

Changing second language targets in Taiwan: The case of Paiwan and other minorities

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1. The Formosan language situation

The present language situation in Taiwan is a complex one. Those who are familiar with patterns of language use elsewhere in Asia will notice similarities with the case of Taiwan; whereas those who are unfamiliar with this area may be surprised by certain facts. Today's report is based on my own field research in 1993 and 1994. Although scholarly histories¹ provide details about the early European and Chinese colonization of Formosa² and its surrounding islands, the more recent history which I describe is based on eyewitness accounts and on the oral histories of "Formosans", by which term I refer to the area's autochthonous Austronesians.

Before 1895, the Paiwan and other Austronesian language groups of southern and eastern Formosa were relatively isolated. Except for certain border interactions with other Austronesians and some occasional contact with Chinese, there was very little contact between Formosans and foreign speech communities. Today, however, the Paiwan community is divided by a complex pattern of multilingualism, the result of historical development and changes of foreign suzerainty. During the period of Japanese administration, from 1895 to 1945, a classic substrate-superstrate situation developed as Japanese educators, missionaries, and engineers moved into the non-Chinese highlands of Formosa. This half century of Japanese development resulted in widespread literacy and bilingualism in Japanese and indigenous languages. For example, among the Paiwan people of southern Formosa, it became common to speak Japanese at school and in government offices, while speaking the Paiwan language at home. Since 1949, when Formosa became the largest land mass controlled by the Republic of China (ROC), the indigenous minorities (as well as the Sinitic majority) have been forced to learn Mandarin as a means of socioeconomic advancement. In addition, throughout the past century, the increasing urbanization of Paiwan and other indigenous communities has resulted in widespread contact with native speakers of Holo. Given the change of superstrate and the added complexity of a rival lingua franca, the Paiwan are now faced with a language situation which presents second language learners with many difficult choices. The ethnic Paiwan must decide whether (and, if so, when and where) to speak Japanese, Holo, and Mandarin within

¹ English language accounts include Davidson (1903), Campbell (1903) for the Dutch era, Meskill (1979) for the rise of Chinese gentry, and Gordon (1970) for the establishment of Japanese suzerainty. The patterns of Paiwan cultural loss described by Tung (1995) are in the main valid for other Formosan groups.

² The terms "Formosa", "Taiwan", and "Republic of China" are not synonymous. "The Republic of China" is the English name of a sovereign state recognized as such by foreign governments. Taiwan is a province of China, which is recognized as such by both of the governments which lay claim to it, namely, the ROC and the PRC (People's Republic of China). The territory of Taiwan consists entirely of islands, of which the largest is Formosa. In English-language writing and speech, both Chinese governments use the name "Taiwan" ambiguously, referring either to the province 台湾省 or to its primary island, Formosa 美麗島.

the Paiwan community. The various rates of second language proficiency are changing, and the pattern of multilingualism is affecting the community's social structure. Sociologically emblematic language usage has arisen, and in this and other regards there are parallels with other Formosan speech communities.

2. Bilingualism in Japanese

As part of Japan from 1895 to 1945, Taiwan was an area of great linguistic diversity. Two Sinitic languages had great currency. Collectively known as Holo 福老語 are the varieties of Fukienese spoken by the Hoklo Chinese, descendants of immigrants from Fukien 福建. The principal Fukienese variety is Min Nan 閩南語, which is also known in Taiwan by the English names Southern Min, Southern Fukienese, and Hokkien. The other important Sinitic language, Hakka 客家語, was spoken by many of the Hakka Chinese, who were also descendent from mainland China immigrants. In addition, several autochthonous Formosan languages were spoken, most notably: Amis 阿美語, Atayal 泰雅語, Saiset 賽夏語, Tsou 曹語, Bunun 布農語, Puyuma 卑南語, Paiwan 排灣語, Rukai 魯凱語, and Yami 雅美語.

