Journal of
MULTILINGUAL
and
MULTICULTURAL
Development

Vol. 18: 4, 1997

Language Ideology in Taiwan: The KMT's Language Policy, the Tai-yü Language Movement, and Ethnic Politics

A-chin Hsiau
Department of Sociology, University of California, San Diego, 9500 Gilman Drive, Department 0503, La Jolla, CA 92093-0503, USA

Taiwan's political climate, which has been the single most important influence in the development of the island's local languages, has changed dramatically since the mid-1980s. One of most important consequences of Taiwan's democratisation is the Tai-yü language movement, which aims to revive this major local language and which symbolises the recent, rapid growth of local identity awareness. The promoters of the movement reject the official definition of Tai-yü as a 'dialect'. For them, bilingual education and the establishment of a Tai-yü pronunciation and writing system are crucial to the rebirth of the language. The movement has posed a threat to the status of Mandarin as the national language and the symbol of Chinese identity and political dominance of the ruling Nationalist Party. This paper analyses the official language policy, which had exalted Mandarin and suppressed other local languages, and the efforts to revive Tai-yü. The paper points out that the Tai-yü language movement shares with the official policy a language ideology which is based on the nation-state idea. The dynamics of the Tai-yü language movement reveals a pressing problem facing Taiwan: how to balance national cohesion with multilingualism and multiculturalism?

On April 14, 1994, the president of Taiwan, Lee Teng-hui,[1] was interviewed by a group of reporters. This was the first time that the highest leader of Taiwan had publicly spoken about the language problem on the island. Lee said:

> I am more than seventy years old. Having lived under different regimes, from Japanese colonialism to Taiwan's recovery, I have greatly experienced the miseries of the Taiwanese people. In the period of Japanese colonialism, a Taiwanese would be punished by being forced to kneel out in the sun for speaking Tai-yü. The situation was the same when Taiwan was recovered: my son, Hsien-wen, and my daughter-in-law, Yüeh-yün, often wore a dunce board around their necks in the school as punishment for speaking Tai-yü. I am very aware of the situation because I often go to the countryside to talk to people. Their lives are influenced by history. I think the most miserable people are Taiwanese, who have always tried in vain to get their heads above the water. This was the Taiwanese situation during the period of Japanese colonialism; it was not any different after Taiwan's recovery. I have deep feeling about this.[2]

Lee's talk is an excellent summary of the past 100 years' history of the political suppression of Taiwan's local languages.

This paper is a study of the political suppression of Tai-yü, a major local language in Taiwan in the postwar period, and of the efforts to revive it in the

0143-4632/97/04 0302-14 $10.00/0

last decade. Such efforts represent the significant growth of local identity awareness and are an integral part of Taiwan's ethnic politics.

In 1988 Lee was vice-president of Taiwan. He became Taiwan's first native-born president after the death of his predecessor, who was of Chinese mainland origin, Chiang Ching-kuo, the son of Chiang Kai-shek. Lee was then elected as chairman of the ruling Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT). The KMT government led by Chiang Kai-shek had fled from the mainland to Taiwan in 1949 after it lost the Chinese Civil War to the Communists. Since then, the island has been politically dominated by the KMT, which was tightly controlled by the mainland minority group until quite recently.

The mainlanders who migrated to the island after the Second World War and their offspring are called by the islanders, 'wai-sheng-jen', which literally means 'people from other provinces of China'. The islanders are divided into three ethnic groups. The largest of these groups, the Hok-lo, who constitute about 75% of the population of the island, and their native language, Tai-yü, are the focus of this paper. The other two ethnic groups are Hakka (about 10% of the population), who speak Hakka, and the aboriginal peoples (about 2% of the population), whose native languages belong to the Malayo-Polynesian family. In this paper the islanders, especially the Hok-lo, are referred to as 'Taiwanese', in contrast to the wai-sheng-jen.

Fieldwork is still needed to find out more about the reality of the wai-sheng-jen's usage of language. However, the fact is that the wai-sheng-jen speak different regional dialects of Chinese. They have lost their language communities, since on the island the number of people speaking the same regional dialect (e.g. Cantonese) is small, and they are normally dispersed. When these dialects are used, they tend to be limited to the circle of family members. Hence they can communicate with one another and with Taiwanese only in Mandarin Chinese. Mandarin has become a major marker of identity among the wai-sheng-jen. In fact, Mandarin has been defined by the KMT government as the only politically legitimate language. In contrast, the use of Taiwanese languages, especially that of Tai-yü, has tended to be regarded as a challenge to the legitimacy of the KMT rule.

