

Pedagogy, Language Development and Assessment Practices in a Middle School Social Studies Dual-Language Classroom

Dual-Language programs have been identified as a powerful form of educating multilingual students (Babino, 2017; Steele et al., 2017). One impactful component of dual-language programs are teachers and the extent to which their ideologies around language impact their practice. Many studies exist documenting the role of teachers and language development in dual-language programs, though few at the secondary level (Ramirez & Ross, 2019). Moreover, few studies focus on dual-language programs with a majority-minority school population. As interest in multilingualism and dual-language education grows (leading to program expansion into upper grades) and as the U.S. student population becomes increasingly diverse (Park, 2018), there is a need to document how middle and high school teacher ideology around language impacts their teaching within the unique context of post-elementary dual-language education (Freeman, 2000).

This study aims to qualitatively understand how a seventh-grade social studies teacher understands language and bilingualism, and the impact of these beliefs on her classroom practices specifically tied to language development. The study takes place in a university affiliated K-12 community school in a large urban school district in Southern California. Serving an overwhelmingly multilingual student population (Spanish, Korean, Urdu), the school recently began to expand its 10-year-old elementary Spanish Dual-Language program into the middle and high school, as part of an effort to build a multilingual, translanguaging space that seeks to honor students' various languages and linguistic experiences (García, 2017).

This research is part of a co-designed research-practice partnership in which a problem of practice is formulated between the researcher and the practitioner. Guided by Ramirez and Ross's (2019) framework for secondary dual-language education, the teacher implements strategies to foment oral language within a multilingual, Spanish/English-dominant classroom of students with diverse language experiences. This framework is used as a guide for language development because it attends to the importance of second language development yet is general enough to accommodate translanguaging practices and to allow varied forms of activities to develop oral and written language. The study documents the use of these strategies and seeks to understand the process of implementation and the teacher's understanding of her students' languages through their development of writing and oral language development in Spanish. This study draws on multiple sources of data including teacher interviews,

classroom observations, student written samples, and student reflections to qualitatively document the impact of oral language development activities on student written and oral language use in Spanish in a content area. Additionally, it uses end-of-unit and end-of-year assessments in Spanish in combination with standardized tests in both English and Spanish to create a bilingual profile for each student (Hopewell & Escamilla, 2014).

Limitations include the focus on a single teacher, and therefore a single experience in a dual-language program. Moreover, the setting of the school (as a university-affiliated community school) is unique in the context of the large public school district in which it is located. Nevertheless, the study contributes to the sparse field of dual-language research in post-elementary grades, in language development in a language other than English, in the application of translanguaging within dual-language settings, and finally in dual-language programs that serve exclusively minority and multilingual students. Moreover, as a research-practice partnership, the study benefits from collaboration between a researcher and teacher in understanding how ideology impacts practice.

References

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