KOREAN-NESS THROUGH LANGUAGE USE AND IDEOLOGIES: NOTES FROM THE ARGENTINE CONTEXT*

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Summary

From an anthropological perspective that incorporates topics and theoretical-methodological tools developed within various branches of linguistics, this project attempts an approach to the transnational Korean collectivity in Argentina and its configurations of Korean-ness by looking at a set of practices and ideologies related to the *Korean language* in this particular migration context.

Since the 1960s, diverse disciplines have emphasized the relationship between language and identity. There is a number of studies available on the symbolic efforts national States invest in the creation (and preservation) of national languages out of certain denotational codes. Another group of investigations has paid attention to minority languages and the linguistic macro and micro policies regulating them. Still another research line has focused on linguistic practices of (members of) ethnic minorities in face-to-face interaction. Identity constructions taking place through language use in transnational scenarios, however, call for a combination of all three analytical levels.

Expanding on a previous exploratory study, the present project therefore aims to examine communicative practices, and their underpinning linguistic ideologies, that stitch together the simultaneous status of Korean as national language, immigration language and mother language. On one hand, it seeks to analyze minorizing forces –materialized in linguistic policies, media and everyday discourse– at work within the specific frame of Argentina's diversity fromation that shape Korean into an ethnic/immigration language. On the other hand, it observes certain uses of Korean in contact with the variety of Spanish spoken in Buenos Aires, and especially delves into community practices which, drawing on old and new forms of State-sustained linguistic nationalism active in South Korea, valorize Korean and lead or contribute to its (re)appropriation as a mother language by Korean descendants.

1. Introduction

Over forty years after the first Korean immigrants settled in Argentina, there are few and isolated studies about the different aspects of the sociocultural insertion of the Korean collectivity[1] in Buenos Aires, its main destination in the country. From an anthropological standpoint covering theoretical and methodological discussions and tools from diferent branches of linguistics (ethnography of speaking, sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis), and conceiving linguistic and communication activities as constitutive and constituent of broader socio-cultural processes (Golluscio *et al*, 2001), this paper seeks to contribute to this field through the exploration of a series of social practices around the Korean language and its uses in the context of migration. Such practices shed light on cultural policies –specifically, linguistic policies and their ideological underpinnings–, which work, explicitly and implicitly, at macro

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[1] Following the local tradition, and in line with the constructivist perspective here adopted, I will use the term "collectivity" rather than "community".

and micro levels, “from above” and “from below”, and with different degrees of organicity, in ethnic and national subjectification processes. Empirically, the study is based on material collected from 1996 to date, including ethnographic notes taken throughout fieldwork, in-depth interviews to “Korean” and “non-Korean” actors, the results of a socio/ethno-linguistic survey conducted over a universe of 300 male and female respondents, aged between 12 and 70, who self-identify with the Korean community, and a set of print media articles about Korean immigration in Argentina.

After presenting a brief characterization of the Korean immigration in Buenos Aires, and an outline of the sociolinguistic situation of the Korean local collectivity based on the research work available, I will examine, on the one hand, several forces operating in the diversity formation specific to the Argentine national frame that shape the turning of the Korean language into an ethnic/immigration language. The focus is placed on every-day practices aiming at minorizing the Korean language and its speakers. Oriented by a historic intention of cultural homogenization, such practices may fall under what I’ve called *politics of indifference/unrecognition* and *poetics of stigmatization*.

On the other hand, I will also explore a set of practices produced within various spheres of the Korean collectivity that seek to valorize the immigration language. These appear to be informed by old and new forms of linguistic nationalism active in the society of origin and result in the Korean language being (re)appropriated as mother language. Moves of “completion” or enhancement of the Korean language in the migration context, the actualization of Korean as an index of community membership, and what I’ve termed experiences of *return* to the Korean language are all considered here under this light.

Both types of practice span, in the migration context, the simultaneous status of Korean language as national language, immigration language, and mother language. The paper ends with an apostille aimed at contributing to a comprehensive migration policy. It suggests the need to modify the current guidelines of linguistic policy in Argentina, not only by offering immigrants and their children effective opportunities to acquire Spanish but also by starting, at the same time, actions of positive-awareness towards all those languages that have been subordinated and minorized in the framework of national hegemony.

2. Brief overview of Korean immigration in Buenos Aires

According to an authorized self-narrative of the Korean collectivity in Buenos Aires, Korean immigration in Argentina dates back to the mid-1960s. These pioneer immigrants came by sea from South Korea, fleeing poverty and political-military instability resulting from the Korean

War and, after a period of precarious settlement in the neighborhood of Retiro, were relocated mostly to rural areas of the provinces of Río Negro, Buenos Aires, Santa Fe and Santiago del Estero, on land purchased by the Korean Corporation of Overseas Development[2].

However, some of them stayed in the city of Buenos Aires and settled in humble areas; among them, the surroundings of what is today known as *Koreatown*, in the neighbourhood of southern Flores. Reinforcing this trend to remain in urban areas, about 200 middle-class Korean families arrived during the 1970s –property owners, professionals and students who were escaping from the marked military tension between the North and South of the peninsula– and from the government's authoritarian policy, and looked for better a quality of life and opportunities for social promotion. This *imin* coincides with rapid economic growth in South Korea, which was followed by a dramatic rise in its urban population.

The largest volume of Korean immigrants came by plane to Argentina in the 1980s, and is mainly represented by families from a highly industrialized South Korea, where strong competition was perceived to reduce youngsters' opportunities for personal development. Unlike those immigrants set for rural areas with the support of the Korean government, these immigrants, financially capable of investing in small and medium enterprises, arrived stimulated by trade agreements between the Korean and Argentine governments[3]. This conditioned immigration had its peak inflow between 1985 and 1989, and its pattern of settlement indicates a preference for downtown areas of the capital city and its surroundings, rather than being restricted to the South Flores neighborhood. Currently, the Korean presence in Argentina is estimated at about 25,000 people[4].

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[2] In the 1950s, small contingents of former North-Korean military prisoners arrived in Argentina. However, it is the arrival of thirteen families from North Korea, in October 1965, that the Korean collectivity considers as a founding milestone of the immigration process in which they took part.

[3] Rule of Procedure for the Admission of Korean Immigrants in Argentina, April 1985, and National Migrations Department Resolution No. 2340, of June 26, 1985. Created by such regulation, the mandatory requirement of a US$ 30,000 deposit for the admission of a family group was intended to ensure permanent establishment, and prevent immigrants from using Argentina as an intermediate stop for North America. However, not all Korean citizens complied with such requirement: Some came as tourists from border countries and then changed their visa category; others entered the country illegally, and managed to obtain their residence permit; and there is a number of people –979, as registered by the National Migrations Office– who were only able to regularise their migration status via a special regularisation program for non-MERCOSUL citizens implemented in 2004.

