

TWO-WAY/ DUAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION: THEN AND NOW

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, San Jose State University

Imagine a program that could provide the best of bilingual education for ELL students combined with the best of foreign language programs (e.g., immersion programs) for native English-speaking children, making both groups bilingual, biliterate and academically successful in the same classroom environment. That was a relatively new concept back in the 1980s. Since then, two-way/dual language programs have become increasingly popular in the U.S. They have grown from just one program in 1962 to possibly as many as 1,000 or maybe more programs in public schools across the country. While this only represents a small percentage of schools, the increasing popularity of these programs is not surprising. Bilingualism has received considerable attention more recently with research

showing its positive impact on the brain and other research showing its positive effect on students' educational success. Two-way/dual language students score as high or higher on state standardized achievement tests compared to their peers in English monolingual classrooms.

To better understand two-way/dual language education, it's important to have some knowledge of the historical context in which it developed.

Then—The Early Days:

There were some prominent issues in the 1960s-1980s that prompted a resurgence of interest in bilingual education. Of course, we know there were a variety of social movements associated with the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, part

of which spearheaded the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1968. The purpose of this Act was to provide federal funding to help school districts establish innovative educational programs for students with limited English-speaking ability. There was also pressure exerted by the important *Lau vs. Nichols* case in 1974, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that students who spoke a language other than English have the *right* to comprehensible instruction that promotes learning. In addition, in the 1970s, Canada (especially Quebec) was developing French immersion programs for native English-speaking children and showing that these programs promoted bilingualism and educational success.



Initial demand for two-way programs was heightened in the 1980s by U.S. government interest in developing more effective programs for ELL students,—who were failing to learn English proficiently and were underachieving—and for more effective foreign language programs for native English-speaking students. In the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. government provided considerable support for the expansion of bilingual programs in a variety of ways that had significant impacts on two-way/dual language programs in five important ways: 1) Research/resource centers were established that provided technical assistance to schools offering bilingual instruction; 2) Federal Title VII funding provided universities with scholarship funds for potential bilingual teachers and with greater incentive to improve their bilingual teacher credentialing and training programs; 3) Title VII funds were established to help schools plan and implement new programs or to improve older programs; 4) there were Title VII Academic Excellence and Dissemination competitive grants awarded to exceptional two-way/dual

language programs, which enabled these schools to provide technical assistance to new programs; and 5) Research grants were available to researchers interested in studying issues of importance for the greater educational success of ELL students.

In addition, in those early years (1980s – 1990s), various states (especially California) also provided funding or other technical assistance to improve two-way/dual language instruction and programming, which enabled many schools to develop, implement and evaluate the success of their two-way/dual language program.

In 1985, the Center for Language Education and Research (CLER) was funded by the US Department of Education at UCLA with various university partnerships and the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) in Washington, DC. Part of its contract with the federal government was to identify any existing two-way/dual language programs, to provide technical assistance and research guidance on the potential effectiveness of this new program, and to help pilot

schools interested in implementing this new program. The first directory of two-way/dual language programs was established with a total of 30 programs (Lindholm, 1987) and the Center for Applied Linguistics has continued to update the directory over the past couple decades [<http://www.cal.org/twi/directory/index.html>]. Other states, such as California and Texas, also maintain a directory of their programs.

In the late 1980s, several two-way/dual language programs were developed and implemented in California. The Bilingual Education Office, within the California Department of Education (CDE), received federal government Title VII funds to help with the initial planning, implementation, further training, and evaluation of two-way/dual language programs. From the first five schools that were selected, a state-wide initiative was begun with many more two-way/dual language programs. Now there are some 200+ programs in the State of California.

California was not the only state that was developing new two-way/



dual language programs, but because of the leadership provided by CLER at UCLA and CDE with both training and evaluation/research, there were more programs being developed and more research that substantiated their success. In the 1990s, the Two-Way CABE affiliate within CABE was formed with the first of many annual conferences focused exclusively on two-way program training and research. Even in those early days, research was clear in demonstrating that students in two-way/dual language programs were developing bilingual and biliteracy, as well as academic, proficiencies similar to those reported in the research for traditional bilingual programs and traditional immersion programs (Lindholm-Leary, 2001).

Changes that Impacted Two-Way/Dual Language:

With a cadre of schools and evaluation results pointing to successful educational outcomes for both ELL and native English-speaking students in the 1990s and into the new millennium, the two-way/dual language program became more popular with newspaper, magazine and journal articles that interested educators, parents, community members, business leaders, and policy makers. In addition, English-speaking parents in many communities were involved in advocating for dual language programs so that their children could participate in these programs that were considered to be effective foreign language programs.

