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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the teaching strategies employed to foster preschool bilingual education (English-Spanish) in two preschools in Trinidad. The objectives of the research were to identify the methods used for preschool bilingual education, the impact of the teaching strategies on students' performance and the relationship between the teaching strategies for bilingual education in preschool and student learning outcomes. Data was gathered through interviews and observation of the curriculum of the schools. The interviews were held with the principals and teachers of the selected schools and thematic analysis was used to evaluate the research subjects. The major findings concluded that language separation, sheltering instruction, translanguaging, shared book reading, guided play and montessori methods were the approaches used for preschool bilingual education in the case study. Although language separation was the general approach, different results were yielded for each school, due to the way in which the method was carried out. It was also found that student motivation and hands-on or play-based activities are significant in bilingual education.

Keywords: Bilingual education, preschool, teaching strategies, outcomes, performance, curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

This research paper is a case study of the teaching strategies used for promoting bilingual (English-Spanish) education in two preschools in Trinidad. Bilingual education refers to teaching in two languages, a native language and a second language. Generally, bilingual preschool education is not as widely researched as bilingual school education (Palviainen et al. 1). Across Trinidad and Tobago, bilingual education at the preschool level is primarily offered at private institutions. It is an investment which is generally time consuming and requires qualified professionals, but it is essential in promoting holistic education (Moe).

Trinidad and Tobago is a multicultural society that has welcomed Spanish speaking migrants who require educational provision. The twin island has experienced an influx of Venezuelan migrants seeking asylum primarily due to the collapse of the Venezuelan economy. Essentially, there has been large - scale migration as migrants search to improve their quality of life (Herbert). However, the language barrier seems to be one of the greatest challenges faced by Venezuelans which can be detrimental in their daily life (Herbert).

As such, bilingual schools can be an asset as it provides both local and migrant children with access to education to aid in navigating life in Trinidad. Bilingual schooling can be beneficial to children of multilingual background and research in teaching strategies can help in guaranteeing inclusivity and access to quality education. Research has shown that teacher facilitation is fundamental in a child's oral language production (Baker 115). Thus this study is important to identify whether the teaching strategies at the selected schools are functional for the students' development of bilingualism. Having an understanding of the strategies being used in preschool bilingual education, in an already bilingual context, will inform other teaching practices in preschool bilingual education.

Rationale

This study is important to enhance documentation on preschool bilingual education and to influence change in practice or policy, if necessary. Research has been conducted on bilingual education but further investigation is needed about the teaching strategies used at the preschool level and their effectiveness. The research paper also explores untapped data as preschool bilingual education seems to be under researched in Trinidad and Tobago. Research findings can help in developing or advancing evidence-based policies and a curriculum for preschool bilingual education. Above all, it can be useful in ensuring educators and policymakers make informed decisions about bilingual education and supporting bilingual learners.

According to the Spanish primary school curriculum of The Ministry of Education of The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, it is essential that the 21st century child acquires the necessary expertise to operate in a global environment, such as the ability to interact in various languages. Besides having a strong historical and cultural presence in Trinidad and Tobago, Spanish is one of the fastest growing languages in the western hemisphere. Foreign language programmes not only focus on spoken language but students also learn the language through stories, games, interactive and cultural activities, and music. At this level, a primary goal of studying foreign languages is to help the child become aware of and appreciate the richness of the study of languages.

Thesis Statement

This research paper aims to examine the teaching strategies used to promote preschool bilingual education and its impact on student outcomes.

Research Aims

1. To identify the teaching strategies used to foster bilingual education at the two schools and its impact on student outcomes
2. To compare the teaching strategies used in the schools with evidence - based practice
3. To distinguish the relationship between the teaching strategies used in the two preschools and the results of the students

Research Questions

1. What is/are the method(s) used for promoting bilingualism in preschool aged children in the selected preschools?
2. How do the teaching strategies impact the students in the selected schools?
3. What is the relationship between teaching strategies in bilingual education in preschool and student learning outcomes?

Parameters

This project will be done within the period September 2023 - April 2024 and involves two bilingual preschools in Trinidad. The research paper seeks to identify the teaching strategies used to promote preschool bilingual education in the selected schools. Moreover, the data collection process only involves the principals and teachers of the schools and not the students.

