



SUMMARY

Nathalie Thomauske:

Constructions of speechlessness: a German – French comparative study about language power relations in the domain of early childhood education

Germany and France face similar challenges concerning questions of immigration. Both countries are nation states, in which the majoritarian society is convinced that the people should be unified through speaking a common language. This conception of the nation-state is nevertheless strongly opposed by plurilingual people (of Color). The aim of the thesis is to analyze how a discrimination of plurilingual children is constructed and legitimized in daily life in the domain of early childhood education. To this end, focus group discussions with practitioners and parents have been conducted and analyzed following a constructionist “grounded theory” approach. Findings show, among others, that practitioners do not know or are insecure of how to deal with children who do not speak the target language. Some of them react by expecting children to adapt and to learn the language on their own through “language submersion”. The “Other” languages of the children and their parents are relegated to the private context and their speakers are silenced in the ECEC setting. Other practitioners criticize these de facto language policies and describe how they contribute to support children in expressing themselves in their favorite language(s).

Key-words: Comparative education, France, Germany, de facto language policies, power relations