



Title of Project:

Space, Scale, and Language Policy Performativity
in the United Arab Emirates

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Project Summary:

This project focuses on language policy in Ras Al Khaimah, a city in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is an in-depth ethnographic investigation of the lived language policy experiences of individuals working and studying at a private English language school in the city. The project is centered on this institution but also extends beyond it, following participants as they move through the city as language users and policy agents. The primary goals of the project are to investigate how language learners and speakers in the city understand themselves as both language users and language policy agents, and in turn, how this reflects, supports or contradicts national language policy objectives. It is hoped that this investigation will provide language policy makers in the UAE with a better understanding of the complex interactions between language users, linguistic norms and expectations, and institutional language policies in their country. The project also has the theoretical goal of orienting language policy research towards a *sociolinguistics of mobility* (Blommaert, 2010), which entails an understanding of language as sets of mobile and flexible resources rather than static, discrete objects. To do this, the project proposes the need for an expanded theoretical toolkit. This includes a more thorough approach to the concept of scale, drawing on debates from human geography. It also involves a cautious, Foucault-inspired discussion of agency in which language choices are understood to be embedded within multiple, polycentric spaces – both institutional and informal – and the normalized tools, procedures and expectations that populate those spaces.