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# Language Planning and Policy in Taiwan: Past, Present, and Future

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This paper takes a language ecology perspective (Haugen, 1972; Hornberger, 2003) and uses Cooper's language planning framework for status planning, acquisition planning and corpus planning (1989) to provide an overview analysis of language policy and planning (LPP) in Taiwan since the 17th century. The paper investigates how languages have interacted with one another and with their socio-cultural and political contexts, and how different policies at different times have altered the local language ecology. Three emerging factors that are changing the local ecology are further identified. As the first step to successful LPP is a detailed understanding of the local language ecology (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2008), it is hoped that the analysis presented here will provide insights for future LPP in Taiwan.

## Introduction

This paper takes a language ecology perspective and uses Cooper's language planning framework (1989) to discuss language policy and planning (LPP) in Taiwan since the 17th century. Traditionally, LPP has been understood as conscious efforts, usually at the governmental level to change the language behaviors of some groups for some reasons during a certain period of time. The question of "who plans what for whom and how" posed by Cooper (1989, p. 31) and further elaborated by Haarmann (1990, p. 123) as "who is engaged in planning what language for whom and why (emphasis original)" is helpful in examining various LPP across different contexts. A closer look at each interrogative suggests that although the agents of LPP (i.e., who) were originally conceived as a small number of powerful elites, more recent studies have argued a wider number of stakeholders are involved in LPP (e.g., Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). With respect to what is being planned, Cooper's framework provides useful guidance to explore what aspects of language can be, and usually are planned, namely, status planning, corpus planning and acquisition planning. Following Kloss (1969), Cooper (1989) defines status planning as "deliberate efforts to influence the allocation of functions among a community's language" (p. 99). When desired communicative functions are identified, selection of forms follows, which include graphization, standardization, modernization and renovation of a language. This process of designing linguistic forms is what Cooper bases on Kloss (1969) and refers to as corpus planning. In addition to status and corpus planning, Cooper (1989) defines a third type

as acquisition planning, “organized efforts (e.g., providing more opportunities or incentives) to promote the learning of a language.” (p. 157)

The question for whom the LPP aims draws attention to different levels of people affected, ranging from individuals, families, schools, communities to nations or even beyond national borders. Importantly, Ricento and Hornberger (1996) have argued that people whom the LPP aim to influence are not passive, but are constantly involved in shaping the language policy, whether consciously or unconsciously, and thus people at all levels can be agents for social changes in their local contexts. Finally, the question of how and why certain LPP is carried out has been the center of LPP research. While different approaches (e.g., ethnographic, geolinguistic, psycho-sociological, to name a few) have been adopted to provide descriptions and/or explanations for LPP across different contexts and among those, this paper will adopt an ecological perspective to discuss LPP in Taiwan.

Hornberger (2006) notes that the concept of language ecology (or linguistic ecology, the ecology of language, ecolinguistics) has drawn increasing attention among LPP scholars. When Haugen (1972, p. 325) developed the notion of language ecology, he defined it as “the study of the interactions between any given language and its environment.” Fill and Muhlausler (2001, p. 3) reason that language ecology is a useful metaphor to examine “the diversity of inhabitants of an ecology” and “the functional interrelationships between the inhabitants of an ecology.” It also helps identify essential factors that sustain the diversity. Hornberger (2003) further identifies three key themes of the language ecology metaphor based on previous work in the field: language evolution, language environment, and language endangerment. She proposes that languages, like living species, evolve, grow, change, live, become endangered, or even die under the influences of other languages and the environments in which they are situated. Hornberger suggests that the metaphor contributes to our understanding of the mutual relationships between languages, their interaction within their socio-political, economic, and cultural environments, and how lack of sufficient environmental support might lead to language endangerment.

Building on the notion of language ecology, this paper aims to provide an overview analysis of the language ecology in Taiwan since the 17th century with respect to (1) how languages have interacted with one another and with their sociocultural and political contexts within the language ecology, and (2) how and why different policies at different times have altered the language ecology in Taiwan. The paper begins with an overview of Taiwan’s ethnolinguistic composition and socio-historical context, and moves to its early colonial experiences and its short period of integration to the Qing Dynasty in the 17th century. It then reviews the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945), the Kuomintang (KMT) period, which witnessed a transition from hard authoritarian control to the advent of democracy (1945-2000), and the contemporary modern democratic period (2000-2008). The paper concludes with a brief assessment of some emerging factors that are changing the language ecology in current Taiwan and will affect future LPP in Taiwan.

### **Ethnolinguistic Composition and Socio-historical Context of Taiwan**

Taiwan is comprised of one major island and several smaller offshore islands in the west Pacific Ocean, and is located less than 100 miles across the Taiwan Strait

from the coastal Chinese provinces of Fujian and Guangdong. In an area slightly larger than the states of Delaware and Maryland combined, inhabits a population of over 22.9 million (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2008). Currently, around 98 percent of the population is of Han descent, and the remaining two percent is of Austronesian descent. While the Han descendents can be further divided into three ethnic groups: the Holo (70%), the Hakka (10-15%), and the Mainlander (13%), the Austronesian descendents are comprised of 13 different tribes (Copper, 2003). Although the population figures are only an approximation since there has been substantial intermarriage across different groups since the 1980s (Dreyer, 2003), the concept of the “four great ethnic groups” has been an important component of discourse dealing with ethnic and national issues in contemporary Taiwan (Makeham, 2005). This concept is also of significance in the development of contemporary LPP in Taiwan as much of recent LPP focus has been on the languages associated with the four ethnic groups (Scott & Tiun, 2007).

