

*Trilingual Education of Chinese University Minority
Students in China: A Case Study*

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Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

Institute of Education

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Declaration

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Signed:

Date:

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Abstract

Discussion of the 55 ethnic minority groups in China is normally associated with socio-political issues. Very little attention is paid to the education and, in particular, the language education of minority groups who account for 8.49% of the country's total population. The present study sets out to address this gap in the literature by exploring the experiences of staff and students on a trilingual Yi-English-Chinese programme at a Southwestern university for minorities in China.

Based on the evaluation frameworks of Spolsky, Green, and Read (1976) and Cenoz (2009), this study explores the overarching question: *What is the role of minority languages in higher education in China?* An ethnographic case study attempts to answer five main research questions:

1. What are the views towards Yi in the wider society, in the Southwest University for Nationalities (SWUN) and in the College of Yi Studies?
2. What are the main challenges of the trilingual education Yi-English-Chinese (YEC) pathway in the Chinese Minority Languages and Literature programme offered at SWUN?
3. What is the range of competencies in Yi, English and Chinese of the YEC pathway programme?
4. What are the policy makers', teachers' and students' perceptions of and attitudes towards the programme?
5. What has been the impact of the programme on individual students?

Qualitative data collected from document analysis, interviews with the architects of the programme, staff and students; focus group discussions with staff and students; classroom observation; and 'River of Life' narratives based around critical incidents identified by participants, indicate that many complex yet dynamic contextual factors shape and determine their experiences. Challenges include tensions between course aims and national policies associated with student

recruitment; the very wide range of student competences in the programme languages upon arrival and the ways in which they position themselves to these languages; and the absence of appropriate pedagogical responses. The implications of these challenges for the delivery of this programme and any future initiatives in multilingual education at a tertiary level are discussed, together with recommendations on possible ways forward.

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Acronyms

A&H - Arts and Humanities
BE - Bilingual Education
BICS - Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills
CALP - Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CFL - College of Foreign Languages
CYS - College of Yi Studies
EV - Ethnolinguistic Vitality
HE - Higher Education
IMAR - Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region
L1 - First Language/Mother Tongue
L2 - Second Language
L3 - Third Language
L4 - Fourth Language
LYAP - Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture
ME - Multilingual Education
MoI - Medium of Instruction
PRC - People's Republic of China
SWUN - Southwest University for Nationalities
TE - Trilingual Education
UCEE - University and College Entrance Exams
XCC - Xichang College
YCP - Yi-Chinese Pathway
YEC - Yi-English-Chinese
YKAP - Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture

Chapter 1 Introduction

The genesis of the present study

While China is a culturally and linguistically diverse society with 56 different ethnic groups, the Han represent 92 per cent of the total population with a monopoly on political power (Tsung, 2014). The attention of researchers to issues concerning ethnic minorities has been relatively recent, particularly in relation to higher education. It was only in 1950 when thirteen higher education (HE) institutions for nationalities were introduced by the central government to China's minority areas for the first time (Lee, Li, & Luo, 2012). Apart from allowing more minorities from the 55 *shaoshu minzu* (ethnic minorities) to have a chance of receiving education in their own regions, those universities were also originally set up to provide a liberal arts education for promising minority students in China who would form the cadres responsible for liaison with central government. In early 2004, I embarked on my teaching career in one of these universities – Southwest University for Nationalities (SWUN) – in Chengdu, a medium-sized inland city.

SWUN is located in the Han dominated neighborhood of my grandma. My parents, uncles and aunties, cousins and myself, all members of the Han majority, grew up on its doorstep and spent a lot of time on its beautiful campus. There were many minorities, mainly Tibetans and Yi, living or doing business in the community and I can still recall that, from time to time when I was little, I heard adults talking about incidents involving minorities; while details of those 'incidents' are no longer fresh in my memory, few of them were good stories. It seems to me that conflict between the Han and other ethnic groups in China, based no doubt in part at least on ignorance of the 'other', has been rooted in Chinese society for a considerable period of time.

I worked in SWUN for two and a half years where I taught English majors in the College of Foreign Languages (CFL) to mixed groups of Han and minority students. Like my colleagues, my awareness of diversity was very limited. I was not sure, for instance, of the relative sizes of the groups or which minority communities were represented. I, however, often heard my Han colleagues making comments on the poor performance of minority students, such as “insufficient language skills”, “their knowledge base is very poor”, or “good at no language at all”. As writers such as Feng and Adamson (2015b) and Xiao and Higgins (2014) point out, negative perceptions of this kind are common.

In 2006, I went to UK to study on a master’s degree programme and then settled in Singapore in 2007, another multi-ethnic society where multilingualism and multilingual education assume enormous importance. I continued my teaching work from 2009 in a local private university as a lecturer and gave minority groups in mainland China very little further thought until 2012 when I was trying to identify a focus for PhD study.

The final choice of my research topic emerged from discussion with Professor Anwei Feng in 2012, a reader in the University of Durham at that time who some years earlier I had helped recruit participants for a pilot study on the trilingualism of Chinese minority students at SWUN. When we discussed my plan, Professor Feng referred to the College of Yi Studies (CYS) at SWUN: “Have you ever thought about Yi-English majors at the College of Yi Studies? They are really an interesting group. In theory, the programme is a strong form of multilingual education; but in practice, you may find it’s a different story”. Prof. Feng’s remarks awakened an interest in minorities: was it possible to find the reasons for their underperformance? Reflecting on the negative evaluations from my former colleagues, it occurred to me that a possible contributing factor in this underperformance was that minority students are often learning through a medium of instruction, i.e. Chinese, which is not their mother tongue. Further, in foreign language education, such as English, they are dealing with three languages, i.e. their home language, Mandarin Chinese and English. This led to a series of further

questions: what are the advantages and disadvantages of being a trilingual in higher education? How do students position themselves in relation to the three languages? What are the aims of the trilingual education programme at the CYS? Given my earlier association with SWUN, which would ensure easy access, and also the special status the CYS holds in China, which will become clear in the course of this thesis, I decided to choose the College of Yi Studies as a case study for my research.

Focus of the research

Although bilingual education in North America and in Western Europe has been extensively studied, “the world knows very little about bilingual education in China” (Baker, 2007b, p. vii). It was not in fact until 2001 that bilingual education (BE), based on English and Chinese, was officially promoted by the Chinese government. And the fact that most discussion of subsequent developments is available only in Chinese makes it difficult for researchers from other backgrounds to find out what is taking place. The size of China increases the complexity of the topic further. It is also noteworthy that most studies of BE in China focus on the majority Han student population. ‘Language education’ has been treated as a synonym for ‘English language education’ with the effect of further marginalizing the home language education of minorities (Feng, 2005a).

Minority students, of course, are not dealing with two but three languages – Mandarin Chinese, a minority language and also a foreign language, usually English, but in some regions also Japanese is of even more recent origin (Zhang, 2007). Most of the empirical studies undertaken to date focus on trilingualism of students in basic education. Tertiary level trilingual education, in contrast, remains largely unexplored. This study aims to address this gap. “What is the role of minority languages in higher education in China?” thus becomes the overarching research question I aim to explore.

Contextualizing the research

In order to provide a context for the present study, I will look first at education in China from the perspectives of the population as a whole, of minorities in general and Yi in particular, before looking more specifically at language education. Then I will examine the various dimensions of the linguistic diversity in China which forms the background for the case study of the CYS.

Education in China

Over the last four decades, China has enjoyed tremendous economic progress to become the world's second largest economy with implications for many spheres of activity, not least education. In post-Mao China, basic education became central to the cause of national and ideological redefinition (Jones, 2002); then, from 1998, China's HE underwent huge expansion and by 2003, total student enrolment had reached 19 million, making China the largest provider of tertiary education in the world (Zhou & Zhu, 2007).

According to Yu, Stith, Liu, and Chen (2012), expenditure on education accounts for 12.6% of the family budget. After food, education is the second highest expense in Chinese people's daily life. A questionnaire survey undertaken by the People's Bank of China (2002) of its customers also reports that education is the most important reason why customers put personal savings aside: 19.8% of customers report it as the first reason for saving, 6.2% higher than the second reason, retirement saving (Hu, Fu, & Zhang, 2003). By 2012, 10.57% of families with children in tertiary education had educational loans (Survey and Research Center for China Household Finance, 2015).

Reasons at both societal and individual levels can explain this situation. At the societal level, as Yu et al. (2012, p. 7) observe, education has always played an important role and learning "has always been highly valued and respected" in

Chinese traditional culture. According to an old saying dating back to the Song Dynasty (960-1279): 万般皆下品, 惟有读书高 [All pursuits are of low value; only learning is high] (Yu et al., 2012, p. 8). As Seeberg and Luo (2012, p. 356) point out, “A millennial-long tradition of academic credentialism” is rooted in Chinese traditional culture and society. At the level of the individual, the pursuit of knowledge is considered to be a practical means of achieving social and economic mobility (Liu, 1998). Many Chinese parents treat academic success as the only – or at least an essential – criterion in determining children’s success in life in general. According to a survey conducted by the Shanghai Academy of Education Science in 1998, in some developed regions and areas such as Shanghai, families who hope that children can enroll in diploma courses, degree programmes or graduate programmes have reached 13.8%, 47.6% and 28.4% respectively (Hu et al., 2003; see also, Tan & Xie, 2009); Gan (2013, p. 77) reports that the percentage of people, born in 1980s or later, with college degrees “is stabilized at 19%”.

The education of minorities

Educational reforms from the late 1970s were targeted at eliminating the gaps in educational attainment between Han and minority students. Initiatives such as the Great Western Development Plan in 2000 (Li, Zhang, & Edwards, 2015) aim to raise educational standards and equalize opportunities for minority populations. As such, with the expansion of HE, the number of ethnic minority students at tertiary level also increased from 226,300 in 1998 to 953,200 in 2005, a 321% increase. The situation of the 55 Chinese *shaoshu minzu*, however, compares unfavourably with that of the Han majority: for instance, while the proportion of students in the population as a whole has remained fairly stable for several years (from 8.41% in 2000 to 9.05% in 2005), minority participation in college and university fell during the same period, from the high point of 6.6% in 1998 to 5.7% in 2001 and 2004 (Tan & Xie, 2009). Yet, the inequality among ethnic minorities in HE remains the same today in China (Lee et al., 2012; Zhu, 2010).

Various factors are involved in the low enrolment of ethnic minority children, not least the economic situation prevalent in minority dominated regions. For example, in the Lahu area of Yunnan province, another Southwestern province with a Yi population of 834,500 (Ethnic and Religious Affairs Committee of Yunnan Province, 2014), and the nomadic regions of Tibet (Postiglione, Ben, & Li, 2014; Schoenhals, 2001), people are struggling to maintain “a meager subsistence” (Teng, Yang, & Yang, 2014, p. 188). In a similar vein, Chen and Wu (2015) depict the brutal reality of life in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture (LYAP) in Sichuan province, home to the largest concentration of Yi in China, in the following terms:

走进村民家，第一反应是震惊，社会发展进步到今天，真的还会有人居住在这样的地方么？在这里，依然保持着人畜混居的生活状态，漆黑的屋子里左边睡牛马，右边便住着一家7口。

Entering a village house, the first impression was shocking. The whole society is so developed today, so why are there still people living in such conditions? Here, human beings live together with livestock. In the badly lit house, on the left are cows and horses, on the right are seven family members.

Yi education

According to Zhou (2001), the illiteracy level of the Yi who form the focus for the present study is very high, ranking in 38th place overall among the 56 ethnic Chinese groups, including the Han, in the 1990 Chinese National Census. Yi participation in HE was ranked 49th with a percentage of 0.26%, for secondary education 44th with a percentage of 10.5%, and 28th, at 34.3% for primary education. Schoenhals (2001) estimates that as few as 15% of the Yi attend junior middle schools, falling to 2% for senior middle schools, a trend with obvious implications for participation in HE. He argues that the reasons include financial difficulties, shortage of labour at home or the fact that some *bimos*, the religious practitioners and influential repositories of Yi culture, think that the Han and even

some Yi who go to Han schools look down upon them as superstitious preachers. They therefore refuse to send their children to schools run by the Han.

For majority of Yi students, they receive basic education through two pathways. One is the Model I pathway which means students receive education through the medium of Yi; the other one is the Model II pathway which means the MoI is Chinese. The different two pathways have a direct and substantial impact on students' application and admission for HE, the language competencies in the three languages involved, as well as their attitudes towards their learning (Liu, Ding, Wang, Yu, & Yang, 2015; Teng, 2001), issues which will be discussed in chapters five to eight.

As mentioned earlier, Southwest University for Nationalities where this study is based is one of the few ethnic HE institutions founded by the central government in early 1950s. Established in 1950, after six decades of development, it has become one of the six leading ethnic universities governed directly under the State Ethnic Affairs Commission in China (State Ethnic Affairs Committee, 2013) with over 29,000 registered full-time students and nearly 2000 staff across 23 colleges and schools (Southwest University for Nationalities, 2016).

The College of Yi Studies (CYS) is a college set up in particular for Yi ethnic university students. It has 591 undergraduate students and 40 postgraduate students (College of Yi Studies, 2016a). CYS has a unique status both within the university and in the country which will be discussed in great detail in chapters four to five. It is worth noting that in China there are only two HE institutions which run programmes related to both Yi and English. One is CYS, recruiting students across the country; the other is Xichang College (XCC), located in LYAP, governed directly by Sichuan Educational Office. Thus, CYS enjoys more reputation, as well as educational support and resources, than XCC.

The sociology of language in China

In the discussion which follows, I will outline the extent of linguistic diversity in China before looking in greater detail at issues which relate to the three languages of the trilingual programme – Yi, English and Chinese – that will form the focus for the present study.

It is commonly assumed in the west that China is a linguistically homogeneous nation where the entire population speaks ‘Chinese’. While it is true that everyone is exposed through the education system which is mainly delivered in Mandarin Chinese, such an assumption is a gross oversimplification. Mandarin is indeed the most common variety, spoken by an estimated billion people (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015). However, it coexists with a number of other mutually unintelligible regional varieties including Wu, Cantonese, Hunan, Hakka, Gan, Southern Min and Northern Min. This confusion has led writers, such as Lewis et al. (2015) to classify Chinese as a whole as a ‘macrolanguage’. Mair (1991) takes an alternative approach, adopting *topolect* (i.e. ‘the speech form of a particular place’ and a literal translation of the Chinese term 方言 *fāngyán*), to defuse the confusion that arises as a result of the mistranslation of *fāngyán* as ‘dialect’. A topolect, then, is a set of similar dialects, e.g. those of Beijing and Sichuan, which is distinct from Wu or Cantonese or any of the larger distinct regional varieties of a language.

After the foundation of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, China followed the former Soviet Union model of a “multi-ethnic state” (Harrell, 1995, 2001b; Ma, 2012). The *minzu shibie* (ethnic identification) process was conducted in 1950s. As a result, some 56 different ethnic groups are officially recognised in China, of which the Han form by far the majority. Found predominantly in the western borderlands of the country, these minority communities differ considerably in terms of history, culture and language (Dai, Cheng, Fu, & He, 1999). The Yi constitute the sixth largest group, numbering over 8.7 million (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

By the same token, in addition to the topolects, over 80 languages, associated with the 55 *minzu* (ethnic group) have also been recognized in the process of the *minzu shibie*. The situation is complicated still further by the emergence of code-mixing varieties. Take Tuanjie Hua in LYAP as an example, which draws on Yi and the Sichuan topolect and is used mainly in informal contexts (Tsung, 2012).

The origins of the Yi language

As mentioned earlier, an exercise was carried out in 1950s to determine Chinese ethnic group boundaries. There were two steps involved in the process of ethnic identification: first each group which claimed to be a *minzu* (ethnic group) submitted their application; second, a team of specialists, mainly in language and culture, investigated the validity of the group in relation to Stalin's four criteria of a nationality (Harrell, 1995; Wang, 2010): "having a common territory, language, economy, and psychological makeup expressed in a common culture" (Lin, 1987; Jiang, 1985, cited in Harrell, 1995, p. 66). In practice, it was often "the pre-existing categories [of the investigators] that took precedence [over the criteria]" in what proved to be a highly complex process. For example, just in Yunnan province itself, 260 groups submitted applications (p. 82).

In some cases and notably in most of the Southwestern areas, it was difficult to apply these criteria. Besides, there was extensive contact between ethnic groups living in this part of China leading to considerable cultural and linguistic diversity. For this reason, it is not feasible to draw clear boundaries among those groups and establish each as a separate *minzu*. In these circumstances, as discussed earlier, the self-identification of the various groups "cannot always be made to coincide with the pre-existent Chinese categories" (Harrell, 1995, p. 83). When linguistic and cultural similarities appeared to demonstrate "historical kinship", many relatively small groups were combined into one group.

This was the case of the Yi. Even though there were clear discrepancies between self-identification and the official classification (Heberer, 2005) and even though the Yi language actually encompasses a wide range of varieties from the Tibeto-Burman family (Harrell, 1990), groups speaking mutually unintelligible but related varieties (Harrell, 2001a; Liu et al., 2015) were classified as one group, the *Yi*, and their language as *Yi*. As Harrell (1995, p. 66) asserts, “the category Yi [...] was created not by the Yi people themselves but by the Chinese who administered, fought, and interacted with them, and by the Chinese and Western scholars who studied them”. He adds further that “there is [simply] no commonly used term in all the Yi languages to refer to the Yi as a whole” (Harrell, 2001a, pp. 7-8).

This, then, is the historical context in which Yi was born. It is currently considered to comprise six main varieties¹: Northern Yi (known as *Nuosu*, consisting of 31% of the total numbers of speakers, though in Liangshan this proportion was as high as 43.4% by the end of 2001); Southern Yi (*Nisu*, with 16% of speakers); Southeastern Yi (*Sani*, 8% speakers); Central Yi (*Lipuo* or *Lipo*, 12% speakers); Eastern Yi (*Nasu*, 16% speakers); and Western Yi (*Shuitian* and *Laluo*, 10%) (Bradley, 2001; Heberer, 2005; Zhou, 2003). Zhou (2003) reports that Mandarin was the first language spoken by the remaining 7% of the Yi. However, three years later, based on the 2006 data from the survey of language and script use in China, he estimated that the percentage of the Yi who speak both Mandarin and “Hanyu (Han language) dialects” (p. 6) had reached 81.43% (Zhou, 2012).

Another issue which needs to be clarified in any discussion of the language of the Yi is the difference between Nuosu and Yi. Some writers (Heberer, 2005; Hein & Zhao, 2016; Kraef, 2014; Liu et al., 2015; Svantesson, 1991) use Nuosu and Yi interchangeably, possibly because the focus of their research is the Liangshan mountain areas where the Nuosu Yi form the majority (Gerner, 2013; Harrell,

¹ The criteria for classifying the Yi vary from researcher to researcher. According to Heberer (2005), over 50 groups were grouped to form the Yi, while Hsieh (1982, p.6, noted in Harrell, 1990), calculates this figure as sixty or even more different groups using various names. But the most common classification has six main divisions. This may be, in part at least, because that historically, the Yi were divided into six clans (Bradley, 2001).

1996). The Nuosu are the largest Yi group living in Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou and Guangxi provinces. Today, over two million Nuosu Yi live in LYAP (Bamo, 2001a; Kraef, 2014); here Nuosu and Yi indeed refer to the same language and are used interchangeably. This is because, first, the Yi living in Liangshan called themselves Nuosu until the mid-1950s (Heberer, 2005) and now “they identify themselves as Yi” (Harrell, 2001b, p. 81); second, the Nuosu script is the basis for the standardized Yi written language. However, standard Yi (Nuosu) is limited to Sichuan province; in provinces such as Guizhou and Yunnan, different standard versions are used.

Bender (2015, p. 100) suggests that “[When] speaking of the ‘Yi’ it is necessary to state clearly which cultural area of the Yi regions one is talking about”. I use both Nuosu and Yi to refer to the language of the Yi in Liangshan in the following discussion, because the population being studied is mainly from the Liangshan area.

The spread of Putonghua

Putonghua, known variously as common speech, Mandarin Chinese or Standard Modern Chinese, has been promoted across the country since the mid-1950s. But serious promotion started from 1982 when its status, as the only national standard language and *lingua franca* designed to achieve national unity and cohesion, was enshrined in the Constitution (Feng & Adamson, 2015c; Zhou, 2012). And according to the 2000 national census, the percentage of Chinese population who could speak Putonghua in conversation reached 53.06% (Zhou, 2012).

On the one hand, the government makes great efforts to maintain political stability and promote national cohesion through promotion of *Putonghua*. On the other hand, it needs to respond to linguistic diversity. In spite of the primacy of Putonghua, however, minorities’ language rights are also recognised in the Constitution. As Zhou (2008, p. 8) argues, “Undoubtedly, it is an uphill battle for the P.R.C. to maintain a harmonious sociolinguistic life within the framework of one national

language (Putonghua/Han) alongside linguistic diversity (Han dialects and minority languages)”.

In 1989, Fei Xiaotong, the famous Chinese anthropologist, proposed “*Zhonghua Minzu Duoyuan Yiti* (diversity in unity of the Chinese nation)” (Fei, 1999; Zhou, 2003, 2008). On one level, “the Chinese nation” is seen as embracing all Chinese citizens; at another level it accommodates the different ethnic identities associated with each of 56 ethnic groups. The Chinese government enthusiastically employed Fei’s slogan of “one nation with diversity” opening the way, at least in theory, for a more balanced bilingualism in both Chinese and minority languages.

Two types of BE have emerged in China in response: the first traditional approach is targeted at minority populations and involves the teaching of Mandarin Chinese and an ethnic minority language; the second, more recent approach, is targeted mainly at the majority Han population, involves Mandarin Chinese and English in recognition of its growing importance as a global language (Feng, 2005a, 2007b). In both contexts, however, the situation is further complicated by the fact that teachers in rural areas are more likely to use a topolect rather than Mandarin while teachers in urban areas are likely to code switch between Mandarin and non-Mandarin topolects. In the present study, for instance, Yi students were and continue to be exposed to both Mandarin and the Sichuan topolect in basic and tertiary educational environments. For reasons of simplicity, however, unless specified I will use ‘Chinese’ throughout to refer to this code-switching behaviour among the Yi students.

The spread of English

Since the late 1970s, English has played an increasingly significant role in China’s open-door economic reforms, and social and cultural development (Feng, 2011; Hu, 2003; Tsung, 2014). Membership of the World Trade Organization in 2001 further reinforced the government’s determination to link with the rest of the world through

the expansion of English language education. According to Hu (2003) and Wu Qidi (Wu, 2004), the former Vice-Minister of Education of China, by 2003 more than 95% of 80 million students were studying English as a compulsory subject at secondary school and 19 million students were learning English at tertiary level. The number of university English teachers reached 50,000 in the same year.

The boom in English learning in China has had complicated minority language education with the move from bilingual to trilingual provision for very many minority students (Feng, 2007b): in addition to their mother tongue (L1), and Chinese (L2), they also need to learn a foreign language, most often English (L3). The present study aims to address the issues for students, teachers and administrators in this transition.

Theoretical rationale for the study

This study has the potential to further our understanding in a number of ways. It will highlight the dominance of the Han linguistic group whose language is enshrined in national policy (see, in particular, chapter four). It will underline the pressures of globalization for English language discussed above. Moreover by focusing on the Yi, a minority group largely ignored by researchers both inside China and beyond, it will stimulate discussion of issues such as the need to balance language maintenance, ethno-cultural identity, cultural self-determination, self-esteem and cultural empowerment against the pressures of the demands of both national language policy and those of globalization (see chapters four to eight).

Structure of thesis

This study consists of nine chapters. Chapter One has given an explanation of the reasons why I have chosen this area of research and has provided contextual information on Chinese education in general and language education with particular attention to minorities' language education.

Chapter Two reviews the literature on a number of concepts which underpin the present study, namely bi-, multi- and plurilingualism, and bilingual and multilingual education. Models of bilingual and multilingual education are discussed, as are approaches to their evaluation.

Chapter Three justifies my choices around methodology. It presents my philosophical position, the design of the qualitative case study, sampling, access issues, the methods used to collect data, data analysis, rigour in my research, triangulation and ethical issues.

Chapter Four introduces ethnolinguistic vitality, a fundamental concept informing the interpretation of my findings. The three different dimensions of ethnolinguistic vitality proposed by Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977) – demography, status and institutional support - which provide the framework for my discussion are presented in turn.

Chapters five to seven present the main findings of my study concerning the main challenges in delivery of the programme (Chapter Five), students' language competencies in the three languages involved (Chapter Six), and the evaluation of the programme (Chapter Seven).

Building on the data analysis in chapters five to seven, Chapter Eight moves from breadth to depth through three vignettes which illustrate the trajectories of minority students at the individual level, collected using the River of Life method.

The last chapter, Chapter Nine, concludes with a summary of the findings organised in such a way as to answer my research questions formulated in Chapter Three. The chapter also reflects on the strengths and limitations of the study and explores implications for future research.

Chapter 2 Key Concepts

Introduction

In this chapter I look at key concepts which underpin my analysis. I start with the important notion of ethnolinguistic vitality which offers explanations for the motivation for bi-/multilingual education and the effectiveness of the associated educational models. I will then examine the various definitions used in discussions of education in linguistically diverse contexts, including bi-/tri-/multi- and plurilingualism. Next, I will look at the different theoretical frameworks, types of educational response and attempts to evaluate their usefulness. Finally, I describe the ways in which trilingual education is delivered in China.

Ethnolinguistic vitality

The key concept for the strength of the life force of a language within a community is ethnolinguistic vitality (EV). Originally introduced by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977), it has been widely used for over three decades as a framework for research (Cenoz, 2014; Ma & Renzeng, 2015). Ethnolinguistic vitality means a group's ability "to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in intergroup situations" (Giles et al., 1977, p. 308). It is generally held to consist of three main dimensions: status, demography and institutional support. The variables which constitute the status dimension concern the prestige of the linguistic group in the intergroup context and include the economic, social, sociohistorical and language statuses; the demographic variables are those related to "group distribution and group numbers factors"; and institutional support refers to the degree of formal and informal support or representation a language receives in the various institutions of a nation, region or community (Giles et al., 1977, pp. 309-316).

The notion of ethnolinguistic vitality is important for this study because of its potential for helping us understand the strength of a language in bi-/multilingual contexts and the effectiveness of bi-/multilingual education programmes. Based on the EV in China, as we will see, for instance, Zhou (2000, 2001) categorises Chinese minority communities into three groups based, in part at least, on their ethnolinguistic vitality of their languages (for further discussion, see Chapter Two).

Definitions and models

Lewis (1976, cited in Cummins & Swain, 1986, p. xiv) observes that “bilingualism and bilingual education are phenomena which have been studied since ancient times”. And the research continues. The past several decades have seen bilingualism and multilingualism become major topics in inter-disciplinary research (Hornby, 1977; Li, 2007; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). A wide range of writers including Beardsmore (1986), Cenoz (2009), Baker (1993, 2011), Cummins (1980a, 2000), Edwards (1994), Edwards (2004), Garc á (2009), and Feng (2009b, 2013, 2011) have made significant contributions to the growing awareness of this area. In the late 20th century, Colin Baker, “one of the most perceptive scholars in the field of bilingual education” (Garc á, 2009, p. 5) published the first edition of *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* in 1993; the developments charted in the 5th edition (Baker, 2011) are an indication of the great progress which has been made in this field.

The vigorous debates currently taking place include the exponential spread of English, as a global *lingua franca* (Graddol, 2006) and its nativisation across cultural and linguistic boundaries. It may indeed be overly simplistic to assert that in most countries English is a component of bilingual or trilingual education given cases such as Luxembourg (Cenoz, 2009; Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, 2008) where Luxemburgish, French and German have a role in the education system. However, the unprecedented impact of English worldwide is self-evident. Although subject to some criticism (Graddol, 1997), Kachru's (1985) three circle framework

graphically conceptualizes the spread of English in terms of three groups (the inner, outer and expanding circles)². Feng (2011, p. 1) adopts the term “third wave” to refer to the rapidly “expanding circle” (p. 3) of English as a second language in general and English as a third language in minority education in China.

The spread of English has undoubtedly had a huge impact on many aspects of life in the 21st century. According to Eurydice (2008, cited in Cenoz 2009), 90% of secondary school students in the European Union (outside the UK and Ireland) are learning English. In China, learners of English number more than 226 million (Feng, 2009a; Yang, 2005). In a similar vein, data from (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2015) indicates that there had been 872.9 million internet users of English by 2015 (see Figure 2.1). And, the number is still growing. In short, the role of English is an important focus for research on bilingualism and multilingualism.

Top Ten Languages Used in the Web - November 30, 2015 (Number of Internet Users by Language)					
TOP TEN LANGUAGES IN THE INTERNET	Internet Users by Language	Internet Penetration (% Population)	Users Growth in Internet (2000 - 2015)	Internet Users % of World Total (Participation)	World Population for this Language (2015 Estimate)
English	872,950,266	62.4 %	520.2 %	25.9 %	1,398,283,969
Chinese	704,484,396	50.4 %	2,080.9 %	20.9 %	1,398,335,970
Spanish	256,787,878	58.2 %	1,312.4 %	7.6 %	441,052,395
Arabic	168,176,008	44.8 %	6,592.5 %	5.0 %	375,241,253
Portuguese	131,903,391	50.1 %	1,641.1 %	3.9 %	263,260,385
Japanese	114,963,827	90.6 %	144.2 %	3.4 %	126,919,659
Russian	103,147,691	70.5 %	3,227.3 %	3.1 %	146,267,288
Malay	98,915,747	34.5 %	1,626.3 %	2.9 %	286,937,168
French	97,729,532	25.4 %	714.9 %	2.9 %	385,389,434
German	83,738,911	87.8 %	204.3 %	2.5 %	95,324,471
TOP 10 LANGUAGES	2,632,248,147	53.5 %	787.0 %	78.2 %	4,917,011,992
Rest of the Languages	734,013,009	31.3 %	1,042.9 %	21.8 %	2,342,890,251
WORLD TOTAL	3,366,261,156	46.4 %	832.5 %	100.0 %	7,259,902,243

Figure 2.1: Top ten languages on the web 2015 (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2015)

The discussion of bilingualism and multilingualism, of course, extends well beyond consideration of the role of English to issues such as nation building and political

² The inner circle includes English speaking countries such as UK and USA; the outer circle is occupied with countries where English is used as an official language, such as Singapore and India; and the expanding circle refers to countries where English is studied as a foreign language, such as China and Brazil.

stability at a societal level (Zhou, 2008; 2015, see also Chapter One) to cultural and linguistic identity, or even personal needs, at an individual level. Before exploring questions such as these, however, it is important to look first at definitions of bilingualism and multilingualism and, bilingual education and multilingual education because these concepts are essential for an understanding of the Chinese situation. As Li (2013, p. 26) argues, bilingualism and multilingualism have attracted:

the attention of scholars in disciplines ranging from linguistics, psychology, neurology, and computer science, to sociology, education, public policy, and management. Scholars with such different disciplinary backgrounds and research interests often approach issues of bilingualism and multilingualism with very different, sometimes contradictory, views of what bilingualism and multilingualism consist of [...].

Bi-, multi- and plurilingualism

Bilingualism

Researchers often place emphasis on different aspects of a phenomenon. As Cummins and Swain (1986, p. 7) observe:

The term ‘bilingualism’ has not been used in a consistent way among researchers and theoreticians. Definitions vary considerably. Macnamara (1976), for example, defines bilinguals as those who possess at least one of the language skills [...] even to a minimal degree in their second language. At the other end of the scale, bilinguals have been defined as those who demonstrate complete master of two different languages without

interference between the two linguistic processes (Oestreicher 1974) or who have native-like control of two or more languages (Bloomfield 1933).

In this approach, then, the focus is on the people who speak the languages and their linguistic capabilities, as defined in the literature (Baker & Jones, 1998). In contrast, Aucamp (1926, cited in Beardsmore, 1986, p. 2) pays greater attention to the languages themselves as used in a social context:

Bilingualism is the condition in which two living languages exist side by side in a country, each spoken by one national group, representing a fairly large proportion of the people.

Similarly, Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) and Grosjean (1982) consider bilingualism as the presence or “the regular use of two or more languages (or dialects) in [people’s] daily lives” (Grosjean, 2008, p. 10). According to Feng (2005a), the most frequently cited definition of bilingualism in the Chinese literature, follows the same pattern: “the use of at least two languages either by an individual or by a group speakers, such as the inhabitants of a particular region or a nation” (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1998, p. 45). Li (2013, p. xxi) also considers that bilingualism refers to “the knowledge and use of two languages”.

Although the emphasis has shifted from the people associated with the languages to the languages themselves as used by an individual or a group of individuals (Baker 2011), typically, then, bilingualism refers to competence in two or more languages (Baker, 2001). Other issues, however, also need to be considered. What is communicative competence, multilingual competence, or linguistic and cognitive abilities? Furthermore, what do we mean by ‘two languages’ – two unintelligible languages, two different varieties, or even dialects of the same language? For instance, as mentioned in Chapter One, Mair (1991) and Groves (2008) treat different varieties of what is commonly called Chinese, which are specific to given Chinese regions, as ‘*topolects*’ because they are not always mutually intelligible. Such questions challenge established theories.

When it comes to the use of two languages in education and the diversified linguistic repertoire students bring to classroom, another term discussed frequently in recent years is *translanguaging* (Baker, 2011; Garc ía, 2009; Garc ía & Li, 2015; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Li, 2016). *Translanguaging*, coined by Cen Williams as *trawsieithu* in Welsh and translated by Colin Baker (Baker, 2001, 2011), describes a pedagogical practice where the input (reading and listening) is in one language and the output (writing and speaking) is in a different language. However, it is distinct from code-switching or translation because it goes beyond the boundaries of languages (Garc ía, 2009; Li, 2016). As Garcia (2009) argues, it highlights a “socioeducational process” (Garc ía & Li, 2015, p. 226) of bilinguals who “translanguage [not only] to include and facilitate communication with others, but also to construct deeper understandings and make sense of their bilingual worlds” (p. 45). As an approach to bilingualism and bilingual education, *translanguaging*, thus, reflects the more nuanced complexities of bilingualism and bilingual education.

Skutnabb-Kangas (1981, p. 81) sums up the situation thus: “Every researcher uses the kind of definition which best suits her own field of enquiry and her research aims. In this sense all definitions are arbitrary”. Nonetheless there is a growing consensus on two issues. First, there is a need to reframe the concept of bilingualism (Garc ía, 2009). More traditional ways of defining bilingualism, such as “native-like control of two languages” (Bloomfield, 1933, p. 56), limit bilingualism to equal mastery of two languages (Edwards, 1994). Bilingualism, as understood today, is not simply about two languages (Baker, 2011; Baker & Jones, 1998; Beardsmore, 1986; Garc ía & Sylvan, 2011), or two languages at the same proficiency level. It is an “all-terrain vehicle” rather than “a bicycle with two balanced wheels” (Garc ía, 2009, p. 45) and it is complex in character (Cenoz & Valencia, 1994). The notion of balanced bilingualism has thus been replaced by a much broader range of concepts, including unbalanced or dominant bilingualism (Peal and Lambert, 1962, noted in Bhatia & Ritchie, 2004; Garc ía, 2009); productive or active bilingualism (Myers-Scotton, 2006), involving speaking and

writing skills in two or more languages, and receptive or passive bilingualism, involving listening and reading skills only (discussed in Beardsmore, 1986). The second issue on which there is a growing consensus concerns the distinction between individual and societal bilingualism (Baker, 2011; Beardsmore, 1986; Dewaele, Housen, & Li, 2003). Individual bilingualism is an attribute of the speaker and is researched from linguistic and psycholinguistic perspectives (Edwards, 2013). Five issues can be related to individual bilingualism (Baker & Jones, 1998): the distinction between language ability and language use; different levels of proficiency across the four language skills; unbalanced bilinguals; different levels of competence between unbalanced bilinguals and monolinguals; and, finally, instability of bilinguals' competence. On the other hand, societal bilingualism is relatively more permanent because the factors involved do not usually change over a short period of time. It places an emphasis on historical, educational and political aspects. As Beardsmore (1986) suggests, societal bilingualism is "more involved with the sociology of language than with sociolinguistics or pure linguistics". It studies the inter-relationships between languages and the community where the languages are present, and "the degree of connection between political, economic, social, educative and cultural forces and language" (p. 4).

Multilingualism

The Greek prefix '*bi-*' means 'two'; '*tri-*' refers to 'three' while both the Latin '*multus*' or '*multi*' and '*pluri-*' indicate many (Cenoz, 2009, 2012b, 2013). Nevertheless, the distinctions are not as neat as it might seem at first sight and the literature in this field is often confusing.

When multilingualism is discussed, "one of the first issues to consider is the number of languages involved" (Cenoz, 2012b, p. 2). Is it as simple, however, as adding more languages, i.e. '*2+1*', '*2+n*' or even '*1+n*'? Logically, we might expect that bilingualism means two languages and multilingualism means three or more

languages. Yet, in some definitions the line is not drawn clearly, not only between ‘two and more’ but between ‘one and more than one’:

Multilingualism is understood as the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives.

(Commission of European Communities, 2007, p. 6)

The term/concept of multilingualism is to be understood as the capacity of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage on a regular basis in space and time with more than one language in everyday life.

(Franceschini, 2009, p. 27)

Cenoz (2009, p. 2), however, considers that “multilingualism usually implies more than two languages” while at the same time also arguing that bilingualism (individual and societal) can be part of multilingualism in a broad sense (Cenoz, 2009, 2012b; Franceschini, 2009). Thus, for some scholars multilingualism includes bilingualism.

Baker (2011), nonetheless, argues that bilingualism can include multilingualism: “Bilingualism often includes multilingualism [...] While bilingualism and multilingualism are different, where there is similarity multilingualism is [...] combined under bilingualism” (pp. ix, 3). Similarly, Beardsmore (1986, p. 3) considers that “the term bilingualism does not necessarily restrict itself to situations where only two languages are involved but is often used as a *shorthand* [my italics] form to embrace cases of multi- or plurilingualism”. Thus, the two terms, *bilingualism* and *multilingualism* are often used interchangeably in literature. There are, however, cases where writers refer very specifically to the practices associated with or the acquisition of three languages, i.e. *trilingualism* (Cenoz & Etxague, 2013; Cenoz & Gorter, 2011), as, for instance, is the case for Basque, Spanish and English in the Basque Country. Similarly, Feng, Adamson and a national network

of researchers in ten key regions in China (see, for instance, Adamson & Feng, 2015; Feng, 2009a; Feng & Adamson, 2015a; Hu, 2007; Sunuodula & Cao, 2015; Sunuodula & Feng, 2011; Wang, 2016) focus on the emerging trilingualism of Chinese minority home languages, Mandarin Chinese and English provision in China.

Here, we can see that the definitions of multilingualism are divergent because researchers are focusing on different topics in a wide range of language-contact settings. They consequently draw a different picture of the same scene (if they are indeed the same), which, in turn, affects our research methodologies and methods (Li, 2013) and can be a cause for possible confusion. This has been a long-standing problem (Kemp, 2009).

Riagain (2013) provides a possible alternative perspective. Inspired by the French sociologist Bourdieu, he considers multilingualism as an ‘elastic’ concept: “everyone can unconsciously manipulate [its] extension in order to adjust [it] to their interests, prejudices and social fantasies” (p. 1). Edwards (2013) also points out that every language-contact situation is unique, not because of individual elements or factors but because of the combination of all the elements involved. Multilingualism, as discussed above, is a complex phenomenon associated with different disciplines (Cenoz, 2012) where scholars employ different methodologies and frameworks (Grosjean, 1998) to study different aspects. We should therefore recognize the dynamic nature of multilingualism, as well as bilingualism (Edwards, 2015), and allow a more ‘elastic’, extended, various and multifaceted approach. For example, traditionally, when we talk about multilingual phenomena, we think of several languages. In modern research, however, the meaning of ‘language’ has been extended to include not only national or official language but also regional and minority language varieties (Franceschini, 2009, p. 29). China’s linguistic diversity discussed in Chapter One is another case in point.

Plurilingualism

As has already been discussed, both bilingualism and multilingualism have individual and societal dimensions. This distinction is useful in understanding plurilingualism:

Individual multilingualism (also called plurilingualism) refers to the ability that individuals can have to communicate in two or more languages while societal multilingualism refers to the languages used in a specific society.

(Cenoz, 2009, p. 2)

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw.

(Council of Europe, 2001, p. 168)

Li (2013, p. xxi), however, posits a different view: “a term is needed to refer to the full range of phenomena including both bilingualism and multilingualism [...] we will use the term plurilingualism to refer to both bilingualism and multilingualism”. As explained earlier, researchers in this area approach language from a wide variety of perspectives. Different approaches lead to different definitions. It is therefore worth pointing out that in this thesis, unless otherwise specified, *bilingualism* refers to ‘two languages’ only. *Multilingualism* means ‘three languages or more’, under which *trilingualism* is subsumed. I also follow Garc á and Sylvan (2011) in defining the term *multilingual* as “the language practices of classrooms, geographic or political areas, or groups”, while *plurilingual* refers to “the complex language practices of individuals” (p. 391).

Bilingual education and multilingual education

Bilingual education

If bilingualism and multilingualism are the presence of languages, bilingual education (BE) and multilingual education (ME) represent two of the formal domains where bilingualism and multilingualism take place.

Many scholars have attempted to define the terms BE and ME, yet it is not an easy task (Cenoz, 2009). My discussion will start from BE, which “is more grounded in theory, research, practice and reality than multilingual education” (Garcia, 2009, p. 11). Usually, ‘bilingual’ is used to refer to two or more languages (Myers-Scotton, 2006). Yet, BE is “not simply about one language plus a second language equals two languages” (Garcia, 2009, p. 7); rather it is a simple label for a complex phenomenon (Baker, 2011; Cazden & Snow, 1990; Garc á, 2009). There is a wide range of interpretations. Some broader definitions include “education in more than one language” (Wang, 2011, p. 571); “education using more than one language, and/or language varieties” (Garc á, 2009, p. 9) and “language planning through the process of education [...] broadly defined as the formal learning of two or more languages in the school system” (Cummins & Corson, 1997, p. 177). In such conceptions, the main concern is that the number of languages involved is at least two, if not more.

These broad definitions do not consider the specific role of languages. In a review of the literature on BE, Cenoz (2009) summarizes a number of other definitions using more explicit criteria, and emphasising the requirement that the two languages are not only subjects but the medium of instruction (MoI). For instance, Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty (2008, p. 4) consider bi/multilingual education as the “use of two or more languages as media of instruction” while, according to Baker (2007a) and May (2008), they consider that a key element in BE is having

subject content taught through two languages of instruction rather than just learning the languages *per se*.

As such, when two languages are used for instructional purposes, this is, technically, bilingual education (Freeman, 1998; Garcia, 1997; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2007). In practice, however, when the degree to which different languages are involved in instruction varies, the structure of BE programmes differs inevitably. For example, in some European programmes, such as Saami BE in Norway (Balto & Todal, 1997), Swedish-medium learning for pre-school children in Finland (Coyle, 2008) or German-medium learning for primary school children in Luxembourg (Cenoz & Gorter, 2015), the minority language is used as the only MoI and the majority language is taught as a subject. In some Inner Mongolian regions of China, maintaining the ethnic Mongolian mother tongue and using it as the primary MoI in education is still a mainstay of practice (Dong, Narisu, Gou, Wang, & Qiu, 2015; Narisu, 2013); in other Chinese regions, such as the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (YKAP), the Korean language is used as the only MoI in all content subjects throughout basic education (Zhang, Wen, & Li, 2015). But these programmes are also considered to be BE (Cenoz, 2009) because the use of the minority language, as in the cases of the Mongolian and Korean languages, “counterbalances the low vitality of the minority language as compared to the [overall] vitality of [the major language in a country]” (Cenoz, 2012, p. 2).

Multilingual education

In General Conference Resolution 12, UNESCO defines ME as “the use of at least three languages, the mother tongue, a regional or national language and an international language in education” (1999, noted in UNESCO, 2003, p. 17). The European Commission adopts the term to refer to its policy of “mother tongue plus two other languages for all” (European Commission, 2004). In a similar vein, Garc ía, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Torres-Guzman (2006, p. 13) observe that “the main criterion for multilingual education is the number of languages of instruction”. Accordingly, they conclude that ME is “education where more than two languages

are used as languages of instruction in subjects other than the languages themselves”. Cenoz and Genesee (1998) express a similar view, but further specify that ‘languages’ considered as MoIs should be non-mother-tongue only:

By multilingual education, we mean educational programmes that use languages other than the first languages as medium of instruction (although some teach additional languages as school subjects) and they aim for communicative proficiency in more than two languages (p.viii).

The definitions above emphasize that ME should involve the use of two or more languages without specifying order of acquisition. In contrast, Gregerson et al. (2009) present a sequential explanation of ME as:

education which develops the skills of communication, cognition, and reasoning first in the language which is familiar to the student, and later phasing in those languages which are required for successful access and contribution to life in a multilingual society (p. 361).

Cenoz (2009, pp. 3-4) defines ME from a different perspective with an emphasis on the aims of education: “Multilingual education [is] the use of two or more languages in education provided that schools aim at multilingualism and multiliteracy”. As discussed above, Cenoz’s definition is informed by the expectation that the ultimate goals or aims of education should be multilingualism and multiliteracy (Cenoz, 2013). At the same time, she points out that it is not an easy task to use all the languages as MoIs. The situation in China referred to earlier is a case in point. In the YKAP, for instance, the language vitality of Korean has traditionally been very strong. The region is dominated in both formal and informal domains by the minority language rather than the official language. Wei (2005) also reports that the different sociocultural histories of Chinese minority ethnic groups, often living in mixed communities, add to the complexity. Some ethnic groups, for instance, may not be literate in their languages. Alternatively, their

language may not have a written script or a fully functional writing system (Zhou, 2003), as is the case for the Ewenki in the Evenk Autonomous Banner of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region (IMAR). Here, the language of the majority group – Chinese Mandarin, and the language of another dominant ethnic group with a written language, Mongolian, are the main MoIs in multilingual education. When it comes to foreign language education, the availability of well-trained English teachers who not only know English but also can deliver courses through the medium of English is also an issue. Limited English teaching resources and constraints on language planning bring yet another challenge to the implementation of an ME programme in multiple MoIs.

Cenoz (2013, p. 2) stresses that ME “does not include situations in which bilingual and multilingual children speak languages other than the school language at home but do not get any support for their home languages at school”. In other words, the involvement of students’ mother tongue, whether as a subject or MoI, is an essential element in ME. She also observes (2015, p. viii) that, in trilingualism in an educational context, “the boundaries between learning and usage are blurred”; the learning and use of three or more languages are intertwined.

Research also sheds light on *trilingual education* (TE) though, again, often within the framework of multilingual education. If *trilingualism* refers to the language practices or acquisition of three languages, TE is the teaching of three languages “even if two of them are merely a subject in the curriculum of the school” or simply “prepare pupils to actively speak three languages” (Beetsma, 2001, p. 9). The most common practices related to *tri/multilingualism* thus take place within educational contexts (Adamson & Feng, 2015; Cenoz, 2015; Cenoz & Genesee, 1998; Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Liu et al., 2015; Sciriha, 2001). After all, it is “rare” that people “habitually use more than two languages” (Hoffmann, 1998, p. 145). Trilingual education can be both in a formal context, such as a school, or an informal context, in the community or at home (Hoffmann, 2001a; Wang, 2015a). While it is debatable as to the numbers of languages subsumed under *bi-* and multilingualism, *tri-* clearly refers to three. In this thesis, while trilingual education

is treated as a form of *multilingual education*. It refers specifically to education in three languages.

ME offers greater challenges as more languages are involved. The fluid and dynamic nature of multilingualism explains how different countries respond to those challenges with different models of BE and ME.

Models of bilingual and multilingual education

There is a large body of literature on the different models of BE and ME. One of the best known and most elaborate typologies was proposed by Mackey (1970) who summarizes 90 different possibilities/variables regarding the relationship between languages used at home and school, languages of the curriculum, linguistic characteristics and language status. The impracticality of this kind of typology is self-evident: there are too many complex features (at least 250 different types, according to Cenoz 2009; Cenoz, 2013; Hoffmann, 2001b). Nevertheless, this demonstrates yet again the complexity of establishing firm boundaries between different bilingual education contexts. In the discussion which follows, I will consider a selection of BE and ME models, forms or types, terms which often refer to the same concept and the usages of which are not always clear-cut in literature. It should be noted that the models in question are built on the perspective of the aims (Baker, 2006, 2011) and outcomes, or in Feng's words, the "end-products" (Feng, 2014) of multilingual education.

Hornberger (1991): Models and programme types

Hornberger's (1991) distinction between models and programme types, which is later adopted by Freeman (1998), may help make the boundaries clearer: models refer to broader, more abstract phenomena than programme types. They are defined "in terms of their goals with respect to language, culture, and society" (Hornberger, 1991, p. 222), or "their language-planning goals and ideological orientations

toward linguistic and cultural diversity in society” (Freeman, 1998, p. 3); programme types are more concrete categorizations involving specific contextual and structural characteristics “relating to student population, teachers, and program structure” (Hornberger, 1991, p. 222).

Hornberger proposes three main models (see Table 2.1) defined by parallel criteria because “any one type may theoretically be implemented within any of the three models, and any model may be implemented via a wide range of types” (Hornberger, 1991, p. 223). The three models are *transitional*, *maintenance* and *enrichment*. The nature of each model is characterized by different ‘goals’, as presented in Table 2.1:

Transitional model	Maintenance model	Enrichment model
Language shift development	Language maintenance	Language
Cultural assimilation	Strengthened cultural identity	Cultural pluralism
Social incorporation	Civil rights affirmation	Social autonomy

Table 2.1: BE models (Hornberger, 1991, p. 223)

Beardsmore (1993): Canadian immersion and European models

Beardsmore (1993) introduces the Canadian model, i.e. immersion programmes, and several individual European models, i.e. the Luxembourg system, the European School model, the Foyer Project and Catalan and Basque BE in Spain. His models appear to be an expanded version of Hornberger’s models: while he acknowledges that the outcome of BE (*maintenance* bilingualism, *transitional* bilingualism and *additive* bilingualism) “is not absolute but more or less” (pp.199-120), Beardsmore highlights that the decisive role is actually played by the level of language proficiency and literacy to be targeted or developed, i.e. minimal, partial or full bilingualism and biliteracy:

The outcome (or goal) may be

maintenance	}	bilingualism
transitional		
additive		

with attempts to achieve

minimal	}	bilingualism and	minimal	}	biliteracy
partial			partial		
full			full		

(adopted from Beardsmore, 1993, p. 200)

Thus, according to Beardsmore’s framework, the models of BE are closely linked with the aims of bilingualism. When the aims related to the degree of bilingualism and biliteracy change, the nature of the programme also changes.

Garcia (2009): Theoretical frameworks and types

In Garcia’s (2009) discussion of BE (which in her case encompasses ME), she does not use the word ‘models’. She observes two main constraints with the use of this term: first, *models* are “artificial constructs” which cannot reflect actual language use or language practices in the classroom; second, there are potential risks in “exporting” a model to a “particular context”, leading to artificial practices in order to operate the “wrong” model effectively (p. 114).

Garcia (2009) identifies four forms of bilingualism – *subtractive*, *additive*, *recursive* and *dynamic* – and four corresponding theoretical frameworks for BE. *Subtractive* BE corresponds to Hornberger’s (1991) *transitional* model. It supports language shift from a less powerful language, often children’s home language or a minority language, to a more powerful language. *Additive* BE, corresponds to Hornberger’s *maintenance* and *enrichment* models. It aims at maintaining two languages at no cost to the first language. *Recursive* BE refers to the “language

revitalization [of a lost language] through education” (García, 2009, p. 118) in which bilingualism is no longer just a goal of education but a phenomenon which takes place in classrooms on a daily basis. Finally, *dynamic BE* sheds light on “plurilingualism, or a dynamic form of bilingualism” (p. 119). It supports students with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and also promotes “transcultural identities”. Based on the forms of bilingualism and BE theoretical frameworks, García summarises different types of BE programmes in the following way (see Figure 2.2).


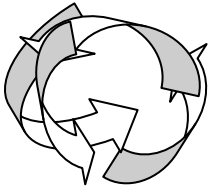
Bilingualism/BE Theoretical Frameworks	Types of Bilingual Education Programme
Subtractive $L1 + L2 - L1 \rightarrow L2$	Transitional
Additive $L1 + L2 = L1 + L2$	Maintenance Prestigious Immersion
Recursive 	Immersion revitalization Developmental
Dynamic 	Poly-directional or two-way (Dual language) CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and CLIL-type (none-European programmes) Multiple multilingual

Figure 2.2: Bilingualism models, bilingual education frameworks and types (adopted from, García, 2009, p. 131)

Having reviewed the different models of bilingual and multilingual education, it is evident that, when criteria change, the approach to classification also changes accordingly, leading to different forms of BE or ME. It should be borne in mind that not all real-life examples of BE and ME can be accommodated into one single typology. As Martin-Jones (2007; noted in Cenoz 2009, p. 26), points out, no

typologies are “readily transplantable from one sociolinguistic context to another”. They must be localized first before being transferred to other contexts (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2013). The limitations of different typologies are therefore self-evident (Baker, 2006; Cenoz, 2009; Spolsky, 1978).

Next, I will describe the various attempts to evaluate, analyze and compare BE and ME programmes in particular educational contexts.

Models for evaluation of bilingual and multilingual education

As discussed above, contextual factors must always be given consideration when BE and ME are analysed in different sociolinguistic and educational settings. As Baker (2011, p. 208) observes, “Bilingual[/multilingual] education is not just about education. There are sociocultural, political and economic issues ever present in the debate over the provision of bilingual education, particularly politics”. Among them, the aims of education play a crucial role (Cenoz, 2009).

Spolsky et al. (1976): Two-dimensional and multi-factor model

While Baker focuses on the characteristics of the students, languages and aims, Spolsky et al. (1976, p. 233) provide a “two-dimensional, multi-factor model” which encompasses more features and looks into different stages of BE and ME. One dimension is horizontal and groups numerous factors such as education, linguistics, politics, economics, psychology, culture and religion (see Figure 2.3). These factors, alongside the educational factors in the centre of the figure, shape the bilingual or multilingual educational programme. The other dimension explores how the factors presented above – but not necessarily all at the same time – “overlap and interact with one another” (Spolsky et al., 1976, p. 235) at three separate levels, or *tiers*: situational, manipulable /operational, and outcomes (goals) (Spolsky, 1978) (see Figure 2.4).

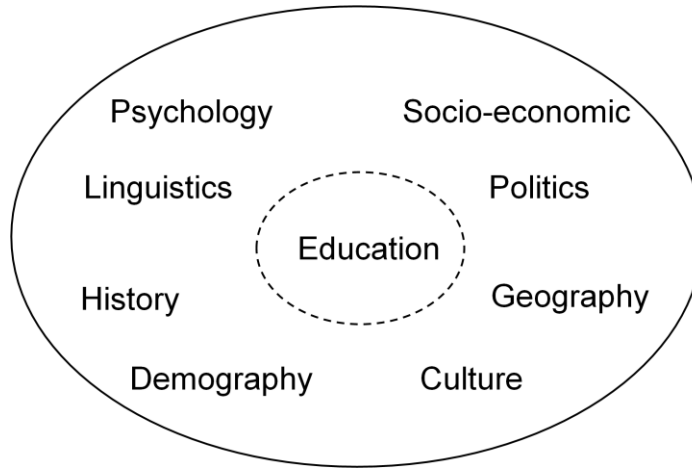


Figure 2.3: Factors involved at each level
 (adapted from Spolsky, 1978, p. 349; Spolsky et al., 1976)

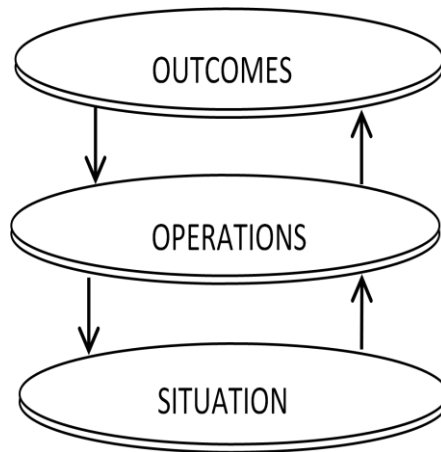


Figure 2.4: Three stages of a BE or ME programme
 (adapted from Spolsky, 1978, p. 349)

The situational level is independent of the BE or ME programme and relates to the community or school before the programme is introduced. Thus, as many as possible, situational factors should be taken into account before a programme is established. At the *operational level*, factors which administrators can manipulate, or aspects which will have a direct bearing on the operation of the programme, are incorporated. Most importantly, these are also influenced by factors both within and outside the programme, including the languages used as MoIs and their distribution in the curriculum. The third *outcomes level* concerns the effects of BE or ME programmes, both the explicit intended goals and implicit unintended

outcomes, or “by-products” (Spolsky et al., 1976, p. 241)³. It is most relevant after the programme has been implemented for some time. Although, as Spolsky et al. (1976) stress, the three levels presented appear to be in linear order, they actually function in an interactive, dynamic and fluid way. In the same way as “there are no dividing lines” within each level (p. 235), it is possible to go back and forth among the three levels.

