

A Lecturer's Applications of Translingualism in a Multiethnic Classroom Environment to Help Students to Cope with Multiethnic Situations in Positive and Fruitful ways

Tung Chiou Huang^{1,*} and Akiyo Pahalaan²

¹Former Chair, Institute & Department of Languages & Cultures,
FoGuang University, Taiwan
Director, Aboriginal Centre for Transmitting Languages & Cultures, Taiwan

²PhD. National Centre for Language and Literacy, University of Reading
Great Britain

*Corresponding author's email: tchuang [AT] mail.fgu.edu.tw

ABSTRACT---- *Taiwan, once called Formosa (meaning beautiful island in Portuguese), is a country with a diverse ethno-linguistic heritage, and therefore it is a multiracial, multicultural and multilingual country, the society of which consists of more than 16 different aboriginal communities in addition to majority Han peoples. This paper employs the phenomenological method, using natural and qualitative description to explore how the different cultural backgrounds of senior high school students in Taiwan in a multilingual classroom that promoted multilingualism come to value other languages spoken in their class or in their actual communities.*

Evidence supporting students' attitudes and motivation in learning community languages and English, came from close analysis of interactional patterns with peers and teachers in classes and informal settings, and from students' explanations of their actual school experiences in group work and interviews with students themselves, parents, community figures, and educational leaders over a four-month period during the process of the course.

In a word, being in a multiethnic classroom environment, a lecturer may apply the theme of translingualism to help students to cope with multiethnic situations in positive and fruitful ways; furthermore, it has the potential to promote multilingualism and pluralism in minority and majority group students who study several languages at a time in a multilingual classroom.

Keywords--- multilingualism, ethno-linguistic, multilingual classroom, translingualism, multiculturalism

1. INTRODUCTION

As in numerous other countries, Taiwan, once called Formosa (meaning beautiful island in Portuguese) is a country with a diverse ethno-linguistic heritage. There are more than ten aboriginal groups in addition to the three Han Chinese majority (which consists of Hoklo or Minnan group speakers, Hakka speakers, and Holam in Amis language/the latest immigrants). For the aboriginal peoples, all Han peoples have been called Payrang (meaning the invaders) in some aboriginal languages.

The present paper examines how the different cultural backgrounds of the students studying in universities in a multilingual classroom that promoted multilingualism come to value all languages spoken in their communities. It also tries to dispel the myth that schools and other symbolic institutions contribute to the reproduction of inequality by devising a curriculum that rewards the "cultural capital" of mainstream groups, while devaluing other groups or non-mainstream forms of knowledge.

2. THE RATIONAL FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

The largest community of aboriginal peoples in Taiwan is the Amis ethnicity, and with a population of over 534,000 in 2015, they form over 38% of the 16 different aboriginal peoples living on the Taiwan Island and Orchid Isle. I belong to this ethnicity, born on October 18, 1954. My native name is Akiyo Pahalaan, and my Chinese name is Huang, Tung-Chiou. As I grew up in a multicultural environment, I speak aside from my native Amis language, Hoklo (one of the majority languages in Taiwan), Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and English. Before being granted the master degree at Graduate Institute of Multicultural Education of National Hualien Teachers College in 1999, I had taught Nature Science

in primary school for five years and taught English in high school for the later 15 years. After graduating from the University of Reading as Doctor of Philosophy from in July 2002, I worked as an assistant professor at The National Dong Hwa University from then to July of 2008, and was promoted to be an associate professor in 2009. My fifth book appeared under the title “LALENGAWAN: Language Revitalisation” in 2003, a sixth “FUCACING: English-Mediated Orthography” in 2005, and a seventh “PARANAAN: Let Our Mother Tongues Be Part of Our Daily Lives” in 2006. Since then I focus my study on “The True Beauty of Taiwan: Translingualism,” examining how the students in a community of Taiwan hailing from different cultural backgrounds and attending multilingual classrooms that promoted bi/multilingualism can come to value all languages spoken in a community. In 2010, a project offered by Ministry of Education helped me finish working with six different native ethnic adjunct professors, and we published their masterpieces of activating and cultivating all languages spoken in Hualien, called “The Heritage of the Six Aboriginal Languages and Cultures in Hualien Area”. At present, I have been making my full contribution to language revitalization through learning and teaching in a multilingual classroom, and the masterwork of the students from the course of “Aboriginal Music with Dances and Transmission” was published at the end of August in 2016.

