

The Politics of Bilingual Education in the People's Republic of China Since 1949

Minglang Zhou
Dickinson College

Abstract

The constant struggle between accommodationism and integrationism within the Chinese Communist Party divides its minorities policy and the Chinese government's language policy into three stages since 1949. The first pluralistic stage (1949–1957) recognized minorities' language rights, established infrastructures for minority education, and developed prototypes of bilingual education. The Chinese-monopolistic stage (1958–1977) unified language policies for Chinese and minority languages, promoted Chinese over minority languages in education, and reduced bilingual education to the minimal. The second pluralistic stage (1978–present) has legislated for bilingual education, revived it, and significantly developed it, but also faced its dilemmas. The Chinese experience represents, only from one perspective, the limitation of minorities' rights to and choices of education in their native languages worldwide.

In every country, an education in one's first/native language (L1) is often taken for granted by the majority, but the minorities always have to overcome many obstacles to obtain their rights and choice to this education. Even with rights and choices available, minorities everywhere still face dilemmas such as how to keep a balance between L1 and a second language (L2) and whether to choose bilingual education or monolingual education in the mainstream language, since these choices essentially involve the balance between the maintenance of their native languages and ethnic identities and the advance of their socioeconomic status. It is within this agonizing theme that the current study examines how China's language policy has facilitated and/or limited minorities' rights and choices to education in their L1 since 1949.

There are 56 officially recognized ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Han majority has 1,186 million people, while the remaining 55 ethnic minority groups have nearly 109 million (census 2000) who are

officially defined as ethnic minorities by Stalin's criteria, that is, from linguistic, cultural, territorial, and/or economic perspectives, with consideration of historical factors (cf. Crossley, 1990; Gladney, 1998, pp. 11–18; Harrell, 1995, pp. 22–24; Heberer, 1989; Mackerras, 1994). Minorities in China speak more than 80 languages from five language families: Sino-Tibetan, Altaic, Austro-Asiatic, Austronesian, and Indo-European (cf. Daobu & Tan, 1992; Ouyang & Zhou, 1994; Ramsey, 1987). The minority population is distributed in three general patterns. In northeastern, northern, and northwestern China, minorities such as the Koreans, Mongolians, Kazaks, Uygurs, and Tibetans inhabit large communities that occupy vast geographic areas. In south and southwestern China, minorities such as the Miaos, Tujias, Bouyeis, Dais, Yis, Bais, and Dongs live in relatively small and concentrated communities that are surrounded by Han communities or other minority communities. Finally, some minorities such as the Manchus and Shes live within Han communities.

Given the diverse populations and multilingual settings, bilingual education may be assumed to have been in order. In fact, bilingual education has been rollercoasting in China over the last five decades because of changes in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) minorities policy and PRC's language policy. The first "up" years were from 1949 to 1957, when a pluralistic approach was taken in the CCP's minorities policy and PRC's language policy. The "bottom" years were from 1958 to 1977, when Chinese-monopolistic language policy (equivalent to English-Only in the United States, see Ricento & Burnaby, 1998) was dominant. The second "up" years have been from 1978 to the present, when a pluralistic approach has once again been adopted. These changes in policy have had great impact on the extent and types of bilingual education offered and on educational levels and literacy development in minority communities (cf. Zhou, 2000a, 2001a).

This study first reviews and analyzes the three stages of CCP's minorities policy. It then reviews the subordinate minority language policy and examines its role in bilingual education in minority communities, separately for each stage. The study concludes with an international perspective on the Chinese experience in bilingual education.

The CCP's Changing Minorities Policy

Historically, the CCP's minorities policy has been based on theories about the pace of the evolution from capitalism to communism, and the relationship of ethnic groups to that evolution (the course of which is socialism). In the last half century, whenever views on the pace of that evolution changed, the CCP's minorities policy changed, and so did the PRC's minority language policy.

Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the CCP's minorities policy has been theoretically based on Marxist-Stalinist views of nation and nationality (cf. Connor, 1984). Practically, until about 1958, the CCP modeled

its minorities policy directly after that of the Soviet Union (cf. Dreyer, 1976, pp. 43–137; Mackerras, 1994, pp. 140–145). According to Stalin, ethnic groups (nationalities) arise during the period of capitalism and integrate into each other during the evolution toward communism (cf. Stalin, 1975, pp. 15–88). But how long does it take to evolve from capitalism to communism? This question has puzzled the CCP in all its major policy areas since 1949. In the minorities policy, the CCP faces the question of whether “local nationalism” (a CCP term for minorities’ nationalism) should be tolerated as an inevitable phase before final mutual integration, or be discouraged as retarding a potentially rapid development toward communism. When the CCP affirms the former answer, it allows for a gradual transition from accommodation to integration, whereas when it affirms the latter answer, it pushes for “accelerated” (forced) integration.

The First Pluralistic Stage: 1949–1957

In the early and middle 1950s, accommodationism was dominant in the CCP’s minorities policy. The accommodationist policy was based on lessons drawn domestically and internationally: the failure of the minorities policy of the nationalist government of the Republic of China (1911–1949) and the initial success of the minorities policy in the former Soviet Union. Domestically, the nationalist government, beginning with its founder, Dr. Sun Yatsen, recognized only five ethnic groups—the Han majority, and Mongol, Tibetan, Manchu, and Muslim (Turkic speakers) minorities—and completely ignored all other minority groups in China. The result was forced assimilation in minority communities in southwestern China and secession attempts in minority communities in northwestern China. In its struggle against the nationalist government from the 1920s to the 1940s, the CCP promoted recognition of more minorities, equality among all ethnic groups, autonomy for minorities, and self-determination by minorities, policies that won it support from minority communities (cf. Dreyer, 1976, pp. 63–92; INRCASS, 1981; Mackerras, 1994, pp. 49–78.). Internationally, the Soviet Union influenced China’s minorities policy as early as the early 1920s, when the CCP and the Nationalist Party formed a coalition (INRCASS, 1981, pp. 7–8). The Soviet minorities policy was of particular appeal to the CCP in that the Soviet promotion of equality, autonomy, and self-determination for all minority groups appeared not only to have won support from non-Russians in the fight against the czarist force and foreign powers but also to have strengthened the unity of various ethnic groups under the umbrella of the former Soviet Union in its early years. The CCP adopted the essence of early Soviet minorities policy for national propagation and for local practice in the territory under its control before 1949, and continued this policy in the early and middle 1950s, though in 1949 it completely dropped self-determination, which allows for the possibility of independence (cf. Dreyer, 1976, pp. 93–137; INRCASS, 1981). The

