



TAIWAN'S BILINGUAL NATION POLICY 2030: CONCERNED ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONSⁱ

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Abstract:

Since the inception of the new “Bilingual Nation Policy 2030” by the Ministry of Education, Taiwan, it has raised debates and concerns among people. Opinions of scholars and laymen on the new bilingual nation policy issues have been published. But so far, no local or international research papers have been published on how the people of Taiwan perceived it. The present quantitative research investigates the perceptions of people on issues such as if the policy is necessary for every Taiwanese, if the policy will neglect the local languages, if the policy can be achieved by 2030, if enough English teaching hours can be added, if enough budget can be invested, if enough trained teachers can be hired, if non-English major teachers can teach both in English and Mandarin medium by 2030, and what challenges the policy might face on its path. For this purpose, the researcher distributed a self-designed questionnaire including seven questions in which, 171 participants took part. Main findings: 55% of participants think the new policy is necessary for everyone, while 14% of them think the policy will neglect the local languages. However, only 11% of participants believe the policy can be achieved by 2030. 22% and 11% of participants respectively think Taiwan government can add enough English teaching hours and invest enough money. While 14% of participants think Taiwan government can hire enough trained teachers, and 77% of them think the policy will face many challenges like insufficient budget, lack of trained teachers and lack of equipment.

Keywords: bilingual nation, concerned issues, local and indigenous languages, trained teachers, budget, challenges

ⁱ 2030年國家雙語政策之重要問題與建議

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摘要

自從教育部提出“2030 年雙語國家”政策以來，人們對此話題的辯論和關注程度突然升高。針對新的雙語政策，不論來自專家或是民間，各界已經發表了他們對這議題的意見。針對島內民眾對政策的觀感如何，直到目前為止，國內外還沒有學術論文的發表。本文採用量化研究，調查一般民眾對雙語政策的觀感，例如：該政策是否人人都需要它？會不會排擠母語？能不能在 2030 年達成雙語國家的目標？能不能增加足夠的英語教學時數？能不能挹注充裕的經費？訓練有素的教師足夠嗎？不是英語本科的老師們，能不能在 2030 年之前，同時具備母語與外語的授課能力？在施行的過程當中，可能會發生的什麼問題或挑戰？研究的目的，經由筆者親身設計的問卷，一共七題，由 171 名受訪者填寫完畢。主要發現如下：（一）有 55% 的受訪者認人人需要雙語政策，其中也有 14% 的受訪者也認為它會排擠母語。（二）只有 11% 受訪者相信該政策可能於 2030 年達成目標。（三）分別有 22% 與 11% 受訪者認為政府可能增加足夠的英語教學時數，與挹注充足的經費。（四）雖然有 14% 的受訪者認為政府可能聘用足夠的訓練有素的老師們，也有 77% 的受訪者認為該政策的實施將會面臨預算不足、缺乏培訓的教師，設備不足等諸多挑戰。

關鍵詞：雙語國家，關注問題，母語，訓練有素的教師，預算，挑戰

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose of the Study

Taiwan's new bilingual nation policy 2030 aims to *“enhance the bilingual skills of Taiwan's professionals so as to make them more competitive in the global arena and equip them with an international outlook, and attract international enterprises to invest and set up operations in Taiwan. By enabling domestic enterprises with bilingual capabilities to connect to the world, Taiwan expects international business opportunities to be expanded for domestic enterprises and high-quality job opportunities to be created for Taiwanese citizens”* (National Development Council, Ministry of Education, Taiwan, p. 5, 2021).

Since the inception of the new “Bilingual Nation Policy 2030” by the Ministry of Education, Taiwan, and the announcement of its blueprints in 2018, it has raised debates among language and policy scholars, and caused concern in some minority groups and academic circles (Ferrer & Lin, 2021). Scholars, professors, teachers, policymakers, language experts, and laymen have written and published their opinions on the new bilingual policy. Some express their views on the issue of whether bilingual education is necessary for everyone, and some criticize the policy concerning the issues of neglecting the indigenous and local languages – *“Instead of developing these (indigenous languages) further, particularly in the case of Taiwan's endangered and unrecognized Indigenous languages, the focus is shifted to Taiwan's purported deficit in English language proficiency”* (Batchelor & Lin, para. 3, 2020). Others express their doubts about achieving the policy by the set time, 2030, while some worry about the issues of funding and budget allocation and challenges the new bilingual policy will face on its path *“the government should prioritize resources on the training of English teachers and support for teaching materials and strategies, rather than setting unrealistic goals to reach despite the currently limited educational resources and the cultural conditions in the society”* (Batchelor & Lin, para. 9, 2020).

The main purpose and aim of the present study are to investigate people' particularly students, teachers, professors and parents' perceptions on the concerned issues if the policy is

necessary for every Taiwanese, if the policy will neglect the local languages, if the policy can be achieved by 2030, if enough English teaching hours can be added, if enough budget can be invested, if enough trained teachers can be hired, if non-English major teachers can teach both in English and Mandarin by 2030, and what challenges the policy might face on its path in implementing and executing the new bilingual policy plans.

1.2 Literature Reviews

According to Ferrer and Lin, since the late 1980s, Taiwan has moved away from a Mandarin-only language policy in favor of greater recognition of local languages as part of a greater localization movement. While continuing to implement language policies aimed at promoting local Taiwanese languages, recently Taiwan has additionally made plans to implement a bilingual language policy to incorporate English (Ferrer & Lin, 202, p. 2).

