Language Learning and Empowerment: Languages in Education for Uyghurs in Xinjiang

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Abstract Occupying one sixth of China's total land mass, Xinjiang is officially designated as the Uyghur Autonomous Region. While traditionally Uyghur was used as the medium of instruction in schools dominated by Uyghur children, bilingual education as it is enforced in these schools, as well as in ever-increasing merged schools, has increasingly come to mean using Mandarin Chinese as the medium of instruction (as well as teaching it as a school subject) throughout its education system. Uyghur children's home language is taught only as a school subject. To gain first-hand information about the models used in schools, case studies were conducted in some secondary schools and universities accessible to the authors in Xinjiang. Findings approved commonly reported realities such as limited accessibility to trilingual education for Uyghur students. Using a combination of concepts such as cultural and symbolic capitals, identity and investment, the authors analysed the data to argue that, in many situations, Uyghur students actively reposition languages as economic, symbolic or cultural capital for investment and negotiate identity and power in the society.

Keywords Xinjiang · Uyghur · Census · Ethnolinguistic vitality · Bilingual education · Outside-Xinjiang boarding class · Three options policy · Economic capital · Cultural capital · Symbolic capital · Investment · Empowerment

1 Introduction

The passage and coming into force of the *National Common Language Act* in 2000 and 2001 marked the beginning of a new era in language planning and policy in China (China Government 2000; Xu 2001). The law placed a renewed emphasis on

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Mandarin Chinese as the national official language and provided a legal framework for language planning and policies to promote and enforce the standard language nationally. This was followed by provincial and local implementation directives and policy guidelines issued by governments at sub-national levels (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region People's Government 2004; Kumul City People's Government 2006). While the law and the sub-national level directives and guidelines reinforced the ongoing efforts to promote and enforce Mandarin Chinese as the standard spoken language in areas where other spoken dialects of Chinese were in use, the effects of the law on areas with predominantly non-Han populations, many of whom were proficient only in their mother tongue, were much greater. These minority areas, which enjoyed an official autonomous status, with their main local languages recognised as regional official languages along with Mandarin Chinese, began to implement a type of "subtractive bilingual" (Baker 2006, pp. 213–226) education policy, in which Mandarin Chinese replaced the minority languages as the language-in-education at schools and enforced Chinese writing, instead of minority scripts, thereby effectively forcing the minority languages to assume the role of mere school subjects. These changes originated against the backdrop of the rapid spread of information and communication technologies, increased population mobility, high economic growth and rapid social transformation, accelerated economic and political integration across different regions and populations and growing individual, ethnic and regional disparities.

At about the same time, perhaps not so coincidently, the rise and spread of the English language in the People's Republic of China (PRC) accelerated dramatically and was hailed as one of the major educational and linguistic stories of the contemporary age. With the rapid integration of China's economy into the world trading system and the country's fast growing international stature and global economic influence, the pressure for its citizens to acquire proficiency in English has grown to an all-time high. This unprecedented rise in the importance and status of English and the growing demand for English language proficiency, has brought about unique changes with significant consequences for education, the economy and society in general. This phenomenon has attracted widespread attention and comment from scholars, educationalists and policy makers alike, both within and outside the country (Bolton 2006; Adamson 2004; Wang and Gao 2008; Feng 2007; Feng 2011). Three policy documents were issued by the Ministry of Education to promote English language education in 2001. The first of these documents stipulated that English provision should start from Year three in all primary schools by the autumn of 2002 (China Ministry of Education 2001a). The second document, which was intended for secondary schools, established specific English standards for secondary school leavers (China Ministry of Education 2002). The third document was intended for universities (China Ministry of Education 2001b) and required that five to ten percent of the undergraduate curriculum be conducted in English within three years. Such pressure has also fuelled the demand for thousands of private English language schools and a nationwide Utopian drive for Chinese–English

"bilingual education". English has become a prerequisite for high paying jobs and subsequent promotions, and it is a mandatory subject starting from as early as kindergarten in some areas. Chinese–English bilingual education involves using the English language to teach non-language school subjects, with the aim of achieving subject learning and English proficiency simultaneously. Again, critics used the term, "Great Leap Forward", to draw parallels with the 1950s style Utopian drive for social and economic development, which resulted in disastrous consequences (Hu 2008).

It is estimated that there are currently 400 million English language learners in China and several scholars predict that the number of Chinese English language learners will exceed the total population of all English speaking countries in the near future. This figure can be understood as indicative of the status and importance of English in today's society, and the popularity and belief in the language among the populace, as not all of them speak English fluently or even speak any English whatsoever (Gil and Adamson 2011, pp. 23–45). English language teaching has become a multibillion dollar business, doubling in market size in the five years between 2005 and 2010, with more than thirty thousand private English language training institutions, operating outside the mainstream state or public education sectors. For many Chinese citizens, English has become not only a tool for international communication, but also a step for socioeconomic advancement (Zhan and Sun 2010).

In the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, where indigenous ethnic minority peoples make up about 55 % of the total population and are traditionally educated in their own native languages, the government campaign to promote the use of Mandarin Chinese in minority language schools and improve proficiency in the language has been widely dubbed in official discourse as "leap frog development" in ethnic minority education and progress (Xinjiang Education Work Conference 2011; Gu 2010). Some critics have even gone so far as to use the familiar term "great leap forward" (Ma 2009), invoking memories from China's disastrous industrialisation campaign in the late 1950s. Within that context, a dual track linguistic "leapfrog development" has taken shape in terms of language education policy and practice in the last decade, more or less simultaneously and on a parallel course, but with different aims. On the one hand, minority language speakers are required to become proficient in Mandarin Chinese, regardless of the effort involved, keeping in mind the State's explicit aim of achieving socioeconomic development, national unity, and unified national identity and citizenship (Hu 2010; Bekri 2009). The promotion of Mandarin Chinese was also presented as a project to bring economic prosperity to impoverished minorities and improve their conditions and achieve long lasting peace and stability for the country. On the other hand, the promotion of English is aimed at achieving communicative competence in the language, in order to conduct foreign trade, increase China's interaction and integration with the outside world, expand its international influence and learn and acquire advanced Western technological and management skills (Li 2005).

2 English Language in Education

As a result of implementing national policies and being influenced by a number of external and internal drivers, today the English language exercises a profound impact on education, society and the economy in general, in Xinjiang. As in other places in China, English language education officially begins at the primary level in schools dominated by Han majority pupils (Han schools, hereafter). It then goes on to become a compulsory school subject at secondary level education and university students graduating from Han schools, compulsorily study English for at least two years and pass the College English Test 4 (CET−4), in order to graduate. Knowledge of English considerably influences the assessment and evaluation of the qualifications required for entrance into the postgraduate programmes at Master's and doctoral levels, and the stakes associated with test outcomes are high throughout the education system. As English is one of the three core subjects along with mathematics and Chinese, students are tested to evaluate their English proficiency levels for entrance into junior and senior secondary schools. Satisfactory performance along with securing passing grades in English language tests, is moreover one of the basic requirements for gaining professional qualifications and promotions in many fields. English skills are tested for all those seeking promotions in governmental, educational, scientific research, medical, financial, business and other government-supported institutions (Cheng 2008).

As for those linguistic minorities who are mainly educated in their own native languages, national policies place additional emphasis on achieving proficiency in Mandarin Chinese and implicitly exclude them from the promotion of English language education. The directive (China State Council 2002), for example, states that, in bilingual education, "the relationship between the minority language and Mandarin Chinese should be correctly managed. English should be offered in regions where favourable conditions exist". The directive offers no explanation of how 'correct management' is defined and what 'favourable conditions' are, but it appears that two of the main factors which influenced this directive were, firstly, the State's priority for those minorities in terms of second language (Mandarin Chinese) acquisition, and, secondly, the conditions on the ground in terms of resources to implement the national policies.

The dual track language education policy and practice contradict the State's aim of providing equal educational opportunities for all its citizens (China Government 1995), creating or even increasing the gap in terms of human, cultural and other forms of capital between the rich and the poor, between the city and rural areas, between majority and minority populations (Bahry et al. 2009, pp. 103–129; Bastid–Bruguiere 2001; Beckett and MacPherson 2005). There exists either very little or no provision for foreign language education in the curriculum for ethnic minority students, whereas Mandarin Chinese is becoming the norm for language-in-education for all students, through a government campaign to merge minority schools with Han schools.

Table 1 Major ethnic groups in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. (Source: Tabulation on the 2010 population census of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region)

Ethnic group	Population	Primary languages	Population proportion (%)
Uyghur	10,001,302	Uyghur language	46
Han	8,829,994	Mandarin Chinese	40.5
Kazakh	1,418,278	Kazakh Language	6.5
Hui	983,015	Mandarin Chinese	4.5

The largest of the linguistic minorities affected by the dual track language policy in Xinjiang are the Uyghurs. Consequently, most of them are obligated to learn Mandarin Chinese at the expense of English or any other foreign languages, as well as their native language. Since they live in economically disadvantaged peripheral areas, a very small number of Uyghurs can actually afford private English lessons for themselves or their children, as in other wealthier parts of China. Those who can and are sending their children to Chinese schools risk losing their native languages, cultures, and identities (Salahidin 2006, pp. 31–39; Upton 1999, pp. 285–340). Therefore, it is generally assumed that English is exacerbating the educational inequities confronting minority and indigenous peoples, who already encounter significant educational and literacy disadvantages.

