

Research Notes **【研究討論】**

A Window to Globalization?  
A Cluster Analysis of the Debate on Making  
English the Second Official Language of Taiwan  
**開啟全球化之窗？**  
**臺灣以英語為第二官方語言論辯之修辭分析**

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After the world War II, English has become the de facto international language. An ever-increasing number of people with different native tongues around the globe choose to use English as a vehicle of communication in intercultural contexts. In the world population, about 350 millions are native speakers of English, about 1.5 billion people use it as a second language, and over 10 million people are learning the English language. It is estimated that half of the world population will be proficient in English by the year of 2025.<sup>1</sup> This recent spread of English in the international community can be attributed to factors such as multinational commercial needs and co-operation, exposure to English media and entertainments, internet activities and academic communications, especially in science and technology. Fluency in English is thereby considered part of the essential upward mobility in these fields and even a prerequisite for entry-level employees in many international institutions.<sup>2</sup>

In the midst of the unprecedented English wave, Taiwan as a small nation whose life vein strongly depends on international trade has made noticeable endeavors to surf the high tide. One of the newly established measures is to add English language as a subject of study into the elementary school curriculum. And the government has announced a new English proficiency requirement for all government employees. On March 30, 2002, Taiwanese president Chen Shui-bian further proposed to make English to be made Taiwan's second official language in an interview.

A series of discussion were triggered on the editorial and public opinion pages of Chinese newspapers in Taiwan between 2002 and 2003. For Taiwan to adopt a

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1 David Crystal, *English as a Global Language* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

2 Charlotte Hoffmann, "The Spread of English and the growth of multilingualism with English in Europe," in Jasone Cenoz and Ulrike Jessner (eds.) *English in Europe: The Acquisition of a Third Language* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2000), p. 19; Wolfgang Viereck, "English in Europe: Its Nativisation and Use as a Lingua Franca, with Special Reference to German-speaking Countries," in Reinhard Hartmann (ed.) *The English Language in Europe* (Oxford: Intellect, 1996), pp. 16-23.

second official language has been a familiar topic of political and academic discussion in the past few years. While some scholars and legislators (including Chen when he was still a presidential candidate in 2000) advocated that Hoklo, the native speakers of which constitute more than 70% of Taiwan residents, should be made so ahead of English, Chen's proposal was not met with any substantial objection in the very beginning. The majority of people seemed to welcome this proposal as one necessary step to further integrating with the international community in the age of globalization.

Yet in the following months, the significance of the English language and the impact of making English a second official language on the nation's future were heavily debated. Till now, English is still not yet an official language in Taiwan. Nonetheless, from the English as the second official language debate surfaced two opposing arguments pointing to different ideological concerns over Taiwan's national identity of which its language constitutes an integral part. This paper examines the rhetorical structures of the editorials and articles on public opinion pages relating to the subject on the leading Chinese newspapers in Taiwan with. The rhetorical analysis is used to cast light on the two very different value systems underlying these arguments that may shape the future of the nation after the official language decision is finalized.

## Background

The ethnolinguistic composition and political milieu of Taiwan has been influenced by its colonial and pseudo-colonial experiences. As the aborigine peoples (consisting of nine tribes) constitute only less than 2 % of the total population of Taiwan, the majority of the residents of the island are descendants of the immigrants from Southern China, mainly the Fujian and Guangdong Province,

speaking Hakka<sup>3</sup> and Hoklo<sup>4</sup> respectively.<sup>5</sup> Since the 16th century, the foreign rule of Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, and Japanese have been interspersed with Chinese regimes originated from the Mainland. Only during the second half of the 20th century did Taiwan start to enjoy a gradual democratization. In the past ten years, Freedom House in its annual report on degree of freedom in countries throughout the world has consistently listed Taiwan as a free country among the 193 countries surveyed.<sup>6</sup>

On this island, the language policy did not exist until the Imperial Japanese ruling in early 20th century. Japanese regime declared Japanese as the "national language" of the island while the two mostly spoken dialects / languages of the Chinese language family, Hakka and Hoklo, were deliberately played down. Fifty years later, the Chinese Nationalist Party-dominated central government moved to Taiwan in 1949 and replaced Japanese with Mandarin Chinese as the "national language." On the other hand, the nine tribal languages (belonging to the proto-Austronesian linguistic family) received little pressure, perhaps because they were treated as objects of preservation or curiosities on the verge of natural extinction.

