

Assimilationist Ideology and Minority Language Rights: The Case of Manchu Language Endangerment and Revitalization

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of assimilationist ideology and policies on the surprisingly severe Manchu language endangerment via a social-historical analysis. Building on an examination of two language policy models and four historical stages of minority language education since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, this study highlights the importance of viewing Manchu language as minority language speakers' necessary human rights. In order to emphasize human agency considerations, this study also argues for the promising involvement of local educators and communities in planning for Manchu language revitalization. Suggestions for ideological shifts and implementational concerns are provided to address various sociopolitical and economic constraints, and to empower Manchus to contest the historical injustice Manchus have experienced by actively protecting their language rights and resources.

Keywords

Manchu language endangerment, Manchu language revitalization, minority language policy, minority language rights, linguistic human rights, language ideology

1. Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has witnessed remarkably rapid progresses in its economic, political, and educational policies and practices in the past several decades, which have tremendously affected the entire society and its 110 million indigenous and minority members in particular (Beckett & Postiglione, 2012). Since language is widely considered critically important for an ethnic minority group's reproduction and sustainability, both Chinese and international researchers have been increasingly interested in exploring the impact of China's language policies on minority education (e.g., Nelson, 2005; Wang & Phillion, 2009; Wang, 2015, etc.). During the last twelve years, social harmony

has become the state motif of the PRC, originally championed by the former President Hu Jintao and promoted in all recent official policies (Wang et al., 2012). Evolving from a classical Confucian ideal, social harmony as a goal of language policy indicates peaceful coexistence of majority and minority peoples as well as respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. However, a large number of minority languages continue to see a massive shift to Mandarin Chinese, including the most severely endangered language—Manchu, which is characterized as extinct in the PRC national census in 2006 (Zhou, 2015). Although recent studies reveal that Manchu is still spoken in a few areas in Northeastern China (e.g., Bai, 2008; Zhang & Ma, 2012, etc.), it is undeniable that the seemingly inclusive harmony-oriented policies have not slowed down its fatal endangerment.

According to Beckett and Postiglione (2012), the evolution of China's language policies has sustained an assimilationist trend through and beyond educational practices. By establishing Mandarin Chinese as the national language and standardized medium of instruction, current national language policies continuously marginalize minority languages. Among all those languages vulnerable to linguistic assimilation, Manchu stands out as the most enigmatic victim due to the striking mismatch between the large population of potential speakers and its dramatic decline over time (Bai, 2008). This paper thus attempts to examine the impact of assimilationist ideologies and policies on Manchu language endangerment, regarding historical, sociopolitical, and economic factors that collectively contribute to the *linguistic genocide* (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Following this analysis, I adopt the linguistic human rights perspective to demonstrate the significance of taking actions to revitalize the dying Manchu language in line with the realization of social justice and harmony (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). Lastly, I focus on discussing local educators' essential role in creating ideological and implementational spaces to foster Manchu revitalization from the bottom up, providing suggestions for future policymaking and educational practices (Hornberger, 1997; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007).

2. Method

In order to critically analyze the complex reasons behind Manchu endangerment as an outcome of language planning and policy (LPP), I adopt Tollefson's (1991) historical-structural approach to examine the language ideologies and social-political-economic contexts that have caused and accelerated the language shift. This approach to LPP research assumes that (1) all LPP outcomes reflect the ruling elites' sociopolitical and economic interests, and that (2) hegemonic ideologies are reflected at all levels of societal-institutional implementations that serve to reinforce and reproduce the existing social order (Tollefson, 1991; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Influenced by the critical language policy theory, this approach is often employed by researchers to illuminate ideologies embedded in policy development, highlight the sociopolitical processes that can perpetuate social inequality, and emphasize the vital role of socioeconomic class in shaping language policy alternatives (Tollefson, 2006; Johnson, 2013).

In my view, there are two advantages of using the historical-structural approach to analyze Manchu

language endangerment. First, this approach requires the contextualization of LPP analysis within the evolution of hegemonic practices and oppressive ideologies (Tollefson, 2006). In order to reverse language shift, it is necessary to develop a critical understanding of the social-historical circumstances where the language has been suffering from a negative balance of users and uses (Fishman, 2006; Johnson, 2013). Second, this approach supports the advocacy of linguistic human rights by explaining how Manchu becomes endangered due to historical injustice toward Manchus, which justifies the necessity of protecting linguistic diversity as a way of reducing inequality (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Johnson, 2013).

