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SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF LANGUAGES AMONG PRIMARY EDUCATION PUPILS IN CATALONIA

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Abstract

In our globalized society, the mastery of languages is everyday becoming more indispensable to inhabit the world. However, not all the languages are perceived under the same conception. The present article intends to analyze the social representation of English and other languages between primary education pupils in Catalonia. For this reason, a qualitative case study will be developed among 7 and 8 year old pupils: all of them, at least, bilinguals. The method, which will include interviews, will be the biographical method. Discussions and interviews will be all recorded for further study. After, specific cases will be analyzed in order to obtain results. These results showed that social representations are essential: plurilingual students at early stages do not show dislike for any language although they do show preference for certain ones, in accordance with their closest environment.

Finally, I would recommend further research to obtain generalized representations and in order to improve educative policies on English and other foreign languages in our country.

Key words: Social representation, biographical method, bilingual students, plurilingual students

1. INTRODUCTION

English has been taught as first foreign language in Spanish schools for some years already. However, it is socially believed that Spaniards are, in general, not capable of acquiring a proficient level of this language. There might be a significant number of reasons to explain the mentioned fact. Nevertheless, one of them is certainly the conception of the target language between learners. This idea of conception is also well-known as social representation of a language.

1.1 SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

According to Wagner (1999), a social representation is “the ensemble of thoughts and feelings being expressed in verbal and overt behavior of actors which constitutes an object for a social group” (p. 95). In other words, when a new object (tendency, idea, product...) is introduced in the society, a general discourse is disseminated. Wagner also describes the formation process of a social representation:

First of all, the social group is disrupted by an unfamiliar event or phenomenon. Afterwards, a symbolic collective coping starts in order to reach the comprehension of the unfamiliar phenomenon: it receives a categorization, a name and it is attributed with certain characteristics. Later, common discourse development leads to an “objectified representation” of the new phenomenon, in the form of an image, metaphor or symbol. Finally, the phenomenon becomes familiar and part of the common sense; furthermore, it supports the social identity of the group.

In relation to English and other foreign languages as new phenomena, a similar process might have developed a specific social view of these languages in Spain. As Escobar Urmeneta (2012, p. 44) points out, “Foreign language teaching has been accused of excessive formalism”. Consequently, it can be said that the educative approach has damaged both learners’ possibilities of success and their social representation of the English language.

1.2 SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF LANGUAGES

In the case of the English language, its role as lingua franca has emerged from the communicative and social needs developed due to globalization. Non-native speakers use this language to share their living with others in the global society. Thus, as Lamb (2004) affirms, English is mainly associated with an international culture that includes technology, business, world travel, consumerism, fashion, sport and music.

The previous idea might be experienced and reproduced as a social representation between adults of all countries. However, in Spain, English is also usually seen as a difficult language.

According to the linguistics of acquisition, Castellotti and Moore (2001), defend that:

Representations are a key component in the language learning process. Representations of one’s mother tongue, the language being learned and the differences between them are associated with particular learning strategies adopted by learners, who construct a representation of the

interlinguistic distance between their own language system and that of the language being learned (p. 9).

It seems that the social representation of the foreign language would be constructed by a community of speakers establishing differences between their mother tongue and the new language. Therefore, the differences between Spanish (or Catalan) and English in terms of grammar, pronunciation and syntax could be a strong reason for the fearful Spanish social representation of English.

1.3 SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AMONG BILINGUAL AND PLURILINGUAL LEARNERS

Studies all around Europe have analyzed children's social representations of languages. These studies have revealed some characteristics included in the social representation of bilingual and plurilingual speakers. Altogether with the educational policies of each country, the personal linguistic status of learners determines their perception of languages' social value.

As Cavalli and Coletta (2002) point out, bilingual and plurilingual classrooms promote some linguistic features: a certain view of language and its learning, a specific development of the linguistic competence, various phenomena associated with interactions between languages, an "emphasis placed on prescriptive rules, and perceptions of the relationship between school and society, among others" (p. 12).

Furthermore, the mentioned studies also demonstrate that the learner's language and culture play an essential role defining a pupil's representation of a foreign language. Their own culture and the languages that they master become criteria to evaluate other cultures and languages. In this sense, bilingual and plurilingual learners are provided with more linguistic background to assess the new language that is being learnt.

Consequently, it is challenging to explore and analyze real social representations of the foreign language in the case of bilingual and plurilingual pupils. Moreover, as educators, it might be interesting to discover how children experience the social conventions that adults legitimize. Discovering their impressions and how to use them to improve our teaching is a key strategy.

For all these reasons, throughout this paper, we will focus on the social representation of the English and other languages among primary (bilingual or plurilingual) pupils in Catalonia.

2. METHODS

This research consisted on a qualitative case study. The students involved were 25 plurilingual children aged between seven and eight. Afterwards, a few cases were selected and analyzed. Pupils were all students of “Escola dels Encants”, in Barcelona (Catalonia). Some characteristics of the center are its active pedagogy and its diversity of families.

The method used for this study was the biographical method, developed by Busch et al. (2006), altogether with the linguistic self-portrait tool.

First of all, the subjects were lead to a separated room in small groups. Then, they were proposed to draw their own body and represent the different languages that they mastered. In other words, they had to map their language experiences onto a body silhouette. Each language could be represented in the part or parts of the body that the student considered and a different colour had to be used for each language. In this case, we specially asked for their relationship with the English language. After that, our students had to interpret and explain they had done throughout an opened interview. According to Busch (2010):

Processes that influence language use tend to operate unconsciously and cannot easily be verbalized. The switch in mode of representation from word to image helps deconstruct internalized categories, to reflect upon embodied practices and to generate narratives that are less bound by genre expectations (p. 286).

