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Shifting Language Ideologies in Taiwan:
The Folk Redefinition of Taiwan Mandarin

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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Shifting Language Ideologies in Taiwan: The Folk Redefinition of Taiwan Mandarin

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Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics
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This thesis applies the analytical framework of language ideologies to the folk conceptualization of speech communities in Taiwan. The data come from the pilot ethnography conducted in Taipei, Taiwan in 2014. This thesis considers Taiwanese people’s changing ideologies about language as a reflection of the volatile sociopolitical relationship between the Republic of China (ROC), commonly known as Taiwan, and the People’s Republic of China (PRC), also known as Mainland China. This thesis presents the ways in which Taiwanese people reideologize and utilize Taiwan Mandarin in a project of linguistic differentiation and semiotic boundary maintenance against the PRC (China). The collective memory of learning Mandarin in school is mobilized to establish the conceptual boundary between Taiwan Mandarin and the ‘Chinese’ Mandarin. Accentual features that were considered non-standard are revalorized and valorized as the perceived standard of Taiwan Mandarin. Linguistic features are semiotically selected to index speaker characteristic differences between Taiwanese people and the mainland Chinese.
The thesis of Spencer Chao-long Chen is approved.

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DEDICATION

To my parents.

Thank you for your unconditional love and support,

I would not be who I am today without you.
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1 INTRODUCTION

What distinguishes a group of people from their adjacent neighbors with whom they share a mutually intelligible language, celebrate similar cultural heritages, and collaborate intensively in economic activities? The ways in which such boundaries can be established could come from natural barriers, or could be arbitrarily negotiated by groups involved, like borders of polities. But even without such geographical or political borders, there are semiotic strategies available to a group of people to construct semiotic boundaries separating them from others. Language, or rather, ideologies of language as defining features for socio-political boundary, is one such semiotic strategy that is utilized by the actors to empower themselves to construct their group identity.

Scholars have a longstanding interest in the notion of communities and cultural groups. Scholars of cultures have striven to investigate the ascriptive characteristics that members conceptualize as the defining features of their membership. For instance, Fredrik Barth (1969) avers that “[t]he [defining] features that are taken into account are not the sum of ‘objective’ differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant” (14). Amongst such semiotic resources as emblems of identity is language. Yet, to date, beyond coming to terms with the definition of language and communities, linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists have applied various approaches to study issues revolving around this concept (for further discussion, see Silverstein 1997, Rampton 2009, Avineri & Kroskrity 2014). As shown in Leonard Bloomfield’s theorization of a speech community as “a group of people who interact by means of speech” (1933:42), the focus had been given primarily to language, the shared code of communication per se.
Since the 1980s, in response to limitations in the attempt to produce objective criteria for the identification of speech communities, scholars started to orient toward members’ subjective ideations of the communicative means that serve to define them as a group. The reorientation of focus has developed into the research program of language ideologies (Silverstein 1979, 1985, Woolard & Schieffelin 1994, Gal & Irvine 1995, Irvine & Gal 2000, Kroskrity 2000, 2010). The focus is to understand how these ideations reflect and refract members’ sociocultural, political, and economic interests both at the individual and communal level. In light of such subjective nature, language ideologies “represent incomplete, or ‘partially successful’, attempts to rationalize language usage” so that “such rationalizations are typically multiple, context-bound, and necessarily constructed from the sociocultural experience of the speaker (Kroskrity 2010:192). It is this multifacetedness of language ideologies that contributes to conflicting situations of various levels within or across communities (e.g. Silverstein 1985, Blommaert & Verschueren 1998, Errington 1998, Gal & Irvine 1995, Stasch 2009). However, even with much attention to ideological contestation across different regions, there still remains much to explore as to how individuals utilize language as a means of group identity construction when the political-economic interests are at stake. Such is the case particularly in border areas or cross-border regions, where oftentimes not just individual-groups but also the whole nation-states are involved in intra-communal negotiation for resources, power, or (dis)integration.

This thesis applies the framework of language ideologies to one such region, the Republic of China, most widely known as Taiwan, to investigate how Taiwanese people ideate Taiwan Mandarin to differentiate themselves as a speech community from their Mandarin-speaking counterpart, the People’s Republic of China, commonly known as the PRC (China) or Mainland China. I argue that recent intensified interactions between Taiwan and the PRC, i.e. the influx of
the mainland Chinese tourists and the politico-economic power imbalance between the two polities, has contributed to Taiwan’s emerging assertion of Taiwanese identity and re-conceptualization of itself as a distinct community. My pilot ethnographic research focused on Taiwanese people’s conceptions about the Mandarin variety they speak—Taiwan Mandarin—with respect to other Mandarin varieties spoken in the PRC.

In this thesis, I discuss that despite the mutual intelligibility of Mandarins spoken across the Taiwan Strait, Taiwan Mandarin is ideologically conceived as a distinct self-standing language variety. That is, to begin with, rather than viewing the language merely as a vernacular of Mandarin, hence subjecting its speakers as subordinates to the Beijing-centered Mandarin language community, Taiwan Mandarin is conceptualized as a unique variety blended with memories of Taiwan’s immigrant history, self-pride about its diversity, civility, and cultural heritages. Furthermore, I discuss how Taiwanese people by idealizing Mandarin vernaculars of the PRC as an undifferentiated, alienated, and unitary ‘the PRC Mandarin’ elevate the status of Taiwan Mandarin. Afterwards, I explore the multiplicity and selectivity of attention to certain language features as ways in which Taiwanese people construct their speaker identity and distinguish themselves from Mandarin-speaking mainland Chinese. Through the discussion of the fluidity of language ideologies in Taiwan, I try to unpack how people on the ground make use of language as a semiotic resource for their realization of socio-political interests and group boundary-maintenance in cross-border regions.

2 ETHNOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Every society has its own unique and complex geopolitical history that contributes to its contemporary belief system about itself and its culture and language. Thus in this section, I
briefly summarize Taiwan’s ethnolinguistic history, with a focus on the postwar years, so as to provide a historical and sociopolitical context in which the phenomena discussed in this thesis are embedded.

Located at the center of the trade route from South Asia to East Asia, Taiwan has been the recipient of multiple colonial regimes and waves of immigrants since 17th century. From the Dutch, the Spanish, the Chinese during the Ming and Qing dynasty, the Imperialist Japanese, until the post-WWII Nationalist Chinese, each regime has ingrained its influences on this historically multiethnic society both socioculturally and politico-economically. As immigrants arrived, settled, or receded, these ‘outsiders’ had imprinted their languages, sociocultural practices, and values onto Taiwan’s preexisting social system. Their linguistic practices and ideologies in particular have contributed greatly to this society’s own conceptions of linguistic practices in relation to its multiethnic complexity (e.g. Wei 2006, Wu 2009, Chen 2010).

Figure 1: Maps of Asia Pacific and Taiwan. Public domain image from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tw.html)
Nonetheless, it is also this history of Taiwan as a passive recipient of hegemonic forces that has contributed to Taiwanese people’s sense of powerlessness and volatile perception of the national identity. Unlike their laissez-faire predecessors, the Imperialist Japanese (1985-1945) and its postwar successor the Nationalist Chinese Kuomingdang (KMT) strictly subjugated the locals and embarked on their assimilation agenda through language policies and devaluation of local languages. Japanese and Mandarin Chinese, languages unfamiliar to the local population, were respectively imposed on Taiwanese people as the sole legitimate official language. Yet, until the introduction of the concept of official language, Taiwanese\(^1\) had served as the lingua franca for all domains of communication, as it was the language of immigrant majority Hoklo. What followed these enforced National Language Policies were series of institutional discriminations against and structural exclusion of non-speakers of the official language (i.e. Taiwanese, Hakka, and Austronesian Formosan languages). As a result, Taiwanese people struggled and suffered under these language policies that aimed not just to assimilate the locals to the powerful foreign oppressor, but more importantly to establish the regime’s hegemony and eradicate the local autonomy (Fujii 2006: 156-159, see also Wu, 2009: 103-106, Chen, 2010: 83-87, Sugano, 2012). Such discriminative and oppressive institutional practices forced Taiwanese people to internalize the oppressor’s ideology and (in)voluntarily valorize the official language for survival. The failure to use and/or acquire the language properly meant minor punishments for pupils and major social-economic immobility for adults (e.g. Sandel, 2003, Brown, 2004, Wu, 2009, Chen, 2010). In the worst forms, the failure could lead to political persecutions (Brown, 2004, Sakano, 2012).

This was especially the case in the aftermath of World War Two when the Nationalist Chinese KMT retreated from Mainland China to Taiwan. The KMT brought with them
approximately two millions of mainland Chinese (known as *Waishengren* ‘out-of-province people’, henceforward “the postwar Chinese immigrants”) and the ideology of “Free China” (vis-à-vis Communist China) that deemed the KMT as the legitimate regime of China. Immediately after the KMT’s establishment in Taiwan were thirty-eight years of political oppressions of Taiwanese people under the martial law (1947-1987). This led to the misunderstanding and distrust between Taiwanese people and the postwar Chinese immigrants. The martial law came to an end in 1987. By then, Taiwanese people had gradually attained better socioeconomic status and political strength. Hence, since 1987 Taiwan has witnessed societal turmoil and conflicts between the two groups in its process of decolonizing Taiwan from the KMT.

During the first two decades since 1987, the discourse of language ideologies had been utilized internally against certain ethnic groups for political agendas. The discourse of Taiwanese-ness turned very salient in political campaigns by Taiwanese activists. The postwar Chinese immigrants and their offspring, as well as Mandarin Chinese (*Guoyu*), became the targets of this political de-sinicization movement (Brown 2004, Wei 2006, Chen 2010). Mandarin Chinese became the site of ideological contestation over ethnicity, language rights, and cultural identity; in the meanwhile, amongst other local languages, Taiwanese was solely iconized (Irvine & Gal 2000) and highly ideologized as the polarized opposite of Mandarin Chinese (Sandel 2003, Wei 2005, Wu 2009, Chen 2010). Taiwanese came to be utilized emblematically to address Taiwanese-ness, largely due to its huge speaker population (70% of Taiwan’s whole population according to Liao 2008:393). Across the Strait during this period, the PRC had been struggling with its internal frictions and economic stagnation in the aftermath of both the internal protests of late 1980s and the Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-96). Accordingly, in
comparison, Taiwan’s economic achievements and democratization at the time endorsed Taiwanese people with the national pride in what the people in the PRC could not easily enjoy: the material abundance, democracy and liberalism, and the blend cultural heritages of Chinese, Taiwanese, Austronesian Formosans, and Japanese.

Nonetheless, as Melissa Brown (2004) points out, the PRC “was more comfortable when Taiwan’s [KMT] government claimed legal authority over China” and saw an independent Taiwan a threat to “China’s national-identity” (2-3; see also 245-250). Hence, as the PRC gained in both geopolitical and economic strength since the mid-2000s, the PRC has been reasserting its “One China Policy” in a highly aggressive official stance with the threat and use of destructive force against any acts of Taiwanese Independence. On the side of Taiwan, the mid-2000s global economic recession had its huge impact on this export-centered nation. This economic hardship, accompanied by both the inability of then Pro-Taiwan Party’s government to cope with the recession and the nationwide anxiety over livelihood, assisted the KMT in returning to governance in 2008. Soon, using the discourse of economy-first-politics-second, the reelected KMT government fastened the already tight and unbalanced economic reliance on the PRC market, which only contributed to Taiwan’s economic dependence on China.

In recent years, in the name of shared culture and language between Taiwan and the PRC, the KMT furthered more Pan-Chinese policies that echoed the PRC’s “One China Policy”. Individual mainland Chinese has been granted permission to travel in Taiwan. Taiwanese universities were allowed, and encouraged, to admit more mainland Chinese students. The curriculum guidelines for the history textbooks have been revised by replacing Taiwanese histories with the Sinocentric ones. It is under this context that Taiwanese people, especially the younger generations born after 1987 who have no historical baggage of the postwar ethno-
political frictions and grew up identifying with Taiwan, find the PRC ever more frightening and refuse to identify themselves as CHINESE. The anxiety over individual and national identity and the animosity towards the PRC and its econopolitical oppressions came to its peek in March 2014. At the time, the KMT government attempted to forcefully pass economic treaties with the PRC before acquiring proper legislative review. This led to the 23-day anti-KMT government protest known as the Sunflower Student Movement, the first citizen occupation of the parliament in the history of Taiwan and the highlight of anti-Chinese movements.

2.1 Taiwan Mandarin

Taiwan Mandarin, or formerly categorized by linguists as Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan (see Li 1985 for further discussion), is a variety of Mandarin Chinese spoken in Taiwan that has been greatly influenced by Taiwanese (Kubler 1981, 1985, Cheng 1985, Li 1985), Hakka (Kubler 1981), Austronesian Formosan languages as well as Japanese (Kubler 1981, 1985, Chien 2011, Sugano 2012). In contact situation, when massive numbers of non-natives learn the dominant language as their second language, it is fairly predictable that they would rely on their first language during the course of the acquisition. Over the past seven decades since the introduction of Mandarin Chinese to Taiwan since World War Two by the Nationalist Chinese KMT, the language has adopted features from Taiwanese ethnic languages and developed into what we know today as Taiwan Mandarin and has become the primary language of the majority population (Kubler 1981, Li 1985, Sandel 2003, Sugano 2012).

