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A Critical Examination of the Implications of
Globalization for Language Learning: The Case of Taiwan
全球化風潮下的語言教學策略及檢視

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Introduction

One of the most common ways of identifying a person is by his or her language. Because language is inherently involved in socialization, the social group whose language you speak is an important identity group for you. There are other markers of ethnic identity, such as food or clothing or religion. But language has a special role, in part because it organizes thought and in part because it establishes social relations.

(Spolsky, 1998:57)

Almost every nation in the world has its own language. The language used in a nation has its historical or regional reason; it represents itself not only as a communicative tool but also as a cultural, ethnic and national identity. As Kramersch (1998) said,

Language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways...the words people utter refer to common experience...attitudes and beliefs... But members of a community or social group do not only express experience; they also create experience through language...Finally, language is a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value. Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language...

(Kramersch, 1998:3)

In Kramersch's (1998:3) words: 'language expresses, embodies, and symbolizes cultural reality.' For example,

European identities have traditionally been built much more around language and national citizenship, and around folk models of 'one nation= one language', than around ethnicity or race.

(Kramersch, 1998:68)

In other words, traditionally, we identify people according to what kind of language they use, for example, Chinese speak Chinese, Japanese speak Japanese, the French speak French, and so on. It is easy to identify people from the language they use.

However, the natural connection between the language that is spoken by a group of people and the unity of identity in that group has been changed because of the close and frequent interaction among different people from different nations (i.e. the globalizing process.). Now the stereotype that this language belongs to this nation or this group and represents specific identities becomes vague. A very good example is that English does not only belong to the English anymore. We cannot identify a person speaking English as an Englishperson. Because of globalization, now English is cross-national and used as a world language.

However, as Strevens (1992:28) said 'One's language is a central element in one's personal, national, and ethnic identity.' Since globalization has developed, English is widely and popularly used in the world by more and more people, what kind of influence has it on the original identity of each person? What should each nation do to correspond with the trend of English-speaking dominant and also to retain its unique cultural, ethnic, and national identity? In my essay, I will take Taiwan as an example. First, I will explain what globalization is as I see it and then the relationship between globalization and language. Secondly, the impact of globalization on English language education in Taiwan will be discussed. Finally, the effort of the Taiwanese government to preserve a cultural and national identity in valuing and promoting the local language will be discussed.

Globalization

It is useful to start by looking at some elaborations of the concept of globalization. Hall (1991) once said that

The globalizing process... is located within a much longer history; we suffer increasing from a process of historical amnesia in which we think that just because we are thinking about an idea it has only just started.

(Hall, 1991:20)

Held (2000) explained the concept of globalization in more detail,

A new era of regional and global movement of people, goods, information and microbes was established. Social, political and economic activities could stretch across communities, regions and continents; increasing proportions of human energy could be devoted to such activities, as flows of trade, investment and culture increased; organizations and mechanisms of power and control (empires, colonization and large corporations) could search the world for advantage; and it became possible for all this to happen much more quickly, as new systems of transportation and communication emerged. On the back of these developments, new economic, political and cultural infrastructures and organizations developed, making possible a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions and generating increased levels of activities across particular communities and, indeed, across the entire world... In short, from the 'age of discovery' to the new millennium, process of change have been underway that have altered the relations and connections between peoples and

communities--- processes which have been captured by the term 'globalization'.

(Held, 2000:1-2)

Living in the era of globalization is somewhat similar to living in 'the global village' (McLuhan & Powers, 1989). Because the developments in information and communication technologies have shortened the space and time where we live and work, now the interaction among people and nations have become more and faster. This identifies many similarities among different nations, although there are still some differences because of each nation's own characteristic. First, let us discuss what the similarities are, and then move on to the differences.

