

Analysis of an interview with immigrant children in quebec

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Interview with Immigrant Children in Quebec How do a selected group of Brazilian children position themselves in relation to language, culture and identity?

Every child benefits from the cultural context of the parents. The first language they learn to use is that of the parents and then they may slowly start learning other languages in cases where their social circles, mostly friends use a different language. Similarly, Brazilian children will develop their identity from that established by their parents. In most cases, if parents are originally Brazilian as in this case the children will identify with this culture. In cases where the parents adapt a new culture the child's identity is hedged on the parent's decision to completely depart from their initial culture or to stick to it (Johnson, 2009). In a situation where the parents choose to stick with the initial culture then the children's identity does not change. These children will still identify with the Brazilian culture; however, this is different if the parents decide to completely depart from their indigenous culture. Unfortunately, this cannot be said in the case of a language. Children will by default adopt the language widely used by the larger society, this explains why in the interview the children attested to be slowly forgetting Portuguese but developing their use of French and to some extent English.

This observation is best explained by a look at the sociocultural perspective which identifies social context as critical to learning. Further, it stresses the importance of social interaction, communication and instruction to learning not to mention that the social environment is identified as not only a place where learning takes place but one that is critical to the learning process

(Johnson & Golombek, 2010).

How do these children perceive language in their immigration experience?

These children perceive language as a mere means of communication. To them, using Portuguese at home or French/English in school does not represent anything but is only an enabling element. The language enables interactions and social contact with their classmates and teachers. This is different from the parents who view language as a source of identity which explains their insistence on the children's use of Portuguese at home.

Perhaps the parents are afraid that failure to use the language will mean losing their identity. Additionally, the children view biliteracy as more of an advantage as it allows them to have a taste of both worlds (Rivera & Huerta-Macías, 2008). This feeling is not shared by the parents as these look at biliteracy as a way of draining the children's prowess in the indigenous Portuguese language.

How do these children perceive their Portuguese language to influence their social behaviors?

The children perceive the Portuguese language as a barrier to their social life. However, this feeling is only dominant in the school context as at home the language is more the "official language". To explain this perception, these children are in a school where the teachers and the rest of the pupils insist on using French or English to some extent. This preferred language is strange to them even though they are slowly learning to communicate.

Therefore, at the beginning failure to understand this language is a barrier to communication and thus a stumbling block. This changes as they learn the language, they can play, attend birthdays, and invite friends over to their

place which is an alteration of their initial social behavior.

How do these children feel about their linguistic identities? Do they feel more Brazilians or Quebecers?

Culturally, the children still retain an aspect of the Brazilian culture this is evident from the girl's response when she cites that she feels more Brazilian. This feeling emanates from living with a Brazilian family. Socially, the children feel Quebecers as they have had to adopt the Quebecers way of doing things. This is evident from the boy's response that the parent's work schedule only allows them to spend time together on Saturdays, Sundays and evenings which is the Quebecers way.

References

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