The development and protection of local and indigenous languages depend a lot on how language policies are planned, implemented and executed. According to Suzanne Romaine (2002), *“Language policy is not an autonomous factor and what appears to be ostensibly the same policy may lead to different outcomes, depending on the situation in which it operates. Weak linkages between policy and planning render many policies ineffective”* (Romaine, 2002).

In line with Romaine’s saying, on the question of how Taiwan’s local and indigenous languages will be protected and developed under the new bilingual nation policy, Ferrer and Lin express that without explicit language planning, clear resource allocation, the legal commitment to both development and institutionalization in schools of Taiwanese languages and English appears in more realistic terms, incompatible. Ferrer and Lin continue that considering the efforts required to fulfill the previously established promises in Taiwan’s pledge for national language development, plans for *“full-scale bilingualization”* – with English as the additional language – by 2030 appear insubstantial, considering the history of the challenges faced by the government – *“Schools in Taiwan offer aboriginal language elective courses, but they are unable to meet the needs due to the difficulties in recruiting teachers”* (Ministry of Education 2014, Section 5).

Singh and Wappel express their doubt that the existing challenges of incoherent policy coordination, inadequate number of well-trained indigenous language teachers and the treatment of minority languages as, in practice, another foreign language class for 40 minutes per week raises doubts that the implementation of Bilingual Nation Plan in its current form *“will not constrain native language education”* (Singh & Wappel, 2021).

Watt (2021) also expresses the view that *“Another is that the emphasis on English could undermine the government’s efforts to promote students’ learning of Taiwanese, Hakka, and Indigenous languages”* (Watt, 2021, para. 10).

While the Taiwan government needs to allocate a bigger budget to implement and execute bilingual nation policy plans, the budget for education has been cut down. *“The spending cut of NT\$27.34 billion was agreed on by all four party caucuses in the Legislature (2022 annual budget) ... Though small, it will be the largest cut of a proposal since 2014, according to Legislature data”* (Focus Taiwan CAN English News, 2022 11:09 PM).

Furthermore, based on Aljazeera News, Taiwan’s parliament has passed an extra spending bill of \$8.6bn, in the latest bid to boost (Taiwan’s) defense capabilities. The news

continues that *“Lawmakers on Tuesday agreed unanimously to pass the special budget, which comes on top of a record annual defense budget of about \$17bn set for 2022”* (Aljazeera News, 11 Jan, 2022).

The Ministry of Education, Taiwan, promised to protect the rights and interests of students - *“At the national primary level, schools should open classes in all local language categories chosen by students. Protect students’ rights and interests in learning their native language”* (Ministry of Education 2014, Section 5). But allocating resources for national language development, especially for non-majority languages, including all Taiwanese Indigenous languages and Hakka, has historically been a challenge for the state – *“Schools offer aboriginal language elective courses, but they are unable to meet the needs due to the difficulties in recruiting teachers”* (Ministry of Education 2014, Section 5).

1.3 Definition of Bilingual Education

According to Colin Baker, bilingual education refers to education in more than one language, often encompassing more than two languages (Baker, 2001). Cummins (2009) defines bilingual education as *“an organized and planned program that uses two (or more) languages of instruction. The central defining feature of bilingual programs is that the languages are used to teach subject matter content rather than just the languages themselves”* (Cummins, 2009, p.161). To paraphrase Garcia (2009), bilingual education is any instance in which children’s and teachers’ communicative practices in school normally include the use of multiple multilingual practices that maximize learning efficacy and communication; and that, in so doing, foster and develop tolerance towards linguistic differences, as well as an appreciation of languages and bilingual proficiency (Garcia, 2009, p. 14).

Li defines bilingualism as *“the coexistence, contact and interaction of different languages. The coexistence may take place at the societal level or the individual level”* (Li, 2012, p. 26).

1.4 How Long does it Take to Stablish a Bilingual Nation?

Concerning the geographical proximity of the Taiwan region to Singapore, and the similarity of bilingual approaches the European countries, brief histories of bilingual education in Singapore under the British Colonialism in Asia, and the Netherlands in Europe, which follows CLIL approach (Content and Language Integrated Learning) are discussed below.

a. Bilingual Education in Singapore

According to the study by Guo et al., the history of Singapore’s bilingual education is divided into four periods as: 1. Embryonic/budding period (1946~1958), 2. Development period (1959-1965), 3. Maturation period (1966~1986), and 4. Finalization period (1987~ till now).

According to Guo et al., during the first embryonic period, Singapore’s bilingual education policy was dominated by British colonialists. After the second world war, to strengthen her declining position and for the sake of ruling, the British colonial government vigorously promoted English education in Singapore by introducing a series of preferential policies to attract local students to study in British schools, and recruiting English-educated people in employment, discriminating against those educated in other languages. As a result, English has become one of the four major languages alongside mandarin, Malay and Tamil.

The second development period of Singapore's bilingual education policy refers to the development period of Singapore's independence from British rule. To calm down social unrest through equal treatment of all ethnic languages, with English to unify national consciousness, Lee Kuan Yew, the first Prime Minister of autonomous Singapore in 1959, promoted a bilingual policy in which Malay the common language of the people in Singapore with the other languages coexisting.