[4] A study conducted in May 1996 by the Korean collectivity in Buenos Aires estimated the presence of 32,000 Koreans in Argentina. Informally, it was said that they reached 40,000. By the late 1990's, there was not only a decreasing trend in the arrival of immigrants, but also a trend of re-emigration and return to Korea, and it was estimated that a considerable number had left the country for the United States, Canada, the Republic of Korea, Mexico and Australia. After the "2001 crisis", informal estimates suggested that only 15,000 Koreans remained in the country. Lately, however, re-emigrants have returned to Argentina –especially those who had left for Mexico–, as well as emigrants who had returned to Korea, and informal estimates amount to 25,000 again. As opposed to the 2001 National Population Census, which counted 8,205 Korean-born foreigners residing in the country, these figures, produced and managed by the Korean government and/or the Korean collectivity, include the children of immigrants born in Argentina.

Korean immigration in Argentina has operated mostly through migration chains comprised by nuclear families connected through family ties or friendship. In financial terms, adopting strategies such as the family business has allowed many of these immigrants to enter an independent occupational niche, either in the small and medium clothing industry, wholesale and retail trade of low-cost garments and food, or in the import of diverse products. According to Bialogorski and Bargman (1994:6), intra- and inter-family solidarity networks result in "the preservation of a wide area for in-group exchange, especially regarding marriage, commensality, sociability, and linguistic competence".

Articulation to the larger society and other immigrant groups has been, so far, more intensive in the working environment. Family businesses have frequently hired internal migrants and immigrants from neighboring countries in their garment workshops and stores which, in competition with the sector of the Jewish collectivity engaged in the textile trade in the metropolitan neighborhoods of Once and Flores, supply consumers of low and medium purchasing power. For the younger generations, which include both people born in Korea and in Argentina, the school has been a major venue for interacting with people of non-Korean origin.

3. On the socio-linguistic situation of the Korean collectivity: some discussions

The socio-linguistic situation of the Korean collectivity in Buenos Aires shows a wide and varied range of aspects which has been scarcely studied. In the absence of an updated systematization, we should focus on some areas of discussion that emerge when we cross-check the results from the few attempts at approaching the issue.

In her book about Korean immigration in Buenos Aires, Mera (1998:80-82) describes the linguistic situation of the Korean collectivity based on a correlation between the variable "language competence" –operationally defined as the ability to express ideas and understand Spanish demonstrated by consultants– and the variables "age" and "year of arrival in the country". However, I prefer to think that the different degrees of linguistic and communication competence[5] in Spanish displayed by Korean immigrants are not automatically based on these variables, but on the social contacts and interactions –direct and indirect– that they manage to establish both with locals and with migrants from neighboring countries[6].

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[5] Communication competence does not only depend on knowing how to say something, but also on knowing how to say it appropriately (Hymes, 1964). Gumperz (1984) defines it as knowing the conventions for discourse processing and related communication rules that participants must control as a pre-condition to be able to engage in and maintain conversational cooperation.

[6] I use the concept "neighboring countries", broader than "border countries", in order to include Peru. Although not all migrants from neighboring countries are native Spanish speakers, their communication exchanges with the larger society and with the members of other migrant collectivities occur mostly in Spanish.

Family work arrangements –especially in the early migration flows–, and the creation of cooperation networks to facilitate the economic integration of immigrant families have resulted in the exclusion of many adults, especially elderly people, from direct work interactions with native Spanish speakers. On the other hand, fluent communications with Korea, the everyday consume of a variety of Korean popular culture products (popular music, television series, movies, best-sellers, among others), and the emergence of a Korean-language local information market (which include locally published newspapers, and several attempts to produce radio and cable television shows) have combined with a migration policy that pays little attention to social integration processes, so that learning the Spanish language has not been promoted among this age group who, nowadays, hardly –if at all– speaks or understands it. These migrants, therefore, are severely isolated from the larger society.

Adult migrants who have led the economic insertion of their families –we should highlight the active role of women–, and who have been involved in activities that require establishing relationships with the larger society and with other migrant groups have attained different levels of competence in the use of Spanish. Some have reached significant grammar and phonological skills; others use isolated words. In either case, however, the acquisition of at least moderate receptive skills adds up to the recognition of socio-linguistic rules that govern a small number of communication situations –business transactions, greetings– to enable them to efficiently use limited production skills.

Although with higher productive abilities and with receptive skills and knowledge of socio-linguistic rules for broader practical spheres, even among the members of the so-called "generation 1.5" –people born in Korea who arrived in Argentina as children or teenagers–[7] different skill levels in Spanish competence are evidenced. Since the better linguistic and general communication competence attained by this immigration group is basically the result of secondary socialization in the Argentine education system, differences in the skills attained are related to length of schooling in the country. As Mera suggests, it is likely that the age at which immigrants entered the Argentine school system has had an incidence on the above-mentioned competence differential[8], and therefore, the year in which they arrived in the country –meaning the years of residence estimated for the members of an age group– would be a relevant variable. But this hypothesis takes for granted the continuity of migrant children and teenagers in the formal education system. Focusing on the difficulties the Korea collectivity faces when it comes

[7] This term, somewhat foreign to the local migration jargon, is an "experience near" concept for the Korean collectivity.

[8] "Because those who are 36 today, and arrived 20 years ago, acquired the Argentine values and methods in a key moment of their psycho-physical development. However, those who are 36 today, but arrived less than 15 years ago, are at a disadvantage, since the momentum of their learning process was interfered by migration" (Mera, 1998:81-82).

to learning Spanish, Jeon (1999:324-325) uses the variable “year of arrival in the country” in a different sense to interpret the varied linguistic and communication skills of generation 1.5. For Jeon, the year of arrival in the country indicates belonging to qualitatively different migration groups, who have had different possibilities of continuity in the Argentine formal education system.

In fact, Jeon finds that, due to bureaucratic disinformation, administrative and legal problems, and the need to contribute to the family work, the level of school dropout (especially in high school students) registered among the children of the first immigrants is considerably higher than among the children and teenagers arrived with the investment migration that started in the 1980s. The latter were partially released from family work, in consonance with one of the key drivers for the migration undertaken by their parents: better opportunities for the education and professional development of their children[9].

For this generation arrived in the 80s, discontinuity in the education system occurs not at the high school level, but at the university level. Although the first Korean students graduated from Argentine universities belonged to this group of migrants, both access to and continuance in the local university have been relatively low. Among the different factors explaining this phenomenon[10], we should not overlook the obstacle implied by the sometimes incomplete command of Spanish. Such incomplete command is related, according to Jeon, to insufficient training in certain registers, especially formal ones. “According to the statistics, in 1992, 62% of young Koreans who enter university leave at the first-year leveling course (CBC). Others complete their studies after nine or ten years, while the average is five to six. Sharing the general problem of education in Argentina, especially Korean students are faced, during university, with the awareness of being less competent in the language [...] For these reasons, the number of university graduates is much lower than expected. Until 1990, about 55 Koreans were estimated to have graduated in Engineering, Dentistry, Law, Economy and Medicine” (Jeon, 1998).

