

The discursive construction of language ownership and responsibility for Indigenous language revitalisation

Chien Ju Ting 

Language and Culture, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand

Correspondence

Chien Ju Ting, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.
Email: Chien.ting@aut.ac.nz

Abstract

Unpacking the possible ramification of how ownership of language and the responsibility of language revitalisation is perceived and how this may impact language revitalisation, this study uses a critical discourse studies approach to examine how the speakers negotiate their language ownership, which eventually leads to the question ‘who is responsible for language revitalisation’. The data of this study comes from semi-structured interviews with 11 Indigenous participants in Taiwan. The findings suggest that, when deciding who can ‘do’ language revitalisation, only those who are deemed legitimate by the speakers have the power to act. However, the speakers view the non-Indigenous speakers as potential speakers and, thus, were also assigned language revitalisation responsibility. Thus, by encouraging non-Indigenous speakers to become speakers of an Indigenous language via language acquisition, language ownership is shared. This study shows the complexity of how the speakers negotiate language ownership and how this has an impact on language revitalisation efforts.

KEYWORDS

critical discourse studies, Indigenous language revitalisation, language ownership, Taiwan

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1 | INTRODUCTION

Indigenous languages worldwide are in a very fragile state with many of the languages considered to be endangered or critically endangered. Despite some of the oppositions suggesting that a lingua franca would be cost-effective, the proponents of language revitalisation have argued that the preservation of these languages is not only the ‘right thing to do’ but also in the best of the public interest in terms of providing a diversity of worldviews that enriches humanity (Crystal, 2000; Fishman, 1991; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Harrison, 2007; Hinton & Hale, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013).

Often, a rapid decline of a language is caused by colonisation. Take Taiwan for example, the colonisation by the dominant Mandarin Chinese speakers has resulted in a rapid decline of the Indigenous languages. Likewise, te reo Māori (the Māori language) was also oppressed by the colonial power of New Zealand (The British Crown) with similar effects (Benton & Benton, 2001). Colonisation instils in people the belief that the language of the coloniser is better, leading to a shift towards using the dominant language. This process is known as ‘language shift’ (Fishman, 1991; 2001). Arguably, the word ‘shift’ suggests that the speakers have a choice about which language to speak; however, given the socio-historical context, often these choices are predetermined.

The speed at which the language shift occurs differs from community to community, depending on their circumstances. For example, according to Fishman (2001), just a generation ago, the majority of Navajo people spoke Navajo. However, in contrast, a survey conducted in Taiwan in 1995 revealed that only 37% of the Indigenous participants considered their heritage language to be the most used language at home and only 16% claimed fluency (Tsao, 1997). Universally, the lack of intergenerational transmission (Fishman, 1991, 2001) of minority languages raises serious concerns and puts many communities in a race against time to save their languages. It is crucial to recognise that this struggle goes beyond mere urgency; it is a battle against those who wield the power to control what languages are used in society, by whom and how.

Despite Grenoble and Whaley’s (2006) argument that ‘an honest evaluation of most language revitalisation efforts to date will show that they have failed’ (p. ix), many countries have made dedicated efforts to revitalise and preserve Indigenous languages. Often, these efforts rely on determined individuals (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006), as has been shown to be the case with the revitalisation of Hebrew (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Spolsky, 2004, 2018), the Māori language nest model (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Hinton & Hale, 2001), the Master-Apprentice Programme (Hinton & Hale, 2001) and Hawaiian revitalisation (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). It is worth mentioning that the Hawaiian case is particularly interesting. It differs from the other examples listed above because it was the non-native speakers of the language who were responsible for establishing the language revitalisation programmes (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006), thus baiting the question ‘who is responsible for language revitalisation?’

Although there are studies that have looked at Indigenous language revitalisation in Taiwan from the linguistics and sociolinguistic perspectives (Lakaw & Friedman, 2022; Tang, 2011; Zeitoum et al., 2015), this paper recognises that in Taiwan there is a lack of studies that critically examine the perspectives of power and ideology. For this reason, I aim to show how the Indigenous participants constructed, redistributed and configured power to language revitalisation. I looked at how speakers legitimise their role in language revitalisation by examining the concepts of language ownership (O’Rourke, 2011) and legitimate speaker (Bourdieu, 1991).

In previous publications, I examined the government language policy discourse surrounding Indigenous language revitalisation in Taiwan (Ting, 2020, 2021). The policy discourse suggested a nation-building discourse that is inclusive of Indigenous languages. In this paper, I look at the other side of the coin: how Indigenous participants establish their linguistic authority and language

ownership by examining how they talked about their language and what claims are used to mediate their sense of ownership. Although here I am analysing individuals' narratives, my focus is also to show how language ownership and responsibilities are negotiated, examining the shared role of the Taiwan authority in Indigenous language revitalisation, which I elaborate on in the discussion section.

In the following sections, I start with a description of Taiwan's social-linguistic background covering some key movements in time that significantly affected the language repertoire. I then explain the terminologies under scrutiny in this paper, which are, language ownership, legitimate speakers and language ideology.

Although the data is presented thematically, this study is guided by a critical discourse studies (CDS) methodological approach, which has a focus on socio-historical context (Wodak, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2016) and is interested in how power and ideology are interrelated (Fairclough, 2010; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Two themes are presented in the findings that show how the speakers construct and negotiate their linguistic authority, thus constituting a positive discourse for the speakers. I further explain how language revitalisation responsibility is perceived to be shared with the non-Indigenous population.

