

**Challenges for Urban Environments  
in the Implementation of Dual Language Programs**

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### **Abstract**

Dual language (DL) programs are relatively new in the United States. These programs aim to create bilingual, bicultural students without sacrificing these students' success in school or beyond. The goals of DL programs are to provide high-quality instruction for language-minority students and to provide instruction in a second language for English-speaking students. Schools teach children through content, with teachers adapting their instruction to ensure children's comprehension and using content lessons to convey vocabulary and language structure. Striving for a balance of half language-minority students and half English-speaking students in each classroom, DL programs also aim to teach cross-cultural awareness. Programs vary in terms of the amount of time they devote to each language, which grade levels they serve, how much structure they impose for the division of language and curriculum, and what populations they serve.

### **Dual Language: What is it?**

#### **Introduction**

##### **Why the current interest in dual language programs**

The United States of America, a nation of immigrants, has extraordinarily low levels of skill in languages other than English compared to other advanced nations. The country has many non-English speaking students, and they need instruction that is comprehensible to them, and genuine bilingualism among children of all backgrounds needs to be developed. Learning another language is and should be seen as an advantage for all, not a remediation for one group. Garcia (2001 b) points out that language is an integral part of culture and that students learn best when their culture as well as their language is respected, affirmed, and used in instruction when they are learning a second language. Throughout this paper, I (together with, Flores & Murillo, 2001; Garcia, 2001b; MacGregor & Mendoza, 2000) intend to make the case that education aimed at Hispanic or Latino students in the United States needs to recognize both their linguistic and cultural roots (raíces) as well as the educational wings (alas). The reason I believe dual language programs would benefit all is due to the fact that if done properly, it should promote bilingualism, respect, and equity for all students in the school. . In March 2004, the Census revised its projections and predicted that by 2050 people of color and Whites would each make up 50% of the U.S. population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Currently, there are more than 225 DL programs in the United States, and the number is growing rapidly (Christian, 1999, MacGregor & Mendoza, 2000).

While the vast majority of programs offer instruction in English and Spanish, there are also programs that target Korean, Cantonese, Arabic, French, Japanese, Navajo, Portuguese, and Russian (Christian, 1997; Crawford, 1992; Flores & Murillo, 2001).

### **Definition and History of Bilinguaphobia**

According to Faltis & Hudelson (1998), bilinguaphobia is the excessive fear of bilingualism, biliteracy, bilingual communities, and any educational approach for promoting the acquisition and use of non-dominant languages prior to or simultaneously with the learning of the dominant one. Bilinguaphobia as a discourse of fear has a long and lugubrious history in the United States (Flores and Murillo, 2001; MacGregor – Mendoza, 2000). Beginning with World War I, suspicions about the patriotism of German-speaking communities surfaced, prompting fearful political leaders to embrace the new political mantra of one nation, one language. President Theodore Roosevelt, elaborating on the mantra, revealed his bilinguaphobia in his 1917 speech to the nation:

We must have but one flag. We must also have but one language. That must be the language of the Declaration of Independence, of Washington's farewell address, of Lincoln's Gettysburg speech and second inaugural. *We can not tolerate any attempt to oppose or supplant the language and culture that has come down to us from the builders of this Republic* (emphasis added, cited in Flores & Murillo, 2001, p. 194).

At that time, Roosevelt was referring specifically to German English bilinguals, but he also cast a wide net of suspicion over all bilingual communities nationwide. An effect of this early discourse of fear about bilingualism was to ban the use of German for teaching and learning in bilingual schools and to eliminate it as a foreign language in high schools. It was not until the late 1920's that German was reintroduced as a modern foreign language (Molesky, 1988).

### **The constructivist roots of dual language programs**

Embedded in the constructivist approach is the understanding that language and culture, and the values that accompany them, are constructed in both home and community environments (Cummins, 1986; Goldman & Trueba, 1987; Heath, 1983). This approach acknowledges that children come to school with some constructed knowledge about many things (Goodman, 1980; Hall, 1987; Smith, 1971) and points out that children's development and learning are best understood as the interaction of past and present linguistic, sociocultural, and cognitive constructions (Cole & Cole, 2001). A more appropriate perspective of development and learning, then, is one that recognizes that development and learning are enhanced when they occur in contexts that are socioculturally, linguistically, and cognitively meaningful for the learner. These meaningful contexts bridge previous "constructions" to present "constructions" (Cole &

Cole, 2001; Diaz, Moll & Mehan, 1986; Heath, 1986; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Wertsch, 1985).

### **The Goals of Dual Language Programs**

Two way immersion programs have three major goals: to help language-minority children learn English and succeed in U.S. schools; to help language-majority children learn a foreign language without sacrificing their own success in school; and to promote linguistic and ethnic equity among children, encouraging children to bridge the gaps between cultures and languages which divide our society. These goals are naturally interdependent. English-speaking children who understand that another language and culture are as important as their own will be more interested in learning about that culture and acquiring that language. Minority-language children who acquire higher school status due to their knowledge of their home language will have more confidence in their ability to learn English.