While the language is still intelligible to other varieties of Mandarin Chinese, Taiwan Mandarin differs not only in phonology and lexicon but in syntax as well (Kubler 1981, 1985, Cheng 1985, Li 1985, Sugano 2012). At the time of the contact, the majority of Taiwanese people spoke Taiwanese as their first language and many of the youth were also native speakers.
of Japanese (Chien 2011, Sugano 2012). Thus, many Taiwanese people adopted the phonology of Taiwanese to deal with the non-existing sounds, e.g. retroflex sibilants [ʈʂ, ʈʂʰ, ʂ, ʐ], diphthongs [ʊo, oo], etc (Kubler 1981, 1985). Accordingly, the fluidity between retroflex and their counterpart non-retroflex sounds becomes characteristic of Taiwan Mandarin. In terms of syntax, for instance, scholars have documented that Taiwan Mandarin allows the use of verbs  kàn ‘see’ and  shuō ‘say’ as clause markers (influenced by Taiwanese) that is completely unacceptable in Beijing Mandarin (Cheng 1985, Li 1985), also known as Putonghua in the PRC.

This mutual intelligibility and the differences between the languages further complicate the geopolitical border and linguistic boundary drawn between Taiwan and Mainland China as two different communities. At times, the seemingly ‘shared’ language enables the pan-Chinese discourse of the cultural bond between Taiwan and the PRC. At other times, clear lines are drawn to separate the two communities by asserting Taiwan Mandarin’s inclusion of features from other Taiwanese ethnic languages that are not seen in Beijing Mandarin. With respect to the recent Taiwan-China cross-border tension and interactions, this thesis focuses on the emergent Taiwanese identity that enacts Taiwan Mandarin as its plane for identity/nationalism production in the micro-level (Fishman 1972, Moore & Podesva 2009).

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The political separation between Taiwan and Mainland China throughout the postwar years has generated greater differences than the mere distinction between the communist PRC vis-à-vis the democratic Taiwan. Their concepts of Chinese culture, social values, language, national identity, to name just very few, are far from similar. While the PRC immersed in the Cultural Revolution that destroyed traditions, Taiwan under the Nationalist Chinese KMT was
preoccupied with preserving Chinese cultural heritages (i.e. Zhōnghuà Wénhuà Fǔxīng Yùndòng Chinese Cultural Renaissance).

The image of nation, as I discussed above in Section 2, has undergone a dramatic shift in Taiwan since 1987 in comparison to the PRC’s official stance. Building upon the past empire’s territory, the PRC has essentially inherited the ideology and historical memory of the Greater China (Esherick J, Kayah H, & Young 2006), in which Taiwan is one of its provinces (Brown 2004). Conversely, despite the efforts the Nationalist Chinese KMT sought to establish Taiwan as the “Free China” and to assert the KMT’s legitimacy as the righteous successor of Chinese history/memory (Brown 2004), from 1990s throughout early 2000s, Taiwanese nationalists toiled on to animate Taiwanese nationalism. Thus, the perceived linguistic distinctiveness between these two varieties of Mandarin across the Strait are projected and semiotically utilized as the justification for the political and socio-cultural diversion between Taiwan and China. To construct intellectual foundation of the later discussion on the changing language ideologies towards Taiwan Mandarin, in this section, I first review two theoretical concepts—speech communities and language ideologies—applied to this study. Next, I summarize prior studies that dealt with language practices and ideologies in Taiwan.

3.1 Speech Community

In its simplest, yet problematic, definition, speech community refers to any group with a shared mode of communication, i.e., language (Trudgill 1974). Central to the study of language and culture, this theoretical concept has been “a troubled term” (Rempton 2009) to anthropologists and linguists alike. Various attempts have been made to theorize speech community since its inception. Leonard Bloomfield, amongst all, was the first to attempt to define “a group of people who interact by means of speech” as “a speech community“ (1933:42).
Later linguists have devoted their attention to identifying a shared, and often homogenous, linguistic structure as the determining characteristic of group membership. According to Michael Silverstein, what had been defined under this paradigm that prioritizes the denotational regularity were essentially language communities (1997:129, 135-138). This idealized and neutral correlation between a group of people and a specific linguistic code, or “the one-language-one-culture assumption”, as Judith Irvine elegantly puts it (1996:123), has only led to the theoretical confusion between speech communities and language communities (Silverstein 1997:127).

Since the 1960s, departing from the earlier objectivist perspective, scholars of language communities begun to take into account the social aspects, i.e. language-in-interaction, of speech. For instance, while acknowledging the importance of “a shared body of verbal signs”, John Gumperz pays equal attention to the intensity of interaction (1968:43). For him, the frequency and potency of the interpersonal verbal interaction contribute to the formation of group membership that essentially distinguishes members from outsiders. Similarly, Silverstein avers that “community must be…a degree term: membership of people in such communities radiantly depends on social-factional regularity” (1997:128). To him, speech communities are differentiated from language communities since they are the ones “based on patterns of indexical facts of linguistic usage-in-context…of who, normatively, communicates in which ways to whom on what occasions” (ibid:129). Focusing on other aspects of this sociality, Joshua Fishman defines a speech community as “a community all of whose members share at least a single speech variety and the norms of its appropriate use” (1971: 28). In the same vein, Dell Hymes understands speech communities as any groups that share rules for both the speech and its interpretation (1962, 1972). This turn of focus from linguistic structure to language practices essentially bred the study program of speech communities that seeks as its core for the “semiotic
processes”, “linguistic phenomena and discursive practices” (Irvine 1996:124). As William Labov (1972) writes,

“the speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior, and by the uniformity of the abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect of particular levels of usage” (p.120).

More specifically, the notion of speech communities, as Marcyliena Morgan defines it, refers to speakers “who participate in interactions based on social and cultural norms and values that are regulated, represented, and recreated through discursive practices” (2001:31; see also Morgan 2006). Under this framework emerge two theoretical approaches that are compatible, and yet bipolarized in terms of their orientation to individuals. On the one hand, Community of Practice (e.g. Eckert 1998, 2012) focuses on intergroup relations and practices. Microscopic approach to face-to-face interactions between members within groups is used in examining the production of membership from within. On the other hand, the study of Language Ideologies prioritizes intragroup interactions and differences. This study program sees the existence of a dichotomized other, with whom members of a group interact and against whom they construct their group identity, as the requisite for the establishment of any speech communities.

In line with this, Netta Avineri and Paul Kroskirty (2014) contend that what defines a speech community is based on its members’ phenomenological conceptualization of social boundaries and temporal borders regarding their perceived other and the use of regimes of temporalization. More specifically, it is not the language per se that differentiates one group from another, but rather it is the semiotic perception of a system, language being only a part of it, that constitutes them as a group unique from others. As is discussed later, it is by appealing to the sociality of speech and the perceptual differentiation of Mandarins that Taiwanese people are
able to semiotically conceptualize themselves not as members of the larger Mandarin-speaking language community. Rather, it is the perceived particularities of Taiwan Mandarin that enable them to claim agency and membership to a speech community that is different from other PRC Mandarin speech communities.

### 3.2 Language Ideology

As stated above, Mandarin Chinese is known as Putonghua, “the common speech” in the PRC but as Guoyu “the national language” in Taiwan. The linguistic variations between Putonghua and Guoyu do not demand language differentiation; rather, the distinction made is more ideologically produced. It is the objectivist understanding of the similarities between these two varieties that has been utilized by the Nationalist Chinese KMT and the PRC in promoting the discourse of Taiwan-China unification based on the mutual intelligibility of language and shared cultural practices. On the ground, however, as is discussed later, Taiwanese people do not seem to unanimously agree with such assertion of language sameness. Valentin Vološinov (1986 [1929]) articulates the importance of investigating ideologies of a particular group from both individual and societal level. Failing to account for both these perspectives will only result in theoretical misconceptions of this group’s ideologies. For the project of (national) identity construction as Taiwanese to be lastingly effective, it is critical that Taiwanese people have self-motivated consciousness to sustain this nationalist project (Esherick J, Kayah H, & Young 2006). Rather than noting “the sum of ‘objective’ differences”, Fredrik Barth highlights the necessity to turn our attention to the subjective differentiations, e.g. behavior, members’ beliefs, language practices, etc., that the participants perceived as significant in distinguishing themselves from others (1969:14).
“When defined as an ascriptive and exclusive group, the nature of continuity of ethnic units is clear: it depends on the maintenance of a boundary. … yet the fact of continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders allows us to specify the nature of continuity, and investigate the changing cultural form and content. Socially relevant factors alone become diagnostic for membership, not the overt, ‘objective’ differences which are generated by other factors” (14-15).

Similarly, Joseph Errington also states that “ideology stands in useful contrast to framings of talk as social practice to deal with situated interactional perspectives and social values, which can tacitly vary and shift between contexts and communities” (2001:111).

The perceived dissimilarities of linguistic practices and structures, theoretically known as language ideologies, support projects of group distinction. ‘Language ideologies’ as a linguistic anthropological concept is first theorized in Michael Silverstein’s ‘Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology’ (1979). In its incipient theorizing stage, language ideologies were understood as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (ibid:193). Grounded in Roman Jakobson’s theory of functions of language (1976), Silverstein (1979, 2003) contended that for an overt conceptualization of language with respect to the experiential world to exist, there must first exist a parapragmatic awareness of the social meaning of the language. Unlike prior scholars of language that viewed language as signs and symbols intact from human sociality, Silverstein drew our attention to both the participants’ awareness and ideations of language structure and use in relation to the sociocultural and political system they reside as the catalyst of language change.

Following this groundbreaking piece, Silverstein (1985, 2003) in his later works contends the causality of the interested participants’ ideologically-driven metapragmatic awareness in transforming the existing linguistic structure and use. Only with such ideology of language could language change (i.e. conscious manipulation/alternation of language) become possible, and so is
it equally possible for the realization of political concerns through language. He demonstrates, for instance, how feminist movements in the US have fundamentally changed people’s perception of the once-neutral third-person singular pronoun he/his as the demonstrative sexist language (1985). Such folk beliefs of language practice, mediated by sociocultural and political ideologies, regularize, rationalize, and eventually legitimize the resultative language change. Michael Silverstein’s theorization of language ideologies prioritizes participants’ metapragmatic awareness as well as activist-inclination. For him, language change is the consequence of both participants’ ideations of language as well as their endeavors in promoting such beliefs in language practice.

In the similar vein, following Woolard and Schieffelin’s idea (1994) of how language ideologies mediate between language practice and the sociocultural political structure the speakers inhabit, Irvine and Gal (2000) further identify the three critical features of language ideologies involved in the productive ideological processes: namely, iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure. In their ‘Language ideology and linguistic difference’ article, they provide detailed examination of the similarities between the honorific systems of Nguni languages in southern Africa and the shifting language ideologies of peripheral European countries since nineteenth century. Iconization, as they understand it, involves participants’ perceived importance of certain language practice in indexing their social reality. Such folk theorized linguistic indices are productive in the sense that they associate particular linguistic features with a specific group as its denotative nature. Fractal recursivity, furthermore, reuses these iconic associations and projects them to different levels of meaning. Such is the case, for instance, of how click consonants were borrowed and incorporated into the Nguni languages from the neighboring Khoisan languages. By adopting foreign elements from Khoisan languages,
Nguni speakers registered this layer of iconic linguistic difference to supplement a different layer of meaning—politeness and respect. That is, by recursively retaining the ‘foreignness’ of the click sounds, Nguni speakers assigned an additional meaning—politeness and respect—to these foreign sounds. The markedness of the sounds was thus transformed from ‘foreignness’ to ‘politeness and respect’ when issued with Nguni communities. Erasure, a selective elimination of the indexicality of certain features in favor of the subjects’ interests, in essence helps to reinforce the indexical relationship constructed through iconization and recursivity. In short, these three processes Irvine and Gal theorize provide intellectual means to describe and examine the semiotical employments of language ideologies of the actors in their constructing of nation-state, collective group membership, or individual identity.

Other dimensions of language ideologies include the multiplicity and the degree of awareness. In his examinations of Arizona Tewas, Paul Kroskrity (1998, 2000, 2009, 2014) suggests that these two dimensions of ideology play an important role in (re-)shaping the relationship between language actors and their perceived language practice and structure. For one, the multiplicity of language ideology, hence the plural form ideologies, suggests the theoretical advantage and realistic reflection in construing the multiplicity of different layers of ideology of language. Such theorization reflects and refracts the “meaningful social divisions (class, gender, clan, elites, generations, and so on) within sociocultural groups that have the potential to produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group membership” (emphasis his, 2000:12; see also Kroskrity 2010:197).

In addition, Kroskrity suggests incorporating awareness into language ideological dimension. In his research on Arizona Tewas, Kroskrity notices the “selectivity of most [Tewa]’s awareness” when trilingual Tewas were asked to describe their language practice. Rather than
reporting accurately their heavy-reliance on code-mixing, Tewas depicted “an idealized spatial
determinism in which Tewa is said to be the language of the home and the village[,] and Hopi
the language of Hopi villages and the Hopi Tribal Council” (2000:339). They “rarely
acknowledge[d] the interactional dynamics of codeswitching and instead conform[ed] to putative
universal patterns of member awareness” (ibid). As a result, through the depiction of
compartmentalization based on ethnic, spatial, and linguistic distributions, Tewas ideologically
ascribed a language purism that did not just reject the historical and linguistic convergence of
Tewa and Hopi but also constructed an imagined boundary within which Tewa identity was
maintained. Such distinctions, materialized via different linguistic codes, were utilized as the
symbolic icons of identities by members in their naturalization of the relationship between
languages and social categories.

