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

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

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**Technical Paper No.5**

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**Questionnaire and Interview with  
Parents**

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

This research project offers a holistic and descriptive account of trilingualism and trilingual education in China. Policy changes have led to the introduction of English language teaching and learning in primary schools. These reforms pose particular challenges to communities in ethnic minority areas, where Putonghua often competes with the minority language, and English is often taught in under-resourced schools with teachers with the requisite training in short supply.

The project involves extensive and intensive research comprising investigations into school- and community-level practices, policies and perceptions relating to trilingualism in such key regions as Xinjiang, Yunnan, Inner Mongolia, Sichuan, Gansu, Guizhou, Guangxi, Qinghai, Jilin, Tibet and Guangdong. Using first-hand data collected from each region, the researchers examine language policies and curricula, as well as language allocation in the classroom and in the community, and analyse them in their specific historical, socio-political, demographical, economic, geographical and cultural contexts.

A distinctive feature of the project is its presentation of a new methodology and approach to researching such phenomena. This methodology encompasses policy analysis, community language profiles, as well as school-based field work in order to provide rich data that facilitates multilevel analysis of policy-in-context.

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

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

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# Questionnaire and Interview with Parents

## Introduction

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

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

## Factors Shaping the Trilingual Education Models

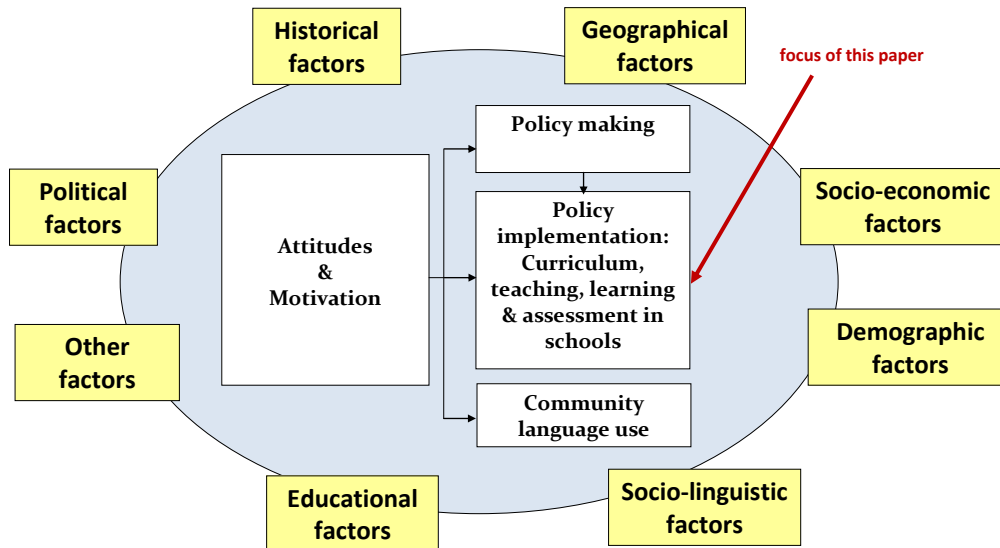
What factors shape and sustain the various models of trilingual education? This question denotes a particular view of education policy—that it emerges from, and forms part of broader contexts.

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

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

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

Figure 1—Conceptual framework



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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Questionnaire and Interview Protocol**

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

Parents are key stakeholders and informants. They make decisions on language use at home and in the community, and they can be influential in choices made by the schools in terms of language education policy. The questionnaire allows the research team to collect quantitative (and to some extent qualitative) data on a range of set issues related to the main research questions. It is advisable to conduct the questionnaire first, as it can produce lines of inquiry for the interviews.

Semi-structured interviews offer the possibility for the research team to deepen our understanding of the perspectives of parents—how they view the different languages, how they want their children to be educated, the language learning outcomes and the life chances accruing to their children that they

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observe, and so on. In a semi-structured interview, there are a number of guiding questions that cover important aspects of the research project, but the researcher should feel free to ask supplementary questions on interesting aspects that arise as the interview proceeds.

