

Strategies in Revitalizing Indigenous Languages in Taiwan

Lillian M. Huang
Department of Applied Foreign Languages
Shih Chien University
E-mail: lhuang@mail.usc.edu.tw

Abstract

Almost all of the Austronesian languages spoken in Taiwan are facing the danger of becoming extinct. This paper will present some governmental strategies, especially those utilized by the Ministry of Education and the Council of Indigenous Peoples, Executive Yuan, in preserving and promoting these endangered languages. It will begin with a brief discussion of the past and current strategies (1995-2006), including (1) establishment of writing systems of indigenous languages, (2) development of indigenous language textbooks, (3) training of indigenous language teachers, (4) teaching of indigenous languages in elementary schools and its evaluation, and (5) administration of proficiency test of indigenous languages.

The paper will continue to present a 6-year (2008-2013) language revitalization program which was proposed by the Council of Indigenous Peoples and was recently approved by Executive Yuan. The program consists of ten major tasks, including (1) establishing indigenous language-related policies, (2) setting up indigenous language promotion organizations, (3) compiling indigenous language dictionaries and materials, (4) advocating indigenous language research and development, (5) training indigenous language promoters, (6) promoting the use of indigenous languages at home and in communities, (7) developing multimedia and on-line teaching/learning of indigenous languages, (8) administering proficiency test of indigenous languages, (9) collecting and compiling indigenous peoples' songs and lyrics, and (10) translating important policies and regulations, and training translators of indigenous languages.

The goal of this paper is to share our governmental efforts in preserving and promoting indigenous languages with others with similar interests and to receive feedback to enhance the revitalization.

1. Introduction¹

Taiwan is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual society. With the total population being around 21 million, there is only 2% belonging to Austronesian peoples and 98% being different Han ethnic groups such as Taiwanese (i.e. Southern Min people), Hakka, and Mainlanders. Due to the language policy over the past 55 years or so, most people on the island can currently communicate with each other freely in Mandarin Chinese, the national language; whereas many young people do not possess a very good command of their mother tongue, if it is not Mandarin Chinese. The situation is much worse with the aboriginal peoples (i.e. Austronesians); quite a few of their languages have either become extinct or are disappearing.²

According to the current official classification, the aboriginal groups in Taiwan are of

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² For a detailed discussion, please refer to Huang 2004.

thirteen tribes, eleven of them being traditionally called *gaoshan* groups (the mountain tribes) and the other two (i.e. Thao and Kavalan) being *pingpu* groups (the plain tribes). Four of them were not officially regarded as natives until September 22, 2001 for Thao, December 25, 2002 for Kavalan, January 14, 2004 for Truku, and January 17, 2007 for Sakizaya, which was originally categorized as one of the Amis dialects. The population³ and geographic distributions of these tribes are as follows:

- (1) the Atayal group (91,208): living in the area of Yilan, Taipei, Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Miaoli, Taichung and Nantou.
- (2) the Saisiyat group (5,445): living at Wufeng in Hsinchu and in the purlieus around the Hsiangtianhu at Miaoli Prefecture.
- (3) the Bunun group (44,028): living in Nantou, Kaohsiung, Taitung, and Hualien.
- (4) the Tsou group (5,740): living at the Alishan township of Chiayi, and also Chiumei, a village in the Hsinyi township of Nantou.
- (5) the Rukai group (10,966): living at the Maolin township of Kaohsiung, at the Wutai township of Pingtung, and at Tunghsin, a village in Taitung.
- (6) the Paiwan group (74,093): spreading around the area near Pingtung and Taitung.
- (7) the Puyuma group (9,432): living at the Peinan Plain in Taitung.
- (8) the Amis group (159,190): spreading along the longitudinal valley and the coastline of Hualien and Taitung, and the Hsuhai area of Pingtung.
- (9) the Yami group (3,295): residing in Lanyu (the Orchid Island), an island southeast to Taiwan.
- (10) the Thao group (506): living around the Sun Moon Lake in Nantou (recognized on Sept. 22, 2001).
- (11) the Kavalan group (503): living along the east coast (recognized on Dec. 25, 2002).
- (12) Truku (131): living in Hualien (recognized on Jan. 14, 2004).
- (13) Sakizaya (5,000~10,000): living in Hualien Plain (recognized on Jan. 17, 2007).

However, there are more aboriginal groups other than the above-mentioned, though they have not been officially recognized yet, including Ketagalan, Luilang, Taokas, Papora, Babuza, Hoanya, Pazeh and Siraya. They are either already assimilated or mostly assimilated by the Han Chinese.

In the following section of this paper, a brief introduction of the current situation of the minority languages in Taiwan is presented. It is followed by a discussion of the past and current language policy and language education policy, and then an illustration of some governmental strategies in preserving and promoting these endangered languages (1995-2006), especially those utilized by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP), Executive Yuan. The paper will continue to present a 6-year

³ The population of the aboriginal peoples provided here (except for Sakizaya) is based on the March 2004 statistics of the Council of Indigenous Peoples, Executive Yuan, Taiwan, R.O.C. (<http://www.apc.gov.tw/en/statistic/number2.aspx>)

language revitalization program which was proposed by the CIP and was recently approved by Executive Yuan, and will start to be carried out in the year of 2008 until 2013. The program consists of ten major tasks which will be presented in Section 4. The following section presents a further proposal for preserving and promoting the aboriginal languages in the future, including a formal college training program of aboriginal language teachers, alternative forms of bilingual education for aboriginal students in rural and urban areas, and the possibility of aboriginal language learning during pre-school years.

