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## THE SECOND LANGUAGE COMPONENTS IN A TWO-WAY BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

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### **Abstract**

With the advent of an increasingly linguistic minority student population in the public schools, program development to maximize these students' learning opportunities is essential. One such program appears to be the Two-Way Bilingual Education model that integrates students from two distinct language backgrounds. Since 1989, one school district in Massachusetts has been offering a Two-Way Bilingual Education program to students from its Spanish and English speaking communities. This article provides a critical description of that program using a fourth grade example. Following the district wide curriculum, and recognizing the necessity of bridging linguistic and cultural differences, this two-way model allows students to develop proficiency in a second language and culture while achieving the objectives of the elementary school curriculum. The need for practical information on existing two-way bilingual education program models is borne out of a resistance by many to recognize bilingual programs as vital aspects of the schooling of language minority students.

### **Community**

The focus of this paper is a two-way bilingual education program located in a suburban community of 65,000 west of Boston, Massachusetts. The program serves students who are first generation urban poor Hispanics coming from monolingual Spanish-speaking homes and students from the suburban middle class English-speaking population. Students in the Hispanic community originate from Puerto

Rico, and countries in Central and South America. The English-speaking community is made up of professionals, administrators, and managers, while laborers, operators, and those in the service industries compose the Hispanic community. This two-way bilingual education program was first implemented in 1989 in response to meeting the educational and linguistic needs of the evolving bilingual community. It was made possible by the initiatives and support of educators, administrators, and parents from both linguistic communities. Federal funding supports this two-way bilingual education program which is part of a K-5 public school system. In Massachusetts five other school communities have developed similar two-way bilingual education programs.

### **Defining Two-Way Bilingual Education**

In a one-way bilingual program, a single language group is schooled bilingually. Two-way bilingual education integrates students from two language groups with a bi-directional language learning focus. For Lindholm (1992), two-way programs have four characteristics: 1) A non-English minority language is used for at least 50% of the curriculum. 2) In each period of instruction, only one language is used (although code-switching may occur for clarification or private conversations). 3) Both English and non-English speakers are present preferably in equal numbers. 4) The English and non-English speakers are integrated in all lessons.

### **Program Goals**

Recognizing the importance of bridging linguistic and cultural differences is germane to the learning experience provided in this two-way bilingual education program. The office of Bilingual Education for this school district states three main goals in the (English and Spanish) pamphlets it puts out describing the two-way bilingual education program it offers. That students will develop:

- 1) proficiency in Spanish and English;
- 2) average to superior progress in achieving the objectives of the elementary school curriculum; and
- 3) positive attitudes toward the two languages and the communities they represent.

Thus, the program offers its students a combination of first and second language learning opportunities with the societal and educational goals of maintaining the primary language, developing balanced bilingualism/biliteracy, and fostering cultural pluralism. Most two-way program models define their objectives in terms of 1) the equitable bilingual and biliteracy development of the two contributing linguistic communities; 2) the development of a cross-cultural appreciation and a psychosocial competence; 3) the collaboration of the participating students and staff; and 4) the understanding that there is more than one solution to a single problem, and because of individual differences in backgrounds, an appreciation of the alternative ways of responding.

### The Students

As of the 1993-94 academic year the program covers kindergarten through fourth grade. In 1994-95 grade five will participate toward continuing the two-way program. Only two classes of nine and ten year old fourth graders representing Spanish homeroom #337 and English homeroom #336 participate in the two-way program. Each homeroom has a combination of twenty Spanish and English-speaking students. The table below provides the breakdown of students by gender, number, and first language, for each homeroom.

**Table 1. Student Description by Gender, Number and First Language for Each Homeroom**

Spanish Homeroom #337			English Homeroom #336		
	Males	Females		Males	Females
<i>Spanish</i>	6	8	<i>Spanish</i>	6	6
<i>English</i>	3	3	<i>English</i>	4	4
total # of students in #337=20			total # of students in #336=20		

### The Teachers

There are two team teachers serving the grade four students in the two-way program. The teacher in charge of the Spanish content area component of the curriculum is English dominant and a trained bilingual

education specialist holding a master's degree. ESL is also among her instructional responsibilities. She has been teaching in this school for two years and has been involved with bilingual/immersion programs in the Boston area for four years. The English language component teacher, a 30 year veteran of the same public school system is new to the two-way program and is participating in it for the first time this year. She possesses a graduate education degree with no formal training in the instruction of second language learner populations.

