

A Survey Report on Trilingualism and Trilingual Education in Yunnan

Yichuan Yuan, Deying Hu, Peng Li, Honghua Zhu, Jinjun Wang,
Yun Shang and Hongbin Ba

Abstract Yunnan is the province with the most diverse population in terms of ethnicity. The 25 ethnic minority groups live side by side in mixed communities or in compact communities where one or two groups dominate(s). Primarily through questionnaire surveys, this investigation focuses on language use and language teaching and on perceptions of and attitudes towards the three languages, the minority language(s), Mandarin Chinese and English, in primary and secondary school classrooms where Bai, Yi and Zhuang students are present or dominant. It was found that, first, except for occasional use of the minority language to explain teaching contents orally in some primary school classrooms, the pupils' mother tongues are largely ignored in primary and secondary education. Despite the glooming situation of the mother tongue in compulsory education, the survey found that the teachers and students had fairly positive views about their mother tongues with regard to their identity and self-esteem. The surveyed respondents showed doubt about linguistic assimilation and they tended to agree that trilingualism or multilingualism is the way forward.

Keywords Yunnan · Sociolinguistic profile · Quantitative approach · Language allocation · Perceptions · Attitudes · Assimilation · Bilingual and trilingual education

Y.C. Yuan (✉) · D.Y. Hu · P. Li · Y. Shang · H.B. Ba
Yunnan Normal University, Kunming, China
e-mail: yichuanyuan@aliyun.com

D.Y. Hu
e-mail: hedeying730@hotmail.com

P. Li
e-mail: 13888959057@139.com

Y. Shang
e-mail: shangyun96@126.com

H.B. Ba
e-mail: honbin1256@yahoo.com.cn

H.H. Zhu · J.J. Wang
Qujing Normal University, Yunnan, China
e-mail: zhjh@qjnc.edu.cn; Wang_jinjun@163.com

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1 Introduction

This research seeks an in-depth understanding of the perceptions and views held by major stakeholders towards trilingualism and trilingual education in minority dominated regions in Yunnan, China. Discussions on trilingualism and trilingual education have become frequent since 2001, when the National English Curriculum Standards (NECS) was promulgated by China's Ministry of Education (MOE) to promote English language education all over the country. Research into this new phenomenon has been reported but this type of research is often isolated and limited to one individual region or educational institution (Hu 2007; Huang 2007; Jiang et al. 2007). There is no known research project designed to examine the whole situation and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape the policy and implementation of trilingualism and trilingual education, of the linguistic typology of language allocation in real-world classrooms, and of the perceptions and attitudes held by the stakeholders towards trilingualism. The current nationwide project aims to fill this gap, as stated in the Introduction of this book, and our research contributes to the project by providing empirical evidence of the perceptions and views held by major stakeholders in Yunnan.

2 Sociolinguistic Profile of Yunnan

Yunnan, the eighth largest province of China, lies in the southwest of China with Kunming as its capital city, adjoining Guangxi, Guizhou, Sichuan, Chongqing and Xizang (Tibet). Of a total land area spanning 394,000 km², 94% consists of mountains and plateau regions. This province borders Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam on the west and south. Of the 56 nationalities in China, 26 can be found in Yunnan each with a population of over 4000 members. With the exception of the Han people who are the majority in China, Yi, Bai, Hani, Dai, Zhuang, Miao, Lisu, Hui, Lahu, Wa, Naxi, Yao, Jingpo, Zang, Bulang, Buyi, Pumi, Archang, Nu, Ji'nuo, De'ang, Mongolian, Shui, Man, Dulong and Dong comprise the other 25 ethnic minority nationalities. In this sense, Yunnan can be viewed as a multilingual and multicultural mirror of minority nationalities in China (Hu 2007, p. 16).

Yunnan, in Chinese, means "South of the Clouds" and it has a generally mild climate with pleasant and fair weather because of the province's location on south-facing mountain slopes, receiving the influence of both the Pacific and Indian oceans. Topographically, the average elevation is 1980 m. The mountains are highest in the north, and Kawagebo Peak reaches up to 6740 m; the lowest point is in the south, near the Vietnamese border, with an altitude of 76.4 m. On account of the highly mountainous terrain, transportation facilities are poor in this province. The ethnic minority nationalities live in range after range of mist-shrouded mountains. Their compact communities, without much communication with other ethnic minorities, have resulted in diverse living conditions for all these communities (Hu 2007, p. 16).

Table 1 Top six minority groups in terms of population. (Source: <http://news.163.com/11/0509/16/73KJ2R4R00014JB5.html> Retrieved 13 November 2013. [In Chinese])

Nationality	Population	Percentage (%)
Yi	5.028 million	10.94
Hani	1.630 million	3.55
Bai	1.561 million	3.40
Dai	1.222 million	2.66
Zhuang	1.215 million	2.64
Miao	1.203 million	2.62

It was reported by the authorities of the Sixth China National Census on 9 May 2011 that currently the total population of Yunnan province is 45,966,000, among whom 30,629,000 are of Han nationality, and make up 66.63% of the provincial population. The 25 ethnic minorities number 15,337,000, and comprise 33.37% of the population in Yunnan. Table 1 provides data for the top six minorities, each with a population of more than a million people.

3 Profiles of the Three Targeted Ethnic Minority Nationalities

This study targeted three of the ethnic minority nationalities in Yunnan, namely Bai, Yi and Zhuang, who make up the majority of the investigated population. A small number of participants from other nationalities were also included. Elaborated below is a brief description of the three major groups.