accommodationist policy politically treated minority upper classes as CCP allies, economically allowed minority communities to develop at their own paces, socioculturally postponed socialist reforms in minority communities until these reforms became acceptable to the communities, and educationally promoted use of minority languages in schools in minority communities (Liu & Zhang, 1994, pp. 40–115). This accommodationist policy successfully distanced the CCP from the Nationalist Party and showed a good-faith effort to eradicate “Han chauvinism” (a CCP term for the Hans’ discrimination and/or prejudice against minorities). In the early 1950s most minority groups wholeheartedly supported the CCP and the PRC government, though a few groups were suspicious of the new government (e.g., the Uygurs) or wanted to keep some distance from it (e.g., the Tibetans).

In the mid-1950s, probably due to the CCP’s initial domestic success and the fierce international cold war, the final battle between capitalism and communism was perceived to be imminent—a perception that led to changes in CCP policies. The beginning of a tilt away from accommodationism in the CCP’s minorities policy was first seen in early 1956. In a speech “on ten relationships” in building socialism, Mao Zedong, chairman of the CCP (1949–1976), stated that Han chauvinism should be fought against, but local nationalism should also be fought against (Liu & Zhang, 1994, pp. 120–121). In July 1957, Premier Zhou Enlai (1949–1976) reiterated the same cautiously balanced point in a speech “on several issues in our minorities policy” at a conference on minorities affairs (EBCCEW, 1989, pp. 105). But in September of the same year, at a CCP Central Committee meeting, Deng Xiaoping, then general secretary of the CCP, unambiguously stressed that in the Antirightist Struggle (a political campaign against intellectuals who promoted democracy) in minority regions the emphasis was on the struggle against local nationalism (EBCCEW, 1989, pp. 108). By then, the CCP’s minorities policy was clearly shifting to integrationism.

The Integrationist Stage: 1958–1977

By 1958, integrationism became dominant in the CCP’s minorities policy. It took two forms: a theoretical identification of local nationalism with the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; and a determination to accelerate the assimilation of minorities into Han communities as a short-cut to mutual integration.

In the late 1950s, as socialist reforms spread deeper and wider in minority communities, the conflict between the CCP and minority upper classes became more acute, and was then considered a serious threat to socialism in China. In

July 1958, the CCP Central Committee commented on a report by the CCP Qinghai Provincial Committee:

In work in minority regions, class lines must be firmly drawn with considerations of local situations. It must be kept in mind that, in a class society, minority issues are essentially class issues. Minority issues can not be resolved if their class essence is not grasped. (EBCCEW, 1989, p. 121)

Local nationalism was then considered to represent a bourgeois stand on minority issues, and the conflict between local nationalism and integration under socialism was considered a struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. After some debate on the application of the principle of class struggle in minorities policy and work, the CCP finally clarified its stand by publishing in its journal *Red Flag* (1964, vol. 12, pp. 16–25) an article titled “On current minority issues and class struggle in our country.” Elaborating on Mao Zedong’s comments on black people’s struggle against racial discrimination in the United States, this article asserted that all minority issues originate from class issues, and publicly brought the minorities policy under the CCP’s principle of class struggle—a principle that was to be carried to extremes during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976 (see Spence, 1990, pp. 602–618).

After silencing the voices of local nationalism in minority communities as well as the voices of accommodationists within the CCP, the CCP was considering how to eradicate the threat of local nationalism once for all. The integrationist attitude in the minorities policy was best summarized in a speech by a vice chairman of the PRC State Commission on Nationalities Affairs, to the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference in January 1959 (Wang, 1959). First, the speech stated that by 1958 socialist reforms had been realized in all minority regions (except Tibet) in the establishment of people’s communes, which were to serve as a bridge to communism. Second, the speech claimed that integration factors were developing rapidly under socialism; there were more and more similarities and fewer and fewer differences among ethnic groups. Third, the speech stressed that, in building socialism, the task for minorities work was to speed up and reinforce socialist reforms in minority regions, and announced a timetable of 15 to 20 years for integration. The last emphasis led to “one single step” assimilation of minorities into the Han Chinese as a short cut to the ultimate integration.

The Second Pluralistic Stage: 1978–present

After debate and fight within the CCP in 1977 and 1978, accommodationist views finally began to gain ground during the third session of the CCP’s Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978, which strategically shifted the CCP’s main task from class struggle to economic development. A day after the

CCP meeting, the State Commission on Nationalities Affairs and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences held an academic forum on minority issues, focusing on the timetable for minority integration and the nature of minority issues. Consensus was reached at the forum that there is no timetable for minority integration—minorities will exist for a long time and integration is a long process in a socialist society—and that minority issues are not class issues in a socialist society, since most conflicts in such a society are among its own people. This forum paved the theoretical way for a more pluralistic approach in the CCP's minorities policy. On July 15, 1980, the *People's Daily* carried an article criticizing the 1964 *Red Flag* article and stating in public and in print that minority issues are essentially not class issues. In 1982, the twelfth congress of the CCP stressed that unity among all ethnic groups, equality for all ethnic groups, and prosperity for all ethnic groups are crucial for the future of China as a multiethnic state (EBCCEW, 1989, p. 367). On Document 13 of 1987, the CCP formally affirmed, as its minorities policy basis, the theoretical consensus reached at the 1978 academic forum (AOSCNA & PROSCNA, 1996, pp. 10–11). In 1990, the general secretary of the CCP stressed that the CCP and PRC government oppose forced integration but welcome natural integration among ethnic groups (cf. Liu & Zhang, 1994, p. 239). In 1992, the CCP listed five tasks in minority work for the 1990s: speeding up economic reform; developing education, science, public health, etc.; increasing minority regions' economic independence; improving autonomous governing; and strengthening ethnic unity (cf. Liu & Zhang, 1994, pp. 250–259). Three of the five—speeding up economic reform, improving autonomous governing, and strengthening ethnic unity—were reiterated at a national conference on the minorities policy and work in September 1999 (*People's Daily*, September 30, 1999). Since the 1980s, this accommodationist policy has contributed to several pieces of legislation that include the right to use minority languages together with Chinese in schools in minority regions, and a draft of legislation on minorities' rights to use and develop their languages.