3 Languages and Language Education in Xinjiang

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is situated in the northwest of the People's Republic of Chinaand occupies one sixth of the country's total land mass. It borders with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and Mongolia and has a complex mixture of ethnic composition and a great potential for international exposure, both in sociocultural terms and economic activities. As of 2010, it was home to a number of officially recognised ethnic groups with a total population of just under 22 million (Office for the Population Census of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, 2012, pp. 34–73). The largest ethnic group in Xinjiang are the Uyghurs with a population of 10 million (Table 1), and this is closely followed by China's dominant Han ethnic group, whose population in the region has increased from less than seven percent to over forty percent in the last half century (Institute of Ethnography 1994, pp. 39–40).

Language policy has been at the heart of Chinese nation building. Shortly after the inception of the PRC, language policy in China's border regions was responsive to local conditions (Dwyer 2005). From the end of the "Cultural Revolution" in the late 1970s until the promulgation of the Xinjiang bilingual education policy in 2004, the education system in Xinjiang was largely divided into two parallel subsystems: minority language medium education for the ethnic minority students, with Mandarin Chinese as a second language school subject, and Mandarin Chinese language medium education for the Han population, with English as the preferred second language school subject. Thus, in this system, the schools were divided along ethnic

Table 2 Number of ethnic minority students at ethnic minority schools in 2004. (Source: *Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region education statistics* (2005))

	Primary school		Secondary school		High school	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Uyghur	1,021,101	47.63	579,868	50.28	93,135	24.01
Kazakh	114,489	5.34	69,215	6	22,606	5.83
Mongolian	6,024	0.28	4,078	0.35	1,913	0.49
Sibe	1,349	0.06	876	0.08	615	0.16
Kirgiz	13,931	0.65	9,601	0.83	1,689	0.45

lines on the basis of the language of instruction and, as Uyghur is one of the two official languages in the Autonomous Region, most Uyghurs were educated in their mother tongue with varying degrees of knowledge of Mandarin Chinese, depending on the areas where they lived and the possibilities for them to interact with the Han population (Benson 2004, pp. 190–202). An official survey conducted in 1986 disclosed that only 4.4% of the Uyghurs reported that they were completely communicative in Mandarin Chinese, with 90% reporting that they did not possess basic communicative skills in the language (Institute of Ethnography 1994).

In 2001, there were 6,221 primary schools in Xinjiang of which 56.37% (3,507) were Uyghur language medium schools; there were 1,457 lower secondary schools of which 39% (566) were Uyghur schools; at higher secondary school level, the proportion of Uyghur schools was under 34% (158) of a total of 472 schools (Zhao 2004). According to Zhao (2004), the percentage of ethnic minority students receiving education in their native language medium schools represented somewhere between 65–70% of the total number, but in the south of Xinjiang where the Uyghurs are dominant, the percentage could be as high as 96% of the total. A recent survey confirms that the proportion of Uyghur university students who graduated from Uyghur language medium schools continued to be over 90% (Cui 2005). Those Uyghur students, who had not attended Uyghur language medium schools, attended other schools, where the medium of instruction was Mandarin Chinese. These included Mandarin Chinese language medium schools in Xinjiang, special boarding classes set up for ethnic minority students in higher secondary schools across major cities and provinces outside Xinjiang (Outside–Xinjiang Boarding Class hereafter), specially set-up boarding programmes for ethnic minority students in Mandarin Chinese language medium schools in Han majority areas in Xinjiang (Inside–Xinjiang Boarding Class hereafter), mixed Uyghur-Han schools and experimental Mandarin Chinese language medium-based classes in Uyghur language medium schools (see Table 2,which gives the number of ethnic minority students at ethnic minority schools in 2004). Reports on educational statistics concerning ethnic minority schools appear to have stopped after 2005. This is probably due to the bilingual education campaign aiming to merge ethnic minority and Han schools (Tsung and Cruickshank 2009). In an attempt to provide updated information on numbers, statistics published in the Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook (2013) are given in Table 3.

Out of the numerous language policies officially promulgated in the history of Xinjiang, it can be argued that the one which has caused the most significant and

Table 3 Number of ethnic minority students enrolled at various education institutions. (Source: Xinjiang Statistical Bureau. (1998–2013). Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook.)

Years	Higher education	Secondary education	Primary education
2005	75,744	993,338	1,369,400
2006	77,627	975,346	1,329,400
2007	81,978	958,643	1,313,200
2008	85,942	935,350	1,304,400
2009	91,243	927,939	1,303,100
2010	94,708	933,338	1,293,700
2011	102,358	940,729	1,292,500
2012	106,893	939,713	1,301,000

extensive impact is the region-level document promulgated by the Xinjiang government on the promotion of "bilingual education" (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region People's Government 2004). The 2004 "bilingual education" document stipulates that Mandarin Chinese be made the primary or the sole language of instruction in primary and middle-school classrooms. "Bilingual education" has come to mean that Mandarin Chinese is *the* medium of instruction from primary school onwards and minority languages are to be relegated to the status of a school subject (Ma 2009). An increasing number of Uyghur pupils in mixed communities or cities attend Chinese medium schools or Chinese–Uyghur mixed schools from childhood, or the so called "bilingual kindergartens" (Tsung and Cruickshank 2009). In 2009, around 994,000 students ranging from kindergarten to senior secondary school, received such "bilingual education", accounting for 42 % of minority students; while the number reported in 2005 was merely 145,318 (Ma 2009).

Meanwhile, large scale school-merging campaigns were launched in 2000, with the ostensible aim of creating a better Chinese language environment for Uyghur and other ethnic minority students by requiring Han schools and minority schools to transfer and operate under the same roof. Between 2000 and 2007, an increase of 71 % in the number of merged schools was reported, up from 461–791. Correspondingly in the year 2000, the first cohort of Outside–Xinjiang Boarding Class was inaugurated. This was a four-year boarding programme aimed at minority students, which involved relocating them to senior secondary schools in predominantly Han-populated and economically-advanced coastal cities. The programme admits only the highest achieving minority students from Xinjiang and at least ninety percent of them are expected to succeed in securing places at top universities. The number of students in the Outside–Xinjiang Boarding Class programme has risen from 1,000 in the year 2000–5,500 in the year 2009. Following the same trend, in 2004, Inside–Xinjiang Boarding Classes for Uyghur and other ethnic minority students were introduced at secondary schools in predominantly Han populated cities and areas within Xinjiang. Unlike their counterparts in ethnic minority schools, the Uyghur and other ethnic minority students in both these boarding programmes follow the national curriculum alongside the Han students at the host schools.

The drastic increase witnessed in the number of students attending these programmes is also the direct result of a series of new measures adopted by the Xinji-

ang government, among which the most coercive and influential was the Bilingual Curriculum Plan in Compulsory Education Phase, also called the Three Options Policy, formulated in 2007. Compared with previous bilingual education policies, which were largely experimental and focused on limited courses, the new plan claims to extend an intensified course of Mandarin Chinese to the whole region.

Depending on the available teaching resources, each minority school in Xinjiang is required to select one of the three suggested options. The three options differ from each other in terms of the amount of Mandarin Chinese used as the medium of instruction, with the largest proportion of Chinese being used in Option 3 and the smallest proportion being used in Option 1.

Option 1 requires that scientific subjects such as Mathematics, Nature and Information Technology in primary schools, and Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Information Technology and foreign languages in junior secondary schools, should be taught in Mandarin Chinese. Other subjects can be taught in minority languages. Option 2 requires further input of Mandarin Chinese. Except for Music and the minority language and literature, all subjects should be taught in Mandarin Chinese. Option 3 follows the same curriculum as Han schools, where all subjects are taught in Mandarin Chinese. The principal difference between minority schools which follow Option 3 and Han schools lies only in the fact that the former are supposed to organise classes for teaching the minority language and literature.

Based on the Three Options Policy, two different curricula standards (Curricular A and Curricular B hereafter) have been issued by the Xinjiang Education Bureau, aimed at students in minority schools from Grades 1–9. Mandarin Chinese continues to be the overwhelming priority. For instance, in Curriculum A, Mandarin Chinese as a school subject takes up most of the students' time: 25% in primary schools and 17.6% in junior secondary schools. If students follow curriculum B, they will spend 26.9% of their time in primary schools and 16.7% in junior secondary schools in learning Mandarin Chinese. Compared with Han school students, the minority students spend much less time learning a foreign language. In the case of Curriculum B, schools have the option to set up a foreign language course at Grade 4, but are allocated only two class hours per week, which is far less than the seven class hours assigned to Chinese language study. In the meantime, the minority native language is placed in a disadvantaged position. Taking Curriculum B as an example, the amount of minority language and literature class periods aggregate to a total of only 7.7% in primary schools and 5.6% in junior secondary schools. Foreign language education is listed in both curricula, but schools can opt to postpone the course, which is the case in most schools (Xinjiang Education Bureau 2011).

