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What Constitutes Quality in Minority Education? A Multiple Embedded Case Study of Stakeholder Perspectives on Minority Linguistic and Cultural Content in School-Based Curriculum in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, Gansu

Abstract While quality in education has long been a significant issue, definitions of quality are often taken for granted rather than argued for, allowing the possibility that the criteria used by researchers and planners to judge quality may differ from local stakeholders' perspectives, particularly regarding the place within quality education of the knowledge, culture and language of non-dominant groups. However, there is an accumulating convergence of research that calls for assessments of quality in education of non-dominant linguistic and cultural groups that engage local stakeholders' understandings. This paper presents a recent study that attempts to do this, investigating the perspectives of students, parents, teachers, and administrators in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, a multiethnic, multilingual district in rural Gansu, inhabited by several nationalities. Over one hundred participants in three schools were asked what was important for children to learn in school; including what aspects of local (minority) knowledge, culture and language should be taught as part of school-based curriculum. The study found three educational visions in local schools: regular urban education; Chinese-medium, multicultural education; and bilingual, multicultural education. The study also found that stakeholders support the latter vision, which reflects society's actual cultural and linguistic pluralism, as well as much research on quality education for non-dominant groups. The paper concludes with a call for a comparative approach, both domestic and international, towards the investigation of quality education of non-dominant groups in China.

Keywords quality education, minority education, bilingual education, multicultural education, education in China

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Perspectives on Quality in Education

At its most basic, quality refers to the presence of desired characteristics, or a process that produces or embodies desired characteristics. Yet discussions of quality in education frequently emphasize effective or efficient achievement of aims and objectives more than criteria for deciding what aims and objectives might be worthwhile. Beeby (1966) argues that quality judgements are strongly affected by point of view; perspectives of ministries of education differ from those of economists, while within society, “everyone becomes an expert on education, and each of us judges the school system in terms of the final goals we set for ourselves, our children, our tribe, our country” (p. 12).

Chapman and Carrier (1990) state that education should reflect social diversity (p. 13). Indeed, they conclude that judgments of educational quality must involve local stakeholders:

The worth of an educational program is based not only on the perceptions of those who fund or administer the program, but on those who participate in it on a day-to-day basis, those who send their children to engage in it, and those who live with the program in their communities long after the program originators have moved on. (p. 14)

The World Bank (1995) also argues that in developing countries local involvement also strongly affects quality:

School governing bodies, principals, and teachers with their intimate knowledge of local conditions, are best able to select the most appropriate package of inputs. Under the right circumstances, making schools and higher education institutions accountable to parents, communities and students helps bring about more effective learning and hence improves educational quality. (p. 8)

A later publication of the World Bank (1999) declares that quality criteria must be decided with partners with “the knowledge and the understanding of local values, culture and traditions that are an essential feature of sustainable development” (p. 17), who include local communities, parents and students, whose participation in school activities and governance is “crucial” for quality education (p. 18).

Educational quality, according to UNESCO (2004), requires relevant content, since:

imported or inherited curricula have often been judged insufficiently sensitive to the local context and to learners’ socio-cultural circumstances. The Convention on the Rights of the Child stresses a child-centred approach to teaching and learning. This in turn

emphasizes the importance of curricula that as far as possible respond to the needs and priorities of the learners, their families and communities. (p. 31)

Similarly, a UNICEF publication states that quality in basic education makes “people’s needs and well-being—the fulfillment of each person’s human potential in its material, spiritual, individual, and social dimensions—the central focus” (Ahmed, Cheng, Jalaluddin, & Ramachandran, 1991, p. 4). They further argue that to do so requires national, subnational, and local levels of curriculum authority to allow maximum adaptation to the diversity of places and students (p. 10), as well as “major decentralization with greatly enhanced local responsibility and popular involvement” (p. 13) and the legal empowerment of “village education committees,... voluntary associations, social activists, and higher levels of government ... to serve as countervailing forces to entrenched local structures of domination and exploitation” (pp. 14–15). In Ahmed’s view, then:

the process and inputs of education—how teaching-learning occurs, who teaches with what learning materials, and in what kind of facilities—are usually raised as quality related questions. These are appropriate and important questions, but these can be answered adequately only in relation to the goals to be achieved. It is, after all, possible to move with great efficiency and speed towards the wrong destination. (p. 73)

Such views suggest the need for a strong form of school-based curriculum development (SCBD) (Marsh, Day, Hannay, & McCutcheon, 1990; OECD, 1979), in which principals and teachers make school curriculum, together with students (Skilbeck, 1984), “parents and other citizens” (Marsh et al., 1990, p. 199), or “the parties involved in daily school work: teachers, parents, pupils, and school administrators” (OECD, 1979, p. 11).

Understandings of quality in education among many scholars, and educational planners have evolved beyond notions of increasing access, attendance, achievement, and national income to grant an important role to the judgments of local stakeholders on quality and their participation in establishing the content and processes of education at the school level as a necessary condition for educational effectiveness. There is, therefore, a need for research on perspectives on quality in education of local stakeholders in minority education, and the importance for local stakeholders in minority districts of inclusion of local knowledge, minority culture and language in the educational process among essential qualities to be fostered as part of quality education. This paper reports on such a study, introducing the study site and research questions, followed by a survey of international and domestic research relevant to quality in education of non-dominant groups, and concluding with research methodology, and the major

findings and discussion of implications for education for quality and school-based curriculum in minority districts in China.

Sunan Yughur Autonomous County and Its Nationalities

Sunan Yughur Autonomous County was founded in 1954 as a home to China's Yughur nationality, as well as Tibetans, Monguor (Tu), Mongolians, and Han (Gao & He, 2003; see Table 1). The Yughurs consist of the Sarigh (West) Yughur, who speak a Turkic language, and the Shira (East) Yughur, who speak a Mongolic language, neither of which traditionally had a written language (Gao & He, 2003; Hahn, 1998; Nugteren, 2003; Roos, 2000). In accord with policy on minority language script development (Zhou, 2007) and recent regional experiments in vernacular literacy (Kosonen, 2005), a single unified script has recently been developed for the two Yughur languages (Arslan, 2006).

Table 1 Population of Sunan Yughur Autonomous County by Nationality between 1954 and 2006

Year	Total	Yughur		Tibetan		Han		Other Minorities	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1954	7,040	3,499	49.7	1,674	23.8	1,499	21.3	367	5.2
1960	21,225	3,963	18.7	3,520	16.6	13,143	61.9	599	2.8
1972	27,396	6,876	25.1	6,021	22.0	13,693	50.0	806	2.9
1980	33,632	7,626	22.7	7,104	21.1	17,901	53.2	1,001	3.0
1990	35,500	8,820	24.8	8,390	23.6	16,983	47.8	1,307	3.7
2006	35,932	9,577	26.7	9,159	25.5	15,901	44.3	1,295	3.6

Note. Adapted from “肃南裕固族自治县概况” [*An introduction to Sunan Yughur Autonomous County*], by Sunan County, 1984. 兰州, 中国: 甘肃民族出版社 [Lanzhou, China: Gansu Ethnic Press]; “肃南裕固族自治县志” [*Sunan Yughur Autonomous County almanac*], by Sunan County, 1994. 兰州, 中国: 甘肃民族出版社 [Lanzhou, China: Gansu Ethnic Press]; “肃南县人口和计划生育利益导向政策落实成效显著” [*Effective implementation of Sunan County population and family planning policies*], by Sunan County Population Commission, (n.d.). Retrieved July 1, 2012, from <http://www.gssn.gov.cn/Article/bmdt/201207/27174.html>; “甘肃少数民族地方” [*Localities of Gansu's minority nationalities*], by Y. Z. Yang (Ed.), 1993. 兰州, 中国: 甘肃民族出版社 [Lanzhou, China: Gansu Ethnic Press], p. 106; “2000 census” from *China Data Online*, by China Data Center, University of Michigan. Retrieved July 1, 2012, from <http://www.chinadatacenter.org>

Language and Education in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County

Sarigh and Shira Yughur are considered endangered languages, with a small number of speakers, and an increasing shift to Chinese (Bradley, 2005; Chen &

Lei, 1985; Hahn, 1998; Nugteren, 2003; Junast, 1981). An estimated 7,000 Yughurs can speak Yughur, while in many districts the young no longer do so; and in some, none under 30 understand Yughur (Luobuzangdunzhi, 2006). In one Shira Yughur village, those school-aged 1940–1972 were deemed highly proficient in Yughur, those school-aged 1970–1982 could respond in Yughur to 60–90% of survey questions, while those school-aged from 1980 to 2002, showed even lower Yughur proficiency (Zheng & Gao, 2004, pp. 227–229).