Nevertheless, exclusively relying on the historical-structural approach has been critiqued for underestimating the power of human agency (Johnson, 2013), which indicates its inability to comprehensively address LPP processes across national, institutional, and interpersonal layers (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). Thus, I integrate this approach with perspectives from ethnographic research that focus on grassroots movements and the agency of local educators and community members. Although it is not uncommon to see local educators' agentic role being overshadowed by the hegemonic power of top-down policies, it is true that almost all top-down policies are interpreted, negotiated, and implemented in locally divergent ways. Even when nation-state ideological discourse allows for limited space for negotiation, implementational spaces created by bottom-up practices are still able to open up local ideological spaces (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). In sum, as I move from examining the emergence and influence of assimilationist ideology toward exploring feasible bottom-up practices to facilitate Manchu language revitalization, I seek to incorporate more human agency considerations into a broader social-historical analysis.

3. Literature Review & Findings

3.1 Language Ideologies and LPP for Minority Education in PRC

Tollefson (2006) refers to ideology as a set of "unconscious beliefs and assumptions that are naturalized and thus contribute to hegemony" (p. 47). Accordingly, I understand language ideology as beliefs and assumptions about language, which plays a vital role in maintaining and reproducing social power. Following a critical approach, any language ideology is inherently political and shaped by particular social-historical contexts. Therefore, the evolving language ideologies enmeshed into China's LPP are worthy of critical examination, not merely because they are often taken for granted (Ajsic & McGroarty, 2015), but because they can drastically influence power relations between the dominant and the oppressed. In this section, I start with an overview of how language ideologies have been evolving and reflected in two institutionalized LPP models. Further, I focus on illustrating how social, political, and economic factors have contributed to the legitimization of assimilationist ideology and policies toward Manchu people and their language in a chronological manner. Drawing on recent research findings, I also adopt an ecological perspective to reflect on Manchu language decline in relation to social changes.

3.1.1 Overview of the PRC's Language Ideologies and LPP

Since the PRC was founded on October 1, 1949, language policies have alternated between pluralistic and integrationist approaches, which respectively emphasize accommodation and assimilation (Beckett & Postiglione, 2012). Zhou (2012) identifies three general conceptual approaches being widely adopted in existing LPP research in China: (1) the descriptive approach, which seeks to review policy implementation among minority peoples across time and evaluate their achievements or shortcomings; (2) the civilizing approach, which seeks to criticize Han chauvinism and argue for counter-hegemonic practices; (3) the political approach, which seeks to highlight that the evolution of LPP has been extensively shaped by the political agenda of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and to capture the tension between centralized power and regional autonomy. Tollefson's (1991) historical-structural approach to LPP is basically congruent with all three approaches mentioned above, and simultaneously draws attention to the socioeconomic interests of ruling elites. Based on a historical account of assimilationist language ideology toward minority peoples in the PRC, I seek to outline major social changes that have occurred since the 1950s, within which LPP efforts are situated and evaluated.

Throughout its history, China has been well recognized as a multiethnic and multilingual country. According to Zhou (2012), there are over 129 languages being spoken among 56 ethnic groups in the PRC, including the Han majority that constitutes over 91% of the total population and 55 minority nationalities. Because of the overwhelmingly large population and concentration of Han Chinese across the country, their shared language—Mandarin Chinese is used as a lingua franca among people of different linguistic backgrounds. In the early 1950s, the most influential LPP outcome is the officialization of standard Mandarin (i.e., a variety of Mandarin based on Beijing dialect) as the national language. The rationale of this status planning is the model of nation-state building, which refers to “the ideological parameters within which a state makes laws and develops policies to consolidate its citizens' national identity for territorial and national integrity” (Zhou, 2012, p. 20). According to Blommaert's (2006) national identity theory, the concept of nation-state is linked to the political-ideological process of nationalism. In terms of language ideology, the construction of national identity among both majority and minority peoples is inevitably faced with the question of whether and to which extent a state should practice monolingualism and/or multilingualism. Whereas multilingualism as an ideology sees language as rights and resources for the community, monolingualism rests on the belief that a unified society should be founded on only one common language (Blommaert, 2006; Zhou, 2012). Consequently, the history of national, top-down LPP in the PRC is an ongoing negotiation moving across the multilingual—monolingual continuum (Hornberger, 2003), demonstrated by the shift from the Soviet model toward the Chinese model (Zhou, 2012).