For the Formosans, Japanese administration proved to be an era of comparative enlightenment. The impact of the Dutch and other European settlements, if not benign, had been short-lived. The long period of Chinese rule which followed the expulsion of the Dutch was exploitative and destructive; by the end of the era of Manchu administration, Formosan language use in the lowlands was all but extinct. By setting Japanese up as the official language, the government placed the Chinese and the Formosans on more equal footing. Moreover, the Japanese opened roads, schools, and churches in the highlands, providing hitherto isolated Formosans access to the fruits of a modern economy. Formosans did not have to forsake their cultural heritage completely and become Chinese in order to modernize; under Japanese administration, a population of modern, industrial age Formosans began to grow. Except in those few areas which resisted Japanese encroachment, rural development also fostered contact between the various Formosan groups, which helped to end Formosan ethnic warfare and thus planted the seeds of pan-Formosan indigenous solidarity. Of course, when the Japanese brought the highlands under their effective administration, they also improved certain material standards of living for the resident Formosans. Older Formosans, who first experienced literacy, electricity, and modern medicine as gifts from a cadre of paternalistic Japanese teachers, engineers, and doctors, are today nostalgic for the days of Japanese rule; they are quite happy to speak Japanese whenever they encounter strangers, and they prefer to use Japanese hymnals in church. As Japanese education programs became increasingly comprehensive, although Holo use remained widespread among the Chinese, Japanese became the lingua franca of communication between highland Formosans and lowland Chinese.

During the Japanese era, although the Sinitic population was able to continue to use Holo and written Chinese as languages of instruction in their schools for a long time after the Japanese assumed control³, the schools which the Japanese established to serve the Formosan population used Japanese as the primary, and typically sole, instructional medium. The significance of Japan's "kominka" policy of turning Formosans into children of the emperor should not be underestimated. By one Formosan account, this "attempt to assimilate a subjected people to the master race

³ The description of Japanese administration on the Chinese relies heavily on Gallin 1966 and Harrell 1982.

and culture had no precedent among the colonial powers in Asia" (Tung 1995: 106).⁴ Access to education in Japanese permitted the Formosans a route to modern industrial society which did not automatically sinicize them. By 1927, well over a quarter of the Paiwan could speak some Japanese, and the early 1930s saw a rapid increase in school enrollment (*ibid.*: 90). Assimilation of the Paiwan was sufficient by 1935 for their reclassification as regular subjects of the emperor.⁵ By the late 1930s, the Paiwan were compelled to take Japanese names. Acculturation progressed even to the point where Formosans volunteered for Japanese military service (*ibid.*: 87).

The Japanese language was used throughout Taiwan's schools as the medium of instruction during the later fascist period, which, while undermining traditional Chinese literacy, significantly equalized the educational levels to which both Formosan and Sinitic Taiwanese could aspire. Indeed, successful Formosan students even received higher education and professional training. Of course, the more rural and isolated highland Formosans remained at a disadvantage, but the opportunities afforded by education, which was free at all levels, became clear to the general Formosan population during this period. One wonders what might have transpired had Japan retained Formosa at the end of World War Two; for example, if it had been placed under temporary U.S. administration as was Okinawa. Certainly, Japanese language use in the schools would have become more thoroughly entrenched. We can even imagine the development of the kind of stable and widespread diglossic situations characteristic of India, and such a situation would have afforded the Formosans a measure of protection from Chinese linguistic hegemony. As it turned out, however, the Cairo Declaration was formulated without representation of nor consultation with Formosan interests, and the transfer of Taiwan to Chinese suzerainty ensured that the Formosans would occupy the lowest rung of the Taiwanese sociolinguistic ladder.

