**Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Class:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ( )**

**Tuesday English News Report**

*Debate over Chinese characters is sensitive issue for Hongkongers*  *(Alex Lo)*

An Education Bureau goal for primary school pupils to be able to read simplified characters is **courting controversy**

Broadcast Date: 23rd February

Joseph Stalin **reputedly** said any standard language is no more than a dialect with an army and a navy.

If that’s the case, perhaps we can say simplified Chinese scripts, used across the mainland, are backed up by the full might of the People’s Liberation Army. However, traditional Chinese characters, used mainly in Taiwan, are being defended by the **renegade** island’s military forces.

Hong Kong is, embarrassingly, caught in the middle. We have no army or navy, but thanks to Beijing, are allowed to continue teaching and writing in traditional characters. We do, however, have to concede that Cantonese, our **dominant** native **tongue**, is a “dialect”, despite its full grammatical sophistications. This **precarious** situation raises questions about how long it can last. And so we have become super-sensitive any time officials even hint at introducing simplified characters into local school curriculums.

Still reeling from the **furore** over the city-wide TSA tests, the Education Bureau is courting fresh controversy by citing as an educational goal that primary school students should be able to read simplified Chinese characters so that they will have a wider reading range.

The issue is raised in a document for public consultation on the renewal of the Chinese language education curriculum for primary schools. Released in December, the **consultation** will end on February 15. Some parent groups are already up in arms. But the bureau is quick to stress that the issue of simplified-character teaching is not part of the consultation.

In any case, promoting character simplification has been the goal since at least 2002, for pupils to “recognise and read simplified Chinese characters” as a basic part of curriculum planning.

Some leftist schools and almost all major international schools have adopted simplified-character teaching. But most mainstream local schools still use traditional characters.

I will not repeat the **pros and cons** of teaching one or the other style of writing; the debate has been well-rehearsed but **inconclusive**. But, like any language, Cantonese and traditional writing are very personal. Given the current political climate, Hongkongers will not hesitate to defend them.

That’s why the issue has become a bit like Article 23 security legislation. It’s always on the government’s to-do list, but it dares not openly advocate it.

 

1. What do you think?
2. Vocabulary

*Fill in the blanks in the sentences below using words from the box.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| courting controversy | reputedly | renegade | dominant |
| tongue | precarious | furore | consultation |
| pros and cons | inconclusive |  |  |

1. The New Zealand “All Blacks” are the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ team in world rugby. They nearly always win.
2. Your mother\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is your first language.
3. He found himself in an extremely \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ situation. The tree branch he was holding onto was beginning to break and beneath him was a hungry lion.
4. There are many \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when you go to England to study English. You are surrounded by English which is great, but you will also be far from family and friends in an unfamiliar place.
5. A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is a person (usually) who leaves one group and joins another that opposes it.
6. She was feeling sick all the time so she went to hospital to have some tests done. The results were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ so she didn’t know the cause of her illness.
7. A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is like a discussion or a debate about something to find out what people think.
8. Donald Trump, the American politician, is always \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He is forever saying things that are designed to be divisive and confrontational.
9. He is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the son of a famous actor but no one is sure.
10. A sudden and extremely angry reaction to something. The Government’s new coffee tax caused \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ among coffee drinkers.

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