

Disappearing or Surviving? – Importance of Minority Culture Education —Taking the Minority Language as Example in Yunnan Province

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Abstract. The minority cultural heritage has been formed by the development of the history for thousands of years, which played an indelible role on the development of the economy and society for human beings. In China, people always have the consciousness to protect the cultural. However, because of the trend of globalization and the acceleration of modernization, some of the unique national cultures are dying. This paper finds that there are 2 kinds of unnoticed reasons which lead to the crisis of the national language; they are the natural disasters and human made respectively. And at last it proposes that education is the important path to protect and inherit the minority culture.

Introduction

Cultural crisis has been known by many researchers generally. They believe that the minority culture is in the status of fracture and reconstruction under the wave of globalization, and this phenomenon is universal in China today.[1] (Yang Fuquan 1998) It is an inevitable trend from the economic globalization to the cultural globalization, and there has an close relationship between economic and strong culture, which the economic advantage derived from the cultural superiority, economic power derived from the cultural power, and it would lead to the output of cultural transformation, accordingly the strong culture would impact the society life, and erode the national culture, so that let the minority culture distorted seriously. [2] (Miao Jiafu 2005) The world globalization may also be a cultural globalization trap, or it is a way to smooth the diversity of minority cultural differences through the economic expansion and political coercion, so that the human civilization and culture lose its natural characteristics and become tedious. [3] (Wan Jun 2001)

In the process of promoting the modernization, it must be accompanied by the impact of traditional culture; the development of modern culture is also the recession of traditional culture. [4] (Wangxi En 2000) The development of modern transportation and the media break the close condition in the ethnic minority areas while making the minority culture change with varying degree, the development and formation of national traditional culture gradually disappearing, the folk activities is dwindling, so that the traditional culture is difficult to remain. The promotion of modern farming techniques eliminated some traditional cultural activities which have the representative and symbolic characteristics. And modern lifestyle is changing the traditional vernacular architecture, clothing, language, art. [5] (Jian Luo 2007) Some people, especially the young people in the minority who have an incorrect perception of national traditional culture, they are taking the wrong approach to accelerate the disintegration of traditional culture. [6] (Fang Tie 2003) It can be said that modern economic activities have huge impaction on the minority traditional culture and squeeze the development of traditional culture gradually. Therefore, some scholars have suggested that the development of tourism in the minority areas would wreak the traditional culture of minority increasingly. Tourism makes the style of agricultural production become the provision of tourism services, so that let the main content of traditional culture fade out of people's lives, the temptation of tourism revenue let the minority religious become more

economical, which the interests of drivers and visitors replace the traditional national dance of self-entertainment communication capabilities. [7] (Yang Lie 2008) The development of consumerism tourism shifts the traditional ethnic festivals, traditional entertainment content from the time and space. [8] (Yangzheng Wen 1997).

The minority culture is undergoing strong pressure in the process of modernization, which includes the various minority cultures in the world; those tremendous impaction even threat the existence of the minority cultures, and let many distinctive minority cultures is in danger of extinction. [9] (Research Group 2007)

Crisis of National Language

In the face of the crisis, the languages in the disadvantaged groups are easy to be attacked firstly. If people want to integrate into the globalization in the backward regions, it must first be open and to communicate with the outside world, the language is the most convenient instruction and the most important tool to communicate. Therefore, to learn and master the common language has become their most urgent needs. With the effort to strengthen the common language, especially taking the common language as the new means of communication, the instruments like radio, television, Internet, mobile communications are deepening into the daily lives of ordinary people, the indigenous language of communication capabilities will gradually diminish, or the common language replaced the mother tongue, thus it will accelerate the demise of the mother tongue.

Crisis of National Language in the World

The latest data was released on the February 19, 2009 in UNESCO warned that about 2,500 languages are facing extinction among the 6000 languages in the world currently. The rating scale published in UNESCO showed that 538 kinds of languages are facing extreme danger of extinction, 502 kinds of languages are facing serious danger of extinction, 632 kinds have the exact risk of extinction, 607 kinds of languages may exist extinction, 200 languages have been in the last three generations extinction (defined as the people are no longer speak the language) in the period. This number is more than 1/3 of the total number of languages in the world, which also has increased several times compared with the numbers released in 2001. According the statistics in the world, more than 199 kinds of languages are spoken by less than 12 people in the worldwide. Over the past 90 years, there have been approximately 200 languages disappeared.

There are 196 kinds of languages are facing extinction in Indian where is the largest country of endanger languages extinction. The second and third places are the United States and the Indonesia respectively; the endangered languages are 147 and 192 kinds of species respectively.

