

# Features and Prospects in Comparative Studies of Vietnam and Taiwan

## 台越比較研究 ê 現況 kap 未來發展 ê 可能性

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### 1. Introduction

Marriages between persons from different countries have become more and more common in the globalization era. Taiwan is no exception to this phenomenon. According to the statistics of Taiwan's National Immigration Agency, Ministry of Interior, in February 2010 foreign spouses in Taiwan numbered 431,723.<sup>1</sup> These foreign nationals account for 1.87% of Taiwan's total population.<sup>2</sup> Among the foreign spouses, many were from China (287,359), followed by Vietnam (82,986), then Indonesia (26,477), Thailand (8,129), Philippines (6,726), Cambodia (4,345), Japan (3,124), Korea (1,005) and other countries together (11,572). Among the Southeast Asian countries Vietnam is the major source country of foreign spouses.

In addition to international marriages between Taiwanese and Vietnamese citizens, economic and educational exchanges between the two countries have also significantly increased in the two recent decades.

In December 1986, the Communist Party of Vietnam approved the Economic Renovation Policy (Đổi mới), which was followed by a series of attractive economic open policies for foreign investors. Taiwanese businessmen were some of the earliest foreign investors to come right after Vietnam's economic renovation policy (Shiu 2003:124-127). A few years later, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) was established in Hanoi, Vietnam, in November 1992 to promote mutual cooperation between the two countries. Thereafter, economic activities between Taiwan and Vietnam have flourished tremendously. Soon Taiwan became one of the top three investors in Vietnam.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <[http://www.immigration.gov.tw/aspcode/9902/外籍配偶人數與大陸\(含港澳\)配偶人數.xls](http://www.immigration.gov.tw/aspcode/9902/外籍配偶人數與大陸(含港澳)配偶人數.xls)>

<sup>2</sup> By the end of year 2009, the amount of Taiwan's total population is 23,119,772 according to Taiwan's Statistical Yearbook of Interior, available at <<http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/year/y02-01.xls>>

According to the statistics of Taiwan's Ministry of Education, there are a total of 22,366 international students in Taiwan (Oo and Tan 2010). They are either studying for accredited degrees or enrolled in non-credited language courses. Among the international students studying for undergraduate degrees, the top three countries in numbers are Malaysia, Vietnam, and Korea (South), respectively. As for master's programs, the top three countries are Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia. In doctoral programs, the top three are India, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Overall, students from Vietnam are among the top three countries to study in Taiwan<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to the relations mentioned above, Taiwan and Vietnam share a similar historical experience, that is, as former colonies. Vietnam used to be colonized by Japan, France, and China. However, Vietnam eventually established a culturally and politically independent country in 1945. Although China had occupied Vietnam for a thousand years and consequently had great influence on the Vietnamese culture, Vietnam has created its own culture with distinct characteristics. Taiwan used to be colonized by Japan and China too. Although Taiwan is currently politically independent from China, "national identity" is still a controversial issue in Taiwan. To some extent, Vietnam is probably a good model for Taiwan with regard to nation-building.

Since both Taiwan and Vietnam have a lot to learn from each other with respect to economy, culture, education, and anti-colonialism, it is inevitable to form comparative studies of Taiwan and Vietnam. The purpose of this paper is to survey current development of comparative studies of Vietnam and Taiwan, and provide further perspective on this area of study's future development.

## 2. Vietnam studies in Vietnam and Taiwan

### 2.1. Vietnam studies in Vietnam

To some extent, initial area studies were connected to colonialism. Colonizers have always investigated their colonies in order to gain the maximum profits from them. This was no exception in the cases of Vietnam and Taiwan. In the case of Vietnam, investigation on Vietnam from a Western perspective started during the period of French occupation of Vietnam (Vũ 2004:633-634). The well-known *École française d'Extrême-Orient* (Trường Viễn Đông Bác cổ Pháp; EFEO, thereafter) was established by French colonizers in Hanoi in 1900. Vietnam, as part of French Indochina, was considered as a subject for colonial research.

