THE YIN AND YANG ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Much like the studies on language birth -- the processes of pidginization and creolization (see Foley 1988) -- more and more studies have been dedicated to the phenomenon of language death (e.g., Dressler 1988). Language death occurs in unstable bilingual or multilingual speech communities as a result of language shift from a regressive minority language to a dominant majority language. Some languages are "dead" as a result of having been transformed into daughter languages (Dressler (1988) gives an example of standard Latin being replaced by standard Spanish), leaving the dead written form with no speakers. Other languages die when the the entire speech community dies, as in the case of the Californian language Yaki (see Swadesh, 1948). Still other languages (e.g., Lushootseed) are "dying" partially due to the lack of an effective means to record and widely spread their use, and linguists are trying to "rescue" these languages by providing them with a proper written system in the hope that such a system will make it easier for these languages to be learned or acquired as "healthy" languages. If a language can be dead or dying, questions arise: What are the essential components of a healthy language? From the experience of such languages as Latin and Lushootseed (though some may not consider them appropriate examples), can we say that the co-existence of both spoken and written systems of a language forms the basic life structure of a given language? What is the principal mechanism that keeps a language healthy? These questions may not find ready answers in today's mainstream theoretical linguistics, but the key to these questions can be found in an oriental philosophy of the *Taoist* yin-yang theory.

The Chinese *Taoism* structures the universe out of ever-changing yin and yang energies, the balance or harmony of which is "the way" *(Tao)* to develop all natural existence, including language. Modern linguistic theories seem to have "sliced" language into tiny pieces such as phonemes, moras, tonemes, features, etc. There are sub-disciplinary boundaries between linguistic branches such as syntax, phonology, semantics, in which different aspects of language are studied from a separate angle. From a Taoist point of view, language is an inseparable harmonious whole. It has followed its own basic law to develop into what it is now. No matter what sub-disciplines the study of language is divided into, linguists are dealing with one thing: the relationship between two categories -- *yin* and *yang*. This seeming disregard for sub-disciplinary boundaries reflects the unitary and integrative vision of Taoism, whose strong undercurrent of oneness is so pervasive in many oriental cultures (Givon 1989).

This paper looks at the nature of language structure from a Taoist point of view, showing that language as a natural existence is composed of unifying yin and yang elements, the due proportion of which assures the well-formedness, or the "healthiness", of a given language. All aspects of language involve the interdependence, mutual control, and mutual transformation of yin and yang in the language. The constant interaction between yin and yang aims to keep the balance and the "harmonious whole" of the language structure and its grammatical functions. Language disorders occur once such yin-yang balance is lost.

2.0 THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF THE YIN-YANG THEORY

Yin and *Yang* are originally separate concepts representing "exposed to the sun" (yang) and "facing the opposite direction of the sun" (yin). Later on, these two terms were extended to stand for the opposite two sides of an object or an event. The major symbolic representation of the Taoist doctrine of complementarity of opposites is the emblem of the Supreme Ultimate (*Tai Ji*), made from yin and yang (see Fig. 1. below). *Yang* corresponds to:

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heaven, light, fire, life, masculinity, movement,
and anything that is bright, warm, light, invisible, strong,
dynamic, going out/up, active or positive
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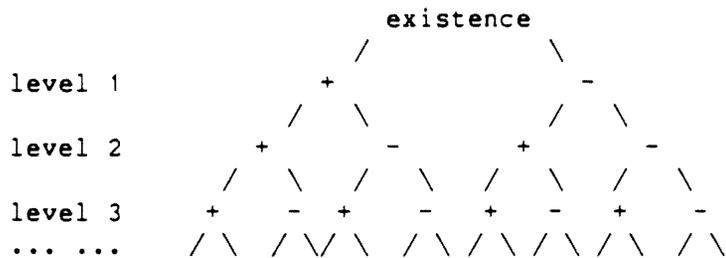
while *Yin* corresponds to:

