

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Causes of the FLLD

4.1.1 The test-driven educational policy

At the school I noticed that the teachers gave too many exercises and classroom quizzes treating the students as testing devices for higher scores rather than language learners, and I asked them why they did not try some other ways to improve the students' English language proficiency. They replied that the county educational administration practiced a policy of "bonus" to create a competitive atmosphere with the bonus fund directly deducted from all the local teachers' summer vacation salary, and that they might get fined and could not get their own money back if their students scored lower than the average.

This indicates that a test-driven policy was practiced at local junior high schools, regardless of the aftermath -- teachers' excessive attention on the tests rather than on the FL knowledge and skills. When they found the students would not cooperate with them, they felt helpless and worked with a burnout attitude. As a result, throughout one full semester, the teachers stuck to their strategy of "to show the students how to swim on the sea of EFL questions". As a result they "drown most of the swimmers".

The de facto policy also gave a negative backwash to both the teachers and their

students. They put all the teachers in a competitive environment with a summative high-stake assessment once a school year without observation of the teaching process by an authentic and formative assessment-- totally inconsistent with the curriculum design of the country. Consequently the teachers strove to assign exercises as much as possible after class and the relationship among the teachers, their students, and the school leaders was not good as expected, failing to achieve the 'organizational and relational capacity'. Under such excessive stress arising from the norm-referred assessment, after repeated failure, some teachers may be expected to give up trying other approaches suitable for the textbooks and their students' level. Some may feel burnout and do not care about any requirements, simply saying that their students could not pass the final term exams and they could never get the money back. As for the students, they did not enjoy learning a new language in this way, quite different from their previous experience in learning Chinese as their second language.

4.1.2 Grammar-translation instruction and rote-learning

Some pre-classroom-observations and interviews with the teachers show that the teachers here, as in many other rural schools elsewhere, adopted exclusively the time-honored grammar-translation method - originally meant for instruction of Greek and Latin, the classical languages of science and scholarship in central and Western Europe until the 17th century--which continued to find its application here. The teachers told me that it could be a 'short cut to grasp a language', with attention to only reading and writing skills and no need to use modern teaching aids. Moreover, in order to engage the students in simple and passive rote-learning words and sentences and make their grammatical explanations understood more easily, they often told their students to learn the English vocabulary and the text by heart in every possible way, for instance, to read and write separately or with Chinese translation several times.

The grammar-translation method neglects development of the students' listening and speaking skills, which accounts for the great failure of most Asian EFL learners in communicating with native speakers. In the classroom, with word-for-word translation and detailed grammatical explanation, use of L1 is much more than that of L2 further minimizing the 'teacher talk', the only input of the target language to the learner. 'Almost no need to use teaching aids' indicates that the teacher ignores the purpose of teaching the foreign languages – to develop all the skills for communicative competence by making use of the resources available to facilitate their learning and interest them. The rote-learning, as a by-product of the long rejected behaviorist SLA theory according to which the grammar-translation method is applied among the Chinese EFL teachers, is a mechanical and passive cognitive process to repeat, practice and memorize incoming information. Both the method and the strategy promise little effectiveness in EFL teaching and learning.

4.1.3 Limited exposure to the foreign language

The field trips to the school and then to the students' villages show that the Lisu rural minority community has very little opportunity for exposure to the foreign language. At school, it is clearly written in the eye-catching slogans along the stairways into each classroom building, "Please speak Putonghua only", thus requiring all the students to speak the dominant national language; after school, they have to choose to speak local Han dialect with their Han, Yi classmates, and even with their Lisu fellows to 'practice' the Chinese speech as encouraged by their teachers although they were already quite fluent after having learnt the second language through six years' of bilingual education. In the teacher's presence, they tried to speak Putonghua to their classmates and the teachers. But after class, the teachers themselves speak several languages and dialects.

English could be a subsequent language and a foreign language, but it was only taken as one of the three most important subjects for tests at the school. I noticed that it was not spoken at all amongst the teachers, let alone their students. Moreover, the teachers used much less English for classroom instruction with the grammar-translation approach.

When the Lisu students went back home, their parents, half of whom were semiliterate with only primary school graduation certificates, allowed them to rest and stay at home watching Chinese TV programs or do some lessons with little exposure to the English language except for some major TV broadcast stations' names (e.g. CCTV for China Central TV Station and YNTV for Yunnan TV Station), name brands in product advertisement (e.g. Colgate, Pantene), and on-screen captions of translated movies.

I also observed that, for the long weekend of four days, they might take home some textbooks, but in most cases, not the English ones. When asked why that was so in their mother tongue Lisu, they responded that they took little interest and it was too challenging to learn and would rather work harder on other subject to 'make up' the subject learning 'deficit' in terms of the final term exams.

At school the students' exposure to the target language is confined to less than half of the teacher's classroom EFL instruction by the grammar-translation method, consolidated by the learners' diligent rote-learning. Unfortunately, despite their enlarged vocabulary, the method and strategy do not impress the students as a language learning process but rather, a difficult subject involving two languages – a national language and an international one. After several times of failure, they generally feel uninterested and choose to give up. If not, the only way out for them to make up is to work harder on other subjects. In order to compensate for what they

know will be low scores in English. As a result, the students' already limited input of the language will be further diminished, resulting in even greater difficulties in the language learning process.