The official name of Taiwan is the Republic of China (ROC), which was established in 1912 in China after the Qing Dynasty was overthrown. The language spoken near Beijing, the Mandarin variety, was chosen as the official language of the ROC in 1912; it became the official language for Taiwan in 1945, when the nationalist party, the Kuomintang (KMT), retreated from China to Taiwan after it was defeated by the communist party. The KMT resumed the name of ROC as well as its official language in Taiwan until the present day. Mandarin Chinese has been a *lingua franca* for Taiwan since 1945, but Holo (also known as Southern Min or Hokkien) is spoken by around 73% of the people in Taiwan, and thus is often referred to as Taiwanese. Hakka is spoken by roughly 10% of the population, and at least 13 different indigenous languages are spoken by different tribes of Austronesian aboriginals (Taiwan Government Information Office, 2008). With their origins in the Fujian and Guangdong provinces of China, Holo and Hakka have been commonly viewed as dialects of Chinese, although Holo, Hakka and Mandarin Chinese are all mutually unintelligible. In this paper, the term “local languages” refers to Holo, Hakka, and Austronesian languages, which all have a longer and more indigenous history than Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan.

### The Dutch/Spanish Colonization and Qing Dynasty Era

Research in linguistics, anthropology and archaeology has suggested that Taiwan’s earliest inhabitants were the Austro-Polynesians, and Taiwan might be the homeland for the vast Austronesian speech community because of the diversity exhibited among the Austronesian languages in Taiwan (Li, 1995). However, large-scale immigration did not take place until the 17th to the early 20th centuries due to political and economic chaos in China (Taiwan Government Information Office, 2008). During this period of time, the Manchu invaded China, overthrowing the Ming Dynasty and establishing the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). The political turmoil pushed many Han people, especially those living in the coastal provinces, to leave for Taiwan over time. At that time, Taiwan was colonized by the Dutch (1624-1662) in the south and the Spanish (1626-1642) in the north. In 1642, the Dutch drove out the Spanish and took over Taiwan, and their demands for more labor further drew increasing numbers of Han people to migrate to Taiwan (Dreyer, 2003). During the

Dutch colonization, the Austronesian aboriginals were the majority, and some of the Austronesian languages were romanized by the missionaries accompanying the Dutch colonizers. The missionaries gave sermons in and translated the Bible and many religious books into the Austronesian languages. In 1636, the first school in Taiwan was established by the missionaries to teach Christianity as well as the reading and writing of Siraya, an Austronesian variety that was promoted by the Dutch as the *lingua franca* in the south (M. Chen, 1996). Several religious schools were established in the subsequent years, many of which taught the Austronesian languages in addition to Christianity, reflecting missionaries' views that local languages were more efficient for educational and proselytizing purposes than Dutch (Heyle, 2009). Importantly, the use of the Siraya writing system went beyond the original missionary purposes as it was later used in contract writing and documentations among the aboriginals and Han people for over a hundred years, long after the Dutch left Taiwan (Tsao, 2000). Since the colonizers' major intentions were commerce and conversion to Christianity (Chiung, 2000), their LPP was "not particularly oppressive and discriminatory" (*ibid.*, p. 61); rather it was "pragmatic" (Tse, 2000, p. 155). In general, Austronesian languages did not seem to be threatened by the colonizer's language (i.e., Dutch) in the local language ecology of this time under its pragmatic LPP orientation. In fact, some of them were even preserved through romanization.

In 1662, the Dutch colonizers were driven out by troops led by Zheng Cheng-gong, a general in the Ming Dynasty and an important leader of the anti-Qing movement, ending their 38 years of colonization in Taiwan. Zheng's family used Taiwan as a military base with the hope of re-conquering the mainland some day. During their twenty-one year control in Taiwan, they established the first Confucian temple devoted to the cult of Confucius and many Chinese-style schools that introduced Chinese customs and traditions to Taiwan (Dreyer, 2003). Since Zheng was a Holo speaker from the Fujian province, most of his followers were also Holo speakers from that region. Holo was the predecessor of what is known as Taiwanese today, and it started to diverge from its origin in China as it integrated lexicon from Dutch and Austronesian languages (Dong, 1998). Later, in 1683, the Qing Dynasty defeated Zheng's regime and loosely incorporated Taiwan into the Fujian province. Although the Qing Dynasty banned Chinese emigration to Taiwan, Holo and Hakka speakers from the Fujian and Guangzhou provinces continued to move to the island. Gradually, Holo speakers became the majority group followed by a much smaller population of Hakka speakers, who oftentimes were driven to become bilingual in Holo and Hakka (S. Chen, 2006).

The Qing Dynasty initially neglected Taiwan due to its remoteness from the mainland, but started to pay more attention to Taiwan when its abundant natural resources had drawn the increasing interest of foreign powers, especially Japan. In 1885, the Qing Dynasty made Taiwan one of its provinces and began to establish infrastructure in Taiwan. It also established many schools, and some of them aimed at teaching Chinese culture and language to the aboriginals (Dreyer, 2003). As a consequence, many aboriginals learned Chinese orthography and gradually ceased to use the Romanized systems (Tsao, 2000). Although Mandarin was the language of the officials from the Dynasty, the majority of the local people spoke Holo or Hakka. Therefore, it was common for schools, private or public, to teach classical Chinese

using local languages as the medium of instruction (Scott & Tiun, 2007).