Vietnam studies from Vietnam's perspective were not well planned until

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<sup>3</sup> There are a total of 2592 Vietnamese students in Taiwan in the year 2009-2010.

Vietnam's independence after World War II. *Tổ Việt ngữ*, the earliest Vietnamese language program established by the *Đại học Tổng hợp Hà Nội*<sup>4</sup> (Hanoi Comprehensive University, HCU) in 1956 could be considered the beginning of Vietnam studies. A decade later, *Khoa Tiếng Việt*, the Department of Vietnamese Language, was officially established by HCU in 1968. The main purpose of this department was to teach Vietnamese language and culture to foreigners. Many instructors in this department were sent overseas to teach Vietnamese in foreign countries. This department is currently renamed as *Khoa Việt Nam Học và Tiếng Việt*<sup>5</sup> or Department of Vietnam Studies and Vietnamese Language, which is part of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities<sup>6</sup>, Vietnam National University-Hanoi. It offers BA degree in Vietnamese studies to both Vietnamese and foreign students. It also provides non-credit language courses to foreign students.

In addition, Graduate Institute of Vietnam Studies and Scientific Development<sup>7</sup>, which was directly established by the Vietnam National University-Hanoi in 2004, offers Master's degree in Vietnam studies. This institute was formerly known as Center for Vietnam Studies and Cultural Exchange<sup>8</sup>, which was established in 1989 by HCU.

Accompanied with the economic renovation of 1986, the demand for learning Vietnamese language and studying its society by foreigners has increased since then. Consequently, more and more universities established centers or departments related to Vietnamese language and Vietnam studies. Currently, the major schools providing Vietnamese studies programs or departments and their descriptions are as follows:

Department of Vietnam Studies<sup>9</sup>, Hanoi University was officially established in 2004 in order to recruit international students. Students are trained in Vietnamese and subjects regarding Vietnam studies. It offers BA degree in Vietnam studies. The students in this department are mainly from China, Japan and Korea. Prior to 2004, the department was known as Center for Teaching Vietnamese to Foreigners, which provides non-credit Vietnamese classes for foreigners.

Department of Linguistics<sup>10</sup> is another unit related to Vietnam studies at the

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<sup>4</sup> Nowadays, it was renamed as *Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội*, Vietnam National University-Hanoi.

<sup>5</sup> It is located at *Nhà B7 Bis, phố Trần Đại Nghĩa, phường Bách Hoa*. For details, refer to the official guide to the department at <<http://ussh.edu.vn/faculty-vietnamese-studies-and-language/1754>>

<sup>6</sup> *Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn Hà Nội*. Official website at <<http://ussh.edu.vn/>>

<sup>7</sup> *Viện Việt Nam học và Khoa học phát triển* in Vietnamese. It is located at *Nhà A, Tầng 2, 336 Nguyễn Trãi, Thanh Xuân*. Readers may refer to its official website at <<http://www.vnu.edu.vn/dhqg/contents/index.php?ID=856>>

<sup>8</sup> *Trung tâm Nghiên cứu Việt Nam và Giao lưu Văn hoá*.

<sup>9</sup> *Khoa Việt Nam Học* in Vietnamese. It is located at *Km 9, đường Nguyễn Trãi, quận Thanh Xuân*. Readers may refer to its official website at <<http://web.hanu.vn/vnh>>

<sup>10</sup> *Ngôn ngữ học* in Vietnamese. Readers may refer to its official website at <<http://ussh.edu.vn/faculty-linguistics/1742>>

University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi. The department specializes in linguistic studies, including Vietnamese and many other domestic and foreign languages. It offers BA, MA and PhD degree for both domestic and foreign languages. The major foreign students are from China and Japan.

In addition to Vietnam National University and Hanoi University, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences<sup>11</sup> (VASS) plays an important role in Vietnam studies too. All researchers at VASS are Vietnamese. Most institutes at VASS are highly related to Vietnamese studies, such as Institute of Linguistics<sup>12</sup>, Institute of Lexicography and Vietnamese Encyclopaedia<sup>13</sup>, Institute of Han-Nom Studies<sup>14</sup>, Institute of Literature<sup>15</sup>, Institute of Cultural Studies<sup>16</sup>, etc.

