

Benefits of Dual Language Education

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper examines how dual language education (DLE) programs are valuable. The literature shows that children do much more than just thrive in a dual language environment. According to research, children who are bilingual are cognitively, academically, intellectually, socially and verbally more advantaged than their monolingual peers. This reveals that many parents, teachers and students are in favor of dual language education. Research also illustrates that further work needs to be done to help educators and parents fully understand the benefits of DLE because of the misconceptions that surround it. DLE has the ability to positively change the educational experience of teachers, administrators, parents, and students.

INTRODUCTION

Many countries around the world other than the United States have children learning more than one language. Multi-language learning is beneficial for youth in the United States because it sets a precedent of cultural awareness and acceptance that is so desperately needed.

While visiting friends in Costa Rica I spent some time with their son, Sebastian, who was four years old at the time. I was intrigued by how well Sebastian knew English. His parents are from Panama and El Salvador; and are bilingual in English and Spanish. At home, they only spoke to him in English because he has exposure to Spanish at school. I then came to find that in preschool he was formally learning English and German as well! He already knew all three languages on a social level for a four year old. I could not help but be amazed and then immediately compare his education to that of children in the United States. I reflected about how he will have an advantage over his peers, especially in the working world. Speaking three languages will create many opportunities for Sebastian and exposure to a variety of cultures will also make him a more well-rounded individual.

Having the ability to communicate and relate to other cultures around the world is invaluable. Unfortunately many public schools in the United States do not understand the value of DLE and therefore do not offer these programs. This leaves only families with sufficient income to pay for private language schools or tutoring for their children in order for them to learn other languages. This paper explores dual language education programs (DLE) and examines how this approach benefits all students.

Statement of Problem

Mono-lingual education does not provide the kind of exceptional curriculum and learning environment that a dual language education can provide. Educators need to understand the value of DLE in order to provide the best education possible for our youth. The problem is that many educators are not aware of the benefits of DLE, thus resulting in students not having real opportunities to become bilingual and biliterate.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to identify the benefits of dual language education programs (DLE), with an emphasis on teaching Spanish and English. This will increase awareness about multilingual education for educators. The research literature reveals how children in DLE programs perform better in school overall, regardless of their native tongue. The study addresses student, parent, and teacher attitudes about DLE programs. The findings will help educators, parents, and students understand the value of multilingual education.

Research Question

In what ways do children benefit from a dual language education environment, where they are taught all subjects in both English and Spanish throughout the school day? What research gives evidence of the value of this type of learning?

Theoretical Rationale

Chomsky and Krashen researched how one acquires language. Chomsky (as cited in Pinker, 1994) states that children develop complex grammar rules rapidly with no formal instruction. Therefore, he suggested that children must instinctively be equipped with a sort of grammar plan in all languages that tells them how the syntactic patterns work. Chomsky's focus

is on the abstract ways we put language pieces together to form sentences. In an attempt to identify grammatical abilities he dismissed most other aspects of human language.

Krashen's study (as cited in Herrell & Jordan, 2004) researched new approaches to language acquisition. He made a distinction between language acquisition and language learning. Krashen found that language acquisition occurs naturally, while, language learning is imperative and aids in the support of students' ongoing acquisition of fluency in a new language. Young children acquire their home language easily without any kind of formal teaching.

Assumptions

I assume that Spanish speaking and English speaking children will show many benefits from learning in a DLE. Children's learning will be enhanced with a dual language approach because of the cultural awareness, acceptance, and rich language that takes place in the dual language classroom community. An increased number of students will demonstrate improved academic and social competence in a year's time with this model, The bilingual aspect of DLE programs will create more opportunities for career choices as these children become adults.

I assume that students in DLE programs will demonstrate increased cultural conscientiousness and acceptance of people from different cultures. Additionally, I assume that DLE fosters ethnic and linguistic equity in the classroom environment making it safer for children to learn. When children are in an environment where everyone is learning a new language, whether it is English or Spanish, ethnic boundaries fade away. Children may not be as scared to make mistakes speaking a new language, if everyone around them feels comfortable in making mistakes while acquiring a new language.

I assume that parents' educational and socioeconomic backgrounds can affect childrens' attitudes toward bilingual programs. The home language environment also can have an affect on

school achievement. For example, if the home language is not properly spoken in the home, this will negatively affect students' academic achievement potential because their basis for correct language is inaccurate to begin with.

DLE promotes increased involvement and interaction among people of differing cultures. At DLE schools, parent involvement programs, such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), will increase community involvement and also create numerous opportunities where people of different ethnicities interact. Spanish and English speaking families will communicate with each other because they have similar goals for their children and bilingual educators would be on site for translation. In many monolingual schools, Spanish speaking families do not attend school functions because they cannot understand or communicate. A DLE environment will create a whole new and improved school experience for families with diverse backgrounds.

