

Unveiling linguistic dynamics: A critical discourse analysis of Taiwan's Bilingual Nation 2030 policy and its impact on Taiwanese identity

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Abstract

This research engages in a critical discourse analysis to scrutinize the linguistic dynamics embedded within Taiwan's Bilingual Nation 2030 policy and its implications for Taiwanese identity. The study employs a qualitative approach, drawing on official documents, policy statements, and public discourse to uncover the underlying ideologies, power structures, and discursive strategies shaping the implementation and reception of the policy. The analysis focuses on the intersections of language policy, identity formation, and innovation, exploring how the promotion of bilingualism is framed in relation to notions of cultural heritage, globalization, and geopolitical security. By examining ideological underpinnings, representations of linguistic diversity, and the construction of national identity, this research aims to provide insights into the broader socio-political context influencing the shaping of language policies in Taiwan. Furthermore, the study investigates the impact of the Bilingual Nation 2030 policy on individual and collective identities, considering how linguistic choices and representations contribute to the negotiation and construction of Taiwanese identity. By unpacking the impact on various stakeholders, including government, academia, and civil society, this research seeks to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between language, policy, and identity in the context of Taiwan's evolving socio-political landscape. Ultimately, the findings aim to inform discussions on the role of language policies in shaping national identity and fostering cultural cohesion within diverse and dynamic societies.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), ideology, Bilingual Nation 2030, language policy, identity.

Introduction

Language policies play a pivotal role in shaping the cultural fabric and national identity of a society (Blommaert, 2006; Price, 2014; Tsui & Tollefson, 2017). In the context of Taiwan, a region with a rich tapestry of linguistic diversity and a complex political history, the introduction of the Bilingual Nation (BN) 2030 policy marks a significant juncture. This policy, designed to promote English and Mandarin Chinese bilingualism, not only reflects the global trend toward multilingualism but also carries with it profound

implications for the construction and negotiation of Taiwanese identity (Chang, 2022; Ferrer & Lin, 2021; Hsu, 2021). Contemporary socio-technical developments have also hastened both the pace and spread of global interconnectedness and cross-cultural communication, increasing the importance placed on English language skills. Students, in many countries around the world, are routinely required to learn English as a compulsory subject included in official curricula (Bozena, 2016). Taiwan's policy overhauls in the area of English education, in recent years, have consequently underscored the importance of English competence as a competitive advantage in areas such as higher education, science, technology, international law, cross-border business and politics (Spence & Liu, 2013).

In 2018, the Executive Yuan of Taiwan unveiled BN 2030 as a transformative initiative with the ambitious goal of bolstering global competitiveness by advancing English proficiency and positioning Taiwan as fully bilingual by 2030. This policy marks a significant departure from traditional language initiatives, recognizing that linguistic capabilities are not just tools for communication but strategic assets in the formulation of a collective identity. The policy sets out to revolutionize language education, reshape cultural attitudes toward bilingualism, and ultimately position the Taiwanese as a bilingual people capable of thriving in the interconnected realms of academia, industry, governance, and societal discourse. The policy's emphasis on English proficiency aligns with the principles of knowledge democracy, fostering global competitiveness and enhanced access to international information networks (Carayannis & Campbell, 2019). A successful implementation of BN 2030 is seen as instrumental in transforming Taiwan into a knowledge-driven hub, fostering innovation and inclusivity. The profound implications of BN 2030 extend beyond language itself, permeating the very fabric of Taiwan's knowledge transfer apparatus and contributing to the ongoing narrative of the island's exaggerated role in the global knowledge economy vis-à-vis its highly regarded semiconductor supply chain (Liao & Hu, 2007).

In the following sections, the contextual background to Bilingual Nation 2030 (BN 2030) will be briefly outlined, followed by an introduction to Taiwanese identity and an overview of BN 2030's impact.

