

THE IMPACT OF LINGUISTIC STEREOTYPES ON THE SOCIAL PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF CHILDREN IN MIGRANT FAMILIES

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Abstract

This article examines the main linguistic stereotypes faced by migrant children, such as "foreign accent," "language deficiency," and biases towards bilingualism. The study explores their impact on academic performance, social integration, and self-identity. Special attention is given to educational policies and the role of society in overcoming these stereotypes. The article also discusses strategies aimed at creating an inclusive educational environment and supporting migrant children.

Keywords: Linguistic stereotypes, migrant children, foreign accent, language deficiency, bilingualism, social adaptation, educational policy.

Introduction

Key Linguistic Stereotypes Faced by Migrant Children

"Foreign Accent" and Its Perception in Society

An accent is one of the most noticeable and frequently assessed linguistic features, often serving as a basis for the formation of stereotypes about an individual. Migrant children who speak the host society's language with an accent frequently encounter negative biases [3, 10]. Society may perceive a foreign accent as an indicator of inadequate competence or low educational attainment, potentially leading to discrimination and social exclusion [12]. Studies indicate that an accent influences the perception of native speakers, shaping specific expectations and biases among listeners [3, 9]. For instance, an accent may be associated with particular ethnic or social groups, reinforcing stereotypical notions about an individual. For migrant children, this entails not only social pressure but also the constant need to conform to societal expectations, which can induce stress and lower self-esteem [12, 15].

"Linguistic Deficiency" as a Stereotype

The stereotype of "linguistic deficiency" suggests that second-language speakers lack proficiency, often serving as a justification for discrimination or social marginalization [3, 10]. Migrant children who make errors while speaking the host language may be unfairly perceived as less capable or intellectually inferior [12]. This stereotype impedes their full integration into educational institutions and social life [13].



Linguistic deficiency also affects the academic performance of migrant children. Teachers and peers may unconsciously lower their expectations for such children, resulting in diminished academic aspirations and, consequently, decreased motivation and interest in learning [3, 10, 13]. This creates a vicious cycle where linguistic deficiency becomes a barrier to achieving educational and social goals [12].

Bilingualism: Stereotypes and Reality

Bilingualism is often viewed ambivalently. On the one hand, proficiency in two languages can be regarded as an advantage, providing additional opportunities for social and professional growth [4, 11]. On the other hand, there exists a belief that bilingualism may slow down the acquisition of the host language and cause linguistic confusion [4].

Empirical evidence demonstrates that bilingualism offers numerous cognitive and social benefits, including enhanced cognitive skills, increased mental flexibility, and broader opportunities for intercultural communication [4, 11]. However, stereotypes about bilingualism can negatively impact migrant children's self-esteem and their attitudes toward their own language and culture, necessitating awareness and intervention from educational institutions and society as a whole [12, 14].

Social Consequences of Linguistic Stereotypes

Impact on Academic Performance and Achievement

Linguistic stereotypes significantly affect the academic performance of migrant children. Those who experience negative judgments due to their accent or language errors may suffer from reduced motivation for learning and diminished interest in academic subjects [3, 13]. This, in turn, influences their overall academic success and career prospects [12].

Stereotypes related to linguistic deficiency can lead to lowered expectations from teachers, limiting children's opportunities to demonstrate their abilities [3, 13]. These low expectations may become a self-fulfilling prophecy, wherein children, sensing insufficient support, do not strive for high achievement, ultimately hindering their educational and social development [12].

Social Isolation and the Sense of Rejection

Linguistic stereotypes can contribute to the social isolation of migrant children. The sense of rejection from peers and teachers due to their accent or linguistic errors may result in decreased social engagement and restricted opportunities for interpersonal interaction [3, 10, 15]. Children may avoid speaking in the host language, further exacerbating their isolation and complicating the integration process [15].

Social isolation adversely affects children's emotional well-being, increasing the risk of depression, anxiety disorders, and other psychological challenges [15]. The lack of support and understanding from their surroundings intensifies feelings of loneliness and non-belonging, making it difficult for them to develop a positive social identity [12, 15].

Self-Identification: Identity Conflict and Its Impact on Self-Perception

Linguistic stereotypes can generate an internal identity conflict among migrant children. On the one hand, they strive to preserve their native culture and language; on the other, they seek to integrate into the host society [4, 7]. This balancing act between two cultures can lead to confusion and uncertainty about their identity [6, 8].

The influence of stereotypes on self-identification manifests in lower self-esteem and negative attitudes toward one's cultural heritage [12, 14]. Children may feel societal pressure to abandon their native language and culture, leading to internal conflict and diminished confidence [4, 7]. This identity conflict complicates the process of socialization and the formation of stable social attitudes [6, 8].

The Role of Schools and Society in Shaping Migrant Children's Social Attitudes Educational Policies Regarding Migrant Children

Educational policies play a crucial role in the integration of migrant children and the formation of their social attitudes [13, 14]. Policies that promote multilingualism and cultural diversity contribute to creating an inclusive educational environment where linguistic and cultural diversity is valued [14].

An essential aspect of educational policy is the provision of additional language learning programs that enable migrant children to acquire the host language efficiently [13]. Furthermore, considering cultural characteristics and the specific needs of migrants in curriculum development fosters more successful integration and adaptation among children [10, 14].

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