Background and Need

Garcia (2007) states that Hispanic people are the largest ethnic group in the United States. He reports that young Hispanic children make up roughly 80 percent of the United States English language learner (ELL) population. They are a diverse group, born both inside and outside the United States and having origins in Mexico, Cuba, Central America, South America, and the Dominican Republic. He finds that young Hispanics bring some welcome assets to the education process: they often come from two-parent families, have a strong work ethic, value education, and are bilingual. Nonetheless, Hispanics continue to lag behind their white and Asian American peers at all proficiency levels in reading and mathematics throughout the K-12 years. To improve this problem requires rich language environments early on in their education, starting in pre-kindergarten with dual-language programs and high-quality, bilingual teachers (Garcia, 2007).

Shannon and Milian (2002) studied English/Spanish Dual Language programs and found that most English and Spanish speaking parents openly choose bilingual programs for their children and think that they are successful. Their survey further showed that the parents were tremendously in favor of the dual language programs to which their children were exposed. Parents stated that they feel it is important to learn a second language and that their children are in fact learning a second language in this school setting (Shannon & Milian, 2002).

Similarly, Ramos' research finds that parents of children in a Two-way Bilingual Educational (TWBE) setting, a model in which about half of the students are native Spanish speakers, and the other half are native English speakers and lessons are taught equally in both languages, also held this type of learning in high regard. The study explained that the parents' reasoning for choosing the program was because it gave their children the chance to build a stronger bilingual–bicultural individuality or to boost their children's aptitude to communicate with other Spanish speakers. In addition, Ramos found that 33.4% of the parents stated career-related advantages as well as academic superiority of the program (Ramos, 2007).

More research is needed to illustrate academic, cultural, and bilingual benefits dual language programs offer to Spanish and English speakers. There are many misconceptions about dual language education and the only way to dispel these untruths is to educate people.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature covers dual language from its historical beginnings to the present. First, the definition of DLE is explored. The focus is mainly on programs for Spanish and English speakers, and addresses how dual language education works to benefit academically, socially, and culturally for speakers of both languages. The benefits of dual language education are reviewed and include biliteracy, bilingualism, and bicultural awareness. Finally, parents', students', and teachers' attitudes about dual language programs are evaluated to better understand whether these programs would be accepted if offered.

Historical Context

In 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court decided in the case of *Lau v. Nichols* that if students do not understand English, then they do not have equal access to a quality education, even if they do have the same facilities, books, teachers and curriculum. This case established a need for bilingual education in the United States. Since this ruling there has been endless controversy (The Language Rights for Children Coalition of Western Massachusetts, 2006). Despite the federal government's passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* in 1974, and several other landmark cases, debate surrounding the development and implementation of bilingual education programs in public schools still persists in both political and educational arenas (Lee, 2006).

Howard and Sugarman (2001) conducted a study of Two-Way Immersion (TWI) programs in the United States. The first TWI program in the United States started in 1963. For the next twenty years, growth of TWI programs was minimal, with less than ten documented programs before 1981; the majority of programs that exist today were established during the past

two decades. The directory of these programs in the year 2000 included two-hundred forty-eight TWI programs in twenty-three states including the District of Columbia. There has also been significant expansion within existing programs. Many schools report they add new grade levels each year, and forty programs now continue into middle or high school (Howard & Sugarman, 2001).

Howard and Sugarman's study reports that the majority of TWI programs are in public schools while there are four in place at private schools. They found that nearly a quarter of the public school programs operate under specialized circumstances; eleven are chartered and fifty-three are magnet schools. California has the largest number of programs operating in specialized environments, with eight charter school programs and twenty-two magnet school programs (Howard & Sugarman, 2001). This highlights the minimal amount of immersion programs in comparison to how many English language learners are in our United States schools, "Relatively few TWI programs (32) are whole-school programs. About three quarters of the elementary programs (191) operate as strands within schools, as do all of the secondary programs (32). Twenty-five programs did not respond to this question" (Howard & Sugarman, 2001, p. 1). This research shows the lack of whole school TWI programs available in the United States, even though the need is there. This need was also pointed out previously in Garcia's article on Hispanic people being the largest ethnic group in the United States and young Hispanic children making up about 80 percent of the United States ELL population. This is our population and our educational system should be doing all it can to support these learners.

Dual Language Programs

To understand the potential benefits of DLE, first it is necessary to understand what exactly is meant by that title. Howard helps in making this distinction clear, "...Dual language refers to any program that provides literacy and content instruction to all students through two languages and that promotes bilingualism and biliteracy, grade-level academic achievement, and multicultural competence for all students" (Howard et al., 2007, p. 1). Hopefully, by defining dual language education some of the common myths will be dispelled.

Multilingual programs are also called dual language, bilingual or immersion programs. There are different models of multilingual programs. Rennie found the following:

All bilingual program models use the students' home language, in addition to English, for instruction. These programs are most easily implemented in districts with a large number of students from the same language background. Students in bilingual programs are grouped according to their first language, and teachers must be proficient in both English and the students' home language. (1993, p. 1)

Within these programs there are different designs; TWI, or TWBE; Developmental Bilingual Education (DBE), or Late-exit; and Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), or Early-exit.

