

Abstract

With increasing interest and success in two-way bilingual programs, it is imperative that they be valued for their greater contribution--educational and social change. Two-way programs do more than effectively educate limited English proficient (LEP) students. They take us on a long-awaited path toward educational and social justice. For too many years, LEP students have been marginalized through transitional bilingual education (TBE) models that are based on deficit theories, segregationist approaches and remediation. Unfortunately, and unwittingly, TBE through its goal of cultural and linguistic assimilation marginalizes and perpetuates inequalities between LEP and non-LEP students.

In contrast, two-way programs are our best attempt yet at providing *equality of educational opportunity* for LEP students through an educational process that validates and develops *both* languages. From this perspective two-way models may serve as a vehicle for positively impacting educational and social change and potentially *narrow the achievement gap* between non-LEP and LEP students. A user-friendly two-way model is presented.

Introduction

Transitional models of bilingual education, by their very definition, deny access to an equal educational opportunity for limited English proficient (LEP) students. These models too often rush LEP students into mainstream all English classrooms while not preparing them for the demanding cognitive rigor that accompany them. A student lacking strong native language cognitive development is often times left in a “no-man’s” land, having both the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) underdeveloped. The student cannot academically function in his or her L1, much less the L2. Furthermore, transitional bilingual education (TBE) models fail to address the need for true educational reform for effectively educating all students that is fair and ensures equal educational opportunity. Empowering models of education such as two-way bilingual programs can

positively impact students' educational attainment and promote long-lasting educational and social change. As described by Thomas and Collier (1997b), not only do two-way programs have powerful data that substantiates their success for LEP populations, but are also dynamic models for school reform for *all* students.

The Bilingual Education Debate

The controversy that has surrounded Bilingual Education since its inception through the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, and the Lau decision of 1974, is whether or not it marginalizes LEP students. No education field has been more widely debated than that of bilingual education (Baker, 1996; Cummins, 1981; and Porter, 1990). However, the debate has centered on the purpose for or extent of LEP students receiving instruction in their native language, versus the identification and dissemination of "best practices" for effectively educating these students. The discussion has also focused simply on short-term language development and academic achievement through primarily TBE efforts versus long-term educational reform and equal educational opportunity for LEP populations that address positive educational and social change. Freeman (1998) in her descriptive study of a two-way bilingual school, suggests that a two-way program can serve as a model for educational reform that promotes social change. The true benefits of *bilingualism* that can be delivered through an effective *maintenance* or *two-way* bilingual education program have traditionally not been enjoyed by its participants due to historical, societal and political limitations imposed upon them. Much of the debate comes from a lack of understanding of the original purpose and methodology of bilingual education programs, as well as the unwillingness among educators to consider other alternatives (Rong and Peissle, 1998).

The Problem with Transitional Bilingual Education

There are additional factors, central to the controversy that continue to negatively impact the effectiveness of TBE programs:

- a) the use of standardized testing in English for public school accountability, which in turn prompts educators to *push* for early English acquisition;
- b) the lack of educator knowledge regarding the transfer of skills and knowledge from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) and/or the process of L1 or L2 development;
- c) the lack of *consistency* by bilingual teachers in language usage, due to the need for translation and clarification in the child's first language (a consequence of the urgency for early English acquisition);
- d) the negative and inferior perceptions of non-English languages and cultures by local, state and national communities; and
- e) the inherent belief that equality for these students is achieved as soon as they learn English for it facilitates greater participation in American society.

These limitations, that have greatly and negatively influenced the effectiveness of TBE implementation, have consequently perpetuated an erroneous societal belief that bilingual education in general is not working.

Cummins (1981) and Baker (1996) argue that TBE programs are inherently flawed due to their disabling of LEP children in the educational process. What is evident in all TBE programs is a deficit model that focuses on remediation and usually an urgent push for English acquisition regardless of the child's level of proficiency or validation in the L1. Although language proficiency in a given language does not necessarily ensure academic success, its absence does suggest the possibility of poor academic achievement. Baker (1996), in his discussion of the rationale for the implementation of TBE programs, presents it as a matter of "perceived priorities." Educators' urgency for English acquisition, he states, is that if LEP students do not rapidly acquire English, they may fall behind their English-speaking peers and not fully participate in society. This line of

thinking, says Baker, suggests that TBE programs are grounded on the notion that equality of opportunity for LEP students is best served by developing their proficiency in English as quickly as possible, rather than focusing on providing the *same educational opportunity for academic success*. Freeman (1998) in her analysis of U. S. public schools' requirement to provide equal educational opportunities to all students guaranteed by Civil Rights legislation explains the following:

...students who come from other than white middle-class native English-speaking homes and communities are often seen as problems at school. Their differences are labeled as deficits, and they are segregated in special classes (ESL, special education, transitional bilingual programs) for remediation. These segregated programs and classes place strong pressure on minority students to assimilate; the student, and not the educational system, has been required to change. If the individual student does not assimilate, that student (and not the system) is labeled a failure. (p. 71)

TBE is typically a subtractive and deficit model. It is subtractive bilingualism in that children are forced to set aside or “subtract” out their native language and assimilate to the majority language. Subtractive bilingualism states Lambert (1987) is recognized and highly related with low levels of second language acquisition, academic underachievement, and psychosocial disorders. It is also a *deficit model* in that it operates from a perspective that LEP students are lacking in a skill, and thus in need of “remediation.”

TBE programs are considered weak in that the end result is a student who is typically not fully bilingual and biliterate, but rather monolingual. As described by Ventrone and Benavides (1998), English-only proponents perceive English as the primary method of assimilation and native language loss as a consequence of English acquisition. Academic success of LEP students is primarily measured through achievement in English, which prompts educators to deliver instruction through the English language. The L1 is seen as needing replacement as soon as possible. This

makes it abundantly clear to students, teachers, school staff, and administrators that the L1 and English clearly do not enjoy equal status (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981; Baker, 1996).

Ramirez et al. (1991) in their study of TBE programs found that early exit models have certain inherent limitations that impact their effectiveness. Results indicate that LEP students in early exit TBE programs rarely receive enough instruction in their native language, resulting in low levels of L1 and L2 proficiency as compared to late exit models. Moreover, instruction provided exclusively in English caused many LEP students to fall further behind their English peers by the end of sixth grade. Traditionally, children are not provided *equal educational opportunity* due to lack of higher academic proficiency in their native language for appropriate and successful transfer into the English curriculum.

Thomas and Collier (1997a) in their study of effective bilingual/ESL programs for second language learners conclude that two-way bilingual education models hold the greatest promise for effectively educating limited English proficient (LEP) students. With the rapid increase of culturally and linguistically diverse students populating today's schools, changes in policies, programs and practices that positively address the changing demographics are not only necessary, but inevitable.

Two-Way Bilingual Education and Social Change

The whole discussion of TBE assumes that the ultimate goal is a child who is academically successful in *English*. Even if transfer of skills and knowledge into the *English* curriculum were successful, due to well-implemented TBE programs, is monolingualism what we want for children? Freeman (1998) in her description of a two-way bilingual school states:

Oyster Bilingual School's discourse practices reflect an ideological assumption that

linguistic and cultural diversity is a resource to be developed by all students, and not a problem that minority students must overcome in order to participate and achieve at school. (p. 233)

A two-way bilingual/immersion model, as described by Lindholm (1992, 1999), includes the following goals for *all* students: (a) high levels of academic proficiency in two languages for all students; (b) academic success in both languages as determined by conventional measurements; and (c) high levels of cross-cultural understanding and psychosocial competence. Two-way bilingual education models incorporate a strong and positive academic and language enriched environment for all students. Two-way bilingual programs create additive environments. These programs build on what students bring to the classroom, viewing them, their parents, and the community at large as resources in achieving literacy in two languages. Recognizing that the strength in literacy in the L1 provides a strong basis for literacy development in L2, two-way programs emphasize maintenance and development of the L1. This attention to L1 development is not just utilitarian, or a way to more effectively acquire English. By giving the L1 *equal status* with English, it is valued, validated, and ensures its role in daily living within and outside the school environment. Such an environment is empowering, addressing issues of social justice as well as test scores (Baker, 1996). Brauer (1997) reminds us that two-way models remain true to research in second language acquisition, ensuring that students gain Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) and learning strategies in L1 before transfer to L2 is expected of them. Thus the potential for the cognitive benefits associated with full bilingualism is considerable.

Differentiating the two-way bilingual education models from TBE models is the extent of positive academic and language enrichment received by all students. Recent research findings by Thomas and Collier (1997a) conclude that language minority children schooled in well-implemented two-way bilingual programs attain greater *long-term* academic and linguistic success

in English than their native English peers educated in well-implemented monolingual English programs.