In sum, language ideologies project influences from individual, communal, societal, and
even to the nation-state level on people’s actual language practice and beliefs, which in turn
induce the development of these ideologies of language. On the one hand, speakers’ beliefs about
linguistic structure and language use influence, project, and/or transform their language practice;
on the other hand, reversely, their very use of language reflects, and potentially determines, their
perception of the social reality they inhabit. Kroskrity succinctly summarizes language
ideologies as “beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often
index the political economic interests of individual speakers, ethnic and other interest groups,
and nation states” (2010:192). He further avers that,

“[t]hese conceptions, whether explicitly articulated or embodied in communicative
practice, represent incomplete, or ‘partially successful’, attempts to rationalize language
usage; such rationalizations are typically multiple, context-bound, and necessarily
constructed from the sociocultural experience of the speaker” (ibid).
3.3 Past Research on Taiwanese Language Ideologies

Language ideological studies on issues of language and identity in Taiwan explain scenarios of language differentiation as the outcome of the language policies and the sociopolitical economic dichotomy between Mandarin and non-Mandarin-speaking population (e.g. Sandel 2003, Wei 2006, Liao 2008, Wu 2009, Chen 2010). These studies attribute Taiwanese’ language ideologies largely, if not completely, to the influences of the Nationalist Chinese KMT’s language policies, especially Guóyǔ zhèngcè ‘National Language Policy’ (implemented from 1946 to 1987). This handling of the phenomena illustrates how the institutional enforcements of language assimilation by the Nationalist Chinese KMT has fundamentally altered Taiwanese people’s attitude towards languages.

In his study on the wartime Taiwanese-Japanese bilingual generation, Shōji Fujii (2006) points out that, similar to Japanese in the colonial period, Mandarin was understood by Taiwanese people as a foreign language transmitted from elsewhere to Taiwan and forcibly imposed on the locals as the national language to assimilate the local population (see above Section 2 for a brief discussion of language policies). During the Imperial Japanese period, the ultimate goal of Japanese language policy (Kokugo-kyoiku ‘National Language education’; for further discussions, see Chien 2011, Sakano 2012, Sugano 2012) is to assimilate (i.e. Kōminka “Japanize”) the colonized Taiwanese. It was implemented along with the literacy enhancement and modernization project. Contrarily, the KMT’s Mandarin language policy was imposed as part of the assimilation project whose goal was to de-Japanese and then Sinicize Taiwanese people. From the earlier stages, in the eyes of then KMT government, Taiwanese people were a people who had ‘lost their language’ (shigo jōtai ‘language lost’, Fujii 2006:146) because of the Imperial Japanese regime. Learning Mandarin—practically a foreign language to then Taiwanese
people—was THE way to regain their lost identity as Chinese people (c.f. Sugano 2012). As native speakers of Mandarin and stakeholders of this political agenda, the postwar Chinese immigrants were privileged because of their language ability and naturally occupied the upper positions of all occupations, which in turn further reinforced and ascribed prestige to Mandarin.

Grounded on the framework of language ecology—the study of the relationship between language and its environment—Ming-Hsuan Wu (2009) understands language policies imposed in Taiwan not merely as the top-down enforcement of the assimilationist policies that aimed to Sinicize Taiwanese. More importantly, she sees the current linguistic landscape as a result of negotiation and compromise by two interests groups: the state leaders (and the postwar Chinese immigrants) and the powerless Taiwanese people. On the one hand, multilingualism is celebrated; yet on the other, in practice, Mandarin functions as the high language and other Taiwanese ethnic languages as low ones. Su-Chiao Chen (2010) concludes from her large-scale nation-wide questionnaire survey (N=2,139, age range 12-60) that Taiwan Mandarin, in comparison to other Taiwanese ethnic languages, is perceived positively for its functional and social values, e.g. authority, better status-traits, and communicative advantages.

Silvie Liao (2008) surveyed Taiwanese college students on their perception of two regional varieties of Taiwan Mandarin, namely Taipeih qiang ‘Taipei accent’ and Taizhong qiang ‘Taichun accent’. Applying Silverstein’s order of indexicality (2003), Liao presents the transforming iconic values of subregional Taiwan Mandarin vernaculars from indexing one’s ethnicity to indicating the socioeconomic status, political inclination, and to some extent, personality. Perceptually considered ‘more standard,’ the Taipei vernacular indexes prestige, urbanity, intelligence, business-minded personality, and politically Pan-Chinese. Conversely, the Taichung vernacular, with its salient accentual features influenced by Taiwanese, guises its
speaker as working class, uneducated, regional, friendly, and politically Pan-Taiwanese. (401-403). Her perceptual dialectological study on Taiwanese college students maps out a folk dialect boundary (Pretson 1999) that separates northern Taiwan from other perceptually ‘southern’ cities based on the correlation between the linguistic differentiation of the two varieties and their sociolinguistic indices. It should be noted that, even though Liao notes that “[s]peaking standard Mandarin has become a marker for Mainlander identity” (400) and that speaking with “more Taiwanese Mandarin features” indexes Taiwanese identity (ibid), her research focus is primarily within the Taiwanese context. The term “standard Mandarin” refers to the perceived standard version of Mandarin that is by no means equivalent to Beijing Mandarin, or Putonghua of the PRC; similarly, by Taiwan Mandarin she essentially refers to Taiwanese-accented Mandarin—the Mandarin vernacular in Taiwan known for its Taiwanese-influenced phonology. In addition, the “Mainlander identity” more precisely signifies the postwar Chinese immigrants and their offspring but not the mainland Chinese of the PRC.

These quantitative studies map out the picture of how Taiwanese people understand Taiwan Mandarin and the sociopolitical attributes of its speakers with respect to other ethnic languages spoken in Taiwan. It is, however, worth noting that these studies place less attention, relatively speaking, to the voices from the people most affected by the oppressive National Language Policy. What is highlighted is the effects, or if I may, the success of the Nationalist Chinese’ assimilation policy in implanting the ideology of Mandarin as the dominant language over other Taiwanese ethnic languages. Liao summarizes that this ‘success story’ of assimilation agenda through language policy has “creat[ed] a unified linguistic market because this standard official language also symbolized the homogenization of the nation” and hence secured the “KMT dominance” (2008:395).
Todd Sandel (2003) attempts to present the folks’ voice and the intricate dynamics between these individuals and the broader institutional context they inhibit. He examines the transforming language ideologies toward Mandarin from a family-based point of view. His ethnographic interviews that involved three-generational participants of several families both in rural and urban areas of northern Taiwan capture how Taiwanese-speaking locals, those most affected by the National Language Policy, suffered from, struggled with, and finally internalized the ideology of Mandarin not just as the language of prestige and power, but more importantly the language of ‘good’ citizens. Referencing Bourdieu’s concept of habitus (1977, 1994) and symbolic capital (1991:50-57), Sandel presents how the KMT’s enforcement of the National Language Policy has created a habitus where Mandarin dominates the practice of communication and where non-Mandarin speakers are forced to accept the pragmatic values of Mandarin as capital in the market and devalue their native languages. Sandel maps out the linguistic landscape of the habitus of the Taiwanese-speaking people. The oldest generation, being speakers of Taiwanese, suffered from their inability to speak Mandarin and struggled with the acquisition of it. The second generation, with the oldest generation’s encouragement and assistance, had fewer problems with Mandarin acquisition and started to show signs of decrease in fluency in Taiwanese. The youngest generation, those entered school after 1989, were least fluent, or almost unintelligible, in Taiwanese and were already near-native speakers of Mandarin.

It is worth noting that Sandel highlights the ways in which each younger generation differed in their attitude toward Mandarin from their parental generation in relation to the overall social changes. However, as Sandel also admits, this study could only roughly outline what seemed to be an emerging revalorization and reconceptualization of languages (in particular Taiwanese ethnic languages) in Taiwan. Participants belonging to the youngest generation were
still “very young” (many started schooling only after 1987; c.f. Pp 541) at the time his research was conducted (1998-1999). For the most part, Sandel has to rely on the interviews with their parents to capture their changing perceptions of Mandarin and Taiwanese.

Despite its limitation, the perceptual shifts towards Mandarin mapped out by Sandel resonate with the later quantitative studies in presenting the social aspects of Mandarin in relation to other local ethnic languages. With that said, nonetheless, focusing on intra-national relationships, findings from these early-2000s studies show their limits in capturing the conceptions of language, identity, and nationalism of Taiwanese society with respect to the current extra-national influences. Ideologies of language are not static snapshots of the societal conception about language; instead, they are the reflection of the concurrent sociopolitical reality. As Meeks (2009) highlights, the study of language ideologies is difficult in that “[the] sentiments of community members are never coherently solidified . . . [community members] expressed a range of concerns not easily compartmentalized into a singular language ideology” (170). Such fluidity, or “indexical mutability” as Penelope Eckert terms it (2012:93-97), is a constant process of (re-)defining indexical signs through transformable linguistic practices, i.e. en-registerment (see also Silverstein 2003).

As stated earlier, since the end of the 38-year-long martial law in 1987 and the democratization that followed, Taiwan has witnessed drastic social and political changes. The lift of oppressive assimilation policies, including the termination of the National Language Policy, emancipated Taiwanese society and ignited revitalization projects of previously oppressed Taiwanese ethnic languages. The early-2000s studies critically engage with this period’s ideological manipulations of languages that geared towards ethnic and social class conflicts. Speaking (partial) Taiwanese, Taiwanese-accented Mandarin, or other ethnic languages, indexes
Taiwanese identity; contrarily, speaking exclusively Mandarin indexes postwar mainlander identity. Much of the emphasis has been put on the situations restrictive to Taiwan. However, much less has been discussed when it comes to the identity as the Mandarin-speaking Taiwanese people vis-à-vis the Mandarin-speaking mainland Chinese living across the Taiwan Strait.

Since 2000s, especially late 2000s and early 2010s, Taiwan-China relationship has entered a new chapter with respect to the PRC’s increasing political economic power over Asian countries and in the international arena, where Taiwan either has to choose to participate as apolitical group “Chinese Taipei” or to be barred completely from participation. Aside from the (forced) disappearance from the international arena, the reelection KMT government’s pan-Chinese ideologies and policies also put into question both Taiwanese (national) identity and autonomy under the PRC’s megapower. Thus in the sections that follow, I engage with Taiwanese people that have intensive interaction with the mainland Chinese and seek to understand the change in language ideologies about Taiwan Mandarin and the PRC Mandarin regarding this volatile Taiwan-China relationship. I look specifically at (1) how Taiwanese people redefine their Taiwan Mandarin as opposed to the mainland Chinese’ Mandarin and (2) how Taiwanese people use this understanding in conceptualizing an imagined boundary (Avineri & Kroskrity 2014, Kroskirty 2014) set against China.

4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

In this thesis, I examine the ways in which Taiwanese people nowadays ideate the symbolic values and functionalities (Bourdieu, 1991) of Taiwan Mandarin to establish and sustain Taiwanese identity at the local level. As part of an ongoing research project that investigates Taiwan’s transforming language ideologies, this study aims to present the results
from a pilot study conducted in the summer and the winter of 2014. The study asks the following research questions: (1) As Taiwan Mandarin has become the majority’s primary language, in what ways do Taiwanese people nowadays conceptualize the language that are different from earlier generations? (2) In what ways do Taiwanese people make use of Taiwan Mandarin to semiotically construct and sustain the nationalistic ideology about Taiwan as a speech community distinct from China?

4.1 Methodology

To address these research questions, I employed the mixed methods approach that combines participant-observations and ethnographic interviews (e.g. Hymes 1972, Briggs 1986) on three major tourist sites in Taipei City, the capital of Taiwan. Through this ethnographic approach, I seek to critically investigate the relation, or disjunction, between the observed phenomena and the participants’ conceptual beliefs about the language in question. The primary set of data comes from interviews from the two short periods of fieldwork conducted over the summer and the winter of 2014.

During my fieldwork in Taipei, I visited daily three tourist sites, i.e. Beitou Hot Spring, National Palace Museum, and Taipei 101 (see Figure 2), and audio-recorded interviews with 25 persons that amount to a total of approximately 24 hours. Audio-recorded interviews were later transcribed and analyzed in the original language (i.e. Taiwan Mandarin). Excerpts presented in this thesis are translated along with the original language transliterated in Pinyin. In cases where my analytic focus is on the narrative, I present the relevant excerpts solely in translated English.
These tourist sites, i.e. Beitou Hot Spring, National Palace Museum, and Taipei 101, were chosen because of their popularity amongst tourists, especially mainland Chinese visitors. This selection provided (1) opportunities to observe how Taiwanese people interact with the mainland Chinese and (2) access to the people in the cross-group contact frontline frequently interacting with the mainland Chinese.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out in informal settings nearby the chosen sites, e.g. local cafés or community parks. Modeling on Sandel’s 2003 cross-generation research, I recruited people in their twenties and those of their parent generation that work or reside in the areas to compare generational (dis)similarities in ideologies towards Taiwan Mandarin. In particular, I recruited 25 interviewees ranging in age from 24 to 57, in which 14 were male. Of the recruits, one-third (7 in total) are in their forties or above. All are native to Taipei City and
currently live in the Taipei Metropolitan Area. The interviews centered on their perception of language differences/similarities between Taiwanese people and the mainland Chinese, their experience with the mainland Chinese tourists, and their self-reflection of their Taiwanese identity based on these experiences. Field notes collected from the participant-observation in three selected tourist sites serve as the supplementary data.

4.2 A “Native” Researcher

I would like to give a brief personal reflection of my role as a researcher in this study. I have spent approximately two-thirds of my life in Taiwan. Thus, as a Taiwanese-American, this study of Taiwanese society to me “involves an inverse process from the study of an alien one” (Narayan 1993: 671). Taiwan is a context to which I am a native and am taken as one by the local Taiwanese people. Meanwhile, however, at times I would be set aside as an outsider when I accidentally reveal my alienness, e.g. a careless slip of tongue with what the locals described as a “not-so-Taiwanese” accent. The volatility of identity puts me in a personally strange but analytically profitable position. Kirin Narayan notes that her double-nativeness as an Indian American (dis)advantaged her throughout her fieldwork in India. She writes:

“instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have preexisting experience absorb analytic categories that rename and reframe what is already known. The reframing essentially involves locating vivid particulars within larger cultural patterns, sociological relations, and historical shifts” (ibid: 678).

