

**Dual Language Education: Historical U.S. Perspectives and Current Practices Podcast  
PART I:**

Host:

Welcome to Part I of this two-part podcast hosted by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). On this podcast, Dr. Elizabeth Bucknor, Education Program Specialist at OELA will speak with three panelists, Dr. Maria Coady from the University of Florida, Dr. Louise Lockard from Northern Arizona University, and Dr. Marco Bravo from Santa Clara University.

All three panelists participating in this discussion are well positioned to lead a national conversation on the expertise teachers in dual language programs need to successfully fulfill the promise of those programs for the education of English learners and Multilingual students. Their combined research investigates the depth of knowledge and orientations that teachers serving multilingual students and their communities need. This is especially relevant to the dual language education community today, as these programs' presence in the national educational landscape increases.

The goal of this podcast is to provide the dual language education community the opportunity to learn about recent work researching how teacher preparation and professional learning support teachers' ability to build on the language and cultural assets of multilingual students, their families, and communities. Altogether, these areas are key factors in ensuring teacher quality, retention and, ultimately, the sustainability of dual language programs.

For English learner students, dual language programs offer opportunities to lead with their cultural and linguistic assets, leverage and nurture their full linguistic knowledge and skills, and engage in rigorous academic content learning, all while developing English.

As dual language programs become increasingly viewed as educationally beneficial, interest in them has expanded. Interest now extends beyond English learner communities and advocates to include native English-speaking students whose families are interested in the many benefits of multilingualism. Against the backdrop of this renewed interest in dual language programs across the country our panelists will illuminate several factors.

In Part I of this podcast, Dr. Coady will discuss the historical context of dual language programs and the need for increased availability of dual language education in rural areas. In Part II, we will speak with Dr. Marco Bravo and Dr. Louise Lockard who will talk about the need for increasing the reach of dual language teachers across grade levels, and the role and benefits of dual language teachers and teacher education programs in Native American communities. Historically, this is an opportune moment for us to pause and reflect on the past as we consider the present and look forward to the future of dual language programs.

Our three panelists share an interest and years of research on teacher preparation and teacher professional development. They are also recipients of National Professional Development grants,

## Dual Language Education: Historical U.S. Perspectives and Current Practices Podcast (Parts I)

administered by the Office of English Language Acquisition. OELA grants support professional development activities intended to improve instruction for English learners.

Let's get the conversation started...

Elizabeth:

Hello to our listeners. I'm Elizabeth Bucknor, and it's my pleasure to introduce our first panelist, Dr. Maria Coady. Welcome to the podcast, Dr. Coady and thank you for talking with us today about this important topic.

Dr. Coady:

Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

Elizabeth:

Dual language programs have gained in popularity in recent years, with several states overturning or reducing English-only legislative policies, and others taking active steps to promote or encourage dual language programs. While this development is an important step towards bridging our society's cultural and language gaps, it is also an opportunity for researchers and practitioners to reflect on how dual language programs started in this country, and how their deep commitment to equity, cultural diversity, and community has evolved.

To start us off, can you tell us what are dual language programs, and how are they similar or different to other bilingual programs?

Dr. Coady:

Absolutely. Dual language programs are a specific type of bilingual education program where two languages are used as mediums of instruction for learning academic content. These programs include students of different language backgrounds, with the goal of the programs being high levels of bilingualism and biliteracy development. The term "Dual Language" indicates the use of two languages for instruction, but the degree to which each language is used for instruction is a very local and pragmatic consideration for schools. For instance, in some school settings, the minoritized language, such as Spanish, may be used for more than 50% of instruction, at least in grades 1, 2, and 3. Schools often choose to also increase or reduce the amount of instruction in each language as students progress academically. Another important consideration in Dual Language is the relative percentage of language minoritized students versus native English speakers. Again, these are some of the characteristics of Dual Language programs that make them unique.

Elizabeth:

You have recently written a book about Coral Way Elementary School, which has the oldest dual language program in the nation. Can you tell us about why you found this particular program so intriguing?