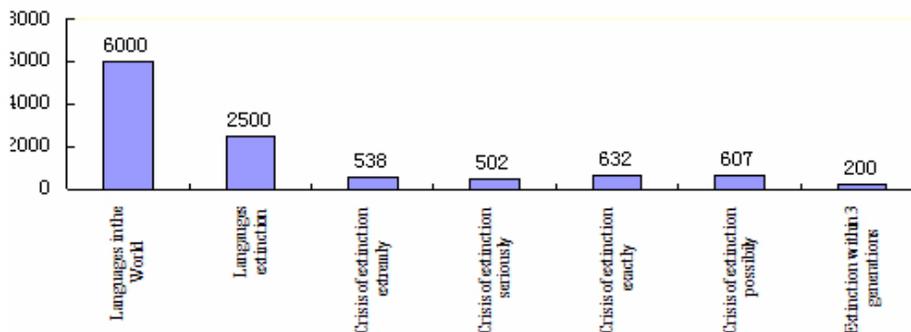


Figure 1. Crisis of Minority Language in the World.

Crisis of National Languages in China

In the globalization of China, the crisis of national language is also facing this problem. China is one of the most languages in the World, but the minority languages and Chinese dialects have undergone tremendous changes with the rapid development of economy and society, many small languages, dialects are in sharp decline and even demise.

The surveys showed that more than 120 species of minority languages are being used recently, there are half of the total languages are being used under the 10 thousand population, 20 kinds of languages are being used less than thousand population, so it can be said that about half of 120 national languages are in the status of recession, and dozens of languages are endangered. Sun Hongkai who is the Honorary President of the Chinese language association introduced that the above languages are being used by thousand of population is in the edge of endanger, though they were being spoken by thousand of population, it does not mean they also has the strong life. For example, there are about million population of Man minority, but the Man language only be spoken by the old people among Man population. Though there are 10 thousand of She minorities, She language is spoken by less than thousand people, so they are all on the edge of extinction. At the same time, the English language is learned by more and more people, and has no sign of abating.

Crisis of National Language in Yunnan

There are 25 kinds of minorities that the population is above 5000, and the total numbers of minorities are more than 15 million, ranking the second in the Country, and accounting for one third of the minority population in Yunnan province. Because of the diversity of minority people and the complex of the dialect, it is rather difficult to promote the work of the common language. According to the statistics, there are 26 kinds of languages are being used by 22 ethnics, and mother tongue are usually used in the minority area, about 6.5 millions of people cannot speak common language. And there are only 37.84% population can communicate with each other by common language in Yunnan province, which is below the average of Country. So it showed that there has a natural advantage to protect the national language in Yunnan.

However, the natural geographical advantages cannot stop the pace of the development of economical market in Yunnan; the minority languages are also in the danger of extinction. According to the study of Bai Bibo who is the teacher in Yuxi Normal University, there are 8 ethnics in Yuxi, including minority Yi, minority Hani, minority Dai and so on whose the population is about 65 million, accounting for one-third of the total population in Yuxi, while people can speak and write their own language are few. The author learned that there are many people cannot speak the national language, even do not understand it. Theirs parents only can understand the mother tongue, as for the writing, only a few of them can write some daily language. The author learned that most minority youth have not said that the national language from the interviewees, and do understand part of the national language, even their parents can only understand a few old language, speak and write a handful phenomenon.

Bimo is a kind of people who undertand the old language and the national customs among the minority Yi. According to the investigation of the Bureau of Eshan County, there were more than 50 Bimo in the Eshan County in the beginning of the built of China, but there has less than 20 Bimo now, of which there are less than 10 Bimo has the old classical book, can chair the funeral, recite and explain the essence of the Books. So Bimo has become the rare items for the minority.

Importance of National Cultural Education.

It is important that the work of cultural protection has started with the economic development and the awareness of the impotence of national culture. There has 15 cities, 74 counties, 4,056 schools have carried out "bilingual" teaching, and more than 150,000 students participated. In order to promote the "bilingual" education, 14 national validation, 18 kinds of languages, and over 200 kinds of books which has the common language and mother language were published free for students. From the beginning of 2010, there has been 20 million RMB invested as the funds to protect the establishment of 25 minority culture, mainly used in the protection of Language and words and the endangered national cultural heritage and so on.

Since the development of human civilization, there has consisted an ecological difference with the biosphere. The diversity of culture, language and species are the valuable asset of human civilization which showed vitality. Russell of British philosopher said it has been proved that it was a milestone of the exchange among different civilizations. Egypt was learned by Greek, Roma

learned from Greek, because of the cultural diversity, the culture can be compared, been learned, been developed, which lead to the inspiration and creation of people to innovation.

Conclusion

In the process of interacting, colliding and changing the indiffernet culture, the cultures become rich and developed with the development of human society.^[13] With the rapid development of the information society and turbulent economic globalization, and the modern pluralistic society, the vulnerable nation has the difficult alternative, giving up their own culture to adapt to the mainstream culture or adhering to their own culture that is an important question, which the minority people must to face and think today. Education is becoming the important role in the process of inheriting national language.

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