

# The Depiction of Bilingual Education of Tibetan students in Chinese News Reports and Blogs

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## *Abstract*

*This dissertation aims to investigate how the Tibetan education system is depicted in Chinese blogs and online official news media in the year of 2014, specifically the bilingual education system of Tibetan students. It will also investigate and compare the discourses that online newspapers and blogs construct on bilingual education in the Tibetan case. To answer these questions, the thesis uses a method of discourse analysis to examine how Tibetans and the Tibetan education system are depicted in Chinese official online newspapers and blogs.*

## **Introduction**

In November 2015, The New York Times posted a short documentary video and news report about a Tibetan entrepreneur, Tashi Wangchuk, that advocates a better preservation of Tibetan language and culture and a true bilingual education system. This video has led to many commotions in China. According to Amnesty International, he has been detained by Chinese authorities in April 2016, because he was allegedly ‘inciting separatism’. Xinhua News, the Chinese government’s official news agency, reported that China is preserving the Tibetan language and at the same time encouraging bilingual education. Since 2008, the Chinese government and regional Tibetan government have invested more than one billion yuan to improve digital dictionaries of the Tibetan language (Xinhua News, 2014). This contradiction in news reports has brought many questions about the actual situation of the Tibetan bilingual education phenomenon. However, this thesis will not investigate how bilingual education for Tibetan children works and to what extent the Tibetan language and culture are being preserved in China, but it will rather focus on the depiction of the Tibetan bilingual system in online news reports and blogs. Blogs are the biggest online communication platform in China and millions of citizens use blogs to share information. Since blogs are increasingly used by a larger Chinese population (Siyang, 2011), they are appropriate for the analysis of the depiction of bilingual education for minorities. In addition, newspapers in China use many blogs to maintain readership. The reason why blogs are used by newspapers is because many readers find blogs more reliable. Blogs do have an agenda—setting role in that the interaction between bloggers affects political communication within the community (Ibid., 22).

The Chinese government requires Tibet to have an education system that promotes basic education, and also takes Chinese people into a political discourse correspondent with the programme of the state that aims for a harmonious society. *Neidiban*, classes located in developed inland cities attended by Tibetan and Xinjiang students away from their own communities, have the aim to bring young Tibetan students closer to China’s national mainstream. *Neidiban* were established in 1985

among Chinese municipalities and provinces. Tibetan schools across Chinese provinces started to recruit Tibetan children in 1986. Although the Chinese government encourages bilingual education in Tibetan and ethnic areas, the Tibetan bilingual education still presents a problem. There seems to be a dilemma between reality and ideal: a balance between Tibetan language and Mandarin seems hard to achieve as there are obstacles for bilingual education. For example finding qualified bilingual teachers, and there are different views on what Tibetan students need. Feng's book (2007: ch.4) reveals that there are different desires among Tibetans concerning instruction in Chinese or their own minority language. Ma (2007, p.22) also discovers these different desires among ethnic Tibetans concerning the language that they want to put focus on at schools. In 1988, he conducted a research on this case and found that Tibetan parents were unhappy that the government forced Tibetan students to attend classes that were given in Tibetan language. In bilingual education there are two tendencies: preferring instruction in Chinese or minorities' language. An analysis of the state of ethnic education located in Sichuan found that Tibetan cadres and the public do have different desires concerning instruction in Chinese or their own minority language. Those who want to focus on minority language instruction have the idea that students with no understanding of Chinese language score disappointing results when they are forced to learn a Chinese language.

Tibetan student protests have always been against the proposals for the Chinese language as the instruction language for the main subjects. In October 2010 ethnic Tibetan students in Qinghai protested against the language policy. The most recent student protest happened in November 2014 in Dzoegé. According to Radio Free Asia ([rfa.org](http://rfa.org)), the Tibetan student protest that occurred in Dzoegé was led by students of the Tibetan Language Middle school. Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamshala ([tibet.net](http://tibet.net)) asserts that three days before this protest started, another protest occurred where students from several Tibetan schools in Dzoegé opposed a call from a Chinese education official for changing the language of instruction from Tibetan to Chinese. This protest took place during a workshop on 29 October 2014 that was organised by the regional Chinese education institution to increase the intervention of Chinese authorities in the Tibetan education system. The workshop was attended by approximately 130 students from Tibetan schools in Sungchu, Ngaba, Barkham, Chechen, Dzoegé, Khyungchu, and Dzamthang in Ngaba county (which is incorporated into Sichuan Province). The head of Ngaba Education, Zhang Tianke, encouraged the Tibetan students to focus on the Chinese Mandarin language with the argument that it will give them broader access to universities. The students who were attending the workshop protested against his statement and called his proposal a discrimination of the Tibetan language. This protest in Dzoegé in 2014 functions for this thesis a catalyst for discursive

developments on Tibet. The sources that this thesis highlights are sources that are posted before and after this Tibetan protest in 2014.

This thesis will investigate online news reports and blogs that discuss several aspects of the bilingual education for Tibetan students. My research questions will consequently be: how is the bilingual education for Tibetans depicted in Chinese online newspapers and blogs? What discourse do Chinese online news reports and blogs construct on bilingual education in the Tibetan case? What role do official statements play in this discourse? First, I will present background information about the development of the education system in Tibet, the depiction of Tibetans in Chinese newspapers in historical context, and the representation of minorities in schoolbooks. The following chapter outlines the internet and blogs in China and some theories about blogs and the government's control versus resistance in the Chinese internet world. The penultimate chapter outlines the methodology and some information about discourse analysis. The last chapter forms the conclusion with the results and findings. I will also highlight some implications of this research and some possible options for a further research.

## **Chapter 1: Education in Tibet and the representation of Tibetans**

This section reviews scholarly writings regarding Tibetan education, the depiction of minorities in news reports in historical context, and the portrayals of Tibetans in Chinese school textbooks. Many studies have discussed the representations of Tibet and other minorities in China. This section will first outline the problems of bilingual education in minority schools. To analyse how bilingual education in the Tibetan case is depicted in Chinese blogs and online newspapers, it is important to read other scholar's academic research about how Tibetans are depicted in general in several types of media, such as Chinese official newspapers and Chinese school texts and books. Therefore, this section will also include the depiction of Tibetans in official newspapers, such as People's Daily and Xinhua news, where Tibet's integration with China is discussed.

### **1.1 Tibet and education**

Before the Communist Party came to power, the Tibetan education system was only providing education through monasteries. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regarded the Tibetan monasteries as obstacles to modernisation, and as the bastions of 'feudal power'. As a result of this, monasteries had to be transformed to secular educational establishments. It is relevant to the CCP that all of the PRC's minority nationalities identify with China, so as to guarantee prosperity and stability. According to Bass (1998), this has always been the most important political reason for

promoting minority basic education. Other scholars point out that China's education system has the aim to reproduce social order (Kelly, 1998) and to integrate Chinese minorities into Han-Chinese society (Postiglione, 1999).

Shang argues that the development of education in Tibet showed that Tibet cannot regulate itself without help from the CCP (Shang, 1997). Kapstein has a more positive view on the Tibetan education system that was based on the monastery system before the Party came to power. Kapstein asserts that it would be incorrect to assume that there was no scholarly education in Tibet when the education was based on Tibetan Buddhist monasteries (Kapstein, 2006). Tibetan monasteries offered advanced studies for those who had the motivation to enjoy such an education. Monk scholars travelled around the Tibetan region to enter famous colleges, such as Gelugpa Gomang College of Draping Monastery and Nyingmapa Shrisimha College. Monastic education in Tibet emphasized the practice of debate and the study of logic and epistemology of Indian tradition that are based on Indian Buddhist schools. The scholastic practice was important since it defined key concepts and logical thought that were then refined through practice of debate.

