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Motivationsstrategier i kinesisk modersmålsundervisning hos simultant tvåspråkiga elever
Motivational strategies in Chinese mother tongue teaching for simultaneous bilinguals

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Abstract

Given the perception that it lacks differentiated study for distinct linguistic varieties under the general discussion of mother tongue tuition, this study is devoted to the Chinese mother tongue education in Sweden. It aims to better understand the motivational issues in the Chinese mother tongue learning for Swedish-Chinese simultaneous bilinguals from the teachers’ perspective. Interview was chosen as the primary fieldwork method to solicit teachers’ understanding and experience on the subject. It is found out that the teachers experience motivation of target students as a multifaceted issue and their strategies stretch over a wide spectrum. The collected empirics are analyzed with the help of linguistic theories of the Chinese language and bilingualism, as well as motivational theories in language learning. It is concluded that the family plays a vital role in the development of bilingualism and that the multiplicity and the morphographic nature of the Chinese language impose extra challenge on Chinese mother tongue teachers and Swedish-Chinese simultaneous bilinguals, at the same time the current general curriculum for mother tongue teaching fails to provide sufficient and relevant guidance to Chinese mother tongue teaching.

Key words: bilingualism, Chinese, mother tongue, motivation, motivational strategy, simultaneous bilingual
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1. Introduction

Being a teacher student with my Chinese mother tongue as one teaching subject and a parent to a Chinese-Swedish bilingual child, I have both professional and personal incentives to investigate the circumstances of the Chinese mother tongue tuition in Sweden. Specifically catching my interest in this wide area is the motivation of Swedish-dominant simultaneous bilinguals.

During KPU program I have acquainted myself with the problematics of mother tongue tuition from many angles, including the social, the cultural, the organizational and the pedagogical. Against that background of information I realized that there is very little differentiated study for distinct language groups. Students from different areas, with diverse sociocultural backgrounds, linguistic features and language competences are roughly categorized as “students with another mother tongue” in various contexts.

Apart from this crude generalization I have also noticed a motivational difficulty, especially on those simultaneous bilinguals, in this case Swedish-Chinese. These are students who mostly grow up in Sweden, speak perfect Swedish, identify themselves more as Swedes, and find learning Chinese technically difficult; some come to the class because parents force them to.

Therefore, my personal incentive, my professional interest together with my initial perception and reflection prompt me to explore the motivational issues with Swedish-Chinese bilingual students in their Chinese mother tongue learning.

1.1 Background

Contrary to the common belief, most of the world’s population is bilingual or multilingual. Many scholars (eg. Stavenhagen 1990, Wardhaugh 1987) have provided evidence to that statement. In Sweden, estimation by the Institution for Language and Folklore (2014) says that around 200 languages are being spoken in this country.
In Swedish primary schools, mother tongue tuition is offered in altogether 144 languages (Statistiska Centralbyrå [SCB] 2013, p.73). The right to mother tongue tuition is guaranteed by law to 225, 497 students today, which make up almost 24 percent of all the primary school students (Skolverket 2015). The figure has been on the rise during the latest years. These statistics show that mother tongue tuition in Sweden touches upon not only a wide range of different language communities but also a huge volume of students.

However, regulatory documents, reports, studies related to mother tongue tuition still tend to view students with another mother tongue as one single homogenous category. For example, the curriculum for mother tongue education for primary school (Skolverket 2011) is a nine-page document which is to be applied to unlimited number of languages as long as they are being taught as mother tongues regardless of linguistic features. Skolverket’s (2008) comprehensive report Med annat modersmål - elever i grundskolan och skolans verksamhet presents the phenomenon that students with foreign background are lagging 20 merit points behind students with Swedish backgrounds\(^1\). Within this group, no distinction is made further than “born in Sweden,” “born abroad” and “born in Sweden with one born-abroad parent.” To me, it seems to generalize over a substantially diversified group. As a matter of fact, this hybrid group tagged “students with another mother tongue” consists of simultaneous bilinguals, consecutive bilinguals, early bilinguals, late bilinguals, balanced bilinguals, dominant bilinguals, passive bilinguals and the list is not exhaustive. These various types of bilinguals assume special language development patterns not only different from the monolinguals but also varied within themselves (e.g. Baker 2001). Moreover, each language has its own linguistic features and each language community in Sweden possesses its own typical socio-economical background as well as distinct educational traditions. Without differentiated study or understanding of these variables it will cause inadequacy, confusion and frustration when it comes to teaching in the mother tongue classroom.

