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# **Reflections on Mother Tongue Education in National and Provincial Policies in Mainland China**

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China, as a culturally and linguistically diversified country, has 56 official recognized ethnicities and languages from six different language families. Ever since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the right for people of different ethnicities to receive education in their mother tongues has been guaranteed by the Constitution. However, due to the strong support from the central government, Mandarin gradually gains its official status and influence in the field of public service, mass media, and education. Not only regional varieties of Chinese language has been replaced by Mandarin in all the formal education, but ethnic languages have also shifted from the teaching languages to an independent subject. Therefore, this study tries to reflect the mother tongue education (MTE) among speakers of Chinese languages and non-Chinese languages by analyzing the national and provincial policies in depth. The main focuses are how MTE is regulated and organized in both national and provincial policies and how national and provincial policies correspond to each other. Since the education systems in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan are under the supervision of separate governments, this study will only focus on the national and provincial policies from Mainland China.

The structure of this thesis is as follows. Chapter 1 introduces the previous research on language education policies in Mainland China and Chapter 2 to 4 present the basic information of languages and MTE in Mainland China. Chapter 5 explains the research method in detail and introduces the cases chosen for this study. The analysis of the national and local level policies will be presented in Chapter 6, and the reflections on MOI policies in educational, political and social-economic sphere will be discussed in Chapter 7. Finally, Chapter 8 will serve as concluding part to summarize the findings.

*Keywords: Mother tongue education, medium of instruction, policy analysis, China*

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## **Abbreviations**

CPC	Communist Party of China
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KMT	Kuomintang (Nationalist Party of China)
MOI	Medium of Instruction
MTE	Mother Tongue Education
NPC	National People's Congress
PRC	People's Republic of China
XUAR	Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

## **Note on the Names of Different Languages**

Due to different perspectives, the official spoken and written form of Chinese that promoted by the governments at all levels in this thesis is interchangeably called Mandarin Chinese, standard Chinese, common language or Putonghua. The languages of other ethnic minorities are interchangeably called minority languages, ethnic languages in this thesis.

## **Note on Chinese Characters and Romanization**

For relevant Chinese terminology, this thesis gives the Chinese word both in simplified Chinese characters (officially used in Mainland China) and Hanyu Pinyin (official Romanization system of Chinese in Mainland China). For example, the term National Language is written as 国语, while the pinyin equivalent would be *Guóyǔ*.

## **1. Introduction**

Language policy, as an important factor in educational, social-economic, and political spheres, has always been paid attention to by the researchers from both inside and outside China. It, from a micro view, related to the protection of certain culture and, from a macro view, related to the linguistic human rights, social status, and even the establishment of a united national identity.

Much of the early existing research on Chinese language policies has focused on the effects to the whole society in general at the macro level. Zhou (2000) and Zhou and Sun (2004), as pioneer researchers in this topic, summarized the evolution of the language policies diachronically based on the timeline. Their historical researches functioned as a fundamental stage for other further research. Later the equal status between the Chinese and the minority languages has been discussed by Dwyer (2005) and Wang, Juffermans and Du (2016). The different status of the languages in China and the minority identity of certain ethnic minority group were analyzed from a political view. People's attitudes toward Putonghua, regional varieties and minority languages were also a direction for research (Bai, 1994; Dede, 2004; Ojijed, 2010; Zhou, 2001). People of different ethnicities and mother tongues were questioned about their opinions and attitudes toward the Chinese Putonghua and their mother tongue.

The attention of the researchers has been shift later from macro to micro level - in the educational sphere. The language policies concerning bilingual education or trilingual education gradually gained its popularity among researchers (Adamson & Feng, 2009; Feng & Sunuodula, 2009; Tsung & Cruickshank, 2009). The illiteracy, effectiveness and practice of the bilingual or trilingual language education policies are the three most researched topics.

Although both the social and educational spheres are covered by most of the existing research, the majority of them researched between the Chinese and minority languages. Research related to the language policies between Putonghua and the regional varieties of Chinese can rarely be found. The common thinking that regional varieties are part of the Chinese languages and relatively lower urgency comparing to the tense relationship

between Chinese and ethnic minorities languages reduced people's interests in researching language policies within Chinese languages. Despite the publication of few related research (Bai, 1994; Zhou, 2001) on language attitudes between Chinese languages, analysis of language policies for Chinese language is still lacking.

What is more, most of the research were made depend on the national policies from the central government. However, within the Chinese system, language policies from local government are also worth analyzing. The central government, as a guide for all the provinces, often publishes policies in general words, while the local governments, as the operator of the policies from central government, are granted rights to make clear and detailed rules or regulations based on the situations of each provinces. Policies from local governments, comparing to those from central government, reflect more detailed procedures and timetable of the language policy implementation.

Language policies are normally analyzed by most of the researchers as a whole to examine the linguistic rights, implementation of bilingual or trilingual education, however, Medium of Instruction (MOI) as an important factor in education which can be further analyzed from the language policies is often neglected. Therefore, in this thesis, attention will be paid to the analysis of the MOI from both national and local policies for the speakers of the Chinese languages and minority languages.

From autumn 2017, new language policies are implemented in some of the provinces/ autonomous regions in order to meet the requirements set by the national long-term plan in 2012. The national long-term plan, in which a timetable for promoting Chinese Putonghua in both Chinese and minority communities was written, will to some extent influence the local governments in policy-making.

In order to fulfill the gap of research on MOI and the newly published language policies, this thesis focuses on the following research questions: 1) How MTE and MOI are regulated by the contemporary national and provincial level policies and 2) How the national and provincial level language policies correspond to each other by reflecting from the educational, social-economic, and political perspectives.



## **2. Mother Tongue Education Around the Globe**

Language, as the carrier of culture, plays an important role not only in everyday communication, but also in building identity, inheriting tangible and intangible traditions, and forming a certain way of thinking. It is also regarded as a unique factor that distinguishes humans from other primates. Lewis et al. (2009) estimate that there are more than seven thousand languages spoken today worldwide while only 6 percent of them have more than one million speakers and in total account for 94 percent of the world population. Due to many possible reasons, like: unequal social-economic status, different number of users or the degree of difficulty, languages develop individually in different pace. What is more, the establishment of contemporary nation states also enlarges the gap and creates Matthew Effects between large and small languages. Normally the status of official language of a country will be given to one or two languages that using by the majority and leave other small languages an unequal status of minority languages, local languages or even local dialects. The phenomena that the official language dominates the country and gradually replaces the minority languages thus start to be seen.

As a result, much attention has been paid recently to the preservation of minority languages in many countries around the globe. Numerous organizations or movements have been initiated, of which, the well-known and influential one is called the International Mother Language Day (IMLD). As observed by UNESCO annually since 2000, the International Mother Language Day helps to promote awareness of linguistic, cultural diversity, and multilingualism. In order to promote those ideas, UNESCO also encourages schools to provide education for students in their mother tongue. The Director General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, has also underlined the importance of mother tongue in her speech for the 2016 IMLD that local languages are not only the lens through which people firstly understood the world, but also the carriers of individual identities.

Apart from the speech above, the support and promotion of Mother Tongue from UNESCO can also be found in many of its documents. *UNESCO Constitution*, as the fundamental principle of the organization, lays down that language should not induce any kind of discrimination:

‘the human rights and fundamental freedoms... are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion’ (UNESCO, 2010).

After the UNESCO Constitution, numerous reports and conventions related to education in mother tongue have also been released in the following years. In 1953, the report *The Use of Vernacular Language in Education* has been released and asserted that: ‘it is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue’ (UNESCO). Later in the year 1960, the *Convention against Discrimination in Education* also indicates the education rights of the people from minority groups in their own languages:

‘the members of national minorities have the right to carry on their own educational activities, including... the use or the teaching of their own languages...’(UNESCO, 1960).

Article 22 of the *Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education* (1976) emphasizes the role of the mother tongue to the ethnic minorities:

‘With regard to ethnic minorities, adult education activities should enable them to... educate themselves and their children in their mother tongues, develop their own cultures and learn languages other than their mother tongues.’ (UNESCO, 1976)

What is more, *Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice* (1978) also encourages education in mother tongue in its Article 9: ‘steps should be taken to make it possible for children to be taught in their mother tongue’. Stepping into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, teaching in mother tongue has also gradually connected to the protection of basic human rights and the preservation of cultural diversity. As mentioned in the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001), different languages use in education show both the respect for the mother tongue, linguistic diversity, and the promotion of multilingualism.

Receiving education in one’s mother tongue has also led to the creation of a new concept - linguistic human rights. Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson and Rannut (1995) developed and

separated the concept into two levels: individual level and collective level. Individual level means that everyone has the right to identify his/her mother tongue regardless of the social-economic status or the number of the speakers. The collective level refers to the right of minority groups to establish educational institutions in their languages. Thus, any violations of the linguistic human rights should be regarded equally as the violation of human rights.

The using of mother tongue in education also has many advantages to the learners. Firstly, the using of mother tongue as medium of instruction (MOI) will improve the performance of the learners. A more familiar and easy command language enables learners to easily understand the key concepts of different subjects, at the same time, improves the efficiency. Nomlomo (2006) backs up the idea that learners may have less anxiety when expressing themselves or answering the questions in the language they familiar. UNESCO in its Global Education Monitoring Report (2016) emphasizes students who study in their mother tongues are reported having better foundation skills in literacy and numeracy than those students who study in another language. A positive relation between academic achievement and the mother tongue instruction has also been found in many researches (Brock-Utne, 2006; Fafunwa, Mcauley and Soyinka, 1989). What's more, the using of mother tongue in education also increases the degree of parent involvement in homework. A well-functioned educational system should involve both school and home education, the consistency of language will also facilitate education at home. According to Desai (2006), parents' participation, which encourages by the fluent and accessible communication among students, teachers, and parents, can also lead to more effective learning.

However, challenges also exist concerning mother tongue education (MTE). One big obstacle is the lack of qualified teachers. A qualified language teacher will not only help students command the language in a more scientific way, but also increase their interest in the culture and performance. Malekela (2006) mentions that untrained language teachers are usually unwilling to use the mother tongue as MOI. Another obstacle is the lack of resources in mother tongue. As minority languages usually do not have a higher social-economic status and strong economy as support, textbooks or published materials in minority languages are relatively rare to find than those in the major languages.

Although MTE has been promoted by both organization and scholars, in practice it still has a long way to go. According to Walter and Benson (2012), there are still around 40 percent of the global population are not receiving education either in their mother tongue or a language they familiar. The causes of the phenomenon are various. Firstly, there is no absolute homogenous nation state exist currently. The establishment of nation state also leads to the creation of minority. The promotion of minority languages within nation states is sometimes considered not as linguistic or cultural pluralism but as ‘an obstacle to national unity, a roadblock on the path to modernization of society, or in Marxist terms, “a survival of barbarism” by many earlier sociologists’ (Haugen, 1985). Although multiculturalism has been paid much attention in the twenty-first century by many countries and international organizations, the major language of each country is still the only medium for media, communication or education for pragmatic reasons.

Similar situation can also be found firstly in the immigrant countries like United States of America, or Australia which only have one (*de facto*) official language require students with different cultural backgrounds to conduct their studies in the language other than their mother tongue (Gupta, 1997). The complexity of students’ language background and the limited resources make mother tongue education hard to implement for all the students of different mother tongues. At the same time, a common language in the multicultural societies serves as the tool that connecting people with different backgrounds and forming the same identity.

Secondly, in former or current colonies like Hong Kong, Singapore, or most sub-Saharan African countries (De Clerk, 2002; Lai & Byram, 2003). The MOI in those countries/regions are same as the official languages of their suzerains in order to keep the tight relations with them. Even after the colonies gained independence from their suzerains, most of the language policies remain unchanged in order to unit people of different ethnic groups and not making any local languages superior. (Gupta, 1997)

Besides the external factors, sometimes the internal factors, domestic policies can also challenge the medium of instruction. Maldives, the small Asian country with its own homogeneous culture and unique language, adopted English as the medium of instruction

in order to keep its people connect to the rest of the world and serve its tourism industry (Mohamed, 2013).

