

National development and language education in Taiwan: reconsidering the Taiwanese Mandarin educational policy (1950-1967)

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Abstract

As the theory of modernization indicated, the process of modernization is different from the East to West. Taiwanese modernization led by former president Chiang kai-shek is an important issue in deliberating the East Asian civilization in comparison with the Western states in terms of capitalism society. This article tells us that Chiang thought a modern state is a ruled and organized by Chinese culture, which is correspondence to Hobsbawn's idea. He claims that nation-state is an invented tradition. In this context, the essay found that Taiwan's mandarin educational policy functioned as the implementation of such invented culture. In addition to shaping a militarized state, because U.S gave the economic assistance after 1945. In contrast with Communist China, culturally, the conception of Chiang' modern state is different from the process of modernization theory, we see a different mode of nation-building when Chiang ruled Taiwan with the Chinese identity. On the one hand, the purpose of mandarin education is majorly for training locals, who were massive workers for island's take-off economy since 1950s. On the other hand, the mandarin policy underlies the exercises of Chinese Cultural Renaissance Project which was launched on the 1967.

Keywords: imagined communities, invented traditions, nation-building, Mandarin policy

Introduction

Instead of employing modernization theories, which views the educational policy as an internal domestic affair, this study deliberates the external factors, which influenced the Taiwanese

Mandarin language policy. Based on the concepts of dependency theory, locating the national situation under the world capitalism system, the educational policy aims at supporting the national competitive capacities in terms of international division of labor. From the

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perspective of dependency theory, the research question of this case study is what the major characteristic of Taiwanese mandarin language policy is. Also, the study explores who will benefit from the implementation of language policy; consequently, what is the impact on the internal social classes of Taiwanese society under the mandarin educational policy.

This case study, employing the document of Taiwanese mandarin language policy from 1950 to 1967, found by way of improvement of illiteracy, Taiwanese government can supply of cheap labor power to U.S. foreign branch factories in Taiwan. However, during such process of state capital accumulation, an unexpected result is the speaking of rural Taiwanese language was strictly limited in order to promote the economic development, which indirectly preserved the social benefits of Chinese mainlanders.

Theoretical background Modernization theories

The modernization theories tend to treat the Third world countries as the underdeveloped countries. The evolving model of Western countries is a way to fix the underdevelopment of countries. Based on the proposition of modernization theory, cultivation of modern mind, and economic

development are the most desirable goals for these poor countries to defeat the problem of poverty, and upgrade low level of national production.

According to Rostow's perspective (1960), he argues that all nations pass through the same five stages of economic development. These stages include pre-conditions for economy take-off, take off, the drive to maturity, the age of high mass consumption, and beyond consumption. For Rostow, technology, savings, entrepreneurialism, and the correct political systems were all key motors in moving countries along this path. Another important argument he makes is that countries that begin to achieve sustained economic growth later may move through the stages much faster (Rostow, 1960).

One of major studies that examined modernity is found in David McClelland's book *The Achieving Society* (1961). According to McClelland the rise and fall of civilization is due to the individual values held by the majority of the population in the society. He argued that there is a personality characteristic, which he called the achievement motive, acquired through socialization, which makes a society open to economic and technological advancement. Many studies have shown that education a factory employment is directly related to the acquisition of modern values. These studies have been

conducted in a variety of countries, such that the relationship has been generalized to include most developing countries (McClelland, 1961). The notion of the need for achievement as a psychological trait was developed by the American sociologist, Alex Inkeles (1969) who formulated a set of attitude questions known as the modernity scale. During the 1960s and 1970s the modernity scale was widely used to measure the extent to which members of a given society hold what are considered to be modern values (Inkeles, 1969). These modernization theorists, along with all structural functionalists, also argue that the creation of modern values can be the result of human planning and the particular social institutions are of extreme importance for their emergence, for example, the socialization, which takes place in families, schools and factories (Giddens, 1990).

In the book of *Passing of Traditional Society*, Lerner (1958) demonstrates how the pervasive tensions between traditional and modern are negotiated through the development of new personality traits such as empathy and the broadening of worldviews. Key motors of modernization for Lerner are media such as radio and television that bring new and different ideas from the far corners of the earth to all classes of people. Lerner also argues that in order to construct the new values and behaviors adapted during modernization,

individuals need to be more flexible and be able to relate to a wide variety of people (Lerner, 1958). Moreover, Inkeles (1969) found exposure to modernizing forces such as formal school-based education and factory work led to changes in individuals' values and behaviors. For example, they found that men with these experiences were more open to other new experiences, were more likely to be involved with civic affairs, and were more willing to act independently from parental authority (Inkeles, 1969).