However, Taiwan's political climate has changed dramatically since the mid 1980s. The political transformation has been characterised by the reduction of the KMT's domination and the rapid development of the Taiwanese opposition. One of the most important consequences of the political change is the re-evaluation of Tai-yü as a major local language. The fact that Lee has become the chairman of the KMT and the president of the country, along with his public talk about Tai-yü, is symptomatic of this transformation. *The Economist* reports with a bit of exaggeration:

> Grandpa would not have approved. Chiang Hsiao-yen, a government minister and grandson of the founder of modern Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek, is studying the Taiwanese language. Others making well publicised efforts to get their tongues around the idiom spoken by nearly 85% of Taiwanese include James C. Y. Soong, Taiwan's provincial governor, and Ma Ying-jeou, the justice minister. Knowledge of Taiwanese [Tai-yü] is fast becoming

a requirement for a political career. Crooning popular songs in Taiwanese on the campaign trail wins votes.[3]

All of the people mentioned in this report are the KMT's top wai-sheng-jen officials. A few years ago this transformation would have been hardly imaginable, since the KMT's language policy had long exalted Mandarin and suppressed local languages. The dramatic development of Taiwanese opposition has posed a great threat to the legitimacy of the KMT's rule. That the KMT's politicians of mainland origin are learning Tai-yü represents the efforts of the Party to 'localise' itself and win the support of the major ethnic group.

This intriguing turnabout raises some questions: what was the nature of the KMT language policy that makes the voluntary or involuntary change of attitude by KMT leaders toward Tai-yü so ironic? What is the social and political significance of the last decade's change in the linguistic situation in Taiwan?

As R. D. Grillo indicates, a number of recent studies have shown that 'any study of linguistic dominance, linguistic hierarchy and linguistic inequality is inevitably a political study ...'. As far as unequal relations among different languages are concerned, language is viewed as 'a contested object', and the 'politics of language is about conflict and struggle' (Grillo, 1989: 7, 17). In what follows, the relationship between the KMT's authoritarian rule and its language policy on the one hand, and the politics of the Tai-yü language movement, on the other, are examined. However, this paper does not downplay the importance of other social and economic factors, such as industrialisation and urbanisation, in the changes of the linguistic landscape on the island.

Furthermore, the ideology underlying claims about language embraced by different political camps is the focus of this study. Language ideology is a cluster of beliefs held by a group about language usage in a society. The analysis of language ideology is very important because language ideology is related to the social position and experience of a group and to their political, economic, and symbolic interests. An analysis of language ideology will lead to the understanding of social relationships in a specific society.

The language problem in Taiwan raises questions about the 'nation-state model' which underlies much language policy and language planning. As Pierre Bourdieu notes, the 'official language is bound up with the state, both in its genesis and in its social uses. It is in the process of state formation that the conditions are created for the constitution of a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language' (Bourdieu, 1991: 45). In the Western European context, the formation of the modern state is often accompanied by the creation of a 'nation'. In the case of France, the French Revolution of 1789 marks the birth of the modern French nation, and the French language, through a national education system, became an important means by which the French nation was to be created (McDonald, 1989). Grillo (1989) has indicated that the problem of political unity posed by the end of the *ancien régime* had to be solved and that the idea of the nation as unified and homogeneous socially, culturally, and linguistically provided one way of solving this problem. For the French Revolutionaries, loyalty to the country meant loyalty to French, and vice versa; nation, state, and language was identified, and there existed a demand for the 'ethnicisation' of the polity. 'The state had to become a nation' (Grillo, 1989: 29,

37). That is, underlying the call for linguistic homogeneity is a need to mobilise political support for the modern state; the promotion of the usage of an official language forms a major part of the attempt to homogenise the society and culture, to create 'national unity'. The nation-state model of language planning becomes an essential tenet of the modern state system. However, the nation-state ideology underlying an official language policy in a multiethnic and multilinguistic society like Taiwan tends to result in linguistic oppression. This paper points to the fact that, ironically, the Tai-yü language movement, which is intended to challenge the official language policy, is inspired by this nation-state ideology.

In the sections that follow, the KMT government's language policy, especially the policy after the government reconsolidated itself on the island in 1949, is discussed, and the consequences of this policy are examined. The focus of the discussion is on the 'Chinaisation' ideology of this language policy. Second, the Tai-yü language movement which has been promoted in the last decade and its relations to the Taiwanese opposition against the KMT's dominance is examined. The ideology — articulated by the promoters of this language movement — that explains relationships between language, culture, and local identity is analysed. Finally, the problem of the 'nation-state model' of language planning, which is shared by the Tai-yü language movement and the KMT's language policy, is discussed.

The 'Chinaisation' of Taiwan and the KMT's Language Policy

Anticipating victory over Japan in the Second World War, the KMT government in China began planning the takeover of Taiwan in 1944. Because under Japanese colonial rule the island had been modernised to such a degree that it had a higher level of economic development and a higher standard of living than the Chinese mainland, the takeover would be a great challenge. In so far as the language problem was concerned, the job was highly demanding: 71.1% of Taiwanese children were enrolled in the six-year free and compulsory elementary schools in 1944 (Lin, 1987); around the same time, about 70% of Taiwanese were literate in Japanese (Mendel, 1970). These percentages of school enrolment and literacy on the island were much higher than those of the mainland, which was suffering the effects of the war. Recognising the profound penetration of Japanese indoctrination, the KMT government realised the importance of education as an effective means of resocialisation. Hence the head of the Taiwan Investigation Committee responsible for the planning of the takeover, Ch'en I — who later became the first KMT's governor of Taiwan — claimed that the teaching of Mandarin as the national language (*Kuo-yü*), in addition to Chinese history, should play a central role in this educational project (Chen & Chen, 1989). The demanding task faced by the KMT government was on the one hand to 'de-Japanise' and on the other to 'Chinaise' the people of the island. The promotion of the national language was crucial to the resocialisation project.