During my course and fieldwork, students and I took advantage of the opportunity to learn more about languages spoken in our own communities, and shared in the responsibility of preserving and revitalizing endangered cultural heritage and languages.

A. Goals and Focuses of the Study

There is a growing feeling everywhere, especially in Taiwan, that younger generations should be given an opportunity to master their own indigenous languages, and share in the responsibility for their learning, preserving and revitalising their endangered cultural heritage. I achieved this by developing a language awareness programme consisting of ten lessons delivered over the course of ten weeks as part of the English curriculum.

Language awareness activities differ from conventional language teaching in a number of important ways (Edwards & Redfern, 1992: 59; Lindholm, 1994; Gorter, 2001: 219). The aim is not to teach other languages formally, but to draw student attention to aspects of language such as the sound system, the grammar or the political context in which they operate, drawing whenever possible on students’ existing knowledge. The French term for language awareness, *sensibilisation* (or sensitisation) offers useful clues as to these goals. Language awareness activities are designed to sensitise students to issues around language rather than teaching them the languages in any kind of structured or systematic way. The aims of the study are as follows:

- 1) to empower the students to be educated for national and international reality, characterized by the unprecedented diversity of culture and language of the 21st century.
- 2) to develop curriculum content and teaching approaches, preparatory to the introduction of other languages at the senior high school level.
- 3) to evaluate this teaching through action research.

B. Note on Terminology

A. Definition of indigenous and aboriginal languages

The terminology relating to the use of languages in multilingual contexts is often confusing, reflecting both the complexity and diversity of different situations. In North America, for instance, the term ‘heritage languages’ is used to describe both indigenous languages and immigrant languages. In the UK and Australia, the term ‘community languages’ is used to describe more recently arrived immigrant languages, but not indigenous languages such as Australian Aboriginal languages or established languages such as Welsh and Gaelic (Edwards, 1998: 8). In the context of Taiwan, I have chosen to use the term ‘indigenous languages’ to describe any language spoken by inhabitants in any community on the island other than the official language, Mandarin Chinese. Further, I use ‘aboriginal’ languages to refer to the languages spoken by the original inhabitants of Taiwan and to differentiate these speakers, wherever necessary, from speakers of languages from the same language family as Mandarin.

B. Multiculturalism

The goal of Multiculturalism is to integrate and build different ethnic groups into a common civil society. Although each group would be different, the goal would be to create reasonable solutions in considering their needs, and to still establish a sound cooperate society. In the section of Chapter 2, the perspectives of multiculturalism are discussed and the discourse of multiculturalism is analyzed (Gay, 1994; Huang, T-C 2010).

C. Multilingualism

Multilingualism is the complete competence and mastery in several different languages at a time, and those who have complete knowledge and control over several languages expose themselves to multiple languages and become increasingly frequent just because of a need to acquire additional languages for being the survivors in a multilingual surroundings. Multilingualism has been becoming a social phenomenon governed by the needs of globalization and cultural openness. (Edwards, 2008; Edwards & Ngwaru, 2011).

D. Translingualism

This term impressed the author during the course of the Language Acquisition, and the definition of it from Dr. Huang's viewpoint is that the process of being multilingual and multicultural is called translingualism, for a person in a multicultural world must have experienced life in two or more cultures (Personal communication, September 23, 2014). In a word, translingualism lets the peoples all over the world feel that there is a real neighbourhood of speaking different languages at a time (Huang, T-C 2010; Steven G. Kellman, 2000).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Taiwan has always been a multicultural and multilingual society, although open discussion of these questions is a relatively recent development, dating in most cases from the lifting of martial law in 1987. As is the case in other countries around the world, the policy of assimilation has been replaced with multiculturalism, and indigenisation and internationalisation are urged in every sector. The announcement of the new national curriculum affirms that the government of the Republic of China recognizes and values its rich ethnic and racial heritage and gives specific direction to local government to work towards achieving equality in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the country (See Huang, Lillian M. 2001). In the present situation of Taiwan, the aim of local government has been to help build a more inclusive community society based on respect, equality and the full participation of all citizens, regardless of race, ethnic origin, language or religion (Clyne, 1998: 4-29). Literature review looks at the theoretical issues that inform the present study. I first introduce languages and cultures of Taiwan, and then review the literature of multiculturalism and multicultural education.