Spolsky et al. (1976, p. 250) also assert that since their “aim is to make the model as universally applicable as possible, the full range of factors is presented with no special concern at this stage for their relative significance”. However, they argue that “in any situation, it becomes necessary to consider the attitudes [of stakeholders including teachers and students] to four subjects: to the languages and varieties (and their speakers), to school and the general aims of education, and finally to bilingual education itself”. This is the main theme which the current study aims to explore (see Chapter Seven for discussion of attitudes in the Chinese context).

Baker (1993): Weak and strong forms

Baker’s (1993) *weak* forms and *strong* forms of bilingual education have proved particularly influential among researchers (see, for instance, Cenoz, 2009; Feng, 2005a; Garc ía, 1997, 2009; Liu et al., 2015; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2007; Wang, 2011). He categorises different forms of education according to these criteria, which he explains in the following terms:

‘Weak’ bilingual education occurs when children are only allowed to use their home language in the curriculum for a short period, with a transition to education solely through the majority language. ‘Strong’ bilingual education occurs when both languages are used in school to promote bilingualism and biliteracy (Baker, 2013, p. 86).

³ Spolsky (1978) later treated this factor separately as the *rationale* level, and added another tier between the situational level and the operational level. For the sake of brevity, only the framework introduced in 1976 (Spolsky et al., 1976) will be discussed.

Weak forms, then, move language from minority to majority language; *strong* forms, aim at achieving both bilingualism and biliteracy through enhancing the use of minority languages and ethnic identities. Focusing on the different aims of BE and ME, Baker (1993) lists different types of programme under each form (see Table 2.2):

WEAK FORMS OF EDUCATION FOR BILINGUALISM				
Type of program	Typical Type of Child	Language of the Classroom	Societal and Educational Aim	Aim in Language Outcome
TRANSITIONAL	Language Minority	Moves from Minority to Majority Language	Assimilation/ Subtractive	Relative Monolingualism
MAINSTREAM WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING	Language Majority	Majority Language with L2/FL Lessons	Limited Enrichment	Limited Bilingualism
SEPARATIST	Language Minority	Minority Language (out of choice)	Detachment/ Autonomy	Limited Bilingualism
STRONG FORMS OF EDUCATION FOR BILINGUALISM AND BILITERACY				
Type of program	Typical Type of Child	Language of the Classroom	Societal and Educational Aim	Aim in Language Outcome
IMMERSION	Language Majority	Bilingual with Initial Emphasis on L2	Pluralism and Enrichment Additive	Bilingualism & Biliteracy
MAINTENANCE /HERITAGE LANGUAGE	Language Minority	Bilingual with Emphasis on L1	Maintenance Pluralism and Enrichment	Bilingualism & Biliteracy
TWO-WAY /DUAL LANGUAGE	Mixed Language Minority & Majority	Minority and Majority	Maintenance Pluralism and Enrichment	Bilingualism & Biliteracy
MAINSTREAM BILINGUAL	Language Majority	Two Majority Languages Pluralism	Maintenance Pluralism and Enrichment	Bilingualism & Biliteracy
Notes: (1) FL=foreign language. (2) Formulation of this table owes much to discussions with Professor Ofelia Garc ía (1997)				

Table 2.2: Monolingual, weak and strong forms of BE (adapted from Baker, 1993, p. 153; 2011, pp. 209-210)

Cenoz (2009): Continua of multilingual education

Like Spolsky et al. (1976) Cenoz's *Continua of Multilingual Education* is a response to the fact that ME typologies "cannot fit all the specific cases [...] because of the diversity of languages involved, program designs and sociolinguistic variables" (Cenoz, 2009, p. 33). It builds on Hornberger's framework of *Continua of Biliteracy* (Hornberger, 2003, p. xiv; 2008) which depict "the multiple and complex interrelationships between bilingualism and literacy and the importance of the contexts, media, and content through which biliteracy develops". Cenoz uses two-way arrows to represent the infinite and fluid movement and interaction of educational, linguistic and sociolinguistic variables (see Figure 2.5) within an ME programme.

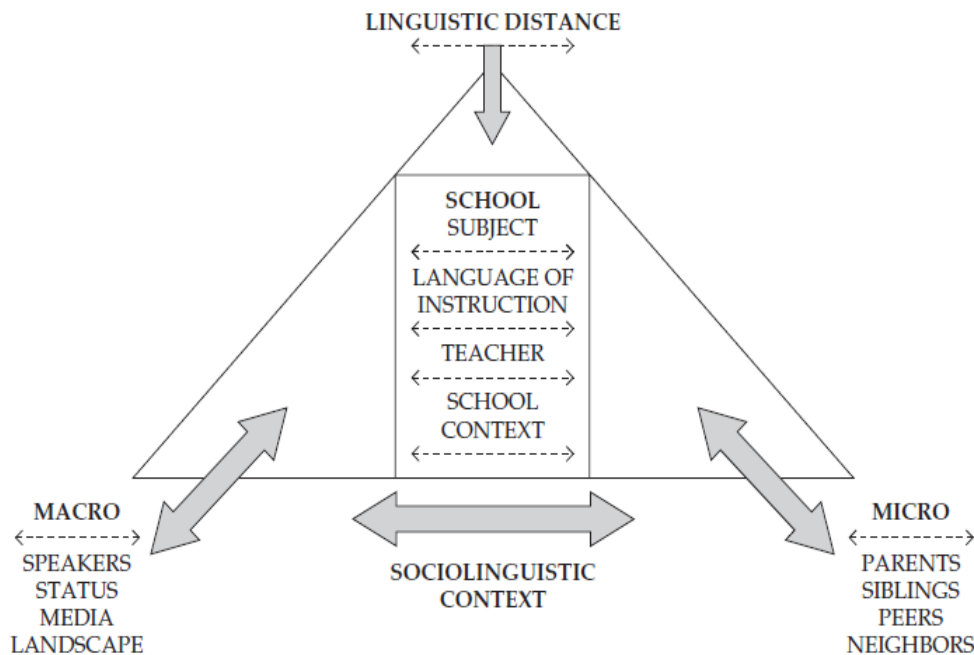


Figure 2.5: Continua of multilingual education
(adopted from Cenoz, 2013, p. 4)

As presented in Figure 2.5, educational variables, which lie at the core of an ME programme, include the continua of subject, language of instruction, teacher and school context. The continuum can change from *less multilingual* at one end toward *more multilingual* at the other; the sociolinguistic context and linguistic distance of languages are also part of the model and interact with educational

variables. In addition to the languages spoken at the micro level by students, parents or other people within the community, the ethnolinguistic vitality of the languages involved in ME at the macro end of the continuum are also taken into consideration (see discussion below). Cenoz (2009) asserts that the difference between the macro and the micro levels is crucial when analyzing ME “because there are many cases in which they do not coincide” (p. 38). The programme under study is a case in point. The majority of Yi students speak Yi and the Sichuan topolect to their peers or with their parents at home. But at the macro level, CYS is a college within a university in Chengdu, a metropolitan city dominated by the Han and where half of the student population is Han. These contextual and sociolinguistic factors inevitably have an impact on the implementation of programme and students’ learning experiences.

Cenoz (2009) points to the potential of applying her *Continua of Multilingual Education* to a wide range of different contexts, such as the use of Hindi, non-Hindi languages and English in multilingual education in India; Mandarin Chinese, topolects and English for different ethnic minority groups in China; Guarani, Spanish and English language provision in Paraguay, and so forth. She claims that “all these situations with different types of curricula in different socio-linguistic contexts can fit into the ‘*Continua of Multilingual Education*’” (p. 41). More empirical research may, however, be needed to justify this proposition: the first question which comes to mind is what are *all* the situations. Also, has she really been able to look into *all* contexts to draw such a conclusion?

Nevertheless, Cenoz’s notion of the *Continua of Multilingual Education* model would appear to be a very insightful, inclusive and comprehensive tool, allowing for “changes along the different continua” (Cenoz, 2009, p. 39), related to the interaction between the different languages, learning and teaching, schools and the sociolinguistic context, which we cannot predict. It also breaks down the boundaries between BE and ME.

Bi-/multilingual education models in the Chinese context

It is possible to observe both similarities and differences between BE and ME in China and the rest of the world, with implications for methodological and conceptual approaches. In China, ME is represented mainly through TE, i.e. the acquisition of a minority language (if it has a written script) (L1), Mandarin Chinese (L2) and English (L3); as is the case for TE elsewhere, discussion and research tend to focus on L3 acquisition (Adamson & Feng, 2009; Cenoz & Hoffmann, 2003; Cenoz & Valencia, 1994; Hoffmann, 2001b).

Cenoz and Hoffmann (2003) give four possible situations regarding the sequence of acquisition of the three languages: 1). L1-->L2-->L3, whereby the three languages are acquired consecutively; 2). Lx/Ly-->L3, where L1 and L2 are acquired simultaneously before the acquisition of L3; 3). L1-->Lx/Ly, in which L1 is acquired before L2 and L3 are acquired next and 4). Lx/Ly/Lz where three languages are acquired simultaneously. In Europe, trilingualism is the norm or reality both within and outside many educational contexts. There are Belgians who can speak Flemish, French and/or German; Luxembourg, where three languages – German, Luxembourgish and French – have different functions in different domains and trilingualism is “supported by the **whole** [my bold] population” (Hoffmann, 1998). As Cenoz and Gorter (2015, p. 474) observe, “The total number of languages offered in the European schools goes from four to twelve”. Exposure to several languages for children is often simultaneous to varying degrees which, thus corresponds to the criteria for situation 4 discussed above.

In contrast, in most part of China, Mandarin Chinese is still the only official language across the country, though topolects and some minority languages are associated with different domains in everyday life. Trilingualism is a phenomenon associated with minority students, but the point at which they are exposed to L3, or on some occasions even to L2, varies greatly from school to school and from region to region. Nor is exposure to three languages simultaneous or consistent.

Chinese minority students' acquisition of L1 and L2 can thus be either consecutive or simultaneous.

Given the complexity and diversity of the linguistic history of China, situations 1, 2 and 3 with regard to the sequence of language acquisition can all be found in China. In most cases, L3 acquisition follows L1 and/or L2 acquisition. The simultaneous exposure to three languages takes place only within the boundary of schooling with the addition, usually, of English; when students leave school, they, are likely to revert either to monolingualism, i.e. Chinese or, in some regions bilingualism (i.e. mother tongue and Chinese/a topolect). Thus the experience of trilingualism and TE in China of both minorities and the Han majority differ in important respects.

Types of trilingualism

Models of trilingualism and trilingual education in China tend to be related to the linguistic and cultural history of the minority in question. Zhou (2000, 2001, 2003) uses two important criteria to categorize Chinese minority groups: first, the presence or otherwise of a writing system; and second, whether access to bilingual education is adequate, limited, or non-existent. He classifies 55 Chinese ethnic minority groups into three main types (Zhou, 2000) (see Table 2.3) using as the baseline 1949, the year the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded, minority-language policies were formulated, and most importantly, when minority-language use and the reform of writing system reform was guaranteed.

Type 1	Korean, Kazak, Mongolian, Tibetan, and Uygur: functional writing systems widely used before 1949 and with regular bilingual education programmes since 1949.
Type 2	Dai, Jingpo, Lisu, Lahu, Miao, Naxi, Va, and Yi: functional writing systems with limited usage before 1949 and limited bilingual education since 1949.
Type 3	The remaining 42 groups: no fully functional writing systems before 1949 and limited or no bilingual education since then.

Table 2.3: Three types of Chinese ethnic minority communities (Zhou, 2000)

Four models of trilingual education

Adamson and Feng (2014) identify four models of TE in China. The first model, *additive* trilingualism, is usually found in communities where the EV of a minority language is very strong and conditions are favourable, particularly “with regard to resources and regional policies” (Adamson, Feng, Liu, & Li, 2013, p. 185). L1 is supported and used; L2 and L3 are both given sufficient time to be developed at school. Languages are acquired at no cost to the mother tongue, and ethnic identities are maintained. The ethnic minorities in question are usually from Type 1 communities. This model is highly likely to foster *additive* trilingualism. Many schools in IMAR, Korean-dominated YKAP or Changchun, a city in North-eastern China, are typical examples.

The second model, *balanced* trilingualism, manifests a genuine desire to develop “simultaneous bilingualism to a certain extent” with the ultimate aim of promoting trilingualism (Adamson & Feng, 2014, p. 246). This model usually takes place in communities and schools where there are approximately equal proportions of number of ethnic minority groups and Han groups. The minority language, Chinese and/or a topelect are all involved and used in both formal and informal domains; the aim of the school is to promote ethnic harmony. The model is mainly present in non-capital or non-metropolitan cities or towns in Inner Mongolia, Sichuan, Qinghai, Guizhou and Yunnan (Adamson & Feng, 2015).

The third model, *transitional* trilingualism, aims at a shift from L1, the minority language, to L2, Mandarin Chinese. Irrespective of the fact that students’ L1 is used as an MoI, taught as a subject, or how much importance minority cultures are attached to the L1, it has no role to play in later schooling. As Adamson and Feng (2015, p. 248) argue,

While the cultural value of the ethnic minority language tends to be acknowledged, its vitality in the community is often insufficient for the

ethnic minority language to be adopted as the predominant language in the school.

In this model, then, Mandarin Chinese is eventually used as the primary MoI, and L3 is taught as a subject. This form of linguistic transition and assimilation is widely seen in Type 2 and Type 3 communities (Adamson et al., 2013), in particular in regions where the Han population is dominant.

Finally, the fourth model, *depreciative* trilingualism, is “an explicit form of subtractive trilingualism” (Adamson & Feng, 2015, p. 249). This model is typical in schools which claim to be trilingual on the basis of the ethnic backgrounds of staff and students, but in reality only English and Mandarin Chinese are taught, and Mandarin Chinese is used as the main MoI. There is little chance to foster *additive* trilingualism in these contexts. Neither the cultural nor the linguistic values of the minority language are acknowledged. This model can be found in “numerous areas in Guangxi, Yunnan, towns or cities in Inner Mongolia, Sichuan, Gansu and Guizhou” (Adamson & Feng, 2015, p. 250).

Reflection on the four TE models in China

The four models presented above suggest that when acquisition of L2 takes place at the price of L1, as in the *transitional* and *depreciative* models, there is little chance to develop trilingual competence and foster *additive* trilingualism. Here then, the focus is on the acquisition of three languages, and the effect of learning of L1 and L2 on L3 proficiency (Cenoz, 2003, p. 74). In order to benefit from the positive effects of bilingualism on cognition and L3 acquisition, the bilingualism in question must be associated with certain level of proficiency in L1 and L2.

The work of Cummins, in particular his concepts of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), and his interdependence and threshold theories (Cummins, 1979a, 1980b, 2000,

2008), are helpful in understanding the educational implications of these models. The BICS/CALP distinction looks at the construct of 'language proficiency' from two perspectives. BICS refers to "conversational aspects of proficiency" (Cummins, 2008, p. 73) which can be easily achieved within a relatively short period of time. Yet, CALP refers to the "academic/cognitive" aspects of language proficiency (Cummins, 1979a) which usually takes learners considerably longer to achieve; it refers to "the extent to which an individual has access to and command of the oral and written academic registers of schooling" (Cummins, 2000, p. 67), and is thus a major determinant of educational progress.

Cummins' interdependence hypothesis and thresholds theories focus on the interrelation of CALP in L1 and L2, or bilingual proficiency across two languages:

To the extent that instruction in Lx is effective in promoting proficiency in Lx, transfer of this proficiency to Ly will occur provided there is adequate exposure to Ly (either in school or environment) and adequate motivation to learn Ly (Cummins, 1988, p. 245).

In other words, when favourable conditions, such as motivation or sufficient exposure to L2, are met, cognitive skills such as literacy skills in L1 can be transferred to the L2. The interdependence hypothesis is significant with regard to "understanding the nature of bilingual students' academic development and [...] planning appropriate educational programs" (Cummins, 2000, p. 175).

The threshold hypothesis proposes a threshold level of linguistic competence, "an intervening variable" (Cummins, 1979b, p. 71) that "mediates the effect of [one's] bilingual learning experiences on cognitive growth" (Cummins, 1976, p. 26). It explores the relationship between cognition and different levels of academic proficiency and the linguistic level which may accelerate or decelerate bilinguals' cognitive performance. There are two threshold levels:

The first threshold is a level for a child to reach to avoid the negative consequences of bilingualism. The second threshold is a level required to experience the possible positive benefits of bilingualism (Baker, 2011, p. 167).

In other words, the consequences of bilingualism on cognition can be either positive or negative. This hypothesis is extremely pertinent to Chinese minority students' TE as it offers an explanation for why Chinese minority student may not benefit from the positive effects of bilingualism. Cummins thus provides a useful framework for the evaluation of TE in China (see discussion in Chapter Six), especially given the great diversity of students' educational backgrounds and educational practices.

Chinese trilingualism and trilingual education

Cummins' theories highlight his principle of 'first things first' (Cummins & Swain, 1986) in programme planning, i.e. it's critical to have or foster first language proficiency: "By doing this, we will provide for the child a social-emotional environment in which the basic conditions for learning can occur" (p. 107) and the skills in the outcomes of L1 learning can then be transferred to L2 learning.

Apparently, to foster first language development requires favourable factors which vary in accordance with a range of educational and sociolinguistic contexts students are exposed to. In such contexts of 'learning', irrespective of learning of languages or learning of content subjects, there is "informal intercourse with people using a different language, or the organized instruction of an educational system, or a program of self-instruction, or a combination of these" (Spolsky, 1999, p. 181). This process of intercourse certainly imposes great challenges on minority students, like those under current study. In most cases, Chinese minority high school graduates leave their villages, towns or communities and go to study in a university located in a medium or large-sized Han dominant city. Since "[ethnicity] is a major

component of mainstream education” (Fishman, 1989, p. 419), students will have to “contextually re-construct” (Fishman, 1999, p. 154) their ethnic identity even in a university particularly tailored for Chinese ethnic students like SWUN. Yet, this process of ‘re-construct’ or ‘re-define’ one’s ethnic identity is inevitably formed by language (Fishman, 1984; Spolsky, 1999), language behaviour and language learning. As such, along with a wide range of factors in *Continua of Multilingual Education* (Cenoz, 2009), the vitality of a group’s language comes to the fore again.

The EV, which can be discussed in terms of economic, social, sociohistorical and language factors (Giles et al., 1977) as presented in this chapter and later in Chapter Four, plays a decisive role in the extent of students’ language contact, as well as shaping their language-related beliefs, attitudes, and values (Allard & Landry, 1992). And these beliefs, attitudes and values toward language will in turn affect learners’ motivations in learning and language behaviours.

Summary

In this chapter, the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality is discussed as the theoretical underpinning for this study. The key concepts of bi-/multilingualism, BE and ME have been explored. Different models of BE and ME and the theoretical frameworks used to evaluate them, including those within the Chinese context have been presented. These theoretical and conceptual frameworks inform and underpin my study.

Given the complexity of the linguistic, sociolinguistic and educational variables, it is important to make it clear that it is not the aim of this thesis to search for the ‘right’ tri-/multilingual education model for Chinese minority universities. However, it is hoped that the present study will raise issues of importance in Chinese minority education and minority language provision, and highlight the associated challenges and good practice in TE in ways which point to more effective TE model in China.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I present the methodological framework for the present study. In particular, I discuss why and how I chose qualitative research as my research design. I justify the decision both to undertake a critical ethnographic case study as my methodology and to use documentation, observation, focus group discussions and the River of Life approach as data collection tools. Finally I discuss issues of rigour and generalisability in qualitative research before considering the ethical issues involved.

Research questions

Research methodology and methods are driven by research questions which, in turn, are reformulated and developed during the research process (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Marshall, 1996). According to Maxwell (2013), research questions determine the goal and focus of our research and offer guidance on its conduct. Based on my literature review, knowledge of the programme under study and the aims of my research, the following research questions have been framed within the overarching questions, i.e. “What is the role of minority languages in higher education in China?” .

1. What are the views towards Yi in the wider society, in SWUN and in the College of Yi Studies?
2. What are the main challenges of the trilingual education Yi-English-Chinese (YEC) pathway in the Chinese Minority Languages and Literature programme offered at SWUN?

3. What is the range of competencies in Yi, English and Chinese of the YEC pathway programme?
4. What are the policy makers', teachers' and students' perceptions of and attitudes towards the program?
5. What has been the impact of the programme on individual students?

Research design: Philosophical position

It is widely acknowledged that the research process is both confusing and daunting for inexperienced researchers (Bryman, 2008; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Punch, 2009). Punch (2009) explains that both terminology and philosophy contribute to this. The use of different terms in different texts in different ways unavoidably makes the picture more complicated and even obscure (Nudzor, 2009; Richards, 2009). For example, sometimes positivism has been used interchangeably with empiricism (Robson, 2002), and after World War II, was replaced by postpositivism⁴ (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Mertens, 1998). In a similar vein, philosophical issues are closely intertwined in debates about theoretical frameworks although it is not always clear why this should be the case (Bryman, 2008, p. 13). Paradigm thus plays an important role in making sense and organizing beliefs, assumptions and even expectations for research.

Paradigms are “shared systems that influence the kinds of knowledge researchers seek and how they interpret the evidence they collect” (Morgan, 2007, p. 50, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 276). Or simply, as Guba (1990, p. 17, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 19) comments, they are a “basic set of beliefs that guides action”. Some researchers (Punch, 2009) argue that research is not always paradigm-driven. Nonetheless, this issue is widely discussed in the literature (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Pring, 2004; Thomas, 2009), with the choice of a paradigm used to establish the theoretical pathway through the whole process of research: different philosophical beliefs lead researchers to choose different

⁴ To avoid confusion, positivism, instead of postpositivism, will be adopted in my research.

research designs or strategies of inquiry – qualitative research, quantitative research or mixed methods research (Creswell, 2009).

Ontology and epistemology

Ontological and epistemological positions underpin research paradigms (Cannella & Lincoln, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Punch, 2009). Ontology is “[one’s] philosophical beliefs about what constitutes social reality, and especially whether realities are singular or multiple” (Yin, 2011, p. 311). The issue here, then, is the very nature of reality, social phenomena or the social world, and what can be known about them. Epistemology, on the other hand, relates to “the philosophical underpinnings of researchers’ beliefs regarding the nature of knowledge and how it is derived or created” (Yin, 2011, p. 309). In other words, it focuses on the relationship between the inquirer and what can be known, the study of “the world that we have defined ontologically” (Thomas, 2009, p. 87).

The most common and dominant paradigms are, from the ontological perspective, objectivism and constructionism/constructivism; and from the epistemological perspective, positivism and interpretivism (Bryman, 2012). Objectivism asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an independent existence and are not dependent on social actors, or knowers (Bryman, 2012; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007); social phenomena are something external to the actors. At an epistemological level, the link is with positivism (David & Sutton, 2011), a “deterministic philosophy in which causes probably determine effects or outcomes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 7). Positivism affirms that the social world can be studied objectively as value-free science. Positivist research is largely based on quantitative data collected through quantitative methods and analysis (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) and used to test hypotheses (Bryman, 2012).

However, positivism is criticised for “strip[ping] contexts from meanings” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 106, noted in Gephart, 1999). Gephart (1999) also points out

that participants' meanings and interpretations are often excluded in quantitative data collection. Instead, outsiders' meanings and interpretations are imposed on data through these quantitative measures. For this reason I would argue that positivist epistemology is inappropriate for my own research, the main focus of which is participants' perceptions of a multilingual programme, and how I, as a researcher, interpret these perceptions. As Robson (2002, p. 21) argues,

When people are the focus of the study, particularly when it is taking place in a social real world context, 'constant conjunction' in a strict sense is so rare as to be virtually non-existent[...] This 'failure' has led some to consider that the whole scientific approach is inappropriate for social science.

Human feelings, emotions, and values, it can thus be argued, cannot really be measured objectively. I therefore consider the alternative philosophical underpinnings: constructionism and interpretivism. According to Bryman (2012, p. 33), constructionism asserts "that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors". In recent years, researchers' accounts have also played a role in presenting "a specific version of social reality" rather than a "definitive" one (Bryman 2012, p. 33). Thus, in a constructionist paradigm, knowledge and truth flow from the perspectives of the social actors (Schwandt, 1994, noted in Gephart, 1999). Thomas (2009) reminds us that different ontological perspectives lead to different epistemological positions. Interpretivism, an antithetical assumption to positivism, argues that the world is "the creation of the mind, and that we can only experience the world through our personal perceptions which are coloured by our preconceptions and beliefs" (Nudzor, 2009, p. 125). This means subjective meanings are a central concern in research. As Basit (2010, p. 14) argues, the interpretive paradigm focuses on smaller numbers and in-depth analyses of human behaviour and perceptions. Given that my research focuses on students' and teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward the programme, and how they, as individuals, see social events and settings and make sense of the world around them (Gephart, 1999), I feel constructionist and interpretivist

perspectives are more helpful in generating knowledge and answering my research questions. I therefore adopt the above two philosophical underpinnings for research which focuses inductively on words rather than quantification. For this reason predominantly qualitative methods will be used.

Qualitative research

In this research, I subscribe to interpretive and constructivist assumptions, believing that multiple realities are dependent on and constructed by people at different periods (often extensive) of time and within different contexts. In Chapter One, I mentioned that trilingual education is a rising but new trend in China. There is little known about this phenomenon, yet there is a lot to be explored and addressed in relation to what a strong model of *additive trilingualism* is for ethnic minority groups in China. It is particularly an issue with the Yi university students participating in this study because existing theories do not address their situation or their expectations adequately. As such, there are no well-defined variables or causal models related to my research topic. Creswell (1998, 2009) argues that when no variables and theories can be easily identified or examined to explain a concept or phenomenon, a research topic needs to be explored qualitatively. Put simply, quantitative data cannot be collected without identified variables. In addition, as previously mentioned, the focus of my research is the implementation of a programme in its natural setting. Given the comparatively small scale of this study, and the nature of the research questions it seeks to answer, I believe a qualitative approach is more appropriate.

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). In other words, qualitative researchers serve as an internal “research instrument” in natural settings of real-world phenomena, interpreting the meanings people bring to them which “cannot be measured by external instruments but only can be revealed by making inferences about observed

behaviours and by talking to people” (Yin, 2011, pp. 13, 122). By this token, qualitative research is often ethnographic.

Ethnography

Qualitative research is an overarching umbrella approach which employs many different designs, strategies of inquiry, or “elements of research styles” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 84) including ethnography (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2009). Ethnography requires the researcher to “immerse him- or herself” (Bryman, 2012, p. 432) in the field, over a significant amount of time, to study people’s behaviour by collecting observational and interview data (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2011). In this respect, it relies substantially or partly on participant observation (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). I considered my research to fall under the umbrella of ethnography, because, over a relatively extensive period of time (approximately four months), I based myself in the field interacting with people within that space to gather in-depth information concerning participants’ real lives; and because my understanding of the phenomenon under study is generated through close exploration of and engagement with a ‘real-world setting’ constructed by my participants themselves.

Ethnography can take various different forms (Adler & Adler, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). An important distinction, however, is between conventional and critical ethnography; the present study took a critical ethnography approach. There are a number of common threads between the two approaches: they are both qualitative and anthropological, and both are participant/observer-based. However, as Elliott and Jankel-Elliott (2003) suggest, people are not always the best predictors of their own behaviour. Critical ethnography sets out to make sense of ‘what could be’ rather than ‘what is’ (Madison, 2004; Thomas, 1993). It sheds light on a recognition of “an ethical responsibility” (Madison, 2004, p. 5) or “a more social responsive ethnography” (Nwemely, 1999, p. 47) to challenge the *status quo*, and critique the ‘neutrality’ and the ‘taken-for-granted’ presumptions (O’Reilly, 2009). As a result, critical ethnography may provide practical solutions

to problems that emerge from the study (Naidoo, 2012). It has resonance with my aim of exploring effective trilingual teaching and learning in practice for Chinese Yi university students and, as a researcher and a former member of staff in SWUN, I also felt a moral obligation to improve the situation of participants.

Inevitably, in such an approach, a researcher's bias comes under scrutiny (Naidoo, 2012), requiring a need for the reflexivity which allows us to "explicitly consider" (Noblit et al. 2004, cited in Madison, 2004, p. 7) how our own acts of studying, biases, values, and personal background shape the context and represent people and situations we think we represent (Creswell, 2009). The first and most important point I, as a critical ethnographer, needed to recognise was "the reflexive character of social research" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 14): the social world I was searching is "an already interpreted world" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 171) which I was part of. It was impossible to eliminate my influence on the social phenomena under study, the data collected and even on myself, the researcher. However, as Creswell and Miller (2000) recommend, what I could or maybe should do was to inform and enable readers to understand my personal beliefs, values, and biases early in the research process, then try to "bracket or suspend" (p. 127) those biases and also take them into account when shaping my interpretation. This concern with self-reflection will be discussed again when each research method is considered.

Above, I have discussed the key features in ethnography. Since ethnography is a field-based study, this leads neatly to the discussion of ethnographic case study which follows.

Case study

Case study, along with other research strategies including experiments, surveys, histories, and the analysis of archival information, is "an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units" (Gerring, 2004, p. 342). In a similar vein, Stake (1995, p. xi) describes case study as "the

study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances”. Thus, when case study is adopted, researchers attempt to understand the universal by studying the uniqueness of the particular (Simons, 1996), or a specific sample of complex phenomena (Cohen et al., 2007). Furthermore, case study can be both qualitative and quantitative (Basit, 2010; Bryman, 2012; Cousin, 2005; Kumar, 2011; Robson, 2002; Yin, 2003b).

It is worth clarifying at this point what case study means to me, given “the apparent disjuncture between an often-maligned methodology and a heavily practiced method, both of which go by the name of *case study*” (Bryman, 2012; Gerring, 2004, p. 352; Mertens, 1998). A research method is simply a technique, an instrument, or a tool, for collecting data (Bryman, 2012, p. 46); research methodology, often used interchangeably with the term research design (Parahoo, 1997, noted in Jones & Lyons, 2004, p. 71), is how we know the world or gain knowledge of it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 12).

Within my case study research, I recognised that several research methods were needed to collect data for analysis. In recognition of this, I have therefore treated case study as a research design rather than an instrument. As Bryman (2012, p. 45) argues, after all, “Choosing a case study approach will not in its own right provide you with data”.

Essential features

Though the parameters are always open to dispute and there is little consensus (Yin, 2003a), many people consider that three essential aspects of case study - focused object, context, and in-depth, are proposed.

Focused object refers to what a case study focuses on. This might be the individual unit(s) of study, its/their context and setting, or both. *Focused object* therefore relates directly to the issue of what constitutes a case. A case can be a person, a

single event, a single place or a single organization. On the other hand, a case can be a group of people, several events, places and organizations. What is common across these situations is that a case study is “a relatively bounded phenomenon” (Gerring, 2004, p. 342).

The second aspect to consider is *context*. Case study should be undertaken within a “naturalistic setting”, or in “its own habitat” where researchers hope to explore more and prompt better understandings (Cousin, 2005, p. 423). What, then, is a “naturalistic setting”? As Cousin explains, “naturalistic settings are simply those where the research designer has not contrived all of the activities to be investigated, as in, for instance, the example of experimental design”.

The third but no less important distinguishing feature of case study is its being *in-depth*, or concentrated within a particular case (Robson, 2002). Cohen et al. (2007, p. 253) claim that case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis. As emphasized by Stake (1995, p.2), this involves “learning all of the case out to its boundaries, tracking its issues, pursuing its patterns of complexity”. To researchers, the case is the focus of interest in its own right. Therefore, in case study research, researchers expect to explore the case and generate rich data in the field which, compared with many other strategies, has greater potential to answer the research questions set by researchers. The findings will provide a clearer understanding of the nature and extent of a problem and the whole research will be portrayed vividly to readers. This is one of the main reasons why I chose to adopt case study. Case study allowed for a fuller explanation of the issues in question through a holistic perspective. The analysis of the extensive data collected through case study will not only answer my research questions but also offer a clear picture of both the uniqueness and wholeness of the situations studied to my readers, especially those residing outside China. Vicarious experience, i.e. “drawing experiential understanding from the narratives of others”, is the term I want to borrow from Stake (1995, p. 173).

Types of case study

Basit (2010) gives a comprehensive list of 14 different types of case study which he identifies in literature⁵. He states that “there is considerable overlap in their views and [they] are not mutually exclusive” (p. 20). Here, I focused on the types which are most well-known and common in educational research.

Yin (1984, 2003a, 2003b) and Merriam (1998, noted in Cohen et al., 2007) identify three types of case study in terms of their outcomes: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. Exploratory/interpretative case study is probably the best known. The researcher starts exploring and probing relevant issues in-depth, often through observation and documentation of real-life context. Explanatory/evaluative case study, as the term suggests, tends to explain and examine a natural phenomenon, such as, for example, how and why a programme has or has not worked. Finally, descriptive case study often comprises narrative accounts of the case.

According to Yin (2003b), exploratory, explanatory and descriptive are also the three purposes of any research strategy used. Stake (1995, 2000) also categorises case study into three types: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. Intrinsic case study is adopted when researchers are curious about a case. They have genuine and intrinsic interest in a particular case and undertake a study to understand it without looking for or suggesting other similar cases beyond the boundaries. Instrumental case study is adopted to understand other similar cases and shed light on a wider context rather than the studied case itself. Case study here is “instrumental” in exploring the potential applicability of the particular situation studied to other like situations (Yin, 2011). As Cousin (2005) summarises, “[Whereas] an intrinsic case study aims to generalize *within*, instrumental case study attempts to generalize *from* a case study” (p. 422). Collective case study involves an extended attempt at instrumental case study; when a study of one particular situation is insufficient to gain a fuller picture, groups of individual studies are called on.

⁵ They are exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, interpretative, evaluative, intrinsic, instrumental, collective, historical, psychological, sociological, ethnographic, action research and educational case studies.

In this research, I employed intrinsic case study. The YEC trilingual education programme offered to the Yi students at SWUN in China has been selected as my case. As mentioned in Chapter One, the case was unique in many ways, being the only programme of its kind in China, and was therefore an atypical university trilingual programme open to Yi students. Given the uniqueness of the case, it was not my intention, nor was it feasible, to research into other similar cases or situations. I also do not claim to generate understanding of other situations through observing and studying this particular one. As Stake (1995, p. 4) observes, “We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case”. I believed the findings from this one case would inspire and generate revealing insights. Meanwhile, my research was also what Yin (1984; 2003a; 2003b) calls *exploratory* case study. It was true that some aspects of the case will be described. However, this was not a complete narrative description of the phenomenon within its context (Yin, 2003b) as embedded in a typical descriptive case study. Nor was it explanatory because the study did not aim at examining the situation and explaining any cause-effect relationship. Indeed, we cannot explain which causes produce which effects (Yin, 2003a) unless we know first what is happening. As mentioned earlier, trilingualism and trilingual education for Chinese ethnic minorities are new phenomena. The literature is still sparse in this regard, and the existing knowledge base is poor. The primary goal of this research was thus to explore and identify both challenges and good practice in this particular programme. It was a journey of theory-seeking rather than theory-testing (Bassegy, 1999). I looked at situations through the eyes of as many participants as possible in order to capture the stakeholders’ perceptions of the programme, as well as the impact of the programme on students. Theoretical propositions were generated within the data and presented to stakeholders, who can either reinterpret the findings and make their own judgements about the implications of their findings, or at a later stage put their insights into action for improvement of the policy and practice of this particular case and even that of other cases which they think are similar or comparable.

To sum up, although different ways of grouping case studies have come to the fore, there is no definite answer as to which one is more advantageous; the answer depends on the specific aims of each research project. As Yin (2003b) emphasises, what is most important is to avoid choosing a research approach which is less suitable for the particular case studied when compared with another approach.

Sampling

Sampling means “the method used to select a given number of people (or things) from a population” (Mertens, 1998, p. 253). Maxwell (2013) indicates the potential problem with the concept of ‘sampling’ for qualitative research as it might suggest ‘representativeness’ or ‘generalisability’ *per se*, which is often not consistent with the aims of qualitative research (Chen, 2000; Marshall, 1996; Patton, 1990): qualitative research focuses on relatively small samples, seeking to achieve understanding of complex issues of human phenomena ‘in depth’; quantitative research depends on larger scale samples, randomly selected, to generalise results to a wider population. The probability sampling techniques primarily used in quantitative research, such as random sampling, then, are usually inappropriate for qualitative research (Bryman, 2012; Marshall, 1996) and the very “logic and power” (Patton, 1990, p. 169) of each sampling approach are also different.

Thus, purposive sampling was used as alternative strategy for the current qualitative research. Purposive sampling, also known as non-probability sampling, purposeful sampling, or judgment sampling (Bryman, 2012; Marshall, 1996; Maxwell, 2013; Mertens, 1998; Patton, 1990; Teddlie & Yu, 2007), is generally agreed to be the most productive and effective way of “identifying information-rich cases” (Mertens, 1998, p. 261) to yield the most information about samples and consequently illuminate the questions under study (Bryman, 2012; Marshall, 1996; Maxwell, 2013; Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

Sample selection

In qualitative research, sampling is not just about people. Parameters such as contexts, settings, times, events and processes are also included (Bryman, 2012; Chen, 2000; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1984, noted in Maxwell, 2013). There are many different ways to categorise those dimensions but for present purposes, I chose to focus on the two most common approaches in qualitative research: sampling of case and sampling of participants.

Sampling of case

As discussed earlier in Chapter One, the CYS in SWUN has been selected as a unique case of a trilingual education programme tailored for Yi minority students in higher education in China. In addition, as a former member of staff, I believed that I was well placed to establish productive relationships with the participants able to provide information about the phenomenon under study (Maxwell, 2013).

Sampling of participants

Students

A prerequisite for the sampling of Model II students was that participants must be Yi students in the YEC programme. This was because that there were other programmes in the College, such as the Yi-Japanese-Chinese programme, where the students were also Yi. The following variables were also taken into account: year of study; gender; medium of instruction; language history, language experience and language proficiency; and names. These criteria, however, were applied only to Model II students because the number of Model I students had been very small in the programme. Thus, all Model I students were recruited.

Year of study

Students from all four year groups were included for the following reasons. First, it was useful to compare the impact of the programme on students at different point of time. Second, students' exposure to the three languages varied across the four year study in the programme: in the first year, students had the most exposure to Yi language learning; from the second year and onwards, the focus of teaching and learning shifted to English and other subjects, with just a few Yi culture and literature related modules in the second year; in the fourth year, time was allocated for placements only. It would therefore be interesting to explore their different learning experiences across the four-year study in the programme. Finally, students from different year groups were considered as different sources for data triangulation.

Gender

Gender is a potentially important variable in exploring patterns of response (Bryman, 2012). It is particularly associated with literacy in education (Moss, 2007). In qualitative research, it positions ideas and subjects (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003) as well. Therefore, in all the student focus groups and one-to-one River of Life interviews, I tried to have a balance between both female and male students in my study. The same criterion also applied to teacher focus groups.

Medium of instruction

Medium of instruction (MoI) determines the status of that language, as well as other languages in the curriculum (Adamson & Feng, 2014). It therefore plays an important role in identifying the kind of bi-/multilingual education model. For Model II students, Chinese was the primary MoI in their basic education; for Model I students, it was Yi. Students were assigned to different focus groups according to the MoI in their basic education.

Language history, language experience and language proficiency

Language history gave me information on issues such as when a student had started to learn Yi and/or English, and the length of time a student had been exposed to formal language provision (Grosjean, 1998); language experience, both in- and outside home or schools, threw light on language contact. It also provided potential explanation of factors actually affecting students' language acquisition, positively or negatively; self-assessment of all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in the different languages in their repertoire helped me identify bi-/trilinguals with different levels of proficiency. Furthermore, it helped me see how differently students perceived their own language proficiencies. Again, strategic purposeful sampling ensured a representative range of language backgrounds. In addition, language history and language proficiency were used as criteria in selecting cases for River of Life follow-up interviews described below.

Names

Although according to Ma (2001), the Yi may never give up using their Yi names and only use the Han names in Han-dominated areas, this is an indicator of the significant changes taking place on Yi's identity due to the Han's dominating status. And it becomes even more critical in the whole Chinese ethnic history and culture, given that Yi's clan names and naming system reflect "the importance of Yi clan organization, [...] the importance of generational and age hierarchy, [and] the economic and ecological bases of society" (Ma, 2001, p. 93; Wang, 1985). For example, it is widely believed in some literature that the Yi strictly practice 父子连名制 [father-son linked naming system] in which the last character of the father's name has the same sound as the first character of the son's name⁶. Thus, when a Han name is adopted, the tradition deeply rooted in the Yi's culture and society will also be changed.

⁶ Both Chinese Han names and Yi names start with a surname, and are followed by a given name.

I had never thought about Yi students' names as an identifier before I started my data collection. However, when I was actually in the field, it was interesting to see that apart from their physical traits, the most distinctive identity of ethnic minority students were actually their names which threw light on how they or their families wanted to assert their identity (Edwards, 2009a).

Teachers

In total, three groups of teachers were recruited for focus groups. One was for staff from CYS; one was for staff from CFL; the third included staff from both colleges as well as one senior administrator from the Teaching and Learning Affairs Office at the University, who had both a teaching and an administrative role. Apart from *gender*, already discussed above, other factors taken into account for the selection of teachers were as follows:

Subject

Subject refers to the use of different languages as school subjects (Cenoz, 2009, p. 34). In the case under study, English, Yi and Chinese were all allocated teaching sessions as subjects in the syllabus. Furthermore, in the present study, subject also included content subjects. Teachers across different disciplines selected were involved in cross-curricular aspects of the programme under study (Patton, 2002).

Ethnicity

It was important to include both Yi and non-Yi teachers in the sample, since these groups might bring different experiences and expectations. In the three teacher focus groups, the CYS group were all Yi, the CFL group were all Han except one Tibetan. For the third group, a mixed group of Han and Yi teachers was selected.

Availability

The availability of staff was always an issue. The majority staff from CYS lived in the staff apartments on the same campus. However, the staff from CFL was much younger and usually lived outside of the campus in private accommodation. It was therefore very difficult to find a time slot to everybody's convenience. To some extent, I felt apologetic because I could not compensate teacher participants' time in any way. Thus, I made the best use of the routine mandatory staff meetings which took place every other Tuesday afternoon at both colleges. I then arranged the focus group sessions to take place either one hour before or after the fortnightly meetings.

Access issues

Although I had worked in SWUN for two and a half years, I had no previous contact with the CYS. As such, all the information about the College or their programmes was obtained from their web site and my former colleagues at the CFL, many of whom taught *College English* to Yi students. Before starting my fieldwork, I had a meeting with a few former colleagues from the CFL, one of whom had frequent contact with the CYS and suggested that I should contact the Dean directly to seek consent. Her feedback on the Dean was very positive leading me to believe that he would be open to any research related to the Yi.

The Dean agreed to meet up at a local cafe. In the meeting, I introduced more about my background and relationship with SWUN. I also explained to him about my research aims. The Dean expressed a very welcoming attitude towards me and my study. He assured me that he would try to support as much as he could. The only condition was that the research should not involve politics in any way, which I understood to refer to sensitive issues such as Tibet; this was not, however, part of my agenda.

Rapport was thus established between me and the gatekeeper from the very beginning. In addition, one of the vice-deans responsible for teaching and learning, who was one of my former postgraduate students, offered tremendous support during the whole process of data collection. However, there was some degree of 'exclusion'. For instance, some administration staff did not inform me about some in-house meetings dealing with issues such as finance issues or students complaints; as an outsider, I totally appreciated why this might be the case. As far as I was able to discern, however, no significant information relevant to my research was discussed in those meetings to which I was not invited.

Research methods

As mentioned earlier, several qualitative research methods were used, including document analysis, observation, interviews, focus group discussions and River of Life. Each method is discussed in turn below.

Document analysis

Ritchie and Lewis (2003, p. 35) note that document analysis "involves the study of existing documents, either to understand their substantive content or to illuminate deeper meanings which may be revealed by their style and coverage". Document analysis has been considered as one of the main qualitative methods for data collection (Mertens, 1998) because of the dual purposes it serves. First, these documents are a basic source of background information about the natural setting before a research project begins though Atkinson and Coffey (2011, p. 80) also urge that "documentary materials should be regarded as data in their own right. They often enshrine a distinctively documentary version of social reality". Second, they provide the researchers an indication of important questions to pursue through other research methods in both a collaborative (Mertens, 1998) and complementary way (Yin, 2011).

With regard to the documentation on China's trilingual education policy, a predicament presents itself. Adamson et al. (2013, p. 183) claim that "[in China] [trilingual] education emerged through policy accretion; no single act of coherent, centralized policymaking can be credited". Kong (2013) also argues that even in the latest government report - *Outlines of the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development 2010-2020*, there are no responses to trilingual teacher education or related issues. As a result, I did not find much in the way of national, local or institutional policy documentation.

However, Patton (1990) and Mertens (1998) remind us that all programmes or organisations leave trails for researchers to follow, for instance in the form of memos, reports, photographs, recorded videos, etc., including information about a programme or an organisation. Furthermore, Mason (2002, p. 103) also suggests that even if no documents exist before the act of research, they can also "be generated for or through the research process". Accordingly, with the permission granted from the Dean and related administrative staff, the documents I looked into or generated were from many different sources: the guidance for implementation of the credit system; University briefing on the College's activities to the biannual college reports; the programme syllabus and teaching schedule of each programme run by CYS; and the media reports on the Dean and the College. My inquiry into the trilingualism and trilingual education programme therefore needed to give equal attention to the documentary reflecting how all the activities in the programme and the College were recorded, presented and most importantly employed for both internal and external.

Observation

My data collection started with observation for the following two reasons. Firstly, as Carspecken (1996, p. 154) suggests, the researcher "should wait until a thick record of observations has been compiled before beginning interviews and group discussion". Collecting interview data too soon before an understanding of the natural setting through observation has been established might increase the risk of bias. Secondly, observation is central and fundamental to qualitative research

(Marshall & Rossman, 2011) because we can never know or fully understand a phenomenon unless we personally ‘sight’ it to experience (Patton, 1990).

Lofland and Lofland (1984) use direct observation and participant observation interchangeably to refer to “the process in which an investigator establishes and sustains a many-sided and relatively long-term relationship with a human association in its natural setting” (p. 12). In contrast, Yin (2003b) and Adler and Adler (1994, noted in Mertens, 1998) distinguish the former from the latter. They suggest that, in participant observation, the researcher is “not merely a passive observer” (Yin, 2003b, p. 92) but also someone who interacts with participants while collecting data from them. In the present study, I adopted Yin’s and Adler and Adler’s understanding of participant observation, engaging with the participants to a degree but also limiting my interactions (as discussed below) as participant observation provided more opportunities to see and describe the setting. Furthermore, I lived in staff accommodation which was located on one of the two campuses. The campus was both the location of the third and fourth year student accommodation and also a venue for events. Being part of the community made it easier for me to observe the natural setting and participate in important events.

Yin (2003b) argues that the major problem for participant observation is the potential biases produced. For example, researchers fail to work as external observers and sometimes do not engage in good research practice. Or they may even totally immerse themselves in the phenomena under study, lending support if they perceive it to be lacking and undermining their research position as a result. These potential problems are particularly challenging given the collectivist culture of China, where people find it difficult to offer personal views that go against the *status quo* (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002). To mitigate these weaknesses, I tried to keep the observation ‘moderate’ (Mertens, 1998): this meant my observational role was neither as peripheral-member nor complete-member but as active-member-researcher (Adler and Adler, 1994, noted in Mertens, 1998). I attempted to balance the *emic* and *etic* roles by participating in

some central activities only, while not fully committing to the participants' values and goals (Spradley, 1980; Adler and Adler, 1994, both noted in Mertens, 1998).

My observation included both classroom and non-classroom activities, such as break times and student functions. I observed between three and five classes for each year group. Before each observation, I had a very brief talk with the lecturer to introduce myself and my purpose of visiting. A formal interview or a questionnaire was deliberately avoided as those approaches might make the lecturers feel that I was attempting to assess their performance, even though they had been informed that this was not my intention, and might have led lecturers to modify their normal teaching mode. This also provided an opportunity for me to introduce myself to the class before asking them to complete questionnaires in a second meeting.

Each year group was different in many ways, such as the degree of their participation and attention in class. I tried to retain an open mind and note down as much as possible of what I found related to my research. However, I also devised classroom observation sheets for both content subjects (see Appendix A.1) and English/Yi language classes (see Appendix A.2) respectively, and also two non-classroom observation sheets (see Appendices A.3 and A.4) to make sure all the essential features were captured both in and outside the classroom. Some parts of those sheets were based largely on Feng, Adamson, and Dong's (2013) technical paper on observation.

Focus groups

The focus group is a form of group interview (Cohen et al., 2007) exploring specific topics or issues (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999; Bryman, 2012). There are three main features which distinguish it from other group interviews (Bryman, 2012; Denscombe, 2007; Krueger & Casey, 2009). First, the participants are "selected individuals" (Beck, Trombetta, & Share, 1986, p. 73 cited in Vaughn,

Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996, p. 4) who have similar knowledge or experiences within the cultural context studied; second, a range of opinions, often different, are elicited on a small number of topics in focus; and, finally, the role of the researcher is as a moderator who facilitates the informal group interaction to “explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas [of participants]” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 178).

Use of focus groups

Focus groups are well suited to the exploratory research I am undertaking where the phenomenon under study is not well understood (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990; Vaughn et al., 1996). In my research, as discussed previously, the use of focus group is to complement other methods of inquiry as part of methods and data triangulation. Compared with one-to-one interviews, focus groups allow members more space and opportunities to voice themselves freely, permitting “wide-ranging interaction on a subject” (Waterton & Wynne, 1999, p. 141). They allowed the participants to interact in a safe and familiar surroundings where they could feel at ease and shared their view openly and thus helped reduced the social distance between them and me as a member of the Han majority and a former member of staff, allowing me to obtain data which could not otherwise be accessed through documentations or observation. This method not only inspired new ideas among group members but also gave them a chance to talk about these ideas through, enabling me to triangulate different views and perceptions from group to group and from one method to another. It also provided me further lines of inquiry for one-to-one in-depth interviews.

Role of researcher

The presence of researchers in a group is not always straightforward. Barbour (1999) notes that focus groups involve negotiation of identity between researcher and researched. On the one hand, we hope to stimulate discussion on a particular topic; on the other hand, we are ‘outsiders’ or ‘constructive marginals’ moving

between the boundaries of different social groups (Bennett, 1993, noted in Feng, 2009b). Discursive barriers, knowingly or unknowingly, did exist. As mentioned above, for student focus groups, the students recruited were all ethnic Yi, yet, I belonged to the majority Han people; most importantly, minority students were often labelled as poor learners (Qian, 2002; Yu, 1997, noted in Feng, 2009b), further underlining differences between the groups. The teacher focus groups raised similar issues. Some were also from the Yi group who might assume that I, too, would have low expectations of the Yi group; some were former colleagues who might not feel comfortable to be questioned by me. In these circumstances mentioned, as Sim (1998) argues, it is likely to elicit “situated” or “public” accounts from participants, different from the more “private” accounts in other social situations (pp. 349-350).

To address these potential issues, both Sim (1998) and Robson (2002) call for a balance between active and passive moderator roles. Butler (1996, noted in Sim, 1998, p. 347) argues that “a relatively passive role” is more likely to produce a participant-led discussion: discussion should primarily take place among the group members rather than them and the researcher. It is also important to pay attention to how we position our own views, beliefs, or understandings. Sim (1998) warns that “[conveying] an impression of ‘expertise’ is likely to be inimical to disclosure from participants”. This observation applied to both student and teacher focus groups in my study. I prepared British teas, biscuits and chocolates for all the focus groups and demonstrated that I was there to listen and learn from the participants, rather than the reverse (Millward, 1995, noted in Sim, 1998). This “permissive atmosphere” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 150) provided a *safe* forum (Vaughn et al., 1996) and enabled both students and teachers to talk about personal or conflicting views on the trilingual programme under research, to identify problems and even explore solutions.

I found the most challenging aspects of this activity were how to make the most use of the limited time of each interview, which was normally one hour, and how to make sure that everybody was able to talk. Often, when one person dominated the

conversation, he or she also tended to spend more time talking about issues of limited relevance. To solve the problem, I used the following three strategies: first, I informed the participants at the very beginning of the areas I hoped to cover, which gave them a rough idea of the potential time required. During the interviews, I also reminded them how many more questions remained to be discussed, especially when I was running out of time. Second, on some occasions, I made comments such as “That’s really interesting. We can look into that topic later but not today”, or “Does anybody else have different views or want to add anything?”. Finally, I addressed participants who were being overshadowed by more dominant members of the group directly, inviting them to comment, a strategy which produced good results.

Design of the focus group

Usually focus groups are composed of six to ten (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) or six to twelve people (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Krueger and Casey (2009) suggest that five to eight participants are the ideal size for most non-commercial topics. Given the scale of this research, smaller groups of four to six participants were used. However, one or two more participants were invited in case of absence.

When deciding how many people to recruit, I had also considered variables highlighted by Krueger and Casey (2009): the complexity of the topic; participants’ level of experience or expertise; and the number of questions I wanted to cover. For all the focus group and one-to-one interviews, I used one iphone and one ipad to record at the same time. It was normally very easy to tell the identity in the recordings of teacher focus groups because they often spoke in turn and I knew most of them. But for students, this became very difficult. I therefore numbered each student before the talk started and also took notes of the sequence of their speaking.

Student focus groups

In the programme, there were 168 Yi students in four year groups; of these, the medium of instruction (MoI) for 12 students in basic education was Yi, i.e. Model I education (see Table 3.1). In total, 8 student focus groups were conducted via purposeful sampling (see Table 3.2: Summary of number of people in focus groups, interviews and RoL: three groups for Model I students (one group was for the 1st year group; one group was for the 2nd year group and the other was for the third and fourth year groups due to the limited number of Model I students); four groups for Model II students (one for each year group); and one additional group was formed for students who attended the *Annual Sino-American Exchange Month* which involved contact with a student group from an English-speaking country. Each group included both males and females with different backgrounds and experiences to ensure that a range of experiences were represented.

I started with a questionnaire (see Appendix B.1) covering variables such as gender, ethnicity⁷, language competence (self-assessment), year group and the medium of instruction for basic education. The ultimate aim of a focus group is not on “consensus building” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Vaughn et al., 1996, p. 5). Rather, it is an occasion when a range of different opinions on an issue are brought forth. As such, to have students with different perspectives was important. Below is a summary of students who completed the questionnaire.