Criticism on Modernizing attitudes.

There are some major criticisms on the modernization theory. First of all, modernization theory assumes that modern values and behavior by individuals necessarily lead to socioeconomic development at the societal level. However, Portes (1976) and others contend that this casual linkage does not necessarily hold because a society is not simply the sum of total of the individuals within in (Portes,1976). Secondly, because modernization theory focuses only on factors internal to a society in seeking the cause for development, education, as a societal institution, is generally assumed to be a part of the internal modernization process. However, modernization theory does not account for the external influences on

education, and therefore the problematic aspects of education's contribution to development, not to its possible negative impact on development.

It is evident that the modernization theorists help to strengthen the illusion of independence and of the sovereignty of the national developmental state, since they were ensconced in a theoretical framework, which accorded integrity to society as a self-regulating social whole within which social and political institutions, cultural values as well as economic organizations, were comprehended as constituent parts. This was a key assumption with which dependency theory took issue. Rather than perceive societies as so many independent units, their unit of analysis was capitalism as a world system spanning nations and placing them in different positions according to their structural place in a historically developed international division of labor (Hoogvelt, 2001).

The invented traditions and educational policy.

Curiously, however, while external relations are the starting point for the analysis of dependence, most of the emphasis of dependency theorists is on the internal class relations of dependent countries. As Cardoso and Faletto (1979) say, there is no such thing as a

metaphysical relation of dependency between one nation and another, one state and another. Such relations are made concrete possibilities through the existence of a network of interests and interactions, which link certain social groups to other social groups, certain social classes to other classes (Cardoso and Faletto, 1979). Moreover, Evans (1979) argues, the internal disarticulation of the peripheral society is complemented and exacerbated by the integration of elites internationally. Contemporary elites do not send their shirts to Europe to be laundered as the traditional colonial rulers of Latin America supposedly did, but they are part of what Sunkel calls the trans-national kernel, that is a complex of activities, social groups and regions in different countries...which are closely linked trans-nationally through many concrete interests as well as by similar style, ways and levels of living and cultural affinities (p.30).

Woodhouse(1993), for instance, in “ *Knowledge and Educational Dependency*”, wrote the indigenous elite of Nigerian clearly identify with foreign role models in their choice of life styles (motor car, foreign bank accounts, houses, and holidays abroad). Thus, they tend to encourage their young to aspire to the Western values that they themselves embrace. At the same time, they blame the import of foreign values for the decline and breakdown of traditional

values such as lack of respect of elders, divorce, crime, and immoral behavior by the young) (p.7). Moreover, through the international brain drain mechanism, the peripheral countries, like China and India still seek to fight the underdevelopment of educational situations even if they produce the highest quality scientific researchers in the world. China and India show some important similarities. The countries have made a significant commitment to higher education, but they enroll only a small proportion of the relevant age group. India enrolls about 5 percents of the relevant age group, while about 1 percent attended postsecondary institutions in China. This compares with close to 50 percent in the United States, 35 percent in Japan, and around 20-25 percent in Western Europe. However, in the context of the developing countries, both India and China enroll a relatively high proportion—many countries in Africa, for example, have only 1 or 2 percent of the relevant age group in postsecondary education, although Latin America educates a much higher percentage, as do most of the rapidly developing economies of the Pacific Rim (Altbach, 1998).

The research question, here, is what is the characteristic of Taiwanese mandarin language policy. Also, the study explores who will benefit from the implementation of language policy; consequently, what is the impact on the internal social classes of Taiwanese

society under the mandarin educational policy. Firstly, the following case study will present the mandarin policy in Taiwan from 1950 to 1967.

