

## Language Choice and Ideology in Multicultural Taiwan

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In this paper, we look at language choices made in a language policy in a multicultural context, using Taiwan's experience to point out the many contentions and predicaments of politics and identity in an emerging democracy. We also look into the ideology behind the power struggles and decision-making. We do not see language policy as a means of assigning status to different languages or appropriating resources for classification and corpus. Rather, we are interested in the socio-political aspect of a language policy especially as it relates to identity formation and we treat discourse on language policy as fraught with tensions between the state and various interest groups. That is, narratives for promoting or abolishing a certain form of language policy—assimilationism, pluralism, multiculturalism—become emotionally charged as they concern not only language per se, but how policy envisions and enacts ties of language to identity, morality and epistemology. Moreover, we point out that language policy in a multicultural context implies conflict and controversy as it becomes the object of contention not only over symbolic recognition of minorities but also over the appropriation of educational resources and status for linguistic diversity. We propose a liberal neutral position for the state in ensuring fair play among the competitors, a non-goal oriented attitude in its intervention for setting up a legal framework for respect and protection as well as a common public language for democratic deliberation, social mobility and identity formation in a multicultural context.

Key words: language choice, ideology, multiculturalism, identity politics

### 1. Introduction

Language policy is important not only for politicians to appropriate resources and implement programs but also for speakers to assign function and status with some programs and authenticity and standardization with others. Linguistic diversity does not always invite dispute nor does it often come without a problem. How diversity is conceptualized by both speakers of a language and policy makers for the state can make or break genuine communication or even affect the outcome of a war. In biblical times, the tower of Babel was a case in point where the insistence of using one's own language generates disputes that lead to a communication breakdown. On the other hand, the

search for a common language often comes during intense power struggles as is often the case for nation states. The group with the upper hand and the resources often gets to promulgate its language variety as the one that should be used by all, while any unchosen languages tend to be subordinated, marginalized, or eventually even face extinction. Increasing democratization with the end of the cold war has brought new ways of conceptualizing linguistic diversity. Uncommon languages are no longer considered a hindrance to civilization or to salvation, nor do they threaten dominant groups; they are now viewed as a valuable resource to be protected and preserved, and their use has become an inalienable right (cf. May 2001). The conceptualization of linguistic diversity thus serves as a useful tool to understand the intricacies of language policy. Moreover, we situate the issues on language policy in Taiwan from a more heuristic and integrative perspective. That is, we look at language policies implemented through the centuries in Taiwan, ever since the island was variously governed: during the Dutch and Spanish period; as part of the Qīng Dynasty; under Japanese colonial rule; under the KMT (Guómíndǎng or Chinese Nationalists) with their Mandarin-only approach; and with the new millennium a new régime with a new policy initiated by the Ministry of Education (MOE). We evaluate the drastic changes that authorities have to make in response to imperialism, evangelism, nationalism, globalization, indigenization, and multiculturalism; and we make suggestions for a common public language in a multicultural context.

## **1.1 Managing choices in language policy**

We view language policy as management in the networking of different languages. This position is a deliberate attempt to break away from the goal-oriented approach advocated by most monolingual nationalistic policies, where the aim is to set up a common public language for all, serving the purpose of nation building. Under this scheme, decisions about language use in public school, in the delivery of public services, in the courts, the voting booth, and so on, are all calculated to achieve this objective (cf. Patten 2003:365). Our approach also differs from the language-maintenance model, which, in contrast to the previous approach, shifts priorities to the maintenance and protection of particular language communities vulnerable to marginalization and total absorption. Under either language convergence or language maintenance scheme, language choices and functions become the central concern of the State. The making of such choices may be motivated politically or pragmatically. In contrast, we advocate a hybrid of liberal neutrality that maintains national coherence with diversity and a non-interfering, non-goal-oriented attitude toward competitions and contentions among interest groups.

This suggestion is similar to Patten's (2003) proposal, whereby the task of a

language policy is not to realize some specific linguistic outcome but to establish fair background conditions under which speakers of different languages can strive for the survival and success of their respective language communities (p.366). In other words, we should be mindful of the pluralist dilemma whereby we are concerned with the difficulty of reconciling social cohesion (civism) on the one hand, and recognizing and incorporating ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity within the nation state on the other (May 1998:273). To address the full ramifications of this dilemma, we must confront some of the contending issues, namely: a critique of the Mandarin-only policy; the prospects of succeeding policies in the mist of mounting political pressure from the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP); and the growing need to recognize the rights of speakers of indigenous languages. At the same time, we must also be concerned with the promotion of mother-tongue education, as well as the growing pressure of globalization, the implementation of bilingual education at various levels of school, and the potential for the making or breaking of existing unequal socio-political relationships among the linguistic varieties of Taiwan.