3.1 *The Bai Nationality*

The population of the Bai nationality is 1.561 million. They live in compact communities mainly in the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture. Other sections of the community are scattered in Kunming, Yuanjiang, Lijiang and Lanping. The Bai nationality has a long history. Since ancient times, the Bai people have established a close relationship with the Han and the Yi in the interior or the neighbouring regions. After the fall of the Nanzhao Dynasty (738–902 AD), specifically during the Dali Dynasty (937, 1254 AD), the Bai people from different areas merged into a single nationality, with a similar language, culture and economic structure. They have their own spoken language that belongs to the Tibeto-Burman stock of the Sino-Tibetan Language family. In addition, numerous Bai people are conversant with the Chinese language. They adopt Chinese characters as their written system. Although they have their own script, that script is not popular with them nowadays. Besides Buddhism and Taoism, the worship of their Patron God is most popular with them. The Patron God Temple can be found in almost every village. The Patron God is the Guardian of a village or a region.

The Bai people regard white as an honourable colour and prefer white clothes. Men often wear white coats with black vests. Bai women too, choose to wear white or blue jackets, paired with black or blue vests. Unmarried women style their hair in a pigtail, or wear beautiful headdresses that depict the four features renowned in Dali, namely the flowers in Shangguan, the wind in Xiaguan, the snow on top of the Cangshan Mountain and the moon reflected in the Erhai Lake. The favourite festival of the Bai people and the grandest show of the year for them is The Third Month Fair in Dali. It falls on 15 March, as per the Chinese lunar calendar and lasts for 7 days.

3.2 *The Yi Nationality*

The 5.028 million Yi people occupy the largest portion of the ethnic minority population in Yunnan (10.94%). Most of them are farmers or herdsmen, scattered in mountains all over the province. They have their own language, which belongs to the Tibetan-Burmese sector of the Sino-Tibetan family. They speak six Yi dialects consisting of 25 local dialects. They are well-known for their rich culture and religious beliefs, for example, the Yi Solar Calendar, believed by scholars to date back to 10,000 years. The altitudinal differences of the Yi areas directly affect the climate and precipitation of these areas. These striking differences are the basis of the old saying that “The weather is different a few miles away” in the Yi area. This is the primary reason why the Yi in various areas are so different from one another in the ways they make a living. Chuxiong is the sole Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan.

The Yi were once a strong, independent and populous ethnic group and they are very proud of their history, which spans centuries. The Yi have a rich heritage and culture, and they have their own religion, which is a form of animism. The Yi worship nature and their ancestral Gods. In contemporary history, foreign missionaries, in some measure, had an effect on the education of the Yi people (Huang 1995). The study of the Yi people, Yiology, was established by different levels of the local government and international conferences on Yiology are regularly held both at home and abroad. The Yi script was originally logo syllabic like Chinese, and dates back to at least the thirteenth century. Under the New-China government, the script was standardised as a syllabary. Syllabic Yi is widely used in books, newspapers, and street signs.

3.3 *The Zhuang Nationality*

With a population of 1.215 million, the Zhuang Nationality represents 2.64% of the total population in Yunnan. Most of them live in the Wenshan Zhuang and Miao Autonomous Prefecture, in the southeast part of the province. Predominantly, the Zhuang follow traditional animist practices, which include elements of ancestor

worship. There are also a number of Buddhists, Taoists, and Christians among the Zhuang. They have a very proud and long history. It was only in recent history that the Zhuang developed a written language. In 1955, the government worked with them and invented a script. Their spoken language is the Zhuang-Dai branch of the Zhuang-Dong group of the Sino-Tibetan family. Many of them can communicate in Mandarin Chinese. The Zhuang are noted for their brass drum culture.

4 Literature Review

4.1 *Bilingual and Trilingual Studies Internationally*

Hornberger (1989) contends that the development of complete L1 proficiency offers not only cognitive and social advantages for mother tongue use but also benefits the attainment of L2 proficiency. To test the functions of L1 to L2 or L3, Shama (1991) and Lin (1997) conducted studies on the Zhuang people in Guangxi province and other minority nationalities in China, and established that the use of the minority language helped students to learn English because students could identify with English more than with Mandarin Chinese. One of the reasons for this finding was that the languages of many of the ethnic minorities and English are similar in script. Shama (1991) even reported that bilingual education improved the overall quality of learning and enhanced self-confidence among minority students. To address this issue, Feng and Sunuodula (2009) conducted empirical as well as archival researches in three minority dominated regions (Xinjiang, Guangxi and Yi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan). Their findings were also reported in Adamson and Feng (2009) and Feng (2007, 2008). Several issues come to the fore in relation to this subject. Firstly, the experience of minority pupils in developing their competence in languages in general, often lacked symmetry. Thus, a large majority of minority pupils failed to acquire age-appropriate competence either in their minority home language or the majority language, Han Chinese. Without reaching the age-appropriate level in either language, according to the threshold theory (Cummins 1976, 1984, 2000), such a pupil was unlikely to avoid the negative consequences of bilingualism. This statement proved to be true in most cases which were investigated. Secondly, while some minority regions responded to the official 2001 National English Curriculum Standards by enhancing English provision, other regions appeared to pay only lip service to the NECS, and their priority continued to be the further enhancement of Mandarin Chinese teaching and learning. With regard to motivation of minority students to learn a foreign language, English in particular, the empirical findings of Feng and Sunuodula also indicated a gap between the literature and reality.

4.2 *Bilingual and Trilingual Studies in Yunnan*

Lin (1990) states that bilingual education in China, in many cases, implies that “minority children learn Chinese” (also see Blachford 1997 and Cummins and Corson 1997, p. 163). There is a huge volume of literature, particularly in Chinese, on bilingual education and bilingualism with Yunnan as the focus, given the fact that the province is the most diverse in China in terms of ethnicity (Dai 1996). Much empirical research has been done to investigate the status quo of bilingual education in schools in different regions (e.g., Cao 2007). In recent years, quite a number of in-depth studies have also been conducted on what attitudes minority students hold towards different languages they use or face in their lives and how they negotiate identities in their own communities (Hansen 1999; Lee 2001; Wang 2011; Yang 2013; Yuan 2008). Discussions on trilingualism and trilingual education, however, are relatively rare. There are research studies conducted in recent years with a concern about trilingual issues, but most of these studies are focused on how minority students acquire English without in-depth discussion on the complex and dynamic relationships of the three languages involved.