When a student finished his or her production, he or she accompanied the interviewer to another table. There, the interviewer asked the pupil which language was each colour of the drawing and why it was represented in that specific part of the body. Despite the fact that all the interviews were following the same structure, the interviewer was free to improvise some questions depending on the child's answers and his capacity to reflect on his work. They could be asked, for instance, if they liked a certain language and why. Both interaction between pupils during the creation and the personal interview were recorded.

After gathering all the productions, 25 in total, and viewing their corresponding recordings, five self-portraits were chosen. The criteria to choose them were, on the one hand, the variety of languages that the pupil was exposed to in his everyday environment, and on the other hand, the ability to express that in a self-portrait explaining the reasons.

In this article, productions will be exposed altogether with a transcription of the students' explanations (before or during the teacher-student interview). The identity of the students will remain anonymous, whereas the identity of the interviewer will be the same as the author of this paper, Sara Sansaloni. The acronyms used will be:

SS: Sara Sansaloni (interviewer)

S1: Student one (interviewed)

S2: Student two (interviewed)

S3: Student three (interviewed)

S4: Student four (interviewed)

S5: student five (interviewed)

3. RESULTS

All the interviews were developed in Dels encants school, the 14th of April (2015). Transcriptions were done in the interview language (Catalan) and translated into English. Obtained productions and their corresponding transcriptions were the following ones:



Figure 1: Students 1's production



Figure 2: Students 2's production

STUDENT ONE

Student one is a very participative and independent student. She was very capable of doing this activity without asking any questions. Her case was also very interesting because her father is English. Furthermore, she made her opinions very clear, as we can see in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 1: Student 1

1. SS: Vale, aquest color de la cara [ha pintat groc i verd a sobre]...el verd, quina llengua és?
2. S1: Lleidetà. Bueno, és blau.
3. SS: Ah és que has fet un blau, no? I per què l'has posat de color blau [el lleidetà]?
4. [PAUSA]
5. SS: Ho saps?

6. S1: Sí, perquè m'agrada molt el blau i perquè tinc moltes coses de color blau a Lleida.
7. T: Vale...a Lleida, no? I et recorda a Lleida el blau. I per què l'has posat a la cara el lleidetà?
8. S1: Perquè...i perquè és [pensa] l'idioma que parlo més.
9. SS: Sí...amb qui?
10. S1: Amb la mama, amb el papa...amb l'Àlex! Amb els meus amics de Lleida.
11. SS: I està tot el dia en el teu cap?
12. S1: No.
13. SS: No tot el dia. Molt bé, i el color aquest morat...quina llengua representa?
14. S1: L'“inglès”.
15. SS: l'anglès. I per què l'has fet d'aquest color?
16. S1: Perquè em recorda a la meva àvia que sempre tenia coses de color lila.
17. SS: És molt interessant aquesta explicació.
18. S1: [Somriu].
19. SS: I per què l'has posat als braços [l'anglès]?
20. S1: Perquè...no la parlo molt sovint.
21. SS: I quina llengua és [aquest color]?
22. S1: [Pensa] Català! [Riu].
23. SS: I per què l'has posat allà?
24. S1: Perquè...parlo, però no parlo amb la meva mare ... Parlo amb els meus amics i amb tu! [mira i
25. senyala]
26. SS: O sigui, que el fas servir cada dia?
27. S1: Sí!
28. SS: I és important per tu, el català ?
29. S1: Sí!
30. SS: I l'anglès?
31. S1: També...Però no tan com el català.
32. SS: T'importa més el català?
33. S1: Sí!
34. SS: Okey!-
35. S1: Perquè m'entenen més persones.
36. SS: Però...amb qui, amb qui tens relació si parles en anglès ?
37. S1: Amb el meu pare, amb la meva àvia i amb el meu avi...i-
38. SS: Vale, i estàs segura que et poden entendre més persones en català que en anglès?
39. S1:“Sep”.
40. SS: Potser a Catalunya però...i al món?
41. S1: [Es queda callada i riu]
42. SS: Això és qüestió de valorar-ho eh-
43. [PAUSA]
44. SS: Bé, m'has parlat del català i ara em dius als peus quina llengua tens.
45. S1: Castellà.
46. SS: I per què està allà [als peus]?
47. S1 : Perquè la meva besavia, bueno la mare de la meva àvia, parla en castellà i he ficat aquest color perquè...no veia...colors que-
48. SS: Vale i hi tens bona relació amb aquesta àvia?
49. S1: Bueno, amb la besavia. Sí!
50. SS: I t'agrada el castellà.?
51. S1: [Fa que sí amb el cap]
52. SS: Sí, però l'has posat als peus-
53. S1: “Se”, perquè no el [el castellà] parlo molt.

Excerpt 1: Student 1 (translation)

1. SS: Ok, this color on the face [she painted yellow and green above]... the green, what language is it?
2. S1: Lleidetà, Well, it's blue.
3. SS: Ah, you created a blue colour, didn't you? And why did you make it [lleidetà] blue?
4. [BREAK]
5. SS: Do you know it?
6. S1: Yes, because I really like blue and because I have a lot of blue things in Lleida.

