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Negotiating Language Policy and Practice: Teachers of English Learners in an Arizona Study Group

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Negotiating Language Policy and Practice: Teachers of English Learners in an Arizona Study Group

Abstract

Arizona language policy now requires English learners to enroll in English language development classrooms for four hours of skill-based, English-only instruction. In this article, I describe Arizona teachers' interpretation and negotiation of language policy and practice during this time of change to more restrictive mandates. I conducted this qualitative case study with a teacher study group comprised of six English language development teachers and one instructional coach from an urban elementary school during the first semester of language policy implementation. Using discourse analysis of individual interviews, study group dialog, and institutional documentation, I investigated teachers' talk as they grappled with restrictive policy mandates and effective classroom practice. Findings indicated teachers negotiated the cultural models inherent in the institutional policy in the study group setting. In the contemporary context of restrictive educational policies, implications for stakeholders center on professional and collaborative support for educators.

Negotiating Language Policy and Practice: Teachers of English Learners in an Arizona Study Group

Classrooms in the United States (U.S.) are more linguistically diverse today than ever before (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). In the past decade, the population of English learners (ELs) enrolled in public schools climbed from 3.5 million to 5.3 million (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, NCELA, 2012). Similar to the 51% growth nationwide, ELs in Arizona schools increased by 48% in ten years, with approximately 94% speaking Spanish as a native language (NCELA, 2012). Despite the large and growing populations in Arizona and across the U.S., schools have not met the needs of ELs, who continue to demonstrate lower academic achievement than their mainstream peers (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; García, Lawton, & de Figueriedo, 2012). Closing this EL achievement gap (Fry, 2007) requires preparation and support of effective teachers, the greatest in-school factor affecting student achievement (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005), particularly for the vulnerable population of ELs (Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006). In addition to their direct impact on EL achievement, teachers play a central role in the negotiation (Menken & García, 2010), implementation (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996), and appropriation of language policy (Levinson & Sutton, 2001), as they are crucial actors and enactors of policies in classroom practice.

Language policy, which guides teachers' and students' linguistic repertoires in educational settings (Menken & García, 2010), relates to broader societal perceptions of cultural and linguistic diversity (Dorner, 2011; Heineke, 2009; Valdés, 2000). Sharing a border with Mexico, the state of Arizona is the epicenter of the contemporary immigration debate in the U.S. In a nationwide study on immigration issues, Arizonans consistently gave the highest response rate to anti-immigrant sentiments and negativity toward the growing Latino population, as 78% of respondents considered immigration a big problem, 52% expressed dissatisfaction with immigrants' failure to assimilate, and 66% believed immigrants did not learn English fast enough (Kohut, Keeter, Doherty, Suro, & Escobar, 2006). Stressing the need for cultural and linguistic assimilation, some Americans perceived

bilingualism to be an imminent threat to U.S. nationalism (Valdés, 2000). Former state representative

Russell Pierce asserted that the rising number of Spanish-speaking immigrants threatened to turn

Arizona into a bilingual state. He asserted, "It's [the rise in Spanish-speaking residents] absolutely

bad for America. We are an English-speaking nation, and we need to encourage everyone to speak

English" (González, 2008). The presumed peril of linguistic diversity led to widespread public

support of language policies that supported English monolingualism to "use language as a strategy

of exclusion" (Valdés, 2000, p. 165). Rather than promoting bilingualism, the insistence on English

monolingualism stigmatized ELs and restricted public use of their native languages (Valdés, 2000).

Impacting the educational institution and context of this southwestern state, voters passed

English-only language policy with Proposition 203 in 2000, which declared English as the official

medium of instruction in schools and nearly eradicated bilingual programs in Arizona (Arizona

Department of Education, ADE, 2000). Proposition 203 designated Structured English Immersion

(SEI) as the instructional approach to teach ELs to comply with the Lau v. Nichols federal ruling of

1974, which forbid the submersion of ELs in English-only classrooms. SEI skirted the question of

submersion by calling for "curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the

[English] language" (ADE, 2000). The SEI language policy reflected the dominant societal discourse

of assimilation and monolingualism, grounding classroom instruction in mainstream cultural and

linguistic conformity rather than the tenets of second language acquisition or the desire to best serve

the unique and diverse needs of ELs (Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006; Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006).

In the historical and contemporary contexts of Arizona, restrictive language policies have

not supported EL teaching and learning (García et al., 2012; Lillie, Markos, Arias, & Wiley, 2012;

Wiley, 2012). In 2006, state legislators called for changes to the previously implemented and proven

ineffective model of SEI. House Bill 2064 necessitated a more prescriptive approach to EL

instruction and gave responsibility to a taskforce to develop a cost-efficient SEI model for Arizona

schools. In the resulting *English language development* (ELD) model, which went into effect in fall 2008, students are grouped in classrooms based on language proficiency as determined and classified by the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA) standardized test, which serves as the sole tool to identify and reclassify ELs. With four hours of skill-based language instruction, teaching and learning does not include traditional content areas, such as science or social studies. The four-hour ELD block includes five different English-language-specific *content areas*, including reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and conversation (ADE, 2008).

Although the latest restrictive mandates in Arizona have attracted the attention of leading scholars (August, Goldenberg, & Rueda, 2010; Gándara & Orfield, 2012; Krashen, MacSwan, & Rolstad, 2012) and publications (Arias & Faltis, 2012; *Language Policy*, 2012; *Teachers College Record*, 2012; The Civil Rights Project, 2010), few studies specifically consider the role and impact of teachers (deJong, Arias, & Sánchez, 2010). Building on other studies that emphasize the ill-preparedness of some Arizona teachers for ELs (Arias, 2012; Hopkins, 2012; Murri, Markos, & Estrella-Silva, 2012; Ríos-Aguilar, González-Canche, & Moll, 2012a) and drawing from approaches of other scholars outside of Arizona who investigate the interpretation and impact of policy on professional practice (de Jong, 2008; Stritikus, 2002; Stritikus, & García, 2000; Varghese, 2008), I examine how teachers interpret and negotiate language policy and classroom practice in a study group setting.

Language Policy and Practice in Arizona

Since the passing of Proposition 203 in 2000 which resulted in the near eradication of bilingual education in Arizona, scholars have documented the failures of the monolingual language policy. Studies demonstrated that teachers felt uninformed and unprepared to teach the SEI model (Combs, Evans, Fletcher, Parra, & Jiménez, 2005; Wright & Choi, 2006), partly due to the unsystematic and inconsistent nature of the SEI trainings (Moore, 2012). The jumble of SEI

implementation and teacher preparation resulted in inadequate instruction for students, as studies confirmed that SEI did not increased ELs' school achievement (Mahoney, MacSwan, & Thompson, 2005; Wright, 2005; Wright & Pu, 2006). The failure of the original legislation led to more restrictive mandates for classroom instruction, starting in the 2008-2009 school year.

