Language Relationships of Multiple-Nationalities in Yanyuan County, Sichuan Province: Angle of Language Harmony and Disharmony

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine language relations of multiple-nationalities in Yanyuan County, Sichuan Province. This paper pointed out that the language relations of multiple-nationalities in this area could be divided into two categories: one was language harmony, and the other was language disharmony. In succession, the paper described the performance and causes to language harmony, and discussed some existing disharmony phenomenon among multiple-nationalities in the area, thereby to understand language relations in the round and to apply in language life for a higher-level harmonious development.

Keywords: Multiple Nationalities, Language Relationships, Language Harmony, Language Disharmony
บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาความสมัมพันธ์ทางภาษาของผู้คนหลากหลายชนชาติในเมืองไทยยุคทุกวัน ผ่านการسأل ข้อค้นพบสำคัญของบทความนี้คือ การประเมินคุณค่าทางภาษาของผู้คนหลากหลายชนชาติที่อาศัยอยู่ในพื้นที่เดียวกันอยู่ในสภาพสังคมประเทศ กล่าวคือ ประเภทหนึ่งคือ ความสมัมพันธ์ทางภาษารูปแบบของความสมดุนนั้นที่หรือความกลมกลืนกันทางภาษา ถือเป็นประเภทหนึ่งคือ การแย่งแยกทางด้านภาษา ซึ่งในบทความนี้พยายามอธิบายสถานการณ์ของการใช้ภาษาทั้งในรูปแบบของความกลมกลืนทางภาษาและความแย่งแยกทางภาษารูปแบบที่มีความหลากหลายของผู้คนและชนชาติที่อาศัยอยู่ในพื้นที่ที่มีหลากหลาย

คำสำคัญ : ความหลากหลายทางชนชาติ ความสมัมพันธ์ทางภาษา ความกลมกลืนทางภาษา การแย่งแยกทางภาษา

Introduction

Language harmony (also known as 'language life harmony') means different languages in a society can harmoniously coexist, mutual benefit and complement with each other, neither being mutually exclusive nor coming into conflict. In other words, different languages coordinate, each doing her best in her position according to her responsibilities and functions, therefore, develop in harmony. (Dai 1993)

The research on language harmony is an important component of language situation studies, because the latter comprises the former. Based on language relationships of multiple-nationalities in Yanyuan County, Sichuan Province, this paper analyzes, on one hand, the performance and causes to language harmony in this area, and on the other hand, the partial emergence of some disharmony. Considering both harmonious and disharmonious aspects is not only inseparable to understand language relationships in around, but also helpful to lead scientifically language life into a higher-level harmonious development.
Objectives

This research focuses on the language relationship between the ethnic groups, including Yi, Tibetan and Mongolian people, in Yanyuan County, an area where minorities live together. Language harmony and disharmony is mainly discussed. Consequently, the paper evokes the phenomenon and causes of language harmony, points out the harm of language disharmony and finally reveals that language harmony contributes to a united and stable society of multiple nationalities.

The sample villages and minority people selected in this research mainly include Yi and Tibetan people's villages: Tangni Village, Pingba Village, Pingba Village, Qinghe Village, which are the dense place where Yi, Tibetan people live together. These villages are affiliated to Mianya Town, Yanyuan County, Sichuan Province. Besides, Mosuo people's villages are also selected, including Boshu Village, Shekua Village and Shannan Village, which are the dense place where Mongolian, Tibetan and Han people live together. These three villages are affiliated to Lugu Lake Region of Sichuan Province.

