

LANGUAGE PLANNING AND LANGUAGE POLICY
IN ETHNIC MINORITY AREAS IN CHINA¹

Richard Young

Introduction

With a land mass equal to that of the continental United States minus Alaska, a population of just over one billion, and a recorded history of settlement which goes back further than any other region of the earth, it should come as no surprise that the language situation in China is one of baffling complexity. Such complexity is made no easier to untangle by the fact that although the philology of Chinese is a subject of hoary antiquity, no scientific survey of the contemporary dialects of Chinese has yet been carried out, and few scientific linguistic descriptions have been made of the one hundred and more non-Chinese languages spoken by ethnic minorities.

In any taxonomy of Chinese dialects and languages, one is faced with competing and overlapping categories as the basic units of description. The so-called spoken Chinese "dialects", for example, are as mutually unintelligible as linguistic varieties which in another context would be considered separate languages. In the case of non-Chinese languages, the speech of ethnic minorities may in some cases be identical to that of the surrounding Han population², as is

the case with the 369,000 She (舍) scattered through the provinces of the Eastern seaboard. In the majority of cases, the name of an ethnic group will also be used as the name of their language, as is the case of the 300,000 Wa Nation (佤) of Yunnan province who speak a language known to the Han as the Wa Language (佤语). In some cases, however, the name of the ethnic group may not be the name used either by themselves or by the Han for their language, as is the case of the 26,500 Tajik (塔吉克) of the mountain passes of the far Northwest who are known to speak two different languages belonging to the Eastern branch of the Indo-Iranian family, Selekur (塞勒库尔) and Wahan (瓦汉).

In this paper I will first attempt to sketch the languages used by China's one billion people in terms of the Stammbaum theories of traditional Chinese philology and dialectology based on the Chinese and Western sources at my disposal. The description of the rich and complex linguistic situation in China, and especially in its ethnic minority areas will then serve as the basis for a survey of the kinds of language planning and language policy which have been tried out in these areas. What I propose to do in this paper is an ambitious undertaking, since the complexity of the situation defies simple description, and is at the same time doomed to a kind of failure. The essential problem with which any sociolinguistic researcher into Chinese minority languages must struggle is that there is simply not enough data available — neither in Chinese nor in English — to allow a reasonably objective picture to be drawn. What documents exist in Chinese on the subject are in the main put out by government agencies

such as the Central Institute for Minorities (中央民族学院), in journals such as Minzu Tuanjie (民族团结), or Minzu Yanjiu (民族研究), or are reports in the press and radio. To my knowledge, no sociolinguistic survey of language policy in minority areas has ever been carried out in China, and indeed the academic discipline of sociolinguistics itself is not taught in Chinese institutions of higher learning. The nature of such data as are available, therefore, tends to reflect more the politics of the situation rather than the linguistics. And since the linguistic issues involved in language planning in minority areas are inextricably bound up with hot political issues such as the conflicting claims of minority nationalisms versus those of the nation state, the integrity of a new nation's frontiers, and the economic development of remote areas, reports of the linguistic issues tend to be written by officials with a political ax to grind. Again, surveys by academics in the West are made on the basis of the available Chinese data, since it is unheard of for foreign researchers to do fieldwork in the remote areas where minority languages are spoken. While these surveys may attempt a greater objectivity by comparing and contrasting the various viewpoints in the primary data, they can never be more than meta-analyses of a situation in which little linguistic fieldwork has been done. An example of the general dearth of information on topics which are crucial to our understanding of the language situation in minority areas is that nothing is known about the language of instruction in schools in minority areas. A

recent survey by an eminent Western scholar in the area of Chinese education had this to say on the topic:

... we have no figures for the relation between the teaching of and about the mother language and Chinese. We have not received textbooks or other source material on the teaching of minority languages and literatures in schools. Therefore we cannot discuss this significant topic now. Here lies a wide field for future research work.

(Dilger 1984: 160-1)

Despite these fundamental problems with the primary data for a sociolinguistic survey of language policy and planning in minority areas, I feel it is nonetheless worthwhile to sketch an outline of the issues involved since many of the problems in language policy and planning of which researchers are aware in other parts of the world are also to be found in China. In confronting these problems, however, the Chinese have adopted a wide variety of solutions, at times conflicting and contradicting earlier policies, at times building on them. Given the richness of the field, it is remarkable that treatments of the Chinese ethnolinguistic situation are rare in Western scholarly literature. I hope this paper and the select bibliography which accompanies it will shed a little light on this as yet untouched area.

The Languages of China

There are several major language families to be found in China: Sino-Tibetan languages spoken throughout the 29 provinces and by minorities in the South and Southwest, Altaic languages spoken across the Northern provinces stretching from Afghanistan to Korea, a small number of Indo-European languages spoken in Central Asia, and some

Austro-Melanesian languages spoken by the Gaoshan (高山) aborigines of Taiwan.

Sino-Tibetan Languages

The largest grouping is the Sino-Tibetan family, including its four main branches, Chinese, Tibeto-Burman, Kam-Thai, and Miao-Yao. Chinese is the language of the dominant Han people, who number 940 million, or 93.3% of the total according to the 1982 census, but is traditionally divided into 8 mutually incomprehensible dialect areas. See Figure 1 for a map of the Chinese dialects from Kratochvil (1968).

1. Northern Chinese or Mandarin (北方话) dialects are spoken north of the Yangtze River, and divide again into four subgroups: the Northern dialects, spoken in Hebei (including Peking), Shandong, and Henan provinces, and in the Northwestern parts of Anhui and Jiangsu, the three northeastern provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang, and by Chinese speakers living in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The dialect of educated Peking speakers is regarded as the standard, known as Putonghua, "The Common Speech" (普通话), or Guoyu (国语), "The National Language", and is the variety which is used for national television and radio broadcasts, and is the variety most often taught to foreigners, both in the People's Republic and in Taiwan. The Northwestern dialects of Mandarin are spoken in Shanxi, Shaanxi, and by Chinese speakers living in Gansu, Qinghai, and the western part of Inner Mongolia. The

Southwestern dialects are spoken in Hubei, Hunan, Guangxi, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan and by Chinese speakers further to the southwest. The River dialects are spoken along the Yangtze in central Jiangsu and Anhui, in southeastern Hubei and northern Jiangxi.

