

Language Education Policies on Taiwan: A Case of Comparative Colonialism and Discourse Power

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This article uses theoretical perspectives on colonialism and language planning to compare the language and education policies of two successive regimes on Taiwan: the Japanese colonial administration from 1895-1945, and the Republic of China from 1945 through the Cold War. The case of Taiwan reveals how blurry the distinction between oppression and liberation can become, and how this ambiguity can remain consistent across different regimes and geopolitical circumstances on the same population. This discussion includes some personal anecdotes from the author's time in Taiwan, exploring how discourse is used to assert power by groups with competing cultural ideologies.

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Despite the breadth of literature on colonialism and language planning in different parts of the world, Taiwan's linguistic and colonial history have received less attention (Eskildsen, 2005; Teng, 2004). As this paper will argue, Taiwan presents a revealing case study of discourse and power, education policy, and the complex interrelationship between oppression and liberation. The case of Taiwan requires us to critically rethink what might be defined as 'colonial' or 'postcolonial'. In this paper, I will compare the language and education policies of two successive regimes in Taiwan, the Japanese colonial administration from 1895 to 1945, and the Republic of China from 1945 through the Cold War. The comparison between two different regimes on the same group of people reveals how education and language policy trends can remain remarkably consistent despite a marked change in government and geopolitical situation.

Theoretical Perspectives

A variety of theoretical perspectives have been developed to examine the social and political forces that shape language policy in national, imperial, or colonial settings. Many of these perspectives have tended to take a critical stance. Pennycook (2002), for example, used Foucault's notions of docile bodies and cultural politics to examine how the British colonial government in Hong Kong positioned itself as a moral and cultural superior to the local Chinese population. The government's language policies, he argued, positioned the Chinese language as inherently inferior due to its monosyllabic character and lack of morphology, while at the same time legitimating the government's control of the colony for purposes of trade and economic power in the region.

In fact, critical theorists often have viewed language policy as an effort by imperial government to pursue some greater political agenda. A classic text of linguistic imperialism is Phillipson (1992), who argues that a colonial government's language policies may be related to its expansionist agenda. Moreover, Phillipson suggests that language planning policies can often have implicit and explicit characteristics: explicitly they might impose an external language upon a population, implicitly they might offer the incentive of a more favorable career development or quality of life for those who learn to speak it.

In addition to the incentives for learning a language, the use of language has often been associated with power, where those who can speak it are able to gain some power or position of privilege over those who cannot. Shohamy (2006) stipulates that language itself is fluid and dynamic, and that the common view of

language as a “closed system” did not emerge until the development of the nation-state, where “decisions had to be made with regard to membership, affiliation, loyalty, categories, and affiliations” (p. 25). Language becomes a way to demonstrate loyalty to the ruling government, and to classify who is a member of the power group and who is a member of the non-power group.

Related to power is the question of how a group asserts and maintains its power. Skutnall-Kangas (2000) presents a detailed classification of the linguistic tools that those with power use against those without it. These include discursive “-isms”, such as racism and sexism. They also include the use of shaming and the threat of physical force, as well as attempts at ideological indoctrination. All of this is tied to discursive practices of power. Van Dijk (2000) examines how the elites of a society use language as a means to maintain their power and access, while limiting the power and access of others.

The attempts to liberate a society from oppression might inadvertently introduce a new form of oppression. For example, Lin and Martin’s (2005) edited volume examines the sometimes-contradictory notions of globalization and decolonization, whereby the spread of standard languages such as English might appear to create social and economic opportunities for some, while limiting them for others, propagating a kind of colonialism variant. It is important to prevent the inadvertent substitution of one form of colonialism for another.

Finally, despite the breadth of literature on the negative effects of language planning, it is important to remember that language planning in itself is not inherently negative. It can be done for a variety of productive uses. Hornberger (2003) synthesized a large volume of literature that classifies the different types of purposes for language planning, which include efforts at group identification, standardization, the assertion (or development) of a group’s national identity, as well as the effort to revitalize certain endangered languages. Much of it depends on the particular circumstances in which these policies operate. For that reason, McGroarty (2002) points out that “all social policies, including those related to language and education, operate in a dynamic social environment where other currents of social, political, economic, and psychological changes carry their own momentum” (p. 17). It is important to examine the broader context within which a certain language or education policy is implemented.

