

**Title of Project:**

Appropriating and Legitimizing Chinese-English Dual Language Education: Multi-sited Ethnographic Study of Language Policy, Repertoires, and Socialization

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**TIRF Research Topic Investigated:**

Plurilingualism in Business, Industry, the Professions, and Educational Contexts



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**Final Report**

**Motivation for the Research**

Studies in dual language contexts have examined the discourses and ideologies in classroom pedagogies and highlighted the issue of equity, hegemony, and power imbalance. Yet, it remains relatively unknown how multiple social actors in disparate communities appropriate dual language policy, learning, and teaching locally. Similarly, experiences of students from diverse social, linguistic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds have not been adequately included in the literature. To address this gap, this year-long multi-sited ethnographic study investigated the social dynamics, ideologies, and agency influencing the local appropriation of dual language education. This study revealed the social processes and practices of how multiple social actors (re) interpreted and (re)negotiate dual language education to uphold their social interests at multiple levels, and how students from diverse backgrounds are socialized into dual language learning and bi/multilingualism across temporal and spatial scales.

**Research Questions**

My year-long ethnographic research adopts a linguistic anthropological and discourse analytical framework. Methodologically, it adopts a multi-sited collective case study approach (Stake, 1995) and a comparative lens to answer the following three research questions:

1. What is the local actors' appropriation of language policy at multiple levels in the two schools? And what ideologies or beliefs of local actors in this sociocultural context are evidenced in shaping the appropriation of these language policies?
2. How do teachers, who are influenced by multiple ecological factors, organize learning resources and materials spatially, socially, and linguistically? How does their organization shape the ecology of dual language classroom practices, discourse, and participation?
3. How do students from diverse social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds perceive, navigate, and socialize into their Chinese-English dual language learning across spatial and temporal scales?

## **Research Methodology**

Focusing on lesser-researched Chinese-English dual language contexts and drawing on an ecological framework, this study adopted a comparative lens and included two types of 50/50 dual language programs from two disparate communities: one a K-5 one-way dual language (foreign language immersion) school in a suburb located in the Midwestern U.S., and the other a Prek-8 two-way dual language (bilingual) school in an urban neighborhood in the Northeastern United States. This study adopted an ethnographic and discursive approach, which have been influential in the field of linguistic anthropology.

My epistemological stance, which is social constructivist, needed an ethnographic approach to explore the locally constructed, interpreted, and negotiated norms around language/semiotics, cultures, and learning. From a linguistic anthropological lens, language is viewed as “a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice” (Duranti, 1997, p. 6) where speakers are social actors and speaking involves ideologically mediated interactions where cultural practices, identities, and social memberships intersect. The two research sites and schools in my research had demonstrated sociocultural and historical characteristics that required an extended and emic inquiry in decoding the interaction between culture, society, language, and literacy practices.

## **Implications**

Findings revealed that, in both schools, the language separation policy was enforced at the official school level but translanguaging was appropriated unofficially at the classroom level, although the policy was practiced in different ways and guided by different school missions in response to the discourse of neoliberal multilingualism and English-monolingual assessment. In alignment, pedagogical repertoires were strategically assembled in the classrooms in both schools for particular pedagogical, social, and ideological functions. Findings also revealed that while dual language education supported learners that the program aimed to serve, it was not an automatic solution for supporting all minoritized learners: unequal access to learning and hegemonic spaces were (re)produced and (re)created where some learners struggled to gain legitimacy.

### ***Language separation and dual language pedagogy***

The dual language schools both tended to separate languages as the official norm for the purposes of organizing curriculum and protecting minoritized resources. Language separation does tend to protect the learning space for the minoritized language and for achieving content area standards. Translanguaging should be adopted as a continuum. The “extent” of translanguaging should be chosen based on the assessment tools, students’ language proficiency (whether the instruction is comprehensible to students), the situated pedagogical tools (whether it’s literacy, linguistic forms, or content knowledge), and the content areas.

### ***Strategic assemblages of teaching resources for pedagogical outcomes and for positive classroom socialization***

Teachers’ assemblages of resources were crucial in fulfilling pedagogical functions (e.g., highlighting content knowledge, eliciting particular language forms, (re)directing learners’ attention, and reinforcing metalinguistic awareness). The assemblages could potentially shape the classroom dynamics. Teachers should think about what resources students can draw on, and how they can interact and produce in group work to promote more balanced participation. The assemblage itself was agentic and could not be separated from the social-historical community of the school and the social discourses. Rearranging resources could potentially change the micropolitics and power dynamics that existed in classrooms.

### ***Learner trajectories and repertoires***

Learners drew on multiple resources to participate in dual language learning and respond to the norms indexed in the scales of learning and interaction. Dual language practices do give some minoritized students more opportunities to develop confidence and more scaffolds for content learning; however, the power differences associated with race, language, ethnicity, social class were also indexed, produced, and reproduced among the students' classroom interactions. There were different pathways for be(com)ing bi/multilingual through dual language education. Dual language education is not necessarily easy for learners who speak the minoritized language at home (Mandarin Chinese in this study). First, many learners with Chinese "heritage" speak dialects at home, so they are learning Mandarin as an additional language just like English. Second, many Mandarin-dominant learners were not familiar with the "academic" genre of the language taught at school. It should not be assumed that dual language education will automatically provide such learners with tools to be successful bilingual users as required by the school curriculum.

### ***Local implementation of dual language policy***

The local development of language policies was agentic and was strongly connected to ideologies and beliefs around language use and language development. Students, teachers, parents and administrators were all policymakers. The official policy was interpreted by individuals and key stakeholders, which involved conflicts and negotiations, which should be identified to further understand the underlying motivations and potential biases in implementing the policy. Decisions of policymaking could not be separated from an ecological look at school communities, and mission, and the sociocultural communities (and student groups) that the school served, as well as who had the power in decision-making.

### ***Interests and dynamics among stakeholders***

It must be recognized that there are power dynamics among stakeholders in shaping local language policies. Parents from majoritized groups and higher social classed tended to dominate policy decisions, which further reproduced inequalities in schools, in particular in the school which relied on parents for funding, support, and resources. Policymakers, particularly administrators, should be aware of these dynamics and look for alternative ways to engage stakeholders from diverse backgrounds so that more voices from underrepresented backgrounds could be validated in the process of dual language planning.

Findings from this dissertation are reaching a large audience in the field of bilingual education and have informed the development of pedagogical tools, theoretical understanding, and equitable language policy. This research has won the 2021 Outstanding Dissertation Award (first place) from the Bilingual Education Special Research Interest of the American Association of Educational Research. Publications from this research were included in peer reviewed journals and book chapters including *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *Language and Education*.

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