All the institutes and universities mentioned above are located in Hanoi, which is in northern Vietnam. In southern Vietnam, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities<sup>17</sup>, Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City plays an important role in Vietnamese studies. There are departments related to Vietnam studies, such as Department of Vietnamese Studies<sup>18</sup> and Department of Literature and Language<sup>19</sup>, etc. The Department of Vietnamese Studies offers both BA and MA degrees to both Vietnamese and foreign students.

## 2.2. Vietnam studies in Taiwan

Vietnam studies in Taiwan was initiated in the late 1980s and developed in 1990s under the Go-South policy (南進政策) of Taiwan's former president Lee Teng-hui (Lee 2003; Shiu 2003). The so-called Go-South policy is mainly a economic policy promoting economic cooperation among Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries.

In the 1990s, the economy in China was rapidly flourishing. It attracted more and more Taiwanese businessmen to invest in China. To avoid potential political and economic risks caused by overwhelming investment in China, Taiwan's Go-South was developed in the 1990s.

In 1994, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (1994-2001) was established by

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<sup>11</sup> Viện Khoa học xã hội Việt Nam in Vietnamese. Official website at <<http://www.vass.gov.vn>>

<sup>12</sup> Viện Ngôn ngữ học in Vietnamese. Official website at <<http://www.vienngonnguhoc.gov.vn/>>

<sup>13</sup> Viện Từ điển học và Bách khoa thư Việt Nam in Vietnamese. Official website at <<http://www.bachkhoatoanthu.gov.vn/>>

<sup>14</sup> Viện Hán Nôm in Vietnamese. Official website at <<http://www.hannom.org.vn>>

<sup>15</sup> Viện Văn học in Vietnamese. Official website at <<http://www.vienvanhoc.org.vn>>

<sup>16</sup> *Viện Nghiên cứu văn hoá in Vietnamese. official website at <<http://www.ncvanhoa.org.vn>>*

<sup>17</sup> Trường Đại học Khoa Xã hội và Nhân văn TP. Hồ Chí Minh. Official website at <<http://www.hcmussh.edu.vn>>

<sup>18</sup> Khoa Việt Nam Học in Vietnamese. Official website at <<http://www.vns.edu.vn/vns/>>

<sup>19</sup> Khoa Văn học và Ngôn ngữ in Vietnamese. Official website at <<http://khoavanhoc-ngonngu.edu.vn/home/>>

Taiwan's Academia Sinica. It was the first center to promote area studies focusing on Southeast Asia. Vietnam, as a member of Southeast Asian countries, was therefore considered a research subject for the center. The center was later expanded as Center for Asia-Pacific Area Studies<sup>20</sup> (CAPAS). At present, CAPAS is still the major center carrying out research on Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries.

In addition to Academia Sinica, there are some major universities conducting research or teaching project relating to Vietnam studies, as follows:

In 1996, the Graduate Institute of Southeast Asia Studies was established by Tamkang University in Taipei. It offered MA degree and was the first institute to promote Southeast Asian studies on campus. The institute was later combined with Graduate Institute of Japanese Studies and renamed Graduate Institute of Asian Studies<sup>21</sup> in 2009.

Another university to promote Southeast Asian studies is National Chi Nan University in central Taiwan. Center for Southeast Asian Studies and Graduate Institute of Southeast Asian Studies<sup>22</sup> were established in 1995 and 1997, respectively. The institute currently offers MA and PhD degrees.

In addition to Tamkang University and Chi Nan University, National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences (KUAS<sup>23</sup>) and National Cheng Kung University (NCKU<sup>24</sup>), in southern Taiwan, also carry out research projects on Vietnam. In 2003, Vietnam Economic Research Center<sup>25</sup> was established by the National Kaohsiung University of Applied Sciences to conduct research projects on Vietnam's economy.

As for NCKU, because there is no specific department or institute on Vietnam studies, research projects are carried out by researchers in different departments, such as Department of Taiwanese Literature<sup>26</sup>, Department of Chinese Literature, Department of History, and Graduate Institute of Political Economics.

