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(RE)IMAGINING TAIWAN THROUGH "2030 BILINGUAL NATION": LANGUAGES, IDENTITIES, AND IDEOLOGIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the discursive construction of Taiwan's envisioned identity as a Mandarin–English bilingual nation, encapsulated in its recent "2030 Bilingual Nation" policy. Through the lens of imagined community, this paper analyzes the blueprint for the policy to parse out the kinds of (international) ties the Taiwanese government is trying to forge for the nation and the role English plays in this top-down imagination. The findings highlight the dominance of English in the policy and show how these imagined national identities and bilingual strategies are constructed largely in relation to English as the language of the global economy. The analysis further identifies three prevalent discourses that help frame this top-down imagination, particularly the urgency for Taiwan to be English-proficient. Based on the findings, the paper warns against taking the value of English for granted, urges policy makers to take a critical and practical stance on the promotion of English, and provides implications for future research.

Key Words: 2030 bilingual nation, imagined community, qualitative content analysis

INTRODUCTION

Facing globalization, governments worldwide are striving to prepare their future generations for wide-ranging global and local changes. As the discourse on globalization is often linked to the discourse on the promotion of English, many non-English-dominant countries believe that their nation's ability to cope with the multilevel changes brought about by intense globalization hinges on their citizens' mastery of the world lingua franca. It is not uncommon to see English being adopted as an official second language, a medium of instruction, or a working language in non-English-dominant

contexts, as governments allocate more resources and curriculum time to the learning of English (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). The harnessing of English as a means to enhance national competitiveness is particularly evident in East Asia, a region that has already secured a relatively strong competitive edge over its neighbors. Nevertheless, except for those with British or American colonial histories, governments' efforts to change the role of English from a school subject to a communication tool, or to expand the use of English beyond the education domain, have not been particularly successful (Choi, 2016).

Like many of its East Asian neighbors, Taiwan has also witnessed an increased emphasis on learning English. At the turn of the century, English as a foreign language was added to the elementary school curriculum; now, it is a tested subject from primary to secondary education and a gatekeeper for entering and graduating tertiary education. A good command of English, often represented by high scores on standardized English proficiency exams (e.g., TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, GEPT), is valued in school and the workplace and championed as a means to achieve upward socioeconomic mobility (Price, 2019). However, similar to Piller and Cho's (2015) depiction of English use in South Korea, while English is a strongly favored (foreign) language in Taiwan, it is yet to be widely used; in fact, after two decades of endeavor, Taiwanese students' English competence in general has not really improved, and few people actually use the language in their daily lives (Chen, 2010; Lin & Huang, 2020; Price 2019).

Making Taiwan Bilingual: "2030 Bilingual Nation"

In December 2018, the Taiwanese government put forward a nationwide initiative, dubbed "2030 Bilingual Nation," to enhance the country's competitiveness by making it Mandarin–English bilingual by the year 2030. According to the National Development Council (NDC), the top policy-planning agency of the executive yuan, this language policy is not just another initiative targeting students within the education system or aiming to make English translations available on public signage; it aims to enlist public participation in enhancing everyone's communicative competence in English:

> [2030 Bilingual Nation] is distinct from previous bilingual policies in several respects. For one, it is designed to enhance the nation's overall competitiveness rather than simply the ability to

> pass examinations. It also focuses on enhancing people's English proficiency as opposed to only building the infrastructure for a bilingual environment. The blueprint is intended to forge a culture of English learning for not only students, but the entire nation. Finally, the blueprint's measures will be driven from the demand side rather than the supply side. (National Development Council, 2018a, para. 4)

Since its introduction, the policy has triggered a flood of discussion about its necessity, feasibility, and legitimacy from professionals inside and outside of the language education sector. Nevertheless, arguments for or against the policy have thus far been largely grounded on personal opinions and experiences. Empirical studies of the nuts and bolts of this initiative have been scarce, except for the few that attempt to compare the bilingual policies implemented across different Asian countries, probe into Singapore's success in promoting English–mother tongue bilingualism, or develop teaching models for bilingual content classes (e.g., Chen, Cheng, Kuo, & Lin, 2020; Lin & Huang, 2020; Lu & Yuan, 2020).

With English being promoted as the global lingua franca, critical language policy researchers (e.g., Tollefson, 2013; Ricento, 2018) have urged the need to examine English language policy in non-English-dominant countries to parse out the links among policies, ideologies, historical-political contexts, and, ultimately, (national) identities. The present study, therefore, aims to enrich the scholarly discussion of Taiwan's recent bilingual policy by analyzing one of its key documents through the lens of *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1991; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton & Pavlenko, 2019) to explore the link between the policy and its envisioned national identity.