Till today Mandarin Chinese remains the national language ("Kuo-yu"), the sole official language, of Taiwan. Brought to the island with a huge exodus of nearly two million people from the Mainland, Mandarin has replaced Japanese,

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3 A dialect / language spoken by an ethnic subgroup of the Han Chinese who live predominantly in the provinces of Guangdong, Jiangxi, and Fujian in China, and comprise a significant portion of Overseas Chinese. The Hakka language has numerous variants spoken in different regions and countries. In Taiwan, Hakka-speaking people, largely descendants of immigrants from Guangdong and Fujian before 1949, constitute about 14 percent of the Taiwanese population. See Wen-Shan Yang, *National Survey of Hakka Population in Taiwan* (Taipei: Council for Hakka Affairs, 2004).

4 A form of Min Nan dialect / language of the Chinese language group. It is considered a native language by the main ethnic population (over 70%) in Taiwan who descended from immigrants from Min-Nan, a Southern Fujian region. See Wen-Shan Yang, *National Survey of Hakka Population in Taiwan*.

5 June Teufel Dreyer, "The evolution of language policies and national identity in Taiwan," in Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (eds.) *Fighting Words: Language Policy and Ethnic Relations in Asia* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005), pp. 385-411.

6 Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2007* (Washington D. C.: Freedom House, 2007). Available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.

after fifty years of japanization, as the language of school instruction, public communication, entertainment and publication on the island as a crucial component of the nation-building effort embarked by the nationalist leaders. All peoples are required to learn Kuo-yu. Films, newspapers, radio, and later television programs used to be almost all conducted in Mandarin. Children who attempted to speak Hoklo, Hakka, or other dialects were subject to disciplinary measures such as paying fines, conducting extra labor at schools, or even corporeal punishment. For nearly 30 years since 1949, dialects or languages other than Mandarin were highly restricted and strongly discouraged outside home.

During those years, the resistance to the rather oppressive measures to promote Kuo-yu never ceased to exist. In fact, it grew and spread around with the dissident, nativist activists who started in the 1970's to voice their dissatisfaction and protested for a more inclusive language policy. It was hoped that the policy might lead to a more positive attitude of the government toward the local Hakka and Hoklo cultures which had been labeled "provincial" and "crude." With the gradual democratization, the language policy was repeatedly reviewed in the 1980's; as a result, the usage of Hoklo was no more discouraged or punished and more Hoklo literature, educational and media programs were produced. In the 1990's, Hakka speakers also began to advocate for more mainstreaming of Hakka into television programs, speech contests, and ethnic songs and poetry. The Ministry of Education of Taiwan announced that Hakka, Haklo and indigenous tribal language courses could be offered as elective at the primary-school level in 1993.<sup>7</sup> Although these efforts were sometimes critiqued as de-unifying the country, an increasing consensus toward building a new national persona which is distinct from the Mainland China has gradually matured toward the turn of the century.

In the 1998 election for the mayor of Taipei, Taiwan's capital city, the then president of the nation, Lee Teng-hui, native-born of Hakka ancestry speaking

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7 June Teufel Dreyer, "The evolution of language policies and national identity in Taiwan."

fluent Hoklo, launched the term "new Taiwanese" referring to anyone who lives in and cares for Taiwan, while campaigning for a Hong Kong-born mainlander. Lee's initiation reflected a commonly shared desire among most people in Taiwan that pursues a national identity which fairly and justly integrates all peoples living on the island including the aborigines and Chinese (Hakka and Hoklo) immigrants before and after 1949. This notion was immediately praised and embraced. Many political and opinion leaders started to show off their newly acquired multi-tongues in public; an all-inclusive language policy was discussed and matching measures were considered. For example, in 2000 the mother-tongue ("*mu-yu*") classes became mandated throughout Taiwan's public school system (for children aged 7-15). Before, English was the only non-Mandarin language required for students above 13 in the secondary school curriculum. Now, in addition to Mandarin, children need to study at least one local language / dialect of their choice, be it Hakka, Hoklo or any aboriginal tribal language. With cultural and language pluralism recognized, one major change in the public scene is the inclusion of Hakka and Hoklo in all public transportation announcements, such as the mass transportation stations and on board the vehicles. Hakka and aborigines finally enjoy television channels designed especially for them.

As the notion of linguistic pluralism popularized, however, the only locally-made foreign language TV programs so far are English news broadcasts. It is offered not only as a service to the growing foreigners' community in Taiwan, but as part of the policy to internationalize Taiwan and its people.

