

**“These children, they will be angry.”**

**Language as determining educational instrument for immigrant children**

In considering educational opportunities in a time of globalisation, much has been said about the difficulties of students with immigrant backgrounds in integrating into an educational system where the language-of-learning-and-teaching (LoLT) is not the same as the family language. (See Genesee 1994, Martin-Rojo 2010, Farrales & Pratt 2012). This paper will specifically use the concept of ‘contact zone’ (Pratt 1991, 2008) – a liminal space where locals and foreigners meet – in considering the challenges faced by children from families whose home language does not coincide with any of the LoLTs of the community in which they are living. Schools are contact zones where not only learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds meet, but also parents and teachers from different educational contexts.

The paper will refer to recent studies on integrating learners with immigrant backgrounds into European as well as Nordic schooling systems, and it will relate that to a different kind of educational setting, namely that of African immigrant children in South African schools. Data collected in 2014 and 2015 in an African migrant community settled in the Western Cape region will be presented in considering patterns of similarity and difference between northern and southern destinations of refugees and asylum seekers. In attending specifically to choices and opportunities regarding the LoLTs, it will address two questions, namely (i) how are the voices of parents heard in assuring integrative and equal educational opportunities for their children in the host countries, and (ii) how are different host country policies more or less responsive to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of a changing body of students? Finally the paper will reflect on how schools as ‘contact zones’ become spaces of developing new identities and of speaking (back) to power.

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