

The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality (Bilingual Education)

Bilingual Education Teachers' Beliefs and Their Relation to Self-Reported Practices

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Abstract

This exploratory survey study investigated teachers' beliefs about the nature of knowledge and how these beliefs influenced self-reported practices. An epistemological framework was used to explore these bilingual teachers' beliefs ($N=176$). A bi-methodological approach was used to analyze the data. Themes for open-ended responses were identified and triangulated with descriptive findings. Multivariate analysis determined the relationships between variables. Findings demonstrated that bilingual teachers have specific beliefs about how bilingual children learn. Results indicated that prior experiences do influence bilingual teachers' beliefs, especially professional teaching. A theoretical, philosophically grounded teacher preparation program is considered vital in the preparation of effective teachers, for there to be a congruity between beliefs and practices. Lastly, to understand classroom realities, the exploration of teachers' beliefs, formations of beliefs, and the influence of beliefs on teaching practices must continue.

Why do teachers teach the way they do? This is a compelling question that has perplexed teacher educators. Many researchers have assumed that teachers' approaches to teaching have been influenced by the way that they were taught. Some researchers have demonstrated that teachers have implicit theories of teaching and learning. These researchers have suggested that teachers' implicit theories influence their approaches to teaching. This brings us to another esoteric question. Why are some teachers more effective than others? Perhaps there may be certain essential beliefs that underlie the practices of teachers; furthermore, certain experiences may reinforce these beliefs.

Undeniably, bilingual teachers play a vital role in the cognitive development of their students. A review of dissertation abstracts revealed that bilingual education teachers are supportive of bilingual children's cognitive development (see Wood, 1994; Quintanar-Sarellana, 1991; Serna, 1990; Martínez, 1989; P. Pérez, 1988). Shin & Krashen's (1996) pilot study on teacher

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