

**Exploring the Educational Experiences and Identity of  
Ethnic Minority Korean and Yi Individuals in China**

**Xuyang Zhang**

**Department of Education, University of Oxford  
Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition  
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## List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
Chao schools	The ethnic minority Korean schools, or <i>Chaoxian zu</i> schools
Chinese Communist Party	CCP
Ebian	Ebian Yi Autonomous County
KLA	Korean Language Arts
Liangshan	Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture
MHK	The Chinese language proficiency test for ethnic minorities in China
NCEE	National College Entrance Examination
Ninglang	Ninglang Yi Autonomous County
NPEE	The National Postgraduate Entrance Exam
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
Yanbian	Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture

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## ABSTRACT

To explore the intersection of ethnicity, language, and identity, this study examines the educational experiences and identity of 19 ethnic minority individuals in China. 13 participants are ethnic Korean, and 6 participants are ethnic Yi. Through the semi-structured interview, this study investigates the following research questions: What are the similarities and differences between the educational experiences of the ethnic Korean and Yi? How do Korean and Yi individuals perceive that minority education and language exposure to their minority languages, Korean and Yi, has affected their identity?

Drawing from the qualitative data, this study reveals that the two groups of participants vary in their educational experiences and heritage language exposure. Nevertheless, their perception of ethnic identity is prominent in a similar way. Under trends of Sinicization, urbanization, and structural discrimination, the ethnic Yi and Korean suffer from inadequate social language affordances, the breakdown of traditional ethnic boundaries, and a crisis of heritage language loss.

Key terms: Yi, Chinese Korean, Korean, ethnic minorities, heritage language, minority language

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Proclaimed by the government, China has historically been a unified multiethnic entity, with many ethnic groups residing within the now territory (Choi, 2001; Mullaney, 2010; Zang, 2015). Since the end of the feudal imperial era, China has undergone the political regimes of the Republic of China (ROC) (1912 – 1949) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (est. 1949). During this period, the *Chinese Communist Party* (CCP) was formed and engaged in the Chinese Civil War (1927 - 1949) with *Kuomintang*, the then dominant party of the ROC. In 1949, ROC and *Kuomintang* relocated to Taiwan following the defeat, and PRC was established concurrently by the CCP. ‘PRC,’ ‘Chinese government,’ ‘government,’ and ‘China’ are used interchangeably in this dissertation.

The notion of ethnic groups in its present sense in China emerged and evolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Historically, the term *zu* was used to refer to a congregation of families, stressing the notion of living together – it could be used to refer to people from the same extended family or within the same ethnic group, containing a notion of descent (Xu, 1868; Zang, 2015). The modern Chinese term for nationality or ethnicity, *minzu*, is a compound word based on *zu*; it was introduced in Japan in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, combining *min*, ‘the people, and *zu* (Zang, 2015). *Minzu* is also translated to ‘nation,’ but such a concept differs from that of a nation-state, referring to a people instead of a country (Holcombe, 2017). In this paper, ‘ethnic group,’ ‘nationality,’ or ‘*minzu*’ refers to a group with unique ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics (Henrard, 2001, p. 41; Zang, 2015, p. 2). ‘Ethnic minorities,’ ‘minority groups,’ ‘minority,’ or ‘minority *minzu*’ refer to the non-Han people – the numerically non-dominant ethnic groups in the PRC.

There are 56 ethnic groups in China, including the dominant Han and 55 minority groups. The entire minority population encompasses over 125 million people and 8.9% of the population. They reside primarily in the periphery, covering over 60 percent of China (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021; Zang, 2015). Han comprises over 1286 million people and 91.1% of the total population (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

The Han majority is a heterogeneous group, varying geographically in traditions, rituals, ideologies, and local vernaculars that could be mutually unintelligible. To promote

linguistic intelligibility and facilitate communications, Mandarin or *Putonghua*, adapted from the Beijing dialect, was imposed as a national standard in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It remains the *lingua franca* of China today. In this dissertation, ‘Mandarin’ refers to this standard variant, and ‘Chinese’ refers to all variants spoken by the Han majority.

The ethnic categories before the 20<sup>th</sup> century were roughly divided into the Han and the non-Han (Zang, 2015). The Han was a group of people sharing a common ancestry of *Huaxia*, a confederation of tribes residing in *Zhongguo*, ‘the central/middle country.’ The usage of *Huaxia* and *Zhongguo* remains in modern days: the official names of the ROC and the PRC both contain *Zhonghua* – a combination of *Huaxia* and *Zhongguo* (Holcombe, 2017). Combining *Zhonghua* and *minzu*, *Zhonghua minzu* is a term that has gained increasing popularity in the political discourse in the recent decade. It refers to all Chinese citizens, the people who live in *Zhongguo*, and serves as a cultural-political identification promoting a sense of unity among all Chinese (Ma, 2019).

Inspired by the Soviet campaign of nationality identification in the 1930s, the modern Chinese ethnic taxonomy was formulated in 1954 through the Ethnic Classification Project, initiated by the CCP to investigate and determine the officially recognized ethnic groups in China (Zang, 2015). In the 1953 National Census, people were asked to self-register their *minzu*. The results showed that more than 400 ethnic groups existed, of which 92 groups had a population of less than 100 (Mullaney, 2010). The CCP thus decided to send a team of social scientists and officials to identify a complete set of predetermined ethnic categories that one may choose from (Mullaney, 2010; Zang, 2015). Some of their decisions were somewhat arbitrary and problematic. Their methodology was oriented around the language proxy, making a language group equivalent to an ethnic group without much ethnographic inquiry, fieldwork, or extensive interviews (Mullaney, 2010). Attention, in some locations, was only given to those with higher in-group status. Knowing the sizable ethnic groups first, the investigation was more of a merging process that combined the smaller groups into these larger categories (Mullaney, 2010; Zang, 2015). Much of the work was finished in 6 months, producing 38 confirmed ethnic groups; later, this figure raised to 53 in 1964 and 56 in 1990, including the majority Han (Mullaney, 2010; Zang,

2015). As of now, an individual is legally bonded to follow one of their parents' ethnic groups. People may apply to change their ethnic status with proof and verification (Chongqing Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission, 2021).

Although the PRC claims to celebrate ethnic diversity, ethnic consciousness and minority languages have undergone tremendous challenges. Since 1949, perhaps one of the greatest language shifts and loss has been observed in China. Minority languages are endangered under the promotion of Mandarin and the popularization of English as a global language (Tsung, 2014; Zhang & Tsung, 2019; Zhou, 2000, 2012). According to Daily Newspaper (2012), 40% of the minority languages are endangered. The ethnic costumes are now the single most representative cultural marker for the ethnic minority; many ethnic minorities are indistinguishable from the majority Han (Zang, 2015).

To explore the intersection of ethnicity, language, and language education in contemporary China, this dissertation focuses on the educational experiences and identity of two ethnic minority groups, Korean and Yi. The two groups are among the largest minorities and were selected for several reasons: feasibility of participant recruitment, differences in geographical distribution, contrasting nature of border-crossing versus indigenous, and instrumental values of the minority languages, Korean and Yi.

As of now, little extensive research has examined Yi in isolation and the perception of Yi identity, nor has there been research about the latest educational reform among Korean minority schools. No literature has yet to juxtapose these two groups directly. With 19 participants, this study does not aim to generalize identity negotiation, educational experiences, and language practices of all Yi or Koreans. In the following chapters, I will discuss two research questions: What are the similarities and differences between the educational experiences of the ethnic Korean and Yi? How do Korean and Yi individuals perceive that minority education and language exposure to their minority languages, Korean and Yi, has affected their identity?

This dissertation is divided into Literature Review, Methodology, Findings and Analyses, and Conclusions. In Literature Review, I situate this research at the intersection of heritage language, identity, and ethnicity in China, discussing relevant studies on policy,

language affordances, and the two ethnic minority groups. In Methodology, I reflect on my positionality, the pool of participants, and the data collection and analysis procedure. In Findings and Analyses, I present the relevant findings by ethnic groups under the framework adapted from the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and analyze the results based on the proposed questions.

In sum, I show that the two groups of participants, Korean and Yi, vary in their educational experiences, exposure to heritage language, and the interplay of political and ethnic identity. Despite their distinctive backgrounds, they perceive a prominent ethnic identity in a similar way, particularly when confronting marginalization and microaggressions.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Heritage and Minority Language

Korean and Yi are minority languages spoken by minority groups. On the other hand, Chinese is the dominant language spoken by the larger national population. Minority languages are usually related to ethnic culture maintenance, and dominant language is associated with societal advancement and social rewards (Lohndal et al., 2019; Sktunabb, 2000). Such instrumental values are accelerated by globalization, the monolingual market economy, and the development of internet society.

A related yet slightly different concept is heritage language. Heritage speakers may have varying degrees of linguistic competency in their heritage languages and usually have these points in common: they are (a) minority language speakers in an environment where another language(s) is the dominant one, (b) bilingual, and (c) more proficient in the dominant language upon reaching their adulthood (Lohndal et al., 2019). In this dissertation, participants were recruited if they had been exposed to Korean and Yi, regardless of their relative proficiency levels and order of acquisition. I refer to all participants as heritage and minority speakers and use both terms interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

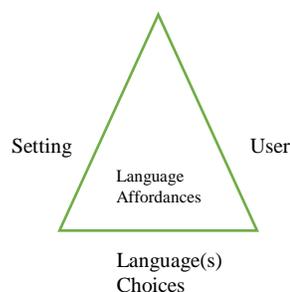
### 2.2 Language Affordances, Choices, Attitudes, and Maintenance

Affordances were first introduced by Gibson (1979) as a psychobiological concept, referring to what the environments offer the animals. In applied linguistics, language affordances are tangible and intangible items, opportunities, or circumstances in a sociolinguistic setting that enable language learning and language use (Aronin & Singleton, 2012; Riestenberg, 2020). Affordances are further classified into social and individual language affordances (Aronin & Singleton, 2010, 2012). The former is provided by “a particular community (e.g., world, country, family) at a specific time which relates to licensing the use and acquisition of a language or languages” (Aronin & Singleton, 2012, p. 318). Through the manifestation of individual language affordances, people may use and

interact with languages, giving rise to opportunities for individual language learning (Aronin & Singleton, 2012).

In language maintenance, intergenerational transmission plays a significant role. The youths' parents speak the minority language to them, and they learn it as their mother tongues; when growing up and forging their own families, the younger generations transmit the heritage language to their children (Gomashie, 2022). If the younger generations no longer speak the heritage language as their L1, half of the world's languages may become extinct (Austin & Sallabank, 2011; Gomashie, 2022; Krauss, 1992). When multilingual, these younger generations' language choices become critical to maintaining minority languages. Language choices are conscious decisions individuals make regarding language use at a particular time-place. The specific, sociolinguistic setting, along with users and the language(s), generate the language affordances in this time-place (Aronin & Singleton, 2012), as detailed in Figure 2-1. Riestenberg (2020) suggests that in language maintenance, the link between the endangered languages' social and individual language affordances needs to be strengthened, potentially creating more daily interactions and functional social uses of these languages.

Figure 2-1: Affordances-generating model adapted from Aronin and Singleton (2012, p. 323)



In modern multilingual communities, some languages are usually preferred over others. The environment with affordances favoring specific language(s) is defined as a domain (Aronin & Singleton, 2012). Homes or families are part of the private domain, whereas schools and workspace are examples of the public domain. As Sandoval Arenas

(2017) pointed out, a hierarchy of language domains may exist, with the public domains superior to the informal, private domains. Heritage languages may become endangered if their share of the language domains is threatened (Aronin & Singleton, 2012; Fishman, 2001; Gomashie, 2022). In the context of China, Chinese is the dominant and official language in public domains, making it almost inevitable to speak Chinese (Lin, 1997; Zhang & Tsung, 2019).

The willingness of the younger generations to use the heritage language in many domains is a key to the language revitalization (Gomashie, 2022). Such disposition, preference, and biases towards certain languages are language attitudes. Within the context of China, Mandarin is associated with positive language attitudes and is thought to bring about opportunities and social acceptance, whereas minority languages have limited use and are relegated to low social status. In turn, little social rewards for using minority languages create a vicious cycle that results in the further deprecation of minority languages by parents and local officials (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). Parents may decide whether to send their children to minority schools and have them learn the heritage languages based on their perceptions of languages; they may intentionally stop or limit the usage of heritage languages at home if they think that heritage language learning brings no instrumental values (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). The local policymaking may also consider these parental attitudes and decide to open or close minority schools. Language attitudes of teachers, parents, and students are thus determinative in the success of the implementation of minority languages into the local school system (Baker, 2006; Zhang & Tsung, 2019).

Linguistic imperialism and pragmatism/instrumentalism affect language attitudes. The former is the imposition of languages and values on subordinate communities, including the imposition of a language hierarchy (Babaoglu, 2021; Lai, 2021). Linguistic pragmatism, or instrumentalism, refers to the justification of languages and speech communities based solely on the usefulness in achieving utilitarian goals and to consider learning or speaking languages solely in terms of the added political, social, and economic benefits (Ager, 1997; Gao, 2017; Giustini, 2020; Gomashie, 2022; Wee, 2003, 2008).

Although language attitudes may influence one's language practice, such willingness or unwillingness does not translate directly to the frequency of language use. Choi (2003) acknowledged that despite the willingness of students in Paraguay to speak Guarani, their levels of proficiency hindered them from successfully using the indigenous tongue in describing themselves; instead, Spanish does the job (Gomashie, 2022). Other factors that affect the language choices and hinder the usage of heritage languages - especially in public domains such as the workspace - include the lack of instrumental values, the weakening of languages as an ethnic marker, decreasing socioeconomic and professional capital associated with heritage languages, and the internalization of a language hierarchy that has some languages privileged over the others. Within such a hierarchy, the dominant language is usually bonded with progress and modernity, and the indigenous languages are placed in an inferior position and reduced to a local and dialectical form (Babaoglu, 2021; Flors, 2015; Gomashie, 2022; Lai, 2021; Mohanty, 2018; Sandoval Arenas 2017).

Not only do the younger generations bear the burden of heritage, but their parents' generations may also impede the intergenerational transmission by intentionally stopping or decreasing their children's exposure to the indigenous languages out of the fear that this would slow down the process of successful acquisition of the dominant languages or prevent them from obtaining a native proficiency and a standard, prestigious variant (Gomashie, 2022; Kulick, 1992; Schieffelin, 1994; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). The older generations may also avoid passing down the heritage language due to fear of discrimination from their personal experiences (Gomashie, 2022). When evaluating individual language choices, it is essential to highlight the cultural, structural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical factors that inevitably act upon the entire speech community institutionally (Bilash, 2011; Gomashie, 2022).

### **2.3 Ethnic Minority Policy**

#### **2.1.1 Ethnic Autonomy and National Unity**

The Chinese ethnic policy, especially in education and language, reflects a seemingly pluralistic but assimilative aim and is disjointed in policy and implementation. The early ethnic policies of the CCP were under the direct influence of Stalin and Lenin and their theories on ethnic structures (Ma, 2019). *Self-determination*, the right to become independent states at the people's will, has been central to Lenin's theories and integral to the CCP's early ethnic ideologies (Ma, 2019; Meissner, 1977). The initial alliance between the CCP and ethnic minorities was political against *Kuomintang*. The CCP even had propaganda about establishing federal states with regional autonomy in Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang. In 1931, the predecessor of the PRC, the Chinese Soviet Republic, had claimed in the constitution that the ethnic minorities in China had self-determination power (Ma, 2019). Although the idea of a federal republic was later relinquished along with the self-determination power, *regional ethnic autonomy* has been at the core of the PRC and the basis of the Chinese ethnic policy (Ma, 2019).