The two-way bilingual model is based on *additive* bilingualism as a form of enrichment where children are given the opportunity to add one or more foreign languages while fully developing their own primary language. This “true bilingualism” says Lambert (1987), allows students to not only greatly profit from the experience, but to also gain “cognitively, socially, educationally, and even economically.” Additive bilingualism, therefore, is associated with high levels of proficiency in the two languages, positive self-esteem and positive cross-cultural attitudes.

As exemplified by the literature (Cummins, 1981; Baker, 1996, & Lambert, 1987), TBE models all too often rush LEP students into mainstream classrooms while not preparing them for the cognitive demands of an English curriculum. This model inherently denies an *equal educational opportunity* for LEP children when compared to native English speakers enjoying consistent instruction in and validation of one language (L1). The best hope for effectively educating LEP children, achieving equal educational opportunity and ultimately changing educational and social policy is through two-way bilingual education practices.

Even though two-way bilingual education programs show great promise for achieving success and equality for LEP students and for the development of biliteracy for all students, they must be well-implemented. According to Thomas and Collier (1997a), the following program elements enhance the academic success of LEP students: (a) content instruction is provided in both the L1 and L2; (b) instructional approaches used in classrooms are authentic and interactive; and (c) there exist changes in the socio-cultural context of schooling. These elements are traditionally found in two-way bilingual models. The following common characteristics regarding program structure and instructional strategies are found to enhance program success and maximize student outcomes (Lindholm, 1992; Collier & Thomas, 1997a; Baker, 1996; Brauer, 1997):

- strong administration/parent support with commitment to implement the program 4-6 years
- heterogeneous grouping of LEP and non-LEP students learning each other's languages
- consistent separation of languages for instruction.
- highly qualified staff high expectations for student achievement.
- equal opportunities for use and validation of the two languages.
- balance of language groups (as close to 50-50 is desirable)
- sufficient use of the minority language (at least 50%).
- instructional approaches (i. e., learning centers, resource centers, bilingual pairs/groups, cooperative learning, ESL/SSL, discovery learning, vocabulary enrichment in L1 & L2)
- close home-school collaboration with active parent involvement

Although common characteristics of effective two-way programs have been clearly substantiated in the literature, there is still a need to incorporate these characteristics in some viable model that can be easily understood and implemented by administrators and teachers. What follows is a description of a *user-friendly* two-way model currently being implemented in nineteen schools across nine school districts in South Texas.

A User-Friendly Model for Two-Way Bilingual Education

Two-Way bilingual programs are to a great extent custom designed to fit the needs and resources of a school district, school and community. Still, as described earlier, two-way bilingual program share common characteristics critical for effective programs. The following two-way developmental bilingual education curriculum model attempts to incorporate such characteristics so that they are easily understood, implemented and evaluated.

[Insert Table 1 About Here]

The following list (see Table 1) constitutes the crucial elements of the two-way model proposed:

- Heterogeneous Instructional Grouping (variations from grade level to grade level)
- Separation of Languages for Content Area Instruction (variations PK-1 and 2-5)
- Learning Centers (PK-1) and Resource Centers (2-5)
- Language of the Day (includes all non-content area language use)
- L1 & L2 Computer Support (variations PK-1 and 2-5)
- Instructional Staff (team-teaching models: pairs, triads)
- L1 & L2 Conceptual Refinement:
 - Clarification and Application (PK-1 support process for content instruction via L2)
 - Specialized Content-Area Vocabulary Enrichment (2-5)

The first column lists the grade levels PK-5 with major components of the model running across. Note that there is a major change in the model as students move from first grade to second grade (indicated with dark black line) based on the need for addressing the greater academic demands of the upper grades and the ongoing biliteracy development of participants. Finally, note how the model incorporates many of the essential characteristics deemed necessary for an effective program discussed previously. A brief description of the model's primary elements follows:

Heterogeneous Instructional Grouping

The program strives for classroom grouping of 50% LEP and 50% non-LEP students. Students are together for all content area instruction *except* Language Arts (LA) at the PK-K level where students are separated by language, and each language group is instructed in their *primary language*. All content-area instruction is conducted in bilingual pairs or bilingual groups through interactive, authentic and challenging approaches.