Imagined Community, Identity, and Ideology

The term *imagined community* was coined by Anderson (1991) to describe nations whose members feel bonded with their fellow members without actually knowing (or even having met or heard of) them. According to Anderson (1991), nations, nationality, and even national identity are political, discursive, and ideological constructs. It is through the invention of printing, the circulation of printed media, and the standardization of languages that people physically located in different immediate communities may be able to understand each other, sharing an imagined identity as members of the same national community (Anderson, 1991). Such imagined affiliations can cross spatial and temporal boundaries (Kanno &

Norton, 2003); as Wenger (1998) pointed out, imagination, is "a process of expanding oneself by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves" (p. 176). While the Andersonian imagined community helps us to see how individuals cross spatial boundaries to forge their sense of belonging, the embodied futuristic implications demonstrate how individuals can also traverse temporal boundaries to connect themselves to their envisioned future affiliations (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Wenger, 1998).

Though one's connection to an imagined community may be intangible, imagination as a source of community is as important as one's direct engagement with the practices and relationships of his/her immediate colleagues. In applied linguistics, the notion is often employed to understand the impact of language learners' envisioned future affiliations on their current self-positioning and choices of learning investment (e.g., Chang, 2011 & 2015; Norton Peirce, 1995). Much like any tangible community, imagined communities have rules and requirements for potential participants to follow and fulfill, and they very likely shape one's current actions, learning choices, and self-positioning, as well as one's positioning of others (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

With that, the connections formed by crossing boundaries can be a force of liberation as well as constraint. On the one hand, forging connections to imagined communities can help learners see new possibilities in their learning and belonging (e.g., Pavlenko 2003). On the other hand, one's belonging to imagined communities can also be limiting, as practices of imagined communities can reinforce social stratifications, impose unwanted identities, and constrain possibilities. For instance, Kanno's (2003) study of the language policies employed by four bilingual schools in Japan demonstrates that as each school had its own imagined community in which its students would participate in the future, it employed different approaches to bilingualism, a measure that reinforced social stratification by imagining a less privileged future for the least privileged students.

Furthermore, imagined communities are infused with ideology (Anderson, 1991). Ideologies can influence national-building projects: as Rahim (2001) pointed out, "profoundly political, tendentiously top-down" (p. 3) colonial ideology has shaped the national imaginings in many Southeast Asia countries. Ideologies assumed to underlie an imagined community (e.g. "white prestige" ideology) can also have an impact on an L2 learner's desire to invest in the imagined community in which they aspire to participate (Liu &

Tannacito, 2013). Language ideologies—the conceptions of the quality, value, status norms, ownership of language, and language use that guide language users' communicative behaviors (Blommaert, 2006)—are often informed by prominent discourses such as globalization. According to Spolsky (2004), language ideologies not only influence language practices, but also form a basis for language policies promoting the acquisition and use of particular languages within a community (Spolsky, 2004; Tollefson & Tsui, 2007). As language has long served as the key to naturalizing the boundaries and nation-making, language ideologies are "productively used in the creation and representation of various social and cultural identities (e.g. nationality, ethnicity)" (Krokrity, 2004, p. 509).

According to Tsui and Tollefson (2007), the recognition and promotion of the importance of English—loaded with assumptions of the power of English—in non-English-dominant nations, often over and above these nations' own languages, can have profound implications for their national cultural identities. Although the 2030 Bilingual Nation project is not in itself an effort to establish English as a new national or official language, it is a national endeavor to encourage public participation in learning the world's most powerful language. In an era of globalization (in which the Andersonian idea of imagined national community is expanded to encompass an imagined international community), the employment of imagined community as a theoretical framework allows the researcher to parse out the kinds of (international) ties the Taiwanese government are trying to forge for the nation and how they might shape its current positioning of the country. The study is guided by the following questions:

1. What kind of community is the Taiwanese government imagining for the nation through the 2030 Bilingual Nation policy?
2. How does this imagined community position Taiwan, portray the role of English, and shape the government's plan to help its citizens acquire the target level of English (or bilingual) competence?

RESEARCH METHODS

To critically explore Taiwan's 2030 Bilingual Nation policy in terms of its underlying ideologies and its discursive construction of national identities, this study employs a two-phase analysis of the

"Blueprint for Developing Taiwan into a Bilingual Nation by 2030" (hereafter "blueprint") put forward by the NDC on December 10, 2018 (National Development Council, 2018b). The first phase consists of a macro-level analysis of key words, and the second phase centers on a micro-level qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009) of the blueprint that allowed the researcher to identify themes and patterns in how the Taiwanese government views the nation and its people in terms of their current positioning and envisioned future.

