

From Macro to Micro: A Summary of Dr. Angel Lin's Research over Time

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Abstract: This article provides a comprehensive overview of Dr. Angel Lin's scholarly contributions, spanning various periods from her early research endeavors in Hong Kong to her recent work in Canada. Employing a chronological approach, it delves into the distinct phases of Lin's research trajectory, examining how her scholarship has evolved over time. By contextualizing her work within the socio-cultural milieu of each respective period, the article offers insights into the interconnectedness between Lin's research interests and the prevailing social conditions. Through this analysis, readers gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of Lin's academic pursuits and their broader implications within the field of study.

Keywords: Chronological Analysis, Hong Kong, Canada, Socio-Cultural Context, Academic Pursuits, Social Conditions, Interdisciplinary Study

Introduction

Dr. Angel Lin is an esteemed Professor of Education at Simon Fraser University's Faculty of Education, recognized for her extensive experience spanning over two decades, and is currently appointed as the Canada Research Chair in Plurilingual & Intercultural Education. She received her Master's degree in applied linguistics from the University of Hong Kong in 1990. In 1996, she obtained her Ph.D. from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, Canada, marking the beginning of her academic journey.

This article summarizes and introduces the characteristics of Lin's research and works in different periods in a chronological analysis from the period of Lin's research in Hong Kong, which is the early stage of her research, to her recent research in Canada, and interprets them in the context of the social situation in each period.

I encountered Lin's articles during my undergraduate studies, and being an Asian student, I found a profound resonance with numerous academic perspectives and concepts woven throughout her work. As I pursued my master's degree, I discovered that my supervisor, Dr. Susan Ballinger, shared a parallel passion for research, particularly in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Therefore, I am compelled to craft this article to delve into Lin's remarkable research trajectory. Although I have never met Lin in person, her research has had a great impact on me; it especially made me start focusing on the relationship between language learning and student identity. I am writing this article in the hope that more people will pay attention to Asian researchers in Canada, especially Chinese-Canadian researchers, and their contributions to the field of second language education research.

1995-2005

Lin's early research focused on local English language teaching in Hong Kong, with topics such as language alternation in foreign language classrooms, the relationship between bilingual education and language isolation, intrinsic motivation and second language acquisition. Since this phase of Lin's publications were completed around the time of the transfer of Hong Kong's sovereignty from Britain to China, the educational context of her publications is very much of the time.

In the article "Resistance and creativity in English reading lessons in Hong Kong", Lin keenly perceives the problem in English reading classrooms in Hong Kong is that teachers do not intend to develop students' critical thinking skills. She believes that teachers should reflect on their role in the classroom. In other words, do they really want to serve the test-based education system and produce students who lack critical thinking skills (Lin, 1999)? Lin emphasizes that literacy alone is an uncritical extraction of information, but teachers can enhance students' critical thinking by discussing various ideas about reading with them (Lin, 1999). Teachers in working-class schools have a large degree of control over their students' futures, as they can choose to be part of the social machine that allows their

students to fill bottom-paying jobs in the future (Lin, 1999). However, they can also tap into their students' potential to develop critical skills and go beyond the types of literacy and literacy prescribed by the curriculum (Lin, 1999).

In her article "Bilingual education in Hong Kong," Lin discusses why Hong Kong should retain bilingual education, which is English and Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese), and the significance of bilingual education for Hong Kong. She emphasizes that although most people in Hong Kong are native Chinese speakers, English is socio-economically dominant and therefore it is essential for most Hong Kong people, especially the younger generation, to learn English (Lin, 1997). In the article, she identifies a major difficulty in the implementation of bilingual and even multilingual education in Hong Kong as the gap between language use in the home and language use in school (Lin, 1997). Lin believes that bilingual/multilingual education is crucial to the development of Hong Kong society because it will facilitate the exploration of students' potential and produce more elite individuals for the society (Lin, 1997).