Our approach is both descriptive and analytical. We offer a comparative review of language choice in the language policies implemented in Taiwan by the Dutch, the Spanish, the Qīng, the Japanese, and the KMT. We evaluate the drastic changes that authorities have been making since the 1980s in response to demands for increasing democratization and we provide suggestions for language policy in a multicultural context. The implication of this study is national as well as transnational, as we learn from debates on issues such as choice of official language, promotion of mother-tongue education, minority rights, and implementation of bilingual education at various school levels, and the relevance of all these to pluralistic identity formation. Language choice in a language policy seen as choice is a statement about a nation's past and future, the state's response to tensions between globalization and indigenization, and the way we see others and ourselves. Nor does our approach end here. Taiwan's historical ties to China and the contention among its ethnic groups are heightened as political representation and resources face challenges. Our analysis sheds light on the transformation of Taiwanese national identity, the conceptualizing of language diversity in pivotal periods of the island's history, and the pressing issues of power, ethnicity, and class in an emerging democracy.

## 1.2 Literature review

We organize our comparative review of seminal works on language policy from the following four perspectives: multiculturalism, indigenous language rights, language ideologies, and bilingual education. The arrangement is presented not only for their

relevance to our study but also because the framework provides a more comparative and integrative way to review the work.

### 1.2.1 Multiculturalism

Recognition of linguistic varieties, protection of minority rights and adherence to international law are three major concerns for multiculturalists (Hornberger 1998, Koenig 1999, May 1998 & 2000, Smith 1998, Sue 1997, Taylor 1992). Multiculturalism has generated much interest in Western countries (the U.S., Canada, and Australia to name just three) but it also resonates with the diverse cultural and linguistic situation in Taiwan. According to Koenig (1999), the dynamics of the modern nation state have had a double effect on linguistic minority groups. On the one hand, the (re-)ethnicization of language in the ethnic model of the nation state as well as the general ideal of national monolingualism have discriminated against non-dominant linguistic groups. On the other hand, the successive establishment of a legal system based on the recognition of individual rights and support of a de-ethnicized understanding of language has highlighted the illegitimacy of discriminating against minorities on language grounds and has provided linguistic minorities with resources to claim legal and political recognition (62). In the wake of increasing demands from minority groups for rights and recognition, multicultural language policies are most likely to succeed in the double task of respecting particular identities and maintaining social integration in a shared public sphere (*ibid.*, p.58).

From a multiculturalist perspective, language policy can serve as a strategy not only to gain overdue recognition of the rights of minority groups and their protection from discrimination but also provide choice of language for them in being educated. This approach is different from the assimilation and differentiation approaches whereby languages other than the dominant one are marginalized, and whereby speakers of such languages are discriminated against for speaking and acting differently and their future jeopardized. However, even with state intervention (e.g., providing educational and professional advancement incentives and protections through legislation, as in the case of Taiwan's draft "language equality law" (*yǔyán píngděngfǎ*), minority languages such as Hakka and the island's Austronesian languages are still facing an uphill battle fraught with dilemmas. In fact, scholars such as Chang (2002) have discussed the social conditions, challenges, and transformation Taiwan has faced by recognizing the rights of minorities and trying to reconcile diversity in the face of mounting pressure for democratization. In the language equality law, drafted by a group of concerned scholars, linguistic diversity is not only recognized, it is protected, providing for mother-tongue education and relief from discrimination. Serious debates on how to best handle issues of language diversity, language vitality, and national progress in a multicultural context

have sparked intense discussions among scholars and administrators. The 2005 series of conferences on perspectives toward language policy in a multicultural context hosted by the Institute of Linguistics at the Academia Sinica is an effective case in point. There, Hakka, Austronesian, and Southern Mǐn representatives and scholars were invited to engage in discussions of issues such as minority rights, bilingual education, and language policy in a multicultural context.

### 1.2.2 Indigenous language rights

Indigenous language education is at the forefront of the debate over “language policy in a multicultural context” not only because the Mandarin-only policy practiced by the KMT in its heyday subjected speakers of these language varieties to discrimination, and marginalization: improvement in linguistic status and function will be seen as the touchstone for a truly multicultural language policy.

Steven May (2000) points out that debates on minority rights address the complexities of the language-identity link, the controversies surrounding group-based rights, and the often-leveled charge of cultural relativism. At the same time, the debates highlight the hegemonies implicit (and, at times, explicit) in the traditional (linguistic) organization of nation states. The challenge, therefore, is to rethink nation states and the national identities therein, in ways that are more plural and inclusive (p.380). Moreover, it is only by greater recognition of minority language rights that the prospect of more representational multinational and multilingual states can be secured (*ibid.*, p.381).

On the domestic front, independent-minded scholars such as Shih (2001, 2004) have advocated minority rights and attacked a Hǎn-centered ideology of Chinese nationalism with its monolithic language policy. Other scholars are more concerned about whether debates on the amendments for minority rights will be in accordance with international laws on human rights and collective identity; for example, Simon (2005) highlights Taiwan’s deepened democratization and the nation’s acceptance of evolving international standards in human rights, including the demands of indigenous peoples as expressed in such documents as the Draft Declaration on Indigenous Rights (UNHCHR 1994) ILO Convention 169 (ILO 1989) and Agenda 21 of the UN Conference on Environment and Development. Proposed amendments to the constitution would include collective rights for indigenous peoples, making Taiwan one of the most progressive countries in the world in that respect (*ibid.*, pp.2-3).

