

A Study of Social Dynamics in English Language Learning Exploring Peer Relationships and Interaction Among Kindergarten Students in Taiwan

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Abstract : Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) to Taiwanese kindergarten students presents challenges due to their young age and cognitive development primarily occurring in their first language (Mandarin). This limits consistent exposure to English. Integrating content-based teaching with language instruction offers an effective approach to address these challenges. This study aims to investigate the impact of peer interactions on English language learning among kindergarten students in Taiwan. Specifically, it aims to understand how these interactions contribute to or hinder vocabulary acquisition and the development of basic language skills. Integrating Chinese and English content teaching enables students to naturally acquire English vocabulary while engaging in meaningful learning experiences. Peer interactions play a critical role in language development, as children imitate and internalize the behaviors and speech of others. This aligns with the theory of social development, which highlights the ability of children to replicate complex actions through social learning. Furthermore, positioning theory examines how social identity and interaction dynamics are constructed through language use in a bilingual kindergarten classroom. The theory provides insights into how students position themselves and others during peer interactions, shaping their social roles and language learning experiences. This study employed a qualitative observational method to examine the effectiveness of content-based language instruction in teaching English to 3-5-year-old Taiwanese students. Data were collected through classroom observations and interaction recordings over five weeks, focusing on students' interaction and language use during integrated content and language activities. The findings revealed that popular children with higher social status or stronger personalities often take on leadership roles, shaping the behavior and learning of quieter peers. The other finding is that integrating Chinese and English content teaching promotes natural vocabulary acquisition and strengthens peer interactions. Students demonstrated an ability to imitate and internalize complex language patterns from their peers, supporting language development beyond their current abilities. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of a social learning approach, validating the application of the theory of social development in bilingual kindergarten education. This research provides valuable insights into effective strategies for bilingual early childhood education. It emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive and linguistic development and underscores how peer collaboration, supported by theoretical frameworks, enriches learning experiences in bilingual settings.

Keywords : kindergarten, peer relationship, positioning, social interaction

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