

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Bilingual Students' Literacy Skills in the Middle East

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Abstract

The Middle East is a region where educational programs are shifting from single language instruction to dual languages instructions. While working in many schools in the region, I witnessed many children at the elementary level who spoke fluent English, but when it comes to reading they are not equipped with the proper literacy skills to write or read a complete sentence correctly. Western studies (Gay, 2010; McIntyre & Hulan, 2013; Palmer & Martínez, 2013; Rueda & Stillman, 2012; Sheryl & Suleiman, 1993) offer many solutions to this problem, mostly emphasizing on equipping teachers with cultural awareness skills to help diverse students build and develop their literacy skills in their second language, that is in this case, English. Most of Arab countries, specifically in the Arabian Gulf area, recruit native English-speaking teachers to teach English. However the question raised is how much these teachers are aware of the culture of the Arab students? This question initiates school administrators and stakeholders consider hiring foreign teachers that possess an awareness of the culture of their students. This is the main purpose of this paper is to present what the literature indicates regarding teachers with culture awareness skills. It investigates the characteristics of teachers that are culturally responsive and how these characteristics have a positive impact on developing English literacy skills in Arab students. It is a platform for new researches in the Middle East regarding the students' acquisition of well-developed English literacy skills.

Keywords: bilingual students, Middle East region, culturally responsive teacher, literacy skills, English as a second language

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