Multilingualism

Trainer’s handbook
Contents

How to use this handbook 3
Multilingualism objectives OHT 4

Advantages of Multilingualism
  Trainers notes 5
  Advantages of Multilingualism OHT 6
  Multilingualism OHT 6

Multilingualism quiz
  Trainers notes 7
  Multilingualism quiz OHT 8
  Multilingualism quiz key handout 9
  Theories of bilingualism OHT 10

Language biographies
  Trainers notes 11
  Language biographies handout 12
  Patterns of language OHT 13
  Language, culture and identity OHT 13

Models of education
  Trainers notes 14
  Arguments against the mother tongue in education OHT 15
  Arguments for the mother tongue in education OHT 15
  Mother tongue based bilingual education OHT 16
  Models of education activity handout 17
  Models of education activity: key handout 17
  Advantages of multilingualism OHT 18
How to use this handbook

Objectives
This module sets out to:

• provide an understanding of theories of bilingualism
• explore participants’ attitudes towards bilingualism
• challenge myths about multilingualism
• consider the implications of bilingualism for education.

Structure
The topics covered are:

• advantages of multilingualism
• multilingualism quiz
• language biographies
• models of education

Organization
Each activity:

• starts with teacher’s notes which set out the purpose of the activity, the materials required and instructions for how to proceed
• is followed by the relevant OHTs and handouts.

Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s notes</th>
<th>TN</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handout</td>
<td>H</td>
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<tr>
<td>OHTs</td>
<td>OHT</td>
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</table>
Multilingualism: objectives

- to provide an understanding of theories of bilingualism
- to explore participants’ attitudes towards bilingualism
- to challenge myths about multilingualism
- to consider the implications of multilingualism for education.
Advantages of multilingualism

Purpose
To explore participants' attitudes towards multilingualism.

Materials
For this activity you will need:
• Multilingualism OHT
• Advantages of multilingualism OHT

Instructions
Display Multilingualism OHT.
Ask participants to think first about their own situation and then to brainstorm in small groups of 3 or 4 on the benefits of bilingualism.
Take feedback from the group.
Then display Advantages of multilingualism OHT as a point of comparison with the group deliberations.
Advantages of multilingualism

- gives status to ethnic and local community languages
- enables children to maintain links with their cultural backgrounds and to develop a close relationship with their families and their communities
- increases people’s employment opportunities in the modern world
- facilitates access to the curriculum and to learning in school
- improves communication between different linguistic and cultural groups
- provides children with the ability to share in a wide range of intercultural experiences such as literature, entertainment, religion and interests.

Multilingualism

In multilingual countries, the majority of people speak three or more languages:
- their own mother tongue
- other local or community languages
- the national language as well as an ex-colonial language such as Spanish, French, or English.
Multilingualism quiz

Purpose
To explore participants' attitudes towards multilingualism and challenge some important myths

Materials
Multilingualism quiz OHT
Multilingualism quiz key handout
Theories of bilingualism OHT

Instructions
Display Multilingualism quiz OHT
When participants have completed the quiz, distribute Multilingualism quiz: key handout, which gives the answers.
Note any comments and direct people to the suggestions for further reading on the handout if they wish to follow up on any of the issues raised.
Follow up by showing Theories of bilingualism OHT.
Multilingualism quiz

True or false?

1. Speaking two or more languages places unnecessary emotional strain on children.
2. Children who learn more than one language do not become fluent in any of these languages.
3. Multilingualism is a positive social and personal resource.
4. Speaking more than one language interferes with children’s intellectual development.
5. Multilingual societies are usually poor and underdeveloped.
6. It is important educationally that children learn in their mother tongues in the early years of schooling.
Multilingualism quiz: key

1. Speaking two or more languages places unnecessary emotional strain on children.
   *FALSE*: speaking more than one language does not create emotional strain. Higher levels of self-esteem have been reported in children who have a good grounding in their mother tongue and also know other languages.

2. Children who learn more than one language do not become fluent in any of these languages.
   *FALSE*: Children can become fluent in more than one language and for many people throughout the world multilingualism is very common. The level of fluency depends on factors such as the language programme children follow in school and the extent of parental support. In Canada and the USA, many rich parents choose to send their children to schools with immersion programmes in French.

3. Multilingualism is a positive social and personal resource.
   *TRUE*: The ability to speak the mother tongue as well as the national language and an international language creates a much wider range of life choices for individuals but can also achieve national unity.

4. Speaking more than one language interferes with children’s intellectual development.
   *FALSE*: There is no scientific evidence that learning more than one language is intellectually damaging. Children who have a good understanding of how different languages function are more likely to have good analytical skills and are often more effective communicators.

5. Multilingual societies are usually poor and underdeveloped.
   *FALSE*: There is no evidence to show that multilingual countries are more disadvantaged than monolingual countries. Social disadvantage is caused by factors other than language.

6. It is important educationally that children learn in their mother tongues in the early years of schooling.
   *TRUE*: Research shows that supporting children’s first language will enhance the acquisition of the second and third language.

For further reading on multilingualism see:
Theories of bilingualism

People used to believe that there was only a restricted amount of room in the brain languages and that languages operated separately another (Separate Underlying Proficiency Model).

More recently, we have come to understand that a central processing system allows us to transfer a whole range of skills, including those related to literacy, from one language to another (Common Underlying Proficiency Model).
Language biographies

Purpose
To make participants think about their own patterns of language use and the links between language, culture and identity.