In recent years, some courses on Vietnam are regularly offered at NCKU, such as “Vietnamese Language<sup>27</sup>,” “Vietnamese Society and Culture<sup>28</sup>,” “Language and Literature: A Comparative Study of Taiwan and Vietnam<sup>29</sup>,” and “Han Literature in

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<sup>20</sup> 亞太區域研究專題中心 in Chinese. Official website at <<http://www.rchss.sinica.edu.tw/capas/>>

<sup>21</sup> 淡江大學亞洲研究所<<http://www2.tku.edu.tw/~tiix/>>

<sup>22</sup> 國立暨南大學東南亞研究所<<http://www.dseas.ncnu.edu.tw/>>

<sup>23</sup> 國立高雄應用科技大學<<http://www.kuas.edu.tw/>>

<sup>24</sup> 國立成功大學<<http://www.ncku.edu.tw/>>

<sup>25</sup> 越南經濟研究中心<<http://verc.kuas.edu.tw/client/cht>>

<sup>26</sup> 台灣文學系<<http://www.twl.ncku.edu.tw>>

<sup>27</sup> Conversational Vietnamese is offered in two semesters, two credit hours in each semester. The course has been offered every year since 2007. It is taught by Wi-vun Chiung with Vietnamese assistants.

<sup>28</sup> It is a course of two credit hours offered by Wi-vun Chiung every year since 2004.

<sup>29</sup> It is a graduate course of three credit hours offered by Wi-vun Chiung every 2 years since 2008.

Vietnam,” etc. NCKU is the first university that regularly offers accredited Vietnamese classes to college students in Taiwan. In addition, with financial supports from Taiwan’s Ministry of Education, a project to collect Vietnamese books was carried out in 2009. So far, around fourteen hundred books written in Vietnamese have been collected. Although the quantity is not large, it is currently the largest collection in Taiwan.

In 2006, the Vietnamese students at NCKU organized the Vietnamese Students Association<sup>30</sup> (VSA), the first Vietnamese student organization in Taiwan. Since 2007, VSA has hosted Vietnam Cultural Week every year.

Regarding Vietnamese teaching, some other schools also offer non-credit or accredited Vietnamese classes in recent years. They are: Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages in Kaohsiung, National University of Kaohsiung, National Chengchi University in Taipei, National Taiwan University in Taipei, and Chung Yuan Christian University in Taichung, etc. Some private or NGO organizations also offer Vietnamese classes from time to time, such as Taiwanese Romanization Association<sup>31</sup>, Association for Taiwanese and Vietnamese Cultural Exchange<sup>32</sup>, and Pearl S. Buck Foundation<sup>33</sup>, etc. To date, all except NCKU all Vietnamese classes have been taught by part-time teachers. The teachers are mainly Vietnamese immigrants or Vietnamese students in Taiwan. This fact shows that Taiwan is short of qualified Vietnamese teachers.

As time goes on, more and more researchers and graduate students have joined the academic circle of Southeast Asian studies. Annual Conference of Taiwan’s Southeast Asia Studies<sup>34</sup> initiated by Academia Sinica in 1999 has become the most important of such annual conferences in Taiwan. In addition, Taiwan Association of Southeast Asian Studies<sup>35</sup>, the first academic organization on Southeast Asian studies, was officially established in April 2005. Currently, there are around 100 members in the association. Furthermore, the Association for Taiwanese and Vietnamese Cultural Exchange, the first Vietnam-specific academic association, was established in December 2009.

