

Voices from the Margin

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Abstract

The political dimensions of language learning have attracted much attention and debate in the area of Applied Linguistics and across interdisciplinary fields in recent years (Canagarajah, 1999; Giampapa, 2004; Goldstein, 2003; Ibrahim, 1999; Morgan, 1997; Pennycook, 2000, 2001; Toohey, 2001). Central to the question are the critical understandings of social reproduction in education, showing how schools are part of society, reflecting and reproducing social relations (Giroux, 1983). From this perspective, therefore, language learning is no longer conceived of as an abstract cognitive process, but as a highly complex social and cultural process through which learners' identities are mediated through the social contexts as well as every day language. (Norton Pierce, 1995; Van Lier, 2001)

My critical ethnography investigates the language classroom as a domain imbued with relations of power, constructed through the continuous legitimization process in various discourse practices. The classroom under investigation teaches Korean as a foreign language at a post-secondary institution in Canada. My particular interest is two fold: 1) ways in which particular discourses promoted and legitimized in the language classroom disadvantage a certain group of learners, thereby marginalizing and placing them on the periphery; 2) ways in which those periphery learners cope with these 'Centre Discourses' (Giddens, 1984). In approaching the topic, I will link the periphery language learners' linguistic, cultural and social lived experiences to their macroscopic and transnational experiences, thereby exploring what it means for them to learn Korean language in this highly globalized world.