The Soviet Model: 1949-1991. The PRC government adopted the Soviet model of multinational state building with specific modifications from the early 1950s, which recognized the 56 ethnic nationalities as equal Chinese citizens by guaranteeing their freedom to use and develop their own languages (Zhou, 2012). Moreover, the acknowledgement of minority language rights was included in the 1954

Constitution (Wang & Phillion, 2009). Nevertheless, the equality of different minority languages was primarily acknowledged on the conceptual level. In other words, the implementation of multilingual LPP was in actuality overwhelmed by the CCP's efforts to spread Mandarin Chinese for linguistic convergence, thereby consolidating various ethnic identities into a unified national identity. As Nelson (2005) argues, the CCP's planning for a unified national identity implicitly positioned minority languages as barriers to effective communication between the central government and local communities, which would hinder the uniform Chinese identity from being instilled. Interestingly, his argument displays a shift of meaning from a "unified national identity" to the "uniform Chinese identity", which indicates the discrepancies between policy statements and practices to influence minority language use. While examining the Soviet model, Zhou (2012) uncovers that the governmental endorsement of multilingualism was based on the assumption that "each minority nationality and each minority language are initially satellites of the majority nationality and the majority language" (p. 23). Thus, I argue that the Soviet model was seemingly accommodationist but intrinsically assimilationist. As Wang and Phillion (2009) point out, the general principle of governmental policies toward minority groups and languages in this period emphasized the notion of *Ronghe*, which means amalgamating diverse components into one entity. Such assimilationist ideology reached its climax during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), which will be discussed in detail later.

The Chinese Model: 1991-now. Serving as a replacement of the Soviet model after the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Chinese model was adopted as a response to the market-oriented economic reform (Zhou, 2012). Thanks to the rapid development of national and international economy, people in the PRC were freed from the previous state-controlled job allocation. As more and more rural residents moved to urban areas for occupational purposes, the central government recognized a strong demand for having a standard language to serve communication needs. As a result, the spread of Mandarin Chinese was strongly empowered by the market, which legitimized "the strictly-structured order of functions and resources for languages" and marginalized minority languages "politically and functionally" (Zhou, 2012, p. 26). Ideologically, the Chinese model of LPP radically supports linguistic assimilation by promoting Mandarin Chinese as the uniform national language for all Chinese citizens and positioning minority languages as symbols of linguistic diversity. So far, I have compared the two major LPP models as part of the PRC's nation-state building project. Although it is generally agreed upon that the Chinese model represents the assimilationist ideology of the political authorities and the dominant social group, it remains controversial whether the Soviet model promotes the accommodationist or assimilationist ideology. From my perspective, the Soviet model attempted to display an inclusive perspective, but it failed to protect minority language rights by providing any regulatory support when such rights were undermined. Due to its dependence on the CCP's political agenda, either public or hidden, the Soviet model of LPP had to be strictly aligned with the state's primary mission—building a unified Chinese national identity. Therefore, even if the Soviet model was in principle accommodationist, implementation of multilingual education in the PRC has

always been characterized by the centrality of top-down laws and policies that attempt to encompass ethnic diversity within the nation-state political framework (Wang, 2015). As a conclusion, the assimilationist ideology has been controlling both the Soviet model and the Chinese model for the past six decades. In the following section, I will focus on the case of Manchu language endangerment and revitalization to examine the impact of the PRC's assimilationist ideology and policies on minority languages over time.

