

**How do language rights affect minority languages in China?  
An ethnographic investigation of the Zhuang minority language  
under conditions of rapid social change.**

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## Summary

This thesis examines the political economy of Zhuang, the language of China's largest official minority group: how do China's minority language freedom – a form of constitutional language right – and the policies associated with it affect Zhuang use under conditions of social, economic and political change? The thesis asks what language ideologies are produced and reproduced in official rights discourses and policies and how social actors receive, resist or reproduce these.

The research takes an ethnographic approach and draws on interviews with over sixty participants, texts collected from public linguistic landscapes, fieldwork observations and a corpus of Chinese laws, policies and official policy commentaries. The thesis combines three complementary theoretical lenses for analysis, namely legal, linguistic landscape and perspectives lenses.

The analysis commences with a critical examination of the procedures of Zhuang language governance, finding that the language policy framework neither empowers Zhuang speakers nor the institutions tasked with governing Zhuang because authority for language governance is fractured and responsiveness to changing conditions is limited. Furthermore, the Zhuang language governance framework entrenches the normative position of a “developmentalist” ideology under which Zhuang is constructed as of low value.

Next, the analysis follows Zhuang language policy along its trajectory into practice. The thesis examines how language policy is implemented at different levels of government, and how Zhuang language governance is understood and experienced by social actors, concentrating on two key mechanisms of language policy: first, the regulation of language displayed in public space; and second, the regulation of language in education.

With regard to public space, the thesis examines a municipal legislative intervention under which Zhuang has been added to public signage. It finds not only that Zhuang language is rarely displayed outside areas under Zhuang autonomous regional government but even within these areas Zhuang is almost exclusively displayed on government signage. The thesis then extends the linguistic landscape study into situated subjectivities, analysing the various “readings” of Zhuang landscape texts by viewers, including many who simply do not “see” the displays of Zhuang, and others who negatively evaluate the signage as tokenistic.

Finally, the thesis examines education policy under which Zhuang is introduced as a study subject at a limited number of universities after its near-total exclusion from primary and particularly secondary schooling. It finds that students who – against social norms and values – choose to study Zhuang at university nevertheless largely adopt the language ideologies of the pre-tertiary schooling system, namely the belief that Zhuang is not an educated person’s language and not useful for socio-economic mobility.

Overall, the study finds that Zhuang language rights and policies, despite being powerful official discourses, do not challenge the ascendant marketised and mobility-focused language ideologies which ascribe low value to Zhuang. Moreover, although language rights and policies create an ethno-linguistically divided and hierarchic social order seemingly against the interests of Zhuang speakers, Zhuang speakers may nevertheless value the Zhuang identity discursively created and invested with authority by this framework.

## **Statement of Candidate**

I, Alexandra Grey, declare that this work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution and all usage of sources has been duly referenced.

This research was conducted with the approval of the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee, granted 4 April 2014, reference number 5201400089.

Signature

Date

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*To Bob, AJ and Peter; grandparents lost during the period of preparing this thesis and great supporters of the travels and studies which led to it.*

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*Alexandra “艾丽” Grey*

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# **Glossary**

## **1. Abbreviations**

CCC Sites	Campus-Culture-Centre Sites (of fieldwork)
CPPCC	Chinese People’s Political Consultative Committee
GU	Guangxi University
GUN	Guangxi University for Nationalities
GDoE	GZAR Department of Education
GNAC	GZAR NAC
GZAR	Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region
IMAR	Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region
IMUST	Inner Mongolia University of Science & Technology
Lianshan	Lianshan Zhuang-Yao Autonomous County
LLA	Linguistic Landscape Approach (including “semiotic landscape approach”)
LPP	language planning and policy
MoE	Ministry of Education
MLC	Minority Language Committee
MUC	Minzu University of China
NAC	Nationalities Affairs Commission
NPC	National People’s Congress
PhD	Doctorate of Philosophy

PKU	Peking University
PRC	People's Republic of China
Q&A	Question and Answer
RE	Rapid Ethnography
RUC	Renmin University of China
Wenshan	Wenshan Zhuang-Miao Autonomous Prefecture
YMU	Yunnan Minzu University
YU	Yunnan University

## 2. Chinese and Zhuang terms

白话 *baihua*, “vernacular speech” (particularly Nanning’s vernacular)

创智天地二维码 *chuang zhi tiandi*, “knowledge and education community” or “KIC”

方块壮字 *fangkuai zhuangzi*, “Square Zhuang Characters”

繁体字 *fanti zi*, “classical Hanyu characters”

高考 *gaokao* “high school leavers’ examinations”

汉化 *hanhua*, “Hanification”

汉语 *hanyu* “Han language”

夹壮 *jia zhuang*, “Pinched Zhuang”

僚 *liao*, in Hanyu, this translates the Zhuang word “*raeuz*”, meaning “we/us”

民族 *minzu* “a people”/“minzu” (see Notes on Terminology, below)

民族和宗教委员会 *minzu he zongjiao weiyuanhui* “Committee for Ethnic & Religious Affairs”

民语委 *min yu wei* [abbreviation], “Minority Language Committee” (sometimes translated as “Minority Language Commission” in the literature)

民语文 *min yu wen* [abbreviation], also “Minority Language Committee”, but of lower rank.

*Sawndip* [in Zhuang] “the Old Zhuang Character Script”

山歌 *shange*, “mountain (folk)song”

通昊 *tonghao*, “Through Luxury”

土话 *tuhua*, “Localese”

土俗字 *tusu zi*, “Native Script”

*Vahcuengh Sinhwnz* [in Zhuang] “*Zhuang Language News*”

小语种 *xiaoyu zhong*, “second language”

云南汉语方言 *yunnan hanyu fangyan*, “Yunnan Hanyu topolect”

中国 *zhongguo*, “China”

中华 *zhonghua*, “Chinese”/“Sinitic”

壮姑 *zhuanggu* “Zhuang Auntie”

壮家人美食馆 *zhuangjiaren meishiguan*, “Zhuang Home-style Restaurant”

壮文 *zhuangwen*, “written Zhuang”

壮乡美食 *zhuangxiang meishi*, “Zhuang Hometown Cuisine”

壮语 *zhuangyu* “Zhuang language”

壮语新闻 *zhuangyu xinwen*, “Zhuang Language News”

### **3. Notes on terminology**

Loan words are printed first in italics and thereafter in plain type font.

#### **Hanyu**

Zhou (2012b, p. 1) explains the near equivalences of “Modern Standard Chinese”, “*Hanyu*” and “*Putonghua*”, also called “Mandarin” in English. This thesis will refer to Mandarin dialects collectively using the loaned name “Hanyu” (“Han Language”), but will loan a specific name (e.g. *Putonghua* when it is significant to name one particular variety. *Putonghua* is the official, national standard variety of Hanyu.

## **Minzu**

The formerly conventional translation of “*minzu*” as “nationalities” is “misleading” (Harrell, 1993, p. 102), so in modern academic literature, the term is “typically rendered as ethnicity” (Leibold, 2015, p. 274) or “ethnic group.” However, as Mullaney (2011, p. 15) explains, “*minzu*” is a “notoriously contested word” which has been used “to translate no fewer than four politically charged concepts: race, nation, nationality... and ethnic group”. Therefore, “*minzu*” is nowadays sometimes loaned directly into English, especially in official Chinese translations. (On the twentieth century adoption of the term and concept “*minzu*” in China, see e.g. Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 42; and Mullaney, 2011). Borrowing rather than translating “*minzu*” avoids prioritising one meaning over others. For that reason, this thesis will loan “*minzu*”, contracted to the suffix *-zu* for specific *minzu*. This thesis refers to the *Buyizu*, *Dongzu*, *Hanzu*, *Huizu*, *Mengguzu*, *Miaozu*, *Qiangzu*, *Yaozu* and *Zhuangzu*, i.e. the Buyi, Dong, Han, Hui, Menggu, Miao, Qiang, Yao and Zhuang *minzu*. These groups are not conventionally known by other names in English, except the *Mengguzu*, who are known in English as “Mongols”/“Mongolians”.

## **Minority minzu**

“Minority *minzu*” refers to those *minzu* who are both small in population and in a subordinate political position compared to the *Hanzu* majority (Roche, in press). This aligns with the tendency in international language rights literature to understand “minority” both numerically and in regards to socio-political status (see Giordan, 1992; Paulston, 1997, p. 77; de Varennes, 1996, p. 129; Vilfan, 1993).

#### 4. Notes on transcription

Oral interviews in Putonghua were transcribed by native Hanyu speakers whom I employed under a departmental grant. I gave basic training and on-going feedback to the transcribers, and proof-read the transcripts. I transcribed all the English interviews. I re-typed written interviews conducted online into Word, for record-keeping and coding.

Excerpts quoted in this thesis are provided first in the language in which they were originally stated and, where that is Putonghua, I then also provide an English translation. Only the English translation is included in the word count, avoiding double counting. These are my translations and, for quality assurance purposes, they have been verified by a qualified translator. The following conventions have been observed:

- Vocalised pauses take their conventional Putonghua spellings, e.g. 哦 ; 嘛.
- Where a speaker breaks one syntactic pattern to commence another or when a speaker is interrupted, I show this break with two dashes (--).
- Where speakers interject or overlap, this is shown by indention e.g.

Speaker One: Do you think --

Speaker Two: -- I think so.

- Within Putonghua quotations, an ellipsis is marked using the Chinese convention (……).
- Arrow quotation marks ( 《 》 ) are used when a quoted passage is in Putonghua; English quotation marks ( “ ” ) are used for alphabetic scripts (English and Zhuang Pinyin).



## Chapter One: Introduction

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*The globalised new economy is bound up with transformations of language and identity in many different ways ... Ethnolinguistic minorities provide a particularly revealing window into these processes. (Heller, 2003, p. 473)*

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### 1.1 Journey to the South: development of a research problem

During the preparation of this thesis and before it, I gathered many photographs of places and people across China. The small selection in Figure 1 to Figure 3, all from cities in the Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region (GZAR) in South-Central China, indicate how everyday urban streetscapes and associated language practices in China have changed since the middle of the twentieth century. Moreover, the obvious changes in public, urban life revealed in these photographs hint at potentially significant changes in linguistic, social and cultural spheres of life that photographs cannot capture. What language varieties did these soldiers, pedestrians and cyclists use? How did these change along with the enormous transformations in Chinese society during this time?



*Figure 1. Urban main street, unspecified city in GZAR, circa. 1940s (Q. Li & GZAR Areal Annals Compilation Committee, 2010, p. 308).*



*Figure 2. Photographs captioned “Main street of Kweilin [Guilin]”, GZAR, 1976 (photographs by the author’s mother, reprinted with permission).*



*Figure 3. A main street of Guilin, GZAR, 2015.*

Over a period of six decades, these photographs document profound changes in the urban landscape. While I cannot be certain, I believe that Figure 2 and Figure 3 even depict the same street. In the pre-communist era in Figure 1, public texts are prevalent in the urban streetscape, mostly commercial slogans exclusively using 《方块字》 (“classical characters”). By contrast, in the 1970s (Figure 2) large signage seems relatively absent from a streetscape designed for pedestrians, cyclists and minimal commerce. The small signs that are visible in the right-hand image are written in simplified Chinese characters; many are indistinct but those that are identifiable on close inspection include Chinese New Year couplet banners around a door on the far right and what appears to be a red direction sign for those doing 《拉练》 (“field training”) at the left. Nowadays, a mixture of large

commercial and orientation signs designed to be visible to motorists take up a good part of the urban streetscape in Figure 3. In addition to Chinese in simplified characters, English and the Roman alphabet now also has a visible presence. While Chinese is a fixture in all three images and English a new addition in the twenty-first century, there is also a striking absence across the three images: *Zhuang*, a local language of GZAR, does not appear in any of the signs. These simple observations point to an intriguing interplay between language practices, and political and economic transformations in south-west China, specifically GZAR, which has been officially recognised as an autonomous territory since 1958.

Heller notes, in the epigraph, that changes relating to economic globalisation are inseparable from transformations to languages and identities. Looking at such photographs, I wondered about the linguistic consequences of China's opening-up to the world, particularly in a peripheral place such as GZAR.

When I moved to China in 2010, China's ethnolinguistic diversity often came up in conversations as both a source of pride and a problem, but – as in the images above – was invisible to me as part of the linguistic landscape I experienced. Walking the streets of Beijing, I saw mainly Putonghua (i.e. Standard Chinese, see Notes on Terminology) signage and maybe some English, much like in Figure 3. At work in a Chinese legal aid centre focused on labour law, I encountered many members of ethnic minority groups but their problems were due to their socio-economically marginalisation and had – seemingly – nothing to do with their ethnolinguistic status. Traveling outside Beijing – in the far South-West in Yunnan, the far North-West in Xinjiang, and GZAR - ethnolinguistic diversity

became much more visible to me. I travelled through China as much as work and studies allowed me, finding both high levels of sameness and high levels of difference. I found locals were, like me, particularly interested in talking about linguistic diversity wherever I went, but never appeared put out that I spoke to them in Putonghua rather than a local dialect or language.

When I first travelled to South-West China, visiting a Miaozi rice-growing village and small cities in Guizhou (2011), and then to Yunnan to hike a tea field route near the Myanmar border (2012), I found myself in landscapes and linguistic soundscape more different to Beijing – where I then lived – than anything I had so far encountered in China. But surprisingly, this was also the imagined China I had grown up with. Based on photographs and stories from my mother’s 1976 study tour of South China and a favourite picture book about rice paddy farmers, my sister and I spent days of childhood tromping through “rice paddies” in our Sydney front garden with Chinese baby-dolls in conical bamboo hats. Although I was familiar with the rocky landscape of the Great Wall and the gilded elegance of Imperial Chinese art, it was this “other” China that resonated with me. I thought my Chinese teachers would be disappointed: this was clearly not the “China” presented in class. And yet, at the same time, Guizhou and Yunnan were as similar to Beijing as they were different: there were still Putonghua street signs in simplified characters naming a 《人民大街 / 人民大道》 (“People’s Street”) and a 《人民广场》 (“People’s Square”) in every city, there were the same hotpot eateries, China Mobile stores, advertisements for private English tuition, supermarket chains and CCTV soap operas. Guard posts and tobacconists were as ubiquitous as in the North, people wore the same casual and colourful Western-inspired

clothing (but with less luxury branding outside of Beijing) and the new airport in Jinhong, in southern Yunnan, looked to be a miniature version of Beijing's Capital International Airport.

I became ever more intrigued: how was diversity, especially linguistic diversity, continuing, and when and where was it not continuing, given high levels of internal migration and the apparent reach of cultural homogeneity and the unified market?

As Heller observes in the epigraph, the “window” of ethnolinguistic minorities particularly reveals the transformative processes undergone by languages and identities in globalising, transforming economies. But where was this window? I had come to find that these ethnolinguistic minorities seemed to exist in rhetoric, and continued to live in actual fact in peripheral parts of China, but not in the nation's centres. My observations were confirmed by my readings. M. Zhou and Ross (2004, p. 16), for instance, argue that “coupled with globalisation and the forces of market economy, China's modernisation drive appears to favour only two dominant languages, Chinese as the national commonly-used language and English as the world language.” (N.B. This thesis includes authors' first initials where two authors share a family name, as with M. Zhou.)

My observations coupled with my readings motivated me to study China's sociolinguistic minorities as “a window” onto China's fast-paced political, social and economic transformations. I returned to Australia in 2013 to begin my doctoral research and determined I would begin by tracing China's constitutional language rights from their context in national laws and policies, through to regional and local language policies implementing

them, and thence to their reception by social actors. Given that there are fifty-five recognised minority minzu (see Glossary: Notes on Terminology) within the remit of China’s language rights and policies, I would have to narrow the scope of the study and develop a case study of one minzu, ideally one with an autonomous region. I thought again of GZAR, which I had visited in 2011 and 2012. GZAR is the sort of economically under-developed region that Adamson and A. Feng (2009, p. 322) describe as the home of most of China’s minority minzu. It is a provincial-level minority minzu autonomous area located at China’s southern frontier with Vietnam (shown in Figure 4). It is the poorest region in East China (“Rich province, poor province”, 2016) although developing rapidly. GZAR’s poverty and its ethnic autonomous government structure caused it to be included in the national “Open up the West” policy (Moody, Hu, & W. Ma, 2011, p. 1). The policy aims to even out China’s economic growth by investing over US\$325 billion in less economically developed areas, mainly in Western China (Moody et al., 2011, p. 1). Since its inception in 2001, GZAR’s integration into national and global economies has begun in earnest.



*Figure 4. Map highlighting GZAR in South China (in red). (Modified from Turner, 2010, p. 10).*

Moreover, as I learnt from my readings, the eponymous Zhuang minzu (i.e. Zhuangzu, see Notes on Terminology) of GZAR were the biggest minority minzu, as big as the Uyghurs and Mongolians combined. How could I have failed to notice such a big group on my first visits to GZAR? I had not noticed any visible language or cultural differences, or divided communities, when I had visited Nanning, GZAR's capital, twice before undertaking this PhD. Even on the second visit, when I travelled beyond the capital and got a greater sense that rural life differed from urban life in GZAR, I nevertheless observed that there was nowhere near the emphasis on minority minzu cultures, crafts and languages in GZAR tourism as there was in tourism in neighbouring Yunnan. It struck me as especially interesting to study the sociolinguistics of a group that appeared to be blending in but at the same time maintained a non-Chinese language. I was further intrigued by a group that was large and, at least symbolically, powerful and cohesive (in having an autonomous region) but which seemed not to leverage that politically or economically. I wondered what role the Zhuang language was playing in maintaining or organising communities which enjoyed a desirably placid state of affairs compared to the ethnic violence ratcheting up in other autonomous regions such as Xinjiang? Was GZAR a success story of social integration of diversity, a place of hegemonic minority marginalisation, or both?

Having identified my broad research problem, I identified four key background themes within which the research problem is embedded: the interrelated processes of globalisation and nationalisation; the migration of people out of areas traditionally occupied by recognised ethnolinguistic minorities; legal transformations; and sociolinguistic tensions. Following, I will introduce these before providing an overview of the thesis.

## 1.2 Globalisation and nationalisation

Of all the countries changed by globalisation, China is one of the most changed, with its current embrace of capitalism building upon almost a century of dramatic transformations. This is a key reason for studying sociolinguistic change in China.

China's political, economic and social organisation underwent enormous upheaval in the mid-twentieth century as the nation transformed from a new republic enduring a civil war to a stable, communist, industrialised and centrally-planned state, dubbed "New China" (formally, the People's Republic of China, or PRC). The social significance of linguistic diversity changed with these changes, and continued to evolve once New China was established, as the politics of diverse languages – by then dominantly constructed as diverse *minority* languages – fell prey to the semioticisation of ethno-linguistic difference as threatening and bourgeois during the Cultural Revolution. Thereafter, China's "Opening and Reform" paved the way for a capitalist-socialist hybrid political economy.

Once those changes were in train, central planning was increasingly devolved and policy-making decentralised (Adamson & A. Feng, 2009, p. 322), internal migration liberalised and job-seeking rendered competitive, and as the twenty-first century began, China was preoccupied with harmonising a nation-wide society, its national economy, and its international trade and diplomatic connections. China committed itself to a convergence toward national and global norms and systems.

Nevertheless, the “globalised new economy” of the epigraph is not uniform, and has been experienced in China with so-called “Chinese Characteristics”. Foremost amongst them is the Chinese Party-State’s focus on balancing international connectedness against a strong national interconnectedness, both for reasons of domestic political strength and because national interconnectedness is integral to China optimising its economic growth in the globalised new economy.

National interconnectedness has many fronts. These include infrastructural and economic linkage, as exemplified by the Open up the West campaign; the promotion of cultural 《融合》 (“melding” or “assimilation”) and a neo-Confucian national identity; 《和谐》 (“social harmony”) and its correlate, the coercive containment of social instability and diversity; and the movement of people around China, including the movement of people from the *Hanzu* majority to minority areas (discussed further in Section 1.3). The result of these social, economic and political changes is therefore both top-down homogenisation *and* the kind of bottom-up complexification that has been called “super-diversity”; “Superdiversity ... denot[es] the new dimensions of social, cultural and linguistic diversity emerging out of post-Cold War migration and mobility patterns” (Blommaert & Backus, 2013, p. 13; see further Vertovec, 2007).

This diversity, while taking myriad forms, is rarely discussed in China without reference to the official organisation of diversity, the state’s *Minzu Classifications*.

### 1.3 Minorities and migration

“New China” was built around fifty-six officially recognised categories of ethnicity, with one majority, the Hanzu, and fifty-five minority groups. This created a compartmentalised multiculturalism, a 《统一多民族国家》 “unified multinational country” in Harrell’s (1993, p. 57) translation. These categories continue to exist. Nowadays, as Adamson and A. Feng (2009, p. 322) report, “there are 55 ethnic minority groups in the PRC, with a total population of around 106 million living in 155 largely resource-rich but economically under-developed ethnic autonomous areas, many of which are located near the country’s frontiers”. Of these minorities, the largest has always been the Zhuangzu, comprising 1.27 percent of the national population on recent figures (R. Guo et al., 2015, p. xv).

Before “Opening and Reform” began in 1978, there was an officially locked-in link between minzu populations and bounded geographic areas achieved through a combination of the Minzu Classifications and the autonomous regions system, compounded by the immobility structurally achieved by the household registration, land collectivisation and iron rice bowl systems. In the first decades of the PRC, the effect of these systems was to tie people to locations: they had no means of livelihood outside of their centrally planned locations and were generally not permitted to move. The *hukou* (“household registration”) system acted much like a system of internal visas restricting people’s rights to travel and resettle around China.

Today, despite substantial structural changes in relation to marketisation of the economy and liberalisation of property and labour, these older laws continue to play large roles in

structuring society. The economic consequences of the previous collectivisation of landholding and labour mean that there is now limited capital accumulation amongst rural households and households in lower-tier cities, and with rural hukou it is very hard to settle, access social security or enrol children in school in cities. However, people are technically mobile today as restrictions on the freedom of movement of workers and students have been lifted. Indeed, the competition introduced by the PRC's overall move from a planned to market economy has created not just the possibility but also the need to move to find work and access the opportunities that have emerged.

The consequential movement of people within China's borders is known as 《流动》 (lit. "movement/flow", i.e. a flow of people) but is usually translated into English as "migration". Animated by the quest for work and upward economic mobility, the out-flow of people has especially affected China's poorer regions, such as GZAR (Chan, 2013) and most other areas inhabited by minority minzu people.

As a consequence of pervasive migration, China's cities, in particular, are diversifying, because China is urbanising and rural areas are depopulating rapidly: "the volume of rural–urban migration in such a short period [1979-2010] is likely the largest in human history" (Chan, 2013). This migration includes the settlement in cities of people with rural hukou, no longer only those with urban hukou (C. Fan, 2008) and the movement of the Hanzu majority to every corner of the nation (Iredale, Bilik, & Guo, 2003).

In addition, there is a (re)emergence of variation in unofficial social groupings, especially socio-economic classes (Tomba, 2014) and ethnic identities other than the recognised fifty-six (e.g. Lickorish, 2008). There are foreign residents, too, in numbers China has never before accepted (Leibold & Y. Chen, 2014a, p. 8). And of course global communication systems, of the kind Blommaert and Backus note in relation to superdiversity (Blommaert & Backus, 2013, p. 13), as well as new media spanning the Sinosphere are capable of feeding processes of diversification (Leibold, 2015) even if they are mobilised by some to forge a unified, pan-Chinese identity. Under these conditions, more than ever,

Standard Chinese is viewed by many sectors of society, including many leaders in ethnic minority regions, as a facilitator for economic development through commercial interaction with the rest of the PRC. Therefore, the language carries high political, cultural and economic capital. (Adamson & A. Feng, 2009, p. 323)

Given the context of nationalisation processes which mobilise *Hanyu* (see Notes on Terminology) and other cultural practices associated with the Hanzu majority, and given the wealth accruing in China from globalisation has been concentrated in the largely Hanzu populated East, the processes of cultural reproduction radiate especially powerfully from Hanzu-centric areas. Given the “high political, cultural and economic capital” of Putonghua that Adamson and A. Feng observe, ethnolinguistic inequality remains central to Chinese diversity. This has significant ramifications for the official recognition and governance of minority languages.

## 1.4 Legal transformations

Globalisation and nationalisation are works in progress involving many legal and structural changes; and within them, reforming laws about ethnolinguistic minorities has not been a priority. The first priorities were trade laws and laws gaining for China the trust of international investors; property, criminal and corporate regularisation. Next, laws regularising and attempting to render more equal the employment conditions of China's millions of workers. Thus, numerous questions remain about the operations and future direction of minority language laws. Were the older laws about minorities and their languages – including the constitutional language rights – at least changing in terms of the ways they were implemented? If so, which language practices and which identities were protected, and which transformed by the laws? These days, what is the social significance of the law constructing certain language varieties as “first-tier minority languages” (X. Chen, 2015, p. 14)? Does that kind of legal support mean that people have the power to make “language choices”, to use M. Zhou and Ross's term, or are language laws overpowered by processes of marketisation and globalisation and language choices therefore constrained?

The research therefore seeks to investigate the role language policies and legal rights play in Zhuang language's use and social significance and further, to investigate how laws and legal rights interact with other major factors which are known to play a role in minority language use and social significance, including a language's social and educational status, the economic value of a language and the importance of a language in cultural identity. Under conditions of social, economic and political change, in what ways (if any) are China's minority language rights effective?

A further rationale for studying this issue now, in China, is that China's combination of formal minority language rights and political economy are singular. The context offers a contrast to the liberal democracies of the Global North that overpopulate sociolinguistic literature, and yet the social and governmental challenges of linguistic diversity and globalisation may well be akin.

### **1.5 Sociolinguistic tensions**

The apparent staticity of language laws in the face of largescale political, economic and social transformation creates a dynamic tension that forms the foundation for this thesis. On the one hand, there is an older regime of language governance which assumes (and to some extent reproduces) patterns of social organisation in which people with shared language practices are recognised as one minzu, and live together in concentrated societies in predictable locations. On the other, there is a new regime of social governance that produces mobility and ethnic heterogeneity, resulting in the re-ordering of society not around fixed points in an ethnicity-language-place-autonomous government matrix but around convergence on or divergence from socioeconomic class, national identity and mainstream linguistic and cultural norms. That is, there is transformation from top-down, posited categories of social organisation to co-constructed, emergent categories social organisation. The state continues as an influential agent in this new form of social organisation, but its old mechanisms and discourses may lag behind.

Against the backdrop of this tension, and with the themes of globalisation, nationalisation, and changes regarding minorities and migration in mind, it is the effect of language rights and

policies on processes of Zhuang linguistic and identity transformation – including processes of minoritisation – that this thesis investigates.

## **1.6 Overview of the thesis**

This thesis traces China's constitutional language rights from their context in national laws and policies, through to regional and local language policies implementing them, focusing on how these laws are understood and make minority language meaningful – in varying ways – for minority language speakers and members of ethnic minorities in a case study of China's largest recognised minority minzu, the Zhuangzu, and Zhuang language. To do so, the thesis is organised as follows.

The Literature Review, in the following chapter, will explain why the Zhuang were chosen for this case study, as well as the significance overall of contributing an ethnography of language rights and language policy situated in China to the field of critical sociolinguistic research. Given the potentially vast nature of effects of language rights on Zhuang's use and social significance, the Literature Review concludes by focusing the research problem into specific research questions, related to Zhuang language governance, Zhuang in the linguistic landscape, Zhuang in education and language ideologies about Zhuang.

Chapter Three, the Methodology, sets out the purposive selection of focal participant groups (Zhuang university students and language leaders) and focal environments, explaining the triangulation of complementary analytic lenses.

Chapter Four examines the formal legal instruments constructing the frontiers of Zhuang language and the Zhuangzu; frontiers that are both produced by and productive of difference. Laws, rules and policies, being voiced by the symbolically empowered State, have the capacity to promote a hegemonic belief in their own principles of division and value systems over other possible systems. This chapter therefore draws out the language ideologies and the linguistic and social orders produced in the Zhuang language governance framework, and identifying a language ideological debate deeply entrenched in the Zhuang language governance framework between egalitarian and developmentalist beliefs and hierarchies.

Chapter Five analyses the effects of language law and policy on Zhuang in public spaces inside and outside areas of Zhuangzu autonomous jurisdiction. Within this enquiry, the chapter reveals the marginality of Zhuang language in governmental and regulatory texts and even more so in commercial texts. Following on from these findings, Chapter Six examines how the linguistic landscape is understood by people living within these places. It investigates Zhuang speakers' responses to and readings of Zhuang-inclusive public signage, and finds that Zhuang signage may actually be misrecognised as other languages. Chapter Six also finds that Zhuang-inclusive signage is overlooked even when recognised as Zhuang, and evaluated negatively as tokenistic or at least ineffectual for protecting Zhuang heritage or increasing the popularity of Zhuang. The misunderstanding of Zhuang in the linguistic landscape is largely a result of the low levels of literacy in Zhuang and the limited state-provided opportunities to acquire it.

Therefore, Chapter Seven turns to an analysis of participants' experiences of Zhuang language education. It investigates the linguistic habitus formed in primary and secondary schooling in relation to Zhuang, finding that, by and large, Zhuang is expected to fade out of both educational and everyday language practices over the trajectory of a young person's life. The chapter then asks what effect Zhuang language policy has when it creates a role for Zhuang as an object of academic study at the tertiary education level, against the Zhuang-minimal language norms of pre-tertiary educational institutions and the habitus they foster. It argues that language policy does not engage with the dominant belief that Zhuang is ill-suited to education and mobility, but rather creates a new role for Zhuang as an object rather than a practice.

Concluding the thesis, Chapter Eight revisits the research questions and shows that the texts and structures of the Zhuang language rights and policy framework have, largely, not been updated to respond to changing social conditions. Nevertheless, these texts are re-interpreted now in their implementation through a marketised, neoliberal ideology. The effect is to reinforce, through new processes, the minoritisation and marginalisation of Zhuang language and Zhuang speakers. The thesis further argues that because language policy does little to engage language rights or to destabilise the increasingly dominant developmentalist language ideologies which render Zhuang of low value, features associated with Zhuang language are transforming from markers of Zhuangzu ethno-cultural identity to markers of an undesirable socio-economic identity.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This review of the literature will first outline the theoretical underpinnings of the Bourdieuan critical sociolinguistic approach to laws which this thesis takes as a foundation for studying language rights, in Section 2.2. Then, Section 2.3 demonstrates three converging routes in contemporary language rights research: the expansion of language rights studies to diverse political economies and rights frameworks, especially China's (2.3.1); the emergence of ethnographic studies of language planning, policy and rights (2.3.2) and the developing field of critical sociolinguistics of minority/peripheral multilingualism in the so-called Sinosphere, i.e. the Chinese-speaking and/or Chinese cultural world (2.3.3). The chapter then identifies Zhuang language, an officially recognised minority language in China, as a large but understudied language (2.4), before proposing a research problem and associated research questions focusing on Zhuang language planning, policy and rights (2.5).

### 2.2 Critical sociolinguistic approaches to law

The way laws are understood as structures and as discursive resources in critical sociolinguistic literature which follows Bourdieu provides a relevant foundation to this research. Bourdieu considers the structures of fields and of "*habitus*" as mutually productive. Bourdieu (1987) further argues, specifically in relation to laws, that the law is a "symbolic structure" within "the social system which produces it" (p. 816) – i.e. the law is structured – yet it is also a "structure of this world" upon which individuals base the "schémas [*sic*] of perception and judgment which are at the origin of our construction of the social world" (p. 839). That is, the law is also structuring. Thus, Bourdieu's position is that the law is both a

structured and a structuring structure of fields, and, in turn, of habitus. This position is developed in Bourdieu's (1987) essay *Force of Law* in which he argues that law as a structuring structure has special productive capacity. This derives from the law's role: "Law consecrates the established order by consecrating the vision of that order which is held by the State" (p. 838). In this way, the law is a key site for the production of "*méconnaissance*" ("misrecognition"), being "the process by which power relations come to be perceived not for what they objectively are, but in a form which renders them legitimate in the eyes of those subject to the power" (Terdiman, 1987, p. 213).

By virtue of the law's special relationship to the State, which Bourdieu (1987, p. 839) conceives of as a society's legitimated and naturalised perpetrator of "symbolic violence", the law is especially powerful in the organisation of society into groups:

Law is the quintessential form of the symbolic power of naming that creates the things named, and creates social groups in particular ... It confers upon the reality which arises from its classificatory operations the maximum permanence that any social entity has the power to confer upon another (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 838).

This makes the structures that the law produces and naturalises, over and above other social structures, especially pertinent in an analysis of the construction of minority ethno-linguistic ethnic groups in China.

Laws distribute entitlement. Entitlement is a term common in legal scholarship, jurisprudence and political theory; it is a disembodied notion of power which may be embodied in specific forms, most notably a more concrete instrument known as a "legal right". From a perspective

informed by Bourdieu, entitlement may be understood as the grant of capital with currency in the legal field, allowing mobility through the legal system.

Laws not only structure the agents and procedures of mobility through the legal system, they provide specific discursive resources for framing and communicating the entitlement in a profitable way. The primary concern of most of the literature combining law and linguistics is inequality in the access to, or symbolic capital of, various discursive resources mobilised by participants within legal processes.

A second line of scholarship in relation to law as a discursive resource looks at how the terms, groupings and ideologies encoded in legal texts then shape discourses outside legal processes. This includes studies of the discursive practices of political advocates and social movements (including language revitalisation movements: e.g. Costa, 2013; Faudree, 2013; Mowbray, 2012) and the discursive practices of individuals in identity formation, amongst others. In all these discourses, the terms, schema and values in the law can be especially an influential “voice” and even norm-setting. Thus, this literature often, albeit often implicitly, follows Bourdieu’s view of law as discourse. In his view, the law is not only a powerful symbolic structure with special capacity for ordering the social field and, consequentially, the habitus of individuals, but:

The law is the quintessential form of “active” discourse, able by its own operation to produce its effects. It would not be excessive to say that it creates the social world, but only if we remember that it is this world which first creates the law. (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 839)

That is, the discursive nature of the law is important in the way laws come to influence the formation of habitus. Through the discursive co-construction of reality, the law can circulate and be internalised into institutional cultures and the structures of individuals' habitus.

Bourdieu himself illustrates this relationship between structure and habitus, mediated by the law as discursive practice, in his contention that:

the feeling of injustice or the ability to perceive an experience as unjust is not distributed in a uniform way; it depends closely upon the position one occupies in the social space ... The discovery of injustice as such depends upon the feeling that one has rights ("entitlement"). (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 833)

That is, it is not only the legal standing and procedures structured by laws that create legal entitlement (i.e. by structuring the field such that legal capital is valued). The subject must also have a habitus within which she represents herself as entitled to justice and constructs particular experiences of disequilibria as unjust.

While Bourdieu makes his point specifically in relation to the internalisation of the structures of entitlement as vocalised in laws, the related argument is made elsewhere that people internalise the social groupings and hierarchies which laws (and other state discourses) express, in part because the state and the legal system are imbued with normative authority, they are part of "legitimised discourse" (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 844) and they become "imaginable" and "plausible communities" (Mullaney, 2011, pp. 69-91), to use Mullaney's adaptation of Anderson's (1991) "imagined communities". Thus, laws, particularly laws about minority language, provide a framework underpinning the education, bureaucratic and

media frameworks which Goebel (2015) has identified as significant sites of reproduction of a social order, in particular the replication of social categories.

Bourdieu's framework therefore provides a strong theoretical basis for sociolinguists to study not only minoritised, marginalised and disempowered language practices, but also the laws and other prominent discourses which construct and determine value in the linguistic order. Empirically, and perhaps coincidentally, the literature has followed this orientation in that language policy and planning (LPP) and language rights studies have proliferated; however, a Bourdieuan, discursive focus with LPP and language rights literatures has only gradually emerged, spurred particularly by the development of discourse more generally as a topic in critical sociolinguistics (particularly following Fairclough, 1993; and Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002).

### **2.3 Emerging focuses in language rights and LPP literatures**

There is now a substantial literature on language rights and an overlapping, vast literature on LPP. This section reviews the trend within the former to a post-rights perspective (2.3.1), the argument for conceiving of language rights studies as part of LPP studies (2.3.2), and trend from typologies towards language ideology-focused, ethnographic studies of LPP (including rights) (2.3.2.2).

#### **2.3.1 Critical language rights studies and post-rights perspectives**

A review of the international language rights literature reveals important shifts in reaction to critiques of certain schools of scholarship, creating broad schools in reference to which

language rights research must now position itself. Specifically, the international literature on language rights is usually presented as falling into three schools, Language Ecology (LE), Linguistic Human Rights (LHR), and Minority Language Rights (MLR) (e.g. in May, 2005, p. 320; but note the different division in Ricento, 2015b, p. 28; Wee, 2011, p. 49). MLR emerged more recently than LE and LHR, partly in reaction to their limitations. A fourth, emerging school is sceptical of the overall rights paradigm as the solution to linguistic discrimination (Piller, 2016a; Wee, 2011).

LE research values preserving linguistic diversity and frame language shift/change as “loss” and “death” (e.g. Maffi, 2000; Mühlhäusler, 1996; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). To the extent LE scholars see language rights as the solution, the rights are understood as protecting endangered languages, not speakers. This school is not exclusively concerned with language rights as the mechanism of choice, it is entwined with a broader literature on dealing with language endangerment (key works include Craig, 1992; Dorian, 1981; Fishman, 1991; Nettle & Romaine, 2000).

LHR are framed as part of human rights discourses, as the inalienable, universal, personal entitlement to be granted protection for one’s basic needs to have, use and identify with a mother tongue (see also Skutnaab-Kangas & Phillipson, 1995; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, pp. 497-498). This literature sometimes ascribes rights to languages, as well as people (Wee, 2011, p. 62). Applications of the LHR paradigm to Chinese language governance (e.g. J.-J. Fan, 2006; J.-W. Yang, 2006; G. Zhu, 2014) further complicate what this literature means by human rights.

MLR literature, like LHR literature, prioritises legalistic, rights-based responses, sometimes even “human rights” (de Varennes, 1996), but its proponents value the languages of minority “ethnies” (Smith, 2005), whether or not endangered, as a means of redressing inequalities in the politics of recognition, political participation and, by extension, socio-economically (May, 2001, 2005, 2012; Mowbray, 2012). Wee (2011, p. 63) summarises MRL’s premise:

in an ethnically diverse society, language rights are needed in order to ensure equitable relationships between speakers of the dominant language, on the one hand, and speakers of the minority language, on the other. To make this argument, the MLR movement characterises the protection of language rights as a critical part of a liberal democratic perspective.

The role of MLR, then, is to increase the status of a language and its speakers so the language becomes instrumentally valuable in more domains (May, 2005, p. 335) and/or to give substantive meaning to autonomy so that linguistic choices can be freely made (May, 2001, p. 124; 2005, p. 330). LHR is likewise concerned with free linguistic choice, and in this sense is also within a liberalist framework, but LHR focuses on speakers being fully informed about the language loss consequent upon changing their linguistic practices rather than on the material conditions in which linguistic choice is exercised. Unusually in liberal theory, but following Kymlicka (1995, 2001), MLR literature theorises group rights (Ives, 2015; May, 2012; Ricento, 2006; Wee, 2011, p. 71), in order to liberate both individuals and groups.

The discourses, and legal affordances, of international law are important to understanding these language rights literatures; although international law cannot be said to fall squarely in

any one of the three schools, especially as language rights have an “ambiguity of status” (M. Zhou, 2004, p. 72), in general international law constructs language rights as human rights. Key instruments including the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Minorities* (United Nations General Assembly, 1992) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR)(United Nations General Assembly, 1966). The *Universal Declaration on Linguistic Minorities* (World Conference on Linguistic Rights, 1996) is a further document, signed by NGOs and is not binding on any states; it was presented to the UNESCO Director General but has not been formally approved by UNESCO. De Varennes highlights the *ICCPR* as the leading instrument for language rights: Article 27 states that minorities “shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language”.

The ambiguity of status of international language rights centres on debates in the literature and jurisprudence over whether or not Article 27 guarantees “positive action” i.e. creating a positive right for a minority to make a resource claim against a state, or, as M. Zhou (2004, p. 73) adds, a claim against another institution or individual triggering the state’s “duty to act”. Canvassing these debates, de Varennes (1996, p. 150) concludes that the “prevailing view” sees Article 27 providing a guarantee of State non-interference, i.e. it is a freedom, not a positive right. However, de Varennes (1996, p. 173) points out that even a freedom requires some positive action in that a state cannot “stand by and assist or permit other parties to intervene in the use of a minority’s language by members of the group” if such intervention is prohibited. In addition, M. Zhou (2004, pp. 72-74) argues that language rights are considered universal human rights *only* if they are freedoms imposing on a state a “duty of abstention”. De Varennes (1996, p. 157) identifies a gap in the literature on this topic, commenting,

It is one thing to agree that linguistic minorities are free to use their language, but the question then becomes free to do what exactly. Surprisingly little has been written on the extent of the right of non-interference....

Thus, the literature on language rights can be extended to detailed studies of how language freedoms work.

Additionally, or alternatively, the language rights literature has opened itself to further studies taking a post-rights perspective; some literature is increasingly reacting against the overall rights paradigm, seeking instead for non-rights-based approaches to overcome linguistic discrimination, inequality and social exclusion. In particular, Wee (2011, p. 161) argues that language rights are theoretically non-perfectible and socially destabilizing, hence “it seems clear that there is a need to explore an alternative way of dealing with linguistic discrimination that does not rely on the notion of language rights”. Piller (2016a) similarly avoids over-reliance on the mechanism of language rights in social justice-oriented language policies. Paulston (1997, p. 79) can be considered a forerunner of this perspective, having argued that constructing language rights as universal – i.e. as human rights – is useful for advocacy but “holds little explanatory power”.

One fundamental criticism is levied by Wee (2011, p. 73), who observes that, for LE, LHR and MLR, “language is assumed to be construable as a phenomenon that rights-holders can coherently lay claim toward”, highlighting the language rights literature’s lack of interrogation of this premise. This assumption about language arose in the context of language rights in international law, as “[t]he right of individuals belonging to a linguistic

minority to use their language with other members of their group has been part of international law since the time of the minorities treaties under the League of Nations supervision” (de Varennes, 1996, p. 172).

Another fundamental critique of the three language rights schools notes a tension persists between individual and group language rights, and therefore whether policies relying on language rights seek the equality of speakers or languages. As “the continued existence of a language critically depends on it having a community of speakers, [but] the continued existence of a community does not depend on its using a specific language” (Wee, 2011, p. 52), problems of priority and in-group authenticity arise (see further Mufwene, 2002). Moreover, Ives (2015) has criticised Kymlicka’s liberal groups rights proposition for inadequately theorising and empirically studying how language relates to culture and identity, yet relying heavily on language to define groups. Ives (2015, p. 57) argues Kymlicka lacks insight into how language-culture-identity relationships are socially constructed rather than “transhistorical and universal connection[s]”. May (2005, p. 334) therefore asks whether to change the discourse, and the material conditions, so that instrumental and identity functions of majority and minority languages are not pitted against each other (i.e. applying the Bourdieuan view of law as powerful discourses: see 2.2).

Moreover, as Jaffe (2007, p. 63) observes, language rights can provoke purist language ideologies, such that “language shift and other forms of contact-induced linguistic change become, by definition, forms of cultural deficiency”, with negative consequences for “impure” speakers and, ultimately, community cohesion. This critique is made especially of LHR, but

relevant to the rights paradigm overall, as it highlights the difficulty of protecting languages without reproducing an essentialising ideology that presumes “an almost ineluctable connection between language and (ethnic) identity” (May, 2005, p. 327). Similarly, Wee (2011, p. 58) argues that LHR’s fundamental dichotomies of mother/foreign tongue, basic/enrichment needs etc. (dichotomies that may also be produced in other framings of language rights), “do not seem to be able to accommodate the fact that, over time, identities may change and so may the languages that speakers consider to be their mother tongues”, as will the nature of speakers’ interests in linguistic justice.

Finally, an important critique of the rights paradigm pertains to the instrumental adequacy of rights as policy mechanisms. Wee (2011, p. 68) levies this critique specifically at MLR, arguing MLR is un-reflective about its coupling of means and end:

[MLR scholars] inten[d] that the hitherto disparaged minority language will gain sufficient prestige and value so as to satisfy the identity and instrumental needs of its speakers, thus dissuading them from abandoning or shifting away from this language. But why should we be so quick to assume that the best way to help speakers is to enhance the status of the minority language?

However, this trenchant question can be asked of the language rights paradigm overall; Costa (2013, p. 318) makes a similar but more general argument:

Promoting socio-economic rights through language may therefore serve to naturalise constructed links between language, culture and ethnicity that lock peoples into an imagined past and potentially deprive them of a future ... [and] may also induce

language-related solutions, which in turn can easily overlook other types of solutions to otherwise formulated problems.

This critique is furthered arises if we apply Bourdieu's theory of distinction (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1984[1979], 1992). May (2005, p. 335) argues that MLR will positively alter wider relationships of political, cultural and socio-economic marginality, and in so doing raise the status and instrumental value of a minority language. The logic of this relies on symbolic power. But the logic of distinction is that, over time, higher/newer standards for distinction emerge, as previously distinct Practice X becomes widespread and deflates in value. Kaplan (2011, p. 90) makes a related argument in regards to language planning, describing "[s]ymmetric multilingualism" as a situation in which "equal numbers of speakers are invested with equal rights, and in which both language prestige and linguistic identities are congruent"; symmetric multilingualism is recognisable as an aspiration of much of the language rights literature. However, Kaplan (2011, p. 90) argues "is impossible because one of the language groups will always be subject to stigmatisation and/or discrimination."

Thus, there is a trend emerging in the literature to acknowledge the limitations of language rights and challenge basic rights paradigm assumptions, considering (though not automatically endorsing) post-rights language policy.

This literature points to two prominent areas for further research in language rights; first, how language freedoms operate; and second, whether language rights are inherently too groupist, too essentialising, too status-oriented and not in themselves able to produce new norms by which symmetric multilingualism becomes the mainstream linguistic order. China offers an

appropriate context in which to pursue the first, as China's variation on language rights are constitutional minority language freedoms dating back to 1949 (Communist Party of China, 1949, art.53) and in the first *Constitution* (National People's Congress, 1954, art.3). Given China's language rights were developed separately from the human rights discourses of international law, they also offer an interesting counterpoint study of whether the same critiques of language rights nevertheless reasonably apply. The international laws above do not operate with legal force in China, although they circulate in Chinese language governance discourses and literature. The *ICCPR* was signed by China in 1998, but never ratified (United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, 2016, ch.IV.4). *ICCPR* Article 1(2) seeks that states adopt their own "legislative and other measures" to achieve the declaration's aims. The *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* was adopted unanimously by UN General Assembly member states (including China) but is not binding; it provides "essential standards" and "offers guidance" (United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, 2010, p. 3).

However, the language rights literature has rarely considered China's language rights despite their long and formal existence. One rare exception is a compilation of articles arising from the "Seminar on minority language use and cultural development: Chinese theories and practices" (H. Li & Lundberg, 2008). This book also includes the *Beijing-Oslo Recommendations on Protection for the Rights of Linguistic Minorities*, a legalistic discourse but not a binding law (on the history of these *Recommendations*, see Lundberg, 2009). The book gives some details on Chinese language rights implementations but does not engage in a critique of the rights paradigm. The book makes clear the diversity of sociolinguistic contexts and local policies implementing the language freedom across China. It takes a seemingly LE

approach to that diversity, for example Mu (2008, p. 133) argues that 《任何一种语言，都是全人类共同的文化财富》 (“whichever language, each is mankind’s joint cultural treasure”) and 《文化多样性是具有竞争优势，是文化富裕和社会稳定性的来源》 (“multiculturalism is a tool for competitive, advantage; it is the source of cultural prosperity and social stability”). Not all contributions engage deeply with conceptual questions and it is unclear where the analysis ultimately argues for the *status quo* and where for change regarding language rights. The book highlights the importance of autonomous regions as a type in the implementation of Chinese language policy and its case studies focus especially the Tibetan Autonomous Region and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, leaving open for further study the autonomous regions other than Tibet and Xinjiang, namely Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and, possibly, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

Another exception, and a very useful one, is M. Zhou and Sun’s edited history of twentieth century Chinese language rights and policies: (M. Zhou & Sun, 2004). Introducing it, the series editors (Spolsky & Shohamy, 2004, p. xvi) argue

China has clearly had language policies for at least 2000 years.... This volume includes one of the first serious discussions of the policy towards Chinese minority groups ... It charts rapid changes in attitudes and policies that continue to be in turmoil. With its size and complexity, China presents a fascinating challenge for the study of language policy... [With] the last half century of centralised language

management affecting more people than any other country and driven by developments in language ideology that reflects ongoing changes in political thought.

Further, two shorter works, (and Loper, 2012; MacPhearson, 2012) propose a critical sustainability theory of Chinese LPP and analyse human rights theory in relation to Chinese LPP, respectively.

Yet with H. Li and Lundberg's book out of print in China and not published in English, and M. Zhou and Sun's book having relatively low citation rates in the international language rights literature, it appears the literature has not heeded Spolsky and Shohamy's call or moved far beyond Paulston's (1997, p. 74) observation that "[m]ost of these [language rights] writings concern conditions in Europe and North America". Ricento (2015b, p. 35) briefly presents liberal and communitarian political philosophies *vis-à-vis* language rights, categorizing communitarian language rights as holding that citizenship and collective identity – including ethno-linguistic identity – are inseparable; however, China's minority language rights are not analysed in detail in that book, and nor have the changing attitudes and policies identified by Spolsky and Shohamy been charted since 2004.

Nevertheless, Ricento's two recent chapters on language rights theory and its relationship to the political economy literature – (Ricento, 2015a, 2015b) – offer a beginning for analysis which considers China on both the theoretical and empirical levels, given theorising on language rights is usually articulated as confined within the liberalist framework (e.g. Ricento, 2015a; Wright, 2015); Wee (2011, p. 165) calls for diversification of approaches, arising from his critique of liberal democratic philosophy. Given language rights scholars'

engagement with democratic theory and participation (e.g. Mowbray, 2012; Ricento, 2015c; Shohamy, 2006, p. 74; van Parijs, 2000), the Chinese counterpoint is particularly ripe for research, especially if one agrees with Wee (2011, p. 73, following Ryan, 1993) that “[t]he traditional opposition between liberal and communitarian values appears to be unnecessarily strict and possibly based on parodies”, or agrees with M. Zhou (2001a, p. 59) that “the Chinese experience provides a [general] lesson about the direct involvement by governments in minority language maintenance”.

Destabilising the liberal/communitarian language rights binary also aligns with the LPP literature’s tendency towards situated and particular language ideology studies, a trend reviewed below. This trend is especially relevant if one follows the literature below that incorporates language rights research within LPP research.

## **2.3.2 Situated LPP studies**

### **2.3.2.1 *Rights within LPP research***

The vast literature on language governance and deliberate attempts to change language practices has, over recent years, coalesced around the moniker “language planning and policy (LPP)” (Hornberger, 2006, p. 24). Language rights are sometimes studied as part of LPP, even standing in for LPP more broadly (e.g. in Wright, 2015), but at other times language rights are dealt with separately to the LPP literature (e.g. May, 2005, 2011), especially by legal scholars who position their language rights’ studies within human rights literature (e.g. de Varennes, 1996; Abayasekara, 2010; Mowbray, 2012). Shohamy’s (2006, p. 48) literature review notes language policy “can exist at all levels of decision making about languages”, including individuals, families, schools, regions and nations, so only some language policies

are “expressed in terms of language laws” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 50). Following this understanding of language rights as one “mechanism” or “policy device” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 57) amongst others, this thesis treats language rights as part of LPP, one of the four key LPP mechanisms identified by Shohamy (2006, p. 57): “laws, rules and regulations, standardisation and officiality”; “language education policies”; “language tests”; “language in the public space”. Many LPP (including language rights) studies focus on one or other of those mechanisms and the mechanism’s impacts, particularly LPP mechanisms’ impacts in advancing or stemming the global spread of “hypercentral” and “supercentral” (de Swaan, 2001) languages (e.g. Grenoble, 2003; Ricento, 2015c; Sonntag, 2015; de Varennes & Trifunovska, 2001; Whaley, 2004). A small number of authors focus on LPP in relation to both a supercentral and a hypercentral language dominating together, i.e. “double domination”, as Lin and Luk (2005, p. 80) term the linguistic order in which English and Putonghua are, jointly, dominant over Cantonese in Hong Kong, with the linguistic hierarchy entrenched through official language policy. Speaking of an analogous Putonghua-English-Minority linguistic order reproduced in language policy within mainland China, but highlighting the dynamism of the order, Adamson and A. Feng (2009, p. 321) use the term “tripolar complexity”. In addition to the studies of specific policies and/or linguistic orders, a large subset of the LPP literature has been concerned with theorizing policy and rights typologies but over time this has ceded ground to studies focusing on LPP ideologies and LPP’s situated effects.

### 2.3.2.2 *LPP typologies*

The merging of LPP and language rights literatures appears to have been largely driven by the urge to classify types of LPP/rights. The numerous typologies make salient diverse aspects of LPP frameworks including:

- their construction of territoriality and personhood within language rights (see also Kloss, 1965; McRae, 1975, p. 52);
- their “degree of domain comprehensiveness and ... of centralisation in decision making” (Paulston, 1997, p. 79);
- whether they orient to language as a resource, right or problem (Ruiz, 1984);
- their policy goals (Hornberger, 1994; 2006, pp. 28-33; see also Nahir, 1984);
- whether the LPP plans for status, acquisition or corpus changes (Cobarrubias, 1983; Cooper, 1989; Haugen, 1983) or is best classified as some other type of planning (Lo Bianco, 2005);
- whether LPP prioritises gaining new speakers or maintaining existing (or past) language usage patterns (e.g. Sayers, 2015);
- LPP’s tendency to naturalism or intervention (Wright, 2015);
- language rights’ “degree of overtness” and “degree of promotion” (M. Zhou, 2004, p. 72);
- what type of international legal right the LPP provides (de Varennes, 1996);

and many others (e.g. D. Ager, 2001; Jernudd & Neustupný, 1987; Neustupný, 1974; Rabin, 1971; Turi, 1994) (Ferguson, 1968; Schiffman, 1996; Stewart, 1968).

The status/acquisition/corpus planning typology has been adopted in Chinese LPP studies (e.g. Lu & F. Li, 2012), and the legalistic typologies of (McRae, 1975, p. 52; and de Varennes, 1996) have potential, if adopted, to foreground key features of Chinese LPP. However, few typologies were determined from a consideration of Chinese LPP, save M. Zhou (2004, p. 72); relatedly, few typologies compare LPP across political economies. The notable exceptions are Schiffman (1996), though he does not provide a Chinese case, and M. Zhou (2004). Thus, most typological studies under-specify (or exclude) the LPP of nations that are not liberal democracies. In addressing that gap, research can build on studies which have analysed LPP of Soviet and post-Soviet political economies (most notably, Grenoble, 2003; see also Weinreich, 1953; Yilmaz, 2013), and from certain analytic frameworks developed specifically in the Chinese context to consider Chinese LPP with a level of abstraction (especially Blanchford, 2004; A. Feng & Sunuodula, 2009; Harrell, 1993; Postiglione & Beckett, 2012; M. Zhou, 2012a).

Another gap in typological LPP literature – the under-studying of situated LPP – is increasingly being addressed and the resulting focus on language ideology in LPP studies now guides LPP researchers.

### ***2.3.2.3 The emergence of situated, ideology-focused studies of LPP***

Many typologies of LPP attend only to the formal locus of decision-making, which may be different from who actually exercises decision-making power. Thus Paulston (1997, p. 79) called for “situated” language rights, following Ricento and Hornberger’s (1996, p. 417) argument for situated studies in their analysis of the “onion” of LPP theory and their “hinting

at the roles played by ideology, culture, and ethnicity” (pp. 419-420) and following McRae’s (1975, p. 52) argument that “group value systems” affect what language policy alternatives are available and how they operate so language policy types should not be analysed, assessed, or predicted in the abstract. Paulston (1997, pp. 81, 83) argued “the same event may have different significance in different cultures, or...different events/phenomena may have the same significance” and yet this was being “ignored in the discussions of language rights”. Freeland and Patrick (2004, p. 2) explicitly attempted to advance the study of ideologies within critical language rights research in their edited volume, *Language Rights and Language Survival*. They advanced the need for studies of language ideologies as part of an “emic” (Freeland & Patrick, 2004, p. 8) approach to language rights and practices. That compilation is also an example of the literature opening to an overall examination of the rights paradigm, as the editors (Freeland & Patrick, 2004, p. 3) set out to interrogate “the particular strengths and weaknesses of the language rights discourse as a special “chapter” in a larger universalising discourse of human rights”, although they do not reach a post-rights perspective as Wee does (see 2.3.1), but rather take a Bourdieuan, discursive frame of analysis (see 2.2), acknowledging that laws make languages “hard edged” and that such languages have “considerable symbolic power as part of the dominant discourse, and [this] is strategically useful to minorities in their struggle for language rights” (p. 8). This is further made clear in Heller’s (2004) Bourdieuan, power-critical reflections on the compilation. Reviewing the turn in the literature as this argument became mainstream, Hornberger (2006, p. 31) criticised her own earlier “integrative framework” (Hornberger, 1994) for being largely unable to analyse the impacts of ideology, culture, and ethnicity on LPP. Hence she updated the framework to respond to the literature’s “emphases on ideology, ecology, and agency in LPP” (Hornberger, 2006, p. 31). More recently, Wright (2015, p. 190), drawing on South African research, has integrated ideologies, or “nonlinguistic forces shaping society”, into his

LPP types, classing as “naturalist” those policies which “facilitate[e] the evolution of a linguistic dispensation” that follows these non-linguistic forces.

Thus, language ideologies, which are beliefs and rationalities that organise the mental representation of language and associate features of language with social, economic, moral and other values (see Schiefflin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998; Silverstein, 1979; Woolard, 1998) and which “mediate between language use and social organisation” (Piller, 2015b, p. 920) – emerged as a central notion in situated LPP studies (see further 3.6.1.) The emergence of an ideological focus in LPP studies aligns with the Bourdieuan underpinnings of critical sociolinguistics, as Bourdieu (1987, p. 823) introduced the general notion that the construction of “the law as an instrument for the transformation of social relations” is an “ideology” (above, Section 2.2).

That LPP texts offer partial meanings had long been recognised, with (Schiffman, 1996) and (Paulston, 1997) calling for researchers to be alive to differences between “explicit” and “implicit”, “overt” and “covert”, “official” and “non-official”, “*de jure*” and “*de facto*” policies, and simply between “policy and practice”. Situated, language ideology-sensitive studies have come to be seen as crucial for an “expanded view of LP [language policy]” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 52; see also Jie Zhang, 2011, p. 225) appropriate for studying such policy “cleavages” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 51). Therefore, while language ideologies are not only relevant to LPP studies, they are especially relevant to LPP studies in order to analyse the meanings of LPP beyond the explicit, denotation meaning of policy texts. However, as with LPP typologies, situated, language ideology-sensitive LPP studies in China have been limited.

Related to the situated, ideological and emic focuses, LPP studies have also started to attend to a greater diversity of agents (see e.g. the identification of social actors in LPP as a direction for future research in Jie Zhang, 2011, p. 225). Hornberger (2006, p. 34) identifies this turn in the literature, quoting Ricento's (2000, p. 208) argument that the recognition of an agentive role of "individuals and collectives in the processes of language use, attitudes, and ultimately policies" is the seminal factor dividing earlier "positivistic/technicist" LPP scholarship from more recent "critical/postmodern" scholarship. Within this critical scholarship sits literature emphasizing grassroots, rather than nation-state, agents in language governance (e.g. Canagarajah, 2005). Although they may not position themselves as postmodern or grassroots-aligned, authors who consider non-state actors' roles in LPP and "language management" are also contributing to this agent-focused language governance literature: on corporate agents see e.g. Nekvapil & Nekula (2006) and on families as policy-making agents see e.g. Armstrong (2013). However, whether focused on China or elsewhere, very few LPP studies consider "the state" as an intrinsically heterogeneous agent with potentially divergent interests, resources and power.

Situated LPP studies tends to focus on policy at the institutional level, for example language-in-education policies, language and communications policies in official immigration processes, or language management in corporations. Thus, three of Shohamy's four primary types of LPP mechanism *as practiced* – namely official policy texts, language in education, and language testing (see 2.3.1) – have also become primary types of LPP *as studied*, because they are central to such institutions' practices. Depending on the type of institution, the focal agent changes. School studies typically concerned with the state as policy-maker and

teachers/schools as policy implementers (Barton & Tusting, 2005; Davis & Phyak, 2015; and theorizing this, see Hornberger, 2005; R. Ma, 2012; Mortimer, 2016; Stites, 1999), with Shohamy (2006, pp. 76-92) explicitly calling these people “agents” of language in education policy. Immigration process studies likewise often focus on the state as policy-maker and the immigration officer and/or judge as policy implementer, although some intentionally highlight the agency of other social actors (e.g. Maryns, 2006; Smith-Khan, 2016). Corporate studies focus on the enterprise as policy-maker (e.g. Nekvapil & Nekula, 2006).

Although this emic and agentic focus has not yet taken the literature to post-typologies theorising of LPP *as practice* (unlike, say, the emergence of post-typology governance theory of the state as situated practices, namely Bevir & Rhodes, 2010), it is urging the literature towards methodologies which uncover subjectivities and/or detailed social and governance contexts of LPP implementation.

#### ***2.3.2.4 Ethnographies and linguistic landscape approaches as new tools for situated LPP studies***

Ethnography is one such methodology uncovering the detail and the diverse subjectivity of LPP practices. Freeland and Patrick (2004, p. 2), for example, note its prominence in the contemporary sociolinguistics’ framework within which they situate situated and ideology-focused language rights studies. The methodology of ethnography has since continued to emerge in LPP studies, as Mortimer has identified (see further the literature review in Mortimer, 2016, p. 350). (However, ethnography has long been used for situated legal studies,

often called “legal anthropology”, see e.g. B. Malinowski, 1926.) Mortimer (2016, p. 350) argues,

These ethnographic approaches dovetail with increasing attention to the role of local norms, practices, and epistemologies in various aspects of language policy activity (Canagarajah 2004; Hornberger 1996) ... demonstrate[ing] that when we look at language policy text, we have but a partial understanding of its meaning.

That is, the ethnologic approach dovetails with the foregrounding of language ideologies (see 2.3.2.2). Ethnographies of LPP allow the analytic focus to fall on how formal, high-level LPP texts are implemented; how these texts function as discursive resources being re-entextualised, re-scaled or used intertextually; and how language ideologies vary between law or policy and localise practice. For example, Mortimer’s (2016) ethnography of Paraguayan LPP exposes how ideologies intended and encoded in minority language-in-education policy do not align with teachers’ and parents’ language ideologies. Because methodology is a central concern in ethnological literature, the thesis’ Methodology Chapter will further examine literature on ethnographic method.

The agency of social actors and of institutions in influencing, reinterpreting or thwarting LPP may thus be studied along a policy-making chain, from law-makers through to the officials implementing policies, to the “front-line workers’ including teachers, and individuals in society who are governed under language policies. That is LPP, is increasingly being studied both “from above” and “from below”, as Coupland (2010) says of linguistic landscapes.

Further, LPP is also being studied “in place” because another situated focus gaining ground is to study LPP as manifest in linguistic landscapes (e.g. Coupland, 2010; Draper, 2016), because “public space ... is primarily shaped by public authorities” (Pavlenko, 2009, p. 254), aligning with Shohamy’s identification of language in the public space as the fourth key LPP mechanism (see 2.3.1). Such studies employ an extended “linguistic landscape approach” (Gorter, 2006 p. 1; see also Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009) or “semiotic landscape approach” (following Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010b) (the latter representing an extension towards multimodality and subjectivity). Institutional and public space focuses may be combined; Brennan (2015), for example, studies how the regulation of “visual bilingualism” by a government is received and implemented by businesses.

However, even as the literature moves towards situated LPP studies, there remains a normative debate over the scale of LPP. One normative position argues language governance should attempt a “big push” (Wright, 2015) of large-scale, multi-domain changes to language practices, believing gradual attempts will always be forestalled by the overwhelming *status quo*. The other position advocates small-scale incremental changes whereas, e.g. Kaplan’s (2011, p. 91) “unplanned planning”. The literature is yet to apply this analysis to LPP in China, but China’s centralised state system has clearly enabled “big-push” LPP while its recent decades of opening and reform have also allowed for “unplanned planning” responding to social and market reorganisation, making it an attractive focus for further critical sociolinguistic LPP research.

### **2.3.3 Critical sociolinguistics in China**

#### ***2.3.3.1 The emergence of critical perspectives in Chinese sociolinguistics***

Critical sociolinguistic studies in/from China are also emerging but, given the size of China and the complex multilingualism within it, there is yet much ground to cover. Almost all Chinese critical sociolinguistics studies take denaturalising China's official ethno-linguistic groupings as their starting point. However, the literature suggests that the powerful, national symbolism of language, specifically of Chinese (Hanyu), has been strong for millennia because China was organised not as a modern nation-state but as an imperial "civilization-state" (Jacques, 2011; see also He, 2014). Thus, there is much room for critical sociolinguistic studies of power, ideology and assimilation as they relate to China's non-Chinese languages, the languages of the so-called 《少数民族》 ("minority minzu") peoples. The minzu concept is integral in Chinese minority language literature because it is integral to Chinese state practice with regards to linguistic diversity; it is the term for officially recognised ethno-linguistic polities (see Glossary).

Fifty-five minority minzu are recognised, while the Hanzu are recognised as the majority minzu (see list in Ramsey, 1987, pp. 164-165). Together, the fifty-five minority minzu accounted for 9.44 percent of the PRC's population in 2005's national 1 percent sample survey (China Encyclopedia Compilation Group, 2008, p. 33), reducing to 8.49 percent by 2013 (Y. Zhou, 2013, p. 4).

The minzu classifications establish what Benhabib (2002, p. 8) has elsewhere called "mosaic multiculturalism" i.e. "human groups and cultures are clearly delineated as identifiable entities that coexist, while maintaining firm boundaries". Although Chinese linguists

recognise more languages than minority minzu (Sun, 1992, p. 9), the classification bears the hallmarks of the “object-constructions operations” (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 645) which Bourdieu argued were foundations of the discipline of linguistics, and which he criticised for importing an ideologically-loaded category mistake about the nature of language.

Thus, Chinese language governance might be seen to display the “over-determined sense of linguistic fixity” which Pennycook (2004, p. 2) argues sociolinguistics should call into question. The tension between social constructions of groups, and the Chinese state’s rigid classifications of majority and minority ethnies, sets up a fundamental dynamic suited to sociolinguistic research. Nevertheless, while critical sociolinguistic studies of the Sinosphere are now proliferating, the bulk of twentieth century Chinese linguistic literature concerned “describing merely the structure and historical evolution of languages” (Sun & Coulmas, 1992, p. 7). In particular, twentieth century Chinese “ethnosociolinguistics” (Q. Zhou, 1992a), a sub-field, was socially-focused but did not engage with critical theory or the potential fluid reconstruction of languages, groups and identities; rather, in its fundamental stance, it reconstructed an essential connection between abstractions of ethnicity and language. Ethnosociolinguistics is a “branch of sociolinguistics investigating the relationship between minority languages and society in China”, reported Q. Zhou (1992a, p. 59) in an article summarizing Chinese sociolinguistic literature for international readers. As might be expected from Q. Zhou’s definition, this literature (enumerated in Q. Zhou, 1992b), tends not to examine the relationship between Putonghua and minority languages, but maps language variation onto recognised (often officially ascribed) social categories.

Q. Zhou's (1992a, p. 64) review indicates the dominant understanding amongst Chinese ethnosociolinguists of the twentieth century was that whenever minority and Hanzu groups lived in contact, the minority language would shift to Hanyu, i.e. bilingualism was not deeply studied and the literature reproduced a "monolingual mindset" (Clyne, 2005). As opposed to ethnosociolinguistics, sociolinguistics "was developed relatively late" (Sun & Coulmas, 1992, p. 5) in China, and later still in relation to minority languages: Sun and Coulmas (1992, p. 7) note Chinese scholarship broadened into research on bilingualism, language planning and nationality only in the 1980s. Bourdieuan critical sociolinguistics approaches have been especially slow to proliferate, likely because, as Thompson (1991, p. 29) points out, they are not Marxist (see further Bourdieu, 1991, p. 251). However, leading Chinese minority language scholar Sun Hongkai, acknowledges critiques of structuralism in the international literature (Sun, 1992, p. 16) and suggests it is now time for social and political factors in China to be considered along with formal linguistic classifications, historical groupings and people's own understanding of their group, as "the beginning ... of sociolinguistics suitable to the linguistic realities of China". Nevertheless, Lickorish (2008, p. 3) argues that in "Chinese scholarship ... CPP ideology continues to canalise research" such that minority studies are marginal.

This new, more critically reflective sociolinguistics has the potential to engage with the demographic literature shows a growing dislocation of Chinese minority minzu from traditional territories (e.g. C. Fan, 2008; R. Guo, 2013; Iredale et al., 2003; Iredale, Bilik, Su, Guo & Hoy, 2001). Despite China's minorities being "on the move" (Iredale et al., 2003), a significant portion of literature about Chinese minority languages does not yet challenge the hegemonic State construction of the fifty-six minzu and "their" languages and jurisdictions.

Furthermore, there is room for critical sociolinguistic studies to build on other social science literature about China aligned with a Bourdieuan approach. For example, analysing reproduction of the social order in China, Gladney (2004, p. 165) argues the state's "ethnic labels ... have taken on a life of their own" i.e. they are social accepted and reproduced discursive constructions, and Leibold (2015, p. 274) invokes an idea of internalisation of social structures very like the Bourdieuan idea of habitus (see especially Bourdieu, 1977a):

Mainland citizens have long internalised the existence of fifty-six distinct ethnic communities, or minzu (民族) as they are known in Party-speak, which are evoked and performed across China on a daily basis: from the filling-in of official paperwork to the singing and dancing of ethnic performers on television.

Here, Leibold refers to two types of state practice: official paperwork, i.e. discursive texts in circulation; and the ideological process of "iconisation" (Irvine & Gal, 2000) of ethnicity (on iconisation, see further 3.6.1).

Critical sociolinguistic studies comprise one strand within "the young but rapidly developing field of ethnicity studies in the People's Republic of China" (McKhann, 2001, p. 845), sitting within the social constructionist ethnicity studies sometimes called "Critical Han Studies" (Mullaney, Leibold, & Gros, 2012) or "critical multiculturalism" (Leibold & Y. Chen, 2014a, p. 4; following May, 2009). That field takes "'culture as a terrain of conflict and struggle over representation' and seeks to uncover the broader material and structural barriers to social, political, and educational equality" (Leibold & Y. Chen, 2014a, p. 4). Within the Chinese context, it comprises primarily critical historiography and anthropologic studies rather than sociolinguistic or LPP studies (e.g., critical Uyghur history: Brophy, 2016; anthropology of

reinventing Zhuang traditions for tourism: Chaisingkananont, 2014a; critical examination of politics and processes of Chinese Muslim and subaltern identities: Gladney, 2004; historiography of minority classification work: Mullaney, 2011). Lickorish (2008, pp. 197-198) reviews a subset of this literature: twenty-first century anthropological studies which “delineate the role of the [Chinese] nation state in the production and manipulation of ethnic identity” (including Litzinger, 2000; Schein, 2000).

Lickorish’s (2008) own anthropology of subaltern Manchu cultural reproduction offers an enlightening illustration of the analytic value of both Bourdieuan theory and ethnographic method; of general relevance to critical minzu studies is his finding that, although the state’s articulation of ethnic identity is powerful, alternative identities are nevertheless created and persist, somewhat challenging the notion that the “Communist Party of China (CPC) and its bureaucratic apparatuses possess a virtual monopoly on ethnocultural identity articulation” (Leibold, 2015, p. 274). However, Lickorish (2008, p. 199) finds, the “increasingly restricted bases of ... ethnic reproduction ... have shifted ... to the household”.

In addition to these recent critical minzu studies, Stevan Harrell’s work on the Han-centric and hegemonic ideologies of China’s minority language policies (e.g. Harrell, 1993, 1995, 1996; Harrell & E. Ma, 1999), and the extensive work of his former student Dru Gladney on constructions of Muslim identities amongst China’s minority peoples (e.g. Gladney, 1994, 1999, 2004) have laid important foundations for critical multiculturalism in China and also for the importance of language practices and policies within that field. In terms of critical Chinese LPP studies, specifically, Harrell’s work is an important counterpoint to later authors

who present early PRC language policies as “pluralistic” (M. Zhou, 2000, p. 126) or as having formed a “parallel language order” (Beckett & Postiglione, 2012, p. 4) in which minority languages were positioned as local lingua francas with Hanyu only a supplement. Harrell (1993, p. 108) argues that, in demanding one standard(ised) written dialect for each minority, despite many minority languages having mutually unintelligible dialects, the state coerced minorities into learning Hanyu/Putonghua as their local lingua franca. To Harrell (1993, p. 108), Chinese language policy therefore “subverts as well as fulfils the policy principle of linguistic equality”.

M. Zhou’s extensive research on Chinese language policies (M. Zhou, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2004, 2012a, 2012b; M. Zhou & Ross, 2004) does not spring from the same well of critical theory but he provides enormous detail on the political discourses and dominant ideologies over the twentieth century’s development of official Chinese language policy. In particular, M. Zhou (, 2012b, p. 4) argues that since the USSR collapsed,

China has been gradually replacing its Soviet model with a native model of an inclusive Chinese nation with diversity ... This model attempts to establish a language order where Putonghua functions as the dominant language while minority languages serve as the supplementary ones.

M. Zhou (2012b, p. 4) calls this “ordered multilingualism”. Considering the same LPP shift, Lam (2005) has argued China’s minority language-in-education policies are now deliberately designed to avoid a USSR-style dissolution.

Furthermore, M. Zhou (2000, p. 130) observes that, “in China there is always a gap between a constitutional guarantee [about minority language usage] and the right that people actually enjoy”, arguing the variation “reflects the tilt toward [either] accommodationism or assimilationism in language policy implementation” (M. Zhou, 2001a, p. 38). Such discontinuities in Chinese minority LPP have not been studied in detail but M. Zhou (2004, p. 90) nominates three language ideologies contributing to this gap. First, in Communist theory, ethno-linguistic diversity is only a means to ethno-linguistic integration (i.e. “assimilationist”); second, Han Chauvinism makes officials blinkered to the importance of minority language equality thus linguistic concerns are simply overlooked (M. Zhou, 2004, p. 90). Third, following a “Hobbesian” logic, only those minorities who are “equal threats to the PRC’s territorial and national integrity receive equal status, equal opportunities for use and development, and equal government service” (M. Zhou, 2004, p. 90).

Recently, education scholars Gerard Postiglione and Gulbahar Beckett have drawn critical Chinese multiculturalism closer to sociolinguistic concerns with their edited volume on China’s “assimilationist” LPP (Postiglione & Beckett, 2012). Leibold and Y. Chen’s (2014b) *Minority Education in China* deepens this connection (see also Postiglione, 1999; Stites, 1999; Tsung, 2009). Within that book, He (2014) provides a critical history of China’s minority language in education policies emphasising the “imperialism” (following Phillipson, 1992, 2009) of Putonghua and especially of written Chinese characters. These “critical multiculturalism in education” studies offer analyses of minority language education policies and their implementation in Inner Mongolia (Bilik, 2014), Tibet (R. Ma, 2014; Postiglione, Jiao, Li, & Tsamla, 2014), Xinjiang (Y. Chen, 2014; Postiglione, Jiao, & Manlaiji, 2007; Simayi, 2014; Tsung, 2014), Yunnan (Teng, H. Yang, & Q. Yang, 2014; Tsung, Ge Wang, &

Q. Zhang, 2012; Tsung, 2009), and Hong Kong (Tsung, 2009), as well as Uyghur and Mongolian students in Beijing (Grose, 2014; Z. Zhao, 2014). This literature has not considered China's largest minority language, Zhuang, or the associated territory Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region (GZAR).

Furthermore, these works, and the broader (critical and descriptive) literature on minority education in China (e.g. Adamson & A. Feng, 2009; Dai & Cheng, 2007; A. Feng, 2007; A. Feng & Sunuodula, 2009; A. Feng & Adamson, 2015; Hansen, 1999; B. Huang, 2007; Lam, 2005; Lamontagne, 1999; X. Ma, 1990; Muhate'erer, 1989; Sautman, 1999; Su, 2002; J. Tai, 1988; Ge Wang, 2011, 2016; Peng Wang, 2010; S. Wang, 2003; Y. Wang & Phillion, 2009; H. Xu, 2009; K. Xu, 2006; X. Yan, 1990; Yuan et al., 2015; Yue, Z. Zhang, Wu, & C. Zhao, 2010) rarely study tertiary education. One of the few exceptions is J. Xu's (2000) research on challenges faced by English Majors from the Zhuangzu, none of whom, she finds, can speak Zhuang. (On university students from other minzu see Grose, 2014; Jacob & Park, 2012; Wu, Tuchscherer, & Parkay, 2012; Z. Zhao, 2014).

Despite the coalescing of critical Chinese multiculturalism studies as a field and the ripe ground for critical sociolinguistic studies of minority multilingualism and LPP in China, the now sizeable body of international critical sociolinguistic literature about China is yet to pay adequate attention to minority multilingualism. That literature focuses instead on the impacts of English on mainstream Chinese language and identities. For example, Jie Zhang (2011, p. 10) argues there is a tension between identifying as Chinese and achieving China's national goals of modernisation and global integration, because Chinese identity associated

with Putonghua while the goals are associated with English, and Y. Gao (, 2009, p. 58) suggests there is an “identity dilemma” for Chinese learners of English; neither considers diverse minority Chinese identities. Similarly, Dong and Blommaert’s (2009) study of regional accents and identity formation by internal migrants in Beijing and S. Gao’s (2015) otherwise excellent analysis of the changing indexicality of multilingualism within an ideological paradigm of Chinese “neo-nationalism” (p. 3) both overlook the indexicality of minority multilingualism. S. Gao (2015, p. 4) notes that historically English was considered “barbarian”; today’s official Chinese minority languages were, like English, also considered to be languages of foreign “barbarians” in the past. The historic foreignness of China’s southern minorities, in particular, is illustrated in (Tapp & Cohn, 2003).