China, a country that seems to be culturally and ethnically homogeneous, has also experienced the similar challenge of providing equal mother tongue education for every citizen. As a country with fifty-six recognized ethnic groups, linguistic pluralism is never a new topic in China. According to the Sun (2007), except Hui people have fully adopted Chinese language for daily communication, the rest fifty-five ethnic groups all have their own representative written and spoken languages. Most of the historical minority languages, such as: Uygur, Mongolian, and Tibetan have well-developed literature and historical records. Although minority languages gained the official status in certain regions, Chinese is the only official language nationwide as written in the Constitution. The unequal status between Chinese and other minority languages therefore leads to argument in MTE for the ethnic minorities - mother tongue as MOI or mother tongue as an independent subject. As mentioned by many researches (Lin, 1997; Zhang & Yang, 2018), language policies in different ethnic minority regions are shifting between the mother tongue as MOI and mother tongue as an independent subject during different periods of time.

Not just those speakers of minority languages, speakers of Chinese language also face the similar problem of lacking mother tongue education within school education. Chinese language as one standard written form has various spoken forms, and different spoken forms are incomprehensible to each other (Huang and Liao, 2017). Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese), a man-made language based on the Beijing accent, has been created and promoted by the central government and used as the lingua franca within China in order to eliminate the language barrier. The National policies and government-leading nationwide Promotion of Putonghua movement make Mandarin Chinese the only dominant language in media, school and government. Although people from different regions keep using their own local languages in daily life, Mandarin is the only medium of instruction while receiving education. Lacking official status in any national or regional laws, regional varieties of Chinese language have been ignored by all the government sectors and their speakers hardly have a chance to achieve mother tongue education.

Due to the complexity of the language situations inside China, details about both Chinese and minority languages will be further explained in the chapter 3 from different perspectives. What's more, a brief changing of the language policies in Mainland China will also be illustrated in the chapter 4 in order to form a general view of the unstable language policies before the first national language-related law has been made.

### 3. Languages in Mainland China

#### 3.1 Chinese and Its Regional Varieties

The term ‘Chinese’ nowadays is always equaled with the idea of a standard writing system with a vernacular spoken system matching it. People who live outside China may have the above idea since the written system is same elsewhere and all the state media or overseas Chinese language institutes are using the same vernacular spoken system. However, the term ‘Chinese’ itself is far more complicated.

Chinese as a unified language had gone through a period of free development. In the Warring States Period, all the small countries have their own writing styles for the same character and different pronunciations. The language difference can be seen from many of the ancient books:

‘县门不发，楚言而出。’ (The gate of the city is not closed, the person from Chu country speaks Chu language and walks out.) (Zuo Zhuan, 2015)

‘南蛮馶舌。’ (The language of the southerners [from Chu country] sounds like birds’ singing.) (Mencius, 2017)

The situation started to change after the first unified dynasty (221BC) has been established by the first emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang. One of the first three things he promoted was the standardization of the writing system. Since then, the standardized writing Chinese became the only written form regardless of the various spoken forms across China. It therefore leads to the separate development of written and spoken language in the following thousand years.

Nowadays, the term ‘Chinese’ as a linguistic term is commonly used to refer to a grouping of inter-related regional varieties spread throughout the area of China (Chen, 2007). According to the latest generally accepted classification, Chinese as a spoken form consists of nine major regional varieties. Table 1 below is the summary of the basic information of the nine regional varieties, including their names, approximate number of

speakers and the major geographical area in China. As stated in the table, Mandarin as a wide-spread variety is spoken by more than six million people in the northeastern, northern and southwestern China. While comparing to Mandarin, other regional varieties are much smaller in the size of both number of speakers and geographical areas.

**Table 1** Distribution of the Regional Varieties of the Chinese Language in China

<b>Name</b>	<b>Approximate Number of Speakers (million)</b>	<b>Major Area</b>
Mandarin	662	Beijing, Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning, Shandong, Hebei, Henan, Southern Shaanxi, Gansu, Ningxia, Sichuan, Chongqing, Yunnan, Guizhou, Northern Jiangsu, Northern Anhui, Hubei
Jin	45	Shanxi, Northern Shaanxi
Wu	70	South Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Southeastern Anhui
Hui	3	Southern Anhui
Gan	40	Jiangxi, Eastern Hunan
Xiang	31	Hunan
Min (Hokien)	55	Fujian, Taiwan, Eastern Guangdong, Hainan
Yue (Cantonese)	62	Guangdong, Eastern Guangxi, Hong Kong, Macau
Kejia (Hakka)	40	Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangxi, Taiwan

Based on the information from Chen 2007.

The nine regional varieties (see Table 1) differ from each other in their pronunciation in a general view, and also in lexicon and grammar more specifically. The great phonological variation leads to the mutually incomprehensiveness among the different regional varieties. Due to the fact that most of the ancient wars were occurred in the northern part, regional varieties in the relatively stable southern part generally preserved more characteristics from the ancient Chinese. Numerous tones and checked tones can be easily



found in most of the regional varieties in the south. Besides the phonological differences, lexicon and grammar are also different in each regional variety. Most commonly are the preservations of the ancient single-character words and the ancient grammar order in the other regional varieties than in Mandarin. Take Mandarin and Cantonese as example, the linguistic distance between them can be likened to that between Spanish and Italian.

Due to the big differences among those regional varieties, some linguists argue that the nine regional varieties should be given the status of language as even the sub-varieties within one of the nine major regional varieties might not be mutually comprehensible. Bloomfield (1961) and Chen (1999) suggested similarly that those nine major regional varieties could be categorized as separate Chinese languages rather than just regional varieties under a big concept of Chinese language.

Although linguists have various ideas and arguments toward the language classification, people's perceptions toward regional varieties as part of the Chinese language have not been challenged. Instead of 'language' (语言, *yǔyán*), the term 'dialect' (方言, *fāngyán*) is used to refer to all the regional varieties that people have as their mother tongue inside China. The nation-wide standardized written form and the commonly shared literary history play an important role in bridging all the regional varieties and forming the perception of using the same language.

However, the independent development of each regional variety cannot be considered as the lack of a variety for administrative purpose or lingua franca. Prior to the beginning of Ming dynasty (1368-1644), an early form of official spoken Chinese was adopted as official use in the name of 'Mandarin / Speech of Officials' (官话, *guānhuà*). This term remained in use for several hundred years until the new term 'National Language' (国语, *guóyǔ*) gained its popularity after the nationalistic movement. Although the name remained unchanged, the varieties that used under this name switched from time to time following the changing of the political or economic center in different dynasties. Table 2 below summaries the changing of the definitions of Guanhua geographically from Sui (581-618) dynasty to the end of Qing (1911) dynasty.

**Table 2** Geographical Base of Guanhua in Different Dynasties

<b>Dynasty</b>	<b>Geographical Base</b>
Sui (581-618) Tang (618-907)	Present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi Province
Northern Song (960-1127)	Present-day Kaifeng and Luoyang, Henan Province
Ming (1368-1644)	Present-day Nanjing, Jiangsu Province
Qing (1644-1911)	Present-day Beijing

Based on information from Chen 2007.

It is not hard to notice that the geographical base of the lingua franca of each dynasty is the capital cities of each time. On the one hand, the strong political and economic influence back up the certain regional variety, on the other hand, the usage of the certain regional variety is still limited for administrative purposes and far from daily communication nationwide.

The coming of the specific concept of nation state and national language from the western countries after the Opium War (1840-1842) also marked an important step in national language movement in China. Before the movement, the term standard Chinese applies mainly to the ancient written form, also known as, literary Chinese (文言文, *Wényánwén*). Wenyanwen, as the only written form that connects all the speakers of the regional varieties, has a great difference than all the vernacular forms. As a result, people without much education and exposing to the wenyanwen might not be able to understand the meaning of the books or the government notifications (Xia, 2010). Although some books were started to be written in the vernacular form in Ming and Qing dynasties, the use of vernacular literary Chinese (白话文, *Báihuàwén*) was still limited and not encouraged in the administrative or educational fields.

The increasing interests of people in learning new western concepts and the wide-spread idea of nationalism at the early twentieth century also facilitated the movement by establishing and promoting an official Chinese language with both standard written and spoken form across China. Due to the great number of regional varieties, it was hotly

debated that on which regional variety should the new standard Chinese be based. In 1913, the Commission on the Unification of Pronunciation (读音统一会, *Dúyīn Tǒngyī Huì*) released the later-called ‘Old National Pronunciation’ (老国音, *Lǎo Guóyīn*). Bearing the core idea of ‘Including both North and South and referring to the Old and New’, the Old National Pronunciation combined different characteristics from many regional varieties. However, the Old National Pronunciation did not gain its popularity as expected due to the lack of support from people. Later in 1924, government decided that the national pronunciation should be based on Beijing accent of Mandarin, and published the ‘A Glossary of Frequently Used Words in National Pronunciation’ (国音常用字汇, *Guóyīn Chángyòng Zìhuì*) in 1932. The series actions by the language movement and government promotion successfully established the standard Chinese as national language and connected the Beijing accent to the idea of standard speech.

After the establishment of the People’s Republic of China, the new government changed the term from ‘National Language’ (国语, *Guóyǔ*) to ‘Common Language’ (普通话, *Pǔtōnghuà*). This new term includes both the ambition of the government in promoting the language, and some other political purposes which will be discussed later in the section 3.2. According to the State Council (1956), Putonghua was officially defined for the first time as:

‘...The basis for unifying Chinese already exists, this is the Putonghua with Beijing pronunciation as standard pronunciation, northern speech as basic dialect, and with model modern vernacular literary writings as grammatical standard...’ (State Council Instruction concerning Spreading Putonghua)

This definition clearly regulates the standard of Putonghua from the perspectives of phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. As an abstract manually regulated standard language, Putonghua does not have a real set of native speakers. In pronunciation, it derives from the Beijing accent of Mandarin but also excludes some typical local pronunciations; in vocabulary and grammar, it heritages mainly from the modern vernacular literary Chinese based on the Northern speech. It is also found that speakers of Mandarin in the north, northeast, and southwest have advantages than the speakers of other regional varieties in acquiring Putonghua. Despite of the pronunciation, speakers of

other regional varieties also need to study a new set of vocabulary, and some, even grammatical structures.

Although the vocabularies from different regional varieties in theory can be officially adopted into Putonghua, in practice the vocabularies from non-Mandarin areas are skipped in order to raise the readership within China. State Language Commission (国家语言文字工作委员会, *Guójiā Yǔyán Wénzì Gōngzuò Wěiyuánhui*) also plays an important role in regulating the vocabulary of Putonghua by guiding and publishing dictionaries.

Been adopted as the only one official language in administration, public service, media, and education spheres, Putonghua also gained a superior status in many aspects. Knowing Putonghua will be considered as a symbol of well-educated, and using Putonghua will be regarded as a symbol of civilized according to the official slogans. The dominance of Putonghua gradually increases its significant and importance, at the same time, shifts people's idea of the regional varieties from neutral to negative. Many studies (Bai, 1994; Zhou, 2001; Ojijed, 2010; Dede, 2004) in researching people's attitudes toward Putonghua and their mother tongues show that people consider Putonghua as a more useful tool for future and essential for social, academic and pragmatic purposes. Ng and Zhao (2015) also mentioned that a discrimination attitude has been created among people by the continued use of Putonghua in all crucial aspects in the society.

The successful promotion of Putonghua and the tense relationship between Putonghua and other regional varieties will be furthermore discussed later in the chapter 4 together with the discussion of the language policies in brief.