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\(^1\) Among students who finished the ninth grade in academic year 2006/07, the average merit score of students with foreign background was 190.1 points compared with 210.1 points of students with Swedish background. Skolverket (2008), table 1, s. 19.
On the other side, recognizing Chinese as a very special and difficult language, Skolverket introduced in year 2015 a new curriculum for Chinese as foreign language on the ground that “problemet med den generella kursplanen är att den inte är helt anpassad för ett språk som kinesiskan där man använder tecken istället för bokstäver och där skriftspråket skiljer sig väldigt mycket från det talade språket” (Skolverket 2013). However, in spite of this initiative in adapting curriculum for Chinese as foreign language, Chinese as mother tongue is still neglected. It has to follow the even more general curriculum for all mother tongues, which is hardly realistic for the Chinese mother tongue learners. I want to take the criteria to achieve A at the end of sixth grade for example, and make a comparison between Swedish and mother tongue:

Kunskapskrav för betyg A i slutet av årskurs 6 i ämne modermsål: Eleven kan läsa elevnära och åldersanpassade texter för barn och ungdomar med **gott flyt** genom att, på ett **ändamålsenligt och effektivt** sätt, använda lässtrategier. Genom att göra **välutvecklade** sammanfattningar av olika texters innehåll och kommentera centrala delar med **god** koppling till sammanhanget visar eleven **mycket god** läsförståelse. Dessutom kan eleven utifrån egna erfarenheter och referensramar föra **välutvecklade och väl underbyggda** resonemang om texternas tydligt framträdande budskap.

Kunskapskrav för betyg A i slutet av årskurs 6 i ämne svenska: Eleven kan läsa skönliteratur och sakprosatexter för barn och ungdomar med mycket **gott flyt** genom att använda lässtrategier på ett **ändamålsenligt och effektivt** sätt. Genom att göra **välutvecklade** sammanfattningar av olika texters innehåll och kommentera centrala delar med **god** koppling till sammanhanget visar eleven **mycket god** läsförståelse. Dessutom kan eleven, utifrån egna erfarenheter, tolka och föra **välutvecklade och väl underbyggda** resonemang om tydligt framträdande budskap i olika verk samt på ett **välutvecklat** sätt beskriva sin upplevelse av läsningen. (Skolverket 2011)

It is obvious that the goals set forth in mother tongue are equally demanding as that of Swedish, even though the available resource, especially exposure, to these two subjects is by no means comparable. Situated in these tough circumstances and challenged with
these high demands, how do mother tongue teachers deliver the meaning of mother
tongue teaching, make young individuals actively engaged, and encourage them towards
the demanding goals?

1.2 Research question and purpose

Against the aforementioned background the questions that I seek to answer are:
- How do Chinese mother tongue teachers perceive the issue of motivation in
  Swedish-dominant simultaneous bilingual students’ Chinese mother tongue
  learning?
- What are the motivational strategies that Chinese mother tongue teachers use in
  their teaching?
- What are the implications of the teachers’ perception and handling of the above
  issues?

The study aims:
- To bring attention to the language development of simultaneous bilinguals,
  especially the acquisition and maintenance of their subtractive mother tongue.
- To better understand the motivational problematics in mother tongue tuition.
- To oppose the common practice of regarding students with another mother
  tongue as a homogenous group.
- To give voice to the particular educational needs of the Chinese language
  community which have seldom been articulated academically.
2. Method

The ambition of my research is not to generalize or theoreticalize its findings, rather, is to understand the motivational questions on a specific group of students lived by a selected group of teachers, in the hope that this work can be informative and inspirational to present and future educators, parents or people who are interested in this topic. The methods are chosen in accordance with the purpose of this study.

