

EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF
A TWO-WAY DUAL LANGUAGE
PROGRAM

by

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DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my late father and mother
Francisco Mercado, Sr. and Lydia Mercado;
My wife Teresa Mercado, and my sons Frank and Michael
Without whose love, support, and patience
This task could not have been completed.

PREVIEW

PREVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Although some studies have begun to describe the nature of second language acquisition for students learning Spanish and the maintenance of the Spanish language for Spanish-dominant speakers, many questions remain unanswered. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a two-way dual language program. This was done by applying the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence's (CREDE) rubric *Criteria for Success in a Two-Way Dual Language Program*, to the program under evaluation. The aim of this research study was to evaluate the learning of Spanish lexicon by English-dominant children acquiring Spanish as a second language and Spanish dominant children enhancing their native language.

The subjects of this study, one hundred twenty-nine students from two classrooms in each grade level, K-4th, were chosen at random as a representative sample of the program's population. The test instruments were the Pre-Language Assessment Scale-Oral, (PreLAS-O) Spanish and the Language Assessment Scale-Oral, (LAS-O) Spanish. They were

administered to the students enrolled in the two-way dual language program being evaluated. Measures of growth were derived from the differences between the results of the pretest and the posttest. A *t*-test for paired samples analysis was conducted between the means (averages) of the two tests' scores. Also, the students passing rate on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) was compared with the passing rate of a comparable group of monolingual students from the same school campus.

The results showed that the two-way dual language program was a source of enrichment for all of the students enrolled in the program. The gains in Spanish acquisition and enhancement were proven to be statistically significant. An additional bonus for the students enrolled in this program was a higher passing rate on the TAAS test than their cohorts enrolled in mainstream English-only classrooms. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations stated in this report should be considered by educational leaders when developing and implementing new programs. This could lead to a more appropriate second language acquisition curriculum along with the improvement of teacher training for two-way dual language programs.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

A dire need exists to prepare today's school children for a bilingual (i.e., English/Spanish), bicultural society by developing programs that are educationally sound. Our world is becoming a global community--a community where technology, commerce and immigration have exposed us to other cultures and languages. The demands of our global economy are challenging public schools to produce the workforce necessary for this country to lead rather than trail behind other countries where multilingualism is accepted and expected (Romero, 1999).

Two-way dual language instruction provides non-English and English-speaking students the opportunity to acquire a second language, without affecting their native language (Christian, Montone, Lindholm and Carranza, 1997; Cloud, Genesee and Hamayan, 2000; Genesee, 1999; Romero, 1999). The findings of this study will determine whether the development and implementation of a two-way dual language program is responding to these concerns by providing the successful acquisition and enhancement of

both English and Spanish to the students enrolled in the program during the 2001-2002 school year. The program under evaluation is at a K-5 elementary school campus in the rapidly growing Eastside section of El Paso, Texas.

Furthermore, the vast amount of research that continues to be conducted in the areas of bilingualism has focused on English-as-a-second language studies (Jackson-Maldonado, et al., 1993). This study focuses on the acquisition and/or enhancement of Spanish. The findings of this study will add to the limited body of research on two-way dual language programs and their effectiveness on second language acquisition by non-Spanish speaking English-dominant students along with the enhancement of Spanish for Spanish-dominant limited English proficient K-5th grade students.

Two-way dual language immersion programs, also known as two-way dual language and dual language programs, are being promoted as the latest remedies that will help solve some of the language acquisition problems encountered by students of second languages (Christian, et al, 1997; Cloud, et al, 2000; Genesee, 1999). Currently, several dual language models are being

implemented throughout the United States. Two hundred sixty-one programs in 24 states and the District of Columbia meet the standards required for listing in the 2000 Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) and the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, & Excellence (CREDE) Program Directory (Christian and Whitcher, 2000).

Two-way bilingual programs in the United States are offered in different languages, depending on the concentration of students in the area speaking another language that is not English. These include Spanish(244), Chinese(5), Korean(4), and Navajo(2). Thus, the overwhelming majority of the programs are conducted in Spanish and English (Christian, 1994). Three states, California(92), Texas(38), and New York(20) with high populations of immigrant, non-English speaking or limited-English-proficient students, have the greatest number of two-way bilingual programs. Nonetheless, according to the CAL and CREDE program directory, other states (from Alaska(2) to Arizona(14) and Florida(5) to Maine(3)) are also interested in the potential benefits of students being fluent in two languages as demonstrated by the number of new programs being developed and

implemented, as shown in the Center for Applied Linguistics' web page at www.CAL.org.