### **The goals and missions of dual language programs**

- Their goal is to promote native language literacy skills and balanced bilingualism.
- Their mission is to enrich with a quality program design for standards based education while promoting bilingualism.
- Their mission is to educate first class students who are able to achieve at the highest levels and who are bilingual. The programs need to be at the core of school and / or district efforts.
- They should be built on a new infrastructure and be well designed and integrated to make time for and do justice to the two languages and cultures.
- Their mission is to dispel the myths around an “enrichment” versus “remedial” bilingual program before and during program implementation.

As of the year 2001, there were 260 two way or dual language programs in 23 states, and the majority of these programs – more than two thirds – use English and Spanish (CAL, 2002). If done with care and integrity, these are bilingual education programs for all students, for the general population, and for the language minority and language majority students. It is an asset to bilingualism and it is thoroughly bilingual. These programs aim for full proficiency in two languages, understanding and appreciation of the cultures associated with those languages, and high levels of achievement in all core academic domains (Cloud et al, 2000; Montague, 1997).

### **The source of bilingualism**

For bilinguals, the significant uses they have for their languages are grounded in their daily practice. In the United States, millions of children come to school with languages that are different from the schooling language. This set of circumstances

immediately generates language contact between those who do and do not speak English. The result is a population of bilingual students, speaking a non-English language at home and learning English in school.

### **The bilingual mindset challenge**

Consequently, the establishment and operation of bilingual education programs have largely proceeded on the assumption that one can be a “real” member of U.S. society only by assimilating to the new culture and by becoming a monolingual English speaker, thus giving up one’s first language and ethnic identity (Crawford, 1992; Minaya-Rowe, 1988).

### **Why it matters**

#### **History of Bilingualphobia: English Only in the 90’s and today**

Post World War I saw the introduction of intelligence tests, ushering in a different, but nonetheless pernicious blow to bilingualism. In comparisons on intelligence tests between bilingual and monolingual English speakers, the bilinguals performed significantly lower, leading researchers to conclude that bilingualism negatively affected intelligence. Never mind that the tests were culturally biased toward white, middle-class monolingual English-speakers or that none of the working class bilinguals taking the tests were English-dominant, the alarm was sounded: “bilingualism is bad, ... a foreign home language is a handicap” (Sanchez, 1997, p. 127). The onset of World War II once again brought about the extirpation of the German language from all public schools.

Students who wished to study a modern foreign language were allowed only to learn how to read, but not speak or understand its spoken form, lest they be suspected of un-American activities (Chastain, 1976).

The English-only movement gained momentum with the rise of anti-immigration sentiments in the 1990’s, especially in the state of California, which in 1994 sought to eliminate health and educational services for undocumented immigrants through proposition 187. Congressional Republicans, seeing an opportunity to exploit the anti-immigrant mood, introduced H. R. 123, known as the “English Language Empowerment Act of 1996” In the bill, they portrayed bilingualism as a hazard to national unity. English, they claimed, needed “legal protection” to preserve America’s “common bond” (Congressional Record 1996, cited in Crawford, 1997, p. 6).

Newt Gingrich, commenting on the need for such a policy, declared that English was “at the heart of our civilization.” Language diversity, he asserted, could lead to its eventual “decay” (Crawford, 1997, p. 6). What many seem to forget is that learning English is a main goal of bilingual education (Faltis & Hudelson, 1998). English for the Children is spreading new fear among teachers and their students, fear that if they use a language other than English to make sense of school work, teachers could face legal sanctions or even lose their jobs (August, Carlo & Calderon, 2002). The sad fact is that

teachers, as a result of English for the Children initiatives, are now forced to use pedagogy that contradicts their specialized preparation for teaching immigrant children who come to school speaking a language other than English.

### **The benefits of bilingualism**

Below I will list the benefits of a dual language program:

- Educational: These programs benefit all students, whether they are minority or majority, rich or poor, young or old. Students can acquire high levels of proficiency in their L1 and in their L2.
- Cognitive: Bilingual students achieve cognitive and linguistic benefits on academic tasks that call for creativity and problem solving. They also know about the structural properties of the language, including its sounds, words, and grammar. This knowledge is beneficial in reading development because it facilitates decoding academic language.
- Sociocultural: Bilingual people are able to understand and communicate with members of other cultural groups and to expand their world. They are able to respect the values, social customs, and ways of viewing the world of speakers of other languages and their communities.
- Economic: There are jobs that call for bilingual or multilingual proficiency. Students who come to school speaking important languages, such as Spanish, Korean, Navajo, and Albanian, are valuable resources who can contribute to the nation's economic relations with other countries because they already know another world language.
- Global: Due to the recent terrorist attacks to the United States and the threat of long term war, our nation can benefit from bilingualism and biculturalism as strategies and initiatives to bring peace that are put in place in different parts of the world with non English speaking communities. It follows that our country would benefit if negotiations, protocols, and deliberations were conducted using local languages to defend democracy and protect the general welfare of the citizens of the world.