Policy changes in favor of native groups and their languages continued to take shape after Chen Sui-bian, a native-born of Southern Taiwan, was elected president by direct popular vote in 2000. While Chen was still a presidential candidate in 2000, his campaign spokesperson announced Chen's determination to make native tongues of "Taiwanese,"<sup>8</sup> namely, Hakka and Hoklo, official languages, in addition

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8 People who are descendents of Chinese immigrants before 1949.

to Mandarin, as a step to furthering the localization, a.k.a. Taiwanization, of the island, which was seen as a public promise to continue effort initiated by the then president Lee Teng-hui to de-Sinonize and localize Taiwan after he came to power in 1988.<sup>9</sup>

Two years after Chen took office in March 2002, Taiwan Solidarity Union<sup>10</sup> legislators, mainly loyal followers of Lee, called for Chen's realization of his campaign promises to establish Hoklo as the second official language in Taiwan in March 2002. This move immediately triggered a round of heated discussion in the country since, according to a poll result, people had quite split opinions on this issue: 48% of the surveyed were for the move while 37% against it.<sup>11</sup> Yet the most surprising finding from the survey was that the majority of the surveyed (over 60%) would like the government to adopt English as Taiwan's second official language. In the following week, several legislators asked the Executive Yuen to immediately proclaim English as the second official language of Taiwan and establish an all-English environment for people in Taiwan in order to improve their overall English proficiency.<sup>12</sup>

One week after, on the controversy over Taiwan's second official language, President Chen Shui-bian voiced his opinion as a president for the first time at the end of March during an on-line conversation with Taiwanese people. He asked the public to give serious thought to the possibility of adding English as an official language of the nation, citing gaining more competitive edge for the nation as the reason since Taiwan was about to face a global competition after joining the World Trade Organization (WTO).<sup>13</sup> This proposal immediately ignited a heated debate on the status of English in this nation. Many people, as the survey indicated, cheered

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9 *South China Morning Post*, Mar. 15, 2000.

10 A nativist party founded by Lee Teng-hui after he decided to leave the Nationalist party (KMT) in 2000.

11 *Ming Sheng News*, Mar. 14, 2002.

12 *Ming Sheng Daily*, Mar. 20, 2002; *China Times*, Mar. 26, 2002.

13 *China Times*, Mar. 31, 2002.

this proposal by expressing their excitement on the new directions that this proposal may lead the nation toward: a more open, internationalized society and workforce, more closely connected to the global community, which is very much to the nation's benefit.<sup>14</sup> Yet, one of the opposition party leaders, Taipei City (the capital of Taiwan) Mayor Ma Ying-jeon commented that "It is not only unnecessary but also impossible to make English the second official language in Taiwan right now."<sup>15</sup> At the same time, speakers of other languages / dialects in Taiwan also showed their eagerness to preserve their mother tongues by adding more languages / dialects to the list of the second official language candidates.

In April, 2002, Taiwanese Premier Yu Shyi-kun ordered the Ministry of Education to assess the feasibility of making English a semi-official language of the nation. Less than a month later, on May 7, Premier Yu released a six-year national development plan to cement Taiwan in the age of globalization in which making English the nation's quasi-official language is listed the number one task. The purpose is to help smooth the communication links between Taiwan and its international business partners,<sup>16</sup> and to create an English-friendly environment that will make it easier for certain foreigners to work, study, visit and do business in Taiwan and finally enable "local industries to compete on the world stage."<sup>17</sup>

The announcement triggered another wave of discussion on how to proceed the task as well as whether it is a wise move to make English the second official language of Taiwan. Most of the public attention and discussion occurred within those two years, 2002 and 2003, and best represented by the editorials and public opinions published on the leading Chinese newspaper in Taiwan. The extensiveness of discussion and the varied background of opinion holders make the issue one of

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14 *Taipei Times*, Apr. 9, 2002.

15 *Taipei Times*, Apr. 2, 2002.

16 *China Times*, May 8, 2002.

17 Cecilia Fanchiang, "Cabinet Experiments with Ways to Create English-friendly Environment in Taiwan," *Taiwan Journal*, July 9, 2004.

<http://publish.gio.gov.tw/FCJ/past/04070922.html>.



the first public issues being openly debated by not only the politicians but the general citizens on newspapers. The arguments, be it for or against President Chen's Proposal, examined the role of a foreign language, i.e., English, in contemporary Taiwan and its near future while subscribing to two very different views relating the national identity of the nation.