The maturity of Singapore's bilingual education policy refers to the period when Singapore was independent of Malaysia in 1965. During this period, Singapore experienced ethnic conflicts caused by ethnic tensions seriously affecting Singapore's unity and stability (Lee wen Bo, Wang Fengming, 2019, as cited by Guo et al., 2022). To solve this problem, Lee Kuan Yew made English as the common language and the first language under the premise of promoting national identity and economic development, and carried out compulsory bilingual learning nationwide, that is, all students had to learn English and their mother tongue as a second language.

The last finalization period of Singapore's bilingual education policy refers to the Singapore government's order that all schools must adopt English as the language of instruction, while retaining the bilingual decision to learn the mother tongue, and the resulting education diversion system. After the 1980s, with the continuous development of globalization, the status of English has become higher and higher with more and more students have chosen to study in English schools (Guo et al, 2022). Thus, Singapore's bilingual education continued her journey. Today, Singapore is the only Asian country to be included among the top 10 best bilingual countries in Europe (around the world). Singapore occupies the top six according to the EF English Proficiency Index, with a score of 63.5 (Nuffic, para. 4, 2020). It is even ahead of 4 top 10 European countries like Luxembourg, Austria, Germany and Poland.

b. Bilingual Education in the Netherlands

To paraphrase Nikula, Europe has a long history of forms of bilingual education. However, in the 1990s, accelerated by the processes of political and economic integration, a need was felt for a unified orientation to bilingual education, strongly influenced by the various policy initiatives that urged the educational institutions to meet the demands of diversifying societies in the multilingual continent and in the rapidly globalizing era, led to the establishment and adoption of the terms CLIL (Nikula, T., 2016). Coyle, Hood, and Marsh (2010) define CLIL as "*a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language*" (Coyle et al. 2010, as cited by de Graaff & Costache, chap. 8, p. 139, 2020).

Byca states that a clear interest in introducing all forms of bilingual education has been noticed in the countries of the European Union since the 1990s. In 1994 the methodological foundation was formulated, which makes it possible to describe the practice of CLIL Program (Byca, 2011, p. 187). According to Christine Helot and Marissa Cavalli, bilingual education in dominant languages is available today in most European public education systems, which is implemented in a variety of sociolinguistic contexts marked by different educational history, and is strongly supported by European institutions. Bilingual education varies from models where all school subjects are taught in two languages to more partial models where the target language

is used to teach only one or two subjects. The CLIL model is considered an important central instrument to achieve the plurilingualism in European Union (Helot & Cavalli, 2017).

In the Netherlands, it all started back in 1989, when an international school started a bilingual stream for Dutch children. A handful of regular schools already offering international projects to their students soon followed their example, and by the early 1990s, these pioneering schools were helping other schools to also set up bilingual streams. Since then, the concept has flourished (Nuffic, para. 1, 2020). The Netherlands has often held up an example of a 'success story' in terms of practices and research regarding the teaching and learning of subject content in a second language (de Graaff & van Wilgenburg, 2015; Pérez-Cañado, 2012, as cited by Mearns & Graaff, 2018). Nearly 30 years after its initial beginnings, bilingual secondary education in the Netherlands continues to thrive and to evolve in fitting with educational demands (Mearns & Graaff, 2018). The official languages in the Netherlands are Dutch and Frisian, although English also occupies a prominent position in society, such that the question has been raised as to whether English should be considered more of a second than a foreign language (Edwards, p. 35, 2014).

Bilingual secondary education in the Netherlands began in 1989 as a grassroots movement initiated by parents and teachers (Maljers, 2007). Bilingual secondary education grew gradually at first but experienced a boom in the 2000s, growing from 26 registered schools in 2000 to 115 in 2010 (Koster & van Putten, 2014, as cited by Mearns & Graaff, 2018). At last count, there were 120 secondary schools, which have obtained official accreditation as bilingual secondary schools offering bilingual education in the Netherlands – almost one in five of all secondary schools – catering to nearly 30,000 students (Nuffic, para. 4, 2020). At these secondary schools, the languages of instruction are Dutch and English. Briefly, the Netherlands has three levels of secondary education. On the basis of their primary school results, 12-year-olds are advised to follow an education at one of three levels: 4-year pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO), 5-year intermediate secondary education (HAVO) or 6-year pre-university secondary education (VWO). A VMBO diploma prepares students for vocational college and a HAVO diploma provides access to institutes of higher professional education (HBO), also known as vocational colleges or universities of applied sciences. A VWO diploma gives students access to university (Nuffic, p. 5, 2020). Today, the Netherlands has emerged as the nation with the highest English language proficiency, according to the EF English Proficiency Index, with a score of 72. It is ahead of five other northern European nations at the top of the chart (World Economic Forum, para. 5, 2019).

From the above brief studies of bilingual education histories, it can be seen that whether bilingual education was created through imposition by the British Imperialists or through following the popular CLIL program in European bilingual countries, it is clear that it takes decades to establish a bilingual nation. There is no shortcut. The same will be with Taiwan's journey to establishing a bilingual nation.