Table 2 shows national educational attainment statistics for all Yughurs in Sunan County with similar statistics for Gansu, for Zhangye prefecture, and for Sunan County.¹

Table 2 Cumulative Regional and Yughur Educational Attainment in 2000 (% of total population aged six and older achieving each level or higher)

Level of Education	Gender	China	Gansu Province	Zhangye Prefecture	Sunan County	All Yughurs in China
Primary +	M	94.7	92.6	94.2	94.5	90.1
	F	86.0	80.9	83.5	84.8	79.6
Junior secondary +	M	58.1	40.8	38.4	44.2	50.1
	F	46.2	31.2	28.6	34.2	39.8
Upper secondary +	M	18.1	12.8	7.3	15.3	21.1
	F	13.4	9.2	5.1	10.4	15.2
Post-secondary	M	4.7	2.9	1.7	3.2	6.3
	F	3.0	1.9	0.9	1.6	4.0

Note. Adapted from “2000 census from China Data Online,” by China Data Center, University of Michigan. Retrieved July 1, 2012 from <http://www.chinadatacenter.org>

As is evident, Yughur primary and junior-secondary attainment rates are below the national level, but high for the region; while Yughur mean upper-secondary and post-secondary attainment rates surpass even the mean national rate. However, these impressive mean attainment rates are less clear-cut when we examine Table 3, which shows attainment rates for Yughurs from the 2000 census by five-year cohorts. We then see a steady increase to near universal primary attainment for the 10–14 year-old cohort, and to over 80% for junior-secondary education.

Female and male upper-secondary attainment have risen to 30% and 33%, respectively, with the female rate rising steadily, and the latest male rate dropping from the previous period. Female junior college attainment has also been rising, while four-year university attainment declined for males, as did male junior college attainment.

¹ According to the national census of 2000, there are slightly more than 3,000 Yughurs who live outside Sunan.

Table 3 Cumulative Yughur Attainment of Compulsory and Post-Compulsory Education by Gender and Cohort in 2000 (% aged 6 and older)

Age	Compulsory Education				Post-Compulsory Education					
	Primary +		Junior Secondary +		Upper-secondary +		Junior College +		Four-Year University +	
Cohort	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
40–44	84.6	69.3	44.9	23.9	25.0	14.9	4.8	1.6	2.0	0.9
35–39	93.7	83.3	61.6	43.6	30.7	18.6	7.4	4.5	4.2	1.5
30–34	94.2	87.5	62.2	44.5	29.6	19.6	10.0	5.7	2.6	1.2
25–29	93.6	92.3	63.2	55.4	33.1	26.2	8.6	5.8	2.5	1.6
20–24	97.6	96.6	73.8	70.3	30.3	29.7	6.5	7.4	1.6	1.9
15–19	97.9	97.9	80.6	81.7						
10–14	99.3	98.3								

Note. Adapted from “2000 年人口普查中国:民族人口资料” (上册) [*Tabulation on nationalities of 2000 population census of China*] (Vol. i), by Department of Population, Social, Science and Technology Statistics, National Bureau of Statistics, P.R.C. & Department of Economic and Development, State Ethnic Affairs Commission, P.R.C. 北京, 中国: 民族出版社 [Beijing, China: Ethnic Publishing House].

Research Questions

Given the MOE’s emphasis on quality education for all-round development², and the increased curriculum control of local and school levels (Zhou & Zhu, 2007; Zhu, 2002), the major research question is: What do local stakeholders in a minority district feel is important to learn in schools as part of quality education; in particular, what part do local stakeholders feel the maintenance of Yughur indigenous knowledge, culture and language should play as part of a quality education in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County schools? Additional research questions included:

- What is the nature of stakeholders’ understandings of the place within the curriculum of local minority language(s), local minority culture and other local knowledge in “quality” basic education in Sunan County?
- What challenges do stakeholders perceive, and what responses do they see as appropriate to address them?
- What is the nature of stakeholders’ thinking about what adaptations of

² Kipnis (2006) clarifies the distinction between two Chinese phrases translated as “quality education.” 素质教育 *suzhi jiaoyu* refers to education that is meant to foster valued “qualities” in children, while 教育质量 *jiaoyu zhiliang* refers to the education system. Kipnis thus recommends translating 素质教育 *suzhi jiaoyu* as “education for quality” (p. 301), which some Chinese authors have translated as “qualities education” (see Zhou & Zhu, 2007, p. 21).

curriculum are, could, or should be made in schools and classrooms to take into account the local context, including its multiple languages and cultures?

One aim of the research questions is to engage stakeholders in reflecting on what sort of education is necessary to meet their own standards for quality of education as well as those of the education system. The questions also extend notions from teacher development literature, such as teachers' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes (Pajares, 1992), teachers' personal practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), teachers' epistemology (Pope & Scott, 2003) and teachers' knowledge-in-action (Schön, 1983) to all stakeholders. Since research on stakeholder perspectives in multiethnic, multilingual districts in China is relatively new, the study was necessarily exploratory in nature.

Quality in Rural Education

Research on North America

Many small, rural North American schools have been consolidated on the model of large urban schools with the expectation of reduced costs and increased quality. Yet a major review of rural education research found that, when controlling for socioeconomic variables, rural schools delivered adequate basic education, and school-consolidation was not associated with significant advantages in costs, student achievement or behaviour (Arnold, Newman, Gaddy, & Dean, 2005). Indeed, reforms that reflected local perspectives were received more positively (McLaughlin, 1982). Standardized reform negates the rural school's greatest educational advantage, its intimate connection to community (Haller & Monk, 1988; Rosenfeld & Sher, 1977; Sher & Tompkins, 1977). Another major rural education research review stated, "the drive to make rural schools more centralized, standardized, bureaucratized, and professionalized has nearly robbed them of their distinctiveness and has failed to deliver on the promise of improved quality of education" (Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999, p. 76). Scholars increasingly argue that quality rural schooling should affirm student identity, and ground it in its environment and community, through approaches such as place-based education (Herzog & Pittman, 1995; Gruenewald, 2003; Howley, 1997; Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995).

Research on Developing Countries

While rural schools in developing countries typically lag behind urban schools in enrollment, attendance, achievement and promotion rates, particularly for girls, evaluations of community-based rural schools, where curriculum development,

school governance and instruction are shared among teachers, students, parents and community members, have found that children met basic education criteria as well as or better than in regular schools (Bray, 2001; Farrell, 2008). Similarly, a comprehensive review of international nomadic education research found that standard educational models are typically applied with minimal adaptation to local context (Krätli, 2000), concluding that nomadic education's "failures" derive largely from this overreliance on untested assumptions of quality for nomadic communities, while models that accommodate community quality perspectives are generally more successful.

Thus, research is accumulating that puts into question notions of quality in rural education, in both developing and developed contexts, suggesting that quality rural education should be more closely involved with rural communities.

Quality in Education of Linguistic and Cultural Minorities

Educational models for linguistic minorities range from dominant-language as language of instruction (LOI), second-language classes alongside dominant-language instruction, and transitional bilingual education, in which LOI gradually changes from the mother tongue to a dominant language, to maintenance bilingual education in which both the mother tongue and a dominant language are used as LOIs (Baker, 2011). Several types of bilingualism may occur. Additive bilingualism provides additional abilities or skills to the learner, and does not involve the new language and associated culture replacing learners' first language and culture. Subtractive bilingualism involves the second language performing certain functions instead of the first language. Under subtractive conditions, speakers of minority languages may abandon their language and culture to conform with the majority, or may resist learning the second language and participating in education as a means of preserving minority group language and values (Baker, 2011; Cummins, 2001).

A meta-analysis of studies on language-minority students concluded that bilingual education that supports the minority language consistently produces advantages in reading, math, language skill, and overall achievement over monolingual dominant-language programs (Willig, 1985), while a large-scale longitudinal study found that the strongest achievement in both first language and second language instruction was in enrichment maintenance bilingual programs, in which both languages are used as LOIs (Thomas & Collier, 2002). Such programs seem to provide optimal learning conditions for language minority students identified in early studies (Cummins, 1986; Lucas, Henze & Donato, 1990; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995). Indeed, only enrichment bilingual education was able to help:

students to fully reach the 50th percentile in both L1 and L2 in all subjects and to maintain that level of high achievement, or reach even higher levels through the end of schooling. The fewest dropouts come from these programs. (Thomas & Collier, 2002, p. 7)

To explain such findings, Cummins proposes the interdependence principle: “To the extent that instruction through L_x is effective in promoting proficiency in L_x, transfer of this proficiency to L_y will occur provided there is adequate exposure to L_y (either in school or in environment) and adequate motivation to learn L_y” (as cited in Cummins, 2001, p. 172). This principle may also imply that development of second language proficiency may be restricted if the second language is used to replace the first language in the classroom, or if the second language is introduced before first language proficiency is sufficiently well-developed to permit decontextualized learning (Baker, 2011).