The themes cutting across the above literature on language planning and power discourses might be broken down as follows: (1) the linkage between language and power/social control, (2) the relationship between language policies and the broader societal and geopolitical contexts that they are embedded within, (3) the use of linguistic controls as one of many tools employed within a broader political or economic agenda, and (4) the replacement of one form of oppression or colonialism with another. We will see these

four trends played out in the complex history and geopolitical climate of Taiwan, past and present.

At the same time, Taiwan presents several questions that I have not found as thoroughly addressed within the academic literature. What happens when a society endures a succession of colonial regimes? Particularly when its cultural and linguistic fabric are continuously shaped by competing great power regimes, to the point where society itself is severely divided over its past and future, even today? Teng (2004) argues that Taiwan provides an important case study in colonial ‘frontier’ discourse. Eskildsen (2005) highlights the need to “use the history of Taiwan, and even more narrowly the history of the Taiwan frontier, as a case study in comparative colonialism” (p. 290). This paper explores how education and language planning in Taiwan have simultaneously become tools as well as targets of colonial discourse.

Historical Background: Taiwan Before 1895

As a volcanic island on the Pacific Rim, Taiwan has always been positioned between two worlds, that of the Asian mainland and that of the Pacific Islands. For most of its history going back 15,000 years, the inhabitants of Taiwan were largely aboriginal, though their exact cultural origins have long been debated by scholars with competing political ideologies. Chinese anthropologists point to evidence that the first aboriginals arrived in Taiwan from the Asian mainland. Japanese anthropologists point to evidence that the first aboriginals arrived from the Japanese island chains. Nativist anthropologists point to evidence that Taiwan itself was the source of the entire Austronesian Pacific-Islander ethnicity. In reality, there is evidence to support all three theories, given the successive waves of migrations to and from these disparate regions, and the various inter-tribal wars that have resulted over thousands of years (Manthorpe, 2005). Culture and history are interpreted through the lens of a political ideology. These debates over the island’s cultural origins are at the center of the various regimes’ education policies, including the political battles that occur in Taiwan’s legislature and Education Ministry even today. I witnessed many of these battles myself during the years that I lived there, and on subsequent visits back.

For most of the millennia in which Taiwan was inhabited, the languages spoken were largely from the Malayo-Polynesian language family. The first Chinese record of contact with Taiwan was in 230 C.E., when Sun Quan (孫權) (182-252), emperor of the Eastern Wu Dynasty, sent an expedition to explore a rumored island off the Chinese coast, only to lose most of the force to aboriginal attacks, and quickly abandon the endeavor (Wong, 2017; Zhao, 2019). Chinese contact with the island remained sporadic and usually limited to occasional trade and military expeditions, including one sent by Sui Dynasty emperor Yang Guang (楊廣)

(569-618), though Tang Dynasty poet Shi Jianwu (施肩吾) (780-861) reported briefly living on the Penghu Islands in the middle of the Taiwan Strait (Zhao, 2019). Most Chinese imperial courts at the time considered the island to be a haven of pirates, outcasts, and headhunters. In fact, the Taiwan Strait became the center of pirate networks throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including the infamous Wokou (倭寇) and Shibazhi (十八芝) confederacies who frequently raided the Chinese coast. Taiwan itself became frequent battleground between aboriginal plains and mountain tribes, Dutch and Spanish colonists, and various ethnic Chinese clans who attempted to stake out farms and trading posts on the island (Eskildsen, 2005; Wong, 2017).

In 1644, the Ming Dynasty regime in Beijing was overthrown by Manchu clans from the north, who established the Qing Dynasty. Ming loyalists, however, continued to hold out in parts of the south. In 1661, the half-Japanese military leader Zheng Chenggong (鄭成功) (1624-1662) attacked the Dutch settlements in southwestern Taiwan. He expelled the Dutch after a year-long siege and established his family's rule over the former Dutch territorial possessions, naming his government the Kingdom of Tungning (東寧國). The rest of the island was still largely aboriginal (Davison, 2003).