3.1.2 Assimilationist Ideology and Language Decline: The Case of Manchu

Manchus, former rulers of Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), constitute the second largest minority nationality in China (Bradley, 2005). With more than 10 million officially registered Manchu individuals, the Manchu language is surprisingly among the most severely endangered across the nation (Janhunen, 1997; Kane, 1997; Zhang & Ma, 2012). While some scholars attribute the dramatic decline of Manchu language to Qing imperial elites' Sinicization and their ignorance of protecting the territorial integrity of rural Manchu speakers (Janhunen, 1997), a thorough examination of the accelerated language shift in the past several decades is yet to be conducted. In order to complement the historical-structural approach to generate more critical analyses, I seek to understand the case of Manchu from an ecology of language perspective, which is characterized by Hornberger (2006b) in terms of three themes:

“The first theme is that languages, like living species, evolve, grow, change, live, and die in relation to other languages—the language evolution theme. Second, languages interact with their environment (sociopolitical, economic, cultural, educational, historical, demographic, and so on)—language environment theme. A third theme is the notion that some languages, like some species and environments, may be endangered and that the ecology movement is about not only studying and describing those potential losses, but also contracting them; this I call the language endangerment theme” (pp. 7-8).

Following this ecological perspective, I will address (1) the Manchu language shift in relation to other languages, (2) how it interacts with the national and regional language environments, and (3) how to reduce the potential losses as it continues to decline. According to Wang and Phillion (2009), the PRC's minority LPP experienced three stages: (1) support of minority languages before the mid-1950s, (2) suppression of minority languages during the late 1950s and the Cultural Revolution, and (3) tolerance of minority languages starting from the late 1970s. Building on their classification, which only represents the era of the Soviet model, I add a fourth stage—market-driven assimilation of minority languages starting from 1991. Henceforth, I will examine how assimilationist ideology plays a role in shaping Manchu language evolution, environment and endangerment at each stage of minority LPP in the PRC.

Stage 1: Support (1949-1957). Soon after the Red Army of the CCP gained control over mainland China and established a socialist regime, five autonomous regions were designated for five populous minority nationalities, including Guangxi for the Zhuang, Inner Mongolia for the Mongols, Ningxia for the Hui, Tibet for the Tibetans, and Xinjiang for the Uighur (Bradley, 2005). LPP at this stage was

largely driven by the CCP's incentive to effectively govern the multiethnic country without triggering minority peoples' resistance. On the one side, Mandarin Chinese was nationally promoted to minority groups who had not possessed written language systems, while minority peoples reserved the rights to use their home languages (Wang & Phillion, 2009). On the other, in line with Haugen's (1983) four-stage model of language planning, minority LPP consisted of (1) selection, during which a standard variety was determined regarding the population density and socioeconomic status of its speakers within the nationality; (2) codification, which included retaining, revising or replacing the pre-existing orthography by a romanized Mandarin spelling system; (3) implementation, which adopted what had been selected and codified; (4) elaboration, during which standard minority language translations of Han Chinese literature were prepared and distributed (Bradley, 2005). Hence, many minority languages were well preserved due to the governmental support. However, Manchu was politically and ideologically marginalized.

With its prestigious status as the national language in Qing Dynasty, Manchu used to be as much valued as Han Chinese for both academic and administration purposes (Kane, 1997; Zhang & Ma, 2012). Exacerbated by the Qing government's failure to solve political and military problems in the nineteenth century, and strengthened by the anti-Manchu ideologies, the 1911 Revolution overthrew the imperial government and resulted in people's reluctance to be associated with Manchuness (Kane, 1997). This legitimized anti-Manchu propaganda remained prevalent after the establishment of the PRC, which caused many Manchus to conceal their ethnicity, until the re-registration policy allowed people who had disguised their minority status to reclaim their minority identities in the 1980s (Bai, 2008). Therefore, Manchu was not only regarded as detrimental to the stability and unity of the CCP's new regime, but also ideologically positioned as inferior to other minority languages due to its existence as imperial legacy.

Stage 2: Suppression (1958-1976). From 1958 to 1961, Chairman Mao launched the Great Leap Forward reform project, which required every Chinese citizen to participate in the national industrialization. Concerning the unprecedented demand for inter-ethnic communication needs, Mandarin Chinese started to replace minority languages in nation-wide public education systems. In 1966, Mao started the Cultural Revolution to eliminate capitalist influence within the CCP as well as the entire society. During this period, the central government's denial of teaching and learning local languages eventually resulted in a military process that suppressed all minority languages in schools, and denounced whoever raised questions about the curriculum as betrayer of ideological correctness and supporter of capitalism (Nelson, 2005). As Mandarin Chinese became mandated for all ethnic groups, linguistic and cultural assimilation became the explicit goal of minority education (Wang & Phillion, 2009). The notoriously hostile language environment led to immeasurable language and culture loss, especially in the case of Manchu.

