

Bilingualism theories and deaf

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Bilingualism theories and the deaf Introduction Bilingualism refers to the ability of an individual to use two languages. This paper discusses the various theories that offer an in-depth understanding of bilingualism. Theories provide systematic hypothesis that enhance the understanding of such concepts. Among the theories is the common underlying proficiency theory. The theory explains that the two languages used by a speaker always sound separate but they both function from the same central cognitive system. Such is an important assertion that proceeds to discuss the process of cognitive development in humans (Cummins, 2011) (Page# 2 Lines# 27-31). The threshold theory on the other hand provides a three staged development of bilingual abilities the theory explains that bilinguals achieve positive cognitive advantages after crossing the first and the second threshold (Baker, 2011) (Page# 167 lines#26-30).

Content

Developed in 1977 by Toukoma and Skutnabb-Kangas, the threshold theory analyses the relationship between bilingualism and cognitive development. Language is a social tool used in enhancing interactions. As such, the development of bilingualism in children is always a portrayal of their cognitive development. In analyzing bilingualism, the theory provides three stages of bilingualism development that also portrays the development of cognition in children (Baker, 2011) (page#167 lines # 24-29). Each of the three thresholds is varying levels of language competencies that also portray the cognitive development of a child. Stage 1 is a preliminary stage and children at such stages lack effective bilingual skills thus cannot communicate effectively. At such stages, children have weak cognitive development. Their inability to speak in two languages is therefore a

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portrayal of their underdeveloped cognitive abilities.

According to the theory, the second threshold is also preliminary and the children cannot communicate in two languages effectively. The theory explains that people begin realizing the benefits of bilingualism. The theory uses the example of a child with progressive prowess of bilingualism. At the first two stages, the child cannot realize the benefits of bilingualism since they cannot communicate effectively. The fact that this portrays their underdeveloped cognitive prowess further complicates the situation. Such a child cannot for example use language to enhance learning in school. As such, his inability in bilingualism affects his academic development since such a student cannot learn effectively. After crossing the second threshold, the child is a competent in both languages and therefore enjoys the benefits of bilingualism, which includes enhancing his learning process. The theory equates bilingualism to a three-story house. In doing this, it explains that a bilingual child is in a constant state of learning thus always moving up the ladder as he advances his bilingual skills (Baker, 2011) (Page# 167 Lines# 36-42).

Summary

In retrospect, bilingualism is an essential skill that enhances communication while portraying the level of cognitive development in an individual. The relationship between bilingualism and cognitive development enhances its importance in the process of growth and development. Acquiring bilingual skills is a progressive process that begins with learning the basic words in the language. This portrays an individual's cognitive development in the new language. As the threshold theory explains, perfecting bilingualism is a progressive development that portrays the progressive nature of perfecting

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cognitive skills. The progressive nature of bilingualism influences the benefits of the skills in people based on the importance of language in cognitive development.

References

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Cummins, J. (2011). BICS and CALP: Empirical and Theoretical Status of the Distinction. Ontario, CA: California Association of Bilingual Education.