## Methodology

To gain insight into the arguments developed in this controversy, the editorials and public opinions on the role of English in Taiwan published in 2002 and 2003, when the issue received most public attention, on major Taiwan's Chinese newspapers were collected as rhetorical artifacts. The artifacts were subject to associational cluster analysis, a method first developed by Kenneth Burke.<sup>18</sup>

Associational cluster analysis is a rhetorical criticism tool, generally applied to written discourse to unveil the worldview or the ideology underlying a communication act. According to Burke, the first step to examine a work is to find "what goes with what"<sup>19</sup> in the discourse. The word clustering together may point to the kinds of acts, images, and traits that go with the notions conveyed by the key terms (words that are prominent or repeated appear in the artifacts) about a certain topic. As Burke contends, a communicator expresses his / her conception of the subject consciously or unconsciously through the choice of words. When the person tries to form attitudes or to induce actions in other people, it is a conscious decision to employ words, in the written discourse, to achieve his / her objectives. Yet, unconsciously, the vocabulary a communicator deliberately or spontaneously

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18 Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

19 Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, p. 30.

chooses constitutes his / her "reflection, selection, and deflection of reality,"<sup>20</sup> that is, how the communicator looks at the world, and how she / he interprets it. The connotations carried through the words associated with the central notions are disclosed by extracting key terms and calculating the frequency of the associated word clusters.<sup>21</sup> By chartering the words clustering around the key terms, cluster criticism allows for an in-depth exploration of meanings of the vocabulary chosen by the author; how texts "construct and support cultural values"<sup>22</sup> and hence the worldview and value system of the rhetor might be revealed. The method has been extended beyond a single writer's (speaker's) texts to those of collections of writers / speakers.<sup>23</sup> This extended version of Burke's associational cluster method, as interpreted by Starosta,<sup>24</sup> analyzes like arguments made by compiled writers / speakers who holds similar stances on a certain issue, and identifies the shared position and / or values / beliefs of these rhetors. This understanding usually helps create a window to a collective stance on a major social issue and its underlying ideologies. The result of this rhetorical analysis method can therefore best facilitate the negotiation or reconciliation between opposing parties in a position or policy debate.

All the editorials and public opinions pages in six major Chinese newspapers in Taiwan between 2002 and 2003 were examined to locate the relevant pieces. Altogether 4 editorials and 14 pieces of reader's opinion, were collected as data (Table 1). Then, key terms that appear to be most significant for the writer were

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20 2; Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 3rd edition (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2004)

21 Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*.

22 Bettina Heinz and Ronald Lee, "Getting Down to the Meat: The Symbolic Construction of Meat Consumption," *Communication Studies*, 49 (Spring, 1998), p. 87.

23 William J. Starosta, "United Nations: Burkeian Construct," A.M. thesis (Indiana University, 1971); "Qualitative Content Analysis: A Burkeian Perspective," in William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim (eds.) *Methods for Intercultural Communication Research* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984), pp. 184-194; "A National Holiday for Dr. King? Qualitative Content Analysis of Arguments Carried in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*," *Journal of Black Studies*, 18 (1988), pp. 358-378; Bettina Heinz and Ronald Lee, "Getting Down to the Meat."

24 William J. Starosta, "United Nations;" "Qualitative Content Analysis."

selected based on either frequency or intensity. Frequency refers to the repeated occurrence of certain words in the artifact, which may indicate a deliberate emphasis in the rhetor's communication, or a recurring idea in the rhetor's thinking process when writing. The intensity criterion is used to single out those words that represent a strong degree of feeling or commitment, whose removal would significantly change the nature of the text on the intention of the rhetor.<sup>25</sup>

After the key terms identified, words appearing around each occurrence of these key terms were recorded. The words may cluster around the key terms in close proximity in various semantic connections, such as parallel or cause-and-effect relationships. Through these association clusters, that is, words aligning with and thus forming an implicit equation with the key terms, the "structure of motivation" underlying the key terms can be made explicit.<sup>26</sup> Next, words that the key terms are dissociated from were recorded since these words would further provide insight into the rhetor's worldview which, not just embracing certain value symbols, would reject some others. Moreover, when words cluster around a key term but carry contradictory, even opposing meanings to those of other clusters, this may suggest a conflict, tension or some confusion or ambiguity on the part of the rhetor, perhaps without her / his own notice. An analysis of the juxtapositions of key terms and word clusters around them in those editorials and readers' opinions gives evidence to a rhetor's motives and the world views underscoring the arguments for or against making English the second official language of Taiwan.

### Key Terms and Their Associational Clusters

In the editorials and readers' opinions published in 2002 and 2003, not a single editorial of the major newspapers openly advocated for making English the second official language in Taiwan. Only one editorial hails Premier Yu's Six-Year National

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25 Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Development Plan and mentions the importance of improving English proficiency in today's global economy. The two editorials that directly address the issue unscanningly voice their reservations on President Chen's proposal. In the collected readers' opinions, nine out of fourteen are concerned with the negative impact of this proposal if it will be implemented soon. From a close examination of all the 18 pieces targeting the issue, four key terms were identified because of their intensity and frequency of occurrence: "English," "official language," "globalization," and "colonization." Then, words recurring surrounding these key terms were recorded and analyzed in turn.

