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

**Models of Trilingual Education in
Ethnic Minority Regions of China
Project**

Technical Paper No.8

Classroom Observation Protocol

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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.

Models of Trilingual Education in Ethnic Minority Regions of China Project Technical Papers Series Editors: Anwei Feng (University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China) and Bob Adamson (The Education University of Hong Kong)

This series of Technical Papers presents information about the research instruments used in this project.

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Classroom Observation Protocol

Introduction

One of the key research questions driving the project is how the policy goals of trilingualism is being interpreted and realised in the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The project distinguished four distinct policy models of trilingual education (Adamson and Feng, 2013). The first model focuses strongly on the ethnic minority language. Typically, the nine years of compulsory education from Grade 1 in primary schools to Grade 3 in junior secondary schools is provided through the medium of the minority language. Chinese and English are taught as subjects in the curriculum. Chinese could be used as the medium of instruction for certain school subjects in late primary and secondary years. The second model is a balance between Chinese and the minority language. The balance is evident in terms not only of the medium of instruction but also of the ethnicity of the teachers and students. The third model often exists in two different forms. The first form is the reverse of the first model, i.e., Chinese is used as the primary medium instruction and the major ethnic minority language is taught as a subject to all students in the school, irrespective of their own ethnicity or mother tongue. The second form is found in many remote village schools in which one minority group dominates. In these schools, the minority language is used as the medium of instruction for the first two to three years with Chinese taught as a major school subject. Starting from Year 3 or Year 4, all school subjects are taught in Chinese. In both cases, English is taught as a school subject, with Chinese being used when necessary in those lessons. A fourth model is represented by schools that proclaim to be an ethnic minority language school but, in reality, do not use the minority language as the medium of instruction nor even teach it as school subject. Such schools also claimed to be bilingual, in the sense that Chinese and English are studied as languages in the curriculum and Chinese serves as the medium of instruction.

Factors Shaping the Trilingual Education Models

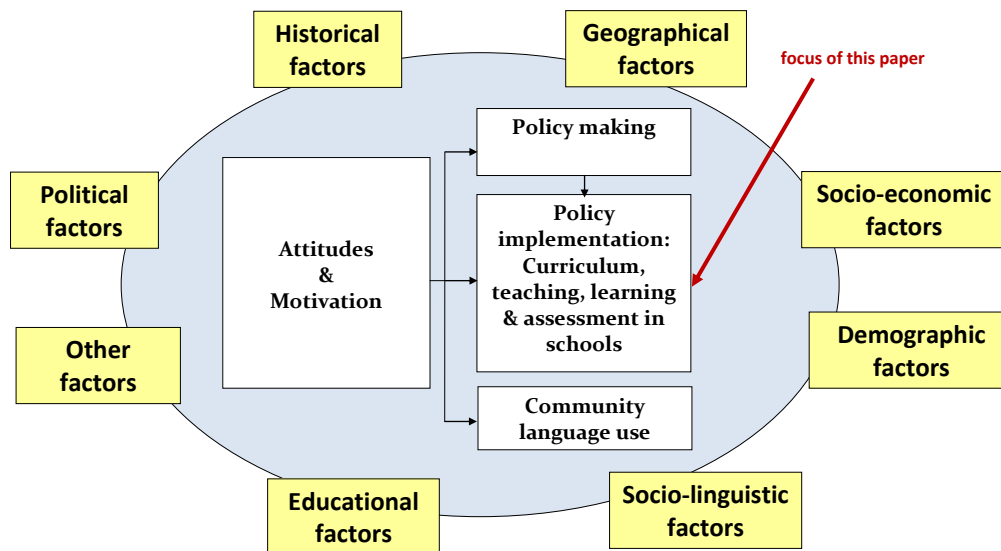
What factors shape and sustain the various models of trilingual education? This question denotes a particular view of education policy—that it emerges from, and forms part of broader contexts.

At the outset of the project, it was possible (on the basis of relevant literature) to identify key contextual factors that would likely play a role in shaping trilingual education policy. For instance, Fägerlind and Saha (1989) propose a triadic framework that positions education policy under the influence of socio-economic, socio-political and educational priorities.

A key concept for the study is ethnolinguistic vitality, the strength of life force of a language within a community. Ethnolinguistic vitality is influenced by geographical, historical, demographic and socio-linguistic factors, in addition to socio-economic and socio-political factors (Landweer, 2000). Other factors, such as religion, are emerging from the first phase of the project.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for the study of models of trilingual education in the PRC.

