

Linguistic reception of Latin American students in Catalonia and their responses to educational language policies

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This study explores the connections between language policy implementation in three Barcelona-area secondary schools and the language attitudes and behaviors of Spanish-speaking Latin American newcomers. Data were collected through interviews and ethnographic participant observation document indexes of different forms of language socialization processes and highlight the role of teachers and of 'Reception Classes' (RCs) in which students receive Catalan language support. Different RC models and placements of the RC in the school have effects on those processes and the students' attitudes toward Catalan and schooling. Deficient models result from lack of institutional support and unfavorable conditions of the RC in the school. Positive models result from individual teacher initiative and commitment to move beyond basic language teaching and include broader social and academic objectives for newcomers. We conclude that language policy meeting goals requires consistent commitment at all levels from policy-makers to individual teachers.

Keywords: Catalan; immigration; language attitudes; language policy; secondary school; language socialization

1. Introduction

The present study is part of a larger project that explores the interaction between language policy and the linguistic reception of immigrant adolescents in Catalonia, specifically in the Barcelona metropolitan area.¹ In this part of the research we focus on one subset of these: Spanish-speaking Latin Americans who arrived as teens and so attend Catalan language support classes in their secondary schools. Evidently, immigrant students experience different language socialization processes than peers born and raised in the receptor society and those who arrive before puberty, the so-called Generation 1.5. These processes may not afford the newcomers the same degrees of accommodation to the discourses and practices prevalent in that society, including those that constitute educational and broader social goals (Duff 2008).

The key concept here, language socialization, is defined by Garrett (2007, 233) as 'the human developmental process whereby a child or other novice (of any age) acquires communicative competence . . . enabling him or her to interact meaningfully with others and otherwise participate in the social life of a given community.' Such

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