Contextual background

Taiwan's education system, whilst being the envy of many nations and boasting consistently extraordinary performance in areas such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) math and science rankings, is nevertheless confronted with its own challenges, perhaps the most pressing of which is its proficiency level with respect to communication in English as a foreign language (EPI, 2018). In Taiwan, English is not the native language for the overwhelming majority of its inhabitants nor is it a frequent feature of the day-to-day local context for much of the populace, despite being a mandatory subject taught in the public-school system officially starting from the third grade (Chern, 2002). The English curriculum for secondary school levels was superficially expanded upon in the early nineties, with the 'communicative approach' adopted as the preferred style of instruction, the stated aim being to enhance students' English competence, however there was little progress made on this front as entrance examinations for higher levels of education remained focused on grammar (Tsao, 2000). In 2002, National Taiwan University (NTU) set up the English Graduation Benchmark Policy (Henceforth EGBP). In addition, according to the "Action Plan of Administrative Principles" issued by the Minister of Education in 2004, other universities were also encouraged to set up EGBPs to enhance Taiwanese college students' English proficiency. The plan further stipulated that certain subsidies, to universities from the central government, would be contingent upon the rate at which their students met the threshold for their respective EGBP. The success of these interventions has, however, been limited. Rote memorization of grammar and vocabulary, while useful for test-score based selection processes, have failed to produce an abundance of fluent English speakers for Taiwan (Chang, 2017). Hence, Taiwan's English proficiency remains poor relative to most other developed economies, with this phenomenon being leveraged in local media to nurture a narrative that Taiwan's poor English proficiency be seen as cause for national shame and anxiety (Her & Chiang, 2021). It is evident that Taiwan's education system, despite its excellence in various aspects, faces a significant challenge in English proficiency. This challenge becomes a focal point as Taiwan navigates the global innovation landscape.

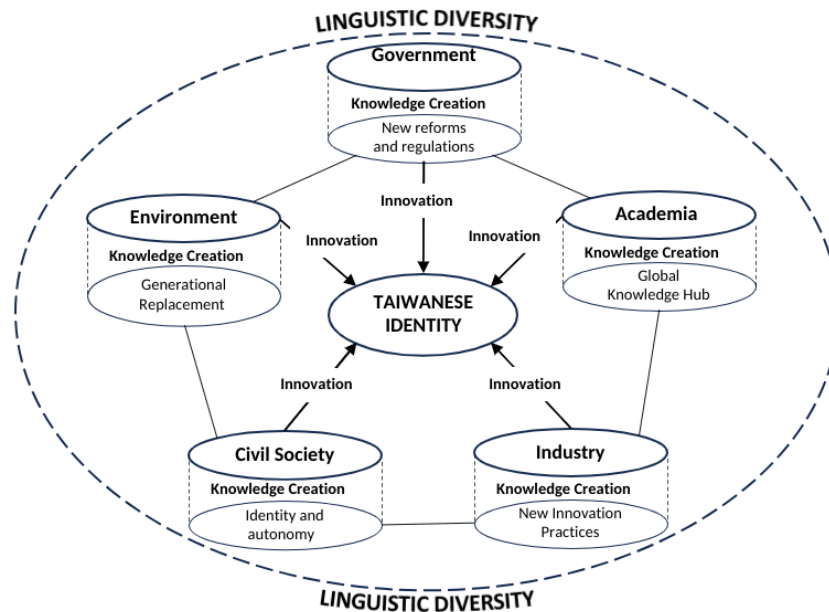
Taiwanese identity

The evolution of Taiwanese identity has emerged as a pivotal phenomenon in the political landscape of Taiwan since the onset of democratization in 1987. Notably, the steady increase in the proportion of the population identifying exclusively as Taiwanese, reaching 67% in 2020, underscores the profound impact of shifting sociopolitical dynamics (Wang et al., 2023). This noteworthy transformation can be attributed to myriad interconnected factors, including an intensified desire for political autonomy, heightened cross-Strait tensions, the influence of generational replacement, and a notable transition from ethnic nationalism to a more politically grounded sense of national identity. Of particular significance is the discernible trend among the younger generation in Taiwan, characterized by a notably elevated level of Taiwanese identity and a corresponding decrease in identification with a Chinese-centric identity. This generational shift reflects not only changing political landscapes but also the intricate interplay between evolving societal values and historical narratives. Furthermore, the role of government performance and external pressures stand out as influential in shaping the contours of Taiwanese identity. It is within this intricate web of historical, political, and generational dynamics that the polarization of Taiwanese identity becomes evident, often manifesting along political affiliations. Despite this polarization, Taiwanese identity remains a linchpin in the collective consciousness of the Taiwanese people. As Taiwan navigates its complex relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and asserts its position on the global stage, the multifaceted nature of Taiwanese identity becomes increasingly integral to the ongoing narrative of Taiwan's embeddedness in the broader global context as a distinct entity. Moreover, an appreciation for the interconnectedness between democracy and economic development (Campbell, 2018) remains crucial for informing a comprehensive understanding of Taiwan's socio-political dynamics and the intricate interplay of forces that contribute to the formulation and evolution of its national identity.

