

Toward a Sociolinguistic Profile of Taiwanese Americans

EULC5

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Motivation

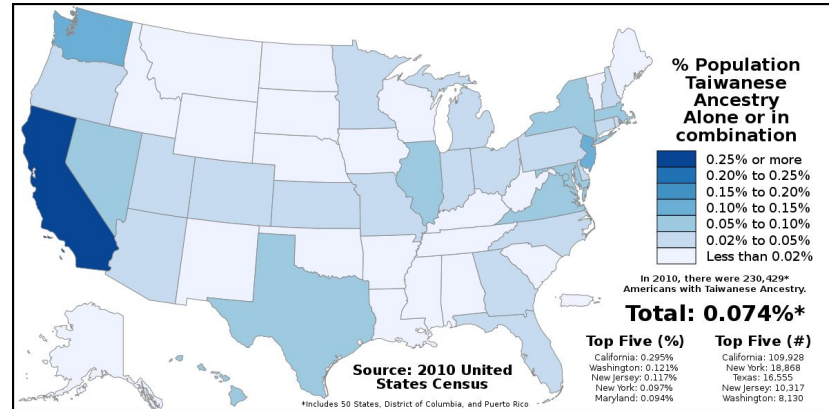
- Previous studies: Taiwanese Americans as heritage learners of Mandarin Chinese (Wiley; Liao et al.)
- This study: Understand Taiwanese Americans' relationships with both Mandarin and languages other than Mandarin

Background

- Before 1600s: Indigenous Austronesian languages (Li 523)
- 1600s: Dutch, Spanish, Qing colonization, settlement by Southern Min speakers
- 1700s: Settlement by Hakka speakers (S.-c. Chen 82–83)
- 1800s: Japanese colonization
- 1900s: Republic of China: Promotion of Mandarin Chinese
- 1960s: Beginning of significant Taiwanese immigration to US
- 1990s: Taiwanese immigration peaks
- 2000s: Taiwan's "Mother Tongue Language Policy" to support languages other than Mandarin (87-89)

Background

- Pew Research Center (2019): ~697,000 Taiwanese Americans (Passel et al.)
- Demographics of Taiwanese Americans: STEM graduate students, businesspeople (Wang and Zhou 7)
- Geographically dispersed, white middle-class suburbs > Shift to English?
- Taiwanese American organizations > Maintain language and identity?



Methods

- Survey distributed via email, social media, word of mouth to friends, family, acquaintances, local Taiwanese American organizations
- Follow-up interviews with interested survey participants
- Survey questions:
 - Which languages do you speak?
 - Which of the above languages do you consider to be your native languages?
 - How old are you?
 - What is your gender identity?
 - Where were you born?
 - How long have you lived in the US?
 - If you would like to share any other details about yourself and/or your languages, please do so below.
 - If you are interested in being contacted for a follow-up interview, please leave your contact info for your preferred method of communication (name, email, phone, etc.) below.

Methods

1. Location

(a) Where do you currently attend school or work?

2. Family

(a) Do you have any children? If so, how old are they?

(b) Which language do you use the most with your family? With your parents/grandparents/siblings/partner/spouse?

(c) Do you ever speak your native language(s) with your family?

(d) Does your spouse/partner speak with your children in their native language(s)?

(e) Which language are your children most fluent in? Do they understand/speak any of your native languages? Do they express any desire to learn them?

f) If you ever start a family of your own, would you want your family members to speak your native language(s)? Which ones and why?

3. Language Resources

(a) Do you attend languages classes in your native/heritage language(s)? If so, when/where? Who else attends these classes?

(b) Do you read/write in your native language(s)? If so, when/where?

(c) Since moving to the U.S., have you stopped speaking your native language, or do you speak it less than you did before you moved to the U.S.? Why or why not?

4. Transnational Connections

(a) Have you ever visited Taiwan? If so, how long ago was your last visit?

Methods

5. Community Organizations

- (a) Where do you normally interact with the Taiwanese American community in your hometown?
- (b) Do you attend any community celebrations?
- (c) Does your community have any formal or informal organizations or leaders?
- (d) Has your group ever organized to work on a project together for the community?
- (e) Are there any major religious divisions in your community?
- (f) Do you attend religious services? If so, where?

