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“Effective Teachers’ Communicative Strategies When Working with Linguistically Diverse Learners”

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Israel –Diverse Language Learners and Education

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Israel is pluralistic country. Its society consists of several ethnic groups, religions and immigrants. Yet, very little has been done in Israel to investigate how teachers, with this diverse population of students, use language to instruct the second language learner.

A close attempt to examine this issue was conducted by Schwartz and Asli, (2014) who investigated the language-teaching strategies used in a bilingual Arabic-Hebrew kindergarten in Israel. The results demonstrate that the

language-teaching strategy most frequently used by teachers was flexible bilingualism, through translanguaging that involved code-switching. The teachers thought translanguaging enables bilingual children to learn their second language efficiently and it encourages children's interactive involvement in the kindergarten. Similar results were reported by Gasser (2015) where Russian immigrants in Israel often used code switching between Russian and Hebrew based on the social setting, context, and age.

Timor (2012) examined the controversy around teacher use of the mother (MT) in foreign language (FL) teaching among 112 English language teachers in Hebrew-speaking elementary and secondary schools in Israel. The teachers were asked to fill a questionnaire designed specifically for the purpose of the study. Findings suggest that teachers' overall attitudes towards MT use in FL classrooms are positive; they report using the MT for teaching purposes and a small number use the MT for classroom management purposes.

Language, Education, and Identity

Some of the members of this IRN (Vaknin, Abbas, Neuman, Feola, & Mongillo, 2016) have studied instruction for second language learners. Currently, they have an article in submission, "The Use of Modern Standard and Spoken Arabic in Math Lessons: The Case of a Diglossic Language" that addresses the dearth of information on the subject. Specifically, we investigated the linguistic transitions from standard Arabic to spoken Arabic made by the teachers during mathematics lessons. The results suggested that Arab-speaking mathematics teachers were aware of the gap between home language (Spoken Arabic) and school language (Modern Standard Arabic) and used linguistic transition as a teaching strategy to develop academic thinking and

behavior among their students. The results further suggested that Arab teachers built a non-formal bilingual education program where the two languages were used to teach mathematics. Despite the requirement to use Modern Standard Arabic, participants bridged the gap between the languages which suggests an inherent understanding that “language and .(identity are ultimately inseparable” (Edwards, 2013, p. 20

United States- Diverse Language Learners and Education

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The US, like so many nations worldwide, has seen an increase of diverse language learners entering school with little or no knowledge of English. There has been a considerable amount of research examining best practice for English language learners (ELL’s) but there is controversy about which program or technique is most beneficial to the student. For example, bilingual education was mandated by law in 1968 under the Bilingual Education Act under Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. However, this law has been repeatedly challenged for a variety of reasons including exclusion of some populations and assimilation programs. Although other programs (transitional bilingual education, total immersion, two-way bilingual or dual-language education) have some support, the US is still supporting bilingual education. In 2008, President Obama originally endorsed transitional bilingual education, however he later stated, “While there are certain practices that have been shown to benefit ELs, more research and evaluation are needed on the types of language-instruction programs that are most effective for English-learners” (White House, 2011).

Language, Education, and Identity

According to several researchers (Fillmore & Snow, 2002; Gollnick, 2002), EL's are expected to learn English as the language of instruction in school as quickly as possible, often with minimal help (Md-Ali, Mohd-Yusof, & Veloo, 2014). Eventually, they understand that the only way to access the social or academic world of school is by learning the dominant language used there. This understanding accompanies the perceptions of children and parents that the home language has no place in school if it is not English, and that parents who want to help their children learn English should switch to English at home. This attitude however ignores the critical connection between language and identity. As Edwards (2010) explained, "the single most important aspect of human language-beyond its obvious instrumental and communicative function-lies in its relationship to group identity" (p.3).

Language Use in the Classroom

Researchers have examined in class practices and analyses of discourse patterns among several groups of emigrants (Philips, 1993; Purdie et al., 2002) showed that the speech pattern children bring to school from home can be quite different from the one used at school. Still, the learners are placed in regular classrooms where they are expected to learn in the dominant language of the school (Md-Ali, Mohd-Yusof, & Veloo, 2014). This places the burden on the classroom teacher to devise ways to ensure the students comprehend the content, "Talk in the classroom involves the talk of the teacher and the talk of the learners, and, as in any relationship, the one can have a deep impact on the other, for better or worse" (Henderson & Wellington, 1998, p.36).

Therefore, it appears that the teachers' use of school academic language in the classroom has to be closely aligned with the linguistic knowledge students have already mastered and, identify with, in their homes and communities (Feldman, 2002;

Fillmore & Snow, 2002). Bringing the languages of the two venues more in line with each other is considered fundamental to students' success in learning and an essential factor in teachers' pedagogical strategies (Oliver et al., 2011; Fillmore & Snow, 2002). It is recommended that “teachers must develop academic language proficiency consistently and regularly as part of the lessons they plan” (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2010, p.19).

Future Directions

Based on the research collected thus far, we believe that we should continue to collect and synthesize current research in this area, focusing on best practices of effective teachers' communicative strategies when working with linguistically diverse learners. In this way we will learn, from classroom studies, how best to provide effective language strategies for the diverse students utilizing their knowledge of their first language to aid in acquiring the academic language of instruction. Further, the literature suggests that it is critical to understand the connection between language and identity, an area that should be further explored by this group for consideration when teaching diverse language learners.

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