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earth, darkness, water, death, femininity, stillness,
and anything that is dark, cold, heavy, restricted, waning,
static, going in/down, passive, or negative
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There are four major principles within the yin-yang theory: opposition, interdependence, mutual complementarity, and mutual transformation. *Opposition* suggests the polarity within any complete entity. Unlike post-Socratic Western epistemology, which is founded upon categories that are discrete and mutually exclusive, the Taoist approach to categories recognizes the relativity of binary distinctions, the fact that they are polar only within a limited context (Givon 1989). As Lao Tzu pointed out in his *Tao Teh King* (see Bahm 1980), all distinctions naturally appear as opposites. Each member of a pair of opposites gets its meaning from the other and finds its completion only through the other. The dark and the light reflect each other, the hard and the soft explain each other, the long and the short reveal each other, the high and the low define each other (Givon 1989). The relationship between the two opposites shows the nature of yin-yang *interdependence*, indicating that yin and yang contain each other, and one is not complete or cannot survive without the other. Furthermore, the opposites do not remain in a fixed state: they are *mutually complementary* and are constantly waxing and waning. As explained in *Tao Teh King* (see Bahm 1980), what shrinks must first be large, what falls must first be high. Some things go fast while others lag, some things grow strong while others wilt. When day goes further, it becomes night, and when night goes further it becomes day. Therefore, the opposites *transform* into each other under certain conditions. These examples illustrate the simple materialistic Taoist world outlook, which has given theoretic guidance to philosophy, religion, education, sociology, medicine, and many other fields. In general, yin and yang are the basic features of all phenomena, and they exist at different levels in the structure of a natural existence (see Fig. 2.).

(FIG. 1)

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                                    existence
                                  /           \
        level 1                  +              -
                               /   \          /   \
        level 2               +     -        +     -
                            /  \  /  \     /  \  /  \
        level 3            +   - +   -    +   - +   -
        ... ...           /\  / \/ \  /\ / \/ \/ \  /\
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(FIG. 2)

Taoism advocates that yin and yang are the laws of all beings. According to *Huang-Di Nei-Jing*, a classical work on traditional Chinese medical theories based on the yin-yang philosophy (written about 2000 years ago), "to follow (the laws of yin and yang) means life; to act contrary to (the laws of yin and yang) means death. To follow these (laws) results in order; to act contrary to them results in chaos" (Unschuld 1988: 13). To treat a human being's physical disorder, the principle practice of traditional Chinese medicine is to balance and regularize the yin and yang of the patient's internal structure. To save a language, or to maintain the normal functions of a language, linguists should be aware of the yin and yang aspects of the language structure before prescribing effective methods. The application of yin-yang theory in language studies is relatively novel, but it does seem to explain why a language can be dead or dying, since "death" in this theory is defined as separation of yin and yang. Language is a unity of activity and passivity, thought and feeling, spiritual timelessness and material temporality, individuality and society (Bailey 1982). The Taoist yin-yang concept provides a unifying relation that prevents these oppositions from being antagonistic and truncated, making them complementary and mutually fulfilling. A better understanding of the yin and yang aspects of language may help understand why languages can be "healthy" and "dead", and what linguists can do to promote language continuity.

3.0 THE YIN AND YANG ASPECTS IN LANGUAGE

Modern linguistics has segmented language into many units and has classified these units into different categories. A yin-yang theorist looks at language in just two basic bipolar categories at each level of the language structure. The yin and yang concept are similar to, but significantly different from, the traditional oppositions of matter vs. mind, concreteness vs. abstractness, mechanism vs. organism, etc. They are similar in that they both emphasize the polarity or the binary features of "things", which are based on a static philosophy. They are different in that the yin and yang philosophy also believes in the dynamic and processual relations between the polarities. Traditional oppositions have lead linguists to attempt developmental and comparative analyses of language with models that are explicitly "synchronic" and "idiolectal" (see Bailey 1982). These developmental and comparative approaches were in a way predicted long ago by the yin-yang theory. If language is considered as a multi-level structure both in form and its communicational functions, the yin-yang balance can be seen at each level and at each communicational aspect.