In 2000, Lin published "Deconstructing 'Mixed Code'". She deconstructed the mixed code by using the transcription of classroom discourse from previous studies as an example of policy analysis of the then Education Commission Report in Hong Kong. In this article, she mentions that in 1990, when Hong Kong was a British colony, the government issued *Education Commission Report No. 4 (ECR4)*, which officially used "mixed code" as a name to disparage bilingual classrooms (Lin, 2000). The term "mixed code" is no longer used in today's academic world. It refers to "the practice of using both Cantonese (L1) and English (L2) in the Hong Kong secondary school classroom" (Lin, 2000, p. 182). The mixed code referred to by the British Hong Kong government at the time was similar to what we would call "code switching" today, because both types of code usage refer to the alternating use of more than one language or its variants in a conversation. Lin argues that to grasp language and education issues in Hong Kong, we must question the idea of mixed code in media and understand social interactions in context without biased perspectives. In the article "Bilingualism or linguistic segregation? Symbolic domination, resistance and code switching in Hong Kong schools," she argues that the dominance of English in Hong Kong's economy, which led many students with limited English proficiency to struggle to obtain an English education due to socio-economic values, was in fact a manifestation of the British government's colonialism (Lin, 1996). Although the British colonial government discouraged the use of mixed code in the classroom and considered it a pidgin language, Lin believes that Hong Kong schools should retain two (or even more) languages in the classroom (Lin, 1996). She advocates for educators to research and improve bilingual education so that it may change the symbolic and permanent dominance of English in Hong Kong society (Lin, 1996).

From 1995-2005, Lin had just received her PhD and was based in Hong Kong. During this period, English education in Hong Kong was changing in response to the ideological changes that occurred as a result of the Chinese takeover of Hong Kong, and Lin focused heavily on the relationship between English education and social change in Hong Kong and contributed to the future of English/bilingual/multilingual education in Hong Kong.

2005-2015

The period 2005-2015 was a period of marked transition for Lin's research concerns, as her research shifted from a focus on broad sociolinguistic topics in the Hong Kong context, such as discourse and the politics of self-censorship in Hong Kong, to a greater focus on CLIL in the field of second language education.

In 2008, Lin published a book chapter, "Respect for Da Chopstick Hip Hop", which discusses the relationship between Cantopop (Cantonese pop songs) and the identity of Hong Kong people as a part of China. Lin argues that Cantopop is a very special presence in popular music because it marks a different kind of identity for Hong Kong people from that of the British colony and mainland China after more than 150 years of rule by the British colonial government (Lin, 2008). Interestingly, Lin's article also discusses the

cultural significance of Cantonese and English in Cantopop, as well as the possible “war crime” provocations behind some of the local slang and swear words, all of which are inextricably linked to Hong Kong’s turbulent history (Lin, 2008). “Respect for Da Chopstick Hip Hop” is a representative article from the period before Lin focused entirely on the field of second language education. Although Lin’s research interests remain language-related, her focus is more on the social phenomenon of Hong Kong after being taken over by China.

During this period, Lin began working with Ryuko Kubota, who later became a renowned professor of race and anti-racism at the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia. In 2012, Lin and Kubota co-authored the journal article “Race And TESOL: Introduction to Concepts and Theories”. In this article, they noted that Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) means “[bringing] people from various racialized backgrounds together in teaching, learning, and research” (Kubota & Lin, 2006, p. 471). Concepts such as race, racialization and racism are therefore inevitable topics in the TESOL field, and this can be applied not only in Canada but also worldwide (Kubota & Lin, 2006). They argue that the field of TESOL has not adequately addressed the issue of race and related concepts, so their study is one of the first attempts to fill the gap (Kubota & Lin, 2006). In this article, they investigate the key concepts and theories of race ethnicity, nationality, and culture as they relate to TESOL (Kubota & Lin, 2006). Unlike her previous studies, this article marks the beginning of Lin’s greater engagement with, and collaboration with, Western (especially North American) researchers and a greater focus of research interests on English language education.

In the years that followed, Lin focused more on how CLIL is practiced in the classroom and its possible future development. In her article “Special issue: Designing multilingual and multimodal CLIL frameworks for EFL students” co-authored with Yuen Yi Lo, they analyze the distinction between content-based instruction, immersion, and CLIL by referring and citing theories and findings from previous research. In the article, they cite Lyster and Ballinger’s (2011) article, which summarizes the characteristics of CLIL as “a continuum of programmes which can be differentiated based on their orientation towards language and/or content” (Lo & Lin, 2015, p. 262). Although such a summary sounds comprehensive, as it takes into account the situation of CLIL in almost all countries, “the only criterion of ‘language-content orientation’ may not be sufficient to unravel the complexities involved in different programmes” (Lo & Lin, 2015, p. 262). In the article, they address the similarities between CLIL and immersion programmes, citing Lasagabaster and Sierra’s (2010) contention that “there are some important differences between CLIL and immersion programmes” (p. 367). Although, Lasagabaster and Sierra’s (2010) argument mentions the connection between CLIL and immersion programs, it is generally considered unclear or untenable due to the lack of clear evidence, although the similarities between CLIL and immersion programs may be objective (Somers & Surmont, 2012, p. 113).