2. Language policy and language education policy since 1949

Before the Republic of China was established in 1912, Taiwan already had several contacts with the Mainland China and with some foreign countries, as shown below (Tsao 1999a: 329-331, and Davidson 1988: 9-275):⁴

- (1) The earliest record of the contact between Taiwan and the Mainland China dates back to AD 230, during the period of the Three Kingdoms. Two more contacts were made a thousand years later, in the Yuan dynasty (1260-1295). After the Dutch were driven out of Taiwan in 1662, the island was under the rule of Koxinga (i.e. Cheng Cheng-kong in Ming dynasty 1662-1683) and Ching dynasty (1683-1894).
- (2) In 1624, the Dutch invaded and then ruled the southern part of Taiwan, and later the north was under their colonial rule as well. The Dutch rule did not come to an end until the year of 1662, when they were driven out of the island by Cheng Cheng-kong and the Ming royalists.
- (3) In 1625, the Spanish invaded the northern part of Taiwan, and served as the colonial government until 1642, when the Dutch drove them out of the island.
- (4) Between 1895 and 1945, the entire island was under Japanese occupation.

At the end of the Second World War (1945), the Japanese returned Taiwan to China. By that time, a number of language policies had already been formed and implemented in Mainland China. So the laws and regulations related to these language policies were simply adapted by the Nationalist government when moving to Taiwan in 1949. Mandarin Chinese has been the national language of the island since then. In this section the language policy in Taiwan since 1949 will be briefly examined.

As stated earlier, Taiwan is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society, so a common tool for communication seems necessary among people having different mother tongues. Since the Nationalist government began to rule Taiwan in 1949, the most important language policy has been the propagation of the national language, i.e. Mandarin Chinese. Chan (1994), as cited in Tsao (1999a: 365), considers the language policy during this time as uni-directional

⁴ For a detailed description of the contact between Taiwan and the Mainland as well as foreigners such as the Dutch, the Spanish and the Japanese, and the history of language planning in Taiwan, please refer to Tsao 1999a & 1999b.

bilingualism; that is, while all speakers of local languages had to learn to speak the national language, the Mainlanders were not required to study a local language. Such a language policy could be exemplified by some of the regulations concerning aborigines' education issued by the MOE in Taiwan:

- (1) The declaration of setting up Mandarin Promotion Groups (MPG) at the level of mountain counties in 1957.
- (2) The announcement of the MPGs at the mountain-county level being subordinate to the mountain county governments as well as being under the supervision of the MPGs at the prefect level.
- (3) The advocacy of teaching Mandarin to aborigines through after-work training programs in 1964.
- (4) The proclamation of strengthened points in teaching aborigines Mandarin in mountain elementary schools.
- (5) The proclamation of 'Proposal of improving the education of aborigines' in 1968, with the ninth regulation emphasizing the propagation of Mandarin in mountain areas.
- (6) The establishment of 'Propagation of Mandarin in mountain counties in Taiwan' in 1973 with the first regulation stating that 'Aborigines should abandon the habits of using Japanese or dialects in order to learn the mother nation's culture and to strengthen their nationalism.'
- (7) The renaming of 'Re-enforcement of the education of aborigines in Taiwan' into 'Re-enforcement of the compulsory education of aborigines in Taiwan' in 1980, with the first part of the fourteenth regulation indicating that 'The teaching of the subject of Mandarin Chinese must be strengthened; the conversation class in the lower grades must receive attention; teachers should use Mandarin in teaching and conversing with students.'

Under such a language policy, the following phenomena were observed:

- (1) Only Mandarin Chinese was taught in school, both as a subject and as the tool of instruction.
- (2) Both students and teachers were not allowed to use languages at school that were not Mandarin. Students were taught that it was unethical and unpatriotic to speak their mother tongue, if it was not Mandarin, and they would receive punishments when caught speaking their own languages.
- (3) People were forbidden to speak in public their native language, if it was not Mandarin.
- (4) Mass media (newspapers and electronic media) were under strict control; the use of local languages, i.e. non-Mandarin, was severely restricted.
- (5) Parents and children gradually stopped using their native languages at home, not to mention in public.

The above-mentioned situations did not change until the lift of martial law in 1987.

One of the consequences of such successful propagation of Mandarin Chinese, as the national language, is that most people on the island can communicate with each other freely in the language. However, with all the above-mentioned repressive measures in effect for fifty years or so, an unavoidable consequence is that most of the other languages have been under great threat of being erosive and many have disappeared, especially the Austronesian languages in Taiwan.

With the revocation of martial law in 1987, indigenous peoples in Taiwan began to realize the importance of preserving their cultures and languages. In 1990, Atayal, one of the Taiwan aboriginal languages, began to be taught officially in the Wulai Secondary and Primary School, Taipei Prefecture. Many schools, cultural centers and aboriginal churches have thus been advocating the importance of teaching these aborigines' languages and developing their textbooks.

The current role that the MOE plays has also been observed to be different since 1987, as illustrated by some of the regulations the Ministry has issued:

- (1) In 1990, while responding to some prefectures advocating the teaching of local languages, the MOE stated that 'The government does not forbid the local languages from being taught and people can learn all these languages in their daily life. As for the current language education policy, it is still considered that at the stage of compulsory education, it is the primary concern to establish people's command of the national language. Elementary school teachers have to utilize Mandarin while teaching, and students interested in learning local languages may learn them after school.
- (2) In 1991 and 1992, the MOE entrusted scholars with designing and revising 'Orthographic systems for Formosan languages', which were proclaimed to be the basis for developing textbooks on Formosan languages in 1994.
- (3) In 1993, the MOE started to implement 'the First Five-year Project on Developing and Improving Aborigines' Education', with the fifth category on 'strengthening the curricula and aborigines' education', including the design of curricula, the implementation of aboriginal language teaching, and the improvement of materials and methods of aborigines' education.
- (4) In 1993-1994, the MOE entrusted some aborigines and scholars with co-designing the outlines of compiling and editing textbooks, and proclaimed the outlines as the principles to follow in 1994. Meanwhile, it was announced that a chapter on 'peoples and languages' would be included in Taiwan's junior high school curricula.
- (5) In 1994, the MOE started to present awards for excellent works on aboriginal language textbooks, reference grammars, vocabulary books/dictionaries, and writing systems. These awards have been held annually since then.
- (6) In 1995, the MOE announced the implementation of subsidizing institutions that promoted aborigines' social education, including aboriginal language and arts education.