After implementation of the four-hour ELD block, scholars responded with critiques of the more restrictive model. Many outlined the lack of evidentiary base for the mandates (August et al., 2010; Faltis & Arias, 2012; Krashen et al., 2012; Long & Adamson, 2012; Mahoney et al., 2010). Goldenberg and Rutherford-Quach (2012) critiqued the limitations of the home language survey, which is the preliminary tool utilized to begin the ELD placement process by asking few questions related to language use at home. Following screening by the home language survey, students who are designated to have contact with a language other than English must take the AZELLA, an English-language test to measure proficiency in listening, speaking, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and writing. Although scholars deem to be flawed and unable to provide valid and reliable data (Florez, 2010; García, Lawton, & de Figuerido, 2010), Arizona administrators proctor this high-stakes test to label ELs (i.e., identification) and determine ELD classroom exit (i.e., reclassification). Before testing out of the ELD track, the policy segregates ELs from mainstream peers (Combs, 2012; Gándara & Orfield, 2012; Lillie et al., 2010; Mahoney, MacSwan, Haladyna, & García, 2010), emphasizes linguistic and instructional prescription (Combs, 2012; Iddings et al., 2012), and limits content area instruction (Gándara & Orfield, 2012; Martínez-Wenzl, Pérez, & Gándara, 2012; Ríos-Aguilar, González-Canche, & Sabetghadam, 2012). In addition to the literature that critically evaluates programmatic issues, quantitative comparisons of student achievement data demonstrate that ELs are not performing better than pre-ELD mandates (García et al., 2012; Mahoney et al., 2010); additionally, promotion and graduation rates have declined (Lillie et al., 2010).

The new language policy did not only impact programs provided to ELs, but also shifted teacher preparation policy in Arizona. Following the passage of House Bill 2064 in 2006, which responded to weaknesses of the prior SEI model and prompted the shift to the ELD approach, the state legislature outlined new requirements for educators (Arias, 2012; Hopkins, 2012). Where previously some teachers opted for full university programs of study in English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual education, the ADE now required all pre- and in-service teachers receive the SEI endorsement – ninety hours, equivalent to two university courses, of state-prescribed teacher training (ADE, 2008). ADE administrators stipulated time increments for coverage of predetermined SEI-related topics, which lacked alignment to the extant EL research base (Combs et al., 2005; Combs, 2012). To meet the demands of training all Arizona teachers, school districts, universities, and educational agencies rushed to put together curriculums to match state requirements; the wide array of providers led to inconsistent training for teachers (Moore, 2012).

Whereas the policy required all Arizona teachers to have basic knowledge of teaching ELs, the limited and inconsistent training impacted teacher preparation. Studies investigating ELD classroom teachers (Arias, 2012; deJong et al., 2010; Hopkins, 2012; Murri et al., 2012; Ríos-Aguilar et al., 2012a) overwhelmingly found that SEI endorsed teachers were less prepared and utilized fewer effective strategies with ELs than those certified in ESL or bilingual education. Using survey data focused on pedagogy and practice for ELs, Hopkins (2012) discovered that teachers with ESL and bilingual certification utilized more effective instructional strategies than teachers with the minimal SEI endorsement. This built on previous studies, which found that teachers with ESL and bilingual certification held more positive perceptions of ELs' abilities (deJong et al., 2010; Ríos-Aguilar et al., 2012a) and promoted students' funds of knowledge (Lillie et al., 2010; Murri et al., 2012). These quantitative studies converge around the poor quality of teacher preparation in the state-minimum-required SEI endorsement, but do not offer a solution. This study contributes to the

extant literature by using qualitative methods (Menken & García, 2010) to investigate a teacher study group where participants discuss and negotiate restrictive language policy and practice.

Sociocultural Constructs of Educational Policy and Practice

Guided by sociocultural theory (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991), this study focuses on how teachers at one urban school grapple with policies and notions of teaching and learning language. Situated in the sociocultural context of *teacher learning communities* (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006) where teachers learn when engaged in sustained and structured social interaction with one another (Rogoff, 1994, 1997), three concepts frame this investigation: (a) *appropriation* (Levinson & Sutton, 2001) which emphasizes teachers' roles in macro-level institutional policies, (b) *discourse*, which recognizes how language mediates teachers' micro-level interaction (Gee, 2005), and (c) *cultural models*, the taken-for-granted assumptions that teachers often unknowingly form and use to oversimplify and make sense of a complex world (Holland & Quinn, 1987), which connect the macro-level of the institution and the micro-level of interaction (Gee, 2005).

A social group with a shared repertoire of resources, practices, and artifacts, a *teacher learning community* involves educators in their own learning through social interaction with others around them (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; Rogoff, 1994). Building on the sociocultural recognition that individuals co-construct knowledge through participation in social and cultural activities with others (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991), learning is not understood as a behavioral or conceptual change of an individual; rather, learning is understood as a change in participation on the multiple planes: individual, interpersonal, and institutional (Rogoff, 2003). Within the interaction of a *teacher learning community* (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006), participation changes and develops over time, such as roles individuals play, purposes and modes of involvement, flexibility and attitude toward change in involvement, and how involvement relates to changes in community practices (Rogoff, 1997). Teachers' changing participation demonstrates learning within the sociocultural perspective.

The construct of *appropriation* infers that teachers play active and agentive roles in the language policy process (Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Menken & García, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Although English-only policy is enforced from the top down, teachers are the link between macro-institutional policies and micro-interactions in practice (Cummins, 2000). The central actors in the language policy process (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996), teachers appropriate policy (Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Menken & Garcia, 2010) by molding mandates to match their own language ideologies, personal histories, and professional backgrounds (Datnow, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2002; Varghese, 2008). To bring about change as language policy actors, teachers require sound pedagogy to support ELs' social, cultural, linguistic, and academic achievement (Wrigley, 2000); however, many teachers lack adequate preparation (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). Without knowledge to meet the unique and diverse needs of ELs, teachers can implement educational policies and reinforce institutional structures (Heineke, 2009) in ways that adversely impact ELs (Hopkins, 2012).

