

*Review*

# **Study of language planning on English taught programs/English as medium of instruction programs in Taiwan**

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**English Taught Programs (ETPs) first appeared in European countries. Research showed a growing trend of ETPs, not only in Europe but also in other continents. However, despite the increasing number of such programs, there is a lack of consistent language policy and language planning in these programs. Without a clear language policy, the problems caused by language diversity cannot be solved properly. EMI researchers have indicated the urgency of a language plan in English-taught degree programs to maintain a collaborative relationship with the university's policy. This study aims to present how language policies will work from a macro view to a micro one, from country as a whole to educational institutions. The author will first examine the language policy in all levels and then focus on the ETP programs in Taiwan. From the investigation, the author finds that it takes time for language policy to be effective. If ETP programs are the future trend as a result of globalization, language policies should be specifically drawn up for these programs.**

**Key words:** English as medium of instruction, language policy, Taiwan, Language planning, English taught programs.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Globalization is affecting higher education everywhere in the world and many countries are internationalizing higher education. In Taiwan, the universities are focusing on the first category of Knight's (2003) classification of international education: the provision of internationalized education within a country. Although the number of English Taught Programs (ETP) is increasing, most institutions are not addressing the issue of language. In a survey sponsored by the British Council in 2015, the statistics show a lack of official statements about English

as Medium of Instruction (EMI) and national level EMI policy for public access (Dearden, 2015).

While EMI programs are seen as good medicine for dropping demography and the competitive global educational market, the lack of national-level EMI policy shows negligence on the part of the educational authorities. Without a clear policy, the development of EMI programs will stagnate and they will become those ready for immediate sacrifice should a need for austerity arise.

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In this study the first step undertaken was an examination of the general development of language planning and policies concerning current Medium of Instruction (MOI) issues in higher education. Since there is a general trend towards a lack of explicit language policy, the next step was an investigation of the discursive construction of EMI programs in the higher education system in Taiwan. An attempt was then made to sketch out the contours of language policies in these EMI institutes.

## LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICIES IN GENERAL

Language policy and planning are closely related to every aspect of modern life, in politics (nation-building), commerce, education, legal systems, religion, to name just a few. The power struggle between major and minor languages and even dialects is sometimes a matter of life or death. Language planning has sometimes helped to protect endangered languages. Linguistic expressions also make it possible for ethno cultural behavior to be properly expressed. Furthermore, “linguistic exchanges can express relations of power” (Thompson, 2003).

According to Bourdieu (1991), language has symbolic power in the economic and political environment of today. “English” is closely associated with the economic capital of today and the possession of this linguistic skill also allows access to much knowledge and communication advantages. In politics, upholding one language voluntarily could mean the demonstration of a love for the people and country where that language is spoken. Such a gesture can contribute to an increase in the competitiveness of that country and people. Lee Kuan Yew, the first prime minister of Singapore, wrote in his autobiography *From Third World to First*, “English as our working language has... given us competitive advantages because it is the international language of business and diplomacy” (Lee, 2000). Speaking English can also be viewed as a symbol that “sets us apart” from the affluent but uneducated people: it allows a choice of either certificates or cash, as Nwaubani (2019), a Nigerian journalist and novelist, wrote in her experiences in Nigeria.

Some critics have warned against the harm that the globalized economy and the free market continue to do to languages. The process of deciding a standard language in a country, out of the anxiety of creating a common identity, also brings pressure on the existence of other languages. Standardization of a specific language also implies privilege upon speakers who speak the standard language and the emulation of the less powerful groups. However, a multitude of languages could also bring conflict, while a common language can make communication easier and improve national security, as was the case in Singapore. No wonder Lee Kuan Yew lamented, “We were saddled with a hideous collection of dialects and languages and faced the prospect of going

into battle without understanding each other” (2000, 30).