Bilingual Education and the CCP

Language Policy and Bilingual Education During the First Pluralist Stage

From 1949 to 1957, during the first pluralistic stage, CCP minorities policy contributed to bilingual education in minority communities in several areas. First, the legal rights of minorities to use and develop native languages were specified in the constitution and various government decisions and regulations. Second, infrastructures at various levels were established for minority education and language work. Third, implementation efforts were modeled after the seemingly successful Soviet experience in creating writing

systems for oral languages to be used in schools for minorities (cf. Lewis 1972, pp. 154–175). Fourth, prototypes of bilingual education were developed, with success in literacy development. However, in the last two years of this stage, transition from the pluralistic approach to a monopolistic approach began to take shape.

Minorities' language rights

In September 1949, on the eve before the PRC was to be established, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress, controlled by the CCP and participated in by almost all Chinese political forces, passed a provisional constitution for the PRC—the Common Programs, which (Article 53) guarantees minorities the right to use and develop (create writing systems and standardize oral and writing languages) their native languages and scripts, and requires government to assist minorities to do so. In 1954, the rights of minorities to use and develop their native languages and the obligation of their local governments to use their languages were further affirmed at the First Chinese People's Congress and stated in the first constitution of the PRC (Principles, Article 71, and Article 77).

Accordingly, the PRC government made some decisions and regulations on minority language use and development in the early and middle 1950s. In 1950, *The Preliminary Plan for Training Minority Cadres* specified that, in minority colleges, translators should be hired to assist teaching, but appropriate courses should be gradually shifted into minority languages, and that minority students should master their own languages as well as Chinese (China, 1991, pp. 25–26). In the same spirit, but in a broader sense, the Ministry of Education made its first decisions on bilingual education in 1951: (a) in minority communities where Mongolian, Korean, Tibetan, Uygur, and Kazak written languages were commonly used, subject courses should be taught in the local minority languages in primary and secondary schools; (b) in minority communities without written languages or functional writing systems, education should be conducted in Chinese or another minority language of a community's choice while writing systems were being created; and (c) Chinese courses were to be offered in schools at various levels according to minority communities' needs and choice (Xie, 1989, pp. 76–78). In 1952, the PRC government's *Implementation Program of Autonomous Governing in Minority Regions* required local autonomous governments to use minority languages in official business, education, and cultural activities as well as to educate their peoples to respect each other's languages. Collectively, these decisions and regulations provided a comprehensive policy for bilingual education.

Infrastructures for bilingual education

To implement these decisions, in April 1952, the State Council issued regulations on the establishment of minority education administrative agencies. According to the regulations, a minority education agency was to be

established in the Ministry of Education, minority education divisions were to be established within the education departments of provincial governments whose jurisdictions had 10% or more minorities, and offices or specific persons were to be appointed in prefecture and county governments to oversee minority education, including administration, budget, teacher training, years of schooling, course offerings, and teaching materials for bilingual education (Xie, 1989, pp. 91–92). A year earlier, in 1951, the State Council had established a Research and Advisory Committee on minority languages and writing systems within the Ministry of Education to survey minority languages, to create writing systems for oral languages, and to gradually improve “imperfect” writing systems (EBCCEW, 1989, p.17). In the following two years, this committee sent teams of linguists to minority communities. On the basis of their survey, the committee classified minority languages into seven categories and made corresponding proposals for each category in its 1954 report to the State Council: (a) a minority that concentrates in one geographical community with a single major dialect should have a writing system created based on the major subdialect of the community’s political and economic center; (b) a minority that has its population diffused in different communities with several major dialects should have an oral language recording system created for convenience, until further research on issues in the creation of one or more writing systems; (c) a minority that has its population diffused in different communities with mutually unintelligible dialects/languages should have their dialects/languages recorded for further research before any writing system is created; (d) different minorities that use a similar language or similar languages should have only one writing system created if they have no objections; (e) a minority that uses an existing writing system of a closely related language should have its choice respected; (f) a minority that has its own language but has used a neighboring ethnic group’s language, as well as writing system, may keep using that writing system if its members do not require a new system for their native language; and (g) a minority that has its own language but has only a small population, and is willing to use a non-native language and its writing system, should have its will respected. The report also suggests that minority people who voluntarily study Chinese and other minority languages should be encouraged and protected.

The State Council immediately approved the report and asked the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the State Commission on Nationalities Affairs to implement these proposals experimentally in a few minority communities and, if successful, to implement the proposals gradually in more minority communities. To facilitate work in this area, the first national conference on minority languages was held in Beijing in 1955, after which seven teams comprising more than seven hundred linguists were sent to minority communities to survey minority languages in preparation to revise “imperfect” writing systems and create new writing (cf. Zhou, 2001b).