In the discussion section, I discuss issues concerning language domains and explain the role of new speakers and their potential impact on language revitalisation. Additionally, I touch on the alignment of Taiwan's language policy efforts with the changing language ideology and linguistic practices in the country. By drawing attention to the new speakers, this paper contributes new insight into how language ownership in Taiwan is negotiated in the modern, postcolonial contexts, which also offers the language users a way to contest and challenge the dominant ideology and provide insights into their struggle.

2 | THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC BACKGROUND OF TAIWAN

Taiwan is a North Pacific island nation situated next to the Chinese Mainland – the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.). The official name of Taiwan as an independent country is the Republic of China, which is not recognised by China and many other countries due to the vaguely defined One-China principle (一個中國原則) (Dupré, 2017). To avoid confusion, I use the word 'Taiwan' throughout this paper.

Aside from the dominant Mandarin Chinese language, there are 2 'Taiwanese language' groups (Hoklo-Taiwanese and Hakka) and 16 officially recognised Indigenous languages (Sandel, 2003; Tang, 2011) spoken on the island. Taiwanese Indigenous languages are known as the Formosan languages and are considered the most diverse within the entire Austronesian language family (Bradley, 2010; Li, 2008).

Taiwan has a relatively small percentage of Indigenous people, in comparison to other Austronesian languages, such as Māori in New Zealand and Hawaiian in the State of Hawaii. With just over 2% of the population, the use of Taiwan's Indigenous languages is in rapid decline. In spite of the language planning efforts since 1996 and the establishment of the Council of Indigenous Peoples, language attrition has continued, and it is feared that most Taiwanese Indigenous languages will become extinct in the next couple of decades 'if current trends continue' (Bradley, 2010: 74).

Although foreign powers, such as Dutch, Spanish and Japan, have occupied Taiwan (Chiung, 2001; Sandel, 2003; Tang, 2011), the main culprit for Indigenous language attrition in Taiwan is the early Mandarin Chinese-only policy, also known as the 'National Language Campaign' (國語運動), first introduced in 1946 by the Chinese Nationalist Party (the Kuomintang, KMT hereafter) (Dupré, 2017). The Mandarin-only policy was a reaction to counter the influence of the 50-year Japanese colonisation

prior to the end of World War II. Coupled with the Chinese Civil War, which ended in 1949, the Mandarin-only policy served a dual purpose: 'de-Japanisation' and 're-Sinicise' the KMT's power after their defeat by the P.R.C. (Communist China) in 1949 (Dupré, 2017).

After retreating to Taiwan in 1949, the KMT's top priority was to secure its power against Communist China. Consequently, the Mandarin-only approach was a means to ensure the nation was united by one government 'speaking one language, ruled by one state, within one bounded territory' (Irvine & Gal, 2000: 63) and Martial Law was put in place to strengthen the nationalist ideology. Sandel (2003: 529) explained:

The KMT justified their actions by claiming they were necessary for the war to recover the mainland from the Communist bandits; and it was necessary that Taiwan's population learn to speak the national language, Mandarin, so that it would be prepared to rule on the day it 'recovered' the mainland.

As a result of the heavy-handed monolingual policy, which banned all non-Mandarin Chinese languages, over 94% of the population used Mandarin to communicate while the Indigenous languages suffered the most by the end of the 20th century (Huang, 1995, as cited in Tang, 2011).

Apart from a general approach of the Mandarin-only policy across the entire island, the Mountain Reserve Policy (Hu, 2002), specifically targeted at the Sinicisation of Indigenous people, was reinforced. In March 1973, 'the Ministry of Education officially proclaimed linguistic unity as a national policy' (Tang, 2011: 152), which further discouraged the use of Indigenous languages across all domains leading to the rapid decline of native speakers. Creating new speakers, hence, becomes a crucial part of language revitalisation for the current efforts.

After years of colonisation, the concept of 'speakers of an Indigenous language' does not automatically entail that the speaker has one Indigenous lineage, nor does it assume that an Indigenous person is able to use an Indigenous language. In Taiwan, it is impossible to assume an Indigenous person would have one mother tongue and thus one ethnolinguistic identity given the complexity of the country's linguistic repertoire. Out of the 16 recognised Indigenous peoples, intermarriage is common. Moreover, Taiwan's Indigenous population has a high intermarriage rate with Han-Chinese due to the historical background. These factors give rise to a peripheral role of the language-identity connection as many Indigenous people have multiple points of identity reference and language is not the only thing that links them to their identity.

Despite the fact that words such as 'Indigenous' and 'native' imply a certain level of linguistic competency, an Indigenous person may not be an actual speaker of an Indigenous language. In light of this, an essentialist view of Indigenous language revitalisation policy efforts appears to be problematic for Taiwan's situation. For example, Taiwan's 2 Six-Year Plan for Indigenous Language Revitalisation (2008–2019) included programmes, such as Language Nanny and Immersion School, that are ethnocentric with the language-essentialist view where linguistic identity is taken as ethnic identity (Crystal, 2000; Fishman, 1991; Harrison, 2007; Hinton & Hale, 2001). These programmes value the private domains for language use (e.g. home), which is highly valued by Fishman (1991) in his Graded Inter-generational Disruption Scale (GIDS). However, due to colonisation most of the grandparents speak Chinese at home, so it becomes questionable whether the Language Nanny programme can meet its intended language revitalisation outcome. Furthermore, the language-essentialist approach may further contribute to the marginalisation of Indigenous languages by restricting the Indigenous communities' activities and voices as pointed out by McCubbin (2010).