Lo and Lin (2015) argue that the spread of CLIL is inherently controversial because it is based on a deep-rooted ideology of “linguistic purism”, which discourages teachers and students from using and sharing their first language in the classroom. In classroom practice, it ignores the potentially effective role that L1 (first language) can play in the cognitive functioning and sociocultural identity development of bilinguals (Cummins, 1979; Kroll et al., 2002), which leads teachers to use some of the students’ existing linguistic and cultural resources in the CLIL classroom to alleviate the pain that students are experiencing but could have avoided (Lo & Lin, 2015). Based on Lin’s (2012) framework, they advocate the development of viable multilingual and multimodal lessons for CLIL in EFL contexts and want to help students acquire L2 (second language) while valuing students’ L1(s) in their own right (Lo & Lin, 2015).

In the same year, Lin published the article “Conceptualising the potential role of L1 in CLIL”. In this article, Lin critically reviews the deep-rooted monolingual principles that inform the pedagogy of the CLIL curriculum, discusses how to conceptualize the potential role of L1 in CLIL and how to extend content-based instruction (CBI), and she makes recommendations for future research in CLIL. Lin sees the potential of CLIL in particular in balancing the role of L1 and target language in the curriculum, which is fundamentally different from the traditional L2 immersion model. She emphasizes that although there is a serious lack of research on the use of L1 in CLIL, based on existing research it is possible to conclude that there are potential benefits of L1 for learners’ language development (Lin, 2015). Monolingual immersion ideology continues to dominate many contexts of CLIL instruction in a number of international locations, especially in Asia where L2 English has long been used as a medium of instruction in many government and official policies

(Lin, 2015). Lin (2015) argues that this monolingual immersion ideology has not developed worldwide as a result of a single factor, which includes but is not limited to the pedagogical philosophy of teaching the target language (L2) only through the target language, and the use of L1 stereotypes in the classroom. Lin (2015) suggests that the potential benefits of using L1 in the CLIL classroom are numerous, such as deepening awareness of the native and target language, developing multilingual interests and attitudes, and improving overall target language proficiency.

In the decade 2005-2015, Lin's research interests have not only shifted significantly, but she has also consistently advocated for the use of L1 in CLIL classrooms from multiple perspectives. Lin argues that allowing only students in the classroom and teachers in the target language in the classroom is detrimental to students' language development and therefore should create a bilingual or even multilingual learning environment for students by allowing students to freely use their L1.

2015-2023

In 2018, Lin moved to Simon Fraser University in Canada, where she was appointed as a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Plurilingual and Intercultural Education, further cementing her status as a leading expert in the field. In recent years, Lin has continued to focus on and analyze the use of CLIL in bilingual/multilingual educational settings from different perspectives.

In the same year, Lin and Ron Darvin and Yuen Yi Lo published the article "Examining CLIL through a Critical Lens". They argue that CLIL is a site for the formulation and struggle of different language ideologies and pedagogical beliefs. For example, in Taiwan, the "English-only" approach and the dominant ideology of "native English" have had a terrible impact on national policy, classroom language policy, and teacher hiring policy, among other things. This ideology has been shaped in large part by the strong desire of Taiwan's political leaders in recent years for Taiwan to participate in the global arena (Darvin et al., 2020). The negotiation of rights between language and content teachers when working together is also a manifestation of the struggle in the CLIL field (Darvin et al., 2020). While integration of language and content is essential in the CLIL approach to teaching and learning, it is rare to find true integration in real practice (Darvin et al., 2020). This is because in CLIL practice, the roles or responsibilities of language and content teachers are often unclear (Darvin et al., 2020). Such ambiguity typically requires a process of negotiation to resolve it, which is always constrained by power and involves not only the teachers but also the institution defining their roles and hierarchies (Darvin et al., 2020).

In 2022, Lin and Yanming (Amy) Wu co-authored the book chapter "Thematic patterns, Cognitive Discourse Functions, and genres: Towards an Integrative Model for CLIL" in 2012. In the chapter, they designed a comprehensive framework for CLIL pedagogy and learning assessment to clarify the need for assessment tasks and diagnose the performance of sample students, and to help CLIL practitioners and researchers (especially content teachers) analyze and design different learning assessment tasks (Wu & Lin, 2022). They use an illustrative example of a high-stakes CLIL biology assessment task from Hong Kong to show readers the issues that teachers commonly face in today's CLIL classrooms (Wu & Lin, 2022). Although they refer to the example from Hong Kong, the example can be a good reflection of the current situation in not only local CLIL classrooms in Hong Kong, as the primary context in which EMI (English Medium Instruction)/CLIL is offered in Hong Kong secondary schools is similar to the EMI/CLIL contexts in Asia and Europe (Wu & Lin, 2022). The generality represented by the example is important because it determines the extent to which the models in this chapter can be applied, i.e., locally or internationally.