3. Shift to Mandarin

The flight of the ROC (Republic of China) to Taipei radically changed the demographics of Taiwan. In the four years following the "restoration" of Chinese rule, over four million Chinese immigrants came to Formosa, nearly all of them with the ROC government in 1949. The Taiwan population increased by about half. The language of these new immigrants was overwhelmingly Mandarin, commonly called Kuo-yü 國語 in Taiwan. Though it had been the official language of China since 1928, Mandarin was not widely used in Taiwan. Except for the Mandarin-speaking provincial officials who replaced the Japanese in 1945, the Chinese of Taiwan spoke either Holo or Hakka.

As Formosa became the ROC's fortress, much of the rugged highlands was designated for military use only, and the autochthonous Formosans living in those areas were forced from their homes. Elsewhere, Formosans were permitted to remain in their highland villages, but access to those villages became restricted, hindering travel by Formosans between neighboring villages. Although many Formosans have

⁴ The situation of the Ainu vis-à-vis the Japanese was in many ways similar, though their long history of contact is marked by dramatic changes in the Ainu-Japanese relationship (DeChicchis 1995).

⁵ The rate of assimilation was not everywhere the same. The experience of individual villages varied according to their particular geographic and social circumstances. In general, the Amis and Puyuma cases were similar to the Paiwan. On the other hand, the Atayal and the Bunun of the hinterland resisted Japanese encroachment and acculturation longer. The Yami people, by virtue of their island home being designated an anthropological reservation, were uniquely insulated from the Japanese.

continued to live in these restricted villages, over the years there has been a sizable exodus of Formosans to the lower unrestricted zones. Formosans, who had long been able to maintain their language and customs in the highlands, came under pressure to assimilate to the Chinese culture of the lowlands. This rapid and extensive assimilation resulted in indigenous cultural loss. Although very recently the Formosan churches have been leading efforts to revive and maintain important Formosan traditions, the cultural loss has often been so great that recovery is impossible. The loss of land and the physical dislocation of Formosan settlements caused by military operations has been the largest single factor in the loss of highland Formosan languages and customs.

The ROC transformed Taiwan from a fishing and agrarian province into a diversified economic powerhouse. The resulting urbanization of the population also threatened the Formosans, who found themselves at a distinct disadvantage among the Chinese who dominated the cities. Rapidly, the urban populations became stratified along linguistic lines. At the top were the Chinese speakers of Mandarin, especially the mainland-China born "extra-provincials" 外省 who immigrated with Chiang Kai-shek; they controlled both the ROC government and the provincial government, as well as the various government-sponsored social and commercial organizations. Next, the Chinese speakers of Holo derived their status by virtue of being a majority of the populace. In third place were the Chinese speakers of Hakka, a small minority which benefitted from their Sinitic cultural traits. At the bottom were, and still are, the unassimilated Formosans.

Forced from their highland sanctuaries by both military and economic policies, Formosans began to see the acquisition of Chinese language skills as a prerequisite for a better life. After the ROC's relocation, Taiwan's educational system was improved in terms of both quality and access. As a result, ninety-four percent of Taiwan's present population can speak Mandarin, either as a first or second language, making Mandarin the most widely known of any language spoken in Taiwan. Formosan languages, such as Paiwan and Amis, which once had some currency as regional *linguae francae*, now rarely serve that function. Japanese is now used only by older Formosans. Now, when a native Paiwan speaker encounters a native Bunun speaker, they are almost certain to speak Mandarin with each other. Moreover, since Holo and Hakka speakers have also learned Mandarin, knowledge of Mandarin suffices for communication with all of the Sinitic groups in Taiwan. Knowledge of Mandarin has afforded Formosans the same educational opportunities as enjoyed by the Chinese in Taiwan, and it is now spawning an educated elite of young Formosan scholars, with foreign language skills in English and Japanese as well.

