

## Tomita Akira's Tips for Taiwanese Language

Associate Professor of the Department of Japanese, Tomita Akira, has an exceptional fluency in Taiwanese language and if you heard him talking, you'd think he was Taiwanese. He moved to Taiwan from Japan sixteen years ago and is a great appreciator of the heritage and history. While he was in Japan studying for his PhD in International Studies, his research led him even deeper into the historical links of Taiwanese language and what it means to be an exceptional language learner. He believes that to truly understand a language, you must also have an in depth understanding of why people speak the way they do and what it represents.

When asked what language he most often spoke with his Taiwanese wife, he laughed, "My wife's Japanese is excellent so we use it for daily things, but she's my Taiwanese teacher." He mentioned that for holidays the family gets together and that is his opportunity to really use what he has learned. "Even though there is more room for my Taiwanese to improve, I can easily participated in Taiwanese conversations regarding most topics." He stated.

As a language researcher and educator, he still found learning Taiwanese to be quite challenging. "Many people believe that if you have a basic understanding of Chinese, you will be able to learn Taiwanese easily." He expressed before sighing, "That's not really the case. Chinese only has four tones which is basically only half of the tones used in Taiwanese. Also many of the sounds are completely unfamiliar to Japanese language. Not to mention there isn't a writing system, making it much more difficult to study. I just continued to watch Taiwanese television and slowly more and more words began to stick with me. Afterall, Taiwan is my second home." (Article written by Jin-yu Cai)

