Motivation for the Research

Decades of language planning and policy initiatives have sought to disrupt the marginalization of students learning English as a second or additional language (henceforth referred to as emergent bilinguals) in U.S. schools. Often framed as an issue of teacher training, a growing body of literature suggests language policies themselves are the sites in which language ideologies are negotiated, reproduced, and operationalized by key policy interpreters. Though recent research suggests teachers play a key role in language policy enactment, much remains unknown about those who authoritatively communicate language policy to teachers within state-mandated teacher training initiatives. Therefore, this dissertation project examined language policy interpretation among teacher educators implementing a state-mandated Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) course in Massachusetts. This course was designed to familiarize general education teachers with methods for teaching emergent bilinguals, and it was delivered throughout the state during the final years of the state’s mandated English-only education policy.

Research Questions

This dissertation sought the perspectives of teacher educators (i.e., SEI course instructors) and was grounded in a theoretical framework foregrounding the role of monolingual language ideologies in policy interpretation. The main research questions were the following:

**Research Question 1 (RQ1).** How has the theoretical framework of monolingual language ideologies been applied to language policies in previous research, particularly in regard to U.S. SEI educational contexts?

**Research Question 2 (RQ2).** How have SEI course instructors interpreted and operationalized the SEI endorsement initiative? What experiences, contextual factors, and/or language ideologies appear to inform these approaches?

**Research Question (RQ3).** Considering how language policy intersects with dynamics of race and racism in U.S. contexts, how do SEI instructors approach the topics of language policy and race
within the SEI endorsement course? What experiences, contextual factors, and/or language ideologies appear to inform these approaches?

Research Methodology

**Context.** In 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice investigated Massachusetts’ approach to teaching emergent bilingual students and concluded the state was “failing to provide adequate teacher preparation” in the state’s chosen SEI education method (DOJ, 2011, p. 1). To redress this issue, the Massachusetts Department of Education developed the RETELL initiative (Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners; DESE, 2017), an ambitious initiative under which all teachers were mandated to undertake state-designed SEI endorsement courses between 2012-2017.

**Data sources.** This study drew on critical policy analysis as a methodology to examine both the Massachusetts SEI endorsement policy itself, as well as its interpretation by SEI course instructors. The first data source for this study consisted of policy documents—the official policy documents related to the SEI endorsement initiative and its development and the standards for the state-approved curriculum for endorsement, which was written between the years of 2012-2016 and which included the pilot and statewide rollout period for the initiative. These documents, publicly available through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (henceforth DESE), provide overviews of (1) SEI-related requirements for educators and administrators, (2) standards covered in the courses themselves, and (3) processes for agencies to become state-approved providers of the SEI endorsement courses.

The second data source consisted of transcripts from semi-structured interviews with SEI course instructors. Participant recruitment was guided through purposive sampling, limited to individuals who had served as instructors for the SEI course. As previous research on SEI endorsements documented the importance of the type of institution, I tracked participants’ institution types (e.g., district, university, private provider) while recruiting interviewees to maintain a broad range of institutional affiliations. I located prospective participants through publicly available state databases of approved course providers, university course listings, school district websites, and recommendations from members of professional ESL associations in Massachusetts. A total of 33 participants who were representing 20 different institutions across four main regions of Massachusetts agreed to participate in the study.

**Data analysis.** My analytical approach was informed by Altheide and Schneider’s (2013) qualitative media analysis. For both policy documents and interviews (referred to collectively as “texts”), I began by applying general identification codes to sort texts by document or demographic characteristics. I then applied deductive codes derived from my research questions and my literature review on monolingualism, English-only, and SEI policies, which were designed to highlight sections of the data relevant to the policy itself (policy codes), language (language codes), particular groups or individuals (person codes), or the course as a whole (course codes). During the coding process, I identified additional emergent codes based on emergent topics and patterns within the data that I had not previously identified as deductive codes (Charmaz, 2014), using code mapping to track the generation and consolidation of these emergent codes (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002).

**Summary of Findings**

The findings of this project were reported in three individual papers, one to address each research question. I report these findings below for each paper.
**Paper 1.** This paper addressed RQ1 by laying out previous research on monolingual language ideologies in relation to a historical analysis of U.S. language policy and SEI educational mandates. The analysis revealed the limitations of the current research in substantively addressing race and racism in U.S. language ideological contexts. Second, this paper demonstrated the affordances of analyzing monolingual language ideologies as *productive*—in producing certain advantages, accommodations, or “sheltering” for certain populations. Applying this framework to the Massachusetts SEI endorsement initiative demonstrated the affordances of this framework in highlighting how teacher education can function to reproduce monolingual language ideologies, even in the absence of (or after the repeal of) specific English-only education policies.

**Paper 2.** Addressing RQ2, this paper highlighted the ways in which the SEI endorsement initiative itself was established to prioritize two key frames—*adequacy of teacher training* and *standardized SEI*—as the operative levers by which to address the needs of emergent bilinguals in the State. When juxtaposed with the perspectives of SEI course instructors, this analysis demonstrated how instructors interpreted the course by (1) prioritizing awareness to augment the state’s strategies emphasis and (2) bringing varying degrees of innovation to their operationalization of the course. Beyond contextual differences, these innovations were also facilitated by a range of personal, ideological, and relational factors. However, even the most ardent innovators kept the overall framing of the initiative intact, thereby demonstrating the role of policy itself in delimiting the boundaries of policy interpretation. Overall, this study pointed to specific ways in which monolingual language ideologies are maintained, reproduced, and disrupted through the policy interpretive process—a process largely mediated by how instructors balanced strategies vs. awareness in their instruction, as well as the course’s ideological underpinnings of access, monolingual empathy, and SEI as a common language across the state.

**Paper 3.** This paper took up a specific analysis of discourses around language policy and race among SEI course instructors to address RQ3 above. Once again highlighting the key role played by course instructors, participants’ discourses around race and language policy illustrated specific pedagogical moves and justifications by which the topics were evaded or addressed. In particular, this study documented how monolingual language ideologies manifested in the tensions between erasing vs. naming, bracketing vs. framing, and deferring vs. disrupting in relation to the topics at hand. This paper drew out larger implications for teacher education on race- and policy-intentionality for topics often considered “too political,” or as existing outside the purview of teachers and teacher educators. When analyzed simultaneously, the overlap in how these topics were addressed or evaded provided further empirical documentation of the language ideological framework developed in Paper 1 around the intersections of race, language policy, and teacher education in U.S. contexts.

**Implications**

Together, the three papers comprising this dissertation hold implications for analyzing the intersection of language policy and language ideology, particularly within teacher education for contexts of linguistic diversity. First, the three papers highlight the affordances of analyzing the role of language ideologies in relation to language policy. Previous research has posited that language ideologies play a key role in the pedagogical and policy interpretive process, but often address and interrogate these ideologies in the abstract. The papers in this dissertation document specific ways in which language ideologies interact with the policy interpretive process. Second, this study adds to the literature on policy interpretation, specifically highlighting the roles played by teacher educators in the language policy interpretation process. Finally, the three papers demonstrated the role of teacher education in
maintaining or disrupting monolingual language ideologies. A through-line across the dissertation papers was the consistency with which language ideologies played a key role in mediating policy and teacher educators’ simultaneous role of influencing and being influenced by these dynamics. As there exists almost no research on teacher educators as language policy interpreters, this dissertation highlights the importance of teacher educators in the policy interpretive process, the affordances of explicitly teaching teachers about their role as policy interpreters, and the generative role that can be played by further studies on these interpretive dynamics.
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