

Language Choice & Language Power

Children's Use of Korean & English in a Two-Way Immersion Program

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Introduction

We have a good mix of Korean children and English children in our [two-way immersion] program but it's extremely difficult to get the kids [both Korean and English] to speak Korean. The Korean kids are learning English so fast and they talk to the English kids in English, and the English kids are speaking English. And, I'll say, "Speak Korean, Speak Korean" and [they will] but that only lasts for that minute until I'm gone, and then they'll go back to English. Even if they would just say a few words to each other in Korean everyday, they would learn more Korean. (Ms. Kim, teacher in a Korean-English two-way immersion program)

Ms. Kim is a kindergarten teacher in a Korean English two-way immersion (hereafter referred to as TWI) program located in a metropolitan area. The TWI program is an instructional approach that aims to provide language minority students and native English speakers with instruction in both English and the minority language (Christian, 2001). According to Garcia (2005), such programs in the United States have three major goals: "to help language minority children learn English and succeed in U.S. schools; to help language majority children learn a foreign language without sacrificing their success in school; and to promote linguistic and ethnic equity among the children" (pp. 47-48).

Despite such program goals, in Ms. Kim's Korean-English TWI classroom where this research was conducted, only one group of the students, the Korean-natives, were learning a new language—English. Both the native Korean speakers and the native English speakers chose to speak in English over Korean, though Korean was used as the language of instruction by the teacher during 70% of instructional

time. Of more serious concern was the fact that the native Korean speakers were becoming less and less willing and, in some cases, able, to use their mother tongue. This pattern of language use continued to intensify as the children moved up into the upper grades. Ms. Kim's words above are telling of the dominance of English among the children in this classroom.

Interest in this topic comes from personal experience of being a resource teacher in the same immersion program some years ago. I had experienced such tensions in my own classrooms where the use of English to the exclusion of Korean quickly became the norm among the children. In many cases, the native Korean children catered to the linguistic needs of their native English peers by making efforts to communicate in English and thus the native English speakers did not need to make efforts to use Korean to communicate.

From a professional standpoint, the phenomenon also raises interest because it makes very little theoretical sense. Peer interaction has been emphasized as a critical, if not essential, component in learning a new language (Fassler, 2003; Gibbons, 2002; Yoon & Kim, 2012) especially in TWI programs (Collier & Thomas, 2004), yet in Ms. Kim's classroom it did not support the children's development of Korean.

In this article, I explore this phenomenon of children's language choice and language use in a TWI program. I do so by drawing on situations in which the children spoke of the principles guiding their choice of languages, and instances in which they voluntarily adopted Korean as the means of communication and made efforts to use Korean. Instances in which the children voluntarily chose to use Korean amongst themselves were few and far in between, but this latter focus is an effort to understand the contextual features—mainly the linguistic and the social—of language choice, and to see under what conditions Korean was utilized

by the children—why it was adopted, and how it was used. This focus is in line with the theoretical argument of this paper that power in language is contextual and its dynamics are defined by the context within which it operates (Foucault, 1978; Genishi, 1999; Sarup, 1993; Tobin, 1995).

The research questions for this project are as follows:

What are the children's understandings of the two languages that guide their choice and use of the languages?

What are the dynamics underlying the children choice of Korean and their subsequent uses of the language?

What are the dimensions of interaction that matter?

And, what can we learn from this study about the nature of language learning that can be applied to other language learning situations?

In closing, I address implications of this research for classroom practice and demonstrate the importance of putting children and their social relationships at the forefront of pedagogical decisions.

The Two-Way Immersion Dilemma

When TWI programs were first introduced in the United States in 1965 from Canada, there was general consensus among researchers in the field of second-language acquisition that immersion education was a radical method of educating second-language learners (Genesee, 1987; Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003; Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Swain & Lapkin, 1982). Genesee (1994) called it one of the most "interesting innovations in second language education during the past three decades" (p. 1).

In the past two decades especially, TWI programs have developed in all parts of the U.S. and many have been successful in educating students from both minority and mainstream linguistic backgrounds

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(Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010; Yoon & Kim, 2012). The Center for Applied Linguistics (2010) reports 367 programs in 28 states across the U.S. This number represents the number of programs that meet the criteria (integration, instruction, population, and duration of program) set by the Center and thus the real number of TWI programs in the U.S. is believed to be larger than represented in this data.