Trilingual education is normally defined as the learning of three languages, with Chinese either at the centre of the three or as the medium of instruction of all school subjects. The first language is the ethnic minority learner’s mother tongue (the language in which the learner should have developed the most proficiency, but it is often ignored); the second is Chinese (Mandarin, or Putonghua, or standard Chinese, or the local Han dialect, any of which may be used as the medium of instruction for part or for the entire curriculum); and the third is English, which is usually regarded as a foreign language in China (Hu 2007, p. 32).

As Yunnan is comprised of 25 multi-ethnic nationalities, they all have their own characteristics and patterns in terms of language learning (Zhang and Cheng 1997; Li 2000; Xue 2000; Zhang et al. 2001; Li and Yuan 2001). It is apparently inappropriate to teach ethnic minority students English with the same syllabus, textbooks, methodology and learning strategy as teaching Han students. Thus, some educators argue that a special policy would have to be formulated on how to deal with ethnic minority students learning L2 and L3 (Zhang et al. 2001, p. 135). Such a policy has to be evidence-based. Hu’s (2007) investigation in Xishuangbanna in Yunnan highlighted four features, (a) bilingual education was insignificant to the ethnic minority students’ L3 learning; (b) ethnic minority students’ ideology of “Inferior” L1 led to their lack of self-confidence; (c) The proposal of applying ethnic minority students’ L1 to L3 instruction was unwelcome; (d) The success of ethnic minority students in learning L2 did not necessarily lead to their success in learning L3. Hu’s (2007) research also determined that students’ overall English learning outcomes had little to do with ethnicity, except for specific minor linguistic items like pronunciation or memorisation of vocabulary. The research of Li and Yuan (2001), however, indicated that ethnic minority students differed from Han nationality students in the aspects of their English learning objectives, attitudes towards teaching, and requirements for teaching and studying. Various English proficiency tests (Zhang and

Cheng 1997; Zhang et al. 2001; Li and Yuan 2001) revealed that ethnic minority learners in secondary schools lagged far behind their Han Chinese counterparts. This indicated then that high levels of bilingualism (both ethnic L1 and Mandarin L2) were not achieved by the students, as the cognitive and social advantages of third language learning by balanced bilinguals widely found in research were not demonstrated by these ethnic minority students.

5 Research Questions

Different research results beg further questions requiring investigation into the real situation of language education in the region. To make the current situation in Yunnan comparable with other minority regions in China, as stated in the Introduction, we conducted several surveys in 2009, which addressed the following two basic questions:

1. What is the linguistic typology in terms of language allocation in classrooms in different schools in minority dominated areas of Yunnan province?
2. How do different stakeholders in minority education perceive the importance of trilingual education?

5.1 Methodology

This investigation was carried out in September 2009, in four ethnic minority regions in Yunnan Province, southwest China, i.e. Dali Bai People's Autonomous Prefecture, Shiling Yi People's Autonomous County, Shizhong County and Kunming City.

The investigations were undertaken at seven schools, of which two were primary schools (one in a village, another in a township) and five secondary schools (one was in a township and four in the cities). Most of the participants were in the age group of 15–17 years old. In China, typically, primary school students do not exceed the age of twelve, and secondary school students range from 13–18 years old.

The population for this study was composed of three groups of stakeholders, namely students, teachers (including educators) and parents. 801 students from seven primary and secondary schools participated in the investigation, out of which 241 were Han students. 85 teachers and administrators took part in the survey, and 37 belonged to the Han nationality. 264 parents, 97 of whom were from the Han nationality, and with children studying at the schools, were also invited to join in the investigation. Hence, the gross population totalled to a figure of 1150. Since the Han belong to the ethnic majority in China and their inclusion in this chapter would be contradictory to the theme of this research, Han participants were deleted from the database. Thus, the valid population finally added up to a figure of 775: 560 students, 48 teachers and educators, and 167 parents.

Table 2 School level and ethnic groups

School level	Gender (<i>N</i> =560)			Ethnic groups (<i>N</i> =560)				
	Male	Female	Total	Bai	Yi	Zhuang	Others	Total
Primary school	84	55	139	0	42	97	0	139
	60.4%	39.6%	100%	0.0%	30.2%	69.8%	0.0%	100%
Secondary school	176	245	421	260	100	18	43	421
	41.8%	58.2%	100%	61.80%	23.80%	4.30%	10.20%	100%

The investigation was conducted following a quantitative approach. The instruments consisted of three questionnaires designed by the project group, which were mostly statements on 5-point Likert scales with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”, plus some open-ended and close-ended questions. The questionnaires were mainly concerned with the views of students, parents, teachers and administrators, on languages and language education respectively. The questionnaires were in Chinese, translated from the English version.

All survey data collected in this study were entered into the SPSS data analysis programme for the following statistical analysis: (1) frequency analysis, to measure the percentage of the open and close-ended index; and (2) descriptive statistics, to determine the mean values and standard deviations of the Likert scale items.

6 Results

6.1 Students' Responses

Table 2 shows that all together 560 students participated in the survey, 139 of whom were primary school pupils and 421 were secondary school students. (The primary school students could not fully understand the questionnaire, so their teachers were invited to help explain the questionnaire items.) In terms of the sample population, the first three ethnic minorities were Bai (260), Yi (142) and Zhuang (115), and they made up 89.8% of the total subject population. The other ethnic groups were each too small to be statistically significant and thus, were organised into the “Others (43)” group (see Table 2).