Another recurring aspect in the literature surrounding Tibetan education is the language policy and its problems. High illiteracy rates and low education quality in Tibet have resulted in low enrolment and graduation rates (Bass, 1998, p 80). Illiteracy rates have fallen in the 90s, but if we take semi-illiteracy into account we can see an increase of the illiteracy rate. According to Bass, the illiteracy and semi illiteracy rate in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) was 53% in 1990 (Ibid., p 82). In 1995 the percentage increased to 60%. Lapsed illiteracy is also mentioned, which is common in areas where children drop out of school to help their parents- with work, or in areas where the Tibetans are a minority and go to Chinese schools, for example in Sichuan and Qinghai. The significant problem is that once these children go back to their communities after school, they do not use Chinese, so the children are unable to properly use the language, while it is the only language in which they learn how to write and read.

What is remarkable about the language policy for Tibetan students is that it has always been inconsistent in allowing or prohibiting Tibetan language at schools. This inconsistency occurs not only in Tibetan language, but also in other minority languages at schools. Zhou describes that during the pluralistic stage (1949-1957) the Chinese minority language policy encouraged the use of the minority language at schools. During the Chinese monopolistic stage in 1958-1977 Chinese language was encouraged and became the main language at schools; minority languages were dismissed when the Cultural Revolution started. In 1997, the bilingual policy was restored in

education (Zhou, 2000). Hereafter, the classes at elementary schools were taught in Tibetan and to some degree in Chinese. According to Kapstein, it is not compulsory to learn Chinese, as classes are offered in Tibetan as well as Chinese (Kapstein, 2006). Despite this, Chinese is highly recommended since it gives access to higher education and career chances.

## **1.2 Historical context: Chinese view on Tibet in the media**

The Tibetan education system cannot be understood without examining the invasion and integration of Tibet in the 1950s by the newly established CCP, because from that point on the monastery—based education system in Tibet has changed drastically. Many articles argue that China's desire to integrate Tibet into China comes from resistance to Western imperialism in East Asia. In the case of Tibet, the British invaded the region in the 1900s (Johnson, 2000). For several decades China had to face foreign intervention and humiliations. Therefore, it was decided by the CCP to liberate Tibet from imperialist influences. Tibet has belonged to China since the Yuan dynasty that was ruled by the Mongolians (Blondeau& Buffetrille, 2008).

According to Young (2013, p 92), the Chinese media used tactics in their portfolio, accusing foreign powers of causing unrest, and using keywords such as 'liberation' of the Tibetan people. Young asserts that this idea of 'liberating Tibet' is still used up until today, and that it is a view that is commonly accepted among Chinese people. An example he raises is how Xinhua News reported that Chinese troops received 'a warm welcome' by local Tibetans.

The frequent appearance of the word 'liberate' in Chinese media, in this case Xinhua reports, is one aspect of Chinese news reports about Tibet. Other important aspects of the Chinese news reports concerning Tibet in the late 1950s are the Dalai Lama's flight and the uprising of Tibetan people in 1959 against Chinese authorities. The uprising started at the beginning of March and a week after this uprising, the Dalai Lama escaped from the Tibetan region. Throughout that week, there were no reports about Tibetan uprising and deaths in People's Daily (Young, 2013). This understatement of the whole situation in Chinese media is quite telling, because this kind of news would qualify as a story for front pages in foreign media. The absence of news reports about the ethnic riots reflects the sensitivity in Chinese media when reporting on ethnic related tensions. Nowadays, the internet plays an important role when tensions in China occur. In the case of riots in Urumqi in 2009 for example, the internet was banned for ten months by the Xinjiang regional government, because the riot was organised on the internet (Zheng, 2011). When the ban was lifted in May 2010, all the

well-known Uyghur websites had been shut down. The ban had the aim to take control of the situation in order to avoid commotions.

Beside the statements like ‘liberating Tibet’, the image of ‘Old Tibet’ - was constructed in China and became synonymous for savage, cannibalistic, dark-, and cruel behaviour (Baranovitch, 2010). This demonic label was perpetuated so heavily that in the 1980s the Tibet Museum of Revolution located in Lhasa exhibited bones, skulls, and burned human organs to show the cruel Tibetan culture before the CCP ‘liberated’ Tibet (Ibid., p 174). Interestingly, this negative image of Tibet changed in the 1990s when Tibet came to be represented as a paradise and a spiritual area. However, the negative image of Tibet still persists in contemporary Chinese society. According to Baranovitch, Chinese people would mention that the condition of Tibet was terrible (可怕) before the ‘liberation’, and that Tibetans should be grateful for what the ‘Chinese’ did to ‘liberate’ them instead of pursuing independence and making trouble (Ibid., p. 175).

Three weeks after the 1959 Tibet Uprising and two weeks after the Dalai Lama’s flight, the People’s Daily reported how China had calmed the Tibetan uprising, and accused a small group of ‘radical’ Tibetans that they had allegedly betrayed the motherland by supporting imperialism. The Dalai Lama was labeled in media reports as a ‘traitor’ and ‘splittist’. A brief statement mentioning that he was in India was written at the bottom of the front page. However, this approach of blaming the ‘radicals’ or ‘separatist movement’ seems not to be seen in Hoodie’s findings in People’s Daily reports concerning minorities. Hoodie (2006) conducted research on People’s Daily reports about minorities from 1949 until 1989. The state media responds to resistances of minorities differently than how Young (2013) suggests. Acts of rebellion and protest increased the level of propaganda focused on minorities. The increased resistance places the state propaganda in a positive light and delegitimizes the resistance protests (Hoodie, p 14). Hoodie identifies how the Chinese government used the media control to convince ethnic minorities of the benefits of living under the Chinese authorities through propaganda. He shows that there is a relationship between periods of heightened ethnic tensions and— the level of government’s use of propaganda.

### **1.3 Representation of minorities in school textbooks and campus newspapers**

The depiction of minorities in China is contradictory. It is hard not to notice that Chinese minorities are presented by the Han majority as colourful and joyful ethnic groups that are happy to be part of the motherland. However, they are also depicted as primitive people that are associated with poverty, superstition, and illiteracy (Hoodie, 2006). Characterising these minorities can create a



sense of superiority for the majority. There are already many articles about the construction of dichotomous images, 'Us' vs. 'Other', and 'Object' and 'Subject' distinction in the context of minorities and majority relations (Gladney 1994; Zhao&Postiglione 2010). The previous works on this theme have documented the inclination of official media to emphasise femininity when depicting minorities. The representation of minorities in China often reflects the objectification of minorities by the majority discourse that assign values to gender and political hierarchies (Gladney, 1994). Gladney shows that, in the state-sponsored publication of *Chinese Nationalities* in 1989, only three nationalities out of the fifty six official Chinese nationalities are represented by men, the other fifty-three nationalities are represented by women with colourful ethnic costume surrounded by nature (Gladney, p. 97). From this perspective, the minorities equate with the 'weaker' gender, and this characterization serves to present the minorities as subordinate.