During senior secondary school, learning Mandarin Chinese receives even greater attention than in primary school. Minority students who take the College Entrance Examination in their own native languages will be tested in six subjects, and Mandarin Chinese is one of the three essential subjects, with the other two being the minority language and mathematics. Some minority students, usually those studying in bilingual classes, may choose to take the College Entrance Examination in Mandarin Chinese. In contrast to the consequential position of Mandarin Chinese, a foreign language test is optional, and the test results merely serve as a reference,

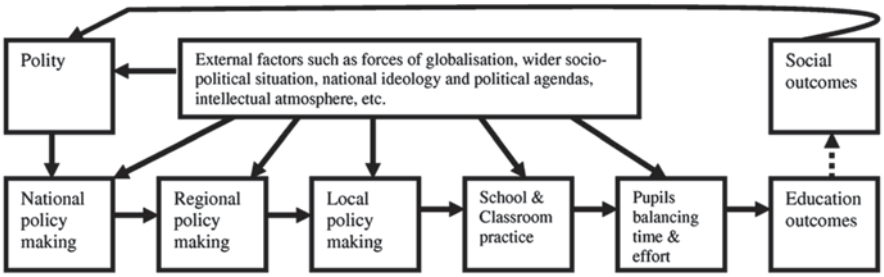

Fig. 1 An analytical framework for minority educational policies in China

with regard to college admissions. Though a bigger proportion of foreign language credits can be observed in the curriculum designed for senior secondary school, this allocation has no substance or value, as few students would devote much time to a course for which they will not be tested.

Emphasis on Chinese and lack of foreign language provision in schools is also noticeably demonstrated by the fact that tertiary institutions have policies that require minority students to pass the Chinese Proficiency Test for admission and graduation, but exempt them from taking the nationwide College English Test 4 (Yang 2005).

4 A Policy Studies Model

In comparing empirical evidence obtained in several different minority populated regions in China, Feng and Sunuodula (2009) proposed an analytical model for the process of minority language education policy making. The evidence indicated that education in different regions had different degrees of integration into the national curriculum and language education policies and practices differed from region to region, depending on different conditions on the ground and interpretation of national policies by the local actors, in accordance with the local priorities (see Fig. 1).

The dotted line between educational and social outcomes suggests a weak link between the two, as social outcomes would usually derive from the entire society, with schools forming only part of that society (Feng and Sunuodula 2009).

The stark difference in the implementation of two different sets of language education policies in Xinjiang, i.e. the processes of implementing English language education policy and the Chinese–Uyghur bilingual education policy, illustrates the dynamic relationship among the key actors and factors in a clear picture. For the policy process, with its aim of promoting Chinese–Uyghur bilingual education, all actors specified in the model are fully mobilised to play their respective roles. The literature and the data reveal distinctly that policy makers at regional, prefectural and county levels tend to carry the state policy to an extreme level exceeding guide-

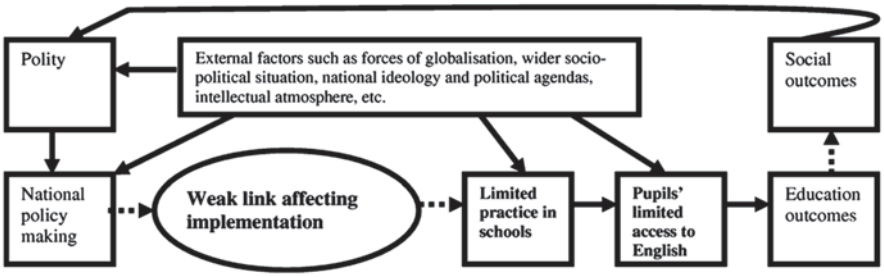

Fig. 2 The process for implementing English language education policy in Xinjiang

Table 4 Numbers of international tourist arrivals in Xinjiang (excluding overseas Chinese, Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Macao tourists). (Source: State Statistical Bureau. (1998–2012). China Tourist Statistical Yearbook.)

Years	Xinjiang	National total
1997	157,067	7,428,000
2002	233,700	13,439,500
2007	402,700	26,109,700
2008	327,688	42,753,133
2009	318,400	44,198,831
2010	454,444	54,111,187
2011	487,701	59,205,897

lines, by over emphasising the promotion of Chinese, whereas parents and pupils exploit the system to their advantage, to balance the benefits and time and resources invested in it. The policy cycle regarding English language provision for ethnic minority students, on the other hand, shows a weak link at the regional, prefectural and county levels (see Fig. 2). Without active participation by these key actors, there is no guarantee or assurance of the resources and supplementary preconditions for policy implementation, resulting in limited practice in schools and limited access for pupils.

While English language provision for minority students, particularly those who live in remote areas and study in minority language medium schools, is limited, the demand for English in the region is clearly on the rise. Ever-growing tourism levels (see Table 4) and the presence of multinational companies (see Table 5) are two indicators, which suggest increasing opportunities for people with foreign language competence.

With regard to English, some issues appear obvious from the evidence presented here. Firstly, while it is obvious that the demand for personnel with English language skills is growing, it appears that an insufficient number of people with a minority background are truly qualified for the market, since they have no opportunities to study the language as part of their normal education. Secondly, there is a clear difference between the national education policy and the regional policy in foreign language provision in Xinjiang, due to the dual track education systems followed by the Han majority group and the minority groups. And thirdly, as many

Table 5 Number of foreign owned enterprises and their employees in Xinjiang (excluding Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao owned). (Sources: Xinjiang Statistical Bureau. (1997–2013). Xinjiang Stastical Yearbook; State Statistical Bureau. (1998–2012). China Labour Statistical Yearbook)

Year	No. of companies	No. of employees
1997	76	6129
2002	64	6428
2006	421	11374
2007	341	13152
2008	317	13482
2009	315	12352
2010	499	13105
2011	491	19029

authors (Beckett and MacPherson 2005; Bastid–Bruguiere 2001) assert, the current drive for dual track linguistic "leapfrog development", is further empowering the already powerful majority Han group, leaving minority and indigenous peoples even further behind. It is widening the gap and augmenting educational inequities minority peoples already face in the traditional system. The political, economic and symbolic status and power of Mandarin Chinese has been considerably elevated as opposed to minority languages. Although, English has been promoted with pronounced vigour as an international language and a necessary cultural capital, most minority students are excluded from the opportunity to acquire it through state education. Minority students learn Mandarin Chinese as a mandated but very difficult priority, and a limited number of families can actually afford private English lessons for themselves and/or their children.

5 Analytical Concepts

We have conducted both qualitative and quantitative investigations in Xinjiang at different locations, using the ethnographic research method adopted for social and educational research, in order to gain insight into the specific language related issues faced by the Uyghurs, as well as broader socioeconomic factors influencing their language learning decisions and behaviours. Drawing from the quantitative evidence and semi-structured interviews with Uyghur students attending secondary schools and universities, we will examine how the learning of three languages, i.e., Uyghur, Mandarin Chinese and English is perceived by Uyghur students. We have applied specific theoretical concepts and the framework developed in recent years in sociolinguistics of second language acquisition, to gain a more generalised understanding and derive general conclusions from the case studies.

To analyse the unequal power relations among different languages with the data collected, we have drawn on the notions of capital, market and symbolic power, originally developed in the works of Bourdieu (1977, 1991), and applied them to multilingual contexts in Xinjiang. Our intention is to go beyond describing languages as a means of communication in a narrow sense, to focus on the symbolic relations and signs by which language becomes a medium of power. The need for

such a focus will become obvious in the later sections, in which we critically review current practices as revealed by our studies on "bilingual" education, and English language in education, or the lack of it, for the Uyghurs.

Bourdieu (1986, 1991) has proposed that capital comes in four guises, that is, the various forms of capital that function in relation to each other in terms of their conversions. For Bourdieu, economic capital is directly convertible into material wealth. Cultural capital, on the other hand, entails accumulated knowledge and skills and the institutions or objects that realise this type of capital. Culturalcapital is potentially, but not directly, convertible into economic capital. According to Bourdieu (1977), cultural capital consists of ideas and knowledge that people draw upon as they participate in social life. Everything from rules of etiquette to being able to speak and write effectively can be considered as cultural capital. Bourdieu's original focus was on the unequal distribution of cultural capital in stratified societies and in what manner, such inequality disadvantages people. This is especially true in schools and other institutions, where ignorance of what the dominant classes define as basic knowledge, makes it difficult for those in marginal or subordinate groups to compete successfully (Johnson 2000). Uyghur students, for example, do not perform creditably in some school subjects, first and foremost because they lack the cultural capital presumed by the education system, in which knowledge and authority are essentially defined by the dominant group. Bourdieu refers to this lack as cultural deprivation.

Yet another area of capital is social capital. Bourdieu defines this as the aggregate of an individual's group memberships and social connections. It may be convertible into economic capital through mutual agreement but, perhaps more importantly, social capital depends on symbolic exchanges which allow it to be established and maintained.

The fourth guise of Bourdieu's capital is symbolic capital, which is seen as accumulated prestige or honour. Symbolic capital derives from all or any of the other guises of capital, when they are recognised as legitimate (Bourdieu 1989). Bourdieu offers the official language as an example of the legitimate language in use, thus imbuing it with symbolic capital. Bourdieu goes on to state that, "The official language is bound up with the state, both in its genesis and in its social uses. It is in the process of state formation that the conditions are created for the constitution of a unified linguistic market, dominated by the official language" (1991, p. 45). He further elaborates, "All linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices, e.g. the practices of those who are dominant" (1991, p. 51). This brings in the notion of power and how it plays out in relation to different forms of capital.