In 1946, half a year after the end of the Second World War, the National Language Movement (*Kuo-yü yün-tung*) was initiated on the island. The major agent of the Movement was the Taiwan Provincial Committee for the Promotion and Propagation of the National Language (*T'ai-wan-sheng kuo-yü t'ui-hsing wei-yüan-hui*). The stated goals of the Committee were characteristic of the dual

enterprise of 'de-Japanisation' and of 'Chinaisation': 'to recover the Taiwanese dialect so as to enable the public to learn the national language by comparison between the dialect and the national language', 'to eradicate the influence of Japanese as reflected in the daily speech of the people', and the like (Tse, 1986).

According to the goals of the Committee, it seems that the KMT's language policy was one of 'multilingualism', since the recovery of 'the Taiwanese dialect' was postulated. The reality of the policy, however, was rigid monolingualism which deified the national language. In 1946 schooling began to be conducted in Mandarin; Japanese columns in newspapers and magazines were banned (Chen & Chen, 1989). The impact of this policy was significant. It was an especially hard blow to Taiwanese intellectuals who were accustomed to Japanese information. It can be said that those generations who had received education in Japanese suddenly became 'illiterate' under the rule of the new government.

Monolingualism was more strictly enforced after the Taiwanese Uprising of February 28, 1947, which was caused by mismanagement and corruption among the KMT's authorities on the island. The island-wide revolts ended with a massacre and ensuing decades of purge. These events resulted in constant hostility between Taiwanese and wai-sheng-jen. In fact, the Taiwan Independence Movement developed as a consequence of the Uprising. It is difficult to overestimate the influence of the Uprising on Taiwan's politics, which in turn shaped the linguistic ecology.

The relations between Taiwanese and wai-sheng-jen became highly uneasy after 1949, when the KMT central government fled to Taiwan. A sudden influx of about two million wai-sheng-jen refugees from the mainland followed. The KMT state reiterated that it was the single legitimate government of China and that the Chinese Communist Party was a 'usurper'. The 'holy national task' propagandised by the KMT state was to 'recover the mainland and liberate the fellow countrymen'. On the other hand, the KMT suppressed Taiwanese opposition, especially any activity suspected of separatism.

In the dual context of the intense struggle between the states on both sides of the Taiwan Straits and the ethnic tension between the state and society within the island, the KMT government promoted Mandarin as a major instrument to achieve national unity and as a powerful weapon to destroy the Communist 'bandits'. First, all non-Mandarin languages in Taiwan, including Tai-yü, Hakka, and aboriginal languages, were relegated to 'dialects' (*fang-yen*) by the KMT state, and the use of these languages was considered a threat to national cohesion and unity. Only Mandarin was dignified with the title of 'language'. While this sort of ideology is not new in the history of modern Chinese nationalism, it is only in Taiwan that the KMT state possessed the capacity to turn the ideology into reality. The national language is regarded as the single orthodox language of the Republic of China, and no 'dialect' is compared to the national language. The national language is not just viewed as a standard language, a common norm, but an orthodoxy defended by the political hegemony. Mandarin is held to be the focal point of linguistic unity and ethnic harmony. It is also the marker of KMT dominance.

The greatest threat to Mandarin's status is Tai-yü, the mother tongue of the majority of people on the island. Any public encouragement of the use of Tai-yü

can be regarded as an anti-KMT action or even a sign of support for Taiwan independence. In fact, Taiwanese opposition has used Tai-yü as an effective instrument to awaken ethnic consciousness and to mobilise support. This mobilisation constitutes a great domestic challenge to the dominance of the KMT state.

A second dimension of the KMT language ideology derives from the perception of Communist China as an external threat to the legitimacy of the KMT state. In addition to the ethnic tensions that exist within the island, the competition with the Communists for the legitimate representation of China has conditioned politics in Taiwan. In this regard, the usage of Mandarin as a national language becomes a testimony of the Chineseness of the KMT state. Hence speakers of non-Mandarin are asked to abolish their 'localism' by 'sacrificing dialects'.

The KMT's language ideology is realised through a variety of approaches. Since 1965 the Taiwan Provincial Government has required that all civil servants speak Mandarin during office hours. It has also stipulated that the national language is the language in the court of law. The fact that the parties involved in a lawsuit may not understand this language is neglected (Hung, 1992a). School, an important institution of socialisation, becomes a major agent of language ideology. As mentioned above, schooling has been conducted in Mandarin since 1946. Since 1956, students, especially those in elementary and high schools, have been forbidden to speak dialects in school. If they do, they are punished in various degrees. Severe punishment is not unusual, even in recent years. By contrast, wai-sheng-jen students are normally free from this humiliation. Because Mandarin becomes a marker of wai-sheng-jen identity, wai-sheng-jen students are more willing to learn the language than native Taiwanese students are. In fact, Mandarin is regarded as their 'new mother tongue' regardless of the province or area of the mainland from which their parents came. In the modern state, the educational system plays a decisive role in the construction, legitimation, and imposition of an official language. By devaluing popular modes of expression and imposing recognition of the legitimate language, it fashions the similarities from which derives the community of consciousness, the cement of the nation (Bourdieu, 1991). In Taiwan, school plays this part rather successfully.

