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Uncovering trilingual development and multilingual literacy practices in the United States: A Review

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Abstract

Trilingual literacy practices in the United States have not been widely researched. When evaluating the benefits of trilingualism, most of the ongoing conversation has largely concentrated on theories of subtractive and additive bilingualism, which have been recently identified as inadequate to explain the complexity of literacy development in children who are born in a trilingual home. It is hypothesized that there is a staggering gap in how much is known about learning strategies and multilingual literacy instruction for trilingual children in the United States.

Using the framework of *language rights* in the context of inclusive education, the proposed research aims to conduct an integrative literature review to report the existence of empirical studies devoted to understanding trilingual development and multilingual education. This review encompasses literacy practices from newborn children to adolescence and it is limited to education exclusively in the United States of America. Analysis and synthesis of primary sources will include empirical and experimental studies while theoretical literature will be excluded. Several databases will be accessed such as PubMed, Web of Science, and PsychINFO. Keyword generation will include multilingual, trilingual, child development, education, literacy, and United States.

Considering that “families still live in a multilingual world of vanishing languages as many languages are dying while many others are being marginalized” (Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 2009), the goal of this research is to uncover the challenges that different groups with rich linguistic backgrounds experience as their multi-lingual repertoires are adversely limited by a persistent tradition of monolingual ideology in which the north American education system has been built despite its historical influx of cultural-diverse people.