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The history and nature of immersion programs in American context

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Abstract

The presented paper tends to reveal the value of recently implemented dual language instruction for minority children in the United States of America and addresses the categorization of various theoretical models of dual language instruction. Americans have experienced a public attention to "language problems, which caused some radical changes in policies for educating language minority children and bilingual education programs. These policy shifts were caused by struggles over social dominance among cultural and ethnic groups within the larger society" (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Searching for the sources about the topic showed that the effort to create a social and political atmosphere in which cultural and linguistic diversity are not only accepted but also truly valued is a difficult one. The ideology of cultural and linguistic assimilation and the relative power and status of speakers of different world languages among mainstream, immigrant, and minority populations have created conflicting social and political agendas that play themselves out in reform initiatives in public schools. Bilingualism and bilingual education in the United States became the subject of renewed controversy as schools felt the impact of increasing immigration to the United States. As recent attention and validation has been directed toward Foreign Language and the National Foreign Language Standards that call for communicative competence, many schools are turning to dual language education to strengthen second language proficiency among students in the United States. It results in creating immersion programs as a viable means of second language acquisition and effective schooling practices for language majority and minority students in the United States of America.

Keywords: Dual Language Programs, Immersion, immigrants, majority and minority languages, elementary and secondary schools

Introduction

As with many other complex concepts, dual language education that situates within an additive bilingual education framework does not have a clear-cut definition. Much like other models of bilingual education, dual language is also known as developmental bilingual education, bilingual immersion, double immersion, bilingual enrichment, and two-way immersion (Baker, 2001). Dual language education is defined as a long-term additive bilingual and bicultural program model that consistently uses two languages in one classroom. The first instructional steps are found in the nineteenth century, when non-English or dual language instruction was offered in more than a dozen states in a variety of languages including German, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Dutch, Polish, Italian, Czech, French and Spanish (Ovando & Colier, 1985). Formal schooling was locally administered by Native Americans only insofar as the U.S. government allowed. Where locally controlled education was permitted, Native American communities often provided dual language instruction. In this article , language majority students refer to speakers of English, since in the context of the United States English is the language used by the majority of the population, and language minority students refers to speakers whose first language is not English and who use their native language as the primary vehicle of communication. The terms "majority" and "minority" are in no way intended to imply that one language is superior or inferior to any other language; rather, they are used in reference to the number of individuals using each language in the context of the United States. The majority of bilingual and dual language programs in the United States are offered in Spanish and English (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2002). Spanish is undoubtedly the language most commonly used in the United States after English. Although attention may, on occasion, be focused on Spanish-English dual language programs, the discussions are here for the most part applicable to programs that use other languages. Schools that use languages other than Spanish do, however, experience certain constraints that are not as apparent for Spanish language programs, such as a scarcity of certified bilingual teachers and shortages of instructional materials in the minority languages.

Historical Background of Immersion Programs

In the United States, particularly in California bilingual education has become a debatable topic since the schools experienced the large influx of immigration wave. Conflicting social and political environment caused by cultural and linguistic assimilation in mainstream, immigrant, and minority populations play a vi-

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tal role in reformation of public schools. California's Proposition 227, which passed in 1998 with a 61% majority vote, is an adequate example of these social misbalances. As Los Angeles Times/CNN Exit Poll (1998) indicates: 'Proposition 227 severely restricted bilingual education for the state's 1.4 million students classified as limited English proficient (LEP), among which 82% are native speakers of Spanish. The law was rejected by Latino voters by a 2 to 1 margin almost the mirror image of support for the proposition among the majority of White voters who identified themselves as conservative'.

Proposition 227 demanded the establishment of intensive English language instruction ("structured English immersion" (SEI), which covered only one year. The program was designed for limited English proficient students and the instruction was conducted in the primary language of those students. It is thought-provoking to stress out the requirements of Proposition 227 regarding language minority students, which was not consistently hinged on a theoretical model within the sound language teaching practices. On the contrary, it was based on the language implementation policy, which aimed to impose a de-contextualized procedural model of second language instruction in local school districts through legal mandate (Sahagun, 1999).