Government efforts toward bilingual education

To reduce illiteracy and improve education in minority communities, the earliest efforts were concentrated on revising the existing writing systems to achieve a closer one-to-one correspondence between phonemes and graphemes (cf. Coulmas, 1989, pp. 225–40; Huang, 1992). The first wave of revision affected eight writing systems: Kazak, Kirgiz, and Uygur, based on the Arabic script; Jingpo, Lahu, and Miao (Pollard), based on the Roman alphabet; and Dai, based on the Indic script (Zhou, 2000b, 2001b). Subsequently, 18 new writing systems were created. The creation of new systems was influenced by the Soviet experience in two areas. First, establishing one standard writing system for dialects of one language and for closely related languages was considered to help speakers of these closely-related ethnic groups integrate into a single community more smoothly and sooner under socialism (Zhou, 1995, pp. 81–82). Second, to strengthen ties within Altaic language communities divided by the Sino-Soviet borders, writing systems in the Cyrillic script were created or adopted for Daur, Kazak, Kirgiz, Uzbek, Tatar, Uygur, Xibe, and Mongolian, though only the one for Mongolian was actually used briefly.

Types of bilingual education and achievements

The actual practice of bilingual education developed differently in three types of minority communities:

1. Those (Korean, Mongolian, Tibetan, Uygur, and Kazak) with functional writing systems of broad usage;
2. Those (Dai, Jingpo, Lisu, Lahu, Miao, Naxi, Va, and Yi) with functional writing systems of limited usage; and
3. Those (the remaining 42 groups) without writing systems (Zhou, 2000a).

In type 1 communities, bilingual education evolved in three types: (a) a minority language used as the language of instruction (LI) with Chinese as L2 (subject) in primary and secondary schools; (b) Chinese used as LI with minority languages as L2 (subject) in some secondary schools; and (c) both Chinese and a minority language used as LI in some secondary schools, usually Chinese for science courses and L1 for other courses. Type 2 communities had type A bilingual education in some primary schools and type B bilingual education in some secondary schools, while they mostly had education in Chinese. In type 3 communities, type B bilingual education was experimentally carried out in some schools where newly created writing systems were tried, whereas the majority of primary and secondary schools used Chinese as LI. In both type 2 and type 3 communities, some teachers voluntarily used minority languages to supplement their teaching in Chinese. However, at that time, bilingual education was officially considered only if a community had a written language. Thus, the supplementary role of oral languages in education was not taken advantage of systematically by the minority education offices in the 1950s.

To a large extent, the three prototypes of bilingual education were offered at different levels in those three types of minority communities, not by design but mainly because of two constraining factors. First, the availability/lack of qualified bilingual subject teachers determined what courses were offered and how many of them were offered in native languages or in Chinese. For example, minority languages were used as LI in lower levels in schools in many type 2 and type 3 communities, because native speakers were usually not qualified to teach higher level subject courses, while Chinese speakers could not teach subject courses in minority languages. Second, the availability or lack of textbooks in minorities languages limited LIs in schools. The government had limited resources for preparing textbooks, and thus invested them mainly in type 1 minority communities, where such limited resources would have immediate impact. Without textbooks in minority languages, schools were more likely to offer subject courses in Chinese. From the way resources were used, it appears that bilingual education was intended as maintenance programs in type 1 communities and as transitional programs in type 3 communities, but with ambiguous status for type 2 communities.

Education in minority communities developed rapidly during the first pluralistic stage from 1949 to 1957, with substantial reductions in illiteracy (Zhou, 2000a) and substantial increases in the number of people completing primary and secondary education as well as enrolling in universities (Zhou, 2001a). Type 1 minority communities, with the best bilingual education, made the most advances in education, and some type 3 communities also made significant progress, while most type 2 communities and some other type 3 communities lagged behind.

Transition to Chinese-monopolistic policy

In the last two years of the first pluralistic stage, there were signs of change toward an integrationist approach. First, in January 1956, signaling its growing unwillingness to allow reforms in minority communities to evolve at their own pace, the CCP Central Committee issued a timetable that writing systems must be created for minority oral languages, and reforms must be carried out for existing minority writing systems within two to three years (EBCCEW, 1989, p. 80). Second, in that same year, the State Council consolidated authorities in writing system reform and creation, putting the Minority Language Institute of the Chinese Science Academy in charge of creating writing systems, the State Nationalities Affairs Commission in charge of approving them, the Ministry of Education in charge of experimenting with them and implementing them in schools, the Ministry of Culture in charge of translation and publication in minority languages, and the Central Institute (University) for Nationalities in charge of training minority linguists and language educators (EBCCEW, 1989, p. 83). This regulation essentially stripped regional minority autonomous governments of authority in minority language affairs and concentrated the authority in the hands of those five agencies in

Beijing, whose staff members were mainly Chinese-speaking Hans. Third, the *Draft Plan for the Phonetic Spelling of Chinese* (in the Roman alphabet, called Pinyin in Chinese) that was circulating for comments began to influence the creation of new writing systems for minority languages. Fourth, in 1957, some of the Research and Advisory Committee's seven proposals to solve problems in writing system creation were criticized. For example, Proposal 2 (to create more than one writing system to accommodate major dialects spoken by one minority group) was criticized as promotion of differences that hindered integration under socialism. Individual linguists and educators were also criticized for promotion of or adherence to ideas not focusing on similarities, under socialism, among minority languages and between minority languages and Chinese, as well as between education in minority communities and that in Han communities (cf. MCEDESCNA, 1958).

Schools were all nationalized in the first few years of socialist reforms. By 1956, primary and secondary schools were administratively under the control of education departments of county, municipal, and provincial governments, while colleges and universities were controlled by education departments of provincial governments or the Ministry of Education. These departments directly controlled budget, teacher training, teacher hiring, curricula, textbook adoption, and LI. After the Antirightist Campaign in 1957, control of political thoughts were also tightened so that schools and teachers were themselves allowed to express only ideas that confirmed to the CCP's stand on everything. The direct impact was that people no longer dared to promote bilingual education when the government showed decreased interests.