To access how actors make meaning of policy, *discourse* is language-in-use that reveals teachers' particular perspectives on the world (Gee, 2005). The integral element of social life (Fairclough, 2003) that "has meaning only in and through social practices" (Gee, 2005, p. 8), *language* is the cultural and conceptual tool (Vygotsky, 1978) of keen importance to mediate knowledge. Learning is inherently social (Bahktin, 1981), which makes language central to the daily social interactions that support and promote learning. When teachers' voices come together in social settings, two competing forms of discourse arise: *authoritative discourse*, the official doctrine of the larger societal and institutional realm and *internally persuasive discourse*, the ideas and theories of individuals with whom we interact (Bahktin, 1981). With varied complexities and tensions between the macro-level institutional structures and micro-level discourses, teachers use language "on site" to take perspectives, enact activities, and situate identities to make meaning of daily life and participate in various ways with different social groups, cultures, and institutions (Gee, 2005).

Reflected in educators' discourse, *cultural models* (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1993; Gee, 2005; Holland & Quinn, 1987) demonstrate how teachers mediate between the macro-level institutional structures (i.e., policy appropriation) with micro-level interaction of the study group (i.e, discourse). When faced with implementing policies, cultural models, the taken-for-granted assumptions and oversimplified *theories* of the world, allow teachers to weather the challenges of teaching ELs, such as the ascription of generic labels to define students (Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006) or the assumption of cultural, linguistic, and academic homogeneity (Wrigley, 2000). By linking macro-level policy and micro-level practice, cultural models illustrated how societal and institutional structures shape teachers' discourse (Cummins, 2000; Gee, 2005). An understanding of cultural models, along with institutional structures that shape them, create a starting point for teachers to perceive themselves as active mediators of policy and practice.

Conducted in the monolingual context of Arizona in a time of significant changes to more restrictive language policy and practice for ELs, I used the following research questions to guide the study: (a) What are the cultural models reflected in teachers' discourses on ELs? (b) How do teachers' situated identities mediate discourses on ELs? (c) How do teachers' discourses and cultural models of language change over time? Part of a larger dissertation study, this article outlines findings related to language and learning in one Arizona teacher study group.

Method

Grounded in the sociocultural tenets of teacher learning, a *teacher study group* (Birchak et al., 1998) is a learning community where educators come together to investigate policies and practices in their school and create conditions for change in their classrooms to align with students' needs (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998). I conducted qualitative case study research (Yin, 2003) on teachers' social interaction and discourse in a teacher study group at an urban Arizona elementary school. Facilitated on a bi-monthly basis, I framed study group sessions to value participants as experts and

utilize *knowledge-of-practice* (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998), in which teachers used inquiry and dialog to make sense of daily work in ELD classrooms with ELs. After receiving information about new mandates at staff meetings, the small-group context gave teachers opportunities to explore issues, share ideas, ask questions, work through problems, and reflect on practice.

Context and Participants

Maravilla School sits in a predominantly Latino neighborhood in a large, metropolitan city in Arizona. This Kindergarten-through-eighth-grade (K-8) school is the home to 55 teachers and nearly 1,000 students – 97% of whom are Latino, 97% of whom are on free- and reduced-lunch, and 50% of whom are considered ELs. At the time of the study, the school was considered *Performing*, a state-designated label based on standardized test scores; however, the ADE tightly monitored the school after not meeting yearly growth requirements. Of the 18 ELD teachers at Maravilla School, six made a voluntary commitment to participate in the study group to dialog about classroom policy implementation. In addition, one instructional coach joined during our first study group meeting, for a total of seven participants from the Maravilla staff. Cristy, the instructional coach in charge of implementation of the new restrictive mandates at the school-level, decided that she needed to be present since our conversations related to the classroom application of ELD policy.

[Insert Table 1 around here.]

I was the facilitator of the study group, and my responsibilities followed suggestions of Birchak and colleagues (1998), including tasks before, during, and after the meetings. Before each meeting, I made a tentative and negotiable agenda to guide study group discussion. At the beginning of each meeting, I brought coffee and breakfast, ensured that the meeting started on time, recounted key points from the last meeting, and grounded the meeting in the topic and research questions. During the meeting, I facilitated the dialogue by actively listening, connecting ideas to other topics and bigger issues, and encouraging all voices to be heard. At the end, I summarized the highlights of

the discussion and lead the reflection and negotiation of the next meeting's focus. After the meeting,

I distributed the meeting notes and the next meeting plans via e-mail. My position as the researcher

undoubtedly affected my role as the facilitator; although I planned and facilitated the study group

meetings based around teachers' desired topics, I also purposefully brought in mediating artifacts

and specific questions that would spark conversations pertinent to the study.

Data Collection

This case study utilized qualitative methods of data collection (Erickson, 1986), as the

research questions and framework required in-depth understanding of local discourse and social

interaction among a focused sample of teachers. In order to ensure case study validity, I sought

multiple sources of evidence (Stake, 1998; Yin, 2003) to enrich the data and situate discourse within

the larger sociocultural context. Sociocultural theory perceives learning as taking place on three

planes that coexist – the institutional, interpersonal, and personal planes – to account for the

complex nature of the many social and cultural factors that affect the cognition of an individual

(Rogoff, 2003). Although learning may be visible on one plane, the others are also present in the

background and play a role in the learning that occurs (Tharp, 1997). My unit of analysis was the

teacher study group; however, I considered each of the mutually constituting planes to provide a

complete account of teacher learning.

I collected data to reflect the different planes from individual interviews, teacher study group

sessions, and institutional documentation. To understand the personal plane, my data collection

both started and ended with one-hour individual interviews. Held at Maravilla School before or after

school at the teachers' convenience, initial interviews aimed to get to know teachers on personal and

professional levels and gauge starting points for small-group discussions; exit interviews allowed

teachers to member check findings and reflect on learning. To understand the interpersonal plane, I

collected audio and video data to capture social interaction of study group sessions. Held on a bi-

monthly basis, we convened in Maravilla classrooms for one hour in the morning before school over coffee and a light breakfast. To understand the institutional plane, I utilized multiple forms of documentation, focused on institutional mandates and policies that directly affected the ELD classroom teachers. In total, the data included (a) audio recordings and transcriptions of 14 individual interviews, (b) audio and video recordings and transcriptions of seven study group sessions, and (c) documentation, including state, district, and school ELD-related documents.

Data Analysis

Highlighting the role of language in the mediation of knowledge, I utilized discourse analysis (Gee, 2005). As teachers grappled with macro-level institutional policies and micro-level classroom practice, I investigated instances in which teachers learned – demonstrated as change in talk, which preceded change in action (Argyris, 1993). To accomplish this, I immersed myself in transcribed and audio-recorded data to discern patterns of key words and phrases, understand situated meanings, and tie meanings to cultural models (Gee, 2005). Utilizing *N-Vivo* software, I reorganized coded data to speak to the research questions; with this master list of codes, I reviewed transcripts multiple times to ensure valid and reliable findings. I then looked specifically for linguistic details to answer each research question by demonstrating how cultural models (Question 1), situated identities (Question 2), and learning (Question 3) were reflected in the teachers' discourse.