2. Wu (吳) dialects are spoken in southern Jiangsu (including Shanghai), southeastern Anhui, and in Zhejiang.
3. Xiang (湘) dialects are spoken in the greater part of Hunan.
4. Gan (贛) dialects are spoken in Jiangxi, southern Anhui, and southeastern Hubei.
5. Hakka (客家) dialects are spoken in scattered areas across Guangxi and northern Guangdong.
6. Yue (粵) or Cantonese dialects are spoken in southeastern Guangxi and throughout Guangdong, including Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Various Yue dialects are used as the lingua franca in most emigri Chinese communities in the New World and in Europe.
7. Southern and Northern Min (閩) dialects are spoken in Fujian, southern Zhejiang, northeastern Guangdong, on Hainan Island, and are the first language of 90% of the population on Taiwan. Southern Min dialects are also the predominant varieties among the Chinese communities of Singapore and Malaysia.

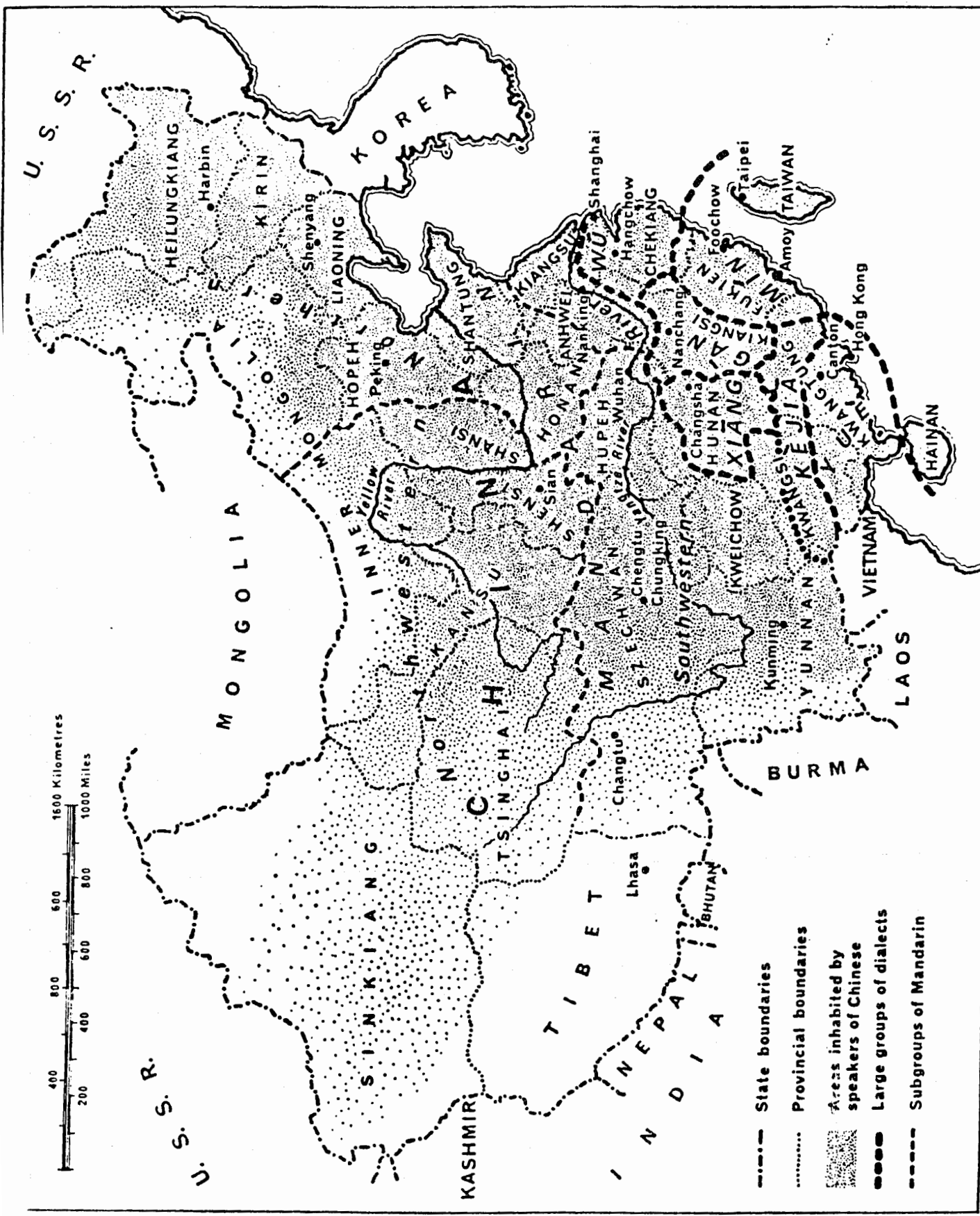


Fig. 1 Map of Chinese dialects

(Kratochvil 1968)

DeFrancis (1985:58) gives the following table of relative numbers of speakers of the Chinese dialects.

Table 1: Officially Recognized Dialects of Chinese

Linguistic Division	Speakers
Northern (Putonghua, Mandarin)	715 million (71.5%)
Jiangsu-Zhejiang (Wu)	85 million (8.5%)
Cantonese (Yue)	50 million (5.0%)
Hunan (Xiang)	48 million (4.8%)
Hakka	37 million (3.7%)
Southern Min	28 million (2.8%)
Jiangxi (Gan)	24 million (2.4%)
Northern Min	13 million (1.3%)

Source: DeFrancis 1985]

Besides the Han and their language, known in Chinese as Hanyu (汉语), the government of the People's Republic extends official recognition to 55 ethnic minorities, known according to Marxist terminology as "National Minorities" (少数民族). Although these minorities make up only 6.7% of the total Chinese population, in absolute numbers, at almost 70 million in 1982, they are no negligible quantity compared, say, with the 56 million population of Great Britain. The proportion of national minorities has also almost doubled since the early 1950's by comparison with the Han population due to great improvements in medical care, and, more recently, to more liberal population policies in the minority areas. As was mentioned above, there is a less than precise correspondence between official

recognition of a national minority and the existence of a separate language, since the official policy follows the lines laid down by Stalin for Soviet nationalities in the 1930's, viz. recognition is granted based on (1) common territory, (2) common economic ties, (3) common psychological ties, and (4) a common language. Nevertheless, the following treatment of non-Han languages will for the most part follow the divisions recognized as national minorities for the simple reason that they provide a clear and convenient starting point to tackle a complex topic. However, where there are significant differences between the linguistic and ethnic units, these will be pointed out.

