International Journal of Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood

Published by the Centre for Equity and Innovation in Early Childhood Education (CEIEC), Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne

Research

"Verde – sometimes we call it green": Construal of Language Difference and Power in a Preschool Dual Immersion Program

Kellie Rolstad,

Beth Blue Swadener,

Kathy Nakagawa,
Arizona State University

Abstract
This article presents findings from a preschool dual language (Spanish/English) immersion project, drawing primarily from data collected during its first two years. Through analysis of observational notes and videotapes of classroom interactions, as well as interviews with teachers and other classroom staff, we explore the extent to which the dual immersion model supports critical pedagogy in the classroom. The results highlight the counter-hegemonic aspects of the program in terms of teacher-child power relations and roles of language and language play in shifting power dynamics in the classroom. We find that especially in early childhood education programs, dual immersion allows children to develop alternative views of language use and enables them to form friendships and alliances across cultural and linguistic barriers. We also consider the difficulties in establishing a dual immersion program for young children and how dual immersion programs may succeed in ways that other language learning programs fail.

Background

One of the most contested issues in contemporary education policy and practice concerns optimal strategies for educating English language learners (ELLs). While a growing literature has sought to document the outcomes of various language instruction approaches, relatively little research has documented the experiences and perspectives of children in these programs, particularly at the preschool level. Federally funded preschool programs such as Head Start strongly emphasize the acquisition of English, based on the belief that English proficiency is far more important to children's academic success and well being in this country than proficiency in any native minority language. Although Head Start and other programs have succeeded in meeting many of the needs of children and families, we deplore the implicit message often conveyed to English-learning children, their families and communities – namely, that their native language is essentially irrelevant to their education and academic success. Programs that seek to make use of children's home languages as a bridge to English development and even programs promoting the maintenance of children's home languages while they learn English can be found in Head Start and other early childhood education settings, but these tend to be ad hoc and scattered, not the result of policy initiatives aimed at developing bilingualism.

In 2005, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) adopted recommendations for the screening and assessment of young ELLs, intended to supplement the full position statement *Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation*, published by NAEYC and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education in 2003. In early 2007, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families issued a call for research proposals investigating the needs of ELLs in early childhood settings, seeking to fund research in this population of learners. Such public indicators of the growing awareness of the unmet needs of ELLs are extremely encouraging, as traditional approaches highlighting only the need for English language development have been shown to leave ELLs academically far behind English-speaking children (Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2005a).

In contrast to an educational model that seeks to transition children away from their native language into English-only proficiency and literacy, strong or maintenance bilingual education programs (those that foster bilingualism and biliteracy) embody fundamentally different implicit assumptions about English and the minority language, as well as about the value of family participation in education. Research in pre-K-5 settings has shown that bilingual education may prevent or slow native language loss at the same time it facilitates full academic and intellectual engagement among English-learning children, who would otherwise fall behind academically during the years it takes them to fully develop English (Ramirez, Yuen & Ramey, 1991). Among adolescent and older students, grades 6-12, loss of the native language with the onset of English learning is rare; however, in children younger than kindergarten age, native language loss is far more likely, as children's native language is not yet fully established at that young age.

Wong Fillmore (1991) has suggested that introducing any English at all into early childhood settings might forestall development of the native language, but this remains controversial (Winsler, Diaz, Espinosa, & Rodriguez, 1999). The viability of the native language depending on the age of learner has yet to be thoroughly researched.

Dual immersion (DI) constitutes a form of strong, developmental bilingual education that capitalizes on the presence of English-speaking peers to aid English learners in developing English, while at the same time provides English speakers the opportunity to learn a second language from their language minority peers. In DI, also known as two-way immersion, English-speaking students learn Spanish together with Spanish-speaking students, while Spanish speakers learn English; both groups of children become bilingual and biliterate in an atmosphere of mutual support and respect with the crucial benefit of peer language modeling and feedback.

Of the many forms of bilingual education, DI has been proposed as the model most likely to succeed in times of heightened opposition to bilingual education (Brisk, 2006). DI, with its ability to provide real bilingualism to English-speaking children, appeals to a constituency that is historically more powerful, politically and financially, than the traditional, English-learning clients of bilingual education.

It is clear from research studies (Cazabon, Lambert & Hall, 1993; Christian, Howard & Loeb, 2000; Freeman, 1998; Holobow, Genesee & Lambert, 1991; Howard & Sugarman, 2007; Lara-Alecio, et al., 2004; Lindholm & Fairchild, 1990) that linguistic and social integration in children are strengthened significantly in DI programs. Instead of entering a classroom in which the anticipated hegemony (and privileging) of English is the norm, children and teachers in DI programs find that the minority language at least temporarily assumes the more privileged position. As the language and power tables are turned, children are immediately confronted by the altered power dynamics and can quickly come to view each other as potential friends and language role models in a way that contrasts sharply with the linguistic and social devaluing that routinely occurs in English-only settings.

Creating an Early Childhood Dual Immersion Program: TWIST

In Arizona State University's College of Education Preschool (CoE Preschool), the TWIST (Two-Way Immersion Spanish Time) program was implemented in Fall 2002 to provide a cross-cultural, counter-hegemonic preschool experience, while documenting some of the complex issues in young children's language learning experiences, identity development and attitudes toward peers. It was part of an evolving anti-bias curriculum approach at the preschool, which sought to foreground linguistic and cultural diversity. The project was developed in collaboration with a campus Head Start program, serving predominantly native Spanish speaking families.

The goals of the TWIST program were to integrate Spanish-speaking children from Head Start and English-speaking children from the COE preschool for learning activities/play facilitated in Spanish, as a way of developing Spanish language skills in both groups of children while promoting social interaction and concepts

of social justice (or antibias curriculum). Two-way immersion in elementary school has been found to successfully promote interaction between students who differ not only by the language they speak, but also by their socioeconomic status. A fundamental goal of the TWIST program was to promote mutual respect and friendships among the primarily middle-class English-speaking children and the Spanish-speaking students in the Head Start program, an income-eligible program serving families.

