

Literature Review on Second Language Acquisition: Looking at the Impact of Bilingual Education at Different Times on Intercultural Competence

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Abstract: With the prevalence of globalization, more and more parents are caught in a state of anxiety — they want to give their children a bilingual education as early and as well as possible so that in the future they can send their children to study abroad. Hence comes the existence of bilingual schools. However, parents are increasingly choosing bilingual kindergartens because they believe they will enhance their children's linguistic and intercultural competence. This literature review aims to illustrate the distinct impacts of attending a bilingual kindergarten versus a bilingual high school on students' intercultural competence, enlightening readers about the distinctions between the two, and highlighting the importance of early enrollment in a bilingual education system. This article concludes that bilingual kindergartens could subtly let students learn the language and its culture, and bilingual high schools would focus more on the practical way of learning a language but less on the cultural aspects. They both have their advantages and promote intercultural competence in different ways.

Keywords: Second language acquisition, Intercultural competence, Bilingual kindergarten, Bilingual high school, English learning education.

1. Introduction

This topic of second language acquisition has various related articles published in the field, but they rarely touch on the comparison of bilingual kindergarten and bilingual high school. As the economy continues to grow and progress, more and more parents want their children to attend bilingual schools. They believe that attending a bilingual school will allow their children to adapt to foreign education at an earlier age so that they will be better able to adapt to the local living environment when they go abroad to study in the future. The article discusses how, due to the development of a globalizing economy, bilingual education in Colombia has evolved to accommodate this shift in Colombian society. In specific, parents begin to send their children to bilingual schools at earlier stages. Parents believe bilingual schools and programs highlight the increasing international opportunities and foreign education [1]. In the past, parents used to send their children abroad to study at university, but nowadays, with the prevalence of globalization, some parents send their children to receive a bilingual education at an earlier stage (e.g., junior or senior high school). For example, one article

examines the growing tendency of parents to select top-tier bilingual education to help their kids get prepared for chances abroad, highlighting the impact of globalization on this choice. It focuses on how bilingual education is intended to support students' global environmental adaptation [1]. In some cases, children go to bilingual schools as early as kindergarten, where they learn about English and foreign cultures. This literature review aims to provide a comparison of bilingual kindergarten and bilingual high school students' competence in cross-cultural education and integration. This article will review previously published literature (mostly recent 10 years, but some recent 20 years' published articles are also included) to show whether earlier bilingual education, such as in kindergarten, would be more helpful for students to integrate into life and learning abroad. Therefore, this literature review finds different cases of bilingual schools starting in kindergarten and then starting in high school in an attempt to draw a conclusion through comparison. This paper will get a touch on outlining the characteristics of bilingual kindergarten and bilingual high school first and provide a comparison between them. This is aimed to point out this literature review's influence on the academic field and society, which is to give more thoughts and inspiration on how to make bilingual education progress and advance.

2. Bilingual Education in Kindergarten: Building the Foundation for Intercultural Competence

2.1. The Impact of Early Bilingual Education on Cultural Understanding and Cognitive Flexibility

Bilingual education in kindergarten plays a key role in helping young children develop the skills to understand and connect with people from different cultures. Bilingual programs that introduce children to multiple languages in their childhood can create an immersive environment for children. In specific, children do not just learn new lexicons; rather, they start to absorb the cultural values and behavior, that are aligned with these languages. In places like the Samoan-English bilingual kindergarten in Queensland, for example, children are exposed to both language and cultural diversity at the same time. As they hear and use different languages, they naturally begin to understand other ways of living and thinking [2]. Additionally, Lipner and his colleagues demonstrated that bilingual kindergarten children developed the breadth and depth of vocabulary when offered bilingual environments, which again reinforces the notion of smoother adoption of new cultures with early bilingual education [3]. This early language exposure to children helps them to be more flexible in how they think and interact with others, fostering good qualities such as open-mindedness, which are qualities that are essential for globalization.

