1. Introduction
One approach within sociolinguistic theory treats both linguistic utterances by individuals and language planning decisions by institutions as choices among different options. This approach is outlined in a recent study by Coulmas (2005). Following this approach, this paper re-examines previous research on sociolinguistic developments during the Japanese colonial period. The focus lies on language planning decisions by the Japanese colonial government and non-governmental language activists and literary writers. It is argued that the case of Taiwan is of particular interest for the analysis of language choice, as Japanese as the chosen national language was foreign to the linguistic community it was forced upon. In this respect, the case of Taiwan shows that the ideological force behind governmental language choice may effectively outweigh considerations about the communicative functionality of a language to the exclusion of cooperation with the receiving end of language planning.

2. Theoretical preliminaries
2.1 Language choice
Language planning institutions make choices from a vast range of options. These choices amount to linguistic standardization, and include choices in status planning,
corpus planning, and acquisition planning (Cooper 1989). Such choices are by definition the result of deliberate and normative political decision making. When a language planning institution tries to define the standard pronunciation of a national language, such a decision has significant political dimensions. In many countries the decision to declare a particular linguistic variety the standard for the whole country is an official confirmation of the prestigious position of this variety. This prestige typically derives from the fact that the variety happens to be spoken in the political, cultural, and economic center of the country and/or by the political elite. The choice for this variety is uncontested if a country’s political and cultural heritage as well as the superiority of its standard variety are widely acknowledged.

The situation is quite different, however, if the political and cultural foundations of a given community are contested. In such a situation, language planning decisions are often controversial, as the choice for a particular standard involves the refusal of alternatives, which in turn antagonizes proponents of counterproposals. Although both proposed linguistic norms and counterproposals may be presented, criticized, and defended as purely linguistic issues, they are ultimately ideological in nature, as they represent competing conceptualizations of the cultural and political belonging of a country. In this context, Von Polenz writes that linguistic norms serve “parasitic functions of a language” symbolizing social unity or distinctness (1999: 231). Choices in language planning are thus intimately linked to political and ideological purposes.

2.2 Functionality
Do what extent can ideological considerations determine language planning? Asked differently, does the fact that a language must function as a tool of communication counterbalance the ideological load of official language choice? Language planning institutions arguably intend chosen standards to be effective with regard to their communicative functions. After all, successful communication between state institutions and the people is a major precondition for the functioning of the state as a whole. This in turn leads to the question whether effective language planning has to entail cooperation between the providing and the receiving end of language planning?
It has been suggested that cooperation is essential. For example, referring to Axelrod’s claim that “a government cannot enforce any standard it chooses but must elicit compliance from a majority of the governed” (1984: 24), Coulmas claims that “[l]anguage status decisions are doomed to failure unless they heed this general principle” (2005: 194).

Cooperation is self-evident when a national language is a widely-used variety chosen from within a speech community. As a national language, a particular variety and vehicle of communication becomes, in the words of Fishman, “a value in its own right and a means of general, all-encompassing cultural defense” (1987: 639). Cooperation is less self-evident in the reverse situation, i.e., when a national language represents a variety foreign to the speech community for which it is chosen. In this scenario, the choice is purely ideological and without cooperative dimensions. As I argue in the following paragraphs, Taiwan is an example par excellence for this scenario. The historical roots for purely ideology-based language planning can be found in the late 19th century, when Taiwan became a colony of Japan.

3. Governmental language planning: The choice of Japanese
The arrival of Japanese government officials, teachers, and businessmen following the takeover in 1895 led to only slight changes in Taiwan’s demographic makeup. In 1900, almost twenty thousand Japanese lived in Taiwan, adding to the Malayo-Polynesian aborigines and descendants of early Chinese settlers. The figures in table 1 are based on Davidson ([1903] 1992: 560–594).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese (Southern Min)</td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese (Hakka)</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aborigines</td>
<td>114,000</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,633,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 The choice of Japanese

Theoretically, all the languages listed in table 1 could have been chosen as Taiwan’s new official language. Japanese was not chosen because its linguistic properties are intrinsically superior, but because of ideological considerations: the intended transformation of the local Taiwanese population into Japanese citizens. Colonial language policies were hence inextricably linked to this imposed ideology of cultural affiliation with Japan.

Japanese as a national language was foreign in two respects. First, as a linguistic variety it had been absent from the local speech community before 1895. Second, the concept of a national language as such had been foreign to Taiwan. In other words, the Japanese colonial government, in addition to importing a new linguistic variety, introduced an ideological and organizational framework for its implementation as a national language. In this respect, the lack of a system of wider education before 1895 benefited the enforced spread of a foreign national language lacking communicative functionality. Before 1895, language policies had been restricted to a small elite of literati officials and examination candidates. The total lack of wider language education had led to a situation in which, according to the Canadian correspondent James W. Davidson, “the great mass of the population are unable to read and write, and thus the field for educational work is very vast” ([1903] 1992: 602).