Proposition 227 limited the existence of theoretical models of dual language instruction, including transitional bilingual education, dual immersion, and content-based foreign language instruction (Johnson & Swain, 1997). This tendency restricted the educational needs of a number of students and their learning opportunities through native language instruction in dual language classes. The students did not have a right to have an access to sound second language acquisition. In the reports of California Department of Education (1999), an essential piece of information can be cut out:

> Prior to passage of Proposition 227 only 29% of California's language minority students received instruction in a language other than English through transitional bilingual education programs. Following Proposition 227, the number of students in bilingual programs enrolled through the parental waiver process dropped to 12%. Students whose parents did not choose to waive Proposition 227's mandatory one year of intensive English before entering mainstream classrooms were enrolled in SEI programs. Nine percent of California's teachers provide primary language instruction to English language learners in programs under parental waivers. The other 91% of teachers are legally prohibited by law from using students' L1 as a medium of instruction in the classroom (p.54).
> instruction in the classroom (p.54).

Different models of dual language instruction indicate a great importance for my article and I will assess the existing bilingual background of American schools addressing the growing interest and need for creating positive cross-cultural environment among majority and minority students. Despite the attitudes of reductionism and power imbalances among ethnic communities in a divergent society, the paper appreciates the sound principles of second language acquisition and effective schooling practices for language minority students. In dual immersion program, which means the participation of both language majority and minority students in the same classroom, the issues connected to language status for different linguistic groups are important indicators of program outcomes. As Cummins (2000) writes: 'The outcomes of dual language programs for language minority populations demonstrate that long-term persistent underachievement of language minority students cannot be ameliorated by addressing linguistic factors in the absence of conscientious efforts to also affect issues of status and power '(p. 178)

These programs provide a minimum of six years of bilingual instruction in which students from the two language backgrounds are integrated in most or all of their content instruction. Both languages are separated for instruction and the use of minority language at least 50% of the instructional time and as much as 90% in the early grades. ESL students are exposed to the standards-based curriculum, which leads to full language proficiency and mastery of content. Two-way bilingual programs are inclusive and integrated education for all the students in contrast with the segregated, exclusive education offered in TBE or ESL pullout programs. Two-way programs are considered equitable educational programs that treat all students as equal members of the school community. They can also become educational reform tools as school become transformed by increases in the numbers of ESL students who bring the richness of linguistic and cultural diversity with them to school. As whole-school reform tools, two-way program goals are to: a) promote native language literacy skills and balanced bilingualism; b) enrich with a quality program design for standards-based education; c) educate first-class students to achieve at the highest levels; d) do justice to the two languages and cultures based on a well-designed infrastructure and e) dispel the myth and mindset as an enrichment, rather than a remedial, bilingual program before and during program implementation. Recent research evidence points to two-way bilingual programs as beneficial in the reading achievement of ESL students (Cummins, 2001).

The actual implementation of dual language education is different from school to school in the States. Students' demographics, parental expectations and support, teacher beliefs and qualifications, and administrative leadership all contribute to shape the design and direction of a dual language program.

Two-Way Immersion Programs

In today's pedagogical world, two-way immersion programs are regarded as academically innovative step in education. In this model, monolingual English-speak-

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ing chil¬dren are engrossed in a second language together with limited English proficient children who are native speakers of the second language. English is introduced gradually until it comprises about 50 percent of the curriculum. The model is actually a combination of maintenance bilingual instruction for LEP (English proficient children) students and immersion instruction for monolingual English speakers. The strength of this approach is that it aims at addi¬tive bilingualism for all the students involved. The goals of a two-way immersion pro-gram are bilingualism and biliteracy for all students. According to Thomas and Collier (1997), the following factors are present in suc¬cessful two-way immersion programs:

- Students participate for at least six years.
- The ratio of speakers of each language is balanced.
- Languages are carefully separated.
- The minority language is emphasized in the early grades.
- Instruction is excellent and emphasizes core academics.
- Parents have a strong, positive relationship with the school.