Both have trained and worked in the Boston area and are differentially committed to and supportive of the philosophy underlying the bilingual program in which they teach. The English language component teacher feels that the Spanish dominant students should be placed in a fully English academic context to accelerate their acquisition of English to prepare them to meet the language demands of the larger society more effectively. She holds that maintaining Spanish as a medium of instruction for a prolonged period of time will only delay their success in English. By contrast, the Spanish component teacher heralds the importance of bilingual education. She believes that developing academic biliteracy and a positive self-image is crucial to their educational and personal success. Despite the obvious differences in their orientations the teachers are nevertheless highly effective in their instructional treatment of the students.

### **Classroom Setting**

Spanish homeroom class #337 is stocked with numerous visual reinforcements in both English and Spanish. There are calendars, name tags, reference charts for letters and numbers, maps, classroom rules, lists of new vocabulary, and bulletin boards, displaying student work. Large pictures mounted on one of the bulletin boards for example, provide stimuli for use in the science class. The physical setting arranged by the teacher consists of desk clusters organized in groups of six for the purpose of reinforcing and facilitating cooperative learning activities. A small library stands against the wall containing a selection of content area texts, encyclopedias, reference books, storybooks, and novels primarily in Spanish. A door connecting Spanish homeroom #337 and English homeroom #336 is located at the back of classroom #337.

Both are of similar arrangement and decor with the exception that materials and visual reinforcements in homeroom #336 are in English.

### **Program Structure and Curriculum Organization**

The program begins in kindergarten and enrollment is on a voluntary basis with expansion each year to a new grade level. All students in the bilingual two-way program receive instruction following the curriculum of the district's public schools. The school day and year is structured to provide ongoing alternation between the two languages. Curriculum organization in a dual language bilingual education program can mean that each language is featured on alternate days, or from lesson to lesson or subject to subject. Often a strict sequence is adhered to in order to maintain language continuity. Furthermore, both languages may be used in all curricular areas to ensure a balance; students may learn one science unit in Spanish and the subsequent chapter in English so that the same cognitive operations are promoted in each language and subject area. Thus students in this program have an equal opportunity to develop cognitively and linguistically as they learn subjects taught in both Spanish and English.

Second language instruction includes: a) integrated content area academic classes, b) Spanish as a second language for native English speakers, and c) ESL for native Spanish speakers. In kindergarten, 20% of the day is spent in the second language. In grade one, this increases to 35% in the second language. In grades two and three instruction is 50% in Spanish and 50% in English. At the fourth grade level the curriculum is based on a 60/40 split even though an equal split is prescribed. This means that subjects taught in English to both groups represent 60% of the curriculum while instruction in Spanish for both groups covers 40% of the subjects in the curriculum. While there is significant community and school-based support for the program, greater emphasis is placed on English instruction. In response to parental demands from both linguistic communities and the perceived academic needs of the students, administrators have arrived at this percentage. By the end of the fifth grade it is expected that students will be competent enough to understand, speak, read and write in both languages. The subjects covered in this two-way program at the fourth grade level include: handwriting, math, social studies, science, language arts, ESL and SSL.

Subjects such as art, music, and gym do not fall under the two-way program core curriculum and are offered only in English. The table below presents the class schedule during a typical day in the two-way program during the fall of 1993. It is intended to be a general guideline for those interested in implementing a two-way model and as an indication of the scheduling and language concerns that must be addressed.

**Table 2. TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY IN THE TWO-WAY BILINGUAL CLASSROOMS**

<b>Time</b>	<b>English Homeroom # 336</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Spanish Homeroom #337</b>
9:00 - 9:15		Handwriting	
9:15 - 10:15	II	Math	II
10:15 - 10:45		Music	
10:45 - 11:30	II	Science	II
10:45 - 11:30	II	Social Studies	II
11:30 - 12:30		Native Language	
12:30 - 1:30		Arts	
1:30 - 2:15		LUNCH	
1:30 - 2:15	*	ESL	*
2:15 - 2:35	Δ	SSL	
2:35 - 3:00		English Spelling Silent Reading	

II = Students change teachers and hence languages each month for math and every two weeks for science and social studies.

\* = Spanish dominant students remain with their homeroom teachers for ESL instruction.

Δ = English dominant students exit both classes for Spanish second language instruction with a third teacher.

