THE MAKING OF MULTILINGUAL SCHOOLS IN A MONOLINGUAL CITY

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The Researcher

• Assistant Professor of Educational Policy (www.lisamdorner.com)
  • Language policy and planning
  • Educational policy implementation
  • Immigrant family integration and identities

• Community Partner
  • English-as-a-Second-Language programs
  • “Strong” forms of bilingual education (Baker, 2006)
The Research Context

• Midsized Midwestern city
• Population around 300-400,000
• Residents identified on 2010 Census as:
  • Black or African-American
  • White or Caucasian
  • Foreign-born (5-7%)

• State-wide
  • Education for English Learners = English as a Second Language
  • No state certification in bilingual education
The Research Site

• One-way language immersion school
  • At least 50% of instruction in target language
• Three goals:
  • Bilingualism
  • High academic achievement
  • Intercultural competence (Tedick, Christian, & Fortune, 2011)

• Spanish Immersion Elementary School (SIES)
  • 80-100% of instruction in Spanish
  • Serving ~85% monolingual English speakers
  • One of few such schools in the area
  • Charter school
The Research Questions

• Overall, what cultural scripts are employed in planning local multilingual education in monolingual areas?
• What goals and values were voiced by SIES leaders, as they recruited students?
• How did parents respond, and what were their goals?
The Theoretical Framework

1. Organizations/policies are shaped through local interactions.
   - Neo-institutional theory (Colyvas, 2012)
   - Bottom-up studies of language policy and planning (Hornberger, 2003)

1. Local interactions are strongly shaped by “cultural scripts” (meta-narratives or storylines).

1. Individuals employ these cultural scripts as they negotiate their organizations’ objectives/policies (Hamann, 2011), as they make sense of their work (Spillane, 2004).
The Theoretical Framework

The working out of such scripts in local interactions

- Theoretical Framework
  - Socio-cultural-political context
  - Cultural scripts
  - Sense-making
  - Policies
The Theoretical Framework

- Language (bilingualism) as a **problem** (Ruiz, 1984)
  - English-only initiatives in CA, MA, AZ
  - “Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs” → “Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students”
  - See also Dorner & Layton, 2013

- Language (bilingualism) as a **right and resource** (Ruiz, 1984)
  - Parents choose bilingual programs for integrative/instrumental reasons

- Language as a marker of **identity** (Orellana, et al., 1999)
  - Children (and adults) recognize languages reflect particular identities, and allow them to interact in new ways with a variety of people.
The Methods: Data Collection

• Longitudinal ethnography (18 months)

• Participant observation
  • 36 recruitment/enrollment events
  • 18 board meetings
  • 17 parent meetings
  • Artifact collection (SIES promotional brochures/videos)

• Interviews
  • 10 parents (4 African-American/Black, 4 White/Caucasian, 2 Mexican)

• Survey of parents, Year 1 (n=60)
The Methods: Data Analysis

- Constructivist approach to grounded theory (Charmaz, 2010)
  - Open coding, axial coding, memo writing
- Constant comparison among:
  - Goals/values of school leaders
  - Goals/values of parents
  - Goals/values from the literature review
Findings

1. Multilingualism was viewed as a right and future instrumental resource by both parents and leaders.
2. However, parents also valued multilingualism as an immediate cognitive resource for their children, and a marker of identity.
3. In addition, parents valued the choice they had for safe, socializing spaces for their young children.

• In summary:
  • *Cultural scripts beyond those about language shape the bottom-up language planning of new, multilingual schools.*
1. Leaders’ Cultural Scripts

- Language as a right and future resource:
  - Multilingualism
  - Global Access
  - Social Equity
1a. Leaders & Multilingualism

• SIRES’ first television advertisement: Welcome to [our state’s] first International Baccalaureate schools with a total language immersion curriculum. What does that mean? That means a real world-class education for all of our children, where they learn their entire elementary curriculum in at least two languages.

• SIES recruitment presentations: Students will learn all of their course work in a second language from native and near native speakers.
1b. Leaders & Global Access

- **IBO mission:** to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

- **SIES recruitment presentations:** citizens of the world

- **SIES mission:** to position all children for success in local and global economies.
1c. Leaders & Language (Rights) for All

- **SIES school board meetings:** Continual conversations about how to recruit low-income families, who may not otherwise seek out specialized charter schools
  - 50% African-American/Black students
  - 30% White/Caucasian
  - 10% Latino/Hispanic
  - 10% Multiracial/Other
  - 50% Low-income
2. Parents’ Cultural Scripts

- Language as a right and future resource
- Language as a cognitive resource
- Language as an identity marker
- Schools as safe, socializing spaces
2a. Parents & Language as a Right

• One Spanish equated learning in Spanish with the very opportunity to learn: “Me gusta mucho para que ellos van a tener más oportunidad de aprender.” (I like a lot that they [my children] are going to have more opportunity to learn).

• Another Spanish-speaking parent said: “Me interesó mucho porque está en español y en inglés, que es lo que más batallo con mi hijo mayor, que no sabe leer en español.” (I was very interested [in SIES] because it is in Spanish and English, which is what was so challenging for my oldest son, who cannot read in Spanish).
2b. Parents & Language as a Future Resource

- One survey respondent’s expected SIES to provide: “the best education possible to equip my daughter for a global workplace.”

- An African-American mother explained that SIES would: “Give [students] a greater opportunity [...] because if you notice, you look in a paper, a lot of things are veering toward, it’s better to have a second language. So if you’re bilingual, that’s a plus” (Ms. D).
2c. Parents & Language as a Cognitive Resource

• “Language immersion provides both a valuable lifelong skill and critical brain development” (Mr. C).

• Language immersion is important for my “gifted” children (Ms. K).

• I want my children “challenged” by learning new languages (Ms. J).
Parents & Language as an Identity Resource

• “My [L1 English-speaking] husband speaks Spanish, so I’ve had a lot of interaction with immigrant families,” and I want that for my children as well. (Ms. E)

• “We’re very committed in terms of—my husband’s family almost primarily speaks Spanish—and so we’ve been very committed to ensuring that [our daughter] speaks Spanish as well.” (L1 English-speaking White mother, Ms. K)

• “My husband is Hispanic and came from a small border town in south Texas. . . it was very important to us that the children be raised in both of our cultures and in both languages.” (Comment on school poster, L1 English-speaking mother)
2d. Parents & Choices for Safe Schools

In answer to the question: What do you expect from SIES?

- Bilingual/multicultural/global development
- Cognitive development/learning in general
- Socialization/social growth
- Safe/respectful school environment
2d. Parents & Choices for Safe Schools

• Half of the respondents highlighted either expectations for positive social growth/socialization or safe school environments:
  • I am expecting SIES to provide a safe and secure environment.
  • We expect our son will feel safe and he will be protected both physically and emotionally.
  • We hope SIES will provide a structured and respectful environment where she will be encouraged to do her best as a student and an individual.
Conclusions

• Multilingual schooling can be planned in monolingual areas.
  • Multilingual schools like these can be critical in creating welcoming communities for newcomers.

• Multilingual schools (and diverse groups of parents want them to) provide more than multilingualism/global access/future job opportunities.
  • Schools that open doors to diverse, integrated groups of students are important socializing spaces.
  • Schools that value global/international perspectives prepare youth for transnational interactions and identities (not just economies).

• Must consider contextual cultural scripts in policy planning.
Questions, Comments?

- **Dorner, L.** (In press). From global jobs to safe spaces: The diverse discourses that sell multilingual schooling in the U.S. *Current Issues in Language Planning*.

- See more related research at [www.lisamdorner.com](http://www.lisamdorner.com).
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References