A World of Similarity

Since globalization means the spread and fluidity of technology, economy, people, and even knowledge, value, ideas, etc. flow among nations; now people all over the world have similar ways of living as follows,

We drive German cars, listen to Japanese hi-fis, eat French food, drink Colombian coffee, wear Italian clothes, buy Chinese toys, chat on Finnish mobile phones, work on computers made in Taiwan and use American software.

(Legrain, 2002:5)

In addition, communication technologies such as mobile phone, satellite television, and the Internet have also changed and homogenized our lives. Galbraith (2001) has said that,

The inhabitant of London can now watch events around the world as they happen, thanks to live television; he can travel by air to virtually anywhere; and he can seal business deals in an instant, via the Internet or fax machine. All of these advances are part of globalization---which, at its simplest, means crossing borders. Capital crosses borders; companies cross borders; whole industries cross borders; people, ideas, diseases, even government cross borders.

(Galbraith, 2001:9)

It is true that in the time of globalization, the boundaries among nations have been blurred. As Giddens (1994:4) said, "Globalization is really about the transformation of space and time. I define it as action at distance, ..." Cochrane & Pain (2000:10) also suggest that 'a new geography is being created within which physical distance is less important than electronic connectedness'. Therefore now almost everything 'can be transferred through cyberspace by a few keystrokes' (Dalby, 1996:29).

The rapid flow of information and the ideological disappearance of national boundaries have gradually made the whole world tend to homology and an interactive and interrelated unity has taken form. For example, no matter where we live, we can always eat at McDonald's, watch BBC or CNN, see Hollywood's movies, drink Coca-cola, and drive Range Rovers, etc. Because of globalization, the economic sphere becomes transnational; that is why we can

see many transnational corporations such as IBM, HSBC, or Microsoft almost everywhere. Besides, with the end of the Cold War, the world order has become integrated. This is the characteristic of globalization. The contact among people or nations is greater. Therefore, some 'supranational organizations' (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997:57-58) have been established such as OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), EU (European Union), or APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Community). More and more national and cross-national policies are made in agreement with the members of these 'supranational organizations'. It means that now even the government policies of different nations become the same or very similar. As a result, right now, a highly developed capitalism is our base in economics; the great influence in politics is democracy; in culture, we are facing a tremendously extensive amount of information that leads us to cultural consumption and cultural industry.

Furthermore, the intensive contact among nations has also made drugs, crime, war, disease, and pollution all travel the globe. AIDS, SARS, and bird flu affect the whole world. The horrible news about the collapsed World Trade towers or the Gulf War relayed to our homes also cause fears and panic in everybody's mind. Because of globalization, if one nation sneezes, probably the whole world might catch a cold. Good or bad, all events and all problems become global now.

However, if we reflect upon the process of globalization, we can see that the flow and spread of economy, politics, and culture are principally 'in terms of Americanization or Westernization' (Meyer & Geschiere, 1999:4). As Giddens (2002) said,

To many living outside Europe and North America, it looks uncomfortably like Westernization--- or, perhaps, Americanization, since the US is now the sole superpower, with a dominant economic, cultural and military position in the global order. Many of the most visible cultural expressions of globalization are American--- Coca-Cola, McDonald's, CNN. Most of the giant multinational companies are based in the US too.
(Giddens, 2002:15)

Of course we can say that this is also because of 'a force for good' (Legrain, 2002:12). Generally speaking, the West is more well-developed and richer than the East and it is human nature that many want to have a better life in these terms. Besides, through globalization, both the West and the East can benefit from it. As Legrain (2002) said,

Not only because we are all human, but also because if the poor get richer, we in the rich countries will gain new markets for our products. But if the poor stay poor, we must not only live with our conscious but also in fear of the hatred that envy and despair breed.
(Legrain, 2002:16)

I think being homogenized as 'Americanization or Westernization' (Meyer & Geschiere, 1999:4) in the process of globalization for developing countries, like Taiwan, is probably useful since we need to be well-developed. However, Meyer & Geschiere (1999) have

questioned this proposition:

Through the impact of new technologies of communication and transport, and the intensified circulation of goods and people on a global scale, cultural difference was supposed to disappear. Whether homogenization is seen positively in terms of McLuhan's utopia of the 'global village', or negatively in terms of Western imperialism, both views thrive on the assumption that the world is moving rapidly towards uniformity.