We adopt May’s suggestion to break away from the deterministic view of language and identity prevalent in the nationalistic discourse of language policy and adopt Bourdieu’s notion of “habitus” in viewing the dialectic relationship between language and ethnic identity. A pluralistic and inclusive perspective on language and identity is called for not only to better accommodate the linguistic diversities in a multicultural

context but also to avoid conflicts such as language convergence and language shift.

### 1.2.3 Bilingual education

We look at bilingual education in terms of how forces such as globalization and indigenization come into play and generate dilemmas in language policy. The importance of English has been linked with professionalism, modernization, and internationalization, while stress on local language teaching is identified with culture, tradition, and authenticity. With increasing enthusiasm to participate in a more globalized community, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has been motivated to change the initiation of English language instruction from fifth grade down to third. In response to rising ethnolinguistic awareness, the MOE mandated the teaching of local languages as a formal school subject in the fall of 2001. Students are to receive local language education from among Hakka, Southern Mǐn, or one of the Austronesian languages from first grade through sixth. According to Tse (2001), the goals for local language education are basic listening comprehension ability, the use of transcription symbols as an aid to pronunciation, and simple oral proficiency (p.8). Students will be exposed to the sense and sound of the local language and learn to appreciate and respect cultural and linguistic diversity.

The learning of English, on the other hand is treated with more than an aesthetic appreciation. As the U.S. and the U.K. have the strongest influence over Taiwan, exporting technology and popular culture filling the daily lives of the people of Taiwan, the interest in acquiring English proficiency has become fiercely competitive. Sectors other than educational settings are aspiring to require their perspective employees to provide credentials for adequate English proficiency. As a result, there has been a surging interest in taking national and/or international certified English proficiency examinations such as GEPT (General English Proficiency Test) or TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) and consequently, an ever increasing number of cram schools have sprung up to meet the demands and provide training.

For other than practical reasons, this unending frenzy for English proficiency has a socio-political dimension in how the people of Taiwan see themselves in an international setting. Opting for English in lieu of Mandarin or Hakka or Táiyǔ (i.e., Taiwanese Southern Mǐn or TSM) or Austronesian deliberately avoids yet further ethnolinguistic conflict involving speakers of Mandarin (associated with unification with the communist régime in Běijīng), of Táiyǔ (associated with independence from said régime on the Mainland), and of Hakka or Austronesian (associated with separatism). (Cf. Tse 2000: 161). Given these tense circumstances, English, imbued with the cachet of Western economic and technological advantage, has the further advantage of being a “neutral” medium for inter-ethnic and international communication.

In fact, in sociolinguistic literature, we can find plenty of examples of former colonies returning to the ethnically unrelated language of their colonizers to surmount the linguistic obstacles arising from competition and conflict. Such a choice might also be pragmatically motivated: e.g., English is perceived not merely as an international language but also as the language of technological and economic advantage. For example, according to Bokhorst-Heng (1998), bilingual education in Singapore is premised on the role of English to meet the pragmatic needs of the nation (globalization, economics and technology, inter-ethnic communication), and the mother-tongue languages (Mandarin, Malay, Tamil) to meet the cultural needs of the nation. Like Singapore, English language education in Taiwan has been stressed for its practicality, international status, and economic force. Unlike Singapore, an increasingly democratized Taiwan society will not associate English with low moral standards and decadence (cf. *ibid.*, p.44).

The current bilingual education drive in Taiwan symbolizes the beginning of the government's acknowledgement of previously denied rights for minority groups and the elevation of their languages' marginalized status. The symbolic implications are national as well as transnational: such multilingual choices represent a statement about a nation's past and future and its relations to others—in Taiwan's case, its historical ties to China and contention among its ethnic groups. However, beyond the implied need for a balancing act between globalization and indigenization, and national cohesion and linguistic diversity, unequal power relations among different speakers is another crucial factor that must be addressed. It is especially important to avoid in future these twin pitfalls: English-language education in Taiwan has been managed with obsessive paranoia, and English proficiency has been deemed a panacea for all educational and professional shortcomings. These attitudes have resulted in the grotesquely disproportionate allocation of time, energy, and resources (particularly in the metropolitan areas) to the study of English before children have acquired a firm base in their mother tongues. As Price (2005) rightly points out, some even worry that ethnic equality is a social impossibility as long as economic advantage remains predicated on English language ability (p.1).

In fact, Price's concern with the role of English in maintaining a supra-ethnic tool for communication and its potential for making/breaking the current unequal power relation between the dominant and the dominated makes bilingual education in Taiwan a very interesting case in language rights. For according to Price, as well as a right to mother-tongue language education, is there not a case for proposing access to English as a right (*ibid.*, p.16)? We shall take up this issue in a later section with discussion of how language rights are conceptualized and realized in certain national contexts.

