

On the Official Languages of the Macao SAR: from the SFG Discourse Analysis Perspective

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In early May 2012, the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR) issued a circular to all public administrations entitled “Atenção com a divulgação de informações ao público (Attention in Release of Information to the Public)”. The authority, taking Article 9 of the *Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China* (hereinafter as “the Macao Basic Law”) and Decree No. 101/99/M *Aprova o Estatuto das Linguas Oficiais (Approval of the Status of the Official Language)* as the basis, believe that both Chinese and Portuguese are the official languages of the Macao SAR, and both of the two languages are of equal dignity; therefore, the authorities asked the public administrations to use both Chinese and Portuguese in the release of public information, and meanwhile, as for various information (including the departments’ websites and various information recorded in various media) that has been released and is still available for the public, if it is only available in one language, the other language shall be supplemented as soon as possible. The circular was low-key, but still attracted wide public attentions. Some people even wrote in the newspaper, criticizing that the act of the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau “is not only a waste of public funds, but also a damage to national dignity”.¹ In fact, it is not fresh for the discussion on the Chinese and Portuguese as the official languages in Macao and the status of the two. But so far, there are a number of people with different viewpoints, no matter in the academia or the social community. The intense discussion over the years seems to fail to reach the consensus.² This paper intends to further explore the status of the two languages, namely, Chinese and Portuguese in Macao from the perspective of linguistics.

I. Historical Review on the Official Status of Chinese and Portuguese in Macao

Before the 1990s, although more than 90% of Macao’s population was composed of Chinese people ignorant in Portuguese, as a region governed by the Portuguese, the language used in the public sector was Portuguese, and the Macao Portuguese Government did not formulated any provisions on the officialization of Portuguese in accordance with any laws and regulations. As for the official status of Portuguese in Macao, the Macao Portuguese Government at that time had been taking a well-deserved and self-evident attitude.

On 13th April 1987, the *Joint Declaration of the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of Portugal on the Question of Macao* (hereinafter as “the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration”) was signed. Both the Chinese and Portuguese Governments believed that it was necessary to endow Chinese with official status, so as to adapt to the new situation in the transitional period after the reunification of Macao. For this purpose, the

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Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) timely took the officialization of Chinese as one of the three core tasks to be emphasized in the transitional period. In 1989, the Macao Portuguese Government issued Decree No. 11/89/M *Estabelece o Uso da Língua Chinesa nos Diplomas do Governo (Establishing the Use of the Chinese language in Government Documents)*, which was the first time to make provisions on the officialization of Chinese and Portuguese. It is regulated in the Decree that all laws, decrees, orders and instructions with legislative and regulatory nature issued in Portuguese by self-regulatory authorities in the region shall be published together with the Chinese translation version; all legal proposals, decree drafts and instruction drafts by hearing the Consultative Council shall be proposed in both Portuguese and Chinese; the residents shall use Portuguese or Chinese to communicate with the public authorities of the region, including the autonomous authorities and municipal institutions, or relevant civil servants and public officers; and the all printing documents, forms and similar documents printed by the public authorities including the autonomous authorities and municipal institutions must be in Portuguese and Chinese. The Decree did not formally endow Chinese with official status, but only pointed that "both the Portuguese and the Chinese have equal official status in Macao region, and shall be used gradually in accordance with the conditions permits"; moreover, it is clearly regulated in Clause 3, Article 1 of the Decree that where there are doubts in the understanding in the Portuguese version and the Chinese translation version or the Chinese version, the Portuguese version shall prevail.

In 1991, China and Portugal reached a consensus on the status of Portuguese in Macao. Mário Alberto, President of Portugal, represented the Portuguese Government to sign and announce Decree No. 455/99 of the Republic of Portugal *Atribui à Língua Chinesa Estatuto Oficial, Idêntico ao da Língua Portuguesa (Giving the Chinese Language an Official Status, Identical to the Portuguese Language)*. Since then, Chinese has been endowed with official status in Macao. As the decree issued by the Portuguese Government, its effectiveness in Macao has been terminated automatically upon the establishment of the Macao SAR on 20th December 1999.

In the eve of the return of Macao on 13th December 1999, the Macao Portuguese Government issued Decree No. 101/99/M *Aprova o Estatuto das Línguas Oficiais (Approval of the Status of the Official Language)*. The Decree provides that "both Chinese and Portuguese are the official languages of Macao with the principle of equal dignity". There are totally 14 articles with detailed regulations on the status and application of Chinese and Portuguese in each public sector including the legislative, administrative and judicial fields. Meanwhile, Decree No. 11/89/M, the contradiction decree, was abolished. As one of the original laws, decrees, administrative regulations and other normative acts of Macao, this decree has been retained after the establishment of the Macao SAR and is now still in use.