To answer the first research question, I analyzed teachers' discourse to understand how institutional structures supported cultural models. Cultural models as a tool of inquiry allow the analyst to see the connection between the micro-level of interaction and the macro-level of institutions (Gee, 2005). Understanding that participants were intelligent individuals, I sought to connect their micro-level discourse in interviews and study groups with macro-level discourse found in the documentation data that reflected the institutional constructs and mandates.

I honed in on the situated identities of study group participants to answer the second research question. Although the institutionally supported cultural models were evident in the data, they were not scripted in to teachers' discourse on ELs. Situated identities (Gee, 2000, 2005) led teachers to participate in various ways and allowed them to either accept or resist the dominant cultural models. By coding the individual discourse of each teacher throughout the interviews and study groups, I traced each teacher's participation and enactment of various socially situated identities, along with how teachers recognized one another as a "certain kind of person" (Gee, 2000, p. 100), through changing social languages and other linguistic cues and clues.

To answer the third research question, I examined the data throughout the study group to find changes in teachers' cultural models and discourses over time (Rogoff, 2003). To help me locate instances of change in the study group, I incorporated a three-facet conceptual scheme to examine teacher communities of practice (Little, 2002). Through analysis of *representations of practice*, I examined how teachers portrayed classroom practice in social interaction with other teachers. With the lens of *orientation to practice*, I analyzed data for instances that either opened up or closed down opportunities for learning. I also scrutinized the *norms of interaction* within the teacher study group, which looked at patterns in discourse and how material artifacts mediated conversation. The analysis gave evidence of change in teachers' discourses and cultural models.

Validity

I included various measures to ensure validity. First, triangulation was the cornerstone of the research, made possible through the multiple sources of evidence from data collection (Yin, 2003). Second, I utilized member checks of the findings with study group participants. In the final study group and individual exit interviews, I shared findings with them to receive feedback on the validity and possible reasons behind the cultural models that were portrayed. Third, I shared my findings with other scholars to ensure that my findings were not biased or skewed due to my participation in

the teacher study group. Finally, I offered a draft of the case study findings for a final review to study group participants.

My personal and professional background also inherently affected both roles of facilitator and researcher. As a former teacher, I brought similar lenses and experiences that I used to connect with teachers, build rapport and collegiality, and share pedagogical ideas. As a university instructor for EL coursework, I brought expertise and knowledge about second language acquisition, EL instructional strategies, and Arizona language policy. As a scholar and advocate for ELs, I approached study group conversations and research with a sense of skepticism toward the ELD four-hour block instruction for ELs – hoping to engage teachers in critical conversations that focused more on students and less on policy. Knowing that the interplay of my multiple *hats* wove into the data collection and analysis throughout the study, I was diligent to reflect on my roles through memos and journals, as well as integrate my own discourse into the research findings.

Results

In this section, I present results to respond to the research questions on educators' changing discourses and cultural models of language across the teacher study group. To provide background on the personal planes of teacher learning (Tharp, 1997), I first share teachers' preliminary cultural models of language from interviews. I then foreground the interpersonal plane to describe the study group trajectory of development as teachers negotiated policy and practice over time. Connecting to language policy demands on the institutional plane, I close with data from the penultimate study group session that demonstrates change in teachers' talk, negotiation of dominant cultural models, and co-construction of competing cultural models of language.

Preliminary Cultural Models of Language

Cultural models of English. Teachers' talk in individual interviews reflected the dominant cultural model of language that emphasized the need for students to speak English. Although ELD

teachers at Maravilla did not subscribe completely to the staunchly monolingual cultural model, they recognized the value of English. Erica and Molly described their thoughts on the importance of learning the English language as a resident of the U.S.

> *Erica*: It's [learning English] good because these Hispanic kids can learn English, and I think that on the other side for the Hispanic parents, they [the parents] see it is as good. I think there is a sense of, like, they have to know English. And English is good. And that if you can teach them English, that's good.

> *Molly*: It sounds great, let's make sure all these kids learn English. The parents want the kids to learn English. Everybody wants the kids to learn English. If they come to our country, they should learn English. That's the general perception.

Erica's discourse implied the responsibility of ELs to learn the dominant language of mainstream society – something that they "have to" or "should" do. Through use of evaluative statements, her discourse reflected the cultural model of English as the language of value that was "good" to maintain and become a part of mainstream society. Molly used similar discourse, but she framed the statement with an awareness of the societal expectations for speaking English. Teachers' varying degrees of consciousness of cultural models led to distinct perceptions and beliefs about ELs.

Rather than value bilingualism, the societal insistence on monolingualism stigmatized and marginalized ELs and their native languages. Reflecting this dominant cultural model, Erica asserted,

> [Students] have to learn it [English] and they understand the reasons why. You live in a country that speaks English and if you don't [speak English] people won't see it the good way, so it's kind of like a punishment or a different way of seeing you. So, I want them [EL students] to learn [English] because, number one, so they can succeed when they grow up and, number two, so they can defend themselves and not be overtaken or looked at different, because I see that still. You go to some place and they look at you different or they

look at somebody else different.

Erica, a Guatemalan immigrant who learned English as her second language, made a personal connection with an *I-statement* (i.e., "I see that still."), alluding to her own experiences with linguistic difference and discrimination. Deeply affected by her own experience with the dominant cultural model of language that frowns on linguistic difference, Erica maintained the individual's responsibility to learn and speak English. Not only is learning English good, according to Erica, it is pertinent to not be punished or considered different, mirroring much of the societal and institutional discourse that only allows a student to *fit in* with the *mainstream* by speaking English.

The teachers' discourse also reflected the dominant cultural model that emphasized English as the only language for school instruction, thus marginalizing other languages. Teachers' discourse frequently implied that English was the language being discussed.

Erica: They don't have the language.

Marcy: They don't have the vocabulary.

Cristy: They don't have the productive language.

Two linguistic patterns emerged: (a) the use of negatives to stress students' deficiencies (e.g., "don't") and (b) the implicit use of the declarative article "the" when referring to "language" to assume that English is the only language of value in school and students cannot speak what is perceived as proper or standard English. Even when teachers did not cast a negative lens on ELs' learning abilities, teachers further insinuated that English was the only language of importance.

Joni: She has a lot of language; she just would not produce [it], but she had it.

Gisela: Like, one of them just barely started speaking at all.