In those two years, however, language policies for minority languages and for Chinese still appeared to be independent of each other. An instruction on language planning and writing system reform issued by the CCP Central Committee in 1956 clearly stated that Mandarin as the standard Chinese was to be promoted in Han communities only (PROSCLS, 1996, pp. 7–8). An instruction on the same topic issued by the State Council in 1956 also stated that in minority regions Mandarin was to be promoted only within Han communities and in Chinese language classes for minority students (PROSCLS, 1996, pp. 11–15).

Language Policy and Bilingual Education During the Chinese-Monopolistic Stage

During the Chinese-monopolistic stage, from 1958 to 1977, the CCP's integrationist minorities policy unified language policy for minority languages with that for Chinese, oriented writing system reform for minority languages to the Plan, and reduced bilingual education, changes that led to serious deficiencies in education in many minority communities (cf. Zhou, 2000a, 2001a). There was constant struggle between accommodationist views and integrationist views within the CCP; as result, the monopolistic policy was carried out more actively from 1958 to 1960, more laxly during 1962 and 1963, and more extremely during the Cultural Revolution (1966 to 1976).

A unified language policy

The first major change from a pluralistic policy to a Chinese-monopolistic one was seen in the unification of language policy for minority languages with that for Chinese. In the 1950s, the PRC language policy for Chinese had two major aims: writing system reform and Mandarin promotion, each of which had a long-term goal and an immediate one (cf. Chen, 1999; Ramsey, 1987; Seybolt & Chiang, 1979). The long-term goal for Chinese writing system reform was to replace Chinese characters with a Romanized system, while the immediate goal was to use the Romanized system as a pronunciation tool and to simplify Chinese characters. The long-term goal for Mandarin promotion was to adopt Mandarin as the common language among all ethnic communities in China, whereas the immediate goal was to use it as the common speech among various Chinese dialect communities.

After the State Council's approval of the *Plan for the Phonetic Spelling of Chinese*, in January 1958, Premier Zhou Enlai stressed that the Plan would serve as the common base for the creation and reform of writing systems for minority languages, and the Roman alphabet would be used in similar ways in new writing systems for minority languages (Liu & Zhang, 1994, pp. 190–191; Seybolt & Chiang, 1979, pp. 236–237). For the stated purpose, the State Council approved five Plan-based principles for creating and reforming minority language writing systems: (a) the Roman alphabet should be the base for the creation of writing systems and the reform of existing writing systems; (b) minority language sounds close to Chinese sounds should be represented by the same letters as in the Plan; (c) sounds not existing in Chinese should be represented by Roman letters, a combination of two Roman letters, a newly created letter, or a combination of a letter and a diacritic; (d) tones could be represented, by adding a letter at the end of a syllable, or not represented; (e) writing systems for various minority languages, particularly for closely related languages, should use similar letters and orthographic rules. The underlining rationale for the five principles was that, with one Roman alphabet for both Chinese and minority languages, linguistic and ethnic integration would be sooner and smoother. In March 1958, the second national conference on minority languages was held in Beijing to ensure smooth adoption of the Plan in writing systems for minority languages (EBCCEW, 1989, p. 114; Zhou, 2001b).

Plan-oriented writing systems for minority languages

Between the 1955 and 1958 national conferences on minority languages, 15 writing systems for 12 minority languages had been created in the Roman alphabet, similar to the Romanization of Chinese as specified in the Plan, because in 1956 a decision was already made to follow the then proposed draft Plan. Writing systems created earlier had more differences from the Plan, whereas those created later and finalized in 1957 and 1958 more closely followed the five principles summarized above. The ones with more differences were to be revised in accordance with the five principles in the subsequent years.

Minority communities with existing writing systems in other scripts, or in the Roman alphabet but differing from the Plan, felt politically pressured to reform their systems. The reforms of the Kazak and Uygur writing systems are examples of adoption of the Plan under political pressure against the will of the two language communities. At the second conference on Xinjiang's minority languages in December 1959, which local minority language researchers, educators, and government officials attended, Seypidin Azizi, chairman of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, made it clear in his speech that "to oppose the adoption of new writing systems based on the Plan for the Phonetic Spelling of Chinese and to oppose the development of minority languages along with the Chinese [writing system] is to oppose socialism and communism of the Chinese peoples, and to oppose the creation or reform of writing systems for minority languages based on the Plan is to oppose the unity of all Chinese ethnic groups and the unification of the motherland" (Azizi, 1960, p. 15). Not surprisingly, the conference decided to adopt Plan-oriented Roman writing systems for Uygur and Kazak and to convert to these systems exclusively within three to five years, while it also considered Romanized writing systems for other minority languages in Xinjiang. Experimental use of the Roman systems for Uygur and Kazak started in elementary and secondary schools in Xinjiang in 1960. However, owing to resistance from Uygur and Kazak communities, where many people simply kept using the old systems in everyday life, full-scale utilization of the Roman systems to replace the Arabic ones did not take place in Kazak and Uygur communities until 1965 (Zhou, 2001b). Replacing the Arabic writing systems with the Roman ones had a disastrous consequence in education in Uygur and Kazak communities in the following years (cf. Zhou, 2000b, 2001b).

Promotion of (Mandarin) Chinese and reduction of minority languages

In 1958, an editorial-style article by the Minority Culture and Education Department of the State Commission on Nationalities Affairs (MCEDSCNA, 1958) argued that while written languages with a history of broad usage (Korean, Mongolian, Kazak, Uygur, and Tibetan) might play a role in primary schools, secondary schools, and probably higher education, the role of newly created writing systems should be limited to primary education and literacy education, with a possible role in secondary education in the future. Therefore, the article suggested that creation of new writing systems for minority languages should be discouraged; if a new writing system has to be created, it should follow the Plan with the five principles, and loan words from Chinese for new terms should be promoted in minority languages. Departing from the 1956 instructions by the CCP and the State Council, this article specifically recommended that in minority communities Mandarin Chinese (henceforward, Chinese) should be taught in primary schools, all students should learn Chinese (oral and written both in characters and in Pinyin), and Chinese should be used in literacy classes for

minorities without written languages (and also in literacy classes for minorities with written languages if they so chose). Since the author of the article was not an individual but one of the two central government offices in charge of education in minority communities, the article was read as a central government directive and essentially shaped bilingual education in China for the two decades of the monopolistic stage. If there had been any ambiguity about the status of bilingual education, it was then clear that bilingual education was transitional in all minority communities, with the exception of type 1 communities where it might be used as maintenance programs.

