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Peer Review

Review of: "Language Policy and Student Language Identities in Bilingual Classrooms: A Hong Kong Primary School"

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This manuscript addresses a significant and timely topic in the field of bilingual education, namely, the intersection of language policy and student language identities. The study focuses on the multilingual context of Hong Kong, which serves as a valuable and appropriate site for examining how language ideologies and school practices shape students' language identities. The manuscript is generally well-written, clearly structured, and contributes to ongoing discussions on bilingual education and identity formation. The following points offer constructive feedback to enhance the manuscript's theoretical rigor, methodological transparency, and clarity for readers.

1. (p.4, Introduction) While the literature review provides a useful overview of relevant research, it would benefit from explicitly drawing on a theoretical framework for understanding language identity and language ideology (e.g., Peirce's Social Identity Theory of Second Language Learning; Norton's theory of language learning and identity). These frameworks could provide stronger conceptual grounding as well as contribute depth to the discussion of findings. This will also help readers understand how the research questions are framed and interpreted.

2. (p.6, 2.2 Participants) The manuscript briefly describes the participants in the abstract, but additional contextual details about the school would improve the interpretability of the findings. In particular, it would be helpful to clarify what is meant by a "bilingual English and Putonghua school" (e.g., Is it EMI or PMI? What are the primary languages of communication among students in informal interactions? Are there official language policies or practices that structure classroom interaction?) Providing these details would allow readers to better understand how the school context supports or constrains the construction

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of student language identities and would contextualize findings related to language use and identity negotiation.

3. (p.7, 2.2 Participants) The six interview participants represent different home language backgrounds. While the manuscript notes that 'the majority of students are first language Cantonese', there might be a concern about whether participants who do not speak Cantonese at home constitute a linguistic minority within the school. The authors are suggested to consider whether this variation could influence findings on identity construction and the extent to which school practices accommodate minority language speakers. Addressing this point would strengthen the interpretation of the results.

4. (p.7, 3 Method) Readers may be interested in knowing more about the interview procedures, including the language in which the interviews were conducted and whether they were one-on-one or group interviews. Adding some details of the interview methodology here would enhance transparency, such as what was the language of the interviews?

5. (p.8, 3 Method) While it is informative to provide examples of questions, it would be helpful to specify whether the interviews were semi-structured and whether examples of the questions were asked to every participant. Providing these details will help readers in the understanding and interpretation of subsequent findings.

6. (p.8, 3 Method) The manuscript employs Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. A brief introduction to the framework would be helpful for readers unfamiliar with it (e.g., a figure, a brief mention, or a list of the six-phase process).

7. (p.8, 3 Method) It is also important to clarify whether one or multiple researchers were involved in coding and analysis, and whether the coders were also data collectors (e.g., interviewers, classroom observers, field-note takers) or independent researchers.

8. (p.8, 3 Method) As mentioned in the abstract, 'quantitative analysis was used to compare the amount of time different languages were used during classroom sessions'. This quantitative component should also be mentioned in the Method section.

9. (p.8, 4 Findings) Providing a brief introduction to the organization of the Findings section would be helpful for readers. For example, the authors could note that the subsections in Findings are organized by data type (interview, classroom observation). However, I personally think a better way to organize the findings is to integrate different types of data and organize the sections around the key themes, especially when both the 'interview' and 'classroom observation' sections contain the overlapping theme

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“language hegemony.” Integrating different types of data might improve readability and highlight the triangulation of data sources.

Overall, this manuscript presents a valuable contribution to the study of bilingual education and student language identities in Hong Kong. With minor revisions in clarifying theoretical grounding, methodological details, and findings organization, it will contribute to our understanding of second language learning and language identity.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.