### **3.2 Non-Chinese Languages**

As mentioned in the previous section, the new term 'Putonghua' includes both the realistic purpose and political purpose. Realistically, the newly founded country needed a common language for communicating and breaking the interior language barriers. The term 'Putonghua' shows the great desire and ambition of the government in promoting the language and connecting people with different mother tongues together. Politically, this

new term is also more neutral than the old term ‘national language’ due to the fact that China is a multi-ethnicity country. In order to unit all the different ethnic groups, a neutral term with no leaning towards certain ethnic group is easier to be accepted by all.

Apart from the majority of Han Chinese, there are fifty-five officially recognized ethnic minorities (少数民族, *Shǎoshù Mínzú*) living mainly in the western part of China close to the national border. Been influenced by the countries nearby, most of them developed their unique culture, language, religion, and custom which are different from those of Han Chinese. Table 3 shows the major provinces or autonomous regions with high percentage of ethnic minorities settled.

**Table 3** Major Geographical Areas of the Ethnic Minorities in China

<b>Province/ Autonomous Region</b>	<b>Percentage of minority population per Province/ Autonomous Region</b>	<b>Major minority group(s)</b>
Tibet	91.83%	Tibetan
Xinjiang	59.90%	Uygur, Kazakhs,
Qinghai	46.98%	Tibetan, Hui, Monguor, Salar
Guangxi	37.18%	Zhuang
Guizhou	36.11%	Miao, Bouyei, Dong, Tujia
Yunnan	33.37%	Yi, Hani, Bai, Dai, Zhuang, Miao
Ningxia	35.42%	Hui
Inner Mongolia	20.47%	Mongolian

Based on the data from the Report of the Sixth National Population Census of People’s Republic of China (2010)

According to the Sixth National Population Census of People’s Republic of China (第六次全国人口普查, *Dìliùcì Quánguó Rénkǒu Pǔchá*) in 2010, the ethnic minorities takes up 8.5 per cent of the whole population of China. Zhuang, as the largest ethnic minority, has a population more than 16 million following Han Chinese. Other minorities like Manchurian, Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan, Uygur, Miao, Yi, Tujia, have a population of between five and ten million, and Korean, Dong, Kazakhs, have a population between

one to five million.

The languages of the ethnic minorities also vary from each to each. According to Sun (2007), the languages of all the fifty-six ethnic groups belong to five language families: Sino-Tibetan Language, Altaic Language, Austronesian Language, Austroasiatic Language, and Indo-European Language. Most of the minority languages belong to a language family linguistically, while languages like Korean or Jing still remain unclear. Some major minority languages with its language family and geographical areas are summarized in the following Table 4.

**Table 4** Distribution of Major Non-Chinese Languages in China

<b>Genetic Affiliation (Major Languages)</b>	<b>Major Geographical Areas</b>
<b>Sino-Tibetan</b>	
Tibeto-Burman (Tibetan, Yi, Bai, Hani, Tujia)	Tibet, Yunnan, Sichuan
Kam-Tai (Zhuang, Dong, Boyei, Dai)	Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou
Miao-Yao (Miao, Mian, Bunu)	Hunan, Guangxi, Guizhou
<b>Altaic</b>	
Turkic (Uygur, Kazakhs, Kirgiz)	Xinjiang
Mongolian (Mongolian, Dongxiang, Daur)	Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Gansu
Manchu-Tungus (Xibe, Ewenki)	Xinjiang, Heilongjiang
<b>Austroasiatic</b> (Va, Blang, Deang)	Yunnan
<b>Austronesian</b> (Gaoshans)	Taiwan
<b>Indo-European</b> (Tajik, Russian)	Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia
<b>Status undecided</b> (Korean, Jing)	Jilin, Heilongjiang, Liaoning, Guangxi

Based on information from Wurm 1987 and Fu & Wang 1987, as cited in Chen 2007.

Attention should be paid to the fact that language is not the accurate marker of ethnicity in China. Among all the ethnic minorities in China, Hui, Manchurian, and She either lost or did not have their languages and are nowadays the native speaker of Chinese (Jin, 2005). And more than one language will be used by the same ethnic group. About 130 languages in thirty different scripts are used currently by the fifty-six ethnic groups in

China (Sun, 2007). The language distribution among ethnic minorities is unbalanced in China.

Although Chinese language is the only *de facto* official language for administrative purposes nationwide, neither Constitution nor other laws have legally given the status of ‘official language’ to any languages in China. On the contrary, the rights of using and developing the languages of each ethnic group are protected by the Constitution:

All nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs. (2018, Article 4)

In order to help ethnic minorities preserving their languages, various projects have been implemented by the central government in the past six decades. Prior to 1949 when the People’s Republic of China was established, twenty-one minority language have their own writing systems to record language and develop literature. After the establishment, new writing systems in Roman script or Cyrillic script were devised for some of the minority languages which did not have a writing system like the Zhuang language (Jin, 2005).

In some minority-dominant regions, certain degree of autonomy has been granted by the central government of China. The autonomy of language using of the ethnic minority communities was also regulated and protected by different laws:

Regional autonomy is practiced in areas where people of minority nationalities live in concentrated communities; in these areas organs of self-government are established to exercise the power of autonomy. (Constitution of the P.R.C, 2018)

The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas shall guarantee the freedom of the nationalities in these areas to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and their freedom to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs. (Law of the People's Republic of China on

## Regional National Autonomy, 2001)

Currently there are five provincial level autonomous regions, Xinjiang, Xizang (Tibet), Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, and Guangxi. In other provinces, there are 30 autonomous prefectures and 120 autonomous counties on the lower level (Ministry of Civil Affairs, 2017). The governments and legislative bodies of the autonomous regions are granted power to pass local laws or regulations in terms of special circumstances such as language and custom.

Apart from the daily communication, in many places minority languages are also used. On the national level, all the crucial documents of National People's Congress, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conferences, and the Communist Party are published in seven major minority languages (Mongolian, Tibetan, Uygur, Kazakhs, Korean, Yi and Zhuang) together with Chinese. The ballot and simultaneous interpretation are also provided in the above eight languages.

On the provincial level, major minority languages are employed for certain TV and radio channels. Twenty-five minority languages are used for broadcasting in nearly 200 radio stations across the country (Bai, 2012). One of the major responsibilities of those TV and radio channels are to translate and dub the national news into minority languages as the supplement of national TV or radio in the autonomous regions. Some newspaper or magazines are published in minority languages as well. Inside the autonomous regions, one major minority language is usually chosen as the administrative language together with Chinese. The government documents, road signs, public services, websites, and ID cards are normally provided in two languages.

Education is another crucial stage for the minority languages. By studying and using the minority languages daily in the school context, ethnic minorities can keep and develop their mother tongues. However, due to the constantly changing of the national language policies, education in minority languages underwent great changes in the recent years. As the core topic of this thesis, the minority languages in education will be furthermore discussed in the later chapters.



## **4. Changing of the Language Policies in China**

Language policy, especially in the multilingual and multiethnic country, plays an important role in protecting language rights, promoting awareness of equality, and creating the harmonious atmosphere. Functioning as a top guidance, a good well-balanced language policy can help preserve cultures and unit the people of different ethnicities while an unbalanced language policy may cause the tense or even conflicts between the minority and the majority. However, language policy is not always stable and consistent and it will be rectified for many reasons. Due to the sensitive position of language in the country, the changing of the dynasty, the shifting of the domestic policies, and even the international trends may trigger the rectification of the language policy.

The situation of the constantly changing of the language policies, especially from the twentieth century onward, also exists in the Chinese context. The constant changing of the regimes and numerous domestic political movements, after introduction of the nationalism in the late nineteenth century, added up the uncertainties to the policy making and implementation.

Generally, the changing of the language policies after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 can be divided into four major stages according to the terminologies from Li and Huang (2004). The establishment of the P.R.C, cultural revolution, economic reform, and the first law on national language as four important milestones and political events in the sixty years' history of P.R.C separate the four stages respectively. The language policies in China, which went through the process from scratch, from informal to formal, and from random guidance to systematic laws, also provided the opportunity for further research and reflect. Therefore, in order to make clear how the language policies in China evolved in the past six decades, the four major stages will be briefly introduced in the following sections to form a whole picture diachronically.

Due to the different positions and situations of the Chinese languages and minority languages, the two groups will be discussed separately below.

### **4.1 Start-up Stage: 1949-1965**

The establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 marked the control of the majority of the Mainland China under one central government in Beijing after three decades of numerous wars and warlord era. Despite some part of the southern or southwestern China were still under KMT's control until 1952, new language policy concerning both Chinese and minority languages has been made and implemented since 1949.

Prior to the establishment of the P.R.C., nearly 80 per cent of the population at that time were illiterate (Mao, 1945). The unbalanced relationship between the urgent need of development and the low degree of literacy obstructed the growth of the economy. Therefore, the main tasks of the first language policy were to eliminate the illiteracy for the speakers of all the languages and help standardize each language.

For the Chinese languages, the most important tasks were to eliminate the illiteracy, unify the pronunciation, and promote the Putonghua as national standard pronunciation. In 1949, the Association of Chinese Language Reformation was founded and later changed the name to the Committee of Chinese Language Reformation and Research in 1952 as the official authority for the reformation of the Chinese languages. After the guidance that published by the Central Committee of the CPC in 1955 and the State Council in 1956, the work of simplifying of the Chinese characters, promoting of the Putonghua, and creating of the Chinese Romanization System (汉语拼音, *Hànyǔ Pīnyīn*) was initiated. Different from the Chinese language, the languages of the ethnic minorities were in different situations. Some traditional regional minority languages like Uygur, Korean, Mongolian had already developed their own unique writing systems and literatures, while other small minority languages still faced the problem that no writing systems could be used to record their languages. Thus, the crucial tasks for the language policy concerning the minority languages were to collect the detailed information about and help develop the minority languages. The First Five-Year Plan of China (1955) witnessed the first top guidance for helping create writing systems for those minority languages without writing systems. Later in 1956, then Prime Minister Zhou Enlai specifically emphasized in his report for the Second Five-Year Plan that 'The help of creating and reforming minority languages should be provided for those ethnic minorities without a writing system or a complete writing system'.

In order to collect detailed data about minority languages, some small-scaled research teams were set to different ethnic minority communities according to the guidance from the party and the government. 700 people of seven research teams were sent to ethnic minority communities in about ten provinces and Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang from 1956 (Li, 2012). The purposes of the research teams were to investigate the writing systems and the dialect of each minority language.

Based on the efforts of the language researches and the experts, 14 different writing systems were created for the Zhuang, Buyi, Yi, Miao, Hani, Lisu, Naxi, Dong, Va, and Li; 4 traditional writing systems were improved for the Dai, Jingpo, and Lahu (Xiao, 1997). At the same time, writing systems of Mongolian, Uygur, and some other minority languages were reformed or redesigned to a standard form.

In school education, bilingualism and bilingual education in Chinese and minority mother tongue were promoted and encouraged by the language policy during this period of time. In 1954, a guidance concerning minority languages in education was issued by the Ministry of Education in which emphasized minority language courses or even subject courses in minority languages should be provided within minority regions (Zhou, 2000). As further instructed by the State Council, Putonghua was only to be promoted for Han people and in Chinese class for ethnic minority students. Minority languages have its rights to be used as medium of instruction in school education for ethnic minority students. Minority languages started to have an equal right with Chinese languages both by law and by practice within this period of time.

#### **4.2 Stagnancy Stage: 1966-1976**

Only ten years after the publication of the guidance and the language plan, the pluralistic approach was suspended during the Cultural Revolution for ten years from 1966 to 1976. Cultural revolution, as a political movement launched by the highest leader Mao Zedong, is widely acknowledged as the cause of the chaos for the whole Chinese society. No need to address the destruction of the government machine and the political power, Cultural Revolution also greatly destroyed the education system and people's rights of education.