The promotion of Chinese was launched nationally in April 1958 with the magazine *Ethnic Unity* (Minzu Tuanjie) running a forum on the necessity for minorities to learn Chinese. In addition to mass movements to teach and learn Chinese, plans for Chinese courses were made for schools in minority communities, though the implementation of Chinese courses in schools differed in minority communities.

In type 1 minority communities, from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, Chinese courses increased significantly while minority language courses decreased significantly. In Korean communities, where Chinese had already been taught as L2 in primary and secondary schools, Chinese courses started to replace Korean courses as the main language course (He, 1998, pp. 73–74; Pu, 1989, pp. 127–128). In high schools, Korean courses were reduced from six hours a week (in the early 1950s) to two hours (in the late 1950s) to make room for Chinese. In Mongolian communities in the late 1950s, Chinese courses were being extended from primary schools in urban communities to those in rural communities (Shamajiajia & Luo, 1990, pp. 25–26). In Tibetan communities, after 1959, more schools were established to replace the role of temples in education. In primary schools, Chinese courses began to be offered and Chinese language teachers replaced Tibetan language teachers who used to be lamas, while more and more subject courses were taught in Chinese in secondary schools (Geng & Wang, 1989). In Uygur and Kazak communities, the Xinjiang government proposed to expand Chinese courses from secondary schools to primary schools, particularly to those in urban communities (Azizi, 1961).

In type 2 communities, Chinese began to replace minority languages in schools in some communities, while in other communities minority language courses were reduced to the minimum. In Yi, Miao, and Naxi communities, in 1958, newly created/revised Yi, Miao, and Naxi writing systems were withdrawn from schools where they had been experimentally used for just a year or two (Ouyang & Zhou, 1994). In those communities, minority languages were limited to unofficial supplementary status in primary schools, where teachers sometime used these native languages orally to translate Chinese for students. After 1958, newly revised Jingpo, Lisu, and Lahu written languages were still offered along with Chinese in schools and literacy classes in rural areas, while in urban schools Chinese basically replaced them. In Va communities, the newly

created writing system replaced the missionary one in 1957 and had just gotten a good start in teacher training classes and literacy classes when the promotion of Chinese killed its chance in primary schools in 1958. In Dai communities, the Dai language survived in primary schools, though Chinese was LI in secondary schools. The variations in adopting Chinese and maintaining native languages in schools across minority communities were determined basically by the community's history of written language use and its consequent passive resistance. Communities with longer and better established written language-use traditions, such as the Dai, had a better chance to keep their native languages in schools.

Among type 3 communities, some minority communities were able to use new writing systems experimentally in schools before 1960, while most did not even get a chance (Ouyang & Zhou, 1994). Zhuang communities were the earliest to use their newly created written language experimentally in literacy classes and primary schools, though expansion stopped after 1958. In Li and Bouyei communities, the new Li and Bouyei writing systems had just started being experimentally used in some literacy classes and primary schools before they were withdrawn in 1959. In Bai and Tong communities, schools were about to start trials of the new Bai and Tong writing systems when they were ordered to stop in 1958. The other 39 minority groups in type 3 communities never got a chance to experience any formal bilingual education, though unofficially some teachers occasionally used minority languages orally to supplement their teaching.

The Survival of Bilingual Education

After the failure of the Great Leap Forward (an accelerated economic plan to catch up with Britain in 15 years and America in about 20 years, see Spence 1990, pp. 574–582), bilingual education was given a little more room for breath, particularly in type 1 communities, in 1962 and 1963. However, after 1964, integrationism began an overwhelming dominance that lasted until 1977. During the 1966–1976 Cultural Revolution, CCP minorities policy and PRC language policy were seriously criticized for their accommodative practices. Consequently, government offices for bilingual education at various levels were either dissolved or left empty, without any operations.

In type 1 communities, during the last decade of the monopolistic stage, bilingual education was reduced to the minimum, while education in Chinese became more and more dominant. In Korean communities, total hours of Korean in primary and secondary schools were reduced from more than 2,600 to about 1,500, while many students enrolled in Chinese-only schools, owing to political pressures and local communities' perception that Korean education offered no future (Pu, 1989, p. 177). In Mongolian communities, Chinese became LI in most primary and secondary schools (He, 1999, p. 82). In Uyghur and Kazak

communities, new writing systems based on the Plan for Chinese were introduced to schools of all levels, while Chinese courses were gradually expanded to low levels in primary schools (Zhou, 2000b). In Tibetan communities, in most primary and secondary schools, Chinese became LI while Tibetan was only supplementary (Tian, 1998).

In type 2 and 3 communities, bilingual education survived in only a few communities (Ouyang and Zhou, 1994). In the middle 1960s, the new Zhuang, Lisu, and Lahu written languages were withdrawn from the few schools where they had survived the promotion of Chinese in the late 1950s. Dai was still used, together with Chinese, in schools in rural communities, where incoming students could not understand any Chinese (He, 1986). Jingpo was also used along with Chinese in a few primary schools in remote mountainous areas, where Chinese was not spoken at all (Ouyang & Zhou, 1994, p. 766). These few remote schools were able to provide bilingual education, in part because local minority officials were sympathetic and higher Han officials never bothered to visit such remote areas.

Impact on Education in Minority Communities

The Chinese-monopolistic language policy had differing, though generally negative, impacts on the three types of minority communities. The policy was not uniformly implemented because communities varied in their history of native written language use, proportion of Chinese-speaking minority members, and acceptance of monolingual education in Chinese.