By identifying language as an area in which power relations are created and exercised, Bourdieu (1977, p. 648) shows that the act of speaking does not merely involve exchanging information: 'Language is not only an instrument of communication or knowledge but an instrument of power.' Bourdieu argues that the value ascribed to speech cannot be understood apart from the person who speaks, and the person who speaks cannot be understood apart from larger networks of social relationships—many of which may be unequally structured. The acquisition of certain

types of socially valued linguistic behaviours may then allow a person to access additional resources that can be translated into material wealth. The ability to speak a language and use it in certain ways, therefore, signifies a measure or subcategory of cultural capital, i.e., the linguistic capital a person possesses (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Although the notion of linguistic capital is coined by Bourdieu, primarily to explain the 'hidden mediations through which the relationship (grasped by our tests) between social origin and scholastic achievement is set up' (p. 116) in a given society, many educators make use of the concept to explore power relationships in social interactions where a powerful language, or languages, is used and/or taught as a second/foreign language (e.g., Abdullah and Chan 2003; Lin 1996; Norton 1997).

A *linguistic marketplace (or field)* is generally defined as a symbolic market, constituted of various social domains within which linguistic exchanges take place. Linguistic products are not equally valued in a linguistic market. The language legitimised by the market sets the norm against which the values of other ways of speaking and varieties of language are defined (Bourdieu 1977). Those who command the legitimate language possess the linguistic capital, a form of symbolic capital, which may bring them rewards (both material and symbolic) from the market. The power of Bourdieu's linguistic market as an analytical tool for language use and practice lies in the nature of the market as part of a larger structured symbolic domain. The construct of the linguistic market is especially relevant to examining the relationship between language use and practice and socioeconomic change in the current context of Xinjiang. As explained in greater detail in the next section, the rapid restructuring of the economic system and the commodification forces of the market economy, have changed the means by which material and symbolic resources are used and valued in the reconfiguration and construction of (new) social distinctions.

Norton (1997) extends Bourdieu's (1977) social theory into second language learning, by questioning how relationships of power in the social world, affect social interactions between second language learners and target language speakers. Norton proposes a theory of social identity, which assumes power relations play a crucial role in social interactions between language learners and target language speakers. She introduces the notion of investment, instead of second language learning motivation. The notion of investment attempts to capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world. It conceives the language learner as having a complex social identity and multiple desires. The notion of investment presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organising and reorganising a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus, an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space. If learners invest in a second language, Norton (1997) points out that they do so with the explicit understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital. Learners

will expect or hope to have a good return on that investment—a return that will give them access to hitherto unattainable resources.

Norton (1997, p. 410) defines social identity as the process of "How people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future." She also takes the position, following West (1992), that identity relates to desire—desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation and the desire for security and safety. In this view, a person's identity will shift in accordance with changing social and economic relations.

Furthermore, relevant to our discussion is Vaish's (2005) argument about the groups who have historically been linguistically 'subalternised' and have only now gained more equitable access to linguistic capital, due to the market forces of globalisation. His argument is based on the notion of 'subaltern', a term popularised by Antonio Gramsci (1971) to refer to depressed groups in society that suffer from the hegemony of the ruling class. Vaish proposes the "peripherist" view of English language use in India, which disagrees with those sociolinguists who think that English endangers local languages and perpetuates inequality. He views this as Orientalism disguised as liberal sociolinguistics, which in fact, reproduces the inequitable distribution of linguistic capital and fails to acknowledge the tenacity of indigenous cultures in being able to maintain their longevity (Vaish 2005). The technique of teaching English adds a domain to the multilingual/multi-literate repertoire of subalterns, a workplace literacy domain that can help them break the constraints of class and caste (Vaish 2005).

This chapter employs all of these concepts, namely capital, field, power and identity that are related to desire, which in turn, may or may not, directly or indirectly be related to economic or material rewards that are believed to be at play in second or third language learning and the linguistic market place.

6 Research Site and Research Methodology

Our research consists of two parts, targeting both secondary school and tertiary-level ethnic Uyghur students. Firstly, we elected to conduct qualitative case studies of students at the tertiary level for the obvious reason that, unlike many other regions, as the context section confirms, most Uyghur students do not begin learning English until they go to university. Our focus was on their perceptions of the third language, English, in relation to their home language and Chinese, their second language, their willingness to invest in the third language and the process of social identity negotiation and transformation (Olsson and Larsson 2008, pp. 10–11). Ten tertiary level students were chosen for two rounds of ethnographic interviews, which involved a first round of minimally structured interviews, followed by a second round of semi-structured interviews, with a focus on emergent themes from the first round. The interviews were conducted in Uyghur.

The second part of our study was the quantitative research which was carried out in the period between July 2010 and May 2011, at four research sites: a senior secondary school in X County, a senior secondary school in Y City, an Inside–Xinjiang Junior Secondary School Class in which Chinese was the medium of instruction, and an Inland Xinjiang Class. The first two schools are located in Kashgar Prefecture, Southern Xinjiang, where the population is predominantly Uyghur speaking. We refer to these locations as X County and Y City and the schools as M School and K School. The Inside–Xinjiang Junior Secondary School Class is located in a Han-dominant city in northern Xinjiang. The Inland Xinjiang Class lies in a city in north-eastern China. They are referred to as T school and H school hereafter. Overall, 190 students completed the questionnaires. Two teachers and four policy-makers were selected as key informants for further interviews. The method of data collection included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, questionnaire surveys and document search. Questionnaires and interviews with teachers and education officials at these locations were conducted in Mandarin Chinese.

A site visit was conducted at two schools, K School in Y City and M School in X County in July 2009. With a history spanning 54 years and a track record of sending ninety percent of its students to universities, K is an elite school with an eminent reputation throughout Xinjiang. K school established its bilingual education department in 2007. As of 2010, there were 420 Uyghur students receiving senior secondary education at the school. The language of instruction for all subjects is Mandarin Chinese, with the exception of the Uyghur Language and Literature, which can be said to follow Model 3. Students study Mandarin Chinese intensively from Grade 10 through to Grade 12. During the first two years, students have three English classes per week. In Grade 12, they have one English class per week. As most minority students possessed no English learning experience prior to Grade 10, the school had selected primary English textbooks, from the regular textbooks used by Han students in Grades 7 and 8, for their use. For Uyghur students in bilingual classes, English is a minor subject which receives far less attention than their major subjects. For example, English classes often tend to be cancelled, in anticipation of certain important examinations. Since English is not a subject which is tested in the College Entrance Examination, the school cancelled the English course for Grade 12 students. Three English teachers, all with bachelor's degrees, were assigned by the School to teach in the bilingual department.

While Uyghur students at K School were enthusiastic about learning English, one factor that hindered their progress was the substantial demands presented by the College Entrance Examination. However, for Uyghur students in M School, an additional factor prevented and deferred their learning of a third language. This was the insufficient supply of English teachers as well as bilingual teachers of other subjects, which significantly impeded the advancement of trilingual education.

X County has a population of 210,000, of which 95% is Uyghur. According to statistics communicated orally by officials from the Education Bureau of the County, the County has a total of 26 English teachers, and 24 of these teachers are employed at M school, a consolidated school made up of Han and Uyghur campuses, separated by a wall and employing a different teaching and learning system.

Table 6 Number of questionnaire respondents (students)

School	No. of students filling in questionnaires
M	51
K	99
T	12
H	28

Two English teachers reside at the Uyghur campus, teaching English to six bilingual classes from Grade 10 to Grade 12, two periods per week, while the remaining 22 teachers work on the Han campus. In terms of the language policy, since the school does not have a sufficient number of bilingual teachers, the six bilingual classes on the Uyghur side of the wall adopted Model 3. It is a noteworthy fact that most Uyghur teachers do not speak fluent Mandarin Chinese. Efforts were believed to have been undertaken to remedy and thereby, improve the situation from 2009 when the school commenced a policy of sending teachers for bilingual teaching training sessions during summer and winter vacations. Tables 6, 7 and 8 show the number of participants from each school and information regarding the interviewees.

Students who participated in the quantitative investigation can be categorised into two groups, based upon their choices of the "bilingual education" model and their living and study environments. The first category comprises students from M and K schools. They attended experimental bilingual classes and their schools followed the Option3 "bilingual education" curriculum, which denotes that a large proportion of the subjects are required to be taught in Mandarin Chinese. These students live in predominantly Uyghur neighbourhoods and their contact with Mandarin Chinese is limited to the hours when they are at school. The second category includes students from T and H schools, which follow the same curriculum as the majority Han students. They live in predominantly Han neighbourhoods and cities and all their teachers are from the majority Han ethnicity. Their medium of instruction is Mandarin Chinese and they have constant contact with Mandarin Chinese in their daily lives as well as at school. The above mentioned factors are inclined to influence students' perceptions of and attitudes toward trilingual issues, which will be elucidated and clarified in the latter part of this chapter.

7 Findings

The findings of our research with respect to perceptions of language learning can be categorised under the following subheadings, which are interrelated. It should be noted that while the statistical data given below were collected exclusively from the four secondary schools, the interview data were a combination of data collected from secondary students, teachers, policy makers and from tertiary-level students, as mentioned before.

Table 7 List of key informant interviewees (teachers)

No	From where	Ethnicity	Gender	Anonymous name
1	K city	Uyghur	Male	Mr. L Physics Teacher
2	T school	Han	Female	Ms. H English Teacher

Table 8 List of key informant interviews (policy makers)

No	From where	Ethnicity	Gender	Anonymous name and position
1	U city	Han	Male	Mr. C, director of Bilingual Education Office
2	K city	Uyghur	Male	Mr. M, director of Bilingual Education Office
3	M county	Uyghur	Male	Mr. A, official of county education bureau
4	M county	Han	Male	Mr. Z, official of county education bureau

7.1 Mandarin Chinese as Economic Capital

The current language policy discourse in Xinjiang explicitly links economic development, citizenship, language and education. English language, Mandarin Chinese as well as the minority languages are considered to be linguistic capital that can be exchanged within Xinjiang's multilingual linguistic marketplace; their value is embedded in the predispositions of those engaged in the exchange and the power relations in the linguistic field. Language policy discourse consistently presents justifications and rationales, which distinguish Mandarin Chinese from the other languages of China as the language of modernity, economic progress and national unity.