3.1 Yin and Yang in Language Structure

Language is a yin-yang balanced hierarchical structure with different elements at different levels (e.g., phonemes, syllables, words, sentences, discourse). Sentences in a language (e.g., English) are divided into positive (a yang feature) sentences (1a) and negative (yin) ones (1b). A positive sentence can again be subdivided into active (yang) sentences (2a) and passive (yin) ones (2b).

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(1) a John loves Mary.
    b John does not love Mary.

(2) a John is watching.
    b John is watched.
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Positive and active sentences are dominant in a language in that they are more productive, easier to comprehend, and hence more frequently used than negative and passive ones. These two classes of sentences show not only the opposition of language structure at sentence level, but also the

interdependence of the two opposites. Without either of the sentence forms, the feeling of John toward Mary in (1) cannot be precisely conveyed (with the lexical items provided in the sentence), and the relation between John and the act of "watch" in (2a) and (b) will not be distinguished. It is the coexistence of these two (yin and yang) classes of sentences that makes it possible for different meanings to be expressed through sentences in communication.

Similarly, linguistic units at word level also demonstrate the yin and yang aspects. Apart from the fact that word gender plays a role in many languages such as French (e.g., *le ciel* 'the sky' (masculine), *la terre* 'the earth' (feminine)), lexical items in general fall into an open class (dominant, actively changing, hence of the yang nature) and a closed class (subdominant, relatively stable, hence of the yin nature), the due proportion of which assures the well-formedness of sentences in a given language. One cannot imagine a language without content words or morphemes, and sentences without function words would also be incomprehensible. Also, bipolarity is an important character of the semantic features of a word. The unmarkedness and markedness seem to suggest more of the yin-yang opposition and interdependence throughout the semantic domain of a balanced human lexicon. Although the unmarked member of a word pair is considered to be "usual" and "normal", and is therefore more often used, words such as *far* or *deep* cannot be very meaningful without their marked counterparts (*near* or *shallow* in this case) in comparison.

One level further down, we see that a syllable, the basic sound unit of a word, varies between stressed and non-stressed, toned and non-toned, strong and weak, long and short, etc. It is these different features of a syllable and their interactions that make up the complete concept of "syllable". Note that a typical syllable is formed from a consonant and a vowel. It is the different combinations of vowels and consonants that produce the prosodic melody of human speech. Therefore, the contrast between vowels and consonants seems to make the two a pair of unifying opposites since no natural language consists of only vowels but no consonants, or vice versa. Unlike other contrasted features in a language (e.g., positive/negative, active/passive, open/closed, etc.) which can easily match up with the yin and yang feature description in the Taoist polarity philosophy, consonants and vowels pose the question as to whether one is more dominant or active (hence of the yang nature) than the other. The emphasis of this discussion is on the contrast and the interrelationship between two opposites, and a yin/yang definition at this point is neither important nor necessary, but some simple language facts do provide an answer. Consonants are greater in number than vowels in most (if not all) known languages and more variant across languages. They are more expressive and carry more of the phonetic characteristics of a give language. Therefore, it is the consonants that decide the phonetic shape of a given language. Vowels, on the other hand, are relatively stable, and they form a minor part of the phonetic inventory in languages. A striking contrast between consonants and vowels in terms of their activeness and expressiveness is also found in a telegraphic writing system. For example, a sentence like *"Thanks for your message"* can never be shortened to only a combination of vowels such as *"a o ou eae"*, but the group of consonants in the same sentence may convey exactly the same meaning without vowels, such as *"thnks fr yr mssg"*, which can be clearly understood. Despite the clear contrast, vowels and consonants are inseparable. In languages such as Bella Coola, there are words or one-word sentences that contain only consonants but no vowels (e.g., *sp'* 'hit'; *qsx* 'rope'; etc.), but these utterances cannot be longer than one morpheme, or vowels have to be inserted (e.g., *spĭs* 'he hit him'; *tiqsxts* 'the rope'). Likewise, insertion of consonants between vowels is also required in cases such as *an eye* in English, and *mon amie* 'my girl friend' in French, as well as the glottal stop insertion such as *ta ʔai ʔanjing* 'he loves quietness' in Chinese.