Firstly, the education of the past seventeen years was denied by the National Education Conference held by the State Council in 1971. The education system was described as useless and education at all levels were suspended across the country. Secondly, due to the destruction of the local level governments and the numerous struggle sessions for the local government leaders, schools at that time were operated without leaders and guidance. Thirdly, study period, admission system and the evaluation were all either changed or cancelled.

The destruction of the education system at all levels and the chaos of the society also affected the language policies for both Chinese and minority languages. For the Chinese languages, regional varieties gained their opportunities to survive since the stagnancy of the governments and the schools led to the pause of the promotion of Putonghua. Putonghua lost its own channels for promoting and all levels of official activities for promoting the Putonghua were suspended.

Different from the regional varieties that gained freedom of using, a monopolistic approach was employed in the early 1960s and later pushed to its extreme during the Cultural Revolution. ‘One single step to Chinese’ as the top guidance in most of the minority regions required the elimination of the minority-language courses and the implementation of Chinese as the only medium of instruction (Zhou, 2000). The bilingual education in minority regions was abolished officially during that time.

Due to the chaos of the whole society and the government, language policy during Cultural Revolution were rarely documented officially. It is also normally mentioned in most of the researches in brief as transition. However, conclusion can still be drawn that the stress among Chinese languages decreased while the relationship between Chinese and minority languages became more tense.

#### **4.3 Recovery and Development Stage: 1977-1999**

The end of the Cultural Revolution in 1977 together with the start of the economic reform in 1979 triggered the changing of the language policies for the third time. Government systems and official education systems at all levels were rebuilt and a modernization

scheme was adopted after the Cultural Revolution. Different from any other time of the P.R.C.'s history, numerous western new concepts were brought to Mainland China by the economic reform and opening up and influenced the planning of the new language policy.

For Chinese languages, the work of promoting Putonghua restarted nationwide with the support from the central government. An official status of Putonghua was guaranteed by the 1982 Constitution: 'The state promotes the nationwide use of Putonghua (Article 19).' Later in 1994, the Putonghua Proficiency Test (普通话水平测试, *Pǔtōnghuà Shuǐpín Cèshì*) was launched by the State Language and Writing Commission (国家语言文字工作委员会, *Guójiā Yǔyán Wénzì Gōngzuò Wěiyuánhui*) across the country for teachers and TV hosts. Putonghua, for the first time, gained its legal status.

What's more, the publication of the Guidance on Promoting Putonghua in schools at all levels by State Council (1992) and the Ministry of Education (1991, 1993) also regulated the teaching language and campus language and limited the use of regional varieties in campus:

'By the end of this century [twentieth century], Putonghua should be the teaching language of all the Chinese-medium schools and the campus language of normal schools, primary and middle schools (Request for the Current Language Work, 1992)

Putonghua, since then, gradually replaced the regional varieties as teaching and campus language in the schools. It is also mentioned that Putonghua education should be promoted for the ethnic minorities in the form of bilingual education.

Different from the situation of Chinese languages, revival of minority languages has been taken as one of the chief guidance in the 1980s. Bilingual education as a crucial policy of schooling in minority regions was advocated by the central government. The central government hoped to revert from the highly assimilative mode of the Cultural Revolution era and ensured the rights of the ethnic minorities to learn in their own mother tongue. According to Lin (1997), bilingual education was employed by over 160,000 schools for 2.5 million minority students by 1985. Although the number changed year by year,

bilingual education in both minority language and Chinese was still encouraged.

Although the term ‘bilingual education’ can be used interchangeably with the term ‘bilingual teaching’, the methods, teaching procedures, and activities are different (Zhang & Yang, 2018). Two modes of bilingual education are commonly used in the minority regions - minority language as medium of instruction or minority language as an independent subject. Former one suits for the students with barely no knowledge of Chinese and the latter one suits for the students with some knowledge of Chinese and would like to study more in the Chinese languages.

Despite of the differences of using the minority languages in two modes, minority students and parents are given the right and freedom to choose the suitable modes from the parallel modes. Students of ethnic minorities can access to their own language and acquire Chinese at the same time through formal school education.

#### **4.4 Rule by Law Stage: 2000 onwards**

The first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed a new stage of the language policies in China. Several national laws concerning the language using and the language rights of both Chinese and minority languages have been legislated. It is, for the first time, the using of the languages has been regulated by the law, instead of the guidance or regulations from the State Council or the Communist Party.

Law of the P.R.C. on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, as the first national law concerning the language use, is legislated in 2000 and regulates the standard use of the Chinese languages. In the law, simplified Chinese and the Putonghua are assigned respectively as the standard written and spoken form of Chinese nationwide. It is also regulated that the standard written and spoken Chinese should be the exclusive language for education, mass media, public service, and government administration. Together with the legislation or the rectification of the specific laws such as: The Law of Education and the Law of Compulsory Education, a whole set of laws systematically regulated the use of standard Chinese in all aspects, including education.

The law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy which amended in 2001 also assured the right of using minority languages in many different aspects. People of ethnic minorities have the full right to use their languages in daily life and the local government of the ethnic minority regions should help promote the using of minority languages in mass media and government administration.

Although there are laws for regulating the Chinese and minority languages separately, the language policies in a wider view are still on one track. Both Chinese and minority languages are always mentioned in all the national laws regarding languages and education, as well as, the Constitution. For Chinese speakers, Putonghua replaced the different regional varieties as the only one official language for educational purpose, while for the speakers of minority languages, Chinese is also a compulsory subject besides their own languages. The acquisition of Putonghua (Chinese) is equally required for both Chinese and ethnic minorities.

## **5. The Study**

The methodology that employed in this study is based on the review of the official policies regarding education that issued by the national and local level government of P.R.C.. The policies from both national and local level containing governmental laws, guidance, regulations, and few guidance from the Communist Party help form a whole picture of the Chinese language policies from top to down and from general to detail.

In the first part (Chapter 6: Results), emphasis will be given to the analysis of the language policies from national level and local level respectively. Articles or sentences related to the MOI will be selected for further analysis. An expanded definition of MOI in teaching has also been adopted for analysis in order to form a whole wide context, and at the same time, to check the consistency between the national and local policies.

Later in the second part (Chapter 7: Discussion), results of the MOI policies that are selected from the previous part will be shown in the following three spheres - educational, social-economic, and political. This framework for the policy analysis is based on a holistic approach, emphasizing the policies from wider perspective besides education.

Due to the relatively complex language situation in China, analysis and discussion of this study will firstly be conducted separately for the Chinese languages and the minority languages. Later, the similarities of the policies for two groups and the indication of the language policies as a whole will be concluded in the conclusion part.

### **5.1 Policy Analysis**

The policy texts that are analyzed for this study are mainly governmental laws, guidance, and regulations from both national and local level (see table 5 and table 6). However, due to the special political system of China, Communist Party, as the only ruling party, has absolute power to release their guidance which will be considered even higher than any governmental guidance in most of the cases. Since laws, guidance, and regulations in China are made under the supervision and approval of the Communist party, the guidance from the Communist Party will also be taken into account for policy analysis.



Although all the policies related to the education and MOI are analyzed for the study, the majority of the policies are published between 2000 and 2017. Since the education policies are changing constantly after certain period of time, the valid and current-in-use policies are worth analyzing and discussing for possible future improvements. However, previous repealed policies will also be employed for comparison in order to see the differences of policies at different time. List of the national policies from the government and party is summarized in the following table.

**Table 5** List of National Policies Chosen for Study

<b>Title</b>	<b>Year of Publication</b>	<b>Authority of Issue</b>
Constitution	1954,1975, 1978,2018	NPC
Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language	2000	NPC
Law on Regional National Autonomy	2001	NPC
Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development 2010-2020	2010	Ministry of Education
Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Language Reform and Development 2010-2020	2012	Ministry of Education
Decision on Expediting the Development of Ethnic Education	2015	State Council
Guidance on Supervision and Evaluation of the Spoken and Written Language Work	2015	State Council
Law on Education	2015	NPC
Plan of the Development of the National Spoken and Written Language during the “Thirteenth Five-Year Plan”	2016	Ministry of Education

Since each province has its limited autonomy for making local regulations for implementing the national laws, the total number of the local policies from all the thirty-

one provinces/autonomous regions/direct-controlled municipalities (Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau are excluded for the fact that education policies in those areas are made and controlled by their own governments) will be enormous for further analysis. What’s more, due to the highly autonomy of the five autonomous regions for ethnic minorities in China, five autonomous regions have larger autonomy than other provinces/direct-controlled municipalities in legislating local laws. Therefore, for this study, one minority autonomous region and one Han-Chinese dominant province will be chosen as representatives of ethnic minorities and Han-Chinese respectively for the source of local level policies.

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and Guangdong province are selected as the cases for study based on the criteria as population and influence of the regional variety/languages. The list of the local policies from the above two governments can be found in the following table. Reasons for selecting these two places as cases will be further illustrated in the next section from the perspectives of population, cultural influence, and language influence.

**Table 6** List of Local Policies Chosen for Study

<b>Region</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Year of Publication</b>	<b>Authority of Issue</b>
	Regulation on Spoken and Written Languages	2002	NPC of XUAR
XUAR	Guidance on the Implementation of the “Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Language Reform and Development 2010-2020”	2013	Language Commission of XUAR
	Bilingual Curricula for Minority-Han Joint Schools	2011	Department of Education of XUAR
	Explanation on the Adjustment of the Bilingual	2017	Department of Education of XUAR

Curricula in Compulsory Education			
	Regulation on National Spoken and Written Language	2012	Government of Guangdong
Guangdong	Guidance on the Implementation of “Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Language Reform and Development 2010-2020”	2012	Department of Education of Guangdong

## 5.2 Cases

### 5.2.1 Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR)

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR), normally referred to as Xinjiang, is the largest first-tier administrative division geographically in China. Taking up to one sixth of the land of China and bordering eight countries, Xinjiang is also the most culturally diversified first-tier administrative division in China. According to the latest population census (2010) and the Xinjiang government, fifty-five of the total fifty-six ethnic groups of China can be found in Xinjiang, and ethnic minorities account for 60 percent of the total population.

**Table 7** Major Ethnicities in Xinjiang with Population and Languages in 2015

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percentage of the population in Xinjiang</b>	<b>Language</b>
Uygur	48.7%	Uygur
Han	37%	Chinese
Kazakhs	6.9%	Kazakhs
Hui	4.4%	Chinese
Kyrgyz	0.8%	Kyrgyz
Mongol	0.8%	Mongolian

Data from the Statistic Bureau of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

The cultural diversity also links to the linguistic diversity. As can be seen from the table 7, the native speaker of Chinese language only account for 41.4 percent of the whole population in Xinjiang, while at the same time, other minority languages are used by the rest 58.6 percent of the ethnic minority population. What's more, eleven autonomous prefectures/counties were also established for some major ethnic minorities according to the law within XUAR. The representative minority of each autonomous prefecture/county indicates both the major minority of this area and the major language of this place. The eleven autonomous prefectures/counties are summarized in the following table with its representative ethnic minority and language.

**Table 8** List of Autonomous Prefectures/Counties in XUAR

<b>Name</b>	<b>Major Ethnic Minority</b>	<b>Major Minority Language</b>
Kizilsu Kyrgyz Autonomous Prefecture	Kyrgyz	Kyrgyz
Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture	Mongol	Mongolian
Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture	Hui	N/A
Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture	Mongol	Mongolian
Ili Kazakhs Autonomous Prefecture	Kazakhs	Kazakhs
Barköl Kazakhs Autonomous County	Kazakhs	Kazakhs
Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County	Tajik	Tajik
Yanqi Hui Autonomous County	Hui	N/A
Mori Kazakhs Autonomous County	Kazakhs	Kazakhs
Qapqal Xibe Autonomous County	Xibe	Xibe
Hoboksar Mongol Autonomous County	Mongol	Mongolian

Data from the official website of the Ministry of Civil Affairs of the P.R.C.