4.1.4 High incidence of drop-outs

From my interview with the school leaders and some class teachers, I discovered that there are 14 classes each with a student number of 12-48, two classes for each grade. In grade 1, for the first semester, almost no student chose to leave the school. But after that, every class teacher would claim that some of their students discontinued their junior high schooling for several reasons. In general, there is an incredibly high ratio of dropouts: a grade-1 class of some 40 students may only leave some 10 in the class upon graduation, around 30%. The dropout rate was a little more than 10 times higher than the average junior high school dropout rate of 2.49% in 2007 and over four times as much as the nationally highest (7%) for the poverty-stricken western region of the country.

However, unlike other poverty-stricken rural minority areas of the country, the dropouts appear to be unrelated to inadequate resources or social support for the students. The local educational administration is striving to support the local schools in the forms of policy, essentially with adequate funds and necessary school facilities, staffing of teachers-college graduates and partial transfers of local excellent village primary school teachers who become eligible with a college diploma and demonstration of their competence as teachers at a higher level school, with very few cases of "loose compliance" with the state educational policies and requirements. The schools in the minority area even receive several international NGOs' generous support for provision of a multimedia classroom with 20 personal computers,

Internet access, color TV sets for long-distance education, solar water heating devices, spacious playground, and partially funded school canteens.

At the junior high school level, most of the teachers hold a college diploma from full-time three-year college education, self study in spare time, or take correspondence courses during the summer or winter vacations, to make them principally qualified for the teaching post. They care about the students' material needs for their living at school and report to the school leaders if their students have any financial difficulties in study, helping with applications for bursaries to cover part of the boarding costs and tuition. Some class teachers even try to help reduce the students' investment through some organized income generating opportunities after school, such as vegetable plantation, construction work and even recyclable rubbish collection.

As for the school leaders, they work carefully to comply with the supervisory departments' frequent inspection and often demand the teachers' devotion to their teaching toward quality improvement. They also check regularly the teachers work and quantify their teaching tasks, for instance 4 times of exercise assignments on weekly basis.

On the student parents' part, the majority of them can afford their children's schooling at the primary and junior high school during the ages 7 – 16, and only ask their children to do some light farm work on weekends (4-day per two-week-combined long week) and some holidays (e.g. the 'help with harvest' vacation). Despite inaccessibility to the school from the villages to the community town school, due to long distance, rugged hilly paths and merely one-bus daily service, most parents of rural minority students visited and interviewed for the case study try

to get a motorbike to pick up their children and then send back their children on weekends, leaving only one third who have to walk home for half a day.

When investigated through field trips and interviews, in addition to the five causes found for school dropout by other researchers, here I found three more causes: (1) the local ethnic tradition of early marriage at 16-18, in comparison with China's legal age for marriage, 22 for males and 20 for females; (2) Lisu ethnic festival interruption, when no holiday is given; (3) Christian belief, without any church near the school. Of all these, for this community, learning difficulty and inadequate ethnic cultural respect for the minority learners are the major causes.

In the high-stakes accountability testing system, students are forced by their teachers to pass all kinds of tests at the school, and they may be continually criticized by the teachers for underachievement of the tests despite effort and time expended and thus may be discouraged from continuing their schooling. Though it might be too much an exaggeration to say that EFL learning (one of the three major subjects) difficulty resulted in such high dropout rates from the school, it is very likely part of it. As a result, the other students in the class are also affected, with increased anxiety and distraction: “what to do – stay or leave?”

4.1.5 Unrealized learner potential of trilingualism

I checked several FLLD students' Chinese scores at the school teaching affairs section and found there was no marked difference between the Lisu, the Yi and the Han in their Chinese fluency. According to their Chinese teachers, the only difference might be that there is still certain level of the minority accent in speaking, which is understandable and does not affect communication in the language. Interviews with some of the Lisu students poor in their English tests also confirmed their comments.

The rural minority EFL learners have gone through six-years of bilingual education and all are already proficient in the second language. However, the Han teachers and some minority teachers are not aware of their additively bilingual competence, which could be an advantage if they are encouraged, motivated and supported through teaching method adjustments and content adaptation as needed. After being interviewed, they also asked the researcher how they could manage to learn the foreign language, which shows they had not really lost all the confidence built up from their previous successful experience in learning L2 and were willing to try out some of their or other successful learners' language learning 'tips'.

4.1.6 Low motivation and high anxiety

I checked Dornyei's (2001) demotivating factors with regard to the FLLD Lisu students, and found (1), (3), (5) and (9) may account for the learners' low motivation for this case study, as they dislike the teacher's classroom teaching method, experienced too many 'failure' in tests, and the coursebook is all about the urban Western and Han people's life in content, ignoring the fact that the Chinese population comprises over 60% rural people and the 55 minorities in ethnicity.

I also found that the student interviewees' motivation seemed to decrease from grade 1 to grade 3 due to the EFL difficulty accompanied by increased anxiety, as several of them came to me and asked why it was so very difficult to pass the exam, what would be the use of the language in the future except for higher school admission tests, and how to learn the foreign languages after being informed of its importance.

In this study, the learners also became worried about the difficulties and differences which may grow to be the anxiety that reduce their confidence in making

progress and impede their learning. To a certain extent, the students would no longer 'invest' their time and effort and the foreign learning would be terminated.

4.1.7 Insufficient and inappropriate teacher development

Only one of the teachers, when observed in class and assessed with a checklist (See the Appendix), have reached over 70, at a fairly good level; 4 scored less than 50; and two just around 60. This shows that in terms of proficiency, ethics and spirit of devotion as teachers to the rural minority students, their performance was not commensurate with their college graduate diploma.