### Two Key Terms That Pervade

Two terms repeatedly appear in all the artifacts collected and examined in this study. An analysis of their associational clusters indicates that the terms were operationalized in quite different directions by those for and against the President's proposal of making English the second official language of Taiwan.

### Key Term : English

"English" is, not surprisingly, the most prominent word throughout all the 18 pieces. On both sides, the importance of the English language to Taiwan as situated in the world community has been recognized through clustering words such as "urgency," "importance," "a necessary tool of internationalization," "magic stone for connecting to the international society," "window to globalization," and "competitiveness." Yet a closer look at the clusters around "English" in the articles can differentiate word groups of distinct meanings. In articles advocating for making English the second official language, four categories of words were located surrounding the key term "English."

The first group contains action words including "expand," "control," "direct," "occupy," "participate," and "understand." These rather pre-active verbs translate the static noun "English" into an action realm where the dynamics and mobility lead to development and, usually, prosperity. The activator-like character of English also denotes some competitive edge for the nation. In the second group, benefit-related words such as "interest," "resource," "technology," "economic chips," and "national strength" were identified. The term "English" (or proficiency of English), considered as determining influence in international economy, is operationalized in tangible, concrete benefits for learners and speakers in monetary and financial terms. This informs not only the indispensability of English to the much desired national development, but the guaranteed positive outcomes denoted by the third group of words. The third category of words associated with English points to a very desirable end result described as "the strong," "prosperity," "success," and "outstandingness," for an energetic nation attempting to move toward a higher status in the international arena where the competition for the resources and market is steep. These positive word clusters associated with English are identified in almost all articles. The finding indicates that both sides seem to agree upon the progressive, future-oriented picture that English can paint for the future Taiwan.

Another cluster contains words of rather different nature from the previous three cluster groups. These words refer to certain dire consequences of insufficient English ability such as "marginalization," "conditioned," "weak," "passive," "receptive," "anxiety," and "inequality." This cluster of words reinforces the necessity and exigence of the proposal to make English as official language. Although those who are against the proposal admit the potential negative consequences resulting from Taiwanese people's lack of English proficiency, it is described in a much lesser degree with words such as "indirect," "screened vision," and "regret."

Also found in the arguments against Chen's proposal, words closely associated with English denote more realistic concerns. To counter the over-

proactive and over-positive tone of the pros campaign, jargon words relating to the practicality of language learning are found around the key term "English": for example, "education," "language instruction," "listening," "reading," "learning environment," "proficiency," and "matching measures." One cluster connects rather negative words like "weakness" and "poverty" to the key term "English" in one editorial. This cluster of words was used as the counter argument against officializing English: not all countries with citizens speaking fluent English do good in the present world economy. This lexical juxtaposition helps to break the magic spell that English casts as the major reason for becoming the second official language. English is no more the panacea to procuring economic advantages in the global market.

As the most dominant and intense vocabulary, the key term "English" and its surrounding clusters offer an opportunity for the impact of the English language on the nation to be examined with magnifiers in both pros and cons opinions. English proficiency is taken to be a door-opening tool leading to development and prosperity of the nation; on the other hand, the negative impact from people's low English proficiency is to some degree exaggerated in the pros arguments, while it is considerably minimized yet duly recognized as reality in the cons arguments.

#### Key Term: official language

The second key term that emerges from the analysis is "official language". The term was repeatedly appears in all the articles, yet the word clusters surrounding it are of two distinct natures. Three pairs of contrastive clusters are located. The first pair of clusters answers the question whether making English an official language is a key to a nation's prosperity citing two different groups of nations. On the pros side, the term "official language" is linked to the industrialized countries in Asia including Japan, Singapore and South Korea. For those who opt for legalizing English to be Taiwan's second official language, the "successful" examples of

Singapore and Hong Kong are almost self-evident support for their advocacy. And the way they argue seems to claim that the only reason for Taiwan to lag behind these Asian neighbors is that Taiwan does not have English as its official language. To them, once making English the second official language, Taiwan will gain more competitive edge in comparison with its neighbors. On the other hand, the cons side associates the same term with less advantaged regions such as South Asia, Middle East and Africa. To them, adopting English as a nation's official language is not necessarily connected to the development and prosperity of the nation. The language itself is not the answer to the quest for increasing the competitiveness of a country.

The second contrasting cluster denotes a sense of future versus history. Looking into the future is weighed against looking at the past in this official language debate. For those who approve of English as an official language of Taiwan, one of the most appealing reasons is the forward-looking perspective conveyed through the clustering words such as "prospect," "future," "21st century," "the new century," and "the new mode of thinking," (as derived from the mandated usage of an official language in a society). Yet for those who have reservations, the choice of an official language cannot separate itself from the country's historical past. Hence in analyzing examples of countries which already officialized English, conspicuous words clustering around the key term "official language" refer to the colonial past of those countries: "colony," "colonizer country," and "decolonization." Considering all those countries with English as an official language were all colonies of British Empire or the United States in the past, legalizing English to be an official language would be as if Taiwan places itself in a category of those countries, although Taiwan was never colonized by any English-speaking people in its history.