Step 1 – Identify and approach the parent to seek his/her consent to participate in the study. The consent should be in writing but—if the informant is reluctant to sign the consent form—an oral agreement is acceptable.

Step 2 – Distribute the questionnaire and allow the informant sufficient time to answer the questions thoughtfully. Handle any queries over the wording of the questions.

Step 3 – Analyse the questionnaire data and highlight any key themes that emerge. Make a note of any interesting aspects that you could explore further in the interviews.

Step 4 – Approach a small number of the parents (selecting those who look articulate as research subjects and are willing to chat to you). With consent, conduct the interviews with them in appropriate (comfortable, non-threatening) venues, using the guiding questions below.

Step 5 – Analyse the interview data as soon as possible, ideally soon after each interview (not necessarily transcribing them, which is time consuming). Whenever necessary, conduct follow-up interviews with the same parents if there are further points that arise from the analysis.

## TRILINGUALISM QUESTIONNAIRE – PARENTS

We are a group of researchers conducting a research project on language education, including minority home language, Chinese and English, for schools dominated by minority pupils in China. Your views on language education are what we wish to study. We assure you that your personal identity will remain confidential. So, please feel free to give the most honest answers to the questions in this survey. The data collected from this survey will be used for research purpose only.

### Part I – Something about You and Your Child(ren) (Please write short answers or tick the boxes)

- Your Gender: Male  Female  Ethnic background: .....
- Highest education received: Primary School  Junior Middle School  Senior Middle School  Technical School  University or above
- Age range: 25 or below  26 to 35  36 to 45  46 and above
- How good are you in these languages:

	Fluent	OK	Limited	No knowledge at all
Chinese				
Minority language				
English				
Other				

- Name and place of your child(ren)'s school: .....
- How old are your child(ren): First Child ..... Second Child ..... Third Child .....
- Is the school dominated by children of a minority group? Yes  No   
If yes, which minority group? .....

### Part II – How much do you know about your child(ren)'s school (Please tick the boxes or write short answers)

1. Does the school teach minority language to minority pupils?  
Yes  No
2. Does the school use a minority language to teach any school subject(s)?  
Yes  No
3. Is Chinese used as the only language to teach most or all school subjects in the school?  
Yes  No

4. Is English taught to minority pupils in the school?

Yes  No

5. Do you find that the school attaches sufficient importance to minority pupils' home language and their culture?

Yes  No

6. Do you find that the school treat minority pupils in the same way as they do with Han pupils?

Yes  No

If the answer to 6 is No, in what way they are treated differently?

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**Part III – Your Views on Languages and Language Education** (Please read the statement in the left-hand column and circle the number in right-hand column that best reflects your view. 1 = strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Not sure; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree)

Statements	Strongly disagree ..... Strongly agree				
1. Minority language teaching and learning should be promoted more seriously in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Chinese language teaching and learning should be further enhanced in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
3. English language teaching and learning should be improved in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
4. More teachers of minority nationality should be employed by this school because they know minority pupils' needs better.	1	2	3	4	5
5. More teachers of Han nationality should be employed by this school because they are generally better than minority teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
6. More equipment such as computers and language labs should be provided for the school.	1	2	3	4	5
7. There should be more schools with pupils of mixed nationalities so that they integrate better.	1	2	3	4	5
8. There should be different syllabuses for Han and minority pupils, even in the same school, because their learning abilities differ.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Minority children should know their own minority language first, then Chinese and English.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Minority pupils cannot learn English as well as Han pupils. So English should be dropped from the school curriculum for them.	1	2	3	4	5

Please write any comments on how to improve the practice of the school attended by your child(ren)





.....  
.....

Please write any other comments here .....

.....  
.....

**Thanks for Your Time!!!**

**INTERVIEW WITH PARENTS**  
**(For Semi-Structured Interviews with Parents)**

Date of Interview: .....

Language used for the interview: Chinese  Minority Language  Other. Specify .....