On 20th December 1999, with the return of Macao, the Macao SAR was established, and the Macao Basic Law was firstly implemented as the constitutional law of the Macao SAR. As for the official language, it is explicitly stipulated in Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law: "In addition to the Chinese language, Portuguese may also be used as an official language by the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao Special Administrative Region."

Through the above review, we can clearly see that, at present, the main laws that regulate the status of the official languages in the Macao SAR are Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law and Decree No. 101/99/M. But it must be noted that, Decree No. 101/99/M has not been examined by the Preparatory Committee of the Macao SAR before the reunification, as the examination of the Preparatory Committee of the Macao SAR on the original 855 laws and decrees of Macao was over when the 10th Session of the Preparatory Committee was held on 28th and 29th August 1999, while the *Decision on Disposition of the Existing Laws in Macao Pursuant to Article 145 of the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region* (hereinafter as "the Decision") was made in accordance with the Macao Basic Law on 31st October 1999. Therefore, there are some doubts whether there are logical identifications without contradictions to the Macao Basic Law for Decree

No. 101/99/M. As the constitutional law of the Macao SAR, the Macao Basic Law has been driving all other laws, decrees, administrative regulations and other normative acts since the establishment of the SAR. According to Article 11 of the Macao Basic Law, no laws, decrees, administrative regulations and normative acts of the Macao SAR shall contravene the Macao Basic Law. Therefore, even Decree No. 101/99/M is still identified as valid, its status is obviously lower than that of the Macao Basic Law, and Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law shall be regarded as the most fundamental basis for standardizing the official language of the Macao SAR.

II. Debate about the Official Languages in the Macao SAR

Since the timetable of Macao's return was confirmed, discussions on the official status of Chinese and Portuguese has never stopped. Through the review of the documents, it can be found that the discussions mainly aim at whether Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law means that the Macao SAR implements "bilingualism", in other words, whether Chinese and Portuguese have the equal status, and will or should the two be ordered in priority.

As for this question, Wang Shuwen and other scholars believe that "principle provisions on the official language used by the government authorities of the Macao SAR have been made in Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law. Macao is an inalienable part of the PRC with 98% of local residents of Chinese people. It is inevitable to take Chinese as the official language of the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao SAR."³ Xiao Weiyun, an expert on the Basic Law, points out that it is clearly defined in Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law that the language policy of the Macao SAR is a Chinese-based language policy, "Chinese will be on an important position in the Macao SAR in the future, and is the main official language for the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao SAR...When there are discrepancies in the interpretation or understanding of Chinese and Portuguese, the Chinese version shall prevail...The future Government, Legislative Council, the Court and the Procuratorate of the Macao SAR must use Chinese."⁴ Many scholars believe that, "in addition to the Chinese language, Portuguese may also be used as an official language..." in Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law clearly expresses the viewpoint of "mainly based on Chinese, supplemented by Portuguese"⁵

There are no completely opposite opinions with the above opinions found in the society and academia that Portuguese shall remain to be more important than Chinese after the establishment of the Macao SAR, however, there are arguments that the two languages shall have equal status. Nuno Calado, the Coordinator of the Office for Legal Translation of that time, pointed out before the reunification that, the officialization of Chinese was the direct result of the agreement reached by China and Portugal on the status problem of the two languages in Macao. To guarantee the improvement of the legal system of Macao, the Macao SAR Government shall guarantee the existence of Portuguese as the legal language of Macao and maintain the coordinating and equal status of the two languages.⁶ This kind of idea has been used in the Macau Lawyers Association till now. The main rationale is that it is clearly specified in Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law that "Portuguese may also be used as an official language", and Decree No. 101/99/M specifies that the two official languages have equal dignity.⁷ In addition, Ching Cheung Fai, philologist, analyzing from the linguistic perspective, believes it unnecessary to order in priorities for the official languages. "The primary or secondary status will become meaningless if we shout to establish the primary official language status of Chinese every day, but fail to actually formulate qualified legal texts in Chinese, and have to formulate the laws by relying on Portuguese", and what really matters is how to improve the standard of Chinese so that the Chinese legislation can be carried out.⁸ Other linguists also hold the similar viewpoints.⁹

III. SFG Discourse Analysis on Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law

After checking previous documents, we can easily find out that, both the viewpoint of “mainly based on Chinese and supplemented by Portuguese” or the viewpoint of “the equality of Chinese and Portuguese” take Article 9 of the Basic Law of Macao as the basis, and find support basis in the article. In fact, neither the article with less than fifty words specifies that both Chinese and Portuguese are the official languages, nor specifies if the two languages are ordered in priority. Some scholars believe that the expression of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law is that “the legislators have no firm words.”¹⁰ In fact, to understand the laws, we must firstly start from the concepts of the languages, as the law is a language agency. Laws are formulated by languages, and those concepts used to constitute the laws can only be understood by the people through languages.¹¹ This paper adopts the Functional Discourse Analysis Theory to carry out the discourse analysis on Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, and attempts to explore the viewpoints of the legislators on Chinese and Portuguese.