7. SS: Ok...in Lleida, no? And blue reminds you of Lleida. And why did you put Lleidetà on the face?
8. S1: Because it is the language I speak the most.
9. SS: Yes...who with?
10. S1: With mum, dad and...with Alex! And with my Friends in Lleida.
11. SS: And is it [Lleidetà] all day in your head?
12. S1: No.
13. SS: Not all day. Very good, and this purple colour...which language does it represent?
14. S1: "Inglès".
15. SS: English. And why did you use that colour?
16. S1: Because it reminds me of my grandma, who always had purple things.
17. SS: This explanation is so interesting.
18. S1: [Smiles]
19. SS: And why did you put it [English] on your arms?
20. S1: Because I don't speak it that much.
21. SS: And which language is that[colour]?
22. S1: [She thinks] Catalan! [she laughs].
23. SS: And why did you put it there?
24. S1: because...I speak it, but not with my mother. I speak it with my friends and you! [staring and
25. pointing].
26. SS: So, you use it every day?
27. S1: Yes!
28. SS: And is Catalan important for you?
29. S1: Yes!
30. SS: And English?
31. S1: Also...but not as much as Catalan.
32. SS: You care more about Catalan?
33. S1: Yes!
34. SS: Okey!
35. S1: Because more people understand me.
36. SS: But...with whom, with whom do you relate in English?
37. S1: With my father, my grandmother and my grandfather ...and-
38. SS: Ok, and are you sure that in Catalan more people understand you than in English?
39. S1: "Yep"
40. SS: Maybe in Catalonia, but...in the world?
41. S1: [Stays quiet and laughs].
42. SS: That is something to think about.
43. [BREAK]
44. SS: Ok, you have talked about Catalan and now, tell me what the language on your feet is.
45. S1: Spanish.
46. SS: And why is it there [feet]?
47. S1: because my great-grandmother, well my grandma's mother, speaks in Spanish and I used that colour because...I could not see...colours that-
48. SS: Ok and do you have a good relationship with that grandma?
49. S1: Well, great-grandmother. Yes!
50. SS: And do you like Spanish?
51. S1: [nods with her head]
52. SS: Yes, but you put it on the feet-
53. S1: "Yeah", because I don't speak it[Spanish] that much.

Focusing our attention on student one's excerpt, it can be interpreted that her mother tongue, Lleidetà, remains the most important for this girl. She perceives Lleidetà as a different language from Catalan (even if sociolinguistically it is determined as a dialect of the Catalan language) because she uses them differently. Student 1 is able to connect Lleidetà to a colour and to a place of her body, her head. In the case of the English language, she is also able to relate it to a colour and a place. In general, all the colour justifications are about her family, her closest environment. She even relates Spanish to

her grandgranmother (lines 47 to 50), although she confesses not using this language very much (lines 53 and 54) and having chosen the colour by discard.

Despite having a British parent, she admits not using English that much. Furthermore, she says that she likes English but prefers Catalan (lines 28 to 31). This opinion is due to the possibility of using it everyday to communicate at school. Student 1 thinks that more people can understand her in Catalan, and she laughs when she is asked about the whole world. Probably she does not have yet the social sense of belonging to the world and can only think about her own reality: the catalan society.

STUDENT TWO

Student two is a very talkative girl that enjoys explaining her work. Her parents are from Argentina and she likes to be exposed to different languages. Nonetheless, it could be the case that she invents some of her reasons right at the moment of the interview. She answered what follows:

Excerpt 2: Student 2

1. SS: Vale, t'aniré preguntant com als altres companys. Jo miro aquí i veig un color turquesa. Quina
2. llengua és el turquesa?
3. S2: Ca...Ca... Castellà.
4. SS: I per què l'has posat d'aquest color, el castellà?
5. S2: Pues perquè el color... no sé, perquè el castellà m'agrada.
6. SS: Vale...I per què l'has posat al cap?
7. S2: Perquè em ve molt...perquè el cap és gran.
8. SS: D'acord...i tu, quina relació tens amb el castellà ?Quan l'utilitzes ?
9. S2: Pues amb els pares...Bueno no tan amb els pares perquè parlen en argentí i aquí ho he posat
10. [senyala el dibuix]...Però parlo a vegades amb les meves amigues.
11. SS: Vale, parles en castellà i l'utilitzes bastant. Molt bé. Després tenim un color al cabell...Crec que
12. és negre aquest llaç, quina llengua és?
13. S2: "Cual"? Aquest?
14. SS: Sí aquest d'aquí [senyalant el llaç].
15. S2: English!
16. SS: English, i per què l'has posat negre?
17. S2: Perquè el negre és fosc i no m'agrada tant.
18. SS: I no t'agrada l'anglès-
19. S2: No, no m'agrada el negre.
20. SS: I per què has pintat l'anglès amb negre si no t'agrada?
21. S2: Pues...perquè no sé...
22. SS: No acaba de ser la teva llengua preferida?
23. S2: Sí m'agrada però és que no sabia quin color posar.
24. SS: Vale...I perquè l'has pintat en un llacet l'anglès?
25. S2: Doncs perquè no en sé tant.
26. [PAUSA]
27. SS: A molt bé...Que més?...Aquí veig que a la panxa tenim el color rosa. Quin idioma és?
28. S2: Català
29. SS: Català. I per què l'has fet rosa?
30. S2: Perquè m'agrada molt el rosa.
31. SS: Ah... I perquè està a la panxa[el català]?
32. S2: Perquè la panxa és una mica gran i l'he posada el català perquè en sé molt.
33. SS: Vale, saps molt de català i molt de castellà.
34. S2: [fa que sí amb el cap]
35. SS: I t'agrada el català?
36. S2: Sí.
37. [PAUSA]