Methodology

This research is based on the field work, and all the data are collected through the household investigation. The survey about minority people's competence of Chinese was distributed to a total number of 1171 people from four villages in Yanyuan County, Sichuan Province, China, among which there were 369 Yi people, 338 Tibetan people and 464 Mongolian people. The methodology adopted in this study included the reference consulting, the field work, and an analysis on the materials and data. Four questionnaires were designed as the investigation materials: 1. The Questionnaire of Language Use in Family, 2. The Questionnaire of Language Ideas, 3. The Questionnaire of Teenagers' Second Language Use and 4. The Questionnaire of Minority People's Language among Different Interlocutors in
Different Places. The first and the second questionnaire are presented in tabular forms, which need filling by the interviewed minority people. The third and the fourth questionnaire are designed to be choice questions, the answers to which are helpful for investigating Yi, Tibetan and Mosuo people's opinions and attitude towards their mother tongues, Chinese and other languages. Hundreds of questionnaires were handed out to villages, households and schools, and finally collected back. The statistics were done through Microsoft Office Excel.

Text

In Yanyuan County dwell 21 ethnic groups including Yi, Han, Mongolian, Tibetan, Naxi, Lisu, Hui and so on and so forth. Each ethnic group basically maintains their own mother tongue from generation to generation. With all ethnic groups communicating and interacting with each other in the long history, all languages also keep in touch with each other. Different languages in contact with each other constitute a large and orderly net of language relationships. Due to different characteristics and conditions resulted from language contact, language relations are bound to come forth different nature and different types. From the linguistic angle of whether harmony or not, language relationships can be roughly divided into two categories: one is the linguistic harmony, and the other, disharmony. Language life harmony is essential for a peaceful and friendly society, guaranteeing the building of a civilized society.

1. Language Harmony of Multiple Ethnic Groups

Yanyuan County is composed of multiple nationalities, among which minorities account for the primary part. Language harmony of multi-nationalities is in the main the harmony among Yi language, Chinese, Prinmi language and Mosuo language, etc. Language relationships in Yanyuan County can be classified into three types: first, Chinese and minority languages. The second is the relationship between minority languages,
including Yi, Mosuo, Primi, and Lisu languages and so on. The third is the relationship among Chinese Mandarin and Yanyuan dialect, namely the standard Chinese and local Chinese. Language harmony embodies in all these three types, mainly regarding the two aspects as follows.

1.1. Different languages can harmoniously coexist, mutual benefit and complement with each other, neither being mutually exclusive nor coming into conflict.

People of different nationalities in Yanyuan County have had a common understanding that whatever nationality, large or small, has the equal social status, and should not be discriminated but respected and that each minority language plays her role and cannot be replaced by other languages. Ethnic groups like Yi, Tibetan (The Tibetan people in the Yanyuan County are different from those in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. But they were classified into the nationality of Tibetan according to their own will at the beginning of the foundation of the P.R.C. Actually they speak Primi language.) This paper adopts the official term 'Tibetan' when referring to people, and use Primi when referring to their language. and Mongolian (The Mongolian people in the Yanyuan County are different from those in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. As a fact they are Mosuo people whose language is the Musuo language. But in order to meet their will, the paper adopt the official term 'Mongolian' when referring to people, and the Mosuo language when referring to their language.) in Yanyuan County, on one hand, steadily maintain their mother tongue, and on the other hand, speak Chinese on the whole. Many can also speak other minority languages. Some Han nationality can also speak languages of ethnic minorities. The use of different languages by different nationalities leads to bilingual and multilingual coexistence and complementary, meeting all nationalities' needs of communication. The following are ethnic groups' use of Chinese and another ethnic language.

1.1.1 Ethnic minorities use Chinese at large, considering it a kind of civilization and advancement.
Regarding Chinese as the most important second language, ethnic minorities in Yanyuan County throw themselves into learning of Chinese, since Chinese is the language in common use. They generally believe that Chinese records the world’s advanced science, technology and culture, so mastery of Chinese is a symbol of advancement. If they don’t learn Chinese, they can neither master modern technology or knowledge nor communicate with other ethnic groups. Additionally, they don’t think their mother tongues and Chinese exclude each other, but complement instead. Therefore, it's very common in Yanyuan County that minorities speak Chinese, especially among youths and adults. Here are analysis on the use of Chinese by ethnic minorities including Yi, Mongolian, and Tibetan.

