

Taiwanese Learning Resources

By Henry H. Tan-Tenn, for Mid-West ITASA Conference (Michigan, 2001)

Below are some books, tapes, websites, and university courses available for the English-speaking learner of Taiwanese languages. Unless stated otherwise, the materials use the traditional *Peh-oe-ji* romanization system in use since the nineteenth century.

(An on-line version will be available at <http://lomaji.com/info/books/english/>.)

◆ Textbooks (Superscripted numbers refer to vendors in the √'ed section.)

■ Holo

1. ***Lai Oh Tai Gu, Basic Taiwanese*** (1984) - By Iuⁿ Nga-Bun, Tan Beng-Hiong of the Taiwanese Heritage Society in Alberta, Canada. Contains 25 lessons in phonetics, 15 lessons in conversation, and additional reading drills and children's songs.
2. ***Taiwanese Book 1-3*** (1984, 1985, 1993)¹ - By Si Eng-Seng of the Maryknoll Language Service Center. Cassettes available. The third book offers 14 sections of practical, realistic conversations. As English glosses are offered sparingly, this volume is best used as an advanced supplementary textbook. Includes an index of vocabulary words.
3. ***Speak Taiwanese Hokkien Book I, II, III*** (1991, 1995, 1982)³ - By the Taipei Language Institute. "Each lesson in Book I&II has five parts which contain vocabulary, sentence patterns, repetition drills, substitution drills and guided conversation...The regulations for tone changes are included in lesson five of Book I and in its preface, Taiwanese parts of speech, their usage and order are explained in detail. A student will be able to communicate with Taiwanese speakers after finishing Book II. Book III is the bridge toward advanced study..."
4. ***Taiwanese American Bilingual Textbook*** (1989)² - By Robert Cheng and Siok-hun Ng. Cassettes available. Out of print but a new edition based on similar materials is said to be in preparation.
5. ***Spoken Taiwanese*** (1980) - By Nicholas C. Bodman. Book and/or cassettes available from major on-line stores. Uses a unique romanization system.
6. ***Spoken Amoy Hokkien: Vocabulary Units 1-30*** (1987) - By Nicholas C. Bodman.
7. ***Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography*** (1996)² - Translated by Cheng-gi Chan. This is the eighteenth-century classic, fitted with a Holo translation alongside the original. Useful for advanced students. (A Holo-only edition is also available.)
8. ***A Bilingual Biography of Abraham Lincoln*** (1997)² - Translated by Cheng-gi Chan. In both English and Holo. For advanced students.

■ Hakka

1. ***Hakka One*** (1975)¹ - By George F. Harkin of the Maryknoll Language Service Center. Based on the Meulit dialect and uses a unique romanization system.
2. ***The Little Prince*** (2000)⁴ - Translated by Jhaocyuan Yu, this world classic is the first to use the Tongyong Hakka spelling system. For advanced students. [See Websites]

◆ Tools

■ Holo

1. ***Taiwanese-English Dictionary*** (1973, 1984)^{2,3} - Edited by Bernard Embree. An excellent Holo-to-English and Holo-to-Mandarin dictionary of sufficient depth to be useful even to knowledgeable native speakers. Once banned by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). [See p. 4 for article reprint]
2. ***English-Amoy Dictionary*** (1977, 1995)¹ - Maryknoll Language Service Center. A unique work offering a rudimentary translation of English words and phrases into Holo

equivalents. As expected, Holo proficiency is required to discern among the various connotations of a word.

3. ***Amoy-English Dictionary*** (1976)¹ - Maryknoll Language Service Center.
4. ***Illustrated Taiwanese Dictionary*** (1995)² - Available with cassettes. Offers Holo, Mandarin, English, and Japanese word equivalents. For children or novice.
5. ***A Dictionary of the Amoy Vernacular, Spoken Throughout the Prefectures of Chin-chiu, Chiang-chiu and Formosa*** (1913)² - By William Campbell, this classic tool remains popular.

■ Hakka

1. ***English-Hakka Dictionary*** (1959) - By Margar.
2. ***A Chinese-English Dictionary: Hakka-Dialect*** (1905, 1926)⁴ - By D. Maclver.

◆ Websites

■ Holo

1. **Travlang.com's Holo for Travelers** - A commercial site offering audio on various useful words and phrases tailored to the traveler. [<http://www.travlang.com/languages/holoee/>]
2. **Introduction to Holok** [sic.] - Five sessions on the history of the language and the spelling system. [<http://www.digitas.harvard.edu/cgi-bin/ken/huhebi/g149>]
3. **Hoklo.org** - Thought-provoking linguistic and cultural notes on the Holo and Hakka languages. The author attempts to debunk widely held notions regarding these southern languages.
4. **Taigu Bang Mailing List** - Romanized writing in action. For advanced students. [<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/taigubang/>]
5. **Modern Literal Taiwanese Homepage** - Offers audio lessons for the novice, as well as songs, stories, and short essays. Uses the Modern Spelling System. [<http://www.taigu.com>]
6. **Voyager Spacecraft's Greetings to the Universe** - By NASA. This phrase, in one of the 55 languages stored on the craft, is Holo for "Have you eaten yet?", a figure of speech for hello. Click on "Amoy". [<http://vraptor.jpl.nasa.gov/voyager/lang.html>]

■ Hakka

1. ***The Little Prince On-line Edition*** - Romanization is given adjacent to the character version (requiring special font). [<http://abc.iis.sinica.edu.tw/tp/prince-0-4-new.htm>]
2. **Labor Exchange Band** - MP3 files of contemporary Taiwanese Hakka songs. [<http://artists.mp3s.com/artists/68/exchange-work.html>]
3. **Hoklo.org** - Features some linguistic notes on the Hakka language.

