

**INTRODUCTION**

- > Since the 1990s, a considerable amount of literature has appeared on **language endangerment** and language revitalization.
- > Comité International Permanent des Linguists(CIPL): The 15<sup>th</sup> International Congress in Québec in 1992 was devoted a theme "Endangered Languages."
- > UNESCO' s Red Book of Languages in Danger of Disappearing (since 1993) and **Atlas of World' s Languages in Danger** (since 1996).
- > American Anthropologist: Entire issues of the journal (2003, Vol.105, Issue 4) devoted to issues such as language ideologies, rights and choices, and revitalization.

**INTRODUCTION AND QUESTIONS**

- > How many languages are endangered exactly? (in the world and in Taiwan)
- > "Some language became extinct or is dying" ...Why should we care?
- > Government policies on endangered languages in Taiwan.
- > **A case study : the Thao language**
  - > Language and ethnicity: When very few people talk "mother tongue," can the language still be a marker of ethnic identity?
  - > How do the Taiwanese government policies on indigenous languages affect the Thao people and language?

**HOW TO DEFINE ENDANGERED LANGUAGES?**

- > There are roughly 6,000 spoken languages in the world today.
- > There are 51 languages with only one speaker (Malik 2000).
- > **A minimum number of speakers/learners are need to allow a language to survive:**
  - > Krauss (1992): **100,000 speakers to be "safe"** ; a language with fewer than 10,000 speakers should be regarded as "endangered."
  - > Garza-Cuarón&Lastra (1991): a minimum threshold is 500 speakers.
- > We can expect to lose half of the world' s languages this century (Krauss 1992).
- > Why do we have to protect indigenous/minority languages? Because "linguistic diversity is a benchmark of cultural diversity" . ☞ **Language death "is symptomatic of cultural death"** (Nettle and Romaine 2000).

**INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN TAIWAN ( "EXTINCT")**

Source: UNESCO Atlas of World' s Languages in D

**INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN TAIWAN ( "CRITICALLY ENDANGERED")**

Source: UNESCO Atlas of World' s Languages in D

## GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN TAIWAN

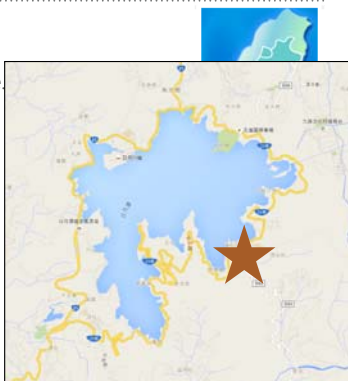
- > The additional articles of the Constitution in 1997— "The State affirms cultural pluralism and shall actively preserve and foster the development of indigenous languages and cultures." ( §10 XI )
- > In 1998, Education Act for Indigenous Peoples was promulgated.
- > In January 2001, Preferential Treatment for Indigenous Students' s Admission to Higher Education was promulgated in order to secure better employment and educational opportunities for indigenous students.
- > In November 2001, Regulations for Certification of Indigenous Language Abilities was promulgated.
- > In December 2001, the first Certification Examination of Indigenous Languages was carried out.
- > Since 2006, indigenous students who obtains passing score for the indigenous culture and language ability exam, the additional 35% is added to the total score in a high school/university entrance exam.

## IDEOLOGIES BEHIND GOVERNMENT POLICIES ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

- > Yohani Isqaqavut (the Minister of Council of Indigenous Peoples, 2000-2002, Bunun) has said, "the mother tongue is an identification of indigenes." ; "if a person refuses to learn his/her mother tongue, it means that he/she refuses to identify the indigenous status."
- > Those who don' t learn their mother tongue = They don' t deserve to have welfare and benefit for indigenes.
- > Indigenous ethno-linguistic centrism or "native languageism."
- > Certification in indigenous "cultures" > indigenous decent.
- > As for "cultural knowledge," indigenous students have to prove their language abilities.
- > Question: Culture = Language?

## THE THAO

- > Recognized by the government in 2001.
- > Population: 776 people (December 2016)
- > Residence: Ita Thao village (Yuchih Township, Nantou County)
- > Ancestor Worship
- > A patrilineal and clannish society



## HOW "ENDANGERED" IS THE THAO LANGUAGE?

- > The most commonly used factor evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next (Fishman 1991).
- > Safe (5): The language is spoken by all generations, including nearly all children.
- > Unsafe(4): The language is used by by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.
- > Definitely endangered (3): The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.
- > Severely endangered (2): The language is used by the grandparental generation and up.
- > Critically endangered (1): The language is used by very few speakers generation, of great-grand parental generation. ←
- > Extinct (0): There exists no speakers.

## THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE THAO LANGUAGE

- > Under the long-term policy of a single national language and tourism industry in Sun Moon Lake, the Thao people almost lost their mother tongue.
- > Fluent speakers are less than 10 people.
- > But the Thao languages are still spoken in religious ceremonies.



Thao shamans

## ETHNIC BOUNDARIES

- > A language is one of the most important cultural features of a group and often acts as a principle maker of ethnicity.
- > Under the current circumstances, can the Thao language be still working as the ethnic boundary that define the Thao?
- > At least for now, the Thao people don' t see the Thao language as a requirement to be the Thao.
- > The Thao people have another option for the qualification of the group.

### THE ETHNIC BOUNDARY = ULALALUAN



Every thao household has an *ulalaluan* in a house. In the village, "those who has an *ulalaluan* is a Thao."

### THE CERTIFICATION EXAM AND LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION?



### THE CERTIFICATION EXAM AND LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION?

- > In the National Reading Competition in 2015, a Thao girl from Gaoxiang City took first prize **defeating other Thao students from Ita Thao village.**
- > The Thao don't have any urban settlement. This girl was born and raised in circumstances with no Thao language.
- > She learned it through textbooks and online dictionary. No "village" experiments.

### LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION?



- > SNS network: facebook, Line group...
- > The younger generation are learning the indigenous languages with their phone, not from their parents.

### CONCLUSION

- > According to David Bradley (2010:72-73), "(Among the indigenous languages in Taiwan) six are now critically endangered...**All the other surviving languages are definitely endangered** and in rapid decline in most areas, with child speakers only in a few areas, even for the largest languages. **All may well be extinct during this century if current trends continue.**"
- > The goal of the Certification Exam of Indigenous Languages :
  - > Protect indigenous languages and support cultural pluralism.
  - > Decrease the gap between indigenous students and non-indigenous students.
  - > Decrease the gap between indigenous residential district and other area.
  - > Compensatory justice

### CONCLUSION

- > In the Thao society, they don't see the mother tongue as a necessary condition to be the Thao.
- > The government utilizes indigenous languages as a criterion for evaluation of indigenous "culture."
- > The exam might interest some indigenous students in their cultures, but most students stop learning the language after the exam.
- > The gap between a "way of life" and "native languages" (as a second language).
- > **Those who does not have any experience in an indigenous settlement and any local knowledge** might become "indigenous elites" in future?

Thank you! anuniza!