Equal educational opportunity has not been matched by equal employment opportunity, and the Formosans continue to be the poorest segment of Taiwan's population. One benefit of their relative poverty has been the greater social insulation of Formosan villages, which act as sanctuaries of Formosan language use. Because of continuing discrimination, some of the individuals who have been among the most successful in Chinese business and scholarly circles are now returning to their homes to promote Formosan language preservation. The Presbyterian Church has been especially active in this regard, its ministers and seminarians encouraging their peers to develop their villages and urban churches as havens of Formosan culture. Church services are routinely conducted in Paiwan, and Paiwan language hymns are very popular. To be sure, Mandarin translations of the Paiwan sermons are necessary in order to reach some of the younger worshippers; however, it is important to note that most of them are rather embarrassed by their lack of indigenous language skill. In contrast, there is a sizable group of esteemed young fluent Paiwan speakers, and one can easily overhear both Paiwan and Mandarin conversations at village festivals and

other social gatherings. While their grandparents take a certain pride in their Japanese language skills, young Paiwan are beginning to take pride in Paiwan language skills. Indigenous pride is on the rise, and Mandarin is now coming to be viewed as merely a vehicle of wider communication (on a par with English or Japanese), rather than as a key to a higher standard of living. This change of attitude has taken years, and there has been extensive damage to Formosan culture during those years; but, certainly among the Paiwan, it is not yet too late for effective repairs.

4. Multilingualism: an instrument of both division and unification

To say that a person is multilingual is to say that that person has abilities in more than one language; however, when talking about a community, there are two senses in which a community may be multilingual. On the one hand, there may be different languages spoken in the community, though they may not be spoken by the same people. This is the meaning we have in mind, for example, when we say that the U.S. is a multilingual community. Many Americans speak French as a native language, and even more Americans speak Spanish as a native language; however, there is no community of Americans who are native bilinguals in French and Spanish. To be sure, there are Americans who are native speakers of both French and Spanish, but these individuals do not comprise a community in the normal sense of sharing an array of geographic, cultural, socioeconomic, ethnic, or other traits in addition to their common language skills. There are many minority language groups in the U.S., but only English and, to a small extent, Spanish have currency as *linguae francae* across various American communities. In multilingual countries such as the U.S., where individual speakers tend to be monolingual, language differences can function as social barriers. Even when such linguistic barriers are reinforced by geographic and political divisions, they need not prevent the achievement of cultural harmony and economic prosperity, as the case of Belgium makes clear. Unfortunately, public perception often magnifies the deficits of such barriers, and universal competence in a single national language is often promoted as a way of surmounting perceived barriers. The misguided English Only movement in the U.S. is an example of how such fears can adversely affect government policy.

Another sense in which a community can be multilingual is that it is characterized by having multilingual speakers. A vast majority or other significant fraction of the community's members may be each multilingual, or it may simply be that the community values multilingualism as an important goal to which its better educated members aspire. The populations of the Netherlands and Switzerland are two sizeable European communities which exemplify this kind of multilingualism. There are, of course, many monolingual Dutch and Swiss. The key characteristic of these two communities is their high rate of individual multilingualism and the high priority given to multilingualism as an educational goal.

In order to easily distinguish the two kinds of multilingual communities, we may refer to the former as a "linguistically rich community" and the latter as a "community of multilinguals". A linguistically rich community possess speakers of various languages, even though a person who speaks various languages may be relatively rare in such a community. In contradistinction, a community of multilinguals (or a community of bilinguals, in the minimal case) has a relatively high number of individuals who can each speak more than one language, even though the total number of languages spoken in such a community may be relatively small. Indeed, from these two properties, we can define two broad metrics which can measure the multilingualism of any community: first, the number of languages which are (competently, fluently) spoken (read) by (some threshold fraction of) the community's members; and, second, the number of community members who are individually capable of (competently, fluently) speaking (reading) two (three) or more

languages. With these two numbers, we can effectively characterize the multilingualism of any community as a point in a simple two-dimensional space. Some communities score high in terms of linguistic richness, while others will score high in terms of individual multilingualism. By examining both of these measures for any country, certain facts become clear. Unsurprisingly, linguistically rich communities show higher rates of individual multilingualism than linguistically homogenous communities. Also, communities which are linguistically very rich tend to adopt diglossic or lingua franca usage for broad public communication. More interestingly, in certain areas with the right social and demographic conditions, such as southern Belize or Swiss Ticino or southern Formosa, we find high rates of individual trilingualism. In such cases, this multilingualism itself can be a property which helps to define the community, and the kinds of code-switching and cross-language play observed in such communities confirms the importance of multilingual skills.

