Mobility, language brokering and identity in Barcelona

JULIA LLOMPART
University Autonoma of Barcelona, Spain

The sociolinguistic and sociocultural reality of the Catalan spoken regions has been modified by the migration, globalization and mobility phenomenon that started in the 90s of the last century. Catalan schools today are multilingual and multicultural (Nussbaum & Unamuno 2006) entering the paradigm of superdiversity (Vertovec 2007). This fact brings up some questions that need to be answered throughout the observation of the recent sociolinguistic and sociocultural processes. The sociolinguistic reality of the Catalan context causes a change in the dynamics of language transmission that is bidirectional (the language of the parents is transmitted to the children and children are responsible for transmitting the local language to their parents) and presents specific characteristics and consequences. Some children and young adults of first and second generation of immigrants (called language brokers by Tse [1996]) acquire a vital role for the communication between their parents (specially their mothers) and other members of the society by translating and interpreting for their families, members of their extended families, teachers and other adults.

The objective of this paper is to present the first results of a qualitative study in process based on the discourse analysis about the language brokers of two schools of Barcelona, a primary school and a secondary school. Our aim is to analyse: (a) the processes of autocategorization and heterocategorization of language expert or non-expert and the consequences that it has in the identity construction processes; (b) the importance of the use and participation in one or another language as well as the level of expertise in that language as factors to define their identities and language socialization; and (c) the empowerment that the daughters acquire as language brokers and teachers of their mothers and of their peers and the development of their cognitive and metalinguistic abilities.

Keywords: identity, migration, language brokering.