Since 2001, with the implementation of a Nine-Year Integrated Curriculum for Primary and Junior High Schools (國民中小學九年一貫課程) by the Ministry of Education, all primary school children

in Taiwan were required to study at least one local language at school. These classes are known as 'local languages education' (鄉土語言教育) and are generally referred to as 'mother-tongue education' (母語教學) (Scott & Tiun, 2007; Tiun, 2013). However, mother tongue is a contestable notion in multilingual Taiwan, where most people's mother tongue is a language other than an Indigenous language. Nevertheless, the legislative efforts acknowledged the importance of all languages that exist in Taiwan. It is a shift in political ideology from 'one language one nation' to 'multilingual Taiwan'. This also aligned Taiwan with the international (linguistic) human rights movement in its policy orientation (Tiun, 2013). The most recent legislative effort is The National Languages Development Act (國家語言發展法) passed in 2018, which gave the Indigenous languages 'national language' status, signalling a major shift in the nation's political and language ideology.

With just a handful of fluent speakers left for some of the languages, the low linguistic vitality (Ytsma et al., 1994) of Taiwan's Indigenous languages seems to indicate that inviting and inventing new speakers is an inevitable path to revitalising the languages. However, who can be invited to become new speakers of an Indigenous language is a moot point. No examination has been done on who can be invited to learn the language and who has the power to make the decision within this context. Therefore, this paper seeks to further understand how language ownership is negotiated and how language revitalisation responsibility is perceived. Such understanding will help shed light on how power and resources are distributed. How the speakers negotiate their legitimacy and language ownership is important for the community to move beyond the perceptions of 'at the receiving end of government efforts' and take charge and control of their language revitalisation process. The ramification of how this affects policy decisions and responsibility is profound, which I tap into in the Discussion section later. In the section below, I explain the concepts of language ownership, legitimate speaker, language ideology and their implications.

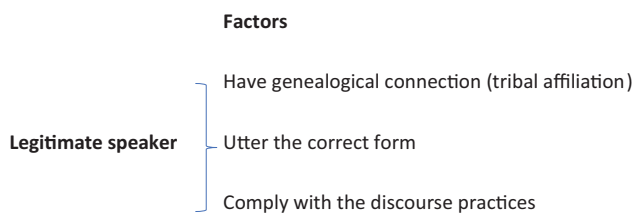
3 | LANGUAGE OWNERSHIP, LEGITIMATE SPEAKER AND LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY

The concept of language ownership is often used to reflect the 'legitimate control that speakers claimed to have over the development of a language' (O'Rourke, 2011: 327). This is simply saying that to claim language ownership is to decide what the language should look like (corpus planning), and how the language is practised (status planning) and learned (acquisition planning). A language policy can significantly impact these aspects of planning (Johnson, 2014; Shohamy, 2006), and subsequently, the sense of language ownership by either giving or taking away the control of the speaker's linguistic resources. In this light, language policy is able to wield control over 'the production and distribution of linguistic resources and over the legitimisation of relations of power' (O'Rourke, 2011: 327) and thus affects language ownership. Although language ownership is tied to the distribution of resources, it also signifies a 'legitimate speaker' (Bourdieu, 1991).

Bourdieu (1991) developed the concept of a 'legitimate speaker' as part of his broader theory of cultural capital and argued that certain individuals or groups have more authority and influence in society based on their ability to speak and communicate in ways that are considered legitimate by dominant groups. This concept highlights the role of language in shaping power dynamics within society. However, it is important to note that the connection between language ownership and the legitimate speaker is not a given, as I explain below.

In the discourse surrounding Indigenous language revitalisation, language ownership is often automatically assumed by native speakers. Regardless of their level of fluency, native speakers assert ownership over their language based on their belief that it is linked to their genealogy and their role

FIGURE 1 Factors contributing to legitimate speaker.



as the guardians of the language. For example, in Aotearoa (New Zealand) being Māori is identified by a person's *whakapapa* (genealogy), and therefore, the connection with te reo Māori (the Māori language) (Albury, 2014; King, 2014). In this sense, native speakers are seen as the most 'legitimate' speakers (Nic Fhlannchadha & Hickey, 2016; O'Rourke, 2011). This typically includes an affiliation with a specific language community. In Taiwan, due to colonisation and intermarriage, the linkage to language ownership is not a singular entry as many of the Indigenous people have both Indigenous and Han-Chinese heritage. This has a profound impact on Indigenous language revitalisation when it comes to negotiating with the dominant Mandarin Chinese for the speakers.

In Bourdieu's view, being a legitimate speaker entails the ability to utter the correct linguistic forms (linguistic purism). This particular way of viewing the legitimacy to language has been problematic for Taiwanese Indigenous language revitalisation, where most of the population is not fluent speakers of their heritage language. In this context, the idea of a legitimate speaker is constantly contested and negotiated amongst the communities. In Taiwan, it would seem counter-productive to insist on speakers having a certain level of fluency as it promotes competitive language ideology within the 44 dialects. As advised by Grenoble and Whaley (2006), when doing language revitalisation work, it is better to avoid arguments over 'what form is correct' or 'who speaks better'. Therefore, to better align with the current situation in Taiwan, where most of the Indigenous population lack fluency in their heritage language, the boundary of 'legitimate speaker' is extended to include an individual who is 'authorized to speak and to speak with authority' (Bourdieu, 1991: 41). This implies adhering to the appropriate discourse practice, thus avoiding the challenges associated with linguistic purism. Nevertheless, it is essential to understand that the purist movement is not always directed at the language itself, but rather, a manifestation of concerns over the endangerment of culture (Austin & Sallabank, 2014; Fishman, 1991; Shaul, 2014).