In the writing section of the student's paper, they found that although the student in the example demonstrated an awareness of the topic in writing that met expectations, the biology teacher scored the communication of this essay response as zero because its content did not meet the expectations of the course assessment (Wu & Lin, 2022). "[Students] showed that they were capable of memorizing various facts on different topics; however, rarely could they select and link up related facts to produce a coherent and logical essay" (HKEAA, 2014, p. 57). It suggests that students face considerable difficulty in applying content and concepts from the classroom to their daily lives. The example in the chapter exemplifies the fact that content tends to be given more weight than language in the assessment criteria of the CLIL in Hong Kong (Wu &

Lin, 2022). However, students' learning of content in CLIL classrooms is sometimes not as effective as it could be (Wu & Lin, 2022). Thus, they synthesized previous theories and designed the Integrative Model for CLIL that can help CLIL researchers and practitioners better understand and conceptualize CLIL, for example by clarifying what constitutes mastery and ability to apply content knowledge in a CLIL context from an integrated content and language perspective (Wu & Lin, 2022).

Finally, Wu and Lin (2022) called for the inclusion of language learning objectives in content syllabi and for allowing students to engage in classroom learning in a CLIL approach in a cross-linguistic context, which they believe would better support teachers in the classroom (Wu & Lin, 2022).

In 2023, Lin, together with Yuen Yi Lo and Yiqi Liu, published the journal article "Exploring content and language co-construction in CLIL with semantic waves". In the article, they mentioned that CLIL is now becoming increasingly popular worldwide and is often used as part of bilingual education programs (Lo et al., 2023). It is worth acknowledging that in the CLIL approach, non-linguistic content subjects provide a more authentic communicative environment for students to learn the target language. However, learning abstract concepts and academic language simultaneously using L2 in the classroom can be a great challenge for CLIL students. Therefore, they simulate the classroom practice of unpacking and repacking with semantic waves and use two CLIL lessons in Hong Kong as examples. Their analysis showed that in CLIL classrooms, teachers usually work from abstract and lexical phenomena, "through technical terms (i.e. power words) and nominalisation with grammatical metaphor and passivisation (i.e. power grammar)" (Lo et al., 2023, p. 307). Then, teachers employ different strategies, such as L1/L2 everyday domains, everyday life examples, and multimodality, to unpack conceptual and academic language (Lo et al., 2023). Although unpacking is helpful for students' language and content learning in CLIL, it is not the complete package, as unpacking alone may not help students express their content knowledge in appropriate academic language in L2, and repacking is essential (Lo et al., 2023). During the repacking phase, teachers typically summarize orally and in written form through oral summaries, note taking, repetition with variation, and scaffolded written exercises (Lo et al., 2023). The unpacking and repacking process leads to semantic waves, which is the key to students' accumulated knowledge.

Recent publications by Lin have often taken a more critical perspective in analyzing different aspects of the CLIL classroom. Lin's articles from this period are often more conceptually complex, as some of the conceptual/theoretical frameworks involved are based on the findings of many previous studies. She focuses more on the ideologies within the classroom and attempts to address micro issues from a macro perspective.

Conclusion

Dr. Lin's research has undergone a dramatic transformation over the past almost three decades. Her research focus has shifted from phenomena to concepts and from Hong Kong to the world. Her research covers a wide range of areas including language, identity, culture, and more. In particular, she explores the benefits of CLIL as an innovative approach to language education, examining its impact on language proficiency, cognitive development, and academic achievement. By investigating the pedagogical practices and outcomes of CLIL, Dr. Lin's research provides valuable insights into the potential benefits of CLIL and helps to promote CLIL as an effective educational approach for language learners in a variety of contexts. Lin's pioneering research spans across various epochs, consistently heralding ahead of its time. With meticulous attention, she delved into the intricate dynamics of language usage among students within the classroom. Her ground-breaking approach advocated for the fluid integration of students' preferred languages, fostering a rich linguistic environment conducive to learning and expression. Overall, Dr. Lin's work has practical implications for language educators, policymakers, and researchers, contributing to the advancement of the field of linguistics and promoting effective language learning and intercultural communication practices.

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