A lot can be said about linguistically rich communities, depending on the exact number of languages involved, the relative proportions of the speaker bases, and various social and economic factors. Such communities often exhibit a higher tolerance of linguistic minorities and foreign language groups, especially when no particular mother tongue group represents a large proportion of the community population. The area around the Jamaica train station in New York City, where well over a hundred languages are spoken, is a good example of such a linguistically rich community. When problems of linguistic intolerance do arise, it is typically in areas with a small group of more nearly equal competitors.⁶ Language shift and eventual death tends to occur in situations which involve a clearly "dominant" versus minority languages. It is these latter situations which are increasingly common throughout the world, which is why we are faced with the current crisis of global language loss. Speakers of such "minority" languages, whether their speakers be numerous (such as the Maya) or relatively small in number (such as the Formosans), are faced with many incentives to learn the dominant language, and the fate of the community will be determined by the aggregate of individual decisions. Although any shifting whatsoever will have its sociolinguistic effects, the ultimate survival of a minority language will depend on the extent to which individuals in the community choose to become more or less multilingual. Minority language communities can survive in the U.S. because enough of those individual community members become bilingual in English. Remaining monolingual in a minority language is typically less attractive than being monolingual in the dominant language, and minority language monolingualism becomes a viable individual option only when sufficiently many minority language speakers have become bilingual in the dominant language.⁷

As regards long-term effects, multilingualism as an attitude or educational goal is as important as the actual multilinguality of speakers. Because of the importance of language to a person's identity, a good measure of a multilingual attitude is the range of names by which a person is known. Until 1995, Chinese law required that all Formosans have Chinese names, by which they were legally registered in schools and other institutions. In addition, however, more than ninety-three percent of the Paiwan also have a Paiwan language name, the name by which they are known in the Paiwan

⁶ The birth of three new "languages" from what was formerly Serbo-Croatian (and now Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian) is a hair-splitting case in point.

⁷ What counts as "sufficiently many" will depend on many nonlinguistic factors. The patterns illustrated by urban U.S. Spanish-speaking communities and German Turkish-speaking communities, for example, is very different from the patterns seen for Spanish and English bilingualism in the Mayan communities of Guatemala and Belize.

community. It is also significant that about one fifth of the Paiwan school teachers and over one tenth of the Paiwan church ministers maintain the Japanese names which they received before 1946, and they use these names in Japanese-speaking contexts. Because English has replaced Japanese and Mandarin as the language of enlightenment and cosmopolitan opportunity, over half of the educated young Paiwan now have English names; among seminarians, English name use is particularly high (65%), but it is common among normal college students as well (33%). The survey by Tung (1995), which provides these and other facts about name usage and speakers' attitudes, suggests that the notion of multilingualism as an alternative to wholesale shift to Mandarin is a viable alternative for the Paiwan.

As much as linguists might hope for a linguistically rich world, it is ultimately each individual speaker who must choose whether or not to be multilingual (indeed, whether to even speak at all). Ladefoged (1992) is right to remind us that we should not force people to speak languages which they do not wish to speak. We must recognize that a person chooses to speak certain languages for various personal reasons and that, therefore, policy makers who aim to preserve languages should provide incentives, or "carrots", for people to use those languages. Moreover, we must remember that employment and its economic rewards are not the only carrots. Xenophilia and academic curiosity can be potent incentives; unfortunately, since they may not sufficiently motivate the average person to learn languages, programs which simply make instructional resources and other formal educational opportunities available will generally fail to arrest a general tendency toward language shift and loss. On the other hand, because of their ability to create areas wherein the use of a particular language is appropriate and even attractive, social institutions can provide incentives which effectively motivate the average person to develop and maintain skills multiple languages.