Language Orientations Frameworks

A useful framework for examining multilingual contexts is Ruiz’ (1988) Language Orientation Framework. Ruiz’ identified three different approaches to language in language policy debates, which he called language orientations. The *language as problem* orientation sees multiple languages in society as a problem both for national unity and for modernization (pp. 6–10), while the *language as right* orientation (pp. 10–14) sees language as a fundamental human right that must not be interfered with. Ruiz argues that these orientations form an either-or opposition, which he claimed derives mainly from “unconscious and prerational...dispositions” (p. 4). Ruiz also identified a third *language as resource* orientation that avoids the problematic either-or logic of the first two (pp. 14–18). Within this orientation, proficiency in any language is seen as both an individual and social resource, and therefore individual bilingualism and multilingualism are viewed positively as resources for the success of individuals, and society as a whole.

From the *language as resource* perspective, the other orientations both show an equally short-sighted emphasis on single languages, and differ only about which language presents the major problem. Instead, personal plurilingualism and social multilingualism are goals that should be actively pursued by individuals and social policy. For holders of this orientation, a language-in-education model can be evaluated by the degree to which it helps students individually and societies realize the benefits of bi-and multilingualism. Thus, the development of bilingualism will be preferred over promotion of monolingualism; similarly, balanced bilingualism will be preferred over subtractive bilingualism. Within this paper, Ruiz’ framework will be used to

classify statements by stakeholders concerning language and education. His framework will also be extended to include orientations towards culture as well as language.

Quality Bilingual Education of Linguistic and Cultural Minorities

Scholars have attempted to go beyond consideration of the LOI to identify characteristics of quality programs for students from non-dominant language groups, widening success criteria to include measures of cultural and linguistic maintenance leading to additive bilingualism, as well as qualitative measures such as perceived satisfaction of students, parents, and teachers with the educational process and its outcomes. Table 4 summarizes key factors identified by three studies that promote educational success among language minority students.

Table 4 Factors Facilitating Educational Success of Language Minority Students

Lucas, Henze, and Donato	Skutnabb-Kangas	Cummins
Treating L1 and L2 as important, and L1 as advantage not liability.	All children know, or alternate equally between knowing and not knowing LOI; all teachers are bilingual.	Incorporation of the home language and culture, which permits greater learning and support of student identity.
Promoting language minority students' L1 throughout the curriculum.	L1 is the main LOI, especially during first eight years.	The inclusion of minority parents as partners in their children's education with educators.
Providing a variety of courses in L1 and L2 with small class sizes.	Foreign languages are taught through L1 and/or by teachers who know it.	The use of pedagogies that involve meaningful interaction rather than one way transmission from teacher to student.
Active commitment to language minority students' educational success and empowerment.	Study of both L1 and L2 as subjects is compulsory through grades 1–12.	Assessment is used as a form of advocacy for minority students.

Note. Adapted from “Promoting the success of Latino language-minority students: An exploratory study of six high schools,” by T. Lucas, R. Henze & R. Donato, 1990, *Harvard Educational Review*, 60(3), 315–340; “Introduction,” by T. Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995. In T. Skutnabb-Kangas (Ed.), *Multilingualism for all* (pp. 7–20). Lisse, Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger; “Empowering minority students: A framework for intervention,” by J. Cummins, 1986, *Harvard Educational Review*, 56(1), 18–36.

Quality Bilingual Education in Developing Contexts

Speakers of non-dominant languages in many developing countries are often instructed in a dominant language they do not understand, while teachers often do not know students' language, restricting their ability to explain lessons and their ability to engage with parents. However, mother-tongue-based bilingual

education programs have some teachers who know local culture and language allowing closer cooperation among teachers, parents and students, and frequently display decreased repetition and dropout, and increased participation of girls (Bender, Dutcher, Klaus, Shore, & Tesar, 2005; Benson, 2005; Skattum & Brock-Utne, 2009).

Students in experimental Nigerian bilingual primary schools had higher achievement in all subjects than students who had transitioned from mother tongue to English (Akinnaso, 1993; Benson, 2004). Nevertheless, parents often still view dominant-medium education as superior and “choose” this for their children (Qorro, 2009), yet when informed about the potential of high quality bilingual education are much less likely to do so (Heugh, 2002).

Preventing or Reversing Language Shift via Community-Based Elementary Schools

Dominant-language submersion of language minority students is frequently associated with language shift, and possibly eventual language death. In this situation, mother-tongue or mother-tongue-based bilingual education are recommended as measures to prevent language shift (language maintenance), to increase the use of L1 among the young (language revitalization) and even to create speakers of a heritage language, where it had already disappeared from use (language revival; Fishman, 1989; Hornberger, 2008).

In an investigation of Inuit perspectives on quality of education in Nunavut territory, northern Canada (Martin, 2000), elders, parents, and students expressed concerns that dominant-language schooling was causing language shift and assimilation, but were disappointed that many non-Inuit administrators and educators did not sufficiently share these concerns (pp. 58–66). In this situation, one response to perceptions of low educational quality has been to establish community-based schools. This has been done in Canada (Burnaby & Mackenzie, 2001), USA (McCarty & Watahomigie, 1999), New Zealand (May & Hill, 2005), and elsewhere. Fishman (1989) suggests that a close connection of minority community and the primary school is necessary but warns that it is not sufficient to prevent language endangerment, stating that, “Schools cannot succeed, whether their goal be reversing language shift or merely history or mathematics instruction, if the relation between teachers, parents, and students is such that they are estranged from each other and from the curriculum” (pp. 30–31).

Quality in Education of Non-Dominant Groups in China

The MOE has criticized education that is far from student experience and interests, arguing that education should support student’s all-round development,

engage their opinions and interests, and exploit their prior knowledge through local and school-based curriculum (Huang, 2004; Su, 2002; UNESCO, 2004; Zhu, 2002). However, this approach requires teachers to take into account local stakeholders' knowledge and quality perspectives (Yang & Zhou, 2002), which, for linguistic minorities, involves reflecting their home language and culture in the curriculum. Approaches to quality rural education range from vocational education (Lin, 1993), practical activities (Zhou & Zhu, 2007) to localizing content to increase comprehensibility and interest (Li, 2006). Quality issues, such as dissatisfaction with the study experience, boarding school conditions or distances to school were cited by rural students as reasons for dropping out, with those in low tracks finding schooling uninteresting and purposeless (Liu, 2004; Qian, 2007).

Models of Language-In-Education and Models of Minority Education

Language-in-education models vary considerably. In addition to submersion in exclusive Chinese LOI, "bilingual education" involves one language as LOI and a second language as a school subject, with minority-language LOI plus Chinese or Chinese LOI plus a minority language. Bilingual teachers may transform Chinese submersion into "mixed" bilingual education, supplementing Chinese instruction with informal oral mother-tongue explanation. Transition from minority-dominant to Chinese-dominant LOI is common, with Grades 3 to 4, and 6 to 7 the most common transition. Maintenance bilingual education with both Chinese and minority language used as LOIs is rare (Blachford, 1998; Teng & Wang, 2001; Teng & Weng, 2001; Wang, 2002; Zhou, 2004, 2007).

Supporters of Chinese submersion or early transition argue that Chinese language learning matters more to children's life chances, and that modern knowledge is best learned through Chinese (Jiang, 2002), in a way related to Ruiz' "Minority Language as Problem" orientation (1988). However, such programs do not seem to provide even moderate minority language proficiency, limiting graduates' ability to find work in their communities (Postiglione, Jiao, & Manlaji, 2007; Wang & Zhou, 2003). Others argue early transition to Chinese LOI leads to low literacy in minority language and Chinese (Badeng Nima, 2001; Teng & Weng, 2001).

Still others support strong bilingual education, arguing that Chinese and minority LOI, "should not be mutually exclusive or replace one another, but rather, they should complement and reinforce each other... The two must be emphasized equally, without favoring one over the other or showing bias (Xie & Sun, as cited in Ma, 2007, p. 12).