The integration of the Quadruple and Quintuple Helix Frameworks (Carayannis & Campbell, 2021) into the discussion on Taiwanese identity adds a valuable layer of analysis, particularly in the realm of non-linear innovation. These frameworks, encompassing government, industry, academia, and civil society (Quadruple Helix), or additionally incorporating environmental considerations (Quintuple Helix), provide a

robust toolkit for understanding innovation. In this context, the government's influence on policies, industry's role in shaping innovation practices, academia's function as a knowledge hub, and the public's contribution of societal perspectives become critical components. In order to align innovation with the evolving dynamics of Taiwanese identity, it is imperative to recognize the significance of linguistic diversity within each helix. Emphasizing inclusive language practices in research, development, and dissemination becomes crucial for fostering a sense of collective identity and ensuring equitable participation. The conscious consideration of language policies within the Quintuple Helix Framework becomes vital, especially in the Taiwanese context where linguistic diversity is synonymous with the island's identity. By navigating these linguistic complexities, collaboration, inclusivity, and effective communication among diverse actors can be fostered, contributing to successful innovation outcomes benefitting Taiwanese society. Integrating the Quintuple Helix framework into the broader discourse on Taiwanese identity allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate intersections between language, innovation, and the evolving socio-political landscape (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Linguistic diversity and Taiwanese identity through the lens of the Quintuple Helix. Source: Author's own conceptualization.



The establishment of BN 2030

In the context of innovation systems, the ability to navigate a global landscape effectively becomes crucial. The Bilingual Nation (BN) 2030 policy is not merely a linguistic initiative; it's an ambitious endeavor with implications for Taiwan's innovation dynamics within the Quintuple Helix framework. The rationale behind this policy is rooted in the recognition that proficiency in English, as a global lingua franca (Crystal, 2003), is increasingly indispensable for meaningful participation in innovation networks, collaborative research endeavors, and knowledge dissemination. BN 2030's strategic dimensions extend into this facet of innovation networks, where effective communication is paramount. Proficiency in English, as advocated by the policy, not only facilitates seamless collaboration with international partners but also enhances Taiwan's ability to actively contribute to and lead scientific endeavors. The policy positions Taiwan as a valuable participant in the global innovation dialogue, fostering an environment where ideas, expertise, and knowledge can be shared across borders. In the information age, knowledge dissemination plays a pivotal role in shaping a nation's global standing. BN 2030's emphasis on bilingualism is a strategic move to ensure that Taiwan's contributions to scientific advancements, technological breakthroughs, and artistic and cultural endeavors are made accessible to and relevant for a broader international audience. By equipping its citizens with proficiency in English, Taiwan aspires to amplify its voice on the global stage. The intertwining of language policy with national identity and diplomatic relations underscores BN 2030's multifaceted role. Proficiency in English serves not only as a tool for effective communication in diplomacy but also as a strategic asset, enhancing Taiwan's soft power. Taiwan aims to strengthen its diplomatic relationships, cultivate a positive international image and solidify its position as a key player in global affairs; thus amicably maintaining its own autonomy and a semblance of peace across the Taiwan Strait (Campbell et al., 2023). This recognition aligns with Hsu's (2021) perspective, emphasizing that BN 2030 serves dual purposes: enabling Taiwan to assert a de-Sinicized national identity in opposition to the PRC and acting as a method to further secure close relations with the United States (US). The intricate relationship between politics and language education policy has been a longstanding feature in Taiwan, as highlighted by Yeh and Chern (2020), who assert that “English has functioned as the medium for Taiwan to strengthen its cooperation and exchanges with other countries in diplomacy, business, culture, technology, academia, and so forth” (p. 175).

The policy positions Taiwan as a valuable participant in the global innovation dialogue, fostering an environment where ideas, expertise, and knowledge can be shared across borders. BN 2030 strategically positions Taiwan to actively engage with government, industry, academia, civil society, and the public on a global scale. Language proficiency becomes a bridge that facilitates meaningful engagement, ensuring that Taiwan can leverage its linguistic capabilities to contribute to and benefit from diverse perspectives within these collaborative innovation ecosystems. The BN 2030 policy ultimately recognizes that effective communication in English is fundamental to fostering innovation across diverse domains.