Alongside such developments, however, a group of researchers have expressed concern over the complexity of the social, cultural, political, and economic factors involved in language immersion programs and the extent to which such factors influence the balanced use and learning of both the ethnic language and English (Edelsky & Hudelson, 1978; Potowski, 2004, 2008; Valdes, 1997; Vasquez, 2003).

For instance, Potowski (2004) was interested in exploring just how much Spanish and English are used in a Spanish-English TWI program by quantifying the students' use of each language over a seven-month period. She reports that the students preferred to use English among themselves, whether it was in the classroom, the playground, or the lunch cafeteria. This held true for all grade-levels. She adds that her findings are in line with other researchers, Fortune (2001) and Carrigo (2000), who also found that the presence of proficient Spanish speakers does not guarantee a high level of Spanish use in immersion classrooms.

From a sociocultural and political standpoint, Valdes (1997) urges educators to examine the complexity of TWI education. Valdes explains that the complexity inherent in TWI programs lies in the diversity of the students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds as well as in the fact that supporting language study among majority group members who speak English, and providing minority children with access to the curriculum in a heritage language they can understand often pose a dilemma. She advocates for "difficult issues and complex questions" (p. 420) such as the quality of minority languages used within TWI programs, the issue of the children's, the educators' and the public's attitudes towards bilingual education, and issues of language and power, be a part of the conversation for dual immersion programs. To quote her directly,

If we are truthful, perhaps we will admit that supporters and proponents of dual-language immersion face a dilemma. They want to find ways to support language study among majority group members,

and they want to provide minority children with access to the curriculum in a language they can understand. These two objectives, however, have very different agendas. (p.419)

The linguistic and cultural objectives of TWI programs must serve two groups of students who speak two separate first languages and are, in many cases, of different ethnic groups. They must do so in the two languages that the students come with which often, in the larger society, each serve distinct purposes and therefore are loaded with social, cultural, and political baggage. This baggage, together with the languages, is unloaded in the classroom as they become the medium of instruction and the interplay between the cultures and the languages poses a dilemma.

Edelsky and Hudelson (1978), from their study of TWI programs more than 30 years ago, report that the balanced use of both the minority language and the majority language (the language of the society) in TWI classrooms is by no means automatic or the norm. For one, the relative political positions of the native language and English, namely the markedness phenomenon, is an important factor in how the languages are learned or in some cases, not learned. The markedness phenomenon, as the authors claim, comes from the relative political relationship between the languages outside of the school context.

The language that is used to carry on the everyday life of institutions, the language that everyone is expected to learn and is taken for granted, is the unmarked language. It is the language of power. The other language, or languages, are marked. Markedness is a context-specific phenomenon that can only be determined by comparing the status of languages within a particular social domain.

Edelsky (1991), in a chapter reflecting on her initial study of two-way immersion programs more than a decade later, comments that the non-acquisition of Spanish was something that she found in both of her studies of TWI programs that had substantial in-school contextual differences. She adds that because markedness in language originates from speech communities outside of the classroom, primary efforts for change must be made in those communities where it is rooted in.

Schools, though they cannot change power relations between languages, can and must work to understand and make changes to the program as the practices that have become normative in such pro-

grams may be rooted in an unnoticeable blanket of resistance.

Understanding Power in Language

During the initial stages of this study, I asked a number of people from the school community—parents, teachers, and administrators—what seemed to many the very obvious question, "Why do so many of the children choose to speak in English over Korean?" Many of them replied that it was because English was the language of power:

We need English to survive here, not like Korean, so I think it's more powerful and they end up using more of it.

Kids who speak English know that they don't really have to learn Korean, but the Korean kids know they have to learn English in this country. It has more power, way more power.

These responses are a part of the grand narrative (Lyotard, 1979) representing the relationship between English and many low-status minority languages in the U.S. According to Lyotard (1979), a grand narrative is an overarching theory on why and how things are the way they are. Grand narratives represent a single truth, often based on the cultural values and political agendas of those in power (Arnold, 2000), and thus they impact or reinforce existing power relations and customs within our society. They do not necessarily explain why things are the way they are, but they function as a tool to legitimize certain types of knowledge or phenomenon (Lyotard, 1979).

In this study, I follow in the theoretical tradition of post-structuralists (Foucault, 1978; Sarup, 1993; Tobin, 1995) who, in understanding the world, replace the notion of grand narratives with small narratives based on localized knowledge. Post-structuralism posits that there is no one truth. There are only multiple truths that exist in relation to other localized truths. Thus, entities such as identity and power are also dynamic terms that can only be located in the social practice of a culture (Foucault, 1978; Sarup, 1993; Tobin, 1995). They are never fixed, but are constantly in motion (Foucault, 1978).