Nevertheless, critical sociolinguistic studies of subaltern/minority/peripheral languages and identities in China is emerging. While sociolinguistic studies in the Sinosphere appears primarily concerned with the tension between the international indexicality of English and that language’s perceived mobility value *vis-à-vis* the nationally important but less mobile Putonghua, critical sociolinguistic studies of China’s minority languages remind us that Putonghua is also the dominating, not the dominated, language. Specifically, as Roche (in press) (citing Bilik) argues, Putonghua’s

ubiquity across all domains ensures its place as the language of social mobility in China, and also confers prestige on that language, which is in turn consolidated by discourses that associate Putonghua with progress, civilization, and human quality while denigrating minority and regional languages as backward, unscientific and parochial.

Roche's work represents both critical, periphery-focused sociolinguistics in the Sinosphere and a critical sociolinguistic analysis of policy. Of particular relevance is his research on the impact on the Tibetan language ecology of an "ideologically driven modernisation program" (Roche, in press) known as "Open (up) the West", which is a high-priority development policy, rather than a language policy, implemented in China this century. Roche employs the notion of language ideologies in his situated analysis, arguing "it is essential to consider the ways in which generic modernisation processes are modified by specific, nationalist ideologies". Roche's foregrounding of the impacts of modernity and its attendant social reorganisation on China's language ecology goes beyond critical sociologic or sociolinguistic studies (e.g. Kaup, 2000) which emphasise the twentieth century state processes of constructing the minority languages and ethno-cultural groups, as well as the "strict correlation" (Roche, in press) between them (and see also Whaley, 2004). Regarding those state processes, Roche (in press) (following Hirsch) applies the concept of "double assimilation", i.e. LPP was part of "the assimilation of diverse peoples into nationality categories and the assimilation of [these] nationally categorised groups into mainstream society". In positioning Chinese LPP within a longer-term ideological frame, Roche's analysis serves to render Kaup's (2000) and Mullaney's (2006, 2011) critical histories of mid-twentieth century linguistic classification and group recognition salient today. S. Liang (S. Liang, 2015, p. 179) has also identified the gap in the literature for ethnographic studies of contemporary Chinese minority multilingualism, and called for research in China "about coming to terms with challenges imposed by traditional monolingual norms and new demands for heteroglossic language competencies". Her (S. Liang, 2015, pp. 69-89) ethnography is of multi-dialectal children in a Guangzhou school finds children of internal

migrant parents identify as Guangzhou natives although they cannot speak Cantonese, but also finds this is rejected as illegitimate by Cantonese-speaking locals, and finds monolingual ideologies underpinning dominant Guangzhou identities (p. 161).

Ethnographies of Chinese minority LPP are emerging as part of the broader critical and ethnographic turn in sociolinguistic research on Chinese minorities, although descriptions of historic LPP documents and evaluations of preferential education policies predominate (A. Feng & Sunuodula, 2009, p. 685). These ethnographies have concentrated especially on peoples in the Yunnan area (noted in Lickorish, 2008, pp. 3-4). Ethnographies are a significant route for critical Chinese LPP studies to pursue, both because ethnographies are emerging internationally in LLP studies (2.3.2.2) and because, as Lickorish (2008, p. 197) argues, only ethnography can “uncover the sociocultural mechanisms, other than state recognition, by which ... identity is constructed and reproduced”. Pérez-Milans takes an explicitly critical sociolinguistic ethnography approach to the “meaning of modernisation” under conditions of changing policies about English language education in China (Pérez-Milans, 2013). A. Feng and Sunuodula (2009) responded to the same gap, with an ethnographically-oriented study focusing on institutional agents in the implementation of minority language education policy; their priority, however, was to compare minorities not “drill down”. Blanchford (2004) also takes an ethnographic approach to Chinese LPP, tracing language policy along the path of its implementation through various government agencies and agents, revealing how heterogeneous interests are within the often homogenised “state”, and revealing fractured lines of power and authority. Her study provides an excellent basis for further similar Chinese LPP ethnographies.

### 2.3.3.2 *Chinese minority LPP in the context of globalisation and second generation minzu policy discourses*

The task of analysing how Chinese minority LPP works *in situ*, and the dynamics of the ideologies animating it, is especially topical given the emergence within Chinese political discourses and political science literature of 《第二代民族政策》 “second generation minzu policy” (Hu, 2012), the increased marketisation of systems and values in China since its trade, political and cultural globalisation, often recognised as gathering steam from the time of China’s 2001 World Trade Organisation ascension, and the globalisation of English – with its acknowledged effects on Chinese multilingualism (e.g. Adamson & A. Feng, 2009).

Second generation minzu policy hinges on removing the State’s symbolic recognition of ethno-linguistic identity. Conflicts with the Uyghur and Tibetan minzu, in particular, are fuelling increasing calls in Beijing’s political circles from Professors Angang Hu, Lianhe Hu and Rong Ma to start dismantling minority-preferential policies and laws in including language rights (Leibold, 2012a). Leibold (2012b, p. 7) notes that “intellectuals, netizens, generals, dissidents and even property tycoons now call for a major rethink of ethnic policies”. New policies suggested by Angang Hu include strengthening Putonghua *and* bilingual education (Leibold, 2012a), and fostering the decline of sub-national minzu identities (Leibold, 2012b, p. 7). Likewise, Rong Ma advocates “the scaling back of ethnic autonomy and preferential policies” because the “systematic segregation of ethnic groups and institutions in China has rendered the Chinese nation (中华民族) an empty concept” and the 《汉化》 (“Hanification”) of the minority minzu is an “inevitable process of modernisation”

(quoted in Leibold, 2012a). This envisions a “melting pot” (A. Hu & L. Hu, 2011) of ethnicities like in the USA or Brazil, rather than the brittle “hors d’oeuvres” Soviet model, or that which Sen (2006) calls “plural monoculturalism” (see also Leibold & Y. Chen, 2014a, p. 15; Postiglione, 2014, p. 31). In this Chinese melting pot, Leibold (2012a) explains,

cultural pluralism is tolerated and groups are permitted to maintain their cultural traditions, yet the absence of group-differentiated institutions, laws or privileges encourages natural ethnic mingling and a shared sense of civic belonging.

This is notably like moves in sociolinguistic and liberal democratic theory towards plurality and complexity, except that the cornerstone notions of fluidity and hybridism – i.e. manifestations of liberalist individual autonomy – are largely absent from second generation minzu policy discourses. This echoes a criticism of linguistic identity politics in the French context made by Lafont (1997[1989], p. 35), who argues that the state’s affirmation of identity is a cloying “*scellement du devenir*” (“sealing in of fate”).

Specifically regarding language, second generation minzu advocates propose increased learning of Putonghua by minorities (e.g. R. Ma, 2014), and even the “death” of minority languages as the only way to gain equal access to educational and economic opportunities (a comment from Ma Rong cited in He, 2014, p. 3). This is somewhat like van Parijs’ (2011) argument that the most just global situation would be the global spread of English because English facilitates access to global political participation, except van Parijs’ focus is political not economic resources and he is concerned with redistribution that dissipates linguistic privilege, not only with supporting the linguistically under-privileged (see also Piller, 2016b, pp. 249-251).

Moreover, the literature argues that Putonghua is increasingly deployed as a “rallying point” (adopting the phrase of Heller, Pujolar, & Duchêne, 2014, p. 542) for national cohesion and Chinese identity. For example, Jie Zhang (2011, p. 221) argues the belief that “a unified Chinese language is regarded as the foundation of a unified Chinese national identity” has compounded over time and is galvanising in reaction to English’s spread into China (on the adoption of this view by individuals, see e.g. H. Yang, 2012, pp. 102-103). Simpson’s (2016) chapter in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of the Chinese Language* provides a history of twentieth century Chinese linguistic nationalism and explains that nowadays state institutions representing “cultural nationalists take the Chinese language to particularise the Chinese way of thinking and enshrine the ‘spirit’ of the nation”. Such beliefs can be understood as the foundations for second generation minzu policy already being laid, if second generation minzu policy represents “aspiring monolingualism”, to borrow Hult’s (2014, p. 209) phrase. The way the concept of minzu policies *without* minzu categories will play out in Chinese language policy, and in whose linguistic, socio-economic and political interests, deserves enthusiastic scholarly attention, all the more because Leibold (2012b, p. 7) predicts Hu Angang’s proposals “will receive a serious hearing” as “the party-state already has adopted no fewer than seven major policy reforms” proposed by him.

These socio-political and economic changes are surely disrupting the linguistic order the literature has variously characterised as a “balance of bilingualism” in LPP since 1991 (Adamson & A. Feng, 2009, p. 323); a “second pluralistic” (M. Zhou, 2000, p. 126) stage of LPP; a phase since 1977 of “modernisation” (Blanchford, 2004, p. 108) or “recovery and development” (A. Feng & Sunuodula, 2009, p. 685). Nevertheless, the application of these

terms, and the analytic chronologies of Chinese LPP from which they come, have not been tested against data from the twenty-first century; does modern China remain in its (second) pluralistic phase?

Having identified a gap in the literature for situated, critical, ideology-sensitive studies of Chinese minority languages freedoms and attendant LPP, there remains an issue of scope: China is too big. However, the literature does indicate certain minority languages, including the Zhuang, as worthy candidates to focus on.

## **2.4 Zhuang studies**

### **2.4.1 Reasons for focusing on Zhuang**

The Zhuangzu are not especially prominent in sociolinguistic (or wider Sinology) literature even though they are by far the most populous official minority minzu in China. In 2011, the Zhuangzu population was 17.283 million (R. Guo et al., 2015, p. 68).

Zhuang speakers are often assumed to be “well assimilated” (Ramsey, 1987, p. 167) people who “can communicate perfectly well in Chinese [Hanyu] and are more than happy to do so” (p. 235). Yet, as H. Chen (2005), L. Li (2005, p. 10) and Liu (2005, pp. 4,6) each report, Zhuang is still a widely spoken language, with almost fourteen million speakers. Of these, the majority (66.15-77.99 percent: M. Zhou, 2012b, pp. 6, 10) were Hanyu-Zhuang bilinguals by the early 2000s although only 84.95 percent of people who can speak Zhuang as a mother tongue use it in their everyday lives (H. Chen & L. Wang, 2005, p. 52). In the decades leading up to this data, Zhuang bilingualism and Zhuang speakers’ Putonghua proficiency both increased markedly: Li and Huang (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 240) report 42.29

percent of the Zhuangzu population were monolingual in Zhuang in the 1980s, while 54.72 percent were bilingual “Zhuang-Chinese” speakers, then M. Zhou (2000, p. 142) reports 1990 data showing 57 percent of the Zhuangzu were “Chinese” speakers. That is, the repertoires of Zhuang speakers are changing, especially in regards to their inclusion of Hanyu.

Moreover, existing literature on Zhuang reveals an ideological tension as this big population is usually homogenised. For example, the literature and survey data shows 430,830 Zhuang speakers in GZAR are not Zhuangzu (H. Chen, 2005, pp. 19-20) but the experiences, ideologies and practices of Zhuang speakers who are not in the Zhuangzu are invisible in the literature (see e.g. A. Feng & Sunuodula, 2009; X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004). Indeed, some authors do not acknowledge such people at all, treating the Zhuangzu and the Zhuang speaker populations as coextensive: for example, an authoritative 1980s language atlas states “The numbers of speakers of languages, dialects and local dialects inside the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region are estimates based on the 1982 population census” (M. Liang, Junru Zhang et al. 1988, note 5), but the census recorded individuals’ minzu classification, not their language use (see also Bodomo & Pan, 2007; Luo, 2015, p. 3). Another homogenisation is the ascribing of a Zhuang identity to Zhuang speakers whereas Ramsey (1987, p. 167) reports of the Zhuangzu that “most of its ... assigned members are said to consider themselves Han” and A. Feng and Sunuodula (2009, p. 692) claim “Zhuang is rarely taken seriously as the linguistic identity of this largest minority nationality group”. By contrast, X. Li and Q. Huang (2004, p. 239) claim that when Zhuang is used for communication it is “because of the Zhuang’s deep emotional attachment to it” and Lu and F. Li (2012, p. 36) argue “the Zhuang people still need a linguistic representation of their ethnic identity”. Ramsey (1987, p. 167) “wonders why borderline cases were not permitted to go ahead and register as Han”; they are not so permitted, and critical histories suggest political and pragmatic reasons (see e.g. Kaup,

2000; Y. Zhou, 2013). As Kaup (2000), in particular, has illuminated, the PRC government very actively constructed the Zhuangzu and sought to foster a Zhuangzu identity.

Ideological tension is also present in the literature about written Zhuang language. Holm's (2013; see also Tsung, 2014, p. 161) thoroughgoing history of Zhuang logographic writing evidences a literate history and textual conventions rather than Zhuang texts being "a farrago of nonce creations" as (Ramsey, 1987, p. 235) had claimed, and yet A. Feng and Sunuodula (2009, p. 670) discuss the Zhuangzu as a people with no written language before PRC times, following M. Zhou's (2000, p. 129; also M. Zhou, 2001a, p. 56) more modest claim that they "had no fully functional writing systems before 1949". Going further, Li and Huang's (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 240) say "for most periods of history, the Zhuang did not have their own writing system" and "often tried to create a native writing system" implying these attempts failed, which contrasts other literature on the Zhuang logographic script known variously as Old Zhuang Character Script; *Sawndip* [θa:uMɔ̃p], meaning "uncooked characters" in Zhuang; 土俗字 ("Native Script"); and 方块壮字 ("Square Zhuang Characters") (S. Ager, 2016; Holm, 2013; Kaup, 2000, p. 139; "Sawndip," 2016; Sinj & Loz, 2008). That script, used for other Tai languages also, adapted Hanyu characters and added indigenous characters but was not standardised (Holm, 2013; see also C. Tai, 2005). By contrast, imperial policies first standardised Hanyu script and banned non-standard Hanyu scripts in the third century B.C.E. (He, 2014, p. 6). Holm argues the Zhuang script was used in religious texts read aloud in rituals, and Kaup (2000, p. 140) asserts it was for "legal documents and contracts, religious texts, and folk literature and songs".

In addition to these unverified statements that seem to recur in the literature, the Zhuang language allows for a case study of the effects of language rights under conditions of social and economic transformation, in particular because GZAR, where 87.06 percent of the Zhuangzu and therefore the majority of Zhuang speakers live, is another province targeted by the Open up the West modernisation policy. I arrived at 87.06 percent by aggregating reported Zhuangzu populations by county; this is slightly below M. Zhou's (2000, p. 142) approximation of 90 percent. Using data from the 2000 Guangxi Language Committee Survey reported in (Liu, 2005, p. 3), I calculate the Zhuangzu comprised 32.4 percent of GZAR's total population in 2000.) Roche explored this policy as integral to Tibet's changing language ecology (cited in Section 2.3.3.1). Although GZAR is not in West China, the policy also targets all five autonomous regions (Bird, 2015), as Figure 5 shows. The striking blend of ethnic tradition and modernity used to represent the Zhuang people by the state in the officially-authored Chinese Encyclopaedia (Figure 6) visualises types of tensions of modernity and the preservations of language (and other traditions) interesting for sociolinguistic study.



Figure 5. Provinces and regions covered by the Open up the West policy; GZAR is red.  
Source (Bird, 2015).

GZAR is, moreover, a province adjacent to an ASEAN state and therefore now priming for development under China’s new ASEAN-focused foreign policy. Finally, the very discourses of Zhuang assimilation suggest a potentially very interesting case of hybridity and/or “conviviality” (Blommaert, 2013, pp. 127-128) and/or successful LPP. Indeed, Lickorish (2008, p. 20) denaturalises discourses constructing a minority as assimilated (in his case the Manchu) as a “trope ... [that] continues to circulate unquestioned” in scholarship and which, if accepted uncritically, presents a theoretical impediment to minzu ethnographies. Blackledge and Creese (2015), and Piller (2016a, pp. 252-259), make the argument that it is problematic for the literature to overwhelmingly select “problems” rather than situations of well-functioning multilingualism. However, the apparent tranquillity of Zhuang

multilingualism may also be a case of ideological hegemony, or simply a misrepresentative assumption in the literature.



*Figure 6. A phone call in Zhuang? (“Ethnic Minorities,” 2008, p. 42)*

In short, the social meaning(s) of Zhuang language and its protection by the national language freedoms under conditions of socio-economic transformation are particularly intriguing, suggestive of the “hybridity” that studies which denaturalise the state’s construction of ethno-linguistic identities should focus on (see e.g. Lickorish, 2008, p. 204), but as-yet understudied from a critical sociolinguistic or LPP perspective. There is, however, a solid body of relevant research on Zhuang linguistic and cultural changes provided by the literature, as reviewed below.

## **2.4.2 Background literature on Zhuang**

### **2.4.2.1 *Zhuang LPP***

Providing a basis for further sociolinguistic study of Zhuang, X. Li and Q. Huang (2004, pp. 240-243) introduce the history of language policies about the Zhuang Pinyin (i.e. Romanised) orthography and standardisation of spoken Zhuang in the early 1950s, and Zhuang Pinyin reform in the 1980s. In addition to being limited to standardisation policy, which is just one part of LPP and was completed in the twentieth century, their work is limited to official policy texts without analysis of the situated practices or language ideologies at play, or analysis of whether policies worked. However, they show that developing Zhuang Pinyin formed the bulk of early Zhuang language work and outline the public consultations within the script development, complicating the notion that Zhuang Pinyin was imposed top-down (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 242), whereas Kaup (2000, p. 145) argues script standardisation was a minority language need determined by top-down LPP and then adopted by Zhuang cadres.

Zhuang Pinyin initially included Cyrillic and IPA letters that were later ruled out (see Figure 7) (see further S. Ager, 2016; GZAR Minority Language Working Group Research Team, 1984; X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004; Sinj & Loz, 2008; J. Wang, 1979, 1983). The rules for Zhuang Pinyin writing were developed alongside the development of an official grammar and pronunciation for Standard Zhuang, a dialect based on that of Wuming Town (Ramsey, 1987, p. 236) (see e.g. the standard grammar in Guangxi Language Reform Committee, 1989). X. Li & Q. Huang (2004, p. 241) suggest that choice was made because of Wuming's proximity to GZAR's capital city.

<b>Script</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Meaning in English</b>
Simplified Putonghua characters	壮语	“Zhuang language”
Putonghua pinyin	<b>Zhuàngyǔ</b>	“Zhuang language”
Modern Zhuang pinyin	<b>Vahcuengh</b>	“Zhuang language”
Early Zhuang pinyin	<b>Vabcueŋb</b>	“Zhuang language”
Sawndip	𑜄𑜂𑜆𑜏	“Sawndip”

*Figure 7. Illustration of script diversity (Zhuang scripts adapted from S. Ager, 2016).*

M. Zhou (2000, 2001a, 2001b; 2003a, 2004, 2012a) provides further analysis of Zhuang Pinyin and script policy within his overall history of PRC language policy. M. Zhou also provides the basis for an analysis of how Zhuang LPP works, showing Zhuang script policy’s limited impact on the provision of Zhuang bilingual education, which was not often available in the twentieth century, and reporting high rates of illiteracy amongst the Zhuangzu. (M. Zhou does not clarify whether this is illiteracy in Zhuang, Putonghua, or both.) M. Zhou considers the Zhuangzu as archetypal of the type of Chinese minority bilingual education policy provided for those “hav[ing] had limited or no bilingual education since [1949]” (also in A. Feng & Sunuodula, 2009, pp. 690-693; see also M. Zhou, 2000, p. 129; M. Zhou, 2001a, p. 56). M. Zhou (2000, p. 142) notes Putonghua has been the main language of instruction for Zhuangzu students throughout the twentieth century.

Other literature provides more detail about Zhuang bilingual education policies, focusing on primary and secondary schooling. Zhuang-Putonghua education began in primary schools only in the 1980s, in areas with a Zhuangzu majority, with the GZAR government directing

that Zhuang could also be made compulsory at middle school but it was not required at high school (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 247). From 1981-1990, experimental use of Zhuang in primary schools was rolled out, eventually reaching 306 schools (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 248). As at 2004, there were sixty-six bilingual Putonghua-Zhuang primary schools with about twenty-one thousand students and twenty-four minority middle/secondary schools at which one third of students, about five thousand, were in Zhuang classes (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 248). The literature does not make clear if this third had various Zhuang-medium classes or merely Zhuang language class. Further investigation puts these numbers in proportion: China's inter-census National Sample Survey data shows some 2.6 million Zhuangzu children aged six to fourteen in 2005. This means the 2004 student populations Li and Huang report for GZAR's bilingual schools represented just under 1 percent of school-aged Zhuangzu children. I arrived at a figure of 2,606,717 million Zhuang children by subtracting the 2005 National Sample Survey's count of Zhuangzu population aged six-and-over (R. Guo, 2013, p. 22) from the Survey's total Zhuang population (R. Guo, 2013, p. 12), and then subtracting that difference from the Survey's Zhuang population aged zero to fourteen (R. Guo, 2013, p. 12), taking into account the Survey's sample fraction of 1.325 percent.

Various authors provide other scattered details about Zhuang LPP decisions and/or rules. Rather than summarising them here, they are presented and analysed as part of a system within Chapter Four's critical analysis of the overall framework of Zhuang LPP, in an effort to contribute a comprehensive account of Zhuang LPP to the literature.

## 2.4.2.2 *Zhuang linguistic studies*

### 2.4.2.2.1 Descriptions and taxonomies

Luo (e.g. 1990, 2008, 2015), Qin X. (2004) and Qin Z. (2013) have built up descriptive research on Zhuang language over recent decades. Zhuang is placed in the Chinese literature within the “Zhuang-Dai branch of the Zhuang-Dong language group of the Chinese-Tibetan language family” (“Ethnic Minorities,” 2008, p. 41; similarly, Lu & F. Li, 2012, p. 19). Outside China, linguists use a slightly different taxonomy, placing Zhuang in the Zhuang-Tai branch of the Kam-Tai group of Sino-Tibetan (Bodomo, 2010, p. 180; X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 239; Luo, 2008; Wurm, 1988; M. Zhou, 2000, p. 142). (But note the alternative “Tai-Kadai” umbrella grouping in Diller, Edmondson, & Luo, 2008). Harrell (1993, pp. 104-105) makes more of the divergent Western/Chinese classifications, arguing Chinese linguists’ assertion that Tai languages are Sino-Tibetan, and the branch name “Zhuang-Dong”, are both discursive means of claiming that Zhuang and other Tai languages are rooted within China’s borders. Nevertheless, the literature largely agrees that Zhuang language originated in the area which is now South China (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 239) and that the Tai language family emerged in South-Central China about 2500 years ago (Luo, 2008, p. 9). Zhuang is similar to the national, Tai languages of China’s neighbours, Thailand and Vietnam, and especially close to certain language varieties recognised by the Vietnamese government as distinct minority languages. Zhuang has several dialects, classed into the Northern and Southern dialectal groups (Holm, 2013, p. 27; X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 239; Lu & F. Li, 2012, p. 19). Because of the variation within Zhuang, Luo (2015, p. 3) treats “Zhuang” as “a cover term for the Tai language spoken in Guangxi and adjacent areas in Yunnan, Guangdong in south China with some spill-over in North Vietnam, and which comprises a group of diverse dialects.”

For detailed linguistic descriptions, (see e.g. H. Chen & Li, 2005; Junru Zhang, 1999). Literature aimed at teaching Zhuang is limited but a source of formal detail on Standard Zhuang's pronunciation, grammar and orthography. This literature includes: Putonghua-Zhuang texts (J. Wang, 1979, 1983); one English-medium Zhuang proficiency course (Bodomo & Pan, 2007); a primer of Zhuang literature (Guangxi Zhuang Literary History Newsroom & Guangxi Teachers College, 1961); a Zhuang-Putonghua dictionary (Sinj & Loz, 2008); and a government promotion for learning Zhuang script (J. Wang, 1990). In addition, Standard Zhuang language has been analysed in linguistic studies about: grammar (Guangxi Language Reform Committee, 1989); language family classification and morphology, phonology, syntax (Diller et al., 2008; Luo, 2008; Luo, 2015); tense and aspect (Luo, 1990); the history of logographic Zhuang script (Holm, 2013); and modern alphabetic Zhuang (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004).

The Chinese LPP literature does not analyse the legal, language policy and language ideology ramifications of stable contact varieties that can form from both a minority language and the majority language. However, there is emerging linguistic scholarship on one such contact variety of Zhuang: (Lu & F. Li, 2012; Y. Yang, 2006), although most of the linguistic literature describes the Zhuang language in “the eternal present tense” (Lickorish, 2008, p. 3). Lu and F. Li (2012) challenge the dominant presentation in the literature of Zhuang as static by proposing that a contact variety they call “Zhuang Putonghua” is a systematic language variety requiring a change in Zhuang status planning. They (Lu & F. Li, 2012, pp. 24-34) describe Zhuang Putonghua's phonetic, tonal and grammatical differences from Zhuang. The limited research suggests Zhuang Putonghua is more widely spoken than any

Zhuang areal dialect: Lu and F. Li (2012, p. 35) re-analyse survey findings (originally from Y. Yang, 2006) showing that Zhuang Putonghua was heard and used by over 80 percent of respondents across 50 Zhuang communities in 2004, and their own data likewise indicates widespread, consistent usage of Zhuang Putonghua. Indicating cross-class, rather than just geographical spread, usage, the authors (Lu & F. Li, 2012, p. 23) observe that “[i]n Guangxi, teachers, students, officials, regular employees, and migrant peasant-workers all speak Zhuang Putonghua to a certain extent.” This high usage begs the (unanswered) question whether/how current minority language laws can extend to a Zhuang Putonghua variety.

Lu and F. Li’s case study is also significant because it was undertaken in Chengxiang Town, within Wuming County, the area whose dialect the officially-endorsed Standard Zhuang is based on (see 2.4.2.1). At the time of Lu and F. Li’s study, the Zhuangzu were over 85 percent of the population of Chengxiang (Lu & F. Li, 2012, p. 23). It is significant that even in this bellwether area, where Zhuang has relatively high symbolic and cultural capital, the linguistic capital of Zhuang is decreasing and shift to Zhuang Putonghua is occurring.

Unlike Lu and F. Li’s survey, the bulk of the literature about Zhuang usage and multilingualism is premised on a recent survey recognising only a discrete, static “Zhuang”, but measuring several revealing trends in the domains and functions of Zhuang language practices.

#### 2.4.2.2.2 Multilingualism studies

The last major survey of Zhuang usage and demographics was conducted in GZAR in 2000 by the state agency, the GZAR Language Committee, and published most thoroughly in (H. Chen & Li, 2005). It is the primary source authors writing about Zhuang and/or GZAR multilingualism rely on. It does not cover Zhuang usage outside of GZAR. H. Chen (2005, p. 17) reports that forty-eight Hanyu dialects – including Putonghua – eighteen minority languages, English and three other foreign languages are spoken in GZAR, and that 35.518 percent of people in GZAR speak Zhuang. That makes Zhuang the region's third most spoken language after South West Guiliuhua and Putonghua, which are each spoken by about 49 percent of the population. Survey data shows more Zhuang speakers live in South and West GZAR than East GZAR (CASS Institute of Linguistics et al., 2012; H. Chen, 2005, p. 17). Individual multilingualism is now normal in GZAR: using 1998 data rather than the 2000 survey, Li reports only 20.04 percent of the GZAR population were then monolingual (in any language), while nearly half the population were bilingual (in any combination), nearly another third were trilingual and a small percentage spoke four or more languages (L. Li, 2005, p. 13).

This societal and individual multilingualism in GZAR, and the increasing individual Zhuang bilingualism noted in 2.4.2.1, may be understood as situated within increasing proficiency in Putonghua amongst China's minorities. Blanchford (2004, p. 121) argue0, Putonghua, only widely spoken amongst North China's Hanzu peoples in the early PRC, became the "common language of all Han[yu] dialect speakers by the end of the 1970s" and by 2004 Putonghua was "on its way to becoming the second language of all national minorities [i.e. minzu] and eventually the lingua franca of the entire nation." The 2000 census showed

“53.06 percent of the total Chinese population carried out conversations with others in Putonghua and 13.47 percent of the population spoke Putonghua as its first language” (M. Zhou, 2012b, p. 4). Indeed, Putonghua has been the official, national “common language” since 1956 (L. Guo, 2004, p. 45) and Putonghua-inclusive bilingualism had become prevalent by the end of the Cultural Revolution (i.e. 1965-1976) (Q. Zhou, 1992a, p. 60). By the early 1990s, for most of China’s fifty-five minority minzu, about half of each minzu were bilingual (Q. Zhou, 1992a, p. 60). H. Chen (2005) provides additional data putting Zhuang-Putonghua bilingualism in context, showing that while many of the minority ethnic groups in GZAR include a significant proportion of Putonghua speakers, the rate is highest amongst the Zhuangzu. H. Chen (2005, pp. 19-20) reports 52.56 percent of the Zhuangzu in GZAR are Putonghua speakers. Of the Hanzu in GZAR, 60.72 percent are Putonghua speakers and the non-Zhuang minorities Putonghua speaker rates at or below 30 percent (H. Chen, 2005, pp. 19-20).

Lu and F. Li (2012, p. 36) argue “Putonghua is the language of the highest social prestige... in Guangxi” and the GZAR Language Committee’s survey showed “Zhuang people value Putonghua more than Zhuang” (Lu & F. Li, 2012, p. 36). The value survey respondents gave to Putonghua was gauged after a series of instrumentally-focused questions, including being asked to rank which language was the best medium of instruction in schools, which was the most important tool of communication within China, and which had greatest social influence. Putonghua was nominated by around 90 percent of respondents for all three (Lu & F. Li, 2012, p. 36).

Historically, the area of GZAR and its surrounds was a “language corridor” (Edmondson & J. Li, 1996) or a “shatter zone” (Holm, 2013, p. 13) because of repeated migrations and resettlements within the region but Holm suggests migrations were generally contained to language communities moving together, either under imperial orders or for better farming conditions, rather than the decentralised and individual migration common in China today. F. Wang et al.’s (2011, p. 331) toponym analysis suggests concentrations of Zhuang speakers in South and West GZAR historically, but also “an increasingly integrated settlement pattern” of Zhuang and non-Zhuang speakers over the *longue durée*. Thus, it is not clear that Zhuang speaking areas were like the “granular mosaic of self-contained, sequestered communities” Roche (in press) describes in Tibet which, he argues, meant “[l]anguage was therefore primarily a marker of local, rather than ethnic identity”. Nevertheless, the literature does suggest Zhuang was historically not a widely shared ethnic identity amongst speakers of Zhuang varieties: researchers argue the Zhuang-language word now used for “Zhuang” (*cuengh*) was not previously a common autonym (Barlow, 1989, pp. 33-34; Chaisingkananont, 2014a, pp. 32-40; Kaup, 2000, pp. 53, 96; Leibold, 2007; Mullaney, 2011; S. Zhang, 1997, p. 1128). Rather, “Zhuang” was introduced by Yuan Dynasty administrators (i.e. 14<sup>th</sup> century) to indicate certain southern barbarian soldiers (Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 1). Texts about people, customs and language groupings produced for educated imperial Chinese readers in the 1700s and 1800s (in Tapp & Cohn, 2003), and earlier pre-Song Dynasty uses of “Zhuang” (Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 33), both suggest the names and groupings of China’s South Western peoples were unstable in imperial representations and the Zhuang were “taxonomically unstable groups” (Mullaney, 2006, pp. 61-62).

Furthermore, most historians suggest that in imperial times, the dominant social organisation in South China was not nuanced and stable ethno-linguistic groupings but the Sino/Barbarian dichotomy i.e. “civilised” Chinese (华) and Barbarians (夷) (e.g. Harrell, 1993, p. 101; e.g. Mullaney, 2011, p. 1). Leibold (2014a, p. 5) argues this was inseparable from a Confucian ideology in which the ruling group (often Han but not always) should be “responsible for retaining order and stability, and determining what is best for the [Barbarians], whether it be exclusion and autonomy or inclusion and assimilation” and are “responsible for policing the [binary] barrier”. In Leibold’s view, versions of this ideology have been reproduced in modern China, for example within the Communist ideology it became “the responsibility of the Communist vanguard to protect and promote the independent development of ‘backward,’ ‘minority’ groups”. Gladney (2004, p. 51), amongst others, argues a majority/minority binary (not a fifty-six distinct way distinction) is integral to state representations and construction of social groupings today. He (Gladney, 2004, pp. 51, 58) argues although minorities are not represented as barbarians, “[t]he widespread definition and representation of the minority as exotic, colourful, and primitive homogenises the undefined majority as united, mono-ethnic, and modern”; that is, minorities are a necessary Other to create (self-interested) boundaries of a majority identity (see also Piller, 2011, pp. 18-28; following Said, 1978; on Chinese language practices furthering cultural boundaries, see Stites, 1999). Reproduces the older dichotomous ideology is an example of “recursive” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38) ideology processes.

Whether or not Zhuang speakers historically identified as speakers of a particular language variety, it appears not to have been an ethnic identity (in line with Roche’s view of historic Tibet). For example Iredale et al. (2003, p. 8; also Harrell, 1993, p. 102; Kaup, 2000, p. 73)

report that in the 1949 pre-census, people nominated themselves as falling into over four hundred ethnic groups with Zhuang not among them, although Zhuangzu was a large category by the 1954 Yunnan census (Mullaney, 2006, p. 142). The now-naturalised connection of Zhuang ethnicity to Zhuang language was not dominant in early PRC Zhuang speakers' self-construction, with many reporting themselves as 《讲壮语的汉人》 (“Zhuang-speaking Han peoples”) (see also Kaup, 2000, p. 87; S. Zhang, 1997, p. 1128)) and groups disputing their Zhuangzu classification for decades afterwards (Kaup, 2000, pp. 91-92).

Regarding the organisation of multilingual repertoires, including whether Zhuang is fading from particular domains or functions for multilingual individuals in Zhuang-speaking areas, the literature is not comprehensive. However, compared to other minority languages in GZAR, usage of Zhuang at home, and beyond home, is strong. Across all GZAR's minority minzu, 61.47 percent of those capable of speaking a minority language as their 《母语》 (“mother tongue”) reportedly use it *both* inside *and* outside the home, and this is even higher amongst Zhuang speakers: 70.14 percent (H. Chen & L. Wang, 2005, pp. 52-53). H. Chen and Li's study of a sample of 3495 Zhuangzu people found corroborating results, with 72.38 percent speaking some Zhuang at home (H. Chen, 2005, p. 21). Generally, amongst GZAR's minorities, 23.54 percent use minority language *only* at home, while just 11.8 percent of the Zhuang do this (H. Chen & L. Wang, 2005, pp. 52-53). While these indices convey Zhuang's vitality, more Zhuang speakers than average GZAR minority language speakers choose *not* to use their minority language *either* at home *or* outside: 15.05 percent compared to 12.43 percent (H. Chen & L. Wang, 2005, pp. 52-53). H. Chen (2005, p. 52) notes that even amongst those who can find other speakers of their minority language in outside-of-home

environments, some will use it only in restricted circles because they feel speaking a minority language has 《降低身份》 (“lowered status”), especially in cities.

The literature provides detail – albeit with some ambiguity – on common domain divisions between Zhuang bilinguals’ languages, and on the divisions made by other bilinguals in GZAR. Li (2005, p. 14) reports that 50 percent Hanyu-minority language bilinguals in GZAR divide their repertoire by domain, into minority language for home and Hanyu for out-of-home. That is, a public/private boundary appears especially salient in the habitus of bilingualism in GZAR. Further, the 2000 survey shows minority languages are used less than Putonghua and less than Hanyu dialects across the domains of home, shopping, visiting hospitals, visiting government offices and at work in GZAR (M. Zhou, 2012b, p. 5). For example, minority languages were used by 2.30 percent of respondents at work, Putonghua by 41.97 percent and Hanyu dialects by 70.09 percent (M. Zhou, 2012b, p. 5). (The total is >100 because some respondents used two or three languages at work.) Seeming to contradict that data, but referring to the same survey, H. Chen and L. Wang (2005, p. 54) report that, of those who can speak Zhuang as a mother tongue, 81 percent do so (to an unspecified extent) at markets, 65 percent at hospitals, 62 percent at government offices, and 69 percent in the work-unit. Note, however, these respondents might *also* speak Hanyu in these places.

There is a suggested in the literature of a predisposition, or path dependency, dimension to the organisation of Zhuang bilinguals’ repertoires (see the discussion of habitus at 2.2), with research showing that Zhuang was not constructed as appropriate for official functions in

recent decades and that very few domains or functions were exclusively Zhuang. Li and Huang (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 240) break down statistics from the early 1990s, reporting: “In the nine counties [of GZAR] where the Zhuang [minzu] comprise 90 percent of the total local population, Zhuang is spoken on most occasions except official occasions and in many classrooms” while official occasions are usually conducted in Putonghua. In counties with Zhuangzu majorities, “Chinese” and Zhuang were both used in non-official domains (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 240). In addition to limited official and semi-official Zhuang usage, in social communications in GZAR as at 2000, only 29.46 percent of all people spoke Zhuang, while 48.76 percent spoke South West Guiliuhua and 19.46 percent spoke Putonghua (H. Chen, 2005, p. 21). Nevertheless, Zhuang remained “the main means of communication” amongst the Zhuangzu at that time (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 239). Thus, while these data suggest Zhuang language is not home-bound, they do suggest it is a less common choice in some public domains.

#### 2.4.2.2.3 Intergenerational transmission studies

So far, researchers have compiled partial data on intergenerational transmission of Zhuang. Within households where some Zhuang is spoken, 96 percent of speakers use it to speak to parents, 89 percent use it to speak to spouses, and 83 percent to speak to children (H. Chen & L. Wang, 2005, p. 54), but whether these people speak only Zhuang to their parents/spouses/children, or combine languages, is not reported. Such data is highly relevant to understanding Zhuang’s prospects and social value. An attitudinal survey in GZAR found only 5 percent of respondents expected Zhuang to be spoken in China in future (N. Huang & Cheng, 2005, p. 62), which suggests intergenerational non-transmission is widely expected. Kaup (2000) observed non-transmission as a phenomenon within urban Zhuangzu families

since the 1980s. Q. Zhou (1992a, p. 68) cites 1980s research by Chinese scholars arguing that “in the south of China there is an urgent need for status planning with respect to both the expansion of the use of minority languages and the upgrading of their social status”: i.e. there was at that time a problem with language hierarchy causing language shift. More recently, Bodomo (2010, p. 179) describes Zhuang as “an endangered language” because of the widespread “language shift” towards children becoming proficient in Putonghua rather than Zhuang. However, Zhuang is not included amongst those Chinese languages listed as “endangered” (Moseley, 2010) and Lu and F. Li (2012, p. 23) declare, “Putonghua is a second language (L2) for the Zhuang people”, implying Zhuang is still the first language of most Zhuangzu individuals.

To the extent that urban settings encourage the non-transmission of Zhuang, as happens with many minority languages, non-transmission of Zhuang is likely to have increased because the literature shows urbanisation rates amongst Zhuangzu are increasing. In the late 1900s, only 10 percent of the Zhuangzu lived in cities (Stites, 1999, p. 112). By comparison, on 2005 One Percent Sample data (China’s inter-census survey), 34 percent of the Zhuangzu were registered as urban residents (R. Guo, 2013, p. 5). Zhuangzu urbanisation rates from the 2010 census have not been published but the proportion of the national population who are urban residents rose by 13.46 percent points between 2000 and 2010, and urban residents hit 50 percent of the national population (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011), so the Zhuang urbanisation rate is likely now above 34 percent. Moreover, Lu and F. Li (2012, p. 38) argue that increasing inter-minzu business and social exchanges are a product of China’s marketisation and urbanisation and that Putonghua is the “first choice” for communicating in such situations. There might also be emerging changes in rural Zhuang usage, as the coverage

of Putonghua-medium media has increased (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 254) (amongst other nationalisation, globalisation and modernisation changes), but research specifically on rural, intergenerational non-transmission of Zhuang has, to the best of my knowledge, not been published.

#### ***2.4.2.3 Zhuang socio-cultural studies***

There is a growing literature about contemporary social and cultural change amongst the Zhuangzu which provides a background to socio-linguistic changes which may be identified in a sociolinguistic study of Zhuang LPP. Chaisingkananont's (2014a) anthropological doctoral research on the new Zhuang Buluotou Festival, Y. Zhu's (2014) study of the construction of authenticity in tourism in South China, Turner's ethnomusicology doctoral research on folksongs in Zhuang tourism and Chio's (2014) study of rural ethno-tourism in GZAR may be classed together as ethnographically-oriented studies of Zhuang cultural change in response to the tourism market. These studies highlight the fluidity of Zhuang cultural practices and cultural change within Zhuang tourism.

This literature touches on changing Zhuang language practices, for example documenting traditional Zhuang songs being performed in Putonghua rather than Zhuang for tourists (Turner, 2010, pp. 346-351). In another work Chaisingkananont (2014b) offers a useful review of the literature on Zhuang language, culture and history from the perspective of uncovering "the individual agency of Zhuang Studies scholars and how they have negotiated, interpreted and presented what it means to be 'Zhuang'" (Chaisingkananont, 2014b, p. 131). While that work reflects on academic discourses as part of social construction of the Zhuang,

Kaup's (2000) well-known book is less self-reflexive but uncovers important governmental and social discourses "creating the Zhuang", and the prominence of Zhuang language as a rallying point within those discourses. She also incorporates some data and fieldwork observations on Zhuang language in education in the 1990s and the use made of Zhuang language in the classification and official recognition of a Zhuang minzu.

Finally, there are a number of works in both Putonghua and English examining the socio-cultural history of the Zhuangzu and/or Zhuang speakers: especially, (S. Zhang, 1997) and (Barlow, 1989, 2011). These histories are not principally concerned with Zhuang language practices or with examining the extent to which the "Zhuang" of the past shared language practices, but they do explain many centuries of social organisation separate to and gradually integrating with the imperial Chinese administration in and around the area now delimited as GZAR.

## **2.5 Research problem and questions**

Having reviewed the literature, the following lacunae can be identified: first, situated analyses of language freedoms as a form of language right (see Section 2.3). Second, critical studies, and especially ethnographies, of minority-majority sociolinguistic dynamics in China, particularly in relation to large and "unproblematic" languages such as Zhuang (see Sections 2.3.2.3, 2.3.3.1, 2.4.1). There is room for further research relating current Chinese LPP practices to China's changing socio-economic conditions, globalisation and changing political discourses about minorities (see Section 2.3.3.2). Moreover, studies of emerging Zhuang language change and changing social meanings of Zhuang language are few (Section

2.4.1). Finally, there is a lacuna in studies of the implementation of Zhuang LPP beyond studies of language-in-education policy as implemented at the pre-tertiary level (again, Section 2.4.1).

Therefore, the research problem this thesis will address is how China's language freedoms affect Zhuang language use and social significance, under conditions of social, economic and political change. The thesis will investigate what the comprehensive framework of LPP is in relation to the Zhuang minority language, who is empowered within and by the framework, what Zhuang LPP's goals are, how it is (or is not) implemented and made meaning as a discursive resource at different levels of government and by various agents and how it is understood and experienced by social actors. Language ideologies in LPP will be analysed as challenging or reproducing dominant norms to construct a linguistic and social order. After establishing the overall framework, I will concentrate on public space and education as key sites of LPP implementation (see 2.3.2). In particular, I will examine how the education system at the tertiary level relates to the treatment of Zhuang in pre-tertiary education.

The research problem will be approached ethnographically, and will explore the following research questions:

**RQ1** What texts comprise official Zhuang LPP and what processes of language governance do they establish?

This question seeks to establish the detail of the Zhuang LPP framework, its systematic dimensions, and its structural strengths and weaknesses.

**RQ2** What role does Zhuang language play in public space within areas of autonomous Zhuangzu government and outside these areas?

This question enquires into language regulation in public space and whether such regulation differs depending on the formal level of authority and autonomy of the Zhuangzu polity over that space.

**RQ3** What role does Zhuang language play in education, especially for students continuing to university?

This question examines the implementation of Zhuang language-in-education policies and how they affect the language practices and ideologies of tertiary students; it also investigates how beliefs about graduate careers intersect with language-in-education policy for tertiary students.

**RQ4** What are the ideologies undergirding official Zhuang LPP?

This question seeks to uncover overt and covert beliefs about language as they are discursively produced and reproduced by the texts and structures of Zhuang LPP.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines my methodology. It first provides the rationale for undertaking a qualitative study, particularly a study with an ethnographic orientation within the social constructivist paradigm (3.2). Next, it sets out the methods of collecting data (3.3), selecting and recruiting participants (3.4), and that which the data comprises (3.5). The chapter then outlines the methods of analysis (3.6) and addresses limitations (3.7).

### **3.2 A qualitative approach**

As explained in Chapter One, this study seeks to explore what effects China's minority language rights framework has on the use and maintenance of minority languages, specifically the Zhuang language. The research questions investigate dynamic social knowledge and as Noy (2007, p. 331) argues "social knowledge [has] emergent, contingent, interactive and heterogeneous characteristics"; the research design takes a qualitative approach to accommodate such knowledge. Specifically, the research seeks to investigate the research questions using ethnographic, naturalistic qualitative data. Ethnography has ontological and epistemological components, making it a "full program" rather than a "complex of fieldwork techniques", in Blommaert's (2010, p. 5) view. Ethnography is an established methodological approach adopted in linguistics, initially particularly in anthropological linguistics (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 4) but now more widely used. In the burgeoning ethnographies of "language planning and policy" (LPP) within which this study is positioned, ethnography has emerged as a crucial way of studying LPP (e.g.

Canagarajah, 2005; Johnson & Ricento, 2013; McCarty, 2011; Menken & García, 2010; Mortimer, 2016; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996).

This research first examines the “the objective relations of material and symbolic power” in the form of the interlocking language rights framework, minzu classification system, and delimitation within China of certain areas of minzu autonomous governance. However, as The Literature Review has identified, studies rarely go beyond these structures assuming, within a positivistic paradigm, that the formal texts and structures of LPP also describe how LPP works in practice. In contrast, this study takes a social constructionist approach, foregrounding the meanings made of LPP, including by heterogeneous agents *within* the state as well as by individuals in society and the power and ideologies reproduced in LPP. Studies with a critical sociolinguistic framing conceptualise language as resources. Following Heller’s (2010) extension of Bourdieu’s theorizing of linguistic economies, such studies conceptualise language as resources with an unequal distribution of “capital” and “distinction” (Bourdieu, 1977a; see also Bourdieu, 1984[1979]; 1992, p. 238). Within this framework, language rights and the attendant LPP framework can be seen as mediating and regulating relations of power and the dynamics of availability and accessibility of language resources. Here, power is studied in its objective and symbolic dimensions; Bourdieu (1992, p. 238) observes that,

objective relations of power tend to reproduce themselves in symbolic relations of power, in visions of the social world which contribute to ensuring the permanence of those relations of power.

Following Bourdieu, in each field, the values of language (and other) resources are socially constructed, with symbolic capital seminal to the “exchange” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 55). According to Bourdieu, of symbolic capital – i.e. distinction – is structured through the lenses of people’s habitus, i.e. personal dispositions to practice and judgment structured around a value system largely organised through the internalisation of one’s society’s norms and hierarchies, including in this case, the society’s LPP framework.

Viewed this way, language rights have an overlapping role with language ideologies, which “mediate between language use and social organisation” (Piller, 2015b, p. 3). Part of this inquiry, therefore, is to better understand what language ideologies are reflected in LPP, in their practice, and in people’s perceptions and experiences of LPP. That is, the research enquires how language rights are situated amongst “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193) and other “deeply sociocultural ideas of language users about language” (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 8). The literature on language ideologies has developed the analytic tools with which to study LPP norms and hierarchies at societal and individual levels: (especially Irvine & Gal, 2000; Kroskrity, 2000, 2010; Piller, 2015b; Schiefflin et al., 1998; Silverstein, 1998; Woolard, 1998; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994). Thus, China’s language rights framework is to be studied in relation to:

the practical schemes (implicit, confused and more or less contradictory) through which agents classify other agents and evaluate their position in these objective relations as well as the symbolic strategies of presentation and self-representation with which they oppose the classifications and representations (of themselves) that others impose on them. (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 227).

To uncover and interpret these “symbolic strategies”, I engage in a qualitative, “thick” (Geertz, 1994; following Ryle) ethnographic account of participants’ discursive constructions of, and reflections upon, social groupings, identities and the social meanings made of Zhuang language and language rights. Bourdieu argues that it is worthy to study “the individual and collective strategies [...] by which agents seek to put these classifications at the service of their material or symbolic interests, or to conserve and transform them” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 227). “These classifications” explicitly refers to institutionalised forms and legal boundaries (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 227), both pertinent in this study. Moreover, this view of social agents as conserving but also transforming institutional and legal classifications and boundaries dovetails with the social constructionist governance studies’ theorisation of the state as inescapably socially situated. This “situatedness” is an object of study foregrounded through the use of an ethnographically-oriented approach.

Finally, the ethnographic method is appropriate because this study investigates the actual functioning of a particular kind of norm, language rights, and the ethnographic approach is:

capable of constructing a discourse on social uses of language and social dimensions of meaningful behaviour which differs strongly from established norms and expectations, indeed takes the concrete functioning of these norms and expectations as starting points for questioning them ... it takes them as problems rather than as facts.  
(Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 10)

Reconnaissance ensured the collection of varied data at multiple sites in my ethnographic approach was targeted.

### **3.3 Data collection**

#### **3.3.1 Reconnaissance**

Prior to commencing my PhD in 2013, I built up “immersive” experiences which gave me some footing on which to begin ethnographic fieldwork. From 2010-2012, I worked on legal rights’ research at a Chinese legal aid NGO in Beijing which provided me opportunities to observe and reflect on people’s actual engagement with Chinese legal rights. In 2011-2012, I spent a year studying Putonghua full-time at Beijing Language and Culture University, where I also lived on campus in a student dormitory. In 2012-2013, I spent one year in the Inter-University Program for Chinese Language developing my language skills and reading of Chinese linguistics research (six of these months fell within my PhD candidature). During my years in Beijing, I travelled to Nanning and Kunming, where I later did fieldwork, and to other areas in China with high concentrations of minority language speakers, namely Xishuangbana in Yunnan Province and Gansu and Xinjiang Provinces in the northwest. I became increasingly familiar with Chinese campus landscapes and lifestyles through participation in, and organisation of, a variety of public interest advocacy and debating training events for university students between 2011 and 2013, and I taught English for Special Purposes to non-English majors at Beijing Foreign Studies University, with Chinese colleagues and classes including a small number of minority minzu students. After returning to Sydney and commencing my PhD, I advertised for Zhuangzu university students in Australia to participate in preliminary discussions, through the Facebook page of the Australia-China Youth Association, and had a discussion with a respondent at my university, as well as some online exchanges with others.

The reconnaissance revealed to me that Zhuangzu university students were often seen to have mainstream cultural traits of the Hanzu majority, in particular, near-perfect Putonghua, which is essential in university studies in China.

### 3.3.2 Fieldwork

The reconnaissance assisted me to accelerate my ethnography. There is no minimum time requirement for ethnographic research in sociolinguistics (Blommaert & Dong, 2010); I undertook three months of fieldwork in China in 2014 (May to August) and two weeks in 2015 (June), subdivided as per Table 1.

*Table 1. Fieldwork timing*

Fieldwork Site	Period of Time
Beijing City (Beijing)	40 days
Hangzhou City (Zhejiang)	32 days
Nanning City, Guilin City, Wuming Town, Ping'An Village (Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region: GZAR)	19 days
Baotou City, Ordos City, Damao County (Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region: IMAR)	8 days
Kunming City (Yunnan)	6 days

Inspiring my multi-sited fieldwork method, Lickorish (2008, p. 9) notes

multi-sited ethnography has become a mainstay of the anthropology of Chinese minorities, as anthropologists have tended to take as their basic unit of analysis state-ascribed ethnic categories rather than specific communities, which requires the study of multiple bureaucratic and commercial sites ... [and] neighbourhoods.

Organising this multi-sited ethnography, I took the “itinerant ethnography” approach of focussing on agents, sites and discourses (following Schein, 2000, pp. 26-28; and Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 18). Fieldwork sites corresponded to where participants (details in 3.3.4) lived and worked because the ethnography targeted participants’ lived experiences of how language governance affects their physical environments, their institutions and their own practices. The sites were six university campuses where Zhuangzu and Zhuang-speaking students lived and studied (see 3.3.4.1); urban centres in the cities where those campuses

were located (Nanning, Kunming, Baotou and Beijing, shown in Figure 8); cultural and tourism institutions within those cities; with additional observations across GZAR, the largest official territory under Zhuangzu autonomous government, specifically in Guilin City, Wuming Town and Ping’An Village. I also took a short course in Chinese sociolinguistic theory at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou (Zhejiang Province), where I lived in an on-campus environment akin to the student participants’ (see 3.3.4.1) and prepared my fieldwork networks and schedule.



Figure 8. Location of universities where participants were interviewed, and where fieldwork was undertaken.

In order to juggle the availabilities of my facilitators, participants and Zhejiang University commitments, I travelled regularly between locations. I was able to undertake interviews and landscape data collection on some of the travel days, before or after a flight or train trip.

In this way, I collected a sufficient corpus of detailed, complex, usable data, because I also used triangulation and other validity measures (Fetterman, 2010). Moreover, I improved my own ethnographic research skills through undertaking this doctoral research, fieldwork always being “a learning process” (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 26).

The environments for this study were the everyday campus environments of Zhuangzu and Zhuang speaking students around China, and urban environments in which Zhuang language was expected, protected and/or displayed, and the “part of society” studied was the Zhuangzu minority. The “larger socio-political context” included language laws, Zhuangzu autonomous governance, Zhuangzu consciousness and rights consciousness. Ethnographies with durations similar to mine, e.g. “rapid ethnography” (Baines & Cunningham, 2013, p. 74), increase efficacy by “involve[ing] at least two researchers in all aspects of data collection” (Baines & Cunningham, 2013, p. 75), a condition I could not fulfil given this research had to be undertaken independently to qualify for a PhD. The purpose of having two researchers is to pair an (semi-)insider with an outsider so that the two can join in paired reflexivity and thus rapidly derive ethnographic insight. In order to derive similar benefits, I informally paired myself with certain insiders and engaged in a reflective dialogue with them. Chief amongst these insiders were my facilitators, whom I introduce in the following section.

### **3.3.3 Facilitators**

My fieldwork facilitators were Dr Yang Hongyan in Yunnan Province, Ms Emma Guo in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR), both teachers with many years’ experience at universities where I undertook interviewing and observational research. In addition, Dr Yang is a minority language speaker, and Ms Guo grew up in a minority autonomous region, IMAR. They assisted with network-building and arranging interviews. I ate and/or taught

with these “insiders”, met their families, friends and colleagues, visited their and their relatives’ homes, travelled across cities and counties with them, and had conversations about language and language rights. I maintained contact via text and email after fieldwork.

I did not have a facilitator in Beijing, the fieldwork city I knew best, but a contact in GZAR introduced to me through my snowballing network became a third facilitator. He assisted with recruitment, arranged space for interviews, and involved me in his community. (Given his language leadership in music and education, he also became a language leader participant – see 3.3.4.2 – so remains anonymous.) As a Zhuangzu member and Zhuang speaker, as well as a university educator, he was an informed discussant about Zhuang language and language policy.

In many ways, these informal partnerships accelerated my ethnographic understanding of the sociolinguistic context, similar to the advantage a formal rapid ethnography partner could have provided. These facilitators were crucial to participant recruitment, as the next section explains.

#### **3.3.4 Participant recruitment**

Sixty-three participants were involved (see 3.4), organised into two categories: university students and language leaders. To recruit them I used the “snowball sampling” method (Noy, 2007, p. 331), using my facilitators and existing contacts at Chinese universities as starting points to access social networks. I used a purposeful sampling method, choosing networks where “‘what goes on there’ is critical to understanding some process” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 128). In particular, I selected networks connected to universities and to “language work”, both of which had the potential to illuminate processes of change in Zhuang language usage and “Zhuang-ness”, and the roles of LPP in these processes.

Through purposively selected participant networks, I sought to study people who possessed kinds of capital (in particular, social and educational) and were likely to be more powerful than others in constructing the social meaning of Zhuang-ness and the social value of Zhuang resources, and in accessing, reproducing or challenging the language rights framework which structures access to Zhuang resources. I describe these people as indexing “vectors of change” for Zhuang, building on Han’s (2013, p. 86) framing of participants’ lived experience as a type of systematic rather than purely subjective data.

In addition, whether or not the participants influence others, an understanding of how power and inequality interact with language practice requires studying the habitus of those who *are* empowered, not only those who are not, and studying how languages rights affect people under conditions of social change necessitates studying those close to social change, not those removed from it. The first networks chosen to recruit participants indexing relevant social changes were university student networks.

#### **3.3.4.1 *Student recruitment***

Students are the primary type of participant indexing social capital and change targeted by this research as:

The educational system is a crucial object of struggle because it has a monopoly over the production of the mass of producers and consumers, and hence over the reproduction of the market on which the value of linguistic competence depends, in other words its capacity to function as linguistic capital. (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 652)

When selecting students as potential participants, I narrowed my focus to Zhuang students as their language practices are indicative of Zhuang language practices of highly geographically and socio-economically mobile people. Students who were Zhuangzu or spoke Zhuang can be considered “notional inheritor[s]” (Rampton & Charalambous, 2010, p. 4) of Zhuang. These students have increased linguistic capital if they are bi/multilingual. They therefore have a *choice* to not use Zhuang. Students’ language choices are shaped by habitus (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1991) and “macro constraints” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 72), including the institutional language practices and language ideologies (re)produced through education, a key area of LPP, making them important to this research.

I selected *university* students because they have more educational capital than peers who did not continue to university. As a type, university students have social capital in China, partly because of the respect a university education draws in China but also by being “Hanified”. Thus, these participants are likely to have relatively high geographic and social mobility. They are in a better position than non-university educated peers to convert their current educational and social capital into economic capital when they find employment after graduating. In addition, being relatively endowed with social capital, the students may be in a position to shape institutional language practices in the future.

The student’s geographic mobility is important. As C. Fan argues, university students are relatively geographically mobile. C. Fan (2008, p. 60) notes China’s “study/training” migrants come from either rural or urban locales but, like mobile Chinese overall, “their destinations are overwhelmingly urban areas where advanced education institutes concentrate”. Across China, many university students remain in their city of university after

graduating; it is a common step in internal migration. C. Fan (2008) argues the “the role of the state” (p. 2) is crucial in understanding migration within the PRC and explains the hukou system structures migration such that students are “first circuit” state-sponsored migrants because universities are collective units providing urban hukou to students (p. 41) and university studies count towards applications for local urban hukou once students graduate (p. 42, 57). Based on these structures, university education is widely understood in China as a resource for better facilitating upward (i.e. urban-oriented) geographic and socio-economic movement, as well as for career mobility. However, while statistics support the popular wisdom that university is a mobility pathway (C. Fan, 2008, pp. 1-13, 60), with over 60 percent of high school graduates now attending university (Levin, 2010) and average graduate starting salaries stagnating (Jacobs, 2010), the capital of university qualifications has reduced.

Nevertheless, for students from Zhuangzu backgrounds, university education and its attendant mobility resources are even more valuable due to scarcity. Using recent, Zhuang-specific data, R. Guo (2013; 2015) shows the Zhuangzu are, on the macro level, disadvantaged compared to the Hanzu majority, and R. Guo’s (2013, pp. 25-33) educational attainment statistics show significant attrition amongst the Zhuangzu. I have converted these data to percentages of each minzu, to compare Zhuangzu and Hanzu attrition rates (Figure 9). The National and Hanzu student bodies decrease significantly at the transition to senior secondary school, where compulsory public education stops, with only 32.4 percent and 32.6 percent, respectively, of senior school students continuing to college (2005 data). However, the Zhuangzu student body decreases more: only 26.6 percent of Zhuangzu senior secondary students continue to college. A similar pattern repeats at the transition to university. Compulsory Putonghua and English examinations control entry to most universities in China. Government data indicating

whether these exams systematically restrict Zhuang students are not made available, but providing some indication of systematic problems in one compulsory university entrance examination subject, English, both (Adamson & A. Feng, 2009) and (A. Feng & Sunuodula, 2009) accept other studies (e.g. J. Xu, 2000) showing “Zhuang people are somewhat disadvantaged in learning English when compared to mainstream (Han) counterparts” (Adamson & A. Feng, 2009, p. 326).

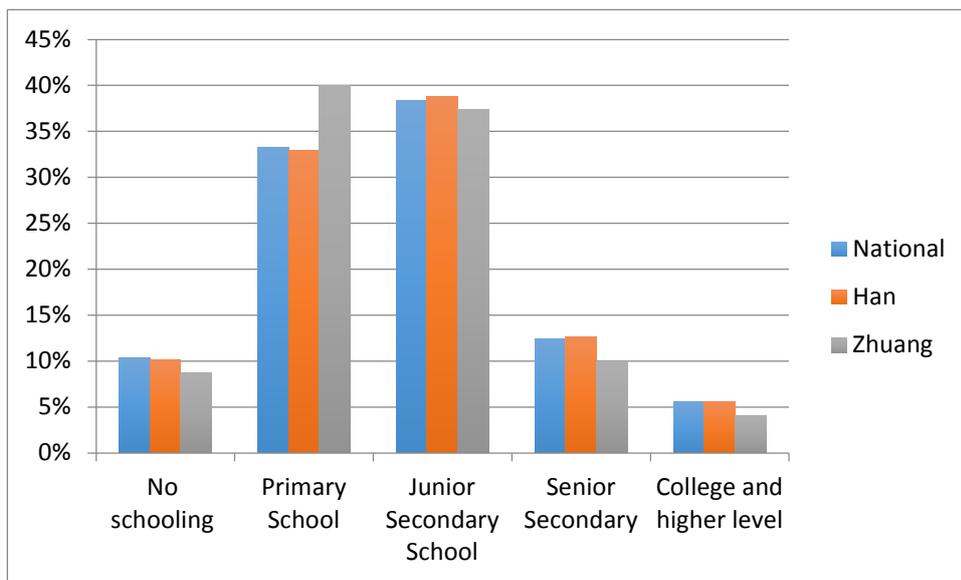


Figure 9. Educational attainment as at 2005, by minzu, based on (R. Guo, 2013, pp. 25-33).

Further, Zhuangzu and Zhuang speaking students are likely to come from “double-disadvantage” rural and minority backgrounds. The most recent economic indices available, collected in Table 2, show not only relative Zhuangzu poverty compared with the Hanzu but also that rural poverty is higher than urban poverty for both minzu. (Table 2 includes comparative Engel coefficients; this coefficient measures food expenditure as a percentage of total consumption expenditure. On this measure, Zhuangzu households are clearly struggling more with everyday subsistence costs than Hanzu households.)

Table 2. Relative Zhuangzu rural and minzu poverty.

	National	Hanzu	Zhuangzu
Urban unemployment rate (2011)	-	3.5%	3.5%
Urban unemployment rate (2005)	-	3.8%	4.1%
Per capita GDP (2011)	-	38,923rmb	25,952rmb
Urban average per capita annual income (2005)	11320.77rmb	11080.44rmb	10248.49rmb
Rural average per capita annual income (2005)	3254.93rmb	3590.78rmb	2555.24rmb
Engel coefficient for urban households (2005)	36.69%	36.71%	41.08%
Engel coefficient for rural households (2005)	45.48%	44.81%	50.52%

Source: (R. Guo et al., 2015, pp. 37-38, 46,174-175) (R. Guo, 2013, pp. 125-127, 141-142, 160-161).

Moreover, GZAR and Yunnan, where Zhuang speakers (regardless of minzu) live in largest concentrations (H. Chen & Li, 2005), remain amongst the poorest regions of China, see Figure 10. Thus, general rural disadvantage compounds the specific Zhuangzu structural disadvantage because a greater proportion of the Zhuangzu are rural residents (66 percent) compared to the proportions of the Hanzu (56 percent) and the national population (57 percent) who are rural residents (R. Guo, 2013, p. 5). Thus, accessing urban hukou through university studies significantly advantages Zhuangzu socio-economic mobility. Because the Hanzu comprise over 90 percent of the national population, it is unsurprising that the national figures (where available) mirror the Hanzu figures.



Figure 10. Lowest-tier GDP/capita in Yunnan and Guangxi (GZAR) (“Rich province, poor province,” 2016, p. 42).

As such, purposively sampling university students suited my research into minority languages under conditions of migration and mobility within China. My purposive sampling targets “the fast lane... of social life” (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 213), as per the “mobilities paradigm” (originating with Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 213). As minority group issues are increasingly politicised and problematic in China; universities had the additional advantage as being places I could legitimately enter for research, and which I could access through my existing contacts.

The snowball method is particularly useful for accessing “hidden” (Noy, 2007, p. 330) groups. University students with Zhuangzu ethnic status are not entirely hidden as this detail is made socially salient by the administrative system. Minzu classification is on national identity cards and on the enrolment records to which teachers have access. One facilitator went so far as to highlight every Zhuangzu student on her class rolls as potential participants. Nevertheless, Zhuangzu student populations on each campus were small and dispersed, especially at universities where Zhuang Studies was not offered. Moreover, I wanted to keep recruitment open to students without Zhuangzu status who were Zhuang speakers, a much more hidden group because this is not an administrative category. I therefore had to recruit students through a “snowball”, building on social networks then inviting groups to small meetings at which I could introduce the research and invite them to consent to participate. (See Section 3.4.1 and Appendix 3-1 for characteristics of students recruited.)

I organised my recruitment to include students from both specialist minzu universities where Zhuang Studies are offered, and generalist universities. Specialist minzu universities are tasked with “training ... ethnic minority talents ... presenting ethnic culture quintessence ... [and being] a symbol for unity and development of all these [minority] groups” (Press Trust of India, 2013). They enrol more minority minzu students than other public universities in China, using affirmative action mechanisms. These universities have specialist faculties for teaching and research into minority-minzu-related topics, including languages, cultures, ethnomusicology, anthropology, “ethnic economies” (“Minzu University of China,” 2015) and literature. In addition, these universities have “mainstream” faculties including Science, English, and Law. Some minzu universities are in national hubs (e.g. Beijing), and some are in areas with high minority minzu populations (e.g. Yunnan and GZAR). Zhuang Studies is taught at some minzu universities: Guangxi University for Nationalities (GUN) in Nanning,

Yunnan Minzu University (YMU) in Kunming, and the Minzu University of China (MUC) in Beijing. I therefore recruited students at these three.

Generalist universities do not offer Zhuang Studies. In GZAR, there is a provincial generalist university, Guangxi University (GU), and I recruited student participants there. In Kunming, one student from the generalist Yunnan University (YU) in Yunnan was recruited by YMU students. In Beijing, there are many generalist universities. I recruited students at Renmin (i.e. the People's) University of China (RUC). One student from the generalist Peking University (PKU) in Beijing was also recruited by MUC students. Recruitment in IMAR was limited by network and time constraints, but also because I had sufficient participants at the other universities; I recruited only through the generalist Inner Mongolia University of Science & Technology (IMUST) in Baotou.

Thus, fieldwork sites came to be chosen in relation to six universities: GU, GUN, YMU, MUC, RUC and IMUST. Table 3 in Section 3.4.1 in shows how many students were at each.

The research investigates Zhuang beyond the geographic “language homeland” of GZAR; I sought to recruit through universities in a variety of provinces in order to better reveal differences between the students’ language use and language attitudes under different social and legal conditions. While many provinces could be destinations for Zhuangzu or Zhuang speaking youth moving to university, I chose Yunnan, IMAR and Beijing specifically because of my contacts and, in regards to Yunnan and IMAR, also because of those regions’ relatively high minzu populations. Yunnan contains the only autonomous Zhuang prefecture outside GZAR (Wenshan Zhuang-Miao Autonomous Prefecture) and I therefore anticipated Zhuangzu/Zhuang-speaking students from Wenshan to be at university in Yunnan.

Preliminary enquiries with my facilitator at IMUST had revealed a number of Zhuangzu students there, and I was interested in their experience moving from the Zhuangzu homelands in the south of the country to an area in the far north in a different minority minzu's (the Mongolian minzu, or Mengzu) traditional homelands. An additional reason for choosing to recruit through universities in Beijing, alongside my pre-existing networks and the minzu university in Beijing offering Zhuang Studies, is that Beijing – along with the other “first tier cities”, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Guangzhou – represents the pinnacle of social mobility and opportunity for many Chinese people. Beijing, more than any other city in China, is regarded as the seat of power, wealth and culture, in contrast to “peripheral” and poor GZAR and Yunnan.

The broader field-work schedule largely followed the student interview schedule. My fieldwork period covered the end of the academic year and beginning of the summer holidays. End-of-academic-year exams have a staggered schedule across China, commencing earlier in the South and later in the North. Thus, I visited the Southern universities first. As most students planned to leave campus over the summer, I had to recruit and interview before their semester ended.

Thus, fashioning a network of student participants was intertwined with language leader recruitment.

#### **3.3.4.2 *Language leader participants***

The language leader participant recruitment was more open, as they were selected to investigate varied networks of language maintenance, protection and advocacy. They were recruited using criteria in addition (sometimes in the alternative) to being Zhuangzu or

speaking Zhuang language. They were, broadly, people doing Zhuang language work. They were introduced, and selected, one by one. The language leaders index a different sort of vector, and even more “hidden” as a “social unit” (Noy, 2007, p. 330) than the students (see 3.3.4.1) because they are not organised, or socially understood, as one group. Snowball sampling was therefore an especially effective method.

Language leaders had to be in positions of relative power regarding Zhuang resources or influence over Zhuang language practices, or self-consciously trying to change the structures of power. One language leader may cross over multiple selection criteria. The former group, those with power or influence, were envisaged as those producing and controlling Zhuang language expertise, and those occupied with popularizing or restricting the use of Zhuang language. In particular, leaders and producers in these fields:

- cultural (e.g. Zhuang singers, those designing exhibitions in museums about Zhuang language and culture);
- Zhuang policy (e.g. language policy-makers, Zhuangzu officials, or grassroots language policy activists);
- education (e.g. academics specializing in teaching Zhuang language, researchers of Zhuang language and culture);
- popular culture and media (e.g. well-known Zhuangzu media, business or sports stars); and
- language professions (e.g. Zhuang translators and interpreters, but also including those from the categories above who use Zhuang language in that profession, e.g. authors, musicians, teachers and broadcasters.)
- law (e.g. specialists in prosecuting or researching language rights).

The second broad criteria, trying to change structures of power *vis-à-vis* Zhuang language, was envisaged to include those with an official mandate to represent the Zhuangzu and/or to govern language issues, as well as those without an official role. These might include community activists who call for Zhuang language protection or organise Zhuang language revitalisation activities. Anticipating some difficulty in accessing officials, and interested in the diversity of LPP practices beyond state actors, I used the snowball method to access unaffiliated and diverse grassroots leaders.

To begin, the facilitators helped with language leader recruitment using their social networks and I identified potential language leaders within my existing networks. Most language leaders were then introduced to me by other language leader participants and my snowballing acquaintances. As with the students, my facilitator, existing participant or mutual contact explained who I was to a potential participant, then I contacted the person, explained my research, requested an interview, gained consent and met with them or conducted an online interview.

Ms Guo facilitated recruitment of potential language leader participants in IMAR who were Mongolian language officials and teachers. To broaden my contextual understanding, I interviewed them but excluded them from the participant cohort because of their lack of connection to Zhuang language. I also excluded two minority language researchers whom I interviewed because they did not specialise in Zhuang, a marketing manager of the minzu-specialist museum in GZAR and other workers at Zhuang tourism-sites, and incidental interviewees with whom I spoke on fieldwork, but these people's commentary informed my field-notes and observations. I included academics specializing in Chinese minority rights,

even if they did not focus specifically on the Zhuangzu or Zhuang language, because the research sought to investigate how people understand and/or use language rights and these academics could explain accepted understandings and report examples of language rights cases or LPP implementations. The language leaders ultimately recruited as primary participants are described in Section 3.4.2. The next section explains how participant recruitment was ethically sound.

### 3.3.5 Ethical considerations

The methodology raised ethical issues relating to consent, the recoding of interviews and participant anonymity. Other data was published publicly online (i.e. laws and policies). Ethics approval was granted by Macquarie University on 4.4.2014 (Ethics Application Ref: 5201400089: Appendix 3-2).

#### 3.3.5.1 Consent

Some facilitators, being teachers, were able to exert some social pressure on students to participate. The veracity of the students' consent was protected, however, by following the protocols approved in relation to this study: first, all participants received a Putonghua-English consent form before their interview (also in Appendix 3-2), explaining their freedom not participate without penalty and to withdraw at any time. I reiterated these messages orally in Putonghua for in-person interviews. I ensured all participants had my contact details and understood they were welcome to ask me questions about my use of their interviews. Furthermore, I was not in a teacher-student relationship with the students and students were not threatened by their teachers with any academic penalty for not participating. I suggest my recruitment was akin to Noy's (2007, p. 337) study of backpacker networks, in which "the participants in the research viewed the interview as a rite which is *as organic* to their participation in the social network as any other", rather than an obligation.

While the social capital was equal between facilitators and language leaders, reducing the pressure facilitators might exert, there was nevertheless a culturally-informed pressure for potential participants to “give face” to the introducing party by agreeing to participate in an interview. There was also a perceived inequality between the language leaders and me (elevating me above my self-perceived social “rank”), such that many appeared to find it important to give face to me by providing me with recruitment contacts. I therefore made sure potential language leaders understood the research and the interview commitment, could make clear their interview terms (e.g. convenient locations, level of anonymity) and followed the consent procedure.

Participants were specifically made aware that interviews were audio-recorded, and interviews were not video-taped. Further, in so far as possible, I attempted to compensate the participants by providing them snacks and meals, meeting requests to participate in “English corner” language practice sessions, attending social functions together, locating requested Australian LPP references, and introducing them to each other.

#### **3.3.5.2 Confidentiality**

Participants’ personal details, interview responses and photographs have been held in confidentiality and made anonymous in this thesis. The students are identified by a first-name pseudonym. These names are “Western”, in the hope they are more easily read and remembered within this English-language thesis than Chinese names. One student requested I use his Zhuang name: this would not render him anonymous so I gave him a Zhuang pseudonym. The students’ year of university is not given, to further de-identify them.

Only two language leaders requested anonymity but even so I anonymised all in accordance with the procedure approved by Macquarie University's human ethics committee. The language leaders are identified by a surname pseudonym preceded by "Mr" regardless of the participant's actual gender and professional title, to further de-identify them. I have used colour surnames, e.g. Mr Green. For those participants requesting anonymity, I have also obscured references to their employer/position.

I seldom encouraged my local facilitators to participate in the student interviews lest the presence of an authority figure produce a chilling effect. However, I allowed my GU facilitator, to sit through an interview – in which he remained silent – to judge my clarity of expression. At IMUST, my facilitator was also present for parts of the interviews, and during the second group interview she asked some questions. These questions developed a line of inquiry I was pursuing and, in my estimation, were perceived as part of a conversational tone by the students, but I was nevertheless especially careful when listening back in order to observe perceptible changes in tone or attitude around the facilitator's questions.

When taking photographs to collect linguistic landscape data (3.5.4.4), I attempted not to take photographs in public with identifiable individuals, although such photography in public places in China is legal. So far as possible, I photographed linguistic landscapes without people. Photographs published within this thesis have been edited to obscure faces.

### 3.3.6 **Researcher Positionality**

These experiences were also relevant to my subjectivity. Following Cresswell and Miller (2000, p. 127), my methodology includes this reflection on the researcher's "assumption, beliefs and biases". When I undertook my fieldwork in China, I was neither an "insider" nor a complete "outsider". I was nevertheless an outsider because I do not look Chinese. Because I was a university student, many assumed I was a young adult with limited knowledge or experience. I was therefore positioned as somewhat naïve but also neutral, and being a foreign researcher focusing on Zhuang was taken as giving face to Zhuang language and its speakers. These factors encouraged participants to participate and share networks. I assumed that those interested in participating might have more "Zhuangzu consciousness" than "typical" Zhuang speakers; conversely, I was seen as sharing Zhuangzu consciousness which prompted some language leaders to ask for my assistance forming overseas connections to support their Zhuang language maintenance activities. This made me uncomfortable because I had little to offer and was unwilling to jeopardise my research by involving myself, my participants or others in politically sensitive foreign funding of grassroots activities in China. As a research student taking a short course at ZJU during my fieldwork, I held a valid student visa, and the visa application declared my research plans, so I was positioned as a doctoral researcher.

I did not anticipate criticisms of my scope of study; however, during recruitment conversations some participants-to-be remarked that, if I wanted to properly understand how Zhuang was spoken, I should visit rural villages and interview those who had not gone to university; because my research design focused on urban practices not "pure" Zhuang (see further 3.3.2) and yet I positioned myself as a researcher of Zhuang, I had a "credibility gap" which I had to address by further explaining my research. To study in rural villages would

have defeated my purposes but made the study's representation of Zhuang usage more authentic in certain participants' eyes. Lickorish (2008, p. 10) similarly noted in his ethnography of Manchu identities in China that "choosing a field site on the basis of the depth of ethnic sentiment displayed ... [would have] only limited applicability to [that ethnic group] as a whole."

As a fluent but not native Chinese speaker but unable to speak Zhuang, I anticipated disappointing proud Zhuang speakers. My language repertoire was integral to how I was perceived, and positioned myself, but also presented limitations (see 3.7.2). Having explained participants' recruitment and the protection of their interests, I will now present the participants themselves.

### **3.4 Participants**

#### **3.4.1 Students**

All student participants were at university in China in 2014-2015. There were forty-three student participants, thirty-nine of whom were Zhuangzu. Their profiles are tabulated in Appendix 3-1, including pseudonym, minzu, gender, university, major, place of origin, interview date and group, and whether or not they self-reported as a Zhuang speaker. A forty-fourth student, from the Qiangzu minority, was interviewed because she wished to be included when existing participants brought new recruits to a meeting we had arranged. I excluded her later as she did not speak Zhuang and grew up in a non-Zhuang area in Sichuan Province. By contrast, one student who was neither Zhuangzu nor a Zhuang speaker but who had a Zhuang-speaking parent and grew up in a Zhuang-speaking community in GZAR was included. Aside from this student, the non-Zhuangzu students reported speaking Zhuang.