In summary, the Dutch's pragmatic orientation to languages helped promote some Austronesian languages through religious education and romanization of the Austronesian languages. During the Zheng period, Holo became the language of the regime since Holo speakers were the majority. The establishment of schools further promoted Holo within the local language ecology. In the early Qing Dynasty era, there were few conscious attempts to intervene in the language ecology in Taiwan, but growing foreign interests in Taiwan led the Dynasty to make stronger efforts to manage Taiwan, setting up schools as one of these measures. The Chinese language was introduced through schooling, and it gradually replaced the use of the Romanized writing systems among the aboriginals. Meanwhile, Mandarin Chinese started to gain some presence in the local ecology, but Holo remained the dominant language of the time, followed by Hakka.

It should be noted that LPP during the Dutch colonization, Zheng's regime and the Qing Dynasty was less explicitly enacted in documentation and accomplished implicitly through the establishment of schools. Although the first schools set up by the missionaries during the Dutch colonization were meant for religious purposes, they helped promote the Austronesian languages in the local ecology. The Chinese-style schools founded during the Zheng's regime were authoritative attempts to introduce Chinese traditions and values to Taiwan, and since Holo was used as a medium of instruction, schools became part of an organized effort to affect the local language ecology. More schools were further established during the Qing Dynasty. Some that introduced Chinese culture and language to the aboriginals eventually changed their literacy practices. As one reviewer succinctly points out, although LPP during these periods was embedded in schooling policies that ultimately affected languages, the measures taken were primarily focused on goals other than language (i.e., religious conversion or the introduction of Chinese culture). However, as this paper will soon demonstrate, more explicit language measures were taken in the regimes that followed.

### **Japanese Colonization Era (1895-1945)**

Taiwan was ceded to Japan and became its colony after the Qing Dynasty was defeated in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, at which point immigration from China was prohibited. Policies of Japanization were adopted to turn local people into loyal subjects of the emperor. The Japanization policies were closely linked to the three stages of educational planning, which moved gradually from pacificatory toward oppressive orientations (Tsao, 2000; Tse, 2000): (1) during the period from 1895 to 1919, private Chinese schools were still tolerated since the Japanese, ethnic Chinese, and the Austronesian natives attended different school systems. Meanwhile, the Japanese government encouraged local people to send their children to the public elementary schools set up by the Japanese around the island, which taught Chinese as a required subject; (2) during the period from 1919-1937, private Chinese schools were no longer permitted and Chinese became an optional school subject. Since then, the enrollment rate for public elementary school children had risen steadily, from 25.1% in 1920 to 71.3% in 1943 (Tsao, 1999); (3) during the last eight years of Japanese colonization (1937-1945), Chinese and other local



languages were prohibited in all public domains. Moreover, when the wars between China and Japan intensified, the Japanese government launched an “only-Japanese-speaking families” campaign in 1938, which aimed to intrude Japanese upon language use in the family domain, often considered the base for language maintenance (M. Chen, 1996). Under such a discriminatory language policy, local languages were seriously damaged, and Taiwan gradually became a diglossic society with Japanese as the High official language of administration, education, and prestige and local languages as Low languages of family and local commerce (Tsao, 1999; Scott & Tiun, 2007). The language policy was successful in that an estimated 51% of the population understood Japanese in 1940, and by 1944, the percentage rose to 71% (Huang, 1993).

Ironically, the fact that Japanese became a common language through its exclusive use in the educational and public domains helped to foster a sense of “Taiwanese identity” among the colonized who all experienced systematic social discrimination (Dreyer, 2003; Huang, 2000; Scott & Tiun, 2007). During the 1920s and 1930s, many Taiwanese elites were engaged with a series of Chinese language reforms focused on the enhancement of Taiwanese culture and resistance to Japanese imperialism. The reforms were influenced by the Taiwanese students in Tokyo and Japanese scholars sympathetic to the fate of Taiwan, as well as by Taiwanese students in China who witnessed the Literary Revolution in which vernacular Chinese was adopted as the new literacy medium (Haylen, 1999). The solidification of a common Taiwanese identity and intellectual discussions associated with it eventually led to the Taiwanese literature movement, enabling some local languages, especially Holo, to be used in writing. It is also during this period that Holo in Taiwan became even more distinct from its origin in China as it borrowed many words and grammatical features from Japanese (Scott & Tiun, 2007). Thus, Japanese, though introduced to the language ecology in Taiwan much later than other languages, spread rapidly and became the language of prestige through various political and educational measures that promoted Japanese learning at the cost of other languages. However, the oppressive Japanese language policies also led to the emergence of a common local identity.

### Kuomingtang Era (1945-1999)

A defeated nation in World War II, Japan returned Taiwan to the ROC in 1945, at that time under the Kuomingtang (KMT) control. Four years later, the KMT was defeated by the communist party (which later established the People’s Republic of China in Beijing in 1949) during a series of civil wars and retreated to Taiwan. Chiang Kai-shek’s KMT government brought over one million people from all parts of China to Taiwan, speaking various Chinese dialects. This group of immigrants was often known as Mainlanders (*waishengren* 外省人, literally “outside-province person”), as opposed to local people (*benshengren* 本省人, literally “original-province person”), who came to Taiwan before the KMT troops. Upon their arrival, Chiang’s troops seized local people’s property, destroyed local infrastructure and economy, and created tensions between local natives and Mainlanders. The accumulating tensions eventually burst into demonstrations across the island. Chiang used this incident to suffocate dissent in Taiwan, and thousands of



intellectuals were killed. This incident is known as 228 (February 28, 1947) or the White Terror, and for several decades it was a taboo to even mention it (Dreyer, 2003). As a result of 228, martial law was imposed in 1948 and lasted for 38 years until it was lifted in 1987, creating a tremendous impact on Taiwanese modern history. Under Chiang's oppressive control, Mainlanders and the local people were segregated not only residentially but also vocationally, with Mainlanders taking over positions of power in economic, political, cultural and educational domains and continuously discriminating against local people's languages and cultures. The gulf between Mainlanders and local people was deep, and Taiwan was effectively turned into a dual society that categorized people as either *waishengren* or *benshengren* (Huang, 2000).

