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Abstract

In Taiwan the language of the majority of the population, Taiwanese, historically has been subject to two “national” language policies due to political colonization. Both policies resulted in linguistic contact between Taiwanese and other languages which led to certain forms of lexical change and variation in the writing of Taiwanese novels. From 1895 to 1945, Japan occupied Taiwan and practiced a colonial language policy, making Japanese the national language. From 1941 to this day, the Chinese have practiced their own colonial language policy by replacing Japanese with Mandarin Chinese as the national language. The influence of both Japanese and Chinese languages on the Taiwanese lexicon has been overwhelming. This researcher has collected five Taiwanese novels written in Romanized Chinese by two novelists during the Japanese era, specifically in the period 1924-1960, and has also compiled a corpus of 113,880 words after computer-aided segmentation. He has also collected another lexical corpus based on Taiwanese novels written in the 90’s and using a total of 94,910 different words. Comparing these two corpora, the researcher has found that the Japanese influence on Taiwanese novel writing had not decreased as significantly as might have been expected; on the other hand, Mandarin influence increased due to the KMT’s Mandarin language policy. After comparing the Taiwanese “local layer” to the loanwords from the other two languages during these two eras, it was found that the lexical density of the local layer is higher in the Post-Japanese or Chinese era, and that lexical expansion is an ongoing process.

Keywords: borrowing, language policy, lexical change, loanwords, Taiwanese novels