The Blueprint

Formulated by the NDC and published at the end of 2018, the blueprint is one of the earliest, most overarching, and therefore most representative documents of the 2030 policy at the time of the study. Divided into six main sections— 前言 [Foreword], 推動理念 [Promotion rationale], 目標[Targets], 策略[Strategies], 執行單位及預算[Implementing agencies and budget], and 關鍵績效指標 [Key performance indicators][1]—the blueprint explains the rationale behind the policy, indicates its distinctiveness, identifies its goals, establishes strategies and general guiding principles to reach its targets, allocates responsibilities to different departments, and sets short-term goals for the initial year of its implementation. As both Mandarin and English versions are available on the NDC's website at the time of the study, both have been collected and examined as data. While the 13-page-long Mandarin version serves as the primary data, the 23-page-long English version provides an additional lens for interpretation when concepts or wordings in Mandarin seem ambivalent.

Coding and Analysis

The analysis of data started with the frequency counts of key words—especially words/phrases of languages—whose frequencies provide important insights into the qualitative data. The key words/phrases include: 英/英文 [English] English 中/中文 [Mandarin (Chinese)], 雙語[Bilingual/bilingualize], 母語[mother tongues/native languages], 國際 [international], 競爭/競爭 [competitive/competitiveness]. In addition to counting their

[1] English translations of the Mandarin terms in the blueprint are shown in square brackets. They are taken from the English version of the blueprint released by the NDC.

frequencies, each of their appearances was qualitatively examined to understand its possible nuances and innuendoes when used in different contexts.

In the second phase of analysis, the study took on board what Hsieh and Shannon (2005) call a *directed* approach to qualitative content analysis: an analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes. The analytical process, guided by the research questions and the theoretical framework, allows the use of both inductive and deductive reasoning (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The main foci of the 2-phase analysis were: (1) the envisioned identities of Taiwan in the policy; (2) Taiwan's current standing in relation to the future imagined for it; and (3) the role of English in such a future. Though seemingly linear, the process of coding and analysis was in fact recursive, involving (re)reading data, writing memos, assessing coding consistency, (re)grouping related codes into networks and families, (re)examining the clusters, and, finally, interpreting coded qualitative data obtained in the second phase of analysis and corroborating them with findings from the first phase of analysis. Table 1 shows selected examples of codes that emerged from the data, the layering and categorization of these codes, and associations among codes, code families, and code networks.

Table 1

Selected Examples of Codes, Code Families, and Code Networks Emerging from the Data

A. Selected code networks	B. Example code families in the network	C. Example codes in the code families
Current positioning as Taiwanese	Who we are	Non-native speakers of English Marginalized global participants "Techy" people
	What we do(n't) have	IT industry/new technology Linguistic resources Taiwanese talents
Envisioned future as Taiwanese	Community to join	Fellow members (traits) Common practices
	Competence/resources we want to have	Forward-looking economy (quality jobs, foreign investments) Language competence
Languages	English	Power of English Competence targeted Means of acquiring English proficiency
	Bilingual	Shades of bilingual (bilingual in what way?) Justification
	Mother-tongue languages	Protection/promotion

FINDINGS

The Envisioned Affiliations for a Bilingual Taiwan

Though the blueprint does not clearly name one specific community the government envisions Taiwan joining as it makes its way to becoming Mandarin–English bilingual, the themes emerging from the analysis offer clues to desirable ties the government believe Taiwan should be able to develop. First, English dominates the blueprint as the most frequently appearing language in a document for bilingual policy. As shown in Table 2, the word/phrase 英/英文 [English] dominates the document, receiving 116 mentions; its frequency of occurrence surpasses that of 中/中文 [Mandarin (Chinese)] (receiving seven mentions), the other language featured in the bilingual policy. In fact, among the mere seven times "Mandarin (Chinese)" occurs in the blueprint, six are juxtaposed to "English," such as "中英語雙語對照之諮詢服務[Chinese–English bilingual services]" and "中英並重的雙語國家[a bilingual nation in which equal importance is attached to Chinese and English]."

Table 2

Languages and Their Frequency of Occurrences

Language	Number of occurrences
English	116
Bilingual	86
Mandarin Chinese	7
Native languages	5

雙語 [Bilingual/bilingualize] receives 86 mentions in the blueprint. Nevertheless, a closer look at the proposed strategies shows that there are variable meanings embedded in the term and that it has a possible bias towards English. That is, the terms "bilingual" or "bilingualize" can imply more than simply rendering something in both English and Mandarin Chinese, such as "業務涉外國人之相關表單及線上申辦系統，由「中文」或「中英文分列」改為「中英文並列」[Forms and online application systems pertaining to

foreigners in Taiwan should be changed from Chinese only, or Chinese and English separately, to Chinese and English side by side]." In fact, "bilingual" in a couple of strategies refers to the preparation of English summaries of Mandarin documents, as in "重大案件與涉在臺外國人或外商之起訴書，提供英文摘要內容[Providing English digest of indictments for significant cases relevant to foreigners or foreign businesses in Taiwan]." On the other end of the spectrum, bilingual strategies can be *Englishizing* strategies, as in "營造科學園區實驗高級中學全面英語化學習環境[Building a comprehensively Englishized environment in science park experimental high schools]," "落實中小學英語課採全英語授課[Implementing the Teaching English in English policy in primary and secondary education]," and "推動設立全英語電視台頻道[Promoting the establishment of all English TV Channels]."