Figure 1—Conceptual framework



To conduct the research into the factors that shape and sustain the various models of trilingual education, a range of methodological tools were adopted.

A suite of research tools as shown in Table 1 were designed. A typical study of each single school would include:

- focus group interviews with 3-6 community leaders
- 2-3 interviews with regional and local education officials
- 1-3 interviews with school principal, deputy and other school leaders
- focus group interviews with 5-10 teachers
- focus group interviews with approximately 10 students
- 3-5 interviews with former students
- focus group interviews with approximately 10 parents
- documentary analysis of policy papers, syllabuses, timetables, learning resources and curriculum materials
- 5-10 lesson observations
- questionnaire surveys focusing on language attitudes and views of trilingual education among 60-100 students, 20-30 teachers including headteachers and deputies.
- field notes (e.g. observations of the school buildings and wall decorations, of languages used in the school outside of the classroom and of language use in the community).

These tools are described in detail in other Technical Papers in this series.

Table 1 – Methods to study factors that shape and sustain the models of trilingual education

Paradigm	Instrument	Focus
Qualitative	Semi-structured interview with head-teachers and teachers (focus groups or individuals)	Perceptions of and attitudes to trilingualism and each language, and their experiences implementing trilingual education models
	Semi-structured interview with policy makers (for individuals)	Perceptions of & attitudes to trilingualism and each language, and their experiences in policy making and implementation of trilingual education policy
	Semi-structured interview with parents (focus group or individuals)	Attitudes to different languages, their knowledge of what is going on in schools and their experiences of their children’s trilingual education
	Semi-structured interview with pupils (focus group or individuals)	Attitudes and experiences in using and learning languages in a trilingual education context
	School observation	Language environment: notice boards, signs, pictures, etc.; languages used by staff, pupils, etc.; the role and distribution of languages, as shown in curriculum documents
	Classroom observation	languages used by teacher and pupils, for classroom instruction and activities
	Ethnographic study	To study the language environment in a minority community
Quantitative	Teacher Questionnaire	Teacher’s perceptions of current practice, views of language use and views concerning language education
	Parent Questionnaire	Parents’ knowledge of current practice and views of language use and language education
	Student Questionnaire	Students’ attitude to current practice and views of language use and language education
	Subjective vitality survey	Ethnolinguistic vitality of a minority language
Other (Archival)	Objective vitality study	Ethnolinguistic vitality of a minority language by collecting data through archives, mass media, official documents, etc.

Classroom Observation Protocol

The qualitative research aims to produce a thick description of the model of trilingual education that is in operation in the school under study, and probes the factors that produce and sustain this model.

Observing lessons in the classroom offers the possibility for the research team to deepen our understanding of the linguistic environment. It offers insights into preferred languages, how the teachers and students implement the language policy, and the language of social interactions inside and outside of the classroom.

Step 1 – Identify and approach the Principal to seek his/her consent for you to observe the lessons, and to allow the teachers to participate. The consent should be in writing but—if the informant is reluctant to sign the consent form—an oral agreement is acceptable. Agree on the number of lessons that you will observe.

Step 2 – Meet with the teacher and explain your purpose. Explain the project to the teachers—you are not there to evaluate the teacher’s performance. Agree which lessons you will observe and arrange a short interview before the lesson to collect data on the students.

Step 3 – Enter the classroom with the teacher. Greet the students and then find a vantage point at the back of the room. As you watch the lesson, it is not always possible to gauge the response and activities of all the students, so select two or three “target” students that you observe carefully. Make sure that you do not interfere with the lesson in any way.

Step 4 – At the end of the lesson, thank the students and offer some words of praise on their work. Thank the teacher and discuss any points that you would like to clarify. Give the teacher an opportunity to ask you any further questions about the project.

SCHOOL OBSERVATION SHEET – 1

Classroom Observation

There should be a short interview with the class teacher before or after the observation to complete the questions from 1 to 5.