Children born in Argentina have also been affected by this problem. Although Mera states that they “use Spanish correctly, in expression and comprehension” (1998:80), Jeon finds that “children do not have homogeneous competence of the registers used in the academic milieu. It is true that they

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[9] More research is needed, however, to examine whether these immigrants and those who came later actually maintained these values in the migration context.

[10] Unemployment has been one of the reasons discouraging potential and effective university students. Many of them perceive that “if there are few possibilities for Argentine graduates, there are even fewer for Korean graduates”. A significant number of people consider that labor insertion in the larger society is, if not impossible, at least extremely difficult and badly paid. Also, the preference for North American universities could be associated with the scarce presence of Korean students in local universities. This inclination rests on the belief that degrees awarded by universities in the US guarantee access to highly-paid jobs.

use children or adolescent language fluently, but they show inefficiencies in others: writing, reading comprehension, literary and informative registers" (1999: 327). This limitation in the appropriate use of certain registers is not restricted to the academic domain but is later evident in others, especially those including some type of negotiation, such as business or work interactions, condominium board meetings, parents' meetings, etc., in which tasks are distributed and assigned.

This gap experienced by many students in the collectivity, and that underlies failure and dropout, is partly based on the lack of access to natural contexts of use of such registers. On the other hand, the use of Korean language in the family domain may conflict with socializing in cultural and linguistic codes whose knowledge the school takes for granted and only partially teaches.

4. From national language to immigration language: Minorization of the Korean language in Argentina

The idea of a tension between cultural/linguistic codes leads us to a logic of diversity management and production of differences which operates in the semiotic process of shaping Korean from national language into ethnic/immigration language. In order to approach this process as it occurs in the Argentine context, it is useful to describe a set of practices tending to the minorization of the Korean language and their speakers. Although in the case of the local Korean collectivity, the core criteria are met to define a linguistic minority –self-identification, common origin, cultural and historical traits related to language, and social organization of interaction between linguistic groups such that the group under consideration is relegated to a minority position– mechanisms of submission active in the "host" society have conspired, so far, against the *political* articulation of the Korean collectivity in terms of a linguistic minority. That is why, rather than speaking of the Korean language in this immigration context as a minority language, I prefer to emphasize its condition of *minorized language* (Allardt, 1992) and to point out certain *minorization practices* to which it is subject.

The concept of minorization calls our attention to the specific national diversity formation resulting from the experience-unifying mechanisms implemented by the Argentine state in the historic process of nation building. Focusing on this stage is a necessary step to understand the course of immigration languages and linguistic practices of migrating collectivities in Argentina.

Argentina as immigration context: a "difference-squashing machine"

In her anthropological analysis of the historic formation of diversity in Argentina, Segato contends that “[here] the national State, faced with the original fracture between the capital city and the provinces, and with the contingents of European immigrants that later added up to and overlapped this original breach [...], exerted pressure so that the nation would behave as an ethnic unit with its own singular, homogeneous and recognizable culture”. In their quest for a national ontology, local Nineteenth-century elites chose an “essential and indivisible ethnic model applied to the national society as a whole” (1997:11). Creating a national ethnicity implied the cultural homogenization of its inhabitants throughout the territory, especially in the borders; the nation thus became, since its inception, “the great antagonist of minorities”.

According to the author, this historical model of population identity management aimed explicitely at culturally cleansing those contingents that converged in the formation of the Argentine nation. The Argentine State adopted the role of an efficient “difference-squashing machine”: “All people who were ethnically marked, either by their belonging to a defeated ethnic group (Indians and Africans) or from an immigrant collective (Italians, Jewish, Spanish, Polish, Russians, Syrians, Lebanese, Germans, English, and so many others) were called or pressed to move away from their category of origin to, only then, comfortably exercise full citizenship” (Segato, 1997:17). Thus, instilled by “ethnic terror” or fear of diversity, several mechanisms of cultural surveillance were activated. School, public health, and compulsory military service were key devices of the neutralizing plan.

Although arguable from historical data that cast doubt on both the consistency of such management model and the scope of its effects, this interpretation –which is more widely accepted among anthropologists (Briones, 1998, Grimson, 2003, Guber, 1997)–, seems appropriate to shed light over the so-called “language question”. Subject to a nationalist ideology that equated people, land, and State, language became of utmost importance for the moral elites in charge of creating and consolidating the nation[11]. Together with a hispanicizing program, linguistic submission was a constituent aspiration and a privileged field of action for the general mechanisms of social submission (Allardt, 1992). Linguistic surveillance ranged from banning the use of American languages in school to inorganic and every-day forms of control, such as, for example, the mockery of accent, which “terrified whole generations of Italians and Galicians who had to refrain themselves and be careful not to speak ‘wrongly’” (Segato, 1997:17). Notwithstanding the results –which differed from immigrants to their children or grandchildren–, such mechanisms of omission and pejorative exposure of difference still exist in our days, even without the explicit support of a nationalist project for which

[11] For an analysis of the “language question” in Argentina, see Di Tullio (2003).

linguistic homogeneity is essential, and in a context of growing exaltation of diversity, which seems to result partly from the import of a globalized model of multiculturalism. As stated by Mármora (1992), even nowadays, the issues related to cultural identity, and especially, language maintainance, are the most controversial aspect in terms of migrants' rights.

In comparison with the intensity and duration of the minorization practices that have affected and still affect other languages and their speakers in the context of the nation as State –particularly, indigenous languages–, one could be tempted to underestimate the contempt component (Dorian, 1998) which is at stake in the case of the Korean language as immigration language in Argentina, and consider it to be only a language spoken by a numerical minority. However, if, as suggested by Woolard (1996), the status of languages reflects the status of their speakers, the Korean language reflects the status of second-class citizens attributed today to immigrants in our country. From this perspective, the specific practices leading to the minorization of the Korean language become relevant. Such practices, which emerge in multiple scenarios and range from deliberately ignoring the immigration language to openly stigmatizing it– could be lumped together under two large titles: politics of indifference/unrecognition, and poetics of stigmatization.

4.1. Politics of indifference/unrecognition

Minorization practices affecting the Korean language have most serious consequences in the realm of Spanish language acquisition. As I could record in several interviews, learning Spanish has been a big concern for the Korean collectivity in Argentina.

The structural and cultural gap between Spanish from Rio de la Plata and (the different regional variants of) the Korean language do not make learning easy. In terms of morphological typology, for example, Korean is an agglutinating language –with polysynthetic characteristics, as Payne suggets (1997)– while Spanish shows an inflecting-fusional system[12]. In terms of syntax, unlike in Spanish, the basic order of the Korean sentence is S-O-V. The main predicate of the Korean sentence is placed at the end, while in Spanish it is usually found immediately after the subject. On the other hand, the structure of a Spanish sentence begins with the broader concepts and completes the details afterwards, while a Korean sentence provides the reader with many details at the beginning, and only later puts them in context. Besides, the Korean language encodes a strict social hierarchy mostly based on the Confucian state philosophy[13]in a system of

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[12] The index of synthesis refers to the number of morphemes that tend to occur per word in a language. Highly-polysynthetic languages include several morphemes per word. The index of fusion refers to the ease with which morphemes can be separated from other morphemes in a word. Agglutinative languages have a low index of fusion, while in fusional languages it is high.

