Evolution and Development of Chinese Ethnic Minority Bilingual Education Research

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Abstract. Ethnic minority bilingual education research began in 1979. As a key branch, it has been one of the hot issues in the whole ethnic minority language research of China. The main content and hot topics experienced evolution of four different periods, the evolution and development is a good reflection of the whole ethnic minority language research skeleton. This paper describes the evolution process of ethnic minority bilingual education research, illustrates the influencing factors of hot topics in ethnic minority bilingual education research and analyzes the language view reflected by the evolution and development of hot issues based on high frequency key words in research papers.

Introduction

Ethnic minority bilingual education research is one important branch of Chinese minority language research and Chinese linguistic research. This paper focuses on the evolution and development of ethnic minority bilingual education research process and tries to detect the skeleton of the whole Chinese minority language reflected by it. Ethnic minority bilingual education research experienced four important periods: 1977-1986 recovery period, 1987-1996 development period, 1997-2006 booming growth period, 2007-2016 diverse growth period. The hot issues of each period have experienced a series of evolution under the influence of our national language condition, national language policy and development of language theory. The evolution of hot issues also shows the change of language views in different times.

Evolution of Ethnic Bilingual Education Research from “Bilingual” to “Bilingual Education”

The first keyword “learn language” in ethnic bilingual education research appeared in 1979, and in the following three different periods the hot keywords experienced a series of changes. In each different period there are typical features in content and method, and there are differences in different periods. The detailed evolution trace is as follows:

1977-1986 recovery period focuses on conception of “bilingual”. After ten years (1966-1976) of research in almost every field, in 1977, ethnic minority language research stepped into the period of recovery, like any other linguistic field. “learn language” as a keyword first appeared in 1979, “bilingual” appeared in the following two years, and “multilingual” in 1982. Bilingual research was in the beginning stage like any other linguistic research field, the initial research of “learn language” included encouraging ethnic minority students to learn Chinese mandarin, meanwhile encouraging ethnic Han to learn minority language. China carried out the reform and opening policy, and all different subjects had the same research goal for constructing “four modernization”. Under such historical background, our country began to popularize Chinese mandarin in order to help the ethnic area to realize modernization as soon as possible, and Chinese mandarin stepped into the life of ethnic minorities. Cultivating talents and leaders who can speak ethnic minority languages for realizing “four modernization” is one of the key contents of “learn language”. With the popularity of Chinese mandarin teaching, the number of people who can speak both ethnic minority language and Chinese mandarin and even more languages such as languages of other ethnic minorities was growing bigger,
and during this time, “bilingual” appeared as a keyword in a few researches. And the focus of attention about “bilingual” was the boundary of conception like “what is bilingual on earth?” and “what kind of language speaking condition in ethnic minority area belongs to the bilingual?”. And the representative scholars included Ma Xueliang, Dai Qingxia, Sun Hongkai and so on.

1987-1996 development period emphasized the research of language teaching. After the definition of bilingual, key words like “bilingual teaching”, “bilingual phenomenon”, “Chinese mandarin learning”, “Chinese mandarin teaching”, “teaching effect”, “the second language” began to appear in papers, and with a very high frequency. From the information contained in the high frequency keywords, it showed that development period scholars began to turn their concentration to language teaching. There were two stages in this period, in the early stage people paid attention to the theory of second language teaching, they distinguished the concept of keyword “bilingual teaching” and “bilingual education”, and divided the types of bilingual education; In the later period people turned their attention to the teaching of Chinese mandarin, especially with the introduction of aboard theory on second language acquisition, theories like error analysis and contrastive analysis applied widely in the whole bilingual education research field. Research on teaching method in the second language acquisition theory carried out extensively, especially the method of comparative analysis, appeared with high frequency in both teaching practice and theory research, they taught languages by the comparative of different languages, and the teaching of Chinese mandarin promoted the research of language comparison. In the development period, the bilingual teaching in ethnic minority area had reached a certain scale, the research of bilingual teaching became “hot issue” in reality. And the representative scholars included Zhou Qingsheng, Dai Qingxia, Zhao Yizhen.