According to the traditional Stammbaum grouping of languages used by Chinese philologists, four main families are to be found within the Sino-Tibetan phylum: Chinese itself, Tibeto-Burman (藏缅), Kam-Thai or Zhuang-Dong in Chinese usage (侗台), and Miao-Yao (苗瑶). The genetic relationship between these languages is illustrated in Figure 2. It should be noted that there is considerable disagreement among specialists regarding the problem of classification. The treatment given here draws heavily on the genetic classification given in the 1979 edition of the Chinese encyclopedia Ci Hai.

Languages of the Tibeto-Burman family of Sino-Tibetan are to be found in the southernmost province of Yunnan, and in Tibet and the contiguous provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, and Gansu. They fall into three main groupings: Tibetan (藏), Yi (彝), and Jingpo (景颇). One of the three dialects of Tibetan is spoken by 3.8 million people in

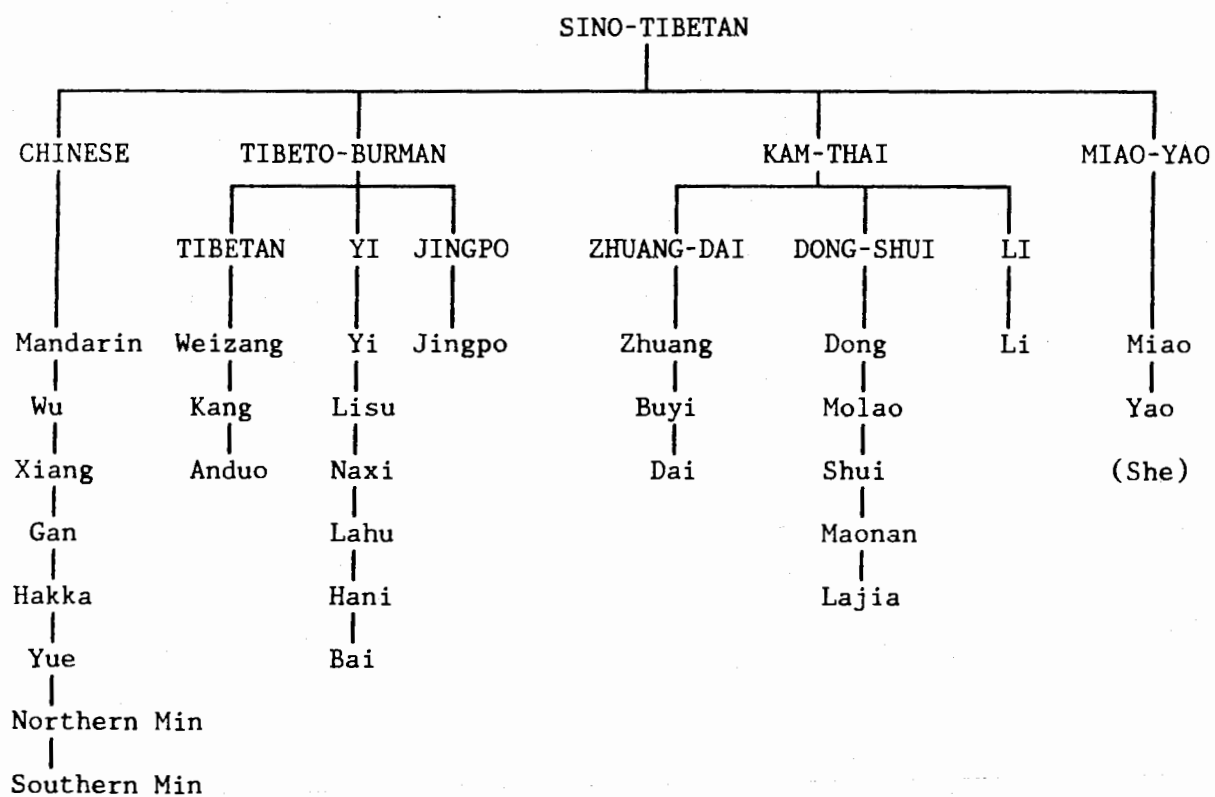


Figure 2: Languages of the Sino-Tibetan phylum spoken in China

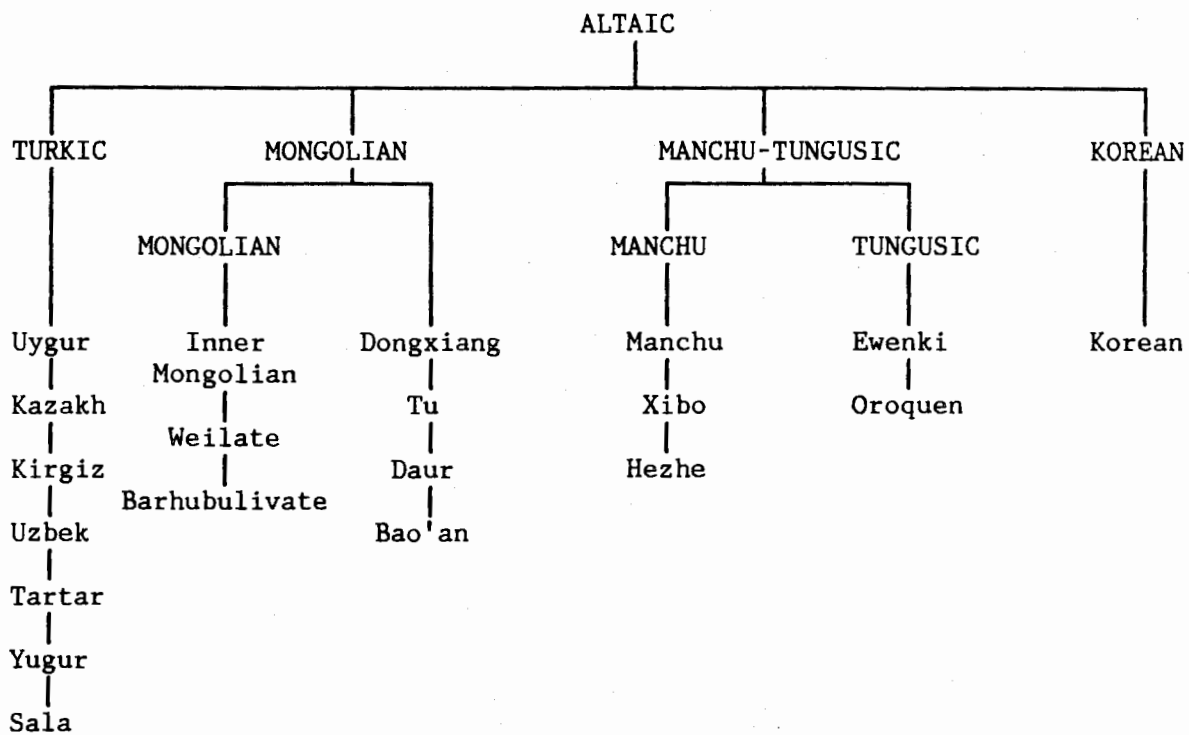


Figure 3: Languages of the Altaic phylum spoken in China

Tibet and neighboring areas. In Tibet proper, it is the language of the 96% Tibetan majority, but other related languages are spoken by the Menba (Tibetan Menpa) (门巴) and Luoba (Lopa) (洛巴). Naxi (纳西), a language of the Yi group, is spoken along the Burmese border. Other unrecognized minorities in Tibet include the Denpa and the Sherpa. The Yi group is a large and various grouping in Yunnan, Sichuan, and Guangxi comprising the languages of the 5.5 million Yi nationality, the Lisu (傈僳), Lahu (拉祜), Hani (哈尼), and Bai (白) peoples. The third branch of the Tibeto-Burman family is represented alone in China by the 90,000 Jingpo (景颇) of Yunnan Province.

The Kam-Thai (Zhuang-Dong) family splits into three branches, Zhuang-Dai (壮侬), Dong-Shui (侗水), and Li (黎). The largest number of speakers is to be found in the Zhuang-Dai branch which includes the largest of China's National Minorities, the Zhuang, who number 13.3 million according to the 1982 census and who control the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, a strategically highly sensitive province bordering on hostile Vietnam, and overflow into Yunnan and Guangdong. This branch also includes the .8 million Dai (傣) of Yunnan province, closely related in culture and language to the Dai of neighboring Laos, Burma, and Thailand, and the 2.1 million Buyi (布依) of Guizhou province. The Dong-Shui branch includes nationalities spread over Guizhou, Guangxi, and Hunan provinces such as the Dong (侗), Molao (仡佬), Shui (水), and Maonan (毛南), as well the Lajia (拉祜), an unrecognized subgroup of the Yao (瑶) nationality who nonetheless speak a language mutually incomprehensible with Yao.

The Miao-Yao branch of the Sino-Tibetan family consists of two languages with a number of dialects of each. The Miao (苗) and Yao (瑶) are mountain peoples of the Chinese-Laotian border areas, and are better known by their Thai names of Meo and Yeo. Many of the Laotian Miao, better known in the United States as the Hmong, have sought refuge from Laos in the refugee camps of Thailand, and in the United States. The Laotian, and now American, Hmong recognize twelve "generals" of the Hmong nation, of whom three live among the over 5 million Miao in China. Although 1.4 million Yao live in China, the majority of Yao are to be found across the border in Vietnam and Laos. Finally, a lone group called the She (舍), numbering .4 million in provinces to the east of the main Sino-Tibetan groups such as Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Guangdong speaks a language which is recognized as Sino-Tibetan but which Chinese philologists have so far been unable to relate to other languages within the Sino-Tibetan phylum.