(Meyer & Geschiere, 1999:1)

Instead they imply that:

Paradoxically, the culturally homogenizing tendencies of globalization imply continued or even reinforced cultural heterogeneity.

(Meyer & Geschiere, 1999:2)

So although the world could be said to be homogeneous in economy, politics, and culture, there remain differences among nations.

A World of Difference

As Appadurai (1990:295) said 'the central problem of today's global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization.'

In Hannerz's (1990) view,

There is now a world culture...The world culture is created through the increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures, as well as through the development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any one territory. These are all becoming sub-cultures, as it were, within the wider whole; cultures which are in important ways better understood in the context of their cultural surroundings than in isolation. But to this global interconnected diversity people can relate in different ways. For one thing, there are cosmopolitans, and there are locals.

(Hannerz, 1990:237)

This means that because of globalization, both cosmopolitan and local elements could exist at the same time in the same place all around the world. Just because I was born in Taipei, it does not mean that I can only speak Chinese, eat Chinese food, get a job at local and travel in Taiwan; I can still have much diversity from everywhere in the world for me to choose from.

Mackay (2000) discusses 'cultural imperialism':

'Cultural imperialism' is an important way of understanding the globalization of culture. This is a structural analysis which has at its core two notions: that dominant cultures of the West and the USA are swamping minority cultures in processes of homogenization,

reducing diversity; and that this is a strategy to meet the economic interests of the USA and other Western nations.

(Mackay, 2000:64-65)

In such a view, is it asserted that it is the ‘cultural imperialism’, not the ‘cultural homogeneity’ at the heart of the process of globalization?

On this, Waters (1995) wrote that,

In a globalized world there will be a single society and culture will probably not be harmoniously integrated although it might conceivably be. Rather it will probably tend towards high levels of differentiation, multicentricity and chaos. There will be no central organizing government and no tight set of cultural preferences and prescriptions. Insofar as culture is unified it will be extremely abstract, expressing tolerance for diversity and individual choice.

(Waters, 1995:3)

As we can see that not all McDonalds sell the same products in every nation, for example, beef burger will not be found in India, nor is pork in the Islam world. Chinese dishes in London are quite different with those in China, and in Taiwan, we have Italian pizzas with the flavor of kung bau chicken. Pop songs played in MTV in Asia are mostly local instead of the western styles. Moreover, although BBC, CNN, or Wall Street Journal is so popular, the TV channels and newspapers chosen by people are still overwhelmingly local. From my point of view, globalization has made different cultures become available in one place, so we can choose many more different products from different nations at one time than before; it means that we have more choices, more freedom to choose. If we do not like Coca-Cola, we can drink Oolong tea; if we dislike hamburgers, there are still spaghetti, sushi, or fried rice that we can eat. Besides Nike, we can wear Reebok or Adidas. Both Chinese opera and Les Misérables are played in the nearest theaters. In addition to similarities, there are differences and they promise more choices, more diversity. As Legrain (2002) puts it,

Nor is American culture by any means the only influence on the world. In some basic ways, America is an outlier, not a global leader...Fears about an Americanized uniformity are overblown. American cultural products are not uniquely dominant; local ones are alive and well.

(Legrain, 2002:299,303)

Furthermore, Hall (1991) has suggested that ‘global and local are the two faces of the same movement’. Therefore in the process of globalization,

We are likely to find something familiar (in the shape of fast-food restaurants, global brands and mobile phones) almost everywhere we travel, however far away we are from home. Paradoxically, we are equally likely to find differences (in terms of food, cultural and religious festivals and music and films) just around the corner.

Now let us see what the relationship is between globalization and language.