Textbooks in Chinese elementary school often reflect the stereotypical view of the Chinese ethnic minorities. Besides highlighting characteristics of ethnic minorities, textbooks position them as pursuing the same ideologies as the Han majority, i.e. national unity and patriotism (Chu, 2015). Furthermore, textbooks seem to base the relation between the Han majority and the minorities on paternalistic discourse. The 'Han helping the ethnic groups' model is found in textbooks concerning the history of Chinese ethnic groups whom have received help in the form of improving the civilisation of minorities from the dominant ethnic group. Chu mentions an example of a Tibetan story in textbooks for grade-4. The story describes the marriage between the King of the Tibetan Empire, Songtsan Gampo, and the princess of the Tang Dynasty named Wencheng. This princess brought food, spices, and knowledge of farming techniques to Tibet. The ending of the story states that the contact between Tibet and the motherland has improved ever since. The story is popular in China and it appears also in the fifth grade Textbook (Chu, p. 481). The message behind this story is that it was Princess Wencheng, a representation of the Han, who brought Tibet civilisation. Under this ideology of a unified multiethnic China, the relationship of 'helped versus helper' is constructed from a Han's point of view: the Han's motivations and protagonist actions are presented in the story, but the experiences of ethnic minorities - what they feel about receiving help - seem to be ignored.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical framework: Internet and blogs in China**

The number of internet users is increasing worldwide. In the case of China, the year 1994 marked its first encounter with the internet (Cernet, 2010). The number of internet users had reached 253 million in 2008 (Yang, 2009), and at end of June 2015 the total number of internet users had

increased to 667 million (China Internet Watch). The huge number of Chinese internet users is therefore becoming a field of research, since it influences the authoritarian political atmosphere. Current Chinese internet policies and their relation with online society have been a theme for discussion for many scholars. The situation of the internet in China is still fluid and controversial. The terms that Yang Guobin uses to debate the Chinese internet are framed as resistance versus control and democracy versus autocracy. Other scholars like Peter Marolt and Herold (2011) disagree with the way the internet phenomenon in China has been framed as control versus resistance. Chinese people do not have the will to actively oppose the government, but instead find ways to cope with the control of the authorities. The struggles to keep the balance between online freedom and control of the state over the Chinese internet will be explained in this section.

## **2.1 Multi-interactionism: Government's control versus resistance?**

Yang (2009) predominantly focuses on the contentious character of the Chinese internet. According to him there are two dominant images of the Chinese internet: control and entertainment. These images reinforce the false idea that Chinese people only use internet for entertainment purposes because of the governmental internet control. Although the state strictly controls the Chinese media, people engage in informal networking online as well as offline. This results in an increase of Chinese internet culture and in chances for users to engage in political activities, organise protests, and influence the political atmosphere. Online activism in China is therefore an important topic, since it has transformed society and politics, while the internet in China is controlled by the government. It is worth noting that Yang believes that online activism will result in a revolution which can create an open and democratic society. This view might seem one-sided and too optimistic. It is still debatable whether the term 'democracy' can be applied to China, and whether there is a will among Chinese people to transform China into a democratic country. What is striking in Guobin Yang's book is his explanation of multi-interactionism as it demonstrates the paradoxical nature of Chinese internet culture in which Chinese activists use the internet as a platform for resistance to push back against the Chinese government's internet control (Yang, p. 63).

Yang (2009) asserts that in order to analyse online activism, a multi-interactionism approach is needed. Multi-interactionism is defined by Yang as multidimensional interactions that both enable and constrain online activism (*ibid.*,7). There are multiple parties involved and their influences go in different directions. The internet is a place where complex interactions occur between different actors such as authorities, journalists, and internet users like bloggers. Yang's analytical framework includes online activism in interaction with state power, culture, market, civil society, and

transnationalism. The constraining part of multidimensional interactions is associated with ‘soft control’ and resistance. As control becomes more sophisticated, so does resistance. To maintain both control and prosperity, the government has been forming technologies of control into what Foucault might have viewed as forms of bio-power (Foucault, 1977-1978). The importance of bio-power is to harness people in the service of authorities’ agenda (ibid., 222). Soft control is an element in this regime of bio-power that pertains to indirect guidance and self-discipline. This idea of soft control also embodies a promotion of ethical use of internet, as well as inducing individuals to take part in the government’s agenda.

## **2.2 Hybrid spaces**

However, relationship between government officials and internet users is much more complex than the control versus resistance dichotomy. Peter Marolt (2011) seems to reject the thought in terms of dichotomies within Chinese internet culture, such as state versus people and control versus resistance. He shows that the Chinese internet phenomenon is complex in that Chinese netizens do not act to resist the authorities, but do try to avoid government’s influence on their daily lives (Marolt, p.5).

It seems that democracy is not the main aim of the Chinese internet users. People would rather live their online lives by using internet that is controlled by the government than oppose the authorities. Herold (2011) uses the term ‘hybrid spaces’ which contains offline and online settings that are free from government’s intervention— not as settings of protest, but settings for amusement that let people ignore or forget the government’s power over offline spaces (Herold, 22). One argument lies in the fact that the majority of internet users in China are young people who are not going online to make political statements, but to look for entertainment purposes on the internet. However, from this perspective it might seem that there is limited online activism in China which contradicts with Yang’s belief. It is true that there are to some extent internet users that do engage in political activism, but what Herold points out is that there are hybrid spaces of offline and online China. There are several new perspectives on Chinese internet usage that scholars need to put focus on. One example is a strategy of self-regulation by online communities that are interested in political debates. These communities are aware that they need to survive the government censorship in order to avoid financial destruction.

## **2.3 Blogs and microblogs**

In 2009, China's microblog Sina Weibo emerged as a platform for people who want to share their opinion, experiences, and debates. Statistics show that 44% of the Chinese citizens have access to the internet, and 56% of this number have microblogs (Svensson, 2014). This huge number of microblogging users created some concerns for the Chinese government in response to which it strengthened control through administrative regulations, targeting internet companies. From the start microblogs were subject to censorship that blocked the most sensitive topics. Svensson's research (2014) is focused on who has a voice in Sina Weibo and what it means to have a voice in the era of social media in contemporary China. Besides microblogging, there is also an increase in the use of blogging. Microblogs are different from blogs. People on microblogs exchange small content for example text messages and pictures. A blog exists to share articles and information about a certain theme. This section illustrates the development of blogs in general and highlight scholar's view on blogs.

### **2.3.1 Theory of Blogs**

One of the most famous theorists about blogging is Jodi Dean. Her view on blogs is that they are a form of communicative capitalism, that depend on individual enjoyment in order to reproduce more blogs. This is connected to Debord's theory about the spectacle in today's society produced by Hollywood to deny the grim sides of economic and social life (Dean, p. 74). This communicative capitalism results in 'circuits of drive' in which bloggers are captured in repetitive actions, such as being addicted to look at other blogs and voice their own opinions.

Like Jodi Dean, Lovink (2007) also has a negative view of blogs and their development. In *Blogging and Nihilist Impulse*, he discusses several negative aspects of blogging. A blog is 'vague media', nihilist, brings forth decay, and bloggers do not have the time and skills to do proper research (Lovink, p. 8). His basic theory is that blogs are 'decadent artifacts that remotely dismantle the mighty and seductive power of the broadcast media'(Lovink, p. 17). He regards this phenomenon as 'nihilism' and connects this with cynicism. Internet cynicism occurs through blogs in which sharing your thoughts and feelings is becoming a common activity. By nihilism he means that blogs only touch the surface and do not go deeper into the topic. What is foundational to blogs is that they 'point to an article without giving a proper opinion about it apart from being worth mentioning' (Lovink, 30). Lovink states that superficiality is foundational to blogging and that blogs have meaningless content. This can be seen as a generalisation of the content of blogs. His book seems to have no view on blogs from a different, positive perspective which makes his statements less reliable. He is skeptical about blogs because of their subjectivity. There is no

guarantee of truth in a blog, it is an amateur project, sanctioned by high authorities (Lovink, 13). Despite the fact that he regards blogs as subjective and unreliable, it seems that readers trust blogs to a certain extent. Rettberg (2013) cites a survey of Blogads in 2004 which shows that readers perceive blogs as more reliable than mainstream media. Another example is the changing role of blogs during the Iraq War from 2003 to 2007. In that period, military and war blogs rated higher in credibility than media blogs (Johnson & Kaye, 2010). Unlike Lovink's statement about the unskilled bloggers, the bloggers here are knowledgeable about war and politics in Iraq.

