Bilingualism in Puerto Rico

Summary of Existing Literature

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Much has been written about bilingualism in Puerto Rico. Reviewing the corresponding literature makes it obvious that the debate this theme generates is still very active in spite of almost a century of its presence and discussion. Some of the written work about the theme is summarized in what follows.


The report identifies language deficiencies and cultural differences between black and Hispanic in the United States. The program reveals that the students become anxious and confused. The healthy environment to motivate language learning is disrupted when the students are forced in an indirect way to abandon their first language. The schools are placing the students in an extremely ambiguous role. The report also states that children learn more in context.


The authors believe in the silent period which is considered to accelerate learning to speak a second language, rather than to impose the second language learn to speak on the first day. Although the language theory states that the environment is of upmost importance, many learners don’t learn the new language. The explanation is discussed. The working model for creative construction in L2 Acquisitions is presented in detail.

They underscore the need to enrich the research perspective on bilingual education by acknowledging its full range of complexities, including the politics, practices, values, and expectations regarding language-minority students. The emphasis is not about learning English but rather the potential lost in the attrition of the native language.


Topics related to the evaluation of bilingual education programs are discussed. The diverse findings of the results of seven major bilingual education evaluations are presented. The Bilingual immersion program is also presented to demonstrate the potentials and possibilities for bilingual education.


Brown discusses theories of the first language acquisition, and how children first communicate with utterances, continue to nonstop chattering, which continues until children begin their primary grades. He dispels the myth that hinders second language learning. Various classroom methodologies are discussed such as: Community Language Learning, Suggestopedia, the Silent Way Total Physical Response and the Nature Approach. Brown believes that bilingual is a way of life due to the fact that your whole person is affected.

Introduces the theoretical bases of communicative language teaching and guides to building a language program consonant with those in theory. Savignon addresses the concept of “communicative concept” and demonstrates how the attitude interplays an important role in second language learning.

Department of Education (1998) *Bilingüismo*

The goal of the English Program of the Department of Education in Puerto Rico is to ensure that students have domain not only in the vernacular language, Spanish, but also in the second language acquisition as well. However, throughout the decades the task of creating bilingual citizen has not been accomplished. Various variables were studied to demonstrate the limitations in the second language learning. Alternatives are discussed for possible solutions to remedy the English second language acquisition in Puerto Rico.


The Puerto Rican Academy discusses the Bilingual Project, a new educational policy prepared by the Department of Education in 1997 to facilitate the second language process. The Academy recommends the Department of Education to revise the document to avoid political issues on bilingualism. A pathway of the commissioners, like Falkner, is discussed explaining how English was first taught in the public school system making English the target language and how it slipped out of the Department of Education and became a political issue. The recommendations made by teachers were set aside by the Department of Education itself. It reminds the Department of Education to recognize Spanish as the vernacular language and English as a foreign language. To uphold this issue Dr. José Padín is also discussed. On the whole, the
academy discusses this document to guide the people of Puerto Rico to make a wise choice and not permit political parties to intervene with the educational system of Puerto Rico.


The Puerto Rican Department of Education states that since 1947 they have provided its students with 50 minutes of daily English instruction throughout their twelve years of schooling. Nevertheless, the academic assessment data for 1995-96 shows that 81% of the students form the Public School System have not developed the basic English language skills needed in oral or written discourse.

According to Lladó Torres and Rodríquez (1997) teacher’s preparation for teaching English should be attended. Puerto Rican children are not learning the English language due to the fact that the Public School System in not teaching adequately Goodlad (117) adds that novice teachers receive little formal education in reading instruction before entering the classroom; most have taken only one course in the subject as undergraduates. Many are not certified English teachers In other words, they have not taken the required coursed at the University.

Department of Education (1999) Historia de la Reforma Educativa Transformación de la Escuela Pública

In Puerto Rico innumerable studies have been made on the education of the English language learning that present/display their history and methodologies; many of these studies affirm, identify the problem. The Department of Education presents situations that handicap second language acquisition and limit the development of the language for its essential use: to communicate ideas, opinions and feelings.

In this book Dr. Torres discusses the analytical history, the social, political, and the sociological aspects of bilingualism. He also discusses the presence of the English language in Puerto Rico since 1898. The conflict between the political parties and the Department of Education has been an issue from day one and is presented and analyzed by Torres. The linguistic attitudes are also mentioned. There are tables which demonstrate educational pathway of English and Spanish in Puerto Rico throughout the years. Language learning theories are also discussed.
Bibliography


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