Because economic and cultural exchange between Taiwan and Vietnam has rapidly increased, Vietnam is gradually becoming the major subject in Taiwan’s Southeast Asian studies. For example, there were 17 research papers directly on Vietnam among the total of 88 papers presented in the 2010 Annual Conference of Taiwan’s Southeast

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<sup>30</sup> 國立成功大學越南學生協會<<http://vsa.twl.ncku.edu.tw>>

<sup>31</sup> 台灣羅馬字協會 It was established in August 2001. Official website at <<http://www.tlh.org.tw/>>

<sup>32</sup> 台越文化協會 It was established in December 2009. Official website at <<http://taioat.de-han.org/>>

<sup>33</sup> 賽珍珠基金會<<http://www.psbfb.org.tw>>

<sup>34</sup> 台灣東南亞區域研究年度研討會

<sup>35</sup> 台灣東南亞學會<<http://taseas.rchss.sinica.edu.tw/>>

Asia Studies. They account for 19.3% of the presented papers.

To get a better picture of the development of Southeast Asian studies, we may take a look at the number of MA and PhD theses on Southeast Asian countries offered in recent years. The data is based on information found in the National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan<sup>36</sup> as of September 30, 2010. Thesis/dissertation title and keyword were chosen as the search range. Names of Southeast Asian countries in Chinese characters were inputted for search. The statistics of MA and PhD theses are listed in Table 1. It shows that Vietnam is the country with the highest number of MA and PhD theses, accounting for 30.7% of all theses. As for their research topics, most theses/dissertations are related to Vietnamese immigrants and economic relations.

Table 1. Statistics of MA and PhD theses  
on Southeast Asian countries

Countries	Quantity
Vietnam	442
Singapore	301
Thailand	174
Malaysia	161
Philippines	144
Indonesia	141
Myanmar	39
Cambodia	20
Lao	9
Timor-Leste	7
Brunei	0

Although more researchers and graduate students have joined the circle of Vietnam studies, there are still some difficulties to overcome. The first is probably researchers' Vietnamese language ability. Almost all Taiwanese researchers do not possess Vietnamese language ability. They always have to rely on interpreters or literatures in English. The major causes could be 1) Vietnamese language education is not well-planned in colleges, and 2) the researchers were not required to possess Vietnamese ability while they were graduate students. In my opinion, establishment of undergraduate level of department or program in Vietnamese language is necessary for solving this problem.

<sup>36</sup> 台灣博碩士論文知識加值系統<<http://ndltd.ncl.edu.tw>>

### 3. Taiwan studies in Taiwan and Vietnam

#### 3.1. Taiwan studies in Taiwan

In the same way that Vietnam used to be a colony, Taiwan had also been colonized by several foreign colonial regimes. The first foreign regime was established by the Dutch people in the seventeenth century. It was followed by the Koxinga (鄭成功) regime and the Chinese Ch'ing (清) regime. Two centuries later, the sovereignty of Taiwan was transferred from the Chinese Ch'ing to Japan in 1895 as a consequence of the Sino-Japanese War (Chiung 2004). During the Japanese period, a great number of surveys and investigations about Taiwan's geography, census, ethnicity, languages and customs were carried out by the Japanese. Those investigations are still useful references and have been studied by researchers, even though they were originally for colonization purposes. Such reports include Japanese-Taiwanese Dictionary (日臺大辭典 1907), Taiwanese-Japanese Dictionary (臺日大辭典 1931), and Taiwanese Ethnography (台灣文化志 1928).

At the end of the World War II, Japanese forces surrendered to the Allied Forces. Chiang Kai-shek<sup>37</sup>, the leader of the Chinese Nationalists (KMT<sup>38</sup> or Kuomintang) took over Taiwan and northern Vietnam on behalf of the Allied Powers under General Order No.1 of September 2, 1945 (Peng 1995:60-61; Chiung 2010). At the time, Chiang Kai-shek was fighting the Chinese Communist Party in Mainland China. In 1949, Chiang's troops were completely defeated and pursued by the Chinese Communists. At that time, Taiwan's national status was supposed to be dealt with by a peace treaty among the warring nations. However, because of his defeat in China, Chiang decided to occupy Taiwan under the excuse that "Taiwan was traditionally part of China." He planned to make use of Taiwan as a base from which he would fight back and retake Mainland China (Kerr, 1992; Ong, 1993; Peng, 1995; Su, 1980). Consequently, Chiang's political regime the Republic of China (R.O.C) was relocated and resurrected in Taiwan and has remained there since 1949.