2.1 General

The qualitative research emphasizes the existence of multiple reality and multiple interpretation (Brewer, Newman and Benz 1999). Separated by common characteristics, the quantitative studies are studies that include information that can be measured or evaluated numerically whereas qualitative studies are used for a deeper understanding for a specific phenomenon (Bjöklund and Paulsson 2014, p. 69). My work, therefore, is a qualitative research by nature.

2.2 Choice of method

Being aware of the nature of the aforementioned approaches, I see a qualitative method as fit to my study. Qualitative research starts from the idea that methods and theories should be appropriate to what is studied (Kvale 2007, p. xi). This study does not aim to identify cause-effect connections between the variables around the central problem, nor does it seek to test motivational theories. The question of my study is how the teachers deal with the motivational problems found among the Swedish-dominant bilingual students. It aims to approach, understand, describe and to some extent explain this specific pedagogical phenomenon in its natural settings. Therefore, the subject matter and the research purpose determine that a qualitative approach is appropriate.

Among the typical qualitative methods, a semi-structured interview is chosen. According to Kvale (1996, p. 5), it is defined as “an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena.” Since my research is interested in how Chinese
mother tongue teachers motivate a certain group of students, how they contemplate the motivational issues, how they implement their motivational strategies in practice and how they evaluate and reflect these experiences, it is vital for my research to gain these information from the teacher’s perspective through an open interactive channel. In addition, since strategy in my study is defined as efforts consciously exercised to achieve motivating effects, interview provides a perfect setting to confirm this consciousness by inviting interviewees to verbalize the thoughts and experience. Therefore, semi-structured interview with individual Chinese mother tongue teachers is considered an ideal tool to create the knowledge this study wants to elicit.

There are limitations and drawbacks of interview as a research method. In Intervjuer - Genomförande, tolkning och reflexivitet (Alvesson 2011), it is pointed out that the information obtained from an interview cannot represent the reality outside interview situation. Bearing that in mind, I shall try to formulate my questions as non-judgmental and non-loaded as possible and analyze materials with a critical eye.

2.3 Sampling

For a small-scale qualitative study, a strategic sampling is of great importance. A researcher has to get hold of candidates who presumably can shed light on the studied topics (Alvhus 2013, p. 67). The research questions and background of this study determine that it needs to access Chinese mother tongue teachers who work or has worked in Swedish schools.

This study settles on a convenience sampling due to practical limitations, the major one being that there are very few Chinese mother tongue teachers. The subjects observed and interviewed for this study are a collection of total six teachers, reachable by public transport within two hours from my location and willing to participate in my research.

2.4 Procedure

I started with searching for Chinese mother tongue teachers’ contact. I had already acquainted me with two teachers during my VFU period and thanks to their network I was introduced to another two. Other than these four I sent mails to nine municipalities
asking for contact information of their Chinese mother tongue teachers. Four municipalities responded saying that unfortunately there was no Chinese mother tongue tuition presently. Two municipalities did not respond to my request. The rest three connected me to four more teachers, two of which I managed to interview whereas two of which refused due to logistic inconveniences. Altogether I interviewed six Chinese mother tongue teachers working in four different municipalities in southern Sweden.

Each interview was done in person and took 30 to 60 minutes depending on how much time the interviewee put available. Introduction, interview questions were done in accordance with the interview guide (Attachment 1) and the interview language was Mandarin. Three interviews were done individually, one at the staff room of the school where the interviewee worked, one in the city library close to the interviewee’s home, and one in the interviewee’s home, all following interviewee’s own preferences. The rest of the three interviews were carried out in a public cafe in sequence while all three were sitting at a casual meeting together with their colleagues (mother tongue teachers in other languages). Due to the circumstances where I could not avoid recording other people at the same time I would record my interview, I decided to take notes.

