The Dolores Huerta Community Service Award Essay:
Spanish Bilingual Elementary Education in CA

Esther Chan
Professor Suhr
SPAN 195
Abstract: Bilingual education has been a part of the education system since the establishment of the United States. Though there have been changes along the way in the 18th and 19th centuries in educational reformation, bilingual education continues to grow, especially in the state of California. This field research paper’s approach to bilingual education is specific to my experience as a teaching assistant at Broadway Elementary School. It aims to present and highlight the knowledge of bilingual education, as well as its benefits and challenges using the program model of Broadway Elementary School acquired and developed during this internship and research study. The research study focuses on the challenges and benefits of Broadway's 50/50 dual-immersion program model and reveals the teachers' experiences with teaching at Broadway.

Key Words: bilingual education, elementary education, dual-immersion program, bilingualism

Resumen: La educación bilingüe ha sido parte del sistema educativo desde el establecimiento de los Estados Unidos. Aunque ha habido cambios a lo largo del camino en los siglos 18 y 19 en la reforma educativa, la educación bilingüe continúa creciendo, especialmente en el estado de California. El enfoque de este trabajo para la educación bilingüe es específico de mi experiencia como asistente docente en la Escuela Primaria Broadway. Tiene como objetivo demostrar y contextualizar el conocimiento de la educación bilingüe, así como sus beneficios y desafíos utilizando el modelo de programa de Broadway adquirido y desarrollado durante este estudio de pasantía e investigación. El estudio de investigación se centra en los desafíos y beneficios del modelo de programa de doble inmersión 50/50 de Broadway y reveló las experiencias de los maestros de Broadway.

Palabras claves: educación bilingüe, educación primaria, programa de doble inmersión, bilingüismo

Introduction

This paper addresses the need for qualified bilingual teachers in California as more programs are being implemented due to the discovered benefits of bilingual education. The following pages first present the history of the Spanish language in the USA and the definition of bilingualism, which is followed by the history of Bilingual education in the US and state of California. Next, the portfolio presents research and statistics on the benefits of bilingual education, growth of bilingual programs, and as a result, a demand for more bilingual teachers. After the different models of bilingual programs are presented, the portfolio focuses on one specific model of dual immersion program of Broadway Elementary School, providing an explanation for the program structure and statistical analysis of its demographic. Thereafter, it is followed by the motivations and goals for my internship, as well as the tasks I completed in my role. The following portion highlights the research I conducted at Broadway surveying several faculty members and a presentation of the survey results along with its implications. Finally, it details my reflection of my internship experience, detailing how I met my learning objectives through this experience, as well as its impact on my current and future career implications. This paper aims to highlight the value of bilingualism and bilingual education in the state of
California, where it is advantageous to be a bilingual learner and educator in a growing multilingual city such as Los Angeles.

I. Bilingual Elementary Education in California

Bilingualism in California

Living in the cosmopolitan city of Los Angeles, it is common to hear Spanish being spoken daily. In fact, it is not news that Spanish is by far the most spoken non-English language in the United States today. However, the presence of Spanish language comes from the roots of the Spanish establishment led by Ponce de León in the Florida peninsula in the 14th century. In 1849, the first constitution of the state of California was written in both English and Spanish, illustrating the prevalence of Spanish roots in the history of our country. Although English speakers populated the region and eventually became the dominant language of the US, Spanish influenced the early linguistic landscape, as evidence of the Spanish-speaking communities today. As a result, many individuals are a part of a community in which two languages, such as English and Spanish, are in contact (Languages in Contact Weinreich 1968). Therefore, someone who has the ability to use two languages is defined as a bilingual. As a note, bilingualism may “range from a minimal proficiency in two languages, to an advanced level of proficiency which allows the speaker to function and appear as a native-like speaker of two languages” (Rampton).

