

Linguistic and Cultural Integration of the Immigrants in the Mediterranean Area

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Abstract: *The following abstract is the result of a bibliographic review presented at the end of the first year of PhD in "Integration Pathways and Process Identity in the Mediterranean Area" at Kore University. The argument of the research intends to do an in depth study of the linguistic learning variable, in particular that of the acquisition of the second language learning, but above all the relationship between language and identity in order to favour integration processes. The word integration means "to keep together" the different parts of society and to keep the different values and models of behaviour alive considering also the social inclusion policies of the migrants adopted by the countries. The integration phenomenon underlines the best strategies adopted for migrants respecting and maintaining their cultural and linguistic identity. The difficulties which immigrants face are many and they can be identified in the pressure by the values and systems of beliefs that are in contrast with the culture and the language of the native country with that of the host country. If the intercultural represents an attitude linked to the migratory phenomenon where the accent does lie on the fixed identity which corresponds to the culture but on its continual element, the interculturalism is presented every time that different socio-cultural groups interact in the same geo-political and relational areas. The element that brings us to the possibility of realizing this research is the presence of ethnic minorities who live in Sicily guaranteeing them an integration in the host country, but at the same time, safeguarding the language and the culture which they belong to.*

Keywords: *immigration, identity, second language, integration, interculture.*

Introduction

The word integration means "to keep together" the different parts of society and to keep the different values and models of behaviour alive considering also the social inclusion policies of the migrants adopted by the countries. The integration phenomenon underlines the best strategies adopted for migrants respecting and maintaining their cultural and linguistic identity.

Park and Burgess (1925) define the concept of integration as "Assimilation", so as cultural homologation and acquisition of the value systems and of the behavioural models; but this concept is also considered as "Fusion" which people acquire memories, feelings and ways of thinking different from other people sharing experience and history, favouring a *melting pot* in the sense of a creative process where different ethnic groups are united in a common cultural life.

The difficulties which immigrants face are many and they can be identified in the pressure by the values and systems of beliefs that are in contrast with the culture and the language of the native country with that of the host country. Among the useful integrative proposals, we take into consideration those which intend to stimulate the culture of the immigrant student, maintaining his/her own cultural identity, opening him/herself to the knowledge of different cultures, developing his/her linguistic skills through the development of cognitive processes and using the language as an active instrument in a communicative and cultural context.

Besides, if the intercultural represents an attitude linked to the migratory phenomenon where the accent does lie on the fixed identity which corresponds to the culture but on its continual element, the interculturalism is presented every time that different socio-cultural group interact in the same geo-political and relational areas.

For this reason, an intercultural meeting-clash also represents a meeting-clash among different identities, in fact, a society that lives the multicultural aspect as a discomfort and not as richness has to consider the intercultural aspect as a real social problem.

Methodology

The methodologies and the best behaviours that the hosting community should have, in favour of an intercultural education, refer to:

Comparison Method: a way to educate the complexity, the pluralism and the comparison.

Deconstructive Method: deconstruction as reviewing the ideas, the prejudices, the stereotypes, cliché.

Decentralization or turnover of the point of view Method: capacity of decentralizing from the point of view, also considering the other points of views.

Action Method: action has got an important educative value for the promotion of actions, initiatives and intercultural experiences.

Narrative Method: the narrative thought allows the construction of an intercultural thought.

In order to guarantee an intercultural education, the foreign students should have a communicative and linguistic competence that allows them to act in culturally and socially shared ways, with a greater involvement of the personal history and of the foreign student's identity and an adaptation of the informative linguistic aids, extending the intercultural study.

In second language learning, the language of the hosting country, Cummins (1986) gives us some coordinates and some knowledge to reflect on the teaching of the Italian language as a second language in the school in order to have a good integration.

He identifies two big linguistic obstacles, two big objectives that a foreigner has to reach in his scholastic path in order to have success at the end of his/her school career using the same instruments as the Italian students. The BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) are identified as the basic competences useful to interact in everyday life and they develop after two years of linguistic practice, while the CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) develop after five years.

The study of Cummins on the second language starts from the consideration that a situation of bilingualism that migrant children have could be a chance or an obstacle.

He speaks about the link between L1 and L2 using the image of the iceberg where below sea level there is a big block of ice but on the surface two or more blocks of ice emerge. The bilingual theory is based on the concepts of "multilingualism" and "bilingualism" because the different linguistic codes can be found in the same point; this is true only if the language is developed enough for the requested functions.

The "threshold" level is the developmental level joined to the bilingualism of the child, so for him/her the bilingualism represents a chance, an opportunity in linguistic and cognitive terms; the knowledge of the second language of everyday situations does not guarantee scholastic success.

Therefore, to be competent in two languages the cognitive system helps but, if one of the two languages is not developed enough, the cognitive system will not function.

Conclusion

In order to stimulate the cultural integration, there are three elements that influence language learning. Among the universal linguistic elements, the "Contrastive Analysis" underlines the way in which the difficulties of the language learning depend on the differences between L1 and L2 (1950) and the "Universal Grammar" by Chomsky who affirms that everyone has got a natural aptitude to the language acquisition (1960).

Among the specific linguistic elements, instead, the "Interlanguage" by Selinker and Corder (1972) is examined where the language is learnt through different phases. Finally, among the extra linguistic elements the "Cognitive Factors", for a language aptitude, motivation, personality and the "Social Context Factors" defined by the macro social variables (social and psychological distance), micro social variables (formal context, as the school, or informal) and social variables (age, sex, social class, identity, ethnic group).

An observation is also placed on the relationship between the identity and the language level, in fact, there can be: *monolingual identity*, people who do not recognize themselves in the minor language ignoring it and living it as an error (for example, the dialect after the war); *diglossic identity*, people who accept the existence of another language, they use it but they consider themselves to belong to one of the two communities and the presence of the other community and of the other language is seen as a heavy historical heritage (for example, the Italian and German community in the Bolzano province); *bilingual identity*, people who feel a double belonging to the two communities.

In conclusion, when we talk about "bilingual education" we want to underline that education which works on the self, on the person, on the definition of identity produce effects on the self-realization of the person; while, if we consider the "bicultural education" we want to include a linguistic dimension on the social level, a culture and an interest for the diversity leaving everyone to recognize him/herself in one of the groups of the multicultural community.

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