However, in recent years, the policy goal has swung from plurality to unity, prioritizing national unity over regional autonomy (Ma, 2019). In recent governmental discourse, *Zhonghua Minzu* is much more emphasized and used frequently, along with the decreasing use of terms such as *regional ethnic autonomy* and *ethnic equality* (Ma, 2019). Nevertheless, such a reduced appearance is not equivalent to declining political significance. Due to the Chinese history of being invaded by foreigners, especially by neighboring peoples, ethnic minorities such as Koreans that are associated with foreign countries play an important role in China's national security. The central government pays special attention to these groups to prevent them from turning hostile (Gao, 2008; Seeberg, 2001). Contacts with foreigners could be perceived as a potential political alliance with foreign governments or nationalist groups and a threat to national security (Gao, 2008).

### **2.1.2 The Dichotomy between Policy and Implementation**

The Chinese ethnic policy grants minorities the right to be educated in their native languages, and minority languages are also official in autonomous regions (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). Within the national framework, regional governments are given the legal rights, *the autonomous rights of ethnic education planning* guaranteed by *the Regional Ethnic*

*Autonomy Law*, to implement local educational planning and to determine the detailed set-up of specific schools, such as when to introduce Mandarin (Ma, 2019).

A discrepancy is found between the implementation and the explicit minority policies. According to Choi (2001), Zhou (2004), and Zhang and Tsung (2019), little real autonomy is practiced by minorities in autonomous regions – the regional jurisdiction is almost strictly cultural and economic but not political. The status of minority languages and their promised usage in governmental services and education are not implemented as stated. Many schools focus on teaching Chinese regardless of the policy due to the largely monolingual higher education and the job market (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). If schools teach minority languages as planned, students may face fewer opportunities in higher education and career advancement, and this may also affect their success in the National College Entrance Examination (NCEE), the score of which is used to apply to college and is the single-most indicator in admission (Zhang & Tsung, 2019).

A true promotion of minority languages in education is necessary to bridge the gap between policy and implementation and fulfill the legal guarantee of minority education. Although the ethnic language policy claims to promote both minority languages and Mandarin, Mandarin benefits more from the bilingual programs (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). *Bilingual* has been used as an umbrella term for all types of programs involving some levels of minority languages, which may only be used as the medium of instruction on the specific subjects that directly relate to the languages themselves or ethnic literature but not all subjects (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). Many schools employ a transitional bilingual model from minority language to Mandarin, utilizing minority language education as a tool to achieve Mandarin proficiency (Ma, 2012; Zhang & Tsung, 2019). The content of minority languages in these programs is purely linguistic, without the learning of the minority culture and history. However, individual teachers or schools may incorporate some cultural activities (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). The subordinate role of minority languages in education is also reflected by a lack of standardized assessments in school, such as the high school admission exam. As a result, students and parents may perceive related subjects as minor and irrelevant, not related to their educational advancement (Zhang & Tsung, 2019).

### 2.1.3 Linguistic Plurality and National Unity

The dichotomy between policy and implementation reflects that the government lacks the true determinatives and incentives to realize linguistic diversity and plurality. From 1990 onwards, the priority of national unity set the tone for educational and language policies that favor the dominant lingua franca and perpetuate the disadvantages and marginalization of minorities (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). Compared to the European linguistic policy, which considers the right to be educated in one's mother tongue fundamental, the contemporary Chinese policy aims for students to obtain Mandarin proficiency and to be integrated into mainstream society while retaining some ethnic elements (He, 2013). The de facto usage of the minority languages is limited, despite the granted official status, the enshrinement in the Constitution, and the explicit policy to revitalize the minority language. Cultural and linguistic homogeneity is promoted for stability, efficiency, and unity - "one nation, one state, one culture, and one language" (Naran, 2014; Zhang & Tsung, 2019). As mentioned in the Fourth Ethnic Working Committee Meeting, the contemporary goal is to promote national education in Mandarin and gradually merge minority and Han education (He, 2013; Ma, 2019). Language maintenance is important, especially when specific minority languages are at the edge of extinction. Still, it may not be realized at the cost of or overriding the national utilitarian goals, the economic benefits of a monolingual, monocultural market, and the ultimate governing goal of the country's integrity and unity (He, 2013; L. Zhang & Tsung, 2019).

The conflict between linguistic and ethnic diversity and the furthering of Han monolingualism and monoculturalism is balanced by two concepts: *Zhonghua Minzu* and *plurality within the organic unity of the Chinese nationality*. The former is proposed as a supra-identity, within which all Chinese ethnic minorities are bound together despite linguistic, cultural, and religious variations. The latter advocates for a balance between diversity and unity, achieving the assimilative governing goal while acknowledging the ethnic *plurality* and diversity in China (Fei, 1991, 1999; Gao & Park, 2012; He, 2013; L. Zhang & Tsung, 2019).

Overall, the Chinese ethnic policy implicitly associates ethnic minorities with inferiority and backwardness, who need help to achieve economic and social progress; their languages are also reduced to a subordinate position, whereas Mandarin is paramount and central to a better living (Gao, 2010b). This perception of language hierarchy and structural inequality has been internalized by the minority communities, becoming part of their language attitudes and affecting individual educational and language choices (Zhang & Tsung, 2019).

#### **2.4 Urbanization and Economic Development**

The rapid growth of the Chinese economy has unfavorably weakened the ethnic consciousness and accelerated the assimilation of ethnic minorities (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). The economic reform in 1978, which transformed the PRC into a socialist market economy and introduced the Open Door Policy, perpetuated the inequality of social rewards for speaking different languages and accelerated the spread of Mandarin. With entire China joining and forming a market economy and the increasing development of the internet and cybercommunities over the past 20 years, Mandarin is much needed for communications online and offline. The unequal economic development across China, in rural and urban areas, and among different ethnic groups further marginalize the minority languages in education (Lin, 1997; Zhang & Tsung, 2019). The urban population in China has risen from 36.9% in 2000 to 58.52% in 2017 (Ma, 2019). If students want to seek employment in more economically developed regions, learning to speak the local language variant becomes a crucial linguistic capital.

#### **2.5 Identity**

Identity is a perception or imagination of how individuals position themselves or are positioned by others in a perceived community (Gao, 2012). An individual may belong to a variety of groups. Regarding one or multiple identities as dominant and important may involve deliberate and conscious choices. Sen (2007) describes identity formation as a two-stage process: determining what the identities are and their relevant priorities.

Identity is fluid. A specific membership may become more salient under different contexts (Sen, 2007). Although an ethnic membership seems to be subjected to birth and independent of agency, the significance of this ethnic membership is affected by personal choice and situational factors. Such decision of identity may influence how an individual treats other in-group members and their relationships with them, as well as their perceived responsibility for the welfare, status, and the security of rights of that ethnic group – in this case, that person has extended themselves to other members of that community with which they identify with and whose membership they prioritize (Sen, 2007). The conscious alignment with particular membership may also affect cultural and language practices and practical reasoning (Gao, 2012; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2000; Sen, 2007; Wenger, 1998). The perception of one's belonging to a community further influences individuals' perception of future selves – what practices they may participate in in the future (Gao, 2012).

The linguistic aspect of the minority identity is especially tricky. On the one hand, one may be identified strongly with an ethnic minority group without being able to speak the language (Fishman, 2001; Gomashie, 2022). As Zhang and Tsung (2019) indicate, some Yi interviewees reported that they thought they could retain an ethnic Yi identity without speaking the Yi language. On the other hand, the minority language is associated with ethnicity and arguably one of the ethnic markers. As Zhang and Tsung (2019) indicate, despite its considerable inferiority as the “low language” compared to Mandarin, the Yi language has always been associated with ethnic membership. As mentioned in Section [2.2](#), language choice in interactions is a manifestation of whom the language users want to be in the time-space. Their choice of the minority language may reflect the prominence of their ethnic identity at this moment, over their other memberships.

To choose what elements to use from one's linguistic repertoire translingually is a manifestation of agency and ownership of language uses (Kato & Kumagai, 2022). This agency refers to the general capacity to learn to respond to the environment and to make decisions for oneself among possible responses (Grush & Springler, 2019). Through this translingual selection of what linguistic elements fit the best in the given setting, language

users establish and construct their identity in interactions (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Kato & Kumagai, 2022). In negotiations with others, these active and self-directed language users decide whom they want to be now based on their perceptions of particular groups – this is then manifested as their language choices (Garcia, 2010; Kato & Kumagai, 2022; Lemke, 2002; Zhang & Tsung, 2019). Such language practices are part of their social image and identity work - including ethnic identity - through which language users negotiate their position in the interactions (Zhang & Tsung, 2019).

## 2.6 Korean

The Korean Chinese is a highly educated minority group with the highest university attendance, known as the *model minority* (W.-G. Choi, 2001; Gao, 2010b). As the 16<sup>th</sup> largest ethnic group, more than 1.7 million Koreans reside in China, most in the Northeast, which bordered the Korean Peninsula (National Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of China, n.d.). In this paper, I refer to this group as ‘Korean,’ ‘ethnic Korean,’ ‘*Chaoxian zu*’, and ‘Korean Chinese.’

The biggest Korean Chinese community is located in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture (abbreviated Yanbian in this dissertation). More than 40% of the Korean Chinese reside in Yanbian Koreans (Jilin Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Established in 1952, Yanbian is one of the two Korean autonomous areas and is strategically significant and politically sensitive, bordering Russia and the Korean Peninsula (Gao, 2008). As of 2020, Yanbian encompasses six cities and two counties with 2.05 million people; 0.73 million are Koreans (Jilin Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

The modern-day ethnic Koreans first immigrated to Northeast China on a large scale as early as 1850 due to famine. The second flux of immigrants arrived during the 1910s - 1930s due to the Japanese annexation of the Peninsula, being coerced to abandon their homes and nation (Gao, 2010a). Coming from shared ancestry, the ethnic Koreans are the same ethnicity as South and North Koreans. As a result of forced migration, ethnic Koreans retained a strong nationalism during their settlement during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The strong ethnic identity and Korean nationalism were maintained through ethnic and

language education (W.-G. Choi, 2001). To fight against the Japanese, ethnic Koreans allied with the Chinese army and fought in the Anti-Japanese Wars in Manchuria, playing an active role in the subsequent liberation of Northeast China. During the Korean War, the Korean Chinese fought as part of the Chinese armies alongside North Korea against the Americans and South Korea, forming and strengthening their identity of being Chinese nationals while also feeling fragmented as the war was waged against their ancestral land and ethnic counterparts (W.-G. Choi, 2001).

Before the economic reform, the entire Chinese society was discouraged from moving from one's residence. This isolation helped solidify the ethnic boundary and the compactness of the Korean Chinese community, forming *cultural islands* (Choi, 2001). After the economic reform, many Koreans moved to the developed urban regions in China and the Korean peninsula (National Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of China, n.d.). The traditional, compact Korean agricultural villages face disintegration, damaging the intergenerational transmission of heritage languages (W.-G. Choi, 2001). The regional and economic development in Yanbian has also deteriorated. Among the 18 largest ethnic groups, the Korean minority has the lowest population growth rate (Choi, 2001; Zheng, 2006). Since 1996, the Korean population in Yanbian has been in continuous decline, with negative population growth (Zheng, 2006).

The economic reform has also brought about positive changes to the group. Following the Korean War, China recognized only North Korea. In 1992, China established formal diplomatic relations with South Korea, and the Sino-South Korean relationship has since flourished (Snyder, 2009). The increasing contact between the two countries encourages border trade and investment from Korean companies in China, benefiting Korean Chinese, who may utilize their language skills for employment as middlemen or translators for these companies (W.-G. Choi, 2001; Gao, 2008). The growing contact also promotes the maintenance of language and ethnocultural traditions in the Korean Chinese (Choi, 2001; Lee, 1986). As of now, many ethnic Koreans have relatives and homes in the Korean Peninsula (W.-G. Choi, 2001).

The vernacular language of Koreans varies dialectically based on the locations their ancestors migrated from. For example, the children of the Gyeongsang immigrants speak the Gyeongsang dialects. Orthographically, ethnic Koreans use the Korean alphabet, the same as North and South Korea (National Ethnic Affairs Commission of the People's Republic of China, n.d.). The ethnic Korean group employs a fully bilingual education model<sup>1</sup> in school, teaching Korean and Chinese simultaneously (Gao, 2012). In 2001, the Department of Education required all schools to teach English as an additional language from the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (Yang, 2017). As a result, the language education of Korean Chinese is de facto trilingual, with English, Mandarin, and Korean in school. Z. Zhang and Yu (2012) survey the attitudes toward language education among four ethnic minorities in North China, including 207 Korean students and faculty. Most students think trilingual learning is necessary and a unique advantage; they are confident in achieving high proficiency.

Due to its migration histories, the Korean Chinese are distinctive in the potential to develop *dual identity* or *Korean Chinese Identity*, one that is distinguishable from Koreans elsewhere, with China as their fatherland and Korea as their motherland (Choi, 2001; Gao, 2010a). They separate political and ethnic identities, owing to their Chinese citizenship. Chinese-ness and Korean-ness simultaneously exist, but the latter seems to remain on an ethnic and cultural level (Choi, 2001). As mentioned previously, ethnic consciousness is only encouraged by the Chinese government if promoting national unity, integration, and Chinese-ness. The government will not allow ethnic identity beyond a cultural one or with separatist tendency (W.-G. Choi, 2001). Social language affordances of Mandarin in China contribute to strengthening Chinese-ness (Choi, 2001; Gao, 2012). For Korean Chinese moving back to the Peninsula, their experiences with discrimination and culture shock also highlight their Chinese-ness (Choi, 2001). The prolonged assimilation, as the government intended, further elevates the Chinese-ness. On the other hand, ethnic consciousness is maintained through the above-mentioned bilingual education, which only five groups have fully implemented (Koreans, Mongolians, Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Kazaks) (Choi, 2001; Gao, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> In this dissertation, bilingual education model refers specifically to the learning of minority language and Chinese.



and ranked (L. Zhang & Tsung, 2019). Historically, the caste system also contributed to intra-group variations between different families and communities.

Yi has many more autonomous areas than the Koreans. Their three autonomous prefectures and 17 autonomous counties are distributed across Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, and Guangxi. Some of their autonomous regions are shared among multiple minorities. Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture (abbreviated as Liangshan in this dissertation) is the biggest one, with a 5.31 million population; 2.86 million are Yi, indicating that about 30% of Yi live in Liangshan (Liangshan Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Orthographically, before introducing a new, simplified Yi script in 1998, the Old Yi Script was primarily used for religious purposes.

Unlike Koreans, Yi has an occasional bilingual education system, which was implemented by the government for all minorities with a functional writing system but was only narrowly used before 1949 (Gao, 2012). As of now, the exact language education differs across locations and by schools: in Yunnan, where 16 ethnic minorities reside, minority students receive a trilingual education in Mandarin, English, and heritage languages, with a focus on Mandarin (Yuan et al., 2013). In Liangshan, students acquire Yi as their L1 and start to learn Mandarin in primary schools and English in secondary schools (Yang, 2017).

However, the lack of attention and comprehensive Yi language education leads to non-age-appropriate language development in their heritage mother tongue (Adamson & Feng, 2009). Yuan et al. (2013) surveyed 3905 minority students from primary through tertiary schools in Yunnan, of which 302 are Yi. The results indicate that only 7% of all participants know how to write in their heritage languages, and around 40% cannot even speak them. In another study by Yang (2017), 412 secondary school students in 3 schools in Liangshan self-reported their proficiency level in Yi. 344 participants are Yi, More than 70% are fluent speakers and listeners, whereas less than 40% could read or write in Yi.

School is a domain where entrenchment of language hierarchy occurs (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). Yang (2017) identifies the Yi language education as subtractive trilingualism. Although Yi and Chinese are both used in class and among the students, the transitional

approach from Yi to Chinese places Chinese at the core of interactions between the three languages. Students, faculty, schools, and parents tend to undermine the prominence of English and Yi education. The final exam results of the participants complement this finding: 82.7% of students have failed their English finals.