37. S2: Doncs no l'he posat però també podria ser una mica...Una mica no sé, el Japonès.
38. SS: Japonès...Vale...I per què el poses lila?
39. S2: Pues perquè també m'agrada molt.
40. SS: I t'agradaria aprendre'n?
41. S2: Sí.
42. SS: I per què l'has posat a la falda?
43. S2: Pues perquè no és tan gran...
44. SS: O sigui que...?
45. S2: Que en sé més o menys-
46. SS: Que en saps menys, no? que altres llengües...I les cames per què són grogues? Quina llengua és?
47. Perdona.
48. S2: Argentí. Perquè en sé ...Tot això, seria molt. Perquè els meus pares són d'argentina. Es van trobar a Argentina i després van venir aquí em van tenir aquí [Barcelona]. I em van ensenyar una mica d'argentí perquè a casa parlen i jo també parlo.
51. SS: I per tu és important l'argentí ?
52. S2 : Sí, perquè em recorda a la meva mare i el meu pare.
53. SS: I t'agrada?
54. S2: Sí.
55. SS: I Per què l'has posat a les cames, però?
56. S2: Perquè és més o menys, perquè m'agrada el groc però no són tan grans.
57. SS: Ah, vale...I els peus...Són de color vermell... Quines llengües són ?
58. S2: "Aleman" i xinès.
59. SS: Vale , i per què els has posat vermells?
60. S2: Perquè a la meva mare li agrada molt el vermell i a mi també.
61. SS: [Pensa] Molt bé! I...I t'agrada molt el xinès doncs? Perquè l'has posat vermell-
62. S2: Perquè el meu pare...Treballa amb xinesos...Perquè va a les "tendes" de xinès i m'ensenyava a mi i per això...
63. SS: Vale i l'alemany per què és vermell?
64. S2: Perquè [pensa] em van ensenyar una mica i perquè el vermell també m'agrada molt i la meva mare.
66. SS: I per què són als peus aquestes dues llengües?
67. S2: Per què no en sé tan.
68. SS: Vale, vols dir que en saps una mica i per això les poses allà... Molt bé, moltes gràcies. Alguna cosa més que vulguis afegir de les llengües? Del que t'agrada més? Sobretot de l'anglès, que ja saps que a mi m'interessa
69. S2: Que m'agrada molt l'anglès, el català el castellà i el argentí
70. SS: I per què creus que són tan importants ?
71. S2: Perquè m'agrada molt parlar-los...Perquè a mi m'agrada parlar i que els altres no sàpiguin el que parlo...Això m'agrada.
73. SS: Ah a tu t'agrada que no et puguin entendre.
74. S2: Sí! [Somriu]
75. SS: Ala, quina bona estratègia. Molt bé.
76. S2: moltes gràcies!

Excerpt 2: Student 2 (translation)

1. SS: Ok, I will be asking you, as well as to your partners. I look here and I see a turquoise colour.
2. Which language is turquoise colour?
3. S2: Spa...Spa...Spanish.
4. SS: And why did you put this colour for Spanish?
5. S2: Because this colour...I don't know, because I like Spanish.
6. SS: Well...and why did you put it on the head?
7. S2: Because it...because the head is big.
8. SS: Alright...And you, which relationship do you have with Spanish? When do you use it?
9. S2: With parents...Well no so much with parents because they speak Argentinean and here I have put it [pointing at the picture]...But I sometimes speak with my friends.
11. SS: Ok, you speak Spanish and quite a lot. Very good. Then we have this colour on the hair...I think this lace is black, which language is it?
13. S2: Which? This one?
14. SS: Yes this one here [pointing at the lace].

15. S2: English!
16. SS: English, and why did you put it black?
17. S2: Because black is dark and I don't like it.
18. SS: And you don't like English-
19. S2: No, I don't like black.
20. SS: And why did you paint English with black if you don't like it?
21. S2: Well...because I don't know...
22. SS: It is not exactly your favourite language?
23. S2: Yes I like it but I didn't know which colour to use.
24. SS: Ok...And why did you put English on a lace?
25. S2: Because I am not so good at it.
26. [BREAK]
27. SS: Ah very well...What else? Here I can see that the tummy is pink. Which language is it?
28. S2: Catalan
29. SS: Catalan. And why did you make it pink?
30. S2: Because I like pink.
31. SS: Ah...And why is it [catalan] in the tummy?
32. S2: Because the tummy is a bit big and I put Catalan there because I am very good at it.
33. SS: Ok, you know a lot of Catalan and Spanish.
34. S2: [She nods with her head]
35. SS: And do you like Catalan?
36. S2: Yes.
37. [BREAK]
38. S2: Well I did not put it but it could also be a bit of...I don't know, Japanese.
39. SS: Japanese...Ok...And why is it purple?
40. S2: Because I really like it.
41. .SS: And would you like to learn more?
42. S2: Yes.
43. SS: And why did you put it on the skirt?
44. S2: Because it is not so big...
45. SS: So that...?
46. S2: I know it more or less-
47. SS: You know it less, don't you? Comparing to other languages...And why are the legs yellow?
48. Which language is it? Sorry.
49. S2: Argentinean. Because I know it...That much, it would be a lot. Because my parents are
50. Argentinean. They met there and then they came here [Barcelona]. And they taught me some Argentinean because they speak it at home and so do I.
51. SS: And is Argentinean important for you?
52. S1: Yes, because it reminds me of my parents.
53. SS: And do you like it?
54. S2: Yes.
55. SS: And why did you put it on the legs?
56. S2: Because it is more or less, I like yellow but they [legs] are not so big.
57. SS: Ah, ok...And the feet...they are red...which languages are them?
58. S2: German and Chinese.
59. SS: Okay and why did you make them red?
60. S2: Because my mother likes red very much and so do I.
61. SS: [thinks] Very good! And...Do you like Chinese a lot? Because you made it red-
62. S2: Because my father...Works in Chinese...Because he goes to Chinese shops and he teaches me, and that is why...
63. SS: Ok and why is German red?
64. S2: Because... [She thinks] they taught me a bit of it and red because my mum and I like it.
65. SS: Why are those two languages on the feet?
66. S2: Because I don't know them that much.
67. SS: Well...So it means you know them a bit and that is why you put them there...Very good, thank you. Do you want to add anything about languages? What you like the most? Mostly English, you know that I am interested in it.
68. S2: That I like English, Catalan, Spanish and Argentinean a lot.
69. SS: And why do you think they are so important?
70. S2: Because I like speaking them... Because what I like is speaking and that the others don't