Pathway Year Group	Model I	Model II	Notes
1st year	5	47	Male: 17; Female: 35
2nd year	4	44	Male: 15; Female: 33
3rd year	2	35	Male: 11; Female: 26
4th year	1	30	Male: 8; Female: 23
Total	12	156	

Table 3.1: Student number at each year group

⁷ This was to assure that all participants were Yi.

The time when the questionnaires were completed was critical because I wanted to make sure that as many students as possible, if not all, participated. Thus, the questionnaires were distributed either before a class started or during the break. Another advantage of this arrangement was that when participants were not very clear about a question, they could ask me immediately. By the same token, once I collected the questionnaires, I was able to quickly scan them to make sure there were no questions unanswered and that the handwriting was legible.

Teacher focus groups

In the programme under study, the total number of teachers was no more than 15. Most language teaching was done by members of staff from the CFL. But there was one English subject, *Spoken English*, which was taught by a member of staff who was very proficient in Yi, Chinese and English. The majority of content subjects were taught by staff from the CYS and a small number by staff from other departments or colleges in the University. When I sampled, I used two main sources. One was the programme schedule which listed each module and its lecturer; the other was the questionnaires (see Appendix B.2) completed by the staff. As with student questionnaires, I tried to choose an occasion when most people were present, such as staff meetings. I made the use of breaks during these meetings to invite staff to fill the questionnaires and, during the actual meetings, I went through quickly to make sure there were no questions missing or inaccurate information.

Thus, three teacher focus groups were set up: as mentioned earlier, one for the CFL staff, one for the CYS staff, and one involving people from both colleges and one senior administrator. The first two groups were “naturally-occurring”, a most important context within which ideas were formed and decisions made (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 9). Teachers in the third group were heterogeneous (Brown, 1999, p. 115, noted in Robson, 2002) because they worked in different colleges and were of different ethnicities. Groups of this kind enriched the discussion and shed light from different perspectives.

Although, originally, I thought that group cohesiveness might be a problem (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2006) for the third group, the atmosphere was very harmonious and participants were active. In order to overcome potential problem, I followed the suggestions of Stewart et al. (2006) for facilitators: I tried to be clear from the start about the aims of the discussion; and before the discussion moved to controversial topics, for instance, what the fundamental challenges were for Yi students, I tried to establish common experiences among group members so as to build a sense of cohesiveness (Stewart et al., 2006). For example, for the question above, I invited the group members to give me some examples of students' "learning challenges" first which embarked resonances.

Interviews

Interviews "allow us to enter into the other person's perspective [...] We interview to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). They provide the researcher with an opportunity to focus on a small sample, to engage and talk actively with people to generate in-depth data on their constructions of the world. As Stake (1995, p. 64) asserts, the interview is the main road to multiple realities.

There are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Bryman, 2012; Patton, 2002; Robson, 2002; Thomas, 2009). Structured interviews are essentially spoken questionnaires (Denscombe, 2007). They are often used in quantitative research (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews, with at least some predetermined questions, allow the interviewer greater flexibility to modify questions according to the interests of interviewee (Denscombe, 2007). Finally, unstructured interviews refer to completely informal conversational interviews (Patton, 2002) which develop spontaneously and "go with the flow" (p. 343).

All three kinds of interviews have advantages and disadvantages. At one end of the continuum, while the unstructured interview can yield rich data, it can be very

time-consuming as the researcher tries to pull all the data together and extract systematic information (Patton, 2002). At the other end of the continuum, the structured interview is easier to conduct and code but offers little scope for probing more deeply (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interviews were therefore chosen for this study as a good compromise between these two extremes, allowing the researcher to gain access to contextualised personal accounts of an object or event, and the meaning people attribute to it (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 27).

In my study, the students and teachers' perceptions of the programme have played a crucial role in answering my research questions. I explored issues in-depth from participants' own perspectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews provided a more comprehensive description of individuals' behaviours and also their inner world. Through face-to-face 'conversation with a purpose', I asked questions (see Appendices C.1 and C.2) and listened actively while reconstructing my own views of their social world. The semi-structured interview allowed me to generate data actively and reflexively (Mason, 2002). They provided a conducive atmosphere for interviewees who expressed their thoughts freely while I, the interviewer, identified emerging themes and issues as they arose. Madison (2004) and Rubin and Rubin (2005) advise that, rather than pretending that we begin research with no biases or "self" (Madison, 2004, p. 8), we should make our subjectivity transparent and accessible. In my research, my personal views, interests and experiences had been acknowledged through the information sheet, interactions with participants in focus groups, and casual communication.

For the purpose of my study, one-to-one interviews were employed in two contexts: one for the Dean of the College, the other as a follow-up for 7 members selected from the student focus groups discussed above. To minimise my biases in the interview with the Dean, careful preparation was undertaken. For example, as Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest, in order to be as knowledgeable as possible about the Yi group, familiar with the technical language in the HE environment, and also with his social situation and biography, I deliberately decided to delay the interview with the Dean until I finished all the focus group and one-to-one

interviews. This helped me develop sound knowledge of the programme under study and avoided making direct and inappropriate comments based on inaccurate information. Rather, it enabled me to ask more targeted questions and triangulate data elicited from staff and student focus group, as well as other methods.

I undertook my follow-up interviews with selected participants from the student focus groups through using the River of Life narratives which will be discussed below. Based on the sampling criteria discussed earlier, I attempted to ensure as wide a range of experiences as possible. My aim was to explore in greater depth issues which had emerged in the group discussions so as to chart development of individuals according to their own narratives.

River of Life

The River of Life (RoL), also known as ‘the Snake Interview’ or ‘the Snake technique’, is a constructivist technique used to promote reflection on ‘critical incidents’ in the life history of participants (Denicolo & Pope, 1990; Pope & Denicolo, 2001). Hughes (2007) argues that “In general usage ‘critical incident’ often implies a major crisis or turning point [...] While they [real life incidents] are not necessarily dramatic, they still represent aspects of human experience that are significant to the individual concerned”. In my study, the method highlights the *significance* of an incident to each participant.

Participants are asked to draw a winding river. Each turn on the river represents an “important event, person, object or anything at all that influenced [participants’] attitudes and beliefs” (Cabaroglu & Denicolo, 2008, p. 31). A few words are written on each turn to illuminate what triggered the change or development. The method was first used by Priestley, McQuire, Flegg, Hemsley, Welham (1978, noted both in Denicolo & Pope, 1990; Pope & Denicolo, 2001) as a tool for social skills training but later adopted by Denicolo and Pope (1990, p. 158) as a multifaceted research tool in teacher education or staff development.

Just like interviews or focus groups, RoL enables participants to use their own words to explore their experiences, opinions and concerns. One of its biggest advantages is that, as a qualitative-interpersonal approach, it sheds light on personally important issues (Cabaroglu & Denicolo, 2008; Pope & Denicolo, 1986) or ‘critical incidents’ (Denicolo & Pope, 1990) helping students to reflect on their learning experiences and to tap into data which “otherwise would be difficult to access” (Cabaroglu & Denicolo, 2008, p. 39) by using other methods. Most importantly, RoL illustrates the influences of the past on where a participant is today. One more advantage of this “less ‘personal’” (Apelgren, 2001, p. 110) technique is that it requires “only the barest minimum of intervention” (Denicolo & Pope, 1990, p. 159), allowing the researcher to offer non-critical encouragement to sustain the dialogue. The main aim of employing RoL in my research, then, is as *methods* triangulation to identify, in participants’ own words, what has led to their present positive or negative learning experiences in the programme.

Often, RoL is deployed before a focus group interview (Apelgren, 2001). However, in my present study, it would have been difficult to identify a purposive sample as there was no good understanding of the setting or what issues might emerge. Furthermore, the time and resources available were limited, making it unrealistic to contemplate organising RoL activities on a large scale. I had therefore decided to use this tool as a starting point for the follow-up interviews after student focus groups. Participants able to attend a briefing meeting were offered some examples by way of explanation and then asked to create their RoL drawing. I copied those drawings and then asked students to go home, think about it, giving them more time to reflect what happened in the past in their lives and make amendments if necessary. RoL drawings were brought back again when we met for the one-to-one interview. For those who could not attend the introductory meeting, I tried to provide as much information as possible via telephone conversation or online chats. Similarly, I kept a copy of their drawing, and discussed it with students next time when we met. Among the seven students, three students drew another image at home with more details provided.

Below shows the number of participants involved in the different methods of data collection (see Table 3.2).

Methods	Target group	Number	Notes
Focus groups	Students	8 groups	3 to 7 students for each group
	Teachers	3 groups	6 to 7 teachers for each group
Interviews	Dean	1 people	
River of Life	Students	7 people	1 to 2 people from each student focus group

Table 3.2: Summary of number of people in focus groups, interviews and RoL

The different methods used to answer the research questions are summarised below (Table 3.3):

Research Questions	Research Methods Adopted
1. What are the views towards Yi in the wider society, in the Southwest University for Nationalities (SWUN) and in the College of Yi Studies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document Analysis • Focus groups • Interview
2. What are the main challenges of the trilingual education Yi-English-Chinese (YEC) pathway in the Chinese Minority Languages and Literature programme offered at SWUN?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation • Focus groups • River of Life • Interview
3. What is the range of competencies in Yi, English and Chinese of the YEC pathway programme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • River of Life
4. What are the policy makers', teachers' and students' perceptions of and attitudes towards the programme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups • River of Life • Interview
5. What has been the impact of the programme on individual students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation • Focus groups • River of Life • Interview

Table 3.3: Research methods used to collect data answering each research question

Data analysis

As Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 153) argue, data analysis is the process of “systematically searching and arranging” all the data accumulated to “increase [our] own understanding of them and to enable us to present what [we] have discovered to others”. Although qualitative data often involve comparatively smaller numbers of people, the data are often detailed, subtle yet rich (Cohen et al., 2007) and, as such, analysis is both time-consuming and demanding.

Analysis in the field

Marshall and Rossman (2011, p. 207) assert that three activities – description, analysis, and interpretation – are “bundled together into the generic term *analysis*”, and they are not linear. However, due to the time limitations associated with my fieldwork, the ‘analysis’ was preliminary and was more about thinking about rather than interpreting the data.

The following three activities were being done in parallel. First, I tried to transcribe interviews and focus groups as soon as completed. Second, I took reflective memos or field notes on a daily basis. Sometimes, I wrote them down on my pc; when I was too busy to write, I used my iphone to record my thoughts, doubts, questions, observations or anything I found interesting and worth noting. Third, as Marshall and Rossman (2011, p. 213) argue, “[Choosing] the language while writing brings codes to a conceptual level in data analysis. Writing prompts the analyst to identify categories that subsume a number of initial codes”. I compared, categorised and sought to find the linkage in the data, thinking of different codes for the second phase of data analysis following field work. This, was an ongoing process (Robson, 1993).

Analysis after data collection

Many authors (Mason, 2002; Robson, 1993; Wilkinson, 2011) have acknowledged that there is a wide range of approaches to the analysis of qualitative data. Given that I was handling large quantities of data in the form of transcriptions, pictures, notes, and documents, I adopted a content analysis approach, one of the main forms of qualitative data analysis. As Cohen et al. (2007) highlight, content analysis has several advantages: it focuses on “systematic and verifiable” (p. 475) language and linguistic features and meaning in context; it is possible to do reanalysis for verification and replication; furthermore, it allows “examination of the data for recurrent instances of some kind” (Wilkinson, 2011). Content analysis thus allowed me to immerse, as well as concentrate on, the texts itself.

After I completed my field work, my first task was to finish transcribing all the interviews and focus groups in Word. This task was complicated by the fact that many Yi students had a strong Yi accent; in addition, when they could not find an appropriate Mandarin translation for a Yi term or expression, they offered Chinese words with similar pronunciation. Next, I started to refamiliarise myself with those transcripts by importing all the documents into NVivo 10, a specialist qualitative data analysis software package, and reading them through; as Gibbs (2002) argues, the heart of qualitative data analysis is to understand the meaning of the texts. After arriving at a set of codes, I reviewed, compared and used codes to organize data further, searching for the linkages and identifying themes and patterns across various data sets. Finally, key themes were redefined which provided me with a framework for chapters five to eight, where I present the findings of analysis. Those themes are delivery of programme, student language competencies, evaluation of the programme, and identity and aspiration.

Rigour in research: Criteria in qualitative research

Although discussions related to the legitimacy of qualitative research are less common in the recent literature and there is a wide consensus (Creswell, 2009) that qualitative approaches are suitable within educational research, qualitative research has been an objective of criticism since the 1970s (Bryman, 2008). Here I will focus on some of the main criticisms.

Shipman (1997) and Bryman (2012) propose that *reliability* and *validity* are two of the most prominent parameters related to the quality of research. *Reliability* is concerned with the question of whether or not the same results can be replicated. *Validity* is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from research (Bryman, 2012, p. 47). However, many scholars (Denscombe, 2007; Healy and Perry, 2000, noted in Golafshani, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Robson, 2002) call for an alternative way of addressing the same issue in qualitative research.

Denscombe (2007, p. 296) argues that “it is not feasible [...] to check the quality of [qualitative] research and its findings by replicating the research in the same way that scientists might repeat an experiment”. This is because essentially no social setting can be replicated. The phenomena a researcher hopes to interpret and probe in their natural settings exist outside of the research project (Geertz, 1973), yet are portrayed as the researcher’s version of the socially-constructed “truth” (Shipman, 1997). Pring’s (2004) observation is helpful in resolving the paradox:

[...] the ‘evaluation outcomes’ do not describe ‘the way things really are’ or ‘really work’[...] It no longer makes sense to talk of the ‘true’ state of affairs. What, one might ask, is truth? Rather it is the case that we each, in our research and evaluations, try to ‘make sense’ of the situation we find ourselves in [...] ‘Facts’ are not discovered, but created (p. 46).

It is essential to be aware that in qualitative research that “what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to” (Geertz, 1973, p. 9). This point of view pertains to the constructionist and interpretive assumptions discussed earlier, which inform my own approach to research, i.e. knowledge and truth flow from the perspectives of the social actors.

Thus, if we acknowledge the unique features of qualitative data, including the fact that it is often based on a small sample size, it can be argued that it is simply not feasible to use the conventional criteria designed for quantitative research to judge or justify the legitimacy of qualitative research.

Dependability: ‘Reliability’ in qualitative research

As discussed above, in qualitative research, the claim to reliability is often unrealistic. The issue of “whether or not qualitative findings can be replicated” is not relevant to qualitative inquiry (Morse, 1999, noted in Robson, 2002).

Different basic beliefs lead to different criteria for its evaluation and different claims about knowledge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Alternative criteria have emerged which “have greater resonance with the goals and values of qualitative research” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 270), namely *consistency* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Robson, 2002; Hammersley 1992, noted in Silverman, 2010), or *dependability* (Denscombe, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; also adopted in Marshall & Rossman, 2006; 2011). In this view, instead of asking whether the same results would be obtained if the same instruments were used by different researchers to conduct the same research, we need to ask whether the research itself “reflects reputable procedures and reasonable decisions that other researchers can evaluate” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 298) so as to see the possibility of reaching the same or comparable findings. In my research, the YEC programme is unique in its own right due to many factors, for instance, the status of the University, the vitality of Yi within and outside the University in the region, and the background of students,

and most importantly, the aims of the programme. As such, it is simply not possible to replicate any of the findings of the current research. What I have tried to establish is the “degree of consistency” (Hammersley 1992, noted in Silverman, 2010), or *qualitative reliability* (Gibbs, 2007), which claims instead that, across different researchers and repeated studies, the reader can find *consistent* and *comparable*, rather than exactly *the same* results. Measures taken to achieve this end include providing sufficient information and a fairly detailed record of my research procedures for the reader so that he or she can assess how much is evidence and how much is opinion (Shipman, 1997). In addition, triangulation was deployed to increase dependability (this will be discussed at greater length later).

Credibility and transferability: ‘Validity’ in qualitative research

The alternative criteria which correspond to internal and external validity in quantitative research are *credibility* and *transferability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; also adopted in Marshall & Rossman, 2006; 2011). *Credibility* refers to “the extent to which qualitative researchers can demonstrate that their data are accurate and appropriate” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 297). Thus, the researcher’s reconstructions are “credible to the constructors of the original multiple realities” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296), i.e. the participants or the population under study. To address credibility and yield valid data, both focus group interviews and observation were employed as they allowed a means of assessing credibility by cross-checking first hand insights – contemporaneous and historical – emerging from the data in both settings (Creswell, 2009); the ‘River of life’, narrative approach, in particular, was selected as a triangulation method which allowed my participants to reflect in-depth, through images and their own verbal and non-verbal interpretations, about what had in the past led them to where they were today.

Transferability is an imaginative process in which, based on the thick description (Geertz, 1973) provided, the reader draws conclusions about the possibility of transferring the findings of the research to other settings (Denscombe, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). If *credibility* highlights a researcher’s capability of

demonstrating credible and believable findings, *transferability* allows the reader, often a policy maker or another researcher (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), to foresee the possibility of a transfer. Here, the reader, instead of the researcher, plays a central part in the generalisation to other settings. The role of the researcher in this process is as a story teller who gives a full account of how the research is conducted.

In relation to my own study, as an inductive researcher, I emphasise *transferability* rather than *generalisability*, and *comparability* within a particular theoretical framework, rather than representativeness of wider situations and populations. To be more explicit, the purpose of my research is to explore what can be an effective and strong trilingual education model for Chinese ethnic Yi university students, rather than to establish or test a theory suitable for a wider context, for instance, other 54 ethnic minority university students in China. I explicate my underpinning theoretical frameworks, how data were collected and analysed, and my findings. Decisions about transferability to other settings, then, will rest on the reader and other researchers rather than me (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Neutrality or confirmability

A claim of high and sufficient reliability is usually based on an objective, scientific or evidence/data-based research (Shipman, 1997). In contrast, qualitative methods such as observation are often considered less transparent and systematic, and more subjective (Yin, 2003) as researchers bring different values to the situation. The reader must depend on the researcher's depiction of what was going on (Silverman, 2010) and the researcher's views about what is significant and important (Bryman, 2012). The issue of objectivity is certainly relevant but, as discussed earlier, "truth" is socially constructed. Furthermore, as Shipman (1997, p. 18) observes, "When the research is about humans there is always controversy". Each seemingly similar human situation tends to have its own unique features.

Thus, instead of objectivity, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose the alternative concept of *neutrality* or *confirmability* which demonstrates “whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by another person or another study” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 253). In my research, researcher bias – a “contaminant” (Bryman, 2008, p. 22) – is explicitly acknowledged. As Denscombe (2007, p. 300) points out, “No research is ever free from the influence of those who conduct it [... Qualitative] data, whether text or images, are always the product of a process of interpretation”. However, I tried to counteract my biases and minimize the impact of the *etic* (or outsider), in my case, the Han perspective, on the *emic* (or insider), i.e. the Yi perspective (Yin, 2011). Ultimately and also most importantly, I kept an open mind: being open to any criticism (Denscombe, 2007).

Triangulation

Triangulation is a strategy borrowed from surveying and geometry (Thomas, 2009). In the social sciences, the term has been used in a metaphorical way to refer to “[the] use of more than one method or source of data in the study of a social phenomenon so that findings may be cross-checked” (Bryman, 2012, p. 717). Triangulation indicates that studying the same phenomena from different perspectives can enhance the rigour of the research (Nwenmely, 1999; Robson, 2002). Each method adopted can complement the strengths of other methods, while its weaknesses, or “unique deficiencies”, can be minimised (Denzin, 1970, p. 308; Johnson, 1997). Most importantly, triangulation can effectively help “overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single-method, single-observer, single-theory studies” (Denzin, 1970, p. 313). In this respect, triangulation is particularly relevant to the credibility of a qualitative research project (Johnson, 1997).

Denzin (1970) identifies four distinct types of triangulation: *data* triangulation, using different data sources within the same method(s); *investigator* triangulation, involving multiple researchers; *theory* triangulation, employing multiple theoretical perspectives; and *methodological* triangulation, employing multiple strategies

within one given method to examine data (*within-method* triangulation), or combining “dissimilar methods to measure the same unit” (pp. 307-308) (*between-methods* triangulation).

Taking into consideration the scale of my research, the limited time and money available, and the theoretical assumptions I adopt, I did not employ *investigator* triangulation or *theoretical* triangulation, but only used *data* triangulation and *methodological* triangulation. With regard to *data* triangulation, as Denzin (1970) notes, there can be three subcategories: time, space, person: we use the same method among as many people as possible, at difference places and over a different period of time. In my research, I used focus group interviews with both students from four different year groups, as well as one group with students who had experienced direct contact with American students. Thus, different perceptions from students in different year groups were brought together. This means comparing and checking what different people say about the same thing. In addition, three further focus group interviews were arranged specifically for the twelve Model I students. The data obtained from these focus groups were compared with the previous groups to identify differences in their experiences. In a similar vein, as discussed earlier, there were three teacher focus group interviews: one for teachers from the CYS, one for teachers from the CFL, and one involving both teaching staff and a member of administrative staff. When the data from both students’ and teachers’ focus group interviews were amalgamated, the different perspectives were cross-checked (Patton, 1990). The different data sources therefore provided me a richer and more complete understanding of the phenomenon (Johnson, 1997).

In addition, *methodological* triangulation such as observation and the River of Life activity offered a “combination of attempts at understanding a person’s point of view with attempts at describing the life world in which he or she acts” (Flick, 2002, p. 49): observation allowed me to actually *see* what happened in real world; the RoL activity unfolded more detail on issues such as triggers for changes in participants’ life and the opportunity to seek internal consistency and corroborating

evidence. I was therefore able to sort through the data to find both common and major, and also minor themes (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Ethical considerations

People were the main sources from whom I collected data for the current study. As Oliver (2010, p. 9) stresses, “It is important to consider ethical issues from the early stages of a research project”. Before I collected my data, information sheets (see Appendices D1 to D3) and consent forms (see Appendices D.4 to D.6) was prepared to provide all the essential information about myself and my project, and also why and how participants could be involved in the research. On the sheet, the anonymity and participants’ confidentiality were assured.

In the field, the major ethic consideration concerned how to protect the identities of those participants who voiced negative feedback to an individual, often a member of staff, and the College. I therefore paid particular attention to this aspect and made sure that the real identity of any participant was not revealed accidentally. Before any interview started, I assured the interviewee(s) that the content of the interview would be treated in strict confidence. In addition, I used pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity.

Another ethical consideration concerned the University and the College of Yi Studies *per se*. I raised this question directly to the Dean who assured me that this would not be an issue from his perspective. This was also supported by his actions. For example, when he learned that I would do a poster presentation in an international symposium which had his students’ photo on, he publicized the poster among the staff, claiming that the College was drawing attention worldwide.

Conclusion

This chapter has accounted for the methodology employed in the current study. It began by discussing the philosophic positions I subscribe to. Based on the existing literature and my knowledge of the phenomenon under study, the study was designed as an ethnographic case study. It then explained how I sampled my participants and any access issues which might occur. It was further followed by my choice of five different research methods which were used to gather qualitative data. They were document analysis, observation, focus groups, interviews and the River of Life narrative. Finally, I explained how I went about analysis of the data generated in this way, including the issues of how to assure rigour in research, triangulation and the ethical implications.

Chapter 4 Ethnolinguistic Vitality of Yi

Introduction

The notion and utility of the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality was first raised in Chapter Two. In the present chapter, this concept is applied specifically to Yi in order to provide a context for the findings presented in chapters five to eight. As such it addresses the first of my research questions: What are the views towards Yi in the wider society, in SWUN and in the College of Yi Studies? It draws on multiple sources: the relevant literature, an interview with the Dean and founder of the programme, and focus groups and interviews with students and teachers. The three different dimensions of ethnolinguistic vitality proposed by Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977) – demography, status and institutional support – provide the framework for the following discussion. The chapter begins with the discussion of the ethnolinguistic vitality of Yi in the wider society from the perspectives of demography; status; and institutional support and then by a detailed examination of the vitality of Yi in the University and the College of Yi Studies.

Demography

In the country, overall, among the 55 ethnic minority groups identified by the government, the Yi group is the sixth largest ethnic minority group with a population of over 8.7 million people. And there is a steady increase on the Yi population in the past several decades. In LYAP, the total population is 4,532,809 by 2010, out of which the Yi account for 49.13% which is an increase of 4.46% compared with the Yi proportion at the same region in 2000 (Liangshan Prefecture Statistic Bureau, 2011).

The concentration of Yi speakers varies from region to region across the country. For example, Liu et al. (2015) adopt Giles et al.'s (1997) framework to measure these three dimensions of Yi ethnolinguistic vitality in LYAP, which occupies much of the southern extremity of Sichuan province (see Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2). For example, in Meigu, a county in the Northeast part of Liangshan, the Yi account for 98.74% of the population. Together with the neighbouring Zhaojue County, 96%, the largest concentration of the Yi population in China, is found here (Hein & Zhao, 2016). And on some occasions, the Han are reduced to “an - albeit dominant - minority” (p. 273). Besides, the Yi language is “used on a daily basis for intra-ethnic communication among the Yi people and all walks of life” (Liu et al., 2015, p. 144). It is the major language people use in informal domains, “a necessity for life and work”, as commented by a local primary school teacher of Muosu ethnicity (another ethnic minority group in China) (p. 143). Thus, it can be concluded that in terms of demography and social status, the Yi ethnolinguistic vitality is very high in Meigu, LYAP. Yet, in other places such as the prefectural capital city Xichang, the Yi population only accounts for 22.5%. The Han make up 74.37% of the local population and the remaining 3.13% is made up of other ethnic minorities (Liangshan Prefecture Statistic Bureau, 2011). The Yi demographic strength in Xichang is therefore much lower compared with Yi-dominated counties like Meigu.



Figure 4.1: Geographical map of China (Chinafolio, 2016)



Figure 4.2: Geographic map of LYAP in Sichuan province (d-maps, 2016)

Within the CYS, with the exception of one member of the administration, all staff and students at the CYS are Yi. In other colleges which have a mixed population of Han and ethnic minority students, the numbers of Yi are significantly smaller; however, in the CYS the concentration provides a better opportunity for in-group contact with other Yi. This concentration and the focus on language and culture (see Chapter Five) have various repercussions.

The demographic strength of a group, in the form of absolute numbers, does not, of course, in itself guarantee vitality; a wide range of societal factors also play a role (Yagmur & Ehala, 2011). In this respect, Ehala (2010) makes a useful distinction between vitality, strength and sustainability:

Vitality is the ability of a community to act as a collective ethnicity; sustainability is the ability to continue existing as a group [with a distinctive identity and language]; [and] strength is its durability in demographic, economic, institutional and cultural terms, i.e. objective vitality (pp. 364-368).

Ehala (2010, 2011), then, argues that vitality, strength and sustainability are intertwined: vitality contributes to sustainability which is influenced by strength; strength may also affect – but does not determine – vitality. Many scholars (Bourhis, Giles, & Rosenthal, 1981; Giles, 2001; Giles et al., 1977) argue that vitality is not static and it can, or maybe should, be assessed both objectively and subjectively. Objective vitality is indicated, for instance, using statistics or data “gathered from secondary sources” (Bourhis et al., 1981, p. 146). Subjective vitality, in contrast, is reflected in speakers’ self-reports or self-assessment of ingroup/outgroup vitality. Subjective vitality “may be as important as” (Bourhis et al., 1981, p. 147) or “even more important than the objective ethnolinguistic vitality, for maintaining [...] language and [...] culture” (Giles, 2001, noted in Cenoz, 2014, p. 10). If an individual’s subjective EV is measured as a system of belief, as proposed by Allard and Landry (1992), this perception then becomes a strong predictor of language behaviour (Landry & Allard, 1992): if a Yi student at the CYS has the opportunity to learn and use the language, then the positive language experiences within the group are likely to reinforce his or her willingness to learn and use the language and vice versa. In contrast, Yi students from other programmes or universities where the Han and/or other ethnic groups are dominant will have fewer opportunities to use the language and thus may have lower levels of competence.

Status

As already indicated, status variables can be classified in terms of economic, social, sociohistorical and language factors Giles et al. (1977). I will discuss each of these in turn.

Economic status

Economic status means “the degree of control a language group has gained over the economic life of its nation, region or community” (Giles et al. 1977, p. 310). It is

beyond question that LYAP is one of “the poorest and least developed areas” in China (Heberer, 2001, p. 220). As Chen and Wu (2015) observe, “四川凉山彝族自治州, 中国贫困的样本 [Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan (is) a label for China’s poverty]”. Nevertheless the Yi community contributes significantly to the development of the regional economy in China. The *Annual Yi Torch Festival* attracts millions of tourists to the Liangshan area. For example, during the *Eleventh Five Year Plan* (2006-2010) announced by the central government, 62,736 million tourists visited the prefecture. The total tourism revenue in 2012 reached RMB21.563 billion (approximately US\$3.17 billion) (Sichuan Daily, 2012). However, these economic gains are concentrated in Xichang, the Han-dominated capital city, and its five neighbouring counties which account for over 74.1% of the prefecture’s GDP. Among the 30 autonomous prefectures in China, the average income of people in LYAP ranked 27th (Vermander, 1999). The government considers that the most effective way to lift LYAP out of poverty is to develop education (Chen & Wu, 2015).

Arguably, however, the economic indicator most relevant for the trilingual programme under study is employment. For example, according to the 2013 Graduate Employment Statistics for the College of Yi Studies (College of Yi Studies, 2014), the students’ employment rate was 100% though there is no indication of the kind of job which constitutes “being employed”. Out of 38 students, 29 (76.31%) were employed or in a placement in a national or regional government or public sector organization. Each year, over half of graduates go back to their regions, seeking a job locally rather than in Chinese cities such as Beijing, Shanghai or Guangzhou, which are always among the popular choices for the majority Han students (Zhang, 2010). As Schoenhals (2001, p. 254) reports, “The Yi make up over half the prefectural officials in Liangshan, and these jobs are won by going to college and then being appointed to such a position”. Thus, inevitably, these graduates contribute to the development of the local economy. The CYS is the only designated national training centre for the groups designated as ‘Yi Bilingual Talents’, the civil servants or senior school teachers working in Yi

majority areas and regions (State Ethnic Affairs Committee, 2013). They are the policy makers and stakeholders who will have an impact on the local economy.

Studying in a programme like the YEC means different things for different people. For example, when asked whether being Yi has an impact on their daily life and study, Student Gongguo identified the economic gains of participation in the programme, making clear links between this and sustainable development:

我觉得有影响吧。我就来自贫困山区，那里就是生活很艰苦。作为一个彝族同学，看到我们同胞生活很艰辛，我觉得我要、我必须改变这样一种现状，我要为我们的民族做出我的[贡献]，就是长大以后我要尽自己最大努力来帮助他们。我就是凭着这样一个动力，这样一个信念，然后不断学习、不断努力，一步一步来到这里。

I think yes [there is an impact]. I am from a poor mountainous area where life is hard indeed. As a Yi student, when I see my peers still living in hardship, I feel that I must, that I have to make a change. I shall do something for my group. I've been thinking that, when I finish, I will try my best to help them. This is the motivation, the belief which drives me here today, step by step, to carry on my learning.

Student Shibu made similar comments when asked about the time allocated to each language as part of the programme:

作为一个现代人，我们必须走向世界，比如外国的朋友到我们的老家西昌……例如那些旅行者啊，卖东西的……[英文就会有用]，或者是要搞一个调查翻译，我们当志愿者也可以。不管在哪里，能为人类做出一点点自己的贡献都是很好的，我觉得。

As a people involved in modernization, we have to be part of the world. For example, when foreign guests visit Xichang, my hometown, like travelers or pedlars, [English will be useful]. Or maybe a translation of a survey will

be needed. We can even work as volunteers. No matter where we are, I feel, it is good to contribute to humanity in whatever small ways [we can].

Not all students, however, felt as positive. When asked about the impact of the programme on her, Student Yang Xiao confessed:

他们都说有[影响], 对我个人而言, 对我改变不是很大。因为家在农村, 爸爸妈妈接受的教育就很低, 没接受什么高等教育。他们的思想还是比较传统。他们觉得我能上个大学, 内心就已经很满足了。也是受他们的影响, 想到自己的家境、环境, 就想改变。反正理想没那么高, 就是想改变一下环境……早点出来替他们分担一下。

They [her peers] all think [the impact] is huge but, to me, it doesn't have much influence. My family is in a rural area where my parents just had very basic education without any involvement in HE. Their thoughts are still very traditional. They are pleased by the fact that I can go to a university. Influenced by their values, I just want to make a change to my family situation and my surroundings. I do not aim high but just a change [...] I want to graduate as early as possible to share my parents' burdens.

Student Yang Xiao, then, has more modest aspirations. She sees the economic advantages associated with completion of the programme more in terms of her immediate family than the wider society. The same attitudes were apparent in the views attributed to many parents who refused to support children's postgraduate studies, as in their eyes this was unlikely to lead to any change in the family's financial situations and even if it did, the wait would be too long to be of interest. Teachers discussed the economic benefits and disadvantages from another perspective. In a focus group for CFL teachers, discussion focused on the competitive edge of brides with a bachelor's degree when it comes to the *caili* or betrothal payment. However, one teacher also mentioned that some female students refuse to continue their education because they worry that so few men can afford the *caili*, which ranges from RMB300,000 to RMB500,000 (approximately

US\$44,100 to US\$73,500) for a bride with a master's or even a bachelor's degree in a period of rapid economic development.

Social status

Social status is “the degree of esteem a linguistic group affords itself” (Giles et al., 1977, p. 310). There is no shortage of evidence concerning the self-esteem of the Yi. They represent the sixth biggest minority group by population in China. Although they are a small ethnic group compared with the dominant Han population, the Yi have played a significant role in China's modern history. During the Republic Period of China (1912 – 1949), the central government of the Chinese Nationalist Party enlisted the support of the united Yi local warlords and militias in Yunnan province. Yunnan borders neighbouring countries and many Yi can be found on both sides of the border. The Yi contribute significantly to the social prosperity and security of these neighbouring regions and countries, including Laos, Burma and Vietnam (Lu, 2010). Furthermore, Xichang, the prefectural capital of LYAP, is also the base of one of the three Chinese Satellite Launch Centres. As Harrell (1996, p. 107) observes, many Yi people “feel a mission to record and celebrate the glories of Yi civilization [...and there] is a large scholarly industry supported by the National Minzu Bureaucracy, devoted to writing comprehensive Yi history”.

Hannum and Wang (2010, p. 4) highlight the fact that, government policies “shape the rights and opportunities of official minorities”. Minority groups are accorded various special privileges, including, in some cases, regional autonomy. The LYAP, the region with the greatest concentration of Yi, for instance, was accorded the right to self-government in accordance with the national policy on minorities autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties fall under Chapter 3 (Articles 111-122) of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (Information Office of the State Council, 2005; Zuo, 2007), and the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy.

It would appear, however, that attempts to ensure the equal status of minorities, as well as their languages (Zhao, 2010), remain on the level of rhetoric (Bilik, 1998; Tsung, 2012) rather than reality, and discrimination and social inequality are widespread. The following statement from a director of the Dongjen Centre for Human Rights Education and Action underlines this situation:

Every time ethnic minorities are mentioned, we think of economic backwardness and laziness. The argument is that we are poor because we are idle and refuse to work. There is little respect and a platform for a discussion among equals (Yin and Mao, 1996, quoted in Sautman, 2014, p. 176).

Similar concerns were expressed by students in focus group interviews. When asked about the implications of being Yi for them personally, many highlighted the disadvantages of their ethnic identity:

比如说……手机分期付款，好像是他们[商家]就不把手机分期付款给藏族和彝族 (Student Yang Xiao)。

For example [...] it is known that they [retailers] refuse to make loans to the Tibetans and the Yi on mobile phone contracts (Student Yang Xiao).

[我] 就是感觉我是个彝族人，我在别人面前，可能会，别人会看不起我，因为我是个彝族人……这里有我的主观感受，但也有看到过在汽车上或火车上，[当]我的一些同胞在车上时，他们会用很不好的眼光去看他们 (Student Kebu)。

I just feel that I am a Yi. In front of others, maybe, people will look down upon me because I am a Yi [...] This is my personal observation, but when people from my group are on buses or trains, I see suspicious look in others' eyes (Student Kebu).

Obstacles in finding employment may further “sap [...] morale” (Giles et al., 1977, p. 310), potentially leading to lower self-esteem. Discrimination in employment was in fact a recurrent theme, raised by many students:

比如在外面打工的时候，其他民族不要少数民族，有民族歧视，有点……(Student Dangfu)

For example, when [we] are looking for jobs, the other group [Han] do not recruit ethnic minorities. Ethnic discrimination exists, in varying degrees... (Student Dangfu).

确实是这样，工作都找不到。上学期假期找工作都找不到，找了十几二十家，他首先问你，“你是不是少数民族” (Student Erfu)。

Yes, it is certainly true. No [part-time] jobs can be found at all. For instance, in the vacation last term, I contacted a dozen employers. The first question they always asked is “Do you come from an ethnic minority?” (Student Erfu).

但有个情况是，有时候处在一群汉族人中间，你就会是个宝；[而]有时候你去找工作，投简历那些会有点受歧视 (Student Muga)。

On the one hand, when you are with a bunch of Han people, you are valued as a treasure. Yet, sometimes, when you go to job hunting, your r ésumé will meet with discrimination (Student Muga).

Not all the students, however, shared this view. For example, on hearing comments about public hostility to the Yi, another student observed:

我觉得对这个行为，应该是大多数人对某种不良的行为习惯看不惯吧，应该不是对一个民族的偏见 (Student Xiaojun)。

I feel this kind of response is just a reaction to bad behaviour in public. It shouldn't be treated as prejudice against a *minzu* (Student Xiaojun).

In a similar vein, Student A Hong reflected:

因为我们都是大山里走出来的，大家独立性特别强。来到大城市里面，虽然有歧视之类的，但只要你充实了自己的大脑，到哪儿去，或许有一天心存观念的，只要你走得好，就算你身份证上写的彝族，他也会假装没看见，就是[跟]汉族一样的对待 (Student A Hong)。

Since we are from mountainous areas, we are very independent. Coming to big cities, even though things like discrimination happen, as long as your own mind is enriched or you have your own beliefs, wherever you go, people will ignore your Yi ethnicity on your identity card⁸. You will be treated the same as the Han (Student A Hong).

Sociohistorical status

Sociohistorical status is an important variable used to distinguish one linguistic group from another. The histories of minority groups often involve struggles to “defend, maintain or assert their existence as collective entities”. On the one hand, these struggles can make individuals “forget or [even] hide their ethnic identity”; on the other, they can “bind together” people in the present (Giles et al., 1977, p. 311).

The Yi have an illustrious history. The most famous event is the *Yihai Alliance* – “彝海结盟，光照千秋 [Yihai alliance, glory centuries]” which took place by Yihai, a lake in Liangshan in the late 1930s involved the Chinese Revolutionary Army and the local Yi ethnic minority, who fought together against the Japanese army and also the army of the Chinese Nationalist Party. Wang and Zhang (2012) acknowledge not only the significance of this event in history, but also the sociohistorical status of Yi as a collective entity. They further comment “这是彝族人民为中国革命作出的重要贡献 [This is the significant contribution of the Yi

⁸ In China, the ethnic identity of the card holder is printed on his or her identity card.

people to China's revolution]" (p. 127). The famous Chinese historian Fan Wenlan also observes (discussed in Nian, 2015) that the Yi played a central role in the course of both the development of Southwestern China areas and the historical unification of the whole country.

Another important case in point in relation to sociohistorical status is how the Yi acquired their identity as a separate ethnic group as part of the *minzu shibie* process. As was introduced in Chapter One, the fact that the Yi successfully established their existence as a collective entity in the discourse of *minzu shibie* is a strong endorsement of the sociohistorical status of the group.

Any discussion of the socio-historical status of Yi needs to include religion. As Kraef (2014, p. 146) states, "For many centuries, the Nuosu [Yi] have cultivated a belief system, which scholars describe as a combination of animism and ancestor worship". This is *bimo*⁹ culture. Various students also asserted the worth of *bimo* in their lives:

做宗教祭祀活动时，他说你是迷信的。其实这不是迷信，真正是一种宗教祭祀活动，是必须要去做的。以后我肯定也是会去做宗教祭祀活动，我选择相信它，坚守它。没有信仰的人是恐惧的，面对自然灾害的时候，他太恐惧了……自从我选择相信这个毕摩后，我也就身体力行要求我父母做这个宗教祭祀活动。后来在面对这些恐惧的时候，我就想，我是相信毕摩的，我是有信仰的，我不怕 (Student A Hai)。

When rituals are carried out, people say "This is just superstition". Actually, it is not superstition. They are real religious practices which [we] have to perform. In the future, I will definitely perform these religious rituals. I choose to believe in them and hold fast to them. A person with no belief is scared. When [we] face things like natural disasters, they are too scary.

Since I chose to believe in *bimo*, I have also asked my parents to practice

⁹ In Chinese, "*bimo*" is used to refer to both the belief system (used in the singular) and its priests (used in the plural).

those rituals as I do. Afterwards, when facing terrible events, I think: I believe in *bimo*. I have faith. I am not scared (Student A Hai).

Another student commented:

彝族做迷信，大的迷信……很大的那种，自己亲自去参加，跟运动员一样。以前只是参观，这次回去差不多就是运动员那种，自己去做，心里面觉得挺不错的，很舒服的 (Student Erfu)。

And when the Yi perform *mixin* (rituals), big *mixin* [...] really big ones, I participate like an athlete. In the past, I just watched. On my last [trip], I took part in person, like an athlete. I feel so great inside, really comfortable (Student Erfu).

A final and quite different example of pride in Yi collective history concerned Yi names, explained by one of the students as a defining characteristic of the group:

我觉得这是一个民族的特征……这个是追溯到彝族历史一个很关键的东西。比如说我叫格哈，再传下去、往后[往我的祖辈]推算，你有了多少代，这是可以算出历史来的，是可以证明彝族的历史。这是一个文化的特征。

I think this [Yi name] is a characteristic of a *minzu* [...] a key factor in tracing your Yi decent. For example, my name is Geha [a Han transcription of a Yi name]. If [the name] is passed down, my [descendants] will be able to calculate how many generations there are after me¹⁰. The history of [the numbers of my generations] can be calculated. So [our names] are evidence of the history of the Yi and this is a feature of culture as well.

¹⁰ According to Harrell (1995), Bradley (2001) and Bamo (2001b), it is about 25 years per generation in Yi genealogy.

The Yi' naming system reflects “the importance of Yi clan organization [...], the importance of generational and age hierarchy, [and] the economic and ecological bases of society” (Ma, 2001, p. 93; Wang, 1985). In this 父子连名制 [father-son linked naming system], the last character of the father's name has the same sound as the first character of the son's name. Among the students at YEC both Han and Yi names are used. There are two occasions when the Yi use Han names. One is when both the family names and the given names are Han; the other is that when a Han family name is combined with a Yi given name (Wang, 1985).

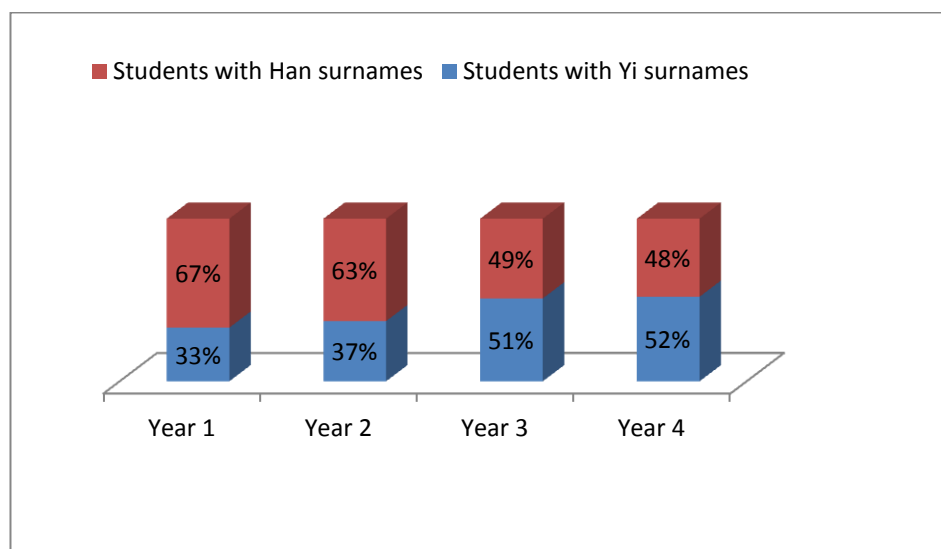


Figure 4.3: The percentage of students who use Han surnames and Yi surnames

Interestingly, the proportion of students using Han names is higher among younger than older students (see Figure 4.3), suggesting changes in Yi identity in response to Han domination. Nevertheless, significantly, most of the students interviewed make no attempt to “hide” their identity. A Yi student with a Han name, for instance, asserted: “其实，我好想改回彝族名字 [Actually, I really want to have my Yi name back]” (Student Wang Jun).

Language status

Language status refers to “the status of the language spoken by the linguistic group both within and without the boundaries of the linguistic community network” (Giles et al, 1977, p. 311). In order to fully understand this issue, it is helpful to look first at the origins of the spoken language and then at the development of its written form before considering the status today.

Nuosu scripts: From bimo culture, to romanization, to standardization

Literacy is inextricably linked with aspects of culture, including, most notably, religion. As mentioned earlier, the Yi faith has been described as “a combination of animism and ancestor worship” (Kraef, 2014, p. 146). It also encompasses feelings about “health and illness” as part of a belief system expressed through rituals performed only by *bimos* who “as priest and magician” serve as “an intermediary between spirits and people” (Bradley, 2001, p. 226).

Bimos are exclusively male and are accorded higher status than other religious figures such as *sunyi* (shamans or clan leaders) (Bamo, 2001a; Bamo, 2001b; Kraef, 2014; Liu, 2013). The widespread respect they command is neatly encapsulated in the saying: “If a ruler knows a thousand things, and a minister a hundred, then the things a bimo knows are without number” (Bamo, 2001b, p. 455). The bimo faith, then, plays a fundamental role in the Yi cultural and linguistic heritage (Bamo, 2001a; Bradley, 2001; Harrell, 2001a, 2001b, 2013; Kraef, 2014; Luo, 2010).

Bimos “recite all kinds of texts and perform all sorts of ceremonies” (Bamo, 2001b, p. 455), including, most importantly, the Yi epic *Hne wo* (Luo, 2010, Bender, 2008, discussed in Liu, 2013, p. 113). These oral narratives form the central text for the religion (Luo, 2010), a rich written record which also provides a reference point for oral performance. They have been passed down by bimos for millennia in a variety of forms (Bamo, 2001b; Liu, 2013). Alongside the traditional corpus, bimos continue to compose new contributions. Thus, in a two-way process, written works such as *Hne wo*, inform oral performance while oral performance continues to

enrich and becomes embedded in written literature. As such, “Nuosu [is] a unique language that preserves a rich and dynamic verbal life associated with the traditional rituals of Nuosu society” (Bamo, 2001b, p. 455). As argued by the Dean himself, the Yi language is revitalized in the religious oral performance of bimos. This view is expressed in an article on Yi oral traditions and literacy written by the Dean himself:

毕摩既是彝族传统口头文明成果的集大成者，又是创立书写文明的创始人和坚韧不拔的坚守者，还是新的民族文化精神的探索者和缔造者 (Luo, 2010, p. 163)。

Bimos are not only the people who epitomize the civilization of Yi oral traditions, the creators who laid the foundations for [Yi] literacy, but also its ongoing defenders. [What is more], [they are] also the explorers who lie at the heart of the spirit of the new ethnic cultures (Luo, 2010, p. 163).

Besides, the view is in fact widely shared among students. His personal impact on students' attitudes toward Yi, Yi religion and the group will become clear in the discussion which follows.

Bimos are also respected for their ability to read and understand the “archaic and obscure” Yi writing system (Bamo, 2001a, p. 212). These specialist skills are so highly prized that a bimo's manuscripts will usually be burned with him when he dies. With the exception of a few intellectuals, lay members of the community are able to access meaning only through ritual performances which “enact the power” (Liu, 2013, p. 113) of the scriptures. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter One, bimos are unwilling to send their children to school because they perceive the “ascendant Han education is in conflict with, and a threat to, the traditional teachings of bimo” (Schoenhals, 2001, p. 247). The limited access to manuscripts, as well as the complex Yi-Han relations necessarily has a negative effect on the overall literacy level of the Yi in LYAP. The Dean's personal experience of Yi literacy is a case in point:

勒俄等民间口承传统文学很小我就耳濡目染……到了西南民族大学以后，系统地学习了规范彝文，才有机会接触书面文学。

I have been immersed in a wide range of oral literature such as *Hne wo* since I was very young. [But] it was only when I went to Southwest University for Nationalities and studied the standardized Yi scripts systematically, that I was able to access the written literature [in Yi].

Yi scripts are extremely variable, both because of the different interpretations of bimos and also, as discussed earlier, the culturally and linguistically diverse small groups that come under the umbrella of the Yi. Bradley (2009, p. 175) (see Figure 4.4) clearly illustrates the wide variation of different representations of the same words.

Meaning	Chinese	Nosu Shengza	Yino	Nasu Yunnan	Guizhou	Nisu	Sani	Yunnan Reformed
'one'	一	┆	┆	┆	┆	┆	ㄣ	┆
'two'	二	┆┆	┆┆	┆┆	┆┆	┆┆	ㄣㄣ	┆┆
'three'	三	┆┆┆	┆┆┆	┆┆┆	┆┆┆	┆┆┆	ㄣㄣㄣ	┆┆┆
'four'	四	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ
'five'	五	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ
'six'	六	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ
'seven'	七	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ
'eight'	八	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ
'nine'	九	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ
'ten'	十	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ
'hundred'	百	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ
'thousand'	千	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ
'not'	不	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ	ㄣ

Figure 4.4: Variant representations of the main Yi orthographies
(Bradley, 2009, p. 175)

There have been several attempts by western missionaries at unifying the Yi language (Zhou, 2003). While largely unsuccessful, they can nonetheless be argued to have improved the status of the language. In 1951, the first official writing system was developed for northern dialect speakers in Liangshan, i.e. the Nuosu, using a roman alphabet (Zhou, 2003). This romanization went through two revisions in 1956 and 1958 respectively but was never widely used (Bradley, 2001; Harrell & Bamo, 1998). As Kong (2004, p. 126) explains, “拉丁化新文字不适合彝语的情况，不被彝族群众所接受 [the Latin new scripts are not suitable for the Yi context and are not acceptable to the Yi public]”, due no doubt in large part to the fact that there was no sense of a unified ‘community of Yi’ at this point (Zhou, 2003). Another reason for reluctance to accept romanization may lie in the historical and political events in the late 1950s, such as the break between China and the former Soviet Union (Bradley, 2001), the *Great Leap Forward*¹¹ (1958-1961) (Li & Yang, 2005), which changed language policies in relation to Han language education at that time (Harrell & Bamo, 1998). By the same token, the new romanised system was in competition with the traditional orthography for which the Yi have “strong emotional feelings and linguistic attachment” (Liu et al., 2015, p. 146); when they chose to defend this traditional system, they won in what Wu Gu (2001, p. 34) describes as “a trial of existence or annihilation”, demonstrating in the process the strong EV of Yi at that point in time.

During the ten-year period of the political upheaval of the *Cultural Revolution* (1966-1976), all education and language work stopped. The only publications in minority languages were parallel editions of political works such as *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong* (Bradley, 2001). However, from the late 1970s, work resumed and tremendous efforts were made to develop minority languages and establish their presence in education and the media. The right of each minority language was recognized in the 1982 Constitutions of the People’s Republic of

¹¹ The Great Leap Forward refers to the economic and social movement launched by the central communist government of China which aimed to transform the whole country’s economy through aggressive industrialization and to “propel China to surpass Great Britain in industrial production in 15 years and the United States in 20 or 30 years” (Li & Yang, 2005, p. 841). It led to the devastating famine across the country.

China (National People's Congress of the P.R.C., 1982, Article 4): “The people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs”. As a result, the call for the standardization and promulgation of the Yi language came to the fore.

Harrell and Bamo (1998, p. 64) assert that “[the] Nuosu cultural revival was, more than anything else, based on the standardization and popularization of the Nuosu script”. Provinces with different Yi populations, however, went about reforming the Yi script in different ways. In 1978, a new syllabary with 819 syllables, selected from traditional Yi scripts, was introduced and was officially approved in 1980 in Sichuan province (Bradley, 2001; Harrell & Bamo, 1998; Zhou, 2003). This new writing system won widespread public approval and was adopted not only in education but also in administration, literacy campaigns, publishing and even the daily lives of agricultural communities. According to Harrell and Bamo (1998), however, the new Nuosu script was still not in common use in 1998; they acknowledge that “its symbolic value as an indicator of Nuosu local autonomy is probably greater than its practical value as a tool of administration” (p. 64). However, following its official approval in 1980 (Liu et al., 2015), the standardized Yi script gained in popularity and is still in use today. Yi enjoys high status in Sichuan, especially when compared with the languages of the 42 other ethnic minority groups (see Chapter Two) which have no orthographies (Zhou, 2001) and consequently cannot yet be used in bilingual education. In provinces such as Guizhou and Yunnan where the Yi are also found, the standardization and popularization of the traditional Yi scripts has been less successful than in Sichuan province (Bradley, 2001).

To sum up, as Giles et al. (1977) argue, “A language’s history, prestige value, and the degree to which it has undergone standardization may be sources of pride or shame for members of a linguistic community” (p. 312). Yi orthography can be seen to have strengthened the ethnolinguistic vitality of Yi and has also “become an important part of the developing Yi identity” (Bradley, 2001, p. 213).

The current status of Yi

The high status of Yi is evident in a number of domains today: Yi radio broadcasts have been available since 1979 (Hao, 2009); word processing using the Yi script dates back to 1984 (Zhao, Guo, Suo, Shi, & Xu, 2010); in the two most important annual political meetings in China, i.e. the NPC (National People's Congress) and the CPPCC (Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference), Yi is one of the seven minority working languages and is used alongside Mongolian, Tibetan, Uyghur, Kazak, Korean and Zhuang (Jiang, 2004; Zhang, 2013); within the Ethnic Languages Translation Bureau of China, there is a separate office for Yi translation (China Ethnic Languages Translation Bureau, 2013); several provincial and national minority language publishing houses produce materials in Yi; conferences on Yi studies are held regularly; both domestically and internationally, extensive studies have been undertaken of Yi culture and heritage (Aku & Bender, 2006; Bradley, 2001; Harrell, 2013); since 2014, the local government in LYAP has provided Yi announcements in all public transportation venues, including train and bus stations, the airport and onboard services on buses, all of which have proved extremely popular with the public and have been reported across the country (see Figure 4.5 below, which shows a commuter is asking information from a counter where service in Yi is available).



Figure 4.5: 彝语窗口[Yi Window] (Gao, 2014)

The impact of Yi on daily lives in the country is, however, limited to communities in Yi dominated areas or regions such as LYAP. Students themselves are aware of this situation:

在中国主流语言还是汉语，学汉语可以出来打工，各种事都可以行得通。只懂彝语的话，基本上混口饭吃都很难 (Student Yiga)。

In China, the dominant language is still Mandarin. Learning Mandarin enables [us] to Dagong [find a job in a city usually in relation to internal migration]. Everything works [through Mandarin]. If [we] only understand Yi, it is very hard to keep the wolf away from the door (Student Yiga).

彝语在本民族地区还是有用，因为很多工作需要。比如有些农民来单位，如果（说）汉语，对有些农民（而言）是不怎么通的，肯定要会一些彝语，如果是要回去自己本民族地区。但在外面的话肯定还是汉语 (Student Lasa)。

Yi is very useful in ethnic minority regions as it is necessary for many jobs. For example, if farmers come to a work unit, what you say in the language of the Han will not be intelligible to them. Thus, being able to speak some Yi is essential [as long as] [we] go back to our own minority regions [after graduation]. But outside of [these areas], for sure [what works] is the language of the Han (Student Lasa).