An Overview of the History of Bilingual Education within the US and California

With growing bilingual speakers in the United States, bilingual education became more prevalent in the states, with a dozen states passing bilingual education laws by the end of the 19th century to allow bilingual education at the request of parents. Beginning in the 20th century,
there were more primary students receiving German language instruction than students enrolled in Spanish-English programs today. However, during the World War I era fears about the loyalty of non-English speakers and German Americans in particular, resulting in the majority of bilingual schooling to be dismantled throughout the country. English-only instruction continued as the norm for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students until its failure could no longer be ignored. LEP students in English-only classrooms were falling behind in their academic studies and dropping out of school at alarming rates. However, during an era of growing immigration and an evergived civil rights movement, the 1968 Bilingual Education Act was passed to encourage local school districts to try approaches incorporating native-language instruction. Most states followed the lead of the federal government, enacting bilingual education laws of their own or at least decriminalizing the use of other languages in the classroom (Rethinking Schools). In the case of Lau v. Nichols, it required schools to take “affirmative steps” to overcome language barriers impeding children’s access to the curriculum. Congress immediately endorsed this principle in the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974. However, in 1998, Proposition 227 was passed, which required English learners to be taught in English immersion classrooms and for parents to sign waivers to enroll their children in bilingual or dual immersion programs. (Hopkinson). This was recently overturned by Proposition 58, which was approved by voters with a 73.5% majority of Nov. 8 2016. This proposition repealed the English-only requirement of Proposition 227 and allowed students to learn English through multiple programs outside of English immersion classes. Opponents to Proposition 58 argued that Proposition 227 was highly effective in the test scores of immigrant students and there was improvement in language education while arguments in support of Proposition 58 included a restoration of local control for California schools, greater intercultural interaction, and use of the most up-to-date teaching methods to help students learn (Ballotpedia). Ultimately, Proposition 58 has given California public schools more control over dual language acquisition programs and has implemented the California Multilingual Education Act of 2016.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual Education Act</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>First federal recognition of needs of students with limited English speaking ability by incorporative native-language instruction (Stewner-Manzanares).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Educational Opportunity Act</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Barred states from discriminating against students and required public schools to provide for students with language barriers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposition 227</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Requires public school instruction to be in English, eliminating bilingual classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposition 58</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Repeals Proposition 227, allowing non-English languages to be used in public educational instruction. Parental waivers no longer necessary to take non-English-only classes.</td>
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Understanding the history of bilingual education in our nation is crucial in the future steps districts will take to implement new bilingual schools that require more bilingual teachers. As such, it is necessary to examine the different models of immersion to consider the factors that lead to a successful implementation of bilingual programs.

II. State of the Art

Benefits of Early Bilingual Education

The history of bilingual education has been supported by findings about the benefits of early bilingual education. To begin with, bilingual education has proven to have significant benefits cognitively, such as increased executive function in attentional control and task switching. There have also been findings of lower incidences of Alzheimer’s disease and delaying the onset of age-related cognitive decline (Adesope et. al). Overall, cognitive benefits including increased intellectual flexibility and neural plasticity are correlated with early bilingual
education. Secondly, early bilingual education suggests educational benefits, including comparable or higher achievement of students in dual language programs as compared to students in English-only programs, improved learning outcomes in various subjects, increased levels of creativity, higher levels of abstract thought and reasoning, and engenders enhanced metalinguistic awareness to support the learning of languages in the future. These educational benefits lead to other sociocultural benefits, as students that complete bilingual education programs may have a greater understanding of other world cultures, increased empathy development, enhanced connection to heritage cultures and global awareness, as well as “reduced discrimination, improved self-esteem, and stronger cross-group relationships” (Wright & Tropp, 2005; Cho, 2000). Lastly, early bilingual education may provide greater job opportunities in multiple public and private sectors, language skills are in high demand for employment with the Federal Government, and increased global communication (Callahan & Gándara, 2014). As a whole, early bilingual education has various cognitive, education, sociocultural, and economic benefits.

In sections II and III, we will examine studies on bilingual education and the different models of bilingual education, focusing on the model of Broadway Elementary School in order to see applicable impacts of bilingualism, it is necessary to examine studies on bilingual education and the different models of bilingual education.

California State and District Increases in Bilingual Education

After Proposition 277 was repealed in California in 2016, there was a big push for more bilingual schools. The California Association for Bilingual Education reported 229 dual-immersion schools in California in 2010-11, which increased to 407 in 2016-17 (Stavely and Rosales). More recently the California Basic Educational Data System reported that 1,490 schools had “some kind of bilingual or multilingual program in 2018-19, including 747 dual-language schools.

Figure 3. Graph of bilingual schools
established immersion programs” (Stavely and Rosales). Looking ahead, the state of California aims to enroll half of all K-12 students in programs that lead to proficiency in two or more languages by 2030 under the CA Department of Education’s Global California 2030 Initiative. By 2040, their goal is to have 3 out of 4 students proficient in two or more languages (Stavely and Rosales). The COVID-19 pandemic put a hold on many California school districts’ expansion of bilingual education programs, but now many school districts are resuming their plans, enrolling students in new bilingual immersion programs for the upcoming school year. The Los Angeles Unified School DIstrict (LAUSD) is that state's largest school district. The district is aiming to launch 12 new dual immersion programs, increasing the number of bilingual and dual immersion programs to 212 in K-12 schools (Stavely and Rosales). Thus, bilingual teachers play an important role in the success of a bilingual school, which will be discussed in the research portion of the paper.