A. Languages and Cultures of Taiwan

Taiwan has an extremely rich and complex history. In order to provide a context for the discussion which follows, it is helpful to first set out a brief geography and history of the island and then to look in greater detail at the languages and cultures associated with present-day Taiwan and, in particular, the various aboriginal, the Chinese, and the Japanese communities (Iunn, Phek-chhoan 1992; Cheng, Robert L. 1990, 1996: 21). In brief, as Van den Berg (1988: 243) indicates:

Taiwan's historic development has left the country a diverse linguistic heritage. Since the 17th century, Chinese pioneers brought varieties of Southern Min (Hoklo) and Hakka to the island. Japanese colonial rule (1895-1945) introduced the Japanese language and saw the implementation of a policy aimed at the spread of that language. Republican rule led to the spread of Mandarin Chinese.

Because of the rich natural resources and the attractive geographical location close to the Malayan Archipelago, the Chinese mainland, and Japan, Taiwan has attracted diverse peoples and nationalities through the centuries. To be brief, the Taiwanese include speakers of the 16 aboriginal languages, descendants of longstanding Hakka and Hoklo-speaking immigrants to the island, and Mandarin speakers who have arrived from the Mainland in more recent times. In addition, there are also many people who can speak Japanese and English. I describe the main features of each of these groups in turn.

Apply

Ethnicity	Population	Main Characteristics
Hoklo	16,560,000	The Hoklo speakers (also sometimes known as Southern Min or Minnan) who are descendants of the Fukienese who migrated to Taiwan at the end of Ming Dynasty (AD 1368-1644) constitute almost 74 per cent of Taiwan's population. Hoklo is one of the most important varieties of Chinese.
Hakka	3,450,000	The Hakka people believe themselves to be noble pure blooded Han from the Central Plain, migrating to the South at about the third century, and different from the neighbouring people. They have maintained their own distinctive

		language and culture even after centuries of migration.
Amis	172,685	The Amis ethnicity are the largest community of aboriginal peoples in Taiwan. The two most impressive characteristics of the Amis tribe are the matrilineal society and their social organization through male work ranks to carry out community chores more effectively and quickly.
Paiwan	83,391	The folk song “Mayamayaazuwa, Niyamenaazuwa, ‘usinipaciwmonganga (You have been booked by my family, and be happy.)” directly indicates the power of delineated social classes and a social stratification system. The Paiwanlive in the southernmost region of the CentralMountain range.
Atayal	81,348	The Atayalrange over a broad area in the Central Mountains, from Taipei County to Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Taichung, Nantou and Hualien Prefectures, whose distinctive facial tattoos of the men and women are a symbol of beauty and maturity, indicating that they are ready for marriage and learning how take care of their family.
Bunun	48,974	Their staple crop, millet, is a symbol of wealth, which can be brewed into wine for social and religious purposes. There is always an archery competition between April and June, helping train their young in the tactics of hunting, for that is the baisc technique of being survivals in the central mountain areas on Taiwan island.
Rukai	11,408	Their social stratification system, like the Paiwan, is similar to the feudal system that prevailed during the Chou dynasty (AD 1066 to 221BC). They are scattered in the areas of Maolin rural township in KaohsiungCounty, Wutai rural township in Ping-TungCounty, and Peinan rural township in Tai-TungCounty.
Puyuma	10,897	The Puyuma are spread throughout the environs of Peinan rural township and TaitungCity, the society of which was organized according to a matriarchal system with property passed down to daughters, like the Amis ethnicity.
Tsou	6,483	The Tsou are mainly spread throughout Alishan rural township in ChiayiCounty, although small numbers live in Hsinyi rural township in NantouCounty, and in Shanming rural township and Taoyan rural township in KaohsiungCounty. Their men’s house or <i>kuba</i> is well-known, and they are noteworthy for using leather for clothing (Ferrell, 1969: 36-39).
Saisiyat	5,541	The Saisiyatare divided into two communities: North and South. The South Saisiyat are scattered across MiyawliCounty, and in the plain areas alongside the Han people. The North Saisiyatinhabit the mountain areas of the HsinchuCounty. They have a well-developed pantheon.
Tau/Yami	3,337	The Tau live on a small isolated island, called Orchid Isle or Botel Tobago Isle. Fishing plays an important role in their economy, and that is why their many rituals relate to fishing activities (Ferrell, 1969: 58-60). The notion of sharing is their philosophy of life, and the number of doors symbolizes the owner’s social status.
Thao	626	TheThao ethnicity with a dwindling population of 450 in2004, once inhabited the SunMoonLake region in the central mountains. They lived by growing millet, and pounding it to remove its husks with a mortar and different sizes and lengths of pestles, making a specific and elaborate rhythm and sound (Tung, Masegseg C. 1996: 144-147).
Kavalan	1,092	In 2002, the Kavalan, meaning people living on the plain, became the 11th indigenous ethnicity to receive formal designation by the Executive Yuan. Kavalan society is primarily based on matrilineal clans, like the Amis and