Overall, four participants were not ethnically Zhuangzu: one was Dongzu and one was Yaozu (both also official minorities in China), and two were Hanzu (the majority minzu). With limited fieldwork time, non-Zhuangzu such students were harder to recruit. The four non-Zhuangzu participants were recruited by peers who knew they spoke Zhuang and/or heard of my research from classmates/teachers and nominated themselves.

The student participants included eighteen Zhuang Studies students at minzu universities, and twenty-five students with other majors at both specialist and generalist universities. There is not exact equivalence between these numbers. Nevertheless, I maintained two key triangulation factors: overall, students from each kind of university (specialist and generalist) participated; and students from universities in areas with both high and low Zhuangzu population concentrations participated.

The students in this study ranged between eighteen and twenty-six years of age. About two thirds of participating students were female (28 females, 15 males). All spent their childhoods in South China, predominantly in GZAR or Wenshan Prefecture. Their places of origin and the universities they attended when I interviewed them are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Student participants' origins and universities

Place of origin	Number of students from place of origin	University the students now attend (number of students at each university from each place of origin)
Yunnan Province	12	YMU, Yunnan Province (8)
		YU, Yunnan Province (1)
		MUC, Beijing (2)
		PKU, Beijing (1)
GZAR	31	GUN, GZAR (8)
		GU, GZAR (10)
		IMUST, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (7)
		MUC, Beijing (2)
		RUC, Beijing (4)

All the students lived on campus in gender-segregated student dormitories (as is almost universal amongst university students in China). The majority of participants had not left their home province for university but most had moved to a larger city: only three students in Nanning City grew up there, and none grew up in Kunming, Beijing or Baotou Cities. Even those who grew up in Nanning moved from outskirts suburbs into more central dormitories on-campus, thus they too changed their environment, networks and daily activities upon commencing university. No one had moved between GZAR and neighbouring Yunnan for university. All seven participants at IMUST had moved from GZAR for university. By contrast, most of the students based in Beijing had moved during middle and high school, not at the start of university. They had boarded at the Central Minzu Middle and High School, affiliated with MUC. All students attended public schooling in China up to their current,

public tertiary studies. Thirty-eight students were undergraduates and five were postgraduates.

### 3.4.2 Language Leaders

I ultimately included twenty language leader participants. Fourteen were Zhuangzu, three were Hanzu, one Naxizu, one not stated and one language rights activist from another country based in China. Their profiles are also tabulated in Appendix 3-1, including pseudonym, interview place and date, profession/role, home province and whether they self-reported being a Zhuang speaker. The language leaders' ages range from late twenties to sixties.

All the language leaders do language work. Many are academics, teaching Zhuang Studies (Messrs. Purple, Mauve and Blue) and/or doing research on Zhuang language (Messrs. Blue, Green and Orange) and/or other South Chinese minority languages (Messrs. Blue and Lime). One academic is a university English teacher in China and has also been a children's school Mandarin teacher outside China but writes Zhuang songs, is undertaking research on bilingual Zhuang education, and is Zhuangzu (Mr Orange). Messrs. Green, Red and Black teach or have taught Zhuang language outside of university; in 2014, Mr Green taught free group classes and Mr Black took private pupils. Messrs. Pink, Cream, Beige Lime and Turquoise are current or former public servants in Zhuang translation, publishing and cultural work. Mr White is employed by the government for minority language translation but focuses on another language; he has been involved in language policy developments in Yunnan relating to Zhuang. Mr Black is a freelance Zhuang translator. Mr Turquoise and Mr Brown have authored histories about GZAR and/or the Zhuangzu, and Mr Brown also makes documentaries. Others are active in popular media, including producers and distributors of Zhuang pop and traditional music (Messrs. Black, Aqua, Silver and Russet). Mr Russet is

also a policeman; the police force encouraged and distributed his anti-drugs ballad in Zhuang, and Mr Silver often appears on television as folksinger. Mr Taupe is an academic specializing in China's minority laws (including language rights), Mr Crimson is a political scientist focusing on China's minorities, and Mr Yellow was (in 2014) a senior staff-member at an international access-to-justice NGO implementing language rights projects in North-Western China.

### **3.5 Data**

#### **3.5.1 Overview**

As this research adopted an ethnographic methodology to analyse language policies and their implementation, it involved various forms of data. I undertook a sociolinguistic ethnography based on the following datasets:

- a) Laws, policies, regulations, implementation guidelines ("LPP data");
- b) Interviews and follow-up online interactions with participants;
- c) Records of the linguistic landscape;
- d) Field notes (as participant-observer during data collection.)

Data collection was assisted by an ANU Library Fellowship including membership at the National Library of Australia. Following, I describe in further detail the LPP data (3.5.2), interview data (3.5.3), and landscape and observation data (3.5.4).

#### **3.5.2 LPP data**

I collected the official texts of Chinese laws and policies relating to language and/or minority governance (Zhuangzu specific and pan-minzu) publically available online. Where both English and Chinese versions were officially published, I collected both. I also collected official statements published online about these laws and policies. Together, these are the primary LPP data. Because these official texts are not systematically published by the

government, I have provided the publishing details of each in the References. These data were collected to investigate the formal structures of Zhuangzu governance and LPP, as well as authorised discourses about language rights and minority languages.

However, as Costa (2013, p. 327), notes, “[d]ebates on linguistic issues are typically one way of gaining access to many other elements at stake”: I expanded the LPP data beyond official texts to commentaries about Zhuang LPP to investigate competing discourses circulating in public. Government debates about LPP (e.g. congressional deliberations) are not on the public record in China and so collecting debate data was circuitous. Jurisprudence was a potential body of commentary and competing discourses: I systematically searched compilations of instructional cases (i.e. guiding judgements handed down under new rules since 2010 and published publically (see further Deng, 2016), and Chinese law and law journal databases: the results were meagre. Further, I identified a key online forum for discussing issues of Zhuang language, identity and culture (“Rauz Horizons”: [www.rauz.net.cn](http://www.rauz.net.cn)), collecting (by printing to PDF) its posts and comments about LPP. I searched Chinese newspaper articles, using both public search engines and library-licensed databases. The collection of the LPP and ethnographically-oriented datasets overlapped, as participants themselves were sources of commentary and knowledge about how LPP worked. Because cases and laws are not systematically published in China, especially laws enacted by regional and local governments, I asked participants if they knew of legal cases about language rights or of Zhuang language laws and policies, and then attempted to track down records of their examples.

Cartography is another type of commentary on LPP; to trace the history of correspondences between Zhuang-speaking areas and jurisdictional boundaries, I compared language atlases and maps of China: (CASS Institute of Linguistics et al., 2012; H. Chen & Li, 2005; d'Anville, 1737, 1785; Moseley, 2010; Wurm, 1988) and collected cartographic representations on flyers, tickets and signage during fieldwork.

While this process necessarily resulted in a very large but still incomplete set of official LPP and commentary, it allowed me to replicate the LPP texts and interpretations available to Zhuang speakers themselves, and to collect “folk knowledge” about Zhuang LPP and the legal system. That is, language rights and language policies were studied as discursive resources in circulation, aligning with the social constructionist orientation to LPP studies within which this research is positioned (see Section 3.2).

### **3.5.3 Interview data**

This dataset was collected to identify attitudes to minority languages and Zhuang language practices of both participants and governments, inside and outside areas of autonomous Zhuang government, as well as identifying participants’ understandings of language rights and any “language rights practices” they may have had. The interviews allowed participants to provide their own socially constructed knowledge. The interviews’ semi-structured nature and, for the students, group form, allowed for further dynamism as we actively co-constructed knowledge, following the reflexive science approach. Interviewees’ metalinguistic awareness is limited and self-reports about language practices are different from actual language practices, however, the research does not seek to quantify or otherwise “objectively” measure Zhuang language use: Chapter Two has explicated this research’s intention not to mimic the tendency in LPP, including Chinese LPP and Chinese literature

about it, to assume a normative separability of languages and “quantifiability” of language usage. The advantage of self-reports about language use is their orientation towards norms as norms and norm construction are integral themes in ethnographic research on the effects of LPP.

Both groups and individual interviews were semi-structured and undertaken in Putonghua unless the participant was a fluent English speaker and was comfortable being interviewed in English (Mr Orange, Mr Yellow). Appendix 3-4 lists these semi-structured interviews’ themes and questions. I allowed the interviews to adapt to particular participants’ knowledge and interests, i.e. “responsive” interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Group interviews were employed for most student interviews but I undertook individual interviews with students Damien, Hoz and Una because of their availabilities. Their interviews followed the themes of the student group interviews. Individual interviews were employed for most language leaders; part-way through my individual interview with Mr Cream, his colleague Mr Beige was introduced to me, but Mr Beige and I then had a one-on-one discussion. An individual interview with Mr Aqua was arranged but in the event Mr Russet was present and wished to participate; this group language leader interview followed the semi-structured themes of individual language leader interviews.

Both group and individual interviews were one to one-and-a-half hours long. I conducted sixteen student interviews and eighteen language leader interviews (totalling approximately fifty-five hours). Interviews were all recorded on a digital recorder and/or mobile phone. Some photographs were taken during the interviews of the participants to assist in identifying voices on the tapes. (Sometimes also selfies at the students’ request!) During interviews, I

collected hard-to-obtain materials about Zhuang language, culture and history which interview participants and recruitment contacts gave me, including dictionaries, survey reports, Zhuang-medium music and the text and photographs for an under-construction website on GZAR's history.

Group and individual interviews are described further at 3.5.3.1 and 3.5.3.2, respectively.

### **3.5.3.1 *Group interviews with students***

Each group consisted of students from the same university. At our initial meeting to discuss the research and obtain consent, I allowed to students to nominate which classmates they would join and arranged the time-slots. I aimed for three students per group however, occasionally students' preferences resulted in four-interviewee groups. At GUN, one four-student group recruited another student between our initial meeting and the interview, bringing her along, so I undertook the consent procedures then undertook a larger group interview.

Students read a dual-language consent form; most signed it but a small number provided oral consent instead.

Group interviews were planned as “walk and talk” interviews while walking around students' daily linguistic landscapes. This method was inspired by human geographer, Qian (see further Qian, 2014; 2012) but Stroud and Jegels recently adopted a similar “commented” or “narrated” walk method in a sociolinguistic study (Stroud & Jegels, 2013; see also Winkler, 2002), arguing

narrated walking in particular, allows the ethnographer-linguist to monitor the enactment of discourses of place as they evolve over time and across landscapes through the perspectives and affectual stances of narrating walkers [.]

The method was intended to relax the students into a less formal dialogue; to ask about the languages expected in local settings; and to observe the students' language practices *in situ*. Thus, I would join the students in actively engaging with their environments and collate ethnographic data about perceptions of, and interactions with, their linguistic and spatial landscape. However, in actuality some students requested that we sit indoors, usually because of the summer heat. Moreover, the recordings from the first outdoor interviews were less clear than my preparatory recording device tests. I therefore adapted to ensure we could sit and talk at quiet, shady points if taking a narrated walk.

Group interviews typically began with me asking the students in turn to detail their personal language and schooling histories, and asking them to nominated all languages they could speak. In sum, the interviewees were asked about their personal past, present and future language practices; the language practices in their daily environments; Zhuang on campus and/or in public; their associations between place and language; language rights; ways of “doing being Zhuang”; and attitudes to Zhuang language in the past, now and in a hypothetical situation of severe endangerment.

This research sought to expand on the “Linguistic Landscape Approach” (LLA) (proposed by Gorter, 2006, p. 1) by mapping language practices as a linguistic “topographic features” through the narrated walks and observations, and also by asking interviewees about specific signage we saw together or recollected. Given the ethnographic orientation of this research, I take “object-level” acts themselves, in particular texts in the linguistic landscape, and

“metalevel” ideas to be inseparable (following Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 9), and Blommaert and Maly (2014, p. 3) make clear that “[p]ublic spaces are normative spaces”. Thus, without using interviews to investigate participants’ awareness of norms conveyed by the linguistic landscape, and landscape perceptions, my LLA would be limited.

### **3.5.3.2 *Individual interviews with language leaders***

Most language leader participants were interviewed individually. However, in some cases joint interviews were possible, for example when I interviewed the senior staff of the Zhuang magazine, San Yue San. I also observed Language Leaders interacting together outside of interviews where possible, as at a dinner organised by a Language Leader who is CMU professor. I did not “walk & talk” with the Language Leaders but endeavoured to interview them *in situ* in their primary workplaces or homes. Most Language Leaders consented orally, which I recorded, or had consented via email when we arranged the interviews.

In addition to the themes used in the students’ group interviews, the language leaders’ semi-structured individual interviews asked about the overall circumstances of Zhuang language use, language policies, language preservation and language advocacy practices.

### **3.5.3.3 *Following up***

I had planned and obtained consent for follow-up interviews where necessary. However, I was satisfied after the initial interviews that the semi-structured topics issues been adequately addressed. In addition, as most interviews were around exam session, many students indicated they would prefer not to participate in second interviews. When necessary, follow-up questions were communicated online. With that aim in mind, I established a group chat room on the instant messaging platform QQ, in which participants could communicate with

each other and with me (an opportunity for both participant observation and follow-up questions). However, when moving between field sites, a geo-location security protocol was triggered and I was locked out of my QQ accounts; I re-established a smaller group but encountered a similar lock-out when I returned to Australia. I had taken screenshots of the QQ chats. Follow-up communications were better served by WeChat, where I could see exchange individual messages with, and see the public posts of, participants who have agreed to be WeChat “contacts”. I also emailed participants when I wanted to clarify certain information; some responded but some did not. Such follow-up occasions arose when I was preparing interview data for analysis (see further 3.6.4). I situated the interview data within the observational data.

#### **3.5.4 Observation**

I organised participant observations and linguistic landscape data collection around three types of space: campuses and their surrounds; cultural institutions; and central commercial/commuter places (detailed at 3.5.4.1-3.5.4.3, respectively), together forming what I will call the Campus-Culture-Centre Sites (“CCC Sites”). Collecting linguistic landscape data in these sites is detailed at 3.5.4.4 and observing participants within them is detailed at 3.5.4.5. The sites were defined as places using local understandings (e.g. a museum and its grounds are “a place”, campus and its surrounds are another place, “downtown” is a third) rather than rigid borders, and the linguistic landscape observations were situated within broader ethnographic observations.

##### **3.5.4.1 Campuses**

I took each university as a linguistic environment. The campuses are described in 3.3.4.1. Almost all Chinese university students live on campus in university-provided dormitories and

spend the majority of their time around campus. My reconnaissance established that campuses typically have a fringe of eateries, street vendors, bike repair, phone and clothing shops, supermarkets, banks, karaoke bars and internet cafes, as well as on-campus cafeterias, shops, gardens and sports fields. It is rare for university students to commute from home, or to work. Students may go downtown to socialise or shop, and to access major rail and bus stations during holidays, when most students travel back to their parents' home. As such, the linguistic landscapes the students encounter regularly are relatively contained.

Therefore, I walked through ate and shopped around campuses, observing and photographing campus landscapes and surrounds. This photography collected typical linguistic landscape texts (e.g. campus main entrance signs) and remarkable, a-typical texts (e.g. posters in Zhuang), as well as photographs showing the scale of campuses, features participants drew attention to and activities undertaken with participants (e.g. watching a volleyball match). These add valuable data not previously collected.

#### **3.5.4.2 *Cultural institutions***

I also identified, visited, observed and photographed cultural institutions, particular public regional institutions and places billed as “Zhuang” or “minority minzu”. These were concentrated in GZAR and included the regional GZAR Museum and Library in downtown Nanning, the Guangxi Museum of Nationalities and its adjacent “Ethnic Village” theme-park in Nanning’s outskirts, a Zhuang-themed restaurant in Wuming, and central plazas in Nanning, Guilin, Beijing and Baotou. It also included “Ping’An Zhuang Village”, farming village now within a ticketed tourism zone in northern GZAR replete with hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, a local museum and other tourism amenities. In IMAR, it included a museum,

temples and a grasslands yurt restaurant in Damao County and the museum and central park in Ordos. In Beijing, it involved the Nationalities Dance Institute near MUC and minority dance classes downtown recommended by a minority dancewear retailer with a shop adjacent to MUC.

#### **3.5.4.3 *Central commercial/commuter places***

Further, I explored, observed and photographed central commercial areas and transport hubs, including downtown markets, shopping plazas and malls, bus terminuses, inter-city train stations, and airports in Nanning City, Guilin City, Wuming Town and Ping'An Zhuang Village in GZAR, as well as in Kunming, Baotou and Beijing Cities, and stations between these fieldwork sites that I traversed. These centres were physically big areas and photography therefore had to be limited to features of the linguistic landscape that I considered relevant to a linguistic landscape study (texts, images and buildings rather than people or natural vistas), and judged, after reconnaissance and observation, to be either representative of a class or remarkably non-typical (keeping the reason for selection clear through notes).

These cultural and central sites were areas where the broader social practices, norms and representations of minority languages could be explored. It was therefore not necessary for them to be places the participants visited, though some reported visiting the Guangxi Museum of Nationalities, downtown commercial areas, and the bus terminus, for example, and Mr Black took me on a commented walk of GZAR Museum and Library.

While I endeavoured to visit many of these cultural and central places in each city/town, the observations were shaped by my travel requirements. I entered and left Guilin by train, for example, but did not have time for a Guilin Airport observation side-trip. In IMAR, my facilitator had pre-arranged cultural visits and interviews outside of Baotou (in Damao and Ordos), limiting my observations within Baotou. In Kunming, the student participants were particularly open to active observation, plus their campus was located in a precinct far from downtown Kunming, so increased time on campus with them reduced my explorations downtown.

An important aspect of observing these CCC Sites was collecting data on their linguistic landscapes.

#### **3.5.4.4 *Linguistic landscapes of the CCC Sites***

My landscape data was not limited to fixed public signage of the kind Gorter (2006, p. 1) defined early on as the entirety of the Linguistic Landscape Approach (but see Gorter's expanded view in Shohamy & Gorter, 2009) because my aim was to thickly describe the range of texts, and the linguistic cues and normative practices, within the CCC Sites. I systematically photographed samples of:

Campus':

- main gates;
- dormitory exteriors;
- shops-fronts;
- street-name signs;
- signage on/in Zhuang Studies departments;

- cafeteria interiors including permanent menu boards and temporary posters;
- outdoor areas where the students regularly spent leisure time;
- shop-fronts and street-name signs in surrounding streets.

#### Cultural institutions’:

- exterior institution-name signage and building forms;
- main entrances;
- rules and/or safety signage;
- wayfaring signage;
- exhibition entrances;
- curation signage and artefacts (in Zhuang-themed exhibitions);
- souvenirs on sale.

#### Commercial/commuter centres’:

- markets and shop-fronts;
- road directions and street-name signs;
- downtown billboards and posters;
- bus stops/train station/airport names, schedules, public notices, and advertisements;
- on-vehicle advertisements (exterior and interior);
- public plaques in downtown areas and central parks;
- street scapes in the centre of town.

The photography captured some shop and magazine-stand displays but it was not always appropriate to take photographs of products. Furthermore, I made sample audio recordings of pre-recorded announcements in CCC Sites and collected circulating texts (e.g. brochures,

receipts) given to me. Finally, the photography included campus activities and classroom interiors, dependant on the activities I was included in for participant observation.

#### **3.5.4.5**     *Participants*

My interactions with participants extended beyond interviews and deepened my ethnographic approach. Often, when group interviews ended some or all participants joined me informally to eat on campus. Typically, I would interview more than one group each day and would run into earlier interviewees during/on route to later interviews, and arranged informal catch-ups on-campus after that day's interviews. I came back to campus in the days after the group interviews in order to "hang out" with the students. During these times, the students suggested activities including eating together, strolling, watching sports matches and having conversational English practice. As far as possible, I stayed close to campus and dropped in even when nothing was arranged with participants, to observe the campus environment and to be available for informal, impromptu activities. At YMU, I also attended some classes with the participants as my facilitator invited me into her classroom, where I participated actively, including running a short English lesson and answering personal questions in a Q&A session. My Kunming and Nanning facilitators and various language leaders invited me to their and their families' homes, including a music soiree, and to restaurants with their colleagues and relatives. I took multiple electric-bike and car rides across these cities with facilitators and language leader participants, sometimes along with their children and spouses, and had phone conversations with participants. I also had meetings and meals in Nanning, Beijing and Damao County, IMAR with university administrators and academics who were not ultimately participants.

When I returned to GZAR in 2015, I invited participants from 2014 to meals, to update them and to re-establish our connections for follow-up questions. Some politely declined but Danielle, Barbara, Morris and Mr Black enthusiastically met me again. Mr Black also arranged a commented cultural institution walk (we had an indoor interview in 2014), after which we took tea inside a traditional Dongzu “wind-and-rain” bridge in GZAR Museum’s grounds. Later I met him and his friends studying minority folk singing for a night out, and for an informal lunch interview with a Zhuang celebrity and her husband and a restaurant specializing in GZAR cuisine.

The participant observations worked on campuses in Kunming and Nanning, but less well in Beijing and Baotou. I believe the students in Kunming and GZAR had fewer opportunities than the Beijing students to meet and interact with foreigners, and wanted to make the most of my presence, while certain language leaders in Nanning were especially inclusive and well-connected to people of interest in my research. Further, the Kunming and Nanning interviews took place before the exam session commenced, so students were comparatively more relaxed and available. In Beijing, the students were on the cusp of end-of-semester commitments, and then in the process of packing to head home for the summer holidays, and so their availability to participate in activities with me was limited.

Nevertheless, over the 2014 Chinese summer holidays I remained based in Beijing, and in November 2014, I visited Beijing for a conference. During those periods I was able to revisit the Beijing fieldwork campuses by myself for further observations, to undertake language leader interviews at MUC and dine with some language leaders and their associates, and to present to academics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Ethnology, located on the MUC campus. I also used these periods to explore the linguistic landscape of

the Beijing campuses' surrounding neighbourhoods and Beijing's downtown areas, to visit minzu dancewear shops next to MUC, and to enrol in a weekly Chinese minority dance class for adults in downtown Beijing.

In Baotou, the students had not yet reached exam time, unlike in Beijing, but because of where I was staying (more than walking distance from campus, with my facilitator) and because my facilitator had arranged visits to cultural sites and potential language leaders, I was not able to initiate leisure activities with the IMUST students. Unfortunately, I could not extend my fieldwork in Baotou without cancelling on student participants interviews I had arranged in Beijing. I contacted IMUST participants during fieldwork in 2015 to arrange follow-up activities and/or interviews in their home province, GZAR, during their summer break. None were available but Penny arranged for me to visit her parents in Wuming Town, GZAR, providing an opportunity to observe her family's daily life and talk with her parents.

Participant observations were assisted by my Putonghua and English proficiencies, both as a medium of communicate and as a drawcard for participants to include me in activities.

### **3.6 Methods of analysis**

#### **3.6.1 Critical sociolinguistic ethnography of LPP**

Critical sociolinguistic ethnography is the overarching framework of this research, and within it I employ different analytic lenses to achieve an ethnography of LPP, providing both complementarity and triangulation (on validity measures, see further 3.7). This section explains how, following the analytic approaches to critical sociolinguistic ethnographies of LPP in the literature, Zhuang LPP is critically analysed as a group of texts and legal structures that participate in both a political economy and in discourses.

The overarching, critical framework frames language as a terrain for power struggles; that is, “struggles over language are not centrally about language at all” (Heller, 2004, p. 285). The “linguistic order” (originally Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 665) highlights the role of language practices in organising social categories and hierarchies, or the “social order” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 6). Piller (2015b) uses the analytic construct “language ideologies” to analyse the norms of language practices and the linguistic and social orders they construct. Language ideologies are an idea allowing me to “systematically link language and society” (Piller, 2015b, p. 920); in Woolard’s (1994, p. 72) words, “language ideology ... relates the microculture of communicative action to political and economic considerations of power and social inequality, confronting macrosocial constraints on language behaviour” (see further 2.3.2.3).

But how are language ideologies understood to relate linguistic order and social order? This thesis approaches language ideologies as active discursive resources, i.e. normative “metacommentaries” (Philips, 2000) and authorised discourses backed by the force of law, and as processes. In particular, language ideologies processes encompass “iconisation” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38) by which language practices take on conventionalised and often reductive symbolic meanings; “erasure” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 39) by which language practices are selectively validated and metaphorically voiced and made visible; “recursivity” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38) by which hierarchic ideas of non-linguistic differences are matched onto differences in language practices (and vice versa); and naturalising (antonym “denaturalising”, “denaturing”: Blommaert, Rampton, & Spotti, 2011, p. 1; Piller, 2016b) by which a linguistic order is normalised, taking on hegemonic naturalness such that its social

construction is invisible and unquestioned. Certain language ideologies have been identified in the literature in multiple situated instantiations and named, e.g. “standard language ideology” (Piller, 2015b, p. 920) and “monolingual mindset” (Clyne, 2005). In Bourdieuan critical sociolinguistic theory, language ideologies are a structure of habitus, and may be instantiated on a societal level as norms (*doxa*) (see particularly Bourdieu, 1977a, 1992).

If language is invested with power then so too is managing, controlling, promoting or deliberately changing language practices i.e. that which language policy, by its nature, does. Costa (2013), following Lafont (1997), specifically foregrounds this, analysing language policy as a structure organizing (sometimes by proxy) socio-economic power and disempowerment (i.e. marginalisation); the political economy and the sociolinguistic economy intersect in practices of language policy and in its study. The prism of language ideologies likewise serves as a tool for analysing the norms of language practices that language policies reproduce or challenge, and the linguistic and social orders language policy constructs.

Hence, this approach analyses LPP not only as legally structuring society but as a means of powerful perspectives participating in a “discursive struggle” to discursively and ideationally structure society i.e. the analysis is poststructuralist, following Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, as re-articulated by Jørgenson and Philips (2002, p. 6):

discourse constructs the social world in meaning, and that, owing to the fundamental instability of language, meaning can never be permanently fixed. No discourse is a closed entity: it is, rather, constantly being transformed through contact with other discourses.

Thus, LPP texts (as well as other discourses identified in 3.6.2-3.6.4) are treated as discourses dynamically (re)constructing and transmitting language ideologies (cf. Mortimer, 2016) to produce certain social orders. This is integrated with the with the overall critical sociolinguistic ethnography approach: on discourse (not only policy discourses) as ideological and constitutive of the social world (see Fairclough, 1993, p. 135; Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002, p. 63). I use the theory of sociolinguistic scales (following Blommaert, 2007; see also Blommaert, Westinen, & Leppänen, 2014; Canagarajah, 2013; Collins, Slembrouck, & Baynham, 2009) to analyse the varying ways language policy, as discourse, is interpreted and practiced.

With a view to adopting this critical analytic framework in my ethnography of LPP, I take (language) rights as positing an authorised distribution of power, but I do not assume they work as posited. This is a critical approach, and follows social constructionist theories of governance (e.g. Bevir & Rhodes, 2010) and critical legal theory (see also studies of policy as sociocultural practice e.g. Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Shore & Wright, 1997). Rather, an ethnography of LPP requires the contrastive analysis of what policies say and how policies are practiced, and why. Ethnographies of LPP accept that how LPP is practiced is “unpredictable from policy texts alone” (see also Hornberger, 2005; Mortimer, 2016, p. 350) because of power dynamics and because policy is interpreted by social actors (or “agents”, in the governance studies terminology). Linking this dynamic view of policy studies to Bourdieuan sociolinguistics, Wee (following Bonham, 1999; 2011), extends the notion of habitus as it relates to agency, arguing,

Bourdieu’s “pre-reflective habitus” is too “one-dimensional” and makes no place for “deliberate processes and practices” ... Mitigating this determinism requires a

conception of agency that is both reflective and transformative, one that recognises “the capacities of socially and culturally situated agents to reflect upon their social conditions, criticise them, and articulate new interpretations of them” (citations omitted).

That is, language ideologies are dynamic and individuals are animated by both a disposition (habitus) reflecting LPP structures and their ideologies (part of Bourdieu’s doxa) and by reflexive, potentially critical evaluations of one’s dispositions and ideologies. This conceptualisation of agency anticipates dynamism, even resistance and counter-hegemony, in language policy processes (i.e. language governance). Thus, this analytic view lends itself to situated and ethnographic methods of LPP research.

LPP practice is taken to comprise an array of empirical phenomena situated in relation to each other and therefore sensibly studied together, thus this research employs different theoretic lenses in different empirical analysis chapters. Jørgenson and Philips (Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002, p. 4) have argued that “multiperspectival work” offers an analytic weighing up of “different perspectives provide different forms of knowledge about a phenomenon so that, together, they produce a broader understanding”. This reasoning guides my method. Ethnography of LPP is an emerging field in need of exploration into potential approaches, and this desire to trial lenses, as well as to match lenses to different types of LPP practice, informed the research design. The aim of this multi-faceted method of analysis is to,

keep together what go [*sic*] together in reality: on the one hand, the objective classifications, whether incorporated or objectified, sometimes in institutional form (like legal boundaries), and, on the other hand, the practical relation to those classifications, whether acted out or represented, and in particular the individual and

collective strategies ... by which agents seek to put these classifications at the service of their material or symbolic interests, or to conserve and transform them (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 227)

Hence this thesis combines approaches to analysis – or “lenses”, as set out below – within a critical analysis of how language ideologies, as strengthened or changed by LPP, function as an organising force of society and limit or channel socio-economic and geographic mobility.

Furthermore, in general, at least some of the effect of language rights – effects that are the ultimate object of this study – is the bolstering or changing of norms i.e. macro-processes of ideological production. The existence and impact of these macro-processes is meta-linguistic/meta-social information that participants are not always going to be able to recognise or articulate, especially if they have never engaged in processes they consider to be official language rights processes. This further justifies the use of different lenses to enrich the investigation into what the data reveals about the effects of Zhuang LPP. These heuristics are a legal analysis (3.6.2), a linguistic landscape analysis (3.6.3) and an analysis of individual perspectives (3.6.4).

### **3.6.2 The legal lens**

My legal approach to analysing the LPP data analyses the systems formally structured by laws and policies, but is a critical legal approach in that the framework’s structural weaknesses are explored. Following principles of statutory interpretation, the meaning of LPP texts was discerned first from the denotation. Where an official English version of a legal text was available, I used that version. Where the wording was ambiguous, the Putonghua version of a legal instrument always prevailed over the English version. If the

wording was ambiguous, however, the Putonghua version of a legal instrument always prevailed over the English version. Official statements were then used, where available, to interpret the instruments and legal scholars and theory constituted a third source of interpretation. This follows conventional methods of statutory interpretation.

The meaning of a law thus analysed was also taken as its “primary discourse”; Piller (following O’Barr, 1994; 2001, p. 156) distinguishes between “primary discourses” in advertising texts, i.e. denotations, the explicitly-stated details, and “secondary discourses” which imply, talk about or overlook elements of the world in which an advertising text positions its products, characters and prospective customers, including their languages practices. The primary discourses of the LPP texts were examined in terms of their articulation of “overt” (Schiffman, 1996, p. 27) or official language ideologies.

The secondary discourse of the LPP texts were analysed to reveal “covert” (Schiffman, 1996, p. 27) language ideologies (but nonetheless officially endorsed by their inclusion in the LPP framework). Philips (2000) considers case law a metacommentary on language ideologies (especially cases explicitly about breaching linguistic norms), but not all legal systems construct case law as an authoritative commentary (about anything) or a norm (re)setting discourse. The Chinese legal system is a system that does not do this (like most systems except common law systems). Therefore, in this study, following the situated practice of the state in China, the official pronouncements and authorised statements about laws and policies within the LPP data were taken as important ideological metacommentaries and articulations of language ideologies. The LPP framework’s “covert” language ideologies were also analysed by critiquing the framework of LPP the point of view of subjects, asking how the

laws in question construct legal subjects, include ethno-linguistic groups like the minzu as legal subjects, and how they empower and capacitate (or disempower and marginalise) these subjects. This is a method of analysing representation, following the discourse analysis view that representation is significant “[b]ecause groups are not socially predetermined, they do not exist until they are constituted in discourse” (Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002, p. 45).

In China, as in many nations, legislation is understood as significant norm-setting text, in addition to a code of rules. Again, like in many nations, the *Constitution* is understood as a normative text more than a regulatory text. Thus, the analysis approached language ideologies encoded in legal texts, whether overt or covert, as normative and as dominant discourses.

Language ideologies as encoded in legal texts are not necessarily identical to language ideologies expressed in other genres and therefore the next step in the analysis was to examine how participants understood that which Zhuang LPP covered and how the language rights framework functioned, using linguistic landscape analysis and content analysis of interview data (see further 3.6.3-3.6.4).

### **3.6.3 The linguistic landscape lens**

One way to interrogate language ideologies as expressed in legal texts is to employ an “expanded” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010b; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009) linguistic landscape approach (also called a “semiotic landscape”: Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a) to analyse specific implementation of a local Zhuang language policy regulatory intervention in public linguistic landscapes, as well as to analyse the place-making of public displays of language in

areas of autonomous Zhuangzu government, the CCC Sites (3.5.4) of urban centres and in educational environments. I analyse patterns in the display of Zhuang language with reference to which script is used, which other languages are displayed alongside Zhuang, how content and informational and symbolic functions are shared between Zhuang and other languages, where Zhuang signage is placed, which generic and material types of public signage include Zhuang, whether these signs are oriented towards civic/regulatory, commercial or other discourses, whom the signage appears to be addressed, and whether the authors are government agencies or commercial enterprises. Authors in this analysis group together those fabricating the sign, designing it, and ordering it, e.g. standardised and publicly funded street-name signs are “government-authored” signs.

The patterns in the secondary discourses public signage revealed norms of public use (or disuse) of Zhuang but also norms of representation of social groups, returning to the significance of representation to discourse analysis, i.e. public signage is an aggregate of discourses instantiating ideological representations of languages and those associated with them. The signage primary discourse is also analysed to see whether and how signage explicitly refers to Zhuang language, and to see how visual icons of “Zhuang-ness” (potentially including language) may be explicitly linked to referents within signage.

Thus, this method analyses the reproduction of discourses intertextually (between signs and between signs and LPP) (on intertextuality as a critical method of discourse analysis, (see, following Fairclough, Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002, p. 7) as well as the emplacement of linguistic norms and the contribution of those norms to place making. I then analyse the findings in relation to linguistic landscapes against language policy, investigating the extent

to which Zhuang displays in public reflect policy directives. I ask how patterns of display in the linguistic landscapes not only reflect or make manifest language policies, but how they reproduce and/or challenge languages ideologies of language policy. Using this and the perceptions lens (3.6.4), I relate the linguistic order displayed in linguistic landscapes to habitus and the lived experiences of Zhuang LPP.

This method foregrounds relationships between where language is used in public practices (here, specifically physical, textual practices) and the defining or bounding of places. In particular, it analyses the construction of norms in public languages practices and the role of these norms in the “spatialisation” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 6) of social order. That is, my linguistic landscape approach foregrounds how language, inequality and exclusion, and place co-construct one another and how they relate to social groupings and identities.

#### **3.6.4 The perceptions lens**

In order to bring into focus the heterogeneous views about LPP and about the linguistic landscapes and institutional practices with which LPP interacts, another analytic approach was to foreground subjective perceptions. Foregrounding the subjective knowledge, ideologies and identities of participants as they relate to language is part of taking a critical sociolinguistic ethnography approach to LPP. I examine the subjectivities of the participants through a combination of content analysis and discourse analysis.

My content analysis began with making reflective field-notes after interviews. I then listened back to interview recordings and read the interview transcripts, read the field-notes, and collected follow-up or online data if needed for clarifications. Themes which reoccurred were

examined i.e. a recurrent thematic analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of content, which is within the reflexive ethnographic approach (Burawoy, 1991). Themes were examined and then accepted or rejected as types of relevant language practice, discursive construction or language ideology. In this way, themes emerged from the data, which is a reflexive ethnographic approach. Reflexive acts of knowledge production by the researcher are essential (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p. 10). However, some themes were directed by theory or by findings from analysis under my other lenses, i.e. “directed content analysis” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). I arranged the emergent and directed themes into these thematic categories:

- engagement with language rights and policy;
- viewing linguistic landscapes;
- past and present Zhuang language use;
- prospective Zhuang language use;
- literacy;
- Zhuang identities;
- language and cities;
- language change and generations;
- economic development and employment;
- language and tourism; and
- language in education.

This approach may also be described as “validity-as-reflexive-accounting”, to use Altheide and Johnson’s (1994, p. 489) terminology. These authors (Altheide & Johnson, 1994, p. 486) contend this is appropriate within “analytic realism” framework – the “social world is an interpreted world, not a literal world”, consistent with the positioning of this research. Next, I excerpted interview data relevant to the categories for detailed analysis. For most data, I translated them into English at this point. Clear and audible data were given preference, and I was careful to draw the excerpts from a cross-section of the corpus. I situated the interview

data within the observational data, looking for commonalities or further implicit data fitting within an identified category.

Discourse analysis is combined with content analysis. The literature presages such combinations, with Jørgenson and Phillips (2002, p. 4) arguing a researcher can “create one’s own package by combining elements from different discourse analytical perspectives and... non-discourse analytical perspectives”. I have outlined the overall discourse analytic perspective in 3.6.1, and in regards to legal and landscape texts in 3.6.2-3.6.3. In attending to individuals’ discourses through the perceptions lens, i.e. analysing participants as producers of discourse in the interaction of interviews, my discourse analysis goes beyond the poststructuralist view of discourse as a force shaping the social world to which individuals are merely subject (see further Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002, p. 7) Nevertheless, as in poststructuralist discourse analysis, a key question in my discourse analysis of individuals’ discourses is representation (Jørgenson & Phillips, 2002, p. 45): i.e. asking how the Zhuang and other social groups are constituted in participants’ discourses. I then comparatively analyse how these representations struggle with or conform to representation of social order constituted in legal and public texts, as foregrounded through the legal and landscapes lenses.

Further details of the methods of analysis are provided at the beginning of each of the following analytic chapters. The advantage of “testing out” these multiple lenses and triangulating them against each other must be weighed against the limitations of this method of analysis.

### **3.7 Limitations**

The application of multiple analytic lenses – that is, legal, landscape and perception – in this way constitutes a limitation as well as an opportunity. Specifically, some lenses and the data to which they are applied may have been amenable to further research to produce a deeper but narrower thesis, whereas I have instead prioritised the complementarity of lenses, and theoretic triangulation (see further 3.7.1), to produce analytic depth by different means. This is an epistemological limitation as much as a pragmatic one; it is the inherent nature of studying dynamic and situated knowledge that that which can be “known” academically is always partial, and the specific implementations I chose – public language policy and language-in-education policy – are consistent with common foci in LPP research.

Thus, this section will focus rather on how I have addressed two surmountable kinds of limitation; that arising from the qualitative nature of this research (3.7.1) and that arising from the multilingual environment in which I undertook it (3.7.2).

#### **3.7.1 Research validity**

Although the literature proposes various ways to think about the validity, plausibility, trustworthiness or authenticity of data, Cresswell and Miller (2000, p. 124) note that “there is a general consensus, however, that qualitative inquirers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible”. This study takes credibility to encompass both valid data and drawing valid inferences from it (Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125), which is assessed through the accuracy of my account of the “participants’ realities of social phenomenon” (Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p. 124) and whether my account is credible to those realities (following Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p. 124; Schwandt, 1997, p. 168).

Triangulation increases the validity of data by cross-checking it through placing a datum within three (or more) dimensions, being “a validity procedure where researchers look for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (following Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Triangulation is “at the heart of ethnographic validity” (Fetterman, 2010, p. 94) and can occur “naturally in conversation” (Fetterman, 2010, p. 96) or be designed; both natural and designed triangulation occur in this study. There are several recognised ways of designing triangulation (Denzin, 1978): in this research, data triangulation and theory triangulation are employed. Therefore, this research employs what some call “multiple triangulation” (Polit & Hungler, 1995).

First, Denzin (1978) notes that data can be triangulated by being sourced either from different times, spaces or persons. My data is mainly contemporaneous, although reviewed literature on the development of the legal framework surrounding minzu groups and their languages provides temporal triangulation. The LPP, observational and interview data are sourced from multiple people and places, including various physical sites and online spaces.

Second, theoretical triangulation, or the combined use of multiple theoretical lenses, is achieved through the combination of sociolinguistic, ethnographic and legal theory on which this thesis draws. Section 3.6 further details the combination of analytic lenses employed.

Third, “fact-checking” data triangulation and theory triangulation are combined with a “reflexive science” method (following Burawoy, 1991). The language leaders provide a tier of reflection on the students, and all participants provide a tier of reflection on the LPP and

linguistic landscape data, then I “embed” my participant dialogue “within a second dialogue between local processes and extralocal forces” (Burawoy, 1991, p. 5). Burawoy (1991, p. 5) provides a three-tier model of reflection, with these sorts of data “in turn ... comprehended through a third, expanding dialogue of theory with itself”; that is, the research literature with which this monograph engages.

Together, these measures seek to make findings based on the data more credible by checking for convergence. If an inconsistency is found, however, triangulation cannot tell me which data are true; none is “true” given the analytic realism framework of social constructionism “assumes the researcher interprets the world, and this interpretive process rests on an ethnographic ethic” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 481). Therefore, in cases of inconsistencies, the study moves from a “postpositivist paradigm” to a “critical paradigm” (Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126), according to which the inconsistency is reflected on and, where possible, explained by theory, as per the reflexive method. In order to achieve validity within the critical paradigm, I have also disclosed my own “assumption, beliefs and biases” (Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127) in Section 3.3.1.

This combined use of paradigms constitutes “within-method” triangulation (Denzin, 1978) and a “fallibilistic pluralism” of methods which Schwandt (2012) has advocated (see also Schwandt, 1997, p. 169). In order to achieve data triangulation and critical reflections on data, a large corpus of many forms of data was collected. Much of the data collection involved multilingual communication.

### 3.7.2 Language limitations

I speak Putonghua well and undertook most of my fieldwork and interviews in that language. Nevertheless, had I native-like Putonghua I could have had deeper conversations with my participants and read more online commentaries and research from China. To counter my limitations in Putonghua and Zhuang, I triangulated my observations and my group and individual interview transcripts against other data, including comments and research from more sensitive speakers of Putonghua and Zhuang, and listened back to my Putonghua interviews numerous times to ensure accurate comprehension. I had ethics approval and departmental funding for transcription assistance so I trained Chinese university students fluent in Putonghua to transcribe most interviews, minimising the risk of my written language limitations affecting the data (see Transcription and Translation Conventions). I proofread all the transcripts, listened again to segments where the transcript appeared to contain a typographical error or the transcriber had noted some uncertainty, and corrected them. Transcript excerpts used within the thesis were also verified by Chinese-English bilinguals to ensure the accuracy of my translations to English.

During interviews, I sought clarifications, reworded my own questions and referred to my dictionary whenever I sensed a limit in my language competencies. In some cases, I also sent questions to the participants in advance, in order that they might seek clarifications. If I spoke Zhuang, I could have confidently noted occurrences of Zhuang speech in the linguistic environments. I am, however, able to distinguish written and spoken Zhuang from written and spoken Putonghua, Hanyu dialects and English. As such, I could observe the use (or absence) of Zhuang in fieldwork sites.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter has outlined the social constructionist, qualitative and critical method for an ethnography of language planning and policy in relation to a case study Chinese minority language, Zhuang. It has outlined the systematic, ethical and valid collection of: LPP data; interviews with sixty-three purposively selected Zhuangzu/Zhuang-speaking university students and language leader participants; records of the linguistic landscape at campus, cultural and commercial/central sites in four regions and provinces across China; and field notes made as a participant-observer during data collection.

This chapter has presented the overarching analytical framework of critical sociolinguistics, within which ethnography of LPP is an emerging approach, and introduced an analytic method of contrastive use theoretic lenses across four empirical chapters – analysing the LPP framework, linguistic landscapes, perceptions of linguistic landscapes, and language ideologies in schooling – in order to match the thick ethnographic description with enriched analysis of how China's language rights affect the maintenance of Zhuang language under conditions of social transformation.

## Chapter Four. The Zhuang LPP Environment

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*“The frontier, that product of a legal act of delimitation, produces cultural difference as much as it is produced by it”*

*(Bourdieu, 1992, p. 222).*

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### **4.1 Introduction**

LPP has an inherent risk of policy cleavage, so analyses of “overt (explicit, formalised codified) forms of [language] policy are meaningless without... [considering the] “covert (implicit, informal, unstated grassroots reality)” (Schiffman, 1996, p. 27); nevertheless, Section 2.3.3.1 established that such discontinuities in Chinese minority LPP have not been studied in detail. Thus, this ethnography of Zhuang LPP commences, in this chapter, with an examination of the minority LPP framework nationally in China and, at the regional level, LPP specific to Zhuang, analysing the structures and processes of the LPP framework and drawing out operational discontinuities and language ideological tensions. Such tensions, as well as covert policies, may then be amplified in the situated policy practices and understandings of social actors. Following the ethnographic method’s holistic approach (see 3.2), the chapter combines descriptive analyses of legal texts with interview data commenting upon Zhuang LPP and literature on Chinese state structures to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of Zhuang LPP. This provides the foundation for the following chapters’ investigations into “sociolinguistic realities ‘on the ground’” (Freeland & Patrick, 2004, p. 1) in regards to Zhuang LPP’s interventions in literacy, linguistic landscapes and tertiary education.

To commence, Section 4.2 outlines the structure of the state, including the official organisation of Zhuang speakers and their descendants into a polity called the Zhuangzu.

Section 4.2 also analyses the organisation of the Zhuangzu's participation in processes of governance through delimited Zhuangzu autonomous territories and identifies structural weaknesses and the recurrent discursive fracturing of Zhuangzu and Zhuang speaker groups. Next, Section 4.3 explains national, regional and case law relating to minority languages, highlighting language ideological tensions encoded in Chinese LPP and its emphasis on script development. Section 4.4 summarises the findings and critically discusses the ideologies within which the dynamic processes of language policy-making occur.

## **4.2 The governance framework**

In outlining the structuring of Zhuang and Zhuangzu interests, this section will also examine structural discontinuities and limitations. This section first presents the overall organisation of state institutions with the potential to be involved in language governance (4.2.1). Next, Section 4.2.2 explains the official groupings into which the population is organised by the state, including the Zhuangzu. Section 4.2.3 describes the hierarchy of administrative units into which the PRC is divided, including the Zhuangzu's units, and the structures for representing Zhuang interests that hinge on the Zhuangzu units. These legal frontiers are officially presented as recognising an ethno-linguistic diversity within which the Zhuangzu is a discrete entity, but arguably produce a meaningful Zhuang linguistic, ethnic and cultural group, as the epigraph foretells.

### **4.2.1 Government and Party organisations**

The Chinese state structure has, at its core, two types of institution: those of the government, and those of the Chinese Communist Party. The Party organs sit parallel to, and sometimes above, government organs in the institutionalised hierarchy of power (see e.g. Blanchford, 2004, p. 103): this is commonly called a "Party-State" model (e.g. Cartier, 2015a). The Party-State power structure is visualised in Figure 11. That Party organs have greater power than

government organs may be considered part of the situated “cultural practice of the state” (R. Bevir & Rhodes, 2010); this is fundamental to how the abstract notion of “the State” is practiced in the particular, localised and concrete state known as the People’s Republic of China. Party organs have “symbolic power” (Bourdieu, 1977b, 1991, 1992) in addition to their formally structured power. Within these Party-State structures, minority/Zhuang language governance has a structured place rather than being structurally “minoritised”, as the following overview shows. However, this section also shows that Zhuang language governance is structured within discrete organs which fracture Zhuang governance, creating the possibility of organs governing minority affairs being marginalised, especially as Party power is not structural distributed to many of these organs.

The highest government organ is the national legislature, the National People’s Congress (NPC). The NPC is formed of deputies elected by geographic unit and the armed forces (“State System,” 2008, pp. 64-68), but not specifically from minority minzu units, although the NPC now includes 409 minority minzu deputies (of almost 3000) (National People’s Congress, 2013, 2016). Official statements promoting the NPC’s increasing inclusion of working migrants, young people and women suggests minzu diversity is nowadays not especially salient to NPC legitimacy (e.g. National People’s Congress, 2013), and likewise the 1982 *Constitution* (English version: Central People’s Government of the PRC, 1982a; Puonghua version: Central People’s Government of the PRC, 1982b) removed the earlier quota for minority deputies, with the current Article 59 merely stating “[a]ll the minority nationalities are entitled to appropriate representation” while the subordinate *Electoral Law* mandates minority representation only for local not regional or national people’s congresses (National People’s Congress, 1979, ChIV). By contrast, the 1954 *Constitution* directed “The number of deputies to the National People’s Congress, including those representing minority

nationalities” was to be prescribed in electoral laws (my emphasis, National People’s Congress, 1954, art.23).

The NPC is less powerful than national Party organs, as Figure 11 shows; its Party Committees “provide guidance” from those Party organs (Yabuki & Harner, 1999, p. 35). Of these committees, the Nationalities Committee is the organ tasked with providing guidance on minority minzu affairs, including minority language issues. This committee is now mandated under Article 70 of the *Constitution* but has existed since the first PRC Constitution (Kaup, 2000, p. 80). However, this means minority issues structurally separated from – and positioned as contrastive to – other NPC committees’ foci, e.g. the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee and Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee. Moreover, the Nationalities Committee has been criticised for its limited actual role in “minority work” (Kaup, 2000, p. 80).

A second, powerful national organ of government is the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The CPPCC is partly but not entirely a Party organ: its role is spelt out in the *Constitution*. It includes representatives of certain polities and interest groups, including the fifty-five minority minzu (see further 4.2.2). The CPPCC guarantees representation for each of the minority minzu, though it is unclear whether any structures exist to enforce this. Representatives are elected for five-year terms. The CPPCC has nine committees under it including the Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs (民族和宗教委员会), another organ with the potential to be formally involved in Zhuang language governance.

However, Blanchford (2004, p. 103) argues it is the Party's national United Front Work Department, rather than the NPC's Nationalities Committee or the CPPCC's Committee for Ethnic and Religious Affairs, which shapes the broad outlines of minority policies. While the United Front Work Department works with the CPPCC, it is "the most direct link between the CCP leadership and the national minorities". The United Work Front Department sits above both the NPC and the CPPCC and is a department of the Party Central Committee, making it extremely powerful in both formal and symbolic hierarchies. Reading the *Constitution* confirms Kaup's (2000, p. 114) assessment that "no ... quotas exist on the ethnic makeup of party organisations".

The State Council, another national government organ, sits below the NPC. Its role is regulating and executing the national administration, rather than law-making. The State Council also plays a formal role in law-making, with their regulations

serv[ing] as direct legal bases for rules formulated by departments under the State Council as well as local government regulations [...providing] a connecting link between national laws on the one hand and departmental rules as well as local government regulations (Ping Wang, 2005, p. 78).

The State Council oversees a number of commissions (yellow circle in Figure 11). Of these, the Nationalities Affairs Commission (NAC, also translated as State Ethnic Affairs Commission) is the national institution most relevant to Zhuang language, as it deals with minority minzu cultural and linguistic research and heritage protection. The Party's United Front Work Department and the CPPCC send guidelines to the NAC to implement (Blanchford, 2004, p. 103).

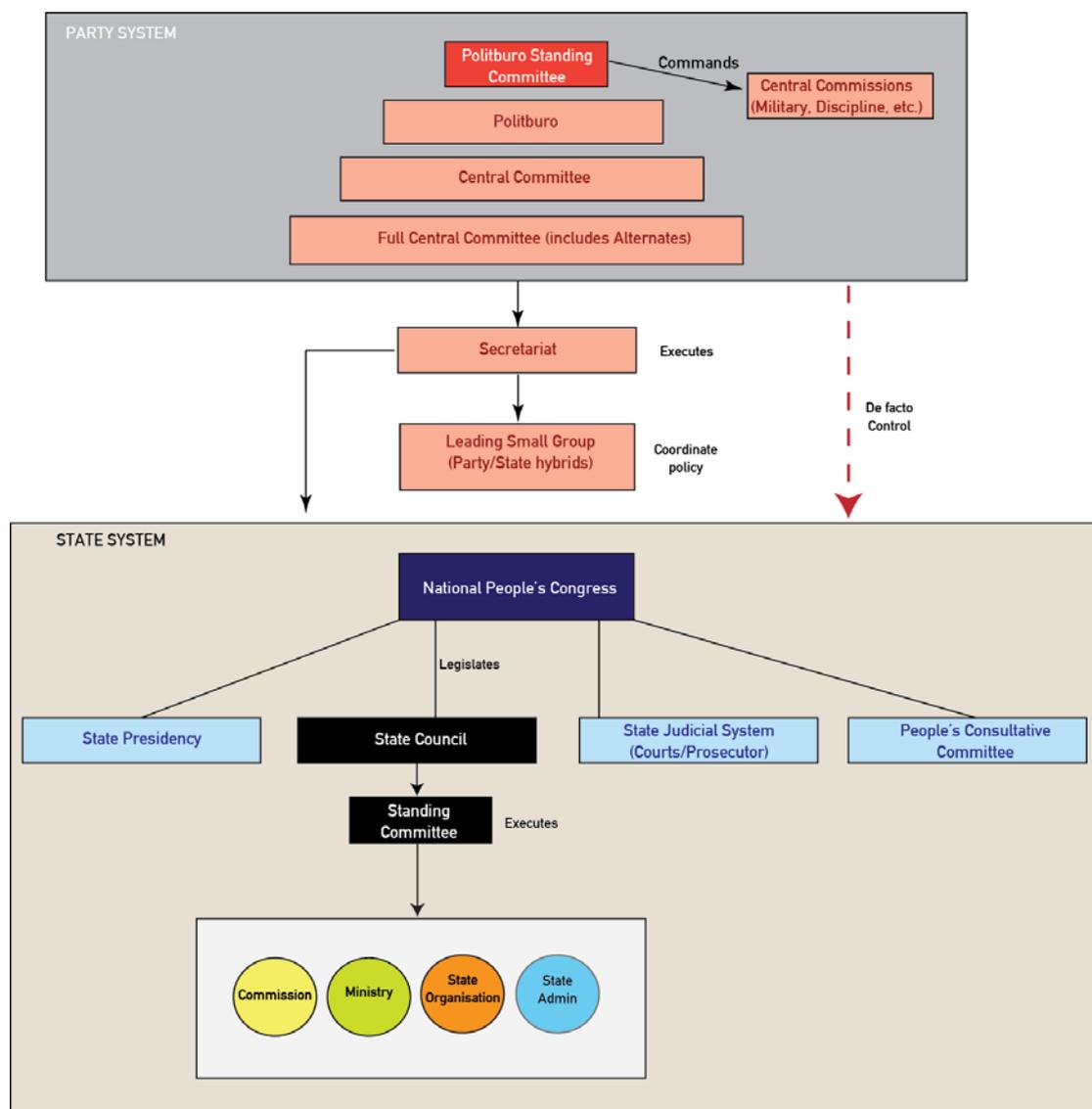


Figure 11. “China’s central governance structure and coordination bodies” from (Manuel, 2015).

The national NAC oversees regional Nationalities Affairs Commissions, including the GZAR Nationalities Affairs Commission. These are important structures for language governance: Kaup (2000, p. 80) argues “[t]he bulk of day-to-day minority affairs is assumed by the State Council’s Nationalities Affairs Commission and its local branches.” Some of these regional NACs oversee, or sit alongside, a regional minority language agency. These bureaux are

colloquially called 《民语委》 and 《民语文》 (both “Minority Language Committee”).

However, as Blanchford (2004, p. 103) notes, organisations like the regional NACs and Minority Language Committees are under the “triple leadership” of the Party, the Central government, and the national minority works organisations.

In addition, the national Ministry of Education (MoE) and its Bureau of Minority Education regulate minority language schooling. Separate from the NAC and MoE, a national agency called the State Language Commission is tasked with spreading Putonghua (Blanchford, 2004, p. 104). In addition to the system of Party-State commissions, agencies and other bodies, the PRC is structured through its division into ethno-linguistic polities, which are described below.

#### **4.2.2 Defined groups: the Zhuangzu**

There are fifty-five officially recognised “minority minzu” (see 1.2, 2.3.3.1). This enumerative construction of ethnicity follows the general “modernist” governance trend across political economies of making the subjects of the state “legible” through rigid and predictable categories (Scott, 1998). It is similar to the state organisation of people into *narod/nastia* (“nation/nationalities”) in the USSR (Chaisingkananont, 2014a, pp. 43, 56; Grenoble, 2003; Mullaney, 2011, p. 15; see further Weinreich, 1953), from which the PRC drew inspiration (M. Zhou, 2001a, p. 34; 2012b, p. 3), and to the organisation of peoples into recognised minority ethnicities in other post-communist countries, including Vietnam, where speakers of Zhuang dialects are officially recognised as the *Nung*, *Tay* and *Caolan* ethnic minorities (Population Reference Bureau, 2011). It is also similar to the bureaucratic ethnic and linguistic categories in liberal democracies (see e.g. Leeman, 2013; Martin-Rojo, 2004, p. 245); recognising fixed ethnic categories became common state practice in national census-

taking in the twentieth century (Anderson, 2011, p. xix; although imposing ethnic groupings was not unique to that century Lickorish, 2008, p. 23). The Chinese approach to making diversity legible for census-taking and state administration initially relied grouping people by shared linguistic practices into *minzu* (see e.g. Brandist, 2005, p. 64; Mullaney, 2011), particularly for the Zhuangzu, and in naming them, as the classification team's leader recounts:

There are also [people] who call themselves Han, and yet recognise that they are different than Han from outside ... Since the language they speak is generally called Zhuang, we recommend calling them Zhuang (Xiaotong Fei quoted in Kaup, 2000, p. 127 and also in Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 59).

Teams of “linguists, ethnologists, archaeologists, economists, and experts in literature and the arts” (Iredale & Guo, 2003, p. 8) were dispatched across South China to identify the *minzu* and propose them for official recognition. Mullaney (2006, 2011) in a study of these teams' diaries and meeting minutes, argues they adopted already-circulating discourses about linguistic categories and pragmatically relied on linguistic evidence because other *minzu* characteristics including “a historically constituted, stable community of people” with common “territory, economic life, and psychological make-up” (Stalin, 1913), following the Sun Yat-Sen-via-Stalin model then ascendant, were less clear in their data. On the teams' influences from language-centred classification ideas from the West, see also (Mullaney, 2006, pp. 53-66); on the Zhuangzu classification see (Chaisingkananont, 2014a, pp. 42-43; Mullaney, 2006, pp. 8, 55); and on adapting Stalinist classifications for other Chinese *minzu* see e.g. (Whaley, 2004, p. 142). This process was (and is) largely presented as systematically identifying naturally-existing ethno-linguistic groups rather than as state process (compare both views, e.g. “discovery” and “arbitrary” classification, within Kaup, 2000, pp. 75, 89; Leibold, 2007; see critical discussions in Mullaney, 2011, pp. 1-17).

Ethno-linguistic classifications were one of the highest-priority undertakings of the new Party-State when the PRC was established in late 1949 (Blanchford, 2004, p. 101; and Chaisingkananont, 2014a; see details in Kaup, 2000, pp. 65-91). While this appears to contrast with the low priority of minzu diversity in state institutions like the NPC today (see 4.2.1), the Chinese state still describes itself as a “unitary multi-ethnic country” (“Ethnic Minorities,” 2008, p. 38) because it comprises these fifty-six groups. Mullaney emphasises that minzu diversity remains a “central, load-bearing concept” (Mullaney, 2011, p. 1) in Chinese national identity and government discourses.

This load-bearing understanding of ethnic diversity is of a composite diversity of enumerated and essentialised groups. Within prominent discourses, each minority’s language, ethnicity and minzu classification is often represented as essentially and co-extensively connected (see discussion in Harrell, 1993, p. 103; e.g. X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 254), along with archetypal homelands and emblematic costumes, songs, modes of production. Language – namely the official standardised variety – is another such emblem, as Harrell (1993, p. 104) argues using the example of the one volume/minzu pattern in China’s official *Simplified Linguistic Description* series. Only one group, the *Huizu* does not have a distinct language. Instead, Hui people are “distinguished from the Han Chinese by their Muslim religion and customs” (Ramsey, 1987, p. 165). While some of the official minority languages within China are also languages of other countries – namely Kazak, Korean, Kyrgyz, Mongol, Russian, Tajik and Uzbek – Zhuang, and most other minority languages, are not official or national languages anywhere else. Within this official framing of language as emblematic of ethnicity, and ethnicity being structured into the form of minzu, being Zhuangzu but not

speaking Zhuang, or being another ethnicity yet speaking Zhuang, go unrecognised; as Leibold (2015, p. 274) argues,

in the eyes of the Party-state, there are no ethnic hyphens or hybrid identities in China; rather each of the PRC's 1.3 billion citizens possesses a single, unambiguous minzu status, which is stamped on identification papers and vividly displayed in public life.

Nevertheless, the state-propagated taxonomy of language groups departs from the language groups recognised by Chinese and foreign linguists. For example, the recognised languages of the Zhuangzu and the separate *Buyizu*, Zhuang and *Buyi*, are recognised by linguists as varieties of one language (Harrell, 1993, p. 106; Population Reference Bureau, 2011; Ramsey, 1987, p. 243) or as close Northern Tai languages (Holm, 2013, p. 27); Luo (2008, p. 319) suggests Northern Zhuang and Buyi are a dialect “continuum” only administratively distinguished.

Furthermore, the linguistic commonalities central to the initial ethnic classifications are no longer relevant to the state; minzu classification today is administratively reproduced, assigned to a child following her parents’ “ethnonymic status” (Mullaney, 2011, p. 123), much like in the former USSR. In “two-minzu couples”, parents nominate one parent’s minzu to pass on; but when aged between eighteen and twenty years of age, the child may nominate the other parent’s minzu for her own official identify (Mullaney, 2011, p. 123). There is no other possibility for reclassification (Y. Zhou, 2013, p. 5). A Chinese person’s minzu status is constantly re-articulated in bureaucratic processes and on ID cards, where it serves as a basic identifying feature. This fixity of categories regardless of actual language practices applies also at the group level; by 1981 there were fifty-five recognised minority minzu (Iredale & Guo, 2003, p. 8; Ramsey, 1987, p. 163) and the list has not been increased since (Y. Zhou, 2013, pp. 7,9), despite some groups protestations (see example in Kaup, 2000, p. 96) and

regardless of the (contested) emergence of groups speaking contact varieties like “Zhuang Putonghua” (described in Lu & F. Li, 2012).

Using various methods, Tapp and Cohn (2003), Mullaney (2011), Barlow (and 1989; 2011) and Kaup (2000) illustrate that ethno-linguistic classificatory processes had not previously structured South Chinese society, and so the organisation of disparate Zhuang-speaking communities to the official Zhuangzu illustrates Harrell’s (1996, pp. 274-275) argument that,

when state classification intrudes on a scene where the classificatory process had not previously been undertaken, fluid identities are precipitated or crystallised, and ethnicity may reduce, partly or nearly completely, to state categories.

(On the hegemony of definitions, see also Harrell, 1995, p. 8.)

The “vision and division” (Bourdieu, 1984[1979]) of a citizenry divided into static ethno-linguistic groups has been reproduced in national censuses since ethnic identity was first asked in 1953 (Y. Zhou, 2013, p. 2). Y. Zhou (2013, p. 2) notes that a definition of minzu was not initially provided, and that the current census does not provide a multiple-choice list (p. 4). He (Y. Zhou, 2013, pp. 5-7) reports that if people nominate an ethnicity other than their officially-listed minzu then this is treated as “wrong” and “misreporting” (p. 5-7), although the consequence of that evaluation is unclear. Y. Zhou (2013, p. 2) argues that providing a definition “seems redundant since its meaning should be as natural as categories of name, age or place of residence” (my emphasis) and that not providing a definition in the census “means that Chinese are accepting a classification of ethnicity at social as well as individual level [*sic*]”. Rather than showing individual’s acceptance, this approach recalls early classification officials treating divergent ethnic self-identifications as “misunderstandings” (reported in Kaup, 2000, p. 90), but it also reflects how processes of

formalising and institutionalising a social order of ethno-linguistic groups has “bec[o]me part of the mainland Chinese common sense” (Mullaney, 2006, p. 10); the official minzu groupings have strength as a “legitimised discourse” (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 844).

However, paralleling language’s formal irrelevance to the minzu classification of an individual, discursively, language is becoming less central to minzu classification. The latest State pronouncement defining ethnic groups was the 2005 State Council circular entitled “About further strengthening the ethnic work, accelerating economic and social development in ethnic regions” (translation by (Y. Zhou, 2013, p. 3)). Such circulars have guiding status (Lieberthal & Oksenberg, 1988, pp. 152-153) i.e. they are formal LPP texts. This document declares that a minzu is a “stable community of people with common characteristics in history, production mode, language, culture, customs and psychological identity” (Y. Zhou, 2013, p. 3). This represents a departure from earlier Stanlinist formulations (see above) which posit shared language practices as a contemporary, rather than historic, feature of a minzu. That is, language practices have transitioned from being used as data determining which minzu categories existed and who was in each, to an icon of fixed minzu categories.

Despite its centrality to bureaucratic processes, the literature suggests Zhuang was historically not a widely shared identity amongst speakers of Zhuang varieties (see 2.4.2.2.2), indicating the Zhuangzu was not a community consistently “imagined” (Anderson, 1991) or taken as “plausible” (Mullaney, 2011) by either speakers of Zhuang varieties or by the State until the early PRC years. The state’s ethno-linguistic classification thus illustrates processes of “erasure” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38).

The transformation from a loose group of peoples into an ethnically distinct Zhuangzu is elided, as is the state's agency in that transformation. What remains distinct across the *longue durée* of representations is that this group, like all fifty-five now-recognised minority minzu, is not Han. For example, this distinction is foregrounded in the anachronistic use of minzu categories in S. Zhang's first report of the Zhuangzu, in 1007 AD, in his three-volume 《壮族通史》 (“*General History of the Zhuangzu*”): 《宜州陈进，卢成均率领壮，汉族人民起义》 (“Chen Jing and Lu Chengjun of Yizhou [in GZAR] led the peoples of the Zhuangzu and Hanzu in an uprising”) (S. Zhang, 1997, p. 1187).

Thus, the discursive construction of the Zhuangzu finds powerful reproduction in laws and state structures. Another significant element of this structuration is the emplacement of the Zhuangzu's in (partially) self-governing territorial units.

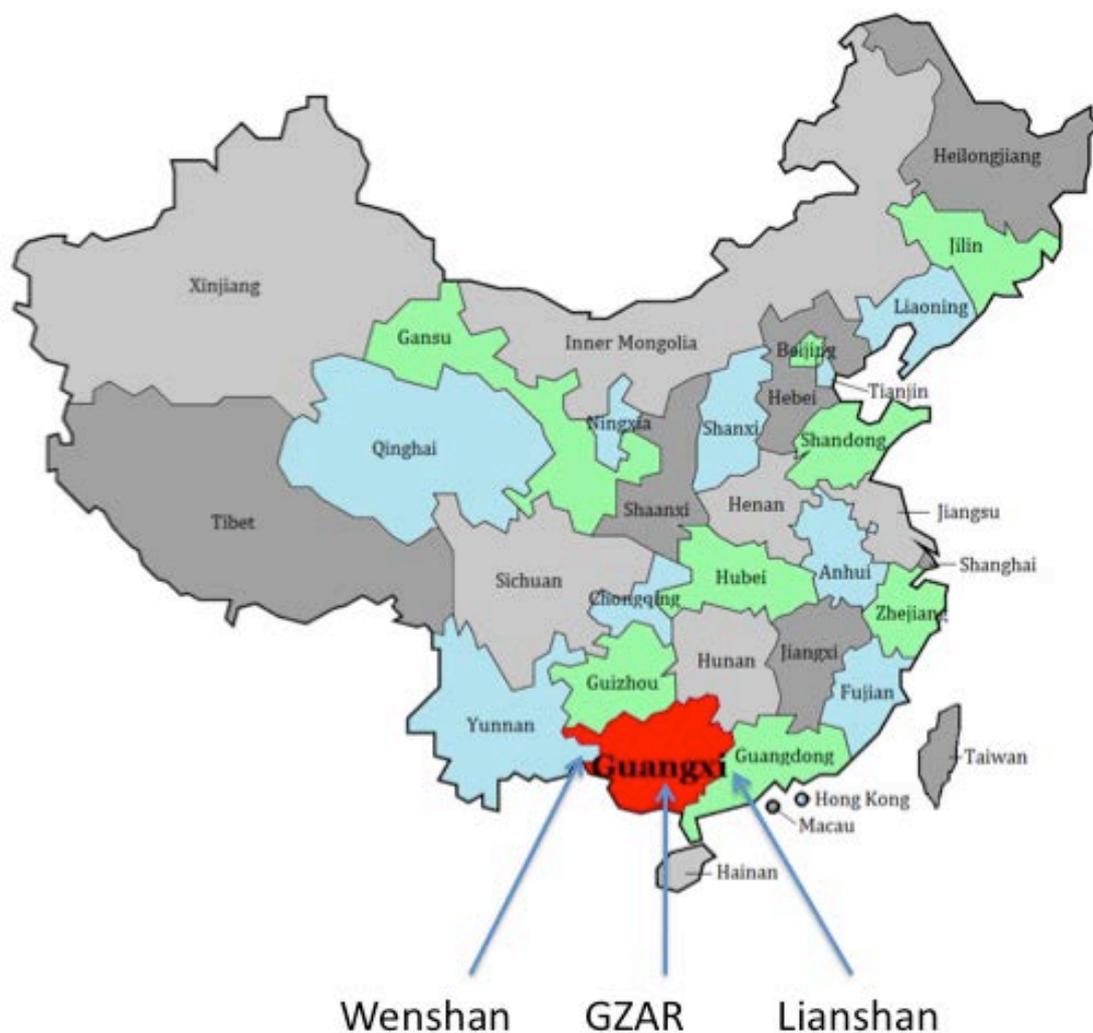
### **4.2.3 Autonomous regional governments**

This subsection explains the geographic organisation of governance in China into sub-national division including Zhuangzu territories (4.2.3.1), and these divisions' formal powers (4.2.3.2).

#### **4.2.3.1 Zhuangzu autonomous governments**

China's internal administrative divisions follow a hierarchy of authority: the Central government ranks highest, and the next tier comprises territories delimited within the nation: provinces, autonomous regions and metropolises directly under the Central government.

GZAR will be the focal jurisdiction in this research because it is the highest ranking, most populous and largest territory officially and nominally in charge of the Zhuangzu (see 1.3, 2.3.3.1 and 2.4.1). GZAR and its neighbours, Yunnan, Guizhou and Guangdong Provinces, are shown within China in Figure 12.



*Figure 12. Map of China highlighting Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region with Wenshan and Lianshan marked approximately in the adjacent provinces (adapted from Chinafolio, 2016).*

Below this regional/provincial tier sits a hierarchy of prefectures, counties, townships, towns and villages (see further Article 30 of the *Constitution*). These include two other units of autonomous Zhuangzu governance: Wenshan Zhuang-Miao Autonomous Prefecture within Yunnan Province (Wenshan); and Lianshan Zhuang-Yao Autonomous County within Qingyuan Prefecture-Level City in Guangdong Province (Lianshan). These lower-tier territories each abut the GZAR border and in each, the Zhuangzu share titular autonomy with another officially-recognised minority minzu (the Miao and the Yao). The Zhuangzu in Yunnan are primarily in Wenshan and comprise 6.44 percent of the Zhuangzu overall (Appendix 4-2), which I calculate equates to 2.3 percent of Yunnan's total population (of 47,368,000 people in 2015 Scally, 2016). Wenshan Prefecture itself has 1,031,851 Zhuangzu within a prefectural population of 3,517,946 (in 2010 National Bureau of Statistics & Yunnan Bureau of Statistics, 2010[2016]) i.e. just under a third. Guangdong Province has 1.54 percent of the Zhuangzu overall, under one fifth of whom are in Lianshan (Appendix 4-2). Another 0.13 percent of the Zhuangzu live in Guizhou Province, while 4.83 percent of the Zhuangzu live outside of GZAR in unspecified places (Appendix 4-2).

GZAR, Wenshan and Lianshan were established as China's Zhuangzu autonomous areas because these areas had high concentrations of newly-recognised Zhuangzu people – GZAR and Wenshan in 1958 and Lianshan in 1962 (Chaisingkanont, 2014a, p. 74; X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 244) – implementing the 1954 *Constitution*, Article 68 direction: “[i]n autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties where a number of nationalities live together, each nationality is entitled to appropriate representation in the organs of self-government”. Similarly, Article 2 of the current *Constitution* directs that “Regional autonomy shall be practised in areas where minority nationalities live in concentrated communities”; the corollary that where Zhuangzu population concentrations are

diluted, as is typical in cities, they have no special governance power. Limitations on formally governing Zhuang interests extend beyond the requirement for concentrated communities, as the following section explains.

#### ***4.2.3.2 GZAR government's limited powers***

Linking Zhuang speaking to the Zhuangzu (explored in 4.2.2) and, in turn, linking Zhuangzu representation to jurisdictional Zhuangzu populations (explored in 4.2.3.1), reduces the representation of Zhuang interests. Further limits arise because authority to rule in GZAR is distributed across national and regional tiers of government and Party and State organs as well as directed towards various policy goals with the potential to compete. The *Regional Autonomy Law* (National People's Congress, 1984), under which GZAR (and Wenshan and Lianshan) are formally set within the Party-State structure, gives a power to autonomous governments in addition to the powers exercised by provincial governments:

people's congresses in autonomous areas have the right to formulate self-government regulations and other separate regulations in light of the particular political, economic and cultural conditions of the ethnic group in that autonomous area. ("Ethnic Minorities," 2008, p. 59).

(See further Article 6 of the *Regional Autonomy Law*.)

Despite this, the GZAR government's autonomous law-making powers have themselves not yet been fully enacted, illustrating a specific example of M. Zhou's (2000, p. 132) general observation that "there still remains a gap between policy and reality" in relation to the *Regional Autonomy Law*. Whatever the cause (a number of causes are canvassed below), this outcome is problematic for Zhuang language governance because GZAR remains "without a working document clearly defining its relationship with the centre" (Kaup, 2000, p. 117). The

first cause is national law being unsupported by operative subordinate laws. The *Legislation Law of the PRC* (National People's Congress, 2000c) provides the technical rules for how the GZAR government is to interact with the Central government in making laws and regulations, for example to regulate language use. That law requires a detailed text about how decision-making power will be split between the Central and the GZAR Governments to be proposed by the GZAR government, then formally approved and enacted by the Central government. Further, Article 15 of *Regional Autonomy Law* stipulates that regulations on the exercise of autonomy must be enacted. Without an instrument satisfying these provisions in the “Law on Legislation” and the *Regional Autonomy Law*, the formal powers of the GZAR Government to practice self-government are limited. Kaup (2000, p. 117) reports that GZAR’s congress approved and submitted fourteen drafts of its *Regulations on the Exercise of Autonomy* between 1984 and 1999 but all were “returned to the GZAR committee for revision”. Kaup (2000, p. 117) suggests this is a systematic vulnerability because none of the five provincial-level autonomous regions’ *Regulations on the Exercise of Autonomy* had been approved by the State Council by 1999, but her interviewees from the GZAR drafting committee say the problem was GZAR’s rapidly changing economic conditions. Kaup (2000, p. 117) argues these requirements have hamstrung autonomous governance in GZAR and elsewhere, reporting that “[m]ore than a decade after the Law on Regional Autonomy became effective, nationally only 67 of the 157, or 42.6 percent of the local autonomous areas, had promulgated local autonomy laws”. Ping Wang (2005, p. 78) reports more local autonomy laws had been promulgated by 2004, in 133 of 155 autonomous areas; this has still not included China’s five autonomous regions’ regulations on Regional-Central power-sharing (Yu, 2009, p. 56). Furthermore, despite national regulations being enacted in 2005 (*Regulations of the State Council on the Enforcement of the Law on Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities*) to push

national-level governance organs to act in accordance with the *Regional Autonomy Law* after persistent failures to do so, GZAR's power ambiguity remains (Ping Wang, 2005, p. 78).

This distribution of power does not create systematic balance of power, but rather discontinuities: GZAR's authority to make decisions about Zhuang language use or funding for language maintenance is ambiguous, and who has responsibility to monitor or remediate concerns over how Zhuang LPP is implemented is unclear. Moreover, even when/if the power-sharing arrangement between GZAR and the Centre is formally finalised, GZAR lawmakers remain bound to seek approval from the NPC whenever they exercise their formal power to adapt national laws to regional conditions and local minzu characteristics.

Further, accountability for Zhuang LPP is not fully provided for, although certain mechanisms address the numeric minority of the Zhuangzu within GZAR and nationally. Section 4.2.1 identified the removal of quotas for Zhuangzu (and other minority) members in national government organs, and the absence of quotas for central Party organs. Specifically, in relation to Zhuang, Zhuang interests are formally represented at the NPC through GZAR's representatives, and they have habitually be drafted to the NPC's Nationalities Committee instead of Zhuangzu representatives sitting on national committees dealing with "mainstream" issues not specific to minorities. This reduces GZAR's deputies' ability to oversee how Zhuang LPP is dealt with in education, economic and legal policies (amongst others) as they are the purview of other committees. At the regional level, quotas remain where Zhuang speaking populations are visible as concentrations of registered Zhuangzu residents, namely in GZAR. Nevertheless, GZAR's minzu quotas are not Zhuang-specific: the chairman and vice-chairmen of the GZAR People's Congress Standing Committee should be "citizens of the nationality or nationalities exercising regional autonomy in the area" (*Constitution*,

art.113). Furthermore, these appointments are not necessarily held accountable, just as the implementation of a convention of appointing a Zhuangzu person as the GZAR Governor is not held accountable: first, this convention does not appear to be guaranteed through formal rules; second, the current governor of GZAR is reported to be Hanzu in some sources (China Vitae, 2015) and Zhuangzu in others (“Chen Wu (politician),” 2015). Transparency in this appointment process is not required formally or, it appears, even for symbolic legitimacy. Moreover, M. Zhou (2004, p. 87) notes that, across China’s autonomous areas (including GZAR), the proportion of government officials from the minority minzu is almost always lower than the proportion of minority minzu in the areal population. Aggravating potential structural weaknesses in accountability, GZAR is known to have especially high levels of government corruption and government inefficiency (Cole, Elliott, & Jing Zhang, 2009; S. Yan, 2004); S. Yan (2004, p. 122) nominated GZAR the “best example of multilayered, top-down chains of local corruption” in China.

