

Underprivileged Ethnic Minority Students' Language Learning Experience in Shadow Education: A Multilingual Motivational Self Perspective

In many non-English-speaking countries, ethnic minority students tend to be linguistically and academically disadvantaged due to inadequate communication opportunities in English and the language of the migrated place. These can adversely affect their academic performance and motivation to learn these languages. What exacerbates such disadvantages is the global prevalence of private supplementary tutoring, or “shadow education”, particularly in contexts that emphasise academic performativity. In Hong Kong, many secondary school students invest in private tutoring in Chinese and English because these are core subjects in the local school curriculum. Passing these subjects is the prerequisite for university admission. Nevertheless, although they may be proficient in Cantonese and spoken English, ethnic minority students usually find these language examinations challenging, not just because they learn them as second/foreign languages but they may also not possess the necessary literacy or skills to tackle the public examinations. Private supplementary tutoring offers support in these aspects, but many ethnic minority students either cannot afford the tuition fees or the services catering for their needs are not widely available. Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) offer low/free-fee supplementary tutoring for underprivileged ethnic minority students (i.e., those from low-income families) to help them catch up with their studies and integrate into the local community. Their language learning experience in this type of tutoring is still underexplored. Since motivation plays a significant role in language learning success, this study will draw on the Multilingual Motivational Self System to understand how underprivileged ethnic minority students' language learning experience in supplementary tutoring interacts with their multilingual selves and shapes their motivational dynamics. In line with the recent “multilingual turn” in applied linguistics research, this study will capture the complexity of multilingual individuals' motivations as mediated by contexts. Through narrative inquiry, it will analyse the language learning experience in relation to the future language selves of 30 underprivileged ethnic minority students receiving supplementary tutoring. Participants will be recruited through three NGOs. Data will be collected through three rounds of in-depth individual interviews, supplemented by the participants' self-plotted “motigraphs”, informal conversations with the participants' parents and tutors and documents. This study seeks to gather thick description of ethnic minority students' narrative experiences to generate theoretical understanding of their dynamic multilingual motivational selves. The findings will yield theoretical insights in language motivation research and offer practical advice on how underprivileged ethnic minority students can be better supported in language learning in mainstream and shadow education.