The time I spent in Taiwan throughout my secondary education and college provided me first-hand experience of Taiwan in social and political transformation during the first decade of the century. More than that, this experience enabled me to engage myself personally and critically with my informants during my fieldwork. We know the context; we have directly or indirectly
participated in many of the national events; and we have lived through the same period of time. Yet, at the same time, my professional identity, and, in their words, my “foreign self (wàiguó shēnfèn)”, allowed me to disengage myself from these contextualized local categories and then reengage with them from an outsider’s perspective. Given the aim of this study, the study informants’ search for self-definition, and in some ways coupled with my shifting identity between that of a native and an outsider, essentially provide a situated, negotiated, and most importantly, subjective accounts of what determine a speech community.

5 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Twenty-five people I interviewed shared with me their understanding of what Taiwan Mandarin is and their experience from the interactions with mainland Chinese visitors. Issues my twenty-five informants discussed with me at length involve two major themes: (1) their understanding of Taiwan Mandarin and how it differs from the Mandarin of PRC, i.e. Putonghua; (2) their experience with speakers of Putonghua and how they realize the speaker differences between themselves and the mainland Chinese. In the following discussion, I map out my informants’ ideologies about Taiwan Mandarin and their attempts to rationalize the perceived linguistic differentiation between the two varieties of Mandarin.

First, in Section 5.1, The Ideology of Taiwan Mandarin, I provide an analysis of the naming of Taiwan Mandarin in the original language. The discussion highlights how the complex extralinguistic reality complicates Taiwanese people’s understanding and categorization of this very language. Secondly, in Section 5.2, The Shared Memory of Learning to Pronounce, I discuss how Taiwanese people construe themselves as a speech community different from China by mobilizing the collective memory of learning Zhuyin, the phonetic notation system used only.
in Taiwan. Following this, in Section 5.3, Metalinguistic Awareness, I discuss the multiplicity of awareness of the linguistic differences between these two varieties of Mandarin. I then analyze how specific features are selected for the construction of conceptual boundary between Taiwan Mandarin and the PRC Mandarin. In Section 5.4, Valorization and Iconicity of Taiwan Mandarin, I focus on the analysis of how specific phonological features are utilized to valorize and sustain Taiwan Mandarin as a self-standing language variety but not a regional vernacular of Mandarin. Lastly, in Section 5.5, Indexicality and Iconicity, I first introduce the two indices of sociolinguistic reality—speaker characteristics and behaviors—to present the folk rationalization of phonological differences between the two Mandarin varieties. Later, I talk about how logographic differences are used to reinforce the ideology behind these two indices.

5.1 The Ideology of Taiwan Mandarin: a “Variety” or a “Vernacular”

Until this point, I have been using terms such as “Taiwan Mandarin” and “Guoyu” interchangeably to specify the Mandarin variety spoken in Taiwan. In contrast, “Beijing Mandarin” and “Putonghua” are used to refer to the official Mandarin variety regulated under the guidance of the PRC government. Such treatment of the terms does not adequately reflect the sociolinguistic reality and the categories locally used in both Chinese and Taiwanese contexts. For instance, as I noted earlier, Liao (2008) observes two regional varieties of Taiwan Mandarin, namely Taibei qiang ‘Taipei accent’ and Taizhong qiang ‘Taichun accent’. In the PRC, similarly, there exists an array of provincial vernaculars of Mandarin, each of which varies in degree from the standardized, Beijing dialect-based variety known as Putonghua.

For English audience, the referent language of interest to this thesis is commonly known as Chinese (language), Standard Chinese, or Mandarin (Chinese). Nonetheless, Mandarin
speakers in both Taiwan and the PRC categorize the language very differently depending on within which polity they inhabit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Guoyu</th>
<th>Pǔtōnghuà</th>
<th>Zhōngwén</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloss</td>
<td>‘National language’</td>
<td>‘Common speech’</td>
<td>‘Chinese language’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place(s) of the Usage</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3: Chinese Terms for Mandarin Chinese*

While these Chinese terms all refer to Standard Chinese or Mandarin, both Guoyu and Putonghua possess a more restrictive denotation in referencing the corresponding language variety. The two terms are particularly associated with their distinct referent, Guoyu to Taiwan Mandarin and Putonghua to Beijing Mandarin. Additionally, they serve as the umbrella term that categorically rules out regional vernaculars of Mandarin in both contexts. As I elaborate in the following sections, my focus of Taiwan Mandarin-Beijing Mandarin dyad and my disattention to regional vernaculars have analytical purposes and reflect the sociolinguistic reality.

Unlike the former two terms, Zhōngwén however, is oftentimes used interchangeably with Guoyu and Putonghua. To many of my informants, there exists less distinction between Zhōngwén and either Guoyu or Putonghua than that between Guoyu and Putonghua. Zhōngwén serves as the neutral term, one that does not bear as many additional extralinguistic meanings as Guoyu and Putonghua do. In the following excerpt, a group of three, consisting of two middle-aged women and a recent college graduate working at a retailer store, discusses heatedly whether Zhōngwén and Guoyu have the same referent.

1 **SCC** Do you think that nowadays “Zhōngwén” and “Guoyu” refers to the same thing?
   Nǐmen huì juédé xiàn zài “Zhōngwén” gěn “Guóyǔ” zhè liànggè císhì yǐyàng de dōngxī ma?
2 Or they are still slightly different?
   Háishi yóudiǎn bùyìyàng?
The same, yeah…?
Yīyàng ā..?

Like “You speak Zhōngwén” “You speak Guoyu”
“Nǐ jiāng zhōngwén”, “nǐ jiāng guóyǔ”

I think they are the same
Wǒ juédé yīyàng

You [i.e. Fay] think they are the same. What about you [i.e. Brea]?
Nǐ juédé yīyàng. Nǐ juédé ne?

The same. Almost the same right? As long as it’s not that--
Yīyàng. Chà-bù-duō ma. Zhīyào shūō bǔshì nàgè--

Curly tongue [i.e. refering to the retroflex sounds]
Juānshé de

What is that called? Bei-
Nà jiào shíme? Bēi-

Beijing accent
Bēijīng qiāng!

Beijing speech, Putonghua, Standard speech

Yes, Putonghua!
Duì, Pǔtōnghuà

Putonghua Putonghua
Pǔtōnghuà! Pǔtōnghuà!

That feels the real difference
nà jiù gǎn jué zhēn de yǒu chà

It feels truly not Taiwan-
Jiǔhuì gǎnjué zhēn de bǔshì Táiwān

People
rén

’s word choices
de yòngcì

Ok, okok, so if it’s between Zhōngwén and Guoyu, there’s no real difference,
Hào, hào, hào. Suǒyǐ rúguǒ shì Zhōngwén gēn Guóyǔ, tīng-qi-lái jiǔ biějiǎo méi chà.

But if it’s Putonghua-
Dàn rúguǒ shì Pǔtōnghuà jiù-

Yeah that’s Mainland China there
Duì jiù Dàlù nàbiān

It must be the mainland Chinese
Jiǔ yídǐng shì Dálùrén

From this example we see that Zhōngwén is treated as a synonym of Guoyu in designating the Mandarin variety that Taiwanese people speak. In particular, Zhōngwén does not arouse the strong sentiment as Putonghua does here. In other discussions I had with my informants as well,
Zhōngwén is not the term that Taiwanese people would attempt to oppose or to disassociate from. Conversely, when referencing the Mandarin spoken in the PRC, multiple terms including “Beijing speech”, “Putonghua”, “Standard speech”, etc., were brought up (e.g. line 9-13 in the excerpt above). These were the terms that Taiwanese people would strongly refuse to be associated with. Following the interview discussion above, Jia further recounted an incident happened to her in Japan where she was troubled by these terms when she met a mainland Chinese woman:

“So for example I spoke, because I wasn’t sure if the hostess, oh she’s the hostess of a Korean restaurant, but she’s actually a mainland Chinese. At first I spoke to her in Japanese, then suddenly she asked me, “So do you speak Putonghua?” I had this moment that I wondered, “should I answer yes, or no?” “Oh… um, ye— yes.” That’s it, now it all occurred to me [why I was perplexed]. To me Putonghua is like THAT used in the China’s side, and I feel that I always speak Guoyu, Zhōngwén. Even though they [i.e. Guoyu and Putonghua] are very similar, but you just felt that they are actually different when she asked you. Ummm”.

When inquired by a mainland Chinese “do you speak Putonghua” at the time, Jia was unsure about how to answer. Irrespective of the mutual intelligibility, to her, Putonghua and the very Mandarin variety that she speaks—Guoyu or Zhōngwén—do not belong to the same category. This struggle to find a proper term to categorize one’s own language is a ubiquitous experience amongst my informants. A different informant, Lea, a late-twenties clerk from a souvenir store, gives a similar account of how perplexed she was in Japan when she always had to introduce herself in Japanese as a speaker of Chugoku-go ‘the language of China’, the Japanese word for Mandarin Chinese (for clarity, *Japanese* phrases are boldfaced, italicized, and underlined).

1 Lea When I was in Japan what I felt most awkward was that,  
Zài Rìběn de shíhòu, wǒ juédé hěn biěniǔ de shì shuō,  
2 I speak Zhōngwén,  
wǒ jiǎng Zhōngwén,
but I have to say, “I speak China’s language, the language of China”

wǒ dé shuō “Wǒ jiāng Zhōngguó-yǔ, Chugoku-go”

4 SCC  Um-hm, right.

Én én én, Dui.

5 Lea  When I said this, I, I don’t know, at that moment I felt a bit…

Zhèyàng shuō de shīhòu, zǐjǐ yòu- Wǒ bù zhǐdào, zǐjǐ dāngshí hui, yǒudiǎn…

6 SCC  Awkward?

Biěniǔ?

7 Lea  They [i.e. Japanese people] would say, “you are a Taiwanese,

Tāmén shuō “Nǐ shì tàiwān-rén,  

and yet you speak the China’s language?”

kěshì nǐ jiāng de shí Zhōngguó yǔ?”

8 SCC  Oh.

Oh.

10 Lea  Yeah, because the word is written as “China’s language”, not “Zhōngwén”.

Dui, yīnwéi ná gé zì shì xié “Zhōngguó-yǔ”, bùshì “Zhōng-wén”

11 Ren  So we Taiwanese can only speak Taiwanese?

Suǒyì wǒmen tàiwān-rén zhēnghèng jiāng Táiyǔ?

12 SCC  Oh, that’s like my initial question, what would you answer when people ask

Oh, jùxiàng wǒ yǐkāishì wèn de, Rénjī wèn

“as a Taiwanese what language do you speak?”

“nǐ shì tàiwān-rén nà nǐ jiāng shìme yǔ?”

14 Lea  Here [i.e. in Taiwan] I’d say, “oh I speak Guoyu, I speak Zhōngwén,


15 and I [also] speak Taiwanese”. Yet then in Japanese,

Wǒ jiāng Táiyǔ. Ránhòu zài Riwén lǐmiàn,

it’ll become the language of what nation. So it becomes, like “I’m a Taiwanese,”

Tā jiǔhuì biānchéng shì shíme guó de yǔ, biānchéng shuō “Wǒ shì tàiwān-rén,

“but then speak the language of China”.

dàn jiū huì biàn Chugoku-go”.

18 Ren  Taiwan, Taiwan’s language?

Táiwān- Táiwān-yǔ?

19 Lea  No- Oh Japanese had asked me if there’s such a thing as the language of Taiwan.

Méi- Oh Rìběn-rén wén guó wò, “Yǒu-měi-yǒu Taiwan-go?” zhēgé wèntí

20 SCC  Then you found it hard to answer I assume?

Nǐ jiūhui biānchéng yǒudiǎn nán húidá ba?

21 Lea  Um, “so is it Taiwanese?” And it’s, um…

Èn… “Suǒyǐ shì Táiyǔ ma?” jiū hui, èn…

22 Yeah there is a thing known as Taiwan’s language,

“Yǒu Táiwān-yǔ zhēgé dōngxī là,  

but you’ll think in your mind for a while, “so what is Taiwan’s language?”

Dàn nǐ xīnli jiūhui xiàng le yǐxià shuō, “Táiwān-yǔ yào duidìng de shì shìme?

24 “Taiwanese? Hakka? Austronesian Formosan languages?”

We see Lea’s confusion over the sheer Japanese term Chūgoku-go ‘the language of China’. Similar to Chinese morphology, in Japanese the names of speech forms are constructed by combining a place name and the suffix -go ‘speech form, language’ (see Everhart 2013: 13-14 for further discussion of the Japanese case). Japanese applies this rule in naming the Chinese languages, e.g. Pekin-go (Beijing dialect), Binnan-go ‘Southern Min dialect’, or Kanton-go ‘Guangdong dialect (c.f. Cantonese)’. In the case of Mandarin, the word is constructed by combining Chūgoku ‘China’ and -go, which literally means “the language of China”. Tellingly, such naming causes some unintended consequences to Taiwanese people. The difficulty in defining what language it is that Taiwanese people speak touches on the delicate issues as a result of the complexity of Taiwan-China relationship that involves the language, identity, and nationalism.

As we have seen in the prior excerpts, labeling the language of interest to this thesis—Taiwan Mandarin—in the original language is less difficult than it is in foreign languages. The choice between Guoyu and Zhōngwén gives the speakers leeway to avoid inducing extralinguistic information, in particular the implication of Taiwanese nationalism. Nevertheless, although the English term Taiwan Mandarin has been widely accepted by the intelligentsia nowadays more than it used to be (c.f. Li 1985), its direct Chinese translation Táiwān Guóyǔ ‘Taiwan National language’ still raises some concerns from Taiwanese people. Consider, for example, the response of Wei, a civic worker at his late-twenties residing near the National Palace Museum, the tourist site renown to mainland Chinese travelers (English phrases are boldfaced).

