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Taiwan's Diplomatic Situation from a Taiwanese College Student's
Perspective

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<https://charcharnmt2017.wordpress.com>

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I. Motivation

During the time in the English Department, I realized the importance of knowing my own culture before embracing a foreign one.

The aim of this course, Chinese Culture in English, is to help students learn how to talk about their own culture in a different language. During my college year, and after participating many Taiwanese Culture involved activities, I found myself switching from totally denying and disliking my root as a Taiwanese to fully embracing and being proud of my own culture. Those events I have attended were all held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROC (MOFA) and they definitely were the main factors that enhance my Taiwanese pride which focused on spreading Taiwanese culture to the world and foreigners.

Therefore, this paper will elaborate on the recent MOFA event, Mosaic Taiwan 2017 (MT 2017), I helped coordinate, its purpose and benefits on the foreign participants and Taiwanese students. Not only will this paper be used as my graduation project for the Chinese Culture in English course, it will also serve as a record of one of the biggest program I worked on.

II. Introduction to current Taiwan's diplomatic situation

Due to One China Policy, Taiwan (The Republic of China, ROC) is not considered as a country in the international society. Although Taiwan is operating exactly like any other democratic country in the world, its relation with China is the main reason why it is really difficult for Taiwan to improve its diplomatic situation.

Since 2016, there are two countries that broke its diplomatic alliance with Taiwan, switching their recognition to Beijing. In Dec. 2016, a tiny country in Africa, Sao Tome and Principe, announced their establishment of diplomatic ties with Beijing. Likewise, in June 2016, the Panamanian government also decided to end its long diplomatic relation with Taiwan, leaving Taiwanese government in shock. Until today, Taiwan remains diplomatic ties with 20 countries.

Beijing government has tried every possible way to squeeze Taiwan's international space; therefore, besides official diplomatic interaction, Taiwan also creates many opportunities to build non-official relations with other countries such as hosting delegations from different countries, programs for foreign youths to visit Taiwan and get to know about Taiwan more or even sending Taiwanese students abroad to spread Taiwanese cultures with the world.

III. Students' Participation in Taiwan's Diplomacy:

There are a lot programs held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for students in Taiwan and abroad to participate in Taiwan's diplomacy. For example, the largest event for

Taiwanese students to take part in is the International Youth Ambassador of Taiwan.

This program gives Taiwanese students lectures on Taiwanese cultures, current political situation, international affairs and so on. During this program, the participants will be sent to different cities around the world to spread Taiwanese cultures with foreign friends.

I participated in the program in 2015. During the program I started realizing what exactly is Taiwanese culture which I have never quite understand. Growing up in Taiwan, “Taiwanese culture” has been a very vague idea to me because part of my family is originally from China and the other part is local Taiwanese. Moreover, there is never a clear idea or icon that represents Taiwan. Therefore, during the program I started learning about Taiwanese culture is actually formed with many different cultures such as Min-Nan, Hakka, Japanese and Indigenous cultures. With all those cultures and time passing by, Taiwan actually has a very unique and diverse culture which is changing all the time because we have new immigrants moving into this small island.

Likewise, the International Youth Ambassador of Taiwan is a program for Taiwanese students; there is also one for foreign youths to learn about Taiwan—Mosaic Taiwan (MT). This program is especially designed for students and young professionals from the US and Canada. MT provides these North Americans a great opportunity to learn about Taiwan through a series of lectures, workshops and even forum. The participants are carefully chosen and most of them have experience and some are about to work in the US or Canadian government. Therefore, this program allows them to learn about

Taiwan in a semi-official way and build connection with Taiwan when they are still young. Moreover, some of the participants actually come from prestigious family and universities that would potentially help Taiwan in the future.

However, some people question MOFA for spending money on such programs because they don't actually have any obvious benefits on improving Taiwan's diplomatic situation. It does seem like it. Spending money on programs for students to have a "free" trips abroad and to Taiwan doesn't seem to be an efficient way to improve Taiwan's international situation. Yet, due to Taiwan's special international status, there doesn't seem to be a better way to have future leaders from other countries to come to Taiwan and learn about Taiwan's situation. Although there is no promise that all this money would pay off, it's some money worth spending for because it also gives Taiwanese students a chance to interact with the future leaders from the US and Canada.

During the MT this year, there are youth forums for the participants and also Taiwanese students to join. They discussed about the current Taiwan's political situation and also some social issues such as the law of same-sex marriage, sunflower movement and local charity work in Taiwan. As a Taiwanese student, it is a very good chance to discuss about such issues with students and young professionals. Not only can they learn about Taiwan in a non-official way, Taiwanese students can also learn about Taiwan through their eyes. Learning from our own culture through foreigners' point of view is always interesting because we live here and there are many things that we take for granted and never be aware of. Therefore, to me, the biggest benefit from programs

such as the Youth Ambassador and also MT for Taiwanese is to look at Taiwanese culture in a different way. Moreover, learning about the participants' cultures and making a group of new friends are definitely some other big benefits for Taiwanese students.

IV. Reflection on the future of Taiwan's situation in international society

Learning from the recent events, it seems that the problem that is blocking Taiwan away from being part of the international society is its relation with Beijing government. Due to this complicated situation, the way for Taiwan to improve its diplomatic situation is probably using its soft power and programs such as MT to make the world see Taiwan more often.

Besides MT, there are also program such as Ni-Hao Taiwan providing similar opportunities as MT provides but focus more on students and young professionals from Asian and Pacific countries. Not only from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education also provides similar programs for Taiwanese students to go abroad and interact with foreign students and professionals.

With all these programs, there are more opportunities for Taiwan to be seen in the world. As a student, what we can do seems to be very little and has very little impact on Taiwan; however, improving Taiwan's status in the international society is not only the job of the Taiwanese diplomatic officers but everyone's responsibility.

VI. Reference

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