Separation of Languages for Content Area Instruction

Content areas at each grade level are taught in the language designated (i. e., K-5 mathematics in English, science and social studies in Spanish). This area also stresses that there is no translation or clarification in the L1 for all classroom instruction. Teachers employ effective

ESL or SSL strategies to ensure comprehensible input for the respective L2 learners. Note that the model calls for the same language of instruction for specific content areas PK-5.

Learning Centers and Resource Centers

The model incorporates the use of learning centers (PK-1) and resource centers (2-5) because they promote interactive learning environments. Students engage in learning center activities in bilingual pairs. Resource centers serve as "content specific reference areas" for bilingual groups to use with cooperative learning activities. Both learning centers and resource centers contain activities and materials in English and Spanish.

Language of the Day

All school activities and subjects not specifically designated a certain language of instruction adhere to what is described as the *language of the day*, which alternates daily. For instance, activities in areas such as physical education, storytelling, library, sustained silent reading (SSR) and music are conducted in the language of the day. Similarly, non-instructional classroom routines such as lunch breaks, clean-up, daily morning activities, etc. also adhere to the language of the day. Announcements every morning conducted in the language of the day serves as a cue for teachers and students. The language of the day validates and stresses the equal importance of both languages school-wide.

L1 & L2 Computer Support

During grades K and first, computer instruction is conducted in the language mode that *reinforces* the language of instruction. For example, first grade science (taught in Spanish) is supported and reinforced through Spanish computer enriched science programs. However, during grades second through fifth, computer lab activities are designed to provide exposure to *specialized vocabulary* in the language not used for instruction in that subject area. For example, while second grade mathematics instruction is still in English in the classroom, computer lab enrichment

activities in mathematics are now provided in Spanish. Students by second grade master enough of their L2 to enable them to benefit from this enriched vocabulary presentation.

Instructional Staff

In all cases, teachers must be either bilingual education or ESL certified. It is very common for teachers to team-teach to compensate for lack of bilingual proficiency, to aid teacher lesson preparation and provide more quality instruction. For instance, teacher "A" instructs the English portion of the curriculum to a group of 20 students while teacher "B" instructs the Spanish portion to a second group. Approximately mid-day, students or teachers switch classrooms and repeat the morning instruction to their second group.

L1 & L2 Conceptual Refinement

During grades PK-1, students are separated by native language at the end of the day (usually 15-20 minutes) for necessary L2 reinforcement of content area instruction provided in their second language. For instance, first grade students are involved in activities (ESL or SSL) that help clarify and or apply skills and concepts learned earlier that day or the day before. The clarification and/or application would be conducted in the same language of instruction using ESL or SSL techniques. Thus, non-LEP students would receive clarification during this time for social studies and science in Spanish; while LEP students receive clarification for mathematics in English. Thus students in the initial stages of L2 development, have additional opportunities to solidify the day's instructional concepts presented in their L2.

L1 & L2 Specialized Content-Area Vocabulary Enrichment

There are significant differences during grades 2-5. Similar to the shift in computer support, the ESL/SSL time is now used to provide students, via interactive and sponge-type activities, *specialized vocabulary* in the language not used for instruction in that subject area. For example, third grade science, taught in Spanish in the classroom to all students, is during this time

(approximately 20 minutes) practiced in English by all students (Note: there is never any repetition of content material from one language to another or any *new* material presented).

Conclusion

Although this model speaks to the Spanish and English language, it can be adapted for other languages as well. A two-way model is the best hope for effectively educating and empowering the growing numbers of LEP students in today's schools. According to Berliner and Biddle (1995), by the year 2030, approximately 40% of school-age population will be non-English speaking. Can we afford not to close the equity and achievement gap between these two groups? For both LEP and non-LEP students, two-way bilingual approaches appear to challenge and stimulate their learning with positive cognitive advantages for those achieving biliteracy.

This model holds great promise in nurturing the linguistic, academic, cultural, social, political and moral aspects of the whole child. These students are better prepared to function in an increasingly diverse and technological world, with empathy for others and a strong sense of self-identity. With all its many successes, it is clear that more and more two-way bilingual education programs will be implemented across America, for success breeds demand. As bilingual educators, we must steadfastly support two-way bilingual education in terms of its greater contribution to long-term education and social change. It is our best attempt yet for preparing all students as life-long learners and successful citizens in an increasingly culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse society.

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