Case study: The mandarin education policy in Taiwan (1950-1967)

Historical background

Comparing with those decentralization issues, language education programs in primary school are a highly centralized policy in earlier years. For example, the primary school English education program is a product of Taiwanese decentralization of educational policies, which is launched on 2005. By way of mandating “Curriculum Standard of Primary and Junior High School, Taiwan Ministry of Education directs the state’s decision on pupil’s learning text. For instance, according to Curriculum Standard of Junior High School of 1982, the total hours of Mandarin learning course is 36 hours compared with less 10 hours of English learning course. The intended consequence of Mandarin learning is to reinforce legitimacies of ruling political party—Koumingtang (KMT), which is established by General Chiang Kai-Sek. Ku (2000) mentioned, “finally, Chinese Mandarin has replaced the Japanese language at the core elementary education. Although Taiwanese people are used to speaking

the Fukien dialect, which is one of China's local languages, this situation was not respected by the KMT. Like the Japanese colonial government, state power was applied to repress the Fukien dialect, which was prohibited in learning and in formal meetings. Mandarin was regarded as a weapon to foster the national identity of pupils, to shape their minds as Chinese, not Taiwanese, and make them pursue the highest national policy of the KMT: defeating the communist rebellion and reinstating KMT power all over China”(p.178).

Doubtless, there was no English class provided in primary school. For, school worked as an ideological machine for Chiang's governments. In Curriculum Standard of 1968, Chiang announced, “ the purpose of primary school education is to teach pupils being a Chinese”(Ku, 1994).

At the same time, the Taiwanese economic was in the stage of “take-off” due to the aids from U.S. According to the official reports, from 1949 to 1967, the U.S. provided Taiwan with U.S.\$ 2.4 billion in military aid and US\$ 1.8 billion in economic aid. This aid meant Taiwan did not need to throw too many resources into warfare but could use them to restructure its economic infrastructure. This was a huge sum of money for Taiwan at that time. For example, from 1949 to 1967 Taiwan received for every member of its civilian population was 425 dollars—excluding military aid this

figure was US\$ 187. The per capita income of people was raised from less than US\$ 100 in 1949 to US\$ 186 in 1952 and to US\$1193 by 1977 (Government Information Office, 1998). The close relationship between Taiwan and United States hence, brings Taiwan into the world capitalist system in the cold war period of postwar. In this era, Taiwan meanwhile became the production base for cheap electronic product, which most of these goods exported to America.

The implementation of mandarin language education

The rapid accumulation of state capital is contributed by the strong governmental export policies, especially the thousands of factories of electronics and garment industries played a role in the first stage of industrialization in Taiwan. The many of companies are American foreign branches. Therefore, a stable supply of cheapest labor power was the sufficient condition for supporting the growing economy. For the sake of improvement of illiteracy, the mandarin language education, thus, was introduced to educational policy area. It is evident that the prevalence of illiteracy is unbearable for a nation, which is at stake of launching her industrialization.

In 1949, the defeated central government of Nationalist Government (KMT) moved to Taiwan accompanied

by an influx of migrants; this influx started in the late 1940s and continued into the early 1950s. Estimates of the total number of migrants vary from one million to two million; this degree of variation is due to the lack of reliable census and household registration records in the earliest part of this period. Taiwanese scholar Sun (1994) argues, “the exact number of immigrants is perhaps not so important for the purpose of analysis. What is important is that this was not a group of average people. Rather, they were a select group, highly educated and well experienced, and they provided a basis for the development of human resources, which compared favorably to any of the other underdeveloped economies of the time (p.92). The group of mainlander was the beginner of post war period in Taiwan. However, the social rewarded mandarin policy stirred the conflict between Taiwanese and Mainlanders. The government placed great importance on promoting the official language, Mandarin, and discouraging the Taiwanese dialect. Teachers punished children who spoke Taiwanese at school by fining them or forcing them to wear humiliating placards. Signs reminding local functionaries to speak Mandarin hung next to the telephones in government offices. Rigger (1999) indicated, “the regime promoted the view that Taiwanese was a second-rate dialect, primitive, ugly and low class. The campaign to promote Mandarin succeeded, but the effort to

wipe out Taiwanese failed; what the regime created was a bilingual nation in which more than three quarters of the population speaks both Mandarin and Taiwanese” (p.72-73).

Not only did the government tried to introduce Mandarin into the Taiwanese pupils, but did it promote the Confucian philosophy to the school. The purpose of Chinese language education actually combines Mandarin and Chinese philosophy (see Figure1.). In a book of social science in elementary school, the individual achievement becomes group achievement and the highest emphasis is placed on the society’s achievement as a whole. Wilson (1970) mentions, “this concept is widespread in education and finds expression in Chiang’s statement that all virtues are based on loyalty and filial piety. To fulfill the principle of complete loyalty to the state and of filial piety toward the nation; to be altruistic and not seek personal advantage; to place the interests of the state ahead of those of the family; such is the highest standard of loyalty and filial piety”(p.45). The conformity of student is also helpful to create discipline among the factory workers.

