains the phenomenon of the revival of some 'old' Chinese address terms in today's modernizing China. It describes and explains the relationship between language and society in terms of cause and effect (i.e., causality). It reaches several conclusions.

- (1) A society undergoing social change tends to show certain and sometimes dramatic change in its language, especially in its address terms which signify some 'new' social, political and cultural

18 <http://appl.chinadaily.com.cn/star/2003/0626/cu18-1.html> (Lu Chang, "The right address," Shanghai Star. 2003-06-26).

19 <http://zhurnal.net/ww/zw?AiRen> (ZhurnalWiki, "Ai Ren").

systems and human relations. China is such a society which has witnessed several significant social changes since the founding of the PRC in 1949. Those social changes have fundamentally caused the changes in 'new' China's social, political, and cultural systems. Consequently, human relations in such a society during a particular historical period are recognized and signified (i.e., addressed) in different ways. The abandonment or revival of Chinese address terms is in fact the linguistic reflection of China's social changes.

(2) Language change or revival is driven by social motivations during a particular historical period of a society. Strong social motivations are instigated by dramatic socioeconomic change in a particular society. In other words, it is socioeconomic change that drives language change or revival. China's current socioeconomic change has created its social hierarchical structure. Chinese people are no longer socioeconomically 'equal' in that some possess enterprises or properties, but others do not, and in today's China an individual's social status is mainly determined by his/her wealth. As a result, 'appropriate' address terms become necessary to linguistically realize human relations embedded in such a 'reformed' socioeconomic structure.

(3) Address terms are in fact social identifications of people and signification of human relations in a particular society. China's revived address terms have become not only necessary but also indispensable in identifying individuals' social status or roles and in signifying human relations in a sociolinguistically appropriate manner.

(4) Although speakers belonging to different generations tend to use particular address terms to express their interactional or associative meanings in particular contexts, changes in the use of address terms is predictable in a changing society. Even though some address terms commonly used in China before its socioeconomic reforms may remain often used by people belonging to an old generation for a certain period of time, the newly revived address terms are not only most frequently used by the young generation but also often by the old generation. As predicted, as the Chinese society continues to change, China will witness further changes in its language.

This paper has reviewed some historical changes of Chinese address terms and explained the phenomenon of language change and revival in terms of the relationship between language and society. The social and cultural values of the revived Chinese address terms are related to the natural results of China's socioeconomic reforms. Thus, social motivations must be fully considered in any sociolinguistic study of language change or revival. Taken as a whole, changes in address terms in today's China are unique and drastic. Such changes are unique in consideration of their historical background and their political and socioeconomic reforms that open the door to those traditional address terms as needed in today's Chinese society.