The basis of the analysis is the Systemic-Functional Grammar (SFG) put forward by Michael Halliday. In SFG, it is believed that the language is multi-strata, which can be mainly divided into the stratum of grapho-phonetic, the stratum of lexico-grammatical and the stratum of discourse. As the forms are the realizations of the meanings, the discourse is realized by words and grammars, while the words and grammars are realized by the morphology and (or) pronunciation. Different ways of writing or pronunciation, different grammars and different words actually realize different meaning potentials; briefly, the language users, in selecting different ways of writing or pronunciation, actually make one or some vocabularies and grammars be realized intentionally or unintentionally. While selecting to use one or some vocabularies or grammars is actually to express a particular meaning.¹² The stratum of discourse is realized by the stratum of lexico-grammatical. In the stratum of lexico-grammatical, there are three metafunctions of the language: Ideational Metafunction, Interpersonal Metafunction and Textual Metafunction.¹³ By analyzing the systems of the three metafunctions of each sentence of the discourse, we can explore the field, tenor and mode expressed individually by each metafunction. This paper tries to apply the approach of the Functional Discourse Analysis Theory to analyze the meaning of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law.

Before the analysis, we shall divide the article into sentences and clauses according to the SFG. Noted that the Macao Basic Law is a law made by the National People's Congress (NPC) of the PRC, and the Standing Committee of the NPC has ever made relevant decisions on the Portuguese version of the Macao Basic Law, stating that “if there are discrepancies in the meaning of terms of the Portuguese version with the Chinese version, the Chinese version shall prevail.” Therefore, we should try to understand the embedded meaning of the article from the Chinese version instead of the Portuguese version, and thus, it is the Chinese text of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law that should be analyzed. In the perspective of SFG, there are two clauses in the Chinese text of Article 9. The first clause is a clause complex including a main clause and a subordinate clause, and the second sentence is a simple clause. But it must be noted that the division of the text is purely for grammatical analysis rather than evaluation on the semantic meaning. Figure 1 shows the division of clauses of the Chinese text of Article 9. The first clause and the second clause should be analyzed separately.

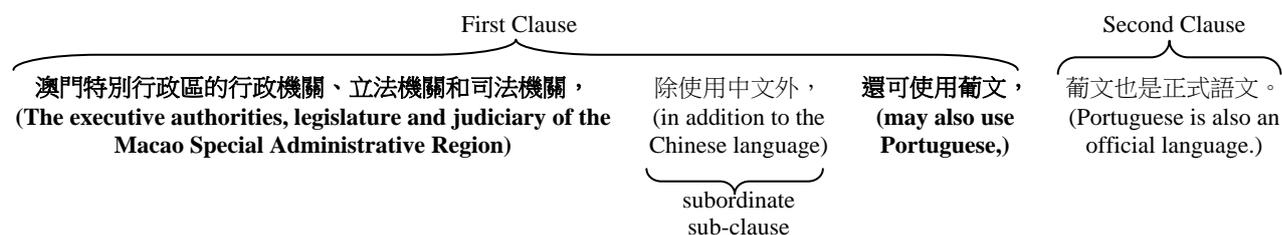
3.1 Functional discourse analysis of the first clause

From the perspective of the Ideational Metafunction analysis of SFG, the first clause of “澳門特別行政區的行政機關、立法機關和司法機關，除使用中文外，還可以使用葡文(The executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao Special Administrative Region, in addition to the Chinese language, may also use Portuguese)” is a Material process, representing the process of

doing something with at least an intermediate participant: the Actor and the Goal of another participant possibly involved.

The Actor of the Material process clause is “澳門特別行政區的行政機關、立法機關和司法機關(The executive, legislative and judicial authorities of the Macao Special Administrative Region)”; the process is the action of “使用(use)”; and the Goal is “葡文(Portuguese)”. Therefore, the concept that the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao SAR use Portuguese is clearly expressed in the first clause. However, it is not the full meaning to be expressed in the clause. To get a clear understanding of the whole meaning of the clause, we need to carry out discourse analysis from the perspectives of Interpersonal Metafunction analysis and Textual Metafunction analysis too.

Figure 1 Clause Division for the Chinese text of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law by SFG



* The bold part is the main sub-clause of the first clause.

