

An Investigation of the Multilingualism of Migrant Children: Method and Challenges in Quebec

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Abstract

This article presents methodological principles specifically adapted to explore the sociolinguistic representations together with the education needs of children. It explores narrative and graphic modalities the child controls to speak openly. The article takes as an example a survey of newcomer migrant children in welcoming classes in Montreal for the purpose of examining the self-perceptions of these multilingual children in a mostly francophone school environment in Quebec, in order to identify their feelings, projects or difficulties beyond the common representations of the adults according to which the children adapt “spontaneously” to changes, specifically linguistic and cultural changes. Through the survey methods used with this population, the study revealed a range of psychological, education and social needs. The authors’ conclusion addresses the importance of the study and the consideration of sociolinguistic representations and education needs as expressed by the children. They also suggest a pedagogical transposition of the investigation methods used.

Keywords: childhood, migration, identity needs, narrative, socio-didactic, social representations, methodology of investigation

Social and Epistemological Context of Research and Intervention Method

The purpose of this article is to examine methodology using as an example a survey of newcomer migrant children in welcoming classes in Montreal. After defining the context and the theoretical framework, we will explain the research parameters

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adapted to the situation of migrant children. Finally, we will discuss the results that the method enables us to obtain.

The survey used as an example aimed to study the self-perceptions of multilingual children having migrated into a mostly francophone environment in Quebec, Canada. It is interesting to adopt the perspective of these children as it is often considered that they adapt easily and quickly to changes in benchmarks (Vatz Laaroussi et al., 2005, p. 109). The migratory movement involves not only a territorial displacement but also a symbolic one since it constitutes an “intimate experience of the otherness” (Ouellet, 2003, p. 10). This distancing process may make the migrant wonder about its effects on him and about what defines him as such.

Human beings are “knowing beings” who cannot prevent themselves from trying to understand their existence and their environment, from constructing *representations* (Giordan, 1994). Faced with the changes caused by the migratory movement, “creativity” (Camilleri, 1996, p. 333) enables individuals (migrant and nonmigrant) to mobilize their resources for an optimal adaptation. The expression of identity is not only figurative but also productive: “to say the identity, is to try and produce it” (Leray, 1995, p. 139). When talking about himself, the child uses creative and reflective resources to materialize his identity markers. He has to recreate and rethink himself to translate himself for the other. At the same time, he can also act on the representations of the other. By representations we mean a “type of social knowledge” (Jodelet, 2003, p. 366) closely connected to our feelings of belonging (Colles, 2003, p. 175). A migrant child resorts to his intercultural skills to succeed in a universe (cultural, linguistic, and physical) that initially is not his. Meeting the other involves a double movement of decentering and returning to the self.

The main question this research wished to answer is “What are the self-perceptions of these children (otherwise said, the representations they have of themselves)?” What observables enable us to work on their representations? The research that is the basis of our work aimed to study discourse observables co-produced with the children enrolled in francophone elementary schools in Montreal. In our opinion, these observables allow access through their biographical narrative. The purpose of this article is to present the methodological challenges of such a research and the observables that our methodological options enabled us to gather. We will also summarize the analyses of the representations observed for the sole purpose of defining identity needs and to return to an intervention strategy issued from our methodological choices that would target the production of children’s narratives to process these representations.

Theoretical Framework: Ethnographic Research Using a Contextualized Sociodidactic Method

A research using a sociodidactic method has a double orientation:

. . . on the one hand, the analysis of the heterogeneity of formal and informal situations of language teaching/learning, including the language called at the time “maternal language” and on the other hand, the description and consideration of individual language practices and of the social representations of the oral and the written within these situations and in their environment. (Dabène & Rispaïl, 2008, p. 10)

Any sociodidactic research begins with the study of the specificity of its environment before trying to reveal correlations that sometimes may be generalized or

transferred between its various parameters. Sometimes we arrive at a typology of didactic fields as the scene of social and language practices that can reproduce themselves with variations. The notion of *variation*, at the same time didactic, political and linguistic, is thus promoted to the center of a sociodidactics of which it is a foundation. It is this active consideration of the contexts within the concrete structure of didactic and didactologic practices that is called *contextualization*, stressing the process (reason for the suffix *-ization*) rather than a “given” context that would only be a simple “setting”.