Although a number of Manchu speakers voluntarily or apprehensively accepted the Han assimilation before the Cultural Revolution, many survived in remote villages of Siji and Dawujiazi in the Amur

basin, and villages of Sanjiazi and Daxing in the Nonni basin (Janhunen, 1997). However, at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, the village of Dawujiazi with the main concentration of Manchu speakers was dissolved and forced to become part of the State Military Farm. During this extremely conservative period, speaking Manchu would be suspected of being spies and even persecuted to death (Kane, 1997). As a consequence, many Manchu speakers refused to identify themselves as Manchu because of fear and panic. Therefore, I argue that the tremendous loss of Manchu language and speakers was a tragic linguistic genocide committed by discriminatory policies and ignorance of human rights that were shaping and shaped by assimilationist ideology.

Stage 3: Tolerance (1977-1990). After the devastating Cultural Revolution ended, nation-wide reflection on the far-left politics (i.e., extreme communism) initiated a number of achievements in legislation. Such achievements provided a relatively hospitable sociopolitical environment for the coexistence of majority and minority languages. According to the 1982 Constitution, “[the] people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages” (National People’s Congress, 1983, Article 4, p. 13). Moreover, governments of autonomous regions can “employ the spoken and written languages in common use in the locality” (National People’s Congress, 1983, Article 121, p. 85).

In the meanwhile, Manchu linguistic revivalism started to be recognized soon after the end of the Cultural Revolution, followed by a number of schools established to organize courses in Manchu (Kane, 1997). There has also been a remarkable Manchu identity revival since the 1980s (Bai, 2008), which can be partly explained by the fact that “large numbers of people whose parents did not declare themselves to be Manchus in 1952 did declare themselves Manchu in 1982, and a further 10% declared their nationality to be Manchu in 1990” (Kane, 1997, p. 246). Unfortunately, albeit driven by many Manchu people’s desire for group legitimacy, the grassroots Manchu language revitalization has not received adequate public or financial support (Bai, 2008). Given the enduring impact of assimilationist ideology toward Manchuness, LPP characterized by tolerance at this stage was insufficient to prevent Manchu endangerment.

Stage 4: Market-driven Assimilation (1991-now). As I discussed earlier, the market-oriented economy at this stage has been motivating all ethnic peoples to acquire fluent Mandarin Chinese in order to participate in and benefit from the economic progresses. While there is nothing wrong to promote Mandarin Chinese due to its economic advantages, it cannot be morally justified to marginalize minority languages just because they are not that immediately profitable. As Wang (2015) claims, ethnic minority learners are confronted with unprecedented challenges from urbanization, which contributes to the commonly perceived dilemma whether to embrace the Han-dominant curriculum or maintain the heritage languages. Such an “either/or” dilemma has been further complicated by the current Chinese-English bilingual education policy, which regards both Mandarin Chinese and English as gateways to advanced education attainment, employment, and socioeconomic prestige (Hu, 2012). Therefore, a lack of access to either Mandarin Chinese or English will necessarily

result in an obstacle to ethnic minority learners' enjoyment of various social, educational and professional opportunities that require Mandarin and English proficiency. As Beckett and Postiglione (2012) argue, it is exactly the perception of minority languages as having little economic value and even limiting minority students' opportunities that serves as the frequently cited rationale for linguistic assimilation.