Debate centers on Chinese-dominant versus minority-language-dominant models (Badeng Nima, 2001; Wang, 2002; Teng & Wang, 2001). International research suggests, however, that neither of these monolingual models is as

effective as a true bilingual model where two languages are used as LOIs (May, 2008; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Table 5 Approaches to Minority Language Provision for Minority Learners in China

Approach	Function of Mandarin	Function of Minority Language
Mandarin submersion	All formal curriculum, textbooks, and instruction in Mandarin	No support for minority language; local environment may support minority language use
Minority language + Mandarin	Mandarin subject only	Mother-tongue education medium of instruction for all subjects except second language
Mandarin + Minority language	Medium of instruction for all subjects except mother tongue subject class	Minority language as subject only
Mixed bilingual education	Formal instruction in Mandarin	Informal oral explanation to supplement Mandarin instruction
Transitional bilingual education	Subject in early grades; later shift to main medium of instruction	Medium of instruction in early grades; later occasional use; rarely used in senior secondary
Maintenance bilingual education	Medium of instruction for some subjects throughout schooling (often sciences)	Medium of instruction for some subjects throughout schooling

Note. Adapted from “Bilingual education in China,” by D. R. Blachford, 1997. In J. Cummins & D. Corson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education: Bilingual education* (Vol. v, pp. 157–165). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer; “Typology of bilingualism and bilingual education in Chinese minority nationality regions,” by Q. Dai & Y. Cheng, 2007. In A. W. Feng (Ed.), *Bilingual education in China: Practices, policies and concepts* (pp. 75–93). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters; “*Language education in China: Policy and experience since 1949*,” by A. S. L. Lam, 2005. Hong Kong, China: Hong Kong University Press; “20世纪中国少数民族与教育” [Twentieth century China’s minority nationalities and education], by X. Teng & J. Wang (Eds.), 2001. 北京, 中国: 民族出版社 [Beijing, China: Ethnic Publishing House]; “Bilingualism and bilingual education in China,” by X. Teng & Y. H. Weng, 2001. In N. Shimahara, I. Z. Holowinsky & S. Tomlinson-Clarke (Eds.), *Ethnicity, race, and nationality in education: A global perspective* (pp. 259–278). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum; “Minority language policy in China: Equality in theory and inequality in practice,” by M. Zhou, 2004. In M. L. Zhou & H. K. Sun (Eds.), *Language policy in the People’s Republic of China: Theory and practice since 1949* (pp. 71–95). Norwell, MA: Kluwer; Zhou as cited in “Writing cultural boundaries: National minority language policy, literacy planning, and bilingual education” by R. Stites, 1999. In G. A. Postiglione (Ed.), *China’s national minority education: Culture, schooling and development* (pp. 95–130). New York, NY: Falmer Press.

Quality in Minority Education and Local Cultural Diversity

A publication approved by the MOE Teacher Education Department on school-based curriculum development for teachers recommends study of the local community, its beliefs and cultural practices (Yang & Zhou, 2002). Chen (2004) extends this argument to multilingual, multiethnic districts, concluding that multicultural education is needed, and could increase minority students’

school achievement, ethnic identity, and mutual understanding and respect among nationalities. Wang and Wan (2006) review multicultural education in USA, Canada, UK, and Australia, and conclude a Sinicized multicultural education has great potential in China. Zhu (2007) examined identity construction of minority children in a Chinese-dominant boarding school and the effect on them of the hidden curriculum about minority identity, identifying considerable complexity in how minority students negotiate differences between their existing identity and the diversity of official and unofficial discourses on minorities they encounter in school.

Language Endangerment and Revitalization in China

Certain minorities are experiencing anxiety of language endangerment and the loss of ethnic identity (Bradley, 2005). As a result, UNESCO China advocates policies that support maintenance and revival of endangered languages, including using indigenous languages in education (Moukala, 2003, p. 3). Producing curricula that embody indigenous languages and culture and are used meaningfully can strengthen links between local communities and schools, and is consonant with the MOE's promotion of local and school-based curriculum.

Research Design and Methodology

Multiple Embedded Case Study

Multiple case studies allow a more complete understanding (Stake, 2005, pp. 445–446, and permit replication across cases within one study (Yin, 2003, pp. 37–38), by expanding the number of cases, or subdividing into smaller units: “cases within cases” (Stake, 2005, p. 451), or “embedded cases” (Yin, 2003, pp. 42–43). Multiple embedded case design permits two types of replication: *literal* and *theoretical* (Yin, 2003, pp. 47–53). A *literal* replication obtains across a group of cases where similar findings are expected; a *theoretical* replication where different findings are expected on theoretical grounds. Replication adds to the robustness of findings, whereas failure to replicate contributes to reinterpretation and retesting against other cases. An advantage of this design is that generalization to theory can be made from a relatively small sample; and that internal replicability across cases permits interpretations and findings to be tested, strengthening findings through triangulation of multiple sources (Yin, 2003,

p. 98).³

School sites were selected across a range of demographic characteristics in urban and rural settings. Three school cases were selected to allow theoretical replication of cases. Two extreme cases were selected: a school in an urban site where Yughur were a minority, and a rural school in a district where Yughur were a majority. And an intermediate case: A rural school in a district where Yughur were a minority. Findings in the first two cases were expected to clearly differ, while the last case’s findings were expected to be intermediate to the extreme cases.

The study, however, is not simply a study of communities, or of schools, but also a study of the stakeholders most closely concerned with the education of primary and junior secondary-aged children: the students themselves, their families, teachers and school administrators, of both genders and representing Yughur, Han, and other nationalities. Each stakeholder type can form an embedded case, that is, a case within a case (Yin, 2003). Thus, the four types of stakeholders form embedded cases across all four school sites. Furthermore, there are further embedded cases: Yughur and non-Yughur, Female and male, within and across embedded stakeholder cases. Table 6 below illustrates the four stakeholder cases and three geographic cases as well as multiple embedded cases within these broader cases. Table 7 below illustrates the distribution of participants by four stakeholder categories and three ethnicity types.

Table 6 Sample of the Multiple Embedded Case Research Design

		School District Cases							
		Site 1		Site 2			Site 3		
		Embedded Cases							
		Demographic Characteristics							
Stakeholder Cases		Yughur Minority				Yughur Majority			
		Urban				Rural			
		Grade Level Characteristics							
Cases	Embedded cases	Primary		Primary		Junior secondary	Primary		Junior secondary
		Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper		Lower	Upper	
Students	Ethnicity Gender								
Parents	Ethnicity Gender								
Teachers	Ethnicity Gender								
Administrators	Ethnicity Gender								

³ Data were gathered at a fourth school, in a rural district with a plurality of Shira Yughurs and Mongolians. This school was not included in the final study for reasons of brevity, since preliminary analysis suggested it largely replicated findings of one case.

Table 7 Number of Participants Interviewed by Nationality and Stakeholder Category

Stakeholders	Yughur	Han	Other Minority	Total
Educators	3	12	3	18
Parents	20	15	8	43
Students	23	24	12	59
Total	46	51	23	120

At the core of this enquiry are the perspectives of different stakeholder types in different school settings. Semi-structured interviews generate data that are easily comparable within and across cases, while permitting follow-up questions tailored to individual contexts (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 146). Children were asked what they enjoyed learning, rather than what was important to learn. Individual interviews were conducted with administrators, and teachers, while group interviews of 2 to 6 participants were conducted with parents and students.

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Participants were asked a question derived from MOE publications about education for quality and on SCBD, which divided thinking on curriculum, teaching and learning into three categories: knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Yang & Zhou, 2002; Zhu, 2002). The question was: “What knowledge, skills, and attitudes should be learned in school for children to receive ‘education for quality’ (*suzhi jiaoyu*).” The second question was “What knowledge, skills, and attitudes concerning local knowledge, local culture, and local language are important to learn in school for children to receive ‘*education for quality*’?” Interview guide questions were supplemented by probe and clarification questions. Responses further influenced the interview process, informing subsequent interviews (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003).

Analysis of Interview Data

Qualitative language data in participants’ own words about their understandings were gathered in the study. Such verbal data are appropriately analyzed by content analysis and discourse analysis (Cohen et al., 2000, pp. 284–285, 298–300). Significant emergent themes were identified and coded to facilitate

analysis and cross-case comparison of cases and sub-cases. Themes and interrelations among themes and embedded cases were identified. Interview transcripts and field-notes were examined for key phrases, statements, and extended responses. Recurrent themes and typical associated language were identified, coded, and juxtaposed using an analytic grid to facilitate identification of commonalities and differences between embedded cases, and to increase ease of comparison.