#### 1.2.4 Language ideology

We follow Shieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity (1998) in treating language ideologies as



they envision and enact ties of language to identity, aesthetics, morality, and epistemology (p.3). Moreover, we see ideologies as derived from, rooted in, reflective of, or responsive to the experience or interests of a particular social position, even though ideology so often (some would say, always) represents itself as universally true (p.6). The second point highlights the social and material nature of ideologies. We further propose that ideologies can be seen as ideas, as discourse, or as signifying practices in the service of the struggle to acquire or maintain power (cf. *ibid.*, p.7). Language ideologies, from these three corollaries, are not only a metaphorical expression of our view of the world and people around us, but also have to do with the socio-political context from which we derive such ideas, a context which certainly has to do with our quest for power, legitimacy, and representation.

We analyze works on how language ideologies have come into play with language choice in language policies ever since the Dutch were here (1624-1662) and the Spanish (1626-1642) as colonizers. With the arrival of Christian missionaries to the island in the 17th century, evangelization was intensive, and not without a theological struggle of Protestants vs. Catholics, which also influenced how linguistic choices were made and remade during this earlier colonial period (Campbell 1992, Friedman 2005, Heylen 2001, Kloeter 2005).

Taiwan for the European powers in the 17th century was simply another commercial prize to be grabbed in Southeast Asia in order to satisfy an insatiable appetite for raw materials implemented by a growing maritime military expansion. According to Heylen (2001), Chinese had tried settling at various locales along the lowland coast of the island. The majority of these Chinese settlers were fishermen, traders, or pirates, who raided the Mainland coastal areas or were engaged in trade with their Japanese counterparts (p.202). Rough seas made it difficult to approach the island and the practices of headhunting tribes further literally made it a killing field. Some of the tribes displayed the characteristics of a subsistence community or “primitive” society: preliterate, with no open market, and a simple division of labor based on age and sex. Religion was not separated from the socio-cultural life. Shamanesses presided over their narrow but rigorously controlled morality. Tradition, sorcery, and witchcraft regulated the lives of these people (Heylen 2001:205). Under these dire circumstances, the intervention of the European powers was not only to engage in trading competition against the Chinese and Japanese with the natives but also to civilize the barbarians.

The lack of a lingua franca on the island, a laissez-faire policy by the Chinese government, and the absence of a writing system among the natives made it relatively easy for the missionaries to introduce Christianity to the natives. The introduction of the Roman alphabet to the natives was more than just a tool of conversion for the Dutch Reformed Church. The imported language classification and the establishment of the



SinKan tongue as the official vernacular for the area and its surroundings were more than language engineering; it was also done in defiance of the Roman Catholic insistence on the use of Latin. Thus, the choice of a native language can be seen as a continuation of religious antagonism between the Protestant tradition, which advocated proselytizing in the vernacular or daily speech of the people, and Catholicism which considered Latin and the Latin Bible as the orthodox medium for religion and civilization.

The Dutch missionaries' insistence on using the local languages for instruction and evangelization proved to be a great success. Local languages were categorized, grammatical rules were formulated, and Christian doctrines were translated into the local tongues. In fact, the introduction of the Roman alphabet to transcribe the Austronesian languages and Southern M̐n and its applications in transcribing the Bible is used by some scholars as an argument for treating Austronesian languages as well as Southern M̐n as a full-fledged languages not just oral forms of communication, which would denigrate and downgrade in their status to either a local dialect or a subordinate variety of Chinese (Ang 1988). However, authorities only tolerated the propagation of Christianity insofar as it served the needs of territorial conquest and further colonization of the island. In other words, it had to be done in the interests of promoting social stability. In fact, the administration shifted their focus on securing new footholds among the natives, while organizing and exercising control over the Chinese settlers during the latter half of Dutch rule (1642-62) (cf. Heylen 2001:214-215), during which attempts were made to introduce Dutch as a *lingua franca*. Linguistically speaking, Dutch colonization introduced the Roman alphabet to the natives, a European language classification system was set up to classify local languages and to transcribe the Bible and catechism as well as for practical purposes such as documenting transactions.

Linguistic choice and practice in Taiwan during Dutch colonization is similar to what Errington (2001) describes as the linguistic territoriality of the European powers. He states that colonial states and missionary jurisdictions shared a territorial logic that was similarly inscribed in colonial linguistic work, presupposing mappings of monolithic language onto demarcated boundaries. Within those bounded confines were conceived to be ethnolinguistically homogeneous groups that were localized, and naturalized, as "tribes" or "ethnicities" (p.24). The assumptions about the naturalness of monoglot conditions further a strategic purpose for the Europeans to manage language diversity in the locale. Nevertheless, historiographies of missionaries show how the linguistic descriptions they authored, augmented by print literacy, served as a means for powerfully yet intimately conceptualizing, inscribing, and interacting with colonized people on terms not of their own choosing (*ibid.*).