The history of two-way immersion model has commenced in San Diego, California, in 1975, and has been replicated almost in all states. Higgs (1991) regards River Glen Elementary School, in northern California, where 'a linguistically heterogeneous group of kindergarten children starts school each year in a classroom where Spanish is used 90 percent of the time and English 10 percent of the time. By fifth grade, English and Spanish are each used 50 percent of the time in class. The program at River Glen was started as part of a mag¬net school desegregation program and has been extremely successful in attracting an ethnically diverse student population' (p.35).

Two-way immersion programs address an issue that has surfaced in research on traditional programs. In traditional programs, the teacher is the only native speaker in the classroom. Native-like language input is therefore somewhat limited, and stu¬dents in interaction with each other tend to develop what might be characterized as a classroom pidgin of the target language. Because two-way immersion classrooms mix students from both language groups, all students have many opportunities to interact with native speakers, which enhance their chances to develop native-like proficiency in their new language.

The collected data has indicated that two-way immersion program is a suitable model for America's diverse society. The model backs the use of primary language of language minority stu¬dents, and offers an enrichment program to English speakers. Results of longitudinal studies indicate that students in these programs **'achieve high levels of bilingualism as well as high levels of academic competence in their subject areas'**(Guido, 1995; Lindholm, 1994). Another important outcome of two-way immersion programs is that students not only speak each other's languages, they learn to appreciate and respect each other's culture.

Total or Partial Immersion

Political pressure in the United States to move away from primary language instruc¬tion has resulted in experimentation with English immersion programs, sometimes called structured immersion, for minority students. One important lon¬gitudinal study of English immersion indicates that it is less successful for minority language students than bilingual education with native language support (Ramirez, Pasta, Ramey, & Yuen, 1991).

I would like to apply to the most prominent immersion programs implemented in American schools: **total immersion and partial immersion**. The primary distinction between these two models is the amount of time assigned to each language for instruction at each grade. (See Table 1.1) In the total immersion model, the amount of instruction in the minority language is initially greater than in the majority language, usually 80% to 90% of the time in the primary grades, with English instruction increasing by each level until students receive equal amounts of instruction in both language instructions by the intermediate grades. In the partial immersion model, on the other hand, the minority and majority languages are used equally for instruction in all levels. In addition, total immersion programs require most teachers' proficiency in both languages, because the majority of the instruction is conducted in non-English language, while in the partial immersion model, monolingual English teachers can team-teach with bilingual teaching partners. According to Sugarman and Howard (2001) '42 percent of dual language schools listed in the *Directory of Two-Way Bilingual Immersion Programs in the US*[1] *(2001)*, implements total immersion models, while 33 percent of the schools implement a partial immersion model' (p.136).

The implementation of a partial or total immersion model becomes a controversial subject for the researchers. The reviewed literature has indicated that the total immersion proves to be more effective than partial immersion programs at higher levels of minority language proficiencies. But this does not mean that all American schools implement total immersion models in their curricular. It is widely acceptable that language instructional model involves knowledge about the linguistic educational background of the community, better understanding of students' language proficiencies and the availability of qualified teachers. Choice of program often depends on school and community circumstances and attitudes. One critical factor that seems to influence the decision to implement a partial or total immersion program is the second language skills of the existing teacher staff. Another significant

[1] In this directory total immersion model is also mentioned as "minority-language dominant model"

factor in design selection is student mobility. This is particularly problematic for English-dominant students in to immersion programs because most content instruction, and often literacy instruc¬tion, is conducted in the minority language (Cummins, 2001). School demographics (the linguistic makeup of both teachers and students), the philosophical and political positions regarding bilingualism and biculturalism, and teacher and parent expectations for students' linguistic proficiencies all bear in the decision to implement a total or a partial immersion model. Table 1.1. offers summed up comparison of total and partial immersion programs, paying special attention to their benefits and drawbacks.