Rennie's study explains that in TWI programs, language minority students from one language background, for example, Spanish, and language majority, for example English, students are grouped together learning in one classroom. She explains further that ideally this would be a 50/50 balance between language minority and language majority students. Instruction is given in both languages. Sometimes the languages are used on alternating days. Others may rotate morning and afternoons, or they may split the use of the two languages by academic subject. Native English speakers and Spanish speakers in this model have the opportunity to

achieve proficiency in a second language while continuing to expand upon their native language skills. Two-way bilingual classes can be taught by one teacher who is proficient in both languages or by two teachers, one of whom is bilingual (Rennie, 1993).

In DBE programs, students receive instruction in their first language and are also given classes in English as a second language. Students typically stay in this program until they have gained fluency in both languages. She explains that this differs from early-exit programs mainly in the amount and length of time that English is used for instruction as well as the span of time students are to participate in each program. “Students remain in late-exit programs throughout elementary school and continue to receive 40% or more of their instruction in their first language, even when they have been reclassified as fluent-English-proficient” (Rennie, 1993, p.1). Continuing instruction in their first language throughout elementary school is very important in keeping children engaged and interested. With this model they can continue to thrive in both languages and feel supported.

TBE programs are designed to help children acquire the English skills needed to succeed in English-only mainstream classrooms. These programs provide minimal instruction in the students' first language, mainly for the introduction of reading, but also for clarification. Instruction in the first language is phased out quickly, with most students mainstreamed by the end of first or second grade (Rennie, 1993).

Statistics show that the best way to implement dual language learning for school age children, is with TWI programs: “Dual language programs have been found to provide the greatest academic gains for language minority students when compared to the academic achievement of language minority students attending other types of bilingual or English-as-a-

second language programs” (Shannon & Milian, 2002, p 683). Shannon and Milian’s research is crucial in justifying the need for more of these types of programs. The Language Rights for Children Coalition of Western Massachusetts, (2006), reported that TWBE is increasing in popularity across the country and there are typically long waiting lists for students waiting to enter these programs. The Coalition also suggests that students with different languages who learn together in the same classroom develop bilingual fluency in both languages and this type of program encourages appreciation of both cultures and communities.

Biliteracy, Bilingualism and Academic Benefits of Dual Language Education

Baron’s research (1992) states that one benefit of studying language, is being able to notice and talk about the way people use different words that mean the same thing; for example, words such as soda or pop. Children who grow up bilingually, as opposed to those who do not, learn earlier on that linguistic labels are no more than social conventions and different societies follow different rules of conventions. Even teaching children minimal amounts of languages other than their native one can successfully pave the way for later functioning in multiple languages (Baron, 1992).

Baron goes on to explain how children who are hearing impaired (and use sign language) provide a very interesting way to look at our understanding of how children learn language. Her experience with older signers has enhanced her understanding of how knowledge in one language enables people to scaffold their understanding to other languages. This is an important point because people do not separate speech from written language. In other words, we often write the way we speak. Young children reading beginning reader books are exposed to learning new spoken vocabulary in the avenue of books. She explains that these books review concepts

and are geared toward decoding written words. Those foundations are where more sophisticated literacy skills are then built from (Baron, 1992).

As a professor of linguistics, Baron is commonly asked by international students if their children might benefit from growing up bilingually. Bilingualism is the norm in many of the countries these students are from, especially amongst the educated citizens of those countries; she finds this an odd question because the answer seems obvious. The answer she says is yes, they benefit greatly (Baron, 1992).

Baron asserts that people who live in the United States have always been slightly ambivalent toward bilingualism even though the Founding Fathers did not want to establish a national language. The United States currently has an “English only” attitude in its educational and political policies. When American and European children are compared, American children have very little exposure to languages other than their own in school. She states also that our country is hesitant in supporting bilingual educational programs and often judges those who cannot function in English, which is why it is not readily accepted in our society (Baron, 1992).

Baron concludes that contemporary research proves that children who are fluent in more than one language are intellectually advantaged when compared to their monolingual peers. A growing number of studies verify that bilingual children outperform monolinguals in a wide array of cognitive and language-based tasks, such as using language for reasoning processes and classifying words on the basis of semantics. Overall, studies are showing that bilingual children have more cognitive flexibility than monolingual children (Baron, 1992). Baron found the following:

The watershed study was published in 1962 by a team of researchers at McGill University in Montreal. Their carefully designed investigation of Canadian 10-

year-olds revealed that bilingualism (here, in French and English) proved an intellectual boon. The bilinguals performed significantly better on cognitive tests, verbal tests, and even nonverbal tests. (1992, p. 176)

Bimbaum (2008) reports about a school system called “Loudoun”, in Washington where the first set of children to go all the way through the program, are now in ninth grade. This program runs from grade one through six and had the students study Spanish starting when they were six years old. The children were given thirty minutes a week of Spanish instruction in grades one and two, and an hour a week in grades three through five, then thirty minutes every other day in the sixth grade (Bimbaum, 2008).

