

The Difference between Taiwan Min-nan Dialect and Fujian Min-nan Dialect: Borrowed Words from Japanese in Taiwan Min-nan Dialect

Ya-Lan Tang

Department of English

Tamkang University

11F., No.3, Ln. 65, Yingzhuang Rd., Tamsui Dist., New Taipei City 25151, Taiwan

Abstract

Southern Min dialect (also called Min-nan or Hokkien) in Taiwan is usually called 'Taiwanese.' Though there are many other dialects in Taiwan, such as Hakka, Mandarin, aboriginal languages, people speak Min-nan are the majority in Taiwan society. It becomes naturally to call Southern Min dialect as Taiwanese. Taiwanese Min-nan dialect though came from Mainland China; however, Min-nan dialect in Taiwan is a little different from Min-nan dialect in Fujian, China. Some words which are commonly used in Taiwanese Min-nan dialect do not see in Min-nan dialect in Fujian. In this paper the writer, choose some Taiwanese Min-nan words which are actually from Japanese as materials to discuss the difference between Taiwanese Min-nan dialect and Min-nan in Fujian.

Key Words: Taiwanese Min-nan, Fujian Min-nan, borrowed words.

1. Introduction

Taiwanese Min-nan has been used in Taiwan for hundreds of years, and it is now different from its origin language, Fujian Min-nan dialect. In order to clarify the difference between Taiwan Min-nan dialect and Min-nan dialect in Fujian, the first point to make is the identity of Taiwanese people themselves. Language and identity cannot be separated. Therefore, based on this point of view, this paper is going to discuss three questions below:

1. Why do the people in Taiwan call Min-nan dialect 'Taiwanese'?
2. Why is Min-nan dialect in Taiwan different from Min-nan dialect in Fujian, China?
3. What is the difference between Min-nan dialect in Taiwan and in Fujian, China?

2. Literature

Min-nan people came from Fujian to Taiwan in Ming dynasty. As a result, at that time, the language they used – the now-called Taiwanese Min-Nan dialect, was the same as their original counterpart in Fujian. There were not any changes in Taiwan Min-nan dialect during this period of time. Then in 1895, the Ching government lost the battle with Japan and had to compensate Japanese government by giving Taiwan Island to be its colony. From that time, Taiwan became Japan's colony for around 50 years. This was a dark period for Taiwan Min-nan dialect. Taiwan Min-nan dialect had many changes in this period, and Japanese influenced Taiwan Min-nan dialect in some ways.

Taiwanese people began to be aware of their own identity while be controlled and colonized by Japan. Because the Japan government carried out the 'national language family' policy, Taiwanese people were forced to speak in Japanese instead of Taiwan Min-nan dialect. Though the policy did not work out successfully in all places in Taiwan, it still made some changes in Taiwan Min-nan dialect. Some Taiwanese people who received education in Japanese schools in Taiwan spoke bilingual in Japanese and Taiwan Min-nan dialect. They might speak Japanese in public and in schools but spoke Taiwan Min-nan dialect with their family. As other bilingual speakers, these bilingual speakers might also make code-switching in Japanese and Taiwan Min-nan dialect. Then, the borrowing started appearing in Taiwan Min-nan dialect. Some Japanese words were borrowed and mixed into Taiwan Min-nan dialect. With the time for Japan to control and colony, Taiwan was getting longer and longer, and the Japanese education was offered to the public (or should say the general Taiwanese people), this situation became more common to see in Taiwan Min-nan dialect.

Although Fujian was occupied by Japan during the World War II for few years, Japan did not have as much influence on it as on Taiwan. Fujian Min-nan dialect therefore could keep its own characteristics. On the subject of identity, Edwards (2009: 20) says that individual identities will be both components and reflections of particular social (or cultural) ones, and the latter will always be stereotypic in nature because of their necessary generality across the individual components. On the other hand, Wardhaugh (p.119) stresses that an individual's feelings of identity are closely related to that person's feelings about groups in which he or she is or is not a member, feels strong (or weak) commitment (or rejection), and finds some kind of success (or failure.) As the paper examines the relationship between "people" and "language," it is important to define ethnic identity. Spolsky (1998: 57) says that ethnic groups regularly use language as one of their most significant identifying features. In all, language can certainly be considered as a "marker" at the individual level and the group level. The following are examples of markers at the individual level that are found unique to the individual (Edwards, 2009: 21):

1. Particular combination of accent and dialect.
2. Particular assemblage of formal and informal registers.
3. Particular pattern of stress and intonation.

On the other hand, at the group level, everyone is used to accent, dialect and language variations that reveal speakers' memberships in particular speech communities, social classes, ethnic and national groups. As Edwards (2009: 21) puts it, the groupings are base upon gender, or age, or occupation, or club or gang membership, or political affiliation, or religious confession, and so on. This means, that language can certainly be considered as a 'marker' at the group level. Finally, since Taiwan has adopted Mandarin Chinese as the official language and the Min-nan language, similar to the Hakka language, is deemed as a dialect (that is usually considered as being used by minority groups). The linguistic characteristic of bilingualism and its relationship with identity should also be considered in this research.