- (7) Since 1996, aboriginal languages (as well as Southern Min and Hakka) have been promoted and taught in elementary and junior high schools; i.e. during the nine-year compulsory education.
- (8) In 1998, the MOE declared 'the Second Five-year Project on Developing and Improving Aborigines' Education'.
- (9) In January of 2000, the MOE announced that the teaching of local languages would become a required subject for the entire six years of elementary school and an elective for the three years of junior high school. The local languages were to be taught 1-2 periods per week, and students could choose one out of the 3 alternatives (i.e. Southern Min, Hakka and aboriginal languages).
- (10) In March of 2000, the MOE officially announced that in its language education policy, the teaching of the aboriginal languages was to be included in the course curricula of the nine-year compulsory education (i.e. the primary and secondary school). The new language education policy became effective in the fall semester, September of 2001.

To sum up the above-mentioned language policies since 1949, the following are observed (Tsao 1999a: 369):

- (1) The language policy making before the lift of martial law in 1987 was always a one-way or top-down affair. Since 1987, more public opinions and experts' advice have been considered and included in the process of Taiwan's language policy making.
- (2) While Mandarin was the only language taught in elementary schools in the past, aboriginal languages (as well as Southern Min and Hakka) is [will be] taught 1-2 hours every week, beginning in September in 2001.

However, as noted earlier and as expected, competent teachers of these aboriginal languages and well-designed textbooks on these languages have been badly needed. Such problems certainly deserve further attention and require immediate solutions.

3. Current strategies in preserving and promoting Taiwan indigenous languages

Before 1996, the highest government agency in charge of indigenous affairs was the Indigenous Section under the Civil Affairs Department of the Ministry of the Interior. It was not until December 10, 1996 that the Council of Indigenous Affairs was established, and since then, the formulation of indigenous policies has been placed in the hands of the indigenous peoples; all the indigenous affairs have then been brought under the jurisdiction of this specific ministerial-level agency. In the following we will examine some current strategies in preserving and promoting indigenous languages, including (1) establishment of writing systems of indigenous languages, (2) development of indigenous language textbooks, (3) training of indigenous language teachers, (4) teaching of indigenous languages in elementary schools and its evaluation, and (5) administration of proficiency test of indigenous languages.

3.1 Establishment of writing systems of indigenous languages

There was never an attempt from any government institution to establish writing systems of indigenous languages until 1991. In that year, the MOE entrusted Professor Paul J. Li, a linguist who has been working on indigenous languages over the past 30 years, with designing more appropriate orthographic systems for these minority languages. As a result, a set of phonetic symbols was established for each indigenous language, in the hope that different dialects of the same language could utilize the same set of symbols for compiling or writing textbooks, and with the goal of promoting indigenous language teaching. However, the MOE did not officially require that the named orthographic systems be adapted by textbook editors or compilers. As a result, not only did the writing system adapted by some textbooks of the same language or even the same dialect present variations, but also showed differences from those in the above-mentioned MOE version. Similar situations were also found in the exam questions while the CIP held the first indigenous language proficiency test in 2001, as well as the following three tests in 2002-2004, which caused a lot of problems to language learners and examinees of language proficiency tests.

In order to unify such orthographic systems, the CIP called for a meeting on April 16, 2003. Yet the expectation was not actualized because of the disagreement among some aboriginal representatives. The CIP thus called for another meeting two years later; i.e., on June 25, 2005. This time, through more efforts and negotiation among indigenous peoples themselves, certain agreement was successfully reached. On December 15 of the same year, the MOE and the CIP co-declared sets of writing systems for all the aboriginal languages. These are the official writing systems of indigenous languages, which are and will continue to be adapted in designing aboriginal language textbooks and language proficiency tests.

The official writing systems of indigenous languages utilize Romanization symbols with the following reasons (Huang 2000: 10):

- (1) The adaptation of Romanization symbols in compiling or writing textbooks makes it possible for all the peoples in the country and/or foreigners to learn these languages, which may further help promote academic interactions nationally and internationally.
- (2) The use of Romanization symbols is more accessible to modern word processors.
- (3) Most priests in native tribes have been utilizing Romanization symbols in the teaching of these indigenous languages. The use of Romanization symbols then allows them to continue helping teach the named languages.
- (4) Because of the limited time given to indigenous language teaching per week, elementary school students are not expected to master all the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The main goal of teaching indigenous languages to elementary school students is to strengthen their listening and speaking abilities of their native languages. Consequently, these students do not need to learn or memorize these symbols, and will not mix these symbols with Chinese phonetic symbols (zhu4-yin1 fu2-hao4).

3.2 Development of indigenous language textbooks

Following the outlines of compiling and editing aboriginal language textbooks designed in 1993-1994, the MOE entrusted aborigines and scholars with the task of developing eleven 4-volume sets of different indigenous language textbooks for elementary school aborigines between 1995 and 1999. In 2002, due to the policy change (i.e. the teaching of aboriginal languages starting from the first grade instead of the third grade), indigenous language textbooks for the first and second graders were needed. The MOE and the CIP thus co-entrusted the Center for Aboriginal Languages Cultures Education, National Chengchi University, with the mission of re-designing thirty-eight 9-volume sets of aboriginal language textbooks within three years (i.e. between 2002 and 2005). Currently, the nine volumes of each set are available on line⁵. However, as for their hard copies, only the first three volumes are ready.