Findings

Stakeholder Cases

Yughur Parents

Yughur parents broadly supported increased achievement and promotion to post-secondary study, and did not mention the place of Yughur language and culture, until specifically asked, when a different picture emerged. In all three school sites, the preponderant majority of Yughur parents state that Yughur culture and language should be taught to their children in schools. Parents differed somewhat on the practicality of such implementation more than its necessity. Parents in the town setting who had undergone language shift feel the urgency to protect their language and culture, but question whether school instruction is enough to revive the language if they are unable to support Yughur learning at home. Some of these parents mentioned the lack of a Yughur script as a problem for school instruction, but were interested to learn that an experimental script has been developed and there are many folkloric texts recorded. Some parents were interested in the idea of adult Yughur language classes that would teach this script.⁴

Parents spoke of Yughur more as an obligation than as a right: speaking of their “duty” to transmit Yughur languages and cultures to their children and grandchildren, and the duty of the young to learn from their elders, treating them as an inheritance, heritage, or patrimony from the ancestors. Moreover, parents did not separate culture and language, linking them closely, conjoining the loss of Yughur language and the disappearance of Yughur culture.

Many parents’ perspectives fit Ruiz’s *language as resource* orientation (1988), in that they felt that Yughur language would strengthen children’s sense of identity and self-understanding, and in that they treated bilingualism,

⁴ The Sunan County Yughur Cultural Research Office has devised an experimental common script for Sarigh and Shira Yughur, which is being used to transcribe oral literature, and to develop Yughur language teaching materials.

trilingualism and even multilingualism as practical, possible benefits to their children. One parent, trilingual in Tibetan, Sarigh Yughur, and Chinese, desired plurilingualism for her children in these languages, plus English.

Many parents also exhibit Ruiz' *language as problem* orientation, speaking about their own experience of weak Chinese proficiency at school. One group was taught by bilingual teachers who taught in Chinese with oral explanation in Yughur. A second group had teachers who used only Chinese, but "tolerated" students speaking in Yughur, allowing students with stronger Chinese to explain lessons to classmates with lower Chinese proficiency. The final group was taught only in Chinese and was not allowed to speak Yughur in class, which parents resented. All three groups report a similar length of time to learn enough Chinese to understand lessons (one to four years), but only the third group speaks of this period negatively, and thus as a *problem*. However, parents refer to the monolingualism of current Chinese-only schooling as a problem more than of the languages themselves.

Parents mentioned a frequent response to the dilemma of monolingual schooling: a family language policy of shifting to home use of Chinese to prepare children to cope with schooling, a practice that is leading to rapid Yughur language loss after children go away to school. Significantly, no Yughur parent expressed concern that learning Yughur in school would negatively affect their children's overall learning. Indeed their enthusiasm for learning two languages in school suggests they generally hold an additive *language as resource* orientation.

Yughur parents expressed high aspirations for their children's educational attainment within the current school system, most expressing the hope that their children can continue to post-secondary education. Yughur parents also expressed the belief that Chinese proficiency is both an enabling and limiting factor in their children's educational futures. This insistence on the place of Yughur language and culture in the school system goes beyond *subtractive bilingualism* to a desire for additive bilingualism.

Furthermore, parents did not argue for Yughur language learning at school as an instrument for more effective learning of national curriculum. That is, for Yughur parents, inclusion of local knowledge, culture and language is not "merely" a means to an end, but an "end" in itself. Thus, parents envision local schools as sites of "both" excellence "and" multiculturalism and multilingualism.

Non-Yughur Parents

Non-Yughur parents interviewed were generally quite positive towards the inclusion of Yughur language and culture in the Sunan County schools' curriculum. Tibetan and Mongolian parents were particularly supportive, expressing a desire that not only Yughur, but also their own heritage languages

be included in school curriculum. Many Han parents also supported Yughur language curriculum in schools, and in some cases, supported their children learning Yughur in school. Thus, Sunan County residents seem to have their own implicit language policy of mutual tolerance, multilingualism and multiculturalism, exhibiting a *language as resource* orientation.

Yughur Students

Yughur students are generally enthusiastic about the prospect of learning traditional songs, stories and poems in the Yughur languages. Their explanations for their interest are of two basic types, related to esthetics and identity. Students describe Yughur oral literature as beautiful, in other words, as “pleasurable” to hear, and by implication, to learn. Students also report that they would enjoy learning traditional Yughur literature in school because they are Yughur. This seems related to feeling pride and taking “pleasure” in the fact that these are Yughur stories and songs and that Yughurs have such beautiful traditional literature. An additional aspect seems related to the above-mentioned adult notion of “duty” of Yughurs to learn these things. One student adds an additional explanation that connects pride in the local environment, with pleasure in Yughur songs which come from and in some cases are about the grasslands.

Some Yughur students expressed hesitations about the manner and content of Yughur study at school, noting for example that Yughur was difficult and required too much vocabulary to memorize. These responses were recorded only in Case 1 where there had been an experimental Yughur class in September 2003, which was initially popular but later suspended due to lack of interest. The teaching approach emphasized memorizing vocabulary and basic conversational phrases from a theoretical grammar in Chinese, and seems not to have included any oral literature (Ba, 2007). In other words, Yughur had been introduced not as a living language but using traditional a grammar-translation “foreign” language methodology typical of examination-based education. While it is impossible to conclude that Yughur students with negative responses towards learning Yughur in school did participate in this experimental class, it seems reasonable to conclude that some concerns derived from knowledge of this class and its methods.

Thus, when students were presented with the proposal of learning Yughur oral literature in Yughur, they responded positively. Those students with hesitations may have had concerns about the content and pedagogy they expected rather than about the language and culture themselves. Among students reporting ability to understand, but not speak Yughur, and among those reporting inability to understand spoken Yughur, there was also a motivation to improve communication with parents and grandparents. Finally, Yughur students shown

examples of Yughur in romanized script demonstrated interest in learning to read and write in their language. In one school, students were quite excited to see examples from a Chinese-Shira Yughur reference grammar, and enthusiastically used their knowledge of Yughur, Chinese, and *pinyin* romanized script to work out how the romanized script for Shira Yughur works.

Non-Yughur Students

Non-Yughur students expressed generally favourable perspectives towards learning Yughur in school. Among Grades 1 and 2 students, there was a near universal enthusiasm for Yughur stories and songs, which were seen as beautiful. Older non-Yughur students took a positive or neutral stance towards learning Yughur, although among a few older Han students (Grades 4 to 5; 7 to 8), particularly those who had moved from elsewhere, minority language learning was seen as appropriate only for minority students.⁵ Students from other minorities expressed a desire to learn their languages in school too, mainly to communicate better with their parents, and especially grandparents.

Teachers

Teachers generally support the inclusion of Yughur language classes in the school curriculum. Of nine teachers interviewed, none disagreed with this possibility; although one teacher stated simply that “our school does not do this now.” However, the degree of support varied, with one teacher saying simply that bilingual education “should be considered” and another saying that it should be provided “at the elementary level.” Table 8 summarizes statements in support of teaching Yughur language categorized by type of justification (Ruiz’ *language as right* or *language as resource* orientation), revealing a strong consensus in principle on the desirability of teaching Yughur in schools. Nevertheless, a range of justifications were provided. Most teachers mentioned Yughur instruction’s role in maintaining individual and group identity, suggesting a *language as right* orientation.

Many teachers saw Yughur instruction as stimulating student interest in study, and one mentioned its potential role in increasing student comprehension of curriculum content, suggesting that for some teachers, the Yughur language is seen as a resource for teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the right to Yughur identity formation through language learning in school was emphasized by more teachers than its general pedagogical function as a learning resource.

⁵ Several of these students had moved from outside Sunan County and may have acquired these attitudes before coming to Sunan County.

Table 8 Teachers' Orientations towards Yughur in School Curriculum by Grade Level: Language as Right Versus Language as Resource

Grade/ Level	Aspects of Yughur language and culture that should be taught in school 8/9	Language as Right		Language as Resource	
		Maintain group's identity 7/9	Develop youth identity 5/9	Interest in learning 5/9	Comprehension 1/9
Grades 1 to 2 (N=3)	Learn their own language: Yughur	Helps language and culture survive; maintains special features of Yughur identity	Helps students understand their own culture	Raises interest in study for Yughurs, but also for others	Helps Yughur students understand lessons better
	Folk legends and stories	Parents want to protect their national group	Minority parents want children to not forget their nationality	Children enjoy learning stories and interesting things	
	Open Yughur language curriculum	Without Yughur language classes, the language can disappear	Very many children can't speak their nationality's language		
Grades 4 to 5 (N=3)	Should include language and customs at elementary level	Language and culture may disappear; should be protected	Should know their own language and history		
	Very important: Our school opened a Yughur interest group We don't do this; no interest for children				
Grades 7 to 8 (N=3)	Yughur language	It can save the language and maintain the customs		If students are interested, it stimulates their development	
	Inclusion should be considered	To preserve language; to transmit culture		Contributes to student interest in study	
	Bilingual education should be provided, but for Yughurs only	Develop minority language		It is interesting for Yughurs	

Moreover, support for teaching Yughur varies with grade level: Grades 1 and 2 teachers gave unqualified support for Yughur teaching, exhibiting a strong *language as right*, and a moderate *language as resource* orientation, with all three teachers giving justifications related to identity, and an average of one justification per teacher related to increased interest and comprehension.