From the perspective of Interpersonal Metafunction analysis of SFG, every clause contains the Subject and the Finite, which constitute the Mood of the clause, and Residue, which is the rest part. In the first clause of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, the Subject is “澳門特別行政區的行政機關、立法機關和司法機關(the executive, legislative and judicial authorities of the Macao Special Administrative Region)”, and the Finite is “還可(may also)”. The two constitute the Mood of the clause. The meaning of the Subject is obvious and it is unnecessary to analyze too much, but the Finite “還可(may also)” is worth exploring. As an adverb, the word “還(also)” has the meaning of “additional” and “supplementary contents”, with the meaning of “additions for the original content”. Moreover, if it is used together with the words such as “除了(except)/不但(not only)”, the role of addition will be more obvious.¹⁴ “可(may)” has the meaning of “agree”, “permit” or “possible”.¹⁵ The finite actually restricts the meaning of Predicator and Complement in the Residue. In the sentence, the Predicator is “使用(use)”, and the Complement is “葡文(Portuguese)”. It can be seen that “使用葡文(use Portuguese)” is restricted by “還可(may also)”, that is to say, “使用葡文(use Portuguese)” is a content to be complemented with a consent or permit. If “使用葡文(use Portuguese)” is a complemented content, what will be the original content? It will depend on the Adjunct of the rest part. The Adjunct of the first clause is “除使用中文外(in addition to the Chinese language)”. According to the *Modern Chinese Functional Words Dictionary*, “除(外)……還……(in addition to... also...)” means “to complement other parts, in addition to the existing part”. In other words, “使用中文([the use of] the Chinese language)” is the original content, and “使用葡文(use Portuguese)” is the content to be complemented with permits.

From the perspective of Textual Metafunction analysis of SFG, every clause includes the Theme-Rheme System and the Information System, involving in the coherence and convergence problems of the languages, and whether there are contents to be emphasized. The Theme in the SFG Theme-Rheme System is the starting point of the clause, and the rest part is the Rheme. In the first clause of the Chinese text of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, the Theme is “澳門特別行政區的行政機關、立法機關和司法機關(The executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao Special Administrative Region)”, and the Rheme is “除使用中文外，還可以使用葡文(in addition to the Chinese language, may also use Portuguese)”. According to SFG, when the clause

has no special emphasis on a certain composition, the Theme and the Subject are overlapped, and the Theme is regarded as unmarked, which is like the Theme of the first clause. If the composition of the clause is “除使用中文外，澳門特別行政區的行政機關、立法機關和司法機關還可以使用葡文(In addition to the Chinese language, the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao Special Administrative Region may also use Portuguese)”, the Theme will be “除使用中文外(In addition to the Chinese language)”, the Adjunct, and it will be a marked Theme, representing that the language producer (is also the legislator of the Macao Basic Law under this situation) wants to emphasize the Adjunct part and puts it at the beginning of the clause, but this kind of emphasis is not found in Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law. In addition to the Theme-Rheme System in the textual metafunction, there is also the Information System. In general, the unmarked information arrangement shall be from the given information to the new information. As one of the articles of the Macao Basic Law, and “澳門特別行政區的行政機關、立法機關和司法機關(the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao Special Administrative Region)” has already been mentioned in the previous articles, Article 9 may be regarded it as the given information; while it is the first time for “使用葡文(use Portuguese)” to occur, so it is a piece of new information. It can be inferred that the information arrangement of the sentence is unmarked. That is to say, the information is arranged from the given to the new. Therefore, compared with “使用葡文(use Portuguese)”, “使用中文([the use of] the Chinese language)” is a piece of known given information, that is the recognition on the content of the language receiver (under this situation, it also refers to all readers of the Macao Basic Law); to the contrary, “使用葡文(use Portuguese)” is the new information that the language producer wants to tell the language receiver.

3.2 Functional discourse analysis of the second sentence

From the perspective of Ideational Metafunction analysis of SFG, the second clause “葡文也是正式語文(Portuguese is also an official language)” of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law is an indentifying Relational process, with the function of indentifying one entity (person, objects, situations and events, etc.) in terms of another. In this clause, the Identified is “葡文(Portuguese)”, and the Identifier is “正式語文(official language)”. In other words, the clause implies that the Portuguese is indentified as an official language.

From the perspective of Interpersonal Metafunction analysis of SFG, in the second clause of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, the Subject is “葡文(Portuguese)”, while the Finite is “也(also)”, and the two constitute the Mood of the clause. The Predicator is “是(is)”; and the Complement is “正式語文(official language)”. The Finite “也(also)” is an adverb with the meaning of “similar and coexistence”.¹⁶ To represent affinity or coordination, there must be more than one thing; otherwise, the comparison cannot be made to check the affinity or coordination. Therefore, even the preceding paragraph implies nothing, we can also make a reasonable inference.¹⁷ By observing Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, we are reasonable to infer that the omitted implicit content is that “中文是正式語文(Chinese is an official language)”, and the implicit content and the second clause can constitute a clause complex with a coordinating relationship. Therefore, the implicit meaning that “中文和葡文是正式語文(Chinese and Portuguese are the official languages)” can be inferred.

From the perspective of the Theme-Rheme System of the Textual Metafunction, in the second clause of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, the Theme is “葡文(Portuguese)”, and the Rheme is “也是正式語文(is also an official language)”. Same as the first clause, the Theme and the Subject are overlapped, and it is an unmarked Theme. According to the analysis of the Information System, the information arrangement in the clause is also unmarked. Occurred in the first clause, the term “葡文(Portuguese)” is a piece of given information, while the new information in the second clause – the content that the language producer wants to tell the receiver – is “正式語文(official language)”.