The official hierarchy of Taiwan’s languages was defined in the educational groundwork laid down by Izawa Shūji, the first director of the colonial Education Bureau (Gakumubu, after 1898: Gakumuka). Izawa considered language education in Japanese to be a crucial vehicle for the Japanization of the Taiwanese people. Education in Southern Min—the language with the highest degree of communicative functionality—was thus not an option for Japanese language planners. Tsurumi describes Izawa’s stance as follows (1977: 213):

Realizing that they faced challenges far greater than those of early Meiji, the Japanese in Taiwan wondered if the Japanese language could be used to unify and
nationalize the Taiwanese too. Officials debated this question, but to Izawa Shūji there was really no choice. He had already decided upon Japanese-language education before he left Japan. When a British Presbyterian missionary, who had been teaching in Taiwan for twelve years and had found it necessary to teach in the native languages (although he had tried instruction in English at first), urged him to educate in the vernacular, Izawa only became more adamant. Vernacular education might have imparted new skills and knowledge, but would it have encouraged identification with Japan?

On the one hand, it was assumed that a unity between the colonizer and the colonized should be achieved through the promotion of Japanese. On the other hand, given the fact that Japanese was a foreign language to the entire Taiwanese population, the linguistic Japanization could not be implemented on an ad-hoc basis. The Japanese colonial government was well aware of this and therefore devised an accommodationist strategy as a part of which Southern Min was included in the language education program. For instance, Japanese instructors and employees of the colonial administration were encouraged to learn the local vernacular and Japanese teaching material was translated into Southern Min for the convenience of the local learners (Ang 1992, 1993).

The decision to introduce instruction of Southern Min had the important practical result that textbooks and reference works had to be compiled. During the 50 years of its reign in Taiwan, the colonial administration published numerous Southern Min textbooks, six Southern Min journals, and more than ten dictionaries, including Southern Min-Japanese and Japanese-Southern Min editions, as well as specialized reference works on Southern Min proverbs, plant names, and job titles. For the written representation of Southern Min in these publications, Japanese linguists devised a script based on the Japanese syllabary katakana (Ang 1992: 49, Klöter 2005: 133ff.).

The outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese war in 1937 had a deep impact on Japanese colonial policies. Policies of assimilation (dōka) gave way to the kōminka ‘imperialization’ movement. In Ching’s words, “[f]rom the colonialist perspective, the process of kōminka movement was a political and cultural intensification required to transform colonized peoples into loyal imperial subjects in preparation for the war. […] From the anticolonial point of view kōminka represents not so much the transformation
of colonial subjects into imperial subjects, but the total annihilation of the colonized’s identity and culture” (2001: 92–3). Policies of enforcing linguistic Japanization included an official ban on the use of local languages in public places, such as government offices, banks, and companies (Hsiau 2000: 36). At the same time, Japanese was promoted through various teaching programs and political campaigns. New language institutes were set up, and attempts were made to enhance the prestige of Japanese by creating role models such as ‘national language families’ (kokugo katei; for details, see Chou 1991: 72–80).

Against this historical background, it is apparent that the initial inclusion of Southern Min into official language planning was merely a temporary means for the promotion of Japanese. Japanese language planning for Southern Min consequently remained restricted to particular subfields of acquisition planning (i.e., language training for Japanese administrators, acquisition of Japanese via Southern Min) and corpus planning (i.e., design of a katakana script for Southern Min). Southern Min was, however, absent from any official measures related to the field of status planning, i.e., it was not chosen as medium of instruction, official language, or language of mass communication (Cooper 1989: 32). These functions were all reserved for Japanese.

4. Non-governmental language planning: The choice of Southern Min

The notion that a national language is a vehicle of national identity is widely accepted in sociolinguistic theory. Joseph, for instance, writes that “one of the first and highest obstacles that has to be overcome in establishing a national identity is the non-existence of a national language” (2004: 98). The establishment of Japanese as the national language of Taiwan can thus be seen as an attempt to establish a Japanese national identity. During the 1920s and 1930s, however, the policy of enforcing cultural and linguistic assimilation of the Taiwanese people was severely criticised by parts of the Taiwanese intelligentsia. Taiwanese intellectuals conceptualized a Taiwanese identity which was directed against enforced assimilation. Significantly, Taiwanese identity construction became closely linked to the historical identification and elevation of a Taiwanese language (Southern Min).
Before Japanese rule, there had been no ‘Taiwanese language’. Instead, between the 17th and the beginning of the 20th century, shared dialects together with common surnames, ancestral places, and religious traditions were dividing lines between Chinese communities competing for land (Hsu [1980] 1995, Morris Wu 2003: 37). It was during Japanese colonial rule that Chinese localism gave way to a Taiwanese ‘we-sentiment’ which in turn brought about the recognition of linguistic commonalities. According to Hsiau, it was primarily because of the confrontation between the colonialized and the colonizer “that the categories “tai-oan-lang” [Southern Min for ‘Taiwanese people’] and “tai-gu” or “tai-oan-oe” [Southern Min for ‘Taiwanese language(s)’] were created. The first term referred to the people of Han Chinese origin, despite their different Mainland home-towns. The latter term mainly signified the major local language, Hoklo [i.e., Southern Min – H.K.]. In some contexts it also included Hakka” (2000: 4).