The new century and millennium (remember Y2K?) dawned with some enthusiasm for bilingual and foreign language programs, and then U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley stated “I am delighted to see and highlight the growth and promise of so many dual-language bilingual programs across the country... They are the wave of the future... That is why I am challenging our nation to increase the number of dual-language schools to at least 1000 over the next five years, and with strong federal, state and local support, we can have many more.” (Riley, 2000). This speech was followed by federal funding specifically for two-way/dual language programs, though the funding was short-lived. Furthermore, many states were mandating foreign language instruction for their children.

This era should have led to considerable support for two-way/dual language programs, with additional funding for teacher training, implementation, and research, right? Sadly, no. The English-Only Movement took hold, impacting California and several other states, trying hard to dismantle all types of bilingual programs. While most two-way/dual language programs survived the effort to

erode instruction in languages other than English, the cry for English-Only heralded an era of broad changes that impacted two-way and other bilingual/biliteracy programs. The federal Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA) was changed to the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), and similar name changes and intent occurred in legislation (e.g., Title VII was changed to Title III which focused on English language proficiency and did not mention bilingual at all), federal and state agencies (e.g., National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education changed to National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition), and other state departments of education. In addition, the accountability requirements forged by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 placed undue burdens on two-way/dual language programs to produce literacy and language proficiency results in English from early grade levels, with no accountability or concern for second language proficiency.

Despite this roller coaster of support and challenges, two-way/dual language programs have survived and continue to expand.

Now—Successes and Challenges:

While most two-way/dual language programs include Spanish as the partner language, there is growing demand for other languages as well, particularly in Mandarin; currently, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Russian, French, German, Portuguese, and Italian are other partner languages. More recently, with increasing interest and connections with China, parents, business and community leaders, and policy makers in some communities have pushed for more Mandarin programs. For example, the State of Utah leads the nation in Mandarin programs, with passing of legislation to establish 100 dual language programs enrolling 30,000 students throughout the state by 2015, though the target date has been moved up to 2014. While Utah partner languages may include Spanish, Portuguese, and French, there is a strong commitment to Mandarin. Mandarin is also emerging as a popular partner, due to assistance in funding through the Confucius Institute for non-profit public institutions aligned with the Chinese government’s goal to support Chinese language and culture.

Support for two-way/dual language education has changed dramatically in the past 30 years. Originally, there was considerable funding to help schools develop and implement a program; to provide pre-service and in-service



training; and to fund evaluation and research studies that examined important issues, such as an examination of the critical features and instructional practices associated with student success. Now, support – but usually not funding – is provided by a variety of local, state, and national professional organizations (or school districts or county offices of education) that provide conferences or workshops. Unfortunately, there is little funding for teachers or administrators to attend these conferences or for school leaders to provide the range of professional development for teachers and administrators that is necessary for quality implementation. Further, there is little funding for research and evaluation activities to better understand what strategies and practices work best and for whom. Thus, there is considerable experimentation with the two-way/dual language model, some of which may be beneficial, but some of which may be detrimental.

Nonetheless, the research results have remained fairly consistent over the past 30 years; considerable research has been conducted on both the 90:10 and the 50:50 programs in public (and public charter) schools from preschool through high school. Research includes different geographic locations around the US, schools in richer, middle class, and poorer communities; schools in rural, urban, inner city, and suburban areas; students from different ethnic, socio-economic, language backgrounds, and also includes students with various disabilities. Despite these wide variations in communities, schools, and students, results are quite consistent in showing that both native English-speaking and ELL students who participate in two-way/dual language programs achieve at levels that are at least comparable to, and often higher than, their peers enrolled in English-only instruction on standardized tests of achievement and language proficiency in English; but, two-way/dual language students have the additional benefit in that they are also bilingual and biliterate. Furthermore, native English-speaking and ELL students who attain the highest levels of bilingualism tend to score at higher levels of achievement on standardized tests of reading and math compared to English-speaking students enrolled in English monolingual classrooms. However, research clearly demonstrates that these successful results are not always apparent until grade 4 or 5, especially for children who are educationally at risk, because it takes time for children to fully develop the two languages and thus to score at high levels on achievement tests that require considerable proficiency in the two languages.

Thus, while programs continue to expand and results continue to show success, we need to advocate for two-way/dual language education to receive more support. We need school-community-business partnerships from pre-K through college to support children and their families at all levels of education, to provide program alignment and also community opportunities to use the languages being learned. We need materials for classrooms and libraries and homes in the various languages that are offered. Expansion efforts in two-way/dual language require more teachers and administrators who are trained in content, in the two-way/dual language model, and who have full bilingual/biliterate proficiencies. We need to help parents become advocates for their children and communities as well, both native English speakers and target language speakers.

Imagine a nation in which all children have access to high quality two-way/dual language programs and all children could become bilingual, biliterate, and educationally successful. It will require our advocacy efforts, but we can get there! 🌱

Contact the author: klinholmleary@mac.com

Full versions of the articles available online:

http://www.bilingualeducation.org/resources_public_educator.php



California Association for Bilingual Education

WWW.BILINGUALEDUCATION.ORG