While BN 2030 holds significant promise, it is not without its challenges. In an article featured in *Taiwan Business TOPICS*, a publication by the American Chamber of Commerce in Taiwan, it was posited that an “emphasis on English could undermine the government’s efforts to promote students’ learning of Taiwanese, Hakka, and Indigenous languages” (Watt, 2021, para. 10). The BN 2030 policy's ambitious goals face obstacles related to equitable access to language education opportunities, potential neglect of mother-tongue education, and the need for a balanced approach to ensure that proficiency in English does not come at the expense of minority indigenous languages in Taiwan. Navigating these challenges is imperative for BN 2030 to achieve its strategic objectives while upholding principles of inclusivity and cultural richness.

Literature review

Status of languages

In order to understand the logic by which languages are categorized, it is necessary to first understand the status of a language. The status of a language can be delineated according to 3 categories: official, national and recognized.

It is also important to understand the notion of “de jure” and “de facto”, at this juncture. “De jure” refers to “legal authority”, while “de facto” refers to “factual authority”. For example, in the US, English has been established to be the most widely spoken language among the populace, in other words it is the de facto official language - however, there

exists no de jure official language in the US since no law has ever defined English as the official language at any point its history (Marshall, 1986).

An official language is considered vital for official communication and written texts in the national context. In Taiwan, Mandarin Chinese is indeed the de facto official language - but, as with the case of English in the US, it is often misunderstood to be the de jure official language as well. The former Minister of Culture, Cheng Li-Chiun, has been quoted as saying, “No national law in Taiwan has ever pointed out what language is the official language”. The term “second official language”, a placeholder often attributed to English in the context of BN 2030, is thus contested given that clarity on Taiwan’s “first official language” is absent from legislation (Huang, 2000).

A national language is one that conveys important national, ethnic and/or cultural meanings - ostensibly necessitating its protection. The “Development of National Languages Act” as laid down in 2019, protects all national languages, especially those minority languages, such as dialects, indigenous languages, and also Taiwan Sign Language (TSL). It strives to ensure equality between the different languages and the populations that use them. In Taiwan, the national languages comprise Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese Southern Min, Hakka, numerous Austronesian languages (for example: Amis, Paiwan and Tao) and TSL.

A recognized language is a language brought from abroad by new immigrants to Taiwan. With the increasing number of new immigrants to Taiwan, new languages are gradually being accepted by the society and have even begun receiving support in areas such as K12 education. Languages such as Vietnamese, Indonesian and Thai serve as examples of recognized languages in Taiwan. It is worthwhile to note here that English also belongs to this category. In this context, the potential promotion of English as the “second official language” would be considered a significant leap in terms of status enhancement.

Language policy motives: ideology and identity

The relationship between language policy and ideology is a central concern within the study of linguistics (Irvine et al., 2009). Chen (2008) points out that a language is not only indicative of an ethnicity but also an ideological stance. For instance, when Taiwan was

returned to the Republic of China (ROC) by Japan, after World War II, the government mounted the so called National Language Movement (referring to the promotion of Mandarin Chinese) as policymakers sought to reduce Japanese influence and, instead, Sinicize Taiwanese people thus reinforcing the government's ruling power (Hsiau, 1997). Subsequent policy decisions even went so far as to prohibit Taiwanese people from communicating in anything other than Mandarin Chinese. As such, the National Language Movement had a significantly detrimental impact on diversity in the local linguistic landscape. Language policy played a significant role in shaping identity formation in Taiwan, with local languages coming under threat and the resultant strengthening of socio-semiotic cohesion fueling the expression of an alternative national identity (Heylen, 2005). It was not until 1987, with the lifting of Martial Law by the late Taiwanese President Chiang Ching-kuo, that the local language revitalization movement started to gain traction.

Language policy challenges: colonialism and bilingualism

Language policy is informed by the linguistic roots of a populace. Nowadays, some countries are bilingual as a result of the vestiges of their colonial past. Colonized inhabitants were frequently subjugated and forced to learn the colonizers' language, as dictated by language policies crafted by, and favoring, the colonizer. In many cases, after a colonial possession gained its independence, the people not only maintained usage of the colonial language but preferred it because benefits were reaped from doing so (Chen, 2008). Gradually, the colonizers' language would come to be seen as superior among the populace once again, despite arising under conditions deemed as "independent" from the colonizer (Buckner & Francis, 2006).