With regard to linguistic background, Table 3 suggests that the students rated their knowledge of their ethnic minority language as “Fluent” (73.4% for primary and 59.6% for secondary school students) and their Chinese (Putonghua) as “OK” (84.9% for primary and 64.6% for secondary school students). But they stated that their knowledge of English was “limited” (82.7% for primary and 51.3% for secondary school students), and knowledge of other minority languages, was either “limited” or that they had “no knowledge at all” of other minority languages.

On the positive side, of the 560 participants, 353 (102+251, 63%) believed that they were able to speak their minority language fluently, as specified by their acceptance of “Fluent”, which indicated that the minority spoken language continued to be popular amongst the participants.

Table 3 Linguistic background

School Level	Language	Fluent	OK	Limited	No knowledge at all	Missing	Total
Primary school	Minority language	102	12	15	7	3	139
		73.4%	8.6%	10.8%	5.0%	2.2%	100%
	Chinese (Putonghua)	20	118	1	0	0	139
		14.4%	84.9%	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100%
	English	3	9	115	9	3	139
		2.2%	6.5%	82.7%	6.5%	2.2%	100%
Other minority language	2	21	83	18	15	139	
	1.4%	15.1%	59.7%	12.9%	10.8%	100%	
Secondary school	Minority language	251	78	49	41	2	421
		59.6%	18.5%	11.6%	9.7%	0.5%	100%
	Chinese (Putonghua)	138	272	8	3	0	421
		32.8%	64.6%	1.9%	0.7%	0.0%	100%
	English	9	182	216	12	2	421
		2.1%	43.2%	51.3%	2.9%	0.5%	100%
Other minority language	8	18	146	169	80	421	
	1.9%	4.3%	34.7%	40.1%	19%	100%	

6.2 Analyses of Students' Answers to the Questionnaires

In this part, we analyse the students' answers to the questionnaires. From Table 4, we see that only 18 (12+6) of the participants reported that they were taught minority languages at school, however 542 (127+415) stated that their schools did not teach them any minority language.

Table 5 shows that 83 (81+2) of the students stated that some subjects were taught in their ethnic mother tongues. However, according to our lesson observations at the two primary schools, the ethnic minority teachers only occasionally used their own languages to explain the content. On no occasion was the pupils' L1 used as the medium of instruction to teach a school subject. No ethnic minority language was spoken in classes, as observed by us, in the three secondary schools. Nevertheless, 83 (58.3%) of the primary school pupils had experienced occasional use of their home language in the classroom, but 476 (58+418) of the participants had never experienced minority language teaching in the classroom.

Table 4 Whether the school teaches a minority language to minority students

Level	Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	Yes	12	8.6
	No	127	91.4
	Total	139	100
Secondary school	Yes	6	1.4
	No	415	98.6
	Total	421	100

Table 5 Whether the school uses a minority language to teach school subjects

Level	Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	Yes	81	58.3
	No	58	41.7
	Total	139	100
Secondary school	Yes	2	0.5
	No	418	99.3
	Missing	1	0.2
	Total	421	100

Table 6 Whether Mandarin Chinese is used as the only language to teach school subjects

Level	Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	Some subjects	22	15.8
	All subjects	117	84.2
	Total	139	100
Secondary school	Some subjects	89	21.1
	All subjects	320	76
	Missing	12	2.9
	Total	421	100

The results in Table 6 are somewhat obscure, because 111 (22+89) respondents stated that “some” school subjects were taught in Mandarin Chinese but 437 (117+320) respondents said that “all” subjects were. Maybe some participants meant to convey that in English classrooms, teachers used English as the teaching medium but all other subjects were taught in Chinese. Alternatively, it could also be surmised that the local Chinese dialect which was used by some teachers was not understood to be Mandarin Chinese by these students.

The responses in Table 7 appear not to agree with the reality, when 446 (116+330) of the respondents answered “No, English was not taught to us in school”. Currently in China, English is offered in primary schools from Grade 3 onwards. In some village primary schools, English is not offered because of a lack of qualified English teachers. It seems especially contradictory that 330 secondary school students answered “No”, when they should have undoubtedly, been taught more English than primary school pupils. Their replies could be construed as suggesting that their schools did not offer English exclusively to ethnic minorities, and that they studied English along with the mainstream Han students.

Table 7 :Whether English is taught to minority students in school

Level	Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	Yes	22	15.8
	No	116	83.5
	Missing	1	0.7
	Total	139	100
Secondary school	Yes	87	20.7
	No	330	78.4
	Missing	4	1
	Total	421	100

6.3 Views on Languages and Language Education

While analysing the factors related to the students' views on languages and language education (Table 8), it was perceived that the students scored Item 6 as the highest (4.81/4.4), i.e., the schools needed more teaching facilities and equipment. Items 2 and 3 received the second and the third highest points respectively (4.59/3.97 and 4.22/4.33), indicating that most of the students agreed that both their Chinese and English should be further enhanced and improved. It was apparent that they were not satisfied with the learning environment.

Item 7 received the fourth highest score of 4.33/3.94, signifying that the participants had a greater preference for mixed ethnic group schools than sole ethnic dominated schools. The students provided the lowest minimum scores of 2.08/1.70 to Item 10, and the second and third lowest scores were given to Item 5 (2.97/2.23) and Item 8 (1.78/2.44). Item 8 implied that they had a strong sense of ethnic identity and confidence in learning English required by the school curriculum as efficiently and capably as their Han peers. The students also assessed the importance of the employment of minority teachers (Item 4: 3.01/3.36), as having significantly more priority than that of Han teachers (Item 5: 2.97/2.23). The students believed that their ethnic mother tongue teaching and learning should be promoted more seriously (Item 1: 3.28/3.56).