In addition to the above-mentioned language textbooks, there have been some other teaching materials designed by native speakers, priests, teachers and/or staff members in schools, with or without the assistance of linguistic scholars and researchers. However, certain problems have been encountered regarding the orthographic systems adapted in these textbooks and the contents of these materials.⁶ For instance, some materials had their contents limited to introduction of phonetic symbols, vocabulary items, and pronunciation drills, making it difficult for language teachers to design interesting and varying teaching activities. Some textbooks did not follow the 'from easy/simple to difficult/complicated' principle, hence causing presenting problems to language teachers. Some textbooks had quite a few typos and errors.

The situation has recently improved somewhat, due to the involvement of language teachers, linguistic scholars and experienced material designers. Various categories have been included, such as dialogs, reading, pattern practice, songs, games, role plays, and listening/oral/written exercises, and more daily-life experiences have been included in such materials; consequently, different interesting teaching activities can be utilized so as to activate students' natural curiosity and to increase their motivation of learning their own native languages. Besides, more and more sequential and systematic materials have been produced, from the beginning level, to the intermediate, and to the advanced one.

However, it is noticed that the thirty-eight, 9-volume textbooks, as co-entrusted by the MOE and the CIP mentioned above, seem to have adopted the Chinese' thoughts, logic and culture, and appear to be more like translation work of Chinese textbooks. The editors representing different tribes have been echoing such problems and have demanded to include more of their own cultural information instead. Many native language teachers have pointed out typos, structural errors, inadequate sequence of material presentations, inappropriate

⁵ The address of this website is http://www.alcd.nccu.edu.tw/index_0.html.

⁶ In 2000 a research project was granted by the CIP (2000.9-2000.12) in reviewing and evaluating the textbooks on Formosan languages. Please refer to Huang 2001b for a summary of the research result.

illustration, etc., requesting that the MOE take an action in revising these textbooks (cf. Hsu 2007, Kao 2007, Wu 2007).

3.3 Training of indigenous language teachers

It is well-known that a competent language teacher needs to meet three qualifications:

- (1) a good command of the target language, i.e. he/she has to be a fluent speaker of the named language;
- (2) familiarity with the structures of the target language; and
- (3) familiarity with the language teaching methodology.

It is also noticed that insufficiency of competent aboriginal language teachers has always been a big problem in Taiwan. At present, certified teachers, students' parents, priests, elders from the native tribes are some major sources of aboriginal language teachers. Yet not all the above-mentioned individuals are competent language teachers, because:

- (1) they may be enthusiastic and willing to help teach aboriginal languages, but not all of them are fluent speakers of the target languages; or
- (2) even if they are fluent speakers, they may not be familiar with the structures of these languages; or
- (3) even if they know the structures of the target languages, they may neither be familiar with the language teaching methodology, nor be able to teach students efficiently.

All in all, competent language teachers are really hard to find. In order to train more capable language teachers, the MOE and the CIP provided training camps for certified school teachers and for general public, respectively.

3.3.1 Training camp for certified school teachers

The training camp for certified school teachers was sponsored by the MOE and was only offered once in 2001. It was a 72-hour program, including introductory courses related to Taiwan aborigines' cultures and languages (18 hours), Formosan linguistics (22 hours), and language educational courses (32 hours), as shown below.

Table 1. The MOE 72-Hour Aboriginal Language Teachers' Training Program

| Course Titles | Hours |
|--|-------|
| (1) Taiwan Aborigines' Cultures and Languages | 18 |
| Introduction to Formosan Languages | 2 |
| Introduction to Taiwan's Indigenous People: A Cultural Perspective | 4 |
| Literature of Taiwan Aborigines | 4 |
| History of Taiwan Aborigines | 4 |
| Performing Arts of Taiwan Aborigines | 4 |
| (2) Formosan Linguistics | 22 |
| Formosan Phonology and Writing System | 8 |
| Formosan Morphology and Syntax | 10 |
| Linguistic Fieldwork | 4 |
| (3) Language Educational Courses | 32 |
| Aboriginal Language Teaching Materials and Methods | 8 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Development of Aboriginal Language Materials | 4 |
| Design of Aboriginal Language Teaching Activities | 4 |
| Aboriginal Language Teaching Observation and Practicum | 8 |
| Application of Media in Aboriginal Language Teaching | 4 |
| Aboriginal Language Assessment | 4 |
| Total | 72 |

The result of this training program seemed rather unsatisfactory because of the following factors:

- (1) Some of the trainees were unable to speak the aboriginal languages, not to mention to teach the languages;
- (2) The training program lasted only 72 hours, not long enough for the trainees to acquire necessary knowledge to become competent language teachers;
- (3) The trainees' school administrators were not very supportive and even discouraged these trainees to receive such in-service training; some trainees were asked to make up the 72 hours of class time after the training program was over.