After People's Republic of China was established in Mainland China, Chiang still asserted that R.O.C. was the only legitimate government of China. Because Taiwan was regarded as a base and a part of China in the viewpoint of Chiang, the Taiwanese people were not allowed to identify themselves as Taiwanese but only as Chinese (Ong 1993).

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<sup>37</sup> 蔣介石 in Chinese. Trường Giới Thạch in Vietnamese.

<sup>38</sup> KMT (中國國民黨 Trung Quốc Quốc Dân Đảng) was the ruling party in Taiwan since 1945 until 2000, in which year *Chen Shui-bian*, the presidential candidate of opposition party Democratic Progressive Party was elected the new president. Thereafter, the KMT won the presidential election again in 2008, and has become the ruling party again since 2008.

To convert the Taiwanese people's identity into a Chinese identity, martial law was carried out from 1949 to 1987. Under the 38-year-long martial law, the Taiwanese were not allowed to organize any opposition party<sup>39</sup> or hold any national-level elections such as presidential or legislative elections. Besides these, the Taiwanese people did not have freedom of the press or mass media. The National Language Policy, or Mandarin Chinese-only policy, was adopted. Under the policy, the Taiwanese people were not allowed to speak their vernaculars in school and in public. Moreover, they were forced to learn Mandarin Chinese, Chinese history, Chinese geography and to identify themselves as Chinese through the national education system (Cheng 1996; Tiun, 1996). Research on Taiwan was definitely forbidden in this period.

Taiwan studies were not allowed until the lifting of martial law. The call for Taiwan studies came with the movement of Taiwanization, which was initiated along with the rise of native political activities against Chinese KMT regime in the middle of 1980s. After a decade's efforts, the first college department on Taiwan studies eventually appeared in 1997, in which year the Department of Taiwan Literature<sup>40</sup> at Aletheia University, a private university, as well as the Graduate Institute of Taiwan Languages and Language Education<sup>41</sup> at National Hsinchu University of Education were established.

In 2000, the Department of Taiwanese Literature<sup>42</sup> at National Cheng Kung University was established. At present, the Department of Taiwanese Literature at NCKU is the only department offering BA, MA, PhD degrees in Taiwanese literature in Taiwan. Although the department was named Taiwanese literature, faculty research and teaching are not limited to literature, but also language, culture, and history.

During the ruling period (2000-2008) of former president Chen Shui-bian, many schools were urged and approved to found departments or graduate institutes relevant to Taiwanese studies. Currently, there are around 20 universities with this kind of department or institute. In general, their research fields are mainly in literature, languages, history, culture, anthropology, ethnicity, and geography.

Because Taiwan studies was regarded as political taboo, most researchers in Taiwan did not dare do it. Once the political restrictions were officially lifted in the 1990s, it soon attracted many of the new generation of Taiwanese students to join the circle. Consequently, Taiwan studies curriculum in most schools is usually planned for

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<sup>39</sup> Democratic Progressive Party (民主進步黨) was the first Taiwanese party during KMT era, which was not organized until September 28, 1986.

<sup>40</sup> 真理大學台灣文學系<<http://mttl.mtwww.mt.au.edu.tw/front/bin/home.phtml>>

<sup>41</sup> 新竹教育大學台灣語言與語文教育研究所<<http://gitll.web.nhcue.edu.tw/index.phtml>>

<sup>42</sup> 國立成功大學台灣文學系<<http://www.twl.ncku.edu.tw>>

domestic students rather than for international students. This is the difference of Taiwanese studies in Taiwan from Vietnamese studies in Vietnam. In addition, because Mandarin Chinese has been adopted as the official language in Taiwan's schools for over sixty years, many of the younger generation of Taiwanese cannot speak or write fluently in languages other than Mandarin Chinese. As a result, most curricula are taught in Chinese rather than in Taiwanese. Moreover, many schools do not require that students who major in Taiwan studies learn Taiwanese language(s) (Chiung 2007:354-377). This is quite ironic!