Demand for Bilingual Instructors

With this increase in bilingual schools in California, there is a growing demand for bilingual teachers. Districts have reported teacher shortages particularly in subjects like math, science, special education, and bilingual education (Carver-Thomas et al). Moreover, this shortage was indicated by the hiring of individuals that were not fully credentialed, especially for foreign languages such as Mandarin and Japanese (Carver-Thomas et al). According to recent estimates, nine out of 17 districts reported shortages in math and science while seven out of 17 reported shortages in special education (Harrington). Half (4 out of 8) of the large districts that support dedicated bilingual programs showed to have shortages in bilingual education (Harrington). These statistics provide evidence that there is a growing demand for qualified bilingual teachers as a result of the establishment of more bilingual schools.

Models of Bilingual Education

As shown in the chart below, there are several models for bilingual education. My study is based on a specific model of dual-language immersion with a 50/50 immersion model. Since my study is only focused on one model of immersion, future research can focus on the other program models to evaluate which one is most beneficial.
Figure 4. Description of types of models of bilingual education schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multilingual Program</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Examples (CA)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dual-Language Immersion (Two-Way Immersion)</td>
<td>language learning and academic instruction for native speakers of English and native speakers of another language.</td>
<td>language proficiency and academic achievement in students’ first and second languages, and cross-cultural understanding. K-8th</td>
<td>Sacred Heart Elementary School Los Angeles, CA <a href="https://www.sacredheartla.org/dual-language-immersion/">https://www.sacredheartla.org/dual-language-immersion/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Bilingual</td>
<td>provides instruction for English learners utilizing English and students’ native language for literacy and academic instruction</td>
<td>language proficiency and academic achievement in English. Students typically transition to “English only” instruction by third grade.</td>
<td>Saint Alphonsus School- Los Angeles <a href="https://www.saintalphonsusschool.org/">https://www.saintalphonsusschool.org/</a> Spanish Program: <a href="https://www.saintalphonsusschool.org/espan%D0%B8%D0%BB%D1%8Cdeol.html">https://www.saintalphonsusschool.org/espanильdeol.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Bilingual</td>
<td>provides instruction for English learners utilizing English and students’ native language for literacy and academic instruction,</td>
<td>language proficiency and academic achievement in students’ first and second languages.</td>
<td>Winters Elementary School Winters, CA <a href="https://wes-wintersjusd-ca.schoolloop.com/DBE">https://wes-wintersjusd-ca.schoolloop.com/DBE</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-Way Immersion</td>
<td>instruction in English and another language for non-speakers of the other language</td>
<td>language proficiency and academic achievement in English and the other language, and cross-cultural understanding.</td>
<td>Gratts Learning Academy Los Angeles, CA <a href="https://glays-lausd-ca.schoolloop.com/">https://glays-lausd-ca.schoolloop.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Language or Indigenous Language</td>
<td>provides instruction in English and another language for non-English speakers or students with limited literacy skills in their first language.</td>
<td>Indigenous language programs support endangered minority languages in which students may have limited receptive and no productive skills. Both programs often serve American Indian students.</td>
<td>Gateway Charter High School San Francisco, CA <a href="http://www.gatewayhigh.org">www.gatewayhigh.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLEX: Foreign Language Elementary Experience</td>
<td>provides instruction for non-native speakers of the target language. Typically during a designated period of</td>
<td>exposure, enrichment, and language experience.</td>
<td>Centralia Elementary School District Buena Park, CA <a href="https://www.cesd.k12.c">https://www.cesd.k12.c</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Internship at Broadway Elementary School

My community service site was at Broadway Elementary School, a K-5 public school in Venice, CA. Broadway Elementary School is a part of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and operates as a one-way 50/50 language immersion model, where students receive all academic subjects taught in both English and the target language (Mandarin or Spanish) for equal parts of each day (CDE). Broadway Elementary School offers a wide variety of programs for students to gain diverse experiences and expand their knowledge beyond typical elementary school. In my experience as a teaching assistant in the Spanish target language classroom, I observed the daily schedule and behavior of students and how the teacher managed her classroom. Seeing how the teachers were so involved with the students motivated me to conduct my research on the teachers' experiences and knowledge from teaching at this bilingual elementary school.