2. Research Methodology

Every research needs a hypothesis or a problem question/s, to begin with. The present research questions were formulated based on the literature reviews and questions such as whether the

new bilingual policy is necessary for every Taiwanese, whether the policy will neglect the indigenous and local languages, and whether the policy can be achieved by 2030 as rhetorically claimed by Taiwan government, whether enough English teaching hours can be added, whether enough budget can be invested, whether enough trained local as well as foreign teachers can be hired, and what challenges the policy might face on its path. After formulating the research questions, a self-designed survey questionnaire including 7 relevant questions was compiled and distributed to 350 prospective participants during the months of April and June 2022 for collecting their opinions in quantitative statistical numbers which can fairly represent cross-sectional groups of people, especially those who will involve in giving, receiving and supporting bilingual education. The following table shows the 7 self-designed survey questions.

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| Q1. Do you think Bilingual Policy 2030 is necessary for everyone in Taiwan? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea. |
| Q2. Do you think Bilingual Policy 2030 will neglect local languages? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea. |
| Q3. Do you think Bilingual Policy 2030's goal can be achieved by 2030? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea. |
| Q4. Do you think the Taiwan government can add enough English teaching hours in all the educational institutes to achieve the policy's goal by 2030? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea. |
| Q5. Do you think Taiwan government can invest enough money for bilingual education? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea. |
| Q6. Do you think Taiwan government can hire enough trained local as well as foreign teachers to realize Bilingual Policy 2030? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea. |
| Q7. What are some of the challenges Bilingual Policy will face on its course? A) Insufficient budget, B) Lack of trained teachers, C) Lack of equipment, D) all of them. |

The first question – “Do you think Bilingual Policy 2030 is necessary for everyone in Taiwan?” addresses the issues of whether Bilingual Policy 2030 is necessary for everyone in Taiwan. The second question – “Do you think Bilingual Policy 2030 will neglect local languages?” deals with the issues of whether bilingual nation policy will still protect or neglect indigenous and local languages in Taiwan. The third question – “Do you think Bilingual Policy 2030's goal can be achieved by 2030?” investigates the question of whether the bilingual policy’s goal can be achieved by 2030 as set by the Ministry of Education under Taiwan Government. The fourth and fifth questions “Do you think Taiwan government can add enough English teaching hours in all the educational institutes to achieve the policy's goal by 2030?” and “Do you think Taiwan government can invest enough money for bilingual education?” respectively investigate peoples’ perceptions on the concerned issues of whether Taiwan government can add enough English

classes and invest enough money to smoothly establish a bilingual nation in Taiwan by 2030. And the final question investigates peoples' thoughts on what challenges the new bilingual nation policy might encounter on its path.

2.1 Participants

For the purpose of collecting relevant data a group of people consisting of students, teachers, professors and parents were chosen as target participants. The research survey participants were chosen as the target participants from these cross sections of people as they are the ones who will be affected directly by the process of bilingual policy. Of course, the policy and plans will be implemented by the Taiwan government but the materials for bilingual education will be delivered by the teachers and professors through their teaching and students are the ones who will receive the bilingual materials, while parents are the ones who will encourage and support both student and teacher communities.

Out of the 171 participants who took part in the survey, 64 participants are mostly final year college students at a university in New Taipei city, while 32 participants are students' parents whose children are also studying in grade two five-year program. Among the remaining 76 participants, 42 are high school teachers from two high schools in New Taipei City, while the remaining 34 participants are professors from two universities, one from New Taipei City and another one from southern Taiwan. The 32 parents are not related to those 62 students who took part in the present research survey. Most of the parents who took part in the survey are mothers. Out of 32 parents, only 7 fathers took part in the survey. The remaining 25 participants are all mothers. The students and parents who took part in the survey belong to New Taipei City.

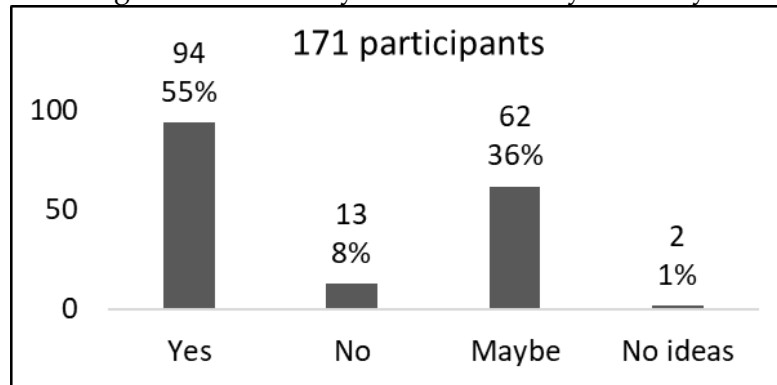
2.2 Data Collection

With the permission, the self-designed survey questionnaires including 7 questions were distributed to more than 350 prospective participants, physically and through e-mails. Out of 350, 171 participants took part in the survey and returned the answered questionnaires. Once the answered survey questionnaires were collected, the answers were entered in Microsoft Excel, then the data was converted into statistic numbers for further analysis using the Microsoft Excel program. The converted statistic numbers were then entered into Microsoft Pivot Table for further analysis. The pivot table results are then converted into charts for detailed results. All 7 questions were analyzed individually and separately.