For post-structuralists and other scholars who come from a socio-cultural perspective on language learning (Au, 1979; Ballenger, 1999; Cazden, 2002; Dyson, 1989; Gee, 2005; Genishi, 1999; Heath, 1983), power is a phenomenon that is contextualized by the particular conditions in effect. Power as it relates to

language, then, can only be recognized by the particularities of its context and there is nothing inherent about the language, or the person using the language, that awards it power. For instance, in a conversation, the relations of power among and between the participants can change at any given moment as conversants pull from different resources, adopt different positions vis-à-vis their conversants, and reference various sociopolitical and historical worlds.

As Genishi (1999) put it,

As language, meaning, and subjectivity are never fixed, poststructuralists assume that power, an underlying factor in all social interaction, is not a commodity that some individuals or social groups possess to control others. Drawing on the work of Foucault, poststructuralists replace this static notion of power with a strategic one in which power is conceptualized as circulating throughout social relations so that individuals both enact and undergo the effects of power (Foucault, 1978; Sarup, 1993). (p.289)

According to Genishi(1999), the power that coincides with the use of English in Ms. Kim's classrooms is drawn from the contextual particularities of the situation rather than the English language or the individuals using English. Power is dynamic and it circulates through social relations. The poststructuralists' perspective provides an optimal framework to study the phenomenon of language use in Ms. Kim's classroom as it has the potential to expose the particularities of the context surrounding the children's language choice and language use. Under this framework, the phenomenon under study can not be dismissed by grand notions such as 'English is the language of power' and the focus becomes the contextual particulars and the ideology behind children's choice and use of the language (Fairclough, 1989).

Methods

This study was conducted in a Korean English TWI Program located in an urban metropolitan area in California. The program, at the time of the study, maintained grades from kindergarten through fourth grade with a population of 78 students. This program was initiated by a group of Korean parents who felt the need for an educational program that would offer their children the opportunity to be bilingual in Korean and English while having equal access to the curriculum and educational opportunities offered through the public school system.

This study was conducted in the

kindergarten classroom that had a total population of 19 students. The student population was divided into two categories, the native Korean speakers and the native English speakers for the purpose of this study. The two categories are language categories, though they do overlap with ethnicity for a majority of the students.¹ The categories were devised in order to group the students according to the language that they were most proficient in. I did not have focal children, though children who were identified as playing a major role in sustaining or disrupting patterns of language use were followed and observed more than others.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology because the questions I ask in this project "are formulated to investigate the topic in all their complexity" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 2) and the nature of this project is one that requires examination of the phenomenon from a multitude of perspectives.

During the data collection period, I observed for two hours a day, twice a week, for a full academic semester. At first, I observed during both Korean and English time. The kindergarten class had a 70:30 division of instructional time for Korean and English. As the scope of the research narrowed down and questions and sub-questions became clear, I only observed during time that was designated for Korean. The two-hour Korean block consisted of a show-and-tell event, one whole group literacy lesson, group work which was organized into centers, and a mid-morning break. During center time, individual literacy activities were planned that reinforced what was discussed during the preceding whole group lesson.

All classroom observations were audio-taped and accompanied by fieldnotes that provided contextual information for each of the observation sessions. In addition to the classroom observations, I talked to the children during class about what they said or put down on paper. Data also came from the classroom teacher, Ms. Kim, whom I observed on a regular basis and interviewed twice during the observation period.

The parents of the children, as well as administrators of the school and teachers from other classrooms, were interviewed informally during lunch breaks and dismissal time. I asked them their thoughts on TWI programs in general and whether they had noticed the phenomenon that I had noticed among the children—the non-acquisition of the minority language. I took down notes of these conversations and used

them to contextualize the phenomenon under study.

My role in the classroom was mainly that of a participant-observer (Merriam, 1998), moving along the observer-participant continuum as called for by different situations in the classroom and the needs of the teacher and students.

After the first month, I focused in on when children used Korean to talk to each other or made efforts to engage in conversations using Korean. However, instances in which the native Korean children and the native English children interacted in Korean were scarce. The recorded interactions were transcribed in Korean and English. All Korean interactions were later translated into English for the purpose of write-up. This study is a part of a larger study in which I investigate the development of children's bilingualism and biliteracy.

