

INTERNATIONAL MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE

The conference took place on Saturday, January 28, 2017 at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, CA.

The focus was Multilingual Education: new perspectives and possibilities.

1st SESSION

First was a general session with a presentation by Guadalupe Valdés, professor on pedagogy from Stanford University's pedagogy faculty. The focus was about the linguistic ideologies where the actual context was Hispanics that do not speak English and a common definition is sought for English Learners. It is believed that the effect on the students will be great with proposition 58 and will be in favor of bilingual education in California. The possibility exists to rescue the Spanish language.

When speaking about linguistic ideology, it means to give value to good language expression. Because, many times it is commonly thought that to be American is to be monolingual in English, but now with this law there is the possibility to give value again to native languages, in this case Spanish.

An adequate definition for bilingualism is important.

BILINGUALISM

This is when a person has perfect control in two languages and sometimes can go unnoticed since both languages are spoken and true bilingualism is created with an authentic balance of both languages. This can be considered as early emergent since they had two languages since they were little. The importance of true bilingualism is proficiency in the different areas: reading, writing, speaking and listening in both languages for bilingual children. There are benefits since they have a bilingual brain that functions with concepts in both languages. Although we might observe that bilingual acquisition happens belatedly, this is a great feat. Some students might develop different linguistic discourses in varying ways while developing intellectual talents but based on what is observed, linguistic progress refers to acquiring academic English at the same rate of acquiring academic Spanish. Academic language is one that is formal and goes further than the language spoken at home or street talk so to speak and this results in an academic norm where this academic language changes and develops depending on the profession and results in the use of two correct and appropriate languages.

2nd SESSION

WHEN A STUDENT ARRIVES IN A DIFFERENT COUNTRY

Yara Amparo López, State Coordinator for Binational Programs for Migrant Education, presented during this session.

This session was about the migrant education program in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. This program talked about students recently arrived in Mexico due to different circumstances like parents who decide to return and live in Mexico, but also parents who are deported and are forced to resettle themselves in Mexico with their families and start anew in this new country. When students arrive from Mexico, they are Spanish language learners (opposite to our United States students that are considered English language learners). The workshop was very interesting because it showed the opposite perspective of students that are known in our schools as newcomer English language learners in LAUSD.

The program is focused on adapting the new students to the academic changes, but also to the cultural changes because although their families are of Mexican descent, the students arrive with a different context based on what they lived and developed in US cities where they lived. They then start a new life with the respective changes just like English learner students start here in the United States. What I found most interesting about this program was: the importance given to the focus on adaptation as a first priority since they have to learn to survive in a different country that for them is completely unknown despite their family's roots belonging to that country; the importance given to working with the student's self-esteem; the importance of taking into consideration the emotional context; the importance given to understanding the school's social and historical context that they come from and situate them in the current environment; and the way that they are motivated or in other words walk in the student's shoes to be able to understand them.

This program has a focus that gives priority to the student's interest since it is taken into consideration that "what they would like for the teacher to teach them and how they would like to be taught". In other words, the WHAT and HOW through the student's perspective is very important.

Another important point is the support given to students when integrating, since they are assigned a support group for 1 or 2 months where they work on motivation and self-esteem. They develop adaptive language according that the student finds necessary for him/her. In other words WHAT DO I NEED TO LEARN THE LANGUAGE AND HOW DO I THINK I CAN LEARN IT. In the same manner, a life project is done shared among the countries where the student previously lived and in the one he is now living in

Moreover, the goal observed for many of them is that they want to return to the United States to study and go to college once they can return.

LAURA BAZ

CAC Member

February 17, 2017