a. Yi ethnic minority’s use of Chinese: According to the census in the year of 2005, Yi ethnic minority has a population of 149,568 accounting for 47.6% of the total of population of Yanyuan County. A total number of 369 Yi people of four villages are sampled and analyzed to investigate Yi people's competence of Chinese. The result reveals that in these 4 villages people who are highly proficient in Chinese account for 44.5%; the averaged is 41.7%; and the incompetent is 13.8%. These figures indicate the use of Chinese has become very common in Yi ethnic minorities, who inhabit in a rural area. See the following Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Yi People</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Averaged</th>
<th>Incompetent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gongmushan</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangni</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qinghe</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pingba</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Yi Villagers' Competence of Chinese
b. Tibetan ethnic minority's use of Chinese: The population of Tibetan ethnic minority is 5,944, accounting for 1.89% of the total population in Yanyuan County. There are no villages in which most or all of the Tibetan people live. A survey on Chinese competence was conducted with 338 Tibetan people from 4 villages. It reveals that there are only 8 or 2.3% Tibetans who cannot speak Chinese. This figure shows Tibetan nationality has basically completed universal use of Chinese. See the following Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Tibetan people</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Averaged</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Incompetent</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 1, Pingba</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qinghe</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 6, Pingba</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>90.6%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangni</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Mongolian ethnic minority's use of Chinese: In all 46 villages and towns in the whole county, Mongolian people are located in 39 villages and towns, among which Lugu Lake and its vicinity are the places where the Mongolian inhabit in a dense community. On account of rapidly-developed tourism and increasing number of tourists, the local Mongolian people are fluent in not only local Chinese dialect but also Chinese Mandarin. 464 Mongolians from three villages were selected to investigate their Chinese competence. Among these three villages, both Boshu Village and Shekua Village are places where Mongolian people dwell together, while Shannna Village is the place where Mongolian people live together with the Han and Tibet people. The result reveals that only 6 out of all 464 Mongolian people from 3 villages cannot speak Chinese, while the rest of 458 people can, among which 451 have a good command of Chinese. See the following Table 3.
Table 3  Mongolian Villagers’ Competence of Chinese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Mongolian people</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Averaged</th>
<th>Incompetent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boshu</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>97.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shekua</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>96.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannan</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>451</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1.2 The mutual use of languages among ethnic minorities is a commonplace, and the relationship between different minority languages is also very harmonious. The mutual use of languages among ethnic minorities is natural and harmonious. There are two characteristics of the mutual use of languages. First, the Yi language is commonly used by other ethnic minorities, whereas Yi people seldom use languages of other ethnic minorities. Secondly, the Mosou language is commonly used by other nationalities in Lugu Lake Region, whereas Mongolian people seldom use languages of other ethnic minorities. The detailed discussion is as follows.

1.1.2.1 Other ethnic minorities’ use of Yi language: Having a large population and a vast territory, Yi nationality either inhabits together with or closes to other nationalities, so it’s common for other nationalities in rural areas of Yanyuan to use Chinese, but Yi people seldom use other minority languages. See Table 4 and Table 5 as follows.

Table 4  Tibetan Villagers’ Competence of Yi language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Tibetan people</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Incompetent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangni</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team1, Pingba</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team6, Pingba</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qinghe</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

216
Table 5  Yi Villagers’ Competence of Prinmi Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Yi people</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Incompetent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td>percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangni</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pingba</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qinghe</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 above shows Tibetan people’s use of the Yi language: According to the data, 284 out of 338 Tibetan people speak Yi language fluently; this is 82.2% of the total. The other 54 people, accounting for 17.8%, have no knowledge of Yi language.

Table 5 shows Yi people’s use of Prinmi: The data illustrates that only 52 out of 216 Yi people can speak Tibetan people’s mother tongue the Prinmi language fluently, and the number accounts for merely 24.1% of the total, while the number of Yi people who have no knowledge of Prinmi language reaches to 164, accounting for 75.9%. This indicates that only a small part of Yi people can speak Prinmi language.