As can be seen from the table 7 and table 8, over five minority languages are widely used inside Xinjiang with a large number of native speakers. The only exception is Hui since they have already adopted Chinese as their native language for ages. Together with the Uyghur language as the administrative language of the Xinjiang government, at least six

different minorities languages are used in formal situations such as for administrative and educational purposes.

The unique case of Xinjiang that different ethnicities, cultures and languages coexisting at one place makes it an ideal place for studying the local language policies. The complex situation of Xinjiang requires the local government to pay more attention in policy-making and policy-implementing in order to reduce the unstableness and unsatisfactions of the society. Therefore, take Xinjiang as a case for study can check the local language policies in a wider context for more ethnic minorities.

### **5.2.2 Guangdong Province**

Guangdong province, as the top one on the GDP and population list among all the Chinese provinces/regions, has a great influence on other Han Chinese areas both economically and culturally. Bordering Hong Kong and Macau, Guangdong plays a crucial role in bridging the Cantonese popular culture between Hong Kong and inner land. Sharing the same language and culture, Guangdong as a big market for Hong Kong popular culture has a significant position in preserving the Cantonese language.

Cantonese, or Yueyu (粤语, *Yuèyǔ*), was firstly originated in the Guangdong area and later spread to the rest of the world with local emigrants. Nowadays, Cantonese is used by many overseas Chinese communities in countries like Malaysia, United States, Canada, Australia, and United Kingdom. The status of official language has also been granted to Cantonese in Hong Kong and Macau. According to Shao and Gan (2007), about 120 million people regard Cantonese as their mother tongue worldwide. Among them, about 67 million are living inside Guangdong province. The large number of users and the strong economy make Cantonese hard to be ignored among the regional varieties of the Chinese languages.

However, the relationship between Cantonese and Putonghua becomes more tense in the past decades inside Guangdong province because of the government project in promoting Putonghua. Stories about the language gap within a family between grandparents and grandchildren are not rare to be heard. Social activists, linguists, and normal people

express their concerns on the use and preservation of the Cantonese language in the future. Later in 2010, a questionnaire from local government that suggests to prolong the hours of broadcasting in Putonghua triggered the Protect Cantonese Movement in both Guangdong and Hong Kong. The movement also caught attention of the central government and other provinces to reflect the balanced language policies and equal language status.

The strong identity among Cantonese speakers and the leading economic status of the Cantonese-speaking regions requires the language policy to be more balanced and equal. Therefore, take Guangdong as sample can have more valuable reference to other Han provinces in making their language policies in the future.

## **6. Results**

In order to find out the policies concerning Medium of Instruction directly or indirectly, all the related sentences will be selected from both national level and local level policies. National policies, as leading guide to all the local governments, should be equal to all different languages without prejudice. Therefore, for the national level, selected policies will firstly be further categorized into the equal rights of different language. This is to examine whether all the languages within China are treated equally and granted the status of official languages. Later the policies regarding the Promotion of Putonghua will be categorized to check the attitudes of central government toward the Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese).

Since local governments are responsible for converting general national policies into concrete local policies for implement, the sentences regarding Medium of Instruction from local policies will be further analyzed in the second part. Besides the languages that used for teaching, the definition of Medium of Instruction is also expended to the languages that used inside textbooks and school campus in order to form a whole picture of the language using in the school context.

Due to the unbalanced number of speakers between Chinese languages and minority languages and the unique autonomy of the autonomous regions, policies of all levels will be categorized into Chinese languages and minority languages in this section.

### **6.1 Language Policies Concerning the Society**

#### **6.1.1 Equal Rights of Language Using**

Of all the national laws in Mainland China, the Constitution is no doubt the most important and influential one as it is the fundamental principle of all the laws and guidance of one country. Playing a crucial role in regulating almost all different aspects of rights and obligations, Constitution sometimes also indicating the language rights in some countries. The similar article can also be found in the latest Constitution of the P.R.C.:

**Article 4** ... All nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs. (P.R.C, 2018)

Dated back to previous Constitutions of the P.R.C, the same sentence exists in all versions under different articles (article 3 in 1954 Constitution; article 4 in 1975 Constitution, 1978 Constitution, 1982 Constitution and onward). The rights and freedom of all the nationalities in China to use and develop their spoken and written languages are protected by the Constitutions of all time while the freedom to preserve and reform their own folkways and customs was not mentioned in the 1975 Constitution.

The first year of the twentieth century witnessed the legislation of the first national law on the standard spoken and written Chinese languages. The law was legislated for regulating the standard form of the Chinese language from the surface, however, the freedom of all nationalities to use their own languages as mentioned in the Constitution was emphasized again in this law:

**Article 8** All the nationalities shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages... (Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, 2000)

Ethnic minority communities, including five provincial-level autonomous regions and other autonomous counties/prefectures, are granted the autonomy in certain degrees in making local policies for ethnic minorities by both the Constitution and the law on regional autonomy:

**Article 10** The organs of self-government of national autonomous areas shall guarantee the freedom of the nationalities in these areas to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and their freedom to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs. (Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy, 2001)



The right and freedom of receiving education in minority languages are also confirmed and protected by the following two guidance from the State Council:

**Article 27** Respect and guarantee the right of ethnic minorities to use their own spoken and written languages to receive education. (Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development 2010-2020, 2010)

Respect and guarantee the right of ethnic minorities to use their own spoken and written languages to receive education, and continuously improve the teaching level of minority languages. In the areas where the national standard language is not used in education, be able to speak both Chinese and minority language is the basic goal... (Decision of the State Council on Expediting the Development of Ethnic Education, 2015)

At local level, Xinjiang released its own regulation on the spoken and written language for the whole autonomous region in 2002. In its article 2, the freedom of all the ethnicities to use their spoken and written languages was also mentioned:

**Article 2** The principle that all the spoken and written languages of each ethnicity are equal should be insisted, and guarantee the freedom of each ethnicity to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. (Regulation of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Spoken and Written Languages, 2002)

Specific articles on the language use in schools and educational institutions for ethnic minorities are also mentioned in the education-related laws. Apart from their own languages, bilingual education in Chinese and their own language is promoted at the same time.

**Article 37** ...Schools (classes and grades) and other institutions of education where most of the students come from minority nationalities shall, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use their languages as the

media of instruction. ... (Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy, 2001)

**Article 12** ... Schools and other educational institutions dominated by ethnic minority students in ethnic autonomous areas shall, according to the actual circumstances, use the standard spoken and written Chinese language and the spoken and written language of their respective ethnicities or commonly used by the local ethnicities to implement bilingual education. ... (Law of the People's Republic of China on Education, 2015)

Although equal rights of using own languages in both society and education for both Han and ethnic minorities are guaranteed by the Constitution and other laws, more attentions are paid to the ethnic minorities. Specific and detailed sentences on language use in education for ethnic minorities can be easily found while the specific situation of the Chinese regional varieties are hard to find.

### **6.1.2 Promotion of Putonghua**

Putonghua, as the official spoken and written form of Chinese that promoted by the governments at all levels, is also interchangeably called as Mandarin Chinese, standard Chinese, or common language due to different perspectives.

The legislation of the *Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language* in 2000 had an important effect to the language using of the Chinese society. It, on the one hand, supports the national project of promoting Putonghua and regulates the correct using of the Chinese language in the form of national law, on the other hand, promotes the status of the Chinese languages from the language of Han people to the standard language of the whole country. As Huang (2010) commented in his study, this change reflects that the national project of promoting Putonghua expands from the areas of Chinese regional varieties to the whole country with ethnic minority communities included.

As an important national project that influences almost all aspects of the society, the national-supported Putonghua is superior than any other Chinese regional varieties or

minority languages. Therefore, it is worth selecting the sentences regarding the promotion of Standard Chinese nationwide and to find out the relationship between Standard Chinese and other regional varieties or minority languages.

**Article 2** For purposes of this law, the standard spoken and written Chinese language means Putonghua (a common speech with pronunciation based on the Beijing dialect) and the standardized Chinese characters. (Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, 2000)

Besides the definition of the standard Chinese as quoted above, the obligation of central and local governments in promoting Putonghua is also emphasized by both the same law and the Constitution:

**Article 19** The state promotes the nationwide use of Putonghua (common speech based on Beijing pronunciation). (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, 2018)

**Article 3** The State popularizes Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters. (Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, 2000)

**Article 4** ...local people's governments at various levels and the relevant departments under them shall take measures to popularized Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters. (Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, 2000)

In order to promote standard Chinese more efficiently, a timetable has also been proposed by the Ministry of Education in its plan, guidance or period outline:

By 2020, Putonghua will be basically popularized nationwide, and the social use of the standardization of Chinese character will be further improved, and Hanyu Pinyin will play a better role. (Outline of the National Medium- and

Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development 2010-2020, 2010)

By 2020, the standard spoken and written Chinese will be basically popularized nationwide, the level of language using will be comprehensively improved, the ability of the language and writing industry to serve the needs of the country will be comprehensively enhanced, and the national language ability and the comprehensive national strength will be achieved. (Plan of the Development of the National Spoken and Written Language during the “Thirteenth Five-Year Plan”, 2016)

Standard Chinese as Medium of Instruction within school context is also regulated by various laws and guidance. Most of the national laws like: *Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language* (China, ibid), *Law of the People's Republic of China on Education* (China, 2015), and *Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy* (China, ibid) have the similar articles that emphasize “Putonghua and the standardized Chinese characters shall be used as the basic language in education and teaching in schools and other institutions of education, except where otherwise provided for in laws”.

In both Xinjiang and Guangdong, the promotion of Putonghua is also regulated by the local regulation or guidance. Local level policies, as the supplement to the national level policies, give detailed steps and timetable for promoting the Putonghua in all aspects of the society. Specific sentences from the local level policies regarding Medium of Instruction will be digested in the next section.

## **6.2 Medium of Instruction**

Generally, the definition of the term Medium of Instruction is always connected to the language that is used during the teaching process. It is no doubt that majority of the time is spent on teaching, however, other factors related to teaching inside school should not be neglected either. Viriri and Viriri (2014) mentioned in their study that the textbook in certain language will also facilitate students' learning in the same language. Therefore,

the textbook language and campus language will also be considered as part of the medium of instruction in this study.

### 6.2.1 Teaching Language

According to the national law, students of ethnic minorities should receive education under the bilingual system inside schools. Besides their own mother tongue, standard Chinese should also be used for teaching:

**Article 12** ...Schools and other educational institutions dominated by ethnic minority students in ethnic autonomous areas shall, according to the actual circumstances, use the standard spoken and written Chinese language and the spoken and written language of their respective ethnicities or commonly used by the local ethnicities to implement bilingual education... (Education Law of the People's Republic of China, 2015)

Similar articles can also be found from the local policies of Xinjiang:

**Article 3** To those minority-language-medium primary and middle schools, Chinese course should start from the third grade while the minority language has been strengthened. (Regulation of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Spoken and Written Languages, 2002)

**Article 19** Those Chinese-medium primary and middle schools in minority communities, may start to teach minority language of the region. (Regulation of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Spoken and Written Language, 2002)

Different from Xinjiang, Guangdong as a Han-dominant province with Chinese as mother tongue, has to promote Putonghua as the only spoken language in education:

**Article 10** School and other educational institutions should use Putonghua and standardized Chinese character as basic spoken and written language in

teaching, conference, promoting and other activities. (Regulation of Guangdong Province on National Spoken and Written Language, 2012)

However, the situation of the ethnic minority regions changes after the releasing of the *Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Language Reform and Development 2010-2020* by the Ministry of Education in 2012. It not only speeds up the promotion of national standard Chinese in ethnic minority regions, but also sets a goal for all the ethnic minority teachers and students that they should master the Chinese language by 2020. In order to better implement this outline, a guidance was made by the government of Xinjiang in 2013:

By 2020, bilingual teachers of ethnic minorities should reach the requirement of teaching in Chinese, and students of ethnic minorities should master the Chinese language after completing the compulsory education. (Language Commission of XUAR, 2013)

Similar as in Xinjiang, the government of Guangdong also made its guidance for better promoting national standard Chinese to all the Chinese speakers:

Increase the degree of promoting the national standard Chinese. By 2015, all the schools in countryside should teach in Putonghua. By 2020, national standard Chinese should be popularized across the province and language barrier should be basically eliminated. (Department of Education of Guangdong, 2012)

Chinese speakers of different regional varieties, comparing to the speakers of minority languages, are less supported by the policies from all levels. Putonghua, as promoted by the governments at all levels, becomes the only language for education in Guangdong. While ethnic minorities in Xinjiang can freely choose to receive education in one or two languages according to their wills.