As a measure of human capital, learning and proficiency in Mandarin Chinese by ethnic minorities is portrayed as a crucial part of their human resource development in policy discourses in Xinjiang. Current Mandarin Chinese—Minority Language "bilingual" education policy and practices, which position Mandarin Chinese in an all-powerful position, are unfailingly defended with utilitarian economic and political justifications, rather than with cultural or other reasons. As professional and technical jobs, by definition, require higher education certificates, and higher education in Xinjiang is only conducted in Mandarin Chinese since the early twenty-first century, Mandarin Chinese performs the role of a guardian or monitor, which allows, or prevents, choice of continued education and, thus, future job opportunities for the individual and fulfilment of labour market needs for the society.

Consequently, Mandarin Chinese has become the language of political power and prestige, socioeconomic mobility and advancement, in complete contrast to the government's discourse on symbolic capital, associated with ethnic minority languages (see Table 9). However, the political and administrative decisions adopted, cannot completely explain the means by which the boundaries of the linguistic field are set or changed. As Mandarin Chinese has slowly but surely come to represent more economic capital, it has assumed near complete dominance in the linguistic field in terms of the value of human capital at the expense, in particular, of the minority languages. This in turn, has reduced the need for Mandarin Chinese—Minority Language bilingualism, in sharp contrast to stated policies. As the market

Table 9 Ethnicity and Language Requirements Specified in Civil Servant Recruitment Examination in Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia in 2010. (Source: Tursun (2010))

No. of vacancies	Language requirement			Ethnicity requirement			
a. Xinjiang uyghur autonomous region							
1973	Mandarin chinese	Uyghur	Unspecified	Han	Minorities	Two ethnicities	Unspecified
	1385 (70.2%)	209 (10.6%)	379 (19.2%)	1196 (60.6%)	541 (27.4%)	43 (2.18%)	193 (9.78%)
b. Tibet autonomous region							
1986	Unspecified		Han	Ethnic minorities		Unspecified	
	1986		23 (1.16%)	58 (2.92 %)		1905 (95.92 %)	
c. Inner mongolia autonomous region							
3408	Unspecified	Chinese/Mongol bilingual	Unspecified	Ethnic minorities (Ewenki, Daur)			
	3235 (94.93 %)	173 (5.07 %)	3397 (99.68 %)	11 (0.32 %)			

develops, the value of capital can change, as can perceptions of what constitutes capital. Bourdieu's theory helps to illustrate how boundaries in the fields of politics, ethnicity, education and economics intersect, and in what manner individuals and institutions situate themselves, in relation to these fields.

Our questionnaire and interview data below illustrate how Uyghur students viewed the changing fortunes of capital in the linguistic market place in Xinjiang, and exactly how they intend to invest their time and resources, in relation to their mother tongue and Mandarin Chinese.

Figure 3 shows the percentage of answers to one of the key questions asked in the questionnaire survey (see Appendix A) and the analysis of the responses:

As shown in Fig. 3, a significant majority of respondents (80%) supported the strengthening of Chinese language learning in their school curriculum. Based on the interviews and responses to open-ended questions on the student questionnaire, it can be observed that Uyghur students displayed strong extrinsic orientations about learning Mandarin Chinese. The following are some of their comments about learning Mandarin Chinese:

"Mandarin Chinese is very important for me to find a job."
"I want to be a teacher in the future. It is a must that I learn Mandarin Chinese well."
"My parents hope me to learn Mandarin Chinese well."
"Mandarin Chinese is our national language. We have to learn it to communicate with others outside Xinjiang."
"I will take College Entrance Examination in Mandarin Chinese, so I will need to study it hard."

All the four policy makers who were interviewed were very supportive with reference to the active and aggressive promotion of Mandarin Chinese in Xinjiang. They believed that teaching Mandarin Chinese to Uyghur students will lead them to better employment opportunities, which would imply greater economic benefits.

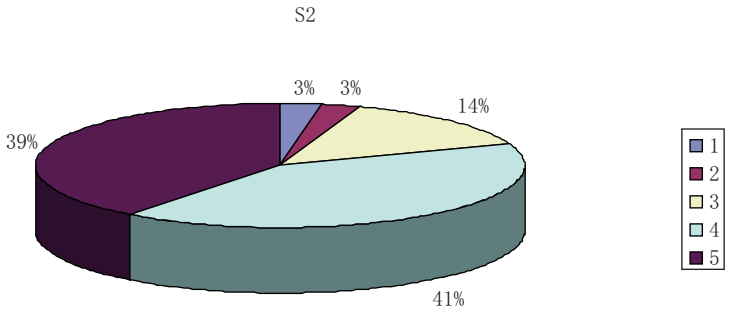

Fig. 3 Percentage of answers to the statement: "Chinese language teaching and learning should be further enhanced in my school". *1* strongly disagree, *2* disagree, *3* neutral, *4* agree, *5* strongly agree

They opined that the Uyghur language is also important, but ranked it lower in comparison with Mandarin Chinese. As one official at the Xinjiang Education Bureau put it:

> It is a choice between development and culture. If Uyghur people hope to raise their incomes and improve their living conditions, they must learn to speak Mandarin Chinese. It is a basic tool for them to participate in the country's economic development. It is unavoidable that minority language and culture will be affected to some extent. But they have to make the choice.

They also expressed serious concern about the lack or shortage of qualified bilingual teachers. This proved to be a major challenge for implementation of Mandarin Chinese–Uyghur bilingual education, and to quote a remark by one of the officials:

> To improve our education, the precondition is the quality of teachers. We are in great need of bilingual teachers who can teach in Mandarin Chinese. Good teachers won't stay. The natural environment is bad here and salary is not high.

The teachers interviewed observed that the students devoted long hours, investing their valuable time and energy in learning Mandarin Chinese, to overcome the language barrier for their education. One Uyghur physics teacher explained:

> They are very hard working. They get up very early and spend all day studying. You don't know how much energy they put into study.

In terms of importance, the two teachers we interviewed selected Mandarin Chinese as the most important school subject for Uyghur students, indicating the high level of mobilisation of critical actors required to actualise the "bilingual education" policies, which are vigorously promoted in Xinjiang.

7.2 English as Cultural Capital

With the implementation of the dual track bilingual education policy and practices, the English language is only offered as a school subject at schools, where the medium of instruction is Mandarin Chinese in Xinjiang. Despite the recent school merger

Table 10 A class timetable for Grade 12 Uyghur students in a school in Kashgar

	Time	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
1	9:00–9:45	Chemistry	Biology	Uyghur	Chinese	Math	Chinese	
2	9:55–10:40	Chemistry	Physics	Uyghur	Biology	Biology	Chinese	
3	10:50–11:35	Math	Physics	Physics	Biology	Biology	Chemistry	
4	11:45–12:30	Math	Math	Physics	Uyghur	Chemistry	Chemistry	
5	12:40–13:25	Biology	Math	Chinese	Uyghur	Chemistry	Biology	
6	16:00–16:45	Chinese	Uyghur	Math	Math	Physics	Math	
7	16:55–17:40	Chinese	Uyghur	Math	Math	Physics	Math	
8	17:50–18:35	Physics	Chemistry	Chemistry	Physics	Chinese	Uyghur	
9	18:45–19:30	Physics	Chemistry	Chemistry	Physics	Chinese	Uyghur	Chinese
10	21:00–21:45	Chemistry	Physics	Biology	Uyghur	Math		

campaigns and phasing out of the Uyghur language as a language-in-education in favour of Mandarin Chinese across all levels of education, the provision of English language education, for students in classes traditionally taught in Uyghur and attended by Uyghur students, has seen very little improvement. Our investigations at two of the merged or bilingual education schools disclosed the following realities.

In School K, one teacher explained:

> Han students in Grade 12 need to have at least eighteen English classes each week, but Uyghur students do not have any. They spend that time studying Mandarin Chinese.

One of the Uyghur high school students interviewed expressed grave concerns about the growing gap between Uyghur and Han students, in terms of English language skills:

> There is a very wide gap between us and Han students in terms of English level. It will be hard for us after we go to college. I am worried.

The lack of English classes is evident in the Timetable for Grade 12 Uyghur Students in a school in Kashgar (see Table 10.)

Despite the unfavourable conditions and potential obstacles in learning a foreign language encountered by Uyghur students, the respondents to our questionnaire survey and the university students we interviewed demonstrated a determined and resolute willingness to invest in learning English, as well as confidence in themselves to be successful in achieving better results than their Han counterparts, provided that they were accorded equal opportunities for education.

As shown in Fig. 4, two–thirds of our questionnaire respondents have strongly supported the strengthening of English language education at their schools and ninety percent have agreed with that statement, which is the highest level of support for any of the three languages in question.

Contrary to the claims made by some authors and policy makers about English being perceived as an additional burden by minority students and therefore, not attaching sufficient importance to learning it, our respondents resoundingly rejected, by a large margin, the statement that the English language should be excluded from the curriculum for Uyghur students because they are unable to learn as thoroughly and satisfactorily as the Han students. As presented in Fig. 5, 77% strongly disagreed with that statement and 98% disagreed, with only 2% agreeing with it.