In Rubin and Jernudd's classic book (1971), they defined language planning as “deliberate language change... in the system of language code or speaking or both, that are planned by organizations that are established for such purposes” (xiv). In practice, language planning is “a body of ideas, laws and regulations, rule changes, beliefs, and practices intended to achieve a planned change (or to stop change from happening) in the language use in one or more communities” (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997). Languages, as seen from the macro view, can be regarded as a kind of national resource. In opposition to a natural resource, a national resource is a human resource and can be planned by a country. However, Kaplan and Baldauf point out that when national authorities make language policies, they seldom consult the education ministry and ignore the reality that an education ministry does not have the resources to enforce the language policy of a country (ibid).

In December, 2018, the Taiwan National Development Council proposed a Blueprint for the transformation of Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation by 2030, when English would become the second official language. The main goal for such language planning is to upgrade manpower quality. Cross-ministerial conferences were convened for this national bilingual project. There had been previous bilingual projects and proposals from as early as 2002 that focused on building foreigner-friendly bilingual environments to boost tourism. However, this was the first time that English was upgraded to the national level of an “official language.”

The new blueprint lists clear timelines for the transformation of Taiwan into a bilingual country and then to move to the final goal (after 12 years), to make English an official second language. This was different from past bilingual projects such as the provision of bilingual signs in tourist spots and bilingual government announcements for foreigners. The 2018 bilingual blueprint focuses on upgrading the English abilities of the public with limited resources. Digital technology will be applied to ensure English learning in remote areas. Although the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) were made in the blueprint for the coming years, many educators are pessimistic about the outcome. The reason for this is that the Premier who launched the project has stepped down and Nationalist criticism of the proposal is widespread. No special budgets were allocated for the “national” project and it has been made clear that this project is to be executed without making dramatic changes to the existing system, or any that would affect the mental or physical wellbeing of the people of the country.

Concern about using a language for instruction that is not the mother tongue of the recipient has always arisen with the promotion of an official second language in Taiwan. The debate between linguistic diversity and national unity persists. Supporters of the mother tongue

as an instructive language cite linguistic right as a basic human right. They want to safeguard the right of every person to be educated in a language with which they are familiar and comfortable. In Macedonia, minority languages can be used as the language of instruction in private universities (Agai-Lochi, 2015). This is to ensure that minority students can be educated in their mother tongue. Deprivation of native language opportunities will result in “serious physical as well as mental harm, from social dislocation to psychological, cognitive, linguistic and educational damage, and concomitant economic, social and political marginalization” (Baer, 2008, cited in Yataco, 2009). Baer went further to describe such adverse effect as “linguistic and cultural genocide” (Ibid). In a study commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, the learning results of students whose mother tongue was suppressed, or only partially supported in total submersion programs, did not look good (Ibid).

The importance of language policy and planning is emphasized especially for countries that have recently achieved independence. National leaders treat language as a political tool knowing full well that the dramatic power of language can be used to shape the unification and success of a country. If neglected and maltreated, language issues could lead to serious social division and affect the stability of a country. The correct choice of language by Lee Kuan Yew in Singapore allowed Singapore to move from the third-world into the first. However, most government agencies usually carry out their language planning agenda without consideration of whether the education ministries have the resources to respond to the policy or not (Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997). Education has become more accessible to the public and international education is now both necessary and trendy. The reason for this is that researchers now call for an explicit language policy in every university to address the language issues faced by its students, faculty and staff (Dines, 1994).

## **LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Language planning is the result of various ideologies. According to Cobarrubias (1983), there are four language ideologies: linguistic assimilation, linguistic pluralism, vernacularization and internationalization. In the history of Taiwan, linguistic assimilation occurred when the island was under Japanese occupation (1895-1945). Later, when the nationalist government took over, Mandarin becomes the dominant language in Taiwan, pushing native Taiwanese, Hakkanese, and the aboriginal languages aside. While efforts in linguistic pluralism and vernacularization were made in the last two decades, minority languages such as Taiwanese have not become dominant partly because of the lack of systematic development and partly because of the practical public demand for an international language, English (Ang,

2002).

