

The Influences of Taiwan Mandarin innovative variations on Taiwanese -- from young people's /iN/ variation

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This study explores the latest condition of Taiwan Mandarin /iN/ variation and its influences on young people's Taiwanese. A long-term Mandarin-only policy resulted in the language shift towards Mandarin in Taiwan; young Taiwanese people, even the native Taiwanese-Mandarin bilingual speakers, thus speak Mandarin as the major language. Previous studies reported a variety of Mandarin phonological transfers in young people's Taiwanese. However, these studies mainly focused on the phonological gaps between Mandarin and Taiwanese. The ongoing Mandarin variations' influences on Taiwanese were barely studied.

Taiwan Mandarin /iN/ variation has been studied in the past three decades, while contradictive tendencies were found in previous studies. Some suggested /iN /â/in/ and others suggested /in/â/iN/ as the major direction. The current study explores whether and how this Taiwan Mandarin ongoing variation influences Taiwanese. 80 young native Taiwanese-Mandarin bilingual speakers, equally subclassified under sex and two regions, are recruited to read one well-designed /iN/ word list. This word list consists of two parts, the first in Mandarin and the second in Taiwanese. All target words were selected by two criteria – the shared form (Chinese character) in both Taiwanese and Mandarin, and the different degrees of phonological similarities between the Taiwanese and Mandarin pronunciations of this form.

The value of this study are two-folded. First, it presents the latest condition of Taiwan Mandarin /iN/ variation. This value is important since the results of previous studies have not been consistent and the proficiency gaps between Mandarin and Taiwanese among young bilingual speakers of these two languages remain enlarging. Secondly, it presents a case study of how the dominant language in a bilingual speech community keeps transferring its influence on the minority language. In addition, at macro level, it demonstrates how the L1 and L2 switch their statuses in an unequal political-power involved bilingual speech community.