2.5 Validity and reliability

Validity is the extent to which the study truly measure what it intends to measure while reliability is the degree of operational reliability of the measuring instruments (Bjöklund & Paulsson 2014, p.66). Problem with these terms is that it is a quantitative thinking pattern lying underneath, which is not exactly in line with the general concern of qualitative researches. In the effort of creating new terms more relevant to qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) used concepts such as trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, and confirmability to address the truth value of their findings. Kvale (1989) also provides another approach, viewing validation as investigation, as communication and as action. Some researchers stay acceptive to the conventional terms of validity and reliability but call for a redefinition to make them applicable to qualitative research (eg. Stenbacka 2001).

Despite the controversiality over the terminology my major concern in this research is how to obtain a good research quality. Bjöklund and Paulsson (2014, p.77) point out
that when using interviews the validity of study can be increased by specifying target
group as well as formulating clear and concise questions. At the beginning of the
interview I explained for my interviewees about the student group I am focusing on.
Interview questions were formulated as neutral, concrete, short and precise. Interviews
were conducted in an open and probing way in order that a truthful life world should be
presented.

2.6 Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations permeate every aspect of the field research process, from
selecting the research topic to disseminating the results (Bailey 2007, p.15). In
observance of the Swedish Research Council’s (Vetenskapsrådet 2010) ethical
principles for research in the humanities and social sciences, care is taken to ensure that
the participants fully understand the nature of the study and the fact that participation is
voluntary. The confidentiality of recovered data will be maintained at all times, and
identification of participants will not be available during or after the study. The study
presents minimal risk to participants pertaining to exposure to physical or psychological
harm.
3. Literature and theory

The key aspects of this study are: the Chinese language, simultaneous bilinguals and motivation. In this chapter I will try to define concepts, relate facts and examine theories relevant to the topic.

3.1 The Chinese language or the languages of China?

A search by keywords “Chinese language” in Wikipedia generates two top entries: “Chinese language,” and “Languages of China,” which perfectly speaks for the complexity of defining the Chinese language(s). Although the term Chinese is commonly used as referring to a single language, Chinese is actually a group of related but in many cases mutually unintelligible language varieties according to many linguists (eg. Kratochvil 1983, Norman 1988). There are 13 major regional groups of Chinese, which are identified as different languages by ISO 639-3: 2007. In Sweden, the absolute dominant varieties of Chinese mother tongue tuition are Mandarin and Cantonese. Varieties other than these two are extremely rare.

When it comes to the written system of the Chinese language, it is not unified either. Mainland China uses the simplified characters introduced in the 1950s while Taiwan and Hong Kong maintain the traditional form. Because there is no native phonetic transcription to Chinese, there have been many efforts in romanizing Chinese, which can be dated back to the westerners in the 16th century. Today the most common standard is pinyin, introduced in 1956 by the People’s Republic of China, later adopted by Singapore and Taiwan, and now almost universally used for teaching mandarin in schools across the world. Pinyin directly indicates pronunciation and tone, however, pinyin system cannot fully function as a substitute for the written characters because there are a lot fewer distinct syllables than characters, as a result, many different characters share the same pinyin.


3.2 Literacy from a Chinese perspective

Unlike most of the world’s languages, Chinese is a morphographic language, meaning that its basic writing unit, the character, does not have a direct correspondence to the phonemes, but points to morphemes. This means, one cannot “spell out” a word once learnt the alphabet; actually there is no alphabet to start with. This has obvious implication on literacy. With other alphabetic languages, once the child has acquired oral proficiency, learning to read and write is a natural continuation of their oral competence, however, with Chinese, there is little advantage to be taken from that oral competence. When one proceeds to reading and writing, in other words, literacy, one has to start from scratch, memorizing radicals, compounds etc.

In a recent study from the United States (Xiao 2013), comparison of Chinese language development was made between students who had home background in Chinese language and culture and those who did not. The study found that the former group did significantly better than the latter in speaking, listening, grammar, and sentence constructions, but not in reading comprehension, vocabulary learning, and Chinese character writing. These results suggest that Chinese background learners’ oral exposure to their home language does not necessarily lead them to acquire reading and writing skills more quickly than non-Chinese learners. The special requirements on Chinese literacy reset all students on the same starting line.

