Authoritative practices in school socialization in Hungary after the transition. An analysis of children's narratives

Tamás Péter Szabó

University of Jyväskylä, Finland

After the fall of communism (1989), the democratization of Hungarian political life and the changes in the symbolic and institutional framing of the education system left educational ideologies and practices almost untouched. The contradictory nature of transition is reflected in students' and teachers' narratives as well.

Recently, several papers have investigated personal narratives, targeting a better understanding and the development of learning environments. The majority of these papers deal with L2 education (e.g. Duff 2002, 2012; Harrison 2013; Kalaja et al. 2008). In a similar manner, such analysis supports a better understanding of how children reconstruct interpersonal relations and social practices during L1 acquisition as well. The paper analyses interactional data from a 47.7 hour interview corpus collected by the author. In the interviews, students aged 6–11, 13–15 and 17–19 describe how they acquired certain variations of their L1 (Hungarian) and how they learned to regulate their own and their communication partners' language use.

The present paper, applying a CA, DA and Language Ideologies approach, focuses on the early stage of Hungarian school socialization (children aged 6–11). Participating in or being exposed to metadiscourses in various sociocultural settings, children acquire recycled fragments of traditional and contemporary descriptions of language use. They learn how to combine these elements while participating in metadiscourses (cf. Aro 2012). As for the corpus data, younger children often claim that language should be used properly in order to avoid punishment, quoting or assimilating voices of authorities (parents, teachers, etc.). This is a basic characteristics of standardist cultures like Hungarian, and narratives on informal learning at home and on school experiences resemble. Children often present themselves as agents who punish others with language-related goals as well. These self-constructions show how they adapt their self-reflections to the system of socialization they are exposed to.

Keywords: language ideologies, school socialization, narrative studies.