Although bilingual education is possible for ethnic minorities, the fact that central government wants to promote national standard Chinese across China in all aspects

should not be neglected. The high-demanding goal and strict timetable give pressure to both schools, teachers and students and further squeeze the space of teaching in other languages.

The curriculum of the bilingual education in compulsory education in Xinjiang has been adjusted in 2017 in order to increase the percentage of using Chinese in teaching. According to the new curriculum, all the courses should be taught in national standard Chinese from autumn semester 2017, and teach minority language as a subject at the same time. Although both old and new curricula are called bilingual education since both Chinese and minority languages are used in teaching, the percentage of minority language used decreases dramatically.

**Table 9** Two Models of Bilingual Curricula for Minority-Han Joint Schools (2011)

Mode	Level	Mandarin Medium of Instruction (MOI)	Ethnic Language Medium of Instruction (MOI)
Mode 1	Primary School	Chinese Language, Math, Science, IT	Morality and Life, Ethnic Language, Arts, Practical activities, local and school-based courses
	Middle School	Chinese Language, Foreign Language, Math, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, IT	Morality and Life, History, Geography, Biology, PE and Health, Arts, Practical activities, local and school-based courses
Mode 2	All Level	All subjects (including English language)	Ethnic Language (PE, Music or Art if no enough teacher)

**Table 10** New Model of Bilingual Curricula for Minority-Han Joint Schools (2017)

Mode	Level	Mandarin MOI	Ethnic Language MOI
New Mode (Autumn 2017)	All Level	All subjects (including English language from third grade)	Ethnic Language

As can be seen from the table 9 and table 10 above, the possibility of studying other courses in ethnic language is no longer available for ethnic minority students in Xinjiang according to the new curriculum. The new curriculum is still regarded as bilingual education in theory with ethnic language taught as an independent subject, while the major language for teaching shifts from ethnic language to Chinese in practice.

### 6.2.2 Textbook Language

As one of the teaching aids, textbook provides students with more deep contents and an opportunity for self-studying. The fact that textbook is used throughout the teaching process by both the teacher and students requires the textbook to be easily comprehended. Therefore, whether the textbooks are written in the students' mother tongue has a significant difference than those written in other languages.

The right of using textbooks in ethnic languages has been guaranteed by the national law from the year 2001:

**Article 37** ...Schools (classes and grades) and other institutions of education where most of the students come from minority nationalities shall, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use their languages as the media of instruction... (Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy, 2001)

Since the national law only guarantees the using of the minority languages in textbooks and the unified written form of different regional varieties of the Chinese language, textbook languages in Guangdong province is no doubt the standard written Chinese as regulated by the law. Due to the fact that the speakers of different regional varieties share the same written form of Chinese, the effect of the textbook language to the students in Guangdong can be neglected. Although some things are described differently in standard Chinese than in Cantonese, they are still comprehensible to the Cantonese speakers in practice.

However, based on the law, textbooks in the ethnic minority communities should be



written in local ethnic languages, it has not been well implemented in practice. The latest curriculum of compulsory education in Xinjiang that published in 2017, besides the new mode of curriculum, regulates also the textbooks that can be used in teaching.

### **Article 6 About the Use of the Textbooks**

1. From autumn 2017, the course of national standard spoken and written language from the first year of the primary school shall use the textbook *Language and Literature* that written by the Ministry of Education and published by People's Education Press; the course of national standard spoken and written language from the first year of the middle school shall use the textbook *Language and Literature (Xinjiang Version)* that written by the Ministry of Education and published by People's Education Press, schools with better Chinese language skill can also use the the textbook *Language and Literature* that written by the Ministry of Education and published by People's Education Press

2. Course of ethnic language shall use the textbook *Ethnic Language and Literature from Xinjiang Education Press*, textbooks of other courses should be the same as those used in local Chinese-medium schools. (Department of Education of XUAR, 2017)

It is clear that besides the course of ethnic languages, textbooks of other courses are all written in Chinese language. Although special version of textbook for Chinese language has been written and published for ethnic minority students with lower Chinese language skills, textbooks of other subjects such as math, chemistry, and biology are at the same level as those for Chinese speakers.

The textbooks of ethnic languages could be the complement of the teaching and studying process under the circumstances that all the courses besides ethnic language are taught only in Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese). However, the currently policy from the local government gives no chance to the textbooks in ethnic languages. To learn specific knowledge or technic terms in a language other than the students' mother tongue might

demotivate the interests of students, at the same time, ignore the right of the students to receive education in their mother tongue and lead to the uncompetitiveness of the whole ethnic group.

### **6.2.3 Campus Language**

Difference from other countries, school day is much longer in China. According to the latest survey that was conducted by the Chinese Youth and Children Research Center (CYCRC) in 2015 (as cited in Zhang, Sun & Zhao, 2017), the average time of the students spend a day in primary and middle schools are 8.1 hours and 11 hours respectively. By spending more than one third of a day inside schools, students' language use and language habit may also be effected by the regulations on campus language. Therefore, campus language is also regarded as part of the Medium of Instruction and taken into consideration in this study.

Campus language, as the extension of the teaching language, plays an important role in creating a consistent language environment for the teachers and students. Students can well practice the target campus language with classmates and friends in school and achieve a better language skill after a period of time. However, if the target campus language is different from their mother tongue, the acquisition of the campus language will also have a reverse effect to the language skills of their own mother tongue.

Although Putonghua has been promoted mainly in schools for many decades, the State Council emphasized the crucial role of schools in promoting Putonghua again in its latest guidance:

Putonghua and standardized Characters shall become the basic spoken and written language used in school education, and the standardization of spoken and written language shall be included in the supervision and evaluation of the primary and middle schools... (State Council, 2015)

One year later, the national Ministry of Education also addressed the significance of school in its plan:

3. Strengthen the education of spoken and written language in school. Insist to use school as the main channel for promoting and popularizing national standardized spoken and written language. Incorporate the requirements of spoken and written language into all aspects of school, teacher, student management and teaching... (Ministry of Education, 2016)

In fact, three years prior to the publication of the guidance, local governments of Xinjiang and Guangdong have already published their own guidance and regulations on campus language. In Xinjiang, schools are considered as one of the important aspects in promoting Putonghua:

Strengthen the promotion of Putonghua in important aspects. National common spoken and written language should become the working language of the Communist Party and the governments, the campus language of schools, the language of mass media, and the service language of the third industry. (Government of XUAR, 2013)

Similar as in Xinjiang, Guangdong province strengthens the promotion of Putonghua in schools, but also takes the campus language as one of the factors in supervising and evaluating education qualities of the schools:

Promote the creation of the provincial-level model schools of standardized spoken and written language. Improve the standard of the provincial-level model schools, and take the degree of language standardization as an important part of school education quality monitoring, education supervision and evaluation, and the evaluation of model schools at all level. (Government of Guangdong, 2012)

Both national and local policies emphasize Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese) as the only campus language in schools at all level. However, the use of Putonghua and standard written Chinese inside campus, on the other hand, is ensured by threatening schools with their future ranking and status of model schools. Through administrative method,

Putonghua easily replaces all other ethnic languages and Chinese regional varieties and dominates the school campuses across China.

In order to achieve a higher degree of Putonghua using inside campus, some rules concerning campus language are also made by each school. Punishments for speaking other than Putonghua in the form of warning or demerit are also mentioned normally. With the high pressure from top to bottom, students might gradually get used to the campus language and replace their first language with it.

## **7. Discussion**

In this chapter, the phenomenon that national and local level policies on Medium of Instruction do not correspond to each other will be discussed and the reflections on the policies will also be made. According to Pennycook (2002) and Tollefson (2002), language policy is never simply an educational issue but needs to be understood in the broader social and political context. Therefore, besides the educational sphere, reflections in political sphere and social-economic sphere will also be made in order to form a whole picture and understand the policies in depth.

### **7.1 Reflections on MOI Policies in Educational Sphere**

#### **7.1.1 Rigorous Plan for Language Education**

It is acknowledged that language learning and education is an indefinite time-consuming process which takes patience, dedication and hard work. Easton (2011) mentioned in his study that at least 10,000 hours should be spent to achieve fluency of a language together with the language immersion. The age of the learner (Archibald et al., 2007, p.3; Birdsong, 1999), the language environment (Archibald et al., 2007; Cummins & Swain, 1986), and the wills of the learners in acquiring the target language (Leibowitz, 2015) also add up the uncertainties to the length of the whole language education process. Therefore, when making the language policies, those above-mentioned factors should be taken into consideration and enough time should be given to the learners.

However, neither the national level policies nor the local level policies are patient enough in making the language policies. Two outlines that published by the Ministry of Education, *Outline of the National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Language Reform and Development 2010-2020* (2012) and *Plan of the Development of the National Spoken and Written Language during the “Thirteenth Five-Year Plan”* (2016), set 2020 as the deadline for the popularization of the Chinese Putonghua and the elimination of language barriers across the country. Although the earliest outline was published in 2012, only 8 years left until 2020 for people to master the Chinese Putonghua regardless of the insufficient teachers, materials, language environment, and personal motivations.

No need to say the hardness of promoting Putonghua in the Han-dominant areas where Chinese is already the first language, it is even harder for people of different mother tongues to master the Chinese language in such a short time without the language environment and motivation. As the year 2020 is getting closer and in order to achieve the goal that set by the central government, local governments have to make even rigorous policies to promote the Chinese Putonghua.

The new bilingual curricula for Minority-Han joint schools (table 9 and table 10) which enters into force in autumn 2017 is the best proof. The possibility of being educated in ethnic languages is replaced by the new Chinese-medium mode and the ethnic languages are gradually marginalized in the school context.

**Table 11** Comparison of the Percentage of Ethnic Language MOI in Three Modes

Grade/Mode	Mother Tongue MOI	Mother Tongue as a Subject	
	Old 2011 Mode 1	Old 2011 Mode 2	New 2017 Mode
First Grade	60%	40%	16.1%
Second Grade	60%	40%	16.1%
Third Grade	56.2%	32.4%	14.7%
Fourth Grade	56.2%	32.4%	14.7%
Fifth Grade	56.2%	32.4%	14.7%
Sixth Grade	56.2%	32.4%	14.7%
Seventh Grade	54.2%	27.8%	13.1%
Eighth Grade	50%	27.8%	12.8%
Ninth Grade	48.6%	28.6%	13.1%

By calculating the percentage of the ethnic language that used as MOI in the three modes respectively, it is clear that ethnic language is gradually marginalized in daily teaching. Diachronically, the percentage of ethnic language as MOI in three modes all drop gradually from the first grade to the ninth grade. Although both the old modes drop more than 10%, the percentage of ninth grade is still higher than that of the new mode. Synchronically, the percentage of the new mode drops dramatically comparing to the old modes. Even comparing to the old mode 2 which also treats ethnic language only as an

independent subject, the percentage of ethnic language used in new mode is still much lower. By shifting from the old modes to the one-track new mode, it might take time for the students to adapt to.