Data analysis was an on-going process during data collection. The data were coded using strategies outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). I relied on their concept of "three concurrent flows of activity" (p. 10)—data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification—for data analysis. After each observation, I listened to the audiotapes and looked at the fieldnotes to look for instances that seemed significant to the questions that I was asking.

I summarized the observations and transcribed parts of the data that seemed most relevant to my research questions to reduce the data. The same process was applied to the two interviews with the teacher, Ms. Kim, and my conversations with the other educators in the school and the parents. Once I had collected a significant amount of data, I displayed the reduced data in organized, compressed ways and I followed this process through until I had collected all the data at the end of the academic semester.

I ended up with a number of different categories that corresponded to each of my research questions. As a final step, to draw conclusions from the categories, I looked through the data to see what all the categories really meant. I looked for regularities and patterns in the categories to form larger, core-categories (axial-coding) keeping in mind the research questions of the study. I eliminated some categories that were not well supported by the data and ones that seemed minor. This process lent itself to fewer categories that explain the nature of language choice and language use among the children.

Findings

Norms and Expectations Guiding the Children's Language Choice

The children had an established set of cultural norms and expectations that guided their choice of language in interaction with their peers. They had built-up underlying beliefs about who speaks and does not speak, or does not need to speak the minority language, Korean. The following vignette illustrates this point.

I (Author) am sitting at the Korean alphabet center next to Wayne who is a native English speaker. Wayne is asking me a question regarding one of the Korean words starting with the Korean letter of the day. Wayne's task is to pick a picture-word set from the worksheet and draw the picture and copy the word under it in his Korean alphabet book. Chris soon joins in on our conversation. Chris is a native Korean speaker who also has a good command of English. (E) indicates that the child is a native English speaker and (K) indicates that the child is a native Korean speaker. Korean utterances are capitalized. They have been translated for the purpose of write-up.

Wayne (E): Hey, can I do this one, the fingers? (pointing to the picture on the Korean alphabet board with two fingers crossing)

Author: YOU CAN BUT THAT DOESN'T SAY FINGERS. THAT SAYS YAK-SOK (PROMISE), LIKE WHEN YOU MAKE A PROMISE. YOU CROSS YOUR FINGERS. (I hold up my pinky and gesture him to hold up his to cross fingers).

Wayne (E): Can I do the fingers with the fingers crossing?

Author: THIS SAYS YAK-SOK. CAN YOU SAY YAK-SOK. This says YAK-SOK, promise. YAK-SOK. Can you say that?

Wayne (E): I can do that, the fingers crossing with the pinky. (Chris who is sitting adjacent to Wayne taps me on the arm)

Chris (K): HE'S NOT KOREAN. HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE SAYING IF YOU SPEAK TO HIM IN KOREAN.

Author: YOU DON'T THINK HE KNOWS ANY KOREAN?

Chris (K): HE KNOWS A LITTLE BIT LIKE A BABY, BUT HE KNOWS ENGLISH.

Author: HOW DOES HE COME TO CLASS EVERY DAY IF HE DOESN'T KNOW KOREAN? I AM SURE HE IS LEARNING SOME KOREAN.

Chris (K): I DON'T KNOW. HE HAS TO ASK PEOPLE, LIKE ME, I HAVE TO

TELL HIM IN ENGLISH BECAUSE HE DOESN'T KNOW.

Author: WELL, SHOULD WE HELP HIM LEARN THE LANGUAGE, SO THAT HE CAN TALK TO ME AND YOU IN KOREAN?

Chris (K): I AM HELPING HIM. I TELL HIM THINGS WHEN THE TEACHER TALKS TO HIM IN KOREAN AND HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT SHE'S SAYING AND I TELL HIM WHAT HE HAS TO SAY.

In many situations, native Korean speakers provided assistance for their native English peers like Wayne. Chris's (K) expectation for his native English peer was representative of many of the Korean children's views of their peers as evidenced by remarks during peer conversations and interactions with adults in the classroom.

Clearly, the children's expectations of competency in the Korean language ran along ethnic lines and the children knew who had to know Korean and who could do without the language. The children's language expectations for each other were especially evident in the native Korean children's willingness to code-switch from Korean to English for their native English speaking peers, regardless of their level of competency in the English language.

In the above dialogue, Wayne starts the conversation with me in English. I respond to him in Korean trying to engage him in the language. As is evident, Wayne keeps to English, despite my efforts to engage him in some kind of interaction in Korean. In my response to Wayne's question I switch from Korean to English mid-way through my sentence. I do so to explain the meaning of the word, "yak-sok," which means "promise" in English, hoping to have him say it at least once but my efforts are clearly in vein as Wayne continues to proceed in English.