The dominance of English, specifically, is characterized by what sociolinguists refer to as a case of "linguistic colonialism" or "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson, 1992). The dominant language (in this case English) influences people's beliefs (in terms of culture, media, education and politics) - deepening divides and leading to inequalities between those who use the local language(s) and those who use the dominant language (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). Following this logic, there exists a risk that Taiwan might marginalize its local population, through the active promotion of a dominant language to which Taiwanese people do not hold any meaningful connection.

Research gap and questions

BN 2030 is an ongoing policy initiative in the early stages of its rollout thus limiting the scope of its analysis. Little research has considered the challenges associated with BN 2030 - and those studies that have addressed its challenges have largely focused on issues related to teaching. While educators may, for example, be concerned with optimal teaching methods and quality assurance; linguists are, on the other hand, chiefly concerned with social issues arising from the implementation of BN 2030. An education policy with far reaching consequences, such as BN 2030, should be informed by linguistic imperatives so as to encourage higher rates of buy-in, support and, ultimately, success.

This article aims to shed light on BN 2030's ideological policy underpinnings and to draw attention to the implications arising from BN 2030's impact on Taiwanese identity. Thus, this article addresses the following questions:

- a. What is the ideology behind the promotion of English bilingualism?
- b. How would BN 2030 shape Taiwanese identity?

Methodology

According to Fairclough (1995), Critical Discourse Analysis (Henceforth CDA) is used to systematically investigate how discursive practices (events and texts) are ideologically expressed in power and dominance, considering the embedded social and cultural background. As inequality and injustice frequently result from these discursive practices, critical discourse scholars shed light on the plight of the disadvantaged who are faced with inequality, injustice or discrimination (van Dijk, 1993). What is seemingly "natural" and "acceptable" may in fact be ideologically motivated, manifesting an imbalance of power, and so an investigation into how this phenomenon is constructed is necessary (van Dijk, 1993).

Since the establishment of a language policy is highly dependent on the social trajectory of a group (Cooper, 1989), this article will use van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (1998) as the theoretical framework.

The main data source comprises the policy of BN 2030. The Blueprint, Act and Implementation Reports issued by the Executive Yuan, Legislative Yuan and National Development Council, respectively, are the targets of inquiry. Select educators' and linguists' comments will be quoted to support the analysis where deemed appropriate.

As for the data analysis, van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (1998) focuses on 4 aspects: (i) Examination of the context of the discourse in terms of historical, political and social background of a conflict and its main participants; (ii) Analysis of how power relations lead to the conflicts between groups; (iii) Identification of positive and negative opinions about Us versus Them; (iv) Examination of formal structures: lexical choice and syntactic structure.

The data analysis procedure will be divided into three parts. The first part is textual analysis, which relates to the third and fourth components in van Dijk's model (mentioned above), focusing on how the lexical choices, definition choices, and use of pronouns indicate a certain ideology. The second part is contextual analysis, which relates to the first and second components of the model, focusing on how the contextual background (in terms of historical, political and social factors) influences the dominance and imbalance of power relations, eventually leading to a certain ideology. Finally, the ideology unearthed in the first two phases of the inquiry is examined in greater detail so as to understand how it would shape identity, inequality, injustice and division in society.

Results and discussion

Textual analysis

Roman Jakobson, a prominent linguist, defined six functions of language, each associated with a specific factor, to describe effective communication (Jakobson, 1960). These functions are the referential, expressive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic functions. The referential function corresponds to the factor of context and is used to describe a situation, object, or mental state. The expressive function allows individuals to express their thoughts, feelings, and needs, while the conative function directly engages the addressee. The phatic function is associated with interaction and is observed in greetings and casual discussions. The metalingual function is used to clarify or discuss