- understand what I say... That is what I like.
71. SS: Ah, What you like is not to be understood.
72. S2: Yes! [Smiles].
73. SS: Wow, such a good strategy. Very Good.
74. S2. Thank you so much.

Student two perceives Argentinean as her mother tongue. Nevertheless, it seems that she speaks Spanish much more (lines 8 and 9). It could be the case that she thinks about Argentinean and Spanish as different languages but in communicative situations she is not able to realize which one is being used.

As much as her partner, student 1, she relates all the languages to her closest environment: parents and friends. However, she is not capable of using both criteria (part of the body and colour) to explain her relationship with each language. In some cases, student 2 used colours that she does not like for languages that she likes (lines 16 to 21). On the other hand, she used a really defined criterion during all her drawing: the bigger the surface that represents a language, the better she can speak it (lines 31 to 34).

This girl affirms to like a lot of the languages that she included in her drawing. Languages have an amusement factor for her: she wants to use them as a code in order not to be understood. It can be said that she has a positive opinion towards languages and this attitude could favour her plurilingual competences.



Figure 3: Student 3's production



Figure 4: Student 4's production

STUDENT THREE

Student number three is a very hard working pupil who experiences contact with other cultures thanks to her family situation. She did a great effort on drawing the picture because she wanted it to look good. Her answers were very sincere and she answered according to her feelings.

Excerpt 3: Student 3

1. S3: Una cosa, puc posar l'anglès?
2. SS: Sí, clar!
3. S3: [Parlant per ella mateixa] I el blau quin serà?Sí, serà castellà perquè quan vaig a "Hualba" ...Perquè corro molt.
4. [PAUSA]
5. SS: El color lila, em pots explicar quina llengua és?
6. S3: El "inglès".Perquè la S5 m'ha donat una idea, que a mi també em fa pensar molt.
7. SS: Ah vale, l'has posat al cap perquè et fa pensar molt...Però i el color?
8. S3: El color? No sé, perquè m'agrada molt el lila.
9. SS: A veure que més...El color aquest d'aquí del coll...Quin idioma és?
10. S3: El català.
11. SS: Ès el català, i per què el tens aquí al coll?
12. S3: Perquè a vegades també...Com...Perquè jo estic barrejada entre el català i el castellà i a vegades no em surt molt.
13. SS: I se't queda com atrapat al coll?
14. S3: Sí.
15. SS: Vale molt bé! I li has posat aquest color per algun motiu?
16. S3 : Perquè m'agradava molt.
17. SS : Vale...Has posat tots els colors que t'agradaven?
18. S3: Sí.
19. SS: Molt bé, aquest color taronja i aquest espai tan gran, quina llengua és?
20. S3: L'argentí.
21. SS: És l'argentí. Vale i per què l'has posat de color taronja?
22. S3: Perquè m'agrada molt el color...No és el meu favorit però m'agrada.M'agrada l'argentí i per això l'he fet tan gran.
23. SS: Molt bé,ah... I tot aquest espai és l'argentí per això...perquè t'agrada molt. I hi ha alguna connexió especial que tinguis amb l'argentí?
24. S3: Sí que la meva cangur és argentina.
25. SS: I parles molt amb ella? I te l'estimes molt?
26. S3: Sí...sí molt!
27. SS: Molt bé... I aquí, aquest últim que tenim. Aquest color quina llengua és?
28. S3: El...Castellà.
29. SS: Vale i per què l'has posat aquí amb aquest color?
30. S3: Perquè també em passa semblant com lo del coll...Però que per pensar una amica en castellà em va molt bé començar a donar voltes.
31. SS: Ah sí ? Fas voltes amb els peus? I després pots parlar castellà ?
32. S3: Sí! [Riu]
33. SS: I ho has pintat de color blau per cap motiu ?
34. S3: Perquè m'agrada molt també.
35. SS: Genial, adéu i gràcies!