		Puyuma. Banana fibers are used to make material for clothing.
Truku	23,492	The Truku ethnicity is located mostly in Hsiou-Lin and Wan-Rong villages of Hualien County, and Ren-Ay Village of Nantou County. In 2003, the Truku became the 12th officially designated indigenous ethnicity in Taiwan. They deeply believe that the ancestral spirits are the guardians of the "gaya" (social systems and orders).
Sakizaya	65	The famous Galiwan incident in 1878, which the Qing then tried to commit genocide of the Sakizaya ethnicity, caused them to hide within the Amis tribes for safety. Since the Sakizayan language is more than 60% different from the Amis language, they became the 13th officially designated indigenous ethnicity in Taiwan.
Seediq	6,000-7,000	The famous aboriginal Taiwanese rebellion against the Japanese in 1930, the Wushe Incident, is about the Seediq uprising against the Japanese. The Seediq live west and northwest of Hualien County and around Wushe in Nantou County. They have been separated into three small groups: Truku, Qetaya and Tuda. They are good at hunting and weaving.
Sa'aruwa	400	Sa'aruwawas were recognized as the 15th ethnicity on 26 June 2014. The Ethnic population was 300 (2000 UNESCO Red Book), but the whole people living at the west central mountains, south and southeast of Minchuan, along Laonung River are fewer than 400. Up to now, there are several alternate names of their ethnicity: La'alua, La'arua, Pachien, Paichien, Rarua, Saarua, Saroa, Shishaban, Sisyaban.
Qanaqanabu	520	Qanaqanabu is the 16th official-recognized ethnicities of Taiwan was on 26 June 2014. Although the Ethnic population was 250 (2000 UNESCO Red Book), yet there are over 520 right, inhabiting the Central, Sanmin Township, Kaohsiung County, Minchuan village area.

Table 1. A Concise Description of 16 Indigenous Ethnicities

The table above provides a brief description and dispersion of minority communities within the island of Taiwan, and it is apparent that multilingualism is a natural product of language spread and development in Taiwan. As we know that an important characteristic of a multilingual society is the allocation of functions and distribution of languages across various domains, but the present generation of Taiwan's aborigines do not understand themselves fully, and know very little about their own cultural heritage. Without distinct aboriginal social structure, language, customs and culture, how could Taiwan make up further promotion its unique cultural scene?

In short, of the ten main aboriginal peoples in Taiwan, six have clan social systems. The Amis and Puyuma societies are matriarchal; the Saisiyat, Bunun, and Tsou are patriarchal societies, and the Atayal are lineal patriarchal. The Yami are organized chiefly around fishing groups. The Rukai and Paiwan societies have strictly delineated social classes, similar to those that prevailed during the Chou dynasty (AD 1066 to 221BC). Each has retained its own distinctive language and culture, although the policy of Mandarinisation described above has resulted in language shift and a move towards what might be described as a cultural leveling.

B. Multiculturalism in the Taiwan Context

The introduction of community or heritage language teaching is just one practical application of a multicultural approach: it acknowledges the existence of ethnic diversity and ensures the rights of individuals to retain their culture, an essential element in full participation in society. Therefore, each ethnic group must not only seek to secure its own place in a pluralistic society, but also try to emphasize respect for different ways of life.