3.3 Simultaneous bilinguals

It seems to be diverse and complex when it comes to the definition and classification of bilingualism. When searching for the literature on this subject I have come across many terms, including simultaneous bilinguals, compound bilinguals, heritage language speakers, home background language speakers, dual language learners etc. Here in this paper I adopt a definition by Patterson (2002): Simultaneous bilingual children are exposed to both languages during infancy and early childhood.

One intricate aspect about bilingualism is that not all children in potentially bilingual families become bilinguals, so in a pre-dominant monolingual society the acquisition
and maintenance of the minority mother tongue is the decisive factor to bilingualism. In *Social factors in childhood bilingualism in the United States*, Pearson (2007) argues that the language of the broader community, the language of commerce, education, and the mass media, is a given. In every culture, children learn the majority language, even when their parents do not, but the acquisition of the minority language against the background of an overwhelming societal language is only a possibility (Pearson 2007).

According to Pearson (2007), the quantity of input has the greatest effect on whether a minority language will be learnt, but language status and attitudes about language also play a role. She means that when families are proactive and provide daily activities for children in the minority language, the children respond by learning it.

### 3.4 Theory: motivation in language learning

Mother tongue as a school subject has its peculiar position in the Swedish educational system. It being a voluntary subject indicates that coming to the mother tongue teaching is the result of the dynamic fusion of both the student and the parent(s) motivation.

I could not find any theoretical work on the motivation for the subtractive mother tongue for simultaneous bilinguals, which sadly speaks for the inadequacy of this field. As a compromise I decided to borrow the motivational theories in the field of second language learning on the ground of the similarities. The multifaceted nature and role of language in L2 learning postulated by Dörnyei (1994) are: a) a communication coding system that can be taught as a school subject, b) an integral part of the individual’s identity involved in almost all mental activities, and c) the most important channel of social organization embedded in the culture of the community where it is used. I found these essential features commonly shared by Chinese as a mother tongue subject in Sweden. Although the Chinese language in my discussion is by definition not a second language, I found the motivation theories in this area extremely relevant because of the Chinese language’s *secondary* position in the simultaneous bilingual’s dual mother tongue system. Thus, I venture to borrow Dörnyei’s (1994) synthesized framework of motivation of foreign language.
Dörnyei’s framework consists of three levels: the Language Level, the Learner Level and the Learning Situation Level. According to Dörnyei the three levels reflect the three different aspects of language, the social dimension, the personal dimension, and the educational subject matter dimension.

The Language Level can be divided into two subsystems; the integrative motivational subsystem is centered on the individual’s positive attitude to the social, cultural, ethnolinguistic features associated with the language, while the instrumental motivational subsystem consists of the language’s usefulness centered around the individual’s future career endeavours. Motivation on the Learner Level involves personality traits. Two underlying motivational components are: need for achievement and self-confidence. The Learning Situation Level is made up by components from three areas. 1) Course-specific motivational components are related to syllabus, the teaching materials, the teaching method, and the learning tasks; 2) Teacher-specific motivational components include the affiliative drive to please the teacher, authority type, and direct socialization of student motivation (modelling, task presentation, and feedback). 3) Group-specific motivational components are made up of four main components: goal-orientedness, norm and reward system, group cohesion, and classroom goal structure.

Having talked about motivation in language learning, motivational strategy can be easier understood as an extension. According to Dörnyei (2001, p.28), motivational strategies are those motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect. Different motivational strategies can be constructed in view of the aforementioned motivational levels and components.
4. Result

Before presenting the result I shall introduce the general background of the six Chinese mother tongue teachers I interviewed. Five of them are presently employed by four municipalities; one newly retired. They are all female teachers with teaching experience from three years to 30 years. Two come from Vietnam, one come from Taiwan and three from Mainland China. Two teaches Cantonese, the rest Mandarin. Two of them are educated Chinese teachers from their home countries, and another three have degrees in the Chinese language. One teacher has neither education in teaching nor degree in the Chinese language. Among them five who have relevant education, two of them studied complementary pedagogy and hence became legitimized teachers in Sweden. The rest remain unqualified.