The stress is on the representations of the actors since it seems relevant to take into account their representations of the languages they use, languages of the family, the social entourage, the school, institutional languages or family languages used in school, to quote only a few, that exert an influence on their teaching/learning actions. This multilingual tangle creates on the one hand, the linguistic and language identity of the learner or the teacher and thus creates, on the other hand, the sociolinguistic aspect of the community or communities he is a member of. The known, heard, learned languages organize themselves according to relationships of strength, sets of relations, sometimes combinations, matched by language behaviors, linguistic attitudes and the representations of these languages. Louise Dabène (1994) stressed these phenomena a long time ago in her groundbreaking work that shows how this socio-didactic approach is created by putting together language didactics and sociolinguistics, which she presents as inseparable, at least theoretically, for whoever is interested in the social dynamics of languages and specifically in their transmission in school. This approach leads to certain methodological practices, mainly sociolinguistic: participant observations, semi-directive conversations, complex corpuses, the so-called method of language biographies, oral or written, recording of contextualized social practices, relationalization, comparative approaches, to quote only a few.

The methods of development of the knowledge are a clear sign of epistemological positioning (Demaizière & Narcy-Combes, 2007). The span may be represented between two polarities: {hypothetic-deductive quantitative (HD) <—> empiric-inductive qualitative (EI)}. These two polarities are crossed by a continuum {methodology < — > method} that helps determine, on the one hand, the *methods*, “adaptable support principles for a progressive research strategy” and, on the other, the *methodologies*, “a priori programming of a fixed research technique” (Morin, 1986, p. 27). They are also reinforced by the continuum {experimental methodology <—> ethnographic method}.

The project of an EI method is to propose the comprehension (interpretation) of individual and social phenomena observed in an ethnographic manner as they occur spontaneously, by taking into account first of all their meaning for their actors and therefore by living these phenomena with the actors, like an actor among other actors, however, according to methods that ensure the significance of the observed and compared situations and that consciously use the intersubjective relations maintained within the group, particularly those in which the researcher is involved. The interpretation resulting from the research is induced by the observed phenomena: there is no underlying hypothesis (in the sense of a predetermined answer to validate or invalidate); there are questions to which the research brings elements of an answer (in English it is called *data driven research*, however, the term *data* is inappropriate, because nothing is “given”^{*} everything is produced and/or turned into *observable* by

* Translator's note: In French, "data" and "given" are homonyms.

the researcher). The fundamental epistemological principles of this kind of science are the principle of humanism (human beings, individuals and/or groups, are considered independent, worthy subjects, rich in their uniqueness), the principle of intersubjectivity (human and social phenomena develop and can be understood within and through the interactions among the subjects, including the researcher, and the meanings they assign to these interactions), the principle of endo-referentiality (comprehension of the subjects based on their own system of reference, values, meanings), the principle of heterogeneity (human and social phenomena, humans, are characterized mainly by their extreme heterogeneity, complex and chaotic¹, that prevents us from reducing them to universal rules that allow us to suggest deeply anchored knowledge that might reveal partial tendencies but never absolute predictions). The main argument is therefore a qualitative one: we are seeking and proposing mainly meanings, not figures (which can however subsequently corroborate the interpretations proposed). This type of research is well adapted to human and social sciences.

The research field is not reducible to the definition of a geographic space. If this criterion often constitutes a determining variable, at least three other criteria should be considered: a field is also a temporal, social and situational space (in the sense of a microsituation of interactions). The field is not an “object” dissociated from the researcher, it is a network of human and social interactions, which the researcher explores and transforms, while belonging to it in a recurrent manner: “The field is not an object, it is not a place, a social category, an ethnic group or an institution . . . it is first and foremost a system of personal relationships where ‘we learn things’” (Agier, 2004, p. 35).

Sociodidactics, in its theoretical and methodological aspects, is always, in various manners, an action-research. The proposal for a pedagogical transposition of our research method complies with this perspective.