1 Wei I suppose your “Taiwan National Language” is a literal translation from English?
   Wǒ cāi nǐde Táiwān Guóyǔ shì Yīngwén zhíyì ba
2 You want to know ‘THIS’ which is spoken here in Taiwan, right?
   Nǐ shì xiǎngyào zhīdào Táiwān zhègè diāngde zhègè ma
Wei’s counter-question about whether Taiwan is considered a country highlights the controversial nature of the term Taiwan Mandarin. He pointed out the fact that this reference of the language as Taiwan Mandarin presupposes that Taiwan is a recognized independent sovereignty. Immediately after this, I followed up with the question “Then how would you refer to the language that we’re both speaking at the moment and the majority of Taiwanese nowadays use?” To this he simply answered, “[there’s] no need to specify, Guoyu is enough.” To determine if Taiwan Mandarin is a language, he gave prominence to the ideological contestation between the postwar Chinese immigrants and Taiwanese people over the issue of whether Taiwan is a country or a province of the Republic of China. Also note that in our discussion here, Wei uses the pronoun “zhège ‘this’” to refer to Taiwan Mandarin (lines 2 and 8). My other informants alike tended to hedge around and use pronouns, e.g.

* wǒ men zhège ‘our this’, tā men nàgè ‘their that’, etc., to index the Mandarin varieties of either side. With that said, my informants were all well aware of the differences between Taiwan Mandarin and Putonghua and understood Taiwan Mandarin as a language culturally unique to Taiwan.
But what makes Tàiwān Guóyǔ ‘Taiwan Mandarin’ controversial but not Guoyu? Why is it easier to use less specified terms like Guoyu or Zhōngwén than the proper name “Taiwan Mandarin” to talk about the very language they speak? I consider that the problems stem from “Taiwan” in “Taiwan Mandarin” that draws to attention the implication of Taiwanese nationalism. Without a specific referent to a nation, Guoyu asserts its national status without explicitly specifying which nation it is designated for. Without nationalistic particularization, this vagueness allows the issue of “Taiwan Problem”—whether Taiwan is a country or a province of China—remain unaddressed. Hence, this rhetorical question necessarily calls attention to the indexical relationship between the language ideology about Taiwan Mandarin and the larger geopolitical and extralinguistic reality of the Cross-Strait relations.

On the other hand, Tàiwān Guóyǔ ‘Taiwan’s national language’ conveys the strong ideological belief in which Taiwan is a nation and Taiwan Mandarin being its designated official language. This conceptualization of Taiwan Mandarin emancipates Taiwanese people from the Beijing-centered linguistic totalitarianism. It is a rejection of Beijing as the center of all Mandarin varieties, including Taiwan Mandarin; Taiwan Mandarin is deemed not as a regional vernacular of the PRC Mandarin, i.e. Putonghua or Standard Mandarin, but as a self-standing language variety.

In the next sections, I elaborate the ways in which Taiwanese people utilize linguistic differences to conceptualize the sociopolitical distinctiveness between Taiwanese and the PRC communities and to support the construction of their Taiwanese identity. Also, from now, I will use “Taiwan Mandarin” to refer to the Mandarin variety that Taiwanese people speak and “the PRC Mandarin” to refer to the Mandarin variety that Taiwanese people ‘believe’ the mainland
Chinese speak. I should emphasize that this is to more accurately capture the folk categorization of the languages than the actual and rigorous categorizations made by linguists.

5.2 The Shared Memory of Learning to Pronounce

Every polity has its own education system for its citizens’ language acquisition. The experience of language learning under such institutional systems is fabricated into the memory as people grow. Mandarin Chinese is a tonal language that uses logographs as its writing system. For Mandarin-speaking pupils, learning to speak the language is recognizably different from learning to use the Chinese characters. In order to master the writing system, pupils have to first recognize the corresponding sound(s) of each character before learning how to write it. Accordingly, both polities across the Taiwan Strait have developed their unique phonetic notation systems to facilitate the pupils’ logographic acquisition. The PRC uses Pinyin, a phonetic notation system based on the Roman alphabet, to transcribe the Chinese characters. Pinyin is not restrictively used within the educational setting; it is widely used for transcribing Chinese sounds by natives and non-natives in China and across the globe.

Across the Strait, Taiwan employs a drastic different transcription system known as Zhuyin, a system first developed in 1912-13 to enhance literacy by then Republic government (Shìjiè Huáyǔ-wén Jiāoyù Hui 2012) and implemented in Taiwan since 1945 by the KMT. Zhuyin consists of 37 symbols, among which 21 are used to designate consonants and 16 vowels. The transcription of a word is configured vertically (see Figure 4 for illustration), with one on the top denoting the consonant, the bottom the vowel. Tonal symbols are marked on the right-hand side of the consonant-vowel combination.
Yet unlike the internationally recognized Pinyin, Zhuyin remains exclusively used in Taiwan. It is extensively used in primary schools to facilitate the pupils’ development of both Chinese writing and reading ability. Outside the school system, it is also the most popular inputting method (Su 2003). Regardless of Zhuyin’s prevalence in various domains, in 2009 the Taiwanese (KMT) government decided to replace it with Pinyin to cater to foreign visitors. Still, Pinyin is restrictively used for the road signs and place names; Zhuyin remains dominant in educational institutions and the Chinese input method.

It is because of this shared memory of learning Zhuyin since day one in elementary school, coupled with its exclusive use in Taiwan, that many informants associated Zhuyin with “Taiwanese-ness”. They viewed Zhuyin as one of the contributing factors to the reduction of the accentual differences amongst Taiwanese people and the birth of “the homogenous” Taiwan Mandarin accent. In the following excerpt, Nan, a museum worker in her mid-fifties, recounted to me her memory of learning Guoyu in elementary school. She discussed her view of Zhuyin and the making of the Taiwanese accent (phrases in **English** are boldfaced):

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**SCC** So it’s like the zh, ch, sh sounds [i.e. three of Zhuyin symbols for [ʈʂ, ʈʂʰ, ʂ]] that my parents taught me to pronounce when I was young

**Nan** Yes, that’s the Zhuyin symbols that I was talking about. Because we learned, and your parents too must’ve learned b-, p-, m-, zh-, chi-, sh- [i.e. six of Zhuyin symbols for [p, pʰ, m, ʈʂ, ʈʂʰ, ʂ]]. These symbols ensure [the sounds] transcribed are the same.

**SCC** So it’s not like in the Mainland-, in China there-

**Nan** They there, because, partly due to their regional accents, every place is different [in terms of pronunciation]. But then in Taiwan’s Guoyu, when you learn Guoyu in Taiwan, there shouldn’t be such problems [i.e. because of the Zhuyin system].
Presumably as you may have already known, some people came from the Mainland China to Taiwan [i.e. the postwar Chinese immigrants], and they spoke Guoyu, but since they were already adults when they came, so they’d never learned Bopomo [i.e. also Bopomofo, the alternative name for Zhuyin system, originated from first four symbols b-, p-, m-, f-]. They might speak different [regional dialects of] Guoyu. But supposedly like us, we learned [Zhuyin] in school since childhood, then so there’s no difference [among us now].

Then like in our parents’ generation, some came from the Mainland China [i.e. postwar Chinese immigrants], then because they’d never learned Bopomo, so their Putonghua have many Provincial differences

Born to a family of a Chinese immigrant father and a Taiwanese mother, Nan grew up in a juàncūn ‘military dependents village’—a postwar Chinese immigrant village. According to her, those of her parents’ generation spoke various provincial Chinese dialects. When they talked to her in Guoyu, their accents were so “heavy” that she sometimes found it very hard to understand. Unlike these adults, her peers, bi-ethnic or not, talked just like the way she did. She attributed this difference between the adults and children to the learning of Zhuyin at school. Zhuyin is remembered as the neutralizer of differences between the descendants of the postwar Chinese immigrants and local Taiwanese people. Another informant, Rayan, a recent college graduate, gave a similar account:

Additionally their pronunciation is different from Taiwan’s. Taiwanese pronunciation uses Bopomofo. But they use roman—Hanyu Pinyin right?
Yeah, Hanyu Pinyin spells differently. Because of that it makes them [the mainland Chinese] pronounce kind of differently.
Oh—
Because if you follow Bopomofo, it’s like you’re “locked” [i.e. one has to pronounce the words as transcribed by the symbols].
And then, they use Hanyu Pinyin for spelling. It’s just like using English spelling to pronounce the words, so, it’s different from learning Bopomofo.
Here, Rayan attempted to rationalize the pronunciation differences as a result of the differences between the two systems. Like Rayan, many informants connected Zhuyin to the genesis of sameness in Taiwanese pronunciation and Pinyin to the regional differences amongst the PRC Chinese. On the one hand, since each symbol in Zhuyin denotes a specific consonant or vowel, the informants believed that the system helped reducing the heterogeneity in pronunciation. As Zhuyin diminished the intergroup accentual variations, it simultaneously created and further stabilized, or “locked”, the neo-unitary accent. On the other hand, in light of the PRC’s use of Roman alphabet, the informants considered that Pinyin makes it possible to accurately capture the precise way the mainland Chinese articulate. Accordingly, instead of unifying the pronunciation, and hence creating a people with the same speech, Pinyin enables the mainland Chinese to continue speaking markedly different Mandarin vernaculars, not just in comparison to Taiwanese people, but also among themselves.

The account of Pinyin and Zhuyin is not a mere comparison of institutional practice between Taiwan and the PRC. What is important is that it highlights the postwar memory of learning Zhuyin with peers consisting of different ethnic groups—the unifying socialization process. Hence, Zhuyin becomes a semiotic resource that can be mobilized to assert that Taiwan is a self-standing speech community distinct from the PRC Mandarin speech communities. That is, from the informants’ point of view, just as it helped eliminate intergroup ethnolinguial differences and conflicts, Zhuyin substantially helped creating a speech community where every member can identify with his/her fellow citizens through the way s/he speaks. Still, we should note the partial attention to Zhuyin in this reconfigured ideology of sameness in Taiwan Mandarin. Zhuyin is essentially part of the language standardization project under the KMT’s National Language Policy. At one level, it is conceptualized as the maker of a subjective
boundary between Taiwan Mandarin and the PRC Mandarin. At another, as an institutionalized pedagogical practice, Zhuyin is linked to Textbook Mandarin, which was based on Beijing Mandarin, in which there are sounds that Taiwanese people are not prone to produce. At times, this association in turn could alienate the Zhuyin/Textbook Mandarin pronunciation as non-Taiwanese. In the sections to come, I elaborate these multiple, incomplete, and at times contradictory ideations of Taiwan Mandarin in relation to the PRC Mandarin.

5.3 Metalinguistic Awareness

In Taiwanese contact situation, intergroup language differences between pronunciation, tones, and accents are most noticeable, with the lexicon coming as second and syntax the last (Kubler 1981). Naturally, it came as no surprise to me as a researcher that, of all the perceived differences, the phonological peculiarities were unanimously stressed throughout the interviews. The informants are all very aware of other linguistic differences between Taiwan Mandarin and the PRC Mandarin; still, oftentimes they would spend an extended amount of time highlighting the accentual differences and further enacting their version of the PRC Mandarin. The informants would start the discussions with a preface similar to what Haul, a sales at his late-twenties, said:

Haul  Though there are many regional differences inside [Taiwan], but overall there is a so-called Taiwan’s accent. And we don’t know how it is developed. But once you hear it you’ll know.
SCC   Um-hm
Haul  So if a mainland Chinese speaks with the Taiwanese accent, then we’ll instead think of him as a Taiwanese [at first]. But after you chat with him at length—
Yuu   But, [one’s] phrasing and word choices are still slightly different, right?
Haul  Yeah-yeah, those things just like ‘leak’ his identity, letting it [i.e. the mainland Chinese identity] pop up.
SCC   So the accent is the first determinant, isn’t it?
Haul  The accent is the first. It’s the first impression!
Haul talked about how phonological features of Taiwan Mandarin, which he framed as “Taiwan’s accent” (line 1), can be utilized for one to self-identify and identify others as Taiwanese people. What is noticeable in this excerpt and the following ones is the fact that the accents they described are abstract and unspecific, and arguably imagined. With that said, two important features of these accents are the projected homogeneity and the negligence of heterogeneity. There is only the dichotomy of Taiwanese accent vis-à-vis the PRC accent. When I proceeded with questions about the specifics of these two accents, the informants would concentrate exclusively on the pronunciation of consonants and provide examples accordingly, without discursively noting suprasegmental differences such as stress or prosody. For instance, even though Wei (introduced earlier in Section 5.1) touched upon intonation, he still linked the accentual distinctiveness solely to pronunciation.

1  Wei Yeah. And then, [our] pronunciation is not as standard as Beijing [Mandarin].
   Dui à. Ránhòu, fāyīn yè bù xiàng Bèijīng náme biāozhǎn.

2  This is a matter of our accent. A matter of our intonation.
   Jiǔshì wǒmen qiāngdiào de wèntí, yǔdiào de wèntí.

3  And there’s a whole, um, how to explain these differences, hm,
   Háiyǒu zhēnggè, ēn, zěnme shuō bùyìyàng ò?

4  in fact I’m also very, I too find it amazing as to why [the two Mandarins] differ!!
   Qíshi wǒ yě hén, wǒyě juédé hén shénqí wéishíme bùyíyàng!

5  It’s apparent that [both peoples] speak the same speech, but why do they differ?
   Míngmíng jiù jiāng yíyàng de huà, wéishíme hui bùyíyàng?

6  SCC Um-hm, how would you say [about this differentiation]?
   Ènèn. Zěnme shuō ne?

7  Wei that’s what I said, pronouncing less accurately is in fact Taiwan people’s Guoyu.
   Suǒyì wǒ jiù shūō, yàozì méiyǒu náme zhūnquē fāněr jiǔshí Táiwān-rén jiāng de Guóyǔ,

8  So such as sounds are not pronounced [precisely] zh-, ch-, sh- [i.e. retroflexes].
   Xiàng zh- ch- sh- bùshí zhèyàng fāyīn

9  [Such pronunciation] conveys the feeling of being at home [i.e. familiar].
   Shi yǒu qīnqīgǎn. Èn-ā!