Finally, 母語[mother tongues/native languages] receives five mentions throughout the blueprint, and all appearances occur in a half-page section entitled "兼顧雙語政策及母語文化發展[Bilingual policy and native language policy run in parallel]." In this section, the policy makers not only vow to attach equal importance to native-language culture as they promote the bilingual policy, but also explicitly spell out their vision of a future national identity for Taiwan: "多元民族與語言的國家[a nation of diverse ethnicities and language]." This is also the only place throughout the document where Taiwanese mother tongues and multilingual identities are mentioned.

In addition to the frequency of occurrence of different languages, the prevalent use of the terms "international" and "competitive" in the blueprint helps to detail the features of Taiwan's imagined community. For one, 國際[international], receiving 23 mentions, implies the supranational nature of the imagined community. It is often used to modify the skills Taiwanese people are expected to acquire once they are bilingual, such as "國際化視野與國際溝通能[*international* vision and *international* communication competence]." Second, 競爭/競爭力[competitive/competitiveness], which often collocates with *international*, is typically used to elucidate the ultimate objective of the bilingual policy, as in "希望藉由「雙語國家」政策，讓臺灣更具有國際競爭力[the "bilingual nation" policy would enable Taiwan to become more internationally competitive]," and "臺灣應打造成為雙語國家，進一步強化我國家競爭力[Taiwan must develop itself into a bilingual nation, to further strengthen our national competitiveness]."

This envisioned identity of Taiwan as English-speaking, international, and competitive appears to be crafted against the

backdrop of the world as a global economic system, another theme gleaned from the analysis. Excerpt 1, a passage from one of the bilingual policy's four promotional rationales ("打造年輕世代的人才競逐優勢[Forging a competitive advantage for young talent]") indicates that the community Taiwan expects to join may be one driven by the global economic system and dominated by powerful multinational corporations:

Excerpt 1

放眼國際，新加坡及印度，甚至羅馬尼亞，皆由於當地人民具有良好英文能力，因而爭取到許多跨國企業進駐，提供當地人民許多優質工作機會。植基於我國在產業鏈之優勢，臺灣應打造成為雙語國家，進一步強化我國家競爭力，吸引跨國企業來臺從事商業活動，讓年輕世代可在家鄉有更好之發展機會，進而提升整體薪資水準，帶動國家經濟繁榮。[Looking around the world, we can see the examples of Singapore and India, or even Romania, where because of the local population's good English ability, they are able to lure in many multinational corporations, which provide local people with many quality job opportunities. Building upon the advantage of our country's industry chains, Taiwan must develop itself into a bilingual nation, to further strengthen our national competitiveness, attract multinational corporations to come to Taiwan to engage in business activity, and enable our young generation to have better development opportunities in their homeland, lifting wage levels as a whole, and spurring the prosperity of our national economy].

In explicating the importance for Taiwan to join the English-speaking league, this passage offers glimpses of a global community with talented, English-proficient individuals racing against each other for quality job opportunities, and nations drumming up resources to lure investments from multinational corporations to stimulate economic growth. Singapore, India, and Romania, the only three foreign countries named in the blueprint, exemplify English-proficient non-native-English-speaking nations who seem to have the upper hand in this global community imagined for Taiwan.

Positioning Taiwan: Edges and Disadvantages in the Imagined Community

As the blueprint rationalizes the importance for Taiwan to become English-proficient, it also gauges the types of capital Taiwan

possesses and lacks in relation to its envisioned future. In terms of capital, the blueprint often refers to the nation's advanced digital technology in relation to the promotion of English. First, as digital technology has "spread rapidly all over the world" (National Development Council, 2018b, p.1), Taiwan is at an advantage due to its global dominance in the semiconductor, packaging, and testing industries (see Excerpt 1: "our country's industry chains") (TSIA, 2019). Second, the Taiwanese government is counting on its digital infrastructure to help make the nation bilingual, calling itself a "Digital Nation, Smart Island" (DIGI+, 2018). Excerpts 2 and 3 illustrate the government's plan to utilize digital technology to create software environments (e.g., digital learning platforms) that will cater to individual learning needs and bridge the urban–rural gap in educational resources:

Excerpt 2

[國發會]請各部會就業管對象提出推動方案，… 以提升國人英語力為策略主軸，著重軟體學習與應用環境的打造。[(The NDC requests) each ministry and commission to propose implementation plans …, with the raising of the people's English ability as the main shaft of strategy, emphasizing the creation of a software environment for learning and using English.]