In type 1 communities, literacy development slowed down between 1958 and 1966, though it did speed up again slightly during the Cultural Revolution (Zhou, 2000a). Across type 1 communities, literacy levels basically correlate with the proportion of community members who can speak Chinese: a community with more members speaking Chinese is less susceptible to changes in language policy. Secondary education suffered from the transition except among the Koreans, and college graduates also decreased (Zhou, 2001a).

In type 2 communities, the monopolistic stage slowed down progress in literacy development, and even saw a rise in illiteracy in Yi and Lahu communities during the Cultural Revolution (Zhou, 2000a). Primary education was the biggest loser; secondary education did not see any significant changes, since Chinese had always been LI anyway (Zhou, 2001a).

Among type 3 communities, some saw a slowdown in literacy development in the first few years, others during the last years (Zhou, 2001a). Secondary education suffered from the changeover, but later adjusted; college education was hurt in almost all communities, many of which were not able to recover until the second pluralistic stage (Zhou, 2001a).

Language Policy and Bilingual Education during the Second Pluralistic Stage

After accommodationism once again became dominant, the third national conference on minority languages, held in January 1980, called for more respect for constitutionality in minority language use and writing system reforms. The second pluralistic stage has been characterized by favorable legislation and the consequent revival and flourishing of bilingual education, as well as by some educational dilemmas that minority communities face, probably, everywhere in the world.

The Legal Status of Bilingual Education

The 1982 revision of the PRC constitution specifies that every ethnic group has the freedom to use and develop its language and script (Article 4) and that local autonomous governments shall use one or more minority languages in their official business as required by local laws (Article 121). The Law of Autonomous Governing of Minority Regions, passed in 1984, specifically states that local autonomous governments shall decide on LI in schools (Article 36), encourage their officials of various ethnic origins to learn each other's languages, and reward officials who can use two or more local languages fluently (Article 49). The Compulsory Education Law, passed in 1984, requires that primary and secondary schools promote Mandarin as the national common speech but also that they use commonly adopted minority languages as LI if the student body is mainly minority (Article 6). The Regulations on Illiteracy Eradication, passed in 1988, state that both Chinese and minority languages may be used as LI in literacy classes. During the 1980s and early 1990s, almost all local autonomous governments, from the provincial level to the county level, passed legislation on bilingual education in their jurisdictions.

In 1991, the State Council's Document 32 espouses (a) adherence to the Marxist principle of equality for all languages, (b) insurance of minorities' freedom to use and develop their languages and scripts, and (c) practical, active, cautious, and steady work on minority languages for the purpose of ethnic unity, progress, and prosperity (AOSCNA & PROSCNA, 1996, pp. 707–711). According to this document, the main tasks in the new era (the period since 1978) are to implement existing minority language policy; to do a good job in minority language planning; to promote translation, publication, education, news reports and broadcasting, television and movies, and classics in minority languages; to promote academic training, research, and exchange in minority languages; and to encourage all ethnic groups to learn each other's languages. In response to the democracy movement in general and ethnic unrest in Tibet and Xinjiang in particular in the late 1980s, however, the same document stresses that the creation, reform, and use of minority writing systems must strictly follow official procedures—those

set by the 1956 regulations as well as recent laws. It stipulates specifically that: (a) commonly used minority writing systems should be improved, standardized (according to the Plan if in the Roman alphabet), and promoted; (b) if they are popular, writing systems created and reformed during the 1950s can be promoted after legal approval; (c) if not popular, they should not be promoted; (d) minorities who do not have a writing system or do not have a commonly used one are encouraged to adopt an existing one that is commonly used; and (e) writing systems created by local minority communities since the 1980s should be further examined scientifically, and should be subject to strict legal procedures for approval. Since the middle 1990s, the Committee on Nationalities Affairs of the Chinese People's Congress has been drafting legislation on minority languages. The lengthy drafting process may indicate that there have been unresolved conflicts between adherence to the existing policy as stated in State Council Document 32 and accordance of more rights to minorities, and that integrationists within the CCP still resist a more accommodative approach to minority language rights.

The Revival and Development of Bilingual Education

The revival of bilingual education started in the early and middle 1980s with reestablishing minority schools in type 1 minority communities and readopting abandoned writing systems in schools in type 2 and type 3 minority communities.

In type 1 communities, during the two decades of the monopolistic stage, many minority schools in Mongolian and Korean communities had been gradually dissolved, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. For example, in Dunhua County of Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, 45% of the Korean schools were integrated into Chinese schools, while 23% of the Korean schools were dissolved (Pu, 1989, p. 181). Thus, the first task in those communities was to restore minority schools where minority languages are used as LI. By the early 1980s, Korean communities had restored almost all Korean schools, while Mongolian communities had restored about three thousand Mongolian schools, close to the previous highest level (IMPP, 1985, pp. 12–13). In Uygur and Kazak communities, in 1982, the Roman writing systems based on the Plan for Chinese were reduced to the role of a pronunciation assistance system, while the traditional Arabic writing systems were reintroduced (Zhou, 2000b). Tibetan communities made efforts to teach more subject courses in Tibetan in primary and secondary schools (Bass, 1998, pp. 233–237).

In type 2 and 3 communities, efforts focused on reintroducing the writing systems revised/created in the middle and late 1950s but later abandoned (Zhou, 2001b). The writing system for Zhuang was first reintroduced in literacy classes and some primary schools in 1980. In the following years, the written languages of Bai, Bouyei, Dong, Hani, Naxi, Lisu, Lahu, Va, Zaiwa, Miao, and

Xibei were also readopted. Since they had never been (extensively) used, these writing systems were first used in literacy classes and experimentally used in some classes in primary schools. According to some reports, the results appear to be extraordinary not only for illiteracy eradication but also for primary school enrollment (cf. Zhang, 1986). For instance, on the average, in one year, one teacher was able to help only one and one-half persons achieve some literacy in Chinese but one to two hundred people in Miao. Good enrollment in literacy classes also increased the enrollment of school-age children in primary schools.