The KMT reinstated the title of ROC in Taiwan, and assumed that soon it would be re-established on the mainland. It also instituted several ambitious nation-building programs to emphasize a common Chinese identity; language played a critical role in this effort (Dreyer, 2003). In terms of status planning, the KMT continued the language policy of the ROC and thus, Mandarin Chinese became the national language (*guoyu* 國語) and official language for Taiwan. Just one year after KMT's takeover, Japanese was banned completely in 1946 to eliminate the Japanese influence in Taiwan. In 1948, the KMT declared that local languages were inappropriate for academic and cultural communication (Tsao, 2000). Since then, strenuous effort had been taken to emphasize a common Chinese identity through the use of Mandarin Chinese and the suppression of local languages (Chen, 2006; Dreyer, 2003; Scott & Tiun, 2007; Tsao, 2000).

As for acquisition planning, Mandarin became the sole medium of instruction and the use of local languages at school was prohibited. Children who attempted to speak local languages were subjected to physical punishment and fines (Dreyer, 2003). In 1975, the passage of the Broadcast Bill strictly constrained the use of local languages in the media (Huang, 2000). Budgets for film and TV program production favored those produced in Mandarin, and actors or actresses who spoke Holo or Hakka in Mandarin-produced films usually took the roles of maids, street vendors, or construction workers, creating an impression that only people of low socioeconomic status spoke those languages (Dreyer, 2003; Huang, 1993; Scott & Tiun, 2007).

This restrictive language policy not only greatly weakened the vitality of local languages (some varieties of aboriginal languages even disappeared, see Li, 1994), but also undermined local and ethnic identity (Tse, 2000). The desire to create a shared Chinese identity was also reflected in the school curricula, which focused on the history of empires and dynasties in China rather than the history of Taiwan, and on Chinese rather than Taiwanese culture. For instance, students studied Beijing opera instead of Taiwanese opera or traditional Taiwanese puppetry. The languages and cultures of ethnic minorities, though they received a great deal of attention, were constrained to the minority groups on the mainland (i.e., Tibetan or Mongolian), rather than the Austronesian minorities in Taiwan (Dreyer, 2003). Cheng (1990) argues that the oppressive policies disadvantaged local people who did not speak Mandarin Chinese and were a mechanism for the dominant elite (i.e., Mainlanders) to maintain control over the majority.

Language played a central role in both the Japanization movement and KMT's Chinaization movement. Billing (1995, p. 29) points out that creation of a national

hegemony often involves a hegemony of language, which ignores the diversity and variety of the languages spoken within the existing ecology. In a similar vein, Blackledge (2008, p. 31) discusses how language polices are important means of social control used by nation-states to define “who is in” and “who is out.” LPP during Japanese colonization and KMT control was deliberately constructed to advantage some individuals at the expense of others.

### *Post-1987 Democratization Effects on LPP*

The year 1987 was particularly important in Taiwanese modern history as martial law was lifted that year. From 1987 to the present day, Taiwan has been under democratization in many aspects of politics, society and education. For instance, the first opposition party, the Democratic Progress Party (DPP), which was predominately composed of Holo speakers, was established in 1986 and tolerated under the repeal of martial law. People in Taiwan have elected their legislative representatives in local governments since 1989 (Huang, 2000). Democratization also led to the drive toward more Taiwanization in many aspects. After Lee Teng-hui succeeded President Chiang Ching-kuo, son of Chiang Kai-shek, after his death in 1988, and became the first Taiwanese-born president as well as the chairman of the KMT, Taiwan not only went through liberalization but also started to establish its own identity, distinct from that of China. Lee proposed the term “New Taiwanese” to refer to people living in Taiwan and sharing the same fate (Dreyer, 2003, p.400) and replaced the earlier political slogan “Fighting back against the Mainland” with “Footing in Taiwan, taking an international view” (S. Chen, 2006). To achieve this end, Lee took several measures during his twelve-year presidency. For instance, place of birth replaced the designation of ancestral origins in China on the identity, highlighting ones’ roots in Taiwan and erasing the distinction between those who came to Taiwan long before the KMT troops and those who came with them. This was the period often characterized as *bentuhua* (本土化)<sup>1</sup>, translated as “Taiwanization,” “localization,” or “indigenization” (S. Chen, 2006; Jacobs, 2005; Scott & Tiun, 2007).

Taiwanese became aware of their linguistic rights to use mother tongues as Taiwan moved toward further democratization and Taiwanization. Although Mandarin remained the national language and a de facto lingua franca, much attention was progressively paid to local languages in educational and political domains. Pupils were no longer punished for speaking local languages at school, and restrictions on public use of local languages were also repealed. In fact, President Lee often gave his speeches in Holo. Hakka people were also united to ask for more language rights, and in 1988, Hakka people launched a “Return our mother tongue” movement to demand more mother tongue education and mass media coverage. Scott and Tiun (2007) argue that language ideology gradually shifted from viewing local languages as problems that threaten a common Chinese identity to viewing them as rights applied to all people living in Taiwan (cf. Ruiz, 1984). The language-as-rights orientation gradually became crystallized in education as several DPP members, who became representatives in some local governments in the 1989 island-wide election, pushed for more mother tongue education. The push for mother tongue education gained support from the ethnic communities and local educators, and together they repeatedly pressured the KMT government. In 1993, the Minister of the Interior acknowledged that past language policy

