

Native languages as secret languages

Ariadna Saiz Mingo, asmingo@ubu.es UBU / IESabroad Granada.

Virginia Díaz Gorriti, virginia.diaz@ehu.eus, EHU_ Universidad del País Vasco.

Keywords: lenguas maternas, alumnado migrado, creencias, educación primaria

Abstract

An immigrant pupil's 'belonging' to a Mother Tongue, in the sense of the language spoken at home as a child (Montrul, 2013:3), carries with it the baggage of beliefs associated with that 'belonging', in themselves the result of a shared social message. The main objective of this paper is to study the immigrant children's own beliefs about their multilingualism, and to propose a narrative for use in Primary Education that allows such pupils to make sense of their linguistic situation.

The activity is centred around a free text composition, with thematic suggestions made in relation to the different Mother Tongues, contexts and associated experiences, and then ultimately to encourage the pupils to draw portraits of themselves speaking their Mother Tongues. The texts were elaborated by pupils at primary schools in Burgos and Granada. Above all we were interested in what the children themselves felt about their linguistic situation, the identity that emerged from their writings and drawings, and how they regarded their linguistic potential.

Employing a qualitative methodology and subjecting the texts to discourse analysis we attempted to relate individual cases to more general configurations, and to identify distinctive and really significant elements, "(...) conectar lo particular con las configuraciones posibles y localizar en lo particular lo que es distintivo, lo que difiere, porque esto es lo significativo." (Palou y Fons, 2012: 4). As these same authors note, referring to Pavlenko (2007) and the discursive nature of these texts, it is not so much a question of drawing up a list of contents, but rather of demonstrating connections between themes and means of expression: "They should be treated as discursive constructions, and as such be subject to analysis that considers their linguistic, rhetorical, and interactional properties, as well as the cultural, and social contexts in which they were produced and that shape both the tellings and the omissions". (Pavlenko, 2007: 181).

By way of conclusion, we anticipate a range of beliefs oscillating between pleasure and pride being taken in speaking a language different to that of their classmates, and more ambivalent reactions as to whether to speak or not their Mother Tongue in certain contexts. In this sense, we note Norton's belief in the importance of the reception given to the immigrant and by extension to the linguistic heritage which they bring to the classroom "(...) the extent to which a language learner speaks or is silent, and writes, reads, or resists has much to do with the extent to which the learner is valued in any given community. Language is thus theorized not only as a linguistic system, but also

as a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated".
Norton (2008: 126)

References

Norton B. (2008) *Identity, Language Learning, and Critical Pedagogies*. In: Hornberger N.H. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. Springer, Boston, MA

Palou, J. y Fons, M. (2012). *Historias de vida y reflexividad en los procesos de formación para la enseñanza de lenguas en entornos plurilingües*. Comunicació en Histórias de Vida em Educação. Oporto

Pavlenko, A. (2007). *Autobiographic Narratives as Data in Applied Linguistics*. *Applied Linguistics* nº 28/2, pp.163-188.

Montrul, S. (2013). *El bilingüismo en el mundo hispanohablante*. Malden; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.