As is the case there, one theme that kept surfacing in the discussions of phonological differences is the accurateness of pronunciation. The simultaneous use of the terms yǎo zi ‘to bite words’
(line 7) and fā yīn ‘to emit sounds’ (lines 1 and 8), as we see here and later, reflects an ideology that there appears to exist the “standard” to follow in pronouncing words. Both fā yīn and yǎo zì can be understood in English as “to pronounce”. The word yǎo zì stems from a practice in Peking Opera that strictly requires the performers to articulate the lines cleanly to ensure the beauty of the songs. Rye, a mid-twenties employee responsible for the cross-Strait communication, associated the PRC Mandarin with Xiangsheng, a traditional Chinese verbal comedy, and viewed Taiwan Mandarin as a deviation from that standard of accurateness.

1. SCC  So you said mainland Chinese and Taiwanese people speak different ‘speeches,’
Nǐ shuō Zhōngguó-rén gēn Táiwān-rén de jiāng-de huà bùyìyáng,

2. then how can we distinguish the Taiwanese’ from the mainland Chinese’ speech?
Nà yào zěnme quīfèn Táiwān-rén gēn Zhōngguó-rén jiāng-de huà?

3. What exactly do you think is different?
Nǐ juédé dàodǐ shì shíme dìfāng bùyìyáng?

4. How do you understand [the difference]?
Nǐ zěnme lǐjiě?

5. Rye  So in Xiangsheng [c.f. ‘Crosstalk’], Zhōngwén, in China there
Zài Xuāng-Shēng lǐmiàn de huà, Zhōngwén, jiǔshì Dalù nàbiān

6. they call the practice “Beijing-word Beijing-rhyme”,
jíàozuò “Jīng-Zǐ-Jīng-Yùn”

7. SCC  Um-hmm
Èn, èn, èn

8. Rye  That is, you have to chew the words [i.e. to pronounce] very clearly and precisely.
Jiùshì yǎo-zi yào tèbié qīngchǔ

9. It’s not the case in Taiwan. Taiwan is, like this,
Táiwān jiù bùshì ā! Táiwān jiù, jiāng ā-

10. [that] you can talk in whatever way you want.
Jiǔ suíbiàn jiāng.

11. You don’t need to pay too much attention to pronunciation.
Méiyǒu tèbié zhūyí yǎozì ā!

It is especially the case when the informants brought up the issues of the lack of retroflexes in Taiwan Mandarin as an evidence of the “deviation” from the “standard”. The informants, like Wei and Rye above, understand Taiwanese pronunciation as “less standard” and “less accurate” in comparison to the Beijing Mandarin (i.e. Putonghua), since Taiwanese do not produce the
retroflex consonants zh-, ch-, sh-, and r- exactly as [tʂ], [ʈʂʰ], [ʂ], and [ʐ] respectively. Indeed, as I touched upon at the end of Section 5.2 and will further elaborate later below, in Textbook Mandarin and primary school Guoyu classes, the distinction between retroflex consonants and their non-retroflex counterparts z- [ts], c- [tsʰ], s- [s] and l- [l] are highly emphasized (e.g. Kubler 1981, 1985, Cheng 1985, Li 1985, Sandel 2003, Chung 2006b). Retroflex initials are thus oftentimes categorically described as the (perceived) “standard” form. Nonetheless, in the actual speech, it has been documented that since as late as the late 1970s Taiwan Mandarin has witnessed “the gradual loss of … retroflexivization which in turn characterizes the language” (Li 1985:123; see also Kubler 1981, 1985, Cheng 1985). The informants were well aware of the discrepancy between the actual production and the prescribed articulation (as signified by the Zhuyin transcriptions) of these sounds. Consider, the following discussion I had with two salesclerks, Yuu and Haul.

1 SCC Then when you guys talk, do you distinguish zh-, ch-, and sh- sounds? Do you? Nà nǐmen zìjǐ jiǎnghuà huì fèn zh-, ch-, sh-? Hui ma?

2 Yuu He did correct me! Tā jiù zhěng guò wǒ!

3 Haul Haha Hāhā

4 Yuu He likes to correct people[’s pronunciation] Tā hěn xīhuān jīzhěng bié-rèn. [tsvn] [lsn]

5 Haul Haha Hāhā

6 Yuu [I don’t] differentiate the r- sound from the l- sound r- gèn l- bù fèn. Tā jiù shuō “HÉN-LE” [’very hot’] but not “HÉN-RÈ” [’very hot’] [ɾɯʌŋ] [lɯʌŋ] ¡Haul’s actual articulation

7 Haul Yeah he would say “HÉN-LE” [’very hot’] but not “HÉN-RÈ” [’very hot’] Tā jiù shuō “Hěn lè” ér bùshì “hěn rè”

8 SCC But you [i.e. Haul] your self just said LÈ, didn’t you? Ni zìjǐ gānggāng bù jiù jiǎng hěn lè? [lɯʌŋ]
As this interview took place in the afternoon of a hot summer’s day, the complaints about the heat and humidity constantly entered our conversation. The word rè ‘hot’ came naturally into the discussion about Taiwanese pronunciation. While in Textbook Mandarin the designated pronunciation of rè is [ɻuə˥˩], with a retroflex sibilant [ʐ] and a high-falling tone [˥˩], what Yuu uttered instead was much closer to non-retroflex (lateral) mid-falling [ɻuə˧˩]. Both informants here were aware of the fact that Yuu failed to produce the retroflex sibilant [ʐ] (which is also evidenced, though unnoticed by them, in Yuu’s other retroflex sounds, e.g. rén in bié-rén ‘other people’ in line 4, which he produced [ləɛn˧˥] instead of the prescribed version [zəɛn˧˥]). Haul discursively commented on Yuu’s mistake in uttering [ɻuə˧˩] instead of the “correct” [ɻuə˥˩]. What passed his attention, however, is that both of his versions of rè (in line 7), a flap [ɾ] and a lateral [ɻ], were in fact the non-conventional variants of the “correct” rè [ɻuə˥˩]. The “unorthodox” pronunciation as such requires to be amended when the attention to pronunciation is called. The informants often used “jiū zhèng” (c.f. line 4 here) or “jiào zhèng”, literally meaning ‘to correct, to amend, to set straight’, to refer to the action they take or being enforced upon them in dealing with these sounds.

Underlying this discourse is the standard language ideology (e.g. Silverstein 1996, Lippi-Green 1997) at work that sees superiority in the standard form and disfavors non-standard variations. Guoyu and Textbook Mandarin (or Mandarin Chinese in general, including Putonghua), in particular their phonology, was standardized based on the Beijing dialect.
Textbook Mandarin was essentially Beijing Mandarin. Under the KMT’s National Language Policy (Guóyǔ Zhèngcè), educational institutions enforced non-Mandarin-speaking population (the majority of whom were speakers of Taiwanese) to acquire Guoyu and devalued their improper acquisition (Sandel 2003, Chung 2006b, Liao 2008, Sugano 2012). Cornelius Kubler (1981, 1985) and others (e.g. Cheng 1985, Jernudd 1985, Li 1985, Sandel 2003) point out that due to the differences in phonology and syntax between Taiwanese and Mandarin Chinese, learners of Guoyu were troubled by their lack of proficiency in these areas. Many were ridiculed by the postwar Chinese immigrants for the heavy Taiwanese-influenced accent. Figure 5 shows the parallel of the sociolinguistic context of Taiwan and the PRC.

![Figure 5: The Hierarchical Order of Standard Mandarin in Taiwan in Comparison to the PRC (China)](image)

The blue- and red-colored square diagrams are made to represent the speech community of Taiwan and the PRC respectively. In either context, due to the standard language ideology, the Beijing dialect-based standard variety is regarded as prestigious and hierarchically superior in comparison to other non-standard forms. As illustrated by the larger grey square diagram, it is this analogy of Mandarin hierarchy based on Beijing Mandarin that essentially submits Taiwan and the PRC to a larger, Beijing-centered, Mandarin language community.
Amongst all sounds that do not exist in Taiwanese (e.g. the postvocalic Erhua [ɻ], diphthongs [uo] and [ou], etc.; see Kubler 1981, 1985 for further discussion), retroflexes have received attention the most. Hence, much emphasis and efforts were placed to “correct” or “improve” Taiwanese people’s phonology of Mandarin. Similar to Labovian studies of New Yorker postvocalic [ɻ] (Labov 1966, 1969, 1973), retroflex initials have become the iconic index (Irvine and Gal 2000) of prestige in (semi-)formal settings (Chung 2006b). The inability to accurately utter retroflex sounds indexes the lack of educational achievement and rural or working-class background (Sandel 2003, Chung 2006b, Liao 2008). Such standard language ideology has put Taiwanese-speaking population at a disadvantage with the postwar Chinese immigrants. This is exemplified in Karen Chung (2006b)’s observation of the hypercorrection of retroflex initials amongst many Taiwanese people. She notes that, as retroflex initials have come to index “a ‘stereotype’ feature of ‘standard,’ ‘correctly’ pronounced Mandarin, as opposed to ‘Taiwan Mandarin’, the inability to produce them would result in “a feeling of insecurity and even inferiority about one’s own natural speech” (Chung 2006b:198). Nevertheless, my informants’ responses seem to suggest a very different interpretation. Rather than complying with the hierarchical order that degrades Taiwan Mandarin, they validated their own natural speech to reconceptualize the indexicality prescribed to the r-coloring sounds.

The informants were well aware of the disjuncture between their actual speech and the “standard” form. As Chung also points out, “[T]extbook Mandarin exists mainly as an idealized language that is studied and exists in one’s consciousness, but is seldom consistently practiced” (2006b:198). This tells us that in the actual practice, Taiwan Mandarin occupies very different but practical speech domains than Textbook Mandarin does. I suggest that this selectivity of awareness (Kroskrity 1998, 2000, 2009, 2014) of pronunciation brings up a different but more
crucial aspect of Taiwanese people’s conceptualization of Taiwan Mandarin. Such awareness does not, however, stem from the standard language ideology that projects negative value judgments on “the non-standard” Taiwan Mandarin. Instead, informants expressed feelings of being home, closeness, familiarity, and “táiwān de wèidào” (‘Taiwan’s flavor’) towards Taiwan Mandarin.

Recall that the introduction of Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan was accompanied by the influx of the postwar Chinese immigrants and the Nationalist Chinese KMT’s institutional enforcements. Also bear in mind that, under the KMT’s National Language Policy, teaching of Textbook Mandarin was essentially teaching Beijing Mandarin that aimed at assimilating Taiwanese people to the postwar Chinese immigrants. Thus in its earlier stages, Textbook Mandarin has been associated with the linguistic coercion imposed upon Taiwanese people. Thus, it is not surprising to hear informants associating Guoyu/Textbook Mandarin with the manifestation of linguistic coercion. Wei (introduced above in Section 5.1) critically gave his view concerning “the standard Mandarin”:

“So THIS [i.e. Beijing dialect-based Mandarin] is the [language’s] political, social, [and] oppressive functions. Because the National language policy helped the oppressor to control [the people], or suppress the local cultures, and prevent the locals from disobeying these mainland Chinese oppressor [i.e. here, the postwar Chinese Nationalists]. Yeah, there’s such a thing. This is coercion through the use of language.”

In the next section, I offer more extensively my own interpretation of this revalorization of and the reconfigured ideology towards “the non-standard” deviation of Guoyu now known as Taiwan Mandarin.
5.4 Valorization and Iconicity of Taiwan Mandarin

Placing Taiwan Mandarin at the opposite end in comparison to the standard variety is not to disfranchise and subject it as a regional vernacular of Mandarin Chinese. Rather, it is an attempt to restore its status and more crucially to disassociate Taiwan Mandarin from Beijing Mandarin, which is the basis of Guoyu and Textbook Mandarin. Following the quoted statement above at the end of Section 5.3, Wei continued to elaborate what he sees as “the cultural meanings [of Taiwan Mandarin that] are different [from the PRC Mandarin]”:

“They [cf. the Chinese: here both postwar Chinese immigrants in Taiwan and the mainland Chinese in Mainland China] believe in this long historical, Beijing-centered, the Beijing dialect-based unitary speech. And we here, we our kind, we have our own, um, how to put it, local, our own set of all sorts of loan words. Or, let’s say, like the loan words [borrowed from Japanese] in the Japanese colonial period [c.f. 1895-1945]”.

Similar to Wei here, in their conceptualizing of Taiwan Mandarin, multiple informants emphasized the prewar memory under the Imperial Japanese regime and the loan words from other languages (particularly those from Japanese). I see this highlighting of non-Mandarin elements as a semiotic endeavor to establish a clearer boundary between Taiwan Mandarin and the PRC Mandarin. In a different context, Joseph Errington (1998. 2000) observes a similar multilayered ideology of the Indonesian towards Standard Indonesian. He describes Indonesian people’s “ongoing construal of and engagement with the social flux of everyday life [and Standard Indonesian]” as the “enduring resource for shifting national identities in volatile, emergent sociopolitical contexts” (2000:225). Here, the Taiwanese people I interviewed essentially juxtaposed Mandarin in relation to other non-Mandarin languages, subordinating it as one of the many contributors to the development of Taiwan’s current official language—Taiwan Mandarin. This ideology reverses the Chinese ideology about Mandarin Chinese that takes
Taiwan Mandarin as merely one of its many regional vernaculars. By underlining and producing these “non-standard”, non-Beijing, and non-Mandarin elements in Taiwan Mandarin, they symbolically position themselves as equal to the mainland Chinese, but not subordinate to them. To understand how this comes to effect, consider the following example of Rye’s enactment of his version of “the Chinese speech”:

1. **Rye** Yě yǒu shūō jiūshì, “Nǐ zhěnde hěn méiyǒu wénhuà yē!”
   “Also there’s like, [you say] “you have completely no wénhuà [i.e. uncivilized]!”