During the period of data collection, the Head Start program used primarily English for instruction with 18-20 Spanish-speaking children on Monday through Friday mornings. The Head Start program included a bilingual assistant teacher. When these Head Start children arrived for TWIST on Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons (12:45 to 3:30pm), they joined a second group of 25-28 children. These children were primarily English speakers, but included a few children who were English learners dominant in Navajo, Korean, Chinese or Farsi.

These two groups came together three afternoons per week to participate in TWIST's Spanish immersion in the COE preschool site. One of the three Lead Teachers was a native speaker of Spanish who led instruction in her classroom during TWIST. In the other two rooms, native Spanish-speaking Language Enrichment Teachers assumed the instructional lead, supported by the two Lead Teachers who were learning Spanish. In addition, each classroom was assigned a native Spanish-speaking Language Reflector, whose role was to reflect Spanish back to speakers. The center director also began studying Spanish prior to the start of the program, and occasionally interacted with children and adults during TWIST, attempting to maintain communication in Spanish. All materials for parents were bilingual and parent meetings and education were facilitated in Spanish and English, in collaboration with the Head Start staff.

Situating the Program: The Political Context

TWIST was developed against a backdrop of national and state opposition to bilingual education, associated with a growing policy discourse of standards and accountability (Wiley & Wright, 2004). Proposition 203, an Arizona ballot initiative, was approved by voters in November, 2000, and mandates structured English immersion (SEI) for all language minority children in the state who have been designated as limited in their English proficiency. Many K-12 bilingual education programs in Arizona have survived under a waiver provision that permits bilingual education for those who request it and can prove proficiency in English. However, under subsequent related changes in language policies of the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) following the election of a superintendent of public instruction who ran in part on an English-only campaign, bilingual education programs have become far more severely threatened. As the political and social climate continues to have an increasingly chilling effect on language minority children and communities, educational programs that support bilingualism and biliteracy create opportunities for counter-hegemonic praxis.

Preliminary results of Arizona's English-only policies are showing that K-12 students are not succeeding in English

immersion (Thompson, et al., 2002). Less is known of how preschool-aged children fare in English immersion programs, linguistically, psychologically or socially. While Arizona does not mandate English immersion for preschool children, English immersion remains the de facto program for all ages. The results of some preschool studies suggest that ELL preschoolers do not fare well in English programs (Tabors, 1997; Wong Fillmore, 1991). The TWIST project, and related studies comparing children's experiences in a DI classroom versus in an English-only immersion classroom (Rolstad, Swadener, Nakagawa, 2004) sought to learn more about the linguistic and social effects on young children of a two-way Spanish/English immersion program, with the aim of addressing these gaps in the research literature.

Brief Review of Literature

Research on English immersion has established the dangers of English immersion to children's academic performance (Ramirez, Yuen & Ramey, 1991; Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2005b) and emotional well being (Hernandez-Chavez, 1984; Soto, 2002). Early advocates of English-only instruction insisted that it could be as effective as foreign language immersion in Canada, but stipulated that SEI teachers must possess three critical characteristics: 1) the ability to understand the language of the children, 2) special training in immersion techniques, and 3) a specially-adapted curriculum (Baker & deKanter, 1981). When teachers do not understand the language of the children, children may feel silenced and be less likely to participate, and therefore less likely to engage in learning opportunities. Teachers who are not adequately trained in immersion methods may not adequately engage and may even marginalize English learners, particularly when no adaptations are made to the curriculum to accommodate ELLs (Rolstad, in press).

While SEI, properly conducted by a qualified teacher meeting even the minimal requirements outlined above, may sometimes be the most viable option in a given context, a lack of infrastructure in Arizona has undermined the enactment of an authentic SEI experience for the majority of English language learning (ELL) students (Wright & Choi, 2006). Although some nominal provisions for SEI methods instruction have been discussed in Arizona, and may eventually be made available to SEI teachers, there has thus far been no mention of SEI's requirement that teachers understand the language of the children they teach. Thus, a very threatening, often effacing atmosphere is created for ELL children, whose language and cultural resources are ignored or marginalized.

A threatening sociolinguistic atmosphere can be effectively countered with the authentic, valued use of the minority language and culture, such as that provided by DI to Spanish-speaking children (Freeman, 1998). At the same time, English-speaking children in DI learn to value a second language and its speakers through a direct relationship with language minority children (Cazabon, Lambert & Hall, 1993). The opportunity to interact with linguistically and culturally diverse peers also contributes to an anti-bias learning environment for young children (Derman-Sparks, 1989; Marsh, 1992; Soto, 2002; Swadener, 1988; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995). Spanish-speaking children's fluency in their native language may be valued in important

ways by their Spanish-learning peers and contributes to Spanish-speaking children's self-esteem and confidence.

This integrative rather than isolating experience can lead to the development of cross-cultural skills and improved attitudes toward the other group on the part of both language minority and majority children, and can positively affect self-esteem (Cazabon, Lambert & Hall, 1993; Lambert, 1987; Lindholm, 1990). Such authentic interaction is encouraged by two-way programs such as the TWIST program. It is important to note, however, that bilingualism and biliteracy are not attained overnight; language immersion programs that are intended to lead to bilingualism and biliteracy require long-term participation, generally lasting a minimum of six years. TWIST students were typically in the program for only one year before moving on to kindergarten. While English learners who leave TWIST continue learning English in elementary school, few opportunities exist for children who began learning Spanish in TWIST to continue learning Spanish in elementary school. The goals of the TWIST program, therefore, were defined primarily in terms of social interactions, striving for an antibias experience. However, classroom observations, interviews with parents and teachers, and some assessment data were collected and examined to glean information on language development in both groups of children.

It was also important to establish the goals and methods of the program with classroom teachers and other adults who would be participating in the program. A weekly staff development session was initiated in the semester before the program began, and staff development continued throughout the first two years of the program. Teachers, experienced and novice, had expressed considerable confusion over how to interact with English learners, of how children learn a second language, and of what the teacher's role should be. The extant research on preschool second language acquisition was shared with the teachers, complete with the controversies surrounding early exposure to English. However, due to the general inadequacy of research in early childhood second language acquisition, and the obvious need for the teachers to know what to do and what to expect from the children, staff development was focused on basic principles of linguistics and sociolinguistics.