Qing rulers in Beijing debated whether they wanted control over Taiwan, whether it would be worth the cost. They decided that it would be better to control it than allow it to become a pirates' base so near their coast. In 1683, at the Battle of Penghu (澎湖海戰), admiral Shi Lang (施琅) (1621-1696) defeated the last of the Zheng family forces, and claimed the island in the name of the Qing. It was an ironic twist of fate, given that the fathers of both Zheng Chenggong and Shi Lang, named Zheng Zhilong (鄭芝龍) (1604-1661) and Shi Daxuan (施大瑄) (d. 1651) respectively, had been famous pirates themselves during the prior era (Wong, 2017).

Even under the Qing, however, Taiwan remained classified administratively as a prefecture of Fujian Province, and the imperial government never controlled the entire island. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Taiwan continued to be a constant battleground, as wars and rebellions broke out almost every year between ever-shifting alliances of Qing governors, landowning elites, and aboriginal tribes. The Qing also tightly controlled migration to the island, though many young men seeking their fortunes or fleeing from poverty would ignore those restrictions (Davison, 2003; Manthorpe, 2005).

Starting with the Opium Wars in mainland China in the mid-nineteenth century, various colonial powers including the French, British, and Japanese, sent expeditionary forces to Taiwan, shutting down port cities and attacking aboriginal villages. The Qing government decided to expand its effective control over the

entire island, and upgraded Taiwan to the status of full province in 1885. However, Japan during this time was coming out of its feudal era and modernizing its military and economy, with the aim of becoming a Western-style empire. China and Japan had a dispute over Korea, which led to the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894. The Chinese suffered a heavy defeat. As a condition of their surrender at the Treaty of Shimonoseki, they were required to give Taiwan and other East China Sea possessions such as the Pescadores to Japan. Thus in 1895, Taiwan went from being a province of the Chinese imperial Qing Dynasty, to being a colonial possession of the growing Empire of Japan (Cauquelin, 2004).

By 1895, Taiwan's population was predominantly ethnic Chinese (about 2-3 million) who had settled mostly along the plains of the western coast. The aboriginals had largely been pushed up into the central mountains and eastern coastal areas, and estimates of the time placed their population at over 200,000 (Davidson, 1903). Although the majority of the island's population in 1895 might have originated from the Chinese mainland, they were not a cohesive or homogeneous group. They were a mix of largely rivalrous clans from different parts of the eastern and southern coasts of the mainland. They were also a mix of recent immigrants and those who had long since made the island their home, with some intermarriage among the aboriginals. Additionally, the language they spoke was not Mandarin, but Hakka and Southern Min, two variants within the Chinese language family (Cauquelin, 2004).

Language Education under Japanese Colonial Rule: 1895-1945

Understanding Japanese language and education policies in Taiwan requires an understanding of Japan's geopolitical situation at the turn of the twentieth century. As a budding empire competing with other Western empires in the Asia-Pacific waters, it needed an increasing supply of raw materials to support its growth, including wood, gold, and copper. Taiwan provided many of these resources. At the same time, the Japanese needed a territory to govern, so that they could demonstrate to the Western empires that they were equally capable of running a colony. The Japanese therefore needed to modernize the island's infrastructure, from railroads and irrigation to financial and telecommunications networks. They also needed to cultivate a workforce of loyal imperial subjects. Such material and ideological needs required the language to be standardized (Goddard, 1966; Manthorpe, 2005).

Tsao (1999) notes that the Japanese took a pragmatic approach to their language policies in Taiwan. They wanted to integrate Taiwan into their empire and make Japanese the lingua franca, but they knew that they would not be able to force this outcome immediately. They designed a three-phase process of assimilation. The first was the pacification phase (1895-1919), where local children attended public schools and took

Chinese as a required class, though they had the option of attending a Chinese private school instead if desired. The second was the assimilation phase (1919-1937), where Chinese was offered as an elective, and Chinese private schools were closed down. The third was the Japanization phase (1937-1945), where Chinese was fully banned from all public spheres, including the classroom and the media.