3.3 Semantic analysis of “official language” in the second clause

In the second clause of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, a relatively uncommon Chinese term “正式語文(*zhengshi yuwen*)” is used instead of the term “官方語言(*guanfang yuwen*)”, which is generally considered as more appropriate. As for this problem, many scholars have raised questions¹⁸ or opinions¹⁹, and some people directly ignore the problem, and take the two as the same.²⁰ According to the SFG, language is actually to reflect the meaning potentials by many systems (and sub-systems) through the utterance. The language producers select from different systems to express their meanings. Therefore, selecting different grammar expressions is for expressing different meaning potentials, similarly, different words also have different meaning potentials. Therefore, from the perspective of SFG, the legislator of the Macao Basic Law, as the language producer, must have some reasons and particular meanings to express to select to use “正式語文(*zhengshi yuwen*)”.

There are a lot of countries or regions worldwide that regulates the language application in public sectors through legislation, but most of them are post-colonial independent places. Such kind of legislation is generally regarded as a reflection of declaring the national (or regional) sovereignty. In the laws of these countries or regions, the languages used in public sectors are generally called as “official language” (in English), “langue officielle” (in French), and “idioma oficial” (in Spanish), etc. Even the official English version of the *Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China* (hereinafter as “the Hong Kong Basic Law”) and the official Portuguese version the Macao Basic Law adopt the terms “official language” and “língua oficial” respectively. However, in analyzing the Macao Basic Law, we cannot use foreign languages to deduce Chinese expressions, as it has already been mentioned above, the Macao Basic Law is made in Chinese, and the Standing Committee of the NPC has ever made relevant decisions on the Portuguese version of the Macao Basic Law, stating that “if there are discrepancies in the meaning of terms of the Portuguese version with the Chinese version, the Chinese version shall prevail.” What should be the corresponding Chinese term for “official language” and “língua oficial”? Besides the Hong Kong SAR and the Macao SAR of the PRC, the public sectors of the world countries or regions that use or can use Chinese (Chinese/Mandarin) are the Mainland China, Taiwan and Singapore. Relevant provision in the *Constitution of Singapore* is that: “Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English shall be the 4 official languages in Singapore.”²¹ But, the *Constitution of Singapore* has English version only without any Chinese translation for reference. There is a law in the Mainland China – the *Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language*. The term in the law is “國家通用語言/文字(Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language)”, which is mainly aimed at dealing with the practical situation that China is a country with various dialects. There are no official legal provisions in this aspect in Taiwan, but it is discovered that the term “官方語言(*guanfang yuyan*)” can be found in several laws, executive orders and interpretations of the judges.²² By searching domestic Chinese linguistics monographs, corresponding Chinese words for “official language” has always been “官方語文(*guanfang yuwen*)” with the meaning of “the language authorized to be used for official purpose within a country”²³, in many cases, it is “a basic way to express the national sentiment” to establish the official language.²⁴ The use of “正式語文(*zhengshi yuwen*)” is not common, as the word “正式(*zhengshi*)”, literally means “formal”, mainly refers to “conforming to generally recognized standard; conforming to certain procedures”,²⁵ while from the perspective of ordinary linguistics, the “正式性(formality)” of a language represents “the variations of different language styles and registers”. Some of the social situations are more formal, such as conference presentations or discussions; some are less formal, such as casual chats with relatives and friends at home. Correspondingly, the languages used by people have different styles and characteristics. The former use more formal language style, while the later use more casual and informal style.²⁶ Generally speaking, corresponding English equivalence for “正式(*zhengshi*)” is “formal”, but

“formal language” and “official language” are concepts of completely two different categories in linguistics. In all formal documents, besides the Hong Kong Basic Law and the Macao Basic Law, only the documents such as *Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly of the United Nations* and *Multi Languages Adopted in the System of the United Nations* of the United Nations adopt the term “正式語文(*zhengshi yuwen*)” as the Chinese translation of “official language” (in English) and “langue officielle” (in French). The United Nations is an international organization, not a sovereign state. It is slightly improper to use the Chinese term “官方(*guanfang*)”, which has certain relation to the sovereignty of a nation, and can literally mean “authorized by the government of a country or region” or “possesses a legal status”. Although “official” in English has both the meanings of “官方(*guanfang*)” and “正式(*zhengshi*)”²⁷, the Chinese meanings “官方(*guanfang*)” and “正式(*zhengshi*)” are not exactly the same. Perhaps because of this, the Chinese translators made such choices in the documents of the United Nations.