The English Taught Programs discussed in this paper have been established under the ideology of internationalization. This implies the adoption of a non-native language as an official language for wider communication. It has become a major ideology in Taiwan and in many other Asian countries, acquisition planning (language literacy through education) has become very important as a means for the successful implementation of English as an official language in educational institutions and even in governments.

Languages are closely related to ethno cultural behaviors. Language planning and policies in education will also reflect the concept of the language in the country. However, there is a general lack of explicit language planning and policies when it comes to higher education. This is also true even in the European Union, where “two additional foreign languages” are encouraged for its member citizens (Erling and Hilgendorf, 2006; Tian, 2015). De Swaan (2001) indicated that “the more languages, the more English.” This is also true in Taiwan and if a convenient language has to be chosen to keep up with the international communities, it has to be English.

In the past, language policy and planning in Taiwan involved only the dominant languages and dialects. For example, the struggle between Mandarin Chinese and Japanese, or that between Chinese and Taiwanese. The medium of instruction in Taiwan was associated with colonialism and identity issues. Taiwan was ruled by Japan from 1895 to 1945. During that period the Japanese assimilation policy stressed the adoption of Japanese as the medium of instruction in elementary schools. An attempt was made to “transform Taiwanese school children into Japanese ones” (Chen, 2006).

The Japanese Governor of Taiwan had a different approach to that of most colonizers of that time. A costly language policy was enacted that provided Japanese language education from the elementary level, instead of language education of a small number of elites in higher education, as other colonizers had done (Ibid.). This comprehensive and indiscriminate language education was a far cry from colonial practice at that time. The purpose of such an inclusive language policy was to introduce Japanese values and knowledge to facilitate the development of the colony.

No countries have undergone greater changes in language policy in education than Singapore. To unite a group of people who spoke several different languages and dialects, Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of Singapore, transformed Singapore into a first-world country solely by language policy. He was not affected by nationalistic fervor and realized that English, not Chinese, Malay, or Tamil, had to be the language of the workplace and the common people (2000). The rationale was practical rather than nationalistic. As a country heavily dependent on international trade, the ability to speak English would ensure a prosperous future. The need for a

common language was not only of economic concern, it was also essential to ensure national security. Imagine Singaporean soldiers, speaking Chinese, Malay, and Tamil, going into battle without being able to understand one another (Ibid.).

English would become the working language with which people could make a good living. But it was clearly understood that Malay would remain a national and symbolic language which linked the country to its roots in Malaysia. The mother tongues would remain cultural languages which carried ethnic value, wisdom and tradition. By recognizing these divisions in a country where ethnic diversity was inevitable, nationalistic tendency and sentiment might be relieved.

It was a daunting task. Lee Kuan Yew started by increasing the English faculties in secondary schools to create an English-speaking environment that allowed students of both languages to mingle and learning hours were increased for better immersion.

To avoid immediate opposition and conflict, Lee Kuan Yew slowly introduced mother tongue education in English schools and English education in the Chinese, Malay and Tamil schools. The Nanyang University decided to change the language of instruction from Chinese to English in 1975 after it had become clear that their Chinese-speaking graduates did not perform well in the job market where English speakers were preferred. The university was also forced to lower its requirements for admission and graduation standard to attract students. While the change to English at Nanyang University was an unavoidable move to save the University, the transition task was daunting. There was strong opposition from the staff and faculty, who were all monolingual Chinese speakers. Finally, the problem was solved by merging the Nanyang University with the University of Singapore. The entire university-staff and students-was physically moved into the English-speaking University of Singapore, the two became the National University of Singapore and immersion did the work (Lee, 2015).

In Singapore, during the mid-twentieth century, it was regulated that mathematics and science in middle and elementary schools were taught in English. History and civil education were taught in other ethnic languages. This choice of instructive languages was a good demonstration of the function of different languages in a society. The practical and scientific subjects were taught in English to connect with international standards, while literary and historical subjects were taught in ethnic languages to consolidate ethnic identity and cultural background.