A legitimate speaker is also expected to be the appropriate person who speaks in a legitimate situation and addresses the legitimate recipients (Bourdieu, 1991). Nowadays, many new speakers have a genealogical connection to the language but are categorised as second-language speakers or learners as they begin acquiring their heritage language through formal learning (O'Rourke, 2011). Their legitimacy to speak is challenged as the words 'second' or 'learner' does not convey a sense of 'speak[ing] with authority' (Bourdieu, 1991: 41). The lack of full command of the language presents a challenge in attaining this legitimacy.

In many Indigenous contexts, the number of new speakers outweighs fluent native speakers. Therefore, what 'legitimate speaker' and 'legitimacy to speak' mean to the Indigenous communities and the policymakers is a challenging negotiation, which has a significant impact on language revitalisation in terms of the distribution of power and resources. Figure 1 demonstrates the factors that contribute to the concept of 'legitimate speaker'.

When considering the decreasing number of minority language speakers, the responsibility for language revitalisation may be shared with non-Indigenous speakers to ensure the language's well-being in a wider socio-political context. In this paper, I use the term 'non-Indigenous speaker' to refer to a non-Indigenous person who does not speak an Indigenous language. This position means that it is possible

TABLE 1 Types of speakers.

Types of speakers	Indigenous status	Language fluency level
Native speaker (as a birthright)	Have a genealogical connection	May or may not speak the language
New speaker/Learner speaker	May or may not have a genealogical connection	Learning to speak the language as L2
Potential speaker	No Indigenous status	Not yet speaking but could learn as L2
Non-(Indigenous) speaker	No Indigenous status	Do not speak the language

to say that someone responsible for decision-making relating to the Indigenous language's well-being may be a non-Indigenous speaker and have no Indigenous status. Conversely, a native speaker may have no influence in the wider socio-political field. This highlights the underlying power struggle within the Indigenous communities, and it seems to be an issue that has perpetuated the one-size-fits-all approach in minority language policies. Taiwan's mother-tongue education policy is such an example where the definition of a mother tongue seems to be counter-productive to Indigenous language revitalisation efforts. Table 1 provides clarification of speaker types used in this paper.

The concept of language ownership is also closely linked to the ideology of language that people hold. Generally, language ideology can be broadly defined as the attitudes and beliefs towards a language (Austin & Sallabank, 2014). However, it is important to note that, as Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) pointed out, language ideology is a set of socially, culturally and politically loaded ideas about languages. Therefore, language ownership and the identification of different types of speakers are contextual and political. For example, as we see in the definitions above, new speakers and native speakers could both have Indigenous genealogy, but depending on their levels of awareness and 'attitude' towards their language, they may identify themselves as a certain type of speaker in certain situations and contexts.

In the end, language issues have been understood as political issues and language ideologies are not about language alone (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994; Woolard, 1998). Therefore, claiming language ownership is never just about the language itself but also the construction and legitimisation of power, the production and distribution of linguistic resources and the construction of the social structure. Most importantly, it is the decision about 'who has the right to speak what language' as a legitimate speaker. On this note, Grenoble and Whaley (2006: 177) cautioned that 'disagreement in language ownership and authenticity can create an unfortunate rift in communities and destabilise revitalisation efforts', which is an ongoing concern in policy-making regarding language issues. This is evident in Taiwan's National Languages Development Act (2018), within which whose language counts as the 'national language' dominated the debate and sidetracked the efforts to support Indigenous languages.

4 | METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

This study is guided by a CDS approach. CDS is not a method of analysis, nor is it a framework. Wodak (2001: 2–3) defined CDS as being 'fundamentally concerned with analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language'. Three concepts central to CDS are: the concept of power, the concept of history and the

concept of ideology (Fairclough, 1989; 1992; Unger, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). This study looks at how the dimensions of socio-historical context interact with the language ideology of individuals and explores the concepts of power and ideology within the participant's discourse about their language in relation to the dominant discourse. Therefore, it requires a methodology that appreciates this complexity. Given the uneven power dynamic in Taiwan between the Government and the Indigenous people, the propensity of CDS in scrutinising power makes it an appropriate methodology for this paper. While the textual dimension is where the linguistic analysis occurs, the questions of power and ideology will be closely examined within the discursive and sociocultural practices.

The data used in this paper is based on interviews with 11 Indigenous Taiwanese participants. The recruitment process followed three criteria to ensure that the participants were able to give consent, and that the data collected was meaningful and relevant. First, the participants needed to be over 18 years of age. Second, they needed to have 'Indigenous' status stated in the Status Act for Indigenous Peoples (2005). Lastly, the participants needed to have an overt interest in their languages. Fluency in their heritage language was not a requirement.

Selecting members of all 16 Indigenous tribes was difficult considering some tribal population is small; therefore, this research used the snowball sampling method (Bryman, 2001) to select 11 participants from 4 tribes: Amis (3), Paiwan (6), Seediq (1) and Rukai (1). Their fluency levels vary. Due to the snowball process, starting from my contact point, Professor Chang Hui-tuan from the National Cheng-Chi University in Taiwan, the participants all have obtained higher education (university-level education). It is important to note that I am aware that the word 'tribe' may be considered outdated and pejorative. However, in Taiwan, the term is used in official policy document translation, for instance, in The Indigenous Peoples Basic Law (2005). Therefore, I consider the word choice appropriate for contextual reasons.

Semi-structured open-ended interviews were conducted. The questions focused on their language-identity connections and language revitalisation efforts. For example, the participants were asked about their attitudes towards learning and teaching the language to the next generation. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. All transcripts were sent back to the participants for them to comment to ensure their words were not misused. Relevant sections were then translated into English for this paper. My translation was checked by a certified translator to ensure accuracy and appropriateness.

