

Towards an alternative framework for the investigation of ‘practiced’ policies in bilingual classrooms

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Traditional approaches to the study of language in education policy (LEP) included quantitative large scale studies that investigated the linguistic and academic impact of certain policies on certain student populations. Later on a movement towards more qualitative approaches to LEP has been noted. However, even studies that have taken a more ethnographic turn, in order to examine the specificity of certain bilingual policies (Fitts 2006; Lee et al 2008; Martin-Jones and Saxena 1995), have primarily been concerned with the processes involved in the micro (classroom) implementation of a macro policy. Therefore the fundamental language policy making has so far been conceptualised as being carried out at the macro level (Baldauf 2006) while classroom language practices have predominantly been explained by reference to outside-the-classroom developed policies.

In this paper, I will discuss the explanatory power of the aforementioned approaches when it comes to the language choices and norms (i.e. ‘practiced’ policies) developed and oriented to by bilingual learners who attend the Reception classroom of an International School based in Athens.

The paper will be based on a corpus of audio-recordings collected (January-April 2008) in the above school.

In line with Spolsky (2004) for whom “the real language policy of a community is more likely to be found in its practices” (Spolsky 2004: 222), these data will be examined using Conversation Analytic methodologies applied to language choice (Auer 1984, 1998; Gafaranga 2000).

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