The two languages are presented to all students in the following ways. Upon completion of a unit in science and social studies usually lasting for a two-week period, students switch to the other teacher. That means that twenty of the students previously in the English social studies class will switch to the Spanish homeroom for two weeks of science while the other twenty students previously in the Spanish science class will switch to the social studies class taught by the English

homeroom teacher. Each unit is repeated so that both groups learn the same material. Students also change teachers and language of instruction for math each month. These switches are possible because the two teachers follow a similar curriculum and plan their lessons together. This pattern repeats itself throughout the year but according to the Spanish homeroom teacher is not fixed but open to modification. The Spanish homeroom teacher describes the instructional context as a team teaching situation in which the coordination of efforts is essential to the success of the program.

Language arts classes are offered in the student's native language unless, as in the case of several students, other arrangements are made. For example, three of the Spanish dominant and six of the English dominant speakers from the Spanish homeroom (#337) switch into the English homeroom (#336) for language arts instruction. A determination was made on the basis of teacher and formal evaluation measures that it would be more beneficial to those three Spanish dominant students to receive language arts instruction in English. Their performance in English was found to be at a level comparable to or better than some of their native English counterparts and therefore they were deemed capable of receiving the content in English.

With respect to direct second language instruction the approach is more traditional (than the content area instruction) with its focus on grammar and language structure. Spanish dominant students remain with their homeroom teachers for daily ESL instruction, while English background students exit the class for SSL instruction with a third teacher. Thus students receive ESL and SSL instruction as a subject and medium of instruction. In addition to vocabulary enrichment provided through prereading exercises and composition development undertaken through process writing activities, students are provided more conventional lesson content emphasizing grammar and isolated language skills practice. The ESL/SSL components in this two-way bilingual program are integral features of the curriculum as opposed to being detached units of the daily lesson plan.

### **Materials**

The materials used in the two-way program were selected by both two-way teachers. We thought it would be helpful (to those interested in

stocking two-way classrooms with similar materials) to include the list of books that the fourth grade level teachers have selected for use in their two-way classrooms. The Spanish homeroom teacher #337 acknowledges how fortunate she is to select her own materials and develop curriculum that is tailored to the interests and needs of a specific group of students and situation. The materials include both expository and narrative texts that the teachers use to create thematic units and integrate content. Teacher-produced visuals such as reference charts and technical drawings also contribute to the goals of the lesson.

### **Program Materials**

Math: Ginsburg, H. P., Gustafson, D. B., & Leutzinger, L. P. et al. (1991) *Matematicas: Exploremos tu mundo*. Needham, MA: Silver, Burdett & Ginn

Science: Barufaldi, Ladd & Moses (1985) *Ciencias de Heath*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath

Social Studies: Congemi, J., (ed.) (1986) *Regions*. New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston

Language Arts: Pearson, P. D., Johnson, D. D. et al. (1991) *Silver secrets*. Needham, MA: Silver, Burdett & Ginn

Language Arts: Acosta, M., Ada, F. et al. (1993) *Cuentamundos: Caracola*. New York: MacMillan, McGraw Hill School Pub. Co.

ESL: Atwater, R., Atwater, F. (1938) *Mr. Popper's penguins* N.Y.: Dell

SSL: Acosta, M., Ada, F. et al. (1993) *Puerta del sol*. New York: MacMillan, McGraw Hill School Pub. Co.

### **Student Evaluation**

In this program, stakeholders (administrators, parents, and to a lesser extent the teachers) rely on the more traditional standardized forms of assessment to measure student progress in language and the content areas. At the culmination of the school year students in the fourth grade are evaluated in both languages through conventional basic skills tests. These include SABE (Spanish Assessment of Basic

Education), a measure administered at the end of the third and fourth grades, and MEAP (Massachusetts Evaluation of Academic Progress), an English language measure administered for the first time in the fourth grade. The use of student achievement indicators also serve as program evaluation criteria for parents and administrators.

Recent results from these traditional measures provide evidence of differential performance for students from both language backgrounds. Previous evaluation results have revealed higher achievement levels from the English dominant students in the Spanish homeroom class #337: five out of the six English dominant students in class #337 demonstrate performance at above grade level average on both English and Spanish language measures. Similarly, five out of the fourteen Spanish dominant students in classroom #337 performed above grade level average on the English and Spanish measures. Informal teacher observation and evaluation of these same students confirm the findings from the standardized tests.

### **Program Critique**

#### *Successes*

The past program's successes derive from several sources:

- parental involvement and support of the program;
- teacher satisfaction with student participation and achievement;
- student motivation to participate and feel equal validation;
- reduced class size.

