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THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF BILINGUALISM AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This article explores the pivotal role of multilingual education in promoting bilingualism and intercultural competence. In an increasingly globalized world, the capacity to communicate across linguistic and cultural barriers is essential. Multilingual education not only advances linguistic skills but also enhances intercultural understanding, preparing individuals for effective participation in a diverse global environment. By examining theoretical underpinnings, educational methodologies, and the benefits of bilingualism and intercultural competence, this discussion underscores the transformative impact of multilingual educational approaches.

Key words: bilingualism, multilingualism, Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Introduction



As global connectivity intensifies, the necessity for education systems worldwide to equip students with comprehensive skills for global participation becomes more apparent. Bilingualism and intercultural competence are among the top capabilities needed in modern society, facilitating communication and understanding across diverse cultures. Multilingual education serves as a critical educational strategy that develops these skills, representing an adaptive and forward-thinking response to globalization's demands. This article delves into the mechanisms through which multilingual education fosters bilingual capabilities and intercultural understanding, outlining its benefits and challenges.

Theoretical Foundations of Bilingualism

Defining Bilingualism

Bloomfield (1933:56) defines bilingualism as *“native-like control of two languages”*—a very high goal indeed. (5) Bilingualism is the ability to use two or more languages effectively. It is typically categorized into two types: simultaneous bilingualism, where a child acquires two languages from birth, and sequential bilingualism, where a second language is learned after the first language is well established. Both forms of bilingualism provide unique insights into cognitive flexibility and cultural perception.

Cognitive Benefits

Research has overwhelmingly shown that when a bilingual person uses one language, the other is active at the same time. When a person hears a word, he or she doesn't hear the entire word all at once: the sounds arrive in sequential order. Long before the word is finished, the brain's language system begins to guess what that word might be by activating lots of words that match the signal. If you hear “can,” you will likely activate words like “candy” and “candle” as well, at least during the earlier stages of word recognition. For bilingual people, this activation is not limited to a single language; auditory input activates corresponding words regardless of the language to which they belong. (2) Experimentation indicates that the benefits of bilingualism on



executive functions extend beyond the brain's language networks. (3) Studies have repeatedly shown that bilingual individuals often possess superior cognitive abilities compared to their monolingual counterparts. These cognitive enhancements include better problem-solving skills, enhanced memory, superior multitasking abilities, and greater mental flexibility. Moreover, the practice of switching between different linguistic systems . fosters an improved executive function, known as the cognitive control mechanism, which can contribute to a cognitive reserve that delays the onset of dementia.

Sociolinguistics Perspectives

The impact of bilingualism extends beyond individual cognitive benefits, influencing social identity, interaction, and community integration. Bilingual individuals often exhibit a deeper understanding of cultural nuances, which enhances their ability to navigate social contexts that are culturally diverse.

Understanding Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence involves the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in various cultural contexts. This ability is crucial, encompassing a wide range of skills from language proficiency to behavioral adaptability in different cultural settings.

Models of Intercultural Competence

Frameworks like Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1) illustrate the progression from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, the latter representing an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. Byram's Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (4) includes knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. These models are instrumental in designing educational programs that effectively cultivate intercultural competence.

Educational Models

Multilingual education can take various forms, including immersion programs, where instruction is provided in a second or third language, and Content and Language



Integrated Learning (CLIL), which integrates subject learning with language teaching. Dual-language programs also represent a significant model, offering instruction in two languages with the goal of achieving proficiency in both.

Curriculum Development

Curricula in multilingual education are uniquely designed to integrate language learning with cultural content, ensuring students not only learn a language but also understand the cultural contexts in which the language operates. This approach is essential for developing genuine linguistic proficiency and deep intercultural understanding.

Teacher Training

The effectiveness of multilingual education heavily relies on the competence of educators. Teachers must be proficient in the languages they teach and adept at intercultural education strategies. Continuous professional development and support are vital for educators to remain effective in increasingly diverse educational settings.

Bilingual Proficiency

Effective multilingual programs produce students who are not only fluent in multiple languages but also capable of cultural navigation within those languages. This proficiency includes the ability to think, understand, and interact in ways that are culturally and contextually appropriate.

Intercultural Skills

Students educated in multilingual settings generally display more robust intercultural skills. These skills enable them to manage cultural differences effectively, providing them with significant advantages in personal and professional domains.

Societal Impact

The societal implications of multilingual education are profound. Culturally aware individuals contribute to a more tolerant society, fostering social cohesion. Economically, such education prepares students for a globalized job market, enhancing their employability and capacity for innovation.



Conclusion

Multilingual education is more than just an academic program; it is a vital tool that equips individuals to thrive in and contribute to a global society. By fostering bilingualism and intercultural competence, this educational approach enriches individuals' lives and enhances societal well-being. As the world grows more interconnected, the importance of multilingual education in promoting global understanding and cooperation cannot be overstated. The future of global education will increasingly depend on our ability to integrate multiple languages and cultures seamlessly into our learning environments.

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TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) IN ESL CLASSES: INTEGRATING LITERATURE, POETRY, AND DRAMA FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Language teaching is a complex and dynamic process that requires a lot of effort in lesson planning with the integration of various innovative methods into the classroom. The pursuit of the best approaches for teaching EFL has been the focus of English experts in recent years as these elements continually evolve and shape literacy practices, positively affecting both the content and instruction within the English language arts classroom. This article investigates the integration of drama, poetry, and literature elements from English Language Arts (ELA) into EFL instruction for elementary students. It explores how ELA integration can enhance students' communicative competence, critical thinking, creativity, and expressive language use.

Keywords: ELA, authentic materials, drama, poetry, literature, Personal Growth Model