Altaic Languages

From the tropical borderlands of the South, we now turn our attention to the plains, mountains, and grasslands of East and Central Asia, an area which for China has traditionally been the direction from which foreign invaders have overrun the entire country. Most notable of the invasions from the north were the Xiongnu (匈奴) or Huns during the Tang dynasty, the Mongols, who under Kublai Khan established the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) with its capital at Peking, and the Manchus, who founded the last imperial dynasty, the Qing in 1636.

In no case did these northern invaders of the Han homelands

preserve their own language once they had seized the imperial throne, but gradually accepted the written and spoken standard of the Hans. This was true even when the invaders brought with them their own writing system, as was the case with the Manchus. A walk around the well-preserved Qing imperial palace in Peking today will bring to sight only a small number of inscriptions in the distinctive Manchu orthography, indicating that by the time of the late Qing in the nineteenth century, very little remained of the native language of the 17th century invaders.

The Altaic phylum is conveniently divided into three families which stretch from West to East across the northern provinces. (See figure 3 for a Stammbaum representation of the Altaic language family.) The grasslands and mountains of China's westernmost province, Xinjiang, whose official title of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region testifies to the predominant presence of 6 million Uygurs (维吾尔), are the home of a number of languages of the Turkic family. The speakers of these ancient languages of Central Asia have scant respect for modern national frontiers, and many of China's minorities in the area have close ethnic and cultural links to the neighboring Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, and Uzbekistan.

The languages and dialects of the Mongolian family are spoken by peoples spread across the grasslands of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and in the Mongolian People's Republic to the north. The Manchu-Tungusic languages are spoken by ethnic minorities in China's northeasterly provinces of Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang. This is

an area which has been of great strategic importance in recent Chinese history since it is rich in minerals. In the Anti-Japanese War of 1937-1945, it was the first part of the Chinese mainland to fall to Japan, which exploited its resources for raw materials for the Japanese munitions industry. The puppet state of Manchukuo which Japan established in the Chinese Northeast to legitimize its occupation cleverly exploited the ethnic nationalism of the area by inviting the deposed Qing emperor, Pu Yi, who was of course a Manchu, to rule an "independent" Manchukuo (literally, Manchu-land).