[13] Let us recall that the five basic relationships prescribed by Confucianism are: king-subject, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, friend-friend.

speech levels so that the speaker's status governs the selection of a given level and the applicable honorifics[14]. Also, as opposed to the notion of autonomous and sovereign subject implicit in Spnish, the Korean language encodes a relative or structural conception of subject. The imposition of plural forms –among them, using the first-person plural possessive adjective for the first-person singular (restricted form of "our")–, and the use of the object of judgment as subject of the sentence illustrate "Eastern self-effacement [which contrasts] Western self-assertion" (Baxter, 1996:129).

In short, for adults, "the learning process is lengthy and difficult" (Jeon, 1999:326), especially since it is a lonely and self-managed process because the Argentine State has informally and implicitly delegated the teaching of Spanish for adults to the immigrant collectivity itself[15]. Language courses –either on-site or media-based– offered by private institutions of the Korean collectivity meet an unarticulated demand that the few extant public Spanish teaching programs for foreigners cannot cover effectively, in part, due to the absence of a pedagogical design considering both the specific characteristics of the Korean language and culture, and the interests and schedules of these migrants, largely absorbed by their work. The few research works aimed at facilitating the acquisition of Spanish by adults, and the lack of State support for the application of such research to the field of informal education and cultural mediation are not surprising, considering the enactment of official migration policies that, rather than ensuring migrants' social insertion, have proposed forms of intervention with growing police-style characteristics[16].

The same gap is observed in the formal education of children and adolescents from Korean families[17]. The traditional hispanicizing project of the Argentine educaction system affects the

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[14] Although some authors speak of seven speech levels, there is broad discussion about an accurate definition of speech levels in Korean (Wang, 1990; Park, 1992). Since speech level markers and honorifics are referential indexes that pressupose and create social relationships (Silverstein, 1976), the study of how speakers resolve the transposition from one language to the other, should take into account both semantic and pragmatic moves. Such a study would have two pedagogical purposes: designing a Spanish-teaching method, and building communication bridges based on the identification of cultural and social aspects that are taken into consideration every time a native speaker of Korean uses certain linguistic forms in Spanish.

[15] This affects several aspects of everyday life. For example, the Argentine national traffic law in force mentions "knowing how to read and write [the national language]" as a requirement to obtain the driver's license. Until recently, the city of Buenos Aires required foreigners with temporary and permanent residence permit to pass a Spanish test together with the driving test. The license granted to incidental residents (tourists), instead, did not include this requirement. This new regulation, which contemplates taking the written examination in languages other than Spanish, was adopted following lobbying actions carried out by the ONG "Asociación por los Derechos Civiles (ADC)" through its project "Participative Diagnosis on Discrimination", coordinated by myself and anthropologist María Inés Pacecca.

[16] Migrating contingents arrived in the country in the latest decades have been represented in official discourses as deviant from the norm (Courtis *et al*, in press).

[17] There are two projects that were never implemented: one proposed by the *Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires* [a prestigious high school run by the University of Buenos Aires], where the main reason for Korean students to change schools are language difficulties, and another submitted to *Lenguas Vivas* [higher education language school] by municipal elementary schools (Fanjul, 1995).

school biographies of Korean family students, since it ignores in practice that, when entering the elementary level, many of these children are monolingual[18] in Korean and are forced to learn a second language according to pedagogical criteria designed for native speakers. By putting them at disadvantage, the school becomes a "factory of suffering" that has a negative effect on students' social and emotional development (Neufeld and Thisted, 1999), and results in lower performance in subjects requiring reading comprehension and writing abilities in Spanish. All this, in addition to the pressing expectation of academic success by parents, for whom outstanding formal education seems to represent less an automatic transfer of cultural values than an answer to discriminatory experiences suffered by the collectivity in a context that tends to turn difference into inequality (see also Mera, 1998:74-75)[19].

Applied research shall be an essential task if we expect to meet the more up-to-date objective of "guaranteeing the teaching of Spanish as a second language throughout all levels of the Argentine educational system in the cases of communities where Spanish is not their mother language", proposed in the Framework Agreement for Language Teaching (Federal Council of Culture and Education, Ministry of Culture and Education, 1997). The experience conducted in Argentina by Korean institutions, as well as that of many private teachers who help students from the Korean collectivity– will therefore be compelling elements.

The violence caused by the hispanicizing program that, in line with a standardizing tradition, awards scarce recognition in the classroom to any first language other than Spanish (in its local variant or in one of the variants considered to be prestigious), ultimately responds to the nationalistic ideology of language –nowadays hegemonic worldwide– which equates one people with one language (Schieffelin, Woolard and Kroskrity, 1998). Evidently, the interpellatory nature of the nationalist ideology of language goes beyond the field of formal education, and there are diverse semiotic mechanisms whereby it creates meaning. In the framework of the above-described practice of omitting the immigrant's language, though "from below" (i.e. outside the State apparatus), it is worth noting the clear lack of interest in the Korean language shown by the local population. To use the environmentalist metaphor, we could say that, in the sound ecology of Buenos Aires, Korean has been relegated to the place of a threatening

[18] This is not necessarily the situation of children from other immigrant collectivities or from indigenous peoples. Among other factors, the case of Koreans is affected by the self-sufficient nature of their economic integration and the use of traditional rules of sociability (especially within the family) in the context of immigration. The different linguistic conditions of children entering the school system –monolingual in (different variants of) Spanish, monolingual in a language other than Spanish, near-passive bilingual , effectively-passive bilingual, high- and low-proficiency bilingual semi-speakers (Dorian, 1982)– must be taken into consideration in detail, from the pedagogical standpoint, in order to implement a Spanish-teaching method that is neither alienating nor paternalistic.

[19] The importance attributed to education of excellence could also be seen in the light of immigrants' conception of formal education in Argentina as a means to attain social, cultural and economic promotion of the migrating family. However, among Korean immigrants, this seems to have changed over time, partly along with Argentina's political and economic instability. See also footnote number 10.

language, and there is an almost nonexistent offer of public spaces where it can circulate and be exhibited in a climate of respect and for the purpose of social or cultural exchange[20].

4.2. Poetics of stigmatization[21]

Everyday discourses about Korean immigration in Buenos Aires persistently actualize several linguistic topics which contribute to the construction of a negative stereotype of Korean immigrants. Drawing on strategies from racist discourse, such instances are tactically elaborated, placing the focus on the form of the message and allowing the explosion of the non-referential functions of language, in particular the poetic function[22].