Adding to these formal constraints on GZAR’s authority over Zhuang language governance, is the difficulty of reconciling at the regional level policy goals set at the national level. In particular, the *Constitution* includes only one provision relating to autonomous governments’ minority protection responsibilities, within which minority language is only implicitly covered:

(art.119) The organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas independently administer educational, scientific, cultural, public health and physical culture affairs in their respective areas, sort out [sic] and protect the cultural legacy of the nationalities and work for the development and prosperity of their cultures. (My emphasis.)

This underlined portion is crucial to the Centre-State division of responsibilities for language, but, as the provision goes on to provide, cultural protection is undertaken alongside the responsibility to achieve “development and prosperity”. This duality of language protection-oriented and socio-economic development-oriented is common in China’s LLP framework, and importing an inescapable ideological tension. These competing goals are “reconciled” in more recent instruments by further erasing language governance from policy directives: for instance, the 2005 State Council regulations on autonomy do not deal with language governance. Rather, they “provide that People's Governments at higher levels and their functional departments should extend support to autonomous regions of ethnic minorities” in enumerated policy areas relating to economic development (see list in Ping Wang, 2005, p. 78). Second, they “make provisions for promoting the development of education, scientific technological research, cultures, public health and sports, and [to improve] social security in autonomous regions of ethnic minorities”, and third “emphasise the consolidation of unity among all ethnic groups” (Ping Wang, 2005, p. 78). While economic development has always been one pillar of PRC policy, the LPP texts are starting to show its explicit inclusion to the exclusion of minority language stewardship or equality. Through these directives about the GZAR government’s responsibilities, minority LPP is “up-scaled” (Blommaert, 2007; Blommaert et al., 2014) to national policy discourses which emphasise developmentalism, and older policy texts are re-entextualised within newer ones (this analysis of scales of policy interpretation follows Mortimer, 2016). These tensions are further explored as encoded in fundamental laws in 4.3.1.

The final constraint on GZAR’s power to govern Zhuang is that, reflecting the national structures, at regional/local government levels “the local CCP committee is the locus of power” (M. Zhou, 2004, p. 85). As an example of Party power in GZAR, the top Party

position in GZAR, the Secretary of GZAR's Party Committee, is constructed as GZAR's leadership role: the 2016 Secretary, Mr Peng Qinghua, gave the opening address when GZAR hosted the China-ASEAN Expo in 2015 (in Putonghua) (CCTV, 2015) and was billed as GZAR's "leader" when making an official visit to The Philippines (Phong, 2013). Some Zhuangzu people attain positions with Party power – for example, the Zhuangzu former Governor of GZAR is now the Vice-Chairman of the CPPCC and a member of the Party's Central Committee ("Ma Biao (politician)," 2015) – however, local Party committees have no structures equalising access for Zhuangzu members (see 4.2.1) and seemingly no informal policy about minzu participation; the informal policy during the post-Cultural Revolution's era of re-establishing minority affairs was to gradually increase minority leadership in party organisations within autonomous regions including GZAR, reports Kaup (2000, p. 114) but such an informal policy appears not to remain in place as Mr Peng is a Hanzu from Central China (China Viate, 2016). This suggests Zhuang representation in party leadership roles is not a priority in GZAR. Local Party committees have a reputation as uninterested in minority languages; in Yunnan's minority language governance context, M. Zhou (2004, p. 85) has described local Party committees as a "barrier" and noted their record of conducting themselves in an especially monolingual fashion.

This section has explored how Zhuang LPP is channelled into bounded jurisdictions, especially GZAR, and how GZAR is then weakened by incomplete authority to govern and potentially conflicting cultural and economic responsibilities. Now, the chapter will analyse how geographic bounding fractures knowledge of Zhuang language usage, potentially restricting both what Zhuang LPP addresses and who enacts it.

### ***4.2.3.3 Fractured representation of Zhuang interests***

The fractured minzu population data, which foregrounds jurisdictional divisions, reflects the adherence to geographic boundaries within the initial minzu classification processes. Section 4.2.2 noted the Zhuangzu and Buyizu are both recognised as speaking languages which are Zhuang varieties; that they were separately proposed as minzu was simply because two classification teams worked simultaneously on separate sides of the Guizhou-Guangxi border and were expected to identify distinct minzu within each province, argues Kaup (2000, pp. 88-89), part of the “well-documented clumsiness of CCP ethnic classification programs in the southwest” (Lickorish, 2008, p. 198). South China’s provincial borders were already well-established constructions, virtually unchanged at least since the eighteenth century (d’Anville, 1737, 1785). These territories were “discursively repurposed” (borrowing the phrase of Cartier, 2015a, p. 3) to create the Zhuangzu autonomous areas, rather than radically redefined geo-spatially (but see changes at the Guangdong border in Kaup, 2000).

This fracturing of the speaker groups resulting from bounded geographic representations of who speaks what is replicated in China’s language usage data collection and LPP today. It is particularly evident in language atlases: it is rare to find official or academic (or even popular) map showing Zhuang speakers across South China. The only example I found is Figure 13 from a 2012 language atlas. Unusually, even for that atlas (compare Figure 14), territorial borders are shown but transcended by the shading marking Zhuang (i.e. speaker populations). Pink and yellow represent Northern and Southern Zhuang dialectal groupings, respectively. Even this representation does not extend across GZAR’s northern border with Guizhou Province, reproducing the geographic and administrative division of Zhuang and Buyi speakers and rendering officially-recognised Zhuang speakers within Guizhou invisible. Nor does it transcend the nation’s southern border with Vietnam. (On Buyi language and Vietnamese Zhuang see 4.2.2.)



Figure 13. Map entitled “Zhuang Language: GZAR, Yunnan Province, Guangdong Province” (CASS Institute of Linguistics et al., 2012). Large version at Appendix 4-3.

Following from 4.2.3.1, Figure 13 indicates roughly where Lianshan and Wenshan are – the pink areas just outside GZAR’s borders – but as only county names are shown, Wenshan, in particular, is unclear.

More typically, data separates GZAR Zhuang and other places’ Zhuang; the largest survey of Zhuang usage, reported in (H. Chen & Li, 2005), was sponsored by the GZAR government and confined its statistics within GZAR. H. Chen et al. elide the existence of speaker communities big enough to have warranted Zhuangzu autonomous local governance in Wenshan and Lianshan. This discursive division is reproduced in grass-roots organisation, for

example the establishment in the 1990s of separate Guangxi and Yunnan Zhuang Studies Associations despite both aiming to “promote the Zhuang culture, economics and politics” (Kaup, 2000, p. 129). These associations have different membership structures and divergent relationships with their separate regional government (Kaup, 2000, p. 129).

Further, a bright-line division between Hanyu varieties and minority languages is often foregrounded in linguistic cartography, with Hanyu dialectal variation represented on the same scale as minority language variation. For example, Figure 14, from the same atlas, maps two separate groups of languages within GZAR; the top-left legend lists twenty-six languages under the heading “Minority Minzu Languages” and the bottom-left legend lists varieties under the heading “Hanyu topolects”.



Figure 14. Map entitled “GZAR Language Distribution” (CASS Institute of Linguistics et al., 2012).

Having established the macro-level structuring the Zhuangzu and government power in GZAR, the chapter will now explore GZAR’s language(s) of government and institutions for language governance.

#### 4.2.4 Language governance in GZAR

The following subsections explain the regulation of Zhuang usage within GZAR’s government institutions (4.2.4.1) and organs tasked with Zhuang language governance (4.2.4.2).

##### 4.2.4.1 Language medium for government functions

Initially, GZAR and lower-tier Zhuangzu autonomous governments, like Wenshan local government, were obliged to operate in Zhuang, following Article 71 of the 1954

*Constitution*. There was no equivalent constitutional rule between 1975 and 1978 (compare de Heer, 1978, p. 375; National People's Congress, 1975), and the rule was removed again when the current *Constitution* was enacted in 1982. Now, the *Constitution* provides:

(art.121) In performing their functions, the organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas, in accordance with the autonomy regulations of the respective areas, employ the spoken and written language or languages in common use in the locality.

The English version does not make clear whether this is an option or simply an acknowledgement condoning actual language practices. The Putonghua version is, likewise, ambiguous: 《民族自治地方的自治机关在执行职务的时候，依照本民族自治地方自治条例的规定，使用当地通用的一种或者几种语言文字》 (Central People's Government of the PRC, 1982b). Unambiguously, Article 121 is not an outright obligation for GZAR's government organs to use Zhuang language. Furthermore, Article 121 does not extend to public institutions e.g. schools and courts.

The regulation of courtroom minority language usage followed a similar course of “watering-down”. For Zhuang speakers to make use of language rights explained in 4.3 in times when Zhuang speakers were not typically bilingual in Putonghua, Zhuang needed to be permitted in legal processes. The 1954 *Constitution* included rights to use minority languages in courts and rights to interpreters, but these were removed in 1975 (M. Zhou, 2004, p. 77), and the legal system did not function (in any language) for many years before 1975 due to the Cultural Revolution. Nowadays, courtroom minority language usage is not within policy-makers' sights as a means of improving access to justice, not being addressed at all in the “Third Five-Years Reform Outline for the People's Courts (2009-2013)” and “Fourth Five Year Reform Outline for the People's Courts (2014-2019)” (reproduced in Sapio, 2009).

However, there was the assumption amongst some participants that courts in GZAR did provide translation:

*Excerpt 4-1*

Facilitator [Emma Guo]: 你们有没有想过如果说有一个老壮族他去打官司的话，他是不会说白话的……就是不会说普通话，但是律师或者法官呢，他是听不懂的，所以他的权利就得不到法律保障了。

Morris: 这个应该没关系吧。

Tom: 有，有翻译，是 --

Facilitator: Have you ever thought about if an elderly Zhuangzu person went to court, he couldn't speak Baihua [Nanning's Hanyu dialect] ... and couldn't speak Putonghua, but the lawyer or judge, they didn't understand him, so his rights didn't get legal protection.

Morris: That surely wouldn't be an issue.

Tom: They have translation --

Monitoring or encouraging (but not mandating) the use of Zhuang government institutions, including encouraging Zhuang translation and interpreting in courts, is one role of GZAR's language governance organs.

**4.2.4.2 GZAR's language governance organs**

Zhuang speakers being recognised as a minzu in the classification project meant being constructed in authoritative discourses as a polity, the Zhuangzu. That continues to structure

Zhuang language governance; the implementation of the principle of minority language equality (see 4.3.1) is tied to a number of departments and agencies in GZAR. In particular, regions have their own agencies governing minority language, overseen by the national NAC (see 4.2.1), but smaller Zhuangzu jurisdictions like Wenshan do not. In GZAR, this body is the Minority Language Committee (MLC). It sits directly under the national NAC, making it more powerful than Minority Language Committee in Yunnan Province, where the Yunnan Minority Language Committee, responsible for Wenshan and other non-Zhuangzu areas prefectures, is subordinate to the provincial NAC. GZAR's MLC is responsible for professional minority language work, mainly translating national policies uni-directionally into Zhuang and publishing them, and providing simultaneous interpretation between Putonghua and Zhuang during broadcasts of the annual national government meetings.

Before the 1980s, when the GZAR MLC was established, a number of language work organs to oversee and institutionalise Zhuang language were formed and disbanded (see further X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 244). Throughout, these agencies' centred on script development, as the MLC still does. The forerunner (known as the Minority Language Work Commission) reached a highpoint of power and functional load when GZAR was named an autonomous region in 1958. It was chaired by GZAR's Vice-Governor, had 151 language workers, and ran a Zhuang-medium newspaper and a school with 1500 employees. That Commission was disbanded twice in the 1960-70s, opening with a reduced staff in between. It was re-established in the 1980s with twenty-five to thirty-five staff, renamed the "Steering Committee for the Zhuang Writing System", and later stripped of its supervisory functions in regards to promoting Zhuang writing and strengthening primary education in Zhuang communities (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 244). The MLC now "coordinates the promotion of the Zhuang writing system among [the] various departments" (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p.

244). It includes government officials from various GZAR-level departments (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 244), but they are not replaced when they retire (Kaup, 2000, p. 143).

Nevertheless, since 1990, there has been a Zhuang branch of the Central Government's Bureau of Translation in Nanning, with about twenty staff (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 245). Only seven of China's minority languages have these services (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 254). This staff translates works by Marx, Mao and other political philosophers into Zhuang, translates documents from the NPC and CPPCC and the Party's National Conference, and simultaneously interprets congressional sessions in the Hall of the People's Congress in Beijing. The purpose, on X. Li and Q. Huang's (2004, p. 249) analysis, is to "reflect the equal status of Zhuang in the political life of the PRC", i.e. it is seen (by those authors) as a symbolic resource in discourses of formal equality, but there are structures are in tension with the construction of Zhuang as equal in PRC politics, including the limited functions and powers of the GZAR MLC.

However, Zhuang is indisputably closer to equal at the formal level than some language varieties, because minority minzu languages are afforded an official status above Hanyu (Mandarin) dialects. Dialects of Hanyu – Cantonese is officially classed amongst these – are not officially recognised as corresponding to a particular minzu (L. Guo, 2004) and not provided with organised government support, unlike Zhuang. The following section explains the special rights of minority languages.

### 4.3 Minority language rights

#### 4.3.1 The *Constitution* and its context

In China, a general minority language protection is enshrined in the *Constitution*; some experts call it a “right” (e.g. M. Zhou, 2000, p. 130). It forms part of a commitment by the State to protect the rights and interests of the fifty-five official minority minzu.

(art.4) All nationalities [i.e. minzu] in the People's Republic of China are equal. The state protects the lawful rights and interests of the minority nationalities and upholds and develops the relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all of China's nationalities ... The people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own ways and customs. (My emphasis).

The underlined sentence is the kernel of the minority language governance framework. The English version uses the word “freedom” rather than “right”; this distinction is not an artefact of translation. The Hanyu original of this sentence is: 《各民族都有使用和发展自己的语言文字的自由，都有保持或者改革自己的风俗习惯的自由》 (Central People's Government of the PRC, 1982b), using 《自由》 (“freedom”) rather than 《权利》 (“right”). By contrast, other constitutional provisions confer an explicit “right”, e.g. Article 45 provides citizens with “the right to material assistance from the state and society when they are old, ill or disabled”, using 权利 (“right”) in Putonghua. This contrast suggests the specific use of “freedom” in Article 4 is intended. The difference between a right and a freedom is that a freedom does not require state action for its vindication; it (ostensibly) requires only state inaction. (But for the suggestion Article 4 creates a positive state obligation, see G. Zhu, 2014, p. 696). Constructing language rights as freedoms is therefore significant normatively, in legal theory, and in terms of state agencies’ responsibilities and resourcing for

implementation. The normative import of this wording in such a prominent text is to construct minority (language) diversity as a matter of personal and group choice and responsibility, rather than constructing the State as having an active responsibility to promote or protect minority language.

However, this freedom is not actionable in that there is no legal procedure by which parties could enforce the freedom. The *Constitution* does not give legal standing to a minority language speaker to seek Article 4's enforcement in a court, either for the protection of their own or a group's linguistic freedom. Rather, Article 5 provides for an administrative procedure (an investigation) where an action appears to contravene any constitutional provision. There do not appear to be structures to enable minority persons to call for such investigations and the authority of investigations to change the law is unclear. While Article 5 declares "no law ... shall contravene the constitution" the *Constitution* is not a higher source of law constraining law-makers (the position many Western readers may expect for a constitution) because it is a piece of national legislation that may be adopted and modified by the National People's Congress; legislation contravening the language freedom would therefore not be automatically invalidated by Article 5. This *Constitution* nevertheless functions as the system's underlying norm; China's NPC, CPPCC and State Council may be guided by Article 4, but they are not bound to consider the language freedom when making other laws.

Further, Article 4 constructs legitimate minority claims as localised. It goes on to refer to the autonomous regions, anticipating Article 4 will be operationalised within them and noting assistance in realising Article 4 will be directed to "areas inhabited by minority nationalities", such as GZAR. In 1982, when this version of the *Constitution* was promulgated, freedom of

movement in China was limited. Nowadays, urbanisation and interprovincial migration undermine the predictability of what Blommaert and Rampton (2011, p. 1) have more generally called the “ethnic minority paradigm”.

What it meant for minority languages to be protected in the *Constitution* was variously understood by participants. Excerpt 4-1, above, represents what 《民族语言在法律上的权利》 (“minzu language rights in law”) – intended as a reference to the language rights in the *Constitution* – meant to these participants: an entitlement to use one’s minority language in legal processes. In contrast, their co-interviewee, Lloyd, thought these rights protected Baihua, Nanning’s Hanyu vernacular, which he earlier explained as Nanning Cantonese. He saw this as protecting his interests; whereas his Baihua proficiency would elsewhere disadvantage him in becoming a professional, in Nanning it is acceptable:

*Excerpt 4-2*

Lloyd: 以后我想当律师的话我说, 像我们语言权嘛, 我们那边是, 在法律上肯定是尊重少数民族地方的语言特色, 尤其是像南宁这样基本都是清一色白话, 所以说尤其是老南宁这些人都是讲白话的, 所以说人家就感觉我这普通话不太过关。但是我们那边只要能讲白话就行。

Later, I want to become a lawyer, I’d say, like our language rights, we there [in GZAR] certainly respect in our laws minority minzu areas’ language characteristics, like especially Nanning and the like basically all speak Baihua, so especially old Nanningers all speak Baihua, so people feel my Putonghua isn’t very passable. But down there if we will only speak Baihua it’s okay.

While Excerpts 4-1 and 4-2 show a (vague) understanding of LPP as protecting non-Han language use, by and large student participants had no awareness of minority language rights; as Morris said, language rights were a topic of which he had heard 《比较少》 (“relatively little”). Lloyd saw this lack of legal awareness as culturally and historically situated, relating it in Excerpt 4-3 to the historically limited role of law in Zhuang-speaking areas and comparing the situation in IMAR, where he now lives:

*Excerpt 4-3*

Lloyd: 壮族这方面法律知识的话我应该是还有一些……因为现代的话……法学知识在壮文壮族地区的话是很少的，因为比较落后。像蒙族的这些法律知识的话，起码说蒙族还是形成了一个统治过一段时间，所以说还是流传下来了，但是壮族的话，他就是没有统治过，所以说没形成一个统治一定地域的……至于说壮族地区的人民对法律方面，法律权利这些，其实是有接触的，但是没能用自己的，形成所谓的地区特色或者说用自己的地方言语说表达，比较有一些呼声之类的，会有这些方面的进展。

The Zhuangzu, knowledge of that aspect of law, I must say I only know a bit... because nowadays...legal knowledge in Zhuang writing and Zhuangzu areas is slight, because they're pretty backwards. Regarding the Mengguzu's [Mongolian minzu] legal knowledge, at least the Mengguzu had been the rulers before and had run government over a period of time and it [awareness of which] is still handed down, but the Zhuangzu, had never reigned, so they had never formulated [policies for] the

governing of a particular territory. ...Regarding law, the people in Zhuangzu areas had some experience, legal rights etc, in fact there were contracts, but they did not use their own resources, forming so-called laws with local characteristics or express them in their local language, for more [upraised] voices. There will be progress in this regard.

(On historic Zhuang contracts see the contemporaneous description in Tapp & Cohn, 2003, p. 45.)

The tensions between developmentalist and language equality, introduced in 4.2.3.2, arises again in the *Constitution*. These discourses appear conflicting but together they spark the ideological debates within which the implementation of Chinese LPP is situated; the minority language freedom is situated within a language policy agenda in which using and developing languages is part of achieving a broader goal of national advancement. This is expressed within the *Constitution*: Article 4 itself frames the minority language freedom within the normative claim that “[t]he state helps the areas inhabited by minority nationalities speed up their economic and cultural development”. This is similar to the dual cultural protection and economic development goals in the 2005 regulation on regional autonomy (4.2.3.2), but here the *Constitution* makes explicit that minority language protection is subsumed within the government’s economic and cultural development responsibilities. A notion of economic development constructs value in monetary terms, while cultural development inevitably constructs some cultural practices – potentially including language practices – as undeveloped while others are civilised and modern.

Development-centred discourses are also explicit in foundational national policies. For example, the *Constitution* is entextualised within the following “Basic Principles” (“Ethnic Minorities,” 2008, p. 58) which emphasise economic development at (c):

- a) Equality and unity among ethnic groups;
- b) Self-government of ethnic groups;
- c) Developing the economy and culture of ethnic groups;
- d) Training ethnic cadres;
- e) Respecting and developing spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities.

However, in addition to economic and cultural development, these principles also articulate a nation-building ideology of ethnic unification (a), and an ideology of minority autonomy, both regarding governance (b) and linguistic diversity (e) (as does the full text of Article 4). Explaining their place in the framework, the PRC State Council Information Office describes these Basic Principles as underlying the “policies of the Chinese Government in handling the ethnic problems” (“Ethnic Minorities,” 2008, p. 58). Similarly, the preamble of the 1954 *Constitution* propagates a discourse of minority equality intertwined with national unity and economic development, but makes the state’s agency in achieving these goals explicit, and positions the minority policy framework ideologically as a normative challenge to Han-centric and parochial and/or separatist ideologies (“big-nation chauvinism” and “local nationalism”):

The unity of our country's nationalities will continue to gain in strength on the basis of the further development of the fraternal bonds ... and on the basis of opposition ... to both big-nation chauvinism and local nationalism. In the course of economic construction and cultural development, the state will concern itself with the needs of the different nationalities.

The preamble of the current *Constitution* repeats this positioning, and reframes all policy (and PRC history) within a strategy of “socialist modernisation”, pledging “the State will do its utmost to promote the common prosperity of all the nationalities”. The language ideology implications of the *Constitution* and contextual texts are critically discussed in Section 4.4.

M. Zhou (2004, p. 77) argues that, since the 1980s, the practice of implementing constitutional language rights through legislation on education and minority autonomy has largely replaced the earlier practice of implementing the constitutional language rights through executive directives and regulations. Thus, while the *Constitution* still provides the formal basis of LPP in China and is an important discourse, the national laws investigated below elaborate the operation of the LPP framework.

### **4.3.2 National laws**

In addition to cornerstones texts of LPP, including the *Constitution* and national laws organising the Zhuangzu as a polity, other legislation at the national level begins to operationalise minority language rights, as explored in Section 4.3.2.1. However, national laws also operationalise rights and promotional policies relating to Putonghua (4.3.2.2).

#### **4.3.2.1 National laws about minority languages**

There are miscellaneous other provisions relating to the minority minzu in national laws, but most are not explicitly measures for language protection; rather, many are laws about autonomous government and minzu representation in government, as outlined in Sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.3, or general minority culture protections. The *Criminal Law* (Second Session of the Fifth National People's Congress, 1997) provides an illustration of the latter. Article 251 provides for imprisonment of “workers of state organs who illegally ... encroach on minority nationalities’ customs or habits”. This is hard to action, as there is no official

guidance or jurisprudence on whether Zhuang language practices count as custom that may be encroached, or what meets the standard of “serious” encroachment set elsewhere in the provision. Moreover, action-ability is constrained by structures confining Zhuang speaker interests to the Zhuangzu polity, a problem identified in 4.2.3. Here, the encroached customs would have to be those practised by Zhuangzu but the agent having the authority to commence legal proceedings is the state (the police or a prosecutor), not a Zhuangzu individual. Likewise, Article 250 protects a minzu not an individual, criminalising “publishing materials that discriminate or insult minority nationalities”, and whether it extends to action over linguistic discrimination or insults about language is untested.

The legislation reveals a discontinuity between positive rhetoric regarding the value of minority languages in some policies and national laws, and very little in more detailed national laws to actively protect, or to normatively reproduce, this value. This is not necessarily for want of trying; the tension between economic development policy and language policy (see 4.3.1) is hard to reconcile in specific, operational policies. Participants were aware of this, as Excerpt 4-4 exemplifies.

*Excerpt 4-4*

Mr Purple: 现在就业很困难，少数民族不太乐观……现在市场经济，他强调实用价值，经济效益。但是我们少数民族语言在这一块更多的可能是侧重这种文化价值。所以他这种好像不能产生经济效益 ... 所以现在如果是政府不加大扶持力度，再加上我们有个培养的学生不能更好掌握一些知识，以后可能有点比较难办……

Alexandra : 所以每一个少数民族他们有他们的代表在中央会议嘛?……壮族的代表这些人,他们考虑语言的情况吗?还是考虑我们刚才说的就业的这些问题?……

Mr Purple : 我想他们也会考虑,但是真正要解决起来,可能就业是一个非常复杂的问题。有些专家,有些代表他们可能也会提出这方面的意见或者建议,但是具体要落实的话恐怕还是很难。

Mr Purple: Nowadays employment is very tough, the minority minzu are not very optimistic ... Now the market economy, it emphasises practical value, economic efficiency. But our minority minzu language, in that regard, it is more likely to focus on cultural value. So they [languages] seem not to be able to produce economic benefits... So if the government doesn't increase the level of support, and additionally if some of our [Zhuang Studies] students cannot better grasp knowledge, ultimately it's likely to be a bit difficult...

Alexandra: So each minority minzu has a CPPCC delegate?... The Zhuangzu delegates, do they think about language circumstances? Or do they consider the employment issues we just discussed? ...

Mr Purple: I think they also consider them but to really solve it, it's likely employment is a very complicated problem. Some experts, some representatives probably also have put forward proposals, but the specific implementation is still very hard, I'm afraid.

Mr Purple represents the economic value system that is one of a number of ideologies encoded within LPP texts as being the dominant value system outside of LPP texts,

influential amongst the minzu populace and propagated by the market economy. This political economy was of course absent when minority equality and economic development were first encoded alongside each other in national laws, perhaps mitigating the initial discontinuity between these ideologies. Moreover, Mr Purple indicates that this tension is not only a potentiality but actual at the level of policy decision-making (in the CPPCC).

Excerpt 4-4 noted that LPP must do more than ever to challenge market norms if it is to achieve its long-standing aim of minority language equality. This is an extremely hard task, as Mr Blue articulated on the scale of lived experience, in a reflection on how minority language rights cannot overcome the fact that socio-economic mobility comes through learning Hanyu, not Zhuang.

*Excerpt 4-5*

Mr Blue: 现在主要的问题是壮族内部，因为壮族把壮语做好用好……这是我的权利，是法律给我的权利，所以不敢来说……现在就是在争论这个事情，他们整天拿一个例子来做一个--有没有用。就是以前广西民族大学的校长，他们两个儿子，在文革前一个学了汉文、一个学了壮文。最后学汉文那个他成绩很好，就出国去留学了，在中国八十年代出国的很少嘛……所以他们老拿这个例子来说，“你看，壮文没有用，学壮文的还在国内，学汉文的出去留学了”。

Nowadays, the important problem is within the Zhuangzu, because it goes without saying that the Zhuangzu could use Zhuang and speak Zhuang well ... this is my right, the right given to me by law ... Now the polemic is all about an incident: they always hold up this isolated example to argue “is it [learning Zhuang] is useful?” Previously, MUC’s president, he had two sons, before the Cultural Revolution one studied Hanyu, one studied Zhuangyu. Afterwards, the one who studied Hanyu succeeded, went

overseas for studies, very few people could leave China in the 1980s to study overseas...so they always used to say, “You see, Zhuang script is not useful, study Zhuang and remain in the country, study Hanyu and go overseas to study”.

This tension between economic and cultural values manifests not only because the political economy reproduces the hegemony of market values, but because the now less-centrally controlled political economy is structured such that GZAR, as the nominal protector of Zhuangzu interests, must also fund implementation measures for Zhuangzu protection. Mr Mauve has had personal experience in advising GZAR’s policy-makers and reported on this constraint.

*Excerpt 4-6*

Mr Mauve: 因为我们是一千多万人口...这个要复杂的东西就多.....甚至是几万人的那小民族还不太一样.....要做双语教育它用不了几个钱.....都不到我们的百分之一...所以很多人都不知道, 就说你们的领导人都不同意这样做。我经常接触我们的领导人, 我知道那当家的也难.....广西都比广东穷。

Because our population is over 10 million ... That complicates things a lot ... This is not quite the case with minority minzu with only tens of thousands of people ... for them to have bilingual education, it costs a few bucks...they’re all not even 1 percent of us ... So, many people don’t know, they say “your [Zhuangzu] leaders won’t agree to do the same [bilingual education]”. I often have contact with our leaders; I am cognizant of their predicament as “the chief executives” ... Guangxi is a lot poorer than Guangdong.

On GZAR’s economic weakness, see also Section 3.3.4.1.

These tensions inform language policy's organisation of the usage and status of Putonghua vis-à-vis Zhuang, with economic development consistently associated with Putonghua, as the following section explores.

#### **4.3.2.2 National laws about Putonghua**

China's LPP concerns not only minority languages but also the national common language, Putonghua, and its official simplified character script. Putonghua is a standardised variety of Hanyu. This language's association with the Hanzu majority, as suggested by the name, is long-standing. Before the PRC, the Imperial and Republican Chinese states took Hanyu variants as their national language. Nowadays, the *Putonghua Law* (English version: National People's Congress, 2000a; Putonghua version: National People's Congress, 2000b) defines Chinese language as "Putonghua (a common speech with pronunciation based on the Beijing dialect) and the standardised Chinese characters" (National People's Congress, 2000a, art.2).

The *Putonghua Law* legally enshrined what was already developing in practice: lingua franca Putonghua across the country. Rohsenow (2004, p. 35) notes that the 1990s saw a turn towards using laws to strengthen policies and social order in China, not only in language governance. The *Putonghua Law* is one such law. L. Guo (2004, p. 51) likewise sees the *Putonghua Law* as a formalisation of 1990s language policy, but specifically the policy of tolerating Mandarin dialects because the *Putonghua Law* stipulates public and official occasions for which dialects may be used (p. 52), whereas Rohsenow focuses on the law's promotion of Putonghua. This law does not regulate when minority languages may still be used, although it claims extensive domains exclusively for Putonghua. In contrast to the constitutional protection of minority languages, the *Putonghua Law* is extensive and detailed:

it mobilises legal authority to monopolise domains of usage. It orders that Putonghua “shall be used by State organs as the official language, except where otherwise provided for in laws” (art.9) and that publishing, broadcasting, television, and IT/information processing must be in Putonghua (art.11-12, 15). Especially relevant are Articles 13-14, governing aspects of commercial and landscape language usage:

(art.13) The standardised Chinese characters shall be used as the basic characters in the service trade ... People working in the service trade are encouraged to use Putonghua when providing services.

(art.14) The standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be used as the basic spoken and written language in ... facilities in public places;... signboards and advertisements;... names of enterprises and other institutions; and ... packaging and specifications of commodities marketed in the country.

While these Articles do not prohibit the auxiliary use of a minority language, the constitutional freedom to use and develop Zhuang language does not override Articles 13-14 and so Putonghua must be included. Thus, *Putonghua Law* reinforces the division in the *Constitution* between the nationally-promoted language (Putonghua) and those not promoted nationally (the minority languages) (M. Zhou, 2004, p. 77).

The *Putonghua Law* (art.19) also sets standards: workers who “need” Putonghua for work must have “Putonghua ability” and additional standards exist for publicised or public sector work, with training to be provided for substandard speakers:

(art.19) ... The Putonghua level of those who use Putonghua as their working language, such as broadcasters ... actors and actresses ... teachers and State functionaries shall reach the respective standards set by the State.

What constitutes a “need” to use Putonghua for work is not defined, and is thus interpreted in light of normative practices and prevailing language ideologies.

In contrast to the weak structures for enforceability and accountability of laws about minority language, analysed above, the *Putonghua Law* expresses a language “right” and enshrines a power of citizens to call upon the government to fix its breaches. The explicit language right is in Article 4: “All citizens shall have the *right* to learn and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language” (my emphasis), expressed as 《权利》 (“right”) in the Putonghua version. This contrasts to the minority language “freedom” in the *Constitution* (4.3.1). Moreover, this contrast of terms appears even within the *Putonghua Law*: Article 8 reiterates that “[a]ll the nationalities shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages”; see also the Putonghua version of Article 8, again suggesting the choice of terms intends different meanings.

Accountability and implementation mechanisms are also provided within the *Putonghua Law*, unlike the laws governing minority languages.

(art.26) Any citizen may make criticism and put forward suggestions where the use of spoken and written language is at variance with the norms of the standard spoken and written Chinese language ...

Where the characters used [in city landscapes and advertisements] are in violation of the relevant provisions ... the administrative departments concerned shall give orders for them to be corrected; anyone who refuses correct them shall be given a disciplinary warning and be urged to put them right within a time limit.

(art.27) Anyone who, in violation of this Law, interferes with other persons' learning and using of the standard spoken and written Chinese language shall be ordered by the

relevant administrative departments to put it right within a time limit and be given a disciplinary warning.

Until the Law Committee recommended this enforcement measure at the drafting stage, the state proposed to fine people for breaching the *Putonghua Law* (Rohsenow, 2004 p. 37). Even this softer penalty – a warning and remediation – has no equivalent in minority language laws.

There is, however, still some weakness in this law's enforceability: the Putonghua "right" has no clear procedure for enforcement and citizens are not provided with a mechanism for enforcing their criticisms and suggestions. Nevertheless, the discursive construction within this symbolically powerful text of a language right rather than a freedom is normatively significant.

By virtue of the *Putonghua Law* and the constitutional provision that "the state is to promote Putonghua in the whole country", Putonghua has a privileged position in schooling; the national promotion of Putonghua informs national LPP about bilingual education.

#### **4.3.2.3 National laws about bilingual schooling**

The national legislation governing bilingual schooling in Putonghua and minority languages is the *Education Law* (National People's Congress, 1995), which is coupled with the *National Outline for Medium and Long-term Educational Reform and Development (2010–2020) (Education Policy)* (see further Ministry of Education, 2010a; Ministry of Education, 2010b).

The *Putonghua Law* requires Putonghua to be promoted even in bilingual minority language schools.

(art.12) The Chinese language, both oral and written, shall be the basic oral and written language for education in schools ... [Those] which mainly consist of students from minority nationalities may use in education the language of the respective nationality [i.e. minzu] or the native language commonly adopted in that region.

Schools ... shall in their educational activities popularise the nationally common spoken Chinese and the standard written characters.

In addition, even the minority schools must adhere to directive that:

(art.10) Putonghua and the standardised Chinese characters shall be used as the basic language in education and teaching in schools and other institutions of education, except where otherwise provided for in laws.

The operation of Article 10 is excluded only where a minority language is permitted. It is permitted for junior years at transitional bilingual schools in designated area of concentrated minority minzu population, in accordance with Article 37 of the *Constitution* and its mirror provision in the *Regional Autonomy Law*:

(art.27) In schools which mainly recruit students of minority nationalities, textbooks in languages of minority nationalities concerned should be used where conditions exist. Languages for instruction should also be the languages of the minority nationalities concerned. Primary school students of higher grades and secondary school students should learn Chinese language. Putonghua, which is commonly used throughout the country, should be popularised among them.

That is, the right to Putonghua and the minority language freedom are reconciled by a bilingual schooling in limited areas.

Moreover, the *Education Policy* supports bilingual education but officially endorses Putonghua as the normative language of education. Chapter Nine of the *Education Policy* is entitled “Education for Ethnic Minorities”, and it announces:

No effort shall be spared to advance bilingual teaching, open Chinese language classes in every school, and popularise the national common language and writing system. Minority peoples’ right to be educated in native languages shall be respected and ensured. Bilingual preschool education shall be promoted (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2010b, p. 23).

Thus, minority language-medium schooling has a place within the education policy framework but may not prevent the promotion of the majority language in schools; how the permissibility of Zhuang bilingual schooling is implemented in GZAR is explored in (4.3.4.2).

Elsewhere, Chapter Nine of the *Education Policy* explicitly frames bilingual education within the national development strategy, beginning:

Speeding up educational development for ethnic minorities is of far-reaching importance to promoting socioeconomic development (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2010b, p. 22).

Foreseeing and encoding another possible tension, between minority languages bolstering minzu identity and the role of schooling in bolstering national identity, the same passage goes on to declare that “educational development” of minority schooling is of far-reaching importance:

to enhancing unity between people of all ethnic backgrounds in striving for common prosperity and development (Ministry of Education of the PRC, 2010b, p. 22).

Following this, the first specific directive in Chapter Nine is that “[e]ducation in ethnic unity shall be conducted extensively in schools at all levels” (Ministry of Education of the PRC,

2010b, p. 22). This policy's combination of heritage, development and unity goals echoes the Basic Principles (4.3.1).

This policy is situated within official discourses maintaining that “educational development should be future-oriented” (Yue et al., 2010), and that “ethnic groups ... [are] trailing behind in educational development” (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010). These co-texts frame the *Education Policy* aspirations of bilingual education as an instrument of development, not heritage, introducing once again a familiar tension to the LPP environment.

In addition to national legislation on language protections and language schooling, another potential body of text adding detail to the LPP framework is case law (i.e. decisions published by courts in disputes over language entitlements.) Chinese cases prosecuting language rights are examined below.

### **4.3.3 Case law**

Overall, there is not a significant body of case law contributing to the language governance framework. In part, this arises because China only instituted an “instructional case system” in 2010 to publish a limited number of “guiding cases” as national precedents for future disputes (Deng, 2016; F. Li & Deng, 2016, p. 90). Thousands of other cases are tried but their judgments are not systematically reported or available to researchers. I attempted to collect judgments and reports of cases relating to minority language usage as one data source. To this end, I searched Chinese-language law databases; interviewed a law professor in Beijing who researches minority entitlements (Mr Taupe) and a lawyer at an access-to-justice NGO in China who runs training on minority rights (Mr Yellow); searched databases of newspaper articles in both Chinese and English; ran online searches; and asked my participants if they knew of any such cases.

Only three cases emerged. The first two were prosecutions claiming a Putonghua entitlement when English was used in safety manuals and for emergency call lines, as described to me by Mr Taupe. He suggested at least one of these cases predated the *Putonghua Law*, the legislation in which an entitlement to Putonghua is now expressly conferred (see 4.3.2.2), while the other case post-dated that legislation. However, as these cases are not publically reported I cannot confirm whether a “right” to Putonghua or other phrases and concepts from legislation were used as a discursive resource in the litigation.

No cases seem to have arisen where a claim was made for safety manuals, emergency call lines or other services to be in a minority language rather than Putonghua. Mr Taupe thought the cost of litigating to protect minority language rights was prohibitively high. I have not found laws or policies addressing any such structural inequality in access to the courts for problems concerning the minority language freedom.

The third case was described by a Zhuangzu academic at Guangxi University (Mr Green). It involved a Zhuang language advocate suing a newspaper in GZAR which ran a cartoon (Figure 15) with the following dialogue (my translation):

Kidnapper: Your son is in our hands, you have two days to get us 100,000rmb!

Hostage: These two “rabbit-toothed” bastards’ accent is “Pinched Zhuang”!



Figure 15. Cartoon from the “Guangxi News web”, 2014.

Offence was reportedly taken by the language advocate because it depicts Zhuang speech as typical of criminals and because it describes Zhuang speech pejoratively as 《夹壮》 (“Pinched Zhuang”). “Pinched Zhuang” reveals a current of linguistic discrimination, referring to a variety of speech characterised by the intermingling of features associated with both Zhuang and Putonghua, where Putonghua is constructed as corrupted by “pinches” of Zhuang. Mr Green and other participants who had seen this cartoon also reported feeling offended.

I eventually conducted an online interview with the advocate (Mr Red) reported to have sued the newspaper (interview details: Appendix 3-1), but discovered that he had not sued. Rather than suing, Mr Red had a series of contestations with police. He explained the contestations began because he was teaching Zhuang for free as an extracurricular activity at Guangxi University, which alarmed the authorities as potentially covering for organising collective

action. Referring to himself in the third person, he alleges unwarranted detention and harassment ensued when he demanded that certain police formalities be conducted in Zhuang.

*Excerpt 4-7*

南宁警方非法限制壮文老师人身自由 15 小时，因壮文老师汉语水平低，要求用壮语翻译被 警方拒绝……签了壮文名字，南宁警方就让他从中午 12 点等到 23:13 分 公安说“有一直选题给你做，签汉字名盖手印就可以回去，不签汉字名就继续留在这里”。

Nanning Police Station unlawfully constrained the Zhuang teacher's personal freedom for 15 hours, because the Zhuang teacher's Hanyu level was low, he requested a Zhuang interpreter. The police declined ... He signed in Zhuang, the Nanning Police then made him wait from about 1200 till 23:13. The Public Security said "There is an option for you: sign a Han character name covered with a fingerprint then you can go back; if you don't sign a Han character name then you continue to stay here."

If accurate, Mr Red's experience exemplifies certain shortfalls in the implementation of language laws. However, without an official record of this dispute, my general finding is that case law does not contribute rules to minority language governance.

Mr Red's account in Excerpt 4-7 illustrates that using the minority language freedom as a discursive resource mobilised to legitimise his claim to an entitlement to Zhuang-medium procedures. However, this resource was apparently not constructed in the policing field as having legal (or other) capital. This was how case law was understood by some participants, particularly those slightly older and experienced in language activism, like Mr Brown:

*Excerpt 4-8*

[ 在国外 ] 只要违反宪法我就可以起诉你，但广西没有这种环境，法院不会给立案，法官不会接手这个案子。

[Overseas] you need only contravene the *Constitution* and I can sue you, but Guangxi doesn't have that environment, the courts will not register your claim, judges won't accept that case.

The paucity of case law on language rights is similar to the dearth of case law about the *Regional Autonomy Law* noted in a report on the Uyghur minzu's rights (Congressional-Executive Commission on China (USA), 2005, p. note 9).

The low instance reveals the construction of the language freedom as part of government responsibilities rather than a personal resource for minority language activism through legal action. Only when regional and local governments see themselves as having responsibilities for language protection are local rules and policies added to the LPP framework.

#### **4.3.4 Regional laws**

GZAR its subordinate municipal and prefectural governments can regulate aspects of language use, but appear to seldom do so. Providing a rare example, Li and Huang (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 247) describe two GZAR circulars (1984; 1991) requesting that government organisations use Putonghua-Zhuang signage. More recently, the Nanning Municipality within GZAR issued interim provisions regulating the format of Putonghua-Zhuang signage (Nanning Municipal Government, 2004); see Section 5.3.1 for details. I found there were no other GZAR or sub-GZAR laws concerning Zhuang language that were

available to researchers, however, participants' experiences of sub-regional decision-making about LPP implementation in regards to schooling in GZAR are examined in Chapter Seven.

Systematic searches of law databases, government websites and Chinese journal articles revealed no other GZAR-level laws. If such laws exist, they are not listed or published by the GZAR government online, known to my participants or noted in the literature. As GZAR does not systematically publish every law, there may be some "on the books" that I was unable to collect, but such LPP would therefore also be of limited access to Zhuang speakers who wished to rely upon it as a legal or advocacy resource. The remainder of this section examines participants' perspectives on how LPP is interpreted, and thwarted, at the regional government level.

Participants, generally language leaders rather than students, were aware of the limited implementation of Zhuang protections in GZAR's laws, but commonly viewed this as resulting from a lack of grass-roots mobilisation of the LPP framework rather than faults with the framework itself, exemplified in Excerpt 4-9.

*Excerpt 4-9*

Mr Purple : 怎么样才能使他的地位提高?……一方面呢需要本民族的不断地宣传,争取法律给我们赋予的权利,用够,用完。

Alexandra : 你觉得这个宪法有用吗

Mr Purple : 这个宪法是有用的,但是我们现在用的好像不够。比如说它规定我们都有使用发展我们自己本民族语言文字的权利,但是我们现在就是很多时候

没有用够这些方面的权利。我们自己很多时候也没有一种自觉的意识去为这个事情做很多事情。一个是靠我们自己，我们自己呼吁。

Mr Purple: How can one make [Zhuang's] status improve? ... one aspect is you must have the minzu itself consistently promoting it; the law gives us the gift of a right; use it enough, use it entirely.

Alexandra: Do you think the *Constitution* is useful?

Mr Purple: The *Constitution* is useful, but it seems like nowadays we don't use it enough. For example, it directs we all have the right to use and develop our own minzu language and script, but now we don't make use of these rights most of the time. Also, often we ourselves don't have a consciousness about doing more and more of these things. First, it really relies on us, we ourselves invoking it.

To this end, Mr Purple, amongst other language leaders, saw the need to raise minzu consciousness rather than change policy texts and structures, however it may be that changing LPP as implemented in public education is needed to raise consciousness, given Mr Purple's (and many other participants') belief that:

*Excerpt 4-10*

我们要自己多去培养一些自己本民族的孩子。靠他们起来了，这样影响力才大一点。

We must do more to train our own minzu children. Relying on them, [only] this way can the influence grow.

By contrast, others saw the problem as the LPP framework's rigidity, not the lack of grassroots mobilisation of LPP, as expressed in Excerpt 4-11, a discussion with Hoz about grassroots script development work.

*Excerpt 4-11*

然后这几年虽然有些就是广西的青年、壮族人他们就呼吁保护起来做这些方面的工作……所以这几年是有所恢复的。但是总体上方案那个被官方僵化了，已经僵硬了这种感觉，然后他在我们不管怎样去呼吁好像得到官方的回应很少，所以我们就自己想，文件自己另辟一个途径。我们不希望被那个官方僵化的，不符合我们自己壮族人那种习惯的。

Then a few years ago some young Zhuangzu people from Guangxi, they instigated [a campaign] for protection of Zhuang and did some work in that regard ... So recently there's been some recovery. But overall the program became ossified by the officials; they had long ossified their feelings [towards Zhuang], and there rarely seems to be an official response whenever we appeal, so we ourselves think, the document [a new script proposal] opens up another path. We do not want to be officially ossified, [because] we won't conform to habits incompatible with that of our minzu.

Whether for bottom-up or top-down reasons, participants strongly perceived variation in the application of the national LPP at the regional level, particularly those who had lived or travelled to other minority autonomous regions, or Yunnan. For example, comparing GZAR to IMAR, where he now lives, Lloyd noted:

*Excerpt 4-12*

因为法律的话，说肯定是比较照顾到各方面 ... 像我们，尤其是我现在报司考……我哥们他是[说]……汉语卷还是蒙文卷，但是我估计广西就没有这个选项……我估计很少有人能作出这种有壮语，壮文这样子的卷子，所以说干脆就取消。

Because, in law, there is certainly more care taken for these aspects [here] ... Take us, in particular I am now doing exams and my buddy [said] "... take the Hanyu or the Mongolian exam paper", but I'm guessing in GZAR there isn't a choice ... I'm guessing very few people could produce [exam] papers in [spoken] Zhuang language or Zhuang writing, so they simply cancel it.

Here, Lloyd presents GZAR and IMAR's differences in applying the language freedom to examinations as bottom-up – resulting from people's language abilities and choices – not top-down.

Regional LPP variation arose especially in interview discussions over a recent regional-level regulation of Zhuang and other local minority languages from Yunnan Province: the *Minority Minzu Language and Script Work Ordinance (Ordinance)* (Standing Committee of Yunnan Provincial People's Congress, 2013). (During fieldwork, I obtained a publication containing the *Ordinance* and consultation reports from its drafting phase). This *Ordinance* was enacted with the purpose of:

一. 为了加强少数民族语言文字工作，保障各少数民族使用和发展本民族语言文字的权利，保护和抢救少数民族传统文化，促进民族团结进步和少数民族文化繁荣发展……。

[1. To strengthen minority language and script work; safeguard each minority minzu's right to use and development their language and script; to protect and salvage minority minzu traditional culture; to advance Minzu Solidarity and thriving minority minzu cultural development ....]

These purposes illustrate the influence at the regional tier of the national structures and principles, following the bounding of language governance within the minzu system, and reproducing the development and national unity focuses, as well as actual phrases from national laws. At the time of this research, Yunnan's *Ordinance* had not been translated into detailed regulations and impacts on public or educational language usage were not observed.

To many of my participants, Yunnan Government's activity in minority language protection, represented by the *Ordinance*, served to highlight relative inactivity in GZAR. Language Leader participants in both Yunnan and GZAR saw this *Ordinance* as beneficial to Zhuang language and reported the GZAR government had sent personnel to Yunnan to study this 《很前卫》 (“*avant garde*”) (Mr White) law. They understood the GZAR officials had ultimately been unable to gain support within GZAR's Party-State organs for a similar law, reflecting the structural weakness I described in 4.2.3-4.2.4. The academic who gave me the *Ordinance* and the participants aware of it attributed its successful passage into law to an individual politician, He Lifeng, rather than formal governance structures (Field-notes 12.6.2014), often believing GZAR lacked an equivalent individual to turn that region's structures for language governance into action.

*Excerpt 4-13*

Mr Brown: 对，没有成功。广西的主席他不敢做这个事情，中央都把自治权给你了，广西的主席要说一句干，谁能拦得住？

Yes, it didn't succeed. The Chairman of Guangxi doesn't dare do such things, the Centre gives him autonomous governance rights, all the Chairman of Guangxi need say is just one single phrase ["go ahead"]; who on earth could stop him?

Similarly, Mr White, a minority language translator of government texts working in Yunnan Minority Language Committee, expressed his surprise that the comparatively higher formal status of GZAR's MLC (see 4.2.4.2) had not resulted in more actual law-making power.

In addition to the purposes above, another listed purpose of Yunnan's *Ordinance* is script development; the following section explains this as a common emphasis in the regional implementation of the basic freedom to use and develop a minority language.

#### **4.3.4.1 *Standardisation and script regulation***

This section describes the application of national standardisation and script regulation to Zhuang.

Following the understanding of minority language rights as guaranteeing the development of minority languages into standardised, written varieties, script regulation has been a major activity in implementing in Chinese LLP. Chinese LPP expert M. Zhou (2004, p. 84), for example, argues the constitutional "equality of use and development requires ... that all minority languages have equal opportunities to undergo language development, such as graphisation and standardisation". Thus, the government systematically identified a dialect of each minority language to standardise into a grammar, Romanised the script (unless an existing written tradition in another script was recognised), and published learning and reading materials. The development of pinyin scripts for minority languages was a high-priority, early PRC policy to facilitate mass literacy in minority languages but also in

Putonghua: a level of orthographic uniformity across minority languages' pinyins and Putonghua Pinyin was thought to facilitate mutual learning.

However, a fundamental division was codified by script regulation: Putonghua ought be written in characters as plans to Romanise Putonghua were quickly aborted and instead the simplification of Putonghua characters was codified (Premaratne, 2015, pp. 426, 433; Rohsenow, 2004, pp. 22-23). Putonghua Pinyin served an auxiliary role, and in the 1980s, the State Language Commission re-confirmed that Putonghua Pinyin is only an auxiliary teaching tool for those learning Putonghua characters (Rohsenow, 2004, pp. 23,30). By contrast, Zhuang and most other minority languages ought to be written only in pinyin.

These top-down standardisation and script regularisation activities were understood as the way to “develop” minority languages, as guaranteed by Article 4. This development also tended to Hanify the languages; for instance, the presiding view in China’s twentieth-century LPP was that “minority languages with a healthy number of loanwords ... [from Hanyu were] well-developed languages” (my emphasis M. Zhou, 2003, p. 364). Harrell (1995b, pp. 23-25) argues modernisation has increasingly been reinterpreted as “Hanification” across Chinese minority LPP. (See further “Confucian co-optation” in Harrell, 1993; cf. recursive “language-nation-State nexus” ideology in Heller, 2004, p. 284). M. Zhou (2003) notes a 1958 article published by the forerunner to the NAC promoting Hanyu loanwords to “enrich” minority languages was “considered as policy for minority language work”. Certainly, the standard language ideology and ideological valuing of written over oral language practices which this national LPP evidence are reproduced in Zhuang LPP.

Zhuang LPP has promoted standardisation and script development based on a classification of Zhuang as a language with no written script, erasing the history of Sawndip literacy (see 2.4.1). Learning Zhuang Pinyin was initially supported through government literacy campaigns and *not* learning attracted government penalties (Kaup, 2000, p. 141), but the policy was abandoned in the Cultural Revolution then revived in the 1980s with significant under-funding (Kaup, 2000, pp. 142-143). Zhuang literacy policy is now subsumed within bilingual schooling policy.

#### ***4.3.4.2 Implementing bilingual schooling in GZAR***

Bilingual schooling is a localised policy decision, although it must take account of the national education policies (4.3.2.2). Those policies frame bilingual education as an instrument of development. Following that orientation, bilingual Putonghua-Zhuang schooling in GZAR is typically transitional, with schooling becoming monolingual in Putonghua in later years (e.g. Kaup, 2000, p. 145; Y. Wang & Phillion, 2009, p. 1). Moreover, A. Feng and Sunuodula (2009, p. 691) argue “subtractive bilingualism” (see also Adamson & A. Feng, 2009, p. 325) is the usual outcome because of the “coercive power relationship” between Zhuang and Putonghua. Subtractive or uneven bilingualism – and illiteracy in Zhuang – arise largely because all Zhuang-inclusive schools follow a transitional SLA model, with Putonghua supposed to be introduced from Grade One in order to “fulfil the targets in the curriculum made by the Ministry of Education” with Zhuang retired to an auxiliary language role by Grade Four-Five (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 248). Indeed, in a recent study, Zhuang student interviewees from cities and towns reported Putonghua-medium classes from the start of their schooling (A. Feng & Sunuodula, 2009, pp. 691-692).

This developmentalist, transitional bilingual schooling is at odds with the purpose certain participants saw for Zhuang bilingual education. For example, Mr Mauve's research expertise is GZAR's bilingual education, and he explained its purpose as passing on traditional knowledge through language, continuing:

*Excerpt 4-14*

所以就是说我们给领导人说他们要注意这一块的时候，我们也告诉他双语教育的这个根本目的之一也是保持语言文化的长远发展，我们跟他们说不是人拯救文化，是文化拯救人。

So we told the leaders they must pay attention to this [critical] juncture [Zhuang lessons], we also told them bilingual education's fundamental purpose is protecting language and culture's long-term development, we spoke with them about it not being people who save culture, but the culture saving the people.

As Excerpt 4-14 indicates, these alternative constructions of bilingual education are not absent from policy-making discourses in GZAR, but nor do they find much purchase. While this is likely in part because Mr Mauve ideology is not dominant, it is also because limited budgets encourage GZAR policy-makers to prioritise the economic efficiency of existing, largely monolingual schooling.

The proviso in the *Education Law* that minority language-medium schooling be offered "where conditions exist" (see 4.3.2.3) is indeterminate, and while it is unclear who holds the power to decide when conditions exist, these conditions must match funding conditions. When the responsibility for funding bilingual Zhuang schools was shifted from the Central government to the typically poorer county governments within GZAR in the late 1980s,

counties had to close more than half of them (Kaup, 2000, p. 143). GZAR is permitted to charge a “levy of added local education fee for specific use of education” (art.57), collected and managed by county-level education departments. However, whether this levy is collected is not made public, and Kaup (2000, p. 137) reports:

[minority schools’] teachers and students complained that the mandated government stipends were not reaching them. Villagers often rolled their eyes and said “yeah, sure” when I mentioned special scholarships that the government supposedly supplies minority students.

This scarcity of funding in rural villages is likely to have continued since Kaup’s study; X. Li & Q. Huang (2004, p. 253) note the GZAR DoE changed its policy in 2002 so that, although the budget for Zhuang-medium instruction was increased and the bilingual “experimental” schooling expanded in the more “efficient”, densely-populated areas, bilingual schools in remote areas were to be closed. Nevertheless, in Excerpt 4-15 Mr Mauve suggests there is still transitional bilingual schooling in rural GZAR with Zhuang-medium lessons in early grades to help children from Zhuang-speaking homes learn Putonghua, which then takes over as the medium.

*Excerpt 4-15*

这个是最多的，大概是 80 percent 的农村学校都是这样，除了我们壮，其它侗啊、水啊、苗啊、瑶啊大类的情况也是这么一个。

This [transitional form] is the majority, about 80 percent of rural primary schools are like that, besides the Zhuang, the Dong, Shui, Miao, Yao groups’ circumstances are like that.

That is, he reports eighty percent of rural primary schools use a minority language to start with, but not necessarily Zhuang. The remaining types are Putonghua-medium primary

schools where Hanyu dialects function as auxiliary languages, which Mr Mauve associates with primary schools in towns, and a less common type of bilingual schooling called “experimental schooling”:

*Excerpt 4-16*

Mr Mauve: 广西现在有 33 个县，有壮文的双语教学任务的实验小学 33 个县…… [这些]有小学、有初中，它用的是壮文来教，部分那个个人他把国家的那个教材翻译成壮语……然后就对难字难句让小孩知道大致的内容，把它转过来又再讲一遍汉语。

Guangxi now has 33 counties, there are schools tasked with Zhuang bilingual teaching in experimental primary schools in 33 counties... [They have] preschool, primary school, junior high school. They use Zhuang to teach, parts of the national curriculum were translate into Zhuang by individuals ... With difficult words and sentences they acquaint the children first with the general content then say again it in Hanyu.

That is, Hanyu is an auxiliary language for some lessons in experimental schools but other parts of the curriculum, and everything after junior high, are taught in Putonghua without Zhuang. Moreover, these thirty-three counties represent just a fraction of GZAR’s 123 counties (“List of administrative divisions of Guangxi,” 2016). By 2014, according to Mr Mauve, there were seventy-two bilingual primary schools and twenty-five bilingual middle schools in GZAR i.e. an increase, yet only ten thousand students overall, i.e. less than half the twenty-six thousand reported in 2004 by Li (2004, p. 248). The combined offerings of these forms of bilingual Zhuang schools are still 《太少了》 (“too few”) in Mr Mauve’s view, and the literature speaks to their paucity, too (see 2.4.2.1).

While the exact bilingual schooling student population might lie between Mr Mauve's ten thousand and Li's twenty-six thousand, there is a perception that Zhuang language has too limited a place in education; in 2007, "a petition initiated by a group of Zhuang intellectuals and signed by more than 16,000 people called upon the central government to make the Zhuang language mandatory for schools in the [GZAR] Region" (Adamson & A. Feng, 2009, p. 325). It appears not to have resulted in any policy change so far, consistent with a history of difficulties enacting policy in this space; the lack of a complete bilingual education policy arose in GZAR, A. Feng and Sunuodula (2009, p. 691) argue, because "policy documents concerning Zhuang Language were debated, proposed and revised numerous times but were never formally promulgated and implemented". Foregrounding material constraints instead, Mr Mauve argues that:

*Excerpt 7-17*

Mr Mauve: 它这个的有原因少是什么呢……我们政府投入少……老师要多一些……少数民族所在的地方都是比较穷。

Why is it [Zhuang bilingual schooling] so small?... Our government invests a small amount... more teachers are needed ... [and] all the minority minzu areas are relatively poor.

Reduced central funding aligns with the reduction of GZAR-level organs' formal powers for Zhuang promotion in schools. In 1992, when the responsibilities of GZAR's MLC were reduced (see 4.2.4.2), central government funding for Zhuang promotion was transferred from the MLC to the GZAR Department of Education (DoE) (Kaup, 2000, p. 143). Kaup (2000, p. 143) reports just one DoE official was tasked with Zhuang promotion after the

funding shifted to the DoE. The Zhuang promotion division of the DoE – called the “National [i.e. minzu] Education Department (sawcuengh [i.e. Zhuang] Promotion Office)” –is now only tasked to:

guide and coordinate the work of minority education; formulate and implement special policies and measures for the development of minority education in our region; ... [ guide] Minority bilingual teaching and textbook construction; [and] guid[e] students [in] the education of national unity”. (“Guangxi Department of Education,” 2016)

This division has little formal control over GZAR’s educational regulation, financing, strategy or curricula, which are dealt with by other divisions of the GZAR Department of Education, including a Policies and Regulations division and divisions for development planning, basic education, higher education, and occupational education (“Guangxi Department of Education,” 2016). The policy division, in particular, has significant formal power to:

Study the strategy of education reform and development ... Research on major policy issues, education policy information collection, analysis, and summary and reporting work; planning and drafting of local comprehensive education laws and regulations; to undertake the legal construction of the education system and the administrative law of the relevant work; ... audit work; ... administrative litigation work. (“Guangxi Department of Education,” 2016)

These activities include suggesting language laws and regulations for law-makers to enact, which the “sawcuengh[sic] Promotion Department” cannot do.

Moreover, Zhuang bilingual schooling is now managed by a number of organs at different tiers, creating potential for fractured interests, LPP implementation challenges, and

accountability problems. Now, the national MoE and the GZAR DoE govern Zhuang language within schools, with counties responsible for funding. They also direct – in some cases, jointly with the national NAC – the specialised minzu universities (Blanchford, 2004, pp. 103-105). Additionally, since the 1980s, there have been prefecture- and county-level institutions in GZAR training Zhuang-speaking teachers for rural primary and middle schools, and a regional institution for training Zhuang secondary school teachers (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 245).

This reveals the structural constraints behind the indication in the literature that GZAR does not promote Zhuang in schools despite legal permissibility.

In contrast to Zhuang's limited inclusion in education, A. Feng and Sunuodula (2009, p. 691) report detailed regional policies and proactive implementation measures exist for English education in GZAR, even in "Zhuang dominated areas". These include English being offered at primary school, targets for tertiary institutions, special funds for training teachers, and a partnership policy to recruit English teachers from Guangzhou for GZAR's under-resourced remote schools. They (A. Feng & Sunuodula, 2009, p. 698) emphasise that "[t]he entire system is mobilised" for English education. Adamson and A. Feng (2009, p. 324), note "English is a high-stakes subject in schools in the PRC. It is a prerequisite for university study in most parts of the country and for entry into many professions." However, in comparison to other minority areas they studied, A. Feng and Sunuodula (2009, p. 699) found it comparatively rare in GZAR for educators and scholars to call for special university policies to accommodate minority students' limited English acquisition.

The limited provision of Zhuang bilingual schooling despite its legal permissibility may be explained by both the developmentalist value system and local governments' lack of funding, but the two are connected: funding shortages arise because bilingual schooling is no longer a national policy priority so central funding has reduced. Changing priorities are further discussed below.

#### **4.4 Discussion and summary**

This section discusses three themes of discontinuity emerging from the data; the divisive boundaries of the Zhuangzu and of Zhuangzu territories (4.4.1), the tension between normative and operative purposes of LPP (4.4.2); and the contradictory discourses within Zhuang LPP (4.4.3). All of these contribute to the inconsistencies in Zhuang LPP.

##### **4.4.1 Boundaries in LPP**

Zhuang language governance rests on the organisation of language users and associated ethno-cultural features into bounded polities, in this case the Zhuangzu. Zhuang language is, therefore, governed by institutions structured to represent Zhuangzu interests, in particular the structure of the semi-autonomous territory, GZAR. This system “assume[s] a spatial ‘fixedness’” Blommaert (2004, p. 56) has argued pervades the international linguistic rights framework. Participants' discourses reproduce this construction of GZAR's pivotal role in Zhuang language governance. These legal frontiers produce Hanzu-Zhuangzu cultural difference as well as reflecting differences, as the epigraph remarks legal systems are want to do, and then bounds linguistic diversity firmly to this authorised organisation of difference. GZAR is, however, not only delimitation but also a limitation. The chapter has described the weakness of Zhuang LPP responsibilities being channelled to the GZAR government while

its self-governing powers are ambiguous and its funding and accountability mechanisms limited.

The constitutional form of language right is negative rather than positive, as this chapter explicates. Thus, at the highest level, China's minority language LPP is "tolerance policy" rather than "promotive policy" (Schiffman, 1996, pp. 28-29) (following Kloss) because there are no state guarantees and no domains are reserves for minority language usage; however, in the subordinate, implementation-oriented instruments, there is some state investment in Zhuang usage. This recalls Schiffman's third type of LPP, "mixed policy", where "no public resources are used to promote these languages, only to tolerate them, or to make the state run more smoothly" (Schiffman, 1996, p. 30). For this type, he provides the example of state-permitted but parent-funded transitional bilingual schooling; in GZAR, bilingual schooling remains state-funded i.e. the policy goes beyond tolerance. However, as these schools are largely at each county's own expense, not the central or regional governments', classing this as "promotive policy" seems unwarranted. Schiffman also uses the use of multiple languages on some state-authored public signage as to illustrate "mixed policy"; Chapter Five will reveal exactly such a policy within GZAR. Moreover, China's LPP has jurisdictional limitations in both the aspects to which Schiffman (1996, p. 30; see also McRae, 1975; Paulston, 1997) draws attention; personality of the rights-holder and territorial limitation. The basic language right in China is not a "personal right" (Schiffman, 1996, p. 29), as 4.3.1 explained. The right is structured so as only to govern language usage within areas of high Zhuangzu habitation, i.e. the Zhuangzu autonomous territories (see Section 4.2.3).

#### **4.4.2 Normative orientation of LPP**

In some systems, language rights themselves may be understood as a tool for mediating, and formalising, the balance between protecting a minority rights and serving the majority. That

is not their role in the Chinese system, because the minority language freedom is not actionable. Rather, the problem of Zhuang disempowerment is pre-empted in other formal structures in China, including the rules about minority minzu participation in national and autonomous regional governments and special powers under the *Regional Autonomy Law* for the GZAR government (see 4.2.3.2). Nevertheless, these mechanisms offer only limited representation to Zhuang linguistic (and other) interests. Ruiz (1984) analyses three LPP “orientations”, towards language as a resource, a right, or a problem. While the Zhuang LPP framework stems from a constitutional expression of minority equality in the form of a right, the framework is not necessarily rights-oriented. Rather, the limited action-ability of these language rights and discontinuities and power restrictions in language governance suggest Chinese LPP is not rights-oriented; its purpose is not to empower Zhuang speakers, the Zhuangzu or other minority groups to mediate their disempowerment vis-à-vis the government or larger language groups. Rather, I argue Chinese LPP’s orientation is towards Putonghua as resource (for development) and its minority language orientation is towards symbolic valorisation (i.e. a fourth orientation). That is, a China’s minority LPP is primarily a vehicle for normative discourses about language diversity and equality. This is a confusing normative discourse given competing language ideologies are reproduced without reconciliation. In this ongoing ideological tension, certain LPP texts also orient towards minority languages, including Zhuang, as problems in so far as they are undeveloped and have the potential to disturb ethnic unity, but always problems the government is solving through its LPP.

#### **4.4.3 Discursive tensions**

Further, the chapter has highlighted the vagueness of minority language protections compared to majority language protections in law, which means in practice that language rights are

variously (mis)understood by regional government but also by individuals. The lack of normative, but also operative, specificity creates particular potential for varied interpretations and implementations because there are also contradictory discourses in LPP, some valorising Zhuang culture and language, and others positioning it as un-modern and un-economic, as this chapter has revealed. The tension is especially important given the chapter finds the situated construction of LPP in this case is mainly as a body of norms rather as operational rights, a discursive bulwark against disrespect for Zhuang and Zhuang speakers rather than a suite of specific mechanisms empowering speakers to freely use Zhuang. This discursive tension affects how constitutional-level minority language rights are (or are not) translated into rules and policies at national and regional levels, and these processes of translation are also affected by the constraints on authority, power and funding at various levels. The normative and functional strength of laws supporting Putonghua (in particular the *Putonghua Law* and *Education Law*) further divests the minority language governance framework of symbolic and legal power.

China offers an especially clear case of how “it is the nation-state that creates linguistic minorities” (Freeland & Patrick, 2004, p. 5), particularly the Zhuangzu. However, China is not alone; Schiffman (1996, p. 30) argues language policies “always ... force binary distinctions on to variable, gradient phenomena”. Freeland and Patrick (2004, p. 5) continue that “[n]ation-state ideology creates one of the central paradoxes of claiming minority rights in a discourse based on equality, individual liberties, and national unity”; this chapter has revealed equivalent tensions between language rights, a discourse based on equality, and national unity, but in an illiberal polity in which individual liberties are not ideologically central. The socialist approach does not, however, predicate a framework in which group, rather than individual, language liberties function cohesively; in any political system

language rights' operability is dependent on the continuity and detail of the texts and structures within the LPP framework. In this case, operability appears to be restricted by the absence of continuity and detail.

In addition to tensions between ideologies of language equality, on one hand, and national unity on the other, this chapter revealed a third crucial and conflicting discourse in LPP, developmentalism, and in particular construction of a language hierarchy organised around languages' backwards/modernity and economic capital. M. Zhou (2001a, p. 36) has argued China's LPP in general has always been a "struggle between long-term and short-term development views", however, vast social and ideological change since China's language rights were first enshrined in the 1950s – most importantly, the ascension of market structures and ideologies – radically alter what development means and what LPP now has to change and achieve in order to protect Zhuang; LPP faced a bigger challenge than ever in normatively valuing Zhuang, and in organising society such that Zhuang is widely useful and profitable. Developmentalist discourses not only reproduces an evaluative understanding of minority language as more or less developed but also an understanding of language as a resource which the state *should* optimise by "developing" minority languages.

This "developmentalism" is open to the critique of being hegemonic, guilelessly overt rather than a "hidden agenda" (Shohamy, 2006). Discourses that valorise minority languages and minority language equality are reproduced in LPP texts, but as this valorisation has an increasingly uneasy relationship with the much more highly valued discourses of "development". Thus, more recent policy texts subsume language policy within development policy, no longer mention language governance, or present language governance as primarily about ensuring Putonghua – instrumental to the entwined national goals of developing

economically and in terms of national unity – is promoted alongside minority language protections. This does not mean the positive, equality-focused discourses in Zhuang LPP are disingenuous; recognising, respecting and assisting minority groups was unequivocally a genuine priority of the early PRC government (see e.g. Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 56; Whaley, 2004, p. 142; M. Zhou, 2004), but the ideological debates within which all LPP must be situated are dynamic.

#### **4.4.4 Summary**

The chapter has identified cleavages arising from formalisation and reification in law of ethno-linguistic groups, especially the Zhuangzu, highlighting ideological processes of “erasure” and linguistic “iconisation” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, pp. 38-39) and a monolingualist ideology, in tension with a language ideology of equality, in the official construction of a Zhuang group and its linguistic entitlements. The chapter analysed these laws as powerful discourses propagating a linguistic and social order within which an ideological division between more and less developed is mapped onto majority-minority ethnic and language divisions, and onto a modern/pre-modern division of traditions; i.e. processes of ideological “recursivity” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, pp. 38-39). Echoing the epigraph, Zhuang LPP’s production of cultural (and other) difference has been foregrounded. The chapter has argued Zhuang LPP is systemically focused on general policy principles, foregrounding the normative role of law (i.e. a discursive role), however, as China’s LPP framework constructs utility in socio-economic development as the dominant value, it restricts the normative power of Zhuang LPP and discourages increased implementation through operative laws and policies.

The chapter has also analysed how structural cleavage arises in a centralised, party-state structure, and how this structure makes it difficult to represent the formalised ethno-linguistic

groups and to adjust dynamically to the realities of language governance and of changing linguistic and social orders. In particular, China's constitutional minority language right – the “freedom” to use and develop minority language from which Zhuang and other minority language governance stems – and the policies and regulations implementing it specifically in relation to Zhuang language cannot be easily challenged by Zhuang speakers or adapted to reconstructed priorities or evolving language practices. What is particular to this political economy is the paucity of feedback mechanisms, rigidity and lack of agility in the LPP framework; Zhuang speakers are largely not empowered to call for different or better implementations of the basic minority language freedom, and Zhuang usage can only be recognised, let alone protected, to the extent it aligns with the administratively and territorially bounded Zhuangzu.

The chapter adds to the ethnography of LPP literature by revealing that cleavage arises even within overt LPP, as policies and rules at various jurisdictional scale-levels – and the government organs which enact and interpret them – are heterogeneous. That heterogeneity is further explored, at the level of specific LPP implementation, in Chapter Five.

## Chapter Five: Zhuang in Linguistic Landscapes in GZAR

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*“Cultural geography ... calls for a decoding of landscape imagery, a reading of the environmental ‘maps of meaning’ ... which reveal and reproduce – and sometimes resist – social order.”*

*(Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 6)*

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### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses linguistic landscape data (defined at 3.5.4.4), primarily from GZAR, the autonomous region in southern China with a mandate to manage Zhuang language (on this mandate, see further Chapter Four). In particular, this chapter considers what public texts in GZAR reveal about use and status of Zhuang relative to other languages used in the region, and how their “visual ideology” (following Cosgrove, Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 3) reproduces or resists particular linguistic and social orders (see further 2.3.2.4). Thus, it treats displayed texts as “maps of meaning” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 6) that, in addition to publicising specific information such as the name of a street, transform physical “spaces” into organised, socially, culturally and politically significant “places” (see also Hult, 2014, p. 513). Through this analysis, the chapter will show that public signage in GZAR tends to minimise the relevance on Zhuang language in contemporary civic and commercial discourse, while using Zhuang language, and non-linguistic references to Zhuang language, as symbols of a version of regional cultural heritage which the government promotes. Following the behest of the epigraph, the chapter will “decode” landscape imagery that is linguistic and non-linguistic in form, i.e. treating “language as

extravisual” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 1, following Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996), including the lexical (semantic) content, language choice and visual grammar of written language displays, and also including Zhuang language as a visual icon of Zhuangness and other visual icons referencing Zhuang language and/or “Zhuangness”.

I focus primarily on public landscapes within Nanning because Nanning Municipal Government has an explicit policy about including Zhuang on public signage (Nanning Municipal Government, 2004) so Nanning’s linguistic landscapes demonstrate how Zhuang language governance affects the physical environment. Further, Nanning is GZAR’s biggest city and capital and therefore imbued with a special symbolic power; its linguistic landscape norms have high symbolic capital so it these landscapes are significant in discourses constructing the social meanings of GZAR as a place

However, to better understand whether the linguistic landscapes observed in Nanning were typical of GZAR overall, and in particular whether displays of Zhuang language appeared to relate to urban scale-levels, I also studied landscapes of other centres in GZAR, namely Guilin City, Wuming, a satellite town under the Nanning Municipal Government remit, and Ping’An Zhuang Village, as well as observing rural areas between these centres. (3.5.4 explains further why my focal landscapes are not rural but rather urban cultural, campus and central CCC Sites.)

My focus on cities reflects the fact that in China (as in many countries) cities offer the greatest opportunities for social mobility: they are where people come to “change their lifestyles or move up the social ladder” (Cartier, 2015b, p. 207; see also C. Fan, 2008,

p. 13). China's cities are destinations and stepping-stones for geographic and socio-economic mobility (C. Fan, 2008, p. 13); Cartier (2015b, p. 207) argues "People in urban China...enjoy greater opportunities [than before... Their] ease of movement — mobility — [is] novel and exciting." Thus, China's cities are places where a concentration of technological and social changes, including linguistic changes, "alter the physical, cultural and linguistic landscape of a site" (Stroud & Jegels, 2013, p. 180), i.e. "mobile places" (see further Jaworski, 2014, p. 530). Urban linguistic landscapes are therefore also important discourses constructing the dominant identities and values associated with mobility.

In addition to GZAR's public, urban spaces, this chapter incorporates an analysis of the public linguistic landscapes within university campuses, namely two large state universities in Nanning (GU and GUN). Like cities, universities are "mobile places", geographic and socio-economic stepping-stones sites or "places of in-between-ness" (Sheller 2006 p. 219) as theorised in the "new mobilities paradigm" (Sheller 2006). Usually, universities within urban areas (and are so in this study), thereby co-constructing such places as centres. Campuses are therefore symbolically powerful landscapes. Education is widely understood in China as a resource for better career mobility, facilitating upward geographic and socio-economic movement, and statistics support this popular wisdom (C. Fan, 2008, pp. 1-13, 60). These campuses are part of the public urban landscape, with their exterior displays forming part of the streetscape, and their interior roads, parks and open spaces accessible to traversing members of the public. Thus, the university landscapes offer a further angle of examination of contrasts and continuities in GZAR's public linguistic landscapes. Moreover, university landscapes are the part of the urban environment experienced most often

(daily) by university students i.e. these landscapes are integral to understanding how language in public and language in place relate to language in (education) policy and language in the personal practices of my participants; a relationship examined across this chapter and the next.

Finally, the chapter includes an examination of linguistic landscapes of campuses of two minzu-specialist universities outside GZAR where Zhuang is studied (YMU in Kunming and MUC in Beijing). These offered an illuminating contrast to the Nanning campuses, to better discern what (if anything) was particular to university landscapes Zhuang language inside an area of Zhuangzu autonomous government. As Zhuang was not observed in public linguistic landscapes other than campuses landscapes in cities outside GZAR, the chapter does not need to otherwise compare places inside and outside GZAR.

Thus, the chapter addresses the Research Questions: “What role does Zhuang language play in public space within areas of autonomous Zhuangzu government and outside these areas?” (RQ2), “What role does Zhuang language play in education, especially for students continuing to university?” (RQ3), and “What are the ideologies undergirding official Zhuang LPP?” (RQ4). The chapter provides three levels of analysis: descriptive, empirical analysis (5.2); critical analysis about the findings (5.2.5) and critical discussion relating the analysis to the broader themes of language policy and social order (5.3). This discussion considers whether, and to what extent, the public and place-making practices of language in the landscapes are the result of explicit language policy, then critically discusses how the norms of language in public and in place revealed by the analysis function to create linguistic and social orders.

## **5.2 Zhuang in language displays**

### **5.2.1 Monolingual use of Putonghua or Zhuang**

Overall, monolingual Putonghua signage was the most prevalent, across all authors and discourses. I will first describe monolingual Putonghua texts before describing the unique monolingual Zhuang text found.

#### ***5.2.1.1 Putonghua-only signage***

Government-authored signage in urban and campus landscapes was typically monolingual in Putonghua. This observation applied across many genres including parking directions at public institutions, public works notices, bus timetables and commemorative plaques.

Monolingual Putonghua signage is not necessarily limited to one script, because Putonghua has both logographic and alphabetic orthographies. In the majority of monolingual Putonghua signs, only logographic characters were used. The sign at the main entrance of GU, a large public university located on a main thoroughfare in downtown Nanning, is a typical example (Figure 16). However, monolingual Putonghua signs in both characters and pinyin were also fairly common in all sites surveyed, particularly for signs giving road directions. In most cases, the characters were much larger than the pinyin (see, for example, Figure 22).



*Figure 16. Entrance, GU campus, Nanning.*

In the background of Figure 16, a small billboard and a red banner can be observed. As with the larger sign in the foreground of the picture, these background signs were monolingual in Putonghua, as was typical. Likewise, I found monolingual Putonghua texts surrounding all public institutions' entrances, such as on signs displaying entrance rules and opening times. Figure 17 provides an example of monolingual auxiliary entrance signage: walking across the GZAR Library forecourt in Nanning, red lettering on the building's façade and a changeable electronic sign are visible. Both are monolingual in Putonghua. This entrance lies on a downtown roadside beside temporary hoardings covered with monolingual government-authored texts taking advantage of the location's high visibility, including the billboard in Figure 18, which

lauds the construction of Nanning's subway (underway in 2014-2015). This billboard exemplifies government-authored signage unrelated to an institution but strategically placed alongside.



