



Media breathes new life into dying dialects

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One way of breathing new life into a dying dialect and sustaining it as a living language is to increase its prestige and accessibility, language experts say. This is where such media as TV and radio come in.

"People identify prestige with multimedia presentations," says William Wang, director of the Joint Research Center for Language and Human Complexity at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Below are some new Chinese media products that celebrate their creators' dialects:

Novel: Fan Hua (Shanghai dialect)

First released on an online forum, the novel explores how the lives of Shanghai's different social classes have changed since the 1960s. Critics say the author Jin Yucheng has deftly captured on paper his native tongue's tone, tempo and emotions. The China Academy of Fiction named Fan Hua (Blossoms) the country's top fiction work of 2012.

Film: Feng Shui (Wuhan dialect)

The film, set in Hubei's provincial capital Wuhan, follows the life of local resident Li Baoli. After moving into an apartment with bad feng shui, Li loses her husband and her son's trust, and takes a dock porter job to make ends meet. But Li is determined to defy superstition and refuses to move out of her "unlucky apartment". The film, directed by Wang Jing and based on Wuhanese writer Fang Fang's eponymous novel, has won some of China's biggest film awards in the past year.

Music album: Some Other Scenery (Haifeng dialect)

Wutiaoren, an urban folk music duo from Guangdong province's southeastern county of Haifeng, has gained popularity for performances in their local dialect. They sing about urban migration, alienation in modern society, and the joys and pains of young people in small southern towns. Wutiaoren's latest album, Some Other Scenery (2012), bagged the twosome the "best band" prize at the Chinese Music Media Awards in September.

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