A close reading of the interview transcripts was conducted to identify codes. These codes were then organised into themes that were relevant to each other and the research objective. The themes are partly determined in advance of full analysis, guided by existing theories and reflected in interview questions. The theme categorisations primarily revolve around the concept of language ownership, which is closely related to ethnolinguistic identity and the power to exercise language-related activities, shaping the notion of a 'legitimate speaker' (Bourdieu, 1991).

The nature of CDS focuses on linguistic analysis to uncover deeper meanings of the words and phrases used by the participants. I found the discursive strategies and linguistic tools from Wodak's (2001: 73) work useful for the analysis of the interview data; these were utilised in conjunction with the identified themes. I adapted the 'predication strategies' to identify the characteristics, qualities and features by various linguistic devices, for example, metaphors or adjectives. I also employed the 'nomination strategies', which were used to construct in-group and out-group identities. These strategies can be linguistically constructed through devices that indicate membership categorisation and identity, such as the pronoun 'we' or 'them'. I examined how the participants construct linguistic authority and the claims over the development of languages.

Although the linguistic devices (see Wodak, 2001) were used to understand the deeper meanings in the sentences, the data is organised thematically. The belief that language creates reality by thematic

analysis scholars, such as Terry et al. (2017) and Braun et al. (2018), agrees with CDS understanding of discourse that language is used to shape our understanding of the world around us. From this interception, the critical orientation of thematic analysis interrogates dominant patterns of meaning which compliments the CDS approach in challenging the taken-for-granted position of power within society. As the analysis aimed to critically unpack the concept of language ownership and the notion of 'legitimate speaker' within the speakers' discourse, this study hopes that, by demystifying the dominant ideology, the Indigenous communities can contest the domination and challenge the 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1991) they experience.

5 | CONSTRUCTING LINGUISTIC AUTHORITY AND LANGUAGE OWNERSHIP

This paper belongs to a larger project that involved the examination of language policies and the Indigenous participants' narratives, within which several discourses of the speakers' narratives were identified. Although this paper presents a positive discourse about the speakers constructing their linguistic authority, a negative discourse, where the participants struggled with their language loss, also coexisted and has been published elsewhere (Ting, 2021). My goal here is to illustrate the reconfiguration of language ownership from the Indigenous participants' viewpoint and the ramifications for language revitalisation.

Two themes were identified as constituting a discourse that constructs the linguistic authorities of the speakers. The first is highlighted by the connection between language and identity, and thus allowing the speakers to claim linguistic authority. In so doing, they position themselves as the 'legitimate speakers' (Bourdieu, 1991) and gain a sense of language ownership to decide how, when and where the language is used. This indicates the participants' attempt to claim the production and distribution of linguistic resources. The second theme demonstrates how non-Indigenous speakers are positioned as 'potential speakers' and, thus, as new speakers who share language ownership and language revitalisation responsibilities.

5.1 | Theme one: it is our language and we get to decide

Language ownership is defined as 'legitimate control that speakers claimed to have over the development of a language' (O'Rourke, 2011: 327). The first theme that constitutes the construction of linguistic authority is for the participants to establish their power to decide how, when and where the language is practised. To do so, they first differentiate themselves from the dominant society (the other) by using nomination strategies to construct the in-group and out-group relationships as demonstrated in the following extract:

(1)

Int: How do you motivate them (the kids) [to learn the language]

S1: Wow, this is deep, we need to motivate the kids in their daily lives, from home, so to let him know who you are. I know it's not easy to do, it has so many dimensions, in the family, in education, school education, all need to have a lot of input, to tell him what you are, where we came from.

The extract above is the response the participant made when talking about motivating young people to speak a heritage language. This indicates that ethnolinguistic identity plays a pivotal role that promotes a sense of responsibility for language revitalisation, with the phrases ‘know who you are’ and ‘where we came from’ emphasising the sense of identity. This step establishes the language-identity connection. The nature of indigeneity suggests that if you are not Indigenous, you are the outsiders, giving the Indigenous community power to decide on their language matters. During the interview, I got a sense that there is an imagined *him*, as shown in extract (1). By differentiating *we* from *him*, the identity of ‘us’ is whatever that is ‘not him’. Moreover, the participant’s emphasis on the private domain, the home, further divides the insider and the outsider. As a result of the us-and-them division, the participants project themselves as the rightful owner of the language, by extension, the legitimate speaker, and therefore, possess the right to decide how the language is practised.

Second, guardianship of the language is claimed by using the predication strategies to describe the language as ‘memory’ which contains a quality that belongs to a person, as illustrated in the following extract:

(2)

[...] these memories (languages) need to continue moving forward, to show their ‘contemporariness’, to put plainly, the traditions are being validated in the ‘now’.

The use of *these memories* also suggests that these are ‘our memories’ (of the languages) – it is also a language ownership marker in the nomination strategy. The use of *now*, *the tradition* (past) and *moving forward* (future) signifies the guardianship of the language by the Indigenous community across time, which also signals that the future language use is in the hands of the Indigenous people. Although the use of *validated* seemed to be suggesting a struggle to legitimise the Indigenous culture and languages, by assuming the responsibility for and the use of the language in the modern era, the language speakers are in charge of making sure the language is sustained.

Three aspects are taken into consideration by the participants when determining how the language is practised: how the language looks, how the language sounds and when and where to use the language. These aspects adhere to the typology of corpus and status planning of languages (Johnson, 2014; Shohamy, 2006), which indicates a sense of control around decision-making from the participants.