Methodology

In order to better understand the delivery and success of preschool bilingual education in Trinidad, a case study will be conducted involving LLI International Bilingual School and Fig Tree Bilingual Preschool Limited. A google search indicated that approximately five bilingual

preschools can be found in Trinidad, which shows that they are not common in this region. These two schools were chosen as they were well-known for preschool bilingual education, due to a strong online presence. The study subjects for this research paper will be the principals, teachers, and the schools' curriculum. Both principals are not only the school's administrators, but also classroom teachers, as they also teach subjects. The curriculum was selected for observation to assess the relationship between the teaching strategies and student outcomes, as well as, to determine whether or not the techniques being used are functioning to promote bilingual education. Furthermore, this document allows the researcher to gather secondary, objective and unbiased data that justifies the strategies used in the classroom. The primary data will be collected through interviews with the principals and teachers of each school. Interviews were chosen as a method of data collection as they are flexible and allow the teachers to provide detailed accounts of their experience and even give examples. Overall, the qualitative data gathered will be segmented into common themes and compared to the literature regarding preschool bilingual education in order to present concrete findings.

Chapter Outline

This study consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 presents the Literature Review which is an examination of the main scholarly works on the topic of the teaching strategies used in preschool bilingual education. Chapter 2 is an analysis of the findings obtained from the interviews conducted with principals and teachers of the two preschools chosen for this research project. Chapter 3 discusses the main results from the interviews, which are interpreted and compared to the findings from the literature review. Following after would be the conclusion, limitations, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER ONE

Literature Review

Bilingual education refers to offering content and language integrated courses that complement one another. The latter serves as the language through which this input is learned, whereas the former is the input (Dikilitas et al. 3). Pontier and Gort posit that dual language bilingual education (DLBE) programmes are those in which emergent bilinguals from different backgrounds and experiences learn together towards achieving bilingualism, biliteracy and biculturalism (89). Emergent bilinguals are young children who are capable of developing bilingual competence through experiences from surroundings that offer possibilities to utilize both languages in meaningful ways (89). The role of the teacher in DBLE programmes is to implement appropriate and relevant pedagogical and language practices to assist students in the comprehension of new material and language and engage them in meaningful language use (89). In addition to using two languages, a native language, and a foreign language, in teaching, the bilingual teacher can implement the languages in activities involving writing, speaking, listening, and reading. This literature review seeks to explore existing teaching strategies used to promote bilingualism in preschools and its impact on student learning outcomes.

Language Separation / one-teacher / one-language

There has been much debate over bilingual education and its delivery methods, specifically regarding whether or not the languages should be taught separately, as they directly affect the students. Primarily, this may be linked to training programmes that emphasize teaching pupils simply the foreign language (L2) and overlooking the role that one's mother tongue (L1) plays as a facilitator (Kramsch 297 ; Turnbull 2). When one is unable to articulate the meanings

they have in their minds for the language that is being taught, having been denied the opportunity to use their entire language repertoire, they may find it difficult to participate verbally (Cenoz and Gorter 307). In some instances, it may cause the student to rely mostly on their L1. Turnbull postulates that English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher training courses barely present information on the use of the L1 in L2 teaching and this is critical to enable teachers to decide on a successful implementation of L1 in their teaching. Ideally, it is important that the students obtain an accurate model of bilingualism.

Nonetheless, there has been research that substantiates language separation as an effective method to foster bilingual education. The one-teacher/one-language approach refers to bilingual interaction that demonstrates how teachers promote children's developing dual language skills by using coordinated monolingual practices. Ideally, the teachers employed structured tandem talk to maintain bilingual discourse in their respective languages, adhering to the language separation guideline in the classroom. Just enough of their coordinated speech overlapped for children in the early stages of learning a second language to comprehend what was being said (Gort and Pontier 239). To increase second language (L2) input and encourage the kids to begin using the immersion language, immersion education heavily relies on the teachers acting as monolingual language models and using the one person, one language principle (Palviainen and Miettinen 386). Gort and Pontier indicate that researchers in dual language education have long opposed the use of bilingual language in the classroom, arguing that learners can produce longer discourse in which they pay attention to the accuracy, intelligibility and sociolinguistic appropriateness of their language, through a language separation approach, which is prolonged periods of monolingual instruction in each language (227). In parallel monolingual situations, it allows pupils to completely develop two languages

and counteracts "the natural tendency of minority language speakers to shift to the majority language (227)." As a result of teacher pairs working side by side and kids being allowed to use a variety of language resources to communicate and engage in class activities, these classrooms actually function as bilingual learning environments, dynamic and hybridized, where kids and teachers use different dialects of Spanish and English in a fluid, simultaneous, and flexible manner throughout the day (Gort and Sembiante 11). This approach has been widely used and accepted even though there has been a lack of empirical research on how separated language instruction affects bilingualism development in dual language programmes.