## LANGUAGE PLANNING AND POLICIES IN EMI PROGRAMS IN TAIWAN

“Language forms a kind of wealth” (Comte, 1875). The economic value of language is particularly valuable in 21st century education. Bourdieu (1991) also suggests

that “utterances are not only signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also *signs of wealth*, intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and *signs of authority*, intended to be believed and obeyed”. Do Bourdieu’s suggestions explain the much higher expectations students and parents have when programs in English language come to mind? It is generally accepted that EMI programs provide education of better quality. It is assumed that knowledge provided in English is automatically better than can be obtained in a native language. Such a mindset also reflects the higher tuition fees of EMI programs in Taiwan universities. The tuition fees for EMI programs are 50% more and sometimes twice those for mother-tongue medium programs<sup>1</sup>. The National Taiwan University Global MBA program, targeting international and local students, charges an average of US\$ 18,000 for total tuition fees<sup>2</sup>. The undergraduate ETP program annual tuition fees charged by other private universities range from around US\$3000 to US\$5120.

As in many other Asian countries, the goals of the Taiwan EMI programs are more social, political and economic than educational. Concern about the efficiency of the acquisition of professional knowledge with insufficient foreign language skills is overshadowed by the grand discourse of internationalization, economic development and the upgrading of human capital. The cost of such internationalized education is also tied to the misconception that good education means English education. However, the confusion of self-identity and cultural heritage is not much discussed, as if internationalization were the panacea for all economic educational problems.

The focus of this study has been on EMI programs for local students in Taiwan. The establishment of EMI programs here, and in other countries as well, is the result of trying to solve the problem of a low birthrate. The programs are expected to solicit international students who will come to bring in more tuition revenue. These undergraduate programs were initially established by private universities in Taiwan faced by an urgent need to attract more international students to compensate for the loss of local students to national universities that charged lower fees to attract elite undergraduate students. While the national universities in Taiwan usually provide English MA programs, most undergraduate EMI programs are offered by private universities, some of which have high tuition fees, to create an English immersion environment. However, the result of such an environment is far from satisfactory due to a lack of international faculty and students. In total, there are around 13 private universities

.gov.tw/Content\_List.aspx?n=FB2F95FF15B21D4A&upn=5137965B2A81A120 (Retrieved Mar. 22nd, 2019)

<sup>1</sup> These tuition

on fees refer to the Global MBA (National Taiwan University) and ACT program (National Sun Yat-sen University).

<sup>2</sup> The tuition fees range from

providing undergraduate EMI programs, and 5 of them charge fees as much as 42% of the fees for programs offered in Mandarin.

Because these EMI programs have been established to solve the crisis of low birthrate and low registration rate in Taiwan, when they fail to attract enough students, they fall victim to closure. It sometimes seem that they had not planned to stay for long anyway and had been established as temporary alternatives. In 2019, Tamkang University, moved four EMI departments back to its main campus, for more efficient use of resources. They had operated for 15 years at Yi-Lan, a rural campus with an all-English living and studying environment. The original goals and plans for a separate English academy were overhauled to accommodate reality.

In Taiwan, the Ministry of Education prohibits the establishment of more individual “departments” in universities and EMI programs can only exist within the structure of “degree programs,” with faculties coming from various departments to support courses offered in the program. The programs were set up by the faculties with financial concerns in mind and without consideration for the importance of language policy. Language policy and planning statements become attractive catchwords on a glossy promotional brochure to get the attention of potential applicants.

National universities do not seem keen to offer EMI programs. According to a project evaluation report conducted by a Control Yuan member, Chang (2019), four top universities received around NT\$4 billion (US\$130 million) in grants for upgrading in all aspects. The grants were made in 2018 and less than 1% of the budgets were assigned to promote courses taught in English. The report showed that the EMI courses in the four universities accounted for less than 20% of the total<sup>3</sup>. The National Taiwan University provides only 5% EMI courses each year. The 2018 Thames Higher Education (THE) survey showed there were only 20 EMI programs at the National Taiwan University. There is only one EMI program in the National Tsing Hua University and two in the National Cheng Kung University.