Somewhat weaker support for teaching Yughur in school was found at the junior secondary level, where one teacher provided unqualified support, another provided qualified support for Yughur students only, and one supported “deliberation” on whether to provide Yughur instruction. Interestingly, teachers at this level did not mention individual identity development, but mentioned its role in group identity maintenance and in increasing individual motivation to study. Among junior secondary teachers, the *language as right* and *language as resource* orientations are present, but at a moderate level in comparison with the junior elementary group.

The weakest support for teaching Yughur in school was found at the senior elementary level, with only two of three teachers supporting its inclusion in principle, and only one of three teachers providing any justifications for doing so. The average number of justifications provided was 0.67; in fact, only one teacher provided any justifications for teaching Yughur in school. No evidence of the *language as resource* orientation is apparent at this level, while one teacher shows a *language as right* orientation. The other senior elementary teachers state that Yughur instruction should be provided but give no justifications for its provision. Despite the research literature evidence for mother tongue instruction as a means to increase minority students’ comprehension of lessons, only one teacher, who is proficient in Yughur and uses it in teaching, mentions this argument in favor of teaching Yughur in school.

Table 9 presents the challenges of including Yughur instruction in the school curriculum that were identified by teachers, presented by grade level. The numbers of challenges to provision of Yughur language instruction identified by teachers are suggestive of the degree to which a teacher shares a Yughur *language as problem* orientation. The columns from left to right indicate the types of challenges presented, with most frequent on the left and least mentioned on the right. The two most frequently mentioned challenges (both raised by seven of nine teachers) were assumed difficulties associated with teaching Yughur in school, and reputed lack of interest in the study of Yughur. Fewer teachers mentioned practical limitations: four stated that there was a lack of need or use for learning Yughur in school, and three claimed that there was a lack of ability or interest among teachers to teach this language. Three teachers raised separate arguments about why one shouldn’t teach Yughur in school, related to the potential negative effect on non-Yughur students, the unsuitability of teaching oral literacy that is not script-based in school, and the harm done to all

Table 9 Teachers' Orientations towards Yughur in School Curriculum by Grade Level: Language as Problem

Grade/Level	Language as Problem					
	Difficult to teach	Lack of interest	No need	Teachers lack ability/ interest	Should not teach	Bad effect on other subjects
Grades 1 to 2 (N=3)	Yughur language is only spoken, not written	Not on CEE; if on CEE, it would create interest		No-one will prepare teaching materials; it is just an interest		
	Yughurs have a language but no script	Yughur stories more interesting in Chinese language Some non-Yughur not interested			Other nationalities would not understand	
Grades 4 to 5 (N=3)	Many children speak Chinese; less interested in learning stories in Yughur than in Chinese	They would not be too interested in studying their own language, because there is no language environment	Use for Yughurs quite narrow; Family can teach culture	We have no teachers who have studied this special ty		Chinese knowledge is common less weigh given to Yughur classes
	Yughur language has no script	Children not interested. Parents will not support study of Yughur	Learn home, not at school; Yughur use is small	Teachers lack preparation and concern about local and school curriculum	Study load heavy and energy limited; and Yughur might make them fail CEE	
	Few know Yughur; only use Chinese at school					

(To be continued)

(Continued)

Grade/Level	Language as Problem					
	Difficult to teach	Lack of interest	No need	Teachers lack ability/interest	Should not teach	Bad effect on other subjects
Grades 7 to 8 (N=3)		No special interest; just like studying English	No need for local culture, language, and knowledge in curriculum		Oral instruction without script-based literacy doesn't belong in school	Too much time taken from other subjects and can interfere with Chinese; students will need extra Chinese language practice to compensate
	Difficult to popularize new Yughur script	Pressure to learn English causes pressure not to learn minority language	Can learn Yughur at home			
	Lack of script for Yughur	Yughur parents have a negative attitude				

students by increasing their study load. Finally, two teachers raised the question of the relation of Yughur language learning to Chinese language learning and pointed out that Chinese teaching must remain a priority.

When grade levels are compared, the findings based on positive statements towards Yughur are confirmed. At the junior elementary level, where teacher support and justifications for teaching Yughur were most frequent, the smallest number of challenges to Yughur instruction is presented, with four challenges to Yughur language instruction raised by teachers, with an average of 2.3 challenges per teacher. All three teachers see interest as a challenge: one is concerned about how to deal with non-Yughur students that might not be interested in a language that is not their mother tongue; another wonders whether Yughur oral literature would be more interesting, presumably to the class as a whole and not only to Yughur students, if it were taught in Chinese, and one states that the absence of Yughur on the College Entrance Examinations (CEE) would create a lack of motivation. Two of three teachers are concerned about how to teach a language that they incorrectly believe has no script. Interestingly, no teacher at this level presents lack of need or use for Yughur instruction as a challenge, nor does any teacher at this level raise Yughur instruction as a challenge for learning in Chinese.

At the junior secondary level, there were a total of five challenges to Yughur instruction; on average, three challenges per teacher were raised. All teachers questioned whether there was sufficient interest in studying Yughur. One teacher speculated that students had little special interest in learning Yughur as a heritage language or second language, and there would be no more interest in learning this language than a foreign language. Another teacher speculated that without the pressure of preparing for eventual CEE, students would not be interested to study. Notably, a Tibetan teacher was certain that there was interest among Tibetan parents for their children to study their heritage language, but felt that Yughur parents would be opposed to this option. Two of the three teachers questioned the need to teach Yughur at school, since it could be learned at home, and two remarked that the absence of a script was a difficulty for teaching Yughur in school, while a third teacher expressed the opinion that teaching based on oral literacy alone was not suitable in school. Thus, teachers interviewed at the junior secondary level exhibit a moderately strong minority *language as problem* orientation.

However, at the senior elementary level, teachers presented a total of six challenges to Yughur instruction, with an average of 3.7 challenges raised per teacher. All teachers presented the difficulty of teaching Yughur as a challenge: two, due to the fact that many students know only Chinese, and one, due to the lack of a writing system. Interestingly, the teacher at a rural school presented no other challenges to teaching Yughur, while two teachers at a town school

presented four more challenges each. Overall, teachers at this level exhibit a moderate to strong *minority language as problem* orientation. When only the town school was considered, however, teachers interviewed at this level presented a strong *minority language as problem* orientation.

A notable contrast between, on the one hand, the teachers of the two rural schools, and on the other hand, the teachers of the urban school stands out. The pattern of language orientations of the teachers of the two rural schools is quite similar, with Case 2 school providing fewer responses overall than Case 3, but with almost the same degree of *language as right* orientation and a somewhat weaker *language as problem* orientation and a moderately weaker *language as resource* orientation. The Case 1 urban schools' teachers stand out in the greater strength of their *language as problem* orientation, moderately weaker *language as right* orientation, and an extremely weak *language as resource* orientation.

Language orientations of minority and Han teachers interviewed also differ somewhat. The proportion of statements of minority and Han teachers consonant with a *language as right* orientation is virtually identical. However, there is a notable contrast when the proportion of minority and Han teachers' statements exemplifying a *language as problem* and a *language as resource* orientation is compared. The minority teachers exhibit a moderate *language as problem* orientation, while the Han teachers exhibit a strong *language as problem* orientation. The contrast between the two groups is even starker, however, when we examine statements conforming to a *language as resource* orientation: slightly over half of all statements of minority teachers conform with a *language as resource* orientation, while less than 5% of Han teachers' statements show this orientation.

Thus, minority teachers' overall perspective seems to be that it is the right of minority students to learn their heritage language in school, and though it is somewhat problematic to do so, there are great benefits to this that justify the effort. The Han teachers' overall orientation seems to agree that it is the right of minority students to learn their heritage languages in school, but that there are enormous problems in so doing and relatively little apparent benefit.