Sheltering instruction

Moreover, research has indicated that sheltering instruction is a useful technique that aids in preschool bilingual education. Gort and Pontier state that educators should engage in authentic conversations with students using sheltering strategies to enhance understanding, offer significant and understandable language input in all target languages and facilitate language interactions between students and teachers from diverse linguistic backgrounds (225). Sheltering instruction is a strategy used by teachers in which instruction is modified and mediated to produce comprehensible language and content to second language learners without the use of translation (225). Using a variety of linguistic and paralinguistic techniques, such as slower, more clearly enunciated, simpler, and repetitive speech focused on the present, highly contextualized language and gestures, systematic comprehension and confirmation checks, and visual reinforcement of both concrete and abstract concepts, teachers can help emergent bilinguals understand input during the early stages of learning a second language (225).

Translanguaging

Additionally, a common teaching strategy that has been identified in research on preschool bilingual education is translanguaging. Translanguaging, which is the student's ability to alternate between accessible language features, has been identified as an alternative as it could serve as a linguistic tool that encourages flexible bilingual use to increase communicative potential (Dikilitas et al. 1 ; Gort and Pontier 226 ; Palmer et al. 759). In order to represent real-world scenarios that mirror multilingual communities outside of the classroom, to create diverse opportunities for language learning, to transmit information, and to incorporate the linguistic signs available to learners, bilingual teachers use translanguaging (Gort and Pontier 226 ; Gort and Sembiente 9). Additionally, to communicate meaning, acclimatize students to learning strategies, elucidate grammatical structures and linguistic features, connect students' experiences and the academic content, identify and clarify errors, notify students of significant new vocabulary, establish a personal connection with each student, and manage the class, for instance, teachers in second or foreign language classrooms employ their native tongues (Gort and Pontier 226 ; Gort and Sembiente 9). By modeling real-world bilingual behaviors and establishing environments where both languages are valued as learning tools, these and other bilingual practices enable educators to support bilingualism and a bilingual language repertoire as commonplace and organic. It is important that teachers utilizing translanguaging pedagogy obtain special training and the necessary support to combat challenges that they may encounter in the bilingual environment (Dikilitas et al. 2).

Shared Book Reading

Research has found that shared book reading is beneficial to children both at home and in the classroom as certain characteristics of book reading enable positive effects on their first and second language learning. Grover and associates posit that children's language development is supported by highly interactive book reading, where they are asked open-ended questions that encourage them to reason, form conclusions, and go beyond the present moment (2193). Moreover, educators who encourage kids to make links between reading and other subjects they are studying in class or who use play to further the plot or theme of a book support kids' spoken language development (2193). Generally, reading aloud together provides youngsters with abundant opportunities to develop their vocabulary and subject-matter expertise, gain sophisticated grammatical structures, experience a variety of narrative formats, and gain an understanding of the thoughts, feelings, and viewpoints of others (2193).

Guided Play

One particularly noteworthy approach was utilizing interactive resources and tasks to stimulate and encourage classroom discussion. Incorporating play materials into whole-group sessions allowed teachers to teach vocabulary in real-time by labeling things and passing around materials that kids could handle while learning new words (Baker 124). The active use of play by teachers to manage the environment and play experiences with an eye towards transdisciplinary learning goals is known as directed play. Previous studies have shown that these teaching strategies are particularly successful because they foster deep learner engagement by connecting instruction to the interests and lifestyles of the students (Baker 128).

In conclusion, it is evident that there are various teaching strategies used to promote preschool bilingual education. One understands that some educators prefer a one teacher/one language approach, while others employ methods such as translanguaging which allows students to experience an authentic bilingual model. Research has also produced other common techniques such as sheltering instruction, guided play, and shared book reading which have been identified as more hands-on approaches to fostering bilingualism in preschools. Given that these studies were based internationally, the purpose of this research paper is to identify the teaching strategies used in two bilingual preschools in Trinidad and compare them to the existing literature.

CHAPTER TWO

Presentation of Data

Interviews

This chapter focuses on the categorization of common themes in the responses and the presentation of the qualitative data elicited from the interviews and curricula. The themes from the interviews explored the perceptions of bilingual education, methods of promoting bilingual education, teaching strategies, language use in the classroom, and the effectiveness of the strategies. Whereas, the curricula were studied based on foreign language goals, interaction, participation, and writing assignments. These were based on the research questions which examined the methods used to promote bilingual education, the impact of the teaching strategies on students' performance, and the relationship between the teaching strategies used in preschool bilingual education and students' performance. The following key will be used to protect the identity of the schools and the participants.

