

THE NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE LANGUAGE POLICY IN TAIWAN UNDER THE AGE OF GLOBALIZED ENGLISH

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Abstract

Globalized English is a widespread communication tool among countries across a larger number of human activities beyond boundary with the prevailing current of Globalization. Under this condition, a number of countries start to take English into consideration as one of the national language policies in order to satisfy the requirements for the national competitiveness. In the case of Taiwan, it would be a possibility for the young generation to reshape their recognition toward the national identity. Therefore, this paper is aimed at triggering the discussions and considerations about how the young in Taiwan construct their ideological recognition in favor of the national identity.

Keywords: Globalized English, National identity, Language policy, Compulsory education, Ideological recognition

1 Introduction

It has been a widespread recognition for people to comprehend that there are close interactions between language and culture which stands for both of them have deep mutual influence since people are obliged to use their language to either express their thought or reach the goal of communication in a way to indicate part of the uniqueness of a given culture. According to Kramsch's point of view, language is the principal means bound up with culture and a system of signs is seen as having itself a cultural value that make speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language as a symbol of their social identity (3). Clearly, it is a very true statement to emphasize the important connections among language, culture, and identity. In order to fulfill the goal of facilitation of communication, a language turns into being somehow an agent to convey the specific cultural characteristics of a certain group identity. Therefore, a language itself, indirectly, unveils the unknown uniqueness of a group of people through the verbal utterance; directly, conveys the core ideas of a given culture with the message-expressing in favor of featuring a language as a bearer of culture to represent an ethnic identity for a specific group of people.

2 The Language Dilemma

From the perspectives of language policy in Taiwan, there have been different stages to fulfill the political manipulations in order to not only achieve a specific intention but also maintain a political sovereignty since different groups of rulers started to take over the ruling power from the former one. It has been a chaotic story for people in Taiwan, from the ancient time, the Dutch, Ming Dynasty, Qing Dynasty, the Empire of Japan to Republic of China, that each of the rulers tried to utilize any one of the political movements to take over the control in order to facilitate their dominance. Referring to Hong's statement, one of the purposes of the national language policy was to reestablish the consciousness of ethnic identification (10). Obviously, the language policy is one of the official concerns to be adopted and implemented to reach the goal of thought control because the verbal tool can be the important bearer to convey messages. In other words, it could be a possible way for the dominant ruler either to control people's thoughts or to build up a new recognition and loyalty toward a country with the assistance of political manipulations of language movements in favor of reshaping the new national identification. New language policies turn into being an expressway for the political integrity that politicians are easy to utilize to influence people's recognitions via the political influence and powerful reinforcement.

The stories of language policies in different countries have been changed since the age of globalization is being recognized and discussed that a variety of widespread phenomenon takes place to show the globalized influence worldwide. From Spolsky's view, he stressed English has become a widespread language with a stronger position competing with local language (76-77). Without a doubt, English is one of globalized linguistic phenomenon that many of countries try to accept it in order to create a communicative platform and be able to improve their national competitiveness because English as a globalized tongue imposes an invisible powerful superiority over other languages. In term of English itself, the tongue is transferred into the globalized communicative tool with the prevalence of westernization and industrialization that enables it to be a tool connected different peoples. Under this circumstance, English becomes internationalized and even much more globalized to make countries concern its compulsory necessity in favor of the national development. It is a similar case in Taiwan that human resource is an important backbone for the country to develop its national competitiveness and economical condition. The government of Taiwan was to recognize its widespread influential necessity and concerned any other possible reactions for the purpose of catching up with the global pace.

It is a very truth that the globalized tongue, English, is being transformed as a credit and certificate to indicate the possible probability for the better choices and higher possibility toward the future employment and labor market. Especially the case in Taiwan, human resource is a crucial element set in the national development for the future blueprint that how the authority invests and nurtures talent for the future generation. Being noteworthy for them to concern the field of education system could be one of the appropriate options to consider the future feasibility in cultivating people's capability and improving national competitiveness. The compulsory education was one of the targets the government of Taiwan started to consider how to adapt its language education with English. In the year of 2009, it was a turning point for the compulsory education system in Taiwan that the government made a language policy statement in accordance with the trend of globalization. Officially, the authority (2009) declared that the globalized current made different countries get closer than ever before without boundary and the whole world turned

into global village due to the frequent internationalized politics, culture and economy; especially, English is being become the internationalized communication tool to suggest its unavoidable influence upon a large number of people and countries. It is not hard but clear for people in Taiwan to recognize the invisible influence of the globalized tongue that the trend of globalization made English become a superior language and impose its political dominance upon people.