Early childhood research relating to language development has long been based on theories proposed by psychologists to account for language in a broader framework of cognitive development, with far too little work drawing upon advances in language development research grounded in linguistics and psycholinguistics. While much has been learned about the nature of language and language acquisition over the last fifty years, relatively little has made its way into the early childhood research literature, and appears to have had little or no impact on early childhood practice concerning language development. In *What Teachers Need to Know about Language* (Adger, Snow & Christian, 2002), the authors lay out a number of basic concepts in linguistics that every teacher education program ought to require prospective teachers to learn. Also in that volume, early childhood researcher Sue Bredekamp decries the lack of linguistics knowledge among early childhood practitioners, and the fact that teacher candidates have

"…no idea of what their role is in supporting language development at various levels or of what to do when it does not proceed as expected" (Bredekamp, 2002, p. 60). Indeed, they really have no idea what should be expected in terms of language development.

Similarly, more linguistically informed research in second language learning and in childhood bilingualism and bidialectalism (Adger, Wolfram & Christian, 2007; Bialystok, 2007; Proctor, August, Carlo & Snow, 2006; Rice & Wilcox, 1990; Romaine, 1989; Saville-Troike, 1987; Snow, 1983; Wong Fillmore, 1991) has much to contribute to early childhood research and practice. Wong Fillmore's (1991) argument that the introduction of a second language to very young children might lead to the successful acquisition of the second language, but at the expense of the first language, was based on the results of a parent survey. However, no work has been done to examine this question linguistically or rigorously, or to connect what has been learned in studies of childhood bilingualism generally to early childhood education practice. Practitioners are sometimes acquainted with the views of educational psychologists such as Jim Cummins, but rarely with their linguistically oriented critiques (Martin-Jones & Romaine, 1986; Edelsky, 1990; MacSwan, 2000; MacSwan & Rolstad, 2003; Wiley, 1996).

Data Collection Methods

This study seeks to reframe many of the issues of early language development accordingly, and, we think, more accurately. We have collected data on language proficiency, via audiotaped natural language samples, and have videotaped classroom and playground interactions, augmented by note-taking, for an ethnography of child-child, child-teacher, teacher-parent and teacher-staff interactions that occur in conjunction with the program and its required inter-agency collaboration. Videotaped data collection was rotated daily among the three TWIST classrooms, as well as the playground, so that each setting was filmed in entirety once per week.

The taping was done by a graduate Research Assistant, who also worked as a part-time teacher in the program. The initial coding of the videotapes was done by this assistant and by two native Spanish speakers. In addition, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with staff and parents from both the COE preschool and Head Start to document their reactions to and observations about the program and its effects on children.

Findings

For purposes of this paper, we focus on an analysis of examples of the counter-hegemonic impacts and challenges of the TWIST program, vis-à-vis an emphasis on language and power dynamics, as well as the potential for antibias education in early childhood contexts. Within this broad framing, we focus on two themes: (1) teacher-child power dynamics, including addressing questions such as whose language is privileged and who is learning language from whom, who is getting attention in particular contexts, etc.; and (2) linguistic engagement and language play, including children's reactions to the TWIST program, peer relationships and power dynamics between native Spanish-speaking and English-speaking children.

An initial concern when starting the project was that two of the three Lead Teachers in the preschool were not proficient in Spanish. Our stricture that only Spanish was to be spoken by adults during TWIST meant that any adults, whether teachers, teaching interns, students workers or visitors who were not proficient in Spanish, would effectively be silenced; no English was to be spoken by adults. It was our hope that this experience of language restriction would have two outcomes: to encourage these adults to learn Spanish and to provide them with an intense, deeply meaningful experience in difficult communication through a language they do not know well or at all. The difficulty and frustration faced by these adults is the usual daily experience of many English learners placed in English-only settings. It was our hope that placing the burden of productive communication on the adults would help them to empathize and identify with the children they served.

We wondered, of course, how some adults' lack of Spanish proficiency would affect the program and children's valuing of Spanish and Spanish speakers. We wondered what effects adults' flawed Spanish might have on children, Spanish speakers and English speakers alike. We suspected that instances of flawed Spanish production would be more than balanced by the children's access to accurate Spanish models via the native Spanish-speaking teachers and via the children's parents and families.[i]

We further assumed that Spanish-learning children would be relatively unaffected by adults' Spanish errors, not only because the errors would be balanced by the authentic Spanish of native speaking adults, but also because such errors are likely to escape the notice of children at this very early stage of second language acquisition. Further, it is clear that children prefer to learn language usage from their peers rather than from adults, so we counted on these children's access to their Spanish-speaking peers as appropriate linguistic models. We hoped that these aspects of language acquisition in TWIST would have no negative effects, and would be offset by the potential advantages.

On analyzing our data, however, we have been struck by what seems to have been an overwhelmingly positive effect of that lack of Spanish proficiency on the part of some of the adults; namely, that children daily witnessed teachers making every attempt to use Spanish and to learn from the native Spanish-speaking children. While this has varied between teachers and not been present in all adults in these classrooms, data have provided striking and consistent examples of the shift in power dynamics created by the Spanish-learning teachers' need to draw on the children's linguistic expertise.

Theme One: Teacher-Child Power Dynamics

In any developmental, child-centered preschool program, teacher-child power dynamics tend to reflect prevailing "best practices" in early childhood including an emphasis on constructivism, which typically entails co-construction of learning between teachers and children. For primarily English-speaking teachers, this concept of learning with and from children is taken a step further in the TWIST program. Teacher interviews and informal discussions reflected some teachers' feelings of being silenced in their own classrooms and not able to share their wealth of knowledge and

experience in providing their usual feedback and guidance to children. However, to the extent that these teachers engaged in learning and using more Spanish and listening intently to Spanish-speaking children and adults, a further power shift has occurred, as evidenced by the following examples. We have characterized such examples as instantiations of a theme of shifted teacher-child power dynamics.

