

Press Contact:

Recommended interviewees: Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature,
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**National Taiwan Normal University 【12/24
Newsletter】**

**「Anew our bidialectal tongue, Redefine
Taiwanese」
Reviving local tongues, creating cultural value,
and reducing the burden of long term care**

National Taiwan Normal University Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature and Education Think Tank research team organized the "Anew our bidialectal tongue, Redefine Taiwanese" press conference on December 24th. In the conference, researchers pointed out that the local tongue should be regarded as an important strategic asset of the country, and the spirit of the Development of National Languages Act should be implemented as soon as possible to expand the bilingual or even multilingual environment of the national language. Moreover, with skilled bilingualism, one can increase cognitive flexibility, delay dementia, and therefore to reduce the heavy financial pressure of long-term care.

Mandarin is currently the dominant language used in Taiwan, but native languages such as Taiwanese Hokkien, Hakka, and aboriginal languages are facing the threat of survival, especially among younger generations. Take Taiwanese Hokkien, which was once a common spoken dialect in Taiwan, for example, less than 50% of people under the age of 25 are fluent in this dialect. According to the results of the Academia Sinica Taiwan Social Change Survey, the most common language spoken at home by middle-aged people in their 30s and 40s is Mandarin (43.8%), which is far more common than other native languages. Since most of the young parents no longer use the native language/dialects, if we do not actively reverse the trend, it will be difficult to reverse the monolingualization of Mandarin in Taiwan in the future.

Mandarin Taiwanese Hokkien, Hakka



[Figure 1] The most commonly used languages at home
Source: Academia Sinica 2013 Taiwan Social Change Survey

[Table 1] The most common languages used by parents of 36-month-old children

	Mother	Father
Mandarin	87.50%	77.80%
Taiwanese Hokkien	9.90%	17.60%
Hakka	0.30%	0.70%
Native Language	0.00%	0.20%
English	0.10%	0.30%
Others	2.00%	3.00%

Note: Others include don't know, refused to answer, not applicable, missing values, languages of Southeast Asian countries, etc.

Source: Taiwan Early Childhood Development Survey Database, National Taiwan Normal University (2019)

Language is a crucial culture carrier. Professor Tsuan-līm Kàu-su, Chair of the Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature at NTNU, points out that there are two practical benefits to preserving native languages. First, the value of the native language to the popular culture of Taiwan and abroad should not be underestimated, and among them, Taiwanese Hokkien is the most promising. People often think that Taiwanese Hokkien movies and pop songs can only be used on TV to win the senior audience, but in fact, these works are also very popular in the youth-oriented online world, as evidenced by the viewership on Youtube. In addition, in recent years, many new Taiwanese Hokkien works have been developed in local languages, mainly in Taiwanese Hokkien, and they have won many awards where Mandarin dominates, which shows the potential of Taiwanese Hokkien in literature and creativity. This "new Taiwanese trend" is expected to create an export of Taiwanese pop culture and create a T-pop culture full of Taiwanese elements.

[Table 2] Example of Taiwanese Hokkien drama with high ratings on Youtube.

	SET TV Taiwanese Drama (Taiwanese Hokkien Drama)	SET TV Chinese Drama (Mandarin Drama)
Channel Establishment Date	July 21, 2015	December 31, 2015
Number of subscribers	739,000 people	555,000 people
Views	894 million	3.00 billion

Note: (Taiwan) SET TV's drama channels on YouTube Mandarin and Taiwanese Hokkien Comparison (as of December 9, 2020)

[Table 3] List of native language/dialect soap opera (some may contain Mandarin)