School Site Cases

Case 1: Regular Education Model with Transmissive Chinese as Right Orientation

In multiethnic, multilingual Sunan Yughur Autonomous County, each of the three schools studied embodies a different orientation towards language, culture and curriculum. The model of education in the Case 1 town school takes regular urban Chinese-language education as its model. Centralized curriculum

knowledge is treated as unproblematic within this multiethnic, multilingual setting, and so school-based enrichment courses are provided to support national curriculum, with no local content at the time of fieldwork. While individual teachers may have various personal language and culture orientations, the curriculum as enacted in the school takes a transmissive approach to dominant knowledge, culture and language, treating national curriculum as a right, and minority student culture and language as a problem that can interfere with that transmission. Accordingly, special preschool classes for language minority students focus on their learning of Chinese, but do not link students' prior knowledge via bilingual instruction, eschewing the use of bilingual teachers, in favour of monolingual Chinese-speaking teachers.

Case 2: Monolingual, Multicultural Educational Model with Transactive Chinese as Right/Yughur as Problem Orientation

The Case 2 school is in a rural district with a minority Yughur population. The model of education here is a Chinese dominant transactive orientation to minority knowledge. While agreeing with the predominance of universal knowledge encoded in Chinese, they doubt that this knowledge and language can be simply transmitted in local circumstances. They argue that the national curriculum is too remote from students' experience to be assimilated by them and must be mediated via prior knowledge, which is derived from the local context. Children's understandings interact with teachers' knowledge, and therefore, a good teacher must take them into account. Clearly, however, children's particular local knowledge is used within this orientation instrumentally as a means towards learning universal knowledge and not as something intrinsically worth learning. Thus, while interaction is central to this notion of teaching and learning, it remains an imbalanced interaction with one side dominant, and thus cannot strictly speaking be considered a dialogical approach. However, while treating Yughur knowledge and culture as a resource when encoded in Chinese, their monolingual model treats Yughur language as a problem. Here lessons about Yughur language are given in Chinese, but the language itself is not used in classrooms, except as an occasional motivator by some teachers. In principle, however, the transitional use of bilingual Yughur-Chinese instruction is compatible with this model, since the minority language would serve as an instrument to strengthen ultimate Chinese language proficiency and national curriculum achievement.

Case 3: Bilingual, Multicultural Educational Ideal with Incipient Transformative Language as Resource Orientation

The Case 3 school is in a rural district with a majority Yughur population. The

current model of education is Chinese language and national curriculum as right along with occasional transactive use of oral Yughur language, to mediate children's learning. However, the school aims to use school-based curriculum to introduce Yughur language instruction into the curriculum. Since there are not enough trained teachers who are proficient in Yughur language, this plan will require the use of paraprofessional teachers from the community. Thus, the ideal to which the school administration aspires is a transformative language and culture as right orientation. At this school, national and local knowledge and languages are both desired for their own sake. Furthermore, the willingness to involve community members in delivery of some courses also approaches the ethos of community schools. In principle, therefore, a strong enrichment model of maintenance bilingual education would suit the objective of developing additive bilingualism.

Discussion

Comparison of school sites shows a different model of education in each case. Unsurprisingly, the weaker the presence of Yughur language in the local environment, the weaker the presence of Yughur language and culture within the school. In Case 1, the town school, there was virtually no presence of Yughur language in public or at the school, while in Case 3, the rural Yughur majority district school, Yughur language could be heard in public and school and was used to a limited extent by bilingual teachers. What is surprising is that in Case 2, a rural Yughur minority district, where Yughur culture has a stronger curricular presence than even in Case 3, Yughur language is as absent as in Case 1. However, when embedded stakeholders' cases are examined by school site, no simple correspondence between local stakeholder perspectives and degree of incorporation of Yughur language and culture is found.

Minority language and education practice in China includes two extreme positions, both considered harmful by some: (1) an overemphasis on Chinese at the expense of minority heritage languages, termed "linguistic assimilationism," or "linguistic integration"; and (2) an emphasis on learning the heritage language at the expense of the national language of wider communication which is termed "linguistic nationalism" (Teng, 2001). Teng and Guan (2007) argue that minority students should become bicultural and bilingual persons, thus implying the need to reject the either-or logic of the above two extremes, which in agreement would require a strong, empowering form of bilingual education (Cummins, 2001; May, 2008).

"Language nationalism" involves a minority community turning its back on both modern China and the modern world, and on the fraternal nationalities in China. However, most significantly, language nationalism is not apparent in the

responses of Sunan County stakeholders. Almost all Yughur parents and students and a large proportion of non-Yughur parents and students support the learning of Yughur language in school. Nevertheless, Yughur parents overwhelmingly also report aspirations for their children to continue their education in Chinese to the highest level possible, post-secondary education.

At an earlier period when many teachers were bilingual, many of these parents experienced a weak form of bilingual education, and were able to use their language in class and on school grounds. Furthermore, many Yughur parents are bilingual and undoubtedly some of them exhibit additive bilingualism, with balanced oral if not written bilingual proficiency. Thus, within the Yughur community exemplars exist of the potential of achieving additive bilingualism, and the experience of relatively successfully mixed bilingual education. It may be recalled that a quadrilingual family was encountered in which language diversity as such was valued: members of the family were proficient in Sarigh Yughur, Tibetan and Chinese, with a child adding English proficiency to the family repertoire. Thus, bilingualism and even trilingualism among northwest China's minorities is not an unknown condition, and as Hansen (1999) and Ma (2007) document, is also much more frequent among rural Han who have been living among north-western minorities for generations than among urban Han. Sunan County is also traditionally multilingual: Sarigh and Shira Yughur used Tibetan as a higher language of learning and religion, and one group of Shira Yughur are reported to have shifted to Tibetan as their prime language; in Dahe district, settled by both Shira and Sarigh Yughur, bilingualism in these two languages is reported; in Baiyin Mongolian Township, a population of Mongolian speakers is surrounded by speakers of Shira Yughur, a Mongolic language, and some Mongolian-Shira Yughur bilingualism is evident (Bahry, 2009; Chen & Lei, 1985; Hahn, 1998; Luobuzangdunzhi, 2006; Nugteren, 2003; Junast, 1981)

Thus it seems that among Yughurs advocating for Yughur curriculum there is a conception of two languages as right, rather than one *language as right*, one *language as problem*, and an incipient *language as resource* orientation. More significantly, there is also an incipient transformative orientation to language, culture, knowledge and identity, for these parents arguing for a model of additive bilingualism, multiculturalism and modernization through both minority and majority language and culture.

This perspective parallels arguments for a middle course between Chinese assimilationism and narrow minority language nationalism (Teng, 2001), yet stakeholders seem unaware of these theoretical arguments. Nevertheless, stakeholders' provided arguments for using more than two languages in local schools, mentioned bilingual education in other jurisdictions in China, and referred positively to the previous experience of informal bilingual education in

Sunan County, all of which suggest their implicit pluralistic, additive, multilingual multicultural ideals for quality education and the qualities that should be developed by minority students in schools. Two-way dual language bilingual education is a strong form of enrichment bilingual education (Freeman Field, 2008). Other scholars have argued for a more critical multicultural/bilingual education for minority students in East Asia, including China (Phillion & Wang, 2011). The fact that a noticeable number of non-Yughur parents and students express interest in learning Yughur language(s), suggests that it might be possible to implement this form of bilingual enrichment education as a model for Yughur inclusion in the school curriculum.

Contributions and Limitations of the Study

As an exploratory study the contributions of the study to the research literature are several. First, the Chinese MOE recommends gathering data on stakeholder voices when preparing a school-based curriculum (Yang & Zhou, 2002), something which can be done in a rigorous and systematic manner using a multiple embedded case study method. The use of multiple embedded cases and sites allows for triangulation of sites and stakeholder groups permitting greater confidence in findings that extend across cases.

A significant contribution of the study is the application of questions and principles drawn from literature and debates on quality education in China, and then extending this synthesis to a case study of minority education in China. A further contribution is the identification of research from a range of contexts outside China on curriculum reform, rural education, development education, nomadic education, bilingual education and language policy, and applying this research to a critique of minority education, bilingual education and language revitalization in China. Particularly important is the application of SBCD reform principles in China to minority cultural and linguistic revitalization efforts.

However, as an exploratory case study, generalizability to other contexts must be done with caution. Despite the broad scope of the study, self-selection of participants may have limited the range of opinion identifiable by the study. In addition, the number of minority teachers in Sunan County is small, such that random selection of volunteer teachers did not lead to selection of any minority teachers in the initial case; subsequently, purposeful selection of minority teachers was necessary to ensure their representation in that embedded case.

