Student Perceptions Regarding the Use of Purposive English in a Spanish as a Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract
In modern American society, diversity is both challenged and celebrated, and inclusion is imperative. This ideology begins in the classroom. Oftentimes, this celebration of diversity, more specifically linguistic diversity, is most visible in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) classes and similar bilingual educational programs. In TESOL programs, students’ international identities are highlighted and students are often instructed using multilingual educational resources to scaffold their acquisition of English. Historically, foreign language teaching also utilized dual-language instructional methodologies. Such archaic teaching methodologies have since been replaced by more modern and immersive sociopsycholinguistic approaches such as Communicative Language Teaching. Such approaches are taught only in the target language with little to no acknowledgment of students’ home languages. Cummins’s (1986) Common Underlying Proficiency model provided the theoretical framework that guided this study. This model likens the first and second languages to two visible iceberg peaks, representative of two proficiencies. Underneath the surface of the water, however, the two linguistic structures are cognitively and inextricably linked. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore student use and perceptions of purposive English and its effects in foreign language classrooms. This qualitative study answered how and why high school Spanish students use purposive English in a foreign language classroom as well as how they perceive the effects of its use. This study utilized a grounded theory approach to data analysis including open and axial coding procedures. Data were derived from eight semi-structured interviews, one focus group interview, and artifacts. All participants were high school students enrolled in a fourth-year level Spanish class. The five categories that emerged included Time, Study, Brain, Language Choice, and Participation. All categories aligned with Cummins’s (1986) Common Underlying Proficiency model and suggest that the first language does indeed play a direct role in the acquisition of a foreign language. Data also suggested that a dual-language instructional model may be appropriate for some foreign language learners and still has relevance today.

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