The fact that these four leading universities spent less than 1% of the grants<sup>4</sup> they received from the government to improve English taught programs and courses was a clear indication that English programs were not a first priority. The Taiwan government does not have comprehensive EMI planning when compared with the scale and scope of countries such as Poland, Thailand and Japan. The weaknesses of such ETP programs in universities were also pointed out in this report. Some universities blamed a lack of overall government planning. The assessment of student learning

through a foreign language is also lacking. From the report, it would seem that Taiwan national universities are not very enthusiastic about the planning of ETP programs. They focus on the number of EMI courses (not programs) to meet the requirements of the government educational grants. While they can develop their own assessment indicators for EMI courses, they still stick to the number of EMI courses without dealing with student performance and the professional development of teaching in foreign languages. It is clear that an evaluation method for EMI courses has not yet been developed. EMI courses are still using the same evaluation forms used to assess courses taught by local teachers in Chinese, translated into English, without developing appropriate evaluation questions addressing EMI courses.

There seems to be little stress on the language planning of graduate-level English Taught Programs in Taiwan. The fliers, brochures and the program websites, often emphasize the diverse nationality of their students and the exchange opportunities their programs provide. They also highlight the fact that international experiences, such as exchange and dual degrees, can be affordable.

However, undergraduate-level ETPs have a different focus. While most undergraduate-level ETPs are provided by private universities, the students are usually those who did not perform very well academically as well as their counterparts admitted by national universities. As a result, the recruitment strategy for these ETP programs includes the provision of language proficiency courses to attract potential students who aim to sharpen their language skills. Some preparation courses are offered which help to buffer cultural shock, such as “International Cultural Exploration,” “International Perspectives and Global Vision” and “International Education Consultation.” These help students studying with other international students at home or abroad<sup>5</sup>.

Most EMI teachers in Taiwan are not teachers with foreign nationalities, they are local teachers<sup>6</sup>. This mindset has led to a wide belief in the general myth that EMI courses are just the same courses translated into English. One might think that the only change is the language of instruction and everything else remains the same. This belief has led to a disregard by the universities and they usually provide one-day or one-session training workshop for EMI teachers, instead of a complete EMI teacher training program. Local teachers tend to prepare lessons without much support, financially or moral, resulting in a lack of incentive for the teaching of EMI courses. What is worse, university recruitment usually specifies the ability of teaching in English and

US\$ 16317 to US\$ 20350, depending on the number of years of stay in the program.

<sup>3</sup> The four elite universities in Taiwan are the National Taiwan University, the National Cheng Kung University, the National Tsing Hua University, and the National Chiao Tung University.

<sup>4</sup> In 2018, the National Taiwan University received a total grant

of NT\$1,413,140,000 (around US\$45.5 million). Only 0.41% of the grant was used in EMI courses/programs (Chang, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> These are

provided as part of the Bachelor of International Business Administration (BIBA) program at Feng Chia University.

<sup>6</sup> In 2017, the percentage of foreign teachers in EMI courses was 21.55% in the Taiwan, 5.56% in the Cheng Kung, 9.01% in the Tsi

requires that new teachers teach at least one subject in English. Some teachers may perform well in the trial teaching with much preparation for recruitment. However, weekly classes are often too much of a load for them to carry in addition to other teaching responsibilities, research and services. Sometimes one will also find teachers too confident with their language ability (who have passed proficiency exams or have obtained a degree abroad). Such ability may work well for daily interaction, but in terms of profession expression in a foreign language and teaching students from various cultural backgrounds, something more is needed than just a translation of their thoughts into another language.

There is little mention of language policy in the individual ETP programs, but no shortage of promotional keywords to sell them. In Taiwan there are about twenty undergraduate degree programs offering all their courses in English. The keywords used most frequently in the introductions are: international mobility, elite education, language ability, adaptability, cross-cultural communication, international vision, immersion, and “a miniature United Nations.”