1. Class Background Data

- School:
- Date: Time period observed:
- Total number of students in the class:
- Gender balance (boys-girls): Age range:
- How many periods do students in this class have for this school subject:
- *Ratio SES (teacher's definition and estimate):
100% from 'well-to-do families' 70:30 50:50 30:70 100% from 'low income families'

* Ask Teacher for a rating to collect this information

2. Subject area (English or another school subject) of the time period:

3. Language profile of students in the class

Ethnic background of students:

- What ethnic groups do students belong to by birth:
- Percentage of students who are of ethnic minority(ies):
- Percentage of students who are ethnic Chinese:

The strongest language of the students in this class?

- Percentage of students whose strongest language is minority language:
- Percentage of students whose strongest language is Chinese:

Is the minority language used and/or taught in school? Yes No

If yes, how

Is English offered to these students? Yes No

If yes, how many periods per week

4. Language profile of the teacher

- Gender: Ethnic background:
- Highest education received:
- Teaching experience (years of being a teacher):
- How many lessons of teaching per week in total:
- Age range: 25 or below 26 to 35 36 to 45 46 and above
- Linguistic background:

	Fluent	OK	Limited	Not known
Chinese				
Minority language				
English				
Other				

5. Teaching Aim and Textbook used

- What is the aim of the subject taught?
 - To meet the national curriculum standards
 - To provide basic knowledge less than required by the national standards
 - Other. Please specify
- Textbook used?
 - Standard textbook used nationally
 - Textbook specially written for minority students
 - Other. Please specify

Observation Sheets for the Classroom

Activities in the Classroom:

6. In a classroom where English is taught, how does the teacher handle the class?

Activity	Much (Give estimate to time spent or frequency)	Some (Give estimate to time spent or frequency)	Little or None
Short questions and answers between T & Ps			
Total Physical Response (TPR) activities			
Words, text and grammar explanation			
Group or pair work (tasks for them)			
Whole class or individual reading aloud			
Story telling			
Asking students to work on white or black board			
Audio/Video listening or watching			
Other. Specify			

Notes

7. What seems to be the major approach the teacher uses in the classroom? (could tick more than one)

- Communicative language teaching approach (many oral interactions focusing on students’ oral skills)
- Task-based, student-centred language teaching approach (many group or individual tasks for students to complete using the target language)
- Grammar-translation language teaching (mainly explanations of language knowledge)
- Others. Specify

8. In a classroom where English is taught, how do the students respond to the activities?

Activity	Majority do well with interest	Majority manage, but with difficulty	Majority show no interest and get lost
Short questions and answers between T & Ps			
Total Physical Response (TPR) activities			
Words and grammar explanation			
Group or pair work (tasks for them)			
Whole class or individual reading aloud			
Story telling			
Asking students to work on white or black board			
Audio/Video listening or watching			
Other. Specify			

Notes

Language(s) in the Classroom:

9. Language(s) used by the teacher when addressing the whole class:

In a classroom where English is taught, the teacher explains English words, text or grammar:

- All or predominantly in minority language
- All or predominantly in Chinese
- In mixed languages (Chinese and minority language)
- In mixed languages including English (Chinese, English and minority language)
- All or predominantly in English
- Notes

In a classroom where English is taught, the teacher interacts with the students:

- All or predominantly in minority language
- All or predominantly in Chinese
- In mixed languages (Chinese and minority language)
- In mixed languages including English (Chinese, English and minority language)
- All or predominantly in English
- Notes

In a classroom where a school subject other than English is taught, the teacher gives explanations:

- All or predominantly in minority language
- All or predominantly in Chinese
- In mixed languages (Chinese and minority language)
- Notes

In a classroom where English is taught, the teacher interacts with the students:

- All or predominantly in minority language
- All or predominantly in Chinese
- In mixed languages (Chinese and minority language)
- Notes

10. Language(s) used by the students:

In a classroom where English is taught, the students interact with the teacher:

- All or predominantly in minority language
- All or predominantly in Chinese
- In mixed languages (Chinese and minority language)
- In mixed languages including English (Chinese, English and minority language)
- All or predominantly in English
- Notes

In a classroom where English is taught, the students interact with each other in group work:

- All or predominantly in minority language
- All or predominantly in Chinese
- In mixed languages (Chinese and minority language)
- In mixed languages including English (Chinese, English and minority language)
- All or predominantly in English
- Notes

In a classroom where a school subject other than English is taught, the teacher gives explanations:

- All or predominantly in minority language
- All or predominantly in Chinese
- In mixed languages (Chinese and minority language)
- Notes