In Taiwan, each culture has a dignity and value which must be preserved and respected, and all members of all groups have the right and duty to develop their own culture. At the same time, however, people in the community as a whole need to find acceptable and practicable ways of reconciling the demands of both unity and diversity (Clyne, 1998; Coleman, 1997: 1-20).

C. Multicultural Education in Taiwan

Taiwanese society in general has been moving towards political democracy, economic freedom, and social liberalization. Against this background, it is possible to argue that there are three main reasons why multicultural education should become an integral part of education in Taiwan: social realities; the influence of culture and ethnicity on human growth and development; and the need for effective teaching and learning.

1. Social realities

As mentioned above, Taiwan is an extremely culturally pluralistic, socially stratified, and racially divided society. Diversity of race, language, culture, ethnicity, social class, and religion is a fundamental feature of interpersonal interactions and community structures. Consequently, consideration of the central role of diversity in education, based on ethnicity, social class, language, culture and economic status is no longer a luxury or a matter of choice – it is arguably a necessity.

The majority of Taiwanese citizens have only a tenuous understanding of the implications of diversity. Stigma and prejudice are as much a feature of Taiwanese society as they are in many others, especially with regard to aboriginal peoples, and stereotypes which portray aborigines as socially deprived, capable only of physical labour, and heavily dependent on alcohol are common (Chen, Yun-Ching, 1997: 7). Multicultural education is thus a potential means for correcting distortions of this kind.

2. The influence of culture and ethnicity on human growth and development

Culture shapes human behaviour, attitudes, and values. As Hernandez (1989: 21-2) points out:

Each is an intertwined system of values, attitudes, beliefs, and norms that give meaning and significance to both individual and collective identity. To varying degrees, all persons are culturally bound and conditioned. Within a particular culture, they derive a sense of identity and belonging, a guide for behaviour.

A person's humanity, then, cannot be isolated or divorced from his or her culture or ethnicity. Multicultural education has the potential to make students more conscious of how culture shapes their attitudes, values, and behaviours and more aware that human beings are products of their cultures and live within given value and symbol systems. Acknowledging and respecting one another – to be fully human – requires mutual understanding and appreciation based on cultural understanding (Gay, 1991).

3. The need for effective teaching and learning

Schools are expected to play a central role in cultural socialization, transmission, and self-perpetuation. In order to make teaching and learning more accessible and equitable, the cultures of all students need to be more clearly understood (Banks, 1994: 27). If teaching and learning are cultural processes that take place in a social context, students need to know, care and act in ways that will develop and foster a democratic and just society in which all groups experience cultural democracy and cultural empowerment. Students need to develop a commitment to personal, social, and civic action, and the knowledge and skills for participation in effective civic action by accepting multiple cultural perspectives (Banks, 1994: 27; Spindler, 1987b). There is an urgent need to identify strategies for improving the quality of the learning environment in Taiwan schools. Multicultural education offers many interesting possible ways forward.

4. METHODOLOGY

My study employs the phenomenological method, using natural and qualitative description just because phenomenological method makes possible “a descriptive account of the essential structures of the directly given,” consisting of an analysis of experienced reality exactly as it presents itself to consciousness. In other words, phenomenology puts emphasis on the immediacy of experience, setting it off from all assumptions of existence. As Chan (2006: 22) points out the most essential mission for the phenomenological method:

The most basic mission for the phenomenological method is to get the information from individual

experience. The universal structures of experience, or ‘essence,’ for general groups of people are thereby revealed.

The phenomenological method stresses a person’s individual experience and a concept related to it (Cresswell, 2007; Polkinghorn, 1989; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Cresswell (2007:94) indicates,

Phenomenology is a form of study seeks to understand the meaning of experiences of individuals about this phenomenon.

From a phenomenological perspective, the researcher was able to discover the description of people’s experiences and explore the relationship of their internal world related to themselves (Patton, 1987). Van Manen (1990:10) reveals as follows,

Phenomenology asks for the very nature of a phenomenon for that which makes a some-‘thing’ what it is. Listening, observing and conversing are important skills for phenomenological researchers.