The inequality of language use between Yi and Tibetan minorities can be understood by Tibetan people who accepted our interview, "Because Yi nationality has more population here... Our language is not easy to learn." We were impressed on their comprehensive minds and attitudes towards the use of other languages.

Some Mongolian people also use Yi language, for example, those distributed in Guabie District of Yanyuan County can almost speak Yi language. Many Lisu ethnic minorities use Yi language as well, as Mr. Luo Wuyan, Director of Bureau of Nationality and Religion, told us, "Lisu people universally use Yi language."

1.1.2.2 Other minorities' use of Mosuo language: It happens mostly in Lugu Lake Region where Mongolian people dwell in a dense community.
Han people in this area can mostly use Mosuo language. Take Shannancun for instance. The village comprises 10 groups or 1325 people. The Mosuo people are the major inhabitants, while the Han people account for only one third. The surveyed was conducted with 380 Han people and found 234 can speak Moso language, accounting for 61.6%.

1.1.2.3 Han nationality's use of minority languages: Han nationality has a population of nearly 140,000 in Yanyuan County. Regardless of a lower average rate of using minority languages in the whole county, Han nationality who lives together with ethnic minorities can speak a certain commonly-used minority language in locality. For example, on the border triangle of Mianya Town, Meiyu Town and Xiahai Town, where Yi and Han people live together, Han nationality can all speak Yi language. Additionally, in Pingbacunliuzu, a village where Tibetan, Yi and Han nationality live together, there are 26 Han people in all, among which 18 can speak Yi language, accounting for 69.3 percent, and 17 can speak Prinmi language, 65.4 percent. Therefore, most of Han people in that village are multi-lingual speakers who can use Chinese, Prinmi and Yi language. Living together with ethnic minorities in a long run and speaking their languages frequently, a few Han people speak minority languages even better than Chinese. What's more, most of the Han people in urban areas can speak a few simple Yi words and sentences.

Han people inhabiting in Lugu Lake Town mostly can use Moso language. Take Shannancun for instance. The village comprises 10 groups, 1325 people. The Mosuo people are the major inhabitants, while the Han people account for only one third. We surveyed 380 Han people and found 234 can speak Moso language, accounting for 61.6 percent.

The Han nationality hardly lives together with Tibetan people, but many can use Prinmi language, and some even speak well. Take Pingbacun for instance. There are four households of Han people who have a good mastery of Prinmi language due to the long-term contact with the Tibetans.
Mr. Dong, the headmaster of Pingba Primary School, noted, "These four households of Han people accept Tibetan culture and customs apart from the Prinmi language. They celebrate Tibetan festivals and hold ceremonies like Tibetan people."

In short, in Yanyuan County the universal use of Chinese by ethnic minorities is a major trend, and mutual use of languages by different nationalities is also a commonplace. It's very usual that some people can speak one or two and even more languages besides their mother tongue.

1.2 Different languages play their own parts in their places orderly and coordinately. As different languages vary in their language functions, some are strong and some are weak. Used by the largest population as the lingua franca, Chinese is the strongest language. While minority languages used locally in large and small places, are weak languages. In Yanyuan County, Yi language, compared with Prinmi, Mosuo and Lisu languages, is the local strong language; but it is the sub-strong language compared with Chinese. All these languages, strong or weak, play their own parts in discourses. On what occasion to use Chinese and on what occasion to use ethnic minorities coordinate and complement each other. According to the questionnaires handed out to the households of all ethnic groups in this research, concrete conditions of language use in different places and occasions are analyzed as follows.

1.2.1 In the family
a. Mother tongue is used in all families of the same nationalities.
b. Inter-ethnic marriages and families use both mother tongue and other languages.