*Figure 17. GZAR Library, Nanning: Putonghua-only.*



*Figure 18. Billboard, GZAR Library kerb; Nanning: Putonghua.*

Commercial texts, whether from state-owned commercial entities or private companies, were also mainly monolingual in Putonghua. For example, Figure 19, a typical advertisement from Nanning's major thoroughfare, monolingually promotes a TV program for the national, state-run internet-TV broadcaster. Through this

advertisement's monolingual Putonghua, it anticipates that readers watch TV in Putonghua and indicates that Zhuang-speakers can be marketed to jointly with everyone else in Putonghua.

This expectation of a Putonghua-literate market was reaffirmed by frequent Putonghua-only advertisements displayed below Nanning's street-name signs. For example, the advertisement in Figure 20 promotes study-coaching services, hinting at Putonghua's dominance in education. I observed the same trend in the linguistic landscapes at GU, GUN and interstate universities, as exemplified by Figure 21, an advertisement laminated into a cafeteria tabletop at GUN. Although GUN offers Zhuang Studies and has a large Zhuangzu cohort, on-campus commercial texts were mainly monolingual in Putonghua, sometimes with English borrowings, but never including Zhuang. GU, which does not offer Zhuang Studies, had a very similar textual landscape to GUN.



*Figure 19. Billboard; Nanning: Putonghua.*



Figure 20. Street sign with advertising pane; Nanning: Street-name: dual-script Putonghua/Zhuang, poster: Putonghua.



Figure 21. Cafeteria tabletop, GUN; Nanning: Putonghua.

Additionally, I saw monolingual Putonghua street-name signs commonly in Guilin and on inter-city routes in GZAR, on-campus at GU and GUN in Nanning, and occasionally off-campus in Nanning (e.g. Figure 23), although most Nanning street-name signs were bilingual (see 5.2.2.2).



*Figure 22. Road sign; Nanning: Putonghua.*



*Figure 23. Street-name sign; Nanning: Putonghua.*

The road sign in Figure 22 uses dual-script Putonghua, while other road directions used English instead of Putonghua Pinyin, as Section 5.2.2.1 explains further.

My passage through rural GZAR confirmed my understanding of cities as places with more affordances for linguistic display in any language. Furthermore, the signage I observed in rural areas was almost always monolingual in Putonghua, as these field-notes reveal.

Just passed through little Hezhou on the train from Guilin to Shenzhen. Only public signage in Mando [i.e. Putonghua] characters, but really not much to be seen (a red banner at a weighing station, wall sign at a timber yard) ... The smallest place with a station that I've yet seen. Approx. 50 mudbrick farm houses around sunny, flat fields, with a small cluster of 5 or 6-storey flats on one edge of town. A school, with clearly visible school-name in Putonghua on its roof ... A few more village/towns, each of 50 or so usually brick, square, 3-storey buildings clustered very close, seemingly almost all residential. No visible signage. (16.6.2015)

While my observations in small places such as Hezhou were neither as systematic nor extensive as those in Nanning, Wuming and Guilin (see 3.5.4 for details), my observations all pointed to Putonghua's preponderance in the limited textual displays of village landscapes I observed.

In some instances, I found multilingual texts displaying Zhuang alongside monolingual Putonghua texts. Before presenting those multilingual texts (in Sections 5.2.2.2, 5.2.3.2, 5.2.3.1), I will describe the one monolingual Zhuang text I encountered.

### 5.2.1.2 *Monolingual Zhuang signage*

Monolingual Zhuang was exceedingly rare, as I discovered through extensive searching (see 3.3.2 and 3.5.4). I found one inlaid Zhuang text in the foyer of the GZAR Library in Nanning announcing the institution's name (Figure 24). However, the institution-name sign on the exterior was monolingual Putonghua (Figure 17). The inlaid Zhuang text was not visible from the street or entryway.

Like Putonghua, Zhuang can also be written in more than one script. The sign in Figure 24 is in Zhuang Pinyin, the standardised, Romanised script developed by the government in collaboration with Zhuangzu groups in the mid-twentieth century (see commentaries in Kaup, 2000; X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004; M. Zhou, 2001a, 2003; and the Standard in Guangxi Language Reform Committee, 1989). Historically, a conventionalised but never standardised logographic script called Sawndip was used for Zhuang (and other Tai languages') literature (see Holm, 2013), while government-developed pinyins specifically for Zhuang that included IPA and Cyrillic letters were briefly promulgated in the mid-twentieth century (see further 2.4.2.1).



Figure 24. Foyer, GZAR Library; Nanning; Zhuang.

### 5.2.1.3 *Monolingual other language signage*

I did not observe monolingual public signage in English or any other language.

Bilingual signage followed different, more Zhuang-inclusive patterns.

## 5.2.2 **Bilingual Signage**

Zhuang was not only rare monolingually but even in bilingual signage the more frequent combination was Putonghua and English. Putonghua-English texts were particularly prevalent in commercially-oriented, new and temporary signage. Putonghua-Zhuang bilingual texts, by contrast, were mainly government-authored, mainly found in Nanning Municipality, and typically street-names or public institutions' names. Bilingual signs without Putonghua were not found.

### 5.2.2.1 *Putonghua-English bilingual signage*

Some road directions were bilingual in Putonghua and English. Figure 25's "HUANGCHENG EXPWY" is English (EXPWY abbreviates "expressway").

Throughout GZAR, English takes the second spot on road direction signage when it is not given to Putonghua Pinyin (as in Figure 22). I observed many road directions across GZAR using English or Putonghua Pinyin, always including Putonghua characters, and never including Zhuang.



*Figure 25. Road sign; highway between Nanning and Wuming: Putonghua/English.*

A minority of other types of government-authored signs included English alongside Putonghua, for example the permanent labels on Nanning's public bins (Figure 26) and temporary texts such as Figure 27's poster promoting a design biennale. I did not observe foreign languages other than English on government-authored texts.



Figure 26. Bins; Nanning: Putonghua/English.

The biennale poster (Figure 27) is commercially-oriented although government-authored, aimed at attracting visitors and their spending. Commercially-oriented texts from Nanning were commonly bilingual (Putonghua-English), whether government-authored or privately authored, but Putonghua-only commercially-oriented texts were more prevalent. For example, my field-notes (10.6.2015) record:

Lots of English in Nanning signs, compared to Zhuang, but less than English in Hong Kong or Beijing. Shop brands / names over doors like “Graceful” ... Banks like CCB have Putonghua characters and English signs, as do “SINOPEC” servos [petrol stations] and “CHINA MOBILE”, “Vienna International Hotel”, “Boston International Hotel”, “Walmart”, “H&M”, “Jack Jones” etc, then one-offs like “Decedene” clothes.

Here, international brands use their internationally-recognised English brand-names, and this includes Chinese multinationals like Sinopec. The list includes hotels using foreign place-names in English and the word “International” in combination to associate themselves with marketable qualities of the lifestyle of an imagined global community. “Decedene” is a made-up English-like brand-name, presumably trading on customers recognising it as a foreign or “Globalese” (Jaworski, 2015), if not specifically English, word.



*Figure 27. GZAR Library entrance; Nanning: Putonghua/English.*

On university campuses, English translations were sometimes included alongside Putonghua in government-authored directions, logos and building-name signage. However, bilingual Putonghua-English signage was less prevalent than monolingual Putonghua signage at universities. I observed this at both minzu-specialist universities

and general universities. On this sign from YMU campus (Figure 28), which exemplifies Putonghua-English campus texts, the Putonghua and English components are parallel in content and given equal space; even the cardinal directions “<北 N” and “南 S>” are displayed bilingually. The YMU logo affixed to the left of the main sign in Figure 28 announces the university’s name in Putonghua characters and slightly smaller English letters under a pictorial emblem. The logo of GUN, the minzu-specialist university in Nanning, followed the same bilingual visual formula.



Figure 28. On-campus street-name sign, YMU; Kunming: Putonghua/English.

Figure 28 is typical: Putonghua comes before English, and is never smaller than the English, in all the bilingual signs collected in this chapter. Moreover, Putonghua was used more often than English in commercial signage. For example, Figure 29 shows one of Nanning's central shopping streets, illustrating the dominance of Putonghua in commercial signage. Sometimes English and Putonghua together announce a brand-name, e.g. here “Coca Cola” and “Haotian Correspondence” are written in Putonghua characters and English. Less commonly, brand-names and slogans were in English alone, but always another part of the same sign was in Putonghua.



*Figure 29. Commercial signage; Nanning: some English, mainly Putonghua.*

A more complicated combination of commercial, multi-tier governance and diplomatic authorial interests was evidenced in promotions for the China-ASEAN Expo, a large-scale event GZAR/Nanning hosted with Central Government support in 2015 and promoted on billboards, e.g. Figure 30, displayed on the same thoroughfare

as GZAR Library. The Expo is explicitly linked to the “Maritime Silk Road”, the cornerstone international trade policy of President Xi’s government, but is also more immediately commercially-oriented, seeking to attract diplomatic and business travellers.



Figure 30. Billboard; Nanning: Putonghua/English.

Property development signage was another prevalent genre of bilingual Putonghua-English display in urban GZAR. Property development is a significant industry in China, contributing some 15 percent of China’s GDP in 2015 (Barmé, 2012, p. 114; see also X. Feng, Ljungwall, & Xia, 2013; Fung, 2016). It is integral to both government and private economic growth because land is mostly leased by the state to developers (Eisberg, 2015, p. 21). Figure 31 shows two typical billboards advertising SINA Corporation’s “O-Park” development, in Putonghua with some English. Under “O-Park”, we see the first four characters of a property jargon term, 《创智天地二维

码》 (“knowledge and education community” or “KIC”), and the Putonghua name of this development, 《通昊》 (“Through Luxury”). O-Park is a high-end residential and commercial development in central Nanning (SINA, n.d.), featuring Nanning’s first “code garden”, a courtyard in which plants and QR codes are physically co-constructed to allow for easy virtual mobility from garden to website and to attract visitors: 《广大业内专业人士，媒体以及普通市民也纷纷慕名而来》 (“the majority of industry professionals, media and ordinary city-folk are enticed to come [here]”) (SINA, 2014).



*Figure 31. Billboards; Nanning: Putonghua/English.*

Within in Putonghua-English texts, explicit references to “Zhuang”/”Zhuangzu” (outside the phrase “Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region”) were extremely rare; I

only observed them in tourism-oriented discourses, including souvenir store signage and direction signage inside museums e.g. signs pointing to the Nationalities Museum's bilingually-named “壮族文化展厅 Zhuangzu Culture Exhibition Hall”.

These texts were part of the public landscape as they were in freely accessible public spaces, but they were not outside in streetscapes, indicating a trend observed in Zhuang-inclusive texts also, that Zhuangness is “in place” only within small and less-frequented areas of public space where Zhuang language or Zhuangness is also made relevant by the particular activities taking place in that space (e.g. university Zhuang Studies buildings: see Figure 42 and the description of GUN's Literature College in 5.2.3.1).

One of the few Putonghua-English examples referring explicitly to “Zhuang” was Figure 32, a souvenir counter named, in Putonghua, 《壮姑》 (“Zhuang Auntie”) in a department store of the up-market Malaysian chain, Parkson, in downtown Nanning. Its name-sign also featured a smaller English brand-name, “Z-girl”, obliquely referencing “Zhuang”. The counter's stock of embroidered “love-balls” displayed decorative Putonghua characters, but no products, signs or receipts at Zhuang Auntie contained Zhuang language; they were in Putonghua. This was typical of price-tags and receipts across GZAR.



*Figure 32. Department store; Nanning: Stall name and price-tags; Putonghua/English.*

Putonghua-English signage typically appeared in different genres to Putonghua-Zhuang signage, as described in the following section.

#### **5.2.2.2 Putonghua-Zhuang bilingual signage**

Texts that were Putonghua-Zhuang were consistently government-authored. The most common examples were bilingual street-name signs in Nanning. By 2014, standard-issue Putonghua-Zhuang street-name signage was widely installed (e.g. Figure 33), with the toponym in Zhuang Pinyin on the top line following Standard Zhuang grammar, above a Putonghua toponym in characters and then in pinyin. In a separately-coloured section, Putonghua characters provided cardinal directions alongside arrows. As Figure 33 shows, Putonghua characters have the largest typefont, while the Zhuang toponym is smallest.



*Figure 33. Street-name; Nanning: Zhuang/dual-script Putonghua.*

I also found bilingual Zhuang-Putonghua street-name signage in central Wuming (e.g. Figure 34). I found no such signage in Guilin City or Heping Township (urban centres in GZAR outside Nanning’s remit), and photos of street-name signs Liuzhou City in GZAR suggest it likewise monolingual (“Liuzhou Laowai”, 2009). However, just as in Nanning (see 5.2.2.1), Wuming’s commercial offerings were typically announced in Putonghua, sometimes accompanied by English but never by Zhuang (e.g. Figure 34).



Figure 34. Street-name; Wuming: Zhuang/dual-script Putonghua. (Background: commercial signage; dual-script Putonghua.)

Apart from street-name signs, no other genre of public text was consistently bilingual in Putonghua-Zhuang. However, some institutions were named in both languages, particularly in Nanning, which has more regional institutions than other GZAR cities. For example, I found Zhuang Pinyin on institution-name signs at GZAR Library (Figure 35), and Guangxi Nationalities' Museum and the GZAR Museum (e.g. Figure 37), all in Nanning. I also found one Putonghua-Zhuang name-sign at one public school in downtown Guilin; during a 2.5-hour walk looking for bilingual signage I saw only this sign (Field-notes 15.6.2015).

On one entryway name-sign at each of these institutions, Zhuang was written alongside Putonghua. Unusually, the Library sign's Putonghua used traditional rather than simplified characters and GZAR Museum's Putonghua name included both traditional and simplified Putonghua characters: this museum was opened in 1958

(“David”, 2016), when character simplification was beginning. The Zhuang component at each, however, was the modern pinyin not traditional Sawndip.



*Figure 35. Entrance stone, GZAR Library kerb; Nanning: traditional Hanyu characters/Zhuang.*

Bilingualism indexing Zhuang heritage was also (arguably) displayed at a Zhuang-cuisine restaurant in Wuming (see further on this restaurant in 5.2.4.1); the example highlights the ambiguity of written Zhuang’s indexicality. Most of the restaurant’s texts, including its exterior signage and menus, were entirely in Putonghua. Only one sign, on entering the dining rooms, was (arguably) bilingual (Figure 36). First, it reads

“Zhuang” in Putonghua using a character assigned to signify “Zhuang” in early PRC years during a campaign to replace the pejorative characters used to write many minority groups’ names. (Previously, 《僮》, a derogatory character also meaning “slave”, was used for “Zhuang”, e.g. in Chang (1968); Guangxi Zhuang Literary History Newsroom & Guangxi Teachers College (1961); and on 1954 census records reproduced in Mullaney (2006, p. 142)). Figure 36’s Putonghua character for “Zhuang” has since been simplified so this is a visual anachronism. Below this on the same panel is a cartouche with a calligraphic-style character 《僚》. In Putonghua this translates the Zhuang word “*raeuz*” (in English, “we/us”) but it can also be read as the Sawndip for the same word (Sinj & Loz, 2008, p. 21). Given the expertise needed to read this, and its brevity, its semiotic function is symbolic rather than lexical, an icon of heritage augmenting the traditionalism of eating “home-style” Zhuang food; that traditionalism is conveyed whether the character is taken as calligraphic-style inscription of Putonghua or Zhuang, amplified by the anachronistic Putonghua character above it.



Figure 36. Dining area, Zhuang Home-style Restaurant; Wuming: Putonghua/Sawndip.



Figure 37. GZAR Museum entrance; Nanning: façade: Zhuang/Putonghua characters, banner: Putonghua, assorted signage: mainly Putonghua.

Zhuang-inclusive signage, however, was not consistently present at public institutions in GZAR. For example, Nanning's two inter-city railway stations, Guilin's central station, the GZAR People's Congress and GU in Nanning (Figure 16) did not have Zhuang on their main entrances, although GU's smaller East Gate name-sign used Putonghua and Zhuang. I found only one government department/agency in Nanning with a Zhuang sign (an environment department in a peri-urban area); in downtown Guilin, I found bilingual departmental signage at the joint entrance of Guilin City Cultural News, Publishing and Broadcast Bureau and Guilin City Cultural Relics Bureau (Figure 38).



Figure 38. Government agency entrance; Guilin: Putonghua/Zhuang.

Each of these Zhuang-inclusive signs was a one-off amongst surrounding texts. For example, the Zhuang-inclusive entrance sign at Nanning Library competed with monolingual Putonghua signs shown in Figure 18 and the bilingual Putonghua-English signs shown in Figure 27. At GZAR Museum, the Zhuang-inclusive entrance sign was surrounded by monolingual Putonghua and bilingual Putonghua-English signage (Figure 37). Likewise, at Guilin Cultural Bureaux, the Zhuang-inclusive sign stood alongside the bureaux's electronic sign in monolingual Putonghua (Figure 38).

I found one other Putonghua-Zhuang sign in downtown Guilin, but not at a public institution. It was a government-authored billboard (Figure 39) that physically minimised its bilingualism, making Putonghua more eye-catching than Zhuang through colour, type-font size and amount. The topmost Putonghua and Zhuang lines translate as “The Chinese ethnic groups, one close family”. That line uses 《中华》 in Putonghua, transliterated into Zhuang as “*Cunghhvaz*”, which means the cultural/ethnic Chinese nation (on the inclusivity of this term, see further Lickorish, 2008, p. 2), not the Chinese nation-state (《中国》), foregrounding the ethno-cultural rather than political element of (national) identity. A smaller, third line in Putonghua reads 《民族团结如空气一般珍贵》 (“Minzu unity is as precious as air”). The multiculturalism indexed by these languages (and this billboard's images: see 5.2.4.2) is emplaced in Guilin by representations in the background of the recognisable Elephant Tusk Park and pagodas, iconic landmarks of Guilin.



Figure 39. Billboard; Guilin: Putonghua/Zhuang.

Roadside magazine stalls constituted another Putonghua-dominated textual feature of linguistic landscapes across GZAR. While a government-sponsored, Zhuang-Putonghua periodical entitled “*Sam Nyied Sam*” (“*Third of March*”) exists (since 1986: Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 91), it is sold through subscription and not displayed at magazine stalls. A government-sponsored, monolingual Zhuang newspaper, “*Gvangjsih Minzcuz Bau*” (“*Guangxi Minzu Newspaper*”), comes out irregularly but was, likewise, not displayed in public.

Overall, no commercially-oriented bilingual texts including Zhuang were observed despite extensive searching, save one word, “CUENGH” (“Zhuang” in Zhuang) on a gift-box of liquor on a supermarket shelf in Wuming. This barely-bilingual and barely public packaging was otherwise in Putonghua (loaning English “vol” for volume), indicating Zhuang was merely a decorative resource authenticating the box’s Putonghua slogan 《壮人智慧 壮乡村户》 (“Zhuang People’s Wisdom-Zhuang Village Household”).

The symbolism of writing “Zhuang/Zhuangzu” in Zhuang was exceptionally rare, except when inside the phrase “Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region” on a bilingual government-authored text of the type described above; the exceptions proving the rule are this gift-box and the Putonghua-Zhuang bilingual logo/opening graphic of a local news program, which reads “*Vahcuengh Sinhwnz* 壮语新闻” (“*Zhuang Language News*”) (in Figure 40).

Televisions are a semi-public feature of linguistic landscapes, playing in campus cafeterias, open-fronted shops, buses, security/concierge gatehouses etc. In my observations, programs including spoken or written Zhuang (e.g. subtitles) were virtually absent on public televisions. I gleaned the government-produced evening *Zhuang Language News* was the best-known (possibly only) systematically-produced Zhuang-inclusive show in GZAR but I did not observe it being broadcast in GZAR because I mainly conducted fieldwork observations during the daytime. I nevertheless analysed its language use to better understand the displays Zhuang people in GZAR

could encounter in daily life, using a sample of streamed episodes of *Zhuang Language News* from 2014. After its daily broadcast on GZAR's regional public channel, *Zhuang Language News* is streamed on the national broadcaster's (CCTV's) website and re-distributed for free on commercial sites like ku.com, where I accessed episodes. Episodes include a textual display of subtitles, headlines and logos in addition to having aural content. Each episode delivers only a few minutes of news (contrary to reports of fifteen minute programs e.g. Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 91), with some reporters speaking Zhuang and others Putonghua. People interviewed use either Zhuang or various Hanyu varieties but Putonghua subtitles accompany all speech (e.g. Figure 40), while there are no Zhuang subtitles for Hanyu speech. Some anchors speak Zhuang and others Putonghua, either way with a banner of Putonghua character headlines scrolling underneath. Episodes typically use both spoken Zhuang and Putonghua, but textual elements are exclusively in Putonghua aside from the logo, which has a symbolic rather than informational function. For example, in the screenshot in Figure 40, the reporter is named in Putonghua characters (in front of her), and what she says is transcribed in Putonghua subtitles (white) beside the bilingual text of the program name (yellow) in Zhuang Pinyin and Putonghua characters, while another program logo at the top left is Putonghua-only.

Furthermore, the program as a whole cannot be comprehended from the Zhuang content alone; the audience appears to be expected to be orally bilingual and literate in Putonghua. Zhuang language is positioned as less useful than Putonghua in this program because the news cannot be communicated fully without Putonghua and because streamed episodes must be located using a Putonghua-only webpage (CCTV, n.d.).

Reportage topics include Zhuangzu cultural events like Third of March celebrations (the Zhuang New Year) and prosaic stories about events in GZAR. The report in Figure 40 was about a children's choir (shown in their costumes) who performed in Zhuang for Third of March celebrations. Overall, *Zhuang Language News*' localised content choices construct Zhuang language as relevant only within GZAR.

Thus, it appears Zhuang-inclusive bilingual television texts (from the *Zhuang Language News*, at least) were consistent with Zhuang-inclusive bilingual texts in public landscapes in being government-authored and associated with GZAR but also in not providing parallel translations. Rather, Putonghua dominated the television texts as it did signage texts; Zhuang seemed even more marginal in bilingual television texts than in bilingual signage.



Figure 40. Screenshot of Zhuang Language News 31.3.2014.

Overall, bilingual signage was more commonly displayed than multilingual signage; the latter is described below.

### 5.2.3 Multilingual Signage

Signage featuring more than two languages was uncommon. It was typically government-authored, naming public institutions in Putonghua, Zhuang and English, as Section 5.2.3.1 describes. However, some texts collected on campuses outside GZAR displayed Putonghua, Zhuang and other minority languages rather than English (5.2.3.2). Putonghua, English and another foreign language (5.2.3.3) was the least common combination for multilingual signage.

### 5.2.3.1 *Putonghua-Zhuang-English signage*

Occasionally, English was included along with Zhuang in multilingual signage. Figure 41, the entrance of GUN, is an example. Zhuang names the university, above the larger Putonghua name and small English name. Another example comes from the doorway of the Literature College at GUN. It displays engraved plaques in a standard format of Zhuang, Putonghua, then English – with Putonghua written largest – to announce various societies and research groups housed within. These all concern local minzu literature but not necessarily literature in Zhuang: e.g. “GUN Lingnan Institute of Minzu Literature” (Lingnan is a historic term for South-Central China). Zhuang on these plaques thus indexes all local minority literary traditions. These plaques are displayed as a cluster. Like the banners in Section 5.2.3.2, these texts are “in place” because this part of campus is zoned for the department where minority languages and cultures are studied; such texts were not generally displayed around GUN.

Minzu universities like GUN are more localised than other universities by virtue of their local minority minzu orientation in enrolments and research; the localisation is their *raison d'être*. However, with China's tertiary education being increasingly deregulated, these universities, too, need to compete for domestic and international students. Thus, “up-scaling” (Blommaert, 2007; Blommaert et al., 2014) with English does important place-making work for minzu-specialist universities. As part of widening its appeal, GUN has introduced Putonghua-English marketing texts (e.g. a bilingual logo) displayed on-campus and online, all excluding Zhuang, while YMU and MUC recently erected Putonghua-English entrance signs and updated their official English names (replacing “nationalities” with “minzu”) (as reported by my YMU research facilitator, June 2014; cf. “Minzu University of China,” 2014). GUN's

trilingual entrance seems older in comparison. Its inclusion of English nevertheless reveals an association made between English and education, and may be interpreted as attempting to portray the university as outwardly-oriented. That orientation has had socio-political purchase since China's Opening and Reform began (1978), even before the current climate of academic capitalism. GUN's more recent bilingual texts respond to the increasing value of internationalism by giving a more prominent role to English, usually at the expense of Zhuang, which is absent from the newer signs.

GUN's neighbouring bank's large signage was in Putonghua and English, while Putonghua dominated smaller information plaques at the entrance (visible at the right in Figure 41), and red banners, toponyms and maps on the roadway into campus. Neither my participants nor I were able to find Zhuang texts on GUN's campus other than the gateway and the Literature College plaques.



*Figure 41. Main entrance, Guangxi University of Nationalities; Nanning: gateway: Zhuang/Putonghua/English. Bank sign: Putonghua/English.*

I found just two commercial texts that combined Putonghua, Zhuang and English, both shop-front signs at Guangxi Rural Credit Service. They announced this bank's name in a long row of Zhuang Pinyin, Putonghua characters and English, with a standardised design. I saw this sign at two branches in the Nanning area, although I saw other branches of this bank in GZAR without this trilingual signage. In each case, the bank also displayed monolingual Putonghua bank-name signs. In one case this included a big, neon sign on the top of the building while the trilingual sign at that branch was smaller and lower.

Finally, while Zhuang-inclusive public institution signs were rare in Guilin (5.2.2.2), I collected one trilingual Putonghua-Zhuang-English name atop Guilin's older, northern railway station. Zhuang and English were symmetrically off-set, slightly lower than the central Putonghua. Inside this station, however, Zhuang was not displayed, as at the many GZAR stations I passed/visited.

### ***5.2.3.2 Multilingual signage in Putonghua, Zhuang and minority language(s)***

The Guilin billboard above (Figure 39) used bilingualism to index inclusivity; this was likewise the dominant indexicality of multilingual, Zhuang-inclusive signage. Languages were used in visual synecdoche to represent specific minzu. Such signage was rare, however. I found two examples on minzu university campuses outside GZAR. Figure 42 shows trilingual New Year banners in the Minority Minzu Studies department at MUC, Beijing. Figure 43 shows a multilingual, government-authored poster on a noticeboard at YMU, Kunming.

These banners hang at the office of Zhuang and Dong Studies academics, visited by students and colleagues but not passed by the general campus population. Zhuang was displayed at MUC only in this semi-public corridor. The banners use Zhuang, Putonghua and Dong (another minority language) to celebrate Chinese New Year. Here, Zhuang and Dong are printed smaller than Putonghua and off-set from the centre.



Figure 42. Office of Zhuang Studies academics, MUC; Beijing: Zhuang/Putonghua/Dong.



Figure 43. Campus notices, YMU; Kunming: banner and LHS poster in Putonghua, RHS poster in eleven minority languages including Zhuang, and Putonghua.

Contrasting with this implied (or secondary discourse) message of inclusivity of the multilingual New Year banners, the poster at YMU explicitly promoted the inclusion of minority languages, within the frame of national cohesion. The poster consists of one slogan repeated in eleven different languages, including Zhuang: 《中华人民共和国各民族团结起来 毛泽东》 (“‘All the Minzu of the People’s Republic of China Join Together!’ Mao Zedong”). The heading is monolingual Putonghua, positioning anyone reading Zhuang as bi-literate in Putonghua. Each sentence ends with the name (in Putonghua) of the language used: the Zhuang sentence ends with 《壮文》 (“Zhuang Writing”). The Zhuang also begins with “*Cunghhwaz*”, Standard Zhuang for “Zhuang Speech”. These subheadings indicate that the poster intends to communicate through Putonghua to a readership who may not recognise minority languages, and may therefore need to be oriented in order to consume each sentence as an “iconisation” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38) of the named language.

Another constant, if circulating, multilingual text in these landscapes is money. Chinese banknotes are multilingual, using scripts of four recognised minority languages with large speaker populations – Tibetan, Uyghur, Mongolian and Zhuang – in addition to Putonghua. The first three minority languages were added when notes were reissued in 1955, with Zhuang added in 1962 (“Renminbi,” 2016). The front is Putonghua-only, with 《中国人民银行》 (“People’s Bank of China”) in simplified characters and the denomination in both Arabic numerals and traditional characters (e.g. Figure 44). The reverse (also Figure 44) gives the denomination and year in

numerals, with “yuan” in Putonghua Pinyin and 《年》 (“year”) as a simplified character. Under Putonghua Pinyin for “People’s Bank of China”, that same institution-name is transliterated in four smaller scripts, including Zhuang Pinyin (lower right in the close-up in Figure 44).



Figure 44. Banknote front, reverse and reverse close-up: Putonghua, Tibetan, Mongolian, Uyghur, Zhuang.

### 5.2.3.3 Signage in Putonghua, English and another foreign language

Foreign languages other than English were largely absent. I occasionally observed a foreign shop-name, but only collected one longer text with multiple foreign languages, a Putonghua-Vietnamese-English promotion at Nanning Airport (Figure 45). While some Zhuang and Vietnamese varieties are reported to be mutually intelligible, they use different orthographies.



Figure 45. Departures entrance; Nanning Airport: Putonghua/English/Vietnamese.

### 5.2.4 Referencing Zhuang language and “Zhuang-ness”

Section 5.2 has so far identified patterns of display of Zhuang language in public texts; displayed Zhuang language functions largely to symbolise (imagined communities of) local Zhuang speakers/Zhuang heritage in government texts. This section examines how else reference is made to Zhuang language and/or the Zhuangzu and/or Zhuang culture, tradition and identity (i.e. “Zhuang-ness”) in public texts. It explores instances when Zhuang language is obscured from displays of other Zhuang icons. It begins by

analysing explicit linguistic references to Zhuang language (5.2.4.1), and then the non-linguistic conventions of referencing the same through visual symbols within public texts (5.2.4.2).

#### **5.2.4.1 Linguistic references to “Zhuang language”**

Public texts in any language did not refer to “Zhuang language” except within the Nationalities Museum’s Zhuang culture exhibition (Figure 46, discussed below), some museum panels specifically about Zhuang language, and in naming “*Zhuang Language News*” (see 5.2.2.2). Rather, in terms of explicit references to “Zhuang” on display, I found the references to “Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region” in institutions’ names (throughout 5.2), the “Zhuang Auntie” shop and the “CUENGH” branded liquor (5.2.2), some references to the tourism destination “Ping’An Zhuang Village” (but some signs and tickets simply said “Ping’An Village”), the Putonghua-English bilingual name “黑衣壮民居 Black Clothes Zhuang House” in Nanning’s Nationalities Museum’s Ethnic Village, a trilingual self-reference inside that museum’s “Zhuang Cultural Exhibition” (Figure 46) which I examine below, and two monolingually-named commercial restaurants in urban centres, 《壮家人美食馆》 (“Zhuang Home-style Restaurant”) in Wuming and 《壮乡美食》 (“Zhuang Hometown Cuisine”) in Guilin. Section 5.2.2.1 has observed that any explicit reference to “Zhuang” in Putonghua or English texts was rare, and largely in tourism discourses or in formulaic GZAR institution names. It is notable that all these are references to “Zhuang” but not “Zhuang language”; for institutions, products and attractions, not explicitly referencing the Zhuang language appeared to be preferred.

At the Nationalities' Museum in Nanning, one display (Figure 46) presented an explicit reference to Zhuang language along with a self-reference to the Zhuangzu. I will focus “up-close” on this particular display as analysing it reveals how, within one text, many of the discourses identified in this chapter collide, including discourses valorising Zhuang language, discourses constructing Zhuang language as symbolic of Zhuang “voice” as therefore as an authentication resource, and the developmentalist and nation-building discourses introduced in Chapter Four.

Opened in 2008, this museum styles itself as exhibiting and protecting the material and intangible cultural heritage of GZAR's twelve minority minzu (“Introduction to GXMN,” 2013; “Guangxi Museum of Nationalities,” 2016). The Zhuangzu appear to have more cultural and symbolic capital than the other eleven minzu in GZAR because only Zhuang artefacts get their own permanent collection. This further constructs the GZAR and Nanning governments' identification with Zhuangness which they elsewhere achieve through displaying Zhuang language but not other minority languages on institution- and street-names.

A self-referential text was prominent upon entering the Zhuangzu Culture Exhibition Hall (Figure 46). Figure 46's sign is entitled “儂 raeuz[rau2]”. I debate which language(s) this character displays later in this section, but “*raeuz*” is Zhuang Pinyin. *Raeuz* is also spelled “*rau*z” in Zhuang Pinyin: both spellings appear in the banner of the prominent Zhuang online community forum, “Rauz Horizon” (e.g. “Stoneman”, 2009). In the sign's title, “[rau2]” indicates the pronunciation and second tone of *raeuz*. Secondary titles on this sign explicitly announce themselves as translations from

Zhuang, e.g. the English translation is preceded by “Zhuang translation:”, announcing this translation from Zhuang. The secondary titles translate the title as 《我们咱们》 in Putonghua and “us” in English. This sign’s reference to, and use of, Zhuang language constructs the Zhuangzu, whom the sign goes on to describe, and the Zhuang culture, which the exhibition presents, as meaningfully represented by Zhuang language practices.

Below the titles, three paragraphs in Putonghua, Zhuang and then English narrate a history of discrete, linear ethno-cultural Zhuang(zu) development and the benefits of historical inclusion in the Chinese empire. The panel is not a parallel trilingual text. The Putonghua paragraph presents the Zhuangzu’s national integration as beneficial to their development i.e. it engages the developmentalist rationale, as the other paragraphs do. However, the Putonghua and Zhuang paragraphs also emphasise the point when “壮族开始融入中华民族大家庭/*Bouxcuengh ongogya yungz haeuj gya hung Cunghwaz minzouz bae*” (“the Zhuang(zu) started blending into the Great Chinese Family”). Here and throughout, the Putonghua refers to the 《壮族》 (“Zhuangzu”) i.e. the officially-recognised Zhuang minzu polity, even when narrating pre-PRC times when there was no recognised Zhuangzu. The Zhuang uses the autonym “*Bouxcuengh*”, the conventional translation of Zhuangzu. The English uses “Zhuang”. “Hidden” alternatives not chosen include naming the historic group(s) as Zhuang 《人》 (“people”) or 《氏族》 (“clans”) or generic people of the Baiyue Basin, as historians do to avoid retrospective application of the modern minzu

classifications (e.g. Barlow, 2011, pp. 33-34), or other Zhuang autonyms (e.g. the autonyms in X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 239).

Further, the Putonghua paragraph frames Zhuangzu integration as the inclusion of a minzu within the establishment of a 《统一的多民族国家》 (“unified multi-ethnic nation”) (a conventionalised reference to the PRC). Section 4.2.2 explained this multi-ethnic unified country as a load-bearing construction of the order of society (see further Mullaney, 2011, p. 1), usually articulated specifically as the fifty-six minzu having unified.

Thus, the panel legitimises contemporary nation-building by framing it as advantageous for the Zhuang and, in addition in the Putonghua, as a form of state-structured ethnic harmony. The panel’s title is embedded here in nation-building discourses and the use in the same text of “Zhuangzu”: this context modifies the reference of “侬 raeuz[rau2]”/ 《我们咱们》 / “us”, indexing a particular group within the state’s organisation of society: “we Zhuangzu nationals”. That organisation of society is also emblematised by the sign’s Putonghua. By contrast, in grassroots texts, both the character and pinyin inscribing “raeuz” (“us”) in sign’s title are actually used to index Zhuang speakers transcending the official Zhuangzu grouping. For example, a CD given to me by Mr Black is sub-titled “The Music of the Rauz People” in English and its Hanyu sub-title, also on the cover, is 《壮族布依音乐专辑》 (“Zhuangzu and Buyizu Music Collection”) (Guangxi Nanning Dream Rauz Cultural Broadcast Company Ltd (ed), 2013). That is, in this title “Rauz” has two co-referents,

the Zhuangzu and the Buyizu, whose language is also a Zhuang variety but who are erased in GZAR's typical representation of Zhuang speakers as coextensive with the Zhuangzu. (See the explanation for these minzu's separate classifications in 4.2.3.3). Moreover, the "Rauz Horizon" website is a "prominent" (Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 26) transnational Tai- and Zhuang-speakers' initiative popular amongst some of my participants; "Rauz" there indexes a transnational group.

The use of Zhuang language is an iconic reference to (imagined) Zhuang speakers and in this case, this reference also is made explicit, trilingually, through the sign's self-reflexive pronominal title. Thus, Zhuang language as an icon and other semiotic resources work together here to make meaning within discourses of symbolic "voice", orienting Zhuang self-hood to outsiders and positioning this text, and the exhibition, as authenticated by being voiced by Zhuang people.

However, this indexicality, and this authentication, is complicated by the ambiguous script in the sign's title, to which I alluded above. The sign is entitled 《儻》 (pronounced *lóu*), with a secondary title in both Putonghua and English declaring that this character is in Zhuang and that the translation of this character is "us". This is incorrect. The Zhuang word for "us" is "raeuz" (in Zhuang Pinyin), as the title correctly shows, but the usual Putonghua logograph for that word is 《僚》 (*liao*) rather than the 《儻》 used in the title, as used in Figure 36 or on the CD noted above, which is entitled "Beix Nuengx Raeuz 贝依僚 Our Brothers and Sisters". Using 《僚》 for *raeuz* can also be found in ("Gaej Lumz Bae Goek Raeuz," 2015; "Bouxcuengh

Raeuz,” 2016; and Guangxi Nanning Dream Rauez Cultural Broadcast Company Ltd (ed), 2013). *Liao* was also one of the pre-tenth century imperial labels for people later called Zhuang (Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 33). Occasionally, yet another character, 《滑》, is used instead to translate *raeuz* (e.g. GZAR Minority Language Working Group Research Team, 1984, p. 631). Moreover, the character used here is the pre-simplified version of *lóu*, making it harder for contemporary readers of Putonghua to understand. The mis-spelling on the museum sign may have arisen because this logograph is pronounced *lau* in Cantonese and it was confused with the similar sounding Putonghua *liao*, or because this character can also be pronounced *lǚ* in Putonghua. *Lu* was another of the pre-tenth century group names for people in Guangxi (Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 33).

Whatever the reason, the mis-spelling demonstrates a lack of familiarity with the Zhuang language and failure to seek professional translation (or the translator’s failure), which is particularly notable in a sign purporting to speak on behalf of Zhuang people. The error confounds the symbolic voice and authenticity of the title. It also potentially causes offence, because in Putonghua the *lóu* character actually shown in the title means “hunchback”. This mistaken character unfortunately also works as an interdiscursive reference to the historic use of derogatory logographs for “Zhuang” and other minority groups’ names, which was decried by a 1776 emperor (Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 38) but was so common that it did not cease until a presidential directive in the late twentieth century officially changed many *minzu* name characters.



Figure 46. Curation, Zhuang Culture Exhibition, GZAR Museum of Nationalities;  
Nanning: Putonghua/Zhuang/English.

#### 5.2.4.2 *Non-linguistic references to “Zhuang-ness”*

This examination is relevant to the analysis of the roles Zhuang language plays in public landscapes because it reveals the how linguistic and non-linguistic symbols are used co-referentially (e.g. both for the referent “Zhuang-ness”) and demonstrates the symbolic role Zhuang language plays in public signage is not played exclusively by Zhuang language.

“Zhuang-ness”/Zhuangzu was also referred to by non-linguistic signs, i.e. images, in the landscapes. These non-linguistic references were slightly more common than linguistic references in commercial discourses. For example, images of (purportedly) traditional costumes were used to index Zhuang-ness, with multiple costume(s) displayed as icons. Again, banknotes are an example: unlike the other notes, the five-jiao note depicts traditionally-clad people from the Miao and Zhuang (R. Wang, 2013, p. 145). The conventional interpretation is that the Zhuang representative is on the right (Figure 47).



Figure 47. Five-jiao note with Miao and Zhuang people on reverse.

The costume worn by this figure resembles that in a photograph of Zhuang farmers I observed in Ping’An Zhuang Village’s cultural exhibition hall (Fieldwork 15.6.2015). It is, however, unlike the silver filigree headdress and bright outfit on hire to tourists as a Zhuang costume within the Ethnic Village’s “Black Clothes Zhuang House” or the dark outfit worn by a figure labeled 《壮》 (“Zhuang”) in Putonghua in a set of 《萌羊娃》 (“Adorable Sheepie”) postcards, which I purchased at GZAR Museum (Figure 48). (Each postcard depicts one minority minzu as a cartoon sheep in a traditional costume.) Those variations are unlike the colourful, high-shine dress and folded headdress depicted in Figure 39. McNaught (2015) has described the preference for colourful, high-shine costumes in the recent invention of “traditional” garb for a Taiwanese minority minzu. I saw this colourful, high-shine costume

repeatedly displayed within Nanning and Guilin, on posters and videos promoting GZAR and on decorative murals. It is on covers of *Third of March* magazine (e.g. issues 2014-5, -6). Indeed, the Nationalities Museum's Zhuang exhibition uses Zhuang costumes as emblems to locate a variety of Zhuangzu sub-groups on a map of GZAR (Figure 49).

The costumes are essentialist, and performative: Zhuang speakers I interviewed do not wear these costumes, nor do their communities. I observed people employed in cultural tourism wearing uniform versions of such clothes in one tourism site but not in cities, even within Nanning's museums, the Ethnic Village or Wuming's Zhuang restaurant.



Figure 48. Postcard purchased at GZAR Museum gift shop, Nanning.



Figure 49. Map of GZAR with Putonghua toponyms and images of Zhuang costumes, Nationalities Museum, Nanning.

The multiplicity of costume emblems contrasts with the singular script emblem, Zhuang Pinyin, used across most displays collected in this chapter. The multiplicity also contrasts with the sole language variety, Standard Zhuang, which the displays encode. These costumes may be reductive as icons; nevertheless, it appears that the diversity of Zhuang practices has not undergone as much “erasure” (see further Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 39) in displays of non-linguistic icons as it has in linguistic displays.

However, the variety also makes these icons indistinct in their indexicality; blurring not only the referents “Zhuang-ness” and Zhuangzu but also “minority minzu”. “Traditional” costume is a trope that indexes a non-Han quality, and foregrounds visual “otherness” and traditionalism (Gladney, 2004, p. 58) (see the significance of

the homogenising minority/majority binary at 2.4.2.2.2). It adds what is called in Putonghua 《民族味道》 (“ethnic flavour”) (see also Gladney, 2004, p. 54) without specifically indexing a culture or group except where accompanying text makes explicit the particular reference of a costume, e.g. the title on the costume map in Figure 49 says 《壮族》 (“Zhuangzu”). Combining these visual icons with Zhuang language, as in Figure 39, can also clarify the referent as “Zhuang speakers” or “Zhuangzu” rather than “minority minzu”, provided it is recognisable as Zhuang language. Conversely, Zhuang language as an icon may simply represent “non-Han language” and indistinctly index minority groups and cultures.

Apart from the costumes, the other prominent non-linguistic symbol referencing “Zhuang-ness” was the bronze drum. Such drums are central to the GZAR Museum and Nationalities Museum’s exhibition about Zhuangzu cultural history and also its separate bronze drum exhibition. The drums were traditionally symbols of high social status and for ritual use (Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 6) and now serve as emblems of technological, religious and musical customs that are sometimes presented as particular to the Zhuangzu and sometimes presented as shared by historic non-Han peoples of GZAR. Like the costumes and language icons, without explicit co-texts the drum can be an indistinct, pan-minzu symbol rather than a specific Zhuang reference. I observed the drum image within public texts in GZAR, e.g. the billboard about minority unity in Figure 39. It was a prevalent image on circulating, Zhuang-themed texts: to name just a few, tissue packets branded by Zhuang Home-style Restaurant for customers, the back cover of S. Zhang’s *General History of the Zhuang* (S. Zhang, 1997), and the case of another CD of Zhuang songs from Mr Black (“Te Yi Lan Lu”

[特益栏陆], 2014). Souvenir and toy drums were sold at both museums, inside the Ethnic Village's "Black Clothes Zhuang House" and at Zhuang Auntie. The liquor gift-box featuring a Zhuang word, noted in Section 5.2.2.2, contained drum-shaped bottles. GZAR Library (see Figure 17) and the Nationalities Museum (Figure 50) are built in the cylindrical form of the bronze drum, as is GZAR Museum's separate bronze drum exhibition room; these latter exemplify architectural "place semiotics" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 8).



*Figure 50. Guangxi Museum of Nationalities' front aspect, Nanning outskirts.*

### **5.2.5 Analysis of findings relating to the linguistic order produced by patterned multilingualism and iconised references**

This section analyses empirical findings emerging from the descriptive analysis above of the monolingual, bilingual and multilingual data.

Zhuang language is publicly displayed in GZAR more than outside GZAR, but not consistently across GZAR. This close analysis of the linguistic order manifest in signs displayed in GZAR clarifies Kaup's (2000, p. 143) passing observation that, in unspecified places in GZAR, "Government buildings and street signs use both Han characters and Zhuang". The landscape analysis shows that although areas within GZAR have more Zhuang language on display than areas which are not under Zhuangzu autonomous government, even within GZAR Zhuang is only displayed in certain places, namely on street-name signs within the Nanning area, on some government/public buildings in various GZAR cities, and on the buildings where Zhuang is studied inside university campuses. The new mobilities paradigm asserts "places are about... the placing of peoples, materials, images, and the systems of difference that they perform" (Sheller 2006 p. 214). Within GZAR, choices about displaying Zhuang language as an image (an icon), as materialised language, and as an index of the people "in-place" as both viewers and as speakers represented, or voiced, through language displays, defines particular spaces. In making particular places distinct, the linguistic order (re)produces a social order over who and what is (normatively) practiced within them. Language displays also afford places their own identities, which may be articulated, *inter alia*, within commercial discourses to create "place-products" (Chaisingkananont, 2014a, p. 25), within civic discourses to create territories and to localise the government, and within heritage discourses to create minority "homelands".

This place-making distinction is clearest in Nanning, where Zhuang-inclusive signage is concentrated. Zhuang-inclusive signage in the form of Putonghua-Zhuang bilingual street-name signs now exists in the Nanning Municipality, including Nanning City and

Wuming Town, but is excluded from streets on university campuses within Nanning. Other centres in GZAR have fewer public institutions, and those they have are not observably consistent in their inclusion of Zhuang on name signs, and these places do not have Zhuang-inclusive street-name signs. Rural observations were limited but consistent with the finding that displaying Zhuang is not normal in GZAR's linguistic landscapes, but rather a practice reserved for certain government texts in certain places. The prominence of Zhuang language in public GZAR landscapes has been increased by public/government buildings being named in Zhuang alongside Putonghua i.e. by language policy intervention.

Zhuang is displayed for symbolic functions more than informational functions. If we analyse this Zhuang signage in terms of an informational function (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 23), the Zhuang on bilingual/trilingual signs carries a minimal informational load. For example, on Nanning's street-name signs – the only signs categorically including Zhuang – the cardinal directions are only in Putonghua, the street-name itself is in Putonghua in addition to Zhuang, and the displayed Zhuang toponym, which is a transliteration of the Putonghua street-name, does not correspond intertextually to any of the physical and online maps I collected and used in fieldwork, nor to the postal system, as these all use Putonghua for location information. The symbolic function of signage can also be analysed (Landry & Bourhis, 1997, p. 23). The smaller type font of Zhuang on street-name signs and, likewise, on those few campus entrance signs that include Zhuang, as well as Zhuang's and typically off-centred position, symbolises that Zhuang text conveys mere peripheral information, or functions as decoration. This is similar to Manx being “constructed a secondary to English by being printed in a smaller typeface” on packaging and public notices in

Sebba's (2010, pp. 68,72) study. The symbolic function of written Zhuang is especially clear in texts where font is stylised and has no informative content (e.g. the restaurant sign in Figure 36 that may be read as Putonghua or Putonghua-Zhuang Sawndip and simply says "Zhuang"), and in texts where Zhuang indexes the Zhuangzu to reconcile the text's secondary discourse with a primary discourse of ethnic harmony and social inclusion (e.g. Figure 39 and Figure 43). That is, written Zhuang language is an "iconised" (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38) symbol of Zhuangness/Zhuangzu. (Similarly, 4.2.2 has argued that Zhuang language is legally constructed as a Zhuangzu icon.)

The symbolic and informative functions interact: signage is a symbolic resource in public discourses in addition to the specific information it announces. As Sebba (2010, pp. 59-60) notes:

public texts may have an overt purpose (for example, to inform) but may participate in other discourses as well. In the case of multilingual texts, this may be a discourse about the relative value and status of the languages used.

Acknowledging overlapping discourses can assist in resolving the ambiguity between including Zhuang on signage at all, not including on all signs, and its small font. In the overt discourse of informing the public, Zhuang is not mobilised: that discourse is typically articulated through Putonghua. The covert discourse of language status mobilises Zhuang as a semiotic resource, but also deploys "visual grammar" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) (the text's size and positioning), Zhuang's absence on whole classes of signage, and the symbolism of never having Zhuang alone without Putonghua on a sign, in a multimodal articulation of Zhuang language's low status.

Zhuang is displayed primarily in government-authored texts; in commercial discourses, written Zhuang is rarely used and is less prominent than the non-specific costume and drum icon; and Zhuang is sometimes displayed as an icon of the Zhuangzu to symbolically reinforce an explicit government message of social inclusion and harmony.

The Zhuang displayed in GZAR was predominantly on texts authored by the government. The few instances of Zhuang on campuses inside GZAR were civic and educational discourses and also authored by public authorities and emplaced proximate to buildings where Zhuang was studied. However, most types of government-authored texts excluded Zhuang. Apart from government signs that categorically included Zhuang (Nanning street-names) or often though inconsistently included Zhuang (government/public buildings' names), there was exceptional use of Zhuang on a government-authored billboard in Guilin, GZAR with no naming discourse; its primary discourse explicitly promoted a message of ethnic unity and deployed bi/multilingualism as a visual resource symbolising unity. Arguably, this same discourse is implied by the Zhuang-inclusive naming signs i.e. it is their secondary discourse, while naming is their primary discourse.

Zhuang was virtually absent from grassroots and/or commercial discourses displayed in public texts in GZAR. Virtually all types of commercially-authored/commercially-oriented texts on display excluded Zhuang, with an exceptional but nonetheless minimal use of Zhuang writing as a resource symbolising authenticity on a commercial liquor product and at one commercial, Zhuang-themed restaurant. Written Zhuang has no role to play in creating associations with market actors, for example it

is not used to communicate with, or affectively connect to, the Vietnamese to whom the advertisement at Nanning airport promotes properties at the Guangxi-Vietnam border (Figure 45). Instead, English is included in that text as a potential lingua franca and/or to index luxury and transnational lifestyles.

Outside GZAR, Zhuang was largely absent from displays of grassroots and commercial discourses too, and also largely also from displays of civic and educational discourses. Indeed, Zhuang was not systematically displayed on government-authored signage in areas not under Zhuangzu autonomous government. Where Zhuang unsystematically appeared in these “non-autonomous” landscapes, it was within campuses, but participating in different discourses to the Zhuang displayed on campuses in GZAR. At YMU, Zhuang appeared as part of an explicit civic harmony discourse, much like the Guilin billboard, rather than a civic institution-naming or educational discourse and was not emplaced with any proximity to the buildings where Zhuang is studied at YMU. At MUC, Zhuang appeared as part of a grassroots cultural celebration discourse, not an educational discourse, but was emplaced in the building where Zhuang was studied, akin to Zhuang at GUN. Non-government, non-commercial texts in Zhuang which played with, or subverted, dominant language and authorship norms were invisible, save for the MUC text (Putonghua-Zhuang-Dong New Year banners) displayed by a Zhuang Studies academic in a semi-public place (his department). The academic chose to display these banners, making them the only Zhuang-inclusive “‘grassroots’ landscape initiatives” (Coupland, 2010, p. 99) I found, highlighting the absence of individually-authored public Zhuang texts. Moreover, the Zhuang New Year is traditionally not observed at the same time as Chinese New Year and the practice of feting New Year with

aphorisms on red doorway banners is a Han custom. Thus, the Zhuang couplets on these banners are re-entextualised into a mainstream textual custom without visually or symbolically displacing Hanyu's centrality. As the banners cannot but be read cross-textually, in meaningful contrast to typical, monolingual Putonghua New Year banners, the trilingualism is deployed for symbolic inclusivity. In a similar way, the social harmony campaign poster's (Figure 43) multilingualism symbolises the aspiration of ethno-cultural groups existing alongside each other in an admixture of enumerated components. It reproduces the construction of the Zhuangzu as one discrete component and as essentially linked to Zhuang language, through which that group, and only that group, is represented; that is, it uses language to articulate a social order.

Zhuang is always displayed along with Putonghua within the same sign. Inside GZAR, streets, cultural institutions and public buildings which display Zhuang names always also display the name in Putonghua, and sometimes in English. Zhuang was typically smaller than Putonghua on these signs (as was English). Zhuang never provided information that was not also available in the other language(s) on a sign, while often additional information was provided in Putonghua but not Zhuang. This was especially clear in the "*Zhuang Language News*" data, where, despite the name, conveying news stories relied on Putonghua and Zhuang was not written at all, only spoken. The Zhuang-inclusive signs were always displayed amongst Zhuang-exclusive signage. Thus, Putonghua dominates institutionalised public code in urban areas and on campus, both through its larger size and central positioning on bi/multilingual signage and through the relative abundance of monolingual Putonghua signage.

Further, across authors, genres, and jurisdictions, Zhuang Pinyin was almost always used instead of Sawndip. This reveals an “erasure” (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 39) of certain aspects of Zhuang history, with the modern, government-developed script indexing those groups whose languages had no literary history and for whom the government beneficially developed modern scripts i.e. the text choice reproduces a certain language ideology. And yet the Library’s sign (Figure 35) etched in stone, using the traditional characters in which much of China’s literature and records were written, and including a stylised, old-fashioned seal, anachronistically implicates Zhuang Pinyin in historic symbology, although Zhuang Pinyin is a twentieth-century orthography. While symbolising Zhuang heritage, pinyin signage also has the potential to reproduce a construction of Zhuang culture as “backwards” because Zhuang speakers (apparently) have none of the traditions of literate and literary practices which attract especially high cultural capital in China (see also 2.3.3.1).

Zhuang is displayed instead of other minority languages in GZAR; written Zhuang and the other visual icons of the Zhuangzu/Zhuangness are emplaced in GZAR and co-construct GZAR as a place with Zhuang essence. My study has found that no other minority language was used to name GZAR’s buildings, creating a normative association between GZAR identity and Zhuang language. The government of GZAR emplaces an association between itself and Zhuang language but not with any other regional language; more specifically it emplaces Putonghua-Zhuang bilingualism. This normative association was heightened within Nanning, because the prominence of Zhuang language in public landscapes was significantly increased there by Zhuang-Putonghua street-name signs. That is, the Nanning government associates itself

especially strongly with Putonghua-Zhuang bilingualism, creating an order of indexicality which positions the government vis-à-vis current and “ancestral” Zhuang-speaking communities and thereby emplaces a “collective memory” of Zhuang heritage (adapting Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 8). Referring to Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region in Zhuang, and naming its institutions or streets in Zhuang, constructs spaces where those naming texts are displayed as meaningfully defined as places where Zhuang language is (or at least was) practiced. The landscapes emplace Zhuang language, and “Zhuang-ness” within GZAR, co-constructing the meaning of GZAR as essentially and distinctly Zhuang. The regional government’s provision of “*Zhuang Language News*”, and the strongly local flavour of that news, also participates in this co-construction.

Imagery localising and emplacing costume icons within GZAR was not uncommon, and oftentimes aided by the use of Zhuang language. Such costumed people were often represented within images of a recognisable GZAR landscape, as in the Guilin billboard Figure 39, which also used Zhuang Pinyin as an additional, visual resource for emplacement. Other displays of the tropes were physically emplaced, like the drum-shaped museum and library physically erected within Nanning. These symbolic forms were co-constructed as emplaced in GZAR by surrounding texts on building façades naming the 《广西民族博物馆》 (“Guangxi Museum of Nationalities”) and 《广西壮族自治区图书馆》 (“Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Regional Library”).

The use of Zhuang Pinyin to name the Nationalities Museum, over its main doorway (see Figure 50), is an additional visual and linguistic resource of emplacement, similar to the Guilin billboard’s text. The representation of places alongside Zhuang language

in public texts and also the physical emplacement of Zhuang texts reveal the “semioticising processes” called “articulation of territory” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 8) by which the display of symbolic landscapes builds regional and national identity. Zhuang language is, in these discourses, a feature of the landscape and of the territory, part of a “geomancy” (Lickorish, 2008, p. 203) of GZAR as the essential Zhuang homeland. This is enhanced by texts otherwise referencing Zhuangness rarely referencing Zhuang language in their primary discourse, and also interacts with the norm of excluding Zhuang language from public landscape texts, further minimising the visibility of Zhuang language. Together, this is a highly naturalising ideological process constructing Zhuang language as inherently tied to GZAR but as an objectified natural landscape feature without agents.

Not all displays of the non-linguistic Zhuang tropes were emplaced within GZAR. For instance, neither the imagery nor text of the Zhuang “Sheepie” postcard (Figure 48) refer to GZAR, nor does Zhuang Auntie’s signage, nor the banknote. However, larger public displays of these tropes, which tended to be government-authored, tended to associate Zhuang symbols with GZAR symbols, including with Nanning as a place symbolising GZAR.

However, as these “maps of meaning” operate on many scales, the Zhuang-inclusive texts also emplace Zhuang within the PRC, through its lack of autonomy from Putonghua and through the dominant use only of government-standardised forms of Zhuang. Moreover, the indexicality of the English-inclusive signage is inclusive of an international and/or internationally-aspiring readership, it “up-scales” (Blommaert, 2007; Blommaert et al., 2014) the symbolism to an international scale. Thus,

Putonghua-Zhuang-English signage like the GUN gateway (Figure 41) is ambivalent; such trilingual signs can simultaneously up-scale with English and localise with Zhuang. That most signs which include English do not also include Zhuang suggests that up-scaling is more important or profitable to those designing/displaying the sign than localising, revealing how linguistic and social orders intersect. This holds also for the Putonghua-Vietnamese-English advertisement (Figure 45), which up-scales to two different levels. Furthermore, the visual grammar of the unusual, trilingual GUN sign nevertheless indicates both Zhuang and English are secondary to Putonghua, reproducing the dominant linguistic order; the Putonghua-Zhuang-Dong text (Figure 42) likewise reproduced Putonghua's dominance in its visual grammar. This linguistic order was also produced in English-inclusive commercial texts, as these were rarely observed to be parallel Putonghua-English texts, i.e. English was in smaller font or translated only part of the Putonghua content, and overall commercial texts were Putonghua-dominant.

Section 5.2 has found that the government of GZAR, and to a greater degree the government of Nanning, promote Zhuang language through the public texts they author and erect. This is another aspect of localising; it localises the central government. This identity was further made prominent in GZAR because many public buildings contained the term “Zhuangzu” in the displayed name, e.g. 《广西壮族自治  
区图书馆》 (“Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region Library”). That is, the government is associated in public texts not only with Zhuang language but specifically with the Zhuangzu. A strong association between the Zhuangzu and Zhuang language is promoted by these government-authorised naming texts. The

association is also promoted by the GZAR government using Zhuang but no other local minority language in public texts. Thus, when a Putonghua (or English) toponym sign explicitly referred to the “Zhuangzu”, as in 《广西壮族自治区博物馆》 (“Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region Museum”), not only was that institution emplaced within GZAR as a territory, but within a space made distinct (in part) by its association with Zhuang language practices.

Not only is Zhuang language in the linguistic landscape is deployed overwhelming for symbolic rather than informational functions, but written Zhuang (Pinyin) is displayed as just one of a range of visual icons of the Zhuangzu/Zhuangness. These include non-linguistic icons, notably certain drums and costumes.

The static form and memorialising function of many objects/buildings/texts that use the drum, and the (apparent) traditionalism of costumes, heighten the heritage symbolism of Zhuang icons rather than indicating drums or costumes are part of Zhuang contemporary practices; arguably, the iconic use of Zhuang language (and the fact that it is only specifically referred to in museums: 5.2.4.1) is also implicated in this historicising discourse, erasing living Zhuang language practices.

The icon of written Zhuang is used to represent the “voice” of the Zhuangzu in order to authenticate primary discourses and places in which the icon is displayed. The discussion of the Nationalities Museum text (Figure 46), in particular, has highlighted how Zhuang language is used to symbolise a “Zhuang” voice, but also how that voice is a government-authored representation of an imagined community identified with

Zhuang language, a community constructed in the primary discourse of that particular text as the Zhuangzu. The extent to which this authentic voice is validated by viewers is explored in the following chapter.

While GZAR's public signage allows for "heteroglossia" (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 263, 428) of dialogic discourses to be instantiated through multilingualism, actually each sign, and signs taken together as landscape, predominantly use Putonghua. Thus, whatever polyvocality there may be in these linguistic landscape, diverse voices are predominantly not relying on the indexicality of multilingualism to be expressed. Moreover, given the "bottom-up" texts in these landscapes are virtually all commercial, the polyvocality arguably represents only a slim range of governmental and commercial voices. This holds even in the uses of English in the data, which reveal a non-dominant pattern of using that language mainly to index two voices. These two voices benefit from association with English's high symbolic capital. The first is a commercial voice of international (or internationally-oriented) businesses, as exemplified in the field notes about hotel names in 5.2.2.1. The second is the regulatory voice indexed through English, for example the "unrecycling" bin (Figure 26). This sign as a whole indexes the government because, in its purpose and its standard form, this type of sign is commonly understood to be reserved for government authorship. That it does so in Putonghua and English is not in itself heteroglossia, as the semantic content in each language is the same (more or less, "put non-recyclable garbage in this receptacle"). Likewise, just one commercial voice is formally expressed in the alternating Putonghua and English signs announcing the brand name "可口可乐/Coca Cola" in Figure 29. That is not to say the indexicalities

of a name/label in different languages are uniform; there are (at least) two indexicalities achieved by using two languages on one sign. On the bin, for instance, using the national standard variety indexes the national government of the national citizenry, while the English indexes a government willing to accommodate international citizens, but neither indexes a specific level of government. Accidentally, “unrecycling”, being Chinglish, also indexes a certain unprofessionalism and thus indexes this as a government which does not routinely work in the medium of English.

The heteroglossia arises in the “social dialogue among languages” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263) on display, and Zhuang language’s part in these dialogues was largely government-orchestrated; it is a means of giving “voice” to Zhuang speakers’ interests associated with Zhuang language in society. These Zhuang-inclusive texts, however, are not bottom-up, they represent pluralism rather than actually voicing plural interests.

If we turn to the Putonghua-Zhuang signage, the Zhuang indexes a local tier of government. The Zhuang indexes a local government assuming “the” Zhuang voice, which co-constructs government legitimacy within a Zhuangzu autonomous area. However, in using the government-standardised Zhuang Pinyin and transliterating Hanyu toponyms into it rather than announcing Zhuang toponyms, the Zhuang subject so indexed is aligned strongly with the subjectivity indexed in the Putonghua names.

Taking the findings of 5.2 together, overwhelmingly, outside places of Zhuangzu autonomous government but also inside them (in GZAR), linguistic landscapes reflect Putonghua’s dominance back onto places and the people within them, contributing to a continuous dynamic through which Putonghua becomes not only common but

hegemonic in urban and educational places and as a resource for urban, educated lives. Against this dominance, in GZAR and especially in Nanning, Zhuang language plays a limited role as a symbolic resource co-constructing these as places as meaningful understood as associated to Zhuang language and as places where the government identifies itself with Zhuang language. Thus, regional/local governments' displays of Zhuang language within frames of language equality, heritage, localisation and place branding (or making "place-products") are contested by other displays authored by the government itself, and by commercial authors, within the ideological frames of (1) Zhuang as a non-autonomous language; (2) Zhuang as a non-commercial language; (3) Zhuang as a historically unwritten language; (4) Zhuang as language inappropriate to education; and (5) Zhuang as an immobile language.

The implications of instantiating the linguistic order that this analysis has revealed in the landscapes will now be discussed, along with how the landscapes reflect language policy.

### **5.3 Discussion and summary**

This chapter has demonstrated Zhuang language is not displayed consistently throughout GZAR: this language is significantly more visible in Nanning than in other parts of the region but dominated by Putonghua across "semiotic aggregates" (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 23) and also within each sign. This section critically analyses the complexity within my empirical findings that GZAR displays very little Zhuang outside Nanning and that Nanning only displays Zhuang on some signs, considering how the discrepancies relate to explicit language policy and public signage (5.3.1). It then discusses the ideological implications for cultural geography and social order –

the themes of the epigraph – when language policy intervenes in linguistic landscape norms (5.3.2), how these landscape norms themselves create spatialised social order (5.3.3) but also destabilise bounded discursive orders (5.3.4).

### **5.3.1 Language policy partially shaping the landscape**

The contrast between Nanning’s linguistic landscapes and other GZAR landscapes suggests differing language policies about linguistic landscapes but, as this section argues, they need not be overt policies. Coupland (2010, p. 78) asks, “[w]hose designs and priorities do [linguistic landscape characteristics] respond to?” The design of most Zhuang-inclusive signage in this study was in Nanning and responds to that city’s explicit policy requirements. However, responding to language policy does not, in practice, mean consistent or to-the-letter implementation for all language displays; language policy intervention in linguistic landscape is but one of a number of forces shaping the norms of display. This section discusses the power of a linguistic order to shape local language policy regardless of whether that order is mandated by law, in reference to the over-application of the *Nanning Municipality Social Word Use Management Interim Provisions* (“*Provisions*”) (Nanning Municipal People’s Government, 2004) and the over-application of an international treaty about the language of road directions.

Nanning’s *Provisions* standardise Putonghua-Zhuang signage’s visual grammar. Although nominally interim, these *Provisions* have not been superseded or withdrawn.

The article dealing with Zhuang language states, in two languages:

**第六条** 社会用字书写应当符合下列要求:

- ( 一 ) 汉 字 书 写 规 范 、 工 整 易 于 辨 识 ；
- ( 二 ) 书 写 行 款 ， 一 般 应 当 由 左 起 横 行 ， 竖 行 的 由 右 向 左 ；
- ( 三 ) 汉 语 拼 音 书 写 准 确 ， 并 与 汉 字 并 用 ；
- ( 四 ) 公 共 场 所 使 用 壮 文 ， 应 与 汉 字 并 用 ， 且 书 写 规 范 。 横 行 的 上 为 壮 文 ， 下 为 汉 字 ； 竖 行 的 右 为 壮 文 ， 左 为 汉 字 ； ……

Article VI Social writing with the word [sic] shall meet the following requirements:

- (i) Specification for writing Chinese characters, neat and readily identifiable;
- (ii) Writing pattern [of lines], it should generally run from the left hand side [horizontally], but vertical lines from right to left;
- (iii) written accurately, and be written together with Han characters;
- (iv) Any Zhuang script used in public places, must be used together with Han characters, and must be used as per the writing specifications. Zhuang script is to be positioned above, and Han characters below; in vertical text the right vertical line is Zhuang script, the left Han characters ...

These *Provisions* exemplify language governance directed at “allocat[ing] functions and/ or uses for particular languages ... [i.e.] status planning” (Johnson & Ricento, 2013, p. 7) (following Kloss, 1969). They represent a move beyond twentieth century Zhuang language governance’s focus on “corpus planning”, typified by “preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for ... a non-homogeneous speech

community”, to apply Haugen’s (1959, p. 8) early definition (following Johnson & Ricento, 2013, p. 7). These *Provisions* normalise textual parity and equivalence between Putonghua and Zhuang as autonomous codes (applying Coupland, 2012, p. 10). However, the data show that, oftentimes, parallel texts are not produced when the regulatory standards are applied, but rather texts where Putonghua provides more content, is visually central, and has larger type-font than Zhuang, e.g. Nanning’s street-name signs. This undermines the symbolic display of the ideology of language equality explicit in China’s foundational, national policies of language governance (see 4.3.1).

Nanning’s permanent street-name signs and institution-name signs generally organise scripts as per the *Provisions*, indicating that the *Provisions* are regarded as authoritative even though these are “interim” rules; indeed, some museum name-signs predate the *Provisions*. Even in Guilin, outside the Nanning Government’s remit, some bilingual government bureaux signage (Figure 38) conformed to the *Provisions*, suggesting the *Provisions* overtly encode an underlying covert i.e. normative policy from which they also draw authority.

Moreover, Nanning’s *Provisions* do not actually oblige Zhuang be included on public signage, they merely regulate Zhuang when it is included. Yet the municipal government nevertheless funded the wide-spread replacement of Putonghua-only street-name signs with Zhuang-Putonghua signs in the last decade, reputedly because of these *Provisions* (“南宁路牌 [Nanning Street Signs],” 2009); the *Provisions* are over-implemented. They are also interpreted overly widely: Sina News (“南宁路牌

[Nanning Street Signs],” 2009) lists a number of texts that Nanning’s *Provisions* allegedly regulate:

全市党政机关、社会团体、企事业单位名称牌、公章都使用壮汉两种文字，公共场所设置的挂牌、路牌、标志牌也同时标注有壮文拼音文字 All of the City's party and government organs, social organisations, enterprise and work unit-name signage, and official seals must use both the Zhuang and Han types of script, and all listed public places’ installed road signage, street signage, direction signage must also display Zhuang Pinyin.

However, my reading of Nanning’s *Provisions* themselves finds no such list of obligatory bilingual signage. I have not found such a list in any other publically available Nanning law or policy either. This further illustrates the point in Chapter Four that policy and practice may differ; here, language policy is interpreted as a prompt to erect more bilingual signage than is explicitly required.

Moreover, there is an absence of a policy directing that English be included in the landscape; indeed, national language policies even restrict foreign languages in public landscapes. The 1996 《地名管理条例实施细则》 (“*Detailed Implementation Rules for the Management of Place-Names Ordinance*”) forbids foreign place-names and the Vice Minister of Civil Affairs renewed policy efforts in 2015 to enforce this ban, specifically in relation to English’s perceived invasion (“民政部 [Ministry of Civil Affairs]” 2016). Despite this, English is in place in public texts and contributing to place-making in naming discourses. This is another example of covert language policy, this time overriding rather than extending overt policy. In particular, the road

directions across GZAR (see Figure 22 and Figure 25) appear to conform to the standards of the international *Vienna Convention on Road Signs and Signals* (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 1968), although China is not a signatory.

Article 14(2) stipulates:

The inscription of words on informative [road] signs ... in countries not using the Latin alphabet shall be both in the national language and in the form of a transliteration into the Latin alphabet reproducing as closely as possible the pronunciation in the national language.

That is, if this treaty were taken as guidance, road directions should be in both Putonghua characters and pinyin. This corresponds to what was sometimes observed in practice e.g. Figure 22. At other times, however, road directions were in Putonghua characters and English (e.g. Figure 25). This is nevertheless also consistent with the *Convention*, as Article 14(4) directs that “[a] sign shall not bear inscriptions in more than two languages” i.e. two languages are permitted. There appears to be an inconsistently applied policy of providing Romanised content in addition to Putonghua on road directions, which in practice is produced either as Putonghua Pinyin or English; note that often, sign-writers in China do not differentiate these as distinct languages (in my observation and discussed in reference to Liz, Mae and Hope’s survey on tourism text translation).

While this practice is not legally required of China, these signs make China visibly modern, international and accessible (similarly to Beijing Government mandating Putonghua-English street-names for the Olympics: Jie Zhang, 2011, pp. 88-95). I argue the data indicates a policy decision to make road signage conform to Anglo/“Globalese” (Jaworski, 2015) norms. This highlights the distinct normative

power of laws as discourses, in that this international law is “appropriated” (Mortimer, 2016, p. 349) at a sub-national scale even without having formal power to govern GZAR’s road signs.

Further, place-making norms which are not encoded in law can also be appropriated, as the dominance of English over other foreign languages in road directions and also in commercial signage indicates. English is the dominant language associated with international places and the mobility of international people between them; its use in GZAR up-scales places from local to international, and erasing Zhuang from these signs augments this re-scaling. This was clear in the “O-Park” billboards and descriptions of O-Park (see 5.2.2.1); indexicalities of mobility, futurism, commerciality and being accessible to an urban society are integral to O-Park’s sense of place, as its advertising explicitly tells us. Zhuang was not deployed to index these qualities, whereas English was, in addition to Putonghua; thus “O-Park” advertisement’s secondary discourses align with its primary discourses. This is also evident in the texts participating in commercial discourses from various government and institutional authors, not only from businesses. For example, the English-inclusive, Zhuang-exclusive business names noted in 5.2.2.1, the Biennale signage at GZAR Library and GZAR Museum (in Figure 27 and Figure 37), the China-ASEAN Expo advertisements (Figure 30), and the university logos and texts (e.g. Figure 28) all participate in promotion within marketised systems; they are commercial discourses despite the Biennale and university signs being authored by government agencies. Their erasure of Zhuang language is a (secondary) discourse constructing Zhuang speakers irrelevant to the (cultural and international trade) events and (educational) services they promote.

Finally, the signage data also reveals how broader, regulatory language policies are reconstructed in specific institutional language policies, and inside marketised language ideology. Zhuang-inclusive exterior signage was limited to signage that was neither time-sensitive nor updatable (i.e. not in the 2015 Biennale promotions in Figure 27 and Figure 37, nor in the scrolling digital signs at the library, museums and Guilin Cultural Bureaux in Figure 17, Figure 37, Figure 50 and Figure 38). Nor was Zhuang included in newer, higher-technology signage (i.e. not these same digital signs or the building-topping neon sign at the Guangxi Rural Credit Service branch (Section 5.2.3.1). Relatively portable signage like red banners (e.g. at the entrance to GU: Figure 16) and parking direction sandwich boards at public buildings were likewise never in Zhuang. This indicates institutional language policies about not expending resources to produce temporary, updated or expensive-to-fabricate Zhuang texts. Even public institutions operate within a frame of commercial efficacy (amongst others) i.e. marketised (language) ideology, and so “language choice is a business choice” (Piller, 2007, pp. 58, 68). Evidently, the GZAR government has not structurally facilitated cheap access to Zhuang language work for public institutions (given the lack of renovation in Zhuang-inclusive signage) and commercial authors see no profit to be made by communicating in Zhuang or even by affectively associating their products with Zhuang language (given their avoidance of Zhuang). That the incorrect sign at the Nationalities Museum (Figure 46) remains on display is perhaps further evidence that minority language work is seen as not worth the cost.

Nevertheless, laws regulating the linguistic landscape can also function to challenge, rather than reproduce, covert language policies.

### 5.3.2 Laws challenging landscape language norms and ideologies

As I have demonstrated, bilingual Nanning Municipality street-name signs constitute the overwhelming majority of Zhuang-inclusive signs in GZAR. In this way, Nanning's Zhuang-inclusive street-name signs, and the explicit and implicit government policies behind them, are "moves in evolving discourses of cultural definition" (Coupland, 2012, p. 4). Similar to the "organisation premise" (also Coupland, 2012, p. 7; Goffman, 1974) for language display in Wales being that Welsh was "inappropriate for use as a public code" (Coupland, 2012, p. 8), until recent decades Zhuang was constructed, in a powerful governance ideology, as inappropriate except for its sparing use when naming cultural institutions. Meanwhile, Putonghua was used widely for public code in GZAR. Against this history, Nanning's *Provisions* and their implementation "assert or propose" a new "'shape' of bilingual culture" (Coupland, 2012, p. 4).

But this new shape is not a dominant cultural-linguistic norm. M. Zhou (2004, p. 87) notes that in most minority autonomous areas most government services and signs are not in the local minority language, creating practical inequality of government services: that accords with the data on GZAR landscapes. Indeed, the disjunction between these *Provisions* and their implementation reveals aspects of ideological "struggles" over Zhuang's "authoritative entextualisation" (Blommaert, 1999, p. 9); decision-makers' language ideologies and/or institutional habitus coloured the *Provisions'* interpretation, such that regulatory recognition that bilingual Zhuang signage *could* exist was taken to mean such signage *should* exist. And yet bilingual signage has not been implemented across the board in Nanning or across GZAR, as my study shows. Furthermore, despite the *Provisions'* 2004 commencement, Zhuang-

inclusive street-name signage in Nanning was 《未达到家喻户晓的地步》 (“not yet household knowledge”) even in 2009 (“南宁路牌 [Nanning Street Signs],” 2009).

Moreover, the explicit regulation of public Zhuang texts by the Nanning *Provisions* and Article 14 of the national *Putonghua Law* means that Zhuang signs are never monolingual, but rather always include Putonghua. This is a norm consistently followed in practice, as my descriptive analysis has shown. Thus, while local (city) laws challenge the language ideological subordination of Zhuang, the national laws entextualise Zhuang on every sign within a meta-discursive context of minoritisation, national ethno-linguistic unity and subordination to a Chinese identity.

Furthermore, neither the national nor the city regulations allow for syncretic Zhuang-Putonghua forms, but rather institutionalise an ideology of “double monolingualism” (Heller, 2002, p. 48; also Coupland, 2012, p. 11). Both linguistic syncretism and ideological devaluation of such practices are pervasive beyond signage, providing the frame in which Nanning’s bilingual displays are conventionalised. My legal analysis (Chapter Four) highlighted double monolingual ideologies in national language policies. Beyond explicit norms, Lu and F. Li (2012) imply that a double monolingualism ideology dominates Chinese minority language scholarship, positioning their study of a systematised contact variety called “Zhuang Putonghua” as academic resistance. Furthermore, many student and language leader participants remarked on the 《汉化》 (“Hanification”) of Zhuang as commonplace and usually framed this as a corruption (see further 7.2.2.3).

Thus, legal interventions in the linguistic landscape challenge some covert language policies i.e. ideologies, but reproduce others, in particular the fixed “borders” between Zhuang and Hanyu. This “border-forming” role, part of the role explained for public language in place-making and social order in the epigraph, extends beyond what legal discourses say about language categories and where languages are in (or out of) place, to the spatialised patterns of public language practices.