was repressive and a mistake, and the Minister of Education announced that local languages could be offered as electives at the elementary level. Three local governments, all led by the DPP, actually were ahead of the central government's initiative in providing mother tongue education. Illan County, Tapei County, and Pingtung County had already started to offer a variety of mother tongue education in 1990 (Dreyer, 2003). In the late 1990s, many more elementary schools started to teach mother tongues (Huang, 2000; Scott & Tiun, 2007). In addition, school curricula paid less attention to the history of China and focused more on that of Taiwan (Dreyer, 2003). The language policy of this time moved from "Mandarin-Only" to "Mandarin-Plus," although Mandarin still remained the only official language of Taiwan (P. Chen, 2001; Scott & Tiun, 2007).

### *English Language Policy*

Discussion of Taiwanese language ecology is not complete without reference to the development and evolution of English language policy in Taiwan. The KMT continued the foreign-language-in-education policy implemented in China in 1912, in which English was a required subject in middle schools (Tse, 1987, cited in Chen, 2006, p. 327). Following the introduction of the Joint College Entrance Examination in 1954, which assigned English as one of the core test subjects, English became the only required foreign language subject in middle schools in Taiwan in 1968. Since then, teaching and learning English in Taiwan has been test-driven and focused on grammar (Sommers, 2003). At the same time, as Taiwan's economy has become more dependent on exports, the public demand for English education has also increased.

Although many local governments started to offer English education to their pupils in elementary schools starting in 1998, some scholars (e.g., Sommers, 2003) point out that the demand for more authentic English education has been generally met by private companies specializing in English, rather than by schools. Due to the lifting of martial law in 1987, the number of private educational companies has skyrocketed, and many of them hire foreign teachers as instructors. This private English educational phenomenon led Sommers (2003) to challenge scholars (e.g., S. Chen, 2001; Tsao, 2000) who situated the development and spread of English in Taiwan mainly in the larger scope of state-controlled language planning, arguing instead that private education has played an influential role in language education in Taiwan. Indeed, the issue of growing disparity in pupils' access to English education, with pupils from more affluent families being able to start their English education earlier in private after-school programs has been one impetus for the implementation of nation-wide English education at the elementary levels in 2001 (Law, 2004; Ministry of Education [MOE], 1998).

A large-scale educational reform was launched in the mid-1990s, which was partly driven by the internal democratic process and partly by external economic demand (Law, 2004). Democratization and liberalization processes have pushed for more decentralized power distribution during policy-making and policy-implementation processes, and globalization of the economy has also drawn increasing concern about how Taiwan might gain a competitive edge over other countries. As a result, the Taiwan Commission on Education Reform (CER), composed of elites with an international outlook, was created as a mediating agency between

the government and civil society in 1994. Based on suggestions from the CER, which prioritized the need to prepare pupils for the global economy and foster appreciation for multiculturalism, the MOE developed new curricula (i.e., Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum) for elementary and junior secondary schools (MOE, 2000). Under the new curriculum, learning Chinese, English and local languages are all combined as “language subject learning,” the first time that English and local languages have become required subjects in elementary schools (Tsao, 2000). This language-in-education policy is the realization of concurrent promotion of internationalization and Taiwanization (S. Chen, 2006; Scott & Tiun, 2007; Yang, 2001). Because the new curriculum was not implemented until 2001 when the DPP became the governing party, more discussion on language education will be provided in the next section.

### Contemporary Modern Democratic Era (2000-2008)

As Taiwan moved toward a more democratic society, Taiwanese were able to vote for their own president beginning in 1996. It is not surprising that Lee Teng-hui, the chairman of the KMT and president since 1988, won the first direct presidential election as the KMT had been in power since 1949 and had maintained most of the political, economic and educational resources. Candidates from the once opposition party DPP, Chen Shui-bian and Annette Lu, won the second direct presidential election four years later. This marked the end of more than half a century of KMT rule in Taiwan. In 2004, Chen and Lu were re-elected by a margin of only 0.22% of valid votes over their opponents who were chairmen from the KMT and the People First Party.

The DPP has been a Taiwanese-centered party since its inception, and thus it has undertaken great effort to further Taiwanization during their governance. Similar to its earlier counterparts (i.e., the Japanese and the KMT), languages have played a prominent role during the DPP’s Taiwanization process. In terms of status planning, the DPP proposed granting national status to Holo, Hakka and other Austronesian languages when the party was established in 1986. Huang (2000) posits that the proposal stressed the shared struggle for independence across different ethnic groups and objected to the degradation of local languages under the Mandarin-only language policy. When the DPP became the ruling party in 2000, it attempted to realize this proposal.