Like mainstream media, bloggers do have tactics and ways to gain credibility. However their techniques are not the same as those used by the mainstream media. Blogs rely on personal authenticity, while mainstream traditional media relies on institutional credibility (Rettberg, 98) which depends on people's perception of newspapers, the reputation of media, and whether people trust or distrust a piece written in the newspaper. Blogs, however, build credibility individually. Many bloggers use pseudonyms, in case they become controversial and people want to find out their real identity. According to Rettberg, it is not important whether the stories of blogs are true or not, the focus of blogs should lie on individual stories. Their function is not to confirm what happened in an area. They function as emotional reports on things we know are happening. However, in the case of China, political blogs do have the function to discover events that are not reported in official newspapers. They not only report on something that we already know is happening, but cover issues that are neglected by the official newspapers. An example is a blogger named Zhou Shugang (周曙光), known by his pen name Zola, who became popular for his writings about the nail house incident. This incident concerned a family that refused to relocate without receiving a compensation from real estate developers. During the Tibetan riots in 2008, Zhou Shuguang posted information that was not reported by the state media, which started public debate. Public debates on microblogs are not only restricted by state control, but also by many other actors and different kinds of power relations. While the Chinese authorities control and use microblogs to form public opinion, internet companies are forced to promote their own products and allow certain uses for commercial aims (Svensson, 173). Influential users take advantage of this platform to discuss social issues. This strategy of, in this case Sina Weibo, to encourage certain users and opinion leaders has increased the popularity of the microblog and created a form of pressure that forces companies to censor and control the outspoken users.

### **2.3.2 Newspapers, journalism, and blogs**

Zhou Shugang's blog phenomenon shows us a deep connection between newspapers and blogs. Blogs have influenced journalism and journalists in recent years and sparked a debate whether blogs replace journalism entirely. There is an increasing number of journalists that are blogging in China (Lin & Li, 2010). Chinese newspapers even use blogs to maintain or increase readership (Ibid., p 17). This shows that blogging in China is accompanied by a notion of reliability and the Chinese blogosphere is therefore of relative importance for research. Besides the fact that Chinese people find blogs reliable, blogs are the biggest online communication platforms in contemporary China (Clothey; Koku; Erkin; Emat, 2015).

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This section will include a description of what discourse analysis entails. The next part is an explanation of my sample selection, limitations of the samples, and the method of my research analysis.

### **3.1 Discourse Analysis**

This thesis utilises discourse analysis as its research method. Discourse analysis focuses on how writings, speeches, and images are framed by analysing the way they are articulated. Within discourse analysis it is crucial to analyse how 'truths' that are embedded within the society, are developed and how ideas are constructed. According to James Paul Gee (2005), discourse is language in use with socio-political meaning (Gee, p.1). There are several approaches to discourse, like Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) or Chilton's political discourse approach (Chilton, 2004). They tend to have the same aim of uncovering subtle manipulation of language, and they provide the readers with tools to become more aware of subtle and hidden meanings within a discourse. Within the field of discourse analysis, Fairclough developed some approaches for analysing discourse. He defines discourse as a form of social practice (1989, p 42). According to Schneider, discourse does not only pertain to discussion or conversation, but to all forms of communication (Schneider, 2013). Through interaction we create a certain 'truth' that is imbedded in society.

### **3.2 Sample, Time Limitation, and research explanation**

This thesis will examine what discourse Chinese online news reports and blog construct on bilingual education in the Tibetan case and what role official statements play herein. Also, I will compare the discourses that online newspapers and blogs construct on the Tibetan bilingual

education system. First of all, this thesis will analyse official statements of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Secondly, this thesis will observe the discourse in general in all sources.

For online newspapers, I have chosen the sources of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China or MOE (Zhonghua Renmin Gonghe Jiaoyubu 中华人民共和国教育部), Xinhua (Xinhua 新华), and Southern Weekend (南方周末). The reason why I choose the MOE is because it is an institution that regulates many aspects of the education system in China and it is an agency of the State Council of China. The MOE plays an important role in the education system, since it standardises the curriculum and textbooks. MOE certifies teachers and monitors the whole education system.

Xinhua News is a state news media of the PRC and is the most influential news media in China. Xin Xin is a researcher that has worked for Xinhua News agency in the past for seven years. She obtained her doctoral degree on Xinhua News Agency in 2006 ([chinamediacentre.org](http://chinamediacentre.org)). According to her, Xinhua has undergone a transition from a political bi-directional dependency with People's Daily in the pre-market age and other national newspapers to a news-client relationship in the 1980s with other media during the marketisation age (Xin, 2012, p 3). Due to Xinhua's business orientation, it received reduced amount of financial help from the government in the 1980s and 1990s. Since the early 2000s, Xinhua has turned back to the government for more financial help.

Besides the state-owned news agencies, I will also examine Southern Weekend, an outspoken, investigative, liberal newspaper in China that is based in Guangzhou. In 2013 the newspaper received global attention because of the strike against censorship. This thesis will examine its news report which is structured in a form of an interview between the journalist and Alai, a famous Chinese Tibetan writer in China. His book 'Red Poppies' has received the Mao Dun Prize, one of China's most prestigious literary awards (Baranovich, 2010).

For blogs I will select sources based on the popularity of bloggers on Tibetan matters. Since the theme is Tibetan education (Xizang jiaoyu 西藏教育), specifically bilingual education (shuangyu jiaoyu 双语教育), the term Tibetan bilingual education (Xizang shuangyu jiaoyu 西藏双语教育) will be used to find Tibetan education related subjects in blogs and official online newspapers.

One prominent blogger called Tsering Woesser discusses several things concerning Tibet and Tibetans. She is a well-known Han-Chinese and Tibetan writer, poet, essayist, and activist. Her own blog 'Invisible Tibet' (Kan bu jian de Xizang 看不见的西藏) is an influential blog that exhibits a critical view towards the Chinese authorities. She has been placed under house arrest by the Chinese officials for the second time in 2013 and her websites have been closed down, but she succeeds to write on Tibetan matters from inside China. She is therefore a controversial figure in contemporary China. In 2010, she wrote a blog about the future of Tibetan bilingual education, and referenced the Inner Mongolian bilingual education case that was merged with the Han school. According to Woesser, Inner Mongolian schools will disappear as a consequence of mixing them with Han schools (Woesser, 2010). This paper will analyse her blogs about her experience at Chengdu high schools as a Han and Tibetan student. In this blog she mentions aspects that deal with bilingual education for Tibetan students in Chengdu, for example the deterioration of her Tibetan language ability, culture shock, and segregation of Tibetan students from Han-Chinese students.

Another blogger is a sociologist called Li Yi. He seems to be famous in the Chinese blog world and has written many publications. His themes mostly pertain to Mao Zedong and reunification with Taiwan. He is the author of two books and several journal articles concerning Chinese culture and its society. He was born in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, and studied there at Northwest University (西北大学). This paper will analyse his blog concerning graduated Tibetans and Uyghurs bilingual students that have gone to mainland cities for job prospects.

### **3.2.1 Small amount of sources**

I will focus on online official media and blogs that were posted in the year of 2014. The reason for this time frame is due to the protests of Tibetans in different areas about different topics. One of the phenomena is the student protest in Dzoerge, Ngaba county on 1st of November 2014.

The issue of bilingual education in the Tibetan case, specifically in the year of 2014, is quite specific. There is a small amount of blogs and online official media on the issue of Tibetan education or bilingual education phenomenon in the Tibetan case. I have performed systematic searches at China Daily (Zhongguo Ribao 中国日报), Xinhua (Xinhua 新华), and Southern Weekend (Nanfang Zhoumo 南方周末) by looking for sources that were either posted in 2014 or in



the beginning of 2015 and contained the keyword 西藏双语教育 (Tibet bilingual education). For the year 2014, Southern Weekend only provides a news report about different aspects of the situation in Tibet, including bilingual education. It is based on an interview by a Southern Weekend journalist with Alai, a Chinese Tibetan writer. As for Xinhua News in 2014, I have only found two news reports about the problems on communication between the Han community and Tibetan minorities and how to improve bilingual education to prevent miscommunication.