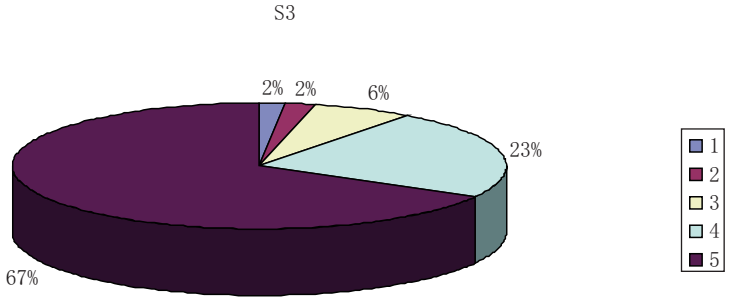

Fig. 4 Percentage of answers to the statement: "English language teaching and learning should be improved in my school". *1* strongly disagree, *2* disagree, *3* neutral, *4* agree, *5* strongly agree

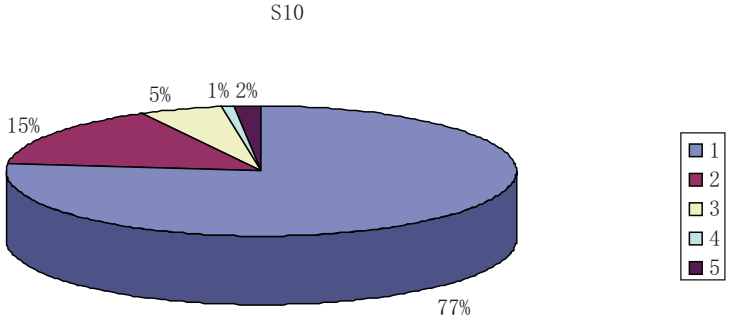

Fig. 5 Percentage of answers to the statement: "Minority pupils cannot learn English as well as Han pupils. So English should be dropped from the school curriculum for them". *1* strongly disagree, *2* disagree, *3* neutral, *4* agree, *5* strongly agree

Given below is a statement made by one of the policy makers, regarding the provision of English language in education for minority students:

> English is useful, but minority students should learn Chinese in the first place. English instruction is a long-term plan, not for now.

The high degree of discrepancy between the policy makers' views about the provision of languages in education for the Uyghurs, and the views and actions of students and their parents, illustrates the scope of the agency and power, which the agents on the ground possess and exercise in the multilingual linguistic marketplace in Xinjiang. This enables the agents to obtain valuable capital and attempt to shift the balance of symbolic power in their favour.

The following are comments from several students on the value of the English language as a linguistic capital:

> English is a world language; and I hope to go abroad in the future.

> English can help me know the world better, because so much information is in English on the internet.

> I should pass College English Test Band 4 and Band 6; and I can get a well-paid job.

One of the general questions in the interviews sought to elicit the perceptions of the interviewees, with regard to the English language. The answers below are representative of some of their perceptions:

> English is an important language. It is a world language. … It is important to know English for learning new and cutting edge academic knowledge and scholarly exchange. Many Han scholars publish their work in English. English dominates the academic literature published.(Student 6, Uyghur male, first year MA in Humanities)

> English is now a popular language in China. A few years ago, knowing Chinese was sufficient for getting a job. Now everyone knows Chinese, so learning English gives extra qualification to get better jobs. (Student 2, Uyghur male, fifth year in Social Sciences)

> I wanted to learn English because when I went to see my sister in Beijing where she was studying, I came across her speaking English with some of her friends. I think English is easier to learn than Chinese. But my sister is now a teacher in Kashgar region and her English is wasted. (Student 4, Uyghur female, fourth year in Humanities)

As an MA student, the Uyghur male who provided the first quote, viewed the language as an access point to 'cutting edge academic knowledge and scholarly exchange', namely the linguistic capital, which is essential for him to acquire, so as to be able to participate in his specialised field and "imagined community" successfully. In the third quote, the word, '*wasted'*, reveals everything; the student's sister had gained linguistic capital but failed to convert that capital into the life opportunity that would typically go with it. In all the above quotes, the importance attached to the English language is very apparent, and motivation on the part of the students to acquire the language, is equally obvious.

However, even though Uyghur students typically start English learning at a later stage than their Han counterparts, many students set idealistic goals for themselves, for e.g., to pursue studies abroad and to achieve the necessary competence to access information through English:

> I am studying English because I have a desire to continue my studies in a European country. I also want to learn about the world through the medium of the English language, rather than the limited and filtered information I get through the Han language. Europe has been leading the world in cultural and technological terms for hundreds of years and many important inventions were discovered by Europeans, for example, trains, Newton, Shakespeare, Dante, Rousseau, Picasso, these are just a few. (Student 3, Uyghur male, fifth-year in Journalism)

> I would like to go abroad to study if I get the opportunity. English is also a very important tool to learn about what is happening around the world, rather than reading about it in Chinese translation or re-interpretation. Knowledge of English has also become important for finding employment and being able to use computers. Teachers in my hometown (in Kashgar region) are required to have the knowledge of English and being able to offer English language classes. (Student 1, Uyghur female, fifth-year in Sociology)

In addition to their high expectations, it is also worth noting that both these interviewees aspired to learn and stay informed about current events around the world, through the medium of English directly, and not through their second language,

Mandarin Chinese. This suggests that, to the interviewees, the meaning of obtaining a multilingual and multi-literate repertoire goes beyond economic benefits, to include socio-political and cultural gains and of visualising themselves as global citizens.

7.3 Mother Tongue in Education

Uyghur is a south-eastern Turkic language spoken by about ten million speakers in Xinjiang and neighbouring countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan as well as in smaller diaspora communities around the world. It has an extended history, with the written language tracing its roots back to the 8th century AD. Uyghur culture in terms of literature, medicine, arts and music is among the most sophisticated in the world (Engesæth et. al 2009). It is closely linked with other Turkic languages spoken in countries and regions neighbouring Xinjiang and beyond and the Uyghurs traditionally maintained strong cultural, religious and historic ties with the Turkic peoples of Central and Western Asia in particular. Uyghur was the language-in-education in formal education for the vast majority of Uyghurs, especially in southern Xinjiang where the Uyghurs are in an absolute majority, from primary to tertiary levels. Uyghur as the language-in-education remained unchanged, until the large scale introduction of Mandarin Chinese, as the sole or principal language-in-education across the whole region, beginning with university education in early 2000. In fact, for most people who reside in the countryside, the Uyghur language is the sole language that they use in their daily lives and they are only aware of and have knowledge of this language. The Uyghur language was, and still is, used extensively in private and public domains by Uyghurs in Xinjiang and any attempt to weaken its practice and usage, in addition to its social and political significance, is viewed as a threat to Uyghur cultural, ethnic and historical identity. The Uyghurs are zealous in their efforts to use and maintain their language and offer considerable resistance to efforts undertaken to attempt to change the status quo. Uyghur ethnic, cultural and social identity is deeply embedded in the Uyghur language.

It was not unexpected then, that the interview data disclosed distinct evidence of confidence, in maintaining the Uyghur language and culture.

> I am confident that Uyghur language will survive in future and my aim of learning other languages is to learn the valuable aspects of other cultures. (Student 1, Uyghur female, fifth year in Sociology)

> I do not worry about the threat to Uyghur language and culture. Uyghur culture and language are well advanced and deeply rooted among the Uyghurs. Uyghur culture has had many influences on the Han culture in things such as food, dress, and respect for the elderly. … Uyghurs possess a well-developed tradition of commerce and trading. This is also very important for preserving the Uyghur identity. (Student 3, Uyghur male, fifth year in Journalism)

These views could be understood as an illustration of what Vaish (2005) terms the tenacity of indigenous cultures. However, several interviewees also exhibited

anxiety about the rapid increase of the majority Han population and its growing economic and socio-political influence in the region; the diminishing status of the Uyghur language in official discourse; the negative influence on their education with regard to being educated in a language that they did not fully grasp; and about their own future, as they were acutely aware of lacking competence in Mandarin Chinese. The same male student studying for his fifth year in Journalism had the following to say:

> I am more worried about the great influx of Han immigration into Uyghur areas. This trend will have greater impact than the language assimilation policy. (Student 3, Uyghur male, fifth year Journalism)

> Mandarin Chinese is a difficult language to learn. I am required to write my thesis in Mandarin Chinese. There is little originality and creativity in it, because I don't have deep enough knowledge of Mandarin Chinese to fully express myself. What is happening is language assimilation, not bilingual education. Most lectures are about politics, Han China's history and culture. I can't relate myself to what was taught about Qing history. (Student 6, Uyghur male, first year MA in Humanities).

> I am very concerned about the overwhelming influence and pressure to learn Mandarin Chinese. Uyghurs are least knowledgeable in Mandarin Chinese compared with most other minority nationalities in China. I am not sure if I will be able to progress to Master's degree course when I finish my BA. (Student 2, Uyghur male, fifth year in Social Sciences)

> I used to be able to compose poetry and short stories in Uyghur and had a lot of creative imagination when I was at school. My mother tongue is the essential tool for me to think and create and it can never be replaced. I am now becoming a passive learner because I lack proficiency in Han language and I am not able to think creatively in Han language. I am losing interest in the subjects as I am not able to understand, digest and internalise the knowledge I have learned using Han language. (Student 3, Uyghur male, fifth year in Journalism)

Decades of rigorous, top-down promotion of Mandarin Chinese language education does not appear to have accomplished its desired outcomes. The data as a whole, suggest that the strong influence of the majority culture and the government policy to promote it (Feng 2007, pp. 271–272), cause anxiety and even resistance, which may well be the major hurdles for minority students to acquire the Mandarin Chinese language.