During my interviews with them after classroom observation, the five Han teachers blamed the students difficulties on the students themselves, in particular the minority students most of whom fail in the tests, instead of reflecting on their own underperformances in terms of profession, morality and devotion. To take some examples, they seldom prepared carefully the new lessons, always gave lessons in the unchanged, tedious instructional method, and assigned the word-copying and reading exercises in large quantities as required by the school leaders; they participated in all forms of teacher development training for the new curriculum during the vacations but never tried to apply what they had learned there to their teaching as they believed it was 'definitely' not applicable to the rural minority learners; to a certain extent there also seemed a distance between them and their students with too many students failing to achieve the teachers' goals. Moreover, instead of endeavoring to find out the causes, adjust their teaching and eventually improve their instructional quality, they continued to work in an irresponsible, 'burnout' manner. On my advice during my initial field trips, the school leaders equipped them with English teaching facilities, such as a multimedia classroom, tape-recorders and textbook-accompanying cassettes,

but very few of the teachers of English would register and borrow them out for use over the coming semester. Every morning, I could still hear the students read aloud in their morning self-study session following their teachers, with a basically correct pronunciation but in a strange chanting intonation, similar to the way they had practiced Chinese-pinyin by reading out each single vocabulary unit three times – one time in English and two in Chinese translation in an attempt to memorize the spelling and meaning of each word, with overdependence on the second language.

When I tried to speak English with them, I found that most of the college-degree-compliant English teachers could not fully understand my speech and failed to respond in correct and appropriate English. The teachers' communicative competence itself was far from enough for teaching the new communication-oriented English textbook. Then, from my check of their students' daily homework after class, without their presence, I also noticed that most of the mandatory extracurricular exercises for the students were actually just to copy some new words several times (3-5 lines on the exercise-book) with Chinese translations. Sometimes even when they asked the students to do grammar exercises, unless there were keys to the questions in the teachers' reference books, the teachers themselves failed to correct the exercises in red ink. I went to some teachers personally for an explanation and they responded honestly that they paid little attention to updating their own knowledge and to familiarizing themselves with the new textbooks, and that they seldom prepared for new lessons carefully, which was overlooked by the school leaders for several years since none of the leaders were English majors. Most of the teachers would rather enjoy their long four-day weekend with their family or go to the county town for a change, than think about how to improve their target language proficiency in several

roles, to adjust their teaching to the learners' needs, and thus to teach more effectively.

I once went to the teaching affairs section chief and suggested sending the teachers out for varied forms of teacher development. According to him, the seven teachers were often sent out for teacher development during the summer or winter vacation. But they claimed that the costs were too high and what they had learned from the city teacher specialists' lecture did not apply to their teaching to the rural minority students. So they were even given a chance to participate in the in-school sit-in-classroom training for 10 days. That school was selected by the leader as it had been long amongst the best in terms of English teaching quality, with similar conditions.

I also examined their roles in accordance with Table 6 (See the Appendix), and found that only four of them acted as an organizer of the classroom, instructor of the foreign language, controller of the students, and evaluator of their grades, which shows they practiced an old teaching method and failed to realize that they should adapt themselves to the newly designed authentic, task-based, interactive, communicative new texts, that is, they insisted in "taking the new path in a pair of old shoes". Without other roles, the students may keep away from the "sage on the stage", show less initiative for participation in the tasks, and not be as open to motivation. In addition, without the awareness of lifelong learning, they could never be a desired 'resource' and 'facilitator' to help the students in need with a full capacity.

Consequently, although they are all teachers with college diplomas and only have to teach two classes and enjoy relatively good working and living conditions, under some but not too demanding pressure, local EFL teachers' proficiency in the

foreign language, occupational competence and ethics all need to be improved through a variety of teacher development methods.

4.1.8 Ignorance and neglect of the Lisu culture and religion (Christianity)

According to my field trips to the community township and large Lisu villages, in the community, Lisu ethnic minority language is learned as the vernacular among other ethnic people and the Lisu customs are readily respected by other groups. Many Lisu students study hard despite making little progress, and get on well with their peers, and respect their teachers and friends from all the other groups.

Following religious traditions handed down from the Western missionaries about two hundred years ago, almost every village has a church for pious believers, a sizable population of around 85%. They go to church regularly with the Lisu or Chinese version of the Bible on Sunday and also celebrate Christmas on December 24-25 in the remote rural villages, while the festival is not observed in Han villages and the Han Christmas fans among the urban Han youngsters know little about the religion and the implication of Christmas in the West. In this sense, the religious faith, as part of the Lisu ethnic culture, is the same as the people in the English-speaking countries, which is completely ignored in EFL teaching.

This does not mean that the EFL teachers are expected to learn the Lisu language and read the Bible as the Lisu people do. However, their recognition of the Lisu language popularity in the community, their respect for the Lisu culture and their involvement of the Lisu students in classroom EFL activities with relevance to the culture, would encourage and facilitate the Lisu minority students' EFL study at school.

At the beginning of my field trip to the community school, before they knew the researcher was also a Lisu proficient in Chinese, Yi and English with years of

experience in working and studying abroad, the Han EFL teachers blamed unanimously the Lisu learners' English learning difficulties on the students themselves, in a tone of some racist discrimination: "Some Lisu students speak Chinese with their ethnic accent, how can they study the foreign language?" It is annoying and unaccountable to hear some remarks from the teachers which are simply excuses for their underperformance in teaching the rural minority EFL learners. In contrast, from the teaching affairs section, I heard that the classes taught by a Lisu woman teacher, who only held a non-English major college diploma, achieved the best record of students passing the exams and retaining the most students from grade 1 until grade 3.. This group of relatively successful EFL learners, or higher scorers, may be attributable to their teacher's good relation with her students speaking Lisu at break and mentioning comparatively the life of Lisu people in classroom activities, with an ethnic and cultural awareness while teaching them. The minority students' preference of the minority EFL teachers and their willingness to cooperate with the teacher is evidence of the importance of ethnic and cultural awareness in language pedagogy. It occurred to me that if she had taught them in the medium of the minority language, as most of the students were Lisu and the rest could fully understand the language, her performance would have been better. Such an assumption inspired me to do a short teaching experiment in the Lisu minority language later.