A prominent blogger that discusses Tibet is hard to find; prominent bloggers who are involved in Xinjiang cases are contrarily quite easy to find, such as Wang Dahao, who criticises Ma Rong's essay about ethnic policies. There are few sources on this issue in the year of 2014 and the beginning of 2015. It is therefore only possible to analyse a small amount of blogs and online news reports.

### **3.2.2 Research: Discourse analysis**

I will be analysing how arguments in the sources have been structured. I will identify the function of each paragraph, e.g. introduction, argument, example, explanation, and conclusion.

When analysing statements, I will look at the six points for identifying linguistic mechanisms (Schneider, 2013):

- 1 Word groups: determining what kind of language it is used by looking at the nouns, verbs, and adjectives in the text.
- 2 Grammar features: I will have a closer look at the 'we' and 'they' discourse and whether the reader can identify the protagonist and antagonist in the sources. Adjectives and adverbs that describe a certain group of people are important to analyse what judgements the sources have on a group of people. Judgements can also be found by analysing the use of passive sentences in the sources. Using passive sources might have an ideological function in a biased text and context (Van Dijk, 2006). For example, a cruel deed is accomplished by active agents that are responsible for what they have done, but they are not described in passive sentences by the author. This is one of the many ways to emphasise or mitigate the 'we' and 'they', 'protagonist' and 'antagonist' discourse.
- 3 Rhetorical and literary figures: focusing on the rhetoric of the texts including metaphors, allegories, hyperboles, rhetorical questions, and parallelism. These style choices help in the construction of relations and categories which could shape an argument.
- 4 Direct and indirect speeches: direct quotes are enclosed in quotation marks and are the exact words of the speaker, while indirect quotes are the quotes in a sentence that they paraphrase

what the speakers say. Both quotes do have several functions, but are mostly used to make the reader identify with the speaker.

- 5 Modalities: words such as ‘should’ and ‘could’ can have a tool to call to action and has a sense of urgency.
- 6 Evidentialities: text that present facts might try to support its argument using terms such as ‘of course’, ‘definitely’, ‘obviously’, ‘as everybody knows’. The use of these words can express a notion of verity that supports its ideology and arguments. These words are features that convert some statements to ‘common sense’ while being controversial.

Despite the fact that I will only analyse the visible discourse, censorship in the digital sphere does matter here. Blogs with opinions that might lead to resentments and social instability could have been censored and banned by the Chinese authorities. Therefore, this thesis might lack the whole picture of blogging and people’s opinion on the Tibetan education system. Since I am interested in the public discourse, censored content does not have any importance in my research. This thesis will only examine the public discourse on Tibetan bilingual education system on the Chinese internet. I will observe how the visible sources of official discourse and blogs portray the Tibetan bilingual education system and what discourse these sources construct on bilingual education.

## **Chapter 4: Research and Analysis**

This section will include a discourse analysis of official online newspapers, blogs, and one article of the Ministry of Education depicting the Tibetan bilingual education in the year of 2014. The sources used have all been published in 2014 and the beginning of 2015 since I intend to observe how bilingual education has been portrayed before and after the Tibetan student protest on 1 November 2014 in Dzoerge (CH: 若尔盖), Ngaba county, Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. This thesis will observe and identify the discursive practice, central themes, and specific issues of the sources that will be compared. This section will cover the use of Xi Jinping’s quotes, the use of chengyu (Chinese idiomatic expression), ‘we’ and ‘they’ discourse, and passive sentences.

### **4.1 The use of Xi Jinping’s quotes**

The Chinese Ministry of Education is an agency of the State Council of The People’s Republic of China that is responsible for all aspects of education in mainland China, such as drawing up planning, strategies, and plans for education reform, and supervision on their implementation.

MOE's online report on the 2014-2020 research plan on minorities' education was published right after the Tibetan student protest that occurred in Dzoegé. It uses governmental language and it is a well-structured text with all the same font and size and gives the reader a clear overview of all aspects of the plan by using titles and subtitles. It is not a narrative report, but is structured in different points with different themes. It has five chapters, each having its own sub chapters with Chinese and Roman numerals.

The main topic of this text is the planning of national research programs of education from 2014 to 2020, specifically national ethnic education and research. The first part emphasises a socially harmonious society in China, national unity, and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Education is the basis of a great cause for a thousand years. Minor ethnic groups and the educational development in ethnic areas are closely related with the unity of the motherland, the solidarity of ethnic groups, the safety of country, the achievement of the 'two one-hundred year' target and the great revival of Chinese nation.<sup>1</sup>

We see here that the educational development for ethnic minorities is of importance for the reunification of the motherland, national unity, national security, and the realisation of the 'two 100 years' of striving for the goal of a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. One of the first sentences in this text emphasises the importance of one nation. It also makes the statement of 'two 100 years' which seems to refer to the party and the People's Republic of China lasting a century each. The Communist Party will have a 100th anniversary in 2021, a year before the president of the PRC, Xi Jinping, finishes his second five year term. The Communist Party came to power and established the PRC in 1949 following the Chinese civil war that ended with the communists defeating the Kuomintang, or Nationalists. The Nationalists fled to Taiwan which the Communist Party up until now still claims as its own.

This concept of 'two 100 years' has been used by the state media in the year of 2013, but Xi Jinping explicitly mentioned it in his speech on the 1st of March during the 80th anniversary of Central Party School that trains prospective government officials ([reuters.com](http://reuters.com)). 'two 100 years' concept is applied to Xi's version of the 'Chinese Dream' that aims for the rejuvenate of the Chinese people.

Li Yi's blog includes quotes that are cited as direct speech of Xi Jinping in his introduction. The introduction includes Xi Jinping's speech on The Second Xinjiang Work Forum which points out

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<sup>1</sup> Original text: 千秋大业，教育为本。少数民族和民族地区教育事业发展事关祖国统一、民族团结、国家安全，事关实现“两个一百年”奋斗目标和中华民族伟大复兴。

two main points: social stability and long term peace and stability (BBC Chinese). We have seen in the MOE's text that the use of the chengyu 長治久安 (long term peace and stability) is mostly used in the section where the case of Tibet and Xinjiang is explained. The use of references of Xi Jinping's speeches is a remarkable feature in these two sources.

Xinhua News online news report also uses Xi Jinping's speech in Lankao county. One paragraph describes the situation of the bilingual system in a village called Chang Gang in Gonggar County, Shannan Prefecture. In that paragraph we see that the writer references elements of Xi Jinping's speech in Lankao county. He was there for the commemoration of a revolutionary icon called Jiao Yulu. In the Jiao Yulu Memorial Hall, Xi presented a moralistic message about Jiao Yulu's deeds that the party members should learn from.

Another distinct feature of the way Tibetans put academic knowledge into practice is by combining education with practicality, highlighting the importance of practicality in order to reach better focus as well as effectiveness. Besides an in depth comprehension for core value of the speeches given by General Secretary Xi Jinping in Lankao, the members from the party also highly promote 'spirit of Jiao Yulu', 'spirit of old Tibet', 'spirit of Kong Fansen'.<sup>2</sup>

Xi uses the term 'spirit of Jiao Yulu' and connects this to the 'spirit of the old Tibet' and 'Kong Fansen's spirit'. Kong Fansen was an important figure that made contributions to the development and reconstruction of Tibet in various ways. This text uses Xi Jinping's speech about heroic figures that made a big contribution to the Tibetan society which functions to inspire the readers. It shows what the party member of the CCP in the past have done for this region, and gives the feeling that there are good officials that people should not forget.