### **The Content Goals of Dual Language Programs: Professional Development**

Teachers need to be trained to have high academic expectations for all students and to teach the importance and respect for diversity, language, ethnicity, religion, and social class background. Instruction should be conducted in only one language at a time. Translation methods and preview-review (preview in the native language, teach in the second language, and review in the native language) have not proven to be effective for second language learning. The second language learners wait for the explanations in their language and tune out the lesson in the second language.

## **The Cognitive Benefits of dual language programs**

According to Greenfield (1995), dual language program planning, implementation, and coordination in a multifaceted and integrated approach enable planners to better instruction, curriculum assessment, staff development, and other school organizational strategies. There have been reported academic and cognitive benefits associated with bilingualism (Hakuta, 1986). These findings are not surprising when we consider that bilinguals have been exposed to more training in interpreting and analyzing language than monolinguals. As students develop high-level bilingual skills, they become “linguists” and are able to compare the grammars and vocabularies of their two languages (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994; Lambert, 1984).

### **Challenges faced by urban districts: Poverty challenge, the demographic challenge**

The above items need to be considered before the implementation of the program. Did we forget that many students are poorly housed, undernourished, subject to the effects of others’ abuse of drugs, provided with few adult role models, and linguistically and culturally diverse? (Laturneau, 2001). European American students in the classroom are projected to decrease by 10 to 11 percent between 2000 and 2020, Latinos are expected to grow by 54 percent (Gonzalez, 2000; NCES, 1997). In 1996, Latinos represented 11 percent of the nation’s population but will increase to 25 percent in 2050 (Osterling, 1998).

### **The lost benefits of linguistic diversity**

There are several educational implications of these circumstances. In a nation with a large culturally and linguistically diverse population, it is problematic when schools fail to recognize the diverse contributions that each of these languages and cultures can make in teaching and learning. Children come to school with a complex set of histories as members of diverse families and communities (Garcia, 2001a), including distinct and diverse histories of literacy. As teachers, we come to know our students through the interactive spaces that are created in our classrooms (Dyson, 1993). Too often, however, we deny them, and ourselves, the benefit of the diverse languages/literacies.

### **Additional positive effects of dual language programs**

The program should involve and support teachers, principals, parents and the community’s efforts in a concerted effort to:

- improve racial relations
- refine classroom teaching and learning
- reduce drop-out rates
- strengthen community/parent participation in the education of their children

- apply research-proven curricula; and,
- update staff development with the potential of sustained long term changes.

### **The added burden of language schemata - shift**

If, as Vygotsky (Cole, & Cole, 2001) proposed, a child's cognitive schema for operating in the world is culturally bound, what are the effects of trying to learn in an environment where the culture of the classroom differs from the culture of the home? Linguistically and culturally diverse students face the challenge of either accommodating their existing schema or constructing a new schema. When the educational focus is on transitioning culturally diverse students to a mainstream culture rather than building on what they already know, the students are forced to change in order to meet the needs of the classroom. As Duquette (1991) concludes, children need to be understood and to express themselves (in the same positive light experienced by other children) in their own first language, home context, and culture. Their minority background brings out the limitations not of the children but of the professionals who are asked to respond to those needs. Bilingual students face a far greater challenge.

### **Need for comprehension and higher order thinking skills**

We read to learn. Second language learners need extensive reading to learn. The lessons need to focus more on the immediate recall of the information than on the development of thinking while reading. The teacher guides I saw were full of activities but most are mindless, useless activities, such as recall questions for oral interrogation, written end-of-chapter questions, worksheets with crossword puzzles, hidden word searchers, vocabulary definition tasks, and other such busy time killers. The lessons and tasks simply assessed whether students could adequately respond to low level questions, rarely tapping higher order thinking and comprehension skills. Let's not forget that the higher the threshold level of literacy in Spanish, the easier it is to transfer those skills into English (August & Hakuta, 1997; Cummins, 1981). If a student is assessed and found to have a high threshold level of literacy in the primary language, that student will be able to develop literacy in L2 in a much shorter timeframe than a student who tested at a lower level.

### **The burden of low evaluations of minority languages**

It is through a child's first language that he or she creates mechanisms for functioning in and perceiving the world. If the culture of the classroom negates a child's first language and accompanying representations of the child's world, it negates the tools the child has used to construct a basic cognitive framework. Positive attitudes toward the target-language group correspond to higher language proficiency.

### **The administration is listening**



One teacher I interviewed put it this way: “You can go in there ... and read the script, like you’re ‘supposed to’ but if you don’t know where the kids are coming from, and you can’t relate to them, none of that matters.” Another teacher spoke privately with a few of his colleagues who shared his concerns, but these conversations came to an abrupt end. The school’s assistant principal had somehow found out about their private forum. All of them received disciplinary action for “unprofessional behavior.”