Excerpt 3: Student 3 (translation)

1. S3: One thing, can I put English?
2. SS: Of course!
3. S3: [Talking to herself] and what will be blue? Yes, it will be Spanish because when I go to "Hualba"...Because I run a lot.
4. [BREAK]

5. SS: Can you explain to me which language is purple?
6. S3: It is "English". Because S5 gave me an idea, it [English] makes me think a lot too.
7. SS: Ah ok, and you put it on the head because it makes you think...But what about the colour?
8. SS: The colour? I don't know, because I like purple.
9. SS: Let's see what else...This colour here, on the neck, which language is it?
10. S3: Catalan.
11. SS: Catalan, and why did you put it the neck?
12. S3: Because sometimes...Like...Because I am mixed between Catalan and Spanish, and sometimes I doesn't come out easily.
13. SS: And it gets stuck in your neck?
14. S3: Yes.
15. SS: Ok, very good! And did you put this colour for any reason?
16. S3: Because I like it very much.
17. SS: Okay...Did you put all the colours that you like?
18. S3: Yes.
19. SS: Well done, which language are this big space and the orange colour?
20. S3: Argentinean.
21. SS: It is Argentinean. Ok, and why did you make it orange?
22. S3: Because I like the colour a lot...It is not my favourite but I like it.
23. SS: Very good, ah... All this space is Argentinean because...You love it. And do you have any special connection with Argentinean?
24. S3: Yes, my babysitter is Argentinean.
25. SS: Do you speak with her a lot? Do you love her?
26. S3: Yes...Yes, a lot!
27. SS: Very good...And here, this last colour. Which language is it?
28. S3: It is...Spanish.
29. SS: Ok and why is it here and it has this colour?
30. S3: Because something similar to neck's thing happens to me...But to think a bit in Spanish, turning around works for me a lot.
31. SS: Oh yes? Do you turn around with your feet? And then you can speak Spanish?
32. S3: Yes! [She laughs]
33. SS: And did you use blue for any reason?
34. S3: Because I like it a lot too.
35. SS: Great, bye and thank you!

Student three was very concerned about her drawing. She erased and did it many times before she started painting. Although she has a Catalan family, it can be said that her mother tongue is Argentinean. She has used the bigger space in the body for this language to represent that she speaks it a lot and that she spends a lot of time with her babysitter (lines 20 to 26). Moreover, she also perceives Argentinean and Spanish as different languages. In general, she used colours that she likes. This strategy could mean either that she likes all the languages she added or that she did not have into account the colour variable (lines 15 and 16, lines 34 and 35 ...).

In relation to English, it is a foreign language for student 3 and she admits that it makes her think a lot. She also doubts whether she can include this language, probably because she does not totally master it (line 1). Regarding to Catalan and Spanish, as many bilingual children, she sometimes has some interference that may block her at the moment of speaking.

STUDENT FOUR

Student four is really engaged with languages. As well as other participants, her parents are Argentineans but she also has Italian family. She gives a lot of value to her roots and also to her home country, as we can see in the following transcription:

Excerpt 4: Student 4

1. SS: [Pensa]...Quina llengua és el marró?
2. S4: El castellà.
3. SS: Vale i l'has posat marró per algun motiu?
4. S4: No.
5. SS: Marró i ja està...I per què l'has posat al cap?
6. S4: Perquè sempre estic parlant en castellà a casa meva...I quan parlo castellà em surt del cap i de la boca...Per això ho he posat aquí.
7. SS: Molt bé! I el color aquest turquesa quina llengua és?
8. S4: L'anglès.
9. SS: L'anglès, vale...I tens algun motiu per haver-lo posat turquesa?
10. S4: Perquè m'agrada molt.
11. SS: Ala! T'agrada molt, no ho sabia! Que bé! I per què l'has posat als braços?
12. S4: Perquè és un dels llocs que més espai...I a les mans perquè m'agrada molt fer coses amb les mans.
13. SS: Molt bé, perquè t'agrada igual que l'anglès.
14. S4: I també sé "inglès" una mica perquè el meu pare sap anglès pero és argentí.
15. SS: Ah vale, però ell en sap?
16. S4: Sí.
17. SS: I t'agrada, molt bé. El color taronja quina llengua és?
18. S4: L'espanyol.
19. SS: Vale-
20. S4: No! El català.
21. SS: I ho és per algun motiu, taronja?
22. S4: És que un dia vaig fer una rosa de Catalunya i com no tenia vermell la vaig fer taronja.
23. SS: Ah! [riu]. I per tu quina importància té?
24. S4: Perquè sóc catalana.
25. SS: I t'agrada la llengua?
26. S4: Sí, m'encanta.
27. SS: Vale, okay. Molt bé, i al final d tot:als peus, quin idioma tenim?
28. S4: L'argentí.
29. SS: L'argentí...I tu el conceptes diferent del castellà?
30. S4: Sí, perquè té un "asent" diferent.
31. SS: Vale tu veus que és diferent l'accent. Perquè l'has posat als peus ?
32. S4: Perquè m'agrada...Em diverteix.
33. SS: I algun motiu per què sigui de color blau ?
34. S4: Perquè el blau és un dels colors de la bandera [argentina].
35. SS: Ah vale...I has volgut representar la bandera d'Argentina. Em sembla xulíssim. Alguna cosa més que vulguis explicar?
36. S4: El verd.
37. SS: Ah el verd! Quina llengua és?
38. S4: Es l'italià.
39. SS: I què em vols explicar de l'italià?
40. S4: Perquè jo tinc família a Itàlia i per això ho vull explicar.
41. SS: Ah i per què ho has posat a les cames?
42. S4: Pues perquè m'agrada tant l'italià que és el lloc que més cobreix.
43. SS: Era un espai molt gran. Fantàstic, gràcies