## **4.2 The use of the two chengyu long term peace and stability (changzhi jiu'an 長治久安) and contact exchange (jiaowangjiaoliu 交往交流)**

### **4.2.1 long term peace and stability (changzhi jiu'an 長治久安)**

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<sup>2</sup> Original text: 学习教育结合实际，突出重点，提高针对性和实效性，这是西藏开展教育实践活动的又一特点。除了组织深入学习习近平总书记系列重要讲话精神特别是在兰考县调研时的重要讲话精神外，还引导党员干部大力弘扬焦裕禄精神，继承弘扬“[老西藏精神](#)”、[孔繁森精神](#)。

In the MOE's text the first word of 'Tibet'(Xizang 西藏) emerges in the middle of the text. What is striking here is that the text combines the Tibetan educational situation with Xinjiang situation, and not with other minority area. The reason might be the struggle that mainland China has to face with grievances among the Tibetan and Xinjiang minorities which receive get more attention from news media worldwide. It is clear that this text emphasises that the educational plan research serves to enhance national unity, which is the core theme of this whole plan. In the paragraph where the word 'Tibet' (Xizang 西藏) is mentioned for the first time, it mentions that educational research which focuses on Tibet, Xinjiang, and various Tibetan areas in four provinces in terms of education, serves for social stability and policies for long-term peace. The chengyu 'long-term peace and stability' (changzhi jiu'an 长治久安) seems to be used because of the historical relation between China and Tibet that has not been all that peaceful since the 1950s and so there is the need to create a healthy relationship between the two for the sake of stability in one country.

We need to put effort on studying the educational policy serving for the long-term peace and social stability in areas of Tibet, Xinjiang and Tibetan regions in four provinces and take the education of ethnic solidarity, the bilingual education and occupational education as sally ports.<sup>3</sup>

This chengyu is mentioned four times and three of them are mentioned in the section about Tibet, which is remarkable. It says that research focused on Tibetan areas needs to serve for policies on social stability and long-term peace. After this sentence, this text mentions that the research will use national unity education, bilingual education and vocational education as a 'breakthrough' (突破口). The concept of breakthrough, which can be defined as a substantial finding to improve a situation, is quite important here. Using the concept of breakthrough might be a way to catch readers' attention to the topic. Since scientific research can be hard to comprehend for the majority of the people, it is conceived differently by the public and researchers. This part of the text promotes the idea of breakthrough as it is one of the ways to not explain in scientific terms how exactly the research will be done and to keep the research about bilingual education itself in the public eye.

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<sup>3</sup> Original text: 着力研究西藏、新疆和四省藏区教育服务社会稳定和长治久安的政策，以民族团结教育、双语教育和职业教育为突破口，推进促进就业、结构调整、教师队伍和资源建设等方面的特殊扶持政策研究。加强历史研究和前瞻性研究，重视国际比较研究，为出台重大民族教育政策提供科学依据。

The chengyu of 长治久安 emerges again in the section 西藏、新疆和四省藏区教育研究 (*Educational Research on Tibet, Xinjiang, and Tibetan areas in four provinces*), which implies that religious ideas have the tendency to danger the education system. It tries to explain that religious practices, in this case Islam and Tibetan Buddhism, can endanger the new education system. It gives the impression that the goal of long-term peace and stability will be under pressure if these religious practices are continued to be practised by the Xinjiang and Tibetan minorities. The second paragraph of this section mentions some problems and difficulties in this area of research:

The major problems in this research field include: the studying of specific and practical problems in improving the education of ethnic solidarity under the new circumstances, the social and religious influence on education, the resistance and precaution against the permeation of religious extremism within groups of teenagers and the problem of religious common sense entering schools.<sup>4</sup>

The projection of religious extremism to these two minorities has negative connotations. It frames the Uyghur and Tibetan population having religious extremists among them. The adjectives ‘religious’ and ‘extremist’ adhering to ‘ideas’ (sixiang 思想) expresses their negative view on religious practices of the Uyghurs and Tibetans.

This part presents a seemingly factual statement, namely that the research on education in these areas serves for national unity (minzu tuanjie 民族团结). The reader would find this information credible, because of the strong governmental language and the constant use of words such as ‘scientific research’ and ‘national unity’, etc. It is impossible for the readers to know who the researchers are, what their backgrounds are, and how they are doing their research, so the idea of the MOE is stressed by using formal and governmental language that accentuates the goal of their plans and persuades the reader to believe in their educational research plan.

#### 4.2.2 Contact exchange (jiaowangjiaoliu 交往交流)

The MOE’s text mentions this chengyu two times and it describes the goal of the research on minorities’ education as building a platform for exchanging contacts between all students of different minority groups.

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<sup>4</sup> Original text: 这一领域研究的主要问题包括：新形势下提高民族团结教育的针对性和实效性问题研究，社会环境和宗教对教育的影响研究，抵御和防范宗教极端思想向青少年渗透研究，宗教常识进学校问题研究

- To build a communication platform for students from different ethnic groups and consistently strengthen the cohesion, the centripetal force and sense of pride of the Chinese nation.<sup>5</sup>
- The studying and adjusting of the major structure and the course design in universities of Tibet and Tibetan regions in four provinces, the situation of majors and employment of students in Tibet and Tibetan regions in four provinces, the research of Tibetan classes in mainland China, communication activities of students between Xinjiang and corresponding supportive provinces and cities.<sup>6</sup>

The involvement of Tibetan and Uyghur minorities in Chinese society is of great importance in enhancing the cohesion of national unity and both texts accentuate the mixing of minorities with other minorities and the majority. In this way the minorities are depicted in both as ‘us’ as well as ‘them’. By mixing ‘them’ into ‘our’ society there is a sense that these minorities should belong to the majority.

The main message of Li Yi’s blog is also to have the minorities to blend into the society of Chinese mainland cities, but only under the condition of having them to graduate first from a bilingual school. The blog emphasises that graduated bilingual minority students from Xinjiang and Tibet need to find a job in their local areas first. If they are unsuccessful, places for them in the coastal areas are available, so that they can blend into society.

Local companies should give seventy percent of their positions to minority bilingual graduates. If there are not enough positions, then ‘we’ will resolutely make arrangements to let them come to coastal areas, and blend them into the society.<sup>7</sup>

Among different ethnic groups in the Chinese nation, we must communicate, live, and study together. We need to understand each other and enhance our friendship. Among different ethnic groups in Chinese nation, we will never isolate each other from aspects of social structure, community environment, living, studying, working, affectional bonding and so on. We need to accelerate the communication and mingling.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Original text: 搭建各民族学生交往交流交融的平台，不断增强中华民族的凝聚力、向心力和自豪感。

<sup>6</sup> Original text: 西藏和四省藏区高校与民族院校学科专业结构调整和课程设置问题研究，西藏和四省藏区高校学生所学专业 and 就业情况调查研究，内地西藏班办学情况调查研究；对口支援省市和新疆之间开展各民族学生交往交流交融活动问题研究

<sup>7</sup> Original text: 少数民族双语高中毕业生，要全部安排就业，本地企业至少 70% 的位置用来雇用少数民族双语高中生毕业生，如果位置不够，就坚决安排到沿海打工，[交往交流交融](#)

<sup>8</sup> Original text: 中华民族各兄弟民族之间，一定要交往交流交融，一定要相互嵌入，共同生产，共同生活，共同学习，加深了解，增进感情。中华民族各兄弟民族之间，绝不能，再不能，在社会结构、社区环境、生产、生活、学习、工作、感情等各方面，隔离开来，要加速[交往交流交融](#)。

Li Yi uses words such as ‘resolutely’ to enforce a sense of urgency that the arrangement for minorities to come into the cities is necessary. The last sentence about blending them into society is a sign that the writer puts importance on the mixing phenomenon between the minorities and the Han-Chinese. Bilingual education for minorities is a process of assimilation and this is why there is a focus on learning Mandarin Chinese. Li Yi uses the word ‘need to/ must to’ (yidingyao 一定要) or ‘must not’ (juebuneng 绝不能) to make his argument clear: minorities must learn Mandarin Chinese; we must not isolate each other. In his blog there is no statement that the Han-Chinese should learn minorities’ culture or language in order to create enhanced mutual understanding. From this point of view, he has a one-sided view of the bilingual education phenomenon among minorities, which puts importance on the culture and language of the Han majority.