In a third scenario, when a teacher complained about how Reading First and Open Court were not helping the ELL population, the principal told him: “Don’t ruin your career; because that’s exactly what you’re doing.” The teacher couldn’t believe his ears. The principal then continued with: “You’ve got to play the game. You need a paycheck just like I do. Don’t ruin your career.” For the first time in his career of working as a tenured ESL teacher, he thought seriously about throwing in his towel!

### **The common mistake of disrespect:**

In referring to family intervention programs for families of Mexican origin, Valdes (1998) suggests, for example, that programs “must be based on an understanding, appreciation, and respect for the internal dynamics of families and for the legitimacy of their language, values and beliefs” (p. 203). Too often, parents are coerced into believing that “success” entails giving up many of their beliefs, values and language practices. Worse yet, as in the case of diverse literacy practices, schools perceive these children as devoid of any school-related literacy experiences.

### **Non-verbal cultural patterns among Puerto Rican students in the USA**

Calderon (2001b) identified areas that can cause particular confusion for Puerto Rican students: proxemics (personal space), oculistics (eye contact), haptics (touching), and kinetics (body movement). In a study exploring verbal and non-verbal forms of communication, Morales (1986) found that Puerto Rican students born and raised on the mainland retained a higher rate of Puerto Rican gestures. Students may be retaining more of the non-verbal than the verbal patterns of their parents’ native Spanish. Morales’s observations about Puerto Rican culture have been further summarized by Irujo (1988).

### **Need for whole staff professional development:**

A quality program is achieved faster when the whole school staff buys into a philosophy, a way of teaching, and a way of nurturing student development and success than when only a portion of the staff is committed. A shared ethos is critical from the start. Eventually, a partition can become a divisive tool in the school. At best, it will simply set the bilingual program apart from the mainstream, as bilingual programs have been historically.

### **General weaknesses in reading instruction**

Most current studies (Elmore, Peterson, & McCarthy, 1996; Pressley, Rankin, &

Yokoi, 2000; Turner & Paris, 1995) show that in the typical classroom, the tasks assigned as “reading” overwhelmingly emphasize copying, remembering, and reciting a few low-level items on what the students read individually. The situation for struggling readers seems dire (Allington, 2001; Johnston & Allington, 1991). Researchers consistently report that lower achieving readers spend little of their instructional time on comprehension tasks of any sort. Struggling readers simply read less often in their classrooms, with limited tasks on comprehension. Instead, for these students, the lesson focus is often on words, letters, and sounds through phonics, drills, or recall questions on worksheets. The typical pattern of interaction during the reading of texts has been the IRE pattern of instruction: initiate, respond, and evaluate. That is, the teacher initiates interaction with a question, one or two students respond to the question, and the teacher evaluates that response by usually saying “good” or “that’s right.” This type of instruction rarely generates rich discussion, language acquisition, and equal turns for all students.

### **What a classroom needs to support writing**

The balance between feeling successful and meeting standards in writing hinges on the classroom’s climate and instructional process. Vocabulary and oral language development are an integral part of writing and writing flourishes in a safe community of learners and with culturally responsive instruction.

### **Mismatches in writing rhetoric**

As part of culturally responsive instruction, teachers may explore with their classes the ways in which students and their families use literacy at home and in the community (Au, 1993) or in their former schooling experiences. For instance, well-educated Mexican students will start a narrative with long sentences filled with flowery language. To them, it is an insult to start with a succinct topic sentence. The topic is not typically approached until the elaborate introduction is complete. Korean students tend to use more inductive logical structures, putting details first and working up to a conclusion. Their style may appear indirect and unconvincing in their arguments to teachers unfamiliar with such a rhetorical approach. Arabic students, who also love long descriptions, may be seen as digressing. The Vietnamese students also focus more on setting the scene than on developing the plot (Trumbull & Sasser, 2000). These cultural mismatches might raise false impressions about the students’ writing abilities. Thus, teachers who are unfamiliar with cultural variations such as these might want to begin the class activities to discover the variations in the class. An ample variety of multicultural literature will motivate students to write and can serve as templates for writing.

### **Prescribed methods**

Teachers would have to knowledgeably explain and defend their choice of teaching methods, rather than saying: “I’m just following government orders.” The research clearly shows what happens to readers who are toxic on phonics. They read

slowly and laboriously, and ultimately, do not read for meaning (Goodman, Burke & Watson, 1996) if they are not turned off to reading altogether.

### **Identification and parental involvement**

It is important to have in place a complex system of classifying and assessing a student's bilingual profile. I would also recommend for parents to sign a parent agreement contract with the school.