Key :

- Fig Tree Bilingual Preschool Limited - School 1
- Principal and English teacher at Fig Tree Bilingual Preschool Limited - Principal 1
- Spanish Teacher at Fig Tree Bilingual Preschool Limited - Teacher 1
- LLI International Bilingual School - School 2
- Principal and Bilingual teacher at LLI International Bilingual School - Principal 2
- English Teacher at LLI International Bilingual School - Teacher 2

Perceptions of Bilingual Education

Based on the data collected, the two schools had similar views on the concept of bilingual education. Principal 1 indicated that bilingual education for their school is “full immersion where the pupils get both languages throughout the day.” Teacher 1 emphasized the fact that bilingual education is a gentle introduction to a second language as the language must be presented in a simple and understandable way for the children. Similarly, Principal 2 and Teacher 2 stated that the students maintain their native language while a new language is added. Principal 2 further explained that bilingualism is not transitional, as the students are not required to transition from speaking their language to a new language, but instead, they must continue learning their language in the manner that they are accustomed to while the second language is being introduced.

Methods of promoting bilingual education

Overall, school 1 and school 2 had varying responses regarding the methods of promoting bilingual education. In school 1, as reported by Principal 1 and Teacher 1, there is one English teacher and one Spanish teacher present at the same time in the classroom. As the Spanish teacher speaks, the English teacher repeats her statement in English and vice versa. For example, Principal 1 said “while I might be telling them ‘let us clean’, the other teacher is saying ‘limpia, limpia’ or ‘vamos a limpiar’ at the same time.” Additionally, there are instances where the activities are strictly in Spanish or English, namely storytime or circle time where the children listen to stories or music. The idea is that, each day, the use of both languages alternates. In this way, the students become familiarized with both languages while associating what they hear, with what they see, and mimic actions alongside the songs. Principal 1 explained that they begin

singing along and doing the actions independently after hearing the songs several times.

Similarly, for storytime, Principal 1 explains that:

The Spanish reading, of course, we have to simplify a lot, so it can't be quite as complex as it would be in English, but we do have some very simple books in Spanish that the teachers will use or we'll just use a normal, when I say normal, a book in English and just go through the pictures of them and talk a little bit about it.

Likewise, Teacher 2 informed the interviewer that School 2 has an English teacher and a Spanish teacher but they do not teach simultaneously. Each semester, the core subjects are taught in one language and the next semester the same content is taught in the other language. Ideally, the students are immersed into the language for the entire term. Principal 2 stated “this term they are doing science, so therefore all the science and the learning will be in Spanish. Next term we may change that to science being taught by the English speaking teacher and that way they would gain the same vocabulary.” Principal 2 also expressed that the aforementioned method may be challenging for the group of students whose native language is not that of the teacher but the ultimate goal is to get accustomed to understanding both languages and not relying on translation. Though this may take a while, eventually they will be able to comprehend both languages.

Teaching strategies

Through the techniques previously mentioned, each school teaches a variety of topics to the students in both Spanish and English. Principal 1 responded that the language itself is not explicitly taught, only basic vocabulary that would be necessary for primary school such as shapes, colors, numbers, and letters, are taught in both languages. There are other subjects such as character education and science, that are done strictly in English because the teacher believes

the topics would not be thoroughly understood and they are too advanced for the students to comprehend in another language at that level.

Teacher 1, on the other hand, explained that in school 1, the Montessori method is employed in the classroom as the classes are led by the children based on their feelings on the particular day and the teacher follows their lead. Likewise, Principal 1 reiterated that, in school 1, the classes are play-based which means that hands-on activities are used to achieve learning objectives as the children get to move, explore, and use many skills and overall develop both languages holistically. For example, Principal 1 said “instead of let us get out all copybooks and write, in the sensory bin, we might have rice with a bunch of magnetic letters and a magnetic wand. So they have to find a letter with the magnetic wand, take it out, and then write it on the page or check it off.” Principal 1 believes that learning is more effective through play.

On the other hand, Principal 2 teaches different concepts in both English and Spanish. For instance, in science, the students may learn about the types of plants. Other areas of importance are vowels and their sounds, reading, writing, global perspectives, and mathematics. Principal 2 assured the interviewer that the material is easy for the preschoolers to grasp because “they are now learning anything whatsoever so they are the easiest group to grasp things. They play and they learn and they repeat stuff.” With regard to reading, the teachers also focus on comprehension and pronunciation. Teacher 2 indicated that in school 2, the students receive worksheets and copies, as well as, notes are written from the board into their copy books based on the topic being taught. When a student is having difficulty understanding, the teacher gets a student who is more fluent in the respective language to explain and clarify any doubts.

Language use in the classroom

Generally, the children are not forced to use a specific language in either of the schools and one is not taught more than the other. Principal 1 affirmed that “we try to make it as equal as possible.” Essentially, as the day progresses, the teachers express themselves in Spanish and English and if further clarification is needed, the other teacher translates. Furthermore, if Teacher 1 is speaking to the students and they are responding in English, she may try to encourage them with prompts in Spanish like “gracias” in order to increase the production of the second language. Teacher 1 confirmed that the children are not required to use Spanish for one thing and English for another and no one language is used more than the other because the languages are always balanced. Students use whichever language they feel comfortable using while speaking and some attempt to communicate in the second language with the teacher they associate with this particular language.