In the early 1990s, Manchu was still used in some villages and counties in Northeastern China, such as Aihui, Tailai, Sunwu, and Xunke (Kane, 1997). Nevertheless, efforts for Manchu language revitalization were inevitably overwhelmed by the large population of Mandarin speakers surrounding Manchu speakers. Being aware that speaking Mandarin Chinese is a prerequisite for social participation, Manchu youths seemed much more reluctant to maintain their heritage language than their parents and grandparents had been. According to Zhang and Ma (2012), a heritage language will be categorized as endangered if (1) over 80% of its potential speakers have increasingly shifted to use the dominant language, and if (2) it is only used by people who are over 40. Accordingly, Manchu must be considered critically endangered, since most of the surviving Manchu speakers who can speak and write Manchu are over 60. In the site of Sanjiatun, for example, the only three senior Manchu speakers are all over 80 (Zhang & Ma, 2012). Hence, it is generally agreed that Manchu will be extinct in a few decades without significant revitalization efforts (Janhunen, 1997; Kane, 1997; Zhang & Ma, 2012).

To sum up, the evolution of minority LPP in the PRC reflects a struggle between the goal of imposing a uniform national identity and the declared advocacy of minority communities' autonomy. Although the broad sociopolitical environment for minority languages is getting better, it is questionable whether or not large-scale changes in a nation's political climate accompanied by rapid economic developments will be powerful enough to bring a dying minority language back to life (Dorian, 1987). In the case of Manchu endangerment, one of the most salient reasons for failure in revitalization is the internalized negative attitudes among its speakers and potential speakers. As Dorian (1987) claims, revitalizing an endangered language may be perceived as "throw[ing] good money after bad in a classically impractical and romantic way" (p. 65), if such negative attitudes continuously position a minority language as purely symbolic without other values. Nonetheless, I would argue that a pessimistic attitude toward endangered language revitalization merely based on an economic concern is not fully justified. As Hornberger (2002) states, it is the speakers' desire and right to speak their own language(s) that serve as the impetus behind language revitalization or revival. Thus, there is a fundamental affinity between planning for language revitalization and protecting linguistic human rights. In the next section, I will demonstrate that minority language rights should be legally protected as a prerequisite for both Manchu language revitalization and the realization of social justice.

3.2 Minority Language Rights: A Legal Perspective for Manchu Revitalization

Advocacy of Minority Language Rights (MLR) derives from the concerns that (1) minority languages will inevitably be viewed as limiting their speakers' opportunities, and that (2) language shift or replacement will be witnessed if minority language speakers "increasingly dispense with their first

languages in favor of speaking a majority language” (May, 2006, p. 258). With these concerns in mind, advocates of MLR argue that the hierarchical order among majority and minority languages is a historical and sociopolitical construct rather than a linguistic one. By regarding minority language rights as necessary Linguistic Human Rights (LHR), Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) argues that the societal and institutional authorities must shift away from viewing minority languages as problematic per se towards promoting linguistic diversity as an irreplaceable resource.

Ruíz’s (1984) classification of three orientations for language planning provides a strong theoretical underpinning for the MLR and LHR arguments: (1) A *language as problem* orientation tends to view local languages as obstacles standing in the way of linguistic and cultural incorporation; (2) A *language as right* orientation tends to view local languages as their speakers’ basic human right; (3) A *language as resource* orientation tends to view local languages as resources for their speakers as well as the society at large. Most importantly, Ruíz (1984) also recognizes that language resources are inexhaustible by use, but exhaustible by lack of use. To my understanding, the language-as-right and language-as-resource orientations mutually support each other in the discourse of minority language revitalization. On the one hand, if language is viewed as basic human right, then minority language speakers’ right to use their languages should be as important as that of majority speakers; On the other, if language is viewed as a global resource for all social members, then both majority and minority peoples would be motivated to protect their rights to utilize the resource. Aligned with Skutnabb-Kangas (2006), minority learners should have both the right to receive education through the medium of mother tongue and the right to study the dominant language well, so that they can maximize the benefit from learning and utilizing bilingual or multilingual resources.