These language phenomena seem to reflect the basic yin-yang principle: language at any structure level requires contrasting opposite components -- the dominant yang and the subdominant yin. They oppose each other in nature but are interdependent. When yang grows out of its due proportion, it has to be balanced with yin, and vice versa. When certain parts of linguistic systems are lost in a language in the course of simplification, they will be compensated by increased complexity and enrichment in other parts. For example, Old English was simplified by loss of case forms, categories, and finally, almost the entire system of case marking, but in compensation, prepositional constructions flourished, word order became more rigid, and obligatory articles were introduced (Dressler 1988). If structural loss is not compensated, or not balanced, the language decays, becomes partly dysfunctional, and eventually dies. Such a self-regulating system is what the yin-yang theory describes as "harmonization". If this natural law of language is broken, language "unhealthiness" or "death" is the result.

3.2 Yin and Yang in Language Use and Communication

The effect of yin and yang features as a harmonization power occurs in other aspects of language, such as communication. The foregoing vision of wholeness is clearly shown through everyday communication, where we see the two opposite but mutually complementary sides of language functions. Language is all-pervasive in our lives, and its function is that of communication. Basically, this task is carried out by two related but separated activities, the activities of speaking and listening (Kess 1992). Successful, or healthy, communication requires not only the active process of speech production on the side of the speaker, but also the active participation of the listener. In most conversations, the speaker plays the "active" and "dominating" part (the yang feature). The listener, on the other hand, is relatively "passive" (the yin feature), absorbing what the speaker has to say. Therefore, speaking and listening are a pair of unified yin-yang factors that make conversation a harmonious, whole event. A speaker without a listener will not talk normally (even those who talk to themselves have at least themselves as the listener). Of course, the listener in a conversation must signal a not completely passive participation, and provide the speaker with the "auditor back-channel signals" (see Kess 1992). Such signals, however, cannot be sent without the presence of the speaker. The speaker and the listener are mutually interdependent through the principle of turn-taking (wax and wane). When a speaker keeps talking without offering a turn to the listener (the yang is growing out of its due proportion), he or she is breaking the conversational rule and the harmonious whole of the communication process is affected. At this point, it is usually the case that the listener will take the floor (a way to balance the yin and yang in the conversation). The mutual dependence of yin and yang characters in conversation is clearly indicated.

A healthy conversation is one with the yin and yang elements in "due proportion". Too much talking from the speaker with little response from the listener (too much yang with not enough yin) will not keep up the conversation for long (because it is a dull or unhealthy one). If speaker and listener are talking at the same time without following the turn-taking conversation rule (surplus yang with no yin to balance), the conversation is dead. Too much response from the listener to a very quiet speaker (surplus yin and not enough yang) would be unnatural and even pretentious. It would be hard to imagine how a listener would respond to a speaker if the speaker is not speaking at all (lack of yang). Therefore, this "due proportion" of yin and yang in a successful conversation depends on many factors such as the partners' age, gender, education, personality, degree of intimacy between the partners, communication skills, social experience, the content of the conversation, and so forth. The same is true with written communication. When writing, a writer needs to take the reader into consideration in terms of how the writing will affect the read-

er and how the reader will possibly respond. Without the readers in mind, a writer can never write properly. If nothing were ever written by anyone, readers would not exist.