Globalization and Language

Since globalization is a constant process in which a series of diverse and various activities of economy, politics, and culture spread all over the world, language is the most important medium. First the reason why English becomes so universal will be discussed. Secondly, I will write about where the local languages stand.

English as a Global Language

Block & Cameron (2002) said that,

Language is the primary medium of human social interaction, and interaction is the means through which social relations are constructed and maintained... New communication technologies enable individuals to have regular exchanges with distant others whom they have never met face-to-face... Distance is not an issue for these non-local networks, but language remains an issue of some practical importance: global communication requires not only a shared channel (like the internet or video conferencing) but also a shared linguistic code.

(Block & Cameron, 2002:1)

Historically, because the sun never set on the British Empire, the English language is destined to be a language that is used by most people around the world. Afterward, owing to the dominant economic power of the United States, the importance of English has been strengthened ever more. This leads English to its current position, that is, the remarkable global means of communication. As Pennycook (2000) said,

This global spread of English is bound up with many cultural, economic, and political forces: the dominance of U.S. media, the role of international corporations, the spread of particular forms of culture and knowledge, and the development of a very particular 'world order.'

(Pennycook, 2000:97)

The United States has the dominant economic power to affect the world. Almost all companies wish to develop a market in the United States so working with English is inevitable (Jenkins, 2003:36). Besides, in the dominant economic position, the culture of the United States transmits to every corner in the world. Globalization makes the transmission become more rapid and more completed. Parents the world over vainly fight the tide of T-shirts and jeans, of music and movies, of video and software pouring out of the United States and craved by their children. Through this, English engages almost all young people. Moreover, the language

of air-traffic control adopt English and English is also the most widely used language in all international conferences, including in the United Nations (Stevens, 1992:30; Jenkins, 2003:36) And even the intellectual and commercial boulevard of the future, the 'Internet, has originated in the USA' (Waters, 1995:150) and been used in the American language, English. In addition, Jenkins (2003) writes that

Most of the scientific, technological, and academic information in the world is expressed in English, and over 80 per cent of all the information stored in electronic retrieval system is in English. Closely related to this is the concern to have access to the philosophical, cultural, religious and literary history of Western Europe, either directly or through the medium of an English translation. In most parts of the world, the only way most people have access to such authors as Goethe or Dante is through English.

(Jenkins, 2003:36)

Mackay (2000:63) shares the same point of view as Jenkins (2003).

Crystal (1997:61) estimated that there were about 670 million people whose English was spoken both as a first language, that is, a native language (ENL) (e.g. in U.K., U.S.A., Canada, etc.) and as an official second language (ESL) in government, education, and law (e.g. in India, Philippines, Pakistan, etc.). However, the number of people who speaks English as a foreign language (EFL) (e.g. in China, Japan, Taiwan, etc.) has not yet been included. And everybody knows that China has the largest population in the world.

Kachru (1992:356) invented the terms of English in different situation: 'Inner Circle (ENL), Outer Circle (ESL), and Expanding Circle (EFL)'. How big is the 'circle' of English? An approximate estimate probably would be 'nearly a quarter of the world's population' (Crystal, 1997:4) and the 'circle' gets bigger year after year. However, nobody knows the accurate number. In any case, 'English as a global language' (Crystal, 1997) is a certainty. However, will it be a threat of local languages?

A Crisis of Local Languages?

Kramersch (1998) wrote that,

Members of a group who feel that their cultural and political identity is threatened are likely to attach particular importance to the maintenance or resurrection of 'their language' (for example, Quebec, Belgium, Wales among many others).

(Kramersch, 1998:75)

I do not mean that because English is a global language, all local languages will become 'endangered languages' (Spolsky, 1998) and every person should have 'language loyalty' (Spolsky, 1998) to his/her own native language. According to the explanation of Spolsky (1998),

Language loyalty, the ability (or lack of it) of speakers of a language to stand up to the pressure of more powerful languages. Endangered languages, languages that are no longer being passed on to children as native languages, but are spoken by a contracting and aging group of adults.