Everyday conversations and media articles evidence attitudes of disapproval and discredit both towards the relationship between immigrants and the "majority" language, and towards the ethnicized language and its uses in the context of immigration. One of the most common figures in this type of discourse is that of *the Korean who does not speak Spanish*. Although this topic refers to the immigrant generation, it is frequently extended collectively to "Koreans", which neglects the fact that both children born in Korea and those born in Argentina are competent in Spanish communication (at least, as noted above, in the colloquial register). Most times, this inability or lack of grammatical skills in Spanish is perceived to be the result of a presumed lack of will to "become part of" the national society (a euphemism for "assimilate"), thus ignoring the efforts undertaken by the Korean collectivity –with specific priorities and methods– to fill the linguistic gap: opening "academies" that include Spanish (support) lessons in their programs, preparing educational material, investing on private teachers for children and teenagers, among others.

This attributed communication deficit is thematized not only explicitly, but also implicitly and metapragmatically; in fact, there are several non-referential resources discursively available to convey the said insufficiency. The following excerpt of a narrative including the representation of a dialogue between a police officer and a Korean immigrant arrested for presumed tax evasion and illegal hiring of immigrants from neighboring countries combines some of them: very brief interventions in laconic reply to the questions asked by the police officer, slow

[20] Contrary to this trend, some institutions from the Korean collectivity opened their language and culture courses to non-Koreans long before the late direct and indirect initiatives taken by the Korean government.

[21] This section is based on my research on everyday discourses about Korean immigration in Buenos Aires, conducted between 1996 and 1998 (Courtis, 2000).

[22] I conceive the poetic function of language in broad terms –not necessarily involving an artistic purpose–, drawing on Jakobson's idea of "the poetics of grammar" (Jakobson, 1960) and Silverstein's statement (1976) on "the pragmatic 'poetics' of prose".

utterances in a low volume –which contrast with the stressed discourse of the interrogator–, signs of doubt, and repetition of the same phrase which denotes a poor and general vocabulary:

> *A: [the police officer] asks him Do you understand? // >°Some things°< ((laughs)) // Well, I'm going to print this / to see whether: whether you can understand / then he prints the record from the computer / gives it to him ((laughs)) and:: and he says: Do you understand? // >°Oh, some things°< ((laughs))* (interview to A)[23]

The emphasis on the limited communication competence is a practical expression of an ideology that, defending the ideal of a monolingual nation, considers the foreign language as a problem –caused by the foreigner – rather than a right. In that respect, not speaking the Spanish language is usually considered to be suspicious, especially in business interactions.

This reproachful attitude also focuses on the use of the Korean alphabet, hangul, in the urban space, which is considered to denote enclosure, hermeticism, mystery, exoticism and other characteristics that are attributed to a collectivity which is perceived as a homogeneous community. This discourse can be registered in the media:

> *"The place known as 'Korean neighborhood or Chinese neighborhood' is characterized by the large number of stores with signs written in Oriental characters" (La Nación, 4/20/93)*
>
> *"In the Korean neighborhood, everything from food to lingerie, cosmetics and videos subtitled in their language, is offered only to members of their community" (La Nación, 9/28/92)[24],*

but it is also perceived in everyday conversations, such as the ones illustrated in the following fragments of a conversation I had with a taxi driver during a trip to this area of Flores in October 1997:

> *C: Aha / so there are many Koreans around here? / since when?/*
> *T: Yes / some years ago/ since I've known this place // there's a Korean neighborhood there*
> *C: Oh / how do you know?*
> *T: Because they're all / they're all all Koreans! / the stores are all written in // the way they write*
> *C: Oh yes? / How? / What's it like the way they write?*

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[23] Transcription conventions:

INTONATION	*PAUSES*	*LENGTH*
? rising intonation for questions	/ micropause	**:** additional short syllable
VOLUME	// short pause	**::** additional long syllable
CAPS high volume	*ARTICULATION*	*OTHER*
° ° low volume	se-pa-ra-tion rhythmic separation of syllables	( ) non verbal action
underline emphasis		**[ ]** doubt or transcriber's reconstruction

[24] Already in the first half of the 20th Century, prominent writer Ricardo Rojas complained about the signs in immigrants' languages in Argentina: "What is the point, then, in the teacher teaching Spanish grammar, and saying that Spanish is the language of the country, if students, when they come back from school, see the streets full of signs in French, in English, in German? Shop owners and industrialists may be foreigners, but when they come to do their business in our land, we have the right to impose upon them the language of the country, since it is one of the signs of our nationality" (1922:218; also quoted in Di Tullio, 2003).

T: Well, the way they write / impossible to describe / right?
[...]
C: And how do you see them?
T: Hem: / them? // they' re in their own world
C: They're in their own world?
T: Yes / with their people and: well/ they don't want to leave their place // they don't want to relate with anybody / no contact / it's as if they didn't care /// they have their own: their own: NEIGHBORHOOD /// they have their own neighborhood there where we're going / so with that you get an idea.

Conjuring up this alleged danger, everyday discourses about Korean immigration in Buenos Aires also express mocking attitudes that undermine and discredit whatever voice immigrants manage to articulate. In media discourse, for example, the way in which the voices of isolated members of the Korean collectivity are inserted attain underestimating effects, in particular when reporting immigrants' complaints about discrimination against them. In these cases, quotes in free indirect speech emphasize, through imitation and parody, the limited use of Spanish widely attributed to Korean immigrants. Thus modalized, the Korean voice is ridiculed and its complaint is neutralized.

"My son, my daughter, Argentines. ¿Work? Nooooo. Study. Better study. My wife angry. Many newspaper come and speak badly, and say that all Korean bad." (La Nación 3/16/97)

Especially Korean personal names are the target of imitations and games of words. In the above-quoted narrative, the resource is evident:

A: <well the point is that here comes> / the Korean / who's called Wi:n-Chu:n-Fa:u ((laughs)) // [...] Then / policeman with a moustache <all> says to him: / well name? ((laughs)) / Wm-Chm-Fn ((laughs)) // What? /Let's see: write it down // <so he grabs the paper> °and writes° Wn-Chn-Fn [...] and well finally I'm released from the case of Wan-Chin- Sin / Wan-Chin-Kon for having err: business with: / for being a printer who had: err: subcontracted Paraguayans.

There is yet a more radical practice of transforming Korean personal names: "christening", i.e. the substitution of a local name for the Korean one[25], in which case the Korean language, rather than being discredited, is bluntly denied. In fact, both imitation and "christening" perform substitution operations on the immigrant's language –a language that raises suspicion since it is taken as a symbol of social and cultural practices considered exotic and morally questionable.

In sum, linguistic homogeneity –one of the core principles of the notion of national culture–, is the basic assumption that helps turn the language of reference of Korean immigrants into a

[25] From another perspective, the use of an "Argentine name" has a practical sense: to avoid giving explanations, and becoming focus of attention or target of mockery. We should distinguish the "christening" from registering newborns with locally-authorized names. It is worth mentioning that both "christening" and the restriction of personal names are frequent practices in diverse domination contexts.

stigmatized/ing diacritic. The Korean language is, in the immigration context, not only as an index of a social group, but also as a transparent description of the presumably distinguishing traits of such group (Gal & Irvine, 1995). Since, in turn, the same operation of stigmatizing the language of the "other" triggers the community-building potential of the national language, the discursive resources that I have presented are but (some of the) means by which the hegemonic conception of languages as distinctive and emblematic entities of a community self is (re)created in this specific scenario.