The use of non-Mandarin languages on television, another major agent of socialisation, is extremely restricted.[4] In 1962, when the first television channel began to operate, the KMT authorities limited non-Mandarin programmes to less than 16% of the total broadcast time. However, Tai-yü programmes became more and more popular in spite of the restriction, simply because the language was the mother tongue of the majority of the population. Thus television stations sometimes ignored the restriction. Tai-yü programmes reached their heyday around 1971. In response, the KMT government further suppressed Tai-yü programmes. In 1972, the Bureau of Culture of the Ministry of Education stipulated that non-Mandarin programmes should be decreased, and that Tai-yü programmes, which included soap operas, puppet shows, traditional Taiwanese operas, and commercials, should take up less than one hour per day on each channel. Moreover, the Radio and Television Law enforced after 1976 specified: 'The ratio of the use of the national language by radio broadcasts must not be less

than 55%; for television, this ratio must not be less than 70%. The use of dialects should decrease year by year'. Those surviving traditional Taiwanese operas and puppet shows on television were forced to use Mandarin in the early 1970s. Moreover, compared with Mandarin programmes, Tai-yü programmes were vulgar because of tight budgets. Normally, the roles depicted in these programmes were of low socio-economic status: illiterates, peasants, workers, fishermen, elders, especially old women,and the like. Thus Tai-yü was represented by a most powerful agent of socialisation as a marker of backwardness, vulgarity, ignorance, femininity, aging, and so on.

The humiliating image of Tai-yü portrayed by television speaks volumes about the reality of Tai-yü on the island in the past half a century, as a consequence of the official language policy. First, the Tai-yü literary reading system, which had already been seriously undermined under Japanese colonialism, is on the edge of death because of the suppression of Tai-yü language education. As a result, traditional Hok-lo high culture mediated by this system, like the recitation of classical poems and essays in Tai-yü, becomes nearly foreign to the younger generations of native Taiwanese. Tai-yü has now been reduced to a colloquial language which only deals with daily affairs. Even its vocabulary about everyday life is decreasing, and part of it has already been replaced by Japanese and Mandarin phrases (Hung, 1985). This leads to the phenomenon of codemixing, especially when new ideas and things, such as 'computer network', 'washing machine', 'microwave', 'hamburger', are talked about. The more new ideas and things are dealt with, the more Mandarin is used (Yang, 1991). That is, Tai-yü has gradually lost its basic function as a medium of cultural production and reproduction.

Second, a number of studies show that Tai-yü is dying among younger Hok-lo, especially among the intellectual stratum. Tai-yü is still a major language used in business circles because business is mainly dominated by the Hok-lo (Cheng, 1990). However, according to Hung Wei-jen's fieldwork, the younger a Hok-lo is, the lesser his or her ability to speak the mother tongue (Hung, 1992a). In addition, Huang Hsüan-fan's study finds (1) that the younger the people to whom the Hok-lo college students talk, the larger the use of Mandarin, and (2) that the use of the national language is a first choice in their social activities (Huang, 1988). An example of the consequences of KMT monolingualism was the fact that, in 1987, when the political atmosphere began to change dramatically, television stations could not find any qualified Tai-yü newscaster when they tried to add a short Tai-yü news segment to their shows.

Third, a linguistic hierarchy is established. Tai-yü is devalued as a 'dialect'. It is seen as a marker of backwardness, crudeness, illiteracy, low socio-economic status, rurality, and so forth. In contrast, Mandarin as the national 'language' becomes a symbol of modernity, refinement, literacy, urbanity, high socio-economic status, and the like. The linguistic hierarchy corresponds to the ethnic one in the political arena: wai-sheng-jen as the dominant, and Taiwanese — of which the majority are Hok-lo — as the dominated.

In summary, the promotion of Mandarin as the national language by the KMT state on the island revolves around the state's enterprise of 'Chinaising' both itself and the Taiwanese: to claim that the island is 'an integral part of China', to

legitimise its rule, and to justify its representativeness of China. To achieve this goal, the local languages, especially Tai-yü, has been disciplined.

Until recent years, the KMT's policy of exalting Mandarin as the single politically legitimate language had not changed. From 1983 to 1985 the Ministry of Education tried to establish the Language Law, one article of which stated that the national language only could be used in any meeting, official business, public speech, and conversation in public domains. However, confronted with increasing objection expressed through public opinion, the Ministry eventually abandoned the idea of the Language Law.

The Tai-yü Language Movement and Ethnic Politics

The Taiwanese opposition movement has developed rapidly since the mid 1980s. Encouraged by this development, the Tai-yü language movement emerged in the late 1980s. Before that time, the opposition had used the language as an effective means to rally support. This was especially true during election periods. Usually the opposition would use Tai-yü to express themselves, but even the KMT candidates — not only those who were Taiwanese but also those who were wai-sheng-jen — would speak the language to appeal to voters. Tai-yü thus became the 'language of elections'. Among the Taiwanese opposition, use of the language is a symbol of political discontent and ethnic loyalty.