I am reminded by Chris that Wayne does not speak Korean and that he needs to be helped by his Korean-speaking peers when it comes to Korean. In fact, Chris insists that he does help Wayne by translating for him during lessons when he is addressed by the teacher in Korean. Chris' idea of help is not exactly the kind that we as teachers wish for, nor is it in line with the theoretical basis that TWI programs are built on which is that two groups of children each with a different first language would serve as language teachers and models for each other in their home language. Such theoretical perspectives are not always in the minds of the

children in TWI classrooms as illustrated in the above dialogue.

What is more surprising is that the children from the two different languages groups are in agreement when it comes to language expectations. In our conversation above, Wayne turns down my invitation to repeat words in Korean and he shows no signs of hesitation in his speech as he proceeds the conversation in English. He does not see himself in the role of a language learner within the context of the classroom nor does he expect others to teach him a language. He wants someone to respond to his question so he can move on with his work of drawing the picture and copying down the Korean word.

He does, however, willingly accept the language help that is offered by his native Korean peers that comes in the form of direct translation because that enables him to function in his environment and complete the assigned work in expected ways. Such language norms and expectations were shared amongst the children creating a culture that governed the kinds of language choices that they made.

Language Choice and Social Work

Instances in which the native Korean speakers and the native English speakers used Korean in peer interaction were scarce as evidenced through classroom observations. The native Korean speakers did use Korean as means of communication both with adults and amongst themselves in the classroom though this trend also became less observable as the year progressed.

When Korean was used in peer interactions between the native Korean speakers and the native English speakers, it was used to accomplish a certain social goal. The situation called for the use of Korean (rather than English) and the children used the language to reach a social end of some sort. In a number of instances, Korean was used to create a sense of community amongst themselves, whether it was to create a sense of community during a fieldtrip when they were surrounded by people from outside of the school, or to create a community that excluded other children in the school who were not a part of the program. The latter is the case in the dialogue below.

Jonathan who was in one of the monolingual first grade classrooms was a regular visitor in Ms. Kim's classroom. When his teacher felt that he needed some time out he was brought to the kindergarten classroom. Jonathan is sitting by one of the centers and is looking in at the children

writing in their alphabet books. Wayne (E), Tom (E), and David (K), all children in the kindergarten classroom and all seated at the writing center tease Jonathan that he has again been bad in his class and is on time-out. Understandably, this upsets Jonathan and he starts talking to Wayne (E) and Tom (E) in a demeaning tone about how he will stop them from playing with the balls during lunchtime. Korean is capitalized. (E) stands for native English speaker and (K) for native Korean speaker.

Jonathan (E): Yes I can, yes I can, I can do that, me and my friends can, (unintelligible) do it secretly and the teacher doesn't.

Tom (E): We can do secret, we can get the ball from, when . . .

Wayne (E): We can speak in Korean and you don't know Korean. (whispers something in David's ear)

David (K): (in Korean) YEAH, WE CAN GET THE BALL (arms swinging) GET THE BALL WHILE YOU'RE EATING LUNCH AND HIDE IT.

Wayne (E): GET THE BALL (arms flinging).

Tom (E): GET THE BALL, GET THE BALL, GET THE BALL. (starts giggling)

David (K): YEAH, WE GET ALL THE BALLS AND HIDE IT. DO THAT?

Wayne (E): GET THE BALL. ALL. ALL, ALL, BALL.

Tom (E): ALL, ALL, ALL, BALL.

David (K): GET THE BALL, ALL THE BALLS, WE'RE GOING TO DO THAT.

Wayne (E): (GET IT FROM) JONATHAN, GET THE BALL.

David (K): JONATHAN HAS NO BALL IN THE PLAYGROUND.

Tom (E): JONATHAN, ALL, NO BALL.

Wayne (E): NO, NO, NO, ALL.

Tom (E): ALL, NO BALL, NO, ALL.

Jonathan: (Mimics the children, makes faces, and seems displeased)

David (K): HEY MAYBE YOU HAVE TO SIT ON THE CHAIRS, ON THE PLAYGROUND ALL THE TIME. (whispers something in Tom's ear) BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN BAD, NO BALL, NO.

Tom (E): BAD, NO BALL. ALL.

Wayne (E): NO BALL, NO BALL.

Certainly, the above interactions are not the kinds of interactions that we as teachers condone. They are, nonetheless, interactions that are a part of childhood

classrooms on a daily basis as they were on this day of data collection.