Research Field and Research Method Adapted to Situation of Migrant Children

The school, a place of passage and a place of living, is one of the main socialization environments for the child, which explains why we chose it for our surveys. The school is also a symbol of a guided bridge towards civic values:

We should keep in mind that if we want to instil in an individual cultural values based on a feeling of belonging, we also want to train citizens capable of joining all the other members of society and of entering the public space, citizens capable of living together. (Gohier, 2006, p. 155)

In Quebec, civic education is related to the societal project that aims to make “French the common language” (FCL):

The intensification of immigration poses a constant challenge for Quebec: to give newcomers and their children the opportunity to fully acquire the French language. In order to feel at home in Quebec, first they will have to feel comfortable speaking French, the essential tool

¹ The term *chaoid* is suggested in order to avoid the negative connotations of the term *chaotic*: it seems completely disorganized from a rational point of view but it may correspond or contribute to a functional organization (Blanchet, 2007a, p. 267).

for integration, access to knowledge, to work, to culture and to citizenship. (Commission des États généraux sur la situation et l'avenir de la langue française au Québec, 2001, p. 71)

In that case, Quebec schools could focus on training for living together in French. The civic policy of francization leads to questioning the individual relations with the FCL by taking the official narrative at face value: does the migrant child feel at home in French?

The observables in the fields we worked in are issued from a combinatory method (written questionnaires, oral interviews, discussion workshops, self-portraits, observations in the classroom) and from a critical ethno-sociolinguistic process (Blanchet, 2000; Heller, 2002) in a Montreal school². The relationship with the field has been historicized and it integrates sociological issues into linguistic phenomena. Linguistic productions then become entries into localized identity dynamics. This also explains the central position that we give, in this study, to discourse observables, which were co-constructed with the children during oral interviews (individually and in groups). Our intention was to invite the children to talk about themselves (open questions without a predetermined order) and to mutualize their thoughts about their identity (interactions between peers).

According to Blanchet (2007a, p. 269), representations are sociocognitive categorizations constructed about the universe through which the human mind assigns an organization and meanings, particularly regarding the social universe (it makes models similar to the scientific models which however are developed and conveyed in a different manner and may be called *ethnomodels*). These representations, stable and unstable, collective and individual at the same time, can be attained through the observation of attitudes (called *epilinguistic*, that is, verbal and non verbal behaviours implicitly, even unconsciously displaying social categorizations, meanings and values) and of narratives (called *metalinguistic*, that is, explicitly and consciously displaying social categorizations and meanings). At the methodological level, there are mechanisms for expressing representations, well known in the participative pedagogy, inspired from the psychology research of Piaget and Vigotsky. These mechanisms bypass controlled or uncomfortable narratives (for example, with children in the school environment) by using other modes of expression: drawings, diagrams, Photolangage, sorting and classification tasks, association games, etc. (about which we can then ask for comments to complete the analysis in a dialogical manner). Since Piaget and Inhelder's work (1966), the drawing is used because it allows access to the representations of children.

This is a method already used in surveys with young children (for example in Moore, 2006). The use of drawings allows the child to use a language that is mostly his own and which the adult cannot control too much; moreover, drawing is often a regular ludic practice for children. Drawings require an interpretive dialogue where the adult is not in a position of superiority (Castellotti & Moore, 2009): the child explains what needs to be understood, or tells the adult what to draw, and the interview that is going on is rich with information about the child's representations.

Main Results Obtained Using This Method

We will retain the results obtained regarding representations, needs and strategic narratives. We should keep in mind that these results cannot be separated from the

² We obtained the necessary approvals and complied with ethics rules.

context in which they were produced, which explains the use of official Quebec documents in their interpretation.

Representations of the French Language

Easy language. Children express various kinds of feelings about French and they put together the technical, aesthetic, historic and academic particularities of the language. Thus, Tijani (boy; 9 years-old) is attracted to French because of its technical easiness. He says he likes French because it is easy, which contradicts the image of “French, difficult language” invoked by several of his peers. For Tijani, it is rather his first language, Arabic, that is described as difficult. He explains by describing the differences between pronunciation and spelling (standard written Arabic is as different from Algerian as Old French is from contemporary French, whose written form seems much more transparent than that of Arabic). His comfort with French is partly explained by his sociolinguistic and school path in Algeria. He easily appropriates FCL as a communication tool but he sees his linguistic practices in a plural and cumulative manner (Arabic, French and “sometimes” English). His linguistic practices within his family are also multilingual, since he says that he speaks “a lot of Arabic and a little French” besides Kabyle, a language he attributes to his parents (“I know words but I do not speak it”). For him, languages have first a communication purpose. He wants to learn Kabyle because he wishes to go back: “maybe I will go back, I want to go back, speak Kabyle /with them/”. This raises the issue of the communities to which French, according to him, gives access.