2. **Tāmen jiù huì shuō**, “Měi wénhuà-ér zhēn kēpà!”
   And they would say, “[having] no wénhuà-er is terrible!”

In this short string of speech, Rye at first uttered his Taiwan Mandarin version (i.e. the phrase marked in blue in line 1) of “you’re completely uncivilized” and immediately performed it in his version of the PRC Mandarin (i.e. the phrase in red in line 2). The differentiation was done through a change of phonological specifics, in this case, (1) the retroflex initial [ʈʂ] for zhēn ‘really’, (2) postvocalic Erhua [ɻ] after wénhuà ‘cultured, civilized’, and (3) tonal and prosodic contrasts (see Figure 6 for illustration).

First of all, note the phonetic difference of zhēn ‘really’ between Rye’s first fricative [ʈʃəә n˧˥] and his second retroflex [ʈʂəә n˧˥]. He specifically enforced a stressed [ʈʂ] to differentiate from his usual relaxed [tʃ]. In addition to the non-retroflex vis-à-vis retroflex distinction, note also the r-coloring, the postvocalic Erhua [ɻ], added to the common noun wénhuà [uəŋ huaɻ] in his PRC Mandarin version. Moreover, although never discursively commented upon during this and other interviews as well, in practice many informants, while they enacted their prototypical “mainland Chinese speech”, would change their prosody as well as the syntactic structure of the utterance. In his enactment, Rye displayed a drastic prosodic difference and a syntactic distinction between the two versions (see underlined tokens in Figure 6).
In his normal speech, instead of pronouncing the words *de [tə], méiyǒu [mer1 joo1]*, and *wénhuà [uan1 hua1]* in their fully developed form (i.e. in Standard/Textbook Mandarin), he exhibited phonetic reduction in the particle *de [ʔ]* and phonetic contraction in both *méiyǒu [mer1 oov]* and *wénhuà [uan1 “ua1]* that are common in Taiwan Mandarin (c.f. Chung 2006a). In addition, observe that the third tone (the low-dipping tone) in the second syllable of *méiyǒu [mer1 oov]* has no rise, a feature of Taiwan Mandarin influenced by Taiwanese (Kubler 1981: 105-106). These features that diminish the distinctiveness of each syllable made him believe that Taiwan Mandarin is more “flat” and “soft”, a point I will return to in Section 5.5.

In comparison, in Rye’s ‘mainland Chinese voice’, every syllable was fully developed and clearly articulated. Unlike the relatively “flattened” Taiwan Mandarin utterance, here the conceived prototypical PRC Mandarin utterance is distinctive in its high-low punctuative pitch contour. It is characterized as a string of consecutive and audibly distinguishable individual beats. One result of this prosodic distinction, as I elaborate in the next section, further contributes the perceptual differences between Taiwan Mandarin and the PRC Mandarin. Lastly, let us briefly look at the syntax of negation “not have” in both pieces of this utterance. According to Kubler (1981, 1985), due to the influence from Taiwanese-speaking learners of Mandarin in the earlier stages, Taiwan Mandarin demonstrates a higher frequency as well as grammatical
tolerance of the addition of 你的 and méiyǒu as auxiliaries before main verbs (Kubler 1985:161-165), a feature that Beijing Mandarin does not permit. Kubler observes that, “in Taiwan Mandarin, méiyǒu is usually used in all positions where Beijing Mandarin would have only méi” (1985: 162). Here, we see the exact pattern of such syntactic construction. Rye reduced 你 from méiyǒu in his PRC utterance. Despite that he regularly uses méiyǒu in his normal speech, he did not metalinguistically comment on, or show any awareness of his syntactic adjustment in his PRC Mandarin utterance.

Indeed we should not overlook the possibility of performance effects in his and other informants’ enactment of their stance on the mainland Chinese speech. Yet, regardless of their illustrating act, their selective attention and disattention to specific linguistic features substantially address their ideologies towards both Mandarins in question. As stated above, the informants focused only on the phonological aspects and lexicon in their metalinguistic commentary when comparing the two Mandarins. In most cases, the informants consciously showcased various short utterances that have retroflex initials and postvocalic Erhua sound by using mutually intelligible lexical items. They often followed up with half-joking self-ridicules and narrated awkward moments when they would “automatically”, but “unnaturally”, “curl their tongue [for retroflex sounds]” when talking to the mainland Chinese. Cher, a counter clerks in her fifties, revealed this very weird moment here:

“[I] don’t know why but whenever I talk to them, automatically my tongue gets tied. And like [so does] my husband too. [He said,] “Why do you curl you tongue whenever you talk to them?” [And I said,] “You do the same thing! [You change your] Taiwan Mandarin, whenever you see them you keep curling your tongue!” [Then he said,] “Oh did I really do that?” That’s it, I found that many people would unconsciously [do it].”
This suggests a clear non-linguistic boundary between retroflex and non-retroflex sounds; while the retroflex sounds are indexical of the PRC Mandarin, non-retroflex sounds are the normative practice in Taiwan Mandarin, as we have seen in Rye’s example above.

Past studies have accounted how retroflex sounds in the Taiwanese context are indexical of (1) the postwar Chinese immigrant lineage (e.g. Liao 2008, Chen 2010, Sugano 2012); (2) higher prestige and socioeconomic status (e.g. Sandel 2003, Chung 2006b, Liao 2008); and (3) Pan-Chinese political preference (e.g. Liao 2008). These, however, are based on the analogy between Taiwan Mandarin (and/or its regional dialects) and Guoyu/Textbook Mandarin. That is, the indexical hierarchy in which retroflexes are considered prestigious stems from the standard language ideology. With respect to the Taiwan-China comparison, the informants have shown what I see as an example of fractal recursivity (Irvine and Gal 2000) that reconfigures the indexicality of retroflex sounds. These informants are, relatively speaking, in constant and intensive contact with the mainland Chinese compared to the majority of Taiwanese people. Also, given the nature of many of their occupations as salesclerks at tourist spots, they have to consciously produce the speech form they associate with the mainland Chinese with whom they interact on a daily basis. These factors help to erase (Irvine and Gal, 2000) the iconic link between the sounds and other sociopolitical reality within Taiwan that the past literature has pointed out. The indexical connection between retroflexes and the Mainland Chinese-ness and higher socioeconomic status has instead been projected to the analogy of the Taiwanese speech vis-à-vis the mainland Chinese speech. Figure 7 demonstrates how the informants constructed a semiotic boundary between Taiwan Mandarin and the PRC Mandarin.
This reconceptualization reconfigures the prescribed hierarchical order under the standard language ideology as stated in Section 5.3 and demonstrated in Figure 5. At one level, it valorizes Taiwan Mandarin and frees it from being proscribed as a regional vernacular of Textbook Mandarin or Putonghua. The sociolinguistic hierarchy is perceptually abated to the degree where Taiwan Mandarin is considered as equally prestigious as Textbook Mandarin. At another level, curling the tongue for the r-coloring sounds is perceived as a non-Taiwanese pronunciation. Thus, rather than indexing sociolinguistic differences within Taiwan, the retroflex/non-retroflex distinction now becomes a well-defined boundary line that clearly distinguishes Taiwan Mandarin from the PRC Mandarin as the language of a different speech community (as marked by blue-colored square diagram and the dotted double line). Retroflex sounds have thus been rationalized to be iconic of the PRC Mandarin, blurring the line between Textbook Mandarin and Putonghua.

### 5.5 Indexicality and Iconicity

Earlier in my discussion of Rye’s enactment of the PRC Mandarin in Section 5.4, I have touched upon the connection between the prosodic contours and the perceptions of Taiwan Mandarin and the rationalized PRC Mandarin. Speakers of Taiwan Mandarin are considered
more róu ‘soft’, wēnhé ‘gentle’, and lìmào ‘polite’, whereas the PRC Mandarin speakers are described as (gāng)yìng ‘tough, stiff’, chōng ‘bellicose’, and chāojià-si-de ‘quarrelsome’. As I have demonstrated in Section 5.4, in a drastic contrast to their “flattened” Taiwan Mandarin speech, informants’ projection of the PRC Mandarin is recognizable by its punctuative rhythm. This paralinguistic feature is then perceived as iconic link between the languages and non-linguistic characteristic of the speakers. Such indexical relationship, according to Elinor Ochs (1992), “entails tacit understanding” of “(1) how particular linguistic forms can be used to perform particular pragmatic work (such as conveying stance and social action) and (2) norms, preferences, and expectations regarding the distribution of this work vis-à-vis particular social identities of speakers, referents, and addressees” (341-342). Consider the words of Jon, a mid-twenties part-time server at a restaurant near one of the tourist site I visited:

1 Jon  Because, speaking of intonation, mainland Chinese talk kind of more heavily
Yīnwèi yǔdiào fāngmiàn de huà, Zhōngguó-rén jiānghua huì bǐjiāo zhòng
2 SCC  Um.
3 Jon  And Taiwanese people are more soft
Ránhòu Táiwān-rén jiùshì bǐjiāo róu
4  And like I’ve heard that people think that mainland Chinese talk SO impolitely,
Xiàng wǒ yǒu tīngshūō guò, yǒuren jiùdé Dálǔ-rén jiānghuà “HÁO méi lìmào”,
5 SO coarse. Then by contrast Taiwanese people [sound] so cultivated.
“HÁO cǔ” Ránhòu, fānguān Táiwān-rén “hǎo yǒu pǐngé”
6 SCC  Huh? Then do you think this way? Like about our way of speaking? Or theirs?
Ēn? Nà nǐ huì zhèyàng juéde ma? Jiù wǒmen de jiǎnghuà fāngshi, huózhè shì tāmen-
7 Jon  Uuhh… I do think mainland Chinese talk more strai- straightforward, a bit…
E… Wǒ shì juéde Dálǔ-rén jiānghuà bǐjiāo zhì- zhìshuāng, yǐdiǎn là…
8 SCC  Um.
   Ēn

In this excerpt, Jon compared the manner of speaking between Taiwanese people and the mainland Chinese. In his narrative (lines 4-5), Jon contrasted the first two stressed hǎo ‘so’, when describing how the mainland Chinese speak, with the last unstressed hǎo ‘so’, when
depicting how Taiwanese people talk, even when he did not intend to enact the mainland Chinese accent. Consciously or not, this differentiation of stress suggests his impressionist interpretation of the prosodic contrast between the “audacious” PRC Mandarin and the “placid” Taiwan Mandarin. Similar to Jon, amongst all categories other informants used, the analogy between róu ‘soft’ and (gāng)yìng ‘tough, stiff’ appeared most frequently. Particularly, all informants used róu to define Taiwan Mandarin as the refined, cultivated, and sophisticated language that categorically differs from the PRC Mandarin, which they took as coarse and aggressive. Like Jon’s account above, Euen, a late twenty-something salesclerk, gave a vivid account of his impression of how the mainland Chinese talk differently from Taiwanese people (the underlined bolds are Taiwanese utterances):

SCC Um-hm, so how do you think that the Mandarins of both sides sound different?
Euen I think is that, when the mainland Chinese speak their National language [i.e. Putonghua] they sound more aggressive. It’s completely so, [they sound] more provocative, more bellicose. Um but I think it’s not necessarily the case of course. I think that’s [an example of the] prejudice too.
SCC Do you think that [i.e. prejudice] has to do with the language or the people?
Euen It should have nothing to do with the language, perhaps…?
SCC So it’s much closer to the people?
Euen Yes, but it is because of the people that it gets into the language. They too also say things like this, oh Taiwanese people are so gentle
SCC Um-hm, so soft-
Euen “You southerners,” he’s [i.e. the generic ‘he’, the mainland Chinese] not even saying “Taiwanese people”! [He would say,] “you men and women talk so gentle, so refined”. The mainland Chinese talk so stiff, so aggressive, so aggressive, so hostile, so impolite!

Euen attempted to link the manner of speaking to language, stating that in comparison to the refined Taiwanese people, the mainland Chinese are “impolite and aggressive”. Interestingly, even though these perceptions are oftentimes introduced using quotes or hedges, like Jon and Euen did above, the informants tended to emotionally reiterate these very judgmental points that
they had first tried to downplay at the beginning. Similarly, Kay, a late-forties salesclerk, let out a similar remark about the mainland Chinese tourists coming to the store in which she works:

“We still talk differently from others, different from the mainland Chinese. Other mainland Chinese all think Taiwanese people talk softly, because they [i.e. the mainland Chinese] talk very bluntly and hastily. It sounds like they’re in verbal fights with others. It doesn’t feel too pleasant. [We are] not in market places!”

Nearly all informants mentioned how “boisterous” the PRC Mandarin sounds to them. Some further described how it gives them an impression of “wà-wà-wà” (onomatopoeic ‘wa’ sound), an idea that the speakers are always making strings of strong and loud noise. In contrast, Taiwan Mandarin is unanimously depicted as jiāoyǎng ‘cultivated’ and róu ‘soft’, which they associated with refinement, education, and higher status. These exemplify the folk attempts to rationalize of the prosodic differences between the two Mandarins. As I mentioned in the previous section, typically Taiwan Mandarin does not have the fully-developed third tone, which usually becomes mid-falling tone [˦˧] than the actual low-dipping [˨˩˦] (Kubler 1981, 1985). Additionally, it has higher tendency of phonetic contraction that reduces the occurrences of distinctive initials and changes the accompanying tones (Chung 2006a). These result in the perception of Taiwan Mandarin being relatively ‘flattened’, i.e. having a much smoother and fluent prosodic contour. Thus from the perspective of Taiwan Mandarin speakers, the PRC Mandarin differs in that the tonal distinctions, in particular the full-fledged third tone, still prevail, which make syllable-initials and the ‘up-and-down’ prosody very salient. Each word is thus a distinguishable and forced beat to the ears of many Taiwanese people. This explains why they perceive the PRC Mandarin as very “heavy”, “strong” and even “boisterous”.