Dr. Coady:

The story of Coral Way is quite fascinating as the first U.S.-documented “dual language” or two-way immersion program in the U.S. The program was an educational innovation in Dade-County Public Schools after the influx of Cuban immigrant children and families in the early 1960s. The district found itself struggling to provide adequate instruction for primarily Spanish-speaking Cuban-background children. The superintendent hired an educational linguist, Dr. Pauline Rojas, to identify a solution for the district. She was really the lead behind the establishment of the Coral Way Bilingual Program, which opened in September 1963.

In 1961, Dr. Rojas traveled to Washington, DC to secure additional federal funding for the Cuban refugee children. As a trained linguist, she believed fully in bilingual development. She did not obtain funding then but was advised to travel to New York and consult with the Ford Foundation. She did, and over a period of an additional 18 months, she interacted with Ford, hired bilingual Cuban teachers as “Cuban aides” in the schools, and some support staff. Once the district received funding, she implemented a professional development program for English- and Spanish-speaking teachers at the Coral Way School.

The school, under the direction of principal J. Lee Logan, also needed to transform its environment from monolingual English to bilingual. By 1967 or so, the program went through several modifications, including how teachers placed students in the program, and the data that emerged demonstrated that students could learn academic content through the medium of two languages without loss to their first language. That was quite revolutionary at the time.

So, the teachers had to be Florida-certified teachers, and they included both monolingual English-speaking teachers and bilingual teachers who were mainly from Cuba and who went through a 2-year teacher certification program. The program also hired “Cuban aides,” who were not certified in the United States, to assist teachers and students and who were bilingual.

Just to be clear, in my research Coral Way was not the first “bilingual education” program in the United States, but it was seemingly the first program of what we now call “dual language programs” in the U.S.

Elizabeth:

What would you say are key lessons the field has learned from the Coral Way?

Dr. Coady:

We learned a lot from that early program. By 1968, five years after the Coral Way bilingual program was established, the data on student learning showed that students were able to learn academic content in two languages while learning two languages and developing literacy in those languages. Although this seems to be a common finding, or a “normal” outcome today, Coral Way was the first program to demonstrate that using student achievement data. The program was the result of a tremendous amount of work on the part of both Spanish and English teachers and educational staff. They were intensely dedicated to the success of the program.

## Dual Language Education: Historical U.S. Perspectives and Current Practices Podcast (Parts I)

Elizabeth:

The Coral Way was clearly developed during a particularly historical moment in this country. Could you tell us how the historical context influences the development of these educational programs?

Dr. Coady:

The historical socio-political contexts in which dual language programs have been developed and sustained is fascinating. Bilingual programs have, in fact, existed since the founding of the country but, as I mentioned before, the current iteration of dual language in the United States began with the Coral Way Bilingual Program. As I shared before, early studies demonstrated students had the capacity to learn in two languages, which paved the way for growth in programs in the 1960s and contributed to the 1968 Bilingual Education Act. The Bilingual Education Act set a strong course for bilingual programs for some 25-30 years but was eventually subsumed under Title III and funding has been reduced over the years to effectively eliminate support for these programs. Some states have taken up policies and programs to foster and grow bilingual programs, but not nearly enough to meet the demand.

Elizabeth:

Your analysis suggests that while federal support for dual language programs waned, some states have taken the lead on fostering those programs. Could you tell us more about the factors that have led the renewed and growing interest in those programs, that is, what is driving the increasing demand for dual language education?

Dr. Coady:

Bilingual education, like education in general, is a social and political issue. Bilingual education intersects strongly with the way people think about their own identity, that of their country, that is, who “we” are and what “we” should speak, and what might be economically advantageous. As the research base on dual language programs has grown, beginning in the late 1960s, educators and some politicians began to see the benefits of bilingual education programs on student learning and social well-being. By 1968 the government passed the Bilingual Education Act (BEA), and that remained in place for several decades. Under that Act, funding was appropriated to support bilingual programs, prepare teachers, and to prepare scholars of bilingual education. This is what was known as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Over time, that funding was sadly subsumed under different areas of educational funding, but the scholarship remains consistent in this area. Some of the same issues that Coral Way faced in 1963, such as parent buy-in and teacher education, are still issues today. And it’s clear that not enough research has been conducted on students of color and the issue of race in bilingual education programs.