Besides the language policies, all the Chinese and ethnic schools in urban regions of Xinjiang had been merged by 2008 (Zhang & Yang, 2018). According to Simayi (2015), Minority-Han joint schools become the main stream and provide uniform class, teaching plans, curricula, and evaluation standards. The establishment of the Minority-Han joint schools has also lead to the increase of Chinese Putonghua used as MOI in the teaching process. Although the freedom of using ethnic language in all aspects has been guaranteed by various national laws, the rigorous policies in promoting Chinese Putonghua as MOI are unintentionally against the original idea of equal status for all the languages, especially in practice.

### **7.1.2 Learning Inefficiently**

To study different subjects in the language other than mother tongue might easily cause the misunderstanding of the teaching contents. Apart from the words, phrases and grammar of Chinese Language and Literature, normal science subjects like math, biology and physics which contain numerous specific scientific terms are hard for students of different mother tongues to understand. This problem has been noticed by the Xinjiang education department and some solutions have been mentioned in the newly published bilingual curriculum:

...Primary school 'Math' Grade 3-6 and Middle school 'Math' Grade 7-9 have 6 lessons per week (one lesson more than the previous plan), one of the 6 lessons should focus on 'terms' and solve the crucial teaching problems such as terms, concepts and formula.

The extra lesson of term learning, on the one hand, gives student of different mother tongues more time to study the terms in depth, while on the other hand, prolongs the study process. Numerous studies have also shown that learning through mother tongue has no effect to the learning of a second or majority language. The good language abilities of

mother tongue will lead to both easier literacy learning and better results in second language education (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006). Student could be demotivated by the long study process and coming results since the efforts and outcome are imbalanced.

Although the Chinese language exposure time for the ethnic minority students has been dramatically increased in the school, students' language competencies might not visibly improved. Pakir (2003) in her study concluded that a synchronization of school and home language is needed. With different home and school languages, students need to shift the languages for different purposes, and at the same time, parents without enough knowledge of school language are also experiencing difficulties in helping their children with homework and questions.

Comparing to the students in Xinjiang, students in Guangdong are facing different situations. Since the written form of Cantonese and Putonghua are identical, students of Cantonese have no difficulty in understanding the teaching contents and terms by reading the textbook. However, the different school and home languages and the Putonghua-only teaching will more or less decrease the efficiency of teaching and increase the time that students use to comprehend the teachers' words during the teaching process.

Due to the two decades of promoting Putonghua in Guangdong province, most of the younger parents nowadays in urban areas have good command of the Putonghua. It, to some extent, decreases the negative impact of the different school and home languages to the current students. While in some rural or mountainous areas, the problem still exists.

### **7.1.3 Unequal Situations**

Unequal situations can be found from many aspects concerning the different languages in China. The imbalanced leaning of the policies and the language development in various places are the two major factors that cause the situation. To eliminate the inequality is of great importance for the future language development in the educational sphere.

Generally, ethnic languages and Chinese languages are treated differently in the national policies. The status of using Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese) as MOI in schools across



China has been clearly regulated in the national law, while the same status does not give to the ethnic languages regarding bilingual education. The State Language Commission also revealed this problem in its yearbook *The Language Situation in China* (2005) that one education law on bilingual education for ethnic minorities should be made to replace the old guidance and policies of 1990s. Without a specific law regulating the bilingual education for the ethnic minorities, local governments of the ethnic minority communities have absolute rights to decide the form of bilingual education and create the unequal situation of bilingual education in different regions.

Various Chinese regional varieties faces even more unequal situation comparing to the minority languages since the central government considers only Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese) as the official form of the Chinese language and refuses to give the equal status to them. As a written-united language, all the regional varieties should have no differences in representing the Chinese language in each region and enjoy the equal status. However, the central government's behavior of supporting Putonghua as the only official form of the Chinese language invisibly makes Putonghua superior than other varieties and eliminates the possibilities of regional varieties to become the MOI in regional schools.

Lack of qualified bilingual teachers is another unequal situation exists between urban and rural areas. In the rural or remote areas of both Xinjiang and Guangdong, teachers face a problem that they are only good at local language and have little or no knowledge about Putonghua. The imbalanced and limited language skills of the bilingual teachers also make it hard for them to conduct teaching entirely in Mandarin Chinese. Additionally, rural and remote areas are also the shadow areas in promoting Putonghua. Without a high degree of Putonghua using in those areas and the environment of language immersion, suddenly change of MOI from local languages to Mandarin Chinese might cause the opposite effect and enlarge the gap of education between urban and rural areas.

Educational polices, especially those related to bilingual education or MOI, should always be flexible and localized according to the different regional situations. Without paying enough attention while making the policies could lead to the unequal situations and imbalanced developments.

#### **7.1.4 Linguistic Human Rights**

As previously mentioned, everyone has the same right to receive education in their mother tongues without prejudice. This right, according to Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson and Rannut (1995), is called linguistic human rights and considered as part of the basic human rights. The ideal situation of protecting the linguistic human rights, as mentioned in their study, is to establish educational institutes and conduct teaching in the mother tongue of the students.

However, the concept of linguistic human rights seems against the definition of bilingual education in China for the ethnic minority students. As can be seen from the latest curricula of Xinjiang, ethnic languages are entirely excluded from the non-language subjects and can only be used as MOI in teaching the languages themselves. With limited time and place to use, ethnic languages can hardly be practiced by the students.

Not to mention Guangdong since Cantonese is not recognized by the government as a separate language. Putonghua, as the only officially recognized spoken form of the Chinese language, replaces all the different regional varieties and is considered as mother tongue of all the Han-Chinese people. Unlike ethnic minorities in Xinjiang or other autonomous regions have opportunities to study their mother tongue as a subject in schools, Cantonese speakers can only use and practice their mother tongue through informal ways.

Although the use of ethnic languages for education purposes has been guaranteed by various national and local policies, they are implemented in another way. The ambiguous words and unclear expressions of the policies give a large space for the governments to decide MOI based on their own interpretations of the policies, and as a result, take away the opportunities of learning in their mother tongues from the students. It is understandable that linguistic human rights can be challenged from different directions such as the complexities of implementing mother tongue education (Blommaert, 2001) and the equal participation in society for minorities (Bourdieu, 1982), however, the linguistic human rights should not be sacrificed at any time.

## **7.2 Reflections on MOI Policies in Political Sphere**

### **7.2.1 Construct the National Identity**

The languages that we speak are one of the marks of our identities. Together with other factors such as cultural background, customs and life style, they consist a concrete picture of who we are. Similarly, language is also considered as an essential part of the strong sense of national identity in many countries. Many researchers (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990) also supported the important role that languages play in the process of nation-building.

According to Oakes (2001), language as one of the strategies in forming closing tie among people and assimilating immigrants has been emphasized by both the governments of France and Sweden. By promoting the standard language to the citizens and immigrants, the purposes of forming same national identity and keeping strong ties among citizens were achieved.

Similarly, the Chinese language policies are also trying to increase the perceptions of Chinese rather than different ethnicities or regions. Zeng (as cited by Zhang & Yang, 2018) in his non-published report concluded the positive correlation between the use of Chinese language among ethnic minorities and their perceptions of Chinese identity. He emphasized that the better harmony of the ethnic minority region can be achieved if people of that region have better command of the Chinese language. What's more, most of the ethnic minority students have developed their ethnic consciousness due to their ethnic languages (Yi, 2016).

However, under the pressure from the separatists recently in the western autonomous regions, especially in Xinjiang and Xizang (Tibet), decisions of promoting Chinese language and imposing Chinese identity are made by the central government in order to against the ideas that spread by the separatists inside those territories. Chinese regional varieties of different Han-dominant provinces are also facing the similar situations since those regional varieties are replaced by the only official spoken form -Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese) for all the official and formal uses. The increasing local identities

and separatist movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan, where the dominant ethnicity is Han and official language is Chinese, could lead to the decision of imposing Chinese national identity rather than regional identity. Although no evidence can prove the internal connection, the outcome of the current language policies in China reaches the same goal.

### **7.2.2 Achieve Stability**

Ever since the establishment of the first national work group for maintaining stability in 1998, to maintain the stability of the society becomes a crucial and long-term task for the Chinese government. As defined by Yu (2012), the social stability that the Chinese government tries to maintain means the exact peaceful and stable of the society. Hard powers from the governments such as using all means to suppress protests, demonstrations or strikes are used frequently. Apart from the hard powers, soft power such as assimilating the ethnic minorities is also conducted.

In order to assimilate the ethnic minorities, the Chinese language is promoted in the ethnic minority communities. As can be seen from the ten-year language plan of Xinjiang, Mandarin Chinese was specified as the MOI for the schools at all levels. Although the ten-year plan is less rigorous comparing to the similar policies in other provinces, the room for open interpretation of the MOI policy seems to be blocked. As shown in the newest bilingual curriculum, both the use of MOI for different courses and the percentage of MOI usage are restricted. The reason how and why the rigorous MOI policy was issued in Xinjiang still remains unclear, however, the mindset of connecting the command of Chinese language with social stability and national unity might be the possible explanation (Atshogs, 2010a as cited in Zhang, 2018).

To achieve social stability with language is rare to be seen in the Han dominant regions, such as Guangdong province. Due to the same culture and shared written language, the function of imposing the language can be ignored. Especially, after being education in Putonghua in schools, most people in Guangdong are bilingual in both Cantonese and Putonghua. In the Han dominant regions where separatist thinking and identity issue are uncommon, social stability is maintained in other aspects with other methods.

### 7.2.3 Eliminate Domestic Language Barrier

Another political purpose of imposing Mandarin Chinese is to eliminate the language barrier within the country. It is not only for easy communication across the country regardless of ethnicities and regional varieties, but also for efficient ruling of the central government. One policy that published by the State Council concerning the promotion of Putonghua in 1956 also emphasized the urgency of eliminating the domestic language barrier among Chinese speakers and benefits of unifying the Chinese spoken language:

Because of historical reasons, the development of Chinese has not yet reached a stage of complete unification. Many gravely diverging dialects have hampered conversation between people from different regions, creating many inconveniences in the undertaking of Socialist construction... For the sake of our country's political, economic, cultural and national defense progress and development, these phenomena must be effectively eliminated. (State Council Instruction concerning Spreading Putonghua, 1956)

This is the first national policy that highlighted the importance and benefits of unifying the spoken Chinese. As can be seen from the sentences digested from policy above, the language barriers among Chinese speakers are considered as the obstruct in constructing socialist China and other aspects.

Some projects are also conducted by local governments in the ethnic minority communities to eliminate language barriers between Chinese speakers and ethnic minorities. According to the governmental projects, popularizing Putonghua among the ethnic minorities is the main method to eliminate the language barrier. Liupanshui, a small city located in the mountainous Guizhou province with large number of ethnic minorities, published the plan of eliminating the barrier of Chinese language in the ethnic regions in 2018. According to the goal, it is estimated the language barrier of 28 000 non-Chinese speaking ethnic minorities will be basically eliminated by the end of 2020 through training.

The goal of eliminating language barrier within China is of good purpose, however,

rigorously promoting only Mandarin Chinese as lingua franca could lead to unexpected reversed effect. Similar as two-edge sword, it will increase the level of communication and boost the economy, at the same time, against people's will and rights.

### 7.3 Reflections on MOI Policies in Socioeconomic Sphere

#### 7.3.1 Access to the Mandarin-dominant Market

The degree of prosperity of one place depends on the level of economy development. Having a stable and large-sized market is one of the key factors for continuously development of the economy. However, due to the imbalanced development for hundred years geographically, the economic market will also develop its own characteristics in different places.