The easternmost branch of the Altaic phylum is Korean, which is spoken by a highly educated minority of one million Koreans in the Chinese province of Jilin, as well, of course, as across the Yalu River in North Korea.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that the Chinese Moslems form a distinct (and officially recognized) ethnic minority by virtue of their religious and cultural practices. The Moslems, or Hui (回) as they are known to the Hans are concentrated in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and in the neighboring provinces of Qinghai and Gansu. In China the language used by the Chinese Moslems in the Northwest is not considered officially as a separate language, but rather as an eastern variety of the Gan dialect of Chinese, known in Chinese as Donggan (东干), and locally as Zhunyan or Zhunyanese. Two recent articles (Hashimoto 1978 and Wexler 1980) however have established that Zhunyanese is a distinct ethnolinguistic variety. Across the border in the Kirghiz and Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republics the language of the Chinese Moslems is

accorded official status as a minority language. And as the language of a group identified mainly by religious differences from the surrounding community, Wexler finds parallels between Zhunyanese and Yiddish.

Zhunyanese ... bears a resemblance to the unique language variants created by Jews (e.g. Yiddish vis-a-vis German dialects, Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Persian, etc.) and hence should be studied within the framework of communal dialectology.

(Wexler 1980: 296-7)

Other Language Families

A couple of Indo-European languages are distinctive of two officially recognized minorities in the central Asian province of Xinjiang: the Muslim Tajik (塔吉克), population 22,000, and a tiny number of Russians. An Austro-Melanesian language is spoken by the Gaoshan (高山), the aboriginal people of Taiwan, whose language is fast disappearing after 400 years of Chinese influence, and the great efforts to spread Guoyu made by the nationalist Chinese government of Taiwan since 1945. It should also be noted that several generations of Taiwanese who grew up under the Japanese occupation of Taiwan from 1895 to 1945 became bilingual in Taiwanese (a southern Min dialect of Chinese) and Japanese, which was the medium of instruction in schools during the occupation. It is thus quite common to find Taiwanese of this generation who are literate only in Japanese and who exhibit complex code-switching behaviors between Taiwanese and Japanese speech varieties (Kiang 1985).

Finally, four languages are classified by Chinese philologists as belonging to a South Asian phylum distinct from Sino-Tibetan. These are spoken by national minorities in Yunnan and Guangxi: Benglong (崩龍, population 10,000 in Yunnan), Bulang (布朗, population 50,000 in Yunnan), Wa (佤, population 260,000 in Yunnan) and the seafaring Jing (京, population 5,000 in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region).

The Language Policies of the Hans in Ethnic Minority Areas

According to a New China News Agency report issued after the 1982 census, 6.7% of the Chinese population are members of minority nationalities. By way of comparison, this figure is of the same order as the 7.2% of foreigners with permanent residence in the Federal Republic of Germany. Since the minority nationalities are relatively small in percentage terms and live in remote areas, the question arises whether the political and linguistic issues which their existence pose are of importance to the Han majority. It is certainly not the case that minority nationality issues are of prime concern to the Peking Government, but nonetheless there are a number of institutions of the central government that are dedicated to the governance of minorities. The State Nationalities Affairs Commission (國家民族委員會) at just below the rank of ministry is the highest level institution dealing with minorities, and the leadership of the Commission in recent years has been mostly in the hands of minority officials (The 1980 edition of the China Handbook lists a Hui as Commissioner, and a Tibetan, two Hans, a Mongol, a Zhuang, a Uygur, and a Yi as Vice-Commissioners). The most important central institution for language policy in minority areas is

the Central Institute for National Minorities in Peking, which was established two years after Liberation and serves as a training institution for (1) Han cadres who are posted to minority areas, (2) propaganda workers in minority areas, (3) both Han and minority interpreters and translators. It also provides a three-year training program in minority arts and crafts (Stockwell 1974). There are also symbolic recognitions of minorities. The one Yuan bill, the basic unit of national currency, depicts minorities marching forward at the side of Hans, and the denomination is written in Chinese characters, Hanyu Pinyin romanization, as well as in Mongolian and Arabic orthographies.

The political importance of minorities to the Han thus exceeds what one might expect from their relative numbers. There are a number of reasons for this. First among them is the importance of national minorities in the frontier regions. Ethnic groupings in Central, East, and South Asia as in other parts of the world are more ancient than the modern nation states which have drawn lines on a map in order to establish boundaries between each other. Thus the minorities in the border areas of Yunnan and Guangxi are also to be found across the border in Vietnam, Laos, and Burma; the Mongols of Inner Mongolia are brothers of Mongols in the Mongolian People's Republic; the Central Asian Uygurs, Tartars, and Tajiks spread across into the neighboring Soviet Republics; and the Koreans in Jilin have relatives across the border in North Korea. The total length of China's land boundary is 17,500 miles, a line which is shared with a total of twelve other nations. With such an extensive border to defend, there are inevitably

border conflicts, such as those which occur daily with Vietnam, and during the 1960's occurred with great regularity with the Soviet Union. Dissatisfaction among the minorities regarding the policies of Peking has resulted in mass migrations of citizens across the border, such as the flight of the Dalai Lama and much of the Tibetan theocracy into Nepal and India in 1959, and the flight of 60,000 Uyghurs across the border into the Soviet Union in 1960. In both cases these migrations coincided with times of hostility between China and her neighbors, and brought her enemies a great propaganda victory.

A second reason for the importance of nationalities is that in the vast and sparsely-populated areas inhabited by minorities are to be found coal and mineral deposits, the greater part of China's forest land and wide grasslands where sheep, cattle and horses are bred. The natural resources of these areas are very important for a developing economy, and are also eyed jealously by her neighbors. We have seen above how ethnic minority politics played a part in the Japanese exploitation of the mineral wealth of China's Northeast during World War II.