Although many ELs spoke Spanish, the discourse implied the insignificance of children's bilingualism. In school, where ADE officials mandated instruction and assessment in English-only, teachers came to espouse the cultural models that English was the only essential language.

The key institutional structures that supported English-centered cultural models were the policies that dictated the language of classroom instruction. Since its inception in 2000, Proposition 203 has governed how teachers teach ELs. Proposition 203 (ADE, 2000) states:

The English language is the national public language of the United States of America …. Immigrant parents are eager to have their children acquire a good knowledge of English, thereby allowing them to fully participate in the American Dream of economic and social advancement; and the government and the public schools of Arizona have a moral obligation and a constitutional duty to provide all of Arizona's children, regardless of their ethnicity or national origins, with the skills necessary to become productive members of our society. Of these skills, literacy in the English language is among the most important.

Teachers' discourse exhibited similar linguistic features to the language policy – English as the uniting and most important language of the nation, parents wanting children to learn English, and English as the ticket to assimilation. The English-centered cultural model demonstrated the connection between the discourse of teachers and institutional language policy.

Cultural models of Spanish. Teachers recognized that students had the ability to speak another language and explicitly stated the value of bilingualism; however, their discourse reflected the cultural model that the appropriate place for Spanish was outside of school. Teachers exposed cultural models of Spanish in reference to both bilingual and ELD classroom contexts.

Although Maravilla School once housed dual-language programs, most teachers exhibited a negative stance toward bilingual education. Andrea, fluent in Spanish and English, discussed her mixed feelings toward bilingual education, as she felt that two languages would be "overwhelming" and "just too much input" for many of her students.

For students, I think sometimes one language is better, but as far as skills for the world,

being bilingual one hundred percent [is the] best option. I mean, especially with the makeup

of our country now, especially [having familiarity] with Spanish. I feel like they should, for

their own benefit, know both languages. But they don't.

Andrea's discourse indicated the inherent value of bilingualism but also asserted that ELs were not

truly bilingual. Further, she doubted the capacity of some ELs and stated that learning in two

languages would prove too demanding, specifically for her students with learning disabilities.

The majority of the study group teachers' utilized discourse that questioned bilingual

education. Research has demonstrated that bilingual education is more effective than English

immersion, as instruction builds on ELs' first language abilities and strengths (August & Shanahan,

2006). Nevertheless, even proponents of bilingual education admit that programs can be flawed due

to inadequate program models, lack of teacher preparation, or scant classroom resources (Rolstad,

Mahoney, & Glass, 2005). Cristy, Joni, and Erica taught in dual-language classrooms before they

were abolished at Maravilla School and reflected on their experiences.

> *Cristy*: I wish there were more dual-language programs. I just think they need to be tightly
>
> monitored and teachers need to be very well trained…. They were not speaking
>
> English the amount of time that they needed to do it. And they were not expecting
>
> kids to have that output at all…. I don't even think that the standards, the high
>
> expectations, were in those bilingual programs.
>
> *Joni*: My experience teaching dual language was really, really bad, but I don't think it was the
>
> dual-language thing. I think it was lots of other things… not really understanding
>
> [dual-language education]. I was kind of just thrown into it. But I think done right, I
>
> think it would be really powerful.
>
> *Erica*: When I started working here, my first year I was put into a dual-language setting –
>
> where I had the English speakers and the person I worked with had Spanish and
>
> then we would switch. But I think in my experience with that [dual language], I think

> I would be, I don't want to say successful, but more aware maybe or more prepared
>
> if I knew what it looked like.

The teachers who had dual-language classroom experience revealed two rationales for the mixed discourse: (a) They viewed dual-language education as a good concept in theory, but (b) they were troubled by the poor enactment in practice, including their own lack of preparation.

Based on negative experiences with bilingual education in practice, teachers relied upon English-only instruction as the answer to EL achievement. Rather than emphasize the cultural model of bilingualism, which would insinuate native language instruction in schools, teachers' discourse reflected the marginalized status of Spanish in the English-only context. As English is the language of success at school, Spanish only had a place outside of school. Erica discussed her own struggle with the cultural model that disparaged her native language:

> I get caught in both [bilingual versus monolingual policy in schools] because I do want to
>
> acknowledge that yes, Spanish is their culture. It's my culture, it's your culture, and we can
>
> speak it, but not in the classroom. You know what I mean? It's just, so, for me, that one's
>
> [the question of English-only language policy] a hard one.

Whereas Erica recognized and grappled with the dominant cultural model that excluded Spanish use in the classroom, Marcy's story of an event in her primary classroom gave a glimpse of the cultural model enacted in classroom practice:

> My kids were speaking in Spanish today, and I was like, "It's really important that you don't
>
> speak in Spanish because I can get in trouble if you guys are speaking in Spanish in here."
>
> They're like, "Can you get fired?" And I said, "Yeah, if it gets that serious, I can."

Marcy's discourse utilized linguistic cues that manifested the stigma and consequence behind the use of Spanish at school – "trouble," "fired," and "serious." Here, not only did Spanish not have a place in school, English-only institutional mandates and ADE compliance pressures transformed the

dominant cultural model of language into linguistic repression (Delpit, 2006).

Beyond the interpretation and implementation of language policy in schools based on dominant societal ideologies of assimilation and monolingualism, Proposition 203 (ADE, 2000) elevated the status of English in schools by pushing anti-bilingual-education propaganda.

The public schools of Arizona currently do an inadequate job of educating immigrant children, wasting financial resources on costly experimental language programs whose failure over the past two decades is demonstrated by the current high drop-out rates and low English literacy levels of many immigrant children.

The attack on bilingual education provided the foundation for the *English for the Children* campaign, which led to the English-only policies in California and Arizona. Although research backs bilingual education, the institutional repudiation of Spanish at school, paired with teachers' experiences in less than adequate dual-language classroom contexts, sustained dominant cultural models.

Of the 7 study participants, only Cristy taught prior to the passing of Proposition 203; therefore, the other 6 teachers knew no other reality outside of English-only policies and state compliance guidelines. Although Cristy, Joni, and Erica taught in dual-language classrooms, possible through the use of waivers, negative experiences reinforced the need for English-only language policies. Teachers internalized – perhaps unintentionally and unknowingly – the dominant cultural models of language that served the broader societal aim to culturally and linguistically assimilate ELs.