6. Language Ideology/Language Attitudes

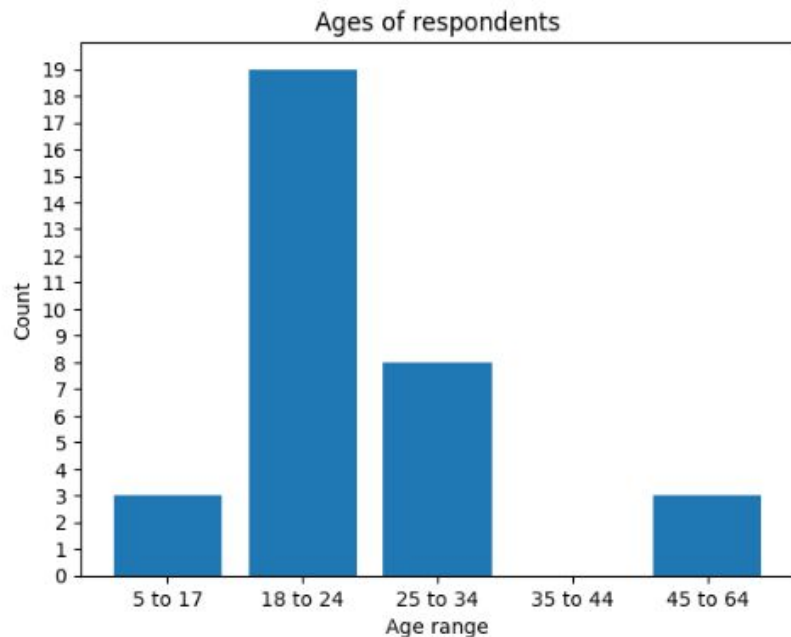
- (a) Is speaking your native language a strong part of your identity?
- (b) Do you think it is important for your children to learn the language(s)? Why?

- (c) Do you think there are ideas or feelings that can be expressed better in your native language?

7. Language Vitality and Social Stigma

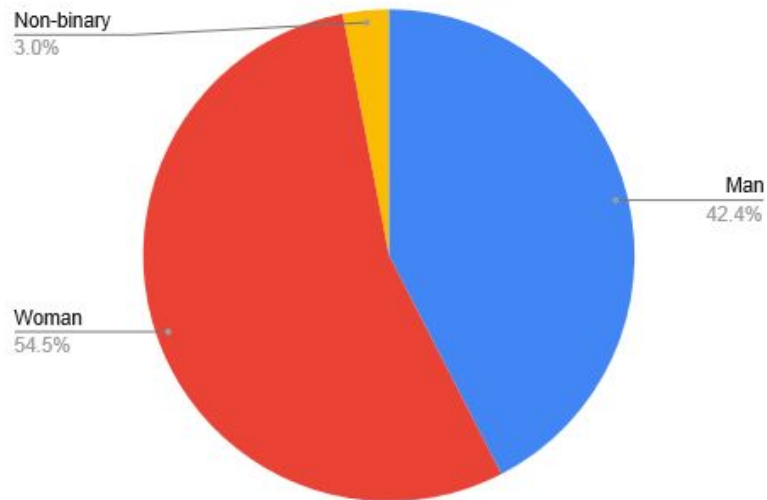
- (a) Where do you use your native language(s) (at home, at work, on the telephone, on the street)?
- (b) How comfortable do you feel using your native languages in public?
- (c) Do you think your language is endangered?
- (d) Has anyone ever commented positively or negatively about you speaking your native language? If so, how did their comments make you feel?
- (e) Have you ever felt that you were treated differently for speaking your native language(s)?

Results: Age and Gender



(a) Ages of participants ($n = 33$)

Gender identities of respondents



(b) Gender identities of participants ($n = 33$)