Table 1.1. *Total and Partial Immersion Programs*

	Total Immersion	Partial immersion
Language	The minority language is used the majority of the time in the early grades, increasing English to reach and equal balance by grade 5 or 6.	Both languages are used in equal amounts of time at all grade levels.
Literacy	Formal literacy instruction may be in the minority language for all students, or in the students' native language	Formal literacy instruction is typically in the students' native language
Content	Instruction of content areas is in the minority language the majority of the time in early grades.	Instruction of content areas is in both languages at all grade level
Grouping	Students from both language groups are integrated for all or most of the day	Students from both language groups are integrated for all or most of the day
	Students may be separated by language for literacy or second language instruction for short periods during the day or week.	Students from both language groups are integrated for all or most of the day
Setup	Classrooms may be set up in self-contained or team-teaching arrangements. Most teachers are bilingual proficient	Classrooms may be set up in self-contained or team-teaching arrangements. At least half of the teachers are bilingual proficient
Advantages	The intensity of the immersion experience coupled with the amount of exposure to the foreign language assures that students have the necessary language skills to deal with the curriculum in the upper elementary grades	It needs fewer special teachers; one teacher can serve two immersion classes for one half day each. Partial immersion is easier to staff, and the potential effect on current staff is lessened. It is a more viable alternative for parents who feel uncomfortable with the idea of their children learning to read in a language other than English and seems to be more palatable to a wider range of parents and school personnel.
Advantages	Not all parents or school personnel buy into the concept that students can learn just as much in a foreign language as in their own. Total immersion also requires a teacher for each immersion class. Not only are immersion teachers difficult to find, they may end up displacing staff because most elementary schools do not already have qualified immersion teachers on board.	Students do not develop the same level of foreign language proficiency as students in total immersion. A consequence of this is that students may have greater difficulty dealing with the school curriculum in subjects characterized by verbal abstractions.

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While talking about total immersion programs, it's noteworthy to point out the two types of programs it consists of: 90/10 and 80/20 dual language models. In each model, the initial amount of minority and majority languages exposure corresponds to the amount of time dedicated for instruction in each language. That is, instruction is conducted in the minority language (e.g. Spanish) 90% to 80% of the time and in the majority language (English) 10% or 20% of the time, usually from pre K to second grade. By the time students reach the fourth or fifth grade, there is balance of instructional time in each language (Quay, 1995). To sum up this, we may assert that total immersion programs immerse both language minority and language majority students in the minority language in the first years of the program. As for the teaching of academic content areas (math, science, social studies, and art) are initially taught in the minority language. In the second or third grade, there is a gradual shift to English instruction for some content areas, for example, math can be taught in English, while science and social studies in the minority language. In the next year, both math and social studies may be taught in English and science continues to be taught in minority language. By fifth or sixth grade, all content areas are either taught in both languages, alternating by day, week or month. The main thing that is useful for the survey is the type of English instruction, which is usually offered in the form of ESL. But in the 90/10 model, initial literacy instruction is usually conducted in the minority language for all students. That is, minority and majority language students learn to read and write in the minority language. By third grade, students receive more formalized literacy instruction in English. Sometimes in 80/20 models, literacy instruction is conducted in the student's native language (Quay, 1995). That is, minority language students learn to read and write in their native language and English dominant students learn to read and write in English.