2.3 Research Results

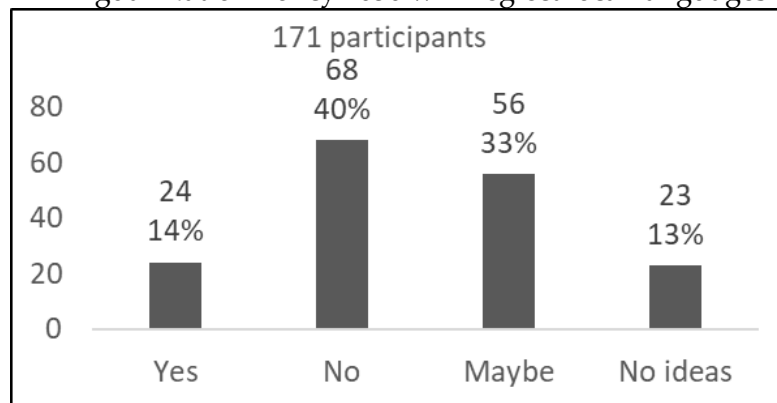
The following chart in Figure 1 shows the participants' feedback on the question – "Do you think Bilingual Policy 2030 is necessary for everyone in Taiwan? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea"

Figure 1: Participants' feedbacks on the question of whether Bilingual Nation Policy 2030 is necessary for everyone



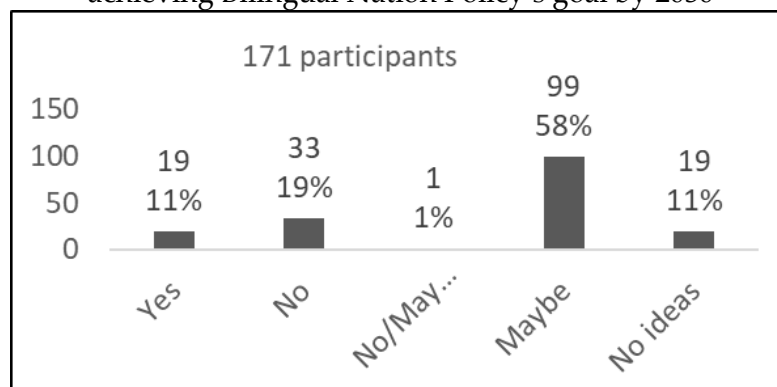
The following chart in Figure 2 shows the participants' feedback on the question – “Do you think Bilingual Education Policy 2030 will neglect local languages? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea”.

Figure 2: Participants' feedback on the question of whether Bilingual Nation Policy 2030 will neglect local languages



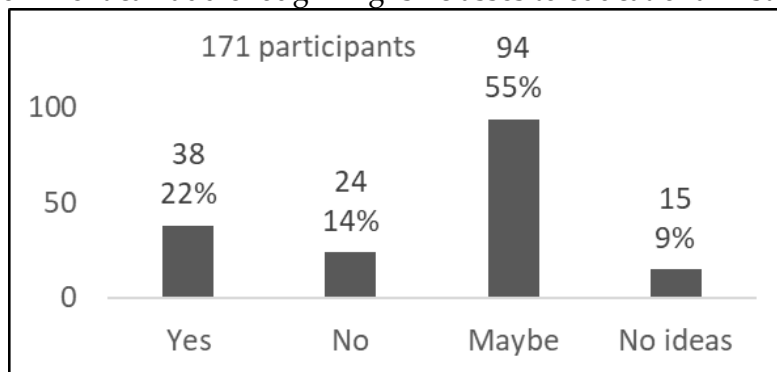
The following chart in Figure 3 shows the participants' feedback on the question of achieving the bilingual nation policy's goal by 2030 – “Do you think Bilingual Policy 2030's goal can be achieved by 2030? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea”.

Figure 3: Participants' feedback on the question of achieving Bilingual Nation Policy's goal by 2030



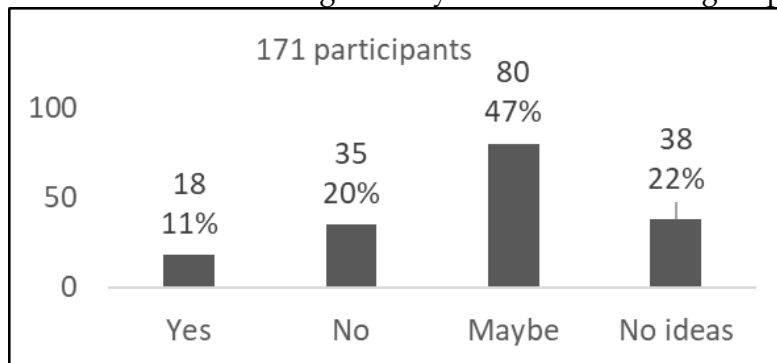
The following chart in Figure 4 shows the participants' feedback on the question of whether Taiwan government can add enough English classes to educational institutes – “Do you think Taiwan government can add enough English teaching hours in all the educational institutes to achieve the policy's goal by 2030? - A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea”

Figure 4: Participants' feedback on the question of whether Taiwan government can add enough English classes to educational institutes



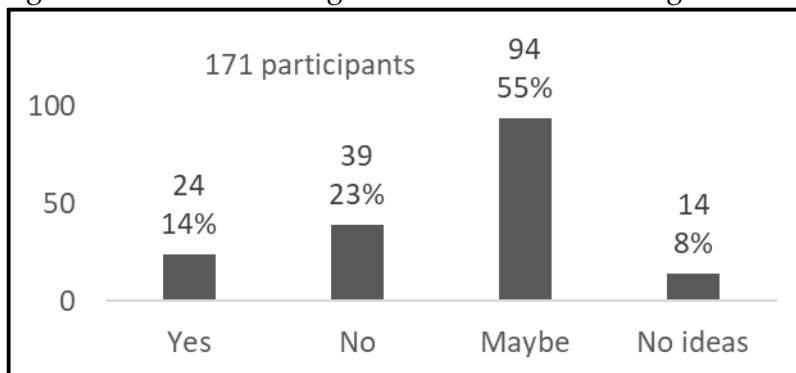
The following chart in Figure 5 shows the participants' feedback on the question of whether Taiwan government can invest enough money to achieve the bilingual policy – “Do you think Taiwan government can invest enough money for bilingual education?”