1997-2006 booming growth period the ethnic minority language research reached peak. In the turn of the century, the ethnic minority language research field and even the whole linguistic research field presented feature of diversity which was obvious, all branches boomed, and new targets and subjects emerged constantly, the whole research stepped into peak. Keywords like “bilingual teaching”, “bilingual education”, “Chinese mandarin teaching”, “Chinese mandarin learning”, “bilingual” still appeared as the keywords group with biggest scale. The keywords group of bilingual teaching research had been formed steady in booming growth period. And the research of bilingual teaching began to divide several branches from highly centralized research of teaching, one branch continued to carry out the research of teaching. In this period, a high frequency keyword “language attitude” appeared, and it had a high Co-occurrence frequency with keywords like “bilingual teaching”, “bilingual phenomenon”, “Chinese mandarin learning” and so on.

Table 1. 1997-2006 Period Co-occurrence Frequency of Keyword “language attitude”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language attitude</th>
<th>Other keywords</th>
<th>Co-occurrence frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language attitude</td>
<td>Bilingual teaching</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language attitude</td>
<td>Bilingual phenomenon</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language attitude</td>
<td>Chinese mandarin learning</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And another branch based on big scale field researches to reflect bilingual teaching from the angle of language use and language attitude trough bilingual teaching achievement, proficiency of Chinese mandarin, language attitude of bilingual speakers. Supplying basis and references for the design of bilingual policy based on the language psychology by bilingual speakers.

2007-2016 diverse growth period “bilingual education” takes the place of “bilingual teaching”. In this period, “bilingual teachers” and “Chinese mandarin level” begin to appear in the core keywords group as new keywords. Among them, keywords “bilingual education” and “Xin Jiang” has a Co-occurrence of 63 times, which shows that Xin Jiang is the main province of bilingual education research. The research emphasis of this period turn to education from teaching, and infusing bilingual teaching to the whole education mechanism and system, bilingual education becomes a national policy. Meanwhile, researches towards bilingual education shows feature of diversity, many different subjects
join in the research of bilingual education, including pedagogy, sociology, political science, ethnology and so on. With the introduction of abroad advanced theory and experience on bilingual education research, the theory on bilingual education promoted again.

The research of bilingual teaching and education experienced four different periods, the focus and emphasis in each period shows different features, which has experienced the evolution process: theory research—teaching method research—language attitude reflects bilingual teaching—education of all aspects, and at present shows a research tendency on fusion of multi-subjects and feature of diversity.

**Evolution Skeleton of Hot Issues on Ethnic Minority Bilingual Education Research**

From the evolution of hot issues in different periods on ethnic minority bilingual education research, the development and evolution of the whole ethnic minority language research have been following two main skeleton:

The first skeleton is the influence of Chinese mandarin towards ethnic minority language. It is caused by the implement of national common language which pushed the study of Chinese mandarin and the contact of Chinese mandarin and ethnic minority languages. Chinese mandarin had a big influence on ethnic minority languages, and the research of ethnic minority language carried out around the relation between Chinese mandarin and ethnic minority languages.

The second skeleton is the description on ontology of ethnic minority languages. The implement of ethnic minority bilingual education accelerates the contact of Chinese mandarin and ethnic minority languages, the ethnic minority languages presents absorption and rejection toward Chinese mandarin which is an exotic language after all. The comparison and connection of two or more different languages promote the deep learning of them, and description on ontology of languages runs through the whole ethnic minority language research for all times.

**Formative Factors of Hot Issues on Ethnic Minority Language Research**

From the location and evolution of hot issues on ethnic minority language research, hot issues in different periods shows obvious time features, on one hand it is related to the self development of ethnic minority language, on the other hand it is influenced by our national language condition, language policy, and the development of language theory.