the language itself, and the poetic function focuses on the message for its own sake and the verbal code. These functions illustrate the diverse roles of language in communication and interaction. According to policy data on BN 2030, The emphasis on the importance of English in Taiwan is predominantly linked to its economic and communicative benefits, overlooking the cultural, historical, and social significance of the language. This overemphasis aligns with the referential and conative functions of language, as English is primarily valued for its practical and utilitarian purposes, such as facilitating business, tourism, and international relationships. However, this approach neglects the expressive, metalingual, and poetic functions of language, which encompass the cultural, historical, and social dimensions of a language. We can refer to this as “linguistic pragmatism.” Linguistic pragmatists evaluate the value of a language based on the practicability and economic profits it can yield (Yang, 2002). In terms of BN 2030 policy documents, both the English version (Executive Yuan, 2019) and the Chinese version (Executive Yuan, 2018) emphasize linguistic pragmatism. For example, terms such as internationalism, communication, national talents, competitiveness, industry, proficiency, ability and benefits are mentioned, and used to support the rationale of the BN 2030 policy. These terms highlight the role of English as an expedient tool to communicate with foreigners, secure employment, sell products or services and enhance competitiveness - without any reference made to the ways in which English may shape the cultural, artistic or social facets of the Taiwanese identity.

Interestingly, the blueprint claims that BN 2030 will not constrain indigenous language education:

The bilingual policy will be parallel to the pluralistic development of mother tongues, and its implementation will not constrain native language education. (Executive Yuan, 2018)

Underscoring that, the blueprint goes on to reference the Development of National Languages Act as a mechanism to ensure equal rights:

This law (Development of National Languages Act) will serve to effectuate equal rights of languages and cultures, help to promote the nation's pluralistic cultural development, and enrich the content of national culture. (Executive Yuan, 2018)

This dichotomy is peculiar in that, when referring to English, the blueprint focuses on globalization and national competitiveness, but when referring to indigenous languages, it focuses on pluralistic cultural development. One can deduce from this that BN 2030 is ideologically discriminating between English and native languages: with the use of English being characterized by linguistic pragmatism and use of indigenous languages being characterized by multiculturalism (Ferrer & Lin, 2021). This ideological distinction implies an opportunistic approach to language use, portraying English as a pragmatic tool aligned with profitability, and indigenous languages as emblematic of a multicultural ethical standard. In this context, a strategic choice in the policy wording has been made based on perceived advantages or practical benefits. The policy seems to strategically position English proficiency as a means to enhance Taiwan's economic and diplomatic standing, aligning with the prevailing trends in an interconnected world. Simultaneously, the emphasis on multiculturalism for indigenous languages reflects a commitment to preserving cultural diversity. Whether this approach is viewed as beneficial or detrimental depends on one's perspective. Some may see it as a guarded response to politically sensitive realities, while others might question the potential impact on linguistic and cultural representativeness and inclusivity. In either case, this contrast raises important questions about the underlying ideology guiding BN 2030.

Contextual analysis

Immersionism

Immersionism in language learning refers to the belief that immersion in a language is the best way to learn it. See generally: Chang, J., *The ideology of the-best-English-teaching-method in Taiwan's children English language schools* (2017) (Discussing the prevalence of English-only methods in Taiwan's English language schools). The ideology of immersionism is constructed within the historical context. Historically, Taiwan has never been colonized by England, the US or any other English speaking country. Thus, over the years English has come to be considered as a foreign language. In 2014 the then

mayor of Tainan City, Lai Ching-Te, chose to promote English as the “second official language”, stating that this was to create a bilingual and English-friendly “environment” in Tainan City. Socially, the prevalence of English-only methods in Taiwan’s English language schools (Chang, 2017) likewise indicates that Taiwanese parents consider immersionism to be the optimal “environment” for their children to learn English most effectively in.

In addition to this contextual background, the relative absence of authentic English engagement in Taiwan is often attributed to Taiwanese students’ inability to master English. The government has sought to actively promote English-only methods in BN 2030 in order to address this challenge:

Measures include promoting the teaching of English courses entirely in English (National Development Council, 2021)

Despite Taiwan’s richly multicultural linguistic landscape, most instruction is delivered monolingually - most frequently in Mandarin Chinese. Although BN 2030 lays claim to ideals such as “bilingual education” and “bilingual nation”, monolingual education, albeit using English, is actually promoted owing to the perceived benefits of immersionism described above. Moreover, English-only methods are not envisaged to apply solely to classes where English is the topic of study as the government also has aspirations of adopting English-only methods across the spectrum of courses available at the college level, with immersionism expanding to encompass English as a medium for instruction across the academic disciplines.