3.3.2 Training camps for general public

Several training camps for the general public were held by the CIP. As declared in 2001, the original purpose/goal for the CIP to give the proficiency tests of aboriginal language (PTAL) was to encourage fluent aboriginal language speakers to serve as substitute teachers and to help teach these aboriginal languages. So after holding the first PTAL in 2001, the CIP offered a 36-hour substitute aboriginal language teachers' training program⁷ to those who passed the test. The CIP program was in fact a short version of the MOE one, as shown below:

Table 2. The CIP 36-Hour Substitute Aboriginal Language Teachers' Training Program

| Course Titles | Hours |
|--|-------|
| Introduction to Taiwan Languages | 2 |
| Formosan Phonology and Writing System | 8 |
| Formosan Morphology and Syntax | 10 |
| Aboriginal Language Teaching Materials and Methods | 8 |
| Aboriginal Language Teaching Observation and Practicum | 8 |
| Total | 36 |

Unfortunately, most of the aborigines taking part in the 36-hour training program were not accepted to help teach aboriginal languages in elementary schools (cf. Huang 2003). Such an outcome was very disappointing and the teaching situation of the aboriginal languages was not improved either. More communication and cooperation between different government divisions seemed appropriate.

⁷ Furthermore, the CIP also offered aboriginal language teachers with workshops on aboriginal language teaching demonstrations so that participants could share experiences, which might help to make their teaching be more motivating and effective.

3.3.3 Other camps

The purposes/goals of the 2002-2004 PTAL's were modified and were not limited to the provision of substitute aboriginal language teachers, in the hope that more and more competent speakers could help preserve and promote the aboriginal languages in their communities. Consequently, the CIP offered more different training programs (besides the training camp of substitute aboriginal language teachers), and the aborigines passing the PTAL could decide on which camp to take part in, according to their own interests, capabilities, and even purposes. Below were the training programs offered in addition to the training camp of aboriginal language teachers:

- (1) training camp of aboriginal language material developers/designers
- (2) training camp of dictionary compilers
- (3) training camp of cultural workers
- (4) training camp of computer-media workers

Though most of the trainees indicated that they learned a lot from the training camps and were better equipped and ready to help preserve and promote the aboriginal languages and cultures, such manpower has not been properly utilized yet, which somehow seems to be a waste.

3.4 Teaching of indigenous languages in elementary schools and its evaluation

Atayal was the first aboriginal language that was officially taught in school, back to 1990. Furthermore, the teaching of the aboriginal languages in primary and secondary schools began to receive its official status in September 2001. However, the current situation of aboriginal language teaching still faces some difficulties, as presented below:

- (1) Only 40 minutes are provided for teaching the aboriginal languages per week; consequently, not much learning can be achieved.
- (2) Some schools still intentionally avoid teaching the named languages, even though these schools are in aboriginal communities or they have quite a few students that are aborigines (and hence the named languages are supposed to be taught). And sometimes even if these languages are taught, they are taught during so-called bad or less popular time slots, such as the one before or after regular school hours, or right after the lunch breaks.
- (3) Some schools, while teaching aboriginal languages, combine students of different classes, students of different grades, or even students of different tribes because of insufficient competent language teachers or financial support. Some schools, because of insufficient space, have the aboriginal language classes taught in such inappropriate places like the school playground or under stairs; constant disturbance during teaching is common.
- (4) Governmental or administrative support and cooperation, as expected, is rather important. The MOE, the CIP, and county or municipal governments are major funding institutions for teaching aboriginal languages. However, funding is often hard to obtain; school

administrators and teachers always complain that funds are insufficient. As a result, only schools that have received full financial support from local governments can successfully and continuously teach aboriginal languages. Without such financial aid and administrative support, the teaching of aboriginal languages can never last long.

(5) English also started being taught as a required subject in elementary schools at the same time. Thus, it has been another problem because parents are unwilling to let their children spend that much time studying the aboriginal languages, when comparing the social status and economic functions of these languages to English.

To conclude the discussion, it has been observed that the current aboriginal language teaching situation in Taiwan can be categorized as follows: (1) insufficient financial and administrative support from the government; (2) insufficient instructional time; (3) lack of well-designed teaching materials; and (4) lack of competent language teachers.

3.5 Administration of proficiency test of indigenous languages

As stated earlier, the teaching of aboriginal languages began officially to be included in the course curricula of the primary and secondary education in 2001. Observing the strong need of competent aboriginal language teachers, the CIP began to provide accreditation of the aboriginal languages proficiency in the same year, in the hope that fluent aboriginal language speakers, though not certified elementary school teachers but willing to teach aboriginal young generation, may serve as substitute aboriginal language teachers after passing the test and receiving certificates.

The proficiency tests of aboriginal language (PTAL) sponsored by the CIP can be classified into three types; namely, recommendation, self-designed aboriginal language materials, and oral & written test:

- (1) To take the first type, natives over 55 years old may be recommended for the accreditation because of the fluency of their native languages and profound knowledge of their cultures;
- (2) To be qualified for the second type, one must present their self- or co-designed native language material(s) for reviewing;
- (3) People taking the oral and written test need to receive 140 points (out of 200 points) in order to pass the test.

Between 2001 and 2004, four PTAL's were held. The number of people registering in the test and the actual passing rate each year is given below.