For a country, a language is likely to play a variety of functions to either reach the goal of the communication, achieve the intention of the cultural immersion or satisfy the need of political concern that directly present its irreplaceable uniqueness and indirectly represents its inner cultural recognition. At the modern age of globalization, a number of countries, particularly, have the slim chance speaking in English but still try to adopt it as one of the language policies for the possibility of having better beneficial conditions in favor of national competitiveness. Being the similar situation in Taiwan, likewise, is to concern the importance of English to modify its part of language policies in favor of development of English-learning environment that the authority took the first political action as a compulsory obligation to build up a new language education in elementary schooling systems. A new language-learning environment in compulsory education is built up to re-allocate the distribution of the educational resources for English and local tongues in order to enable the young generation to possess the capabilities of individual internationalization beyond the national boundary. Without the limitation of verbal communication, people in Taiwan are capable of establishing the linkage among countries and acquiring high probability to catch up with the pace of the global trend as well as the political intentions the authority means to take the advantage of the language policy for the purpose of promoting the national competitiveness.

3 The Influential Globalized Tongue

Each of the languages plays a crucial role for a certain group of people in a community to show the diverse cultural activities, features, and characteristics that reveals the original historical background in order to build up people's ethnic recognitions. To some extent, somehow, the national language policy is likely to be one of the manipulations for reinforcing the authority's powerful sovereignty that people could be [un]aware of its invisible existence. As for the language policy, Chan implied that language assimilation could be one of the language policies to achieve the goal of reshaping the national identity (1). It is clearly indicated that the importance of the national language policy is influential for a nation. In terms of the English education policy in Taiwan, the globalized tongue is a strange but influential one to suggest its undeniable necessity that induces Taiwanese government to recognize its special position around the world. Further speaking, English, as a powerful dominator, leads the local authority to create the new language ecology to permit the co-existence among local vernaculars and English that even though people in Taiwan have no chance speaking it but have the compulsory obligation learn the globalized tongue in the name of globalization.

In a given community with its specific cultural background, the language commonality plays a key role to congregate a stream of ethnic consciousness based on the identical language background that is being transformed into a certain identification to further build up the group identity itself. The language ecology in Taiwan has been complex and problematic due to its multilingual society that there are a variety of vernaculars coexisted and interacted one another that the diverse cultural identities with different historical recognitions to complete the constructions of

society. As Nisbett said, the cultural interference and linguistic confusion indeed happened while learning a new language (162). Certainly, his remarks reminded people of the thoughtful considerations between cross-language and cultural identity. From the point of view of political dominance, this kind of coexistence makes the local authority easily implement the language policy in the compulsory education systems in order to make the ends meet for either the political concerns or the mind control in favor of achieving the goal of educating people collectively. However, one of the common points for the policy is that these vernaculars are true-to-life and daily communicative tools for local residents that is not the similar case either in English-speaking or English-learning. Moreover, the coexistence of globalized English along with the other vernaculars could indicate that it would be a turmoil encounter amid the various cultural features without practical communicative usage or true language users.

The influential trend of globalization is likely to be a medium to create a promising prospective and booming possibility for English as a globalized tongue to get involved in a large number of countries and bring a certain degree of interference to their cultural identity and self-identification because the government is intent to create the possible chance for giving a way to English's coexistence to some extent. This would be very true for the host country that the English-friendly policy could likely be a stakeholder to impose the uncertainty and confusion factors on the present domestic language status quo in term of the issue of cultural identification. In the case of Taiwan, the young generation has been encountering the cross-language confusion in the compulsory education system since the year of new national language policy implemented that their cultural identity and self-identification are, to some extent, to be influenced by the involvement of English education in the compulsory schooling. As Chang mentioned that a large number of parents tried to ask their children to learn English as earlier as they could (131-132). It is noteworthy that the prevailing fad for parents to chase after the globalized tongue. In particular, it is a confrontation for a young language learner to acquire an unfamiliar tongue that is required to make an effort to construct the new linguistic infrastructure. Likewise, the linguistic knowledge with its historical culture background embedded in the learner's metacognition plays a significant role that a language learner is capable of acquiring it much more efficiently if the new tongue could have a similar linguistic patterns and characteristics to the Mother tongue. By contrast, if the target language is irrelevant to the original one, it indicates that putting much more efforts on it for a learner is necessary and unavoidable actions to construct a different and brand-new language system.