It is worth noting that an ideological shift is not easy to achieve if the dominant ideology has already been internalized by a huge population. Whether to promote multilingualism or monolingualism, both diversity and uniformity should be viewed as ongoing across generations as well as deeply embedded in cultural values and historical legitimacy (Conklin & Lourie, 1983). As I reviewed earlier, the assimilationist ideology has been dominant in minority LPP for over six decades in the PRC, which is precisely congruent with the language-as-problem orientation. Manchu was first viewed as problematic because of its association with Qing imperialism for approximately 30 years, and then viewed as problematic because of its minimal economic value in comparison with English and Mandarin Chinese. As Fishman (2006) states, a process of language shift can reflect the culture of sanctions with a particular society, but “no planning culture is democratic in all other respects but authoritarian only in connection with language policy” (p. 312). Thus, if social harmony is the goal of national planning for democracy, minority people’s linguistic human rights must be acknowledged, respected and protected. May (2006) provides three principles of International Human Rights Law that can be applied to raise awareness of MLR in future policies and practices. First, it is unreasonable to expect all national members to share one common public language of the state. Rather, it is possible to argue for the legitimation and institutionalization of minority languages, by questioning and challenging why the

promotion of one dominant language must be at the expense of others. Second, it is important to have a sufficient number of non-dominant language speakers to avoid language discrimination, since they would be able to use their own languages as part of the exercise of their citizen rights. Third, one national minority's right to demand formal inclusion of their language(s) in the civic realm should not preclude other minorities to cultivate and pursue their languages in the private domain. Accordingly, rather than presuming the impenetrability of the "either/or" dilemma between learning Mandarin Chinese or maintaining Manchu, taking a language-as-resource orientation accompanied by the human rights perspectives suggests the feasibility of a "both/and" approach that emphasizes inclusion of both language and indigenous ways of knowing (Hornberger, 1997). By gaining more legal and human rights perspectives, Manchu as well as other ethnic minority peoples will be empowered to defend their own rights and have their voices be heard.

However, the potential of such counter-hegemonic social movements cannot be achieved by solely relying on top-down policies, which highlights the crucial role of local speech communities in implementing language revitalization policies (Hornberger, 2006b). As Johnson (2013) points out, a critical analysis of LPP must be balanced with "local understandings of how educators and community members create (local) and interpret and appropriate (macro) language policy that empowers minority languages and their users" (p. 51). Thus, I will emphasize the importance of activating the indigenous voice of local Manchu speech communities and provide suggestions for bottom-up status planning in the following discussion.

4. Discussion

A rich body of literature and documentaries written in Manchu still exist, but that invaluable historical and cultural legacy may never be fully understood if the language continuously declines (Zhang & Ma, 2012). Even though Language Law has been included in the National Autonomy Law of the PRC, it focuses excessively on the use and spread of Mandarin Chinese and simplified Chinese characters (Bradley, 2005). The tension between the Manchu language being moribund and the time it may take to wait for a magical national language policy to save it from death suggests the necessity of carrying out revitalization efforts from the bottom up. Indeed, it has been well addressed that many successful revitalization projects were initiated and implemented by minority peoples themselves (Hornberger, 1997; Paulston & Heidemann, 2006; Wang, 2015). Planning for Manchu revitalization is a project of status planning, which refers to "deliberate efforts to influence the allocation of functions among a community's languages" (Cooper, 1989, p. 99). Meanwhile, it is also a project of cultivation planning in terms of an approach emphasizing the functions of speaking, writing, and their distribution (Hornberger, 2006a). Clearly, living Manchu speakers in local speech communities are the real experts in understanding the existing and dying functions of their heritage language. Therefore, inclusion of those indigenous speakers' voice and agency is indispensable and invaluable.

As Janhunen (1997) suggests, in order to revitalize Manchu, we should first select the survivors of

Manchu speakers and protect their territorial integrity. Furthermore, we should concentrate those minority speakers as well as other Manchus who have not acquired the language into compact territories. This is an attempt to increase the geographical concentration of Manchu speakers in order to foster communication in Manchu language, considering the fact that Manchu speakers have been historically surrounded by and assimilated into the Han majority. Moreover, autonomy and a spirit of survival should be promoted within the newly formed speech community. I consider this attempt as developing a sense of belonging, pride, and empowerment. Unlike the Mongols and Tibetans who have much more control over their heritage language maintenance, Manchus have not yet gained officially acknowledged autonomy to protect their own linguistic and cultural legacy. Yet, one can optimistically anticipate the effectiveness of their revitalization efforts once they are encouraged to do so, accompanied by their Manchu identity revivalism (Bai, 2008).

