Full Length Research Paper

Editors’ Introductory Overview: Dual Language Education and the Center for Research and Development in Dual Language and Literacy Acquisition

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The Center for Research and Development in Dual Language and Literacy Acquisition (CRDLLA1) at Texas A&M University stands as the only center in the nation that is devoted specifically for research, as well as development, in dual language and literacy for children and adults globally. The CRDLLA is sponsoring Dual Language Research and Practice Journal in an effort to bring a focus on the research in this area of bilingual education, and additionally, information from both researchers and practitioners should be recognized in this relatively new field of bilingual education in the United States. We invite you to submit your manuscripts for peer review in this new journal. The submissions are rolling and as soon as they are reviewed and accepted, they will be uploaded for the yearly volume.

1 CRDLLA is housed in the Department of Educational Psychology, College of Education and Human Development, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. (http://ldn.tamu.edu/)
General Information on Dual Language Education

Dual language programs fall under the umbrella of bilingual education. There are two types of dual language programs: two-way and one-way. Two-way dual language programs are those in which native English speakers and English language learners (ELLs) are in the same classrooms and are taught in both English and another language with dual goals of bilingualism and biliteracy (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005). Researchers who have studies two-way dual language programs have demonstrated their success at increasing the academic achievement of ELLs (Thomas & Collier, 2002, 2003, 2004; de Jong, 2002; Senesac, 2002; Lopez & Tashakkori, 2004).

Thomas and Collier (2004) studied the effectiveness of one-way and two-way dual language programs in closing the achievement gap for ELLs in English achievement. Their research examined dual language programs in Texas, Maine, and California. They found that both 50/50 and 90/10 one-way and two-way dual language programs were effective educational language programs for closing the achievement gap.

Using norm-referenced tests in English, Thomas and Collier (2004) demonstrated that two-way 90/10 dual language programs were expected to close the achievement gap by four to six National Curve Equivalencies (NCEs) annually. They also demonstrated that one-way 90/10 and two-way 50-50 dual language programs were expected to close the achievement gap by three to five NCEs annually, and one-way 50/50 dual language programs were expected to close the achievement gap by three NCEs annually. Thomas and Collier’s research demonstrated that ELLs in dual language programs reached higher levels of academic achievement than ELLs in other bilingual programs.

Other researchers focused on comparing the academic achievement of ELLs in two-way dual language programs with the academic achievement of students in their district and their state (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Howard, 2002). Lindholm-Leary (2001) investigated the academic achievement of ELLs in four 90/10 two-way dual language programs as measured by several norm-referenced achievement tests, including the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, the Metropolitan Achievement Test, and the CAS2 (a test developed to align with the California curriculum frameworks in assessing basic skills). Lindholm-Leary (2001) examined end-of-fifth grade test scores for English reading and language and found that ELLs in these 90/10 two-way dual language programs were achieving as highly or higher than the state averages. Howard (2002) researched the academic achievement of ELLs in an 80/10/10 two-way dual language program over a seven-year period as measured by the English TAAS, and the results indicated that the ELLs in this dual language programs were achieving higher than their district and state peers did.

In one-way dual language programs, there are primarily language-minority students (Genesee, 1999; Gomez, Freeman & Freeman, 2005; Mora, Wink, & Wink, 2001). These students are taught in both English and their native language with dual goals of bilingualism and biliteracy. Several researchers have determined the effectiveness of one-way dual language programs that promote language, literacy, and academic achievement of ELLs. Medina and Escamilla (1992a) evaluated the long-term impact of a 3-year Spanish/English maintenance bilingual education (used interchangeable with one-way dual language) program among native Spanish-speaking students who were all identified as having limited English proficiency. The results indicated that all participants had acquired significant levels of English, and students with lower Spanish oral proficiency demonstrated the greatest gains in their oral English development compared with their fluent counterparts.

In a related study, Medina and Escamilla (1992b) reported that although students placed in both one-way dual language and transitional bilingual models made statistically significant improvement in oral English proficiency from kindergarten to second grade, additive effects of one-one dual language model emerged in that students’ oral proficiency in Spanish was maintained. The authors concluded that this one-way dual language model might be the best alternative to serve ELLs, and yet they were the least implemented. More recently, de Jong (2004) identified that Spanish-speaking ELLs in one-way dual language models made significant progress in English oracy, reading, and writing at each grade level and were just below fluency by the end of second grade in reading. By fourth grade, these students had reached an average of native-like academic English proficiency in comprehension, production, and writing.

Findings from recent research (e.g., Tong, Irby, Lara-Alecio, & Mathes, 2008; Tong, Lara-Alecio, Irby, & Mathes, 2011) on the additive effect of a one-way dual language model in a randomized trial study are consistent with the literature of significant differences in favor of one-way dual language participants on both English measures of oral language, preliteracy skills, and reading fluency and comprehension (effect sizes of .12 to .71) and Spanish measures of letter name and sound, preliteracy skills, and reading comprehension (effect sizes of .19 to .38). It was also confirmed that longitudinally from the outset of Kindergarten to the exit of third grade, students in one-way dual language were able to master the necessary knowledge and skills in academic reading more readily than were their counterparts placed in transitional bilingual programs (median effect size = .14 in English measures and .18 in Spanish measures) (Irby, Tong, Lara-Alecio, Mathes, Acosta, & Guerrero, 2010).

Researchers of dual language programs have demonstrated that ELLs in dual language, programs were reaching the same or higher levels of academic achievement as ELLs in other instructional programs and as ELLs in their district and state (Thomas & Collier, 2002, 2003, 2004; de Jong, 2002; Senesac, 2002; Lopez & Tashakkori, 2004). In their later longitudinal gap-closure research over 18 years, Collier and Thomas (2004) found that students attending either one-way or two-way dual-language models achieved at grade level or higher on
standardized English and Spanish reading tests, with an annual effect size of .14 or higher. They further asserted that students with former schooling in dual-language programs outperformed those with former schooling in English immersion.

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