Policy alone has limited power and may not reverse the macro trend. Far fewer schools are using Yi as the medium of instruction, despite being instructed to do so (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). Although policy allows Yi schools to adopt minority textbooks whenever needed, many schools are reported to use Mandarin textbooks instead due to a lack of Yi textbooks, against the official governmental report on regional education, which indicated a sufficient Yi textbook supply (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). The Yi language is marginalized in many public domains, lacking the instrumental values the Korean language possesses.

Different from the Koreans, Yi is an indigenous group. Their development of identity is fluid yet integrated, combining the two memberships - the national identity of Chinese and the ethnic identity of Yi, reflected by their flexible language usage (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). The willingness to use Chinese implies their capacity to be integrated into the mainstream Han society, and the usage of Yi indicates their identification with the ethnic group, helping them maintain the traditional family tie and relationships with other in-group members (Zhang & Tsung, 2019).

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Positionality

I am a Chinese national of the Han majority. Most of my friends, family, and acquaintances are also Han. As an out-group member, I do not have any experience attending minority schools or studying minority languages in China. When I was in China, I had never resided in nor been to the geographical locations where many of my participants come from, such as Yanbian. This limits how much I may understand the participants and their experiences.

### 3.2 Participants

5-15 participants were recruited from each minority group, determined considering the difficulty of recruitment, the feasibility of individual interviews and data analysis, and the aim of the research to qualitatively compare two ethnic minority groups.

#### 3.2.1. Korean

Thirteen Korean participants were recruited and given the anonymized identification marker of K1 to K13. Through a friend, I was in touch with an ethnic Korean student from Yanbian. He circulated the recruitment information on his social media account. Via snowball sampling, other ethnic Korean volunteers contacted me.

Due to snowball sampling, most participants came from the same high school and hometown. K12 is the only participant not from Yanbian. His hometown is Sujiatun, Shenyang in Liaoning Province, where, according to him, a close-knit community is located, despite fewer ethnic Koreans than Yanbian.

The average age of the Korean participants is 23 years old, ranging from 21 to 26. Eight participants are females. All participants have spent some time at minority schools designated for the Korean ethnic minority, the *Chaoxian zu* schools (abbreviated as *Chao* schools). All participants attended one of the three high schools: School X in Yanji, School Y in Tumen, and School Z in Shenyang.

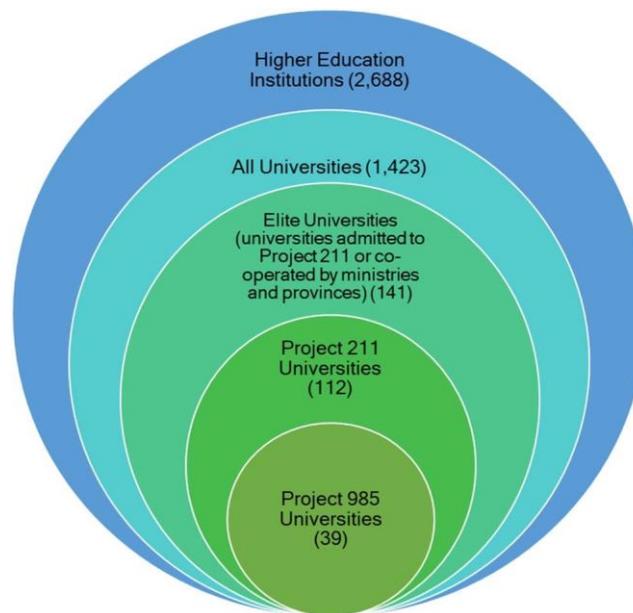
The Korean participants form an unexpected pool of educational elite. Although enrollment at a high education institution is not part of the requirement for participants, all

Korean interviewees are enrolled in or have completed a bachelor's degree, and 5 of 13 are pursuing or have completed a master's degree.

Eleven participants chose to pursue an undergraduate degree outside their home provinces. Most participants chose schools in Northern China. Several have chosen the megacities of Beijing and Shanghai. K12 is the only participant enrolled in an overseas college (in South Korea) who has not taken the NCEE. Three other participants plan to study abroad in South Korea for postgraduate studies this fall. K7 is the only participant who attended college in Hong Kong, where schools have a different procedure for college application than in mainland China.

Out of the eleven participants attending college in mainland China, nine were admitted to universities classified as one of the 39 schools under Project 985 ("Ranking China's universities," n.d.). The '985' universities, along with a similar project of the '211' universities, constituted the elite academia in China (Shu et al., 2021). According to a list of the best colleges in China, four participants were enrolled in the top five universities, with two other participants studying in the top fifteen schools ("Best universities in China 2022", 2022).

Figure 3-1: A stratified system of higher education in China (Shu et al., 2021)



Overall, the ethnic Korean participants are demographically homogeneous. They grew up in a similar environment, and many attended the same high schools. Although they choose to go to different colleges, the majors or programs they are enrolled in largely concentrate on humanities or social sciences. The colleges they attend are the best in China, meaning that they are all academically excellent in a similar way. They are also of similar ages, and a larger than expected proportion were females.

There are several reasons behind the homogeneity. First is the limitation of snowball sampling. Second is the criteria of receiving a minority education, of which the options are fairly limited. For example, School X is the best minority school in Yanji city, according to the interviewees and its admission scores (for confidentiality and anonymity, I will not disclose the source of the admission scores). Naturally, the local ethnic Korean students would choose School X over the other if they have satisfied the prerequisites. The academically selective nature of these high schools contributes to higher chances to be admitted into the best colleges.

### **3.2.2 Yi**

Six participants from Yi were recruited, anonymized as Y1 to Y6. The process was more difficult than finding Korean participants since I do not have any connections with the Yi community. I was put in touch with the initial 3 Yi participants through friends. They then introduced me to Y4-Y6 through snowball sampling. Y4 is a cousin of Y2, and Y5 and Y6 are friends and acquaintances of Y3.

The Yi participants constitute a more heterogeneous pool of participants, reflecting the heterogeneous nature of Yi with substantial intra-group variations. Among the 6 participants, 4 of them are female. Their ages range from 22 to 53 years old, with an average of 31.6. Three participants are married and have children.

All participants are initially from Southwest China. Three participants are from Sichuan, two from Ebian Yi Autonomous County (abbreviated as Ebian) in Leshan, Sichuan; three other participants are from Yunnan.

The Yi participants also share a diverse educational background. Four participants have completed or are pursuing a bachelor's degree from a university; none of them have a master's degree. One participant graduated from senior high school and did not attend any tertiary institution. The last participant went to a tertiary, 2-3 year specialist/sub-degree school ("Qualifications and degrees: Understanding the Chinese dual-credential", n.d.). Two other participants are now attending colleges away from their hometowns: one in the U.S. and one in Shanghai.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

To probe into individual experiences, I adopted a qualitative design with the semi-structured interview, during which the interviewer prepares a set of questions or topics beforehand (Heigham et al., 2009). This type of interview was chosen for its capability to investigate specific topics while retaining considerable flexibility to dig into specific responses (Rose et al., 2019).

Before the interview, I prepared a list of themes and questions based on the literature review and pilot interviews. Prior to recruitment, I was in touch with two Chinese ethnic minority members through friends, one ethnic Mongolian and one ethnic Bai, and we piloted the prepared questions together. Throughout the official data collection process, new questions were added to the question list based on the conversations with the previous interviewees. Members from both Korean and Yi ethnic groups were asked the same topics but with slightly different targeting questions.

Due to the feasibility of scheduling and traveling restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, each participant was interviewed remotely from 40 minutes to 80 minutes. The meetings were held mainly through Voice calls on WeChat; it was also the only platform I had interacted with the participants before and after the interview. Only one interview was conducted through video call. The audio of the meetings was recorded via a phone, and the audio files were transferred into a secure flash drive for transcriptions. They were deleted permanently on the phone. The participants were asked to hold the meetings in a private setting they were comfortable.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

According to the chronicle order of the interview, each interviewee was assigned a number as pseudonyms. The audio files of the recordings and the subsequent transcripts were named after their pseudonyms. All their demographical information was kept on an Excel file, with their pseudonyms as the sole identifier.

After individual interviews, I transcribed the audio files in the interview language, Mandarin, using iFlytek Hears<sup>2</sup>. I logged in to this website through a secure personal account linked to my phone number; it can only be accessed via a verification code.

This research adopted the approach of thematic analysis for its flexibility and feasibility in examining the data from different interviewees and cross-compare between and within the groups. After transcribing, I coded the transcriptions in NVIVO into loosely defined themes while redefining each theme and subtheme during the process. NVIVO was used for convenience and efficiency to organize and analyze a large amount of raw data.

The Korean and Yi groups were coded separately. I initially attempted to have the same themes for both groups. After coding the Korean group first, I tried to code one Yi transcription into similar themes as the Korean group. However, I realized that I needed a distinctive set of themes to capture the heterogeneity of the Yi group. I then recoded the first Yi transcription and decided to start from scratch again with two completely separated sets of themes and subthemes for each group. Nevertheless, the coding of the second group Yi was still influenced by the existing Korean themes since I coded the Korean transcriptions first.

Next, I reviewed all codes under each theme and subtheme to see whether they fit coherently and justifiably and determined any readjustment. Upon consideration of each theme's validity, I organized and moved the themes and subthemes around during this phase of reexamination (Nowell et al., 2017).

### 3.5 Limitations

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.iflyrec.com/>

Several limitations are found in this article. First, as an outgroup member with no field experience, my knowledge of both ethnic groups is not situated within an in-person understanding of their living contexts. Some of the information mentioned in the interview is difficult to fact-check. Due to the lack of connections, I had difficulty finding Yi participants, leading to a disproportional number of participants in each group, with Yi only half of the Koreans. As a result, I have collected more data from the Korean than Yi for analysis.

Second, the format of virtual, semi-structured interviews and the length of these sessions provide a limited amount of data with no extended engagement (Nowell et al., 2017). Despite convenience under COVID, virtual interviews via calls lack face-to-face interactions that may have contributed to a fuller understanding of the data. On the other hand, since the interviewees and I are strangers, the virtual setting may have allowed them to speak more comfortably regarding some personal issues. However, the semi-structured interview format may have prevented the participants from digging into individualized, personal questions and developing their own narratives (Rose et al., 2019).

Third, snowball sampling contributes to a relatively homogeneous data pool among the Korean participants and limits generalizability. The Korean participants come from the same generation, adjacent hometowns, similar educational backgrounds, and families with comparable social-economic status (SES). This leads to potential attribution bias in my analysis, associating results, such as microaggressions, more with their ethnic identity than other influencing factors like their SES. In addition, many Korean participants are elite students and are females, and their experiences may be gender-biased and related to elite colleges only. On the other hand, the Yi participants are more diverse in ages, SES, and geographical locations but much fewer in number.

Fourth, with no knowledge of the heritage languages, I only recruited those who also speak Mandarin, the second language for some participants, which may have brought about issues with communications.

In addition, the recruited participants are volunteer conscious of the topic and the aim of this dissertation. This may lead to potential selection bias that these participants are more aware of their ethnic identity.

Lastly, the lack of interrater checks when applying thematic analysis may lead to inconsistency and incoherency when developing the themes (Nowell et al., 2017).

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

In this chapter, I present the findings by ethnic groups and discuss each research question. To explore their perception of identity, I navigate how the participants react distinctly to the environments and their contextual variations. Bronfenbrenner's *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (1979) proposes a framework that focuses on the interrelationship between different contexts over lifespan development, with the active agent at the center (Darling, 2007). Since identity is unique to each participant, I use the ecological systems as the baseline for analysis to capture the individualized data and the patterns that emerged from each ethnic group.

Three environments, which roughly correspond to the micro-/meso-, exo-/macro-, and the chronosystems in the ecological systems theory, are examined in detail: (a) the immediate environment that every participant has experienced, (b) the indirect environment that has been directed towards the entire groups and has impacted the participants, and (c) the general societal trends that constitute an overarching environment over an expansion of time, targeting not a single group of people, though everyone was inevitably under the influence of. The Korean and the Yi participants vary in their immediate and indirect environments, which pertained to individual experiences. However, they are under the influence of strikingly similar societal trends, taking place all over China and affecting possibly other minority groups as well - namely, the trends of urbanization, marginalization, and Sinicization.

### 4.1 Korean

#### 4.1.1 The Immediate Environment

##### **Educational Choices**

The Korean participants grew up in similar immediate environments, living in the same communities and geographical locations. They have all attended minority schools, also known as *Chao* schools or bilingual schools, which are open primarily to ethnic minority members and use their mother tongue, Korean, as the language of instruction, except for the course of *Yuwen* (Chinese Language arts).

*Chao* and *Han* schools are two different tracks available to ethnic Koreans, ranging from pre-school to high school. In contrast, there is no such division in tertiary education. Although the *minzu* university is a category of public colleges built specifically for ethnic minorities, they are different from *Chao* schools since they use Mandarin as the primary language of instruction, and *Han* students make up at least more than half of the population in *minzu* universities (S. Choi, 2010).

In addition to the language of instruction, *Chao* and *Han* schools differ in their curriculum and the configuration of the NCEE. *Chao* school students have one additional course, Korean Language Arts (KLA). All other subjects are identical across both tracks. As minorities, they may request NCEE papers written in their heritage language and answer the questions on the NCEE in Chinese or Korean, whichever languages they prefer. They also take the *Chinese Language Proficiency Test for Ethnic Minorities in China* (abbreviated as MHK) as an alternative to *Yuwen* before the NCEE; *Han* school students are not eligible. For *Chao* school graduates, the final language arts score on the NCEE is a combination of the scores of KLA and MHK.

The demarcation of the two tracks does not signify segregation by ethnicity. Ethnic Koreans can choose to go to *Han* schools, and students of other ethnicity are also admitted to *Chao* schools. Students can switch between the two systems, but most choose to stay on the same track.

All participants went to *Chao* schools for secondary education. However, K6, K7, K10, and K13 have attended *Han* preschools or primary schools for several years. According to them, their parents chose *Han* schools for more language exposure to Mandarin. They perceived that speaking Mandarin is essential and necessary in China, and sending them off to a full Mandarin environment at a young age would make their future language study easier.

The rationale for sending children to *Chao* schools is more diverse. Korean is one of the ethnic groups eligible for additional points on the NCEE. Since all participants went to *Chao* high schools, they all had 10 points added to their total NCEE scores, which may

be used on college applications. According to the participants, ethnic Koreans attending Han schools may only get 5 points. Therefore, parents thought attending Chao schools brought more advantages to the NCEE. In addition, high competitiveness at the Han schools pushed the students away; Chao schools offered a seemingly more effortlessly academic life.

Furthermore, some parents sent their children to Chao schools for heritage language education. To be able to speak the heritage language was an important ethnic marker for the parents of five participants; they wanted their children to inherit something intrinsic to the ethnic Korean group. K12 described the heritage language as “the foundation of the ethnic group.” K4 and K7 also mentioned that, as a Korean, “you have to learn your own ethnic language.”

### **Experiences at Chao Schools**

As mentioned before, Chao school students take an additional language course. Learning three languages in total in school (Mandarin, Korean, and English) has positives and negatives. Four participants stated that *Yuwen* at Chao schools was easier than the same course at the Han schools. The MHK is equivalent to the level of assessments for students in “primary/junior high,” according to K3 (“[Assessment Information]”, n.d.).

Despite easier assessment, an additional course leads to a larger workload. K4 mentioned that KLA and *Yuwen* had as much homework as all other subjects; if they needed to complete two papers per subject per break, they had two more papers than Han school students. Besides, they needed to complete six additional lessons per week. K7 summarized that, although both *Yuwen* and KLA were not academically challenging, they had more content to learn: “it was not easy to learn all three languages at once.”

The difficulty of learning three languages simultaneously was raised by the lack of learning materials and external resources for KLA. Four participants discussed that their high school teachers had to write learning materials on their own, such as mock exams, and used some Mandarin resources for KLA or manually translated the Mandarin supplemental books into Korean. Since there are few Chao schools and students nationwide, third-party

publishers rarely publish supplemental materials for KLA. External tutors for KLA are very difficult to find.