Linguistic hegemony

Linguistic hegemony refers to the dominance of a language. As highlighted previously, English belongs to the sub-categorization of “recognized languages”, a status deemed less important than that of “national languages”. This is an uncomfortable truth for policymakers because historically, unlike Singapore (a country with which Taiwan is frequently compared to when referencing BN 2030’s merits), Taiwan was never colonized by an English speaking country. Politically, however, the promotion of English as the “second official language” will greatly enhance the status of English, taking it all

the way from the lowest rung of the ladder to the very top of the top in terms of importance - even superseding Mandarin Chinese in many respects. The motivations for BN 2030, as a central policy, are not surprising given the already overwhelming support many Taiwanese people have for English at the individual level. Two polls show that nearly 90% of Taiwanese people agree with the promotion of English language education (Her & Chiang, 2021). With the government's position, actively promoting English as the "second official language", the linguistic hegemony of English in BN 2030 is almost guaranteed. Whilst this article reflects upon the specifics of the issue in Taiwan, similar challenges have arisen in varied contexts around the world (Mustapha, 2014).

Identity, inequality, injustice and division

Linguistic pragmatism and international perspective

There is a phrase in Taiwan which posits that "learning English can broaden one's international perspective" and this echoes the government's emphasis when promoting English. It remains to be seen exactly how an "international perspective" can be distilled merely from learning English. Especially given that the traditional teaching methods in Taiwan, centered on rote memorization of grammar and vocabulary, fit the mold of linguistic pragmatism - the use of a language as a means towards an end. Meanwhile, the cultural, historical and social facets of English, which do lend themselves to the development of an "international perspective", are strikingly absent or glossed over in the policy realm. The government has gone so far as to incorporate this idea into BN 2030:

To cope with the trend of globalization and internationalization, possessing international communication ability and an international perspective are vital elements of raising national competitiveness. (Executive Yuan, 2018)

Immersionism, teachers and students

Based on the government's efforts to promote immersionism, those with the most at stake are those monolingual teachers fluent only in Mandarin Chinese. It takes years for people to attain even a moderate degree of proficiency in English. Moreover, teaching in English requires a mastery of the language that goes far beyond what a typical user would require.

Thus, the cultivation of bilingual teachers inevitably has an impact on monolingual teachers, who stand to lose significantly.

In addition, local bilingual teachers are also faced with their own crisis. The policy mentions that the government aims to hire more foreign teachers:

By 2030, the goal is to have a total of 15,000 Taiwanese bilingual teachers, with all public primary and secondary schools nationwide hiring foreign English teachers or part-time foreign English teaching assistants and with one of every three public senior high schools nationwide employing foreign English teachers. (National Development Council, 2021)

Chang (2017) also addresses this issue, examining how foreign teachers are preferred when it comes to immersionism. In Taiwanese language schools, native English speaking teachers are preferred - especially those with a western appearance (Chang, 2017). In essence, inequality and injustice against both monolingual and bilingual Taiwanese teachers are foreseeable under BN 2030.

As for students, the rural-urban divide in Taiwan is a present day challenge. In rural areas, where resources have been insufficient, BN 2030 will worsen the situation even further. Nevertheless, officials claim that technology could serve as the saving grace when it comes to mitigating the rural-urban divide:

Subsidize the use of mobile devices in rural and remote school classrooms and maximize use of technology to improve bilingual learning efficiency. Continue to administer programs including Bilingual Digital Learning, and International Companions for Learning. (Executive Yuan, 2019)

Technology may, indeed, alleviate the symptoms of the rural-urban divide in the short term - but the root cause of the problem driven by resource scarcity will remain unchanged in the long term. Once BN 2030 has run its course, the rural-urban divide is all but guaranteed to resurface if policymakers do not prioritize resource allocation in a more transformative way.

In addition to the distribution of people, the distribution of wealth is also a challenge impacting upon BN 2030. As Chang (2017) points out, the rich family is more likely to send their child for English classes than the poor family. The implementation of BN 2030 will only serve to increase demand for English classes by the wealthy as the poor cannot afford these luxuries even as the situation currently stands. Hence, the rich-poor divide is forecast to worsen, concurrently.

Linguistic hegemony and minority languages

The severity of linguistic hegemony when it comes to English in Taiwan is exacerbated by top-down policies (i.e. BN 2030) sanctioned by the government. This translates to the dominance of English being condoned by the highest authority of the land. It would be remiss of the author not to concede that whilst English may be a foreign language, in Taiwan, it is hardly a disadvantaged one. With a goal of protecting the national languages, the Development of National Languages Act was laid down in 2019. BN 2030 seeks to undo those protections by promoting English as the second official language, sacrificing resources that could otherwise go towards the protection of local minority languages that are, in some cases, at risk of being lost forever. The conflict between English and minority languages is thus intractable.