2.2. Immersive Bilingual Learning: Fostering Language Proficiency and Cultural Identity

This paragraph will demonstrate how children are immersed in bilingual learning systems using two examples. In this way, early bilingual experience not only improves language capability but also enculturates children in deeper ways. Firstly, the children appeared to have an easy transition into the use of Samoan and English languages in most of their activities. Whether it was during group work or small talk, these children did not only learn how to articulate in at least two languages. For instance, when they greet each other and perform cultural songs and dances, they are gently guided to understand and master these values subtly [2]. Such positive experiences provide one with the most support needed; thus, they are, when older, able to withstand adjustments from one cultural background to another. Besides, the author highlights that the issue of bilingualism could promote the formation of cultural identity and belonging, such as children becoming more confident not only in speaking Samoan but also in understanding its cultural significance. Secondly, Cha and Goldenberg highlight how non-English-speaking children, who lived in a bilingual English & Spanish home, were

more proficient in both languages and understood the cultures of different languages in relation to one another in more complex ways [4].

2.3. Cognitive Flexibility and Empathy: How Early Bilingualism Enhances Intercultural Competence

Furthermore, some research compared bilingual and monolingual children, and the result suggested that bilingual children from an early age were better at tasks that involved the flexible switching of strategies and solving problems, and these qualities were closely tied to cross-cultural competence. For instance, in one study that researched 302 kindergarten children, the researchers found that bilingual children were more flexible in different verbal and cultural settings than monolingual children, such as oral expression and acceptance of culture. These advantages help children foster empathy, and this ability to switch between different contexts helps them develop a deeper understanding of others' perspectives [5]. In this case, bilingual children shall comprehend that the world is filled with different ways of thinking and communicating, which is essential for their intercultural competence.

3. Bilingual High School Programs: Cultivating Advanced Intercultural Skills

3.1. Bilingual High School Programs: Enhancing Language Proficiency and Intercultural Competence for Global Success

Bilingual high school programs are critical not only in improving language abilities but also in equipping students with skills to adapt to different cultures. They not only emphasize the learning of a second language but also concentrate on the application of that second language in the culturally rich environment outside the classroom, which nurtures a high level of intercultural competence among students. Because bilingual learners are now cognitively capable of engaging in discussions about culture in a balanced way through both active and passive participation, students will be able to delve deeper into topics related to culture, identity, and cultural practices. As de Mejía observed, elite bilingual schools, are schools designed to give children sufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge to thrive in international markets and multi-cultural settings. One case study from Colombia explains how bilingual high school students, who studied both English and Spanish, are more prepared for cross-cultural communication and working in global settings. The learners in these programs learn languages as tools for understanding and engaging with such perspectives, making them ready for global opportunities. Bilingual education of this type is especially useful for enabling students to put their language into practice across cultures, which is an essential aspect of intercultural competence [1].

3.2. Limitations of Late Bilingual Education: Challenges in Cultural Integration and Internalization

Despite the fact there are clearly some advantages to attending bilingual high school, there are also some limitations for students when opting for bilingual education only at the high school level, particularly when it comes to internalizing cultural behaviors. In contrast to kindergarteners, secondary school students frequently have to actively learn how to adjust to new cultural environments. Studies on Bilingual Education Programs, including Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE), indicate that although students can be able to speak proficiently in two languages, the culture behind the languages is not effectively embedded into their way of life as quickly as children who have been brought up in a bilingual environment [6]. Moreover, students who studied in Cantonese-English bilingual high schools showed higher competence in academic and peer settings,

and this is closely tied to their ability to flexibly use multiple languages and navigate different cultures. These students exhibited better cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills, which are critical to success in various cultural backgrounds [6]. However, even though high school students may achieve high linguistic proficiency, they may lack the intuitive cultural understanding that is attained naturally in younger bilingual learners. This suggested that early immersion in languages and cultures is the key to deeper cultural integration.

4. Comparing Kindergarten and High School Bilingual Education: Divergent Paths to Intercultural Competence

Based on the data, it is clear that kindergarten and high school bilingual programs have a distinct, and frequently different, impact on students' intercultural ability. First, immersion and some form of natural language learning are attained. Here, children get to absorb cultural norms and linguistic structures through everyday language use. Such children are then able to take in the rules of the culture and the language through practices where they do not have to be taught to be bilingual. For example, the fluent bilingual behavior of preschool teachers in Finnish-Swedish as well as those in Russian-Finnish contexts attests to the immersion policy prevalent in early childcare bilingual programs that foster both cultural appreciation and acquisition of languages [7]. Such a situation provides for a very rich cultural context which in some cases may be hard to cultivate later in life.