6.4 Minority Language Learning

Table 9 indicates that the ethnic minority participants scored Items 4 and 6 very high. The first two highest means (4.08/4.39 and 4.27/4.19) suggested that they had confidence in their ability to learn English as well as their Han peers, and also learn the three languages equally as well as successfully. The third highest score was for Item 1 (3.71/3.94), which implied that ethnic minority students regarded their minority language as useful and valuable and also, asserted that they could learn it competently. The students gave the lowest points to Item 2 (1.56/1.59). The standard deviation of Item 2 is also the lowest (0.869/0.794).

Table 8 Students' views on language education

Item	Level	N	Min	Max	M	SD
1. Minority language teaching and learning should be promoted more seriously.	Primary	138	1	5	3.28	0.861
	Secondary	418	1	5	3.56	0.978
2. Chinese language teaching and learning should be further enhanced.	Primary	139	1	5	4.59	0.867
	Secondary	415	1	5	3.97	0.776
3. English language teaching and learning should be improved.	Primary	139	1	5	4.22	0.808
	Secondary	412	1	5	4.33	0.848
4. More teachers of minority nationalities should be employed because they know minority pupils' needs better.	Primary	139	1	5	3.01	0.771
	Secondary	415	1	5	3.36	0.994
5. More teachers of Han nationality should be employed because they are generally better than minority teachers.	Primary	139	1	5	2.97	1.383
	Secondary	415	1	5	2.23	0.980
6. More equipment such as computers and language labs should be provided.	Primary	139	2	5	4.81	0.550
	Secondary	416	1	5	4.4	0.798
7. There should be more schools with students of mixed nationalities so that they integrate better.	Primary	139	2	5	4.33	0.674
	Secondary	416	1	5	3.94	0.851
8. There should be different syllabuses for Han and minority students, even in the same school, because their learning abilities differ.	Primary	139	1	5	1.78	1.166
	Secondary	417	1	5	2.44	1.159
9. Minority children should know their own minority languages first, then Chinese and English.	Primary	139	1	5	3.77	1.421
	Secondary	417	1	5	3.12	1.133
10. Minority students cannot learn English as well as Han counterparts. So English should be dropped from the school curriculum for us.	Primary	139	1	5	2.08	1.440
	Secondary	416	1	5	1.70	0.974

Table 9 Views on Minority Language Learning

Item	Level	N	Min	Max	M	SD
1. I like my own minority language and hope to learn it well.	Primary	139	1	5	3.71	0.934
	Secondary	413	1	5	3.94	0.929
2. I don't care too much about my own minority language as it is not useful in the future.	Primary	139	1	5	1.56	0.869
	Secondary	413	1	5	1.59	0.794
3. My parents want me to learn the minority language as well as Chinese.	Primary	139	1	5	4.17	1.087
	Secondary	413	1	5	3.54	0.971
4. I think English is important. We should and can learn it as well as the Han peers.	Primary	139	1	5	4.08	0.964
	Secondary	413	1	5	4.39	0.851
5. I think Chinese is most important. We should focus only on learning Chinese.	Primary	139	1	5	3.44	0.902
	Secondary	412	1	5	2.96	1.009
6. I think it is possible to learn three languages equally well.	Primary	139	1	5	4.27	0.977
	Secondary	413	1	5	4.19	0.894

Table 10 Whether minority nationality's written language is taught as a school subject

Level	Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	Yes	8	53.3
	No	6	40
	Missing	1	6.7
	Total	15	100
Secondary school	Yes	1	3
	No	32	97
	Total	33	100

6.5 Teachers' Responses on Trilingualism

Of the 48 teachers and administrators, 15 were primary school teachers and 33 were secondary school teachers and educators. Bai (29), Zhuang (8) and Yi (7) teachers dominated the investigation, with four participants from other ethnic minority nationalities. 68.8% of the teachers had a Bachelor's Degree and 25.0% graduated with an Associate Degree. Their teaching careers spanned from 1 to 18 years, and their ages ranged from 26 to 45 years. Encouragingly, 35 out of the 48 participants rated their eloquence in their ethnic mother tongue as "Fluent".

Table 10 reveals that, of the 15 primary school teachers, eight teachers confirmed that they taught the ethnic minority's written language as a school subject to the pupils, while six teachers answered in the negative. Whereas, for the 33 secondary school teachers, a solitary teacher confirmed teaching the ethnic minority's writ-

Table 11 Whether Chinese (L2) is used as the medium of instruction for school subjects

Level	Answer	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	Yes	13	86.7
	Missing	2	13.3
	Total	15	100
Secondary school	Yes	31	93.9
	No	1	3.0
	Missing	1	3.0
	Total	33	100

Table 12 Time allocated to English per week

Level	Time allocation	Frequency	Percentage
Primary school	2 periods	12	80.0
	Missing	3	20.0
	Total	15	100
Secondary school	2 periods	1	3.0
	5	2	6.1
	6	8	24.2
	7	3	9.1
	8 periods	17	51.5
	Missing	2	6.1
	Total	33	100

ten language as a school subject and 32 teachers replied negatively. Hence, it was inferred that the minority language was used as the medium of instruction in some primary schools, but not in secondary schools. Additionally, it could be inferred that it was only occasionally that some primary school teachers, who belonged to the minorities themselves and who were able to speak minority languages, explained the difficult texts in the ethnic mother tongue to their class, in order to scaffold the minority students and to aid their understanding.

Thus, it is understandable that 86.7%/93.9% of the teachers answered that Mandarin Chinese (L2) was used as the medium of instruction for school subjects as shown in Table 11.