1.2.2 In villages
a. In villages where people of the same nationality live in a dense community, everybody, regardless of their nationalities, can skillfully use their mother tongue which is the most important communicative tool within the tribe. On occasion of weddings, funerals and other ceremonies, friends
and relatives of different nationalities come together and use different languages according to their interlocutors.

b. In the village where a number of nationalities live together, a certain native language is used within the same minority group; Chinese and any other minority languages are used in inter-nationalities.

1.2.3 In schools

There are 2 full-time secondary schools, 1 vocational secondary school, 11 junior high schools and 203 primary schools in Yanyuan County. It was found that there is the shared characteristic of urban and rural schools. That is, different languages complement each other harmoniously. However, different features also exist in the language complementary due to the uneven allocation of education resources and the great difference of education between urban and rural areas.

a. Rural primary schools: A survey was conducted on the capability of Yi language and Chinese used by 44 Yi teenagers from 6 to 21 years old in Gongmushan village. All of the Yi teenagers are native speakers; 24 of them speak fluent Chinese, 18 have some knowledge of Chinese and the other 2 have no knowledge of Chinese. In general, most of the children under the age of 13 cannot be proficient in the use of Chinese. Therefore, bilingual teaching is adopted in class where Chinese is the main language and Yi or Prinmi language is complimentary. After one semester or so, students can make sentences in Chinese. Students of different ethnic groups get along well with each other and generally use their own mother tongue after class.

b. Urban schools: There are two types of teaching. One is bilingual education, using Chinese and Yi language at the same time. This kind of teaching is carried out in the Primary School for Nationalities and the Middle School for Nationalities. In the regular courses, Chinese Mandarin is a required language. After class, local Chinese dialect is commonly used among different groups of people. Minority languages are used sometimes by a small quantity of students.
The other type of teaching is completely Chinese education, which is manipulated in other ordinary primary and middle schools. As Chinese is in common use in urban district, not only junior but also senior students can generally speak Chinese well. Therefore, in these urban schools, minority languages are seldom used, Chinese, however, is spoken by both teachers and students.

1.2.4 In public places

The language use in public places is different in rural areas and urban district. In public places in rural areas like township government, hospitals and highway, ethnic minorities are likely to speak their native languages. Most of officers of township government can speak the minority language in locality to meet the needs of their work. In urban district, every night many people of different nationalities gather in the square, singing in Yi and Mosuo languages and dancing in their own way. Despite of different nationalities, people talk to each other in Chinese.

2. Contributing Causes to Language Harmony

The reasons why a harmonious and complementary relationship of languages can be formed are mainly the following points.

2.1 The national policy of ethnic languages is the fundamental guarantee for language harmony.

The Central Government attaches great importance to the work of national languages and enacted a series of laws and regulations concerning national language and script. From China's Constitution to various historical periods of national language policy, the core ideas are all stressed on the linguistic equality and the freedom to use languages. The national language policy has been implemented in Yanyuan County. The languages used by the local government are mainly the Chinese and the Yi language. For example, important documents, including National People's Congress, National People's Political Consultative Conference as well as the important laws and regulations of the rural work are all written in both Chinese and
Yi language. The use of Yi language and character has covered all aspects and fields such as life, economy, society, culture and education, etc.

Yi language and script is spread out in various aspects in Yanyuan County. Tablets of all units and state-owned enterprises are inscribed with both Chinese and Yi scripts. There are newspapers, magazines, movies, TV programs and songs in Yi language. In May 27, 2009, Sichuan Provincial People’s Congress adopted the 'Liang Shan Yi Language Work Regulations (Amendment)' and will be formally implemented in 1st August, 2009. The regulations provide legal guarantee for the position and use of Yi language.

2.2 The harmonious relationship among all ethnic groups is the essential factor to language harmony.

As an important feature of the nation, language is closely linked with ethnic identity and ethnic affection. Ethnic relationship has a direct impact on language relations. A good ethnic relationship leads to a good language relationship. In contrast, a bad ethnic relationship causes negative impact on language relationship. The harmonious ethnic relationship is embodied in many aspects such as friendly interaction between different nationalities, shared identity of the same ancestors as well as inter-clan marriages and families.