Excerpt 3

政府過去在推動雙語政策時，在師資與經費的限制下難以全國一體適用，現藉由新興科技與數位學習平臺可縮短城鄉學習的落差，幫助偏遠地區的孩童享受與城市同樣的網路學習資源。[When the government implemented bilingual policies in the past, limitations of teachers and funding made it difficult to apply them with uniformity nationwide. But now, emerging technologies and digital learning platforms can reduce the urban–rural divide, helping children in remote rural areas enjoy the same English learning resources as their peers in cities enjoy.]

Apart from Taiwan's accumulated capital in the IT industry, the blueprint also gives special mention to Taiwan's achievement in languages. First, it frames the bilingual and English language policies implemented between 2002 and 2012 as having set a foundation for the current bilingual policy. Thus, rather than being a novice in promoting bilingualism, Taiwan's past effort in bilingualizing tourism-related infrastructures is said to have attained "相當成果

[substantial results]"—though specific achievements are not stated. Then, to assure its nationals that making Taiwan a Mandarin–English bilingual nation "既不會稀釋既有文化，也不僅為了外國人在臺生活便利 [will neither cause the dilution of existing culture, nor merely serve the convenience of life of foreigners in Taiwan]," the blueprint draws on the establishment of the Development Act of National Language, promulgated in January 2019, as evidence of the government's commitment to protect language rights and promote the pluralistic development of Taiwanese languages.

Despite having these resources, Taiwan still does not seem to possess the key linguistic capital to be a competitive enough participant of the community it is expected to join. As the opening of the blueprint states:

Excerpt 4

面對全球化及國際化的浪潮，擁有國際溝通能力與國際化視野，係提升國家競爭力之重要一環，…在此趨勢下，「英語力」已是敲開全球化大門的必備關鍵能力，如何提升國民英語力以增加國際競爭力，已成為非英語系國家共同的重要課題，臺灣自然無法置身事外。[To cope with the trend of globalization and internationalization, possessing international communication ability and an international perspective are vital elements of raising national competitiveness …. "English proficiency" has become an essential ability for opening the gateway to globalization. Therefore, how to raise citizens' English ability to a more internationally competitive level has become a vital issue common to all non-English-speaking countries. Taiwan certainly cannot except itself from this.]

Based on the line of reasoning in Excerpt 4, Taiwan is not being "internationally competitive" enough because English has yet to become a common language in the country. Learning English as a school subject and a foreign language apparently does not give Taiwanese people the key to open "the gateway to globalization," nor the international communication ability and perspective "to cope with the trend of globalization and internationalization." Since being non-English-speaking is inhibiting the nation's development of the other critical skills/dispositions required to be accepted as a valued member of the government's imagined community (i.e., global competitiveness and global vision), becoming proficient in English, therefore, is seen not so much as a choice but as a must for Taiwan.

Portraying English: Roles, Benchmark, and Means of Attainment

In the blueprint, English is regarded as "國際溝通最重要的共通語言[the most important common language for international communication]." It is the gatekeeper to economic development and, ultimately, the key competence Taiwan must have to become a competitive participant in the imagined global community. In the Mandarin version of the blueprint, 英語力 (literally, "English power") appears 23 times and is translated into "English ability" or "English competence" in the English version. However, the analysis found that the blueprint, though explicit in pointing out the indispensability of English, never clearly defines what English ability/competence entails. In fact, whenever the blueprint does provide some specifics, they seem rather incongruous. Excerpt 5, a passage taken from another one of the policy's promotion rationales entitled "需求端全面強化國人英語力[Strengthening people's English proficiency from the demand side]," shows the government's first attempt to provide some definitions:

Excerpt 5

過往政府推動雙語政策，多從供給端的思維擬訂政策，偏重於…硬體環境雙語化工作…；在院長以 2030 年為目標，打造雙語國家，提升國人英語力，讓國人能夠隨時開口說英文之指示之下，此次雙語國家之政策內涵將以需求驅動供給，著重於軟體環境的建置，強化國人英語聽、說、讀、寫等溝通能力，並以最小成本創造最大效益。[In the past, bilingual policies implemented by the government were mostly devised from supply-side thinking, emphasizing the bilingualization of physical environment …. But under Premier Lai's directive targeting 2030 for the development of a bilingual nation, aiming to raise citizens' English proficiency and enable them to readily open their mouths and speak English whenever they need to, this time it will be demand-driven supply that forms the substance of the bilingual nation policy, with emphasis laid on building the software environment, enhancing the people's English listening, speaking, reading and writing communication abilities, and creating the maximum benefit at minimum cost.]

This excerpt first indicates that the targeted English proficiency is primarily speaking-oriented: for people to be able to "readily open their mouths" to express their thoughts in English whenever the situation calls for it. This goal is repeated in a later part of the same

sentence; however, this time around, it is pluralized into abilities, referring to one's competence in four basic language skills, but without further elucidating what this means.