The time allocated in English (L3) classroom teaching and learning was significant, to measure the emphasis placed by the educational administration and school curriculum on English. From Table 12, we perceive that English teaching periods (one period = 45 min in secondary schools, and 40 min in primary schools) per week ranged from two periods to eight in secondary schools. Based on the National English Curriculum, two periods per week for English should normally be offered in primary schools and 6–8 periods in secondary schools. From the figures in the table, we ascertain that English education was greatly valued (eight periods) in secondary schools, as a majority of the schools which were studied allocated the maximum number of hours to English teaching and learning.

Two of the fundamental reasons for offering extra time (6–8 periods) for English to secondary school students were to prepare them for college entrance examina-

Table 13 Whether the proportion of English teaching to minority students is satisfactory for future opportunities of higher education and job markets

Level	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Primary school	Yes	8	53.3
	No	6	40.0
	Missing	1	6.7
	Total	15	100
Secondary school	Yes	31	93.9
	No	2	6.1
	Total	33	100

tions and future job markets. This leads to the inquiry of how these functions were judged from the points of view of the teachers and administrators. Table 13 illustrates that 53.3/93.9% of the teachers reflected that their school provided a reasonable amount of English teaching to minority students, so that they were not in any manner disadvantaged in future higher education and in the job market. However, 40.0% of primary school teachers were not satisfied with the performance of English education.

6.6 *Teachers' Views on Languages and Language Education*

With reference to the teachers' views on languages and language education (Table 14), Item 1 (3.13/3.38) and Item 10(3.13/3.25) were evaluated to receive the first and the second highest mean scores respectively, and Item 9 (3.27/2.56) was ranked third. Since Items 9 and 10 have contradictory statements as Item 9 favours following the same syllabuses as the Han students and ignores the minority language and Item 10 allocates importance to the minority L1, we can understand that the declarations of pros and cons are even or very close.

Teachers assigned a score lower than 2.78 to all other items, thereby implying that they supported the other statements that the minority language was imperative and valuable to the learning of all school subjects. Moreover, the teachers affirmed that English was also beneficial and sufficiently important to justify the time and effort spent in learning it by minority students and they were as capable as their Han counterparts of learning English.

6.7 *Teachers' Views on How to Improve Current Language Practice*

Items 6 and 10 in Table 15 were graded with the first and second highest mean scores (3.93/4.66 and 3.87/4.34), which attest to the fact that schools required added teaching facilities and equipment and that the minority students could learn English besides mastering their own minority language and Chinese as efficiently as their

Table 14 Teachers' views on language and education

Item	Level	N	Min	Max	M	SD
1. The home language of minority pupils is important because it helps them learn school subjects better if they know it well.	Primary	15	1	5	3.13	1.246
	Secondary	32	1	4	3.38	0.751
2. Minority pupils should only learn Chinese and use Chinese to learn all other school subjects.	Primary	15	1	5	2.40	1.121
	Secondary	32	1	5	2.41	1.103
3. English is too difficult for minority pupils. They cannot learn it as well as Han pupils.	Primary	15	1	4	1.67	0.976
	Secondary	32	1	5	2.34	1.004
4. Minority culture here is backward. Minority people generally reject anything foreign including foreign languages.	Primary	15	1	3	1.53	0.640
	Secondary	32	1	5	1.91	0.963
5. Minority pupils' IQ is not as good as the IQ of Han pupils. So they learn new languages slowly.	Primary	15	1	5	1.60	1.056
	Secondary	32	1	3	1.44	0.564
6. Minority pupils should not be taught English because their main task is to learn Chinese.	Primary	15	1	3	1.53	0.640
	Secondary	32	1	3	1.53	0.567
7. If English is taught to minority pupils, they should target a lower level of achievement than that required in the New English Standard.	Primary	15	1	5	1.93	1.033
	Secondary	32	1	5	2.78	1.263
8. The language used to teach and learn English, interlanguage, should be the minority language, but not Mandarin Chinese.	Primary	15	1	4	2.47	1.060
	Secondary	32	1	5	2.22	0.941
9. All minority pupils should follow the same syllabuses for Chinese and English as Han pupils, without bothering to learn the minority language.	Primary	15	1	5	3.27	1.335
	Secondary	32	1	5	2.56	1.134
10. The key for minority pupils to do well in school is, first of all, to learn their own language well. They can then learn all other school subjects, including Chinese and English equally well.	Primary	15	2	4	3.13	0.834
	Secondary	32	1	5	3.25	1.047

Table 15 Teachers' views on language practice

Item	Level	N	Min	Max	M	SD
1. Minority language teaching and learning should be promoted more seriously in schools where minority students dominate or attend.	Primary	15	1	5	3.20	1.014
	Secondary	32	2	5	3.59	0.875
2. Chinese language teaching and learning should be further enhanced in schools where minority students dominate or attend.	Primary	15	2	5	3.33	1.047
	Secondary	32	2	5	4.00	0.803
3. English language teaching and learning should be improved in schools where minority students dominate or attend.	Primary	15	2	5	3.80	0.941
	Secondary	32	2	5	4.06	0.878
4. More English teachers of minority nationality should be employed by minority schools because they know minority pupils' needs better.	Primary	15	2	5	3.60	1.121
	Secondary	32	2	5	3.78	1.070
5. More English teachers of Han nationality should be employed by minority schools because their English is generally better than their minority counterparts.	Primary	15	2	4	2.87	0.743
	Secondary	32	1	4	2.41	0.798
6. More hardware such as computers and language labs should be provided for minority schools.	Primary	15	2	5	3.93	1.033
	Secondary	32	2	5	4.66	0.653
7. There should be more schools with pupils of mixed nationalities so that they integrate better.	Primary	15	2	5	3.33	1.047
	Secondary	32	2	5	3.97	0.695
8. There should be different syllabuses for Han and minority pupils, even in the same school, because their learning abilities differ.	Primary	15	1	4	2.53	0.990
	Secondary	32	1	5	2.31	0.998
9. Linguistic assimilation will not work, but serious bi/trilingual education will. So we should promote bi/trilingualism, not assimilation.	Primary	15	2	5	3.47	1.060
	Secondary	32	2	5	3.91	0.893
10. Given equal conditions, minority pupils can learn English as well as Han peers, in addition to mastering their own home language and Chinese.	Primary	15	2	5	3.87	0.915
	Secondary	32	2	5	4.34	0.701