Besides these concerns of realpolitik, there has been an idealistic feeling at times in the history of the People's Republic that the old "Big Han Chauvinism" (大汉族主义) toward non-Han minorities of previous times was inconsistent with principles of socialist construction. Many policy papers of the early 1950's (cf. Chang 1956, Fei 1979) develop the socialist approach instituted by the Soviets in the 1930's that the main social and economic contradiction among

minorities is not a question of nationalism but rather a class struggle similar to that which exists in Han areas. The role of the Han in these early papers was that of an "elder brother" to the minorities. The Han, by virtue of their greater technological achievements would help the minorities to develop along their own lines.

Although the policies toward minorities which were followed in the early years of the People's Republic were modeled on those of Stalin, the state which arose was a very different one to the federation of republics which took shape in the U.S.S.R. The closest that China came to granting independent soviet republic status to its minority areas was the creation of five Autonomous Regions (A.R.'s), similar in size and administrative structure to provinces but "autonomous" in the sense that minority affairs in these regions are governed locally. These regions are: Inner Mongolia, the Xinjiang Uygur A.R., the Guangxi Zhuang A.R., the Ningxia Hui A.R., and Tibet. In addition a number of autonomous prefectures were established within provinces in which minorities have the right to decide local affairs without undue interference from Peking. In Yunnan, for example, eight autonomous prefectures were set up for eight different minorities, as Table 2 shows.

Table 2: Autonomous Prefectures in Yunnan Province

Prefecture	Minorities	Area (Sq. Km.)
Xishuangbanna	Dai	25,000
Dehong	Dai, Jingpo	34,752
Nujiang	Lisu	25,096
Dali	Bai	33,000
Degen	Tibetan	36,877
Honghe	Hani, Yi	32,000
Wenshan	Zhuang, Miao	30,000
Chuxiong	Yi	30,000

Source: China Handbook 1980]

The Soviet and Chinese situations are not directly comparable since the Soviet Union's Russian "majority" in fact consists of less than 50% of the population, whereas the Han Chinese make up 94% of the Chinese population. Some of the Soviet nationalities, moreover, were technologically quite advanced, while China's minorities remained relatively backward. Thus it was possible for a Georgian like Stalin to reach the apex of political power in the Soviet Union, whereas the highest that a minority leader has reached in China was the appointment of the Mongol, Ulanhu (乌兰夫), to the first vice-presidency of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress (equivalent in some ways to a Parliament).

Policies of the Hans toward minorities however have not always been benevolent. In fact, like many other facets of Chinese political life they have been characterized by violent swings of the political pendulum. Dreyer (1978) outlines six stages in the chronology of central policies of language planning between 1949 and the present.

The first stage which lasted from Liberation until the Hundred Flowers Movement of 1956, was a liberal period in which developments were based on the 1949 Common Program of the P.R.C. which gave "each of the minorities alike ... the freedom to develop its own language". The All-China Minorities Education Conference held in 1951 proposed that all minorities having their own written language be taught in those languages at the primary and secondary school levels. For the greater number of minorities who did not have an orthography, the Chinese Academy of Sciences established in 1951 a program of research in nationality languages. In the same year the Central Nationalities Institute was founded, and in 1953 the foundation of a Nationalities Press facilitated the preparation of works in minority languages. By 1955, the intellectual daily Guangming Ribao reported that there were 20 newspapers and 28 magazines published in the Mongolian, Uygur, Tibetan, Kazakh, Korean, Xibo, and Yi languages. Despite the progress which was made in these areas, there seems to have been little progress in devising and propagating orthographies for the unwritten languages, for in 1956 Ulanhu complained that "no vigorous and practical support is given to devising and promoting minority nationalities' written languages". In 1956 the government announced its first five-year plan for minority languages. This plan called for more effort on similar lines to those which had been carried out so far. It is of interest to note that in the honeymoon spirit of collaboration with the Soviet Union in those years, the plan included a scheme to convert the languages of the Turkic family spoken by Muslims in Xinjiang from an Arabic to a Cyrillic script.

Many of these liberal language planning policies were discontinued or even reversed after the "Hundred Flowers" period of popular criticism of the Communist Party and the government which brought to light fervent local nationalisms and dissatisfaction with Han policies. As an article in the June 1959 issue of Minzu Tuanjie put it,

In general books for minorities exhibited objectionable levels of local nationalism, religious sentiment, capitalist thought, and tendencies to aloofness from politics, reality and production.

(Fu Mou-chi 1959)

The policy with which the Party countered these tendencies was part of the Great Leap Forward in which Mao Zedong hoped to move the economy into a higher stage of socialism while improving productivity. The central government and Han cadres began to propagandize the use of the language of the Hans as a means to the achievement of rapid industrialization, and withdrew support from translation, research and publication facilities in minority languages since these were now considered "unproductive". Orthographies were to be devised based on the Hanyu Pinyin romanization recently established for Chinese, and one of the first efforts at the application of the new orthography was in the very Turkic languages which the authorities had five years earlier enjoined to use Cyrillic. In the case of these languages, the decision to discontinue Cyrillic was an attempt to render communications more difficult across the border with the Soviet Union at a time when relations between the two countries were becoming much cooler. As we have noted previously, it was a case of too little too late, and did

not prevent the mass migration of Uygurs across the frontier to Soviet Turkestan.

Thus by the end of the first decade of Communist language policy for China's ethnic minorities, there had been an about-face on two of the three main platforms of the policy. While the old principle of helping each minority to create and reform its written language was still considered applicable to all minorities, there was some criticism at the end of the decade of a purported previous view that the investigation of spoken languages "was for the sake of coining written languages, and that the more written languages were coined the better" (Schwartz 1962:175). However, the two other planks of the new policy clearly revealed the anti-pluralist stand of the Han government. Fu Mou-chi (1959) warned that the minorities must "grasp the tendency for spoken and written languages to draw closer to the Chinese language. Any plea for the preservation of purity of the existing minority languages must be resolutely attacked". Finally the third principle of the policy ordered members of minority nationalities of all ages to learn Chinese; and where this was not practical, minority languages were to be created and reformed just to the extent that effective government propaganda was assured.

