
Research Grants Council of Hong Kong (General Research Fund 840012)

Models of Trilingual Education in Ethnic Minority Regions of China Project

Briefing Paper No.7

**Factors Influencing Trilingual Education
in Leshan Ebian Yi Autonomous County
乐山峨边彝族自治县三语教育现状调查**

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Models of Trilingual Education in Ethnic Minority Regions of China Project

This research project offers a holistic and descriptive account of trilingualism and trilingual education in China. Policy changes have led to the introduction of English language teaching and learning in primary schools. These reforms pose particular challenges to communities in ethnic minority areas, where Putonghua often competes with the minority language, and English is often taught in under-resourced schools with teachers with the requisite training in short supply.

The project involves extensive and intensive research comprising investigations into school- and community-level practices, policies and perceptions relating to trilingualism in such key regions as Xinjiang, Yunnan, Inner Mongolia, Sichuan, Gansu, Guizhou, Guangxi, Qinghai, Jilin, Tibet and Guangdong. Using first-hand data collected from each region, the researchers examine language policies and curricula, as well as language allocation in the classroom and in the community, and analyse them in their specific historical, socio-political, demographical, economic, geographical and cultural contexts.

A distinctive feature of the project is its presentation of a new methodology and approach to researching such phenomena. This methodology encompasses policy analysis, community language profiles, as well as school-based field work in order to provide rich data that facilitates multilevel analysis of policy-in-context.

This series of Briefing Papers presents information about different aspects of the project.

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Introduction

This survey studies the trilingual education in practice, analyses the existing trilingual education problems in Sichuan Leshan minority areas.

- The Basic Situation in Ebian Yi Autonomous County

Leshan Ebian Yi Autonomous County in Sichuan, with population of 46 thousand, is one of the branches in Yi nationality. There are 9745 Yi students in Ebian, including 5360 primary school students and 4415 high school students. The total number of existing school staff is 1526 and 1320 are full-time teachers. 322 of them are Yi nationality.

- The Trilingual Education Policy in Ebian

All schools offer Yi language course for the Yi students and all the students should attend to English course.

The teaching materials are from “尔比”

- Hypothesis of the Investigation

We suppose that many special features and problems in the present trilingual classroom must be existed to the trilingual teachers from the Chinese minority regions when they carry out their presentation of the lessons without any theory or technology support.

Research Tools

- A general investigation is conducted on a minority middle school located in Ebian Yi nationality autonomous county.

- The data was collected from questionnaire survey, interviews and classroom observations.

Design of the Questionnaire

- The design is borrowed from some other researchers including Li Xiaohong (2011), Tang Hongjuan(2009) and Huang Jian (2008).
- The questionnaire contains fifteen multiple choice questions and three interview questions.

Research Action

The Basic Data Collection

Altogether there are 180 students in a Middle school who participate in the questionnaire survey. The students are randomly selected.

After thorough examination, 7 copies are invalid because of the incompleteness or illegibility of the answers to the questions, and the rest 173 copies are carefully filled which make the valid rate of data 96%. Among the 173 participants, 83 are female students which occupy 49% of all and 90 are male students which occupy 51%.

Findings

1 The Situation of the Language Use among the Yi students

Table 1: Question 1 What's your mother language?

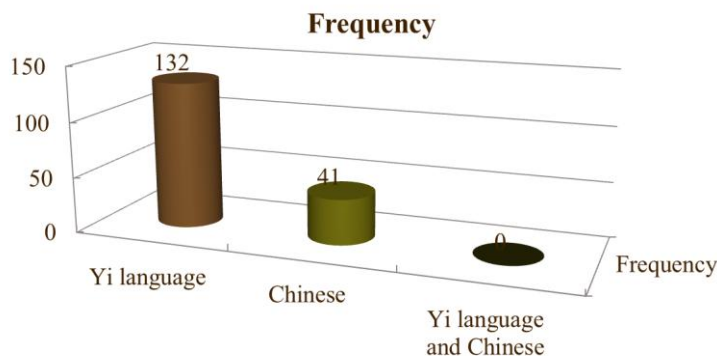


Table 2: Question 6: What language do you use when you communicate with your family?