Table 3. PTAL in 2001-2004

| year language | 2001 | | | 2002 | | | 2003 | | | 2004 | | |
|------------------|----------|------|------|----------|------|------|----------|------|------|----------|------|------|
| | register | pass | % | register | pass | % | register | pass | % | register | pass | % |
| Amis | 1344 | 993 | 73.9 | 1126 | 878 | 78.0 | 734 | 483 | 65.8 | 329 | 201 | 61.1 |
| Atayal | 151 | 119 | 78.8 | 175 | 133 | 76.0 | 157 | 85 | 54.1 | 87 | 48 | 55.2 |
| Paiwan | 348 | 220 | 63.2 | 471 | 250 | 53.1 | 219 | 131 | 59.8 | 115 | 58 | 50.4 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|------|
| Bunun | 553 | 439 | 79.4 | 417 | 290 | 69.5 | 211 | 111 | 52.6 | 145 | 89 | 61.4 |
| Puyuma | 64 | 51 | 79.7 | 35 | 25 | 71.4 | 43 | 27 | 62.8 | 19 | 12 | 63.2 |
| Rukai | 121 | 83 | 68.6 | 111 | 78 | 70.3 | 63 | 43 | 68.3 | 52 | 30 | 57.7 |
| Tsou | 91 | 62 | 68.1 | 57 | 33 | 57.9 | 28 | 19 | 67.9 | 19 | 8 | 42.1 |
| Saisiyat | 182 | 115 | 63.2 | 7 | 3 | 42.6 | 9 | 1 | 11.1 | 13 | 6 | 46.2 |
| Yami | 54 | 43 | 79.6 | 25 | 15 | 60.0 | 29 | 19 | 65.5 | 27 | 12 | 44.4 |
| Thao | 4 | 1 | 25.0 | 7 | 0 | 0.0 | 4 | 2 | 50.0 | 1 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Kavalan | 21 | 20 | 95.2 | 9 | 7 | 77.8 | 9 | 7 | 77.8 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Seediq | 23 | 11 | 47.8 | 153 | 104 | 68.0 | 111 | 63 | 56.8 | 18 | 9 | 50.0 |
| Truku | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 86 | 53 | 61.6 |
| Total | 2956 | 2157 | 72.9 | 2593 | 1816 | 70.0 | 1617 | 991 | 61.3 | 911 | 526 | 57.7 |

While examining and evaluating the effects of the four PTAL's, we have observed the following situations:

- (1) As shown in the four tables above, not only the exam takers decreased every year (i.e. $2956 > 2591 > 1617 > 911$), the passing rate also seemed to decline as well (i.e. $72.9\% > 70.0\% > 61.30\% > 57.70\%$). This might indicate that better and more competent language speakers have already taken the tests; the later examinees' language proficiency is more likely not as good as the precedents. If this is the case (that is, only 5490 [= 2157 + 1816 + 991 + 526] out of 450,000 aborigines are good speakers and have passed the test), the government should take an immediate action in order to preserve and promote these aboriginal languages.
- (2) The PTAL was administered in only one signal level in 2001-2004; it thus failed to differentiate different degrees of examinees' language competence, not to mention whether the examinees had equal competence in listening, speaking, reading, and writing components. Sometimes it was noticed that an examinee with fluent speaking ability actually could not even read the written exam questions; sometimes an examinee fails to communicate freely with other speakers, not to mention whether he/she possesses profound cultural knowledge. Examinees like these are still awarded certificates indicating that they have passed the PTAL. Apparently, the PTAL deserved further modifications and improvement.

With the above observations, the CIP entrusted some scholars to work on a research project, attempting to find the possibility of setting up a PTAL with different levels and with different linguistic skills being focused on, and hoping that the future PTAL could be used in the following areas, among many others:

- (1) to be used by individuals to determine their level of aboriginal language proficiency;
- (2) to be used by government institutions that deal with aborigines' affairs to assist in the selection and placement of employees;
- (3) to be used by the MOE to grant additional scores to aboriginal students when applying for

admission to or taking entrance examinations to public high schools, vocational schools and universities; and

(4) to be used by the MOE and the CIP to examine applicants for government scholarships that support overseas study.

In 2006, between January and June, the CIP called for the participation of different indigenous peoples, with an attempt to design five-level proficiency tests of aboriginal languages. As a result, exam questions of five different levels were designed for each aboriginal dialect. However, such a work was forced to suspend because of an unexpected and more urgent task. That is, the MOE announced that for the aboriginal students who want to enter senior high schools, vocational schools or universities in the year of 2007, they needed to pass the PTAL in order to gain 35% extra grades of their entrance exam scores. Consequently, the CIP had to make up exam questions for these students right away, and there seems to be no definite date for the CIP to re-design the five-level proficiency tests of aboriginal languages.

The students' PTAL mentioned above was given on March 10, 2007. The number of students registering in this test and the actual passing rate is given in Table2.

Table 4. Students' PTAL in 2007

| language \ year | 2007 | | |
|-----------------|----------|------|------|
| | register | pass | % |
| Amis | 2927 | 2137 | 73.0 |
| Atayal | 1383 | 1124 | 81.3 |
| Paiwan | 1608 | 1257 | 78.2 |
| Bunun | 1103 | 914 | 82.9 |
| Puyuma | 213 | 153 | 71.8 |
| Rukai | 214 | 174 | 81.2 |
| Tsou | 103 | 81 | 78.6 |
| Saisiyat | 80 | 44 | 55.0 |
| Yami | 85 | 75 | 88.2 |
| Thao | 11 | 5 | 45.5 |
| Kavalan | 20 | 14 | 70.0 |
| Seediq | 240 | 187 | 77.9 |
| Truku | 534 | 415 | 77.7 |
| Total | 8521 | 6580 | 77.2 |

3.6 Others

Besides finalizing the aboriginal languages' writing systems, holding proficiency tests of aboriginal languages, and implementing training camps mentioned above, more efforts have been made in building manpower databanks, establishing websites, providing services relevant to indigenous scholarship and information, providing education-promotional courses,

professional counseling and evaluation, and producing and broadcasting indigenous radio and TV programs, etc.