In partial immersion programs students' instruction is conducted in equal amounts of time (50/50) from pre K on. It means that the instruction is conducted in the minority language 50 percent of the time and in English the other 50 percent of the time. In a 50/50 program, instruction in the majority language and the minority language is divided evenly at all grade levels. The instructional time is balanced through a daily division, for example, the morning is spent working in one language and the afternoon is spent working in the other. Some schools offer the distribution of time through a weekly division, where one week is spent working in one language, and the following week is spent working in the other language. According to Howard and Christian (2002): 'Programs that use these approaches tend to use a half-week/half-week approach in kindergarten and first grade, because it

Table 1.2. *Description of 90/10 and 50/50 Programs*

90/10 program			**50/50 program**		
In two-way and developmental bilingual programs, the partner language is used most or all of the day in the primary grades (80-90%). Foreign language (one-way) immersion programs that implement the full immersion program use the partner language for 100% of subject matter instruction, and in some cases, also offer specialist classes in the partner language. In all cases, the partner language and English are used equally in the later grades.			The partner language and English are used equally throughout the program.		
	% of instruction in the partner language	% of instruction in English		% of instruction in the partner language	% of instruction in English
K	90	10	**K**	50	50
1	80	20	**1**	50	50
2	70	30	**2**	50	50
3	60	40	**3**	50	50
4	50	50	**4**	50	50
5	50	50	**5**	50	50

is recognized that a full week in the second language is too stressful for young children with limited second language proficiency' (p.14).

It should be noted that literacy instruction is primarily offered in the students' native language. Educators support this approach as considering it very useful for English dominant students. In addition, there is sometimes the concern that children may forget language skills that they have attained in their second language if the intervals between instructional periods in that language are too long. This may create a less efficient language learning situation (see below Table 1.2. in which I summed up the above-presented information).

The main difference between these two models is the amount of instructional time spent in each language. But notably, these differences are apparent only at the primary grades (K-3) only. The contemporary prosperity of immersion programs in the United States of America tends to respond some key needs of the nation and is in favor of both native English speakers and language minority speakers. The research has indicated 'critical need for residents who are proficient in more than one language, and the rapidly increasing number of language minority students entering U.S. schools, the majority of whom are native speakers of Spanish. The increase in the number of programs has led to concerns and questions about how to design and implement effective TWI programs (Two-way Immersion Program)' (Howard & Christian, 2002, p.2).

Dual language instruction in schools

Dual language instruction in public school context has become the major topic in contemporary publications regarding foreign language programs in the United States of America. The country strives to overcome the existing obstacles for limited English proficient children and to our interest; even the private schools have authorized dual language instruction for language majority and minority students.

According to Fishman (1985), 'there are approximately 6,500 private schools in the United States that provide some form of education in a language oth¬er than English. At the time the study was completed the Jewish community account¬ed for nearly half that number, providing schooling in both Hebrew and Yiddish, but at least 108 languages were represented in private schools' (p. 87).

It would be difficult to estimate the number of such schools at the present time, but there are revealing examples. Lindholm-Leary & Borsato (2001) state that, 'the Association of Northern Califor¬nia Chinese Schools lists 84 member schools (ANCCS, 2003). Some of them enroll upwards of a thousand students. These are generally "Saturday" schools, offering Chi¬nese instruction on weekends only. Note that children who attend these schools devel¬op language and literacy in two languages. In other words, they actually receive a bilingual education—it just happens under more than one roof' (p.102).

As part of a federal project on bilingual education, researchers made site visits to 24 private schools that had dual language instructional programs. They found that private schools use many of the same methods as public schools for providing dual language instruction. Despite the lack of innovation, private dual language programs are distinguished by their emphasis on the value of knowing two languages (Elford & Woodford, 1982). This emphasis appears to persist, even in the current political cli-mate. For example, the International School of the Peninsula in Palo Alto, California, offers a full curriculum in both Mandarin Chinese and French to approximately 500 students, many of whom are American-born English speakers. In its mission, the school states 'We are committed to developing well-rounded individuals with a broad international awareness and the ability to communicate in at least two languages'(California Department of Education, 2003).