(Spolsky, 1998:55)

Rather, I mean we should think about the question that if English is so prevalent, what do we need local languages for?

As I have mentioned earlier, language is not only for communication but also for cultural, ethnic and national identity. The identity I refer to is like what Smith (1990) wrote,

The subjective feelings and valuations of any population which possesses common experiences and one or more shared cultural characteristics (usually customs, language or religion). These feelings and values refer to three components of their shared experiences:

1.a sense of continuity between the experiences of succeeding generations of the unit of populations;

2.shared memories of specific events and personages which have been turning-points of a collective history; and

3.a sense of common destiny on the part of the collectivity sharing those experiences.

(Smith, 1990:179)

Imagine a Chinese boy who lives in Beijing, speaking fluent Chinese and English; French fries and cheeseburgers are his favorite. Do the English speaking ability and western style diet make him a Westerner? Of course not! Because he lacks the common experiences or knowledge passed by generations from any specific western nations. Every national or local language has the characteristic of the main medium of handing on common experiences, memories, feelings, and values from generation to generation and this process constitutes the identity of the nation. It is not easily taken over, unless in a 'catastrophic' way (Bickerton, 1988:268), in the way the Creole languages were formed.

Although English is a global language, it does not promise that every person speaking English has the same identity. We can define it just happens to be a popular communicative tool for people from different nations can easily exchange information, ideas, opinions, etc. As Legrain (2002) said,

A common global language would certainly be a big plus: for businessmen, for scientists and for tourists... But a single world language would be far less desirable. Language is often at the heart of national culture. Losing national languages would be especially sad if people had not freely chosen to abandon them. English may usurp other languages not because it is what people prefer to speak, but because, like Microsoft software, there are

compelling advantages to using it if everyone else does.

(Legrain, 2002:305)

Therefore although English is so dominant, the local languages are still important, because they are the medium to pass by our traditions, cultures, and identities. Now let me take Taiwan for example and see what the impact of globalization on language learning in Taiwan.

The Impact of Globalization on Language Learning in Taiwan

What is certain is that in the process of globalization, learning a foreign language becomes very important because we have to communicate with each other. Naisbitt (1984:76) once made the suggestion for Americans that ‘this is the time to learn another language---and learn it well.... To be really successful, you will have to be trilingual; fluent in English, Spanish, and computer’. It is truly necessary that every person should own two (including the native language) or more languages to be able to communicate with others, express ideas, and make contact with different cultures. Therefore, the Taiwanese government emphasizes not only on the native language, Chinese learning but above all, English, the global language, learning. First, I will discuss the emphasis on English learning and then move on to the part of the local, native languages learning.

The Emphasis on the Global Language Learning

In the times of globalization, the competition among people is beyond the national boundaries. It is the ‘end of geography’ (Kofman & Youngs, 1996:7). Not only people in our country but also people of the whole world will compete with us. This is a great advantage to small countries, especially a small island country like Taiwan, because we will not be limited by the geographic boundaries any more. Through the high-level technology system, we will have the same opportunities to compete. To be more competitive, the ability of communication is essential both for working and living purposes. Cameron (2000) once said that ‘Good communication is said to be the key to a better and happier life; improving communication would improve everything else’ (Cameron, 2000:1). Learning English, the global language, thus becomes inevitably necessary. Learning English does not only mean that we can have better conditions of success, but also means we can accept and have respect for the diversity of the world. After all, we live in ‘the global village’ (McLuhan & Powers, 1989). If Taiwanese people want to be competitive, the first thing is to learn English, the global language, well.

The trend of learning English is not strange to Taiwanese people. In fact, English has been used in Taiwan, more or less, for over half a century. At first, of course, very few Chinese learnt it. However, because the relationship in politics and in economics between Taiwan and the United States has become closer and in the process of globalization, English is already an international and universal language in the world, the importance of learning English is emphatically necessary. Although most people of the world speak Chinese, only English can carry we Chinese all over the world. It is the link between the rest of mankind and us.