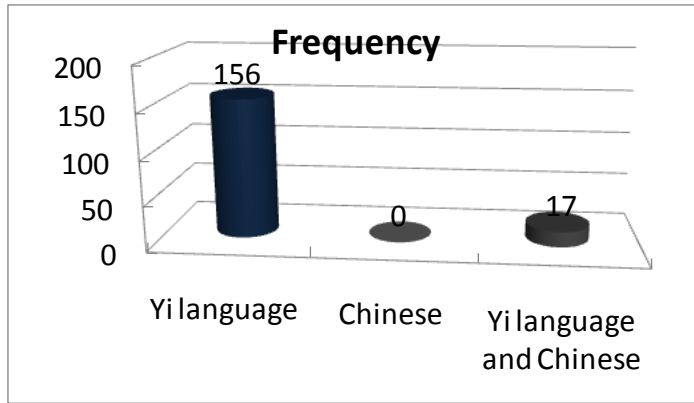
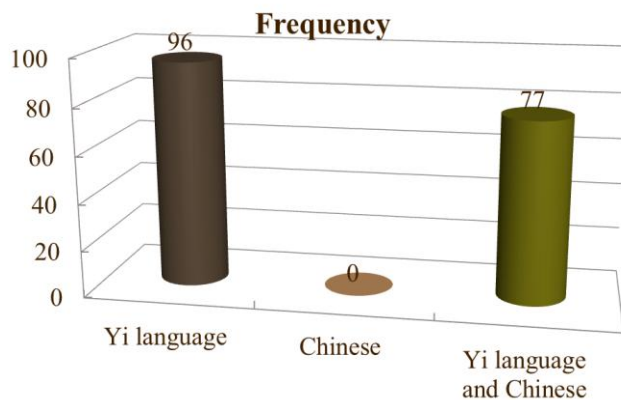


Table 3: Question 7: What language do you use in school?



2. Reading Materials

Question 12: What language would you prefer when reading?

Question 13: What language would you prefer when watching TV?

All the Yi students prefer to read Chinese books and watch Chinese TV programs.

3. Biggest Barrier in Trilingual Education

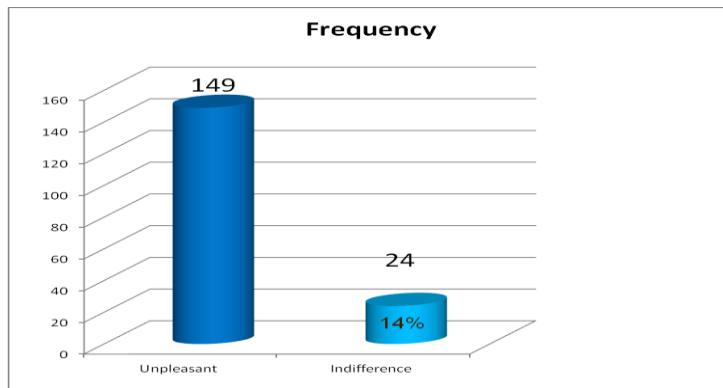
- Many students said that writing and reading are the most difficult parts in English and Yi language learning while most of them could do listening, speaking, writing and reading well in Chinese.

4. The Existing Factors of Language Use

- Most of the Yi students prefer to use Yi language and half of them speak Chinese in school.
- English could be only used by a small margin

5. The Attitude towards Trilingual Education among the Yi students

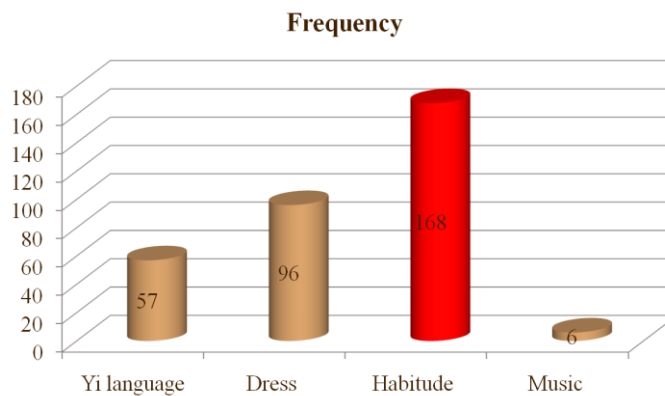
Table 4: Question 8: What's your feeling when you speak Yi language to others, while the response is in Chinese?