Figure 1: Ages and gender identities of participants

Results: Birthplace and Years Lived in US

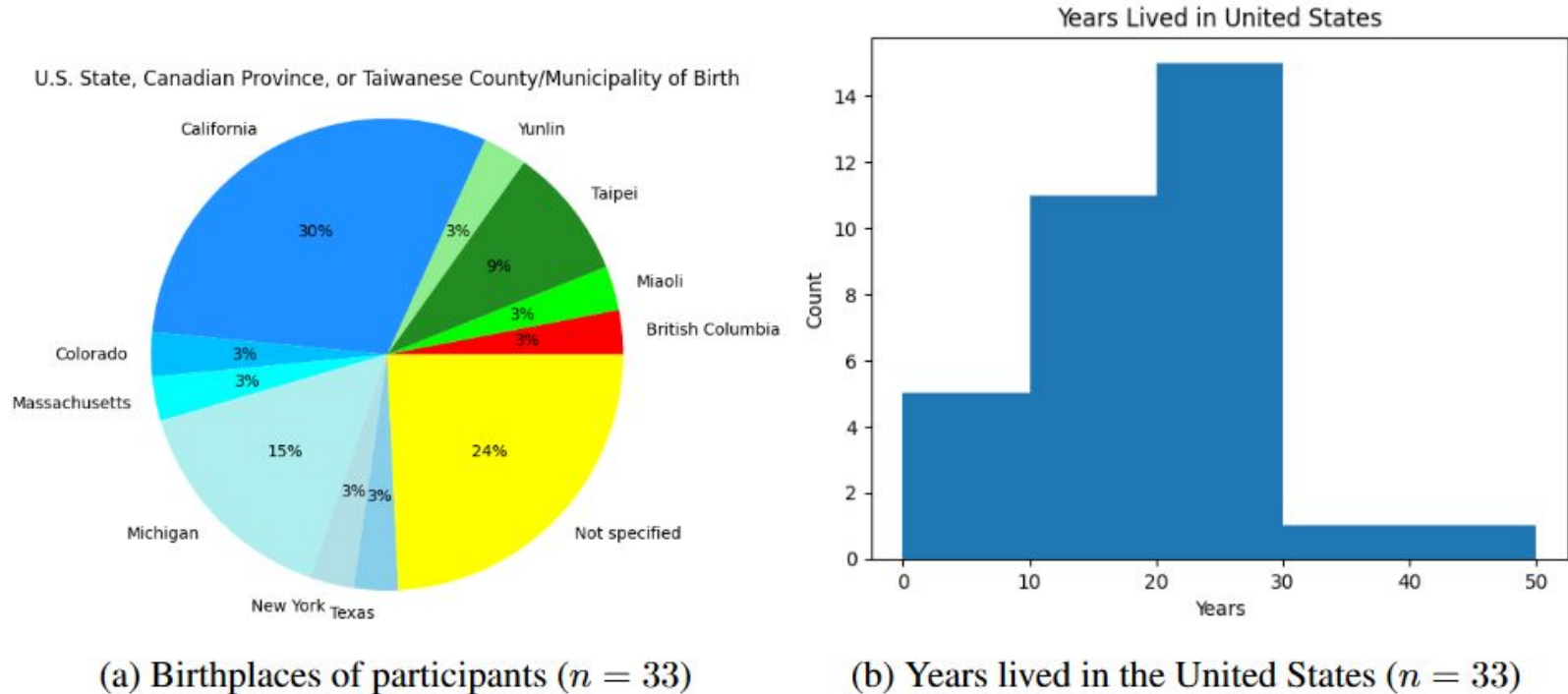


Figure 2: Birthplaces of and