The failure of the Great Leap Forward and the famine and intense suffering that it caused is now an established fact of modern Chinese history. Economic chaos, political dissension, and in some areas outright rebellion ensued. The policies of the period could not withstand such an onslaught and were changed or reversed. Among the

changes was the party's attitude to minority languages. One of the first indications of the changes is found in reports in the national press in 1962 of a conference on nationality language and education work held in the capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Huhehot. The reports praised the Party's efforts in encouraging and developing the study of Mongolian, and mentioned research on the dialects of Mongolian and the translation of Mongolian literature into Chinese. According to the report, at that time Mongolian was the language of instruction in elementary and secondary education, although students "also pay attention to learning Hanyu" (Guangming Ribao February 15, 1962).

The liberalized policy towards minority languages continued until 1966, which saw the onset of the Cultural Revolution and yet another attack on minority languages, described by Dreyer in the following passage:

The four minority language editions in which the magazine China Pictorial had been published (Zhuang, Mongolian, Tibetan and Uygur) disappeared at the beginning of 1967, as did much broadcasting in minority languages. Ulanhu was purged; among his long list of alleged crimes was giving orders "to organize a movement in the whole Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region to study Mongolian in order to compete with and resist the mass movement for the creative study and application of Chairman Mao's works".

(Dreyer 1978: 377)

The more restrictive policy of the Cultural Revolution continued in effect until the spring of 1971, when another abrupt about-face occurred. Again national and provincial radio stations began broadcasts in minority languages which had been cut off in 1967. The

media began to make frequent references to the activities of publishing in nationalities' languages, and even the new revolutionary operas introduced during the Cultural Revolution under the patronage of Mao's wife Jiang Qing were adapted into the Bai, Korean, Uygur, and Kazakh languages.

The meeting of the Fourth National People's Congress in January 1975, which marked the end of the decade of turmoil of the Cultural Revolution, approved a new constitution in which the legal right of all nationalities to use their own spoken and written languages was reaffirmed, and confirmed a tendency toward a more liberal policy toward the minorities. Despite this pronouncement, the enthusiasm for minority languages was not at the same level as in the early 50's, and reforms to spread the use of Chinese which had been instituted previously were not abandoned. In 1974 the Hanyu Pinyin romanization system for the Uygur script which had been proposed way back at the beginning of the Great Leap period was reported to have been introduced on a wide scale (Dilger 1984:158). However, the policy had turned full circle by 1983, when Dilger reports that the Uygurs had once again returned to the Arabic script that they started with in the early 1950's.

Dreyer summarizes the history of language policy in the three decades since liberation in the following words:

The PRC policy toward minority languages has swung between attitudes of tolerance during periods associated with the prevalence of conservative policies among the ruling elite and more repressive policies associated with periods when more radical views prevailed among the ruling elite.

(Dreyer 1978: 382)

Although the swings of the policy pendulum have been well documented by the Chinese media and in party journals, one is still at a loss to describe the effect of these policies among the minority peoples for whom they were designed. It seems highly unlikely that the literate adult Uygur who from childhood had used an Arabic script to express his thoughts in writing would have changed his habits and culture of literacy from Cyrillic to Pinyin romanization and then back again to Arabic with quite the same rapidity that the authorities enjoined him to do so. There is thus some considerable doubt as to the effectiveness of these policies, for if a language policy is to be truly effective, it has to be enforced over the very long term of at least two generations at least. While a highly centralized state like China with a long tradition of national government is in the position to effect this kind of long term language policy, as the government of the new Turkish republic was in the 1920's and 30's, it does not seem to have carried it out effectively. Much greater consistency and success has been seen in the script reform of the Hans' language itself (cf. Seybolt & Chiang 1979).

To a certain extent the problems of the minorities have been

trivialized by the Hans. Their quaintness and picturesque costumes and dances have been eagerly preserved, whereas one suspects that in the homelands of the less populous minorities the cultural patterns and networks of interaction through which their ancestral languages lived and breathed are fast being eroded by rural development and better communications with the outside world. The result is that the minority with the connivance of the Han becomes conscious of preserving its quaintness for the benefit of outsiders. The minorities thus become custodians of a museum of a culture which is fast disappearing. This is a situation which I have witnessed among the Austro-Melanesian Gaoshan ("Mountain") people of Taiwan. The efforts at sinification by the Nationalist government have been so successful that the remains of the mountain settlements of these people have been turned into "Cultural Centers" where the indigenes (mixed with not a few Hans) put on shows of Gaoshan song and dance for tourists. Since language, by virtue of its nature as a means of communication, cannot be preserved as an artifact in a museum there are today very few remaining speakers of Gaoshan languages. Even the songs they perform for the benefit of tourists are now sung in Chinese. This situation may be unique to Taiwan where the sinification policies of the government have been much more consistent than in the People's Republic, but one suspects that the smaller minorities on the mainland are suffering a similar fate. Of the main groups such as the Mongols and the Uygurs in the north, the Zhuang in the south, and the Tibetans in the west, the evidence is that these groups have had much greater success in preserving their languages and distinct identities. To a large extent this has to do

with the fact that these peoples possess what Fishman has called a Great Tradition of cultural achievements, most notably literacy in non-Chinese scripts. This, together with the sizable numbers of these minorities has caused Peking to pay considerably more attention to the problems of these areas than would otherwise be the case. Well-publicized "inspection tours" of the Tibet and Xinjiang Autonomous regions by the Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦) in recent years have brought to light many economic, social, and inextricably linked linguistic problems of these areas, and have called for a new resolve and more effective policies to deal with them.

Conclusions

The complexities of the language situation in a country as vast as China defy adequate description in a short paper such as this. Nonetheless, for sociolinguists and scholars of language planning this very complexity is a rich source of data with which to explore and compare analytical concepts of linguistic politics involving majority and minority groups which have been developed in other geographical and social contexts. It is difficult for Western scholars or Chinese scholars trained in sociolinguistic methods to do fieldwork in minority areas, and thus the field suffers from a dearth of primary data. The information which is available consists of commentaries on policy, and thus is of a political rather than a linguistic nature.