In the 目標[Target] section of the blueprint, the policy makers proclaim the policy's two main goals ("厚植國人英語力[cultivating people's English proficiency]" and "提升國家競爭力[elevating national competitiveness]") and offer their second attempt to explain English competence. Here, the first goal is explicated as "optimizing English learning platforms and media resources, strengthening bilingual education systems, and comprehensively strengthening people's soft power for employing English in listening, speaking reading, and writing" (English version, p. 7). This definition centers on Taiwanese people's ability to *use* English—broken down, again, into its four basic components of reading, writing, listening, and speaking—to fulfill real-life communicative needs. The sole emphasis on speaking competence is again replaced by what is referred to as a more "comprehensive soft power." However, the aspired competence remains vague without further details to explain what such competence or proficiency entails.

Despite the absence of a clear benchmark, the blueprint provides a long list of strategies to make Taiwan bilingual. Among them, the policy makers are counting on media resources, English learning platforms, and bilingual education systems. In line with Taiwan's achievements in digital technology, the blueprint declares the creation of an integrated English learning and translation resources platform—a portal to a compilation of websites of English translation, learning, and testing resources—as a priority; it also lists augmented reality (AR) and artificial intelligence (AI) as resources to aid English learning and teaching, alongside English cloud-based teaching platforms (based on big data and cloud computing) and online digital peer tutoring systems. Aside from digital media, bilingual strategies also aim to engage traditional broadcasting media in creating more opportunities for English learning with all-English TV channels and radio stations.

Finally, vowing to bilingualize Taiwan's education system (i.e., "全面啟動教育體的雙語活化[implementing in full scale the bilingualization of Taiwan's educational system]"), the blueprint lists plans to relax regulations on the establishment of bilingual schools, student enrollment to these schools, and the curriculum designs of bilingual education. Through what is called "修法建立彈性創新學習模式[Relaxing current regulations to allow for flexible mechanisms so that new learning modes can be created]," the government plans to lift regulations on when and how English can be

introduced to learners, and encourages, if not enforces, the use of bilingual instruction in its various forms (e.g., Content and Language Integrated Learning [CLIL], Teaching English in English [TEIE], and English medium instruction [EMI]) from kindergarten to university. Setting the proposed bilingual education plans apart from traditional English education that treats English as a school subject, policy makers regard these various bilingual pedagogies as "innovative" and "dynamic teaching approach[es] with [a] focus on daily English use" and expects them to help Taiwanese people pick up the kind of English competence needed to participate in the global community imagined for them.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

By analyzing the blueprint for the 2030 Bilingual Nation policy, the present study probes into the kinds of imagined communities/identities the government has conjured up for Taiwan as a Mandarin–English bilingual nation and examines the portrayal of English in this top-down imagination along with the proposed strategies to realize the policy goals. The following sections review the findings through the lens of imagined community and unpack the policy's top-down imagination of the nation, its assumed exigence for people in Taiwan to be English-proficient, and its proposed bilingual measures in three locally-, and very much globally-, ingrained ideologies.

An Imagined Community Founded on English: Assigning Identities, Defining Futures, and Shaping Measures

The government's top-down reimagining depicts Taiwan as a digitally advanced nation, filled with talented young people, supportive of its many mother tongue languages, and most importantly, aspiring to join the global competition for national economic growth. Meanwhile, the government conjures up an imagined English-speaking global community for the English-proficient Taiwan to join in 2030. This global community opens the borders of the Andersonian imagined community of nations and positions Taiwan within the global marketplace to form horizontal comradeship as well as compete with other member nations (e.g., Singapore, India, and Romania) and achieve economic development.

Just as our imaginations can shape how we perceive ourselves and others (Kanno & Norton, 2003), the policy makers' imagination

places Taiwan in particular positions (i.e., as having or lacking certain advantages/capital) in relation to others (e.g., Singapore, India, Romania) in the imagined global community. The analysis of the blueprint reveals a clear bias toward English: that is, the rationales of the policy being justified in terms of English proficiency, many of the bilingual measures being crafted with only English in mind, and strategies for developing the nation's *bilingual* competence being almost nonexistent. Moreover, with imagined national identities and bilingual strategies being constructed largely in relation to English as the language of the global economy, the fact that Taiwan is "non-English-speaking"—despite having various other economic and linguistic capital—therefore becomes a critical shortcoming that the nation must resolve (e.g. "Taiwan certainly cannot except itself from this").

Kanno's (2003) study of different bilingual schools in Japan found that the schools' imagined future for their students shaped their employment of different bilingual measures for their students. In the current study, the Taiwanese government's imagined future for the nation also yields its endorsement for selective English language skills and the preferred approaches for Taiwanese to acquire them. Though the blueprint provides few specifics as to what being English-proficient entails, the overall target of enhancing the Taiwanese people's international communicative competence in English calls for a wide range of measures, labeled as "demand-driven," "real-life," and "individualized," and crafted to be "innovative," "dynamic," and "flexible" enough for the imagined English-speaking global community. Aided by the advancement in technology, they are there to change the traditional test-oriented, supply-driven EFL instructions that have had failed to deliver satisfactory results in the past.