### **Why it gets into trouble: No Child left behind and its consequences**

The No Child Left Behind Act is the most ominous, undemocratic intrusion into public education in American history. We are concerned that the graduates of American schools are not prepared to meet the challenges posed by global economic competition (Augustine, Lupberger & Orr, 1997). Professional teachers do not need to follow tightly scripted lessons, which are the focus of direct instruction materials provided by publishers. Regrettably, these textbooks now comprise the only acceptable programs for adoption according to federal law. Where are the package inserts in the boxes of commercial phonics programs listing warnings about their inappropriate use, and that they should not be thought of as a substitute for a minimum daily dose of real reading?

### **Situations leading to loss of equity in dual language programs**

I have observed the following five widespread tendencies that limit equal opportunities for success (Calderon, 2002).

- When dual language programs give more importance and resources to English instruction.
- When teachers are not proficient or literate enough to teach in Spanish.
- When teachers do not receive 20 to 30 days of staff development a year, including summers.
- When high levels of literacy are not developed in both languages in all students.
- Separate lessons with separate objectives, not translations of the same lesson. Where the English unit or lesson leaves off, the Spanish lesson or unit picks up or vice versa.

### **Anti-constructivist policies in US schools**

The culture of U.S. schools is reflected in such practices as the following:

- 1) The systematic exclusion of the histories, languages, experiences, and values of these students from classroom curricula and activities (Banks & Banks, 1995).
- 2) Tracking, which limits access to academic courses and justifies learning environments that do not foster academic development and socialization (Noguera, 1999; Oakes, 1990) or perception of the self as a competent learner and language user.
- 3) A lack of opportunities to engage in developmentally and culturally appropriate learning in ways other than by teacher-led instruction (Garcia, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

### **Common errors in assessing English language learners' development**

An issue of inequity has been a concern in many schools when English language learners are assessed too soon in their academic English development. Research has demonstrated that it takes at least five years for an individual to develop academic language skills in English (Collier & Thomas, 2001). If we test second language learners in their L2 before they are ready, standardized tests are doing a disservice and underestimate the students' potential. Dual language programs need assessment procedures that account for the development and use of two languages for instruction when teaching second language learners. Multiple choice tests are not adequate to assess the full range of higher order thinking skills considered important in today's curriculum (Solomon, 2002). These tests do not account for the linguistic abilities present in a dual language setting. Standardized tests do not represent what and how students learn. They have emphasized the assessment of discrete skills, have been detrimental to the holistic understanding of how the student performs in a dual language setting, and do not contain authentic representations of classroom activities (Arter & McTighe, 2001; Oller, 1997).

### **Testing and its effects**

Wheelock, Bebell and Harvey's (2002) interpretations of children's drawings about their experiences with high-stakes testing suggests significant problems with anxiety, anger, hostility, boredom, sadness, and loss of motivation. If this were the documented outcome in a specific case of parenting, we would have no problem calling it child abuse and emotional maltreatment.

### **The size of training pool challenge**

Many practitioners still do not understand that if bilingual students attain only a very low level of proficiency in one or both of their languages, their interaction with the environment through these languages in terms of input and output is likely to be

impoverished (Buttaro, 2004, 2005; Cummins, 1981, 1984). Even if the plan was to implement only one grade level per year, it was and still is important to include all mainstream and bilingual teachers, librarians, and staff from the onset. Everyone must be given an opportunity to study the features, voice concerns, and assist in the overall design.

### **Need for structured time**

Teachers feel more professional when their schools provide structured time to work together on professional matters such as planning instruction, observing each other's classroom, and providing/receiving feedback about their teaching (Darling-Hammond, 1996), and in constructing their own professional development activities (Calderon, 1991).

### **Self esteem challenge**

Evidence strongly suggests that in dual language programs, bilinguals exit at a critical point that does not allow them to develop more fully their native language literacy and higher cognitive skills that could translate into higher achievement in English only classes (Slavin & Calderon, 2001; Spener, 1988). Forcing newcomers to make personal choices of language and culture often affects their self esteem, motivation and ability to learn English and the academic curriculum (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000).

### **The comfort language challenge**

Bilinguals also report a tendency to switch to the more comfortable language when talking about a specific topic (Zentella, 1997); for some this might be L1 (the first language), but not necessarily, since some bilinguals become dominant in L2 (the second language).

### **Comprehension strategies in dual language programs**

The teacher's delivery of information or instruction can either be a hurdle or a clear path to student success. Teachers can facilitate comprehension, regardless of the difficulty of the text or subject matter. Teachers can use a combination of the following strategies to help second language learners comprehend without having to resort to translations:

- Slower but natural rate of speech and clear enunciation, being careful not to raise volumes.
- Simpler and shorter sentences to explain a process or a concept.
- Frequent communication strategies such as rephrasing, repetition, and clarification when presenting new material, explaining tasks, or conducting interactive reading of literature books.

- Verbal emphasis or writing new vocabulary, idioms, or abstract concepts on the board to facilitate comprehension during interactive reading or providing explanations to students who are at the beginning stages of comprehension in L2.