Also, the Government Information Office (GIO), the agency in charge of regulating mass media, reduced the amount of time allotted to Taiwanese-language programming on TV and radio in favor of Mandarin. As Chen (1998)

argues, “As the ruling party, the Nationalist or Koumintang (KMT) government controlled three domestic television stations, the Taiwan Television Company (TTV), China Television Cooperation (CTV) and China Television System (CTS). All these television station were mandated to broadcast in Mandarin”. In sum, the mandarin education policy contains three parts of policy, which are language, philosophy, and mass media content.

Discussion

The main purpose of Mandarin education policy is to protect the social benefits of Chinese character writers. Such language policy, in turn, reflects the characteristic of colonial education policy, which emphasizing the social elites should own the educational resources. Such policy had already transformed Taiwanese dialect for decades since the era of Japanese Occupation. Empirical research in France by Pierre Bourdieu has shown that schools provide the dominant classes with cultural capital, which enables them to participate more fully in the writing system and its rewards. Therefore, Fagerlind and Saha (1989) argues, “according to Bourdieu’s critique, there is not question concerning the contribution of education to the production of skilled manpower and therefore to economic growth. However,

it is regarded as problematic whether such an education contributes in the long run to social and political equality which in their view is essential for continued development in advanced capitalist societies, and for the reversal of patterns of under-development in less-developed societies” (p.59).

Secondly, in the economic level, the language policy tried to provide the cheap labor power for the increasing need of industrialized Taiwanese factories, which mainly were the U.S. or Japanese foreign branches. As Ward and Pyle (1995) argues, “ethnicity, class, and gender also shape the structure of the transnational corporation workforce. For example, in Taiwan in the late 1970s managers and union leaders in factories were predominantly mainland Chinese military men, whereas the workers were native Taiwanese, largely women” (Ward and Pyle, 1995). In other words, at that time, the people who want to earn her life as least have to learn Mandarin. According, scholars criticized dependency theorists for focusing too much on the particular kinds of commodities traded. Unequal exchange, he said, does not occur between commodities traded, but between trading countries. Applying Marx’s labor theory of value to international exchanges, he argued that the prices of goods produced in any country are determined mainly by the level of wages in that country” (Hoovglet, 2001:41). Focusing on the

process of commodification is not enough for understanding the dominant structure of South and North. After all, television set maker is so different from cash-crop banana for instance. Farmer did not need to understand mandarin, while they can cultivate agriculture very well.

In other words, for the sake of creating effective managerial needs, the language of Mandarin education should be viewed as an easy way to keep lower wage level of Taiwanese worker and also kept the country competitive ability in the world market. The social implication of mandarin policy is to delay the usage of local language, which had not been implemented until the late 2000s in terms of the development of cultural identity (徐淑賢, 2018). There are four different languages in Taiwan, which includes Hokka, Aboriginal, Mandarin and Taiwanese. Too many local dialects would disturb the communication efficiency in the work places.

Thirdly, from the politics of identity, a more interesting finding is the mandarin policy works as a compromising point between the ruling class (mainlander) and local Taiwanese economic elites. Historically, the economic sectors, for instance, plastic manufacturers, garment

producers, and wheat powder factories, were owned by local Taiwanese. But the political sector was dominated by Chinese mainlanders. The language of Mandarin implicitly legitimated the ruling power of KMT. According to the concept of dependency theory, how the internal social class interacts is more a meaningful question than how the western capitalism model works in the peripheral countries. As Brosio (1994) suggested, “the key question is whether the dominant economic class which he described is also a ruling class?” (Brosio,1994).

In the case, I present above, the answer maybe “ No”. As a matter of fact, not until 2000 Presidential election, the local Taiwanese economic monopolies, then did not gained the political influence. But, for the past forty years, in the political arena, the confrontation of social forces between Taiwanese and Chinese seemed seek to come to an acceptable point, whereas is Mandarin policy was implemented in Taiwan. On the one hand, due to their join the process of industrialization, rural Taiwanese earn the bread; on the other hand, through glorifying the symbol of Chinese and calling the loyalty, the ruling power obtained the legitimacy to control the island.



Figure1: Chinese characters displayed in the forest workers gathering on early 1960s

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