The third pair of contrast in words surrounding the key term "official language" lies in a promising vision projected in the pros arguments versus the bleak reality as assessed in the cons. Making English an official language, to those

advocates, seems to be bringing to Taiwan what almost every country in today's world longs for: "internationalization," "connecting with world community," "global perspective," "competitiveness," and "social harmony" (achieved when none of a particular ethnic group's mother tongue would be made the second official language of a country). Yet before those dreams could come true, the society may need to go through substantial changes and perhaps conflicts if the cons side's interpretation of the current conditions in Taiwan is correct.

To those skeptics, as indicated by the words appearing around the key term "official language" in the articles, the average English proficiency of the Taiwanese people lags behind that of many of their Asian neighbors, and Taiwan needs to "drastically improve" its English teaching methods and build up an "English learning environment for all." This means "a great deal of resources and efforts" are to be invested first before English can be designated the nation's official language. In addition, having one more official language commands all governmental documents tendered in bilingual versions. This daunting task would require a high "cost" of money and "human power" for translation and production, let along the "confusion," "misunderstanding," and even "trouble" created between the two language versions. Even after this "complicated", "humongous" task can be completed and its high cost justified, not all the citizens can be expected to acquire a similar level of proficiency since the new official language is to be learned by everyone. "Education gaps" (which usually but not necessarily derive from "economical gaps") plus the language acquisition capability difference may further the "opposition" of the haves and the have-nots in the society. The bleakness of the present and the projected future in which English is made an official language of Taiwan, as indicated in the word clusters, has led the skeptics to call for more public forums and hearings before a final decision regarding the status of English in Taiwan is reached.

The word clusters around the key terms "English" and "official language" in the for and the against arguments clearly depict the progressive thinking of the pros



side in sharp contrast with the down-to-earth concerns of the cons side. From the cluster analysis, the debate over officializing English in Taiwan is disclosed to be a longing for a better developed and more internationalized country with a competitive edge weighed against an unflattering assessment of the current situation far from ready for English to be designated an official language, together with the bleak picture of very plausible consequences resulting from it. Beneath these two tenets lie two opposing views toward the English language and the seriousness of the impact of officializing it on Taiwan. This can be further illustrated through an analysis of the next two key terms.

## Two Key Terms with Unilateral Distribution

On each side of the debate, certain vocabulary appear repeatedly—either the pros or the cons discourse. Groups of words clustering around the key terms are located and analyzed as the basis for an attempt to gain insight into the principles and the world views of the rhetors on opposite sides. One key term emerges from the analysis of each side is: "globalization" and "colonization."

Key term: globalization

The term "globalization" was not used by President Chen Sui-bian in his original initiative; yet the term is the second most repeated word in the articles supporting his proposal, only second to the word "English." The images created by the words clustering around tend to be very positive. The most prominent image associated with "globalization" is a promising one of progressive nature, as indicated by clustering words such as "future," "boundary-breaking," "transformation," "high tech," and "economic development." Also, a very desiring image of "globalization" is built up by words with positive connotations such as

"key position," "competitive edge," "international trade," "useful," "resources," and "priority."

At the same time, a recognition that globalization is an "unavoidable trend" in the today's world is noted through the use of words including "irresistible," "inevitable," "looming," "common vehicle of communication," "world language," "new wave," and "21st century." These words and images they develop produce a prosperous vision of the nation's future in the so-called "age of globalization," and hence convey a sense of urgency and a strong exigence for making English the second official language of Taiwan to catch up with the world. The potential negative impact is minimized or not even mentioned in the pros discourse.

This pollyannaistic view on what English and globalization can bring about in Taiwan has been welcomed by the majority of people on the island (as evidenced by the 2002 poll mentioned) who have suffered to different extent from the slow economic growth and the industry outsourcing in the recent years. They hope English would help improve their personal economic conditions. Since individuals have always use language, especially a preferred one, as a means to help advance their economic and social status. Thus, rather than directly on a national level, the seemingly far-away "globalization" is to be realized through improved English language proficiency on a very personal level. In other words, "globalization" and the good life it promises is not an ideal too good to be reached, but an immediate and achievable state simply if English is made an official language and hence people can easily master the English language in a natural all-English environment on this island.