**Table 12** Top and Bottom Six Provinces/Regions of GDP Ranking 2016

Top Six	Percentage of Ethnic Population	Bottom Six	Percentage of Ethnic Population
Guangdong Province	1.98%	Tibet Autonomous Region	91.83%
Jiangsu Province	0.49%	Qinghai	46.98%
Shandong Province	0.75%	Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region	35.42%
Zhejiang Province	0.70%	Hainan Province	16.67%
Henan Province	1.20%	Gansu Province	9.43%
Sichuan Province	6.10%	Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region	59.90%

Based on the data from the Report of the Sixth National Population Census of People's Republic of China (2010)

In China, the most obvious characteristics is the imbalanced development between east and west, which can also be regarded as, Han-dominant provinces and ethnic minority provinces/autonomous regions. As can be seen from the table 12 above, all the top six provinces on the GDP ranking in 2016 are Han-dominant, while the bottom six on the list have large percentage of ethnic minority population. Gansu and Hainan province are two

exceptions since Gansu is a remote province with mostly desert and mountains and the main industry of Hainan is tourism. Although the Hainan and Gansu province are excluded, three of five autonomous regions are still on the list.

The imbalanced development between Han-dominant and ethnic minority also indicates the leaning of the market to the Chinese language. As a large share of the economy happens in the Han-dominant provinces, the business language is no doubt Chinese. With the command of the Chinese language, separate markets of different provinces can also be combined as a whole large market for business. The expand and development of the Chinese-dominant market does not equal to the disappearance of the market in other ethnic languages. Due to the restrictions of the size, population and location, the markets in ethnic languages are normally fragmented and limited only to the native speakers of the languages.

For the Han people, the Chinese-dominant market means the market with Putonghua. Mastering Putonghua is the prerequisite for people who speak different Chinese regional varieties to participate in the economic market. People without Putonghua skills are still restricted within the small area and can hardly access to the other market. However, since the written language of different regional varieties are identical, people of different regional varieties have less difficulties than people of ethnic languages in participating the big national market.

Therefore, the shifting of the MOI from mother tongue to Putonghua/Mandarin Chinese in fact gives people of different languages or regional varieties a chance to access to the national Putonghua-dominant market and jump out of the geographical language restrictions. However, no one has the right to decide whether people should exchange economy boost and large trade market with the sacrifice of their own mother tongue. Comparing to creating a monolingual market for people of different origins, it will be more important and meaningful to create a language-friendly market for everyone.

### **7.3.2 Hierarchize the Different Languages**

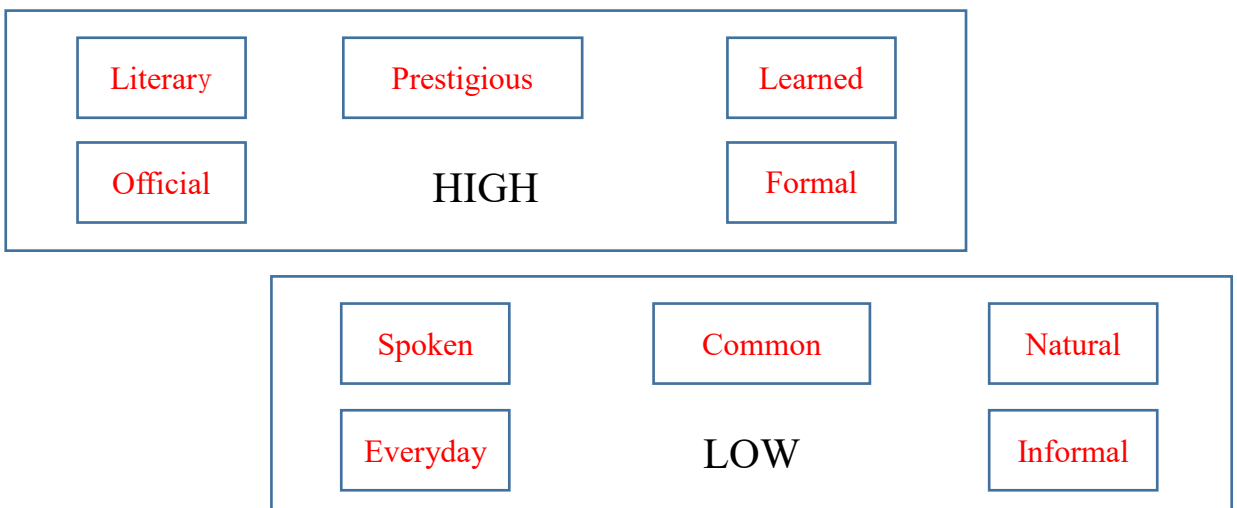
It is common that people in multilingual countries have a shared form of speech as

communication tool other than their own mother tongues. This phenomenon was firstly named ‘Diglossia’ by Ferguson in 1959 with the emphasis that it happens almost in all the countries around the world. Apart from the multilingual countries, diglossia is also found in the monolingual countries. Italy, as a country with numerous regional dialects, take only the speech of Tuscany as national standard speech for the daily communication and education among people of different places.

Some of the decisions on the common speech are naturally made, while a majority of those are manipulated. With the administrative power and national laws, central governments of the multilingual countries can easily decide the common language and create the diglossia. Among all the method to promote the common speech, through education is one of the easiest and cheapest among all.

By adopting the national standard language/speech as the only medium of instruction, students easily accept the language and hierarchize the language with their mother tongues. Similar as what Ricento (2012) has pointed out, the hierarchy of different languages is normally given by the local government or media and usually the higher variety is not the mother tongue language of the area.

**Chart 1** Characteristics of Diglossia



Ferguson (1959) noticed that once the higher variety has been mastered by a person, he or she will avoid using the lower variety (mother tongue) to communicate with foreigners, sometimes will even deny the existence of the lower variety which is the only tool to



communicate with their family and friends. As can be seen from the chart 5-3, once the lower image of mother tongue and the hierarchy of different languages are generated and accepted by most of the people, it is inevitable that the local language will gradually lose its popularity and could even disappear one day in the future.

It is crucial to introduce a common speech for daily communication, however, it is also of great importance to avoid the imbalanced status of the common language and mother tongue. To equally develop the language skills of the common language and mother tongue without prejudice should be the goal for future policy making.

### **7.3.3 Disrespect to the Regional Cultures**

Cultures of different regions not only represent the characteristics of the place, but also be considered as part of the regional identity. As the direct and obvious carrier of regional culture, the restricted use of local languages means the restriction of certain culture. At the same time, take away the right of native speakers to discover their own culture and literature through their mother tongue.

Retrieved from the ancient Turkic language, the language of Uygur has developed its own writing system and literature. Numerous epics, novels, lyrics and religious books were written and published during the history, as well as, the music and songs that Uygur people sing almost every day. Uygur language, as a carrier and platform of those cultural varieties, is an essential element.

Similar as the Uygur language, Cantonese is also an essential element for the local culture, such as local opera, songs, and common sayings. Due to the identical written system that Cantonese shared with other Chinese regional varieties, including Mandarin, it is easy to ignore the fact that Cantonese as a different speech form has shaped local culture in its own way and cannot be simply replaced by the Mandarin.

The change of MOI to Mandarin in those two regions does help people there master the Mandarin and be able to communicate with people elsewhere, however, on the other hand, the rigorous promotion of the Mandarin also cut the ties between local language and

traditional culture. Any form of art that lacks the support of local language and culture will also lose its core spirit. Promoting the rigorous MOI policy without taking local culture and people's feelings into consideration can be also easily connected to the disrespect to the cultures of different regions. No one wants to see and can take the cost of the disappearance of the regional languages and cultures.

## 8. Conclusion

The analysis and discussion of the previous chapters reveal the characteristics of the language policies in China for both Han and other ethnic minorities: high-demanding and rigorous. Two characteristics can be found from the national and local level policies respectively. Central government, as the leader in the national policy making, should acknowledge and take the different situations of learning Mandarin Chinese into consideration. However, all national policies to language learning that are published by either State Council or Ministry of Education require people of other languages to acquire the Chinese language within six years. Without taking people's needs and motivations into consideration, the effectiveness of the national policies are in doubt. What's more, in order to achieve the goal that set by the central government in time, local governments made even more rigorous actions or plans. The effectiveness of the local practice is hard to tell, while the protests against the language policies in several places may reveal the degree of support from the local people.

**Table 13** Opinions Toward the Language Policies from Different Perspectives

	<b>Local People</b>	<b>Central Government</b>
	Disrespect to the culture	Build the Chinese identity
<b>Ethnic Minority</b>	Economy and political power are controlled by Chinese speakers	Keep the society stable
<b>Autonomous Regions</b>	Hierarchize different languages	Eliminate the language barrier
	Weaken the market of ethnic languages	Access to the Chinese market
	Disrespect to the culture	Eliminate the language barrier
<b>Han Regions</b>	Restrict the freedom of using languages	Access to the domestic Putonghua market
	Weaken the regional identity	Reinforce the collective Chinese identity

The motivations behind the rigorous language policies are quite political. Having a shared language is central in nation building (Heller, 1999), and it is also one of the goals that the Chinese government wants to achieve. A collective Chinese identity rather than

several separate regional or ethnical identities is essential in also keeping the society stable. As can be seen from the table 13 above, although local people of different regions and mother tongues are not respected culturally and socioeconomically, the central government achieves what they want. The costs are the weakening of the local languages, cultures and identities of the ethnic minorities and Han people. Political purposes and goals are superior than any forms of cultural preservations and linguistic human rights.

Unequal status of the languages also leads to the unbalanced economic status of the languages. As the actual lingua franca in China among people of different languages or regional varieties is Mandarin Chinese, it is also the language for the domestic economic market. The master of Chinese language becomes an essential skill when people of different origins and backgrounds want to do business with each other. The use of ethnic languages or regional varieties is restricted to the local markets which are small in size and separated from each other. Apart from the unequal development of the non-Mandarin regions economically, the unbalanced economic status also causes the phenomenon of diglossia in those places. As Mandarin are used formally in the society and education, ethnic languages and other Chinese regional varieties gradually shift to home language and gain lower position. Without any actions, the spread of the unequal idea or image of different language can cause the ignorance of language and cultural protection.

Although Mandarin Chinese is the only official language and lingua franca within China, the other regional varieties of the Chinese language do not enjoy the same protection as other ethnic languages do. Different from the ethnic languages which under the protection of the national or local laws, Chinese regional varieties are always ignored and replaced by Mandarin in practice. The shared written language becomes an argument for the central government to insist that only language status and the protections of the national or local laws should be equally given to the Chinese regional varieties.

A national identity can be built through a rigorous language change, however, it lacks a stable and strong foundation of that identity. The quick change from mother tongue as MOI to Mandarin Chinese not only causes the problems of understanding in educational sphere, but also decreases the significance of the various local cultures and linguistic capital. Therefore, this study underlines the importance of a milder method and enough

patience in the process of language planning and creating a relatively equal environment and status for all the ethnic languages and regional varieties in China, which could ultimately lead to the harmonious relationships among different languages, prosperous development of the culture, and the stable society.

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This study, as a master's thesis, has certain limitations in different aspects. Firstly, due to the inaccessibility of some of the Chinese governmental websites overseas and the tradition of unsystematic publishing local policies, local policies that collected for the study are limited in number and range. Although policies that published on official governmental websites are collected, there surely be other unpublished policies that of great value the author cannot access to. What's more, as an authoritarian state, guidance from the ruling party are regarded same as government policies. The double-track system also increases the difficulties in collecting data. Secondly, the scope of the study is not big enough to represent entire Mainland China as only Xinjiang and Guangdong are employed as case study. Other provinces or autonomous regions might have different regional policies which worth research in depth as case studies separately. Although certain limitations exist, they can be seen as reminder and taken into consideration and improved for similar studies in the future.

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