Address pattern in social interaction is another area where the unifying yin and yang features work to keep social relationship harmonious. Address behavior is an important part of communication, which involves such unifying opposites as superior/inferior, distance/intimacy, power/solidarity, nonreciprocal/reciprocal, asymmetry/symmetry, and so forth. Some scholars even suggest the high "Vous" form and the low "Tu" form (Brown & Gilman 1960; Braun 1988, among others) which seem to be a pair of social opposites. All these terms can, in fact, be generalized into just two categories: yin and yang. The way one addresses other people is closely related to how one feels about other people. Society is structured as such a complicated relational system -- from one's boss to one's employees, from one's family members and close friends to those people from whom one wants to keep a certain degree of social distance -- that one has to keep adjusting one's address behavior to always locate oneself properly on the social scale. The V form, being related to the "high" and "dominating" class, is a yang category, and the T form falls into the yin category in the "harmonious whole" of the address system. If only one form exists without the other to balance, the feelings of the addresser to the addressee will not be properly expressed, and the different social relationships and the social and cultural structures of a community will not be differentiated. Such an undifferentiated address pattern is unnatural so long as different classes exist. Also, V and T can transform into each other under certain circumstances. A respected V class addressee can become a close partner of the speaker and be thus addressed with the T form (yang becomes yin); and when the partnership cools off, social distance grows, and the V form may replace the T form between the addresser and the addressee (yin becomes yang). This typically illustrates the inter-transformation process well described in the yin-yang theory.

3.3 Yin and Yang in other Linguistic Aspects

The yin and yang features of language can be seen not just in language structures and language communicational functions; they are also pervasive in all other aspects of language, such as language acquisition, cross-language interaction, and the relationship between language and other disciplines.

The two major factors of language acquisition for a child are the innate language capacity of the child and the language input from the environment in which the target language is acquired. Between these two factors, the innate language capacity is the abstract, invisible cognitive ability to actively respond to the language input. The innate language capacity is active and dominant (yang) in the process of language acquisition in that it is variable; it enables the child to acquire whatever language the child is exposed to. In contrast, the speech environment is a constant, and the language input appears in concrete and solid (yin) syntactic and phonological shapes. It is the integration of the two that makes language acquisition possible. Mentally disabled and brain damaged children have great difficulties acquiring language (due to the lack of yang). Feral children, those with poor or no language exposure (lack of yin), do not acquire language as normal children do. These facts illustrate that separation of yin and yang results in an unbalanced, or unhealthy language acquisition process.

Language borrowing between a dominant language and a subdominant language is another area where the yin-yang balance leads to more efficient communication. Languages include words and expressions borrowed from other languages and cultures. This kind of borrowing is of even

greater importance in today's international communication and there is almost no language in which loan words do not exist. Therefore, indigenous and borrowed language items, though opposite in nature, are interdependent. It is their integration that makes the communication functions of a language a harmonious whole. One's native language, being natural and innate, is usually dominant over a second or a foreign language. But this dominance may change (or transform) into subdominance due to social, socio-economic, socio-psychological and political factors. The two unifying opposites (indigenous and borrowed linguistic elements) of a healthy language have to be in a balanced "due proportion". Once this balance is lost, a language may decay or die. There are several causes for such language decay. The first involves massive lexical influx from the dominant language into the recessive language. As Dressler (1988) points out, these loan words tend to be treated as citation words, with little or no phonological and morphological integration, and yet they are still used as normal words of the indigenous language. Without the step of transformation, these loaned words do not enrich the recessive language, but simply replace the indigenous words. Secondly, the borrowing of morphological suffixes makes the synonymous indigenous suffixes become unproductive. Once the grammatical system of a language becomes unproductive, the language becomes unhealthy. More deadly to a language than the two previous factors is word-formation rules ceasing to be productive. The language of technology, culture, etc. has changed from the recessive language to the dominant language, discouraging and gradually stopping the speakers of recessive languages from creating new words by native rules (see Dressler 1988). When the influence of the dominant language becomes stronger and stronger (showing more and more of the yang nature with less and less yin to balance), the harmony is eventually lost, and the recessive language dies.