The Japanese in Taiwan developed an education system that was highly stratified. Japanese and Taiwanese children generally attended separate schools. Primary education was instituted over much of the island, with Japanese as the medium of instruction. This increased the need for teachers, resulting in the great expansion of teacher training colleges. Teaching jobs in Taiwan were stable and well-paid, becoming among the most desired but competitive jobs open to Taiwanese. A variety of vocational colleges were also built, many of them in the maritime, commercial, and agricultural industries, jobs that supported the development of the empire. Many of the more prestigious colleges required advanced fluency in Japanese, making it difficult for many Taiwanese to gain admission. One university was built, Taipei Imperial University (present-day National Taiwan University), but it was generally open only to Japanese citizens. Japanese language and education policies in Taiwan were both explicit and implicit: Japanese was taught as the medium of instruction, and the most favorable career opportunities required fluency in Japanese. At the same time, the Taiwanese were kept largely in the subordinate position of being trained for low to mid-level vocational jobs, while the Japanese minority generally trained for the higher-level administrative jobs (Chou & Ching, 2012; Huang, 2005; Zhang, 2003).

In the 1930s, as the prospect of another world war loomed, Japanese troops began militarizing for war against the Chinese mainland, first attacking Manchuria in 1931, and moving large numbers of troops into their occupied territories on the east coast of the mainland. During this time, the colonial government on Taiwan was highly guarded against Taiwanese expressions of sympathy toward their Chinese kin. In 1936, the Japanese implemented a new education curriculum on Taiwan called *kōminka* (皇民化), which translates into “making of imperial subjects”. This curriculum eliminated Chinese and Taiwanese history and attempted to inculcate a Japanese nationalist identity through the teaching of Japanese religion, language, and culture (Chen, 2001; Rossabi, 2013; Tsao, 1999).

In 1937, the expected full-scale war finally broke out in the Chinese mainland. The Japanese, with their superior military capabilities, easily captured the coastal provinces, taking economic centers such as Shanghai, Nanjing, and Wuhan, then turning toward the interior, attacking cities such as Changsha and Guilin (Ebrey, 1996; Mackinnon, 2012). They suddenly found themselves in greater need of the resources and manpower necessary to support this war effort. This led them to implement a series of policy changes in Taiwan,

including further industrial expansion, the creation of civic organizations aimed at fostering a sense of duty to the empire, and the requirement for citizens to adopt Japanese names and speak Japanese in the household (Huang, 2005). Language planning was thus intricately linked with nationalist political objectives.

These efforts increased in the early 1940s, as fighting on the mainland intensified, war broke out across Europe, and the bombing of Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the fight. The Japanese army captured more territories in Southeast Asia, including Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Dutch East Indies. Education in Taiwan saw a significant shift toward vocational training for heavy industry. This shift occurred for several reasons. First, the Japanese could acquire their agricultural products more cheaply in Southeast Asia. Second, they needed to increase their production of heavy weaponry to cope with the widening scope of war in Southeast Asia, mainland China, and against the United States in the Pacific Theater; and Taiwan had the industrial infrastructure already in place to accommodate this production. Third, Taiwan's strategic position between the Japanese home islands and the Southeast Asian possessions made it a logical choice for a forward base. Fourth, the Japanese recruited Taiwanese men as support personnel for the army (Huang, 2005; Zhang, 2003).

But even as the Japanese were planning out Taiwan's use as a centerpiece for the expansion of their empire, the wartime Allied Powers were deciding on Taiwan's fate. At the Cairo Conference of 1943, they agreed that Taiwan would be returned to the Chinese government at the end of the war. When the war finally ended, Taiwan was passed into Chinese hands on October 25, 1945 (Manthorpe, 2005).

Language Education under the Republic of China: 1945 – Cold War

When Taiwan passed out of Chinese hands in 1895, the Chinese mainland was still governed by the imperial Qing Dynasty, ruled by an emperor out of the Forbidden City in Beijing. However, a revolution on the mainland in 1911 established the Republic of China, a nationalist autocracy with its political party, the Kuomintang (KMT), or Chinese Nationalist Party. Thus, it was the Republic of China that fought the Japanese during World War II. And it was the Republic of China that received Taiwan after the Japanese surrender in 1945 (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006).