5. The future of Paiwan

Paiwan is a good example of a minority language for which incentives to be multilingual now exist, and Paiwan leaders are now realizing that they must protect these incentives by maintaining and creating "havens" for Paiwan language use. Such havens now include rural highland villages and churches; in the future, elementary school classrooms might also be given this function. In the highland villages, especially in those which have restricted access, we find many young adults for whom the attractions of Paiwan culture are strong enough for them to forego life in the Chinese city. Paiwan is the common language of discourse in these areas, and children are no exception. In the urban centers, the churches of the Paiwan congregations are refreshing oases of Paiwan language use. To be sure, Mandarin translation of sermons is often given for many of the younger churchgoers, but the language of the church is unmistakably Paiwan, and skilled Paiwan speakers are esteemed by young and old alike. In addition to the sanctuaries of village and church, there is a nascent government program for promoting minority language education, and community schools (often church-sponsored) have also been organized to teach Paiwan literacy. The ultimate haven is the home, and more than three fifths of Paiwan intellectuals speak Paiwan to their family members (Tung 1995: 249).

Over the past century, Holo, Japanese, and Mandarin have held "dominant" language status in Taiwan at various times, and this succession of targets for second language acquisition has been a sobering experience for the Paiwan. The nostalgia of Japanese, the local political and market currency of Holo, and the administrative and educational use of Mandarin: these associations have clarified the notion that the various situations of language use can have various appropriate languages. Paiwan leaders, as a result, do not subscribe to the view of language superiority which one so often encounters among disadvantaged linguistic minorities. Rather, they tend to

regard a given language as being best for certain places and occasions, and they are thus poised to seek and demarcate the occasions for the appropriate use of their own Paiwan language.

The Paiwan community is presently divided by the second language skills of its members. Older speakers know Japanese, middle-aged speakers know Holo, and youngest speakers know Mandarin. When the young speakers lose their competency in Paiwan, it denies them effective access to the wisdom of their elders. Though some of the Paiwan have mastered four and even five languages, this is too great an educational burden to expect everyone to bear. The simplest way to ensure sociolinguistic cohesion is for all of the Paiwan to continue to speak Paiwan to each other, especially in intergenerational gatherings. Everyone with whom I have met agrees with this goal of universal competency in Paiwan, though some express dismay or pessimism with regard to its accomplishment.

Depending on their adoption of multilingualism as an alternative goal to thorough language shift, the long range prospects of other Formosan language groups may differ from that of the Paiwan. Enough people speak Amis and Atayal to preserve these languages; yet, in the case of Amis, a progressive shift to Mandarin is apparent. Though small in number, the ethnic solidarity and geographic protection of the Yami and Tsou may help them to avoid widespread shift. Another factor which will certainly have an effect is the Formosan communities' loss of women to the Taiwan sex trade; this has resulted in dramatic male-female population imbalances, especially reducing the pool of available Formosan homemakers. Whether male-heavy populations end up promoting or discouraging Formosan language maintenance remains to be seen, but the effect will inevitably depend on the associated community attitudes of solidarity and acculturation which impinge on multilingual development.

As we near the end of the current five-year cycle which the International Congress of Linguists has dedicated partly to the promotion of endangered languages, it is important to help the Paiwan and other Formosans maintain their languages whenever it is their desire to do so. The present rate of language loss worldwide is indeed "catastrophic" (cf. Dorian 1993: 578), and it is the responsibility of linguists to bring this fact to the attention of policy makers. Government and other instruments of social policy must come to accept and value individual multilingual skills in Paiwan and other Formosan languages as much as they value skills in English. Many young Paiwan are already working to preserve their language, and many more will resist shift and opt for multilingualism given the right policy incentives.

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