DEVELOPMENT OF BILINGUALISM IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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ANNOTATION

Bilingual education is a broad term that refers to the presence of two languages in instructional settings. The term is, however, "a simple label for a complex phenomenon" that depends upon many variables, including the native language of the students, the language of instruction, and the linguistic goal of the program, to determine which type of bilingual education is used. Students may be native speakers of the majority language or a minority language. The students' native language may or may not be used to teach content material. Bilingual education programs can be considered either additive or subtractive in terms of their linguistic goals, depending on whether students are encouraged to add to their linguistic repertoire or to replace their native language with the majority language for a typology of bilingual education). Bilingual education is used here to refer to the use of two languages as media of instruction.

Key words: media of instruction, proficiency, ability to function

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, proficiency in only one language is not enough for economic, societal, and educational success. Global interdependence and mass communication often require the ability to function in more than one language. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, more than 9.7 million children ages five to seventeen–one of every six school-age children–spoke a language other than English at home. These language-minority children are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. school-age population. Between 1990 and 2000, the population of language-minority children increased by 55 percent, while the population of children living in homes where only English is spoken grew by only 11 percent.

Language-minority students in U.S. schools speak virtually all of the world's languages, including more than a hundred that are indigenous to the United States.

Language-minority students may be monolingual in their native language, bilingual in their native language and English, or monolingual in English but from a home where a language other than English is spoken. Those who have not yet developed sufficient proficiency in English to learn content material in all-English-medium classrooms are known as limited English proficient (LEP) or English language learners (ELLs). Reliable estimates place the number of LEP students in American schools at close to four million.

Bilingual education is grounded in common sense, experience, and research. Common sense says that children will not learn academic subject material if they can't understand the language of instruction. Experience documents that students from minority-language backgrounds historically have higher dropout rates and lower achievement scores. Finally, there is a basis for bilingual education that draws upon research in language acquisition and education. Research done by Jim Cummins, of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, supports a basic tenet of bilingual education: children's first language skills must become well developed to ensure that their academic and linguistic performance in the second language is maximized. Cummins's developmental interdependencetheory suggests that growth in a second language is dependent upon a well-developed first language, and his thresholds theory suggests that a child must attain a certain level of proficiency in both the native and second language in order for the beneficial aspects of bilingualism to accrue. Cummins also introduced the concept of the common underlying proficiency model of bilingualism, which explains how concepts learned in one language can be transferred to another. Cummins is best known for his distinction between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). BICS, or everyday conversational skills, are quickly acquired, whereas CALP, the highly decontextualized, abstract language skills used in classrooms, may take seven years or more to acquire.

Stephen Krashen, of the School of Education at the University of Southern California, developed an overall theory of second language acquisition known as the monitor model. The core of this theory is the distinction between acquisition and learning–acquisition being a subconscious process occurring in authentic communicative situations and learning being the conscious process of knowing about a language. The monitor model also includes the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. Together, these five hypotheses provide a structure for, and an understanding of how to best design and implement, educational programs for language-minority students. Krashen put his theory into practice with the creation of the natural approach and the gradual exit model, which are based on a second tenet of bilingual education–the concept of comprehensible input. In other words, language teaching must be designed so that language can be acquired easily, and this is done by using delivery methods and levels of language that can be understood by the student.

Bilingual Education around the World

It is estimated that between 60 and 75 percent of the world is bilingual, and bilingual education is a common educational approach used throughout the world. It may be implemented in different ways for majority and/or minority language populations, and there may be different educational and linguistic goals in different countries. In Canada, immersion education programs are designed for native speakers of the majority language (English) to become proficient in a minority language (French), whereas heritage-language programs are implemented to assist native speakers of indigenous and immigrant languages become proficient in English.

In Israel, bilingual education programs not only help both the Arabic-and Hebrew-speaking populations become bilingual, they also teach Hebrew to immigrants from around the world. In Ireland, bilingual education is being implemented to restore the native language. In many South American countries, such as Peru and Ecuador, there are large populations of indigenous peoples who

speak languages other than Spanish. Bilingual education programs there have the goal of bilingualism. Throughout Europe, bilingual education programs are serving immigrant children as well as promoting bilingualism for speakers of majority languages.

Bilingual Education in the United States

Since the first colonists arrived on American shores, education has been provided through languages other than English. As early as 1694, German-speaking Americans were operating schools in their mother tongue. As the country expanded, wherever language-minority groups had power, bilingual education was common. There were schools throughout the country using German, Dutch, Czech, Spanish, Norwegian, French, and other languages, and many states had laws officially authorizing bilingual education. In the late 1800s, however, there was a rise in nativism, accompanied by a large wave of new immigrants at the turn of the century. As World War I began, the language restrictionist movement gained momentum, and schools were given the responsibility of replacing immigrant languages and cultures with those of the United States.

Despite myths to the contrary, non-native English speakers neither learned English very quickly nor succeeded in all-English schools. A comparison of the high-school entry rates based on a 1908 survey of public schools shows, for example, that in Boston, while 70 percent of the children of native whites entered high school, only 32 percent of the children of non-native English-speaking immigrants did so. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century one could easily find a good job that did not require proficiency in English.

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