The Korean portion of the conversation above is sparked by Wayne whispering something in David's ear. When I later asked David what Wayne had whispered in his ear, he told me that Wayne, his native English peer, suggested they start speaking in Korean so Jonathan, the first-grade visitor who does not understand a word of Korean, would not know what they were saying. In essence, David's first sentence in Korean, "YEAH, WE CAN GET THE BALL, WHILE YOU'RE EATING LUNCH AND THEN HIDE IT," along with his gestures—arms swinging as if trying to hug a ball—provided the appropriate words and expressions that were needed in the conversation. His initial sentence acted as a strong invitation for Wayne and Tom to join him in Korean.

David also provides linguistic scaffolding for Tom and Wayne by breaking down the sentences into smaller units, by using hand gesture, and by repeating and exaggerating certain words and phrases to give them meaning in a non-pedagogical manner. Wayne and Tom each repeat after David, "GET THE BALL." David repeats what Wayne and Tom have just said (GET THE BALL), but he adds another word, ALL, to the sentence thereby expanding the repertoire of words associated with the topic and making it apart of his peers' linguistic capital (Ervin-Tripp, 1991). Wayne and Tom adopt the word, ALL, using it to address their inherent purpose of showing Jonathan that they can speak in a language that he does not understand. David adds more words—NO, ALL, BAD—to the conversation towards the end of the dialogue which again, Wayne and Tom gladly use to accomplish their social goal.

It is not clear if Tom and Wayne know all the words that they are using in the above dialogue but that does not stop them from participating in the on-going interactions. The three children take 16 turns in speech. Their turns do not follow a recognizable pattern of oral interactions in classrooms—they are not asking or responding to questions, disagreeing/agreeing with one another, trying to clarify a point or two in the midst of a conflict, or asking for clarification—nor do they make much grammatical sense, but they are able to sustain the conversation through 16 turns because they have a social goal in mind.

This number of turns in Korean was unusual given the fact that during the data collection period, the longest observed teacher-child or peer conversational turns

in Korean during instructional time was 13 for the native Korean children, and five for their non-native Korean counterparts.

The words and sentences used by the children in the above dialogue carry meaning within the immediate context. That is, the words and sentences refer to persons in the contexts (you, Jonathan, we), familiar events (playing ball in the playground), and familiar items and actions associated with the immediate situation (ball, get the ball, hide it, etc). They are also participating in a speech genre (teasing a peer) in which they have shared understanding of the agenda. The situation that the children created themselves is sustained by their inherent interest in each other and the social energy they bring to the event followed by their authentic use of the language. The participants, individually and in union, skillfully orchestrate their resources to circulate the language to reach a particular social end. In essence, their motivation behind the use of Korean in the above dialogue is all social.

Language Play

It is hard not to notice the language play inherent in the above dialogue. The children repeat and mimic each other for the enjoyment of tossing words back and forth at each other, sometimes being amazed at the string of words that they can say. Many adults would easily become tired of such a situation in which repetition and mimicking was required to sustain the conversation (Bell, 2005; Ervin-Tripp, 1991; Fassler, 200; Tarone, 2000, 2006).

Most of the dialogue between David, Tom, and Wayne make very little linguistic sense. Words, phrases, and sentences that David utters are repeated by Tom and Wayne in no particular order or form. The two English speakers (Tom and Wayne) take from the target language speaker David (Korean), words and phrases that they are able to say and take turns tossing them back and forth. There are only 11 Korean words being circulated as 11 turns are made among the three children and very little meaning negotiation takes place.

In other words, to borrow from Bushnell (2009), the children are not necessarily engaged in a meaning-focused task characterized by a set of conversational moves which work toward mutual comprehension (Lyster, 2002). The three children take 16 turns in speech. It is not clear if Tom and Wayne know all the words that they are using in the above dialogue but that does not stop them from participating in the on-going interactions.

Tarone (2000) reminds us that language play is a large part of language learning. He adds that it provides learners with opportunities to absorb others' voices (Bahktin, 1981) into their own linguistic repertoire and use it for their own will. According to Bahktin (1981) we do not learn words from a dictionary. We learn words and utterance by adopting and adapting them from others and we give them a "blow of intention" to make them our own. Tarone (2000) suggests that language play provides language learners with opportunities to experiment with and practice others' new voices and that is exactly what the children, especially Wayne and Tom are doing in the above speech event. They are playing around with words that David, the native Korean speaker, provides and reinforces and by doing so they are trying out David's new voice in their own ways.