4. A six-year language revitalization program

Since 2003, the CIP has concentrated on a six-year language program. This section will focus on this six-year (2008-2013) language revitalization program which was proposed by the Council of Indigenous Peoples and was recently approved by the Executive Yuan. The program consists of ten major tasks, including (1) establishing indigenous language-related policies, (2) setting up indigenous language promotion organizations, (3) compiling indigenous language dictionaries and materials, (4) advocating indigenous language research and development, (5) training indigenous language promoters, (6) promoting the use of indigenous languages at home and in communities, (7) developing multimedia and on-line teaching/learning of indigenous languages, (8) administering proficiency test of indigenous languages, (9) collecting and compiling indigenous peoples' songs and lyrics, and (10) translating important policies and regulations, and training translators of indigenous languages. The budget for this six-year program estimates NT\$ 719,000,000. A more detailed description of the work to be accomplished in each task is given below.

4.1 Establishing indigenous language-related policies (NT\$ 500,000)

- (1) establishing 'Indigenous Language Development Acts' which concern issues relating to the preservation, continuation and development of indigenous languages;
- (2) revising 'Proficiency Tests of Aboriginal Languages' to set up different-level exam questions;
- (3) revising 'Financial Support to Indigenous Linguistic Camps and Publications' to unify the items of support.

4.2 Setting up indigenous language promotion organizations (NT\$ 30,000,000)

- (1) setting up 'Indigenous Language Development Committee' to be in charge of issues related to indigenous language development;
- (2) assisting local governments in establishing 'Indigenous Language Promotion Committee' for each ethnic group;
- (3) granting institutions or associations in establishing 'Center for Indigenous Language Promotion and Development' to help handle tasks relating to the preservation, continuation and development of indigenous languages; for example, indigenous language proficiency tests, training camps, and dictionary compiling.

4.3 Compiling indigenous language dictionaries and materials (NT\$ 84,000,000)

- (1) inviting scholars and language teachers to form 'Promotion Committee of Compiling Indigenous Language Dictionaries and Materials' to take charge of compiling indigenous language dictionaries and materials;

- (2) compiling 15 indigenous language dictionaries within six years to help preserve these languages and to serve as references and tools to language teachers and interested learners;
- (3) developing indigenous language curricula and teaching materials to increase language teaching efficiency;
- (4) setting up criteria for evaluating indigenous language textbooks to help textbook designers in compiling materials and indigenous peoples in textbook choosing textbooks;
- (5) holding training camps for indigenous language textbook designers to design textbooks of better qualities;
- (6) compiling indigenous language textbooks to meet needs of learners of different language abilities, which may include orthography textbooks, conversation textbooks, simplified readers, and cultural readers.

4.4 Advocating indigenous language research and development (NT\$ 54,000,000)

- (1) investigating and analyzing the dialectal differences within each indigenous language to justify the distributions of the indigenous languages and their dialects;
- (2) investigating the language use and attitude of indigenous peoples to understand their language abilities and to help design language revitalization policy;
- (3) encouraging the universities that have department/institute/centers of indigenous peoples and languages to offer courses relating to indigenous studies to help train indigenous language teachers;
- (4) granting institutions, associations or individuals to publish works relating to indigenous languages;
- (5) holding indigenous language teaching demonstrations, academic conferences and international activities to increase interactions with outside world;
- (6) publishing series of books on indigenous language development, and holding conferences accordingly.

4.5 Training indigenous language promoters (NT\$ 33,000,000)

- (1) encouraging universities to offer courses relating to indigenous peoples' cultures, indigenous languages, and language teaching;
- (2) holding indigenous language teachers' training camps, including both basic and advanced training programs, in-service training program, indigenous language learning program (listening, speaking, reading and writing skills), indigenous culture program, and the like;
- (3) holding training camps on indigenous language writing systems to produce competent indigenous language promoters.

4.6 Promoting the use of indigenous languages at home and in communities (NT\$ 165,000,000)

- (1) establishing 'Indigenous Language Advocating Groups' for each ethnic group in their communities to help gather materials inside communities, promote language revitalization, and establish better language learning environments;
- (2) encouraging people to use their mother tongue more constantly, and providing awards to people with better performance;
- (3) revitalizing indigenous language environments by setting up indigenous language classes, indigenous language and culture classes, and indigenous life experiencing camps;
- (4) entrusting or granting some local governments, institutions, churches or schools to establish regional centers to be in charge of supervising, managing and evaluating training programs in those areas;
- (5) providing opportunities for the public to learn indigenous languages;
- (6) assisting institutions, associations or individuals to hold indigenous language training camps and/or to publish their works.

4.7 Developing multimedia and on-line teaching/learning of indigenous languages (NT\$ 30,000,000)

- (1) developing television indigenous language teaching programs;
- (2) developing on-line indigenous language testing systems;
- (3) developing indigenous language teaching media.

4.8 Administering proficiency test of indigenous languages (NT\$ 210,000,000)

- (1) administering proficiency test of indigenous languages for aborigines;
- (2) administering proficiency test of indigenous languages for aboriginal students.

4.9 Collecting and compiling indigenous peoples' songs and lyrics (NT\$ 60,000,000)

- (1) collecting traditional and modern indigenous peoples' songs and lyrics;
- (2) publishing books relating indigenous studies;
- (3) publishing digital software.

4.10 Translating important policies and regulations, and training translators of indigenous languages (NT\$ 52,000,000)

- (1) holding training camps of translators of indigenous languages;
- (2) coining new words and establishing corpus of indigenous languages;
- (3) translating important policies and regulations.

5. Further suggestions

As discussed above, aboriginal languages have been taught as elementary schools since 2001, aboriginal language proficiency tests have been held annually since 2001, and different training camps have been offered as well. However, there is still more to be done in order to preserve and promote aboriginal languages in Taiwan. Below are proposed three activities that may be done for the named purpose.

5.1 A formal college training program for aboriginal language teachers

In spite of the efforts made by the MOE and the CIP mentioned in Section 3.3.1, it is believed that a formal college training program for aboriginal language teachers is still strongly desired. Below I will propose a tripartite training program for aboriginal language teachers, in the hope that some universities (or colleges) may adopt it and will be able to produce competent aboriginal language teachers in the near future.

