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Linguistic Insights  
Studies in Language and Communication

Daniel Madrid & Stephen Hughes (eds)

# Studies in Bilingual Education

Peter Lang

## Introduction

In today's plurilingual Europe second language learning has become a fundamental requirement for mutual understanding, cooperation between nations and responsible international citizenship. Bilingual or plurilingual individuals are more able to share experiences with people from other countries; they are also likely to be in a better position to appreciate and respect their own cultural identity and that of others.

In order to meet the new demands for plurilingual competence and to foster bilingual or plurilingual education among citizens, almost every country in the world has adopted a multitude of initiatives both in the public and private sectors. In the case of Europe, the surge in interest in second language teaching and learning is evident in the numerous projects and studies carried out in the last two decades. An important landmark for language learning appeared in 1995 with the European Commission's White Paper, *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society*, where it was proposed that the European population should be able to speak three member state languages. As a result of this proposal, recommendations were made in Spain with regards to the introduction of a foreign language in Infant School and a second foreign language in secondary education. More recently, a large number of important initiatives have been made by international language teaching institutions, such as the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML), in terms of language teaching and learning, plurilingualism, intercultural competence and linguistic diversity.

Despite efforts to promote all the European languages, English, French, German and Russian make up 95% of foreign or second languages learned in schools. English, as we know, is the most commonly studied language and is taught in 90% of the secondary school population in Europe.

In the case of Spain, the 1970s marked the predominance of English as L2 over other languages. Similarly, bilingual education which began to form part of public sector programmes in the late 1990s, is also

primarily based on a Spanish-English model. Today, this trend continues in over 1,000 public primary or secondary schools which are either bilingual or partially bilingual.

The region of Andalusia is perhaps the clearest example of the introduction for Bilingual Sections, which involves instruction through non-language subject areas to part of the student population in a second language. In addition to pioneering agreements with the French Embassy (30 schools) and the Goethe Institut (8 schools) in the year 2000, Andalusia has also seen a huge development of bilingual education through a regional project initiated in 2005 entitled *Plan de Fomento de Plurilingüismo* (henceforth referred to as the Plurilingual Plan).

As we mention in Chapter 1, Madrid is another area which has developed bilingual programmes intensively. Here, there are two main bilingual teaching and learning projects. The first of these arises from a joint ministerial and British Council scheme, which in 2009 incorporated 114 schools in nine autonomous communities, including the region of Madrid. By the same year, a separate programme developed by the regional government had incorporated 180 schools and 23,600 students (Fernández Agüero 2009). We must not forget, however, that apart from bilingual instruction in monolingual regions in Spain, there are also trilingual projects in bilingual areas such as the Balearic Islands, Catalonia, Valencia and the Basque Country.

With the diverse experiences that have taken place throughout the country and after five years of the introduction of the Plurilingual Plan in Andalusia, we believe that now would be an appropriate time to pause and examine the effectiveness of these programmes. This will allow us to begin to see whether financial investment of the national and regional education authorities and the efforts of all other stakeholders, particularly teachers and students, are worthwhile.

It is necessary to point out at this stage that throughout this book we employ the term “monolingual” and “bilingual” students in order to distinguish between those who learn the foreign language as a subject and those who, in addition to this, are also exposed to the L2 in other subject areas. In this volume, we also refer to bilingual programmes in monolingual contexts; this implies that our study is not situated in nor does it refer to bilingual regions, where what is learned in class is sup-

ported by communication outside the school. In this sense, Andalusia, for example, is in a different position from areas such as Canada, Switzerland or Catalonia, which have a tradition of bilingualism. In our case, we are dealing with pedagogical bilingualism (also known as global or international bilingualism, Vez 2010), which is introduced in school curricula in contexts where opportunities for natural communication outside the classroom are significantly less common.

The work that we present here includes the results of a Research and Development Project (see Acknowledgements) on the effects of bilingual education in relation to a number of competences developed by students in three subject areas: Spanish Language and Literature, Social and Natural Sciences and English as a foreign language. In addition, with the collaboration of specialists, we also take on board the adoption of other bilingual programmes in Spain and the United States. It is hoped that the inclusion of this dimension will provide those interested in this field of study with a more varied perspective on the matter.

The volume presented here is organised in three parts: a) a contextualization of our study within bilingual education; b) our research project in the specific region of Andalusia; and c) a series of case studies from other areas. The first part includes the provision of definitions, concepts, theories and basic principles involved in bilingual and plurilingual education. In addition, we describe various bilingual programmes in regions of Spain which do not have a second official language. Our contextualisation continues with an examination of the Spanish curriculum for primary and secondary education, which provides the legislative backdrop for our research. Since the participants in our study are also affected by regional programmes and initiatives, we also describe the Andalusian Plan for the development of plurilingualism.

Part II deals with the actual research study, which takes place in the above-mentioned context. Here, we provide a detailed description of the project itself as well as the objectives and the type of bilingual programme that is followed by participating students. We also report on the effects of monolingual and bilingual education on the specific competences developed by students in L1 (Spanish). Here the reader will be able to see whether the linguistic interdependence theory is fulfilled in our study and if the time invested in bilingual teaching and learning with English affects student performance in their mother

tongue. Chapter 6 reports on the levels of English developed by monolingual students compared to those who received bilingual instruction. At this stage, in addition to test results, we consider the sample texts from students to be of particular interest in helping the reader to see the extent to which different programmes and types of school may affect L2 learning. Chapter 7 reports on performance in Social and Natural Sciences among bilingual students in comparison to the monolingual cohort and Chapter 8 explores cultural knowledge in both groups.

Part III aims to complement the two previous sections with the presentation of various case studies which refer to centres that apply different bilingual and trilingual curricula. Among these, we would highlight the bilingual education programme that is developed in California as a result of the agreement signed by the Spanish Ministry of Education and the Californian Educational Authorities, which has been working for several decades.

Finally, we present various appendices which allow the reader to see the type of tests employed to obtain the data which is presented in our study as well as other relevant information.

We hope that this volume will be of use to those who are interested in bilingual education in monolingual contexts and that it may provide some answers to the questions that parents and teachers have formulated in relation to this new initiative in the region of Andalusia.

Daniel Madrid and Stephen Hughes