From the author’s personal views, making good use of learning English and students’ own native language at a time aimed to facilitate students with more opportunities to learn world and local knowledge by the use of English and their parents’ language in order to identify both language not only as a good vehicle to gain the knowledge of the world but also as a stimulant to realize who they are and what they are. The courses of English and ethnic language learning hoped to raise students’ motivation to learn both languages at the same time under the multilingual situation. During the process of phenomenological method, the author’s study proposed a new affective curriculum on campus in order to motivate students’ learning interests in English and their own native languages, and procedures must be able to improve their both language proficiency at least.

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Issues concerning linguistic diversity have not yet received the attention of researchers in Taiwan. Given the dearth of information on the potential impact of recent changes in educational policy, we are concerned primarily with describing the situation and assessing the impact of curricular reform, with the generation rather than the testing of theory.

Although the main findings of my study can be conveniently reported under three main headings: 1) attitudes towards indigenous languages, 2) issues relating to the use of alphabetic writing, and 3) teaching and learning aspects of the project, yet this paper just focuses on the attitudes involved towards indigenous languages only. Various findings of the project relate to attitudes towards indigenous languages, the most important of which are summarised below in discussions of practical concerns, instrumental and integrative motivation, linguistic and cultural inclusion, and status.

A. Practical Concerns

Two main practical matters of concern emerged in interviews with parents and students. The first affected how much progress the students would be able to make during the course of the language awareness programme, because their exposure would only last for one lesson per week over ten weeks. The second concerned the fact that we would be looking not at one indigenous language but at several and that this would represent an unrealistic learning burden, particularly on Mandarin-speaking students.

In all cases before the start of the course, the learning of indigenous languages would be likely to interfere with the students’ learning of English. Students, for example, indicated such kind of concerns, taking the following written comment offered in the fourth period:

I must say that we feel that there is too much for us to have to learn on a daily basis. For most of the students studying English every day takes most of our time. This is an English course, and we only have a limited number of lessons to get through everything. For example, the test at the end of the month is always on five lessons of the textbook, one or two chapters of the grammar textbook, four chapters of conversation practice, and at least two on outside reading. What we learned about indigenous languages is not included in the test. Not only does it stand in the way of our learning English, but it’s an additional burden and a waste of our time.

There was evidence, however, of a considerable softening of attitudes over time. In the seventh period, for instance, a student admitted the following to other members of his group:

My parents didn’t think it was a good idea to learn other languages, but I must say that it looks as though I *can* learn other languages from you just through talking together.

B. The Instrumental Value of Language

In reality, we can make a distinction between instrumental and integrative motivation for language learning (see also Gardner, 1996; Ellis, 2001; Li, Da-Guo, 2001: 100-107): students driven by instrumental motives see language learning as a way of enhancing their personal life chances; students driven by integrative motives associate the benefits of language learning with greater integration into the community linked with the target language.

Most students, parents and community figures expressed strong reservations about the instrumental value of indigenous languages in a world where most intergroup communication can be achieved either through English or Mandarin. In the fourth period, one of the students made the following comment:

As Wei-Zhi said, I think it is useless to learn indigenous languages, because English is the main language of communication for conferences and international events all over the world. The world is getting smaller and smaller but there are too many languages. This leads to poor communication, cultural polarization and conflict. In Taiwan, we speak Mandarin, but English is used all over the world.

Parents' viewpoints were similarly negative. One parent explained that English is an international language which has become indispensable for life in the new century, and for competition in modern society. He expressed concern that learning indigenous languages would leave our children at the starting line and act as a barrier to increasing productivity. Another parent complained that teaching indigenous languages as part of English lessons was impractical and a waste of time and might result in a lack of cohesiveness on the social level and cognitive deficiencies on an individual level. In a similar vein, a community leader pointed out:

English is the main language for events all over the world, and it can be used for international events, and Mandarin for national ones. Sometimes I think that there is no point in learning different ethnic languages.

The main body of opinion, particularly at the beginning of the course was that languages other than Mandarin and English were of little instrumental value. There was, however, evidence of some awareness of the implications of the new government policy on languages. There is no reason to suppose that official support for the other languages of Taiwan will not create the same kind of economic openings for minority language speakers already reported in countries like Wales and Scotland (Edwards, 2000). One of the community leaders, for instance, made the following observation:

Being able to speak several indigenous languages will become an essential requirement if one wants to be employed in government offices in the future. Multilingual workers work much more efficiently and win lots of trust and admiration from the elders and other citizens. I hope students appreciate the advantages of learning indigenous languages, which not only increase their status or competence in the class, but also enhance employment opportunities in the workplace when embarking on their careers.

