

## Chapter 23

# Shifting Linguistic Landscapes Within the Context of International Schools

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores critical issues concerning multilingualism within the context of international schools. As international educators re-imagine and re-create more equitable approaches to language education, three significant conceptual shifts about multilingual education are emerging: 1) international educators demonstrate mindsets which value multilingualism over monolingualism, 2) school communities recognize more expansive and dynamic conceptualization of linguistic identities, 3) multilinguals' diverse languaging practices are valued over previously standardized views of languages. The authors outline some of the key debates related to these significant shifts, including potential conflicts between various stakeholders. The chapter challenges international schools to use their resources and autonomy to enact positive social change for multilingual learners, their families, and their communities. Finally, the chapter concludes with a robust research agenda to explore more equitable and innovative approaches to language education within the context of international schools.*

### INTRODUCTION

International schools present a unique set of issues related to the education of multilingual learners. Viewed through a critical lens, analyzing the role of language in international schools highlights both challenges and opportunities, acknowledging the complex role of multilingualism as well as layers of

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privilege of who gets to define themselves as international and who does not. Investigating transnational students and international schools reveals the potential for innovation and intellectual exchange resulting from the fluid interplay of ideas, languages, and cultures in diverse classroom ecosystems. However, this potential remains unrealized if language policies and programs privilege English over other languages or ignore the historical legacy of English both as a tool for colonization and for post-colonial hegemonic globalization.

This chapter begins by exploring the challenge of defining K-12 international schools, problematizing both the historical legacy of international education and the traditional role of language in international schools. This is followed by a recognition of changing patterns of global migration, shifting demographics in international school populations and a concomitant evolution in identity of international schools. In addition to these changes in how international schools are defined and organized, this chapter identifies significant shifts as international educators and school leaders explore more equitable approaches to language education. This chapter outlines some of the key debates related to these significant shifts, including potential conflicts between various stakeholders, challenging international schools to use their resources and autonomy to enact positive social change for multilingual learners, their families, and their communities. Finally, the chapter concludes with a robust research agenda to explore more equitable and innovative approaches to language education within the context of international schools.

This chapter views international schools through a particular theoretical frame. Any review of research incorporates a particular lens, as authors decide which topics, issues, and articles to include or exclude. This review approaches the key issues in multilingualism within the context of international schools from a critical theory lens. Critical theory draws attention to questions of power, hegemony and injustice which can provide insight on how to approach to the intersection of international schools and language education with a commitment to social justice. Crotty (2012) states that critical theory:

*Emphasizes that particular sets of meanings, because they have come into being in and out of the give-and-take of social existence, exist to serve hegemonic interests. Each set of meanings supports particular power structures, resists moves towards greater equity, and harbours oppression, manipulation and other modes of injustice and freedom. (p. 59)*

While acknowledging how the field of critical research is constantly evolving, Kincheloe et al. (2011) draw on their decades of experience in the field to outline basic assumptions which are essential to critical research. Three of Kincheloe et al.'s assumptions explicitly guide this review:

1. "Language is central to the formation of subjectivity (conscious and unconscious awareness)" (p. 164). This review centers language as essential to the school experience, as language contributes to each person's process of identity creation and informs their perspective and engagement with the world.
2. "Certain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged over others and, although the reasons for this privileging may vary widely, the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable" (p. 164). This chapter acknowledges and calls to account the privileging of certain languages, language users and types of language use over others within the context of international schools.

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