Although not clearly articulated by a single leader, the general goal of the Tai-yü language movement is to rejuvenate the language. The efforts to achieve this goal involve (1) the re-evaluation of Tai-yü linguistic quality and cultural significance based on a comparison between Tai-yü and Mandarin; (2) the advocacy of bilingual, or even multilingual, education; and (3) the establishment of a Tai-yü pronunciation symbol and writing system. All these efforts are intended to undermine the dominance of Mandarin and to challenge the KMT's 'Chinaisation' of Taiwan. The movement can be viewed as an enterprise of 'Taiwanising' the island. The above points require further discussion.

Linguistic quality and cultural significance

The promoters of the Tai-yü language movement reject the official definition of this major local language as a 'dialect'. They argue that Tai-yü and Mandarin are different 'languages' which belong to the same language family and that Tai-yü is not a variety of Mandarin (Cheng, 1990; Hung, 1992a; Lin, 1988). Hung writes:

> I do not deny that Tai-yü or Hakka are a branch of [ancient] Chinese. To say that they are dialects of [ancient] Chinese is also acceptable. However, ancient Chinese is already gone. The differences among Tai-yü, Hakka, Cantonese dialect, Wu dialect, and Mandarin have existed for a long time. They each represent distinctive cultural systems. It is wrong that we treat it [Tai-yü] as a dialect, not as a language, simply because it is an offshoot of ancient Chinese. This can be compared to the fact that English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, and even Hindustani are branches of an ancient Indo-European language. No one would say that Hindustani is a dialect of

> English, though English has become an international language. If Hindustani is not a dialect, why should Tai-yü or Hakka be one? (Hung, 1992a: 61)

Furthermore, Hung notes that the differences among Tai-yü, Hakka, Cantonese, and Mandarin are greater than those among German, French, English, and Russian. Thus he promotes the 'social linguistic view' of linguistic genealogy, rather than the perspective based on historical linguistics or the state's standpoint: because Mandarin and Tai-yü are mutually unintelligible, they are distinctive languages (Hung, 1992a).

Tai-yü is not just regarded as a language different from Mandarin. The promoters also claim that it is a 'better' language than Mandarin. In so far as the diversity of phonology, the precision of lexicon, the logicalness of syntax, and the expressiveness in regard to everyday experiences are concerned, they argue, Tai-yü is highly superior to Mandarin (Hsü, 1992; Hung, 1992a). In fact, Ong Jok-tik, a Hok-lo linguist who pioneered the Taiwan Independence Movement, expressed similar eulogies about the language during the 1950s and 1960s (Hsü, 1992). Another linguist, Lo Chao-chin argues that the phonology, syntax, and lexicon of Mandarin were greatly transformed by the Altaic language family. In his opinion, Tai-yü is a more effective instrument than Mandarin to understand traditional Chinese culture, and the 'dialect' is more 'Chinese' than the national language. However, compared to Hung and Hsü, Lo (1992) does not emphasise so much the 'Taiwaneseness' of Tai-yü as its 'Chineseness'. He disagrees with the 'independence' of Taiwanese culture from Chinese culture and maintains that the reason for rejuvenating the major local language is to preserve and advance traditional Chinese culture.

A strong component of the movement is the development of local identity, as suggested by the promoters' view on the relationships between language and culture. For them, language is the carrier of culture, and the decline of a language is symptomatic of the atrophy of a specific cultural tradition on which one's ethnic identity hinges. Hung argues that, for Taiwanese, Mandarin is equal to a foreign language and that the local languages on the island are the single media by which Taiwanese particularities can be expressed. The traditional Taiwanese culture, Hung notes, has declined, and 'it has been assimilated and replaced by Northern Chinese culture which is represented by Mandarin' (Hung, 1992a: 24). Such awareness of the decline of local tradition suggests the awakening of ethnic consciousness. In this regard, Hsü is more radical than Hung. He rejects the idea that 'Taiwanese literature is part of Chinese literature' and asserts that 'literature in Taiwan should be developed in Taiwanese language'. He believes that Taiwan has its particular history and has developed a society and culture distinct from that of the mainland. From the Taiwanese standpoint, Hsü claims, 'Chinese culture is just a (large) part of Taiwanese culture, and Taiwanese literature is not an offshoot of Chinese literature'. Rather, 'Taiwanese literature contains Chinese literature as its components' (Hsü, 1992: 80). In these discourses about Taiwanese language, culture, and history, the historical relationships between China as the core and Taiwan as the periphery are reversed. The island is constantly 'Taiwanised' to such a degree that a specific cultural tradition, which is believed to be different from Chinese culture, is constructed, despite the close connection between China and the island throughout history. The constructed cultural

tradition justifies the development of local identity, and this identity in turn confirms the constructed tradition.

Bilingual education

Bilingual education is viewed as an effective way to revive Tai-yü. In 1989, the candidates for local mayors and county magistrates of the major opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, established in 1986), listed bilingual education as part of their platform. Seven of them were elected and tried to conduct bilingual education in the elementary and junior high schools of their districts. However, because the city and county councils were controlled by the KMT, the budget was cut. Moreover, a Tai-yü writing system, a pronunciation symbol system, teachers, and teaching materials were not yet available.