C. Integrative Motivation

Although there were strong feelings that the other languages of Taiwan had little instrumental value, awareness of their integrative value was much higher. As the course progressed, students showed a growing awareness of the affective qualities associated with both ethnic Chinese and aboriginal languages. Several ethnic Chinese students, for instance, made reference to the importance of Hoklo and Hakka in their lives:

Hoklo and Hakka are active languages in our present surroundings, and you can hear Hoklo and Hakka in public places, such as on the train, at the station, or airports, especially Hoklo. Sometimes I wonder why so many classmates are not able to speak it well, for it exists in the routine of daily life. My situation is the same as Wen-Jiang. I speak Hoklo well because I learned it from infancy, as my family and friends in the community talk to each other in it. I am pleased to be involved in this course and it is a privilege to demonstrate my language in class.

I am proud of growing up in a mixed family of Hoklo and Hakka. There are many opportunities to hear the sounds of those languages. Furthermore, there are some Amis families in our neighbourhood, and perhaps my optimism, and open-minded personality makes me create opportunities to practice speaking different indigenous languages.

There are elders in my family who are unable to speak Mandarin, and I have no choice but to learn how to communicate with my grandparents in my own ethnic language.

Students from Aboriginal communities also indicated feelings of solidarity for their heritage languages at various points and expressed the view that it should have a more prominent role. One of the Tereku students, for instance, made the

following observation:

People are surprised that the announcements in the MRT [Mass Rapid Transit] stations are in Hoklo and Hakka, as well as Mandarin and English. Although I was upset at not hearing my own language, Teruku, it was nice to be able to listen to Hoklo and Hakka.

Interestingly, there was also support for this view from an ethnic Chinese student, saying that “You can hear Hoklo and Hakka in public places, such as on trains, at the station, or airports. It is a great pity though that the profile of aboriginal languages in public is still limited.”

In a multilingual community, the choice of language is often determined by both domain (public situations, religious observances, instruction, shopping) and interlocutors (parents, grandparents, neighbours, employers) (Whitehead, 1997: 78). The multilingual composition of the class – Hoklo, Hakka, Teruku and Amis – very much reflected the population of many parts of Hualien where the study was based. The classroom situation therefore was in tune with the multilingual realities of every day life for the students. The opportunities to learn and practise speaking other languages thus helped to forge a sense of belonging to the wider community. Not only did this take place within the classroom, but students were encouraged and, on some occasions, required to explore the multilingual realities of the wider community.

There was also evidence that members of ethnic minority communities welcomed the opportunity to talk with students and share their skills and knowledge, as indicated in the following reflection by one of the community leaders interviewed at the start of my fieldwork:

Each community consists of several different ethnic groups. We need to raise every one’s awareness, we need to promote solidarity within our own community. What I mean is that we should preserve local languages, maintain different cultures, and encourage the new generation to develop an interest in who they are.

Language is learned more effectively when it is used in order to communicate and it was my aim to raise the student awareness of the very real opportunities for communication to which they have easy access. The comments of all parties – students, parents and the observer – confirmed my own feeling that significant progress had been made towards this end during the course of students’ ten week exposure to the language awareness activities.

In the present study, however, there was evidence for both integrative and instrumental motivation for studying indigenous languages.

D. Unity in Diversity

As a matter of fact, the majority of Taiwanese citizens have only a tenuous understanding of the implications of diversity, and prejudice and stereotypes are a feature of Taiwanese, as indeed many other societies, but especially with regard to aboriginal peoples. Language awareness activities thus provided a route for addressing issues of this kind. During the fieldwork, I was particularly interested in exploring the students’ reaction to diversity.

At the beginning, I encountered some opposition to the learning of indigenous languages, as I have already mentioned above. As time went on, however, there was growing evidence of more positive attitudes towards indigenous languages. One student spontaneously commented, for instance, in the second lesson that he had been aware of much greater use of indigenous languages in the week which had passed since the first lesson. In the third period, a student made the following comment while working in his group:

We have opportunities and the right atmosphere to try speaking other languages. The diversity of languages all around us is making us want to learn indigenous languages. We don’t feel bored or fall asleep in class because other members of the group are always coming up with unexpected demands and challenges.