In a classroom where English is taught, the teacher interacts with the students:

- All or predominantly in minority language
- All or predominantly in Chinese
- In mixed languages (Chinese and minority language)
- Notes

11. Classroom Hardware:

Aspects	Very good	Not too bad	Very poor
Classroom size			
IT Equipment			
Furniture			
Brightness			
Others. Specify			

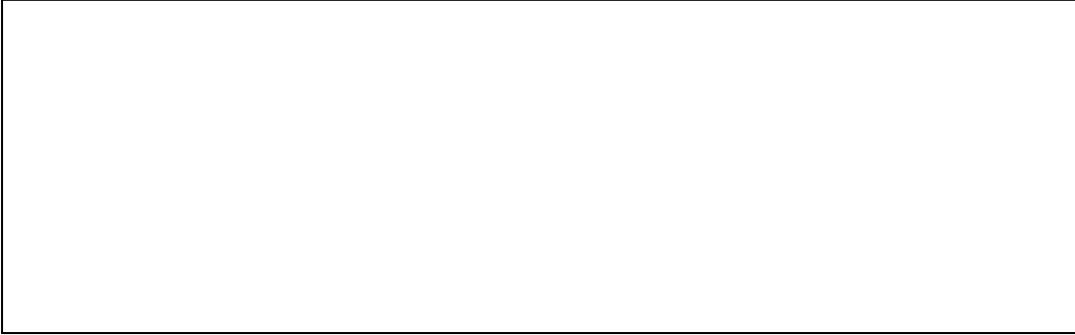
Notes

12. Effectiveness of the Lesson Observed

Aspects	Points of good practice	Points for consideration
Clarity of objectives		
Planning and organisation		
Methods/ approach		
Delivery and pace		
Content (currency, accuracy, relevance, use of examples, level, match to students' needs)		
Students' participation		
Use of space and learning resources		
Teacher's competence in the target language		

Notes

13. Any other points

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write any additional points or notes related to the section.

学校调查表一

班级调查

在回答调查问题 1-5 之前或之后要对班级教师有一个简短的访问

1. 班级背景资料

- 学校:
- 日期: 调查的学期:
- 班级学生总人数:
- 性别平衡 (男生—女生): 年龄范围:
- 本门课程学生需要上多少学时:
- *SES 比例 (教师的说明和估计)
100%来自富裕的家庭 70:30 50:50 30:70

100%来自低收入家庭

*询问教师以收集该信息的比例数据

2. 这一学期的科目 (英语或其他学校科目)

3. 本班学生的语言状况

少数民族学生:

- 学生们属于哪些个少数民族:
- 少数民族学生所占的比例:
- 汉族学生所占的比例:

本班学生最强的语言是?

- 少数民族语言最强的学生所占比例:
- 汉语最强的学生所占的比例:

学校使用或教授少数民族语言吗? 是 否

如果是的话, 是如何使用和教授的?.....

给学生们提供上英语课吗? 是 否

如果是的话, 平均一星期多少学时?

4. 教师的语言状况

- 性别: 民族:
- 获得的最高学历:
- 教龄 (年):
- 每周总共上多少课:
- 年龄范围: 25 or below 26 to 35 36 to 45 46 and above
- 语言情况:
-

	流利	一般	有限的	不懂
汉语				
少数民族语言				
英语				
其他				

5. 教学目标及所使用的教科书

- 本科目的教学目标是：
 - 达到国家规定的课程标准
 - 提供基本知识低于国家标准
 - 其它，请详细说明
- 使用的教科书？
 - 全国通用的标准教材
 - 专门为少数民族学生编写的教材
 - 其它，请详细说明

班级调查表

班级教学活动

6. 在教英语课的班上，教师怎样组织教学活动？

教学活动	许多 (给出估计所需时间或经常)	一些 (给出估计所需时间或经常)	很少或没有
师生间的简短问答			
全身反应法教学活动 (TPR)			
词汇、课文、语法解释			
小组或两人组活动 (指定任务)			
全班或单个学生大声朗读			
讲故事			
让学生上黑板做题			
听录音或看录像			
其它 具体			

备注:

7. 下列哪一个是教师在班中主要用到的方法？（可以多选）

- 语言交流教学法（关注于学生口语的大量口语互动）
- 基于任务的、以学生为主的语言教学法（学生需使用目标语言完成许多小组或个人任务）
- 语法和翻译教学（以解释语言知识点为主）
- 其它，具体是