The association of Taiwan Mandarin with positive attributes is not necessarily the issue of familiarity, nor is the association of the PRC Mandarin with negative attributes a matter of
hostility or ‘Sinophobia’. Rather, Taiwan Mandarin becomes a semiotic resource for reinforcing the positive image of its speakers that Kay below deemed vital for doing business with the Chinese tourists. Kay (introduced above) continues explaining how people perceive Taiwan Mandarin and how it matters in doing business. Staying away from being zi-zhèng qiāng-yuán ‘word-precise accent-sound’, meaning “clear articulation and a mellow and full tone”, is the key to keep Taiwanese visitors:

“Umm honestly, if you talk in that kind of relatively undifferentiated one [i.e. Taiwan Mandarin with no strong retroflex sounds], people will actually consider you more approachable. Really. ‘Cause we’re talking to shoppers! Because we’re talking to shoppers, we need to use a more approachable tone. So naturally, you don’t distinguish the [retroflex] sounds. If you speak in the “zi-zhèng qiāng-yuán” way, people feel disconnected from you. You sound emotionless. But if you use non-standard [i.e. referring to Taiwan Mandarin here], you sound like you have feelings.”

Moreover, along side with this folk rationalization of ‘softness’ vis-à-vis ‘strongness’ and ‘closeness’ vis-à-vis ‘alienness’, these informants inferred an indexical link between the Taiwan-PRC Mandarin contrast and their speaker behavior. Evaluative and emotive comments such as “reserved”, “comfortable”, and “polite” are used to describe Taiwan Mandarin speakers. Contrarily, the PRC Mandarin speakers are negatively depicted as “impetuous”, “cacophonous”, and “impolite”. There were many occasions where the informants emotively described to me the “uncivil” behavior of the mainland Chinese they had witnessed in their work place or other tourist sites. Some talked about how they had learned to avoid dining at the night markets renowned among the mainland visitors, since they “just cannot stand [the mainland Chinese’] yelling and shouting,” and “the dirty tables full of spilled foods [made by the mainland Chinese]”. Underlain these accounts and loaded language (regardless of their truth value) seems to be an ideology of the cultural superiority of Taiwanese people over the mainland Chinese. By
this I mean that, despite that what they described were the actions of the mainland tourists they had encountered, they translated these behavioral particularities to the characteristics of their speech. By establishing the indices of civility to the “softness” of Taiwan Mandarin and incivility to the “boisterousness” of PRC Mandarin, they infused a sense of pride and prestige into the ideology of Taiwan Mandarin. Such dichotomized rationalization further helps to reinforce the semiotic boundary drawn between Taiwan Mandarin and the PRC Mandarin.

In several cases, the informants employed a popular but prejudiced folk theorization that ridicules simplified Chinese characters to this ideology of cultural superiority of Taiwan Mandarin. Jane, a twenty-four-year-old new employee of a local café, in addressing her view of the mainland Chinese, referred to this biased account:

“Isn’t there such a saying? Something like, [in] simplified Chinese characters, “qīn bù jiàn, ài wú xīn” [i.e. literally “[to have] parents [but] not seeing [them], [to] love without heart”] kind of things. It’s really like that! They don’t have things like the heart [i.e. the sense] of social morality. [They] just want things be done quick and throw things away. Being imprudent [in doing everything]. Jī-jī zhā zhā, jī-jī zhā zhā [i.e. onomatopoeia, mimicking the way the mainland Chinese talk]. It feels, hmm, how to put it, it’s just like having no substance [in the mainland Chinese]. I still think traditional Chinese characters are better than simplified Chinese characters. More beautiful.”

Jane linked a local satire of the simplified Chinese character to behavioral particularities of the mainland Chinese. The reproduced account started with the phrase “qīn bù jiàn, ài wú xīn”, literally ‘[to have] parents [but] not seeing [them], [to] love without heart’. It satirizes that the simplified Chinese characters have reduced too many meaningful radicals and strokes only for the sake of simplification. Jane used the second phrase “ài wú xīn”—one that makes fun of the fact that the simplified Chinese character for ‘love’ misses the radical meaning ‘heart’—to describe her interpretation of the behaviors of the mainland Chinese.
Figure 8: Folk Theorization of Simplified Chinese Character “Ai ‘love’”

Here, the “heartless” concept is rationalized as the explanation of their lack of a sense of social morality (note that in Chinese the word for “social morality” is constructed by appending xīn “heart” to gōngdé “social morality” making it gōngdé xīn). Some other informants that used this Chinese character analogy addressed this “heartless” notion differently. They rationalized this as a sign of the mainland Chinese’ lack of respect and consideration for Taiwanese people’s search for their (national) identity. In a drastic contrast, because of the reductionist reconfiguration of simplified Chinese characters, the mainland Chinese are negatively associated with ignorance, uncultivated, and disrespect of others. While this is not a common analogy, it presents use how logographic differences become the semiosis to reflect and rationalize the behavior of Taiwanese people and the mainland Chinese as people belonging to different sociocultural systems.

6 CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

Language ideology as a semiotic system presents how the speakers construe the relationship between linguistic signs and practice and their imminent reality. The history of Taiwan as a receptor of immigrants and their distinct ideologies towards language, ethnicity, and nation is reflected in the multiplicity of Taiwanese identities. The increased interactions with the PRC (China) in recent years at the governmental and individual level have inspired Taiwanese society to search for its identity and autonomy.
In this thesis, I attempted to demonstrate the ways in which Taiwanese people rationalize the language structure and use indexical of Taiwan Mandarin to support their project of linguistic differentiation and boundary maintenance between Taiwan and the PRC (China). I began with an analysis of the ambivalent attitudes towards the Chinese terms for what we know as “Taiwan Mandarin” in English, i.e. Tāiwān Guóyǔ ‘Taiwan National language’, Guóyǔ ‘National language’, and Zhōngwén ‘Chinese language’ as a result of Taiwan’s complicated national identity and international status. I then continued to map out the multiplicity of speaker’s awareness of the linguistic differences between the two Mandarins. I argued that these partial and selective dis/attentions to certain linguistic features are the speakers’ attempts to juxtapose Taiwan Mandarin and the PRC Mandarin as equal in status, thus emancipating Taiwan Mandarin from the Beijing-centered Mandarin hierarchical order. Moreover, I drew multiple examples of the folk rationalizations of these linguistic differences to exemplify how Taiwan Mandarin is re/valorized and used as a semiotic resource for expressing Taiwanese identity. By examining Taiwanese changing language ideologies as a result of the volatile Taiwan-China relationship, this study contributes to the anthropological understanding of how extralinguistic factors could stimulate a group of people within a larger language community to re/conceptualize themselves as a distinct speech community.

As I mentioned, this thesis presents the results of preliminary fieldwork for an ongoing research project on the changing language ideologies in Taiwan. Many questions still remain to be answered. This study focused only on Taiwanese people that are constantly interacting with the mainland Chinese visitors. Bear in mind that however frequent these interactions are, they remain ephemeral: the communications happen and terminate within a limited time and restricted space, such as tourist sites, souvenir shops, or local cafés. As Ochs (1992) has noted, ideologies
“are socialized, sustained, and transformed through talk, particularly through verbal practices that recur innumerable times in the lives of members of social groups” (336). Identity and ideologies emerge phenomenologically from such social interactions that highlight similarities and differences. Thus, it would be analytically profitable for future research to consider a different population—college students with whom now an increasing number of full-time or exchange mainland Chinese students study, live, and socialize.

In addition, one thing I noticed is that the informants demonstrated a very unclear, and at times contradictive, understanding as to what counts as characteristics of Taiwan Mandarin. There is a very blurry line between Taiwan Mandarin and Taiwanese-accented Mandarin (a substandard vernacular of Taiwan Mandarin noticeable in its Taiwanese-influenced phonology). For instance, while other linguistic features of Taiwan Mandarin are also influenced by Taiwanese, the lack of r-coloring initials zh-, ch-, and sh- is considered a major feature of Taiwan Mandarin. At times, however, this lack of retroflexion is treated as a feature of Taiwanese-accented Mandarin. Also, while some informants consider Taiwanese-accented Mandarin derogatory (see also Liao, 2008) but equally “Taiwanese”, others consider it endearing, familiar, and “very Taiwanese”. Future research should hence consider the degree of dialect leveling effects (Johnstone 2010) on Taiwanese-accented Mandarin that may have recontextualized some of its features into Taiwan Mandarin.

Last but not the least, the future research should take into account the "ideologies of linguistic otherness", as Rupert Stasch phrases it, which make salient the alien nature of the foreign code (Stasch 2009). Stasch argues that such ideology pertains to the contact situations where the less powered groups strive to maintain their agency, both linguistic and politico-economic, against the intrusiveness of the sociocultural and politico-economic powerful group.
With regard to Taiwan-China relation, because of the limited interactions with the mainland Chinese as a result of the decades of political separation and travel restriction, in the eyes of the majority of Taiwanese people, the mainland Chinese are culturally and linguistically similar and dissimilar. Additionally, the PRC’s bellicose stance against Taiwanese nationalism and its global-level politico-economic influences only increase Taiwanese people’s Sinophobia and the anxiety about Taiwan’s involuntarily becoming more regional and dependent on the PRC in the globalized world. Stasch’s study points to the possibility of a very ambivalent stance toward international others whose differences are both repulsive and attractive at different. Then, in terms of Taiwan-China relation, what is the effect of a growing ambivalence to the process of routinely making Mainland China into the negative “other” against which Taiwan constructs its self-image? These factors, I believe, would be of greater importance in investigating the complicated relationship between Taiwanese people’s identity construction in relation to CHINA, CHINESE (people and culture), and MANDARIN.

NOTES

1 A language variety of Fujian Province of China known as Southern Min dialect, or Hokkien. It has been spoken by the majority of Taiwanese people (Hoklo ethnic group) since 17th century. In the literature, the language is referred to as (Taiwanese) Southern Min dialect, Hokkien, Tai-yu, or Tai-gi (see Sandel 2003: 549 footnote 2 for further discussion). Sakano (2012) notes that under the Japanese regime (1985-1945), this language came to be understood by both the locals and the Japanese subjects as Taiwan-go ‘Taiwan language/speech’ in Japanese. In this thesis, I solely use Taiwanese to refer to this language, firstly to avoid confusing English readers and secondly to present the informants’ categorization of this language.

2 The literature refers to those migrated from Mainland China with the KMT during 1945-1949 as "Mainlanders". For clarity, in this thesis, I chose to refer to this group as "the postwar Chinese immigrants" to contrast with "the mainland Chinese," which I used to refer to the citizens of the PRC.
There are other terms in referencing Mandarin Chinese. For instance, Huā-yǔ is the official term for Mandarin in Singapore; it is also the term widely used in Chinese Language Teaching Programs across the globe, e.g. Huá-yǔ Jiāo-xué ‘Chinese Mandarin Teaching’. In academia, Hán-yǔ ‘Han-Chinese language’ is most typically used to refer to either Mandarin Chinese or the Chinese language family.

The Chinese term Tāiwān Guóyǔ is a troubled local category for many Taiwanese people and Taiwanese intellectuals alike. If one is to talk about “Taiwan Mandarin”, the Chinese translation of the English term per se should be treated with caution. Many Taiwanese academics prefer the term Tāiwān Huáyǔ to Tāiwān Guóyǔ, as the later still bears derogatory connotations. I thank Dr. Khin-huann Li for pointing this out.

Indeed, for an extended period of time in Taiwan, Tāiwān Guóyǔ was the derogatory term made by the native speakers of Mandarin (i.e. the postwar Chinese immigrants) to mock non-native speakers’ Taiwanese-influenced accent. That is, it was the Chinese term meaning “Taiwanese-accented Mandarin”. Using Tāiwān Huáyǔ, a combination of “Taiwan” and the Singaporean official term for Mandarin “Huáyǔ” (see footnote 3), does avoid the negative connotations implied by Tāiwān Guóyǔ. Yet, in the meanwhile, it also eradicates the nationalistic meaning in Guó-yǔ ‘national language’. Tāiwān Huáyǔ no longer denotes a nation’s national language (i.e. Taiwan’s National language) but only signifies a language spoken in a place (i.e. Mandarin spoken in Taiwan, regardless if it is a nation or a province of China). As I discussed in Section 5.1, I believe the caution and suggestions made to me reflect precisely the ambivalent stance towards the national identity of Taiwan.

Moreover, from my fieldwork, I observed that for the younger generation, the term Tāiwān Guóyǔ does not necessarily evoke the derogative association that the term had once been so for the older generation. Some did not even distinguish Taiwan Mandarin from Taiwanese-accented Mandarin. Thus, in this thesis, I took the position where I would represent accurately how my informants understood the language that they termed as Tāiwān Guóyǔ—“Taiwan Mandarin” in English—even if it was the derogative term for what should have been more precisely translated as “Taiwanese-accented Mandarin”. Pinyin is adopted as the official transcription for signs since 2009. Until then, it was Wade-Giles system that was used and widely recognized by Taiwanese people. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis, the shift per se aroused nation-wide debates and was criticized as a calculating political move of the Pan-Chinese KMT (Chinese Nationalist) government. The Taiwanese people I talk to expressed difficulties in recognizing Pinyin symbols like q- and x-, symbols that are absent in Wade-Giles. The corresponding symbols are ch’- and hs-, respectively, in the Wade-Giles system.

The particle de in zhènde in line 1 is a particle that links the attributive word zhēn with its head. The meaning of zhènde, however, is completely identical to zhēn in line 2.

Words ū ‘have’ and bōu ‘not have’ in Taiwanese are more extensively used in the syntactic structure than the Mandarin counterparts yǒu and méiyǒu (Kubler 1981, 1985, Cheng 1985).

The actual source of this saying is difficulty to identity. The informants over fifties have acknowledged hearing this account in their early teens.
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