

IDEOLOGIES OF DISADVANTAGE: LANGUAGE ATTRIBUTIONS IN A DUTCH MULTICULTURAL PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM

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Abstract:

Current ethnographic research shows that Dutch educational policy is caught between two positions. First, it constructs pupils from immigrant minority groups as educationally disadvantaged and, as a consequence, fosters mainstream (language) education as the means for their social integration and emancipation (Bezemer 2003). Second, it leaves Dutch primary school teachers with the challenge of dealing with the cultural and linguistic diversity brought about by their pupils (Bezemer & Kroon 2008; Spotti 2007). Against this background, the present article, stemming from a larger comparative ethnographic enquiry in the Netherlands and Flanders, focuses on the analysis of the discourse of a Dutch native primary school teacher in a multicultural classroom in the Netherlands. By means of socio-culturally informed discourse analysis (Gee 2005), it is shown that the identities of immigrant minority pupils are constructed, in the class teacher's discourse, on the basis of language attributions that find their pivotal point in ideologies of language disadvantage provoked by the lack of Dutch language skills on the part of these pupils' parents. The analysis, however, indicates that at the level of the discourse that populates the classroom, the ideologies that lay beneath the language attributions through which these pupils' identities are constructed are eroding. Such erosion might also hold consequences for the way in which immigrant minority pupils' identities are constructed in the discourse of Dutch governmental institutions.

Keywords: *Identities; Ideologies; Language attributions; Primary education; Teachers; The Netherlands; Immigrant minority pupils.*