Figure 5: Participants' feedback on the question of whether Taiwan government can invest enough money to achieve the bilingual policy



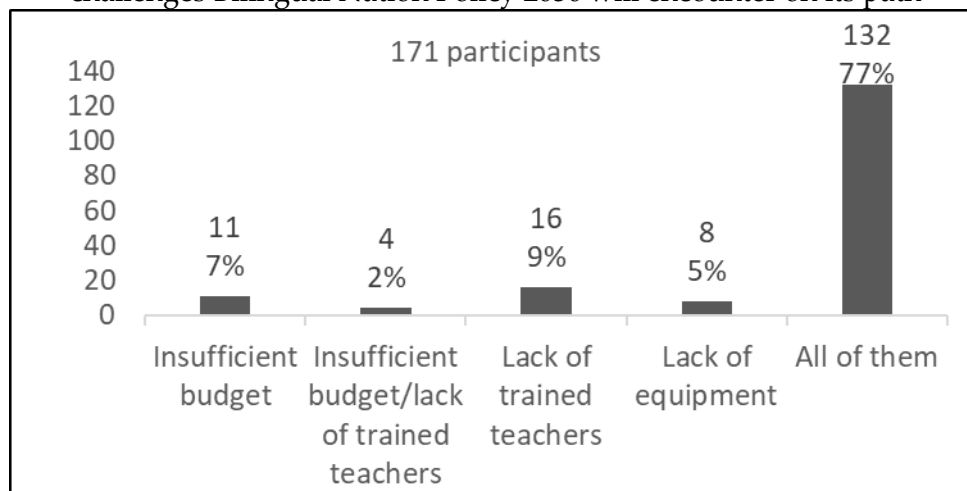
The following chart in Figure 6 shows the participants' feedback on the question of whether Taiwan government can hire enough local as well as foreign teachers to realize the bilingual nation policy – “Do you think Taiwan government can hire enough trained local as well as foreign teachers to realize Bilingual Policy 2030?”

Figure 6: Participants' feedback on the question of whether Taiwan government can hire enough local as well as foreign teachers to realize bilingual nation policy 2030



The following chart in Figure 7 shows survey participants' perceptions on the question of what challenges the new bilingual nation policy will encounter on its path - "What are some of the challenges Bilingual Policy will face on its course? A) Insufficient budget, B) Lack of trained teachers, C) Lack of equipment, D) all of them".

Figure 7: Participants feedback on the question of what challenges Bilingual Nation Policy 2030 will encounter on its path



3. Discussion

Based on the findings from the research analysis charts, for the first question - "Do you think Bilingual Policy 2030 is necessary for everyone in Taiwan? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea", it is found that out of 171 participants, 94 (55%) of them think that bilingual education policy 2030 is necessary for everyone in Taiwan, while 13 (8%) of them say "No", meaning the policy is not necessary for everyone in Taiwan. While 62 (36%) of the participants choose "Maybe" only 2 (1%) choose "No ideas". From these results, it can be said that even though there are people who think the bilingual policy is not necessary for everyone in Taiwan, still more than 50% of the participants think the policy is necessary for all the people in Taiwan. From these findings on question one, it can be deduced that most of the people in Taiwan consider bilingualism will be good for Taiwan.

For question number 2 - "Do you think Bilingual Education Policy 2030 will neglect local languages? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea", which deals with the issues of indigenous and local languages, it is found that out of 171 participants, 24 (14%) of them choose "Yes", meaning they think the policy will neglect the indigenous and local languages, while 68 (40%) of them think the policy won't neglect the indigenous and local languages. While 56 (33%) participants are not sure whether the bilingual policy will neglect or not, 23 (13%) of them choose "No ideas". From figure 2 of question number 2, even though there are criticisms from indigenous and local languages proponents and academic circles who doubt the government's promises about protecting indigenous and local languages, 40% of participants think the new bilingual policy will not neglect the indigenous and local languages, while just 14% of them think the policy will neglect them. It means most participants welcome the new bilingual nation policy.

From the results on question number 3 - "Do you think Bilingual Policy 2030's goal can be achieved by 2030? A) Yes, B) No, C) Maybe D) I have no idea" which deals with the question of whether the bilingual nation policy can be achieved by 2030 as rhetorically proclaimed by the government of Taiwan, only 19 (11%) out of 171 participants think the bilingual nation policy can be accomplished by 2030, while 31 (19%) of them say "No", meaning impossible to be accomplished by 2030. Another 98 (58%) of them doubt the policy can be accomplished as claimed by the government, while another 19 (11%) of the participants have no ideas. One participant says "No & Maybe". The findings from question number three indicate that even though more than 55% of participants welcome the new bilingual policy, only a very small 11% think the policy can be achieved by 2030, while the remaining 19% think it will be impossible and a big 58% of participants doubt if the new bilingual policy can be achieved by 2030.