Findings from our quantitative questionnaire data also point to the fact that our respondents perceive the role of their mother tongue in their formal education as holding immense significance, with 84 % expressing support for further strengthening of mother tongue education in their schools. Additionally, the students voiced considerable support for their schools employing more Uyghur teachers for their education (Figs. 6 and 7).

7.4 Investing in Languages

Norton's (1997) notion of investment has great relevance to the interview data collected by us. The investment can be either in the form of time, through self-learning,

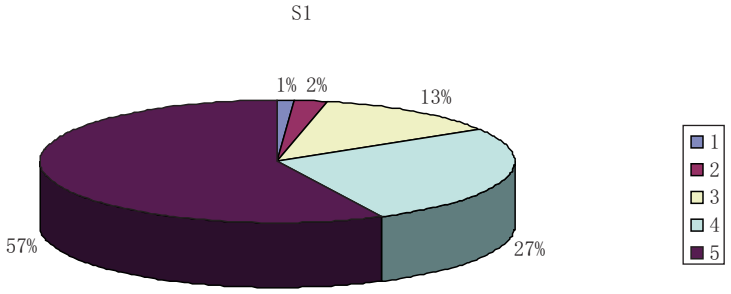

Fig. 6 Percentage of answers to the statement: "Minority language teaching and learning should be promoted more seriously in my school"

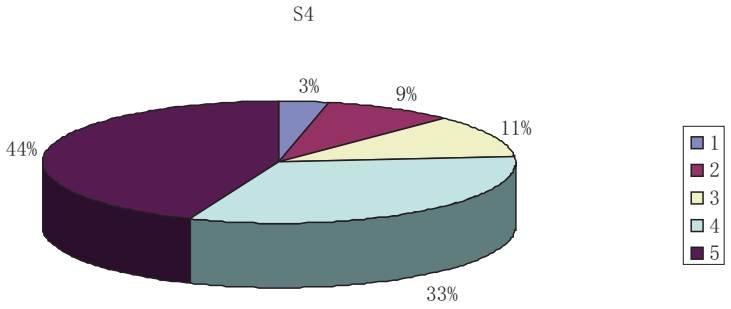

Fig. 7 Percentage of answers to the statement: "More teachers of minority nationality should be employed by my school because they know minority pupils' needs better"

or in the form of financial resources, by paying to attend private English learning lessons available in the market.

> I started studying English because I wanted to progress to Master's level programme. I also wanted to explore the possibility of studying abroad. English is the language of international contact and exchange. I studied English by myself, but also attended some private tuition. I did not even know the English alphabet when I started. (Student 5, Uyghur male, majoring in Humanities)

> Learning Uyghur, Han and English languages will provide me with greater employment opportunity. I learned English by myself but stopped when it became too hard. I would like to go abroad for visits if I get the chance. I feel confident about finding employment and my knowledge of English will be an asset for that. (S −4, Uyghur female, fourth year in Humanities)

Despite the difficulties the Uyghur female student in Humanities encountered, she was prepared to make the time investment, with the implicit understanding that the value of her cultural capital would eventually be increased. Some students may well have actually begun cashing in on the demand for the language, with their hard-acquired competence.

> I started learning English in 2002. I heard of English being offered to experimental classes (selected class for top performing students) only while at high school. I am now privately coaching Uyghur primary school children in English at home. (Student 3, Uyghur male, fifth-year in Journalism)

7.5 Acquiring Symbolic Capital and Desire for Equality and Recognition in Identity Negotiation

The most striking evidence disclosed by our data is the strong desire expressed by the interviewees to be recognised by society and get equal opportunities to access linguistic capital, typically English, based upon their perceptions. This is in conformity to Norton's (1997) and West's (1992) conception of identity, which relates to such desires.

When they talked about English language learning especially, most of the interviewees demonstrated a keen interest in the subject and there appeared to be a consensus that Uyghur students would be capable and perhaps have better positive prospects to compete with their majority Han counterparts.

> Uyghur children perform better than their Han counterparts in learning English because they are genuinely interested and motivated to learn it, rather than only interested in passing examinations. I have now passed the Level 4 English language test for university students. Han people also recognise the Uyghur students' ability to learn new languages. (Student 3, Uyghur male, fifth year in Journalism)

> If a lecture is delivered in English and other factors being equal, Uyghurs can compete with the Han students. In the oral English language classes that I have recently attended, most Uyghur students perform better than their Han counterparts attending the same class, despite the fact that the Hans would have studied English at least seven or eight years longer than the Uyghurs. (Student 5, Uyghur male, majoring in Humanities)

Most interviewees agreed that the motivation to learn English among Uyghurs is very strong and this 'genuine interest' is not similar to learning Mandarin Chinese. The intrinsic motivation to learn English demonstrated by many interviewees, such as the two students quoted above, seems to be derived, at least to some extent, from the desire to confirm their competitiveness or capability of learning.

It is interesting that there have been Uyghur representations in the final round of the toughest English competition in China, the China Central Television (CCTV) Cup English Speaking Contest, almost every year since 2004 (see Table 11).

The programme is broadcast nationally and internationally by CCTV and watched by millions of enthusiasts all across China, including Uyghur students in Xinjiang. This would undoubtedly rate as an exceptional and rare success story for any minority group in China. The winner of the 2010 competition, Ümüt Haji, began learning English through a systematic approach, mostly at his own expense by utilising his spare time for acquiring English, while studying Economics at Xinjiang Finance University. Ümüt had the opportunity to study English only after he

Table 11 List of Uyghur finalists for the CCTV English Speaking Contest since 2004

Year	Name	Prize achieved	Place of study	Place of birth
2010	Ümüt Haji	Champion	Xinjiang Finance University	Urumqi
2008	Faruk Mardan 法鲁克买尔旦	Semi-finalist	Xinjiang Medical University	Urumqi
2007	Nasrulla 纳斯热拉	Qualifying round, Shaanxi Province	Xi'an Petroleum University	Kashgar
2006	Sabahat 沙巴海提	Judges choice award	Tianjin Foreign Languages University	Xinjiang
2005	Adiljan abdukerim	Runner up (2nd prize)	Xinjaing University	Xinjiang
2004	Kasimjan abdureyim	3rd prize	Xinjiang University	Xinjiang
2004	Azimat Rustam	Best pronunciation award	Xinjiang Medical University	Xinjiang

entered University and because he was inspired by an earlier Uyghur contestant (Haji 2010).

A quote from the Uyghur finalist of 2008, Faruk Mardan, while answering one of the judges' questions with reference to English, is very enlightening:

> I have to tell you that people in Xinjiang are really enthusiastic about learning English, because we have lots of youngsters who are willing speak English, who are willing to learn English. There are lots of ethnic groups in Xinjiang. They are passionate and enthusiastic. They like new things, English is really new and it is like new blood in their body. (Mardan 2008)

A female Han English language teacher comments that it is necessary to teach minority students a foreign language. She also appears to agree that, on average, her Uyghur students learn English quicker than their Han counterparts. Furthermore, their pronunciation is better than their Han peers. The aforementioned advantages can be attributed to a gift for learning English among Uyghur students.

> I very much welcome the opportunity to study the subjects in English. This will provide both Han and Uyghurs with the same starting point and equal footing and the Han student will get the taste of how it is like to learn subject knowledge in a foreign language. I think Uyghurs are better in learning languages. (Student 5, Uyghur male, majoring in Humanities)

> When I was at primary and secondary schools, there was no English offered to us. So at the university, I had to learn English all by myself. I found myself quite confident. Unfortunately, I had to drop the language because of other pressures… However, I feel that if Uyghur students are put on equal footing with Han students, we can compete with them. (Student 8, Uyghur female, fourth year History)

These quotes demonstrate that most of the interviewees were conscious of their minority status. But at the same time, in the words of Vaish (2005), they conveyed the impression that they were cognisant of the fact that the national drive toward English education, may present them with an excellent opportunity for equitable access to the linguistic capital, which is highly valued in today's society.

Table 12 Mean score of questionnaire statements by research sites (see Appendix A)

School	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
K	4.5	4.41	4.59	4.11	2.78	4.76	4.21	2.76	4.65	1.24
M	4.56	4.04	4.6	4.32	3.24	4.82	4.22	2.96	4.7	1.43
H	3.93	3.25	4.14	3.75	2.33	4.43	3.59	2.71	4	1.64
T	3.5	4.17	4.42	3	2.83	4.82	3.73	1.83	3.92	1.25
Total	4.37	4.12	4.51	4.05	2.84	4.73	4.1	2.75	4.52	1.35

7.6 Influence of Linguistic Context and Ethnolinguistic Vitality on Language Perception

A closer examination of our quantitative research data reveals a variation in the students' perceptions of language learning and language use, which are strongly correlated with the location of the school and their linguistic landscape (Table 12). Judging from the mean scores of Questionnaire Statements 1–9 (S1 to S9 hereafter), Uyghur students from H and T schools, which are located in Han-dominant neighbourhoods, attach less value to their native language as compared with their counterparts in Kashgar Prefecture. The mean of S4 makes it evidently clear that their demand for minority teachers is also not as strong as the students in Kashgar. In addition, Uyghur students in H school, an Inland Xinjiang Class, exhibit decreased enthusiasm in learning Mandarin Chinese, which is indicated by its low mean in S2. This conforms to the finding of an earlier systematic study of a similar Xinjiang Class carried out by Chen (2008, p. 184).