Motivation and Goals

My motivation for this internship stems from a hope and desire to be a teacher at a bilingual elementary school in the future. My childhood was a melting pot of cultures that shaped my identity as a first generation Taiwanese-Burmese-American. Growing up, my family hosted dozens of international exchange students from Japan, Korea and China. From K-6, I attended a Spanish Immersion school in my hometown of Davis, CA. As the only Asian American in my Spanish Immersion Elementary School, the emphasis to form deeper relationships with individuals of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds has shaped what I believe diversity to
be. At Broadway, I see the cultivation of diversity not only between the programs but within each classroom. Each student has a unique background and perspective to bring into the classroom, which is why I believe Broadway is so unique. Being fluent in both Spanish and Mandarin, I understand and see the benefits of starting second language immersion from a young age. I started my volunteering at Broadway initially with the motivation to gain experience in a classroom environment working directly with a group of students to see if teaching would be the right fit for me since most of my teaching experience involved private tutoring or after school tutoring. However, as I continued researching and student teaching in the classroom, I became more aware of the benefits and implications bilingual education has on this new generation of students long-term. My goal was to be able to use my Spanish and Biology double major in a practical setting, such as a classroom. I am grateful for this opportunity, even during the pandemic, to gain hands-on experience in the classroom as it adjusts back to in-person learning while using my language skills to educate a diverse group of students.

Tasks

My tasks as a student teacher included working with the students and assisting Ms. Luna in classroom tasks. I worked individually with students by conducting make-up spelling exams and helping individual students on in-class activities such as math worksheets, journal writing, and vocabulary practice. At times, I worked extensively with students that needed additional attention due to difficulties focusing or understanding material. More frequently, my interactions with students were in groups when helping table groups complete the task. For example, I assisted with hands-on activities like cutting and glueing worksheets and booklets for stories read or lessons learned about the growth cycle of an apple/pumpkin.

IV. Research

1. Objective
To investigate the role of the teacher in the success of a bilingual school and the success of the students enrolled in the program.

2. The Service Site: Broadway Elementary School
The field research was conducted at Broadway Elementary School, a K-5 public school in Venice, CA. Broadway Elementary School is a part of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and operates as a one-way 50/50 language immersion model, where students receive
all academic subjects taught in both English and the target language (Mandarin or Spanish) for equal parts of each day (CDE). The mission of Broadway is to “grow into a national model for dual-language education that prepares students to be well-rounded and cultured citizens of the 21st century” (CDE). Its overarching mission is to provide a “rich, supportive education environment which encourages all learners to reach their fullest potential by facilitating active participation, recognizing mistakes as opportunities to learn and proving respect, dignity and unity” (Broadway ES). The model of practice is a Mandarin and Spanish foreign language immersion program in one school.

2.1 Spanish Language Immersion

The Spanish Language Immersion Program helps students not only acquire fluency in two languages and a rigorous education in language arts, social studies, mathematics, and sciences, but also in becoming self-confident learners, creative thinkers, problem-solvers, and productive global citizens with a respect for cultural differences. It seeks to nurture fluency in both English and Spanish in its students from an early age, thus students will master all curriculum content within a 50/50 English and Spanish language immersion model, where academic subjects are taught in both languages for equal parts of each day. The program is composed of both native Spanish speakers and those who are fluent in English. Content and literacy instruction in English and Spanish is provided to all students to achieve communicative and academic second language proficiency, primary language proficiency, academic achievement, and appreciation for diversity.

2.2 Demographic Analysis of Broadways’ Student Population

According to data released by schools on school demographics and testing results, Broadway’s “student population is made up of 53% female students and 47% male students” (US News). With almost 600 students enrolled, there is a 84.2% minority enrollment, with 31.6% Asian or pacific islander, 25.8% two or more races, 21.1% hispanic/latino, 55.6% black or african american, and 0.2% american indian or alaska native while the remainder being 15.8% white (US News). Testing results show that 86% of students at Broadway scored at or above the proficient level for math, and 84% score at or above that level for reading (US News). In comparison with the district and state levels for math, the LAUSD found that 42% of students tested at or above the proficient level while 47% of students achieved that level in the state of
California (US News). As for reading, 34% of students in the district test at or above the level for math while the state averages 39% of students testing at or above that level for math (US News).

3. **Method**

   The method of acquiring data is through an online survey conducted through google forms including free response and multiple choice questions. Four teachers in the Spanish immersion program were surveyed for a total of eleven questions.

   The following questions were surveyed in English:

   1. What is your motivation for teaching elementary education? What is your motivation for teaching at a bilingual school?
   2. What are some challenges with this specific program model of half day with a Spanish teacher and half day with English?
3. What are some challenges you face as a current teacher in this generation?