	Title	Channel	Awarded	Highest Ratings
2017	A Boy Name Flora A	TTV, Gala Television, Taiwan Public Television Service	Tokyo Drama Award, Golden Bell Awards	4.16
2018	Roseki	(Taiwan) Hakka TV	Golden Bell Awards (Multiple Awards)	
2019	The Making Of An Ordinary Woman	CTS	Golden Bell Awards (Multiple Awards)	2.22
2019	Survival	(Taiwan) Hakka TV	Golden Bell Awards (Multiple nominations)	
2020	I, Myself	Taiwan Public Television Service Taiwanese Hokkien TTV, CTS		0.44
2020	U Motherbaker	Taiwan Public Television Service		5.55



[Figure 2] Average ratings of TV drama programs by language and origin from 2012 to 2018
Source: Ministry of Culture 2018 TV Broadcasting Industry Trends Research Survey Report - TV Industry

Second, the revival of native languages can substantially reduce the burden of long-term care. The Taiwan government has been promoting Long-term Care 2.0 since 2017, and has been increasing funding year by year, reaching nearly \$40 billion by 2020, an almost eight-fold increase from 2016. The average duration for long-term care demand in Taiwan is about seven years, and the total cost per person starts at \$2.68 million, with dementia-related symptoms having a particularly large impact. The total number of people with dementia in Taiwan will be 290,000 by the end of 2019, and it is estimated that by 2065, the number of

people with dementia will reach nearly 900,000. The cost of medical, non-medical and informal care for dementia in Taiwan alone was as high as 209.7 billion Taiwan dollars in 2015.

In fact, the benefits of regular bilingualism for the brain have long been recognized by the academic community. Empirical studies have shown that bilinguals have much better executive, decision-making and conflict resolution skills than monolinguals. Studies have even shown that bilinguals are diagnosed with dementia 4.3 years later than monolinguals and that symptoms begin 5.1 years later. If there is no active promotion of effective measures about promoting the use of native languages, Taiwan is bound to develop into a monolingual Mandarin society, which is behind the crisis of brain loss of the nation. To arrest Taiwan's slide towards a monolingual society, the fastest and less costly way is to actively promote the use of native languages at all levels of society, rather than promoting foreign languages that are more distant from the daily lives of the people of Taiwan.

The Taiwan government is now actively promoting "Mandarin and English bilingualism", but even after a couple of hours per week and more than ten years of training in English classes, the majority of the nationals abilities to use English fluently are still limited, after all, English is not the language of Taiwanese life. Instead of this, we should turn to a "new bilingualism" policy: learning from Europe to foster native languages and developing Taiwan's native languages, especially Taiwanese Hokkien, which was once a common language across ethnic groups, is a powerful tool to make Taiwan a bilingual society. The aforementioned approach is not only effective, but also relatively inexpensive, and the speedy realization of a "bilingual society" will not only help the health of seniors, but also the effectiveness of English learning, after all, there are studies that show that people who master two languages can learn a third foreign language more easily.

At the Press Conference, besides showing the data that Taiwanese Hokkien dramas have a huge viewership on TV and online platforms and the earning from export to China and Southeast Asian countries, researchers also pointed out that among the younger generations, pop music, TV dramas, theaters and foreign language translations are blowing a "**new Taiwanese trend (pop)**". This powerful cultural and creative force is however gradually being eroded by the continuous loss of Taiwanese Hokkien. Professor Tsuan-līm Kàu-su believed that this cultural and creative power should continue to expand and create value. Looking ahead, we hope that T-pop will be developed like K-pop and J-pop, so that Taiwan's cultural industry will be on the international stage.

Professor Tsuan-līm Kàu-su also pointed out that the term "bilingualism" is often presumed to mean "Chinese + English" when talking about educational matters in Taiwan. However, the term "bilingualism" is neutral and does not and should not refer to any two languages in particular. The world's languages are quite diverse, and in Taiwan alone, there are many native languages in addition to Mandarin. It is such a pity that government officials also preset "bilingualism" as "Chinese + English" in their speeches in public, which will easily lead to a narrow and biased concept of language among the public.

