

SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH ON CHINESE CHILDREN IN SPAIN

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Some studies have indicated that Chinese children face more difficulties than Spanish children when learning the Spanish language and, therefore, tend to have a poor academic performance in Spain. Obviously, as second generation immigrants, children of Chinese origin in Spain confront a more complicated linguistic setting than monolingual Spanish children. So, the objective of this comparative sociolinguistic research study, with the participation of 160 children of Chinese origin, is to analyze their real sociolinguistic situation in Málaga (Spain), including both external and internal factors (i.e., socio economic status of the household, level of education of the parents, language attitudes, identity, motivations for learning, and so on) that affect their linguistic competency and language related learning. Our methodology is based on quantitative and qualitative data extracted from questionnaires, observations, tests and interviews to explain the pattern of linguistic behavior of immigrant children. The research was divided into two parts: in the first, both the children and their parents completed questionnaires; in the second, different language tests were completed to determine their knowledge of both Spanish and Chinese. For comparison purposes, the tests were completed also by 40 native Spanish children of the same age at the MIT School in Málaga, and by 40 native Chinese children from the Nanhu Primary School in Wuhan (China). In conclusion, this study addresses nine research questions. Furthermore, the most significant sociolinguistic theories in relation to our study are presented to deepen the analysis of Chinese immigrants in Spain and their speech community.