years lived in the United States by participants

Results: Languages Spoken

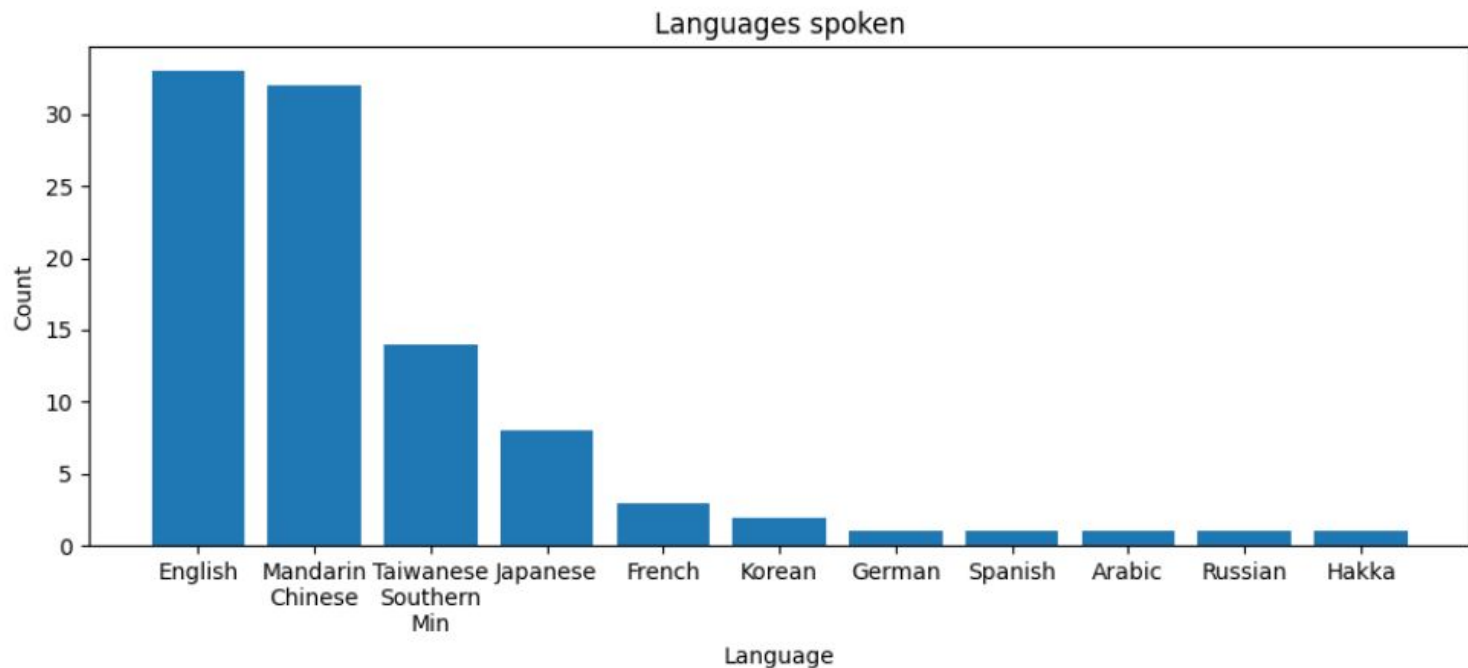


Figure 3: Languages spoken by participants ($n = 33$)