Language of France. Tijani associates the French language to France. He makes a distinction between French in France and Canadian French and illustrates it using a known example: “it is not the same (French) here/here they say “toque” and... in France they say “hat”. On the other hand, Algerian French is perceived as being “similar” to the French spoken in France. So he gives a common belonging to the linguistic field (French) but he makes diatopic differences (France, Algeria, Canada). His descriptions show detailed knowledge of the varieties of French known before and elsewhere (France, Algeria) and “here”. During a separate interview, his older brother Ilian (boy; 11 years-old), shares the same idea regarding the resemblances between Algerian French and the French spoken in France. He explains that that is due to the similarities between Arabic and French and repeats a stereotyped statement that circulates in Algeria about the “Frenchness” of Algerian Arabic³. For Tijani, “intercomprehension” between the two communities is also proof of the transparency between the two languages: “if you say ‘ice’ in Arabic in Algeria they will understand because that is how it is”. He shows his appropriation of current Algerian sociolinguistic representations. He also lays a bridge between the Algerian world and the French world, that is, between the world that defines his first belonging and the world he defines as a linguistic reference standard. However, his representation of France is not idealized. The two brothers explain the proximity between Algeria and France by the French presence in Algeria: “France . . . was in Algeria for 130 years!” (Ilian); “they came/to fight/then . . . then they changed the Arabic words” (Tijani). These narratives evince the thinking of multilingual children to try to understand the linguistic systems they have at their disposal. The consideration of intra-linguistic

³ “Mohamed traversa toroute, krazout tomobil, ramassaw morso morso” is a widespread shiboleth in Algeria to show to what extent Algerian Arabic (the statement is in Algerian) is full of words borrowed from French.

variations and of the representations that seem significant for them contribute to the facilitation of intercomprehension, particularly in the context of teaching:

To stress the point, the teacher speaking in French (the common language) to francophone students thinking that linguistic and language “intercomprehension” is almost implicit (with an adjustment of the language level, for example) and is not an obstacle but an advantage, finds himself/herself in many cases in a situation where (s)he addresses francophone speakers who do not speak the same language as him/her. . . . because they do not have the same practices and especially the same social representations of the common language. (Bulot, 2007)

Elevating a language to the status of single common language tends to relegate the other languages in a multilingual environment to inferior positions in the representations. Quebec is trying to align the French reality to pluralism (Lamarre, 2001), but, just like linguistic policies in school, it is a project rather than a consensus acted upon.

Compulsory language. The French imperative in Quebec schools may be interpreted as a shield against the competition of the English language (Allen, 2006) and other languages. Wishing to see their peers respect the rules that they are striving to apply, certain children are irritated by productions in English, perceived as transgressions against the code of life at school. Prescriptive attitudes among pairs are noted, for example Besjana (girl; 6 years-old): “you know, with my friends, sometimes they talk to me in English but I tell them ‘we must speak French at school!’” Besjana is among the most independent students in her class. Recognized by the teacher for her advanced level in FCL and her insight, she is often asked to tutor her peers. Her prescriptive attitude is therefore in accordance with her authority role in the classroom. Nevertheless, these recurrent reminders make the children prudent in confessing their use of another language. The school is also the privileged place to support the child, migrant or not, in his/her intercultural contacts and the management of his position towards the others. The school can also educate about the cultural and linguistic plurality so that it is not reduced to a type of transgression. Schools in Montreal share mutual adjustment principles and recognize the plural resources of their population (Commission Scolaire de Montréal, 2007). However, the recognition of multiple linguistic resources is often perceived as problematic in the school environment. For teachers as well as for the students’ parents, multilingual practices tend to be perceived as being nefarious to the progress of FCL. The same fears of linguistic impurity and colliding codes are found in several children, regardless of their affiliation groups or class.

