Language Policing: The co-construction of micro-level language policy in the English as a second language classroom

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Abstract

With Second Language Acquisition as the main area of research and ethnomethodological Conversation Analysis as the main research method (cf. Hellermann 2008: 29), this study investigates the negotiation of an English-only language policy at micro level from an emic (members’) perspective. The term language policing refers to the practices of both teacher and learners in both the public and private discursive space of the English as a second language (ESL) classroom to co-construct, contest and manage this policy locally.

In order to understand the management of members’ orientation to the English-only rule, we draw both on Garfinkel and Sacks’ notion of membership (1970), as well as Lave and Wenger’s concept of a community of practice (1991). These concepts are applied here with close attention to the fine-grained interaction of teacher and pupils to reveal local social actions that contribute to the construction of membership of a classroom community of practice.

The empirical basis of the study comprises over 20 hours of video recordings (to date) of ESL classrooms in an International Swedish school. The analysis has revealed, for example, how the teacher regularly reminds pupils of the English-only rule at transitional stages in the lesson as well as when the rule is violated. Furthermore, if the violation takes place in the public space, it may be subject to sanctions. Although pupils may also remind each other of the rule in their private interactions, here the language rule is managed far less rigidly.

References