While the attempt to carry out bilingual education failed, the promotion of the use of Tai-yü has already led to a 'revival' of the language since the end of the 1980s: Tai-yü theatre and films have reappeared; Tai-yü pop songs flourish; a number of writers try to express themselves in Tai-yü; many university students' Tai-yü associations are organised; some Tai-yü dictionaries, studies, and magazines have been published, and the like. In fact, a few promoters believe that bilingual education is insufficient. Instead, they argue that the Hakka and aboriginal peoples should also enjoy the right to receive education in their mother tongues. Thus advocates such as Hung Wei-jen call multilingual education 'local language education', regarding it as an effective means to develop local identity and as the most important basis on which 'local autonomous cultural progress' can be achieved (Hung, 1992a).

Pronunciation symbols and writing systems

For the promoters, the establishment of a Tai-yü pronunciation symbol system and a writing system is crucial to the rebirth of Tai-yü. The major local language has been relegated to the category of 'backward dialect' by those who advocate the use of Mandarin, partly because it lacks a writing system (Mu, 1983; Wang, 1982). For those who try to revive Tai-yü, it becomes imperative to create its writing system. However, there are a number of ideas and debates about such a system, especially about the selection of appropriate Chinese characters for the codification of Tai-yü. The different ideas are still competing for public recognition. First, a few promoters, such as Lin Chi-hsiüng, have tried to improve the Romanisation system of Tai-yü originally created by Western missionaries in Taiwan. These promoters advocate the abolition of Chinese characters. Second, some have tried to preserve Chinese characters to write Taiyü. Cheng Sui-ying (1991) is one of several scholars who hold this view. The third idea is to combine Chinese and Roman characters. It is a practical choice, since about 30% of Tai-yü cannot be codified through Chinese characters. Those who advocate this system are Lin Tsung-yüan (1989), Robert L. Cheng *et al.* (1990). Fourth, Hung Wei-jen (1992b) argues that the Korean alphabet is the ideal system to write that part of Tai-yü which cannot be codified through Chinese characters. In his opinion, the shape of the Korean alphabet is more compatible with that of Chinese characters than the Roman alphabet. A group of activists established the Taiwan Languages Society (*Tai-wan yü-wen hsüeh-hui*) in 1991. Their major goal has been to develop

a Tai-yü pronunciation symbol system and to make a decision about the appropriate Chinese characters for writing Taiyü.

The Tai-yü writing system is regarded as an indispensable confirmation of Taiwaneseness. Robert L. Cheng believes that Taiwanese cultural particularities are lost when expressed in Mandarin. 'It is only when we write Tai-yü', he argues, 'that we can think through Tai-yü and that we can appreciate native authenticity and reality' (Cheng, 1993: 186). As noted above, the advocates view language as the carrier of culture. For them, to abolish the writing system of Mandarin as an inept instrument to voice Taiwaneseness is to slough off Chineseness; to have a Tai-yü writing system is to recognise the existence of a distinctive cultural tradition. Such a view suggests the development of a new national identity which challenges the KMT's 'Chinaisation' of the island and its people. For Ch'en Min-jen (1992), a poet, to create a Tai-yü writing system without using any Chinese character is crucial to the independence of the island. 'A nation without its own written language', Ch'en believes, 'is a nation without a future'. He claims that for Taiwan to be an independent country, codifying Tai-yü is a necessity.

The Nation-state Model and Its Problem

The Chinese National Language Movement emerging at the beginning of this century represented the efforts to establish a modern Chinese state. As Wang Erh-min notes, modern Chinese language reform, which preceded the National Language Movement, was stimulated by China's weakness and the foreign threat in the late nineteenth century. Linguistic engineering was intended to save the country, and the concept of 'kuo-yü' (national language) was closely related to modern Chinese nationalism (Wang, 1982).

The idea of the Chinese National Language Movement has been embraced by the KMT state in Taiwan. Confronted with internal and external challenges to its legitimacy, the KMT state tries to portray itself as the single heir to traditional Chinese culture. The enterprise of Chinaising the island politically, socially, and culturally can be regarded as an effort to legitimise the rule and to mobilise Taiwanese support in the struggle with Communist China. The promotion of Mandarin forms a major part of this enterprise and shows the interest of the KMT state in — to use Grillo's phrase — 'ethnicising' itself. The KMT state 'nationalises' itself to such an extent that the nation is 'statised': the 'traditional Chinese culture' is appropriated, and even monopolised, by the KMT state. The state sees itself as a guardian of Chineseness. Any exaltation of local culture on the island, especially the promotion of the use of Tai-yü, tends to be viewed as a potential threat to Chineseness, to the state's legitimacy. The KMT state, the Chinese nation, the Chinese culture, and Mandarin are identified with one another. The enactment of the nation-state model as a solution to the problem of political unity culminated in the KMT's 'Chinaisation' endeavour.