Contrarily, Principal 2 and Teacher 2 reported that the students switch between languages as the class determines the language that is being used at the time. That is, if they have math in the morning and the teacher is teaching this class in Spanish, consequently the pupils speak Spanish, but if in the next period, science is being taught in English, they would speak English. However, they are not forced to use a particular language, as Principal 2 states:

The idea is for them to be able to be comfortable using both languages, so we cannot penalize them for not using a particular language. What we can do is that if I'm teaching English and I say this is an English class, then you're expected to speak English in class. However, what helps students is allowing them to use their own language to express themselves.

Effectiveness of strategies

The strategies employed in each school have produced different results, according to the teachers and principals. Principal 1 affirmed that the students predominantly use English, which is a hurdle they are trying to overcome. It was explained that through reading and research, the students are not using the second language, in most cases Spanish, outside of the school and, as a result, it is more difficult for the children to speak the language fluently. However, if a student whose first language is Spanish, enters the school, they are more likely to speak English because everyone in the class primarily uses English. She recalled, “in June I had two boys who came in not knowing any English and by the end of the year with us, they were speaking a lot of English. Yeah, just from interacting with the other kids hearing me speaking it, but they would still speak Spanish to each other and to the Spanish speaking teacher.” Overall, Principal 1 expressed that the most successful strategy is full exposure and immersion in the language especially if someone at home speaks the language also, as these students tend to have a greater advantage than those who only hear the language at school. Furthermore, Principal 1 added that the most effective method is the one person, one language method as “the more exposure that you can give them, the more they hear it, the more they're going to be able to understand and hopefully start to speak.” Principal 1 and Teacher 1 notice that the children are becoming aware of both languages as they begin to listen, repeat and respond effectively. Actions are used alongside speech and translation or slower speech follows if further clarification is needed.

In general, teachers and principals believe that motivation and becoming accustomed to using both languages are key components of any effective strategy. Principal 2 opines that allowing students to feel comfortable rather than forcing them to use the other language and creating a mental block is a successful strategy. This principal further explained “people learn

best when they are happy. So if you can get your students emotional about learning about whatever topic, you find that it's easier for them to even speak if they don't normally speak.”

Therefore, Principal 2 emphasizes on the importance of motivating the children as “there are some people who will totally decide I'm not interested, I refuse to learn, I don't want this, I'm not going to do this and they may learn some things involuntarily but never enough to actually function because they have no intentions of giving any effort whatsoever.”

Nevertheless, although the children are getting used to speaking both languages among themselves, some challenges have been encountered with writing, understanding stories and speaking, especially when the tasks are not in the native language of the student. Teacher 2 indicated that the native English speakers are able to converse in Spanish, and the native Spanish speakers can communicate in English, as they are getting accustomed to both languages. However, Teacher 2 also disclosed that writing and understanding stories are a challenge for the children especially those that are not quite fluent. In addition, Principal 2 explained that students tend to form cliques and use the majority language, but there is a difference when they begin mingling with each other. Thus, Principal 2 usually separates the cliques in group activities in the classroom so that the English speakers begin communicating with the Spanish speakers and vice versa. Principal 2 also explains that “It takes a little while for people to start adapting, and I think speaking is a habit. Once you get someone into speaking the next language, then they start developing the habits. If you're not speaking it, then the habit is not there.”

Curriculum

Given that the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago does not provide bilingual preschools with clear and specific guidelines about bilingual education, schools have the autonomy to choose the methods and curricula that align with their own mission and vision.

Foreign Language Goals

School 1 incorporates a variety of methods and curricula to achieve their bilingual education goals. Given that the mission and vision statement of the school is “to provide a holistic education for our students, supporting their academic, emotional, social and physical development through fun, interactive activities that keep them engaged and excited to learn”, they have opted for using the Pocket of Preschool curriculum and Montessori methods to foster bilingual education. This includes literacy, math, character education, and science which are taught using play-based, hands-on activities that keep the children engaged and having fun while learning.

On the other hand, School 2 designed their own curriculum to satisfy the needs of a diverse community. Consequently, the curriculum was guided by the curriculum from the British education system and the curricula of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as various Spanish speaking countries, ensuring that there is a holistic approach to education. In this manner, students are not only exposed to academics but also culture, history and international perspectives in both languages. The curriculum is separated into seven (7) key areas, all of which encourage the use of both English and Spanish. These areas focus on the development of communication and language, the physical, personal, social and emotional aspects of the child, literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design.