Thus, overall, the Yi language can be argued to have medium vitality in China. Within the University, in contrast, the status of the language is high in both objective and subjective terms as will be discussed below.

Institutional support

Ethnolinguistic vitality is also influenced by the extent of “formal and informal support a language receives in the various institutions of a nation, region or a

community” (Giles et al., 1977, p. 315) and is a fundamental consideration for the sociolinguistic description of a speech community (Spolsky et al., 1976). In considering the effects of institutional support for Yi, I will look first at the wider societal context in LYAP and then at the situation in SWUN.

The wider society

In Liangshan, in formal domains, “it is [still] Chinese that dominates” (Liu et al., 2015, p. 144). For example, Liu et al. (2015) reports that in Meigu County, even in a middle school where the Yi students account for 97.6%, there is only one Yi language teacher who teaches 20 classes of students in the school. And the time allocated to the weekly Yi class is just one hour. The linguistic status of Yi, and especially the institutional support received by Yi, then, is low and Yi ethnolinguistic vitality in Meigu is therefore assessed overall as medium-high based on the “combined effects” (Giles et al., 1977, p. 317) of the different dimensions.

By the same token, although the population of Xichang City, Mianning and Meigu counties accounts for 28.36% of the total population (Liangshan Prefecture Statistic Bureau, 2011), 89.29% of the urban and township primary schools in the three places, most of which have better facilities or more resources than rural schools, do not provide Yi language classes (Liu et al., 2015). The Yi language is “by far the most commonly used” but “in the back country” only (Vermander, 1999). Therefore both the demographic status and institutional support received by Yi in Xichang is low.

SWUN and the College of Yi Studies

Having looked at the ethnolinguistic vitality of Yi in the wider region, the focus now moves to the extent to which the University and CYS provide support for Yi language and culture. A wide range of issues, including the overt policy statements

of university leaders, the many activities involving Yi language and the strong presence of Yi in the visual environment, suggest that the situation on campus is very different from that in the wider society.

College policies

The Dean was very much aware of the historical status of the Yi, from his top-down perspective as a decision maker and stakeholder. As he explained when interviewed:

一个是我们现在叫中国第一、世界唯一的彝学学院。彝族是个人口上千万的民族，这样一个唯一的彝学学院所担负的责任和使命不是那么简单的：让一些学生上大学拿个文凭去工作，这只是表面的一部分。他可以不到彝学学院来，他也可以去其他学校……他也可以去考公务员。但是国家要在西南民族大学成立一个彝学学院来，为什么没有一个其它民族的学院呢，对吧？西南民族大学只设立了藏学学院和彝学学院……我以为是它有这样一个历史的眼光，尊重了这些民族传统的、一个中华文明的构成当中的、这样一个历史地位所作出的历史贡献。比如说有文字……有一个庞大的主体还在延续着这个文明；有一个区域，比如说彝族盘踞的整个西南地区。这么庞大的一个主体，这么广的一个地域的这样一个区域……所以国家当要创办这样一个学科，这样一个学院的时候，我们要深入地理解国家的意图，国家的需求。

We can claim to be the only College of Yi studies both domestically and internationally. The Yi are a *minzu* with millions of people. The responsibilities and mission that such a unique *College of Yi Studies* places on us is not that simple: to enable a student to graduate with a qualification and seek a job is just one superficial aspect. People may not choose [our] college; they may go to other universities including some colleges [...] they may also take the entrance exams to be a civil servant. So why has this country set up a 'College of Yi Studies' in SWUN rather than one for other

ethnic groups? There are only the ‘College of Yi Studies’ and the ‘College of Tibetan Studies’ [in SWUN], right? [...] I think, from a historical perspective, the country has shown respect to the historical contribution [of the Yi], their significant contribution to a Chinese civilization which appreciates ethnic traditions. For example, [Yi] has its own script, a large body of group which still sustains the civilization, and a region, such as the whole Southwestern areas inhabited by Yi. Thus, it is a large entity which continues as a group in such a big region. Therefore, when [our] country runs such a programme in such a college, we need to comprehend to the full the nation’s will and requirements.

The attitudes of the senior executives in SWUN echo those of the Dean. In the summer of 2013 when I first made contact with the CYS, I was invited to attend the college’s first Teaching and Research Salon¹². In a speech, the vice-principle at the time and current principal, Professor Zeng Ming, acknowledged the special status of the CYS: “我们可以停办其它任何专业或学院，但不能停办彝学学院。没有彝学学院就没有西南民族大学 [We could stop running any other programme or colleges but not those of the College of Yi Studies. Without the College of Yi Studies, there is no Southwest University for Nationalities]”.

Ehala (2011, p. 198) points out: “[Research] on institutional support should not only describe the situation, but also focus on how collective emotions and group affiliations are actually constructed by these institutions”. An important lead in this respect was offered by the Dean who, in all the meetings and events I observed, started his address in Yi, underlining his call for “用母语与世界对话 [dialogue with the world in mother tongue]”, something noted in the media as the hallmark of his attitude towards Yi (Jiang, 2013). Thus, the Dean himself can be seen as both “a receptor [as well as] a transmitter of linguistic information” (Landry & Allard, 1992, p. 227) who, at the psychological level, expands the students’ experiences and inevitably affects their perceptions of Yi, i.e. its subjective ethnolinguistic

¹² It’s an informal meeting for staff with drinks, finger food and fruit provided.

vitality (Bourhis et al., 1981), both as an individual and also as a member of a collective entity.

Activities

As explained in Chapter One, SWUN consists of 23 different colleges and schools, including the CYS, one of only two colleges for ethnic minority groups within the University. It is also one of three national training centers for the Yi language. The CYS hosts the Center of Yi-Burmese Languages Studies and has the largest and most comprehensive collection of Yi Literature in China with over 3000 publications (Li & Zhou, 2005). It holds regular seminars and open lectures in collaboration with external organizations. For example, during my four-month field trip between March 2014 and Jun 2014, there were at least eight seminars, talks or open lectures, on Yi ethnicity or Yi related culture, language or history. The college has its own literature society, 黑土地 (*Journal of Dark Soil*) which publishes Yi literature and poems (see Figure 4.6).

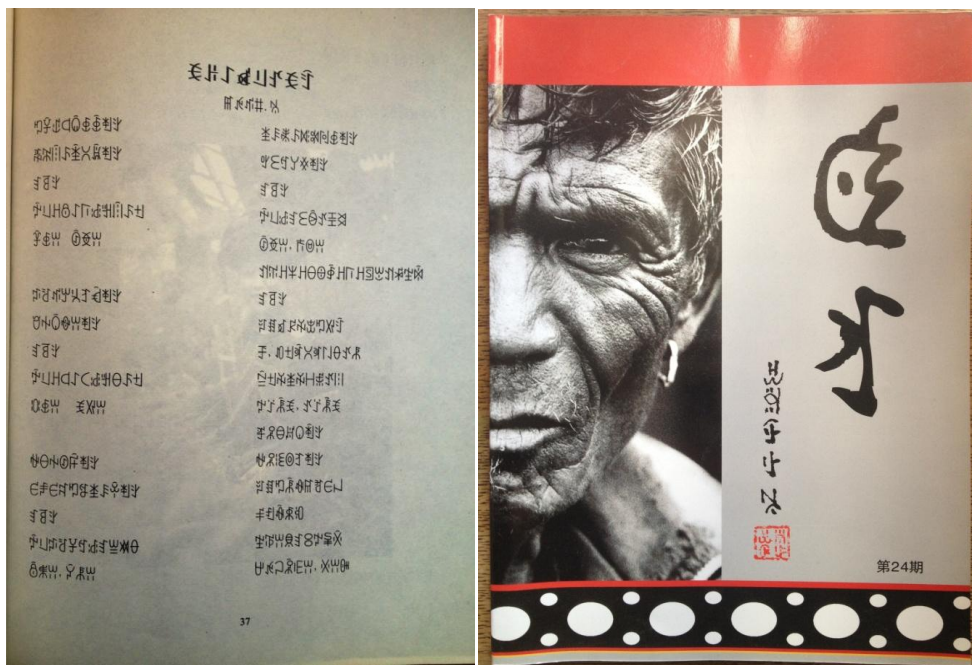


Figure 4.6: Cover and content pages of *Dark Soil Journal* (issue 24, 2013)

Also of note is the wide range of extracurricular activities focused on Yi language and culture which serve to reinforce ethnic identity: the college runs students-led *Follow Me* lessons in Yi on campus, open to all the students in the University (see Figure 4.7).



Figure 4.7: Yi students, in Yi costumes, mingle with non-Yi students at *Follow Me* Yi lessons

The University also supports a Yi student initiative, a summer camp called *Mother Tongue, the Salvation from Peers* whereby volunteers provide activities and a Yi learning experience for underprivileged children in LYAP (see Figure 4.8)



Figure 4.8: Yi learning in Yi summer camp (Geha, 2014)

The Yi are the only ethnic group in the University, apart from the Tibetans and the Qiang (another ethnic group), whose new year is marked at different times in celebrations organized by the University (see Figure 4.9).



Figure 4.9: Yi New Year celebrations (Yu, 2013)

Each new student at the CYS is required to bring a Yi costume from home for events and activities such as the opening ceremony of the Sports Games; costumes are also often worn on weekends when students perform their traditional Dati circle dance, open to the public, at allocated venues on campus (see Figure 4.10).



Figure 4.10: Students performing the traditional Yi Dati dance

Other events include the Multilingual Speech Competition or Yi Poetry readings. The wide range of activities shapes their own and non-Yi peers' ideas of who they are in the University. This structural support for language and culture makes an important contribution to the EV of Yi within the College.

Visual environment

The visual environment offers an interesting perspective on multilingualism (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). Linguistic landscape – the written form of language or visual language use on public signs in a given language community and territory – not only reflects the power and status of different languages within a given sociolinguistic context but also, in turn, affects people's perceptions and attitudes towards the language (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006; Landry & Bourhis, 1997). The importance attached to Yi can also be seen in the visual environment: the name of the university is written in Chinese, Tibetan, English and Yi on banners and signs in offices are often in Yi and Chinese (see Figure 4.11); posters and programmes for extracurricular activities and academic meetings are bilingual; and students wear T-shirts bearing different Yi scripts designed by their peers both on formal occasions, such as a singing competition (see Figure 4.12 and Figure 4.13), or informally in daily life, alongside the traditional costumes.



Figure 4.11: Sign and banners in offices



Figure 4.12: Singing competition



Figure 4.13: Students in singing competition

Student perceptions

The effects of the institutional support for Yi were clearly discernible in student comments. Many shared the same positive feelings as the College leaders in relation to the cultural legacy of the Yi. These feelings were often expressed in comparisons between themselves and other groups, both other minority groups and the Han majority. For example, when students were asked how they felt about being Yi, typical comments included:

有时跟那些外学院的同学交流的时候，当我们谈到自己的文字、语言、历史，我们会感觉到自己的本民族历史悠久，有传统的美德。反正感觉作为彝族挺自豪的(Student Wuguo)。

Sometimes, we communicate with students from other colleges or departments. When we talk about our own script, language and history, we are very aware of the long history of our own ethnic groups which has so many inherent strengths. Anyway, I feel very proud to be a Yi (Student Wuguo).

虽然一直生在那个民族环境下，但很少对自己的民族有一些认识。到了大学这个专业以后受到我们院长的影响，就会觉得我们民族还挺不错，有灿烂的文化……我觉得一个人活着，如果对自己的民族没有太多的了解，而且是以它为耻的话，是一件很悲哀的事情(Student Shijing)。

Although born and bred in an ethnic community, I had very little knowledge about my own ethnicity. After going to the university and being admitted to this programme, I have been influenced by our Dean. Now I feel that our *minzu* is really wonderful, it has a magnificent culture [...] I feel, as a living people, if people know little about their own *minzu*, or even feel ashamed of it, this is really sad (Student Shijing).

Students all stressed that, within the boundaries of the university and this programme, they were accorded to a high degree of esteem:

我觉得这个学校会给我们一些民族的尊严感。出了这个学校走向社会后，可能我们的这个文凭就不是那么受用，就不会被大众很平常地接受，但在校的时候是很有尊严感的(Student Wuga)。

I feel this university offers us a degree of pride in our ethnicity. After we leave the university and enter society, we may find this credential is not

particularly useful or easily recognised by the public. However, when in the university we have a strong sense of self-esteem (Student Wuga).

Giles et al. (1977, p. 311) argue that “it is often convenient” for group members to highlight a rich history as a collective entity and, indeed, students frequently referred to Yi religion, mythology, folklore and philosophy. It is clear that Yi-related cultural activities are a source of great pride for the students. As one commented:

我觉得作为一个彝族人可以很自豪地学习自己的母语，唱自己的歌，然后跳我们自己的舞蹈，我觉得很自豪，很有一种骄傲的感觉 (Student Fang Fang)。

I feel proud, as a Yi, to learn my own mother tongue, sing my songs [in my own language] and dance our own [folk] dances. I therefore feel very proud, a feeling of being proud (Student Fang Fang).

When answering the question: “What are the advantages in study of being a Yi”, another student answered, “有时候回答问题时，[我]都会引用一些彝族的经典话语，神话传说那些进去，我觉得这是我的优势 [Sometimes, when answering a question (in class), I often quote words from some well-known Yi sayings and legends. I think this is my advantage]”. A third student explained how he was able to apply his understanding of Yi philosophy to his analysis of Yi poetry:

过去很多诗人、学者都对彝族的诗歌进行过评析。之前他们分析的都是从语言风格入手，我现在分析的是彝族诗歌里面很明显的彝族文化符号系统。它里面用的词语和其他一样，但是它的字里行间还是渗透着彝族文化和彝族的哲学思想在里面。所以这次我的论文也是从这个方面入手的 (Student A Jia)。

In the past, many scholars have reviewed and provided commentary on the poems of many Yi poets. Their analysis focuses on stylistics. But my own

analysis focuses on the distinct semiotic system of Yi culture in the poems. All the words used are actually the same, but reading between the lines, what is embedded there is the Yi culture and the Yi philosophy. This is where my dissertation starts from (Student A Jia).

Many students, in fact, expressed their satisfaction with the importance accorded to their own culture and tradition on campus and the psychological changes that had taken place. A teacher of Yi, who has been working in the college for over 10 years, also acknowledged students' passion for Yi:

进来了以后刚刚开始的时候大家也是雄心勃勃的，老师也是雄心勃勃的……同学想的是这是本民族的语言文字我一定要好好学习，那么明显的感觉到他们是需要、想学的 (Teacher Li)。

When [students] come to university, at beginning, they are all ambitious. So are the teachers ... What students have in mind is that this is the language of my own ethnic group. I have to study hard. There's a strong feeling that they have this need and they are willing to learn (Teacher Li).

To a great extent, then, the high degree of esteem afforded to students within the University counterbalances the low esteem of the Yi in the wider society. Yi students in the programme are clearly comfortable and confident in their own ethnic culture and traditions. Their impact on students from other ethnic groups in the University is self-evident and far-reaching. There is a broad consensus in the literature that "EV perceptions of one generation will influence the language behaviour of succeeding generations, which might lead either to maintenance or to shift" (Yagmur & Ehala, 2011, p. 103). Through the activities and events, the college increases the impact of both Yi language and Yi culture within the group, at the same time emphasising the saliency of Yi as the most important symbol of ethnicity and cultural identity among the outgroups (Giles et al., 1977).

Concentration of students

The concentration of Yi in one college and the focus on language and culture have various repercussions. With the exception of one member of the administration, all staff and students at the CYS are Yi. Compared with other colleges which have a mixed population of Han and ethnic minority students, the number of Yi at the CYS is relatively small; however, their concentration provides a better opportunity for in-group contact with other Yi. Their language experiences, language behavior and, consequently, their subjective EV will be different from those who form part of more heterogeneous communities. Students were very aware of the different dynamics. As one recalled:

我是来民大之后才有彝族这个意识的，我初中的时候班上只有4个彝族人，高中的时候我是班上唯一的一个少数民族 (Student Yize)。

It wasn't until I came to Min Da [SWUN] that I had a sense of my ethnicity. In the middle school, there were only four Yi students in my class. In the high school, I was the only one from an ethnic minority (Student Yize).

Conclusion

The role language vitality plays in multilingual education is multifaceted: it manifests differences in the power of languages and the salience of a language within an intergroup context; it demonstrates how people within the context construct and perceive language vitality; this, in turn, exerts influence on the multilingual development of individuals. As Landry and Bourhis (1997) argue, without a threshold level of ethnolinguistic vitality, members of the groups in question may not have the contact necessary to “foster the psychological disposition to learn and use the L1 or L2 language” (p. 30). Most discussion of language, culture and education in society is, of course, seen through the lens of the Han majority. The findings presented in this chapter, in contrast, focus on the

achievements and perceptions of the Yi themselves, thus providing a valuable counterbalance to the dominant discourse.

This chapter has discussed three dimensions of Yi ethnolinguistic vitality – status, demography and institutional support – both in the wider community and in the College of Yi Studies. Overall, the Yi language can be argued to have medium vitality in the broader societal context. The College provides a wide range of opportunities for linguistic and cultural contact in both formal and informal settings, moulding collective emotions and attachments. Therefore, it can be argued that the College has high ethnolinguistic vitality of Yi.

Chapter 5 The Delivery of the Programme

Introduction

Having considered the ethnolinguistic vitality of Yi, I turn now to a discussion of programme delivery in order to address the second of my research questions: What are the main challenges of the trilingual education Yi-English-Chinese (YEC) pathway in the Chinese Minority Languages and Literature programme offered at SWUN? I look first at minority participation in HE in China, before considering factors in recruitment, the credit system and the YEC curriculum. Also considered will be the range of resources available for teaching and imbalances in the use of the three languages at the heart of the programme as subjects and medium of instruction. Finally, teacher views and expectations will be discussed.

Minority participation in higher education in China

The Chinese government has taken various steps to address these issues. In China, to enter a higher education institution, students need to take university and college entrance exams (UCEE), also known as 高考 [*gaokao*]. Each provincial/municipal University Entrance Examination Office or Committee then establishes minimum entry requirements for admission to different colleges and universities in a particular region. Given that the contents of the exam papers are different from province to province (Xinhua, 2015), the minimum point requirements vary greatly from region to region. And they can also be modified by the different universities. The popularity of a programme among students, parents and employers, current education policies and teaching capacity all play a role in the final cut-off point and also influence the cap on recruitment for a specific programme in a particular region.

Normally, admission is based on a rank ordering of applicants. However, in the case of applicants who achieve the same number of points, other factors, such as whether a particular university is their first choice, or achievements in sports, music and the arts, will also be taken into consideration. For many universities, membership of an ethnic minority attracts additional points, especially if the entrance exams are taken in the mother tongue of the examinees or if both parents are members of a minority group (Wang, 2016; Wang, 2015b).

The admission process of Yi students to YEC

As discussed in Chapter One, Yi students in the YEC programme at CYS are from two pathways: Model I applicants have received their basic education in Yi, and Model II students have received their basic education in Chinese. Different procedures are used to calculate the scores for Model I and Model II students due to different exams they take. As part of a policy of positive discrimination, Model I applicants are allocated more points than Model II applicants in the UCEE and so their chance of being admitted is much greater than Model II students. The Dean's comments on the admission also acknowledged Model I students' advantages: “如果连分数线都不划的话他就 100%上大学了 [If there are no cut-off scores, the admission rate for this group of (Model I) applicants will be likely to be 100% then]”.

Teng (2001) and Zhang (2014) report that some Yi families transfer their children's learning pathway from Model II to Model I in senior secondary education in order to take advantage of the additional points available to Model I students. This is more likely to happen in Xichang, the prefectural capital city, where parents tend to be better informed of the preferential policies. However, this move, does not necessarily mean that students' L1 proficiency will improve, since they are still allowed to take the UCEE in Chinese; their learning of Yi in senior secondary education thus tends to remain pragmatic, test-oriented and basic.

The number of Model I applicants recruited for the YEC programme is very limited, usually between four to five students each academic year. This is not surprising given that, first, the number of the students who receive Model I education is small and decreasing overall, especially when compared with the number of Model II students (Li, Hai-Lai, Liao, & Luo-Hong, 2015; Zhao, 2015); and second, it is also the case that those who perform well in exams, or as a result of positive discrimination, tend to apply to higher status universities where Han students form the dominant group. Model II students enjoy fewer privileges and need to take a Yi entrance exam. However, the admission threshold cut-off scores is usually set very low, depending on students' average level in Yi proficiency at the admission year. As one student commented: “我全是猜着做的, 得了 17 分左右吧 [I just guessed (in the test). I scored about 17 (out of 100)]”. Furthermore, other than a threshold score in the Yi entrance exam, there are no minimum requirements for admission for Model II students. As mentioned earlier, admission is based on a rank ordering of applicants. Under these circumstance, many students who are actually very poor in Yi reading, writing and even speaking (though presumably having basic listening skills and been born in a Yi family at a Yi-dominated region) are admitted to the YEC programme.

Thus, the predicament that colleges and universities such as CYS encounter in recruitment becomes clear: many children living in the remote areas which are the stronghold of the minority language stop schooling after junior school. “像我们家有一些住在山上的那些亲戚, 很少看他们读高中的 [Like our relatives who live in the mountains, very few opt to continue to high schools]”, one student told me. She continued: “基本上, 初中读完就去读一个技校或者在城里面找工作 [Most of them go to a vocational school or look for a job in town when they finish junior secondary school]”. Many families consider that children, who have used up a significant amount of household savings on education, graduate without skills which are useful either for farming at home or for seeking employment anywhere. Thus, the number of Yi applicants wanting to further their education is very small.

Factors in recruitment

So far the discussion has focused on CYS recruitment. I will now move on to explain who the applicants are, and why Yi high school graduates choose to study in CYS.

As mentioned earlier, it is very likely that applicants with high scores will apply for other more popular universities. For the Model I or Model II applicants with lower scores, then, the programme that forms the focus for this study is clearly the best option: “这个专业就是我们分数能够达到的最好的一个二本了，其它的二本都要比这个学校高 [This is the best programme in the second-grade¹³ colleges and universities that we can enroll on with our marks. All the other programmes, at the same grade, have higher entry requirements than this University]” (Student A Zhi). Students also acknowledged other factors when applying for a programme. These can usefully be grouped under four main headings. The first, as already discussed, is eligibility. The second relates to interest in ethnic minority heritage, especially Yi culture and language. Quite a few students confessed that they had a strong interest in ethnic minority language and culture, and especially Yi; by the same token, they hoped to improve their Yi language competence. Student Zhang Ming, for instance, said that he had chosen SWUN “因为我自己本来就非常喜欢彝族方面的东西[because I myself love things related to the Yi]”. Meanwhile, because of the different status enjoyed by SWUN and XCC, CYS clearly offers more opportunities to Yi students. The third factor relates to future prospects: many senior executives or administrative staff in local government or schools in Liangshan are alumni of SWUN, leading to the expectation on the part of students and parents that a promising future awaits them upon graduation. As Student Guoji also commented: “我们那边许多的行政人员和学校领导都是从民大出来的 [In my area, many government officers or school leaders are also graduates from Minda (SWUN)]”. This student, then, considered that graduating from SWUN

¹³ In China, colleges and universities are ranked as first grade, second grade, and third grade according to the overall capability and teaching and research strength. As a result, the entry requirements can vary significantly across the three grades.

would help him find a decent job, an issue which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven. Last but not least, most of the students interviewed, considered they could only achieve a sense of belonging and intimacy when studying in a minority dominated university. For example, when asked whether they would make the same choice of university if given a second chance, most students gave a similar response:

Student Xiaoying: 说实话，我还是会选民族高校。

Student A Hai: 我也会。

Student Gemen: 我也会，而且是义无反顾的会。以前是不了解，现在了解这里更喜欢了。

Student Xiaoying: Honestly speaking, I would still choose an ethnic minority university.

Student A Hai: So would I.

Student Gemen: Me too, besides I would never change my mind. In the past, I didn't know much. Now I have more information about [this University] and I like it more than ever.

In addition, various factors – political, psychological, sociological, and educational – are involved in student recruitment for the YEC programme. Of these, the political factors are arguably the most important. The government's target for the number of ethnic minority students recruited (Zhou & Zhu, 2007) creates further challenges. This is especially the case given that the current Chinese sociopolitical situation advocates national unity and political stability (Feng, 2005a) and requires educators to place greater emphasis on national policies than on the effectiveness of trilingual education. As the Dean explained:

我们不能说因为你是(成绩) 差的同学我们就不收，比如说……今年给的指标是 180 个，我必须招够这 180 个，即使是最后到了多么低的一个分数段。

We cannot refuse applicants because they are [underachievers]. For example [...] this year [2014], the official recruitment target is 180 [Yi students]. I therefore must recruit 180, regardless of how low their scores are.

As Tsung (2014, p. 201) argues, “[The] aim of multilingual education is not only to improve learning for the minorities but also to enhance political stability and good relationships with minorities in ethnic minority regions”. Multilingual education thus embodies Fei Xiaotong’s concept of *Duoyuan Yiti* [ethnic diversity in the unity of the Chinese nation] (Fei, 1999). Or to put it in another way, political stability has overridden the significance of ethnic cultures and languages in their own right. In theory, since the YEC programme offers a trilingual programme at tertiary level, a basic command of Yi, Mandarin Chinese and English should be a prerequisite. However, political factors affecting student recruitment mean that the skills required for the programme are given lower priority than would otherwise be the case, in the process potentially compromising both the delivery of the programme and the learning outcomes of students (Wang, 2016).

Many of the teachers interviewed shared concerns regarding the potential problems posed by the lowering of the entry requirements:

办这专业有[前期的障碍], 这个前期障碍影响了后来一系列事情。比如说他们的功底都普遍偏低……特别是近几年的这种偏低比以前严重。可能是我们的扩大招生、人口基数这些有一些影响, 毕竟他们[人口]是那么一点。所以有些以前没有资格上大学的可能现在我们也把他收过来了, [然而]他这部分[人]接受能力有点问题 (Teacher Wula)。

One obstacle affects the [operation] of the whole programme. The overall entry level of students’ academic performance is relatively low [...] Especially in recent years, this situation has been getting worse. This might be due to the expansion in the number of places relative to the [Yi] population base. After all, the population [of the Yi] is so small. So those

who were not eligible for university admission in the past are now also recruited. However, their ability to learn is problematic (Teacher Wula).

The Dean, however, chose to see this situation in terms of an opportunity rather than a problem:

国家政策许可，那些孩子有机会上大学我为什么要不准他们上大学呢，对吧？200分也好，300分也好，他有机会上大学。

Since recruitment complies with government policies and those children have an opportunity to go to university, why should I turn them down? Irrespective of whether [they] scored 200 or 300, the chance to study in university is there for them.

This observation provides support for Spolsky et al. (1976, pp. 235, 237) who acknowledge that decisions made on the basis of “relatively insignificant educational considerations [...] will not always be in favour of such a [trilingual] program”. When a bi/trilingual education programme/model is evaluated, it is crucial to take into consideration situational factors such as these.

Having discussed issues relating to the application process and factors in recruitment, I will now move on to consider the credit system in SWUN.

The credit system in SWUN

As discussed in Chapter One, since the new millennium, large-scale education reform and curriculum change have taken place in China (Dello-Iacovo, 2009; Li, Morgan, & Ding, 2008). The re-introduction of a credit-bearing modular system is one of them. In China, universities and colleges set out a different threshold for the credits required for the award of a diploma or a degree. In SWUN, this credit system has been in operation in relation to undergraduate programmes since 2004. The minimum number of credits required for the award of a degree is

approximately 170 though this varies slightly across different disciplines (Southwest University for Nationalities, 2004b).

As Figure 5.1 shows, this is a complicated hierarchical system. There are four main strands: A. Generic Knowledge and Skills (approximately 27%); B. Arts and Humanities (A&H), and Sciences (approximately 20%); C. Specialised Knowledge (approximately 43%); and D. Practice and Placement (approximately 10%).

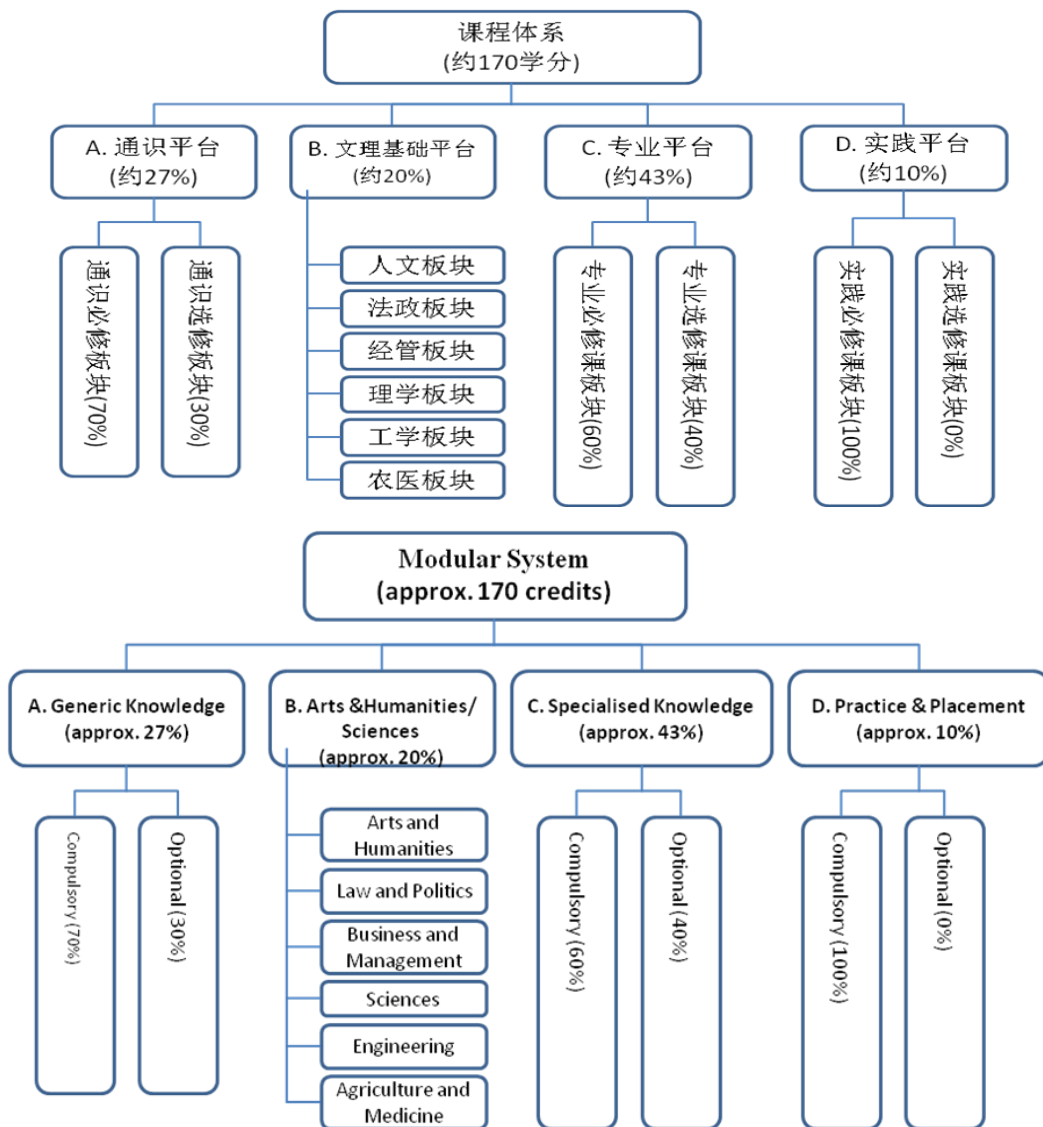


Figure 5.1: Guideline for modular system in SWUN (Southwest University for Nationalities, 2004b)

Strands A, C and D consist of compulsory and optional modules which are weighted differently. Compulsory modules in Strand A include *Moral Education and Introduction to Marxism* and *Introduction to Maoism and Socialism*. Although the Socialist projects are not closely related to students' majors, universities and colleges have little or no control: since many are required by the Ministry of Education, there is no room for manoeuvre.

Strand B includes six subject groups, i.e. Arts and Humanities, Law and Politics, Business and Management, Sciences, Engineering, Agriculture and Medicine. The focus here is on cross disciplinary knowledge in both Arts and Humanities, and Sciences in response to China's curriculum reform which is centred on *suzhi jiaoyu* [quality education], or holistic education, designed to cultivate well-rounded students (Dello-Iacovo, 2009). This knowledge and associated skills are seen as critical: "*danhua zhuanaye* [less attached to or weaken one's major]" is a principle underlying University policies (Southwest University for Nationalities, 2004a). In practice, different colleges/departments recommend which modules should be included in this strand. In the past, students could choose modules freely according to their own interests. However, with the greater emphasis on cultivating "well-rounded" graduates, I was told by staff that this policy had been abandoned two years previously. Now all the modules in Strand B are compulsory.

The strand with the highest proportion of credits is Strand C, *Specialised Knowledge*, which covers modules directly linked to students' majors and carries approximately 43% of the total credits. This is also the only aspect of the curriculum where a college has authority to make independent decisions regarding teaching content, because all modules in the other three strands are selected and implemented in accordance with guidelines provided either in national education policies or by the University.

Strand D normally includes modules involving practical skills or social experiences, such as pre-admission military training¹⁴, social work, placements and thesis/project design. Students need complete all modules to earn credits.

Clearly, then, the programme is subject to many constraints with far-reaching implications. As the Dean confessed, “时间是有限的，学分是有限，我三语并重，你想我怎么样得到预期的效果呢 [There are time constraints, as well as the credits. How can I achieve the expected outcome if I hope to attach equal importance to three languages?]”. The discussion so far has focused on guidelines for curriculum design at the University level, but at the college level there is a certain degree of flexibility in the credits allocated.

The YEC curriculum at CYS

While the college makes the necessary adjustments to the content of curriculum on an annual basis, YEC curriculum design is informed by the guidelines below (see Table 5.1):

平台	通识平台		文 理 基 础	专业平台		实践平台		毕业最低 学分要求
课程 性质	通识 必修	通识 选修		专业 必修	专业 选修	实践 必修	实践 选修	
学分	26	10	24	69	28	16		173

Platform	A: Generic Knowledge		B: A&H, Sciences	C: Specialised Knowledge		D: Practices & Placement		minimum total credits required
Module Code	Compulsory	Optional		Compulsory	Optional	Compulsory	Optional	
Credits	26	10	24	69	28	16		173

Table 5.1: YEC curriculum design guideline (College of Yi Studies, 2013)

¹⁴ In China, as required by the Ministry of Education, one-month military training applies to all first year undergraduate students before they start the programme in October.

As Table 5.1 makes clear, 52 out of 173 credits (A: Generic Knowledge, 26+10; D: Practices & Placement, 16), have been allocated to modules which, as explained earlier, often have little relevance to students' majors or future employment. These 'less relevant' modules account for 30% of the total credits required. But in theory CYS still has scope to decide which modules to recommend for Strand B, and which modules to offer for Strand C, which together make up the remaining 70% of credits.

The compulsory modules in Strand C, *Specialised Knowledge*, carry 69 credits in total (40%). However, only four of these modules are relevant to Yi language and literature: *Modern Yi Language (I)*, *Modern Yi Language (II)*, *Linguistics of Yi* and *Introduction to Yi Literature*; these modules carry 11 (16%) out of the 69 credits. Most other compulsory modules focus on non-Yi languages, especially English. Again, in Strand B, A&H and Sciences (see Appendix E), only 6 out of 24 credits (25%) are allocated to two Yi-related modules: *Yi Traditional Culture* and *Yi Mottos and Proverbs*. All the remaining modules are either English or Chinese related subjects.

A broader range of optional modules in Strand C, *Specialised Knowledge*, includes many Yi-related subjects (see Appendix E). To run an optional module, a college must assure that a minimum of 16 students choose to take it. Nevertheless, according to the Vice Dean, there is not normally a problem in reaching the target as this option is also open to students from other programmes at CYS. Of course, this is subject to the popularity of the module with students, an issue which will be discussed later in Chapter Seven.

In contrast, in the Yi-Chinese pathway (YCP) at CYS, the weight of Yi-related modules in Strand B, *A&H and Sciences*, is the same as in the YEC pathway (25%). However, in Category C (*Specialised Knowledge*), the proportion of Yi-related modules is significantly higher than the YEC pathway: in 2014, 21 out of 53 credits (40%) were allocated to ten Yi-related modules. Among them, *Essential Yi* is one of the modules available to YCP but not YEC student. From the curricular

perspective, the outcomes for the YEC programme would appear to be subtractive inasmuch as the students learn English at the expense of Yi.

Teaching resources

I move next to a discussion of teaching resources available for the programme. These include both human resources in the form of staff, and materials such as textbooks and other learning resources.

Staff

Liu et al. (2015, p. 153) argue that “the offering of language classes is related to the forms of education and the educational resources at hand, teachers in particular”. At CYS, the YEC programme is well resourced in terms of teachers. Since all the staff are Yi with the exception of one Han administrator, they are able to use the students’ mother tongue in their teaching when necessary. In addition, all the teaching staff are experienced associate professors or professors, a situation which, according to the Vice-Dean Dr. Qubi, is unusual in undergraduate teaching:

在很多大学，教授或者副教授都只是上研究生课程的。像那些专门搞科研的教授，也通常更有兴趣带研究生。所以，我们学院的本科生已经是很幸运能够有这么多高级讲师给他们上课。

In many universities, associate professors or professors are normally allocated to postgraduate programmes. Senior research staff, such as professors, are often more interested in supervising postgraduate students. It is a blessing that in our college undergraduate students can have classes with senior lecturers.

Further, the fact that the college actively organizes academic seminars and open lectures for both staff and students helps to broaden the horizons of students. For

example, in June 2015, scholars from three American universities were invited to give a presentation or speech at CYS (College of Yi Studies, 2016b).

English modules are taught by staff from the *College of Foreign Languages* (CFL) with one exception. A senior researcher from CYS, who has extensive experience abroad and a very good command of Yi, English and Chinese, is assigned to teach *Spoken English* to YEC students. As a former member of staff at CFL, I am able to confirm that all member of staff provided to the YEC programme by CFL are highly qualified and experienced. The remaining modules take the form of generic courses provided to students across the University, including Yi students from CYS and students from other disciplines. The lecturers in these subjects are allocated by the University *Teaching and Learning Affairs Office*. For obvious reasons, no Yi is used in teaching.

Textbooks

Only one of the textbooks used in Yi modules – *Yi Mottos and Proverbs* – is written predominantly in Yi, using the Yi script. This is an in-house textbook published by CYS (see Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3)

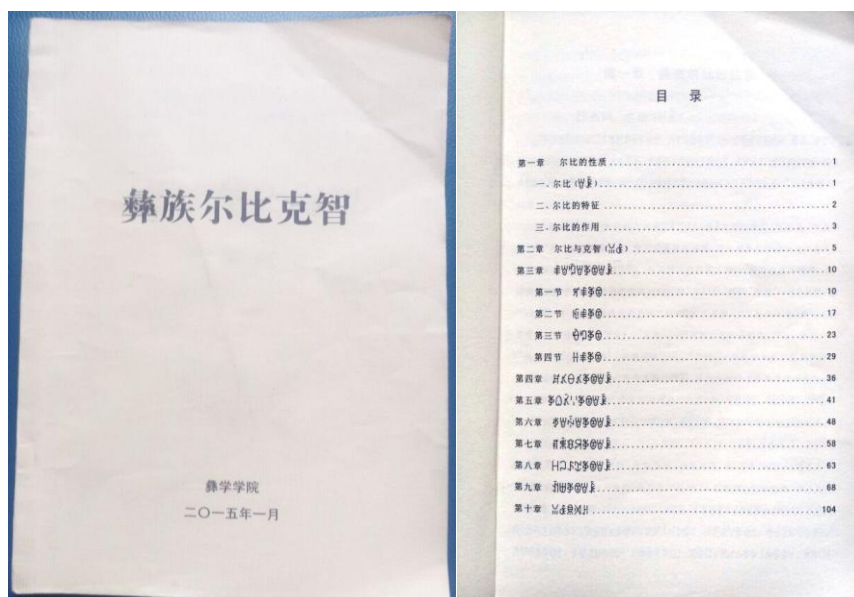


Figure 5.2: Cover and table of contents pages from *Yi Mottos and Proverbs* textbook, 2015

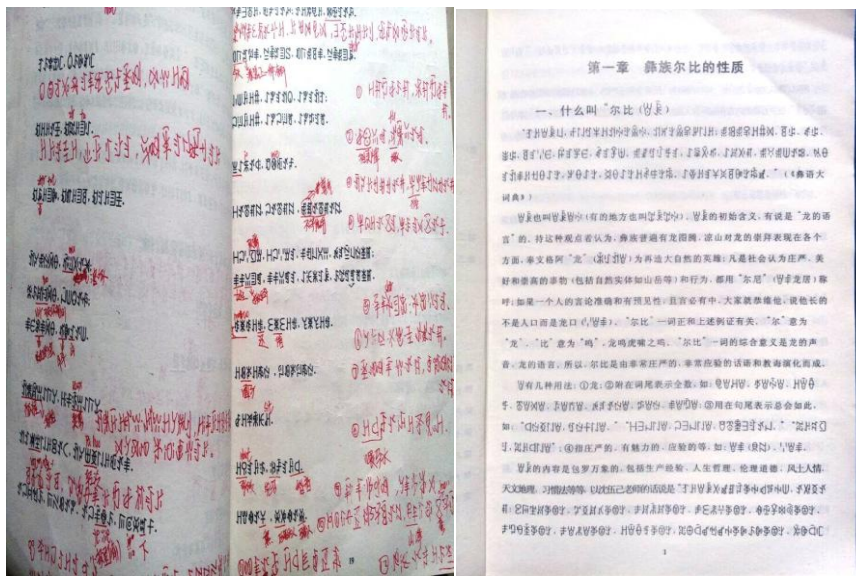


Figure 5.3: Yi Mottos and Proverbs textbook, 2015

All other textbooks, such as the set book for the module *Modern Yi Language* (see Figure 5.4) are written mainly in Chinese with limited use of Yi scripts.

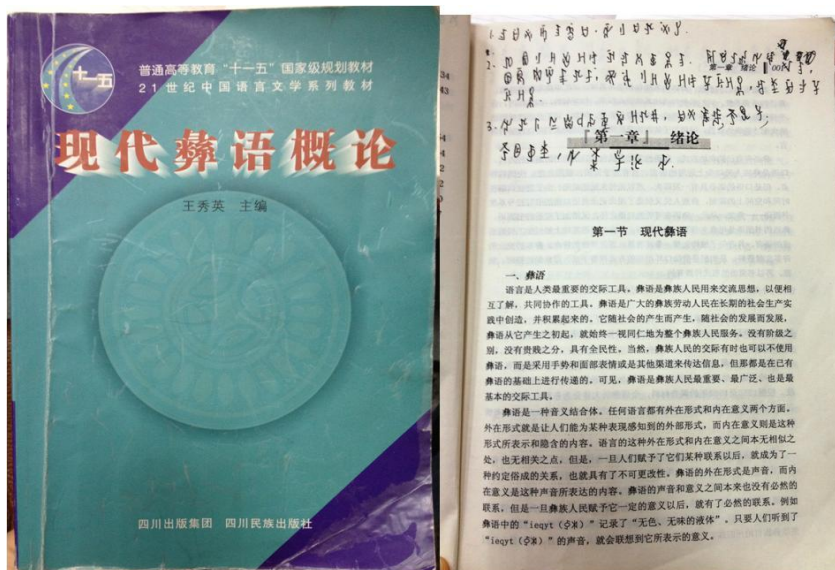


Figure 5.4: Cover and page from Modern Yi Language textbook, 2011

In contrast, all the textbooks used by the CFL teachers are written mainly in English with few Chinese notes (see Figure 5.5). The only exception is the set book for the more theoretically oriented module, *English-Chinese Translation*, which is mainly in Chinese. Teachers are allowed to choose textbooks. However, in most

cases, the books adopted are the same as those used in CFL English pathway which draws mainly on Han students.

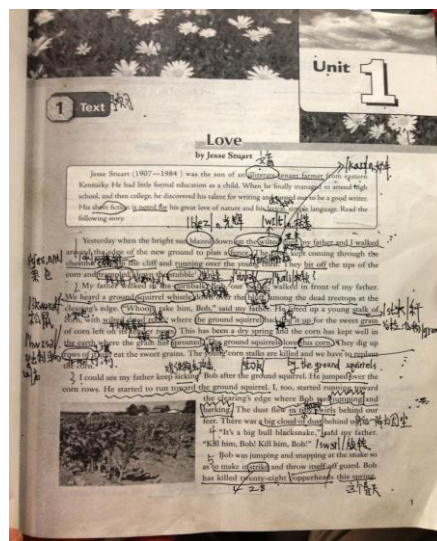
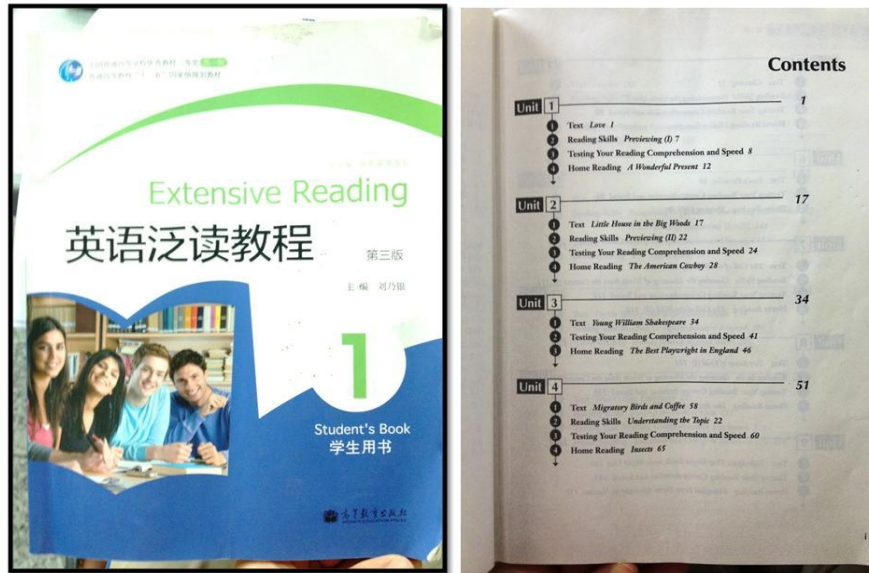


Figure 5.5: Cover and content pages from *Extensive Reading* textbook, 2011

In reality, however, there is a huge gap between the language levels and overall academic performance of Han and Yi students. For example, in 2015, the minimum score set by SWUN for admission of Han English majors in Sichuan province was 549.110, yet for YEC students, it was 405.100. The average scores of all the Han English majors recruited is 556.706, yet for Yi students, it is 420.645 (Southwest University for Nationalities, 2015). It should also be remembered that without the

additional points allocated to Yi students, these differences would be even greater. Even so, the same standardised textbooks, developed mainly for the Han students, are used for all students in both colleges and there were few attempts, as far as I could see, to accommodate the very different needs of Yi students. As Feng (2005b) observes, ethnic minority students often have to translate from Chinese into their mother tongue in their heads. Thus ethnic minority students, who often have a poor command of Chinese, are marginalized in the curriculum (Wang, 2016, p. 20).

Other accessible materials

It goes without saying that, with the spread of English, there are many more opportunities for students to access English texts, including online or self-learning materials. In contrast, the provision of Yi texts or materials is much more limited. As mentioned earlier, China's biggest Yi literature centre is located in SWUN. However, both access and supply are problematic. For instance, the literature centre functions more like an exhibition for external visitors, open only on important occasions. However, the college is planning to set up a multilingual resource room for the use of both Yi students and staff. CYS publishes two journals dedicated to literature and poetry: *Dark Soil* (see Figure 4.6 in Chapter Four), and *The Spirit of Mountain Eagles*. The newspaper, *Liangshan Daily*, published by the local government in Liangshan, can be obtained in the college office. But again, it is not a common practice among students to borrow those newspapers or journals because there is no librarian.

Languages as content subjects

The YEC programme involves three languages: Mandarin Chinese, Yi and English. According to the 2013 YEC curriculum (College of Yi Studies, 2013), the following modules are delivered directly in relation to the three languages *per se* (see Table 5.2):

Language	Language related modules
Mandarin Chinese	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modern Chinese language (I) 2. Modern Chinese language (II) 3. Ancient Chinese language 4. Chinese writing (I) 5. Chinese writing (II) 6. Chinese Mandarin (optional)
Yi Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modern Yi language (I) 2. Modern Yi language (II) 3. Linguistics of Yi (optional module before 2012)
English Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. English pronunciation 2. English reading 3. English/Chinese translation (I) 4. English/Chinese interpretation (II) 5. English/Chinese interpretation 6. Essential English (I) 7. Essential English (II) 8. Essential English (III) 9. Essential English (IV) 10. Listening comprehension (I) 11. Listening comprehension (II) 12. Listening comprehension (III) 13. Listening comprehension (IV) 14. Spoken English (I) 15. Spoken English (II) 16. Spoken English (III) 17. Spoken English (IV) 18. English grammar 19. English writing (I) 20. English writing (II) 21. Advanced English (optional) 22. English lexis (optional) 23. Business English (optional) 24. Comparison of Yi varieties (optional)

Table 5.2: Language modules in the YEC curriculum, 2013

This list leaves no doubt that, of the three languages in the programme, the main focus is on English, probably because, as the Dean pointed out, the Chinese-English pathway curriculum of CFL was used as the point of reference in the design of the YEC curriculum.

Languages as medium of instruction

Predictably, Mandarin Chinese was the medium of instruction (MoI) for most modules. Among those modules I observed, the only one where the lecturer made extensive use of Yi was *Yi Mottos and Proverbs* (see Figure 5.6 below for an example of her in-class slides).

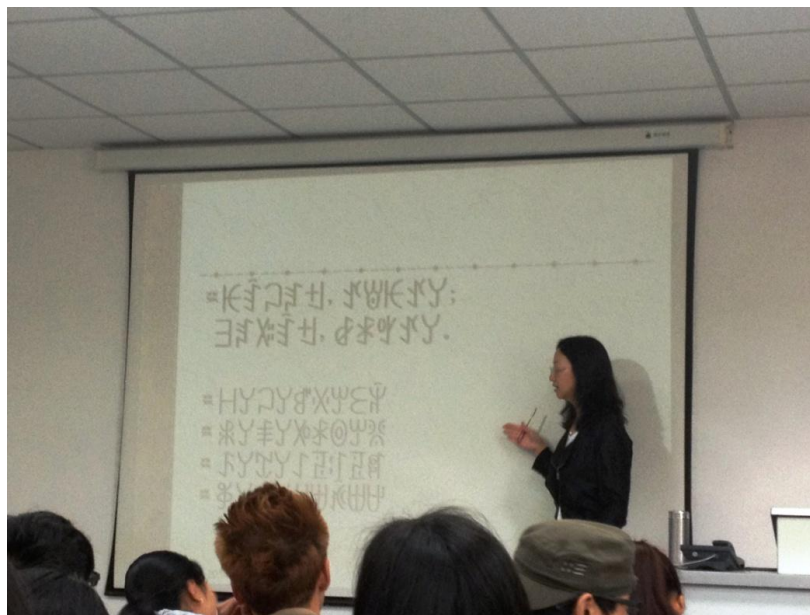


Figure 5.6: A teacher in the module of *Yi Mottos and Proverbs*

In the *Modern Yi Language* module, a mixture of Yi and Chinese was used. All other Yi-related modules were delivered mainly in Mandarin Chinese or even in the Sichuan topolect. Although the use of presentation slides in classes is a compulsory requirement in SWUN, most Yi teachers in the YEC programme tended not to use them in their lessons for several possible reasons. First, as explained earlier, since

the majority of teaching staff on the YEC programme are associate or full professors, they enjoy a certain degree of autonomy. Second, because the staff tend to be older, they often lack confidence in the area of IT skills. Finally, the Yi input software was not installed on all the pcs in classrooms. And even if this had not been the case, the computers were often unreliable and IT support was limited. Consequently, the evidence for actual usage of Yi, especially written Yi, in the classroom was very limited.

The situation for English language teaching is slightly different. Of all the modules I observed, in only *Essential English* and *English Extensive Reading*, was English used as the main or only MoI. In other modules, including the module on *Spoken English* taught by the multilingual member of staff from CYS who had lived abroad for over a decade, teachers used a mixture of Mandarin Chinese and English with Mandarin Chinese as the primary instruction language. However, teachers of English used English mainly in their presentation slides, in line with national expectations for language subjects. And most teachers of Yi used Chinese as the main language in their presentation slides with some notes in Yi.

Teacher views on programme delivery

All of the issues discussed above have implications for the delivery of the programme. I turn next to the perspectives of teachers and administrators on the curriculum, essential dimensions in description of a bilingual education programme (Spolsky et al., 1976). Students' views and attitudes will be discussed separately in Chapter Seven.

There are both similarities and differences between the CFL teachers', all but one of whom are Han, and the Yi CYS teachers' perceptions of the programme. This, of course, is not surprising. The different sociopolitical, sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds of the two groups need to be considered; so, too, do other differences. The CYS teachers involved in the YEC programme, for instance, are all associate

professors or professors. Maybe due to their age, or the fact that they teach only Yi students, they were more likely to make comparisons between today's Yi students and their own learning experiences as students rather than with Han or any other ethnic group students. Teaching in SWUN is their main or even only job. Yet, most of the CFL staff involved in YEC programme are much younger, junior lecturers. They not only teach students from both CFL and CYS, but also have extensive contact with students across different disciplines, age groups and different teaching programmes both within and outside the University.

Both groups of teachers, however, acknowledged the advantages of trilingual education. All those interviewed acknowledged that the programme offers good opportunities for ethnic minority students, broadening their horizons as well as enhancing their multiliteracy. For instance, Mr. Ji, a Yi teacher, shared this view:

在全球化的背景之下，凉山也不是一个世外桃源。凉山与内地，与外边世界交流接触，我觉得，将会越来越频繁。所以我们的学生多一种语言就多一个选择。

Under globalization, Liangshan is not a world apart. The contact between Liangshan and *Neidi* [the inland cities] and the outside world will be more and more frequent, I feel. Therefore, for our students, learning one more language is to have one more choice.

That said, they addressed several issues of concern in curriculum planning, implementation and teaching practices. First, in relation to curriculum planning, with the exception of Tuesday afternoons, students in the first year have 10 sessions daily on each weekday from 8:30am to 8:30pm in the first semester and two sessions on Saturdays. This leaves little or no time for students to digest what are taught in the classroom. A senior administrator in the *Teaching and Learning Affairs Office* of the University explained in a focus group interview that the main reason for this arrangement is because of the 4-week compulsory military training students receive before they start their university study. This means that the

contents of 17-18 weeks have to be completed within 13 to 14 weeks. He commented that, while there is no latitude for the University to change state policy, this situation can be seen as encouraging good time management and learning habits on the part of student:

我们认为[这样排课]是出于让学生养成好的学习习惯，从大一一开始使劲抓……[让]学生不要认为，从高中到了大学就可以‘放羊’。

We think the ultimate goal is to encourage students to develop good study habits. We start being strict from the first year [...] They will therefore not think that, after leaving high school, it's time to slack off in University.

Another aspect related to the curriculum planning concerns the content which reflects a “mismatch between expectation and reality” (Rogan, 2004, p. 176). The CFL course convenor for the YEC programme, remarked:

我感觉，课程设置没有照顾到学生阶段性的特点。比如说，翻译课在大二的第二学期就开课。但其实[外国语学院]英语专业的学生都是大三才开始开，也就是说连英语专业的学生[都要到了那个时候]语言能力才可以支撑这样的学习。所以那些文学和文化的课，开起来就会让学生感到更吃力。[我]感觉[专业定位]不是特别清晰。

My impression is that the syllabus design does not match the students' learning levels at different phases. For example, the module *Translation* is delivered in the second semester of the second year. But even the [Han] English majors at CFL, only take this module from the third year. This would suggest that even English majors' competence won't reach the level required by the module [before that point]. Thus, as a result, other related modules, such as literature and culture, will become even more challenging to [Yi students]. I feel the goals of the programme are not very clear.