Negotiation of Language Policy

The trajectory of development of the teacher study group. As language difference was one characteristic shared by ELs at Maravilla School, the topic of language emerged throughout the semester in the teacher study group dialog. Supported by the institutional structures of English-only language policy, the dominant cultural models of language reflected in teachers' initial discourse placed English as the language for school success and marginalized Spanish as inappropriate for school use. Poignant

statements, such as "We can speak it [Spanish], but not in the classroom" and "It's really important that you don't speak in Spanish," manifested the overall sentiment of teachers toward the role of Spanish in school. Nevertheless, teachers' talk changed over time to expose the negotiation of the dominant cultural models of language – specifically the place of Spanish in classroom instruction.

When analyzing the *trajectory of development* (Little, 2002) of the teacher study group, teachers' discourse reflected a shift in *representations of practice* (Little, 2003) following the fourth teacher study group in mid-October. The change in teachers' talk corresponded to the state compliance visit at Maravilla School, where state-level auditors from the ADE came to evaluate ELD classrooms for adherence to prescriptions of the four-hour block and other restrictive language policy mandates. In early study group sessions, teachers' representations of practice aligned closely with demands and requirements of the language policy, as teachers utilized institutional discourse in the presence of Cristy, the instructional coach charged to train, prepare, and monitor the ELD teachers to comply with ADE guidelines. Cristy's role as the *instructional coach* mediated the discourse of the teacher study group serving as an *institution identity*, grounded in her position within the institution (i.e., school) that determined her amount or degree of power (Gee, 2000).

Cristy's discourse in the teacher study group was framed by her institution identity of the instructional coach – the school leader responsible for teachers' adherence to state mandates. During the first study group session, Cristy asserted, "But we have to have those four hours. We have to have those subjects, and we have to be teaching them for that amount of time." In this example and others, she utilized *authorization* (Fairclough, 2003), legitimizing her claims through reference to the authority of the institutional language policy. Cristy's discourse emphasized obligation – what teachers "have to" do to remain in compliance with the law.

> *Cristy*: You have to have a language performance objective and the language content
>
> objective written out for that. I mean, they're [district-level employees] running

scared right now because of the documentation that we have to show [to ADE]. And when they [ADE] come in, I don't know if we just do a dog-and-pony show for the day they come in [for compliance audit] and it [instruction] looks a little different.

Author: Well, I want to bring it back [to the study group topic of meaningful instruction]. I feel like so often we get so caught up in the state requirements, which we have to, but let's get back to students, since we said that was going to be our focus.

Cristy: Can I? I mean I am so there with you, I am so – 'cause this is, I mean we've been going round and round with the district as coaches that we're being mandated as coaches that this is the way it has to be for now [strictly following ELD mandates]. And we, they [district-level employees] said, "We know what's best for kids, but we have to do this because we're in corrective action."

Cristy's discourse reflected the urgency for compliance with state mandates – fueled by pressure from the district in preparation for the ADE audit. Assertions such as "You *have to* have a language objective" (emphasis added) and "We *have to* do this because we're in corrective action" (emphasis added) demonstrated Cristy's "have to" statements that legitimized her insistence on following the language policies set by ADE.

Cristy's discourse changed after the October ADE compliance audit of the district. After the looming date had passed, Cristy stated to the study group teachers during the fifth session, "We're still going to be required to teach the time [the required four hours of ELD instruction] but I think we can be a little more – I think we [instructional coaches] felt like with the state coming, it really needs to be cut and dry." The *authorization* (Fairclough, 2003) in her discourse that she used to legitimize the ELD implementations shifted from present (e.g., "We have to do this because we're in corrective action") to past tense (e.g., "We had to apply all of this and follow the rules"). Cristy's utilization of past-tense verbs in the latter study group revealed that the pressures to comply with

ELD mandates had passed with the state audit. This *orientation to practice* (Little, 2002) differed from earlier sessions, where Cristy's emphasis on strict policy compliance closed opportunities for learning. The completed state visit lessened anxiety at the district office, which eased pressure on the school leaders, which reduced constraints on the ELD teachers.

In this fifth study group held in early November, participants' discourse reflected the corresponding change in teachers' orientation to practice, as Cristy's explicit statement related to the waning top-down compliance demands opened opportunities for teacher learning. In this session, which focused on teaching reading in the ELD classroom, participants questioned the staunch reliance on AZELLA scores by school-, district-, and state-level officials, realizing that student interest and motivation to read trumped the data provided by reading fluency scores. By the close of the fifth study group session, teachers started to recognize their ability to negotiate language policy and practice. Building on this policy consciousness of their active roles in language and literacy classroom instruction, teachers collaboratively decided to focus the subsequent study group session on improving and supporting EL student writing. In order to facilitate study group dialog, I asked participants to read a chapter outlining core research related to writing and ELs (Samway, 2006) and bring student writing samples (See Appendix B).

Teachers' talk about language in the penultimate study group. The teachers sat around a group of students' desks for the study group, held in mid-November before school in Marcy's primary classroom. We utilized the first five minutes of the session as we always did, having an "open share" of ELD classroom experiences, including successes, challenges, and stories. Like past sessions, participants focused primarily on the challenges: various teachers shared gripes about large class sizes, while Molly and Andrea discussed frustrations with the considerable number of students with learning disabilities placed in their upper elementary ELD classrooms under the administration's inaccurate assumption that instruction was "slower."

After the allotted five minutes for open share, I facilitated the group to the designated session topic: ELs and writing. We utilized sentence starters (See Appendix B) and an anticipatory set of true-or-false statements (See Appendix C) to begin the discussion. Reflecting on writing instruction in her primary classroom, Marcy asserted, "Writing is so hard at such a young age because they're all working on everything all at once." After Gisela echoed the challenge, both Cristy and Molly empathized that all classrooms had students with varying writing needs and interjected ideas to differentiate writing instruction in English. Thinking back to my own classroom experience with young ELs and writing and drawing from the mediating text (Samway, 2006), I inadvertently shifted the dialog on writing differentiation to specifically hone in on students' native language.

Author: Do they [students] know how to write in Spanish?

Gisela: I have two [students] that do. And sometimes they ask me specifically, "Can I write it in Spanish?" And one girl, she's very, very – she's my one [AZELLA score]. And I said, "Sure, go ahead." But she's one of them that's – as much as she can write English, she tries still. There's some things when she really wants to express herself, she asks [to write in Spanish], and I say, "Sure, go ahead."

Andrea: What do you do with those ones [AZELLA scores]? I have one [student] whose writing is just a blank page [without words] for her. Should I allow her to write in Spanish? Should I encourage her to do that or no?

Author: In my personal opinion, when we talk about teaching writing, the most important part is showing kids the meaning and the purpose behind it. The main purpose in writing is getting your ideas on paper. It's not about writing in a perfect sentence. It's not about writing with perfect grammar, because that comes later. The main idea is to get kids to get their thoughts out on paper, so, I think so, [permit writing in Spanish] until they're ready to transition in. If they're writing in their native language,

they're still practicing getting their ideas on paper. Of course, I would think you'd

want to encourage them eventually to transfer over [to writing in English].

