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The bilingual story: an investigation into the pattens of thinking for speaking L1 and L2 learners of English and IsiZulu

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ABSTRACT

The nature of language learning in bilingual environments has been brought to the fore in recent research. South Africa is a culturally and linguistically diverse country. Some challenges have been met upon embracing multilingualism most especially in the field of education, with the implementation of a bilingual language policy.

The aim of this study is to investigate the language patterns and development of South African speakers in a monolingual and bilingual context in order to discover the patterns of thinking for speaking amongst the different groups of speakers. This research seeks to gain insight into whether second language learners develop a different pattern of thinking for speaking upon acquiring their second language.

A total of 54 narratives of first language English, first language isiZulu and second language English speakers, were compared and contrasted in terms of language and pragmatic use. This data of oral narrative texts was elicited from a video retelling task. A linguistic analysis was carried out in order to determine language and pragmatic acquisition and development, as well as to report on performance of the oral narrative task from both a speech and gesture perspective.

The results reveal an effect of culture on these typologically dissimilar languages, as speakers of the different languages all performed the narrative task differently. The findings show strong evidence towards the patterns of thinking for speaking amongst the different speakers, and the fact that different learners perceive the same task differently is an important factor in drawing up curricular and learning programmes in education.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Thinking for Speaking, Narrative, Gesture, Language development