4.1 Motivation under parental influence

When asked how motivated their students are, more than half of the interviewed teacher expressed that parents play a decisive role. According to these teachers the parents’ attitude towards and engagement in their children’s mother tongue learning is directly reflected in students’ motivation. In general, the Chinese parents and the mother tongue teachers have a rather tight collaboration, which involves frequent communication and home support in form of checking homework and oral practice. The majority of the interviewed teachers also expressed appreciation for the “discipline” exhibited by students with Chinese background, meanwhile uttered critique to the Swedish school’s “free style,” as one teacher said that she is grateful that the Chinese students are generally well-behaved unlike “some Swedish students.”

The negative (as experienced by teachers) aspects of parental influence exist too. One teacher complained that the majority of her students are only exposed to various dialects at home instead of Mandarin, therefore when they grow up to school age they can hardly speak nor write in the language they are supposed to be taught, so as a result the teacher has to teach in Swedish. This makes the already highly limited exposure to the target language even less. Another conflict between the teacher and the parents is the disagreement concerning Chinese writing. One teacher mentioned that some parents do
not think it is necessary for their children to train on writing, because “it’s too much.” The teacher said she had a hard time trying to convince the parents that she was obligated to follow the Swedish curriculum which has clear requirements on the writing competence. “The problem is that they (the parents) don’t understand that there is a *kunskapskrav* even for the subject of mother tongue.”

### 4.2 Dubious cultural identity

Only one interviewed teacher have confirmed that she have lectured to the students that “Chinese is part of your root and your identity no matter what.” The rest of the interviewees consider such lecturing on cultural identity and root as “high talk,” neither convincing nor effective on students who grow up in Sweden. One teacher said that the targeted students identify themselves more with the Swedish than the Chinese, therefore when it comes to the choice of language for expression, “Swedish formulations naturally flows out of their hearts, but Chinese is a painstakingly transcribed version of their Swedish reality.”

### 4.3 Adapted teaching

Several interviewed teachers demonstrated clear awareness of the need for adapted teaching to target students in view of their language competence and their life interests. One teacher told me that she often work with Chinese versions of popular Swedish stories that the students are already familiar with. Another teacher said that “for those children (Swedish-dominant simultaneous bilinguals), it is good enough to be able to recognize characters and work with pinyin, I never ask them to be able to write (Chinese characters).” Two teachers told me that if they were to “follow the knowledge criteria strictly,” none of the students who grow up in Sweden would even have the chance to A, B or even C. So they have to take the criteria with fitting.

### 4.4 Building up language status

Three of the interviewed teachers mentioned that they tried explicitly or implicitly to show the good of learning Chinese. One teacher talked about that she tried to remind students that China is becoming more and more influential at international affairs,
Chinese is becoming more and more popular, and the successful mastery of the language is beneficial to their future development especially in forms of job opportunities. Another teacher told me that she taught the students that the Chinese civilization is the only living civilization among the four ancient civilizations due to the continuation of its language, and many brilliant projects, like the Great Wall and the Silk Road are created on this ground. She told the students to be proud of being the Chinese descendant and to learn the language is actually a descendant’s responsibility to carry on that glorious culture.

4.5 Projecting enthusiasm

Only one teacher consciously talked about how she tried to show the conciseness and subtle beauty of the Chinese language. She asked students to compare the Swedish and Chinese versions of the same story, and together with the student came to the conclusion that the Chinese version manages to render some extra style and subtlety than the Swedish. The teacher then took the chance to express her own fascination for her beautiful mother tongue. Not coincidentally, she was also the only interviewee who clearly demonstrated her passion and enjoyment in her role as a mother tongue teacher. From three of the rest of the teachers I could feel a certain degree of frustration and negativity in their account of the job. One well-intentioned advice given to me from a teacher with almost 30 years’ experience as mother tongue teacher was:

“Being a mother tongue teacher for me is less rewarding than detrimental. You are welcome to the profession, but don’t settle for mother tongue teacher. It might be a good step stone for other school jobs (than being a mother tongue teacher).”
5. Analysis and conclusion

The results show that teachers have identified various motivational challenges and developed various motivational strategies accordingly. In this chapter I shall try to interpret the findings from the interview with the help of literature and infer my own opinions on this subject.