Results: Native Languages

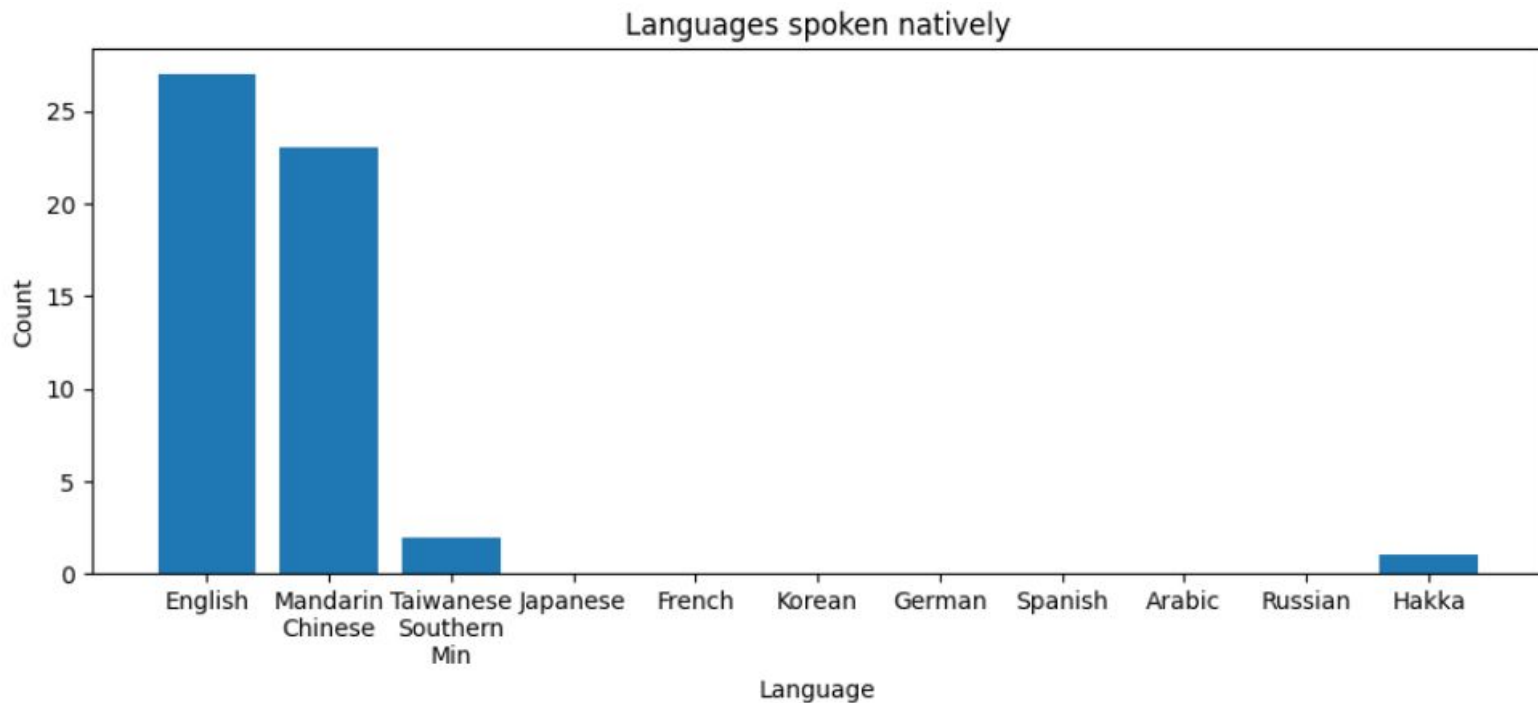


Figure 4: Native languages of participants ($n = 32$)

Results: Intergenerational Language Transmission

Relative	Languages Spoken
Mother (second-generation Taiwanese American)	English (native language), Mandarin Chinese (heritage language, native-like fluency), Hakka (listening ability)
Father (second- or third-generation Italian American)	English (native language), Mandarin Chinese (second language, limited proficiency)
Younger brother (third-generation Taiwanese American)	English (native language), Mandarin Chinese (heritage language, limited proficiency from weekend classes)
Sister (third-generation Taiwanese American)	English (native language), Mandarin Chinese (heritage language, intermediate proficiency from summer program in Taiwan)
Maternal grandmother (first-generation Taiwanese American)	Hakka (native language), Mandarin Chinese (fluent, unknown if native), English (second language, fluent)
Maternal grandfather (first-generation Taiwanese American)	Taiwanese Southern Min (native language), Mandarin Chinese (second language, fluent), English (second language, fluent)

Table 1: Linguistic profile for family of 23-year-old American-born Taiwanese American man

Results: Transnational Lives

Gender	Age	Birthplace	Transmigration ⁸ History
Man	57	Taiwan	Grew up in Taiwan, moved to the United States at age 26 but still visits Taiwan occasionally
Woman	23	United States	Grew up in the United States, has never visited Taiwan
Man	21	United States	Moved to Taiwan shortly after birth and lived there for 9 years, then moved back to United States; visits roughly annually
Non-binary	16	United States	Lived in United States for first year of life, has spent rest of life in Taiwan

Table 2: Transnational lives of Taiwanese Americans

⁸This term is derived from Schiller et al.'s idea of a “transmigrant,” referring to immigrants who engage in transnationalism (1).

Results: Experiences with Taiwanese Language Policy

- Older participants:
 - Discouraged from speaking Taiwanese Southern Min and Hakka in Taiwanese public schools
- Younger participants:
 - Mandatory weekly Taiwanese Southern Min classes in Taiwanese public schools
 - Questionable effectiveness

"You had to wear a banner that said 'I won't use dialect,' 'Dialect is a dirty language,' and so on, so forth."

Results: Spoken and Written Taiwanese Mandarin

Taiwanese Mandarin “不是標準”
("is not standard")

"It was good for me to be able to not have too strong of an accent [by attending Chinese school]"

"If I learned simplified Chinese and I forget how to read traditional Chinese that's like losing a language . . . If my choices were learn Simplified Chinese [Characters] or just learn Traditional on my own, I would just self study."

Book in Chinese

Simplified

书

Traditional

書

Source: <http://pandanese.com/blog>
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"I think that's something that I sort of take pride in . . . My tones are not very obviously like a foreigner's and also not like mainland Chinese speakers."