Han counterparts, under equal conditions and circumstances. Items 3 and 2 with the third and fourth highest points respectively (3.80/4.06 and 3.33/4.00), suggest that most of the teachers agreed that their students' Chinese and English learning skills should be further enhanced and improved. Items 9 and 7 placed fifth and sixth (3.47/3.91 and 3.33/3.97), which implies that the participants did not approve of linguistic assimilation, and would definitely prefer mixed ethnic group schools rather than single ethnic dominated schools.

The teachers provided a minimum score (2.53/2.31) to Item 8 and the second lowest score to Item 5 (2.87/2.41), and from Item 8, it could be inferred that they believed that their minority students had strong ethnic identity and confidence in learning English required for the school curriculum, as competently as their Han peers. Additionally, the teachers accorded more prominence to the employment of minority teachers (Item 4: 3.60/3.78) than Han teachers (Item 5: 2.87/2.41). The teachers declared that their ethnic mother tongue teaching and learning should be promoted more seriously in the school (Item 1: 3.20/3.59). In general, all the teachers concurred that linguistic assimilation would not succeed in schools, but serious bi/trilingual education would, hence it would be in the best interests of the students to promote bi/trilingual education, not assimilation (Item 9: 3.47/3.91). The teachers conveyed the impression of giving responses similar to those of the students, as regards their views on how to improve current teaching and learning practices.

6.8 *Parents' Responses on Trilingual Education*

Overall, 167 parents participated in the survey. The men (118) outnumbered the women (49) by up to 71%. The Zhuang (93), Yi (35) and Bai (33) minorities comprised the overwhelming majority of parents in the survey. A mere 7.2% of the parents had university degrees or had studied further and acquired a Master's Degree; 49.1% had graduated from secondary school or its equivalent and 38.9% had graduated only from primary school, which denoted that many of the parents had limited educational qualifications.

In terms of their linguistic backgrounds, an overwhelming majority of the parents rated their Mandarin Chinese ability as "OK" and their ethnic mother tongue ability as "fluent", but their English ability was "limited", and their knowledge of other languages was either "limited" or they professed having "no knowledge at all".

6.9 *Language Education Issues*

Children attended schools where a few of the minority teachers occasionally used the minority language to scaffold children's learning and understanding of what the teachers wished to convey in Chinese. Consequently, 22.9% of the parents assumed that schools indeed taught the minority language to minority students.

Table 16 Whether school offers subjects in minority language

Level	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Primary school	Yes	56	43.1
	No	74	56.9
	Total	130	100
Secondary school	No	37	100
	Total	37	100

Table 17 Whether English is taught to minority students

Level	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Primary school	Yes	112	86.2
	No	16	12.3
	Missing	2	1.5
	Total	130	100
Secondary school	Yes	33	89.2
	No	4	10.8
	Total	37	100

Table 18 Whether school attaches importance to students' home language and culture

Level	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Primary school	Yes	108	83.1
	No	20	15.4
	Missing	2	1.5
	Total	130	100
Secondary school	Yes	26	70.3
	No	11	29.7
	Total	37	100

However, when questioned as to whether the school used a minority language to teach any additional school subject(s), only 43.1% of the primary school pupils' parents believed that this was true (refer to Table 16). However, not a single secondary school parent contributed a positive response to this query.

Table 17 demonstrates that 16 of the primary school pupils' parents were not convinced that English was offered in their children's schools. In other words, they reflected that their children attended village primary schools where there was no provision for English language learning. But, it was encouraging feedback that 145 (112+33) out of the 167 parents reported that their children's schools taught English.

As indicated by Table 18, 31 (20+11) of the 167 parents thought that their children's school did not attach sufficient importance to the language and culture of minority pupils, but an overwhelming majority, 134 parents, answered this question positively.

6.10 *Parents' Views on Languages and Language Education*

Table 19 suggests that parents held the view that schools needed enhanced teaching facilities and equipment and Chinese teaching and learning should be further improved in schools.

Items 1 and 7 indicate that a high number of parents concurred that there should be greater support and encouragement with respect to teaching the minority language to their children and the parents keenly advocated the concept of mixed ethnic group schools, rather than single ethnic dominated schools. The parents gave a minimum score of 1.74/1.54 to Item 10 and the second lowest score (2.49/2.26) to Item 8, leading to the inference that they reflected that their minority children had strong ethnic identity and confidence in learning English required for the school curriculum as competently as their Han peers. Besides, the parents attached higher importance to the employment of minority teachers (Item 4: 3.62/3.40) than of Han teachers (Item 5: 3.45/2.71), which is similar to the evaluations by the students and teachers. The parents opined that English teaching and learning should be improved in their children's schools (Item 3: 3.83/4.31). Furthermore, the parents agreed that minority children should know their own minority language first, and then Chinese and English.

The results in Table 19 confirm responses similar and comparable with the students' and teachers' views on languages and language education, along with their beliefs on improving current practices in teaching and learning.

7 Conclusion

This investigation studies the views of stakeholders in minority education including students, teachers (educational administrators) and parents in Yunnan by means of three survey questionnaires. Through data analysis above, we are in the position to draw the following conclusions that are relevant to the research questions.