Conclusion

This research has delved into Taiwan's linguistic landscape, unraveling the complexities of language status, policy ideologies, and the potential ramifications of the Bilingual Nation (BN) 2030 initiative. The intricate categorization of languages reveals nuances in Taiwan's linguistic fabric, while historical perspectives underscore the profound role of language policy in identity formation.

Challenges posed by linguistic colonialism

Challenges emerge from the dominance of English as a form of linguistic colonialism, raising concerns about cultural divides and inequalities. The historical imposition of colonial languages, of which English is one, have left a lasting impact on societal structures, often marginalizing local languages, and contributing to disparities in cultural representation, educational opportunities, and economic access. The analysis of BN 2030 exposes a dichotomy between linguistic pragmatism, emphasizing the economic benefits

of English, and multicultural ideals supporting the protection of indigenous languages. The tension between these two perspectives underscores the complex challenge of navigating contested linguistic narratives while pursuing economic goals. It raises critical questions about how to strike a balance between leveraging the global utility of English and safeguarding the rich linguistic and cultural tapestry that defines Taiwan's identity. Careful consideration of this distinction is essential for policymakers as they steer BN 2030 to ensure it addresses challenges posed by linguistic colonialism without perpetuating inequalities or cultural erasure.

Challenges to local Taiwanese educators

Immersionism, a central tenet of BN 2030, introduces severe challenges for local Taiwanese educators, especially those with a monolingual background limited to Mandarin Chinese proficiency. Emphasis on bilingualism places monolingual teachers at a clear disadvantage, risking their exclusion from the rapidly evolving education system under BN 2030. The demanding proficiency in English required for teaching in the language surpasses conventional basic communication thresholds, intensifying the difficulties faced by monolingual educators. The government's intent to increase the hiring of foreign teachers adds another layer of complexity, potentially favoring native English speakers, particularly those with Western appearances. Consequently, immersionism presents a multifaceted challenge for local educators, impacting both monolingual and bilingual local talent. The disparities in employment opportunities and preferential treatment of foreign educators underscore the broader implications of BN 2030 on the education sector, emphasizing the imperative for thoughtful support mechanisms, retraining opportunities, and compassionate allowances for local educators navigating these substantial policy shifts.

BN 2030 as a catalyst for innovation

BN 2030 holds promise in fostering innovation within the Quintuple Helix framework, aligning with the government's focus on enhancing international competitiveness and cultivating a bilingual workforce. Benefits to industry include the enhancement of Taiwan's global market presence and the attraction of foreign capital. In academia, the policy may stimulate cross-disciplinary research and collaborations, contributing to a vibrant knowledge ecosystem. Civil society impacts encompass the fostering of greater

inclusivity and diversity, if one were to take an optimistic stance. However, opportunities come with risks, including threats to the cohesion of civil society brought about by linguistic hegemony. Ensuring the transformative potential of BN 2030 in driving innovation in Taiwan requires a careful equilibrium. Balancing the advantages of fostering a bilingual nation with the need to mitigate against associated risks is crucial to prevent any undermining of the policy's intended impact.

Ideological grounding of English as “second official language”

The assertion that English should attain the status of the "second official language" in Taiwan is grounded in a complex interplay of factors, including ideology. On the one hand, the emphasis on English as a means to enhance Taiwan's international competitiveness and its connections with the world serve as counterbalances to heightened geopolitical instability. However, on the other hand, this steadfast progression towards English as a “second official language” also undermines the status of indigenous languages and indigenous cultural identity in Taiwan.

Recognizing the multifaceted implications

While BN 2030 could exacerbate existing socio-economic disparities and injustices, it remains strategically poised as perhaps Taiwan’s most powerful policy lever in the field of education since the advent of democratization. Moreover, the initiative's potential to stimulate international integration, knowledge transfer and transdisciplinary research with global peers resonates with Taiwan's core civic values. It is important for policymakers to recognize the multifaceted implications of such a linguistic policy and to consider, more acutely, its impact on geopolitical security imperatives, drivers of innovation, and the collective consciousness of the Taiwanese people in determining the scale and scope of implementation going forward.

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