Key Term: colonization

Nearly absent in the pros discourse but prominent in the cons discourse is the term "colonization." While those nations having English as an official language but no native speakers are recognized with more or less admiration by both sides, the

colonial background of those nations is severely deemphasized in the pros discourse. For the skeptics who articulate their reservations on officializing English, colonization is not only a historical fact to those countries but also a legitimate concern for not only the future development of Taiwanese culture but its identity formation currently in progress. They use post-colonial vocabulary such as "hegemony," "nationalism," "subjectivity," "identity-shaping," "colonizer," "colonialism," and "resistance" to warn of the potential damages that officializing English may cause in Taiwan. They are worried if the local culture and the national identity will all be subsumed into the new dominant cultural and linguistic "reality" in the contemporary world where English is the global lingua franca. That is, the cultural and commercial artifacts produced by English-speaking population might take the place of those produced by a variety of local languages, and even the relevant cultural values / beliefs transmitted and maintained by them. The social imperatives derived from the English language dominance might alter the mode of thinking on the very personal level, and the mode of the cultural constructions in which people live their lives on the social level. This is what Ngugi wa Thiongo, a Kenya writer and scholar, dreaded most.<sup>27</sup> To him as well as to those who are not for making English as official language in Taiwan, this is the ultimate control and domination of the colonized people since this form of mental colonization goes down to people's perception of themselves and their place in and relationship to the world, since "language carries culture and culture carries the entire body of values" that we live by.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, to those who are concerned with the dire consequences of making English the second official language of Taiwan, "globalization" is simply a pronoun for anglo-Americanization. With this type of "globalization," Taiwan will no longer enjoy its prosperity as a free, independent state, but become a nominal state which

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27 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1981).

28 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

is imprisoned, or even enslaved, within the "hegemonic," multi-national market-economy systems most of which originate in countries where English is the native language. If English once become an official language of the country, the English spoken by Taiwanese people may eventually "ascend" to the list of world Englishes that already contains Indian English and Singaporean English. This Taiwanese variety of English may hardly ever achieve a status similar to the native varieties of English; and discriminatory perception and judgmental criteria of English proficiency and intonation will inevitably prevail in Taiwanese society, as evidenced in other countries where English is already made their official language.<sup>29</sup> For Taiwanese people, this will be a disastrous move plunging them back into the pseudo-colonized status once again as they will be marginalized by their own people to the degree of their English proficiency. In fact, "globalization" praised with a rhetoric of progress as articulated by the pro side is viewed as an equivalent to "colonization" by the cons side if English were made the second official language of Taiwan. The repeated word "colonization" and the clusters around it convey the fear that English proficiency does not necessarily guarantee an increase in the national strength of Taiwan; but its national identity is very likely to go through another crisis as a result of the premier and prestiged status of the English language suddenly established in a nation that was never colonized by any English-speaking countries.

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29 Josie Arnold, "Some social and cultural issues of English as the global language: Everything is changing; everything is going, going, gone now," *Electronic Magazine of Multicultural Education*, 8, 1. Retrieved June 23, 2006, <http://www.eastern.edu/publications/emme/2006spring/arnold.pdf>; Charlotte Hoffmann, "The Spread of English and the growth of multilingualism with English in Europe."

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## Conclusion

President Chen Shui-bian's proposal of making English the second official language of Taiwan evoked a series of public discussions over the potential ramifications of the language policy-to-be in 2002. In the editorials and reader's opinions published on the major Chinese newspapers during the years 2002 and 2003, both sides, whether for or against Chen's proposal, tried to persuade the general public citing other countries as examples and the world's current cultural and economic trends as warrants. A cluster analysis of the rhetorical artifacts reveals two very different views on the role that the English language could play in Taiwan. In fact, the polarities of the values evidenced in the clusters around the key terms "English" and "official language" form the basis for two competing discourses of opposing ideologies regarding the function of a prestigious language in a nation: utilitarian thinking versus identity formation. To those who consider the English language a means of communication and thereby a pre-condition for the internationalization of Taiwan, proficiency in English is taken to be a necessity or even a prerequisite in this highly competitive global economy. The mastering, or at least a good command, of English, to them, can ensure Taiwan remains a significant player on the world economic stage.

