

Re-articulating culture in a place in-between:

Exploring the Multimodal Experiences of Hearing Mothers of Deaf Children

Jennifer Johnson
jenniferjohnson@berkeley.edu

"I understood where they were coming from. Why can't you accept him as he is? And, you know, you are always trying to be accepted in life...and which, you know, I understand that, but, at the same time- I didn't live it. I am in a hearing world and that's what I want for my child. But, I am not taking away the fact that he is deaf. I want him to be able to function in both worlds."

-A hearing mother of deaf child

Abstract:

Culture has been commonly understood as something we "have", acquired through membership into a community rather than something socio-ideologically situated that we "do" bodily in and through language. Through videotaped interviews with hearing mothers of deaf children discussing their language experiences in the visual world of their deaf child, I attempt to shape an emergent notion of culture as a site of struggle which includes multiple modes of meaning-making via speech, sign and sensory production.

What insights might this study offer on language learning?

- *Introduces a second-language learning narrative often left out of the SLA literature (yet this narrative reiterates the common narrative of the second-language learner underpinned by a monolingual, assimilation ideology)*
- *Brings forth a bodily understanding of culture on the margin and in the in-between*
- *Directs our attention to how the use of multiple modalities creates spaces for meaning making providing us with insight on the social and individual level*
- *Ask us to give attention to non-verbal meaning making processes in a language classroom and in other language learning contexts*

Authors I draw on:

Culture rooted in language as "heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past... all given a bodily form"(Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291)

"Our bodies matter because they shape how we experience, understand and interact with the world and because they affect how others view us." (Baynton, 1996, p.296)

Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of *plurality* and creativity. By an art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation. (de Certeau, 1984, p.30)

"human behavior as symbolic action" (Geertz, 1997, p.123)

"Multilingual subjects have a multiple embodied understandings of social reality and a broader and more varied range of options than others to act on these understandings." (Kramsch, 2009, p.124)

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