In 2003, the MOE proposed the “Language Equality Law” draft, which included all languages of the four ethnic groups, namely Holo, Hakka, Austronesian languages and Mandarin Chinese as national languages. In this draft, the name of Mandarin Chinese was changed from national language (*guoyu*) to Chinese language (*huayu*), as the draft intended to include more languages as national languages. Moreover, Taiwanese was included in parentheses after Holo, and Holo was written in Romanized alphabets rather than Chinese characters (河洛). No further reasons were given to explain such a choice, although both the names of Taiwanese and Holo have been used by ordinary Taiwanese to refer to the same language<sup>2</sup>. Eventually, this draft was not passed in the Legislative Assembly since the DPP was only a minority party. In addition, referring to only Holo as Taiwanese in the draft incurred criticism of de-Chinaization and language chauvin-

ism mainly from the KMT, but also from Hakka and Austronesian speakers (Liou, 2007; National Policy Foundation, 2003). The draft was described as “creating fake inequality though the rhetoric of language equality” (National Policy Foundation, 2003). Since some local people interpreted the draft as making the use of 14 languages necessary in all public and educational domains and thus increasing enormous financial expense of the country, the DPP was thought to “make a fuss out of nothing,” “complicate the simple issue,” or “introduce a policy that will hurt the economy at the already difficult times of Taiwanese economy” (National Policy Foundation, 2003). In 2007, the Council for Cultural Affairs took over the role of the MOE, drafting the “National Language Development Law” and changing the focus from officialization of local languages to the preservation of local languages/cultures, and maintenance of linguistic diversity and equity in Taiwan (Council for Cultural Affairs, 2007). The decision to shift the focus from an orientation that views language as a right to language as a cultural artifact to be preserved might indicate DPP’s changing strategy in response to the public rejection of the first draft that aimed to politically elevate all local languages. Currently, the new draft is still pending in the Legislative Assembly and thus, Mandarin Chinese is still called the national language (*guoyu*) in Taiwan.

The new educational curriculum, although conceived in the later years of the KMT governance, was crystallized during the DPP period and has continued to address issues of acquisition planning. Since 2001, all elementary school students across Taiwan have been required to complete at least one session of mother tongue, and all fifth and sixth graders to complete at least one session of English. Although mother tongue and English education both have faced some common obstacles (e.g., the lack of qualified teachers), mother tongue education has received less governmental support than English education (S. Chen, 2006; Scott & Tiun, 2007). In addition, issues of graphization, standardization, and modernization have emerged during the implementation of mother tongue education. Graphization refers to the provision of writing systems for unwritten languages (Cooper, 1989, p. 126). The implementation of mother tongue education confronts the question of which phonetic system best represents local languages since existing Chinese characters cannot represent many words in the local languages. Several Romanized phonetic systems have been used for local languages, some developed by western missionaries and others by local linguists. There has been little public attempt to unify them, but the provision of national mother tongue education in the elementary schools has pressed the government to adopt one phonetic system that can apply to all local languages, making teaching and publishing easier (Su, Zhang, Zheng, Wang, & Xia, 2000).

The debate over which phonetic system both best represents local languages and does not interfere with pupils’ English language learning at a younger age turned out to be a divisive issue among different political parties. The DPP favored the locally-developed Tongyong Pinyin, as it was more intuitive and comparable to other Romanized phonetic systems currently in use (Zhu, 2000), whereas the KMT favored the PRC-developed Hanyu Pinyin as it already had received international recognition (Yang, 2002). The debate soon became highly ideological. Advocates for Tongyong maintained that the adoption of Hanyu would inhibit Taiwanese’ language autonomy, but such arguments were criticized by their opponents as simply ideological rather than educational. After a prolonged and heated



debates among scholars, practitioners and politicians, the DPP eventually adopted Tongyong with some room left for local practitioners to decide what is best for their students. The DPP's opponents attacked this decision as prioritizing political agenda over educational concern. Some local governments under the KMT (e.g., Taipei city, Taichung city) explicitly stated that they would not follow this policy, and thus Hanyu would be taught to their pupils and used on road signs (Yang, 2002).

Another obstacle specific to mother tongue education is related to standardization. Those developing teaching materials for Holo and Hakka have confronted issues related to which variety should be used as the standard in textbooks. In general, the government has not attempted to introduce a standard for either Holo or Hakka, but instead emphasizes that teaching should be sensitive to and based on regional usages (MOE, 2000). Finally, due to the past oppressive language policies, local languages did not develop vocabulary in academic and official domains. This is related to modernization, which refers to "the process whereby a language becomes an appropriate medium of communication for modern topics and forms of discourse" (Cooper, 1989, p. 149). Scott and Tiun (2007) argue that the lack of appropriate vocabulary in mother tongues creates a vicious cycle as it poses challenges to expanding their functions and promoting their status. There seems to be little public support for any mother tongue to go beyond the level of basic literacy learning, and Huang (2000) suspects that the goal of the mother tongue education is less about competence in the languages, and more about the MOE's general "get-to-know-your-native-land" educational goal (p. 146).

It should be noted that one important factor deserves special attention in the discussion of language policy implementation during the DPP era, that is, the tension between central and local governments. Discussed earlier, as Taiwan has moved to a more democratic country since the late 1990s, local governments also have growing autonomy in deciding what to offer their residents (Law, 2004). The educational reform launched in the late 1990s has underscored the market mechanism in the educational process, and thus it has also forced the central governments to reduce their control over education. As a result, children's educational rights as well as parents' rights to choose the adequate education for their children have been emphasized (Yang, 2001).

This changing relationship between central government, local governments and parents is important for the discussion of LPP in Taiwan. For instance, although English was mandated as a required subject for all fifth and sixth graders across Taiwan in 2001, some more affluent local governments had already offered it prior to 2001. The capital city, Taipei, for example, had offered English to their third graders and above since 1998, and to their first graders and above since 2002. Under this new policy, first and second graders in Taipei City only received one session of mother tongue education but two sessions of English education. Several other local governments soon followed this policy. This exemplifies Cooper's point (1989, p. 106) that in countries where social, economic and political resources are centered in the capital cities, their decisions of allocating new functions to a linguistic system (in this case, allocating the function of a school subject to English) usually diffuses from center to periphery, ultimately contributing to language spread.