Language play, however, is happening at a different level. It is also important to note the role that Tom and Wayne, both non-native speakers of the target language, play in the dialogue. For instance, Tom says "JONATHAN, ALL, NO BALL" and Wayne follows with "NO, NO, NO, ALL" selectively choosing from what Tom has just said. Tom then repeats Wayne's words though in a different order. Each of their turns make way for the other person to repeat or reinforce the language that is being circulated. However, inherent in this language play is unintended language learning happening through practice and repetition.

Non-native speaker peer group interactions have not received much attention as contexts for language learning and language development in the field of language learning (Fassler, 2003). In fact, groups absent of native target language speakers have been downplayed as appropriate contexts for language learning. However, as we see in the dialogue above, Tom and Wayne clearly play a role within this setting especially from the perspective of language play. Tom and Wayne toss utterances back and forth with each other thereby creating opportunities for repetition, a component important for language learning.

Discussion and Implications

Ovando (1990) reminds us that bilingual education is not just about pedagogical effectiveness and that inherent in the realities of bilingual classrooms are dimensions of political power and cultural identity that affect its outcomes. Learning a second language while still learning and developing your mother-tongue does have

a heavy political and sociocultural dimension to it, especially if your mother-tongue is deemed "less powerful" than the other language in your society. Indeed, the under-use of the ethnic language in TWI immersion programs where the ethnic language is competing with a higher status language such as English is not unique to Ms. Kim's classroom. This has been documented in a number of different contexts with various ethnic languages (Carrigo, 2000; Potowski, 2004; Quintanar-Sarellana, 2004; Valdes, 1997; Vasquez, 2003).

As Edelsky (1991) states, it is important to remind ourselves that the status of languages originates from speech communities outside of the classroom and she proposes that primary efforts for change must be made in those communities in which it is rooted. I agree with this proposal. It is critical to work at the macro level of speech communities to bring awareness to the value of ethnic languages and to change attitudes towards minority languages and cultures. It is, in many ways, the only way we will fully resolve the issues at hand such as the phenomenon in this study. This proposal, however, because of all its might, takes time and effort at a grand level. It may take generations to change people's attitudes and to move away from the ethnocentric views of minority languages, let alone bring equity into the equation.

This proposal also has the danger of making us think that this is the only thing we can do to bring equity to our language practices and this assumption leaves educators with their hands tied. If English is the language of power, and the power is controlled by the larger society in a static manner, then this is a fixed phenomenon and very little can be done to balance the use of languages among children in classrooms such as the one under study.

This study is a reminder that in addition to the work that must be done at the macro level, we have work to do at the micro level, at the level of the classroom. This study is also an attempt to remind us that power in language is not a static entity. As the findings of this article illustrate, power is contextual. It is contextualized by the particularities of the situation. It is fluid in nature, moving around as the conditions of the context change and as participants situate and re-situate themselves within the interactions. The findings of this research point to a number of contextual dimensions and language dynamics. In the following sections I discuss the implications of these findings in further detail.

The Importance of Social Relationships in Language Learning

The findings of this research point to the importance of placing children's social relationships at the forefront of pedagogical decisions and language policies. The social possibilities that children saw by using Korean or English framed the language choices they made during interactions among themselves and also with adults. Children chose to speak in the language that enabled them to do more in a given situation, for instance, use Korean to form a community that excluded others as in the example presented in this paper, or use it to be the classroom teacher in playing school.

More power was afforded to those who were able to use the language appropriate to the situation. The children's language choices and uses were not guided by the program's language policy, which instituted a 70:30 division of language use between Korean and English. Such a policy had a meager effect on their choice of language because the policy suggested no directions for how the language should be used to channel social energy, nor did it hint at the kinds of possible situations in which social work could be done.

For instance, the policy did not deal with how friendships could be made, reassured, but also at times, be controlled. The policy in and of itself was not capable of doing such work because it was top-down, and thus prescriptive, and it had little to do with the children's language intentions. A close examination of the discursive spaces surrounding peer interactions is necessary in order to understand the dynamics of social interaction at the micro level.

Language Learners as Communicators

According to Lindfors (2008) when adults interact with infants or toddlers, often the adults' speech is modified. However, she reminds us that the purpose of such modifications are not pedagogical in nature. In other words, the adult is not modifying the language as an effort to teach the child the language. Rather, the modifications emerge as an effort to make oneself understood and to have a conversation. The key purpose in such modifications of language, according to Lindfors (2008), is to "help the child participate" (p.43) in the ongoing conversation.

