Linguistic and Cultural Responsive Pedagogy to lower grade ethnic minority students in Yunnan, China

Dr. Du Yuan,
Education Officer, UNICEF China Office
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1. Background

- In China, ethnic minorities comprise **8.49%** of the national population.

- The population of **113 million** is classified into **55** officially recognized ethnic minorities.

- **53 out of 55** officially recognized ethnic minority groups have their own languages.

Data source: the 2010 national census, China NBS, 2011
1. Background

- In spite of the policy assurance that “ethnic minority groups have the rights to receive education in their languages”, mandarin is the language of instruction in most areas of China, except in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Tibetan areas.

- In Yunnan province, where ethnic minorities comprise over 30% of the population, all children are expected to study in Mandarin.

- Children learn all academic content in Mandarin even as they struggle to develop proficiency in the language.

- There is a resultant gap in learning performance between Han and ethnic minority group.

Scores of Han and Lisu ethnic students in end-year examination on July 2011, Tengchong County

1. Background

• Besides language, ethnic customs and cultures rarely find a place in the school curriculum.

• The different language combined with the unfamiliar culture, results in ethnic minority children reporting less engagement with their schools.

• A large number of children report biased behavior from their teachers.

1. Background

As a result of the difference in the cultural and language background between teachers and students, most primary school teachers report that they do not feel prepared to teach ethnic minority children in a bi-lingual or even multi-lingual circumstance in the classroom.

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Situation on the education quality for ethnic minority children in Yunnan, China

2. Process
Linguistic and cultural responsive pedagogy

3. Application
Trialing the pedagogy in classroom practice

4. Reflection
Challenges for replication and sustainability
2. Possible solutions

Language path: increase the linguistic proficiency of teachers

• Based on the concept that children are not learning well due to the poor language competency of their ethnic minority teachers, this solution advocates:
  • Increasing the number of Mandarin speaking Han teachers;
  • Improving the language capacity of ethnic minority teachers;

Culture path: cultural identification

• Based on the concept that ethnic minority students perform poorly due to an alien curriculum, this method advocates for introduction of a culturally appropriate curriculum.
Rethinking the two paths

• Education for ethnic minority children is more than second language acquisition;

• Teachers’ proficiency on language does not equal proficiency in teaching;

• Cultural identification is only one part of the meaning and function of education.

The Answer to the issue:
Linguistic and Cultural Responsive Pedagogy
2. Linguistic and Cultural Responsive Pedagogy

refers to the package of educational philosophies, approaches and strategies, that ordinary teachers can learn/master to help ensure that every child from a different language and cultural background has access to quality education leading to all round development.
Educational philosophy:
Defining multilingual education

Strategy:
developing a culturally appropriate curriculum.

Approach:
assessing and teaching the language

Linguistic response

Cultural response

Educational path

Ethnic minority children’s all-round development
## Facts and educational philosophy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facts</th>
<th>Educational philosophies</th>
<th>Educational approaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The bilingual/multilingual situation is the fact globally</td>
<td>Respect children’s mother tongue and experiences gained via mother tongue.</td>
<td>Understanding students’ language background and identify the needs of language proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue language can maintain the continue the cognitive development of children</td>
<td>Language learning can’t replace the cognitive development, while the language serves for cognitive development.</td>
<td>More teachers who are familiar with multi-language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every teacher can promote children’s schooling and development through friendly and appropriate teaching approaches.</td>
<td>The educational techniques and skills can be in better place on helping the development of ethnic minority students</td>
<td>Application of non-language teaching approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Cultural and linguistic responsive ways to teach the ethnic minority children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three types of approaches

• **Language assessment**: familiarity with students' linguistic and academic backgrounds;

• **Language needs identification**: understanding of the language demands inherent in the learning tasks that students are expected to complete;

• **Language teaching**: using appropriate methods so that the ethnic minority children can engage in classroom learning.
Familiarity with students’ language backgrounds

An example of rapid assessment tool

**Output:** tell several sentences

**Activity:** what do you see in this picture?

**Output:** analyze the context, and tell sentence

Example: which is a basket ball in this two pictures? Who is playing basketball?