In the local teachers' classroom instruction, I found that the awareness of the ethnic and cultural identity were not given due attention in their teaching. They followed the new texts which only introduce the English speaking countries and the Chinese Han's culture but not the Chinese 55 minorities. In this classroom and the entire community, however, the Han's population only accounts for 10%. Some

students were disappointed to find that the texts were all about the Chinese and the foreign countries.

To sum up, the findings from the time-consuming, dedicatory and physically-challenging field trips and the repetitive, cross-linguistic and intercultural interviews over a considerable long period have proved fruitful. For some general issues, they are similar to the reviewed literature (e.g. Liao 2005, Ma 2009) or local rural EFL teachers' hearsay and overstatement in a shuffle-off-responsibility style blaming all on teaching facilities and the minority learners' inability to learn the foreign language, but the rest are found to be quite different in the rural minority community context, more complex and idiosyncratic. Through the investigation, it also shows preliminarily that there may be several causal factors, such as (1) the educational authority's test-driven policy, (2) grammar-translation instruction and rote-learning, (3) limited exposure to the foreign language, (4) low motivation despite basically adequate learner support, (5) unrealized learner potentials of trilingualism, (6) high incidence of drop-outs, (7) insufficient and ineffective teacher development, (8) coexistence of ethnic religion and Christian belief and (9) neglect of learner ethnicity and culture.

4.2 Students' own characterization of the FLLD

The students' responses are grouped by specific topics in five major categories, in attempt to see their choices of A, B or C each with an indication based on the number of students choosing the questions (See Table 11), which may shed light on their impression of English language, exposure, interest and expectation (Q1-15); social support and basic learning condition (Q16-29); classroom instruction, method and extracurricular activity (Q30-40); bilingual education and ethnic culture

(Q41-49); and EFL study self-assessment and actual achievement in the final term exams (Q50-57).

The students' responses to the questions 1-15 (See Table 11), indicate that the Lisu EFL learners know the wide use and importance of the foreign language but find it different and distant from their minority language. At home or school they have very limited exposure to English with the teacher's classroom instruction being the only source of input of the language. They take great interest in English learning, in particular listening and speaking, as Lisu has no universal writing system. The interest may be well maintained or increased upon their achievement of progress in learning the language, with more time investment on the study subject. They also tend to work hard at study while expecting to have a teacher proficient in English, flexible in teaching methods, willing to show them how to learn the language, and strict and careful in teaching. Local high dropouts seem to have little effect on those who continue their schooling.

**Table 11 Students' Responses to Questionnaire 1-56 with Indications
English, Exposure, Interest and Expectation (Q1-15)**

Q NO.	Choice	Class A			Class B			Indication
		Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=5)	Han (n=12)	Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=8)	Han (n=13)	
1	A	2	1	7	6	5	3	Most Lisu students regard English as a foreign language or the second language, and they are more likely to find it different and distant from their own language; Yi and Han, mainly a study subject, with more instrumental motivation.
	B	6	3	4	7	3	7	
	C	8	1	1	3	0	3	
2	A	2	0	1	1	0	2	Most of Lisu, Yi and Han students know the widest use of English and probably the importance to learn the language.
	B	11	4	9	14	7	9	
	C	3	1	2	1	1	2	
3	A	0	0	0	0	1	0	Of all the students, only one Yi student once heard a foreigner speak English. Most of them merely hear it spoken by the teacher in class, the only input source for them.
	B	3	4	1	2	1	3	
	C	13	1	11	14	6	10	
4	A	1	0	2	3	1	2	More Lisu only see English words on commodity packs while their Yi and Han peers seem to watch TV more often with some exposure to English words.
	B	5	1	4	8	4	7	
	C	10	4	6	5	3	4	
5	A	8	3	3	6	2	7	Students speak mainly English with the teacher or classmates in class. Very few would communicate in the foreign language after class.
	B	7	0	7	8	4	5	
	C	1	2	2	2	2	1	
6	A	11	1	8	5	6	9	The repetitive, mechanical and meaningless word copying become the major part of their 'writing' exercises. Few are taught to write passages.
	B	5	3	3	8	2	3	
	C	0	1	1	3	0	1	
7	A	2	1	3	3	2	2	At the beginning most students are interested in learning English.
	B	9	2	6	6	3	7	