We often forget that language is a tool for communication (Vygotsky, 1969) and that ultimately language learners are communicators. They are participants in

an on-going language event. These basic rules of language learning are often forgotten, especially when it comes to the field of second language learning. The discourse of second language acquisition has largely been dominated by a focus on pedagogical issues: discussions of teachers and learners, masters and novices, and by the methods of teaching and the efficiency of learning.

Children, though they do teach and learn from each other, are not always gathered or oriented towards each other in such organized and direct ways, as masters and novices (Vygotsky, 1978), or as teachers and learners. This is true even in instructional settings such as TWI programs that are planned and implemented under such pedagogical assumptions. The children's relationships and their interests guide their motivations to interact or not interact with each other and for what purpose (Dyson, 1992).

In fact, the children's interactions are geared towards each other as communicators who are in the business of participating in an interactional event. Communication is about the transmission of information between and among individuals via language. As was evident in this study, language learning can also happen as children play with language by mimicking each other's utterances or taking turns in what makes very little sense to many adults.

In these situations there is no distinction between teachers and learners, but there is learning happening at a very authentic level because language play is a large part of the children's repertoire of communication. Children reinforce the vocabulary being circulated through repetition that is backed up by an intention to be playful and to be connected to others in their surroundings. Language play is safe grounds for all language learners because it is play and it is hard to be wrong in play (Bushnell, 2009).

Bushnell (2009) notes that prior to the 2000s language play was not taken seriously by the field of language learning. Though now there is more awareness of the importance of language play in many of our early childhood and childhood classroom, language play is still not a concept that is at the forefront of classroom instruction and language development.

As teachers and teacher educators we must think about how language play can safely become a part of our classrooms, especially in the earlier grades. Under the current climate of high-stakes testing

and accountability, this is certainly not an easy task. It is a difficult task to find a fitting place for the idea of children playing around with language in a classroom that is dominated by state mandates and standardized exams. The two seem quite incompatible, if not antithetical.

However, to exclude it from the classroom where children are learning a language, be it their first or their second, would be to take away a resource that has its roots deep in what is natural to children, and maybe to all human beings. Children's own resources have long been neglected in the traditional curriculum and especially in the field of language learning, which has been dominated by the discourse of methods and more recently by the discourse of assessment and accountability. As educators, we need to redefine what it means to honor what children bring to the table and what it means to use those resources in teaching children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Children reinforce the vocabulary being circulated through repetition that is backed up by an intention to communicate and, therefore, be connected to others in their surroundings. They are speakers, communicators, people who have social work to do, but not necessarily masters and novices working in organized and hierarchical relationships (Vygotsky, 1971). As Birsch and others (1996) remind us, language curriculum development and the implementation of materials must focus on language that has meaning and that is used for meaningful purpose in a real-life context.

Conclusion

TWI classrooms where more than one language is being learned must take into consideration how power is being circulated in interactions and implement changes that alter the dimensions and dynamics of communication to allow for a balanced use of the two languages. Classrooms, we are reminded once again by Edelsky (1991), can be sites for change, but they can also be sites of resistance and struggle.

If we resist alternative ways of conceptualizing relationships among language learners and alternative ways of thinking about how children learn (or in some cases, do not learn) to communicate in a new language, we will only reinforce the teaching and learning practices already in place and we may not be able to change circumstances such as the ones in this

study. Working towards broader and more in-depth understandings of programs for diverse populations is especially important because it is one way of illuminating issues of equity in the classroom that may otherwise be ignored. By "foregrounding the relational and the continually shifting present" (Genishi, 1999, p.291) we may begin to understand TWI programs as sites that are complicated by power play and grand narratives.

Only after acknowledging and accepting such realities can we work towards achieving justice and equity in language education (Potowski & Matts, 2008). Our bilingual classrooms must become places where languages are learned and languages are added. They must not become grounds for language loss, especially not for minority children, families, and communities in struggle to maintain and celebrate their languages and cultures.

Note

¹ The native Korean speakers were all ethnically Korean and spoke Korean as their first language. All of the eight children who were not ethnically Korean came from homes that spoke English as their first language and they make up the majority of the native English speaker category. The three bi-racial children who came from homes where one parent was of Korean ethnicity and the other parent was of a different ethnicity all spoke English as their first language and it was the language that they used at home and thus they are all categorized as native English speakers.

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