In terms of ‘how the language looks’, several participants acknowledged that, in order for the Indigenous languages to be used (or useful) in the modern era, they need to be modernised, as demonstrated in the following extract:

(3)

Taiwan’s indigenous languages, if want to progress to modern use, to become a language-in-use, it must undergo standardisation. In the writing system, it needs a system of standardisation. Via this process, the language can show what it meant to represent in a written language. Like the internet, or to communicate with the world’s languages, (we) must develop a standardised writing system. This is one of the most important things to show that the indigenous language is modern and can keep up with time.

The notion of modernisation does not only mean the creation of new words (e.g. computer, internet etc.) or new structures, it also means a new system, the standardised writing system (corpus planning). To have a standardised writing system is seen as modern, which provides a positive connotation to the

historically deemed negative word 'Indigenous', thereby elevating the status of the language. Furthermore, given the impact of globalisation, especially the development of information technology, being able to reach out or 'put oneself out there' is seen as a key to success and legitimating the speakers.

The mention of *the world's languages* indicates that the Taiwanese Indigenous community would like to reach out to the wider global Indigenous groups, creating a sense of community, an imagined community (Anderson, 1991) that supports one another. This can be achieved via standardised written language and the use of modern technology, for example, the internet. In addition, the use of *the world's languages* could also mean the dominant languages (i.e. English). In this case, the statement is viewed as an attempt to raise the linguistic capital of the Indigenous language to compete with the dominant languages and challenge the 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1991) perpetuated by the dominant ideology. Using a standardised writing system to communicate with the world, the Indigenous communities are able to reclaim their existence and be a stakeholder of the world's linguistic repertoire, which bestows power and legitimises their previously denied existence by harsh government assimilation policies. However, with 16 languages and 44 dialects, how this process is viable without the languages competing for resources is something the policy will have to address.

As Indigenous languages are oracy-driven (Shaul, 2014), the uniqueness of oral tradition in the Indigenous context further reinforces the concept of legitimate speaker, as the following extract stated,

(4)

P6: speaking of standardisation, listening, speaking, reading and writing all are very important, But I only believe being able to master the spoken language is the 'complete way', 'the way'.

Int: why?

P6: If you can understand, but you can't speak, you can't use it, you only succeeded half. If you don't understand, you can look it up in the library [...] oral tradition determines the survival of a language. This is why I say to be able to speak is the 'complete way'.

Extract (4) suggests that having the ability to speak is particularly empowering (as shown in the predication *complete*), perhaps a key criterion for being a legitimate speaker. The focus on oral tradition puts the reliance onto the language community, and thus, the speakers themselves. However, this is a contentious in-group marker (nomination) as many of the Indigenous people do not have the ability to speak 'the correct form' to be considered legitimate speaker.

Another aspect about how the language is practised is to decide how the language sounds, which is a strong linguistic purist sentiment to promote an uncorrupted language. The purist way of asserting language ownership came through the participant's predication strategies (metaphor), as [R1] expressed in the following extract:

(5)

because she (my grandmother) taught me [...] when singing about your feelings, like homesick, like you miss the mountains, you need to sound like the silhouette of the mountain ranges. But, when singing about the everyday stuff you need to sound like the rivers, your voice sounds like the running water of the river [...] I would sing to her and she would tell me if I sounded ok.

The use of metaphor (mountain and river) in extract (5) shows a 'world' that belongs to his people, and the practice of 'singing', as a cultural practice, strongly suggests 'this is our way of using the language' – indicating a strong intimacy with the language. He mentioned that his grandmother is the one who taught him the art of singing which underscores the intergenerational transmission at home. But his case is unique as not many Indigenous people his age can use the language as flexibly as he could. I feel that he is very proud to be a speaker and through singing a sense of empowerment and completion can be re-established because Indigenous languages were founded on oral tradition.

It is interesting to take a minute to note that [R1] also mentioned that he is not a language teacher at the school he works because he is worried that he might not be able to teach the language well or correctly even though he has a high level of fluency. The higher level of reverence for language shows that language is not just a tool for communication, it is a treasure and is sacred to him.

A purist feeling towards the language could also be found in the linkage between language and *worldview*. For example, [A1] explained that the word 'mafana' means both 'know' and 'can' in Amis. This means, if you say you 'know', it also means you 'can'. He insisted that 'this is the logic of the language, this is how you see the world'. This example shows that a language is a cultural practice – the interaction this language has with the world. This purist feeling is not restricted to the forms of the language (lexico-grammatical system) but a 'way of being', a sense of 'who we are' (Di Carlo & Good, 2014).

The last element of this theme is to decide *when* and *where* to use the languages. Several participants mentioned that in working with their people, having the ability to use the heritage language is advantageous. An example is provided in the following extract:

(6)

Int: You feel that English is advantageous to learn, do you think there are advantages to use your heritage language in the society?

PI: if you want to do ethnic-related work, it (language ability) is an advantage, but if you don't have a job related to the culture, it is hard to use the language in the society. I am doing a language course myself.

Interestingly, although many of the participants claimed that most people in the tribal area speak Chinese, they still see using the language at home or in tribal areas as advantageous and as an 'in-group' marker and are keen to learn, which further constructs legitimacy around the languages. This indicates that linguistic authority is constructed by viewing the language as useful for the Indigenous people.

All the participants perceived that, ideally, Indigenous language should be the home language. They agreed that private domains are thought to be important for the maintenance of the language. However, they also pointed out that although the language is 'a tool for communication with the elders', given the socio-historic context, this choice is predetermined. As seen in the following extract:

(7)

We have a lot of grandparents looking after the grandkids in this area, but the grandparents always use Chinese. I lived with my grandparents, they spoke to me in our heritage language and I responded in our language. But this generation, the grandpar-

ents speak their mother tongue but they (kids) only use Chinese to respond, in the end, the grandparents have to force themselves to use Chinese.

