



Li Wei. (2014). Negotiating funds of knowledge and symbolic competence in the complementary school classrooms. *Language and Education*, 28(2), 161-180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2013.800549>

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: To examine how students and teachers in minority language schools in the U.K. negotiate funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge.

FRAMEWORKS: (1) families' and communities' funds of knowledge¹; (2) symbolic competence: "ability not only to approximate or appropriate for oneself someone else's language, but to shape the very context in which the language is learned and used"²; (3) translanguaging pedagogy³.

HYPOTHESES: How do teachers and students—all individuals with diverse backgrounds—deal with the discrepancies in their funds of knowledge? What can they learn from each other apart from linguistic structures? (p. 163) [But the study doesn't really go into individual diversity; rather, it seems to set up contrasts between teachers as monocultural, sometimes Mandarin-hegemonic, and students as hybrid English-Chinese or Cantonese-Chinese.]

PARTICIPANTS: Students in "complementary" schools in Britain that teach minority languages to young heritage speakers, principally on weekends; these particular K-12 students were ethnically Chinese, attending complementary schools in London, Manchester, and Newcastle

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS: Sampled 1 Cantonese and 1 Mandarin school in each city (6 schools). Did audio/video recordings during class and break time. Focused on 10–12-year-olds.

MAJOR FINDINGS: Teachers Chinese-dominant (moved to U.K. as adults; may be there temporarily) and kids English-dominant (born/raised in U.K.). Teachers learn

from the kids that some of the vocab they are teaching are words borrowed from English into Chinese languages (p. 167). A teacher may focus on Mandarin but some Cantonese creeps in from Cantonese-speaking kids (pp. 167). Kids correct teachers' English pronunciation (p. 169). A teacher teaches the kids to write in Chinese characters while kids teach the teacher to write in Roman numerals (pp. 170-171). Teachers and kids can have different understandings of vocab (e.g., the teacher doesn't get that elderly living in "the home" can mean care home rather than family home" (p. 171).

There is disagreement on whether Taiwan is part of China (p. 172). A teacher struggles to make students see the "importance" of a unified motherland (p. 174). The curriculum focuses on traditional culture of China rather than the pop culture of the Chinese diaspora (p. 175). Teachers and students reflect on terminology in relation to their identities—e.g., ethnic Chinese, overseas Chinese, British Chinese (pp. 175-176); Mandarin may have higher status globally, but Cantonese has power/influence at the local level (p. 177).

LIMITATIONS: Did not report on participant checking, or how participants themselves saw the interactions (e.g., Did teachers really assume Chinese kids in the U.K. should be or become like kids in China or Hong Kong? (p. 178)

IMPLICATIONS: Heritage language students don't just learn from teachers; they negotiate funds of knowledge in the complementary school classroom.

¹Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; ²Kramersch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 665;

³García & Li, 2014