	C	5	2	3	7	3	4	4	
	A	7	2	3	4	1	1	1	About half of Lisu students prefer listening and speaking while their Yi and Han classmates pay more attention to all the four skills.
8	B	3	2	3	3	0	5		
	C	6	1	6	9	7	7	7	
	A	11	3	7	8	3	6	6	When the four skills are re-sequenced, L-R and S-W, they tend to choose both. Actually, as colloquially bilinguals or trilinguals, they may choose L-S.
9	B	4	2	4	6	3	5	5	
	C	1	0	1	2	2	2	2	
	A	5	0	5	6	5	4	4	Except Yi students who would not leave their homes and work abroad, both Lisu and Han's choices are balanced, for admission to higher schools, making foreign friends and working abroad. This may indicate that although quite limited in number, they already know some graduates from this school have succeeded in achieving those goals.
10	B	5	4	3	5	2	4	4	
	C	6	1	4	5	1	5	5	
	A	3	0	3	6	3	5	5	Upon their failure in English tests, most students would try to find out the causes and work hard instead of giving up. It seems that they know the impossibility to get a high score just by learning other subjects. It also shows that rural students, however poor they may achieve in study, would value the study opportunities.
11	B	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	
	C	13	5	8	10	4	8	8	
	A	8	2	8	10	4	11	11	Most students hope to have a teacher who would teach them how to learn and also change their instructional methods. It is also found there are more Lisu who expect the teacher's tutorial with exercises.
12	B	3	3	3	1	3	0	0	
	C	5	0	1	5	1	2	2	
	A	6	0	4	7	2	5	5	Most students prefer a teacher proficient in English and flexible in teaching methods. More Lisu than Yi accept strict and careful teachers.
13	B	10	5	8	8	6	7	7	
	C	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	
	A	10	5	9	11	6	10	10	Progress in English may entail more time on the subject, highly motivated.
14	B	6	0	3	5	2	3	3	

	C	0	0	0	0	0	0
	A	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	B	11	3	9	7	12	
	C	5	2	3	7	1	1

No one admires dropout peers and for most of them, their study would not be affected.

Then their responses to the questions 16-29 show that the school support consists of a desirable environment, an adequate and stable team of teachers, and necessary facilities to aid teaching. With regard to the teachers, they expect the class teacher to care about their study, living and psychological issues, and the teacher of English to be concerned about more than just their scores, for instance, access to modern teaching facilities and devices. From their parents they gain such support as coverage of fees and living costs, connection with school leaders and teachers, good family relationships, pick-up from and sending-back to the school, assignment of little farm work, and encouragement to make progress, but not educational advice as the parents themselves are not well educated, only having receiving primary or secondary schooling.

Social Support and Basic Learning Condition (Q16-29)

Q NO.	Choice	Class A			Class B			Indication
		Lisu-Class 1 (n=16)	Yi-Class 1 (n=5)	Han-Class 1 (n=12)	Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=8)	Han (n=13)	
16	A	9	1	2	8	6	6	More Lisu favor clean, delightful and comfortable boarding conditions than Yi and Han, who pay more attention to having qualified teachers.
	B	6	3	8	7	0	6	
	C	1	1	2	1	2	1	
17	A	12	5	8	15	8	11	Most rely on the parents' support for fees and living

	B	1	0	3	1	0	2		costs. Very few or none receive school stipends or class work-study activities.
	C	3	0	1	0	0	0		
18	A	14	5	9	11	8	11		Same as above.
	B	2	0	2	3	0	1		
	C	0	0	1	2	0	1		
19	A	7	2	6	13	7	8		The parents' support is mainly reflected in provision of adequate money or little contribution of farm work.
	B	6	3	4	3	1	5		Only a few hope to pick them up from and send them back to school.
	C	3	0	2	0	0	0		
20	A	7	1	7	7	4	8		The parents' support also lies in their concern about their school performance, by meeting the school leaders and the class teacher for inquiry.
	B	4	1	2	3	0	1		
	C	5	3	3	6	4	4		
21	A	5	2	6	7	2	8		Most parents just graduate from primary or secondary schools themselves, unable to give adequate educational support.
	B	9	3	5	7	4	5		
	C	2	0	1	2	2	0		
22	A	5	3	4	10	3	8		Most parents seldom quarrel at home in a harmonious atmosphere.
	B	11	2	8	6	5	5		
	C	0	0	0	0	0	0		
23	A	0	0	0	0	0	0		The parents talk with them over study issues and encourage them to do better. Only a few criticize them and always compare their performance with others.
	B	12	3	6	15	6	12		
	C	4	2	6	1	2	1		
24	A	7	2	7	3	1	3		Lisu need the class teacher to support them in almost all aspects – study, living, and morality.
	B	2	1	2	7	4	6		
	C	7	2	3	6	3	4		
25	A	2	1	3	2	1	2		The English teachers concern mostly about the students' study performance (test scores), seldom about their discipline or exercises.
	B	13	4	7	13	6	10		
	C	1	0	2	1	1	1		

26	A	7	0	2	1	0	0	Most students are fairly given chances to respond to the teachers' questions.
	B	1	1	1	3	2	5	
	C	8	4	9	12	6	8	
27	A	1	0	0	1	0	1	The multimedia teaching aids are seldom used. Inaccessibility to the resources enlarges the gap between the town and the rural schools.
	B	10	5	10	13	7	9	
	C	5	0	2	2	1	3	
28	A	0	0	0	0	0	0	The teachers seldom or never take tape-recorders into the classroom. So the students have to imitate their teachers' pronunciation,
	B	8	2	4	13	4	9	
	C	8	3	8	3	4	4	
29	A	0	0	0	0	0	0	The school seldom replaces class teachers, with sustainable support to the students.
	B	2	1	1	1	1	2	
	C	14	4	11	15	7	11	

Their reply to Questionnaires 30-40 informs us of the fact that they have an English class or a self-study period every day but when the teacher deploys the teaching grammar-translation method, more L1 is spoken in the classroom and less English study specific activities are developed in and after class, as required for communicative competence and retention of the students' interest. They expect to have teachers who use an appropriate approach to facilitation of their learning, in addition to their proficiency in the language and extensive knowledge related to teaching the lessons. Reading remains the most demanding problem for all the groups of students, which indicates the cause is not the Lisu's lack of a popular, universal writing system but the teacher's incompetence despite excessive translation and grammatical explanations.