### **Dilemmas in trade and texts**

Although there are many popular children's literature trade books and basal selections, not all lend themselves to second language reading. Some are just too difficult (*i.e.*, too many idioms, unfamiliar cultural references) and take too much time to explain. Others are too simplistic and do not elicit rich conversations or have good story elements.

### **Linguistic justice and dual language program curriculum**

It is also important to understand that dual language programs should do justice to both languages and cultures based on a strong program design and implementation (Calderon, 2001a, 2001b). Curriculum that involves thematic units that stress issues important in the students' lives (Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, 2002) and Crawford (2002)) remind us that the United States is only one of many nations that must deal with issues of students coming to public schools not speaking the schooling language. In particular, the United Nations has spoken directly to the rights of a minority group to its language:

Prohibiting the use of the language of a group in daily discourse or in schools or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group falls within the agreed upon constraints regarding linguistic genocide (United Nations, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, e794, 19848).

Consequently, dual language programs are

- NOT subtractive. These programs promote native language literacy skills and balanced bilingualism.
- NOT remedial programs. These programs are quality program designs for standards-based education while promoting proficiency in two languages.
- NOT compensatory programs. These programs educate first class students who are able to achieve at the highest levels and who are bilingual. These programs need to be at the core of school and/or district efforts.
- NOT superimposed on traditional school or district structures or on an infrastructure that was set up for an existing bilingual program. The structures need to be re-orchestrated, redesigned, and integrated to make time for and do justice to the two languages.
- NOT superimposed on existing mind sets of an "enrichment" versus a "remedial" model.

### **Need to identify level of literacy in L1 and adjust instruction appropriately**

As mentioned before, the higher threshold of literacy in Spanish, the easier it is to transfer those skills into English (August & Hakuta, 1997; Cummins, 1981). In many

cases, it is more beneficial for the student to receive instruction in the primary language (L1); in other cases, the student might be ready to be instructed in the second language (L2). If the student is assessed and found to have a high threshold level of literacy in the primary language, that student will be able to develop literacy in L2 in a much shorter timeframe than a student who tested at a low level in L1. This is possible because skills taught first in L1 transfer into the second language (L2) and facilitate faster learning of L2 (August *et al*, 2002). When second language learners are integrated, a different approach must be taken to ensure that it is not a sink-or-swim situation for any of them.

Dual language programs cannot be superimposed on existing structures or mindsets (Calderon, 2001a, 2001b). Since they are not remedial programs or compensatory or subtractive ones, they need a whole school reform setting. Dual language programs need a new structure; schools and/or districts need to start all over.

### **Teachers' knowledge gap**

In my own observations throughout New York City Schools, teachers have said the following to me: "I'm afraid to elicit higher order discussions in Spanish because I don't know enough vocabulary." Or, "If it's not in the manual, I'm afraid of asking questions in Spanish." Or "We don't have enough math books in Spanish, so we use key terms in English and I let the students explain it to the other students." Observations in quite a few classrooms overwhelmingly revealed a gamut of spelling and grammatical errors in the teachers' and students' work that was posted, as well as in the teachers' instructional delivery. Simple phrases on the board or charts with instructions for the students contained spelling errors and lacked accents for the most part.

### **Military option**

There is a group in our society that regards those who fail as ripe for recruitment – the military. Those who make it through the workforce development system will become knowledge workers. Those who do not will fight the wars to defend this system – unless they wind up in prison instead.

### **How to improve it: The plight of immigrant language minority workers and students**

More than one scholar, including Suarez-Orozco (1997), has argued that, unlike the low-skilled industry jobs of yesterday, the kinds of jobs typically available to low-skilled new immigrants today do not offer prospects of upward mobility (Portes, 1996). It is, however, far from clear how the new "culture of multiculturalism" will affect, if at all, the long-term adaptations of immigrants and, especially, their children. Employers in Miami, for example, with its large concentration of Spanish-speakers, have trouble finding competent office workers with the ability to function in professional Spanish (Fradd, 1997). The issue, of course, is that immigrant children today are likely to rapidly learn English – or a version of it anyway – **while** they lose their mother tongue (Snow,

1997).

### **Two dual language program models and their effects**

Thus far, there are two types of models being used: 90-10 (in which 90% of the academic content is given in the student's native tongue and 10% in the other language). For the purposes of this paper, I shall designate the native tongue as Spanish and the other language as English. As time goes by, the percentages fluctuate, with the following year giving 80% of the time dedicated to academic knowledge given in the student's native tongue and 20% in the other language and so on and so forth. There is another type of program where the academic content is given in the student's language for 50% of the time and the other 50% of the time it is done in the other language. This remains constant from kindergarten and up. The most popular one at the moment is 70-30. Formal instruction in reading in English is conducted at the third grade level. By fourth, fifth and sixth grades, time of instruction in both languages becomes 50-50. Lindholm-Leary (2001) found differences in some components as follows:

- Students in the 90-10 program models developed higher levels of bilingual proficiency than students in the 50-50 program.
- Students in the 90-10 model developed higher proficiency in Spanish than those in the 50-50 model.