An English-speaking boy, asked by a Language Reflector to identify a color in a book, responds, "*verde* – sometimes we call it green." One interpretation of his use of 'sometimes' is that he feels that language choice is fairly random, rather than reflecting any power differences. At age three, he may not even have been aware that he was using words from two distinct languages, why there are two words for the same color, or what could possibly drive the selection of "*verde*" vs. "green." However, we are especially interested in the significance of his theorizing about which language, and which group, is privileged, given his use of the pronoun 'we.' He says this to a native Spanish-speaking adult, a male Language Reflector, presumably including him in his use of 'we.' It suggests that he identifies with the Language Reflector and feels included in whatever group the Language Reflector belongs to.

In considering how this child construes the language and power difference between English and Spanish, we submit that he has not yet been sensitized to differential valuing of the two languages in this regional context. The importance of providing a context in which children may openly explore language and power is critical to resisting and changing attitudes about bilingualism and immigration. For example, Cain (2005) discusses how cultural models reflected in current reading policies value middle-class, Eurocentric, standard English as the "ideal" in reading ability (p. 264). Contexts such as TWIST, that promote Spanish language and language learning, offer an alternative cultural model, one in which Spanish is valued and language use may be explored in multiple ways.

From our analysis of videotaped data collected in the first weeks of the program, several interesting and potentially contradictory findings relating to language difference and power emerged. A few of the English-speaking children (who were there all day) had initial reactions to the teachers' switching to Spanish in the afternoon, reactions which included covering their ears, hiding their faces in their shirts, or verbally complaining. However, most children seemed to quickly adapt to the fact that their Lead Teachers suddenly were speaking Spanish to the extent that they could, with the overall effect of two of the Lead Teachers talking much less than they had earlier in the day. While some children seemed to be initially confused or disoriented that their teachers were no longer speaking English to them, most children accepted without question their teacher's behavior and language. For example, English-speaking children happily sat through whole stories read in halting Spanish during choice time and witnessed Spanish-speaking children serving as resources to their teacher. Many child-centered activities (e.g., art, dramatic play, construction, etc.) appeared to be well facilitated using a few basic phrases in Spanish. Some English-speaking children were also observed

quietly repeating Spanish words within the first 2-3 weeks of the program.

A Spanish-learning Lead Teacher describes her experiences with the program,

> It was not as easy as I thought. I cope with my lack of Spanish by keeping a Spanish dictionary around and also I ask the children; they are my teachers. I just ask them, 'como se dice…?' and they teach me. I am learning from them… I am not as frustrated anymore. I have seen the successes and I think it's a great program. We are not wasting our time whatsoever. Our Spanish speakers feel very comfortable here. The English speakers feel comfortable. The program flows (Teacher G).

When asked what had been most surprising to her about teaching in TWIST, the same teacher responded,

> Having fun with the language -- the fun that the kids and us can have playing with the language. When you watch two kids and one is Hispanic and one is English-speaking, it is wonderful because you know that these two kids who may never have gotten together are doing so, and it is a good thing, a good start in their lives. I have not seen that before. In other experiences that I had before, it was not that *we* learned *their* language; they always had to learn English (Teacher G).

This view is echoed by the Spanish-speaking Lead Teacher, who commented that she was surprised by the interactions between Spanish-speaking and Spanish-learning children.

> Socially, they play together, with good interaction, lots of play; they don't care who speaks which language. You hear a lot of Spanish. A non-Spanish speaker and a Spanish speaker play together, I don't know how they communicate with each other, but they still play together (Teacher R).

A Language Reflector, an undergraduate student, reflecting on how the children communicate with each other across language boundaries, described their communication this way,

> It is through body language and pointing at things. They talk to each other. It's funny – one kid will be talking in Spanish and the other in English. They still know what they are saying to each other. But their response will always come from their language. Sometimes [the English-speaking children] will answer back in Spanish if they know the word (Language Reflector V).

A native Spanish-speaking Language Enrichment Teacher, discussing English-speaking children's experiences in the program, shares her perception,

> Something that is interesting is that the English speakers get a chance to learn what it feels like to not understand a language, or being different. They are now more aware of what it feels like for those kids that are learning the language (Teacher T).

It is this reversal of the power dynamic and the way English-speaking children are confronted with the valuing of Spanish

and Spanish speakers that best captures the goals of TWIST. As a Spanish-learning Lead Teacher reports,

> There is equal respect for both languages. The English speakers are not going to learn [much] Spanish, not now. But they are going to have an [open] attitude toward it. And hopefully maybe even an [open] attitude for all languages (Teacher G).

Acquisition of Spanish by the English-speaking children is a source of delight to parents and teachers, but the primary goal of the program is to counter – whether proactively or reactively – the dominance of English.

A Language Enrichment Teacher expressed her feeling that the Spanish-speaking children felt empowered in TWIST, compared to how they felt in their English immersion Head Start program, saying,

> I think the Spanish speakers like it most. The parents express that the kids like coming here, sometimes even more than going to Head Start. So they really, really like coming here and you can tell (Teacher T).

A Language Reflector feels strongly about TWIST's benefits, linguistic and otherwise for the Spanish-speaking children. He explains,

> There are a lot of things that we do that go far beyond the language. They learn social skills, such as approaching somebody that is different than they are…. Hey learn to sing, speak, plan and listen. It is way beyond the language. Language is a principal thing, but not all (Language Reflector V).

As we analyze TWIST data, we keep in mind questions of whose language is privileged, who is learning which language from whom, who is getting attention in particular contexts, especially attention from adults, and so forth. From interviews with TWIST adults, as well as from the videotape data, we find an increasing use of English by Spanish-speaking children over the course of the year. This phenomenon, pointing to the hegemony of English even in settings devoted to the use of a minority language, is quite common in studies of K-12 bilingual education programs, including DI programs. In contrast to many other settings, however, we also find many examples of Spanish being privileged, and of predominantly English-speaking children and adults learning Spanish from Spanish-speaking children, and of Spanish-speaking children receiving prolonged, positive attention from adults. These examples of the valuing of Spanish and Spanish speakers persist despite the intrusion of English.