4.3. Possible effects on everyday life

Considering the politics of indifference and the poetics of stigmatization outlined above, the assertion that most "school children and students [who belong to the Korean collectivity] feel more at ease with Spanish" (Mera, 1998:81) should not always be taken at face value. This is undoubtedly the case in the presence of "Argentines", especially, of those who co-participate in a same communicative situation. Rather than standing as a sign of ease, the use of Spanish among "Korean-Argentines"[26] may sometimes signal determination *vis-à-vis* the linguistic demands to which the Korean collectivity is subjected. In this context, we may understand the growing trend among parents of generation 1.5 to conduct the primary socialization of their children in Spanish.

The following vignettes have been taken from my ethnographic notes to evoke some effects that minorization practices may have on the use of the Korean language in the context of migration to Argentina[27]:

[26] The hyphenated category "Korean-Argentine" echoes ethnic categories common in the United States –probably the most important site of the so-called Korean diaspora. Like "generation 1.5", it is a category used by the actors for self-definition.
[27] Names and certain other data used in the vignettes are fictitious.

Ethnographic Vignette I

In October 2001, a theater complex in Buenos Aires organized a film cycle featuring the latest successes of the "new Korean cinema". On my way to the theater, and certainly seized with the ethnographic habit of keeping my eyes and ears alert, I distinguished a young couple with Asian traits who, I assumed, were going in the same direction as me. We were stopped by the traffic light, and crossed Corrientes [Avenue] together, so I managed to hear them speak in Korean in a very lively manner. Once inside the building, I came across them again in the elevator that took us to our theater, amid half a dozen potential spectators –none of which had "Asian traits"–, who kept silent. Although less lively than in the street, the coupled continued to talk. But now they spoke in spotless "*porteño*" [Buenos Aires Spanish variant].

Ethnographic Vignette II

As part of my training for ethnographic research, I have joined a Korean language course offered by the "Saturday school" at the Korean-Argentine Institute[28]. My bench mate, Kevin Kim, is twelve years old. He easily understands the Korean language used in class, but has a hard time writing it. I know very little about his oral production because he is reluctant to speak Korean besides the oral exercises given by the teacher, which he does with a little embarrassment. I have encouraged him several times showing him how far ahead of me he is, but he insists that he cannot speak Korean because they do not speak it at home. Or rather, they only speak Korean with grandmother. One Saturday I miss class, and then I call Kevin's house to find out about the day's lesson. A man's voice answers the phone, greeting in Korean. In Korean, I ask for Kevin, and the answer, in Korean again, is "Speaking". Once I introduce myself, the conversation goes on in Spanish.

5. From immigration language to mother language: Korean language valorizing practices in the context of Argentine migration

Faced with the minorization forces of the Korean language and its speakers active in the migration context, some practices aimed at valorizing the immigration language have emerged from disparate sectors of the local Korean collectivity, resulting in the language being

[28] In 1996, was inaugurated the *Instituto Coreano-Argentino* (ICA), a trilingual school supported by the Korean government and incorporated to the Argentine official education curriculum, which also implements a "Saturday school" of Korean language and culture.

(re)appropriated as mother language. I am referring to *valorization*, and not only *appraisal* [in Spanish "*valoración*"], a classic category in the study of linguistic attitudes, because these practices propose new forms for embellishing, enhancing or completing the minorized language (Schleiermacher, 1999). In other words, they intend to increase the relative value of that national language turned into ethnic language.

An interesting feature of such practices is that they have the potential of evoking aspects of the semiotic processes of dialect appraisal which at some point resulted in the crystallization of a given denotative code as the national language of the country of origin (Silverstein, 1998)[29]. In our case, in the migration context, there is a re-emergence of traits of the strong linguistic nationalism that interpellates Koreans through the official narrative purporting the exceptional scientific nature of hangul, the alphabet specifically designed in the 15th Century to write the Korean language[30]. The following quote, extracted from a Korean language manual for Spanish speakers, represents a brief entextualization of such narrative:

> *"The Korean language is generally written in hangul, an alphabet invented by Magno Sejong (1418-1450), the fourth king of the Choson Period, in the early 15th Century, according to the phonetic and metaphysical principles, and is based on careful linguistic observation and analysis of the Korean language. Hangul shows not only individual phonemes, but also how they are arranged in syllables. As a scientific invention, hangul is unique among the existing systems of writing, and Koreans are proud of it and of its inventor"* (Baxter, 1996:115).

The inclusion of language as a key element of political projects is indeed old in the Korean Peninsula, and the Korean language has contributed to consolidate the hegemonic ideal of "nation of a single people"[31]. However, in the latest decades, South Korean cultural policies have tended to reinforce and create processes of traditionalization[32] whereby certain elements –among which, the Korean alphabet–, appear as the epithome of a "millenary Korean culture"[33].

[29] This concept has been applied mainly in the case of movements tending to give prestige to certain linguistic variants minorized under the political label of "dialects", in processes of re-emergence of either functionally "dead" or "endangered" languages. I believe, however, that this potential makes the valorization practices of national languages occurring in migration contexts particularly interesting.

[30] Let us recall that before the invention and dissemination of hangul, Korean was written –almost exclusively by nobles– with Chinese ideograms. Even nowadays, the ability to use Chinese characters is considered a sign of erudition and a source of prestige.

[31] That is, precisely, the translation of Han-guk, one of the names of South Korea. Note that speaking about nationalism (and linguistic nationalism) in the case of Argentina and Korea does not mean considering both processes as identical. Kohn's classification (1967) into Western and Eastern nationalisms may provide some elements to shed light over the differences.

[32] For the concept of "traditionalization", see Bauman (1992).

[33] Such policies coincide with the accelerated industrialization of the Republic of Korea, and with the promotion of emigration and the emergence of a Korean diaspora –i.e. an opening to the global flow of goods and people–, and are designed with a marked spirit of international marketing. The promotion and marketing of "Korean culture" summarized in the Korean language, hangul, taekwondo, kimchi and samul nori, among other elements, was especially active during the Seoul Olympic Games in 1988, and in the FIFA World Cup held in South Korea and Japan in 2002. The growing allocation of resources for "Korean studies" in different parts of the world and the numerous initiatives to translate prestigious works of Korean literature into the most widely-spoken "Western" languages are an expression of such policies.

An active linguistic nationalism permeates, then, the valorization practices of the Korean language in the context of migration in sucha a way that immigrants' recurrent "proud" discourse about the Korean language is informed by the political administration of culture exercised in and from the country of origin. With this backdrop, let us review three types of practice that, in a metapragmatic/metacultural move, emphasize the value of the immigration language: we will examine some specific forms that language completion acquires in the context of migration, its actualization as an index of community membership, and what I will term experiences of "return" to the Korean language.