The second problem for the CFL teachers concerns the limited understanding of what the YEC existing curriculum entails and the frequent modifications to the syllabus. Mr. Yang recalled, “一些主干的课程变动都很大。开的年级、学年、学期都在不断地变，老师也在变 [The changes made in the core modules are also significant. There are frequent big changes in things like the target year group, semester of delivery or teachers allocated]”. Mrs Zeng, who taught YEC students *English/Chinese Translation*, further criticized the lack of engagement. The CFL staff involved in syllabus design are usually senior administrators with little knowledge of Yi students’ learning rather than those teachers who have the closest contact with Yi students, leading her to comment: “我觉得他们在安排英语课的时候，其实没有征求过我们外国语学院[任课]老师的意见 [I don’t think they have ever consulted our CFL teachers’ opinions on syllabus design]”.

There would thus appear to be a communication gap between CYS and CFL staff with the result that the curriculum planning of CYS is not in line with the teaching practices of CFL teachers. Big class sizes were another issue. For example, there were 52 first year students and 48 second year students each class. In the view of CFL teachers, these numbers were too big for language classes and pose difficulties in designing activities and class management.

CYS teachers raised a rather different concern – the cancellation of many Yi-related courses. One commented:

原有的整个彝文专业彝语主要课程有九门课程，这九门课程现在保不下来，已经没有了。写作课、彝语修辞学取消了，就现代彝语保住了。

In the past, there were at least nine Yi-related courses for Yi majors. Now, the majority of them have not survived but been withdrawn. [*Yi Writing and Yi Rhetoric*, they were both cancelled. Only *Modern Yi Language* was kept.

The dilemma facing Yi teachers, then, was there would not be enough courses for them to teach on the YEC programme with direct impact on their income because teachers are paid in part according to the number of teaching sessions on the top of their basic salary. The College's solution was to assign Yi teachers to teach other subjects which were often of little interest or did not fall within their expertise. As one of the teachers reflected:

所以后来没办法,我才上的普通话。[但]普通话不可能是我的特长啊,而且我又不想把很多的精力放在这块……

So later, there was no better arrangement than to assign me to teach Chinese Mandarin which has never been my specialized field. Besides, I'm not particularly interested in this subject.

The challenges around the legitimacy of imposed curriculum policy and curriculum planning are not, of course, limited to the YEC programme. The same situation has also been identified in studies among students from other ethnic minority groups in China. For example, Wang (2016) reports the tensions encountered by *Hani* and *Naxi* ethnic students in the Yunnan University of Nationalities who majored in English. Hu (2007) even argues that:

[...] since all the educational institutions in China are prescribed by law to follow the set curriculum, the same teaching approaches, and the same learning outcome evaluations, it is not feasible to consider the [diverse language backgrounds] of students in teaching English.

In the case of the YEC programme, there was certainly scope for the College to narrow the gap between curriculum planning and curriculum implementation. But as Lelliott et al. (2009) stress in the discussion of the issues of teaching and learning in South Africa,

To establish a dialogue between curriculum planning and curriculum implementation will inevitably be problematic in that the challenges they address are different, and hence a ‘gap’ will exist between intended curriculum and implemented curriculum (p. 48).

This is indeed the case for the YEC programme. On the one hand, at the national level, the central government calls for ‘ethnic diversity within national unity’ (Fei, 1999) and the Constitution (National People's Congress of the P.R.C., 1982) guarantees the legitimate rights of ethnic minority languages speakers, for instance offering support for practitioners to undertake trilingual education; at the institutional level, the aim of the YEC programme is to “to cultivate well-rounded talents, with high quality, in Yi language and culture” (see Appendix E). On the other hand, in practice, as Leung (2016, p. 82) suggests, “where some leeway for local autonomy may exist, the opportunities to conceptualize and formulate goals are often not taken up for a variety of reasons”. Take the two possible reasons given by Leung (2016) in a UK context as examples: one could be that the policy-declared goals have been set too abstract to be achieved without clear or practical instructions, and sufficient support; the second reason is that there may be “lack of active engagement” (p. 82) in the whole process of curriculum implementation and programme delivery. Against this background, the engagement of different stakeholders in the YEC programme and the consequences are self-evident.

Teacher expectations

Teachers’ expectations are one of the core elements which defines pedagogy (Morley & Rassool, 2002) and they directly impact students’ achievement in many ways. As Ferguson (2003) asserts, no matter what materials are used or how students are grouped in schools, students and teachers regularly interact with each other. In this process, their perceptions and expectations “reflect and determine the goals [... they] set for achievement, the strategies [they] use to pursue the goals, the

skills, energy and other resources they use to implement the strategies, and [eventually] the rewards they expect from the effort” (p. 461).

In the case of YEC, a final issue of central concern for the delivery of the programme relates to the standard of the Yi students themselves. Such concerns would appear to be well founded. Li’s study of the English entry level of Yi and Tibetan students in SWUN (Li, 2003, p. 334) concludes: “从考试结果看来, 大部分学生的英语水平还停留在初中二、三年级的水平上 [Based on the assessment results, the English level of the majority of the students remains the same as that in the second or third year in junior middle school]”. Other studies of ethnic minority foreign language education report similar findings (Feng & Sunuodula, 2009; Ma & Renzeng, 2015).

Teachers at CFL report problems not only in English learning but in a variety of fields including arts, literature and history. One teacher shared this view: “语言学习不可能是纯粹的语言学习……它毕竟有一个东西来支撑 [Language learning isn’t just pure linguistic study. There must be something to support the learning]”. Minority university students’ poor levels of Chinese knowledge, which have often received attention (Feng & Adamson, 2015c; Hu, 2007; Lin, 1997; Tsung, 2014; Wang, 2016), also come to the fore in L3 learning. CFL staff had the following to say:

何老师: 翻译来说有的人翻译得非常好, 有的人就是乱七八糟。他没有逻辑也没有思维, 也没有想到这个汉语[译文]是不是符合汉语的表达习惯。所以他们其实存在一个问题就是, [学习]受三语的影响, 因为汉语不是母语, 所以你要让他把英语翻译成汉语对他也是一个挑战。

Mrs He: When [they do] translation exercises, some translations are good but some are a total mess. There is no logic or thought, and they don’t think about whether this Chinese Han [translation] conforms to Chinese syntax. Thus, there is a real issue here – the impact of trilingual background on

their language learning. As Chinese is not [their mother tongue], if you ask them to translate English into Chinese, this is another challenge.

The responses of CFL and CYS teachers to the learning of Yi students, however, were very different. CFL teachers felt that they had no other option but to lower academic standards and expectations. This practice further marginalized Yi students as *poor learners* and thus placed them at a disadvantage, for instance, when competing for academic and career opportunities with Han students:

赵老师：只能看纵向不能看横向，[否则]学生压力大。

白老师：肯定不能[去竞争]，他们的优势还是在民族性……他们想靠外语吃饭不行，少数人可以。

Mr. Zhao: You have to compare them [with other Yi students], not [Han students]. [Otherwise] students will feel pressured.

Ms. Bai: Of course [they can't compete]. Their advantage lies in their ethnicity [...] They can't make a living through a foreign language, well only a few can.

In a similar vein, Lightfoot (1978, noted in Ferguson, 2003, p. 461) argues,

Teachers, like all of us, use the dimensions of class, race, sex, ethnicity to bring order to their perception of the classroom environment. Rather than teachers gaining more in-depth and holistic understanding of the child, with the passage of time teachers' perceptions become increasingly stereotyped and children become hardened caricatures of an initially discriminatory vision.

Some CFL teachers clearly adhered to a cultural deficit view of Yi students. One commented “他们的障碍跟他们的文化传统有关 [Their learning barriers are associated with their culture and tradition]”. For another, the reason students

underperformed was because they never aimed high. A third teacher Mr. Zhang, an ethnic Tibetan, also associated students' learning ability with group culture.

跟这个民族的文化也有关系。他这个文化是不是更容易接纳其他民族的文化？……如果是，他的背景知识就会非常地丰富。所以我觉得民族问题不是占主要的，但可能多少会影响这个学生基本的学习能力和吸收能力。

An ethnic group's culture may also play a role. Is this a culture which is willing to accommodate the cultures of other groups? [...] If it is, then people's knowledge will be very rich. Therefore, although I don't think ethnicity has a significant role to play, it can affect a student's basic learning ability and ability to digest [knowledge].

The CYS teachers were clearly aware of the negative attitudes of some CFL teachers. In a focus group interview, one CYS teacher reported that a student had written at great length in their final dissertation about Han teachers' discrimination and prejudice against the Yi. Another referred to past conflict between Han teachers working in CYS and Yi students. Nevertheless, CYS teachers actually perceived things in a very different way. Unlike their CFL colleagues, almost all the CYS teachers considered Yi students to be intellectually astute; only one teacher reported that she had to lower requirements in order to help students, especially Model II students, to keep up.

Schoenhals (2001) asserts that, for the Yi, social status and ethnic status are both incontestable. There was no evidence that the Yi think of themselves or their own worth in relation to the Han. Rather they feel confident in their Yi ethnicity and their academic performance has little effect on their sense of who they are. In that case, the issue of "being accommodating or open to other cultures", suggested by Mr Zhang above, became irrelevant. To some extent, the comments of non-Yi teachers, then, showed limited *multilingual awareness* (García, 2008, pp. 385, 391), of the "understandings of the social, political, and economic struggles surrounding

the use of the two languages”, and ultimately, the “understandings of and about bilingualism[/trilingualism] itself”.

Instead, the CYS teachers attributed students’ poor performance to the failure to work hard enough. In their opinion, students could not see the usefulness of either Yi or English for their future career development and were therefore reluctant to make more effort to learn either language. Some also attributed declining competence in Yi to the rapid economic development in China which was drawing more and more people from the remote regions to employment in the Han-dominated urban areas with detrimental effects on Yi language transmission. One of the solutions suggested by the CYS teachers was that Yi language tests should be put in place for applicants for all Yi-related posts, especially at the local level, in order to serve as a stimulus for students’ motivation and change their learning behaviours.

Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have presented different aspects in the delivery of the YEC programme. By way of context, I discussed the lower level of minority participation, when compared with the majority Han students, in HE in China, and a range of factors related to recruitment which explain the underperformance of Yi students. I also examined in some detail the credit system and the considerable constraints under which the programme operated. As the focus for this chapter has been on the main challenges in the delivery of the programme, I have also considered teacher views on this aspect of the programme, highlighting both the strengths and the weaknesses. For instance, the most distinctive strength of the programme is that it offers an unprecedented opportunity for Yi students to learn their culture and language with the support of experienced Yi scholars. But by the same token, problems related to curriculum planning directly affect not only the implementation, but also the learning and teaching.

I turn next to a more detailed consideration of the language competencies which students bring to the YEC programme.

Chapter 6 Student Language Competencies

In Chapter Four, the ethnolinguistic vitality of Yi is focused. In the present chapter, the focus broadens to include Chinese and English, the other two languages in the trilingual programme in order to address the third of my research questions – What is the range of competencies in Yi, English and Chinese of the YEC pathway programme? I will draw on students' self-reports in response to both a questionnaire survey of participants across all four years of the programme and focus group discussions. The analysis which follows provides an invaluable context for the discussion of an evaluation of the actual delivery of the YEC programme, as well as the impact of the programme on identities and aspirations, which follows in chapters seven to eight.

Composition of the group

As explained in Chapter Three, all students in the YEC are ethnic Yi. Although there is only one class per year group in the programme, students can be categorized into two groups: Model I and Model II students. The numbers of Model I students in years one to four are 5, 4, 2, and 1 respectively; for Model II students, the numbers are 47, 44, 35 and 30 respectively (see Table 3.1). An obvious point of departure, then, is to provide a full description of my participants, especially their level of proficiency in L1, L2, and L3, given the many different definitions of *bilingualism* discussed in Chapter Two. Language history, modes and functions are all factors which need to be taken into account in studying bilinguals (Grosjean, 1998).

The participants in the present study are extremely diverse. First, although all the YEC students are Yi from LYAP, Sichuan province, they speak a wide range of Tibeto-Burman varieties of Yi at home but are now exposed to just the standard variety, *Nuosu* in the University; second, the ages of students within the same year

group can vary by as many as four years often because of the disruptive nature of education for minority children in remote areas and villages; third, the students' prior academic experience of Yi learning is extremely varied.

Questionnaire data also suggest that Yi language provision is patchy and unsystematic for the Model II group: as illustrated in Figure 6.1 below, the exposure to the language in school is highly variable. For example, one student had studied Yi for three years in a primary school, but not again until he entered the University. Yet, some students had started studying Yi as a subject from Year 1, Year 4 or Year 6 in primary schools, while still others started in secondary school. Increasing numbers of students – from 33% in the 4th year group to 74% in the 1st year group – only began Yi learning formally when they joined the YEC programme. However, the trajectories of Model I students were quite different: the majority – seven out of twelve – had had formal contact with Yi since primary school. It is thus important to take into account what Garc á and Sylvan (2011, p. 385) describe as the “singularities in pluralities” in the YEC programme.

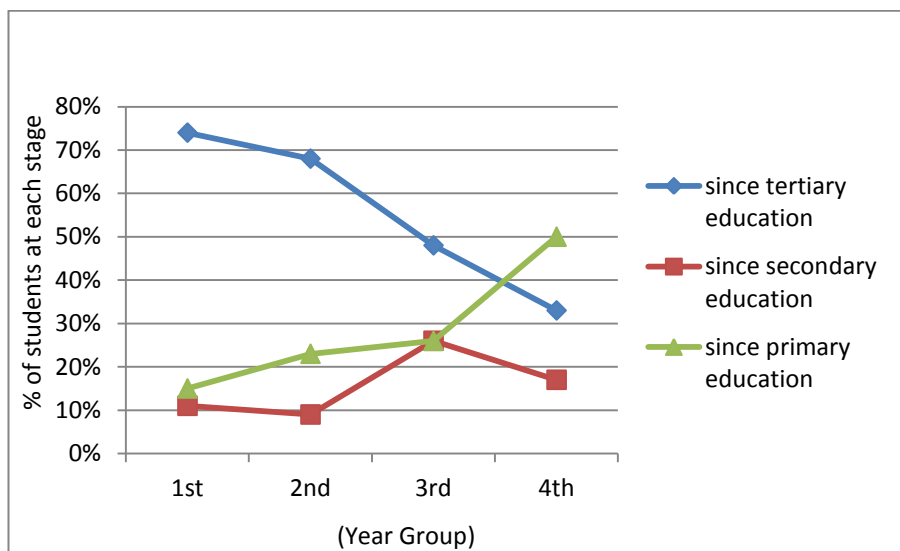


Figure 6.1: Percentage of Model II students at each year group when they started formal Yi learning

One possible way of proceeding might have been to analyse students' scores either on admission or in the course of their studies. I dismissed the notion of analysing

admission scores because different data are collected for Model I and Model II students, and the number of Model I students is small. I also did not consider that it was feasible to collect either admission or in-course scores because of the enormous bureaucratic obstacles involved in accessing the data. In addition, given the heterogeneity of the student body, there are simply too many variables for it to be feasible to evaluate bi/trilingual abilities on the basis of their academic performance. Therefore, I decided to focus instead on the students' perceived language ability – “individual assessment of competence in the four skill areas of comprehension, speaking, reading and writing” (Hasson, 2008, p. 145) – to help me establish their level of proficiency in each language.

I take as the starting point for this discussion Klenowski's (1995, noted in Ross, 2006, p. 1) definition of self-assessment as “the evaluation or judgment of ‘the worth’ of one's performance and the identification of one's strengths and weaknesses with a view to improving one's learning outcomes”. There has been much debate about the reliability of self-assessment, focusing, in particular, on the mismatch between student and teacher assessment (Babaii, Taghaddomi, & Pashmforoosh, 2015; Ross, 2006). Nevertheless, as Ross (2006, p. 1) argues, “Self-assessment produces consistent results across items, tasks and short time periods”. Additional support for this approach is offered by difficulties in defining language proficiency. For instance, the boundary between conversational and academic proficiency is not always clear (Heppt, Haag, Böhme, & Stanat, 2015) and, as Cummins (1980b) stresses, there are often large differences between individuals in different aspects of language proficiency. Given the constraints discussed above, my decision to explore self-assessment of language proficiency represented the most promising way forward. I would argue that the way in which students perceive their skills and abilities in different languages rather than how other parties see them is central to the present study because these views are closely linked to their language attitudes, learning motivation and language production.

Self-assessment of language competencies

Students were asked to self-evaluate their language competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing on a five point scale: Level 0 - little or no knowledge at all; Level 1 - poor; Level 2 - average; Level 3 - good; Level 4 - outstanding (see Appendix B.1). An important note of caution needs to be sounded here in relation to the interpretation of the findings: comparisons of year groups do not relate to the same individuals across time.

Competence in Chinese

Model I students assess their Chinese competence mainly at Levels 2 or 3 (see Figure 6.2).

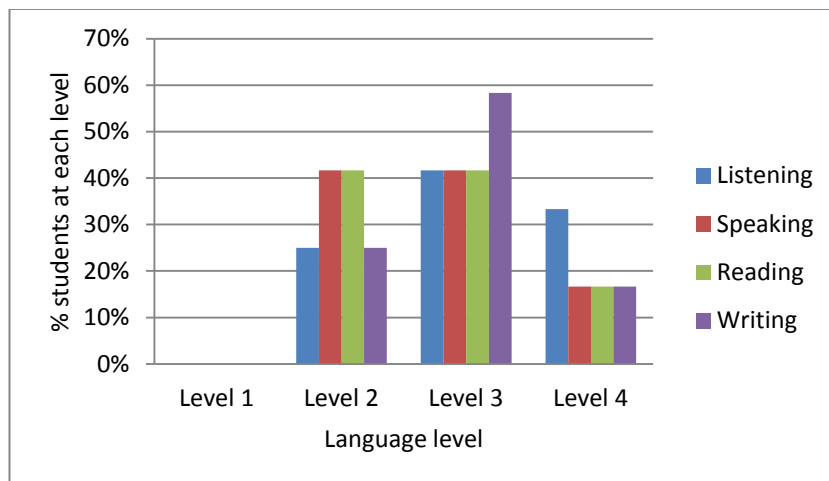


Figure 6.2: All Model I students' self-assessment in four skills in Chinese

In contrast, most Model II students are more confident in their Chinese competence which they rate as Levels 3 or 4, i.e. good or outstanding (see Figure 6.3 to Figure 6.6).

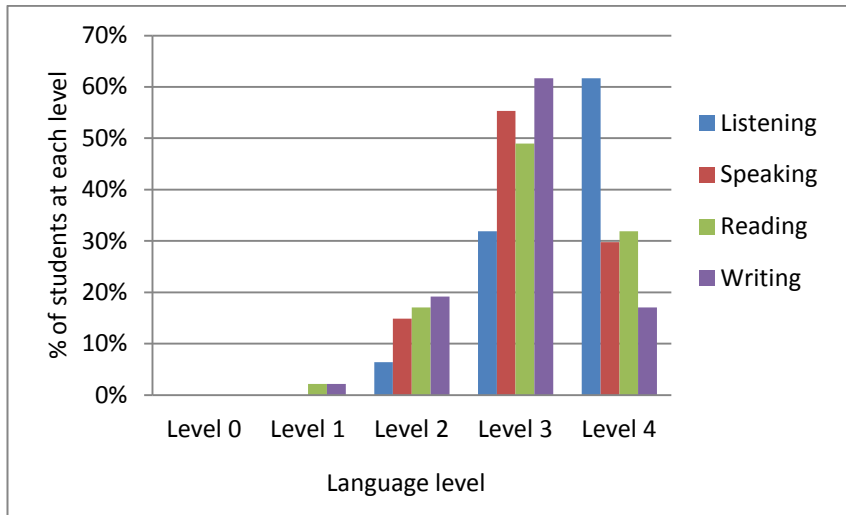


Figure 6.3: Model II 1st year students' self-assessment in four skills in Chinese

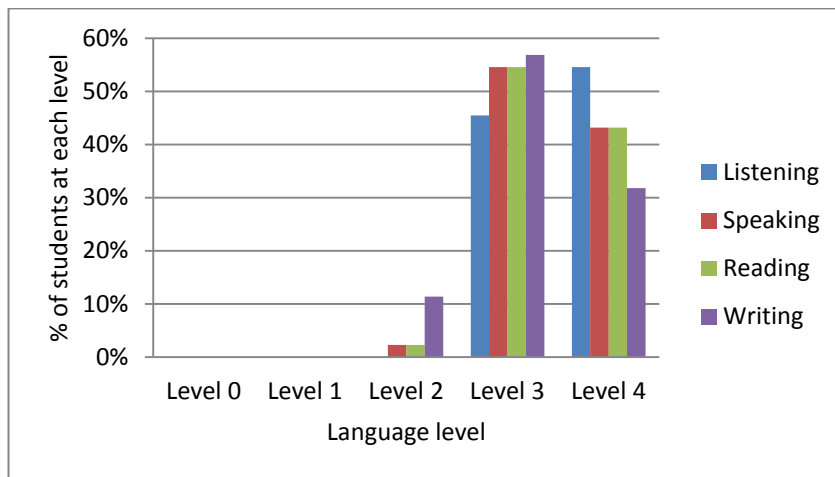


Figure 6.4: Model II 2nd year students' self-assessment in four skills in Chinese

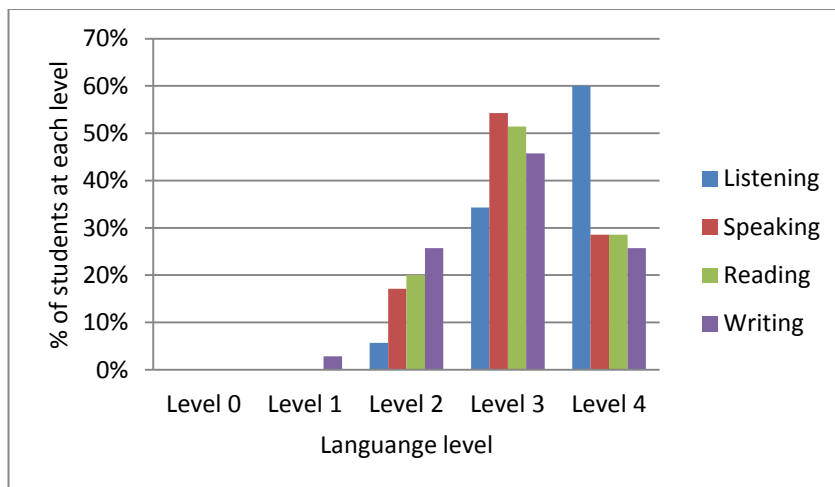


Figure 6.5: Model II 3rd year students' self-assessment in four skills in Chinese

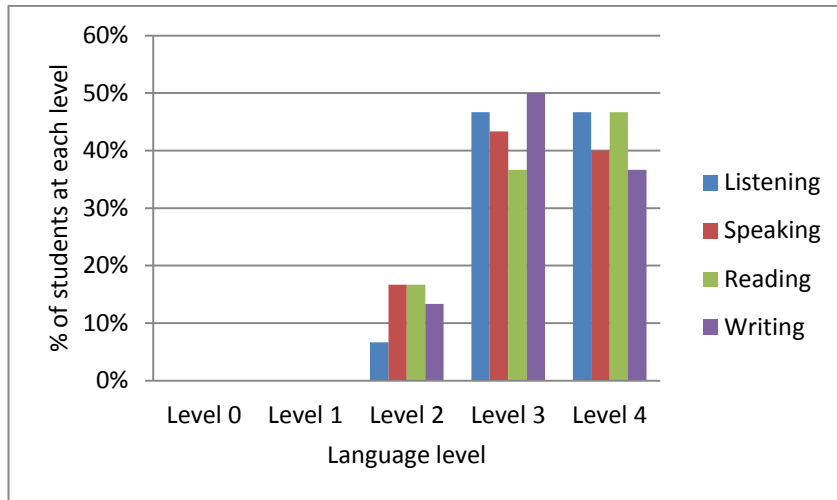


Figure 6.6: Model II 4th year students' self-assessment in four skills in Chinese

Competence in English

With regard to English competence, most Model I students considered themselves as Level 2 (see Figure 6.7), though it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions given the much smaller numbers in question.

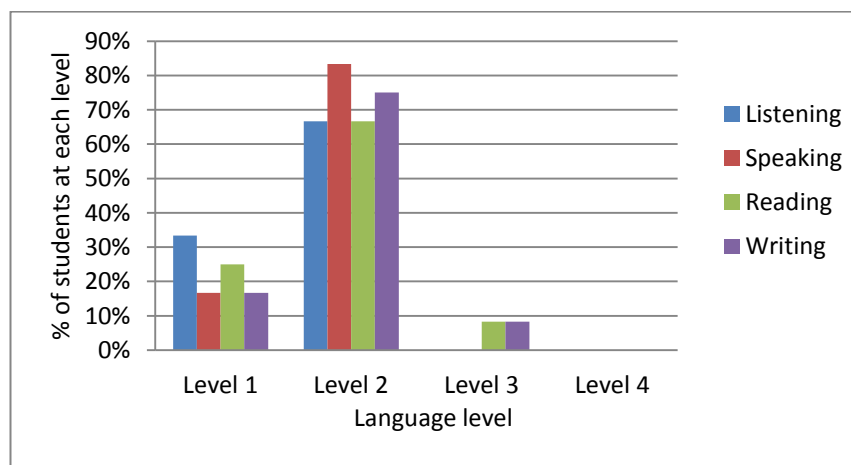


Figure 6.7: All Model I students' English competence at different levels

Most Model II participants also rated themselves as Level 2, i.e. average (see Figure 6.8 to 6.11).

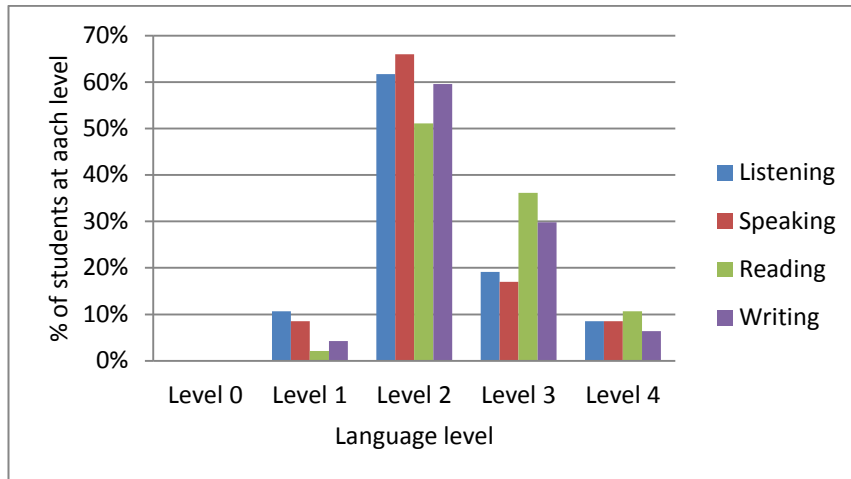


Figure 6.8: Model II 1st year students' self-assessment four skills in English

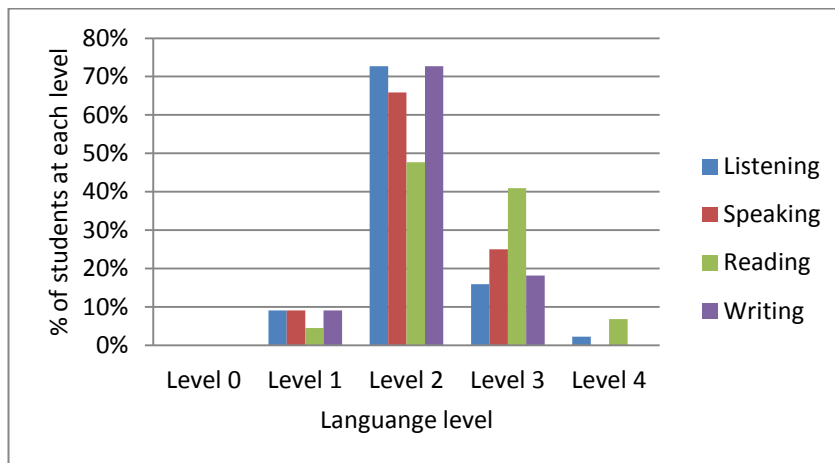


Figure 6.9: Model II 2nd year students' self-assessment in four skills in English

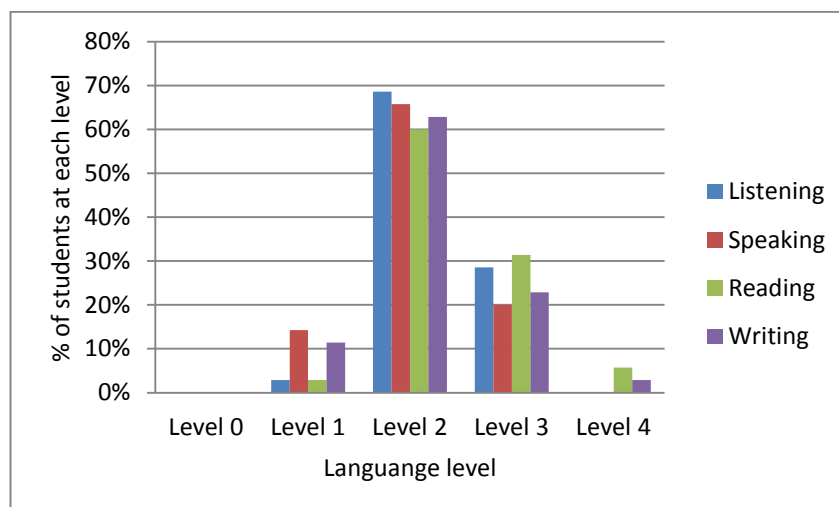


Figure 6.10: Model II 3rd year students' self-assessment in four skills in English

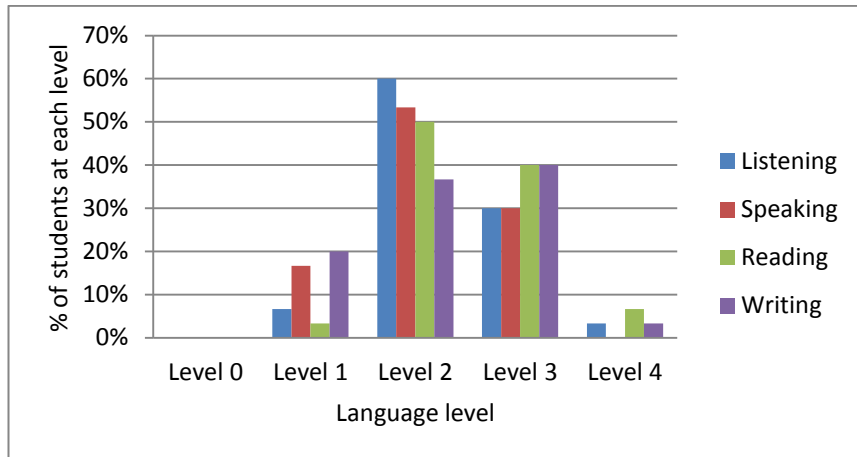


Figure 6.11: Model II 4th year students' self-assessment in four skills in English

Competence in Yi

Most Model I students felt confident in Yi. Their self-assessment of all language skills (see Figure 6.12) remained largely at Levels 3 and 4, and, for the most part, there was steady improvement across the year groups.

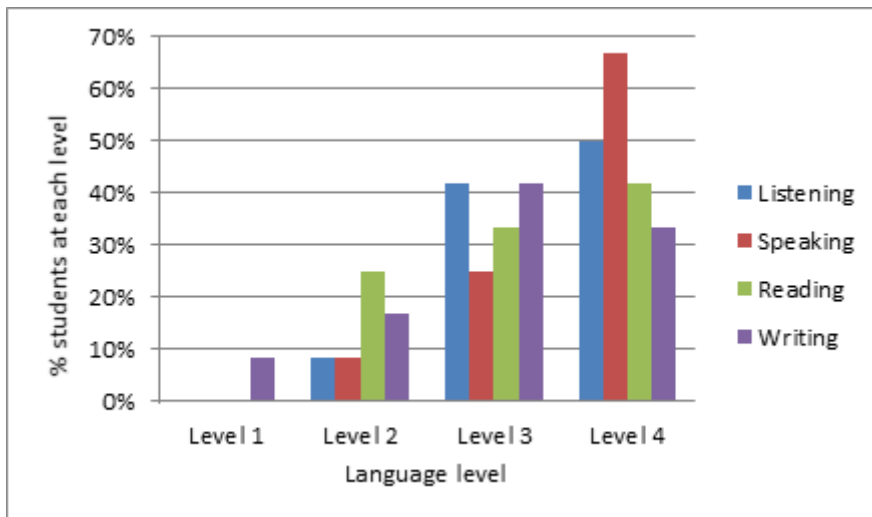


Figure 6.12: Model I students' self-assessment in four skills in Yi

Model II students demonstrated a more scattered distribution (see

Figure 6.13 to Figure 6.16). The most striking difference, compared with their language proficiency in Chinese, and English, is the proportion of students across all four year groups who rated their competence at Level 0, i.e. little or no knowledge, indicating both a very low point of departure on arrival and *little or no* development for some students after four years of study in the programme. The only skill of Model II students which suggests improvement is listening (see Figure 6.16) which almost all students in the fourth year rated as Level 2 and above.

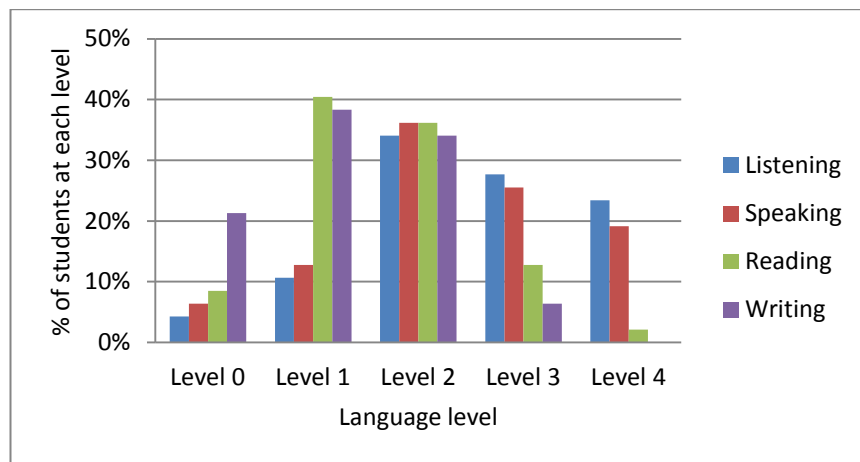


Figure 6.13: Model II 1st year students' self-assessment in four skills in Yi

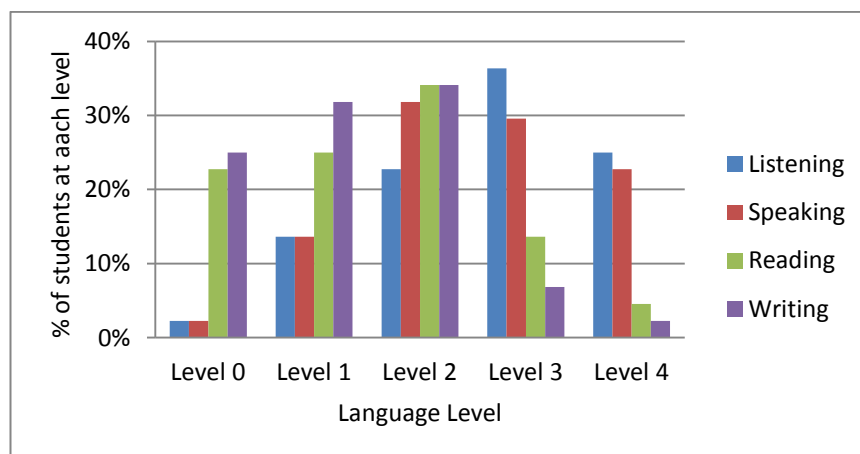


Figure 6.14: Model II 2nd year students' self-assessment in four skills in Yi

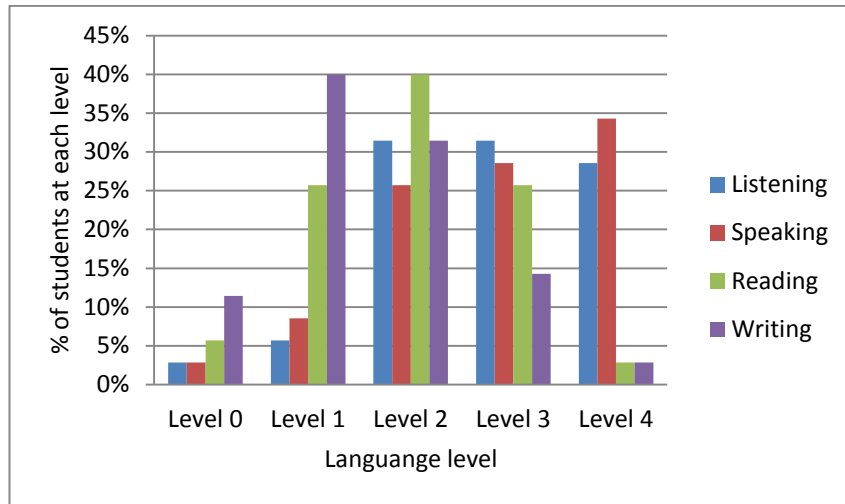


Figure 6.15: Model II 3rd year students' self-assessment in four skills in Yi

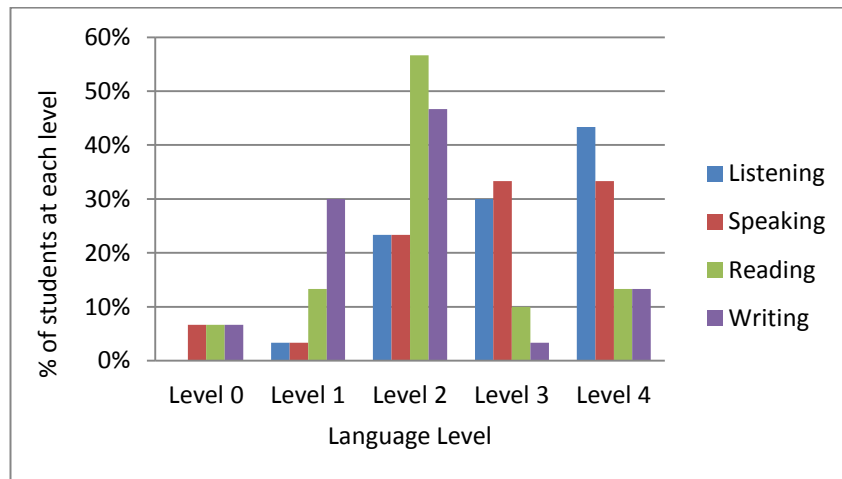


Figure 6.16: Model II 4th year students' self-assessment in four skills in Yi

Two trends are noteworthy. First, there is an apparent increase in the proportion of student self-assessments at Level 2 and above across the year groups (see Appendix F), particularly in relation to reading and writing in Yi: students' reading skills increased from 51% in the 1st Year (36% at Level 2, 13% at Level 3 and 2% Level 4) to 80% in the 4th Year (57% at Level 2, 10% at Level 3 and 13% at Level 4), while writing skills increased from 41% (35% at Level 2 and 6% at Level 3) in the 1st Year to 63% in the 4th Year (47% at Level 2, 3% at Level 3 and 13% at Level 4). These developments point to the positive effects of trilingual education. The other trend, however, is less positive: the proportion of students at the higher levels

is far lower in reading and writing than in listening and speaking (see Figure 6.17). In addition, 7% of the 4th year students reported that they cannot speak, read *and* write in Yi (see Appendix F).

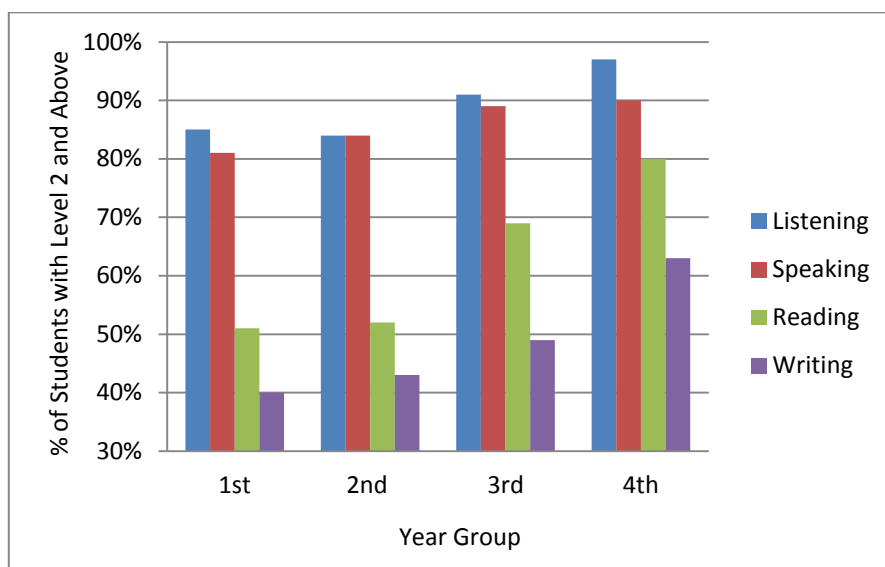


Figure 6.17: Percentage of students with level 2 and above in four skills in Yi

This latter trend may reflect differences between context-embedded and context-reduced language proficiency (Cummins, 1982). The former is related to the *basic interpersonal communicative skills* (BICS) that underpin speaking and listening, while the latter is related to the *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP) associated with literacy (Cummins, 1980b). As such, students may feel face-to-face communication in Yi less challenging with support of “a wide range of situational and paralinguistic [...] cues” (Cummins, 1982, p. 145) than when faced with context reduced activities involving writing and reading. While the distinction between BICS and CALP does not completely map onto the differences between speaking and listening, on the one hand, and reading and writing on the other, the trends observed could, arguably, provide support for this position.

The findings are also consistent with Cummins’ interdependence model (Cummins, 1981) which predicts that, transfer of L_x proficiency to L_y only occurs when instruction in L_x is effective in promoting proficiency in that language. Such

transfer cannot occur when the foundation in the Lx is not sufficiently firm. Based on the preliminary analysis presented above, the evidence of students' academic proficiency in all languages is not strong, and this is particularly marked in the case of Chinese and English for Model I students and Yi proficiency for Model II students.

Focus group data

As discussed in Chapter Three, in total, two focus groups were arranged with Model I students from the first and second year group of the programme. Since there was only one Model I student in the 4th year group, she joined two other students in the third year to form the 3rd Model I student focus group. Four focus groups were carried out with Model II students from each year group. An additional group was organized with students who had participated in *the Sino-American Cultural Exchange Month*. However, it is worth noting that it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between Model I and Model II students as the Model I group constituted only 12 in contrast with 156 Model II students in relation to issues such as patterns of language use. For this reason, unless otherwise clarified, the discussion that follows applies to both groups.

Issues explored in relation to student perceptions of L1, L2 and L3 focused on three main areas: language use, i.e. which language is used or spoken with whom in which contexts (Grosjean, 1998; Grosjean, 2013; Navracscics, 2002); language behaviour, i.e. how much effort participants had spent or were willing to spend on which language; and, language attitudes, i.e. what values are assigned to each language. The discussion which follows will focus on the first dimension, language use. Language behaviour and attitudes will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Over half of students interviewed tended to code-switch between Mandarin, the Sichuan topolect and Yi in daily life, especially in communications between

students and teachers or with peers with low levels of Yi proficiency, or who are unable to speak Yi. The following comments were typical:

Student Zigui: 跟老师基本上用的普通话, 跟同学朋友普通话跟彝语都在用, 有时候还会用一下英语。

Student Zigui: I speak Mandarin with teachers most of time. To friends and peers, I use both Mandarin and Yi, even some English [words] sometimes.

Student Ati: 彝族老师, 有些说彝语, [我]就用彝语, 但多半都用汉语。

Student Youzi: 我的话, 好像只有和教彝语的两个老师说彝语。

Student Ati: With Yi teachers, if [they] speak Yi, [I] will use it. But most likely, [we] use Chinese.

Student Youzi: To me, it seems that I only speak Yi to two teachers who teach the Yi language.

Student Shier: [跟老师讲话] 有可能说普通话, 有可能说四川话. 如果是我们彝族, 他平时经常说汉语, 不怎么讲彝语的, 我们跟他交流也会说汉语。

Researcher: 同学间私下一般交流说什么语言?

Student Zisa: 穿插的, 有些是汉语, 有些是彝语。

Researcher: 但如果说汉语, 是四川话?

Student Zisa: 嗯, 大多数是四川话. 然后和其他学院同学交流用是普通话。

Student Shier: [We use] either Mandarin or the Sichuan topolect when we talk to teachers. If they are Yi but hardly speak it, we will then speak Mandarin to them.

Researcher: Which language(s) are used in everyday life with your peers?

Student Zisa: Mixed. Sometimes Chinese, sometimes Yi.

Researcher: If it is Chinese, is it the Sichuan topolect?

Student Zisa: Yeah, most of time it is the Sichuan topolect. When we

talk to students from other colleges, we use Mandarin.

A smaller but nonetheless significant number of students highlighted four main domains where Yi is more likely to be used: in class, provided that teachers also speak Yi; at home; in student halls of residence; and on occasions when an interlocutor, who can speak Yi well, chooses Yi as the medium of communication.

Student Yihei: 跟家长, 我喜欢说彝语。跟家长肯定会说彝语。

Student Erge: 对啊, 都差不多, 对家长都说彝语……和彝语说得比较好的, 基本上都用彝语……平时我们一起吃饭, 一起玩基本都用彝语。

Student Yihei: To parents, I like speaking Yi. For sure, I speak Yi to [my] parents.

Student Erge: Yes, it's almost the same [to me]. [I] always speak Yi to my parents. Literally, I speak Yi to those who are good at it [...] When we [peers] have a meal or are hanging out, we use Yi most of the time.

Student Rihei: 像我们宿舍平时都是用彝语, 多半都是。

Student Rihei: For instance, in our hall of residence, Yi is used in everyday life. [We] usually speak Yi.

Student Muga: 小学到初中用的几乎都是彝语, 高中用的都是汉语。因为我们班上几乎都是汉族, 彝族就两个。大学寝室里面每天说的是彝语, 以至于我现在汉语都不会说了……生活中百分之九十的时间还是用彝语的。平时在课堂上跟着老师说, 有时候如果去外面的话一般都是说汉语吧。英语很少说, 因为英语本来就不怎么好。

Student Muga: We always spoke Yi in my primary school and junior secondary school. [But] things switched to Mandarin Chinese in the senior secondary school because most classmates were Han and there were only two Yi people. In [my] university hall of residence, [I've started] speaking Yi [again] every day, which is so [often] that I even feel I can't speak

Chinese any more. In everyday life, speaking Yi accounts for 90% of time. I also use Yi with teachers in class who can speak [Yi], but when I have contact with [the world] outside, usually I speak Chinese. I don't use English often because I am poor at English.

Grosjean (2013, p. 12) proposes a *Complementarity Principle* defined in the following way: “Bilinguals usually acquire and use their languages for different purposes, in different domains of life, with different people. Different aspects of life normally require different languages”. Students' situations discussed above clearly provide support for this theory. And different patterns of language use also contribute to different degrees of fluency.

Another important issue to consider at this point is that the individual's network of linguistic contacts (family, school and socio-institutional) (Landry & Allard, 1992) changes over time. As such, language dominance in a bilingual can also change (Grosjean, 2013). Student Muga is a case in point. For this student, less frequent use of Yi in senior secondary school made Chinese his dominant language. At tertiary level, Yi was used in more domains, especially in everyday communication with roommates; as Yi acquired new importance, it replaced Chinese. The less frequent use of Chinese led to the student perception that his fluency in the language had also reduced. By the same token, he perceived his competence in English as inadequate, limited as it was to a very small number of domains. As Grosjean (2013, p. 12) observes, “[The] more domains a language is used in, the greater the frequency of use and hence, usually the greater the fluency”.

However, Muga's changing patterns of language dominance from Yi to Chinese, then back to Yi again may or may not be typical. As the earlier discussion demonstrates, students' language history and background prior to the YEC programme were extremely varied (see also Chapter Eight). On the one hand, if they are from mountainous regions and villages in Liangshan, as is the case for most students, they have been exposed to a *socio-institutional milieu* where the EV of Yi is active and high (Ding & Yu, 2012). In addition, Yi tends to play an

important role in the *family milieu* (Landry & Allard, 1992), irrespective of the areas of origin (Zhang, 2014). On the other hand, in the current YEC programme, new situations, interlocutors and language functions create new linguistic needs which may change the language configuration of the person involved (Navracscics, 2002). Because students are far away from home, the *family milieu* where Yi was dominant no longer comes into play. And within the *socio-institutional milieu* of the University as a whole, Chinese predominates in spite of the medium-high ethnolinguistic vitality of Yi. The dividing lines in students' language use, then, are extremely fuzzy with educational, linguistic as well as sociolinguistic variables involved in the "kaleidoscopic" continua of multilingual education (Cenoz, 2009, p. x). It is therefore very difficult to establish with any certainty the precise patterns or changes over time in language dominance in the present study because the information about each student's language history is both complex and difficult to establish. The only practical course of action, then, is to look into the existing language practices of students and try to paint as clear as possible a picture of the present situation.

This situation resonates with the "visual representation" offered by Grosjean (2013, p. 11) of the domains covered by a bilingual's three languages (La, Lb, and Lc) as indicated in Figure 6.18 below:

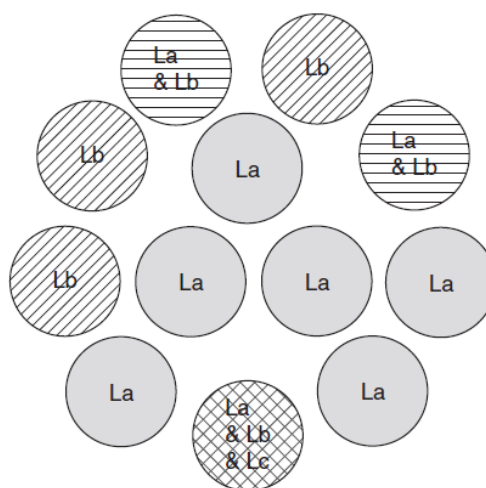


Figure 6.18: The domains covered by a bilingual's three languages, (adopted from Grosjean 2013, p. 11)

For most Model II students, La is Chinese, the *lingua franca* used in most domains; Lb is Yi which still has a role to play in everyday life but is less evident in academic contexts including communication with Yi teachers; and finally, English is Lc which is used the least. In relation to Model I students, it is not possible to establish similar patterns of language use for the reasons discussed above.

Conclusion

The diverse competencies of the Yi students in all three of their languages, together with the apparent lack of progress over the course of the programme, have clear implications for the delivery and evaluation of the YEC programme. Self-reports, offer a useful window on what is happening, though, as noted, they have various limitations. Other issues which need to be considered when interpreting the findings include the very small number of Model I students and the fact that comparisons of different year groups are not based on the progress of the same individuals across time. That said, the poorer performance of students in reading and writing than in speaking and listening offers support for Cummins' CALP theory and interdependence models. In order to understand the situation better, however, we need also to consider the perspectives of students, teachers and administrators on the programme which are the essential dimensions in description of a bilingual education programme (Spolsky et al., 1976), and it is to this issue that I turn next.

Chapter 7

Evaluations of Multilingual Education and the YEC Programme

This chapter will address the fourth of my research questions: What are the policy makers', teachers' and students' perceptions of and attitudes towards the programme? I will start by discussing attitudes towards language learning in general as a preface to interpreting the perceptions of the major stakeholders of multilingual education – the Dean responsible for introducing the programme and overseeing its delivery, the students and the teachers – drawing on Spolsky et al's (1976) 'Model for the description, analysis, and perhaps evaluation of bilingual education'. Finally, I will move from a discussion of multilingual education on a conceptual level to an evaluation of the actual delivery of the YEC programme underpinned by Cenoz's (2009) 'Continua of multilingual education' model.

Attitudes to language learning

Baker (1992, pp. 9-10) points to three reasons why attitudes can be used as “a hypothetical construct [...] to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour”: first, they are important in “language restoration, preservation, decay or death”; second, in relation to minority languages, attitudes “provide a measure of the health of the language”; finally, over half a century, attitudes have “repeatedly proven a valuable construct in theory and research, policy and practice”. In short, as Cenoz (2014) suggests, students' and teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the programme, will “not only provide in-depth evidence to explain the forms of trilingual education, weak or strong, practised in a specific region, but also best reveal the subjective ethnolinguistic vitality” (p. 10).

The discussion of attitudes which follows is based on observation, interviews and focus groups with students, supplemented where relevant with data from other stakeholders in the YEC programme, namely teachers and the Dean. It will start from motivation – both intrinsic and instrumental (Hofman, 1977; Soureshjani & Naseri, 2011); move on to the issue of attentiveness and productivity in the classroom; and draw on examples of the influence exerted by family perceptions of language learning on students' language attitudes.

Motivation and language learning

Attitudes have been widely discussed in the literature in relation to language learning, often in close association with motivation (Baker, 1992; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Gardner, 1982, 1985, 2007; Hofman, 1977; Thomas, 2010; Wesely, 2012). While Ellis (1985) concludes that “there is no general agreement about what precisely ‘motivation’ or ‘attitude’ consists of, nor of the relationship between the two” (p.117, noted in Baker, 1992, p. 14); Wesely (2012, p. 100) argues that motivation can nonetheless “be a way of understanding learners attitudes, perceptions and beliefs”.

In the context of language education, intrinsic motivation “has to do with the private enjoyment of language” (Hofman, 1977, p. 278), something that a learning activity can bring about (Dörnyei, 1998). Although the students are all English-Yi majors, they had genuine interest in the learning of different languages:

Student Yang Xiao: 对我们彝英双语班，反正我觉得我们最该重视母语，因为彝语只学一年。

Student Yang Xiao: To our Yi-English majors, no matter what, I think we should attach the most importance to the mother tongue. We only have Yi language as a course for one year.

Student Yihei: 我 [选这个专业]是因为[对英语和彝语]都感兴趣。

Student Yihei: The reason why I [chose this programme] is because I am interested in both English and Yi.

Of particular note is the fact that, in the interviews, several students also showed interest in L4 learning. One student explained, “当时学习日语的一个原因也是我喜欢日语，因为日语和彝语说起来感觉都差不多 [One of reasons why I started learning Japanese is because I like it. The rhythms of Japanese and Yi sound similar to me]”. Here, then, the motivation for learning Japanese was intrinsic. In a similar vein, factors such as the popularity of Japanese and Korean soap operas in China (Liu, 2007) may also contribute to interest in learning these languages, suggesting an openness of students (Gardner, 2005, 2007) to multilingualism.

However, even though a range of personal interests in L1, L2, and L3 were demonstrated, the intrinsic motivation of most students seemed to focus on learning English and Yi rather than Chinese:

Student Layi: 英语是从小就开始学的……相比 [学习其它语言] 我对英语是很感兴趣的，像数学，语文就完全不感冒。

Student Layi: I started learning English when I was little. Compared with learning other languages, English is my strong interest. For example, I am totally not interested in subjects like maths or Chinese.

Student Aga: 在这次活动当中，很多人都会说你不可以给我写出这个彝语。我现在不能完全写出来，所以我只能让更擅长彝语的人来写。这种在被问到的时候我自己 [做为彝族人] 都答不出来，让我心里印象特别深刻，就觉得确实非常有必要加强一下自己的语言。

Student Aga: In this event¹⁵, many [American] people asked me, could you write this down in Yi? I could not always write it all. So, I would have to

¹⁵ The *Annual Sino-American Cultural Exchange Month*. In the event, Yi students engage with American students for four weeks of cultural and ethnographic experiences of the Yi.

ask someone who is better at Yi to write it. The fact that I, [as a Yi], could not answer questions [related to Yi] made a very deep impression. And I therefore feel the urgent need to improve my own mother tongue.