Among our findings, from analysis of videotapes of interactions when Spanish-learning teachers shared Spanish-language storybooks, was the high level of engagement of all children during Spanish immersion stories. One episode, for example, conveyed how absorbed three English-speaking boys were in a Spanish-language story. We also noted how the Spanish-learning teacher turned to a Spanish-speaking boy for his Spanish expertise and how the teacher shifted her attention away from the three English-speaking boys to the Spanish-speaking boy.

In another story reading sequence, we noted a Spanish-speaking Lead Enrichment Teacher's physical inclusion

of a Spanish learner and heavy linguistic engagement with a Spanish-speaking child. She physically redirected and encouraged the Spanish-learning child to keep him interested in the book while talking with the Spanish-speaking child also sitting nearby. This teacher, when asked if she thought that kids who speak English or Spanish feel more or less comfortable with a teacher that speaks their language, responded,

> I don't think so. I was so surprised about this. When I first started, I thought that if I only spoke Spanish to the [English-speaking] kids, they would not develop a relationship with me. I thought that language would be a barrier. But I think the kids were able to see me as the teacher. And that was interesting (Teacher T).

Finally, we were interested in comments from the preschool director and several of the Lead Teachers, who noticed that there were far fewer conflicts between children during TWIST than typically occur in standard preschool settings. This was surprising, since these experienced educators had anticipated an increase in conflicts due to the mixing of linguistically and socially different groups. Still more interesting, perhaps, is that despite most adults' natural desire for low incidence of conflicts among children, it has been argued that conflict negotiation actually provides a rich and valuable opportunity for children in DI kindergarten programs to develop their second language proficiency (Hayes, 2002). We wonder whether and to what extent TWIST reduced conflicts among children, and whether that might in some way affect children's opportunities to stretch themselves, socially and linguistically, through conflict negotiation. It is also possible that the value of conflict and its negotiation is simply greater for children of kindergarten age, and in kindergarten settings.

As these examples indicate, the TWIST environment encourages both children and adults to change their perspectives, attitudes, and expectations with respect to language. By shifting power relationships, allowing alternative views of privileged language and challenging the knowledge of all participants, TWIST advances an alternative early childhood education model. It promotes what Cannella & Viruru (2004) call "decolonial practice":

> Decolonial practice must be emergent while at the same time planned, must be individual while at the same time community based, must recognize dominant discourses while at the same time turning them upside down (p. 124)

Theme Two: Linguistic Engagement and Language Play

While we are pleased to think that both groups of children could potentially become bilingual, we regret the tendency for English learners in this society to lose proficiency in their first language, a phenomenon that may be more common in children who undergo English immersion at younger ages (Wong Fillmore, 1991). TWIST teachers have observed the intrusion of English, despite their emphasis on Spanish.

> The Spanish speakers are learning more English than the English speakers are learning Spanish, but that is not the result of the program. That is probably the context, but also the kids from Head Start probably realize that English is powerful…. For example, when I ask them what

> they want to sing, the Spanish speakers will always bring an English song to sing, like the ABC song. They don't want to sing the Spanish songs and they know those songs. I'm beginning to feel that they think it is cooler to sing in English than in Spanish (Teacher T).

The data reveal many instances of Spanish learners using and playing with Spanish. Willingness to engage in language play in the new language reveals children's level of comfort with the 'strange' social and linguistic experience of TWIST. Several examples of this were reflected in a teacher journal kept by Teacher T, one of the Language Enrichment Teachers. During a recent interview, she made the following observations.

> The English speakers are becoming more and more comfortable with the new language. They feel more comfortable with not knowing everything, with the fact that they don't know everything that is being said. At the beginning of the year they were less comfortable.
>
> Now they try to listen, try to pay attention, try to extract some meaning. They use non-verbal clues. The kids that are more adaptable or willing to try, they just will try different things. They will try something in English to see if that will work.
>
> They are also starting to use Spanish words in their language. Like the other day this English-speaking child came to me and said, "I always like rojo." Or like, they would count to themselves in Spanish. They would be counting how many cookies they have, but in Spanish rather than English. I think that shows that Spanish is becoming part of their communication (Teacher T).

A Lead Teacher comments,

> It was interesting watching the [Spanish-learning] kids' transition from putting their hands over their ears and not wanting to listen to an acceptance. And then this year, the kids that are in their second year are actually using Spanish. They will use Spanish like in counting or the colors. They use little greetings. They learn the songs that Teacher T uses. They are finding joy in it and that makes it all worthwhile (Teacher G).

A Language Reflector adds,

> There were kids that at first they would say, "I hate Spanish," and all you do is speak Spanish to them. At the beginning it is always a challenge to establish a relationship and learning the kids' personalities. This kid that said he hated Spanish now sings everything with us. It is just that they don't understand it at first, but once they do, they are fine (Language Reflector V).

The mother of a second-year Spanish learner commented about her daughter, that "Spanish has become an important part of her identity." The child had an older sister who did not know Spanish, and who was learning Spanish words from her little sister. For this TWIST student, Spanish gave her a sort of "cultural capital" that her older sister

lacked. Similarly, another second-year Spanish learner was reported to teach Spanish to her younger sister at home.

Parents of Spanish learners have reported many other anecdotes of their children's uses, and sometimes misunderstandings, of Spanish outside of TWIST. A little boy complained one day, "the teachers always say *hola* to me, but my name is not Hola!" Another mother described a day when she was helping her older children to spell words in English, when her TWIST preschooler joined in.

> "Mom, what does 'e' mean?" I said, "Well, nothing really, all by itself." He corrected me, "Doesn't '*y*' mean 'and'?"