The Qīng administration adopted a center-periphery mentality in their rule over Taiwan (1683-1895). According to Friedman (2005), they intervened in education in

two major ways that not only helped in state control of local prefectures but also had a great impact on ethnic relations, especially among the minorities such as the Hakka and the Austronesians who benefited the most from such policies (cf. p.87). Regional examination quotas were an important means of social control, often utilized by the Qīng to reward loyal supporters, ensure that power would be evenly distributed geographically, and to cultivate the development of a local élite “to cultivate the growth of a Confucian literati in regions where the state’s influence was weak” (*ibid.*; also in Shepherd 1993:210).

The curriculum of these schools for the Austronesians was modeled directly upon that of the community schools in the villages: “Emphasis was at first on character recognition and calligraphy and then on recitation and memorization of the [classical Chinese] texts”. But the main focus was on Confucian morality (*ibid.*, p.88; also in Shepherd 1993:372).

The Qīng administration’s emphasis on Confucian ethnics in its intervention in the education of the locals in Taiwan shared the similarly practical motives of the Dutch—to “civilize” the locals—but, as Friedman rightly points out, the Qīng were not as enthusiastic nor were they willing to allocate as many resources to the “uncivilized” and tensions among the locals served a strategic purpose for the Qīng’s ruling—divide and rule (*ibid.*, p.91).

In terms of language education, Tse (2000) points out that the Míng and the Qīng periods essentially practiced the traditional Chinese education system in which the Chinese language was both a subject and the medium of instruction. The term “Chinese language” when discussed as the medium of instruction more often than not meant one of the locally spoken Chinese dialects (Southern Mǐn or Hakka) rather than Mandarin. The native Austronesian languages were not taught, while sinicization was encouraged (p.155).

Summing up, the Dutch and Spanish colonial periods brought waves of missionaries to the island. With them, various community schools were set up and Roman alphabets were introduced for religious and pragmatic functions. The choice and use of local tongues, Latin, or Dutch for administration and communication was the result of intense power struggles among the administrators, missionaries, and locals. At times, the missionaries’ conviction to evangelize the locals was in sync with the Dutch authorities’ interest in trade. At other times, their respective interests conflicted. European epistemology looked at Taiwan’s linguistic diversity, classified the local languages, and exercised great tolerance so long as social stability was maintained and daily transactions were carried out smoothly.

The laissez-faire attitude of these earlier governing authorities was drastically altered under Japanese colonization (1894-1945), with this trend continuing with the

KMT's retreat from the mainland after their loss of the civil war by 1949. Both had adopted a nation-state model and introduced new ideologies to the language policy scene. Nationalism ran high in both régimes, with Japan was waging it war of aggression in WWII and the KMT mostly preoccupied with fighting Chinese Communists. Making language choices during a state of emergency and imminent danger, where one would have to combat threats from a military enemy and appease ethnic conflicts among the natives, were paramount to the engineering of a new nation and a civilization. The nation-state ideology envisions a homogenous state for its people who should be satisfied with using one common language. According to Steven May (2000), the emphasis on cultural and linguistic homogeneity associated with the rise of political nationalism is predicated on the notion of 'nation-state congruence'. Nation-state congruence holds that the boundaries of political and national identity should coincide. The view here is that people who are citizens of a particular state should also ideally be members of the same national collective (p.370).

The inevitable consequence of this political imperative is the establishment of an ethnically exclusive and culturally and linguistically homogeneous nation state—a realm from which minority languages and cultures are effectively banished. Indeed, this is the “ideal” model to which most nation states (and nationalist movements) still aspire—albeit in the face of a far more complex (contested) multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic reality (*ibid.*). May's insights on the implementation of nation-state ideology and its consequences speak volumes for the situation in Taiwan, for we not only fit into the circumstances where such ideology has arisen but also suffer the consequences of a one-nation/one-language monolingual hegemony. In light of nationalism's effect on language diversity and the consequences for minority languages, we now reflect on how language choices were made by government authorities during the Japanese occupation, the KMT era, and their treatment of minority languages.

The Japanese assimilatory language policies consisted of three stages: pacification, assimilation, and complete Japanization. The three stages not only coincided with Japan's military expansion but also reinforced its imperial goal of becoming a pan-Asian régime. Chinese varieties were at first tolerated, later banned, and eventually banished from all public domains. Public servants were even required to use Japanese not only publicly but even in private (Chen 1996, Huang 1993). The repressive and discriminatory practice of these policies relegated speakers of Chinese dialects and Austronesian languages to second-class citizens in Taiwan (cf. Tse 2000:155).

According to Ping Chen (2001), the strategy to promote Japanese at the expense of local languages in schools, mass media, government institutions, and the wider community had succeeded to some extent, while it failed to achieve the goal of eliminating local languages completely (p.98). Japanese language policy helped create a generation

whose Japanese fluency outstripped their Chinese, and nobody had a functional literacy in Chinese on topics beyond the trivialities of everyday life (cf. Liang 1983:150).