### **5.3.3 Zhuang usage producing borders within borders**

The analysis has shown that whether signage is inside or outside an area of autonomous Zhuangzu government is not the only salient border, because public Zhuang usage is spatially confined even within GZAR. Here, I critically discuss these localised language norms and their place-making implications i.e. how public texts reveal, and reproduce, borders within GZAR’s borders. A close analysis of the signs and images within GZAR indicates that boundaries are constructed and made visible by relatively systematic changes in the practices of displaying and referring to Zhuang language. In particular, within the capital city and its satellites, government-authored, Zhuang-pinyin-inclusive, bi/trilingual displays are common in the genres of street-name signage and institution-name signage. In contrast, in GZAR’s other urban centres, e.g. Guilin, street-name signs are not Zhuang-inclusive and Zhuang-inclusive institution-name signage is less visible, indicating that the autonomous jurisdictional boundary which defines the region of GZAR is not the only boundary delimiting where public, written Zhuang is “in place”.

In universities, the jurisdictional boundary had little impact on the linguistic landscape and nor did it matter much whether the university was generalist or minzu-specialist; rather, the linguistic landscapes were similar across all campuses surveyed. Being a place of education appeared more germane to campus linguistic landscape norms than being within Nanning, or GZAR, or being a university where Zhuang Studies were taught. Campus landscapes were typically dominated by monolingual Putonghua texts (in characters not dual-script), with their bilingual texts usually minority-language-exclusive but English-inclusive. Indeed, Nanning's Zhuang-inclusive street-name signage did not continue inside campuses, clearly demarcating this "educational place" from the wider city. Even within campuses, there were implied boundaries within which Zhuang-inclusive signage was "in place", so long as the signage also included majority language(s). These places were public gateways interfacing between Nanning and a campus, and buildings where minority minzu languages were explicitly defined as the object of study. Finally, within GZAR and universities offering Zhuang Studies, no place appeared to be demarcated by monolingual Zhuang being "in place".

By contrast, another "border", between government and commercial discourse, is being broken both top-down by language in policy and bottom-up by language in public practices, but this does not opening "ideological or implementational space" (Hornberger, 2005, p. 605) for displaying Zhuang.

#### **5.3.4 Breaking down borders between discourses**

Nanning's *Provisions* regulate all government and non-government public texts in Nanning Municipality. While commercial displays in Nanning generally avoided triggering these *Provisions* because they did not include Zhuang, they were

nevertheless subject to other, national rules mandating simplified Putonghua characters (National People's Congress, 2000a). This wide remit of language regulation complicates the characterisation of commercial texts as “bottom-up” (Backhaus, 2007): it means that certain characteristics of regulatory discourses become incorporated into commercial and un-official discourses, a process the Scollons (amongst others) call “interdiscursivity” (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 193). Inversely, there is also an interdiscursive influence of commercial discourses within the official discourses on display: these data show even government authors may be commercially-oriented (e.g. the ad-like subway billboard at Figure 19). This blurs the classic private/government author binary applied in Landry (1997).

The blurring in this case is a manifestation of a global trend towards corporate structures for organisations and market-oriented and managerialist rationales. Coupland (2010, p. 93) calls such in-between authors “quasi public-sector institutions”, highlighting their structural hybridity. In China’s socialist market economy, this global hybrid trend is made additionally complex because multifarious state interests blur the public/private and top-down/bottom-up divides. To illustrate, in my dataset, one in-between author explicitly named on signage is the state-owned, commercially-oriented broadcaster, China Network Television System (Figure 19). Other authors appear to be corporatised government agencies, e.g. the public China ASEAN Expo Secretariat (authoring Figure 30) is backed by eleven government ministries and sixteen private or QANGO Chambers of Commerce (China-ASEAN Expo Secretariat, 2016), while the subway organisation authoring the sign in Figure 18 is a joint entity combining a public bureau and a private organisation, Nanning Rail Transport Limited (“Nanning Rail Transit,” 2016).

I argue that these data show it is not only corporatised institutional structures that complicate authorship, but also – and even more saliently – the commercial interdiscursivity of public displays; commercial characteristics cross public text genres regardless of the particular structure of the authoring organisation. A brief list of characteristics might include eye-catching colours, recognisable logos and “mobile”, (i.e. viewer-transporting) inter-textual links such as web addresses, QR codes and phone numbers. Additional visual grammar-oriented studies would be illuminating. In this case study, one apparent commercially-oriented characteristic is for languages features perceived as international (especially English) to be incorporated into nominally government-authored texts, for example the Design Biennale and China-ASEAN Expo billboards, while features associated with local language(s) under the management of local/regional governments are not used by those governments in many displays. For example, the public, minzu-specialist universities whose campus semiotic landscapes have been reviewed in this chapter (GUN, MUC and YMU) are under market-based competition to attract students and staff; they use their public authorship for marketing, amongst other discourses, and in doing so display English but not Zhuang or other minority languages offered as subjects and spoken by students and staff.

Thus, in-between organisational forms, interdiscursive linguistic practices that are becoming normative, and language regulations that span the public/private divide complicate how authors’ interests, genres, and explicit, top-down language policies intersect. Nevertheless, this destabilisation, or re-organisation, of the linguistic order is not, it appears, creating the physical or ideological space for Zhuang language to be

included in publically-displayed discourses. That is, new “ideological or implementational space” is created but is not “filled up” (Hornberger, 2005, p. 605) with public Zhuang practices. Rather, it is arguably in the face of the increased complexity (or disorder) of scales, authors and discourses that adherence to high-scale normative language practices – like the association of English with commercial activities and spaces – plays an ever greater role in producing a linguistic (and social) order. Further, the association of Zhuang and immobility created by its frequent display as a localising and heritage-symbolising resource further de-commercialises Zhuang, given the ideological imbrication of commerce and mobility.

#### **5.4 Summary**

The chapter has found differences in the role of Zhuang language in public, in terms of the public, physical environment, within areas of autonomous Zhuang government and outside these areas (RQ2). Primarily, Zhuang is used more in cultural and central sites within Zhuangzu jurisdictions, and used by the governments as a symbolic resource for governmental legitimation, localising, and valorising/maintaining heritage. Moreover, in reference to RQ3, in the physical campus environments of (tertiary) education, Zhuang is shown to have a very limited role except to co-construct places within a campus as distinct through their association with Zhuang, and to associate campuses within GZAR with the “Zhuang-ness” of that region’s identity as asserted in GZAR’s public landscapes. However, the chapter also found significant patterns of Zhuang language display which do not turn on whether the display was inside or outside an autonomous jurisdiction, or inside or outside a university, but rather reflect – and produce – more specific, spatialised linguistic orders (see findings in 5.2.5)

The prevalence of Zhuang-inclusive government signage in Nanning results from a language policy intervention in public landscapes, although that policy has not been implemented in an entirely consistent manner. Further, sometimes language policy is over-implemented in the landscape, suggesting covert rather than overt policy is followed. In all cases in my data, Zhuang names are alongside Putonghua names, in line with official policy. However, minority language policy has had very little effect on the linguistic landscapes of campuses, which remain strongly Putonghua dominant, suggesting education policy is practised as distinct from, and more important than, language policy targeting minority language displays.

I have argued a strong association between the Zhuangzu and Zhuang language in GZAR is promoted by government naming texts and government languages choices, in the interests of government identity formation, whereas commercial texts and grassroots texts using Zhuang language or referring to “Zhuang-ness” (texts that were, as a group, not common) construct an association between Zhuang language and other social groupings e.g. the imaged community of Zhuang speakers.

Further, the chapter argues Zhuang-inclusive signage produced through language policy intervention in CCC Sites is contested within a frame of Zhuang as immobile. Section 5 identified the subject landscapes as mobile places. While Zhuang’s limited role as a symbolic resource in GZAR’s urban and educational landscapes has been revealed, the commercial, national and international discourses in these landscapes do not mobilise Zhuang or associate it with mobility. The non-commercial government texts that emplace Zhuang within Nanning also position it as symbolic of the past. Overall, the linguistic landscapes construct Zhuang as immobile; while people, money,

and other languages are “in motion” (Piller, 2007, p. 63; 2015a), Zhuang’s spatialising role is to provide a rooted sense of place.

Nevertheless, *de facto* language policies are not a *fait accompli*. In the dynamic and subjective co-construction of meaning, the ideologies and norms of GZAR’s linguistic landscapes may be challenged or re-interpreted. This involves a certain level of subjective reflexivity, however, because the viewers’ habitus must be challenged. Each habitus will have been formed in part through the environmental influence of living within these landscapes: discourses manifest and amplified in linguistic landscapes “become an inescapable part of everyday life and, even if only tacitly, shape one’s social and ethnolinguistic identity” (see also Dong & Blommaert, 2009; Hult, 2014, p. 510; Silverstein, 2003; Trumper-Hecht, 2010).

Following the emerging literature developing the study of intersubjectivity and the construction of meanings of signage in semiotic landscapes (e.g. D. Malinowski, 2009; see also Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 13), as well as Wee (2011, p. 169) and Bonham (1999) in exploring the “deliberate processes and practices” (Bonham, 1999, p. 146) of individuals overcoming pre-reflective notions of habitus, Chapter Six will analyse social “agents” (Pavlenko, 2009, p. 250) constructing the meaning of this chapter’s Zhuang displays.

## Chapter Six: Perceptions of Zhuang in the Linguistic Landscape

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*“Identity is never a one-way street”*

*(Anderson, 2011, p. xx).*

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### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the investigation into the role of Zhuang in public landscapes, but from the perspective of people living in these landscapes. Section 5.3.1 referred to a news article about the policy of including Zhuang on certain signage in Nanning (“南宁路牌 [Nanning Street Signs],” 2009). That article also reported on an investigation by Guangxi News into complaints over new signage at a major intersection; residents complained the place-name on the sign was misspelled Putonghua Pinyin but the journalists reveal that the place-name was actually in Zhuang Pinyin. That people assumed the name must be in Putonghua, and did not recognise it as Zhuang, illustrates the perceived abnormality of public Zhuang writing. The example also demonstrates that the meanings of Zhuang public texts are co-constructed by viewers. Nevertheless, linguistic landscape studies have tended to overlook viewers: according to Jaworski (2014, p. 525), studies which include “the role of social actors in producing space through their embodied actions ... and interactions with the environment” are relatively rare; see also Stroud and Jegels’ (2013, p. 180) observation, but note the recipient study in (Scollon & Scollon 2003, p. 134) and the survey of public responses to a proposed inclusion of minority language on government signage in (Draper, 2016). This chapter will contribute to the growing literature taking a viewer-focussed approach to linguistic landscapes.

This chapter is also positioned within recent extensions of linguistic landscape research into subjectivity. Such extensions have been made by Hult (2014), who analyses the mismatch between languages displayed and languages that demographic data show to be spoken by residents in the same locales; Stroud and Jegels (2013), who study the interplay between displayed language and individuals in the “affectual” navigation of public space; and Malinowski (2009) and Papen (2015), who focus on the perceptions of authors of signage. This chapter follows the rationale that “merely representing what there *is* [in a semiotic landscape] does not capture what is imagined to be, nor how what there *is* is transformed and transmuted and “read” in alternative ways in situated interactions” (Stroud & Jegels, 2013, p. 183).

In order to explore how Zhuang-inclusive signage is “transformed and transmuted and ‘read’”, this chapter builds on the analysis presented in Chapter Five, exploring alternative language-ideological visions of the same spaces; after all, governments “are not the only agents in the process, and their framings are not necessarily definitive” (Coupland, 2012, p. 23). Public texts are subject to “heteroglossic” readings (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 263, 428).

Perceptions of public texts in Zhuang were investigated with student and language leader participants in commented walks and interviews (see 3.5.3.1). In their roles as residents, pedestrians and road-users in Nanning and/or at minzu-specialist universities offering Zhuang Studies, participants had personal experiences of the landscapes in this study. Analysing interview data about personal and everyday ways of seeing their linguistic landscapes, Sections 6.2-6.5 examine how public displays of written Zhuang are misrecognised (6.2), not read despite being recognised (6.3), evaluated as tokenistic (6.4), or evaluated as

contributions to heritage maintenance (6.5). These perceptions are often interrelated or overlapping. Section (6.6) foregrounds perceptions of widespread illiteracy in Zhuang running through the preceding sections and examines the belief that Zhuang literacy is attained only through specialist training. Section 6.7 critically discusses how being able to read public Zhuang texts may be mobilised as a resource for constructing a “special” Zhuang identity, and how the perceptions of signage described in this chapter may be interpreted as “activating” semiotic resources in identity construction, following (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 5). Finally, Section 6.8 summarises the chapter’s production of an enriched, multi-layered “map of meaning” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 6) of Zhuang-inclusive linguistic landscapes.

## **6.2 Misrecognition of Zhuang displays**

A key theme emerging in discussions with participants about Nanning’s linguistic landscapes was the misrecognition of Zhuang: certain participants did not actually realise that Zhuang signage was in Zhuang. Specifically, I found Zhuang may be misrecognised as misspelled Putonghua Pinyin (as in Section 6.1’s news report) or as English.

For example, GUN students in Excerpt 6-1 report the misrecognition of Zhuang as Putonghua and English.

### *Excerpt 6-1*

Laurel : 因为它这个是拼音文字，没什么人看，看不懂。略过去也觉得它是英文或者是拼音这种，但是又不是拼音，所以他不会觉得这个是壮文。

Alexandra : 对啊。

Zeina : 看起来像英文一样 , 我觉得。

Laurel: Because it [signage] is pinyin script, no one pays it any regard, they can't read it. In the recent past, people even thought it was English or [Putonghua] pinyin, something of that nature, but it is not [Putonghua] pinyin, so they could not conceive of it being Zhuang script.

Alexandra: Right.

Zeina: To look at, it looks the same as English, I think.

Zeina's comment highlights the significance of the alphabetic form of Zhuang Pinyin in its misrecognition. Laurel's comment suggests the additional significance of *habitus*: written Zhuang must be within one's mental representation of languages in order for a viewer to recognise it.

In Excerpt 6-1, Laurel suggests people previously thought Zhuang was Putonghua Pinyin, implying people now know better. Other students developed this idea of coming into knowledge, explaining the role of formal education in their transition from someone who misrecognised written Zhuang to someone who recognised it. For example, Sunny described acquiring the knowledge to recognise, and read, Zhuang Pinyin.

*Excerpt 6-2*

Sunny : 所以说没有去了解这个壮文啊 , 它壮文也有壮文的拼音—— 你如果没有了解它那个壮文 , 像之前我刚来的时候看到广西大学旁边写的“GVANGJSIH DAYOZ” , 这个是用壮文写的 , 然后我那时候就用英文去拼 , 可是拼着它拼不出来是那个啊。如果是英文的话是“Guangxi University” , 但是如果是要大写的首

写字母也拼不出这个，所以呢我就-- 然后我加入到这个协会学了一节那个拼音，壮文的拼音，然后就去看了一下，“哦，原来是这样子念”。

So to speak if you don't come to understand that Zhuang script, that this Zhuang script also has pinyin-- If you don't understand that Zhuang script, like before when I had just come [to university] I saw written on the side of Guangxi University [East Gate] "GVANGJSIH DAYOZ", that's written in Zhuang script, so at that time I used English to sound it out, but it can't be sounded out like that. If it were English it would be "Guangxi University", but if it were written in big alphabetic letters it wouldn't come out like that, so I was -- Then I entered that [Zhuang students'] association and studied that pinyin a bit, Zhuang Pinyin, then I went to take a look: "oh, all along it was read out like this".

Excerpt 6-2 reveals the role of university in gaining the knowledge to recognise Zhuang writing, but Sunny's accounting major courses were not instrumental. Rather, she learnt Zhuang Pinyin through classes offered by an extracurricular association at GU.

The role of knowledge in recognising Zhuang is explained further in Excerpt 6-3, in which GUN Zhuang Studies students affirm the need, in their view, for specific knowledge about written Zhuang rather than simply knowing how to speak Zhuang in order to recognise it.

*Excerpt 6-3*

Luke : 每个人都有人民币，RMB，但是其实没有多少人懂得这个是壮文。

Alexandra : 对--

Laurel: -- 有壮文呢？！

Alexandra : 我最近-- 写什么啊 ?

Laurel: 写的吗?

Alexandra : 对啊。

Luke : 中国人民银行 , 十元。 [都在笑着]

Laurel : 我爸妈都不一定懂哦。 写什么啊 ? 对啊。

Luke : 中国人民银行 , 十元。

Zeina : 我爸妈都不一定懂哦。

Luke: Everyone has Renminbi, RMB, but in fact not many people know this [pointing on the note] is Zhuang script.

Alexandra: Yes --

Laurel: -- It has Zhuang script?!

Alexandra: I recently -- [To Luke] What's written?

Laurel: Written?

Alexandra: [To Laurel] Right.

Luke: [reading from note] The People's Bank of China, 10 yuan. [General laughter]

Zeina: My dad and mum wouldn't necessarily understand.

Zeina here positions her parents, whom she reported were speakers of Zhuang, as unable to recognise Zhuang on banknotes because of their lack of formal education in Zhuang. The excerpt demonstrates that oral proficiency in Zhuang is frequently divorced from the ability to read Zhuang, hence speakers may not recognise Zhuang when it appears in the linguistic landscape.

The extracts above show Zhuang Pinyin is misrecognised as Putonghua or English, but it is also sometimes misrecognised as an unspecified foreign language, as Excerpt 6-4 illustrates. Referring again to the GU campus East Gate, which gives the university's name in Zhuang and Putonghua, Mark, a science undergraduate, said:

*Excerpt 6-4*

Mark : 因为很多人却是看不懂的 , 像我们只会说语所以我也是上了大学才知道有壮文这个东西……我看到 [ 东门 ] , 我以为是其他国家的文字 , 也没看得懂。

Because many people actually can't read it, like we can only speak the language, also I only knew there was such a thing as Zhuang script after I started university ... I saw [the East Gate], I thought it was another country's writing, I couldn't read it.

Mark had not encountered Zhuang Pinyin in his childhood in GZAR, or had not been made aware he was encountering it. He rationalises his misrecognition by arguing that Zhuang is a spoken language and that therefore recognition of written Zhuang ought not to be expected.

The contention that the oral nature of Zhuang was the cause of misrecognition also emerged in a group interview with GUN students who, with the exception of one student, Luke, had only become familiar with Zhuang Pinyin at university.

*Excerpt 6-5*

Yana : 我以为只是说 , 但是没有那个字 , 我不知道它有没有字。然后上大学之后就就知道他们在学壮文嘛 , 然后就说怎么会有壮文 , 就觉得很神奇 , 我不知道 , 以前不知道。

Alexandra : 所以以前没看到牌子这样的还是没看到比如, 我拿出来, --

Luke: -- 三月三 --

Alexandra : -- 这个杂志? 这样的东西? 是用壮语写的。

Yana : 看到我也不懂啊, 我看不懂。

Luke: 没什么人懂。

Yana: I thought it was only spoken, but didn't have these written graphemes, I didn't know whether or not it had a script. Then after I started university I understood they [co-interviewees studying Zhuang Studies] were studying Zhuang script. Then, I just marvelled, "how can there be Zhuang script?" I didn't know before, didn't know.

Alexandra: So beforehand you had not seen signage and things like that, or had not seen, for example, I'll get it out ... this magazine? --

Luke: *Third of March* [magazine title] --

Alexandra: -- Those things? Written in Zhuang language.

Yana: Seeing them I still didn't understand; I could not read.

Luke: Not many people can understand it.

Luke is literate in Zhuang so he knew literacy was possible but he highlights how unusual his Zhuang literacy is. GUN taught Zhuang Studies students that a script for Zhuang exists, and that knowledge (although not necessarily the knowledge to read it) has been transmitted to GUN students in other majors.

Contrasting with those emphasising the need for education to recognise written Zhuang, other participants wondered how they, being Zhuang speakers, could have failed to recognise it

automatically even without specialist training. To them, the oracy of Zhuang did not naturalise misrecognition of written Zhuang. For example, Huw, at GU, previously thought Zhuang Pinyin was Putonghua, like those in the Guangxi News report (Section 6.1). Huw recounted that he came to know how to read Zhuang script after moving to university and that he had initially misread GU East Gate's bilingual sign as a dual-script, monolingual Putonghua sign. Now that he had learnt to recognise written Zhuang, it made sense to him that Zhuang speakers be expected to recognise it, and he turned this expectation on himself.

*Excerpt 6-6*

Huw: 看到这个我的感觉就是，基本上就是广西南宁啦，政府那牌子写的名字上旁边才用壮文。然后我说怎么看不懂？又不是英文，又不是拼音。

Seeing these signs my feeling is, basically it's Guangxi Nanning, so the government, next to the names it writes on signs it writes Zhuang script on one side. So I say to myself, "how was I unable to read it?" It's not English, nor is it [Putonghua] Pinyin.

Excerpt 6-6 also reveals it made particular sense to Huw that Zhuang writing be displayed in Nanning; it was "in place" in GZAR's capital.

The implication of perceiving displays of Zhuang Pinyin as another language is that Zhuang's symbolic capital is vitiated, and no association is made by the viewer between Zhuang language and written traditions or contemporary literacy practices. This reduces both the perceived utility and the symbolic power of the displays. However, when a viewer is highly literate in Zhuang – as Mr Purple, who has a PhD in Zhuang and teaches Zhuang Studies is – the signage can be recognised and become symbolically powerful:

*Excerpt 6-7*

Alexandra : 你在路上看到用壮语写的牌子会有什么感觉？

Mr Purple : 觉得挺亲切的，还觉得是自己的东西。

Alexandra : 这个可以理解，特别是历史上汉语和少数民族语言不能公开的写在一起。

Mr Purple : 被歧视，地位不高。

Alexandra: In the street, when you see signage written in Zhuang, how might you feel?

Mr Purple: It feels very familiar/dear, I also feel it's my own thing.

Alexandra: That is understandable, especially as historically Hanyu and minority languages would not be publically written together.

Mr Purple: There was prejudice against it, the status wasn't high.

Mr Purple is referring to experiences seeing signage in GZAR, where he is from, not Yunnan, where he now lives.

Finally, the dissociation between Zhuang writing and Zhuang language may persist even when a viewer is aware of Zhuang Pinyin because their knowledge about Zhuang Pinyin is incomplete, as the following excerpts from Jane and Tansy's interviews illustrate. Jane, a Zhuang Studies undergraduate at YMU, declared 《我们语言也是这个汉语拼音写的》 (“Our language is also written in this Hanyu Pinyin.”). Here, the majority language is perceived as useful even in the role of transcribing Zhuang, in a misperception nurturing Putonghua's hegemonic status. This is a slightly different misrecognition to seeing Zhuang as

Putonghua or English; Jane knows the language being written is Zhuang, but she misrecognises the tool used to write it as Putonghua's pinyin. Zhuang and Putonghua Pinyins are different orthographies, however, Jane associates literacy practices with Putonghua rather than Zhuang, not recognising Zhuang has its own orthography.

Yet another version of misrecognition emerged in an interview with Tansy. In Excerpt 6-8, Tansy associates the practice of writing Zhuang with a dialectal group other than her own, misrecognising writing as “Yulan Zhuang” and therefore as a specific symbol which offers her no generic Zhuang identity affordances.

*Excerpt 6-8*

Tansy: 壮文看不懂。像我们那边的壮语就只是口口相传的，没有书面，书面类型。像那个，中国的那个人民币上，不是有那个壮文吗？但是那个壮文应该是，就是玉兰他们那边的，因为就是玉兰他们那边应该是有文字保留下来的。他们那边是正统的壮语。

I can't read Zhuang script. Like, our Zhuang language from there [hometown in GZAR] is only passed on through word of mouth, it's not in books, in book form. It's like that, on the Chinese RMB, isn't there Zhuang script? But that Zhuang script must be that of Yulan, theirs, because those from Yulan should have kept Zhuang script going. There they have orthodox Zhuang language.

This normative role proposed for “Yulan Zhuang” appears to be idiosyncratic; official, standard Zhuang is based on the Wuming dialect (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 241). Tansy's view reveals a hierarchy of “authentic” Zhuang dialects on a localised scale familiar to her. To Tansy, the written form of Zhuang represents the strictly preserved minority language

practices of Yulan. As that kind of orthodox language is not associated with her hometown, she places no expectation on herself to be able to read or write Zhuang; this is potentially also because, while a Zhuang speaker, Tansy is not classified as Zhuangzu. Similar to participants in Excerpts 6-4 to 6-5, Tansy considers that an ability to recognise written Zhuang should not be expected of Zhuang speakers with an oral linguistic tradition.

The above excerpts illustrate participants explaining the misrecognition of Zhuang – as alphabetically-written Putonghua, English or another foreign language – either as a mistake of their former selves or of less educated others, not a mistake they now make. Tansy is the exception, presenting herself as still not literate in Zhuang because her kind of Zhuang is not the literary kind.

Taking Zhuang Studies or extracurricular Zhuang classes may appear the sort of education enabling a viewer to correctly recognise written Zhuang. However, the surprised reaction of Laurel upon learning banknotes display Zhuang writing (Excerpt 6-3) reveals a viewer can have some familiarity with Zhuang writing – as Laurel does from her Zhuang Studies major – and yet not “see” it. Section 6.3 explores this overlooking of public, written Zhuang.

### **6.3 Overlooking Zhuang displays**

Even where displays of Zhuang Pinyin are recognised as Zhuang, the recognition may engender only a fleeting interaction between the text and a Zhuang-speaking viewer, when a viewer’s reading *habitus* tends towards attending to, and reading, other languages on the same multilingual sign. This section explores such experiences of “overlooking” Zhuang writing. I found some viewers noticed Zhuang displayed on signage in the sense of

recognising the signage included Zhuang, but reported themselves habituated to ignoring it while reading the signage's other language(s), especially Putonghua.

Ignoring Zhuang was particularly evident with reference to Nanning's bilingual street-name signs (see Figure 20, Figure 33, Figure 34 in Chapter Five). For example, in a group interview at GU, I discussed Nanning's street-name signs with Liz and Hope. These students considered Zhuang their first language, and grew up in Zhuang-speaking areas of GZAR, but neither had learnt to read in Zhuang. Their major was English Language and they likened reading Zhuang to their experiences learning to read English.

*Excerpt 6-9*

Alexandra : 然后我有一个问题 , 你在路上看到 , 每一条路的名字有壮文 , 然后有普通话的汉字 , 然后有普通话的拼音 , 汉语拼音 , 这三个语言。你们看到这样的有什么样的感觉 ?

Hope : 一般的话直接看普通话。

Liz : 对.....

Hope : 就像看美剧 , 有时候双语的话我们也会直接看普通话。要练习英语的话 , 有的时候就听听 , 就做一些听力了也。

Alexandra: Now then, I have a question, have you seen on the street; each street's name sign has Zhuang script, then Putonghua characters, then Putonghua Pinyin - Hanyu Pinyin - those three languages. When you see them how do you feel?

Hope: Generally, I really only look at the Putonghua.

Liz: Yes ...

Hope: So it's like watching American TV [with subtitles], sometimes where there are two languages we will really only look at the Putonghua. If we are practising English, sometimes we listen and do some "Listening Strengthening" also.

Evidently, these students consider reading Putonghua takes them less effort than Zhuang. Others professed never paying attention to Zhuang displays. I specifically discussed Nanning's street-name signs in my PKU group interview, given the interviewees' GZAR origins. In Excerpt 6-9, from that interview, Freddy and Zac acknowledge Zhuang signage exists but Zac dismisses any expectation he would read it.

*Excerpt 6-10*

Alexandra : 我在南宁看到每一条路牌名字用普通话写 , 然后壮语写 , 然后拼音写。看到这样的公开的壮文 , 你们有什么样的感觉 ?

Freddy: 嗯。好。

Zac : 哈哈我们没有注意到这个东西 , 对完全没有注意到这个东西。

Alexandra: In Nanning, I saw that each street-name sign is written in Putonghua, then it is written in Zhuang, then in pinyin. Seeing that kind of public Zhuang script, how do you feel?

Freddy: Hmm. Yeah.

Zac: Haha! We haven't paid attention to that, yes, paid completely no attention to that.

Zac expresses his response as "we", not just "I"; thus including his peers or possibly even the wider group of all Zhuang speakers as oblivious to Nanning's Zhuang-inclusive street-name signs.

Excerpts 6-9 and 6-10 reveal how Zhuang signage may be ignored by Zhuang speakers, but not all Zhuang speakers regularly encounter such signage, given its relative absence in linguistic landscapes, as found in Chapter Five. However, the data also revealed the overlooking of Zhuang on a commonly encountered text, the banknote. In Excerpt 6-3, I quoted Luke bringing into our conversation the example of banknotes as public text written in Zhuang. His fellow interviewee, Goldie, then commented that banknotes were multilingual texts in which Zhuang writing was typically not noticed unless a viewer had developed Zhuang literacy through education 《这种没有专门学过壮文的人是不会去注意这个事的》 (“With these things, if somebody hasn’t specifically studied Zhuang script, they would not pay any attention to this thing [line of script]”). Luke provided our group interview with another example of a similarly common but overlooked multilingual text, official identity cards.

*Excerpt 6-11*

Luke : 而且在身份证上有 , 我们广西的身份证上都有。然后但是他们没有人去注意 , 或者说可能觉得是英文。

Luke: And moreover our identity cards have it, our Guangxi identity cards all have it. But then, they don’t have anybody paying attention, or we could say they probably think it’s English.

Here, Luke combines lack of attention with script misrecognition and these two processes obviously form a continuum that serves to render Zhuang invisible even if it exists in the linguistics landscape.

Finally, the oversight was sometimes a matter of scale. This is a slightly different type of overlooking, noticing certain Zhuang texts but not looking at them as part of a wider state practice of displaying Zhuang, thereby overlooking some of the significance of public Zhuang texts. For example, Huw, in Excerpt 6-11, had known of banknotes' Zhuang script since high school but did not perceive banknote multilingualism as part of a policy of writing Zhuang in public until he moved to Nanning because he had not encountered public Zhuang texts in his hometown, Guigang (another urban centre in GZAR).

*Excerpt 6-12*

Huw: 我在高中的时候就去知道，基本每一张那个钱是有壮文的……但是说有些比较有名的地方方面都标有壮文，我是后面才知道的，因为我那边好像很少有。

While at high school I came to know, basically every banknote had Zhuang script... But that some relatively well-known places are marked in Zhuang script, I only knew that afterwards, because back [home] seems to have few [such signs].

At the time of our interview Huw perceived bilingual Zhuang signs to be a particular feature of Nanning landscapes, as he expresses in Excerpt 6-6, in contrast to Guigang landscapes.

So far, the chapter has described the misrecognition of Zhuang as other languages and the overlooking of Zhuang on multilingual signs by viewers preferring to focus on the Putonghua version of the text. However, even when Zhuang signage is recognised as an icon of “Zhuang-ness”, and read, it is subject to multiple readings. In particular, Zhuang signage may be interpreted as tokenistic, as Section 6.4 will explain.

#### **6.4 Zhuang displays as tokenistic**

This section presents perceptions of Zhuang displays as problematic and potentially even a slight to the Zhuangzu group, within a frame of identity politics. Displays of written Zhuang were perceived by some participants as an inauthentic language practice, i.e. tokenistic. I found Zhuang signage was perceived as tokenistic for two reasons: first, Zhuang was widely perceived as a spoken, rather than written, language, as I demonstrated in Section 6.2, so some people considered any Zhuang writing to be tokenistic. Participants with this view included some who thought Zhuang was a primarily spoken language because Zhuang literacy had been insufficiently supported in the public school system, rather than oracy being inherent to Zhuang. Second, some considered Zhuang Pinyin, specifically, as tokenistic, because it encoded but also represented Standard Zhuang, which they consider “Hanified” and therefore inauthentic.

To illustrate the view that any Zhuang writing is tokenistic, I will present extracts of my interviews with Mr Brown, a language leader, and Barbara, a student. Mr Brown was a Zhuangzu historian and documentary maker. Barbara was a Chinese Language major at GU who voluntarily co-taught extra-curricular classes in Zhuang writing at GU which certain other participants had attended (e.g. Sunny: Excerpt 6-2). Each perceived Nanning’s Zhuang-inclusive signage cynically, explaining that they associated the signage with the absence of schooling enabling people to learn to read it. Excerpt 6-12 comes from my discussion with Mr Brown about his understanding that GZAR offered a limited number of bilingual schools, the quality of which were questionable, resulting in few opportunities to learn Zhuang literacy.

*Excerpt 6-13*

Alexandra: 壮文学校都不教授壮文了？

Mr Brown: 是的，它不教了，成了普通高中了，只挂了一个壮文学校的牌子，其实已经不教了。

Alexandra: None of the schools [nominally] for Zhuang writing are teaching Zhuang writing?

Mr Brown: That's right, it's not taught, they've become mainstream secondary schools, they just hang up a Zhuang script school sign, but in actual fact they no longer teach it.

These comments reveal how Zhuang displays can be perceived as indexing the minority language policy framework of which they are part, foregrounding a governance discourse in tension with the discourse of language valorisation in which the same Zhuang displays symbolically participate. This point is illustrated further by Excerpt 6-13.

*Excerpt 6-14*

Alexandra: 但听说是经常写错。

Mr Brown: 是的，经常写错。毕竟国家给她这个地位了，人民币上也印上了壮文，所以广西政府不得不这样做，但这种东西哪怕写错了也没有人能看得出来，因为广西人没有任何机会能接受到壮文的教育，谁能看懂？广西有那么几所小学，装模作样的教授壮文，教了两三年又不教了，广西的小学有那么一万到两万人能享受到双语教育。但对于一个人数由两千万的民族，只有两万人会壮文，

这跟没有是一样的。等于官方只做了一些门面上的工作，社会上有没有人看得懂壮文，他的错误就更没有人指出来了。

Alexandra: But I've heard it's often written wrongly.

Mr Brown: That's right, it's often written wrong. After all, the nation gives it [Zhuang language] that status, [even] the Renminbi [banknote] has Zhuang script printed upon it, so the Guangxi government has no choice but to do likewise, but no matter how erroneously those sorts of things are written there is no-one who can pick that out, because Guangxi people have no opportunity to receive a Zhuang script education; who can read and understand? Guangxi has however many primary schools, making a pretence of teaching Zhuang script, teaching it for two or three years then stop teaching it altogether, Guangxi's primary schools have ten to twenty thousand people who are able to receive bilingual education. But with a minzu population of twenty million, only having twenty thousand people who can use Zhuang script, it's no better than having "altogether non-existent literacy". It equates to the government's superficial work; [but] in society there isn't anybody who can read Zhuang script, so there is nobody to point out their errors.

Here, Mr Brown refers to 《门面上的工作》 (lit. "door-front work"), a figurative reference emphasising the image-projection role of multilingual public texts, including the work of erecting the largely government-authored texts collected in Chapter Five.

To Mr Brown, the use of Zhuang name signage by these schools and institutions is a mere token, given that substantive government efforts to develop people's literacy in Zhuang are

lacking. Barbara, although many decades younger than Mr Brown, shared a very similar perception:

*Excerpt 6-15*

Barbara: 我觉得啊壮文以前国家是重于挺广的，就是在每个县会看壮语吧……后面的话是心痛顺社会，所谓的民族班就发钱，但是不教壮语，只是跟普通的班系一样就教汉语的东西，所以使用人群少，而且在家也没有任何的经济佳绩，没有提供很多的工作岗位，所以你必要壮文的话，其实心痛去说，只是说国家意识形态比较好看一点”如果我们再提高壮文我们再使用壮文”，这样的。

I think, ah, Zhuang script was previously highly regarded by governments and widespread across the country: in each province you could see Zhuang language.... After, it sadly went the way of society: so-called “minzu classes” expend money, but they don’t teach Zhuang language, they’re just the same as the common class stream so they teach Hanyu things, so people who use it [Zhuang writing] reduce in number, moreover in the home it doesn’t have any economic benefits, not offering many company jobs, so times when you have to use Zhuang writing are actually sadly falling, it’s only to make the national ideology a little better looking: “if we again offer Zhuang writing we will use Zhuang writing again”, like that.

“Minzu classes” is a common expression referring to public schooling provided at least partly in the medium of a minority language (see 7.2.1). Excerpt 6-15 illustrates how displaying Zhuang on signage can be perceived as tokenistic because the teaching of Zhuang in the

education system is also seen as tokenistic. Because of the problems with Zhuang education, Barbara is concerned that Zhuang speakers will not be more inclined to value Zhuang language, nor use it more, just because the government now displays written Zhuang. Mr Green, a linguist and convenor of the extra-curricular Zhuang class Barbara co-teaches, expressed the similar view that “Public signage won’t change youth opinion/low prestige”.

Mr Brown expressed his perception that the use of Zhuang signage represents a false pretence of government commitment to maintaining Zhuang language. The following excerpt also illustrates how the treatment of Zhuang language may be taken as representing an overall tokenism in the government’s treatment of the Zhuangzu.

*Excerpt 6-16*

Alexandra: 当你看到这样的牌子你会怎么想？

Mr Brown: 这简直就跟开玩笑一样，用中国话说就是“挂羊头卖狗肉”，就是装门面，他们内心对壮文没有任何尊重，为了装门面，广西壮族自治区，才挂上去。不信的话问那些官员尊不尊重壮文，他们绝对没有这种意识。本民族的官员都觉得自己的民族是一个很可笑的民族。

Alexandra: So when you see those signs [on government institutions in GZAR], what do you think?

Mr Brown: It’s simply a joke, to use Chinese it’s “to hang up a sheep’s head and sell it as dog meat” [Idiom: false pretences], so it’s on the façade, but in their hearts there is no respect; for the façade, “Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region” gets hung up. If you don’t believe what I’ve said here, just ask those officials if they respect Zhuang

script. They have absolutely no such consciousness. Our minzu officials think their own minzu is a laughable minzu.

That the GZAR government is eponymously Zhuangzu exacerbates the perception of tokenism in Excerpt 6-15; to Mr Brown, Zhuang language protection is in place in GZAR. This supports my finding in Chapters Four that the LPP framework constructs Zhuang protection as a GZAR responsibility.

Other participants perceived displays of Zhuang Pinyin, specifically, as tokenistic, because the development of pinyin orthography is seen as part and parcel of the “Hanification” of Zhuang through the government’s standardisation of the language. For example, Excerpt 6-16 comes from my interview with Hoz, a political science student at YMU. Hoz led me to the only piece of Zhuang-inclusive signage which he knew of on his campus, the multilingual national unity poster shown at Figure 43. Hoz pointed out a grammatical mistake in the Zhuang on that poster, and explained:

*Excerpt 6-17*

Hoz: 这个壮文，实际上，这个语法在我看来是一个很错误的用法……是完全汉化了了的壮语。

This Zhuang writing, frankly, this grammar is in my view a really erroneous usage ... it’s completely Hanified Zhuang language.

This echoes Excerpt 6-14, where Mr Brown noted Zhuang displays often contain errors, but few people can tell. While the YMU poster’s display of minority languages may have been intended as inclusive symbolism, displaying mistakes causes Hoz to interpret the text as offensive. Hoz’s offense is further explained by his belief that pinyin is not legitimate Zhuang writing:

*Excerpt 6-18*

Hoz: 我们壮文主要的目的反对那种、不认可那个广西方面的那种所谓的标壮，一个原因是它掺用了太多的汉语，包括语法方面他们没有坚守我们母语的语法，所以我们就比较反感。

Our Zhuang script must have as its goal opposing that, Guangxi's so-called Standard Zhuang which is not endorsed [by Zhuang speakers]; one reason is that it mixes in too much Han Language, including from the grammar aspect it doesn't stick to the grammar of our mother tongue, so we feel relatively disgusted.

That is, Zhuang Pinyin is perceived as an inauthentic symbol because it both encodes and symbolises government regulation and “development” of Zhuang. A more authentic script, on this view, might be the older, unstandardised Sawndip script, in which Hoz claims some literacy, or the new, grassroots orthography which he explained he hopes to develop after graduating.

However, as Section 6.1 posited, there are multiple “readings” of public Zhuang texts. For example, another reading was critical of the quality of the Zhuang in public displays, similar to views in Excerpts 6-14, 6-17 and 6-18, but diverged in not perceiving such displays as tokenistic government efforts. This view was expressed particularly by Mr Turquoise. He too regretted the loss of meaning and knowledge that is conveyed by displays of Zhuang of declining linguistic quality, as he saw it, but explained this as a problem of Zhuang people, not a policy problem. He considered that Zhuangzu people set an expectation of limited governmental Zhuang language use.

Implicit in participants' commentaries on Zhuang displays as tokenistic is the acknowledgement that when the government displays Zhuang-inclusive signage, it does so to contribute a symbolic resource for Zhuang heritage maintenance, albeit a symbol the participants in this section saw as wrong-headed. The next section further explores evaluations of Zhuang displays as – positive or negative – symbolic resources in heritage preservation.

### **6.5 Zhuang displays as contributions to language maintenance**

A fourth perspective on Zhuang signage revealed in interviews considered its contribution to maintaining Zhuang heritage. Both positive and negative appraisals of written Zhuang displays as symbolic tools in heritage preservation are evident in my data. To see public texts partially written in Zhuang as a tool of heritage preservation, viewers must see such texts as symbolising Zhuang culture and/or minzu, but this was not an automatic way of seeing, as Sections 6.2-6.4 have demonstrated. Furthermore, I found those who saw written Zhuang displays as symbolic of Zhuang heritage struggled to dissociate this symbolism from the functional problem of the public being unable to read Zhuang signs. Some also perceived written Zhuang displays as ineffectual contributions to heritage maintenance due to negative associations with Zhuang culture, the exclusive association of Zhuang displays with government language practices, or the dissociation of the variety displayed from “authentic” Zhuang heritage.

First, some people were content because they saw Zhuang-inclusive signage as positively contributing to Zhuang heritage maintenance. For example, I asked Dora how it made her feel to see Zhuang writing in public and she replied:

*Excerpt 6-19*

Dora: 我觉得有的话还是挺好，但是我觉得没有用，没有多少人看得懂的。她们甚至不知道有壮文这么东西存在。

Dora: I think sometimes it's really good, but I think it has no use, there are not that many people who can read it. They even don't know Zhuang script exists as a thing.

Inquiring further into this tension between a viewer perceiving Zhuang signage as positive and useless, I asked how Dora would feel if she knew a sign was in Zhuang although she could not completely read its meaning. She reaffirmed her positive evaluation, giving a specific example: 《我觉得挺好，就像我们学校的东门》 (“I think that's really good, like on our campus' East Gate”). That is, despite recognising the limitations of displays few people can read or recognise, Dora evaluated the public display of Zhuang positively.

Others were less equivocal about the positive contribution of Zhuang writing. For example, at the time of our interview, Mr Turquoise's book on the history of GZAR was being translated from Putonghua into Zhuang, to become a circulating Zhuang text in the public realm. Although he expected that edition would be rarely read because of low Zhuang literacy, and explained it was expensive to translate, he nevertheless believed publishing in Zhuang served a symbolic purpose. My field-notes record his explanation: “It [a Zhuang edition] seems proper to do given it is about the locality and local language, so it ‘should be in the local vernacular’”. That is, he sees producing a Zhuang-medium book is an act of valuing Zhuang heritage.

For others, a positive reaction to Zhuang displays was diminished by an awareness that few people can read Zhuang on public signs. For example, in Excerpt 20, Liz doubts her own positive evaluation of Zhuang signage's contribution to maintaining heritage.

*Excerpt 6-20*

Liz: 我觉得还是很有价值的吧，就是保护我们的壮族文化。但是可能因为我们  
毕,我们有些都不太理解不太懂，所以可能我们就觉得好像也无所谓这样的。

I think it [Zhuang on signs] still has value, it's to protect our Zhuangzu culture. But maybe because we are relatively --, we all don't understand that well, don't read, so maybe we think it's a good symbol yet also "whatever", like that.

Similarly, while Mr Black was pleased that Zhuang appeared on signage in the GZAR exhibition on Zhuang heritage because he perceived it, and the whole exhibition, as valorisation, he expressed dismay that most people had no training to read the Zhuang on that signage.

While Dora, Liz and Mr Black saw public Zhuang texts as contributing to Zhuang cultural heritage preservation, others who perceived Zhuang language displays as a symbolic way of maintaining heritage evaluated them negatively. Like the participants in Excerpts 6-19 and 6-20, the participants in Excerpts 6-21 and 6-22 questioned the cultural heritage value of erecting signage most Zhuang speakers cannot read, but in contrast to the participants above, did not then conclude that such signage nevertheless made a contribution. The first example is from my group interview at PKU. Freddy's comments in Excerpt 6-21 generalise his and his co-interviewees professed habit of not reading of Zhuang on public signage (Excerpt 6-9) to their wider community, questioning whether it matters that there is a heritage policy about Zhuang displays if the resulting signage is habitually not seen despite being in public places.

*Excerpt 6-21*

Alexandra: 啊。 哪，所以你来北京你们没有发现没有壮文呢？没注意到北京有，广西有--

Freddy: -- 我觉得区政府这么做，南宁市政府那么做，他只是为了凸显一个我们是壮族人，所以我们的路牌一定要有壮文而已，但是说实话用壮文写的路牌有多少人会去看，我觉得比较少。

Alexandra: Ah. So, then, when you came to Beijing you didn't realise there was no Zhuang script? Didn't pay attention to Beijing having, Guangxi having --

Freddy: -- I think the area government did that, Nanning Municipal Government did that, it only is for highlighting a bit that we are Zhuang people, so our street signage must include Zhuang script, but frankly speaking, street signage using Zhuang, how many people will see it? I think relatively few.

Excerpt 6-21 reveals how viewers make meaning from both the symbolic and informational functions of signage; Freddy thinks Zhuang signage must maintain some utility as an informational resource to be a positive symbolic resource. This is exemplified also in Excerpt 6-22, which further illustrates the perception that public Zhuang texts do not contribute to Zhuang heritage maintenance because of the Zhuangzu's habituation to reading Putonghua. Thus, Zhuang is no longer considered necessary for public communications.

*Excerpt 6-22*

Leroy: 我觉得就是可能吸引来游客，但是对于保护语言文字的话我觉得作用确实比较小，因为这个东西本身大的趋势上来说本身确实是要被普通话所取代

的，我觉得，因为确实用不到这个东西了，它没有，可以说已经没有存在的必要了，因为确实现在普通话普及了之后，生活环境里头确实这个已经没有使用的必要了，等就是——你想在我们下一代再下一代的时候，估计上基本上就是听不到这样的语言在存在了，因为现在接受的都是普通话的教育，所以大家都习惯于用普通话来交流。那既然习惯于用普通话来交流的话，别的语言就容易慢慢的退化了，就被取代了。所以它的那个刻字的行为，我觉得保护的作用不大，基本上就这样。

I think that may be able to attract tourists, but for the protection of language and script then I think the effect [of public signage] is relatively small, because speaking of the big trend, it is actually to replace these things with Putonghua, I think, because indeed these things are unusable, they do not have, we can say there is no longer a need for them to exist, because in fact now that Putonghua has been popularised, there is already no need to use it within the environment in which we live, so-- I think, in the next generation and the one after that, I estimate, basically, you'll not hear that kind of language in use, because now all education is received in Putonghua, so everybody is accustomed to communicating in Putonghua. So given we are accustomed to communicating in Putonghua, it's easy for other languages to fade away, to be replaced. So it's-- that lettering behaviour, I think it's function as protection is not big, basically that's it.

That is, to Leroy, Zhuang signage today protects a practice that no longer exists, rather than representing broader Zhuang heritage. Supporting Leroy's observation were comments from

a Zhuang language professional, Mr Pink, who previously worked for a GZAR government translation bureau translating and interpreting government announcements, rules and broadcasts from Putonghua into Zhuang for public dissemination. Mr Pink reported that the need for government information to be translated into Zhuang in order for the public to understand it has died away, whereas previously there were many readers illiterate in Putonghua who were expected to read Zhuang instead.

I was occasionally able to observe members of the public struggling to decode Zhuang on signage, although literacies viewers do not have are obviously rarely on show. In my commented walk through GZAR Museum with Mr Black, while he was explaining the Zhuang orthography to me in reference to the museum's trilingual signs, a GZAR woman working as a museum attendant came to join the "lesson", explaining she had never known how to read Zhuang (Figure 51) and a number of Chinese museum-goers also joined. Observations such as these serve to confirm the claim of my participants that illiteracy in Zhuang is widespread.



*Figure 51. Mr Black gives an impromptu lesson in reading Zhuang Pinyin to staff-member at GZAR Museum.*

A different, negative evaluation of the efficacy of Zhuang signage's contribution to heritage maintenance arose from the perception it targeted tourists rather than regular users of Zhuang language, thus producing very little uptake of Zhuang language in new domains. This is similar to perceiving Zhuang-inclusive displays as tokenistic, as explored in 6.4, except these viewers were not offended and did not perceive written Zhuang as a false show of respect by the government. Rather, these viewers considered Zhuang was simply displayed for a purpose – such as attracting tourists – other than heritage protection within Zhuangzu/Zhuang-speaking communities. For example, Freddy, continuing after Leroy in Excerpt 6-21, said:

*Excerpt 6-23*

Freddy : 我基本上也是同意他们两个的意见 , 然后我觉得说你用这个方式来保护民族的文化的的话我觉得其实用处也是真的不太大 , 因为说你本民族的文化、

本民族的语言还是要你本民族的人来说，然后你用这个去吸引游人、吸引一个外来人，他可能看的时候觉得挺有兴趣的、挺新奇的，但他走了回到自己家了之后他也不会记得什么东西，所以我觉得说，我们要想说保护我们本民族的语言和文化的话，应该还是说在本民族，在教育啊那些方面多下点功夫，而不是靠这些旅游的东西。

I basically agree with the views of the two of them [Leroy and Zac], so I think, say you use that method to protect minzu culture, actually I think the usefulness is not that great, because speaking of our minzu culture, our minzu language or our minzu people, and then you use this to attract tourists, attracting people from outside, when they see it they might think it's pretty interesting, very novel, but when they go back home they won't remember anything, so I think, if we want to talk about protecting our minzu language and culture, for this minzu it should be, in education and those sorts of things put in a bit more effort, rather than relying on these tourist things.

To the participants in Excerpts 6-21 to 6-23, Zhuang on signage was perceived as a means of attracting tourism and could not simultaneously be seen by Zhuang speakers as a symbol of their own cultural heritage. For these participants, practical contributions to protecting Zhuang heritage are more valuable than symbolic contributions.

Freddy, in Excerpt 6-21, also articulates a common perception amongst participants that Zhuang-inclusive signage was *only* a government language practice. Mr Brown also made this clear as we discussed the characteristics of areas of Zhuangzu autonomous governance:

*Excerpt 6-24*

Alexandra: 在公开的地方会有壮语吗？

Mr Brown: 在政府公开的牌匾上有壮文。

Alexandra: In public places will there be Zhuang language?

Mr Brown: On the government's public signs there is Zhuang script.

Mr Brown's comment confirms the findings presented in Section 5.2.5 that government authorship of Zhuang-inclusive signage is the norm, and it appears this has become normative; commercial or personal authors of Zhuang signage would not be perceived as "normal". One consequence for heritage maintenance of this normative view is that the government's Zhuang-inclusive signage does not readily encourage others to use written Zhuang because using Zhuang writing in public is not perceived of as a normal personal activity, nor as a personal responsibility to contribute to heritage maintenance.

Another evaluation of Zhuang displays as contributing very little to Zhuang heritage maintenance arose for those who associated Zhuang language with a culture they did not value; if Zhuang is perceived as having limited cultural capital, displaying it may not have much symbolic power. An example is given in Excerpt 6-25, from an interview with a Zhuangzu student at PKU. This student, Una, did not see Zhuang language in any mode as having cultural capital, and therefore its display was perceived as futile heritage maintenance. Her comments reveal the interaction between the displacement of Zhuang language practices from urban and educational settings – norms that the landscape findings in Chapter Five have explored – and broader language ideologies. To this student, using Zhuang language – even the government using it for public texts – could not be disassociated from rustic customs.

*Excerpt 6-25*

Alexandra: 对，我发现是这样的，所以很多人觉得壮语没用。哪我在广西的时候看到有的公开的地方比如博物馆还是民俗他们都用壮文写，这样的东西我觉得可能有这个象征性——

Una: --什么性？

Alexandra : Symbolic 性。就是，不是很有用的，但是让人，怎么说，高兴，这样的，让人骄傲，还是让人高兴看到自己的语言，你觉得有这样的吗？

Una: 没有，因为我觉得在我眼中，因为壮族就是现在就是还这么保存着这种风俗其实是很山里面的，所以对我们来说，已经完全同化了，就没有什么概念了。而且，因为在我们那边，他们壮族如果是很纯的话，他们穿的衣服说话跟我们都不一样，所以就会觉得很奇怪。有一点，我没有那种认同感。因为我小时候看到那种她们不穿胸衣的，然后就会觉得他们穿自己的衣服，自己做的那种壮锦，然后就出来觉得很奇怪，也不梳头发，就用那个筷子。

Alexandra : 不洗头发？

Una: 不梳头发，就是不像我们这样放下来，她们就是用筷子或者是梳子挽起来，特别大的一把，你见过吗？

Alexandra : 见过啊

Una : 特别纯那种 , 她们本也不说话 , 她可能从山里出来……就带着她们的孩子 , 都很脏的 , 我觉得 , 不太讲卫生。就觉得是那样的。

Alexandra: Yes, I realised it was like that, so many people think Zhuang language has no utility. So when I was in Guangxi I saw some public places – for example the museum – all using written Zhuang script. That kind of thing I think may have this symbolic nature --

Una: --What nature?

Alexandra: Symbolic nature. That is, it's not very useful but it makes people, how to say it, happy, like that, it makes people proud, and makes people happy to see their own language, do you think there is that [symbolic nature]?

Una: No, because I think in my eyes, because Zhuangzu is now-- Howsoever it's still maintaining that kind of custom in fact that is really inside the mountains [i.e. remote villages], so in regards to us, already completely assimilated, there is not any concept of it. Moreover, because in our area, these Zhuangzu if they're really pure, the clothes they wear, their speech, are not at all the same as our ways, so we will think it's really strange. It's a bit, I don't have that kind of feeling of identification. Because when I was small and saw them not wearing bras, then I would think they wear their own style of clothing, that kind of Zhuang brocade they make themselves, so then the thought emerged that it's really strange, also they don't comb their hair, they use those chopsticks.

Alexandra: They don't wash their hair?

Una: They don't comb it, so it's not like our hair let down like this, so they use chopsticks or combs to pin it up, a really big bun, have you seen that?

Alexandra: I've seen it.

Una: Especially pure that type, they fundamentally don't speak, they probably come out of the mountains ... carrying their children, all filthy, I think, not very hygienic. So I think it's like that.

Una's comments reveal a strong ideological emplacement of Zhuang language in rural areas, while Zhuangzu practices are completely out-of-place in the city, even for heritage maintenance. In Excerpt 6-25 she reports having "not any concept" of written Zhuang although we had previously discussed her knowledge that Zhuang Pinyin exists and she had demonstrated some ability to recognise it. She almost overlooks my report of Zhuang writing in city museums, despite knowing Zhuang writing exists, because it cannot fit within her understanding of all Zhuang cultural practices as rural and pre-modern. For Una, Zhuang has not place in the modern city.

Yet another reason for negatively evaluating the efficacy of Zhuang displays as heritage maintenance tools was the perception that the Zhuang writing displayed was inauthentic, i.e. a misleading symbol. For example, extending our discussion of the multilingual poster at YMU in Excerpt 6-16 to written Zhuang displays in general, Hoz noted Zhuang signage often transliterates Putonghua proper nouns into Zhuang rather than inscribing Zhuang nouns. Further, he noted that the Zhuang word for "street" would not be at the end of a toponym in grammatical Zhuang although he had seen it placed terminally in street-names following the rules of Putonghua (see e.g. Figure 20, Figure 33, Figure 34). He then summarised his evaluation:

*Excerpt 6-26*

Hoz: 我觉得像这种的壮语，我感觉的话给人一种造成不利的影响。因为感觉这种好像是四不像，既不是汉语，又不是壮文，到底是什么文字？……但是这种很官方化的语言一般我们都不太认同、不太喜欢。

I think this Zhuang language; I feel it gives people a kind of adverse effect. Because I feel this kind is neither fish nor fowl, i.e. it's not Hanyu, nor is it Zhuang writing, in the end what kind of writing is it? ... But this kind of very official-speak language, usually we all don't really identify with it, don't really like it.

That is, the display of “Hanified” Zhuang language was perceived as detracting from Zhuang heritage maintenance.

Finally, some participants valued other Zhuang texts as contributions to heritage maintenance, but not particularly public signage. Mr Mauve, for instance, believed like many other participants that few people could read Zhuang and that the purpose of producing Zhuang texts was to preserve Zhuang heritage. However, Mr Mauve explained his goals were to preserve a written archive in Zhuang and “instil a passion” for written Zhuang in his Zhuang Studies students, i.e. he focused on texts longer than, and generically different to, public signage.

Thus, perceived problems with Zhuang literacy became central to many evaluations in this Section of written Zhuang displays as symbols for heritage maintenance, just as Zhuang literacy had been central to perceptions in Sections 6.2-6.4. Following, the chapter will

therefore delve further into the construction of the problem of literacy and its place in Zhuang identity construction.

## **6.6 Perceptions of learning to read Zhuang displays**

The findings presented in Sections 6.2-6.5 reveal various discursive constructions of written Zhuang displays. Across these personal narratives, and integral to them, is a consistent theme of not knowing the script and/or believing that others do not know it. This section foregrounds the belief that Zhuang literacy must be taught rather than being an ability naturally inhering in Zhuang speakers, and analyses data indicating that it may be overly optimistic to believe that specialist education is maintaining a literate Zhuang readership.

Researchers have not comprehensively studied contemporary literacy in Zhuang (see 2.4.2.1) and certain sources maintain Zhuang Pinyin is widely in use in GZAR (“Ethnic Minorities,” 2008, p. 42; reproduced, e.g. in X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 242), while others indicate Zhuang literacy is rare (A. Feng & Sunuodula, 2009, pp. 690-693; Kaup, 2000, p. 137; M. Zhou, 2000; 2001a, p. 56). This subsection contributes ethnographic data to this largely unresolved debate. (Chapter Seven’s data about institutionalised language practices at school will further develop an empirical portrait of Zhuang illiteracy.)

In addition to the universal perception that few speakers of Zhuang are literate in the language, the interviews revealed a common perception that Zhuang literacy is difficult and so one must be well, and formally, trained (see e.g. Excerpts 6-2, 6-3, 6-13, 6-14 and the field-notes about the commented museum walk in Section 6.5). This diverges from the belief of language-policy makers who developed Zhuang Pinyin so that its orthography would be

transparent to Zhuang speakers and thus “easy to learn” (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 244) with basic instruction; enabling rapid mass literacy was the policy goal behind all the minority languages’ pinyin (Premaratne, 2015; Rohsenow, 2004; M. Zhou, 2001a, 2003). Illustrating the perception that Zhuang literacy is associated with being especially educated, Mr Lime, an academic specialising in Southern Chinese minorities, maintained there were some people literate in Zhuang but described such readers as specialists. My field-notes record:

*Excerpt 6-27*

He thinks those magazines [the Zhuang-medium *Third of March*] and the minzu newspaper are still popular, for example his office mate [sharing his profession] reads them. The kind of people who read them are his university classmates.

This view was also expressed by Mr Cream, an editor of *Third of March* magazine, one of the few authors of public Zhuang texts whom I could access. Although he explained in our interview that a strong readership remained, and this assertion must be understood against his evident desire to present himself as a successful editor, he nevertheless emphasised that those literate in Zhuang have specialist, formal training:

*Excerpt 6-28*

Mr Cream: 社会青年也有，读者就很多了，读者有专家的，在北京，你见过 [名字]，这些都是读者；也有大学生的，现在我们广西民大就有本科生；也有那个研究生；原来以前教的大专生、中专生都有，现在有实验小学啊，我们德保、东兰、黄江很多县都有这个壮文实验学校，有的初中有，有的是小学有，大部分在小学。

We also have as readers the young of society, readers are numerous, readers include professionals, in Beijing, you met [names of participants teaching Zhuang Studies], they are both readers; there are also university students, now we have some Bachelors students from GUN; also those research students; originally before I taught advanced classes, there were intermediate classes too, now there are experimental primary schools, our Debao, Donglan, Yellow River many places all have this Zhuang script experimental schooling, some are middle schools, some are primary schools, the majority are primary.

However, revealing literacy is limited even amongst those with access to specialist education, participants at GUN joked that their Zhuang-literate classmate Luke, also a participant, was the 《我们班的宝贝》 (“teacher’s pet”) (Danielle: see Excerpt 7-56) in their GUN Zhuang Studies cohort because his Zhuang literacy exceeded that of the other students.

Moreover, suggesting there are difficulties in reaching a wide readership through Zhuang, *Third of March* is no longer entirely Zhuang-medium. This magazine was noted as a circulating Zhuang text potentially contributing to linguistic landscapes in Section 5.2.2.2. Taking for example, issue 2010-4 of *Third of March* (Gyausou & Loz, 2010), which I was given by Mr Purple, there are Putonghua and English contents page parallel texts (pp. 1-2), two colour-printed inside-cover features in monolingual Putonghua, and that edition’s three research articles, all about Zhuang linguistics, are in Putonghua (pp. 39-46). Section headings are in Zhuang Pinyin and Putonghua characters, e.g. “SAWCUENGH BOUXCUENGH 壮人小说” (“Zhuang People’s Fiction”), but publication and contact details are only in Putonghua

(p. 1). The remainder – eleven stories, songs and essays – is in Zhuang Pinyin (pp. 3-38). The magazine also produces an entirely Putonghua mini-edition, bilingually called 三月三 *Sam Nyied Sam* (also “*Third of March*”).

Thus, I have found a widespread belief that Zhuang literacy is rare and that those who have attained it have done so through specialist education, as well as describing how the belief in education maintaining a literate Zhuang readership may be optimistic. These beliefs about Zhuang illiteracy provide the basis for the discussion in Section 6.7 of how the performance of reading public Zhuang signage becomes a resource of distinction in identity construction.

### **6.7 Discussion: mobilising signage as an identity resource**

An implication of the widespread perception that public Zhuang texts are largely unable to be read, unless one has specialist training, will now be explored. For those who can read it, Zhuang signage can be a resource for identity construction in that viewers can perform Zhuang literacy to construct a “special” and “authoritative” Zhuang identity. Following Jaworski and Thurlow (2010a, p. 5), who argue the physical environment offers “a symbolic system of signifiers with wide-ranging affordances activated by social actors to position themselves and others in that context” (see also Coupland, 2014, p. 33; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 688; Thurlow & Jaworski, 2011 p. 307), I argue that Barbara and Hoz’s critical evaluations of Zhuang signage (Excerpts 6-14, 6-16, 6-17), in particular, may be interpreted as discursively positioning themselves as having authoritative Zhuang identities. It is no coincidence that, of the students, these two were the most passionate about Zhuang language work after graduating. This self-construction is particularly intertwined with perceptions of Zhuang displays as tokenistic – which both Barbara and Hoz expressed – because to evaluate

the accuracy, historicity and frequency of displays of Zhuang writing, and to be seen to do so legitimately, relies on Zhuang literacy. Hoz, in Excerpt 6-25, goes further, explicitly identifying himself in opposition to the Zhuang identity he perceives Zhuang Pinyin displays to represent. This exemplifies what Lickorish (2008, p. 27), studying subaltern minzu identities, has called an “oppositional ethnic consciousness”. Similarly, Mr Black enthusiastically embodied an authoritative Zhuang identity through emplaced interactions with Zhuang signage in the impromptu literacy lesson captured in Figure 51 (on such emplaced meaning making, see further Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

Beyond affording an opportunity to claim Zhuang literacy, the Zhuang-inclusive displays in Chapter Five afforded many symbolic and/or “geosemiotic” identity resources (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. 4); a subject may mobilise – “activate”, in Jaworski and Thurlow’s (2010a, p. 5) term – the face-value and policy-intended affordance of Zhuang displays. For example, a subject may “read” Zhuang signage as a valorisation of the Zhuang language and, metonymically, of the Zhuang people, and therefore feel their Zhuang pride bolstered; or “read” Zhuang signage as a localising symbol and feel themselves to be in place and at home. Notably, this “at home” activation never appeared in my participants’ reports of their perceptions, despite being an “obvious” meaning of GZAR’s Zhuang displays, while a “Zhuang pride” activation was relatively weak (see Sections 6.4-6.5).

However, the data also show how affordances may *not* be activated, for example through a subject’s misrecognition of displays as English rather than as a Zhuang icon (6.2), by a subject being habituated to read the non-Zhuang language in a bilingual display more easily than the Zhuang (6.3), or by perceiving Zhuang Pinyin as an inauthentic symbol (6.4).

The misrecognition and overlooking of public Zhuang writing in Sections 6.2-6.3 illustrate Jaworski's (2014, p. 528) argument that reception of linguistic displays begins with noticing, and that, in itself, is situated:

the noticing (or not) and reading of the poster (its uptake) is thus dependent on the knowledge, experiences, skills, capacities, and goals that social actors bring into their encounter with this particular instance of *discourse in place*, their *historical bodies*.

Indeed, discourses in place afford situated meanings that may not be transparent to the researcher without ethnographic inquiry. By way of illustration, Draper (2016) surveyed views on proposed minority-language-inclusive government signage in Thailand's Isan Province. While his survey accommodated a very large number of participants and had the advantage of producing findings in a form amenable to policy makers, that survey did not allow many ways of expressing qualitative dissatisfaction with the signs, for instance seeing them as a good idea but poorly executed because of spelling mistakes. In this study, the perception of Zhuang-inclusive signage as better in the abstract than the actuality emerges through ethnographic enquiry. Another affordance revealed to have been activated in this data but otherwise not transparent to a researcher, because it appears counter-intuitive, is the reading of Zhuang-inclusive government signage as symbolically communicating the government's lackadaisical attitude to Zhuang language maintenance.

The literature, and language policies, often presume official language displays offer a particular affordance for identity construction: that official language displays are imbued with symbolic legitimacy deriving from the general authority of government authorship (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 222), from being fabricated well, and from being placed in prominent spots. Thus, officially displaying a minority language affords a normative challenge to the marginality of that minority language. However, Sections 6.4-6.5 reveal how the symbolic capital of

government authorship can also function to draw attention to political ironies, symbolising the government overall, with government signage emplacing and foregrounding contested discourses evaluating government minority language and education policies. It is this “lightening rod” affordance arguably activated in the more politically engaged and critical discourses of Barbara, Hoz, Mr Brown and Mr Black.

## **6.8 Discussion and summary**

This chapter has illustrated how texts in the physical environment are mobilised within multiple semiotic systems. The interview data revealed varied ways of “reading” Zhuang-inclusive public texts and mobilising displays of Zhuang writing as an identity resource, showing “identity is never a one-way street”, as my epigraph playfully quoted from Benedict Anderson’s foreword to Thomas Mullaney’s history of China’s minzu- and nation-building processes and discourses.

Overall, my findings reveal a mismatch between the written use of Zhuang in the linguistic landscape and the fact that the Zhuang language is perceived to be primarily, or even essentially, oral. Section 6.6 foregrounds the common thread of Zhuang illiteracy through the various “readings” of Zhuang displays. That section highlights how Zhuang literacy is seen as rare because it is not undergirded by widespread literacy education in the language. This further explains why Zhuang signage can be “read” critically in reference to Zhuang education policies, as participants express in Section 6.5. In this chapter, participants also point to Zhuang illiteracy to rationalise why they and others misrecognise or overlook displays of Zhuang writing, to criticise the government’s use of Zhuang (Pinyin) writing as a symbol, to doubt its displays’ impact on heritage maintenance, and to position themselves as Zhuang authorities. Ideologies about literacy are further explored in Chapter Seven.

This data analysis begs the question: what is the point of Zhuang language policies which focus on maintenance through publicly displaying (and publishing) Zhuang writing, if such measures will be perceived as invalid in the language ecology of Zhuang? That is, while Chapter Five finds there are certain displays of Zhuang writing in GZAR and minzu university linguistic landscapes, representing a form of vitality, this chapter calls their “legitimate vitality” (Draper, 2016, p. 834) into question; government-authored Zhuang signage is not always validated by viewers. The government’s Zhuang-inclusive public signage can be seen as a means of achieving certain of the generic LPP goals Hornberger (1994, p. 78; 2006, p. 29) has identified: “officialisation”; “standardisation” in that it makes standard spelling and grammar visible; and “modernisation” as it extends Zhuang to new functions. However, the varied and sometimes critical readings of Zhuang-inclusive signs in this data indicate a complex and/or interrupted transmission from increased Zhuang usage by the government to increased and/or increasingly standardised Zhuang usage by individual Zhuang speakers.

This disconnection between the instrument of changing government language practices and the goal of changing others’ language practices is evident but not always acknowledged in other studies. For instance, Draper (2016) has surveyed what new minority-language-inclusive government signage the public would like in Thailand’s Isan Province. Draper’s respondents explicitly said (answering his Q16) that the proposed signs would promote the learning of Isan language, presumably one of the reasons they perceived such signage as meaningful to preserving Isan language (p. 844). Nevertheless, akin to participants in this chapter, a significant portion of Draper’s respondents anticipated not being able to read Isan on the proposed signs (p. 844). This belies a common misapprehension, amongst language

users and language policy-makers, that passively seeing a language written in public prompts active learning and use of that written form. Elucidating this misapprehension, this chapter has illustrated that while viewers can now find Zhuang within their linguistic landscapes, it does not necessarily follow that those viewers evince an increased desire to learn and write Zhuang, nor that such individuals actually increase their learning and/or writing of Zhuang. In large part, this is because public displays of a language do not teach literacy; the chapter identified that viewers of Zhuang-inclusive displays see the education system as a weak link between displays of written Zhuang and its increased uptake.

Experiences of learning, not learning, and unlearning Zhuang at school are further explored in the following chapter. That chapter also examines how beliefs about Zhuang, evident in this chapter, came to be developed within institutionalised language ideologies during formal education, particularly at university.

## Chapter Seven: Zhuang in the Education System

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*“[T]he social value of linguistic products is only placed on them in their relationship to the market” (Bourdieu, 1977a).*

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### 7.1 Introduction

Building on the recurring problematisation of Zhuang literacy education in Chapter Six, this chapter examines the position that LPP constructs for Zhuang in the education system, and what language ideologies are reproduced in education influencing students’ linguistic habitus. It addresses RQ3, “What role does Zhuang language play in education, especially for students continuing to university?”

Leibold and Y. Chen (2014a, p. 8) argue that the education system, divided by language/education policy into a mainstream and minority stream (see also 4.3.2.3 on bilingual schooling), allows for diversity to be marginalised as a feature pertaining to the categorical Other (minorities) while categorically constructing this diversity – particularly linguistic diversity – as a barrier to education and to the economic and nation-building stability that China’s public education aims to facilitate; therefore minority education is seen as “remedial” rather than an exercise of linguistic freedom. Illustrating this marginal position of minority languages in education, Chapter Five found Zhuang was virtually invisible in university landscapes. In this ideological and physical environment, what are the effects of LPP “injecting” Zhuang into education at the tertiary level as a study subject?

The chapter begins by exploring how Zhuang is used and viewed in pre-tertiary schooling (7.2) before moving on to how Zhuang is used and viewed at university (7.3). The analysis takes content and discourse analytic approaches to interview data, particularly from interviews with students in Zhuang Studies degrees and university-level teachers and researchers of Zhuang.

## **7.2 Zhuang in primary and secondary schooling**

To explicate the institutional language ideologies within which the participants were socialised, this section explores the language practices of their pre-tertiary schooling and their families' attitudes to language in education. It commences by explaining the public minority education stream within which Zhuang has a limited but official role at primary school (7.2.1), and then explores experiences which position Putonghua as crucial to education while Zhuang is largely constructed as peripheral and even problematic at school (7.2.2).

### **7.2.1 Zhuang in minority education**

Across the pre-tertiary stages, there are two streams of public education in China. In mainstream schools, teaching and examinations are in the medium of Putonghua. In the alternative 《民族教育》 (“minority education”) stream, bilingual education is allowed and so Zhuang may be taught alongside Putonghua. Within the literature on the minority education stream “there is little agreement on its form” (Leibold & Y. Chen, 2014a, p. 9) and Tsung (2014, p. 162) argues the great variability within the minority stream's modes of bilingual education “reflects not only the diversity that exists among China's ethnic minorities but also the Party-state's ambivalent attitude toward bilingual education”. However, bilingualism transitioning minority language speakers to Putonghua in early

primary school is an especially common macro-model of bilingual minority education (Dai & Cheng, 2007; Tsung, 2014, p. 165). Mirroring this national preference, in GZAR, transitional bilingual early primary schooling is relatively common in rural areas, reports Zhuang bilingual education expert, Mr Mauve, with schools using Zhuang as the medium where Zhuang is the most commonly-used local language. Mr Blue, a university Zhuang language teacher, reported that transitional bilingualism is similarly the mode of bilingual Zhuang schooling in Yunnan (including Wenshan) and that transitional bilingual programs are reducing in GZAR:

*Excerpt 7-1*

Mr Blue: 刚开始去学习壮语……慢慢的过渡到小学高年级的时候以汉文为主，云南和贵州把它提出叫做《拐棍论》……在广西不说，但是实际上做法也接近……也就是开始比较正式在一二三年级学的壮语的课比较多一点……他们现在在几十到一百来个学校还在上这个课，比以前少一些。

At the beginning, you study Zhuang language ... slowly transitioning to Hanyu as the prime medium in the senior years of primary school; Yunnan and Guizhou hold it up as the “Walking Stick Theory” ... We don’t say that in GZAR but, in reality, the approach is very similar... it’s also relatively formal, in the beginning in grades 1, 2 and 3 there are a few more Zhuang classes... They [GZAR] now have between a few dozen and a hundred schools still running those classes, fewer than before.

“Walking Stick Theory” refers to students using Zhuang as their crutch until they can independently learn in Putonghua, i.e. transitional bilingualism.

At bilingual schools in GZAR's urban areas, teachers using oral Zhuang informally to assist with comprehension in primary years is more common than formal transitional bilingualism programs. There is also one "experimental school" teaching parts of the national primary and middle school curriculum in Zhuang in thirty-three GZAR counties but only a limited number of students have access to that sort of Zhuang bilingual education (4.3.4.2). Furthermore, within minority education institutions, Zhuang may, in fact, not be taught at all, as (Kaup, 2000, p. 135) suggests.

In both the mainstream and minority education stream, pre-tertiary curricula are regulated at three levels, with some subjects under a national policy, some under a regional policy and some decided at the school level. Including a minority language in schooling is largely a regional and local decision, although the allowance for bilingual minority language schooling comes from the national education law and policy (see 4.3.2.3). Chapter Four identified the ideological tensions in national language and education policies and these impact on whether governments decide to provide schooling in Zhuang. For example, when I spoke to Mr Blue about why GZAR had not passed a pro-minority language *Ordinance* akin to Yunnan's (see 4.3.4), he explained an ideological debate over the role of Zhuang in education prevented it:

*Excerpt 7-2*

Mr Blue: 人大代表十几年前就提出来……但是人大常委里面壮族的主要干部表示了反对，他们觉得这是对壮族不利。

Alexandra：为什么不利？

Mr Blue : 一直是壮族领导对壮文一直是两种态度 , 有的觉得这个对壮族有利 , 应该发展 ; 有的认为没有用 , 你学来干什么 ? 我学了汉文我可以学不只是汉文 , 可以学很多别的东西。

Mr Blue: The [GZAR] People's Congress deputies proposed this [an equivalent] ten years ago ... but the Zhuangzu cadres in the People's Congress Standing Committee opposed it, they thought it was not good for the Zhuangzu.

Alexandra: Why? Why wasn't it good?

Mr Blue: There have always been two attitudes to Zhuang script amongst the Zhuangzu's leaders, one is that Zhuang script is advantageous to the Zhuangzu, it should be developed; the other group thinks it is not useful, if you study it what will you do? "If I study Han script I can study not just Han script, I can study so many other things".

That is, because Putonghua is associated with development and Zhuang is not, there is tension over implementing policies allowing for Zhuang schooling. It appears the anti-Zhuang script camp remains more powerful, particularly because high school leavers' examinations (the "Gaokao") are not currently offered in Zhuang, although within minority education there exists a sub-stream specifically for a minority language-medium version of the national curriculum to be used in preparation for a minority language-medium Gaokao. Scholars have reported this route is available for languages other than Zhuang, suggesting a Zhuang-medium Gaokao is not available. However, some students and language leader participants suggested that a Zhuang-medium Gaokao was possible but never taken up in practice because Zhuang-medium secondary schooling was not available (see e.g. Excerpt 4-12).

In short, even in Zhuang-speaking areas, later primary and secondary schooling does not usually offer Zhuang as either a subject or a medium. Experiences through which Zhuang's absence from education is normalised for students are now explored.

## **7.2.2 Formation of a linguistic order**

This section analyses the language hierarchy developed through the students' school experiences. It will show Putonghua, as the normative language of education, was positioned as the most valuable (7.2.2.1). Non-standard Hanyu dialects were, like Putonghua, valued more than Zhuang and had a greater role in education – albeit not officially – than Zhuang (7.2.2.2). Zhuang was typically learnt at home and seen to have limited or no place in formal education. Relatedly, Zhuang was often not experienced as a written language in childhood and spoken Zhuang perceived as damaging children's Putonghua; furthermore, Zhuang was “unlearnt” through schooling (7.2.2.3). The analysis then shows how the hierarchy was further complicated by English, experienced as another “top-tier” language putting pressure on students' language learning (7.2.2.4). Thus, some parents prepared students for school languages by policing their own household Zhuang. The overall effect has been a decline of Zhuang amongst the students, and a perception of an even more pronounced shift towards Hanyu amongst younger children.

### **7.2.2.1 Putonghua**

By high school, at the latest, all the students were studying exclusively through the medium of Putonghua. Most reported encountering Putonghua much earlier; usually, this was from school materials and from teachers, but not always. Norm's school teacher father, for instance,

began teaching him to read and write Putonghua when Norm was three; Una recalled being familiar enough with Putonghua from television cartoons to find the transition to Putonghua-medium kindergarten from a Guiliuhua-speaking home not too hard; and Mae was raised in Putonghua.