The gathered data on this topic indicate the great demand for second language instruction in private preschools, which therefore, gives rise to the popularity of immersion programs.

While the numbers have grown from 30 documented programs in 1987 (Lindholm, 1994) to 261 in 1999 (Sahagun, 1999), the vast majority of these programs operate at the elementary school only. To date, very few programs have effectively carried on into the middle school (26) and fewer to high school (8) (Sahagun, 1999). The lack of immersion programs at secondary school levels is caused by two major reasons:

a) First, because contemporary two-way immersion programs are groundbreaking to American society and they start with a single cohort of students in kindergarten, adding additional grade levels and cohorts each year. It is far-reaching that there have not been a significant number of two-way immersion programs in schools, which caused the lack of those programs at the secondary level until this time.

b) Second, the structure of secondary schools is contrasting to elementary school and this difference complicates the further development of two-way immersion programs. In secondary schools, students can have a free choice of subjects, which is not a common issue in elementary schools. Regarding students' freedom of choosing subjects in secondary programs require from two-way immersion programs to not interfere with core courses or well-liked electives. Another obstacle is the staffing problem, as 'secondary teachers tend to teach a single academic domain rather than all content areas, meaning that several bilingual teachers may need to be hired in order to keep going the program at the secondary level'(Loeb, 1999, p.13).

We have seen so far, that the nature of secondary two-way immersion programs differs from that of elementary programs. Because this program at the high school and middle school level typically becomes the sum of the classes offered in the non-English language only. According to Loeb (1999, p. 24):

…the Spanish-English two-way immersion program is considered to be the two or three courses

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taught in Spanish to the participating students, since those are typically the only classes offered exclusively to TWI program students. Classes taught in English may no longer count as TWI, since they frequently include non-TWI students. Planning the TWI program, then, consists mostly of deciding which courses to offer in the non-English language and how many periods per day students will be required to attend these classes in order to be considered part of the TWI program.

While most TWI (Two-way Immersion Programs) programs appear to offer the same as non-TWI programs deciding how much of the curriculum and which subjects will be taught through which languages is often a difficult decision.

I have already dealt with two-way immersion programs at the elementary level as the complete and separate unit, which makes the school curricular easier to adopt any of a variety of program models (50/50 model or a 90/10 model). The staffing problems is also very easily solved, as s/he can teach any or all subject areas in Spanish, while a monolingual English teacher can teach any or all subject areas in English. As for middle and high school curricula (with the exception of language arts in the non-English language), the choice of language (majority or minority) causes serious problems. It should be noted that high schools are 'departmentalized' (Loeb, 1999), and teachers specialize in one or more content areas. Consequently, teaching different subjects will most likely require the services of many bilingual teachers instead of just one. Middle schools are more flexible in their structure. Some may be much departmentalized (especially in the upper grades), while others may operate more like elementary schools (especially in sixth grade), with one teacher teaching multiple subjects or staying with the same group of students for most of the day.

According to surveys conducted on the effectiveness of two-way immersion programs at the secondary and high levels, the most pressing aspects are: subjects' availability (in terms of language), qualifications of teachers, and subject-matter preferences of the staff. The non-existence of two-way immersion programs at high level is caused by a number of factors. It is quite challenging to find qualified teachers for each content subject in the non-English language. Finding appropriate bilingual texts in non-English languages can also prove problematic. It should be mentioned that the social studies curricula, which is a core subject is different in all states. Therefore, the availability of textbooks can be named as another problem for establishing two-way immersion programs at high level. Teaching the same subject in two languages will require two textbooks instead of one, which will cause some budgeting problems then.