Classroom Instruction, Method and Extracurricular Activity (Q30-40)

Q NO.	Choice	Class A			Class B			Indication
		Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=5)	Han (n=12)	Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=8)	Han (n=13)	
30	A	16	3	11	9	6	10	Almost everyday students have English classes, with continuance of the learning.
	B	0	1	0	0	0	0	
	C	0	1	1	7	2	3	
31	A	6	2	2	2	1	3	The teachers' use of more or less L1 instructional medium differs. The teacher for Class B mainly translates the text and explains the grammar in Putonghua.
	B	6	2	5	11	3	6	
	C	4	1	5	3	4	4	
32	A	4	1	3	0	0	1	Likewise, pairwork and group discussion in class, which is required for the task-based textbooks, may be often but is not carried out for every class.
	B	12	3	7	9	5	9	
	C	0	1	2	7	3	3	
33	A	8	2	7	4	2	8	There are a great number of students still interested in English, but very few express 'very much interested'.
	B	7	2	4	8	5	2	
	C	1	1	1	4	1	3	
34	A	1	1	2	3	0	0	Many would like the teacher's teaching style than their English proficiency level or extensive knowledge.
	B	11	2	8	9	4	10	
	C	4	2	2	4	4	3	
35	A	2	1	2	1	2	1	Most of the students may get distracted in class because of difficulty in incomprehension of the instructional contents other than little interest or the teacher's insufficient attention.
	B	13	4	10	13	6	12	
	C	1	0	0	2	0	0	
36	A	3	1	2	4	2	1	Reading is the most demanding for all the three groups.
	B	13	3	9	10	4	10	
	C	0	1	1	2	2	2	

37	A	6	3	6	9	3	4	The teacher seldom involves the students in extracurricular activities, which may interest them and improve their competence in use of the foreign language.
	B	10	2	6	5	4	6	
	C	0	0	0	2	1	3	
38	A	1	1	1	1	0	3	Most of them can only complete half of the exercise on their own. Class B seems to have more who can complete independently.
	B	10	4	9	9	7	4	
	C	5	0	2	6	1	6	
39	A	8	2	6	8	3	9	For more than three times they failed to turn in the exercises or they did carelessly.
	B	7	3	6	8	5	4	
	C	1	0	0	0	0	0	
40	A	6	2	7	10	3	12	For more than three times they did not bring their English textbook to the class, because they forgot it or their books were lost.
	B	2	0	0	1	0	0	
	C	8	3	5	5	5	1	

The answers to questions 41-49 reflect that, through the six-year primary school bilingual education, Lisu students are bilingual in their native Lisu language (listening and speaking) and their second language Chinese (all the four skills). They can fully follow the Chinese teacher instruction in class. However, while listening to the teacher of English in the instructional medium of Chinese, they still try to use their successful experience from the L2 learning. Some even expect their teacher to teach in Chinese-Lisu combination or Lisu only medium. As most of the students are Christians, they hope to go back to the village churches or possibly a church nearby for Sunday service, which is impossible as there is no church at the Yi village and they follow the peculiar 10-day continuous workdays and 4-day

weekends and never enjoy a Sunday at school. This may impact their concentration in study at least for one Sunday in between every local "long week".

Bilingual Education and Ethnic Culture (Q41-49)

Q NO.	Choice	Class A			Class B			Indication
		Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=5)	Han (n=12)	Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=8)	Han (n=13)	
41	A	6	2	5	5	2	8	A little more Lisu are bilingual than Yi, but there are also more expressing their incomprehension of some of the teacher's instruction in Chinese. Whereas there are also some Chinese students in the same case, it does not mean Lisu fail to understand the Chinese instruction, but rather complexity of the contents.
	B	4	3	3	7	4	5	
	C	6	0	4	4	2	0	
42	A	5	1	9	6	4	11	Most Lisu and Yi often or always associate with their own language while listening to the teacher's instruction in Chinese.
	B	8	3	2	8	4	2	
	C	3	1	1	2	0	0	
43	A	7	4	9	10	6	9	The minority students expect use of Chinese or Chinese-minority combination as the instructional medium. Almost no one chooses to use their own minority language only.
	B	0	1	0	0	0	0	
	C	9	0	3	6	2	4	
44	A	10	4	7	8	3	8	Most have ever tried their experience in learning the second language Chinese through primary bilingual education.
	B	2	0	2	0	1	2	
	C	4	1	3	8	4	3	
45	A	3	0	0	1	0	0	They find there are some effects by using the experience.
	B	9	3	10	10	7	6	
	C	4	2	2	5	1	7	
46	A	6	4	7	6	6	6	One third of Lisu students are apt to Chinese only,

	B	5	1	3	7	2	4	another one third to Chinese-Lisu combination, the rest to Lisu only.
	C	5	0	2	3	0	3	
47	A	2	3	6	2	4	8	Majority of Lisu believe in Christianity while Yi and Han believe in Buddhism. Very few are followers of Taoism.
	B	0	0	1	1	1	1	
	C	14	2	5	13	3	4	
48	A	0	1	3	5	0	6	In Class A, most students practice the religion in their heart or wish to go back to their village churches for Sunday service, however, in another class (B), there is a considerable proportion of the Lisu students wishing to have a church near the school.
	B	10	4	6	6	8	5	
	C	6	0	3	5	0	2	
49	A	13	4	10	6	5	7	Christian belief does not affect their study for one class; for another class, one third think it does, and the rest one third argue that it may even promote as most foreigners are also Christians.
	B	1	0	1	5	1	3	
	C	2	1	1	5	2	3	

The students responses to the last questions 50-57 demonstrate that, as far as knowledge of the English language is concerned, that is, sound, vocabulary and grammar, most students believe their grammar is just at the medium level although it is always emphasized in class, with very few finding it easy. Then, of all the five skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing, and translation), speaking and writing skills seem to be more challenging than others. Inadequate input of the receptive skills, listening and reading, and neglect of practice in the two productive skills may account for the outcome. The students' self-assessment is basically consistent with their achievements in the final term exams. For some items, such as grammar, listening and translation, they appear to be moderate in

self-assessment.; listening and reading, and neglect of practice in the two productive skills may account for the outcome. The students' self-assessment is basically consistent with their achievements in the final term exams.