Therefore, now it is spoken, written, and read by large numbers in Taiwan.

As in Japan, 'English' is almost the synonym of 'foreign language' in Taiwan (Kubota, 2002:19). It is the first and the only required foreign language subject that is taught at junior and senior high schools and in the first year of colleges. In some colleges and the upper classes of schools, English is even the medium of instruction. It has become so necessary for educated people in Taiwan. We must learn it and use it because its advantages are so great that we cannot well do without it. For example, English is certainly important for any one entering a good college, government service, trade, science, or other professional fields in Taiwan. Lawyers cannot plead in international cases without it and people in business of any pretensions soon find they are handicapped if they do not know English. Besides, English is a noble language and possesses many of the finest literatures in the world. Knowledge of English introduces us to some of the finest books ever written. It is a key to the most precious treasury, books. We Chinese always believe that the more books we read, the better lives we can have.

From 1998, during a series of education reform in Taiwan, the Ministry of Education make some regulations to modify the ways of English teaching and learning to correspond with the trend of globalization. The most important reform is the curriculum integration from the first grade in primary school to the third grade in junior high school; it is called First to Ninth Grades Curriculum Alignment. In the section of foreign language, in order to go with the tide of globalization, the regulation about the age of learning English has been extended to the fifth grade in primary school (which is the age of eleven) and this has been put into practice since 2001 (MoE in Taiwan, 1998).

Jenkins(2003) has written that,

It is well known that tests have a backwash effect on classroom teaching: that is, the language and skills that are tested in examinations are the ones that teachers choose to teach and learners desire to learn. Otherwise, they have nothing to show for the efforts they have made.

(Jenkins, 2003:108)

In order to keep well balanced among the four language skills learning: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the MoE in Taiwan (1996) try to adjust the questions in the English examinations: not be confined to multiple-choice of English grammar mostly as before, but include both the written part to test students' ability of listening, reading, and writing and the oral part to test their ability of speaking. The part of examination adjustment still needs to make more efforts. However, right now, teachers not only emphasize the reading and writing skills but also try hard to teach the listening and speaking skills. In addition, many senior high schools and colleges have already had English listening comprehension tests in their independent entrance examinations. Some of them even ask the applicants to write an English autobiography and study plan attached in their application forms.

Furthermore, the education authorities is inquiring about the future possibility of Taiwan to become a bilingual country (maybe to have English as the second official language). In the report from CDTRO in Belgium (2002), it said that the importance of English is increasingly undeniable because of globalization. If Taiwan wants to make more progress in politics, economics, and culture, we need to emphasize English learning. Learning English well is the first and necessary step and the final aim is to make Taiwan a bilingual country, that is, to make English as the second official language in Taiwan. Since Taiwan is a small island country, being expelled from the global world will put Taiwan at a disadvantage. Therefore, learning English is the best link with the world I would argue, but as well as emphasizing English learning, the Taiwanese government also puts a high value on local languages learning.

The Value of Local Languages Learning

Giddens (2002) has said, 'Globalization is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world.' (Giddens, 2002:13) So globalization does not only promise the prevailing English learning but also reminds people to value the local languages; after all, the local language is the main medium for passing cultural, ethnic, and national identity and traditions through generations. This is how Legrain (2002) expresses it,

It's a shame if ancient cultural traditions are lost. We should do our best to preserve them, and keep them alive where possible, but people cannot be made to live in a museum.