The number of foreign faculty members is also highlighted as a major attraction. Tamkang University promotional material emphasizes that such programs offer direct access to international professional knowledge. The National Cheng Kung University, promises to provide an “international environment,” while the definition of such a term leaves much room for maneuver.

On the Feng Chia University BIBA program website, innovative teaching methods that are different from traditional Taiwanese lecturing are also mentioned as one of the key features of these programs. Case study discussion and teacher-student interaction are proposed as examples. Interestingly, this information does not appear on the Chinese website. This disparity may be because local students are not yet familiar with the practice of interactive class discussion in English because of a general lack of language proficiency and professional knowledge. This kind of interactive style is not stressed because it might scare local students away. The Graduate Institute of International Human Resource Development (IHRD) established in 2003 at the National Taiwan Normal University is the first ETP in Taiwan that claims to be riding with the trend to cultivate international executives.

Nanhwa University, located in southern Taiwan and sponsored by one of the largest Buddhist institutes on the island, offers an English Taught Bachelor Program in International Business. Although the university has lowered its tuition fees to the level of the national universities to remain competitive, the students attracted to the program need a boost in learning motivation. That is the reason why phrases such as “to boost the confidence of our students” and “to energize our students program promotion. This echoes the idea that English language proficiency and international mobility may

enhance confidence in learners.

## CONCLUSION

OECD (2018) in *Education at a Glance*, claims that “the language of instruction is a strong determinant of student choice of destination”. Many countries, such as Poland, Thailand and Japan, have allocated budgets for international programs. In Japan, the Top Global University Project aims to provide 50% EMI courses by 2032. If the Taiwan educational authorities believe that international students are the solution to university survival (for private universities in particular) as well as to international education quality (for public universities), then, meticulous long-term planning and deliberation with respect to all the EMI courses and programs are necessary. Committees composed of language policy professionals should be convened to draft up rules and principles of a program’s language use and other related issues. The lack of specified language policies will confuse students, teachers and administrators.

An overall consideration of human development suggests that the idea of linguistic diversity, correlated with biodiversity, should always be encouraged. Linguist Anderson (2010) also found that “groups with diverse linguistic heritage come into regular contact with one another and multilingualism is a perfectly natural condition” if there is no one dominant local language. Although language diversity seems to be a better solution for a globalized world, we also need to realize that with limited resources, such as time, effort and talent, bilingual education is a matter of choice. Not all students are apt language learners and fluency in one language is often at the cost of another.

The success of bilingual education will depend on the participation of not just students but also parents. The change will not happen overnight. It took decades for parents in Singapore to see the need for English as a working language and to start using English in the home. A successful language policy will require determination and persistent leadership as well as patience to wait for change to happen despite the critical attack.

Language problems are political issues, whether we like it or not. They are closely related to the allocation of national sources that may affect future success and prosperity. If we evaluate the overall benefit of the adoption of English, we may be surprised to discover the biggest beneficiaries. Rose and McKinley (2017) argue that native English-speaking countries are by far the biggest beneficiaries of the global adoption of English. Imagine how much profit can be made by English-speaking countries establishing campuses abroad. If non-English-speaking countries are to share the benefits of a bilingual workforce, educational institutions should have their say in the cultivation of the bilingual workforce. As Charlesmagne (748-814) allegedly said, “To have a second language is to possess a second soul.” It is

always rewarding to learn a new language skill. However, language learning at a national level requires more thorough planning than just an increase in the number of students and teachers from abroad.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Any decision about the choice of language for education in a country has many deep political implications. The use of a language that is not the native tongue could lead to the de-culturization of a race and implies a disregard of the traditional moral values of the people. Inevitably, the use of English as a language of instruction will also lead to the assimilation of North American core values such as consumerism, individualism and utilitarianism.

If we compare the language policies of China with those of Singapore, it becomes obvious that metaphysics is involved and national development and ethnic sustainability has to be taken into consideration. In its national plan for the period 2010 to 2020, China aimed to achieve “educational modernization, to form a learning society, and transform China into a country with competitive human resources” (Perrin, 2017).