As stated earlier, a competent language teacher needs to meet three qualifications: (1) having a good command of the target language, (2) being familiar with the structure of the target language, and (3) being familiar with the language teaching methodology. Furthermore, a language can never be independent of culture. Consequently, the formal college training program proposed here includes thirty-eight credits that can be further divided into three parts: courses related to Formosan language structures and cultures, courses on Formosan languages, and related educational courses.

Table 5. Courses related to Formosan language structures and cultures (20 credits)

| Course Titles | Credits | Hours | Notes |
|--|-----------|------------|---|
| Introduction to Formosan Languages | 4 | 72 | Including phonetics, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, etc. |
| Introduction to Taiwan's Indigenous People: A Cultural Perspective | 2 | 36 | |
| Literature of Taiwan Aborigines | 2 | 36 | |
| History of Taiwan Aborigines | 2 | 36 | |
| Arts of Taiwan Aborigines | 2 | 36 | Including Formosan indigenous music |
| Education of Taiwan Aborigines | 2 | 36 | |
| Ecology of Taiwan Aborigines | 2 | 36 | |
| Related Issues of Taiwan Aborigines | 2 | 36 | Including issues on indigenous religions, spatial geography, heritage management, museum management, cultural revival |
| Introduction to Field Methods | 2 | 36 | Including practice on orthographic system and sound transcription |
| Subtotal | 20 | 360 | |

Table 6. Language courses (8 credits)

| Course Title | Credits | Hours | Notes |
|-------------------|----------|------------|---|
| Formosan Language | 8 | 144 | A 2-year (4-semester) course on the same language, including its pronunciation, listening comprehension, conversation, reading and writing/ composition |
| Subtotal | 8 | 144 | |

Table 7. Related educational courses (10 credits)

| Course Titles | Credits | Hours | Notes |
|---|-----------|------------|--|
| Language Teaching Materials and Methods | 2 | 36 | Including methodologies on teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing |
| Language Teaching Observation and Practicum | 2 | 36 | |
| Language Assessment | 2 | 36 | |
| Curricula and Teaching Activity Design | 2 | 36 | |
| Multicultural Education | 2 | 36 | |
| Subtotal | 10 | 180 | |

5.2 Alternative bilingual education for minority students

Considering the current situations of aboriginal languages being used in aborigines' communities, we may note that some of the communities definitely preserve their languages better than the others. These communities are more likely located in rural areas. Most people, including children, in such environments are able to use their native languages to communicate with each other; Mandarin Chinese is considered to be the second language which is acquired. It is possible to construct a learning environment within such a village and community, and elementary schools and even preschools should be allowed to carry on bilingual education. In other words, native languages could be used as instructional tools, rather than merely a school subject.

The situation is different within environments where aboriginal languages are no longer the aborigines' first languages. Such areas tend to be urban areas. It has been noted that recently more and more aborigines, about one-fourth of the population, have left their hometowns and searched for jobs in metropolitan areas. As expected, more and more of their children have no opportunities to learn or acquire their mother tongue. One possible solution is that the government should have aboriginal languages (1) taught either during the weekdays or on the weekends; (2) taught to small classes, even on one-to-one base, or to classes composed students coming from different schools; or (3) taught to students through electronic media. In other words, aboriginal languages should be taught to students, using as many avenues as possible, before these languages disappear completely.

5.3 Learning minority language during pre-school years

Although aboriginal languages were taught in elementary schools since September of 2001, research indicates that a child should begin learning one's native language in early childhood.

The Maori experience in New Zealand is a successful example (Huang 1999) which deserves our attention. The Maori people implemented a native language immersion program

in order for their preschoolers to be saturated and to learn in a home-like environment. Similarly, the learning of native languages in Taiwan should not be confined to just the first graders in elementary schools; it should begin in kindergarten and nursery schools. Elders in tribal communities should be encouraged to help teach their youngsters their native languages and cultures, and provide language learning environment similar to ‘language nest’ in New Zealand.

6. Concluding remarks

This paper has presented some governmental strategies, especially those utilized by the Ministry of Education and the Council of Indigenous Peoples, Executive Yuan, in preserving and promoting these endangered languages. It began with a brief discussion of the past and current strategies (1995-2006), including: (1) establishment of writing systems of indigenous languages, (2) compiling of indigenous language textbooks, (3) training of indigenous language teachers, (4) teaching of indigenous languages in elementary schools and its evaluation, and (5) administration of proficiency test of indigenous languages.

The paper has also presented a 6-year (2008-2013) language revitalization program proposed by the Council of Indigenous Peoples. The program consists of ten major tasks, including: (1) establishing indigenous language-related policies, (2) setting up indigenous language promotion organizations, (3) compiling indigenous language dictionaries and materials, (4) advocating indigenous language research and development, (5) training indigenous language promoters, (6) promoting the use of indigenous languages at home and in communities, (7) developing multimedia and on-line teaching/learning of indigenous languages, (8) administering proficiency test of indigenous languages, (9) collecting and compiling indigenous peoples’ songs and lyrics, and (10) translating important policies and regulations, and training translators of indigenous languages.

Further preservation and promotion can be accomplished through a formal college training program for aboriginal language teachers, an alternative form of bilingual education for aboriginal students in rural and urban areas, and minority language learning during pre-school years. It is hoped that the aboriginal languages and cultures in Taiwan can be preserved and further developed through the efforts of government and aborigines, and that Taiwan will become a true multilingual and multicultural society in which all ethnic groups will appreciate each other’s culture and live purposefully in the global communities.

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