Interaction and Participation

In school 1 and school 2, the approaches focus on encouraging the children to express themselves in both English and Spanish through listening, speaking, and storytelling activities, as well as, developing their vocabulary and comprehension skills in both languages through reading, singing, and conversations. Additionally, creativity and self-expression in both languages through art, music, and drama activities are fostered, coupled with the development of imagination and storytelling skills in both languages through role-play and pretend play. All of this is accomplished by providing opportunities for the students to interact with their peers in both languages in group activities and discussions.

Writing Assignments

The curricula seek to develop early writing skills in both languages through activities such as tracing, drawing, and mark-making (“LLI International” ; “Curriculum Map”).

CHAPTER THREE

Discussion of findings

The results of this case study demonstrate that several strategies are used to achieve bilingual education which have varying impacts on student outcomes. The strategies used in the selected schools, discovered through the interviews, are similar to those of the literature review.

Methods used for promoting bilingualism in preschool-aged children in the selected preschools

Based on the responses obtained through the interviews and the revision of the schools' curriculum, it appears that Language separation or the one-teacher/one-language approach is commonly used in the selected schools. This finding supports that of Palviainen and Miettinen, who found that immersion education is heavily dependent on teachers acting as monolingual language models in the one person, one language approach (386). The principals and teachers of the schools identified language separation as the most effective method as it allows students to develop both languages equally, rather than shifting from the majority language to the minority language. Likewise, Gort and Sembianti discovered that teacher pairs working alongside each other and kids being allowed to use a variety of language resources to communicate and engage in class activities, create dynamic and hybridized bilingual learning environments where different dialects of Spanish and English in a fluid, simultaneous, and flexible manner are used daily (11). Notably, school 1 used this method concurrently while school 2 alternated the languages between the school semesters.

This study revealed that Sheltering instruction was another technique mainly used by the teachers in School 1. During the interview, Teacher 1 mentioned that stories are simplified and actions are done alongside the stories and songs to ensure that students understand the material. Gort and Pontier stated that this method is useful for facilitating language interactions between

teachers and students from diverse linguistic backgrounds (225). However, according to the definition of sheltering instruction, it is evident that this technique is not applicable when translation is required. Principal 1 did indicate that sometimes speech is translated if students need further clarification throughout the day, which is primarily seen as translanguaging.

Translanguaging is another method for bilingual education that emphasizes the value of the mother tongue in Second language learning. According to Gort, Pontier and Sembiente, to manage the class, identify and clarify errors, alert students to significant new vocabulary, orient students to learning approaches, explain grammatical structures and linguistic features, and establish a between link the academic content and students' experiences, for instance, teachers in second or foreign language classrooms employ their native tongues (226, 9). Essentially, this technique is implemented by Principal 1 whenever she translates for the students to ensure that they understand what is being said in the other language. This shows that one's native language is of equal importance in learning a second language.

Furthermore, Shared book reading and Guided play were also identified as methods for promoting bilingual education in the chosen preschools. As recommended by Grover and associates, reading aloud together provides youngsters with the opportunity to develop their vocabulary and subject-matter expertise, obtain sophisticated grammatical structures, experience a variety of narrative formats, and gain understanding of others. Therefore, books are read in both languages to orient students with different vocabulary and topics in second language learning (L2). Similarly, play is used as an approach to learning new things while having fun, which stimulates the interest of the child.

Generally, it appears that school 1 and school 2 use a multifaceted approach to promote preschool bilingual education. Both schools favor the language separation method which focuses

on one person, one language, but they also use other techniques such as guided play and shared book reading. Other methods such as translanguaging and sheltering instruction were mainly utilized by school 1.

Impact of teaching strategies on the students' performance in the selected schools

Both schools utilize similar teaching strategies but the impact on the students differs. School 1 and School 2 use both languages to teach different concepts and topics such as colors, letters, mathematics, and science. These topics are predominantly taught using the one teacher, one language approach, which Palviainen and Miettinen recognized as a recurrently used method that aids in the increase of second language input and encourages children to begin using the immersion language (386). However, the findings from school 1 counteracts that of Gort and Pontier who highlighted that parallel monolingual situations allow pupils to better develop two languages and impede “the natural tendency of minority language speakers to shift to the majority language (227).” The interview with Principal 1 revealed that the students of school 1 mainly use their first language (L1), English, rather than the second language (L2), Spanish. Principal 1 explained that generally the students are not using the L2 outside of school which affects their level of fluency, as the L1 of the majority of students is English. The use of the example of two Spanish-speaking students being able to speak English by the end of the year in the school highlighted the point that the environment needs to be saturated with the language in order to have a high level of output. Nevertheless, the students are becoming aware of both languages as they listen, repeat and respond in some cases. Generally the students use whichever language they are comfortable speaking, and there are those who attempt to communicate in the second language, with the teacher they associate with this particular language. Nonetheless, allowing pupils to use their L1 to communicate is of equal importance in L2 learning, as Cenoz

and Gorter have posited that denying an individual the opportunity to use their entire language repertoire when they are unable to express their thoughts in the language being taught, they may find it difficult to participate verbally (307).