The KMT régime brought another wave of monolingual policy to Taiwan. With the Communist threat hanging over the island, the KMT had to engineer ways to legitimize its rule over the island as a base to recapture China, to eradicate a half-century of Japanese colonial influence, and to consolidate ethnic tensions and contentions. In fact, it was due to the extraneous factors that the KMT promoted standardized Mandarin, emphasized the homogeneity of a Chinese ethnicity, and advocated the quintessential nature of Chinese culture as major instruments to lend legitimacy to its rule, to achieve national unity, and as a powerful symbolic means to upstage the Communists on the mainland. Under the nation-state model, language, culture, and the state are one. Heller (1999) provides an interesting parallel from French Canada and points out that these nationalistic ideologies focus on authenticity and integrity: the language is the inherent, essential property of the people, and the guarantee of its peoplehood. Properties of the language (its correctness, its beauty, and so on make it uniquely valuable and important as the symbol and vehicle of public life (p.339)).

The nationalistic language movement started out in China at the turn of the 20th century as China was facing great threats from the west. Democracy and technology were identified as the two major areas where China lagged behind its western counterparts. In addition, the élite-centered literary language (*wényán wén*) was identified by many radical intellectuals as the cause of China's mass illiteracy and backwardness. Similarly, a language common to the masses and accessible to absorbing modern ideas was advocated. According to Ping Chen (2001), the KMT régime practiced a different kind of national language movement during its initiation on the mainland between the 1920s and the 1940s. When *guóyǔ* was promoted as the standard spoken language on the Mainland, it was not intended to replace local dialects in informal use. The goal was a bilingual society in which people acquire proficiency in *guóyǔ* and in their native dialect. In Taiwan, on the other hand, what was pursued was essentially a policy of monolingualism, with *guóyǔ* serving as the sole legitimate language in schools, and with the expectation that it would replace local dialects for all occasions in due course (p.104).

While the Communists on the mainland opted for simplified characters, Pǔtōnghuà, and pīnyīn as a continuation of the language movement, the KMT tried to upstage its counterpart by imagining itself as the state (Republic of China), the Chinese nation, which was composed of a homogenous Chinese culture in which all ethnic groups speak a common language—Mandarin Chinese. According to Hsiao (1997) the enactment of the nation-state model was seen as a solution to the problem of political unity that culminated in the KMT's "Chinatisation" endeavor (p.312). The use of Mandarin as a national

language becomes a testament to the Chineseness of the KMT state. Hence speakers of non-Mandarin are asked to abolish their “localism” by “sacrificing dialects” (p.307).

Tse (2000) stated the three stages for KMT language policy. (1) Transition (1945-1969), which emphasized the eradication of all Japanese influence among the general population in all aspects of life; use of dialects was discouraged in public domains. (2) Solidification of Mandarin as the national language (1970-1986). It was during this period that linguistic varieties other than Mandarin faced more stringent treatment. (3) The last stage was a gradual trend toward multilingualism with the repeal of Martial Law in 1987. Policies for mother tongue education, bilingual education and the preservation of endangered varieties of Austronesian were designed and implemented (cf. pp.156-57).

To sum up, the double dose of monolingualism forced upon Taiwan under the auspices of the nation state of the Japanese régime and the KMT régime were borne out under extraneous socio-political circumstances, when governmental authorities were engaged in international military exercises or threatened by civil war as well as by ethnic discontent. A high-handed nationalism was called for in order to imagine the state as consisting of one homogeneous nation within which all speak the common language. Language, or better yet the designated standard language, was a powerful symbol charged with nationalistic ideologies, such as patriotism and moralism. The double-whammy monolingualism has drastically changed the function and status of a minority language. The imposition of Japanese gradually decreased the functions of the local languages, the numbers of its speakers, and eventually replaced them as a new generation grew up identifying with Japanese culture, language, and state as one's own. The KMT's policy produced similar effects with standard Mandarin as the enforced language for Chinese people. Mandarin was imposed as a replacement for Japanese for all public or private functions. Language diversity was discouraged and eventually banned. Another generation was raised where Mandarin was used not only as the lingual franca among ethnic groups in Taiwan but also in private domains such as communications with parents and grandparents.

## **2. Multilingualism or monolingualism revisited?**

Advocacy of a multilingual Taiwan has been accompanied by socio-political liberalization. A renewed sense of urgency to reform the nation and the state has been emerging as interest groups seized the opportunities of a “demanding civil society” and a “soft authoritarian state” (Hsiao 1990:163). Among the most vocal groups were independent-minded people who, like their KMT counterparts, saw language as an indispensable part of culture and nationhood and advocated the right to be educated in

their mother tongue, using a separate writing system, and eventual breaking away from the Chinese-centered ideology practiced by the KMT. Such an ideology sounds strangely familiar to those proposed by the KMT at the time of their takeover of Taiwan in the 1940s. For example, Cheng (1993) states, “It is only when we write Táiyǔ that we can think through Táiyǔ and that we can appreciate native authenticity and reality” (p.186). Hsiao (1997) further pointed out that for the advocates of the Táiyǔ writing system and rights to dispense with the writing system of Mandarin as an inept instrument to voice Taiwanese-ness is to slough off Chinese-ness; to have a Táiyǔ writing system is to recognize the existence of a distinctive cultural tradition. Such a view suggests the development of a new national identity challenging the KMT’s “Chinaisation” of the island (p.312).