Now that these students are in ninth grade researchers have been able to look at the effects of the program. The benefits are outstanding. Bimbaum explains further how the children are fast learners in their new foreign language classes and the effects are clearly good for the students who took Spanish at an early age and stuck with it. Many of the students in Senora Gueits’ class at Seneca Ridge Middle School have come from Loudoun School and they already have a very sound base for the Spanish language (Bimbaum, 2008).

Suzette Wyhs oversees the foreign language instruction for the school district and has seen a surge in the total enrollment in language classes at the middle school level now that the children who took part in the “Loudoun” system, are at that level. She figures that the students are less intimidated about pursuing a foreign language because they already have some background (Bimbaum, 2008).

Cultural and Social Benefits of Dual Language Education

Rich and Davis’ (2007) studied two bilingual boys managing the discontinuity between their identities at home and at school in a primarily white school in the United Kingdom. Their

data revealed that while the children try to assume the student identity they have at school, the differences are too great between school and home and the end result is that children are left with no choice but to keep the worlds separate. The study found that this disrupts the school's attempts to develop a vital home/school partnership (Rich & Davis, 2007).

Their research also found that children who experience a considerable disconnect between home and school practices also have a hard time attempting to create a sense of balance between the home and school. This is challenging, demanding, and takes away from their overall learning experience. How the children are able to address this issue is likely to have important consequences for their ongoing learning (Rich & Davis, 2007).

Lastly, the researchers point out that bilingual learners are singled out further due to the fact that their home practices may be given no or a low status in the school curriculum. These children also have to figure out what their in-school identities are, through a language that they are still learning, and do not yet have proficiency in language use. Rich and Davis (2007, para. 1) said, "We argue that a focus on identity management issues for children in the early years allows new and more critical understandings to emerge that can usefully inform the practices that educators can develop to enhance their learning experiences." This key concept of learning about identity to help children enhance overall learning in the early years is synonymous with what two way immersion programs offer, since they start this in kindergarten or before.

Banks and Caponi's (2000) research states that the target purpose of multicultural education is to educate people so that they can then participate successfully in the workforce and in the community. They claim that multicultural education is also trying to help unify a deeply divided nation. They report that some critics of multicultural education state that multicultural education is divisive and will separate our nation, but this is assuming that our nation is united in

the first place, which it is not (Banks & Caponi, 2000). According to the authors "...Our nation is deeply divided along racial, ethnic and social-class lines" (p. 97). This is precisely why more bilingual programs are needed in our schools.

The creation of an inclusive community becomes possible when the focus is changed to be reflective of the diversity that enriches our nation, report Banks and Caponi. They also point out that schools *should* be where these reflective accepting ways are fostered, in order to bring together people of diversity. If school curriculum reflects the diversity of our nation, the students will learn to respect and value each other instead of compete and divide based on culture. With this multicultural model, cooperation, rather than competition, is promoted among students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social groups. They conclude that when given equal status in the school, students will benefit and grow to be more accepting and tolerant (Banks & Caponi, 2001).

A University of North Carolina (UNC) study, (as cited in "Schools to add help for Spanish speakers", 2007) found that as more Spanish was spoken to a Spanish-speaking child by their classroom teacher, the child was less likely to be the victim of aggression, teasing or bullying by his peers. "Social relationships, attachments to teachers and adjustments to school are predictors of later academic success," said Gisele Crawford, a research specialist at UNC. The earlier these positive relationships are set in place the better, as Rich and Davis' (2007) study confirms; from Crawford's comments, we see this is true, not only academically but socially as well. This study included 345 Spanish-speaking pre-kindergartners, in 161 pre-kindergarten programs. "This research is showing how important the teacher-student relationship is. Those teachers who are reaching out to the English Language Learning students and drawing them in to the classroom are doing the important work of education." said Carol Andrew,

principal at High Desert Montessori Charter School in Reno. (“Schools to add help for Spanish speakers,” 2007, p.1A) Reaching all types of learners is what educators should be doing; as Andrew states, those educators who are making the effort to do this are the ones who are doing the imperative teaching.

Parents Ideas Surrounding Dual Language Education

Shannon and Milian’s research (2002) found that some parents, especially immigrant parents, did not want bilingual education for their children and that these programs were forced upon them. Ron Unz, a California software developer with a background in physics takes the position that most parents who oppose bilingual education take, which is “English only” programs because they want their children to learn English. In 1997, Unz started the ‘English for the Children’ initiative campaign, a program in which there is a one-year English immersion period for any child who comes to school speaking any language other than English. This campaign seriously limits educational programs for students who speak a language other than English. According to Unz, these parents do not want their children learning in their native language while they are acquiring English (Shannon & Milian, 2002).