Two-way dual language programs can provide a win-win situation in which both the native English-speakers and native speakers of another language acquire a second language in a natural setting. The goals of dual language instruction are to promote high academic achievement, first and second language development, and cross-cultural understanding for all students involved. In two-way dual language programs, language learning takes place primarily through content-area instruction. Academic subjects are taught to all students through both English and the non-English language, which is usually Spanish. As students work together to perform academic tasks, the students' language abilities are developed along with their knowledge of content-area subject matter (Christian, et al., 1997).

Along with reaping the benefits of being biliterate and bilingual, Hispanic students will tend to have higher income levels, earning approximately \$2,000 more per year than Hispanic adults who speak only English or Spanish (Fern, 1998). Business and education sectors in Florida

have teamed together to study the economic impact of the increasing language-minority populations within the state and how those populations can be used to the state's economic advantage. Two-way bilingual programs are viewed as a way to nurture an environment where multiple languages are valued and maintained. In addition, they can be a lure for foreign business interests to invest and set up shop in Florida. The entire nation stands to gain by following Florida's lead (Fradd and Lee, 1998).

Since two-way dual language programs evolved from bilingual education programs, a historical overview of bilingual education is included. Information about the inception, methodologies, and curriculum utilized in effective two-way dual language programs is also provided in Chapter Two--Review of Related Literature.

Statement of the Problem

A two-way dual language immersion program design builds on the intellectual power of bilingualism. The program's mission is to prepare children for a multilingual, multicultural world--a world in which they can become leaders who think critically and work

collaboratively to solve complex problems (Calderon, 1996). During the 1999 National Association of Bilingual Educators (NABE) Conference, the organization's president, Dr. Josefina Tinajero, shared her thoughts on the paradigm shift in American society from mediocrity to excellence. This shift includes bilingualism for all children. She put forth cogent and enlightening arguments in defense of bilingualism. Her view of excellence includes an interdependent world that demands linguistic, cultural, technological and socio-psychological preparation. She also noted that corporate America believes model employees should have knowledge of at least two languages. Tinajero added that being bilingual/multilingual is an enormous asset, an intellectual accomplishment, and should be fostered as a national treasure (Gonzalez and Rodriguez, 2000). To illustrate further, almost two-thirds of the 1000 executives representing the largest companies in America polled in a nationwide survey said that Spanish was the most valuable second language in the business world. Japanese was the second choice, with sixteen percent of the vote. The survey, developed by Accountemps, was

previously administered in 1989. Spanish still holds the number-one ranking, but the 1997 poll indicates greater importance (Half, 2001).

Calderon (1996) also contends that a border town such as El Paso, reeling from the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), needs to set up educational programs where limited English proficient students acquire English, while English-speaking students learn Spanish. Since students in the El Paso area live in a multicultural, binational community, they must also understand and evaluate multi-dimensional issues that impact their society.

The preparation of an individual to participate effectively in society is generally believed to be the responsibility of both the parents and the public educational system. Because education is compulsory in the United States, parents or guardians of minor children are required to ensure that those under their care attend school (Kemerer and Walsh, 1996). At school, students must develop a balance between self and environment and begin the task of learning. Insidiously, though, the effects of poverty and discrimination upset the balance

for many students (Castro and Rodriguez-Ingle, 1993). Over the past several years, the percent of school-age children in the United States from non-English speaking households has increased substantially (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1999). Many of the schools in the U.S./Mexico borderland area have an enrollment consisting in part or wholly, of Hispanic children.

Steve Murdock, head of the Texas State Data Center at Texas A&M University, stated that Hispanics now make up the single largest population group in four of the five largest cities in Texas. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Hispanics also account for the state's largest population growth. In fact, since 1997, the number of Hispanic children had already surpassed the number of Black children in the United States (Hispanic children outnumber Blacks, 1998). The 2000 Census also shows that the U.S. Hispanic population grew 60% over the past decade--from 22.4 million to 35.3 million--and now constitutes 12.6% of the population. People of Mexican descent make up about two-thirds of the U.S. Hispanic population, followed by Central and South Americans, and

mainland-residing Puerto Ricans (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 2001).

