

**Polite Chinese Children Revisited:  
Creativity, resistance and the use of codeswitching by British Chinese children  
in complementary schools.**

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The ideology of monolingualism prevails throughout society, including within minority ethnic communities who are bilingual and multilingual. Some minority ethnic communities in Britain believe that the response to the dominance of English language is to replace it with other languages. Complementary schools – language and culture classes organised by minority ethnic communities – often impose a One Language Only or One Language at a Time policy. There is still widespread fear of bilingual and multilingual practices such as codeswitching.

Drawing on data from an ESRC-funded research project on multilingual practices in complementary schools, this paper examines the use of codeswitching by Chinese-English bilingual children as a symbolic and creative resource. A particular focus is on the tensions between the school ideologies and policies and the actual practices by the teachers and pupils, as well as the differences between the teachers and pupils' language proficiencies and preferences. Examples of codeswitching will be used to show how the pupils resist the OLON and OLAT policies, and how they manipulate their language proficiency to undermine the teachers' authority and gain control of classroom interaction.