The Republic of China in 1945 was in a precarious state. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the KMT had fought a civil war against the rising Chinese Communist Party (CCP). When full-scale war broke out with Japan in 1937, the KMT and the CCP agreed to a temporary cease-fire, and established a joint base of operations far up in the interior mountains of Sichuan Province, safe from Japanese bomber planes. However, both sides knew that they would return to fighting each other as soon as the war with the Japanese

was over. Thus, the Republic of China in 1945 had just suffered considerable destruction by the Japanese all across the mainland, and was preparing for another full-scale war, this time a resumption of the civil war between the Nationalist KMT and the Communist CCP (Ebrey, 1996; Mackinnon, 2012).

Under this climate, Taiwan's return to the mainland sparked controversy. The Taiwanese, who had just been subjugated as second-class citizens by the Japanese for fifty years, were looking forward to having their status elevated once again as they reunited with their mainland compatriots. However, the KMT-run government, which had just suffered through a decade of war and massacre at the hands of the Japanese, was in little mood to establish friendly ties with a people who had just been Japanese subjects. In addition, the KMT viewed the coming civil war with the Communists as a more immediate concern. This meant that managing Taiwan was less of a priority, except perhaps for any material resources that could be extracted for the anti-Communist war effort. Moreover, corruption had become more widespread within the KMT, with soldiers across the mainland seizing ordinary people's property for the alleged purpose of supplying themselves against the Communists (Manthorpe, 2005; Rossabi, 2013; Zhang, 2003).

When KMT officials arrived in Taiwan and established the Taiwan Provincial Administrative Office (臺灣省行政長官公署), the initial welcome gave way to dissention. The Taiwanese, who had just been subjugated to a form of oppression for not being Japanese, suddenly found themselves subjugated to a new form of oppression for being too Japanese. Under the previous colonial rule, they had been barred from holding high political office, and their land and property rights had been tightly controlled. Under KMT rule, they found themselves once again barred from holding high political office, their lands and properties seized, only this time they were corruptly hoarded and mismanaged by the KMT, leading to large shortages of goods, and giving way to a growing black market. The island's economy became significantly weakened in a short two years, while the KMT focused most of its efforts on gathering the resources necessary for its fight against the Communists on the mainland. The police in Taiwan—who were usually mainlanders and KMT soldiers—treated the population with deep mistrust as they attempted to root out Communist sympathizers. Dissatisfaction among the local populace increasingly grew bitter (Rigger, 2013; Lam, 2008).

The Provincial Government during this time implemented a series of education policies aimed at eliminating Japanese linguistic and cultural influence, barring Japanese from schools, the media, and other public spheres. The local populace had just spent fifty years being forced to learn Japanese, they had grown accustomed to speaking it for their career advancement, and they had been encouraged to speak it as good subjects of the Japanese Empire. Suddenly and abruptly, they found themselves in the opposite position: they were forced to stop speaking it, they were unable to gain career advancement with it, and they were

scorned for having learned it in the first place. This whiplash ignited deep resentment among the local Taiwanese (Goddard, 1966; Rigger, 2013).

The Provincial Government also implemented the National Language Movement (NLM) (國語運動), which had first been started on the mainland in the 1920s with the aim of making Mandarin the lingua franca of the Chinese nation. The mainland newcomers, who held most of the key political positions and controlled most of the island's industry, spoke Mandarin. The local population could speak primarily Japanese, Southern Min, Hakka, and the aboriginal languages. This caused numerous tensions and misunderstandings, and further prevented the local populace from playing a more active role in public affairs. This grew into an additional source of unrest and dissatisfaction (Tsao, 1999; Zhang, 2003).

The tensions finally erupted on February 28, 1947, when riots broke out across the island. The police and military cracked down hard, killing thousands of citizens, both indiscriminately on the streets, and systematically seeking out intellectuals and other local elites. Many people simply disappeared. The government declared martial law, and a reign known as the White Terror was initiated, where those whom the government considered to be political dissidents and communist sympathizers were arrested, many executed. The government banned all local languages other than Mandarin from being spoken in public and in the classrooms. The White Terror would last until 1987 (Rigger, 2013; Rossabi, 2013).