One child was reported to be thriving in the program despite her lack of proficiency in either English or Spanish. A Language Reflector described his surprise and delight this way,

> [She] is a Chinese girl that does not speak English or Spanish. But when you sing the songs, a week after she came in she was already singing the songs. Through ways of communication we were able to kind of get some sort of conversation going on without having to speak the same language. I thought that was pretty neat (Language Reflector V).

One day, both of the Spanish-speaking adults typically present in one of the classrooms were out sick. It was left to the Spanish-learning Lead Teacher to maintain a Spanish language environment, a challenge which she gamely met. She described her somewhat desperate, rather comical attempt to dredge up all the Spanish words she had at her disposal during circle time, and her sheer delight at the impact her efforts had on the children. The Spanish-speaking children did all they could to help her fill in the linguistic blanks, but so did the Spanish-learning children. The teacher was astonished at the intense interest and level of whole-hearted participation that were inspired by her obvious need, and stated that it was the most exciting and enlightening day she had experienced in all her years of teaching preschool.

More often, Spanish-learning children were observed trying out Spanish in quieter moments, reminiscent of reports from other settings where English learners quietly try out English words and phrases (Tabors, 1997). An example was a Spanish learner using the Spanish word for 'bird,' [pájaro], while waving his arms as if in flight and saying, "The pájaro flew!" Spanish learners were often heard counting and using color names in Spanish, as well as identifying animals, an apparent favorite being "*gato*" (cat)."

Based on many hours of videotape, interviews and anecdotal data, it would appear that most children participating in TWIST were quite comfortable with the larger "experiment" represented by this project. In other words, children appeared to feel safe and supported in their experimentation with both languages. Children frequently observed Spanish-learning adults grappling with how to express themselves in Spanish and joyfully playing with the new language. One Lead Teacher, in fact, succeeded in identifying with Spanish and the Spanish-speaking children, to the point of unconsciously developing a "Spanish persona," that included intonations and mannerisms. Similar to

notions of creating a "third space," (Bhabha, 1994; Soja, 1989) this teacher appeared to be able to transform herself in ways that allowed her to have a significant role in the improbable, yet possible world created by the TWIST program. Another third space aspect of the program was reflected by the many opportunities that native Spanish-speaking children had to be at home in TWIST; that is, to freely use their linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge in what would otherwise have been a hegemonic English immersion context. While taking place only three afternoons each week, the program did appear to offer a counter-hegemonic space and experience to Spanish speakers and Spanish learners alike.

Our as yet preliminary analyses of the natural language samples showed that the Spanish-speaking children learned a great deal of English over the course of a year, despite the time they spent in our all-Spanish environment. While we were not able to study a matched comparison group, it is clear that these children were not hampered in English acquisition by their education through Spanish, and their English may well have improved because of it, as has been consistently argued in the bilingual education research literature. While it remains to be determined to what extent very early introduction of English may lead to first language attrition, our inclusion of Spanish speaking children who were already enrolled in a daily English-language Head Start program was intended to bolster their Spanish as best we could in the time available. Although a careful examination of the linguistic development in English and Spanish of the students in our classrooms was not a focus of the present study, we found extensive evidence through analyzing videotaped interactions and teacher and parent interviews that the children were delighted to be able to interact in Spanish during our program, and remained comfortable doing so.

We also found that the English-speaking children were able to demonstrate the comprehension and production of Spanish words and phrases that they learned while in the TWIST program. Our analysis also showed that, contrary to popular conceptions of very young children as "language-learning sponges," their linguistic gains were hardly impressive in and of themselves. Given that the Spanish-speaking children attended a daily English-language Head Start program, the Spanish-speaking children received considerably more second language instruction than the English-speaking TWIST children did, but neither group of children simply "soaked up" a new language and became proficient over the course of the academic year. This finding is consistent with others where it is commonly found that children beginning English instruction in kindergarten acquired English no more rapidly than older children (grades 1-3), and required an average of 3.31 years to reach parity in English with native English speakers (MacSwan & Pray, 2005, and work referenced there).

We began the TWIST program by explaining to teachers and parents that English speaking children were not expected to learn Spanish as a result of the program but rather were likely to become comfortable hearing Spanish and to enjoy interacting with Spanish speakers, a notable counter-hegemonic goal in our ethnically-stratified region. Our findings support our claims in this regard, although many of the English-

speaking children learned Spanish words and phrases enough to delight their parents and themselves. While Spanish-language instruction is not easy to obtain for young children in our state, the children's exposure to Spanish laid an excellent foundation for the additional years of Spanish instruction that would be required for them to develop full proficiency.

Lessons Learned

We learned a great deal from the first year's implementation of TWIST and made many improvements for the second year, from insisting that prospective TWIST personnel have stronger theoretical background and/or experience in early childhood and that teachers improve their understandings of language development and acquisition, to better predicting and preparing for Spanish-learning children's initial negative responses to an all-Spanish language environment. One important change from the first year of TWIST to the second involved having the English-speaking children visit the Spanish-speaking children in the Head Start site before the TWIST program began. Due to site constraints, TWIST occurred in the COE Preschool, where some of the children felt it was their home turf, perhaps because they were also there in the mornings. Still, it was not quite in the typical position of "integration" always happening on the dominant group's turf, since many of the English-speaking children were not there outside of TWIST time either. Because the English-speaking children were at the site in the mornings, when only English was used, it sometimes seemed to them that the language minority children were intruding into their space, bringing Spanish time with them. TWIST's approach was to start by taking the language majority children to the fun, highly-appealing Head Start setting to strengthen the Head Start children's status. This introduction of the children to each other on the Spanish-speaking children's "territory" had a noticeably positive impact on how the two groups of children viewed each other, according to the COE preschool director and to TWIST teachers.

Just a few days into the first year of the program, we noticed a fundamental lack in the Spanish language environment. Whereas Spanish-speaking children and a Spanish-speaking teacher typically suffice to promote Spanish instruction in typical K-5 DI classrooms, the tender age and lack of school experience of preschoolers resulted in a heavy burden of language production falling on the lone Spanish-speaking teacher. Children tended to be unresponsive, Spanish speakers and English speakers alike. Additional Spanish-speaking adults were clearly necessary to sustain full and engaging linguistic interactions. Hence, the addition of Language Reflectors, typically undergraduate native Spanish-speaking students, who played the critical role of reflecting Spanish back to teachers and children, ensured a back-and-forth model of interaction for children to follow.