In view of the growing disparity between local governments' financial power

to offer English education, the MOE extended English to third graders and above beginning in 2003, but it also made several public announcements to emphasize that Taiwanese language-in-education policy prioritizes mother tongue over English and that it is inappropriate for young pupils, specifically pupils under third grade, to receive more English education than mother tongue education (MOE, 2006). Moreover, the MOE claimed to reduce funding for those local governments who insist on providing more or earlier English education to their elementary school students. The MOE was blamed, however, for neglecting the growing parental demands for more English education, and for eagerly inculcating a Taiwanese identity through mother tongue education (e.g., Oladejo, 2006; Sommers, 2004). The tensions between central and local governments and parents in Taiwan with regard to English education also illustrate Ricento and Hornberger's (1996) onion metaphor, describing different layers (or levels) of agents in LPP, and shed light on their interaction. Ricento and Hornberger also highlight the role of states in LPP as they have the power to levy taxes or to regulate behaviors through various edicts; thus in many contexts, policy guidelines at the level of the central government might be modified or not even implemented at state or local levels. In the case of Taiwan, affluent cities/counties usually can (or have to) attend to what their residents ask for (i.e., more English education) since their residents tend to pay more tax to the local governments. In these regions, the power of central government might diminish to a greater extent and thus the influence of local government becomes more obvious.

To conclude, the DPP era was particularly active in LPP formulation. Local languages received the greatest official and educational attention in Taiwanese history due to internal democratization and Taiwanization of the society. Promotion of local languages was not only a response to growing public concerns of linguistic human rights but also linked to promotion of Taiwanese identity(ies) in contrast with the earlier monolithic Chinese identity that was imposed upon the local people. In addition, the Taiwanese export-dependent economy also resulted in a growing systematic support of English education, as English replaced Japanese and became the most prominent foreign language in the local language ecology. Lastly, agencies other than the central government became increasingly important in the LPP, leading to variations in the policy implementation.

### Into the Future

Throughout the paper, I have aimed to situate LPP in Taiwan within a larger sociocultural and political context and examine how different languages have interacted with one another in the local language ecology. In the remaining paragraphs, I identify some important factors that will influence future LPP in Taiwan, and following Kaplan and Baldauf (2008), I suggest that future LPP will benefit from a detailed and nuanced analysis of the local language ecology.

First of all, there has been a growing number of immigrants from Southeast Asia in Taiwan since the late 1990s. Intermarriages between Taiwanese and foreign nationals have increased so drastically that foreign nationals are called "the fifth ethnic group" in governmental discourse (Huang, 2006). The international marriages are highly gendered since over 92% of them are Taiwanese males married to



foreign females (Ministry of the Interior, 2007), and the Taiwanese males who have married foreign nationals are usually from the bottom of the socio-economic stratum (Hsia, 2001). The majority of the foreign nationals are from China (62.74%), and the rest are from Vietnam (19.72%), Indonesia (6.57%), Thailand (2.25%), Philippines (1.54%), or Cambodia (1.15%).

Schools have also started to experience this demographic and ethnolinguistic change. Since 2004, students from international marriages in the elementary and secondary schools have experienced a 30% growth per year (MOE, 2007). Public media and anecdotes from teachers often portray these students as lagging behind other students. Although several governmental measures have been taken to address the socioeconomic status and underachievement among these students (e.g., giving young children priority to be enrolled in public kindergartens, offering elementary students after-school tutoring, giving parents parenting education etc.) (MOE, 2005), future LPP should address this diverse group's unique linguistic needs at school and in society.

Secondly, as Taiwan's economy becomes more globalized, so do its educational policies. For instance, some local counties have developed "English villages" with English-only environments based on the Korean model, and three English villages have been established across Taiwan since 2006. Additionally, Taipei County educational officials decided to increase Chinese and English instruction to their pupils starting September, 2008, after they examined the curriculum in Singapore, Hong Kong and China and found that pupils in these three polities spend more time learning Chinese and English. Kaplan and Baldauf (2008) remind us that languages interact with and affect one another not only within, but also across polities. They also state:

Language planning must recognize...that language modification may not be susceptible to containment within a particular nation-state or other entity that may be isolated for the purpose of discussion but that in truth always remains embedded in a larger context. Rather, the language plan may cause a ripple effect in proximate communities, in nation-states, and across a region (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997, p. 269).

As LPP in Taiwan has experienced a ripple effect originating in its nearby polities, future LPP in Taiwan should recognize that LPP can no longer be narrowly defined within Taiwanese social and political circles, but is embedded within even larger contexts. As can be seen in the case of English villages and increasing English/Chinese instructional time, local governments look for overseas experiences that can address their local needs.

Lastly, the local ecology has inevitably been influenced by the KMT's victory in the presidential and legislative election in 2008, putting an end to the DPP's 8-year governance of Taiwan. The DPP's failure in the legislative and presidential election in 2008 can be understood as Taiwanese's rejection of the DPP's downplaying of domestic economic issues and its over-emphasis on a pro-independence agenda (Open CRS, 2008). As a party that does not favor *de jure* independence but instead supports eventual reunification with China, the KMT is unlikely to challenge the official status of Mandarin Chinese or to grant other local languages co-official status. In terms of language-in-education policy, it remains to be seen if there will

be any change with respect to mother tongue and English education in the elementary schools. It should be noted that the incumbent president Ma Ying-jeou had been the former Taipei City mayor from 1998 to 2006, a time during which he advanced English education to all first graders in Taipei, thereby allotting more time to English than to mother tongue. With respect to the battle between Tongyong and Hanyu pinyin, Hanyu has replaced Tongyong as the model for English-Chinese translation in both central and local governments. No funding is available for local governments adopting Tongyong (He, 2008). As Ricento and Hornberger (1996, p. 410) remind us, guidelines proposed in one administration might not be enforced by those that follow.