The situation changed in 1949, when the Chinese Communists finally defeated the Nationalist KMT forces on the mainland. The KMT military was larger in size, and had the backing of American weapons and advisers, but it was more corrupt and disorganized than the sleeker Communist guerrilla forces. The Communists entered Beijing, and Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975) and the rest of the KMT leaders fled to Taiwan, along with two million mainlanders. The United States decided to withdraw its support for the KMT and allow Taiwan to fall to the Communists as well. However, when fighting broke out on the Korean Peninsula less than a year later, President Truman reversed that decision and decided on a policy of communist containment in Asia. He sent the Navy's Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait to block the Communists from taking Taiwan, as well as to prevent the KMT from attempting to re-take the mainland. He signed the Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty with Chiang Kai-shek to provide financial and military support to KMT forces in Taiwan (Rigger, 2013; Rossabi, 2013). This Cold War partnership between the United States and the Republic of China on Taiwan would end up having both direct and indirect influences on the KMT's education policies and on the cultural and linguistic development of the island.

The change in geopolitical circumstances had a profound impact on the Republic of China's language and education policies. After 1949, the government's primary focus was to prepare the island to re-conquer

the mainland. This required a strategy with several prongs. First, to improve the island's production capacity to provide the equipment and materials necessary for the fight. Second, to prove to the international community that the KMT was the sole legitimate government of the entire Chinese nation, by creating a prosperous society in Taiwan that promoted justice and fairness according to the principles of Confucius and of Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), the Republic of China's founder. Third, to cultivate a sense of pan-Chinese nationalism among the Taiwanese population and a sense of belonging within the historical traditions of mainland China. Fourth, to investigate and prosecute expressions of communist sympathy or of a separate Taiwanese identity, both of these notions having the potential to undermine the KMT's credibility as a leading force for Chinese unity and anti-communism during the Cold War (Rigger, 2013; Zhang, 2003).

In the educational sphere, fulfilling these political objectives required making several policy changes. First, expanding the number and quality of universities and vocational colleges to support this industrialization. Second, expanding the free and compulsory education at the primary and secondary levels. Third, eliminating references to Taiwan-specific history from the curriculum, and teaching almost exclusively about Confucian philosophy, Chinese dynastic history, and the Republic of China. Any cultural characteristics specific to Taiwan were re-interpreted as falling within the umbrella of 'traditional' Chinese culture, with the aboriginal tribes relabeled as an ethnic minority group within the greater Chinese nation. Fourth, teaching only Mandarin, and instituting a ban on Southern Min, Hakka, and the aboriginal languages from all public spheres (Chou & Ching, 2012; Hong & Murray, 2005). My middle-aged friends in Taiwan still remember a time when they could be severely punished by their teachers for speaking Southern Min at school, or for making suggestions about Taiwan being its own distinctive culture.

At the same time, the government permitted non-mainlanders to run for local office, allowing them to participate more actively in public affairs. Yet the government still subjected them to martial law, where they could be punished for publicly speaking languages other than Mandarin, for suggesting a separate Taiwanese identity, or for expressing sympathy toward communism. Agricultural reforms increased the number of landowners, while fiscal reforms increased savings and curbed inflation (Manthorpe, 2005; Zhang, 2003). Thus, the social and economic reforms, and the educational policies that accompanied them, contained elements of both oppression and liberation. A personal anecdote will further illustrate this point.

When I was living in Taiwan, I once had two students in my oral conversation class, both of whom were retired, both of whom were born in the 1950s. The first student's parents had fled from the civil war in mainland China, and she grew up in a poor farming village in the north of Taiwan. She attended a military college, became a public school teacher, and retired with a stable pension and benefits. She expressed deep

gratitude for the Republic of China and the KMT party for helping lift her family out of poverty and helping raise the socioeconomic level of Taiwan as a whole. The second student's parents were born in rural communities in southern Taiwan. While she had successful career in finance, she was sharply critical of the KMT, arguing that in her youth it had controlled much of the island's wealth and provided the highest quality education only to those who were recent immigrants from the mainland or to those who supported the KMT's ideologies. Both of these students nearly broke out into arguments several times in my class. After that, I learned to be careful when raising political issues in class.

Over time, I came to see these two different women and their divided opinions as a microcosm for Taiwan as a whole. This demonstrates the interrelatedness of education with politics and economics, as well as the unequal distribution of education, leading the Taiwanese to hold sharply conflicting beliefs about whether education was a tool of oppression or liberation. Thus, a complex power dynamic is seen here, one that still deeply divides Taiwanese today.