Another setback at Chao schools was a deficiency in high-quality teachers. As most subjects were taught in Korean except for *Yuwen*, Chao school teachers were mainly ethnic Koreans. Ethnicity was an underlying prerequisite in recruitment. Qualified teachers were, therefore, limited. K8 indicated that some Chao school teachers were “underqualified,” especially for the STEM subjects.

### **Language Exposure**

Language exposure is associated with direct-language input at home, in schools, in communities, and even online (DeAnda et al., 2016). Although most Korean participants grew up in Yanbian, their early exposure to Mandarin and Korean differs. The participants’ parents vary in their proficiency levels in Mandarin, leading to different frequencies of Mandarin usage at home. K10’s mother is Han, while his father is Korean. He grew up listening to both languages simultaneously and perceived both languages as his L1. As of now, he speaks mainly Mandarin to both of his parents. K1’s family members had little to low knowledge of Mandarin, and her early exposure to Mandarin was through TV shows. At Chao schools, K1 and K2 reported that Korean was the dominant language, and students barely used Mandarin outside the *Yuwen* lessons. The relatively homogeneous make-up of the students and faculty at Chao schools, largely ethnic Koreans, contributes to abundant social language affordances for the Korean language.

K12’s experience at Chao schools is an outlier. He grew up in Sujiatun and is the only participant from areas outside Yanbian. He described himself as an ethnic Korean in diaspora/non-congregated communities, where ethnic Koreans are dispersed among Han. The differences in geographical locations and population density of the ethnic Koreans gave rise to differences in social language affordances. In fact, the Chao school K12 went to use Mandarin as the primary language of instruction at the students’ request; these ethnic Korean students residing in non-congregated communities were more proficient in Mandarin than Korean. Outside of classes, even speaking to ethnic Korean faculty, they use a mixture of Korean and Mandarin “in case certain meanings could not be

communicated clearly via Korean.” In most other non-congregated regions, Chao schools are not even available as an educational track; the ethnic Korean children have no option but to attend fully Mandarin schools.

### **Transitioning to College**

College demarcates participants' language exposure and usage in and outside of school. Different from primary and secondary education, where students have the options of Chao and Han schools, higher education in China is dominated by Mandarin (Zhang & Tsung, 2019). Most ethnic Korean participants left their hometowns for college and went to cities where the Han Chinese are the absolute majority. The transition from congregated, Korean-spoken communities to fully Mandarin environments has been challenging.

The first challenge is to socialize with Han classmates and adapt to the Mandarin-dominated campus. Coming from Chao schools, participants found it difficult to make friends with a less-than-fluent language. K3 and K8 both mentioned that their Mandarin proficiency had prevented them from having deep talks with classmates, limiting their interactions. K3 usually conversed translingually with other ethnic Koreans, whereas in college, she had to stick with one language, reducing her eloquence.

In addition, with Mandarin as the language of instruction, participants found their college life academically challenging. K2 and K4 had difficulty understanding the lectures in their first and second years, especially when the lecturers had dialectical accents. K4 had to record all first-year lectures and listen to the recordings after class.

Another academic challenge emerged from academic writing. Several participants found that they needed more time to complete the same length of writing than their Han classmates. Despite this, all participants reported improvement in Mandarin proficiency after four years in colland understanding and writing academic materials. Nevertheless, the additional commitment of time and energy to compensate for the challenges brought about by the fully-Mandarin environments is immeasurable.

These challenges may hinder minority students' academic performance and achievement. K10 mentioned an incident involving two classmates in high school. They both scored high in the NCEE and were enrolled in the '985' universities but decided to

withdraw from college and reapply to universities in South Korea “because they really could not adapt to such an environment.” Cases like this overshadowed the ethnic Koreans. Although they may score high in the NCEE, they were worried about their academic and social life in the Mandarin-speaking college. K4 and K10 felt like studying abroad when attending domestic colleges. K6 pointed out that, before college started, she was highly anxious and “collapsed”:

I really couldn't imagine talking to everyone in Mandarin, communicating with the Han classmates, and listening to lectures and writing essays. It's so scary... I was so anxious. I couldn't even fall asleep.

The monolingual, Mandarin-dominated higher education may have limited the choices of the ethnic Koreans in postgraduate studies. The standard required postgraduate entrance exam in China, the National Postgraduate Entrance Exam (NPEE), is held entirely in Mandarin, different from the NCEE, which offers versions of the exams in minority languages (“[General information of postgraduate entrance examination: bonus points and merit policy]”, n.d.). The fully Mandarin NPEE prevents some minority students from pursuing a higher degree. K4 gave up on further study due to the fully Mandarin exam. She thought she was disadvantaged when competing with other applicants with higher levels of Mandarin proficiency. Out of the five Korean participants pursuing or planning to pursue a postgraduate degree, three are studying or going to study abroad in South Korea, affected by the monolingual academia in China.

The lack of coherency and consistency between minority and higher education contributes to the somewhat negative experiences of the ethnic Koreans in their immediate environment. Without a smooth transition between the two systems, the cost of adaptation is imposed upon disadvantaged minority students. The educational reform is part of the effort to target this issue, discussed in the next section.

#### **4.1.2 The Indirect Environment**

The indirect environment is adapted from Bronfenbrenner's *ecosystem*, which is the third-level ecological system that does not involve the individual as an active participant but affects or is affected by the immediate context containing the individual; the individual has

no active role, no agency, in determining the *exosystem* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013).

### **Reform of Ethnic Korean Minority Education**

The educational reform of Korean minority education is part of the indirect environment. The term *reform* is coined by the researcher, referring to all structural changes in Korean minority education that have taken place since 2019. Occurring after all participants have graduated from high school, this reform has no direct impact on them; they also have no agency in formulating or altering this reform.

This reform is marked by the lack of official and formal legal documents except for the changes in additional affirmative points. What precisely the reform includes is uncertain. The scope of the reform may be limited to Yanbian or Jilin Province; however unknown. All information I have collected about this reform is from the participants. The reform targets the following aspects of ethnic Korean minority education:

#### Curriculum

- (a) Replacing Korean textbooks with Mandarin textbooks<sup>3</sup>
- (b) Replacing Korean with Mandarin as the language of instruction in Chao schools.

#### Minority NCEE

- (c) KLA is no longer an exam subject on the minority NCEE but will be taught as an additional class in Chao schools.
- (d) Students can no longer choose from the Korean or Mandarin versions of the NCEE papers; all NCEE papers are now written in Mandarin and can only be answered in Mandarin<sup>4</sup>.

#### Affirmative Actions

- (e) The cut-down of affirmative, additional points for ethnic Koreans on the NCEE from 10 to 5 points<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> K10 mentioned that this is part of the textbook reform initiated by the Chinese Department of Education, which released a standard edition of textbooks earlier this year. Every school is now using the new, standard, identical edition throughout China.

<sup>4</sup> This information is uncertain as I have heard from one participant that students can still respond to the NCEE in either language.

<sup>5</sup> The affirmative point addition policy was changed in the reform, supported by a notice released by the Jilin Department of Education in 2020 – which is the only part of this reform that I have found supporting documents online. It states that, for minority students answering the NCEE in minority languages, the additional points (10 points) are now reduced to 5 points. In 2023, there will no longer be any additional points. The points, since 2020, were only added when students applied to in-province universities. See *Jilin Provincial Department of Education and other four departments* (2020).

This reform is doubtlessly *controversial* – K2, K3, and K10 all mentioned this term. K3 discussed opinions on both sides: some minority members, internalizing the supra-identity of *Zhonghua Minzu*, see ethnic Koreans as part of the greater China and view this reform as a chance to improve the ethnic Koreans' Mandarin proficiency and promote assimilation into the mainstream society. Others regard the reform as a challenge to the foundation of the ethnic Korean minority. Minority language education has contributed to the ethnic boundary of the whole group; removing the linguistic component in education is damaging Korean-ness. K3 herself was struggling between two sides and pointed out that being bilingual in Korean and Mandarin has been a unique advantage to ethnic Koreans. K8 felt angry when she heard the news, considering the reform as an attempt to “assimilate our language.” Agreeing with K3, K8 argued that this would make ethnic Koreans less advantageous in the job market if they were no longer bilingual. K10 commented that, although switching to a Mandarin-focused curriculum may ease the transition to college, “it is a bit too cruel” for the ethnic Koreans when the minority language education is removed entirely. In a group chat consisting of ethnic Korean students in his college, everyone was critiquing and condemning this reform when they first heard about it. K11 described herself as “heartbroken” when thinking about this reform, worrying about possible loss and endangerment of the minority language as a potential consequence. K9 had a different view from the previous participants. He thought ethnic Koreans could not be an outlier when integration and speaking Mandarin is the inevitable trend.

The terms like “angry,” “heartbroken,” and “cruel” manifest participants' views on the significance of language education in holding the community together, their concerns with language loss, and the underlying idea that minority language serves as an important ethnic marker. Some interviewees even considered this reform somewhat equivalent to an attempt of linguistic genocide, wiping out the existing structure of minority language education. Although the KLA classes are still kept in school, it is no longer assessed as an exam subject in the most critical exam, the NCEE. K10 talked about how most students and their parents are driven to study hard and to consider a course seriously based on its instrumental values, which, in the context of the school, are indicated by the relative

assessments and their importance. He partially attributed the flourishing Korean language and culture in Yanbian to the minority language education before the reform and its strong association with the NCEE. K4 held a similar view, stating that future generations may think that speaking Mandarin is much more important, functional, and necessary than speaking Korean, “as Mandarin is the most important language in China.” Her mom, a KLA teacher in a primary Chao school, was aware that the ethnic Korean students at her school have a much lower level of proficiency in Korean than the students she had previously. She also mentioned that the KLA class time has now been reduced. With the importance of minority languages reduced in the education system, students, parents, and schools further internalize the language hierarchy implied and bring it to the greater society.

#### **4.1.3 The General Societal Trends**

The general societal trends refer to the broader contexts of the individual's development over a lifespan - the overarching environments. Understanding these greater contexts help situate participants' future projections and perceptions of their identity.

##### **Urbanization and Migration**

As mentioned in the Literature Review, entire Northeast China, including Yanbian, faces population loss. Many residents have moved to more developed and economically prosperous regions. The generational population loss started as early as the third-generation Korean immigrants. K8, a fourth-generation immigrant, stated that second-generation Koreans are more willing to return and settle in Yanbian once they have enough money for retirement. In contrast, third-generation Koreans are much more inclined to move to cities with abundant employment opportunities, such as Qingdao, where many South Korean companies have established offices or factories.

When the younger generations of ethnic Koreans grow up and reside in the regions outside the congregated community of Yanbian, the immediate environment surrounding each Korean child inevitably consists of many Han majority, and the ethnic boundary in its geographical sense is broken. As K8 concluded about the fourth-generation ethnic Koreans born in Qingdao:

Their self-identification leans towards being a Qingdao local instead of an ethnic Korean. Their social circle and social capital urge them to move away from ethnic

Korean toward mainstream society. The generational transmission between second and third-generation ethnic Koreans is a gradual process of assimilation.

Some metropolitans have self-organized weekend schools for ethnic Koreans, aiming to teach the heritage language. K5, who volunteered at a Korean weekend school for multiple sessions, commented that the children there did not speak much Korean and were more fluent in Mandarin. This next generation of ethnic Korean children, growing up in the non-congregated regions, despite going to weekend schools, are not within an environment that offers enough social language affordances for the heritage language; their daily language choice is preferably Mandarin.

The willingness to move is manifested in the growing urban and decreasing rural population. In fact, some rural schools have been shut down due to a lack of students. The Chao primary school K8 went to in the rural area was shut down when she was in second grade, and she was forced to move to the city. K8 was not the only one suffering from the shutdown of the rural schools. According to her, many ethnic Korean students in her generation lost education opportunities due to school closure.

Many ethnic Koreans have left Yanbian and Northeast China in general. The hometown of K12, the only participant not from Yanbian, also faced the problem of population decline. His junior and senior high school used to be the largest Chao school in the city in the early 2000s. However, by the time he was in school, his class consisted of only ten students.

The population loss has other consequences than the decreasing number of local minority schools and students. As K7 stated, some traditions and rituals have been simplified, partially Sinicized, or altered due to a lack of family and community members:

Ethnic Koreans have many people within the family in our previous generation. So every time they celebrated a festival, the entire big family gathered around. But up until our generation, we have only a few, and we usually just celebrate within our own immediate family... Family gatherings are difficult during festivals since we are now all spread out, studying or living in other places.

The weakening of ethnocultural traditions contributes to the further dissolution of the ethnic boundary.

The reasons behind this generational migration are complicated. First, local job opportunities are minimal, and only a narrow range of industries are available. K2, K5, and K11 stated that they could hardly find any jobs related to their majors, limited to government officials, doctors, and teachers. Second, the local wages are not competitive compared to the more developed regions. K2 and K3 mentioned that the local wages are low compared to the high expenses. K5 described the local income level as “possible to sustain one’s life but impossible to pursue a better living quality.”

### **Border-crossing to Korea**

Benefiting from the bilingual, border-crossing nature, South Korea is a popular destination for ethnic Koreans to migrate. It is relatively close to China, especially Yanbian and Northeast China, but its geographical vicinity is not the only reason behind its popularity.

Among the participants, many of their parents are working or have been working in South Korea. According to K5, around 1/3 of the Korean Chinese are now in South Korea. Since the 90s, Korean Chinese have swarmed South Korea for job opportunities. Most of them worked in the 3-D job - dirty, degrading, and dangerous. The wages in South Korea were much higher than in Yanbian and even anywhere in China. The Korean Chinese workers may return home as frequently as bi-yearly, but some may also choose to return once every two to three years. The mother of K8 has been working in South Korea since 2011. She only came home when K8 was in the middle of critical examinations, taking care of her for two to three months and then returning to South Korea.

One of the reasons behind the massive migration is the availability and accessibility of the visa. The ethnic Koreans are now eligible for a different visa from H-2 that is easier for application and renewal, the F-4 visa for “People of Korean Heritage” (Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and permanent mission to the International Maritime Organization, n.d.). Even during COVID-19, when the regular tourism visa was suspended in China, individuals could still apply for F-4. The relative ease of visa application, the absent language barrier, and the bordering geographical location make working in South Korea a highly feasible option. After working there for years, many Korean Chinese may choose to become official citizens of

the country – as K10’s father has chosen. Another incentive for long-term residence and employment in South Korea is to unite with families and friends. As K8 mentioned, her mom decided to reside there since all her friends and relatives were there.

Migration towards either South Korea or other regions in China has somewhat dissolved the ethnic boundary established on top of and maintained by the congregated communities. Being a true minority in their new residences, ethnic Koreans are more likely to marry non-Chinese-Korean partners, contributing to the breakdown of traditional ethnic families. Without enough in-group members, urbanization and local population decline weaken the social language affordances in other regions of China (Riestenberg, 2020).

### **Marginalization from Both Societies**

As their trend of migration indicates, ethnic Koreans are truly capable of joining both societies: Chinese and Korean. On the one hand, the duality of Korean Chinese provides them with additional learning and employment opportunities. On the other hand, they may sometimes face structural discrimination, microaggressions, or even racism from both societies for not being entirely Chinese or entirely Korean. With rising nationalism and chauvinism within China and South Korea, Korean Chinese are often misunderstood and discriminated against and have reportedly encountered cyberbullying.