Based on the above discussions, we can see that when drafting Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, the legislator did not use the common words of “官方語文(*guanfang yuwen*)” deliberately, but chose the words of “正式語文(*zhengshi yuwen*)”. This kind of choice is regarded as marked in SFG. Therefore, it cannot simply take “正式語文(*zhengshi yuwen*)” as the same as “官方語文(*guanfang yuwen*)”. The reason why the legislator made such a choice lies in that it has different approaches but equally satisfactory results with the Chinese translation of the United Nations. After all, the second clause of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law goes that “葡文也是正式語文(Portuguese is also an official language)”, where the Subject is “葡文(Portuguese)”. It perhaps does not use “官方(*guanfang*)” deliberately to avoid the concept of the state sovereignty. This potential significance shall not be ignored in the understanding of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law.

Here, we can make a even bolder assumption: the word “也(also)” in the second clause of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law was regarded as an adverb representing a “coordinating” relation with the implicit composition of “中文是正式語文(Chinese is a *zhengshi* language)” omitted; however, from the lexico-grammatical perspective, the omitted composition may also be “中文是官方語文(Chinese is the *guanfang* language)”, the meaning expressed by the omitted grammatical metaphor is not “coordinating” relation but an “affinity”, that is to say, “中文是官方語文，葡文也是正式語文(Chinese is the *guanfang* language, and Portuguese is also a *zhengshi* language)”. If it is true, Chinese and Portuguese are actually different in status. Chinese is the official language with the meaning of representing the national sovereignty, while Portuguese is only a formal language used by the public sectors in daily work. This kind of speculation may be over aggressive and extremely controversial. The author here is not to push the claim, but to rationally point out that from the perspective of SFG discourse analysis, it is possible.

3.4 Speculating the original intents of the legislator

Through the SFG discourse analysis on Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, it can be found that the topic of the whole article is basically around “葡文(Portuguese)”, and descriptions on “中文(Chinese)” is almost glossed over. For example, in the first sentence, “除使用中文外(in addition to the Chinese language)” is not placed as the Theme for emphasis, but is just placed as the subordinate sub-clause as an adverbial; and another example is that in the second clause, contents relevant to Chinese are directly hidden. The biggest reason for the language producer to omit some of the contents is that the omitted content is regarded as the given information, which is supposed to be known with no doubt by the language receiver. As deduced from hereof, from the perspective of the Chinese Government, “澳門特別行政區的行政機關、立法機關和司法機關使用中文(The executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao Special Administrative Region use the Chinese language)” is an already-known and self-evident content unnecessary to discuss. There is a deliberate expression in the Macao Basic Law that “還可使用葡文(may also use Portuguese)”. In fact, it is a kind of respect given by the users of “the strong language” to the users of “the weak

language” and a living space specifically given by “the majority language” to “the minority language”. It must be noted here that as for the language researchers, every language is unique without any difference in strength, size and status. “The strong language” and “the weak language”, and “the major language” and “the minor language” are the concepts of social linguistics, mainly related to the usages and functions of the languages and the number of the population of use, they are relative concepts. As an inalienable part of China, there are over 90% of the population in the Macao SAR are using Chinese. In the society of Chinese people, Chinese is naturally “the strong language” as well as “the majority language”. Therefore, Chinese is naturally a language used in the public sectors. But at the same time, Portuguese is allowed to continue to be used in the public sector of the Macao SAR.

In fact, in the 1980s, China and Portugal consulted over the Macao Question, and signed the Sino-Portugal Joint Declaration. In the second point of the Sino-Portugal Joint Declaration, twelve basic policies of the PRC after the PRC has resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Macao have been listed. These basic policies have been completely adopted in the Macao Basic Law. Among them, as for the status of Chinese and Portuguese in Macao, it is mentioned in the later part of Clause 5, Article 2 of the Sino-Portugal Joint Declaration that: “In addition to the Chinese language, Portuguese may also be used by the government authorities, legislature and courts of the Macao Special Administrative Region.” Compared with Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, the expressions are not exactly the same. The expression in the Sino-Portugal Joint Declaration is basically the same as the first clause of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law. But the second clause of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law that “葡文也是正式語文(Portuguese is also an official language)” does not exist in the Sino-Portugal Joint Declaration, and is added when drafting the Macao Basic Law. This is a kind of consensus reached on the two languages after the signing of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration. As the country to exercise the sovereign power over the Macao SAR, China gives a position on the Portuguese to respect the history.

In summary, the relationship between the Portuguese and Chinese in the public sector of the Macao SAR is different from the traditional concept of bilingualism, and is different from the bilingualism of French and English practiced in Canada. The Portuguese and Chinese are not equivalent in terms of the significance, as the relationship of the two languages is a combination of “the strong language” and “the weak language”, and a coexistence of “the majority language” and “the minority language”, which has reflected the spirit of the implementation of the “One Country, Two Systems” policy in the Macao SAR – that is to seek common grounds while to reserve differences with complementary advantages.