Although school 2 experiences a similar situation with students resorting excessively to their L1, it is addressed by separating cliques in the classroom and allowing students to mingle and interact in the L2, not only the majority language. Overall, one can say that school 2 has witnessed more effective results due to substantial L2 input. Essentially, in school 2, one topic is taught in one language for an entire term before the other language is used, in comparison to both languages being utilized simultaneously to teach various topics daily in school 1. This theory supports the ideas from the studies of Gort and Pontier, as well as, Palviainen and Miettinen, which declare that increased L2 input and encouraging the use of the immersion language, requires extensive durations of teaching from monolingual language models and as a result, longer discourse is produced (227, 386).

It was mentioned that students should be motivated to learn which means that teachers should do activities to stimulate their attention. This supports Baker's findings which underscore that prior studies have shown that these teaching strategies are successful because they promote deep learner engagement by connecting instruction to the interests and lifestyles of the students (128). For example, school 1 allows students to learn from a sensory bin which has rice, magnetic letters, and a magnetic wand. The students are required to find a letter with the magnetic wand, take it out and then write it on the page or check it off. These types of activities would encourage interaction among the children, as play has been identified as an effective way of learning, and creating a connection between classroom instruction and the interest of the learner. Baker's theory is proven as Teacher 2 mentioned that students in school 2, who are not

fluent in the target language, become uninterested during storytelling, which shows that a lack of comprehension can lead to disengagement.

Based on the responses from the interview, the teachers in school 2 reported that their students are able to interact in both languages as they are growing accustomed to using them. The results from the teaching strategies used show that the native English speakers are able to converse in Spanish and the native Spanish speakers can communicate in English. Though adapting to speaking the L2 may tarry, it eventually happens, but a person must begin practicing in order to develop the habit. Notwithstanding, some students use the language they feel comfortable using while speaking, and some attempt to communicate in the second language with the teacher they associate with this particular language.

Although both schools use similar strategies, the students in school 2 have produced greater results from the bilingual approaches than those in school 1. That is, the students of school 2 can converse in both languages with their peers but in school 1, the pupils tend to resort to their L1. To limit the excessive use of the L1, school 2 usually separates cliques in the classroom so that students practice both the L1 and L2. Besides, Principal 1 believes that students should receive L2 input outside of the school environment in order to effectively achieve bilingualism. Overall, it has been identified that motivation is an important factor in learning, as students tend to become uninterested in the lesson when they are not stimulated by the topics or there is a lack of comprehension.

The relationship between teaching strategies in bilingual education in preschool and student learning outcomes

It is conspicuous that achieving bilingual education in preschool and positive student learning outcomes require students that are engaged and interested in learning. For this reason, it

is imperative that teachers utilize effective strategies that will arouse the determination to become fluent in both languages. Hence, the curricula of the schools are diverse and focus on language input in both languages in different areas. With regards to the curriculum of school 1, one observes that special attention is placed on the concept of play and interactive activities in learning, as well as Montessori methods, which follow the lead of the child, ensuring that they are willing to participate in the task at hand. In addition, it is essential that the teaching strategies used allow students to feel comfortable interacting with teachers and classmates in both languages. The curriculum of school 2 particularly mentions that it is a bilingual programme offered in English and Spanish, permitting students to develop their skills in both languages and to be able to have diverse interactions. Hence, the areas of interest are the development of the physical, personal, social, and emotional aspects of the child, communication and language, literacy, mathematics, expressive arts and design and understanding the world.

In the literature review, it was noted that it is highly recommended that the native tongue be used in second language learning as it mirrors real-life bilingual situations. This claim is supported by the studies of Gort, Pontier and Sembiente, which state that bilingual teachers employ translanguageing to generate opportunities for language acquisition, communicate information, replicate real-world settings that are similar to multilingual cultures outside of the classroom, and incorporate the linguistic signs available to learners (226, 9).

Moreover, the concept of preschool bilingual education in Trinidad appears to be feasible as Teacher 2 indicated in the interview, it is easy for preschoolers to apprehend the concepts because this is their first time being exposed to things of that nature. Therefore, they learn quickly and effortlessly. This statement reinforces the findings of Pontier and Gort which revealed that young children, who are emerging bilinguals, have the potential to become

bilingual through being exposed to environments that provide opportunities and support for meaningful use of both languages (89).