South Koreans often misunderstand the Korean Chinese migrant workers. During his time there, K12 has been working on promoting immigrant rights and equality: “Immigrants in South Korea suffer from unreasonable structures, biases, and discriminations, no matter what they do.” Since Korean Chinese were willing to take low-end 3-D jobs with low social status, the South Koreans generally had negative impressions of them. According to K4, on Korean websites such as Naver<sup>6</sup>, some South Korean netizens would speak discriminatively about Korean Chinese, and such cyberbullying was “extremely common.” K3 also perceived that the South Korean media intentionally “defamed” the Korean Chinese and considered them “rubbing their job opportunities.” K4 attributed the misunderstanding and the microaggressions to a lack of general knowledge of China and Korean Chinese; many South Koreans have associated China with poor and

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.naver.com/>

backwardness. During her trip to South Korea in 2016, the local driver asked her if she had ever eaten a banana; she perceived this interaction as a microaggression, implying that the South Koreans thought the Chinese were too poor to afford bananas.

The microaggressions toward Korean Chinese are manifested in the media. K13 and K5 mentioned that the Korean Chinese are usually the antagonists in the movies, portrayed as “criminal gangs” or “drug dealers,” and were commonly reported on the news of South Korea for convicting homicides. These negative depictions in the Korean media both manifest racism and perpetuate structural discrimination.

Ethnic Koreans may also experience microaggressions and misunderstandings in China. K4 has been cyberbullied on a Chinese social media platform for posting and calling a particular type of traditional ethnic Korean clothes *Han Fu* (literally, Han stands for Korean and Fu stands for clothing), which is what the entire ethnic Korean community typically terms it. She received comments saying that she should call it *Chaoxian Zu Fu* (literally, ethnic Korean clothing) and criticized her for stealing the Han Chinese clothing. This happened during the Winter Olympics in China earlier this year, and she attributed this partially to the increasing nationalism and chauvinism during the Games.

Similarly, arguments over ethnic clothing also took place in South Korea during the Winter Olympics. According to K7, the Korean media criticized wearing ethnic Korean clothing in China as cultural appropriation. K7 commented, “isn’t it so justifiable for ethnic Koreans to wear ethnic Korean clothing?” Both the Chinese and the Korean media - although they may not represent the opinions of the vast majority, have blamed each other for cultural appropriation and “stealing” each other’s ethnocultural symbols.

In addition, Korean Chinese may face structural discrimination in employment in China. According to K10, he was thinking about being a “national defense student” and joining the Chinese army. However, his father has asked him if he wanted to switch his identity to Han<sup>7</sup> and warned him about the potential ceiling effect:

My dad said the highest level an ethnic Korean could be in the army is *Da Xiao* (senior colonel) [fourth higher ranking possible]; you can never be a *Shao Jiang* (major general) [third higher ranking possible].

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<sup>7</sup> His mom is Han Chinese. Thus, he may legally switch to Han.

Although this unspoken rule cannot be verified, the older generations of ethnic Koreans seem to perceive that ethnic minority identity may bring negative consequences. K4 discussed another incident that supported the potential ceiling effect:

For certain administrative positions in colleges, such as those in the international department responsible for contacting South Koreans, they have unspoken limitations for ethnicity. They prefer not to hire Korean Chinese unless no one else is available... They would consider the potential risks of treason and spying activities on positions that connect with other nationals.

The ceiling effect is possibly related to the governmental concerns of national security, as mentioned in the Literature Review. Associations with the Korean peninsula, which is intrinsic to the ethnic Korean group, are perceived as a threat by the Chinese government.

Korean Chinese may also face discrimination in China for speaking their heritage language. K4 talked about an incident that happened to her cousin, who was going out in a restaurant and speaking Korean to her boyfriend. A Chinese man came up to her and swore at her: “you Koreans should speak Chinese in Chinese territory; don’t speak the fucking Korean”. This incident, unfortunately, took place right after the THAAD deployment controversy between China and South Korea in 2017. This incident indicates that Korean Chinese are sometimes scapegoated during international and regional controversies. The nationalism, chauvinism, and concerns with national security have been internalized by some Chinese, who may then direct their anger toward the ethnic Koreans. Her other cousin in Beijing, who was going to pre-school there and had been speaking Korean at home, had also been bullied in school for not speaking Mandarin fluently and for speaking a language that nobody else understood. Despite its instrumental values, the heritage language, Korean, is almost always regarded as inferior to Mandarin within the large domain of China. Upon hearing these incidents, K4 was extremely anxious about leaving Yanbian for college, taking other the experiences of in-group members as her own, implying that she has internalized and prioritized her ethnic Korean identity (Sen, 2007).

Without proper understanding, knowledge, and recognition from either the Chinese or South Korean mainstream societies, K12 perceived Korean Chinese as a marginalized group in both places:

I feel like people with our identity can never become part of the mainstream... even if you change your nationality, it only changes your official identity within the system but not the recognition and identification.

He agreed that the Korean Chinese “lack the capital to be assimilated into the Korean society”. In his opinion, the Korean Chinese hold an identity not entirely defined by either ethnic bloodline or nationality. Although possessing both, the Korean Chinese are not accepted or welcomed in South Korea. K12 described that he “cannot feel at home” in South Korea. Despite holding a citizenship from either country, the connections and associations with both sides and the border-crossing characteristics make the Korean Chinese feel unsecured and in constant “diaspora.”

The marginalization in both societies may lead to intentionally concealing or diminishing one’s identity as an ethnic Korean. K6, who will study abroad in South Korea later this year, stated that she would never disclose her identity as a Korean Chinese while there, out of self-protection to avoid potential conflicts: “I will say that I am from China but not a Korean Chinese.” Although they may prioritize and recognize their ethnicity, ethnic Koreans need to consider the potential consequences of disclosure.

Overall, it is difficult to generalize that all ethnic Koreans suffer from marginalization in China and South Korea due to their ethnic identity. K8 has reflected that some perception of discrimination maybe a result of attribution bias that the working-class background of the Korean participants and their relatively lower social-economic status (SES) may have been the true underlying cause. However, there is a possible structural discrimination toward this ethnic group to some extent. In China, the marginalization is associated with a lack of social language affordances for their heritage language in the non-congregated communities, as well as the linguistic imperialism that creates a language hierarchy dominated by Mandarin. In South Korea, the discrimination against Korean Chinese is related to competition with local workers and exaggerated, negative portrayal in the media and online. In both countries, nationalism and Chauvinism have contributed to the struggle of ethnic Koreans, especially during international controversies. Caught in the middle of the two countries – their fatherland and motherland, the ethnic Koreans are often forced to take a firm stance on one side.

Structural discrimination and marginalization lead to feelings of otherness and prominence of one's ethnic identity. As K7 detailed, she was neither interested in who she was nor who ethnic Koreans were until the controversies between China and South Korea and certain incidents online that raised discussions on cultural appropriation and where certain practices truly belong, as detailed above. She then started to reflect on whether she was a Korean, a Korean Chinese, or a Chinese, at the intersection of nationality and ethnicity. Such a feeling of otherness and marginalization drove her to learn more about ethnic culture and history; she began to research on her own and listen to lectures online, trying to find who they really were. The search for her identity is not realized through minority education or exposure to the minority language, but through the discrimination, marginalization, and controversies that forcibly separate the political and ethnic identities of Chinese and Korean.

### **Sinicization**

Sinicization is to assimilate the non-Han people into the Chinese language, culture, and lifestyle, implying the superiority of the Han culture (Cheng, 2021). The educational reform, dissolution of ethnic boundaries, and migration towards the urban areas where many Han people reside are all signs of Sinicization. For the ethnic Koreans, Sinicization is more on a linguistic level, manifested in the weakening of heritage language and the increasing importance of Mandarin in education. The declining, non-congregated Korean population makes it harder for minority schools to survive and contributes to the potential loss of heritage language during intergenerational transmission. K11 mentioned that before the spring festival this year, her niece had been speaking Korean to her; now, she only spoke Mandarin. She associated it with removing Korean as the language of instruction in school and the switch to Mandarin textbooks.

K4's mother, as mentioned in the previous section, worked as a KLA teacher in a primary school, experiencing the generational loss of heritage language directly. K4's statement implies that the schools and the government are aware of the language loss but refuse to take any actions and are even deliberately supporting the increasing dominance of Mandarin:

[My mom] is not allowed to discuss the gradual loss of heritage language in public... there is likely a BBC team discretely investigating the education around Yanbian, and the school would give them official order to not to involve in any external interviews; it is a job-losing deal... when China and South Korea was in harmony, the South Koreans used to donate many books to Yanbian but this is no longer allowed; they would even burn down these donated Korean books, those stored in the school's library. [South] Korean is different from Chaoxian Yu [the language of the Korean Chinese]... they would burn the books in South Korean but not in Chaoxian Yu.

K4 said that her mom barely talked about it at home either, despite feeling helpless towards the trend of Sinicization in progress:

But she feels heartbroken as if everything is going to be unified, gradually tearing down the ethnic characteristics... she thinks that it is almost like tearing down traces of our ethnicity.

Incidents like this indicate that the effort of Sinicization is highly active. The perceived threat to national security is damaging the ethnic Korean minority and their access to language education and materials written in Korean. The aim to unify the language and culture through education is conspicuous – the practical policy implementation does reflect the goal of “one nation, one state, one culture, and one language” (Naran, 2014; Zhang & Tsung, 2019). The relationship between the two countries, unfortunately, affects what the ethnic Koreans may experience in their hometowns - the seemingly unrelated macro forces are manifested at a surprisingly local, micro level.

## 4.2 Yi

### 4.2.1 The Immediate Environment

As mentioned above, the immediate environment is what the participants directly experienced. In the following section, I will provide a detailed description of each Yi participant's educational experiences, language exposure, as well as their experiences with intergenerational loss of the Yi language.

#### **Educational Experiences and Language Exposure**

Unlike the ethnic Koreans, none of the 6 Yi participants received a minority education – that is, education in their heritage language. This is related to the relatively fewer minority Yi schools that carried out a de facto curriculum in the minority language. Several

participants have mentioned that the Yi script is very difficult to learn, and one would need to learn it in a structured curriculum. In addition, *Bimo*, the shaman-priests of the Yi indigenous religion or culture, were traditionally the masters of the Yi language. Each *Bimo* learns the Yi scripts from the previous elder *Bimo* in their families; this tradition persists today. Most other ethnic Yi without formal lessons are unable to recognize the Yi scripts, limiting their heritage language skills to listening and speaking.

Y1 was born into a fully Yi family where everyone would communicate via Yi; she also married a Yi husband. Acquiring Yi as her first language, she did not learn Mandarin until attending primary school. She said that even in school, they first used limited Mandarin since the local primary school consisted mainly of Yi students and all faculty were Yi. As a result, Yi was the de facto primary language of instruction in class. When going to junior high and high school, more Han students were in class, and the students started to speak Mandarin as the primary language, despite being “accented”; once in college, there were only a few Yi students. Without knowledge of the Yi scripts, she could not read or write in Yi. Y1 and Y3 stated that schools teaching the Yi language were only available in Xichang, Daliangshan; some of Y1’s relatives had been studying it and learning the Yi script. A policy document published by Sichuan Province in 2017 also supports that the Yi language education has been incorporated into the broader NCEE system (Sichuan Provincial Department of Education, 2017).

Y2 grew up in a Yi Autonomous County, Ebian, and was born to a fully Yi family that speaks Yi as the dominant language. However, she cannot speak Yi may understand it in interactions. She detailed an anecdote during her childhood, when she was in town and went to a pre-school with majorly Han students; she was ridiculed for speaking Yi. Coming home, she had never spoken any Yi again. Now, she would communicate with her family and friends using Mandarin, with her parents and peers speaking Yi to her in response. Despite being in an autonomous county, Y2 stated that the minority junior high/high school in town had the same curriculum, language of instruction, and textbooks as the local Han schools, with only a large proportion of Yi students and teachers. According to her, not just the minority school, Ebian makes no difference from other counties around it as an

autonomous county. She added that after graduating from high school, the local government may have started to implement a new policy that allowed Yi students to choose a track with Yi language and literature, similar to that of the ethnic Koreans; students would learn Yi and Yi scripts instead of English as the additional language on the NCEE exam.

Y3 grew up in a non-autonomous region in Yunnan, where the Yi population is less congregated, and she now understood little Yi. Her grandfather moved to the current residence from Liangshan and is the only family member who could speak Yi fluently and know the Yi scripts. Her father could speak a little Yi, and her mother is an ethnic Mongolian but could not speak any Mongolian. Most of her relatives in Liangshan speak Yi and know the Yi scripts. According to her, in Liangshan, they had a minority language education since primary school, and many Yi people there are proficient language users of the heritage language. When communicating with her Yi peers, Y3 said that they used Mandarin most of the time due to a lack of proficiency and linguistic variations among Yi. As mentioned in the Literature Review, these dialects of the Yi language spoken by different subgroups could be mutually unintelligible. Mandarin becomes a more accessible and mutually intelligible language choice if speaking various vernaculars.

Y4 is the cousin of Y2 and grew up “surrounded entirely by Yi with no Han people.” He did not learn Mandarin until primary school. When he was in first grade, most students in class and the teacher were Yi, and Yi was the primary language in the classroom, as the students only spoke and understood Yi; however, they were still using the Mandarin textbooks as other schools did. Starting from second to third grade, they had one Han and one Yi teacher in class, and the Yi teacher would translate the Han content for them so they could learn Mandarin simultaneously. Until fifth to sixth grade, students in his class could understand Mandarin, and the Yi teacher was no longer needed. Y4 also confirmed that the local minority high school later implemented a special Yi script class in which the students would learn Yi instead of English as their additional language.

Y5 is the oldest Yi participant, growing up in Ninglang, Yunnan. He was born into an impoverished family living in the mountains, and his entire family only knew Yi. He did not speak any Mandarin until he learned it in primary school from teachers of other

ethnicities who moved to the village to teach. These migrated teachers quickly learned Yi and could communicate with the students and parents via Yi, implying that Yi becomes the superior, dominant language on the language hierarchy in Yi communities with enough social language affordances. Y5 later went to a regional minority school open not only to Yi but also to other minorities. As of now, when returning to Liangshan, he still speaks Yi with his friends and family. When visiting Yi in other locations such as Guizhou and Guangxi provinces, he said that the linguistic variations were too huge to have mutually intelligible conversations, and they would use Mandarin instead. Since interactions with Yi from other communities may also require Mandarin, the role of Mandarin is promoted even within in-group communications.

Compared to Korean, Yi has a larger population and is distributed across a broader range of areas. This obstructs Yi as a group from implementing a large-scale minority language education that opens only to the Yi minority, teaching the Yi language, since other ethnic groups reside inevitably in the vicinity; local resources may not support individual minority schools for each minority. Regional and dialectical variations of Yi are also less intelligible, challenging the design of an all-encompassing Yi curriculum.

Y6 went to the same high school as Y3, growing up in the same region as her. She spoke mainly Yi before going to a fully Mandarin pre-school. When in pre-school, she said she barely had any friends since she did not speak Mandarin. Her parents were worried about potential microaggressions in school and the challenges associated with adapting and assimilating to the school environment. Therefore, they urged her to speak mainly Mandarin and prevented her from speaking Yi to her peers. Without interactions in Yi, she gradually forgot how to speak it and now barely used Yi, only knowing simple and conversational sentences. Y2 and Y6 shared the experiences of being potentially bullied or isolated in preschool for not speaking Mandarin, which resonates with the experiences of K4's younger cousin in Beijing, who was bullied in pre-school for speaking Korean, indicating that when the social language affordances in the given domains are too low, the participants may face more severe social consequences for speaking their heritage languages.

Y6 was admitted into one of the pre-college ethnic programs in an elite college; these programs are courses at specific colleges, admitting high school graduates based on their NCEE scores, similar to the process of regular college admission in China. Y6 mentioned that her program usually admits students from regions where ethnic minorities are populated – most of her classmates are from Guizhou, Yunnan, and Xinjiang. Students take one additional year of college, committing to the pre-college program regardless of their majors. They then attend this college as freshmen. During this one-year course, students take classes in subjects like Calculus and English, aiming to ease the academic transition into college and reduce the education gap between students from various backgrounds. There are also classes designed for ethnic minority students, including ethnic minority career coaching, *Maozedong Theories*, ethnic theory, and ethnic policy, promoting the idea and the concept of national unity simultaneously. Compared to the experiences of the ethnic Koreans in college, Y6 mentioned she is a fluent Mandarin speaker and has not encountered any challenges pertaining to language proficiency; this pre-college program may have contributed to her smooth transition.