Thanks for your time. I hope our conversation is informal and casual. Please do feel relaxed. Though I have some questions for you, you can also ask any question during our talk. We understand that this area, region or country is dominated, or has a large ... minority population. We are doing some research on the languages minority pupils learn and use in schools in this region. The languages we talk about include pupils' home language, Chinese and English. ...

Questions:

**1. Could you please first of all say something about yourself?**

- Gender: ..... Ethnic background: .....
- Highest education received: .....
- Children at local school(s): .....
- Age range: 25 or below  26 to 35  36 to 45  46 and above
- Linguistic background:

	Fluent	OK	Limited	No knowledge at all
Chinese				
Minority language				
English				
Other				

**2. Could you please say something about your area or village and the minority groups?**

- Population: .....
- Percentage of people who are of ethnic minority(ies): .....
- Percentage of people who are ethnic Chinese: .....
- Economic conditions: .....
- Geographic conditions: .....

**3. What language do you speak to your child(ren)?**

**Possible probing questions:**

- **Why your own language, or why not?**

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4. Is the home language (L1) of the minority pupils used and taught in schools where your children go?

Possible probing questions:

- Why or why not?
- And if yes, how?)

5. How is Standard Chinese (L2) used and taught in these schools?

Possible probing questions:

- Can minority pupils handle school subjects in L2 as well as Chinese children?
- Is there policy for cases where minority pupils lag behind? If yes, what?

6. Do the schools offer English (L3) to minority pupils?

Possible probing questions:

- When (from which Grade)?
- How (how many lessons per week)?
- Do minority pupils follow the same syllabus as the majority Han children?
- Do they cope with the language equally well?

7. What do you think of the importance of each language for minority pupils in this region or country?

Possible probing questions:

- Does the minority language have a role to play in their studies?
- Are they disadvantaged at Chinese being used as the medium of instruction? Or is their Chinese as competent as the majority Han children?
- Do you think it is important for them to learn English?

8. How is the competence in each language assessed in the schools?

Possible probing questions:

- L1, the minority language?
- L2, Chinese?
- L3, English?

9. What's your general view about minority pupils' L1, L2 and L3 in terms of their usefulness for their future?

10. Any comment on how language education can be improved for the minority pupils in this region or county, or for minority pupils in general?

### 三语教学调查问卷—父母

我们是研究小组的成员，正在进行一项针对于中国少数民族学校少数民族学生的母语、汉语及英语语言教学的调查研究。我们希望了解一下您对当前语言教学的看法。我们保证您的个人信息不会外泄给他人。因此，请您在我们随后的调查问卷中给与您最真诚的答复。此次调查所收集的资料仅用于研究目的。

#### 第一部分—关于您和您的子女的基本信息（请您简要回答或是在□里画对勾）

- 您的性别: 男性  女性  民族: .....
- 您目前最高学历: 小学  初中  高中  职业技术学校  大学或更高学历
- 年龄: 25 岁以上  26 岁到 35 岁  36 岁到 45 岁  46 岁以上
- 您对下列语言的熟练程度:

	流利	一般	有限	不会
汉语				
少数民族语言				
英语				
其他语言				

- 您子女的姓名及学校所在地: .....
- 您子女的年龄: 第一子女..... 第二子女..... 第三子女.....
- 子女所在学校是否由少数民族构成?  
是  否

如果是，哪个少数民族? .....

**第二部分—您对子女所在学校了解多少？（请您简要回答或是在□里画对勾）**

7. 学校是否向少数民族学生教授少数民族语言？  
是□ 否□
8. 学校是否用少数民族语言教授学校开设的所有课程？  
是□ 否□
9. 是否用汉语作为唯一语言来教授大多数或者所有的校设课程？  
是□ 否□
10. 学校是否向少数民族学生开设英语课？  
是□ 否□
11. 您认为学校是否足够地重视少数民族学生的民族语言和文化？  
是□ 否□
12. 您认为学校在对待少数民族学生和汉族学生方面是否是兼顾公平？  
是□ 否□

如果第 6 题答案选择“否”，有哪些不同？ .....