Using school contact and school visits as an informal measure of parental involvement has led the Spanish homeroom teacher to describe a tentative pattern. According to her experience the English dominant parents have made the most contact with the school. This is based on the number of visits, phone calls and conferences with the teacher. Ironically, their primary concern is that the Spanish homeroom teacher is not a native Spanish speaker and is therefore not exposing their (English dominant) children to a fully proficient Spanish speaker. Two Spanish-speaking parents however, have taken particular interest in the education of their children because of the special physical and emotional needs of their kids. They frequently contact the school by phone or

through visits to inform the teacher and/or administration of a developing physical or emotional situation.

Giving more individual attention to students is not only a parental goal but one that the Spanish homeroom teacher claims is only possible during the ESL portion of the curriculum when all fourteen native English speakers exit to a third class. It represents one of the successes that the program schedule permits. Owing to the placement of students for direct second language instruction (ESL and SSL courses) the teachers have a reduced class load and can provide one on one ESL instruction when necessary. The smaller class size is made up of twelve kids and includes support from a Chapter 1 teacher. This situation allows the teacher to be more flexible in delivering the course content and in attending to the students. It also appears to motivate the students and augment their performance. Increased attention to the students has also improved their feelings of self-worth and validation. Together these lead to greater pedagogical satisfaction for the teacher.

#### *Shortcomings*

While the overall involvement from parents coupled with reduced class size count toward program successes, there are other more pressing localized issues facing the teachers and the program. The following is a list of some of those issues, explained (as indicated) in the voice of the Spanish homeroom teacher.

#### *Resources and materials*

"One of the problems we face is with the math books. Students have to share texts and workbooks because they switch to the other language every month. This means that one portion of a chapter is completed by one student while the other student completes the remaining exercises. Similarly, there are no materials in Spanish for social studies, so I will have to teach a unit on the North East because that is part of the curriculum but I will have to develop my own materials in English."

#### *Scheduling to maximize exposure to the second language*

"A major problem surrounds the fact that both teachers lose 45 minutes to ESL and SSL instruction everyday. I wonder whether I

should cover less content area material in English more thoroughly or continue in the same way? ESL is my favorite class because it is a smaller size and I can work individually with a homogeneous group of students. These features also make it easier to plan classes. Another major concern is the fact that students are discombobulated because of all of the classroom switching. Teaching time is cut and therefore learning time suffers. We really need to work this out."

*Inability to evaluate from a bilingual perspective*

"Regarding code-switching, I hope I don't have to, but I intend to review the students' work in the other language. This still hasn't been worked out yet. This is also a problem because there is only one teacher capable of evaluating the students in both languages. Often parents cannot assist their kids with their homework because they are not proficient enough in the second language or have little education themselves."

*Inappropriate use of assessment data*

Teachers do not make use of the results of the conventional summative measures to inform and guide their own practice. Conversely, information on student performance collected by the teachers through their own assessment systems does not come into play in the decision making process regarding student placement.

*Poor communication between school and the Hispanic parents*

The Hispanic parents have been less involved at the school level. This may be due to the fact that they are less informed about the program. The language used by the school and the language the parents need to articulate their concerns is not accessible to them. These circumstances make it uncomfortable for these parents to approach school personnel with or for information.

## **Conclusion**

Having considered the different aspects of this two-way program, the natural question to ask is whether this type of program is more effective in delivering ESL and SSL instruction than other dual language

models. For Spanish and English speaking children the opportunity to access the target language and culture while in close contact with it is an optimal language learning situation. Interdependent students may stimulate cooperation and thus improve learning and achievement. It may also reduce the problems of cultural hostility and prejudice associated with the segregation of language different students (Baker, 1993).

While it is too early to determine the benefits or drawbacks of this program because this is the first group to go through the two-way model, one of our conclusions is that for individual communities two-way bilingual programs may be the best means for delivering an equitable and effective education for two distinct language and cultural groups schooled together. For both groups it can only enrich their education.

This program also represents a democratic and efficient approach to the education of two distinct language groups by balancing the distribution of ESL and SSL instruction, validating their status, and by integrating rather than segregating two diverse language learner populations.

Several important points can be made about this program model and the second language components within it. Content learned in one language is transferred to the second language and vice versa. The students gain access to each other's cultures and ways of knowing and in the process become bilingual and biliterate at the academic and psychosocial levels.

To augment the quality of the program there is clearly a need to address scheduling issues to facilitate more swift classroom changes; improve communication to increase the involvement of the Hispanic parents; increase funding for materials, resources, and staff; and incorporate performance based assessment data into decision making processes.

Nevertheless, the need for practical information of the kind provided in this paper has been brought forth in part by the reluctance of many educators to recognize bilingualism and dual language programs as important aspects of the education of children, and of language minority students in particular.

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