Today, some states such as Washington, Utah, and Delaware have continued to see the benefits of dual language and have appropriated funding for their growth and teacher education. Others, like my own in Florida, have provided virtually no support and have retreated into a more restrictive language policy and political stance declaring English “official” in 1988. Again, these

shifts in policy reflect varying ideologies. Dual language is not a panacea for issues of race and equity in the U.S., but it continues to surprise me how little the effectiveness of the programs in general has been made known across the U.S.

Elizabeth:

You shared with us that Coral Way began in response to meet the needs of Cuban refugees in Miami, which was, and still is, a very urban area. However, as dual language programs become increasingly viewed as educationally beneficial, interest in these programs has expanded beyond English learner communities in urban settings and has begun to include rural settings. Can you speak to these shifts, and some of the implications they have?

Dr. Coady:

The growth of dual language programs has not been “even” across urban and rural settings, and we have work to do to ensure equity for black and brown children who are both native and non-native speakers of English. In other words, our work continues to evolve surrounding language, race, equity, and strong educational programs. The issue of race in dual language and bilingual education programs has not yet been taken up nationally, but I see this as an essential direction for scholars and, as Chair of the AERA Bilingual Education Research Special Interest Group this year, we will be taking this important work up.

We are starting to see some growth of dual language programs in rural communities, but we have some work to do in two key areas. The first area of work is that rural schools and districts suffer tremendously because of the limited funding base that they draw from to support schools. The COVID-19 context has illuminated some of those differences, such as the connectivity divide, poverty, and who our “essential” workers are, such as those who work in agriculture.

We also need critical reflection and specific action surrounding our black and brown students and access and inclusion to dual language programs. Race is an issue that we need to center in the curricula of dual language programs. We have, as a field, been grappling with neoliberal policies and benefits of dual language for White and monolingual families, but we are now in a new era where we have an opportunity to address this as a field.

Elizabeth:

Those sound like very important and timely issues to consider. Would you be able to offer any other insights, perhaps from your work with Coral Way, about “lessons not yet learned,” or in other words, what has not yet been widely adopted by the field, possibly to the detriment of establishing and sustaining strong programs?

Dr. Coady:

Yes. In the context of Coral Way, we learned that a major strength of the early “model” was critical daily planning time for teachers in grade level teams. Teachers had about one hour each day to co-plan and prepare lessons and instruction. The reason that this is important is because teachers must ensure that their instruction builds academic content and language rather than repeat. Some repetition is very helpful for learning, but the planning time allowed teachers to

reinforce and extend content in both languages. Today, teachers are rarely provided professional time to co-plan content, instruction, or assessment.

In fact, the principal of the school at the time, Mr. Lee Logan, wrote in his 1965-66 reports to the Ford Foundation, which funded the program, that the key to the success had been teachers' ability to adapt the curriculum to students' learning needs, the flexibility of the program to let teachers create and innovate curriculum, and the ability to move students into different classrooms based on their language proficiency in Spanish or English. Some of those activities today would, again, be standards such as initial student assessment and placement, but in 1963, it was innovative. Trying to replicate the success of Coral Way, without creating the conditions that contributed to that success, still presents a challenge in the field.

Elizabeth:

It sounds like many of the points you spoke to today are all valuable take-aways that educators considering how to start a program, or strengthen an existing one, can benefit from. Taking the specific historical and socio-political context surrounding each individual dual language program can help leaders plan to build and maintain successful dual language programs. Thank you so much for spending time with us today and sharing your expertise with us. For those listeners interested in learning more, Dr. Coady's book is entitled [The Coral Way Bilingual Program](#).

Dr. Coady:

My pleasure. Thank you for having me.

## **Closing**

Host:

Thank you again Dr. Coady for joining us today to consider the important historical context and lessons of the implementation of dual language education in the United States. The ideas shared today will certainly help institutes of higher education, teacher preparation programs, state and district educational leaders, and teachers consider how to position themselves as advocates for sustainable, quality dual language programs. Stay tuned for Part II of the podcast where we will continue our conversation on Dual Language education with Dr. Marco Bravo and Dr. Louise Lockard. We also encourage all of you to visit the NCELA website at [www.ncela.ed.gov](http://www.ncela.ed.gov) to check out the many other resources available to teachers and administrators.