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The Benefits of Teaching Children in Their Home Language"

Teaching Kids in Their Home Language

Teaching children in their home language has become an important question in many schools today. This issue matters a lot to students who speak one language at home and another at school. Articles like "Lost in Translation" by Maya Alkateb-Chamis and "The Evolution of Literacy Education" discuss how using a student's first language in the classroom can help them learn. Alkateb-Chamis points out that when teachers do not use a child's home language, it can make learning harder. But if the home language is used, the child often learns to read and write better. "The Evolution of Literacy Education" shows how teaching methods have changed over time, going from very simple ways to more thoughtful approaches. In this essay, I will look at these ideas and other studies to see if teaching kids in their own language really helps. I think it does because it helps them do better in school, keeps them close to their own culture, and improves their learning overall.

Introduction

Paragraph 1: Context and Example

In the last few decades, schools have been thinking a lot about how to teach children who speak different languages. In the past, many places believed that teaching only in English would help kids learn English faster. One famous example is California's Proposition 227. This law said that schools could only teach in English. A *Los Angeles Times* article by Joy Resmovits explains that in 2016, people voted to end this law. They changed their minds because they saw that bilingual education worked better than just English-only. In "Lost in Translation," Maya Alkateb-Chamis also says that using a child's home language makes it easier for them to learn how to read and write. Both the newspaper article and Alkateb-Chamis's essay show us that bilingual teaching can be more helpful than everyone once thought.

Quote:

“Excluding a child’s native language from the classroom can lead to delayed literacy development and a sense of cultural disconnection” (“Lost in Translation”).

Explanation:

This quote means that if we do not allow kids to use their home language, they might learn to read and write more slowly. They may also feel that their culture is not welcome at school. This could make them less interested in learning. By letting them use their first language, we help them feel good about who they are, and this can improve their school performance.

Background Information:

In the past, teachers often used very basic methods, like making students memorize words without thinking about meaning. Later, people started using phonics and other methods to teach reading and writing. Now, with so many students speaking many different languages, schools are starting to try bilingual programs. These programs do not force kids to leave their language at home. Instead, they use it as a tool to help them learn English and other subjects. This approach is meant to help kids become strong in both languages, which can help them in the future.

Paragraph 2: Different Opinions and the Main Question

People do not all agree about bilingual education. Some researchers, like Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier, say that children in bilingual programs do better in the long run. They might learn English a bit more slowly at the start, but over time they end up doing better in reading, writing, and even math. On the other side, Rosalie Porter thinks that teaching in English only helps children fit in faster. She says that if we just focus on English, kids can join the mainstream right away. So the big question is: Does teaching kids in their home language really help them do better in reading, writing, and other school subjects over time?

Bilingual programs: Help kids learn better in the long term (Thomas and Collier).

English-only programs: Help kids adapt to English faster, at least in the short term (Porter).

Research Question:

How does teaching children in their home language improve their reading, writing, and overall school success?

Section 1: Theoretical Background

Paragraph 3: Using a Theory to Understand

Jim Cummins's Threshold Hypothesis is a helpful idea here. Cummins says that if children have a strong first language, it helps their minds grow. It also makes it easier for them to learn a second language, like English (Cummins 2000). This theory is important because it shows that learning in one's home language does not slow down learning English; instead, it can make learning English easier later. It works like a base or a strong floor on which the child builds new language skills.

Paragraph 4: Connecting the Theory to Real Examples

If we look at the problems described in "Lost in Translation" and think about Proposition 227, Cummins's theory helps us understand what happened. When the law forced English-only teaching, schools missed the chance to use the child's first language as a bridge. Later, when Proposition 227 was ended, schools returned to methods that respected the child's home language. This fits with Cummins's idea that a strong first language background helps children think better and learn new languages. It shows us that ignoring a child's first language might harm their learning in the long run.

Section 2: Scholarly Conversation

Paragraph 5: Research That Supports Bilingual Education

Thomas and Collier did important research on language minority students. They found that children in bilingual programs did better than those in English-only programs (Thomas and Collier 1997). Why is this so important? Because it shows with data what Cummins's theory suggests: that learning in your first language helps you become a stronger student. These findings are not just guesses, they are based on studying many students and seeing how they learn over time.

Paragraph 6: More Proof and Agreement

The repeal of Proposition 227 and more recent studies support what Thomas and Collier found. The *Journal of Multilingual Education Research* (2020) says, "Maintaining a child's first language while introducing a second language creates a dual-language advantage that extends beyond academics." This means that when kids keep using their home language and also learn English, they do better in more than just school subjects. They may feel more confident, stay connected

to their culture, and communicate better with family members. This also makes them proud of who they are, which can improve their attitude toward learning in general.