5.1 From linguistic diversity to administrative chaos

Although it is purely a linguistic unsettlement concerning whether Chinese is one language or a language family, it has practical consequences in the organization of mother tongue tuition in Sweden. Skollag (2010:800) has established that the prerequisites for mother tongue tuition are: "språket är elevens dagliga umgängesspråk i hemmet" and "eleven har grundläggande kunskaper i språket." Webpage Tema Modersmål (Skolverket) has also made it clear that: "modersmålsundervisning är inte en nybörjarundervisning" and that "modersmålslären i samverkan med rektor avgö r om eleven har grundläggande kunskaper och därmed rimliga förutsättningar att nå målen i kursplanen för ämnet modersmål."

This seemingly simple regulation has complicated implication for the Chinese language. In practice it can mean that those children who speak another variety of the Chinese language than Mandarin or Cantonese are not technically qualified to mother tongue tuition when they come to school age, because they can neither speak nor understand the teaching language. The current practice is to let these students attend the class. But it is far from being a solution to the problem. It is extremely difficult, if ever possible, for these students to reach the goals. This also makes the already diverse group even more uneven. Teachers are dealing with students of different ages, from different schools, with different language proficiencies and now even different languages/dialects, this diversity challenge combined with lack of teaching materials, limited teaching time (typically 40-60 per week) results in multiplied work load and frustration on the teacher’s part. These negative effects eventually go out onto the students.
5.2 Family plays a vital role in bilingualism

From the frustration and negativity expressed by several interviewed teachers I got an impression that under the current organizational framework Chinese mother tongue teachers feel there is very little they can achieve and the parents should take on more responsibility. The amount of exposure that mother tongue teaching, being one class per week, can offer to each student is nothing that can stimulate substantial progress in their development of Chinese proficiency. On the other hand, the Chinese parents’ attitude to the language and culture, their own Chinese proficiency, their language habits, the amount of Chinese they use themselves, the amount of Chinese they purposefully use to socialize with their children, the amount of encouragement and appreciation they show for their children’s Chinese progress have enormous impacts on the students’ mother tongue development. Parents have more influence than teachers in those social aspects discussed by Pearson I earlier mentioned.

Moreover, parental impacts are not only confined to matters like providing more exposure, driving the children to mother tongue class and checking homework. They can also play a significant role in motivation. In Dörnyer’s three-levelled motivational framework, parents can do as much as teachers, maybe more, especially on the language level and learner level. For example, on the language level, a parent may even have advantage in imparting a positive attitude towards the culture and language, which makes up for the integrative motivational strategy, and parents can concretely demonstrate the usefulness of the language using their own experience, which makes up for an instrumental motivational strategy. On the learner level, being a parent could more easily provide a relaxing, intimate, encouraging language environment which can satisfy the learners need for achievement and self-confidence.

5.3 Need for a more relevant curriculum

The curriculum of mother tongue only provides rough generalizations, which partly fit Chinese, partly not. Words like stavningsregler (Skolverket 2011) are irrelevant to the Chinese language. It also lacks specification when comes to learning the Chinese writing system, which leaves room to ambiguity where some teachers completely drop the requirement on writing characters and use pinyin as a substitute.
Apart from that, goals set forward in the curriculum are considered by the teachers as unachievable for the Chinese learners in Sweden. From the comparison of the knowledge requirements for score A at the end of sixth grade between subject mother tongue and subject Swedish, we can see that they are formulated almost identical. But the reality is that a Swedish-dominant simultaneous bilingual simply does not have the prior condition to achieve the goals, considering the linguistic peculiarity of Chinese and the highly limited exposure to Chinese. The Chinese teachers are trapped in a dilemma where if they strictly follow the criteria they probably have to give F, E, Ds to most of the Chinese learners, which probably result in that they are disheartened and drop off from Chinese mother tongue tuition.