**Output:** speak out words correctly

**Teacher:** Good morning, my name is .. What is your name?

**Student:** my name is ....

**Teacher:** how old are you?

**Student:** .....

**Teacher** (point the different items in the classroom): what is it
Familiar with students’ language backgrounds

Language mapping

Which language do you use, when you:

— talk to your parents;
— talk to your classmates;
— speak in classroom;
— speak in your village;
— watch and simulate the TV cartoons;
— ....

- Yunnanhu
- Dai
- Mandarin
- Hani
- Northeast accent
- English
Total Physical Response

- Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language learning method based on the coordination of language and physical movement.

- This method of learning was developed by James Asher, a professor of psychology at San Jose State University, California.

- According to Asher, the language learning theories are similar to those of other behavioral psychologists. The principals that help elaborate his idea are:
  - Second language learning is parallel to first language learning and should reflect the same naturalistic processes.
  - Listening should develop before speaking.
  - Once listening comprehension has been developed, speech develops naturally and effortlessly out of it.
  - Adults should use right-brain motor activities, while the left hemisphere watches and learns.
Total Physical Response

- It is fun and easy, students can enjoy getting up out of their chairs and moving around.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gives a command</td>
<td>Action demonstration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listen and observe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives a command</td>
<td>Action demonstration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives a command</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives a command</td>
<td>Action demonstration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give a student to give a command</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Total Physical Response

In Mathematics class,
• Learn the Chinese character of 1-10

一二三四五六七八九十
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Educational philosophy: Defining multilingual education

Approach: assessing and teaching the language

Strategy: developing a culturally appropriate curriculum.

Educational path

Linguistic response

Cultural response

Ethnic minority children’s all-round development
**Community life:**
Diffuse, natural knowledge, national culture, the production of knowledge

**Children:**
Familiar with, feel fun,
Want to learn, curious about it

**Children:**
care of, don’t like, fear the teachers, fear the exam.

**School life:**
Arranged knowledge, arranged space, separate, regularized contents

**Link the community with school**
Local Curricula
Key principles of developing local curricula in a children participatory manner

- Respect student’s knowledge and experiences, and learn from students
- Closely link the students’ community life with their school life
- Reflect the diversity of culture
- Experience sharing amongst different ethnic minority groups and communities
Example 1: my family tree
Example 2: the history of my community
Example 3: welcome to my village

这是我们羡多村，

村子前有一条小河，

我带你们到活动中心去玩
Example 4: food in my hometown

制作类酒的步骤

1. 将大米浸泡 1-2 天后蒸成米饭;
2. 把米饭放在竹席或竹席、塑料袋上;
3. 在凉好的米饭上洒上一些水（注意：夏天要等米饭凉了再洒水，而冬天则要先在米饭上盖着热气叶洒水），再撒上酒药后搅拌均匀，然后把它装好在装好竹篮叶（或蜜糖叶）的篮子里进行发酵;
4. 待米饭发酵后放入大缸内并密封好缸口;
5. 发酵的米饭在大缸内密封存放 9-10 天，取出加入凉开水。
3. Application of the pedagogy: our practice

Area and population

- Province = 1
- Counties = 2
- Schools = 86
- Students = 40,000
- Teachers = 2,000

Analysis

Situation Analysis → Assessment → Teacher Training → Action

Classroom application/teacher support

Analysis
3. Application of the pedagogy: our practice

Changes on students’ attitude to schools and teachers

Changes on teachers’ teaching behavior
4. Challenges

• Beliefs and perception on bilingual education by local education authorities and school management, that bilingual education equals to learn Chinese;

• Loose ties between communities and schools;

• Lack of pedagogical knowledge and skills in the pre-service and in-service teacher training programme;

• One off teacher training is not enough for applying the methodology, and continuous teacher support system is necessary to ensure its wide coverage, quality and sustainable development.
Co-authors of the presentation:

• Prof. Zheng Xinrong, Director of China ethnic minority education and multi-cultural research center, Beijing Normal University

• Dr. Pei Miao, China ethnic minority education and multi-cultural research center, Beijing Normal University
谢谢 Xie Xie

Thank You!

Dr. Du Yuan,
Education Officer, UNICEF China Office
Email: ydu@unicef.org