The Role of Plurilingualism on Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Multiligualism has clearly been increasing in the era of globalization and multiple citizenship. As a result, there has also been a growing interest and demand on the influence of puriligualism on learning additional languages. The assumption is that in modern societies a lot of children are blessed that they have access to multiple languages while developing and creating an inter language. The present article is an attempt to describe the role of plurilingualism, its major features while depicting a consensus view on the evolution of plurilingualism and its central role in learning new languages. The article presents a group of related research after identifying essential issues and concepts. The article ends with a conclusion based on the collected evidences and concrete research findings. This article hopes to have implications not only for English language teaching but it is also expected to contribute to our better understanding of the issue helping teachers make informed choices from a multilingual perspective.

INTRODUCTION

We live in an intricate globalized world, and this globalization has absurdly affected our lives. One remarkable feature of it is having diverse societies all around the globe where people who come from different regional, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds live together (King, 2018). Since, nowadays, businesses, education and scholarships are ever more global and multilingual, the 21st century's citizens must improve a new set of skills such as translanguaging to keep up with today's globalization (King, 2018). That is to say, a mastery in more than one language is required to establish an effective and extensive communication in today's globalized world.

Accordingly, a new discussion has evolved in language teaching and learning, concerning nuances and the significance of different ideas about multilingualism (the ability to speak many languages proficiently) involving bilingualism (speaking two languages competently), Plurilingualism (the ability to learn several languages), translanguaging (the use of different languages together) and heteroglossia (the variability of 'voices' and language present at the micro-level). 'Two solitudes assumption' refers to anold-fashioned view point of bilingual education which has begotten the division of languages in teaching (Cummins, 2007). According to Heller (2007), bilingualism is developing a native-like proficiency in two monolingualisms; however, the 'Multilingual turn' in language teaching and learning (Conteh and Meier, 2014) views bilingualism as developing various degrees of proficiency based on the settings and purpose.

The growth of multilingualism has not only affected the language education and/or education entirely but also the linguistic identity of a learner based on their schooling language or the number of languages they speak, predominantly the one(s) with which communicate the most. By the rise of multilingualism, a constructivist view perceived the linguistic identity as a fluctuating construct at the individual and societal level(Rothman & Nino-Murcia, 2014), especially, in contexts where communal diglossia does not make the language user to use a specific language different from their linguistic repertoire. Thus, despite the fact that the language choice indicates a social act, it is the individual language user's preference (Butler 1998; Zentella 1997).

The effects of multilingualism are not limited on just education and schooling but it has also influenced other areas of life. That is, Plurilingualism (*based on Moore and Gajo's (2009) identification of the multilingualism instead of plurilingualism, this article will also use the terms interchangeably*) has been recognized as a lifestyle in Europe (Beacco, 2005) since promoting the plurilingual identity

and empowering the capacity of individuals towards plurilingualism has become the central emphasis of language education there (Beacoo & Byram, 2003). On top of that, plurilingual identities have to do with time, discourse and the context where one comes form(Oliveira & Aanca, 2009), and pedagogies should appreciate the purposes of plurilingualism (Bernstein, 1996) which in turn requires raising awareness of language teachers to create a learning environment in linguistically diverse settings through which learning happens smoothly (Le Nevez, Hélot, & Ehrhart, 2010).

RELATED STUDIES ON PLURILINGUALISM

Since Plurilingualism's popularity increased specially in countries where people know more than one language or people gather together from different linguistic and cultural background, researchers showed interest in studying its wide influence on education. Prasad (2020) conducted a research on children's representation of Plurilingualism in relation with teaching and learning through which 100 children across five schools in Canada were studied. She claimed that a multi-layered collage of language(s) and language practices can represent plurilingual repertoires. She further claimed that the children's mental images and social representations are made visible through collaging.

Preece and Marshall (2020) analyzed the data gathered from their study of plurilingualism in Canadian higher education with a focus on five instructors' understanding of the students' plurilingual competences on their pedagogical responses to teaching in linguistically diverse classes. The findings of their study show that the students' plurilingualism is viewed more as a deficit than asset because of increasing students' stress between their plurilingual process and monolingual product.

In another study on students' multilingual repertoires by Odeniyi and Lazar (2020), they offer the findings from interviews with undergraduates who were studying applied social sciences at a university in London. Odeniyi and Lazar (2020) conclude that the respondents' multilingual repertoires may create challenges while taking up plurilingual pedagogies in curriculum. Nevertheless, they suggest that teacher training programs can play a key role in raising students' awareness of their hidden repertoires and their role in learning process.