(Legrain, 2002:311)

'Taiwan is a multilingual, multiethnic country' (Tsao, 1997:97); however, since 1949, because of the government policy, Mandarin has monopolized, and many local languages such as Taiwanese, Hakka, and all aboriginal languages have been forced to confine their usage. Because Mandarin is so dominant, all information and services are read in Mandarin including in the education system, government service, newspapers, television programs, etc. This makes it very difficult for local languages to survive and some of them like 'the language used in Ping-pu tribe has almost disappeared and some are fast disappearing' (Tsao, 1997:98). However, as Tsao (1997) mentioned,

Fortunately, after the lifting of the martial law (it was in 1988), many scholars and common people have spoken up, calling for the use of indigenous languages in education and indigenous perspectives in teaching materials. Government agencies have also responded. New measures have been enacted to guarantee rights. In 1992, the Second National Assembly amended a constitutional article to ensure "legal protection of (the aborigines') status and the right to political participation." The Amendment also requires the government to "provide assistance and encouragement to their educational, cultural preservation, social welfare and business undertakings." A law approved by the Legislature this year (1996) allows the aborigines to restore their traditional tribal names.

(Tsao, 1997:106)

Besides, the MoE in Taiwan (1998) has also regulated the national curriculum in junior high and elementary schools to provide one to two hours of the indigenous cultures and languages teaching every week (also in Tsao, 1997:106). Furthermore, more and more publishing materials and television programs are using indigenous languages. Also, since 'the use of a regional or social dialect by a political leader is often a claim to a specialized ethnic identity' (Spolsky, 1998:58), many political participants in Taiwan have learnt indigenous languages to show the value of indigenous languages and cultures to attract the voters. This is also a promotion of indigenous languages learning.

Conclusion

Globalization has had a huge impact for many people across the world. Through the activities of economics, politics, and culture among different nations, every nation become more and more similar yet at the same time they retain, even strengthen their individual difference. As Giddens (1994) said,

Globalization is not a single process but a complex mixture of process, which often act in contradictory ways, producing conflicts, disjunctures and new forms of stratification. Thus, for instance, the revival of local nationalisms, and an accentuating of local identities, are directly bound up with globalizing influences, to which they stand in opposition.

(Giddens, 1994:5)

Therefore, not only is the global language emphasized but also much value is put on the local languages.

Because of globalization, the interaction between people increase and learning foreign languages is inevitably important and necessary. It is for communication. After all, a language is dead unless people use it. The right way to learn foreign languages is to learn how to use it to communicate. As Nunan (1999) wrote,

In a world that is increasingly intermeshed economically, environmentally, and electronically, the ability to communicate effectively is crucial.

(Nunan, 1999:71)

As a global language, English is the most understandable language and the most convenient and easiest way to open a window to see the whole world and be a part of the world family. The main purpose of learning English is to communicate with different people in different countries of the whole world and try to be more competitive. As Spolsky (1998) said,

The association of English with modern technology, with economic progress, and with internationalization, has encouraged people all over the world to learn English and

to have their children learn it as early as possible. The more this has succeeded, the greater the reason for others to want to have access to the power and success assumed to be a result of knowing English.

(Spolsky, 1998:77)

Therefore, many countries, including Taiwan, encourage English learning in the education policy to correspond with the current trends of globalization.

However, the value of local languages also becomes important. Nunan (1999) once wrote that,

Ethnic groups regularly use language as one of their most significant identifying features....Most ethnic groups believe that their language is the best medium for preserving and expressing their traditions.

(Nunan, 1999:57)

The Taiwanese government has faced the serious problem about the promotion of indigenous languages squarely and has tried to make some innovations in a series of education reform not only to emphasize English but also the learning of indigenous languages. The local languages are very important manifestations of cultural, ethnic, and national identity. Through the local languages, the traditions of our nation will pass from generation to generation. As a citizen of the world and of Taiwan, I think English learning can promise Taiwan a better future in the process of globalization. On the other hand, we should value the local languages learning as well because we need to preserve and pass on our culture and identity. Finally, I think we are very lucky to live in the globalizing world, because as Legrain (2002) said,

We should opt to live in a more globalised world because it offers greater opportunity for everyone, rich and poor, to make the most of their potential.

(Legrain 2002:24)

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