#### **4.3 Dominant language and positive discrimination**

Li Yi’s blog, the MOE, and Xinhua News have to a certain degree put forth statements that favour people from disadvantaged groups, Uyghurs and Tibetans, but they place restrictions on these groups to certain degree. As an example, we have already seen Li Yi’s dominant language of using words such as: must, need, resolutely, must not.

#### **4.4 ‘We’ and ‘They’ discourse**

In both the blogs of Li Yi and Tsering Woenser we see a strong ‘us’ and ‘them’ discourse. The title of Li Yi’s blog is ‘We need to help Tibetan and Uyghur bilingual students to settle down in mainland cities and help them find jobs.’<sup>9</sup> Closer inspection of this sentence reveals that the subject or the word ‘we’ is not mentioned here explicitly, but the subject most likely pertains to the Han-Chinese people who make up the majority of the Chinese population. From this perspective an ‘us’ and ‘them’ construction is devised by making a statement of helping the Tibetan and Uyghur bilingual students settle down. There is a sense that ‘we’ are the majority that is well-off, ‘they’ are less well-off, so we need to help them out.

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<sup>9</sup> Original text: 要安置维藏双语大学生到内地大城市就业落户



The ethnic minorities like Uyghurs and Tibetans do have difficulties learning Mandarin Chinese after receiving a bilingual education in the elementary, middle, and high schools. What are they doing at schools? They should learn because it is useful for finding a job.<sup>10</sup>

Li Yi asserts that after Tibetans and Uyghurs are done with bilingual elementary, middle, and high schools, they still find it hard to learn the Chinese language. After that he uses a rhetorical question “干什么?”, which in Chinese language this rhetorical question has often purveys negative connotation. In this context the rhetorical question expresses what the minorities are doing at schools, and why they have poor Chinese proficiency. Furthermore, he provides a sense of urgency that they should (yiding yao 一定要) learn the language because it is useful for getting a job (yousuo yongcai xing 有所用才行). This sentence has a dominant nature in the fact that ‘they’ should learn ‘our’ language to have a good prospective in their life. It seems that he has a one-sided view of this bilingual education phenomenon. There is no view with tolerance that it is difficult to grow with different languages at the same time, especially when the language at home is different than the language at school. Li Yi is a Han-Chinese person that did not have to cope with this situation. By adding the word ‘should’ his statement purveys a sense of dominance over and urgency towards a group that is assigned a more submissive role in this context.

The strong ‘we’ and ‘they’ sentiment is also found in Tsering’s blog. Tsering refers to the past to explain how she experienced her school life as a half—Tibetan girl in Chengdu and to emphasise the deterioration of her and her classmates’ Tibetan language skills. She also seems to emphasise the segregation of the school; there was a school for minorities and a separate school for the Han Chinese peers. After her description of coming to Chengdu, she explains in the fourth paragraph that everything was totally different from the place where she had been raised in terms of food, looks, and accents. The first example of the difference between Chengdu and the place where Tsering was born is the food. Amongst Chengdu’s local food are stewed eel, frog meat, and rabbit heads. Tsering explains that she knows that she would be cursed by Tibetans if she ate those things, because it is against her cultural and religious beliefs that she was brought up with. But according to Tsering, Chengdu people would tease her if she would not try the local food. For them, if she was too afraid to eat a rabbit’s head, she would be one of those ethnic, stupid barbarians. In this section it seems that she wants to emphasise the different cultural and religious backgrounds between the

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<sup>10</sup> Original text: 维族、藏族等少数民族同胞，在小学、初中、高中接受双语教育之后，好不容易学会了汉语，干什么？一定要学有所用才行。

Tibetan and Chinese students. She assumes that Chinese students would react negatively to Tsering's beliefs. She puts a negative representation of Chengdu people that would call her and her fellow ethnic students barbarians. The second difference between the two ethnic groups is their looks, especially differences in hair style. The curly hair which is caused by humidity in Chengdu seems to differentiate Tsering and her fellow ethnic Tibetan students to the straight-haired Han Chinese. According to Tsering, people regard the natural curls as a trait of minorities.

Average people regard this kind of 'natural curly hair' as the feature of ethnic minorities.<sup>11</sup>

She uses the term 一般人 (average people) that seems to refer to the Han Chinese majority. She does not use the term 汉人 (Chinese Han people), but from the context we can assume that the average people equates the Han people. The aim of her story seems to give the impression that the Han Chinese people are labeling the minorities, while Tsering is doing the same thing, but from the other way around by using the terms 'me and my fellow ethnic students' and 'Chengdu people' or 'average people'. Also, by saying that the average people regard the curly hair as a trait for ethnic minorities, she means that the ethnic minorities are not part of the average people. In other words, the writer is shaping a large gap between these two by emphasising the differences in terms of culture, food, and habits.

#### **4.5 The use of the words mainland (neidi 内地) and China (Zhongguo 中国)**

It is striking that Southern Weekend, Li Yi's blog, and the MOE use the word 'mainland' (neidi 内地) much more often than 'China' (Zhongguo 中国). For example, the MOE uses 'mainland' 27 times, and 'China' 10 times. The preference for using the word 'mainland' might have the function of making the differences between minorities and the Han-majority less visible. By using the word 'China' it might seem that minorities do not belong to China. The word 'mainland' is used by the sources to distinguish the minority populated regions in eastern part of China from the Han-majority populated regions in the western part of China. The word 'China' in relation to the minorities has a different tone. It creates a form of distance between China and the minorities. Minorities that go to the mainland sounds different from a text describing minorities that go to China. In Tsering's blog the word China is used to describe the emergence of Tibetan schools in China. She also uses the

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<sup>11</sup> Original text: 一般人将这种“自来卷”看成是少数民族的特征

word ‘sinicised’ (hanhua 汉化) as an adjective adhering to the eastern town in the Tibetan area called Kangding.

Early autumn 1981, I graduated from junior high school at the sinicised eastern town in Tibetan area called Kangding. Qiayu in Chengdu, Southwest University for Nationalities Preparatory unit (equivalent to high school) started to recruit Tibetan students like me. This official parlance had to be started in 1985 with the purpose of accelerating assimilation. In Beijing, Shanghai, and other Chinese cities, Tibetan classes were created.<sup>12</sup>

In this context, ‘sinicised’ (hanhua 汉化) performs as an adjective with negative connotations as it makes a clear statement that the Han culture assumes a dominating role. Unlike Li Yi’s blog, the MOE or Southern Weekend, she does not use the word ‘mainland’, but instead ‘China’ or ‘Chinese’. For example, Li Yi describes ‘big cities in the mainland’, whereas Tsering uses ‘big cities in China’. These two ways of describing things have completely different connotations, as Tsering’s way of ‘China’ in relation to minorities gives the reader the impression that China and the minorities are different entities, while the word ‘mainland’ tends to give the reader a sense that ‘mainland’ is the centre where minorities go to for education and job reasons, and that it is a place for both ethnic minorities and the Han majority.

#### 4.6 Sentences with deleted agents

Passive sentences occur when the source is trying to criticise the Chinese authorities. In Southern Weekend, the journalist asks for Alai’s opinion about the bilingual education of Tibetan students. He answers that the management of minorities school, middle school, classes, food and drink are all taken care of, but they are locked up in one place. In this passive sentence we do not know who are actually taking care of the minorities and secluding them.

Why don’t you regard them as common people, distribute them to different classes and make them become integrated with Han classmates in order to communicate with and understand each other?<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Original text: 1981年初秋，在藏区东部日益汉化的山城康定（藏语叫达折多）初中毕业的我，恰遇位于成都的西南民族学院预科部（相当于高中部）招收藏族学生。这个预科部应该是始于1985年，出于加快同化的目的，在北京、上海等诸多中国城市创建的西藏班

<sup>13</sup> Original text: 你为什么不把他当普通人看，把他们分散，插到不同的班级上，让他们和汉族同学打成一片，相互沟通理解呢？

The text predominantly uses sentences with unclear subjects. The deleted agent here presumably pertains to the Chinese authorities. The writer might have been conscious of the directness of Alai, and by not referring directly to the Chinese government, the message of this text will seem to have a neutral view. Also, by using passive phrases it will give the impression that the described development just happened and that it is a fact.