The above pointed obstacles are not faced by 90/10 programs, because most of the instruction is conducted in Spanish in the primary grades, this does not become a major issue until the upper elementary grades. On the contrary it works for 50/50 programs, where the instruction is provided in neck and neck amount of time in both languages at all grade levels. According to Howard E. & Christian D. (2002, p. 16):

There are three ways that language distribution can be accomplished, and most programs use a combination of two or all three methods. First, language of instruction can be distributed by time. Accordingly, sometime blocks are allocated for instruction in the minority language, while others are allocated for instruction in English. Common structuring of these time blocks includes the morning vs. afternoon or week-by-week language distributions that were described in the previous section on 50/50 programs. A second way that language distribution can occur is by topic. Using this approach, some content areas are taught in English, while others are taught using the minority language. If this approach is used, language arts should still be taught in both languages, as recommended in the earlier discussion of criteria for success. The third way that language distribution can occur is by person, meaning that two teachers work together, with one providing instruction in English and the other providing instruction in the minority language.

Getting acquainted with immersion program data, three key approaches to initial literacy instruction have become salient --minority language first, both languages simultaneously, and native language first--and these three approaches tend to be reflected with certain program models.

Minority language approach is reflected in the model of 90/10 immersion program. In this program the majority and minority children are integrated in one class the whole day and receive initial literacy instruction in the minority language only (mostly in Spanish). Informal literacy in conducted in English, but I is allocated for a small percentage of the day. English instruction occurs at third grade. The studies revealed that this approach is only appropriate for the 90/10 model (or 80/20 or 80/10/10) and would not work with a 50/50 model. Because native English students in a 50/50 model 'would not be likely to have enough proficiency in the minority language in the primary grades for initial literacy instruction in that language alone to be meaningful to them' (Long, 1991, p. 51).

Both languages simultaneously approach is most frequently used in 50/50 model. In this program, the majority and minority students are grouped together during a day, and from the very beginning, receive literacy instruction in English during English instructional time and literacy instruction in the minority language during instructional time in that language. The students receive literacy instruction in both languages at all grade levels. The studies indicate the appropriateness of this approach is a 50/50 model.

Native language first approach separates the students by language. This approach provides the language minority students with initial literacy instruction in their native language and providing the native English speakers with initial literacy instruction in English. If the two groups are separated during the classes, the

instruction is conducted in targeted second language if needed. Informal literacy instruction in the second language takes place for both groups through content instruction in each language, and by third grade, the two groups are fully integrated and formal literacy instruction is provided to both groups in majority and minority languages (Johnson & Swain, 1997). In some cases where a 90/10 model is preferred, the instructors apply to this approach, which somehow, can be a challenge for the native English speakers, who are academically at-risk.

The native language first approach has been applied to some 50/50 programs and proved to be effective. Notably, some factors have to be taken into account while implementing this approach to initial literacy instruction in this model. Instructional time in the minority language (50%) for native English speakers needs to be fixed in their school curricula simultaneously with initial literacy instruction which is in English. Concerning with instructional time, Howard & Christian (2002) state:

This is especially problematic if an alternating weeks approach is used, because this approach results in a total exposure of only about 25% to the minority language for the native English speakers. Second, if the 50/50 model uses a half-day/ half-day model, and if the students work with other teachers for art, music, and so on, then adding an additional switch and potential teacher change for initial literacy instruction could result in a schedule that looks more like a middle school model. This much transition on a daily basis could be disruptive and developmentally inappropriate for young children (p.26).

Conclusion

In sum, it could be stated that grouping native language students in initial literacy classes won't work in case the school faces the large influx of bilingual students, who do not have clear language dominance. Considering the above presented information, one might conclude that the languages are usually separated by teacher and classroom in team-teaching situations and students alternate between the two teachers every other day in dual language instruction classes. It's note-worthy to point out that school districts around the USA are challenged by the increasing linguistic diversity of their student population. At the same time, the ability to communicate in multiple languages is becoming recognized as a valuable asset. In order to help language minority students learn English and achieve academically, and give language majority students an opportunity to develop proficiency in another language, a growing number of schools have developed two-way immersion programs.

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