Generally, speaking a particular language means belonging to a particular speech community; speaking more than one may (or may not) suggest variations in identity and allegiances. For monolingual majority-group speakers in their own 'mainstream' setting, the instrumentality and the symbolism of language are not split and the language-identity linkage is not problematic. Minority-group speakers, however, rarely have this luxury... While it is true that no simple equation exists between bilingualism and minority-group membership, it is also true that many bilinguals are found in the ranks of 'smaller' or threatened societies. (Edwards, 2009: 248, 254) Multilingual societies inevitably face conflict over language choice. Some aspects of concern for language choice can be explained practically, politically, or economically. The speakers of a language are in a stronger position when their language is used for national or international communication, or for government, or for trade and commerce, or for education. (Spolsky, 1998:57).

3. Method

Before distinguish the differentiation between Taiwan Min-nan dialect and Fujian Min-nan dialect, it needs to look at the Taiwan history and Taiwanese people's relationship with Fujian and Mainland China. From the literature review, it can make the identity of Taiwanese people, and also figure out why Taiwanese people prefer to call Taiwan Min-nan dialect as "Taiwanese." Then, collect common used words in Taiwan Min-nan dialect in daily dialogues. The words selected as samples in this paper are those borrowed from Japanese, which is thought to be the major difference between Taiwan Min-nan dialect and Fujian Min-nan dialect. There are numerous of such type of words in Taiwan's Min-nan dialect, however, this paper only lists some twenty of them. The selected words are provided meaning in Mandarin and pronunciation in Taiwan Min-nan dialect by Roman alphabets. Next, look these words up in Fujian Min-nan dialect dictionary. The pronunciations of these words in Fujian Min-nan dialect are listed next to the Taiwan Min-nan dialect ones. The list of words is chosen because of their frequent usage in our daily lives.

4. Results and Discussion

As we can see from Table 1 below, there is a significant difference between the Min-nan pronunciations used in Taiwan and Fujian.

Table 1: Words under Study

Word Meaning (Mandarin)	Taiwan Min-nan dialect pronunciation	Fujian Min-nan dialect pronunciation
1. 俱樂部	khu1 la2 puh4	--
2. 打火機	lai2 ta3	pa4 hhe3 gi1
3. 螺絲起子	loo2 lai3 bah4	lo2 si1 do1
4. 麥克風	mai2 khu1	bbi4 kkik1 hong1
5. 老虎鉗	phian3 tsih4	--
6. 馬達	moh4 tah4	--
7. 機車	su1 ku3 tah4	--
8. 摩托車	oo1 too2 bai2	bbnoo6 tok1 cia1
9. 柏青哥	pha1 tsing3 khoh4	--
10. 乒乓球	phim5 phong2	ping1 pong1
11. 漫畫	bang3 gah4	bban5 wi5
12. 襯衫	sia2 tsuh4	--
13. 領帶	ne1 ku2 tai2	lnia5 dua4
14. 胸罩	bu1 la2 jiah4	--
15. 拖鞋	su1 lip4 pah4	--
16. 方向盤	hang5 too2 luh4	--
17. 浴室	hu2 looh4	yik2 sik1
18. 瓦斯	ga2 suh4	--
19. 護照	pha1 su2 phoo3 tooh4	hoo5 zio4
20. 膠帶	the3 puh4	ga1 boo4
21. 目錄	kha1 ta2 loo2 kuh4	bbok2 liok2
22. 招牌	kham5 phang2	ziao1 bai2
23. 影印	Kho2 phih4	--
24. 心情	khi2 moo1 tshih4	--
25. 按摩	ma1 sa3 jih4	an4 bbnoo2
26. 味噌湯	mi1 soo2 si2 luh4	--
27. 番茄醬	khe1 tsia2 puh4	--
28. 啤酒	bi3 luh4	bi4 a 3 zui3
29. 蕃茄	thoo1 ma2 toh4	cao4 ki5 a3
30. 烏龍麵	u1 long2	--
31. 味素	bi7 soo3	--
32. 麵包	phang2	bbni5 bao1
33. 芥末	oa1 sa2 bih8	--
34. 檸檬	le1 bong2	ling2 bbong2
35. 維他命	bi1 ta2 min2	wi2 sing1 soo4

It is found that there are many borrowed words in the Taiwanese language originating from the Japanese language. They represent the lingering effect of the 50-year Japanese colonization of Taiwan. It is important to note that underneath the identity influence, there is a strong political influence on the adoption of the Japanese language (and its vocabulary) for older-generations of Taiwanese people. The Japanization (Tennoization) Movement during the colonial time forced Taiwanese people to use only the Japanese language. This translates into the many borrowed words entering our everyday vocabulary; and these get passed down through the generations.

