

Between monolingual policy and multilingual classrooms: Mapping the ideological frameworks of Flemish teachers

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Teachers are at the epicentre of language education policies, as they interpret, negotiate, resist, and (re)create language policies in their classrooms. As such, they are not solely "servants of the system" or "bureaucrats that follow orders unquestioningly" (Shohamy 2006:76): teachers fulfil a pivotal role in between language policy, often imposed on school top-down by the government, and the everyday classroom practice (Menken & García 2010). Especially in regions where the language-in-education policy is strictly monolingual, as opposed to classrooms increasingly becoming multilingual and superdiverse environments, it is difficult for teachers to uphold a firm position: on the one hand they are supposed to abide by the rules, firmly ingrained in their mindsets by teacher training programmes, rules and legislations, on the other hand their focal point should be what their pupils need, by making the correct (linguistic) choices and decisions (e.g. Hélot 2010).

In Flanders, the northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, this gap between monolingual policy and multilingual classrooms is incessantly widening. Flanders counts a growing number of immigrants and languages. At the same time, on an intralingual level, Tussentaal ('in-between-language') emerges as a cluster of intermediate varieties between the Flemish dialects and Standard Dutch, gradually becoming the colloquial language. The Flemish language-in-education policy deals with these (perceived) problems of multilingualism and substandardisation by imposing a strict monolingual policy, propagating Standard Dutch as the only acceptable language variety (AUTHOR & De Caluwe 2014). This paper analyses the very different ways in which 80 Flemish teachers of primary and secondary schools try to make sense of this gap between policy and practice, and how they act upon what is expected from them in a classroom context. By combining participant observation data and interview data, we attempt to map their personal ideological frameworks, in order to uncover the capricious ways in which teachers respond to language education policies.