8. 在教英语课的班上，学生对于活动的反应如何？

教学活动	多数学生很有兴趣并 完成很好	大多数学生可以做到 但有困难	多数学生没有兴趣并 且不知道该做什么
师生间的简短问答			
全身反应法教学活动 (TPR)			
词汇、课文、语法解释			
小组或两人组活动 (指定任 务)			
全班或单个学生大声朗读			
讲故事			
让学生上黑板做题			
听录音或看录像			
其它 具体			

备注:

班级的语言使用情况

9. 教师对全班同学讲话时所用的语言

在教英语课的班上，教师解释英语单词、课文或语法时：

- 全部或主要使用少数民族语言
- 全部或主要使用汉语
- 使用混合语言（汉语和少数民族语言）
- 使用包括英语在内的混合语（汉语、英语和少数民族语言）
- 全部或主要使用英语
- 备注其它

在教英语课的班上，教师与学生互动时：

- 全部或主要使用少数民族语言
- 全部或主要使用汉语
- 使用混合语言（汉语和少数民族语言）
- 使用包括英语在内的混合语（汉语、英语和少数民族语言）
- 全部或主要使用英语
- 备注其它

在除英语课以外的其他课的教学上，教师做解说时：

- 全部或主要使用少数民族语言
- 全部或主要使用汉语
- 使用混合语言（汉语和少数民族语言）
- 备注其它.....

在教英语课的班上，教师与学生互动时：

- 全部或主要使用少数民族语言
- 全部或主要使用汉语
- 使用混合语言（汉语和少数民族语言）
- 备注其它.....

10. 学生的语言使用情况

在教英语课的班上，学生与老师互动时：

- 全部或主要使用少数民族语言
- 全部或主要使用汉语
- 使用混合语言（汉语和少数民族语言）
- 使用包括英语在内的混合语（汉语、英语和少数民族语言）
- 全部或主要使用英语
- 备注其它.....

在教英语课的班上，学生在小组活动中与其他成员互动时：

- 全部或主要使用少数民族语言
- 全部或主要使用汉语
- 使用混合语言（汉语和少数民族语言）
- 使用包括英语在内的混合语（汉语、英语和少数民族语言）
- 全部或主要使用英语
- 备注其它.....

在除英语课以外的其他课的教学上，教师做解说时：

- 全部或主要使用少数民族语言
- 全部或主要使用汉语
- 使用混合语言（汉语和少数民族语言）
- 备注其它.....

在教英语课的班上，教师与学生互动时：

- 全部或主要使用少数民族语言
- 全部或主要使用汉语
- 使用混合语言（汉语和少数民族语言）
- 备注其它.....

11. 班级硬件

相关方面	非常好	还可以	很差
教室面积			
计算机设备			
家具设备			
明亮度			
其它 具体有			

备注：

12. 所调查课程的效果

相关方面	好的经验	建议考虑
目标清楚程度		
计划和组织		
手段/方法		
讲课和节奏		
内容(准确性, 流利程度, 关联性, 举例子, 水平, 符合学生需求)		
学生的参与		
用到的空间以及学习资源		
教师在目标语方面的能力		

备注：

13. 其他建议

SCHOOL OBSERVATION SHEET – 2

School Environment

1. School Background Data

- School:
- Date:

(For more detailed information of the school, see interview data with the Principal and/or other school leaders)

2. Observation Sheet for the Environment

a) Language(s) predominately used in posters, wall papers, etc.

Media	In Chinese	In the Minority language(s)	In English
Posters			
Wall papers			
School notices			
School broadcast			
Classroom posters			
Other. Specify			

Notes

b) Language(s) predominately used in conversations between teachers

- In Standard Chinese
- In local Chinese
- In minority language(s)
- Other. Specify

Do teachers code-switch between languages? Yes No

If yes, how often

c) Language(s) predominately used in playground between students

- In Standard Chinese
- In local variety of Chinese
- In minority language(s)
- Other. Specify

Do students code-switch between languages? Yes No

If yes, how often

d) Language(s) predominately used by school supporting staff (cleaners, chefs, etc.)

- In Standard Chinese
- In local Chinese
- In minority language(s)
- Other. Specify

3. Any other points

.....

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