Except 4: Student 4 (translation)

1. SS: [Thinks]...Which language is brown?
2. S4: Spanish.

3. SS: Alright, and did you make it brown for some reason?
4. S4: No.
5. SS: Brown, that's it...And why did you put it on the head.
6. S4: Because I am always speaking Spanish at home...And when I speak Spanish it comes out from the head and mouth...And that's why.
7. SS: Well done! And this turquoise colour, which language is it?
8. S4: English.
9. SS: English, ok...And do you have some reason to make it turquoise?
10. S4: Because I really like it.
11. SS: Wow! You really like it, I did not know! Great! And why is it in the arms?
12. S4: Because it is one of the biggest spaces...And the hands because I like to do things with my hands.
13. SS: Great, so you like it as well as English.
14. S4: I also know "English" because my father knows English but he is Argentinean.
15. SS: Ah ok, but he can speak it.
16. S4: Yes.
17. SS: And you like it. Alright. And which language is orange?
18. S4: Spanish.
19. SS: OK-
20. S4: No! Catalan.
21. SS: And is it orange for some reason?
22. S4: One day I did a Catalan rose and I used orange because I did not have red.

23. SS: Ah! [she laughs]. And which importance has Catalan for you?
24. S4: Because I am Catalan.
25. SS: And do you like this language?
26. S4: Yes, I love it.
27. SS: Right, okay. Very good, and at the very end: on the feet, which language is it?
28. S4: Argentinean.
29. SS: Argentinean...And you see it different from Spanish?
30. S4: Yes, because it has a different "accent".
31. SS: Ok you see the accent different. Why did you put it on the feet?
32. S4: Because I like it...It amuses me.
33. SS: And any reason why it is blue?
34. S4: Because blue is one of the colours of the [Argentinean] flag.
35. SS: Ah good...And you wanted to represent the Argentinean flag. I believe it is great. Anything else that you want to explain?
36. S4: Green.
37. SS: Ah green! Which language is it?
38. S4: It is Italian.
39. SS: And what do you want to tell me about it?
40. S4: Because I have family in Italy and that is why.
41. SS: Ah and why did you put in on the legs?
42. S4: Because I like Italian so much and it is the part that covers more space.
43. SS: It was a very big space. Fantastic, thanks!

Student four feels related to more languages than other students because of her family roots. Her mother tongue is Spanish, as she explains that it is in her head and she "uses it every day" (line 6). Likewise her classmates, she mentions the languages that are related to her family : Her father speaks English and she has Italian family, for this reason, she can speak these languages a bit. In addition, she considers Argentinean a different language from Spanish and is even capable of explaining why (lines 28 to 30).

She is able to combine colour and part of the body to represent a language, although sometimes she only focuses on one of the two criteria. Moreover, she is the only pupil who uses national colours to represent a language (Catalan and Argentinean) (lines 21 and 22, lines 33 and 34). She also affirms that she is Catalan (line 24), so possibly she has a better understanding of the sense of belonging to nation or to a culture than other students.

Finally, she also affirms that she likes English and Italian. This is demonstrated by the use of the biggest spaces to represent these two languages (lines 11 and 12, lines 41 and 42). It can not be demonstrated if she really likes English and Italian or if these preferences have been induced by her environment.



Figure 5: Student 5's production

STUDENT FIVE

Student number five is normally very reflexive about her work. Her level of English is one of the best in the class. However, she has some interferences with Spanish and Catalan, probably because her mother is from València. These are her answers:

Excerpt 5: Student 5

1. SS: Vull que em diguis quin color és cada llengua i després t'aniré preguntant perquè. Vale? El lila?
2. S5: El lila és l'anglès perquè...Està al cap perquè em fa pensar. Moltes vegades que tu em parles en anglès em fa pensar què vols dir.
3. SS: Molt bé... I algun motiu perquè sigui lila?

4. S5: Perquè m'agrada el lila.
5. SS: Vale, molt bé! Després, el color blau, quina llengua és?
6. S5: El català.
7. SS: El català, d'acord, Hi ha algun motiu per què sigui blau?
8. S5: No.
9. SS: "Bueno" has triat el blau, no? I per què l'has posat als braços el català?
10. S5: Perquè moltes vegades... [pensa]... A educació física hem de moure els braços-
11. SS: Ah i et mous molt en català! Clar...I el marró quina llengua és?
12. S5: El...Castellà.
13. SS: Vale i per què l'has posat a les cames?
14. S5: [Pensa]...Perquè també a vegades quan parlo amb la meua mare o quan vaig a valència...Una vegada vaig anar a la platja i vaig córrer molt...I com que allà a València...Parlem en castellà. ..
15. SS: Parles castellà, no?Molt bé!I em falta crec el taronja. Ah! Algun motiu perquè hakis posat el marró?
16. S5: No.
17. SS: No? Vale... El taronja?
18. S5: [murmura] El valencià.
19. SS: El valencià, vale. Explica 'm perquè el tens aquí.[Senyala]
20. S5: Perquè a vegades...La novia del meu tiet, de València , el germà de la meua mare...Em parlava en valencià i no entenia casi res...Em posava molt nerviosa.
21. SS: Ah vale, et posava nerviosa. Pero també és important per tu o és perquè et fa posar nerviosa i prou?
22. S5: Perquè em fa posar nerviosa.
23. SS: [Riu]Vale molt bé, gràcies.