For some, Putonghua took over normatively in school even before students were exposed to teachers who could speak Putonghua as opposed to a Hanyu topolect. For example, Zac's primary school teachers taught in Liuzhou's Hanyu dialect but teachers attempted to switch to Putonghua in middle school:

*Excerpt 7-3*

Zac: 然后直到初中的时候我们重视了这个问题，然后开始规定上学的时候需要用普通话来教学。但是因为老师自己可能说普通话也不太好，然后就造成没有什么特别大的改善。然后一直到了高中我来北京上学之后，然后开始不管上课啊还是交流啊都用的普通话，然后口音才会渐渐地纠正到普通话的口音来。

By the time we reached middle school we paid attention to this problem [of using dialect at school], so we started to have to use Putonghua in for lessons. But because the teacher himself also couldn't speak Putonghua well, it didn't result in much improvement. Then all the way through to high school, after I'd come to Beijing to study, I used Putonghua for everything, whether it was class or [private] communications. Then, my accent gradually regularised into Putonghua.

This sort of experience demonstrates a linguistic double disadvantage; first as speakers of low-prestige Zhuang, and second because the students' exposure to the prestigious Putonghua was limited even in school environments.

Nevertheless, by the time they reached university – indeed, integral to reaching university given their Putonghua-medium Gaokao – all the students had Putonghua in their language repertoires and used it fluently for our interviews and correspondence. This accords with the literature; M. Zhou (2012b, pp. 4-5) shows that across China, “the more education one has, the more likely one speaks Putonghua”. Further, M. Zhou (2012a, p. 4) argues that the proportion of secondary and tertiary school-aged minority people who speak Putonghua is higher than the proportion of all-ages minority people, over 70 percent. Moreover, the Zhuangzu has population growth skewed towards younger age brackets (R. Guo, 2013, pp. 2-3) i.e. an increasing proportion of the Zhuangzu are school students and therefore are (becoming) Putonghua speakers.

Only Lloyd, a law student at IMUST who grew up in GZAR, reported that his Putonghua was not fluent, apparently reflecting teachers' construction of his Putonghua as deficient: his comment that “people feel my Putonghua isn't very passable” appeared at Excerpt 4.2 and referred to his experience of adjusting to university in IMAR, where the local Hanyu dialects and accents are different from South China. Lloyd moved through Zhuang-speaking and Hanyu-dialect speaking areas of GZAR as a child; his exposure to Putonghua might have been less consistent than that of the other participants.

Most students perceived Putonghua as distinct from Hanyu varieties they, their families and teachers spoke, e.g.:

*Excerpt 7-4*

Leroy: 我爸爸这边是讲壮语的，我妈妈这边是讲客家话的。然后我们住的街上讲的是白话，也就是有点类似于粤语。然后所以，我可以讲壮话，因为跟我爷爷奶奶交流用的壮话。然后跟我外公外婆那边就是用的客家话会比较多一些，有时候也是普通话。在家的话跟我的父母基本上用的普通话交流。

My father's side speaks Zhuang; my mother's side speaks Hakka. Then the street where we lived was Baihua-speaking, it's a bit like Cantonese. So then, I can speak Zhuang to communicate with my paternal grandparents. Then with my maternal grandparents, I mainly need to use Hakka, sometimes also Putonghua. At home, I basically use Putonghua to communicate with my parents.

Schooling teaches students to distinguish Putonghua because it is the only Hanyu they read and write, and they are explicitly taught its grammar and pronunciation (regardless of whether their teachers have the standard accent). However, many had also used Hanyu topolects informally at school in addition to Putonghua.

#### **7.2.2.2 Hanyu topolects**

All students except Mae reported speaking Hanyu dialects in addition to Putonghua. Generally, they distinguished Putonghua and Hanyu when listing the languages and dialects

they spoke, although Tom listed only Putonghua but later recounted being raised in Guiliuhua. Beyond separately identifying Putonghua or 《中文》 (“Chinese”), many participants were uncertain about how to name dialects, so I will not attempt to do so, either. The most common topolects students reported speaking were 《桂柳话》 (“Guiliuhua”) from Northern GZAR and 《西南官话》 (“South West Mandarin”, the generic name for South-Western China’s Hanyu dialects), together spoken by about half the students. A small number reported speaking other generic varieties including 《云南汉语方言》 (“Yunnan Hanyu Dialect”), 《土话》 (“Localese”) from Wuming, and Nanning’s 《白话》 (“Baihua”, lit. “vernacular”).

Hanyu dialects were experienced by some within the classroom and by many as the school playground lingua franca. This was typically limited to primary school, but Norm and Yvonne reported Yunnan Hanyu was the lingua franca, sometimes even in class, when they boarded at middle school. Hanyu dialects are permitted as the auxiliary classroom language for bilingual schooling in Hanyu dialect-speaking areas, and may also be used as the medium in later grades by teachers approximating Putonghua. However, primary schools cannot have more than one auxiliary language. Hanyu seems to outrank Zhuang in this role: for example, Tom reported Guiliuhua was used as an auxiliary language in his primary school classroom and as the playground lingua franca, while Zhuang was also spoken by the community within their homes.

*Excerpt 7-5*

Tom: 然后在学校的话一般都是桂柳话，跟同学之间是桂柳话，上课跟老师交流都是用普通话……

Alexandra：普通话的--

Tom：--汉语么。

Alexandra：你的老师们是偶尔用壮语来帮助学生们--

Tom：--一般不用，一般不用，有时候用桂柳话。

Tom: Then at school everything was mainly Guiliuhua, between classmates it was Guiliuhua, [but] in class talking with the teacher it was all in Putonghua ...

Alexandra: Putonghua's --

Tom: --Hanyu.

Alexandra: Did your teachers occasionally use Zhuang to help the students --

Tom: -- Not usually, not usually, sometimes they used Guiliuhua.

Tom came from a Zhuang-speaking household where everybody sought to raise him as a non-Zhuang speaker, preferring Guiliuhua with him, to match these school practices. A three-tiered language hierarchy driven by the scholastic linguistic order becomes clear in Tom's experience. This three-tiered ideological order was also reproduced in educators' commentaries: in Excerpt 7-6, Mr Mauve foregrounds the association of Hanyu rather than Zhuang with commerce and upward social mobility when explaining typical urban primary

schooling in GZAR; given society prioritises commercial and mobility value, Hanyu dialects are believed to be more valuable than Zhuang, despite officially ranking lower than Zhuang, which is recognised as a language in LPP while Hanyu dialects receive no such recognition.

*Excerpt 7-6*

Mr Mauve: 城镇的小孩上学之前他有一些人是因为家里面做生意啊、或者家里面有读书人呢、或者家里面有各种各样的优越条件，他会说地方的那个汉语的方言，这样子的进去读书都直接都用汉语上课，然后用当地的汉语方言来讲解，有时候呢有解释不到位的也用少数民族语言来补充。

Town kids, before they start school, some can speak the area's Hanyu dialect because the family does business in the home, or their home has educated people, or their home has some kind of advantageous situation, that type receive their lessons in Hanyu, then teachers use the local Hanyu dialect to explain, sometimes if they still don't understand they'll use minority minzu languages to supplement.

Mr Mauve here distinguishes “Hanyu” and “local Hanyu dialect”; the former is a reference to Putonghua. However, the overall minority policy framework renders the age-old “civilised Han”/“uncivilised non-Han” binary distinction (see 2.4.2.2.2) of ongoing prominence in Chinese social organisation. This makes the Han/Zhuang language distinction more salient than distinctions between Putonghua and other Hanyu varieties, and can normatively erase the variations in Hanyu such that the three-tiered model is simply understood as Hanyu ranking above Zhuang.

While all students observed the exclusion of Hanyu dialects from teaching practices at high school (e.g. Excerpt 7-3), many reported continuing these days to use Hanyu dialects as the

“normal” language for communicating with friends from middle and high school days. The lasting place of Hanyu in the students’ linguistic habitus contrasts to their reducing usage of Zhuang for everyday communications, even with Zhuang speakers, as discussed further in Section 7.3.2.4.

There was a consistent understanding amongst the participants of the Zhuangzu as a bilingual group because of the common exposure to Hanyu at school:

*Excerpt 7-7*

Mr Mauve: 我们壮族这个地方，我们老百姓普遍都有双语现象，像我这个年纪以下的人差不多就是 60 岁以下的这些人基本上都可以说两种语言，因为我们年纪小的时候进学校读书都学汉语，然后都在社会上干活，我们多半是壮汉两种都用，所以我们基本上都属于双语人。

We Zhuangzu here [in GZAR], it seems our populace are commonly bilingual, like my generation and people below, under about 60 years of age these people can all speak two languages, because at primary school our generation [onwards] studied Hanyu, then living in society, we mostly use both Zhuang and Hanyu, so we basically all count as bilinguals.

This discursive construction of even bilingualism normalises the shift towards Hanyu; as Section 7.2.2.3 will explore, Zhuang bilinguals often immobilise the Zhuang “half” of their linguistic repertoires.

While schooling appeared to secure Hanyu in their repertoires, students' exposure to Hanyu dialects typically commenced before starting school, in their home communities. While only Mae reported a Putonghua-speaking home, many students reported their families used a Hanyu dialect instead of or alongside Zhuang at home. For example, Una is Zhuangzu but was raised through Guiliuhua:

*Excerpt 7-8*

Alexandra: 所以为什么你的父母跟你不讲壮语？

Una : 不讲壮语 , 因为我们家只有我妈一个人是壮族的……然后其实她也不会说壮语……姥姥是壮族的。她们其实也会很少说壮话。都说桂柳话了。

Alexandra: So why didn't your parents speak Zhuang with you?

Una: We don't speak Zhuang, because in our household only my mother is Zhuangzu. And then even she cannot speak Zhuang ... Maternal Grandmother is Zhuangzu. Even they [grandparents] rarely speak Zhuanghua. They all speak Guiliuhua.

In Excerpt 7-8, Una reveals being a Zhuangzu person who cannot speak Zhuang. Using Hanyu is already normalised within her family, even if that does not affect their classification as Zhuangzu: e.g. 《我们整个法学院……然后应该是只有我是一个是壮族的》 (“[In] our entire Law School ... It's certainly only me who is Zhuangzu”). Similarly, many other students constructed their personal experience of learning Zhuang from their parents as abnormal and not speaking Zhuang as normal: in Excerpt 7-9 and 7-10, for example, two students contrast their generation's learning of Zhuang to children today in Wenshan and GZAR, respectively, who are raised to speak Hanyu dialects.

*Excerpt 7-9*

Tara: 小学吧，现在我们村里的小孩都讲汉语了，都不讲壮语了，但我们小的时候有很多讲壮语的，现在都汉化了。

In childhood, now in our village [in Wenshan] all the little kids speak Hanyu, none of them speak Zhuang, but when we were young there were many Zhuang speakers; now they're all Hanified.

*Excerpt 7-10*

Lucy: 我们那里有比较奇怪的情况……现在就有小孩子，五六岁那样中就不怎么愿意讲壮语，家里人比大也不愿意教，就，她有时候从小以至上学校来跟他讲桂柳……要不教他普通话。

We have a particular situation now back there [GZAR] ... Now there are children, once they get to 5 to 6 years old, they become reluctant to speak Zhuang and their families largely don't want to teach them to either, so sometimes from early childhood until school they speak Guiliuhua with them ... Otherwise they simply teach them Putonghua.

The students' experiences illustrate that "Putonghua-medium" schooling may actually be taught in local Hanyu without destabilising the belief that Putonghua is the language of education. Although both Zhuang and Hanyu dialects have an acknowledged auxiliary role in

early schooling if they are the school community's dominant topolect, the next section will show Zhuang had far less of a role than Hanyu at school beyond the early years.

### **7.2.2.3 *Zhuang***

Thirty-seven students self-reported as Zhuang speakers, one (Gina) self-reported as a partial speaker and another (Tom) self-reported listening but not speaking proficiency (i.e. receptive competency). I do not claim the thirty-seven are fluent speakers compared to the partial speaker because this research was not designed to investigate students' Zhuang proficiency.

This section will show that a three-tiered order of linguistic practice was experienced by several participants, especially when participants' families aligned their language practices with schools' language practices. Zhuang was usually perceived as not good enough for schooling at all after the early years, and indeed as an educational retardant. Perceived as an unwritten language associated with poor education, Zhuang was not believed to be professionally useful either. By comparison, Hanyu was good enough for some functions up to middle school (see 7.2.2.2). Putonghua was believed to be essential for schooling, especially secondary schooling (see 7.2.2.1). Throughout schooling, students came to expect Zhuang to "fade out" of their daily lives.

The Zhuang-speaking students mainly learnt Zhuang at home, not at school; as illustrated in Goldie's recount of her childhood:

*Excerpt 7-11*

Goldie: 就因为我们生活在一个壮汉杂居地，他们说我们自然而然地学会的……这个环境让我们学会这种语言。

Because we lived in a place where Zhuang and Han languages were mixed together, what they spoke we naturally mastered ... This [childhood] environment made us learn this language well.

Unusually, Nola reported learning Zhuang from its auxiliary usage by primary school teachers and because it was the playground lingua franca, as it was not spoken at home by her Miaozu father and Zhuangzu mother. Even students like Nola who encountered Zhuang at school only experienced teachers sometimes using Zhuang in early classes while training the children for Putonghua-medium education. Moreover, teachers' use of Zhuang was primarily oral – very few students had been exposed to written materials in Zhuang at school or taught Zhuang literacy – and primarily in less urbanised areas. Zhuang was not part of the urban students' primary schooling. Mr Blue indicated growing up in the city was a common reason for Zhuangzu students in Zhuang Studies to have poor Zhuang and Mr Mauve explained urban children are assumed by the education system to be able to learn directly in Putonghua given 《城市的小孩普遍没有自己的语言了》 (“city children do not commonly have their own language”).

Because it was primarily a home language, Zhuang had been learnt by some students who were not administratively classed as Zhuangzu but had Zhuang-speaking families. Three of the four non-Zhuangzu students considered themselves Zhuang speakers: these were Yazmin

and Tansy, both officially from the Hanzu majority, and Hope, from another recognised minority, the Dongzu. Ethnic classification is not a reliable indicator of home language; these non-Zhuangzu students all learnt Zhuang from their families and childhood communities much the same way as Zhuangzu participants had: for example, Yazmin's father is Hanzu but speaks Zhuang, as did her community: 《我感觉我们那里的人都会讲壮语，不管是汉族要是什么族都可以呀》 (“I think all of us from there [Wenshan] can speak Zhuang language, whether Hanzu or whatever minzu, everyone can”). Thus, Yazmin explained, she grew up bilingual: 《我壮语的话就应该和汉语差不多是同步学的吧》 (“My Zhuang and Han languages were more or less learnt in step with each other”). Similarly, when I asked Tansy what she considered her mother tongue, she replied 《应该是壮语。因为 [在广西] 家里边都讲壮语》 (“It's surely Zhuang language. Because in and around the home [in GZAR] everyone spoke Zhuang language”). Nevertheless, there was a recurrent discourse that no-one except the Zhuangzu would speak Zhuang, exemplified in Una's comments at Excerpt 7-8, and in Mr Blue's explanation of some Zhuang Studies students having poor Zhuang: 《当然就包括一个因为是汉族》 (“of course the reasons include being Hanzu”).

Because learning was at home, students had primarily learnt local Zhuang varieties rather than Standard Zhuang, which is only accessible through formal learning because it is not a naturally occurring dialect. Mr Blue explained that before the Cultural Revolution the government encouraged the learning of Standard Zhuang. However, nowadays, the approach is to encourage Zhuang dialects in transitional primary schooling to support the learning of

Zhuang-first-language children, meaning the local Zhuang dialect is used. This leaves no role for Standard Zhuang in schools or elsewhere.

*Excerpt 7-12*

Mr Blue: 这个问题不要往那么轰轰烈烈的……要发放到它用得着的地方去做，所以教育呢，就是在小学阶段，要用它帮助他开发他的智力，他能够学好汉语、学好英文。

This problem doesn't have to be tackled so vigorously [now] ... it [Zhuang] should be best deployed in circumstances where it is most effective, so with education, at the primary stage, it [Zhuang] is used to help them [students] develop their intellect, so they are able to study Hanyu and English well.

He puts this instrumental approach to Zhuang, which accepts Home Zhuangs as useful educational bridges, in the context of GZAR's DoE pushing to increase primary school completion rates, with a view to then increasing the number of Zhuang-speaking students who gain entry to good universities.

Furthermore, most of the Zhuang speakers learnt Zhuang at home only in oral modes; some reported not knowing in childhood that Zhuang had a written form at all; as Fay explains, Zhuang therefore seemed irrelevant to work as well as to education:

*Excerpt 7-13*

Fay: 因为之前在家的话只是仅限于一个我们说话的，没有想到那么多。就没有想到：哎，这个语言能够成为一个专业的写[文字]。

Before [university], [Zhuang] language at home was limited to what we spoke, I did not think much about it. I did not think: “hey, that language can become a professional way of writing”.

Although there was a minority with Zhuang-literate parents, some of these students gained Zhuang Pinyin familiarity without necessarily becoming literate: e.g. Zeina, who had to take Zhuang Studies to become Zhuang-literate because her father would not teach her (see Excerpt 7-37), or Freddy, who says he picked up a little at home:

*Excerpt 7-14*

Freddy: 因为我妈妈本身她是教壮文的，然后她编著过很多壮文的课本，然后壮文文字的话我在我家经常会看得到。所以说我还看得懂一些。

Because my mother, she teaches Zhuang writing, and she has translated many textbooks in Zhuang, so in terms of Zhuang’s script I often saw it in my house. So, I can still read it a bit.

The exceptions was Hoz, whose father held a traditionally-literate Zhuang social role (a song master) and who taught Hoz Zhuang literacy to pass on his cultural practices. Given learning literacy includes an ideological dimension (Blommaert & Backus, 2013, p. 15) i.e. “attributing particular values to writing and reading achievements”, the students’ experiences of the institutionalisation in schools of Zhuang-exclusive “sociocultural norms of literacy” (Blommaert & Backus, 2013, p. 15) was especially significant in forming a linguistic habitus in which Zhuang had low value. Zhuang was thus normatively dissociated from education and, to use Fay’s word, “professional” work for which writing is integral.

Moreover, many of the Zhuang speakers perceived their Zhuang proficiency to have declined over their time in formal education. Many reported forgetting Zhuang vocabulary after childhood and using Hanyu to replace it: e.g. 《有时我忘记怎么讲了，只能说，是用白话或者普通话来说了》 (“sometimes I forget how to speak [Zhuang], I can only say, use Baihua or Putonghua to say it”) (Lloyd). Ivy and Sunny describe this as the 《汉化》 (“Hanification”) of their Zhuang, but point out the changes also affects older Zhuang speakers, though less markedly:

*Excerpt 7-15*

Ivy: 比较淳朴嘛他们讲的比较淳朴，像我们年轻一代的话讲的，真的，比较汉化比较多，名词的汉化比较严重。

Sunny: 但是就是因为这个，发展的速度啊，汉话跟壮语就是结合得也快，老一辈的也接受了，我们就顺着用下去，然后就没有去多学一些老一辈的那种词，所以就没有在这个细节上面。

Ivy: They are relatively simple folks, they [older generations] speak relatively straightforwardly; like, our generation's speech, really, it has Hanified quite a lot, the Hanification of nouns is relatively serious.

Sunny: But it's because of this, the pace of development ah, Han Speech and Zhuang Language are also combining quickly; the older generation have also accepted this [fusion], and we've used it [fused language] even more than them, to the extent that

we didn't go study some of the older generations' words, so we don't have that level of detail.

Maintaining Zhuang despite Hanyu- or Putonghua-dominant schooling was associated with having regular face-to-face time in their home communities. The students who felt their Zhuang remained strong attributed this to having hometowns not too far from university such that visits were frequent, and having lived with Zhuang-speaking families growing up, e.g.:

*Excerpt 7-16*

Danielle: 我觉得应该算是壮话吧，我的母语。因为小时候是在农村生活的……迁到城市里面，在家里面和父母都是用壮话……就回家，老家的话，因为我们老家离我们所在的城市也挺近的，就经常回家……经常能够讲到壮话，所以一直都没有忘记壮话。

I think it's certainly Zhuang language, my mother tongue. Because in early childhood we lived in a village ...When we came to the city [as a 6yoa], at home with my parents I always used Zhuang language... Now when I return home, in the hometown, because my hometown is pretty close to the city where I live, so I often return home ...[therefore] I'm often able to speak Zhuanghua, so all along I haven't forgotten Zhuang language.

Danielle's quote reveals the connection often perceived by the participants between urban mobility in childhood and starting not to practice Zhuang, although her family kept speaking Zhuang at home. By contrast, students who moved to cities for pre-tertiary schooling *without*

their families – i.e. to boarding school – saw this as central to their “unlearning” of Zhuang and their shift to Putonghua, as in an urban environment, the norms exclude Zhuang: “move to the city and your [Zhuang] language dies”, lamented Mr Orange.

In contrast to students who learnt Zhuang at home some students with Zhuang-speaking family members were raised as Zhuang non-speakers, their relatives did not speak Zhuang *to them*. Una, Zac, Farah, and Tom, who are all classified as Zhuangzu, had not learnt to speak Zhuang at home, and this was also the case for Mae, who is classified as Yaozu and has Zhuang-speaking family.

These experiences of not being raised in Zhuang, along with the perception that being raised as a Zhuang speaker is abnormal, even if Zhuangzu (indicated in Section 7.2.2.2) suggest changing social constructions of what it means to be “Zhuang”, with not speaking Zhuang becoming acceptable. As Zac said, 《我不会讲壮语，但我是壮族是没有错，哈哈》 (“I cannot speak Zhuang language, but I am Zhuang minzu without doubt, haha”). Such a change indicates the dynamism of language ideologies; participants understood family language policies aimed at raising non-speakers of Zhuang as animated by two beliefs about language: first, the education system’s ideology that Zhuang has low value in educated lives; second, if a lingua franca other than Zhuang is available it should be used. These are hegemonic; the “natural” state in which Zhuang is peripheral is not denaturalised. For example, Farah explained that her parents had not specifically determined a reason for not teaching her Zhuang, but rather whether one spoke Zhuang was considered a “natural” function of generation in their community:

*Excerpt 7-17*

Farah: 从小家里是讲地方的方言，壮语的话很少讲，壮语一般都是大人之间的讲话，比如我爸爸妈妈，还有爷爷奶奶或者伯父伯母他们之间是用壮语讲话……小孩之间就是讲方言，所以，对于壮语，我就会那么一句两句三句。

From childhood, we spoke the area's topolect at home, Zhuang language was spoken very little, Zhuang language was usually what grown-ups spoke amongst themselves, for example my dad and mum, and my paternal grandparents or my uncles and aunts used Zhuang language amongst themselves ... Small children used [Hanyu] dialect between themselves, so, regarding Zhuang language, I can only manage a few sentences.

Thus, even though Zhuang could have been naturalistically learnt with little effort or cost, this family avoided raising Zhuang-speaking children. This practice ascribes more value to children learning Hanyu dialects than Zhuang and shows an acceptance that younger generations will not be Zhuang speakers.

A belief that the child should learn another family lingua franca instead of Zhuang arose especially when one parent was not a Zhuang speaker. For example, Mae's mother did not grow up speaking Zhuang or learn it from her in-laws, so Mae's parents chose to use only Putonghua with Mae. While a non-Zhuang-speaking mother cannot be expected to teach a child Zhuang, the ideological aspect of their choice is clearer when we understand that Mae grew up with a Zhuang-speaking father and Zhuang-speaking paternal grandparents in a Zhuang-speaking area; Zhuang could *also* have been a convenient lingua franca both within

the family and in the community. As noted in Section 7.2.2.1, Mae considers herself monolingual in Putonghua, an unusual outcome given this Zhuang exposure, further revealing the family's effort to ensure she did not develop Zhuang language.

Moreover, some families not only believe Zhuang is not useful because students need Putonghua for school, but that learning Zhuang interferes with learning Putonghua. This can be described as zero-sum language ideology, as it constructs an either-or choice between Zhuang and Putonghua, believing Zhuang proficiency comes at the cost of Putonghua. Although Tansy herself grew up speaking Zhuang, she suggested this zero-sum language ideology now predominates:

*Excerpt 7-18*

Tansy: 况且，就是现在除了农村的孩子会讲壮语的话，城市的孩子是不会讲壮语的。因为他们父母的话怕，就是会影响到普通话的发音，所以就不让讲壮语。但是他们听得懂。

Moreover, nowadays, except children in rural villages who can speak Zhuang language, city kids cannot speak Zhuang language. Because their parents fear this [Zhuang] can influence Putonghua pronunciation, therefore they don't let them speak Zhuang language. But they listen and can understand.

Excerpt 7-18's comment was typical, although Zhuang speakers still outnumbered non-speakers amongst my student participants. Luke reported similar parental concerns about Zhuang persist even where Zhuang is officially included in schooling:

*Excerpt 7-19*

Luke: 即使现在的问题是，在少数民族地区的话有双语教育，现在的父母都不愿意让他们往那里送了。

That is, the problem now is, in minority areas there is bilingual education, but today's parents are all reluctant to send them [children] there.

This zero-sum ideology builds from the social stigma against “Pinched Zhuang” i.e. Zhuang-inflected Putonghua, mocked in the newspaper cartoon in Section 4.3.3 and described by Mr Green as a linguistic 《成见》 (“prejudice”). This remains a strong stigma: even Mr Russet, a proud Zhuangzu whose own Zhuang-medium music was acclaimed, bewailed his children's Pinched Zhuang: 《我的儿子我的女儿，还夹壮语，我觉得羞死了，羞死了》 (“My son my daughter, still have Pinched Zhuang, I feel I'm dying of shame, dying of shame”).

Yazmin linked the zero-sum home language ideology directly to the problematisation of Pinched Zhuang in education:

*Excerpt 7-20*

Yazmin: 它会跟他大人有时候觉得呢那个夹壮语趋势。因为可能之后学普通话有点障碍，就是会有那个夹壮的那个--

Willow: --有口音--

Yazmin: --对，口音-- 因为上学课学，学的肯定都是普通话就不怎么不乐意要求孩子讲壮语。

Yazmin: It could be to do with adults sometimes thinking of that Pinched Zhuang tendency. Because probably later, studying Putonghua, children will have some obstacles, they may have that Pinched Zhuang that --

Willow: -- Accent --

Yazmin: --Yes, accent -- Because when they're in school, everything they study is in Putonghua of course, so the parents aren't willing to require the children speak Zhuang.

Moreover, learning Zhuang is also constructed by both parents and teachers as carrying an opportunity cost with regard to learning other subjects:

*Excerpt 7-21*

Mr Mauve: 有一种情况呢是这两种都反对，他们认为我的小孩来学汉语都已经够辛苦的了，还要学英语，然后我还学壮语，我这个小孩哪有那么多时间来学习，反对学这个壮语。

There's a situation those for and against [Zhuang] oppose, they think "our children are already toiling away at Hanyu, then they must study English, then Zhuang on top, my child only has so much time", they oppose studying this Zhuang [in school] .

Likewise, Mr Blue reported the predominant attitude to Zhuang in education is that Zhuang causes students to do poorly in English, perpetuating the construction of Zhuang as a waste of educational efforts.

Furthermore, some students also believed not acquiring Putonghua's standard pronunciation could inhibit mobility in adulthood:

*Excerpt 7-22*

Tara: 像我们说普通话就很别扭，还是口音很重的，少数民族的口音……

Alexandra：那这个是不是很重要，比如说你想要找工作，面试的话，你有口音的话，会给你带来坏处？好处？没有--

Tara：--这个也是要看你面试的工作吧，因为有些他对你的普通话要求很严格，所以如果你讲的不好就会被刷下去。

Tara: It's like we speak Putonghua very awkwardly, still with a very strong accent, the minority minzu accent ...

Alexandra: Is this important, if you want to find a job say in the interview, if you have the accent, can it be disadvantageous? Advantageous? No --

Tara: --That depends on what job you're interviewing for, because some have very strict requirements about your Putonghua, so if you don't speak well you will be brushed aside.

Note Tara describes her accent as a general minority accent, rather than a Zhuang accent, reproducing the homogenisation of minorities and focusing on their difference from the Han, as current earlier chapters have argued runs through Zhuang LPP (see 4.4.4 and also 5.2.4.2).

Given the emphasis placed on standardisation under LPP (4.3.4.1), but also more broadly in Chinese education, and the enormous pressure to do well in education, these situated perceptions of the costs of speaking imperfect Putonghua can be keenly understood. Furthermore, Tsung (2014, p. 162) observes that “successful participation in the mainstream economy is strongly related to mastery of Chinese” and “[t]he media has paid a lot of attention to the lower educational outcomes of minority students with blame falling on mother tongue education” (p. 165) (see also Tsung, 2009). However, obviously not learning (or unlearning) the stigmatised language does not necessarily result in mastering the prestige language.

At the same time, in the few cases where Zhuang-in-education policies are implemented with high quality teaching and resources, parents see Zhuang as 《有用》 (“useful”) (Mr Mauve).

Mr Mauve cited the example of a bilingual school in Wuming (“Jing Le School”) known for being well-resourced with computers and earnest teachers whose students consistently get high marks. Thus, 《所以周边的就要求要来他们那儿读书》 (“from all around people require their children to go study there”). This illustrates that when LPP is implemented well, studying Zhuang comes to be valued instrumentally for accessing a good education opportunity, but this still does not reposition Zhuang itself as a scholarly subject.

Mr Mauve saw language policy as having a crucial role to play in destabilising these educational language ideologies. He believed policy could be better implemented to help students and families know that Zhuang is a university subject well before reaching university and to restructure Zhuang inside the educational paths leading to top mainstream universities:

*Excerpt 7-23*

Mr Mauve: 而我刚刚跟你说我们只有那么 33 个县，那么几十所小学、中学来办这个东西，这都没有太多的那个普遍性，所以人家都看不到这个样板。……问题在于……你跟他说，他都不太相信，你要有一个路给他走，他才相信。所以这个东西，路在哪里？所以得建设这一个完备的这个教学的那个通道，也就是说他从小学，到如果上中学，从中学，到如果上大学，他得有一个完备的台阶给他，所以你必须要有这个体制……都有一个结构吧……然后他就知道我走那条我向北大清华也可以，我走这条我向中央民大、向广西民大也可以。他就知道这个也管用，我学不了那个我学这个也行。

We only have 33 counties [with experimental schools], a few dozen primary schools, middle schools do it, so it's not commonplace at all, so people don't see the model [experimental school pilot program] ... The problem is ... if you speak to [the masses] about it they don't believe you, you need to have a route to show them and only then will they believe you. So, this, where is this route? So, it warrants building a complete

channel of [bilingual] education.... Then they'll know "I walk this route and I'm heading to PKU or maybe Tsinghua University, I walk this route and I'm heading to MUC, or maybe to GUN". Then they'll know it's effective, "I don't study that, I study this and it's also okay".

However, without that route, the dominant practices and discourses marginalising Zhuang in pre-tertiary schooling create an expectation that Zhuang will also be of low worth in tertiary education, and thereafter for socio-economic mobility.

Moreover, the norms propagated through the primary and secondary schooling system have the potential to affect, and constrain, LPP decisions, rather than LPP simply acting top-down to change language ideologies; LPP is formed and implemented in a dialectic. For example, Mr Mauve spoke of the language ideological constraints on GZAR's leaders because of their personal experience of Putonghua-dominant education, and the resulting "trickle-down" constraint in the implementation of Zhuang LPP on those agents (bilingual teachers and education researchers) who attempt to implement language equality at the local scale. Specifically, Mr Mauve commented that when Zhuangzu leaders believe their own Hanyu-medium education was sufficient, then they are unlikely to support increasing the role of Zhuang in education and 《所以这个就是造成了我们的工作特别地被动》 ("Then this makes our work [in bilingual schooling] especially lacking autonomy"). Similarly, Mr Blue recounted that after the Culture Revolution, a specialised public broadcasting "language service" was restored in other large minority languages but not for Zhuang because the relevant Zhuangzu representative believed his own personal, Hanyu-dominant language practices were normative.

*Excerpt 7-24*

Mr Blue: 因为壮族当时在中央的主要领导代表人物是魏国庆，他说我们不需要这个，就因为他一个人的一句话……因为他觉得没有用啊，我也会讲汉语啊。

Because at the time the main Central leadership representative [of the Zhuangzu] was Wei Guoqing, he said “we don’t need it”; so, because of one word from one sole person ... Because he thought Zhuang wasn’t useful: “I can also speak Hanyu”.

Overall, the experience of schooling produced in the students a disposition against using Zhuang at school. The students’ experiences growing up Hanyu speakers and decreasing- or non-speakers of Zhuang illustrate how a three-tiered language hierarchy can be reproduced by home practices in combination with the scholastic linguistic order. English, associated with schooling but not replicated at all in the students’ home language practices, complicates this linguistic order.

#### **7.2.2.4 English**

In contrast to Zhuang, English is hard to learn naturalistically in South China and spoken by few people, but associated with a good education and mobility, and more commonly written than spoken (especially as learnt at school). English is therefore a sought-after resource of distinction. Thus, even in pre-schools 《英语比壮语还要普通》 (“English is even more common than Zhuang”), as Danielle observed. Distinction in the sociolinguistic economy can be theorised as inflating across languages, and so the rising prominence of English in China (see e.g. Jie Zhang, 2011) should contribute to the ever-rising standards families perceive their children need to compete for university places and jobs. (Competition rather than central

planning in university admissions commenced in the 1980s Z. Zhao, 2014, p. 250). As more people speak better Putonghua, English becomes an increasingly significant resource for attaining distinction, although English is seldom needed for communication. Thus, for example, Z. Zhao (2014, pp. 251-253) reports school and university English certifications are increasingly valuable for employment mobility regardless of the low usage of English in Chinese workplaces. This inflationary value of English is also appearing in GZAR. For example, despite being a monolingual Putonghua speaker, Mae was pursuing English as her university major because she thought it essential to obtain work in her chosen field, tourism. Fay, talking about her traditionally Zhuang-speaking home community, expressed the perception that English is the next level of distinction sought when the value of Putonghua is lowered by mass up-skilling, stressing that teachers who use Putonghua as the medium from the beginning of formal education – teachers did not do this in her childhood – have now 《甚至》 (“even”) started teaching English:

*Excerpt 7-25*

Fay: 现在很多小孩子都不讲了。因为从上幼儿园开始老师都是讲普通话，甚至一些已经开始说教一些英语那些的。

Fay: Nowadays many little children cannot speak [Zhuang]. It's because from pre-school onwards teachers all speak Putonghua, there are even some already starting to teach some English.

This sort of sequential ordering again represents languages in relation to educational norms, with minority languages least favoured.

The prestige of English and its place in education suggest there are two dominant languages towards which shift is directed, not only Putonghua. Looking at the impact on a minority language such as Zhuang, the relevance of this “double domination” (cf. Grey, 2015) to language shift is primarily that the pressure to shift away from Zhuang is intensified; 7.2.2.3 indicated the fear of Zhuang polluting students’ English caused some parents not to allow their children to learn Zhuang at home. However, avoidance of Zhuang does not necessarily result in mastering English, as noted also in relation to Putonghua in Section 7.2.2.1, especially because access to high quality English learning resources or practice opportunities were limited in the participants’ childhoods. Louise, for example, criticised the “Chinglish” she and Tara had learnt at school. Tara likewise exclaimed, 《不过我们学的英语比较好笑, 比如有时候我们会说: Are you joking? 哈哈》 (“Although we studied English in a laughable way, like sometimes we’d say ‘are you joking?’ Hahaha”). These students felt this was because the teachers were under-skilled and because they had not had the means or opportunity to go to a national centre (Beijing) to experience the English learning environment that their peripheral hometowns in GZAR could not provide.

These experiences of learning, not learning, and unlearning Zhuang reveal a linguistic habitus commonly produced through schooling in which Zhuang is peripheral to education. Zhuang is expected to reduce in both schooling and daily life as one grows up, while using Hanyu, especially Putonghua, and to a more limited extent English, becomes more common. Moreover, students anticipate the processes of Hanyu, and English, becoming more standardised, “correct”, and literate – to a large extent these processes are what schooling has been for them – while there are not clear processes by which Zhuang can be “developed” and “improved”, reproducing an ideology of Zhuang’s inherent backwardness. Thus, this section

has shown that the linguistic habitus of the student participants has been formed in a tension between Zhuang as the language of the childhood home, informal spaces, gradually fading away as one grows up, and Hanyu (especially Putonghua) as the language of education, mobility and professional adulthood, with English as an aspiration more than a personal practice. The next section explores how this habitus was challenged but not displaced in university experiences, a significant stage of life between childhood and adult (linguistic) habitus.

### **7.3 Zhuang at university**

In contrast to the language practices and language ideologies of primary and secondary schooling described so far, the status of Zhuang is different in tertiary education, where it is available as an academic subject at university. This section begins by providing background on the “educational non-sequitur” of Zhuang Studies degree programs through which Zhuang is positioned in tertiary education as a specialised field of academic inquiry in Section 7.3.1. Section 7.3.2 then explores how Zhuang language’s value is variously constructed at university through discourses used by universities to promote Zhuang Studies to prospective students, and those used by students and teachers about choosing Zhuang Studies majors and graduate careers. Next, it examines values of Zhuang constructed in the coursework and everyday language practices of Zhuang Studies students. Overall, this section will show that Zhuang LPP, as implemented in tertiary education, is disengaged from changing a habitus established in primary and secondary schooling.

#### **7.3.1 What are Zhuang Studies and where do they fit in the education system?**

The minority education stream introduced in Section 7.2 continues into tertiary education, but its form changes from (variable) bilingual schools to minzu-specialist universities which offer

minzu-specialist subjects and which have tailored entry requirements to preferentially enrol minority students (see further 3.3.4.1). There are about a dozen minzu universities amongst China's four thousand tertiary education institutions. The tertiary education elements of the minority education stream are not systematically described or analysed in the literature on minority education, or in the national education policies (outlined in Section 4.3.2.3).

Because bilingualism is not the focus of tertiary minority education, minority languages at university are not relied upon as an instrument to assist students' studies. Study subjects on minzu themes are not necessarily taught or examined in minority languages. Rather, because Chinese tertiary education is almost exclusively Putonghua-medium, students coming to university from minority education schools must, in addition to the Gaokao, pass Level Two of the standardised Putonghua-as-second-language examination (the "HSK") and may also have mandatory remedial Putonghua once they commence university (this policy was first trialled in 1997: He, 2014, p. 45; Tsung, 2014, p. 164).

Within tertiary minority education, the formal study of Zhuang language as a subject may be introduced because a province or region may choose for some of its universities to offer the Zhuang option within the national "Chinese Minority Language and Literature" curriculum. Zhuang Studies is not taught at all minzu-specialist tertiary education institutions, even within GZAR. GZAR has seventy-five tertiary education institutions, three of which are minzu-specialist: GUN; its separately-counted adjunct college, GUN School of Xiangsihu; and Youjiang Medical College for Nationalities ("Guangxi Department of Education," 2016). Zhuang Studies is only taught at GUN in GZAR, and elsewhere only at YMU in Kunming and MUC in Beijing. YMU commenced its Zhuang Studies program in 2012, so did not yet

have final-year Zhuang Studies undergraduates, or postgraduates, during my fieldwork. The programs at GUN and MUC both commenced in 1983, according to Mr Mauve, and continue to the PhD level. In addition to Zhuang being taught within Zhuang Studies, Mr Mauve reported that Zhuang language and script are taught to undergraduates and masters students in the bilingual teaching training programs at Guangxi Teacher's College; at Masters level within bilingual teaching at GUN, MUC, GU and Guangxi Normal University; and at PhD level at Nankai University, Shanghai Normal University and in Taiwan. Guangxi Teacher's College students are required to serve as teachers in rural areas after graduating (Kaup, 2000, p. 137), so their employment is guaranteed; Zhuang Studies university students are not tied to government postings and have no employment guarantee. Based on figures reported by Messrs Blue, Mauve and Purple, and by Zhuang Studies students, each Zhuang Studies department has around one hundred students: twenty to thirty undergraduates/year choose Zhuang Studies at each of GUN, MUC and YMU, and a smaller number of postgraduates.

Against the backdrop of relatively small Zhuang Studies programs and institutionalised Putonghua-dominant language practices, eighteen of my forty-three students were Zhuang Studies undergraduates and postgraduates. "Zhuang Studies" refers to slightly differing programs at various universities; all are a similar four-year mix of literature, language, and anthropological studies of South-West China's minority groups. Zhuang language is but one component. For example, at MUC, the degree is called 《南方少数民族语言文学》 ("Southern Minority Language and Literature") and one of its teachers, Mr Blue, explains students may select Buyi, Yi or Miao language instead of Zhuang. The MUC cohort of ten to thirty p.a. splits into smaller groups for these languages, taking one language for two years. They take other subjects together. The structure is similar at YMU; YMU Zhuang Studies

students described their subjects, including two compulsory Hanyu subjects and a foreign language:

*Excerpt 7-26*

Alexandra : 然后你们的专业都是壮语，所以，你们是每天上壮语课还是每天也必须上别的课？

Monica : 呃，也要上其他的课。

Alexandra : 什么样的？

Tara : 比如说什么现代汉语，还有那个古代汉语，还有那个语言学纲要，还有那个语言调查，还有民族理论。就是关于语言的那些东西都要学。

Monica : 我们还学小语种，越南语。

Alexandra: Then you're all specialising in Zhuang language, so, do you take Zhuang lessons every day or have other lessons also every day?

Monica: Oh, we also have other lessons.

Alexandra: What kind?

Tara: For example, Modern Hanyu, Ancient Hanyu, then there's that Overview of Linguistics, and the Language Survey, and Minzu Theory. We must study all sorts of things relating to language.

Monica: And we also study a second language, Vietnamese.

In addition, the YMU students have an English subject, as is compulsory in most Chinese university degrees; these young women were taking 《英语写作》 (“English Writing Exercises”).

As Section 3.3.4.1 noted, Zhuangzu students have very low university enrolment rates. This inequality is responded to, in part, by a set of national preferential policies regulating entrance to both minzu and generalist universities. These change often (e.g. Jin, 2016; Leng, 2016; Shi & Sun, 2014) and the detailed rules are not published, but these policies entail a system of bonus Gaokao points for students who are classified as minority people and/or from rural areas. Within GZAR, these points systematically provide Zhuangzu students preference over the Hanzu, while the smaller minorities of GZAR have preference over the Zhuangzu (Kaup, 2000, p. 137). Additionally, quota policies prompt the minzu-specialist universities to enrol greater numbers of minority students than other universities, for example obliging GUN to accept the top ten students from forty-nine disadvantaged counties in GZAR, regardless of marks (Kaup, 2000, p. 137). For admission to a Zhuang Studies degree candidates must gain entry to GUN, YMU or MUC through a combination of their Gaokao scores, any applicable Gaokao bonus marks, and an oral Zhuang examination administered by the university. The Gaokao includes compulsory Putonghua, English and Mathematics examinations, although passing English is no longer required for minority studies enrolments, since 2016 (Mr Purple). This demonstrates language/education policy engaging with linguistic double disadvantage, given the unequal access to English learning resources for minority minzu students, especially those in “peripheral” locations. In Section 7.2.2.4, Tara and Louise criticised their disadvantaged English education, and Zhuang Studies students Jane, Nola and Blaine reported they felt they would have benefited from this exclusion from

the English prerequisite when applying for university. Already, they, and most other Zhuang Studies students I interviewed, had been advantaged by another policy response to linguistic inequality, the Zhuang-medium oral entry examination, which Mr Blue explained:

*Excerpt 7-27*

Alexandra: 他们上这个大学以前，在高考的时候，必须参加一个少数民族语言的考试？

Mr Blue：有的参加，有的没有参加……有一部分原来他会少数民族语言，有的不会……你参加这个测试以后呢，就可以比别人录取的分数线降低一些……达到这个分数线。如果你不参加测试的话呢，你可能要达到这个分数线以上比较高的分，比如说超过 20、30 分才能够录取。但是如果你参加了这个测试，说明你有这个语言的能力，那么只要刚刚上这个线。

Alexandra: Before they began university, at Gaokao time, did [your students] take a minority language exam?

Mr Blue: Some did, some did not ... Part of the group originally speak a minority language, some cannot ... If you take the special examination, then you can be accredited with a lower admissions score than others ... [and thereby] reach the score line [i.e. threshold requirement]. If you don't take the special examination your marks must be above the line, for example 20, 30 marks higher to be admitted. But if you take this special examination, show you have this language ability, all you need is to just reach the line.

The students know this preferential language exam as the 《小语特试》 (“Special Second Language Exam”) or 《口语特试》 (“Special Oral Language Exam”): for example, Lucy and Yazmin used these terms interchangeably. This policy is a means by which the university 《门槛儿比较底》 (“threshold is relatively low”) (as both Yazmin and Lucy said) but there are some local variations in its application: for example, in its timing:

*Excerpt 7-28*

Willow: 她们是民族语特试进来的就是还没高考的就进--

Lucy: -- 高考之后口试的，对高考之后特试--

Willow: -- 哦这样的。我们以前是还没高考试的--

Willow: They came in through the special minzu language exam, that is before you sit the Gaokao you enter --

Lucy: -- The oral exam was after the Gaokao, yes after the Gaokao we sat the special exam --

Willow: -- Oh, like that. We go before, we're examined when we haven't yet sat the Gaokao --

The Zhuang Studies students took this oral exam in their own dialect (of necessity as well as policy, given no-one reported learning or speaking Standard Zhuang when I asked).

A written Zhuang exam is not needed for entry into Zhuang Studies because it is not expected that entrants will have had opportunities to acquire Zhuang literacy at school:

*Excerpt 7-29*

Alexandra: 他们来上学的时候,他们必须学好壮文吗?

Mr Blue: 来这里的学生的吗? 来这里的学生的就是他们有一部分在广西的时候, 他在小学初中他可能学过壮文, 不多, 但大部分没有学过。

Alexandra: When they come to study, must they have mastered Zhuang script?

Mr Blue: Students coming here? The students coming here, well, some of them when in Guangxi, at primary or middle school, might have studied Zhuang scripts, not many; but the majority won't have studied it.

Not having opportunities to study Zhuang script had been the case for my participants: see 7.2.2.3.

Passing the Zhuang oral examination is not exclusively a mechanism for getting into Zhuang Studies, but for getting into the university overall. After admission to a university through this preferential language policy – in my data it appears that this policy applies only for minzu-specialist universities – the university then decides which of a student's nominated majors to offer them. MUC Zhuang Studies students Lucy and Willow explained their entry experiences; the policy turned Lucy's Zhuang proficiency into a tool to access her desired degree whereas Willow was left with no choice but Zhuang Studies after obtaining university entry through the oral Zhuang exam.

*Excerpt 7-30*

Lucy: 我是第一自愿第一专业就是这个学校这个专业……我们是小语课策进来的……可能是因为高考分数不怎么高……只要你填报这个学校的专业就都可以上了……但是老师比较资历推荐嘛，然后可能是我比较喜欢这个小专业……听说过有这个专业感觉挺浪漫的，然后就来了……这个大学在云南的知名度特别高。

Willow: 我呢是思想来北京。因为我的分数[太低了]……所以想去别的好的大学是有点难，所以央民大是比较好。后来，我就签了民大新闻学英文的专业……我现在的专业是第五个吧。

Lucy: My first choice, first major was this university, this major ... we [Willow, Yazmin and Lucy] came in through the Second Language Policy ... probably because my Gaokao marks weren't that good ... all you need to do is nominate this university's majors and you can get in.... But my teachers recommended me comparing my qualifications [to others], then maybe it was also that I quite like this little major... upon hearing of this major I felt it was romantic, then I came ... [and] this university is renowned in Yunnan....

Willow: I thought about coming to Beijing. Because of my [low] marks ... so thinking of going to other good universities was a bit tough, so MUC was comparatively good. Then I signed up for MUC's English media degree ... My current degree [Zhuang Studies] was my fifth choice.

Willow's language hierarchy, ranking of English over Zhuang, is clear here, mirroring the pre-tertiary scholastic language hierarchy analysed in Section 7.2.

The special oral language exam is so attractive as a means of accessing the educational capital of a university degree that some students, including those in Excerpts 7-31 and 7-32, reported choosing to take the preferential entry route and only afterwards turning their attention to Zhuang Studies:

*Excerpt 7-31*

Nola: 因为这个专业是刚开的嘛。所以从来有一个同学“哎你们同学，壮族的同学，要不要请进这个口音考试这样专业”。我就觉得哦好进去也感动，然后去试，来这儿。口语考试考完然后到这个专业。

Because this major [at YMU] has just commenced. So, to start a classmate [said] “Hey you classmates, Zhuangzu classmates, will you go for this oral exam for these kinds of majors”. Then I thought it would be good to get in and I was moved, then I went for the exam and came here. When the oral exam was done, I came into this major.

*Excerpt 7-32*

Alexandra: 你们以前想到会上这样的课吗？还是觉得这个专业挺有意思呢？你们怎么来选择？

Monica: 还好玩，因为当时这个专业需要进行口语考试，好，在进行不用笔试考试嘛。

Alexandra: Did you think before [university] about taking these sorts of courses? Or did you think this major was very interesting? How did you choose?

Monica: It's fun, because at the time this major needed an oral exam to get in, good, there is no written exam for entry.

In addition to the preferential oral language examination, many students enrolling in Zhuang Studies can also benefit from a preferential tuition subsidy policy which enables minority students to afford university. Yazmin, a Hanzu Zhuang Studies student, was working in the semester breaks to pay for tuition, suggesting the subsidy is awarded only to minority students (as with other preferential policies, the detailed rules seem inaccessible). Unlike the oral exam, showing Zhuang proficiency is inessential for the subsidy, Mr Mauve reports. Zhuang Studies teachers report it has significantly increased enrolments:

*Excerpt 7-33*

Mr Mauve: 然后呢这些年又换过来了，因为有一些人他发觉做少数民族文化还是比较好的，特别是一些它有那个政策性的一些补贴，然后这两年马上又有一点回升了，去年我们招到了 29 个本科生，今年计划不知道是 30 个。

Then in recent years there's been a change [from very low enrolments], because some people realise that doing minority culture [studies] is still pretty good, particularly some who have subsidies under that policy, then the last two years have seen a sudden

rebound, last year we have 29 undergraduate students, this year we're planning for, I don't know, 30 students...

However, choosing Zhuang Studies – even with a preferential entry policy – relied on knowing it existed and weighing the degree against the expectations developed in school that Zhuang was not a professional, useful or educated language, as the following section explores.

### **7.3.2 Zhuang Studies students' enrolment decisions**

The eighteen Zhuang Studies students chose the major mainly because they wanted to maintain and even improve their linguistic and cultural understanding of their own minzu or because they desired the mobility of attending university and Zhuang studies was easy to get into. Sometimes these motivations overlapped. Perhaps surprisingly, very few were put off by their own perception that Zhuang Studies had low graduate employability, while others believed this specialist degree would afford them specialist jobs. A minority perceived Zhuang Studies as valuable to a specific kind of occupation, Zhuang Studies postgraduate research, which they sought. Before discussing job aspirations and reasons to choose Zhuang Studies (7.3.2.2), I will discuss one key reason which emerged for not choosing it – not knowing the major existed – which reflects poorly on the normative effects of Zhuang tertiary education policy (7.3.2.1).

#### ***7.3.2.1 Not knowing Zhuang Studies is on offer***

The policy offering – and for many students, subsidising – Zhuang Studies represents an important normative intervention at the territory level of education because Zhuang is often seen as a rustic language, a belief the pre-tertiary education system encourages (7.2). In

contrast, university, like school, is often perceived as primarily valuable for its role in socio-economic mobility. Thus, minority languages may be discounted as academic subjects because it is unclear what employable skills or qualifications they equip students with:

*Excerpt 7-34*

Mr Mauve: 不乐意学民族语文的也有不少……中国这个大学体制是你读了大学要出去要有事做。

There are many who are unwilling to learn minzu languages ... The Chinese university system is once you read your course you must “get out”, you must do something with it [i.e. work].

However, (re)introducing Zhuang after systematically excluding it from secondary education and often from primary, as the participants experienced (7.2), is potentially of minimal normative impact because no expectation develops amongst students that they *can* study Zhuang as a specialist university subject. Knowing Zhuang can be a specialist subject is especially significant for challenging the belief that Zhuang is not a written language. Una, for example, held an extremely negative view of Zhuang based in part on the lack of formal options for studying Zhuang and because Zhuang seems separate from mainstream education:

*Excerpt 7-35*

Una: 说壮文的人，基本上，就是在外边读书的人，基本上，没有人会说也没有人会写。你学了也没有-- 对我来说也没有太大的用处。而且也没有那个氛围，没有那种专门教壮语的学习。

Una: Zhuang-speaking people, basically, amongst people who are educated outside Zhuang circles, basically, there aren't people who speak it or write it. If you study it there is likewise no-- In my opinion, there is likewise not much use for it. Moreover, there is also not that atmosphere, not that kind of specialised studies for teaching Zhuang language.

Una's views align clearly with the institutionalised language practices in schools which all but exclude Zhuang. Una appears unaware of Zhuang Studies degrees or Zhuang-medium schooling. By contrast, becoming aware of Zhuang Studies can significantly change beliefs about Zhuang: for example, Yana at GUN had not known this degree existed, nor that Zhuang could be written, when she commenced university, but is now motivated to spend her own time improving her Zhuang:

*Excerpt 7-36*

Yana: 我是上大学之后才知道有壮文这个东西……我以前要是知道我会选他们的专业……然后我就很想自己去，我想自学，但是我在找书，它会首先有那什么，像我们学英语会有音标那种……自己会说壮话，但是不会写。然后就希望自己学，到时候我会说我也会写。

After I started university I came to know of such a thing as Zhuang writing ... Had I known before, I would have picked their [Zhuang Studies] major ... After, I wanted to get onto it, I want to teach myself, but I'm looking for books, where to start? Like when we learn English we have phonetics and such ... I myself can speak Zhuang language, but I can't write. Later, I hope with my self-study, one day I may speak and also write.

In Yana's case, the promotion of Zhuang Studies was clearly insufficient to overcome a habitus anticipating Zhuang's absence at university. While many specialist subjects only commence at the tertiary level, other specialisations have not been constructed as "rustic", and "irrelevant to education" in earlier years; Zhuang Studies low visibility reduces any normative effect LPP is aiming to have to raise the status of Zhuang. As Louise commented:

*Excerpt 7-37*

Louise: 现在小孩都不讲壮语都讲汉语，然后对自己本民族的语言，像我自己就是，我是上了大学之后才知道是有文字的，觉得普及还不够，然后面也不够广。

Today's children all speak Hanyu but not Zhuang, then towards their own minzu language, [they're] like I was, I didn't know there was a Zhuang script until after I came to university. I think the promotion is insufficient, and the breadth of it is not vast enough.

I conducted follow-up research online to examine how Zhuang Studies was promoted and found Zhuang Studies is not a prominent course even at the three universities where it is offered. For example, searching the YMU and the GUN websites for "Zhuang" or the Putonghua equivalent 《壮》 returns zero results (Guangxi University for Nationalities, 2016a; Yunnan Minzu University, 2016e). It is unclear from YMU's twenty faculties' descriptions to which Zhuang Studies belongs, as none refer to it (Yunnan Minzu University, 2016a), and likewise with GUN's six faculties' descriptions (Guangxi University for Nationalities, 2016b). Rather, the specialist minzu programs that are given explicit description on these websites appear only to be those following national policy priorities,

particularly courses about social cohesion and ASEAN integration. For example, YMU's School of Humanities boasts its "Ethnic Frontier Regions Social Stability and Development" innovation team (Yunnan Minzu University, 2016b), and YMU's Schools of Southeast Asian Studies and of South Asia promote courses in "non-common languages" (languages of ASEAN states), explicitly associating this with "One Belt and One Road", China's cornerstone international relations policy (Yunnan Minzu University, 2016c, 2016d).

Zhuang Studies' low visibility in university's own discourses does not assist in challenging the belief that Zhuang is unprofessional and unemployable; beliefs which damage the status and indeed the inter-generational transmission of Zhuang. Zeina's reports of discussions with her father about her university major illustrate this; despite Zeina's father having Zhuang literacy practices, he nevertheless equates book learning with Putonghua and framed her childhood interest in Zhuang writing as a threat to learning to read Putonghua well, an important employment skill. He believed learning to read Zhuang would offer no employment advantages to Zeina.

*Excerpt 7-38*

Zeina: 我从小说的话，因为我爸爸也学过壮文，从小他会写文章发到《三月三》

...所以我在家从小就看到《三月三》这本书。但是那时候我跟我爸爸说过我想

学壮文，但是他说你先好好念书，上大学了再做你自己想做的事情。但是之前

我学的是理科，然后我上大学之后也是得学理科嘛，后面我大学准备毕业我就

说我想做自己喜欢做的事情，我就想来学我们民族的语言，然后我想了解我们

民族的文化，所以后面我就考了我们这个中国少数民族语言文学专业这个，所以考过来，然后再跟[名]老师学了壮文，也是了了自己一个心事。

From childhood, because my father also studied Zhuang script, from early on he was writing articles to send to *Third of March* ... So I saw *Third of March* that book [magazine] at home throughout childhood. But when I spoke to Dad about wanting to study Zhuang, but he said “before anything, you’d better study well; when you get to university then you can do what you want”. But before [at school] I learned sciences [i.e. in the sciences stream], so after I started university I had to study sciences yeah, then preparing to graduate I said again “I want to study what I like, so I want to go study our minzu language” [at Masters level], I want to understand our minzu culture. So I took the exam for our Chinese Minority Minzu Language and Culture degree, got in, then I studied Zhuang script with [a language leader], following my own heart.

This recount also highlights the prominence of family members’ language ideologies in students’ trajectories, because students are not always agents of their educational decisions.

The logic of including Zhuang as an academic subject at university is different to Zhuang as a transitional medium at school, as 7.3.1 noted. Nevertheless, the logic of the schooling system and Zhuang’s low value within that logic is carried over in students’ habitus; thus, many students perceived that Zhuang was not prestigious despite being a specialised university subject. For example, Laurel recounted an incident from the time when she was deciding whether to enrol in Zhuang Studies:

*Excerpt 7-39*

Laurel: 我记得我当初报这个志愿的时候啊我还上网问以前班里面的同学，竟然有这个少数民族语言哦，然后他们说学什么，我说壮语啊，然后他们还笑着说，啊？学壮语啊，不会是教讲壮话吧？

I remember when I originally selected my major, ah I also went online to ask some colleagues from [high school] class, [saying] there are even minority minzu languages, then they said “what are you studying?”, I said “Zhuang language, then they laughed; “what?” Studying Zhuang language eh, isn’t that for teaching Zhuang?

Laurel’s old classmates saw Zhuang as unworthy of university study as it opens only a narrow career path. Their tone is Zhuang Studies is *just* for teaching, and an unpopular language at that.

Thus, the expectation that Zhuang is not part of a “good” education or part of literacy practices, which develops in earlier schooling (7.2), impacts on whether Zhuang can be seen as a specialised university subject or simply as anomalous at university.

The normative view of Zhuang as un-educated and un-professional language cannot be challenged by Zhuang Studies alone, however, the role of LPP in changing educational practices which then change language ideologies has precedent, as Mr Mauve pointed out. Personal exposure to Zhuang in tertiary education unseated beliefs that Zhuang was un-educated and un-professional amongst some of his generation:

*Excerpt 7-40*

Mr Mauve: 你看我们这个在这里的本科 85 级，83 年到 85 年的那一帮在这里毕业的那帮双语的[学生]……现在好多都当大官。就是说他出去都比别人优秀，都不见得是学民族语文地出去都没用，他脑瓜活。

You look at us who got degrees here [GUN] in 1985, the 1983-1985 bilingual graduates... now so many have become officials. That is to say they've had an advantage in going further than others; none of them think studying minzu languages is no use in getting somewhere [in life], [after all] they have brainy livelihoods.

However, Mr Mauve fails to mention that the centralised planning of graduate jobs, which created jobs for Zhuang studies graduates of his generation, has ceased (reducing since the 1980s Z. Zhao, 2014, p. 250). The types of jobs the 1983-85 graduates obtained were government postings, for example work translating government announcements and policies. Nowadays, public service Zhuang translation work is reducing in volume, vacancies are few, and Zhuang translators who retire are rarely replaced, as Mr Pink, a Zhuang language specialist of that era, observed. The following section explores the students' perceptions of Zhuang Studies' economic capital in employment markets.

### ***7.3.2.2 Job aspirations and reasons for choosing Zhuang Studies***

Some students professed to choose Zhuang Studies for interests' sake, but for many of these this entailed an interest in a career relating to Zhuang Studies, including research work, translation, broadcasting and teaching. However, language leaders suggest such work is

limited. Moreover, several students appear to have chosen Zhuang without regard for its employability, or despite a view it was of low employability.

Exemplifying the students interested in Zhuang language careers, Zeina came to Zhuang Studies at the Masters level deliberately following *only* her interest in the language, as Excerpt 7-38 showed, and hoping for related work. She secured employment on a Zhuang language survey research project before completing the Masters. However, the belief that Zhuang Studies' educational capital would make Zhuang language more employable did not last for others: for example, Laurel described realising, over the course of her Zhuang Studies degree, that GZAR had too little ethno-tourism for her to pursue her original plan of using Zhuang language in the tourism sector. Others interested in Zhuang ethno-tourism work (namely Liz, Hope and Mae) had not chosen Zhuang Studies at all, but chosen English majors. These three viewed only English and Putonghua as tourism resources, given the need to communicate with outsiders and the unlikelihood of outsiders speaking Zhuang.

Others saw Zhuang Studies as a route to translation and broadcasting work:

*Excerpt 7-41*

Alexandra : 所以 , 你们觉得毕业以后可以找到什么样的工作 ?

Louise : 做翻译啊。

Alexandra : 啊不错啊。

Louise : 然后当播音员 , 那边有地方电视台嘛。

Tara : 我们学的这个专业找的工作应该差不多也是这种吧。如果语言学得好一点还可以当壮语老师。

Alexandra : 那是在这里还是在 ?

Tara : 应该是在我们家乡吧。

Monica : 在大学当老师要求的学历是很高的。

Alexandra: So, what type of work do you think you'll find after graduating?

Louise: Translation work.

Alexandra: Oh, not bad.

Louise: Then being a broadcaster; here we have a local television station.

Tara: For us in this major the work we can find is pretty much that kind. If you study the language well you can be a Zhuang language teacher.

Monica: To teach at university your qualifications must be very high.

Louise's comment highlights the association of local rather than national television stations with content produced/dubbed in Zhuang and the importance of local media to translation sector employment. Nevertheless, such jobs must be limited because such stations are few; Tara later commented that 《用壮语的就只有我们家乡那边的电视台会用壮语讲，然后其他电视台都是用汉语的》 (There's only our hometown television station using Zhuang [in Yunnan], then all the television stations use Hanyu”).

Excerpt 7-40 also suggests that gaining employment teaching in Zhuang is competitive. Nevertheless, students including Nola at YMU wished to use the Zhuang Studies degree to become Zhuang-medium teachers at bilingual schools. Mr Blue explained this career path was common amongst MUC Zhuang Studies graduates:

*Excerpt 7-42*

Alexandra : 你刚给我比较丰富的解释他们毕业以后的工作，所以别的学生毕业以后当老师吗？

Mr Blue : 当老师的有，当老师的也不少。但是当老师呢，如果你是不在广西当老师，那么用处可能不是很大，有的回广西的话针对壮族地区、壮族学生可能还有一些用处。

Alexandra: You just gave me a very fulsome explanation of their employment after graduating, so do some other students go one to become teachers?

Mr Blue: Some become teachers, more than a few. But if you don't become a teacher in Guangxi, the application [of Zhuang Studies] isn't great, some return to Guangxi specifically to Zhuangzu areas, [where] Zhuangzu students probably still have some applicability.

While a school teaching career aligns with the goals of earlier Zhuang tertiary education policies – Mr Mauve described the 1983 initiation of GUN and MUC's Zhuang Studies

degrees as part of efforts to produce teachers for Zhuang bilingual schools – the limited state of Zhuang bilingual schooling today (see 4.3.4.2) suggests only a weak demand for such teachers. Moreover, there are teacher training colleges and specialised bilingual education university degrees (see 7.3.1) also producing teachers for Zhuang bilingual schools.

While these excerpts reveal student perceptions that Zhuang Studies can lead to Zhuang-related work, the language leader data suggests that the students may be overly optimistic. Mr Pink, in 7.3.2.1, observed the decline in government translation work, and the *Third of March* editors I interviewed only maintained a small and partly volunteer staff. Mr Purple explained the market for his Zhuang Studies students was already very limited although the new program at YMU had not yet produced any graduates:

*Excerpt 7-43*

Mr Purple: 这种岗位是有限的，这种民族语的岗位，它很快就会饱和了……就是说学生培养了几年之后，他招够了……就是会面临一个……连续招人的这么一个问题。所以这个现在还是很着急的。

That kind of post is limited, that kind of minzu language post, it will soon reach saturation point ... That is to say, the students are nurtured for a few years then a sufficient amount are attracted [for the available postings] ... So, then they [authorities] could face... a continuous recruitment problem of sorts. So now this is very worrying.

Similarly, the first cohort (of eight) in the specialised Naxi language degree at YMU obtained most of the available specialist jobs while later cohorts struggled to find work (H. Yang, 2012,

pp. 69-71). Mr Blue painted a similarly bleak picture of Zhuang work but was more positive about postgraduate Zhuang Studies research positions:

*Excerpt 7-44*

Alexandra : 他们的工作也包括语民位这样的工作吗？除了这样外，编辑、民位外，有别的工作可以使用壮文吗？还是使用壮语。

Mr Blue : 就是做一些，有时候到出版社做编辑，或者有些到县里面市里面的文化局可能也会用得上。但是说整天用很多、专门用那个可能没有，就是你需要的时候，比如说，现在广西他是每个政府的部门要求挂的那个匾牌啊，要求有汉文和壮文，这样的话虽然用处不是很大……所以他们出去以后的工作实际上是说，使用汉文的机会多一点，跟那个中文系出来的学生所从事的工作比较接近，比人家多一点的就是说他掌握壮语、壮文知识。或者说他们如果是本科毕业的他要去再读研究生、以后可能读博士，别的学校可能会想多招这个会多一种语言、壮族文化的学生。所以我们每年的毕业生，本科，很多会被推荐到别的学校去读研究生，别的学校愿意招他们也就是因为会一些民族的语言。

Alexandra: Does their work also include the Minority Language Committee and work like that? Apart from that, editing, the Language Committee, is there other work which could use Zhuang script? Or use Zhuang language?

Mr Blue: It makes for some, sometimes they go to publishing houses to be editors, or to the provincial and county cultural bureaux where they might also use it. But where you'd speak it all day and use it exclusively, there's unlikely to be any job like that; it's [more like] sometimes you need it. For example, now in Guangxi in every government department is required to hang up a plaque, it's required to be in both Han and Zhuang scripts; the utility of it isn't great ... Or that if they are graduates and continuing to postgraduate studies, maybe a PhD after, other schools may want to recruit more students with an additional language, the Zhuangzu culture students. So, each year our graduates, undergraduates, many of them will be recommended to other schools as graduate students, other schools are willing to recruit them because they can use some minzu languages.

This research work alternative to employment represented an important possibility after graduation for many of the Zhuang Studies students and warrants further discussion because it is the only occupation, other than teaching, where policy creates professional opportunities for using Zhuang language. Opinions on whether postgraduate Zhuang language work was worthwhile were divided. In the face of perceived low employability for their Zhuang Studies bachelors degree, some student, for example Lucy, viewed post-graduate Zhuang Studies as a bad idea because a Masters would further delay the already difficult task of finding work. Others reacted to the perception of low employability by considering post-graduate Zhuang Studies. An interview at GUN especially foregrounded this:

*Excerpt 7-45*

Gina : 每个人的想法都是不一样。

Danielle : 对，还是有一些人他，还是对这个始终没有办法提起那么大的兴趣吧，因为毕竟很多人，到现在为止还是不是很赞同这个东西有用，比如说这个专业啊，不知道以后出来是干什么，像中国--

Fay : --就业的前景会比较窄。

Danielle : 对，就业的前景太窄了。

Fay : 而且选择这个专业可能就是说做研究生的比较多一点。

Danielle : 就是不是那么的。

Alexandra : 所以你们觉得毕业以后可以继续上硕士然后变成研究者还是老师这样的，还是有别的理想的工作吗？

Fay : 我有想过这个问题，但是可能是一种现实的选择，我可能会考虑先就业，但是我也会考虑去考研，但是可能说如果考研方向的话我可能会选择历史文化类的，因为我刚才说过对语言的话，这个学习能力不是很强，或者可能说学不下去。

Gina: Everyone has their own reasons [for choosing Zhuang Studies].

Danielle: Yes, then there's some people who are never going to find a way of having much of an interest in it [Zhuang Studies], because after graduating many people, till

now there has not been much agreement that this [degree] is a useful thing, for instance this major ah, we're not sure what you come out of it as, like China --

Fay: -- The employment prospects are very narrow.

Danielle: Yes, the employment prospects are too narrow.

Fay: Therefore, many of those choosing this major probably become research students.

Danielle: It's not like that.

Alexandra: So, do you think after graduating you might continue to a Masters and become a researcher or a teacher or the like, or do you have other ideal jobs?

Fay: I've thought about this problem, but it may be a pragmatic consideration, we may consider employment first, but if maybe if I take the research [degree entrance] exam route, I would probably choose history or culture, because as I just said concerning language, this [my] language ability is not strong, I might not get through.

Those already in post-graduate Zhuang Studies (Goldie, Zeina, Yvonne) were genuinely interested in the field but also driven by the employment market: Goldie and Yvonne saw their undergraduate Zhuang Studies degree as having insufficient educational capital for Zhuang Studies-related work. Their Zhuang Studies professors all have PhDs, modelling this value. Mr Mauve explained that at the postgraduate level, there was often a different interplay between the value of Zhuang language and job market values, because students may already have the additional educational capital of a bachelor's degree in another field. Thus, many Zhuang Studies Masters students are motivated specifically to study Zhuang language to differentiate themselves on the job market from the broad Hanyu-speaking cohorts of their undergraduate degrees.

*Excerpt 7-46*

Mr Mauve: 他们有一些人是对壮语文喜欢……还有那个是播音的，他也是文语类比较……可是他喜欢，因为他觉得如果跟人家做那个汉语，他没有太多的那个优势，然后他如果转过来读我们这个壮语了，做这个壮文、壮语的播音、节目主持人，他更有优势……更多的是读语言学的较多，学了汉语言文学，觉得做汉语研究也是研究，做少数民族语言也是研究，那么多人去做汉语言，换过来我做少数民族语言研究。

We have some people who like Zhuang language ... Then there's broadcasting, they've studied language comparatively ... but they like it [Zhuang], because they think if they do Hanyu like everyone, they won't have much advantage, then if they switch to studying Zhuang language, do Zhuang script, Zhuang language broadcasting, [become] program anchors, they have more advantage... More of them are studying linguistics, studying Han language and script, they think whether they do Hanyu research or minority language research it's still research and since there are already so many people doing Hanyu, [so] they change to my minority minzu language research.

Even without a Zhuang studies degree, however, Zhuang language can be developed to increase employment prospects in Zhuang research work. The participants described literacy as they key to this route. Barbara undertook diligent self-study and then Zhuang linguistics research work with Mr Green, and she had both continuing Zhuang research work and hoped also to resume voluntarily teaching the GU extra-curricular Zhuang literacy course. However, Hoz, one of the very few students to grow up with Zhuang literacy, nevertheless thought he

would have to obtain a job unrelated to Zhuang language to support a passion for which there are no jobs, developing a new Zhuang script (see also 6.4).

One student, Luke, constructed the possibility of post-graduate Zhuang Studies as an indication that Zhuang was useful regardless of its employability and explicitly challenged the utilitarian (job) market ideologies which dominate evaluation of Zhuang:

*Excerpt 7-47*

Luke: 不会。因为我现在想的话，你说很有用的话，因为我设想以后如果是干这个的话肯定很有用；就算做那个工作跟这个没有关系的话，也不会难过。因为刚才说的，你懂得了太多了，学这个东西你有-- 你的民族意识上，还有对于这个东西你会…… [有] 一种责任跟意识，你不能用很功利的来说用到工作当中什么的，但是会了就会了，就行，这样子。……我以后的，我可能说也会往那个方向发展，跟这个语言有关的。

No. because my current thinking is: you [Alexandra] said “very useful”; because I expect if I undertake this then it’s certainly useful afterwards; even if the [eventual] job bears no relation to this [major] it’s still not bad. Because as was just said, you know too much, studying this subject you -- on the level of your minzu consciousness, still regarding these things you will ... [have] a kind of responsibility and consciousness, you cannot use a very utilitarian [view] to say it’s useful in work or whatever, but you can understand, that’s enough, like that.... In my future, I will

probably also head towards developing in that direction, in connection with this language.

Luke's final comment refers to his intention to head towards 《读博》 (“taking a PhD”) in Zhuang Studies. Moreover, because Luke does not believe undergraduate Zhuang Studies will sufficiently equip him for Zhuang language-related work, he takes private lessons in Zhuang literacy with Mr Black.

Outside of government postings and research work, Zhuang language can be a resource in creative work. Mr Black, for example, produces Zhuang songs with collaborators. However, there is not a strong commercial market to support creative Zhuang-language work and these songs are offered free through the Chinese search engine Baidu.com. Mr Black therefore takes private students in Zhuang and translates books into Zhuang for income. Mr Aqua, Mr Russet and Mr Silver are relatively well-known singers who use Zhuang but the position of each is unique, and all have day jobs (in TV production and policing). Moreover, none of the Zhuang Studies students aspired to creative Zhuang jobs.

Moreover, many Zhuang Studies undergraduates did not actually perceive Zhuang Studies would lead to a job because Zhuang language was not employable. Thus, reasons of interest, experience or identity became decisive in choosing Zhuang Studies. Willow, at MUC, explained the difficulty converting a Zhuang language, even as a university specialisation, into employment:

*Excerpt 7-48*

Alexandra: ……特别是你找工作的时候你们会特别找着怎么说跟壮语有关系的工作还是给你机会讲壮语这样的工作吗？

Willow: 如果说有机会的话也可以。但是可能因为如果说壮语这防线去发展的话，这方面比较窄缝所以我会更宽一点去想。

Alexandra: ... especially when you look for [graduate] work, will you especially look for – how to say it – work connected to Zhuang language? Or work that gives you an opportunity to speak Zhuang?

Willow: If the opportunity came up, maybe. But probably [it won't] because if you speak Zhuang, if this is the line of attack you adopt [i.e. for gaining employment], it's a relatively narrow approach; so, I will think about a bit of a wider approach.

Willow's wider approach was the extremely wide aspiration of wanting to work in a good company anywhere in China.

For many, one problem with seeking work relating to Zhuang language and/or Zhuang Studies was Zhuang's usability being limited to the local scale, as Jane explained.

*Excerpt 7-49*

Alexandra: 你们在找工作的时候你觉得你的壮语可以非常重要吗？

Jane: 重要啊？因为这样，我们……商面这样他们也需要--

特别少有民族在嘛.....社会有各种人嘛，只是说我们民族--不会说自己--不会说他们少数民族语言然后搞通不了有很多很多问题，交流矛盾嘛。

Alexandra: When you look for jobs do you think Zhuang language would be very important?

Jane: Important? It's like this, we ... in a shop or the like they also need-- Very rarely is there a minority minzu person there [in the shop] ... Society has all kinds of people, that's to say our minzu-- You can't speak your own-- You can't speak their minority minzu language, then you can't make sense [of each other] and have many problems, communication conflicts yeah.

Because of its limited ability to serve across language groups, Jane views Zhuang as not important to employment. This reproduces the views in pre-tertiary education that Zhuang cannot serve as a school lingua franca, while the lack of education in Standard Zhuang reduces its usability across groups.

However, career planning was not on all Zhuang Studies students' minds; Jane, Blaine and Nola were especially vague about their plans after graduation plans. They were in the first intake of the YMU Zhuang Studies program, so they did not have graduate classmates to model their career paths on; rather, when I asked about careers they turned immediately to their Zhuang Studies teachers as models. However, they, like Monica in Excerpt 7-40, thought that to become a Zhuang Studies teacher would be difficult because a PhD would be required. Nola exclaimed 《因为是第一届，考去当博士啊.....不要.....毕业以后很盲哈

哈》 (“because it’s the first year, thinking of going to do a PhD well ... I don’t want to... I am blind when it comes to [life] after graduation haha”).

Several students had thought their graduate aspirations through somewhat more but had chosen Zhuang Studies for reasons unrelated to employment. These reasons included experiencing university, living in a far-away city or developing their sense of Zhuang identity. This latter drew Danielle to Zhuang Studies at GUN.

*Excerpt 7-50*

Danielle: 因为我觉得我们中国有时候吧，像现在西方文化，过来其实挺多，然后很多人就找不到自己的文化了。这样因为我觉得文化是每个人的根吧，因为你找到自己文化，找到自己，才会找到一种归属感。

Because I think we in China sometimes, similar to Western culture now, in fact quite a lot, lots of people can’t find their own culture. That sort of thing because I think culture is each person’s roots, because you find your own culture, find yourself, only then will you find a sense of belonging.

The preferential policies (see 7.3.1) for Zhuang-speaking and/or minority students attending minzu universities encouraged students to use their Zhuang as a “ticket” to experience university and big-city life rather than focusing on career prospects in their choice of university and major. Zhuang Studies was even an alternative to a job as a means of urban mobility for Yazmin, whom preferential policies enabled to get into MUC:

*Excerpt 7-51*

Yazmin: 我也是跟他们考比较低……进不了我喜欢的专业然后通过小语策夹了分……因为我不想呆在云南呆着吧……我想见识更广的地方……我就想到来北京……但是当时我告诉我爸妈……他们都不同意的。他们说你选择了那个专业以后怎么就业各种。但我是特别想爱去北京。

Like them [Willow and Lucy], my Gaokao marks were low ... I couldn't get into the major I wanted but then through the Second Language Policy I got additional marks ... I didn't want to hang around in Yunnan ... I wanted to see a vaster place ... So, I thought of coming to Beijing ... But when I told mum and dad ... they didn't agree. They said "if you chose that major what job will you get after?" etc. But I really loved the idea of coming to Beijing.

Thus, Yazmin's own ideology aligned with the policy's construction of Zhuang as a mobility resource. However, Yazmin's parents' reaction reveals an ideological clash; Zhuang is not believed to have economic capital. Yazmin reconciled this tension by prioritising geographic mobility above economic mobility because she wanted to 《奠定》 ("settle down") after graduating, so it did not matter as much to her if choosing Zhuang Studies created an employment risk.