Here, interestingly, Student Aga demonstrates, what Giles et al. (1977, p. 328) describe as the “social comparison” dimension of the multifaceted concept of ethnic identity. As they argue, “[One’s] identity only acquires meaning in relation to other existing or contrasting features of one’s ethnic world”. The Yi students are clearly aware of their identity through their contact with other ethnic groups within the multiethnic University. But the contact with people from the English-speaking world, further underlines their feeling as a distinctive ethnic group. As Weinreich (1974, noted in Giles et al., 1977, p. 328) observes, “Language loyalty breeds in contact just as nationalism breeds on ethnic borders”.

Also of interest, however, is the aesthetic quality which a few students associated with the mother tongue itself, Yi:

Student Kezi: 我特别喜欢彝文歌, 还有彝文诗。有时候听起来比汉语还美, 那种押韵、停顿什么的都有节奏感。

Student Kezi: I like Yi songs very much, as well as Yi poetry. Sometimes they sound even more beautiful than the Han language. The beats or meters are full of rhythm.

Student Yousha: 就我个人而言比较喜欢彝族那种……有诗的韵律美。将来在一些场合里, 我们彝族人, 比如说婚丧嫁娶的时候, 一般是要有头有脸的人出来坐在前面。双方对话, 假如你能说两句彝语, 就体现了你的内涵, 而且你会得到很多人的认可。

Student Yousha: Personally, I very much like the rhythmical and poetic quality of Yi. Besides, in the future, for example, in some Yi ceremonies or events, such as weddings ceremonies or funerals, important or respected people will normally be invited to sit at the front and will then have a

conversation [with each other]. If you can speak some Yi, it can reflect your inner quality which will be acknowledged by many people.

The above reflection is consistent with the “psychological distinctiveness” dimension of ethnic identity (Giles et al., 1977). Yi students distinguish themselves from the Han, as Student Kezi commented, by referring to the perceived “rhythmical” or “beautiful” quality of their mother tongue. Such reflections offer support for Hofman’s (1977) observation that “when the language appears to represent interpersonal or public symbols”, it becomes a symbol of “*value*” (p. 278). As Edwards (1982) points out, people’s linguistic attitudes do not reflect “any inherent linguistic or aesthetic” (p. 30) characteristics of the language(s). Instead, individual “preferences and attitudes” (p. 31) reflect perceptions of the speakers of these language(s) varieties. If “ethnic group members identify more closely with someone who shares their language than with someone who shares their cultural background” (Giles et al., 1977, p. 326), Student Yousha’s comment above, then, suggests her favourable attitude not only towards the language itself but also towards the Yi people to which she belongs.

In contrast, Baker (1992) argues that instrumental motivation represents “pragmatic, utilitarian motives” (p. 32). In other words, students learn a language for pragmatic reasons or “to gain social recognition or economic advantage” (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 14, noted in Baker, 1992, p. 32). Liu (1998, p. 121) suggests that “throughout history, Chinese people have been characterized by their utilitarianism”. Among the different motives for language learning offered by students, many claims were instrumental in nature:

Student A Ga: 如果在汉语、英语、彝语这 [三门语言当中] 分的话, 首先可能关注的是英语。汉语的话, 感觉从小就在接触, 如果没有走专业路线, 我觉得太没有必要深入研究。彝语本身自己有基础, 但没有太大的想法去深入研究。但英语的话, 自己的是兴趣在, 以后跟自己的职业规划有关, 就想要去把它学好。

Student A Ga: In distinguishing between Chinese, English and Yi, I might first of all focus on English. In terms of Chinese, as I have had contact with the [language] since I was young, there is no need to specialise or study it in depth. In terms of Yi, I have got the basic skills but no interest in studying it further. But English is my interest as it's tied up with my career development in the future. So [I] hope to learn more about English.

Student Jian Jun: 升学要考英语嘛，我觉得过了升学就没什么影响了。你通过英语了解其他国外也是没必要的，因为那些东西已经都翻译过来了，而且以后和外国人接触的时间也几乎没有。汉语的话，我现在在尝试诗歌写作，对诗歌语言比较感兴趣。

Student Jian Jun: To continue my education requires English exams. But I have taken the entrance exams [for universities and colleges], thus there is no further need for me. There is no need to know about the world outside via English either because everything has been translated. Besides, there is little chance [in life] to have contact with foreigners in the future. With regard to Chinese, I am learning poem writing at the moment and I am therefore keen on poetic [Chinese] language.

Student Zisa: 作为一个现代人，我们必须走向世界，比如外国的朋友到我们的老家西昌，比如那些旅行者啊，卖东西的那些，或是要搞一个调查翻译之类的，我们当志愿者也可以。

Student Zisa: As people living in this day and age, we have to see the world outside. For example, those foreign friends who visit our hometown, Xichang, are tourists, merchants or researchers who need translation. We can thus work as volunteers.

A range of extrinsic factors, then, rather than interest in a language in its own right, affect motivation to learn a language. These findings are consistent with the data obtained in research on other minority university students such as the Uyghur and the Koreans in China (Adamson & Feng, 2009, 2015; Feng, 2011; Sunuodula &

Feng, 2011; Zhang et al., 2015): utilitarian justifications, then, inevitably play a significant role in minority language education. It is noteworthy, however, that, despite the widespread use of Mandarin Chinese as the MoI and the fact that the YEC programme is offered in a Han-dominated region, most YEC students show little evidence of motivation, either intrinsic or instrumental, in relation to L2 Chinese learning. A possible reason for this pattern could be, as suggested by their self-reports (see Chapter Six), that both Model I and Model II seem confident in their Chinese proficiency which in turn is related to the fact that the programme is delivered primarily through the medium of Chinese.

Attentiveness and productivity in class

Attentiveness and productivity in class can also throw light on students' attitudes (Garrett, 2010). In this respect, YEC students demonstrate behavior consistent with that of other college students (Zhang & Zhang, 2009). For example, the quality of teaching, the weight of a module in the curriculum or in relation to employment and the taking of a register all play a major role in students' class attendance. In classes taught by teachers who had more interaction with students, my observation was that students were more attentive. Yet, in teacher-centered classrooms, students often appeared to be unfocussed, not engaging in the learning. When asked what influenced their decision to attend a class, one student had the following to say:

Student Xiaohua: 我觉得很大程度上跟老师的讲课情况有关, 他讲得有没有趣, 还有这个课的重要性。

Researcher: 这个重要性是如何评判?

Student Xiaohua: 大多数情况下, 我觉得是跟考证或职业方面有关。其次, 我觉得可能最重要的是老师要点名, (这)会影响自己的期末成绩。

Student Xiaohua: I think it largely depends on the teaching, or whether or not he or she sounds interesting. Another factor is the importance of the module.

Researcher: How do you judge if a module is important or not?

Student Xiaohua: On many occasions, I think it is associated with qualifications or professional exams. Secondly, I guess probably the most important factor is the teachers' attendance check as it will directly affect the final exam marks.

Student Ati: 有点应试教育……因为我们语言类的专业，有时候背的有点多，有可能平时缺席。最后期末老师都要划重点的，同学们有时候就可能依赖这个，平时逃课缺课现象就比较严重。

Student Ati: Our study is more or less test driven. Since we are language majors, there is a lot to memorize. [Thus, due to the limited amount of time available, we] may be absent from class sometimes. Usually, teachers will highlight the content to be tested at the end of term. Sometimes students rely on this. As a result, daily class absences are frequent.

These comments suggest that for many students, instrumental motives, such as concern regarding final marks or access to potential exam content, play a decisive role in language learning. Certainly, both intrinsic and instrumental motives contribute to students' language learning (Gardner, 1985). In interviews, as we have seen, some students' expressed genuine interest in one or another language. However, as Dörnyei (1998, p. 121) reminds us, traditionally instrumental motivation "can undermine intrinsic motivation and [...] students will lose their natural intrinsic interest in an activity if they have to do it to meet some extrinsic requirement". Although within the scope of this research it is impossible to examine the extent to which students' intrinsic interests are affected by instrumental purposes, there is evidence that many contextual factors influence an individual's motivation.

Family perceptions of language learning

Fishman (1977, p. 45, noted in Edwards, 1985, p. 140) observes that “the only aspect of bilingual education that has been even less researched than student attitudes and interests is that of parental attitudes and interests”. However, parents’ perceptions of language clearly have a significant role to play in children’s education. Edwards (2004) gives several reasons for being bilingual from a family perspective including family relationships; language, culture and identity; religious observance; intellectual benefits; and career advantages. In the case of Yi students in YEC, parents seemed to have very definite views on the material rewards associated with different languages (Edwards, 2004; Sunuodula & Feng, 2011; Tsung & Zhang, 2015). These family attitudes inevitably affect those of students:

Student Xiu Ying: 我不是凉山的，是甘孜的……家里面的父亲就经常叮嘱我把英语学好，他们说英语现在是主流语言。就想到以后回去考个乡村老师，就要英语好，当个英语老师挺好的。考公务员就是汉语要好，因为甘孜是藏族自治州，就对彝语的要求不是很严。

Student Xiu Ying: I am not from Liangshan but Ganzi¹⁶ [...] At home my father often advises that I must learn English well. They said English is the main language. [Their] thought is that one day I can be recruited as a village teacher. So my English has to be good. It’s something good to be an English teacher. If [I] take civil servant exams for the local government, [my] Chinese has to be good. Ganzi is part of the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Thus the expectation for the Yi language is not high.

Student Lasa: 现在回去我爸爸问我，学英语干什么？他是希望我回去考公务员的，不怎么支持我考研……看了我的课程表，他说 “[怎么]全是英语课？公务员考试又不考英语”。

¹⁶ Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is located in western Sichuan province in China. Although dominated by the Tibetans, the Yi are one of the few other ethnic groups living in that region.

Student Lasa: When I am at home, my dad will ask [skeptically]: What is the purpose of learning English? He hopes I can go home and take the civil servant exams rather than taking the entrance exams for graduate school. After reading my programme timetable, he commented that “[how come] they are all about English? English will not be assessed in civil service exams”.

Minority parents’ attitudes towards the target language and language learning tend to be closely correlated with career development. For many ethnic parents in Liangshan and other minority-dominated rural areas, the ultimate goal of education is to “jump out of farmer status” (Wang, 2016, p. 157), be lifted out of poverty through education and seek employment in government roles such as cadre¹⁷ upon graduation. In a similar vein, Tsung and Zhang’s (2015) study of 98 students in Year One of a bilingual primary school and 20 Yi parents in Xichang, reports that both students and parents give high priority to Chinese and consider it a pathway to a successful career, in particular given the fact that the exam papers of UCEE must be answered in Chinese.

Language attitudes and language behaviour

Language attitudes and language behaviour are inextricably entwined. The former consists of the “evaluative reactions towards [the latter, i.e.] the activity of learning languages” (Cenoz, 2004, p. 204), while the latter is the base from which the former is derived. Four dimensions of attitudes proposed by Spolsky et al. (1976) from the perspective of programme evaluation are relevant here: attitudes towards the languages and language varieties (and their speakers); attitudes towards the educational institution; attitudes towards the general aims of education; and finally, attitudes towards bilingual education itself.

¹⁷Cadres are defined by Wang (2016, p.132) as “people who take leading political or administrative roles in factories, communes, governments, schools, the military and similar organizations”.

Attitudes towards the learning of Yi, Chinese and English

So far, the discussion has illustrated a variety of attitudes towards L1, L2 and L3. Nevertheless, when it comes to the time allocated to studying each language, student responses are relatively homogeneous. As the comments which follow demonstrate, most of the students think their Chinese skills meet their needs, a position consistent with their self-assessments (see Chapter Six). They therefore do not see the necessity of putting more effort into Chinese acquisition. In contrast, approximately half of students, irrespective of the year of study, recognised the importance of English. Particularly given the time constraints, the majority of these students reported that they had spent much more, if not most, time on English learning:

Student Youer: 如果有时间的话, 我会把彝语提高上来, 但最主要的, 我还是会提高英语。因为, 彝语, 汉语, 英语, 这三门之间, 我英语水平比较差一点, 所以不一定每一科都可以兼顾到, 但必须要。

Student Youer: If I have the time, I will improve my Yi [proficiency]. But mainly, I am still trying to improve my English. This is because of the three languages, Yi, Chinese and English, my English is the weakest. It's impossible to give equal attention to each subject but I have to try.

Student Deti: 本来英语班, 其实英语课也很多……如果把英语学好, 其它方面更有优势。

Student Deti: We are English [majors] anyway. And there are so many English classes. If [I] can have a good command of English, there will be many advantages in various different ways.

Student Ayi: 我们彝英班开设, 还有彝日班主要都是考研。我们知道考研是要考一门外语, 我们彝英班当然就是英语, 所以就觉得必须要英语学好才行。

Student Ayi: The purposes of setting up both the Yi-English and the Yi-Japanese programmes are for entering graduate school. We know that we will need to take a foreign language [entrance] exam for graduate school. It will be English for Yi-English majors. So, [I] must master English.

Student Geha: 就我自己实实在在来说的话，就这三本书摆在眼里，汉语、彝语、英语你让我选择出哪样的书来看，我要么选的是英语或者汉语。

Student Game: Frankly speaking, if now three books of Chinese, Yi and English are placed in front of me and you ask which book I want to read, I would choose either the English one or the Chinese one.

In Chapter Four, it was argued that the medium-high EV of the Yi within the boundary of the University has produced favourable attitudes on the part of YEC students towards their own ethnic language, culture and identity. However, in practice as Student Youer openly confessed: “If I have the time, I will improve my Yi [proficiency]. But mainly, I am still trying to improve my English”. He was consciously aware of the difference between his inner attitudes and external behaviours. The attitudes and behaviour of the Yi students are thus often contradictory and inconsistent (Edwards, 1982; Garrett, Coupland, & Williams, 2003); attitude is not a reliable predictor or indicator of behaviour. As Garrett et al. (2003, p. 8) observe, “[Even] if we have every intention of acting in line with our attitudes, we might be prevented from doing so by any number of circumstances”. This is exactly the predicament encountered by the Yi students in the present study. Contextual factors, such as the curriculum and its implementation, constraints in employment, the spread of English worldwide and parents’ perceptions override private feelings, leading many students to believe that study of a foreign language, in the case of YEC an L3, should be given priority over L1 learning for various utilitarian reasons. It would seem that students’ genuine affection and feelings for their own mother tongue are strong but not sufficient to counterbalance the impact

of other factors such as the perceived need to spend more time on English learning. Those factors will be discussed further below.

Attitudes towards the institution

The YEC programme is offered by SWUN. As such, it is helpful to revisit the issues which influenced student decisions to apply to this university. In the discussion which follows, the focus changes from the prospective (discussed in Chapter Five) to the retrospective as students reflect, with the value of hindsight, on the choices that they made.

One of the influences highlighted in the previous chapters as important for student choice was interest in ethnic minority heritage.

Researcher: 分数线可能是一个考虑, 但同样的分数线你可以上普通的二、三本, 为什么选择了这里呢?

Student Yihei: 因为我自己本来就非常喜欢彝族方面的东西。

Researcher: Marks are one factor. But with the same marks, you would be eligible to apply for other universities or colleges. Why did you choose here?

Student Yihei: Because I myself love things related to the Yi.

There was no shortage of evidence that the College, and especially the Dean, had played a significant and even decisive role in raising the awareness of students' ethnic and linguistic identity. Student comments included:

Student Gemen: 母语这个[概念]我是现在才发现的, 之前没有概念。在凉山那边的时候会说彝语, 都是不会认字、写字, 但是我知道我是彝族人, 我会说彝语。后来到大学里面, 有一种民族意识了。

Student Gemen: I wasn't aware of the [notion] of mother tongue until now. In the past, I had no idea of this. When I was in Liangshan, I could only

speak Yi but not write or read it. But [now] I know I am a Yi who can speak Yi. After enrolling at the University, [I] became aware of *minzu* [ethnicity].

Student Wang Yun: 选这个专业后有一点很大的不同就是在读高中以前包括高中，对自己的民族没有太多的 [了解]。虽然一直生在那个民族环境下，但很少对自己的民族有一些认识。到了大学[读]个专业以后受到我们院长的影响，就会觉得我们民族还挺不错：有灿烂的文化，被他影响也接触到很多彝族比较优秀的人，就会有民族的自豪感，对自己的民族认识也就比较多了。

Student Wang Yun: Before I went to a high school, and even including the time spent in high school, I did not know much about my own ethnic group. Although I grew up in a minority dominated region, I had very few thoughts about my own ethnicity. But after being admitted to this programme and being influenced by our Dean, I have been impressed by the well-developed culture of my group. Under his influence, [we] have also been introduced to many brilliant Yi people which has allowed me to feel proud of my ethnicity and helped me have a better understanding of my own ethnicity.

Certainly some students expressed worries about the perceived historical stigma associated with the University before their enrollment. However, many now identified the advantages of studying at the CYS:

Student Yi Ze: 我想说像我有一些亲戚朋友的孩子是考了很好的一本或二本学校。回来还是一样的工作，没什么区别。所以我来彝学院可能会有不一样的东西，因为这就是一个很特别的地方。

Student Yi Ze: What I want to say is the children of some family friends or relatives did study in a more prestigious University. In the end, they came home with no jobs. There is no difference. But at the CYS, there might be something different because this is a unique place.

Student Gongguo: 没录取前听谣言说民族学院很乱, 经常打架什么的。

Student Muga: 以前可能就是在 2000 年之前, 民院的形象不是很好……以前我们那边很多哥哥姐姐会从这个学校出来, 出过很多人才。[同时], 也会有一些负面的影响存在。但感觉现在是[说学校]特别好了, 以前谣言是说不怎么好。

Student Gongguo: Before I started at University, I heard rumours about a chaotic ethnic university where there was often trouble like fighting.

Student Muga: Probably that happened before 2000. The image of the University was not that good. Many of the older brothers and sisters in my area graduated from the University in the past. Some of them were high achievers. At the same time, there was some negative impact as well. But the overall comments on the university now are quite good. The rumours suggested that it was not good.

Other factors also come into play. When existing students were asked if they would make the same choice if starting over, a small number answered in the negative:

Student Liu Qi: 我觉得我不会选择。因为我从小出生在那个民族的地方, 那我可能接触其他民族比如汉族的东西就会比较少。我觉得可能要接触到其他的一些文化, 思想、价值, 世界观会更提升自己, 视野更广泛些。

Student Liu Qi: I don't think I would make the same choice again. Because I was born in a minority region where I had already had less contact with other ethnic groups such as the Han, I think maybe the only way to broaden my horizons would be to have contact with other cultures, thoughts, values and world views.

Student Zigu: 如果不考虑分数的因素, 可能会选择一个非民族大学, 我同意刘琦的想法, 因为从小是在乡下读的, 说的全部是彝语, 所以汉话说的不好。总是和彝族人打交道, 所以就想和其他[汉]民族的同

学交流，交朋友。因为[那样]可以有三、四年的时间 and 汉族同学待在一起，学习一下先进的文化和外国的东西。然后大学毕业后，就回到老家那边去，那样我就一辈子和彝族人打交道……如果我要读研究生的话，就会选一个非民族院校，感受不一样的大学生活。

Student Zigu: If it hadn't been for the scores, I might have chosen another non-ethnic university. I agree with Liu Qi on this matter. My childhood education started in villages where everybody spoke Yi. As a result, I cannot speak Mandarin well because I have always had close contact with the Yi. So I want to communicate and make friends with peers from other ethnic groups. And in that scenario [registering for another programme], I would be able to spend three to four years with Han peers and learn more about culture and things abroad. Upon graduation, I will go back to my hometown and spend my whole life with the Yi [... So] if I can further my education in graduate school, I will choose a general university and experience campus life in a different university.

Although responses of this kind came from only a small proportion of students, they reflect perceptions not only of their current learning situation but also of intergroup relations. While there is no way of knowing whether contact of the kind they are proposing with the majority would lead to assimilation, there can be no doubt about their willingness to interact with Han students, providing support for the observation of Taylor, Meynard, and Rheault (1977, p. 116) that “contact with the majority group is not necessarily associated with feelings of threat to one’s own identity”. On the contrary, the reflections of these Yi students on the Han majority – both linguistic and non-linguistic – as evidenced by references to “advanced culture” and “a broader horizon” in the comment from Student Zigu above, demonstrate an openness to the Han community. As Gardner (2005, p. 7) explains,

[...] because of their cultural background, early home experiences, child rearing characteristics, etc., some individual learners would be more open to

other ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups than others, and this openness could influence their motivation to learn the other language.

Such openness is characteristic of integrative motivation (Gardner, 2005, 2007). This small group of students may therefore feel motivated to have contact with the Han and to acquire Mandarin Chinese. It is possible to argue that students who attended *the Sino-American Cultural Exchange Month* and demonstrated strong interest in the English language and American culture were similarly motivated. Nevertheless, it is crucial to bear in mind, as Gardner (2005) stresses, that openness does not necessarily mean “one wanted to become a member of the other cultural community, but rather an individual’s openness to taking on characteristics of another cultural/linguistic group” (p. 7). The impact of this openness on students’ ethnic and social identity will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

Attitudes towards the general aims of education

In Chapter One, I discussed attitudes in the general population towards education (Yu et al., 2012) and the various social and economic factors involved in the low enrollment of ethnic minority children. According to Mr. Hou Yuangao, the Deputy Director of the Research Centre for Western Development in Minzu [ethnicity] University of China, Liangshan is the poorest region in China (Tan, 2015), far less developed than regions he has visited in India, South Africa, Kirghizstan and American Native Reservations. The interview data collected for the present study also demonstrate Yi concerns. For many students, the aims of HE are not very clear either to themselves or to their families. One student admitted that “我们家里[就读书]并没有什么固定的想法，只要能够读大学有个固定的工作就可以了 [My family had no thoughts [on education]. As long as I can have a job through this, that’s fine]”. As already mentioned, reflections from the students and the staff confirm that many Yi students and their families think that, as long as a student can work as a local village/town leader, or civil servant after graduation, their goals have been fulfilled. The same attitudes are also found among *Hani* and

Naxi university English majors (Wang, 2016). There is little clear evidence, for instance, that knowledge or the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake is highly prized, or at least considered on a par with career concerns. As Schoenhals (2001, p. 247) reflects, to the Yi “[schooling] was simply a means to get ahead, in order to help oneself and one’s family and hometown”. The following exchange provides further support for this view:

Student A Hong: 父母以为找得到工作了就够了 (Student Geha: 公务员啊什么的), 生个儿子要传承家里才是硬道理, 那个思想是有的。

Student Geha: 娶妻生子, 留在家里照顾父母啊, 反正就是把家支发扬光大就够了, 还有一点[这个想法]。

Student A Hong: My parents will be very pleased as long as I can get a job (Student Geha: A job such as a civil servant.)

Student A Hong: What’s important is that we can have a son who can carry on the family line. That thought does exist.

Student Geha: Get married, have children and stay at home to take care of parents, etc. Anyway, [we should] bring glory to our clan. [Parents] still tend to think in this way.

While the Dean’s reference to “历史的惯性 [the inertia of history]” may well sum up the attitudes of most Yi towards education, there was nonetheless evidence of the enjoyment and self-efficacy that some students associated with education:

Student Yiga: 以前我们刚进学校,收分比别人低,进这个大学.但是我觉得我们从山里走出来,在这个学校中接受到更好的条件学习。比如现在我们还可以学英语,还可以拓宽我们的视野,还可以学习到其他很多方面的东西。我觉得这个影响挺好的。

Student Yiga: In the past, we entered this university with lower scores than many other majors. But now I feel [it is good] that we, people from the mountainous areas, can study in a place with better study facilities and

[resources]. For example, now we can even learn English, broaden our horizons or learn knowledge about different things. The impact [on us] is really good, I think.

Student Kezi: 她说的很多话我都记得: 每个人在大学里面有四年, 有可能前面来的时候卷着铺盖就来了, 就什么也没带。但有可能这四年之后, 对每个人意义不同, 你可能会学到很多与别人不一样的东西, 也有可能四年后就光溜溜地走了。四年对一个人的一生有很大的作用。

Student Kezi: I do remember most of what she [a teacher] said: Everybody has got four years in university. Maybe some people arrive with nothing. But after four years of [study], its meaning is no longer the same. You may learn many things others do not learn. Or you may leave with nothing again after four years. Four years have a significant effect on one's whole life.

Although students may not at first have any clear ideas about the purpose of a university education, these comments reflect how they gradually perceive the ways in which mother tongue education can empower them or lead to beneficial and positive outcomes. In the final stages of writing up this thesis, I learned from the above Student Kezi of one such outcome. He and another young man, the first two children in their village to go to university, had both been admitted to a good graduate school in China, proof of how education has the potential to inspire and empower ethnic minority students.

Attitudes towards bi-/multilingual education

Having explored the role of attitudes towards language learning in more general terms, I now focus on the complex inter-relationships between these attitudes and stakeholder evaluations of the YEC programme, I will start by outlining the perspectives of the Dean, the founder of the programme which provided a baseline against which to evaluate the views of other stakeholders. I will then report student reflections on whether SWUN, the institution in which the programme is embedded,

was indeed their best option for study; the extent to which they valued the experience of bi/trilingual education offered by the YEC programme.

The Dean

Of all the stakeholders – students, parents, teachers, policy makers – none was more deeply concerned about the quality of the programme than the Dean. While students were participating in the programme at the *operational* and *outcome* stages of multilingual education (Spolsky, 1978), the Dean, as founder of YEC programme, was also involved in the *situational* or planning stage.

He demonstrated a keen critical awareness of the programme. He commented: “彝学院是一个四不像的学院 [the College of Yi Studies is neither one thing nor another]”, alluding to the challenges encountered in the implementation of the programme. He made it clear that the original aim in establishing the YEC programme was to increase the admission rate to graduate school rather than promoting multilingualism and multiliteracy (Cenoz, 2009):

办学期间我们遇到了一个问题：就是有那么一两年，应届毕业生考上研的一个都没有，主要的原因是英语过不了关。所以我们反复的讨论，如果再这样办下去就不是办大学了，就相当于办干学部。我们这一代的彝族学子没有一个上升、发展的空间。未来这个民族的文化传承、学术代言、学术研究，科学研究这方面都没有真正的彝学的人才。所以基于这样一些考虑[我们]后来向学校打报告，就是采取这种变通的形式，还是中国少数民族语言文学[的学位]但是旁边备注彝英双语方向……这个考研也不是说他将来能成为一个历史人物或怎么样，实际上是给他继续提高汉语和提高综合能力的机会……我们这些学生就业都是100%的，不用担心。我担心的是100%的低端就业，我的民族就没有未来了。

In the first couple of years of running the programme, we became aware of the fact that no graduates had been admitted to graduate school. The main reason was that students failed in English. Thus, we analyzed the situation, thinking that if this continued, we would no longer be running a university but a training centre for cadres. This generation of Yi at this period would have no space to develop and there would be no Yi talent to inherit our culture, become academics and carry out academic research. For this reason, we submitted an application to the University, adopting a flexible approach: the degree name is still Chinese Ethnic Minority Language and Literacy but with the option of a Yi-English pathway [...] Taking the entrance exams for graduate school does not necessarily mean that one day you become a historical figure or a somebody, but it does offer an opportunity to improve Chinese proficiency and comprehension skills [...] 100% of our graduates are employed, so [employment] is not an issue. What I am anxious about is that these are 100% dead-end jobs. In that case, my ethnic group will have no future.

The reality remains, however, that relatively few students will proceed to graduate school. When asked how about the students who are not willing or able to take the entrance exams, the Dean was philosophical:

那就自己的命运自己把握。在大学里面，作为我个人，我不管是不是院长我都会这么去做，我是有使命、有责任的知识分子。即使我有一天不当院长了，我在上课的时候也会这么去要求他……但是，如果一个长辈提醒过他、教育过他、启蒙过他，他觉得无所谓，那我不可能随时成为他的保姆。所以那百分之七、八十这样一群人，你要让我负责到底不可能的。大家是相互选择。

Your fate is in [your] own hands [...] If an elder has reminded, educated and inspired a student and they still do not pay heed, you can't always be their baby-sitter. Therefore, it is impossible to ask me to be responsible for

the 70% to 80% students [who don't take the entrance exams]. Both sides have a choice.

Hence, from the very beginning, YEC programme priority was given to English rather than promoting proficiency in Yi or multilingualism and multiliteracy. Yet, on the other hand, the College has consistently emphasized the importance of language awareness and the mother tongue. As the Dean has said on many occasions, “放弃母语，就放弃尊严；拒绝外语，就拒绝未来 [To give up your mother tongue is to lose your dignity; to refuse a foreign language is to turn your back on the future]”. In a similar vein, Cummins (1986, pp. 25-26) suggests that when educators communicate to students in different ways “the minority language and culture are valued within the context of school”; even though the actual teaching of the language might be limited, this approach demonstrates the additive orientation of the educators.

The Dean had reconceptualised *multilingualism* and *multilingual education* in the Chinese context. He argued that any non-Yi language, whether Mandarin or English, helps students be open to learning and knowledge: “开放地办学 [to run a university in an open manner]” is seen as fundamental. Against this background, the Dean argued that the long-term significance of multilingual education in China was to broaden the horizons of minority students:

办英语不仅仅只是是一个培养高层次的问题，这些学生在学习和熟悉外国文化、多语种文化当中，会培养出他开放的胸襟，开阔的视野。他会学会宽容，学会对它文化的理解，学会包容别人，了解文明是多元的……[这是]现代知识分子或者现代的少数民族彝族知识分子一种基本的素养……如果没有得到一个这样的教育，那国家怎么办？未来的民族地区怎么办？他应该在大学里面感受过、教育过、启发过，这是我们的责任。不仅仅是让他吃饭，我们要让他成为一个文明人啊。

Running an English programme is not just about training talents at a higher level. While the students study and familiarize themselves with other cultures and multilingual cultures, they develop an open mind with a remarkable breadth of vision. They learn to accommodate and appreciate other cultures and people. They learn that civilization takes diverse forms [...] [These qualities] are essential for today's intellectuals, [including] today's minority intellectuals [...] Without such [multilingual] education, what future is there for the country? What's the future for ethnic minority regions? [...] Our responsibility is to provide [learning] experiences, to educate and inspire. We should not only enable them to make a living but also to become civilized human beings.

As Cummins (1986, p. 22) argues, school failure is unlikely to occur in minority groups that are “positively oriented” towards both their own and other cultures. Similarly, from the perspective of the College, the YEC programme goes beyond how well students master languages. As the Dean pointed out:

这些孩子收进来的时候他的分数达不到外国语学院学生的分数，这样一群孩子他也可以得到外国语学院老师的教育，你说这个是不是一个优势？这个叫真正的利用西南民族大学已有的资源来促进我们少数民族孩子来接受现代化教育。英语到底提高多少，实际上已经不重要了。重要的是我们已经充分利用了西南民族大学的资源来教育我们自己的孩子。

A group of young people who haven't achieved the basic pass mark of students at the College of Foreign Languages are [nonetheless] able to receive training from teachers at their college. Isn't this an advantage? This harnesses the resources available at SWUN to promote the modern education of our ethnic minority children. [Thus], the question of how their English proficiency can be improved, is actually no longer important. What matters is that we make the best use of the resources available to educate our own [ethnic group] children.

The focus of the YEC trilingual programme, then, is to offer minority students a positive experience of learning, because “[朝着]这样一个彝英方向办学以后我们的学生获得了一种自信 [running a programme involving Yi and English allows our students to develop confidence]”. This position, then, lies comfortably with the approach advocated by Cummins (1986, p. 23): “Students who are empowered by their schooled experiences develop the ability, confidence, and motivation to succeed academically”.

The Dean also highlighted other practical implications:

这个国家汉语是通用语，这些孩子出去以后第一个要面临生存。就业这块他不是靠彝语去就业，我 90% 的学生都是靠汉语去就业的，彝语可能就 10% [……] 我恨不得 100% 全开彝文。我们老师也用彝文来出书立书，那多好啊。但是出来以后怎么办呢？就业机会上哪去找？就业岗位上哪去找？

The common language in this country is Mandarin Chinese. Once these children leave the University, making a living is at the top of the list. On the employment front, they do not find a job through Yi. Ninety percent of my students make a living through Chinese and 10% people use Yi. I would like to offer 100% modules in Yi. So our teachers also write and publish books in Yi. Isn't that wonderful? But what's ahead upon graduation? Where can they look for employment opportunities? Where can they look for job vacancies?

According to the Dean, then, the programme has been shaped by considerations related to employment, societal commitment and ensuring a positive school experience of students. He was, however, clearly aware of the negative ‘*profile*’ perceived by his students and their parents prior to University. Yet, in his words, “That's history [那是历史]”:

Researcher: 学生来了后才说, 学校不是想象中那样, 如果早知道早就来了。那家长是不是也觉得, 不得已才送孩子读彝学学院呐?

Dean: 对啊, 有的人是没有地方可去了才来的。你想想看我在这, 是高调的在做, 而他们那是没有地方去了才去读彝学院[……]一个没有地方去了才送到我这的人, 我[却]要把他塑造成民族英雄。

Researcher: 这个也是你办学的一个障碍吧?

Dean: 那是最深远的障碍, 这些我都清楚。面对这样的障碍, 我奋力而往, 热情似火。

Researcher: Students responded that the College was different from what they imagined. If they had known the reality earlier, they might have joined the programme earlier. Then, is it true that to send children over to this College is also the last choice for [many] parents?

Dean: Yes. For some of them, they have nowhere [else] to enroll. So simply think about it: on the one hand, I am promoting this kind of programme vigorously; on the other hand, CYS is [the applicants'] last choice. A student, who can't be admitted anywhere else, is passed on to me [by the family]. Yet, I am expected to cultivate him or her into a hero of the ethnic group.

Researcher: This is one of the barriers in delivering the programme, isn't it?

Dean: This is the most far-reaching and challenging barrier. I am aware of this yet in the face of these barriers, I carry on enthusiastically.

The Dean's observations, then, point to pre-existing factors, such as students' and parents' preconceptions of the College, which policy makers at national level seem not to take into consideration.

I will look next at the reflections of students (for teachers', see Chapter Five), drawing attention, where relevant, to those that support or challenge the views of the Dean.

Student perspectives

Baker (1992, p. 77) suggests that when we make statements such as ‘Language A is easier to learn than Language B’ or ‘I would rather spend more time on learning Language C’, there is a suggestion of “a subtractive view” of bilingualism and multilingualism, which implies that we learn some languages at the expense of others. This approach, however, presents a partial picture of bilingualism and multilingualism. Baker argues rather that languages can “co-exist in a positive, helpful and mutually reciprocating beneficial manner” (Baker, 1992). Thus, in the following discussion, instead of looking at each language as if they were separate entities, I will focus more closely on students’ attitudes to the integrated trilingual programme, an issue which is distinct from their attitudes to the component languages (Baker, 1992). I will also focus more on factors involved in the dynamic interactions between Yi, Chinese and English, and between teaching and learning. This is of particular importance to the participants under study because so many Model II Yi students in the YEC programme are embarking on a critical journey: the acquisition of either Yi or English and the move from bilingualism (Chinese-English) to trilingualism (Chinese-English-Yi), from natural exposure or informal learning of Yi to formal learning, from teaching styles associated with students’ local communities, minority villages or regions and local minority cultures to those associated more with mainstream society and Han culture in a Han-dominated metropolis.

I will start by discussing students’ overall impressions of the course before looking at specific aspects of their experience.

Overall impressions

In general, Yi students report positive experiences both academically and in terms of their linguistic and ethnic identity. This has been a clear advantage of the trilingual programme given that there are many ethnic minority students in China whose experiences at tertiary level can be considered as “detrimental to their

academic and even personality development” (Feng, 2009b, p. 289). Although students recognized the challenges of learning three languages simultaneously, their overall attitudes towards bi/trilingual education are positive and favourable.

They acknowledged its advantages from three main perspectives. The first and most important perspective is empowerment. As Liberali (2013, p. 233) argues, “[Bi-/trilingual] education is more than simply learning a different language fluently”. It engages students as individuals, groups and communities in communicating in the world outside at the same time as maintaining their own ethnic identity (Baker, 2011).

Student Xiao Jun: 比其他同学多一门自己会的语言。到不同的地方去，遇到不同的人，他们也会用不同的语言交流，[那样]在和人交流上有优势。

Student Xiao Jun: Compared with other [non-ethnic minority] students, I know one more language, i.e. my own [mother tongue]. When visiting different places and meeting different people who would communicate through different languages, I will thus have my own advantages in communication.

Student Xiao Fang: 最有意义就是和外国人说话。因为以前学英语的时候都没有和外国人说过话，就想说学这个专业看看能不能说。后来和他们说话，发现他们还是能听懂，就觉得还不错。

Student Xiao Fang: The most important aspect [of the programme to me] is that it enables me to communicate with foreigners. In the past, I never spoke to foreigners when I learned English. I [was thus wondering] whether the programme will enable me to do this [one day]. Then later, when I found that they can understand me when I talk, I felt this was great.

The second perspective concerns the effects of bi/trilingualism on metalinguistic and cultural awareness. Most of the students interviewed strongly agreed that their

awareness of linguistic and cultural aspects of their own ethnicity had developed through participation in the programme. But it is worth noting that this awareness was achieved not only through the study of their mother tongue *per se* but also through comparison between *my* culture and *my* language with other examples of linguistic and cultural diversity. As Moura (2009, noted in Liberali, 2013, p. 233) argues, bi/multilingual education:

open[s] learners' minds to a variety of ways of perceiving and understanding the world, developing a number of different strategies to live with others, and knowing, respecting and appreciating diverse cultural sceneries.

Students demonstrated the “attention” necessary to reflect on their language learning journey (Bialystok, 2001, pp. 126-127).

Student Labu: [学习几门语言对学习]还是有帮助的，因为多学一门外语，思维会更开阔。

Student Labu: Learning several languages is helpful [to academic study] because learning one more language, broadens the way I think.

Student Azhi: 很多东西它是相通的。不管是英语还是彝语，它有时候在发音和意义上不是说完全一致，但是相通的……会的语言多了，你反而会觉得学起来很感兴趣。

Student Azhi: Much knowledge is interrelated, no matter whether it is English or Yi. Sometimes, they are different in pronunciations and meanings, but they are linked. The more languages you know, the more interesting you feel learning is.

Student Xiao Jun: 我觉得我们这样一个彝英双语班级，可以通过对两种语言进行的对比[来学习]……

Student Xiao Jun: I feel, in a Yi-English bilingual programme like ours, we can learn through a comparison of two languages [...]

These comments clearly indicate the additive benefits of multilingualism on students' metalinguistic awareness through a focus on the forms of languages rather than their meanings (Edwards, 2009b). L3 learning can also enrich students' L1 in the process.

The final perspective relates to cognitive development (Cenoz, 2003). In the interviews, some students provided evidence that the multilingual programme also had repercussions for their cognitive development.

Student Li Ping: 优势就是几种语言能运用自如，和家里人能说彝语，和外面的人能说汉语。

Researcher: 这个带给我们学习上什么样的帮助？

Student Li Ping: 这 [让我们变得]很灵活，思维方式转换特别快。

Student Li Ping: The advantage is that we can manipulate several languages without much difficulty. We can speak Yi with the family, and Han Chinese with people outside.

Researcher: What effects can this have on our study?

Student Li Ping: This makes us flexible and able to switch into a different way of thinking quickly.

Student A Hai: 比如说，某一个汉语的词汇，你并不知道其真正的意思，但在用另外一个语言来解释这个东西的时候，你会理解的更透彻，这一点我是有很深刻的感受……关于认知那些东西真的是很重要。我要通过像学英语那样，花一两个月时间，一个词一个词地去背彝语……我觉得学会了一种东西再去转化为另一种东西，这种感受真是太神奇了。

Student A Hai: For example, you don't really understand the meaning of a Chinese character. But when you try to explain it in another language, you have a more thorough understanding. I personally feel very strongly about this [...] Cognition is really very important. I will spend one to two months learning Yi the same way as I learned English. I will memorize words one by one [...] I feel when I learn one thing, I can use and transfer the learning experience to learn something else. That experience is so marvelous.

However, as is the case for any learner, minority students have plans and expectations; when these are not fulfilled, they become frustrated. A sense of frustration was, in fact, observable throughout the interviews among both Model I and Model II students. Although students acknowledged that the programme advocates multilingualism and multiliteracy, approximately half considered that its commitment to multilingual education, in practice, was weak. Particular concern was expressed by some students about the limited importance of Yi:

Student Age: 我想要来这个学校加强彝语，但没有达到预期的目标。学院说的要重视，但是在做的时候也让我们会有重视不起来的感受。

Student Age: I enrolled in this University to enhance my Yi proficiency which has not been achieved [...The College] claims to attach importance to it, but in reality the implementation doesn't really impress us.

Student Musha: 我就是真的想说没有，他完全没有给予足够的重视。

Student Musha: I just want to say "No". [The College] is absolutely not [committed enough].

In contrast, other students focused on the utilitarian value of Yi and agreed with the College that too much emphasis on Yi would not necessarily contribute to their career development.

Student Zisa: 这个课实用性不强……我们这个专业，限制专业公务员我们就不能考。

Student Zisa: The programme is not practical [...] Graduates from our major cannot apply for some competitive civil service exams.

Student A Ti: 我觉得劣势的话不是说这个学校，而是我们是一个很冷门的专业，只能针对像和我们本民族有关的工作才有用，其他工作可能都不太会接受这种二本文凭。

Student A Ti: I feel that in terms of the disadvantages, it's not about the University but our own unpopular programme. It can only be of help in jobs related to our ethnic group. The chances of other employers recruiting graduates with this kind of degree from a second-grade university are very slim.

In addition, many students stressed that, from their perspective, the College was attaching disproportionate importance to graduate school entrance exams although the percentage of students who actually take the exam is very small.

Student A Ge: 学院有个想法就是先把学历提上去。等学历上去后再等你回来教彝文。比如说先让你考研，再去考博。不一定要研究彝族方向，就算研究也是用汉语研究。

Researcher: 为什么，人人都考研？

Student A Ge: 不考研就无法生存了。

Student A Ge: What the College plans to do is to raise the overall levels of qualification first. Once you get a higher qualification, you can even come back [to the College] and teach Yi. For example, [the College] would like to encourage you to take entrance exams for a master's programme and then a doctorate programme. Your research does not have to be bound to Yi-related area and you can also do research through the medium of Chinese.

Researcher: Why? Will everyone take graduate entrance exams?

Student A Ge: It's hard to survive [in job market] without studying at graduate school.

Students thus exhibited mixed feelings both about their learning journey and their future upon graduation. As a result many felt they had to lower their expectations of Yi and abandon their original reasons for joining the programme - being a competent bilingual in both Yi and English.

Programme evaluation

Having looked at bi-multilingual education at a conceptual level, I now consider student evaluations at the level of programme delivery. In the following discussion, the '*Continua of Multilingual Education*' proposed by Cenoz (2009, pp. 39, 56) will be used as a tool to "see the different degrees of multilingualism [...] without establishing closed categories and hard boundaries" (see Chapter Two). Since the linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of this model, as well as the University context, have been considered in Chapter Four, I will focus here on the continua of educational variables at the heart of the programme, i.e. *subject, language of instruction* and *teachers*; the last of these – teachers, aspects of which were considered in Chapter Five – will be integrated with the discussion of language of instruction.

Subject (or course)

Subject refers to the language subjects in the curriculum (Cenoz, 2009). Gorter and Cenoz (2011, noted in Cenoz, 2012a, p. 43) present (see Figure 7.1) the possibilities for educational programmes for minority languages as a continuum with the use of the minority language as the main MoI at one end and no minority language provision at all at the other.

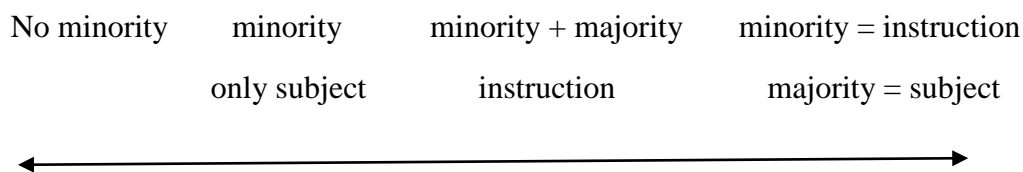


Figure 7.1: Role of minority language in education

In higher education, the discussion is around *courses* rather than *subjects* (Cenoz, 2012, noted in Fortanet-Gómez, 2013). As outlined above, in the YEC curriculum the three language modules involved in the curriculum are Mandarin Chinese, Yi and English. Of these, Yi is studied as a subject and used occasionally as the MoI. Yi and Chinese form the focus for two modules – in the case of Chinese, L2, they are *Modern Chinese language* and *Chinese Language*; and, in the case of Yi, L1, *Modern Yi Language* and *Linguistics of Yi*. Nonetheless, only one of the two modules (in both Yi and Chinese) runs in either the first year or the second year. In contrast, English language, L3, is accorded more importance than L1 and L2, and studied more systematically across three years and each of the four language skills is treated in separate modules (see Table 5.2).

Reflections on Chinese courses

Participants expressed a range of concerns in relation to this imbalance. First, they were aware that a good command of Chinese has important social and economic implications both for daily life and for future career development. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, few expressed a strong interest in learning Mandarin Chinese or requested additional modules on Chinese. On the contrary, their responses tended to suggest that there was too much emphasis on Chinese Han literature and culture.

Student Shier: 学院的（课程设置）就是汉语的东西比较多，我们选修的那些几乎全部都是汉语，然后最后的结局就是汉语最多。反而，我们要学的彝英又很少。

Student Shier: There are many Chinese-related courses in our syllabus. The majority of our optional modules are about/in Chinese. As a result, [we] have many Chinese courses. In contrast, there are few choices of Yi and English related subjects which are actually what we need to learn.

Student Kebu: 汉族文化我们从小到大见识的太多太多。

Student Kebu: We have been exposed to too much Han culture since we were young.

These comments suggest that students could not see the need to extend their Chinese learning further in the programme.

Reflections on Yi courses

Students reported a range of concerns related to the relative importance attached to Yi, L1. Some were unhappy that Yi learning was not placed in the heart of teaching and learning, pointing out that this had repercussions for language assessment.

Student Kebu: 课程我感觉合适，就是下来之后我们同学不太重视，老师也不会太要求我们怎么去背、去写，或者是在课堂上怎么用彝语表达，或者是下来用彝语交流啊，他们都不太会要求。

Researcher: 也就是说老师可以再严格一点是吗？

Student Kebu: 对。

Researcher: 在评估方面，考核再严格一些，这样可以督促你学习，是这个意思吗？

Student Kebu: 对，就是不会把我们的民族语言放在很高的位置，和其他课程是一样的很平等。

Student Kebu: Regarding the [number of Yi] courses, I find it adequate. The thing is that we students do not give much attention to [Yi language] after class. Neither do teachers who don't ask us to recite, to write, or to

speak in Yi in class, or to communicate in Yi after school. They have low expectation.

Researcher: Are you suggesting that teachers could have been stricter?

Student Kebu: Yes.

Researcher: And in terms of assessment, if they had been stricter it would push you to work harder. Is this what you mean?

Student Kebu: Yes. It is simply that [the College] does not really prioritize Yi learning to give it the same weight as other [non-language] modules.

Other students, however, reflected on the situation from the perspective of policy makers:

Student Zigui: 我的理解是，老师们希望我们彝族能够在各行各业、各个方面有优秀的人才，不仅仅是文化这一块。

Student Wang Jun: 老师希望首先让大家都知道彝族这个民族，才能发展这个文化……如果你没到这个层次，无论你怎么发展文化，都没有人会看到。我觉得老师的想法可能是这样的。

Student Zigui: My understanding is that teachers want the Yi to excel and be experts in different areas, not just in [Yi] culture.

Student Wang Jun: They want people to know about the Yi, as an ethnic group, first before we develop our culture [...] If you have not reached this level, no matter how much you develop the culture, nobody will be aware of it. I think that's what the teachers think.

While students' attitudes varied a great deal, there was nonetheless consensus that the numbers of learning hours devoted to Yi are too few, and that there should have been more modules. This response is consistent with the concerns of CYS teachers' discussed in Chapter Five. In 2014, as already mentioned, just one module was offered in the first year for four sessions per week. Students from the 3rd and 4th year seemed to have particularly strong feelings on this aspect of the programme:

Student Er Cong: 本来我们是彝英专业，整得后来也没有学到彝语。就大一的时候学了一会儿，就没有了。彝语专业（的英语）本来也不是外国语学院英语（水平），整来四不像了。老师初衷可能是很好的，但实施起来的时候就没有去做我个人觉得，彝语我是希望再多学一点的……我希望在大一，大二，大三……都有彝文这个课程。

Student Er Cong: Primarily, we are Yi-English majors. But at the end of the day, we learned little about Yi. It was taught for such a short while and only in the first year, then there was no more. The English level in the programme is not the same as in the College of Foreign Languages, either. So we are good at nothing. Maybe teachers' initial ideas are good but when it comes to implementation, nobody makes it happen. I personally hope to learn more about Yi. I hope it can be taught in the first, second and the third year.

Student Xiaoying: 当时我觉得彝英双语专业主要是学彝语和英语，结果当大家说彝语只学一年的时候，我就觉得有点懵了。学英语的话，没什么目的，就是和外国人说话。这个已经实现了。学彝语，本来想的是通过大学四年下来，不是说要特别精通，至少能拿个及格什么的。但是没想到课程只开一年，而且彝语课量又不是特别多。

Student Xiaoying: In the past, I thought the Yi-English programme would focus on Yi and English. Then later when everybody said [we would] only learn Yi for one year, I felt overwhelmed. [I] learn English for no other purpose other than communication and this has been achieved. But my original plan in studying Yi was that after four years of study, I would at least be able to pass exams even if I wasn't [particularly] proficient. The fact that the course ran only for one year was totally beyond my expectations, [let alone the fact that] the teaching sessions were so few.

Significantly, the small number of students who had achieved at least an elementary or even intermediate level of Yi prior to starting at University reported that they found the learning of Yi rewarding, just as one of them commented:

Student Yiga: 我觉得我还是学到了很多, 因为我是有功底的, 就是会读会写, 所以彝语是学到了一点的。

Student Yiga: Still I feel that I have learned a lot [about Yi in the programme] because I had some basic knowledge [of Yi] and I could read and write [upon enrollment]. So, I have been able to learn more about Yi.

The experience of these students, then, provides support for Krashen (1982, 2015) *comprehensible* input which predicts that learners make greatest progress in their acquisition when their understanding of language input is slightly more advanced than their current level. However, the number of students who benefited in this way is very small. Typical comments from students who arrived with less competence in Yi included: “我觉得开这个课程好像只是为了对付 [I feel that offering Yi as a course is a perfunctory move]”. Most students in fact expressed a lack of confidence and low self-efficacy in Yi, perceptions likely to promote anxiety and consequently affect achievement. The following conversation can be seen as an illustration of their worries.

Student Yang Xiao: 关键是之前像我们二类模式学生从没接触过 [彝文] 。

Student Shibu: 所以你一来就跟我们讲 [标准] 母语, 因为我们也来自不同的方言区, 像我是来自阿杜的, 我没办法懂。一来就教我那么快, 又是很短就一年。

Student Yang Xiao: The point is that Model II students like us never have any contact with [Yi written language].

Student Shibu: You started with standard Yi right away, but we are from regions with different [Yi] varieties. For example, I myself am from A Du. I

could not understand [what teachers said] at all. The pace of delivery is also so fast and the learning time is just a short year.

Student Yiga: 每次上课的时候听老师讲课需要一半的时间来猜他讲的是什么，不是不想听，是有时候根本就听不懂，有时候比较困难。

Student Yiga: Every time half of the class is spent on guessing what teachers are talking about. It is not that I do not want to listen but sometimes I don't understand it at all, which is difficult.

In contrast, the majority of Model I students did not express concerns regarding the limited number of Yi language courses, in general reporting that they found the Yi modules easy, thus allowing them to spend more time and energy on Chinese or English learning. At the same time they felt that, because the content of the Yi modules was very basic, they were not being fully stretched. For instance, when asked whether they thought the Yi teaching was responding to their needs, one student commented:

Student Er Fu: 很多时候，毕竟一个大班嘛，我觉得老师基本上没有怎么顾及到一类模式这几个……因为比如[老师]在教一些日常用语，然后文字之类的，我们基本上都会读，会写。但他就经常，比如很基本的一节课，都要重复可能上一个星期……我们已经懂了，然后做其它的又不行，坐在那里,就这样。

Student Er Fu: After all, the class sizes are big. Most of time, I feel that the teacher pays hardly any attention to Model I students like us [...] Because, for instance, when the teacher teaches everyday [Yi] language or scripts which we are more or less able to write and read. Yet they often review almost a week's content, even if it has been a very basic session [...] We have mastered [the content] but we are not allowed to do other things [in class]. So we just sit there, without a thought.

This is just one voice. Two other Model I students, in contrast, reported that they found the Yi learning as challenging as Model II students, no doubt because, as discussed earlier in Chapter Five, some students had transferred from the Model II to Model I scheme at a very late stage in secondary education. Their Yi competency consequently remains low.

Reflections on English courses

While most students acknowledged the importance attached to English, some expressed the view that the very heavy emphasis in the distribution of course had the effect of failing to meet the educational goals of the College. As one student remarked, “我觉得我们这个专业应该突出我们的专业特色，主要抓彝语和英语 [I think, we should highlight the [main] characteristics of our programme by putting more effort into Yi and English]”. As we will see in the discussion of languages of instruction below, individual responses to the challenges of learning English varied considerably, with some students clearly experiencing difficulties and for a range of reasons. Interestingly, a small number of students accepted some responsibility for the situation: they felt that they had not worked hard enough or were not good enough to apply for graduate school as advocated by the College, a goal which in many cases they did not share.

Most discussions of bilingual programmes centre on what happens inside the classroom; extracurricular activities, however, also play a role. Student comments on *the Annual Sino-American Cultural Exchange Month*, where English was used extensively, offered interesting insights on their attitudes to learning the language. Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1994, p. 422) argue that in a multiethnic context, positive attitudes orient the individual to seek contact with the members of the target language community and, when the contact is “relatively frequent and pleasant”, self-confidence develops. Students, who attended the event, offered support for this argument.

Student Aga: 参加这次活动给我最大的感触是从他们身上学到的就是各个方面要变得自信，这是第一点。第二个方面其实英语口语不难，它要比中国的应试教育简单的多。是我们刚开始接触的时候想得太复杂了。所以我们第一次跟他们交流的时候，是有很多想要说的话但说不出口。现在慢慢也有提高了，也在慢慢观察他们的发音是怎样的……我们 [和美国学生] 是在玩，其实他们每天都在很系统地整理自己的一些感受和笔记。所以我觉得自己学习不要有惰性，要坚持下去。

Student Aga: My strongest feeling on participating in the event is that I learned from my [American peers] how to be confident in all aspects of life. This is the first achievement. Second, spoken English is actually not that difficult. It is much easier than China's test-oriented learning. Initially we felt it was too complicated. Thus, when we wanted to communicate with them at beginning, we had a lot to talk about but we could not say it [in English]. Now gradually we are improving. We are also learning to observe how they pronounce [things], etc. [...] We [and American students] are having fun but [we noticed] that they are actually doing some serious learning everyday such as tidying up their notes. So, I think I should not be lazy in my own study either. I need to persist.

Students' reports thus attest to the value of contact with other languages both within and outside curriculum, whether "oral or written, formal or informal, context-embedded or context-reduced, low or high in cognitive demand, and interactive or non-interactive" (Landry & Allard, 1992, p. 227). Positive attitudes to extracurricular experiences with English thus have the potential to influence classroom behaviour and achievement (Clément et al., 1994) not only in language learning but also in content subject learning.