Although the KMT eventually grew more pragmatic in its realization that it would not retake the Chinese mainland, it has arguably never fully lost its ideology of Taiwan being a part of the Chinese nation whose history is largely shared with mainland China. Despite the KMT allowing the government to become a democracy in the 1990s, it remains deeply fractured over how quickly to push for reunification with mainland China (Fell, 2018).

Comparison and Contrast: A Critical Examination

Examining the Japanese occupation during World War II and the Republican administration during the Cold War, we can see several parallels. First, both regimes needed to develop a cohesive sense of cultural and political identity in order to achieve their political ends. Language planning policies both inside and outside the classroom were treated as important mechanisms for achieving those ends. Certain languages were promoted for unity and efficiency, while other languages were prohibited for the danger that they posed to the regimes' political agenda and sense of legitimacy. Second, both regimes viewed the local Taiwan-born culture as being inherently inferior, or at least threatening to their political agendas. Thus, both regimes required the population to undergo a re-education in new cultural ways, while administering some form of social or legal punishment for the expression of "old" cultural ways.

Third, both regimes created a system that was liberating in some aspects and oppressive in others. Both regimes expanded the education system and trained the local workforce for the technical and industrial jobs required to fulfill their political and economic goals. Both regimes raised literacy rates and socioeconomic

levels, but they did so in a tightly-controlled manner that would not tolerate dissent. Fourth, both regimes downplayed Taiwan-specific historical events, and emphasized a version of history that was more in line with their political agendas.

Fifth, both regimes viewed Taiwan itself—its natural resources and its geographic positioning—as a strategic piece of their Asia-Pacific endgames: the Japanese for purposes of expanding their empire, the KMT for purposes of re-taking the mainland. Sixth, both regimes created a social divide between two groups of people, the higher group being a minority of newcomers, the lower group being a majority of localized residents. These tensions still exist today: although the mainlanders have integrated into local society, there is still a sharp divide over whether Taiwan should be considered Chinese or not. In the sphere of education, a personal anecdote will illustrate. This anecdote is a good example of how language is used to assert power and identity in Taiwan today, by both groups in different ways.

When I revisited Taiwan in 2015, a large-scale demonstration was breaking out across the island, in protest against a series of comprehensive changes to the education curriculum that were being proposed by the Ministry of Education, then under the direction of the KMT. The new changes proposed to eliminate from the curriculum a number of key historical events that occurred in Taiwan, while rephrasing other events as being related to mainland China. For example, the Hamada Incident (濱田彌兵衛事件)—or the Nuyts Incident, as it is known to the Dutch—was a 1628 battle between Japanese traders and the Dutch East India Company on Taiwan, where the Japanese attempted to use local aboriginals as proxies, playing on the aboriginals' hatred of Dutch rule. The Madou Incident (麻豆事件) was a failed aboriginal revolt in 1629 that resulted in further Dutch massacres to the aboriginal population. Additionally, the Spanish briefly had a colony in the northern harbor of present-day Keelung, which they named Santísima Trinidad. The Dutch and the Spanish fought each other in the early seventeenth century, with the Dutch finally expelling the Spanish from the island in 1642 (Tsai, 2005). These events and others like them, show how Taiwan was a frequent battleground between various non-Chinese maritime powers, with the aboriginals often caught in the middle. Such events demonstrate the island's historical ties with Japan and Europe, as well as the island's own indigenous history, which the KMT sought to reduce from the history books.

Facts themselves can also be interpreted according to political ideology. A prime example is Zheng Chenggong, the military leader who expelled the Dutch from southern Taiwan. Despite him fighting in the name of the Ming Dynasty or its remnants, his identity has always been debated. Those who favor the view of Taiwan as being largely connected with Chinese tradition will usually argue that Zheng was under direct Ming control. Those who favor the view of Taiwan as a distinctive entity with a history that is only partially

shared with mainland China will usually argue that Zheng was a Ming loyalist but not operating under its direct control. Whether he should be considered a ‘Chinese’ or ‘Taiwanese’ hero, and whether he represents a Chinese regime in Taiwan or a regime in opposition to rule from Beijing, are still vigorously debated on the island (Vickers, 2021). Could his rule of southwestern Taiwan be considered a part of Ming Dynasty history? It depends on how you label it. The old curriculum labeled his rule as “Zheng Clan” or “Zheng Family”, while the new curriculum labeled it as “Ming Dynasty Zheng Rule”, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Examples of terminological changes in the KMT's 2015 proposed curriculum revision. Cited from <https://www.storm.mg/cardstack/58980>. Translations are my own.