Compared to the ethnic Korean families who may have thought about which schools, Chao or Han, they should attend, the Yi families are characterized by a lack of educational options. Although several participants resided in the Autonomous areas, the minority policy in place – minority education and minority autonomous policy – seems to be implemented solely in the naming but not in practice. In addition, the participants provided mixed responses on where Yi language classes were taught in school, implying the lack of clarity in the minority education policy and a general lack of interest in knowing where to learn the scripts. Education in the minority language was not a determining factor in where they decided to go to school. Without appropriate minority language education, many ethnic Yi are only able to listen to or speak Yi without knowing its orthographical scripts, limiting the domains of language usage to highly informal and in-person interactions.

The educational experiences of the Yi participants indicate that, although they did not go to a de facto minority school teaching the Yi language, some of them started with

Yi as the main language of instruction, especially in primary school. However, these schools seemingly implemented a transitional bilingual model, using Yi as a transitional language in order to switch to a fully Mandarin teaching environment, in agreement with the observation in Zhang and Tsung (2019). Moreover, participants have reported that once they entered secondary and tertiary education, more Han students were in their class, and Yi students were a minority group; Yi was barely used as a result of decreasing social language affordances in school. The transition from Yi to Mandarin, which is the aim of the transitional model, seems successful. The introduction of Mandarin in school from scratch may have also hindered the academic performance of the Yi students. Since Yi was not the formal language of instruction and they were still using Mandarin textbooks, their understanding of the classroom materials depended on their proficiency level in Mandarin. Y4 pointed out that since he could not understand Mandarin in class, his grades in primary school were terrible.

### **Intergenerational Loss of the Heritage Language**

The intergenerational loss of Yi is observed more in the younger generations. As a mother of two, Y1 now uses Mandarin more often at home since one of her children does not understand Yi. Despite speaking Yi with her husband and mother-in-law, she found that “it does not affect the children that they still do not understand without us explicitly teaching them,” demonstrating the significance of formal language education in learning Yi. She stated that when bringing her children to see her friends and family, who all spoke Yi, they could hardly communicate with each other and would mainly rely on Mandarin. However, Y1 commented that the Yi students at the primary school she currently taught at still spoke both Mandarin and Yi fluently; it is, therefore, unjustifiable to generalize that most of the next generation Yi children are no longer able to speak the language.

Y4’s two older daughters were currently attending the village pre-school. He mentioned that the school required students only to speak Mandarin at home. As a result, the parents and other relatives also had to follow the Mandarin-only rule. Even when talking to the children in Yi, they would respond in Mandarin. Y4 concluded:

The national policy right now is probably to spread Mandarin... Not only children but also to have them influence the elderly and the parents at home, having them all speak Mandarin.

Through Mandarin promotion among the next generation, Mandarin has successfully intruded the language domains of Yi - the informal, familial settings. Education becomes a channel to manifest the policy goal of unity and even Sinicization. Y4 indicated that this new Mandarin-only rule was implemented in 2018 when the preschool was built.

#### **4.2.2 The Indirect Environment**

The indirect environment targets the whole group and affects each participant indirectly. In this section, I discuss the instrumental social uses of the Yi language and the affirmative educational policies toward the Yi group.

##### **Functional Social Uses of Yi**

Unlike Koreans, the practical use of the Yi language is limited to familial and informal settings and has less instrumental value in job seeking. As Y1 indicated, speaking Yi as an additional language did not help her in job seeking; the only occasion she had used it in the workplace was during an internship at the local court, where she was asked to translate for those who did not speak Mandarin. In her job now as a primary school teacher, she may sometimes utilize the Yi language on special occasions.

The limited use of Yi in the workspace is also associated with the intergenerational loss of the Yi language. With the domains of language usage mainly in informal, familial settings, the younger generations are less incentivized to learn the language. Not only Yi but many heritage languages also suffer from limited, functional social uses. As Riestenberg (2020) suggests, to revitalize the Yi language, more practical social uses must be created, strengthening individual language affordances among the younger generations.

##### **Affirmative Actions**

Like ethnic Koreans, Yi also benefits from the affirmative bonus points on the NCEE. Y1 and Y2 had an additional 50 points; Y2 mentioned that even the Han students in her hometown received 20 points. However, the affirmative points could not be used toward the elite colleges, which is the main difference between the Yi and Korean policies.

Therefore, although the point addition is far higher for the Yi students than the Korean students, this does not help the Yi graduates to get admitted into elite colleges. Now, the point addition policy is under revision for all ethnic groups. According to Southern Metropolis Daily (2022), the revised policy aims to help those truly in need, reducing the number of students receiving bonus points. The eligibility and the number of additional points now depend on the test-takers ethnicity, residence, and educational background.

In addition to the bus points, ethnic programs in certain elite schools are also part of the affirmative educational policy; these classes are courses or programs designed specifically for ethnic minority students, providing the Yi students with additional opportunities for high-quality education. The pre-college program Y6 attended is an example. Y2's brother was also admitted into a similar program at the *High School affiliated to the Minzu University of China*, allowing him to attend high school and college in Beijing.

### 4.2.3 The General Societal Trend

#### Microaggressions

Similar to the ethnic Koreans, the Yi people sometimes experienced microaggressions. Y3's grandfather, an ethnic Yi from Liangshan, even had to hide his ethnic identity and pretend to be a Han to avoid potential discrimination. Compared to the ethnic Koreans, Yi, as an indigenous group, is not involved in controversies between countries; their ethnic identity is strongly tied with political identity. The structural discrimination towards them is more associated with their relatively low social-economic status than nationalism and chauvinism. Y5 was born into a family of extreme poverty and is the first college student among his whole extended family. Upon graduating from college, he worked in the government but found the ceiling effect too huge. As someone with no background and "no relationships," he felt he was not "used" properly and placed in the position he deserved. This is related to the structural issue as a first-generation college student. His family could not provide him with the resources, and he did not possess the underlying knowledge of how to succeed in the workspace or what to expect after college; his family thought being a good student was all he needed. However, this discriminative experience incentivized

him to take a closer look at his ethnic identity; he quit his job and decided to work on ethnic clothing and designs. Like K7 in Section 4.1.3, his ethnic identity becomes more prominent after incidents of discrimination that he perceived as targeting his ethnic and underprivileged background.

### **Urbanization and Migration**

The Yi group is influenced by the overarching trend of urbanization, migrating from their traditional, ethnically congregated regions, like ethnic Koreans. Unlike the Koreans, the Yi people are not border-crossing, without potential access to another nation. Their destinations of migration are the nearby towns and cities that offer better employment opportunities and higher wages. In addition to employment, their migration is also driven by the national and regional programs of Poverty Alleviation and educational and employment opportunities.

According to Y1 and Y4, she and many of her peers went to primary school in the local village near home. Still, they had to move to the county for secondary education - the only secondary school available. This trend of migration has been intensifying over the past few years, as Y1 stated:

Many Yi people think education is essential, and they would choose to reside close to the cities, not as 'backward' as before... the reasons why they decide to move are first for their children's schooling and second for their convenience.

This migration trend is related to the lack of educational choices mentioned before. Children in the rural villages sometimes have no option but to move to the nearby towns for school.

Y4 is a father of a girl who currently goes to the pre-school in the village. Since there is no primary school available in the village, he expressed the dilemma of either sending the children to boarding school from first grade or moving his whole family to the town where the school is located. He stated that the school had a boarding policy if the students do not live in town out of concern about student safety. He was worried that his daughter would be too young to take care of herself, but the other option required his whole family, along with a younger daughter and two newborn twins, to move to the town, where

he would need to rent a place. He said many parents around him had for their children's education:

Now all these parents are concerned about having their children receive a good education and prefer moving to the town or county. The housing price there is increasingly higher. In 2017/2018, the housing was priced at 3000 RMB per square meter and has now increased to 5000 to 6000 RMB.

Compared to the ethnic Korean group overshadowed by the model minority myth, the Yi participants are less of an elite group regarding their highest education level. Y4 claimed that less than ten students in his high school class, with more than 40 students, were admitted into college. The relatively lower educational quality might incentivize migration for education, as observed in Yi but not so much in the ethnic Korean communities.

The Poverty Alleviation program also expedites urbanization. According to Y2, the local Poverty Alleviation initiated projects that built new factories and housing around the counties for new migrants and provided the locals with sale channels for agricultural products, encouraging the Yi people living in the mountains to move to nearby towns. Now, most of the Yi people reside in the counties.

Like the ethnic Koreans, Yi are also driven to move to the urban areas by job opportunities. As Y4 stated, many left-behind children in the villages remained home and were taken care of by their extended families, such as their grandparents, while their parents were working away from their hometowns, usually in the bigger towns or cities. Y4 said he and his wife might need to leave their children with their grandparents in the village and work in the bigger cities later, due to a lack of local jobs and the relatively low wages in the rural areas. Y6, although residing in the bigger city of Kunming, was also thinking about seeking employment in the megacities. Currently in college, she realized that she could barely find any internships in her hometown pertaining to her finance major. If she wants to return home and work, she may need to find positions not directly related to finance. Considering her career development, she was more inclined to stay in Shanghai and base her family there.

Villages or towns in rural areas have been the traditional units of the Yi congregation. Y1 commented on these communities, which consisted of almost solely the Yi people:

Our area of residence, such as villages, usually entirely consists of Yi, and most of us are relatives and friends. There are also Han people in addition to Yi, but where they live is somewhat distant from us.

These close-knit communities provide strong social language affordances for the heritage language and the opportunities to immerse in the Yi traditions and cultures. With many Yi people leaving and migrating to the cities, the ethnic boundary is damaged. After moving away, the Yi people rarely move back, and Yi communities in the traditional sense no longer persist.

### **Sinicization**

Sinicization within the Yi group is manifested linguistically and ethnoculturally. According to Y1, there are many loanwords in Yi from Mandarin, such as television and laptop. Y4 said that throughout the past 20 years, the Yi people in his hometown have gradually switched to speaking Mandarin as the primary language. The intergenerational loss of the heritage language is also an indication of linguistic Sinicization.

Y4 attributed the channel of Sinicization to education: “it is from the school that exerts the influence through.” He indicated that many Yi parents now think that heritage language and culture are much less relevant to their children’s success; as long as Sinicization brings practical benefits, its side effects are negligible.

In addition, Y4 and Y5 pointed out that the Yi lifestyles have also been under the influence of the Han people. Y5 mentioned that Yi living in Lijiang, the city of his current residence, no longer celebrated the Torch Festival and the Yi New Year, the two biggest Yi festivals. They are now celebrating the Chinese New Year instead. He further commented that the ethnocultural Sinicization is related to the overarching *Zhonghua minzu* identity:

Under the general, contemporary atmosphere in China, which is to have *Zhonghua minzu* consolidate the common sense of community for all Chinese nationals, the culture of ethnic minorities will be assimilated, gradually approaching the culture of *Zhonghua Minzu*”.

By strengthening and prioritizing *Zhonghua minzu*, the political identity, to some extent, overshadows the ethnic identity, weakening the ethnic consciousness and substituting it with an identification with the greater China.

The degree of Sinicization differs across regions. In the areas where Y2 resided, they still celebrate the Torch Festival and the Yi New Year, with governmental holidays during these two. However, she said that such policy differed from county to county. Due to the nature of autonomy (the county she resides in is a Yi Autonomous County), the county government has the power to design its own policy that satisfies the need of the local ethnic traditions.

Y5 was also concerned about the loss of Yi culture outside the central area of the congregation, Liangshan. He asserted that it was impossible to implement minority language education in regions outside Liangshan due to a less congregated Yi population. As a result, it is much harder to maintain and revitalize the heritage culture and language among the Yi people in these areas.

### **What are the similarities and differences between the educational experiences of the ethnic Koreans and Yi?**

Despite living under an identical, overarching minority policy, the two groups of participants, ethnic Korean and Yi, differ drastically in their academic experiences. Most Korean participants were born to fully Korean families, with their ancestors immigrating to China from the Korean peninsula. All Korean participants acquire the minority language as their L1 while learning Mandarin later in school. They also have access to local minority education with Korean as the language of instruction. Assessing their educational outcomes, the Korean participants are educational elites, complying with their reputation as *model minority* (W.-G. Choi, 2001). Residing in congregated Korean communities, college marks the turning point in their language exposure and language environment.

The Yi participants present more intra-group variations in their minority language proficiency, family background, and educational experiences; they also differ from the Korean group in a lack of educational choices. Some Yi participants grew up in rural

villages with a large Yi population, whereas some others were in Mandarin-dominated cities. Their diverse family background and residences contribute to their variations in the Yi language proficiency levels. A couple of participants only speak Yi at a conversational level, and none of the Yi participants can recognize Yi scripts very well due to a lack of Yi lessons in school. The Yi participants mainly differ from the Koreans in the absence of the minority language in formal schooling. None have ever attended a truly minority school, although several participants received a de facto transitional bilingual education while in primary school.

The different educational environments between Korean and Yi affect their language choices in school. With Mandarin as the primary language of instruction and Yi sometimes serving as a transitional instructional language, Mandarin is superior in this domain. Detailed in the previous section, the incident of discrimination toward speaking Yi in pre-school demonstrates that Yi is the inferior language with lower social language affordances. The interactions between the language affordances and the active language users, students, contribute to their language choices. Due to a lack of minority schools, the Yi participants are immersed in a fully-Mandarin environment earlier than the Koreans, and their language choices are inevitably under such influence. As the participants indicate, they mainly speak Chinese in school after junior high. On the other hand, the Korean participants in Yanbian still speak Korean dominantly until college. With Korean as the dominant ethnic group in schools and Korean as the instructional language, students are provided with abundant social language affordances in this setting to practice and use Korean, creating individual language affordances. The educational experiences of these two groups, particularly in language education, affect their future language usage, but not how they perceive their ethnic identity.

### **How do Korean and Yi individuals perceive that minority education and language exposure to their minority languages has affected their identity?**

The ethnic identity of the Yi and Korean participants is seemingly independent of their educational experiences and language exposure but more related to the greater societal

trends of Sinicization and marginalization. Koreans differ from Yi as a border-crossing minority with the fluidity and flexibility to join both the Chinese and the Korean societies. The previous literature labels their identity as *dual identity* with *Koreanness* and *Chineseness* emerging simultaneously (W.-G. Choi, 2001). The ethnic Korean participants in this research seem to develop a similar duality, with a separate political identity developed on top of the ethnic identity.

As *Koreans in the diaspora*, the ethnic identity serves as the basis and emerges from the ancestral, cultural, and linguistic association with the greater Korean ethnicity. Upon immigration to China, the political boundary between China and the two Koreas enforces the ethnic boundaries of Korean Chinese as a distinguishable group, distinctive from the national and political identity of North/South Koreans. Although participants receive a minority education in Korean, speak a variant of Korean, have families or friends in the Korean peninsula, and browse or read Korean content such as social media, they do not perceive themselves as Korean nationals. Their language exposure to Korean does not contribute to forming a political identity but is more associated with formulating a firm ethnic identity. They may switch their nationality, but this would not change their ethnic identification as Korean Chinese.

Despite originating from the same region and the same Korean race, the discrimination toward the Korean Chinese in Korea contributes to their feelings of *otherness* and helps solidify the ethnic boundary, strengthening their ethnic identity as Korean Chinese, a unique group apart from other Koreans. Participants who study abroad in Korea experience anxiety and friction with being entirely accepted into Korean society. Past educational and living experiences in China distinguish them from the local Korean residents, contributing to their perceived *otherness*.