Louise did not want to attend university at all but had been encouraged by the preferential policy. During her studies, she came to value the university experience, but not because of any increased Zhuang language capacity:

*Excerpt 7-52*

Louise: 以前我也觉得不想上大学，但是来到大学知道了很多东西，然后感觉人变得独立一点了，现在好了很多。

Before, I thought I didn't want to go to university, but at university I've learnt so many things, I feel I've become a bit more independent, I'm much better now.

Thus, despite the ideologies dominant in education, some students' personal beliefs about the value of Zhuang overcome a disposition against considering Zhuang a worthy university major. For others, making something of themselves and becoming more mobile at this stage of life were contingent on using Zhuang proficiency to qualify for university entry, with the specific choice of Zhuang Studies something of a by-product.

Thus, Zhuang Studies appeared to have little impact on participants' ideologies which constructed Zhuang language as obtaining little economic capital, although the course developed the linguistic, cultural and/or educational capital of Zhuang in students' eyes. While Zhuang Studies exposed students to Zhuang literature (perhaps for the first time) the construction of Zhuang as of low educational and economic capital prevalent in pre-tertiary schooling was not destabilised by the norms of language of instruction.

The low employability of Zhuang Studies derives, in part, from how university education constructs "doing" Zhuang language.

### 7.3.2.3 *How university constructs “doing” Zhuang language*

Zhuang languages classes, and other Zhuang Studies subjects, were not usually taught in the medium of Zhuang at the three universities. Zhuang is an object of study, not a medium, and the focus is not on developing students' registers in Zhuang to professional levels, although they will become somewhat literate during the degree and develop an understanding of Zhuang from a linguistics perspective. Laurel explains the typical Zhuang Studies lesson at GUN:

#### *Excerpt 7-53*

Laurel: 是有时候上课的时候这种老师会讲壮文，然后也会提出一些这样。但是上课的话也不是以壮语为主，因为有些同学他是听不懂的，然后以汉语为主的，但是他教的是壮语！用汉语教壮语这样。

Sometimes in classes those kinds of teachers may speak Zhuang, they may pull out a few bits, like that. But in class it's still not Zhuang-medium, because some classmates don't understand it, so it's Hanyu-medium, but what they're teaching is Zhuang language! They use Hanyu to teach Zhuang, like that.

While not a surprise given Putonghua's dominance in education, this is somewhat unusual given the oral Zhuang exam by which many students earn their place in Zhuang Studies. However, not all Zhuang Studies students need proficient oral Zhuang to get in:

#### *Excerpt 7-54*

Mr Mauve: 中央民大呢就比我们惨了，它本科招不到人，至少招不到我们会说壮语的那些同学，然后一些汉语的人来学又学得不怎么理想。

MUC is worse than us [under the affirmative action policy], they can't find undergraduates, at least not those who can speak Zhuang like our students, then they have some Hanyu[-speaking] people coming to study but their study outcomes are not ideal.

Thus, while minzu universities use Zhuang as a gatekeeping tool to effectuate the preferential education policies, as Section 7.3.1 explained, universities are not necessarily interested in students' language outcomes once enrolled. Zhuang Studies is not designed to enlarge students' registers such that they can discuss academic topics in Zhuang, because the medium of instruction and discussion is Putonghua, and the standard expected of Zhuang literacy is not necessarily high, because most of Zhuang Studies students are illiterate in Zhuang before university, having never had access to relevant formal instruction (see 6.6). Thus, for example, while an excerpt of *Third of March* might appear in a comprehension exam at MUC (Yazmin), undergraduate students are not expected to produce their own compositions in Zhuang and do not feel able to (Willow), and indeed have never seen this magazine, only the few excerpts from it used in exams (Lucy). I asked their teacher about the literacy goals of Zhuang Studies:

*Excerpt 7-55*

Alexandra: 然后他们学这个壮文的时候，他们目的是可以看懂一下，还是可以完全了解，自己写文章这样的？

Mr Blue：学完后呢，学两年的时间，有一部分学生写一些比较短的文章问题不大，但是还不是很熟练，但是有这个基础以后他可以读研究生啊，或者以后他

出去工作以后呢，他在广西一些部门他可能能够用得上，因为我们有学生到那个《广西民族报》……然后有些到县里面做壮族文化工作的时候可能用得上。

Alexandra: Then when they study Zhuang script, is their motivation to be able to read a bit, or to be able to completely, themselves write articles and the like?

Mr Blue: After studying, studying two years, some of the students write relatively short articles without big problems, but it's still not very fluent, but some of them coming out of this degree are able to undertake a research degree, or after going out to work in some of Guangxi's postings they can use it, because we've had students go to the [Zhuang-medium] *Guangxi Minzu Newspaper* and *Third of March* ... Then some working for the provincial government when they're doing Zhuangzu culture work may use it.

In fact, of the Zhuang-speaking students I interviewed, only Barbara, Goldie, Hoz, Luke and Zeina reported being comfortable with Zhuang literacy and of those only Luke was a Zhuang Studies undergraduate student. Apart from Luke, the other Zhuang Studies undergraduates presented themselves as learners with limited Zhuang Pinyin literacy and no Sawndip literacy; GUN Zhuang Studies students remarked it was unusual for classmates to be literate in Zhuang:

*Excerpt 7-56*

Alexandra：你觉得这样的学生是比较少还是很多很多啊？

Danielle：少。他就是我们班的宝贝了。

Alexandra: Do you think these [Zhuang-literate undergraduate] students are relatively few or very numerous?

Danielle: Few. So he is our teacher's pet.

Accordingly, most Zhuang Studies students did not practice Zhuang literacy out of class; they would not write text messages or read media in Zhuang, e.g.:

*Excerpt 7-57*

Alexandra: 所以你们之间可以发短信还是发给同学们邮件用壮文这样的吗？

Laurel : 少 , 很少。

Alexandra: So, between each [Zhuang Studies classmates] other might you send text messages or send a classmate an email using Zhuang script?

Laurel: Rarely, very rarely.

Thus, Zhuang Studies is a degree which does not necessarily empower them with the professional level of Zhuang language that is needed for the (few) Zhuang language careers available.

However, when it came to learning certain foreign languages as university subjects, whether in Zhuang Studies or other degrees, Zhuang gained a new level of instrumental value as a bridge to other languages. While Zhuang may be chosen as a transitional instrument in early primary schooling because students speak it at a home not because of any similarity to Hanyu, at university Zhuang is valued as an instrument close to the target language and therefore

accelerating foreign language learning. Many students included the foreign languages Thai and Vietnamese, which are Tai languages like Zhuang, in their repertoires. Vietnamese was typically learned through formal university studies, a compulsory 《小语种》 (“second language”) in the Zhuang Studies degree at YMU (Monica, Louise, Tara; Mr Purple) and an option for Zhuang Studies students at GUN (Goldie). It is also available at some generalist universities in South China; Jack was learning Vietnamese alongside a Materials Science degree at YU. Thai was typically learned informally, e.g. from watching Thai movies and listening to Thai people on the Beijing subway (Yazmin), but Norm studied Thai formally at university and was undertaking a PhD in Thai. Norm framed Zhuang instrumentally, representing his Zhuang as greatly assisting him learn Thai. Vietnamese was similarly framed as a language for which Zhuang was a learning resource by Damien, and in Excerpt 7-58, Jack draws in Vietnamese in answering my question about when he uses Zhuang on campus, revealing a mental ordering of his repertoire in terms of utility, with Vietnamese perceived as more useful than Zhuang.

*Excerpt 7-58*

Jack: 壮语？就我爸打电话给我啊。反正我说他们也听不懂啊，在学校里，除非遇到同一个民族的，但是我上过那个越南语，感觉挺好学的，学很快的，很快就上手了。它是一个语系嘛，有好多词都是一样的。

Zhuang language? Well I'll use it when calling my dad. Anyway, they [classmates] can't understand what I say, on campus, unless I come across someone from the same minzu, but I studied Vietnamese language, thought it was pretty good to study, quick

to study, very quickly I had it in hand. It's one language branch; there are very many shared words.

When the language environment is perceived as extending beyond Guangxi, and even beyond China, to Southeast Asia, Thai and Vietnamese become mobility resources for transnational communication and employment. Thus, the value of learning Vietnamese and Thai at university rescales the value of Zhuang. This construction of Zhuang as a resource for learning more useful languages was emphasised by the decision to make Vietnamese compulsory in the Zhuang Studies program at YMU and in commentary from its staff: I asked Mr Purple how he prepared students to face employment problems arising from the saturation of the Zhuang language job market (Excerpt 7-43); his answer framed Hanyu and especially Vietnamese as essential for increasing career mobility:

*Excerpt 7-59*

Mr Purple: 现在呢，我是要求他们一个呢自己本民族的东西你首先要掌握好，要知道自己本民族的一些东西。其次呢，一些汉语的……这个一些汉字的功底，你写作啊，应用啊，表达啊，这些我要他们掌握……还有一方面我要求他们把眼光看到国外去，国际。比如说文山跟越南很接近，我让他也学学越南语，掌握越南语。然后回去以后他本专业当然可以做壮语的。如果壮语的岗位没那么多，那么他这个汉语功底掌握得好，他也可以去那些事业啊学校啊那些部门，是吧？如果他这两个方面都不想去那么他可以到国外去跟越南人做生意。

Well now, I now require them to each first master the stuff of their own minzu, they must know something about their own minzu. Next, some Hanyu ... That is, some basic skills in Hanyu characters, your writing, your application, your expression ... Those [aspects] I require them to grasp ... Then there's another side, I make them think clearly about going overseas, internationally. For example, Wenshan and Vietnam are very close; I make them study Vietnamese, grasp Vietnamese. Later after returning [from overseas after university] their own specialty can of course be Zhuang language. In case Zhuang language posts are few, well they've got those basic Hanyu skills in hand, they can also go to those industries, ah, schools, those institutions, can't they? If they don't want to go either of those ways, well they can go overseas and do business with the Vietnamese.

Zhuang is excluded here as a potential resource for market-based or entrepreneurial jobs, while languages that facilitate wider communications, regular jobs and personal mobility are valued. As the fields in which graduates might work expand, linguistic repertoires are rescaled and Zhuang, associated chiefly with local places and non-commercial activities, appears to be “down-scaled” (Blommaert, 2007; Blommaert et al., 2014).

Zhuang language not only had a limited formal place in Zhuang Studies coursework and limited place in the careers anticipated for and by students, but, as the next section presents, it was also marginal in Zhuang Studies students' quotidian language practices.

#### **7.3.2.4 *Everyday campus communications***

All Zhuang-speaking students in Nanning, Baotou and Beijing reported using Zhuang rarely in daily life. If they did, it was mainly for calling home and visiting their families. In

particular, most Zhuang Studies students did not use Zhuang with Zhuang-speaking university classmates. Danielle, majoring in Zhuang Studies at GUN, concisely described this typical patterns in personal Zhuang practices:

*Excerpt 7-60*

Danielle: 如果是和现在同学的一般都是普通话，然后如果是我爸妈和以前的朋友，有一些是用壮话，有一些是用我们那里的桂柳话。

If it's with current classmates we all usually use Putonghua, then if it's my dad and mum and friends from before, with some I use Zhuang language, with some I use our area's Guiliuhua.

By contrast, at YMU, the Zhuang-speaking students generally reported speaking some Zhuang with university classmates from similar parts of Wenshan (their Zhuang Studies cohort of nineteen were all from Wenshan), but nevertheless also found it difficult to talk to speakers of other Wenshan dialects. The YMU interview groups used Zhuang amongst themselves far more than other groups during our interviews. One of these students, Monica, explained some ideas are hard to express in Hanyu:

*Excerpt 7-61*

Alexandra: 所以一般来说，你们的朋友们……也是讲壮语的？

Louise：啊讲方言吧

Monica : 恩 , 讲方言。因为我和她们两个是可以通话了 , 然后有时候就可以用壮语说嘛。有些词语找不到汉语来表达 , 所以就会突然冒出一些壮语出来 , 哈哈!

Alexandra: So usually, do your friends ... do they also use Zhuang?

Louise: Ah they speak dialects --

Monica: -- Oh, dialects. Because me and these two [Tara and Louise] share a dialect, so sometimes we can use Zhuang to speak. Some words you can't find the Hanyu to express it, so suddenly some Zhuang words pop out, haha!

Tara went on to give examples of idiomatic Zhuang expressions that come out as 《自然反应》 (“natural reactions”) when irritated or emotional but Louise and Tara also explained that some Zhuang vocabulary is now replaced by Hanyu in their speech:

*Excerpt 7-62*

Alexandra : 也就是说你们现在给他们打电话 , 也是用的壮语 ?

Tara : 都是用的壮语

Louise: 有些物体的词 , 我们用壮语表达不出来 , 我们就会用汉语 , 但还是听得懂的.

Alex : 你们离开广西 [ sic ] 之后 , 你们的父母有没有说你们的壮语跟以前不一样 ?

Tara : 会的 , 用汉语代替的更多了 , 语速更快了 , 哈哈

Alexandra: When you speak to them [parents] on the phone, is it also in Zhuang?

Tara: We always use Zhuang.

Louise: The words for some objects, we cannot use Zhuang to express them, so we'll use Hanyu, but it's still understood.

Alexandra: After you left Guangxi [*sic*, Wenshan], did you parents say you Zhuang wasn't the same as before?

Tara: Yes, using Hanyu to sub in more, speaking more quickly, hahaha.

Often, students provided a rationale for this: that Zhuang dialectal differences render their Zhuang unfit for lingua franca usage amongst Zhuang-speaking peers. Yvonne explains how dialectal differences are the reason she and other Zhuang Studies majors at MUC do not use Zhuang together:

*Excerpt 7-63*

Yvonne: 壮语 , 它的方言差别经常是比较大 , 大到听不懂的程度…… 因为我们现在在学习这个专业 , 所以我们在专业里我们会有比较多的壮语同学。呢 , 因为搞通不了我们平时主要是用普通话 , 但是有情况用壮语开玩笑 , 我主要说一个他听不懂…… 你一定要说然后说慢一点儿 , 就能联通改太的 , 然后你知道他们明白你的意思。

Zhuang language, its dialectal differences are often relatively big, big to the degree of hearing but not understanding ... [discusses dialectal differences with Norm] ... Because we are now studying this major [Zhuang Studies], so in this major we have quite a lot of Zhuang language[-speaking] classmates. Hmm, because we can't communicate we usually must use Putonghua, but there are times to use Zhuang for cracking a joke, I have to say something not understandable [i.e. secret] ... You must say it and say it slowly, then you'll be able to know they [classmates] can understand your meaning.

Nevertheless, when asked, Yvonne and others agreed that if a Zhuang speaker became familiar with other Zhuang dialects then mutual intelligibility would be possible. Of course, all students have also adjusted to communicating across Hanyu dialects as they move; they achieved this not only by speaking Putonghua but by adopting regional Hanyu. For example, Norm and Yvonne described learning Yunnan Hanyu when they moved away to boarding school and Lloyd described learning Baihua when he moved closer to Nanning. But their capacity in this regard, and its analogy with adapting to unfamiliar Zhuang varieties (if they regularly encounter them), is not “visible” to them; the rationale of non-intelligibility appears to be ideologically mobilised to explain minimal Zhuang usage in daily life. Aligning with this interpretation, the only participants to describe actively seeking the familiarity to communicate across Zhuang dialects were also those who expressed an explicitly counter-hegemonic, Zhuang-promotive ideology or 《壮语意识》 (“Zhuang consciousness”) (Mr Black).

Very few Zhuang Studies students “denaturalised” these Putonghua-dominant linguistic norms of out-of-class university life. Only Luke, who also denaturalised the economic

evaluation of Zhuang in Excerpt 7-47, described actively reflecting on whether to accommodate classmates' usage of Putonghua in daily life or switch to Zhuang, unlike his Zhuang Studies peers (including Laurel, also in Excerpt 7-64) and participants at other universities who accepted this norm uncritically.

*Excerpt 7-64*

Laurel: 我们平时很少用到壮话。就是跟家人通电话的时候才会用到一些壮话还有一些方言这些。

Luke: 平时我用的情况可能比她们多一点。我见到同学们虽然,不管是南壮还是北壮,我是就说不是全部用壮话交流,但是我经常会去问他们呢,问他们怎么怎么的,都是我直接去问他们。还有一些即使是老乡他不跟你说你也没办法是吗?就是有一些看到他不排斥他比较喜欢说的,就跟他说了。就这样。

Laurel: Usually, I rarely use Zhuang. Only when I call people at home would I use some Zhuang and some [Hanyu] dialect.

Luke: Usually, the circumstances where I use it are a bit more numerous than theirs. Now, when I see a classmate, whether they're Southern or Northern Zhuang, it's not that what I say is entirely in Zhuang but often I will ask them, ask them this or that [in Zhuang], I ask it all directly. Still, there are some from your hometown who won't speak it with you [in Zhuang], so what can you do? With some people, you see them and you don't exclude what they want to talk in, so you talk to them [their way]. It's like that.

Luke also reported he intentionally texted in Zhuang rather than Putonghua whenever he could with Zhuang-speaking friends, took private Zhuang lessons and wrote for *Third of March*, thus he habitually used Zhuang in ways unlike his peer group.

For most Zhuang Studies students, their dorm-mates were different to their classmates and dorm-mates typically did not speak Zhuang; thus, most students did not use Zhuang within their on-campus “homes” except to call home, when Zhuang could function as a private code within a populous dorm-room. But for some Zhuang Studies students, even calling home had transitioned to Putonghua- or Hanyu-medium. For example, when Willow is physically on campus but calling home she uses Hanyu but switches to Zhuang in-person within the familiar Zhuang-speaking environment of home:

*Excerpt 7-65*

Willow: 平常要是我在家的话经常和我妈妈，还有我妹，我觉得我朋友有的讲壮语。但是我打电话的话就要讲汉语，不知道为什么。

Alexandra: 哦……如果你给妈妈打电话还是汉语吗？

Willow: 对，现在是汉语。但是一回到家里就有环境就可以讲壮语。

Willow: Usually if I'm home I often speak Zhuang with my mum, my sister, I think some of my friends, but when I call [from university in Beijing] I speak Hanyu, I don't know why.

Alexandra: Oh!... If you call your mum it's Hanyu?

Willow: Yes, now it's Hanyu. But upon returning home and having the environment I can speak Zhuang.

Additionally, a preference for Putonghua television shows was widespread amongst Zhuang Studies students. The students did not watch much broadcast television during their daily lives on campus as they did not have televisions; there were sometimes televisions on in the cafeterias playing but students could not choose the programming. They watched shows available to stream online but none reported ever seeking out Zhuang-medium shows like “*Zhuang Language News*” (described in Section 5.2.2.2). Some Zhuang Studies students streamed Thai movies online and could understand enough to enjoy them because the Thai spoken was similar to Zhuang. YMU students were aware of some Zhuang language movies, but not fans:

*Excerpt 7-66*

Alexandra: 这样的电影流行吗？

Blaine: 壮语？讲壮语？有在家的时候是呵我们觉得还是比较有野感什么呢……就歧视它们。

Alexandra: Are these sorts of movies popular?

Blaine: Zhuang? Zhuang speaking [films]? Sometimes at home [guffaw sound] we think they're a bit wild and woolly ... so we discriminate against them.

Zhuang Studies students' other leisure activities – eating or drinking with friends, sports, shopping, hanging out – typically occurred on or close to their campuses and followed campus linguistic norms. The preference for speaking Putonghua with peers persisted in such

activities, and the linguistic landscape environs of these activities displayed very limited Zhuang (see Chapter Five). Some students reported occasional activities which they related to Zhuang culture, including visiting Nanning's Nationalities Museum for open days when traditional minority games were organised, or competing in minority dance eisteddfods. Students reported these activities did not usually involve speaking Zhuang language. Not many recreational "Zhuang" activities appeared to be offered by the Zhuang Studies departments.

Thus, replicating their pre-tertiary experiences, most Zhuang Studies student participants presented Zhuang dialectal diversity as a reason *not* to use Zhuang with university classmates. Furthermore, outside of class, Zhuang Studies students' linguistic practices largely obeyed (and reproduced) the Putonghua-dominant norms associated with educational and urban places.

#### **7.4 Discussion and summary**

Overall, this chapter argues that policy about Zhuang in tertiary education does engage with or seek to destabilise the institutional processes in education that foster a habitus within which Zhuang's exclusion from education is anticipated and Zhuang is seen as a localised, oral practice, nor does policy seek to redress the absence of economic capital for Zhuang. Thus, beliefs that Zhuang is not useful for educational, socio-economic or geographic mobility persist, even amongst students specialising in Zhuang at university. Thus, the effect of LPP about Zhuang in education is to cede the normative ground to developmentalism,

while constructing a new way of “doing” Zhuang language as an objectified research commodity distinct from a lived language practice.

Public education, with its mainstream-minority division and, even more basically, the division between Putonghua as the normative language of education and Zhuang as inappropriate to school, can be considered as providing a “structural apprenticeship” (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 89). Through their experiences of it, students come to develop linguistic and social orders, and their place within them. The ways Zhuang language is practiced and viewed in education therefore represent a major aspect of the broader language ideological tensions in the structures of LPP. This chapter has found that schooling replicates recursive, binary ideologies in LPP which de-value Zhuang as useless for development, and homes then subscribe to these ideologies also. The result is students becoming disposed towards the minimisation of their Zhuang and maximisation of their Putonghua as they pass through school and grow up, and even the naturalisation of not learning to speak Zhuang at all.

By the time the students reached university, Putonghua was being used in their classroom interactions and their everyday lives much more than Zhuang or regional Hanyu dialects, even if they took Zhuang Studies majors. Indeed, Putonghua was used almost exclusively in their classrooms except to the extent that language classes (e.g. Zhuang, Thai and Vietnamese) required some use of the target language. Blommaert and Backus (2013, p. 16) argue that we learn ways to speak particular to each stage of life, citing the stage when we move away from our parents as an example of changing repertoires. That is the stage the students were experiencing in this study; the chapter found that the way they had learned to speak at this stage was, general in everyday life, to immobilise Zhuang within their repertoires, consistent

with the language ideologies they experienced in pre-tertiary education institutions. Thus, while offering Zhuang language at the university level might be an example of LPP intended as symbolically powerful validation, the symbolism can be overlooked by social actors (students and teachers) when the dominant language practices of schools and communities develop the expectation that Zhuang will be absent in education. This is much like the Zhuang street-names being overlooked out of habit in Chapter Six. The Zhuang Studies degree also mandates further Hanyu language studies. This symbolically emphasises once again that Zhuang is not useful without Putonghua, again similar to bilingual street signs discussed in Chapter Five.

Thus, the role(s) Zhuang language plays in education, especially for students continuing to university, is minimal. It may have been a “walking stick” transitioning them to Hanyu-medium schooling in early primary years, and was thereafter treated as irrelevant or even damaging to their schooling. At university, Zhuang is still not a medium, even in Zhuang Studies, but it does become an instrument to gain preferential entry to minzu universities, a literate practice, and an academic and possibly career choice for those interested in it.

Tertiary minority education policy, which creates Zhuang Studies, thus provides not only some new roles for Zhuang in education which are absent in pre-tertiary education, but a new way of “doing” Zhuang language as an academic specialisation, rather than as a personal, home-centred communicative practice. In particular, this new way foregrounds written Zhuang whereas Zhuang is otherwise widely understood as an oral language. This builds on the new ways of “doing” Zhuang facilitated by the twentieth century’s emphasis within

Zhuang LPP on standardisation and pinyin script development, as explained in Section 4.3.4.1.

Enrolling in Zhuang Studies makes a person a relatively “engaged” or committed speakers of Zhuang; however, this chapter has shown that even these kinds of people can be non-committal about the educational, economic and mobility values of Zhuang, and uncertain about their own prospects of attaining literacy in Zhuang and/or obtaining work where Zhuang would be integral. Even as a literate, university specialisation, Zhuang is still usually constructed as of low employment value, even amongst Zhuang Studies students. In many cases in this chapter, Bourdieu’s (1977a) contention that “the social value of linguistic products is only placed on them in their relationship to the market” is indeed borne out; most students, regardless of why they chose the Zhuang Studies major, continued to perceive Zhuang as of low employment value, in line with the ideologies dominant in their earlier schooling experiences and shaped by the market. Moreover, tertiary education policy which creates this new way of doing Zhuang does not dovetail with clear graduate career progressions. Bourdieu’s (1992, p. 57) axiom, “[o]ne cannot save the value of a competence unless one saves the market” highlights the greatest problem in the role(s) Zhuang language play in education, especially for students continuing to university, that the policy shaping the role of Zhuang subscribes to the marketised language ideologies which construct Zhuang as low-value and even costly.

Nevertheless, some students value Zhuang Studies degree for other reasons including a passion for Zhuang language, a desire to develop a stronger Zhuang identity, or as an

experience of life at university in a big city which would have been denied them were it not for their Zhuang language proficiency entitling them to preferential university entry.

These affirmative action tertiary education policies construct Zhuang language as an access tool. It appears that it is only in this regard that LPP has impacted normatively the social constructions of Zhuang's value. By contrast, many participants' commentaries and/or experiences illuminated the structural immobility caused by policy barriers at junctions in students' trajectories. Without Zhuang LPP operating consistency across the education system within which these young people have grown up, Zhuang has become a mobility resource only for brief periods: to ease into primary school (in some areas) but not to complete schooling, to enter university but only for specialised degrees, to study those degrees but not to enter the public service or private sector afterwards.

Zhuang Studies is a relatively recent field of study – especially at YMU – and the degree has largely developed in the context of the decentralisation of university enrolments and graduate jobs (noted in Section 7.2.2.4). The transformation of what it means to use Zhuang language and what Zhuang language is, when studying academically, is in part a novel *commodification* aligning with (academic) job markets and a construction of Zhuang as a classified, written “object-construction” (Bourdieu, 1977a, p. 645). Zhuang Studies is also a novel way of “doing being Zhuang” socio-culturally: the chapter revealed beliefs in the cultural heritage and identity values of Zhuang language as motivating students to learn more about it through formal study, but formally studying Zhuang – especially for women and others without specialist roles – is not a traditional literacy or cultural practice (Holm 2013). This formalised way of being Zhuang represents a comestible and perhaps even performative

“way of belonging” (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, p. 1010) in a context of linguistic and socio-cultural choice, a new alternative to older Zhuang language and cultural practices as “ways of being”. However, Zhuang Studies nevertheless reproduces the normative connection between Zhuang culture, language and the Zhuangzu, and validates the social order of a distinct Zhuang ethnicity rooted in imagined Zhuang language practices.

Moreover, because only Zhuang Studies (and bilingual education teacher training in GZAR) include Zhuang language, Zhuang literature and other minority minzu-related courses as subjects, entry policies mean few people other than Zhuangzu/Zhuang-speaking students take Zhuang Studies, and university discourses fail to promote Zhuang Studies, this new way of “doing” Zhuang is nevertheless problematic. It represents “the creation of closed discursive and social spaces for the ethnic Other” (Leibold & Y. Chen, 2014a, p. 16) i.e. “ethnic caging” in Hage’s (1998, pp. 105-116) terms.

Having examined the impacts of Zhuang Studies, both as a normative policy change and a lived experience, on students’ linguistic habitus in this chapter, it seems that raising the status of Zhuang through a policy of teaching Zhuang at university would require a greater presence of Zhuang both at universities and earlier in the education system (or earlier knowledge that Zhuang will be a university option), as well as a job market where Zhuang is ascribed economic value.

## Chapter Eight: Conclusions

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“法律有一个保证，但是具体在一个什么？贫穷。穷，没有经费投入  
所以有法律，有政策，有在那里，你用不上就像那个水在那里你喝  
不了。” (Mr Mauve)

*(“The law has a guarantee, but the details lie where? Poverty. Poverty;  
there is no economic investment so there is the law, there is policy, they are  
there, but you cannot use them. It’s like there’s water there but you cannot  
drink it.”)*

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### 8.1 Introduction

This thesis has researched the problem of how China’s constitutional language rights – namely a “freedom” to use and develop minority languages – affects Zhuang language’s use and social significance, under conditions of social, economic and political change. The review in Chapter Two of the conflicting representations of Zhuang language and its sociolinguistic conditions hinted at ideological tensions and a shifting social visibility of Zhuang language, the kind of turmoil in attitudes and practices identified by Spolsky and Shohamy (2004, p. xvi) as worthy of further study. Thus, the research was approached from a critical sociolinguistic standpoint and, in order to contribute to the burgeoning field of ethnographic studies of language planning and policy (LPP), Zhuang language governance was examined as implemented, situated and socially understood. This examination employed a range of complementary lenses – lenses bringing into focus the legal, linguistic landscape and inter-subjective aspects of Zhuang LPP (see Section 3.6) – to descriptively and critically analyse Zhuang LPP as a structured legal framework distributing power, as a force shaping the linguistic landscape and tertiary education, and as normative and norm-challenging

discourses experienced by individual social actors. The ethnographic orientation foregrounded the dynamic production and reproduction of language ideologies.

This concluding chapter will revisit the research questions in Section 8.2. In Section 8.3, it will discuss the implications of the study's findings and directions for future research.

## **8.2 Research questions revisited**

### **8.2.1 RQ1: What texts comprise official Zhuang LPP and what processes of language governance do they establish?**

Chapter Four established the detail of the Zhuang LPP framework, analysing how the constitutional language freedoms are then expanded and operationalised through national legislation about regions of minority minzu autonomous governance, most relevantly Guangxi Zhuangzu Autonomous Region (GZAR), about the national language and about bilingual education. It then continued through the “trajectory” of language freedoms to analyse the detail of the rules and guidelines which constitute Zhuang language governance at the regional and sub-regional level. Overall, this chapter found that the constitutional minority language freedom (the foundational form of language right in China), at least in relation to Zhuang language, is systematically translated into LPP that reflects a belief that this freedom is relevant only to Zhuangzu people and within nominated Zhuangzu territories. Thus, if the government is to implement Zhuang's freedom of use and development, it is a regional or sub-regional government of a Zhuangzu autonomous area who must to act to protect or to attempt to change language practices and norms within their own jurisdictions.

A strength of this system is that decisions about Zhuang language are made by governments less removed than the central government from Zhuang practices, and that these governments are organised so as to include Zhuang officials who notionally represent the interests of Zhuang speakers and specialist government minority language organs for the purposes of informing and executing Zhuang LPP. The “flip side” of this territorialisation of Zhuang interests is that the LPP framework produces a normative invalidity of Zhuang use and development outside these areas, delimiting where the sociolinguistic economy should include Zhuang. Moreover, the authority of governments in the Zhuang areas to provide regulatory permissions or material support for Zhuang, and their obligations to use Zhuang, are marred by ambiguity because of incomplete stages within the processes of power-sharing between the central and regional governments.

Furthermore, the established processes of language governance do not require Zhuang autonomous governments to exercise their powers with regards to language: Chapters Five and Seven have shown limits to what governments will do, regulate and support in terms of Zhuang’s roles in society. Moreover, the primary discourses of the LPP framework also grant language rights to Putonghua and create a national space in which it must be used in many prominent functions and domains, and this envelops the Zhuang territories. Thus, the freedom to use and develop Zhuang is contained so as not to impinge on the sanctioned and/or mandated uses of Putonghua.

Finally, as Chapter Four has shown, when the GZAR government or other governments choose not to legislate for the use and development of Zhuang, there are very few systematic processes of check against their decisions, in part because of the nature of the constitutional

language right as a negative right (a “freedom”) and because of the authoritarian political philosophies of the state. Nor do the language governance processes empower an individual Zhuang speaker to use the freedom to use and develop Zhuang – either in its constitutional form or as re-entextualised in regional autonomy, education and other laws – as a discursive or legal resource to articulate his/her own language interest or to protect himself/herself against linguistic discrimination or linguistic inequality.

### **8.2.2 RQ2: What role does Zhuang language play in public space within areas of autonomous Zhuangzu government and outside these areas?**

The study found that while there was regulation in Nanning, within GZAR, to standardise the visual grammar of Zhuang-inclusive bilingual signage, there was also a perception that this regulation *required* Zhuang-inclusive signage, which it did not. That is, the normative impact of the law appears to have exceeded its primary discourse. Thus, while Schiffman (1996, pp. 26-27, 34) criticised some LPP scholars for failing to investigate whether sociolinguistic circumstances arose because of, or despite, language policies (see also Spolsky, 2004, pp. 6-7), Chapter Five showed another variation: linguistic landscapes arising because of language policy but not directly because of the explicit directives of the policy.

Nevertheless, as that chapter further found, not all signage within this regulator’s remit (Nanning Municipality) had become Zhuang-inclusive. It was primarily official street-name signs and public institutions’ name signs in Nanning that were bilingual in Putonghua and Zhuang, while many other official, government-authored signage was monolingual in Putonghua or, to a lesser extent, bilingual in Putonghua and English. Commercial discourses, from any author, almost never used Zhuang. Furthermore, no signage was exclusively in Zhuang; Putonghua was consistently displayed in all signage and often carried a greater

informational load than the Zhuang in the same sign. Zhuang, where displayed in Nanning, was always in the standardised, alphabetic Zhuang Pinyin.

The dominance of Putonghua within both official/regulatory and commercial discourses in Nanning was especially pronounced on the city's university campuses; Zhuang on campus was limited to multilingual plaques on a building associated with Zhuang Studies at GUN, and on certain trilingual institutional name signs on entrance gateways at both GUN and GU. This was consistent with the linguistic landscape of places of (tertiary) education outside areas of Zhuangzu autonomous government.

In the greater region of Zhuangzu autonomous governance, GZAR, within which Nanning City is situated, Nanning's patterns of limited Zhuang-inclusive display did not continue. Rather, Zhuang text was largely absent from public spaces within GZAR outside Nanning. No regional regulation about displaying Zhuang language could be found save for a mention in (X. Li & Q. Huang, 2004, p. 247) of two GZAR circulars (dated 1984 and 1991) requesting that government organisations use Zhuang-Putonghua signs, seals and stationary. In practice, Zhuang was only occasionally used on government and public institutions' signs outside Nanning in GZAR, suggesting the two GZAR circulars are not always followed today. The usage of Zhuang across GZAR was nevertheless more regular and visible than Zhuang outside of GZAR.

Thus, it appears that language regulation in public space does differ depending on the formal level of authority and autonomy of the Zhuangzu polity over that space – formal Zhuangzu authority correlates to LPP about Zhuang in public texts – but language governance in these

places does not legally or normatively mandate the inclusion of Zhuang on all signs. Even within areas of formal Zhuangzu autonomy, many areas do not regulate Zhuang on public signage, and Zhuang is not widely displayed without a regulatory prompt. The thesis argued that one salient determinant of displaying Zhuang, in addition to minzu autonomy in governance of a place, was whether Zhuang-inclusive signage had a branding function. In particular, was Zhuang a visual resource to “brand” a place? (I.e. was it a place-making resource rather than a directly commercial resource?) Chaisingkananont (2014a, p. 25) uses the term “place-product” in relation to the performative display of Zhuang culture in a new tourism festival. Given the more systematic and prominent display of Zhuang in Nanning, in particular, the display might be considered a performance of (select) cultural heritage to create a place-product to achieve linguistic/cultural distinction from other cities.

Li and Huang (2004, p. 247) argue the two GZAR circulars about Zhuang in linguistic landscapes (noted above) “symbolis[e] Zhuang’s successful role in local politics”. This thesis concludes, rather, that their argument is overreaching, given both the limited and inconsistent usage of Zhuang in government organisations’ signage (Chapter Five) and the misrecognition, overlooking and criticism of such signs (Chapter Six). Chapter Six also showed that sociolinguistic circumstances can arise because of language policy but not directly because of the explicit directives of the policy; rather, in this case, in reaction against it.

This study highlighted the importance of subjective meaning-making as part of the “maps of meaning” (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010a, p. 6) created by the linguistic landscape, arguing the role Zhuang language plays in the linguistic landscape is not normatively determined by policy. Chapter Six found that Zhuang displayed on signage is not always “seen”; it may be

misrecognised as Hanyu Pinyin or English, or recognised as Zhuang but glanced over and viewed as too hard to read compared to the Putonghua on the same sign. The thesis argued that a habitus is developed in schooling within which Zhuang is understood as an oral, not written, language and that this disposes viewers to not look for, or read, Zhuang on signage. Learning to read Zhuang and/or critically engaging with Zhuang language and identity politics was shown, in some participants' experiences, to overcome that disposition; this is consistent with the argument made by Wee (2011) (see 3.6.1) that there is a reflexive dynamism in an individual's habitus. Moreover, cognizant that very few people have access to education in Zhuang literacy, and therefore that very few will be able to read Zhuang signage, some participants saw Zhuang on signage as a well-meant but ineffective attempt to preserve Zhuang heritage and/or attract tourists. Others more cynically saw Zhuang signage as brazenly tokenistic, given the lack of governmental effort directed towards Zhuang literacy or directed at developing a script that Zhuang people would find authentic and identify with.

Thus, while government signage is theorised as having symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1992), we should not assume increased respect or changed language behaviours ensue from new norms conveyed by displaying Zhuang-inclusive signage, because of the heteroglossic readings of both signage and the policies regulating it. Indeed, a new norm of Zhuang displays in public spaces was not even clearly conveyed because the most prominent pattern across government signage, as revealed in this study, is still to exclude Zhuang, despite the recent addition of Putonghua-Zhuang bilingual street-name signs.

### **8.2.3 RQ3: What role does Zhuang language play in education, especially for students continuing to university?**

Chapter Five found educational places were characterised by the dominance of Putonghua in the linguistic landscape and by the absence of Zhuang. Chapter Seven further investigated Zhuang's roles, or lack thereof, in education. It examined the implementation of Zhuang language-in-education policies in university Zhuang Studies degree programs and investigated how beliefs about graduate careers intersect with language-in-education policy for tertiary students. Tsung (2014, p. 30, following Fairclough, 1989) argues “[f]or China’s ethnic minorities, language teaching and learning are both the medium and the message”; this research has found that the exclusion of Zhuang as a medium for teaching in almost all stages of the education system, including in the Zhuang Studies degree, sends a powerful normative message. This message is that Zhuang is not a language with educational, employment or mobility capital. The policy of intervening in tertiary education to provide Zhuang language as a study subject within the small-cohort minority language and literature degrees at three minority minzu-specialist universities largely does not counteract the wider message.

Speaking of the sociolinguistic significance of language other kinds of government institution (immigration institutions), Maryns (2006, p. 315) argues “[w]hen rendered into bureaucratic practice ... th[e] pursuit of equality takes on aspirations to similarity. And there’s the rub: variation, no matter how salient ... is considered a problem that needs to be overcome.” A similar construction emerges from the data on educational institutions: Zhuang language, or as a deviation from “the” language of education, Putonghua, is constructed as a problem which students, families and teachers are trying to overcome, particularly in pre-tertiary education. Thus, using and developing Zhuang through school is not an equaliser but a disadvantage, especially given Zhuang is often perceived and used in schools as an oral rather than written language (to the extent it is used at all), while developing written registers in

Putonghua is fundamental to schooling. Bilingual schooling in Zhuang comes to be seen as undesirable rather than a beneficial local implementation of the minority language freedom, because the education system channels students towards a standardised high school curriculum from which Zhuang is absent and towards Gaokao university entrance examinations which are not (currently) offered in the medium of Zhuang.

The role of Zhuang language in education is reformed into a specialist university subject by minority tertiary education policy, and (through universities' oral language examinations) into a tool by which to effectuate preferential policies aimed at increasing the number of Zhuangzu students attending university. Equality, in this framework, is equalised access for speakers of minority languages to a “good” education – one in the medium of Putonghua that culminates in attaining the educational capital of a degree – rather than the normative reformulation of the linguistic profile of the good education.

The study further found that Zhuang plays other roles in tertiary education. These include as a resource for accelerating the learning of “more useful” international ASEAN languages, as a means of strengthening a Zhuang identity, and as a means of distinction enabling students to access the relative occupational security of postgraduate research positions. Only the last of these roles is acknowledged and systematically valued by LPP, in the form of creating some demand for literate Zhuang graduates in postgraduate and academic research positions. LPP does not otherwise systematically create pathways within which an education in Zhuang is a resource for future employment. It does not engage with the difficulties – which appear to be increasing under conditions of social change, especially marketisation and increased mobility

– in converting Zhuang educational capital (e.g. a Zhuang Studies degree) into economic capital.

#### **8.2.4 RQ4: What are the ideologies undergirding official Zhuang LPP?**

This thesis has revealed a number of ideologies, some in tension with one another, in both the primary discourses of Zhuang LPP and in their implementation. The thesis shows that because of these language ideologies, the freedom to use and develop Zhuang “plays in a tightly organised and structured field”, as Blommaert (2016) observes more generally of all “freedom” of linguistic choice. The conditions of social change within which this study’s research problem arises are not only changes in the structures and materiality of social and economic reorganisation, but in ideological organisation. China’s illiberal political philosophy is both absorbing and changing the neoliberal world order. This ideological change is especially germane to the question of how free a person, or a group, can be in their linguistic practices. Overall, this thesis has found an illiberal political ideology continues to underpin Zhuang LPP because the texts and structures of the LPP framework have, largely, not been updated since the mid-twentieth century. Nevertheless, these texts – particularly the freedom they enshrine and the powers to govern language they mete out – are re-interpreted now in their implementation through the prism of an increasingly marketised, neoliberal ideology. The effect is the reduplication, through new processes, of Zhuang language and Zhuang speakers’ minoritisation and marginalisation from power.

The most significant ideologies undergirding Zhuang LPP, and contributing to this minoritisation, are discussed below. The thesis argues that it is these language ideologies, as identified through the study, not only the material constraints of Zhuang autonomous area governments’ relative poverty, which render Zhuang language rights and policies akin to

having “water there but you cannot drink it”, as my participant, Mr Mauve, is quoted as saying in the epigraph. The thesis has analysed how these ideologies operate to constrain the government organs who are responsible and empowered to protect and/or promote Zhuang language. Within this language policy environment, even policies aimed and/or implemented to invest Zhuang language with symbolic capital as a distinct icon of ethnicity, culture or heritage, do not challenge the dominant constructions of Zhuang having low economic and mobility capital, because those same economic and mobility-oriented value systems undergird LPP.

The thesis has found that, despite changing and/or declining Zhuang language practices, the officially articulated idea of a discrete, bounded language called Zhuang with an inherent and exclusive link to the Zhuangzu polity remains foundational to Zhuang LPP.

However, while LPP is undergirded by an ideology of language and groups as distinct and bounded, there is an ideological tension – potentially an ideological change – undergirding LPP in regards to the role of Zhuang language in the construction of the Zhuangzu minority polity. A belief that the Zhuangzu are essentially Zhuang speakers persists but is challenged. On the one hand, the thesis found the state uses written Zhuang language as a symbol of the Zhuangzu, demonstrating that Zhuang speakers are an “imaginable” community giving validity to the Zhuangzu social grouping (many participants also reproduced this belief in interviews). However, the thesis also showed that the state’s mobilisation of Zhuang language as an emblem of the Zhuangzu is limited, that the state does not rely on Zhuang to communicate with the Zhuangzu populace, and that the law does not dispute the classification of non-Zhuang speakers as Zhuangzu, concerning itself instead with parentage requirements.

The practices that are officially recognised as Zhuang are locked in time, and – in terms of writing – it is standardised Zhuang orthography in the Zhuang Pinyin script that is recognised. Moreover, Zhuang is recognised as the language of the Zhuangzu and so Zhuang is normatively constructed as localised within the officially recognised Zhuangzu territories. Additionally, Zhuang language practices by speakers who are not officially classed as Zhuangzu people are typically rendered invisible. Zhuang language practices outside of the territories ascribed to the Zhuangzu – GZAR, Wenshan and Lianshan – are seen as “out of place” and not protected by policy. A belief that Zhuang is a localised group of dialects only for use in “local” contexts and unable to function as lingua francas even among Zhuangzu people was revealed in the participant interviews and appears also to be reflected in official LPP as it relates to Zhuang in education. Chapter Seven highlights Zhuang LPP now largely discounts Standard Zhuang in education and sanctions local Zhuang dialects instead in so far as they are “walking sticks” (Excerpt 7-1) for local, transitional primary schooling. Thus, a key language ideology undergirding Zhuang LPP is that the language is static, neither changing over time nor travelling beyond bounded (and peripheral) localities.

The thesis has also shown that this ideology is reproduced in the implementation of Zhuang LPP in relation to place-making. It confirms Jaworski’s (2014, p. 530) proposition that,

to “see” a particular instance of discourse as being “on the move” is likely to prompt us to “see” the site of its emplacement to be “on the move”. Conversely, “static” language makes “static” places [.]

This thesis has shown Zhuang to be emplaced largely in places that are not on the move; museum exhibitions and the immovable edifices of the kinds of large public institutions that

claim posterity not mobility: museums and libraries. Even at mobile places like major train stations and universities, Zhuang is used (if used at all) only in the most static of texts – façade names, signs and plaques – and Zhuang is generally absent from physically mobile (circulating) public texts (Chapter Five). Thus, Zhuang language is not a symbol used to make the sites of its emplacement seem more mobile; precisely the opposite; it is a symbol of rootedness and historic association, and a language used to name defined places and buildings. Because it is ideologically constructed as a highly localised and immobile language, Zhuang is used to “make” the staticity of places.

Throughout, this thesis has shown there is a tension between an egalitarian language ideology and a hierarchic language ideology within the primary discourses of China’s LPP texts, and that this tension is reproduced in discontinuities within the structures of language rights framework and in the implementations of Zhuang LPP. Chapter Four began the uncovering of overt and covert beliefs about language as they are discursively produced and reproduced by the texts and structures of Zhuang LPP. Confirming that which Ingrid de Saint-Georges (2013, p. 7) has theorised, that official recognition of language is an ideological construction of value and legitimacy, this study has identified ideologies of Zhuang’s (de)valuing and (il)legitimacy within LPP. While Zhuang is recognised as a language, it is recognised officially as a *minority* language. It is constructed as inherently of a different value than the majority language (Putonghua); its value is as a Zhuangzu cultural practice. This ideology frames the meaning of the constitutional freedom to use and develop Zhuang; Zhuang is not accepted as legitimate for mainstream or higher-scale purposes like participating in the national market or the national education system, and so creating practical roles or normative values for Zhuang in these domains are not a significant focus of Zhuang LPP. Nor is Zhuang

LPP expected to create such roles or values, in the view of some participants; they share this ideology.

Chapter Four argued that LPP not only now structures Zhuang into a supplementary, or even peripheral, position vis-à-vis Putonghua, but that LPP has a long history of producing developmentalist discourses about the evaluation of language which emphasise the instrumentality of languages in seeking economic profitability. These discourses are in tension with the language equality discourses also found in LPP. The thesis shows how these developmentalist language ideologies are amplified by their synergies with the marketised ideologies of the globalised new economy, despite initially arising from Communist ideologies about remedying imperial socio-economic oppression and gradually developing a shared utopian culture. Both the newer and earlier ideologies of development are in tension with the ideology of language equality also articulated in Chinese LPP. Thus, the thesis has argued that instances of Zhuang LPP nowadays re-articulate the egalitarian language ideology as “inegalitarian bilingualism” (to use Hagège’s term, following Roche, in press).

The study found the Zhuang language right, or freedom, has been constructed within an ideology of minority languages as obstacles to development, and Putonghua as essential to development. Thus, LPP seeks to assist Zhuangzu people to access economic growth largely through increasing their access to Putonghua. However, LPP fails to restructure class and ethnicity such that Zhuang people can attain the same distinction from Putonghua as others, unless they also erase cultural markers and linguistic features like the Zhuang-first-language accent. Inequality is reconstructed as the ideological associations of the majority/minority

binary are re-mapped from a Hanyu/non-Han language divide onto divides between prestigious and stigmatised varieties of Hanyu.

The developmentalist language ideologies undergirding LPP construct a hierarchic linguistic order within which the belief that Zhuang and other minority languages are un-developed and pre-modern is naturalised. The continuing and foundational construction of Minority Languages as a class in the LPP framework (discussed above in this Section) reproduces a powerful ideational structure, and this is part of this process of naturalising the marginality of Zhuang. The thesis has argued that despite the constitutional minority language freedom and other laws supporting Zhuang (e.g. for certain roles in schooling and certain public displays), Zhuang LPP does not engage strongly with the norms and instrumentalist, marketised, hierarchic ideologies. Therefore, the emerging practices that this thesis identifies among mobile young people and their families, schools, and governments – choices *not* to use or development Zhuang language – are not only explicable under such conditions but also have the potential to become normative, and appear natural, given their alignment with top-down ideologies marginalising and devaluing Zhuang. For example, the thesis has found Zhuang LPP allows very few people access to an education training them to speak, read and write Standard Zhuang. This LPP context naturalises the belief Zhuang is not a tool for education, commerce or mobility and, accordingly, the participants' experiences and perceptions revealed that Zhuang LPP has very little effect on the widespread belief that Zhuang is not a written language.

Finally, the thesis argues that as the naturalness of Zhuang's marginality undergirds LPP and is amplified by the ideologies of the globalised new economy, it is explicable that many

participants saw little need to call for greater realisation of China's constitutional minority language freedom so as to increase their opportunities to use Zhuang. The overall legal framework of fifty-five minority minzu and their corresponding, recognised languages has become the ideational patrimony of Zhuangzu members and Zhuang speakers, but so has the ideology within those laws. That ideology constructs Zhuang language within a developmentalist paradigm, not an egalitarian one. That ideology is amplified by the marketised and mobility-centred ideologies which now recontextualise China's LPP framework. Thus, the roles given to Zhuang – and especially the roles taken from Zhuang – under the LPP framework are coming to be recognised socially as useful and accepted as normative and natural. The language right, rather than being operative or a discursive resource for Zhuang's protectors, is a discursive resource of those governing. It legitimises a normative framework which reforms the linguistic and cultural patrimony of Zhuang speakers in ways that marginalise Zhuang language and may ultimately render it dispensable.

### **8.3 Implications and future research directions**

#### **8.3.1 Language rights and policy research outside “the West”**

Decentring fundamental assumptions of sociolinguistics represents an important trend identified in the Literature Review within which this research situates itself. In particular, it seeks to decentre assumptions which naturalise and normalise the conditions and ideologies of the “West”/“Global North” in language rights and LPP studies. Beyond the present contribution, it is necessary for future research to continue this decentring. Ethnographies of language policy outside the “Global North” will offer a way to capture the situated details, processes and beliefs that makes the study of the intersection of language and political economy a rich field of inquiry.

This study has demonstrated that an ethnography of the texts, implementation and reception of language freedoms in China offers insights into sociolinguistic changes as experienced in an era of globalisation and mobility. It revealed a variety of governmental attempts, outside a “Western” political economy, to valorise a minority language. Some were familiar in form to LPP efforts in liberal democracies which have been described elsewhere, especially public language displays and transitional bilingualism in schools. However, China’s powerful framework of minority minzu classifications and official minority language recognition, the illiberal nature of the legal rights in question, and the pressures of globalisation and rapid economic transformation combined with Putonghua-centric nationalism, create a distinct context for the theory and practice of minority language rights. In this context, the thesis analysed the constraints on language policy of socially and governmentally entrenched developmentalist and hierarchic language ideologies, and the amplification such ideologies find during China’s absorption of ideologies of the globalised new economy. One way to further decentre the existing literature would be by studying the effect of language rights and policies on other minority minzu peoples and other minority language varieties in China, both those officially recognised and those with social significance but lacking legal status.

In particular, it will be important to continue to examine the shifting interrelationship between economic transformation, nation-state frameworks, and language practices. This study has shown that, in China, despite rapid socio-economic transformation, the state retains enormous normative and legal power in constructing social and linguistic orders. At the same time, the hierarchical and developmentalist language ideologies in which language governance discourses have long officially participated now find synergies with the marketised and instrumental language ideologies of the globalised new economy. The result is the reinforcement of minoritisation by the state through market processes. These processes

will need to be further examined in other cases studies, particularly in hybrid and transitional political economies.

Moreover, China, and other former communist countries, have undergone rapid transformations under conditions of the globalised new economy, the globalisation of political philosophies, and of course the global spread of English. These are likely similar in some respects to the processes of globalisation felt in other countries, but situated in historic experiences of political philosophies and systems which can decentre literature that focuses on liberal democracies. Thus, these countries' processes of language governance are of interest in showing trends and variations in approaches to increasingly shared global conditions. Further, in the particular case of China, the transformations are combined with an economic strength that is powerfully decentring the international roles and powers of the "Global North", creating possibilities for language dominance that may, over time, call into question the centrality of English.

Another aspect of decentring in relation to LPP studies arises especially from the implications of Chapter Six's findings that language policy is "read" heteroglossically. Specifically, this study found government displays of a minority language on public signage may be misrecognised, overlooked and negatively evaluated, rather than functioning symbolically to valorise the language. This is of course significant for further research on language policies, particularly but not exclusively those governing public spaces and texts. The intersubjective reception of language policies, as studied here, can be researched to uncover how state-sanctioned language ideologies are reproduced by social actors in their encounters with language policy and to uncover divergent language ideologies through which social actors reinterpret or resist the language ideologies of official policy.

This line of inquiry represents a decentring of the state within language policy studies. This decentring does not imply that the state is irrelevant or that LPP is necessarily “post-national”, but rather that the role of state discourses and texts of language governance may be fruitfully understood when studied not just as posited laws but as re-scaled, resisted or adapted in their intersubjective reception and implementation by various social actors. Some of those actors will be non-state (e.g. individuals) and some will be state actors, i.e. this research conceives of “the state” as multiple institutions and individuals with heterogeneous powers and interests. This line of research follows the social constructionist theories of the state emerging in political sciences and yet to be fully adopted into LPP studies, e.g. the work of Bevir and Rhodes (2010) (see also 2.3.2.3).

### **8.3.2 Chinese sociolinguistics**

Section 8.3.1 has identified themes for future research into sociolinguistics in China which are of relevance to decentring the global language governance literature. Decentring is, however, also relevant within Chinese sociolinguistics. Further critical sociolinguistic/ethnographic studies in China are needed to interrogate the static framework of minority language recognition and the fifty-six minzu as processes of social, economic and political change continue apace. This thesis suggests the emergence of a Zhuang-less Zhuangzu (i.e. speaking Hanyu not Zhuang), both in practice and as a social group imagined by Zhuangzu people. The implication is that minority languages are losing power as “ideological artefacts” to use Blommaert and Rampton’s (2011, p. 4) term. Critical sociolinguistic research in China should ask how such sociolinguistic changes are being used – and by whom – in social and political discourses. In particular, given that Blommaert and Rampton (2011, p. 4) argue that the ideological artefact of discrete, bounded languages “operates as a major ingredient in the apparatus of modern governmentality”, the loss of

social significance of Zhuang or any other minority language as an ideological artefact has significant implications. Further research will need to examine whether China's minority languages retain power within the logic of governmentality regardless of changes to social use and popular beliefs and, if so, how and why.

Moreover, the political current now stirring in support of dismantling the framework of preferential and protective minority minzu laws – the so-called second generation minzu policies reviewed in Section 2.3.3.2 – is a manifestation of transformations in Chinese language ideological debates particularly in need of critical sociolinguistic interrogation.

### **8.3.3 Ethno-touristic commodification of Zhuang**

In the course of this research, I have not been able to find significant evidence for any trends towards ethno-tourism or the commodification of Zhuang. Against evidence from other linguistic minorities around the globe, this merits further investigation in relation to Zhuang language maintenance. Under conditions of marketisation, certain practices of a formerly peripheral language can sometimes become commodified and a marketable job skill for niche markets. The performance of a language for outsiders and the objectification of a language into saleable souvenirs, both for ethno-tourism, are typical examples. However, the data in this study suggested that, despite the potential for Zhuang language practices to be commodified into what I will call experiential consumables, and thereby re-valued under the conditions of the globalised new economy, commodification is not happening on a large scale for Zhuang. Rather, Zhuang language is erased from commerce and tourism much more than it is mobilised. It actually appears that ethno-tourism “devoices” the Zhuangzu by constructing an attractive, saleable Zhuang-ness without a unique language. Why is Zhuang not transforming into a valuable “glocal” commodity? The thesis has found Zhuang LPP largely disengaged from the project of protecting or creating language work. Could LPP

change this situation by expanding its reach into ethno-tourism and managing the use of Zhuang either as a resource to “authenticate, heritagise and aestheticise space” (analogising with another language and tourism study in Jaworski, 2014, p. 527) or as an experience to be consumed by tourists?

#### **8.3.4 Final remarks**

Many of these interesting themes, particularly those relating to government LPP decision-making, could not be addressed by this study given the limitations in accessing government officials, decisions and internal processes. Nevertheless, this thesis has indicated change at the level of local implementation, even if the overall structures of Zhuang LPP have not been significantly reformed. Specially, it revealed how language policy has changed in its implementation in relation to public language displays and tertiary education, appearing to move towards a goal of symbolically valorising of Zhuang rather than a goal of increasing literacy or other forms practical utility. Moreover, the thesis illuminated that the social significance of measures of language governance is inherently intersubjective and always changing. Blommaert and Maly (2014, p. 2) argue that an ethnographic linguistic landscape approach “can detect and interpret social change and transformation on several scale-levels, from the very rapid and immediate to the very slow and gradual ones, all gathered in a “synchronic” space”. This thesis, overall, extends the argument to ethnographic studies of language policy. Research must remain alive to the dynamism of language rights and policy, especially as the processes of globalisation transform the scales within which language rights and policy operate and make meaning.

# Appendices

## Appendix 3-1 Participants' profiles

5.5 Table 1. Students' Profiles

S#	Pseudonym & minzu if not Zhuangzu	F / M	University the student attends (and was interviewed at, unless otherwise indicated)	Major, stage in summer 2014	Home (Province, area)	Speaks Zhuang (Y/N)	Interview details
1.	Monica	F	Yunnan Minzu University (YMU)	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	11.6.2014 Group Interview A
2.	Jane	F	YMU	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	11.6.2014 Group Interview B
3.	Louise	F	YMU	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	11.6.2014 Group Interview A
4.	Nola	F	YMU	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	11.6.2014 Group Interview B
5.	Tara	F	YMU	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	11.6.2014 Group Interview A
6.	Blaine	M	YMU	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	11.6.2014 Group Interview B
7.	Hoz	M	YMU	Political Science, Masters	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	11.6.2014 Individual Interview C
8.	Damien	M	YMU	Zhuang Studies,	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	11.6.2014 Individual

				undergraduate			Interview D
9.	Sia	(excluded)					
10.	Jack	M	Yunnan University - interview at YMU	Materials Science, undergraduate	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	15.6.2014 Group Interview E
11.	Fay	F	Guangxi University of Nationalities (GUN)	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	GZAR, Laibin	Y	27.6.2014 Group Interview H
12.	Gina	F	GUN	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	GZAR, Liuzhou	PARTIAL	27.6.2014 Group Interview H
13.	Luke	M	GUN	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	GZAR, Guigang	Y	27.6.2014 Group Interview I
14.	Laurel	F	GUN	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	GZAR, Nanning	Y	27.6.2014 Group Interview I
15.	Danielle	F	GUN	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	GZAR, Hechi	Y	27.6.2014 Group Interview H
16.	Zeina	F	GUN	Zhuang Studies, Masters	GZAR, Wuming	Y	27.6.2014 Group Interview I
17.	Yana	F	GUN	Chinese, undergraduate	GZAR, Tiandeng	Y	27.6.2014 Group Interview G
18.	Goldie	F	GUN	Zhuang Studies, PhD	GZAR	Y	27.6.2014 Group Interview

							I
19.	Liz	F	Guangxi University (GU)	English, undergraduate	GZAR, Nanning	Y	27.6.2014 Group Interview J
20.	Mae Yaozu	F	GU	English, undergraduate	GZAR, Laibin and Nanning	N	27.6.2014 Group Interview J
21.	Hope Dongzu	F	GU	English, undergraduate	GZAR, Liuzhou	Y	27.6.2014 Group Interview J
22.	Barbara	F	GU	Chinese, undergraduate	GZAR, Hechi	Y	17.6.2014 Group Interview F
23.	Mark	M	GU	Mathematics and Information Science, undergraduate	GZAR, Guilin	Y	17.6.2014 Group Interview G
24.	Dora	F	GU	Chinese, undergraduate	GZAR, Baise	Y	17.6.2014 Group Interview F
25.	Huw	M	GU	Mechanical engineering, undergraduate	GZAR, Guigang	Y	17.6.2014 Group Interview G
26.	Quentin	M	GU	Mechanical engineering, undergraduate	GZAR, Laibin	Y	17.6.2014 Group Interview F
27.	Sunny	F	GU	Accounting, undergraduate	GZAR, Hechi	Y	17.6.2014 Group Interview G
28.	Ivy	F	GU	Labour	GZAR,	Y	17.6.2014

				management, undergraduate	Liuzhou		Group Interview G
29.	Norm	M	Peking University - interview at MUC	Thai, PhD	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	30.6.2014  Group Interview K
30.	Yvonne	F	MUC	Zhuang Studies, Masters	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	30.6.2014  Group Interview K
31.	Yazmin - Hanzu	F	MUC	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	Yunnan, Wenshan	Y	30.6.2014  Group Interview L
32.	Lucy	F	MUC	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	GZAR, Baise	Y	30.6.2014  Group Interview L
33.	Willow	F	MUC	Zhuang Studies, undergraduate	GZAR, Hechi	Y	30.6.2014  Group Interview L
34.	Farah	F	Inner Mongolia university of Science & Tech. (IMUST)	Law, undergraduate	GZAR, Nanning	N	2.7.2014  Group Interview M
35.	Penny	F	IMUST	English, undergraduate	GZAR, Nanning	Y	2.7.2014  Group Interview M
36.	Tansy - Hanzu	F	IMUST	Chinese, undergraduate	GZAR, Congzuo	Y	2.7.2014  Group Interview M
37.	Tom	M	IMUST	Finance, undergraduate	GZAR, Hechi	PARTIAL	2.7.2014  Group Interview

							N
38.	Morris	M	IMUST	Finance, undergraduate	GZAR, Hechi	Y	2.7.2014  Group Interview N
39.	Quinn	F	IMUST	Construction, undergraduate	GZAR, Laibin	Y	2.7.2014  Group Interview N
40.	Lloyd	M	IMUST	Law, undergraduate	GZAR, Wuming then Nanning	Y	2.7.2014  Group Interview N
41.	Una	F	The People's University of China (PUC)	Law, undergraduate	GZAR, Liuzhou	N	9.7.2014  Individual Interview O
42.	Zac	M	PUC	Digital and information systems, undergraduate	GZAR, Liuzhou	N	9.7.2014  Group Interview P
43.	Leroy	M	PUC	International economics and trade, undergraduate	GZAR, Guigang	Y	9.7.2014  Group Interview P
44.	Freddy	M	PUC	Accounting, undergraduate	GZAR, Nanning and Wuming	Y	9.7.2014  Group Interview P

**5.6 Table 2. Language Leaders' Profiles**

LL #	Minzu	Pseudonym	Interview Place and date	Profession/Role	Home province	Speaks Zhuang (Y/N)
1.	Naxizu	Mr White	Kunming (13.6.2014)	Translator/ trainer	Yunnan	N
2.	Zhuangzu	Mr Purple	Kunming (14.6.2014)	Zhuang Studies academic	GZAR	Y
3.	Zhuangzu	Mr Green	Nanning (17.6.2014)	Linguistics academic /Zhuang language tutor	GZAR	Y
4.	Zhuangzu	Mr Orange	Nanning (17.6.2014) and Sydney (7.5.2015)	English & Putonghua teacher / Education Studies academic / Zhuang language singer-songwriter	GZAR	Y
5.	Hanzu	Mr Black	Nanning (25.6.2014)	Zhuang language songwriter/researcher /Zhuang language tutor	GZAR	Y
6.	Zhuangzu	Mr Mauve	Nanning (25.6.2014)	Education Studies / Zhuang Studies academic	GZAR	Y
7.	Zhuangzu	Mr Cream	Nanning (26.6.2014)	Zhuang language magazine editor	GZAR	Y
8.	Zhuangzu	Mr Beige	Nanning (joint interview with Mr Cream)	Zhuang language magazine co-editor	GZAR	Y
9.	Hanzu	Mr Aqua	Nanning (27.6.2014)	Zhuang language singer- songwriter / GZAR State TV music role	Northern China	Partial
10.	Zhuangzu	Mr Russet	Nanning (joint interview with Mr Aqua)	Policeman/ Zhuang language singer-songwriter	GZAR	Y
11.	Zhuangzu	Mr Pink	Nanning (28.6.2014)	Putonghua-Zhuang Translator	GZAR	Y
12.	Zhuangzu	Mr Blue	Beijing	Zhuang Studies	GZAR	Y

			(30.6.2014)	academic		
13.	Zhuangzu	Mr Lime	Beijing (27.11.2014)	CASS Institute of Ethnology academic	Yunnan	Y
14.	Zhuangzu	Mr Brown	Beijing (30.7.2014)	Zhuangzu historian /documentary maker /teacher	GZAR	Y
15.	N/A	Mr Yellow	Beijing (1.8.2014)	China Director of an international legal rights NGO	USA	N
16.	Hanzu	Mr Taupe	Beijing (7.8.2014)	Chinese law academic	Heilong- jiang	N
17.	Zhuangzu	Mr Red	Online, Nanning- Sydney  19-20.8.2014	Activist/ Zhuang language tutor	GZAR	Y
18.	Unknown	Mr Crimson	Online, Beijing- Sydney (29.1.2015)	Chinese political science researcher	China	N
19.	Zhuangzu	Mr Turquoise	Nanning (15.6.2015)	GZAR Local History Compilation Committee member	GZAR	Y
20.	Zhuangzu	Mr Silver	Nanning (16.6.2015)	Zhuang language folk singer/ GZAR State TV music role	GZAR	Y

## **Appendix 3-2 Research ethics approval**

Approval letter and approved participant consent form on following pages.

Sub in letter

Consent form side 1

Consent form side 2

### Appendix 3-3 Students' places of origin and university

**Table of student participants' places of origins and of university**

Place of origin (Province/Region/ City-State)	Total number of students from each place of origin	University the students now attend (number of students at each university from each place of origin)
Yunnan Province	12	YMU, Yunnan Province (8)
		YU, Yunnan Province (1)
		MUC, Beijing (2)
		PKU, Beijing (1)
Guangxi Province	31	GUN, GZAR (8)
		GU, GZAR (10)
		IMUST, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (7)
		MUC, Beijing (2)
		RUC, Beijing (4)

## Appendix 3-4

### Semi-structured interview themes

5.7 Table 1. Topics and sample questions for students' (group) interview

<p><b>Personal language practices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which dialect(s) of Zhuang do you speak?</li> <li>• Tell me about learning Zhuang at home.</li> <li>• When and where do you speak Zhuang these days? (Can we see some of those places on our tour, please?)</li> <li>• Who do you speak Zhuang with?</li> <li>• Tell me about reading and writing Zhuang.</li> <li>• Do you use Zhuang on computers or on your mobile phone?</li> <li>• Tell me about any Zhuang radio or TV broadcasts that you know of.</li> <li>• Please compare your own use of Zhuang inside Guangxi and outside Guangxi.</li> <li>• Are there situations where you think using Zhuang would be inappropriate or give a negative impression?</li> <li>• Are there situations where you think using Putonghua would be inappropriate or give a negative impression?</li> <li>• If you have a child one day, what language(s) do you imagine you'll speak with them?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Studies and Career</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you study/what is your university major?</li> <li>• Are any of your classes taught in Zhuang or about Zhuang culture?</li> <li>• Do you speak Zhuang in the dorms? How valuable or useful is it to be able to use Zhuang at school and university?</li> <li>• What kind of work do you plan to get after graduating?</li> <li>• Would Zhuang help in obtaining or performing that job?</li> <li>• At school, a lot of Chinese people aim to achieve a very good level of Mandarin and also a good level of English. Could you obtain a high level of Mandarin and English but also a high level of Zhuang, or did Zhuang get in the way of progressing in other language studies?</li> <li>• Do you think you'll move back to Guangxi? (Tell me about the reasons why/why not.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Language activism practices</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think Zhuang is in danger?</li> <li>• What things do you do to maintain Zhuang?</li> <li>• How important is it for you to be able to use Zhuang outside</li> </ul>

	<p>the home, for instance in the workplace or in official situations (or is it not important)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you know about laws about minority language in China?</li> <li>• What do you know about policies about minority language in China?</li> </ul>
<b>Community context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about your parents' use of Zhuang.</li> <li>• How have Zhuang people's language practices changed during your life, from your experience or what you know about?</li> <li>• Do you know other Zhuang students at university in this city, and could you put me in contact with them?</li> </ul>
<b>Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about being Zhuang.</li> <li>• Do you know any Zhuang people who cannot speak Zhuang?</li> <li>• Can you tell me about a time you were proud to be Zhuang?</li> <li>• Is it sometimes difficult to be Zhuang? Can you give me an example?</li> <li>• Hypothetical: If, in the future, nobody speaks the Zhuang language, could there still be a Zhuang culture?</li> <li>• Tell me about a time you felt proud to be Chinese.</li> <li>• Is it sometimes difficult to be Chinese? Can you give me an example?</li> <li>• Do people know you are Zhuang without you telling them? Can you give me some examples of people realising you are Zhunag?</li> <li>• Who do you really admire, for example a sporting hero or a business leader or an actress or a famous scientist? (If they are not Zhuang, ask if there are similar Zhuang role models. If they are not Chinese, ask if there are similar Chinese role models.)</li> <li>• One day, would you like to be a Zhuang representative in the Guangxi provincial government or the national government?</li> </ul>
<b>Linguistic Landscape</b>	<p>[Other questions will be prompted by our surrounds, e.g. signage in Zhuang or absence of signage in Zhuang. They will follow the themes of Zhuang use and language maintenance.</p>

**5.8 Table 2: Topics and sample questions for language leaders' (individual) interview**

<b>Personal language practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which languages and dialects do you speak?</li> </ul> <p>[If the interviewee is also a Zhuang speaker, some of the Zhuang Students questions about Zhuang language practices will be used.]</p>
<b>Role</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your job?</li> <li>• How does your work relate to minority languages?</li> </ul>
<b>Impersonal language situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about the situation with reading and writing of Zhuang.</li> <li>• Tell me about the use of Zhuang on computers and mobile phones.</li> <li>• Tell me about any Zhuang newspapers, radio or TV broadcasts that you know of.</li> <li>• What do you know of the use of Zhuang inside Guangxi and outside Guangxi?</li> <li>• Are there situations where you think using Zhuang would be inappropriate or give a negative impression?</li> <li>• Are there situations where you think using Putonghua would be inappropriate or give a negative impression?</li> <li>• How have Zhuang people's language practices changed during your life, from your experience or what you know about?</li> </ul>
<b>Language activism practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you see yourself as             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a representative of Zhuang minority language speakers /</li> <li>- a representative of all Chinese minority languages' speakers /</li> <li>- not as a representative of any group?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do you think Zhuang is in danger?</li> <li>• Do you think Zhuang should be maintained?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What things do you do to maintain Zhuang?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How important is it to be able to use Zhuang outside the home, for instance in the workplace or in official situations (or is it not important)?</li> <li>• Can you tell me about laws about minority language in China?</li> <li>• Can you tell me about policies about minority language in China?</li> <li>• Who would you say is an advocate for Zhuang language?</li> </ul>

	<p>(Could you put me in contact with them?)</p> <p>(For people who ‘make language activism their business’: )</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are you promoting the use of minority languages? (Follow up with questions about how, with whom and how often activities happen.)</li> <li>• How do you use language rights and other laws about language?</li> <li>• Who does similar work to you? (Can you put me in contact with them?)</li> <li>• Whose cooperation do you need to protect a minority language like Zhuang?</li> </ul>
<b>Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could a person be Zhuang if they did not speak Zhuang? Do you know anyone like that?</li> <li>• What are the characteristics of Zhuang minzu besides language?</li> <li>• Hypothetical: If, in the future, nobody speaks the Zhuang language, will there still be a Zhuang culture?</li> <li>• People call Putonghua ‘Han Language’ [Hanyu]. Is Putonghua the language of the Han minzu?</li> <li>• There are Zhuang people in government in Guangxi and in the national government. Why are they there, and what impact do they have?</li> <li>• Can you give me some examples of how the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region government uses its autonomy?</li> </ul>

## Appendix 4-1 Aggregating Zhuangzu populations outside GZAR

Yunnan Province			
City or Prefecture	County	Zhuangzu Population (people)	Percentage of overall Zhuangzu Population (%)
Wenshan Zhuang-Miao Autonomous Prefecture	Guangnan	315,755	1.95
	Funing	211,749	1.31
	Yanshan	180,146	0.8
	Qiubei	120,626	0.75
	Wenshan	91,257	0.56
	Maguan	54,856	0.34
	Malipo	33,250	0.21
	Xichou	24,212	0.15
Honghe Hani-Yi Autonomous Prefecture	Mengzi	37,938	0.23
Qujing City	Shizong	22,290	0.14
<b>Yunnan Total</b>		<b>1,092,079</b>	<b>6.44</b>

Guangdong Province			
City or Prefecture	County	Zhuangzu Population (people)	Percentage of overall Zhuangzu Population (%)
Shenzhen city	Bao'an	81,368	0.5
	Longgang	22,708	0.14
Foshan City	Nanhai	50,007	0.31
	Shunde	18,759	0.12
Qingyan City	<b>Lianshan Zhuang-Yao Autonomous County</b>	<b>44,141</b>	<b>0.27</b>
Zhongshan City		31,666	0.2
<b>Guangdong Total</b>		<b>248,649</b>	<b>1.54</b>

<b>Guizhou Province</b>			
<b>City or Prefecture</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Zhuangzu Population (people)</b>	<b>Percentage of overall Zhuangzu Population (%)</b>
Qiandongnan Miao-Dong Autonomous Prefecture	Congjiang	21,419	0.13
<b>Guizhou Total</b>		<b>21,419</b>	<b>0.13</b>

<b>Other</b>			
<b>City or Prefecture</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Zhuangzu Population (people)</b>	<b>Percentage of overall Zhuangzu Population (%)</b>
n/a	n/a	780,897	4.83
<b>Other Total</b>		<b>780,897</b>	<b>4.83</b>

Remainder of Zhuangzu not listed: 87.06 percent.

County populations extracted from: (“Zhuang People,” 2016).

## **Appendix 4-2 Language Atlas Map of Zhuang Language**

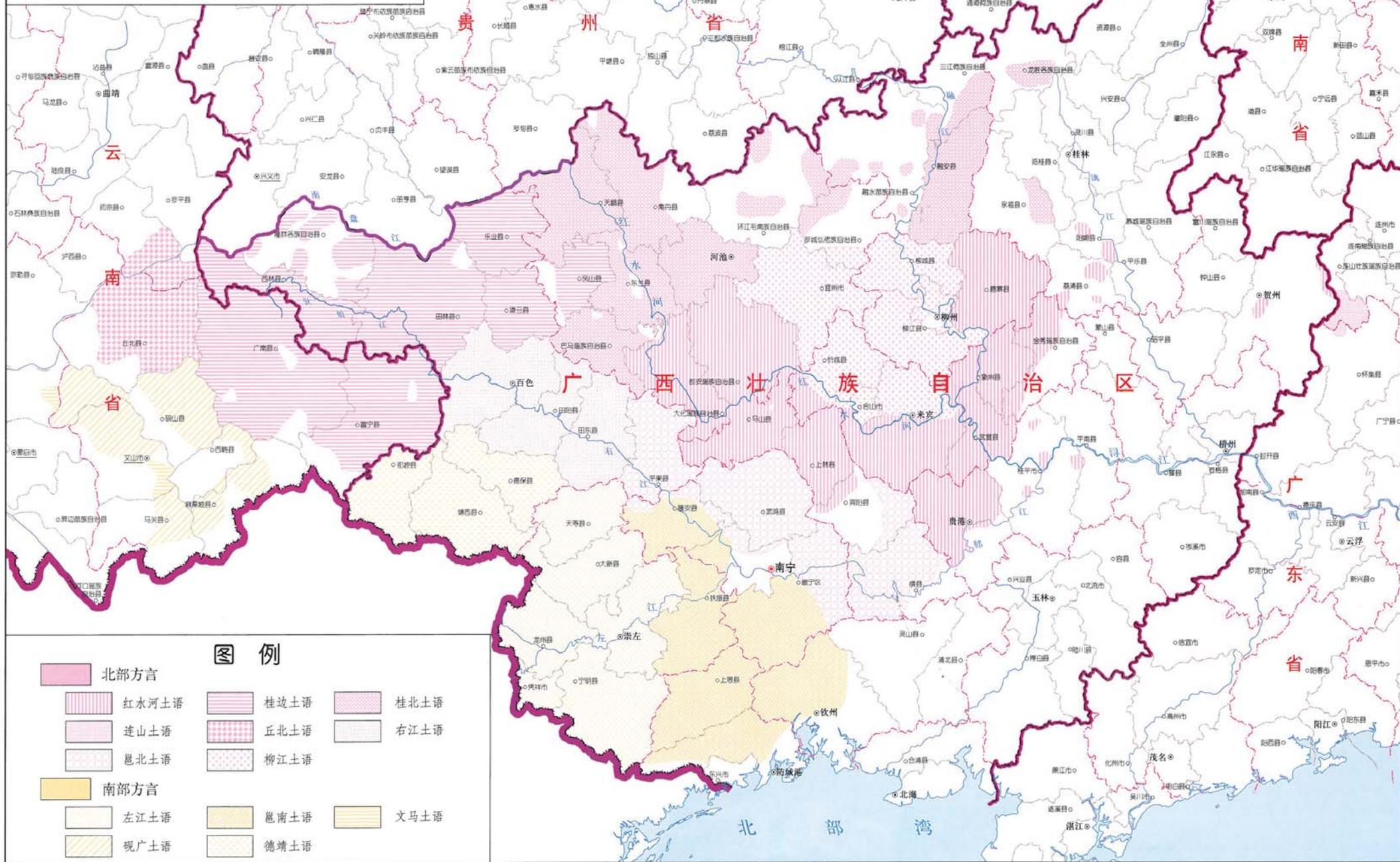
Map on following page.

Source: (CASS Institute of Linguistics et al. 2012).

# C1-11 壮语

广西壮族自治区 云南省 广东省

比例尺 1 : 2 300 000



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