Unlike the Schools H and T, the Schools K and M are located in a predominantly Uyghur speaking environment in Kashgar, where the Uyghur language plays an essential role in the lives of the students concerned. Here, the use of the Uyghur language is much more visible and prominent in society and the Uyghurs play an active and important role in the political and economic spheres. Further to this, the Uyghur language is a test subject in the College Entrance Examination, which can have a considerable impact on students' perceptions. In comparison with Schools K & M, the students at Schools H and T are constantly immersed in a predominantly Mandarin Chinese environment; they are taught by Han teachers and live with Han students on the same campus. For them, Mandarin Chinese is not only a test subject but also the test language. Hence it is obvious, that they would prefer relatively less inputs in their native Uyghur language. But this also does not necessarily signify that their native language is insignificant for them; it is just not as important as the Han language, from an examination perspective. It is widely acknowledged that senior secondary school education in China is extremely test-oriented, for the College Entrance Examination is deemed as the opportunity of a lifetime, which ultimately determines the future of students. Thus, achieving a successful examination score epitomises students' choices of learning and investing in languages, as well as their perceptions of the values assigned to different languages in the linguistic marketplace.

8 Discussion

Trilingual education remains a privilege for a limited number of Uyghur students, who either have an outstanding academic performance, which serves as a bridge for them to pursue better and higher education, or who live in Han ethnic group neighbourhoods, in affluent cities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Alternatively, for the vast number of Uyghur students living in remote and undeveloped towns and villages, learning their mother tongue, Standard Chinese and a third language simultaneously, is an elusive and distant dream.

Uyghur students in general display a dedicated and earnest inclination toward learning English. They demand higher quality teachers, ideally both Uyghur and Han, who excel in teaching, and they aspire to learn the language with computer aids in language labs. Some students expressed their dissatisfaction with their school's decision to cancel English classes. In addition, they unequivocally disagreed with the assertion that Uyghur students are inferior to their Han peers, with regard to English learning.

No objections were raised with reference to the intensive instruction of Chinese, since Mandarin Chinese is chiefly viewed as a tool to gain employment opportunities and the competitive edge necessary to participate in mainstream society. Despite the fact that the Uyghur language and culture may play a secondary role in their future, students reached a general consensus that their native language is important, and would always play a vital and integral role in their lives.

By contrast, provision for learning English still continues to be a privilege and an entitlement for a restricted number of minority students, who are relatively fortunate to be living in bigger cities. Despite the fact that the demand for English language provision in Uyghur communities is on the rise, there are no specific policies formulated in response to this ever-growing need. Nonetheless, to achieve trilingual education in Xinjiang, English provision is indispensable.

As presented in the literature review section, the majority of authors who have expounded on the effect of the national drive for English language education on linguistic minorities such as the Uyghurs, have held the view that the drive for English would, in fact, strengthen the hand of the already powerful majority Han group and give them more power, as this group sets the rules and has access to vastly superior cultural and economic resources for achieving that goal. This would in turn, further marginalise linguistic minorities. Our data show that Uyghur students at both the secondary and the tertiary levels did perceive the importance of the English language and were extremely motivated to learn English, even though they faced additional difficulties when compared with their Han counterparts, in view of their inadequate education in English or even a complete absence of English education in the early years of their schooling. The origins of this motivation, frequently exhibited by the students we interviewed, can be complex as both extrinsic—socio-economic, political, cultural and historic as well as intrinsic—psychological and cognitive factors can be at play here. However, their determined desire for recognition and for equal conditions in education, and their eager willingness to invest in

learning, signified that they were aiming to acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which would gainfully increase the value of their cultural capital. Consideration of economic and material gains through second or third language learning, as argued by several authors reviewed above and by some policy makers, is not the only factor influencing second or third language learning by linguistic minorities. As social groups, Uyghur and Han students are inevitably situated in a dynamic power relationship, which significantly influences their investment in linguistic capital. Despite the fact that the Uyghur students are confronted by innumerable difficulties whilst adjusting to learning and education at university in their second language, Mandarin Chinese, they are also well-aware that this very fact places the Han students in an advantageous position, because of their linguistic capital. English, which is a foreign language for both the groups, may indisputably be the decisive factor to provide Uyghur students the perfect opportunity to equal the balance of power in their relationship. Our data confirm that Uyghur students were cognisant about this fact and in view of it, many students invested substantially in mastering the third language. This may also explain why Faruk Mardan, the winner of the Most Energetic Speaker Award at the CCTV Cup English Speaking Contest 2008, was quoted as saying figuratively, "English is really new and it is like new blood in [the Uyghur youth in Xinjiang] body."

A related issue we wish to discuss at this juncture is the question of whether there should be 'special policies' to institute English standards, which are lower than those mandated by the National Curriculum Standards (NCS). This is a formal request, which often appears in literature pertaining to trilingual education but has seldom been debated. Relevant literature (e.g., Yang 2005) enumerates numerous issues connected with this request. Nevertheless, financial issues such as inadequate resources and a lack of funding cannot justify the request, as these problems can and should be addressed progressively, by a country whose economy is developing so rapidly. If the requirement to lower the standards is based upon the argument that minority students attach inadequate value to foreign languages and/or they face additional cognitive and affective barriers than their majority counterparts in English language learning, this argument is undeniably refuted by the data presented in this chapter. Moreover, the interviewees exhibited steadfast motivation to learn the third language and were able to clearly discern the advantages involved in learning English. Thus, we wish to re-state the earlier argument made by Feng (2008) and Feng and Sunuodula (2009) that, if minority groups are expected to be structurally integrated into mainstream society, which is a widely-acknowledged political objective, it is then misguided and erroneous to make formal requests for lowering the English curriculum standards. Such policies, once they become effective, would not benefit minority groups in any manner, but would segregate them further from mainstream society and place them on an unequal footing for prospects in life. Having restated this view, we also make it explicit that we do not dispute the case for special policies that have provided necessary benefits, both nationally and internationally for minority groups, such as 'preferential policies' or positive discrimination in education

(Feng and Sunuodula 2009). On the contrary, in the case of English provision, we agree with many other authors that special policies to provide additional funding, resources and incentives for minority regions are not only obligatory but crucial. These policies can help and benefit minority people, by creating 'equal conditions' (Feng 2008) for them to engage with the nation and the world.

9 Conclusion

Having reflected on our findings in terms of all four forms of capital, as articulated by Bourdieu (1986) and the means by which these four forms relate to language, social identity, and dynamic power relations between the languages and their speakers in Xinjiang's multilingual linguistic marketplace, we acknowledge that we are in a position to contend that Uyghur students, at least some of them, realise the substantive opportunity of investing in learning the English language. The students accept that it would yield a breakthrough in shifting the balance of cultural and symbolic capital and symbolic power in their favour. They have been under intense political and economic pressure in recent years to become fully proficient in the national language, Mandarin Chinese, at the expense of their native language and English, the crucial foreign language. However, by electing to invest their precious time and resources in learning a third language and continuing to maintain their mother tongue simultaneously, under current living conditions, the students are making a conscientious decision to increase not only their economic and political worthiness, but also their cultural, social and symbolic capital. The students in Xinjiang are keenly aware of their ethnic and social identities and very conscious of how they relate to the world around them and their possibilities for the future. With this in mind, they constantly organise and reorganise their relationships and invest their time, efforts and resources towards issues which matter most to them and which offer them the best returns for their investment, not only in terms of material gains, but also in terms of symbolic value. This challenge may not necessarily result in further marginalising them as predicted by many individuals. Conversely, the situation could mobilise and energise Uyghur students and motivate them positively to negotiate their identity by investing in linguistic capital. There is evidence at present in the literature of language provision for minority students, that the key stakeholders, as mentioned above, do not understand language education solely from the point of view of third language acquisition. Nevertheless, they also reflect on the role of the first language in relation to second and third language learning and the socio-political, cultural and economic dimensions of language use and language education. This may lead to a repositioning of languages for classroom use and a restructuring of curriculums, and produce a lasting impact on language provision for minority groups, which, indeed, has long been a fundamental requirement.

Appendix: List of Student Research Questionnaire Statements

Statement 1. Minority language teaching and learning should be promoted more seriously in my school.

Statement 2. Chinese language teaching and learning should be further enhanced in my school.

Statement 3. English language teaching and learning should be improved in my school.

Statement 4. More teachers of minority nationality should be employed by my school because they know minority pupils' needs better.

Statement 5. More teachers of Han nationality should be employed by this school because they are generally better than minority teachers.

Statement 6. More equipment such as computers and language labs should be provided for my school.

Statement 7. There should be more schools with pupils of mixed nationalities so that we can integrate better.

Statement 8. There should be different syllabuses for Han and minority pupils, even in the same school, because their learning abilities differ.

Statement 9. Minority children should know their own minority language first, then Chinese and English.

Statement 10. Minority pupils cannot learn English as well as Han pupils. So English should be dropped from the school curriculum for them.

The responses are measured on a scale of 1–5:

1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree

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