Results: Learning "Heritage" Languages Other Than Mandarin

"[I] personally don't feel like investing the time into another language if I'm not really going to use it that often."

"Learning [Mandarin] Chinese is enough."

"I should have learned Hakka, to be honest with you. But I don't have a learning resource [and] it's not an easy language."

The screenshot shows the Decal website for the Taiwanese Language course. The header includes the Decal logo and navigation links: About, Facilitate, FAQ, Courses, and Login. The main content area features the course title "Taiwanese Language", a yellow "ADD TO FAVORITES" button, and course details: "Fall 2018", "Ethnics 198", "1-2 Unit(s)", and "Contact Email: taiwanesedecal@gmail.com". Below this is the "About the Course" section, which lists learning objectives: understanding Taiwanese consonants, vowels, and tones; basic vocabulary and grammar; slangs and sayings; and Taiwanese culture. A note states that instructors may adjust the syllabus to students' interests. The "Sections" section is highlighted with a yellow background and includes the URL decal.studentorg.berkeley.edu/courses/4626. Below the URL is a table with columns for Section, Facilitator, Size, Location, Time, Starts, Status, CCN(LD), and CCN(UD). The table lists three sections: MW Beginner (Full), TuTh Beginner (Full), and TuTh Intermediate (Open). A yellow "REQUEST TO BE FACILITATOR" button is located at the bottom.

Section	Facilitator	Size	Location	Time	Starts	Status	CCN(LD)	CCN(UD)
MW Beginner	Helena Chang, Lizzie Chung	30	87 Dwinelle	[M, W] 5:00PM-6:30PM	9/5/2018	Full	--	--
TuTh Beginner	Helena Chang, Lizzie Chung	30	2030 VLSB	[Tu, Th] 6:00PM-7:30PM	9/6/2018	Full	--	--
TuTh Intermediate	Helena Chang, Lizzie Chung	30	2062 VLSB	[Tu, Th] 6:00PM-7:30PM	9/6/2018	Open	--	--

Results: Role of Student Organizations

- No interviewees involved in large regional or national ethnic organizations (e.g. TAACL)
 - "form[ing] the institutional basis of the Taiwanese American community" (Wang and Zhou 8)
- Taiwanese American Student Association (TASA)
 - Second-gen students
 - More English-speaking
- Taiwanese Student Association (TSA)
 - International students
 - More Mandarin-speaking

Results: Code-Switching

- Recall: 97.0% of participants reported speaking multiple languages > Code-switching expected
- Negative experience (below, right) parallels earlier case study of a Taiwanese American heritage language learner (Wiley 100)

"I almost find it charming how people in Taiwan, especially older people who know Japanese and Chinese and Taiwanese and Hakka, switch between all of them."

"I remember feeling a little out of place there and being very confused as to why nobody knew what I was saying."

Results: Anti-Asian Stereotyping and Racism

"There was just a lot of stereotyping that I dealt with growing up and that did push me away from like speaking [Mandarin] and it kind of contributed to why I exclusively started using English unless I was communicating with my grandma."

Results: Vitality of Languages Other Than English

- For languages other than English, transmission of Mandarin Chinese is strongest
- 6.1% of participants identify as native speakers of Taiwanese Southern Min
- Even fewer cases of Hakka being transmitted intergenerationally

"I literally don't know anyone who is second gen and fluent in Taiwanese."

"Language and the culture are kind of tied together. It's very hard to maintain one but not the other. And I do think that maintaining the culture is important."

Conclusions and Future Work

- Goal: Understand Taiwanese Americans' relationships with both Mandarin and languages other than Mandarin
- Surveyed 33 participants and conducted follow-up interviews with 10
- Taiwanese Americans
 - multilingual
 - transnational
 - impacted by language policy in Taiwan
 - view Taiwanese Mandarin as a marker of identity
 - have varying interest in/access to resources for learning heritage languages
 - create spaces for language learning and maintenance through student organizations
 - view code-switching non-negatively
 - experience challenges to freely using their languages from anti-Asian racism
 - hope to pass on their heritage languages despite consciousness of a widespread shift to English
- Future work: Taiwanese American speakers of Austronesian languages, churches, and Taiwanese language and culture schools which teach languages other than Mandarin

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Q & A

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