

The Language Choice Behavior of Paiwan People in the Taipei Metropolitan Area

Sociolinguistics

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Abstract

Owing to abundant working opportunities, the Taipei metropolitan area has the most immigrants among other cities in Taiwan. In addition to the official language, Mandarin, other Chinese dialects and aboriginal languages are used at different frequencies by native speakers. However, in contrast to Chinese dialects, aboriginal languages are found rather abandoned or not passed down to the next generation. Although the frequency of language use is absolutely related to the number of its speakers, which may account for the low rate of aboriginal languages' being spoken in metropolitan areas, this paper aims to probe into other factors that may confine aboriginals' language choice and the corresponding interpretations in terms of language consciousness and language psychology. To avoid unrelated variables, this study only focuses on Paiwan people, the third largest aboriginal group, in the Taipei metropolitan area. 100 native speakers will be given surveys whose questions regarding language choice in various contexts and speakers' language attitude. In addition, one-tenth of the participants will be further interviewed to answer questions regarding issues on language consciousness. A hypothetical result is that age, and education level are the main factors confining their choice of language. On one hand, most of the Paiwan people under 40 years old are not fluent in speaking. For the convenience of communication, Mandarin would be chosen in order to save time. On the other hand, Paiwan people speak dissimilar dialects among tribes, and some dialects even have different meanings toward the identical phonetic form. Therefore, in order to avoid ambiguities, Mandarin would be used as a replacement. Finally, when it comes to topics requiring reference to special terminology or modern inventions, Paiwan would be ruled out for the insufficiency of its lexicon. Nevertheless, according to the researcher's observation, even when such conditions

are fulfilled, for example, when two 40 year-old people from the same village meet each other in the Taipei Train Station, Paiwan is not chosen for a small talk, either. For phenomena of this kind, the researcher wishes to provide possible explanations from the language consciousness and language psychology point of views, which may be helpful in terms of language maintenance and language marketing in the future.