Expressing Needs

Identity needs. When observing the negotiations expressed verbally with the children, a certain “identity need” is noticed, as theorized by Lipiansky (1992, pp. 143, 166–169). Besides the need to exist, integrate, to be valued, to control and to individuate, reactions are particularly suggestive of the need to be recognized by the other (adult, teacher, native, francophone and/or Quebecois): “identity depends at the same time of self-awareness and of recognition by the other, regardless of the affiliations of either” (Blanchet & Francard, 2003, p. 157). Ilian (boy; 11 and one-half-years-old) for example, connects his mother’s linguistic practices with her

socioprofessional status before migrating to Montreal: “my mother speaks Arabic French/because she was, mmh, . . . like, mmh, doctor of French in school”.

Multiple needs. Speaking also shows the reflexive need to talk about oneself. The act is reflexive in the sense that it needs a distancing from the self (and one’s manners of thinking and speaking) in order to open to the other and connect to him through the narrative about the self. The exercise is demanding, encouraging, valuing and threatening at the same time since we also depend on what the other will say (or not). This type of recognition concerns more directly the minority or non-official ethnic, cultural and linguistic markers. These identity markers constitute a favourable ground for marginalization as well as for the assumption of power. Children also feel the need to project themselves through valued figures, whether peers, adults, or public personalities. In a situation of numeric minority, these are also dominated by the more important number of the members of the majority group. The ethno-sociolinguistic diversity of the children is not represented among the authority figures in the school. One of the few teachers to cumulate the markers “migrant”, “multilingual” and “ethnic minority” stated that she shared the feeling of struggle that children must feel upon arrival in Quebec. Speaking of the adjustment difficulties that she encountered, this teacher described how she tries to explain to these children the cultural functioning specific of Quebec. The lack of environments that encourage the expression of multiple identities cannot be beneficial for the co-construction of intellectual, social and ethical knowledge: self-knowledge, intercultural knowledge, knowledge of otherness, diversity and subjectivity.

Multilingual needs? The Board⁴ recognized that “Learning a language is a long process” (Government of Quebec, 2007, p. 73) and states an “openness towards other languages” (Government of Quebec, pp. 53–57). The consultation process has finally consulted the work of various specialists in bilingual and multilingual practices. Rethinking languages as places of living and projects for living stresses the fact that restrictions related to languages limit the freedoms and creativity of individuals, families and societies. Therefore, the promotion of FCL should be done through the mutual recognition between the multilingual resources being shared and through the collective recognition of the subjective relationships with languages, identities and historicities. This ethic way, obviously very narrow compared to the extent of the complexities underlying the social structures and the powers involved, seems nevertheless central for the tendency towards intercomprehension concerning the width for the continuity of the identity of the Other:

A community searching for recognition must first of all assume the subjectivity of the great narrative that it lays on its history in order to construct unity. It needs to carry the wish for continuity that imbues its historic conscience as a unique experience of the world from which it has the moral right to demand respect and recognition. . . . As for the French language in Quebec, it is important not to defend it only based on the argument, though very important, according to which it is

⁴ The Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences co-chaired by Gérard Bouchard (Université du Québec à Chicoutimi) and Charles Taylor (McGill University) was created to review the situation in depth and to make recommendations to the government.

naturally the most likely candidate for the status of common public language. (Beauchemin, 2006, p. 150)

Deconsecrating the language would contribute, ironically, to justifying its relative, and subjectively legitimate, importance. Promoting and protecting FCL because it reflects an identity characteristic that connects a society to its past would open essentialist debates to intercultural negotiations. Promoting and protecting FCL because it includes the other linguistic dynamics present or to come allows the opening of Quebec's identity space to these aspects of otherness. These openings should not be seen as a finality or as an access to the end of the challenges of illegitimacy. This is an opening to renegotiating the linguistic, identity and historic projects of the human resources in order to find out how everybody participates at a given time in a joint and moving project. The complex purview of this will for openness, inclusion and negotiation is to move from the ideal of a pluralistic society to that of a critical society. Rethinking the dynamics in a different manner than through rigid domination relationships enables everybody to mobilize their forces, to believe in them and to use them to think about themselves and others. Following a didactic and ethno-sociolinguistic thinking process based on the discursive corpus (Razafimandimbimananana & Doubli-Bounoua, 2008), it seemed important to consider the existence of these subjective standards and of the corresponding representations as an indicator of the linguistic skills of the students. This integrative process of plural directories and of the resources they constitute works towards a contextualized didactics. Efforts focused on what is lived, perceived, imagined, invented about languages seem appropriate not only in order to improve their acquisition of the codes but also to resolve the pressures they may experience in relationship to such a standard. This allows them comprehensive access to the operation of languages with an awareness of their double articulation: pragmatic and symbolic.