### **Authentic assessment and portfolio contents**

Authentic assessment shows growth over a period of time. Authentic means that the assessment is based on activities that represent ongoing classroom instruction and real life settings. It involves teachers and students developing ways to measure language and academic progress. A key feature is the involvement of students in selecting samples of their own work to show growth and learning over time in developing ownership and assessing their own products. Second language learners would use their knowledge of two languages to have portfolios of the following:

- Writing samples in L1 and L2.
- Reading logs to account for their proficiency in two languages.
- Drawings representing their learning and proficiencies.
- Audiotapes and/or videotapes of their linguistic input in L1 and L2.
- Teacher and student comments on progress made by the student related to his/her content and language learning.
- Show, model, or demonstrate samples of exemplary benchmarks, of what good work looks like, and of work that is not exemplary so that students and their parents, teachers and administrators have a clear idea of how their work will be evaluated (*e.g.* samples of student performance from previous years).



### **Strategies that work to help dual language classrooms flourish**

- English learners (Ells) and Spanish learners (SLs) need to be immersed in text.
- Ells and SLs need to receive many demonstrations of how texts are constructed and used.
- Larger blocks of uninterrupted teaching and learning time are needed.
- Instead of individual desks or long tables, the classroom should be furnished with tables for teams of four.
- Instead of multiple copies of a single text, have four copies of multiple texts from a variety of genres.
- Each teacher owns an extensive repertoire of reading strategies (from decoding to comprehension).
- Teacher mediation and peer support are used in the development of reading for meaning, especially the problem-solving strategies that under gird independent reading.
- Literacy development, including the learning of strategies, should occur during functional, meaningful, and relevant language use.
- Risk taking is an essential part of language learning. Learners should be encouraged to predict, share prior knowledge, argue a point, make mistakes, and self-correct.
- Careful placement of students must ensure they have the appropriate reading material that challenges but does not frustrate them.
- Opportunities to practice and apply the skills learned as they read extended text should follow any text reading.

Background and vocabulary-building strategies are used to introduce concepts and key vocabulary, as well as create an interest in the reading selection. The instructor's assessment and follow-up measure students' growth as readers, as well as their ability to handle a range of increasingly difficult text as a vehicle for learning and applying new skills. The instructor's role is to listen, take note, and plan for follow-up teaching or re-teaching if necessary.

### **Student achievement and amount of professional development**

The amount of staff development and follow-up support a teacher receives correlates with student outcomes (Calderon, 2002). All classroom texts/library materials will need to be bought in two languages. A large portion of the funds will need to be set aside for professional development and follow up activities for teachers learning communities (TLC). Additional funding can be sought from the US Department of Education, the State Educational Agency, private foundations or local businesses that value a bilingual workforce.

### **Qualification: difference between language minority and language majority students**

Children who learn the language of their peers are more likely to want to become friends with them, regardless of their racial or ethnic background. There is a very big difference, however, Valdes (1998) asserts, between the acquisition of English for minority children and the acquisition of a foreign language for majority children. For minority children, the acquisition of English is expected. For mainstream children, the acquisition of a non-English language is enthusiastically applauded. Majority students are certainly not hampered in their progress in English or in their academic subjects by their study of a second language. However, it seems that while these students do gain skills in their second language in DL programs, they do not necessarily gain native-like fluency by the time they graduate, and they do not necessarily gain as much of their second language as their Spanish-speaking peers of English. Why this difference is present, and how/whether it can be overcome, is not yet clear and is a subject for further research.

### **Options restricted by Cabal**

The passage of proposition 227 in California (1998), Proposition 203 in Arizona (2000), and Question 2 in Massachusetts (2002) represents the culmination of efforts by a nationalistic, neoconservative movement in the United States to restrict and repress the use on non-English languages for teaching and learning in school, thereby hampering their promulgation in society. This movement stems from an orchestrated web of historical and contemporary policies designed to advance the causes of cultural assimilation and the restriction of immigration by non-English speaking working class peoples, with the ultimate goal of dismantling civil rights policies that, beginning in the 1960's, opened the door to affirming ethnic and language diversity in school (Dixon, Green, Yeager, Baker & Franquiz, 2000).

### **Further strategies for writing in the dual language program classroom**

Many students want to be corrected, but for many others, corrections can have a devastating effect. Therefore, correction is best left for the editing stage. It is important to keep in mind that writing in a dual language program requires ample feedback for students and teachers. Teachers will need time during the workday to meet with colleagues to discuss stages of writing and rubrics, how to integrate skills, and how to grade their students' work.

