Focus on multilingualism as an alternative to monolingual approaches in education

Jasone Cenoz, Xabier Etxague
University of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU, Spain

This paper discusses the differences between atomistic and holistic approaches to second/foreign language teaching by analyzing the role that the multilingual resources play in the acquisition of additional languages. Atomistic approaches adopt a monolingual view of multilingualism because they aim at developing multilingual skills by isolating the learning of the target language from the influence of other languages and avoiding interaction between languages. This view has been challenged by holistic approaches that do not draw hard boundaries between languages and argue for a multilingual approach in language learning (Coste & Simon, 2009; Cummins, 2007).

In this paper we discuss "Focus on Multilingualism" (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; 2014) as an alternative to monolingual approaches in education. According to "Focus on multilingualism" all the languages in the multilingual speaker’s linguistic repertoire interact and can be resources when acquiring additional languages. Furthermore, this interaction can be easily observed when analyzing multilingual practices is specific social contexts. This view of multilingualism implies the need to replace that acquiring a second or additional language means acquiring multilingual and multicultural competencies (Kramsch, 2012). The paper will show how "Focus on multilingualism" is applied to research on multilingual education.

References


Keywords: multilingual education, bilingualism, multilingualism.