5.1 Some forms of completion of the Korean language in the context of migration

Certainly, the embellishment, enhancement or completion forms that result in the Korean language being valorized in the context of migration differ from those outlined for emerging languages (Schleiermacher, 1999). For example, there is no political-literary movement of speakers reappropriating the Korean language that causes the language to emerge as a valued language in the larger society; nor are the language virtuosos or the great authors the ones who necessarily conduct its enhancement. However, there are small practices, exercised daily and individually that, focusing on the learning of the language by young people, are associated to this phenomenon: parents' insistence on the young to learn the "appropriate" writing, the requirement to achieve harmonious handwriting, the critic conscience of young people about their more or less limited competence in written production. Furthermore, completing the language implies achieving mastery in the use of speech levels. Private institutes from the collectivity and the churches that offer Korean language and culture lessons seek to reinforce grammar and communication competence of young people with special emphasis on these aspects[34].

[34] It is estimated that, presently, there are no less than fourty institutions that offer Korean language lessons in Argentina –29 of them in the capital city and the rest in different provinces–, including community churches and institutes as well as academic and cultural centers supported by the Korean government.

Ethnographic Vignette III

"Koreans" and "Argentines" of different ages attend the Korean language and culture "special course" at the "Saturday school". Most "Koreans" have developed receptive skills to the point that they spontaneously adopt the role of translators between the teacher and "Argentines". As I have been told, their purpose for attending the school is basically two-fold: to learn how to read and especially to write, and to achieve mastery in a wider spectrum of speech levels, since many of them stopped speaking Korean when they were children and can only use the lower levels.

The teacher's pedagogical practice expresses some beliefs about the basic aspects that affect linguistic and communication competence in the Korean language. In particular, she is especially demanding about handwriting. She frequently asks us to write dictated words in the whiteboard, correcting our production in details that we students find minimal, such as the length of a line which exceeds –by few millimeters– the limits of the virtual square in which hangul syllables *must* fit. The high degree of attention awarded to calligraphy is also evident in some attitudes of "Korean" students. On the first day of lessons, for example, a generation 1.5 classmate suggested that we bought the study materials together. We went to a store that sold products imported from Korea because she considered it was necessary to acquire a squared notebook especially designed for hangul calligraphic practice. We "non-Koreans" are surprised at the importance awarded in class to neat writing, always excessive for us.

Although valorization is not undertaken necessarily by the virtuous, the Korean collectivy does not lack people who fulfill that role. Interestingly, it is based on topics related to immigration that the local literary production in Korean language started. As a milestone for such production, we can mention the annual literary publication "*Los Andes*", which started in the mid-90s, and has not yet been translated to Spanish since, in the words of one of its authors, "it is a very hard endeavor and there is still nobody who can undertake it."[35]. Such work has a double constructive effect: it establishes the "community" language virtuosos as such, and authorizes them to create public standards of linguistic beauty for the young generations who, with their putative imperfect management of the Korean language –especially resulting from "interference" with Spanish[36]– seem to attract the ghost of cultural heritage loss.

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[35] The poet's comment may be construed either by the lack of knowledgeable local literary translators or by the need to emphasize the sophisticated nature of the Korean language *vis-à-vis* Spanish.

[36] Although it might be too soon to observe functional and structural changes affecting the Korean language in a minority situation (and especially to decide whether they are phenomena of linguistic retraction), we could mention the interference –or rather, the inter-reference– of Spanish in learning the complex Korean deference system and, even, envisage an early relaxation in its use that, if continued, would have social consequences within the collectivity. During a personal conversation we held, professor Chae Me Young told me that her older students

It is in this scenario that the purist ideology emerges, setting a mythical horizon of original purity not only in face of the threats of the dominant language in the context of migration, but also in face of the dynamics of linguistic change involving the Korean language in several countries of the diaspora[37] and in the country of origin itself. In that respect, the purist ideology and the horizon of fantasy on which it lies sets the Korean language spoken in Argentina against a backdrop of perfection corresponding to a source chronotopos: the time and space prior to migration.

Both insisting on perfect writing/calligraphy and on the correct use of speech levels, and establishing linguistic standards of beauty through local literary production constitute attempts to establish a "high" variant of Korean language in the migration scenario. Faced with the inherent instability of language, this trend towards stabilization turns the language into a hard core of cultural processes of identification.

5.2. The Korean language as an index of community membership

Undoubtedly, loyalty to certain specific denotative rules implies valorizing a code as a privileged instrument of reference. In turn –and evidently, in environments that open the possibility for *de facto* plurilingualism– implementing such specific code entails valorizing its index properties as an identity and community-membership sign. In the plurilingual framework of our concern, Spanish and Korean "have started to serve as indexical modes of acting identities". It is around this "implicit normativity of indexical semiosis that shapes and underlies communication acts of identity and groupness" (Silverstein, 1998:407) that speech becomes part of the imagination work necessary for community-building.

The (frequently reported) indignation of older people at young people's presumed imperfect language competence, the credit associated to skilled language use, and discredit falling on those who lack such skill, the almost compulsory use of Korean in the father-child relationship or the use of certain "keywords" in Korean among the young who prefer to speak Spanish[38] mark the connection between language and identity. Besides, ratifying this indexical property of

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used to complain because the younger ones did not use the title "elder brother" and its due speech level. Also, Ko Woo-ri has approached the systematic use of linguistic inter-references among bilingual youngsters –a way of speaking she identifies as "coreañol".

[37] In the Korean collectivity in Buenos Aires there is great awareness of the diaspora condition. There is fluent communication with immigrant relatives in the United States, Canada, Australia, Mexico and some South American countries. This communication implies information and evaluation of the linguistic transformations occurring in the different sites of the diaspora. A comment collected during a Korean language lesson in which I took part as a student was: "Koreans in the United States speak worse [Korean] than we do".

[38] Among others, we find terms used to refer to customs considered to be Korean *per se* (such as *nore bang* = karaoke) or to refer to Argentines in a disdainful tone: "este/estos *won-ju"* ["this/these *won-ju*", from *won*=native + *ju*=locative + *min*=human*],* where the negative connotation is coveyed by the addition of the demonstrative deictic (nonexistent in Korean) and the suppression of the morpheme *min*.

Korean-in-use, certain communication events –many of them public, but restricted to the "intra-community" space– crystallize and become ritual centers of authority in which the use of the Korean language is guaranteed and invested with cultural dimensions of autonomy which guide the direction of good and bad linguistic/communicative praxis. Among these authoritative entextualizations, we may point out to the liturgy –mostly protestant– and several forms of performance[39] and communication routines reserved for those who hold social positions of hierarchy –elderly people, parents, teachers and academics, among others. These events endorse the performative power of "speaking Korean" to build community and, more specifically, to signal certain social bonds of culturally-privileged asymmetry that *must* be re-created (or to which people must subject themselves) so as to build community locally.