The instrumental rationality of the English language seems to pose no harm but prescribe a very desirable future for the nation. Taken at face value, the grandeur of progressive rhetoric was only feebly resisted in the beginning of the debate by the comparatively trivial, practical concerns voiced by those who were reluctant to engage the nation in any speedy and dramatic action of officializing English. The down-to-earth thinking, as illustrated by the clusters of professional terms relating to language, learning teaching, and official document translation, seems to be lacking the vision and vitality that the pros arguments carry. The realistic concerns, to the pros side, can be dismissed with some leak-patching action plans (for example, Premier Yu's Six-Year Development Plan), and therefore seriously dwarfed by the optimistic, future-oriented arguments of the pro side. Yet a

cluster analysis of the key terms "globalization" and "colonization" ultimately transform the debate into polarized underpinnings about the identity of Taiwan as it struggles to separate from China. In the national identity forming process currently underway in Taiwan, the official language proposal is in fact a metamorphosis of the post-colonial process known as abrogation.<sup>30</sup> The semi-authoritative narrative built up through the progressive rhetoric using the key terms "globalization" and its associational clusters can be taken to be a rhetorical ploy to undermine the status of Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua) as the only official language of Taiwan. The attempt to make English the second official language of Taiwan is interpreted as a strategy to abrogate the privileged centrality of Mandarin Chinese in the current Taiwanese society and its cultural linkage to China, and thus its political implication on national identity, after the unsuccessful appropriation of Hoklo as the language for culturally significant discourse when the China-originated party KMT (Kuomintang, the Nationalist Party) was replaced by the Democratic Progressive Party led by President Chen in 2000.

This post-colonial intention underpinning the argument for officializing English emerges, obviously, out of the "colonial" experiences under the KMT regime that many residents of Taiwan consider an alien ruling party. However, a closer reading of the pros arguments reveals that the progressive rhetoric of the post-colonial discourse is very much a colonial one in terms of the anxiety it conveys through the fear of being marginalized or peripherized from the normative core established by the center (i.e., English-speaking countries), a.k.a., the "world community" and "international society." This anxiety of feeling alienated or not-catching-up reflects, in a sense, Taiwan's current isolated situation and the difficulties it encounters as a result of being excluded by the United Nations and

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30 According to Bill Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (New York: Routledge, 1989), abrogation refers to a process in which the imperial cultural and its "standard of 'normative' or 'correct' usage" (p. 38), is refused and, usually displaced, since language is seen as an obstacle in the progress of the new national identity in formation.

other international organizations for decades. In this official language debate, this discourse of urgency and assimilation employing action verbs and advantage terminology is very similar to that in the colonized regions where the dominant language and culture were considered the standard norms for the colonized locals to aspire to and to catch up with. The cluster analysis uncovers the paradox of a rhetorical dissonance in arguments powered by anti-colonial intentions but rendered in a style of colonial discourse. This incongruity between the communication intention and its linguistic form(s), to some extent, is in tune with the current process of Taiwan's national identity forming—full of confusion and conflicting views in the Taiwanese society.

Probably due to the paradoxical nature of the advocacy for making English an official language and its potential harm to the national and cultural identity of Taiwan, the English as the second official language discussion did not continue after 2003. The campaign disappeared completely from the public discourse well before Premier Yu stepped down from office in 2005. On further reflection upon this history-shaping and future-changing debate, the dilemma between the two opposing ideologies toward English's role in the country, as revealed through the rhetorical analysis of key terms and their associational clusters, may well connect Taiwan to the international community more effectively than what people thought the English language can do. Taiwan's anxiety facing the pseudo-colonization threat of the well-nigh hegemonial status of the English language and its powerful culturacommercial systems in today's world is no stranger to many of non-English-speaking countries. Although Taiwan has unique concerns over its rather isolated status in the world community, the English controversy and the related dichotomy between globalization and colonization, instrumental rationality and identity formation, as experienced by Taiwan and many other non-G-8 countries, seem to replace Taiwan on the global scene and help the nation re-establish liaisons with those countries. With the shared anxiety and dilemma, Taiwan is very much a part of the world / regional community which is usually formed under mutual interests.

On the other hand, the nation's competitiveness within the internationalized / globalized economy is a vital issue to Taiwan, since its prosperity depends to a great extent on international trade, and deserves great attention of the government and the public. Taking English proficiency as the panacea to increasing the nation's competitive edge is not only decontextualizing the issue by ignoring other relevant factors such as finance and industry policies, but simplifying the complicated causes of a nation's well-being and thus ridding the responsibility of the policy-making government for the dire consequences once English is hastened to become the second official language of Taiwan.

A cluster analysis helps unveil the complexity of the issue by examining the key terms and their associated word clusters in the rhetorical artifacts. English, to many people in the previously-colonized regions, is the tongue of unilateral cruelties, oppression and dominance, and thus a symbol of pain and humiliation. Yet to Taiwanese as well as many other Asians, English is a language of unlimited potentiality and even liberation from poverty or exclusion, and will lead their country to prosperity and internationalization. Whether making English an official language is conducive to national development and economic growth while not subjecting the country to a new form of colonization is the question that arises from the rhetorical analysis of the arguments and certainly merits further and continuing attention of both the government and the peoples in Taiwan and many other countries.