If a child can read stories at home in their first language, talk to grandparents or parents about those stories, and then come to school and learn similar stories or vocabulary in English, they are making connections. They are not starting from zero when they learn English words. They already know many ideas and concepts in their first language, and they just need the English words to match what they already understand. Over time, this helps them become good readers and writers in both languages.

Another important thing is that when kids feel comfortable in the classroom, they participate more. If they know the teacher respects their language and culture, they are more willing to speak up, ask questions, and share their thoughts. This leads to better engagement, which is key to learning. When kids feel safe, understood, and valued, they are likely to stay in school longer and do better in many subjects, not just language arts.

Paragraph 7: Cultural Connections and Identity

Cultural connection is another big reason to use a child's home language. When a student's first language is not allowed or is seen as "not good enough," the child might start feeling ashamed of it. They might think their family's language has no place at school. This can cause them to lose interest in learning altogether. On the other hand, when a teacher says, "It's great that you know another language. Let's use it to help you learn more," the child feels proud. They know they have something special. This pride in their background can make them try harder and set bigger goals for themselves.

Connecting Culture and Achievement:

When children keep their culture alive in the classroom, they are not just learning words and grammar. They are learning stories, traditions, and ways of thinking that come from their culture. This helps them understand that learning is not just about getting good grades, but also about understanding the world and their place in it. Over time, this can make them more curious, more thoughtful, and more open-minded, which helps them do better in school and beyond.

Section 3: Counterargument and Response

Paragraph 8: The Other Side (Counterargument)

Not everyone agrees that bilingual education is the best way. Rosalie Porter, in *The Case Against Bilingual Education*, says that if we focus on English only, children will learn it faster and fit in with their classmates sooner (Porter 1998). She believes that spending time on the child's first language might slow down English learning in the beginning. There is some truth to the idea that a child thrown into an English-only class may pick up English words quickly because they have to. The child might start talking English with friends to make sure they fit in and are not left out.

Paragraph 9: Answering the Counterargument

However, Thomas and Collier's work suggests that even if English-only methods help students fit in quickly, they do not lead to the best results in the long run. Bilingual programs give kids a stronger foundation. They might take a bit longer to become fully fluent in English, but when they do, they often have better reading and writing skills, and they do better on tests. They also keep their first language skills, which can help them talk to family members and understand their culture. In a world where speaking more than one language is often a big advantage, these students can later use their skills in jobs or in their communities.

Another point is that feeling connected to one's home language and culture can help a child's emotional health. If a student feels respected at school and can share their home language with classmates, they become more confident. Confident students usually do better over time. They might read more books at home (in their first language or English), try harder to write essays, and feel happy to come to school. So while English-only might work well for a child who just wants to say a few words in English, bilingual education builds a deeper, richer skill set.

Extending the Discussion:

We can also think about the role of parents and families. If the school only uses English, parents who do not speak English well might not be able to help with homework or understand what their children are learning. But if the school supports bilingual education, parents can talk to their kids about school subjects in their first language. They can explain math problems or discuss a story. This helps create a strong connection between school and home. When parents are involved, students do better because they know their family cares and understands what they are doing.

Paragraph 10: Costs and Challenges

Some people worry that running bilingual programs might cost more money or require more trained teachers. It is true that schools need teachers who can speak the students' first

language and understand how to teach both languages together. However, the long-term benefits often make it worth the effort. If students learn better, stay in school longer, and do better on tests, this can save money in the future because fewer students will need extra help or special classes. Also, communities that support multiple languages often become richer in culture and communication. Families feel welcome, and new students who arrive from other countries settle in more easily.

Paragraph 11: Future Steps and Recommendations

To make bilingual education successful, schools can provide training for teachers, add books and materials in different languages, and invite parents and community members to help. Teachers can learn strategies like “translanguaging,” where students use all their language knowledge to understand a lesson. If a student knows a concept in their home language, the teacher can help them find the English words for it, making the learning stronger and more meaningful. Over time, these approaches can create a positive cycle: students feel valued, they learn more, they perform better, and they become proud, bilingual individuals.

Conclusion

Looking at everything, it is clear that teaching kids in their home language helps them in many ways. Cummins’s Threshold Hypothesis, the research by Thomas and Collier, and the end of Proposition 227 all support bilingual education. Studies show that when we respect and use a child’s first language, we help them build a stronger mind, do better in reading and writing, and stay close to their cultural roots. While some people argue for English-only teaching, the long-term benefits of bilingual education are hard to ignore. By supporting a child’s home language, we give them a better chance to succeed not just in school, but also in life. Schools should look at these findings and consider bilingual programs to help all students do their best.

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