EFL Study Achievement Assessment (Q50-56)

Q NO.	Choice	Class A			Class B			Indication
		Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=5)	Han (n=12)	Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=8)	Han (n=13)	
50	A	2	0	1	1	0	4	After-class exercises are the major tasks for them, with two possibilities: the exercises may be similar to the final-term exams in terms of the question types; textbook specific exercises can be all done in class.
	B	4	3	6	4	3	1	
	C	10	2	5	11	5	8	
51	A	4	1	1	6	0	3	Most of the students' exercises are scored between 60-80% or higher.
	B	6	2	7	9	7	9	
	C	6	2	4	1	1	1	
52	A	7	2	5	6	4	3	Most of the students' regular tests are also scored above the pass requirement, but more fail in tests.
	B	9	3	5	10	4	10	
	C	0	0	2	0	0	0	
53	A	0	0	0	1	0	2	There is discrepancy between regular quizzes or tests and the universal final term exams. So validity and reliability of the tests are questionable.
	B	12	5	5	14	6	11	
	C	4	0	7	1	2	0	
54	A	1	0	0	0	0	0	Fortunately the difficulty level between the two is consistent and hopefully they are related.
	B	11	4	11	12	6	12	
	C	4	1	1	4	2	1	
55	A	3	0	1	0	1	0	One teacher would talk with them when they fail an exam while the other says nothing to one third of those who have failed.
	B	8	4	9	15	6	12	
	C	5	1	2	1	1	1	

56	A	9	3	3	11	2	8	The students notice difference between their own language and the foreign language. As a result, following the failure experience, nearly one third of them loses confidence and spends less time on the subject.
	B	2	1	2	1	0	1	
	C	5	1	7	4	6	4	

Self-assessment and Recent Final-term Exam Scores for Class A

Q No.	Knowledge & Skills	Level	Self-assessment			Recent Final-term Exam Scores			Indication	
			Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=5)	Han(n=12)	Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=5)	Han(n=12)		
56	S	E	4	0	4	2	0	2	Most are confident in learning English pronunciation, at a medium or easy level.	
		M	10	5	6	9	5	7		
		D	2	0	2	5	0	3		
	V	E	3	1	2	6	1	2		Most are confident in learning English vocabulary, medium or easy.
		M	11	2	9	7	2	8		
		D	2	2	1	3	2	2		
G	E	4	1	1	4	2	2	Most are confident in learning English grammar in self-assessment while in the final term exam there is a great number who feel difficult to learn the grammar.		
	M	6	3	7	9	2	6			
	D	6	1	4	3	1	4			
L	E	2	2	2	2	2	3		The outcome of listening skill learning is also contrasting: there are more students in one class who feel hard to learn the skill.	
	M	4	3	9	8	3	8			
	D	10	0	1	6	0	1			
R	E	0	1	2	2	1	1	Their reading skill is at the intermediate level or the most demanding level.		
	M	8	4	5	8	4	8			
	D	8	0	5	6	0	3			

S	E	0	1	1	0	1	1	Their speaking skill is the most demanding, which may be attributed to the teacher's little attention to the skills by grammar-translation approach.
	M	2	1	3	3	1	3	
	D	14	3	8	13	3	8	
W	E	0	1	0	1	1	2	Their writing skill is at the intermediate level or the most demanding level.
	M	6	2	6	7	2	4	
	D	10	2	6	8	2	6	
T	E	2	1	3	4	1	3	Their translation skill is just at the intermediate level but still few find it easy.
	M	11	4	6	8	4	6	
	D	3	0	3	4	0	3	

Self-assessment and Recent Final-term Test Scores for Class B

Q No.	Knowledge & Skills	Level	Self-assessment			Recent Final-term Test Scores			Indication
			Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=8)	Han (n=13)	Lisu (n=16)	Yi (n=8)	Han (n=13)	
S	E	3	1	3	1	1	2	Most feel their English pronunciation is at the intermediate level, with some finding it easy.	
	M	9	6	8	11	6	10		
	D	3	1	2	3	1	2		
V	E	5	2	3	5	4	6	Most feel their English vocabulary is at the intermediate level, with some finding it easy.	
	M	11	5	8	9	2	4		
	D	0	1	2	2	2	3		
G	E	2	1	1	2	1	0	Most are confident in learning English grammar in self-assessment while this is consistent in the final term exam.	
	M	11	6	8	11	7	8		
	D	3	1	4	3	0	5		
L	E	2	1	1	2	1	2	The outcome of listening skill learning is also consistent with more achievers for the final.	
	M	9	5	9	12	4	8		

	D	5	2	3	2	3	3
	E	4	1	1	3	1	2
R	M	8	6	7	10	6	8
	D	4	1	5	3	1	3
	E	1	1	2	1	1	1
S	M	7	2	4	8	3	7
	D	8	5	7	7	4	5
	E	3	0	1	2	1	1
W	M	8	7	7	6	5	7
	D	5	1	5	8	2	5
	E	2	0	1	2	2	1
T	M	12	7	8	12	4	8
	D	2	1	4	2	2	4

The reading skill is at the intermediate level in self-assessment but the most demanding in the final.