The Táiyǔ language movement uses the same nationalistic logic as the KMT. This is understood by Woolard & Schieffelin (1994) when they state that “Movements to save minority languages ironically are often structured around the same received notion of languages that have led to their oppression and/or suppression...” (p.9). Similarly, Sandel (2003) points out that, ironically, we see in Taiwan an emerging debate over how to recontextualize the former ideology of one nation-one language—“I’m Japanese /Chinese if I speak the national language of Japan/China”—with yet another: “I’m Taiwanese if I speak the (native) language of Taiwan, Táiyǔ” (p.532).

### **3. A pluralistic view**

The rising consciousness of language diversity and rights were not always pitted against partisan ideologies—KMT’s Chinaization vs. DPP’s Taiwanization. In fact, emphasizing the diversity of historical experiences and linguistic vitality has been behind some of the most influential movers and shakers. For example, the ex-minister of the MOE, Kuo Wei-fan proposed the idea of “concentric circles” (tóngxīnyuán) in 1994 in one’s identity development. This idea designates a three-step plan to expose Taiwanese youth to outside reality by letting them “stand on Taiwan, have consideration for China, and open their eyes to the world.” (Cf. Corcuff 2002:87). On a similar note, and in terms of national identity formation, Former R.O.C. president Lee Teng-hui proposed a non-ethno-lingual centered way of consolidating national, international, and even cultural ethos while campaigning for Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou in 1998. The term “new Taiwanese” was coined to include those who identified with Taiwan regardless of one’s ethnicity, language, or nationality.

The political plurality emphasized by Lee serves several strategic purposes. Friedman (2005) noted that Lee strategically adopted a multiculturalist ideology which effectively undermined efforts to promote Taiwanese nationalism by doing three things.

First, it served to de-legitimize a vision of Taiwanese nationalism grounded in Hoklo culture, by placing it on equal grounds with Taiwan's Hakka, Mainlander, and Austronesian cultural traditions. Secondly, it voided a wholesale rejection of Chinese nationalism by viewing culture as a series of concentric circles, radiating outward from individual communities, to the entire Taiwanese nation, but also beyond to include the greater Chinese cultural sphere and global culture as well. These ideologies further served effectively to enhance the power of the native elite within the KMT without relinquishing power to those outside of the party (cf. p.27).

On the language policy front, the implementation of a new course—"Taiwanese Native Languages"—in the first through ninth grade curriculum is another move away from China/Taiwan-centered nationalism.<sup>1</sup> The new curriculum started in 2001, designating as native languages Southern Min (or Hoklo), Hakka, or one of the Austronesian languages, and students are required to take one hour in these subjects per week. Meanwhile, the teaching of Mandarin remains impeded, and English was introduced in the 5th grade in 2001 and later pushed back to the 3rd grade in 2003. Friedman (2005) rightly points out that the new curriculum marks the emergence of a new and uniquely Taiwanese conception of nationhood, one that departs from the monolithic cultural nationalism of the Japanese and Chinese eras. This can be seen in the fact that Hoklo does not simply replace Japanese and Mandarin as the new National Language. To be sure, there are those who desire to make Hoklo the new National Language, but what is surprising is that Taiwan has instead replaced cultural nationalism with multiculturalism (p.4).

Lee Teng-hui's new proposed ideology of national identity and the MOE's new curriculum might have taken the island toward a multicultural and multilingual context, but the laws and public resources appropriation require that linguistic diversity is not only promoted as a school subject but also protected by law. In fact, the National Language Development Law (NLDL) assigns equal status to all the national languages in Taiwan.<sup>2</sup> The definition of a national language further tries to avoid falling into bipolar partisan ideologies by treating it as natural languages/dialects, sign languages, or written systems used by any ethnic group in this country. The central or local government may designate as national languages the "common languages" in the "community." With such a designation, *this* government is obliged to provide multilingual services and resources on all official occasions.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Hughes & Stone (1999), part of the process of democratization that has arisen from this crisis has been a movement for education reform. This took root in the early 1980s with a movement for campus democracy and school autonomy, quickly developed links with welfare and human rights organizations, and reached a peak in 1994 with a wave of protests involving some 210 pressure groups (p.980).