The Tai-yü language movement faces a problem similar to that inherent in the nation-state model of language policy. A number of studies about language problems in different societies have pointed out this fact: 'Movements to save minority languages ironically are often structured around the same received notions of languages that have led to their oppression and/or suppression ...'. (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994: 9). The Tai-yü language movement is precisely

characterised by this irony. As Florian Coulmas notes, while the idea of a national language and its political enforcement may be said to function as a cohesive force, the reverse is also true. 'Language may be as disruptive a force as any culture marker, and it is clear that the national language-ideology has bred intra-communal strife and, in a sense, created minorities in many countries that have established themselves as states in modern times' (Coulmas, 1988: 11).

On the part of the KMT state, Mandarin is exalted as a cohesive force; by contrast, it is criticised by the advocates of the Tai-yü language movement as a source of oppression. In terms of the distribution of political power and resources, compared to the dominant wai-sheng-jen, the Hok-lo are a dominated 'minority', though they constitute the majority of the population of the island. Thus Tai-yü was politically relegated to the category of an inferior language. However, compared to Hakka and aboriginal languages, Tai-yü is actually a majority language. The result of all this is that the development of the Tai-yü language movement has caused apprehension among the Hakka. As mentioned above, the promoters of the Tai-yü language movement regard Tai-yü as the carrier of their traditional culture; some even argue that a Tai-yü writing system is essential to the formation of a new nation and the independence of the island. Culture and language are identified with a 'potential' nation and a 'potential' state. Facing this situation, the Hakka have become worried that they and their language might be remarginalised. They have, for instance, the uneasy feeling that the language spoken by the Hok-lo appropriates the name, 'Tai-yü' (Taiwanese language), which suggests that it is the single legitimate language on the island. The Hakka argue that this name should be used to designate all languages on the island. Since Tai-yü has dominated the DPP's meetings, even those Hakka who have close connections to the party have made the criticism that the DPP will become a Hok-lo party very soon. In 1988 the Hakka organised the 'Bring My Hakka Back Movement' to campaign for Hakka television programmes. What the movement achieved was only a one-half-hour Hakka programme per week on one channel. The anti-KMT and anti-Hok-lo feelings of the Hakka culminated in 1989. Struggling against not only 'the big-party dictatorship of the KMT, which dominates politics' but also against 'the Hok-lo chauvinism of the DPP, which exalts only Tai-yü while neglecting the Hakka', they tried in vain to organise a 'Hakka party'.

Like most other places in the world, Taiwan is a multiethnic and multilingual society. The problem faced by the Tai-yü language movement thus derives from the fact that — in Jan Blommaert and Jef Verschueren's terms — 'every minority has its own minorities' (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1991: 373). A movement intended to save a minority language may turn out to be a new form of oppression that threatens other minority languages. This irony has been found in Occitania, Moldavia, Kazakhstan, and Slovakia. (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1991; Eckert, 1983). This is a dilemma acutely felt by the Tai-yü language movement, since the speakers of this language are actually the majority of the population. In this sense, the dilemma faced by a minority language movement is very similar to that inherent in the practice of the national language ideology, i.e. 'whether language can be politically instrumentalised without becoming a means of suppression and making it ever more difficult for different language groups to live together

peacefully' (Coulmas, 1988: 12). The weakness of the national language ideology and of a minority language movement is strongly related to political mobilisation based on ethnic identity. Any drawing of clear boundaries implies labelling, exclusion, and suppression. The problem is how people of diverse ethnic groups can unite at a time when they are becoming so aware of their separate ethnic backgrounds. This is a dilemma inherent in the construction of a nation which is inspired by the idea of the modern nation-state, namely, how to balance national identity (cohesion) with ethnic equality (multilingualism and multiculturalism). The linguistic case in Taiwan fully illustrates this dilemma.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Kathryn A. Woolard, Professor Steve Cornell, Mr. Alvin Lu and an anonymous referee for their advice on this paper, whilst accepting full responsibility myself for its defects.

Notes

1. Chinese names referred to in this paper begin with the last name of the individual and are followed by the first name. The Romanisation system of Chinese used in this paper is Wade-Giles, except for conventional spelling such as in 'Lee Teng-hui', 'Chiang Kai-shek' and so on.
2. *Chung-yang jih-pao* (Central Daily News, International Edition), April 16, 1994.
3. *The Economist*, August 7, 1993, p. 38.
4. The discussion about the language problem on television in this paragraph is based on Shih (1983).

References

Blommaert, Jan and Verschueren, Jef (1991) The role of language in European nationalist ideologies. *Pragmatics* 2 (3), 355–75.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Chen, Ming-zhong, and Chen, Xing-tang (1989) *Tai-wan kuang-fu han kuang-fu hou wu-nien sheng-ch'ing* (Taiwan's Recovery and Provincial Situation of Ensuing Five Years). Nanjing: Nan-jing.

Ch'en, Min-je (1992) 'Tai-wan yü-wen fu-hsing yün-tung' yin-yen pu-ch'ung tsu-liao (A supplement to an introduction to the Tai-yü language renaissance movement). *Tai-wan wen-i* (Taiwan Literature) 133, 132–42.

Cheng, Robert L. (1990) *Yen-pien chung te Tai-wan she-hui yü-wen* (Essays on Taiwan's Sociolinguistic Problems). Taipei: Tsu-li wan-pao.