### **Expanded use of vocabulary instruction and learning logs**

One of the main reasons second language learners do not progress quickly is that not enough time is spent on vocabulary development even when they are reading and writing in the second language. Learning logs can be used as personalized concept organizers, vocabulary dictionaries and learning tools for recording the following:

- Words and definitions
- Assignments

- Personal goals and objectives
- Words students hear or read and want to learn
- Summaries of what they read or hear
- Records of errors they want to work on
- The reasons they think they are making those errors
- Strategies that are helping them learn the content

### **Best practices at a school or district level for supporting learning in linguistically diverse communities**

Based on California Tomorrow (1995), the following serve a growing community of linguistically and diverse families:

- Support the development of ethnic identity and anti-racist attitudes among children.
- Build upon the cultures of families and promote cross-cultural understanding among children.
- Foster the preservation of children's home language and encourage bilingualism among all children.
- Engage in on-going reflection and dialogue (p. 8).

In a state-mandated study of exemplary schools serving the state's linguistically and culturally diverse students, several key attributes were common (Berman, 1992). These features included:

- 1) Flexibility – adapting to the diversity of languages, mobility, and special non-school needs of these students and their families.
- 2) Coordination – utilizing sometimes scarce and diverse resources, such as federal and state moneys and local community organizations, in highly coordinated ways to achieve academic goals.
- 3) Cultural validation – schools validated their students' cultures by incorporating materials and discussions that built on the linguistic and cultural aspects of the community.
- 4) A shared vision – a coherent sense of who the students were and what they hoped to accomplish led by a school's principal, staff, instructional aides, parents, and community (Berman, 1992).

The three more recent “effective-exemplary” analyses of schools that serve high percentages of linguistically and culturally diverse students nationally are worthy of mention (Thomas & Collier, 1995). Three key factors are reported as significant in producing academic success for students in studies of five urban and suburban school districts in various regions of the United States. The studies focus on the length of time needed to be academically successful in English and consider factors influencing academic success, such as the student, program, and instructional variables. These studies include about 42,000 student records per school year and from eight to 12 years of data from each school district.

- 1) Cognitively complex academic instruction through students' home language for as long as possible and through second language for part of the school day.
- 2) Use of current approaches to teaching academic curriculum using both students' home language and English through active, discovery, and cognitively complex learning.
- 3) Changes in the socio-cultural context of schooling, such as integrating English speakers, implementation of additive bilingual instructional goals, and transformation of minority/majority relations to a positive plane (Thomas & Collier, 1995).

### **Kindergarten and Pre-kindergarten strategies**

Listening to stories read aloud by the teacher in L1 and L2 is a way to provide receptive and expressive vocabulary in addition to modeling reading. Pre-K and K teachers can use Spanish and English trade books to:

- Introduce children to the characteristics of stories (plot, characters, setting, problem, solution, and author's craft).
- Extend vocabulary, depth of knowledge, and background building.
- Vary activities often to lengthen attention spans.
- Create an atmosphere of pleasure related to languages and books in different languages.
- Allow children to focus on the language and story line without doing the work of reading.
- Provide children with literacy models of writing.
- Provide children with multicultural awareness and respect for other cultures through multicultural literature selections.
- Provide a way to introduce science and social studies topics.
- Provide opportunities for story recollection through dramatic retellings, sequence cards, and other partner activities.

Increasing letter knowledge (the ability to distinguish and identify the letters of the alphabet) and phonemic awareness (understanding that spoken words are composed of smaller units of sound) helps children begin to understand how the English or Spanish alphabets work. This does **NOT** mean teaching phonics through drills. It means teaching through research-based activities, such as the following:

- Learning poetry and songs that are alliterative or rhyme.
- Finding objects in the classroom whose names begin or end with the same sound.
- Doing clapping activities to identify the syllables in words.
- Analyzing each other's names to make discoveries about letters and sounds.
- Making charts about letter/sound discoveries.

## **Transition to first grade**

Effective first grade teachers build on the activities described in the kindergarten classrooms. First grade teachers continue with listening comprehension activities, adding more complex strategies for deriving meaning. In addition, the teacher-directed instruction on reading should be designed to develop the following:

- Enriched vocabulary
- Greater awareness and practice with the sound structures of language
- Increased familiarity with spelling-sound relationships
- Conventional spelling of basic words
- Sight recognition of frequently used words
- Independent reading

## **Conclusion**

### **The strong effects of shared respect**

In spite of all of the above, on a personal level, I tell my pre-service and in-service teachers at the university that we can make friends among our teaching colleagues and make a pact to support each other, even if that means just meeting for conversation and a drink on a Friday afternoon. We can teach each other what we know best. We can read and discuss professional journals and attend conferences. We can publish articles and present sessions about our own research and classroom experiences. We can talk to friends who are not educators, describing our love for our work, our students, and our professions. Ultimately, we can do what we can to make a positive difference and then be at peace with ourselves, with who we are and what we do personally and professionally, so that we can live out each day without apology and be a source of strength for others.

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