<sup>3</sup> For more details on CIP, please refer to <http://www.apc.gov.tw>



#### **4. Language choice and ideology in a multicultural context**

In this paper, we have tried to review the formation and evolution of language policies in Taiwan over the last three centuries and looked into the ideological underpinnings from which power struggles and clashing visions for the island have come, influencing the making and unmaking of a language choice. Waves of colonialism, imperialism, nationalism, and multiculturalism have brought powerful symbols such as writing systems, language classification, civil examinations, national language, and language equality laws to the island. These symbols come with a price, of course, and much of the contention arises from the people who view language as a charged symbol and link it with powerful ideologies. Competition for rights, resources, and representation has always had an inseparable role in a democratizing multicultural context. Taiwan's nascent experience with democratization and multiculturalism is no exception. The twice-occurring monolingual policy on the island, where a language from either Tokyo or Běijīng was chosen and implemented, not only subordinated but also marginalized language diversity and vitality. Worse, a Hân-centered nationalistic ideology and a Mandarin-only policy have created many grievances for speakers whose perspectives of self, nation, and language have been influenced by Dutch and Japanese colonization. The lifting of martial law in 1987 unleashed forces that contended with a state-centered policy on language, education, and nationality. As a result, a new curriculum has been conceived and implemented whereby a multi-layered identity formation replaced the Chinese-centered and the Taiwan-independence identity crisis. Representations for the minorities have also been put at the forefront of the political agenda. For example, the Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP) was set up in 1996, marking a breakthrough in the Republic of China's nationality policy. Since then the formulation of Indigenous policies has been placed in the hands of the Indigenous and all Indigenous affairs are brought under the jurisdiction of this specific ministerial-level agency.<sup>3</sup> On May 4, 2001, the Legislative Yuan passed "The Organization Law of the Council for Hakka Affairs". The Council for Hakka Affairs (CHA) began operating on June 14, 2001. Political representations will not only take complete charge of affairs including collecting the powers of both people and the government to shoulder the responsibilities of perpetuating the life of minority languages and culture, to fight for the Hakka's rights and future, and ultimately to advance Taiwan to a modern society that respects all racial and ethnic groups.<sup>4</sup>

On the language diversity front, the new curriculum implemented in 2001 has included minority languages as one of the school subjects with which students will receive instruction once a week. Debates on the language equality law and minority rights

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<sup>4</sup> For more details on Council for Hakka Affairs, please refer to <http://www.hakka.gov.tw>

and collective identity have consolidated joint efforts from scholars and administrators to implement a legal framework in accordance with international standards in order to ensure respect and protection for minorities. Bilingual education further tries to accommodate demands from globalization and indigenization. On the one hand, the teaching of English in the 3rd grade prepares students for the impact of globalization and internationalization. On the other hand, in response to intense demands for indigenization, the teaching of a mother tongue as a school subject was implemented in the 2001 curriculum.

## 5. A common public language

The search for a pluralistic view of identity and language is not always without conflict and, as suggested at the beginning of this paper, the best way for the state to assume a neutral stance is to ensure fair play in competition. A few more logistical concerns could enhance efficiency and avoid abuse of public funding. For example, “context of choices” as suggested by Patten (2003) should be set up where an individual not only has access to the choices available but also feels comfortable and competent in communicating his ideas (p.380). This brings us to the point of how to make choices when diversity is rampant and proficiency varies. A common public language is thus called for where social mobility and accessibility should be the two primary concerns. In addition, according to Patten (2003), a common public language should provide the basis for a common identity that binds together the citizens of a state and reinforces their civic virtues and sense of mutual solidarity. A common language is thus useful in that it can reduce the cost of public administration. When a common public language has been achieved, it is no longer necessary for public institutions to make significant expenditures on translation and interpretation services and the resources that are freed up can be shifted to other priorities (*ibid.*). A possible candidate for common language might be Taiwanese Mandarin, which has been promulgated in Taiwan since the KMT’s mandate for a Mandarin-only policy. With more than half a century of indigenization in Taiwan, Taiwanese Mandarin has drifted away from the Beijing standard, become a hybrid variety mixed with local features from different provinces in China, heavily influenced by Southern Mǐn, and colored by Japanese and English vocabulary (cf. Ping Chen 1999, Kubler 1981). Years of Mandarin-only education has produced a generation growing up speaking the language fluently in almost all domains of usage. The making of Taiwanese Mandarin as the common public language might be the solution to Taiwan’s increasing demand for democratic deliberation, social mobility, and a common plural identity.

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## 台灣在多元文化下的語言選擇與意識型態

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本文旨在探討多元文化環境中的語言決策問題，由社會政治的角度著眼，檢視處於民主轉型過程中的台灣語言政策，在其決策過程中如何考量權力及資源分配的問題，及其在語言選擇時所面臨的意識型態等各種問題。語言政策不只是國家權衡各種利益團體訴求，以及平衡全球化與本土化等力量的平台；也是決策者藉以表明台灣本土及國際定位的依憑。在多元文化的情境下，各語言將被如何定義，如何區隔，以及其位階如何設定，因為涉及民族的情緒、教育資源的分配以及政治認同等諸項問題，卻成為利益團體爭取權益的目標。

本文建議決策者採取一不干涉的中立態度，只針對制度及法令的設置進行最完善的規劃，並使用一普及的公眾語言，以利民主化及認同等議題之進行。

關鍵詞：語言選擇，意識型態，多元文化，認同政治