Their research showed that when language minority parents were asked to rank the most important things they wanted their children to learn at school, they came up with the same answers as English-speaking American parents - academics and learning the English language. The study found that few of those surveyed wanted instruction in the native language and none mentioned learning about the heritage culture in the classroom. There is evidence, however, that the survey results give the impression that some parents are opposed to bilingual education as a result of the way the questions were asked. As an example, the people surveyed were asked if they wanted schools to keep the native language alive at the expense of acquiring English

(Shannon & Milian, 2002). This clearly biased survey is one of the many ways DLE is misunderstood by the general public.

Shannon and Milian's overall results, however, identified that most English and Spanish speaking parents openly choose these bilingual programs for their children and think that they are successful. This is also the same conclusion that Ramos (2007) reached. As stated in the Background and Need section, the survey shows that the parents were in favor of the dual language programs in which their children were enrolled.

The research illustrates that most parents are advocates for DLE programs and want their children in these programs because they feel it benefits the students in many ways. Regardless of their heritage, parents agree that this is a beneficial way of learning.

Students' Ideas Surrounding Dual Language Education

Lee (2006) surveyed 280 Latino students who were enrolled in bilingual classes to assess their attitudes, perceptions, and views on bilingual education.

Lee found that:

An overwhelming majority (90%) of the students surveyed believed that bilingual education was helpful to their educational experience and 86% supported the offering of bilingual education programs in public schools. Interestingly, however, if given a choice, 53% of the students responded that they would prefer to be in non-bilingual classes. Nevertheless, almost three-quarters (71%) of the subjects reported that bilingual education supported their cognitive and emotional development, suggesting the psychoaffective benefits beyond language development for English language learners. (2006, p. 107)

Interestingly, Lee stated that almost two thirds responded that bilingual education was supportive of their cognitive and emotional well being, verifying the subjects' view that bilingual education was helpful in their educational experience. Furthermore, the study revealed that forty-six percent of the students demonstrated increased self-esteem and confidence.

Teachers' Ideas Surrounding Dual Language Education

Lee and Oxelson's study (2006) revealed that attitudes of teachers who have had Bilingual Cross-cultural Language in Academic Development (BCLAD) and/or English as a second language (ESL) training differed from their colleagues who did not receive such training in terms of attitude regarding multilingual education. They also found that BCLAD/ESL teachers strongly agreed with the idea that maintenance and proficiency in the heritage language positively affects linguistic minority students' academic achievements. Their report found that ESL/BCLAD trained teachers also displayed more favorable feelings toward statements that promoted the need of educators at the school site actively involved in encouraging and supporting the maintenance of the heritage language. Teachers also felt it was imperative to talk with parents and offer heritage language classes whenever possible. Both the BCLAD/ESL and non-BCLAD/ESL teachers determined that heritage language maintenance will lead to many personal benefits, such as a strong sense of ethnic identity and good family values; however, they differed in their perspectives of the reasonableness and possibility of promoting additive bilingualism. Non-BCLAD/ESL teachers thought that the primary role of schools is to teach English and that the school, parents, and communities must all place English as the foremost priority (Lee & Oxelson, 2006).

On the whole Lee and Oxelson found that teachers who did not receive training as language educators displayed negative or indifferent attitudes toward heritage language

maintenance and did not see a role for themselves and schools in heritage language maintenance efforts. The researchers contend that there is still much work to be done to educate teachers and the general public about the important role and function of the heritage language in the personal, academic, and social trajectories of linguistic minority children. Finally Lee and Oxelson found:

With encouragement, enthusiasm, and interest from teachers, we know that students are more likely to develop positive attitudes about their home language (Gardner, 1985; Hollins & Spencer, 1990). Therefore, teachers' voices of authority need to be better utilized to validate and give wider recognition to the value and importance of heritage language maintenance. However, more importantly, students need to have consistent messages about the importance of heritage language maintenance from parents and teachers. Thus, parents and educators must work closely together to find and build ways of creating optimal environments where linguistic minority children will be motivated to maintain and be proud of the languages and cultures that symbolize and represent their complete identities. (2006, p. 469)

In general teachers who are educated on multilingual matters are more accepting of types of bilingual programs because they understand the benefits. More training about multilingualism needs to occur in order for these programs to be viewed in a more positive light; with the correct training, educators can make this happen.

Summary

DLE has many benefits, not only for Spanish speakers, but for English speakers as well. Studies show that DLE programs provide the greatest academic benefit for minority language students when compared to the academic achievement of students participating in other types of

bilingual education, such as ESL programs. This model continues to be beneficial for the students and promotes biliteracy, bilingualism, and academic and multi-cultural benefits for all learners regardless of what their native language may be.

Having a solid knowledge base in one's own language is essential because it gives the person the ability to put those skills to use in other languages. Early and repeated exposure to different languages is key in having students actually learn two languages. Many countries, with the exception of the United States, teach foreign languages in their schools. Children who are fluent in more than one language are intellectually advantaged when compared to their monolingual peers and they also outperform them in cognitive tasks.