4. What are some challenges students may face or experience in the classroom?

5. What are some strategies that you use to overcome your challenges or help students overcome their challenges?

6. What are some challenges that you face in the classroom day-to-day?

7. In your opinion, what is the biggest benefit of bilingual education?

8. What are some observations and patterns that you make from teaching in general (i.e. child behavior or classroom management)

9. If you had the possibility to receive more training, what type of training would it be?

10. If you could change one aspect of the program what would it be?

11. What is some advice you wish you knew before starting? What skills have been beneficial in your teaching career in the bilingual program thus far? What is your advice for future bilingual educators?

4. Survey Results

The following results include data taken directly from survey results as well as tendencies observed from acquired responses.

1. Teachers reported that their motivations to teach elementary school were to “ensure that students from a young age are able to see themselves in the content they learn and feel like competent learners” and is an environment “full of learning, creativity, laughter, playing, and building community”. Moreover, some reasons for teaching at a bilingual school was to allow students to “broaden their cognitive abilities, experience other cultures and have a better understanding of others perspectives in the world at large”. One teacher mentioned that she wanted to bridge who she was as a learner and who she was at home by making “a connection with her home language and academic language”.

2. Many teachers indicated that some challenges with the Program model at Broadway are the lack of time to prepare and covering content during class and adapting routines and teachers when switching classes after lunchtime. Other challenges mentioned include clear communication with teaching partners and classroom management due to language limitations.

3. In this ‘select all that apply’ question, all teachers surveyed indicated that the biggest challenge as a teacher in this generation was balancing diverse learning needs
4. Teachers shared that strategies to overcome the above challenges include Social Emotional Lessons (SEL), being consistent with routines and “allowing space for students to talk through challenges and express themselves with ‘I feel’ statements”. Other strategies include talking with mentors and chatting with teacher friends.

6. All teachers reported that the biggest benefit of bilingual education are the social-cultural benefits.

8. Teachers observed that it is critical to be clear, organized, and have consistent routines because students may not understand the bulk of what is being communicated in the target language class.

9. Teachers suggested that they would like to receive more training in differentiated instruction and reading instruction.

10. Aspects of the program that teachers would like to change include: higher salary, more support for teachers, more planning time, more time with each class, and having a self-contained classroom.

11. The teachers gave the advice of being silly and goofy and creating lessons that engage students and bring them joy so that they find intrinsic motivation to learn the target language.
5. Post-survey conclusions

Based on the results from the survey, the teachers emphasized that the main benefit of being a part of a bilingual school is to gain more sociocultural awareness, develop empathy and respect for a diverse range of students. However, many teachers also shared that this specific program at Broadway brings challenges for both teachers and students, as students need to learn to adapt to the language taught in each classroom and the instructors teaching style while teachers have challenges delivering content since it is not a self contained classroom. The results from the survey suggest that this specific program model at Broadway may be challenging for future teachers who are new to bilingual immersion programs as teachers of the same grade level are teamed together and must work closely together to provide the best support for students. It may also be challenging for future students enrolled in the program in classroom focus and behavior since the two classes of students rotate each day between the English and target language classroom. Overall, the responses from the faculty are valuable in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of this model of dual immersion.

6. Future implications

The research conducted evaluated the specific program model of 50/50 immersion at a dual-language immersion program. My research focused mainly on the Spanish program at Broadway Elementary School, however, future research can focus on the Mandarin immersion program at Broadway. Moreover, future studies can examine other types of immersion programs and broadly study the benefits and challenges for each model.

Post Internship Reflection

My internship at Broadway Elementary School provided me with hands-on experience and knowledge about elementary and bilingual teaching that exceeded my expectations. My takeaways from the internship are the role of teachers, observations of students, and skills learned in the classroom. Spending this quarter in the classroom interacting with the students helped me gain basic skills that are necessary to help students succeed. Skills such as patiently listening, balancing strictness with goofiness, and clearly explaining concepts in a way that was understandable for the first grade students helped me connect and develop relationships with them. Moreover, I learned many things simply from observing the students behavior in the
classroom, from peer helping to bullying. These observations from how students work cohesively together in a classroom to build a community helped me gain insight on the importance of peer-to-peer interaction. Finally, observing and learning from the teacher, Ms. Luna, taught me several skills that I hope to adapt one day myself as a teacher. Ms. Luna was engaging, creative, and demonstrated excellent classroom management skills. I learned how to facilitate Social Emotional Lessons where students stood in a circle to share ‘I feel’ statements. Just by observing the interactions between the teacher and the students taught me the honorable role an educator has on a students life. Through my in-depth experience at Broadway Elementary School, it has solidified my decision to go into teaching, specifically at a bilingual elementary school.
Bibliography


