



世界少数民族语文研究院东亚部

语言发展合作伙伴

世界少数民族语文研究院
东亚部

**Invitation to Yunnan's "Zero Barrier Bilingual Education"
First International Conference
Dates: 25-28 October 2011
Venue: Jinghong City, Xishuangbana Prefecture, Yunnan, China**

Honorable Mr/Ms/Mdm _____

The first "Zero-Barrier Bilingual Education International Conference" has been scheduled to convene on 25-28 October 2011 in Jinghong City, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan, China. The hosts for the conference comprise of the Yunnan Provincial Ministry of Education, Yunnan Ethnic Affairs Commission and SIL East Asia. The conference organizers are the Yunnan Provincial Education Association Minority Education Committee, the Yunnan Minority Languages Commission, and SIL East Asia - External Relations Department.

Over the two-day conference, papers will be presented and discussion groups organized to discuss current world trends in bilingual education and pedagogy, results of practical experiments, development of approaches to bilingual instruction and other related academic issues, in order to better serve minority groups.

Context

Even though bilingual and multilingual education has been promoted worldwide, and is being implemented in widespread areas of the world, it still remains in the exploration and experimental stage for China. How does one promote and develop a successful model of bilingual education so as to strengthen and improve the quality of bilingual education; coordinate with the local government's education policy and formalize bilingual education into a system? This is the goal of all who are involved in education, bilingual education experts, and relevant government departments of all nations with multilingual environments.

The characteristics of Zero-Barrier Multilingual Education are as follows:

1. Teaching the linguistic minority students in their mother tongue in order to overcome the language bottleneck when they enter the national language education system.
2. Applying modern teaching approaches to instruct kindergarten and primary school students to improve learning.

Background

To be gainfully employed in any country, one must be able to speak the language of the land. Due to their inadequacy in the Chinese language, many ethno-linguistic minorities find it hard to compete for economic opportunities and advancement in China. Chinese educational officials recognize that multilingual education (MLE) is the most effective way to educate children in those communities where Chinese is not the mother tongue of the people.

School textbooks are written for children who have oral proficiency in Chinese. Unfortunately, children in the minority communities do not acquire the required proficiency before they go to primary school as they usually do not speak Chinese at home. As a result, they have difficulty learning from these Chinese textbooks especially during the first grade.

There is a common assumption held by both the teachers and the families, that if the children spend more time learning Chinese, they can and will learn it. This assumption is valid for Han Chinese children but not valid for minority children. Minority children have no foundation in the Chinese language which they can build on. As a result of the language barrier, minority children find school boring and difficult. This explains why they do not do well in examinations. As a result of their poor examination scores, many minority children are classified as non-performing students, and some of them will drop out over time.

Conference Purpose:

When the mother-tongue is not used in educating the children, learning becomes very difficult. Only when the students understand and apply what they have learned in the arts and sciences into their daily lives will they excel in education. Language is not just a mean of communication; it is also a vehicle for economic growth and societal development. Language plays an important part in creating a harmonious society. “Mother-tongue first” education is internationally recognized as a necessity for children in ethno-linguistic minority communities.

The conference provides a forum to enhance understanding, inspire meaningful interaction, and increase discussion about the issues of “mother-tongue first” education in China.

The purpose of this conference is to become a platform of discussion to find ways to fulfill the following goals:

1. Strengthen the understanding of the necessity of educating children, who live in multilingual environments, in their mother-tongue.
2. Provide input to the government’s education policy makers: to improve the level and quality of fundamental education; to promote creative thinking and scientific understanding and, through dialogue with international education experts, to share ideas and experience.

3. Strategize efficient measures to improve education in a developing nation, by implementing plans and policies that fit the local context; remove educational language barriers to improve education for minority children; enhance mandatory education quality levels for all children, and improve the level of education of populations in undeveloped areas.