IV. Properly Handling the Official Language Issues of the Macao SAR

After the reunification of Macao, as the fundamental law of the SAR, the rank of the the Macao Basic Law is above all other laws, decrees, administrative regulations and other normative acts. Therefore, all issued regarding to the official languages of the public sectors in the Macao SAR shall be according to Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law. Jeong Wan Chong, Research Fellow of Professor Grade of One Country Two Systems Research Center of Macao Polytechnic Institute has ever pointed out that the legislators wrote Article 9 with only less than 50 (Chinese) characters and less important content in Chapter One “General Principles” of the Macao Basic Law, which seems that the content is not as simple as just language problems. It is not only a measure to solve the communication problems (usually found in multilingual countries or regions) in a country or region to make one or several languages become the communication language of the citizens and the public authorities through laws and regulations, but also a kind of maintenance of national sovereignty, a recognition of national sentiment, and a symbol of the national image. Thus, the

problem of the official languages of Macao is not a simple problem of the internal affairs of the SAR, it is related to the national sovereignty over the Macao SAR. The Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law is "an article to safeguard the sovereignty concept of 'One Country'".²⁸ As a decree issued before the reunification of Macao, if it is not contradicted with the Macao Basic Law, Decree No. 101/99/M can still be valid. However, through the above analysis, if the original intention for the official language of Macao of the legislators of the Macao Basic Law is a coexistence relationship of "the majority language" and "the minority language", it is obvious that the proposal in the foreword of Decree No. 101/99/M that "both the Chinese and Portuguese are the official languages of Macao with the principle of equal dignity" is not consistent with the original intention of Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law. According to the Explanations on the Decision announced by Qiao Xiaoyang at the 12th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 9th NPC on 25th October 1999, it was clearly pointed out in Part 5 that the original laws of Macao can be subject to any amendment or abolition pursuant to the provisions of the Basic Law and legal procedures if found subsequently conflicting herewith. The Macao SAR Government shall carry out review and processing on the Decree No. 101/99/M. In fact, it is not fresh in the voice that the bilingualism proposition proposed in Decree No. 101/99/M with suspect of contradicting the Macao Basic Law²⁹, but the Macao SAR Government has not been responsive, to the contrary, the Macao SAR Government continues to promulgate various executive, legislative and judicial guidelines on this basis. It should be a serious question for the Macao SAR Government whether the Decree No. 101/99/M contravenes Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, as the official language involves not only on the communication, but also includes some political and social interests. It is impossible to result in some deep-seated contradictions if they are handled improperly. Therefore, the Macao SAR Government shall clarify the issue in the concept. The concept shall be correct, in addition, there are categories to be broken in specific operational technical aspects. For a long time, in the legislative and judicial field of Macao, it has been emphasized that the Portuguese is "the strong language", while the Chinese is "the weak language", which is contrary to the language state of the entire Macao society. As a result, there is a gap between the legal language and the language used in the society of Macao, which is also the main focus contradiction of the Macao society in terms of the official language issue. In fact, even though we handle affairs according to the "Chinese and Portuguese equity" concept in the Decree No. 101/99/M, Chinese and Portuguese are fundamentally unequal in the legislative and judicial field, where the Portuguese has always been the mainstream language, whereas in the administrative area, the problems is not that prominent. This is indeed a problem left over in history, but it should not be used as a reason not to deal with the problems by the Macao SAR Government. It has been over 14 years since the reunification, and the work in this aspect has not been done well. For instance, the legislation process is still written in Portuguese firstly, and then translated into Chinese. The access of the legal secretary is actually taking the knowledge of Portuguese as the main factor, which is inevitably resulting in the speculation of the public that the government's act of omission is to ensure the vested interest of a particular social group. The Macao linguistics circle has been insisting not to take Chinese and Portugal into the state of "a life-or-death struggle", and believes that we shall focus on cultivating bilingual talents with high standard both Chinese skills and Portuguese skills to solve the technical problems. Only in this way can the situation be changed, and the legislative and judicial Portuguese tendency will be gradually changed to Chinese tendency.³⁰ However, the reality is that the talents are short, and in order to ensure the quality of Portuguese documents, many government departments shall also invite "Portuguese experts" from Portugal to check the quality, but most of the "Portuguese experts" do not know Chinese, and shall use the third language such as English to communicate with the Chinese people. As more and more resources need to be used in this aspect, the efficiency of the public sector thus slows down.