Language of instruction

Cenoz (2009, p. 36) asserts that two features are involved in decisions about the language of instruction:

(1) the use of different languages as languages of instruction [...] (2) their integration in syllabus design and language planning (coordination between teachers and syllabuses of different languages).

In the discussion which follows, I report first on the views of teachers and then on student perspectives. Finally I look at other influences on student preferences for the medium of instruction.

Teacher views

The majority of the academic staff involved in the programme, both Chinese and Yi, use Mandarin Chinese as the primary language of instruction for most of the courses they taught. There are two main reasons. First, Han teachers feel most confident about Mandarin Chinese, which is also the official national language assumed to be understood by most students. It is thus inevitable that it should be used as the primary or sole MoI for content subjects. Second, although Yi teachers from the CYS usually have a very good command of Yi, their perception of the low Yi competence of students leads them to believe that it would be problematic if the mother tongue was used as the primary or sole MoI. CYS staff, who are in the main teachers of subjects other than language(s), seemed to place greater stress on the causal relationship between low language proficiency and the MoI. As one teacher commented: “如果我们只用彝语，有些孩子可能一句都听不懂 [If we only use Yi, some students might understand nothing]”.

Most Yi teachers therefore use Mandarin Chinese to ensure comprehensible input, adopting Yi in class only occasionally. Students' self-reports are consistent with my observations of their classes: in most Yi or Yi-related courses, other than *Yi Mottos and Proverbs* and *Modern Yi Language*, Yi academic staff tended to use Chinese as the primary medium of instruction.

Staff from CFL involved in English teaching expressed similar reservations about the use of English. They also highlighted the complexity of the situation.

张老师：看你上的哪一门课程了，像做翻译肯定不可以。我是做基础英语，内容尽量在简化，[用英语]是能接受的……但是讲语法的时候用汉语多一点。我讲语法的时候还是要借用汉语。

谢老师：我原来也用过，不过我一看他们的表情，算了吧。你不能把他们当做英语专业的学生。降低难度，打好基础。

冯老师：是，因材施教。看纵向也看横向，只要在原来基础上有进步就行。每个学生要求不能一样。

文老师：大多数时候我不太愿意用汉语，但是在他们不能明白一些术语或者他们完全不懂这句话或我觉得完全没有其它办法，我只有用汉语让他们听明白。

Ms. Zhang: It depends on the course. If it is a translation course, it clearly cannot be [English]. But my own course is *Basic English* and I have been trying to simplify the content as well. In that case, English [as the primary MoI] is acceptable. If it is about grammar, more Chinese will be used which is [also] my situation. I still have to use Chinese as a medium for teaching grammar.

Ms. Xie: I tried [using English] before. But when I saw their uncomfortable responses, I gave up. You cannot treat them like [Han] English majors. The [priority] is to lower the standard in the interests of a good foundation of knowledge.

Mr. Feng: Yes, teach accordingly. Compare them with peers in the programme as well as those from CFL. We can choose either language, [English or Chinese] as long as they make some progress. The requirements will vary according to individual students.

Ms Wen: Under most circumstances, I am reluctant to use Chinese. But, when they can't understand certain terms, when they really can't understand

a particular sentence or when I have tried all other means, I have to speak Chinese in order to help them understand.

The extracts above suggest that the approaches of CYS and CFL staff to the language of instruction vary according to their teaching aims: in most Yi-related courses taught by CYS staff, with the exception of the Yi language course, teachers tend to focus more on content, while, as Marsh (2008) observes, in the English-related languages courses taught by CFL staff, “regardless of what is done within the lesson, language learning is the main aim” (p. 237). However, as ESL learners and teachers themselves, CFL staff were seen to have “explicit knowledge about language, and *conscious perception and sensitivity* [my italics] in language learning, language teaching and language use” (Association of Language Awareness).

For teachers from both Colleges, the common practice was to lower the course standards. As I observed the class on *English Writing*, the teacher spoke to the class in the following terms: “对你们要求已经很低了，一学期才两篇作文。外国语学院英语专业是一周一篇 [The requirements have been set very low for you already. There are only two writing assignments per term. For English majors at the College of Foreign Language, it is one per week]”. In speaking thus, teachers are, of course, asserting their low expectations and risk further marginalizing Yi students. As Sunuodula and Cao (2015, p. 94) argue, “If minority groups are expected to be structurally integrated into mainstream society, which is a widely-acknowledged political objective [in China], it is then misguided and erroneous to make formal requests for lowering the English curriculum standards”.

Student views

Students seemed to hold a more open attitude towards the language of instruction and did not adhere to the view that only languages in which they are proficient should be used. Many believed that when teaching a language-related subject, the language in question should be the primary MoI, while, in general, Mandarin

Chinese should be used for content subjects, though some degree of Yi use would be expected from Yi teachers. The following comments were typical:

Researcher: 上课的时候希望老师用哪种语言?

Student Wang Jun: 看专业。

Student Yiga: 看教什么, 就使用什么语言最好。

Student Lasa: 彝族老师还是偶尔来点彝语。

Researcher: What is your ideal language of instruction?

Student Wang Jun: It depends on the teaching area.

Student Yiga: It depends on what the subject is about. Then you use the relevant language.

Student Lasa: It's better to have some Yi from Yi teachers.

Student Shibu: 关于英语的就用英语讲, 关于彝语的就用彝语讲。

Researcher: 如果是其他非语言类的学科呢?

Student Shibu: 就还是普通话。这样比较好接受一点, 因为虽然都是学彝语, 但有的同学像我就彝语很差, 基本上听不懂, 如果他用彝语讲我就完蛋了。

Student Yiha: 也可以穿插。比如说是我们上一些关于彝族的传统文化, 讲那些故事的时候可以用彝语, 比如说像史布, 不是全都听得懂的, 可以用汉语再进行解释。

Student Shibu: If the [subject] is about English, then use English; if Yi, then Yi can be used.

Researcher: How about other content subjects?

Student Shibu: It's better to use Chinese then, which makes me feel more comfortable. Because, although we major in Yi, some students like myself are very poor at Yi. [We] understand little. If [the teacher] uses Yi [as the instruction language], I am lost.

Student Yiha: These languages can be integrated. For example, in subjects related to Yi culture and tradition, Yi can be used to tell stories. If students like Shibu can't understand completely, then teachers can explain further in Chinese.

Koch and Terrell (1991, noted in Horwitz, 2001, p. 118) argue that there is great variability in learners' reactions to the languages used classroom activities: "In almost all cases, any task which was judged 'comfortable' by some language learners was also judged 'stressful' by others". The present study offers support for this argument: while some Model II students, usually those who are good at Yi, admitted that they feel closer to the speaker when their mother tongue is used in class – in one student's words "也算一种享受 [It's such enjoyment]". Others made frequent reference to their concerns about their weak proficiency in the language of instruction.

Student Muga: 不能总是用彝语来上，又不是一类模式。

Student Zigui: 有些东西用彝语解释不出来。

Student Zihei: 我觉得彝语夹杂汉语是最好的。

Student Muga: 有些词汇比较难，大多数同学都听不懂。虽然用彝语要地道些，但我们班差不多有百分之二十的人对彝语不是很精通，听起来会很费劲。

Student Zihei: 对，很费劲。有些词汇用彝语说出来，大多数人就完全听不懂。

Student Muga: Yi cannot always be the main medium of instruction. This is not Model I.

Student Zigui: There are some ideas which can't be interpreted in Yi.

Student Zihei: I think the best is to use a mixture of Yi and Chinese.

Student Muga: Some [Yi] vocabulary is very obscure. Most of my peers do not understand. Although it is more authentic to use Yi as [the language of

instruction], there's about 20% of the people in our class who are not good at Yi. It is a huge effort to understand.

Student Zihei: Very hard indeed. Most people will not understand some of the vocabulary in Yi.

In contrast, Model I students, who have reached at least an intermediate level of competence in Yi prior to University, felt comfortable about the use of Yi in any domain. They admitted in fact that their learning journey would have been smoother if Yi has been the primary MoI for learning. Nonetheless, because of the instrumental motivation discussed above, they expressed hesitation about a Yi-dominated classroom.

Student Zisa: 如果问我的话, 我肯定希望用彝语。但这是肯定不可能的, 因为我们彝族的市场太小了, 中国就是以汉语为主。如果我们汉语太差, 那我们就没有生存下去的能力。为了生存, 用汉语讲是必须的。如果问我内心的想法, 用彝语, 我们会比较容易接受。

Student A La: 长远的来看, 如果只用彝语, 都不说汉语, 那我们怎么来把自己的文化表达出来呢?

Student Zisa: If I was asked, I would definitely hope that Yi could be used. However, this is impossible. Because the market for Yi is too small. In China, it is still Han Chinese [Mandarin] which plays the main role. If our Chinese is too poor, then we will not be able to make a living. If we are to make a living, Han Chinese [Mandarin] must be used for teaching. [But] if you really want to know what I feel in my heart, Yi is easier for us to understand.

Student A La: In the long term, if Yi is the only language used and Chinese is not spoken, how could we talk about our own culture?

Interestingly, here, students were not only expressing their instrumental motivation in relation to language learning but were also making sense of their multilingual worlds, i.e. *translanguaging* (see Chapter Two), the process by which one receives

information in one language and gives information in another. As Garcia (2009) and Li (2016) argue, *translanguaging* goes beyond and also challenges the boundaries of languages. For instance, the situation perceived by Student A La is that although they greatly value Yi, Mandarin serves as a vehicle through which knowledge of Yi and Yi-related culture is shared with a wider population. This process of making sense of individual languages explicitly highlights one of the challenges observed by Li (2016, p. 5):

language learners or users increasingly find themselves having to deal with the question of how to express one's cultural values through a language, or languages, that is/are traditionally associated with the Other or Others.

For this reason, it can be argued that teachers need to take into account factors such as students' language practices and integrate this understanding into day-to-day teaching and the curriculum (Li, 2016).

Another reason affecting Model I students' preferences as regards the language of instruction might lie in their poorer Chinese competence relative to that of Model II students. As reflected in self-assessments and focus group discussions, Model I students' average level of Chinese is lower than that of Model II students. Typical comments included:

Student Heiga: 学习彝语可能比较自信一点, 其它[科目]基础可能会比“二类模式”差些。

Researcher: 你是怎么觉得这个差距与“一类模式”还有“二类模式”相关的?

Student Heiga: 因为教学的条件就不一样。“一类模式”学校和“二类模式”学校差别还是有的。

Student Rihei: 反正就感觉大一的时候学习普通话比较难, 现在也说得不好。因为在彝语里面没有鼻音。我们“一类模式”班级也一般没有

汉族同学，我们平时交流都是用彝语，所以进入大学学习普通话觉得还是挺有难度的。

Student Heiga: [We] may feel more confident in Yi learning. Other subjects' performance might be poorer than Model II students.

Researcher: How do you perceive the gap is related to the different pathways of Model I and Model II?

Student Heiga: [First of all], it is because that the school conditions under the two schemes are ultimately different. Model I schools are certainly different from Model II schools.

Student Rihei: It was simply felt difficult to speak Mandarin Chinese in the 1st year. It is still not good now. There is no nasal sound in Yi. Besides, in our Model I class, there was no Han student usually. We usually spoke in Yi. Thus, after joining the University, there is still difficulty in learning Mandarin.

The linguistic situation of many Model II students, however, is more complex. Their predicament is that their language proficiency in both Yi and Chinese was weak when they entered the University: on the one hand, some had never left the Yi community and so had little contact with the Han group speaking Mandarin; on the other hand, others came from regions, such as Xichang, where Chinese was dominant both inside and outside the school (Zhang, 2014). As Model II students, they had never studied Yi in formal domains. They consequently had to struggle with mother tongue acquisition when studying it at tertiary level.

It is worth noting, however, that after joining the programme, both Model I and Model II students gained exposure to Chinese both in and outside class, thus acting as a catalyst for improving their Chinese competence. This degree of exposure is such that students therefore do not call for more use of Chinese in class. Conversely, there was some but not sufficient, Yi exposure, especially in relation to academic language. Even though all students and most staff in the College are Yi and the Yi ethnolinguistic vitality is medium-high within the University (see

Chapter Four), Model I students reported that their achievement in Yi was not significant while Model II students reported great difficulties in understanding and learning Yi.

Thus, feelings about using Yi as the primary MoI were mixed: predictably, those with higher levels of competence in the language reported feeling comfortable with its use as the main medium of instruction; those with lower levels of competence were worried about their ability to understand the content. Many students also expressed concerns that the overuse of Yi might be at the expense of Chinese. In contrast, most felt completely different about English. Although a few worried about issues of comprehensible input, many students from both groups suggested that, if possible, English should be used as the main and even the sole medium of instruction for English courses.

Student Kebu: 如果可能的话所有都用英文是最好的……因为，在汉语、英语、彝语这三门当中，论水平能够[达到]跟外国人交流或者表达自己，最困难的就是用英语。

Student Kebu: If possible, it's better to use English as an [MoI] as much as possible. Because, among the three languages – Chinese, English and Yi – in terms of reaching a level which enables us to communicate with members of the target group or express ourselves, English is the most challenging.

Student Xiaohua: 如果是我们学院的老师，我希望用彝语；汉族老师就用汉语；上英语课就用英语，就不管听听不懂，还是希望用全程都说英语。

Student Xiaohua: If the teacher is from our College, I hope s/he can use Yi; Han teachers use Chinese; in English subjects, only English is used regardless of whether [students] can understand or not. I hope the whole class can be taught in English.

Hence, despite the low levels of English competence, students tended to report less anxiety when teachers used English as the primary MoI.

Other influences on student responses

The following conversation may have a bearing on student perspective on the medium of instruction:

Researcher: 李老师教你们英语, 课上用英语比较多是吧?

Students (齐): 对。

Researcher: 听得懂吗?

Student Shibu: 很喜欢李老师。

Student Xiaojun: 特别喜欢他。

Student Gongguo: 大部分都听得懂, 只要(没牵涉到类似古老的彝族寓言或神话)

Student Shibu: 而且李老师语速比较慢, 会照顾我们, 有些生词他会解释。

Researcher: Mr. Li is your English teacher and uses English quite a lot in class, right?

Students (all): Yes

Researcher: Can you understand him?

Student Shibu: [I] like him very much

Student Xiaojun: Extremely fond of him.

Student Gongguo: [I] can understand most content as long as it is not too complex (involving Yi fables or myth)

Student Shibu: Besides, Mr. Li speaks it at a slow pace. He shows concern for us and when there is any new vocabulary, he explains.

I sat in Mr. Li's classes twice. English was indeed the primary medium of instruction in his teaching. In a 45-minute-long session, he spoke just a few words in Chinese. The class was also very interactive. All the students interviewed who had attended his classes reported that their learning experiences were enjoyable and

rewarding and that there were few communication problems. Similar reactions were noted for some of the other teachers who used English as the primary medium of instruction in their classes, and also placed great emphasis on interaction. Compared with Yi, there was less anxiety and fewer concerns from students regarding their weak proficiency when English was used as the primary MoI. On the contrary, most students called for more use of English in the classroom.

Thus, it may be worth considering whether or not there is a real causal relationship between poor language proficiency and unsuccessful communication between teachers and students in class. Cummins (2001, p. 144) argues that “not all aspects of language proficiency are related to academic achievement”. While language exposure is essential, “equally or more important, is the extent to which students are capable of understanding the academic input to which they are exposed” (Cummins & Swain, 1986, p. 80). The difference between BICS and CALP comes to the fore again (Cummins, 1982). In other words, students tend to achieve their communication goals when more “situational and paralinguistic (e.g. intonation, gestures, etc.) cues” (Cummins, 2001, p. 145) are available. Students’ different responses to English medium of instruction, with its more communicative techniques, and Yi medium of instruction clearly support this argument and highlight the importance of the contextual factors involved in learning achievement, including teaching methodology. For example, Cummins (2000, p. 175) also argues that

[...] students whose academic proficiency in the language of instruction is relatively weak will tend to fall further and further behind unless the instruction they receive enables them to comprehend the input (both written and oral) and participate academically in class.

Thus teachers need to offer students *scaffolding* to understand activities. But in addition, “the help and friendship the teacher shows toward students; how much the teacher talks openly with students, trusts them, and is interested in their ideas” (Trickett & Moos, 1995, noted in Horwitz, 2001, p. 119) also needs to be

considered. Students Shibu and Student Xiaojun's first responses to Mr. Li's classes – “like him very much” or “extremely fond of him” can be seen as an illustration of affective attitudes in learning likely to influence their achievement positively.

Conversely students expressed dissatisfaction with their teachers. Ms. Gao, the English grammar teacher, for example was criticized for the pace of her teaching.

Student Kebu: 有时候, 比如那个语法老师讲得太快了。我们就跟她说, 太快了, 听是听得懂, 但太快了就一节课也吸收不完那么多。慢慢讲, 我们就可以有个进步。她说课程就这样安排的, 反正要跟着那个进度。跟着进度走, 那我觉得我们没有进步的话, 教十本书也没用。

Student Gongguo: 然后老师上面一直讲着讲着就很无聊, 而且语法也很无聊, 我们就睡着了。

Student Kebu: Sometimes, for instance, the grammar teacher, she teaches too fast. We told her that to follow her pace, we can understand [the content] but cannot digest everything in one session. If the pace could slow down, we can make a progress. But she said that's the syllabus which she must stick to, regardless of [the situation]. I think in that case, even if ten books were covered simply by following the syllabus, it would still be useless because we make no progress.

Student Gongguo: Then, the class gets boring as she keeps on talking. Besides, grammar itself is boring as well. Then we fall asleep.

Hawkins (1999) argues that foreign language teachers need to “have a clear idea of the *expectations about language*” that students bring to the classroom and “these expectations were conditioned by their *experiences of their first language*” (p. 133). There was no shortage of evidence in the present study not only of a gap in teachers' knowledge of student *expectations* of their learning experiences, but also of their understanding and knowledge of multilingualism and multilingual education.

Teachers were also able to throw light on the situation. Mr. Zhang from the CYS, for instance, showed an awareness of the different needs of Model I and Model II students. He reported that he had tried to design some in-class activities which aimed to stretch Model I students while addressing the learning needs of the majority Model II students in class. However, as time went by, he felt that both groups were making disappointing progress. He and other Yi teachers believed that responsibility for learning lay ultimately with the students; from the teacher perspective, most YEC students were lacking in this respect.

Mr. Zhang also considered that the Credit System, which treated the Yi language course as generic knowledge rather than as a core module, was unhelpful in terms of outcomes:

就这一个老师能够让这些学生一节课或两三节课里会写作吗？让他能很好的用文字能力去从事这方面工作？真的需要学生付出很大努力，不然达不到……到大二，大三的时候之前学的基本上忘完了，更何况之前还没怎么学。所以这个方面不是学生的问题，是因为学分制。

How could one teacher enable students to write [in Yi] in one to three weekly sessions? How is it possible to enable students to use [this degree of] literacy [and writing skills] to find a relevant job? This is really a big demand of students' own efforts. Otherwise, it cannot happen. By the time of entering the second or third year, students have totally forgotten what they learned in the first year. Let alone not much was acquired anyway. So it shall be the credit system, not the students, to be blamed.

The discussion above suggests that students constantly confront challenges in the multilingual classroom both in terms of language learning *per se* and the language of instruction adopted. Therefore, all relevant contextual factors need to be taken into consideration in language use and language planning.

Conclusion

In this chapter I looked first at attitudes to language learning overall, as demonstrated both in student motivation and attentiveness and productivity in class. I also highlighted the important role which their family played in shaping their attitudes. These attitudes were shown to be fundamental to an understanding of stakeholders' views of multilingual education at a conceptual level, guided by Spolsky et al's (1976) model, in terms of attitudes towards the learning of the three languages of the programme – Yi, Chinese and English – as well as to SWUN as an institution, the general aims of education, and bi-/multilingual education itself. I then zoomed in from these wider conceptual issues to an evaluation of the delivery of the programme, guided by Cenoz' (2009) *Continua of Multilingual Education* model, examining a range of issues in relation to actual courses and medium of instruction raised by both students and, in some cases, teachers, as well as additional reasons why some aspects of teaching were looked upon more favourably than others. The picture which emerges is thus one of a highly complex set of interrelationships between students and teachers, programme design and social, political and other factors. The impact of these interactions on individual students will be explored further in the next chapter; the implications which flow from this complexity will be discussed in the final chapter.

Chapter 8 Identity and Aspiration

Introduction

The discussion in Chapter Seven focused on the overall evaluation of the YEC programme by policy makers, staff and students. In the present chapter, moving from breadth to depth, I consider the impact of the programme on identities and aspirations, but through the lens of individuals rather than the wider student body. Using River of Life interviews¹⁸ with three students selected for their very different backgrounds and experiences, the vignettes which follow explore the personal circumstances, linguistic background and educational experiences of three case study students – A Hai, Xiao Fang and Hei Ga – who represent the range of students included in the study.

A Hai

A Hai, a Model II student in his fourth year of study. His River of Life drawing starts at the age of six and ends with his funeral arrangements; it charts his journey from an innocent little boy to his dreams of being a professor, writer and poet.

Like many other Yi students, A Hai comes from a remote small village in Liangshan. “懂事 [sensible and well-behaved]” was how he frequently described himself. In primary school, Chinese was taught by Yi teachers through the medium of Yi and the Sichuan topolect; other subjects were taught by Han teachers through Chinese. Poverty and hardship in childhood made him a very hard-working child. However, his early academic achievements were unpromising and he needed to repeat the first year of primary education three times. His persistence was

¹⁸ See Appendix G for accompanying River of Life drawings which were the starting point for the interviews

ultimately rewarded when he graduated from primary school with the highest score in his class.

In A Hai's secondary education, Chinese completely replaced Yi as the language of instruction even for the Yi teachers. For instance, his class teacher in junior middle school, a Han who didn't understand Yi, required all students to speak Mandarin when talking to her. A Hai recalled: “她说，你们这样 [说彝语] 是对我不尊重……我就觉得她怎么会有这种想法，这怎么就是对她的不尊重呢？ [She said if you did speak Yi, that shows no respect to me [...]] Then I thought why does she feel like that? How could speaking Yi to her mean no respect”? In A Hai's view, this experience was just one of many incidents which demonstrated the great emphasis placed on Chinese in an educational context. In a personal email sent to me, he wrote:

我们彝人的彝语言思维模式从七岁就开始受到汉人汉语言思维模式的挑战。而接下来，初中、高中、大学以至到硕士，博士，汉语已经越来越占据你的头脑，而你头脑中原本拥有的那点脆弱的彝语言思维逻辑模式早就被“侵略”，完全被强势的汉语给“征服”了。

The Yi way of thinking, in Yi, has been challenged by the Han way of thinking, in Chinese, since we were around seven years old. After that, your experiences in junior middle school, senior middle school – and even in postgraduate or doctorate programmes – and the way you think is influenced more and more by Han language which “erodes” your poor fragile residual thinking in Yi. And this way of thinking in Yi eventually ‘gives way to’ the dominant Han language.

Many Yi people move between villages and towns to cities in the hope, among other things, of accessing a good education for their children. A Hai's mother

followed this pattern, paying fees¹⁹ so that he could attend a good senior middle school in Xichang when he reached the age 16. He felt both excited and anxious at this move. His failure to get on with his peers and his feeling of shame and embarrassment as a fee-paying student made it difficult to study. Teachers often scolded him in front of other students, which badly affected his confidence. Although he still worked hard, he did not perform as well as in the new school as in the past. A Hai summarised his three years in senior middle school as: “不堪回首的高中生涯 [high school life which is unbearable to look back at]” (see Appendix G.1).

A turning point came when A Hai helped in his aunt’s shop and came across the book *The Scroll Marked* which greatly inspired and encouraged him. As he repeated the third year of senior middle school, he read a wide range of literature in Chinese, including the books of Lu Yao²⁰ and, in particular, *Life*, and *The Ordinary World*. This exposure to Chinese literature was no doubt responsible for A Hai’s strong competency in Chinese.

After a poor start to his educational journey, things from this point started to improve when he was admitted to the YEC programme: his River of Life drawing suggests that the most enjoyable period of time to date was during his four years at university. A Hai observed, “我的大学生活（19-23岁），可能是[我]一生中最愉快的时光：母语，民族，文化身份的确立 [My university life (19-23 years old) may be the happiest time of my life: my mother tongue and the establishment of (my ethnic) cultural status]”.

This comment neatly summarizes the significance of participation in the YEC programme for A Hai. The rewards are numerous: an understanding of the values of Yi culture and language; the ability to speak English to foreigners; his

¹⁹ In China, basic education is compulsory and also free. But when parents hope to send their children to a particular school, they need to pay a very high rate of fees to the school subject to availability.

²⁰ Lu Yao: a well-known Chinese contemporary writer in mainland China.

identification with the religious practices associated with *bimo*; and admission to a good graduate school of Chinese modern literature in China. Just as the Dean had argued, participation in the YEC programme had the potential to open doors for the young generation of the Yi. A Hai commented: “我觉得我们学院有些教授给我影响太大了，我希望像他们那样 [I feel that some of the professors in our college have had such a great impact on me that I hope I can be one of them one day]”. He talked in terms of his growing confidence:

不怕你笑话，我自从进入这个大学后就不是自信了，而是太过自信。因为通过阿库老师他们，我了解了我族人的历史。虽然不是很透彻，但我碰到这些东西了，以前是绝对不会碰这些的。而且有一种做学生、像学术一样的思维影响到我脑壳去了。因此，我就开始对自己的文化很自信。所以当有人谈到彝文、彝族文化不行的时候，我会据理力争，去反驳。

Maybe you will be amused [by my boldness]. Since I started university, I've become not confident but over-confident. Through teachers such as Teacher Aku [the Dean], I know the history of my people. Although my understanding is still limited, I've had access to knowledge which it was never possible to access before. In addition, being a student or being academic is deeply affecting my way of thinking. So I have gained confidence in my own culture. At any time, when people look down upon Yi culture and Yi language, I try my best to defend it.

As a multilingual minority student studying in a multilingual programme, A Hai's experience of tertiary education was affirming. Because he had been exposed to Yi both at home and in community in the past, he encountered fewer challenges when he started learning Yi formally in the YEC programme. Yet he considered his proficiency in Yi was not perfect: he self-rated his Yi writing skills, for instance, at an elementary level. When reflecting on his own limitations, he elaborated on the importance of a sound foundation in the mother tongue in the early years of life:

我的思维本来是该彝族思维的，但[大脑]却被另外一种思维，逆向地、强行地灌输。我们从小就学的是语文、语文书，我们懂了汉族的文化、典故，但我就没有读到也并不了解彝族的文化、典故，如果我从小就以彝族思维模式成长，我会更健硕一些，我的思维会更成熟。我已经是抛弃了我的东西，学了些什么不是我土生土长的东西。

I should have started thinking in Yi, but another way of thinking, the opposite, was imposed on me. We learned the Han Chinese language and [used] Han Chinese textbooks since we were young. We therefore understand Han culture and stories, yet we did not know those of the Yi. If I had grown up thinking like a Yi, I might have been more grounded, and my thinking might have been more mature. I feel all those things caused difficulties and confusion because I had given up what I was born with. Instead, I picked up what I was **not** [my bold] born with.

The young man's next goal is to undertake a PhD in Peking University in the field of Modern Chinese Literature. At the end point in his River of Life, he wrote a poem:

永远是这样，风后面是风，天空上面是天空，道路前面还是道路。

[Forever is forever; wind will follow wind; sky is above the sky; and ahead of the road is the road!]

Xiao Fang

Xiao Fang is a Model II student in the first year of the YEC programme, the daughter of a Yi father and a Han mother. Although she spent the first years of her life in Zhaojue County, a Yi dominant county in LYAP, she moved shortly after starting school to Meishan, a Han majority city in Sichuan province, to live with her Han maternal grandparents. Thus, all of Xiao Fang's peers in primary and middle school in Meishan were Han and Chinese was the sole medium of

instruction. She commented: “本来年纪就比较小，又跟着[汉族的]外公、外婆，就感觉自己比较[像]汉族，也没意识到自己是彝族[I was very young anyway, growing up with my Han grandparents. I therefore felt I was closer to the Han. There was no awareness of my Yi identity, either]”. When asked how she felt about her Yi hometown in Liangshan when she went back for holidays, her answer focused on its inaccessibility: “坐车很难受，路也不好走。妈妈过来很恼火，我回去也很恼火 [The coach was very uncomfortable. The road conditions were bad as well. It was a nightmare journey either for my mum to visit me or for me to go home for a visit. Yi, then, played a very modest role in Xiao Fang’s identity in childhood and early adolescence. When asked how she perceived her ethnicity, she answered: “我觉得我更像汉族 [I feel I am more like the Han people]”.

Xiao Fang’s father never spoke to her in Yi; her main exposure to the language, then, was through visits to the family. On the death of her maternal grandparents when she was 17, she moved back to Zhaojue County to join the third year of middle school where she experienced trilingualism within an educational context for the first time. Her limited knowledge of the Yi language often left Xiao Fang feeling, in her words, “很尴尬 [very embarrassed]” in front of Yi peers. Although the medium of instruction in her new school was Chinese, she was able to attend taster sessions on Yi culture. Xiao Fang also paid more frequent visits to her *Nai Nai*’s (paternal grandmother’s) house where she was exposed to the Yi language and culture, including religious rituals, such as *bimo*. Even though her father’s family spoke to her in the Sichuan topolect, these experiences awakened a greater identification with the Yi people.

As the child of a mixed marriage, Xiao Fang was well placed to comment on the different values of the Han and the Yi, and the associated differences in status. She attributed the tensions in her parents’ marriage to these differences:

我从爸爸妈妈的婚姻看到，嫁一个人就跟嫁一个家庭一样，很多生活方式和习惯不一样。

On the basis of my mum and dad's marriage, I feel that marrying someone is like marrying his whole family. But there are too many differences in way of living or habits.

Differences in opinion between her parents emerged, too, on a number of other issues. Xiao Fang's father, like the majority of her YEC peers' parents, hoped that she would go back to Liangshan to work as a civil servant. Yet, her mother, like many Han parents, hoped that she could leave home and explore the world:

我妈就不喜欢那样。她觉得我应该去更远的地方，甚至不仅限于四川。她觉得有能力就该去外面四处看下。就算最后回来，再苦再累，都要出去看一下。

My mum does not think [like my dad]. She thinks I should go somewhere far away [from home] and even beyond Sichuan. She thinks as long as [I] have the ability, I should go out and see the world. Even if in the end, [I] have to come back, it's worth doing, regardless the pain and effort.

Despite her main self-identification as Han, she was clearly proud of the history and achievements of the Yi, their culture and their language. She also sympathised with the wide range of problems they encountered:

汉族看不起彝族，彝族也看不起汉族。在外边彝族名声也不好，经常偷东西、贩毒。我们昭觉是个艾滋病县。

The Han look down upon the Yi and vice versa. The reputation of the Yi is not good outside. There are many thieves and drug dealers. There is a high incidence of AIDS in Zhaojue County.

Xiao Fang explained her reaction to “the bad habits” of the Yi in terms of the broader perspective she brought, having lived outside the area. In her words, “比起纯彝族家庭出来的学生，我会抽离一点来看这个问题 [Compared with Yi

students from a family where both parents are Yi, I can stand back and see the situation]”.

Her attitudes towards the three languages of the programme, while to some extent predictable given her personal journey, are nonetheless interesting. Xiao Fang was clearly confident about her competence in Mandarin acquired during her formative years in Meishan. Participation in the YEC programme meant that she had greater contact with Yi and Yi-related culture both in and outside the classroom. Given her limited competence in the language, she inevitably found Yi study very challenging. At the end of the first year, her progress had been very slow. Although Xiao Fang had acquired a basic understanding of the Yi script, her self-assessment of her overall competence was ‘basic’. She was struggling. “明天马上要考彝文了，我真的不知道怎么去参加考试 [The Yi exam is due tomorrow. I really have no clue of how to manage it]”.

Xiao Fang’s attitude towards English, however, was very favourable. She was confident that she had made progress in both listening comprehension and speaking, and felt that the approach used in teaching was more effective than the examination driven curriculum she had experienced in middle school. She summed this experience up in the following way:

读大学的价值也许在于开始明白学习应该是一个持续、恒动的过程，不是为了证书、文凭或是发财。

The value of studying in a university is probably that [we] gradually realize that learning is a continuous and dynamic process. It is not for the certificates, diplomas or making a fortune.

Hei Ga

Hei Ga, the son of a home maker and a lorry driver, is a Model I student whose contact with the Yi language started very early. His first three years of primary

education were spent in a local village school where there were only three Yi teachers. Children were taught Chinese and maths mainly through the medium of Yi. At this point Hei Ga passed the entrance exam for another better-resourced school at county level, seventy kilometres away from his village where he became a boarder. Like many other Yi children, he went back home only during the winter and summer vacations. In this new primary school, Yi was taught as a subject for the first time, further strengthening his competence in the language.

After entering junior middle school in Zhaojue County at the age of 13 or 14, the population was more mixed. For the first time, the teachers were all Han Chinese and the medium of instruction was Chinese. As a young boarder, he often stayed up late playing computer games with friends in the evenings at local internet cafés and, as a result, he would be unable to concentrate much of the next day. When his teacher informed his parents what was happening, they transferred him to another middle school in Xichang, which was closer to home and where he retook the second year. And finally in the third year, the whole family – parents and two siblings – moved from their village to Xichang in order to monitor Hei Ga’s study. At that point, he was a day student.

Although Chinese remained the medium of instruction, Hei Ga started studying Yi as a subject for a small number of sessions each week since the junior middle school, something he very much enjoyed. This arrangement continued until he was accepted as a Model I student in the senior sector of the same school. He did not disappoint his family. In 2013, he came fifth out of all the students in the three Model I middle schools in the whole Liangshan area in the UCEE with a very high language score (71 out of 75) in Yi. His original choice was a top national university. Unfortunately, because only three vacancies were allocated to Model I Yi students in this university that year, Hei Ga was not admitted and also missed the deadline to apply for other more prestigious universities. As his fall back position, he was admitted to the case study university, SWUN.

Although Hei Ga's self assessment of his Chinese competence was '3' – fluent (relative to Xiao Fang's self-assessment of '4' – excellent), he scored higher than Xiao Fang in the university entrance exam for Chinese. Of the different pathways available, however, he was not interested in either the Yi-Chinese or the Yi-Japanese programme. His ultimate goal, on the advice of his former class teacher, was to take the entrance exams for graduate school where English proficiency was critical in gaining a place. Although he had a low score in the English exam, his only option was thus to enroll on the YEC programme.

The simultaneous study of three languages in YEC was by no means smooth. He identified a number of contributory factors:

高中同学基础都差不多，老师遇到大家不懂地方还会用汉语解释一下。到这边来，大部分二类[模式]同学考得都比我们好。老师讲的他们大部分都听得懂，相对老师停下来再多解释一下的机率就少了。听着，听着，就不懂了。

In high school, the [English] levels of all my peers were close. The teacher therefore would explain points we found confusing in Chinese when there was anything we did not understand. But here, the majority of Model II students are scoring better than us [i.e. Model I students] [in the English exam] and they can understand most of what the teachers say. This means the teachers explain things even less. So, as time has gone by, I haven't been able to understand more and more.

This was clearly a dilemma for a Model I student like Hei Ga. As explained earlier, all Model I students admitted to the YEC programme had much higher overall scores than Model II students. Yet, there was a general feeling among Model I students that Model II students' English competence was stronger, enabling them to follow in English classes while Model I students struggled. When asked why they had not communicated this issue to the teacher, Hei Ga explained that they

thought it was too embarrassing to ask teachers to slow down or explain things in greater detail when only a small number of students were affected.

These differences were the source of some discomfort for Hei Ga:

我原本想，我们一类模式的考到这来分数一定是最低的。结果来到这，身边都是考 300 多的[黑呷考了 471]。在高中时候特别是高三，差不多大家都很努力。看到那种氛围，自己都不好意思坐到教室不学习。而这里的同学很多都考 300 多分，感觉他们高考时没怎么努力。来这里后，依然都还是那种状态。几个人在一起，潜移默化，互相影响。

Initially, I thought that we Model I students must have had the lowest marks on the programme. But it turned out to be that many of our classmates [Model II students] scored just above 300 [Hei Ga scored 471]. In high school, and especially in the third year, almost everybody worked hard. In that atmosphere, you would feel embarrassed if you didn't do much in class. But here [on the programme], there were so many people who scored 300 and who it seemed hadn't worked hard in the past. So they carried on with that mindset on the [new programme]. As I started mixing with them, it bothered me more and more.

Hei Ga summarised his early days in the University in terms of “上了一学期什么都没学到”。He recognised, however, that he needed to take responsibility for the situation and in the summer vacation following the interview, he decided to register for extra English courses in the hope that it would still be possible to go to graduate school.

When Hei Ga was asked whether he planned to go to other big cities for employment if he could not find a place in graduate school, he replied in the negative.

Hei Ga: 想找到工作后就回去。因为那边有亲戚，对家乡有一种向往。

Researcher: 那你还是想回来?

Hei Ga: 对。因为小时候在小学读书的时候哭了很多, 因为想家……

Hei Ga: I am thinking of going back to my [hometown] as long as I can pass the entry requirements for a job. Because I've got relatives there. I have a longing for home.

Researcher: So, you still want to come back?

Hei Ga: Yes. This is because when I was young in primary schools, I cried so much because I was homesick...

The *River of Life* mapped out by Hei Ga twists and turns but in the end, it would seem that it was destined to return to its source.

Depth rather than breadth

These River of Life interviews introduce new information for instance, the life events which have steered students to the trilingual YEC programme. They also throw further light on various themes which have emerged in earlier chapters.

Life events

The most salient aspect of the three vignettes lies in the enormous diversity – social, educational and linguistic – of the students (see Appendix H). Two of the three (A Hai and Hei Ga) had been immersed in the Yi language from birth while Xiao Fang, the child of a mixed Yi-Han marriage had only been exposed to both Yi and Han people (except her father at home but who did not speak Yi to her), on visits to her paternal grandparents. Their language histories at school were also variable. At primary school both A Hai and Hei Ga had received a bilingual education, delivered by Yi and Han teachers: in A Hai's case, it was not until junior middle school that the medium of instruction changed to Chinese only; in Hei Ga's case, a

move to another school offered greater opportunity for more formal study of Yi and ultimately being admitted to the YEC programme as a Model I student. In contrast, Xiao Fang's first experience of Yi in an educational context was at the age of 17 when she moved back to live near her paternal grandparents. These three cases, then, illustrate the considerable variation in the levels and the range of Yi proficiency of students on the programme which require thoughtful pedagogical responses.

Relationships to the three languages

YEC is, of course, a trilingual programme which aims to promote not only Yi but also Chinese and English. There was no significant variation in the three students' competence in Chinese literacy, which was consistent with the data of students' self-assessments overall (see Appendix I). Hei Ga, as a Model I student, appeared to have achieved a more balanced Yi-Chinese bilingualism. For both Xiao Fang and A Hai, clearly, Chinese was the dominant language. Xiao Fang, for instance, having grown up in a Chinese-speaking household and attended school in a Han-dominated area, felt completely at ease with the language. Her language acquisition took place through subtractive *submersion* both at home and school. A Hai attributed his unsatisfactory command of Yi to his educational experiences. This includes his class teacher's absent knowledge of and about bilingualism in primary education, and most importantly, the fact that the use of the mother tongue was not allowed with the teacher. As Skutnabb-Kangas (2013, pp. 2-3) reminds us,

Linguistic minority children with a low-status mother tongue are forced to accept instruction through a [...] dominant language, in class in which the teacher does not understand the minoritised mother tongue, and where the dominant language constitutes a threat to the MT [mother tongue], which runs the risk of being replaced.

Thus, A Hai also experienced a *subtractive* language learning trajectory in his basic education. Nevertheless, his exposure to and exploration of Chinese language and literature at a later stage, especially after he entered the University, did not detract from his Yi identity. Rather, the YEC programme and the strong ethnolinguistic vitality of Yi within the University encouraged him to embrace Han culture and literature at the same time as reflecting on his ethnic language and identity.

The situation was more polarised in the case of English. While the case study students – and indeed most of their peers – were united in recognizing the pragmatic value of English as a language of wider communication and key to future employment prospects, their apparent differences in levels of understanding are a matter of concern. Hei Ga was clearly struggling in spite of his strong motivation to learn the language; he was also troubled by perceived differences in understanding and performance between Model I and Model II students and by the embarrassment which prevented him and his peers asking teachers to slow down. Xiao Fang’s confidence in her progress in English and A Hai’s lack of comment on this matter suggest a very different relationship with the language and offer support for Hei Ga’s observation about the better understanding of Model II students. The overall picture which emerges, however, would seem to support the conclusion of Hu (2007) study of *Dai* and *Hani* ethnic minority school students in Yunnan province:

The ethnic minority students’ formal bilingual education has an **insignificant** [my bold] impact on their L3 learning. The impact only affects the students’ abstract or deep level [of] cognition. On the concrete or superficial level knowledge, such an impact has declined. It is noticeable that “bilingual education” is not the equivalent of “Han language proficiency” even in Chinese situations with the trends of assimilation by the Han [...].

It is important, however, to bear in mind the role of Chinese in the L3 learning of minority speakers. English classes are delivered through L2, Chinese, rather than

Yi in the YEC programme. While YEC students' self-assessment of their Chinese skills was relatively high, it is possible that some, including Hei Ga, had not yet reached the higher threshold of competence in Chinese required for skill transfer from L1/L2 to L3, and from bilingualism to trilingualism (Cummins, 1979b). Other factors in teaching and learning, of course, also come into play, such as attitudes, pedagogical issues, and curriculum design. They all attributed to successful or unsuccessful learning outcomes of each individual student.

Implications for programme delivery

Provision for such a diverse group of students in a trilingual programme is extremely challenging. While the awarding of additional points in university and college entrance examinations allows greater access to HE for minority students, the poor educational achievements of the students on entry place heavy demands on those – teachers, administrators, the Dean – responsible for programme delivery; so, too, do their varying levels of competence in both Yi and English. The very wide range of proficiency – oral and written – in Yi is problematic: mixed ability groups are extremely challenging for both teachers and the production of effective teaching materials. The imbalance in the time allocated to Yi and English modules is a further complicating factor. The apparent difference between the English competencies of Model I and Model II students pose yet another potential challenge.

Conclusion

Analysis of the River of Life interviews illustrate the importance of life events, such as family relocation and change of schools, which steered students to the trilingual Yi-English-Chinese programme; the different ways in which students position themselves in relation to the three languages, highlighting, in particular, the varying level of competence; and the impact of the programme on their attitudes towards Yi culture. The weak academic backgrounds of Yi students,

together with limited teaching resources and the absence of appropriate pedagogies present serious challenges. That said, the importance of the programme in enhancing the social status and academic potential of Yi students cannot be underestimated. Although issues remain about the learning outcomes achieved which are often disappointing, a stronger sense of ethnic identity and the pragmatic gains associated with the programme are substantial in terms of students' access to employment in their home region and opportunities for further study.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter brings together the findings of the research project as a whole. It summarizes the findings which address each of my research questions. It then considers both the contribution of the study to existing knowledge and its limitations, sets out the implications of the findings and makes recommendations for stakeholders and researchers. Finally it indicates directions for future research.

Summary of findings

The present study explores a trilingual education programme targeted at Yi minority students in a Chinese university. It has attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the views towards Yi in the wider society, in Southwest University for Nationalities (SWUN) and in the College of Yi Studies (CYS)?
2. What are the main challenges for the trilingual education Yi-English-Chinese (YEC) pathway of the Chinese Minority Languages and Literature programme offered at SWUN?
3. What is the range of competencies in Yi, English and Chinese of the YEC pathway?
4. What are the policy makers, teachers and students's perceptions of and attitudes towards the programme?
5. What has been the impact of the programme on individual students?

The discussion which follows summarises the findings for each of these questions in turn.

Views towards Yi in the wider society, in SWUN and in the CYS

The Yi constitute the sixth biggest minority group in China (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010) with a population of over 8.7 million. The Yi-speaking population is concentrated in the southwest of China and, in particular, in the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture (LYAP) where the language predominates in all informal domains. Even here, however, Chinese is almost entirely the sole medium of instruction in schools after primary education while in the capital city, Xichang, the majority of the population are Han. The Yi language is marginalised from all stages of education.

At first sight, the Yi people and their language enjoy relatively high social status in China when compared with other minority populations. For instance, LYAP has been accorded the right to self government; Yi is one of the seven minority languages used in the two most important annual political meetings in China; radio broadcasts in the language have been available in LYAP region since the late 1970s; and since 2014, announcements on all public transport have been made in both Yi and Chinese as well.

The policy commitment to equal status for minorities, however, remains largely at the level of rhetoric rather than reality. The all pervasive influence of Chinese in critical areas such as education and employment contributes to the ongoing marginalization of the Yi and their language. Student focus group data in the current study, for example, revealed that they experienced a wide range of difficulties both in life in general and in finding employment due to their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. That said, employment opportunities for graduates are good though sometimes limited, particularly in prefectural positions, and most seek to remain locally rather than moving to other parts of the country on graduation.

In the University as a whole, the institutional support for Yi is very favourable. The University attaches great importance to the College of Yi Studies (CYS), one of the only two colleges (the other being the College of Tibetan Studies) targeted

specifically at a single ethnic group. Considerable support is offered to the college, in particular, in the form of Yi cultural and literary academic and extracurricular activities.

For instance, all staff and students at the CYS are Yi with the exception of one member of the administration, helping to create a safe and sustaining place for the language and associated culture. The College is just one of three national training centres for Yi; it hosts the *Centre for Yi-Burmese Language Studies* with the largest and most comprehensive collection of Yi literature in China; it has its own literature society and publishes both poetry and prose in the language.

Extracurricular activities include the celebration of the Yi New Year, weekly traditional Yi dancing, a multilingual speech competition and Yi poetry readings. The visual environment also reflects the importance given to the language with its bilingual banners, signs, notices and events programmes. The public statements of and also the personal writings of the Dean, as the founder and main decision maker in the College, regularly celebrate Yi language and culture and there was ample evidence of his impact on students who expressed pride in Yi cultural activities and the importance accorded to their language by the College.

Main challenges for the trilingual education YEC programme

Several challenges for the delivery of the programme were identified. Among these, the issue of recruitment to the programme emerged as highly significant, given the extremely low levels of minority participation in HE. The government has taken various steps to address this issue, including adjusting the number of points required in university entrance examinations for minority students.

The experience of Yi students in the YEC programme is a case in point. As part of a policy of positive discrimination, Model I applicants are allocated more points in university and college entrance examinations while the admission threshold cut-off score for Model II students is set very low. Putting to one side pragmatic

considerations, however, the programme also has attractions for students interested in Yi language and culture and those who aspire to positions in administration or as English school teachers in Liangshan.

Chinese universities operate a credit system, the main features of which are set at national level. In the case of YEC, many of the credits are allocated to compulsory modules unrelated to language learning or acquisition in any way. The imbalance between the number of Yi modules relative to Chinese and English modules was a further obstacle to the delivery of an effective trilingual programme. The limited teaching resources were another issue, especially given the range of abilities across the three languages of the programme. As a result, many teachers responded by lowering standards; even more worrying, the limited knowledge, on the part of teachers of Chinese and English, of both the Yi people and their language and culture was reflected in low expectations of Yi student performance.

Student competencies in Yi, Chinese and English

An understanding of the range of proficiency of students in the three languages involved provides an essential context for the discussion of the evaluation of the delivery of the programme. In addition to the ethnolinguistic vitality of Yi, I focused on students' perceived language ability in the four skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing, based on student self-reports.

Looking first at Yi, students were classified according to their prior experience of education: those with a stronger foundation in Yi were considered Model I; those with a weak foundation as Model II. Most Model I students demonstrated a very good command of Yi, supported by both their self-reports and teacher focus group data, while most Model II students had limited competence in all four skills of Yi, but in particular reading and writing the language. Because of Model I group's relatively high point of departure in Yi, many of them considered the programme was too basic for their needs and was therefore ineffective in improving their Yi

proficiency. For Model II group, self-reports indicated a wide range of points of departure on arrival with many reporting little or no significant development even after four years of study in the programme. Nevertheless, most indicated improved Yi listening skills with many reaching Level 2 (average) in reading and writing skills. Very few, however, achieved Level 3 (good) and above.

Both groups reported that they were confident in Chinese, although when individuals were probed more deeply using the River of Life technique, it emerged that some felt insecure. Teacher focus group data reinforced this concern. All CFL staff interviewed reported that Yi students appeared to have very poor overall understanding of the Chinese language.

Both groups reported finding English learning difficult with most students rating their English competence as average. Many Model I students, however, considered this area of study particularly challenging because the medium of instruction was Chinese, a language in which they often felt less secure than their Model II peers. In short, students' proficiency in all three languages was highly variable, a finding with serious implications for the delivery of the programme.

Perceptions and attitudes of policy makers, teachers and students towards the programme

Pragmatic considerations, including issues of recruitment and the constraints associated with the credit system, resulted in a startling contrast between the initial rationale for the trilingual programme and what was observed in practice. The Dean admitted that employment and the development of Yi society had to be prioritized over the actual promotion of mother tongue education, multilingualism and multiliteracy. What mattered to him was providing opportunities for Yi students to receive an education in line with their abilities and potential while raising their awareness of language and exposing them to the ideals of multilingual education.

There was indeed ample evidence of favourable attitudes towards multilingual education on the part of both teachers and students. They all acknowledged that multilingualism is associated with advantages, recognising the differences between students on the programme and their monolingual peers in terms of empowerment, metalinguistic and cultural awareness, and cognitive development. While some students had reported concerns about the perceived historical stigma associated with the university before their enrollment, nearly all were now able to identify the advantages of study at CYS which provided an opportunity for them to raise their awareness of, deepen their understanding about and broaden their knowledge of their own language, culture, and identity. Their contact with both other ethnic groups within a multiethnic University and also visiting American students, had further sharpened the contrast between the Yi and outgroups, arousing strong feelings of language loyalty and cultural pride.

Student expectations of the programme, however, had sometimes been frustrated. Prior to arrival in university they had hoped that the programme would help them become confident trilinguals, guaranteeing an advantage in the job market. Yet, as time passed by, concerns were raised that Yi was not given enough attention in the curriculum and that student achievement in both English and Yi was disappointing. Nonetheless, attitudes towards the three languages were also utilitarian. For most, priority was given to learning English in recognition of its market value and importance for winning a place in graduate school. In contrast, they considered that their Chinese proficiency was adequate and that efforts made on Yi learning would reap limited rewards. Student study strategies are also influenced by concern over final marks and parental attitudes towards the usefulness of other languages.

Attitudes towards the language of instruction varied according to students' prior educational experience. Those with higher levels of competence in Yi were comfortable with its use as the main medium of instruction; those with more limited skills in the language were concerned about their ability to understand the content of courses. Many students also feared that the overuse of Yi might be at the expense of Chinese. While some also expressed worries about the

comprehensibility of English, they were generally in favour of its use as the main medium of instruction in English courses. In many cases, the accessibility of teaching was linked to pedagogy, with students reporting that communicative teaching was most successful in supporting their understanding of content.

The various factors discussed above are complex and intertwined and represent a wide range of administrative and pedagogical challenges for the implementation of a trilingual education programme. From the pedagogical perspective, the uneven competencies of students upon arrival and the implications for curriculum design need to be addressed. For example, students raised the issue of how teachers could be more responsive in their teaching, and whether different teaching materials could be adapted for different groups of students. From the administrative perspective, the College is limited by the credit system which determines the number of teaching hours for each subject. Teachers' workloads and the availability of resources are also in need of review.

Although the learning outcomes are often disappointing, the pragmatic gains associated with the programme are substantial in terms of students' identity, their access to employment in their home region and opportunities for further study.

The impact of the programme on individual students

While the previous discussion has focussed on the overall evaluation of the programme based on data gleaned from observation, focus groups and interviews, the analysis of River of Life accounts of three students with very different backgrounds sheds light on Chinese minority higher education at micro-level.

The findings indicated that the impact varied according to the individual trajectories which had steered students in the direction of the YEC programme, positioning them differently in relation to the three languages. One felt time spent in the programme was the happiest period of time in his life and, with

encouragement from the college, had passed the exams and been accepted by a very good graduate school in China. One had a stronger awareness of her own Yi identity and had started appreciating the real value of Yi culture and traditions, and also of learning. The third enlarged on the struggles encountered during study and, in particular, those of Model I students relative to their Model II peers in the English courses and their embarrassment at asking teachers to slow down when only a small number were affected.

These vignettes underline the monumental obstacles Chinese ethnic minority students face in order to participate in HE in China as well as the challenges created by structural aspects of the YEC programme for their attitudes towards learning and their subsequent achievements.

Contribution of the research to knowledge

This study contributes to our understanding of the issues in a number of areas, including knowledge in the field of trilingual education and methodology; it also points to implications for policy and practice.

In terms of knowledge, although trilingual education is not a new phenomenon in China, there is a dearth of research in this area and, in particular, of research reported in English. More recently, however, Chinese minority multilingual education has begun attracting the attention of international researchers (Adamson & Feng, 2014; Feng, 2007a; Feng & Adamson, 2015c; Tsung, 2009; Wang, 2016), with a focus on basic education, for the most part employing a quantitative approach. In contrast, the present study uses a qualitative approach to the exploration of minority education and at the tertiary rather than the basic level. Through the lens of participants themselves, the present study depicts the experiences and learning trajectories of Yi university students who are sadly under-represented in the literature. As already argued (see p.118), this provides a valuable

counterbalance to the dominant discourse, which focuses on the Han population. As such it represents an original contribution to knowledge.

Methodologically, while the larger study drew on interviews and focus group discussions with a wide range of students across the programme and the teachers and administrators responsible for its delivery, the use of the River of Life technique (Denicolo & Pope, 1990; Pope & Denicolo, 2001) represents a methodological innovation in this context, generating rich data which would have been difficult to access through other means and illustrating the full complexity of the issues under investigation.

By the same token, the study highlights various policy issues, not least the complexities involved in delivery to large classes with a huge diversity of competencies in the languages of the programme. It also raises ambiguities and contradictions, such as the failure of many students to significantly improve their performance in Yi after four years of study and the disproportionate emphasis on English at the expense of Yi learning, which appears at first sight to run counter to the aims of the programme. Similarly, issues are raised by the finding that, while the programme clearly increases students' subjective ethnolinguistic vitality, the extent to which this experience improves their prospects in the labour market is unclear.

The findings of this study also point to possible directions for improved effectiveness of trilingual education programmes in China as discussed in greater detail below. Finally, the findings are likely to be of interest to researchers in comparative education unable to access relevant publications in Chinese.

Limitations of this study

Of course, this study also has limitations, the most important of which relates to my status as an outsider, unable to speak or write the language of my Yi participants

and a member of the dominant Han group. All interviews were done through the medium of Chinese and the Sichuan topolect which may have constrained both their willingness and ability to respond to the fullest extent. There is also a danger that my analysis of their narratives is limited by my own lack of knowledge of both linguistic and cultural issues. One way in which these difficulties might have been minimised would have been to employ a Yi-Chinese interpreter, but this was not possible within the time and resources available for fieldwork.

However, aware of the potential barrier between me and the Yi participants, I tried my best to establish rapport with both staff and students from the very beginning. For example, I always rewarded or paid students whenever they did anything for me. I was not the first researcher to collect data from the CYS and had learned that sometimes students felt as if they were being used. I therefore took steps to avoid this ever happening. I always remembered to bring small British souvenirs or snacks and biscuits to any interviews conducted with students and teachers; in all the events I participated in, I assumed the role of camera person, taking photos for the college and sharing any recordings.