**第三部分—您对语言和语言教育的观点（请阅读左栏的声明并且用圆圈标记相应右栏中体现自己观点的数字。1=完全反对；2=不同意；3=不太确信；4=同意；5=完全赞同）**

观点	完全反对.....完全赞同				
1. 少数民族教育与学习应该在学校里受到更认真的对待。	1	2	3	4	5
2. 汉语教育与学习应该在学校里得到进一步加强。	1	2	3	4	5
3. 英语教育与学习应该在学校里得到深层次的提高。	1	2	3	4	5

4.学校应该聘用更多的少数民族教师，因为他们能更好的了解学生的需求。	1	2	3	4	5
5.学校应该聘用更多的汉族教师，因为他们的英语能力总体要好于同龄的少数民族群体。	1	2	3	4	5
6.学校应该具备更多的设备，如计算机和语言实验室。	1	2	3	4	5
7.鼓励更多的学校招收不同民族的学生，这能促进他们彼此间的融合沟通。	1	2	3	4	5
8.对汉族和少数民族学生，即使是在同一学校，也应该采取不同类型的教学大纲，因为他们的学习能力有差异。	1	2	3	4	5
9.少数民族学生应该首先学会自己的语言，然后才是汉语及英语。	1	2	3	4	5
10.少数民族学生不可能像汉族学生一样学英语学的那么好，所以英语应该从学校所开设的课程中删除。	1	2	3	4	5

请您对关于如何提高子女所在学校效绩实施方面提出自己的观点

.....  
 .....

请在此补充说明其他观点.....

.....  
 .....

**再次感谢您的参与!!!**

## 对父母的采访

采访的日期

采访所使用的语言:汉语 少数民族语言 其他

感谢您抽出时间接受我的采访。尽管在我们的谈话过程中我会提出一些问题，您也可以向我提出一些问题，但是我们的谈话是非正式的，随意的，请放松。据我了解这一地区很多人都是少数民族。我们正在对这一地区的少数民族学生在校中的语言学习以及使用情况进行调研。我们谈论的语言包括：学生们在家里所使用的语言，汉语以及英语。

问题：

1.首先您可否介绍一下您的一些个人信息？

性别：            民族：

最高学历：

在当地学校就读的孩子：

年龄范围： 25 岁以下 26—35 岁 36—45 岁 46 以上

语言背景：

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

2. 您能否介绍一下你所在的地区或是村庄以及这一地区的少数民族呢？

人口：

少数民族所占比例：

汉族所占比例：

经济状况：

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地理条件：

3. 您与孩子交流时使用什么语言？

进一步的探讨性问题：

为什么使用或不用你们自己的语言？

4. 在您的孩子所在的学校是否教授您们在家里所使用的语言？

进一步的探讨性问题：

为什么或为什么不？

假如答案是的话，请问他们是如何教授此种语言的？

5. 在此地区的学校中标准汉语是如何教授的？

进一步的探讨性问题：

少数民族的学生和汉族学生是否上同样的课程？

如果少数民族学生落后的话，是否有任何对策？如果有，他们是？

6. 少数民族的孩子在学校上英语课吗？

进一步的探讨性问题：

什么时候开始上？（从几年级开始）

怎么上？（每周多少学时）

少数民族的孩子所用的教学大纲于大部分汉族孩子一样嘛？

他们把握语言的能力一样好吗？

7. 在这个地区你认为对于少数民族的学生来说，每种语言有什么样的价值？

进一步的探讨性问题：

少数民族语言在他们的学习过程中起了什么作用？

汉语作为教学的媒体少数民族学生是否处于劣势呢？他们的汉语能力跟汉族学生们一样吗？

你认为学习英语对于少数民族学生来说重要吗？

8. 在学校每种语言能力是如何进行评估的呢？

进一步的探讨性问题：

少数民族语言

汉语

英语



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9. 就少数民族语言、汉语、英语的对少数民族孩子未来的有用程度而言，你的看法是？

10. 在这个地区你觉得如何能改善少数民族学生的语言教育呢？

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