Old Terminology	New Terminology
鄭氏統治	明鄭統治
Zheng Clan/Family Rule	Ming Dynasty Zheng Rule
原住民	原住民族
Aboriginals	Aboriginal Ethnic Minorities
荷西至台	河西入台
Dutch and Spanish Rule of Taiwan	Dutch and Spanish Infiltration of Taiwan
日本統治	日本殖民統治
Japanese Rule	Japanese Colonial Rule
大航海時代	漢人來台與大航海時代
Age of Maritime Exploration	Age of the Han People Coming to Taiwan, and of Maritime Exploration
清代治台政策	清廷治台政策
Qing Era Taiwan Policies	Qing Court Taiwan Policies

Labeling the aboriginals as a minzu (民族) would classify them explicitly as an ethnic minority group within the Chinese nation, as the term minzu is understood to native Chinese speakers. Labeling the

Japanese rule of Taiwan as “Japanese Colonial Rule” would classify the Japanese as outsiders in what the KMT would consider an otherwise China-centric history. Relabeling Qing government policies from “Qing Era” to “Qing Court” would de-emphasize the Qing rule as being merely one “era” of Taiwan’s history, and instead label Taiwan as a more integral part of Chinese history at large.

The Taiwanese people became split over these curriculum changes. Supporters argued that the changes were necessary in order to standardize the terminology across the curriculum, and that such small changes in wording were not worth making a fuss over. Opponents argued that such small changes in wording actually carried dangerous implications about the KMT’s ideology and vision for Taiwan’s future. They also argued that the KMT was pushing these changes unilaterally. Both groups interpreted the KMT as having different language planning agendas: standardization on the one hand, and manipulation of nationalistic sentiment on the other. Thus, from a theoretical standpoint, the case of Taiwan presents an instance in which the language planning policies of a regime remain ambiguous.

The protests finally erupted when a large group of students stormed into the Education Ministry building and shut it down. I visited the protest site in the summer of 2015. The police had formed a wall in front of the main entrance of the ministry building, keeping watch on the crowd but allowing them to stay. All around the premises were tents with sleeping bags, hundreds of signs with slogans and protest messages, a press tent packed with cameras and journalists from all of the island’s major news stations, and vendor booths selling music CDs and poetry booklets by local Taiwanese artists. Several of these artists even came to the site and gave musical performances of songs written in Hakka and Southern Min. Also conspicuously absent, and rarely seen at anti-KMT protest rallies, was the official flag of the Republic of China. This protest site shows many examples of language and discourse entwined with politics, such an emphasis on languages other than Mandarin, as well as a deliberate rejection of the ‘Republic of China’ as representing Taiwan.

The controversy became visceral. Supporters of the protests said that they were rightfully standing up for their rights to define their own identity. Opponents said that the protesters were simply being obstructionist out of political self-interests. Each side claimed to be exercising their rights, while accusing the other side of having a nefarious nationalist political agenda. The curriculum disputes continue to this day.

Conclusion

What is Taiwan? Who has the agency to define it? How is language used to express those definitions? And how do different groups exercise their power through language? Are those who wish to Sinicize the

education curriculum guilty of a political agenda, or are they simply trying to correct the political agenda of the opposition? Conversely, are those who wish to de-Sinicize the curriculum simply correcting the opposition's skewed history, or are they the ones who wish to skew the history? These debates run deep in the Taiwanese consciousness, as much today as they have over the previous century.

Taiwan shows us that discourse, the use of language, and the choice of languages to include or exclude, can all be potent mechanisms for the exertion of power and the expression of identity, both by the governing as well as by the governed. We also see cases where the line between oppression and liberation becomes blurred, and how language policies can sometimes contain degrees of ambiguity. Taiwan has much to teach us about language and power.

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