Needs of FCL learners. Although few children state their attachment to French, they all recognize its importance for their academic and social success in Quebec. This awareness is related to affective, pragmatic and intellectual reasons for Anka (girl; 11 years-old) and to pragmatic and normative reasons for Besjana (girl; 6 years-old). They both describe technical characteristics of FCL ("I think the language is difficult", a condition of intercomprehension) and associate affective aspects to it ("I like French"; "I would like to learn French . . ."). Language seems to be a source of intellectual stimulation that introduces personal motivations in the didactic project. Anka is motivated to meet the technical challenges because her representations of FCL are positive ("the language is very good", "I find it interesting"). The appropriation of an object that seems attractive corresponds indeed to a self-valuation in the project: speaker of a very good language, difficult and interesting, she would prove her cognitive and cultural skills. Besjana also makes the language a means to access something else that is intellectual and social. This is an intercultural bridge towards an otherness to the extent to which FCL would give her access to the contents of course and to meeting the Other. More specifically, she wishes to "understand" her teacher. The presence of the other linguistics determines the language speaker to become self-reflective, which brings us to de Robillard's idea (2007, p. 92) that migrants and their languages "determine us to change our usual categories, including that of 'language'". The role of the adult, the support person and the trainer is then to work with these plural complexities by including them, for example, in narrative activities in the classroom.

Strategic Narratives

Speaking about oneself during this search for a stable identity enables one to resort to another to create the sought after invariance and even more when the action leaves behind marks perceived as more permanent. Our attention is drawn towards this power to leave marks, which, in the search for the identity invariance, symbolize in fact the opposite process: the marks signify the passage of an identity that from now on is no more. How do children connect the identities they perceive? The narrative of the self connects what is no more to what is coming and will come. It requires a (re)adaptation of the self, the body and its thoughts to the new that from now on surrounds the immediate experience. From now on, elsewhere is also represented by projected spaces or by spaces in which the child says he projects himself. This will enable us to study why the child imagines (re)creating his life in Quebec/Canada or not.

Connecting to the other. For Ilian (boy; 11 years), Quebecers represent a type of otherness compared to the Algerian group with which he says he identifies during the interview. He says that language and religion are the main differentiation factors, by contrasting francophone, non-Muslim Quebecers to Arabic speaking, Muslim Algerians. When he describes himself, he reviews the boundaries he has just expressed between the two groups. The differentiation factors become cumulative (there are Muslim Quebecers) “but”, he says, “not many”. The other can then be perceived in a complex manner, with the attribution of identity factors that are not exclusively exogenous. Ilian situates the “center of gravity” of his identity in his Algerian dimension. This constitutes his type of continuity and ensures his impression of invariance (“I remain Algerian”) through time and space. During the interview, we note a strong affective charge for Algeria: “yeah, I love my country/I am proud of my country/”, “I like everything [the food, the mountains in Algeria]!” However, he also likes to imagine living in England and in Italy, as prospective countries. For him, including other places, other languages or other cultural practices in his life plans is not in competition with the fact of remaining Algerian. According to Gohier (2006), two poles are essential and interdependent for the (re)construction of the identity in a multiethnic environment, with two associated dangers: “. . . the importance of the recognition of the self as an individual in all its aspects, including the cultural aspect, and the importance of the recognition of the other. Two traps should be avoided in this double movement of recognition, closing and cultural relativism” (p. 154). Between his various aspirations and within those of the others, Ilian prospects his path trying to reconcile his attachment to Algeria with the social values that constitute from now on his environment. FCL connects the spaces on his trajectory and thus the language establishes connections between his past elsewhere and his situated (re)constructions. His awareness of the intralinguistic variations of French motivates him to renegotiate his francophone identity (in the general sense of the term) and this characteristic represents a place that is familiar, safe and consistent for him. In other cases, the manifestations of this search for consistency are noted in the formulation of the distinctive.