While in China, the ethnic Korean participants also experience *otherness*. Living in an ethnic autonomous region, attending ethnic minority schools, and receiving affirmative actions all underline their ethnic identity and differentiate them from the majority Han. Such distinctiveness and the knowledge of being an ethnic minority have been internalized since childhood. Residing in a Korean community and attending Chao schools also create

an enclosed space where Mandarin is not the dominant language. Under the trends of urbanization and migration in China, all participants choose to leave their hometowns. Unless moving to South Korea, leaving homes means leaving the enclosed space that offers social language affordances for Korean. For participants with relatively lower Mandarin proficiency, succeeding academically and socially in Mandarin-dominated colleges becomes challenging. Their feelings of *otherness* and the strengthening of their ethnic identity arise when they perceive that they have become the de facto minorities in these new settings, surrounded by Mandarin-speaking Han students.

In addition, incidents of microaggression in China and the controversies between China and South Korea intensify such *otherness*. Recent attempts of Sinicization, such as the minority education reform in Yanbian, encourage the participants to think about what it means to be ethnic Koreans, their cultural and linguistic heritage, and the priority of their ethnic identity. The participants' controversial attitudes regarding the reform indicate their perception of language as a critical ethnic marker and that language education is essential to language maintenance and preserving the essence of the group. When discussing their dating and marriage preferences, many participants want to seek ethnic Korean partners; when talking about future families, most of them want to teach their children the heritage language and would consider sending them to minority schools. Their vision for their future selves reflects their alignment with the ethnic Korean group, and that ethnic and linguistic heritage is something they want to pass on to the next generation.

The Korean participants also perceive the political identity of Chinese nationals. Being educated in China until at least adulthood, they receive the same education as all other Chinese nationals except for the language of instruction. Despite the exposure to the Korean language, the prolonged immersion in the Chinese society and educational experiences construct their political identity. When interpreting Korean Chinese as an ethnic minority group of China under the overarching supra-identity of *Zhonghua Minzu*, the ethnic and political identities are not in conflict but parallel (Fei, 1999). Within this framework, being an ethnic Korean is undeniably equivalent to being Chinese. However, the two identities are often challenged on issues related to national security and

international controversies. The ethnic Koreans, under these circumstances, are asked to make either their ethnic or political identity the priority.

The Yi participants, on the other hand, do not experience the complications of duality as the Koreans do. As an indigenous group, Yi has always resided in the Chinese territory. Being Yi automatically means being Chinese, although one aspect of the identity, Yi and Chinese, may become more prominent in different contexts. Despite immersing in Mandarin-dominated schools, the Yi participants still perceive a prominent ethnic Yi identity. A couple of participants grew up in non-congregated urban areas with limited Yi language exposure. They seem to perceive the Yi identity in an identical way as other participants growing up in the Yi villages. Educated in Mandarin, speaking Mandarin, and working or studying in Mandarin settings do not hinder their perception of being Yi. This may be due to the non-conflicting nature of the Yi and Chinese identity; they could simultaneously feel as part of the Chinese society and part of Yi. The otherness is less conspicuous, while the Koreans may be denied access to either Chinese or Korean societies. However, many Yi participants still agree that the heritage language is an important ethnic marker that should be retained. Two participants are self-teaching the Yi scripts; all participants also want their children to speak Yi, and Y1 and Y5, whom themselves married Yi partners, want their children to marry in-group members as well. The participants also indicated their concerns with the intergenerational loss of the Yi language due to Sinicization; when they perceive that the ethnic language and the ethnocultural traditions are threatened, their ethnic and political identity becomes somewhat separated. Overall, the participants' perception of being Yi and Chinese is seemingly not affected by their educational experiences or language exposure, but by incidents that contribute to their feelings of *otherness*, incentivizing them to think about what it means to be Yi.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, the ethnic Korean and Yi participants provide a glimpse into the experiences, language uses, and identity perceptions of border-crossing and indigenous groups in China. On the one hand, the elite group of Korean participants grew up in an environment with abundant social language affordances for their heritage language. However, as they proceed to college in China or South Korea, they are situated in a dilemma between their two identities, Korean and Chinese. Despite possessing the potential to join both societies, they as a group are not of being fully accepted into either.

On the other hand, the Yi participants did not receive a heritage language education, and the Yi language suffers from a lack of affordances in contemporary Chinese society. However, the scarce opportunities for language use do not undermine their ethnic identity. Despite the intra-group variations and the diverse backgrounds, the Yi participants are eager to learn the Yi scripts and desire to pass down their heritage language and ethnocultural traditions.

The immediate and indirect environments of the two groups, including educational backgrounds and language exposure, vary. However, the two groups, despite the inter- and intra- group variations, perceive their ethnic identity in a similar way. They undergo analogous societal trends that have gradually weakened the ethnic boundary over the past two decades since the economic reform: the trend of migration to the urban areas that offer more jobs and higher wages and the trend of Sinicization partially encouraged and regulated by the government. The two minority groups are confronting an era of changes under the assimilative, integrative policy goal that prioritizes national security and unity over ethnic plurality. Upon perceiving the implicit threat to ethnicity, the ethnic identity of the participants becomes more prominent. The perception of being Sinicized, along with the discriminative experiences of themselves or other in-group members toward their ethnic and low-SES background, further elevate their ethnic consciousness.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

All participants are adults qualified for at least one of the following inclusion criteria:

- a. This individual or their parents speak Korean/Yi.
- b. This individual has had experiences with any language classes of Korean/Yi or has attended institutions, schools, or courses opened primarily to members of ethnic minorities.
- c. This individual speaks Mandarin fluently.

**Appendix B: Procedure of Data Collection**

I first sent out the information sheet to interested volunteers. After explicitly asking whether they would like to participate, I sent out the consent form. Once the consent form was returned, I scheduled an interview slot with each participant. Some demographic information was asked first before the interview but not always. Upon finishing the data collection, the participants were given a stipend of 100 CNY each through WeChat Red Pocket (equivalent to around 14 British pounds). I then began data analysis.

### Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

我叫张煦洋，现在在牛津大学读应用语言学 and 教育的硕士～硕士论文是关于少数民族社群和民族语言学习教育方面的研究，正在找相关的访谈人选，欢迎感兴趣的彝族/朝鲜族小伙伴+微信，完成访谈后会有100rmb的报酬。由于研究限制，目前只能采访成年人，最好是符合以下任一条件的同学：

- a. 父母或自己会说彝语/朝鲜语
- b. 在校期间接触过彝语/朝鲜语教学/双语教学，或上过相关少数民族预科、主要面向少数民族同学开设的班级、课程

大概5月份左右会进行线上的视频访谈，时长在1个小时内，需要录音（保证相关资料不外传，论文里会采用化名）。愿意参与的小伙伴希望能先加联系方式，接触了解一下生活教育背景等等。谢谢！

My name is Xuyang Zhang, and I am a student at the University of Oxford, undertaking a master course in Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition. My dissertation topic is about the ethnic minority community in China and minority language education. I am looking for volunteers who would like to talk to me about their experiences. Any Yi minority or Korean minority members who would like to be interviewed are welcome to add me on to discuss further. Upon completion of interviews, participants receive a stipend of 100 CNY. Due to the nature of the study, I am looking for adult participants who satisfy at least one of the following requirements:

- A. Parents or themselves speak Yi or Korean
- B. Have had bilingual/Yi/Korean education in school, or have attended relevant pre-college programs or related courses open primarily to ethnic minorities

The official interview session will be scheduled in May or June (before June 30, 2022), depending on individual participants' availability. Interviews will take around an hour. The meeting will be recorded (guaranteeing that the relevant data will be securely protected; all personal information will be anonymized in the dissertation). If you are interested, please get in touch with me! I would love to get to know a little bit about your background first. Thank you so much!

## Appendix D: Information Sheet

### 参与者信息单：

#### 中国少数民族彝族和朝鲜族的教育经历

#### Exploring the Educational Experiences and Identity of Ethnic Minority Korean and Yi Individuals in China

大学中央研究伦理委员会(CUREC) 批准参考: CIA-22HT-004

### 基本介绍

您被邀请参加了“中国少数民族彝族和朝鲜族的教育经历”研究项目。在您做出决定之前，请了解为什么要进行这项研究以及它将涉及什么。请花时间仔细阅读以下信息。如果您愿意，可以与他人讨论。如有任何疑问或想了解更多信息，您可以随时询问我。

### 为什么会进行这项研究？

本研究旨在调查在主导语言普通话及少数民族语言彝语和朝鲜语影响下长大的中国少数民族（彝族及朝鲜族）年轻一代大学生或毕业生的语言和教育经历。该研究将侧重于教育经历如何影响和投射到他们的种族身份和对少数民族语言的态度上。研究人员将调查两个少数群体的语言态度，后将从语言态度、身份形成和语言接触方面进行后续的组间比较。研究人员计划远程采访大约 20 名参与者，每个少数群体 10 名左右。采访将会被全程录像，研究人员将对采访数据进行定性分析。本研究希望探究中国少数民族彝族和朝鲜族社群面临的挑战，观察、发掘少数民族教育系统的潜在问题。

### 为什么我受邀参加？

您是彝族或朝鲜族少数民族成员，现已成年，且满足以下至少一条入选标准：

- a. 本人会说少数民族语言（彝语/朝鲜语）；
- b. 父母中任何一方会说少数民族语言（彝语/朝鲜语）；
- c. 曾经就读过或正在就读少数民族学校/民族附设班/少数民族预科班等面向少数民族开设的教育机构。

**我是否必须要参加？**

不，由您决定是否参加。

您也可以在 2022 年 6 月 30 日之前通过微信或其他聊天渠道书面通知我来退出研究，无需说明理由。退出之后，所收集的数据将被永久删除。

**如果我选择参与研究，我需要做什么？**

我们首先会通过文字或简短的电话沟通确定您是否符合参与者的入选标准。之后，我将发给您一份参加同意书。如果您确认参加本研究项目，请签字（手写或打字都可）返还。

我们将在您方便的时候安排一个小时左右的访谈环节，通过微信或其他的网络渠道视频沟通。我们可能会讨论您过去的教育经历、您现在的工作、您的家乡和家庭背景等话题。如果您对任何问题感到不舒服或者不希望具体回答某个问题，请随时告诉我。您可以用几句话回答，也可以讲一个故事。访谈更像是朋友之间的聊天，而不是我调查关于您的事情。您也可以随时暂停采访。

整个访谈环节都会被录音，之后该录音会被放在一个安全私密的硬盘里；我是唯一可以访问这些音频的人。在转录视频之前，您将被分配（或自行选择）一个化名。在此后的研究期间，您只能通过该化名被识别。我是唯一知道您的联系方式以及真实姓名的研究人员。转录后，视频通话的录音将被永久删除。访谈结束后，我可能会在微信中与您联系，请您解释一两件您提到的事情，或者澄清您提到过的名字和地点；整个过程将在 2022 年 7 月 1 日之前完成。如果您在 2022 年 6 月 30 日前想退出研究，请通过微信、电子邮件与我联系，或在采访中直接告知我。截止日期之后，您可能无法退出。

**参与本研究是否会为我带来一定的劣势或风险？**

截至目前，我们尚未发现任何可预见的、不适、缺点和风险。如果访谈过程让您感到不舒服，请随时告诉我您是否想暂停访谈或退出项目。

**参与本研究我是否会受益？**

虽然参与该项目的人不会立即受益，但希望这项研究能够探索中国少数民族社区面临的挑战，并发掘少数民族教育系统的潜在问题。它可能有助于未来的政策制定、少数民族教学等。如果您对本项目的发现感兴趣，项目结束时研究人员会给您一个总结。

### 费用和款项

在完成访谈后，研究人员会于 2022 年 7 月 1 日通过微信或支付宝向您发送 100 元人民币的红包。

### 本项目将收集哪些和我相关的信息？为什么收集这些信息能实现研究目的？

在访谈之前，研究人员将收集您的联系方式和填写好的参加同意书。访谈期间收集的数据将用于定性分析和组间比较。通过讨论相关的问题和您的个人经历，研究人员希望对您的教育和语言经历有所了解。

以下为收集数据的类型和储存方式：

1. 访谈录音：研究人员将通过手机录音的方式录制访谈全程。访谈期间，研究人员将不会做任何书面或电子笔记。录音将被保存在特定的硬盘里。在所有录音被转录后，您的姓名将会被一个指定的化名所代替；之后，原始录音将被删除。
2. 签字的参加同意书将被保存在特定的硬盘里。
3. 您的联系方式将会被保存在研究人员的微信账号中；我是唯一可以访问该帐户的人，账户需要密码和验证码才能登录。

面试时我会使用微信、腾讯会议或您方便的网络渠道进行视频通话。除非我或参与者邀请，其他任何人都无法加入视频通话。通话不会被上传到任何云服务，微信也不会存储任何通话。

可被识别数据（包括参加同意书）将被保存最多 3 年时间。其他研究数据将在研究工作发表或公开发布后最多保存 3 年。研究人员（张煦洋）及其导师，Faidra Faitaki 博士 ([faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk))，将有权访问及使用所收集的数据。

该研究会发表吗？我会被从任何出版物或其他研究成果中被识别出来吗？

该研究结果将以硕士论文的形式进行发表，之后可能会在学术刊物或会议上发表、报告。您将不会被从研究结果中识别出来；所有参与者都将通过使用化名进行匿名处理。

我希望您能允许我直接引用您在访谈中说的话。

### **数据保护**

牛津大学是您个人数据的数据控制者，因此将决定您的个人数据在研究中的使用方式。大学将出于上述研究的目的处理您的个人数据。研究是一项从公共利益出发的任务。有关您对个人数据的权利及更多信息，请访问 <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>。

### **谁审查了这份项目？**

本研究已获得牛津大学中央研究伦理委员会旗下的小组委员会的伦理批准（批准参考: CIA-22HT-004）

### **如果我对研究有疑虑或想投诉，我应该联系谁？**

如果您对本研究的任何方面有任何疑问，请联系张煦洋 (kell6238@ox.ac.uk) 或 Faidra Faitaki 博士 (faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk)，我们将尽最大努力回答您的问题。我们将在 10 个工作日内确认您的疑虑，并告知您将如何处理。如果您仍然不满意或希望提出正式投诉，请联系牛津大学研究伦理委员会主席，他们将寻求尽快解决问题：

社会科学与人文学科跨学科研究伦理委员会；

电子邮件：ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk；地址：牛津大学研究服务部，Boundary Brook House, Churchill Drive, Headington, Oxford OX3 7GB

The Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee;  
Email: [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk); Address: Research Services, University of Oxford,  
Boundary Brook House, Churchill Drive, Headington, Oxford OX3 7GB

### **更多信息及联系方式**

如果您想与我们讨论本研究或有疑问，请联系：

张煦洋, 应用语言学与二语习得 - 硕士学生

**Xuyang Zhang, Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition - MSc Student**

Oxford, OX11TE

(+44)(0)7419731043 (英国), (+86)18978329533 (中国)

邮箱 : [kell6238@ox.ac.uk](mailto:kell6238@ox.ac.uk)

**Faidra Faitaki · 博士学生**

St Edmund Hall, Queen's Ln, Oxford, OX1 4AR.

手机: +44(0)7768236586

邮箱: [faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk)

## **Exploring the Educational Experiences and Identity of Ethnic Minority Korean and Yi Individuals in China**

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

Central University Research Ethics Committee Approval Reference: [CIA-22HT-004  
]

#### **Introductory paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

#### **Why is this research being conducted?**

This research aims to investigate the language experiences of the ethnic minority Yi and the ethnic minority Korean individuals in China, who are growing up under the influence of the dominant language, Mandarin, and their minority languages, Yi and Korean. It will focus on the personal experiences of the minority adults and how their education has affected and projected onto their ethnic identities and their attitudes towards the minority languages. Around 20 volunteers will be recruited for interviews, 10 from each minority group. The interviews will be entirely online, conducted through WeChat video calls, and the meetings will be recorded.