Materials
Language biographies activity
Patterns of language OHT
Language, culture and identity OHT

Instructions
Distribute the Language biographies activity and explain how the model drawing was produced.
Ask participants to make their own drawings.
Choose several participants to share their silhouettes with the whole group.
Display Patterns of language OHT which should sum up some of the points which will have arisen from the discussion.
Now display Language, culture and identity OHT. Ask participants to consider in pairs or small groups whether these summary statements correspond with their own views and experiences.
Language biographies

The drawings below were produced as part of a language biography workshop. Participants were given a silhouette and asked to find a way of indicating which languages they associated with different parts of their bodies. Make your own silhouette to show the associations you have with the languages you speak.
Patterns of language use

We switch from one language to another according to:
- who we are speaking to, e.g. sister, employer
- where we are at the time, e.g. church, school
- what we are talking about, e.g. food preparation, politics
- what we are doing, e.g. speaking, writing.

Language, culture and identity

- Our languages are an essential and often intimate aspect of our identity (who we are).
- Language is very closely integrated with our cultural practices (the ways we do things).
- In all societies, power relations determine issues of language, culture and identity.
- Our identities are not fixed, but shift and change throughout our lives, depending on our circumstances and experiences. In fact, we all have multiple and overlapping identities.
- Young children are still in the process of developing a sense of identity. Teachers need to appreciate and understand the role that language and culture plays in identity formation.
Models of education

Purpose
To help participants:
• understand the arguments for and against the use of mother tongue education.
• familiarise themselves with the different models of educational provision in multilingual societies.

Materials
Arguments for the mother tongue OHT
Arguments against the mother tongue OHT
Mother tongue based bilingual education OHT
Models of education activity
Models of education: key handout
Advantages of multilingualism OHT

Instructions
Ask participants to discuss in pairs or small groups the advantages of mother tongue education.
Take feedback, then display Arguments for the mother tongue OHT.
Ask participants to discuss in pairs or small groups the disadvantages of mother tongue education.
Take feedback, then display Arguments against the mother tongue OHT.
Now display and read through the Mother tongue based bilingualism OHT.
Ask participants to think about their own situation and consider whether this model could work for them.
Distribute the Models of education activity. Ask participants to fill in the blanks in the table.
Distribute the Models of education: key handout. When taking feedback, pay special attention to:
• The ways in which children benefit from bilingual education.
• The ways in which instruction in the language of power (ex colonial language) places them at a disadvantage.
By way of summary, display Advantages of multilingual education OHT.
Arguments against the mother tongue in education

- Many parents feel that their child will have an advantage if they grow up learning through the language of high status.
- Many parents and teachers believe that children learn a high status language by learning through it.
- Many teachers did not learn at school through their mother tongue.
- Many teachers feel that they cannot teach through the mother tongue because they were not trained to do so.
- Many teachers do not read their own mother tongue.
- There are often few reading materials in African languages.

Arguments for the mother tongue in education

- Speaking two or more languages does not create unnecessary strain. In spite of surface differences between languages, cognitive skills like reading do not have to be relearned. They are simply transferred from one language to another.
- There are social and personal benefits: a sound foundation in the home language(s) can increase children’s self-esteem; it is also important for good relations within a family; it can increase the range of job possibilities.
- In school and community contexts, bilingualism can help to combat racism by raising awareness of diversity and can foster communication between speakers of different languages.
- Bilingualism is the basis for democracy: if you cannot operate in your own language, you are not fully empowered.
Mother tongue based bilingual education

• not either (mother tongue) or (English) but both (mother tongue) and (English).
• the mother tongue is used as the language of learning and teaching for the first 3 or 4 years.
• English (or another language of power) is gradually introduced using appropriate teaching methods
• both languages are used more or less equally as the medium of education, depending on the particular context and resources.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Aims</th>
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<th>Status Implications for children:</th>
<th>Access to curriculum</th>
<th>Academic outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No use of the mother tongue.</td>
<td>To enable children to become fluent and literate in English as quickly as possible.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children learn their language and community are not valued.</td>
<td></td>
<td>High rates of underachievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue used in early school years.</td>
<td>To use the mother tongue as a tool for becoming proficient in English as quickly as possible.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High rates of underachievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the mother tongue and language(s)</td>
<td>Full bilingualism, biliteracy and intercultural communicative competence.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students maintain mother tongue proficiency better, do well or better in exams like maths and science, and do at least as well in the languages of power as children educated only in the languages of power.</td>
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Model of education: Activity

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the mother tongue and language(s)</td>
<td>Full bilingualism, biliteracy and intercultural communicative competence.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Children's self-esteem is enhanced through the use of their mother tongue.</td>
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Advantages of multilingual education

- Speaking two or more languages does not create unnecessary strain. There may be very obvious surface differences between languages, but cognitive skills like reading for information do not have to be relearned. They are simply transferred from one language to another.

- There are social and personal benefits: a sound foundation in the home language/s can increase children’s self-esteem; it is also important for good relations within a family; it can increase the range of job possibilities.

- In school contexts, bilingualism can help to combat racism by raising awareness of diversity and can foster communication between speakers of different languages.

- Bilingualism is the basis for democracy: if you cannot operate in your own language, you are not fully empowered.