To differentiate oneself from the other. Leyla (girl; 9 years-old) makes differences similar to Ilian’s, above, however she perceives the cultural characteristics of each group as being exclusive. That is why she explains that she cannot say about herself that she is a Quebecer because of her Muslim religion. However, exclusive

cultural affiliations do not create other differentiations since for her Quebecers “are like Muslims but not exactly the same.” This reminds us of Bulot’s (2007) language, at the same time “identical and different” as quoted above. Without necessarily being aware of it or without necessarily stating it, she points precisely where ethno-sociocultural constructions blend into each other. The search for identity boundaries is particularly tested by the identity plurality to which the children are exposed during their migratory experiences. Besides mobility, its narration enables the children to compare and add complexity to their representations of the other. Thus, the notion of identity assumes a subjective dimension. For Nana (girl; 10 and one-half-years-old) for example, it is “the colours” that enable her to differentiate herself from Canadians or Quebecers. The other factor she invokes is the language. For Anka (girl; 11 years-old), language is the only disjunctive characteristic between Canadians and Bulgarians.

The identity markers expressed by the children through words are attributed on both sides of the boundaries between their *I* and a Quebec or Canadian *they*. By exploring this porosity of identity boundaries, they embark on a reflexive process that, in our opinion, will contribute to the development of their intercultural skills. They will be better able to understand the inherent contradictions within social and identity dynamics, such as the double and opposing need to identify with the other while differentiating oneself from him at the same time. Self-reflection is also an efficient tool for the management of emotional upheavals generated by mobility and specifically by departure(s).

Narrating oneself in the classroom. The themes of break and of transgression connect the migratory process to a powerful emotional load. Migrating means first leaving, this leads to the values of loss or symbolic death. The children talk about the sadness they feel when they think about what they no longer have.

Milan (boy; 9 years-old):

one night I cried/my mother said... ‘Why are you crying?’ I said
‘because my friends I left my friends/but I won’t... maybe I will... I
will not see my friends again’ she said ‘NO we will go back/we will go
back to visit/on vacation then we will come back here’/

Welcoming class teachers also stress the difficulties that children who must get used to new and numerous performances (Quebec school, life and culture) face. This renders the identity flexibilities that can be associated to the migrant child rather relative because he is still a child. Migration also resorts to individual faculties to better live between-the-two that results from the duality of markers (before/after; here/there; I/they). In order to establish links between these various places of affiliation, self-representation activities (biographical narrative, self-portrait, and expressive creations) will enable him to (re)work his emotional interactions with self and others. Spaces, experiences, knowledge of the past and of elsewhere that we would fear to lose, such as the languages we might forget, are revived to be translated for the other and reinvested with him. More specifically, Gohier (2006, p. 156) reminds us of the potentialities of the autobiographical narrative:

To encourage self-knowledge, we can use, among others, the autobiographical narrative, reflection as well as the analysis of one’s connection with culture and otherness, of one’s otherness and the otherness of the others. The importance of the narrative discourse, of

the fiction as well as historical narrative in the expression of symbolic thought is confirmed by Ricœur (1983). The autobiographical narrative in particular resorts to the double, cognitive and affective dimension of knowledge. Moreover, it reveals the complexity, the plurality even of its own identity components, thus opening the way to accepting that of the other.

For the child, doing these biographical activities in the classroom represents a recognition process. The children we met with tend to remember the social markers or products that constituted them before and elsewhere. Several mentioned family and social networks whose absence is felt “here.” At the material level, Tijani (boy; 9 years-old) mentions the house his family no longer has. In another interview, his brother stresses the socio-professional status of the family by stating that “there” his mother was “like a doctor of French at school”. The narrative of what is no more seems to be a discursive means to re-evaluate a new, growing social condition when it is experienced in a manner that leads to minimization. We understand that the identity needs of the children we met include that of recognition of the self and of its historicity.

Suggestions for Intervention in Education

We would like to suggest a transposition of the research method towards pedagogical practices. The results obtained using this method show to which extent the sociolinguistic and identity representations of the children are accessible, essential to understanding them, critical for inclusion in a pedagogical process to help them on their multilingual and intercultural path.