Question 2: Why you keep using and learning Yi language?

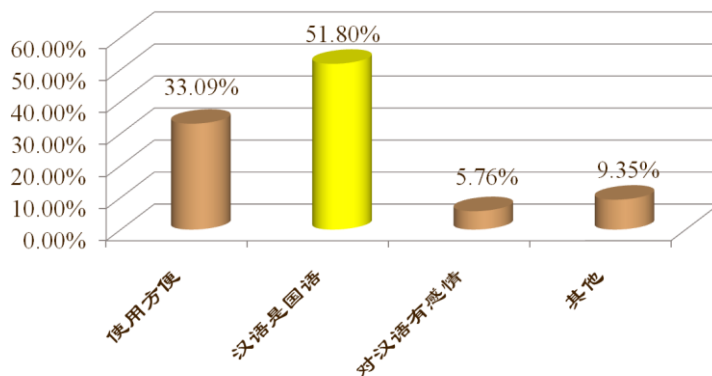
Yi students have deep feelings towards Yi language and Yi nationality.

Table 5: Question 3: What is the most important Yi national characteristic?

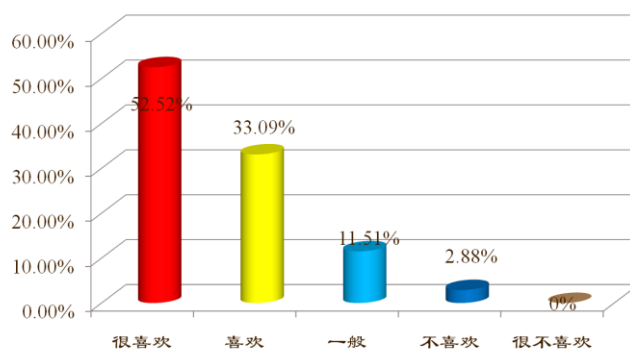


Question 4: why do you keep using and learning Chinese?

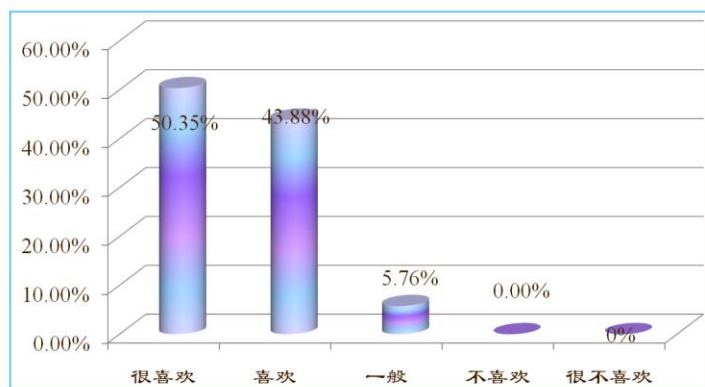
Generally, the Yi students feel it convenient to use Chinese.



Do you like Chinese?



Do you like Yi language?



Interviews

- Do you enjoy the teaching methods that your teachers use in trilingual education?

Most of the students indicate that they enjoy the teaching methods they received.

Summary of the questionnaires of the Yi students' attitude towards trilingual education

- ✓ Nearly all the students prefer Chinese while most of them dislike English.
- ✓ The Yi students could not be attracted by the trilingual education textbooks and teaching methods.
- ✓ Most of the Yi students think the Yi traditional habit could reflect the Yi culture.
- ✓ Complicated attitude among the Yi Students. Yi language teaching materials could not attract students.

The Results of the Investigation

There is poor quality trilingual education. The school cannot afford enough education resources to the students. We do not have a complete trilingual education system. The teaching materials that the Yi students use are the same as the Han students. The textbooks don't contain Yi background information.

The Further Studies on Trilingual Education

- ✓ How to **establish a theoretical system of trilingual education**
- ✓ How to **develop different teaching models for different ethnic nationality areas**
- ✓ How to **probe into trilingual policy making research**
- ✓ How to **promote and perfect the trilingual teacher education system**
- ✓ If we could **extend the objects of trilingual studies?**

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