Chapter 9
Teachers' Mindsets About Their Role in Shaping the Norms of Students' L1 Use in Greek Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

In Greece, mainstream classes consist of linguistic and cultural mosaics, where pupils face problems related to the absence of their L1. Teachers play a significant part in this, as when L1 is welcome, the sense of belonging increases, being highly influenced by their mindsets, in terms of values, teaching attitudes and methods. The chapter explores teachers' mindsets about their role in handling the presence and set the norms of different L1 use in class, presenting the findings of a qualitative research conducted as part of a doctoral thesis on the production of multilingual teaching material for the awakening of first-schoolers to linguistic diversity. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, exploring 60 teachers' mindsets about their role in promoting the use of L1 in class. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and processed through thematic analysis. Encouraging the L1 use, adopting integrative routines, creating conditions of cooperation, and cultivating values among pupils are the main axes that set the norms of students' L1 use in class.

INTRODUCTION

Modern societies are shaped through intense mobility of populations, with multilingualism being more of the rule than the exception (Cummins, 2008; Lasagabaster, 2015). Within these societies, school contributes significantly to the smooth settlement of children who are forcibly or voluntarily displaced, by meeting their emotional, educational and social needs (Nakeyar et al., 2018). Indeed, the interaction of these children with their teachers and classmates, whether during lessons, breaks, or other activities

and events of the school, cultivates and encourages their social inclusion (Farmer et al., 2019; Juvonen et al., 2019).

First-school age is a particularly important phase in a child's school life in terms of language, because all students are in a literacy development phase in their L1. In fact, different cultural and linguistic background constitutes the "luggage" that young students carry with them as a crucial part of their identity. It is, therefore, very important to ensure the well-being of all students at school, through the reinforcement of their emotional security provided by their L1 (Coelho, 1998), but also within an inclusive environment open to diversity, and through making use of all children's abilities and knowledge (Stergiou, 2019). Yet, banning the use of their L1, through an implicit linguistic assimilation, according to Cummins (2008), is likely to deprive them of access to their basic cognitive tool, forcing them to acquire the stigma of belonging to an "inferior" group. In addition, according to Tseng (2020, 112), "hybridity and translanguaging are inherent parts of heritage speakers' repertoires", however, this hybridity is often stigmatised as being a sort of deficient language (Zentella, 2014). This language delegitimisation within monolingual-normed contexts has also consequences for heritage speakers' acceptance and self-esteem (Tseng, 2020). However, especially for the refugee children, stigmatisation is synonym to social instability, or even exclusion (Hart 2009), while their placement is specific accommodation structures encourages social exclusion and "territorial stigmatization" and school segregation, making it difficult for children to build relationships with their classmates outside of the few hours of school (Vergou, 2019).

In Greece, an institutionally monolingual country, the continuous flow of refugees and immigrants from countries of the Balkans, Africa and Asia (Greek Ministry of Migration Policy, 2019), form a linguistic and cultural mosaic in the school classrooms, since the schooling of these children from 5 to 14 years in Greek school is compulsory (Law 4636/2019). Within the Greek educational context, teachers involved in the education of young students report facing important issues with students of immigrant origin, because most of the time they do not speak or understand Greek well and are thus marginalized (Avramidou, 2014; Diakogeorgiou, 2016). In addition, according to Gkaitartzi et al. (2015), many teachers seem to be positive towards promoting pupils' heritage language but they do not relate them to children's school language learning and their own role as educators. Furthermore, other research within the Greek context reveals a discrepancy between teachers' positive views about integrating students' multilingualism in class and their teaching practice (Fotiadou et al., 2022; Simopoulos & Magos, 2021).

In this chapter, the author will first define the concept of teachers' mindsets and link it to that of teachers' identity, situating both of them in the context of teachers' willingness to promote their students' L1 in class. The author will then present the findings of a study on primary teachers' mindsets about their contribution to shaping the context of all students' L1 use in class. In fact, ever since the early 1980s, Bakhtin (1981, 346) had claimed that it is very important for mainstream teachers of multilingual learners to "recognize their ideological points of view, approaches and values'' both on a professional and personal level and how they influence their teaching practices. Thus, exploring teachers' mindsets about their role in establishing a framework for handling the presence and delimiting the norms of use of the different L1 in their classroom, would be of important research interest, as teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards multilingual pupils' cultural background and languages are considered to exert an important influence not only on their professional practices (Llurda & Lasagabaster 2010; Xu 2012), but also all aspects of learning (Vázquez-Montilla et al., 2014).

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