Lastly, in line with the ecological perspective, Janhunan (1997) argues that preventing Manchu from declining should be implemented in the context of the entire ethnolinguistic environment. I propose that local educators and advocates can adopt the *continua of biliteracy* framework (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000; Hornberger, 2003), which not only incorporates the language evolution, language environment, and language endangerment themes, but emphasizes the interrelatedness among biliteracy development, context, content, and media. When it comes to educational policy and practice, the continua model suggests policymakers and practitioners pay more attention to the less powerful ends of the intersecting continua. Promoting Manchu learners' use of their heritage language as medium of instruction along with the dominant language can provide them with access to wider discourses in the society without losing their language rights and resources.

Whereas there is an increasing need for multilingual and multicultural education, it is necessary to examine factors that hinder the implementation at societal, institutional, and personal levels. According to Wang and Phillion (2009), the success of planning for and implementing minority language education can be impeded by poverty, lack of educational resources and qualified teachers, as well as discriminatory attitudes toward the minority language from local government officials. While we can solve the first two problems by raising funding and providing professional support for teacher training, it is considerably challenging to force Han majority officials to think from minority peoples' perspectives. As Wang and Phillion (2009) suggest, if minority rights are respected and constitutionalized, the dominant Han group should not attempt to interpret minority learners' needs and perspectives in their ideological framework. Hence, they introduced Gay's (2000) *culturally responsive teaching* as a pedagogical approach to incorporate minority students' language, culture, and everyday knowledge into curricula, and to make them feel that their heritage is valued and appreciated. Likewise, Hornberger (personal communication, March 14, 2016) suggests that local educators can collaboratively develop curriculum-based projects to provide students with opportunities to talk with and learn from living Manchu speakers. By "curricularizing" their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005; Valdés, 2015), Manchu youths would be empowered to challenge the hegemonic power and

reverse the language shift.

Again, it is worth noting that the long-lasting assimilationist ideology is still prevalent across all levels of LPP toward minority education. Since LPP is a multilayered construct, wherein “agents, levels and processes” of LPP interact with one another in dynamic and complex ways (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 419), we should neither ignore the human agency in facilitating language revitalization, nor the deliberate efforts and stereotypical beliefs to normalize linguistic assimilation. As Zhang and Ma (2012) put forward, current legislative support for minority language protection is subordinate to the CCP’s interests and political needs. For instance, whenever a potential conflict is perceived between the national economic development and minority language planning that desperately needs financial support, the latter is almost invariably postponed or disregarded. Thus, local agents must be convinced that the cost of not protecting the endangered Manchu is higher than that of protecting it. Similarly, before judging the value of LPP, one should take into account both the estimate of its expenditure and the counterfactual estimate of what would occur in the absence of the policy (Grin, 2006).

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I start from questioning the impact of PRC’s prevalent language ideologies on minority language education. Based on a historical-structural analysis of the Soviet model and the Chinese model as two LPP frameworks in relation to the CCP’s nation-state building project, I find that both models represent the assimilationist ideology that seeks to normalize the predominant role of Mandarin Chinese while positioning minority languages as symbols of diversity within the national unity. In particular, I examine the case of Manchu language endangerment as an outcome of various historical, social, political, and economic factors over the past six decades. I argue against the linguistic genocide caused by historical injustice and therefore advocate the minority language rights and linguistic human rights perspectives. By drawing on the principles of International Human Rights Law, I highlight the significance of ideologically viewing languages as necessary human rights and irreplaceable resources. Whereas legislative support plays a crucial role in ensuring linguistic rights and freedom (Kochenov & de Varennes, 2015), the voice and agency of minority peoples themselves can have greater influence on the success of language revitalization planning. Therefore, I argue that LPP for Manchu revitalization should rely on the involvement of local speech communities. Further, development of multilingual curriculum should recognize the value of local students’ funds of knowledge, simultaneously guaranteeing the access to social, economic, and educational opportunities to fully participate in the mainstream society. Finally, concerning the influential assimilationist ideology and the dynamic interaction among all agents of LPP, I suggest that whether or not to implement a presumably costly revitalization policy must take into account the cost of not taking any action. Instead of depending on the political mood, LPP for minority education should be more concerned with the protection of human rights and the realization of social justice.

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