In terms of the language allocation in classrooms, the absolute majority of the stakeholders surveyed reported that Chinese (L2) was predominantly used as the medium of instruction for most or all school subjects in the school. The mother tongue (L1) of minority students was occasionally used orally by some ethnic teachers in primary schools to aid explanations of the texts. This study gives strong evidence of linguistic assimilation in schools in Yunnan.

On the importance of trilingual education, the overwhelming proportion of stakeholders held the view that schools attached sufficient importance to the two languages: Chinese and English. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, our data revealed that ethnic minority languages are largely ignored in secondary schools, although they may still play a limited role in some primary schools. This may inevitably lead to replacive or subtractive trilingualism (see Chapter 11) in that students are acquiring Mandarin Chinese and English at the expense of their home language.

Table 19 Parents' views on language and education

Item	Level	N	Min	Max	M	SD
1. Minority language teaching and learning should be promoted more seriously in this school.	Primary	130	1	5	4.28	0.800
	Secondary	35	2	5	3.71	0.710
2. Chinese language teaching and learning should be further enhanced in this school.	Primary	130	2	5	4.48	0.718
	Secondary	35	1	5	4.66	0.765
3. English language teaching and learning should be improved in this school.	Primary	130	2	5	3.83	0.827
	Secondary	35	1	5	4.31	0.832
4. More teachers of minority nationality should be employed by this school because they know minority pupils' needs better.	Primary	130	1	5	3.62	0.884
	Secondary	35	2	5	3.40	0.775
5. More teachers of Han nationality should be employed by this school because they are generally better than minority teachers.	Primary	130	1	5	3.45	1.162
	Secondary	35	1	5	2.71	0.987
6. More equipment such as computers and language labs should be provided for this school.	Primary	130	1	5	4.59	0.814
	Secondary	35	1	5	4.46	0.817
7. There should be more schools with pupils of mixed nationalities so that they integrate better.	Primary	130	1	5	4.14	1.160
	Secondary	35	2	5	3.91	0.981
8. There should be different syllabuses for Han and minority pupils, even in the same school, because their learning abilities differ.	Primary	130	1	5	2.49	1.259
	Secondary	35	1	5	2.26	1.010
9. Minority children should know their own minority language first, then Chinese and English.	Primary	130	1	5	3.39	1.384
	Secondary	35	1	5	3.20	1.052
10. Minority pupils cannot learn English as well as Han pupils. So English should be dropped from the school curriculum for them.	Primary	130	1	5	1.74	1.158
	Secondary	35	1	5	1.54	0.919

The participants also pointed out that schools need supplementary teaching facilities and equipment, that both Chinese and English teaching should be further enhanced and improved, and that mixed ethnic group schools rather than sole ethnic dominated schools, were more desirable.

A large number of participants believed that minority students displayed strong confidence in learning English required for the school curriculum as competently and efficiently as their Han peers and ethnic mother tongue teaching and learning should be promoted more seriously in schools, because the minority language is regarded as beneficial and valuable. As Holiday (cited in Hu 2007) points out, if there is any break in the attainment of positive self-esteem or self-confidence through the full development of the learner's mother tongue as a valued means of communication or if the learning of the learner's mother tongue and subsequent languages leads to semi-lingualism, the learner's general cognitive development, motivation for learning, and educational progress will be stunted. Fortunately, through the investigation, we comprehended that the participants' ethnic minority self-esteem and self-confidence, at least in their spoken languages, was still strong, which could serve as a sound platform for developing educational programmes that facilitate the cognitive development of all these children.

Both minority students and teachers accorded more priority and importance to the employment of minority teachers than of Han teachers. The teachers were in agreement that belief that linguistic assimilation was not feasible, but genuine and serious bi/trilingual education would work; hence, it would be advantageous from the students' point of view to promote bi/trilingualism, not assimilation. This finding presented similar responses from students and their parents with respect to improvement and upgrading of current educational practices.

In the Chinese context, the definition of bilingual education is restricted to a Chinese educational background, for numerous scholars have defined the term to mean "a speaker of one ethnic group (who) can speak the language of another ethnic group", and "in addition to the mastery of one's own mother tongue, an ethnic group or an individual are/is able to produce one or more languages of other ethnic group(s)" (He 1998, pp. 180–184). In this sense, those ethnic minority students who are able to speak their L1 and also the Han language are all to a greater or lesser extent bilingual (Fishman 1999, pp. 403, Hu 2007, p. 20).

Nevertheless, the pedagogical use of ethnic minority languages has encountered at least three main problems. The first problem arises due to historical reasons: the vocabulary repertoire of specific ethnic minority groups is limited and cannot wholly serve its pedagogical purposes. This is the case with some minority groups in Yunnan. Therefore, "The standardization of new words and terms and the information processing of minority writing [and spoken] systems are two urgent tasks" (Huang 2003, p. 3). The second problem is that in a classroom with children from different linguistic background it would be impractical to adopt only one or two ethnic minority languages, whilst ignoring the others. The third problem, as Fishman et al. (1985, p. 66) point out, is that "language shift of any kind is an indicator of dislocation. It implies the breakdown of a previously established societal allocation of functions". Language shifts may diminish the zeal of students in learning languages seen as less useful. There are proposals such as that by Malone (2003)

to establish education programmes that enable learners from ethnic communities to achieve their educational goals, without having to sacrifice their linguistic and cultural heritage. However, to deal with the problems effectively in the specific context of Yunnan, there might have to be some fundamental changes made in policy making and trilingual education, such as revitalisation of some endangered languages and empowerment of minority groups.

With hindsight, we are able to identify certain limitations of the survey report, as some results are somewhat contradictory. An essential prerequisite that is missing is the knowledge of causal factors behind these views and attitudes. Clarification of ambiguity and the causal factors require further research. Nonetheless, the survey has enabled us to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of key stakeholders and their attitudes towards trilingual education.

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