To extend this discussion a little further, the study of language involves not only the pure linguistic facts, but also other related disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, cognitive science, philosophy, history, and religion. It is the integration of these interrelated studies that makes the study of language an active one. Such interdisciplinary integration, in a broad sense, is well predicted by the yin-yang philosophy. For example, the study of language is an important part of psychology, which, in turn, has been partially combined into linguistic studies in the subdiscipline of psycholinguistics. Whether this study should be called the psychology of language or psycholinguistics really depends on the proportion of the two aspects, which further explains that the "due proportion" of the unifying opposites decides the nature of the whole.

4.0 THE YIN-YANG UNBALANCE AND LANGUAGE DISORDERS

As discussed earlier, language is a hierarchical structure with yin and yang elements balanced at different levels. If the balance is lost, a certain degree of language disorder will occur. Apart from the fact that physical and mental disorders may cause speech disorders (e.g., aphasic patients), normal speakers also experience temporary speech disorders (slips of the tongue) in the course of normal speech production, due to loss of temporary yin-yang balance.

Speech production is the process of a speaker translating information and intentions into the language format of a given language. Speech production requires not only the language material, but also the speaker's active cognitive activity -- thinking and planning. Therefore, speech production is a high-level, balanced unity of speech intention (yang) and the concrete language material (yin) used for speech production. The ideal speech production process involves the speech intention that is perfectly matched with the target speech material. But real time speech is filled with paus-

es and hesitations, corrections, repeats and replacements, and even slips of the tongue. In Fromkin's (1971) terms, these anomalous utterances are, in fact, non-anomalous in nature. They reflect the linguistic rules which are misapplied in the course of speech production. Linguists and psychologists (e.g., Caplan, 1984; Garrett, 1988; Fay, 1980; Stemberger, 1985) have been arguing about the real nature of language production using the evidence from speech errors. With the yin-yang theory, speech errors occur simply because of the fact that many factors influence the natural balance of yin and yang at various levels of the speech production mechanism.

Speech intention and speech material are interdependent, but mutually opposing. When speech intention is weak in cases when the speaker is not well prepared for the speech (lack of yang), unplanned speech material will occur, resulting in repetition, pause fillers such as 'ah...', 'uh..', 'well...I mean...' and 'you know...'. On the other hand, when the speaker's speech intention is extremely strong under special circumstances (surplus of yang), the speech material used is often much less than normal, usually resulting in repeated one-word utterances such as 'help', 'fire', and 'stop'. These speech phenomena seem to show the yin-yang waxing and waning process in which the relative balance of the speech is adjusted. Without such yin-yang mutual adjustment in the course of speech production, the spoken discourse will be unnatural and disordered.

When the speaker has formed a speech intention, which is balanced with the matching speech material, the process itself becomes a balanced harmony, given that the intention and the material are already in "due proportion". But this balance can be influenced by factors such as other competing speech intentions which activate the processing of non-targeted items, or other competing lexical items that interfere with the processing of the targeted speech. These competing intentions/ lexical items (which can be called extra yang or yin) break the otherwise structural balance of the intended speech, resulting in various types of phonological, syntactical, and semantic speech errors. When a speech intention is formed, the mind (yang) has to select its best balancing lexical items (yin) from among the possible choices (which are usually related to the target in one way or another). If the competing items are over-activated, the balance is lost and an error occurs. For example, when the English lexical item 'trouble' is competing with the targeted item 'problem', the semantic similarity between the two weakens the balancing process of speech production, resulting in 'troublem'. an error of the blending type. Freudian slips discussed in Motley (1985) suggest that hidden motives and anxieties are likely to knock the speech production off the yin-yang balance and increase the incidence of speech errors. For example, subjects produced 'bare shoulders' for 'share bolders' (when elicited by a provocatively dressed woman experimenter), 'damn shock' for 'sham dock' (when informed that an electric shock will occur during the experiment) (see Motley 1985). An explanation for this kind of speech error will be that the environmental stimulus causes an extra emotional (yin) influence over the intellectual (yang) performance. The intellectual performance can be balanced if the emotional change of the speaker is within the "due proportion", and the speech production will remain normal, and such errors can be spared. This is why emotionally influenced speakers tend to make more slips of the tongue (Motley 1985).