Cheng, Robert L.(1993) Hu tsa te tsu-ti yu chi-hui tu Tai-yü hsieh Tai-yü (Let our children have opportunities to read and write Tai-yü). *Tai-wan wen-i* (Taiwan Literature) 136, 173–80.

Cheng, Sui-ying (1991) *Tai-wan yü-yen te ssu-hsiang chi-ch'u* (The Ideal Bases of Taiwanese Languages). Taipei: Tai-yüan.

Coulmas, Florian (1988) What is a national language good for? In Florian Coulmas (ed.) *With Forked Tongues: What Are National Languages Good For?* (pp. 1–24). Singapore: Karoma.

Eckert, Penelope (1983) The paradox of national language movements. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 4 (4), 289–300.

Grillo, R.D. (1989) *Dominant Languages: Language and Hierarchy in Britain and France*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hsü, Chi-tun (1992) *Tai-yü wen-tzu hua te fang-hsiang* (The Direction of Tai-yü Codification). Taipei: Tsu-li wan-pao.

Huang, Hsüan-fan (1988) *Tai-wan hua te yü-yen she-hui hsüeh yen-chiu* (The linguistic sociological study of Tai-yü). *Tai-wan wen-i* (Taiwan Literature) 114, 94–101.

Hung, Wei-jen (1985) *Tai-wan Ho-lao-yü sheng-tiao yen-chiu* (The Study of the Tones of Taiwanese Hok-lo Language). Taipei: Tsu-li wan-pao.

Hung, Wei-jen (1992a) *Tai-wan yü-yen wei-chi* (The Linguistic Crises in Taiwan). Taipei: Ch'ien-wei.

Hung, Wei-jen (1992b) *Tai-wan wen-hsüeh yü tai-wan wen-tsu* (Tai-yü Literature and Tai-yü Writing System). Taipei: Ch'ien-wei.

Lin, Chin-hsien (1988) Wei ssu-t'u ssu-min te yü chi wen-hua chiang i-chü-hua: chien lun ch'en-jui-yü hsien-sheng te liang-p'ien wen-chang. (In defense of the language and culture of our land and our people, and on the two articles by Mr. Ch'en Jui-yü) *Tai-wan wen-i* (Taiwan Literature) 113, 61–82.

Lin, Tsung-yüan (1989) Ts'ung pen-t'u wen-hsüeh k'an Tai-wan yü-yen (On Taiwanese languages in terms of local literature). *T'ai-wan wen-i* (Taiwan Literature) 117, 98–105.

Lin, yü-t'i (1987) *Tai-wan chiao-yü mien-mao ssu-shih nien* (The Face of Taiwanese Education in the Last Four Decades). Taipei: Tsu-li Wan-pao.

Lo, Chao-chin (1992) Chao-pu-tao ting-wei te fu-hao:Tai-wan-hua (An undefined code: Taiwanese language). In Kung P'eng-ch'eng (ed.) *I-chiu-chiu-i wen-hua p'ing-lu* (Cultural Critique, 1991) (pp. 345–76). Taipei: San-min.

McDonald, Maryon (1989) *We are not French: Language, Culture, and Identity in Brittany*. London: Routledge.

Mendel, Douglas (1970) *Politics of Formosan Nationalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mu, Ch'ao (1983) T'ui-hsing kuo-yü t'i-gao kwo-wen ch'eng-tu k'o pu jung huan (It is urgent to promote the usage of the national language and to advance the ability in using the national written language). *Chung-kuo yü-wen* (Chinese Language Monthly) 287, 22–30.

Shih, Ching-i (1983) Tai-yü, ni te ming-tzu shih fang-yen: tien-shih tai-yü chieh-mu te ch'u-ching (Tai-yü, your name is dialect: The situation of Tai-yü programmes on television). In Lin Chin-hui (ed.) *Tai-wan yü-yen wen t'i lu-chi* (Symposium on Linguistic Problems in Taiwan) (pp. 161–72). Taipei: T'ai-wan wen-i.

Tse, John Kwock-ping (1986) Standization of Chinese in Taiwan. *International Journal of Sociology of Language* 59, 25–32.

Wang, Erh-min (1982) Chung-kuo chin-tai chih-shih p'u-chi-hua tsu-chüeh yü kuo-ü yün-tung (Self-awakening in the popularization of modern knowledge and movement for the national language in China). *Chung-yang-yen-chiu-yüan chin-tai-shih yen-chiu-so chi-k'an* (Proceeding of the Institute of Modern History, the Academia Sinica) 11, 13–45.

Wang, Meng-wu (1982) Ju-ho shih kuo-yü yün-tung wang-hsia cha-ken (How can we put down the roots of the national language movement?). *Chung-kuo yü-wen* (Chinese Language Monthly) 295, 23–28.

Woolard, Kathryn A. and Schieffelin, Bambi B. (1994) Language ideology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 55–82.

Yang, Hsiu-fang (1991) *Tai-wan min-nan-yü yü-fa-kao* (Draft of the Grammar of Southern Min in Taiwan). Taipei: Ta-an.