Is it true that “you cannot have your cake and eat it” in terms of bilingual education? Will traditional values be discarded if we adopt a foreign language for instruction in higher education in the country? Singapore’s example might offer some insight into this question. As a Chinese descendant, former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew treasures traditional Chinese values such as discipline, filial piety, family values, and the common good over individualism, to name just a few. He then preserved Chinese schools with a special plan (SAP) to help them provide bilingual education and to upgrade their school facilities.

Bilingual education will certainly put an extra load on students, as well as parents, because time is limited and mastering an extra language will compromise the time students spend on other subjects. Singapore adopted its language policy with a very clear goal. The intention was to build a unified country and educate students who would be able to make a living and maintain their cultural identity in a pivotal place where different races meet. In a globalized world there is no good way to accommodate the differences of language, but Singapore found an alternative:

*Hence, in spite of the criticism from many quarters that our people have mastered neither language, it is our best way forward. English as our working language has prevented conflicts arising between our different races and given us a competitive advantage because it is the international language of business and diplomacy, of science and technology. Without it, we would not have many of the world’s multinationals and over 200 of the world’s top banks in Singapore neither would our people have taken so readily to computers and the Internet (Lee,*

*2000).*

Bilingual education is better than monolingualism because one can then get the essence of both cultures. This does not mean losing one traditional value for another. Lee Kuan Yew believes that one’s mother tongue is the best medium for transmitting unique cultural values and traditions (2012).

Language planning is not just a government decision, it is also a family decision. Parents need to decide what languages their children should learn and at what age. In Singapore, the learning of a mother tongue, together with English, in Primary and Secondary schools is encouraged to cultivate language identification<sup>7</sup>. In Macedonia, constitutionally assured education has been established for minorities in their mother tongue in Primary and Secondary schools (Agai-Lochi, 2015). The differences between a formally “learned” language (at school) and naturally “acquired” one (at home) exists and it depends on the user to decide which one they prefer. A learned second language may imply that the language remains “within the four walls of the school” and could be something that is not vital “but a desirable extra” that can be enjoyed and also found useful for interaction with foreigners in their work (Ibid).

From what is mentioned above, we can see that language policies are a subject of economic and social policies in China and Singapore. Both adopt language policies to avoid social unrest and to cultivate talents with multi-lingual abilities to boost economy.

Language planning and the legislation of another official language should be considered more thoroughly. The choice of language of instruction should be carefully deliberated. Consequences should be discussed before language policies are made either at the educational or national levels. Making higher education bilingual should not be a temporary way-out for the commercialized universities to finance themselves for survival. When students are suddenly faced with a multilingual environment without preparation, they may lose an opportunity to acquire professional knowledge, and what is more, prejudice can easily be formed should such encounters be unpleasant. If national leaders deem it necessary for Taiwanese students to be bilingual in Mandarin Chinese and English, some basic lessons on facing “other cultures” should be included in the curriculum so students will know how to face the cultural implication of learning through different languages.

The diverse background of students in EMI programs can pose problems for instructors. Students in other countries are trained differently from their very early years. Students from Europe may find themselves in a learning environment where discussion is impossible, while local students are still struggling to understand the content. The foundation of a profession should be laid at

undergraduate level and clear lectures on certain abstract ideas become a huge challenge for an instructor using a language that is not their mother tongue. It is crucial that students and teachers understand that English proficiency is a default and not a “subject” to be learned after entrance.

From a national point of view, language policy should address the problem of language allocation. In a place where many languages exist, two basic principles should be considered: firstly, the communication function of a common language, and secondly, the equal rights of various languages (Ang, 2002). When language policy is applied to a nation, the problem of conserving cultural roots and dialects may seem as crucial as promoting a lingua franca for better communication among various tribes. However, when language policy is formulated in the context of education, different issues have to be addressed. Students' absorption via a foreign language and cross-cultural intelligence should be taken into consideration in addition to the national workforce agenda.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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