### 3.2. Taiwan studies in Vietnam

In Vietnam, Taiwan studies came along with China studies in the early 1990s. In September 1993, the Center for Chinese Studies (CCS) at Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences was approved by the Vietnamese government. It reveals that the unfriendly relations between Vietnam and China after the 1979 border conflicts had improved. In addition, the rising economy in Taiwan and China is another factor effecting the establishment of CCS.

Taiwan, Hongkong, and Macao were considered as subjects for area studies under the framework of China studies in CCS. Therefore, a research branch called Studio for Taiwan, Hongkong and Macao Studies was established under CCS. The studio was later renamed as Studio for Taiwan Studies in 2001. Further, it was promoted to Center for Taiwan Studies (CTS) when CCS was promoted to Institute of Chinese Studies<sup>43</sup> in 2005. Currently, CTS is the only official center conducting research projects on Taiwan. Members in the center number less than ten. Major concerns are issues on Taiwan's economy, transformation from rural to industrialized society, Vietnamese laborers and brides, and education.

In addition, Taiwan Education Center<sup>44</sup> was established at University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh city, and at University of Foreign Languages, Vietnam National University-Hanoi, in 2008 and 2010, respectively. The center was sponsored by Taiwan's Ministry of Education and run by the school's Department of Oriental Studies. The center mainly provides students information regarding studying abroad in Taiwan.

In addition to the centers mentioned above, some research projects related to Taiwan may be carried out by individual researchers in different schools or institutions. For example, the Institute of Northeast Asian Studies, Institute of Han Nom Studies,

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<sup>43</sup> <<http://vnics.org.vn/Default.aspx>>

<sup>44</sup> 台灣教育中心<<http://tec.fichet.org.tw>>

and Institute of Linguistics at Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, and relevant departments in Vietnam National University and Hanoi University.

#### 4. Comparative studies of Vietnam and Taiwan

Why are comparative studies of Vietnam and Taiwan important? The major reason is that it can benefit and strengthen both Vietnam studies and Taiwan studies themselves. It can help researchers and the general public in Vietnam and Taiwan to understand their motherland more clearly. Some concrete examples are provided in this section.

For example, in the case of Chiang Kai-shek's occupation of Taiwan and northern Vietnam in 1945 after the Japanese surrendered, readers may not have a clear picture of this issue without comparing Vietnam to Taiwan. In Taiwan, all history textbooks for schools only describes that "Taiwan was returned to Chiang's Republic of China in 1945 according to the Cairo Declaration." The textbooks never mention the fact that Chiang took over both Taiwan and northern Vietnam on behalf of the Allied Powers under General McArthur's order. Why was Vietnam missing in Taiwan's textbooks? What happened when Chiang's military troops took over northern Vietnam? Why did Chiang's troops eventually leave Vietnam, but remained in Taiwan? What would have happened if Chiang's troops remained in Vietnam? Why was the great Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh regarded as a liar and traitor by Chiang? All the questions can not be well answered without mutual comparisons.

The second example is the issue on orthographic Romanization in Vietnam and Taiwan. Both Vietnam and Taiwan used to be colonized by China. Consequently, Han characters were adopted as the official writing for a long time. In Vietnam, it finally replaced Han characters with the Romanized chữ Quốc ngữ right after Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In contrast, Han characters are still the dominant orthography in current Taiwanese society even though Roman scripts has been introduced since the 17th century. Why is Vietnam so successful in replacing Chinese characters? Why did Ho Chi Minh choose Romanization rather than Nom or Ham characters? Is there any possibility for Taiwan to become Romanized in the future?

#### 5. Concluding remarks

As economic, cultural, and educational exchanges flourish, Taiwan and Vietnam are getting closer than ever before. To gain better understanding and mutual benefits, it is important to promote comparative studies of Vietnam and Taiwan.

In Taiwan, departments of Vietnamese language or Vietnam Studies should be organized on campus in order to provide better training courses in Vietnamese language and Vietnam studies. It should be the same in Vietnam, departments of Taiwanese language and Taiwan studies should be planned. In addition, Taiwan studies should be conducted from a Vietnamese perspective rather than from the Chinese perspective.

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