Tibetan students have the right to study in Beijing University. The students who reach the score line of 'the first batch of undergraduate' should go to the first batch of undergraduate, those who get scores of 'the third batch of undergraduate' should go to the third batch of undergraduate. You can also take care of them, recruiting them even if they have a grade of 50 out of 100. Do not build specific classes or schools for Tibetan students rashly, because this leads to the inner circle of Tibetan students.<sup>14</sup>

This part does not mention any subject or agency. He uses a metaphor 该上一本上一本，该上三本上三本 that seems to mean that Tibetan students should get the same courses like Han students after which he says that you can also take care of them, and recruit them even if they have a low grade, 50分 (50 out of 100). In Alai's answer the subject is unclear. He uses the word 'you' (ni 你) in 你要照顾他也可以 which means that it is fine if you help minorities. Then, he deleted the agent in an imperative sentence of Alai's answer that says: 'Do not establish a special school for minorities, and do not let them '在这个圈里头内部循环', or 'circulate inside this internal ring' which is a metaphor for getting stuck in a certain environment.

How many scientists are from Tibet? None. How many technically talented people are from Tibet? None. Changing Tibetan society into a modern society relies on talents.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Original text: 藏族学生要上北大。该上一本上一本，该上三本上三本，你要照顾他也可以，照顾50分就进去了。不要动不动专门办班、办专门的学校，让他们在这个圈里头内部循环。

<sup>15</sup> Original text: 西藏出了多少科学家？没有。出了多少好的技术人才？没有，把西藏这个社会变成现代社会，是要靠人才的。现在的结果是，没有。

After that Alai asks a rhetorical question: ‘How many scientists are there in Tibet? How many talented people are there in Tibet? None.’ These rhetoric is used to induce a certain obviousness in the fact that there are no talented people and scientists in Tibet. Again we see a passive and imperative sentence by using the word 把. Construction with 把 always express a passive form in a sentence. Here, the sentence means: ‘letting this society of Tibet to become a modern society needs talented people. The current result is nothing.’ The agent here is not mentioned and thus the use of the passive form has the function to make it unclear who to blame for all of these problems. In this context the source is indirectly accusing the Chinese authorities that did not create any opportunities in Tibet in terms of education.

Tsering uses a passive sentence to describe that the school for minorities that she went to was isolated in a different part of the main school. This blog does not mention who is isolating them and who is in charge of the school, but it is presumably Han Chinese people that are in charge of the school. By not mentioning too many 汉人 (Han people) or 汉族 (Han ethnicity) the text might seem to have a neutral view of the case.

We never got in touch with students from middle schools in Chengdu, so we did not know what peers are learning every day at all. However, it is supposed to be the same, since our text-books are identical after all. It is definitely impossible to have another Tibetan or Yi text book.<sup>16</sup>

Here she explains that because of the isolation, she and her fellow ethnic students did not know what Chengdu students generally learn. From this perspective, she is doing the same ‘us’ and ‘them’ dividing as other sources, but from the perspective of an ethnic Tibetan. The other sources do encourage the idea of mixing between the Han-Chinese and the Tibetans to improve a better understanding between the different nationalities. Here we see the implications of the mixing phenomenon between the different ethnic groups.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

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<sup>16</sup> Original text: 我们从不和成都的中学生接触，根本不知道同龄的他们每天在学什么，但应该是一样的，毕竟我们和他们的课本完全相同，绝不会多出另一本藏文课本或彝文课本。

Bilingual education for Chinese minorities is a theme that has attracted scholars, because language is one of the most important aspects of achieving a harmonious society in a multi-ethnic country such as China. Also, there is already much literature available about the portrayals of Chinese minorities. However, there has been no research done about the depiction of bilingual education of Tibetans in Chinese online newspapers and blogs. In recent years, Tibetan student protests concerning bilingual education and language policy have occurred many times in China. The New York Times documentary about Tashi Wangchuck who advocates for preservation of the Tibetan culture and language has also led to commotions in China. He has been detained for working on this documentary. It can be therefore be seen through Tibetan students protests and the phenomenon of Tashi Wangchuck that bilingual education for Chinese minorities is still a sensitive and controversial theme in today's China.

Internet and blogs have become the largest online platform in China and blogs. Chinese newspapers even use blogs to maintain or increase readership, since many Chinese people find blogs reliable. Bloggers such as Zhou Shuguang have attracted many Chinese readers and the Chinese blogosphere is therefore an interesting medium to do a research project about the depiction of bilingual education of Tibetan students.

The findings of my research can serve as a tool for further research about either the depiction of Tibetan students or bilingual education in Chinese social media, like Weibo. This thesis only focuses on Chinese online news reports, one report from the Ministry of Education, and blogs in the year of 2014. During my research, I found that there is only a minimal amount of blogs and news reports. Other forms of media might differ in depicting the bilingual education for Tibetan students. This study therefore does not give a total picture of bilingual education of Tibetans in Chinese media. A research project with larger scale of samples, time limitation, and other social media sources will be needed to give a better insight.

The research uses a methodology of discourse analysis which focuses on how the sources use the language in their description of bilingual education. This dissertation's aim was to analyse how the bilingual education system, especially bilingual education for Tibetan students, has been depicted in Chinese online news reports and blogs in the year of 2014 and what discourses blogs and online newspapers construct on bilingual education in the Tibetan case. This thesis reveals that there are different discursive strategies that online newspapers and blogs use to shape the discourse on bilingual education of Tibetan students.

Sources with a strong connection to the Chinese government, such as the Ministry of Education, Xinhua news, Li Yi's blog, do use Xi Jin Ping's speech or terms to support their arguments. These sources frequently use the chengyu 'long term peace and stability' (changzhi jiu'an 长治久安) and 'mixing and blending' (jiaowangjiaoliu 交往交流) to make clear that the main reasons to have bilingual education for Tibetans is to reach a mutual understanding between different ethnic groups and there is a need to have a sense of unity among the people to have a harmonious society. These two chengyu appear in sources to give their ideal a multi-ethnic nation, that is by having one language, peacefulness and assimilation will be achieved.

All sources reveal a strong 'us' and 'them' discourse, but to a certain degree the 'us' and 'them' discourses are different. MOE's text, Xinhua, and Li Yi's blog share the same attitude towards the minorities. There is a sense that 'we' need to help 'them' to improve their Chinese and help them to find jobs in the mainland cities. Also the statements seem to favour the minorities and express statement of equality and same rights for all Chinese nationalities, but if we look deeper at the text, there are some aspects that actually put the minorities in a disadvantaged position.. Tsering's blog uses the same 'us' and 'them' discourse by using the word 'Chengdu people' and 'Me and my fellow ethnic classmates' a few times. Also, she accentuates the differences between Chengdu people and Tibetans in terms of food, culture, and looks. There is a sense that the two groups are totally different on different aspects.

Southern Weekend and Tsering blogs have given a different perspective about the situation. Southern Weekend is a more liberal newspaper and Tsering has a critical eye towards the Chinese authorities. Both sources give a form of criticism that is directed at the authorities. What is striking is that they both sentences with unclear agents or subjects to give criticisms in an indirect way towards the Chinese authorities. The sources do not mention a subject or agency, who are presumably the Chinese authorities, that do negative actions towards the minorities. Li Yi's blog and Tsering's blog do use different words to explain Chinese cities that Tibetan students go to find jobs. The word 'mainland' seems to be preferably used by MOE, Southern Weekend, and Li Yi's blog. The word 'China' might have the consequence that it would sound as if Tibetan students that go to Chinese cities, are not Chinese, or do not belong to China.

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