The relationship between teaching strategies used in preschool bilingual education and student learning outcomes is based on student engagement and interest. Thus, the curricula have been designed to facilitate this by focusing on a heterogeneous range of concepts through play-based and collaborative activities. It is essential that teachers recognize the significance of the mother tongue in second language learning as it is a replica of bilingualism in the real world. Generally, preschoolers are able to learn and retain the concepts taught through bilingual education as it is their first time being introduced to this nature of learning and they are immersed into the bilingual environment.

In the final analysis, one can conclude that the selected schools draw on a variety of methods to foster preschool bilingual education. Although the literature review has underscored some of these strategies such as the one teacher, one language approach as effective, it has not been quite futile in school 1. However, school 2 has been experiencing progress as their students are able to converse in both Spanish and English without relying heavily on the L1. To assist with clarification in school 1, sheltering instruction followed by translanguaging are incorporated. Moreover, the motivation of the students is significant in bilingual education as they must be interested in learning. Thus, teachers utilize Montessori methods and a variegated curriculum to ensure holistic learning and ease of interaction in the classroom. Overall, bilingual education not only focuses on the L2 but also the role of the L1 in becoming an adept bilingual speaker.

CONCLUSION

This case study sought to examine the teaching strategies used to foster preschool bilingual education in two preschools in Trinidad and the impact of these approaches on the students' performance. The researcher gathered qualitative data through interviews with the principals and teachers of the respective schools, as well as, through delving into their curricula. In total, there were two participants from each school, one principal and one teacher. Each of these persons taught either one of the languages, Spanish or English.

Among the primary conclusions of the study, it was revealed that the Language separation or one teacher, one language approach is commonly used to promote preschool bilingual education. Other methods utilized were sheltering instruction, translanguaging, guided play and shared book reading which provides the response to the first research question.

However, the manner in which the one teacher, one language strategy was utilized, differed for both schools which yielded contrasting results. Whereas school 1 used Language separation simultaneously, school 2 did it on a term by term basis. School 1 reported that their pupils still relied heavily on their L1 daily, while school 2 indicated that their students used both languages comfortably. The findings of school 1 contradict those of other studies which highlight that in cases in which monolinguals work in tandem, there is a decrease in the tendency to switch to the majority language. It is important to note that most studies explored in the literature review mentioned the Language separation approach as being done simultaneously but in school 2, the languages are switched each term and they have experienced more success from their pupils in using the L1 and L2. Thus, proving that extended periods of monolingual teaching in each language can generate longer discourse, as indicated by some researchers.

Apart from the teaching strategies mentioned in the literature review, it was found that school 1 also uses Montessori methods in their classrooms. These child- directed classes can increase engagement and learning. It was important that classes stimulated the interest of the students and kept them engaged in order to avoid them becoming uninterested in the classroom. For this reason, the curricula of the schools showed diversity in the topics and areas covered.

Bilingual education is a process which must begin with practice. Although comfortably speaking the L2 may take a while, once an individual begins developing the habit, the process becomes easy. For preschoolers in particular, it is not as difficult, as it appears effortless to grasp the languages due to the nature of the environment.

Limitations

The researcher was unable to access the students' reports. Hence, the study relied solely on the data collected from interviews and the curriculum. Student reports would have given an authentic representation of the results of the aforementioned teaching approaches but due to student confidentiality, the schools were unwilling to share this information. Another limitation was the inability to observe classes in order to be able to identify any potential obstacles that may affect the teaching strategies being used.

Recommendations

To fill research gaps on this topic, it is advised that more investigation is done in this field of study. Future researchers should explore student reports, conduct classroom observations, and investigate other bilingual schools to broaden the data for their research findings and provide more documentation on this topic. Additionally, one should examine the relationship between

preschool aged children and bilingual education. Overall, these types of studies should be used to implement or improve policy concerning preschool bilingual education, which consequently will add more success to this nature of pedagogy.

Generally, this case study has enriched existing research on preschool bilingual education, while presenting a Trinidadian perspective and the effectiveness of the teaching strategies, which did not have a strong presence in previous scholarship.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Implementation of bilingualism (PRINCIPAL/TEACHERS)

What is bilingual education for the school?

How is it promoted?

Do teachers receive specific training? What does it involve?

Approach to languages: (TEACHERS/PRINCIPAL)

How are the languages used in the classroom?

Is each language used for something in particular?

How often is each language used?

What languages are the kids encouraged/allowed to use

Are they encouraged to use one specific language?

Teachers

Why did you choose to teach in a bilingual school?

Did you receive specific training?

Teaching strategies

Do you teach the language? If so, what aspects of the language are taught?

How do you teach in a bilingual classroom?

What are the most/least successful strategies that you have encountered?

How do you explore the different teaching strategies?

How do you ensure that the student is learning the other language?

Assessment

What is assessed?

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