5.4 Conclusion

The empirical materials collected from interviews show that the Chinese mother tongue teachers found that the motivation of Swedish-dominant simultaneous bilinguals are affected by multiple factors including the parental influence, cultural identification and the linguistic difficulty. Motivational strategies used by the teachers include collaboration with parents, adapted teaching, building up language status, testifying to cultural identity and projecting enthusiasm. These empirical findings combined with selected theories indicate that the family plays a vital role in the development of bilingualism, that the multiplicity and the morphographic nature of the Chinese language impose extra challenge onto the Chinese mother tongue teachers and Swedish-dominant simultaneous bilinguals, at the same time the current general curriculum for mother tongue teaching fails to provide sufficient guidance to Chinese mother tongue teaching. Therefore, I think that teachers should be more strategic in motivating students, parents should be more aware of the potential of their facilitating mother tongue learning, and last but none the least, there is an obvious need for a more suitable curriculum for Chinese mother tongue so as to provide adequate support for professionals in practition.
6. Reflection

Like all studies, mine has drawbacks and limitations. This closing chapter is devoted to a critical reflection on the subject matter, theory and method. It also gives suggestions for future research.

6.1 Subject matter, theory and method

The subject matter of my study, the subtractive mother tongue development for simultaneous bilinguals, concerns a very marginalized educational sector in the Swedish school system, and a group of students who stand outside the mainstream student types, and the focus on the Chinese language and the Swedish-Chinese students makes it even less universal. But to create a school for everyone where we can foster the future democratic citizens it is of great importance to address to the interest of these marginalized groups; therefore, my study has its value in keeping with the democratic ground values which the Swedish society settles on.

The theoretical references that ground this study are a mixture of linguistic facts on the Chinese language, and theories of bilingualism and of educational psychology in second language learning. Unfortunately I could not find established theories which can be applied, in a straightforward manner, to the motivation for mother tongue learning in an environment pre-dominated by another language. As a remedy I resort to Dörnyeri’s motivational framework targeted at foreign language learning because the mother tongue learning discussed in my context bear many similarities to L2 learning. However, it is still different in several ways: that mother tongue learning is even more loaded with private, cultural, ethnic and social factors than foreign language learning, and that mother tongue learning is more subject to and dependent on family influence than foreign language learning is.

Interview proved to be a very effective method in bringing out the views and experience of the subjects. A drawback of my interview design is that I had not fully anticipated that the teachers might have a narrow conceptualization of the term motivation. As an afterthought I probably should have relied on even more concrete questions like “How
Do you make learning Chinese interesting/attractive?” and perhaps even avoid using terms like motivation and strategy. Another alternative can be a combination of class observation followed by the interview, where I can initiate my interview question with “I’ve noticed that you did this and it seemed to make the students motivated, what were your thoughts?”

6.2 Recommendations

During my research process I became more and more aware that neither Chinese mother tongue teachers nor the Chinese students are sufficiently facilitated to achieve the educational goals set forth in the regulatory documents. In my opinion, the curriculum, as the sole most important guideline for teachers and students’ daily work should be scrupulously reevaluated as how realistic, relevant and effective it is in view of “far-off” languages like Chinese.

An effective mother tongue education relies on the collaboration between school and society, support from the parents and the specific language community. I suggest further work should be done in examining the potential of this broad collaboration and come up with practical models which can mobilize and organize these potential resources to a functional mechanism. Because after all, multiculturalism together with multilingualism is such a delicate heritage to our society, but it is only a gift, not a given.
Bibliography


Attachment

Interview guide

Time span: appr. 1 hour
Location: of interviewee’s choice
Language: Chinese (Mandarin)

Introduce my topic and explain in plain words the student group my study focuses on, which is Swedish-dominant simultaneous bilinguals.

1. How you find these students motivated in learning Chinese?
   Possible follow-ups:
   - What factors do you think makes it so?
   - What do you think make these students come to mother tongue classes in the first place?
   - Do you find it difficult to motivate them? Examples from your experience?
   - Are they willing to work hard on Chinese?

2. Do you try to convince these students of the importance of Chinese? What do you do?
   Possible follow-ups:
   - Do you talk about why they should learn Chinese in you class? How?
   - Do you try to make Chinese teaching more “attractive” to these students? How do you do that?
   - What strategies do you usually use if you find student(s) unwilling to work?