These findings from question number 3 are also very relevant and in line with Professor O'Sullivan's (2021) statement that it will take at least a generation (30 years) to establish a bilingual nation. The bilingual history experienced by Singapore under British colonization and the Netherlands under CLIL program also proves clearly that it takes decades to achieve or establish bilingualism or a bilingual system/nation. It cannot be just accomplished in such a short time as proclaimed by Taiwan government. The government needs to be more realistic in its goals.

Question number 4 deals with the issues of adding enough English teaching hours in Taiwan's educational institutes. "Do you think Taiwan government can add enough English teaching hours in all the educational institutes to achieve the policy's goal by 2030? Based on the findings, out of 171 participants, 38 (22%) of them think Taiwan government can add enough English teaching hours, while 24 (14%) of them say (No). Out 171 participants, 94 (55%) of them are not sure if the government can add enough English teaching hours, while 15 (9%) of them have no ideas. Based on the results from question 4, it is clear that only 22% of the participants think enough English classes can be added to the educational institutes. Out of a total of 669 senior high schools in Taiwan, the Ministry of Education (Taiwan) is offering subsidies to 55 schools - "*Subsidies for experimental bilingual classes at high schools are to be expanded to 55 schools*" (Taipei Times, front page, 6 April, 2022). Leave alone the primary and junior high schools, based on the researcher's teaching experience at a university and visiting professors in other senior vocational high schools, at present, most of the non-English major students have only 2 periods

of 50-minute English classes in the whole week. With such low English teaching hours, there comes the question of how Taiwan can be an English bilingual nation by 2030.

From question number 5 - "Do you think Taiwan government can invest enough money for bilingual education?", it can be seen that out of 171 participants, while only 18 (11%) participants believe that Taiwan government can invest enough money for bilingual education, 35 (20%) of them say "No", 80 (47%) participants are not sure, and remaining 38 (22%) of them have no ideas. From this, it is clear that seeing the present Taiwan government's financial situation, most of the participants don't think Taiwan government can invest enough money to implement and execute the new bilingual nation policy 2030. In fact, instead of increasing the financial budget for the educational sector, Taiwan government has cut down NT\$27.34 billion from the annual educational budget (Focus Taiwan CAN English News, 2022 11:09 PM). To implement the new bilingual nation policy, Taiwan government needs to increase annual budget allocation for the educational sector from now on, not cutting down.

Another issue is whether Taiwan can hire enough well-trained local as well as foreign bilingual teachers. - "Do you think Taiwan government can hire enough trained local as well as foreign teachers to realize Bilingual Policy 2030?". Based on the findings from figure 6 of question 6, it is clear that out of 171 participants, only 24 (14%) of them think Taiwan government can hire enough trained local as well as foreign teachers. This finding is very much in line with the Ministry of Education's statement of not being able to hire enough teachers for teaching Taiwan's indigenous languages (Ministry of Education, 2014, Section 5). Out of 171 participants, while 39 (23%) participants think Taiwan government cannot hire trained teachers, 94 (55%) of them are not sure, and the remaining 14 (8%) of them have no idea. These findings indicate that Taiwan will face financial difficulties to hire enough trained local as well as foreign teachers. Without hiring enough well-trained teachers, it will be impossible to deliver bilingual materials to learners, especially in such a short period of 8 years to come (2030).

Regarding the last question on the issues of challenges which will be faced during the implementation and execution of the bilingual nation policy plans in question number 7 - "What are some of the challenges Bilingual Nation Policy will face on its course? A) Insufficient budget, B) Lack of trained teachers, C) Lack of equipment, D) all of them", based on the data analysis in figure 7, it is found that out of 171 participants, 132 (77%) participants think the new bilingual nation policy will face all the challenges mentioned in the last multiple choice "D" - "insufficient budget", "lack of trained teachers", and "lack of equipment", while 11 (7%) of them choose an insufficient budget, 4 (2%) of them choose both "insufficient budget" and "lack of trained teachers". 16 (9%) participants choose "lack of trained teachers" and the remaining 8 (5%) of them choose "lack of equipment". This finding of 132 (77%) participants' thinking that all the challenges mentioned above will be encountered by the new bilingual nation policy is very much in line with the historical challenges Taiwan government has been facing (Ministry of Education, 2014, Section 5).

The challenges grow even bigger when Taiwan government is cutting down NT\$27.34 billion from the annual educational budget (Focus Taiwan CAN English News, 2022 11:09 PM) when the government is supposed to invest and allocate more funds to the educational sectors to protect and develop local and indigenous languages and to smoothly implement and execute the new bilingual nation policy's plans.

Not only cutting down the educational budget, according to news from Aljazeera, *"Taiwan's parliament has passed an extra spending bill of \$8.6bn to boost defense capabilities"*. It continues that *"Taiwan Lawmakers agreed unanimously to pass the special budget, which comes on top of a record annual defense budget of about \$17bn set for 2022"* (Aljazeera News, 11 Jan, 2022). With such an attitude towards the education sector by the Government of Taiwan, can Taiwan expect to achieve bilingual nation in such a short period by 2030 when countries like Singapore, the Netherlands, and other bilingual nations around the world take decades to establish bilingual nations?