Finally, we must point out that Portuguese as an official language in Macao has its positive

significance, after all, the legal sources in Macao has strong Portugal color, and Macao, as a multicultural society, is a platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. It will be more favorable for the development of the Macao society and the whole country to ensure the living space of Portuguese in Macao, which is also the positive significance of the status of Portuguese endowed by the Macao Basic Law. There are many ways to cultivate bilingual talents of Chinese and Portuguese, and strengthen the acceptance of Portuguese as a social language in Macao. For example, the SAR Government lately expressed the concern on the language skills of the students in Macao when promulgated the *10-Year Planning of Non-Higher Education Development*, and will provide financial aids for the non-higher education institutions to offer Portuguese course³¹, which is a soft measure as well as an effective approach. On the contrary, it will be against the original will of the legislation of the Macao Basic Law and the real social conditions in Macao to overemphasize the political importance of Portuguese. After all, it is different to protect the living space of “minority languages” and treating the two languages as equal. When dealing with official language problems, the SAR Government shall be prudent, “because language is an emotional matter, opposition to a language can become violent”³², in the event of conflict, the contradictions will be not only in culture, but will be more likely to affect the social harmony and the political stability. It is the cautious attitude truly favorable for the long-term peace and order of the Macao SAR to correctly understand Article 9 of the Macao Basic Law, clarify the problems from the concepts, conscientiously study the language use in Macao, and carefully plan the language development of Macao.

Notes:

- ¹ A Wu (2012). Civil Service Bureau Proposing Ridiculous Guideline on Public Information Release, a Thought-Provoking Move and Motivation of a Waste of Public Fund and Impairment to National Dignity. *Jornal Informacao (Son Pou)*. 18th May 2012. P01.
- ² Union of Macao Scholars Secretariat (2011). Summary of the Academic Seminar of “Legal Language Reform and the Cultivation of Bilingual People”. *Academic Journal of One Country Two Systems (Chinese Version)*. Volume 10. 163-149. See the speech of Fang Quan.
- ³ Wang Shuwen (Ed.) (1993). *Introduction to the Basic Law of Macao Special Administrative Region*. Beijing: China People’s Public Security University Press. 105-106.
- ⁴ Xiao Weiyun (1994). “*One Country, Two Systems*” and the Basic Law of Macao Special Administrative Region. Beijing: Peking University Press. 77-78.
- ⁵ Jeong Wan Chong (2011). *Interpretation to the Basic Law of Macao*. Macao: Associação de Divulgação da Lei Básica de Macau. 42-43; Wang Yu (2008). *Authorization and Autonomy*. Macao: Associação de Estudos Jurídico de Hou Kong. 27-28; Zhao Guoqiang (2010). Thoughts on Some Issues about Law Reform. *Academic Journal of One Country Two Systems (Chinese Version)*. Volume 4. 40-45.
- ⁶ Nuno Calado (1997). Algumas Reflexões em Torno do Bilinguismo Oficial (Some Reflections about Bilingualism of Official Language). *Perspectivas do Direito*. Number 1. 1-8
- ⁷ Yu Wei (2009). Decades of Slogans for Law Reform, Mountains of Cases for Judges. *Jornal Informacao (Son Pou)*. 23rd October 2009.
- ⁸ Ching Cheung Fai (2005). Mandarin, Authorative Language and Official Language. *Macao Daily News*. 9th January 2005. D06.
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- ¹⁰ Union of Macao Scholars Secretariat (2011). Summary of the Academic Seminar of “Legal Language Reform and

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- 12 Halliday, M. A. K. and C. M. I. M. Matthiessen (2004). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar (3rd Edition)*. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Limited.
- 13 Thompson, G. (1996). *Introducing Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold (Publishers) Limited.
- 14 Hou Xuechao (1998). *Modern Chinese Dictionary of Function Words*. Beijing: Peking University Press. 251-256.
- 15 Institute of Linguistics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Ed.) (2008). *Modern Chinese Dictionary (Traditional Chinese Edition)*. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press. 648-649.
- 16 Hou Xuechao (1998). *Modern Chinese Dictionary of Function Words*. Beijing: Peking University Press. 615-620.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Kuan Kun Hong (2006). O Valor das Versões Chinesa e Portuguesa dos Diplomas Legais no Sistema de Legislação Bilingue da RAEM (Study on the Effect of Chinese and Portuguese Legal Texts in the Bilingual Legislation of Macao). *Administração*. Volume 9, Issue 1. 99-123.
- 19 Ching Cheung Fai (2005). Mandarin, Authorative Language and Official Language. *Macao Daily News*. 9th January 2005. D06.
- 20 Nuno Calado (1997). Algumas Reflexões em Torno do Bilinguismo Oficial (Some Reflections about Bilingualism of Official Language). *Perspectivas do Direito*. Number 1. 1-8; Gary Ngai (1994). Sobre o Bilinguismo Administrativo (On the Administrative Bilingualism). *Administração*. Volume 7, Issue 1. 213-217.
- 21 See Article 153A of *Constitution of the Republic of Singapore*.
- 22 The author input keywords such as “官方語文(*guanfang yuwen*)” / “官方語言(*guanfang yuyan*)” and “正式語文(*zhengshi yuwen*)” / “正式語言(*zhengshi yuyan*)” on the “Database Web Portal of National Laws and Regulations” of Taiwan with several results found for “官方語言(*guanfang yuyan*)” only.
- 23 Qi Yucun and et al. (1993). *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Linguistic*. Shanghai. Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House. 352.
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