National language condition. As the vector of culture, language is the symbol of a certain nationality, the use and development of language is connected with the survival and development of nationality. As a multi—nationalities country, the language condition of our country shows a feature of multi-languages and multi-words. The research of ethnic minority language must have a clear knowledge of our language condition, and deal with the relation between each language and word. After the foundation of our country, the ethnic minority language research was all blank, there was no knowledge about ethnic minority language at all, constructing the subject of ethnic minority language and cultivate talent and leaders who master ethnic minority languages was the urgent target. And the keyword “learn language” first appeared as a high frequency word in papers. Encouraging leaders in ethnic minority area to learn local languages was the main content of language learning. Under the guideline of equality of nationality and language, creating words for those ethnic minorities who did not own words and reforming words for those ethnic minorities who had owned words was the key point of ethnic minority language work. And around this target, scholars carried out a big scale of language field research, and pay special attention to publish and application of Pinyin fang’an.

Language policy. With the research of ethnic minority language and words, the language policy document published by government experienced a series changes on emphasis and focuses. Language policy is the guideline of the whole ethnic minority language work, and has important effect on the research, one typical example is ethnic minority bilingual education research. The language policy on ethnic minority language has obvious and different levels, national level includes constitution, local level includes local laws, autonomous regulation, specific regulation, and other rules. Under present
condition, there are very few specific regulation toward ethnic minority language, autonomous regulation in each autonomous region plays the most important role in making basement for ethnic minority language work. It is reported that, 1985 Ji Lin province first published Autonomous regulation in Yan Bian Korean Minority Autonomous Prefecture, since then there have been 155 autonomous regions published autonomous regulations one after another. Besides autonomous regulations, there are specific regulations in some autonomous regions, illustrating detail instruction according practical conditions in different regions, take Inner Mongolia autonomous region as an example, there are normative documents like: Management of Social Word Application of Both Mandarin and Mongolian Words in Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, Management of Social Word Application of Both Mandarin and Mongolian Words in Hohhot, Management of Social Word Application of Both Mandarin and Mongolian Words in Alxa League, Management of Social Word Application of Both Mandarin and Mongolian Words in Holingol and so on. And in the field of bilingual education ,there are Autonomous regulation in Yan Bian Korean Minority Autonomous Prefecture and Autonomous regulation in Chuxiong Yi Autonomous Prefecture. The regulation set clear rules on bilingual education that in rural area primary and middle schools the teaching language should be Chinese mandarin. We choose the typical keyword of “bilingual teaching” to analysis the connection and relation between keyword frequency, number of papers and number of relating policy documents.

Table 2. Frequency of Keyword “bilingual teaching” and Number of Policy Documents.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of documents</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of keyword</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the above table, the number of policy documents is increasing with time, meanwhile the frequency of keyword, and the number of the two columns shows positive correlation, which means the concern in language policy of bilingual education really has important guideline function towards ethnic minority language research.

Development of language theory. The development of language theory directly inflect the language research, especially the introduction of aboard theory, which often becomes the hot issue of all scholars. Some famous linguistic theory has gained widely influence in international field, even stir up a research upsurge. After brought into our country, it soon combined with our nation condition and became the hot issue.

Language View Reflected by the Evolution and Development of Hot ISSUES

Language view is the opinion towards language. In the study and research of language, the common view is: language is the tool of communication and mind. With the development of society, the promotion of common sense and knowledge, linguists gradually realize that language is not just a simple tool, but also problem, power, and resources.

After 60 years’ exploration and accumulation, the ethnic minority language research gain certain achievement and evolution, which has reflected the formation and evolution of social language awareness with obvious time features. The new century as a boundary, from the foundation of our country to the end of last century the hot issues appearance and evolution shows the language view of power, which sees the language as a power for equality and respect. From new century on the alternate of hot issues shows the language view of resources, which sees the language as precious resources, especially ethnic minority language, once extinct, it will be impossible to recover. And the whole
evolution of hot issues in bilingual education research reflects the change of language views in different times, it also reviews the adjustment of national language policy.

Summary

The evolution of ethnic bilingual education research experienced four different periods and the symbol keyword changes from “Bilingual” to “Bilingual Education”, the skeleton of evolution mainly follows two lines: the contraction and influence by Chinese mandarin and the development of ethnic minority language itself. National language condition, language policy and the development of language theory are the three key factors to the formation of hot issues in bilingual education research. And the evolution of hot issues shows that the language view has changed from power to resources.

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