Excerpt 5: Student 5 (translation)

1. SS: I want you to tell me which colour is each language and then I will ask you why. Ok? Purple?
2. S5: Purple is English because...it is in the head because it [English] makes me think. Many times when you speak English to me it makes me think what do you mean.
3. SS: Very good...Any reason why it is purple?
4. S5: Because I like purple.
5. SS: Ok, great! Then, the blue colour, which language is it?
6. S5: Catalan.
7. SS: Catalan, alright. Is there any reason why it is blue?
8. S5: No.
9. SS: Well, you chose blue. And why did you put Catalan on the arms?
10. S5: Because many times ...[she thinks]...In PE we have to move our arms-
11. SS: Ah and you move yourself in Catalan!Of course...And which language is brawn?
12. S5: It is...Spanish.
13. SS: Ok and why did you put it in the legs?
14. S5:[She thinks]...Because sometimes when I speak with my mother or when I go to València...Once I went to the beach and I ran a lot...And there in València...We speak Spanish.
15. SS: You speak Spanish, don't you? Great! I think orange is missing. Ah! Any reason why you used brown?
16. S5: No.
17. SS: No? Ok...Orange?
18. S5: [Murmures] Valencian.
19. SS: Valencian. Ok. Explain to me why do you have it here? [Pointing]
20. S5: Because sometimes...My uncle's girlfriend, the brother of my mother...Speaks Valencian to me and I did not understand almost a thing. I got very nervous.
21. SS: Ah ok, you got nervous. But it [Valencian] is also important for you or it is just that it makes you feel nervous?
22. S5: Because it makes me feel nervous.
23. SS: [she laughs] Ok, great, thank you.

Student five's mother tongue seems to be Spanish. She speaks that language with her mother and also when she goes to Valencia, where her mother is from. She uses the

colours randomly or to indicate that she likes a language (lines 3 and 4). However, she does choose the parts of the body intentionally: everyday situations, memories that she has, and so forth. Similarly to her classmates, she conceives Valencian as a different language from Catalan. She bases her beliefs in her experiences: not understanding Valencian despite being a Catalan speaker (lines 20 to 22).

Regarding the English language, she uses purple because she likes the colour and the language and she puts it in the head because it makes her think (lines 1 and 2). English is probably more difficult for her because she does not have the necessity to use it in her environment. Nonetheless, some difficulty may have been added by social perceptions of English that she has experienced.

On the whole, most of the students were very concerned about the silhouette although they were told not very focused on the drawing but on the painting. Furthermore, for such young learners; it was quite difficult to use two criteria to explain their perception of each language. It is also very interesting to see how all of them perceived dialects or topographic varieties of a language as a different language. Moreover, every language that was included on the portrait was induced by everyday experiences of the children, mostly related to their families. At the same time, the importance of the mother tongue has been shown and it has been demonstrated that it is not necessarily always the language of our parents.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

According to the obtained results, some conclusions and further questions have been reached. On the one hand, it can be said that between young children, social representations are mostly based on their closest reality: family and school. However, these representations define the perception that students have of a certain language, and those will be the base of future conceptions. As The Council of Europe (2001) affirms:

Representations play a crucial role in constructing identity, relationships with others and knowledge. They are neither right nor wrong, and nor are they permanent; rather, they enable individuals and groups to categorise themselves and to decide which features they consider relevant in constructing their identity in relation to others. Representations should therefore be seen as an inherent part of learning, which needs to be incorporated into linguistic policies and teaching methods (p. 20).

Furthermore, it can also be affirmed that the mother tongue counts with a special affection from students, who, in all cases, announced to like this language. It is normally the language that they master the most, use more commonly and the reference to learn any other language. It is worth to mention that students did not show dislike for any language. Thus, probably they have not developed an opinion about languages yet. They only coexist with them. Consequently, most of what is being said in the interviews is based on the social representations of their environment.

In conclusion children at this age should be taught languages in a plurilingual vision of them: understanding other cultures, sharing common structures and seeing each language as a resource. Definitely, they should develop their plurilingual competence, the one that will help them inhabit the word. Thereby, they would not develop a negative opinion of foreign languages, in contrast to the attitude of many adults. As a teacher, this study made me realize that my vision of languages will have a lot of repercussion on student's representation of them. For this reason, our collective should be aware of this fact and continue training on language teaching.

On the other hand, some questions for further research have emerged from the results. After observing that pupils were very concerned about the silhouette and that it was difficult for them to select both colour and part of the body: Which would be an adequate method to interview young learners? Besides, according to the interviews, those children believe that dialects are a different language from the standard language: why do they have this perception? And, should we accept their answers or, on the contrary, share with them our sociolinguistic understanding? Finally, some students were concentrating on their mastery of each language; while others were referring to how much they liked the language: which could be the cause of their choices? And, should we ask them precisely about one of this two?

Notwithstanding, this study was only focused on specific cases. For this reason, I would recommend to conduct a wider research, in order to generalize results about social representation of languages. In addition, it would be interesting to contrast the data collected from monolingual students and plurilingual students. Thanks to the proposed investigations, educative policies might change in favour to a more global and practical view of the linguistic competence. Consequently, language teaching approach would benefit student's learning, by approximating to its main objective: communicative success.

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