Assumptions and Ideologies Shaping the Imagination

In the blueprint of this 10-year national bilingual policy, the Taiwanese government's imagination of the nation and its people, the roles of English, and its proposed bilingual measures seem to rest upon three prevalent ideologies: English supremacy, neoliberalism, and linguistic instrumentalism.

English supremacy

English supremacy is evident in the blueprint, as the findings show that English enjoys precedence over all languages, native or foreign, used in Taiwan. The blueprint not only justifies the policy by

reiterating the benefits English can bring, but also sets the policy goals (i.e., cultivating people's English proficiency to elevate national competitiveness) and introduces bilingual measures predominantly with English in mind. Moreover, many bilingual services are enforced to "make foreigners' lives more convenient in Taiwan." Though few would disagree that English is the world's lingua franca today, the fact that more than 70 percent of foreign residents in Taiwan are from non-English-dominant Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand) (DGBAS, 2019) highlights the deeply ingrained English-speaking foreigner stereotype—people assuming all foreigners are English speakers (Linkov & Lu, 2017)—underlying the policy. Finally, though multilingual, Taiwan is relegated to the disempowering position of non-native English speaking through the lens of *native-speakerism*, another pervasive yet contentious ideology within ELT (Holliday, 2006). Therefore, while Taiwan seems to have little choice but to jump this language hurdle if they wish to enter the imagined global community, its English-speaking counterparts are assumed to own a free pass to participate and succeed in the same community.

Neoliberalism

In the blueprint, the need for Taiwanese people to enhance their English competence to be more globally competitive is couched in terms of the grand neoliberal narrative (see: Bernstein et al, 2015; Block, 2017; Kubota, 2011; Park 2016; Ricento, 2018). In fact, the blueprint relies on several key neoliberal concepts (e.g., competition, market, choice, human capital) in its rationale: for instance, the reference to "demand-driven measures" to strengthen people's English proficiency; the aim of "creating the maximum benefit at minimum cost"; the romanticizing of the social, economic, and political power enjoyed by multinational corporations; and the framing of Taiwan's efforts as a form of self-development to increase the value of Taiwanese human capital for the new knowledge economy.

Framing English as a valuable skill for the knowledge-based global economy has helped to define the kind of language skills deemed worthy of learning and the methods of English learning deemed effective. Kubota (2011) points out that in the knowledge economy, "in which information-based activities involving technology and communication take precedence over physical labor" (p. 249), effective oral communication seems to give one a greater edge. Though the blueprint fails to delineate English proficiency, its

emphasis on developing effective communicative competence—especially the ability to "readily open one's mouth" to get ideas across—corresponds to Kubota's (2011) argument. In terms of education, the English-learning pedagogies proposed in the blueprint also bear the imprint of neoliberal ideas. Its emphasis on employing digital technology to provide individualized English-learning environments (especially those outside of traditional school settings), in particular, echoes the neoliberal idea of "converting teachers into expendable and replaceable knowledge workers" (Bernstein et al., 2015, p.7). Moreover, as English is upheld as the world's most powerful language and a required skill for social mobility, English learners become little more than entrepreneurs. The blueprint appeals to learners' self-interest by encouraging them to choose English (over other languages) to make themselves more competitive and valuable in the global market.

Linguistic instrumentalism

Located at the intersection of English supremacy and neoliberalism (Kubota, 2011; Wee, 2003), linguistic instrumentalism is a view of language that "justifies its existence in a community in terms of its usefulness in achieving specific utilitarian goals such as access to economic development or social mobility" (Wee, 2003, p. 211). As mentioned earlier, the exigency for Taiwan to be bilingual—or, rather, English-proficient—is justified by the supposed rewards, including community membership and economic prosperity. In fact, the blueprint's explicit references to three exemplary English-proficient nations—Singapore as a global business hub, India as the third largest global economy and an aspiring global manufacturing hub, and Romania as the new economic tiger of Europe—illustrates the kind of economic capital Taiwan desires to bank with its acquisition of English.

Central to the global utility of English is the language's assumed neutrality, or the perception of language as a pure medium that realizes communicative goals and unlocks the hidden potential of its users (Park, 2016). Since English is considered a neutral medium of personal and national success, a nation's mastery of English does not seem to pose a threat to the well-being of local culture, language, and tradition (Ricento, 2018; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). In fact, English language education is often promoted exclusively for its utility in countries with little cultural connection to English, such as Taiwan, Japan, and Korea (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). For instance, in Japan, English is treated and learned as a mere tool to enrich and promote

Japanese culture; in Korea, English is a mediational tool used to put Korea on the global map and to represent Korean views to the rest of the world (Choi, 2016). In the blueprint, the promotion of English is believed to be innocuous to the existing multilingual culture in Taiwan (e.g., "It will [not] cause the dilution of existing culture"); by appealing to the recently established law recognizing and protecting Taiwan's native languages, the policy makers are relying on the discourse of language neutrality to assure people that the government's efforts to add English to its citizens' existing repertoire will not jeopardize Taiwan's future as "a nation of diverse ethnicities and languages" (National Development Council, 2018b, p.5)

Caveats and implications

This paper has illustrated the communities and identities imagined for Taiwan in the 2030 Bilingual Nation policy and discussed the prevalent discourses that help frame this top-down reimagination. While this paper does not intend to question the policy makers' intentions in making Taiwan more competitive on the world stage, in this final section, it wishes to urge policy makers to take a more critical and practical stance towards the promotion of English and provides directions for future research.