Moreover, since the KMT has become the ruling party, it has tried to normalize economic relations between Taiwan and China (e.g., cross-straits direct charter flights). Related to LLP, one current KMT economic policy has indirectly triggered concerns over the simplified written Chinese used in China<sup>3</sup> and the traditional written Chinese used in Taiwan. In the past, only Chinese people who have established permanent residency in a foreign country or who first travel through a third country were allowed to visit Taiwan. A new policy has aimed to boost local tourism by allowing Chinese residents to visit Taiwan since July of 2008. Many local governments and tourism industries have reacted positively to this policy, and a number of them have also drafted menus or tour guides in simplified Chinese (Lan, 2008). However, President Ma did not encourage the use of simplified Chinese only for the sake of business concerns. He argued that Taiwanese people can expose Chinese tourists to the beauty of the traditional version of Chinese, and said he hoped that all Chinese used the traditional characters in the future. However, the business sector saw this proposal as unrealistic (Lian, 2008). Although simplified Chinese is not likely to become part of Taiwanese's reading or writing systems in a short period of time since there have been far fewer numbers of Chinese tourists than expected, there are growing concerns about the preservation of traditional written Chinese in response to the widespread use of simplified Chinese around the world, especially in the emerging field of teaching Chinese as a foreign language<sup>4</sup>. The Executive Yuan proposed in December of 2008 that traditional Chinese be nominated as a World Cultural Heritage language because it represents an important treasure the Chinese ancestors left to the world (Taiwan intends, 2008). Ironically, since Taiwan is not an official member of the United Nation, it must seek help from China to initiate the nomination, and thus how both countries will reach consensus on the proposal remains unknown (Taiwan plans, 2008).

Meanwhile, President Ma's attitude toward simplified and traditional Chinese seems to have changed dramatically since his last public comments on this issue six months earlier. In a meeting with delegates from the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Associations in the U.S. in June of 2009, he proposed "Reading traditional [Chinese] and writing simplified [Chinese]" as future teaching practices for overseas Taiwanese-funded Chinese weekend schools, which still insist teaching only traditional Chinese in the face of growing demand for teaching simplified Chinese. The President further suggested that traditional Chinese be used in all printed materials and urged the Chinese government to consider such a proposal. The DPP criticized the President for ignoring the fact that traditional Chinese has been local Taiwanese' writing practices and that his proposal was evidence of "surrendering to China" (Wang, Lee, Lin, Hu, & Huang, 2009). On the other hand, local scholars interpreted the President's proposal as a reaction to the bottleneck of overseas Chi-

nese schools, which have only taught the Taiwanese variety of Chinese (i.e., traditional Chinese) in the face of Chinese government's systematic promotion of simplified Chinese learning abroad. As China established the National Office of Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (NOCFL) in 1987 to promote simplified Chinese learning and teaching abroad through various avenues (e.g., the establishment of a Chinese Proficiency Test for Foreigners, cultural exchanges and tours, or sending Chinese guest teachers abroad, to name a few; see a more nuanced discussion of the institutionalized promotion of Chinese language and culture abroad in Lo Bianco, 2007), it has become increasingly difficult for those overseas Chinese schools which have taught traditional Chinese to overlook the demand for and the rise of simplified Chinese learning and teaching. Therefore, it is suspected that the President Ma's proposal was the response to the challenges faced by the overseas Taiwanese-affiliated Chinese schools. It can be expected that future LPP in Taiwan will witness more frequent and direct interactions with China due to the more amiable political and economic relations between Taiwan and China under the KMT governance. However, the KMT will inevitably have to deal with issues related to Taiwanese autonomy during its relation-building process with China.

### Conclusion

This paper has tried to embed the LPP in Taiwan within larger sociocultural and political contexts. The metaphor of language ecology is helpful to examine languages within and beyond the local ecology and to capture the complexity and interrelatedness among languages. Kaplan and Baldauf (2008, p. 50) argue that the first step to a successful LPP is a detailed understanding of the local language ecology. This paper has aimed to capture the system of interacting languages in Taiwan and it is hoped that the analysis presented here might be relevant to future LPP in Taiwan.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Jacobs (2005) discusses the challenges of translating *bentuhua* 本土化 to English. He supports the use of Taiwanization over localization and indigenization because the focus of *bentuhua* is on Taiwan as opposed to China or the rest of the world. He argues that localization as a translation might wrongly reinforce the Chinese view of Taiwan as a "local" government, and indigenization often is understood to include only the aboriginals rather than Taiwan as a whole.

<sup>2</sup>The government did not use the term "Southern Min," but used Holo to refer to the 1st minority language spoken by many of Taiwanese. The intention might be to either decrease the relation with China since Southern Min usually refers to the dialect spoken in the southern Fujian province of China (Liou, 2007), or to emphasize that Taiwanese encompasses all languages of other ethnic groups in Taiwan (Scott and Tiun, 2007).

<sup>3</sup>The writing script was simplified and a phonetic alphabet, Hanyu Pinyin, was developed to enhance literacy in China upon the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

<sup>4</sup>Many Southeast Asia countries (e.g., Singapore and Malaysia) where traditional

Chinese had dominated for years have switched to simplified Chinese. Traditional Chinese has been used in Hong Kong, but simplified Chinese gains much visibility since its reunification with China in 1997. The majority of overseas Chinese education and Chinese foreign language education also have adopted simplified Chinese.

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