The NTNU Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature and the Education Think Tank research team suggest that, in terms of policy, native languages, English, and Mandarin should be included in the overall language planning, and that a special research and development institution for native languages should be established as soon as possible, and that The Taiwanese Hokkien language and popular culture should be actively exported. In particular, schools at all levels should be encouraged to use Taiwanese Hokkien as the medium of instruction in different subjects, and to implement the spirit of the Ministry of Culture and the Executive Yuan to promote the use of the national language in all stages of childcare and education based on the Development of National Languages Act, and the National Development Council to promote the use of the national language in bilingual countries.

The policy concept of "Bilingualism and the Development of Mother Tongue Culture" includes incentives for kindergarten directors, school principals and teachers at all levels to provide funding and personal incentives for teaching practices, as well as tuition subsidies and incentives for participating students to advance their education. In addition, the administrative system should also actively create incentives, such as giving preferential treatment and incentives to students at all levels who have passed a specific level of the Taiwanese Hokkien test, and according to Article 16 of the Development of National Languages Act. For example, giving promotion, salary increase, and awards to civil servants, police officers, and professionals such as nurses and doctors who have passed different levels of native language certification, in order to enhance the motivation of using native languages as daily life and professional languages, so that native languages can return to families and all levels of society. With that, the increasingly monolingual Taiwan can move towards a healthy environment of "new bilingualism" and "multilingualism". We also hope that the "new Taiwanese trend" will be used as a soft power for Taiwan to continue to expand its international impact.

Anew our bidialectal tongue, Redefine Taiwan- Local language as a national asset for film, television, culture and creativity with cross-border production value Bilingual environment to relieve the burden of long-term care.

Every once in a while, a misconception emerges in the news that native languages are a burden of the past, a boring, disappointed burden. What practical benefit can native languages provide, other than a sense of responsibility and mission to pass on culture and heritage?

As a matter of fact, Taiwanese Hokkien drama has been the leading drama on TV and internet platforms, it continued to create value and export abroad, generating foreign exchange. In recent years, there has been a "new Taiwanese trend" in film and television, publishing, drama and pop music, all of which reveal another possible aspect of Taiwanese cultural export.

In addition to its cultural value, Taiwanese Hokkien is a secret weapon in promoting the health of the people. Studies have shown that bilinguals age more slowly and develop dementia on average four years later than monolinguals; scholars have also pointed out that learning multi-tonal and tonal Taiwanese Hokkien is far more beneficial to brain development than learning English.

However, Taiwan is now rapidly moving towards a monolingual Mandarin society, and the losses and crises behind monolingualism are looming.

The NTNU Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature and Education Think Tank research team believes that instead of investing in the costly and unhelpful "Chinese-English bilingualism", the Taiwan government can actually bring Taiwanese Hokkien into the fold more quickly and economically, making the "new bilingualism" a silver bullet that will reduce the country's future spending on long-term care.

"Anew our bidialectal tongue, Redefine Taiwanese" - NTNU Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature and education think tank research team invites you to reconnect with the local language as an important strategic asset of the nation.

- Title: Anew our bidialectal tongue, Redefine Taiwanese—Language and Cultural Education Policy Press Conference
- Time: December 24, 2020 (Thursday) 10:00am~11:00am
- Location: National Taiwan Normal University Library Campus - In-service and Continuing Education Building Second Floor Conference Room (No. 129, Sec. 1, Heping East Road, Taipei City, Taiwan)

Time	Content	Moderator/Presenter
10:00-10:10	Opening speech	Moderator: College of Liberal Arts Director Chiou-Lan Chen
10:10-10:30	Anew our bidialectal tongue, Redefine Taiwanese	Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature Director Tsuan-līm Kàu-su
10:30-11:00	Press Briefing	Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature Director Tsuan-līm Kàu-su Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature Prof. Nikky Lin Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature Assistant Professor Cheng-Hsien Liu Department of Taiwan Culture, Languages and Literature Assistant Professor Cherry Lu