A further weakness also relates to limited time and resources. The comparisons of different year groups are not based on the progress of the same individuals across time. As a result, the analysis and conclusions presented in this study need to be viewed as suggestive rather than conclusive. By the same token, student competencies are based on self-evaluations often considered as potentially flawed. This course of action was due to both the unavailability of suitable measurement tools and complexities related to the extreme heterogeneity of student educational and linguistic backgrounds. I acknowledge that, had data been available on students' scores either on admission or in the course of their studies, this would have provided an interesting point of comparison with their self-assessments of language competence in chapter 4. However, as I explained, different procedures were used to calculate the scores for Model I and Model II students and the number of Model I students was small. Furthermore, accessing admission or in-course scores would have met significant bureaucratic obstacles as well.

Implications and recommendations

What, then, are the implications of this study for the delivery of the programme and the learning outcomes of students? In short, provision for such a diverse group of students in a trilingual programme is extremely challenging. While the awarding of additional points in university and college entrance examinations allows greater access to higher education for minority students, the poor educational achievements of the students on entry place heavy demands on policy makers, teachers and administrators responsible for programme delivery; so, too, do the varying levels of student competence in the languages of the programme. The very wide range of proficiency – oral and written – in Yi is problematic: mixed ability groups are extremely challenging for both teachers and the production of effective teaching materials. The imbalance in the time allocated to Yi and English modules is a further complicating factor. The apparent difference between the Yi competencies of Model I and Model II students poses yet another challenge. In the long term, these challenges may even affect on CYS student recruitment as the findings showed that many existing students did not find the learning and teaching of Yi in the trilingual programme match their expectations of the programme.

Based on the findings of the present study, a number of recommendations for policy makers and teachers are presented as follows.

Policy makers:

- CYS needs to reconsider and reshape the aims of the programme;
- Yi courses should be offered every year of the programme to assure; sufficient input and a solid foundation in L1;
- CYS must address the needs not only of those students who wish to proceed to graduate school but the majority of YEC students who will leave to seek employment;
- In curriculum design, CYS should invite all CFL teachers involved in the programme, and not only senior administrators, to contribute their thoughts and views;

- The implementation of the curriculum needs to be reviewed on a regular basis. There should be no major adjustments without consultation with both staff and students;
- More credits should be allocated to mother tongue related modules;
- Thought needs to be given to ways in which Model I students can be stretched given that the majority are academically higher achievers than their Model II peers.

Teachers:

- Teachers must not label Yi students as poor learners based on limited knowledge of the group and their backgrounds, or unfair comparisons between them and Han students;
- Teachers must adopt a more targeted methodology for students with varying level of language proficiency. Lowering of standards does not represent a solution;
- Model I students' needs must be addressed and represented in class;
- Teachers must be well prepared for all their classes with appropriate pedagogies;
- Awareness of multilingualism and multilingual education should be an important focus for teacher professional development.

Further research

The YEC programme at the CYS of SWUN has a very unique and significant status in Chinese minority education; the pragmatic gains are also substantial. While the present study represents a useful beginning, there is clearly considerable scope for further research. An obvious starting point would be to follow a sample of the same students through the four years of their study in university. It would also be interesting to set up and evaluate two competing models of delivery, for instance, one following the original curriculum, and the other adopting a new one

with more emphasis on Yi input in the first and second years. A mixed method approach could be adopted to compare the two groups.

Another area worth exploring could be how to help minority students, from complex and diverse backgrounds, and with different levels of language proficiency, to make a smooth transition to higher education based, for instance, on the Teng (2001, p. 243) reversed-pyramid model of bilingual education (see Figure 9.1) for minorities in China, in which students receive basic education through the medium of Yi up until Year 3 of primary education, at which point Chinese language is gradually introduced until it becomes the main medium of education so as to prepare majority Yi students to study at university. Future research could explore whether this will be an effective educational model which can better prepare minority students' study at tertiary level.

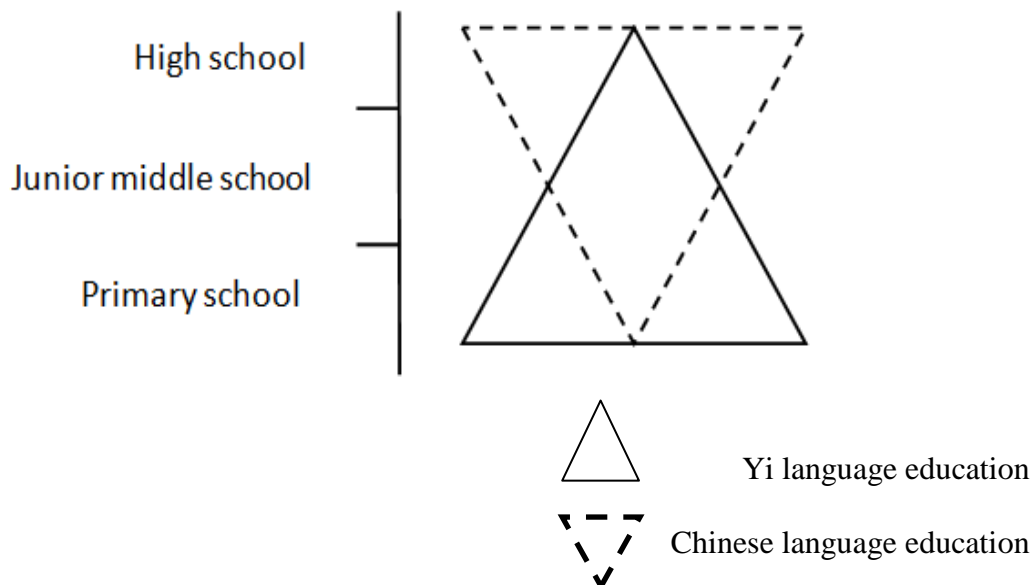


Figure 9.1: Reversed-pyramid Yi-Chinese bilingual education (adapted from Teng, 2001, p. 243)

It might also be interesting to focus on self-assessment of linguistic skills. For example, what are the bases for students' self-assessment? How and in what way do students conceptualize 'language proficiency' and does this vary from one

language to another? To what extent, do students take into account their daily performance in classroom activities, exams or homework when self-rating? The answers to those questions may provide a starting point for exploring the inter-relationship between language attitudes, motivation and language behaviours.

Concluding remarks

Knowledge is not exactly power, knowledge is the power to know, to understand, but not necessarily the power to do or change [...] Knowledge is power only for those who can use it to change their conditions.

--- Ira Shor (2012, p. 6)

Chinese ethnic minority students in competition with the Han majority population face innumerable obstacles in accessing education. As such, they need to be fully supported at all levels of education. Participation at the tertiary level represents personal victory in the battle against hardship, as examples of academic success rather than failure as ‘poor learners’, and should be recognized as such. The question which educators need to ask is not how good they might have been but how much more we could have offered.

My sincere hope, then, is that this study will highlight some of the stress points in the current system and suggest possible ways forward in Chinese minority multilingual education for both stakeholders and researchers.

Appendix A: Observation Proformas

Class observation sheet

A.1 All Subject Class Observation Sheet

- Module title:
- Class:
- Date:
- Time period observed:
- Lecturer:
- Total number of students in the class:
- Total number of students present:
- How many sessions per week the class have for this module:

General practices

Aspects	What observed	Notes
1. MoIs used		
2. Language(s) used to answer questions by students		
3. Language(s) used for class discussion		
4. How much interaction between the lecturer and the class?		
5. Textbook content (national textbooks or specially written for Yi students)		
6. Exercises books available or not?		
7. Main language used in textbooks		
8. Any ppt. slide from the lecturer? If yes, in which language?		
9. How often/much the lecturer relates the topic to the Yi?		
10. Any homework?		

Effectiveness of the lesson observed

Aspects	Points of good practice	Points for consideration
1. Clarity of objectives		
2. Planning and organisation		
3. Methods/ approach		
4. Delivery and pace		
5. Content (currency, accuracy, relevance, use of examples, level, match to students' needs)		
6. Students' overall participation		
7. Use of space and learning resources		
8. Lecturer's competence in the target language		

End of Sheet

A.2 English/Chinese Language Subjects

1. How does the lecturer handle the class and how do the students respond to the activities?

Activity	Lecturer			Students		
	Much (Give estimate to time spent or frequency)	Some (Give estimate to time spent or frequency)	Little or None	Majority do well with interest	Majority manage, but with difficulties	Majority show no interest and get lost
Total Physical Response (TPR) activities						
Words, text and grammar explanation						
Group or pair work (tasks for them)						
Whole class or individual reading aloud						
Asking students to work on white or black board						
Audio/Video listening or watching						
Others specify						

Notes

2. What seems to be the major approach the lecturer uses in the classroom?

(Could tick more than one)

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

3. Language(s) used by the lecturer when addressing the whole class:

In a classroom where English/Yi is taught, the lecturer explains English/Yi words, text or grammar:

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

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

- All or predominantly in Yi
- All or predominantly in Chinese
- All or predominantly in English
- In mixed languages (Chinese and Yi)

- In mixed languages (Chinese and English)
- In mixed languages including English
- In mixed languages including English (Yi, English and Chinese)
- Notes

4. Language(s) used by the students:

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

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

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

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

In a classroom where English/Yi is taught, the lecturer interacts with the students:

- All or predominantly in Yi

- All or predominantly in Chinese
- In mixed languages (Chinese and Yi)
- In mixed languages (Chinese and English)
- In mixed languages including English (Yi, English and Chinese)

Notes

5. Any other points:

End of Sheet

Non-classroom observation sheet

A.3 Non-Classroom Observation Sheet - 1

School environment

1. School background data

- Venue:
- Date:

2. Observation sheet for the environment

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

Media	In Yi	In Chinese	In English
Posters			
Wall papers			
School notices			
School broadcast			
Classroom posters			
Others specify			

Notes

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

- In Mandarin Chinese
- In local topolect
- In Yi
- Others

Specify

Do lecturers code-switch between languages? Yes No

If yes, how often and when

c) Language(s) predominately used in break times between students

- In Standard Chinese
- In local topolect
- In Yi
- Others

Specify

Do students code-switch between languages? Yes No

If yes, how often and when.....

d) Language(s) predominately used in conversations between lecturers and students:

- In Standard Chinese
- In local topolect
- In Yi
- Others

Specify

Do they code-switch between languages? Yes No

If yes, how often and when.....

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

- In Standard Chinese
- In local topolect
- In Yi
- Others

Specify

3. Any other points:

A.4 Non-Classroom Observation Sheet - 2

Event Observation

1. Details about the event

- Venue:
- Purpose of the event:
- People present:
- Date:

2. Observation sheet for the event

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

Media	In Yi	In Chinese	In English
Posters			
Wall papers			
School notices			
Others specify			

Notes

b) Official working language(s) of the event

- In Standard Chinese
 - In local topolect
 - In Yi
 - Others
- Specify

c) Language(s) predominately used in conversations between lecturers

- In Standard Chinese

In local topolect

In Yi

Others

Specify

Do lecturers code-switch between languages? Yes No

If yes, how often and when.....

d) Language(s) predominately used by speakers

In Standard Chinese

In local topolect

In Yi

Others

Specify

Do speakers code-switch between languages? Yes No

If yes, how often and when.....

e) Language(s) predominately used during the event between students

In Standard Chinese

In local topolect

In Yi

Others

Specify

Do students code-switch between languages? Yes No

If yes, how often and when.....

f) Language(s) predominately used in conversations between lecturers and students:

In Standard Chinese

In local topolect

In Yi

Others

Specify

Do students and lecturers code-switch between languages? Yes

No

If yes, how often and when

3. Any other points

End of Sheet 2

Appendix B: Questionnaires

B.1 Questionnaire – Students

Dear students, please feel free to give the most honest answers to the questions in this questionnaire. The data collected will be used for research purpose only. Please fill the blanks according to your own background and self-assessment.

Please fill in the blanks with your answers or tick the box.

- Your name: _____
- Class: _____
- Gender: Male Female
- Ethnicity: _____
- Age: _____
- When did you start learning the Yi Language
(for example, Primary Year 3): _____
- When did you start learning Chinese: _____
- When did you start learning English: _____
- The main MoI in primary education: _____
- The main MoI in junior secondary education: _____
- The main MoI in senior primary education: _____

How good you think you are in the following three languages? Please fill in the blank with the number which corresponds to your level of a certain skill.

0 ---- Little or no knowledge at all

1 ---- Poor

2 ---- Average

3 ---- Good

4 ---- Outstanding

	Yi	English	Chinese	Other (which one _____)
Listening				
Speaking				
Reading				
Writing				

Please leave one or all of your contact details below:

Tel:

Email:

QQ/Wechat:

B.2 Questionnaire – Teachers

Dear teachers, please feel free to give the most honest answers to the questions in this questionnaire. The data collected will be used for research purpose only. Please fill the blanks according to your own background and teaching experience.

Please fill in the blanks with your short answers or tick the box.

- Your name: _____
- Your gender: male female
- Your age group:
25 to 30 31 to 35 36 to 40
41 to 45 46 and above
- Your own ethnic group: _____
- Which college are you in: _____
- What is your highest educational qualification: _____
- Which subject(s) do you teach the Yi students in which year, for example, mathematics, 1st year students: _____
- When did you start teaching students from the *College of the Yi Studies*:

- Usually, which language is your primary medium of instruction:

- Language background: please click according to your own language proficiency level.

Competence Language	Fluent	Average	Limited	No knowledge
Yi				
English				
Chinese				
Other language Specify _____				

Please leave your contact details here:

Email: _____ or

Tel: _____

QQ: _____

Appendix C: Interviews

C.1 Topics Involved in the Semi-Structured Focus Group

Interview with Students

1. What language(s) do you speak to each other when you stay with your peers and teachers?

Possible probing questions:

- Why your own language, or why not?

2. When do you feel you are most like a *Yi* people?
3. If you got limited time for study this week, with regard to the language subjects, which subject will you spend more time on and why?
4. With regard to learning capacity and learning outcomes, do you feel whether there are any differences between you and the Han majority students? In what way?

Possible probing questions:

- In your view, what are your strengths and weaknesses compared with Han majority students?
5. Which language(s) do you prefer teachers to use as the medium of instruction (MoI) for your teaching and learning and why?
 6. Some people think the key for minority students to do well in universities is first of all to learn their own language well. Based on the command of their

mother tongue, they can then learn all other subjects including Chinese and English equally well. Do you or do you not agree with this view?

7. Do you find that your college attaches sufficient importance to minority pupils' home language and their culture?
8. Do you think when teachers design their courses, your ethnic identity, linguistic and cultural background have been given sufficient consideration? If yes, in what way? If no, what makes you think so?
9. How do you feel about the programme you are in? What do you think the programme can or can not bring out?
10. What are your own expectations of the programme? Which aspects do you like and hope to maintain and which aspects do you dislike and hope to see a change?
11. What do you think of the importance of each language, L1, L2 and L3, for the Yi students in this college? Or in other words, what's your general view about students' L1, L2 and L3 in terms of their usefulness for their future?
12. Any comment on how language education can be improved for university minority students in general?

C.2 Topics Involved in the Semi-Structured Focus Group Interview with Teachers

(adapted from Feng et al., 2013)

1. Overall, what are your comments on the average academic performance of the students in the College of the *Yi* Studies?
2. How about languages? Overall, what are your comments on students' average competence in L1 (the *Yi*), L2 (Chinese) and L3 (English)? In your opinion, what are the factors which promote or hinder students' trilingualism?
3. If you know any two, or all of the L1, L2 and L3, which language(s) do you usually choose as the primary medium of instruction (MoI)? Why not the other (s) or all?
4. How is the competence in each language assessed in your course, if you teach a language subject?

Possible probing questions:

- a. L1, the minority language?
 - b. L2, Chinese?
 - c. L3, English?
5. Have the students' ethnic identity, linguistic and cultural background played a role in your course design? If yes, what is the role?
 6. Do you think it takes the *Yi* students much longer or shorter to learn Chinese or English than the Han majority students? Why?
 7. Do you think it takes the *Yi* students much longer or shorter to learn a content subject than the Han majority students? Why?

8. Some people think the key for minority students to do well in universities is first of all to learn their own language well. Based on the command of their mother tongue, they can then learn all other subjects including Chinese and English equally well. Do you or do you not agree with this view?
9. What do you think of the importance of each language for the *Yi* students in this college? Or in other words, what's your general view about students' L1, L2 and L3 in terms of their usefulness for their future?

Possible probing questions:

- Does the minority language have a role to play in your studies?
 - Are you disadvantaged at Chinese being used as the medium of instruction?
 - Do you think it is important for minority students to learn English?
10. In your view, do you think the College of the Yi Studies is promoting trilingual education with an effective strategy to develop trilingual students who are very competent in their home minority language, Chinese and reasonably competent in English? Why or why not?
 11. Any comment on how language education can be improved for university minority students in general?

C.3 Topics Involved in the Semi-Structured Interview with the Dean

Context and Design:

1. Could you please first of all briefly say something about yourself and your college?
2. Could you tell me more about the programme - Chinese Minorities Languages and Cultures (the Yi language and English pathways)?

Possible probing questions:

- ✓ What are the initial aims of establishing such a programme?
 - ✓ What were the design processes for the programme? What factors influenced these processes?
3. What factors lead to the effective implementation of trilingual education in this University? What factors hinder it?

Modes of Delivery:

1. How is the curriculum organised?

Possible probing questions:

- ✓ What teaching and learning activities are used to implement the policy?
- ✓ What factors influence the choices made?

2. How are the Yi (L1), Chinese (L2) and English (L3) used and taught in the programme?

Possible probing questions:

- ✓ When (from which Grade)?
- ✓ As far as you know, what are the mediums of instruction for language subjects and content subjects respectively for the programme?
- ✓ How (how many teaching sessions for L1, L2, and L3 respectively per week for each year)?

✓ Do students cope with the languages equally well?

3. How is students' competence in each language assessed in the College? What are the assessment criteria?

Possible probing questions:

✓ L1, Yi?

✓ L2, Chinese?

✓ L3, English?

Outcomes:

1. Have the intended outcomes been achieved? Are there any unintended outcomes which have occurred? What factors have affected the success or failure of these outcomes in achieving the aims of the programme?

2. Have the aims of the programme ever been reviewed and amended? If yes, when and how? What are the new aims of the programme?

3. Compared with other similar trilingual education models in Southwestern China, what are the strengths and weaknesses of your programme in your view?

Sustainability

1. To what extent have practices that can bring about trilingualism become institutionalized (i.e. embedded in daily work and systems)? What factors have affected the success or failure of institutionalization?

2. To what extent has the human capacity to bring about trilingualism been developed (e.g. through on-going professional teacher development, staff recruitment, students and teachers awareness training)? What factors have affected the success or failure of human capacity building?

3. Some people say that in modern China, in order to survive in the job market, the most important language for minority students is Chinese. What do you think of this comment?

Possible probing questions:

- ✓ Others say the most important language minority students should develop is first of all their own home language. What do you think?
- ✓ What are the advantages and disadvantages to use Chinese as the primary medium of instruction?
- ✓ Do you think it is important for them to learn English?

4. What's your general view about minority university students' L1, L2 and L3 in terms of their usefulness for their future?

5. Any comment on how language education can be improved for the minority university students in general?

Appendix D: Ethics



Researcher: JIE LIU

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Principal Supervisor: Prof. Viv Edwards

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Joint Supervisor: Dr. Daguo Li

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D.1 Student Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project on *Trilingual education model of Chinese university minority students in China: A case study.*

What is the study?

The project is part of a Ph.D dissertation that I am undertaking at the Institute of Education, University of Reading in the UK. The aim is to identify both challenges and good practice in the trilingual (Chinese, *Yi* and English) education programme offered to the *Yi* students at the College of the *Yi* Studies in Southwest University for Nationalities (SWUN).

Why have I been chosen to take part?

You have been invited to take part in the project because you have been identified as having chosen *Chinese Minorities Languages and Cultures* as your major but through both the *Yi* and English language pathways at your college.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you participate. You may also withdraw at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting the researcher and her supervisors using the details above.

What will happen if I take part?

The research will be conducted in four main stages:

- All the students in your college (the *Yi* and English pathways only) will complete a simple questionnaire which is aimed at helping the researcher know some basic linguistic background of you in order to choose her participants. This should take about 3 minutes to complete.
- Based on the information provided in the questionnaires, such as gender and your previous learning history, some of you will be invited to take part in the following activities. A visual narrative method will be adopted. This means you will be invited to draw images or write words along a long 'River of Life', telling the researcher about your use of language in the past, at the present or how you might like to see things happen in the future.
- Focus group interviews involving 4 to 7 students from your year group will be conducted next. In the interview, you will be asked about your learning experiences and perception towards this programme. This interview will last about 45 to 60 minutes. With your permission, this interview will be recorded and transcribed.
- Follow-up River of Life interviews, lasting about 30 to 45 minutes and based on the activities above, will be conducted with a small representative sample of students previously interviewed. With your permission, this interview will be recorded and transcribed.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information you give will remain confidential and will only be seen by the researcher and her supervisors. You will not be identified in the final dissertation although some of your responses will be used in it in an anonymised form. Taking part will in no way influence the grades you receive on your course. Information will not be shared with teachers.

Participants in similar studies have found it interesting and useful to reflect on how they learn and how they think about their languages. It is also hoped that

the information gained will help to improve trilingual education programmes for minority students in the future.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published.

The data will be presented in my dissertation and possibly in subsequent academic publications. Upon request, a summary of the research findings in Chinese can be emailed to you.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

Where can I get more information?

I would like to thank you in advance for your willingness to join in the project. If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors: Prof. Viv Edwards and Dr. Daguo Li.

If you agree to take part in the project, please complete and sign the attached consent form. Thank you for your time.

Researcher: JIE LIU

Email: jie.liu@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Telephone: +44 7784622342

Principal Supervisor: Prof. Viv Edwards

Email: v.k.edwards@reading.ac.uk

Joint supervisor: Dr. Daguo Li

Email: d.li@reading.ac.uk

D.2 Teacher Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project on *Trilingual education model of Chinese university minority students in China: A case study.*

What is the study?

The project is part of a Ph.D dissertation that I am undertaking at the Institute of Education, University of Reading in the UK. The aim is to identify both challenges and good practice in the trilingual (Chinese, Yi and English) education programme offered to the Yi students at the College of the Yi Studies in Southwest University for Nationalities (SWUN).

Why have I been chosen to take part?

You have been invited to take part in the project because you have been identified as a teacher on the project.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you participate. You may also withdraw at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting the researcher and her supervisors using the details above.

What will happen if I take part?

The research you will be involved has three main stages:

- All the teachers will be invited to complete a simple questionnaire which is aimed at helping me have some basic information related to your teaching, such as which subject you teach and what is the medium of instruction you adopt. This questionnaire should take about 3 minutes to complete.
- You will be invited to take part in a focus group interview with 4 to 5 other teachers, lasting about 45 to 60 minutes. With your permission, this interview will be recorded and transcribed.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

The information you give will remain confidential and will only be seen by the researcher and her supervisors. You will not be identified in the final dissertation although some of your responses will be used in it in an anonymised form. Taking part will in no way influence the assessment you receive on your course.

Participants in similar studies have found it interesting and useful to reflect on the challenges which face them in their teaching. The findings will be used to help improve the programme.

What will happen to the data?

Any data collected will be held in strict confidence and no real names will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Upon request, a summary of the research findings in Chinese can be emailed to you. I sincerely hope that you will agree to take part in the project.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

Where can I get more information?

I would like to thank you in advance for your willingness to join in the project. If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors: Prof. Viv Edwards and Dr. Daguo Li.

If you agree to take part in the project, please complete and sign the attached consent form. Thank you for your time.

Researcher: JIE LIU
Email: jie.liu@pgr.reading.ac.uk
Telephone: +44 7784622342

Principal Supervisor: Prof. Viv Edwards
Email: v.k.edwards@reading.ac.uk
Joint Supervisor: Dr. Daguo Li
Email: d.li@reading.ac.uk

D.3 Dean Information Sheet

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project on *Trilingual education model of Chinese university minority students in China: A case study.*

What is the study?

The project is part of a Ph.D dissertation that I am undertaking at the Institute of Education, University of Reading in the UK. The aim is to identify both challenges and good practice in the trilingual (Chinese, *Yi* and English) education programme offered to the *Yi* students at the College of the *Yi* Studies in Southwest University for Nationalities (SWUN).

Why have I and my college been chosen to take part?

You have been invited to take part in the project because you, as the Dean of the college and the founder of the programme, have been identified as a key figure for this programme. The College of the *Yi* Studies has been chosen because of its unique role it is playing in the development of trilingual education in China.

Do I have to take part?

It is entirely up to you whether you participate. You may also withdraw at any time during the project, without any repercussions to you, by contacting the researcher and her supervisors using the details above.

What will happen if I and my college take part?

If you agree and permit for your college to take part,

- You will be invited to have an interview in which you will be asked about the history of setting up the programme in your college, what is your perception of the programme, especially what are the ultimate goals. This interview will last about 60 minutes. With your permission, this interview will be recorded and transcribed.
- Two short questionnaires will be distributed – one to students, the other to teachers – to allow me to select representative samples for further study.
- Based on the questionnaire responses, some of your teachers and students will be invited for interviews and focus group interviews.
- A visual narrative method will be adopted with the students taking part in the focus group discussions. This means students will be invited to draw images or write words along a long ‘River of Life’, telling me what happened in the past, at the present or how they might like to see things happen in the future.
- I will observe 3 lessons for each year of the programme and also some extracurricular activities of the students.
- Follow-up interviews with a representative sample of those taking part in the focus groups will be conducted.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?

Participants in similar studies have found it interesting and useful to reflect on how they run a programme as a police maker. I anticipate that the findings of this study will be of great help in the promotion of a strong model of trilingual education. Also, the information I get from this study may help to improve the curricula for the *Yi* students.

What will happen to the data?

You have kindly agreed in our previous email correspondences, for yourself and the College, to be identified in the final dissertation. Any data collected from

teachers and students will be held in strict confidence and no real names of teachers and students except yours, Aku Wu Wu, will be used in this study or in any subsequent publications. The records of this study will be kept private.

The data will be presented in my dissertation and possibly in subsequent academic publications. Upon request, a summary of the research findings in Chinese will be emailed to you. I sincerely hope that you will agree to take part in the project.

Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

Where can I get more information?

I would like to thank you in advance for your willingness to join in the project. If you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors: Prof. Viv Edwards and Dr. Daguo Li.

If you agree to take part in the project, please complete and sign the attached consent form. Thank you for your time.

Researcher: JIE LIU

Email: jie.liu@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Supervisors: Prof. Viv Edwards and Dr. Daguo Li

Emails: v.k.edwards@reading.ac.uk; d.li@reading.ac.uk

Project Title:

Trilingual education model of Chinese university minority students in China:

A case study

D.4 Student Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet about the project.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered.

I agree to take part in this project.

I agree that any interviews or focus group discussions I take part in can be recorded and transcribed.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Researcher: JIE LIU

Email: jie.liu@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Supervisors: Prof. Viv Edwards and Dr. Daguo Li

Emails: v.k.edwards@reading.ac.uk; d.li@reading.ac.uk

Project Title:

Trilingual education model of Chinese university minority students in China:

A case study

D.5 Teacher Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet about the project.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered.

I agree to take part in the project.

I agree that any interviews or focus group discussions I take part in can be recorded and transcribed.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Researcher: JIE LIU

Email: jie.liu@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Supervisors: Prof. Viv Edwards and Dr. Daguo Li

Emails: v.k.edwards@reading.ac.uk; d.li@reading.ac.uk

Project Title:

Trilingual education model of Chinese university minority students in China:

A case study

D.6 Dean Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet about the project.

I understand what the purpose of the project is and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered.

I agree to take part this project.

I agree my college to be chosen as the sample of the case study.

I agree that my interview can be recorded and transcribed.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E: YEC Curriculum of CYS, 2013

(College of Yi Studies, 2013) (excerpt)

1. Programme aims

Responding to the big demand of Yi, Chinese and English multilingual talents in minority regions of the western China, this programme strengthens students' training for the relevant knowledge and skills such as in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation of Yi, Chinese and English, and basic knowledge of computing science. Through a systematic study, it aims to cultivate well-rounded talents, with high quality, in Yi language and culture. They are expected to have good interpretation and translation skills in Yi to/from Chinese, a solid basic foundation knowledge of English and a good command of Yi, Chinese and English. Graduates should also have a wide range of knowledge about their own major, be able to adjust quickly as well as to take jobs such as teaching, researching, executive administration and business translation in sectors of cultural education, international trade and business, press and publishing, international translation in minority regions of the western China.

2. Requirement for credits:

Platform	Generic Knowledge		A&H, and Sciences	Specialised Knowledge		Practices & Placement		minimum total credits required
	Compulsory	Optional		Compulsory	Optional	Compulsory	Optional	
Module Code								
Credits	26	10	24	69	28	16	0	173

3. Areas core modules subject to:

Introduction to literature, Introduction to linguistics, Minority languages and literature, Modern Chinese, Chinese modern literature, Foreign literature, Ancient Chinese, Writing.

4. Modules (excerpts)

		Module Title	Credit	Weekly sessions	Total sessions	Starting & ending week
		Specialized Knowledge Platform	Compulsory	Modern Yi Language (I)	3.0	4.0-0.0
Modern Yi Language (II)	4.0			4.0-0.0	68	1-17
Modern Chinese Language (I)	3.0			4.0-0.0	52	5-17
Modern Chinese Language (II)	3.0			3.0-0.0	51	1-17
Introduction to Linguistics	4.0			4.0-0.0	68	1-17
Ancient Chinese Language	4.0			4.0-0.0	68	1-17
Linguistics of Yi	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17
Essential English (I)	5.0			7.0-0.0	91	5-17
Essential English (II)	4.0			5.0-0.0	105	1-17
Essential English (III)	3.5			4.0-0.0	68	1-17
Essential English (VI)	3.5			4.0-0.0	68	1-17
Listening Comprehension (I)	2.0			3.0-0.0	39	5-17
Listening Comprehension (II)	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17
Listening Comprehension (III)	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17
Listening Comprehension (VI)	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17
Spoken English (I)	2.0			3.0-0.0	39	5-17
Spoken English (II)	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17
Spoken English (III)	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17
Spoken English (VI)	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17
English Grammar	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17
Chinese Writing (I)	3.0			3.0-0.0	51	1-17
Chinese Writing (II)	3.0			3.0-0.0	51	1-17
Introduction to Yi Literature	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17
English Writing (I)	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17
English Writing (II)	2.0			2.0-0.0	34	1-17

		Module Title	Credit	Weekly sessions	Total sessions	Starting & ending week
Specialized Knowledge Platform	Optional	Chinese Mandarin	2.0	3.0-0.0	39	5-17
		Philology (文献学)	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Advanced English	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		English Lexis	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Yi Philosophy	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		British and American Culture	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Business English	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Yi script information processing	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Culture of Chinese vocabularies	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		History of the Yi	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Comparison of Yi Varieties	4.0	4.0-0.0	68	1-17
		Chinese minority literature	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Selection of Yi folk literature	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Documentation of the Yi	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		World minority literature	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Education	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Yi language and culture	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Educational psychology	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Yi and Chinese scripts and cultures	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		The Yi folk literature	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Modern literature in China	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Yi poetry	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Selection of ancient Chinese literature	4.0	4.0-0.0	68	1-17
		Culture anthropology	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Foreign literature	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Comparison of Chinese and English languages	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17

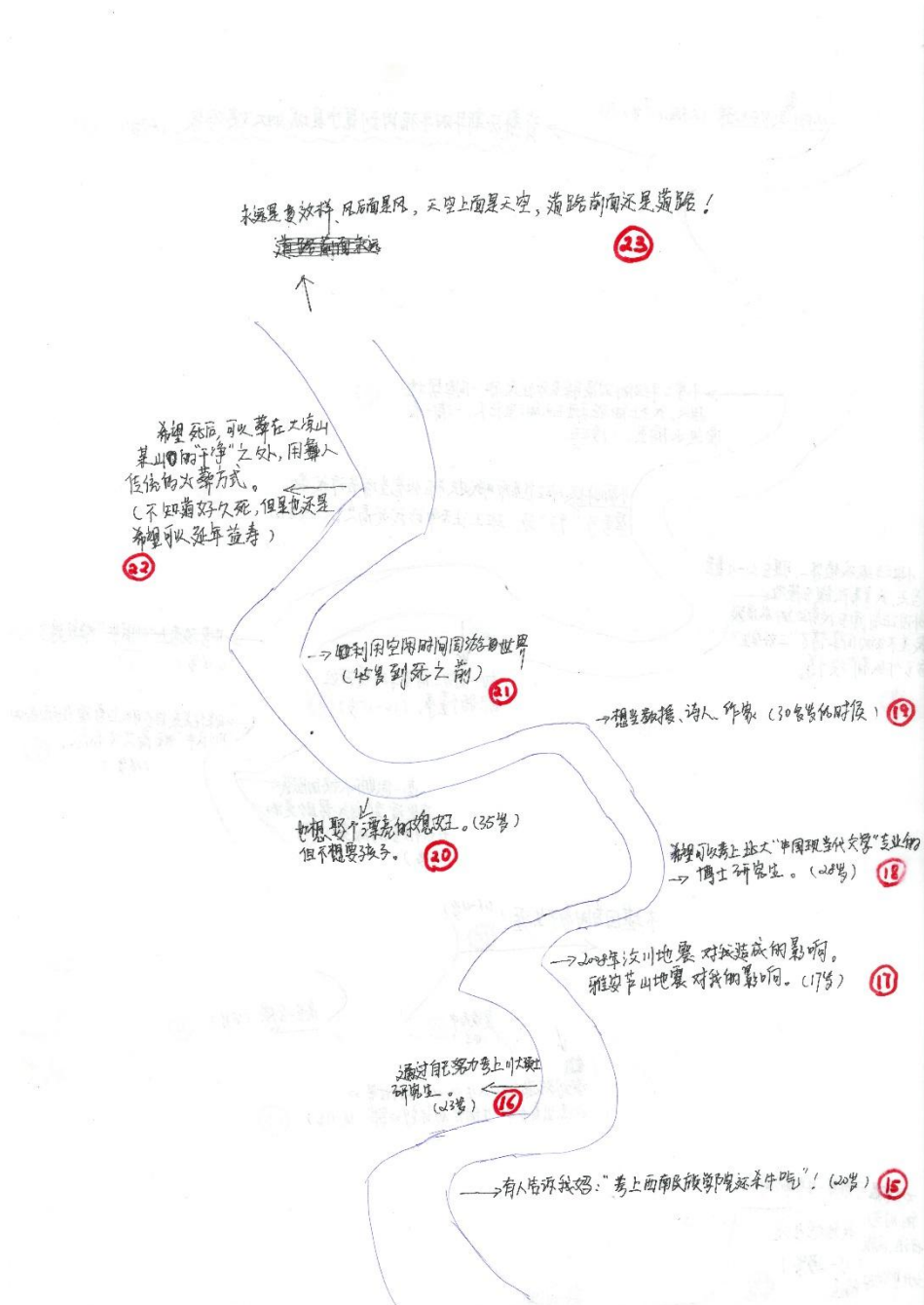
Arts and Humanities/Sciences Platform	Arts and Humanities	Module Title	Credit	Weekly sessions	Total sessions	Starting & ending week
		History of Chinese Literature (I)	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		History of Chinese Literature (II)	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		English Pronunciation	2.0	3.0-0.0	39	5-17
		English Reading	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		English-Chinese Interpretation	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		English-Chinese Translation (I)	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		English-Chinese Translation (II)	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Literature Theory	4.0	4.0-0.0	68	1-17
		Yi Traditional Culture	2.0	2.0-0.0	34	1-17
		Yi Mottos and Proverbs	4.0	4.0-0.0	68	1-17

Appendix F: Model II Students' Self-assessed Yi Language Level

1st year group	Language level	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
	Level 0	4%	6%	9%	21%
	Level 1	11%	13%	40%	38%
	Level 2	34%	36%	36%	35%
	Level 3	28%	26%	13%	6%
	Level 4	23%	19%	2%	0%
2nd year group	Language level	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
	Level 0	2%	2%	23%	25%
	Level 1	14%	14%	25%	32%
	Level 2	23%	32%	34%	34%
	Level 3	36%	29%	14%	7%
	Level 4	25%	23%	4%	2%
3rd year group	Language level	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
	Level 0	3%	5%	3%	11%
	Level 1	6%	26%	8%	40%
	Level 2	31%	40%	26%	31%
	Level 3	31%	26%	29%	14%
	Level 4	29%	3%	34%	3%
4th year group	Language level	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
	Level 0	0%	7%	7%	7%
	Level 1	3%	3%	13%	30%
	Level 2	23%	23%	57%	47%
	Level 3	30%	33%	10%	3%
	Level 4	44%	34%	13%	13%

Appendix G: Images of three River of Life and the Narrative Notes

G.1 River of Life from A Hai



永远是那样，风后面是风，天空上面是天空，道路前面还是道路！

~~道路前面还是道路~~

13



希望死后，可以葬在工凉山
某山“纯净”之处，用彝人
传统的火葬方式。
(不知道好久死，但是我还是
希望可以延年益寿)

22

→ 利用空闲时间周游世界
(45岁到死之前)

21

→ 想当教授、诗人、作家 (30岁退休的时候)

19

想娶一个漂亮的中国女子。(35岁)
但不想要孩子。

20

希望可以考上中文“中国现当代文学”专业的
→ 博士研究生。(28岁)

18

→ 2008年汶川地震对我造成的影响。
雅安芦山地震对我的影响。(17岁)

17

通过自己努力考上川大社
→ 研究生。(23岁)

16

→ 有人告诉我妈：“考上西南民族学院还条件呢！”(20岁)

15

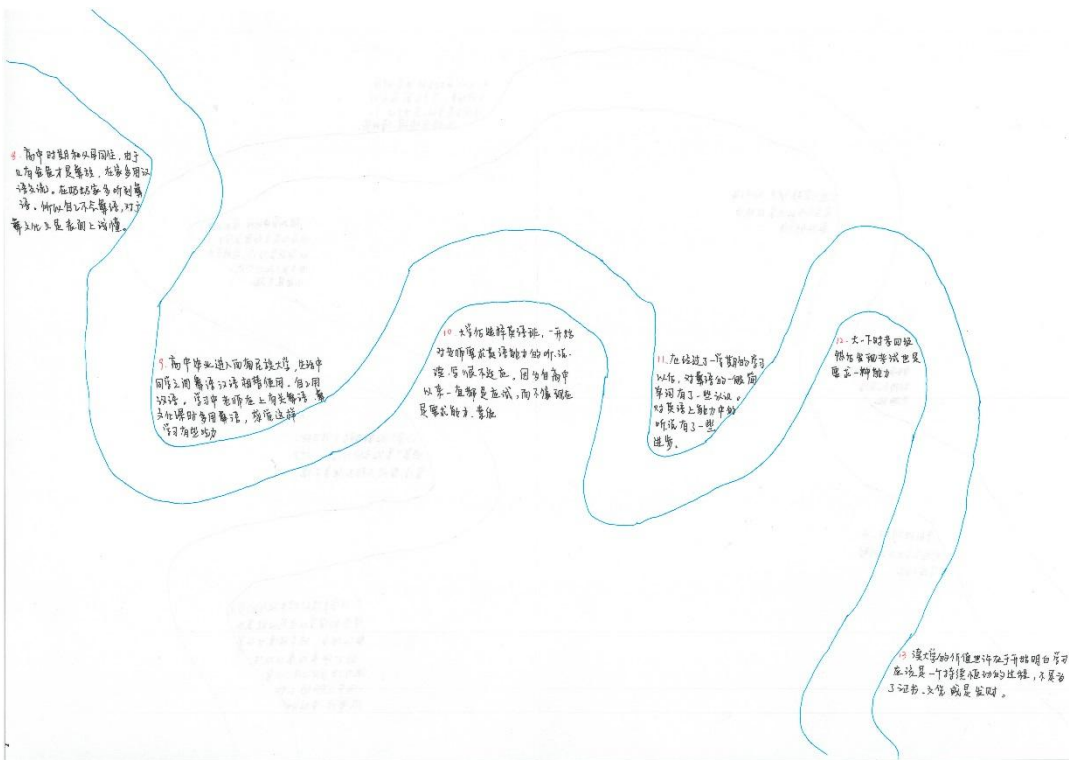
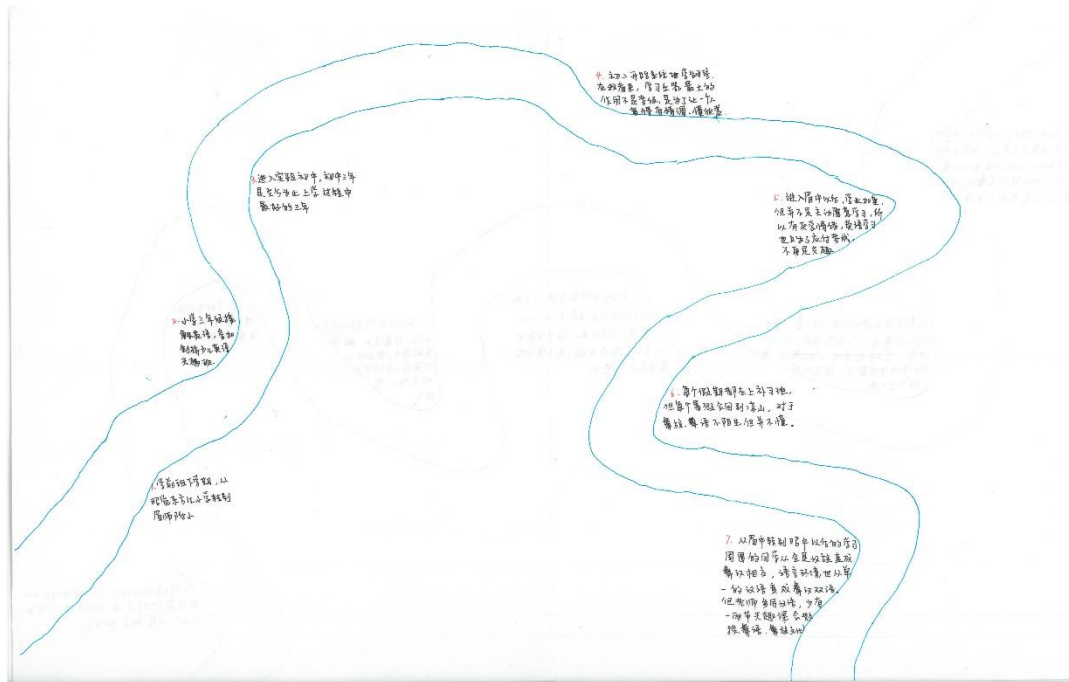
Translation of those narratives at different points:

1. I moved from the village primary school to the town Central Primary School (about 6-7 years old).
2. I delivered some fresh bacon to my elder' aunt's house at the Yi new year (about 6-7 years old).
3. In primary Y2, a music teacher asked me and a peer to help her carry a bucket of water. The filth dropped into the bucket with water (about 7 years old) [It was impressing to A Hai because the teacher blamed him on this].
4. My class teacher of Y4 asked me to see them and marked my math exam paper in front of me. They told me I had scored 93 and they seemed to be more excited than I was.
5. I had the top marks in Y6. On June 1st, the Children's Day, I held the flag in the playground [for an event]. My classmate standing next to me, who had the same grades as mine, won the "Three Best Student" prize. But I was awarded nothing.
6. My grades were very good in the 1st and 2nd year of junior middle school. I was very sensible and well-behaved (14-15 years old).
7. I failed the entrance exams for Liangshan Minzu Middle School. I was very sad (16 years old).
8. My mum used her connections and paid fees so I could go to Liangshan Minzu Middle School in Xichang. I was excited, as well as anxious (16 years old).
9. In the first year holidays in the Senior Middle School, I happened to read the book, *The Scroll Marked*, which talked about self-help (16 years old).
10. Senior middle school which was unbearable to look back (16-18 years old).
11. I failed in the entrance exams to Colleges and Universities (18 years old)
12. I repeated the 3rd year in senior middle school (18 years old)
13. I read the books of Lu Yao, *Life*, *The Ordinary World*, *The Action Plan of Brilliant Young People*, etc. (18-19 years old).
14. My university life (19-23 years old) may be the happiest time of my life: Mother tongue, and the establishment of [my ethnic] cultural identity.

15. Someone told my mum, “Your son was just admitted to SWUN. Could it be worth killing a cow²¹ to celebrate” (20 years old)?
16. I was admitted to the graduate school through my own efforts (23 years old)
17. The impact of Wenchuan Earthquake and Yaan Earthquake on me (17 years old)
18. I hope I can be admitted to the doctorate programme for *Chinese Modern Literature* in Peking University one day (28 years old).
19. Dream of being a professor, poet, writer one day (about 30 years old).
20. I also want to marry a pretty wife but I don't want any kids (35 years old).
21. Travel the world in spare time (45 years old until death).
22. I hope after I die I can be buried somewhere “clean” in Liangshan and be burnt in a Yi traditional funeral (I don't know when I will die but I hope I can have a long and healthy life).
23. Forever is forever; Wind will follow wind; Sky is above the sky; and ahead of the road is the road!

²¹ In Chinese rural areas, people will kill poultry, pigs, cows, etc. for a big meal to celebrate something significant.

G.2 River of Life from Xiao Fang

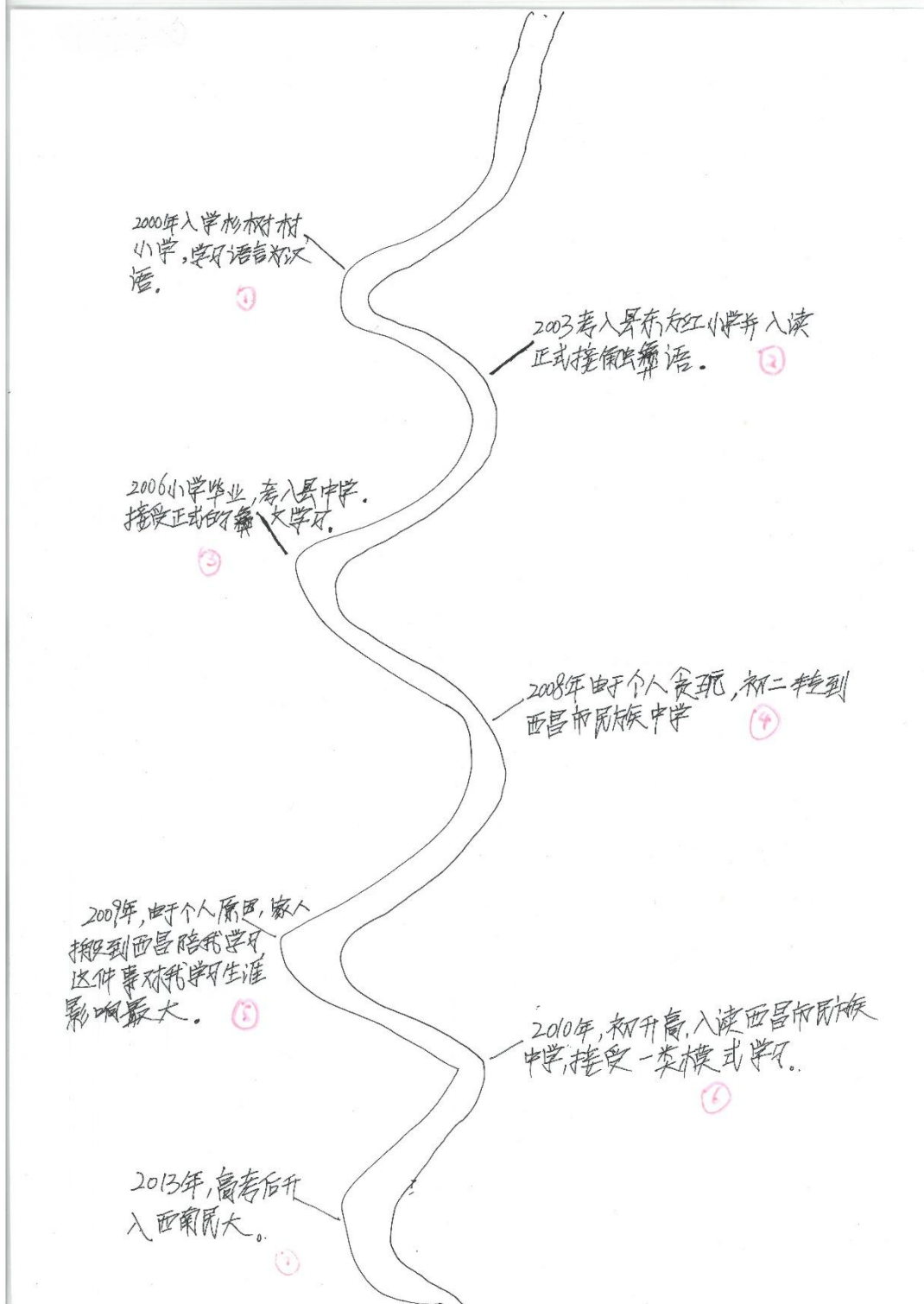


Translation of those narratives at different points

1. At the 2nd semester of the preschool education, I moved from Dongfang Hong primary school at Zhaojue to the Primary school attached to Meishan Teacher's College.
2. I started to have contact with English at the 3rd year of primary school, participating in Cambridge Children's English.
3. I entered the Experimental Middle School. The three years spent for Junior Middle School was the best part in my student life.
4. I started to learn piano playing from the 2nd year in Junior Middle School. To me, the best significance of learning a musical instrument is to enable us to appreciate and be sensational, rather than taking qualification exams.
5. After entering the Meishan Middle School, I was burdened with study. Since I did not take the initiative to learning, I disliked studies. English learning was just for exams rather than for interests.
6. I went to tuition schools every holiday. But on summer holidays, I would go back to Liangshan. The Yi and Yi language were therefore not strange to me though I did not understand any.
7. After I moved from Meishan Senior Middle School to Zhaojue Senior Middle School, all my peers changed from the Han to a mixture of both the Han and the Yi. The language environment was also changed from monolingual Han to bilingual. But the primary MoI was Han. There was a couple of Yi and Yi cultural related sessions.
8. I lived with my parents again at the final year of secondary education. Since only my dad was Yi, we spoke Han most of time at home. At Nai Nai's home, I often heard rather than spoke Yi. Therefore, I couldn't speak Yi and knew Yi culture at a superficial level.
9. Entering SWUN, peers spoke bilingually in life but I used Han Chinese. In study, teachers often used Yi for Yi language subject and Yi culture-related courses which made me feel very challenging to understand.
10. After I joined an English programme in SWUN, teachers required the four skills of English which I did not feel adjusted to. This was because since the senior high school, the learning was exam-oriented. The current one expects quality and capabilities.
11. After one semester study in [YEC programme], I had some basic knowledge of some basic Yi words. There was some improvement in English listening comprehension and speaking.

12. In the 2nd semester of my first year, I took the Band 4 English exam which let me feel that exams also require skills.
13. The value of studying in a university is probably that [we] gradually realize that learning is a continuous and dynamic process. It is not for the certificates, diplomas or making a fortune.

G.3 River of Life from Hei Ga



Translation of those narratives at different points:

1. In 2000, I entered Shanshu Village Primary School. Han Chinese was taught by [Yi teachers].
2. In 2003, I passed the entry exams and studied in Zhaojue Dongfang Hong Primary School (county level) and had the initial contact with Yi.
3. In 2006, I graduated from the primary school and entered the middle school at county level. That's the beginning of the time when I started learning Yi formally.
4. In 2008, because I was not serious to my study, I was moved to the junior sector of Xichang Minzu Middle School in the 2nd year [by my family].
5. In 2009, because of my [underperformance in study], my whole family moved to Xichang city in order to monitor my study. This incident had the greatest impact on me in my student life.
6. In 2010, I joined the senior sector of Xichang Minzu Middle School and received Model I education.
7. In 2013, I entered SWUN.

Appendix H: Educational Background of the Three Students

1. A Hai's educational background

Period	Education Level	School	Teachers MoI used	Age	Notes
1994-1995	Y1 (maybe just one semester)	Ze Gu village primary school in Xide County (which only has three year groups in total from Y1 to Y3)	Only one Yi teacher; Yi and Sichuan variety	4 years old	
1995-1997	Repeated Y1 twice	Shengou Central Primary School in Xide County	N/A	5-6 years old	He moved to live with grandparents at Xide.
1997-2003	Y1 to Y6 in primary education	The same school	Han and Yi teachers taught in their own mother tongue but all Chinese subjects were taught by Yi teachers.	7-12 years old	
2003-2006	Junior Middle School	Xide Middle School (mainly Yi students)	The majority were Han teachers. Both Han and Yi teachers' primary MoI was Chinese.	13-15 years old	
2006-2009	Senior Middle School	Liangshan Prefecture Minzu Middle School (boarding school)	Very little Yi was used by Yi teachers.	16-18 years old	He moved to Xichang city from Xide county
2009-2010	Repeated the 3rd year of the senior secondary education	The same school		19 years old	
2010 to 2014	tertiary	SWUN	Han and Yi teachers; MoIs include Chinese, Yi and English but Chinese is still the primary one in most cases.	20-23 years old	Yi subject is available.

2. Xiao Fang's educational background

Period	Education Level	School	Teachers MoI used	Age	Notes
1999-2000	Reception	The first semester was in Dongfang Hong Primary School in Zhaojue County but she moved to Meishan city from the 2nd semester.	N/A	5 years old	She moved to Meishan city from Zhaojue county, living alone with her mum's parents who were Han.
2000-2006	Y1 to Y6	The primary school attached to Meishan Teacher's College	Han teachers; Chinese only	6-11 years old	
2006-2009	The 1st to the 3rd year	Shiyan Middle School of Meishan, a Han dominant city (junior) (with Han peers)		12-14 years old	
2009-2012	The 1st and the 2nd years	Meishan Middle School (with Han peers) (senior)		15-16 years old	
2012-2013	The 3rd year	Zhaojue Middle School (senior) (mainly Yi peers)	The majority were Han teachers. Both Han and Yi teachers' MoI was mainly Chinese.	17 years old	She moved back to her birthplace, Zhaojue county. Yi taster sessions were available.
2013-date	The first year	SWUN	Han and Yi teachers; MoIs include Chinese, Yi and English but Chinese is still the primary one in most cases.	18 years old	Yi subject is available.

3. Hei Ga's educational background

Period	Education Level	School	Teachers MoI used	Age	Notes
2000-2003	Y 1 to Y3	Shanshu Village Primary School (village level), Zhaojue County	Only Yi teachers; Yi (primary MoI) and Chinese	8-10 years old	
2003-2006	Y4 to Y6	Dong fanghong Primary School (county level), Zhaojue County	Only Yi teachers; Yi and Chinese (primary MoI)	11-13 years old	Yi subject is available
2006-2008	The 1st and 2nd year	Zhaojue Middle School (junior) (with more Han peers)	The majority were Han teachers. Both Han and Yi teachers' MoI was mainly Chinese. Yi was mainly used in Yi subject by Yi teachers.	14-15 years old	
2008-2009	Repeated the 2nd year	Xichang Minzu Middle School (junior)		16 years old	
2009-2010	The 3rd year	Xichang Minzu Middle School (junior)		17 years old	
2010-2013	The 1st year to the 3rd year	Xichang Minzu Middle School (senior)		18-20 years old	
2013-2014	The first year	SWUN	Han and Yi teachers; MoIs include Chinese, Yi and English but Chinese is still the primary one in most cases.	21 years old	

Appendix I: Self-assessment Reports from the Three Students

1. Self-assessment report from A Hai

	Yi	Chinese	English	Other
Listening	4	4	2	
Speaking	3	3	2	
Reading	2	4	2	
Writing	1	3	2	

2. Self-assessment report from Xiao Fang

	Yi	Chinese	English	Other
Listening	0	4	2	
Speaking	0	4	2	
Reading	0	4	2	
Writing	0	4	2	

3. Self-assessment report from Hei Ga

	Yi	Chinese	English	Other
Listening	4	3	2	
Speaking	4	3	2	
Reading	4	3	2	
Writing	4	3	2	

0 ---- No/little knowledge at all

1 ---- Poor

2 ---- Acceptable

3 ---- Fluent

4 ---- Excellent

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