Yanyuan County has a long history of over 2000 years. Nationalities living in the area immigrated one after another because of historical reasons including severe living conditions in the old residency and conflicts of ethnics and families. They came here with a common purpose, that is, to open up wholly new life and to develop and survive better. Since being together, there were never contradiction and conflicts among different nationalities. They bear a common idea in their minds: they ought to be at peace with other ethnic groups in the new places.

The ethnic harmony is also related to the legend of the common source of Yi, Han and Tibetan ancestors. According to the folk story 'Yi, Han and Tibetan people are families', the three nationalities were three brothers
by one mother. The common ethnic identity shortens distance among the nationalities and lays the psychological foundation for mutual acceptance. The friendly ethnic relationship is attributed to harmonious language relationship and vice versa. The long-term use of other languages and acceptance of other ethnic cultures will promote the harmonious ethnic relationship.

2.3 The open-minded attitude of people towards languages is the psychological basis of language harmony.

Minorities in Yanyuan County take an all-embracing attitude towards languages. Yanyuan County is a place where different nationalities live together and different cultures mingle with one another. All nationalities not only maintain the vitality of their native languages in order to meet their needs of communication and ethnic identity, but also use Chinese, the nation-wide lingua franca, in order to meet the needs of self-development and inter-clan communication. Additionally, they can speak minority languages so as to have friendly neighborhood relations. The eclectic and all-embracing attitude can be seen in 'Questionnaire of Language Ideas' surveyed on the sample people.

In conversations with Yi, Mongolian and Tibetan people, no matter young or old, on one hand, they all realized the importance of mastering Chinese for education and employment, expecting their children can have access to better Chinese education in schools. On the other hand, most of them objected to the phenomenon that native speakers are reluctant to speak their mother tongue. It is indicated that people's open minds on Chinese leads to language harmony.

2.4 The modernization promotes the development of language harmony.

The language harmony is necessary for the development of society. Entering a new period of modernization, people of all nationalities need to cooperate friendly and create a peaceful, stable environment in order to
develop the economy as quickly as possible. All causes harming social harmony should be discarded by the whole nation. Therefore, it is the common aspiration of all nationalities to achieve national harmony and language harmony. The greater progress that the society and economy make, the more importance of ethnic and language harmony people realize.

3. The Disharmony on the Background of Language Harmony

The language relationship of Yanyuan County is recognized in the way that the harmony of all nationalities is the main stream, but disharmony also exists. What are considered as disharmony includes contradiction, dissension and conflict related to languages. The causes to disharmony are analyzed as follows.

3.1 Although all languages in Yanyuan County are equal, there is still a matter of fact of inequality in some areas.

It should also be noticed that there are some de facto inequalities on the position of languages. For example, the position of Chinese, the nationwide lingua franca, is on the rise. The use of minority languages, however, trends to decrease, which is mainly manifested in some teenagers, especially in cities and towns whose ability of mother tongue decrease and lower than that of their parents. They have little knowledge of and lack interest in traditional culture of their own nationalities. There is no exception in all minorities in Yanyuan County.

There was great difference about language status between the strong language and the weak language in historical evolution of languages. Minority people who can use Chinese have a higher social status and are easily hired while those who have a low proficiency of Chinese get in trouble to find jobs. Some minority people revealed, "Even though the test of Yi language is taken into consideration in interviews and employments, the percentage is very low. It accounts for only 4% in the officeholder exam and 5% in the recent administration test." As mentioned above, Yi language and script is put in use in the scope of autonomy, which embodies attention paid by
the Provincial Government and State Government. But the sidetracks about the use of Yi should be recognized. For one thing, Chinese-Yi translations on the tablets are not equivalent in forms and contents. For another, Yi script hasn't been popularized and many illiterates cannot read the letters on tablets, therefore, Yi fails to fully play its due role. Many far-sighted minority people call on particular consideration on minority languages and awareness of protecting vulnerable languages.