5.3. Experiences of return to the Korean language

Ethnographic Vignette IV

Ae Ran is studying Korean language in the "special course" at the "Saturday school". She arrived in Argentina as a child. Today she is over forty, she is married to an "Argentine" and she has a preschool-age son who is also coming to the "Saturday school". In her personal narrative, my class mate highlights the fact that her parents –now living in the United States– were "first wave" immigrants who came to Argentina to settle, and made an effort to learn Spanish so that their children could speak the local language fluently. Therefore, she explains, her competence in Korean is confined to "speaking like a child" –description that at times she replaces with "I cannot speak Korean".

(Re)learning the Korean language, says Ae Ran, is an important undertaking, a need that is related to the education of her son. At three years old, Se Gun is already practicing some stimulation exercises that Ae Ran practiced as a girl. He has even started to play some classical Korean games. But, according to Ae Ran, neither her role as a mother can be exercised fully nor the education of her son will be complete unless she "speaks Korean well".

The *return* to the Korean language presented in Vignette IV is a frequent search among those who have undergone secondary socialization mostly in Spanish. As the Korean language –primary language in which immigrants, their children and even their grandchildren have been immersed during childhood– becomes an object of appropriation, it evolves into mother language.

[39] Bauman (1975) defines *performance* as "a mode of communication, a way of speaking, the essence of which resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill". It is a marked act, highlighting the way communication is carried out, and open to evaluation by the audience for the skill and effectiveness of the performer's display.

Some elements are recurrent in the appropriation practices such as the ones described above, which turn the immigration language into mother language[40]. Firstly, there is a passion dimension. The "lost" language becomes, imagination work mediating, a focus of desire, a target of passion, object of psychological investment and affect. In this sense, it cannot be dissociated from other objects of passion (family, as we saw above, or several artistic expressions: literature, film) (Derrida, 1996).

Secondly, the pleasure dimension emerges. The language of childhood, rather than a mere instrument, is conceived of as a milieu, and *experiencing* language enables to reinstate a somewhat broken unity. Behind the attempt to recover "[that] which we can never possess, but which possesses us", as states Derrida, lies the intuition that re-encountering the language is a source of pleasure.

Experiencing language as a milieu implies not only a sensory immersion, but a tendency of sensitivity to "reason" by means of such enveloping sound matter that von Humboldt (1974 [1830-1835]) described as "native murmur"[41]. If, as he describes, we perceive part of our being through this native murmur, there is also a part of our being that can only be expressed in that murmur. Transforming the immigration language into mother language involves, then, appropriating it as an irreplaceable means of subjective expression. Furthermore, attempting to appropriate the structure of the "lost" language, and weaving their own voice in its mesh is one of the ways in which individuals marked by migration can weave themselves into their place of destination.

6. Apostille

In the above overview we have combined some of the multiple variables, levels of approach and socio-political contexts necessary to reflect on the relationship between language and migration. Conceiving the Korean language simultaneously as national language, immigration language and mother language allows us to convey part of the complexity at stake. It is worthwhile

[40] Although the elements mentioned here are emotional, we should take into account that the return to the Korean language is often related to a strong appreciation of bilingualism (Spanish/Korean) and trilingualism (English/Spanish/Korean) as a factor of expansion for job opportunities.

[41] "La langue maternelle possède une force infiniment plus grande qu'une langue étrangère, auprès de l'homme cultivé aussi bien que de l'homme inculte, force telle qu'elle a, pour l'oreille qui la retrouve après une longue absence, des accents magiques, et qu'entendue loin de la patrie, elle suscite une poignante nostalgie. Il est clair que cet effet n'intéresse pas ce qu'il y a en elle de purement spirituel, la pensée ou les sentiments explicites, mais ce qu'elle a de moins explicable, et de plus individuel: l'élément phonétique. C'est comme si, en percevant cette rumeur natale, nous percevions une part de notre être *(als wenn wir mit dem heimischen einen Theil unseres Selbst vernähmen)*."

aiming this effort at linguistic policy and suggesting lines of management for the equal inclusion of migrants arriving in Argentina.

First of all, the issue of acquisition by migrants of linguistic and communication competence in the language of the "host" society must be considered within the framework of macro-social subjectification and regulation processes "in the Faucauldian sense of self-making and being made by power relations that produce consensus through supervision, discipline, control and administration" (Ong, 1996:737). As we have seen, presenting linguistic competence as a required factor of integration tends to be considered as a legitimate requirement of the national society, usually ratified by immigrants themselves. Against this background, a homogenizing linguistic policy that does not provide immigrants with specific and additional instances of learning, besides those planned for standard citizens, has the effect (and, doubtless, the objective) of widening the gap of an implicit double hierarchy of language and speech, by means of which social relations that confer migrant identity a debased nature are (re)produced.

Since language is a powerful element to produce "foreignness", and participates actively in the ethnicization processes operating in the migration phenomenon, it is a concern of Social Science to investigate and monitor the means by which the social construction of such lower(ed) morality, subject to protection and with always limited prerogatives, is achieved in linguistic terms.

From this perspective, it is imperative to modify the tone of express indifference characterizing the current linguistic policy in Argentina. In the case of Korean immigration, it is not late to offer immigrants and their descendants effective opportunities of acquiring Spanish that include a teaching method specifically designed for the needs of adults, youths and children: from multi-media courses, thematic lessons (e.g. business Spanish), linguistic and cultural mediation activities, and recreational instances, to "training workshops implemented by the schools themselves: reading, writing, comprehension and production of several registers", as proposes Jeon (1999:828)[42]. But it is also essential to undertake, at the same time, actions of positive awareness towards the Korean language –and, in general, towards all those languages that are

[42] Our new Migration Law No. 25871 (December 2003) takes a step forward in this direction. In its Section 14, it establishes that the State shall promote initiatives tending to integrate foreigners into their community of residence, especially by a) organizing Spanish language courses in legally-recognized foreign schools and cultural institutions; b) disclosing useful information for the appropriate integration of foreigners into the Argentine society; c) getting to know and appraising the cultural, recreational, social, economic and religious expressions of immigrants; d) organizing training courses, inspired by criteria of coexistence in a multi-cultural society and prevention of discriminatory behavior, for public and private institution executives and employees. It would be suitable that the regulation and enforcement of this section should establish: the use of appropriate methods for teaching Spanish as a second language and as a foreign language, taking into consideration the specific characteristics of the language spoken by the students; the human and financial resources available for such enterprise; the conditions, means and methods suitable for the target population to effectively benefit from such initiatives, and the involvement of immigrants in the design of such proposals.

minorized or turned into minority languages by the national hegemony–, promoting exchanges to dilute the negative evaluation that they systematically receive. A new linguistic policy should contribute to the construction of alternative definitions of "immigrant", aimed at placing migrant people outside the spectrum of a forced and stigmatizing ethnicity, and conceiving them no longer as invalid interlocutors or mere objects of discourse, but as fully communicating subjects.

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