Many children are forced to leave their culture at the school room door; as a result, problems and challenges ensue. Most children who are learning English in the United States are put into a situation where their culture and values are not recognized leading to them not performing to the best of their ability. Having to function in two different languages takes away from a child's overall learning experience. Multicultural awareness will help unify the nation, and people from all ethnicities will be able to communicate more effectively.

Many parents are advocates for DLE programs because of the bilingual, bicultural, academic, and career related benefits that they produce. Students are also appreciative of the benefits they gain socially, academically, and emotionally from DLE classrooms. Thus far, teachers remain divided about the value of DLE.

Missing in the literature is how DLE benefits all learners, not solely Spanish speakers. English speakers also benefit academically, culturally, and bilingually from being in a dual language environment. This needs to be explored more thoroughly so that educators, parents, and students can understand the need for more DLE programs across the country.

How Present Study Will Extend Literature

This research extends literature by showing how DLE can benefit all students. There is a need for struggling ELL to keep up academically with their English speaking counterparts. English speaking students in DLE programs will gain biliteracy, bilingualism and bicultural awareness. These are effectively addressed through DLE programs.

CHAPTER 3 INTERVIEW WITH AN EXPERT

Sample and Site

I interviewed Mary Ann Robinson, ESL coordinator for the Washoe County School District. Mrs. Robinson's background with DLE is extensive. Her love of foreign language started at an early age. She was born in Bolivia, and as a child lived overseas and was surrounded by people who spoke many languages.

Mrs. Robinson helped spearhead the very first TWI programs in Reno, Nevada. She has been the ESL coordinator in Washoe County School District for five years and is also on the TWI advisory committee. The interview took place in Mary Ann Robinson's office at the ESL office in Reno, Nevada on the twenty-third of April, 2009.

Access and Permissions

I sent an email message to Mary Ann Robinson explaining my research needs. She happily agreed to have a meeting. Upon approval of my format for the interview by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at Dominican University of California, a date and location was set for the interview. Mary Ann Robinson read and signed a consent form prior to the interview

Ethical Standards

This study conforms to all ethical standards of research as determined by the American Psychological Association. This project was reviewed by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board and assigned IRB Approval Number 7100.

Data Gathering Strategies

The interview took place in Mary Ann Robinson's office, located upstairs in the ESL building in Reno, Nevada.

The questions were asked as follows:

- 1) Could you provide me information on your background with dual language education?
- 2) Why would having a dual language education be beneficial as opposed to a mono-lingual education?
- 3) In your experience with dual language programs what have you seen as being in place to evaluate their effectiveness?
- 4) In your time evaluating and researching dual language education programs what have you found to be the advantages and disadvantages of these types of programs.
- 5) Of the children who are able to participate in these programs; how do you find they do academically and socially?
- 6) How have you seen the families and communities interact with the schools who have dual language programs?

Data Analysis Approach

Following the interview, the data that was gathered was reviewed and analyzed. Once the information was organized, it was put it into paragraph form. Other information that was related to DLE and would benefit this study was also included in the findings section.

Findings

Mary Ann Robinson was born in Bolivia and raised there as a small child. She attended English schools but was constantly surrounded by people who spoke other languages. She looks

back on this and regrets not having the opportunity to learn another language, but at that time there were no opportunities to do so. She did, however, raise her own children overseas and enjoyed watching them learn other languages.

When she moved to the Reno area in 1987 to teach sixth grade she was shocked that there were no DLE programs in place within the district. In her time teaching sixth grade she was also dissatisfied with the services the ESL students in her school were receiving; so much so that she asked to keep them in her classroom longer than the allotted time. She was very interested in improving the ESL programs and went back to school to get her ESL endorsement so that she could start making a difference in ESL children's lives.

Her next adventure was being a part of a new charter school that started up in 2001. Mariposa School was the first bilingual charter school in the area. She sat on the board for 5 years and initially helped them write their charter. Mary Ann figured that only good things could come of there being a successful bilingual school in Reno.

Mary Ann then continued on to get her administrative license in 2004. With her administrative license she moved into her current position of Washoe County Schools ESL coordinator. As the ESL coordinator she soon discovered that she had a lot of work ahead of her in order to get DLE programs in place. She slowly started to plant the seed, by collecting and sharing articles on the benefits of DLE with other educators and administrators.

The Superintendent at the time, Paul Dugan, invited her to attend the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) conference. She reflected back on the conference and how embarrassed she was when asked how many ELL students there were in her district; there were approximately 11,500 in kindergarten through twelfth grade. When she was subsequently asked how many bilingual programs there were, she sadly had to respond with,

“none”. She commented about how the community, at the time, was simply not prepared for the idea of bilingual education. At the conference,

Paul Dugan realized, after hearing about other people’s successful programs, that there was a need for some dual language programs in his district. He gave Mary Ann the green light to start planning for the implementation of a DLE program. Mary Ann put a team together, sending members to research schools with DLE programs in the Bay area, Los Angeles area, and Puerto Vallarta in order to gain further insight into how they work.