Furthermore, rural children (and parents) were underrepresented in the study due to the difficulty for rural children who live in dormitories in getting parental permission to participate in the study. A further limitation is the challenge of translation and interpretation. The researcher speaks and understands Chinese,

but is not a native speaker, particularly of the northwestern Chinese dialect. While the researcher's interpreters were proficient in northwestern Chinese, they were not trained interpreters. Nevertheless, later transcription allowed for further verification of participants' meaning. Moreover, while Chinese language research was consulted, the study relied more on research published in English. A final potential limitation is the researcher's outsider status. Of course, some aspects of the context that were not familiar to the researcher could not be compensated for by the literature review. On the other hand, the researcher's outsider status also had the potential to see the context from a different perspective.

Conclusion

Considerable evidence has been presented that education of non-dominant groups is more successful when educational models take into account the quality perspectives of students, parents and non-dominant communities. Among linguistic minorities, evidence has also accumulated that strong forms of bilingual education, in which the first language and the language of wider communication (LWC) are both used as languages of instruction produce superior results in terms of quantitative measures of educational success as well as increased learner satisfaction. At the same time, there have been mounting calls from researchers and policymakers in favour of increased participation of local educators, parents and students in determining curriculum and appropriate pedagogies through local curriculum and SBCD. In the context of China's education reform, similar calls have been made on the one hand to shift towards greater incorporation of students' prior knowledge and interests in education, and on the other hand towards increasing local content in curriculum through local and SBCD.

For the education of China's linguistic minorities, these converging lines of argument all suggest that multilingual, multicultural education, sensitive to community quality perspectives, with participation of all interested local stakeholders, is a means with the potential to satisfy non-dominant groups' concerns that schooling should support linguistic and cultural maintenance in addition to preparing for participation in the wider society by also developing high levels of conversational and academic proficiency in Chinese, and supporting improved learning of national curriculum objectives. Such a model of minority education would foster additive multilingualism and multiculturalism, with a "both-and" language and culture as resource orientation, where learning in one language does not occur at the expense of learning another rather than an "either-or" *language as problem/right* orientation, where subtractive bilingualism,

language shift and eventual language loss are the typical results.

Despite this convergence of arguments, some local policymakers respond to poor Chinese language learning of students in minority LOI education not by a curriculum in which local and national perspectives, minority and Han languages are combined in an additive fashion, but by elimination of minority language and intensification of use of Chinese as LOI (Dello-Iacovo, 2009), creating subtractive conditions under which mother tongue literacy and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) are not developed, while improvements in Chinese proficiency will likely be limited to oral interaction ability without delivering intended improvements in academic Chinese proficiency.

In contrast, policymakers in Sunan are allowing for local, school level choice. This study has shown that curriculum reform is indeed leading to school differentiation, with one school following the ideals of regular education, one a monolingual version of multicultural education, and one aiming at a multicultural, multilingual pluralistic ideal of education. Despite this differentiation, the preponderance of stakeholders interviewed across all types, sites, nationalities, and genders favour the multilingual, multicultural, pluralistic ideal, on condition that it is implemented voluntarily. The study thus shows, that at least in this locality, the preponderance of stakeholders have an additive, language and cultures as resource orientation, supportive of schools reflecting actual linguistic and cultural pluralism. Such an ideal will require considerable research and administrative support; however, there is clearly sufficient support among stakeholders in Sunan Yughur Autonomous County for this experimentation to begin.

Theoretical and Policy Implications

The literature review suggests that current curriculum reforms are on the right track: multiple, convergent evidence about education of non-dominant groups concurs with the intent of Quality Education for All-Round Development and the decentralization of curriculum authority to foster curriculum making closer to learners. Moreover, more scholars in China are exploring multicultural education as a guiding framework for accommodating both pan-Chinese and local knowledge perspectives in education via local and school-based curriculum (Hong & Qianar, 2008; Liang, 2008; Ou, & Jiang, 2009; Teng & Guan, 2007; Wang & Wan, 2006).

However, scholars also caution against superficial pluralism that includes only those aspects of minority cultures that are attractive to and unthreatening to mainstream educators, such as colorful clothes, handicrafts, foods, songs and dances, arguing instead for critical multiculturalism, which, like strong forms of

SBCD, involves greater collaboration among educators, students, parents and communities (Banks, 2008; Cummins, 2001; Kalantzis & Cope, 1999).

Indeed, scholars have also looked at the mutual relation of education and identity development and the key role of language and school language practices in mediating between them (Cummins, 2001; Gee, 2000–2001; Nieto, Bode, Kang, & Raible, 2008; Kanno & Norton, 2003). They also consider the intimate relationship between language and culture. While multicultural education may present minority content in mainstream language (Banks, 1994), and standardized curriculum content may be presented in minority languages (Bahry, Niyozov, & Shamatov, 2008), for linguistic minorities, their language and language practices are an inseparable part of their culture, and so their ideal for multicultural education will likely include a strong form of bilingual education (Nieto, 2001).

Finally, research has developed that suggests the utility of a theoretical and empirical distinction of two types of language proficiency: conversational fluency, or Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), and academic proficiency, or CALP, the second of which is primarily learned through schooling, with the former needing only one to two years to develop with exposure to interaction in a second language, and the latter requiring typically five to seven years (Cummins, 2001, 2008b). When language minority children are schooled in their second language, they quickly present as “fluent” in the LOI, but lag significantly behind native speakers in LOI vocabulary development.

This gap between dominant language CALP development of 1st and 2nd language children goes a long way towards explaining the frequent finding of native-like second language fluency in the face of weak second language reading and writing, disappointing academic achievement, high dropout rates, and low ultimate educational attainment. In contrast, developing minority language CALP through bilingual education allows for more challenging curriculum content to be learned in children’s stronger language while second language CALP proficiency has time to develop before beginning any use of the second language as a LOI (Cummins, 2008a, 2008b; May, 2008).

Similarly, CALP proficiency in the first language can support CALP development in the second language, according to the interdependence principle. This principle provides some theoretical explanation for findings of a large-scale longitudinal study that for language minority students, the more school-based study of academic language in their first language alongside the national language, the lower the dropout rates, and the higher the level of proficiency in the dominant language as well (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

This study found evidence of superficial inclusion of diversity, such as beautiful images of costumes and scenery without further minority content; and

teaching about isolated exotic characteristics of Yughur language, without actually teaching or using Yughur. Moreover, stereotypical reference was made by some to Yughurs' special ability in singing, dancing and sport. While Yughur stakeholders valued these aspects of Yughur culture, many stakeholders desired Yughur curriculum content to include more challenging material. At the same time, local stakeholders studied have views on pluralism, inclusiveness of diverse perspectives and cultures, and openness to societal multilingualism and personal plurilingualism that are supported by much theory and empirical evidence (Bahry, 2009). There is much that can be used for reference in enriching theoretical and practical approaches to strengthening the experience of quality in minority education from multiple perspectives.

The need for development of an empirical knowledge base that can be assessed critically based on theoretical principles such as those argued for by Cummins, also points out the need for comparative research, both comparative analysis of non-dominant education in China and other countries, such as a recent edited volume comparing approaches to multicultural education in China, Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea (Phillion, Hue, & Wang, 2011), as well as comparisons of minority nationalities within China (Adamson & Feng, 2009; Bahry, 2011).

A recent attempt was made by Bahry and Zholdoshalieva (in press) to apply a comparative approach and principles from research on bilingual education to a theoretical replication (Yin, 2003) of Yughur with Kyrgyz occupational structure and educational attainment in China, based on key differences in language-in-education policy, until recently, mother-tongue dominant for Kyrgyz, and Chinese-dominant for Yughur. On theoretical grounds (Cummins, 2000, 2001, 2008a, 2008b) both monolingual models are predicted to weakly support L2 Chinese CALP development, and thus provide uncertain preparation for Chinese-dominant post-compulsory and post-secondary education. Accordingly, Yughur and Kyrgyz senior secondary and post-secondary educational completion rates and occupational structure were expected to differ minimally, despite the vastly greater exposure to Chinese language instruction of Yughurs, a prediction that was confirmed.

This finding and similar international findings allow us to caution that recent Chinese-dominant "bilingual education" programs introduced in Kyrgyz areas and elsewhere are likely to increase conversational much more than academic Chinese proficiency, and have relatively weak impact on senior secondary and post-secondary completion rates, and the possibility of monolingual dominant-language education policy coinciding with subtractive bilingualism and mother tongue language endangerment as has occurred among Yughurs in Sunan County.

Thus, there is a need to conduct domestic and international comparative research and the development and application of theory to such major questions affecting quality of minority education. Ultimately, more qualitative study of experiences and perspectives of stakeholders is required as part of judging quality in minority education. When combined with theory, empirical data soon to be available from the 2010 census can help researchers produce deepened insight into minority education that meets the mutual quality requirements of all stakeholders.

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