Conference Program Elements:

Plenary Sessions:

The conference features four plenary speakers who will speak on the theme of “mother-tongue first” education. There will be opportunities for questions and answers from the conference participants.

Hands on sessions:

The attendees will have opportunity to observe first hand a Zero Barrier MLE session in the rural village setting.

Panel Discussion session:

The conference also features a panel discussion on MLE in China. This panel discussion will feature papers and presentations selected in advance from among all conference participants. The papers will highlight relevant local, national or comparative research and practices related to the conference theme.

Target Audience:

- National and provincial government officials responsible for developing policies related to Zero Barrier MLE.
- National and provincial education departments responsible for implementing policies on bilingual education.
- Non-governmental organizations, academicians, and intergovernmental and multilateral agencies involved in research, advocacy or program implementation of bilingual education.

If you are a researcher in bilingual education, have extensive teaching experience or have completed practical experimentations in bilingual education, we would like for you to submit papers to be read, for purposes of dialogue and mutual learning during this conference.

Paper Submission

The attendance size of this conference is 250-300 people. Papers of merit will be selected for publication. In principle, each participant is to submit a paper on bilingual education. The length of the paper should be around 5000 words or so, and the abstract around 800 words.

The abstract can be written in English, limited to one A4 paper with adequate margins; it should indicate the author's name, department, e-mail and mailing address, description of self and work, and a recent photograph. Please send by the **August 30, 2011**, the abstract in Word document format, to **elizabeth_lee@sil.org**.

世界少数民族语文研究院 • 东亚部云南代表处 • 中国云南省昆明市 • 青年路延长线 53 号滨江大厦 B 栋 18 楼 • 650051

电话: +86(871)4184985 • 传真: +86(871)4190157 • 电邮: dongyabu_xunwen@sil.org • 网址: www.eastasiagroup.net

SIL East Asia • 53, Qing Nian Lu Yan Chang Xian • 18th Floor, Block B, Bin Jiang Da Sha • Kunming, China • 650051

Tel: +86(871)4184985 • Fax: +86(871)4190157 • Email: dongyabu_xunwen@sil.org • Website: www.eastasiagroup.net

Conference Fees

Registration fees of US\$200 will cover the following items only: transportation cost during conference which includes pick-up from and drop-off to the local airport, the conference kit, access to plenary, panel sessions, hands-on observation sessions, morning and afternoon refreshments, and meals for the three days of the conference.

Please transfer the registration fee by **August 15, 2011** to the following account:

SIL East Asia (世界少数民族语文研究院东亚部)

Bank of China, Yunnan Branch, 515 Beijing Road, Kunming, Yunnan, China

Swift Code: BKCHCNBJ640

USD Account: 135 600 420 334

After you have made the transfer, please contact the conference organizer as soon as possible, to verify the information.

Booking of Food and Lodgings

Please fill in your details in the table below, and fax or email to the conference organizers. Please indicate any special dietary requirements, so that arrangements can be made in advance.

Name	Organization	Sex	Nationality	Profession	Contact Details	Passport No.

Conference Organizers Contact Information

SIL East Asia

1. Elizabeth Lee (mobile no. +86-15368895019; elizabeth_lee@sil.org)
2. Diana Soh (mobile no. +86-13658854021; diana_soh@sil.org)

Office Phone: +86-871-4184985, Fax: +86-871-4190157

世界少数民族语文研究院 • 东亚部云南代表处 • 中国云南省昆明市 • 青年路延长线 53 号滨江大厦 B 栋 18 楼 • 650051

电话: +86(871)4184985 • 传真: +86(871)4190157 • 电邮: dongyabu_xunwen@sil.org • 网址: www.eastasiagroup.net

SIL East Asia • 53, Qing Nian Lu Yan Chang Xian • 18th Floor, Block B, Bin Jiang Da Sha • Kunming, China • 650051

Tel: +86(871)4184985 • Fax: +86(871)4190157 • Email: dongyabu_xunwen@sil.org • Website: www.eastasiagroup.net