Many people are confused about the proper use of the terms Hispanic and Latin or Latino. The U.S. government defines a Hispanic or Latino as an American whose ancestors came from a Spanish-speaking country. Furthermore, Latin or Latino individuals are generally recognized as coming from France, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Albania, and Romania. Those from Europe, Central and South America, part of the Caribbean and Mexico are considered to be Hispanic (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, December 2001). The term Hispanic is used exclusively in this report. It includes all more accurately without regard to race, creed, color or national origin.

Census 2000 tried to accommodate all of the category preferences by broadening the category from Latinos or Hispanic to Hispanic/Latino/Spanish. The census, in one of the first official attempts to summarize an ethnic population, used the term 'Spanish'. However, that hardly ended a longtime debate among Hispanics--a group that within itself mirrors the racial and ethnic diversity of

the United States--about how best to describe themselves. Much of the debate concerns whether the better term is Latino or Hispanic. Some Hispanics also question whether a single category should define such a diverse people and set them apart from other Americans. Also, many people felt that the category implied a direct link to Spain, which caused discomfort to those of Aztec, Mayan, and other indigenous heritage who resented the Spanish conquistadors (Serbit, 2001).

The terms Hispanic and Latino are often used interchangeably. In the public's view, either term creates a single entity of a diverse group of people. "We tried to capture everybody, regardless of what term they like," said Roberto Ramirez, a statistician at the U.S. Census Bureau in Washington. "We conducted a survey and found that there's no consensus, unfortunately. It is very difficult." In 1980, the census borrowed the term Hispanic, concocted a few years before at the Office of Management and Budget. However, some people still saw too close a link to Spain in the new term and pushed for Latino, which seemed more respectful of the mixed heritage that prevailed in their population. Most

Hispanics view the broader designation in the Census 2000 form as a major improvement. But with the number of Hispanics growing to the point where they soon will be the largest minority, the question about how this population should be defined seems more significant than ever (Llorente, 2001).

This great influx of minority-language speakers means that a large number of students enter our nation's schools each year with limited oral and written communication skills in English. As a result, one of the most crucial challenges confronting today's schools is that of providing effective instruction to language minority students. Pressure to raise standards and to change the objectives of schooling in ways that incorporate activities and content designed to develop oral and written communication skills has increased. Jaime Zapata, public-affairs director for NABE, stressed the importance of forcing the educational system to attend to the needs of bicultural, bilingual students. Public schools must ensure that all students aspire to the highest levels (Deady, 2001).

In 1994, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act was passed and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was reauthorized under the Improving America's School Act (IASA). These acts were designed to work in tandem to build the capacity of state and local education agencies to address reform at the local level. Goals 2000 represented a significant national effort to promote school reform by encouraging challenging academic and occupational standards for all students and provided support to states and local communities to help students reach those standards. Titles I and VII of the IASA specifically addressed the education of limited English proficient students in an effort to help alleviate Hispanic students' historically low educational attainment. However, after almost a decade, school reforms have failed to boost the reading levels of America's students. According to the most recent test scores released by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, a gap in achievement persists between White students and their Black and Hispanic counterparts. While 40% of White students demonstrated proficient or advanced

skills, only 16% of Hispanic students performed at that level (NAEP, 2000).

Educational attainment is measured by the degree to which students complete their elementary and secondary schooling and are accepted into an accredited college (Carrasquillo, 1991). One of the most prevalent inequities encountered by children has been the failure of the schools to provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge for success in American society (Wojtkiewicz and Donato, 1995). This problem is characterized in the Hispanic student by poor performance on standardized tests, low or under-achievement in language arts, low grades overall, and ultimately by dropping out of school (U.S Dept. of Commerce, 1999). Lack of educational attainment is the result of the conflict of cultures which has placed Hispanic students at a disadvantage compared to non-minorities (Castro and Ingle, 1993).

Significant differences in educational attainment between Hispanic and non-Hispanic groups have persisted during the last two and a half decades. Since the early 1970s, the dropout rates of Hispanic youth have remained