Students in the class do have access to several different ethnic languages and cultures. By the seventh lesson, students were regularly making very conscious links between the language awareness activities and community building:

It feels as though we are building a community in the classroom, a community of students serving others, a community in which all students are called on to teach one another and to learn from one another. My parents didn’t think it was a good idea to learn other languages, but our group doesn’t agree. What we have been doing has made us realize that we can learn other indigenous languages in our daily life. Language awareness activities require us to show support and respect for each other, whether we are at home, at school or in the community.

Students, then, showed an increasing awareness of ways in which they could access family and community support for their own language learning. Many also demonstrated very positive attitudes towards indigenous language which had not been evident at the beginning of the course:

The language awareness activities have given us the chance to learn how to read and write our own community languages. The most important thing is that all of us have become more familiar with other ethnic languages and cultures in our own community.

E. Raising Status

At the beginning of the course, a community figure I interviewed argued that the learning of community languages was very controversial. He predicted that very few students would be interested in them because of their low status in society. He further pointed out that, unless the status of other indigenous languages were raised to the same level as Mandarin or Hoklo, those languages and their speakers would continue to be regarded as less interesting. During the course of fieldwork there were indeed indications that the language awareness activities were having the effect of raising the status of minority language and speakers in the eyes of both minority and majority students. The opportunity to demonstrate their skills provided aboriginal students with experience of success. As one Teruku student proudly told me in a conversation after class:

My classmates asked me to demonstrate the sound of /p/ again and again, and it made me feel that I am more competent than some of my classmates. This has motivated me to prepare more thoroughly, and I am becoming a more active language learner.

Similar comments were made by aboriginal students in the seventh and eighth periods, proudly saying that “Making indigenous languages part of English classes has been really motivating and we feel proud that our own languages have been given the same status as English or Mandarin.”

Students’ reflections are consistent with the following viewpoints expressed by a parent and an educationalist:

Taiwan’s diverse ethnicities and languages are a result of the island’s history of immigration, and different ethnic groups have launched movements to preserve their languages and cultures in order to raise their status. Mr. Huang’s courses in this semester enhanced the status of my child and gave him the opportunity to demonstrate his skills during the course. We are very proud of him.

It would seem, then, that the introduction of indigenous languages had benefits for both majority and minority students. The minority students gained in and enjoyed their new status as experts. The majority students experienced a broadening of horizons and showed a new respect for their minority classmates (see Edwards (1998) for a discussion of the same phenomenon in a UK context). When these two processes were working together in parallel, the result was a greater appreciation of the fact that all students form part of the same wider multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual society (Baker, 2001: 406).

6. CONCLUSION

As we have seen, there has been a global awakening of interest in minority languages in general and indigenous languages in particular. There is a special urgency and poignancy concerning indigenous languages, many of which, at the current rate of decline, will have disappeared within a generation. The general consensus on the relative usefulness of different approaches to revitalisation (see, for instance, Fishman, 2001: 37-39) makes it clear that the school cannot be relied upon as the sole agent of language transmission and that both family and the wider community have essential roles to play. The present project has recognised these realities by situating the learning activities and approaches to learning not only in the classroom but also in the family and community. In this respect, it is hoped that the initiatives described in this paper will make a valuable contribution not only to language revitalisation in Taiwan, but to the growing body of literature world-wide on the eminently practical issues in language revitalisation.

In the course of the fieldwork undertaken for this study, I set out to establish the extent to which an English class in Taiwan could offer a supportive context for the exploration of the potentially emotive subject of linguistic diversity in Taiwan through language awareness activities. The fieldwork consisted of a language awareness programme delivered in one lesson a week for ten weeks to a class of 15-16 year old students learning English. The content and delivery were greatly constrained by the prescriptive national curriculum for English in Taiwan. The innovation was, however, made possible by the new language policy in Taiwan, which marks a change from intolerance towards any variety other than Mandarin in education, towards a more inclusive education which recognises other languages. In a word, being in a multiethnic classroom environment, a lecture may apply the theme of translanguaging to help students to cope

with multiethnic situations in positive and fruitful ways; furthermore, it has the potential to promote multilingualism and pluralism in minority and majority group students who study several languages at a time in a multilingual classroom.

7. REFERENCES

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