✓ Where to Find the Books

1. **Maryknoll Language Service Center** - A language training center in Taiwan primarily for religious personnel. Orders can be placed on-line. [<http://tedflanigan.homestead.com>]
2. **Tai-bun Bong-po** - A publisher of a Holo literary magazine which also sells books. Major credit cards accepted. (Address : Taipei City, Roosevelt Road, Section 3, #285, 3F, Taiwan; tel: 02-23628765, fax: 02-23628774; email: ahui@bongpo.com.tw) [<http://www.bongpo.com.tw>].
3. **Taipei Language Institute (TLI)** - Begun as a missionary-oriented language school some forty years ago, the TLI has developed a series of teaching materials both secular and religious for international students. Alas, their books seem to be sold only to students taking their courses in Taiwan. [<http://www.tli.com.tw>] (Also see "**Learning A Little Taiwanese**" -

from the Chinese Language Learners Corner.

[<http://members.aol.com/ChineseLLC/taiwanes.htm>])

4. **SMC Publishing, Inc.** - In Taiwan. Orders can be placed by contacting weitw@smcbook.com.tw. Major credit cards accepted. [<http://www.smcbook.com.tw>]
5. **University libraries** - Major Asian libraries will carry some of these titles.

◆ **Courses (Current and Future)**

■ **University (for credit)**

1. **UC Berkeley Taiwanese Language Class, Spring 1998** - An on-line introduction to this program is available, with syllabi and sample didactic notes.
[<http://www.cs.berkeley.edu/~becs>]
2. **University of Hawai'i at Manoa** - A year-long course tentatively titled "Readings in Taiwanese (Hokkien)" is currently being developed for advanced students.
3. **Harvard University** - The Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations is expected to develop a program in "Minnan Dialect/Taiwanese."
4. **University of California at Los Angeles** - Local Taiwanese Americans are seeking to petition for a program similar to Berkeley's.

■ **Private**

1. **Language 2 Academy** - Based in San Jose, this program (affiliated with the Taipei Language Institute) offers private lessons on Holo.
[<http://www.language2academy.com>]
2. **Taipei Language Institute (TLI)** - Probably the most comprehensive program in Holo for international students. See Where to Find Books for details.
3. **Maryknoll Language Service Center** - Classes are mainly intended for religious personnel, but other students may be accepted conditionally.

◆ **How to Contact the Author**

Henry H. Tan-Tenn

E-mail: tantenn@earthlink.net

Tel./Fax.: (973) 822-8956

**GUIDE TO DIALECT BARRED IN TAIWAN
Dictionary Tried to Render Local Chinese
Sounds**

Special to The New York Times

TAIPEI, Taiwan, Sept. 14 - A Taiwanese-English dictionary in limited circulation has aroused a controversy that points up the sensitivity of the Taiwanese dialect as an issue here.

The dictionary was officially banned, but copies were brought into this Chinese Nationalist-controlled island by stealth -- smuggled, the Government says -- and the police have been trying to find their source.

The Government says that the dictionary, compiled by a Canadian Presbyterian missionary under the auspices of the Taipei Language Institute, a private organization, was banned because it supplies phonetic renditions of Taiwanese words in the Roman, or Western, alphabet as well as giving Chinese characters. The real objection appears to be that it employs the Taiwanese dialect, the use of which is not encouraged by the Government.

Romanization appears commonly in Chinese dictionaries and textbooks used by foreign students here, to facilitate correct reading of Chinese ideograms.

Use of Mandarin Pressed

Since the Chinese Nationalists arrived here after withdrawing from the mainland in 1949, they have carried on a "Mandarinization program". Though members of the native Taiwanese majority speak their dialect privately, only the Mandarin dialect -- from northern China -- is used in Taiwan's schools, the military service and in central Government offices.

Many Taiwanese resent the restrictions on the use of "local dialect." Programming in Taiwanese, for example, may be carried daily by each television station for only one and a half hours.

The editor of the dictionary Bernard L. M. Embree, and predecessors on the project did their research and compiling in Taiwan over a 10-year period. When the book was completed in 1972, permission to publish was denied by the nationalist Government, and the Romanization was cited as the reason. The Government ordered all print shops not to handle the dictionary.

Mr. Embree then had the manuscript taken to Hong Kong, where it was published last year by a sister institution of the Taipei Language Institute. In recent months some copies have been brought into Taiwan -- an act that Government officials refer to as smuggling, since no import licenses were obtained.

For a time, the book was on sale at a Taipei bookshop, but the copies were soon confiscated by the police, who have since been seeking to establish how the book entered Taiwan. Mr. Embree is currently on home leave in Canada, but some Chinese associated with the project have been questioned.

Objection Explained

An official of the Government's Information Office explained the Government position by saying:

"We have no objection to the dictionary being used by foreigners. They could use it in mimeographed form. But we don't want it published as a book and sold publicly because of the Romanization it contains. Chinese should not be learning Chinese through Romanization."

The book is entitled "A Dictionary of Southern Min." a reference to the speech of southern Fukien Province, the area from which the ancestors of the present-day Taiwanese migrated to Taiwan. The Government prefers to call the Taiwanese dialect "Southern Min" to emphasize its mainland roots.

All Chinese use the same written language, but in speech major regional dialects may differ from one another as much as, say, English and German. Younger Taiwanese have learned Mandarin in school, but few members of the older generation can speak or understand it.

Similarly, many younger "mainlanders" have picked up the local dialect from Taiwanese classmates, but most of their parents know only a few words, even after 25 years on Taiwan.

[Source: Hoklo.org, <http://hoklo.org>.]