Mary Ann came to the conclusion that using the verbiage TWI, and not using “bilingual” anywhere in the program’s title was more accepted in this community. She also discovered that parent buy-in seemed to finally occur when efforts were made to involve non-Spanish-speaking families. The English only families really liked the idea of their children being able to become fluent in Spanish.

After much deliberation about where to implement a TWI program, she ran up against problems at potential school sites with teachers who were ill-informed and were not willing to support the program. She wanted the school site chosen for this program to “really want it”; she wanted them begging her for it. She was finally successful in finding the right site for the program where all of the teachers and staff were on board.

Her TWI pilot program was run at Jessie Beck Elementary School for the 2008-2009 school year, having the “strand within the school” approach. The class is kindergarten level and has all academic areas taught in both English and Spanish. The students who are now in kindergarten will continue in the DLE program for their entire kindergarten through sixth grade experience.

This academic year, the students in the TWI program at Jessie Beck outperformed the English only classes in their mid-year benchmark assessments in language arts and math. The only major problem the program has encountered thus far has been that a few of the Spanish speaking families have relocated out of the area and were therefore no longer able to participate in the program. Mary Ann is working on the possibility of getting buses to transport students who are in the program and have to relocate so that they are still able to attend the TWI program.

This year Mt. Rose Elementary School, another school within Washoe County, has begun the same type of TWI program as Jessie Beck Elementary. Mt. Rose, however, has only pre-kindergarten at this time. Parents of these two TWI programs at both Jessie Beck and Mt. Rose Elementary are at every meeting and are involved in every way.

There is approximately a two year waiting list to get into the Jessie Beck program. Sixty English speaking students are waiting for twelve spots in the program for next year alone. Mary Ann also stated confidently that, overall; these have been very successful TWI programs.

Five more elementary schools are now interested in having this TWI program strand implemented in their school. The district has urged her to hold off on those for a while; however, she thinks that one of the schools will get the program starting sometime in the next two years.

Mary Ann talked about some of the benefits of having a dual language education as well. If children are learning literacy skills for the first time in a language they do not speak then the learning is going to be delayed. She also mentions that the federal government conducted a study on literacy strategies for teaching ESL students and they came up with similar results.

Washoe County has a special free program for low income families to help students gain the literacy skills they may be lacking before kindergarten, called the "COW Bus" (classroom on wheels) and is painted like a cow. The COW Bus is an old school bus converted into a classroom

on wheels. It is a twelve hour per week, pre-k early literacy program. The benefits of having the exposure to early literacy skills means that these students do better academically and are ready for first grade in terms of academic language and literacy.

Washoe County uses the “LAS Links K-12” state mandated annual evaluation tool for initial ESL placement and SOPA (student oral proficiency assessment) to assess the effectiveness of their new TWI programs. The SOPA can be given in both English and Spanish, and works to find the students ceiling on the English language.

There are a few disadvantages of TWI programs. They can exclude teachers that are mono-lingual, and it can also be hard to find bilingual educators. Washoe County is doing things to combat these issues so they will not have to lose or move English speaking teachers; the teacher who is bilingual will teach in Spanish to the class for half of the day, and the English speaking teacher will teach the other half of the day in English.

Some of her concluding remarks were about how being bilingual, especially in these economic times, is beneficial for these children. She also brings up the fact that the value of having command of two languages is vast. Higher cognitive levels are seen in children who are bilingual. She reflected on a sixth grade girl who had gone through an immersion program that Mary Ann had previously researched. The girl said that she liked the program because she was picked for teams in both the English speaking and Spanish speaking social groups. She also said that she loved the fact that she could write in her diary, in Spanish, and her sister could not read it.

The Washoe County School district has more obstacles to overcome in order to have more TWI programs. The TWI programs they have implemented, though they are new, are

thriving and have had very good response from the community. Implementing DLE programs is a slow going process; it is clear how far the district has come and how far they still have to go.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

Analysis

The interview with Mrs. Robinson was valuable because her statements supported the research; it brought forth relevant information surrounding dual language education and why it works. Her ideas and insights were informative because they verified in a real-world environment, what has been proven in studies. She recognizes the significance of knowing two languages because she has seen first hand all of the benefits that come with bilingualism. Her implementation of the new two way immersion programs in Reno, Nevada schools documents that positive change can happen, even if it is a slow process. In the end, her interview validated, as other research has supported, that DLE is the right answer.

Comparison of Findings/Results with Existing Studies

Generally the findings from Mary Ann Robinson's interview are consistent with existing research. The purpose of this study was to show the many benefits children gain from having a dual language education. The interview solidified first hand what the research has shown. She commented about the need for early literacy intervention, especially for ELL. This early intervention is crucial as has been stated by more than one researcher. It not only provides a better start academically, but socially as well and Mary Ann Robinson's interview aligns with this view.