Andrea: Because, right now, it's blank every time we do writing – blank paper, nothing –

unless she copies something off the wall.

Author: That's not helping her at all.

Marcy: (*to Andrea*) Will she talk to you though?

Andrea: Not in English, but in Spanish, oh, yeah. She'll talk to me in Spanish.

After I initiated the question specific to the use of Spanish in the classroom, the same

teachers who had willingly interjected a number of ideas about writing in English went silent.

Teachers appeared skeptical to use transparent representations of practice about the integration of

Spanish writing, due to Cristy's presence and her institution identity as the instructional coach. That

is, the admission of using Spanish in the classroom would go against the English-only mandates that

Cristy was responsible to implement and maintain compliance. After Andrea posed her question

about classroom language use (e.g., "Should I allow her to write in Spanish?"), all teachers looked in

the direction of Cristy and me – their eyes going back and forth between our adjacent seats while I

encouraged the use of Spanish to develop students' writing.

When the concentration of the conversation returned to Andrea's student, Cristy voiced her

consent to Spanish language use, which shifted the orientation to practice and opened up

opportunity for teachers to learn about Spanish integration in ELD writing instruction.

Cristy: I would encourage her to write in Spanish.

Gisela: One of my kids last year, he was writing a lot in Spanish. And I don't know how the

grammar works in Spanish or whatever, but I noticed nothing was capitalized;

nothing was [*sic*], period; so, he was still writing in Spanish. So, I was like, "Okay,

well a sentence has to start with a capital and has to end with a period." That's how I

kind of started it, and then as soon as they got their language and started to feel more

comfortable to start writing in English, that's when it [improvement in writing]

would come.

Molly: And they [students] do [know Spanish], and the other kids in my class can read

Spanish, so their conference partners do the writing process with all these people

that can read Spanish. And then they're assessed on the same rubric, and then they

are so excited to translate it [Spanish] over into English.

Gisela: And it works because it's like, "Who can read Spanish?" "Me, me, me!" "Okay, can

you grade Diana's paper on whatever they're graded on? I don't understand what

she's trying to say." And then they would conference because I can't understand to

conference with her. So, they would conference and talk about why this sentence

even in Spanish doesn't make sense.

Molly: I think it's important that once they do acquire the language that they understand the

objective and skill that you want them to have mastered. And if they're mastering in

Spanish, it'll be a lot easier for them to translate it [writing skill] over to English.

In her role as instructional coach in charge of ELD compliance, Cristy's presence had

previously signaled *norms of interaction* (Little, 2003) to avoid candid discussion of classroom language

use. After she voiced consent to native language use (e.g., "I would encourage her to write in

Spanish"), Gisela and Molly divulged utilization of Spanish to improve students' writing in English.

Teachers first looked nervously to me to respond to all inquiries related to Spanish use in the

classroom, as their integration of Spanish literacy may breach the expectations of restrictive

mandates. Nevertheless, Cristy's comment made teachers appear more at ease with the topic of

language and linguistic medium-of-instruction in the ELD classroom, leading to accurate portrayals

and honest talk about classroom practice. Therefore, when Cristy deconstructed her institution

identity as the staunch enforcer of state language policies, the study group discourse significantly shifted and allowed teachers to respond with more transparent representation of practice, which provided a competing cultural model that demonstrated the value of Spanish and bilingualism.

After this key shift in the sixth study group session, teachers' talk then changed to focus on research-based practices of building upon students' first language abilities, drawing on bilingual principles of EL writing from the mediating text (Samway, 2006) and connecting to transparent representations of practice. After this shift in orientation to practice, teachers went on to discuss the incorporation of English, Spanish, and bilingual mediums-of-instruction in the use of writers' workshop, culturally relevant children's literature as seed ideas for writing, and other meaningful writing experiences for the ELs in their ELD classrooms (See Appendix D), utilizing discourse that resisted the dominant cultural models and skill-based prescriptions of the language policy mandates.

Discussion

Through this qualitative case study of an Arizona teacher study group during a time of policy change to more restrictive guidelines for EL classroom instruction, this study yielded results that responded to three research questions: (a) What are the cultural models reflected in teachers' discourses on ELs? (b) How do teachers' situated identities mediate discourses on ELs? (c) How do teachers' discourses and cultural models of language change over time? Results demonstrated that early in the semester, teachers' talk often reflected dominant cultural models of language that emphasized English for school success and Spanish as external to the school setting. Throughout the semester, the study group provided a locale for the interpretation and negotiation of cultural models; through inquiry into ELD-related topics, changes in teachers' talk occurred over time, despite obstacles provided by Cristy's institutional identity as enforcer of language policy. The penultimate session, following the ELD compliance audit, generated opportunities for teacher learning, as policy demands waned and Cristy tacitly gave permission to dialog about instruction

outside of rigid mandates. The shift in discourse revealed a change in teachers' talk to interrupt the

dominant cultural model of language, in which the use of Spanish in the classroom was a hindrance,

and co-construct a competing cultural model that valued bilingual instruction.

Findings from the first research question signified the impact of the institutional and

sociopolitical context on educators' interpretations of language policy and practice. As demonstrated

in the participants' preliminary discourse early in the study, monolingual cultural models influenced

teachers' interpretation of language policy mandates. Grounded in societal discourse that devalued

bilingualism (González, 2008; Kohut et al., 2006) and institutionalized through English-only

language policies (ADE, 2000, 2008), monolingual cultural models allowed these Arizona teachers to

simplify the complexities of linguistic difference and expectations in the ELD classroom (Cummins,

2000; Gee, 2000, 2005). The discourse of English monolingualism began at the macro-level of the

state government and trickled down through districts, schools, administrators, and teachers; the top-

down approach to Arizona language policy is "an authoritarian way of making policies and … a

form of social and political domination" (Shohamy, 2006, p. 140). Due to the strength of the

institution, dominant cultural models overpowered individual teachers' interpretations – even

veteran educators with strong pedagogical backgrounds (Assaf, 2008).