After four years of experience with this preschool DI program, the experimental TWIST program ended for logistical reasons, to the great disappointment of parents, in particular. Because TWIST took place in a university/lab school setting, perhaps the greatest challenge to the TWIST program was the incessant turnover of staff who were, of necessity, undergraduate or graduate students. If we had the means and the opportunity to develop a preschool without the university

constraints we faced, hiring all our own teachers and recruiting the ideal mix of students (half of them English speakers and half Spanish speakers), we would leap at the chance to create a full-time, full-fledged TWIST program. Despite initial reservations about teachers who were not Spanish speakers, and some difficulty with adults who lacked sufficient preschool teaching experience, we were extremely pleased with all that the children, teachers, and other adults learned as a result of this program, and particularly pleased with the counter-hegemonic experiment represented by TWIST. We would definitely encourage other intrepid preschools to consider adopting a similar program, assuming they had the capacity to train and retain qualified bilingual staff as permanent Lead Teachers.

Future Questions and Directions

TWIST's initial two years raised many new questions and led us in important directions for the future. Some key questions we have continued to explore include the following: Are there fewer conflicts in TWIST than in typical preschool classes, and could this be related to the language learning environment? Do typical gender divisions in children's play still hold across language differences? That is, does gender trump all else for peer interaction preferences of preschool children? Does free-play time provide a linguistic "respite" for English-speaking children, who are more consistently immersed during large group activities, rug times, etc.? What factors influence some native Spanish-speaking children to shift away from using Spanish? What does English "slippage" mean in this context?

As mentioned above, it has been argued that early English immersion exacerbates native language loss (Tabors, 1997; Wong Fillmore, 1991). Even bilingual schooling may have little success in slowing children's adoption of English as their preferred language (Veltman, 1983), although many studies rely primarily on subtractive, transitional models rather than an additive, developmental bilingual schooling model such as DI for their data. Is it possible for a one- or two-year preschool DI program, in and of itself, to slow native language loss? Perhaps not; it is likely that several more years of DI would be required. Still, might TWIST children receive some sort of long-term benefit relating to language maintenance (in language minority children), foreign language acquisition (in language majority children), or improved self-esteem and anti-bias perspectives (in both groups)? Is TWIST's counter-hegemonic message internalized and/or visibly operationalized in observable ways by its participants? To answer this question, longitudinal data is required.

A generation ago, even during the heyday of bilingual education, relatively few children (a maximum of 30% of English learners who might have benefited from bilingual education) were provided with opportunities to develop bilingualism and biliteracy in school (Thompson, Di Cerbo, Mahoney & MacSwan, 2002). Today, DI is the only form of bilingual education likely to survive the increased anti-bilingual campaigns. Dual immersion is made possible through grass-roots organization, and must by necessity involve parents and communities. Historically, DI has struggled to involve parents from both constituent groups equally, with middle-class English-speaking parents typically enjoying the

advantages of more time and resources to contribute to the success of these programs; the most successful programs tend to be those where the two populations are both able to participate. The alliance of these two populations, cemented through their years of DI integration in schools and bolstered by concerted efforts toward unity, could serve to twist English-only school policies inside-out. Dual immersion can present a truly counter-hegemonic approach to education, one which provides children a foundation for future understandings of language difference and shifting power dynamics.

References

Adger, C. T., Snow, C. E., & Christian, D. (Eds.). (2002). *What teachers need to know about language*. McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems Co., Inc.

Adger, C.T., Wolfram, W. & Christian, D. (2007). *Dialects in schools and communities (2nd edition)*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum & Associates.

Baker, K. & deKanter, A. (1981). *Effectiveness of bilingual education: A review of the literature*, final report. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Education.

Bhabha, H.K. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.

Bialystok, E. (2007). Acquisition of literacy in bilingual children: A framework for research. *Language Learning, 57* (1), 45-77.

Bredekamp, S. (2002). Language and early childhood programs. In C. T. Adger, C. E. Snow & D. Christian (Eds.), *What Teachers Need to Know about Language* (pp.55-67). McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems Co., Inc.

Brisk, M.E. (2006). *Bilingual education: From compensatory to quality schooling (2nd ed.).* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cain, C. (2005). (Re)writing Inequality: Language of Crisis Implications in California Education Reform. In T. McCarty (Ed.), *Language, literacy and power in schooling,* (pp. 263-282). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Canella, G. S., & R. Viruru. (2004). *Childhood and postcolonization: Power, education, and contemporary practice.* New York: Routledge Falmer.

Cazabon, M., W. E. Lambert, & G. Hall. (1993). *Two-way bilingual education: A progress report on the Amigos Program*. National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning. Santa Cruz, CA.

Christian, D., Howard, E.R., & Loeb, M.I. (2000). Bilingualism for all: Two-way immersion education in the United States. *Theory into Practice, 39*(4), 258-266.

Derman-Sparks, L. (1989). *Anti-bias curriculum: Tools for empowering young children.* Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Edelsky, C. (1990). *With literacy and justice for all: Rethinking the social in language and education.* London: The Falmer Press.

Freeman, R.D. (1998). *Bilingual education and social change*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, Ltd.

Hayes, R. (2002, 1-5 April). *Play and conflict: Secrets of bilingual language acquisition in a dual language kindergarten.* Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), New Orleans.

Hernandez-Chavez, E. (1984). Submersion of language minority students. In California State Department of Education (Ed.), Studies on Immersion Education (pp.114-144). Los Angeles, CA: California State Department of Education.

Holobow, N. E., Genesee, F., & Lambert, W. E. (1991). The effectiveness of a foreign language immersion program for children from different ethnic and social class backgrounds: Report 2. *Applied Psycholinguistics 12*, 179-198.