3.2 Bilingual education system has not been perfected.

Having a half population of minority, Yanyuan County should vigorously launch bilingual education to enhance the Chinese level of ethnic minorities. However, the present situation, both in forms of teaching organization and teaching methods has not been able to meet the requirements for the establishment of a bilingual teaching system. Especially for primary school students in grades 1-3, Chinese teaching in accordance with the characteristics of native tongue has not been implemented universally. Therefore, ways to improve Chinese education of the County is a serious problem. The vice-principal of Yanyuan High School for nationalities said, 'I teach high-school Chinese lessons, so I know minority students make a lot of mistakes in their Chinese compositions, and teachers make efforts to rectify these mistakes but fail to. To improve the quality of teaching cannot be ignored as a problem.'

Although there are a large number of Yi people, few of them have knowledge of Yi script. As a result, they cannot improve their level of Chinese by means of mother tongue. Actually, there are differences and sameness between Yi Language and Chinese. It's entirely possible to find difficulties by languages comparisons and take appropriate purposes to raise teaching effect. It's necessary to probe a set of Chinese language teaching methods suitable for the Yi students. Unfortunately, this meaningful job hasn't been considered seriously.
3.3 The custom that Chinese officers and intellectuals learn minority languages is to be strengthened.

Chinese and ethnic minorities live together and combine tightly. As known, there are two kinds of language use among Chinese and ethnic groups. One is one-way style, meaning one nationality can speak the language of the other, but the other can't speak the language of this nationality. The other is two-ways language use, meaning both nationalities can speak languages of each other to communicate. (Dai 1994)

In the early day of New China, some Han people living together with ethnic groups had and have basically been able to use languages of the later. Many Chinese cadres, teachers and medical workers took initiatives to study minority languages and consider it a pride to speak it well. Nowadays, due to a variety of factors, the enthusiasm of Han civil servants to study minority languages has been greatly diminished and many in ethnic minority areas cannot speak minority languages. Consequently it is necessary that Chinese civil servants learn minority languages in the new era. Those who speak well should be awarded.

Conclusions

Through the field work and investigation, it can be concluded that the language life of all nationalities in Yanyuan County is generally harmonious.

First, the languages of every nationality is respected whether its population and the distribution is large or small. No nationality discriminates against languages of other nationalities. In such an atmosphere of equality, all nationalities can be willing to use their mother tongues.

Second, complementing each other, all languages play their parts in varied fields and different groups of people. Chinese is the lingua franca used by all nationalities in Yanyuan County; Yi, due to the use of larger population and widely distribution, is the sub-strong (subdominant)
language in rural areas. Other minority languages including Prinmi, Mosuo, Lisu and Prinmi are weak languages in the area, mainly used in family and village.

Third, most of people can use one or two languages in the locality. The mother tongue fails to meet the communication needs in daily life. They switch languages naturally and smoothly, considering it helpful and necessary to master more languages. Their all-embracing gesture of accepting and tolerating languages is another manifestation of language harmony.

Fourth, the harmonious language life has played an important role in ensuring and facilitating the modernization in Yanyuan County. Languages are indispensable as they are the most vital tool for economy circulation, culture spreading and education popularity. Without a harmony and appropriate language interaction, our enterprises would be harmed, and language conflicts might come forth and even disturb social tranquillization and development.

Lastly, the language life in Yanyuan tells us the criterion of language harmony rests on whether all languages have the equal positions, whether language discrimination exists, whether it is the people's conscious behavior and consistent with society's demands, and whether different languages can be complementary to constitute a unified system. It also gives us a clue. That is, in a multiple-lingual society, even though language harmony is the mainstream, there are also a few factors in disharmony, which may jeopardize national unity and social progress, and thereby should be paid much attention to.

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