Linguistic self-confidence by primary and secondary students in Catalonia: A longitudinal study

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Previous research in first and second language acquisition has provided evidence that language self-confidence is a key construct that can explain linguistic behavior (Clément & Kruidenier, 1985; Rubenfeld, Clément, Lebrun & Auger, 2006). In this paper, we apply previous research in the socio-contextual model of L2 learning (Clément, 1980) to data from Catalan-speaking areas. More specifically, the paper investigates linguistic self-confidence toward Catalan and Spanish by students in Catalonia for a period of four years, that is, from their last year of primary education to their last year of secondary education. The methodology for the longitudinal study was based on a survey on language competence and use in Catalan and Spanish by students in five different locations in Catalonia (n=778 students aged 11-16 depending on the moment of data collection). The data indicate that linguistic self-confidence is very high for both languages even though two trends can be observed: a) linguistic self-confidence for Catalan is slightly higher than for Spanish, and b) over time, self-confidence increases. However, when these trends are observed regarding specific locations (with more or less presence of Catalan in the environment), linguistic self-confidence varies. Moreover, the results indicate that there is a relationship between self-confidence in Spanish and Catalan and the students’ L1. These results are finally discussed in regard to the Catalan educational system.

Keywords: self-confidence, Catalan, bilingual education.