The speaking skill is the very demanding or just at the intermediate level, which may be attributed to the teacher's inadequate attention to the skills by main grammar-translation approach.

The writing skill is at the intermediate level or the most demanding level.

The translation skill is just at the intermediate level but still find it easy.

4.3 Experimental teaching for teacher development

Based on the findings from other instruments above to investigate the Lisu students' EFL learning difficulties, and in line with the national curriculum for secondary schools and local actual context, a variety of EFL teaching and learning specific theories were used for the one-month experimental teaching and were found to be effective and motivational in teaching the rural minority EFL learners. As a result, the experiment adjusted the traditional teaching method of translation-grammar, involved all the students in classroom pairwork and group discussion, integrated self- and peer-assessment and teacher assessment on their performances of all the four skills, and even tried to use directly the learners' native language Lisu as the main instructional medium for ease of understanding, minimization of L2 interference in L3 learning, and motivation of the learners. Such goals were achieved through awareness of the ethnicity and multicultural classroom while teaching the target language and culture to the minority EFL learners.

It was presented as an opportunity for teacher development for local teachers of English in how to develop the minority students' communicative competence as required by the state's language educational policy. They were welcome to observe any of my classes whenever they were available and every day after class, a brief discussion was held, at which I explained to them what I had taught, how I gave the lesson and why. They witnessed the lively classroom atmosphere, smooth flow of the tasks, initiative cooperation between the teacher and the students, and the teacher's role shifts where necessary. Part of the text contents was adapted and supplemented by adding some topics familiar to the students. The combined and complementary instructional medium was also found effective and feasible, with possibly

more simple and fully intelligible English instructions and interpretations to increase input of the target language under learning.

The school leaders and some parents also sat in the rear of the classroom. They believed that such approaches would interest the students and help them make much progress in English study. As they notice the Lisu students borrow too many Chinese words and expressions in their speech and many of them could not count as much and fast as I could in Lisu, use of Lisu-Putonghua instructional medium, in their view, could retain the ethnic minority language and the culture.

4.4 Implications of the findings

The findings of this case study have a number of pedagogical, institutional and socio-cultural implications, as follows.

4.4.1 Pedagogical implication

For the rural minority EFL learners in the classroom setting, the major prerequisites for successful language learners, as proposed in Spolsky (1989), are rich previous language learning experience, language learning aptitude, positive affective elements, and a magnitude of exposure to the target language, also apply. Their L2 learning experience from the primary school bilingual education, ability to learn subsequent languages as bilinguals or trilinguals in the community languages, and positive affective elements such as interest, motivation, investment of efforts and even faith in Christianity, can be utilized. It is also possible to enlarge their exposure to the foreign language through limited L1, L1+L2, or L2 instructional media, use of modern teaching facilities and devices, and development of interactively communicative activities in the foreign language in and after class.

In EFL classroom teaching, in order to bridge cross-language differences and distance between the ethnic minorities Lisu and Yi, the majority and national language Chinese and English languages, the teacher may predict the students' possible difficulties in preparing lessons by a contrastive analysis approach, for instance, focus on the differences and lack of cross-language correspondence in sounds, words and grammatical rules of the languages concerned. However, the difference and distance should not be emphasized in instruction, to avoid negative L1 or L2 transfer and to maximize input of the target language.

Given the curriculum to develop the students' communicative competence, the textbooks, the students' needs and expectation, the current test-driven assessment model and the teaching method of grammar-translation should be changed accordingly to avoid a negative backwash, to help the rural minority students get over EFL learning difficulties and subsequently to improve the teaching and learning efficiency. This should be taken into account in the teacher development programs.

4.4.2 Institutional, social and cultural implications

For the issue of EFL teaching and learning in rural minority areas of China, sufficient support is essential from local educational administration, community school, the teacher, and the parents. For the administration, locally appropriate policy specification, direction and monitoring as well as reasonable and applicable assessments should be practiced for improvement of local EFL teaching, rather than simply staffing enough EFL teachers to the community schools. At the community school level, the school is not just an institution to take orders from the supervisory governmental department, to require the teachers for test-driven performances and to provide teaching facilities and devices but rather, a teaching and learning environment where the teachers' instruction is regularly checked by the national curriculum, their

professional qualities upgraded through varied teacher development programs, and the facilities are fully utilized for better teaching effectiveness. The teachers' support should include their own qualifications in EFL proficiency, full understanding of the national curriculum and familiarization with the textbooks, proper instructional methods fit for the textbook, role shifts in task-based classroom activities toward communicative competence, and awareness of the multiethnic and intercultural classroom setting. The parents' support is not merely confined to coverage of school fees and living costs but also encouragement of their children to make progress at school and maintain regular contacts with the teachers.

The teachers are not necessarily able to learn the minority language of the students and their parents all speak fluently the local Han dialect, but it is possible and advisable to learn about the ethnic culture's aspects which are different from that of the Han and of the West. In teaching, such ethnic and cultural awareness may facilitate classroom activities and motivate the students through relevance to their way of life and thinking. To put it more specifically, the teaching materials should be correspondingly adapted and some culture specific activities in English should be developed in and after class. In addition, the students are mostly believers of Christianity, which is totally ignored by the school and the teachers. The system of 10-workday plus 4-weekend-day should be no longer practiced out of respect for the Christians who may feel distracted in the classroom on Sundays.