Contrasting Plurilingualism and Multilingualism

Several research segregate Plurilingualism from multilingualism based on the knowledge of a number and the coexistence of languages. Beacco and Byram (2007), for instance, draw the contrast between plurilingualism by means of language user's ability to employ several languages and multilingualism as an existence of languages in a particular geographical region. However, several researchers believe that both terms are semantically indistinguishable. As Canagarajah and Liyanage (2012) stated, "The difference between multilingualism and plurilingualism is largely theoretical. These are not different practices. The terms connote different ways of perceiving the relationship between languages in society and individual repertoire" (p. 50).

PLURILINGUALISM IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Since Plurilingualism has to do with education, it draws the educators, policy makers and educational bodies attention to make use of it for academic purposes and in the educational system exclusively. As Beacco&Byram, (2007) state, Plurilingualism is considered to be relevant to pedagogy since it emphasizes on raising awareness, promoting the use of all languages in the student's repertoire, and developing intercultural understanding. Similarly, Piccardo (2013) believes that resorting to plurilingualism approaches would help to enhance students' self-confidence to facilitate learning and would engage teachers who do not share the same L1 with the students. In the same way, the education sector of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)promotes mother tongue education in the context of plurilingual education from the very beginning years of schooling since they believe it does not only set a durable foundation and facilitate learning but it also develops learning outcomes and enhances the quality of education. Besides, UNESCO declares that the main beneficiaries of a plurilingual approach in education are those who are excluded from the educational system because of poverty, ethnicity, etc. and girls and women who cannot go to school in many places around the world. Hence, it encourages gender equality.

Despite the pros of adapting Plurilingualism into educational system, it is not something to happen overnight – that is to say, it requires

investing time and budget. According to Moore (2018), the plurilingual approach cannot be effectively applied into the educational system unless changes being brought in teacher education through awareness raising programs, training workshops, and in-house capacity building programs to better educate the teachers about the importance and ways of implication of Plurilingualism into teaching and learning curriculum. In addition to this, a profound change is essential in the educational policy which in turn ratify not only the importance of Plurilingualism in language education but also its legitimacy (Canagarajah, 2011). This way, institutions, teachers and learners would be supposed to put efforts into its fulfilment.

Furthermore, when it comes to Plurilingualism, a wider view and a holistic conception of it needs to be taken into consideration to create a learning environment that embrace all sort of differences. As claimed by Caspari, et al (2014), linguistic and cultural differences are considered as means of enhancement and should not be victimized by inclinations of prejudice. These inclinations can be reduced through supporting the linguistic and cultural identity and appreciating their diversity by language education (Caspari, et al, 2014) aiming at incorporating the linguistic and cultural resources of all learners such as languages of origin, foreign languages, regional and minority languages, and dialects.

Likewise, the most well-known scholars who were coming from various regional and cultural backgrounds were requested to share their viewpoints on plurilingualism, trans languaging and their effects on language education in a study by Vallejo and Dooly (2019). As a result, they highlighted the essential similarities and differences that illustrate the fact that these frameworks can be compared and analyzed best if it is acknowledged that they are emerged from different backgrounds (Vallejo and Dooly, 2019). Furthermore, they showed that both approaches share an interest in multilingual education throughout the world. According to Cook (2016), pedagogies and approaches that are linguistically comprehensive and appropriate for multilingual learners must be adapted through which the language of instruction is the target language. There are many factors that contribute to multilingualism views and prevent language separation like globalization and internationalization of education (Cummins, 2008).

Consequently, to implement Plurilingualism and integrate its implications into educational system, a far-reaching outlook of it should be developed to address all the previously mentioned differences to create multilingual learning environments and promote plurilingual learners. Prasad (2020) holds a similar idea in this regard. She argues that abroader approach towards language acquisition, concerning teaching languages as a whole, is essential to boost language learner's communicative repertoire through raising consciousness and understanding of the cultural and linguistic diversity. Accordingly, (Bakhtin 1975) argues that there is a deep implication of Plurilingualism in association with language education. Having discussed that, plurilingual learners who come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds outperform in schools not only they possess a range of language skills and proficiency (Prasad, 2020) but also due to their awareness of what languages they should use in educational contexts (Gogolin, 2007).

A rapid growth of international migration draws attention to the importance of multilingualism which calls for a language policy worldwide that not only helps people gain the necessary language skills they need for an effective communication but also improves the quality of language education in plurilingual societies.

CONCLUSION

Based on what has been discussed earlier, several practitioners have illuminated that a thorough modification in teacher education as well as educational policy is needed to facilitate the process of incorporating plurilingual pedagogical approaches (Canagarajah, 2011, Dooly & Vallejo 2009, Moore 2018).In the same way, Young (2014) demonstrated that paving the way to teachers' understanding of the importance of Plurilingualism will be valuable in language education. Many others also hold the view that policy makers, educators, educational organizations and bodies are required to appreciate the linguistic diversity and respectively reflect on its prominence in education (Masats, Moore, and Nussbaum, 2018).

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