In contrast, bilingual education at the high school level is mainly about explicit and deliberate learning of the language and culture. In high school, students are more involved in the study of the language's grammar and syntax with an exploration of cultural aspects. For example, as Feng notes, limitation comes in when there is too much structure in teaching since it restricts the learners from adopting culture via natural observation. When it comes to high school programs, speaking exercises and academic performance are often the main priorities. Students are rarely exposed to the cultures in which their languages have been ingrained, which results in a shallower understanding of the cultural contexts than students who are raised in a bilingual environment from an early age [8]. Though the high school has these shortcomings, students at this level are old enough to talk about cultural practices and hence use their language skills more critically in several situations [8].

Although both kindergarten and high school bilingual education promote aspects of intercultural competence, particularities of influence differ. Young learners, particularly preschoolers through kindergarten learning can master both language and culture in their minds subconsciously, while high school exposure facilitates more critical and practical use of language through a high level of cultural exposure. However, Schwartz argues, that the success of bilingual education at both levels is very much constrained to the structure of the programs and how well they accommodate students' variety of needs [5]. Instead, even though high school children may find it difficult to grasp culturally acceptable practices as might younger learners, they use a systematic approach that equips them with adequate skills in essential and higher-level cross-cultural interaction.

5. Resolution of Limitations and Prospects for the Future Development of Bilingual Education

5.1. Challenges in Bilingual Education: Resource Limitations, Sociopolitical Barriers, and Linguistic Imbalance

The constraints associated with bilingual education are often tied to the lack of resources, sociopolitical barriers, and the complexities of language status in different regions. As an example, O'Laoire points out that in Ireland, the power imbalance between English and Irish caused the bilingual education system to lack sustainable development, because parents understood that opting for Irish medium education would make their children remain locally globalized and detached from

English English-dominated economy. Furthermore, it seems that this is a frequent problem in many bilingual programs: the public's preference for dominant languages (English in this example) over minority languages (Irish in this case) may be endangering linguistic diversity [9]. Another major limitation of various bilingual education systems is the appeal to balance linguistic proficiency with diverse cultural contexts. Schwartz and Palviainen highlight preschool bilingual education as found in multicultural societies encounters difficulties in addressing issues of the school children's diverse language backgrounds [5]. Here again, since many programs assume a "one size fits all" approach, the complexity of children coming from bilingual or multilingual backgrounds is completely overlooked. Overall, this constrains the scope and application of bilingual education addressing the development of language as well as cultural proficiency.

5.2. Advancing Bilingual Education: The Need for Flexibility, Policy Support, and Cultural Integration

To address these aspects, the area of bilingual education, which is still in its early stages, needs to be directed towards flexibility. Bilingual schooling is the ideal approach because according to Schwartz, there is no need to stick to the existing structures of bilingual programs. This would aid in the divide using a minority language and enhancing cultural integration [5]. Therefore, to improve the current bilingual education system, there might need to be changes in the current teaching mode, such as hiring more native speakers as teachers and synchronizing foreign learning materials. Additionally, there is a need for more policymakers in support of the extension of bilingual education. O'Laoire showed that even when supporting such ambition, seeking the provision of these resources and training does not work when the government is not involved [9]. Given policies such as effective mother-tongue education and linguistic minorities' rights being promoted, it is faced that policies not only consider foreign language promotion but also language minorities' integration, culture appreciation, and mobilization through the economy.

6. Conclusion

Bilingual kindergartens can let students study in an immersive environment, so the learners can learn how to speak English easily and also learn its culture and society subtly, while bilingual high schools emphasize more on the syntax and grammar part of English. In this case, students will learn how to master using English but also get in touch with its culture. Overall, they both have their advantages, and both can improve students' intercultural competence to a certain extent. However, there are still limitations presented in the bilingual education system, such as the need for structural change for some bilingual high schools and the appeal for policymakers to promote bilingual schools. Parents should consider all aspects before deciding when to expose their children to a bilingual education system. However, this article also has some shortcomings. The literature and research results based on the review are mainly previous studies, and future research will combine the latest era background, refer to the latest literature, and add the latest research results.

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