#### **Why have I been invited to take part?**

You have satisfied the inclusion criteria, being a member of Yi or Korean minority group, and you have received or in the process of receiving a post-secondary education.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You can withdraw yourself from the study, without giving a reason, by advising me of this decision. The deadline by which you can withdraw any information you have contributed to the research is June 30, 2022. The collected data will be permanently deleted and disposed after withdrawal.

#### **What will happen to me if I take part in the research?**

We will schedule an interview session at your convenience, and we would conduct the interview via WeChat video call. It will be entirely online. The interview will last up to an hour, and we may discuss topics such as your past educational experiences, your job right now, your hometown and family background. Feel free to tell me that you may be uncomfortable with the questions and do not wish to answer any questions specifically. You may also answer them in a few words or talk me through a story. It's more of a casual conversation between friends than me investigating something about you. You may also pause the interview anytime. The entire interview session will be recorded, and the recordings will be put in a safe and private folder; I am the only person who may access the videos. Before transcribing the videos, you will be assigned a pseudonym, and

you will only be identifiable via the pseudonym during the research. Your contact details will only be available to me, and it will be stored securely. After transcription, the recordings of the video calls will be deleted permanently. Upon finishing the interview, I may need to ask you to explain a thing or two or to clarify the names and places you mention in the interview; I will contact you in WeChat if this is the case, but the entire process will be finished by July 1, 2022. If you would like to withdraw from the research, please contact me via WeChat, emails, or tell me directly in the interview by July 1, 2022. After the given date, a withdrawal may not be possible.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks in taking part?**

As of now, no foreseeable discomforts, disadvantages and risks have been identified. Feel free to let me know if you would like to pause the interview or withdraw from the process if the interview session makes you uncomfortable.

**Are there any benefits in taking part?**

While there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this research will reveal the challenges of the ethnic minority communities in China and address the potential issues of the minority education systems. Its implications might be helpful in future policy making and in pedagogy. If you are interested in, a summary will be given to you at the end of the project.

**Expenses and payments**

You will receive a red pocket for around ¥100 upon completion of the interview session via either WeChat or AliPay.

**What information will be collected and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research objectives?**

Data will be collected in the form of interview, and your contact details and completed consent forms will also be collected before the interview. The data collected during interview will be used for qualitative analysis and inter-group comparisons. By discussing relevant topics and your personal experiences, I hope to gain some knowledge of your educational experiences and linguistic exposure.

The types of data collected and how the data would be stored are detailed below:

1. Recordings of the interviews: The interviews will be recorded using my laptop's screen recording function. No notes will be taken during the sessions. The videos will be stored safely on my laptop, which is password-protected. After transcribing the videos, I will fully anonymise the transcriptions, and the original videos will be deleted.
2. The completed consent forms will be stored in a separate and password-protected folder.

3. Their contact details of the participants will be stored in my WeChat account; I am the only one who has access to the account, and it requires password and authentication code to sign in.

I will use WeChat for video calling during interviews; I am the only one to have access to the account, and nobody else would be able to join the videocall (unless invited by me or by the participants). The calls would not be uploaded to any cloud services, and WeChat will not store any of the calls. The recordings will be stored as mentioned above.

Identifiable data (including consent forms) will be stored securely in a password-protected laptop for up to 3 years. Other research data will be stored for up to 3 years after publication or public release of the work of the research. Personal details will not be shared for participants to receive payments.

The researcher (Xuyang Zhang) and her supervisor, Dr Faidra Faitaki ([faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk)), will have access to the research data.

**Will the research be published? Could I be identified from any publications or other research outputs?**

The findings from the research will be written up in a dissertation and may be written up for academic publications or conference presentations. You will not be identified from the outputs as all participants will be addressed via pseudonyms.

I would like your permission to use direct quotations but without identifying you in any research outputs (you will be addressed by assigned pseudonyms instead) .

**Data Protection**

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the study. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.

**Who has reviewed this study?**

This study has received ethics approval from a subcommittee of the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee. (Ethics reference: [CIA-22HT-004]).

**Who do I contact if I have a concern about the research or I wish to complain?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact Xuyang Zhang ([kell6238@ox.ac.uk](mailto:kell6238@ox.ac.uk)) or Dr Faidra Faitaki ([faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk)), and we will do our best to answer your query. We will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research

Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

The Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee;  
Email: [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk); Address: Research Services, University of Oxford,  
Boundary Brook House, Churchill Drive, Headington, Oxford OX3 7GB

### **Further Information and Contact Details**

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

**Xuyang Zhang, MSc Student in Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition**

Student Castle Oxford, Oxford, OX11TE.

Mobile: +44(0)7419731043 (UK), +86 189 7832 9533 (China)

Email: [kell6238@ox.ac.uk](mailto:kell6238@ox.ac.uk)

**Faidra Faitaki, DPhil Student**

St Edmund Hall, Queen's Ln, Oxford, OX1 4AR.

Mobile: +44(0)7768236586

Email: [faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:faidra.faitaki@education.ox.ac.uk)

## Appendix E: Consent Form

## 参加同意书：

## 中国少数民族彝族和朝鲜族的教育经历

## Consent to take part in: The Educational Experiences of the Ethnic Minority Yi and Korean Students in China

大学中央研究伦理委员会(CUREC) 批准参考: CIA-22HT-004

## 研究目的：

本研究旨在调查：在主导语言为普通话及少数民族语言（彝语和朝鲜语）的环境下成长的中国少数民族（彝族及朝鲜族）年轻一代大学生或毕业生的语言和教育经历。该研究将侧重于考察个人的教育经历，如何影响和投射到他们的民族身份认同以及对少数民族语言的态度。

研究人员将首先调查彝族及朝鲜族两组群体的语言态度，然后将从语言态度、身份形成和语言接触三方面进行后续的组间对比。研究人员计划远程采访大约 20 名参与者，每个少数民族组群 10 名，并对采访数据进行定性分析。本研究希望探索中国少数民族彝族和朝鲜族社群以及少数民族教育系统的潜在问题。

如果同意，请  
在每个方框里  
签字。

我确认我已阅读并理解上述研究的相关信息。

我了解我的参与是自愿的，并且我可以在 2022 年 6 月 30 日之前的任何时候自由退出，无需给出任何理由。

我允许您再次与我联系以澄清信息。

我了解如何提出疑虑或进行投诉。

我了解谁可以访问我所提供的个人数据、这些数据将如何存储以及项目结束时这些数据会被如何处置。

我明白我不会从任何出版物中被识别出来。

我同意被录音。

我了解录音将如何被用于研究分析。

我同意我的个人联系方式可以被保存在一个安全的数据库中，以便研究人员可能就未来的研究与我联系。

我同意参加本次的访谈。

\_\_\_\_\_  
研究人员姓名

dd / mm / yyyy  
日期

\_\_\_\_\_  
签名

\_\_\_\_\_  
参与者姓名

dd / mm / yyyy  
日期

\_\_\_\_\_  
签名

**Consent to take part in: The Educational Experiences of the Ethnic Minority Yi and Korean Students in China**

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) approval reference: **XXXXXX**

**Purpose of Study:** This research aims to investigate the language experiences of the ethnic minority Yi and the ethnic minority Korean individuals in China, who grew up under the influence of the dominant language, Mandarin, and their minority languages, Yi and Korean. It will focus on the personal experiences of the minority adults and how their education has affected and projected onto their ethnic identities and their attitudes towards the minority languages.

**Please initial  
each box if you  
agree with the  
statement**

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point until **30/06/2022**, without giving any reason.

I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.

I understand that I will not be identifiable from any publications.

I consent to being video recorded.

I understand how videos will be used in research outputs.

Use of quotations: Please indicate your preference (select *one* option):

a) I do not wish to be quoted. **or**

b) I agree to the use of quotations in research outputs if I am not identifiable.

I give permission for you to contact me again to clarify information.

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

I agree to take part.

I agree that my personal contact details can be retained in a secure database so that the researchers can contact me about future studies.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

dd / mm / yyyy  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking signature

dd / mm / yyyy  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Appendix F: Sample List of Questions**

1. At what city did you grow up in? Where would you characterize as your hometown?
2. What languages do your parents and family speak?
3. How often do you use the minority languages? Under what circumstances?
4. What language was the medium of instruction at your primary and secondary school?
5. Why did your parents decide to send you to the (bilingual, monolingual, etc.) educational program you went to?
6. Do you know how to write or type in your minority language? When did you learn that?
7. Have you taken any exams or assessments in your minority language?
8. Have you had any classes on the history and culture of your ethnic minority community?
9. Do you think you have an “accent” when speaking mandarin? If yes, have you been consciously correcting your speech?
10. Would you agree teaching a standard mandarin to your children is important?
11. Imagine you are now a parent, would you teach or let your kids learn the minority languages? To what extent? Why?
12. In what language was your college entrance exam written?
13. Why did you choose the university you are at right now/you went to? What was your criteria for choosing a college? Did you discuss it with your parents?
14. Thinking back about the college selection process, do you feel like being a minority member bring any advantages or disadvantages?
15. For those who have decided their major/program, what prompted you to study the major/program you have chosen?
16. (For college students): Do you want to work in the city/region where your college is after graduation? Are you thinking about returning to your hometown after graduation?
17. (For people at work): Have you thought about returning to your hometown for job seeking?
18. What’s your plan for the next 3 to 5 years?
19. (For people at work): Do you think being proficient/not proficient in a minority language have bring you any advantages in the job searching process?

## Appendix G: CUREC Approval for the Dissertation

The Educational Experiences of the Ethnic Minority Yi and Korean Students in China: Language Attitudes towards Minority Languages and Identity Formation  
CIA-22HT-004

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

Our prior discussion on this was very useful – an impressive team as ever, and project, vastly experienced, and a model of genuine care in relation to research ethics.

I am pleased to inform you, then, that, on the basis of the information provided to DREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly, approval has been granted.

Please continue to follow all current guidance issued by CUREC during the pandemic, notably COVID-19: CUREC guidance on research involving human participants,  
<https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/coronavirus>

*If relevant please also check the CUREC website for their best practice research guides, these can be very useful in refining the writing up of ethical considerations in your research – see <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/resources/bpg>*

Good luck with your research study,

Keep well and safe,

Yours sincerely,

All good wishes,

Liam

Chair, DREC

Liam Francis Gearon, PhD, FHEA, FRSA, Docent



Senior Research Fellow, Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford  
Associate Professor, Department of Education, University of Oxford  
Conjoint Full Professor, Newcastle University, Australia  
Docent, University of Helsinki, Finland  
Extraordinary Professor, North-West University, South Africa  
Visiting Professor, Irish Institute for Catholic Studies, MIC, Limerick, Ireland  
Honorary Senior Research Fellow, School of Education, University of Birmingham

**Appendix H: List of Chinese Vocabulary**

<b>English</b>	<b>Chinese</b>
<i>Bimo</i>	毕摩
<i>Chao schools</i>	朝鲜族学校/朝校
Chaoxian Zu	朝鲜族
<i>Chaoxian Zu Fu</i>	朝鲜族服
Da Xiao	大校
Han	汉族
<i>Han Fu</i>	韩服
Han schools	汉族学校
<i>High School affiliated to the Minzu University of China</i>	中央民族大学附属中学
<i>Huaxia</i>	华夏
<i>Kuomintang</i>	国民党
Mandarin or <i>Putonghua</i>	普通话
<i>minzu</i>	民族
Poverty Alleviation	扶贫
Shao Jiang	少将
Torch Festival	火把节
Yi	彝族

Yi New Year

彝族年

*Yuwen*

语文

*Zhongguo*

中国

*Zhonghua*

中华

*Zhonghua minzu*

中华民族

## Appendix I: Information of the Korean Participants

Figure 10: A map of Yanbian (“Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture”, 2022)



Table 1: A list of the Korean participants’ hometowns

Hometown	Count
Yanji, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin Province	6
Tumen, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin Province	3
Longjing, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin Province	2
Helong, Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture, Jilin Province	1
Sujiatun, Shenyang City, Liaoning Province	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13</b>

Figure 2: A map of the relative locations of Sujiatun District and Yanbian



Figure 0: The number of Korean participants attending each of the three high schools.

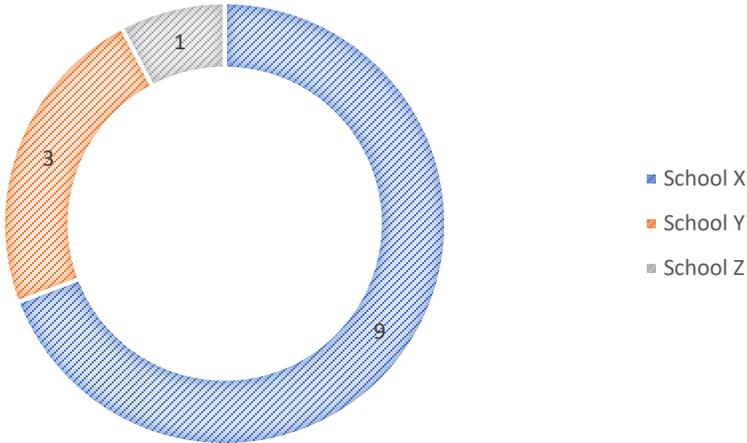


Table 2: The locations of the Korean participants' colleges

Locations of the Undergraduate Programs	Count
Beijing	4
Shanghai	2
Jiangsu Province	2
Jilin Province	2
Shandong Province	1
South Korea	1
Hong Kong SAR	1

<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13</b>
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Figure 4: The relative locations of their undergraduate programs



#	Age	Gender	Hometown	Education Levels (attained or expected)	Major or Program	Location of Undergraduate Program	High School
K1	24	F	Longjing	Bachelor's or equivalent	Humanities	Shanghai	School X
K2	24	F	Yanji	Bachelor's or equivalent	Humanities	Shandong	School X
K3	21	F	Yanji	Bachelor's or equivalent	Humanities	Jiangsu	School X
K4	22	F	Yanji	Bachelor's or equivalent	Arts	Jilin	School X
K5	26	M	Longjing	Master's or equivalent	Media; Humanities	Shanghai	School X
K6	22	F	Helong	Master's or equivalent	Humanities	Beijing	School X
K7	23	F	Yanji	Bachelor's or equivalent	Business	Hong Kong	School X
K8	21	F	Tumen	Bachelor's or equivalent	Social Sciences	Beijing	School Y
K9	23	M	Tumen	Bachelor's or equivalent	STEM	Jilin	School Y
K10	23	M	Yanji	Bachelor's or equivalent	Humanities	Beijing	School X
K11	23	F	Yanji	Master's or equivalent	Social Sciences	Beijing	School X
K12	26	M	Sujiatun, Shenyang	Master's or equivalent	Humanities	South Korea	School Z
K13	22	M	Tumen	Master's or equivalent	Social Sciences	Jiangsu	School Y

Table 3: A list of relevant information of all Korean participants

## Appendix J: Information of the Yi Participants

Table 4: A list of relevant information of all Yi participants

	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Educational Levels (obtained or expected)	Hometown	Current Residence
<b>Y1</b>	40	F	Married	Bachelor's or equivalent	Panzhihua, Sichuan	Hometown
<b>Y2</b>	26	F	Single	Bachelor's through self-studying	Ebian, Leshan, Sichuan	Hometown
<b>Y3</b>	22	F	Single	Bachelor's or equivalent	Kunming, Yunnan	U.S.
<b>Y4</b>	27	M	Married	Senior high school's	Ebian, Leshan, Sichuan	Hometown
<b>Y5</b>	53	M	Married	Bachelor's or equivalent	Ninglang, Yunnan	Lijiang, Yunnan
<b>Y6</b>	22	F	Single	Bachelor's or equivalent	Kunming, Yunnan	Shanghai; Hometown

Table 5: Yi participants' hometowns

Hometowns	Yunnan Province	Sichuan Province	Grand Total
Ebian, Leshan		2	2
Kunming	2		2
Panzhihua		1	1
Ninglang, Lijiang	1		1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>

Figure 5: A map with all the above-mentioned locations