The process of a foreign word entering the local language can be simplified as a one-way process. However, it can be seen from the list in Table 1, the process might be two-way. Simply put, there are two different influences of the borrowed Japanese words into Chinese. The first is the one-way process where the Japanese word enters the Taiwanese vocabulary and gains common usage and is passed down the generations. In this case, the pronunciation of the word in China is literal and that of Taiwan, Japanese. This process can be exemplified by the following diagram.

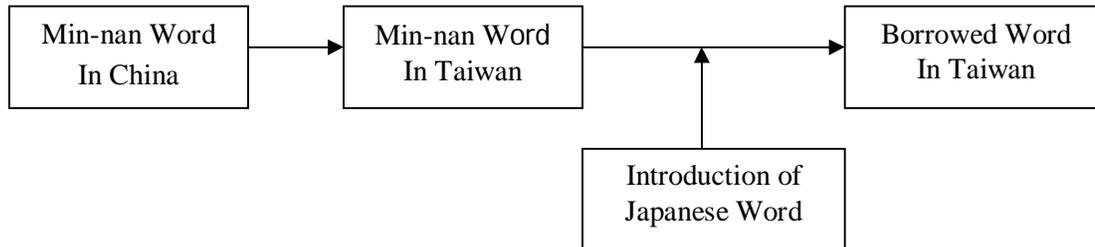


Illustration 1: The Effect of Japanese on Taiwanese Vocabulary (one-way)

On the other hand, the two-way process is where the word and the product was not in the Min-nan dialect vocabulary. For instance, the term “*bi7 soo3*” is purely Japanese and was not in the Min-nan (or Taiwanese) vocabulary. When the term is introduced into Taiwan, along with the Kanji (Japanese Chinese characters), the pronunciation for the new term is fixed by traditional Min-nan pronunciation. This is illustrated in Illustration 2 below:

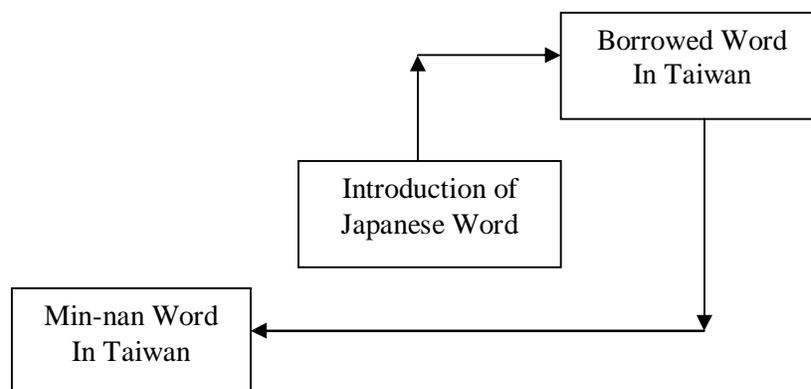


Illustration 2: The Effect of Japanese on Taiwanese Vocabulary (two-way)

Moreover, it is seen from the list that there are many words not having a pronunciation in China. Aside from the reason similar to the previous (two-way) influence of transferring a new idea into the local culture, there is the fact that the choice of words differ in China and Taiwan. Aside from the colonization of Japan, as the Taiwanese political structure changes, the rise in the “local ideology” may have also contributed to the term “Taiwanese” as a language. Traditionally, Taiwan has been classified under the jurisdiction of the Fujian province. Even after the retreat of the KMT, the province of Taiwan lasted till the year of 1998 when the island’s government delisted the “province” as the central governing body. As a result, there are more and more examples of people identifying themselves as Taiwanese (in terms of ethnicity). Moreover, with governmental propaganda, the line between the Benshenren (local provincial people) and Waishenren (outside provincial people) have diminished and almost all the people on the island would call themselves as Taiwanese.

Given the general rule of using Taiwanese to denote the adjective of Taiwan and the people of the land, it is no surprise that the language of the Taiwanese people is considered as “Taiwanese.” The idea of Taiwanese language has recently been brought to surface again.¹

¹ Examples of media coverage on the “Taiwanese” language debate include:

<http://news.chinatimes.com/forum/11051401/112011052600403.html>

• http://www.taiwandaily.net/gp2.aspx?_p=kSF1c9zU9HSOonGooHcto4B3s72jUxA

• <http://udn.com/NEWS/OPINION/X1/6357755.shtml>

• http://www.cdnews.com.tw/cdnews_site/docDetail.jsp?coluid=108&docid=101548383

5. Conclusion

The study was limited not to include the “age” factor. That is, although the vocabulary is still widely used and understood by members of the Taiwanese society, it is speculated that younger generations tend to abandon their usage. In turn, they tend to utter the words using a direct literal Min-nan pronunciation that resembles the one used in China. As aforementioned, many of the borrowed words get passed down the generations, it would also be worthy of a new future study on the degree of passing-on of these vocabulary.

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