Due to the historical assimilatory approach, the older generation sees Chinese as the new home language. Despite the fact that the older generation ‘force themselves to speak Chinese’ in order to communicate with the younger generation, many younger generations seem to see the heritage language as the passage to connect them back to their roots. The mismatching language ideology across generations deserves more attention as it signals different levels of ownership in language revitalisation efforts. Although viewing the language as a home language is key to the reclamation of linguistic authority, it does not necessarily help with creating more speakers due to the intergenerational loss of language.

On the one hand, the focus on private domains and the inherent linkage between language and identity boost the claim of legitimate speaker. On the other hand, the loss of language speakers calls for measures to be taken outside the traditionally considered Indigenous space. In this instance, new speakers are in fact created outside the private domains, which I explain in the next section.

5.2 | Theme two: everyone should learn the Indigenous language

The second theme which constitutes the construction of linguistic authority is not only about who ‘owns’ the language but also about the debate as to ‘who is responsible for language revitalisation’. Indigenous communities could claim language ownership by directly asserting that the languages belong to private domains, such as family and tribal meetings. This also entails a genealogical connection (native speaker) thus creating a ‘legitimate speaker’ (Bourdieu, 1991). Fishman (1991) suggested that language transmission at home is the key to the survival of the languages is generally agreed upon by the participants, as shown in the following extract:

(8)

Be your own boss, the society doesn't have this responsibility. Because the outside world is the oppressor, [...] but you can't rely on this for revitalisation, you've got to do it yourself [...] it is in the family, still in the family, [...] if you don't do it in the family, it is useless no matter how much money you get from the government.

Extract (8) shows the participant agreed that the responsibility of language revitalisation ultimately resides within the family domain. Using the nomination strategy to construct the society as ‘the other’, with phrase such as ‘the outside world’, gives the community a sense of unity. At the same time, the ‘outside’ is also predicated as the ‘oppressor’. However, there is also an indication that some government financial incentives were given to help language revitalisation, which was reluctantly accepted with the participant urging *you can't rely on this*. By accepting the incentives (reluctantly), the participant accepted the fact that the responsibility for language revitalisation is not always only within the family domain. Despite the strong suggestion of family responsibility, this signals the perceived responsibility for language revitalisation (responsible agents) does not always sit within the private domains. On the contrary, the responsibility for Indigenous language revitalisation is often constructed as ‘belonging to everyone in the society’, with statements such as ‘of course its everyone’s responsibility’ stated by the participant.

The obvious problem with this contradiction is that the majority of the groups perceived as responsible for language revitalisation (i.e. everyone) are not part of the *family* or *tribal* membership who can pass on the language. This creates an uneven power relation between the (native) speakers and non-Indigenous speakers, which brings to the fore the question ‘if language revitalisation is unsuccessful, would it be the responsibility of the society as a whole when the society is unable to implement language revitalisation activity?’ In this regard, the expectation regarding the language revitalisation responsibility of the non-Indigenous people seems unwarranted. Nevertheless, this controversy is overcome by suggesting that non-(Indigenous) speakers can become new speakers and, therefore, are also responsible for language revitalisation, as shown in the following extract:

(9)

The whole society is also very important because we only have more or less 2% of the population. Wouldn't it be a shame if we only promote the language ourselves (in the family) but not allow the 98% of the population to learn the language? [...] So, the language can have vitality. Why only Han Chinese, foreigners can learn too.

In this example, the use of *allowing* highlights the language ownership of the Indigenous community, with the aspect of *sharing* putting the speakers in an authoritative position as the owner of the language. That is to say, the Indigenous communities (active agents) are allowing the society to learn the languages and are sharing the languages, as the participants all agreed on the thought that everyone could/should learn a Taiwanese Indigenous language. Such construction of language ownership suggests that the legitimacy of actions fundamentally belongs to the Indigenous people. This view challenges the subordinate position of Indigenous people and the dominant ideology of Chinese-centric thinking.

As much as this example predicates the us–them division, by encouraging the non-Indigenous speakers to become L2 speakers via language acquisition, language ownership is shared. This position leads to the conclusion that non-Indigenous speakers are seen as potential speakers and, later, new speakers, and thus, they share domains of the language and the responsibility for language revitalisation.

6 | DISCUSSION

As shown in the analysis, language ownership and language revitalisation responsibility are two different and contentious concepts and have different implications in terms of how power is exercised. While I have demonstrated the strategies the participants used in their claims to power and language ownership, the most interesting finding is the observations that the participants signalled that the responsibility for language revitalisation being given to Indigenous people themselves is the ideal situation, but in fact, it might need to go wider. This has implications on rethinking the evaluation tools and frameworks currently used, and the role language policy discourse plays in Indigenous language revitalisation.

6.1 | Domains

The most commonly used framework for the evaluation of language maintenance is Fishman's (1991) GIDS, which focuses on intergenerational transmission within the private domains. Considering

non-Indigenous language learners as potential speakers necessitates the recognition that domains not traditionally associated with Indigenous language use may become unavoidable. This realisation could be challenging for some as they value their 'Indigenous way of life'. This view may not be popular as it invites outsider intervention in an Indigenous space with some worry about non-Indigenous people influencing Indigenous language development. For instance, Hill (2002) criticised the concept of 'universal ownership' of language as a way to involve non-Indigenous people in language preservation work, seeing it as taking power away from the local community, which, as Jones (2021) cautioned, 'echoes the colonising demand' to have Indigenous land. Hill's criticism, however, was aimed at the discourse created by the linguists, the experts. The fact that in this study, this view comes from the Indigenous participants shows that although everyone cannot have ownership of the language, Indigenous language revitalisation can still be a shared venture. With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge and understand that it is possible that new speakers would use the languages in domains and contexts that are not traditionally considered Indigenous and that these speakers may not necessarily be equipped with Indigenous cultural knowledge. Nevertheless, new speakers give new context, new domains and opportunities for the languages to be used. They open up the ideological discussion about what counts as a speaker (Hornsby, 2016) and who has the power and access to linguistic capital (McCarty, 2018). They also challenge assumptions such as the notion that speakers of an Indigenous language must be fluent or have Indigenous status.