There have been two new developments in bilingual education since the middle 1980s, particularly in type 2 and 3 minority communities. First, new writing systems for Derung, Qiang, Tujia, Tu, Daur, Donxiang, and Yao (some drafted in 1958 and some quite recently) have been approved by local autonomous governments for experimental use in primary schools (Zhou, 2001b). Second, the concept of bilingual education has been officially extended from merely education in two written languages to include oral language use, which used to be ignored. Since the middle 1980s, local educational agencies have studied, facilitated, and promoted the use of oral minority languages to supplement Chinese as LI in primary schools. Thus far, in primary schools, at least ten minority languages without written forms in current use (Mulam, Shui, Maonan, Lajia-Yao, Li, Salar, Bonan, Hezhen, Tajik, and Blang) have been used in this way and have greatly benefited minority students with limited Chinese proficiency (Ouyang & Zhou, 1994).

By the 1990s, bilingual education had evolved into four major types in minority communities (He, 1999, pp. 100–107; Shamajajia & Luo, 1990, pp. 48–50). First, in some type 1 minority communities, type A bilingual education expanded from primary schools to universities. Second, in some type 1 and type 2 minority communities, type B bilingual education was common in primary and secondary schools. Third, in some type 1 minority communities, type C bilingual education was offered in primary and secondary schools. Fourth, in some type 3 minority communities, a new type—type D—emerged with Chinese as primary LI and minority languages as supplementary LI in primary schools.

Progress and Regress in Education and Literacy Levels

During the second pluralistic stage, the number of college graduates has been rising in communities of all three types, but the number of secondary school graduates has been stable or declining (Zhou, 2001a). Results of efforts to reduce illiteracy have been mixed for all three types of communities, with some groups in each type registering decreases while other groups have seen active increases in illiteracy (Zhou, 2000a). The regress in literacy development and secondary education may result not from a pluralistic language policy but from economic reforms that provide a market for cheap child labor.

The Dilemmas of Bilingual Education

From the legislation examined above, it is clear that during this stage the PRC government has been leaving local minority autonomous governments, to a large extent, to decide what type of bilingual education and how much of it they want, in a society whose mainstream uses Chinese and which is becoming increasingly open to the international community, but the local governments have to confront some crucial issues.

In type 1 communities, there are two principal issues. First, Kazak and Tibetan communities face the question of whether they should extend bilingual education to the college level or just accept a monolingual college education in Chinese (for both Kazaks and Tibetans) or (for Kazaks) in Uygur. There are arguments both for and against bilingual education at the college level (see Geng & Wang, 1989); and even if more local governments decide to extend bilingual education to colleges, there is a shortage of qualified bilingual faculty. Second, in Mongolian, Korean, and Uygur communities that already have regular bilingual education from kindergarten to college, there is a question of how to balance native languages, Chinese, and foreign languages (Pu, 1989, pp. 208-209; Abiti, 1987). Higher education in these communities is not comprehensive and has limited capacity. As a result, many high school graduates have to go to college and college graduates have to go to graduate school outside their communities, where Chinese is LI. For promotion, international exchange, and further studies, minority college and graduate students also need foreign languages on top of their native languages and Chinese, which puts an extra burden on them as compared with native speakers of Chinese.

In type 2 and 3 minority communities, at least two controversial issues have remained unresolved in the last two decades. First, the question of which language is the main LI and which language is the secondary LI in bilingual education involves the conflict between pedagogical concerns and educational goals (Zhang, 1992, pp. 172–183). Regarding educational goals, some argue that Chinese is the main LI and minority languages are secondary LI, since the mainstream society uses Chinese and minorities need Chinese to enjoy political, social, economic, technological, and educational advances. With respect to pedagogical concerns, others argue that the mother tongue should be the main LI and Chinese should be a secondary LI in schools, since people cannot learn a L2 well without mastering their LI. Second, the question of what type of bilingual education should be adopted in primary schools essentially involves the role of bilingual education (Zhang, 1992, pp. 164–171). For example, some people argue that using Chinese as LI with minority languages as supplementary LI is essentially an integrationist approach that

intends only to integrate minorities into the Han mainstream society, while others argue that using minority languages as L1 and Chinese as L2 not only helps maintain minority languages and cultures but also provides a path to the mainstream society.

In all three types of minority communities, there is a problem in balancing promotion of and participation in bilingual education (Geng & Wang, 1989, pp. 40–41). Many minority politicians/elite actively promote bilingual education for their communities, but for socioeconomic advance they send their own children and/or grandchildren to schools where Chinese is L1. Consequently, there is a lack of grassroots support for bilingual education in some minority communities, since both the masses and the elite have deep doubts in bilingual education. There are also technical issues in bilingual education, such as teacher training and teaching materials, that are outside the scope of this article.

Conclusion

The PRC's changing minorities policy and language policy at least slowed down literacy and education development in minority communities, where faster development could otherwise have been possible. This experience is not unique to China, however. Rollercoasting affects bilingual education not only in communist countries but also in democratic ones, such as the United States (Baker, 1996). It leaves minorities at a disadvantage in a competitive world. Bilingual education has moral dimensions (Cutri & Ferrin, 1998). Morally, it is essentially the same for minorities whether a decision on bilingual education is made via a totalitarian process, as in China, or a democratic process, as in California. In the former case, minorities' rights and choices are taken away against their will and to their disadvantage by a totalitarian party, while in the latter case minorities' rights and choices are taken away against their will and to their disadvantage by a democratic majority (cf. Crawford, 1991; Mitchell et al., 1999). Even with rights and choices available, minorities everywhere may still face the same dilemmas that minorities in China face. They have a hard time keeping a balance between L1 and L2, choosing bilingual education or monolingual education in the mainstream language, and even choosing types of bilingual education, since these choices essentially involve the balance between the maintenance of their native language and ethnic identity and the advance of their socioeconomic status in an ever-diminishing space. This issue will become more critical not only for minorities in China but also for minorities all over the world in the intensifying globalization of the twenty-first century.

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