Howard, E., & Sugarman, J. (2007). *Realizing the vision of two-way immersion: Fostering effective programs and classrooms.* Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Lambert, W. E. (1987). The effects of bilingual and bicultural experiences on children's attitudes and social perspectives. In P. Homel, M. Palij, and D. Aaronson (Eds.), *Childhood bilingualism: Aspects of linguistic, cognitive and social development* (pp. 197-221). Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lara-Alecio, R., Galloway, M., Irby, B. J., Rodríguez, L., & Gomez, L. (2004). Two-way immersion bilingual programs in Texas. *Bilingual Research Journal, 28*(1), 35-54.

Lindholm, K. J. (1990). Bilingual immersion education: Criteria for program development. In A. M. Padilla, H. H. Fairchild, and C. M. Valdez (Eds.), *Bilingual education: Issues and strategies* (pp. 91-105). Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Lindholm, K. J. & Fairchild, H. H. (1990). Evaluation of an elementary school bilingual immersion program. In A. M. Padilla, H. H. Fairchild, and C. M. Valadez (Eds.) *Bilingual Education: Issues and Strategies* (pp. 126-136). Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

MacSwan, J. (2000). The Threshold Hypothesis, semilingualism, and other contributions to a deficit view of linguistic minorities. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 20*(1), 3-45.

MacSwan, J., & Pray, L. (2005). Learning English bilingually: Age of onset of exposure and rate of acquisition of English among children in a bilingual education program. *Bilingual Research Journal, 29*(3), 687-712.

MacSwan, J., & Rolstad, K. (2003). Linguistic diversity, schooling, and social class: Rethinking our conception of language proficiency in language minority education. In C. B. Paulston & G. R. Tucker (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: The Essential Readings* (pp.329-340). Cambridge: Blackwell.

Marsh, M.M. (1992). Implementing antibias curriculum in the kindergarten classroom. In S. Kessler & B.B. Swadener (Eds.). Reconceptualizing the

early childhood curriculum: Beginning the dialogue (pp. 267-288). New York: Teachers College Press.

Martin-Jones, M., & Romaine, S. (1986). Semilingualism: A half-baked theory of communicative competence. *Applied Linguistics, 7*(1), 26-38.

NAEYC. (2005). www.naeyc.org/about/positions/ELL.asp

Proctor, C.P., August, D., Carlo, M.S., & Snow, C. (2006). The intriguing role of Spanish language vocabulary knowledge in predicting English reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98* (1), 159-169.

Ramirez, J. D., Yuen, S. D., & Ramey, D. R. (1991). *Longitudinal study of structured English immersion strategy, early-exit and late-exit transitional bilingual programs for language-minority children*. Final Report to the U.S. Department of Education. Executive Summary and Vols. I and II. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International.

Rice, M.L., & Wilcox, K.A. (1995). *Building a language-focused curriculum for the preschool classroom: Vol.1. A foundation for lifelong communication*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Romaine, S. (1989). *Bilingualism.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Rolstad, K. (in press). Immersion education. In J. Gonzalez (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Bilingual Education*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publishers.

Rolstad, K., Mahoney, K., & Glass, G. V. (2005a). The big picture: Meta-analysis and the question of the effectiveness of bilingual education. *Educational Policy*, 19, 572-594.

Rolstad, K., Mahoney, K., & Glass, G. V. (2005b). Weighing the evidence: A meta-analysis of bilingual education in Arizona. *Bilingual Research Journal, 29*(1), 43-67.

Rolstad, K., Swadener, E., & Nakagawa, K. (2004, 12-16 April). Verde- sometimes we call it green: Construal of language difference and power in a preschool dual immersion program. (Unpublished) paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

Saville-Troike, M. (1987). Dilingual discourse: The negotiation of meaning without a common code. *Linguistics, 25*, 81-106.

Soja, E. (1989). *Postmodern geographies: The reassertion of space in critical social theory*. NY: Verso, 1989.

Soto, L.D. (2002). *Making a difference in the lives of young bilingual children*. New York: Peter Lang Publishers.

Snow, C. (1983). Age differences in second language acquisition: Research findings and folk psychology. In K. Bailey, M. Long, & S. Peck (Eds.), *Second language acquisition studies* (pp. 141-150). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Swadener, B.B. (1988). Implementation of education that is multicultural in early childhood settings: A case study of two day-care programs. *Urban Review, 20*(1), 8-27.

Swadener, B.B. & Lubeck, S. (1995). *Children and families "at promise": Deconstructing the discourse of risk.*

Albany: State University of New York Press.

Tabors, P.O. (1997). *One child, two languages: A guide for preschool educators of children learning English as a second language.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Tabors, P. O., & Snow, C. E. (2001). Young bilingual children and early literacy development. In S. B. Neuman, & D. K. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research* (pp. 159-178). New York: Guilford.

Thompson, M. S., DiCerbo, K., Mahoney, K. S., & MacSwan, J. (2002). ¿Éxito en California? A validity critique of language program evaluations and analysis of English learner test scores. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 10*(7), entire issue. Available at http://epaa.asu.edu /epaa/v10n7/.

Veltman, C. (1983). *Language shift in the United States*. New York: Mouton

Wiley, T. G. (1996). *Literacy and language diversity in the United States*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.

Wiley, T.G. & Wright, W.E. (2004). Against the undertow: Language-minority education policy and politics in the "age of accountability. *Educational Policy, 18*(1), 142-168.

Winsler, A., Diaz, R.M., Espinosa, L., & Rodriguez, J.L. (1999). When learning a second language does not mean losing the first: Bilingual language development in low income, Spanish-speaking children attending bilingual preschool. *Child Development, 70*(2), 349-362.

Wong Fillmore, L. (1991). When learning a second language means losing the first. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 6*, 323-346.

Wright, W. E., & Choi, D. (2006). The impact of language and high-stakes testing policies on elementary school English language learners in Arizona. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 14*(13). Available at http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v14n13/

[i] Although the variety of Spanish spoken in these communities is sometimes socially stigmatized, parents and other native speakers are nonetheless perfectly competent and proficient language users, providing an appropriate model of language for their children.