The Narrative Tool

The personal narratives of the child already have an important place in the classes observed (debates, exchange of anecdotes, postponed recreation activities). However, we encountered less often the legitimacy of the autobiographical narrative or of the identity narrative as a school activity. These discursive spaces constitute places to reflect on oneself, to open towards the other and to become aware of one’s subjectivities, complexities, contradictions. They resort to intercultural skills and develop them at the same time. To speak about oneself leads to a better knowledge of oneself, increased acceptance and a better balance between one’s particularities and banalities. Ricœur (1996) analyzes the “narrative identity” as a mediation between internal crises, the feelings of impermanence and the quests for invariance: “Without the leading wire of the distinction between two models of the identity and without the help of the narrative mediation, the issue of personal identity gets lost in the mysterious workings of difficulties and paralyzing paradoxes. . .” (p. 150). The narrative of the self also enables one to redefine oneself in the universe of the other or to assume his own before the eyes of another. Faced with the numerous communication networks, expressive supports and sources of knowledge, we find the double need of the man caught between distinctive and unifying aspirations. The narrative of the self in a school environment would enable the co-construction of different relationships with what is typically common: words, writing, self-expression. The inclusion of such personalized spaces in classroom activities would encourage the awareness of subjectivities and legitimacies of the self and the other. It is during his school years that the child works on and learns to work on his relationships with the

world: "Education can have an effect on the construction of these representations and should lead to an awareness of the positive value of cultural and linguistic diversity" (Armand, 2004). The role of the school would be to support the child's efforts so that he may use his skills in a critical and differentiated manner.

The Intercultural Approach

In the work of Kanouté, Gervais, Sercia and Cantin (2006), intercultural training is based on the following principles:

Decentering as a preliminary to the otherness process; recognition of the ethno-cultural diversity as a structural reality of society; objectifying, by the actors, of their own ethno-cultural references; the inclusive taking into account of the ethno-cultural diversity in policies and practices; the obligation to continuous thinking about the tension inherent of the intercultural: admitting diversity while being concerned at the same time about the construction of "living together" (consensual standards, laws and values during a given period); the promotion of ethno-cultural relationships not based on domination and exclusion. (pp. 4–5)

These are, for us, the necessary foundations for reflecting on the conciliation of civic thinking with the sharing of spaces and their resources as soon as the other is recognized as such in his legitimate shape. Decentering and the recognition of the other can also lead to the deconstruction of racist hierarchies. Accepting one's ethnicity requires seeing at the same time one's uniqueness and common affiliations. The intercultural approach enables one then to shape oneself and to adapt in relationship to the self and to the other. For this approach to the intercultural, the authors used the following papers: Abdallah-Preteuille (1997), Blanchet (2007b), Hohl and Normand (1996), Mc Andrew (2004), and Ouellet (2002). The difficulty consists in turning this approach into a simple teaching object that is not simplistic.

Deritualized Moments in the Classroom

"Deritualizations" of pedagogical exchanges (Moore & Simon, 2002; Moore, 2006) provide a constructive path so that pedagogical activities may be rethought creatively and critically. These authors remind us of the numerous pedagogical possibilities when we come across the identities situated in such a way as to involve the teacher and the learners in a dynamics of co-constructed knowledge. This presupposes that the teacher can delegate the powers and responsibilities he centralizes according to the dominant diagram of academic education. As for the learner, he is removed from any passive comfort consisting in absorbing the knowledge, simulating it or detaching from ongoing interactions. The requirements are many and are distributed on both sides of the teacher's desk, which explains the idea of deritualizations. These moments are at the same time destabilizing and federative of reflexive, communicational and interpersonal consequences:

These moments mark an important involvement of the learners in their narrative and shape a new narrative environment to receive learning data. On the other hand, these moments may or may not constitute themselves in sequences of learning, depending on the reactive

orientations of the teacher when faced with the deritualized demands of the learners. (Moore & Simon, 2002, p. 143)

Including here the biographical narrative (see above) into the curriculum requires a reappropriation of unidirectional (teacher *to* the student) and formal (normative and standard content for all) pedagogical routines. As a thinking tool, the narrative invites the learner to mobilize various types of skills to realize himself. It can also be part of a joint FCL project but the objective is multidimensional and unites types of teaching (oral, writing, spelling and syntax, reading) with types of education (intercultural, civic, socialization).

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