The nationalized tongue, English as an EFL, has acquired the legitimized position with the strong interventions since the implementation of the revised language education policy enacted even though it actually has no real use for the locals in daily life. Even though, the globalized foreign tongue, to some extent, plays a functionalized role in Taiwanese compulsory education system to convert either the influential identity or the foreign ideology of an alien linguistic carrier that the young generation in Taiwan has no chance rejecting but accepting to be immersed from elementary school, junior high school to senior high school. From Chen's statement, she emphasized on the importance of a better cultural understanding for English-learning and the hazardous possibility for Mother tongue (88-89). Under the coexistence of English-Chinese learning schooling, the absorption and immersion within cross-language context could be problematic and chaotic confusions for the young language learners to integrate two distinct language systems into one automatically without the assistance of better understandings of a newcomer language or Mother

tongue due to their young age and immaturity toward the self-recognition.

4 Culturally ideological impact

It is noteworthy that the cross-language could be a controversial issue for both the compulsory education schooling system and the young language learners in order to meet the requirement of English education policy for the purpose of learning the globally nationalized tongue. During the phase of acquiring a new language, it would be an internalized process for a learner who seeks to absorb its linguistic characteristics and cultural features. This circumstance is likely to bring out the side-effect that the language-learning confusion in relation to cross-language accommodation between Mother tongue and the new foreign language. Meanwhile, it could a chaotic situation for a learner to lead to the confusion in the self-identification because they are too young and immature to comprehend the process of learning a language. To some extent, the influential trend of globalization is indirectly to authorize English as a prestige tongue to coexist in the education system due to the political acceptance and economical concerns. Referring to Crystal's implication, there's only a language with a strong power-base making progress as an international medium of communication (7). It would be a very truth for English to coexist in different places and compel people's acceptance. Further speaking, the globalized English turned into being a role as an invisible factor intervening in the cultural awareness that it gradually induced the local government to create an education environment in favor of globalized English.

In any of countries, the education system plays one of the most important roles that makes the authority implement a variety of education policies to achieve the national goals for the future development. It is the real case that Mao mentioned that the Taiwanese government engaged in education reform and confronted the dilemma in the compulsory education system (593). In the case of Taiwan, English functions as EFL for the students to instill the new cultural understandings that the young generation is obliged to confront the cross-language environment. Correspondingly, the position of parents plays a special role as a standard to examine their children's academic performance and cherish the hope that they are able to do well on their test in favor of presenting the excellent personal transcript. To a certain extent, being aware of the importance of the personal academic performance signifies that the core idea of Credentialism is deep-rooted and irreplaceable in people's mind in Taiwan. Either higher scores or better academic performance, indirectly, indicates that the prevalence of Credentialism is likely to have the better chance and higher possibility obtaining much more promising future than the other peers in life as if the academic performance is equal to the representative of successfulness.

5 Conclusion

There have been many different functional characteristics for a language positioning in a society that is either a communicative tool for message-exchanging, a cultural medium for conveying historical background, or a national identity for representing political manipulations. The globalized tongue, English, is to play either an active or an aggressive role to indicate that a large number of countries should lose no chance for it and welcome its coexistence in a given society in order to follow up the globalized trend. The authority in Taiwan follows the trend to implement the revised language education policy in favor of the coexistence of cross-language learning that induced the young generation to be obliged to adopt its linguistic characteristics and

influence under existing conditions of possessing better competitiveness than the other peers. To a certain extent, it could generate the invisible aftermath since the occurrence of the imbalanced cross-language took place in the compulsory education system. The trend of globalization transfers English from globalized to Englishized influencing the individual recognition, intervening the compulsory education, and further, confusing the national identity. General speaking, the globalized English is, [in]directly, to influence the [re]construction of the individual's recognitions toward the national identity along with the cross-language compulsory education policy.

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