Taiwan government will encounter a lot of challenges, especially allocating extra annual budget to recruit trained local as well as foreign bilingual teachers, offering enough English classes, providing necessary bilingual educational materials, and implementing the new bilingual nation policy. If Taiwan government likes to implement and achieve the new bilingual nation policy's goal, then, Taiwan government needs to increase the fund allocation in the educational sector, not cutting down. Without investing enough funding in the educational sector, it will be impossible to accomplish this project even in decades, leave alone 2030. To implement, execute and accomplish the new bilingual nation project, Taiwan Government needs to act honestly and put their words into action instead of rhetorical publicity. It's not necessary to hurry, instead, take one step at a time.

3.1 Limitations

The present research has its own limitation, especially the sample data is concerned. The research could have been even more reliable if the sample data was collected from all walks of life and a larger cross-section of the population from different locations of Taiwan to avoid political biasness. Also, the research could have been more balanced if some questions regarding the new Bilingual Nation Policy's positive outcome were added to the questionnaire.

3.2 Conclusion

The present research investigates concerning issues related to Taiwan's new bilingual nation 2030. A self-designed questionnaire was compiled and distributed, and a total of 171 participants took part in the survey during the months of April-June, 2022. Based on the findings concerning the issue of whether bilingual education is necessary for all Taiwanese, it is found that out of 171 participants, 94 (55%) of them think that bilingual education policy 2030 is necessary for everyone in Taiwan, while 13 (8%) of them think it is not necessary. The other 62 (36%) participants are not sure. Only 2 (1%) participants say they have no ideas about the issue. On the issues of indigenous and local languages, 24 (14%) participants think the policy will neglect the indigenous and local languages, while 68 (40%) of them think the policy won't neglect the indigenous and local languages. 56 (33%) participants are not sure whether the bilingual policy will neglect or not, while 23 (13%) of them have no ideas about this issue. Regarding the question of achieving the bilingual nation policy's goal by 2030, out of 171 participants, only 19 (11%) participants think the bilingual policy can be accomplished by 2030, while 31 (19%) of them think the goal cannot be achieved by 2030. Another 98 (58%) participants doubt/not sure if the policy can be accomplished by 2030, while the remaining 19 (11%) of the participants have no ideas. One participant says chooses both "No" and "Maybe". Concerning the issues of adding enough

English teaching hours in Taiwan's educational institutes, out of 171 participants, 38 (22%) of them think Taiwan government can add enough English teaching hours, while 24 (14%) of them say "No". While 94 (55%) participants are not sure if the government can add enough English teaching hours, 15 (9%) of them have no ideas. From question number 5 concerning the issues of investing enough money for bilingual education, only 18 (11%) participants believe that Taiwan government can invest enough money for bilingual education, while 35 (20%) of them say "No". While another 80 (47%) participants are not sure, the remaining 38 (22%) of them have no ideas. Regarding the issues of hiring enough trained local as well as foreign bilingual teachers, it is found that out of 171 participants, only 24 (14%) of them think Taiwan government can hire enough trained local as well as foreign bilingual teachers, while 39 (23%) participants say "No". The other 94 (55%) participants are not sure if Taiwan government can hire or not, while the remaining 14 (8%) of them have no ideas. Regarding the last question on the issues of challenges which will be encountered during the implementation and execution of the new bilingual policy's plans in question number 7, it is found that out of 171 participants, a big number of 129 (77%) participants think the new bilingual policy will face all the challenges mentioned in the last multiple choice "D" – "insufficient budget", "lack of trained teachers", and "lack of equipment", while 11 (7%) choose "insufficient budget", 4 (2%) of them choose both "insufficient budget" and "lack of trained teachers", while 16 (9%) of them choose "lack of trained teachers" and 8 (5%) of them choose "lack of equipment", respectively.

From this present research investigation and findings on peoples' perceptions concerning different issues arising from Taiwan's new "Bilingual Nation" policy 2030, it can be seen that even though the new bilingual policy is welcomed by 55% of the participants, the remaining 45% of participants need to be convinced to implement and execute the policy smoothly. Regarding local and indigenous languages, Taiwan government must keep its promise of protecting and developing the local and indigenous languages. Concerning the accomplishment of the bilingual nation policy by 2030, Taiwan government must focus on taking action one step at a time, rather than rhetorically proclaiming the policy will be accomplished by 2030. The important goal is not the dateline, but the process of delivering what bilingual nation policy must offer. Let time alone take its own pace. Taiwan government also needs to offer more English teaching ours and recruit trained local as well as foreign teachers. Without enough trained teachers, the bilingual nation mission cannot be accomplished. The challenges to be encountered are manifold, so Taiwan government must allocate enough funds to the educational sector, not cutting down.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author of this research paper, Dr. Shantikumar Meetei Ngangbam has no conflict of interest with anyone or any researcher/s.

About the Author

Dr. Shantikumar Meetei Ngangbam is a naturalized citizen of Taiwan, and has been teaching English as an Assistant English Professor at Hungkuo Delin University of Technology since 2000. He achieved his PhD degree in Applied Linguistics in 1999 from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. Not only teaching as a senior Assistant Professor of English at Hungkuo Delin University, he is also a world class sportsman. Dr. Meetei Ngangbam has been doing natural

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