Consumed with reiterating the importance of English to Taiwan's economic development and proposing strategies to make Taiwan bilingual, the blueprint falls short in its justification for Taiwan—with its existing rich linguistic and cultural resources—to become an English-speaking bilingual nation. At least three key issues need to be addressed. First, the blueprint fails to explicate the level/types of English competence that will bring about the anticipated profits. In Hashimoto's (2009) study of English language education policy in Japan, she noticed that the suffix 力 [*ryoko*] is added to both English and Chinese to express power and ability, "but the actual meaning of such words are often ambiguous, even though they are eye-catching" (p. 28). Echoing Hashimoto (2009), the findings of the study also show frequent arbitrary uses of the term 英語力 [English competence] that, under scrutiny, seem rather ambivalent. Without marking a targeted English competence, are policy makers expecting to hit a target they cannot see? Second, in upholding national economic development as the driving force behind the bilingual policy, the policy makers fail to show proof of a correlation between (Taiwanese) people's English proficiency and economic growth. In light of vast research questioning whether English competence in fact equates to economic mobility/benefit (e.g., Kubota, 2011; Ricento,

2018; Seargeant & Erling, 2011) and social mobility (e.g., Piller & Cho, 2015; Price, 2019; Ricento, 2018; Tollefson, 2013), the policy makers should address how they have determined English's supposed economic value to Taiwan, taking local dynamics into consideration. Though one may argue that the blueprint is just a guideline, the absence of these critical pieces of information harms the legitimacy of such a high-stakes national policy.

Third, the government's imagined community for Taiwan is arguably a naive, reductive worldview that "mistakes the transcendence of the national and nation state for the apparent transcendence of hierarchy, power, inequality, and hegemony" (Demont-Heinrich, 2005, p. 81). Anderson (1991) himself cautions against the inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each imagined community, and policy makers should not overlook the benefits that Western superpowers and multinational corporations may enjoy from a national language policy that legitimizes the hegemony of English while obscuring the inherent inequity in the imagined global community. Since (language) policies are constructed in the interest of specific—oftentimes mainstream—social or cultural groups (Kroskrity, 2004), policy makers in a country should deliberately attend to divergent ideological perspectives on language at both the global and local levels, recognize the language reality of its people, and identify those who might be disenfranchised by a language policy.

As Wenger (1998) notes, discrepancies in imagination will likely impact the relationship individuals have with each other and the way a task is approached by an individual. Like the stonecutter who sees himself as building a cathedral (Wenger, 1998), Taiwan's ambitions to be bilingual may well empower its citizens to see beyond their immediate ties and gives their English learning a greater cause beyond just memorizing material for the upcoming examination or the next round of promotion (e.g., interacting, collaborating, and competing with global talents, and facilitating Taiwan's international visibility and economic development). Nevertheless, through a more critical lens, the imagination promoted in the bilingual nation policy may be constraining, as the government's envisioned community seems to uphold "an image of globalization as monocentric, with an English-dominant economic, financial, and political center" (Blommaert, 2006, p. 241), and consequently—and maybe inadvertently—constructs its citizens' identity through a discourse that promotes the hegemony of English. This effort, no matter how well-intended, may risk disempowering Taiwanese as English users and undermining the government's supposed commitment to the

nation's pluralistic cultural development.

The present study focusses on the policy makers' viewpoint, in particular the government's top-down reimagining and repositioning of Taiwan and the role English plays in such an imagination. As this policy aims to make English learning a "national movement," future research should also survey how the image crafted by the bilingual policy is taken up and unpacked by policy receivers. Past research of top-down reimaginations (from schools, government, or other authoritative figures) have shown that an imagined community may not be one single imagined experience shared among all participants and that disjuncture between universally and locally imagined identity/community can inhibit language learning, disempower positive identity construction, and even destroy nation-building efforts (Chang, 2015; Freidman, 2016; Norton, 2001; Rahim, 2001). A bottom-up understanding may therefore allow policy makers to incorporate the agency of those at the policy-receiving end, understand the causes and forces contradicting and challenging the hegemonic, institutionally imposed national identity, and learn about creative strategies with which people are already preparing themselves for the globalized community—with or without the mastery of English.

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