The study of Chinese language policy in ethnic minority areas is, however, a feasible undertaking. The history of this policy since

Liberation, and its effects on a number of different groups is the subject that I have attempted to sketch in this paper. We have seen how that policy has never been decided on purely linguistic grounds, but has been profoundly influenced by foreign policy concerns, power struggles among the party hierarchy, and other extrinsic factors. As a result, language policy toward minorities has been subject to violent swings of the political pendulum. This is in contrast to language planning and script reform for the Han language itself which has developed consistently and relatively free from extrinsic political influence. The situation of language policy and planning in China today is unclear. It is unlikely that the same concerns of nation-building which were foremost in the minds of language planners during the first decade of the People's Republic are the contemporary concerns of Chinese whose revolution has now matured. I have speculated that except for the major linguistic minorities with their own literate Great Tradition, the cultural identities and thus the languages of the minorities will gradually disappear as China presses toward its goal of modernization in the present relatively peaceful political climate. Whether this will in fact occur or whether local nationalisms will grow as has been the recent experience in Western Europe, and as rebellions among the Dai on Hainan Island in recent years have evidenced is a question which only further research and close first-hand observation of the linguistic situation can decide.

1. This paper was prepared as a term paper for Dr. Nessa Wolfson's

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnes, D. (1978). The language of instruction in Chinese communities. International Review of Education 24 (3):371-374.
- Cai X.S. (1981). Ethnic minorities in Tibet. In Tibet, edited by Jugoslovenska Revija, Belgrade and the Shanghai People's Art Publishing House. London: Frederick Muller Ltd. in association with Summerfield Press.
- Chang C.I. (1956). Zhongguo geming ti minzu wenti he minzu zhengce jianghua (tikang). Peking: China youth publishing house. Translated and annotated in The party and the national question in China by George Moseley. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M. I. T. Press.
- Cheng, C.C. (1979). Language reform in China in the seventies. Word 30(1-2): 45-57.
- China handbook. (1980). Hong Kong: Ta Kung Pao.
- China official annual report 1981. (1981). Hong Kong: Kingsway International Publications Ltd.
- Chiu, R.K.W. (1970). Language contact and language planning in China (1900-1967: A selected bibliography). Quebec, Canada: Les presses de l'Université Laval. Published for the International Center for Research on Bilingualism.
- Ci hai. (1979). Shanghai cishu chubanshe.
- Cuei X.S., Z.C. In, Q.F. Wang, and C.L. Fong. (1983). Education among the Jinuo tribe. Chinese Education 16(2-3):78-91.
- The Cultural Palace of Nationalities (ed.).(1981). Zhongguo ge minzu: China's nationalities. Peking: The Nationalities Publishing House.
- DeFrancis, J. (1984). The Chinese language: Fact and fantasy. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- Dilger, B. (1984). The education of minorities. Comparative Education 20(1):155-164.
- Dreyer, J.T. (1978). Language planning for China's ethnic minorities. Pacific Affairs 51(3):369-383.

- Fei H.T. (1979). On the social transformation of China's minority nationalities. Social Praxis 6(3-4): 141-159.
- Fincher, B.H. (1972). Impressions of language in China. China Quarterly 50: 333-340.
- Fu M.C. (1962). Minzu Tuanjie, no. 3. 25-27; 36-37.
- Hashimoto, M.J. (1978). Current developments in Zhunyanese (Soviet Dunganese) studies. Journal of Chinese Linguistics 6(2): 243-267.
- Hashimoto, O.K.Y. (1972). Studies in Yue dialects 1: Phonology of Cantonese. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hawkins, J.N. (1978). National-minority education in the People's Republic of China. Comparative Education Review 22(1):149-162.
- Hsü, R.S.W. (1979). A select bibliography of Modern Standard Chinese. In Hong Kong language papers, R. Lord, (ed.). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Jackson, R. & B.K.Y. T'sou. (1979). Language problems and language reform in the People's Republic of China. Modern Languages 60(2): 78-88.
- Kiang, N.W. (1985). Language situation and language policy in Taiwan. MS, University of Pennsylvania.
- Kratochvil, P. (1968). The Chinese language today: Features of an emerging standard. London: Hutchinson University Library.
- Lehmann, W.P. (1975). Language and linguistics in the People's Republic of China. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Liu, W.W. (1979). Dialect features and communication problems in Linxian. Journal of Chinese Linguistics 7.1: 29-43.
- Llata, R. & M. Barrera. (1975). The Chinese national minorities policy. Aztlan 6(3):379-408.
- Lum, J.B. (1976). Bilingual policies in the People's Republic of China. Studies in comparative international development 11.1: 88-98.
- Ma X.L. (1977) [1957]. Hanyu pinyin fangan yu shaoshu minzu wenzi de guanxi. Zhongguo Yuwen December 1957, pp.5-6. Translated as "The relationship between the plan for phonetic spelling of Chinese and national minority written languages". Chinese Education 8(3-4):144-155 (1977-78).
- Moseley, G. (1965). China's fresh approach to the national minority question. China Quarterly 24:15-27.

- Pillsbury, B.L.K. (1976). Pig and policy: Maintenance of boundaries between Han and Muslim Chinese. Ethnic Groups 1(2):151-162.
- Schwarz, H.G. (1962). Communist language policies for China's ethnic minorities: The first decade. China Quarterly 3(12):170-182.
- Seybolt, P.J. & G.K.K. Chiang. (1979). Language reform in China: Documents and commentary. White Plains, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Stockwell, R. (1974). National minorities in China. Integrated Education 12.72: 20-21.
- Tan H. (1983). China's national minorities and their languages. Chinese Language Teachers Association Journal 18.3.53-61.
- U.S. Government Printing Office Atlas. 1974. Ethnolinguistic groups in China. Reprinted in Integrated Education 12.72.22-23.
- Wexler, P. (1980). Zhunyanese (Dungan) as an Islamic and Soviet language. Journal of Chinese Linguistics 8(2):294-304.
- Yan X.Q. (1983). Chinese policy on the language and education of national minorities. Language learning and communication/Zhongying Yuwen Jiaoxue 2.2.167-179.
- Yu, Y.C. (1979). The population policy of China. Population studies 33.1: 125-142.