These mutually constitutive layers of language policy (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996) led to

unnecessary compliance measures based on other actors' interpretations. In the case of Arizona,

Proposition 203 is a two-page document that serves as the primary piece of legislation that governs

instruction of ELs (ADE, 2000). In the top-down implementation of policy, ADE officials read the

law in their own ways and subsequently required administrators and teachers to comply with those

interpretations, even where demonstrably misguided (Combs et al, 2005). For example, teachers

perceived Spanish to be forbidden in the classroom, and even feared job loss if a language other

than English was spoken in the classroom, such as Marcy's poignant recount of a dialog with her

students about Spanish language use in the classroom in this study. Nevertheless, Proposition 203 describes the SEI classroom where "teachers may use a minimal amount of the child's native language when necessary" (ADE, 2000). Although not reflected in compliance measures, Arizona law allows for teachers to utilize students' first language in the classroom (Combs et al, 2005); therefore, teachers can incorporate effective pedagogy for ELs, including first-language instruction (August & Shanahan, 2006), while also adhering to the letter of the law (ADE, 2000).

Findings from the second research question demonstrated the role of participants' power and positionality in the teacher study group, demonstrated by socially situated identities (Gee, 2000, 2005). Asserting authority due to her responsibility to enforce the state requirements for ELD instruction (ADE, 2000, 2008), Cristy mediated the discourse of the study group and demonstrated her elevated rank and status held at Maravilla School in comparison to ELD classroom teachers (Gee, 2000, 2005). Cristy's discourse over the duration of the research reflected the dominance of institutional pressures (ADE, 2008); as the instructional coach afforded a degree of power at Maravilla School (Assaf, 2008), her institutional identity allowed her to shift her discourse as top-down, institutional pressures diminished. When top-down language policies – the main institutional structures that upheld the dominant cultural models of ELD teaching at Maravilla School – were not as strictly enforced, Cristy utilized her agency to hold competing cultural models (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1993; Gee, 2005; Holland & Quinn, 1997) and shift to more practice-centered discourse.

Just as teachers were situated as deferent to the instructional coach, Cristy's position placed her under the authority of the school district and state department; in this way, top-down mandates and pressures (ADE, 2000, 2008), which often came with little time to prepare teachers for proper implementation, mediated Cristy's discourse. When state ELD mandates went into effect, the ADE had yet to completely flesh out the design of the ELD approach to instruction, yet state and district administrators expected teachers to adjust and comply with hastily drawn ELD plans and

requirements (Combs, 2012; Moore, 2012; Wiley, 2012). Through the school year, the state passed along new policy mandates to districts that then pressured schools for immediate compliance. Cristy's disclaimer (e.g., "We just got this information on Monday [two days prior] and are passing it on to you") gave a clear depiction of the quick turn-around expected of teachers to comply with top-down mandates. After the audit passed, the district became more lax in efforts to ensure compliance; Cristy's shift in discourse reflected the modified pressures from the top down (Cummins, 2000), which opened opportunities for ELD teachers' transparent representations of classroom practice (Little, 2002) in study group sessions.

Findings from the third research question confirmed that policy is indeed *appropriated* by various actors (Menken & García, 2010; Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996) and demonstrated the co-construction of language policy appropriation. As demonstrated by individual teachers' discourse, the dominant cultural models espoused on the personal plane differed from those discussed and enacted on the interpersonal plane (Gee, 2005; Rogoff, 1994). Not only were there various *layers of the onion* with individual actors engaged in the language policy process (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996), but the appropriation of one actor directly impacted the appropriation of others. Near the final stages of the trajectory of development (Little, 2002) of the ELD teacher study group, teachers began to destabilize dominant cultural models of language; however, embracing the institution identity (Gee, 2000) of the instructional coach charged with school-based responsibilities related to policy compliance, Cristy needed to open the opportunity for learning through her own shift in policy appropriation. Since the state compliance visit of Maravilla school was conducted a few weeks prior to the sixth study group session, Cristy's less rigid stance on the ELD mandates corresponded to the temporarily relaxed demands placed on her by district- and state-level officials, thus allowing the re-orientation between language policy and practice (Cummins, 2000).

Within this complex and dynamic language policy context in the state of Arizona, the teacher study group provided a collaborative locale for ELD teachers to recognize, interpret, and negotiate laws, policies, and mandates (Birchak et al, 1998; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998). Building on existing literature that critically evaluated Arizona language policy implementation (Combs, 2012; Gándara & Orfield, 2012; Lillie et al., 2010; Martínez-Wenzl et al., 2012; Ríos-Aguilar, et al., 2012a), including the ill-preparedness of some teachers (Arias, 2012; Hopkins, 2012), this study analyzed how teachers interpreted the restrictive mandates, shared expertise and experiences, and negotiated the demands of policy in practice (Birchak et al., 1998; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1998). Nevertheless, while the study group provided a collaborative locale for the interpretation and negotiation of policy and practice, findings did not find that the study group structure itself facilitated the changes in teachers' discourse. Future research is needed to understand how to support teachers in negotiation and appropriation of language policy to best meet the needs of ELs in classrooms and schools. This will differ from extant literature on effective study group practices (Birchak et al., 1998; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006), as restrictive language policy contexts provide unique challenges (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Palmer & Rangel, 2011) to generate opportunities for candid teacher dialog.

Limitations to this study center around the case study design of one Arizona elementary school among thousands that work to implement language policy in practice. The Maravilla ELD teacher study group provided the case of one school-based learning community where a small group of teachers discussed and negotiated language policy and practice (Menken & García, 2010). With research questions that dove into the intricate complexities of the lived realities of ELD teachers at one Arizona school, the case study design and methods allowed for "deep, self-referential probes of problems" (Stake, 1998, p. 401). By nature of the case study design, the goal of research was not to generalize in the conventional sense, but rather to capture the intricacy of one context; however, findings from the ELD teacher study group can *ring true* in other settings to inform situations

beyond the actual case (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). Schools across Arizona face analogous issues in the present circumstances of ELD implementation (García et al., 2012; Lillie et al., 2010). Although this study focused solely on Maravilla School, findings echo realities of other schools facing similar challenges in restrictive policy environments for ELs (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010).

Conclusion

Teachers are at the center of policy formation and implementation (Menken & García, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). These integral policy actors make daily interpretations of and decisions about language use (de Jong, 2008; Stritikus, 2002; Stritikus, & García, 2000; Varghese, 2008) and thus appropriate macro-level language policies in micro-level classroom practice with ELs (Cummins, 2000; Gee, 2005; Levinson & Sutton, 2001). Moving beyond notion of top-down implementation of policy into practice (Cummins, 2000; Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996), teachers must find spaces to collaboratively explore their active roles in language policy, interpret and negotiate the implementation of language policies in practice, and find meaningful ways to merge policies with effective classroom practices for ELs (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012). The resulting co-construction of knowledge and policy appropriation prepares and supports teachers for work with ELs (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005; Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006), which ultimately contributes to closing the EL achievement gap (Fry, 2007) in U.S. classrooms, schools, and communities.

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