Language ideologies of African American and Latino students in a dual immersion 3rd grade classroom in southern California

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Context of the Study: California
• Steady migration from Spanish speaking countries to California has established communities where Spanish is as valuable as English, especially for businesses.
• Migration trends show Latinos settle in communities with concentrations of other ethnic groups (i.e. African Americans).
• 2/3 Latino students attend a school where ethnic minorities make up 50% or more of the school’s population; while 1/3 Latino students attend a school where ethnic minorities make up 90% or more of the school’s population.
• Latino and African American students that attend schools together provides the unique demographics to implement dual immersion programs.

California public schools

Methodology and Participants
• Sample: 21 third grade students (14:7 Latino to African American students)
• Weekly visits during spring of 2008 and winter 2009
• As a participant observer, I took ethnographic fieldnotes of Language arts class, writing workshop and recess.
• I coded for Spanish, English and AAVE use by ethnic groups.

Theoretical Framework
• Language Ideology Framework
• Non dominant language has value (Irvine 1989; Swiggert 2001; Woolard 1985)
• Language as Problem; Language as Right and Language as Resource (Ruiz 1984)

Sample Data
Interview between Researcher (R), Lanisha (L) and Paris (P):
R: I noticed that the two of you speak Spanish in the classroom. How did you learn so much Spanish?
L: It’s easy (nodding her head).
P: It’s hard now that we don’t talk in class.
R: Who else do you practice Spanish with?
L: It’s funny ‘cause I try to teach my mom to read in Spanish and she’s like, ‘La knee-iu lay goo-staw.’
P and L: (laughing)
P: Do you speak in Spanish with anybody else?
P: We tried to teach Destiny.

Conclusion
• Students in this classroom initiated the use of Spanish, a non-dominant language, indicating a counter dominant language ideology.
• African American students viewed Spanish as capital and used Spanish as a way to communicate with Spanish speakers.
• Latino students viewed Spanish as academic capital and displayed a language as right/resource ideology.

Data Analysis
• Despite a shift to English instruction students spoke in Spanish.
• 1/2 African American students represented 100% of the personal requests. No Latino students used Spanish for this.
• 100% of Spanish use to help with academic work was used by a small group of Latino students.
• Spanish was used by both Latino and African American students to speak with peers.