Limitations of the Study

Only one expert was interviewed, therefore limiting this study. Having gained more insight from additional experts in other districts or even other states to compare their findings would have been interesting to compare.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should include various interviews with bilingual educators and others who have helped to form dual language programs that exist here in the Reno/Tahoe area. It would have been insightful to have had some firsthand experience observing or volunteering at the two elementary schools in Reno which have the TWI model implemented. Interviewing the children in these programs would contribute greatly as well as interviewing the bilingual teacher who runs the dual language program at Jessie Beck Elementary. Her insight and thoughts about how this program is beneficial to both English and Spanish speaking students would add more depth and scope.

Overall Significance of the Study

Mary Ann Robinson's interview shows first hand that TWI programs work and do benefit all children involved. The findings parallel that of the rest of the research. Children who are exposed early in life to foreign language, such as the "Cow Bus" where they gain early literacy skills, have more advantages in learning a new language because the foundation of their literacy

is strong in their primary language. Mrs. Robinson stated that the children in her TWI programs were out-performing those in mono-lingual classes.

Her interview also showed that there is an ongoing problem with teachers' negative feelings toward bilingual education, just as other studies have shown once the programs are in place and there is proof that children are thriving with higher test scores and drastic improvements, many educators change their stance and become willing to have TWI programs implemented at their school sites. Mary Ann's work demonstrates that with research, determination, and the right group of dedicated people, there can be a positive change with regard to getting TWI programs in place at schools that so desperately need them.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Research indicates on every level that social relationships, academic, and early exposure to literacy and language are encouraging predictors of later success. The interview from Mary Ann Robinson and the literature review showed many examples of how this is true. The cognitive, social, and academic benefits of dual language education can be measured across the board.

The studies conclude that, for the most part, immigrant parents seem to support multilingual education, mainly because of the skills their children attain which will help them in the workplace. Parents of both Latin and Anglo heritage seem to have equal acceptance of multilingual education.

Ramos' study highlights parents' reasoning for choosing multilingual programs because it gives their children the chance to build a stronger bilingual–bicultural individuality regardless of their ethnicity. His study also cites that thirty-three percent of the parents surveyed chose this type of multilingual education for their children because of the academic and career - related advantages, along with the academic superiority of the program (Garcia, 2007).

Students are appreciative of the benefits of multilingual education. Lee's study (2006) highlights that students feel that they benefit far beyond simple language development. His study revealed most importantly that forty-six percent of the students demonstrated an increase in self-esteem and confidence. When students are self assured and confident they tend to excel in more areas than just academic which is the overall goal for all students in the educational systems.

The results of this research showed that more needs to be studied and evaluated in terms of best practices in effectiveness and implementation of multilingual education. Research is missing regarding how English speakers benefit from a dual language approach. Involving the

English speaking community may be the key to encourage more schools in the United States to accept dual language programs. More awareness of the benefits of multilingual education could have a drastic positive impact on our schools.

In order to help our students we can start with the educators. Universities need to start programs where their teachers in training become biliterate and bilingual so that they can enter a multilingual classroom and be successful, or even a catalyst to start one. “Dual language schooling also can transform the experience of teachers, administrators, and parents into an inclusive and supportive school community for all.” (Collier & Thomas, 2004, p. 1) This is a crucial point, not to mention an overarching goal in education. Our children and education system are what bring us together as a community and as a nation. The reflection of our community through the eyes of our children is a vital task for everyone.

Joining together to create awareness for more opportunities of multilingual education is the answer. If teachers educated themselves, while administrators bring multilingual education workshops to their staff, we may start to see a shift toward multilingualism. When teachers come to understand that the English language learners who are struggling in our school system can have access to an easier transition through multilingual education, they may have less resistance toward it. Follow up research should include effects of multilingual education on communities.

It is obvious there is confusion surrounding multilingual education and more research is needed to understand how to dispel many of the myths on this controversial topic. These myths can be dispelled; however, it will take a lot of additional public awareness for it to occur. More research about teachers’ attitudes on multilingual education will be useful to determine what factors need to be addressed in order to reach more educators in the United States. Giving all students the best education possible should be the ultimate goal.

The ambivalent connotations that often accompany any kind of multilingual education need to change through the process of educating the public. The research shows that educators who are trained in multilingual avenues have a more favorable outlook on the whole idea, as opposed to educators who are untrained. More widespread involvement and training in the United States is necessary to further these ideas.

The American public seems to be divided. Looking at Lee's study, "to be American is to speak English." (2006, p. 108) This attitude seems to prevail in many of the studies. It will take a major crisis to bring the value of multilingual education to the masses. This is quite unfortunate; however, there is hope with educators reaching out to our society. Campaigns and teaching conferences country wide make people more aware of the benefits of dual language. This will promote dual language programs being accepted in more and more communities.

Every child can benefit from a dual language environment and this needs additional exploration in order for educators, parents, and students to understand the need for increasing dual language programs across the country. If we as a society can encourage cooperation, tolerance, and the valuation of different languages and cultures, we will all benefit. Let us start with our children.

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