The identification of a Taiwanese language ‘Tai-gu’ out of different Southern Min dialects was accompanied by attempts to elevate the status of Tai-gu vis-à-vis Japanese by making it a language of writing. The promotion of Tai-gu was, however, not only directed against linguistic Japanization, but also against the claim that cultural emancipation could best be achieved by using Mandarin as a vehicle for literary composition. Under the influence of the Chinese May Fourth Movement (wusi yundong) of 1919, works by Chinese writers such as Lu Xun, Hu Shi, and Bing Xin were reprinted in Taiwanese journals and regarded as models for new literature (Chang 1999: 266f). This promotion of Mandarin was countered by some people on the grounds that Mandarin as a language of literary composition was inappropriate for the Taiwanese readership. Instead, a group of Taiwanese intellectuals called for the creation of a literature in the local vernacular and criticized the proposal to propagate Mandarin literature as an attempt to “adjust the spoken language to fit literature” (qu hua jiu wen). Writers should rather “adjust literature to the spoken language” (qu wen jiu hua). In short, language choice became a core issue of ideological debates on cultural belonging. The significance of the question “which language” cannot be overemphasized, as it was not just an implicit aspect of ideological debates: ideological arguments were rather explicitly attached to language choice.
It was the young intellectual Huang Shihui who made the creation of Tai-gu literature the main focus of literary debate by arguing that “we should use affairs and a language that is closest to us” (Huang 1931, transl. Fix 1993: 138). To promote localized literature, he claimed, meant “to write an essay in tai-oan-oe, compose a poem in tai-oan-oe, and deal with things that happen in Taiwan” (Huang 1930, transl. Hsiau 2000: 40). In Fix’s words, “Huang’s analysis went further than a mere recognition that his implied reader spoke Taiwanese and resided in the colony. Huang advocated the creation of an independent Taiwanese culture. His rules for language reform, if taken to the extreme, called for the complete localization of language and literature” (1993: 138).

The debate on Tai-gu literature had soon evolved into a controversy about the correct written representation of Tai-gu. Although Tai-gu and its related Southern Min dialects have written traditions of more than 400 years, it had never been subject to orthographic standardization, let alone been used as a medium for the promotion of literacy (Klöter 2005). It therefore was and continues to be widely perceived as an unwritten language. The debate on written Tai-gu was therefore not a debate on the reform of an existing writing system, but rather on the creation of a written norm for what is generally perceived as unwritten language. From the perspective of language ideology, the significance of this debate can hardly be overstated. As written languages are associated with symbolic values hardly ever ascribed to unwritten languages, controversies about writing go far beyond technical issues. In the words of Woolard, “orthographic systems cannot be conceptualized as simply reducing speech to writing but rather are symbols that themselves carry historical, cultural, and political meanings (1998: 23).” In this respect, attempts to standardize written Tai-gu epitomized a significant cultural revaluation of the language which was aimed directly against Japanese linguistic hegemonism.

5. Results of Japanese language policies
To what extent did Japanese policies of linguistic assimilation succeed? Previous studies present a slightly inconsistent picture. There can be no doubt that through the creation of a common educational system, the Japanese government had established an
effective means of enforcing Taiwanese people’s exposure to Japanese. Statistical figures suggest that that this exposure considerably increased proficiency in Japanese among Taiwanese people. For example, between 1907 and 1944, the percentage of Taiwanese children enrolled in elementary school rose from 4.5 to more than seventy percent (Tsurumi 1977: 148). Within ten years, from 1930 to 1940, the percentage of Japanese speakers among the Taiwanese population rose from 12.4 percent to 51 percent (Lamley 1999: 240, Chou 1991). These figures suggest that Japanese had gained a certain degree of acceptance by the end of Japanese rule. In this regard, Van den Berg suggests that “it seems safe to conclude that the Taiwanese were strongly Japanized when the island was returned to the Republic of China in 1945” (1986: 55). According to Hansell, it “is clear that by the end of Japanese rule, a significant portion of the population was conversant in Japanese, and that Japanese was best established among the urban and the educated” (1989: 73). Chang likewise claims that Japanese was “well accepted in Taiwan”. Pointing to the fact that the Japanese spoken by Taiwanese differed phonetically from the standard pronunciation, he treats it as a separate variety labeled “Formosan Japanese” (1993).

