

Implementing a Plurilingual Approach to ELF in Primary School: An International Comparative Study

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Abstract : The present paper is motivated by the current influence of communicative approaches in language policies around the globe (especially through the Common European Framework of Reference), along with the exponential spread of English as a Lingua Franca worldwide. This study focuses on English language learning and teaching in the last year of primary education in Spain (in the bilingual Valencian region), Norway (in the Trondelag region), and China (in the Hunan region) and proposes a plurilingual communicative approach to ELT in line with ELF awareness and the current retheorisation of ELF within multilingualism (Jenkins, 2018). This study, interdisciplinary in nature, attempts to find a convergence point among English Language Teaching, English as a Lingua Franca, Language Ecology and Multilingualism, breaking with the boundaries that separate languages in language teaching and acknowledging English as international communication, while protecting the mother tongue and language diversity within multilingualism. Our experiment included over 400 students across Spain, Norway, and China, and the outcomes obtained demonstrate that despite the different factors involved in different cultures and contexts, a plurilingual approach to English learning improved English scores by 20% in each of the contexts. Through our study, we reflect on the underestimated value of the mother tongue in ELT, as well as the need for a sustainable ELF perspective in education worldwide.

Keywords : English as a Lingua Franca, English language teaching, language ecology, multilingualism

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