

The Department of East Asian Studies/Sinology and
the Vienna Center for Taiwan Studies are pleased to invite you to the lecture of

Prof. Ralf Vollmann and Dr. Liao Chih-I

Taiwanese Hakka Identity and Language Dynamics

Abstract: Taiwan saw significant settlement by Hakka speakers from the period of Dutch colonial rule (17th century). Hakka speakers experienced dominance from Japanese and Chinese at different times in history, until a revival of Taiwanese identities promoted Hakka as one of Taiwan's heritage languages. The presentation is based on fieldwork conducted in 2017, 2020, and 2023 which involved visits to Taiwanese Hakka settlements and academic institutions.

It will discuss the following findings: .1. Despite Taiwan's language policies supporting minority languages through educational materials and linguistic preservation, younger Hakka speakers rarely use the language, and middle-aged speakers frequently code-switch with Guoyu (Mandarin). Teaching materials often reflect Chinese stylistic influences. 2. Elderly speakers, too, predominantly seem to use Mandarin or Hokkien (Taiwanese), with elicited Hakka utterances often showing Chinese or Hokkien structural influences. 3. As a non-standardized language with diverse dialects, efforts to standardize Hakka in Taiwan risks alienating speakers of certain dialects. 4. Hakkas from other countries also settle in Taiwan in small numbers, e.g. the "Burmese Chinese" migrants maintaining distinct Burmese cultural and linguistic practices. 5. The so-called "Hoklo-Khek" are Hakkas who shifted to Hokkien language. Conclusions presented are: .1. Prolonged settlement and historical developments have shaped a unique Taiwanese Hakka identity. 2. Taiwan's unique historical and political context has fostered a multilingual policy. However, the communicative dominance of a well-established 'literate' language (Mandarin) overshadows smaller, often oral languages like Hakka. 4. Language standardization poses challenges for minority languages such as Hakka, where dialectal diversity resists uniformity. 5. The concept of "Hakka" varies across contexts, in Taiwan it often serves as an ingroup marker. This complicates connections between Taiwanese Hakkas and global Hakka communities.

Ao. Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Ralf Vollmann is a professor of linguistics at the University of Graz, Austria, specializing in syntactic typology and sociolinguistics. He studied linguistics, Tibetology, and anthropology, primarily at the University of Vienna, and previously worked at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. His current research focuses on Hakka as a global minority language.

Dr. Liao Chih-I, a Taiwanese Hakka, holds a Ph.D. in Education from Monash University, Australia, where her research examined language use among overseas Chinese immigrants, with a focus on Hakka communities in Sabah, Malaysia. She earned an M.A. in Hakka Language and Literature from National Central University, Taiwan, and a B.A. in Indigenous Language and Communication from National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan.

Date:
Thursday, **11. Dezember 2025**
Time: 17:00 – 18:30 (CET)

Location: SIN 1, University
Campus, Spitalgasse 2, Hof 2,
entrance 2.3, 1090 Wien