

Implementing a multilingual language policy in pre-primary and primary education at an accredited European School in France

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This paper will present an ethnographic study of how language policy (LP) is created, interpreted, and appropriated in the context of the first accredited European School in France. By examining the nursery and primary school cycles, I will address the multifaceted dimension of language policy by considering Spolsky's tripartite framework (2009) and by examining the interactions of agents, goals, processes, and discourses (Johnson 2009) involved in this dynamic educational setting.

First, I will briefly discuss the European School system, emphasizing the top-down language policy explicitly stated in its policy documents. These documents underscore languages and language education that play a key role in this unique system and consider the reality of today's classrooms, which are changing due to the high linguistic and cultural diversity of students (Hélot et al. 2018).

Next, I will present the context of the study, citing the school's accreditation and personnel recruitment process and how it is unique in that it must adhere to French administrative procedures and how its educational system conforms to that of the European Schools. More importantly, I will highlight the multilingual dimension of the nursery and primary school cycles, emphasizing the super-diverse linguistic repertoires of the teachers, language assistants, parents, and pupils.

I will then present selected data collected over three academic years from 2019 to 2022 that accentuate language policy at several levels. These include interviews with teachers, research notes on institutional and classroom language practices and discourses, and analyses of 193 primary children's language portraits and their written descriptions (Busch, 2018) that provide implications for language learning and teaching.

Finally, I will then propose an analysis of how agents interpret, implement, negotiate, and at times, intentionally or unintentionally ignore the explicit multilingual language policy. Findings indicate that even with clear language policy statements, there are inconsistencies at the level of beliefs and practices that sometimes undermine the principles on which the European Schools are founded. The research findings draw implications for rethinking the education of multilingual learners (Cummins, 2021) and the implementation of multilingual education (Soares, Duarte & Günther-van der Meij, 2021).