To be sure, such general assessments do not distinguish language use in different domains. Such a distinction is, however, significant when the effects of language planning are to be evaluated. As Coulmas points out (2005: 187):

In official and semi-official domains where language choice can be determined by explicit regulations it is possible to proceed along these lines. For schools, courts of law, municipal and national assemblies, churches, local administrations and international organizations it can be decided that they function in language(s) A (B, C, etc.) and not in others. Regulating speech behaviour in private domains is not so easy; for even in totalitarian states it is impossible to control all aspects of people’s speech.

With regard to language use in different domains during the Japanese period, several studies claim that whereas the public domain (education, media) was reserved for Japanese, the use of local languages predominated in the private domain. Hsiau, for instance, writes that “Japanese never replaced Taiwanese languages as the major vehicle
of communication in daily life” (2000: 36). From this perspective, it can be concluded that one chief target of kōmin ka language policies, the replacement of local languages with Japanese in the private domain, was not achieved. This does not mean, however, that the contact with Japanese had no effect at all on the language use of Taiwanese speakers in the private domain. Such effects are clearly manifested in the absorption of numerous Japanese loanwords into the Tai-gu lexicon (Li 2003: 16–18). According to Chang (1995: 14):

Taiwanese borrowed numerous science and technology related lexical items […] In architectural terminology alone, there are more than 450 loanwords […] Loan words in other fields are yet to be studied; however, it is a fact that the jargons in every branch of traditional technology in Taiwan include loanwords from Japanese, some more and some less. In addition to the borrowed jargons, which are indispensable in most professions, many loanwords also have become indispensable in the Taiwanese language dealing with daily life.

The incorporation of Japanese loanwords into the Tai-gu lexicon shows that the two languages were not strictly separated in the daily language use of Taiwanese speakers. However, as there are no statistical surveys about language use in the private domain and case studies on code switching during the Japanese period, any conclusions about the interplay of language planning and language choice by individuals would be speculative.

6. Conclusion
Parallels between ROC language policies and those of the Japanese colonial period are striking. Both governments applied a language policy which was borne out of a historical context foreign to Taiwan, and both governments chose a national language which was foreign to Taiwan’s linguistic environment. Despite their genetic affiliations, Mandarin and Taiwan’s Sinitic languages, Tai-gu and Hakka, are not mutually intelligible. The choice of Mandarin after 1945 was steered by the notion that Taiwan was a province of China and that Mandarin represented the national language of China. In the words of Hsiau, Mandarin as the national language “was regarded the sole
'orthodox' language of the ROC – a standard language and a common norm that represented KMT dominance” (2000: 129).

The Japanese influence on ROC language policies in Taiwan was thus twofold. Firstly, Japan as an Asian role model of a modern nation with a national language has had crucial influence on ROC national language policy formation in the early 20th century. Secondly, Japan as a colonial government had extended its own national language policies to Taiwan, resulting in an educational infrastructure designed for national language promotion. Therefore, when the ROC took over power in 1945, the new government could easily fill the vacuum left by the departure of the former national language. And it used this infrastructure to a much greater extent than the Japanese government.

It is axiomatic that governmental choices of Taiwan’s national languages before and after 1945 were motivated by ideological conceptions of political and cultural belonging. In this respect, the case of Taiwan is not especially noteworthy, as a choice of a national language free of ideological implications is hardly conceivable. What makes the case of Taiwan particularly interesting for the analysis of language choice, however, is the fact that the two chosen national languages—Japanese and Mandarin—were foreign to the linguistic community they were forced upon. In this respect, the case of Taiwan shows that the ideological force behind governmental language choice may effectively outweigh considerations about the communicative functionality of a language to the exclusion of cooperation with the receiving end of language planning.

Two distinct fifty-year periods of governmental language planning have resulted in different patterns of language choice at the micro level. Whereas Japanese did not replace local languages in private domains, Mandarin is now a widely-accepted option in individual language choice situations. One major reason for this difference in degree of acceptance is that Mandarin has had a higher degree of exposure in Taiwanese society after 1945 than Japanese before 1945. Whereas Japanese national language education in colonial Taiwan had to start from scratch, the KMT government inherited a well-established education system when it started to rule in 1945. Moreover, in contrast to the Japanese period, the spread of Mandarin did not rely solely on education, but also
benefited from the rapid development of mass media broadcasting. In short, the case of Taiwan suggests that the enforced use of a national language in public settings can lead to intergenerational shifts in language use and language attitudes. People choose Mandarin because it is an omnipresent option. For the reverse reason, the recent revival of local languages is unlikely to produce comparable results. As long as there are no public living spaces for local languages, they are likely to diminish as options of language choice in private settings.

References