In general, speech errors of different types provide evidence that language production is processed with interacting speech units at different levels. Speech units of different categories carry yin or yang features. Speech production levels can be high, abstract, and functional (which are of the yang nature), or low, concrete, and positional (which are of the yin nature). When these units at different levels possess the "due proportion" of the yin and yang features, the language structure is balanced and language performance tends to be normal. When the language structure is unbalanced due to many influential factors, speech errors tend to occur.

5.0 FURTHER DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

The ancient Chinese yin-yang theory claims to explain the nature of all the phenomena in the universe, including language behaviors, by the integration of their opposites. Modern linguists seldom realize this claim since modern linguistics is a relatively recent study that has been dominated by western theories. In fact, the approach applied to linguistic research is in itself an event that contains yin and yang factors. If language studies are based too much on theories and concepts that are new, and neglect those that are old, the research will become "unbalanced". What is old must be new first, and must have had its significance and made its contribution. Eastern and Western philosophies are interdependent and mutually fulfilling when they are applied to reasoning about cross-cultural phenomena such as language and communication. A language is healthy when all the yin and yang elements at each level are properly balanced, either due to its internal adjustability or its external influences, such as social, socio-economic, socio-political, or psychological factors. Once such balance is lost, whether at levels of language form, structure, or communicational functions, a language may decay. Returning to the question of "the basic life structure of a language" posed at the beginning of this paper, spoken and written forms of a language are, indeed, the two major forms that represent a language and all its internal structures as well as its communication functions. For however long the history of human language may be, the spoken form has been the dominating form in communication while written language, as a learned complementary communication form, has a history of only a few thousand years. But these two language forms have now become inseparable in today's global communication. Language forms must develop with the development of communication needs to keep the yin-yang balance. Although all natural languages are traditionally believed to function equally well for the communicational purposes of their users, written language conveys a more formal, precise, well-edited message than does spontaneous speech. On the other hand, the liveliness and the subtle tonal or intonational differences of the speech form often fail to be expressed by written language, since speech behaviors vary so much between different speakers and in different contexts. Therefore, a language with both spoken and written forms has a balanced life structure and is much healthier than languages that have only one form in terms of communication, historical records, education and public media, etc. Languages that have written forms are often spoken. If they are not spoken, they are dead (e.g., Latin). Languages with only spoken forms will either develop a written form (like Lushootseed), or eventually be replaced by a "healthier" language that has both forms. With the fast development of science and technology, as well as the ever growing need for global communication, it is evident that the imbalance of language form (which is in violation of the natural law of yin-yang interdependence) could at least limit or reduce a language's productivity and communicational functions. For example, languages with no writing system cannot be used in the rapidly expanding global communication system, such as the internet. When distant written communication through computers becomes a must to people's daily life, the spoken-only languages will be much less encouraged for their use and they face even greater threat for survival.

Language, like any other natural existence, contains yin and yang elements whose mutual opposition, interdependence, mutual supplement and mutual transformation decide the very existence and development of language. Linguists and language users in general should be fully aware of the yin and yang natures of language, follow the law of nature to protect languages, promote language education, encourage the proper use of healthy languages, and prevent language disorders by regularizing and balancing the linguistic yin and yang. Only through the effort of all language users can human language in general remain a harmonious whole.

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