Furthermore, as the older generation sees Chinese as the new home language, while the diglossic language context still exists (Chinese–Indigenous languages), the force is swinging towards a homogeneous language environment with the dominant Chinese language as the favoured language, resulting in policies such as the Language Nanny failing to ameliorate language shift over time. In this sense, it is unreasonable to assume the best way for language revitalisation is via intergenerational transmission at home. Therefore, this paper highlights a need for different evaluation tools for Indigenous language revitalisation when the language ideology and language revitalisation strategies change over time. I, therefore, urge that the roles of the private and public domains, in terms of language revitalisation, need to be re-evaluated along with the role of different types of speakers to co-construct shared responsibility for Indigenous language revitalisation in Taiwan.

This paper recognises there is a lack of research into the language ideology of non-Indigenous people who are learning Indigenous languages and becoming new speakers of these languages. Therefore, more exploration of the non-Indigenous language learner's motivation and language ideology would help us to establish a greater degree of understanding of Indigenous language revitalisation and to formulate appropriate policies and methods. The new and potential speakers' role in language revitalisation has not been looked at sufficiently.

6.2 | Policy

The participants' assertion that everyone can and should learn the Indigenous languages of Taiwan is similar to what Nic Fhlannchadha and Hickey's (2018: 48) study on Irish showing that L1 and L2 Irish language speakers expressed 'a need to share' and felt 'everyone owns the language'. The Irish language in the Republic of Ireland signifies the nation, a national identity marker. In the previous paper on Taiwan's language revitalisation policy discourse, Ting (2020, 2021) indicated that Taiwan's Indigenous language revitalisation policies were recontextualised by the governments as a nation-building tool, a way to challenge the One-China principle. These policies operationalised the Indigenous language of Taiwan to enhance its international reputation in relation to Austronesian language research and highlight its democratic process. The most significant finding of Ting (2020) is to show the

policy discursive construction of Taiwan as ‘not China’, drawing on Taiwan’s multilingual repertoire as a national identity marker. By association with Taiwanese Indigenous people, the language policies signal Taiwan’s unique and independent status. For instance, the Stage 1 6-year language revitalisation plans (2008–2013) states that ‘without (our) Indigenous friends, there will be no Taiwan; (if) Taiwan were to stand on its two feet, we must allow our Indigenous friends to stand on their two feet first’. (沒有原住民朋友, 就沒有台灣; 台灣要站起來, 就要讓原住民朋友先站起來), showing the policy views the Indigenous Taiwanese as part of Taiwan, establishing a new national identity that is inclusive of Indigenous languages, as opposing to the China-centric ideology. It appears that Taiwan’s authority attempts to share the role of Indigenous language revitalisation. This shows that the Indigenous language revitalisation policies are aligned with the changing language ideology and linguistic practice in Taiwan.

The conclusion of the policy analysis seems to echo the participants’ responses on sharing responsibilities of language revitalisation. As much as the participants felt the need to share, they also stressed it is important for the Indigenous people to assert ownership of their language. In response to the nation-building discourse, the participants were happy to be Taiwanese but, more precisely, Indigenous Taiwanese, resisting the Chinese-centric ideology.

The discovery of shared language ownership highlights the fact that non-Indigenous Taiwanese are viewed by the Indigenous participants as *potential speakers* of Indigenous languages, and therefore, they share language ownership and, by extension, the responsibility to preserve the languages.

7 | CONCLUSION

This paper examined how language ownership is claimed and negotiated, and how language revitalisation responsibility is perceived by the Indigenous participants in Taiwan. The power imbalance between Taiwan’s Government and the Indigenous communities is a constant and endless negotiation. It seems the world where participants resist the dominant Chinese-centric ideology and the world where they acknowledge the Chinese dominant society as being part of the language revitalisation journey stood side-by-side. Nevertheless, this study has surfaced the fact that the Indigenous participants felt positive about the efforts and the future trajectory of language revitalisation. They have a strong sense of authority over their languages and have constructed the language revitalisation journey as a shared adventure with their non-Indigenous partners.

Benton and Benton (2001: 447) reminded us that ‘all living languages, whether endangered or not, are constantly re-created by those who speak them’, giving prominence to the role of new speakers. Considering different types of speakers have different levels of power and control over the languages, these speakers co-establish ‘whose language it is’. Among them, each one of the speakers would need to negotiate their language ownership with every other speaker. In this process, language ownership is shared, co-constructed and reclaimed.

In the end, the claim to language ownership reflects the language attitude, language beliefs and language ideology of the speaker; it also mirrors the construction of power, the production and distribution of linguistic resources and the construction of social relations. This paper serves as a prior ideological clarification (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006) for language revitalisation and provides an avenue for exploration in the future. Finally, I am deeply appreciative of the opportunity to conduct 11 interviews with the Indigenous participants. I do not claim their comments and experiences are typical, but they show what is possible for Taiwan’s Indigenous language revitalisation.

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ORCID

Chien Ju Ting  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1201-3218>

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